

Memorandum

To : The Conservancy
The Advisory Committee

Date: April 26, 2010

From :  Joseph T. Edmiston, FAICP, Hon. ASLA, Executive Director

Subject: **Agenda Item 9(a): Consideration of resolution confirming a comment letter to the City of Los Angeles endorsing the proposed Baseline Hillside Ordinance.**

Staff Recommendation: That the Conservancy adopt the attached resolution confirming a comment letter to the City of Los Angeles endorsing the proposed Baseline Hillside Ordinance.

Background: The City of Los Angeles is currently considering an ordinance regulating development in hillside areas. The proposed ordinance is the third in a three-step process to limit out-of-scale single-family residential development in the City. The first was the Baseline Mansionization Ordinance, which covered all non-hillside areas of the City. Second, the City revised and updated its Hillside Area designations.

The proposed Ordinance has several benefits for the ecology of the Santa Monica Mountains and other hillside areas. First, it would limit overdevelopment of substandard lots, which often severs narrow wildlife passages between existing single-family homes. Second, it would restrict both the total amount and form of grading in hillside areas, protecting the topography and hydrology of the Mountains and reducing the likelihood of retaining walls too tall for wildlife movement. Third, the proposed ordinance would change the height limits to better fit the topography, discouraging the unsightly tall box-like houses that have proliferated under the current rules.

The attached summary further explains the provisions of the proposed Ordinance. Staff attended a hearing on April 22 to make these comments before the City Planning Commission.