4.3 Land Use Plans

Main Residential Campus Land Use Plan

The land use plan is characterized by a compact academic core to minimize the need to build on natural open space areas. Maximizing access to academic destinations, creating dynamic concentrations of social activity, and sharing amenities across multiple programs are added benefits. The strategy of growing from within relies on utilizing remaining infill sites within already developed areas. The unique topography and vegetation at UCSC can be challenging to navigate; increased density offers opportunities for greater collaboration and interaction throughout the campus.

The academic core continues to be surrounded by an expanded ring of colleges and student housing, where two pairs of colleges are proposed. The college pairs punctuate the northwest and northeast corner of the campus, and a greater amount of student housing for upper division undergraduate, transfer, and graduate students nestles between colleges as infill projects. The plan includes capacity to house 100 percent of new student enrollment on campus to minimize the impact off campus, strengthen the student experience, and encourage convenient access to academic and support facilities.

With the developable footprint only slightly larger than that proposed in the previous LRDP, the campus is able to embrace a robust open space network of Campus Natural Reserve, Natural Space, Outdoor Research and Habitat Preserve. This open space will reinforce the campus’ commitment to environmental stewardship, bridge concepts learned in class with a living library and laboratory, and connect students with a sense of place in the greater community.

The plan also includes a new vision for the Westside Research Park. The west side of Santa Cruz is a newly evolving area with interesting potential as it transitions from traditional light industrial and logistics uses to a mix of research and development, office and support services. In addition, the area has added modest amounts of housing as well as coffee shops, restaurants, and breweries, among other uses. A former freight rail line runs east-west just north of the site. In the short run is being improved as a multi-modal (bike and pedestrian) corridor, and in the long run may support commuter rail potentially extending to Watsonville.

The land use plan is complemented by an integrated mobility strategy, which envisions integrating alternative modes of transportation (transit, pedestrian and biking) with peripheral parking to promote a walkable campus. Integral to this concept is constructing the proposed Meyer Drive extension, creating an inner campus roadway loop for more efficient transit, and developing of mobility hubs for a more seamless and efficient transfer from one mode to another.

Finally, the land use plan is supported by a framework of utilities and infrastructure to support new development. As the campus has aged, the need to invest in existing systems is greater. The compact developable area allows the campus to continue to rely on our existing system, with new extensions for areas of expanded development. The tight footprint of academic space and student housing will foster a more socially and physically resilient framework to support increased growth.

A fundamental premise of the 2021 LRDP is to build upon the foundation of previous plans, including the pattern of development that has evolved since the campus was founded, while reinforcing the best elements and guiding the campus toward continued evolution and success.