

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY

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July 21, 2009

The Honorable Tom Bates, Mayor of Berkeley
Members of the Berkeley City Council
2180 Milvia Street
Berkeley, CA 94704

Dear Mayor Bates and Members of the City Council:

I am writing to update you on the University of California's plans for housing the Helios research initiatives, dedicated to the exploration of new technologies for the carbon-neutral utilization of solar energy.

Prompted by input received from you and others in the community, and by information developed during the design and environmental review processes, the University has concluded that its objectives would best be served by housing these vital research initiatives, which were formerly proposed for a single, consolidated facility on the University's LBNL site, in two physically separate and independent buildings. As I will explain below, the two-facility solution would be mutually beneficial for the city and the University, due to the reduction of impacts, costs, and delays related to the single-facility concept.

We are now discussing the revised plan with state officials in order to secure approval for this change in configuration, but with no attendant change in the overall construction costs that would be partially funded by a California lease-revenue bond authorized by the legislature and the Governor in 2007. If that approval is granted, the University will then ask the Board of Regents for permission to proceed with design and site planning. Given the urgent need for new, sustainable sources of energy, the enthusiastic support of the East Bay's municipal leaders for our region's burgeoning "Green Corridor", the jobs and economic activity that would be generated by construction, and the reduced impacts of the revised plan, we are hopeful that construction of these facilities can commence as soon as possible.

The larger of the two buildings, now referred to as Helios West, is proposed to house the Energy Biosciences Institute and complementary programs of the UC Berkeley Department of Bioengineering. The primary research objectives in this facility would include the development of a new generation of carbon-neutral biofuels, as well as a thorough examination of their potential environmental, social, and economic impacts. The building would encompass roughly 75% of the space formerly planned for the single, consolidated facility.

The proposed location for Helios West is on a portion of the University-owned site along Berkeley Way between Shattuck Avenue and Oxford Street (the former Department of Health Services site). The

existing, vacant building now on the site would be demolished prior to construction. This location is close to the many bioscience programs in the northwest quadrant of the UC Berkeley campus, providing the biofuels programs with broad and important research synergies. It would also improve access for students and faculty, who would be able to walk to and from the central campus.

Helios West is proposed to encompass approximately 64,000 feet of usable interior space, consistent with the amount of development anticipated in the UC Berkeley 2020 Long Range Development Plan, and well within the site's capacity as envisioned in the city's pending downtown area plan. The precise location of the facility will be informed by campus and city land-use goals, and by site-specific design and environmental analyses. It should also be noted that location of the facility on the proposed site would not preclude the University from building a community health campus on the rest of the site, consistent with the downtown area plan objectives. In fact, we believe that growing interest in the impact of climate change on human health creates a new, compelling reason to co-locate these energy and public health research facilities.

The development of a second, smaller facility to house new photovoltaic and electrochemical solar energy systems is envisioned for a location on University of California land at its LBNL site. The reduced size of Helios East would allow for much more siting flexibility, so a location can be selected that avoids or significantly minimizes environmental and aesthetic impacts. Four candidate sites are being investigated as potential locations and planning for the building itself will commence once the site selection process is completed.

I firmly believe that effective, sustainable, and socially responsible solutions to global climate change will rely on robust partnerships that marshal the combined forces of the public, private, and academic sectors. I am also convinced that constructive collaboration is a necessary ingredient for success on the local level as much as it is nationally and internationally, and we will proceed with that goal in mind. We will keep you updated on developments and look forward to working with you, other relevant city officials, and the community as planning and analytical work proceeds.

With warm regards.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bob".

Robert J. Birgeneau

cc: Phil Kamlarz, Berkeley City Manager