

STANFORD UNIVERSITY NEWS SERVICE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

STANFORD - Members of the Palo Alto Tenants Union (PATU), which includes both students and townspeople, have erected a small "tent city" next to Memorial Hall at Stanford to dramatize the need for more housing for low and moderate income families in the Mid-Peninsula.

Erected Monday, the "city" consists of two small tents and one with a capacity of 30 persons. Tuesday afternoon the PATU laced up the large tent's entrance and agreed to leave it unoccupied after field tests by Santa Clara County Fire Marshal John Baker showed its fabric was highly flammable.

Small groups of PATU supporters sat outside in the shade Tuesday leafleting passersby and about half a dozen spent Monday night there in sleeping bags. Following a Tuesday morning meeting with PATU representatives, Associates Provost Robert Rosenzweig said:

"Since the tents went up Monday morning, we have been trying to obtain more precise information on the uses to which they will be put, and how long they will be left up. It is our present understanding that the tents will be taken down over the weekend and that there is no intention that people will actually live in them.

"Given the present state of things, we have taken several steps. First, the County Fire Marshal has been informed of the existence of the tents and he is inquiring into any potential fire hazard they may present. This is obviously necessary in view of the highly dangerous fire conditions in the Bay Area, generally. Second, we have informed the County Health authorities. We assume that they will be alert to any public health problems that might arise.

"Clearly, either our understanding of the situation may be wrong, or circumstances may change. In either case, other action might be called for, and we are watching events with that in mind."

Earlier this month, the University announced the selection of the Stanford-Mid-Peninsula Urban Coalition as sponsor and developer for approximately 200 housing units for low and moderate income families in a racially balanced development on campus.

The project is planned for an 18-acre site at the intersection of Page Mill Road and Peter Coutts Road, adjoining faculty-staff housing on Frenchman's Hill and across the street from Hewlett-Packard's headquarters complex in the Stanford Industrial Park.

(more)

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A committee report published last spring recommended "phased development" of 600 to 2,000 housing units for low and moderate income families on campus. But it also pointed out that the total need can be met only through the combined efforts of several mid-Peninsula communities.

In an interview published in Tuesday's Stanford Daily, Executive Director Ira Hall of the Urban Coalition, said: "In terms of the demand (for more housing), I think the University's response should be much more than 200 units. However, I think they will have to get their feet wet before jumping in."

Recently elected a Stanford alumni trustee at age 26, Hall said he agreed with the conclusions of last spring's committee study. The Coalition estimates total housing needs for low and moderate income families on the Peninsula at 80,000 units over the next 20 years, not counting San Francisco or San Jose.

PATU spokesman Jean Hobson told a Radical Caucus meeting on campus Monday night that the tents were designed to dramatize the University's complicity in the present housing shortage. PATU leaflets charge that "Stanford's land development policies encourage profitable, war-related industry at the expense of housing for working people."

Miss Hobson told her audience of 150 that 100 persons in low and moderate income families had been evicted from their homes in downtown Palo Alto to make room for new high rise construction there.

Jim Shoch, a former Stanford student, suggested that the University should provide housing for "all oppressed people who want to live here," implying mainly those from the Bay Area.

He said the demand for housing was revolutionary, because capitalism can't meet the need for housing and it is not profitable to do so. Janet Weiss, a graduate student convicted on contempt of court charges stemming from campus disturbances last spring, said "that's a demand they can't meet." The University couldn't afford to have hordes of workers living in the "heartland" of "imperialism," she said.

An initial effort to establish the tent city on the oval in front of Stanford's Main Quadrangle Sunday ended quietly when leaders were advised that they would not be welcome.

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