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*****Impacts determined not to be significant are addressed in this EIR under **Section VII, Impacts Determined to be Insignificant**, and have been omitted from the Impact Section of this report.

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II. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

A. STATEMENT OF OBJECTIVES

The project applicant, Castle & Cooke California Inc. (Castle & Cooke) is seeking approval for the subdivision of 449± acres (net area) of land into 32 lots, with 29 of those lots to be used for single-family home development and two private streets. The remaining 424± acres would be permanently set aside as open space and are ultimately intended to be dedicated as permanent open space. A more detailed description of the project is presented in this document under the heading **Subsection D, Project Characteristics**. The following objectives have been established by the applicant for the proposed Mountaingate project:

- Provide additional single-family housing within the Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan area to address the 18 percent annual population increase for that area as described in the pending Housing Element of the City of Los Angeles *General Plan*.

- Plan those homes in a clustered pattern along the two ridgelines located at the southern end of the existing Mountaingate Community in order to:

  - Complement the existing homes,
  - Complete the existing roadway system, and
  - Minimize the environmental impacts associated with hillside development.

- Provide for permanent open space areas on the site and within the Mountaingate Community.

- Design high quality homes in order to respond to the demands of individuals and families seeking those housing opportunities in the Brentwood-Pacific-Palisades District Plan area and consistent with the standards of the residences of the existing Mountaingate Community.

- Bring enhancements to the existing residences within Mountaingate through improved:

  - Fire safety and life safety,
  - Drainage, and
  - Geologic stability.

These objectives serve as a basis for evaluation of associated environmental impacts and comparison of alternatives. In order to build the project, approval of the following actions by the City of Los Angeles is required:

- Approval of 2nd Revised Vesting Tentative Tract Map No. 53072;

- Major Plan Review application, pursuant to Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) Section 11.5.8, which includes approval of a *General Plan* Amendment and a zone change in order to achieve consistency in community plan land use and zoning for the property.

- Approval of lot averaging in the hillside RE 20-1-H zone pursuant to LAMC Section 17.05 H;
- Acquisition of permits from Army Corps of Engineers and Regional Water Quality Control Board, and;
- Other Approvals: Certain other unidentified discretionary approvals as the City may find appropriate in order to execute and implement the project, as necessary. These include, but are not limited to, approval of fire access lane widening, sewer connection permit; permits for the installation of public utilities; Department of Building and Safety permits that may include grading, foundation only and building; and the Mechanical Bureau permits for electrical, plumbing, etc.

B. LOCATION AND BOUNDARIES

The proposed residential subdivision is located within the existing 870-acre Mountaingate Community in the Brentwood-Pacific Palisades area of the City of Los Angeles. As illustrated in **Figure II-1**, the Mountaingate Community is located west of the Sepulveda Pass between the San Fernando Valley and the Los Angeles basin within the Santa Monica Mountains.

Two major ridgelines define the higher elevation points of the Mountaingate Community. In this Environmental Impact Report (EIR), these ridgelines are referred to as Canyonback and Stoney Hill, named for the streets that serve existing development on these ridges. Access to the development area of the project site is proposed from the southern extensions of Canyonback and Stoney Hill Roads as shown in **Figure II-2, Site Vicinity**. These streets are accessed by Mountaingate Drive, which serves as the main roadway in Mountaingate. Mountaingate Drive intersects with Sepulveda Boulevard at the lower elevations of the community, approximately 0.75 miles from the project site.

C. PROJECT HISTORY AND BACKGROUND

Beginning in 1960, County Sanitation District No. 2 of Los Angeles County conducted sanitary landfill operations in a series of canyons in the Santa Monica Mountains, immediately west of Sepulveda Boulevard, between Rimerton Road and Chalon Road in the City of Los Angeles. The landfills served the residential, commercial and industrial refuse disposal needs of approximately one million people living in the San Fernando Valley, the Santa Monica Mountains and in the West Los Angeles area from Santa Monica to Inglewood. Since the latter part of 1965, the refuse operation was conducted on private property in four canyons commonly referred to as Mission Canyons 4, 5, 6, and 7. In 1970, Canyons 4 and 5 were closed to land filling and a golf course was built over them, which is part of the current Mountaingate Country Club. Landfilling in Canyons 6 and 7 was completed by 1978, and in the same year, landfilling operations began in Mission Canyon 8, which continued until 1982.

Figure II-1

Regional Location Map

Figure II-2

Vicinity Map

In 1972 the City Council approved a zone change for an 870-acre area, referred to as Mountaingate, that changed the number of residential uses allowed from 1,174 to 870 units. In March 1973, the Los Angeles City Planning Department prepared an environmental impact report (No. 85-3310-GP / ZC) for the golf course on Mission Canyons 4 and 5 with adjacent residential development. That report addressed an approval of a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for the golf course, a zone variance request, and the approval of Tentative Tract No 29142 (master tract) for construction of 870 single-family cluster homes and town homes in the 870-acre Mountaingate Community.

