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UCSF, Hastings Law School teaming up on student housing

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Photo: Carlos Avila Gonzalez, The Chronicle

UC Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco

Future doctors and lawyers could be living side by side in a new Tenderloin housing complex under a deal hammered out between UCSF and UC Hastings College of the Law.

The two state schools have signed a letter of intent to collaborate on building and rehabbing upward of 1,200 housing units around the Hastings campus. It's a move meant to create a "university village" in the heart of the city while generating affordable accommodations for students in the nation's most expensive housing market.

Under the deal the schools would construct a new housing complex on the site of Snodgrass Hall, an academic building at 198 McAllister St. that would be torn down.

While the details are still being worked out, the idea is for the new building to wrap around onto 50 Hyde St., home to a 1950s-era annex to Snodgrass Hall. If the 10,000-square-foot Hyde Street site is included, the project could yield 970 student housing units.

In addition, the schools are looking at a joint renovation of McAllister Tower, a historic, 252-unit building at 100 McAllister St.

Snodgrass Hall is being replaced with an academic building at 333 Golden Gate Ave., a surface parking lot.

The schools said the project would provide housing for Hastings and UCSF graduate students, UCSF trainees (postdoctoral scholars and residents) and, potentially, faculty of the two UC campuses.

Integrate students

Hastings Chief Financial Officer David Seward said students from both schools would be integrated throughout the campus and that UCSF students would have access to Hastings' libraries, cafeteria and study areas. Hastings students would be able to use UCSF's shuttle system. The schools already have academic and administrative synergies, including the UCSF/UC Hastings Consortium on Law, Science and Health Policy.

"To have these two preeminent institutions linked functionally creates additional opportunities for academic partnerships," Seward said.

Hastings now houses 280 students in 252 units on-site, with potential demand for up to 100 more. UCSF, which leases housing to approximately 462 students and 423 trainees, has a shortfall of up to 900 units.

Talent goes elsewhere

The housing shortage is affecting every resident in this city, including university students. As a result, a growing number of top-quality students are choosing to study somewhere else, which creates a tremendous loss of potential talent for the city," UCSF Chancellor Sam Hawgood said.

The agreement comes a month after UCSF bought several parcels on the 500 and 600 blocks of Minnesota Street in the Dogpatch neighborhood. That project, which could accommodate about 1,000 units, is in the early stages.

"All of these projects are meant to chip away at the housing shortfall," said Clare Shinnerl, UCSF's associate chancellor for campus life services, who added that "every time off-campus rates increase, demand for our housing increases, too."

Over the years Hastings has been criticized for turning its back on the Tenderloin neighborhood by constructing buildings that lack street front windows or retail, which makes them less welcoming to pedestrians. The new projects are a chance to remedy that, Seward said, with street level retail along Golden Gate Avenue and Hyde Street.

“That’s a pretty grim corner,” Seward said.

Central location

A group of UCSF student representatives visited the site before the agreement was made and were pleased with the central location, according to the school.

“Housing is one of the biggest issues facing students in San Francisco, and it’s great that the two universities are coming together to find a mutually beneficial solution,” said Aaron Dolor, a fourth-year pharmaceutical student in the UCSF Graduate Division. “Having a UCSF hub downtown is monumental.”

If the project goes forward and receives the required approvals, Hastings would complete its new academic building at 333 Golden Gate in 2020. The first and larger housing building at 198 McAllister is anticipated to be completed in 2022, with renovations to 100 McAllister planned for completion in 2025.

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