

# UC San Diego

## La Jolla Innovation Center Frequently Asked Questions

### **What is the La Jolla Innovation Center?**

The La Jolla Innovation Center (LJIC) is planned as a new state-of-the-art facility that would house several programs from UC San Diego Health, UC San Diego School of Medicine and UC San Diego Extension to serve students, patients and the larger community. It's planned to include approximately 110,000 square feet of office and educational space, a ground-floor café accessible to the public and approximately 275 parking spaces.

This real estate venture is the result of a public-private partnership with GPI Companies (GPI). For decades, UC San Diego has leased approximately 94,000 square feet of space in office buildings not owned by the university located adjacent to the site. The volume of proposed space and proximity to the UC San Diego campus and the Veterans Administration (VA) Medical Center are vital to the daily operations of the programs that conduct essential research and treat patients on the site. Integrating UC San Diego Extension at this location would allow both university users and the public, easy access to educational services provided at this facility.

### **Where is the La Jolla Innovation Center located?**

The LJIC would be situated on an approximately one-acre property that is currently owned by GPI and is south of the UC San Diego main campus, on the southwest corner of Villa La Jolla Drive and La Jolla Village Drive within the University Community Plan area. The university will purchase the property prior to development and construction of the project.

Rock Bottom Brewery, a Denver-based chain of brewpubs, closed its La Jolla location on this site in January 2020, providing a unique opportunity to redevelop the property immediately adjacent to the campus to meet current and future university needs. An existing pedestrian and bicycle bridge owned by the City of San Diego connects directly from the campus to this site and provides safe and convenient access to the UC San Diego campus and adjacent VA Medical Center. The project site also lies within a 1/3-mile proximity to two Light Rail Transit (LRT) stations of the UC San Diego Blue Line, expected to begin service in late 2021, providing additional public transit access in an area designated as a "Transit Priority Area" in San Diego's regional plan.

### **Why do the current university departments leasing space on the site need to move into a new building?**

UC San Diego has a need to relocate public-facing campus programs from existing buildings both on campus and off-campus that have been rated as a high priority for correction under the UC Seismic Safety Policy. UC policy prohibits its San Diego campus from entering into new lease renewals that do not meet these new seismic standards, such as those at The Campus on Villa La Jolla, and has

granted a one-time limited short-term extension to provide sufficient time for relocation of the UC San Diego campus departments that currently occupy space in leased facilities. Therefore, renewal of long-term leases is not feasible for UC occupants. The purpose of the project is to take advantage of a unique public-private partnership opportunity at the edge of campus that would deliver a financially feasible solution to help meet the need to relocate and consolidate the office and educational uses into a single, UC Policy-compliant building.

### **Why is UC San Diego developing this project off campus, rather than on campus?**

The closing of Rock Bottom Brewery, a Denver-based chain of brewpubs, in January 2020 provided a unique opportunity to redevelop the property immediately adjacent to the campus to meet current and future university needs. An existing pedestrian and bicycle bridge owned by the City of San Diego connects directly from the campus to this site and provides safe and convenient access to the UC San Diego campus and adjacent VA Medical Center. The project site is also at a public-facing location required and supported by the programs from both UC San Diego Health Sciences and UC San Diego Extension, who will occupy the new building.

As part of the 2018 Long Range Development Plan (LRDP) process, UC San Diego reviewed the available development and redevelopment sites within the campus boundaries, including the West Campus and the East Campus, near medical facilities. All sites have been planned for core functions and uses to meet current and projected future needs of the university. The 2018 LRDP was also completed prior to UC San Diego's seismic building review pursuant to an updated UC Seismic Safety Policy, therefore it did not account for the space needs of the users who are required to be relocated due to the policy. The LJIC would provide a building for UC San Diego Health Sciences and Extension programs that aligns with the UC Seismic Safety Policy.

In addition, staff from the VA Medical Center and a variety of UC San Diego departments currently occupy off-campus office space in the same commercial center, including Family and Preventive Medicine, Institute of Engineering in Medicine, Psychiatry, Neurosciences and UC San Diego Extension. Although not on campus, the location's immediate proximity and adjacency to campus and the medical facilities in the area and directly adjacent on campus, is vital to programs that conduct essential research, treat patients and provide educational services on the site.

