

Section 2



PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT AT UCSB MUNGER HALL & OCEAN RD



Image Credit: UC Santa Barbara



Image Credit: Greystar

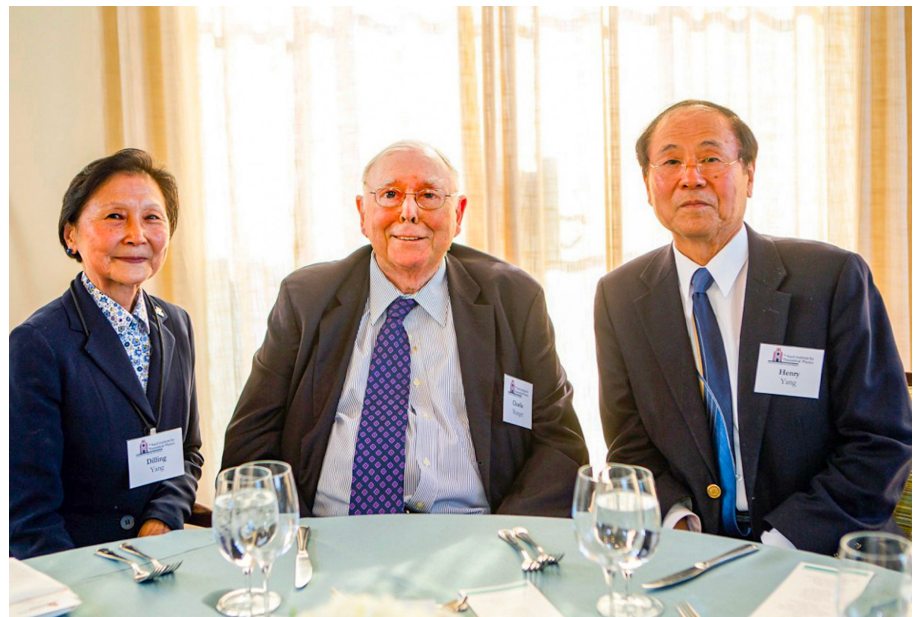


Image Credit: Daily Nexus File Photo

INTRODUCTION

This section introduces UCSB's Munger Hall and Ocean Road student, faculty, and staff housing projects. The former has since been canceled, and the latter is currently stalled in terms of construction. Both the Munger Hall and Ocean Road housing projects demonstrate the University's vulnerabilities in relying on public-private partnerships to deliver affordable housing.



Munger Hall's demise reflects the consequences of private philanthropy efforts that did not prioritize the needs of the campus community. Instead of student housing that was constructed in a reasonable timeframe, Munger Hall was a highly controversial social experiment in high-density housing led by the billionaire philanthropist Charles Munger. Similarly, the Ocean Road housing project intended for UCSB faculty and staff has stalled due to the withdrawal of the private developer Greystar.

Both projects highlight the outsized influence of private contributions and participation, which have outweighed the scale of public resources the university draws on to meet the housing needs of UCSB students, staff, and faculty.

As the University moves forward with its housing plans, it **must learn from the lessons of Munger Hall and Ocean Road to provide housing in a timely and effective manner**. Prioritizing public resources to cater to the needs of the UCSB community over private interests is essential. The University must engage with its campus community, gather input, and enhance transparency in terms of campus housing objectives and stakeholder involvement.

CAMPUS HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Why was Munger Hall Proposed?



Image Credit: *The Daily Nexus*

The Munger Hall and Ocean Road housing projects represent over a decade in university decision-making and planning through its public-private partnerships to provide campus housing.

In hindsight, Munger Hall was a nonviable housing proposal from its inception. UCSB needed to meet the 2010 Long Range Development Plan's (LRDP) housing requirements by adding 5,000 more beds for students by 2026.*

The Munger Residence Hall was proposed in 2016 following a \$200 million donation from recently deceased Berkshire Hathaway Vice Chairman and 'billionaire-philanthropist' Charles Munger.** The student housing project would have increased student on-campus housing by 50% and provide an additional 3,500 beds for students. It was expected to be completed by summer 2026.***

Source: **UCSB Daily Nexus*, July 7th, 2022, *Santa Barbara Independent*, June 14th, 2022

***Santa Barbara Independent*, March 24th, 2016

****UCSB The Current*, July 27th, 2021, *Santa Barbara Independent*, June 14th, 2022

CAMPUS HOUSING SOLUTIONS

Campus Construction & the Public-Private Partnership

Over the past twenty years the State of California's spending on the University of California has not kept pace with the state's growth in per-capita income. This means that UC Santa Barbara does not have existing funds on hand to increase student housing and relies on an inadequate patchwork of university system borrowing, campus borrowing, internal operations revenue, and private donations to construct new buildings.*

