

3.9 POPULATION AND HOUSING

This section describes the existing population, employment, and housing supply for Cal Poly Humboldt, the City of Arcata, the County of Humboldt, and the Student Housing Project's potential contributions to population growth, employment opportunities, and housing as a result of project implementation. Potential growth-inducing impacts of the project are further addressed in Chapter 6, "Other CEQA Considerations."

No comments regarding population and housing were received in response to the NOP.

3.9.1 Regulatory Setting

FEDERAL

No federal plans, policies, regulations, or laws are applicable to the provision of population and housing for the project.

STATE

State California Environmental Quality Act Guidelines Section 15131

State CEQA Guidelines Section 15131 provides that economic or social information may be included in an EIR, but those economic or social effects shall not be considered significant effects on the environment. In an EIR, the lead agency is responsible for researching economic or social changes resulting from a project, which may eventually lead to physical changes in the environment. These economic or social changes can be used to determine the significance of physical changes on the environment.

Government Code Section 65040.12

Government Code Section 65040.12(e) defines environmental justice as "the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the development, adoption, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws and policies."

Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act

The Cortese-Knox-Hertzberg Local Government Reorganization Act Section 56668(o) defines environmental justice as the fair treatment of people of all races, cultures, and incomes with respect to the location of public facilities and the provision of public services. Environmental justice addresses issues concerning whether an activity could expose minority or disadvantaged populations to proportionately greater impacts compared with those borne by other individuals.

California Education Code

The California Education Code contains several provisions mandating CSU enrollment access levels, to ensure the CSU system accommodates all eligible California resident students. Section 66202.5 of the Education Code states the following:

The State of California reaffirms its historic commitment to ensure adequate resources to support enrollment growth, within the systemwide academic and individual campus plans to accommodate eligible California freshmen applicants and eligible California Community College transfer students, as specified in Sections 66202 and 66730.

The University of California and the California State University are expected to plan that adequate spaces are available to accommodate all California resident students who are eligible and likely to apply to attend an appropriate place within the system. The State of California likewise reaffirms its historic commitment to

ensure that resources are provided to make this expansion possible and shall commit resources to ensure that students from enrollment categories designated in subdivision (a) of Section 66202 are accommodated in a place within the system.

Similarly, Section 66011(a) of the California Education Code provides that all resident applicants to California institutions of public higher education, who are determined to be qualified by law or by admission standards established by the respective governing boards, should be admitted to either (1) a district of the California Community Colleges, in accordance with Section 76000; (2) the California State University (CSU); or (3) the University of California.

Section 66741 of the California Education Code requires acceptance of qualified transfer students at the advanced standing level.

California Housing Element Law

California's Housing Element Law (California Government Code Sections 65580 through 65589.8) recognized that early attainment of decent housing and a suitable living environment for every Californian, including farmworkers, was a "priority of the highest order." The law was enacted to ensure that counties and cities recognize their proportionate responsibilities in contributing to the attainment of state housing goals, to establish the requirement that all counties and cities adopt housing elements to help meet state goals, to recognize that each locality is best capable of determining what efforts it is required to take to contribute to attainment of state housing needs, and to encourage and facilitate cooperation between local governments to address regional housing needs. Section 65583 states "the housing element shall consist of an identification and analysis of existing and projected housing needs and a statement of goals, policies, quantified objectives, financial resources, and scheduled programs for the preservation, improvement, and development of housing" and "the housing element shall identify adequate sites for housing, including rental housing, factory-built housing, mobile homes, and emergency shelters, and shall make adequate provision for the existing and projected needs of all economic segments of the community."

Regional Housing Needs Plan

California General Plan law requires each city and county to have land zoned to accommodate a fair share of the regional housing need. The share is known as the Regional Housing Needs Allocation and is based on a Regional Housing Needs Plan developed by councils of government. The Humboldt County Association of Governments (HCAOG) is the lead agency for developing the Regional Housing Needs Plan for seven cities, including the City of Arcata, and County of Humboldt. The Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan is accounted for in the current housing need projections developed by HCAOG as part of the 2019 Humboldt County Regional Housing Needs Assessment Plan (HCAOG 2019). If approved, the student housing complex would be included as part of future housing need projections developed by HCAOG.

