City of Palo Alto

(ID # 9370)

City Council Staff Report

Report Type: Action Items **Meeting Date: 6/25/2018**

Summary Title: Stanford GUP Re-Circulated DEIR 2018

Title: Review and Provide Direction to Staff on the Stanford University General Use Permit 2018 Re-Circulated Draft Environmental Impact Report

From: City Manager

Lead Department: Planning and Community Environment

Recommendation

Staff recommends that Council review this report and provide direction to staff as appropriate.

Background

In November 2016, Stanford applied to Santa Clara County (County) requesting an update of its General Use Permit (Proposed Project), as well as minor revisions to the Stanford Community Plan and changes to some of the on-campus zoning regulations. The Stanford GUP application sets forth a conceptual development plan in County jurisdiction through a 2035 planning horizon. Some of key components of the proposed project include:

- 2,275,000 SF net new academic and academic support space;
- 3,150 net new housing units/beds of which up to 550 dwelling units would be available for faculty, staff, postdoctoral scholars and medical residents;
- 40,000 SF net new of childcare center space and other space that reduces vehicle trips (e.g., transit hub);
- Use of up to 50,000 SF of construction surge space authorized under the 2000 General Use Permit.

The City has previously responded to a Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) that was released for public comment last year.

A new Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR)[1] was released on June 12, 2018.

[1] Available online: https://www.sccgov.org/sites/dpd/Programs/Stanford/Pages/GUP2018_CEQA.aspx

The RDEIR is limited in focus and is intended to supplement the DEIR. The public comment period on the RDEIR extends to July 26th. Some of the key aspects of the RDEIR include the following:

- New significant and unavoidable impact by not providing all or some of the housing need generated by the 2018 GUP Project within the Academic Growth Boundary.
- New Alternative A, which includes 2.3million square feet of building area over the Project 2,483housing units, and 66 student beds.
- New Alternative B, which includes 1.139million square feet over the project of building area, 1,209housing units, and 66student beds.
- Both new alternatives include the same level of academic growth as the Project.

This report updates the City Council on the two new alternatives. After the Council meeting and attendance at County-hosted public meetings, staff will prepare a comment letter on the RDEIR. During this time, staff may also seek consultant support for peer review and analysis to validate some of the conclusion in the RDEIR.

Discussion

Staff is still reviewing the RDEIR. Given the Council's upcoming recess and that the public comment period on the RDEIR ends before Council returns, staff wanted to share some information about the document and ensure the Council had an opportunity to offer some initial comments. Below is a summary of some of the issues affecting Palo Alto. As noted above, staff will prepare a comment letter to the County by the July 26 deadline, incorporating any Council comments.

Summary Conclusion of the RDEIR

- The RDEIR identifies the base Project has a new significant and unavoidable impact by not providing some or all of the housing need generated by the 2018 GUP Project within the Academic Growth Boundary (ABG).
- The two new housing alternatives are noted as not meeting the project objectives.

Scope of the Proposed Change

- In addition to the 3.38 million square feet of construction in the 2018 GUP Project, the construction for Alternative A would add 2.3 million square feet and 2,483 dwelling units and 66 graduate student beds and for Alternative B construction would add 1.14 million square feet and 1,191 dwelling units and 66 beds graduate student beds.

Summary of the Impacts Identified in the RDEIR

Open Space

- Although on campus designated open spaces are preserved in the housing Alternatives, the substantial increase in density within the Academic Growth Boundary may increase pressure on Stanford to develop outside the AGB after 2035

Traffic

- Generally, Alternatives A and B increase peak-hour traffic volumes on Palo Alto streets, but compared to the proposed project, do not create new significant intersection impacts in 2018. In the 2035 study year, which estimates impacts from cumulative regional traffic volumes, Alternative A results in a significant impact at two additional intersections: Stanford Avenue and Bowdoin Street; and Charleston Road and Middlefield Road. Under both scenarios, the intersection of Alma Street and Charleston Road remains significant and unavoidable.

- The No New Net Commute Trips traffic model reductions will have less impact on traffic because (1) more trips-to-work will originate on the campus and (2) TDM measures are not as effective in reducing residential trips.

- The analysis for residential trip distribution is the same as used for the DEIR, which. documents that 55% of residential trips are local to Palo Alto. This is projected to continue with the larger number of residential units (about 2,438 for Alternative A and about half that for Alternative B).

- Compared to the proposed project, total and per-capita residential Vehicle miles traveled (VMT) increases because of the total increase in on-campus population, and the ratio of students to faculty/staff living on campus change. The on-campus faculty/staff population generally have higher VMT than students. However, on-campus residential VMT is substantially lower than the regional average, and is not considered a significant impact.

- The Traffic Infusion on Residential Environments (TIRE) neighborhood traffic volume analysis shows an increase in traffic volumes in the Crescent Park area, but not enough to raise the impact to significant.

Visual / Aesthetics

- To keep the development within the AGB and meet the needs of campus open space; relocation of extensive facilities such as detention basin; and, relocated playing fields, the proposed housing development densities would be 40-80 dwelling units per acre and 100-135 feet in height with setbacks less than 20 feet. The El Camino Corridor plan and the Stanford Community Plans would need to be amended.

Public Safety

- It is assumed that the City of Palo Alto would provide Fire and Emergency service to the campus. The proposed project would increase on-campus residential population by 41% over existing resident population. With Alternative A, on-campus residential population will increase by 82% and Alternative B by 62% over existing resident population. Palo Alto is currently negotiating a contract with Stanford for service that is proposed to be finalized in August or September 2018.

- Police patrol services are provided to Stanford by the County Sheriff's office; however, Palo Alto provides dispatch services, parking enforcement for spill over parking on public streets from construction activity on the Stanford Campus, and enforces safe bicycling and pedestrian access particularly through the Safe Routes to School Program including crossing guards.

Drainage

- The Alternatives substantially increase the resident population on campus and also the consumption of potable water including the additional use and treatment for emergency use of groundwater to supplement the potable water supply. More groundwater will also be used to irrigate larger planted areas.

- The Alternatives require the relocation of a large detention basin in the West Campus/DAPER Development Districts that will affect City flood control facilities as well as cause the location of Stanford play fields that are now accessible to the public.

Housing

- The additional 2,459 units/beds needed to meet the housing demand generated by the 2018 GUP Project, 66 are graduate student beds and 2,393 are dwelling units. This is a greater impact on the number of on on-campus population than the project, since with the Project 3,150 dwelling unit/beds were proposed, but 2,600 were beds in dormitories and 550 were dwelling units. The total number of dwelling units provided with Alternative A is 2,943. The total number of beds in dormitories is 2,666. Even with Alternative B providing half the housing demand, this represents a significant change in the on campus resident population.

Park and Recreation Facilities

- The additional residents generated by 2,459 dwelling units or half that number will increase the Stanford affiliates' use of nearby city parks, particularly in the College Terrace neighborhood. This will impact the quality of these park facilities and increase the City's maintenance costs, over and above the impacts identified in the 2018 GUP DEIR.