Resolution of the Council of the City of Palo Alto
Amending Program L-3, Policy L-8 and Map L-6 of the
Land Use Element of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan

WHEREAS, the City of Palo Alto is in the process of updating its Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, State law imposes strict deadlines to bring non-compliant hospitals up to current seismic standards;

WHEREAS, Stanford University has applied for certain entitlements that will require amendments to the Comprehensive Plan;

WHEREAS, the City desires to make discreet amendments to the Comprehensive Plan in advance of the pending update in order to expedite the proposed project so that Stanford University can comply with the State seismic requirements;

WHEREAS, while the Comprehensive Plan recognizes Palo Alto’s historic preference for a 50-foot building height limit, it also recognizes that there may be extenuating circumstances for varying from this preference in very limited circumstances;

WHEREAS, the Stanford University Medical Center Facilities Renewal and Replacement Environmental Impact Report certified by the City Council in June 6, 2011 (SUMC EIR) carefully analyzed the impact of taller buildings in the Hospital District and concluded that the Architectural Review process would ensure that all visual impacts associated with the proposed taller buildings in the Hospital District would be mitigated;

WHEREAS, permitting taller buildings in the Hospital District would permit the provision of more open space and result in the preservation of more trees;

WHEREAS, the 1989 Citywide Land Use and Transportation Study referenced specific area caps in order to ensure that traffic would not exceed the levels anticipated in the Study’s horizon year;

WHEREAS, a detailed Traffic Study was conducted by AECOM in March 2010 in connection with the SUMC EIR;

WHEREAS, the Traffic Study showed that with mitigation the SUMC renovation and expansion project would not result in significant traffic impacts in Planning Area 9 nor would the project result in traffic impacts to any of the 11 intersections identified in the 1989 Citywide Land Use and Transportation Study;

WHEREAS, other similarly situated medical facilities, such as the Palo Alto Medical Foundation and the Veterans Administration Hospital are exempt from monitoring;
WHEREAS, the Council desires to amend the Comprehensive Plan to clarify that
taller buildings would be permitted in the Hospital District to reflect the Stanford University’s
Medical Center’s unique needs;

WHEREAS, the Council further desires to amend the Comprehensive Plan to
clarify that hospital, clinic and medical school uses in the Hospital District are not intended to be
treated as “non-residential development” for purposes of policy L-8;

WHEREAS, the Planning and Transportation Commission, after a duly noticed
public hearing on _______, 2011 recommended that the City Council amend the Land Use
Element of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan as set forth below; and

WHEREAS, upon consideration of said recommendation after a duly noticed
public hearing held on June 6, 2011, the Council desires to amend the Comprehensive Plan as set
forth below;

The Council of the City of Palo Alto does RESOLVE as follows:

SECTION 1. The City Council finds that the public interest, health, safety and
welfare of Palo Alto and the surrounding region would be furthered by an amendment of the Palo
Alto Comprehensive Plan as set forth below.

SECTION 2. Program L-3 of the Comprehensive Plan is hereby amended to read
as follows:

1. Program L-3
   Maintain and periodically review height and density limits to discourage single
   uses that are inappropriate in size and scale to the surrounding uses.

The Citywide 50-foot height limit has been respected in all new residential and commercial
development since it was adopted in the 1970’s. Only a few exceptions have been granted for
architectural enhancements or seismic retrofits to noncomplying buildings. In addition, the City
has allowed taller buildings within the Hospital District at the Stanford University Medical
Center that reflect the Medical Center’s unique needs.

SECTION 3. Policy L-8 of the Comprehensive Plan is hereby amended to read
as follows:

1. Land Use and Community Design Element Policy L-8:
   Maintain a limit of 3,257,900 square feet of new non-residential
development for the nine planning areas evaluated in the 1989 Citywide
Land Use and Transportation Study, with the understanding that the City
Council may make modifications for specific properties that allow modest
additional growth. Such additional growth will count towards the 3,257,900
maximum. Stanford University Medical Center hospital, clinic and medical
school uses are not intended to be treated as “non-residential development” for the purposes of this policy; thus, additional growth in areas zoned “Hospital District” is exempt from this policy.

Not only will the area devoted to urban development remain constant, but new non-residential growth from 1989 forward will be limited to just over 3.25 million square feet. The total non-residential development in the city in 1996 is in the range of 25 million square feet. This amount of growth was determined by the Citywide 1989 Land Use and Transportation Study and was largely implemented through commercial downzoning. This growth limit will be observed citywide for the term of this Plan. Traffic will be monitored to ensure that the intent of the limit is being achieved, though it is recognized that traffic counts are affected by both residential and non-residential growth and also by auto use behavior. Any uses identified in Map L-6 as exempt from monitoring shall not count towards the area specific or citywide caps.

SECTION 4. The City Council hereby amends Map L-6 Commercial Growth Monitoring Areas from Citywide Study to clarify that hospital facilities within or near monitoring areas are not monitored. A revised Map L-6 is attached as Exhibit “A” to this resolution and incorporated into it by this reference.

SECTION 5. The City Council hereby amends the Land Use Map of the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan by changing the land use designation of the area depicted in Exhibit B and commonly referred to as 701 and 703 Welch Road from Research/Office Park to Major Institution/Special Facilities and by designating the area depicted in Exhibit C, which parcel is currently located in the County of Santa Clara but subject of a pending annexation request by the City of Palo Alto, as Major Institution/Special Facilities. Exhibits B and C are attached to this resolution and incorporated into it by this reference.

SECTION 6. The City Council certified an Environmental Impact Report in connection with this project on June 6, 2011.

INTRODUCED AND PASSED:

AYES:

NOES:

ABSENT:

ABSTENTIONS:

ATTEST:  APPROVED:

City Clerk  Mayor

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

City Manager
Not Yet Approved

Senior Assistant City Attorney

Director of Planning and Community Environment