



## Public Notice

### Preparation of an Environmental Impact Report

**November 2, 2022**

**Project Title:** Cal Softball Field Renovation Project

**Lead Agency:** The Regents of the University of California (University of California)

**Project Location:** University of California, Berkeley, within the Hill Campus West, on Centennial Drive, east of Stadium Rim Way and the Witter Rugby Field, west of the Strawberry Canyon Pool and Haas Clubhouse

**County:** Alameda County

Notice is hereby given that the University of California, Berkeley will prepare an Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the University of California, Berkeley (University or UC Berkeley) Cal Softball Field Renovation Project (project or proposed project). The University, acting as the Lead Agency, has determined that the proposed project could result in potentially significant environmental impacts and that an EIR is required pursuant to the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

### Project Description

The University proposes to renovate and improve the existing Cal Softball Field (Cal Softball Field or field), which is the home for the UC Berkeley Intercollegiate Athletic (IA) Women's Softball Program. The project site is located within the Hill Campus West of UC Berkeley and the Strawberry Canyon Recreation Area at the site of the existing Cal Softball Field. The project would preserve and upgrade the existing softball facility to meet modern safety and competition standards for the IA Women's Softball Program and Recreational Sports Intramural softball players, as well as support campus compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 (20 USC 1681 et seq.) (Title IX) through the provision of equitable athletics facilities for male and female student athletes. The use of the softball facility would remain largely similar to current uses, primarily providing additional spectator and player amenities and seating for up to 1,511 spectators, up from approximately 1,340 spectator seats under existing conditions. The primary physical changes associated with the project would include providing additional permanent spectator seats in place of temporary bleachers, a press box, spectator concourse, replacement competition-grade lights, restrooms, public address system, expanded playing field dimensions, team and locker rooms, a ticket booth, improved training facilities (e.g., batting cages), entry plaza, landscaping, sustainable design features, access and bus stop improvements, and utilities (refer to Attachment A, Figures 1–3). The proposed project will remove approximately 85 parking spaces and retain approximately 25 parking spaces in the existing Witter Lot. The proposed project also

includes the implementation of applicable UC Berkeley's continuing best practices (CBPs), a game-day transportation demand management (TDM) plan, and a project-specific wildfire management plan.

The use of the proposed project would be similar to the use of the existing softball field. During the fall, the facility would be primarily used for practices, intramural play, campusclinics, and other occasional daytime competitions. During the spring semester, the facility use would be comparatively more active, with up to 21 regular season softball events and up to 4 post-season events, as well as practices and intramural sports and activities when not scheduled for IA use. Overall, competitive games would increase somewhat from 15 to 20 under existing conditions to up to 25 with the proposed project. During the summer, the facility would not be used for competition, but would be used for intramural recreation, as well as Rec Sports summer camps, similar to existing uses. Additional project details are provided in Attachment B, Initial Study, for the project.

### **Probable Environmental Effects of the Proposed Project**

UC Berkeley has determined that an EIR will be prepared for the proposed project. Therefore, as allowed under Section 15063 of the CEQA Guidelines (Title 14 Cal. Code Regs.), UC Berkeley has prepared an Initial Study to help determine if the project may have a significant effect on the environment (see Attachment B). As required, the EIR will focus on the significant effects of the proposed project and will document the reasons for concluding that other effects will be less than significant. Where significant or potentially significant environmental impacts are identified, the EIR will also discuss feasible mitigation measures to avoid or reduce these impacts, and a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives.

#### **Aesthetics**

The EIR will assess potential impacts to scenic vistas and resources, existing visual character, and light and glare that may occur due to the construction and operation of the renovated softball field. The proposed softball field lighting will be assessed with a general illumination study to evaluate potential impacts from light and glare to the surrounding areas, which will be evaluated in comparison to existing conditions. The EIR would also rely on photo simulations of the project to assess potential impacts on views from key observation points.

#### **Biology**

Potential impacts to biological resources could occur as a result of the proposed construction and operation of the softball field project. The EIR analysis will address both direct impacts from habitat removal and indirect impacts from noise and lighting and other disturbances, as a result of the proposed construction and operation of the softball field project. A biological resources assessment for the proposed project and EIR will be conducted, which will include a review of current biological resource databases. The EIR will also rely on an updated general survey of the biological study area for vegetation communities, plant and wildlife species, and potential special-status species occurrences and habitat. Results of the project-specific literature review and field survey will be incorporated into the EIR analysis.

#### **Cultural and Tribal Cultural Resources**

Potential impacts to cultural and tribal cultural resources, and paleontological resources could occur as a result of proposed construction and ground disturbing activities. It is possible that cultural resources could be present within the project site. As such, these impacts will be assessed by conducting a California Historical Resources Information Systems (CHRIS) records search update and conducting a field survey of the project

site. Results of the records search and field survey will be incorporated into the EIR analysis. Additionally, potential indirect off-site impacts on the adjacent Panoramic Hill National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) listed historic district will also be addressed in the EIR.

