



**Friends of Griffith Park**

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friendsofgriffithpark.org

June 18, 2018

RE: CF 18-0057 – Griffith Park Mobility and Access

Dear Councilmembers of the Arts, Entertainment, Parks and River Committee:

As Friends of Griffith Park evaluated the proposed Dixon strategies, we endeavored to balance the necessity of reduced residential impacts with the goals of protecting the natural and treasured urban wilderness we know as Griffith Park for future generations to appreciate. Friends defends the principles set forth by its benefactor, Griffith J. Griffith, to keep the park natural, free, and accessible to all.

The park represents the largest expanse of open space in the entire eastern Santa Monica Mountains and contains the largest reserve of natural habitat in the central Los Angeles Basin. Friends has sponsored more than a dozen scientific surveys and studies over the last decade. As strategies unfold and are considered, Friends of Griffith Park and our advisors are eager to share our hands-on experience and our knowledgebase of the park's flora and fauna to assure proposed strategies are environmentally sound.

We considered, as best possible, the limited information provided, and are providing comments on these important seven items initially assessed in the June 15, 2018 feasibility report:

**Strategy 2.1 Electric shuttle service connecting Metro with Hollyridge Trail**

We fully support the finding for this strategy. The use of public transportation and shuttles, rather than private vehicles entering residential areas and the park, is a fundamental objective. This strategy wholly fulfills that goal. Further, this particular place of park entry highly appeals to tourists since it is a very short hike to a favorite Hollywood sign viewing area. Visitors would also have the opportunity to hike further, if they wish, knowing that public transportation will be available upon their return.

This location is a sound choice for entry into the park because Hollyridge Trail is a wide fire road. With proper guidance, including signage and viewing area containment, visitors are not likely to cause significant impact to the habitat here, since off-trail temptations are very minimal due to the terrain itself.

**Strategy 2.2 Implement the alternative access trail plan at Beachwood**

We disagree with the findings. For similar reasons as above, hikers should be allowed to access Hollyridge Trail from the Beachwood area. The electric shuttle plan is a rock-solid proposal, but is no substitute for traditional entry to a public park by foot. The conclusion drawn in this

feasibility study may have occurred due to incorrect information, and we respectfully ask that the feasibility of this strategy be reassessed because:

1. The report incorrectly states that, “the Judge instructed the closure” of the gate. To be accurate, the judge enjoined and ordered the City “to provide public pedestrian access to the Hollyridge Trail, at a location as closest to the start of the subject easement...as is practicable.”
2. The report inaccurately implies that private property would need to be acquired in order to execute an alternate access route which also fulfills the Court’s requirements. We dispute this claim based upon County and City property records.
3. The alternate access plan described in the Dixon Strategies Report is not the same plan supported by many citizens, as well as adopted by organizations including Friends of Griffith Park, Griffith Park Advisory Board, Hollywood United Neighborhood Council, Oaks Homeowners Association, and Beachwood Canyon Neighborhood Association.
4. The preferred plan is the one which was highly circulated in June 2017. It includes modular steps or switchback trail which would direct hikers up a 50-foot vertical rise from the existing entrance’s east side fence to the old Hollyridge Trail. This plan is simple and would shield sensitive habitat from impacts. See attached, as this specific plan should be reconsidered by the pertinent city departments.

Pedestrian access near the Beachwood gate is sorely missed by many local residents since it was lost in April 2017. Several moved to the Beachwood area specifically to have convenient public access to the park’s trails. Closing pedestrian park access is contrary to goals of Recreation and Parks and the General Plan’s Open Space Element. Los Angeles’s national ranking for providing walkable park access is very low, yet has improved over the last decade. We hope the positive trend will not be reversed because of decisions of convenience made by the City.

### **Strategy 3.1 Extend DASH line and shuttle routes to and from highly congested areas**

We support the findings in favor of these measures in theory to reduce vehicular traffic in and around the park. We await further analysis and ideas to take shape. As active participant in the planning of the Observatory circulation plan, we have seen the advantages of DASH over private vehicles.

