

PERKINS
+ WILL

Memo

To: Thomas Rogers, City of Menlo Park

From: Mark Hoffheimer

Date: March 6, 2012

Subject: **Task D. Stanford University Site and Bulk Control Revisions**

Purpose

To analyze Stanford University's request for site planning and bulk control revisions, which generally cover building breaks (publicly-accessible and frontage breaks), setbacks, and open space requirements, and revise the Draft Specific Plan's standards and guidelines as appropriate.

Key Findings/Recommendations for Revisions

1. To break down building massing, three major building breaks are required and aligned with the street grid. At Middle, the building break is 120 feet wide, affording a sizable publicly-accessible open space, connection to Burgess Park and project entry. The width of the other two breaks at Partridge and Harvard are 60' wide, consistent with the intersecting streets rights-of-way dimensions
2. In addition, two major recesses (minimum 60'x 40') are required at College and Cambridge, which can function as courtyards/entrances for the buildings. This will allow Stanford to maximize the building floor plates and provide continuity of access between buildings, while still allowing the building form to be broken down and relate to the surrounding street grid.
3. Buildings will adhere to design guidelines standards to further break down building massing.
4. Rear setback should be reduced to fire lane only and as minimal as possible. This will allow for more functional floor plates.
5. Require only 30% open space requirement. Building studies have shown that in order to provide floor plates that are adequate for office buildings, the 30% open space requirement should be utilized. This is consistent with the other zones along El Camino Real. The front setback will allow for an adequate feeling of landscape/open space along El Camino Real.
6. Continue to require the 10' to 20' front setback to accommodate a sizable walkway along El Camino Real.

7. Proposed protected bike network could be considered for integration with plan for site as an alternative to a bikeway along El Camino Real.
8. As noted separately in the memo for Task B, C, and E, the façade height for this district is being reduced to 38', per City Council direction. Concurrently, it is recommended that the Building Profile standard be measured from the minimum setback, which will allow for buildings at the maximum setback to have taller façade heights, which would address another Stanford comment.

Methodology

The Perkins+Will team reviewed the Stanford letter dated 12 August 2011 and carefully re-analyzed site controls, responding to the desires of the community for appropriate site and building character while ensuring viable and flexible development pads for Stanford University.

Discussion of Findings

The table below summarizes Stanford University's concerns about site and bulk controls in Zoning District ECR SE and the proposed revisions to the Draft Specific Plan in response to those concerns. Stanford's concerns were expressed in a letter to the City of Menlo Park, dated 12 August 2011 (Attachment D.3).

Attachments D.1 and D.2 illustrate the Draft Specific Plan's site controls and the proposed revisions. Note that the attachments include all parcels south of Ravenswood on the east side of El Camino Real, consistent with the Draft Specific Plan. Figure D denotes Stanford property.

A discussion of the proposed revisions follows.

Building Breaks and Break Up of Building Mass

In conjunction with controls for building massing and articulation, the requirement for building breaks further reduces the mass and scale of buildings along the east side of El Camino Real south of Ravenswood. The distance between Ravenswood and the Menlo Park/Palo Alto border is 3,600 feet, with the Stanford property extending 2,400 feet, or nearly ½ mile, along El Camino Real. The building breaks are an essential tool in reducing the scale and character of development.

The proposed building breaks respond to the existing street character/pattern within the area while respecting Stanford's legitimate need for viable building pads and flexibility in design (see Attachment D.2).

Stanford Comments Specific to Stanford Lands (Major Comments)
Stanford Letter dated 12 August 2011

Site/Bulk Control	Draft Specific Plan	Stanford Request	Proposed Specific Plan Revisions
Building Breaks	4 Breaks Required, with 2 publicly accessible	Encourage Breaks; Require 1 Break at Middle	3 Breaks Required, with 1 publicly accessible at Middle
Middle Ave Break	120' minimum	60' minimum in vicinity of Middle	120' minimum; this would be the only publicly accessible break required, and it would allow for plaza and retail
Cambridge Ave Break	90' minimum	Articulate/recess building at Cambridge but no break	Articulate/recess building at Cambridge but no break
Additional Breaks South of Middle	2 required, with breaks located above a parking podium (vs. at-grade); Breaks to align with College and Partridge	Require no building breaks	Articulate/recess building at College but no break; Require building break at Partridge
Rear Setback	20' minimum	Require no rear setback, except what is required by the Fire District	Require no rear setback, except what is required by the Fire District
Open Space Requirement	40% minimum	20% minimum	30% minimum
Sustainability	LEED-ND for larger projects	No LEED-ND	LEED-ND for larger projects (with broader thresholds)

The major features of the proposed building breaks follow.

