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City of Davis
Community Development

Project Goals

The guiding concept of the Nishi proposal is to retain elements of the plan already approved by The City Council, while simplifying that plan to lessen impacts questioned by the voters of Davis.

Among the priorities, consistent with already approved land uses, is the creation of a new student housing neighborhood that takes advantage of the sites unique proximity to both Downtown Davis and UC Davis. The site also offers direct bicycle and pedestrian access along the extensive Arboretum corridor strongly connecting the site to the balance of our community both North and South.

Accordingly, the project continues to meet, as before, the critical need for rental housing at this uniquely convenient location. This convenience, particularly for UCD students, provides economies in both travel time and automobile use to students during their normal 2-5 year tenure at UCD.

Land Use Profile

Land uses will be consistent with the currently approved Nishi Plan and, by reference, the certified EIR. However, because of voter traffic concerns, there could be the reduction or elimination of non-University commercial buildings which create the bulk of peak hour traffic.

Student Housing

Per the existing plan, the residential area will provide 650 housing units which could accommodate up to 2600 occupants. The residential area remains located on the Northerly side of the property maintaining a substantial buffer from I-80. Even though the prior project was exempt from affordable housing requirements, the new plan could include housing available to underserved students. Most students do not qualify for the necessary conventional Federal and State subsidy benefits. Nonetheless, if some path to feasibility can be found, such housing will be a benefit to students who need assistance.

Accessory structures and amenities normal for such housing projects will be built and maintained for residential use.

Roadways and Circulation Strategy

A vehicular and bicycle/ pedestrian undercrossing connecting Nishi and UCD is planned in generally the same location first identified in the approved plan. This new connection will augment already existing bicycle/pedestrian access both North and South, and provide alternative emergency access in addition to the emergency access at Olive Drive and the existing I-80 bike path/emergency vehicle undercrossing. On site bicycle paths will complete the circulation offering convenience by connecting between existing routes and new routes offering more options for bicyclists.

Largely because of feedback from the community, a reduction below certified EIR benchmarks, or even the elimination of private automobile access from Richards Blvd to the Nishi site needs to be explored. Input from appropriate City commissions will be relevant in determining a path forward.

Open Space

Should commercial footprints be reduced, much of the space they now occupy could be retained in open space uses. Preliminary analysis indicates 3 to 6 acres could be available for options such as playfields, urban forests, or even an urban farm as an amenity to adjacent residents.

The applicants are currently growing, organically certified, crops of nutritional vegetables on another Davis urban farm. Some of vegetables grown are provided as donations to students on campus.

Open space also includes the existing Arboretum bicycle/pedestrian trail which might further be enhanced with an open space amenity connecting this corridor with one of the open space alterations just discussed. Open space to the West includes, as it does now, a combination of natural drainage ponds with a dense urban forest providing sound attenuation and air filtration elements to the project.

Another interesting feature will include strategically placed groves of evergreen trees, shrubs, and hedgerows for visual appeal and air filtration as noted in the approved EIR.

Parking

Because of its unique location, Nishi student residents may not need daily access to their cars. Accordingly, apartment on-site parking might be feasibly limited, in the aggregate, at lower ratios normally found at apartment projects in more remote parts of the community. Further, a survey has shown that a satellite car storage area is acceptable to student residents. Accordingly, a satellite car storage facility, generally located where commercial buildings and parking lots were first envisioned, might be a feature offered to all students, including campus residents. This in turn may permit greater density and more efficient uses for core University lands adjacent to the Nishi property.

Sustainability

The Nishi property was selected by the California Strategic Growth Council, as the #1 site for sustainable development in the State of California. As a result of that process funds were provided to prepare a comprehensive sustainability implementation plan which is incorporated into the approved EIR. Additional opportunities may be available to enhance the sustainability plans by adding PV panels in the satellite car storage areas.