

PAVING PARADISE

Cal Poly Pomona will use 13 acres of pasture land for housing project

INLAND VALLEY
Daily Bulletin
dailybulletin.com

By [Monica Rodriguez](#), Inland Valley Daily Bulletin

8/17/15

POMONA >> Cal Poly Pomona will use 13 acres of pasture land to build on-campus [housing](#), university administrators announced this week.

The land on the southeast corner of Kellogg Drive and Eucalyptus Lane was chosen from the 10 sites originally considered for the housing project, which administrators say will accommodate 800 to 1,000 students.

Many questions remain about the project, including the cost and the selection of the architecture and construction company, according to Walter M. Marquez, Cal Poly's associate vice president for facilities, planning and management.

Financing will come by issuing bonds, which will be paid back with fees students pay to live on campus, said Megan Stang, executive director of university housing services.

Earlier this year [students held demonstrations protesting](#) a proposal to build housing on pasture land. They said to do so would cut space for the horses, have a negative effect on the environment and reduce agricultural resources important to the university's history tied to agriculture.

The student protests began shortly after President Soraya M. Coley took over as head of the university in January.

"In February she heard about (the proposal) and kind of paused the whole project," said Esther Chou Tanaka, university spokeswoman.

A question on Coley's mind was how the university would accommodate future student growth, administrators said.

So options were reviewed. A decision was made to move away from multiple two- or three-story structures and instead build up, Marquez said.

"We'll have to go up higher than what we envisioned," Marquez said. Building up will allow "for the preservation of land for the future."

Building at the chosen location will put the project near existing student housing and within proximity of the library, the Bronco Student Center and other university services, Stang said.

Building [new student housing](#) has become necessary, administrators say, citing the interest among freshmen to live on campus.

Currently, about 400 students are on a waiting list seeking housing for the upcoming school year that starts Sept. 24, Stang said. The last two semesters 700 students seeking campus housing were turned away.

Living on campus

“Students who live on campus are more likely to get involved” in campus activities, Stang said, adding studies show a strong link between living on campus and academic success.

Another problem the university has encountered is that most of its current housing dates to the 1960s.

“We’d like to be able to offer housing that meets the needs of modern students,” Stang said.

In addition to the new residence halls, a dining facility open to all will be part of the project.

Such a dining arrangement facilitates interaction among students and faculty and creates an environment “where learning can happen outside of a traditional classroom model,” Marquez said.

A feature of the new residence halls will be an area dedicated to urban agriculture where students will be able to grow their own produce, said Mary Holz-Clause, dean of the College of Agriculture.

Holz-Clause said the university’s [Arabian horses](#) currently have 45 acres of pasture land.

The project will require about 13 acres of the current land. The College of Agriculture, which has about 527 acres of land across campus, has land near the horse pasture used for hay production and cattle grazing, Chou Tanaka said. Eight acres of that land will be reassigned for the horses giving them a total of 40 acres.

When Coley temporarily stopped the project, an expert from Angelo State University in Texas with a background in agriculture and animal nutrition was brought to campus. He determined that “quite honestly we haven’t done as good a job” maintaining the pastures, Holz-Clause said.

So changes are going to be made.

Although the pastures are not the main sources of food for the horses, the expert’s visit led to modifications in grazing practices, Holz-Clause said. Horses will graze in certain areas and then move on to another section of the pastures.

A permanent irrigation system using recycled water will replace an older moveable one, she said, along with other improvements, costing more than \$200,000.

As part of the project [Kellogg Drive](#) will be realigned, Marquez said. The street will be shifting east of its existing location.

Construction on the street realignment is expected to begin in late 2016, and work on the housing is expected to begin in 2017, he said.

Affordability is key

Some incoming freshmen, like Carlos Carballo Rivera, 17, and Steven Robles Flores, 18, both of Ontario, said Monday they would like to live on campus if they had the money.

Living on campus would be convenient.

“Everything you need is here,” Robles Flores said.

In addition, living on campus represents a degree of independence.

Senior Robyn Pavon, a resident of West Covina, said she wouldn’t want Cal Poly’s Arabian horses to be affected in a significant way by the student housing project.

“They’re our mascots,” she said. “You don’t want it to impact them too much.”

The project itself may create additional traffic, but it will also represent a certain level of convenience for the students who end up living there, Pavon said.

Students will be able to get up in the morning and head off to class fairly easily, she said.