

Communication from Public

Name: Douglas P. Carstens, Attorney At Law

Date Submitted: 08/15/2023 05:17 PM

Council File No: 17-1151

Comments for Public Posting: File # 17115-S1 From letter dated July 6, 2023 from Douglas P. Carstens, Attorney at Law to Councilmember Raman and included as an attachment with this Public Comment Form: "When viewed in proper perspective as a series of actions to promote an international tourist destination by funneling traffic to a series of Hollywood Sign viewsites, the City's actions constitute various approvals of a single Hollywood Sign tourism promotion project ("Project"). This Project requires environmental review that addresses the cumulative impacts created or knowingly allowed by the City in this area without sufficient study or mitigation. The access and public health hazards created by uncontrolled usage of the area, which is a high fire hazard zone, must be analyzed and mitigated before further actions are taken. Cumulatively, the City's series of actions could have significant adverse impacts on access and hazards in the area that have not been adequately considered or mitigated. A project that creates cumulative impacts is one of the designated exceptions to the categorical exemptions provided in CEQA Guidelines: "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant."(Guidelines section 15300.2 subd. (b).) The City, when past councilmembers were in office, has failed to forthrightly describe its actual project, or presented alternatives, or mitigation measures for its decision as would be presented in an actual Environmental Impact Report(EIR)under CEQA-the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. Instead, the City has focused on minor actions and has claimed each individual minor action is too small to be subject to CEQA review. The City is doing nothing less than promoting the Hollywood Sign as an international tourist destination with the Hollywoodland area impacted as ground zero. This is a single project and should be reviewed as such. The City should undertake its tourist destination promotion project in a methodical and orderly way (which should be a CEQA review process) to decide which recommendations to implement, which to reject, and which to modify for implementation. Conclusion We ask that the City must act in a coordinated fashion that identifies the overall Project the City is undertaking as promotion of Hollywood Sign tourism, and that you direct the preparation of an

Environmental Impact Report that fully addresses the impacts of that Project, proposes mitigation measures and alternatives for it, and adopts every feasible means to mitigate those public safety, mobility, and accessibility impacts. The public health, safety, and welfare of your constituents in the Hollywoodland area neighborhoods should be the primary concern among these." Thank you your consideration of this matter. Sincerely, Douglas P. Carstens



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July 6, 2023

Via Email

contactCD4@lacity.org

Councilmember Nithya Raman
City Council
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Objection to Piecemeal Consideration of Actions Related to the Hollywoodland Area and Hollywood Sign; Request for Preparation of Environmental Impact Report for City Hollywood Sign Tourism Project

Honorable Councilmember Raman:

On behalf of the Committee to Save the Hollywoodland Specific Plan, we would like to express our concern about four of the five motions you introduced on June 23, 2023 related to the Hollywoodland area and the Hollywood Sign.¹

These four motions of concern (attached) are the following:

1. Fencing. Direct the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report on recommendations to replace temporary fencing on Mulholland Highway with permanent fencing.
2. Roundabout. Direct the Bureau of Engineering and DOT to report within 90 days with a project development plan for installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Lake Canyon Drive and Mulholland Highway.
3. Parking Meter Zones (PMZ). Direct the DOT and CAO to report within 90 days on steps necessary to establish a PMZ.
4. Hiking Destination Improvement.²

¹ The fifth motion directing Department of Transportation to identify areas where Tour Bus operations should be prohibited is necessary and not problematic if it leads to prohibition of Tour Buses from various areas. This is in the Dixon Report and the HUNC report.

² The Hiking Destination Improvement Motion does not appear to be among the other motions introduced on June 23, 2023. (See file:///F:/Hollywoodland%20II/Misc/clkcouncilactions2172621_06282023.pdf.) More

Councilmember Raman

July 6, 2023

Page 2

While we appreciate these motions for recognizing the significant issues that residents in the area around the Hollywood Sign must deal with related to Hollywood Sign tourism³, we are concerned that the motions fail to approach the development of solutions from a comprehensive perspective.

The inappropriately piecemealed development of a Hollywood Sign view site without environmental review continues.⁴ We have previously written to the City Council regarding this issue, and the situation has only gotten worse. (See Encl. 2- June 5, 2019 letter from Chatten-Brown, Carstens & Minter LLP to the City Council.)

