



UMCA

Upper Mandeville Canyon Property Owners' Association
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August 3, 2010

Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Sent Via Email

**Re: File Number: 10-1001
Upper Mandeville Canyon Association
Support for Baseline Hillside Ordinance**

Dear City Council Members:

The Upper Mandeville Canyon Property Owners' Association ("UMCA"), formed in 1956, represents the approximately 300 families residing in the upper section of Mandeville Canyon. The UMCA strongly supports the Baseline Hillside Ordinance ("BHO") *as initially proposed*, which would implement an essential layer of protection for hillside areas. The UMCA therefore supports reinstatement of protections initially contained in the BHO, with the restored protection measures provided in the letters submitted by Councilmember Paul Koretz and the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association. Through the imposition of such review protocols and limitations, the BHO can significantly aid in preserving the natural beauty of hillside environments, prevent erosion and other predicates of hillside instability, and reduce emergency response times to remote hillside residential areas like Mandeville Canyon.

The Upper Mandeville Canyon area has a long history of floods, mudslides, hillside instability, fires, property damage and death. Several years ago, at the height of the development boon, several hillside lots previously considered undevelopable were purchased by spec developers who constructed large mansions cut into the side of the canyon, requiring massive retaining walls and caissons, with septic systems located in Mandeville Canyon Creek.

These over-sized structures are grossly out of character with our hillside community, with massive, out-of-scale retaining walls towering over the natural hillside environment. They also destabilized the hillsides during construction, and have created environmental hazards,

including water pollution, erosion, risk of flooding, and loss of wildlife corridors. In an unprecedented action, the Los Angeles Regional Water Quality Control Board stepped in to address the environmental water-quality hazards and require that the City implement the necessary best management practices.

Mandeville Canyon Road is a narrow, substandard street, with inherent emergency-response delays. Construction with unlimited grading activity and over-development of the hillsides have greatly strained the roadway, caused delays, and, through the storm drains, carried pollution and construction debris into the Santa Monica Bay.

Unfortunately, Upper Mandeville Canyon now has several over-developed lots that illustrate the need for the BHO:



3565 Mandeville Canyon Road



3685 Mandeville Canyon Road



3715 Mandeville Canyon Road



3715 Mandeville Canyon Road

The BHO, as initially proposed, is a necessary *first step* to implement a comprehensive set of reasonable hillside safety and environmental regulations to protect hillside areas. While the BHO does not *directly* regulate the use of retaining and structural walls, the FAR and other baseline development limitations would have triggered a public review process that might have prevented the type of over-built structures depicted in these photographs.

Similarly, the placement of septic systems too close to the stream is a result of over-development on the lots. The initially proposed limitations would require spec developers, like those who built the pictured structures, to participate in a public process instead of unilaterally taking up entire hillside properties with out-of-scale buildings, preventing septic systems from being situated at a safe distance from streams and other tributaries. The BHO as initially

proposed would thereby provide significant protection against over-development of hillside properties by requiring meaningful public scrutiny. In sum, the BHO as initially proposed would preserve more of the hillsides, promote development and grading consistent with the hillsides' natural contours, and serve to limit the traffic-producing and emergency-response delaying impacts of hauling through grading and fill limitations.

The BHO will prevent the transformation of steep, open space hillside properties *from this:*



3663 Mandeville Canyon Road

To this:

An architectural rendering of a house on a hillside. The top part shows a cutaway view of the house built into the hillside. The bottom part shows two different views of the house: one from a low angle and one from a higher angle. The house has a modern, multi-level design with large windows and a flat roof.

3663 Mandeville Canyon Road, Brentwood
Potentially Sub Dividable Lush Mandeville Canyon Site!

Approximately 3/4 on an acre with broad front frontage on the West side of Mandeville bordering the Santa Monica Conservancy. Includes plans and renderings for two exciting architectural homes. South house, a "Green Module" design, is approximately 3400 square feet in design development and the North house a Steve Earlich and Jim Schmidt design ,is approximately 4500 square feet, permit ready!

The UMCA strongly supports prompt passage of the BHO as initially drafted, with the restored protection measures provided in the letters previously submitted by Councilmember Paul Koretz and the Sherman Oaks Homeowners Association. We also support the adoption of further protective ordinances including stream protection, viewshed protection, and limits on retaining walls. The BHO as initially drafted, however, must be passed now, to prevent the types of excessive development that continues to plague the hillside areas and to protect the quality of our hillside neighborhoods.

Very Truly Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tom Freeman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Tom Freeman, President
Upper Mandeville Canyon Association