

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Elk Grove, CA

Thursday, October 15, 2020

Contact: Jake Rambo
email: JakeRambo@yahoo.com
cell: (916) 508-3725

**THE CNU (CALIFORNIA NORTHSTATE UNIVERSITY) PROJECT –
SERIOUS CONCERNS REMAIN: THE STONELAKE HOA JOINS THE
STONE LAKES NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE, SMUD, THE CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION, THE AUDUBON SOCIETY, AND
MANY LOCAL RESIDENTS IN RESPONDING TO THE DEIR**

Overview:

In responding to the Draft EIR (*Environmental Impact Report*), prepared for the CNU (California Northstate University) Hospital/Biotech project, serious questions have been highlighted—including the omission of substantial portions of the fundamental planning process, traffic safety issues, flooding concerns, and protections for migrating birds and bird habitat.

Alvin Cheung, CNU’s CEO & President, continues to insist the facility would be serving the community by 2022. But comments provided by government agencies, local organizations, and residents overwhelmingly demonstrate this project is not even ready for review by the Elk Grove Planning Commission and City Council. It is certainly not ready to begin moving forward. As highlighted in just the few quotes below, there are substantial gaps in the basic planning processes, as well as critical environmental issues that have not been addressed at all. All of the concerns raised must be thoroughly addressed before the City considers the project.

Most concerning, our community is being asked to shoulder the burdens of this project based on CNU’s “good faith” when: 1) the comments below are only a sampling of the numerous unresolved issues raised; 2) the economic and financial projections CNU has used to justify the project don’t seem to have any credible foundation; and 3) these comments do not include all of the additional safety and quality of life concerns voiced by local residents.

Collectively, this reflects a deeper ongoing challenge: project advocates don't seem to grasp the concerns of the local community, or the impacts, processes, and requirements of developing a project of this scale and magnitude.

Partial Compilation of Comments:

While the comments below are substantial, they represent only a fraction of the concerns submitted. All comments and comment letters are public, and can be found in their entirety here: https://www.opentownhall.com/portals/264/Issue_9336

**Hikmat Bsaibess, California Department of Transportation,
District 3, Office of Permits:**

“The intersection of Elk Grove Boulevard and the I-5 NB ramps exceeds the delay target... [the] U-turn [indicated]... for westbound (WB) traffic westbound (WB) traffic at Intersection... is a safety concern and should not be allowed.

Please clarify why a traffic analysis was completed for Phase 1... [and Phase 3], but not for Phase 2.

Since Project phasing timelines are not provided... it is not clear what horizon year and growth factor assumptions have been used for the future build scenarios.”

Bart McDermott, Refuge Manager, Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge:

“Numerous studies show collisions with structures is the second greatest cause of bird mortality estimated at between 365 and 988 million bird deaths in North America alone.

The DEIR acknowledges that the construction of a large 261 foot tall building within the Pacific Flyway migratory corridor in a rural setting surrounded by protected lands which taxpayers have spent over 18 million dollars will result in increased bird collisions solely based on the location of this project.

The DEIR acknowledges that mortality due to bird strikes is difficult to predict yet provides no analyze of local songbird populations to support its conclusion that these populations will not be impacted below ‘self-sustaining levels’...”

Sara Christian, SMUD, Office Tech – Government Affairs:

“More specifically, SMUD would like to have the following details related to the electrical infrastructure incorporated into the project description:

[1] SMUD has existing and proposed underground 12kV facilities on the project parcel(s)... that will need to remain or be replaced with an equivalent electrical system.

[2] A new overhead and/or underground line will be needed to provide the project with electricity.”

William Bianco, President, Sacramento Audubon Society:

“...to express our deep concern about the potentially significant impacts the California Northstate University Medical Center Project (Project) would have on local birds, including several regionally iconic and legally protected birds.

The EIR provides an inadequate baseline and impact assessment for...:

- 1. Adequacy of information disclosure from a lack of survey information regarding bird use and flight altitude in the Project area, particularly Stone Lakes National Wildlife Refuge (Stone Lakes NWR);*
 - a. Adequacy of impact assessment of helicopter strikes;*
 - b. Adequacy of mitigation for helicopter strikes;*
- 2. Adequacy of the impact assessment of regular, ongoing disturbance from helicopter flights directly over Stone Lakes NWR;*
 - a. Adequacy of mitigation for helicopter disturbance;*
- 3. Adequacy of information disclosure regarding bird collisions with the outsized 11-story hospital building.*

The EIR is insufficient to assess the environmental impacts of the Project. Sacramento Audubon encourages the City of Elk Grove to reject the Project based on the potential for multiple impacts to birds.”

Jan Smutney-Jones, NEST (a coalition of Elk Grove residents)

“...The area does not have Urban Level Flood Protection. There are no immediate plans to provide 200-year Urban Level Flood Protection... ingress and gross to and

from the project site are also inundated in 3-10 feet of water... in other words, the area will become a lake...

The DEIR offers no over-arching public policy reason for... allowing for the construction of essential facilities in the 200-year flood plain.

The DEIR states: ‘ To provide a 200-year Urban Level of Flood protection, approximately 4.5 miles of the Laguna West levee system would need to be raised by 3.5 feet. Does the City of Elk Grove plan [on that]?’

...the significant of Climate Change impact on flooding in [the proposed location] needs to be fully studied in the EIR.

According to documents submitted to Office of Statewide Health and Planning Development (OSHPD)... [the site] has serious soil stability problems associated with its unique design... EIR requires further analysis.”

Osha Meserve, Counsel for Stonelake Master Association:

“The DEIR for the Project fails to disclose, analyze and mitigate multiple admittedly significant impacts as required by the California Environmental Quality Act (Pub. Resources Code, § 21000 et seq. (“CEQA”)). This vast Project, consisting of a hospital, associated structures, as well as future laboratory and biotech development, would include the tallest building in Elk Gove, rising far into the City’s western skyline, which looks toward the Sacramento-San Joaquin River Delta.

The DEIR is an inadequate document... riddled with informational deficiencies and lacking in supporting evidence. The DEIR overlooks, dismisses, or downplays the Project’s significant impacts. Yet, even with the level of obfuscation in the DEIR, one glaring truth comes through – this Project is not right for this location. A 261-foot tall building should not be built adjacent to a wildlife refuge. A project requiring ten years of construction should not be developed in a residential neighborhood. Critical infrastructure like a hospital should not be developed in the 200-year flood plain. The Project’s design and location are the root of significant impacts that could likely be avoided in a different location.”