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Neighborhoods and Community Enrichment Committee

via email

June 25, 2023

Argyle Civic Assn.
Beachwood Canyon NA
Bel-Air Assn.
Bel-Air Hills Assn.
Bel Air Knolls Property Owners
Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners
Benedict Canyon Association
Brentwood Hills Homeowners
Brentwood Residents Coalition
Cahuenga Pass Property Owners
Canyon Back Alliance
Crests Neighborhood Assn.
Dixie Canyon Assn.
Doheny-Sunset Plaza NA
Franklin/Hollywood West Res.
Franklin Hills Residents Assn.
Friends of Walnut Canyon
Highlands Owners Assn.
Hollywood Dell Civic Assn.
Hollywood Heights Assn.
Hollywoodland HOA
Holmby Hills Homeowners Assn.
Kagel Canyon Civic Assn.
Lake Hollywood HOA
Laurel Canyon Assn.
LFIA (Los Feliz)
Mountaingate
Mt. Olympus Property Owners
Mt. Washington Homeowners All.
Nichols Canyon NA
Oak Forest Canyon HOA
Oaks Homeowners Assn.
Outpost Estates HOA
Pacific Palisades Res. Assn.
Residents of Beverly Glen
Save Coldwater Canyon!
Save Our Canyon
Shadow Hills POA
Sherman Oaks HOA
Silver Lake Heritage Trust
Studio City Residents Assn.
Sunset Hills HOA
Sunshine Hills Residents Assn.
Tarzana POA
Upper Mandeville Canyon Assn.
Upper Nichols Canyon NA
Whitley Heights Civic Assn.

Re: LA Zoo Vision Plan FREIR CF 21-082

Honorable Councilmembers Hernandez, Lee, and Hutt:

The Hillside Federation, founded in 1952 and representing 47 resident and homeowner associations spanning the Santa Monica Mountains, reviewed the Los Angeles Zoo's Vision Plan FREIR of Alternative 1.5 released in May 2023 at its June 20, 2023 meeting. While Alternative 1.5 is a vast improvement over the initial Vision Plan, the Federation still opposes Condor Canyon and the California Visitor Center.

The Federation is pleased that the Zoo has:

- eliminated the removal of 201 protected trees in the Africa Area
- eliminated the aerial tram to the Africa Area
- eliminated the multi-story parking structure
- eliminated the vineyard in the California Area
- created a Peak Visitation Management Program

While we were glad to see the above changes, we still cannot support the Vision Plan Alternative 1.5 in its current form. We are particularly disappointed that one of the most destructive concepts of the entire plan, Condor Canyon, was not eliminated. Excavating or blasting a 60-foot deep gouge in the hill literally takes a huge bite out of the natural hillside. This gaping hole will have both aesthetic and environmental impacts as the gouge will be readily visible from both the I-5 and the 134, as well as to residents in Atwater Village and Glendale.

The Zoo claims that the construction of Condor Canyon is necessary to provide ADA access to the California Area. This claim is easily disproved by the simple fact that there is already a Zoo Safari Shuttle available for that purpose. ADA access is merely an excuse dredged up by the consultant to justify an entirely unnecessary feature whose exorbitant cost will have to be paid for by taxpayers and donors.

To add insult to injury, the construction of the canyon will have a major traffic impact, requiring dump trucks to make approximately 6,000 trips to haul out the anticipated 74,000 cubic yards of rock and dirt. And another 6,000 truck trips to return empty to pick up another load. Along with the traffic impacts, there will be air pollution generated by exhaust from the trucks and further pollution generated by all the dirt that will be raised. A triple whammy!

The Zoo now claims that the proposed climbing wall will offer children an experience similar to what a biologist would have climbing up to check on a condor nest. But there are other far less impactful and far more economical ways to provide that climbing experience without destroying the natural terrain. The Department of Recreation and Parks owns several tip-up climbing walls that they trailer to various parks which would fill the bill nicely.

The Hillside Federation also objects strongly to the destruction of real California native habitat in order to create a simulated California *experience* in the form of the California Visitor Center. We are grateful that the Zoo is committing to using native plants, but does the Zoo really think it can do better than Mother Nature? Construction of the Visitor Center will destroy 16 acres of native habitat, and its location on a prominent ridgeline will forever destroy the topography of Griffith Park. And for what? What is the point of this wanton and completely unnecessary destruction of California's true native habitat and how is it relevant to the Zoo's mission?

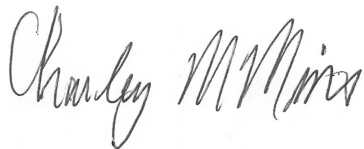
According to its mission statement, everything the Zoo does, "from the daily care of animals to educating and inspiring communities to leading species-saving efforts in far-off lands...has a single unifying goal: to help create a better future for wildlife." A noble goal indeed and one that we can support. But that goal seems to be forgotten here, and, in fact, very little space will actually be used for animal care.

Bottom line, the Federation is deeply dismayed to find that both Condor Corridor and the California Visitor Center are still in the revised and recirculated plan. And as if that weren't bad enough, Alternative 1.5 proposes adding *yet another event rental space*, the Entry Garden and Park, that did not exist in the original Vision Plan!

The Zoo's mission statement says nothing about providing event rental space or becoming another amusement park. Let's keep the Zoo a zoo. The Zoo can achieve its main goals under Alternative 1.5 without the development of the California Area and Condor Corridor. There is plenty of room within its existing developed footprint to upgrade animal welfare and care and to build all the proposed sustainability features. It can be a world-class zoo, dedicated, as zoos of the future must be, to research, to education and to the conservation of endangered animals from around the globe—and, of equal importance, the ones that we are so fortunate to have right here in our beautiful Santa Monica Mountains back yard. It can, in short, be a zoo and not an amusement park, a truly *great* zoo that makes appropriate use of its very special location. And it can accomplish all of these goals for a much smaller price tag than the \$650 million for the first three phases of its Vision Plan.

The Hillside Federation therefore recommends that the Los Angeles Zoo adopt a modified Alternative 1.5, without the development of the California Area or Condor Corridor, as its Vision Plan.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charley Mims". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charley Mims

cc: CM Nithya Raman