

SDSU preparing for major mixed-use addition on south side

By JAMES PALEN, The Daily Transcript
Friday, June 13, 2014



A rendering of the mixed-use South Campus Plaza project at San Diego State University.

San Diego State University is expecting to start construction on its mixed-use South Campus Plaza project, formerly known as Linda Paseo Verde.

Planned to include retail, a parking structure and housing for more than 600 students, the project will fill space currently occupied by temporary modular classroom units immediately south of the SDSU Transit Center, between Hardy Avenue and Montezuma Road.

From this month, until site demolition in September, the project site will be cleared of the modular units and prepared for work, SDSU officials said.

"Before they were there, it was a parking lot, so there's not a whole lot of (demolition)," SDSU spokesman Greg Block said.

The project has been divided into two phases, with the first -- budgeted for \$142.7 million -- scheduled for completion by fall 2016.

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That first phase will include the construction of two residential buildings with ground-floor retail and an adjacent parking structure, which SDSU said will serve retail customers and partially fund the project through anticipated parking fees.

Although funding for the project will require the issuance of California State University's systemwide revenue bonds, SDSU said the project will not be paid for through tuition, university fees or state funds.

In addition to the revenue from parking, housing and retail revenue generated by the project will pay down all project costs, the university said.

The mixed-use buildings will combine for 225,000 gross square feet of residential and retail space, while the parking structure will provide 340 parking spaces across 122,000 gross square feet. Retail space will account for 35,000 square feet in the two mixed-use buildings.

The California State University Board of Trustees unanimously approved plans for the project at its most recent meeting this spring. No site plans have been drawn yet for the project's second phase, which Block said would add complementary housing and retail on the east side of College Avenue in the same vicinity.

The existing \$142.7 million budget for the project applies only to the first phase.

"A lot of that's going to be what the market dictates, what we need, depending on what the needs are for student housing and all that," Block said of Phase 2. "We might need more student housing or less student housing. We don't know."

SDSU has been trying to make itself less of a "commuter" campus, with studies showing that students often have higher grades and graduate faster when they live on campus. The university has set a goal of housing 10,000 of its students either on campus or within walking distance of campus in university-affiliated housing or nearby apartment complexes.

The \$53 million renovation of the Zura Hall student housing facility is also in progress.

Sundt Construction is serving as the South Campus Plaza Phase 1 design-build contractor, working with architects **MVE Institutional Inc.** and **SPGA Architecture and Planning**. The construction manager is **O'Connor Management Inc.**

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Negotiations with future tenants are ongoing for the retail component of the first phase, which will include a community market store, restaurants and other retail shops. The residence halls will have double-occupancy student rooms and apartments for residential education staff and visiting scholars.

They will also include student learning spaces, multipurpose rooms, faculty offices, study areas, lounges and a community kitchen. A mail room, bicycle storage area, laundry room and trash chutes are additionally planned.

Between the structures, SDSU will construct wide sidewalks and has plans for tree-lined streets, open space and bicycle amenities to make the area attractive to pedestrians and users of bicycles and transit.

SDSU said it aims for the project to be LEED Silver certified by the U.S. Green Building Council.