

## Communication from Public

**Name:**

**Date Submitted:** 03/25/2025 07:18 AM

**Council File No:** 24-1371

**Comments for Public Posting:** Please add State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations opposition to the record. Thank you.



# SAFRR

State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations

March 24, 2025

**VIA ELECTRONIC UPLOAD AND EMAIL**

PLUM Committee and Los Angeles City Council  
200 North Spring Street, Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Los Angeles City Hall-Room 395  
[Clerk.CPS@lacity.org](mailto:Clerk.CPS@lacity.org)  
[Clerk.PLUMCommittee@lacity.org](mailto:Clerk.PLUMCommittee@lacity.org)

**Re:** OPPOSE: 3003 N. Runyon Canyon Road; Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)  
Council File No. 24-1371  
Project Violates Title 14 Section 1270 State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations

Dear PLUM Committee and Members of the Los Angeles City Council:

The State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations (SAFRR)<sup>1</sup> joins the Hillside Federation, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC), and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA) in opposing the proposed addition of a new McMansion at 3003 N. Runyon Canyon Road (Project).<sup>2</sup> The proposed Project includes the construction of a 5,500 square foot (sf), two-story, single-family dwelling, with an attached 600 sf two-car garage, a 3,000 square-foot underground basement, and the inappropriate reclassification of the existing 2,018 square-foot single-family historic house on the Project site to Accessory Living Quarters (ALQ).

The proposed Project is a large mansion that would be located in the middle of Runyon Canyon Park, an area designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ), accessed by one substandard roadway, Runyon Canyon Road, which functions primarily as a hiking trail. The fire dangers posed to and by additional development in this location are evident by the fact that the existing residence on the Project site experienced fire damage in 2002 (see

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<sup>1</sup> SAFRR is a 501(c)(3) public benefit association founded in 2021. Its mission is to ensure that all new development in California provides for unimpeded access by firefighting emergency equipment and safe concurrent evacuation and complies with all environmental laws, fire codes and road safety standards, including the State's Minimum Fire Safe Regulations.

<sup>2</sup> All comments by the Hillside Federation and their legal representation Channel Law Group, Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, and Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority are incorporated herein by reference and are available in the City's files for this Project.

**Attachment A**) and Runyon Canyon was within the area burned by the recent Sunset Fire of January 8, 2025 (see **Attachment B**).

Regardless of whether Runyon Canyon Road is classified as a roadway or driveway, the proposed Project violates the State's Minimum Fire Safe Regulations for ingress and egress, adopted to ensure **“safe access for emergency wildfire equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently.”**<sup>3</sup> The State's Minimum Fire Safe Regulations apply to **“(1) the perimeters and access to all residential, commercial, and industrial Building construction within the SRA approved after January 1, 1991, and those approved after July 1, 2021 within the VHFHSZ.”**<sup>4</sup> As documented by the Hillside Federation (see Exhibit E of the Channel Law Group letter dated March 21, 2025 in support of the Hillside Federation’s appeal) the proposed Project does not comply with the following State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations:

- Section 12.73.01(a) which requires that all roads provide a minimum of two ten (10) foot travel lanes and that these lanes provide for two-way traffic flow to support emergency and vehicle and civilian egress.
- Section 1273.01(c) which requires that all driveways be constructed to provide a minimum of one (1) ten (10) foot traffic lane, fourteen (14) feet unobstructed horizontal clearance, and unobstructed vertical clearance of thirteen feet, six inches (13' 6").
- Section 1273.(a) which requires that at no point shall the grade for all Roads and Driveways exceed 16 percent.
- Section 1273.03(b) which provides for grades between 16 percent and 20 percent with approval of the Local Jurisdiction provided that the Project includes mitigations to provide for the “Same Practical Effect.” There is no evidence in the record that this “Same Practical Effect” requirement regarding grade has been met.
- Section 1273.05(c) which requires turnouts that are no more than 400 feet apart for driveways that are longer than 800 feet. Runyon Canyon Road is approximately 7,200 feet long and the Project is located approximately 2,330 feet from the northernmost gate entrance near Mulholland Drive.

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<sup>3</sup> Article 2 of the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations, Section 1273 pertains to the standards for "Ingress and Egress" roads and driveways. The intent of these standards is clearly stated: “Roads, and Driveways, whether public or private, unless exempted under 14 CCR §1270.03(d) **shall provide for safe access for emergency wildfire equipment and civilian evacuation concurrently**, and shall provide unobstructed traffic circulations during a wildfire emergency consistent with 14 CCR §§1273 through 1273.09.”

The State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations (“Regulations”) codified at Cal. Code Regs. tit. 14 § 1270.00 et Seq. The Regulations can be accessed at <https://www.law.cornell.edu/regulations/california/title-14/division-1.5/chapter-7/subchapter-2>

<sup>4</sup> 14 CCR § 1270.03(a)(1). Except as set forth in subsection (b).

- Section 1273.06 which requires that turnouts shall be a minimum of twelve (12) feet wide and thirty (30) feet long with a minimum twenty-five (25) foot taper on each end.
- Section 1273.09(a) which requires that gate entrances be a least two (2) feet wider than the width of the traffic lane(s) serving the gate and a minimum width of fourteen (14) feet unobstructed horizontal clearance and unobstructed vertical clearance of thirteen feet, six inches (13' 6").
- Section 1270.04 which requires that a local jurisdiction must provide the Director of Cal Fire with notice of all applications for building permits, tentative parcel maps, tentative maps, and installation or use permits for construction or development within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

The applicant's attorney argues that the Project falls within the Section 1270.03(b) exception because the Project site is located on a Parcel Map (Parcel Map 44-62) that was approved prior to 1991 with access from Runyon Canyon Road,<sup>5</sup> and that the City approved Runyon Canyon Road as a deemed approved private road with access to two residences.<sup>6</sup> This argument is without merit as Section 1270.03(a)(1) of the Regulations clearly state that the Regulation apply to "(1) the perimeters and access to **all residential**, commercial, and industrial Building **construction** within the SRA approved after January 1, 1991, and those **approved after July 1, 2021 within the VHFHSZ**. The Regulations are triggered by new construction as made clear by Section 1276.03(c) which states:

(c) Affected activities include, but are not limited to:

(1) permitting or approval of new parcels, excluding lot line adjustments as specified in Government Code (GC) section 66412(d);

(2) **application for a Building permit for new construction not relating to an existing Structure;**

(3) application for a use permit;

(4) Road construction including construction of a Road that does not currently exist, or extension of an existing Road.

