

For items VIII - XI

Chair and Board members,

It is good to see the Authority moving forward to preserve more open space lands.

The Corridor is at its most narrow in La Habra Heights.

In fact, as you look at the map attachment in the agenda report, the publicly owned corridor is disconnected in La Habra Heights.

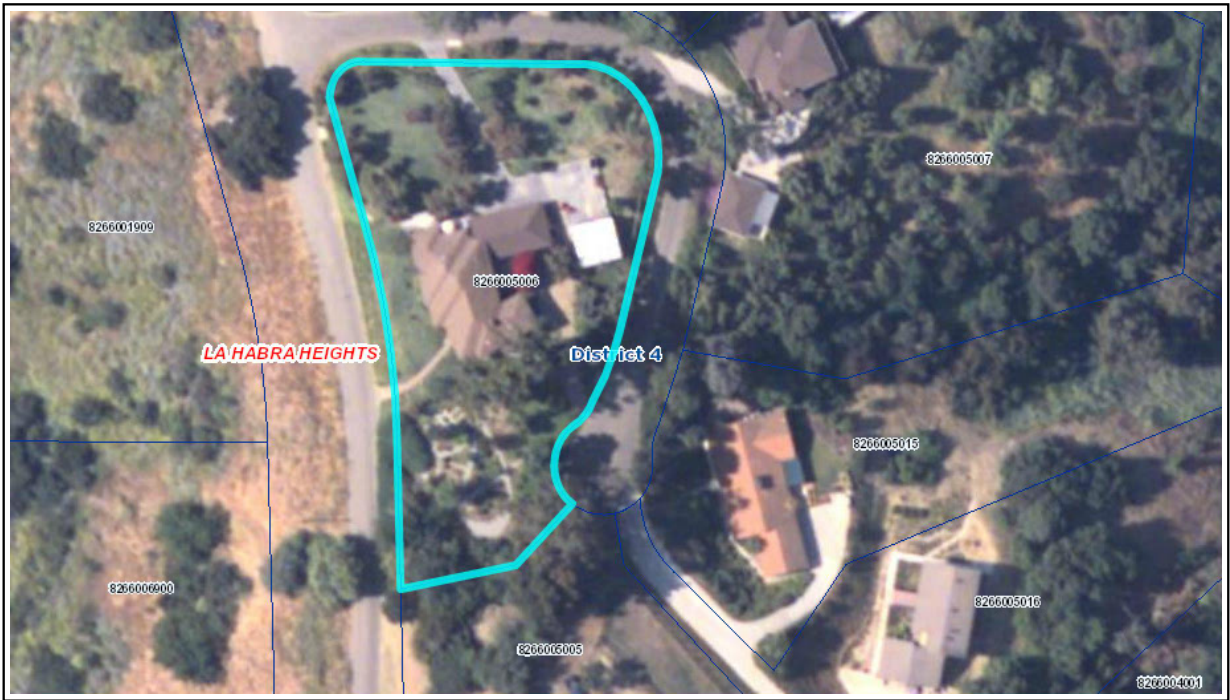
When the Puente Hills Habitat Preservation Authority was established, it was felt that La Habra Heights, with large lots, large setbacks and a General Plan that encouraged protection of open space would allow animals to filter through, was not a priority in purchasing of open space.

However, the past decade has seen a dramatic change, as zoning code changes and council direction have encouraged very large homes, building in setbacks, driveways over 35 feet long exempted from impervious coverage limits, swimming pools exempt, certain two story homes classified as single story allowing more of the lot to be covered, and, recently, the prohibition on surrounding properties with 6 foot high block walls lifted. Long retaining walls; 10 even 20 feet high are now being built that were not allowed before, blocking animal pathways.

