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News

Chapman postpones plans of expansions, aims to be a ‘good neighbor’

08/26/2015 • by Jamie Altman • [Add Comment](#)

Chapman announced that it will temporarily halt its plans for expansion, university spokesperson Mary Platt wrote in a press release today.

The original plan, which was met with disapproval from many Orange residents, called for an increase in student enrollment, addition of a university pub and the expansion of many buildings, according to documents from the City of Orange.

The announcement comes after President Jim Doti and Chancellor Daniele Struppa met with members from the Old Towne Preservation Association (OTPA), which has been a strong opponent of the university’s plans for expansion.

“It was a highly positive meeting,” Doti wrote in the press release. “Chapman University wants to work closely with the city and our neighbors, and we sincerely want to be a good neighbor ourselves.”

The release notes that the plans have not been cancelled, but rather postponed. The initial plan, which was presented to the city in mid-May, called to increase enrollment from 8,700 to 11,650 students and classroom seating capacity from 5,000 to 7,500, according to the city documents.

The university proposed replacing on-campus housing such as the Davis and Harris apartments and Morlan Hall, and adding new faculty housing, which are typically renovated homes in Orange. The plan also hoped to replace DeMille Hall, expand Dodge College of Film and Media Arts and renovate the historic Villa Park Orchards Packinghouse.

These plans are being postponed until 2016 or later. Before going ahead with the expansions, the university announced plans to meet with the mayor of Orange, Orange City Council, the OTPA, the Orange Barrio Historical Society, the Orange Chamber of Commerce and other local groups.

Chapman will also form a neighborhood advisory committee, which the university hopes will include members from the OTPA and the city council. In addition, the university promises to make communication more transparent with members of the Orange community, as it will create a website focused solely on neighborhood communication.

Despite postponing most expansion plans, Chapman will continue expanding student housing, the press release says. This would eliminate the need for students to have to move off campus, which would mitigate noise and traffic concerns.

The OTPA has actively disapproved of a potential Chapman expansion. In a letter to the city on June 11, OTPA President Sandy Quinn said that Chapman students have a negative impact on the city.

“The OTPA agrees with many local residents that the current student population is a big impact on the problem relating to adverse impacts to the Old Towne Historic District,” Quinn wrote. “The aggressive expansion proposed will further deteriorate the fabric and integrity of our historic district.”

The letter went on to say that the Orange community would not be able to handle a Chapman expansion. Quinn claimed that in 2003, when Chapman last proposed an expansion, the university promised that its growth had capped and it would not expand any further.

Doti said that moving forward, Chapman welcomes feedback from members of the Orange community.

“Chapman University has been a proud and contributing member of the Orange community since 1954, and we value our role in the city and the region as an educator, employer and economic driver,” Doti said. “Chapman is committed to partnering with its neighbors and friends to respond to their concerns and to build an ongoing successful relationship.”

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Becky Altman ·

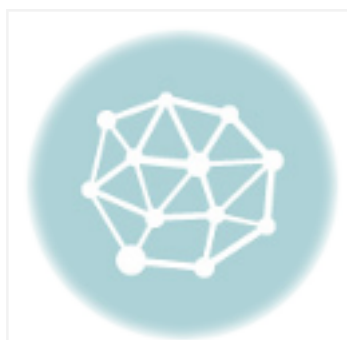
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