### **Strategy 1.4 Install a sidewalk along Canyon Drive**

We support the findings in favor of these safety improvements. To keep Bronson Canyon as natural as possible, we believe a decomposed granite (DG) walkway should be implemented, likely at a lower cost than concrete. This also will help protect the giant California sycamore trees which will be in close proximity to the walkway. We also support a traffic-calming all-way stop at Carolus and Canyon, to allow safe crossings at a distance from gate where there is limited visibility.

### **Strategy 6.3 Implement paid parking and/or time limits**

We withhold agreement with the findings at this time. Paid parking at the Observatory area where 278 car spaces charge rent of \$4 per hour is not the same model as that which may be imposed in areas such as Lake Hollywood and Bronson Canyon. The goal should be to reduce the number of vehicles entering these areas, and we fail to see how parking lot charges in close proximity to residents will do this effectively. We encourage the City to work directly with those affected communities. We warn that charging for parking may result in an undesirable volume of car-sharing operations (doubling the amount of traffic) and/or necessitate PPDs. We also suggest that any parking lot improvements incorporate permeable surfaces and be designed in context with the natural surroundings, particularly in the Bronson riparian area.

### **Strategy 7.2 Develop a Hollywood Sign Viewing Center**

We strongly support the findings. A visitor center could provide a viewing platform, a hub for advice and information regarding viewing the Hollywood Sign, and a launching site for shuttles.

### **Strategy 3.3 Aerial Tram**

There is inadequate information to consider our position of support or opposition for the aerial tram strategy. In fact, it seems incomprehensible that a conclusion of feasibility is even possible at this time. There seems not to be the foggiest concept of its launching area, its path, its platform(s), and its dollar and environmental costs!

### **Strategy 7.3 Build a Hollywood Sign view platform**

There is also inadequate information to consider our position on built platforms, whether incorporated into an aerial transit system or not. Habitat conservation and impacts of the wildlife that surrounds viewing platforms is a major concern. Any built viewing platforms should ideally be located at already developed areas, if in the park itself. Any argument that visitors can somehow be contained on a built platform that is within a wilderness area is a weak notion.

As always, Friends of Griffith Park will continue to work closely with Recreation and Parks, Council District 4 and partnering community groups to reduce impacts to residents, enhance the park visitor experience, and to protect the urban wilderness experience of Griffith Park which is its greatest asset.

