Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood
Frequently Asked Questions

**What factors are driving the growth of the university?**

Everything UC San Diego does is motivated by its academic and research mission, with a specific focus on meeting the needs of our students. The university is under state mandates to increase enrollment, resulting in the campus adding more than 8,000 undergraduate students to the campus in the last eight years. The primary driver of our current development plan is accommodating a student population that already exists.

This unprecedented growth places a responsibility on the campus to provide appropriate infrastructure and facilities, with student housing being of significant importance. With this in mind, the university updated its [Long Range Development Plan (LRDP)] in 2018. The plan is designed and intended to meet housing demands as a result of increased enrollment, placing more students in on-campus housing, which will also help address the housing shortages faced by the county.

The proposed Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood is not a growth-inducing project, but rather, it enables the university to manage its prior growth and is part of a broader plan for accommodating students on campus. This project also supports our academic mission, as it will become the home of a future undergraduate college. In recent years, the student body has grown so that each college accommodates over 5,000 students. This project will help the university to reach approximately 4,000 students per college, ensuring that our students will continue to benefit from a world-class education in the smaller, more intimate environment offered by UC San Diego’s college system.

**Why is the campus continuing to expand development on its campus in lieu of developing housing off campus or building a satellite campus?**

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. The overall approach of the living and learning neighborhoods is to enhance the student experience, cultivate community and support interdisciplinary research.

While there will still be students who choose to live off-campus — and trolley access will be very beneficial to those students, with two campus stations scheduled to be operational in late 2021 — the on-campus environment will continue to be a draw for students. UC San Diego's ultimate goal is to be able to address affordability by providing a four-year housing guarantee for students at below market rates. Providing additional student housing on campus also lessens local traffic and parking demands by decreasing the number of students who commute.
Was the community involved in your planning process?

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

- The university meets on a monthly basis with five different 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 during the development of the 2018 Long Range Development Plan (2018 LRDP). This group, comprised of representatives from the five community groups in La Jolla and University City as well as representatives from the city, students and staff, has convened more than a dozen times over the last two years.

- 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 community and the City of San Diego in the [University Community Plan update](#) process.

- 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 university meets with La Jolla Playhouse leadership and other Theatre District stakeholders to share preliminary designs, consider their input and provide regular updates.

As the result of our continual outreach to the community, several design features incorporated into the Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood are a direct result of community input:

- Incorporating open spaces into the design of the living and learning neighborhoods.
- Adding extra parking spaces to support the campus community, La Jolla Playhouse patrons and other visitors.
- Placing the highest points of the buildings furthest from the community edge and orienting buildings along the public edge to reduce scale and mass.
- Installing adaptive traffic signal technology, also known as “smart signals,” at adjacent intersections to ease the flow of traffic.
- Designing the project with an outward focus, including neighborhood-scale retail and dining options for the community.
• Incorporating pedestrian paths, sidewalks and other connections from the proposed underground parking structure directly to La Jolla Playhouse.

**What is the timeline of this project?**

The project is currently in the design phase, pending UC Regent approval, with the goal of opening in the fall of 2023.

**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.

UC San Diego’s [2018 Long Range Development Plan (2018 LRDP) website](https://www.ucsd.edu) includes information on Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood. 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 land we have as effectively and efficiently as possible. The Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood was included in the 2018 LRDP and evaluated for impacts in its accompanying Environmental Impact Report ([LRDP EIR](https://www.ucsd.edu)).

In addition, [PlanDesignBuild.ucsd.edu](https://www.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.

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

The campus continually looks for ways to provide community benefit in its projects. Through the Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood, UC San Diego’s Joan and Irwin Jacobs Theatre District will be improved for all to enjoy, with retail, dining, parking and a significant amount of open space and outdoor gathering areas. The inclusion of restaurant and retail services within the Neighborhood enhances the campus experience but also reduces local traffic, as there is less need to leave campus for these services. In addition, a new academic conference space with ocean views will be available for community events. Design features will include pedestrian and bicycle improvements to provide easier and safer access to and from the campus.

