

# CANYON AREA PRESERVATION

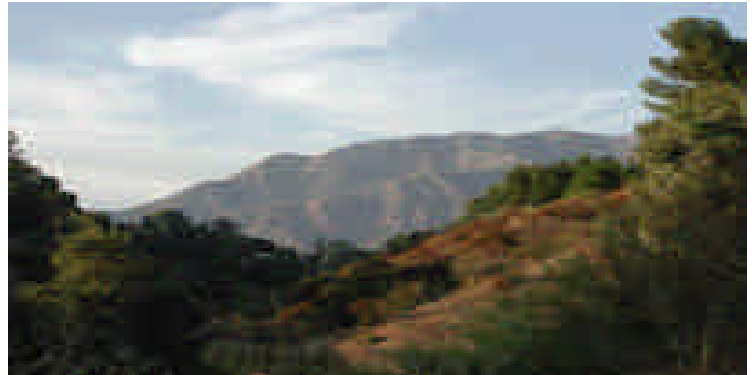
Information about preserving our canyons, hillsides, and the foothills.

Winter 2003

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## VIEWS

LOCAL INPUT / LOCAL CONTROL



View from a Tujunga backyard. Photo by Bosko Renard

### Scenic Plan – Hello? Anyone Listening?

**“It’s the first week of May 2003. Do you know where your Scenic Preservation Plan is?”**

This was the first line of a story in CAP Views last May. It might as well be the first line of this edition, too, because as of December 1, 2003 we STILL do not have a final version of the Scenic Preservation Specific Plan!

**How close are we to seeing a final version?** It depends on the City Attorney’s office and the Planning Department, and whether they will continue to include words and phrases that are completely unacceptable to the Community Advisory Group meeting for the past 3+ YEARS. It could be any day now, OR it could drag on for another 6 months, just as it has since last May– really since Sept. 25, 2002.

**What’s the main problem?** Our group is insisting

that wording be included that says, in Prominent Ridgeline Protection Areas the Scenic Plan shall have precedence; but outside those areas the Community Plan, all the map footnotes, and all the relevant ordinances are still in effect. The proposed wording keeps getting this mixed up, and would have the effect of negating the protections of the Community Plan. This is a key element of the Scenic Plan, and it must be gotten right or no deal!

**What about the minimum lot width and size of 20K-ft<sup>2</sup> requirement we were seeking?** Well, that’s been taken out of the Scenic Plan because Planning says it wasn’t part of their consideration during the past 3 years. The City Attorney has told us if we want that in, Wendy Greuel will have to make a motion in front

cont’d Pg.3 – “Where is the Scenic Plan?”

### Whitebird Canyon Hills Development Information

The Whitebird Inc. Canyon Hills project is a proposal to build 280 homes on both sides of the 210 Freeway between La Tuna Canyon Road and Sunland Boulevard. The developer has submitted its Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) to the Planning Department and it is now released for public comment. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00PM Dec. 31, 2003.

Send your comments to:

LA City Planning Department  
Maya Zaitzevsky  
200 N. Spring Street Room 763  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Please make a copy of your letter and send it to

CAP Views so we can help track the responses.

Copies of the DEIR on CD-ROM can be purchased for \$7.50 at the Planning Department office, or call them at 213-978-1355.

The DEIR can be studied at District 2 Field Office, 7747 Foothill Blvd, Tujunga; Sunland-Tujunga and La Crescenta Branch Libraries; and LA Central Library.

Info on the web:

[www.lacity.org/PLN](http://www.lacity.org/PLN) - Click on “Meetings/Environmental/Hearings/Draft Environmental Impact Reports”  
[www.verdugohills.net/canyonhills](http://www.verdugohills.net/canyonhills) - 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.

## Canyon Area Preservation

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## Property Rights And The Snowball Effect

At the November meeting of the La Tuna Canyon Community Association, Whitebird representatives presented their Canyon Hills project to a passionate and critical audience.

The best question of the evening was from a local landowner in the Canyon (question paraphrased and notes added by editor). She asked, "You're requesting the right to subdivide your property into many R-9 [9000-ft<sup>2</sup>] and R-11 [11,000-ft<sup>2</sup>] lots, even though it's now zoned A-1 [2 structures per 200,000-ft<sup>2</sup> or 5 acres]. Well, I've got 2 acres here in the

Canyon, and I'd love to put 2 or 3 homes on my property and sell them, but I could never get permission from Planning. Why should you be allowed to get by the rules?"

If Whitebird receives their variances and Plan amendments, what's to stop more projects like theirs from happening, or to stop existing landowners from subdividing their property? The rural and equestrian parts of our community could be changed forever. Is this what we want? If it is, shouldn't we have a vote?

**Contact Councilmember Wendy Greuel ([greuel@council.lacity.org](mailto:greuel@council.lacity.org) or 213-485-3391). Request that any radical changes to the Community Plan be submitted to the voters for approval. Tell her that granting variances for the benefit of one company will set a bad precedent for the entire area.**

## Credibility – Who Can You Believe And Why?

So, you've heard something about this Whitebird Canyon Hills development, and you decide to learn something about it.

