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**DEC 26 2003**

ENVIRONMENTAL  
UNIT

Dec 20, 2003

Los Angeles City Planning Dept.  
Maya E. Zaitzevsky  
200 North Spring Street, Room 763  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: CANYON HILLS PROJECT  
EIR Case no: ENV-2002-2481-EIR

Ref. No: SCH # 2002091018

Dear Ms. Zaitzevsky,

I am David Long, a resident of Sunland for 11 years. As an interested member of the community, I reviewed a copy of the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the proposed Canyon Hills Housing Project.

This DEIR is certainly a bulky document, but as I began to read it, I felt that much of it was "word padding" that could give it the appearance of being a comprehensive evaluation without it actually addressing many serious impacts this proposed development would have on our community **FOREVER. I urge the City to have the developer re-do this environmental impact study addressing the issues others and I may bring up. Additionally, I urge the City to allow time for community members to respond to this second DEIR so that further inadequacies in can be brought to light. This project and its impact are HUGE and care must be taken to not overlook important consequences or rush through this process.**

61-1

I feel the DEIR is inadequate in the areas of aesthetics, noise, light pollution, detrimental impact on habitat for wildlife, violation of the community plan, and understated impact of a highly concentrated development (whether acknowledged by the developer as such or not). I have decided to pick one area of the DEIR to comment upon in detail-Traffic Congestion. As a resident of Sunland, this is a subject I know.

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There is no mention in the DEIR of potential impact to *existing neighborhoods* regarding traffic congestion resulting from the proposed connection of either Inspiration Way, Verdugo Crestline Drive, or especially, Woodward Avenue as a secondary emergency access for Development Area A of the project. **The impact is potentially devastating to the residential neighborhoods along the McGroarty Corridor and adjacent areas.**

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The DEIR indicates that an existing road (Inspiration Way, Verdugo Crestline Drive, or Woodward Avenue) would be extended to the new development Area A to provide secondary emergency access for Area A. Open passage by residents and visitors would be restricted. How this restriction would occur is not even mentioned in the DEIR but it is presumed to be a locked gate. My wife attended a Neighborhood Council meeting and she said the Canyon Hills representative that spoke stated the gate would be locked and only the firemen would have a key.

Using a locked gate or other similar means to restrict access to emergency vehicles is potentially catastrophic because for fire and paramedic services, *seconds count*. **Wild fires or heart attacks do not wait while someone is fumbling with a padlock on a gate.** Or what if some young vandal stuffs bubble gum in the lock, forcing the fire dept. to backtrack and go all the way around, wasting precious minutes. These existing padlocked gates I see around the hillside areas are mostly used to control access to dirt fire roads. They probably work fine for occasional passage by forest service personnel, but to have such a gate as emergency access for a community the size of proposed Area A is a very inadequate solution.

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The DEIR is inadequate in discussing the other important purpose of this secondary emergency access route and that is the evacuation of the residents of the new development because of fire, earthquake, landslide, etc. **The Fire department clearly requires this access route is usable by the residents to evacuate, but there is no mention of how the residents are to get through this locked gate.** 2. What if the residents need to get out before the fire department can unlock the gate? Will each resident be given a key or a pair of industrial strength bolt cutters?

So if this proposed extension of Inspiration Way were to be built, and blocked by a locked gate, it is only a small step for the residents to then petition to have the access opened up and allow free flow of traffic. This is not wild conjecture; this is a real likely hood. All it takes is for one resident in the new development to suffer or possibly die because the fire dept. couldn't get to them in time. Then the residents of the new development would get into an

61-5

uproar, or file a lawsuit and even the fire dept. would likely support opening the gate at that time.

Once the gate is opened and traffic unrestricted, it is easy to see that residents of the proposed development would begin to use the route as a shortcut to Sunland, rather than going around via La Tuna Canyon and up Tujunga Canyon Blvd. to Foothill. Such a shortcut would cut about 10 minutes from the drive, *and more during busy times*, and thus would be very attractive.