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan

The *Humboldt State University 2004 Master Plan* is a strategy for modifying the Cal Poly Humboldt campus to accommodate anticipated growth, including both in terms of student enrollment and academic programming. The Master Plan accommodates anticipated increases instructional facilities and in the administrative and office space needed to accommodate increased faculty and staff. As part of the 2004 Master Plan, specifically within Chapter 4, "Illustrative Plan," housing requirements and guidelines for identifying sites for new housing facilities are provided, as well as reinforcing the need for additional student housing. The current Master Plan was approved in 2004 and anticipated an increase in student enrollment from 7,092 to 12,000 full-time-equivalent students (FTES) over the next 30 to 40 years (Humboldt State University 2004). Cal Poly Humboldt was also recently designated the third Cal Poly university in the CSU system.

LOCAL

Cal Poly Humboldt is part of the CSU, which is a statutorily and legislatively created, constitutionally authorized State entity. As explained in the “California State University Autonomy” section in Chapter 3 of this EIR, the CSU is not subject to local government planning and land use plans, policies, or regulations. Nevertheless, in the exercise of its discretion, Cal Poly Humboldt does reference, describe, and address local plans, policies, and regulations where appropriate and for informational purposes. This evaluation is also intended to be used by local agencies for determining, as part of their permit processes, the project’s consistency with local plans, policies, and regulations.

City of Arcata General Plan

The City of Arcata General Plan Land Use Element and Housing Element provide policies to address population and housing within the city and to guide sustainable development that meets their population and housing needs (City of Arcata 2008a, 2019). The following policies apply to the project.

Land Use Element

- ▶ **Policy LU-2.** Allow for a mix of housing types and densities to meet the physical, social, and economic needs of residents, with new and converted housing designed to be compatible with the established neighborhood character.

Housing Element

- ▶ **Policy HE-1.** Support innovation and creativity in sustainable construction techniques, energy efficient design, property conveyances, and types of development. Condominium, Community Land Trusts, cooperative and co-housing, developments, and planned developments shall be encouraged.
- ▶ **Policy HE-6.** Provide opportunities for infill development of vacant and re-developable properties in a way that allows for gradual, rather than drastic, changes from surrounding development density or type. Design features such as gradual increases in building height, functional open space, well-designed landscaping and natural vegetation, breaks in wall and roof lines, and building separations.
- ▶ **Policy HE-7.** Encourage a wide range of public and private investment to help meet the City’s Housing Goals.
- ▶ **Policy HE-12.** Encourage Humboldt State University to maintain, rehabilitate or replace existing campus housing, develop additional on-campus housing, and to work with the City and private developers to ensure that there are adequate and appropriate housing opportunities for Humboldt State University students and staff.
- ▶ **Policy HE-13.** Support affordable housing and greenhouse gas emissions reduction by prioritizing high-density, mixed-income, infill housing projects that improve alternative transportation infrastructure. Affordable housing and infill projects that include public and/or private infrastructure for public transit, bike and other ride share programs, electric vehicles, and other transportation demand management strategies or alternative transportation modes will receive incentives including deferred fees and reduced development standards, including but not limited to reduced parking, setbacks, or landscaping requirements.

The City’s 2019-2027 Housing Element specifically identifies the project site as an opportunity site for infill redevelopment with housing (City of Arcata 2019).

City of Arcata Land Use Code

The City of Arcata’s Land Use Code establishes zones for residential development and contains development standards to ensure orderly housing development that is consistent with the character of existing residential neighborhoods (City of Arcata 2008b). The following chapters apply to the project.

- ▶ **Chapter 9.24 RH:** The RH zone is applied to areas appropriate for various types of multi-family housing, including duplexes, townhouses, and apartments.
- ▶ **Chapter 9.72 PD:** Provide a method whereby land may be designed and developed as a single unit by taking advantage of modern site planning techniques thereby resulting in a more efficient use of land and a better living environment than is otherwise possible through strict application of the development standards. Ensure that approved development meets high standards of environmental quality, public health and safety, the efficient

use of the City's resources, and the purpose, intent, goals, policies, programs, and land use designations of the General Plan, the Local Coastal Program, and any applicable specific plan.

