



Senate Resolution No. 2020/2021-076

A Resolution in Support of Residents of 1921 Walnut St. and Affirming Their Demands

Primary Sponsors:

Valerie Johnson, Transfer Student Representative, *Derek Imai*, ASUC External Affairs Vice President

Co-Sponsors:

Samuel Taplin, EAVP Local Government Relations Director; *Sarah Bancroft*, ASUC Senator; *Laurel Halvorson*, ASUC Senator Union and Labor Relations Co-Lead; *Alecia Harger*, EAVP Campus Organizing Director; *April Ma*, Deputy Director of Basic Needs under Senator Naomi Garcia, EAVP Organizing Intern;

Endorsing Organizations:

WHEREAS, The University is currently developing the Gateway Student Housing Project (also referred to as Anchor House). This proposed student housing project is a donor-funded, designed, and constructed student housing development for the Berkeley campus on Regent-owned land in downtown Berkeley¹; and,

WHEREAS, This project will create approximately 740-810 beds of apartment-style housing for transfer or upper-division students; and,

WHEREAS, originally, the Gateway Student Housing Project was designed to encompass a collection of five University-owned parcels while leaving the remaining privately-owned parcel on the block, 1921 Walnut Street, untouched; and,

¹<https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/anchor-house#:~:text=Anchor%20House%20is%20a%20transformative,funded%20student%20housing%20since%201942.&text=The%20certified%20LEED%20Gold%20building,individual%20bedrooms%20for%20772%20students>.

WHEREAS, in April 2020, residents of 1921 Walnut St. received communication from the Regents of the University of California informing them that the University had plans to undertake the redevelopment of the property and that their relocation would be required eventually; and,

WHEREAS, The tenants worry that the University of California Berkeley had the intention to displace them without direct community engagement or public feedback on the development of 1921 Walnut; and,

WHEREAS, on April 20, 2020, the tenants received notice of eligibility of relocation services and direction to third party relocation data collector, Autotemp². Autotemp was directed to collect personal information from tenants without any indication to where or how such data was intended for use; and,

WHEREAS, when, following the April 20, 2020 notice of potential acquisition, tenants requested additional information about the University's plans for the property from Capital Strategies, and were told to contact Autotemp, which couldn't answer any of their questions about the development; and

WHEREAS, the University administration failed to meet student and tenant demands to schedule a transparent conversation between themselves and the tenants, as they made clear in a letter sent to the tenants on August 31st, 2020 stating: "The University will not be holding in-person or virtual conversations regarding the property for the foreseeable future"; and,

WHEREAS, A broad coalition of community leaders including Berkeley Mayor Jesse Arreguin, Berkeley councilmember Sophie Hahn, Berkeley district four councilmember Kate Harrison, The Berkeley Rent Board, the Eviction Defense Center in Oakland, the Berkeley Tenants Union, and the Berkeley Architectural Heritage Association called for the University to refrain from tearing down 1921 Walnut Street and displacing its current residents³; and,

WHEREAS, the ASUC has consistently called for more student housing construction, but does not want that housing to come at the cost of displacing long-term residents, destroying cultural or historical landmarks or affordable housing units, especially those that are rent-controlled; and

²<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1uC0osIN6UfjLDp4Jbpao3LEdZos8UZWvASiQtRZG46U/edit?usp=sharing>

³ <https://www.save1921walnut.org/supporters>

WHEREAS, students outlined these concerns and demands in a letter sent to the Chancellor in October of 2020 with no resulting actions taken by the University administration to address the concerns and demands⁴; and,

WHEREAS, the rents for UC Berkeley on-campus housing are too high, upwards of \$2,200 per month for guaranteed transfer housing, and contribute to overall student loan debt;⁵ and,

WHEREAS, the average UC student loan debt is \$20, 500 as of 2014;⁶ and,

WHEREAS, of new transfer students in 2019 43% reported to “describe their social class when growing up as being either “Working-class” or “Low Income/poor,”⁷ and as of 2019 Undergraduate Pell Data showed 43% of transfer undergraduate students received the pell grant; and,

WHEREAS, rents and meal costs overall for UC Berkeley Residence Halls continue to increase, it is imperative that campus addresses affordability in their housing packages significantly--given that the Gateway Project is donor-funded⁸; and,

WHEREAS, market- or above market-rate housing like the projected rates of the Gateway Student Housing Project, do little to accommodate or suit the needs of majority low-income transfer students, nor solve an unaffordable housing crisis.

THEREFORE LET IT BE RESOLVED, that the ASUC condemns the University’s refusal to communicate and be transparent about its plans, as well as the University’s blatant disregard for the Berkeley community’s opposition to including 1921 Walnut St in the Gateway Student Housing Project; and,

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ASUC stands in solidarity with the 1921 Walnut Street Association and strongly opposes any student housing that comes at the cost of

⁴<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VFU5u1BwNUCpjkeQx0-xriBJdxLRUgwd9DFuoZUyCI/edit?usp=sharing>

⁵ <https://housing.berkeley.edu/rates>

⁶ <https://www.kqed.org/news/70585/csu-and-uc-tuition-hikes-over-time>

⁷ https://opa.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/2019_fall_snapshot_-_jan2020.pdf

⁸ <https://www.berkeleyside.com/2017/08/01/many-uc-berkeley-students-affordable-housing-elusive>, <https://housing.berkeley.edu/rates>. In 2017, a unit 1 double cost \$16,022 for an academic year. Now the cost is \$18,995

displacing long-term residents and/or demolishing rent-controlled properties that will not be replenished; and,

LET IT BE FURTHER RESOLVED, that the ASUC calls on the University to directly invest their savings from donor funding for the gateway project into lower rents for on-campus housing; and,

LET IT FURTHER BE RESOLVED, that as the elected representatives of our campus' 40,000 students, we demand that the University host a listening session with the tenants, build the Gateway Student Housing Project as originally designed, without demolishing 1921 Walnut Street, and preserve the tenancy of the current tenants of 1921 Walnut street throughout the planning, development, construction, and administration of The Gateway Student Housing Project.