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<sup>5</sup> Letter from JMBM dated March 21, 2025 is available at: [https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2024/24-1371\\_misc\\_03-24-25.pdf](https://clkrep.lacity.org/onlinedocs/2024/24-1371_misc_03-24-25.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> It should be noted that the other residence with access via Runyon Canyon Road is the single-family residence at 3050 Runyon Canyon Road. The proposed Project would add a third residence on Runyon Canyon Road, which would be in excess of what was included in the Runyon Canyon deemed approved roadway letter, as shown in **Attachment F**. Any implication that the proposed Project was anticipated as part of the Runyon Canyon Approved Roadway letter is thus without merit.

The Board of Forestry's August 17, 2022 Final Statement of Reasons (FSOR)<sup>7</sup> for the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations adopted pursuant to Government Code Section 11346.9(a) confirms that the Regulations apply to new construction on existing roads, regardless of the date of the parcel map, stating in part:

While the Board is unaware of any court decision specifically addressing PRC § 4290 or the regulations, the Office of the California Attorney General has commented on the statute and regulations, and its interpretation in those comments may provide helpful guidance. The first was in a 1993 Attorney General Opinion (76 Ops.Cal Atty.19, No. 92-807), which opined that **the regulations apply generally to all building construction after 1991 and that the statutory exemption related to pre-1991 parcels was to be narrowly construed to exempt construction and development activity already in the "pipeline" as of 1991.** The Board amended the regulations in 2013 in part to ensure consistency with the 1993 Attorney General Opinion.<sup>8</sup>

The proposed Project was not in the pipeline as of 1991 and is thus not covered by the statutory exemption for pre-1991 parcels. Furthermore, as noted by the Attorney General in comments on the Paraiso Springs Resort Project (**Attachment E**):

**It is the construction of a new project that triggers the application of the SRA regulations;** the fact that the Project is being constructed at the **end** of an **existing road does not negate** the triggering **effect** of the **new construction**. A contrary interpretation would incentivize development without adequate evacuation routes and emergency access in the SRA rather than prevent it.

Despite the fact that the City has been presented with information regarding the Project's failure to comply with State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations, the City persists in ignoring this information and the resulting impacts of non-compliance, which render the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) for the Project deficient due to a failure to identify significant unmitigated fire hazards impacts. Instead, the City is relying on a deferred, post-approval, analysis to ensure compliance. Page 2-3 of the February 6, 2025 "*Report Relative To Three Appeals Filed By Multiple Persons, Other Than The Applicant, Owner Or Operator Claiming To Be Aggrieved For Case Number APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD For The Property Located At 3003 North Runyon Canyon Road Within The Hollywood Community Plan, CF 24-1371*" (Appeals Report) states:

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<sup>7</sup> The Final Statement of Reasons can be accessed at the following link:  
<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/xa03uiu2jy3cfly2q1x46/2022-08-17-FSOR-Final-Statment-of-Reasons-BOF-PDF-copy-2.pdf?rlkey=acqun4lqpb37w59zo4u3bisc3&st=lxye8i0u&dl=0>

<sup>8</sup> The 1993 Attorney General Opinion (76 Ops.Cal Atty.19, No. 92-807) is available at:  
<https://oag.ca.gov/system/files/opinions/pdfs/92-807.pdf>

Pursuant to EIR Section IV.L (Public Services – Fire Protection) pages IV.L-15 – IV.L – 16 the **LAFD will review** the project plans for compliance with Los Angeles Fire Code, California Fire Code, City of Los Angeles Building Code, and National Fire Protection Association standards and would not approve permits unless emergency access meets their standards, thereby ensuring that the Project would not create any undue fire hazard.

However, this is neither a Condition of Approval nor a Mitigation Measure specified in the EIR. The City has imposed no legally enforceable condition requiring this review take place.

In addition, this analysis should take place before the Project is approved and this analysis is central to the validity of the appeals which have been filed regarding the Project approval and the Project's failure to meet fire safe regulations. Doesn't it create problems for the City if permits are denied after a project has been approved, and doesn't Council approval of a project prior to demonstration that permit conditions and existing regulations can be met put staff in an awkward position if they are faced with denying permits for an approved project, thus making them likely to ignore failures to comply with permit condition, and local and State regulations? In fact, it has been our experience that even when City roadway access requirements are made Conditions of Approval, projects are not always checked by the Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) or the Planning Department for compliance with such conditions of approval and/or permits are issued even when conditions of approval and regulatory requirements are not met.<sup>9</sup> This has also been the experience of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, which noted in its May 15, 2023 letter that: "the City continues to approve hillside development on roads that do not conform to these [State Minimum Fire Safe] regulations with deleterious environmental and safety results."

As shown in **Attachment C**, and confirmed by the lack of any mention of LAFD review of the Project in the Appeals Report or the South Area Planning Commission Letter Of Determination (LOD) dated October 3, 2024<sup>10</sup> for the Project, the LAFD as of March 19, 2025 had yet to approve the Project for compliance with City fire regulations. On March 20, 2025, apparently triggered by the upcoming appeal hearing before PLUM, the LAFD approved the Fire Hydrant and Access Plan. However, this approval neither addresses or demonstrates compliance with the State Minimum Fire Safe Regulations, and the City has still failed to comply with Section 1270.04 which requires that a local jurisdiction must provide the Director of Cal Fire with notice of all applications for building permits, tentative parcel maps, tentative maps, and installation or use permits for construction or development within Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

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<sup>9</sup> See for example the recent Mount Saint Mary's project which fails to comply with either State or City regulations regarding the maximum length of dead-end roads.

<sup>10</sup> The Letter of Determination is available at: <https://planning.lacity.gov/pdiscaseinfo/document/MTU1NTg0/32d019b8-1d0c-4d58-9258-fba315e88f6f/esubmit>

Compliance with the State Fire Safe Regulations has not been made a Condition of Approval. In addition, given the nature of the existing access, there has been no showing that compliance is feasible. The appeal must therefore be granted and the Project denied.

SAFRR members understand how important it is to comply with codes and regulations adopted to ensure concurrent safe community evacuation and fire personnel access and we hope that Council members do too. In fact, SAFRR board members were recently impacted by the Palisades Fire where the evacuation effort was impeded when roadways became impassable due to abandoned vehicles, making it difficult for emergency services to get to the area<sup>11</sup> (see Attachment D and videos).<sup>12</sup> The effects of lack of adequate emergency ingress and egress is evident from the following photos from the Palisades Fire where it became necessary for bulldozers to clear vehicles abandoned by those who had to flee the fire on foot due to inadequate roadway access and the resulting traffic jam:<sup>13</sup>



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<sup>11</sup> <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-02-02/escape-from-the-palisades>  
<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2025-01-08/inside-the-desperate-chaotic-escape-from-pacific-palisades-if-you-go-any-further-you-will-die>

<sup>12</sup> Escape from the Palisades: Split-second decision making:  
<https://www.google.com/search?q=escape%20from%20the%20palisades&source=sh/x/gm2/5#fpstate=ive&vld=ci:d:3b65f4b8.vid:9YSU-M0m1Jk.st:0>

<sup>13</sup> Source video: Bulldozer clears path through abandoned vehicles amid LA wildfire chaos:  
<https://www.cnn.com/2025/01/08/us/video/bulldozer-la-wildfire-abandoned-vehicles-digvid>



It is imperative the Council require Projects to comply with minimum State and local fire safe regulations and that compliance be demonstrated prior to any project approvals. The City must learn from the recent devastating wildfires, including the one that impacted Runyon Canyon, and must deny approval of any projects, like the proposed Project, that have not demonstrated compliance with local and State fire regulations by the time of first approval, be it by the Zoning Administrator, Area or City Planning Commission, or Council. To wait until after project approval to assess or ignore compliance with fire regulations is both foolhardy and dangerous and a practice the City must change. It is also unlawful.

In conclusion, SAFRR opposes the project for the reasons stated above and asks that the PLUM Committee members uphold the three appeals. We incorporate by reference the appeals,

letters of opposition, and testimony of others opposing this Project. Please add SAFRR to the notification list at: firesaferoadregs@gmail.com.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,



Wendy-Sue Rosen  
Southern California Vice President  
State Alliance for Firesafe Road Regulations

Attachments:

- A. LADBS Permit Information, 3003 N. Runyon Canyon Road, printed 3/23/25.
- B. WeHo Times, January 10, 2025: "Beloved Trails At Runyon Canyon Devastated by Sunset Fire.
- C. LADBS Permit Application Status History, 3003 N. Runyon Canyon Road, printed 3/23/25.
- D. Palisades Fire evacuation issues.
- E. Applicable Attorney General's Letters
- F. Map showing the location of the second single-family home with access from Runyon Canyon Road – 3050 Runyon Canyon Road.

SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT A

# Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety

The information below was found on the following Parcel Identification Number (PIN):

**153B181-264**



**Parcel Profile Report:**

**1**



**Permit Information found:**

**3**



**3003 N RUNYAN CANYON ROAD 90046**

Application/Permit #	PC/Job #	Type	Status	Work Description
01016 - 20000 - 17920	B01VN01351	Bldg- Alter/Repair	Permit Expired 3/13/2012	FIRE DAMAGE REPAIR: REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED ROOF FRAMING REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED GYPSUM WALL & CEILING FINISHES REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED DOORS, WINDOWS & AND OTHER FIXTURES
98010 - 20000 - 03717	S07097	Bldg-New	Not Ready to Issue 11/2/1999	SFD/ ATT GAR
99030 - 20000 - 00756	S07325	Grading	Not Ready to Issue 11/2/1999	site preparation for new sfd. driveway.
12030 - 10000 - 00063	G12LA00005	Grading	PC Info Complete 1/18/2012	PROPOSED TO INSTALL NEW SEEPAGE PIT, 6'-0" DIA X 31' BELOW THE INLET PIPE OF AN EXISTING (OWTS) ONSITE WASTEWATER TREATMENT SYSTEM.
12030 - 10000 - 00219	B12LA00671	Grading	Application Submittal 1/20/2012	*** GPI ONLY *** INSTALL NEW SEEPAGE PIT, 6' O.D. X 31' BI



**3003 N RUNYON CANYON ROAD 90046**

Application/Permit #	PC/Job #	Type	Status	Work Description
23016 - 10000 - 41027	B23LA22012	Bldg- Alter/Repair	Quality Review Completed 12/26/2023	3-CONVERT (E) FAMILY DWELLING INTO A GUEST HOUSE
23010 - 10000 - 04668	B23LA22012	Bldg-New	Quality Review Completed 12/26/2023	1- NEW TWO STORY SINGLE FAMILY DWELING W/ BASEMENT, AND ATTACHED GARAGE
23030 - 10000 - 07215	B23LA22012	Grading	Quality Review Completed 12/26/2023	4-GRADING- excavate and backfill basment walls, retaining walls, site garding. grading bond required haul route hearing

