

# Merced Sun-Star

July 22, 2016

## Want to rent a place in Merced? Good luck

Market stretched by growth at UC Merced

No new complexes in recent years

Students having tough time finding a place

---

Making the move to Merced from his home five hours away has been a difficult process for Brooks Miller, but it's not because he'll miss his family. It's because he can't find an available place in Merced.

The 20-year-old from Santa Barbara is coming to town as a transfer to UC Merced. He said he wants to find a place close to the campus, but has had to start widening his search to Atwater and Chowchilla.

"It's kind of hard to find a spot made for a UC student, I'd say," the economics major said. "It's not been ideal for what I'm looking for."

UC Merced officials and local real estate agents say Miller's story is one they hear regularly. The rental market in Merced and the surrounding areas shows few openings.

It's kind of hard to find a spot made for a UC student, I'd say. It's not been ideal for what I'm looking for.

Brooks Miller, 20, who is trying to move to Merced

Miller said he's used [Craiglist](#) and a Facebook page made especially for students coming to the area to try to find a place to stay. It's not the transfer student's first rodeo, as he rented a house with others near Santa Barbara City College.

"It's a lot easier to find student housing right next to school," he said about his search in Santa Barbara.

The Merced market is the tightest it's been in Andy Krotik's 27 years in real estate, he said. The agent with Coldwell Banker Gonella Realty in Atwater said the demand is driving up the cost of rentals too.

"It's affecting rents everywhere," he said.

His company, which manages more than 850 units for rent, has fewer than a dozen openings at any given time, he has said.

"You're going to see a flurry of applications for apartments as part of this," he said.

UC Merced also attracts more than just students, he noted, so there's a demand for buying homes as well.

The university houses about 2,600 students on campus and has plans to expand to add about 1,700 more beds as part of the 2020 Project, according to Abigail Rider, assistant vice chancellor of real estate.

It's not actually surprising because, really, there have been very few new units built since 2008. In the meantime, our enrollment has been growing, our faculty has been growing and Merced itself has been growing.

Abigail Rider, assistant vice chancellor of real estate for UC Merced

The project will also double the size of the campus and make room to educate 10,000 students, according to plans approved this week by the Board of Regents.

"It's not actually surprising because, really, there have been very few new units built since 2008," Rider said. "In the meantime, our enrollment has been growing, our faculty has been growing and Merced itself has been growing."

She said it was, perhaps ironically, the single-family housing market boom and bust that caused the shortage in apartments. [Merced was hit particularly hard](#) during the real estate market crash in late 2006, and developers stopped building new houses and apartments.

Along with adding students, UC Merced expects to add about 150 new faculty members and 150 staffers to its existing rosters of 511 and 994, respectively.

Merced has seen applications in the past year to build large complexes that could hold hundreds of units, which has upset homeowners near the proposed projects.

A [project of about 400 units](#) is going up at Horizon Avenue and Pacific Drive, the city is moving on a 50-unit complex downtown and a few other large projects are attempting to iron out details with the Planning Commission.

August and September are often busy building months, according to City Manager Steve Carrigan.

"We have seen an uptick in activity at City Hall in terms of multifamily housing but also single-family housing," he said.

*Thaddeus Miller: 209-385-2453, @thaddeusmiller*

*Read more here: <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/news/local/education/uc-merced/article91418522.html#storylink=cpy>*