- The building breaks align with intersecting streets in the area, specifically Live Oak, Roble, Middle, College, Partridge, Cambridge and Harvard. (Note that the breaks north of Middle Avenue do not apply to Stanford lands but are retained as shown in the Specific Plan).
- The building breaks take the form of actual building separation or building recesses.
- To ensure viable building pads, building breaks in the form of building separation are required at Middle, Partridge and Harvard. These separations allow for building pads from 200 feet in length (for Stanford property north of Middle) to approximately 650 feet in length (Middle to Partridge and Partridge to Harvard).
 - The building break at Middle is to be publicly accessible (discussed below). The other two breaks are open space to be used as Stanford deems fit.
 - The building breaks have an added value of allowing those travelling on Middle, Partridge and Harvard towards El Camino Real to have a view of open space rather than buildings, thereby reducing the visibility of larger development from these neighborhoods.
- The building breaks at College and Cambridge take the form of building recesses, acknowledging the intersecting streets. The recesses can serve as courtyards/entrances for the buildings, including vehicular access as appropriate.
- With the exception of Middle (discussed below), the building breaks (both building separation and recesses) are 60 feet wide, generally consistent with the right-of-way dimensions of the intersecting streets.

Publicly Accessible Open Space at Middle

The proposed revisions provide one sizable publicly-accessible open space at Middle rather than two as proposed in the Draft Specific Plan. The 120-foot wide break affords a welcoming and amply sized open space to enhance east-west connectivity, via a passage under/over the railroad tracks. It also affords a prominent “front door” to the development, a vehicular and service entry from El Camino Real and a retail/café “node” serving both residents and building tenants.

The northern edge of the break aligns with the northern edge of the Middle Avenue right-of-way, and it extends southward 120 feet. This ensures a sizable building pad north of Middle.

Open Space at 30%

The proposed revisions change the open space requirement from 40% to 30%, consistent with several El Camino Real districts.

