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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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IV.T CULTURAL RESOURCES

INTRODUCTION

As part of the scoping process for this Draft EIR, the City of Los Angeles Planning Department Environmental Staff Advisory Committee determined that the project site could contain unrecorded archaeological sites. Based on this potential, an archival and historical records search that focused on the project site was conducted by the UCLA Archaeological Information Center. The UCLA search concluded that a Phase I Archaeological Survey should be conducted for the project site in order to determine the existence, or lack thereof, of significant archaeological resources on the project site. The analysis in this section is summarized from the Phase I Archaeological Survey, which was conducted by W&S Consultants. The Phase I report is attached to this Draft EIR as **Appendix G**.

Paleontological resources are fossils from prehistoric periods, found in rock units. The Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County Library contains reports and records of surveys and general information on paleontological sites in Los Angeles County. As part of the scoping process for this EIR, the City of Los Angeles Planning Department's Environmental Staff Advisory Committee determined that the project site is located in an area likely to yield unrecorded paleontological sites. As a result, a paleontological records search was conducted for the locality and specimen data for the project site to determine the likelihood of an adverse environmental impact to paleontological resources. The analysis presented in this section is based on the paleontological records search conducted by the Vertebrae Paleontology Section of the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County in November 1997. Results of the paleontological records search are included in **Appendix G** of this EIR.

ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Prehistoric and Historic Setting

The project site lies within the ethnographic territory of the Native American group known as the Gabrielino, one of the wealthiest, most populous, and most powerful ethnic nationalities of aboriginal Southern California. Gabrielino territory included the Los Angeles Basin, the coast from Aliso Creek in the south to Topanga Creek in the north, the four southern Channel Islands, and watersheds of the Los Angeles, San Gabriel, and Santa Ana Rivers.

The Gabrielino were not the first inhabitants of the Los Angeles Basin, but arrived around 500 B.C. The Gabrielino are descendants of the Shoshonean migration, which originated out of the Great Basin and displaced the already established Hokan speakers. The Gabrielino were advanced in their culture, social organization, religious beliefs, and art and material production. Class differentiation, inherited chieftainship, and intervillage alliances were all components of Gabrielino society. At the time of European contact, the Gabrielino were actively involved in trade using shell and beads as currency. Overall, the Gabrielino were known for excellent artisanship in the form of pipes, ornaments, cooking implements, inlay work, and basketry.

Archaeological Record Search

A historical and archival records search conducted by UCLA Archaeological Information Center indicated that three surveys/excavations have been conducted within a one-half mile radius of the project area. No prehistoric or historic archaeological resources were identified as a result of these surveys/excavations indicating that the potential for resources is low. In addition to the three surveys/excavations, the UCLA Archaeological Information Center indicated that 26 investigations have been conducted on the Beverly Hills and Topanga quadrangles, within which the project is located. However, the UCLA Archaeological Information Center could not determine the location of these surveys due to insufficient information.

Historic Architecture Record Search

As part of the archival and historical records search conducted by UCLA Archaeological Information Center, lists from various national, state, and local agencies were consulted to identify architectural historical resources in the project site. These lists included the California State Historical Resources Inventory Database, National Register of Historical Places, California Historical Landmarks, and California Points of Historic Interest. These lists did not indicate any architectural historical resources are located within a one-half mile radius of the site. In addition, inspection of historic maps for the project area by the UCLA Archaeological Information Center indicated that historical resources were not present on or in the immediate vicinity of the project site.

Phase I Archaeological Survey

The Phase I Archaeological Survey conducted within the boundaries of the Mountaingate project site by W&S Consultants included an intensive surface survey of the Mountaingate study area between January 7 and 9, 1998. In the areas of flat terrain the ground surface was examined by walking transects

across the study area to identify artifacts or other archaeological indicators that might be present on the ground surface. Generally, flat areas were restricted to ridgelines. Special attention was paid to depositional environments, such as saddles, swales and toeslopes, where the likelihood of archaeological preservation is enhanced. Areas of steep terrain, exceeding the angle of repose, could not be walked for safety purposes; however, the deposition and preservation of archaeological remains in such steep environments is extremely unlikely. The survey, therefore, covered 100 percent of the study area that might potentially contain archaeological remains.