24030 - 10000 - 01311	B24LA04026	Grading	Application Submittal 3/5/2024	***GPI AND POSTING ONLY*** NEW TWO STORY SFD W/BASEMENT, POOL, CONVERT (E) FAMILY DWELLING TO GUEST HOUSE, GRADING (BACKFIL BASEMENT WALLS, RETAINING WALLS, SITE GRADING), RETAINING WALLS
23020 - 10000 - 02304	B23LA22012	Nonbldg-New	Quality Review Completed 12/26/2023	5- RETAINING WALLS City planning approval for more than 2 retaining walls
23047 - 10000 - 01795	B23LA22012	Swimming-Pool/Spa	Quality Review Completed 12/26/2023	2- POOL



### 3003 RUNYON CANYON ROAD

Application/Permit #	PC/Job #	Type	Status	Work Description
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**Code Enforcement Information:**

**0**



**Soft-story Retrofit Program Information:**

**1**

# Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety

## Certificate Information: 3003 N RUNYAN CANYON ROAD 90046

**Application / Permit** 01016-20000-17920  
**Plan Check / Job No.** B01VN01351  
**Group** Building  
**Type** Bldg-Alter/Repair  
**Sub-Type** 1 or 2 Family Dwelling  
**Primary Use** (1) Dwelling - Single Family  
**Work Description** FIRE DAMAGE REPAIR: REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED ROOF FRAMING REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED GYPSUM WALL & CEILING FINISHES REMOVE & REPLACE DAMAGED DOORS, WINDOWS & AND OTHER FIXTURES  
**Permit Issued** Issued on 1/9/2002  
**Issuing Office** Valley  
**Current Status** Permit Expired on 3/13/2012

## Permit Application Status History

Fees Due	9/19/2001	SULASTRI TJIA
Submitted	9/19/2001	BOSCO TANG
PC Assigned	9/28/2001	ARA SARGSYAN
Corrections Issued	10/4/2001	ARA SARGSYAN
Reviewed by Supervisor	10/15/2001	CAROL JACKSON
Issued	1/9/2002	BOSCO TANG
Permit Expired	3/13/2012	RAUL BARAJAS

## Permit Application Clearance Information

CPC	Cleared	10/22/2001	NANCY SCRIVNER
Design Review Board approval	Cleared	10/22/2001	NANCY SCRIVNER
Ordinance	Cleared	10/22/2001	NANCY SCRIVNER
Ordinance	Cleared	10/22/2001	NANCY SCRIVNER
Specific Plan	Cleared	10/22/2001	NANCY SCRIVNER
City historic monument appr	Cleared	10/29/2001	HAROOT AVANESIAN
Historical monument approval	Cleared	10/30/2001	KENNETH HO

## Contact Information

Engineer	Erstad, Gerald Lee; Lic. No.: S4470	3165 BUCKINGHAM ROAD	GLENDALE, CA 91206
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## Inspector Information

ROY SPAULDING, (213) 202-3244	Office Hours: 7:00-8:00 AM MON-FRI
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## Pending Inspections

No Data Available.
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## Inspection Request History

Pre-Inspection	2/1/2002	No Access for Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
Pre-Inspection	2/4/2002	No Access for Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
Footing/Foundation/Slab	2/27/2002	Conditional Approval	GREGORY VOLPE
PLUMBING-Rough	2/27/2002	Approved	GREGORY VOLPE
Sewer	3/1/2002	No Access for Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
BUILDING-Rough-Frame	5/9/2002	Partial Approval	GREGORY VOLPE
ELECTRICAL-Rough	5/9/2002	Corrections Issued	GREGORY VOLPE
Gas Test	5/9/2002	Not Ready for Inspection	GREGORY VOLPE
HVAC-Rough	5/9/2002	Partial Inspection	GREGORY VOLPE
PLUMBING-Rough	5/9/2002	Partial Approval	GREGORY VOLPE
Rough-Frame	5/9/2002	Partial Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
ELECTRICAL-Rough	5/23/2002	Approved	JOHN WEIGHT
Gas Test	5/23/2002	Not Ready for Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
Rough-Elec/Plmb/HVAC	5/23/2002	Approved	JOHN WEIGHT
Rough-Frame	5/23/2002	Approved	JOHN WEIGHT
Insulation	5/29/2002	Approved	JOHN WEIGHT
Interior/Exterior Lathing	5/29/2002	Approved	JOHN WEIGHT
Drywall Nailing	6/11/2002	Approved	GREGORY VOLPE
Gas Test	6/11/2002	Not Ready for Inspection	GREGORY VOLPE
Final	8/26/2002	Partial Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
Final	12/17/2002	Partial Inspection	JOHN WEIGHT
SGSOV-Seismic Gas S/O Valve	3/18/2003	SGSOV No Gas	ROBERT LUERA
Final	5/16/2005	No Access for Inspection	ENRIQUE MIRELES
Final	2/4/2009	Partial Inspection	KIRK LINKLATER
Final	3/12/2012	Permit Expired	RAUL BARAJAS

SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT B

News

# Beloved Trails at Runyon Canyon Devastate

 By **Paulo Murillo** January 10, 2025



Ru

**WEHO TIMES**

Beloved hiking trails at Runyon Canyon will require significant rehabilitation after a devastat

Jan. 8, 2025. First responders were seen Thursday morning combing through debris to ensure making water drops into the afternoon at intervals of about 10 minutes.

The scorched hills, perilously close to nearby homes, stand as a testament to the swift and the blaze within hours and prevented damage to structures in the area.



*Runyon Canyon the morning after Sunset Fire - WEHO TIMES*



*Runyon Canyon the morning after Sunset Fire – WEHO TIMES*

 [Watch on TikTok](#)

With the fire so close to West Hollywood, the city urged residents to remain vigilant about fire in the region, impacting air quality. Officials recommend staying indoors when possible and wearing masks.

