

**From:** [Board of Supervisors, \(BOS\)](#)  
**To:** [BOS-Supervisors](#)  
**Cc:** [Major, Erica \(BOS\)](#)  
**Subject:** FW: UCSF CPHP Comments - Sierra Club  
**Date:** Monday, January 4, 2021 5:03:22 PM  
**Attachments:** [2021-01-04 Sierra Club - UCSF - CPHP comments.pdf](#)

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**From:** Kathy Howard <kathyhoward@earthlink.net>  
**Sent:** Monday, January 4, 2021 4:11 PM  
**To:** Board of Supervisors, (BOS) <board.of.supervisors@sfgov.org>; Fewer, Sandra (BOS) <sandra.fewer@sfgov.org>; Haney, Matt (BOS) <matt.haney@sfgov.org>; MandelmanStaff, [BOS] <mandelmanstaff@sfgov.org>; Mar, Gordon (BOS) <gordon.mar@sfgov.org>; Peskin, Aaron (BOS) <aaron.peskin@sfgov.org>; Preston, Dean (BOS) <dean.preston@sfgov.org>; Ronen, Hillary <hillary.ronen@sfgov.org>; Safai, Ahsha (BOS) <ahsha.safai@sfgov.org>; Stefani, Catherine (BOS) <catherine.stefani@sfgov.org>; Walton, Shamann (BOS) <shamann.walton@sfgov.org>; Yee, Norman (BOS) <norman.yee@sfgov.org>  
**Cc:** Barry Hermanson <barry@hermansons.com>  
**Subject:** UCSF CPHP Comments - Sierra Club

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## San Francisco Group, SF Bay Chapter

Serving San Francisco County

January 4, 2021

Board of Regents  
University of California at San Francisco  
c/o Office of the Secretary and Chief of Staff to the Regents  
1111 Franklin St., 12th floor  
Oakland, CA 94607

Subject: Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan (CPHP)

Dear Board of Regents,

In December 2020, the Sierra Club held a meeting to discuss the Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan (CPHP) attended by representatives from UCSF and from the local community. The topics discussed at that meeting were transportation, housing, open space, and community participation in the planning process.

First let us say that we deeply appreciate the work that the staff of UCSF has done during the COVID-

19 pandemic and the benefit that they bring to the community. We also understand the need to update or replace facilities that may be at the end of their lifespan. We appreciate UCSF's goals to incorporate "planning elements that seek to improve mobility, increase campus housing, and create significantly more open spaces and greater community access." <sup>[1]</sup> After reviewing the CPHP planning and environmental documents and hearing from community members who have been involved with this project and with UCSF for many years, we are submitting the following concerns for your consideration.

### Transportation

UCSF proposes to add an average of 8,000 people to its daily population. UCSF estimates that this will mean adding approximately 3,000 automobile trips a day, about two-thirds of which would be people driving alone, with an additional 2,500 people taking public transportation.

This will place a substantial strain on an already over-burdened transportation system and in particular on the N Judah streetcar, the primary route to downtown for the entire northern part of the Sunset District. Pre-COVID, the N Judah streetcar route was one of San Francisco's most heavily used transit lines, with full-capacity trains that often didn't stop to pick up passengers at rush hour.

We commend UCSF for volunteering to donate approximately \$20 million <sup>[2]</sup> to San Francisco's Transportation Sustainability Fee program for transit improvements, an amount equal to that which would normally be paid by a private developer; however, it is unlikely that the proposed fee will be enough to accommodate the additional riders that will use public transit over the life of the project. It is also unclear how the current system could be expanded to handle the additional projected ridership.

Furthermore, projecting 3,000 automobile trips a day is not a sustainable approach to transportation. The increase in air pollution and greenhouse gases alone are of concern. The State of California has an ambitious goal of reducing greenhouse gasses, and an aggressive transit element in the UCSF proposal is necessary. Any increase in the amount of automobile traffic will also have a negative impact on the surrounding residential neighborhood.

*Better plans for and more extensive funding of public transit are going to be needed to keep people out of their cars and meet climate goals regarding greenhouse gases.*

### Jobs and Housing Balance

The project will bring approximately 4,100 new staff and students to the UCSF campus on Parnassus by 2030. However, only 134 units of housing will be developed by 2030. By 2050, another 1,000 jobs will be created and some additional housing units are planned, but only a fraction of what is needed. In addition, there is no housing planned for the workforce that will be needed to support the additional faculty and staff. It is likely that the result will be the further gentrification of the housing surrounding the UCSF campus as well as the loss of affordable housing for those living nearby through evictions, raised rents, or other pressures.

The Sierra Club is a strong advocate for social equity. A large portion of the existing workforce already cannot afford to live in San Francisco. We urge UCSF to better balance the amount of housing with the number of new jobs. We commend UCSF for increasing the percentage of affordable housing to 40% affordable, which is much closer to our preference for 50%. However, there is no indication when the affordable homes will be built other than a promise to do so by

2050. The need is now, not in 30 years.

Many workers commute daily from as far away as Tracy and Sacramento. Without a substantial increase in the workforce housing, this project will put more economic pressures on the staff and have an enormous negative impact on the local community. Pushing the workforce into extended commutes will result in significant increases in greenhouse gas emissions and undermine attempts to reduce the amount of climate change we are already facing in the future.

*The housing-jobs balance for this project should be re-evaluated for the impact it will have on housing not only for the current residents of the neighborhood and the City as a whole, but also for the new workforce.*

### Open Space – Shadows and Wind

We appreciate the emphasis on open space that is shown in the Programmatic EIR. The Sierra Club supports providing more open space for people who will be working on the new campus as well as for the local residents. Opening up the campus so that there is a connection between Mt. Sutro and Golden Gate Park ("Park to Peak") is also to be commended. However, there is a certain irony to this connection, because the proposed new hospital – the height of a 30-story-tall building - will have a negative impact in terms of wind and shadows on the open space as well as on Golden Gate Park.

