

Feb. 20, 2005

Councilmember Wendy Greuel
City Hall Council District 2
200 N. Spring Street #475
Los Angeles, CA 90012



Explore, enjoy and protect the planet

Angeles Chapter, Verdugo Hills Group
PO Box 4242, Sunland, CA 91041

Cc: Councilmember Tony Cardenas, Councilmember
Ed Reyes, Councilmember Antonio Villagairosa,
Councilmember Jack Weiss, Mayor James K. Hahn

RE: Whitebird Canyon Hills

Planning Commission Case Nos. CPC 2004-7739-DA, CPC 2004-4344-ZC-GPA-MPR

Dear Councilmember Greuel:

The Sierra Club supported your City Council candidacy two years ago, and we continue to support you and your efforts. Canyon Hills is a very big issue for us. We have thousands of members in your council district, and when I took a poll at our Group meeting recently Canyon Hills came out as the number-one environmental issue our members are concerned about. As you know, this issue is also very important to the community at large.

The Sierra Club would prefer that this property remain as open space *in toto*, but we acknowledge that the City can't legally compel this. On the other hand, the City is not compelled to grant exceptions to the land-use laws and regulations in order to increase the developer's profits.

The Sierra Club has participated extensively in the review process for Canyon Hills, working together with other community organizations including the Neighborhood Councils and FALCON. Here is a summary of what we believe to be the community consensus:

- We must determine the correct maximum number of dwelling units allowed on the entire property under the Slope Density Ordinance (see the discussion below).
- The City should allow this number of dwelling units to be built using a clustered design that minimizes grading, with a minimum RE-40 lot size, and with all houses placed north of the I-210 freeway. As part of the agreement, the developer must donate the remaining portion of the property to the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy to be preserved as open space.
- There should be no changes to the Community Plan or the Scenic Preservation Specific Plan. There should be no sound walls along the freeway. Horse-keeping characteristics of the area should be preserved.

These are just the main points. Once the broad outlines of the project are agreed to, the community would like to have a chance to negotiate the finer details.

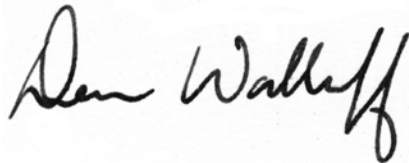
The principle barrier to achieving a consensus along these lines is that we still don't agree on the number of dwelling units allowed on the property under the Slope Density Ordinance. The developer's shenanigans with respect to this number are shameful, and the City Planning Department's willingness to go along with the developer on this issue is scandalous. They're exercising no oversight at all. We request you to ensure that they revisit this issue, and demand an accurate determination of the property's average slope, which is the basis for the allowed density under the Ordinance.

I have enclosed a copy of a recent Sierra Club press release on this issue, an article I wrote for our Group newsletter, and a copy of a letter that Bill Eick (a local land-use attorney) wrote to the City Planning Dept. Mr. Eick's letter conclusively demonstrates that the maximum number of dwellings allowed on the 887-acre property is 67 if the developer's inaccurate map is used. It will almost certainly be less, perhaps as few as 45, when a map of the required accuracy is used as a basis for computing the average slope.

The developer's attempt to circumvent the Slope Density Ordinance is a city-wide issue the outcome of which will affect future developments in other hilly areas of Los Angeles, including the Santa Monica mountains, the Hollywood Hills, Pacific Palisades, etc. We're asking you to take the lead in defending this important law.

Please respond to this letter and let me know your position on these issues.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Wallraff". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dean Wallraff
Conservation Chair, Verdugo Hills Group
Angeles Chapter, Sierra Club
(818) 679-3141 deanraff@verdugos.org

Enclosures: Verdugo Views Article, Sierra Club Press Release dated Feb. 17, 2005,
William Eick letter to City Planning Commission, Sierra Club brochures "The Truth
about Canyon Hills, "Guide to Building More Livable Communities: