

Damien Stolarz
6433 Topanga Cyn. Blvd. #222
Canoga Park, CA 91303

October 25, 2016

City Clerk
City Hall – Room 395
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Planning and Land Use Committee
Attention: Sharon Dickinson, Legislative Assistant

**Support of Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy Appeals
VTT-73714-SL-1A and VTT-73814-SL-1A
Mitigated Negative Declaration ENV-2015-4679-MND
CF Nos. 16-1113 and CF-1112**

Hon. Chairperson Huizar and Committee Members:

My family and I have lived in close proximity to the subject Lederer Ranch property for over 30 years. The proposed development of 47 homes on the less than four acre field eliminates any meaningful remnant of open space and habitat along an upper Los Angeles River tributary. The proposed project would totally and adversely change the visual character of the area. As configured, four solid rows of two story houses with sliver-thin separation would eliminate the most iconic flatland viewshed in the west San Fernando Valley. The final environmental documentation errs in concluding that this is not a significant impact to a public resource.

The Bell Creek channel possesses all of physical attributes for a future public trail and greenway. The proposed project would permanently degrade the aesthetic and spatial characteristics of this public right of way that is integral to the Los Angeles River system. A continuous wall of thirteen two-story houses with minimal backyard setbacks leering above the channel does not provide an adequate buffer zone for a future trail and greenway system. The final environmental analysis does not adequately present this impact to decision-makers nor mitigate it.

The Bell Creek channel possesses sufficient physical attributes to significantly contribute to wildlife movement through the subject section of the valley. To begin with, the valley's flood control channels provide the only continuous paths for wildlife movement across the valley floor. Just that openness under current conditions provides unique movement conditions that cannot be replicated elsewhere. Understandably, over time, in most cases vegetation needs to be established along the channel margins for high quality wildlife movement conditions. However, the key is preserving the potential to enhance wildlife movement through the subject area—including for birds that do not commonly traverse even suburban landscapes. The potential for channel right of way wildlife movement is either positively or adversely affected by development on adjacent private land. The subject property currently provides one of just a few habitat refuges along the Bell Creek channel. The role of the subject property, in concert

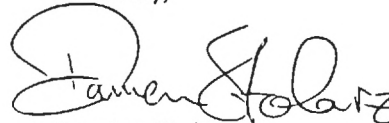
with adjacent City land, to the existing and future viability of the Bell Creek wildlife corridor in not sufficiently addressed in the environmental documentation.

The City Planning Commission's requirement of two private Homeowners Association(s) lots at the end of Woodlake Avenue was a beginning in the right direction but did not go far enough to address and mitigate these project impacts and deficiencies. The contribution of the two required open lots to provide habitat resources and public views over the long term cannot be assured with conditioned private land. The two lots are also located close to the proposed future street with its street lights and headlights. More land along the river channel, some of which is not subject to the glare of adjacent street and head lights must be permanently set aside.

I concur with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy that only public agency ownership of the two open lots can guarantee both no development and assured public access in perpetuity. The public has no standing to challenge the Homeowners Associations if either fails to provide adequate native landscaping or actually fences the public out of all or part of the two open lots. The public also would have no right to improve habitat and park amenity qualities on the open lots. Because the City already owns the Woodlake Avenue right of way to the Bell Creek channel, the subject open space area will serve a combination of park and habitat purposes. At least one-quarter acre of fully protected natural land (in addition to the street right of way) is needed to provide sufficient space for both purposes. Until the City vacates its rights to the unimproved section of Woodland Avenue it cannot be considered permanent public open space.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has submitted a figure into the record requesting that the applicant dedicate a minimum of 10,000 square feet of land to a public agency as part of the project approvals. The figure shows that the dedication of two additional small lots along the channel would achieve this objective. As a nearby property owner, I urge both your Committee and the full City Council to grant this request. Anything less than one-quarter acre of public open space for a 47 lot single family home subdivision is a squandered opportunity to serve the public with what it deserves in exchange for a 1,200 percent up zoning. Surely the applicant has not provided a pro forma for public review showing that adequate profit cannot be achieved with 45 houses on approximately three acres. Please do the public's bidding and grant the Conservancy's appeal, in part, to require an offer to dedicate a minimum of 10,000 square feet of riverfront open space to a public agency. Shy of such an outcome how can your constituents take seriously the Los Angeles River effort for greenways throughout the watershed? The public deserves access and enjoyment of the river tributaries not just the future residents of the tracts.

Sincerely,



Damien Stolarz