UC Berkeley is not immune to California's housing crisis. Indeed, as the student newspaper noted, the campus "has housing for 22 percent of undergrads and 9 percent of graduate students – vastly lower than the UC average of 38.1 percent for undergraduates and 19.6 percent for graduate students." Moreover, soaring housing costs have made it hard for the campus to recruit new faculty.

To deal with the issue, the campus has developed an aggressive program to develop vacant land around the campus into housing, with a particular focus on parking lots. (One controversial proposal involves building housing on People's Park in downtown Berkeley, the site of a 1968 confrontation between protesters and police.) However, a current proposal to convert a parking garage on campus into expanded facilities for the Goldman School of Public Policy; housing for faculty, staff, and students; and some parking has run into opposition. Current faculty who work near the parking garage have objected to the proposal, arguing that the current project would "unduly and irreparably burden[] neighboring academic units," in large part because of the loss of parking. (For a copy of the petition circulated by the objecting faculty, who have called a special meeting of the Berkeley Division of the Academic Senate, see here.)

Whatever the merits of this debate, this fight is a microcosm of the thousands of similar fights that have been occurring and will occur across California as local governments as well as public institutions wrestle with how to provide affordable infill housing that will reduce the burdens of housing costs on Californians while also reducing greenhouse gas emissions. What happens here at Berkeley on this project is worth watching.

For details on the Upper Hearst project, see this letter from the Berkeley chancellor.