



RESIDENTS OF BEVERLY GLEN, INC.

June 11, 2010

By email and mail to:

Ed Reyes, Chair

Jose Huizar

Paul Krekorian

Patrice Lattimore, Legislative Assistant

Re: Comments on Current Version of the Baseline Hillside Ordinance

To: City Planning Commission Members

On behalf of the Residents of Beverly Glen, we are writing in response to the current version of the Proposed Baseline Hillside Ordinance. Residents of Beverly Glen represent a quaint neighborhood of 650+ residents, and we are concerned that the updated version of the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (“BHO”) does not adequately address issues to properly manage hillside development.

Our primary concerns are the safety of our residents and assuring that the charming and natural character of our area is not compromised by out-of-size dwellings. To that end we have the following concerns with the BHO in its current form:

1. The grading prohibitions for landform and grading on extreme slopes has been removed. These were significant in terms of protections for hillside areas as they both limit over-engineered development on small, steep and precarious lots. It seem the logic behind striking these provisions is to not prohibit grading on extreme slopes that were the result of cuts made for roadways in order to provide access to lots. Striking this provision leaves natural extreme slopes open to grading and the potential for over-development. Although we can understand property ownership rights issues, the issue is that owners of those lots need to come up with innovative ways of constructing a home afforded to them under the BHO without cutting into the hillside as is done with many homes and that continues to cause not only safety issues of earth retention and earth work but changes the canyon aesthetic of the community.
2. The import/export limit caps should include grading for exempted activities. Further, the maximum import should be reduced to 250 CY and the maximum export reduced to 500 CY. At current proposed levels, removal or import of earth on substandard lots would significantly alter the nature of those lots; compromise drainage; and create traffic and safety issues with respect to hauling (noise, damage to streets).
3. Most of the thought behind the BHO is that anything above and beyond would be ZA or other hearing. The issue is that those are usually for adjacent neighbors only. In hillsides, many more than adjacent neighbors are affected. We request that all public hearings or notifications, especially Zoning Administrator hearings, require 100' radius notification. Furthermore, as hauling will create disturbance, safety and access issues, notice should be given to those within 200' radius and the opportunity for residents to comment in a public forum; many of the streets in hillside areas are single-lane and in very poor condition.

4. All stairwell SF should count to FAR. That is, a stairwell of 30SF foot print is only counted once, but if in a 3 story house, it is a total of 90SF; therefore 60 SF of house is not accounted for in FAR.
5. Reduce covered parking FAR exemption to 100SF (currently at 200SF). In hillside areas many two-car covered parking space is (illegally) converted to living space. Even if done legally, ZA is usually granted (back to point about notification on ZA).
6. Reduce small accessory building to 100 SF (currently 200SF); 200 SF is living space size in the hillside areas.
7. Remove FAR bonus for minimal grading option and green building option, both are likely to be financially good reasons for developer and could be done anyway so bonus awards something they may do already, not something that costs extra that is to community benefit.
8. Builders should be required to purchase a completion bond for all projects to mitigate for issues on stalled or unfinished work.
9. As an area with a high risk of fire, building materials should be considered that would suppress fire potential.
10. Planting native vegetation on hillside slopes should be required, or at a minimum encouraged.

We appreciate all the hard work that has gone into this process thus far, and commend the work of those who have spent countless hours on the draft document. That said, the BHO as currently drafted dilutes or misses many ongoing hillside issues. We urge City Planning Commission Members to adopt an ordinance that provides for adequate protections and safety.

Please feel free to contact me at hillside@beverlyglen.org with any questions.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Tensie Palmer
President, Residents of Beverly Glen

Gillian Calof
Hillside Federation Representative

Cc: Ramin Kolahi, Bel Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council (by email)
Charles H. Buell, Jr., Zoning Committee Chairman (by email)
Erick Lopez, City Planner, Department of City Planning (by email)
Shawn Bayliss, Planning Deputy, CD5 (by email)
Joan Pelico, Senior Field Deputy, CD5 (by email)
Christopher Koontz, Planning Deputy, CD5 (by email)
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Marian Dodge, President, Hillside Federation (by email)