OFFICE OF THE CITY COUNCIL
CITY OF PALO ALTO

MEMORANDUM

TO:          City Council
FROM: Vice Mayor Judy Kleinberg, and Council Members Yoriko Kishimoto and Dena Mossar
DATE:        January 23, 2006
SUBJECT:     QUIMBY ACT ORDINANCE

At the present time the City of Palo Alto does not have a parkland dedication ordinance as allowed by State law, commonly referred to as the Quimby Act. While the Park and Community Facilities Fees, enacted in 2002, does allocate a percentage toward parkland acquisition, it is far from fully recovering the cost of land needed to meet Palo Alto’s growing needs for parks.

The Quimby Act enables California cities to maintain its park acreage per capita as its population changes. The Act requires subdividers to set aside a portion of their projects for public park purposes. The Act also provides the payment of in-lieu fees if the project’s required acreage is too small to provide meaningful recreation. Fees from other projects can be accumulated enabling the City to purchase additional parkland in a location of greatest need.

Given the current economic conditions where residential land values have outstripped commercial office, retail and industrial uses, we are seeing the potential for many more residential units. Increased housing, while easing the City’s significant housing jobs imbalance, will also produce more demand on the City’s park needs. Keeping pace with the ratio of parkland per capita, through the avenues afforded by State law is an opportunity for our residents to continue to access park and recreational activities.

This colleague’s memo requests that Staff return with a draft parkland dedication ordinance as provided for under State law no later than 5 months. Staff should also evaluate and recommend the possible adjustments of other fees such as the current Park and Community Facilities fee to ensure that Palo Alto’s fee structure remains competitive and is economically feasible.