Due to safety concerns the City has posted a sign "no pedestrians" that has been ignored for years, and now there are rumors the City proposes a walking path next to Mulholland. Hollywood United Neighborhood Council recently released a report supporting, among other items, bathrooms and a satellite ranger station (likely including a gift shop). From the motions and these other actions, it appears the City contemplates extensive development and changes in the area that constitute a project approval without adequate environmental review. These measures require environmental review by the City itself, convening interested stakeholders as necessary.

information must be disclosed about this. If the hiking improvements are within what is now identified as Lake Hollywood Park, this would be concerning as part of the overall piecemealing plan that has been implemented.

³ We also appreciate the short term and medium term bullet pointed items in your July 4th Hollywood Sign Western Griffith Park Action Plan such as increased law enforcement deployments and regulatory changes. However, these are only short term or temporary solutions.

⁴ On behalf of Committee to Save the Hollywoodland Specific Plan ("Appellant"), we appealed the February 20, 2019 decision of the Board of Commissioners of the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Department to adopt a categorical exemption for approval of Lake Hollywood and Upper Vista Outdoor Improvements, Project PRJ21233, Board number 19-039 ("Project"). We have written to the City about the series of actions to promote an international tourist destination as early as September 9, 2011 objecting to the implementation of such strategies at the Mulholland Highway/Canyon Lake Drive view pad without environmental review. Again, on December 17, 2015, we pointed out the nuisance conditions that were being created by the City's continuing actions to promote access for viewsites without controlling it sufficiently including congestion and unsupervised usage of areas in a high fire hazard zone prone to wildfires. We objected to use of this Dixon Report to guide further approvals without environmental review. Our appeal letter of March 1, 2019 included this prior correspondence from 2011, 2015, and 2017.

When viewed in proper perspective as a series of actions to promote an international tourist destination by funneling traffic to a series of Hollywood Sign viewsites, the City's actions constitute various approvals of a single Hollywood Sign tourism promotion project ("Project"). This Project requires environmental review that addresses the cumulative impacts created or knowingly allowed by the City in this area without sufficient study or mitigation. The access and public health hazards created by uncontrolled usage of the area, which is a high fire hazard zone, must be analyzed and mitigated before further actions are taken. Cumulatively, the City's series of actions could have significant adverse impacts on access and hazards in the area that have not been adequately considered or mitigated. A project that creates cumulative impacts is one of the designated exceptions to the categorical exemptions provided in CEQA Guidelines: "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant." (Guidelines section 15300.2 subd. (b).)

The City, when past councilmembers were in office, has failed to forthrightly describe its actual project, or presented alternatives, or mitigation measures for its decision as would be presented in an actual Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under CEQA- the California Environmental Quality Act, Public Resources Code section 21000 et seq. Instead, the City has focused on minor actions and has claimed each individual minor action is too small to be subject to CEQA review. The City is doing nothing less than promoting the Hollywood Sign as an international tourist destination with the Hollywoodland area impacted as ground zero. This is a single project and should be reviewed as such.

The City should undertake its tourist destination promotion project in a methodical and orderly way (which should be a CEQA review process) to decide which recommendations to implement, which to reject, and which to modify for implementation.

Conclusion

We ask that the City must act in a coordinated fashion that identifies the overall Project the City is undertaking as promotion of Hollywood Sign tourism, and that you direct the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report that fully addresses the impacts of that Project, proposes mitigation measures and alternatives for it, and adopts every feasible means to mitigate those public safety, mobility, and accessibility impacts. The public health, safety, and welfare of your constituents in the Hollywoodland area neighborhoods should be the primary concern among these.

Councilmember Raman

July 6, 2023

Page 4

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Douglas P. Carstens". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

Douglas P. Carstens

Enclosures:

1. Motions Introduced on June 23, 2023.
2. Letter from Committee to Save the Hollywoodland Specific Plan to City of Los Angeles of June 4, 2019.

ENCLOSURE 1

MOTION

PUBLIC WORKS


Mulholland Highway is a scenic road in the Hollywood Hills that is the primary means of ingress and egress for many residents. In portions of this road, the Hollywood Sign is visible from the road itself. The segment of Mulholland Highway from Canyon Lake Drive to Durand Drive is a two-lane road with no stopping lanes, but tourists visiting this area frequently stop in the travel lanes along this road segment to photograph the Hollywood sign in locations where it is visible. This segment has no turnout and many curves, and drivers stopping or driving distracted to take photos create a hazard to their own safety and the safety of other drivers.

The Department of Recreation and Parks has installed temporary fencing along this segment of Mulholland Highway to deter visitors from stopping; however, this generates an ongoing cost for the Department and the temporary fencing is not weatherized for long-term deployment.