Additionally, the residents and businesses in Sunland around the Mt. Gleason Corridor would discover this same route as a shortcut to the 210 freeway, going up over the hill and through the proposed new residential area to enter or exit the 210 at La Tuna Canyon. 61-5

Thus, this route that began as "emergency access only" could become an unplanned busy thoroughfare through residential areas for access to the 210 freeway by residents and businesses in the entire Mt. Gleason region of Sunland and Tujunga. Nowhere in the DEIR is this mentioned. The DEIR does not describe anything about this gate other than the statement: "The access to this portion of the project site would be controlled so that it could only be utilized on an emergency basis (i.e., not available for day-to-day use by project residents or visitors.)" 1.

In the DEIR, Section VI Alternatives to the Proposed Project mentioned extending Woodward Avenue as a possible emergency access route. Although the developer less favored this option than either an extension of Inspiration Way or Verdugo Crestline Drive, it is still on the table as an alternative. As a resident living near Woodward, I know that on weekdays around 8:00am and 2:00pm, the traffic flow on Woodward Avenue between Day Street and Apperson slows to a crawl because of parents, school kids and school busses dropping off and picking up children at Apperson School. **Emergency vehicles would be slowed when attempting to travel that section of Woodward. Elementary school children that might be in the path of fast moving fire dept. vehicles would be endangered.** There is nothing in the DEIR about this. 61-6

In Summary:

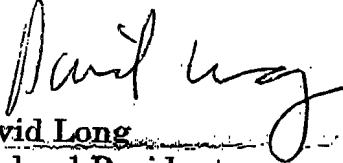
- The DEIR does not specify exactly how traffic on Inspiration Way, or another emergency route is going to be restricted to emergency vehicles only, nor is there any indication in the report that the Fire Dept. or the LAPD has approved of this plan. A locked gate is not adequate for a community the size of the proposed Area A. 61-7

- There is no indication in the DEIR of how this vague traffic restriction is guaranteed to be in place FOREVER so that the emergency access road does not become a de facto freeway access route for Sunland and Tujunga in general. 61-8
- The DEIR does not cover how the residents of Area A could self evacuate through the Inspiration Way gate if it somehow did not get unlocked during a fast moving emergency (such as a Santa Ana driven wild fire breaking out on La Tuna Canyon, landslide, etc.) 61-9
- The DEIR does not mention how the emergency vehicle route through the existing quiet neighborhoods leading up to Inspiration Way (or other emergency route) will adversely affect these quiet neighborhoods or how this emergency vehicle traffic through residential streets will affect the safety of residents and school children. 61-10
- The DEIR does not cover if there is adequate response time to Area A for Fire Dept. and Police who will need to travel at reduced speeds through the narrow residential streets leading up to the proposed emergency access route at Inspiration Way (or alternate) including time to gain access through a locked a gate or other means of restriction. Should the alternate plan of extending Woodward Avenue for emergency access be selected there is no study showing the impact of fast-moving emergency vehicles attempting to travel up Woodward during the two busy times each day the area is swarming with elementary school kids. 61-11
- There is no study on how such a thoroughfare would affect the migration of animals along the ridge above the proposed development. In my estimation, a busy road bisecting the whole mountain would drive the local coyotes and other wildlife down into both the proposed new residential neighborhoods of the development and the older neighborhoods on the Sunland side of the hill. 61-12
- Should the emergency access route be the alternative of Woodward Avenue, there is no study of how the grading would affect the existing neighborhoods, nor how McGroarty would be widened to allow for passage of emergency vehicles. 61-13
- I urge the city to have this DEIR redone so that it is more complete, accurate, and correctly states the impact on the existing community. Also, I urge the city to allow an additional community comment period so that the impact of adding this many homes in such a concentrated area is fully assessed as to the consequences to our community. 61-14

Should this project be approved and then constructed, the developer will eventually leave with hundreds of millions of dollars and for DECADES we in the community will be left dealing with the problems overlooked or understated in this Draft Environmental Impact Report.

61-14

Sincerely,



David Long  
Sunland Resident

1. p. 15 Section IV. I Transportation and Traffic.
2. J.1-2 p. 9 Section IV.J.1 Public Services

cc: Councilperson Wendy Gruel