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University House rehab builds on past

BY DAVE SCHWAB
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Renewing UCSD's University House will be a special task for an extraordinary structure in an exquisite location.



Water and roof damage are shown in this undated photo of University House, where rehab work is set to start this month.

COURTESY UCSD

“For more than 9,000 years, people have wanted to live on this site: The coastal view is just breath-taking,” said project architect Ione Stiegler.

The historical home, which she called “an excellent example of pueblo revival architecture” with 2-foot-thick adobe walls which make it naturally cool in hot weather and warm in cool,” is located on a sanctified Kumeyaay cemetery.

She said efforts have been made to ensure the work is to be done in “a respectful manner.”

Once consigned to the wrecking ball, the house built in 1952 is to be resurrected instead. Bluff stabilization, the first phase of the \$10.5 million rehabilitation project, begins in late September.

Noting UCSD has worked hard to “listen to the community,” Courtney Coyle, a La Jolla attorney representing Native Americans, said the rehabilitation project can end up being “a model project of collaboration between community stakeholders,” adding the university has “thought creatively on how to avoid additional disturbance to the soils — a key issue.”

The construction plan calls for not disturbing or removing any sensitive plant species, with most of the excavation and construction done by hand to minimize impacts to cultural resources. Native Americans will monitor the work.

While satisfied with the rehabilitation plan, Coyle said tribes still have some concerns with the project’s environmental impact report.

“They (university) still refuse to admit that digging in a sanctified cemetery is a significant impact,” she said. “They concluded that it was less than significant. We hope the university can revisit that. Admitting those impacts is a pathway to really achieving trust with our local tribal people.”

Brian Gregory, an assistant UCSD vice chancellor who chairs the 10-member advisory group for the University House Rehabilitation Project, said the first part of the work “will be putting a pier-supported retaining wall in the bluff to support the slope, which is continually being eroded.”

The goal, he added, is “to finish it in December prior to any storms or rains.”

Stiegler said analysis has determined the primary cause of bluff failure is due to misdirected site and roof drainage, which “is going to be redirected to save the cliffs.”

Once the bluff work is done, the entire house will get seismic alterations and all new electrical and plumbing. That should begin in January or March 2011 and likely be done by spring or summer 2013, Gregory said. The historic home was built by noted Santa Fe, N.M.-based architect William Lumpkins for prominent early La Jolla developer William Black, for whom Black’s Beach is named.

The 130-acre site at 9360 La Jolla Farms Road was bought by the UC system in 1967 for \$2.7 million to fulfill a UC policy re-

quiring university leaders live on or within four miles of campus. It was closed in June 2004 due to structural deficiencies and code STE compliance problems and has been unoccupied since.

In July 2004, a University committee studying alternatives for University House recommended it be demolished and rebuilt. But the resultant public outcry by historians, preservationists and Native Americans caused the university to rethink its position. In July 2011, UC Regents certified the environmental impact report (EIR), and approved the design and budget for the project.

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