



PHYSICAL & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNING
A & E BUILDING, # 1382

BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA 94720-1382

October 30, 2023

State of California
Office of Planning and Research
1400 Tenth Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

NOTICE OF PREPARATION OF A ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

Project Title: UC Berkeley Innovation Zone

Lead Agency: The Regents of the University of California

Project Location: The project is located in the City of Berkeley in Alameda County immediately west of the University of California, Berkeley's (UC Berkeley's) Campus Park. The project site comprises the following six Assessor's Parcel Numbers: 057-2034-014-02, 057-2034-014-03, 057-2034-003-00, 057-2034-004-00, 057-2034-011-00, and 057-2034-012-00.

County: Alameda County

UC Berkeley has determined that an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be required for the UC Berkeley Innovation Zone (project or proposed project). The University, acting as the Lead Agency, has determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR is required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). When the decision to prepare an EIR has already been made, CEQA states that an initial study is not required (State CEQA Guidelines Section 15063(a)). Accordingly, an initial study has not been prepared. This notice of preparation (NOP) has been prepared pursuant to Sections 15082 and 15083 of the State CEQA Guidelines.

UC Berkeley has prepared this NOP to provide responsible and trustee agencies, property owners, and other interested parties with a description of the proposed project and information on potential environmental effects of the proposed project, pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15082(a). The NOP is available for public review on UC Berkeley's Capital Strategies website: <https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/environmental-review>.

Description of the Project

UC Berkeley proposes to develop an Innovation Zone in the City of Berkeley immediately west of the UC Berkeley campus. The project site currently comprises several parcels, including University Hall, its annex, the university parking lot immediately to the west of University Hall, and UC-owned commercial buildings located at 2136-2140 University Avenue (Ernest A. Heron Building) and 2154-2160 University Avenue (Martha E. Sell Building), which are city-designated landmarks. The proposed project would demolish all existing structures and redevelop the project site with two laboratory buildings with vehicle parking. The two proposed buildings, referred to as the South Building and the North Building, would include offices, and other collaborative meeting spaces, and would house researchers, faculty, and students from multiple disciplines. The North Building would also include a parking garage. The project would not result in UC Berkeley student population growth, but the proposed project could increase employment-population growth.

The South Building would provide an approximately 176,000-gross-square-foot new laboratory building that includes five above-ground floors, a non-occupied mechanical space at the roof, and a below-grade basement. The South Building would provide space for permanent occupancy of up to 340 occupants.

The North Building would provide an approximately 310,000-gross-square-foot new laboratory building that includes eight above-grade floors and a non-occupied mechanical space at the roof, and an approximately 154,400-gross-square-foot garage, with up to either four above- or below-grade levels, for vehicle parking. The North Building would be leased to a private developer and would house space for UC Berkeley's Innovative Genomics Institute (IGI), as well as other organizations, such as government entities, private companies, and research institutes with which UC Berkeley and/or IGI has research affiliations for industrial scientific and technological research purposes. The North Building would provide space for permanent occupancy of up to 750 occupants.

A linear-shaped courtyard, approximately 40-foot-wide by 200-foot-long, would be located between the South and North Buildings. In addition, streetscape features, including trees, bicycle racks, and trash receptacles, would be installed along the northern, eastern, and southern sides of the site perimeter and sidewalks. Landscaping would be consistent with the surrounding landscape and would include native and/or climate adaptive and drought-resistant plant materials.

Project Location

The project site is located in the City of Berkeley in Alameda County immediately west of UC Berkeley's Campus Park (Attachment A). The project site is approximately 1.86 acres and is currently fully developed. UC Berkeley's Anchor House Student Housing Project is located to the north of the project site across University Avenue. The West Crescent, a significant and primary campus gateway to the Campus Park, is located to the east. The Berkeley Art Museum and Pacific Film Archive are located to the south across Addison Street. Residential and commercial developments are located to the west; these private properties are under the jurisdiction of the City of Berkeley.

