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 will house several programs from UC San Diego Health, UC San Diego School of Medicine, UC San Diego Academic Affairs and UC San Diego Extension to serve students, patients and the larger community. It will include approximately 110,000 square feet of office and educational space, a ground-floor café accessible to the public and 275 parking spaces.

This real estate venture is the result of a public-private partnership with GPI Companies (GPI). UC San Diego has had a presence on this site for decades, and the university currently leases approximately 90,000 square feet of GPI’s property on an adjacent site. The proximity to campus and the space provided by the planned facility is vital to the daily operations of the programs that conduct essential research, treat patients and provide educational services on the site.

Where is the La Jolla Innovation Center located?

The La Jolla Innovation Center will be situated on a one-acre property owned by GPI that is south of the UC San Diego main campus on the southwest corner of Villa La Jolla Drive and La Jolla Village Drive.

Rock Bottom Brewery, a Denver-based chain of brewpubs, recently closed its La Jolla location on this site, 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 connects directly to this site and provides safe and convenient access to the UC San Diego campus. The project site also lies strategically within a 1/3-mile of two Light Rail Transit (LRT) stations of the UC San Diego Blue Line, expected to begin service in late 2021, providing additional access in an area designated as a “Transit Priority Area” in San Diego’s regional plan.

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

The university must preserve its limited campus land for core functions such as classrooms, research laboratories, academic medical facilities and student housing. Staff from the VA Medical Center and a variety of UC San Diego departments currently occupy office space at this location, 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 to campus and the medical area is vital to programs that conduct essential research, treat patients and provide educational services on the site.
Why do the current university departments leasing space on the site need to move into a new building?

It was determined in January 2020 that the existing buildings being leased for these groups were non-compliant with UC seismic policy, and therefore renewal of long-term leases is not feasible for UC occupants. The UC Office of the President is only permitting a short-term extension to provide sufficient time for relocation of the UC San Diego campus departments. The new building’s design will provide university departments with a significantly more efficient use of space that allows for consolidation of uses.

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

The estimated cost to retrofit the existing buildings is approximately $36 million, a financially infeasible investment for 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.

How will this project be financed?

This project is being developed as a public-private partnership between the university and GPI. GPI will remain responsible for designing, financing, constructing, owning and operating the new 110,000 GSF, five-story Class ‘A’ office building with four levels of on-site structured 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, while the project also includes a separate retail space that would be occupied by a ground level café open to the public (non-university tenant).

What is the project schedule?

The project is currently in the environmental review process. 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.

What are the benefits of this project to the community?

The research 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 through UC San Diego Extension programs.
Patients in the community benefit from access to public transportation as well as convenient 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 La Jolla Innovation Center 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 and screening of above-grade parking.

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

An Environmental Impact Report (EIR) will be prepared pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Following initial background studies, the EIR process will initiate in November 2020 with a 30-day public scoping period, during which UC San Diego will solicit input from interested parties and other agencies on the scope and contents of the EIR via email, mail and a virtual meeting open to the public.

Following the public scoping period, a draft EIR will be prepared. In accordance with CEQA, interested parties and agencies will have an opportunity to review the draft EIR and provide input on the adequacy of its analysis and proposed mitigation during a 45-day review period, during which another virtual meeting open to the public will be provided. Public circulation is anticipated for early 2021. A final EIR will provide responses to all public comments.

**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 Regents will review the project, including the lease terms, building design and analysis presented in the EIR, prior to issuing design and environmental approval. Regents meetings are open to members of the public to attend and provide comments. It is anticipated that the project's design, environmental compliance with CEQA, and lease terms will be presented to the UC Regents for approval in mid-2021.

**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 FAQ and a place for members of the community to sign up for project updates and submit comments and questions.

**How will the project assess transportation considerations?**

The project will be assessed for transportation impacts in the project’s Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Pursuant to CEQA, a vehicle miles traveled (VMT) analysis will be prepared for the project 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.

In addition, UC San Diego has already committed to funding and implementing the installation of adaptive traffic signal controls ("smart signals") along La Jolla Village Drive, from I-805 to North Torrey Pines Road, and continuing the entire length of North Torrey Pines Road. It is anticipated that these traffic signal upgrades will be in operation and improve local traffic flow before the La Jolla Innovation Center is ready for occupancy.

**How much traffic is the LRT expected to alleviate when the UC San Diego Blue Line extension begins operation in late 2021?**

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.

SANDAG estimates that the three closest light rail stations to the project site (the VA Medical Center, the Pepper Canyon West Station, and the Nobel Drive Station) will have approximately 8,000 boardings (or 4,000 commuters) per day in 2030. The location of the project site in close proximity to these adjacent LRT stations will further alleviate traffic congestion on adjacent roadways.

**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 La Jolla Innovation Center conduct research, provide patient care, deliver academic instruction and interact directly with students. Their daily responsibilities cannot be performed remotely or by flexing office space, and they must be located in an office/educational setting adjacent to campus.

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

The university only acquires property to advance its strategic mission. When a property acquisition is of interest, the university engages in discussions with property owners, as was the case with the La Jolla Innovation Center. 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.