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City wants 25-year open space commitment from Stanford

By Andria Strickley

Palo Alto City Council last night told Stanford University to set aside open space for 25 years in its long-range planning document.

Council voted to recommend 28 changes to the 10-year plan, a final draft of which will go to Santa Clara County Nov. 15. The recommendations will go to both Stanford and the county.

In the first draft of the plan released Sept. 20, Stanford promised to preserve its open space lands west of Junipero Serra Boulevard for the 10 years the plan encompasses. But council members said that wasn't nearly long enough to compensate for the amount of development the plan proposes.

"We feel (25 years) is essential," said council member Liz Kniss.

Stanford has proposed 2 million square feet of new academic development, plus over 2,000 apartments and homes -- which the Palo Alto Planning Commission has estimated will add up to over 4 million square feet.

"That's a whole lot of building going on in the core area," said Vice Mayor Lanie Wheeler.

Council also recommend the county differentiate between academic and open space zoning for Stanford lands. Although Stanford has promised to limit new development over the next 10 years to its core campus area, the university hasn't designated any of its lands as strictly "open space." Stanford has instead grouped open space and academic use together.

Responding to a Planning Commission suggestion, council will also recommend Stanford either build more housing than it is proposing or cut down on its planned growth. The Planning Commission pointed out that although the university proposes to build up to 2,780 new apartments and homes, the new faculty and students the plan proposes to draw will bring the net housing gain down to about 590 apartments and homes.

Other changes council will recommend include:

-- MIDDLE SCHOOL -- Council wants Stanford to set aside land for a middle school in the plan. Stanford spokesman Larry Horton said the university is in ongoing intense negotiations with the school district over a middle school site. He said the negotiations have been slow-going because the university hasn't been able to identify space in its core campus area for a middle school.

Although Stanford has said it won't build west of Junipero Serra for the next 10 years, Horton said the university hasn't ruled out building a middle school in the area.

-- TRAFFIC -- Council wants Stanford to adopt a policy stating the planned development won't create any new net commute trips.

-- BUILD-OUT -- In line with a suggestion from Palo Alto Planning Director Ed Gawf, council will recommend Stanford adopt a long-term vision, beyond the plan's 10-year scope, for the ultimate build-out of the university.

Also last night, council voted to approve spending \$50,000 for a feasibility study on building a joint

Stanford-Palo Alto performing arts center on the Stanford campus. The university has proposed a new performing arts facility as part of the 10-year plan.