Probable Environmental Effects

UC Berkeley has determined that an EIR will be prepared for the proposed project. Therefore, as allowed under Section 15060 of the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 Cal. Code Regs.), UC Berkeley has not prepared an initial study and will instead begin work directly on the EIR process. As required, the EIR will focus on the significant effects of the proposed project and will document the reasons for concluding that other effects will be less-than-significant. Where significant or potentially significant environmental impacts are identified, the EIR will also discuss feasible mitigation measures to avoid or reduce these impacts, and a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives. The EIR will evaluate the probable environmental effects, including cumulative effects, of the proposed project, in the following environmental issue areas:

- **Aesthetics:** The EIR will evaluate changes in views, visual character, and lighting resulting from implementation of the project.
- **Air Quality:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts associated with temporary increases in air pollutant emissions from construction and long-term increases in pollutant emissions from project operations and associated vehicular trips.
- **Biological Resources:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to result in substantial adverse effects on biological resources, including sensitive habitats and species, wetlands, and waters, as well as potential conflicts with local/regional conservation planning efforts.
- **Cultural Resources:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of known or unknown archaeological or historical resources.
- **Energy:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts related to energy use for construction and operation of the project.

- **Geology / Soils:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to exacerbate geologic hazards and disturb unknown paleontological resources.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts from temporary increases in greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with mobile-source exhaust from construction worker commute trips, truck haul trips, and equipment (e.g., excavators, graders); and long-term increases in GHG emissions associated with project operations, including stationary and mobile sources. The EIR will also evaluate the project's potential to conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations for reducing GHG emissions.
- **Hazards / Hazardous Materials:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for construction and operational activities associated with the project to increase hazards on the site and in the surrounding area and the potential for increased risk of exposure to hazards and hazardous materials. The EIR will also evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to physically impair emergency response or evacuation plans.
- **Hydrology / Water Quality:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to alter drainage patterns, increase impervious surfaces and stormwater runoff, and result in potential impacts on water quality (surface waters and groundwater) during construction and operation.
- **Land Use / Planning:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to affect established communities and conflict with applicable plans and policies adopted for the purpose of reducing or avoiding environmental impacts.
- **Noise:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts from temporary increases in noise (including off-site, vehicle traffic noise) and vibration levels during construction; and long-term increases in noise from project operation, including stationary and mobile sources.
- **Population / Housing:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to induce (directly or indirectly) unplanned substantial population growth or displace substantial housing or residents.
- **Public Services and Recreation:** The EIR will evaluate potential impacts on public services and recreation facilities.
- **Transportation:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to increase vehicle miles traveled (VMT) locally and in the region and whether such increases would conflict with applicable plans, policies, or regulations related to the effectiveness of the local/regional circulation system. The EIR will also include a discussion of emergency access adequacy, and potential transportation hazards from implementation of the project. In addition, a discussion of potential wind hazards associated with building design features will be included in the EIR.
- **Tribal Cultural Resources:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to result in a substantial adverse change in the significance of known or unknown tribal cultural resources.
- **Utilities / Service Systems:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to increase demand for water, transmission, and treatment; demand for wastewater transmission and treatment; use of recycled water; demand for electricity and natural gas; and the potential need to increase the capacity of existing infrastructure.
- **Wildfire:** The EIR will evaluate the potential for implementation of the project to exacerbate wildfire risks and associated hazards.

No significant impacts with respect to agriculture and forestry resources or mineral resources are anticipated, and these issue areas will not be evaluated in detail as part of the EIR.

Public Review and Comment Period

UC Berkeley invites comments on the scope and content of the Draft EIR and appreciates your prompt review of this NOP. Written comments should focus on the scope and content of the environmental information to be included in the Draft EIR for the Innovation Zone Project, germane to agencies having statutory responsibilities

associated with the proposed project, as well as public interest in the proposed project. All comments on environmental issues received during the public comment period will be considered in the Draft EIR. Due to the time limits mandated by State law, this NOP will be circulated for a 30-day review period, which will extend from October 30, 2023, to November 29, 2023. **Responses to this NOP must be received by 5:00 p.m. on Wednesday, November 29, 2023.** Please send your written or electronic responses, with appropriate contact information, to the following address:

Raphael Breines, Senior Planner
Physical & Environmental Planning
University of California, Berkeley
200 A&E Building, Berkeley, CA 94720-1382
Email: planning@berkeley.edu

Please include a subject line indicating Scoping Comments: UC Berkeley Innovation Zone.

Public Scoping Meeting

UC Berkeley will hold an online public scoping meeting to inform interested parties about the project, and to provide agencies and the public with an opportunity to provide oral and written comments on the scope and content of the EIR. The scoping meeting will be held exclusively through Zoom videoconference. The meeting information is as follows:

Wednesday, November 15, 2023

Time: 6:30 – 8:00 p.m.

Meeting Link: <https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/public-meetings>

For instructions to access and participate in the Zoom meeting by telephone or from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone, or Android device, please visit: <https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/public-meetings>.