The city also got the word out that some programs and services in West Hollywood remain suspended. Recreation facilities at local parks were closed on Thursday, Jan. 9, 2025, while the city focuses on fire recovery.

Parking enforcement has also been adjusted. Street sweeping enforcement was suspended and will be lifted through Monday, Jan. 13, 2025.

Cityline Commuter and Cityline Local transit services will continue operating as usual Thursday through Monday.

Saturday. For route information, visit [weho.org/cityline](http://weho.org/cityline) or email the Transit Team at [transit@](mailto:transit@weho.org)

Residents are encouraged to sign up for Los Angeles County emergency notifications via [Ale](#) and email.

For power outage updates, visit [sce.com/outages](http://sce.com/outages). Additional regional emergency information

The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACoFD) continues to monitor the situation. Update social media accounts.

The State of California's "Ready, Set, Go" fire safety guide offers tips for preparing for wildfires including communication and evacuation strategies.

4

Article Rating



- Advertisement -

FOLLOW US ON INSTAGRAM @WEHO\_TIMES

SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT C

# Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety

## Certificate Information: 3003 N RUNYON CANYON ROAD 90046

**Application / Permit** 23010-10000-04668  
**Plan Check / Job No.** B23LA22012  
**Group** Building  
**Type** Bldg-New  
**Sub-Type** 1 or 2 Family Dwelling  
**Primary Use** (1) Dwelling - Single Family  
**Work Description** 1- NEW TWO STORY SINGLE FAMILY DWELING W/ BASEMENT, AND ATTACHED GARAGE  
**Permit Issued** No  
**Current Status** Quality Review Completed on 12/26/2023

## Permit Application Status History

Submitted	11/20/2023	APPLICANT
Assigned to Plan Check Engineer	11/30/2023	SAM CHANG
Corrections Issued	12/19/2023	SAM CHANG
Quality Review Completed	12/26/2023	EUGENE BARBEAU
Building Plans Picked Up	1/9/2024	APPLICANT

## Permit Application Clearance Information

BHO/Hillside ordinance	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
BHO/Hillside ordinance	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
BHO/Hillside ordinance	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
Eng Process Fee Ord 176,300	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
Excavation more than 5-ft deep	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Cal Occ. Safety and Health Administration
GPI Written Notices	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Department of Building and Safety
Grading Pre-Inspection	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Department of Building and Safety
Historic monument	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	City Planning Department
Hydrant and Access approval	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Los Angeles Fire Department
Low Impact Development (LID)	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Sanitation
Miscellaneous	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	City Planning Department
Miscellaneous	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	City Planning Department
Permit	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
Roof/Waste drainage to street	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering
Sewer availability	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Engineering

Specific Plan	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	City Planning Department
Trees in Parkway	Not Cleared	12/17/2023	Bureau of Street Services
Site Plan review	Not Cleared	12/19/2023	City Planning Department
BHO/Hillside ordinance	Not Cleared	3/6/2024	Bureau of Engineering
BHO/Hillside ordinance	Not Cleared	3/6/2024	Bureau of Engineering

## Contact Information

Engineer	Irvine,, Jon Alan; Lic. No.: GE2891	145 N SIERRA MADRE BLVD STE 1 PASADENA, CA 91107
Engineer	Koh,, William Kim; Lic. No.: S3473	5695 STARWOOD CT WESTLAKE VILLAGE, CA 91362
Geologist	Irvine,, Jon Alan; Lic. No.: EG1691	819 W HERITAGE OAK CT ALTADENA, CA 91001

## Inspector Information

No Data Available.
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## Pending Inspections

No Data Available.
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## Inspection Request History

No Data Available.
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SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT D



[Escape from the Palisades: Split-second decision-making, confusing responses](#)  
[latimes.com](#)

## Escape from the Palisades: Split-second decision-making, confusing responses

Summarize

By [Melody Gutierrez](#), [Nathan Fenno](#) and [Paige St. John](#)  
Jan. 22, 2025



The dirty brown smoke signaled trouble as it curled skyward near a popular hiking trail above Pacific Palisades on a breezy Tuesday morning in early January.

A luxury real estate agent about to show a 7,200-square-foot mansion on West Sunset Boulevard wondered if a house up the hill had caught fire. A resident near the top of the stepped bluffs between the Santa Monica Mountains and the Pacific Ocean glanced briefly at the plume, then resumed pulling in trash cans as a garbage truck rumbled past. A mother running errands in posh Palisades Village watched the fire morph from back-of-the-mind concerning to all-out frightening before she rushed home.

From backyard decks and breakfast tables, residents slowly realized this smokestack on the ridge wasn't stopping.

Decades of warnings that the community's three major roads were inadequate escape routes for thousands of people living in upper reaches of the Palisades proved prophetic. Streets were gridlocked at least 40 minutes before the first widespread evacuation order. As flames approached, firefighters and police told motorists to get out and run. The abandoned cars worsened the jam and prevented first responders from getting through. Residents trapped by blocked roads said they were forced to shelter in place. They wondered how — or if — they would escape.

The challenge of evacuating thousands of residents was compounded by delayed alerts and overwhelmed first responders. Residents told The Times they felt as if they were left to fend for

themselves. But state leaders and fire officials assessing the evacuation that day said getting people out quickly was the primary focus.

Los Angeles city and county emergency management departments would provide no details of how they coordinated evacuation orders, or why repeated requests for an evacuation order by fire commanders at the scene were not immediately heeded.

[Twelve deaths](#) have been tied to the [Palisades fire](#). More than 5,400 homes were destroyed. What was remarkable, to both residents and seasoned fire veterans, was that the snarled evacuation in one of the worst wildfires in modern California history did not take a greater toll.

This is the story of the first critical hours of that fire, when thousands of terrified residents had to decide whether and how to flee the inferno churning through hillsides and threatening their homes. Based on dozens of interviews, an analysis of more than 40 hours of dispatch recordings, public records and time-stamped photos and videos, it details the chaotic, heart-pounding and disorganized exodus of Jan. 7.



