



19 July 2021

Dear Dean Ackerly and Peter Gorman,

As the Albany Graduate Student Housing (AGSH) plans approach the UC Regents for approval, we are encouraged to see closer collaboration with the Xerces Society, and more thorough mitigation measures outlined in the Final EIR Addendum (specifically BIO-4). There are a few outstanding issues that we would appreciate more clarity on, so that we can fully support the project's approval at this time.

1. **Fifteen-year Memorandum of Understanding:** As detailed in the attached letter from farm Councilmember, Delia Carroll, secure tenure is essential for farm fundraising and stability.
2. **Collaboration on Village Creek & Hydrology:** We would like to collaborate on the next phase of planning around creek care. Most immediately, we hope to support mitigation measures that maximize infiltration of runoff to recharge groundwater. We understand that mitigation measures HYD-1 and HYD-2 ensure the use of *“bioswales, permeable surfaces, and other water retention and detention features capturing and treating stormwater”*. We have been concerned to see a die-off of established trees north of the Sprouts development, despite green infrastructure features. We want to understand how new and existing trees will be maintained in the interest of the Monarchs and other life at the farm. There are professionals at the City of Albany and UC College of Environmental Design that are excited to collaborate as well.
3. **Mitigation Measure Timeline:** We would like more information about the order of events. Will mitigation measures such as tree planting be completed *before* potentially harmful construction begins? Landscaping usually occurs at the end of a project, but in this case it must come first in order to protect existing habitat.
4. **Parking:** We request your support in arranging an agreement to use the Sprouts parking lot or the new AGSH parking lot for overflow parking on occasions that farm events require it, such as annual festivals and educational courses<sup>1</sup>. For event parking, we have historically used the parking area outside “Room 21” of the former Experiment Station for Biological Control, where the housing is to be built. Our annual festivals have been attended by up to 250 people at a time, and parking is essential for individuals with

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<sup>1</sup> “Annual events” include but are not limited to an Earth Day Celebration in the Spring, and a Harvest Festival in the fall. “Educational courses” include but are not limited to educational workshops like the BFI weekend short courses.

disabilities, for those commuting from areas outside bus routes, and for volunteers hauling materials to and from the events.



Students parking in the proposed AGSH site, for a Berkeley Food Institute course on Agroecology, June 2021

5. **Themed Housing for graduate students working on food, farming, and environmental issues (CNR/ESPM students):** Has the suggestion, brought forth by administrators of the College of Natural Resources, to incorporate themed housing been formally adopted?
6. **Fencing:** Will the farm community be consulted on plans to fence the south bank of Village (aka Quail) Creek, between San Pablo Ave and Jackson St? Our position on the fence is evolving as AGSH design is clarified.
7. **Educational Art:** The Xerces Society advises that we spread awareness about the Monarch's habitat through a public mural ([://www.xerces.org/blog/migrating-murals](http://www.xerces.org/blog/migrating-murals)).

In closing, we would like to again express our gratitude and support for the mitigation and enhancement initiatives laid out in the Althouse & Meade report, and final EIR addendum. At this historic juncture, we hope to encourage a deepening culture of **consistent and inclusive collaboration** between UC and the Gill Tract Farm Coalition. Our experiences of the planning and feedback opportunities offered to the farm community this year have highlighted some areas for improvement. For example, in future we would appreciate access to relevant UC engineers, planners, designers and environmental consultants, such as Althouse and Meade, who can inform the community's ability to meaningfully participate in stewardship. Tina Wistrom and Nick Mills have worked hard to support our participation, but have not had the necessary expertise to inform us about what is possible, and have often been working under very short timelines that do not allow adequate time for internal community consultation. This foments tension and distrust between the farm community and UC officials. We know we have work to do in this arena ourselves, and are grateful for the efforts made thus far.

We look forward to deepening in collaboration with UC, UC Village, the City of Albany, and local schools to make the farm and creek a restorative resource for all.

Sincerely,

The Gill Tract Farm Coalition

Working in consultation with  
The Xerces Society  
Sogorea Te' Land Trust  
and Albany City Councilmembers

