

Stanford land use policies reflect commercial interest

By JOHN PHILO
(First in a two part series)

As the largest landholder in the Mid-Peninsula, Stanford University's land use policies have had a profound impact on the surrounding communities. The past decade has seen a protracted struggle over the development and use of Stanford's lands; recent months have seen important developments in this struggle, and indeed seem to indicate at least a temporary move away from new commercial and industrial developments. This first article will attempt to place these new developments in the context of the ongoing controversy by reviewing the history of the development of Stanford land and its impact on the Mid-Peninsula.

The intensive commercial and industrial development of Stanford lands began in

the early 1950s with the establishment of the Stanford Industrial Park. Starting with spin-offs from Stanford labs such as Hewlett-Packard and Varian Associates, the Industrial Park expanded rapidly as electronics, aerospace, and defense industries flocked to the Mid-Peninsula to be near Stanford's labs and personnel, SRI's business experts, and Palo Alto's exclusive residential area. The Korean War, heavy Cold War defense spending, and the Space Race all stimulated this growth.

The first major opposition to industrial development began in 1962 over the proposed Oregon Expressway. The Expressway was needed to funnel workers into the Industrial Park and to allow for its expansion across Foothill Expressway onto Coyote Hill. Homeowners along the route organized to oppose the Expressway and to preserve Palo Alto's residential character. A referendum yielded a narrow victory for the "commercialists" over the "residentialists."

The years 1962-68 saw continued struggles in Palo Alto over commercial expansion in the city, highlighted by the recall campaign in 1968 in which the commercialists took control of the City Council. These years also saw a local business boom as Vietnam dollars poured into defense industries. Ever larger numbers of people in the area began to question the "growth is good" dogma as they saw the wave of social problems brought on by development: congestion, air pollution, a severe housing shortage, land speculation, and the demolition of low-income neighborhoods to make way for "progress."

Coyote Hill

Stanford came back into the limelight when in the spring of 1969 bulldozers bit into Coyote Hill to build roads for a new industrial park. The public had been kept ignorant of these plans, and the outcry of environmentalists and residentialists drowned out the roar of the bulldozers on the hill. The construction began before the subdivision had been approved. A fight at the Palo Alto City Council ensued in which the lot division was approved by the margin of Mayor Jack Wheatley's vote. Mayor Wheatley's construction firm has done much of the building in the Industrial Park and has bid for contracts on Coyote Hill. A lawsuit filed by the Committee for Green Foothills against Palo Alto and

The unsightly appearance of grazing horses and wildflowers, photographed in 1969, no longer offends visitors to the Dillingham Project. See page seven.



Volume 73, Number 5

Stanford, California

November 22, 1972

Stanford land use policies

Continued from page one

Stanford alleging faulty procedures and conflict of interest has held up construction for three years. A recent out-of-court settlement will preserve all but one of the lots as open space for at least 20 years.

Dillingham

At the same time Stanford was also pushing plans for Dillingham Corporation's Palo Alto Square, a \$12 million development to include two 10-story office towers and a 17-story hotel and convention center on Stanford land at El Camino and Page Mill Road. Citizen opposition was unable to sway either the pro-development Palo Alto City Council or Stanford officials. Today Palo Alto Square stands 82% vacant, an empty shell surrounded by a sea of parking lot. Plans for the hotel have fallen through, as no one is willing to risk such a venture, especially in the current political climate.

Housing

Stanford was also coming under increasing pressure from within and from the community to use its lands to ease the housing shortage. Development of Stanford lands had brought thousands of workers into an area with a tight housing market. The Industrial Park, Welch Road Professional Area, and the Shopping Center employ about 25,000 people; additional thousands work in the companies attracted to the area by the firms on Stanford lands. Few of these workers can afford to live in Palo Alto, while pressure on the housing market drives up rents and forces lower-income residents out of their homes. The only housing on Stanford lands to accommodate these workers is the Oak Creek Apartments, 705 units of luxury housing. The University's own Moulton and Wright Committees called for building 600 to 2000 units of low-income housing on Stanford lands to ease the crisis. People in the community working on the housing

