



WENDY GREUEL
COUNCILMEMBER, SECOND DISTRICT
CITY OF LOS ANGELES

May 27, 2005

Re: Proposed Canyon Hills Project

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Dear Friends of the Verdugo Mountains:

Thank you so much for your letter concerning the proposed Canyon Hills project. I wholeheartedly agree with your perspective that we need to preserve as much open space in our city as possible. I personally have opposed the 280 lot project **as** proposed by the Canyon Hills developer and it is important that you know that I share your concerns about the interpretation of the city's slope density ordinance. Indeed, the issue of slope density will directly impact the **future** of that property as it will determine what any developer is allowed to develop, by right. Given your recent **correspondence** however, it appears to me that some degree of **confusion** exists **as** to the interpretation of the slope density ordinance and of my own position on the Canyon Hills Project. Again, I deeply appreciate your correspondence bringing any misunderstandings to light and affording me this opportunity to respond to you directly.

First, there is a widespread assumption that the City's slope-density ordinance permits only 45 lots to be developed on the 887-acre Canyon Hills property (one lot for every 20 acres). Because the slope-density ordinance contains several technical variables, the determination of the actual lot count is more complex than it might appear. The key issue is whether the developer's calculation is consistent with the ordinance and not, as some have suggested, whether the developer's calculation exceeds the most restrictive interpretation among several possible calculation results.

For that reason, I repeatedly asked the Planning Department and the City Attorney to determine whether the developer's calculation of 175 lots was consistent with the ordinance. At the December 9, 2004 public hearing, the Planning Department confirmed the accuracy of the developer's calculation. That calculation was confirmed again at the City Planning Commission hearing on February 24, 2005. And, because thoughtful new challenges to the interpretation of the ordinance were brought to my attention, I asked for a third report from the Planning Department and the City Attorney as to the number of lots that are allowed by law. I expect to receive that final report any day now.

Next, please allow me to clarify my position on the Canyon Hills project. Like you, my first choice would be to have no development in the open space areas of the Verdugo Mountains – no development at all – and I am on record as opposing the 280-lot project proposed by the Canyon Hills developer. However, there is the basic reality that the property owner has certain development rights which the City cannot abridge. My objective is to preserve the maximum amount of permanent open space in perpetuity. I will oppose any project that results in a subdivision of the entire property and the destruction of the Verdugo Mountains open space. The reasons for my position are:

COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

CHAIR: AUDITS AND GOVERNMENTAL EFFICIENCY COMMITTEE

VICE CHAIR: RULES AND ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

MEMBER: PERSONNEL COMMITTEE



- I am committed to permanently preserving as much of the Verdugo Mountains open space as possible.
- We cannot stop all development on the property unless we buy it, and funds for such a purchase are not available.
- The time to protect open space in the Verdugo Mountains is now. I will not leave this precious land to the hands of fate.

Subdivision of the entire property into large lots will lead to further subdivision into smaller lots over the next few decades. If you doubt this assumption, just look at the long history of the San Fernando Valley and the recent history of Chatsworth, Sylmar and Hidden Hills.

- Subdivision of the property will result in the installation of roads and utility lines **throughout the property.** That process will hasten further **subdivision** and, worse, it will facilitate development of the surrounding open space.
- If a clustered project is denied, the property owner will simply file a **large-lot** subdivision application. That was the original concept, and it was changed only because community members suggested a clustered design.
- A clustered design, located entirely on the north side of the Foothill Freeway adjacent to existing development, and which preserves 85% of the land as permanent open space cannot be built under the **current** zoning and General Plan. Adhering to the current zoning and General Plan will guarantee a full subdivision of the property and the eventual loss of all privately owned open space in the Verdugos.

I am very proud of my accomplishments in creating new parklands and preserving open space in the Verdugo Mountains. I fought to have the City acquire a 145 acre addition to Verdugo Mountain Park, and I led a community hike to the dedication of the new parkland just two weeks ago. At the dedication ceremony – in the middle of that beautiful wilderness – I shared with my **friends** and constituents that I have used all of my Proposition K money to protect open space and acquire new parklands during the three years that I have been your City Council representative.

I hope that I have helped clarify critical aspects of this complex issue for you and that you will join me in doing everything we can to protect this special place we know as the Verdugo Mountains.

Very truly yours,



Wendy Greuel
Councilmember, 2nd District