

Stanford Planning Offices As Vacant For Mayfield School Site As It Appears

Land Development History

When it belonged to no one, the land of the Santa Clara Valley had a beauty that would be unrecognizable to us today. Forested ridges and grassy foothills rimmed the flatland, which joined the Bay in great marshlands full of shellfish and crab.

The history of the area is typical of California's history during the first two hundred years of settlement by European peoples. The Indian inhabitants were enslaved or driven off, and the great farms and ranches were established. A Spanish colonial government was replaced by Mexican control and finally by cessation to the United States in 1848. Each succeeding regime brought more population, more rigid concepts of property and more ruthless competition for wealth.

The modern development of the Mid-Peninsula had its origins in the career of one man: Leland Stanford. This Sacramento merchant accumulated a huge railroad fortune based on federal subsidy, brutal exploitation of Chinese workers, and a monopoly on California commerce. It is what Stanford did with his fortune that changed the history of the Mid-Peninsula. The opening of Stanford University in 1891 made research & training the area's principal economic resource.

In the 1930's, the University's engineering school began to spin off a number of industrial firms in the new field of electronics. The huge military purchases of World War II made these industries prosper, along with the University's research operations. The boom continued with the high demand for electronics hardware in the Korean conflict and the Cold War. Many corporations, including giant Lockheed, crowded onto the Mid-Peninsula to be near Stanford and its new Industrial Park. The Mid-Peninsula acquired a permanent war economy, and the last farms and orchards were paved over to provide expressways and suburban homes for those white people who could afford them.

By 1970, the people of the area were paying the costs of growth: a housing shortage, environmental blight, and the frailty of an economy based on lavish defense spending.

The Promised Land (winter 1970)

Housing

...many factors dictate that the University must take a broader view of its place in society. There is an accelerating awareness among students, faculty and members of the community that "education" can no longer exist in isolation from society as a whole. Education now must include active involvement in the community and in the nation, a nation which is in the midst of a domestic crisis without precedent since the Civil War. This University could not avoid involvement in that crisis if it chose to.

...the committee recommends that:

A. Stanford establish on its land a low rent housing development of significant size relative to the problem;

4. In speaking of a program of "significant size" the Committee means one which would equal between 10 and 20 percent of the current shortage. The committee's data shows a need for approximately 4000 low-rent units in the area; thus, the program recommended is for between 400 and 800 units.

The Moulton Committee Report 4/17/69

After receiving the report, the Board of Trustees approved the "urgent exploration" of housing on Stanford land for low and moderate income groups. In September, Alan S. Maremont of San Francisco was retained as an independent consultant for the study. A broadly representative committee under the chairmanship of Professor of History Gordon Wright was named to work with him. The committee has met throughout the fall and winter, and will report soon to President Pitzer.

"Questions And Answers About Stanford Land Use" 4/3/70

...Indeed, the situation has grown even worse since the Moulton Report was completed...
...During the past year, the number of reports and public meetings has considerably exceeded the number of low/moderate housing units actually built. It is not surprising that pressures continue to grow.

"General Recommendations" ...

2. THAT THE UNIVERSITY ADOPT PLANS FOR THE PHASED DEVELOPMENT OF 600 TO 2000 LOW/MODERATE INCOME UNITS, TO BE INTERSPERSED (ON CERTAIN SITES) WITH SOME MIDDLE-INCOME UNITS: THAT THE FIRST PHASE BEGIN AT THE EARLIEST POSSIBLE DATE, AND THAT FURTHER DEVELOPMENT TOWARD THE GOAL CONTINUE AS RAPIDLY AS FEASIBLE."

The Wright Committee Report 5/12/70

The Stanford University Board of Trustees has approved a Stanford Mid Peninsula Urban Coalition proposal for construction of 225 rental housing units on University land adjoining faculty-staff housing.

Construction of the project is not anticipated before late 1972 or early 1973

Stanford University News Release 9/16/71