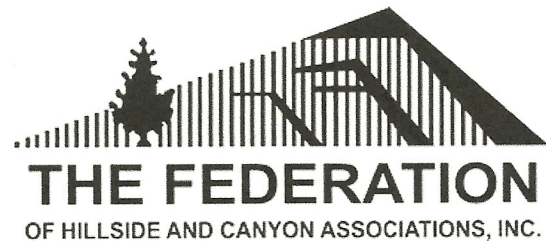


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March 29, 2011

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Dan Palmer

Robert Z. Dueñas
Senior City Planner
Community Planning Bureau
North Valley
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Suite 430
Van Nuys, CA 91401-2709

Re: Full EIR for Curtis School Project, ENV-2009-836 EAF

Dear Mr. Dueñas:

The Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations, Inc. (the Federation) was founded in 1952 for the purpose of conserving the natural habitat and appearance of the Santa Monica Mountains and other hillside and canyon environs of the Greater Los Angeles area. The Federation's membership includes 33 residential and homeowner associations spanning the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Mulholland Institutional Corridor lies within the Mulholland Scenic Parkway, a treasure of the Santa Monica Mountains, and so is of particular concern to the Federation. The Federation has consistently recognized the need for proactive planning along the Corridor. The cumulative environmental impacts of the ongoing, piecemeal institutional growth since the 1970s has resulted in traffic and parking congestion, aesthetic blight, noise disturbances, intensified illumination, deteriorated and overstrained infrastructure, enhanced public safety risks, and impaired wildlife habitat and resources.

In April 2006, the Federation voted that a Master Plan be adopted for the private institutions along the Mulholland Institutional Corridor before any further development within the Corridor could be approved. In fact, the impacts of the Corridor have become so pronounced and detrimental to the community, Councilmember Bill Rosendahl promised the Hillside Federation that a Master Plan would be completed during his tenure. **Lacking a Master Plan, the Federation, in November 2010, voted unanimously that a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR) be required for every project along the Corridor.**

Bel Air Knolls Property Owners
Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners
Bel Air Ridge Association
Benedict Canyon Association
Cahuenga Pass Neighborhood
Crests Neighborhood Assn.
Encino Property Owners Assn.
Forrest Hills Homeowners Assn.
Franklin Ave./Hollywood Bl. West
Franklin Hills Residents Assn.
Highlands Owners Assn.
Hollywood Dell Civic Assn.
Hollywood Heights Assn.
Hollywoodland Homeowners
Holmby Hills Homeowners Assn.
Kagel Canyon Civic Assn.
La Tuna Canyon Community Assn.
Laurel Canyon Assn.
Los Feliz Improvement Assn.
Mt. Olympus Property Owners
Mt. Washington Homeowners All.
Nichols Canyon Assn.
N. Beverly Dr./Franklin Canyon
Oak Forest Canyon Assn.
Outpost Estates Homeowners
Residents of Beverly Glen
Roscomare Valley Assn.
Shadow Hills Property Owners
Sherman Oaks H O Assn.
Studio City Residents Assn.
Tarzana Property Owners Assn.
Torreyson Flynn Assn.
Upper Mandeville Canyon
Whitley Heights Civic Assn.

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Polly Ward

CHAIRMAN IN MEMORIUM
Brian Moore

This certainly applies to the Curtis School Project, which includes the rehabilitation and remodeling of some facilities, the expansion of others, and the demolishing of yet others, in order to reconfigure the campus in a way that is more convenient and user-friendly. The project will involve approximately 80,640 square feet of new construction, of which approximately 20,000 square feet is a new Arts Building, height not to exceed 40 feet, designated as "Phase I" of the project. Phase II (which for funding purposes will probably be broken up into further sub-phases) consists of approximately 20,670 square feet of demolition and approximately 60,640 square feet of new construction, building height ranging from approximately 16 feet (classrooms) to up to 37 feet (gymnasium and athletic building with facilities building). All this will add up to a total of approximately 120,540 square feet of facilities, doubling the school's current size. A total of 230 surface level parking spaces and 12 spaces below the facilities building are also proposed, and a "secondary access road" is being added on the adjacent Caltrans property, for construction, service, and emergency access. Curtis is requesting exceptions from the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan's 500 foot no-build zone and from the Plan's height restrictions. The most recent grading stats are as follows:

GRADING (cubic yards, composite, unadjusted)

Phase I – Arts Building

11048 (cut)
1201 (fill)
9847 (c) (net/export)

Phase II – Athletic Facilities, Parking, etc.

85944 (cut)
35306 (fill)
50638 (c) (net/export)

Total, both phases

96992 (cut)
36507 (fill)
60485 (c) (net/export)

The above figures include the grading of a prominent ridge visible from Mulholland and environs – 22,525 cubic yards of cut and 5,157 cubic yards of fill, with a net cut/export of 17,368 cubic yards. And, of course, a retaining wall (walls?) will also be required. This is a significant project with potential for serious negative impacts on infrastructure, aesthetics, and wildlife.

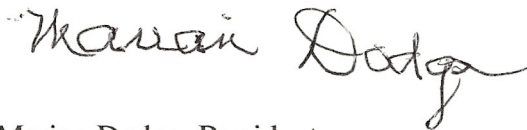
As the accompanying map shows, the Curtis property is surrounded by wildlife corridors (indicated in pink/magenta). These are primary routes used by area wildlife. (A mountain lion was photographed last summer at the corner of Mulholland Place and Mulholland Drive, just yards from the entrance to the Curtis School. And a bobcat was seen about two weeks ago at Mulholland and Elvido Drives, three-quarters of a mile from Curtis. Coyotes and deer are far more commonplace.) As one of the few remaining wildlife crossings in the Sepulveda Pass area, the Mulholland Bridge is key to wildlife connectivity and survival east of the 405. The Caltrans property on which Curtis proposes building its secondary access road is one of the two primary

access areas for wildlife moving west to the bridge (the other being property fronting Mulholland Drive). So anything that disturbs the Caltrans property potentially has a great impact. And Curtis proper, being Caltrans adjacent and itself in close proximity to the bridge, is extremely sensitive territory as well. Construction of the new road, traffic on the new road, grading, retaining walls, excessively steep slopes, new structures, fencing, loss of vegetative cover (especially on a bridge approach) – any of these could present serious obstacles to wildlife attempting to move safely between habitat areas.

There is also the issue of aesthetics. The Mulholland Core Trail runs alongside the Curtis and Caltrans properties in the public right-of-way. Hikers, cyclists and other recreational users will get an up-close look at that graded ridge. Taking down a prominent ridgeline that is visible from surrounding properties and public trails creates potential significant impacts that are, in all likelihood, not mitigatable. CEQA mandates that a full EIR be performed if there is evidence of potential negative impacts that cannot be mitigated to insignificance.

A project of this size – the magnitude of the proposed construction, staging, hauling, and grading – has the potential to heavily impact an already severely diminished wildlife habitat, as well as further degrading the Mulholland Corridor infrastructure and aesthetics. The Federation therefore requests that a full EIR be prepared.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Marian Dodge". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Marian Dodge, President

cc: Councilman Paul Koretz, 5th District
Councilman Bill Rosendahl, 11th District
Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy