

CANYON AREA PRESERVATION

Information about preserving our canyons, hillsides, and the foothills.

Getting Late For Us 2005 Volume 1, Issue 15

VIEWS

LOCAL INPUT / LOCAL CONTROL



Canyon Hills May Be Approved Feb. 24!

Whitebird Canyon Hills is a proposal for 280 homes to be clustered on hillsides and canyons north and south of the 210 Freeway near La Tuna Canyon Road and extending to the cross on Verdugo Crestline Drive in Tujunga.

Planning Department Staff have recommended approving 230 clustered homes, and the Deputy Advisory Agency has already approved 175 homes spread out over the entire 887 acres owned by Whitebird, a Nevada developer backed by Texas investors.

Most of the 887 acres are designated Minimum Density in the General and Community Plans, but the developer is seeking a General Plan Amendment to change the land use designation to Low Density. If they succeed in winning approval from the Planning Commission, they will **NOT** have to follow the Slope Density Ordinance, which limits the number of homes that can be built to 87 (or less) due to the steep topography.

There are many other issues of concern: increased traffic on La Tuna Canyon Road, loss of wildlife habitat, sound walls in a Scenic Corridor, and more – all reasons to limit the density of new construction in our area as outlined in our Community Plan.

If you are confused, you're not alone. So are our elected and appointed officials. Come to the meeting to make your voice clearly heard and say what needs to be said – **TELL THE PLANNING COMMISSION AND THE CITY TO FOLLOW THE LAW AND BE DONE WITH IT.**

Planning Commission Meeting *
Thursday February 24, "After 8:30AM"
Marvin Braude Building at the Valley Government Center
First Floor Conference Room
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Van Nuys, CA
Case No. CPC 2004-4344 GPA/ZC

Please copy this page and distribute as a flyer to your neighborhood.

* Time and location may change. Visit www.verdugos.org for timely updates.

Canyon Area Preservation

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(opinions expressed are
the editor's)

Many Express Frustration About Planning Commission Meeting Time

The Planning Commission's decision to hold a meeting of great public interest at a place and time when most people cannot attend is drawing a lot of criticism from the public.

The only alternative is for people to call, write, or email their elected representatives and hope their voice is heard.

Here are excerpts of emails received recently by Canyon Area Preservation (names withheld):

"Just wanted to let you know that we were present at the last hearing. We felt a little hopeless and disgusted. We plan to be at this next hearing. We will send our letters."

"My wife and I will be there. I might be able to bring a few other people as well. Does suck that they are holding this in Van Nuys. But that be the game."

"I'm definitely planning to attend 2-24 and i am forwarding this message to anyone i know who gives a darn! How can they comment on low turnout when people have jobs they cannot take time from? Perhaps if they had these meetings in the evening or on a Saturday, the turnout would be much different."

"We will do our best to be there. Couldn't make the other date due to medical appointment."

"Thanks for the notice. I will be working and unable to attend. I dislike these daytime meetings and I realize the city plans it this way for low attendanc."

"I would attend, as would others, but the fact that these meetings are scheduled mid-morning on a workday makes it difficult for most folks who have to work. I'll forward the message to my wife (at work), and see what she can do."

Tell Everybody!

Every Councilmember, the Mayor, and the Planning Department needs to hear from you about Canyon Hills. They really do listen! Please be factual with your input:

Los Angeles City Council, 200 N. Spring St., LA, CA 90012

CD1: Ed Reyes, Rm 410, reyes@council.lacity.org

CD2: Wendy Greuel, Rm 475, greuel@council.lacity.org

CD3: Dennis Zine, Rm 450 zine@council.lacity.org

CD4: Tom LaBonge, Rm 480, labonge@council.lacity.org

CD5: Jack Weiss, Rm 440, weiss@council.lacity.org

CD6: Tony Cardenas, Rm 455, Cardenas@council.lacity.org

CD7: Alex Padilla, Rm 465, Padilla@council.lacity.org

CD8: Bernard Parks, Rm 460, parks@council.lacity.org

CD9: Jan Perry, Rm 420, perry@council.lacity.org

CD10: Martin Ludlow, Rm430, Ludlow@council.lacity.org

CD11: Cindy Miscikowski, Rm 415, miscikow@council.lacity.org

CD12: Greig Smith, Rm 405, smith@council.lacity.org

CD13: Eric Garcetti, Rm 470, garcetti@council.lacity.org

CD 14: Tony Villaraigosa, Rm 425, villaraigosa@council.lacity.org

CD15: Janice Hahn, Rm 435, hahn@council.lacity.org

Mayor: James Hahn, Rm 303, MayorHahn@mayor.lacity.org

Planning Dept., Con Howe, 5th Fl., chow@planning.lacity.org

SAVE THE VERDUGOS
Say "NO" To Canyon Hills
www.verdugohills.net/canyonhills

*Website for this group is now www.verdugos.org

Send Us Your Donation!