To request a paper copy of this notice or if you have questions concerning this NOP, scoping session, or associated environmental review for the project, please contact Raphael Breines, Senior Planner, Physical & Environmental Planning, at (510) 642-6796 or planning@berkeley.edu.

Sincerely,

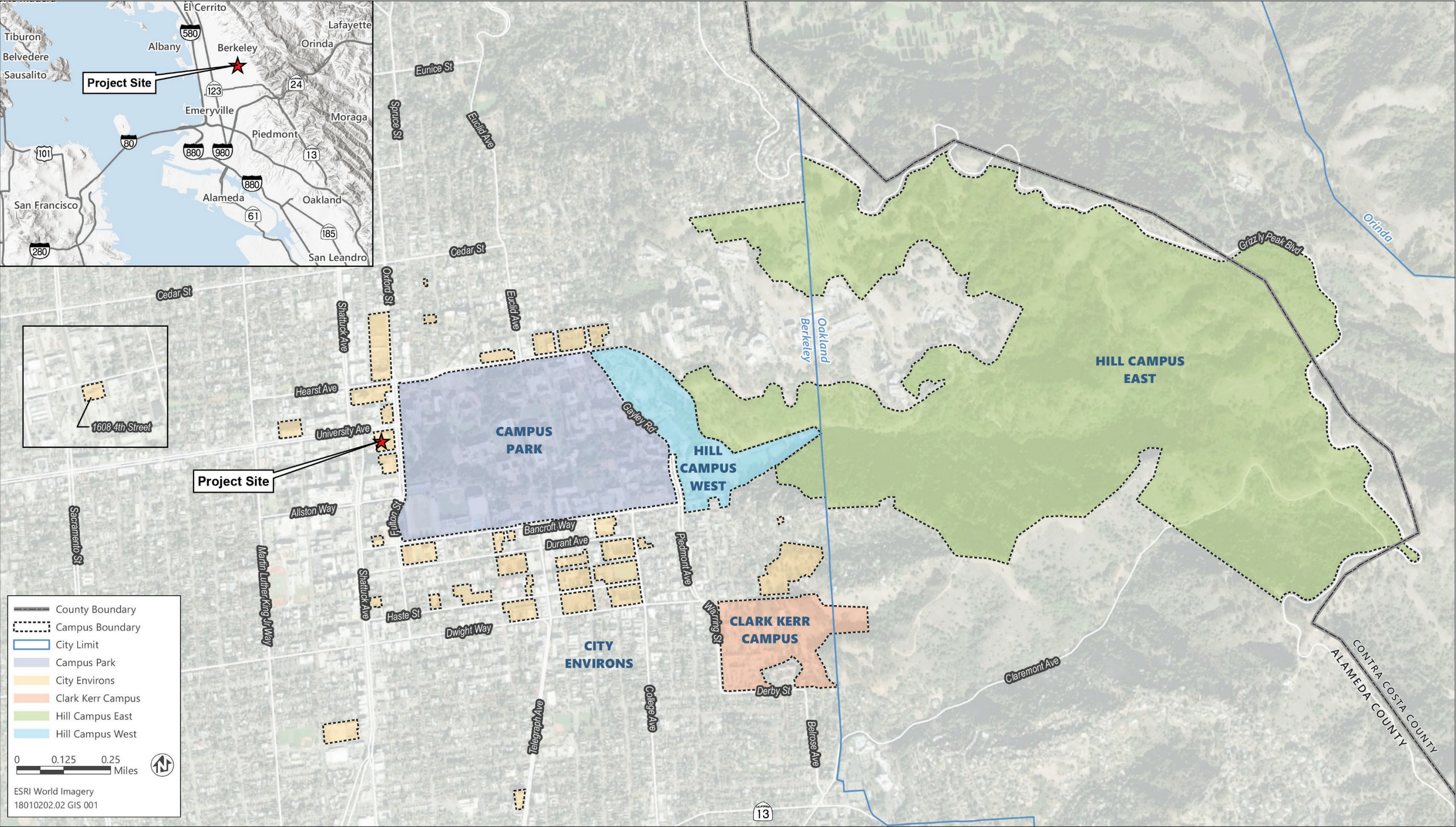


Wendy Hills
Campus Architect, Assistant Vice Chancellor
University of California, Berkeley

Attachments:

A) Location Map

Attachment A: Location Map (Project Site)



Source: UC Berkeley in 2023; adapted by Ascent 2023.