#### Noise

Potential temporary construction and demolition noise and vibration impacts to sensitive receivers (residences) in the vicinity of the proposed project will be assessed based on noise measurements taken at the project site and review of construction phases and equipment usage. Noise impacts from operation of the renovated softball field will be analyzed using a 3-D sound prediction model to quantify combined noise levels at the closest noise-sensitive uses from softball game activity, spectator participation, and public address system use. Results of the noise analyses will be incorporated into the EIR analysis.

#### Transportation

Potential construction and operational transportation impacts of the proposed project will be assessed with a qualitative transportation assessment for the surrounding street network in the project area. Impacts associated with trips generated from operation of the renovated softball field will be assessed in terms of vehicle miles traveled. In addition, the EIR will assess the project site plan for vehicular, pedestrian, bicycle, and transit circulation against campus and/or City transportation infrastructure plans and policies. The EIR will also assess the project to determine whether impacts to emergency vehicle access would occur.

#### Wildfire

To assess the potential wildfire impacts associated with construction and operation of the project, the EIR will include a review of publicly available fire hazard and fire history information from CAL FIRE, the City of Berkeley, UC Berkeley, and the County of Alameda, as well as emergency response or evacuation plans for the project area. The analysis will summarize emergency response resources and the existing fire environment in the project area, including slopes, climate/weather, fire history, and fuel sources on and surrounding the project site. The EIR will review applicable federal, state and local plans, policies and regulations governing wildfire hazards and will determine whether construction and operation of the project is in compliance with these plans and regulations. The EIR will also evaluate and consider the project-specific wildfire management plan being prepared for the project.

#### Impacts Not Found Significant

The EIR will also explain why other effects were determined to not be potentially significant and were not discussed in detail in the EIR. Based on Appendix B, Initial Study, these topics are likely to include Agricultural and Forestry Resources, Air Quality, Energy, Geology and Soils, Greenhouse Gas Emissions, Hazards and Hazardous Materials, Hydrology and Water Quality, Land Use and Planning, Mineral Resources, Population and Housing, Public Services, Recreation, and Utilities and Service Systems.

#### Other Sections

The EIR will include additional topics as required by the CEQA Guidelines including growth inducement, cumulative impacts, and alternatives. The EIR will describe and evaluate a reasonable range of potentially feasible alternatives to the proposed project that would feasibly attain most of the proposed project's basic objectives while avoiding or substantially lessening any significant effects of the proposed project. The "No Project" alternative will also be evaluated as required by CEQA.

## **Project Comment and Scoping Session**

UC Berkeley requests comments and guidance on the scope and content of the EIR from interested public agencies, organizations, and individuals. With respect to the views of Responsible and Trustee Agencies as to significant environmental issues, UC Berkeley needs to know the significant environmental issues and reasonable alternatives and mitigation measures that are germane to each agency's statutory responsibilities in connection with the proposed project.

Due to time limits mandated by State law, your response must be sent at the earliest possible date, but no later than the close of the Notice of Preparation (NOP) review period at 5:00 p.m. December 5, 2022. If you submit comments on the scope of the EIR, you will automatically be added to UC Berkeley's distribution list to receive future notices and announcements about the environmental review process for this and all other capital projects. If you do not wish to submit comments on the scope of the EIR but would like to be added to the university's mailing list, you can subscribe here: <https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/subscribe>.

**Responses to this NOP must be received by 5:00 p.m. on December 5, 2022.** Please e-mail or send your written response to:

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Please include "Cal Softball Field Renovation EIR" as the subject. Public agencies providing comments are asked to include a contact person for the agency.

UC Berkeley will host an online public scoping session to receive public comments on the scope of the EIR. The scoping session will be held exclusively through Zoom videoconference. **The public hearing will be held on November 17, 2022 starting at 7:00 PM.** Because of time restraints, there will be a time limit of two minutes for all public comments.

For instructions to access and participate in the Zoom meeting by telephone or from a PC, Mac, iPad, iPhone, or Android device, please visit: <https://capitalstrategies.berkeley.edu/public-meetings>

If you need to review a paper copy of this notice or have questions regarding this project and associated environmental review, please contact Shraddha Navalli Patil, Senior Planner, Physical & Environmental Planning, UC Berkeley, at [planning@berkeley.edu](mailto:planning@berkeley.edu).

**Download:** [Notice of Preparation with Attachments A-Figures and B-Initial Study \(PDF\)](#)

**Project Inquiries:** (510) 495-5786 or [planning@berkeley.edu](mailto:planning@berkeley.edu)