

# CANYON AREA PRESERVATION

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

Mid Winter 2005

Volume 1, Issue 14

## VIEWS

LOCAL INPUT / LOCAL CONTROL



### Planning To Decide Canyon Hills Feb. 24

The City Planning Commission will make their determination regarding Canyon Hills at a full Commission meeting on Thursday February 24. Input from the Community is required in order for them to make the correct decision. Without our further input, the Commission may simply approve the staff recommendations – 230 homes on land suitable for as few as 87 homes or less.

Please come to the next Planning Commission meeting and let them know your mind. You may not think that your opinion is important, but **it truly is**. When you stand there in the audience and make your presence known the Planning Commission, Councilmember Wendy Greuel, and Whitebird cannot ignore you. If you don't show up, they will figure that you don't care and a decision will be made that you may not like.

The residents of Council District 2, and thousands of like-minded people in the foothill communities, are known throughout the City of Los Angeles for being very involved in the important issues affecting our quality of life. No issue is more important right now than Canyon Hills. Don't let your future be decided by others. Come to this meeting and be heard!

**Planning Commission Meeting \***  
**Thursday February 24, "After 10:00AM"**  
**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**

\* Time and location may change. Visit [www.verdugos.org](http://www.verdugos.org) for timely updates.

## Canyon Area Preservation

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(opinions expressed are  
the editor's)

## Fundraising Exceeds All Expectations

Members of Glendale-Crescenta VOICE, the Sierra Club, FALCON, and Canyon Area Preservation have raised thousands of dollars in the past year to pay for the fight against Whitebird Canyon Hills.

Our summer concert/bake sale raised over \$7,000 and awareness of the issues. We continued with a successful Comedy Night fundraiser hosted by GC-VOICE in September that raised several thousand more.

Our members and friends have generously donated additional thousands of dollars on their own.

The money is being used to pay for a land use attorney to represent us on the legal matters, the cost of mailings and printing, and other direct costs associated with our educa-

tional efforts.

**None** of the money is used for administrative overhead. Everyone is volunteering their time and energy on this issue.

Why are we all doing this? What will any of us gain by continuing this fight?

Some of us care about the wildlife that will be affected by Canyon Hills, some don't want to see the increased traffic on La Tuna Canyon Road, some don't want to see an out-of-state land speculator bend the laws for its own benefit while the rest of us follow the rules.

Some of us recognize that the City needs to follow the laws passed by the Community to ensure the quality of life we bought into when we moved here.

Whatever your reason, please continue giving whatever you can.

It is extremely important.

**Bumper stickers and yard signs are now available.** To get your bumper sticker, send a self-addressed manila envelope and a donation (minimum \$1) to: Friends of the Verdugos, P.O. Box 4242, Sunland, CA 91041. To obtain a yard sign (size: 24" X 48"), email your request to: [yardsigns@verdugohills.net](mailto:yardsigns@verdugohills.net). Please include your phone number and a good time to call. Yard signs are available thanks to a generous grant from the Sierra Club.



## 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](http://www.gcvoice.org)

## Canyon Hills Update

The Planning Department held a hearing on Canyon Hills Thursday January 27 at the Government Center in Van Nuys. A decision has been continued until February 24 where public comments will continue to be received.

On December 9, 2004 the Deputy Advisory Agency and a Hearing Officer held a public hearing at the Sunland-Tujunga Municipal Building. Over 200 people turned out to speak. Whitebird did have a significant showing of support from people connected to the real estate industry in the area. Most people, though, were against Canyon Hills.

[www.lacity.org/PLN](http://www.lacity.org/PLN) - Click on "Environmental/Final EIRs.

[www.verdugos.org](http://www.verdugos.org) - Local activist site.

[www.canyonhills.info](http://www.canyonhills.info) - This is the developer's web site.

[www.gcvoice.org](http://www.gcvoice.org) - Glendale-Crescenta VOICE.

[www.savetheverdugos.com](http://www.savetheverdugos.com) - New site with a great song!

