

From Kriss Worthington
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Draft City of Berkeley Letter to President Napolitano on Student Housing,

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President Napolitano,

OFFICE OF THE CITY CLERK
CITY OF BERKELEY

Thank you for creating the President's Student Housing Initiative. The City of Berkeley greatly appreciates your commitment to accelerating the timetable in completing current student housing developments and also expanding the pool of student housing in the future. We share your concerns in both keeping housing as affordable as possible for UC students and maintaining sufficient amounts of housing to meet an ever-increasing demand. We appreciate your written commitment to meet with undergraduate and graduate student leaders. All of the above-mentioned features of the initiative are exemplary and we commend you for your leadership on this important issue.

In moving forward to implement your housing initiative, we encourage consideration of public-private partnerships (P3), which have the potential to address important concerns and help us meet the need for thousands of additional units of student housing. A model P3 project could meet the needs of all stakeholders, including students, the university, workers, environmentalists, and neighbors.

There are three high-priority criteria for specific features of a P3 that would build strong public support for using this tool to meet the need for student housing. These include:

1. Ensuring student costs will be comparable to residence hall rates and can be controlled in agreement with private developers.
2. Meeting labor standards which include prevailing wage and recognized apprenticeship programs in accordance with the history and tradition of UC's construction projects. Alternatively, a project labor agreement could be considered.
3. Retaining or expanding current UC sustainability standards to ensure green buildings.

We encourage consideration of P3 agreements, provided they include the aforementioned components.

Multiple sections of the Berkeley General Plan support increased housing in downtown Berkeley. Increasing student housing in the downtown would help us implement the vision of transit-oriented development. There are multiple opportunity sites for student housing in downtown Berkeley.

The Telegraph Avenue area from Bancroft to Dwight is ideal for more student housing, given its close proximity to campus and the possibility of students walking or bicycling to class. Telegraph Avenue has been recognized as a Priority Development Area and contains multiple opportunity sites. Already, hundreds of millions of dollars have been invested in the Telegraph area in the recent years. The Telegraph Property Business Improvement District has put forward a powerful plan for community improvements, and the City of Berkeley adopted the South Side Plan, to which the University jointly agreed. Creating housing delivers on the goals of the South Side Plan. This also meets the demands of the area's overwhelming student population, who support additional student housing in their neighborhood.

The City currently has zoning barriers and obstacles which prevent creation of additional housing on or near Telegraph Avenue. Recently, the City Council voted unanimously to refer to the Planning Commission to remove those housing barriers, thus allowing the potential for numerous projects which could add many additional student housing units.

Thank you again for prioritizing the needs of students by creating the President's Student Housing Initiative. The City of Berkeley stands ready to help in any way possible to accomplish these goals.