In general, ground surface visibility during the fieldwork was found to be fair. That is, the flat terrain contained only a low cover of vegetation. While dense chaparral was present on the slopes, the steepness of these areas precludes the preservation of archaeological remains. Overall, the Phase I survey concluded that there was no evidence indicating the presence of prehistoric or historic archaeological resources on the project site.

Environmental Impact Analysis

Threshold of Significance

The L.A. CEQA *Thresholds Guide* indicates that a project would normally have a significant impact upon archaeological resources if it could disturb, damage, or degrade an archaeological resource or its setting that is found to be important under the criteria of CEQA because it:[1]

- Is associated with an event or person of recognized importance in California or American prehistory or of recognized scientific importance in prehistory;
- Can provide information which is both of demonstrable public interest and useful in addressing scientifically consequential and reasonable archaeological research questions;
- Has a special or particular quality, such as the oldest, best, largest, or last surviving example of its kind;
- Is at least 100 years old and possesses substantial stratigraphic integrity; or
- Involves important research questions that historical research has shown can be answered only with archaeological methods.

1 L.A. CEQA *Thresholds Guide*, City of Los Angeles, Environmental Affairs Department, May 14, 1998, pp. M.2-3 and M.2-4.

For the purposes of this analysis, the project would result in a significant impact if it would disrupt or adversely affect a prehistoric or historic archaeological site or a property of historic or cultural significance to a community, or ethnic or social group.

Project Impacts

As proposed, the project would require grading of the site for the construction of building foundations and roadways, and trenching for utilities and storm drains. This may affect cultural resources on the project site, should there be any.

As previously stated, background studies, including the Phase I Archaeological Survey on the project site, did not reveal the existence of any prehistoric or historic cultural resources on the project site. Further, given the rugged nature of the site, the likelihood for the existence of archaeological or historic resources on the site is considered to be low. Therefore, no additional archaeological or historical work is recommended on the site. Based on the above, implementation of the proposed Mountaingate project would result in less than significant impacts to archaeological and historic resources.

Because buried remains generally go undetected during surface surveys, archaeological resources could be encountered during site preparation and construction. In the unlikely event that archaeological or historic resources are uncovered during construction or grading. Impacts to such resources would be significant.

Cumulative Impacts

Development of the open lands and the construction of the related project would involve grading and earthwork that may affect archaeological or historical resources in the general area, should there be any. However, the occurrence of cultural resources and impacts to these resources tend to be site specific rather than cumulative in nature. The development of each site would, therefore, have to be consistent with City of Los Angeles requirements as they pertain to the identification, protection and conservation of cultural resources. As well, each development site is subject to uniform site development and construction standards relative to the protection and conservation of cultural resources that are prevalent within the region. As a result, adherence to proper construction practices and to the requirements of the Municipal Code would be expected to reduce cumulative impacts to an acceptable level by City standards, given the existing setting in the area pertaining to cultural resources. As such,

impacts to archaeological resources by the project and related project would not be cumulatively considerable and not significant.

Mitigation Measures

1. A qualified archaeologist shall be retained to monitor initial grading. If any archaeological or historical remains are found during the development, the archaeologist shall be contacted in order to assess the significance of the resource and to recommend appropriate protective measures. The archaeologist shall have the power to order temporary cessation of grading activity in order to assess the significance of such materials, and to take appropriate protective measures.

2. If human remains of Native American origin are encountered during the project, the County Coroner's Office and the Native American Heritage Commission shall be contacted for preservation and protection of the remains.

Adverse Effects

Incorporation of the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR would reduce any significant impacts to a level that is less than significant.

PALEONTOLOGICAL RESOURCES

Environmental Setting

Rock Units

The proposed project site is located in the Santa Monica Mountains. Geologically, the site is underlain by bedrock of the Santa Monica Slate and the Modelo Formation as shown in **Figure IV.A-1**, **Section IV.A, Earth**, of this Draft EIR. The rock units exposed in the project area are the upper Jurassic marine unit known as the Santa Monica Shale and the upper Miocene Marine Modelo Formation.

The Santa Monica Shale is the predominantly exposed formation in the project area, and is found extensively on the project site. The Modelo Formation is extensively exposed on the northern side of the Santa Monica Mountains. A narrow exposure of the Modelo Formation extends southwards on

Mandeville Canyon in the general vicinity of the project site. Parts of this exposure occur in the northwest corner and western boundaries of the project site.

Fossil Potential

The Santa Monica Shale is not very fossiliferous, and it is mostly known from fossil gastropod mollusks. Although the Santa Monica Shale is identified as an upper Jurassic Marine unit, there is little knowledge about Jurassic vertebrates in California. In fact, no Jurassic vertebrates have been discovered in California.

On the other hand, the Modelo Formation is fossiliferous and contains all of the typical Late Miocene marine vertebrae taxa of sharks, bony fish, sea turtles, marine birds, sea lions, dolphins and whales. In addition, the peculiar extinct marine mammals called desmostylians are known from isolated skeletal elements preserved in the Modelo Formation. Larger fossil vertebrate remains are uncommon in the Modelo Formation and their occurrence is unpredictable.

According to the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, there are no fossil localities within the Mountaingate project boundaries. All the fossil localities in the general vicinity of the project site are from rock units different from those exposed on the project site.[2]

Environmental Impact Analysis

Threshold of Significance

The L.A. CEQA *Thresholds Guide* indicates that the determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis considering the following factors:[3]

- Whether, or the degree to which, the project might result in the permanent loss of, or loss of access to, a paleontological resource; and
- Whether the paleontological resource is of regional or statewide importance.

For the purposes of this analysis, the project would result in a significant impact if it would disrupt or adversely affect a paleontological site.

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2 Samuel A. McLeod, Vertebrate Paleontology Division, Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, Telephone Conversation with Impact Sciences personnel, November 12, 1997.

3 L.A. CEQA *Thresholds Guide*, City of Los Angeles, Environmental Affairs Department, May 14, 1998, p. M.1-3.

Project Impacts

The development of the 29 homes would involve grading, excavation and earthwork during construction. These ground-disturbing activities could potentially result in significant impacts to paleontological resources, should there be any within the rock units found at the project site.

As stated above, there are no known fossil localities within the entire project site. The bedrock unit underlying the proposed construction area largely consists of Santa Monica Shale, which is known to be less fossiliferous. Given that no Jurassic vertebrates have been discovered in California, it would be extremely important if any fossil vertebrates were found in the Santa Monica Shale.

The bedrock unit of the northwestern and western fringes of the construction area contains Modelo Formation as shown in **Figure IV.A-1**, **Section IV.A, Earth**, of this Draft EIR. This type of bedrock is known to be fossiliferous. As such, there is the likely potential of encountering significant vertebrate remains during subsurface excavations in the part of the project site containing Modelo Formation.

Given the lack of knowledge of Jurassic vertebrates in California, and the paucity of knowledge of the fossil vertebrate faunas from the Modelo Formation, impacts to paleontological resources as a result of the proposed Mountaingate project would be considered significant. However, mitigation has been included that would reduce these impacts to less than significant.

Cumulative Impacts

Development of the open lands and the construction of the related project would involve grading and earth work that could potentially result in significant impacts to paleontological resources. However, the occurrence of paleontological resources and impacts to these resources tend to be site specific rather than cumulative in nature. The development of each site would, therefore, have to be consistent with City of Los Angeles requirements as they pertain to the identification, protection and conservation of Paleontological resources. As well, each development site is subject to uniform site development and construction standards relative to the protection and conservation of paleontological resources that are prevalent within the region. As a result, adherence to proper construction practices and to the requirements of the Municipal Code would be expected to reduce potential impacts to an acceptable level, given known paleontological localities and characteristics of unit rocks.

Mitigation Measures

1. Excavation activities during construction at the project site shall be monitored by a qualified vertebrate paleontologist. The monitor shall be equipped to recover any exposed fossils remains, and quickly and professionally collect them without hindering development activities.

Adverse Effects

Incorporation of the mitigation measures recommended in this EIR would reduce any significant impacts to a level that is less than significant.