Several groups and many individuals in our community are concerned about the impact of the Canyon Hills project.

Please make a tax-deductible donation to help us with the costs of responding to this project. The future of our community is at stake, and your donation could make the difference:

Glendale-Crescenta V.O.I.C.E.

PO Box 273

Montrose, CA 91021

818-249-0900

www.gcvoice.org

More information is available at the following:
www.lacity.org/PLN - Click on "Environmental/Final EIRs."
www.verdugos.org - Local activist site.
www.canyonhills.info - This is the developer's web site.
www.gcvoice.org - Glendale-Crescenta VOICE.
www.savetheverdugos.com - New site with a great song!
www.sunlandtujunga.org - S-T Neighborhood Council
www.foothilltrails.org - Foothills Trails District NC
www.tujungawatershed.org - Tujunga Watershed Council

Problems With Slope Density

From the Staff Report, in response to an appeal on the decision to approve the 175 home subdivision:

"The subdivider's slope density calculation was prepared by a registered engineer based on a USGS topographic map with 40 foot contours. The 40-foot contours were digitized by the subdivider's registered civil engineer and re-interpolated to provide 25-foot contours and the slopes were computed based on 500-foot grid increments. The Slope Density Ordinance does not prohibit the use of interpolation to prepare topographic maps..."

Here is an opinion issued by the Board For Professional Engineers And Land Surveyors in Sacramento, a government standards setting group, when a local retired engineer brought this to their attention:

"Mr. Brunner reviewed your letter and advised me that your concerns are appropriate. [He] advised that USGS Quadrangle maps should not be broken down to create sub-contours from the contours on the maps,,, There is insufficient detail and accuracy to enable the maps to work at the smaller scale...Local developers, engineers, and/or surveyors should not be allowed to interpret or misinterpret the data on these maps for any other use [than what they were intended for]."

The hair that Staff is splitting is whether the Slope Density Ordinance *allows* engineers to start with faulty data!

Misleading Information

Land use attorney and Shadow Hills businessman Bill Eick studied the slope density calculations submitted by Whitebird and found numerous glaring problems. If an attorney can spot these problems, why can't the City's professional staff whose job it is to verify this information (that's **not** a job at attorneys ☺):

"3. Problems with USGS Map Used to Calculate Slope Density:

3.3 Section 17.02 permits the use of 500 foot grids to calculate slope based on the city Engineer topographic maps. Numerous grids used by Whitebird exceed the 500 foot grid limitation set forth by Section 17.02 [yielding false results].

3.5 The developer's slope density map includes grids 209 and 210 which are not part of the project area. Compare the developer's Slope Density Map with Exhibit E-2 of the Mr. Duenas report. These additional grids inappropriately add 5.9 dwelling units regardless of the method of calculation.

3.7 Even if the city allowed the use of a USGS map, the map used by Whitebird was created prior to the construction of the 210 Freeway and does not include the cut and fill slopes which were needed to construct the 210 and which have existed for approximately 30 years.

Statement of Overriding Considerations

In order to approve a project with known problems, the City must find valid reasons for accepting the proposal despite the evidence. Here's what Planning Department staff have to say:

"Based on the analysis in the Final EIR, the Project would result in significant unavoidable environmental impacts with respect to NO_x and PM₁₀ emissions during construction, construction noise, artificial light as viewed from La Tuna Canyon Road, Interstate 210, and the existing residential areas north and northeast of the project site, scenic vistas, scenic resources and visual character, and short-term effects on coast live oak trees, and it is not feasible to mitigate such impacts to a less-than-significant level.