### **Could GPI and UC San Diego seismically retrofit the existing buildings?**

The estimated cost to retrofit the existing buildings is approximately \$36 million, a financially infeasible investment for the GPI to make in buildings more than 40 years old. The retrofit would also likely be quite invasive and require disruptions and displacements of the current buildings' tenants requiring UC tenants to relocate to an alternate location while potential work and seismic retrofits are performed.

### **How will this project be financed?**

This project is being developed as a public-private partnership between the university and GPI. The land will be owned by the UC Regents and GPI will remain responsible for designing, financing,

constructing, maintaining and operating the new approximately 110,000 GSF, seven-story above-grade Class 'A' office building (which includes two levels of above-grade parking) with two of levels of subterranean parking pursuant to a long-term ground lease with the UC Regents.

**Will UC San Diego occupy the entire building?**

The university would occupy the entirety of the proposed office and educational space. The project also includes a separate retail space that would be occupied by a ground level café open to the public (a non-university tenant).

**Will there be any other chances for members of the community to learn more about the project?**

The university has established a [website](#), which provides project information, an FAQs document, project presentations, and a place for members of the community to sign up to receive project updates and submit comments and questions.

**How will the project be assessed for transportation considerations?**

The project has been assessed for transportation impacts in the EIR. Pursuant to CEQA, a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis was performed in compliance with Senate Bill 743 and included in the EIR. This type of analysis emphasizes reducing the number of trips and distances vehicles travel to and from the project. VMT analyses consider proximity to major transit stations, bicycle and pedestrian facilities, and mix of land uses and services available at the project or its surroundings, among other features that also reduce vehicular trips.

The proposed office uses included as part of the project would result in a project VMT per employee that is approximately 74% of the regional VMT average, which is less than the 85% threshold of significance for office uses. The proposed educational and retail uses would result in a net decrease in the total regional VMT, which is the threshold (no net increase) for educational and retail uses. As such, there would not be a VMT impact resulting from implementation of the Project.

**How has the university addressed traffic in the surrounding area?**

UC San Diego has already committed to funding and implementing the installation of adaptive traffic signal controls ("smart signals"), 26 in total along La Jolla Village Drive, from Interstate-805 to North Torrey Pines Road, and continuing the entire length of North Torrey Pines Road, with smart signals being installed on Regents Road as well. It is anticipated that these traffic signal upgrades will be in operation and improve local traffic flow before the LJIC is ready for occupancy.

The Gilman Bridge, which was completed in 2019, provides a connection between the East and West campus, which reduces the need for vehicles to utilize the adjacent public streets. In addition, a new bike/pedestrian bridge connects students in graduate housing and guests of La Jolla Family House to the rest of the campus, reducing the need for guests and students to drive.

The university's overall transportation improvement program also includes installation of high-visibility pedestrian crosswalks, including crosswalks along La Jolla Village Drive at Torrey Pines Road and Gilman Drive. As a result of input from the community, the university is considering additional high-visibility crosswalks at the Villa La Jolla and La Jolla Village Drive intersection.

**How much traffic is the Light Rail Trolley (LRT) expected to alleviate when the UC San Diego Blue Line extension begins operation in late 2021? What about other alternative transportation programs?**

Currently, approximately 60% of the university's faculty, staff and students use alternative transportation for their daily commute and are expected to increase use of alternative transportation by riding on the new trolley extension and means other than a single occupant vehicle.

The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) estimates that the three closest LRT stations to the project site (the VA Medical Center, the UC San Diego Central Campus Station, and the Nobel Drive Station) will have approximately 8,000 boardings (or 4,000 commuters) per day by 2030. The location of the project site in close proximity to these adjacent LRT stations will further alleviate traffic congestion on adjacent roadways.