Sincerely,



Gerry Hans  
VP, Science & Conservation



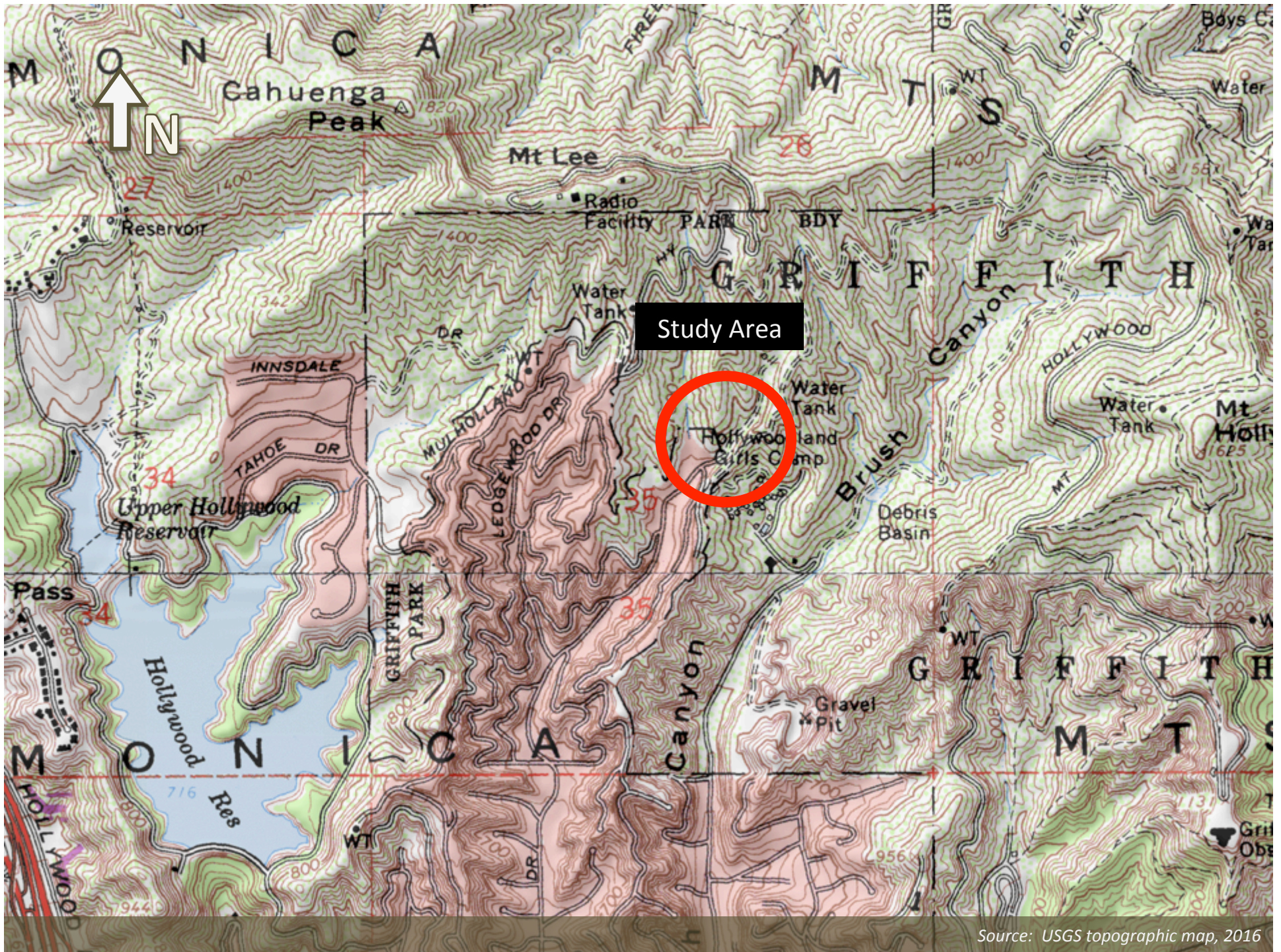
Marian Dodge  
President

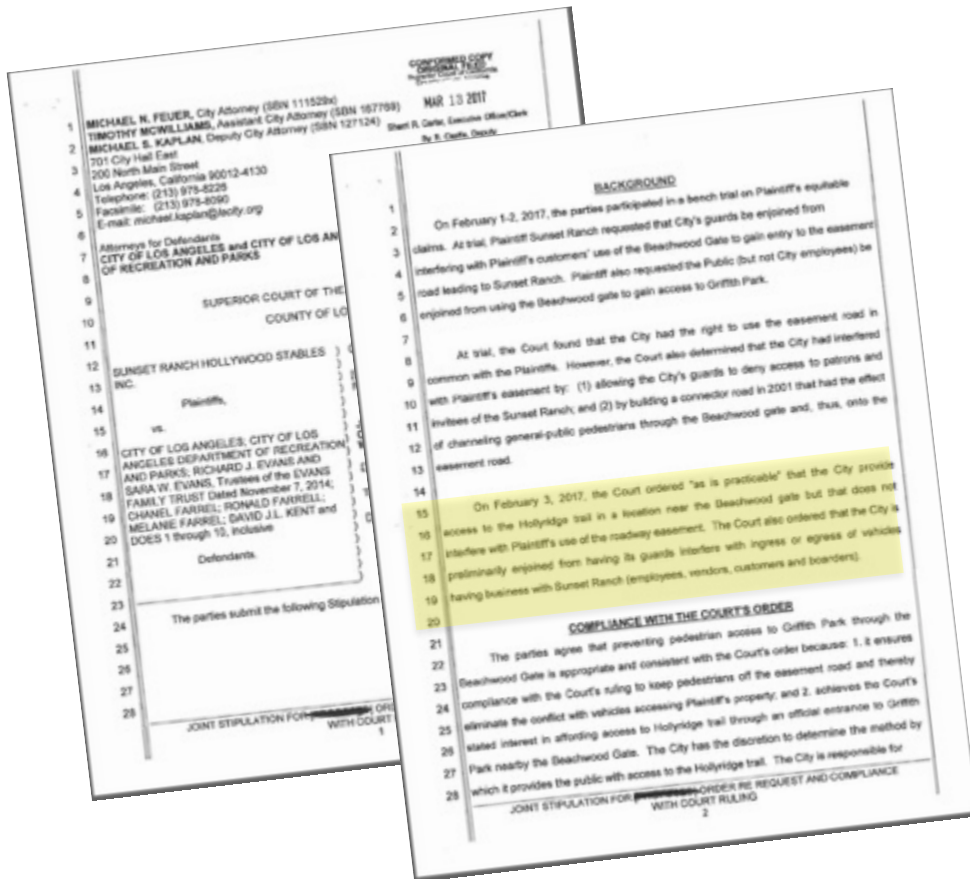


A topographic map of Griffith Park in Los Angeles, California. The map shows contour lines, major peaks like Cahuenga Peak (1820 ft) and Mt Lee (1400 ft), and features like the Upper Hollywood Reservoir and Griffith Canyon. A red line indicates a proposed trail route starting from Beachwood Drive, heading north through Griffith Park, and then east towards the Hollywood Reservoir area. The map also shows various landmarks like the Radio Facility, Water Tank, and Debris Basin.

# Proposed Access to the Hollyridge Trail from Beachwood Drive

June 2017





Court Order from Feb. 3rd, 2017 directing the City to provide access to the Hollyridge trail near the Beachwood gate