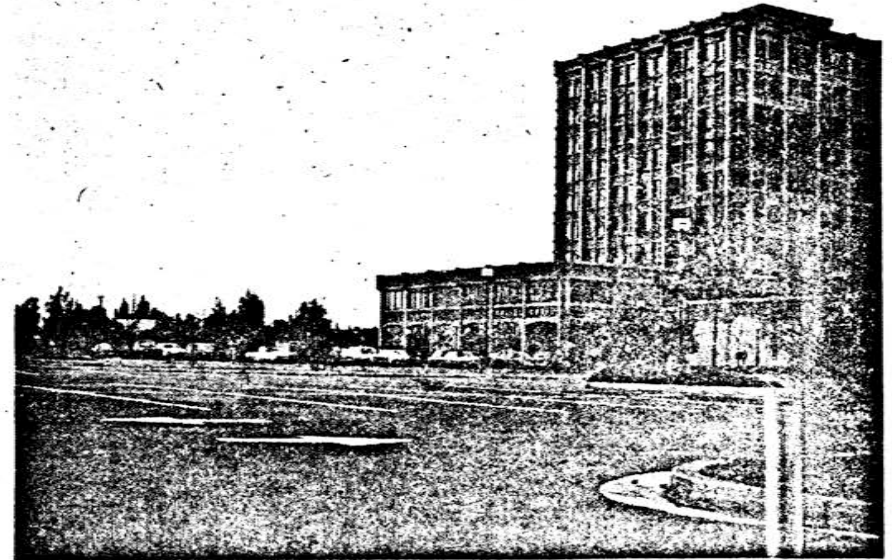
problem pointed the finger at Stanford as the source of the problem and became active both in pressuring Stanford to build housing and in opposing further commercial and industrial development of Stanford lands.

Willow Expressway

The first major setback to Stanford's land development plans came with the defeat in 1971 of the Willow Expressway. Like the Oregon Expressway, the Willow Expressway was to provide the necessary access for further development of Stanford lands. It would shuttle commuters to new industrial parks in the foothills and an expanded Shopping Center and Welch Road offices. It would also have destroyed large numbers of lower-cost homes in Menlo Park, Palo Alto, and East Palo Alto. Community sentiment had changed, as more people became conscious of the links between development, housing problems, and environmental decay. Moreover, successful campaigns against the Downtown Hospital and Superblock served to organize and strengthen the anti-development forces.

The Expressway battle was a real test of strength, for the anti-development forces were taking on the combined pro-development forces of Stanford, Palo Alto, and Menlo Park. Perhaps more significant, however, was that in defeating the Expressway the people of the Mid-Peninsula had for the first time in nine years of struggle been able to influence Stanford land use. In the next article we will examine the most recent developments in the Stanford land use controversy: the Livingston-Blayney Report, the Holiday Inn, Frenchman's Terrace, and Page Mill Plaza.

(John Philo is a member of Palo Alto Tenants' Union and serves as a student member of the Trustees' Committee on Land and Buildings.)



Now the wide vistas of clean concrete are contrasted with empty office buildings, marred only by a carefully managed shrub or two.

Area residents challenge development

By JOHN PHILO

(Editor's Note: This is the second article in a two part series on Stanford land use policies.)

Although there has been intense opposition to the commercial and industrial development of Stanford's lands for more than a decade, it is only in the past year that the anti-development forces have had any significant impact on Stanford's land use policies. These groups have been able to force Stanford to abandon and postpone plans for new industrial parks and office buildings, and to alter its land use priorities.

As described last issue, over the past twenty years Stanford has chosen to intensively develop its lands for commercial and industrial uses. This development has yielded only a 2% increase in University income, while it has created severe problems of housing, congestion, and pollution in the surrounding communities. As a result, Stanford's land use policies have come under increasing criticism, and each new development adds fuel to the controversy and strength to the opposition. Nevertheless, Stanford's intent to develop its lands further remains unswayed.

In May of 1970 Stanford commissioned the planning firm of Livingston & Blayney to create a plan for the use of Stanford's undeveloped lands. The priorities used to develop this plan were, in order of importance: (1) academic excellence of the University, (2) financial strength of the University, and (3) benefits to surrounding communities. Given the past history of commercial development and bottom priority for the interests of surrounding communities, the content of the Livingston & Blayney Land Use Policy/Plan was almost predestined.

six lanes. In other words, Livingston & Blayney were saying "You ain't seen nothin' yet!"

Fortunately community pressure and recent political developments have thwarted these grandiose development schemes. The anti-development forces have scored a significant victory by preventing Stanford from adopting and implementing the Policy/Plan recommendations. When Stanford held hearings on the Livingston & Blayney recommendations in the spring of 1971, the outcry was loud and long. The reaction from civic groups, environmental activities, and housing groups was almost entirely negative. These hearings adjourned over the summer and for some strange reason were never reconvened! Of far greater importance, however, was the defeat of the Willow Expressway by Menlo

Park voters, for this threw a literal roadblock in the way of plans for new industrial parks in the foothills.

By the beginning of 1972 a loose but powerful coalition of forces working to change Stanford's land use plans was emerging. This informal coalition contains environmentalists concerned by environmental decay caused by over-development. It includes neighborhood groups and residents concerned about the impact of development on their residential environment. It also includes housing groups, who see that more development worsens the housing situation and that Stanford's lands are the only large areas available for new housing. Anti-war activists have also participated because historically every new industrial

development has brought more war industry into the area. Stanford students and liberal faculty have, of course, also been involved. It is this combination of forces that has succeeded in altering Stanford's plans.