In an effort of promoting alternative means of transportation, the university continues to expand and improve its Transportation Demand Management (TDM) program for campus commuters. This program aims to reduce single-occupancy vehicle use and includes:

- Triton Transit shuttle routes throughout campus that connect student housing to off-campus shopping centers
- Discounted San Diego Metropolitan Transit System (MTS) and North County Transit District (NCTD) transit passes
- Ride-sharing programs
- Bicycle and micromobility programs
- A paid parking fee structure

Inter-agency collaboration is key to improving alternative transportation options and reducing local traffic. The university works with MTS to improve local and regional bus routes and upgrade bus stops to take full advantage of the UC San Diego Blue Line extension and encourage ridership.

The bus stop serving the LJIC, located on Villa La Jolla immediately across La Jolla Village Drive from the project site, will be upgraded as part of this effort.

The university also successfully partnered with MTS on an extension of the SuperLoop Rapid Transit bus route service until midnight on weekdays and has also partnered with MTS and the North Coast Transit District (NCTD) to add route 974, which connects to the Sorrento Valley Coaster Station.

The Gilman Transit Center funded by UC San Diego in partnership with SANDAG, also supports an enhanced MTS and NCTD network that is heavily utilized by the campus community.

In addition, approximately 28 bicycle spaces will be provided as part of the project, including 14 storage lockers within the parking structure and 14 bicycle racks within the outdoor area near the

project driveway. The campus also contributed right-of-way dedicated towards bicycle lanes for Caltrans Coastal Rail Trail system.

**What are the benefits of this project to the community?**

The research that will be conducted on the site is related to children's health, understanding cognitive impairment in seniors, smoking cessation and refugee health and support.

The site also offers programs for veterans with support from the VA, and continuing education for the San Diego community, and middle and high school students through UC San Diego Extension programs that will be easily accessible to the public.

Patients in the community also benefit from access to public transportation as well as convenient and accessible drop off and pick up locations and parking. UC San Diego staff and students that live, study and work on campus can walk or bike to the services provided on the site.

The LJIC will include a pedestrian-oriented, ground-floor café accessible to members of the public. The building's design is oriented toward efficiency, energy conservation and aesthetic appeal, with attractive landscaping, hardscape and outdoor seating

**As a result of COVID and work changes anticipated, does UC San Diego still require as much office space, given flexible work arrangements and remote working practices?**

The departments that will occupy the new LJIC conduct research, provide patient care, deliver academic instruction and interact directly with students and other members of the public. Their daily responsibilities cannot be performed remotely or by flexing office space, and they must be in an office/educational setting adjacent to campus. The proposed facility also allows for the consolidation of existing space and use, thereby increasing efficiency of leased space.

**Does the university plan to acquire available commercial and residential property adjacent to the campus?**

The university only considers acquiring property to advance and align with its strategic mission. When a property acquisition is of interest, the university engages in discussions with property owners, as was the case with LJIC. The location and the university's presence on the site for decades provided a unique opportunity. Partnering with private developers like GPI, allows the campus to take advantage of industry leading trends in environmental design and competitive financing.

**With the exception of the UC San Diego Urgent Care facility, what is the plan for the existing buildings that are currently occupied by UC tenants on the larger seven-acre property once the UC tenants move to the proposed building?**

Upon construction completion, the university will relocate the majority of its user groups currently occupying the office buildings on the campus to the new office building. The new building will provide the user groups with a seismically upgraded building with significantly more efficient use of space, thereby reducing the university's overall space needs and existing footprint. The

remaining tenants with less critical needs for co-locating adjacent to campus will seek leased space elsewhere. It is expected that the existing buildings will continue to be leased to non-university tenants by the owner, as non-university tenants are not subject to the UCs more stringent seismic policies.

**Why is the university proposing a 100' tall building at this location? Does the 30-foot height limitation established in the Coastal Overlay Zone apply to the proposed project?**

Article IX, Section 9, of the California Constitution, grants the UC Board of Regents broad institutional autonomy, giving the university full powers of organization and government to further its mission of education, research and public service. As a constitutionally established state entity, the university is not subject to municipal plans, policies, and regulations of surrounding local governments, such as the City's General Plan or its Coastal Height Limit Overlay Zone, for uses on property owned or controlled by the university that are used in furtherance of the UC's education and research purposes. Upon acquisition of the property, the project site would be under the ownership and use of the UC Regents and thus subject to UC land management policies, including those related to building height limits, setbacks and design.

