

# City, county, UCD agree to MOU on partnership and growth

By **Tanya Perez**

The city of Davis, county of Yolo, and UC Davis have agreed to a legally binding memorandum of understanding on a series of shared goals and commitments to improve collaboration and partnership, according to a joint statement released on Tuesday afternoon.

The statement is the result of a series of discussions between the city, county and university, with the primary goal of resolving concerns over the campus' recently approved long-range development plan and its environmental impact report. In late July, Mayor Brett Lee noted that the three entities had agreed to confidential mediation as a means of avoiding litigation.

The MOU appears to positively address all of the city's concerns.

According to the statement, "The terms of the MOU include a commitment to build more housing for students and a guarantee to house 100 percent of any new student enrollment growth on campus, a joint transportation plan and traffic improvement projects, the elimination of master leases in the city of Davis, and forming a stronger town-gown partnership through a variety of collaborative activities."

Student housing — and the resulting impacts of an increased student population, from transportation to air quality to emergency services — has been the biggest sticking point between the city, and by extension, the county. The agreement, according to Councilman Dan Carson, "is a breakthrough for our community... (and provides) millions of dollars in funding to help mitigate the impacts of campus growth on our community."

"UC Davis is pleased that we've reached an agreement with the city of Davis and Yolo County regarding our Long Range Development Plan," Chancellor Gary May said in the statement. "Our aim was to make sure the agreement will have a positive impact for our students, and this one will."

"Increasing on-campus housing will benefit our students," he continued, "but also Davis, the county and the region at large. We value our town-gown relationship and look forward to continuing to strengthen our areas of shared interest."

Mayor Brett Lee echoed May's sentiments. "I am very pleased we are entering into this partnership with UC Davis. I believe it strengthens our relationship and will be of long-term benefit to our community," he stated.

Supervisor Jim Provenza also emphasized the commitment to housing all student enrollment growth on campus, noting "If the parties continue to work together in good faith, we will be well on our way to addressing the housing crisis for UC Davis students and the city of Davis. We appreciate the willingness of the university to work with us in reaching this agreement."

A favorable town-gown relationship is being touted by all sides, especially as cities like Santa Cruz have recently voted to oppose any enrollment growth to the campus there, "calling on city leaders to do whatever they could to restrict its effort to expand," according to a June article in the Santa Cruz Sentinel. A 2008 settlement capped enrollment at UCSC at 19,500, but Chancellor George Blumenthal announced in January he wants the campus "to prepare for an enrollment of 28,000 students by 2040."

## **The numbers**

The statement spells out specifics on housing, with penalties attached for not reaching targets.

"Regarding housing, the terms of the MOU require the university to grow the number of on-campus beds available to students, starting with the LRDP baseline of 9,818 and building to at least 15,000 beds by fall 2023 (10,500 beds by fall 2019, and 12,500 beds by fall 2021). The university agreed to make a payment to the city and county of \$500 for each bed not delivered within six months of the agreed-upon dates.

"In addition, the university has committed to providing housing to cover any new enrollment in excess of that projected in the Long Range Development Plan. Per an initial request from Chancellor May to the city, the city, county and university will create and publish an annual Joint Housing Report that will be issued by Sept. 1, 2019, and annually during the life of the 2018 LRDP."

UCD's Kelly Ratliff, vice chancellor for finance, operations and administration, added, "Most importantly, our West Village housing project can proceed as scheduled this fall, which will make at least 1,000 beds available in 2020 and the remaining 2,265 available in 2021. This agreement keeps us on track to build substantially more housing over the next several years, which we outlined in the LRDP, and ends master leases in the city."

Also according to the statement:

\* UCD also agreed to contribute \$2.3 million for traffic improvement projects for a number of areas, including the Richards/I-80 interchange, County Road 98, Russell Boulevard bike path west of Highway 113, and the Russell Boulevard Corridor. The three entities will develop a joint transportation plan together, which will include how to improve bicycle and pedestrian experiences. UCD will initiate a working group that will include city representatives to plan for the future of Unitrans.

\* A number of partnership and collaboration activities to foster better town-gown relationships was agreed upon. Senior officials from UCD, the city and county will participate in an annual public meeting to hear from the larger community. In addition, two high-ranking representatives each from the three entities will meet at least twice during the first year of the agreement in an open meeting format. The university will also contribute funding annually to a rental resources program approved by the Davis City Council last year.

\* The university, city and county agreed to form a working group to discuss mutual opportunities and explore solutions to common challenges. In addition, UCD will conduct an economic and fiscal analysis of the university's impacts and benefits to the region, including to local governments.

Councilman Lucas Frerichs expressed appreciation for the MOU, saying, "The delivery of additional student and faculty housing is paramount, and the additional commitments to collaborate on issues which affect us all, including transportation projects and the city's Renters Resources Program, helps strengthen the relationship between all our institutions."

Added County Supervisor Don Saylor, "This agreement marks a new era and a shared commitment to collaboration among the city, county and campus. I am pleased that today's UC Davis leadership has committed to providing additional student, faculty and staff housing on campus with specific milestones, contributing to transportation needs in the area, and to deep, intentional partnerships now and in future."

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