**‘A really big head of steam’**

**10:25 a.m.**

A fire watch camera on Green Peak captures the first flare and smoke of a fire a mile away. It's near a local hangout dubbed Skull Rock on the popular Temescal Ridge Trail, where a [New Year's Day brush fire](#) had charred eight acres but damaged no homes.

**10:27 a.m.**

A brisk Santa Ana wind feeds the new brush fire. Alarm spreads within Palisades Highlands, a string of developments perched between the coast and the protected wilds of the Santa Monica Mountains.

Residents spread the news through a private WhatsApp group.

“Fire,” one types. “Across the hills on Piedra Morada.”

“I see it,” another responds.

“New?” the first asks.

A resident attaches a photo. It shows smoke rising near the area burned on New Year's Day.

“Same spot!!”

**10:29 a.m.**

A young man drinking morning tea is [the first to call 911](#) after his sister, leaning down to fill his cup, spots the fire from the window of their home on Piedra Morada Drive.

A garbage truck picks up trash cans in the Palisades Highlands neighborhood. (Courtesy of Jeremy Wineberg)

**10:34 a.m.**

As engines head to the Palisades fire, it's quickly clear that more are needed. A city firefighter racing toward the scene from Station 69 in the Palisades requests 10 more engines, and a moment later doubles that.

“I've ordered 20 additional engine companies,” dispatch confirms from the Metropolitan Fire Communications center downtown.

“Let me know what streets need to be protected and we'll get the structure defense going as well,” responds a firefighter in Engine 69.

After eight months without significant rain and amid gusting Santa Ana winds, L.A. is on fire alert.

A firefighter in another engine can see thick smoke coming off Temescal Ridge, angling over the canyon below.

“OK, this thing’s got a really big head of steam,” he radios. “We have significant houses, significant brush in that area.”

**10:37 a.m.**

Jeremy Wineberg, a music executive who has also noticed the smoke, rushes barefoot out his front door on Calle Jermaine, his black robe closed over his underwear.

“Jesus Christ! F—!” he yells.

He turns to his boyfriend, Zander Jimenez, who has just come to the door. “Oh my God, babe, it’s so bad! We got to go. Let’s pack our stuff.”

Wineberg texts his neighbors: “We have to evacuate now.”



Jeremy Wineberg rushes out of his front door to check on the smoke from the nearby fire. Contains strong language. (Courtesy of Jeremy Wineberg)

**10:48 a.m.**

Los Angeles Fire Department Capt. Brandon Ruedy watches as wind drives flames toward thick vegetation.

The 25-year department veteran knows fire behavior and reckons this one will make a good run. Looking at this 10-acre blaze, Ruedy does the math.

“It’s 100% in alignment with the wind,” he radios in a terse, clipped voice. “This has the potential for 200-plus acres in the next 20 minutes.

“We have the potential for structures being threatened in the next 20 minutes.”

A fire watch camera captured this view of Green Peak showing the plume of the Palisades fire in the distance.

(University of San Diego)

### **A fire they must flee**

#### **11:10 a.m.**

David and Kelli Swartz watch in disbelief as smoke envelops their back deck and continues toward the beach. Sirens and horns echo in Santa Ynez Canyon behind their home.

In 11 years living there, the Swartz family has never had to evacuate. Not for the fire early on New Year’s Day, the 2021 Palisades fire, the 2019 Getty and Palisades fires, [the 2018 Woolsey fire](#). Before they moved here, the Palisades were hit by the 1978 Mandeville Canyon fire, part of a firestorm that razed so many homes that The Times called it “Black Monday.” Their house is two blocks from the edge of the 1938 wildfire that gutted this and other canyons.

For the first time, the Swartzes realize, this is a fire they must flee.

#### **11:11 a.m.**

At his kitchen island, Wineberg doubles over on a stool, hands raking his hair. From the den, a television blares a newscast tracking the fire. It has “grown substantially” beyond the 20 acres last reported by fire officials.

“I’m about to faint,” Wineberg says. “My heart rate is at 165.”



The stress of the fire outside is causing Jeremy Wineberg to panic inside his home. (Courtesy of Jeremy Wineberg)

They discuss which cars to drive out of the bluff-top neighborhood, aptly named The Summit. It is one of the highest housing tracts in Palisades Highlands, the chain of developments that started cutting into wild Santa Ynez Canyon in the 1970s.

Wineberg knows he wants to take his electric Mercedes. They quickly rule out also taking the Tesla — it's charged only to 37%. Wineberg wants to move his prized 1967 Mustang down the hill, saying "this whole area isn't going to burn."

The first item on an unfinished evacuation list he began a month ago is the red Mustang.

He checks the screen on his smartwatch.

"They haven't told us to leave yet," he says. But panic is setting in.

"Snap out of it!" Jimenez urges.



Jeremy Wineberg packs his car and prepares to evacuate. (Courtesy of Jeremy Wineberg)

Within seven minutes, they load Wineberg’s English bulldogs, Winnie and James, some electronics and a very few other items into the Mercedes. As they back out of the drive, the Mustang remains in the garage. The Tesla is plugged into its charger.

And in and around the empty home, 13 security cameras are recording.

**11:12 a.m.**

The city’s Emergency Operations Center uses the federal wireless emergency alert system — WEA — to ping cellphones in a 25-square-mile area in and around the Palisades with an evacuation warning.

A minute later, the city’s emergency operations center launches robocalls and hits social media sites with an identical message: “Those near the Palisades fire should get set for a potential evacuation.”

There’s no immediate account of how many of those calls get through or are noticed. Many residents are already packing cars. They are a step ahead of the Palisades Incident Command — the central nerve center set up at the bottom of the canyon on Palisades Drive. This command post will move repeatedly as the flames advance, but for now the spot offers a clear view of what’s happening on the slopes.