14  
15 On February 3, 2017, the Court ordered "as is practicable" that the City provide  
16 access to the Hollyridge trail in a location near the Beachwood gate but that does not  
17 interfere with Plaintiff's use of the roadway easement. The Court also ordered that the City is  
18 preliminarily enjoined from having its guards interfere with ingress or egress of vehicles  
19 having business with Sunset Ranch (employees, vendors, customers and boarders).  
20



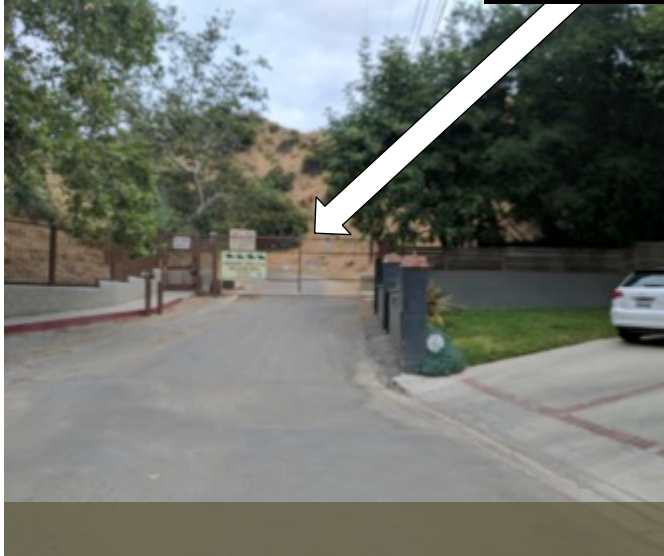
Current location of taxpayer funded Gate for the private business, Sunset Ranch

Proposed general location of access point to Hollyridge Trail



Existing location of gate for previous trail access

Proposed access to the Hollyridge Trail by transforming one of the three fence panels into a pedestrian gate.