The projected costs to construct Munger Hall were expected to exceed 1 billion dollars. Charles Munger's \$200 million donation—20% of the budget—was to help finance the construction of much-needed student housing, **but the funds were contingent on using his design**. Charles Munger had some experience as a housing developer, but not architectural experience. Munger has funded architectural projects of his own on other campuses, such as the Munger Graduate Residences at the University of Michigan.**

Charles Munger was not required to seek the feedback of UCSB students or faculty when proposing his design. UCSB's administration set aside all other student housing plans when Munger offered funding in 2015.

Sources: *American Association of University Professors Official Website (2021).

**Santa Barbara Independent, March 24th, 2016.



Image Credit: UC Santa Barbara



Image Credit: Gallo Images / Getty Images

THE CONTROVERSY

The Public-Private Partnership & Munger Hall

“For many, Munger Hall embodied the bottom-line driven ethos of corporate philanthropism that often prioritizes quantity over quality; and the sad state of academia where, thanks to funding shortfalls, universities must bow to whoever can pick up the tab.” --Daniel Roche, The Architect’s Newspaper

Nicknamed “dormzilla,” by the *Santa Barbara Independent* in July 2021, Munger Hall would have been the “eighth-densest neighborhood neighborhood on the planet,” in housing 5,000 students in a single building that lacked windows, natural light, and required mechanized ventilation.* Architect Dennis McFadden resigned from his position on the Design Review Committee in October 2021, stating “from my perspective as an architect, a parent and a human being, I cannot give tacit approval to this project.”

McFadden discerned that no approval, vote, or input was allowed by the campus Design Review Committee despite Munger Hall’s untested design and lack of research and data that would be expected for a major departure in student housing standards. UCSB students, faculty, and other community members marched in protest on November 5th, 2021 to denounce Munger Hall’s problematic design.**



Image Credit: Mark Alfred, UCSB Daily Nexus

Sources:

**Santa Barbara Independent*, July 14th, 2021; *Bloomberg*, November 2nd, 2021; *CNN Business*, November 3rd, 2021.

**Website: imgur.com/a/frdrEll; *Daily Nexus*, November 5th, 2021.

FROM THE SOURCE

Dennis McFadden's Resignation Letter*

DENNIS MCFADDEN FAIA

Susannah Scott, Senate Chair, Professor, Chemical Engineering
Renee Bahl, Associate Vice Chancellor, Design, Facilities & Safety Services
Co-Chairs, Design Review Committee
University of California, Santa Barbara

October 24, 2021

Dear DRC Co-Chairs:

Following the Design Review Committee meeting on Tuesday, October 5, I submitted my resignation as an architectural consultant, with deep regret, to Julie Hendricks, UCSB Campus Architect.

I was disturbed by both the process and the content of the Munger Hall design presentation. It was clear the DRC was a mere formality: The design was described as 100% complete, approval was not requested, no vote was taken and no further submittals are intended or required. Yet in the nearly fifteen years I served as a consulting architect to the DRC, no project was brought before the committee that is larger, more transformational and potentially more destructive to the campus as a place than Munger Hall. This is the very project the committee exists to consider. That the DRC is prevented from influencing its design or approval is contrary to what I have understood to be the committee's purpose, as well as my role on it.

The basic concept of Munger Hall as a place for students to live is unsupportable from my perspective as an architect, a parent and a human being. I cannot give tacit approval to this project, something I believe I would be doing by continuing my role as a consulting architect to the DRC.

I have grown more disturbed by the project with greater distance from the presentation. In attempting to document an architectural critique of the design to submit to the committee - consistent with my role - my thoughts converged around three essential issues:

Internal Isolation

An ample body of documented evidence shows that interior environments with access to natural light, air and views to nature improve both the physical and mental wellbeing of occupants. The Munger Hall design ignores this evidence and seems to take the position that it doesn't matter: The building offers communal living spaces for multiple groups of 64 students, but at the cost of any connection to the exterior. The 8-person living units are sealed environments with no exterior windows in the shared space or in 94% of the bedrooms; the spaces are wholly dependent on artificial light and mechanical ventilation. The design team offered no research or data to justify the radical departure from student housing standards, historical trends, evidence-based design principles and basic sustainability principles. Rather, as the "vision" of a single donor, the building is a social and psychological experiment with an unknown impact on the lives and personal development of the undergraduates the University serves.