In 1974 the master tract map was approved by the City Council. The master tract map divided the 870-acre community into five development phases with a total of 870 units as shown in **Figure II-3**. To date, subdivision maps for approximately 300 dwelling units have been filed and approved, and most of these homes have been built. **Figure II-4** depicts the location of each phase with number of units that have been built in Mountaingate. The first phase included the Ridge development, which was recorded with the City in 1976 followed by a map for the north golf course in 1977. The second phase included the Crown and Terrace developments that were recorded with the City in 1978. The third phase development was recorded in 1979 that included the Vista development and South Golf Course. In 1983, a map was recorded that included an additional phase three development, the Crest, and phase four development, the Promotory. These latter developments were built on parts of the Canyonback and Stoney Hill Ridges, which were graded to accommodate these residential developments.

In 1990 the previous property owner filed an application for a tract map to permit additional development of 184 homes on approximately 99 acres, to be located at the end of Canyonback and Stoney Hill Roads, the last remaining developable area of the original master tract map. That proposed development is shown in **Figure II-5** along with the existing residential developments and golf courses. That proposed plan was not approved by the City due to concerns related to the Mission Canyon 8 landfill such as methane gas migration.

The current property owner, Castle & Cooke, initiated planning of the proposed project, Mountaingate, in 1997. An application was filed in November 1997 with the City of Los Angeles for a development consisting of 164 residential dwelling units on approximately 99 acres. In November 1997, the City Planning Commission also held a public hearing and gave its initial approval to the Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan Update, which, following City Council approval in 1998, changed zoning and land use designations for the project site, resulting in the application of the City's slope density ordinance to the site. In January 1998, Castle & Cooke filed an application with the City for a smaller development, consisting of 117 units on 61 acres. After the City Council adopted the Community Plan

Update in June 1998, Castle & Cooke sued the City, challenging the approval as a violation of the California Environmental Quality Act and applicable land use laws.

In October 1999, Castle & Cooke dismissed its lawsuit with the City when it reached an agreement with the Mountaingate Community Association (MCA), a local homeowners association, and the Mountaingate Open Space Maintenance Association (MOSMA). Under this agreement, MCA and MOSMA agreed to a reduced density plan for the development of 29 dwelling units at Mountaingate, and agreed with Castle & Cooke that the City shall decide conditions and approvals consistent with standard City policy, precedent and previous approvals affecting the project site. The agreement also called for the parties to cooperate in finding appropriate means to preserve open space owned by Castle & Cooke in the vicinity of the project site.

In May 2000, Castle & Cooke filed a new project application with the City of Los Angeles. The application was subsequently modified in November 2000 and again in June 2003 to make minor changes in the lot configurations. The resulting lot layout is shown in the 2nd Revised VTTM 53072, which is discussed in detail below in **Subsection D, Project Characteristics**. This application is not being filed under the existing approved master tract map as the proposed number of units has been greatly reduced, the general plan and zoning designations have changed since the date of approval of the master tract map.

D. PROJECT CHARACTERISTICS

As previously described, the proposed project is located on approximately 449 acres within the 870-acre master tract. Although the applicant is entitled to build the 570 additional residential dwelling units under the approved master tract map, the proposed project as presented in **Figure II-6**, would subdivide the property into 32 lots. Lots 1-29 would be created to allow development of 29 single-family homes as well as the two private roads. The homes would be built on lots varying in size from approximately 17,341 square feet (approximately 0.4 acres) to 70,090 square feet (approximately 1.6 acres). The buildable pad areas on these lots would range from 10,696 square feet (approximately 0.2 acres) to 26,505 square feet (approximately 0.6 acres) Lots 30-32 would contain the areas to be dedicated as permanent open space.

The proposed 29 single-family homes and private streets would be built on 25.4 acres (1,104,318 square-feet) of the 449±-acre project area, which is immediately adjacent to the existing Mountaingate Crest and Promontory developments. The development area would account for approximately 6 percent of the

Figure II-3

Originally Approved Mountaingate Master Plan

Figure II-4

Currently Developed Areas of the Mountaingate Community

Figure II-5

Currently Developed Areas of the Mountaingate Community (with the 1990 Development Proposal)

Figure II-6

Second Revised VTTM 53072 (Map Pocket)

total area within the tract. The permanent open space area is approximately 424 acres, which represents approximately 94 percent of the total tract area. The 424 open space acres include the closed Mission Canyon 8 Landfill and Public Facilities (PF) zoned property, and are located south and west of the proposed 25.4-acre development area, and west of the existing Mountaingate Crown development.

This proposed project plan is presented in **Figure II-6, Second Revised VTTM 53072**. In addition to the residential development, the project includes a sewer lift station, detention basin and associated street system. A summary of the proposed land use characteristics is presented below in **Table II-1**.

Table II-1
Land Use Characteristics

Use	Size
Development Area (Lots 1 – 29)	25.4 acres
Proposed Residential Lots (Lots 1 – 29)	
Proposed Private Streets (Included in Lots 1 – 29)	
Subtotal	**25.4 acres**
Open Space Areas (Lots 30-32)	
Lots 30 – 31	319.3 acres
Mission Canyon 8 and PF-Zoned Area (Lot 32)	104.8 acres
Subtotal	**424.1 acres**
Gross Project Area (area within tract)	**449.5 acres**
Total Number of Dwelling Units	**29 units**
Total Number of Lots	**32 lots**

Source: Psomas, 2nd Revised Tentative Tract Map No. 53072, June 17, 2003.

