January 24, 2012

Santa Clara County Supervisors:

As you consider options for use of the approximately $10.3 million to be paid by Stanford University, it is important to understand the genesis of this payment. The Environmental Impact Report for the GUP identified an adverse impact – OS-3 – “the adverse effect on recreational opportunities for existing or new campus residents and facility users that will be caused by the housing and academic development approved by the GUP.” Creation of trails was identified explicitly as a mitigation of that adverse impact and funds were set aside to cover mitigation costs. They were not set aside as a general mitigation for the community at large.

The Agreement between the University and Santa Clara County makes the intention clear:

The County shall use such funds only to mitigate impact OS-3 described on page 4.2-21 of the Environmental Impact Report for the GUP (to wit: the adverse effect on recreational opportunities for existing or new campus residents and facility users that will be caused by the housing and academic development approved by the GUP....

The Stanford Campus Residential Leaseholders (SCRL) includes all long-term campus residents, the most permanent component of the “existing or new campus residents.” The SCRL elected Board represents these roughly 2,000 residents. In addition there are about 10,000 student residents of campus.

SCRL asks that projects identified by campus residents be given highest priority for allocation of the funds. All chosen projects must be strongly supported by campus residents. Whatever process is adopted, it must rely primarily on inputs from campus residents because it is those people for whom the mitigation is primarily intended. A grants program, discussed in previous hearings, would be acceptable ONLY IF it fully satisfied the intention of the mitigation.

The SCRL Board has already identified some high priority projects, which would mitigate the adverse effects on recreational opportunities for “existing or new campus residents and facility users.” The ones identified here illustrate types of projects that would be consistent with the requirement for mitigation, consistent with the Agreement, and seen as high priority by campus residents. These should be taken as illustrative and not as inclusive.
Trails

Funds could be used to complete two trail loops – one around the periphery of the University and a second around Campus Drive. In addition to these loops, the system of trails within the residential subdivision could be completed and/or upgraded. All of these trails should be developed as multi-use trails appropriate for walking, jogging, and bicycling. Drinking fountains should be installed at strategic locations along the trails; trails should be provided with appropriate lighting so they can be used at night as well as in the day; parcours integrated into the trail would motivate exercises.

Parks

We propose the extension of parks in order to create additional recreational facilities particularly aimed at adults. SCRL sees four areas as possibly appropriate: Frenchman’s Triangle, Kite Hill, the Arboretum, and Mayfield Playfield. For example, the southern part of Frenchman’s Triangle could be developed into an adult park with trails for walking, benches, and picnic areas. As a second example, the Arboretum would be a suitable place to develop a park primarily for adults, including campus residents, students, and neighbors from other parts of Santa Clara county. This new recreational area could include strolling paths, benches, tables, built-in chess tables, and water fountains. The purpose of this new park would be social, contemplative, and restful.

Other Projects

The SCRL Board has identified additional projects that would be consistent with the Agreement and with the intent of the mitigation. The total cost of the projects we have identified would far exceed $10.3 million, so prioritization will be required. We can communicate these projects at the appropriate time, once procedures for selecting projects have been established. But what is most important is that the projects ultimately implemented are those that best mitigate OS-3 and best provide the “recreational opportunities for existing and new campus residents and facilities users.”

Sincerely yours,

James L. Sweeney
President, SCRL Board of Directors