

Communication from Public

Name: Leta Warner

Date Submitted: 04/20/2021 11:14 AM

Council File No: 00-9999

Comments for Public Posting: For the last couple of months our neighborhood, the 700 block of N Citrus Ave near the intersection of Citrus and Highland Ave, has been under siege from criminal activity due to the homeless encampments surrounding us. LAST WEEK alone: for the SECOND TIME two homeless men tried to break into our house WHILE WE WERE HOME. They ripped out the screens to our front windows. THE FIRST TIME they actually got into the house, stole clothing and speakers and dumped my handbag in the street. That was last Tuesday. LAST FRIDAY I woke to 75 comments on our block's WhatsApp feed. The offices of two of our neighbors were broken into and vandalized. While we were focused on helping those neighbors, another home was sustaining a three hour home invasion. JUST ONE WEEK of activity. On just ONE BLOCK. Throughout we've had fires in a parking lot. Catalytic converters stolen. Encampment structures built right in front of our house blocking the sidewalk. Driveways used as toilets. THE LIFE OF OUR BLOCK is completely transformed from friendship and community to anxiety and vigilance. Where we once used our WhatsApp to ask to borrow a cup of sugar, now it's to ALERT THAT A DRUG ADDICT IS PASSED OUT IN THEIR FRONT YARD. MOTHERS HAVE STOPPED GOING FOR WALKS WITH THEIR KIDS or letting them play outside. WHAT WE FEAR IS COMING INTO CONTACT WITH A HOMELESS MAN OFF HIS MEDICATIONS. WE FEAR AN INCIDENT LIKE BEVERLY GROVE. The police have been empathetic but powerless to make our families, with elderly and children, and those struggling with illnesses, safe. PLEASE LOS ANGELES CITY COUNCIL DO SOMETHING EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY. Stop each city from just telling homeless to move from their city to another one!

Communication from Public

Name: Jacob

Date Submitted: 04/20/2021 01:09 PM

Council File No: 00-9999

Comments for Public Posting: We live in the Melrose and Highland area and have 2 children that attend public school. Our neighborhood has been under attack with theft, public drug use, intimidation and violent crimes. Many of these crimes operate out of the homeless encampments that are within a single block of residential houses. We have had home invasions from homeless transients in these encampments. We were robbed twice (broken windows, property stolen) from transients and we identified them in a local encampment but nothing happened because it is "not worth" prosecuting these people for the crimes because they are ultimately not substantial enough to stand up in court. We have been yelled at and intimidated by mentally ill homeless people who live in the encampments as we walk down our street to go to the store. It even happens when the kids are with us. The tents are in clear code violation blocking entire sidewalks and public toilets have even been placed nearby to further incentivize talking up residence. We are constantly in fear of break-ins, people jumping fences (as they often do) and property that is securely placed outdoors behind locked gates and fences being stolen. Our daughter will attend school in the fall on Selma and since Covid there has been no enforcement of the encampments and public drug use adjacent to her school. It is tragic that Los Angeles does not address and provide safety for the tax paying citizens of the city. I am deeply sympathetic to the mental illness crisis that is rampant amongst the homeless population. That is an issue that needs to be addressed. That being said, suspending the enforcement against the encampments has permitted an air of lawlessness that is causing physical and mental damage to the residents of the city, at no cost to the criminals who repeat this behavior. Removing the suspension, enforcing the codes and not allowing encampments will go a long way towards being able to start sending a message of intolerance towards the crime and lascivious behavior that has become rampant in our district. I remain hopeful that the city will make the right choice and lift the suspension for the sake of its community. Thank you for your time, Jacob

Communication from Public

Name: Garrett Weinstein

Date Submitted: 04/20/2021 02:06 PM

Council File No: 00-9999

Comments for Public Posting: Honorable Councilmembers: Please find attached a comment letter from the Governing Board of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy opposing the Director of Planning's recent interpretation of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, as described in the Director's March 30, 2021 memorandum. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

LOS ANGELES RIVER CENTER & GARDENS
570 WEST AVENUE TWENTY-SIX, SUITE 100
LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90065
PHONE (323) 221-8900
FAX (323) 221-9001
WWW.SMMC.CA.GOV



April 19, 2021

Mayor Eric Garcetti
Office of the Mayor
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Los Angeles City Council
City of Los Angeles
200 North Spring Street, Room 340
Los Angeles, California 90012

**Opposition to Policy of Exempting "Non-Visible" Projects in the Mulholland Scenic
Parkway from Design Review Procedures as Described in the March 30, 2021
Memorandum from Director of Planning**

Honorable Mayor Garcetti and Councilmembers:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) opposes the Director of Planning's (Director) recently stated policy of exempting Non-Visible projects in the Mulholland Scenic Parkway from the standard Design Review Procedure and hearings before the Design Review Board, as described in the Director's March 30, 2021 memorandum, "Review Process for Projects Not Visible from Mulholland Drive". The subject policy subverts the purpose and intent of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan (MSPSP) as envisioned when the City Council adopted the Specific Plan in 1992, and the City Planning Commission's adoption of the Design and Preservation Guidelines in 2003.