A three-hundred-foot building is completely out of scale with this residential neighborhood. Because it is being placed on the side of a hill, the top of the building will be over 400 feet above the level of Golden Gate Park. This building will have considerable impacts in terms of shadows and wind.

The Sierra Club recognizes the importance of open space in urban areas. Parks are a vital resource not only for public health and recreation but also as necessary habitat for wildlife. Wildlife is struggling everywhere, and our cities are becoming one of the areas where they can eke out survival. As isolated parkland surrounded on three sides by urban development, Golden Gate Park is easily impacted by any negative changes in its environment. Even limited shadowing will have an impact on the health of the plant life and on the wildlife habitat as well as detract from the park experience for people, who use the park at all hours of the day.

The EIR illustrates shadowing in Golden Gate Park, including the Park nursery, an area that would be especially sensitive to the need for steady sunlight. In addition, two schools (including school yards open for the public as part of the City's shared Schoolyard Project) and an additional park and a playground, as well as part of the Reserve will be in shadow part of the time with the new project. The Sierra Club opposes any shadowing of our parks, and asks that this plan be modified so that the new buildings will not shadow our parks and have a limited shadow impact on other outdoor space in the neighborhood, such as backyards, which also provide habitat.

An increase in the wind in the area is also a concern. Parnassus Heights is already a windy area. The On-shore breezes sweep in from the ocean. Once the wind hits the proposed 300-foot-tall building, it will be intensified and bounce down into the open space and the surrounding neighborhoods. Although UCSF states that it will meet the City's requirement for wind hazards, that requirement is only for 26-mph winds that don't last more than one hour; this does not make for a comfortable park experience and most plants do not do well in a constantly windy environment.

Moreover, stating in the EIR that tall buildings can be built even if wind speed reduction strategies are "not feasible" or cost more money, [\[3\]](#) is essentially the same as saying that wind reduction does

not have to be done.

*A shorter building, wind baffles and other controls on all of the buildings to decrease windspeed, and a more stringent requirement for a lower wind speed throughout the project site should be part of the analysis of this project.*

In addition, the CPHP proposes adding outdoor heating elements to mitigate the wind conditions on the project. <sup>[4]</sup> This is not environmentally sustainable and should not be considered for this site.

*Instead, a building and open space design that naturally protects open space from wind and preserves natural sunlight should be supported.*

### Community input

The CHPC states, "We are excited to begin the transformation of Parnassus Heights, a process that will be guided by the continued collaboration and guidance of our stakeholders over many

decades". <sup>[5]</sup> However, many neighbors feel that the local community's suggestions have not been given serious consideration and that UCSF entered the public feedback process with a predetermined plan that was more or less unchangeable. The Sierra Club has signed on to the

Jemez Principles for Democratic Organizing, which support local determination for communities. <sup>[6]</sup>

*We suggest that UCSF go back to the neighborhood and include residents' ideas in the plans for the CPHP.*

### Conclusion

The Sierra Club understands the importance of up-to-date facilities for medical care; however, we would also like to put forward the idea that a healthy environment is important for the well-being of local communities and to combat climate change. A project of this magnitude needs to address its environmental and social equity impacts.

The project's massive increase in square footage, resulting in a much larger campus and patient/workforce/commuter population, as well as the addition of a 300-foot-tall building on a hillside in the middle of a residential community with parks, schools, and other open space, are major factors in the negative environmental impacts that this project will have on this residential section of San Francisco.

New developments should strive to balance new jobs with providing new housing and meeting social equity goals by having a large percentage of the housing be affordable. Providing sufficient affordable housing will also help reduce the greenhouse gas emissions by reducing the number of car trips needed by employees who will walk to work rather than commute long distances. In addition, the project will need an aggressive mass transit program in order to reduce single car use so that the project will not result in increased greenhouse gas emissions.

*The Sierra Club urges UCSF to rethink the parameters of this project and create a more environmentally-sustainable, equitable, and neighborhood-friendly project.*

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

***Barry Hermanson***

Barry Hermanson

On behalf of the  
San Francisco Group Executive Committee

cc: San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
San Francisco Planning Commission

Please see document for footnotes.

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[1] "Comprehensive Parnassus Heights Plan," Updated June 2020, Page 3.

[2] *SF Chronicle*, January 4, 2021.

[3] "OCSF CPHP, EIR". July 2020 page 4.1-47

[4] *"Design buildings and public spaces to address the local microclimate (wind, solar access, fog). Exterior spaces should function for year-round occupancy and include wind mitigation treatments, heating elements, and efficient lighting."*

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[6] [https://avanan.url-protection.com/v1/url?](https://avanan.url-protection.com/v1/url?o=http%3A//www.ejnet.org/ej/jemez.pdf&g=YWEwZjgwOWRkNTJiNjllZg==&h=ZjYzNjc5OTlkNzBkZW5zUyZGNlNjRjZmM1NmExZWU0NTY1OTM0YjI0YmQ1OTUwY2RhNGY1OGUyOTJlNWlyMQ==&p=YXAzOnNmZHQyOmF2YW5hbGpvcZmZpY2UzNjVfZW1haWxzX2VtYWlsOjQzYWNiNzgzOTAxZDg1MjE2NzZlZWE2ODc0YThjZmRhOnYx)

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1111 Franklin St., 12th floor

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[regentsoffice@ucop.edu](mailto:regentsoffice@ucop.edu)

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Sincerely,

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San Francisco Group Executive Committee

cc: San Francisco Board of Supervisors  
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