In order to ensure residents have safe access to their neighborhoods and for continued deterrence of drivers stopping along this segment, the City should install permanent fencing or panels that will discourage drivers from stopping along this stretch of road.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, with the assistance of the City Administrative Officer, to report within 60 days with recommendations to replace the temporary fencing on Mulholland Highway, beginning at Canyon Lake Drive and running along a portion of the Lake Hollywood Park perimeter east to Durand Drive, with a permanent option to deter vehicles from stopping along this two-lane segment, to initiate a capital improvement project, and to identify funding for the fencing replacement.

PRESENTED BY:



NITHYA RAMAN
Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY:



ORIGINAL

MHD
JUN 23 2023

MOTION

The intersection of Canyon Lake Drive and Mulholland Highway in the Hollywood Hills is a popular tourist site for visitors, as it overlooks the Hollywood Reservoir to the south and sits under the Hollywood sign to the north. However, this intersection was not constructed to sustain the level of vehicular traffic it receives today and visitors often three-point-turn at this narrow intersection or continue traveling up the two-lane Mulholland Highway looking for another location to turn around.

The City should consider installing a traffic roundabout at this intersection to better facilitate safe vehicular travel in this area, improve pedestrian safety for visitors walking to the viewpoints, and enhance overall traffic flow and safety.

Additionally, the westerly portion of Canyon Lake Drive from Arrowhead Drive to Mulholland Highway and the easterly portion of Canyon Lake Drive from Mulholland Highway to about 150' to the west, feature dirt parkways between the curb and the sidewalk. Due to the steep incline, climate, and high number of visitors, this parkway is not an ideal site for vegetation, and the dirt in the parkway regularly results in mud runoff during weather events. To better weatherize this sidewalk segment, the City should concretize this dirt parkway, which will also expand the width of the sidewalk, improving pedestrian access.

Finally, the area is not currently able to have any curb designated as a loading zone due to a lack of accessible loading area.

Despite being a site of heavy tourism, the City has not invested in significant infrastructure improvements at this location. Doing so will improve visitors' experience in the City, enhance pedestrian and driver safety, mitigate disruptions to residents, and improve quality of life for residents.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, in coordination with the Department of Transportation, to report within 90 days with a project development plan for the installation of a roundabout at the intersection of Lake Canyon Drive and Mulholland Highway with any attendant needed street improvement work.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Bureau of Engineering, with the assistance of any other relevant agencies, to report within 90 days, with options to concretize the dirt parkway between the curb and sidewalk on all sections of Canyon Lake Drive from Arrowhead Drive to Mulholland Highway to reduce soil erosion and runoff, and to construct accessible loading areas to create loading zones on Canyon Lake Drive.

PRESENTED BY: Nithya Raman
NITHYA RAMAN
Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY: [Signature]

MHB
JUN 23 2023

ORIGINAL

MOTION

TRANSPORTATION

Lake Hollywood Park is a popular scenic area with unobstructed views of the Hollywood Sign and access to the Innsdale Trail and Mulholland Highway Trail. Social media and navigation apps have made the Hollywood Sign one of the most visited tourist sites in Los Angeles. There is no transit service to the location and public parking available is limited and uncontrolled. Traffic congestion, due to "cruising" and waiting for on-street parking spaces, creates public safety issues and neighborhood-wide parking problems.

Parking meters can better manage curb space, especially in a constrained area like this one. The Department of Transportation (LADOT) operates and maintains eighty-three Parking Meter Zones (PMZ) and manages 35,000+ metered parking spaces within the PMZs. Variable, demand-based pricing, can help manage available curb space and reduce cruising and waiting for parking spaces by people driving. In this particular area there are also residential areas within a two block radius of public recreational facilities, which, if a Preferential Parking District (PPD) were created, would necessitate a 4 Hour time limit, which, if not managed by price, could offset the positive impacts of using pricing to manage curb usage.

The Griffith Observatory paid parking program from the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) successfully uses price as a tool to better manage a popular tourist destination with similar public safety concerns as Lake Hollywood Park. That program has directed revenues to off-setting the negative impacts of tourism by providing programmatic and infrastructure funds for Griffith Park.

The City of Los Angeles has no dedicated funding source to help mitigate the negative impacts of Hollywood Sign tourism and efforts to mitigate negative impacts from tourism have been confined to line item or ad hoc overtime payments to LADOT Special Events or to the Los Angeles Police Department for holidays. Council District 4 is undertaking a multifaceted approach to tourism management for the Hollywood Sign, initiating motions for needed capital improvements, staffing, and operations and maintenance. Some portion of funds generated from a new PMZ at Lake Hollywood Park could help offset the negative impacts of massive tourism for the Hollywood Sign so that City General Funds can be spent elsewhere.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Transportation, with the assistance of the City Administrative Officer (CAO) to report back, within 90 days, on:

- Steps necessary to establish a PMZ with meters, kiosks, or other payment method, for paid parking on Canyon Lake Drive between Arrowhead Drive and Mulholland Highway adjacent to Lake Hollywood Park. The report should include advice about utilizing Express Park or other demand-based pricing method;
- The ability to overlay a PMZ over a Preferential Parking District (PPD), to balance access and curb usage for Canyon Lake Drive from Arrowhead Drive to Innsdale Drive and other residential streets within two blocks of recreational facilities at Lake Hollywood Park and Innsdale Trail;
- Creation of a special fund where future PMZ Lake Hollywood Park parking revenue could be retained to pay for staffing, operations and maintenance, and capital improvements to mitigate tourism impacts associated with Lake Hollywood Park.

PRESENTED BY: Nithya Raman
NITHYA RAMAN
Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY: Katherine G. ...

MHD
JUN 23 2023

ORIGINAL

MOTION

TRANSPORTATION

Ordinance 187078, passed in 2021, gave the City Council authority to approve prohibitions of Tour Bus operations on streets that the Department of Transportation (LADOT) has determined to be unsafe. To make that determination, LADOT needs to undertake a study and issue a report to Council for any streets in question.

Tour Bus operations continue to pose a public safety concern for the Hollywood Knolls, Hollywood Dell, Lake Hollywood, Hollywoodland, Beachwood Canyon, and Oaks neighborhoods that sit adjacent to the Hollywood Sign. The narrow, winding streets of these neighborhoods are not suitable for large vehicles, and over the years residents have cited persistent moving violations and other infractions by Tour Bus operators. Existing streets in the area have weight restrictions Tour Buses violate which could be enforced more consistently.

I THEREFORE MOVE that the City Council instruct the Department of Transportation to report back, within 120 days, on streets where Tour Bus operations should potentially be prohibited in the area bounded by Barham Boulevard, the ridgeline of the Santa Monica Mountains, Western Canyon Road, Franklin Avenue, and the US-101 Freeway.

I FURTHER MOVE that the City Council instruct the Los Angeles Police Department, with the assistance of the Department of Transportation, to report back, within 30 days, on all streets in Council District 4 with existing 6,000 pounds restrictions per Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) 80.36.1 as well as the resources needed to enforce in the Hollywood Hills on routes leading to the Hollywood Sign and Hollywood Sign views, and on routes leading to Mulholland Drive west of the US-101 Freeway and on Mulholland Drive itself on summer weekends and major holidays.

PRESENTED BY:

Nithya Raman

NITHYA RAMAN
Councilmember, 4th District

SECONDED BY:

Katy Yonokowsky

ORIGINAL

M4to
JUN 23 2023

ENCLOSURE 2



Chatten-Brown, Carstens & Minter LLP

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June 4, 2019

Via Email and Hand Delivery

City Council
City of Los Angeles
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Support of Appeal of Approval of Lake Hollywood and Upper Vista
Outdoor Improvements, Project PRJ21233, Board number 19-039 approved
on February 20, 2019; City Council Agenda Item # 20, Wed. June 5, 2019

Honorable Councilmembers:

On behalf of Committee to Save the Hollywoodland Specific Plan ("Appellant"), we appealed the February 20, 2019 decision of the Board of Commissioners of the Los Angeles City Recreation and Parks Department to adopt a categorical exemption for approval of Lake Hollywood and Upper Vista Outdoor Improvements, Project PRJ21233, Board number 19-039 ("Project").

When viewed in proper perspective as one of a series of actions to promote an international tourist destination by creating an funneling traffic to a series of Hollywood Sign viewsites, this Project requires environmental review that addresses the cumulative impacts created or knowingly allowed by the City in this area without sufficient study or mitigation. The access and public health hazards created by uncontrolled usage of the area, which is a high fire hazard zone, must be analyzed and mitigated before further actions such as this Project are taken.

Appellant respectfully urges the City Council to deny approval of the Project until an environmental impact report (EIR) has been prepared that adequately discloses and mitigates the impacts of the Project in conjunction with all other actions the City has taken to promote use of the Lake Hollywood Overlook and nearby view pad at the intersection of Mulholland Highway and Canyon Lake Drive as an international tourist destination.