The Conservancy is the principal State planning agency for the Santa Monica Mountains, which includes the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. Without question this change in Department of Planning policy will impair public notice and public participation rights in the vast bulk of MSPSP cases. It will result in the immediate degradation of the scenic qualities, ecological capacity, and watershed health of the eastern Santa Monica Mountains

As described in the subject memorandum, the Planning Department's new policy of exempting projects in the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor from Design Review, based on a property's visibility from Mulholland Drive would deprive the public of the opportunity

to give input on projects which previously would have had public hearings. This is a ministerial change that is outside of the language of the Mulholland Specific Plan drafted, and enacted, by the City Council in 1992.

These changes will deprive Planning staff and future decision makers of the expertise of the Design Review Board. The Design Review Board represents the interest of the public through the relevant council office appointments, and that voice should continue to be heard without restriction. The preservation of the unique resources of the Santa Monica Mountains may require delays in the Board hearing projects. That is a trade off that benefits the public and addresses City staff concerns.

The criteria cited in the subject memorandum for exempting a project from Design Review Procedures do not address “Non-Visible” projects within 200 feet of the public parkland marbled throughout the range, despite the MSPSP’s very specific language regarding parklands and environmental protections in Sections 5B.3, and 6B.

The Design Review process has been vital to both identifying and securing protections for wildlife movement through the Eastern Santa Monica Mountains in the City-designated Wildlife Habitat Linkage Zone. The Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) routinely works cooperatively with Board and project applicants to achieve such protections that are vital to sustainable wildlife populations east of the 405 freeway.

The subject memorandum interprets the Citizen’s Advisory Committee transmittal letter (1970) to the City Council as only concerning itself with visible cases, but fails to account for the City Council’s subsequent actions in later years regarding the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor. The fact that the City Council established both an Inner and Outer Corridor when enacting the Specific Plan and Ordinance in 1992 speaks to their concern for both visible and non-visible projects.

These changes by the Director, now enacted without prior input from the public or the Design Review Board, severely curtail the professional oversight that Design Review Board architects and other professionals bring to all Mulholland projects. It eliminates in-depth reviews of impacts to parkland, scenic overlooks, scenic road corridors, wildlife corridors, riparian corridors, and the urban forest. Grading in the non-visible Scenic Corridor would also miss the benefit of additional (no public cost) professional review, as demonstrated by the numerous projects that have been initially presented to the Design Review Board in the past with grading discrepancies and erroneous slope calculations.

In short, this change diminishes transparency and site sensitive design in a plan that was created for just that purpose.

City Planning staff has represented this change in policy in due in part to the reduced number of staff available to work on projects under the Specific Plan. City staff should not

be mislead into believing that the burden of correcting the deficiencies in the application for a project should fall on them. Project delays may have to be a price paid to save the City of Los Angeles portion of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Well thought out projects that are designed to fit within the environmental constraints of a their respective properties are not held up by the Design Review process. Most projects that have been approved by the Mulholland Design Review Board typically benefit from the Board's expertise and proceed more smoothly through the remainder of the planning process.

As of this letter, the City has not provided the public any avenue for administrative remedy of this ultra vires decision by the Director or Planning.

If the Director of Planning desires a means of streamlining the review process and alleviating the workload for Planning staff, without limiting the ability of the public to participate in review of discretionary projects under the MSPSP, the following, bare minimum, changes in policy should be required:

1. Public noticing of MSPSP projects deemed Not Visible undergoing ministerial review by Planning staff, with a public comment period.
2. Project plans made available to the public via internet download during, and after, the public comment period. The measures taken to make MDRB project plans available electronically in response to the COVID-19 pandemic have demonstrated that it is feasible, and reasonable to continue this practice indefinitely.
3. Public noticing of all Letters of Determination issued for projects under the MSPSP, and Letters of Determination being made available online within 24 hours of each letter's date. This would ensure that the public has adequate time to file an appeal of MSPSP project's that have not received a public hearing. Presently, Letters of Determination are only sent to members of the public via physical mail, and are not made available online until well after the deadline for appeals have passed.

Without these simple, bare minimum measures, the main effect of the of the Director's stated policy for Non-Visible projects, regardless of the intent, will be to stymie public involvement in discretionary projects within the Mulholland Drive Scenic Corridor.

We respectfully urge the Council to pass a motion that reverses this erroneous decision by the Director of Planning. Failing that, the only alternative is to ensure that all projects and determinations under the MSPSP are publicly noticed as described above to ensure that the ability of the public to participate in the review process is not unfairly obstructed or obfuscated.

Sincerely,



IRMA R. MUÑOZ
Chair

Attachments: A – Memorandum: “Review Process for Projects Not Visible from Mulholland Drive”, March 30, 2021

CC: City Planning Commission

Vincent P. Bertoni, AICP, Director of Planning