

December 18, 2003

LA City Planning Department
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200 N. Spring Street Room 763
Los Angeles, CA 90012

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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEC 22 2003
ENVIRONMENTAL
UNIT

Re: Canyon Hills DEIR

Dear Planning Department,

The current DEIR seriously underestimates the effects of the Canyon Hills Development on the local community. Its defects are so numerous that the DEIR is misleading. To be fair to the community and to the legal process, the Planning Department should require the consultant to redo the EIR and re-release it for public comment when the defects have been corrected.

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The defects of the DEIR are numerous in the areas of population estimates and impacts on traffic, schools, and public services. However, I'll confine my detailed comments on the areas in which I have the most experience as a Sunland resident and a local educator in California ecology.

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Aesthetic Values and Visual Impact: One of our community's most important resources is its rural character. This is the reason I have chosen to live here. The DEIR attempts to mislead us by suggesting that 4.6 million cubic yards of grading and filling, years of construction, massive structures, and vastly increased light pollution will have minimal impacts.

Recreational Impact: The aesthetic qualities of the site are inherent and vital to the quality of recreational opportunities in our neighborhood. The EIR mentions trails in the Verdugo Mountains adjacent the proposed development, but it makes no mention that the northern portion of the site itself is one of the most beloved recreational resources in Sunland-Tujunga. I regularly ride bike and walk along Verdugo Crestline Drive and the trails near it, and I see other riders, moms with toddlers, couples walking dogs, teens on romantic strolls. In other words, a cross section of the community uses this local resource to "get away from it all." The EIR pretends we don't exist. For example, a footnote on page IV.F-2 suggests that it is "unlikely that material numbers of the public" hike the hillsides in the Verdugos at night. However, the trail they mention is one of the most popular night rides for mountain bikers in all of Los Angeles County, and many people hike it at night. The majority of this network of trails overlooks the proposed development, and the glare of light pollution and the aesthetic degradation would seriously reduce the quality of this experience. The EIR fails to account for how the project would impact local residents and recreational visitors.

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Biological Impacts: I teach classes in California natural history and ecology at Woodbury University in Burbank. Our classes make considerable use of the "living

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classroom" provided by the Verdugo Hills ecosystem. The EIR underestimates the use and value of wildlife corridors that provide essential links to the San Gabriel Mountains. If these links are lost, the principles of island biogeography make it clear that species within the resulting "island" will become extinct over time. The EIR repeatedly asserts that the development will have minimal impact on plant and animal life, yet it offers no reasoning to contradict the tenets of conservation biology that suggest otherwise.


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Traffic Impacts: As a south Sunland resident, I'm concerned that the EIR does not mention the likelihood that emergency access roads would eventually be opened to public use when residents of the proposed development demand it, as has occurred in other developments. This would cause our neighborhood streets to become dangerous commuter routes. It would also exacerbate current traffic problems such as the rush hour bottle-neck at Foothill and Sherman Grove. It would also increase the volume and speed of traffic on Apperson, which is already perilously close to being a thoroughfare.

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Again, The EIR is inadequate. It should be redrafted and released for additional public comment.

Sincerely,



Brad Monsma
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