

Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood Frequently Asked Questions

Project context

UC San Diego is the second-most applied to institution for undergraduates in the country and is included in top-10 national and top-20 global rankings in a wide array of disciplines. To further enhance UC San Diego's presence as a premier destination for students, employees, health personnel, patients and the community, multiple transformative projects are underway across the San Diego region.

In the past decade, UC San Diego has invested more than \$7 billion in new connections, medical facilities, labs, housing and places to reflect, innovate and celebrate. As part of this transformation, the university has increased access to student housing on campus at below market rates, and starting in 2023, three new housing neighborhoods are planned to open in successive years, adding 5,700 new undergraduate beds on campus by 2025.

- Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood will provide housing to 2,000 undergraduate students when it opens in fall 2023.
- Pepper Canyon West Living and Learning Neighborhood will provide 1,300 single-occupancy rooms to transfer and upper-division undergraduate students when it opens in the fall of 2024.
- The proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood, which is anticipated to open in the fall of 2025 to provide housing to an additional 2,400 undergraduate students.

The proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood will enable the university to accommodate additional students in on-campus housing and supports the university's academic mission by providing updated administrative and teaching space for Thurgood Marshall College, as well as student dining, wellness programming, student support services, study lounges, co-working spaces and public realm improvements, such as outdoor gathering spaces and public art. The project would also provide 18 new classrooms and a 150-seat lecture hall for campus-wide academics.

The Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood project site is located west of Geisel Library in the interior of the campus. It will be connected to the rest of the campus through Ridge Walk, the central north-south path for pedestrians as well as bikes and scooters, which connects the majority of the undergraduate colleges on the UC San Diego campus. A network of pedestrian and bike-friendly pathways enhance and encourage the movement of people and bikes throughout the campus and to mass transportation options.

Are there any amenities for the community proposed with the project?

The campus continually looks for ways to provide community benefit in its projects, and the proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood will feature improvements for all to enjoy, with dining, art, and a significant amount of open space and outdoor gathering areas. Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood will also include a glass blowing craft studio which will be open to the public, similar in size to the studio at the UC San Diego Craft Center located in the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood.

What is currently on the proposed project site?

Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood is planned to replace outdated low-density structures, some of which have been in place since the '70s, including student housing (approximately 250 beds), administrative offices, academic facilities, a market and student lounge.

Per the [2018 Long Range Development Plan](#) (LRDP), existing low-density built areas will be considered for redevelopment (e.g. "Infill Development"). This includes surface parking lots, temporary modular building complexes, areas of underutilized low-density development and areas with facilities deemed substandard and in need of replacement.

The university recently opened its first Living and Learning Neighborhood, and plans to open a second in 2023. why is this additional student housing necessary?

Everything UC San Diego does is motivated by its academic and research mission, with a specific focus on meeting the needs of our students. UC San Diego enrollments have continued to rise in an effort to increase access to the university. The proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood is the fourth Living and Learning Neighborhood to be developed as part of the UC San Diego Strategic Plan and associated [2018 Long Range Development Plan \(LRDP\)](#) which help the university meet housing demands as a result of increased enrollment and place more students in on-campus housing.

Providing access to below market rate housing for UC San Diego students will continue to be a top priority for the university. On-campus housing provides many benefits by expanding opportunities for students to fully integrate into the academic and social life of the campus. Part of the attraction is the on-campus community and setting, as well as being close to academic, research, social support and recreation facilities.

In the past decade, the university has built below-market rate housing for more than 5,500 students, including the University of California's first Living and Learning Neighborhood, [North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood](#), which became the new home for Sixth College and houses 2,000 undergraduate students. With open spaces, art, dining and the new Craft Center, it soon became a buzzing hub for the entire campus.