## **The Canyon Area Preservation Position on Canyon Hills**

1. Follow the law – always. If the laws are not serving the community, change them in the proper public venue, not as part of a land speculation deal.
2. Correctly determine the maximum number of homes that are allowed under existing land use designations, the Slope Density Ordinance, and other applicable laws (enforce the standards used by civil engineers in making this determination).
3. Do not allow a General Plan Amendment that changes land use designations in order to avoid obeying the Slope Density Ordinance.
4. Cluster the allowed homes in the more naturally level portions of the property), in this case on the north side of the 210 Freeway (required by the Scenic Preservation Plan and the Community Plan.
5. No grading or construction on the south side of the 210 Freeway since it is steeply sloped, also an important wildlife corridor (Canyon Hills Area B would put 69 homes on a hilltop overlooking the freeway).
6. No sound walls on any scenic highway, especially the 210 Freeway (if planned homes are so close they need sound walls, eliminate the homes or move them farther away so sound walls not required).
7. If the grading area's zone is to be changed, nothing less than RE-40 should be allowed (in the Minimum Density land use designation, it allows A1, A2, and RE-40).
8. Horsekeeping characteristics should be preserved for all lots, whether stable facilities are built or not (this allows future residents to put in horses if desired).
9. Horse and hiking trails should be built around and within any new development (as required in the Community Plan).
10. Anyone making legal and land use decisions on this matter should declare any money received from the applicant or its agents (this follows current ethics rules of the LA City Council regarding city contracts).
11. The Neighborhood Councils, homeowner groups, and stakeholders affected by this project should be listened to.
12. General Plan Amendments should be subject to a vote by the public in a general election.

**Note: Other groups and individuals have different positions. See this and future issues of CAP Views for those positions.**

## **The Sierra Club Position on Canyon Hills**

"We (the City) would like to preserve as much as possible of the remaining open space in the Verdugo Mountains for the long term, so we would prefer that the property that you (the developer) own be conveyed in its entirety to an agency that would preserve it as open space in perpetuity. We will work to find such an agency and help arrange a sale satisfactory to all parties, but we can't do it in the short term; it may take a few years, or even longer, to arrange. If, in the meantime, you want to build on your property, of course you have the right to do that. Just don't expect any breaks from the City on the rules. No zone changes, no plan amendments, the strictest legally-defensible interpretations of all the regulations such as the Slope Density ordinance."

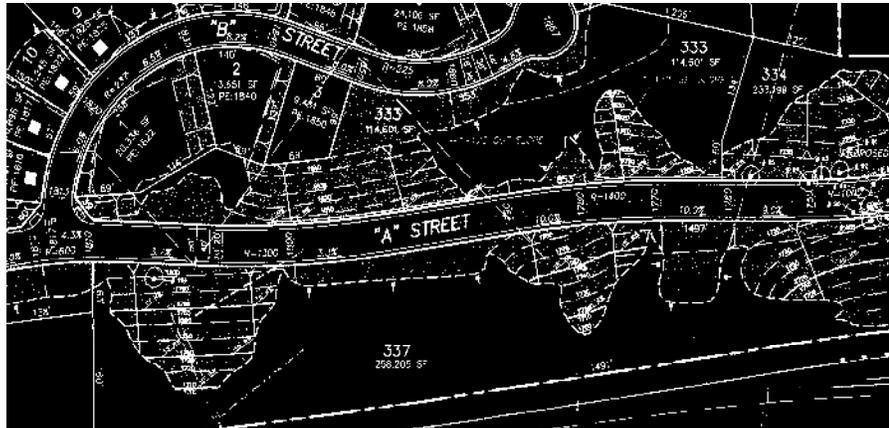
### **Excerpts of a 2/4/05 letter to the Planning Department by Bill Eick, land use attorney for Shadow Hills Property Owners Association**

"After examining the slope density analysis set forth on the map prepared by Whitebird and its engineers, it is evident that their slope density calculations are flawed. Whitebird contends that the minimum number of units allowed ... equals 175 units. However, the actual calculations allowed by the LAMC only permit 71 units. In fact, only 65 units are permissible if grids 209 and 210 are removed from the calculation since they are not actually part of the project..."