While the Project authorizes landscaping and irrigation changes, it is one in a series of actions that are part of a larger project of developing an international tourist destination (i.e., a viewsite to view the Hollywood Sign) across the street from

Hollywoodland and residential property owners that are significantly impacted without undertaking prior environmental review or obtaining proper permits. The City, through Council District 4, commissioned and accepted the Dixon "Comprehensive Strategies Report" with its series of recommendations for "Improving Access, Safety, and Mobility around Griffith Park and the Hollywood Sign" dated January 2018. The Report is not a project, nor an EIR for a project.

With the January 2018 Dixon Resources Unlimited study (Dixon Report) of strategies that affect access, safety, and mobility around Griffith Park, the City's actions including the current approval are now placed in a context of a single overall project, which the City is implementing piece by piece with such approvals as the one at issue in this appeal. The approval also contemplates additional Dixon Report recommendations including fencing and an ancillary structure though it was amended to not include them at this time. There is nothing to prevent their being incorporated into the project at a later date. This is additional evidence of piecemealing the overall project. Recommendation 7-1 in the Dixon Report is clearly stated as "Strategy #1. Enhance the most Accessible and Safe Hollywood Sign Viewing Locations and Hikes" (Dixon Report, p. 50.) The Dixon report further states:

Lake Hollywood Park

There is a view of the Hollywood Sign from Lake Hollywood Park and the vista point where Canyon Lake Drive transitions into Mullholland Highway. This is a common location that to take photos of the sign. *There are ways to enhance this location with amenities that will improve the visitor experience* (see page 62).

(Dixon Report, p. 51, emphasis added.) These portions of the Dixon Report flatly refute the assertion that the project approval at issue here is somehow a standalone project.

We have written to the City about the series of actions to promote an international tourist destination as early as September 9, 2011 objecting to the implementation of such strategies at the Mulholland Highway/Canyon Lake Drive view pad without environmental review. Again, on December 17, 2015, we pointed out the nuisance conditions that were being created by the City's continuing actions to promote access for viewsites without controlling it sufficiently including congestion and unsupervised usage of areas in a high fire hazard zone prone to wildfires. We objected to use of this Dixon Report to guide further approvals without environmental review. Our appeal letter of March 1, 2019 is part of the appeal package and includes this prior correspondence from 2011, 2015, and 2017.

Cumulatively, the Project's impacts along with similar projects nearby could have significant adverse impacts on access and hazards in the area that have not been adequately considered or mitigated. A project that creates cumulative impacts is one of the designated exceptions to the categorical exemptions provided in CEQA Guidelines

sections 15301, 15303, and 15304, cited by the City's approval of this Project. Specifically, the Guidelines state: "All exemptions for these classes are inapplicable when the cumulative impact of successive projects of the same type in the same place, over time is significant." (Guidelines section 15300.2 subd. (b).)

The Project has been improperly piecemealed as review of accessibility improvements, and their likely environmental impacts, have been omitted from the analysis and indeed have never been undertaken for this area. The present appeal is about "Lake Hollywood and Upper Vista Outdoor Improvements" but the issues of concern are a lot bigger than that single most recent proposal. The larger issue is about the City's ongoing series of projects, with the Upper Vista outdoor improvements being the latest. The improvements must be understood in the context of the long history of City actions to promote tourist visitation to the Hollywood sign, without addressing how those promotion efforts affect the health, safety, and welfare of the residential neighborhoods nearby.

While Appellant supports access to Griffith Park, that access must be controlled in a way so as to not create burdens and hazards to the surrounding area as described in our December 17, 2015 letter.

The City has not described its actual project, or presented alternatives, or mitigation measures for its decision as would be presented in an actual Environmental Impact Report (EIR) under CEQA- the California Environmental Quality Act. Instead, the City has focused on minor actions such as the Outdoor Improvements that are the subject of this appeal and has claimed each individual minor action is too small to be subject to CEQA. The City's Project is doing nothing less than promoting the Hollywood Sign as an international tourist destination with the Hollywoodland area impacted as ground zero.

The City should undertake its tourist destination promotion project in a methodical and orderly way (which should be a CEQA review process) to decide which Dixon Report recommendations to implement, which to reject, and which to modify for implementation.

Conclusion

We ask that you grant the appeal. The City must act in a coordinated fashion that identifies the overall Project the City is undertaking as promotion of Hollywood Sign tourism, and that you prepare an EIR that fully addresses the impacts of that Project, proposes mitigation measures and alternatives for it, and adopts every feasible means to mitigate those public safety, mobility, and accessibility impacts. The public health, safety, and welfare of your constituents in the Hollywoodland area neighborhoods should be the primary concern among these.

City Council
June 4, 2019
Page 4

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Douglas P. Carstens". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Douglas P. Carstens