3.9.2 Environmental Setting

POPULATION AND POPULATION GROWTH

As part of its regional planning functions, HCAOG develops regional population, employment, and housing forecasts for the county and the individual cities and communities within the county. The housing elements of the City's and County's respective general plans each incorporate projected population and housing estimates from HCAOG into their overall planning efforts. A discussion of population trends in the city and county are discussed below.

Regional Population

Humboldt County (County) is a rural county with a large land area and low population density. Per California Department of Finance (DOF) statistics, the county's population in 2022, inclusive of incorporated cities, is 135,168 residents, which represents a decrease of 1,295 compared to the County's 2020 population but an increase of 545 residents over 2010 county population (DOF 2021a, 2022). As of 2022, there are 62,771 households in Humboldt County with an average person-per-household ratio of 2.31 (DOF 2022).

The City of Arcata is one of the primary population centers in the County. In 2010, City population was 17,231, and then swelled to 18,592 in 2020 before decreasing slightly in 2022 to 18,059 (DOF 2021a, 2022). The city's population is largely determined by student enrollment at Cal Poly Humboldt. With 42 percent of residents being age 18-24, the City has the largest share of college-age adults in the County (City of Arcata 2019). Table 3.9-1 displays the current and historic populations of both the County and the City between 2010 and 2022. As shown in this table, the population growth experienced in the City between 2010 and 2022 was almost 10 times that experienced in the County over that same period.

Table 3.9-1 Regional Population Characteristics

County/City	2010	2020	2022	Percent Change (2010-2022)
City of Arcata	17,231	18,592	18,059	4.79
Humboldt County	134,623	136,463	135,168	0.40

Sources: DOF 2021a, 2022.

In terms of population projections, countywide population is anticipated to fluctuate somewhat over the next 20 years but would experience an incremental decline in overall population from its current 134,623 residents to 130,791 by 2040 (DOF 2021b).

Cal Poly Humboldt Student Enrollment

At the time the 2004 Master Plan was prepared, student enrollment was 7,092 FTES. Student enrollment has fluctuated over the years but has been declining in recent years (7,054 FTES in 2018, 5,600 FTES in 2020, and 5,862 FTES in fall 2022) (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022a). Fluctuations in enrollment trends are a result of numerous variables including demand for certain degrees, economic prosperity, and the reputation of the university. However, with Cal Poly Humboldt's recent conversion to a polytechnic institution, current enrollment is expected to increase by 50 percent to approximately 8,973 FTES in the next 3 years and double to approximately 11,724 FTES in the next seven years. This is due to the enhancements that will be possible as a polytechnic institution and the university's ability to offer additional in-demand degree programs (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022b).

HOUSING UNITS AND VACANCY

Regional Housing

Humboldt County

According to DOF, there were a total of 62,120 housing units in the county in 2020, which is an increase of 561 over the county's total housing units in 2010 (DOF 2021a). The number of housing units within the county did not increase between 2020 and 2022 (DOF 2022). Over 44,000 units were single-family housing (attached and detached) whereas approximately 22,000 housing units were multi-family housing, about 35 percent of the County's housing supply (DOF 2022).

The housing vacancy rate is a measure of general housing availability and represents the percentage of all available housing units that are vacant or unoccupied at a particular time. A low vacancy rate, 5 percent or less, suggests that housing availability is low; conversely, a high vacancy rate (over 8 percent) may indicate a high number of housing units are available for occupancy, a high number of seasonal units are vacant, or there is an oversupply of housing. By maintaining a "healthy" vacancy rate between 5 percent and 8 percent, housing consumers have a wider choice of housing types and prices to choose from. As vacancy rates drop, shortages generally raise housing costs and limit choices. The county's housing vacancy rate usually exceeds the state's vacancy rate. In 2020, the vacancy rate of the county was 9.20 percent, while California's vacancy rate was 4.1 percent. The County's vacancy rate increased to 9.9 percent in 2022 (DOF 2022).

The County's average persons per household (pph) has been consistently lower than that of the State. In 2022, the household size of the county has averaged 2.31 persons per household compared to California's average of 2.81 persons per household in 2022 (DOF 2022).

City of Arcata

According to DOF, there were a total of 8,502 housing units in the City of Arcata in 2020 (DOF 2022), which is an increase of 561 units over the city's total in 2020 and 780 units over the city's total in 2010 (DOF 2021a). Of those, 4,077 units were single-family housing (attached and detached) and 4,425 housing units were multi-family housing, about 52 percent of the City's housing supply (DOF 2022). The City's multi-family housing units represent approximately 20 percent of the County's total housing supply.