"As the 'vision' of a single donor, the building is a social and psychological experiment with an unknown impact on the lives and personal development of the undergraduates the University serves."--Dennis McFadden

*Munger Hall was promoted as a “visionary design” that would provide “better and more affordable for students.” A more sobering assessment is that it was an untested social and psychological experiment in high density housing.**

After five months of review in 2022, UCSB’S Academic Panel released a 200-page Faculty Senate Report, which concluded that the dormitory likely poses significant health and safety risks to its inhabitants – even in its scaled down version. The report denounced the building’s inattention to critical factors such as COVID-safe ventilation techniques, safer entry- and exit-ways and even the psychological toll on students in its design. The Academic Panel insisted that given the safety risks outlined, “it would be unwise for UCSB to proceed without significant modification to the design.”**

Sources: **The Current*, July 21st, 2021.

***Daily Nexus*, December 21, 2022.



Image Credit: Sammy Munoz, UCSB *The Bottom Line*

FACULTY & STAFF HOUSING

The Ocean Road Housing Project



Image Credit: Greystar



The Ocean Road Housing Project was first proposed in 2005 for UCSB faculty. It aligned with UCSB’s objectives to meet the 2010 Long Range Development Plan’s (LRDP) housing requirements by partially fulfilling the 1,840 housing units mandated in the LRDP by 2025.*

This faculty and staff housing project was to be constructed by Greystar Real Estate Partners, an international investment, management and real estate developer worth over 74 billion dollars. Greystar was recruited to develop the project in 2022.**

Sources: *Daily Nexus, December 6, 2021.

**Santa Barbara Independent, June 14th, 2022.

AFFORDABLE & LOCAL

Fulfilling the University's LRDP requirements

The Ocean Road project planned to build 540 units of “affordable” faculty and staff housing that included 180 for-sale townhome units and 360 rental units. This housing has the potential to attract and retain UCSB faculty and staff, reduce commuter traffic, and enhance the campus community by 1,874 units of new mixed-use faculty and staff housing by 2025.*

Construction on Ocean Road was delayed for over fifteen years due to efforts to adhere to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and locating a private developer to work with. It was originally expected to be finished by 2025.



Image Credit: UCSB Office of the Executive Vice Chancellor

Source: *Daily Nexus, December 6th, 2021.