## Map Sections From Canyon Hills

CAP Views #13 also showed these maps, but we felt they are worth presenting again so people have a chance to view portions of the Canyon Hills project. Also, my graphics editing program isn't working so I couldn't isolate more views of the project! ☹ Sorry to repeat myself, but these views are important to see.

The full maps are available at <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/> under Environmental/Final EIRs/Canyon Hills. Look for Appendix B.



### The Duke Ridge in Area A

This detail shows just some of the "cut and fill" grading that will alter the lower portion of the Duke Ridge as it runs along the 210. The upper portion of this ridge is a Prominent Ridgeline according to the Scenic Plan.

It appears the road will run on top of the flattened ridge, and canyons will be filled to even out the path. Not good!

### Area B – Hill south of 210 along La Tuna Canyon Road

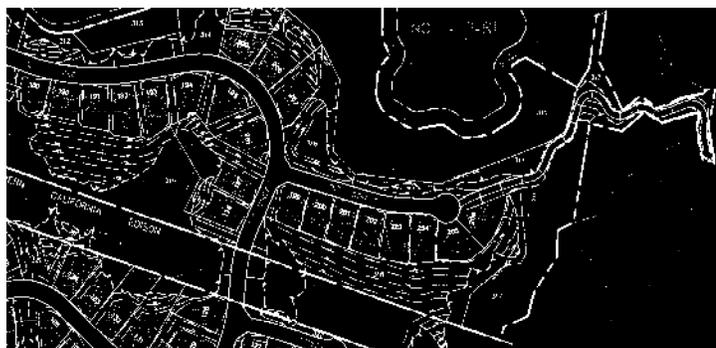
Area B has been modified since the Draft EIR was released. Many people in La Tuna Canyon and Shadow Hills wanted to see a lot of changes.

The layout of the lots is essentially unchanged, but many have been expanded from ~16,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to ~20,000 ft<sup>2</sup>. How did the developer do that without altering the grading plan or layout?

Easy. They extended the lot lines either further up or down the cut slopes to make the lots larger and took land out of the "homeowner association" allotment.

Can you recognize how much of this hill will remain after all this grading? – Not much! And this hill contains a Prominent Ridgeline but it's not identified.

This development area is easily visible when driving east up La Tuna Canyon Road. It would be the first hill-side development allowed in the Canyon if it goes through.



### Emergency Access Road Area A

According to the maps, the developer chose Inspiration Way as the secondary emergency access road. This is a dirt road on a ridge with houses on both sides. The road goes down to Alene Drive and connects to Hillhaven heading down to Foothill Blvd. No word if any of these streets will be improved to handle the task. It's doubtful whether there's enough right-of-way to widen the roads.

## Slope Density Ordinance

(Ever wondered what it says? Here it is!)

### SEC. 17.05. DESIGN STANDARDS.

**C. Conformance To General Plan.** Each Tentative Map shall be designed in compliance with the zoning applying to the property or approved by the City Council for change or shall be subject to a condition requiring compliance with such zoning prior to the recordation of the final map. **(Amended by Ord. No. 156,960, Eff. 8/27/82.)**

"In addition, where a Tentative Map involves land for which a General Plan including dwelling unit **densities** has been adopted by the Council, and said land is also in an "H" **Hillside** or Mountainous Area established by **Article 2** of this chapter, the number of lots on said map shall be limited so that the number of dwelling units permitted by the applicable zoning regulations shall not substantially exceed the dwelling unit **densities** shown on said plan. **(Amended by Ord. No. 149,402, Eff. 4/18/77.)**