City emergency planning documents call for the Los Angeles Police Department to take charge of disaster evacuations. It is up to the police agency to alert residents — drive up and down

streets with loudspeakers or bang on doors if necessary — and to route traffic and convert congested roads to one-way flow in order to keep people moving.

But in the face of a racing brush fire, when residents are within 30 minutes of danger, the responsibility falls to the Fire Department.

Forty-seven minutes after the Palisades fire has started, and nine minutes after warning residents they might have to leave, the command post tells dispatchers downtown that there are no orders to leave: “We are not evacuating residents at this time. We are in the process of putting that piece together.”

### **The politics of development**

Since the 1970s, the Pacific Palisades Community Council has repeatedly warned lawmakers and planning departments that strangled evacuation routes are a “serious risk to lives and public safety.”

Even after the 1978 firestorm swept this canyon, burning 30 homes, news accounts and campaign contribution records show that housing developers used influence with state lawmakers and the L.A. City Council to negotiate exemptions to growth limits.

Development is “a political thing,” a fire chief told the residents council in 2016. He went on to say Palisades residents should stay put during an emergency once fire engines arrive, because evacuees on the roads would only “compromise” the official plan.

The three roads that lead down the canyon — Palisades Drive, Lachman Lane and Bienvenida Avenue — dump onto the same congested commercial strip, West Sunset Boulevard. From there traffic funnels onto Pacific Coast Highway.

A city traffic officer in 2023 told the residents council that the bottom roads are so congested the Police Department can’t run speed traps on them. But, [minutes show](#), she “assured the board that in the event of evacuation, motorcycle officers would be used in great numbers to direct people out in the safest manner they can to avoid traffic snarls.”

No motorcycle escorts for fleeing residents are identified in the Palisades fire.

Disaster planning software developed at Old Dominion University analyzes roads, populations and traffic patterns to estimate the time needed to get people to safety in a disaster — whether a days-away hurricane or racing wildfire.

The program’s calculated evacuation time for Palisades Highlands is five hours and 10 minutes. That is with no fire cutting across exit routes and half the main roads converted to one-way flow.

Those in the Palisades on Jan. 7 have less than an hour before evacuation routes become impassable.

**11:24 a.m.**

As Wineberg and Jimenez drive down Palisades Drive, flames are visible on the steep slopes.

At the bottom of the canyon, traffic has come to a stop. Except for a seldom-used emergency access road, this is the only way out.

Wineberg worries how quickly the fire will run toward them. He wants out of the canyon. He sees no one managing the traffic.

He tells Jimenez to cross the median into nearly empty oncoming lanes. They speed through, skirting the worst of the gridlock before merging back as they approach West Sunset and escape onto PCH.

About 10 minutes behind Wineberg and Jimenez, Ty Duffy heads down Palisades Drive. He wants to be able to tell his parents if it is safe to evacuate their house on the western side of Chastain Parkway — named after the developer who 50 years ago battled environmentalists and urban planners to terrace these steep bluffs.

Before he reaches West Sunset, the way is blocked. Duffy guesses there are more than 100 cars in the jam. Flames creep down the hill on the left, then fire emerges from dark smoke on the right. The burning husks of palm trees cascade toward his car. Duffy sees panicked drivers cross into oncoming traffic. Others jump out of their cars.

Duffy returns home.

“It’s terrible down there,” he tells his parents. “You can’t evacuate, even if you want to.”

He wonders if helicopters will have to rescue them.

**11:25 a.m.**

The incident command post radios to Metro that it is time now to send another alert. But he asks for an evacuation “warning,” the same notification that was issued 14 minutes earlier.

Dispatch is confused.

“Confirming you want an order and not a warning. Correct?”

“Stand by,” the command post replies.

While the request is pending, a firefighter jumps in: “We can use some more resources here.” Houses on Charmel, Turquesa and Lachman lanes are on fire.

Four minutes pass, and then the assistant fire chief from the department’s Valley bureau — at the moment second in command on the Palisades fire — comes on the radio.

“We’re gonna need an evacuation order, all the way to PCH.”

A fire crew on the ridge makes the same request.

“You’ve got gridlock on Palisades Drive,” someone in Engine 71 says. “People are driving down both sides.”

“I recommend getting a company over to Sunset all the way to the [Getty Villa](#) and start thinking about evacs,” another unit says seconds later.

A third unidentified voice comes on the radio: “Metro from Palisades IC, we need evacuation.”

After disaster alerts were bungled in the 2017 La Tuna fire — then the worst to strike L.A. in half a century — the city centralized its warning system. Evacuation orders start from those on the ground, move up the chain to the fire department’s dispatch center, and are then relayed to the city emergency operations hub.

In this instance, that isn’t happening.

A Metro dispatcher radios incident command to let it know another fire boss is requesting evacuations. He is told to take the matter off the air.

“Copy,” comes the reply. “Can you have the [Metropolitan Fire Communications center] call Command 51 on the cellphone?”

**11:41 a.m.**

Not only can’t Palisades residents leave, but some firefighters can’t get in. Frustrated, they radio for help.

The LAFD turns to the Police Department. The city’s emergency plan states that LAPD is “the lead agency for conducting evacuations.” That includes preventing gridlock like that now occurring across the fire disaster area.

The LAPD is sending in wave after wave of units. Its officers are still setting up the first traffic control posts on West Sunset even as Highlands residents hit roadblocks far before reaching that street.

Flames encroach on Palisades Drive, and fire command asks for police help in shutting down that evacuation route. To the east, the cars at the tail end of a mile-long jam on Bienveneda Avenue are exposed to encroaching fire.

Needing to empty Bienveneda, first responders shut down parts of West Sunset, worsening the gridlock in other areas.

**11:54 a.m.**

Residents in Sunset Mesa, just west of Pacific Palisades along the coastal evacuation route, receive an emergency order from L.A. County fire officials to leave. It is the first evacuation order for the fire, but is not directed at Palisades residents.