The proposed project would provide a new office and educational facility in a campus-adjacent, community-facing accessible location, furthering the university's education and research purposes. Occupants of LJIC would include UC San Diego Health Sciences, UC San Diego School of Medicine, and UC San Diego Extension which serve students, patients and the larger community.

The height and square footage of the proposed building are a key factor in UC San Diego pursuing the project, as they would allow for the consolidation of existing UC San Diego Health Sciences and UC San Diego Extension programs currently housed across multiple locations on- and off-campus uses into a single, UC Policy-compliant building. In addition, efficiencies are gained where spaces such as administrative support space (copy/print rooms, reception areas and conference rooms) and other building amenities (break rooms, restrooms and food options) are shared, instead of being spread out and duplicated over multiple locations. By moving these programs into one new, purposely designed building, space and operational efficiencies are gained along with opportunity to accommodate projected future growth in the program needs. This reduces the likelihood that additional space will need to be built elsewhere in future.

The LJIC would consist of a seven-story above-grade building that would include two parking levels and five levels of UC San Diego Health Sciences and UC San Diego Extension uses. While not subject to City regulations, the project has been designed to be generally consistent with its surroundings. Located at a low point off of La Jolla Village Drive, the project's seven-stories (approximately 100 feet tall) are comparable in scale to several buildings in the project vicinity. The seven- to nine-story Rita Atkinson Residences (up to 87 feet tall) are located on the opposite side of La Jolla Village Drive, approximately 300 feet north of the project site. East of Interstate 5, the Hyatt Regency La Jolla at Aventine and adjacent office buildings range in height from 130 feet to approximately 200 feet. The VA Medical Center hospital, which is located approximately 0.3 mile north of the site and at a higher elevation, is also between approximately 110 feet to 130 feet in height. Further, the project design does not block any coastal views or other sensitive view corridors.

**Could more parking be located below grade to reduce the building height?**

The project reduced the overall building height by providing two levels of subterranean parking, which are the maximum levels below grade that are feasible due to the layers of fill and major utility lines and easements located beneath the property that make deeper excavation impossible.

**Could the amount of parking associated with the project be reduced by tapping into parking resources on the La Jolla campus?**

The project includes approximately 275 parking spaces, of which 69 will be accommodated in existing surface lots within the seven-acre complex, with the rest spread between the four levels of parking included as part of the proposed project. The onsite parking ratio of 2.5 stalls per 1,000 rentable square feet is a highly efficient ratio that accounts for parking availability of the adjacent campus.

The total of approximately 275 spaces has been provided after careful evaluation of the project's parking needs, accommodating for those working at this location, visitors participating in the research studies, visiting researchers and physicians and some students driving long distances to attend extension classes. This also accommodates the required accessible parking. The provision of 275 spaces (a parking ratio of 0.28 space per building occupant) is also appropriate given the project's proximity to public transit and the robust transportation demand management measures offered by the UC San Diego campus.

**Is this just the first phase of a multi-phased development of the rest of GPI's property with taller buildings?**

GPI intends to continue to own and operate the existing two-story office buildings currently located on the remaining site.

**What sustainability practices would be incorporated into the project?**

The project would comply with the UC Sustainable Practices Policy, which establishes goals in ten areas of sustainable practices: green building design, clean energy, climate protection, sustainable transportation, sustainable building operations, zero waste, sustainable procurement, sustainable food service, sustainable water systems, and sustainability at UC Health. The project would meet the UC San Diego sustainability standards for all new construction and is designed to achieve, at minimum, U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) LEED Silver certification. The university is currently studying whether the project could achieve LEED Gold. Per the UC Sustainable Practices Policy, the project would outperform current (2019) California Energy Code Title 24 Energy Standards by at least 20 percent.