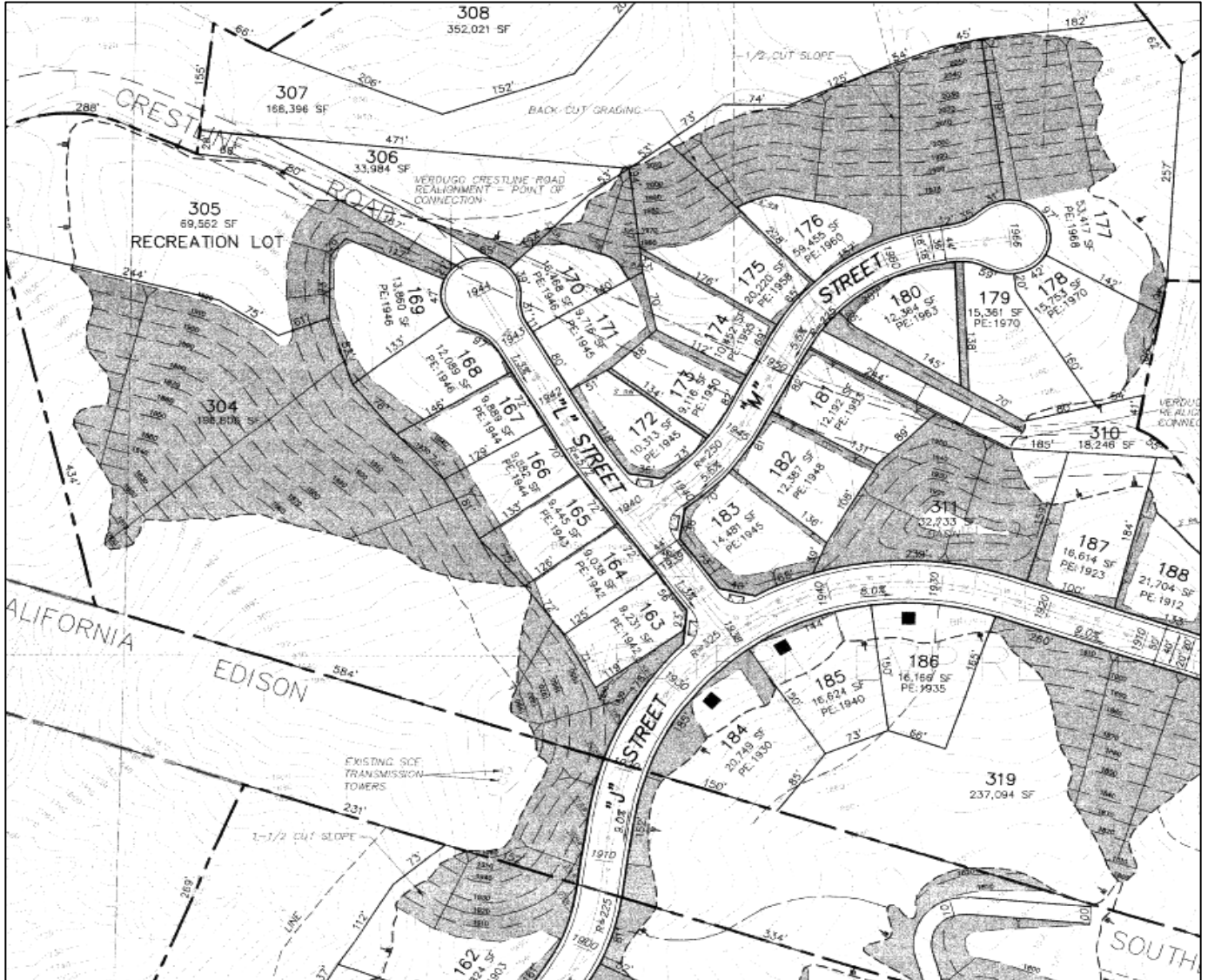
Accordingly, the City adopts the following Statement of Overriding Considerations. The City recognizes that significant and unavoidable impacts will result from the implementation of the Project. Having (i) adopted all feasible mitigation measures, (ii) rejected as infeasible alternatives to the Project discussed above, (iii) recognized all significant, unavoidable impacts, and (iv) balanced the benefits of the Approved Project against the Approved Project's significant and unavoidable impacts, the City hereby finds that the benefits outweigh and override the significant unavoidable impacts for the reasons stated below..."

It goes on to list the reasons provided by the developer. But they ignored all the significant problems pointed out by hundreds of informed citizens and agencies, like (i) the law, (ii) loss of wildlife habitat, (iii) traffic problems on La Tuna Canyon, (iv) much much more.

