Student Family Housing Redevelopment Committee – Meeting Minutes Summary

Date: 10-7-2014   Time: 1:30PM - 3PM PST

Participants: Assistant Vice Chancellor Clayton Halliday, Associate Dean Lenora Timm (Chair), Marilyn Derby (Project Manager), Brittany Derieg (Project Assistant), Professor Michael Rios, Graduate Student Assistant to the Dean and Chancellor Angel Hinzo, Graduate Student Representatives Aaron Fackler, Paul Johnson, Gordon Rees, Sara Petrosillo, and Cutcha Risling Baldy, and Undergraduate Student Representative Ryan Reynolds.

General Timeline Updates

The committee is behind in collecting information from comparable institutions. A new timeline for the committee, including project goals, community engagement opportunities, online surveys, and data analysis is being developed, in conjunction with leadership.

Review of the Open Forums

First Open Forum: 10/29/2014

Second Open Forum: 10/30/2014
Committee representatives present: Paul Johnson, Erica Vonasek, Gordon Rees, Ryan Reynolds, Marilyn Derby, Angel Hinzo, Brittany Derieg

Primary Points of Discussion:

- Affordability should not be defined by the market. It should be defined by the known graduate student TA and GSR salaries.
- Future building plans need to be more aware and considerate of physically disabled students
- Do not forget undergraduates, as they too make up some of the students-with-families population, and often have different financial needs than graduate students.
- Potential arrangement: upper floor(s) for single graduate students, lower floor(s) for families.
- Solano Park is a very different environment than Orchard Park. Solano Park allows residents easy access to downtown, the arboretum, and the main campus, which allows for a much fuller “Davis” experience than at Orchard. Solano Park is also highly convenient for nursing mothers, who can return home easily to care for their young children.
  - Keep both parks. Each park is associated with a different elementary school, and neither school could properly accommodate the increase in demand that would result if all students with families were combined into one location. Increasing the density at one location would also mean one of two undesirable things would have to happen: less green space for children to safely play in, or taller buildings. Strollers would need to be carried up more flights of stairs, increased safety risks at upper level balconies, etc.
• For a comparable rental price, the Parks offer much safer communities than students can get off-campus.

• Any future housing needs to accept section 8 housing vouchers, as many students would not be able to live in Davis otherwise. This is an apparent trend at other UCs, and should not be allowed to happen at Davis.
  • UC Berkeley recently reduced their graduate student housing from 981 units to 545, while raising the rental rates significantly, and UCLA has made similar changes. If UC Davis expects to continue to grow in size it cannot follow this trend.

• We should question why UC Davis is attempting to grow so much considering the environment it is within—the city of Davis is generally against growth. This means that UC Davis has a lot of power over the housing market, how can this be used to our advantage?

• By having low rental rates we are helping the international community in ways we cannot imagine nor directly measure. International student’s children have the opportunity at Davis to play instruments, go to good schools, participate in cultural activities, and more. They then bring these experiences and skills back with them to their homes, enriching those communities.
  • Without affordable housing, many international and low-income students cannot afford to attend UC Davis, and will choose to go elsewhere.

• The 24-hour deadline to sign paperwork forces out many international or out-of-state families, who cannot realistically have all adult members of the household come out with such little notice to sign the lease agreement. This fundamentally changes the look and feel of the Solano/Orchard Park community, and creates a false vacancy rate.
  • Though there may be spaces available, this is not because of a lack of demand.

• Recent patio inspections have increased the community’s stress, as many now fear the threat of eviction due to having items like weight-benches or wooden toy chests on their patios that were previously allowed by more lenient RAs.
  • There needs to be consistent enforcement of rules.
  • These rules need to be clearly stated in the handbook, which also needs to be updated to reflect current fire and safety rules.

• Parking rules are unreasonable. The current parking pass is expensive, yet highly inflexible, allowing them to park nowhere else on campus (even at the student health clinic) besides Solano Park.

• The timing of auto-payments is a problem, as there is a reported delay of several days, in which you may be charged twice if you paid in person the first time. Several students report this happening to them at one point or another, and one student reported that the delayed update within the payment system caused him to be dropped from his financial aid.

• Many residents would like additional storage space in the new units.

• There should be more diversity in the types apartments -1, 2 & 3 bedroom units to accommodate a diversity of needs.

• Affordability is very important; perhaps the most important. However, many students agree the community and happiness should not be sacrificed in the design in order to achieve a slightly lower rent.

• The committee should investigate the possibility of reusing certain items from the old buildings when constructing the new complex in order to save on costs and be more environmentally friendly, which is in line with the goals of the campus.
• The committee should investigate the possibility of beginning an alumni funding drive in order to support affordable student family housing.
• Other university funding sources should be considered, such as discretionary funds, unrestricted funds, endowment funds, etc.
• Some students support the idea of a sliding scale for rents, dependent upon the different GSR and TA incomes. Some students would prefer a flat rate based on unit type and size.
• The committee needs to consider student self-governance of the parks. Perhaps a hybrid co-op model. Some student would like to fully run the parks themselves (administration, maintenance, grounds etc) and some would pay more not to have to, as they feel they are already far too busy to maintain the grounds as well. A hybrid model was suggested, where students can get a discounted rate for their rents in exchange for labor. All potential models should be considered.
• Density: Russell Park is much denser than Solano and Orchard, and has significantly fewer places for children to safely play.
• What makes Orchard and Solano Park such good places to live?
  • Green space and harmony with local wildlife
  • Community space and community programs
  • All of the backdoors face each other, allowing all of the children to play together and be watched over by the community. Feeling of safety.
  • There is no distinct boundary between “inside” and “outside.” The smaller units encourage families to be outside, interact with one another, and look out for each other’s kids.
  • Residents know and help each other – parenting, child care, moving in.
  • The relationships – people care about each other.
  • Quality community space
  • Apartments can get a cross breeze because there are windows and doors on both sides.
• Administration and leadership need to be active and engaged at these forums, so that the final recommendations do not come as a surprise and are not rejected nor changed.

**Action Items**

Collect information from comparative institutions, as well as the other UCs regarding creative funding models for student housing. What strategies are already being employed around the country that might be used here at Davis?

The committee will reach out to maintenance, custodial, and administrative staff and collect feedback from them regarding what works—and what does not—at the Parks, and how they would recommend it be improved. The committee will also arrange a meeting with the international student community to listen about specific challenges they face, and how the committee can help make recommendations to improve their housing experience.

Clayton Halliday will run three potential financial models for presentation to the committee at the next meeting. These models will demonstrate to the committee in real numbers what refurbishing the current structures would cost, what rebuilding the structures exactly as they are would cost, and what rebuilding them through a third-party would cost. These three models would serve as a baseline for understanding associated costs and required capital. Based on
these models, the lowest rents will be shown, and the committee can begin to explore methods to cover the probable gap between what rents would have to be, and what is affordable.