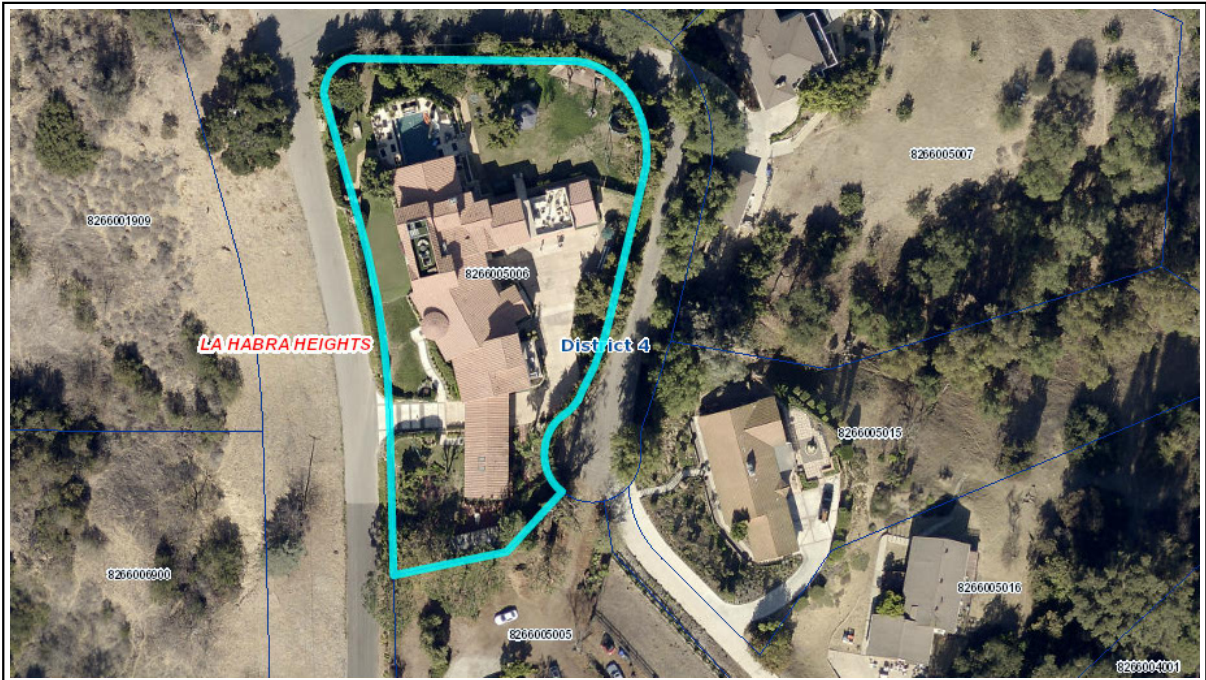
The Planning Commission, which used to review several home and remodel projects a month for compliance with the codes and general plan, now rarely meets – only two new homes or major remodels have been brought to the Commission by Staff in the last eight years (yes, you read that correctly). Most Commission meetings are now to weaken codes and allow more over the counter approval.

With high Staff turnover, I have seen at least 9 or 10 planners in the 19 years I have lived in the City, Staff has little time to develop knowledge of the City before they are gone.

Below is an example of what we are seeing regularly. Old homes where much of the property was open, allowing for free flow of animals and habitat for others, being torn down and replaced by urban estates that cover most of the lot with buildings and concrete, becoming a barrier to travel and unwelcoming as habitat.



1615 Skyline Dr in a 2001 Aerial Photo from L.A. County GIS. Habitat Authority owned property to left and right.



1615 Skyline Dr in 2014 Aerial Photo after tear down and new construction. 8000 square foot house. Habitat Authority owned property to left and right.

What can be done?

1. Previously identified parcels important to the Corridor can be purchased.
2. Development restrictions/guidelines could be purchased on surrounding or critical parcels as they come up for sale. This includes both vacant parcels and existing homes, which should be presumed to be replaced or expanded to much larger size and include urban features.

All aspects of development are negotiable with a willing seller:

1. Limits or prohibitions on fencing and walls. Put a number on how much of the parcel can be fenced or walled in.
2. Weed clearance. Who is responsible for weed clearance?
3. Lighting. How much. How bright. How many hours on, or what controls it being on.
4. Lot coverage. How much of the lot can be covered with manmade materials; concrete or equivalent hardscape (including permeable materials), buildings, pools, etc.
5. Grading. How much of the lot can be graded, with both rough grading and final grading limits. We see almost entire lots graded, but only the "final graded" portion is covered now, with exemptions for driveways.
6. Retaining walls. What length and height retaining walls.
7. Sound. Any noises or sources of sound that need to be addressed?
8. Landscaping. Are there existing trees or vegetation that should remain? Are there vegetation types and lot coverage with landscaping that is desired?
9. Animals. Are there any limits on type of animals, restraints, housing, feeding that would be mutually beneficial?
10. Other.....

It would be best not to presume or assume any protections from City codes or compliance with the General Plan.

I would strongly suggest including definitions of terms, so city definitions are not used, which would defeat the purpose of many elements of agreements.

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La Habra Heights

P.S. Below are deer on my street this past July