The Holiday Inn

The Holiday Inn referendum in June of this year was of major importance to the Stanford land use struggle. The 280-room luxury Holiday Inn was first approved by the outgoing pro-development Palo Alto City Council in June of 1971, and then given final approval in November. The site for the hotel is on Stanford land leased by the City. The Inn was chosen over alternate uses of the site that would meet community needs for housing, mass transit, recreation, or open space. Local real estate

Please turn to page three



Volume 73, Number 6

stanford, california

December 6, 1972

The recommendations were essentially to develop all lands not destined for academic uses. Rather than a single plan, five alternatives were offered. In all cases the Plan called for further expansion in areas already committed to development (the Mayfield School site, along Willow Road, and the Page Mill-Foothill corner). In addition, as many as three new industrial parks plus additional Willow Road offices were recommended. Some housing was also included, but the overall new jobs to new housing ratio varied between alternatives from 5 to 1 an astounding 35 to 1! The Policy/Plan also called for a new eight-lane Willow Expressway, the extension of Foothill Expressway, and widening Alpine Road to

Opposition to stanford land policies grows

Continued from page one

and development interests pushed for the Holiday Inn because it would provide facilities needed for further development of the area, and because it would force up land values and increase Palo Alto's "development potential." Stanford also supported the hotel, since it would greatly increase Stanford's income from the land, provide Stanford with banquet facilities, and provide luxury accommodations near the campus.

Outraged by the Council's approval of the Holiday Inn, the Palo Alto Tenants' Union decided to force a referendum on the zoning by gathering the necessary 1700 signatures in 30 days. With help from the other anti-development forces the issue was placed on the ballot and a very strong campaign waged. The real significance of this campaign was that for the first time the issues revolved around development *per se* and not around the Inn itself. Opponents of the Inn attacked the use of land to serve real estate and business interests rather than to meet community needs. Opponents also stressed how the Inn would serve the self-fulfilling function of stimulating further development. Proponents ran an expensive campaign featuring full-page newspaper ads, computer mailings, and even hardhats and students paid to go door-to-door. The Holiday Inn campaign was particularly tough for the anti-development forces to fight, as the Inn is neither in anyone's neighborhood nor a high-rise development. Therefore, although the Inn squeaked through by 800 votes, the message to the development interests was clear: community sentiment against development is very strong, and the anti-development forces have the strength and determination to put to a referendum and defeat any new development proposals. It is this fact that has forced Stanford to change its plans, for Stanford cannot develop its lands without approval of the neighboring municipalities.



Trustees negotiate land use policies with concerned citizens.

That the Holiday Inn referendum had shifted the balance of power soon became evident. This past summer Stanford sought approval of Page Mill Plaza, a development that would have put two high-rise office buildings on the Mayfield School site at Page Mill and El Camino (across from Dillingham's Palo Alto Square). This use of the site had been recommended by Livingston & Blayney. The offices would have wiped out Sojourner Truth Day Care Center and forced the relocation of a training program for unemployed aerospace workers and a continuation high school program. The same coalition of anti-development forces organized opposition to this proposal at the Planning Commission, and the Commission recommended denial of the zoning change. With opponents clearly ready to go through another referendum if necessary, Stanford and the developer made the unprecedented move of offering to reduce the size of the development in an attempt to weaken the opposition. When this gambit failed, the proposal was withdrawn.

Thus when the Board of Trustees met this September to decide the fate of the

Livingston & Blayney Policy/Plan, few options were open to them. The Policy/Plan cannot be implemented without community approval, and the community strongly disapproves. Moreover, to adopt the Policy/Plan nonetheless would only give new ammunition to the anti-development forces and even further worsen relations between Stanford and the community. Therefore the Trustees chose not to adopt Livingston/Blayney as policy but merely acknowledged it as useful information.

The significance of the Board's action is twofold. First, it proves that people at

Stanford and in the community *can* influence Stanford land use policy, even if only in a negative way. On the other hand, it is important to note that it took a decade of struggle and countless hours of work by hundreds of people to influence Stanford at all. Second, Stanford has been forced to alter its land use priorities. With scant possibility of proceeding with new large scale developments, Stanford must now concentrate on fully developing existing commercial and industrial areas. This means, for example, expanding the Shopping Center and filling vacant industrial park sites. Moreover, the Stanford administration and the Trustees now see that future development hinges on changing public opinion, and therefore have set a high priority on improving Stanford's image in the community.

It remains to be seen whether any long term change in land use policy can be made. The pro-development forces hope the political climate will change back in their favor, and indeed will work to change it. Real change will come only if the anti-development forces can maintain their energy and successfully promote land use policies that will benefit all the people rather than corporate interests and real estate developers.

(John Philo is a member of Palo Alto Tenants' Union and a student member of the Board of Trustees' Committee on Land & Buildings.)