When the fall quarter began in 2022, UC San Diego was able to provide housing to 39% of undergraduate students and 49% of graduate students. The university was also able to [reinstate the two-year undergraduate housing guarantee](#) that had been suspended during the pandemic. UC San Diego remains focused on its 2018 LRDP goal to provide housing to up to 65% of all students by 2035 and to continue to make progress toward a four-year housing guarantee, providing housing to students at a rate that is approximately 20% below market.

What is the university doing to help make housing more affordable?

To further reduce the cost of housing and therefore the cost of education, Chancellor Khosla worked successfully with the UC Regents and state legislators to develop the new \$2 billion Higher Education Student Housing Grant Program that is helping to build new student housing across California. [UC San Diego recently received a \\$100 million grant from the program](#), which will be leveraged to lower rates up to 55% below market for 1,100 low-income California resident students. Chancellor Khosla also has led the charge to develop a new state-funded zero-percent interest revolving loan fund for higher education student housing.

Why is the campus placing this development on its campus in lieu of developing housing off campus or building a satellite campus?

The overall approach of the living and learning neighborhoods is to enhance the student experience, cultivate community and support interdisciplinary research. On-campus housing provides many benefits by expanding opportunities for students to fully integrate into the academic and social life of the campus. Part of the attraction is the community setting, as well as being close to academic, research, social support and recreation facilities.

While there will still be students who choose to live off-campus and take advantage of the UC San Diego Blue Line trolley and other public transit options to travel to campus, the on-campus environment will continue to be a draw for students.

Students who live on campus have a variety of amenities within walking distance, and accessible transit options for when travel off campus is necessary. The Triton U-Pass program provides students unlimited rides on all regional MTS and NCTD mass transit bus and trolley routes during academic quarters. This, combined with below-market rate student housing on campus, lessens local traffic and parking demands. Reducing the number of students who have to commute to campus also reduces greenhouse gas emissions, furthering the campus's sustainability goals. Increasing the amount of housing available to students on campus also helps address the housing shortages faced by the county.

What is the timeline of this project?

The project is currently pending UC Regents approval. If the Board of Regents approves the project, the university anticipates that construction would begin in 2023, with the goal of opening in the fall of 2025.

How does the university involve the community in the planning process?

The university values community input and has fostered two-way communication through several different channels over the years:

- The university works closely with the local community and civic groups, which amongst others include La Jolla and University City community groups, including the La Jolla Community Planning Association, La Jolla Shores Association, La Jolla Town Council, University Community Planning Group and University City Community Association.
- In collaboration with local community groups, UC San Diego formed a Community Advisory Group in 2016 to seek input and help shape the development of the 2018 Long Range Development Plan (2018 LRDP).
- The campus regularly shares information by meeting with home owners' associations, hosting open houses on- and off-campus, hosting campus tours, maintaining a comprehensive website with project information, responding to calls for information and presentations, mailing postcards to local residents and presenting to civic groups such as the Rotary, Kiwanis and others.
- The campus collaborates with the city of San Diego, San Diego Metropolitan Transit System and San Diego Association of Governments, in addition to other regional and state agencies, to ensure these agencies are aware of the university's development and growth plans. For example, the university is currently participating in the [University Community Plan update](#) process that is being led by the city.
- The campus complies with California Environmental Quality Act public disclosure on all projects, and as part of that, a comprehensive Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared and socialized widely for the 2018 LRDP. The 2018 LRDP evaluated for impacts of the proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood.

Where can I get more information?

In addition to sharing information in-person at community meetings and open houses, the university maintains comprehensive websites with project information. PlanDesignBuild.ucsd.edu is a website that shares detailed information on current construction projects that are enabling UC San Diego's physical, cultural and intellectual transformation.

The [2018 LRDP](#) guides the physical development of the campus to support the university's teaching, research

and public service mission over the next 15-20 years. The plan considers academic, enrichment, sustainability and growth goals, striving to use the remaining developable campus land as effectively and efficiently as possible. The growth anticipated by the 2018 LRDP includes the proposed Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood, which is located along the undergraduate housing spine highlighted in the 2018 LRDP. The project site is designated by the 2018 LRDP as housing and academic land uses.

