

Section 1

Introduction

1.1 BACKGROUND

A Draft Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was prepared by the City of Palo Alto (the City) to disclose potential environmental effects of the proposed City of Palo Alto/Stanford Development Agreement and Lease Project. The Draft EIR included a description of the proposed Development Agreement, an assessment of its potential effects, a description of possible mitigation measures to reduce significant effects that were identified in the Draft EIR, and a consideration of alternatives that could address potential impacts. The main Development Agreement components include 1) a 51-year lease to the City of 6 acres at the former Mayfield School site (Mayfield Site) which is currently vacant and zoned for up to 240 units of housing and construction of a soccer complex of two fields and a warm-up field on the Mayfield site; 2) construction of at least 250 housing units on two development sites currently occupied by Research and Development/office (R&D/office) uses; and 3) vesting of 300,000 square feet of R&D/office space for anywhere in the Stanford Research Park, to replace most of the R&D/office space that would be demolished to accommodate the housing. The proposed project includes a zoning change of the Mayfield Site from High Density Multiple-Family Residence District with Site and Design Overlay (RM-40(D)) to Public Facilities District (PF) with a special overlay district to accommodate features of the soccer complex. At the two housing sites, Stanford would have the option of applying different zoning districts, including new overlay combining districts tailored to better ensure compatibility with adjacent uses. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), the Draft EIR was distributed for public review and comments.

The 45-day public review period for the Draft EIR began December 14, 2004 and ended January 27, 2005. During this time frame, the document was reviewed by various state, regional, and local agencies, as well as by interested organizations and individuals. Written comments were received from five public agencies (federal, state, regional, and local), one Planning and Transportation Commissioner, and 18 individuals. A Planning and Transportation Commission public hearing was also held in the City of Palo Alto on January 12, 2005 to obtain oral comments on the Draft EIR. Comments were received from both the Palo Alto Planning and Transportation Commission and nine members of the public during the public hearing.

This document responds to comments on the Draft EIR that were raised during the public review period, and contains revisions intended to correct, clarify, and amplify the Draft EIR. The responses and revisions in this document substantiate and confirm the analyses contained in the Draft EIR. No new substantial environmental impact and no increase in the severity of an earlier identified impact have surfaced in responding to the comments. Together, the previously released Draft EIR and this document constitute the Final Environmental Impact Report (Final EIR). As the lead agency, the City must certify the Final EIR before action can be taken on the proposed project. Certification requires that the lead agency make findings that the Final EIR complies with CEQA.

1.2 HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This document consists of six sections: (1) Introduction, (2) List of Commentors, (3) Master Responses, (4) Responses to Written Comments, (5) Responses to Oral Comments, and (6) Proposed Text Changes to the Draft EIR. Section 1 reviews the purpose and contents of the Final EIR. Section 2 lists the public agencies and individuals who submitted comment letters on the Draft EIR or spoke at the public hearing on the Draft EIR. Section 3 contains master responses to frequently raised comments regarding:

- land use and visual compatibility of the proposed housing with the adjacent College Terrace neighborhood;
- light and glare impacts from the proposed soccer complex lights;
- views along California Avenue corridor;
- historic resources;
- traffic impacts in the College Terrace neighborhood;
- noise; and
- the Standard University Community Plan and General Use Permit.

Section 4 contains individual responses to comments not addressed by a master response. Section 5 contains responses to oral comments made at the Planning and Transportation Commission Draft EIR public hearing. Finally, Section 6 consists of text and graphics changes to the Draft EIR requested by the City of Palo Alto staff to correct inaccuracies.

Specific comments from each comment letter have been enumerated in the margin of the letter, which is reproduced in Section 4 of this document. Comments are denoted using a numbering system that identifies the comment letter and the comment number within the comment letter. Thus, Comment 13.2 refers to the second comment in Comment Letter #13. Responses to each of these comments follow each comment letter and follow the same numbering scheme. Thus, Response 13.2 addresses Comment 13.2. This same numbering scheme is used to identify and respond to oral comments. For the most part, the responses provide explanation or additional discussion of text in the Draft EIR. In some instances, the response supersedes or supplements the text of the Draft EIR for accuracy or clarification. New text that has been added to the Draft EIR is indicated with underlining. Text that has been deleted is indicated with ~~striketrough~~.