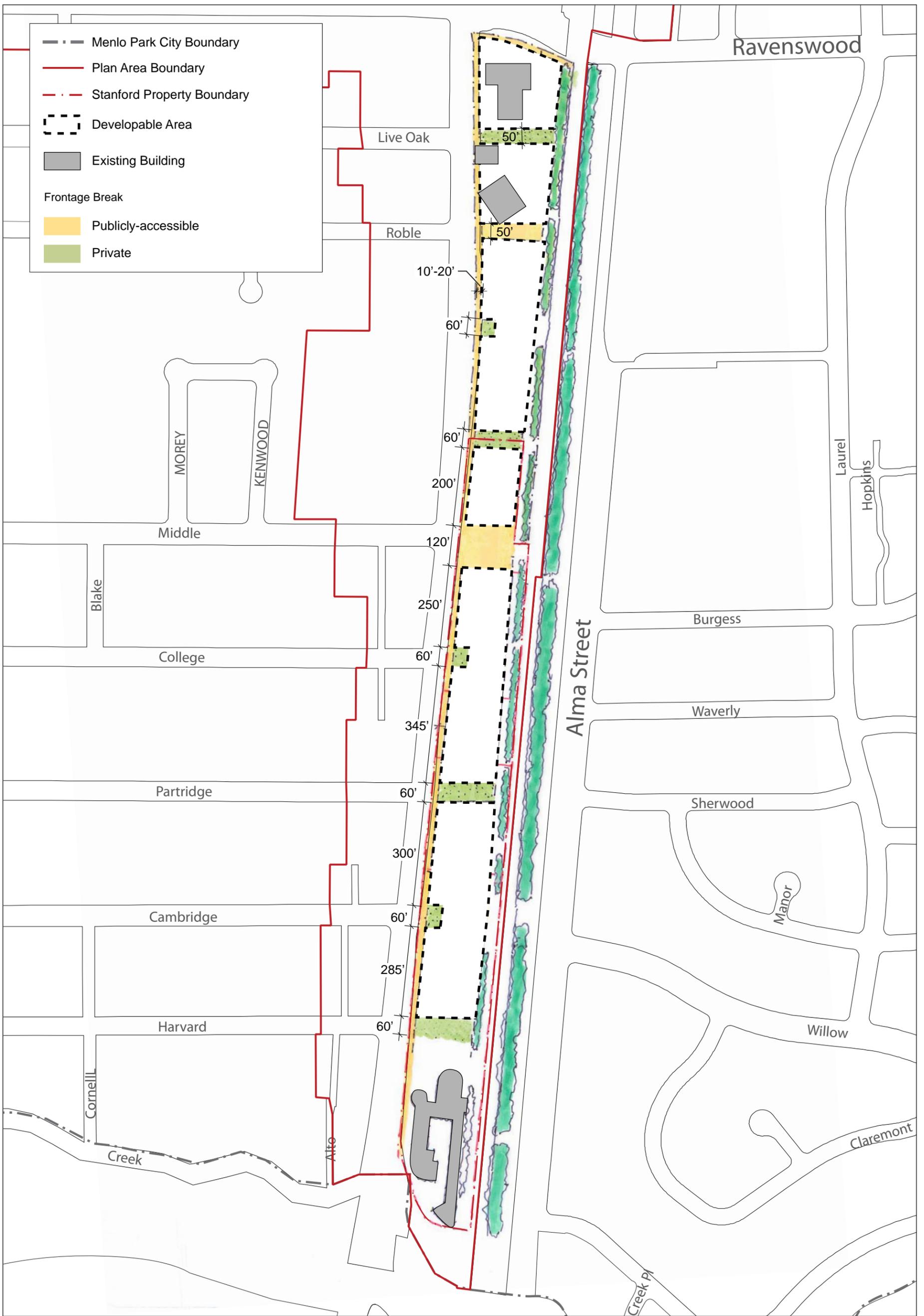
The definition of open space will be changed to make clear that open space, which includes all landscaping, plaza areas, pathways and walkways, are not preserved for public use.

Sustainable Development

The proposed revision retains LEED-ND “Silver” as a requirement of larger projects in the Specific Plan Study Area, but broadens the applicability thresholds so that additional properties other than Stanford will be required to meet this standard. Explained in more detail in the Task H Sustainability memo, LEED-ND has the added benefit of encouraging integrated “green” practices for larger projects with multiple buildings. It has particular merit for green infrastructure, such as on-site renewable energy sources, storm-water management and heat island reduction.

References and Attachments

- Attachment D.1. Draft Specific Plan Stanford Property Building Breaks
- Attachment D.2. Proposed Revisions to the Stanford Property Building Breaks
- Attachment D.3. Stanford Letter dated 12 August 2011



STANFORD
UNIVERSITY



August 12, 2011

Mr. Thomas Rogers
City of Menlo Park
701 Laurel Street
Menlo Park, CA 94025

Re: Menlo Park El Camino and Downtown Specific Plan (“the Plan”)

Dear Mr. Rogers:

Stanford University owns six parcels, totaling approximately 12.8 acres, in the El Camino Real South-East portion of the Menlo Park El Camino and Downtown Specific Plan area. We appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the City regarding the draft Plan’s policies. As you are aware, Stanford has participated since the beginning of the planning process in order to understand the community’s objectives as they relate to our properties. We support the Plan’s goals and believe the thorough public outreach process conducted to date, which has included extensive community involvement and input, has resulted in a draft Plan that can provide significant benefits to the Menlo Park community.

The draft Plan determines that Stanford’s land is suitable for multi-family residential, commercial and mixed use development, including a hotel, an east-west pedestrian and bicycle linkage near Middle Avenue connecting through Burgess Park, and a pedestrian promenade along El Camino Real.

The draft Plan allows a floor area ratio of 1.25 and a housing density of 40 dwelling units per acre on Stanford’s properties, with a potential Public Benefit Bonus of 1.75 FAR and 60 units per acre. The Plan recognizes that the increase in FAR and density help to finance public improvements. In addition, the Plan states that density bonuses could be considered for senior housing, additional residential units including affordable units, a hotel, and platinum LEED certified buildings.

