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California State Senate

ANTHONY J. PORTANTINO
SENATOR
TWENTY-FIFTH SENATE DISTRICT



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June 19, 2023

Vincent Bertoni
Director of Planning
Los Angeles City Planning
200 N. Spring Street, Suite 525
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Request for Canyon Hills Development Subsequent EIR

Dear Director Bertoni,

The proposed Canyon Hills development in La Tuna Canyon within our Senate districts originally had its Final EIR approved in 2005. Since that time nearly two decades ago, the landscape has undergone a series of significant changes, the greatest of which being the devastating La Tuna Fire of 2017 that permanently damaged the plant, animal, and soil life in the area. The physical transformation of the property itself, the changes in the surrounding natural area, and the accelerating effects of climate change since 2005 have all rendered the Final EIR utterly obsolete and in desperate need of revision prior to final grading permits being authorized.

The land proposed for development of a massive, nearly 300-house private neighborhood is a critical wildlife corridor for mountain lions, a species that has been designated by the State as a candidate threatened species in the interim in addition to being home to well over 300 endangered and native plant species. Severe drought and new developments in the surrounding area have narrowed the passageway for these important animals from the Verdugo Hills to the Angeles National Forest, further threatening their survival as a species and the broader ecosystem as a whole. This factor was not contemplated in the 2005 Final EIR and is one of many illustrations of the radically different circumstances present in the region today relative to 2005.

California is home to some of the most fire-prone land in the United States, and wildfires breaking out in dry hillside areas have become increasingly common and exhibited far greater severity since the turn of the 21st century. The location of the proposed Canyon Hills development is in a very high fire risk zone with limited evacuation routes in the event of a fire similar to the 2017 La Tuna Fire. Because the hills have become much drier and the area surrounding the Verdugo Hills more densely

populated in the last 18 years, the existing Final EIR does not account for the totality of the fire risk as it stands in 2023.

For these reasons it is essential to require a Subsequent EIR for this project before any further permits are issued or work begins. With many other challenges remaining unaddressed regarding the wildlife and fire risks of the project, a Subsequent EIR is what is best and necessary for the residents of the community and our shared environment at this time.

Respectfully,



Hon. Anthony J. Portantino
Senator, 25th District



Hon. Caroline Menjivar
Senator, 20th District

CC: Hon. Monica Rodriguez, Los Angeles City Council District 7