

December 20, 2017

To: Chancellor Carol Christ

From: Stephen C. Sutton, Ed.D., Interim Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs  
Rajiv Parikh, Associate Vice Chancellor, Capital Strategies

RE: Interim Report on Campus Housing

Dear Chancellor Christ:

The Housing Master Plan Advisory Group is charged with providing recommendations to campus leadership to address the housing crisis facing Berkeley students. The group has held three meetings this fall semester, focused on understanding existing data and trends in housing for a variety of campus constituencies. On behalf of the Housing Master Plan Advisory Group, we submit this interim report as a summary our discussions to date.

1. **Understanding the Need.** The Advisory Group reviewed the results of the 2017 Housing Survey. The findings resonated with our existing understanding of the current crisis and highlighted both the severity of the issue for all student populations, and the diversity of needs for different constituencies. The group has subsequently sought additional information to further clarify the needs and existing resources for several of these groups, including: utilizing the expertise of advisory group members about their constituencies (e.g. students with dependents, postdocs, and students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity), and inviting experts from Cal Housing, Financial Aid, and the Office of Planning and Analysis to participate in our discussions.
2. **Identifying and Serving Vulnerable Populations.** While the housing market is tight for all students, certain constituent groups are particularly vulnerable to housing insecurity. The Advisory Group has discussed a variety of levers the University could pull to ensure that groups such as low-income students, students with dependents, and postdoctoral researchers (including those with families) have prioritized access to limited existing stock and tailored services. Some possibilities may include:
  - a. Reconfiguring existing prioritization matrices (e.g., for University Village)

- b. Providing targeted services in specific properties (e.g., providing housing for only students/postdocs with dependents at University Village)
  - c. Prioritizing new housing projects that meet the needs of specific constituents (e.g., if family housing is highlighted as a key need, prioritizing projects that reflect the preferences of students with dependents)
3. **Defining and Operationalizing Affordability.** Even if rent is equal to or below the current market rate, it may still be unaffordable for some students. As we build new housing, it will be crucial to define “affordability” in the real context of student need, and be creative in generating beds that meet that need. Furthermore, the Advisory Group hopes to focus on opportunities to make existing housing more affordable, including: continuing to refine the assessment of cost of attendance assumptions, utilizing Financial Aid levers to provide more financial support for housing, offering housing subsidies to vulnerable students, and understanding must-have versus nice-to-have services in campus housing.
4. **Clear Communication.** Throughout our conversations, the Advisory Group has identified several barriers to access to information about available housing options and services. This creates confusion and misconceptions, and can hinder the ability of students, particularly the most vulnerable students, to find housing that meets their needs. The group will continue to discuss how best to present and disseminate information about all available options to reduce these barriers.
5. **Horizons for recommendations.** Adding new beds to the campus housing inventory will require smart strategy and prioritization to ensure that it most effectively relieves the pressure of the housing crisis. However, new beds will take many years to bring online, and students today face significant challenges in accessing housing that is affordable. The Advisory Group is considering long-term, short-term and immediate-term recommendations to alleviate housing pressures. Regardless of the horizon, discussions around potential strategic partnerships, such as non-profits like the Berkeley Student Cooperative or through master leases with third party landlords, seem to present viable options for addressing the collective universe of housing matters, including availability and affordability.

During spring semester, the Advisory Group looks forward to coalescing these observations into concrete recommendations to help address the housing needs of Berkeley students.

We are happy to provide additional details as needed.