



COMMITTEE FOR  
GREEN FOOTHILLS

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### **Carnegie Foundation's Proposal For Stanford Foothills Is Illegal: Stanford Disregards Hard Won Community Plan**

PALO ALTO -- Committee for Green Foothills, one of the Bay Area's oldest and most respected environmental advocacy organizations, announced today that the Carnegie Foundation's proposal for development in the Stanford foothills violates fundamental County planning principles and state law, and undercuts the recently approved Community Plan. In addition, the development would result in the loss of beautiful foothill open space, and destroy habitat valuable to the California tiger salamander. Committee for Green Foothills is urging the Santa Clara County Supervisors to deny the application for this development.

#### **Approval of Carnegie project would violate state law**

State law requires consistency between General Plans and all subordinate land use approvals.

The County General Plan expressly prohibits urban development, such as this office facility, outside of Palo Alto's urban service area – where the proposed location lies.

In addition, the project violates both the old and the new County plans designed to govern development on Stanford's lands. The University requested approval of this project during the development of Stanford's new Community Plan; the County proposes to grandfather this approval under planning principles that were current at that time. However, this project is inconsistent with both the old general plan requirements and the newly approved Community Plan policies for Stanford University.

The County has argued that Stanford is exempt from this fundamental County policy that has driven land use decisions in the region for decades. However, nothing in the existing County General Plan, the 2000 Community Plan or the 1985 Land Use Policy Agreement (between the County, the city of Palo Alto, and Stanford University) exempts Stanford from having to comply with these County General Plan policies, which prohibit urban development outside a city's Urban Service Area.

#### **Project violates new Community Plan's habitat protection policies**

It was ill-conceived for the Board to consider this project before the Community Plan was finalized. The County ignored the requests of the cities of Palo Alto, Menlo Park and Portola Valley, along with those of Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, Committee for Green Foothills, Greenbelt Alliance, Stanford Open Space Alliance and many other groups and individuals, to consider this proposal only after the comprehensive Community Plan process was finalized. If the County had waited until this landmark planning process was done, Carnegie would have been required to design a facility that complied with county policy.

The Community Plan establishes strong protections for sensitive habitat areas with the designation "Special Conservation Areas," where no development is allowed. The project undercuts these protective measures with its plans for a 40-car

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parking lot in the Special Conservation Area set aside as California tiger salamander habitat – a blatant violation of the intent of this regulation.

“The Carnegie’s proposal was illegal under the old planning principles and remains so under the new ones. Stanford’s willingness to disregard protective foothill policies does not bode well for the future of the hills.” states Denice Dade, Legislative Advocate for Committee for Green Foothills.

#### **Survival of the California tiger salamander is threatened; environmental analysis is legally inadequate**

The project’s Environmental Impact Report states that the proposed mitigation for the California tiger salamander would reduce impacts to a less than significant level – a requirement for the project’s approval. However, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the Department of Fish and Game and an independent biological consultant all conclude that impacts from this development can only be fully mitigated with permanent habitat protection – which Stanford refuses to grant.

Early in this process, the County specifically requested permanent dedication of habitat to adequately mitigate the impacts of the project. Stanford’s adamant refusal to do so resulted in the County backing down from this requirement. In its refusal to comply with established standards of state and federal agencies, Stanford is jeopardizing the very existence of the only remaining population of California tiger salamander on the Peninsula. The County must hold Stanford to the mitigation required of other developers.

“If Stanford is unwilling to comply with established mitigation for the California tiger salamander, then the University should not propose to destroy its critical habitat. This population of California tiger salamanders has been greatly impacted by Stanford’s development activities, and its survival now relies on the University’s responsible action. An institution with Stanford’s reputation and resources should not skirt its responsibility to protect a species that is in jeopardy of local extinction.” says Denice Dade, Legislative Advocate for Committee for Green Foothills.

In addition to its misleading statements regarding habitat mitigation, the Environmental Impact Report for this project is illegal, as it fails to adequately analyze a full range of alternative sites. The County allowed Carnegie to seriously consider just one location for the project, and hence did not adequately compare alternative sites. By offering Carnegie a low-cost lease on just this one site, Stanford artificially narrowed the potential sites to this one sensitive habitat area. It is both illegal and unconscionable for the County to allow such a development without full analysis of alternative sites that are more appropriate and environmentally superior.

#### **Site offers remarkable open space**

The Carnegie Foundation has tried to depict the proposed project site as not highly valued open space because there is existing development in the area. This simply is not the case. The site is exceptionally beautiful, and offers important foothills open space, as shown in the photos available from Committee for Green Foothills.

#### **About Committee for Green Foothills**

Committee for Green Foothills is a regional grassroots organization working to establish and maintain land-use policies that protect the environment throughout San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties. For nearly 40 years, CGF has been in the forefront of the continuing effort to protect the natural environment of our peninsula.

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[Pictures of the foothill location are available at www.greenfoothills.org/carnegiephotos.htm](http://www.greenfoothills.org/carnegiephotos.htm)