PROPOSED LOCATIONS

Faculty & Student Housing Construction

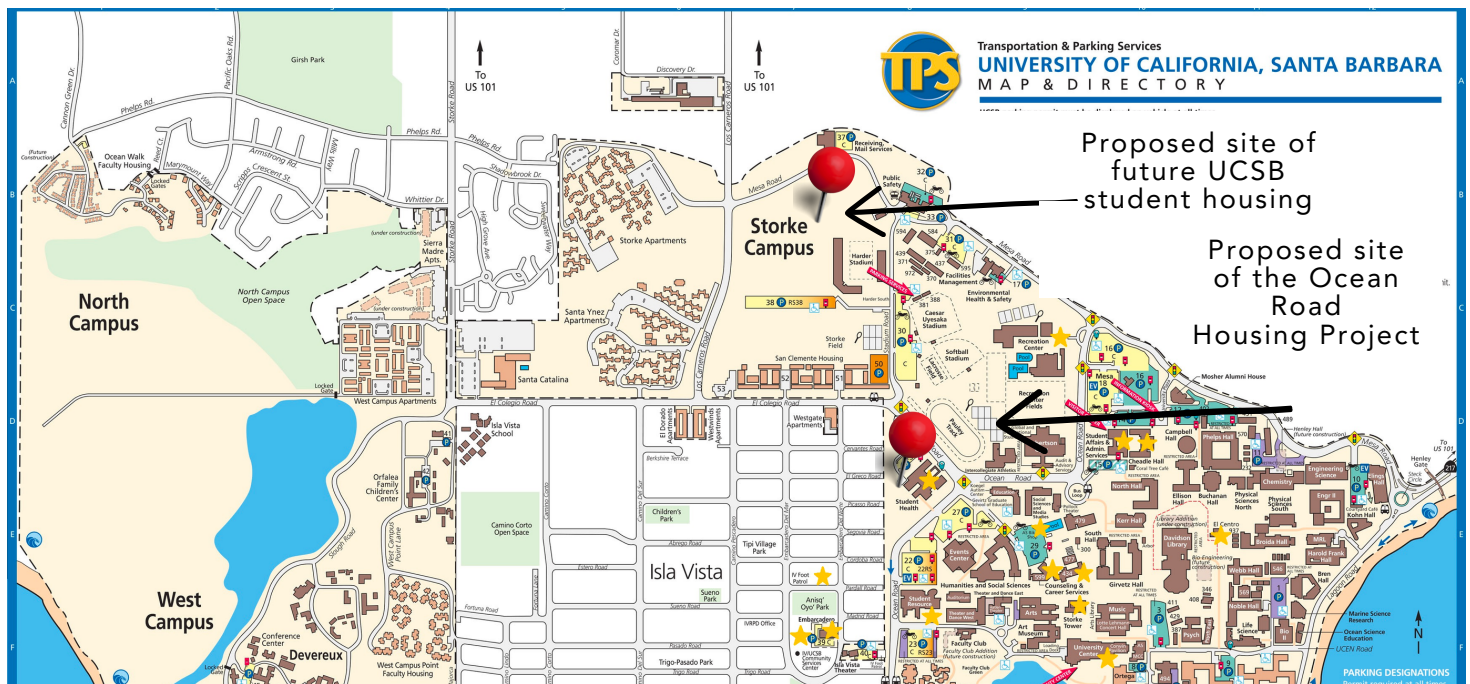


The Ocean Road Housing project is slated to be built along the Ocean Road street.

Campus student housing will be built near Mesa and Stadium Roads.



Image Credits: UC Santa Barbara



CURRENT STATUS

Munger Hall Canceled & Ocean Road Stalled



In the summer of 2023, the Munger Hall project was canceled and Greystar, the Ocean Road private developer, withdrew from the project.* UCSB will replace its site with a new student housing facility to be finished in Fall 2027. It is unknown when the Ocean Road project will resume.*

Details for both projects have not been publicly shared as to why Munger Hall was canceled or why the Ocean Road project has stalled. We do know that:

- *UCSB Campus Housing was bypassed in the development of Munger Hall and the Ocean Road Project, despite having been historically involved in campus housing projects.***
- *Munger Hall and Ocean Road were both developed by, and depended on, private-public partnerships.*
- *UCSB still needs to provide housing for 5,000 students and 1,840 faculty by the end of 2025 according to the LRDP.*

Sources: **The Real Deal*, August 8, 2023; *Santa Barbara Independent*, July 19th, 2023, UCSB Student Housing Development Official Website (2023).

***Santa Barbara Independent*, July 30th, 2023.



SYSTEMIC CONCERNS

The Blum Center student leader team finds that the failure of **MUNGER HALL AND OCEAN ROAD** **SYMBOLIZES THE CONSEQUENCES OF LARGER SYSTEMIC ISSUES** involving university housing, including years of **INADEQUATE PUBLIC INVESTMENT** in housing development, current **DEPENDENCE ON PRIVATE DONORS**, and the combination of **NEGLECT, POLITICAL RESISTANCE**, and **UNREGULATED MARKET FORCES** that have raised housing expenses to shocking and unsustainable levels, putting students and working-class residents of Isla Vista at risk of displacement.

THE LESSONS

Campus Consideration &
Transparency is Essential



The Munger Hall & Ocean Road Housing Projects signify the limits of the private-public partnership, including the overreliance on private sources of investment, and the need to leverage University resources on behalf of the campus community.

Forthcoming University student housing plans need to incorporate UCSB undergraduate and graduate student input, Faculty Senate review, Campus Housing oversight, and avoid the controversy of Munger Hall. Key campus stakeholders must be prioritized. Consistent and comprehensive updates that transparently identify the allocation of campus resources are also critical in order to foster trust that has been lost as a consequence of Munger Hall.

The construction of campus housing is a significant outlay of university resources and requires extensive planning and approvals that can take years to accomplish. However, we cannot let another decade pass without addressing our campus's most urgent and consequential problem: *ever-worsening housing scarcity*.

The University has an obligation to provide transparency through every step they take in developing campus housing. UCSB's community of students and faculty NEED and DESERVE answers on the housing question. At a minimum, there must be greater disclosure of the University's intentions and decisions.

FORTHCOMING HOUSING?

Campus Student Housing Post Munger Hall

On Oct 25, 2023, an email sent out to UCSB department representatives revealed two new student housing projects: **a new housing facility and an expansion of on-campus dormitory.**

The new housing facility, which is to replace the site of Munger Hall, is scheduled to open in Fall 2027; the dormitory expansion has no provided deadline yet.

This housing will also be overseen by a Student Housing Project Building Committee that consists of representatives from key campus auxiliaries and organizations, including Associated Students, the Graduate Student Association, and the Academic Senate Council on Planning and Budget, among others.

More information on this project can be found on <https://hdae.ucsb.edu/student-housing-development>.





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