

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

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May 29, 2013

Zoning Administration Section
Los Angeles City Planning Department
6262 Van Nuys Boulevard, Room 351
Van Nuys, California 91401

Attention: Oliver Netburn

ZA 2013-0664(ZZA) 8145 Willow Glen Road
ENV 2013-665-CE

Dear Zoning Administrator:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) offers the following comments on the proposed Zoning Administrator's Adjustment for both a reduced allowed area on one proposed lot and on the finding that the project will not have a significant affect on the environment and is therefore exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Conservancy is the principal State planning agency for the Santa Monica Mountains.

The Conservancy has multiple objections to the subject proposal and finds that the project could have a significant impacts on the environment thus making the proposed Categorical Exemption deficient. The proposed action has the potential for permanent negative effects on the long term ecological function of hundreds of acres of habitat that have been protected with millions of dollars of public and private funding, not to mention the terrestrial ecological isolation of Griffith Park.

The most pressing objections to the proposal is that the proposed five lot consolidation filed under Case No. AA 2013-662 PMEX is wholly dependent on the inclusion of City-owned APN 5565-026-900. Likewise the proposed creation of two lots on APN 5565-026-015 under ZA 2013-0664 (ZZA) is also wholly dependent on City-owned APN 5565-026-900. That dependency is not lawful for the reasons stated in the following paragraph. The Conservancy does not see how a lot line could be moved across publically-owned Willow Glen Walk if the applicant asserts that the moved lot line is from a parcel other than City-owned APN 5565-026-900.

On April 30, 2013 the Conservancy staff received the attached Memorandum from the City of Los Angeles' Department of General Services, Real Estate Services Division regarding

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the proposed surplus sale of City-owned APN 5565-026-900. Staff returned the signed form objecting to the sale on May 8, 2013. Pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 33207(b) the City must first offer the property to the Conservancy. The property is located within the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy zone.

Section 33207(b) of the Public Resources Code states in part:

The conservancy shall have the first right of refusal on any property within the zone presently owned by a public agency and scheduled for disposal as excess lands, except where such lands are designated for acquisition as a park or recreation area by a federal, state, or local agency. The conservancy shall have the right to acquire such lands at the disposing agency's purchase price plus any administrative and management costs incurred by the disposing agency.

The Conservancy will acquire the subject property pursuant to this section if the City chooses to surplus it. If the City has already proceeded with any actions leading to the sale of the property beyond its April 8, 2013 Memorandum to the Conservancy, that action(s) must cease and possibly be reversed for the City's position to remain lawful. Furthermore, the City's Memorandum states that the property, prior to disposition, must also be made available for park and recreation, purposes and for open space purposes pursuant to Government Code Section 54220.

Principal Eastern Santa Monica Mountains Wildlife Corridor Importance

The subject City property and the applicant's property is located on the southern end of the Bulwer Drive habitat block. The subject properties are also situated on a key habitat linkage to get across Willow Glen Road that connects the Bulwer Drive habitat block on the north to the western Mount Olympus habitat block to the south. The Bulwer Drive habitat block connects across Laurel Canyon Boulevard westward to the Elrita Bowl - Fryman Canyon habitat block, and it is the most essential habitat linkage site that abuts the eastern side of Laurel Canyon Boulevard. The Bulwer Drive habitat block also extends eastward to connect the Nichols Canyon habitat block. The Bulwer Drive habitat block is without question a critical component of the 405 to Griffith Park habitat linkage both because of its connectivity value and its stand alone habitat value. There is no other anywhere near-equivalent location on Willow Glen Road that provides for a matching habitat gap on both sides of the road. As a result, the subject properties are all vital to maintain a direct habitat linkage between the Bulwer Drive and western Mount Olympus habitat blocks in the Laurel Canyon watershed.

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Inadequate CEQA Analysis

The proposed creation of two lots both fronting on Willow Glen Road would clog the existing gap along the north side of Willow Glen Road with two houses. The potential negative biological affects of the proposed lot configuration have not been studied. The City's Categorical Exemption does not address any habitat linkage or loss of habitat issues. These biological issues must be addressed under CEQA.

The potential negative effects of the two proposed future homes have not been addressed. The potential future land use on the remaining ownership located west and north of Willow Glen Walk is also unknown and not addressed in regards to potential environmental impacts including viewshed impacts in the outer corridor of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan. Potential negative effects on the publically-owned Willow Glen Walk stair and path system adjacent to two of the applicant's lots has also not been disclosed or analyzed. The walkway is located less than 200 feet from an MTA bus stop. All of the components of a project with this many parts and phases must be addressed in a single environmental document to avoid project piecemealing.

Missing Information

The applicant's application does not provide sufficient public notice about the proposed action because it does not list the five Assessor's parcel numbers involved in the project.

The Conservancy owns APN 5565-026-902 which abuts the applicant's property. How would the project as a whole affect this State-owned parkland?

County Assessor's maps show portions of City-owned APN 5565-026-900 that are now portions of applicant-owned APN 5565-026-015 and privately-owned 5565-026-021. How the westernmost portion of APN 5565-026-900 became part of applicant-owned APN 5565-026-015 should be disclosed. Did the City first offer the property to the Conservancy pursuant to Public Resource Code Section 33207(b)?

Please direct any questions to Paul Edelman of our staff at 310-589-3200 ext. 128 and send all future correspondence to his attention at the above letterhead address.

Sincerely,

ORIGINAL TO BE SIGNED BY

Irma Munoz

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Chairperson