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## UC Regents Approve University House Rehabilitation

Written by [Kashi Khorasani](#)

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**The University of California Board of Regents approved the second phase of rehabilitation for UCSD's University House on Jan. 19. Construction on the second phase is set to begin this April. The Regents also chose to officially rename the building "Audrey Geisel University House" to honor Mrs. Geisel's continued support of the university and her recent \$2 million donation to the project.**

Following UC tradition, every UCSD Chancellor has resided at University House, which is located approximately one half mile west of Muir campus in La Jolla Farms. In 2004, just before Chancellor Marye Anne Fox would have moved in, the seven-acre estate was deemed uninhabitable due to structural and system deficiencies as well as code compliance issues. According to "Officials Plan University House Renovations," published March 7, 2011 in the Guardian, a Jan. 28, 2011 environmental impact report from UCSD's physical planning department stated that the 60-year-old house does not meet current safety standards for natural disasters.

The Regents approved the full rehabilitation plan of University House on Jan. 19, 2012. In total, the renovation will cost \$10.5 million and will be entirely covered by private funding. A sum of \$1.5 million has been allocated from the Edward F. Searles Fund, an unrestricted endowment used to finance general purposes of the university that cannot be covered by state funds.

A stabilization operation began in November 2011 to insure that the large cliff-top house would not crash onto the beach below. According to principal architect Ione Stiegler, the walls are very lightweight and the roof/ceiling structural framing is not attached to the adobe walls.

Therefore, it is believed that the building would be unable to resist the physical momentum of a seismic event. One major aspect of the renovation is to resolve these deficiencies by physically connecting the roof framing to the load bearing walls.

Issues also remain within the electrical, mechanical, plumbing, gas, telephone, cable and fire service systems. "All of these deficiencies are being rectified with the remodel and finally, the house has never had a fire protection system and that will now be provided," Stiegler said.

Another setback that the house's refurbishment faced was the history of the land itself. While initially the university sought to demolish the home and replace it with a new one, the project was met with strong opposition from the Kumeyaay Native American tribe — who once lived on the land and buried their dead there. Those within the Native American community have also raised concerns over the project since UCSD employees first came across two ancient skeletons in 1976.

Since 2007, a Native American monitor has joined the project team to handle any further cases of burial disturbance that might occur during the renovation and stabilization process.

UC-wide policy states that all new construction and major renovation projects must attain LEED silver certification or above. Because University House is only a private holding of the university, it is exempt from this requirement. Nevertheless, those in charge of the project have been vying for the certification.

"The restoration is including many sustainable energy and life cycle processes," Stiegler said. "However, the project cannot meet current LEED requirements because LEED fails to recognize the need to maintain certain character-defining elements."

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has been appealing to the United States Green Building Council, which oversees LEED, in order to have them recognize the inherent environmental benefit of rehabilitating an existing building, according to Stiegler.

The second phase is scheduled to start construction in April 2012, with a projected completion date of April 2013.

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