**How will parking be accommodated for La Jolla Playhouse during construction?**

UC San Diego has been working closely with La Jolla Playhouse during the development of this project to ensure that the parking and access needs of theatre patrons are accommodated during construction and beyond. In addition to expanded valet service at La Jolla Playhouse, theatre-goers will be provided with shuttle service from the nearby Osler Parking Structure to the Playhouse.
How did the university decide on the name of the new neighborhood?

The name used during the design phase reflected that the neighborhood would become the home of a future undergraduate college. As the project moves from the design phase, pending UC Regent approval, the university named its second Living and Learning Neighborhood with three key considerations. First, the living and learning neighborhoods were designed to enhance the student experience while furthering social and cultural enrichment for the larger San Diego community. Second, the neighborhood is adjacent to UC San Diego’s Joan and Irwin Jacobs Theatre District, which is home to multiple performance spaces used by both the Department of Theatre and Dance and La Jolla Playhouse. Lastly, a key goal of the project is to improve the visitor experience for theatre patrons and highlight UC San Diego’s arts presence in the community.

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

A comprehensive traffic impact analysis was prepared for the 2018 LRDP and its Environmental Impact Report (LRDP EIR) in compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). This included both a Level of Service (LOS) analysis, which measures traffic congestion in terms of roadway capacity, and a Vehicle Miles Traveled (VMT), which focuses on the number and length of vehicle trips made by a project’s employees and residents.

The LOS analysis assessed the traffic impacts of the development expected under the 2018 LRDP looking at existing conditions, future year 2025 conditions and future year 2035 conditions, including both the campus’s projected growth as well as surrounding growth. Projects like the Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood were anticipated in the 2018 LRDP to be built by the year 2025, meaning they are accounted for in the 2018 LRDP traffic analysis’s year 2025 conditions. As mitigation for its LOS impacts, the University is collaborating closely with the city to implement “smart signals”—adaptive traffic signal infrastructure, which adjusts traffic signal timing based on actual traffic demand. The university has invested over $4 million in this solution to help mitigate traffic congestion and improve the flow of traffic.

VMT analysis used a multi-tiered approach to assessing the LRDP’s potential impacts associated with VMT. The LRDP EIR concluded that there would be no significant impacts associated with VMT because the campus’s, per capita, resident and employee VMT numbers are significantly lower than both the regional and City of San Diego averages. In addition, much of the campus lies within a Transit Priority Area (within one-half mile of a major transit station) and is well-served by existing bus lines and the future Mid Coast Trolley. The LRDP’s transit-oriented development places a mix of uses and housing in areas well served by alternative transportation and transit systems, both of which result in a reduction in VMT.

The Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood project will be evaluated for consistency with the traffic analysis presented in the LRDP EIR. However, in accordance with updated CEQA Guidelines and Senate Bill 743, as of July 1, 2020, VMT will replace LOS as the standard performance metric for analyzing transportation impacts in CEQA documents statewide and until that time agencies may elect to use the VMT metric immediately. Therefore, LOS is no longer an appropriate methodology and CEQA requires VMT analysis instead. While project-specific environmental review will involve an evaluation of consistency with the LOS analysis presented in the LRDP EIR, this is provided for informational and comparison purposes only. Instead, to make
CEQA impact conclusions, an evaluation of the project’s consistency with the LRDP EIR’s VMT analysis will be utilized.

The campus anticipates the project to be consistent with the overall campus VMT averages. This is largely due to the fact that the addition of the college and associated population were accounted for in the LRDP’s VMT analysis. Placing housing on campus, by nature, reduces VMT because students living on campus no longer have to commute to campus by car. In addition, the large majority of students living in the Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood will not have a car, as the campus has parking restrictions in place for first- and second-year students. Pedestrian and bike-friendly pathways will enhance and encourage the movement of people and bikes through the campus core rather than on the surrounding streets.

**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 and parking structure 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.