Since 2020, the City's housing vacancy rate has generally been over 6 percent. In 2020, the City had 573 vacant housing units, representing a vacancy rate of 6.8 percent. The vacancy rate grew to 7.8 percent in 2022 with 667 vacant units out of the total 8,502 units within the city (DOF 2022). In 2022, the average household size in the City was 2.11 persons per household (DOF 2022).

Cal Poly Humboldt Housing

Two types of housing are available on campus: traditional dormitory-style student housing, where students share bathrooms and do not have cooking facilities; and apartment-style units that include bathrooms and cooking facilities. When evaluating student housing, it is important to note that the number of beds available does not always match the number of beds occupied. The number of beds available represents the design capacity for residence halls, typically some combination of single and double rooms; however, when demand is high due to a large entering freshman class or other circumstances, Cal Poly Humboldt adds beds by converting double rooms to triples, thus increasing the number of beds occupied. The following discussion makes the distinction between design capacity and beds occupied.

Historically, additional housing facilities have been developed on campus to correspond to increased student enrollment, which has resulted in a gradual net increase in the total percentage of undergraduate students housed on campus. On-campus housing has increased gradually over the years. At present, Cal Poly Humboldt has a design capacity of approximately 2,100 beds (as of 2020) for students on campus, which represents roughly one third of FTES enrollment. Existing housing for freshmen students includes the following facilities: the Hills Complex, Canyon Residences, and Cypress Residence Hall; and existing housing for sophomore and upper division students includes the College Creek Apartments, Creekview Complex, and Campus Apartments (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022b). Cal Poly

Humboldt is also providing temporary student housing for academic years 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 through a short-term lease at the Comfort Inn, approximately 3 miles from the main campus.

Approximately 70 percent of students currently reside in off-campus housing, and most live within the city or elsewhere within the county. As of Fall 2022, Cal Poly Humboldt housed 2,044 students on-campus and approximately 3,900 students resided off campus in the City or other areas of the County (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022b). The lack of available on-campus student housing has deterred prospective students from accepting enrollment, thereby reducing the total number of enrolled students. Additional student housing on university-owned property would provide additional living space for Cal Poly Humboldt students, as well as reduce pressure on the current off-campus housing market.

EMPLOYMENT AND EMPLOYMENT CENTERS

According to the California Employment Development Department (EDD), employment within the County has remained steady with little fluctuation between 2000 and 2020. As of 2020, the top four industries in terms of share of total employment are government, education and health services, retail trade, and professional and business services (EDD 2022a). There are also an estimated 2,500 construction jobs within Humboldt County (EDD 2022b).

Unemployment rates have followed a cyclical pattern as reflected in the economic recessions in the early 1990s, early 2000s, the Great Recession of 2008–2013, and during the COVID-19 recession in 2020. EDD data show the unemployment rate in the County has generally been one to three percentage points below the state unemployment rate. In 2018, the statewide unemployment rate was 4.3 percent while the countywide unemployment rate was 3.4 percent. The countywide unemployment rate has sharply decreased since 2020 COVID-19 recession, when it peaked at 13.7 percent, and has continued to drop to 2.9 percent in 2022 (EDD 2022a).

As of 2020, Cal Poly Humboldt was the second largest employer in the County, employing 490 instructional faculty and more than 1,200 staff and management. Cal Poly Humboldt is thus considered a key employer and economic driver in the region. One of three polytechnic universities in the CSU system, Cal Poly Humboldt attracts students from all over California with strong programs in engineering, architecture, construction management, and agriculture (Cal Poly Humboldt 2022b).

3.9.3 Environmental Impacts and Mitigation Measures

METHODOLOGY

To evaluate the potential impacts of the Student Housing Project on population and housing, the existing population and housing availability in the City of Arcata was compared to population and housing anticipated under buildout of the project. This examination of population, employment, and housing conditions is based on information obtained from review of the plans for the project and review of available population, employment, and housing projections from Cal Poly Humboldt, the City, the County, HCAOG, the U.S. Census Bureau, DOF, and other sources. In determining the level of significance, the analysis assumes compliance with relevant federal and state laws, regulations, and ordinances.

THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

A population, employment, and housing impact would be significant if implementation of the project would:

- ▶ induce substantial unplanned population growth in an area, either directly (for example, by proposing new homes and businesses) or indirectly (for example, through extension of roads or other infrastructure); or
- ▶ displace substantial numbers of existing people or homes, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere.

ISSUES NOT DISCUSSED FURTHER

Displace Substantial Numbers of Existing People or Homes

As noted in Chapter 2, "Project Description," three single-family residences are currently present at the project site and would be demolished as part of the project. However, based on available housing stock and the provision of housing on the site for up to 964 students who might otherwise occupy available housing within the City or County, this would be considered a net increase in housing stock in the area and would reduce further competition between students and private individuals for the limited housing stock within the City and County. As such, the residents of the three units located on-site currently could be accommodated within the available housing stock of either the city (573 available units) or the broader county (6,197 available units) and would not substantially affect the availability of housing locally or regionally. Thus, there would be no significant impacts associated with displacement of substantial numbers of people or housing, necessitating the construction of replacement housing elsewhere. This topic is not discussed further.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Impact 3.9-1: Directly or Indirectly Induce Substantial Unplanned Population Growth and Housing Demand

The proposed project would provide purpose-built housing for up to 964 students that would help to meet existing demand for student housing as well as future demand due to anticipated student enrollment growth, and relieve potential pressure on the local/regional housing market. Although Cal Poly Humboldt student enrollment is expected to increase in the coming years, the project itself would not attract additional students to Cal Poly Humboldt, and instead would accommodate existing demand and anticipated future enrollment growth as projected in the 2004 Master Plan and EIR. Further, the 2004 Master Plan for Cal Poly Humboldt projected an increase in student enrollment up to 12,000 FTES, which is accounted for in both the City of Arcata General Plan and regional growth projections. Therefore, the project would not result in substantial unplanned population growth and would reduce housing demand. This impact would be **less than significant**.

During construction, it is anticipated that up to 60 workers may be required on-site. The existing number of residents within Humboldt County who are employed in the construction industry (approximately 2,500) are anticipated to be sufficient to meet the needed number of construction workers for the project. Further, construction employees could commute from areas outside the county, including several nearby communities in Del Norte and Siskiyou Counties. Therefore, the project's anticipated construction labor force needs would likely be fulfilled by residents currently living in the region and would not likely result in substantial increased housing demand in the region. Furthermore, even if some construction workers from outside the region were employed at the project site, construction workers typically do not change residences when assigned to a new construction site, and substantial permanent relocation of these workers to the area is not anticipated. Therefore, the project would not be expected to generate the need for substantial additional housing in Arcata during construction.

In terms of operational impacts, and as noted above, Cal Poly Humboldt currently faces a shortage of student housing, both on- and off-campus, as many students have had to take up residence within available rental housing, including single-family housing units. In addition, Cal Poly Humboldt's student population is expected to double from 5,862 to 11,724 FTES within the next seven years because of Cal Poly Humboldt's recent conversion to a polytechnic institution. Of note, the 2004 Master Plan for the campus anticipated a similar increase in student enrollment (up to 12,000 FTES), which was also reflected in HCAOG growth projections for the region upon adoption of the Master Plan by CSU. The City's most recent Housing Element also identifies that "the addition of new homes for students is needed" as a result of projected Cal Poly Humboldt growth under the 2004 Master Plan (City of Arcata 2019).

As noted above, Cal Poly Humboldt has a current housing capacity for 2,100 student residents on campus, which represents roughly a third of current student enrollment. The remainder of enrolled students live off campus within available housing in the city or the county. The project would provide purpose-built housing for 964 students within

Cal Poly Humboldt property that would help to meet the demand for housing in City of Arcata and Humboldt County and accommodate anticipated growth in student enrollment identified in both the 2004 Master Plan and as a result of conversion of the university to a Cal Poly university. With implementation of the project, on-campus student resident capacity would increase to 54 percent of 2022 FTES enrollment. As the additional on-site population that would occur as a result of the project was already anticipated and planned by Cal Poly Humboldt, the City of Arcata, and HCAOG, the project would neither directly nor indirectly induce unplanned population growth or housing demand. Impacts would be **less than significant**.

Mitigation Measures

No mitigation measures are required.