Access to the 29 single-family home development would be provided from extensions of Canyonback and Stoney Hill Roads. A total of 22 residential lots would be developed along the Stoney Hill Road extension with 11 lots on the eastern side of the street and 11 lots on the western side. The extension of Stoney Hill Road will connect to a secondary fire / emergency access road. This secondary access road will be the existing maintenance road crossing the Mission Canyon 8 landfill area and connecting to Sepulveda Boulevard. The existing landfill maintenance road would be improved to meet the Los Angeles Fire Department emergency roadway access requirements of 20 feet minimum roadway width and less than15 percent grade.

The remaining 7 residential lots would be located on Canyonback Road along Canyonback Ridge. The proposed project would include a gate and pedestrian access at the entrance to the 6 of the 7 residential lots on Canyonback Road. One of the planned lots would be located near the current end of Canyonback Road and would be accessed from the existing Canyonback Road, while the other six lots would be located at the end of the new Canyonback cul-de-sac. The extension of Canyonback has been designed to accommodate the existing 30-foot wide easement containing the access road to the existing water tank located further south on the Canyonback ridge. The easement and access road would be located west of lot 27 at the end of the cul-de-sac.

A detention basin is proposed at the bottom of the canyon between the Stoney Hill and Canyonback ridges and would accept runoff from both streets. Energy dissipating structures are planned at the bottom of the slopes to slow the rate of runoff before it enters the detention basin and reduce erosion potential. Runoff from Canyonback would drain via a storm drain, southeast under the adjacent fill slope to the detention basin. Runoff from Stoney Hill would drain, via a storm drain adjacent to lot 17 into the detention basin. A standard sewer pump station would also be located at the low point on Stoney Hill road across from lot 26 to pump the sewage from the 6 lots at the end of the Stoney Hill cul-de-sac. Additionally, a second pump station would be located across from Lots 26 and 27 on Canyonback Road.

Development of the street extension and lots along the Stoney Hill ridge would require grading of a 13.3-acre area. In addition, 11.3 acres of adjacent areas will need to be graded to remediate existing soils and slope problems. A total of 575,000 cubic yards of earth would be cut in this area. As shown on the tract map, 525,000 cubic yards would be deposited in the adjacent canyon between the Stoney Hill and Canyonback ridgelines. The remaining 50,000 cubic yards would be used as additional fill for the Canyonback Ridge or balanced on the Mission Canyon 8 landfill.

Development of the street extension of Canyonback Road and the associated lots would require grading of 11.0 acres and remedial grading of an adjacent 7.8 acres. A total of 480,000 cubic yards of earth would be cut in the Canyonback development area. A total of 480,000 cubic yards of fill would be placed in the adjacent canyon between the Stoney Hill and Canyonback ridgelines.

The proposed remedial grading will include grading required to overexcavate and recompact the earth in the proposed building pads, removal and recompaction of earth in areas where there are existing landslides and grading to create shear keys to stabilize landslide and slope areas. Approximately 91,000 cubic yards would be overexcavated, 850,000 cubic yards would be removed and recompacted in

place to correct existing landslides, while 24,000 cubic yards would be graded in place to create the proposed shear keys for a total of 965,000 cubic yards of remedial earthwork.

In summary, 1,055,000 cubic yards of earth will be cut in the Stoney Hill and Canyonback development areas and placed as fill on the site while 965,000 cubic yards of earth material will be graded to remediate existing landslide and soils conditions.

Grading activities would involve the use of standard earth moving equipment such as loaders, bulldozers, backhoes, and other related equipment. All heavy-duty equipment would be stored on the site over the duration of construction activities to prevent disruption to the surrounding residential uses. While construction activities will vary depending on the phase of the project, most of the equipment will be used early in the process and only for a short period of time.

During construction grading operations and general construction activity, all construction equipment would be stored and staged at two on-site locations. These locations are illustrated on **Figure II-7**. As shown, the staging areas would be located away from the existing residential uses in order to reduce any potential construction disturbances. The maintenance area and vehicle inspection area would be located on the Stoney Hill ridge site. This area would be utilized for periodic inspection of construction vehicles and would be used to perform any required maintenance work and minor mechanical repairs as well as refueling and other operational needs.

It should be noted that in order to reduce construction related traffic on the local residential roadways, the proposed project has been designed to minimize grading and eliminate the need for any export of earth materials from the immediate area to reduce any disturbance to the existing homes in the Mountaingate Community with regards to traffic and access, air, noise, safety, and aesthetics. In addition, a majority of the construction equipment needed would arrive on site via the proposed secondary access road located on the Mission 8 landfill site. Again, this would reduce the overall number of construction related trips on the residential streets in the Mountaingate Community.

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Figure II-7

Staging Areas for Construction Equipment