While we support the Plan’s goals and policies, we are concerned that a few of the Plan’s requirements could seriously undermine our ability to redevelop our property in the manner that the Plan envisions. Development of Stanford’s property is highly constrained by the site’s narrow configuration and location sandwiched between El Camino Real and the railroad tracks. In order to provide the transit-oriented mix of uses, intensity and amenities desired by the community, we request additional flexibility to

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ATTACHMENT D.3

position structures in a manner that enables optimal use of the site. As explained in more detail below, our suggested revisions are intended to promote the Plan’s policies in a practical manner.

The following are specific concerns we have with the draft Specific Plan:

Building Breaks (Pages D3, D7, E33, E34, E35, E71 of the Plan)

The draft Plan’s standards and guidelines for building massing and modulation are intended to reduce the monolithic character of buildings, ensure that all new buildings complement the existing character of the area, ensure appropriate transitions to adjacent neighborhoods and provide variety and visual interest. Stanford agrees with these goals. As depicted on page E32, there are a variety of ways to incorporate both horizontal and vertical modulation into an attractive building design. However, we ask that the City modify the Plan to allow for additional flexibility with regard to building breaks.

The draft Plan states that building and frontage breaks are encouraged in all areas of the Plan with one exception: rather than encouraging breaks, the Plan *requires* building breaks in the southeast area of El Camino Real. (Page E33) We ask that the Plan be modified to *encourage* building breaks in the ECR-SE area as one of several methods of ensuring that buildings are not monolithic, but to *require* a building break only at Middle Avenue.

The Plan (at page E71) requires seven building breaks in the ECR – SE area of the Plan, each of which must be at least 50 feet wide, with one at 90 feet and another at 120 feet. Figure D1 on page D3 shows two of the breaks. Figure D5 on page D7 provides a conceptual diagram showing six such breaks. Figure E12 on page E35 provides a more detailed diagram showing all seven breaks. With the exception of the break at Middle Avenue, none of these breaks would enhance pedestrian or bicycle connections due to the location of the train tracks at the rear of the properties. However, as can be seen on the diagrams, the breaks will substantially constrain site development, resulting in relatively small building areas that will render the type of transit-oriented mixed use development envisioned by the Plan far less likely.

While we acknowledge the need for building modulation along El Camino Real, we believe the required building breaks called out in the Plan are neither necessary nor practical. As previously stated, the Stanford site is narrow and backs up to the Caltrain tracks. Visual breaks would only open a view corridor to the railroad right-of-way, limiting the aesthetic rationale behind the concept. Also, the narrowness of the site causes the building breaks to significantly limit design flexibility, as well as the ability to provide the density and mix of uses desired in the Plan. We suggest the following modifications to the draft Plan:

Middle Avenue

The Plan requires a minimum 120 foot building break at Middle Avenue. While we support the concept of a bicycle and pedestrian crossing at the train tracks in

the vicinity of Middle Avenue, this can be achieved within a narrower building break that does not severely restrict the ability to redevelop for mixed use on sites adjacent to this break, each of which is located near transit and would be linked to Burgess Park via the pedestrian and bicycle crossing. We suggest a reduced building break requirement on the order of 60 feet in the general vicinity of Middle Avenue to allow for flexibility in redevelopment. Also, locating the building break closer to the parcel line between APNs 071-440-040 and 071-440-030 would allow for greater development efficiency if the two parcels were developed separately. The 60 foot break would mirror the width of Middle Avenue and would provide space for a publicly accessible plaza with pedestrian amenities.

Cambridge Avenue

The Plan requires a 90 foot building break at Cambridge Avenue. A break in this location would essentially prevent redevelopment of the parcel to the south of Cambridge Avenue. There is only a small sliver of land between the existing Stanford Park Hotel parking lot and Cambridge Avenue. (The diagram on page E35 does not depict the existing, leased surface parking lot.) As previously stated, we recognize the benefits of building modulation at this location. However, it would be possible to provide the desired articulation at this location, as well as a plaza area, without a building break. For example, a “U” shaped building aligned with the Cambridge cross street would serve the same purpose as a complete building break. By contrast, a complete break in this location would render the undeveloped parcel to the south of Cambridge Avenue unusable.