The project has also been purposefully designed with specific architectural and interior features to be a high-performance, energy-efficient structure. The site orientation and façade treatments of the building intentionally balance solar exposure and heat gain and promote natural ventilation. Passive strategies, such as continuous horizontal shades, are designed to shade the windows on the south façade. The introduction of solid concrete areas as well as vertical shading strategies on glazing would be implemented on the building façades. Each office level would integrate multiple multi-slide exterior door exterior systems to allow fresh air in and potential cross-ventilation for

full-floor users. The passive sustainable strategies are proposed to be accompanied by an efficient variable refrigerant flow (VRF), mechanical system with increased outside air ventilation to ensure thermal comfort and highly efficient energy performance. Sustainable features that are anticipated to be incorporated into the project design are also outlined in Section 2.3.4 of the Draft EIR.

### **What would the impact of lighting be on the adjacent neighbors?**

The project would comply with the UC San Diego Outdoor Lighting Policy and Outdoor Lighting Design Guidelines that require the use of focused and shielded outdoor lighting, discourages upward lighting and prohibits lighting for landscaping or decorative purposes after 10:00 p.m. The following UC San Diego Outdoor Lighting Design Guidelines would be incorporated in all or in part to minimize impacts from glare from new buildings: windows would use “clear vision” glass to minimize glare and reflectivity; anti-reflective coating would be used in all windows; a variety of window types would be provided such as low emissivity (i.e., energy efficient) insulated glass, spandrel glass, and window glazing; and avoidance of repetitive bands of reflective windows that could result in a substantial source of new glare to off-site areas or travelers on adjacent roadways.

Refer to Section 3.1, Aesthetics, in the Draft EIR for additional information on lighting included as part of the project. As discussed in this section, neither construction nor operation of the project would result in impacts related to light and glare.

### **What is the project schedule?**

The project will be considered for approval by the Regents of the University of California at their May meeting (see below).

Demolition, grading and excavation, site improvements and building construction are anticipated to begin in mid-2021, shortly after all applicable approvals and permits are obtained from the required permitting agencies and approval bodies and the property is transferred to The UC Regents’ ownership.

### **What is the project approval process?**

The Regents of the University of California is the “lead agency” and will have the principal responsibility for considering and approving the proposed project. The project’s design, environmental compliance with CEQA, and lease terms will be presented to the UC Regents at their May meeting. The Regents will review the project details, including the sale, deed and lease terms; building design; analysis and mitigation measures presented in the EIR; and public comments provided during the EIR review period prior to issuing their decision on design and environmental approval. Regents meetings are open to members of the public to attend and provide comments.

### **How will you be evaluating impacts of the project? What opportunities will the public have to review your findings and provide feedback?**

An EIR was being prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The EIR process was initiated in November 2020 with a 30-day public scoping period, during which UC San

Diego solicited input from interested parties and other agencies on the scope and contents of the EIR via email and mail. A public virtual meeting was held on December 7, 2020 to discuss the project and solicit feedback. Subsequently, a Draft EIR was released for a 45-day public review period extending from February 5 to March 22. A virtual public hearing was also held on February 25, 2021.

Following review of comments received on the Draft EIR, the university prepared the Final EIR, which includes responses to public comments on the Draft EIR. The Final EIR is available at <https://blink.ucsd.edu/facilities/real-estate/ljic.html>.

**How are construction impacts identified in the EIR going to be mitigated?**

The EIR discloses that potentially significant impacts related to energy (use of fossil fuels) and noise (vibration-producing construction equipment) could occur during project construction. To address these impacts, two mitigation measures are proposed. As described in Section 3.3, Energy, of the EIR, the project's construction contractor would be required to reduce energy use by utilizing the most fuel-efficient equipment available, limiting worker commute trips via carpooling and/or using public transit, and minimizing the total number of haul trucks trips by using trucks with larger capacities. As described in Section 3.7, Noise, of the EIR, the project would also be required to conduct construction vibration monitoring to ensure maximum allowed vibration levels are not reached at nearby sensitive receptors, including the UC San Diego Health's Urgent Care location in La Jolla. Implementation of these measures would reduce construction-related energy and noise impacts to a less than significant level.