



San Fernando Valley Group

January 7, 2021

To Whom It May Concern . . .

RE: Sierra Club Support: Writ of Mandate, Sunshine Hills Residents & Association v. City of Los Angeles

The Sierra Club, San Fernando Valley Group, Angeles Chapter, serves the areas of San Fernando Valley: Studio City to Sylmar, from Agoura to Chatsworth. Our group represents several thousand Sierra Club members. We are a community service, non-profit 501 (c) (4) group. Our mission is to *Explore, Enjoy and Protect* local, natural resources, open spaces, watershed and wildlife habitats.

We are privileged to lend our voice and support to the community non-profit group, “Sunshine Hills Residents Association” in their petition, Writ of Mandate Case# 20STCP03910, submitted November 25, 2020. [Exhibit A]

Regarding the private property: 11472 Laurelcrest Dr., Studio City (CF 19-1134), which has been active in the planning process for the past year, an additional challenge, citing the project misuse of the California Environmental Quality Act, has been petitioned.

This vacant 10,000 square ft. parcel overlays one acre of intact wildlife habitat, located within the Los Angeles Wildlife Survey and the Santa Monica Mountains habitat district.

Sunshine Hills Residents Association commissioned a biological assessment by Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc. [Exhibit B] Cooper report findings indicate a intact Southern Oak/Walnut woodland habitat as being a significant contribution to wildlife movement in the immediate and surrounding area, worthy of the Los Angeles Wildlife Permeability review process, which was initiated in 2016, council file #14-0518. So far, city project planning has performed inadequate environmental surveys, including omitting a wildlife permeability study. Overall, the proposed project has been fraught with under-reported, existing condition findings and ecological survey omissions.

In January 2020, the San Fernando Valley Group supported the Sunshine Residents Association’s appeal to the project.

The Sierra Club recognizes residential parcels, which are located on the “wild edge,” also known as the *wildland urban interface*, as being ecologically valuable to local microclimate stability, as well as supporting wildlife circulation to larger swatches of habitat, as in the Los Angeles and Santa Monica Mountains ecoregion.

The 2019 Los Angeles Wildlife Pilot Study explains the value of wildlife connectivity in low density residential areas. [<https://planning.lacity.org/plans-policies/initiatives-policies/sustainability>]

Sierra Club conservation groups support the CEQA guidelines for parcels located in *wildland urban interface* areas. We think careful, conservational planning in Land Use decisions, contribute to preserving quality of life and sustainable conservation outcomes in the community. *Piecemealing* low density, *wildland urban interface* residential parcels, by allowing indiscriminate conversion of natural hillside watershed, native vegetation to ornamental landscapes, contributes to urban sprawl, increased microclimate disruption as well as the degradation of wildlife persistence.

The Los Angeles area is mapped as one of the 36 “*biodiversity hotspots*” in the world. [<http://www.kcet.org/shows/earth-focus/is-los-angeles-truly-a-hotspot-for-biodiversity>] Endemic, significant plant and animal species are at the highest risk of loss, in *biodiversity hotspots*. Environmental resolutions the City of Los Angeles has enacted over past decades, continually appear to be overlooked, ignored or minimized; such as the 2014 Los Angeles Oak Woodland Conservation Guide. This parcel is an example of how local natural resources are chipped away repeatedly, resulting in cumulative negative environmental impacts.

The Sierra Club opposes the City of Los Angeles, CEQA categorical exemption for 11472 Laurelcrest Drive. The “CatEx” is an inappropriate exclusion of protocol ecological surveys, which assure best practice in conservation planning for infill projects located in the *wildland urban interface*. We also concur with the existing conditions report of Cooper Ecological Monitoring, Inc.

We seek a revision of the project to consider wildlife circulation and permeability, and/or a mitigated negative declaration review. It should be delayed until proper discretionary surveys may be performed.

We invite city and county elected decision makers to stand with us, to assist in achieving this goal.

Interested persons, may contact Ms. Terrie Brady, Sierra Club, for more information: sfvcscsepbasin@gmail.com or terriebrady@gmail.com

Sierra Club, San Fernando Valley Group

Cc: Morgan Goodwin, Sr. Director, Sierra Club Angeles Chapter
Kim Orbe, Conservation Projects Mgr., Sierra Club Angeles Chapter

References:

- Los Angeles Oak Woodland Conservation Mgmt Plan <https://planning.lacounty.gov/oakwoodland>