

The view from the bottom of the East Meadow, after a drive, walk, or bike-ride up through the town and into the university, is one of Santa Cruz's most pleasant prospects. One arrives, and the vista opens up to Loma Prieta in the east, and north to the university, nestled in the ecotone, the verge where field and forest meet.

We have much to be grateful for on the Central Coast. Greed and uncontrolled development have ruined much in our state over the last 50 years, but thanks to local initiative, care, and activism, we have Pogonip, Grey Whale, Wilder, Coast Dairies, and much more. And we have, thanks to five decades of reasonably careful stewardship, one of the most beautiful university campuses in the world. That is now under grave threat, as the university pushes forward with plans to build a massive, hastily conceived, and under-reviewed development across the lower East Meadow, north and east of the Hagar/Coolidge intersection.

The project is the first radical break with UCSC's founding decision not to build in the meadows, a guiding principle that has shaped campus development over five decades. For Thomas Church, campus planning visionary and his colleagues, the meadows, open to ocean and sky, were central to the site's enduring appeal. Why ruin this, and why now?

In order to house more students, pursuant to an agreement with the city, university officials planned a residential complex on the west side of the campus called Student Housing West. Recently, due to environmental constraints, it was decided to occupy the entire current site of Family Student Housing, near the West Entrance on Empire Grade. Last fall, under time pressure, it was abruptly decided to relocate Family Student Housing to the East Meadow. The forty proposed apartment complexes were not originally designed with this site in mind. The altered plans were discussed under the aegis of "Student Housing West" (the appropriateness of nine-story buildings in that site is a separate issue) and as a result the decision to destroy the Eastern Meadow was made under the radar, with inadequate public notice and debate. This should not stand.

We agree with the plans to house more students on campus land. But there are other site options for Family Student Housing. It need not be all in one complex, for example, and could occupy several smaller sites. The Redwood Grove apartments on Heller Drive, the Crown Merrill Apartments, and Ranchview Terrace are examples of recent developments designed in harmony with their environment. Forty prefabricated two-story apartment buildings on the Eastern Meadow is not.

We call on our community members, students, faculty, university workers, alumni, and all who care about the beauty of our region to unite in opposition to this ill-conceived plan. Once gone, the meadow is gone forever.

James Clifford and Chris Connery, for the East Meadow Action Committee
eastmeadowaction@protonmail.com