Proposed access to Hollyridge Trail without utilizing the existing gate to Sunset Ranch

Current location of taxpayer funded Gate for the private business, Sunset Ranch

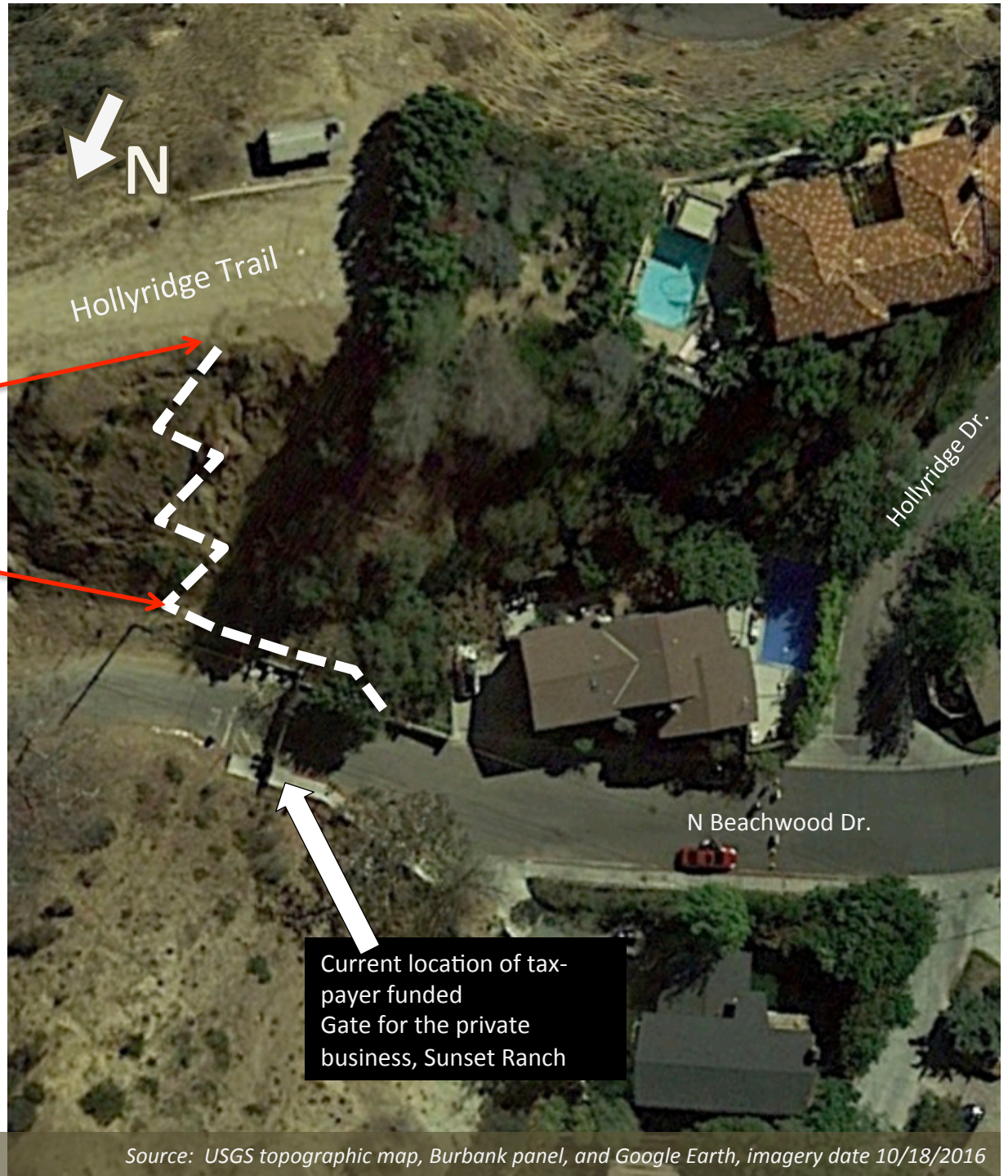
Source: from Los Angeles Zimas system and from Google Earth, imagery date 10/18/2016

Elevation difference from bottom to top of proposed Trail access, as estimated from USGS topographic maps and Google Earth data

Elevation: 941'

Elevation: 891'

Overall elevation change: 50'



Source: USGS topographic map, Burbank panel, and Google Earth, imagery date 10/18/2016

# Summary



Proposed access in front of the gate by removing a fence panel (within City/Griffith Park property)