But for an example, here's one reason they like the Project: "11. Implementation of the Approved Project will locate the residential development in proximity to existing infrastructure and services where possible." NO IT WON'T! They have to bring everything in new and it won't be near bus lines. What are they thinking?

Map Sections From Canyon Hills

The following maps are additional details from the Whitebird Canyon Hills subdivision maps. In order to properly picture the effects of this development, you really need to see it for yourself in its current state. The best vantage point is from Inspiration Way in Tujunga.



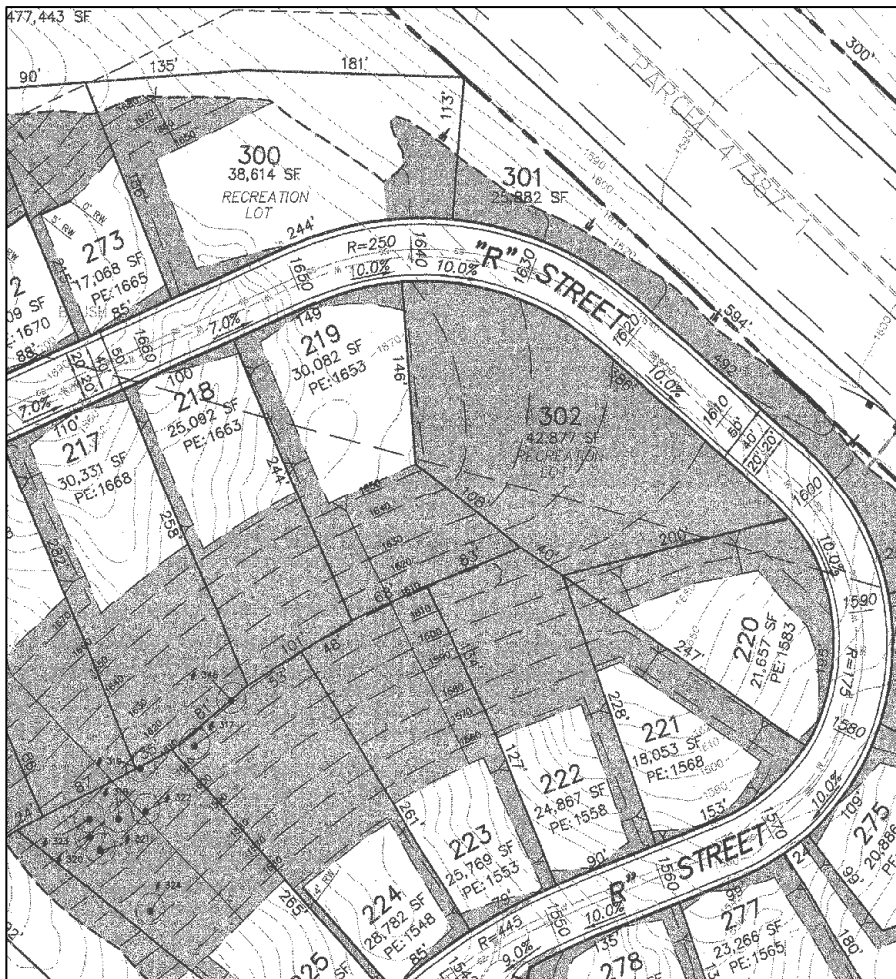
Verdugo Crestline Section in Area A

This detail is the northern part of Area A. The road at the top left is Verdugo Crestline Road. Notice how the cul de sac of L Street ends at what is currently a dirt road. Looks like this could be extended in the future, possibly to include a road down to Foothill Blvd. Whitebird says they don't want this to happen, but the design leaves open the possibility of a decision by the Planning Department.

The gray section to the left of the detail is a **160 foot cut slope**. At the top of the picture towards the right is another cut slope – this one over **110 feet tall**.

Imagine the amount of grading that will take place to create these huge cut slopes. The grading will be balanced on site, which means they will use the dirt to fill in the canyons to make flat parcels.

Take a look at Parcel 176, just above the word "Street" on M Street. It's hard to make out in this image, but it's listed at 59,455 square feet – that's huge, right? But most of the parcel, like 60%, is the cut slope extending north. That's how they give the impression that the lots are big and they are following the guidelines of the Community Plan. Smoke and mirrors (or cut and fill!).



Area B South of the 210 Freeway

Picture driving down the 210 (on the upper right) and seeing what is now a huge hill between the 210 and La Tuna Canyon road.