Additional Breaks to the North and South of Middle Avenue

In addition to the breaks at Cambridge and Middle Avenue, the draft Specific Plan requires an additional 50 foot break at Roble Avenue located at ground level, and four more 50 foot breaks that could be located above a parking podium. While breaks could be encouraged as a means to provide building modulation, they should not be required. Other design requirements of the Plan would achieve the Specific Plan’s goal of mirroring the street grid on the other side of El Camino Real without unnecessarily constraining redevelopment opportunities. Given the site configuration and location, we ask that the Plan should be revised to address massing and modulation issues through means other than building breaks.

Setbacks (Page E70 of the Plan)

Front Setback

We support the Plan’s 10 foot minimum front setback along El Camino Real. However, it would be helpful to clarify that the Plan’s 15 foot sidewalk requirement includes 5 feet of existing right-of-way, in order to make the setback and sidewalk provisions consistent.

Rear Setback

The draft Plan requires a 20 foot rear setback. We feel that a rear setback adjacent to the Caltrain tracks is not necessary and could reduce the developable area of the parcels. We suggest no minimum rear setback, but recognize that fire district will retain the authority to impose specific building setbacks as needed. In some cases, uses such as surface or structured parking may be appropriate up to or close to the property line.

Open Space (Pages E70 and H10 of the Plan)

The draft Specific Plan proposes a minimum 40 percent open space requirement for the ECR-SE portion of the Plan area. Based on our review of the combined draft Specific Plan requirements applied to our parcels, we feel this level would be inconsistent with the high density transit-oriented mixed use development that the Plan envisions for our properties. The 20 percent open space requirement proposed for most other portions of the Plan area is more realistic for our area, and would still represent a significant improvement over the minimal open space currently on the sites.

The Plan recognizes that Stanford’s properties are located in a developed area that is separated from housing and other sensitive uses. The Plan calls for a relatively high intensity and density of uses on the site and provides for density bonuses as an incentive for providing desirable uses such as senior housing and a hotel. A 40 percent open space requirement runs contrary to these goals and is not needed in light of the properties’ location. Accordingly, we request a modification to the Plan to specify a 20 percent open space requirement in the ECR-SE portion of the Plan area.

In addition, we request a modification to the definition of Open Space, as found on page H10 of the draft Specific Plan, to clarify that open space includes all landscaping, plaza areas, pathways, and walkways, (including walkways along El Camino Real), and the phrase “and preserved from development for public use” be deleted. The current definition appears to restrict open space to a natural area, park, square or plaza open to the sky. Under such a restrictive definition, even a 20 percent open space requirement would be unduly restrictive and inconsistent with the Plan’s goals for a higher intensity of development.

Sustainability (Page E49 of the Plan)

Stanford University has a strong commitment to, and extensive record of providing, sustainable development and supports the Plan’s sustainability recommendations. However the assumption in policy E.3.8.3.03 on page E49 that redevelopment projects that are over 4 acres will have a greater ability to incorporate sustainability features than redevelopment projects that are less than 4 acres is not well reasoned or supported. Stanford’s site is long and narrow. Due to the policies of the draft Specific Plan for our

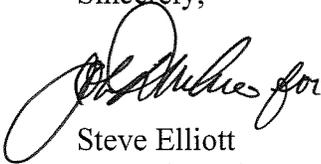
site, which encourage multiple uses including a hotel use, coupled with the narrowness of our site, we do not believe that we will experience sustainability opportunities that are greater than other, smaller redevelopment properties. Accordingly, we ask that the City delete recommendation E.3.8.3.03.

Transportation Demand Management (TDM) (Page F33 of the Plan)

Stanford has a long history of strong support for voluntary TDM and is a recognized leader in TDM program development and implementation. However, as indicated in detail in our letter dated June 20, 2011, state law prohibits the City from mandating TDM. Instead, the Specific Plan should refer to the City's General Plan TDM Policy II-C-1, which encourages the City to work with employers to encourage employees to use alternatives to the single occupant vehicle.

We appreciate being able to provide our comments to you. We also want to reiterate our support for the City's planning process and to urge you to take advantage of the significant efforts of all in the community who participated over the past few years.

Sincerely,



Steve Elliott
Managing Director, Development