

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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October 24, 2016

City Clerk
City Hall – Room 395
Planning and Land Use Committee
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Attention: Sharon Dickinson, Legislative Assistant

Need for Public Open Space and Access
VTT-73714-SL-1A and VTT-73814-SL-1A
CF Nos. 16-1113 and CF-1112
Mitigated Negative Declaration ENV-2015-4679-MND

Hon. Chairperson Huizar and Committee Members:

The Los Angeles River and its tributaries are part of the Public Trust and Commons. It behooves City officials to maximize public benefit and amenities along this network of channels at every opportunity. Unfortunately, river-adjacent public open space and parkland is almost non-existent upstream of Sepulveda Basin. Undeveloped river-adjacent land is equally scarce which leaves a minute set of options for realizing any additional such parkland. Alternatively, it is almost \$3 million-per-acre to buy developed riverfront land for public parkland.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) is compelled to appeal the two City Planning Commission decisions because they provide no new public open space in conjunction with a 1,200 percent zoning density increase.

This is no ordinary proposed small lot subdivision. The proposed 49 homes on an iconic west San Fernando Valley field abutting the Bell Creek channel arise from a 1,200 percent increasing in zoning density. The nexus and proportion to require just 10,000-square-feet of public parkland along the river in a 200,000-square-foot property (both tracts) is indisputable. The City just needs the vision, will, and courage to require such a dedication of parkland to the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority or any other qualified agency.

Planning and Land Use Management Committee

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How can the public have faith in the Los Angeles River planning approval process if a 1,200 percent density increase on the last private riverside open space lots yield no permanent public open space along the river?

The Conservancy implores you to recognize this imbalance and potentially tragic missed opportunity for permanent public benefit. The developer is not entitled to a 1,200 percent density increase. If the project is required to offer to dedicate 10,000-square-foot of riverfront land to a public agency that would still leave 47 large single-family homes to provide additional housing and economic stimulus.

This requested minimum 10,000 square feet of riverside public open space can be achieved without changing the lot configuration of the tract maps. The Conservancy's two appeals can be granted, in part, to require the riverside open space dedication as best suits the developer. The 10,000 square feet of public land will have optimal public access with adjacent street parking. The riverfront park will be complemented by the City's temporary allowance of some Woodlake Avenue street right-of-way to be parkland.

The Conservancy's request is two convert the two conditioned private HOA lots into public ownership and to add additional lots as necessary to achieve a minimum total of 10,000 square feet of public fee simple ownership along the river.

Private open space is not public parkland. Private land cannot provide the guarantee of either for public enjoyment or habitat resource protection, in perpetuity.

The requirement for 10,000 square feet of riverfront public parkland should also be augmented to require a decorative seven-foot-tall wrought iron fence to gate the parkland at night. Such fencing will benefit the tract residents and reduce operations costs for the public entity managing the land.

We appreciate your consideration of this appeal request to achieve a riverfront park at no public expense.

Sincerely,



PAUL EDELMAN

Deputy Director

Natural Resources and Planning