Now try to figure out how there will be any hill left after it's graded for these homes. It's gone in this picture – totally graded!

This is one of the largest sections where there will be sound walls – almost 600 feet in this section alone.

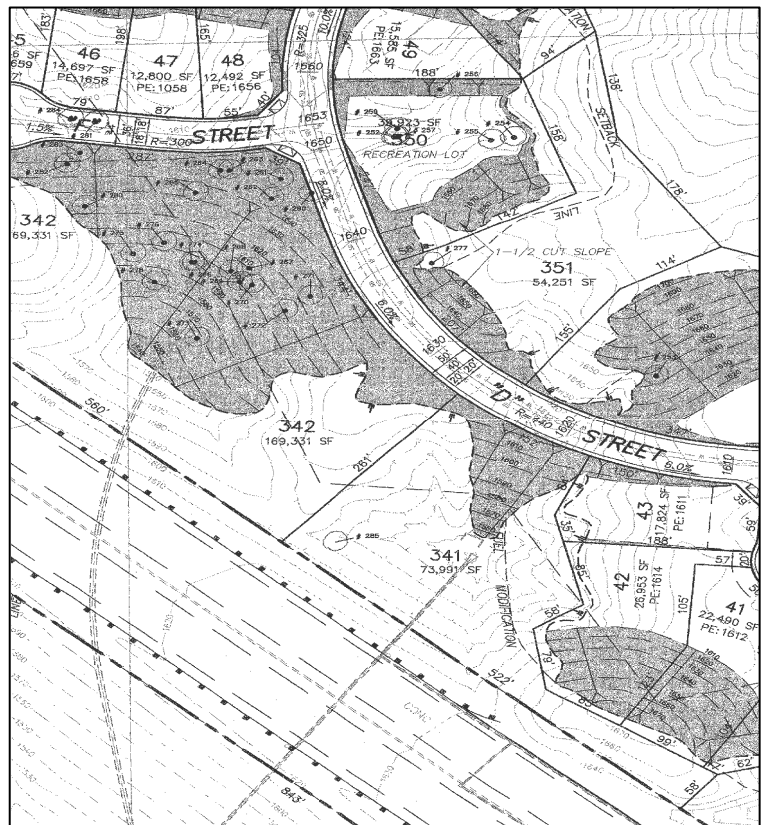
Oh, but Whitebird will put Plexiglass panels in the sound walls. Why? So the drivers on the 210 can see the graded hillsides? Or so the new residents can see the trucks whizzing by all night long? (But at least they won't be able to hear them! You think?).

Cut Slope North Of The 210 Freeway

As you drive along the 210 and look north, now you see some beautiful, rugged hills rising up hundreds of feet, and canyons filled with oaks and sycamores. After Whitebird is finished, you'll look directly at this 120 foot cut slope with a road on top and a bunch of houses.

No wait, there's a sound wall there, so you won't be able to see it. Oh, but I forgot, they'll put in Plexiglass panels so you actually *can* see it!

But why would you want to?



Canyon Hills Final EIR Page IV-31: "There are a few fill slopes over 200 feet high (at a 2:1 slope) in areas that are not highly visible."

Canyon Hills Final EIR Page IV-612: "The total length of the proposed sound walls would be approximately 2,400 feet (0.45 mile), which would extend over approximately 2,900 feet (.55 mile) alongside Interstate 210."

C.A.P.
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Tujunga, CA 91043



Save postage. See the newsletter in color! Register your e-mail address with us today. Many e-mail notices have been sent this past year that have not been mailed. Keep informed. Register your e-mail address with us today!

About Canyon Area Preservation...

Please contribute the names and addresses of people/organizations you think can be important to our cause. Contact the CAP Views editor at CAPViews@comcast.net

Canyon Area Preservation was formed in 1997 by a group of homeowners and citizens to fight a development near La Tuna Canyon Road and the 210 Freeway (Duke Development).

Since then, we have been actively involved with informing citizens, government agencies, and community organizations about threats to the environment and rural quality of life in the Crescenta Valley, San Gabriel Mountains, and Sunland/Tujunga area.

Please join us. We are all volunteers concerned about our environment.

Feel free to make copies of this newsletter to give to neighbors, send in more e-mail addresses of people who want to help or know more, and contact agencies that can provide assistance. Thank you.

.....Important Contact Information.....

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