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

**What impact will this growth have on parking?**

Parking is evaluated on a continuous basis on the UC San Diego campus. The Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood will include an approximate 30% increase in parking, providing close to 1,200 new underground parking spaces. This is an increase of 360 parking spaces from the existing two parking lots on the project site. As the vast majority of students residing in campus housing will not have a car, this parking will primarily serve faculty, staff and visitors. The added capacity will adequately address existing and projected demands for parking in this area of the campus, including parking for La Jolla Playhouse events.

UC San Diego also recently opened the Osler Parking Structure with 1,350 spaces located near the main Gilman Drive entry to campus. An additional underground parking structure with 1,200 parking spaces is in the North Torrey Pines Living and Learning Neighborhood, which will open in the fall of 2020. This, along with the university’s ongoing commitment to promoting alternative transportation and the introduction of the trolley in late 2021, will help ease parking concerns campus-wide.

In addition, UC San Diego is committed to taking a leadership role in convening a stakeholder group with representation from the local community, city, coastal commission and others to discuss residential parking regulations that would help ease parking impacts in the adjacent community.
**Will the campus perform an environmental analysis of the project?**

Pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) completed for the 2018 LRDP analyzed future growth anticipated on the campus. The 2018 LRDP EIR comprehensively addressed the potential environmental effects of campus growth and development due to implementation of future proposed projects and activities, which includes Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood. In addition, the location of the future undergraduate college was identified in 2018 LRDP land use plan. Project mitigations that reduce impacts are included as part of the EIR and will be applied to the project as appropriate. In addition, project-specific environmental review is underway. This review will incorporate project details not known at the time the LRDP EIR was prepared (such as architectural design) and evaluate whether the project is consistent with the programmed growth identified in the LRDP and is within the scope of activities covered in the environmental impact evaluation in the LRDP EIR. Pursuant to the CEQA Guidelines, a subsequent EIR does not need to be prepared, and an Addendum to the LRDP EIR is appropriate, if the project does not have new significant effects on the environment that have not already been addressed by the LRDP EIR.

**Why are you building high-rises on campus up to 21 stories?**

Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood is designed to accommodate residential life and academic space for a new undergraduate college, with approximately 2,000 undergraduate beds, an estimated 1,200 underground parking spaces and space for retail and meetings. The project has been designed to provide a sense of community around a significant amount of open space with the lower 9- to 11-story buildings along the campus edge. Building heights and siting are influenced by maximizing natural light, ventilation requirements, site access and servicing needs and minimizing shadow effects. The two 16- and 21-story buildings are located at the interior of the site, to the east, and are necessary to accommodate student housing while increasing the amount of shared open areas.

**Why is the university planning a meeting space at this location?**

The overall approach of the living and learning neighborhoods is to enhance the student experience, cultivate community and support interdisciplinary research. This is achieved by creating a mixed-use community that incorporates residential, academic, cultural and retail space. A 17,000 square foot meeting center is planned for the top of an 11-story building that would have retail at the ground floor and student housing in between. The center would accommodate university meetings and academic and campus community events. Four executive support spaces would also be made available for guests of the university. Campus event protocols would be strictly followed to mitigate any community impacts.

**Will there be an increased level of noise from the Neighborhood?**

Everyone who chooses to live in UC San Diego housing must abide by the campus's rules and regulations, which include policies on gatherings, quiet hours and much more.
**What is the university doing to mitigate the impact of construction on the surrounding community?**

UC San Diego will strive 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, which reduces on-site noise, traffic and parking, while also reducing waste and improving quality and safety.

**Will development impact existing open spaces or reduce open space on campus?**

The Theatre District project will be built on two surface parking lots and will have minimal impact on existing open space on campus. The project will increase the amount of open space in the area by converting approximately six acres of parking areas into a new neighborhood with open spaces designed into the site.

The 2018 Long Range Development Plan and Environmental Impact Report has designated approximately 335 acres of campus natural resources as Open Space Preserve. The mature eucalyptus groves adjacent to the Theatre District Living and Learning Neighborhood will be preserved as part of this open space preservation effort.