You go to the developer's web site, but that doesn't give you any details you care about. You go to the City Planning Department's web site to see the actual DEIR, but it's hard to see the maps in context. You've been to presentations by Whitebird, but they don't seem to answer any questions when asked. How do you get any real information about this project?

Canyon Area Preservation (CAP), GC-VOICE, and the Sierra Club felt that someone needs to give out information on this complicated topic and put things in context because precedents may be set that will impact our future.

But how do you determine if what we are saying is accurate? Here's who we are, and why you can trust information you learn from us:

- o We are homeowners, residents, and stakeholders who care about our community.
- o We believe local citizens should be informed about their civic rights.
- o We invite wide citizen participation and seek locals who are knowledgeable and experienced, no matter their politics or perspectives.
- o We are not trying to profit from anything that goes on here.

- o Ours is a grass-roots campaign funded by donations and volunteers.
- o We are involved in local politics and know our Councilperson, other elected representatives, and the process.
- o We'll gladly tell you who we are and where we live – we're your neighbors.

On the other hand, Whitebird Inc. has been acting a bit less openly:

- o The address for their DEIR is their PR agency, Consensus Planning Group.
- o They don't answer many questions at the public hearings, or don't know a lot of the answers.
- o We never see the owner of the project in person – just the project manager, the lawyer, the PR person.
- o We don't know who owns this project. Don't you want to know with whom you're dealing when you're doing business?
- o Their lawyers, lobbyists, and PR firm operate out of the public eye.

Here's my open pledge to the community – if, on behalf of Canyon Area Preservation, I ever say in person or write anything that is not factually true about a topic, I will gladly correct it on the spot or publish a retraction or correction if it is brought to my attention by any listener or reader.

It's important to me that you can trust CAP.

## Where Is The Scenic Plan?

Cont'd from Pg. 1

of the full City Council and have them vote on it.

**If the Council has to vote on this, what are the chances it won't pass?** The general rule in the Council is, they follow the lead of the district representative. But there's nothing to prevent them from voting against the amendment. And Whitebird's been lobbying all Council members.

**What else is wrong with the Planning Department's version?** As reported to us by Dale Thrush: Whitebird asked to be allowed to let chimneys protrude above the silhouette of Prominent Ridgelines. Whitebird wants to alter the end lines of some Prominent Ridges on their property. Whitebird wants wording in the grading rules section that says "where practical". Whitebird wants the Planning Director or Advisory Agency to be the final word on oak tree removal, not the Oak Tree Ordinance.

They specifically asked for these changes in a meeting with the City Attorney and the Planning Department – and they got the wording they wanted! This wasn't a secret meeting. It was held

just before our Community Advisory Group met with the same people in September.

However, we never know what goes on in their meetings until a new version of the Scenic Plan is released by the Planning Department and we see the results of Whitebird's requests. The Community Advisory Group objected to every change, and now we're waiting for another version to be released.

In my opinion, Whitebird wants too many changes that benefit their interests alone. The integrity of the Scenic Plan is at stake.

We try to report to you what our Community Group wants from our meetings with CD2, the Planning Department, and the City Attorney. Our input reflects the cross section of interests in the community: horse people, homeowners, business people, realtors, etc.

Why is it that a private, out-of-state commercial interest can be allowed undue influence on a public ordinance with the importance of the Scenic Preservation Plan? Because they own property? – well, we do, too!

The Scenic Plan is supposed to be for the good of the Community in general, not be a development manual for commercial interests. It's about time the Planning Department understood this.

## Call For Donations

The DEIR (Draft Environmental Impact Report) for Whitebird's Canyon Hills project has now been released. Community organizations and individuals throughout the Scenic Plan area should be ready to send in comment letters, which are due by Dec. 31, 2003.

The DEIR will consist of Whitebird's plans with alternatives, along with official reports on traffic, grading, wildlife, trees, geology, hydrology, the impacts of development (noise, dust, etc.) and many other topics.

In order to properly respond to the DEIR, we need to hire certain consultants to provide independent expertise and legal assistance to deal with this complicated proposal.

**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)



**C.A.P.**  
PO Box 633  
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...

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.....

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

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Dale Thrush, Chief Planning Deputy  
Council District 2  
213-485-3391  
[dthrush@council.lacity.org](mailto:dthrush@council.lacity.org)

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

Valley Horse Owners Association  
Carol Locus [President@vhoa.org](mailto:President@vhoa.org)

La Tuna Canyon Community Assn.  
Krystyn Goddard, Pres.  
818-768-8708  
[Paradise4pet@earthlink.net](mailto:Paradise4pet@earthlink.net)

Lake View Terrace Homeowners Assn.  
Nancy Snyder, President  
818-503-2333 [LVTHOA@aol.com](mailto:LVTHOA@aol.com)

Shadow Hills Property Owners Assn.  
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