What impact will this growth have on traffic in the area, has this been studied?

Cumulative traffic conditions resulting from UC San Diego, including proposed growth that could occur under the 2018 LRDP and projected regional growth, were modeled for the [2018 LRDP Environmental Impact Report \(EIR\)](#). Traffic impacts attributable to the 2018 LRDP, including the Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood, were disclosed in the 2018 LRDP EIR, and the campus is in the final stages of implementing a mitigation program that will address these impacts. This program focuses on the surrounding streets most heavily used by campus commuters: Regents Road, La Jolla Village Drive and North Torrey Pines Road. Learn more about the university's investment in smart signals and pedestrian and bicycle safety improvements at <https://rmp.ucsd.edu/about/community.html#traffic>.

Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood is predominately a student housing development, with over 80% of the development dedicated to residential use. Housing more undergraduate students on campus decreases the numbers of students commuting to campus via single-occupant vehicles. In addition, the students residing in the project would be first and second year students, who by policy are not permitted to bring a car to campus.

Will the campus perform an environmental analysis of the project?

The 2018 LRDP EIR includes a comprehensive environmental analysis of the potential impacts that would result from buildout of the development planned in the 2018 LRDP. The scope of the impacts disclosed in the 2018 LRDP EIR includes those of Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood, and all applicable 2018 LRDP EIR mitigation measures will be applied during design, construction and operation of the project. Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and CEQA Guidelines, an Addendum to the 2018 LRDP EIR will be prepared to evaluate and document the project's consistency with the previously prepared environmental analysis. The UC Regents will consider the information provided in the 2018 LRDP EIR and its addenda prior to approving the proposed project and, if approved, will make all applicable mitigation measures a condition of its approval.

Will the growth of the university present problems for emergency access?

Safety is the university's top concern. The University of California has strict safety standards and regulations. The new buildings are designed with occupancy in mind, to maximize safety and ease evacuation.

The UC Police Department and our Fire Marshal work closely with partner agencies responsible for public safety, including the city. As just one example, UC San Diego has provided the city with the land and approximately \$21 million in funding to build a fire station on campus which is currently under construction and anticipated for completion in the winter of 2024.

In addition, the implementation of [adaptive traffic signal controls](#) to ease congestion and improve traffic flow will improve emergency access on adjacent roadways.

What is the university doing to mitigate the impact of construction on the surrounding community?

UC San Diego strives to lessen the impact of construction whenever possible and will continue to keep the community updated on these efforts. One innovative approach to mitigate the impact of construction is to use pre-fabrication off-site when feasible, which reduces on-site noise, traffic and parking, while also reducing waste and improving quality and safety.

Are there any green features in this project?

Ridge Walk North Living and Learning Neighborhood aims to achieve LEED Gold certification with a full range of sustainability practices in design and operations. Low-flow fixtures and drought tolerant landscaping will save water. The project also optimizes natural ventilation and daylight to reduce demand for mechanical ventilation and electricity, and construction waste is reduced by fabricating some building elements off-site.

How will the project preserve open space?

The proposed site for the Ridge Walk Living and Learning Neighborhood is adjacent to the Historic Grove, one of the four preserved open space categories of the UC San Diego's [Open Space Preserve](#) designated by the 2018 LRDP land use plan. The Historic Grove includes the mature eucalyptus stands through the core of the campus, a valuable cultural landscape and aesthetic resource that have defined much of UC San Diego's landscape character over the past 50 years. The project will be sensitively designed to preserve the Historic Grove as a unique feature of the site and valuable open space resource for future residents of the neighborhood and campus as a whole. As part of the project, any tree removed in the Historic Grove would be replaced at a 2:1 ratio—two new trees for each removed. Additionally, the project will incorporate large courtyards and various outdoor amenities, as well as paths and connections through the site and to the rest of campus.