"Each Tentative Map shall substantially conform to all other elements of the General Plan. In computing the number of dwelling units, only the area being designated for residential use and land that is being dedicated for public uses shall be considered, excepting, however, land set aside for "street purposes, or land required to be dedicated for park and recreation purposes pursuant to Ordinance 141,422." **(Amended by Ord. No. 149,402, Eff. 4/18/77.)**

In **Hillside** Areas as defined in **Chapter IX** of the Los Angeles Municipal Code which are designated in the Minimum **Density** housing category by the applicable element of the General Plan adopted by the City Council, the dwelling unit **density** shall not exceed that allowed by the following formula: **(Paragraph and following formula Added by Ord. No. 162,144, Eff. 5/11/87.)**

$$D = \frac{50 - S}{35}$$

Where : D = the maximum number of dwelling units per gross acre allowable, and S = the average natural **slope** of the land in percent

Where the total allowable number of dwelling units per parcel map or tentative tract map calculated under the above formulas results in a number other than a whole number, it shall be rounded to the nearest whole number as follows: where the fractional portion of the total allowable number of dwelling units equals .5 or more, the total number of allowable dwelling units shall be rounded to the next larger whole number; where the fractional portion of the total allowable number of dwelling units equals less than .5, the total number of allowable dwelling units shall be rounded to the next smaller whole number. **(Added by Ord. No. 162,144, Eff. 5/11/87.)**

In no case shall the permitted **density** be less than 0.05 dwelling units per gross acre. Average natural **slope** is **slope** prior to any grading. Where previous grading on a site makes it difficult to determine average natural **slope** using the above formula, the Director of Planning shall determine the average natural **slope** in a manner to carry out the purpose and intent of this Subsection. **(Added by Ord. No. 162,144, Eff. 5/11/87.)**

## The Last Time Our General Plan Was Amended

On November 18, 1997, the Planning and Land Use Management committee adopted the following findings (the committee consisted of Joel Wachs, Hal Bernson, and Laura Chick at the time. Motion was by Wachs):

"Move that the PLUM Committee report for CP# 97-0703 be amended to add the following additional language to the Sunland-Tujunga lake View Terrace Shadow Hills East La Tuna Canyon Community Plan:

On February 20, 1989, the Sunland Tujunga et. al. Community Plan was amended pursuant to AB 283 in order to achieve consistency between the Plan's land use designations and zoning.

On July 10, 1991 the LA City council adopted plan amendments and zone changes relating to regulation and limitation of development in hillside areas having an average natural slope of 15% or greater. The hillside areas that were designated for Minimum Density Housing totaled 6,660 acres. The redesignation to Minimum Density made the properties subject to the provision of the Citywide Slope Density Ordinance which provides a formula to calculate the density of development relative to the percentage of slope on the site.

This action was taken to protect the natural character of the picturesque mountainous areas, to provide a safe environment and to enhance the quality of life in the Northeast Valley. The regulations are directed toward minimizing the problems with soil erosion, slope instability, excessive grading, scarring of the hillsides, inadequate infrastructure, limited accessibility on substandard streets, and a lack of public facilities and services."

**Any questions? Anything changed since 1997?**

**From the Whitebird Final Environmental Impact Report, in answer to a letter from Elektra Kruger:**

"With respect to the concern expressed regarding the consistency of the proposed project with Footnote 4 in the Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan, the slope density formula set forth in Section 17.05C of the LAMC that is referenced in Footnote 4 applies to land designated as Minimum residential, Very Low I Residential and Very Low II Residential in the area covered by the Sunland-Tujunga Community Plan. The **proposed** land use designation for the Development Areas is Low Residential, which would not be subject to the slope density formula." **[Editor's Note: So, by changing the zoning and land use designations, they won't have to follow the slope density formula! Is this what was meant to happen when that law was passed??? What's going on here?]**

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](mailto: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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Sunland Tujunga Neighborhood Council  
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[www.SunlandTujunga.com/council](http://www.SunlandTujunga.com/council)

Valley Horse Owners Association  
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La Tuna Canyon Community Assn.  
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Lake View Terrace Homeowners Assn.  
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