This alert went to someone in the Palisades, even though it says Sunset Mesa.

(Courtesy of Geoff and Sherry Grant)

City and county fire departments are now running a joint command, but their cooperation on evacuation orders is unclear. (The L.A. County emergency operations center said later that it coordinated with Los Angeles city officials on evacuations, but would not provide more information, saying the matter is [under investigation.](#))

A firefighter asks on the radio what he should do about the people stuck in their cars on Palisades Drive.

“The homeowners are saying they’re unable to access any exit routes. There’s fire on both sides of the road on Palisades,” he says in a muffled voice. “You need to think about with evac if they need to go north or how we’re going to shelter in place in this bowl.”



View from below of fire encroaching on Palisades Highlands (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

**Pictures, videos and warnings**

**12:07 p.m.**

Nearly two hours into the fire, city emergency officials issue an evacuation order for Palisades residents.

Social media sites fill with pictures, videos and warnings from those trying to escape.

“We are trapped on Palisades Drive,” a man tweets. “STAY IN YOUR HOMES if you live in the Pacific Palisades Highlands. There is nowhere to go.”



Wind-driven flames near homes in Palisades Highlands (Brian van der Brug / Los Angeles Times)

Also sheltering at the direction of the LAFD are residents of an 80-plus-unit elder care facility, including people reliant on outside transportation and medical support. Local residents had complained that its construction would block views but also questioned the wisdom of putting a vulnerable population in a fire zone that was also prone to landslides.

The president of the facility, Rony Shram, has a pre-fire understanding with the city to stay in place. The four-story concrete-and-steel structure is considered fire-resistant.

### **1:02 p.m.**

David Swartz is in his car, creeping forward on West Sunset. In 45 minutes, he estimates, he has traveled 100 feet. Ahead, somewhere in the gridlock, is the car with his wife, daughter and massive pit bull Sneezy. There are flames by the sidewalk, and a handful of abandoned cars on the side of the road.

This same route is the one being promoted on social media by the city Fire Department.



Geoff Grant is stuck in gridlock amid flames as he attempts to down West Sunset Boulevard.  
(Courtesy of Geoff Grant)

Kelli Swartz calls her husband. There's a palm tree in front of her on fire. She thinks she should get out of her car.

He tells her that's crazy.

Minutes later, firefighters and police officers wading through this sea of stalled cars tell motorists to abandon them.

"Vehicles burning," a dispatcher reports.

An officer knocks on the window of David Swartz's Audi. "Get out of the car," the officer tells him.

Swartz would like to pull over, but cars are sandwiched too tight. The family has to leave their two cars in the middle of West Sunset. With large duffel bags over their shoulders, they walk toward the ocean.

**1:40 p.m.**

Redondo Beach Fire Department Capt. Kenny Campos' first thought when he sees people walking down West Sunset is "that's not normal."

His own engine is blocked by the abandoned cars. Campos heads up West Sunset on foot. People still stuck in their cars yell to him. What should they do?

“Just shelter in your car,” he says. “We’ll protect you.”

The engine’s hoses litter West Sunset as its crew tackles flames creeping toward the road.

### **2:03 p.m.**

Lee Mintz, the real estate agent who was showing a \$5.8-million home, has traveled less than a third of a mile on West Sunset in two hours. She inches past the Self-Realization Fellowship as smoke thickens.

A lone firefighter holding an ax walks between lines of cars. Mintz asks what’s happening. The road is blocked. “Wow,” she says on a video, her voice full of dread, as she makes a U-turn, “there’s no place to go.” She resorts to driving through parking lots to find her own way out.

“Hey, be advised,” an L.A. County engine radios to incident commanders. “Sunset Boulevard is [im]passable due to approximately 100 abandoned vehicles in the road.”

The operations command doesn’t catch the size of the problem. Twenty vehicles?

“One-zero-zero abandoned vehicles,” the county engine corrects. “Sunset is completely impassable.”

He radios back a few minutes later.

“For those vehicles, what do you need to get them moved? ... Can we use just heavy equipment to move them?”

“Affirmative. We need heavy equipment to move A LOT of vehicles,” he says. “No keys, although we do have fobs.”

An earthmoving dozer used to cut fire lines now pushes aside abandoned cars, to the sound of screeching metal. People’s belongings are visible through crushed windows. A dog bed rests on a seat. The occupants are all gone.

First responders also clear a path through the abandoned cars on Palisades Drive, allowing fire engines up the canyon and permitting police to escort convoys of residents down the bluff, past still-burning cars.

### **3:37 p.m.**

A burning hill and a line of firefighters set the stage for a [beachfront media briefing](#).

Aircraft heat sensors have captured the fire's portrait, a diagonal slash that cuts through evacuation routes and impinges on neighborhoods from multiple directions.

City Fire Chief Kristen Crowley emphasizes that the department's first and primary mission is saving lives, "beginning with evacuations."

Gov. Gavin Newsom, having just toured the scene, tells reporters that he was unsettled to see so many people still behind the fire line. "The fact that people were still not evacuated, still did not heed the warning ... is a reminder of how serious this moment is and how important it is you listen to these evacuation orders," he says.

But when a reporter asks Newsom about the bulldozed cars and impassable roads, he defers the question to Crowley.

"People did evacuate," Crowley says. "It was slow to evacuate. From what I have been briefed on is that the evacuations were slow. But they did occur."

## **Epilogue**

Ty Duffy leaves Palisades Highlands as night falls, driving past the wreckage of bulldozed cars and a van still burning. His father follows hours later and is told the main road is now blocked by fire, leaving only an undeveloped spur between developments, Fire Road, that also traverses the blaze's path.

At the direction of city fire officials, those at the senior living center on top of the ridge have remained until 9 p.m. Then, when the canyon wildfire has spilled out onto the dense coast and become an urban firestorm, the department is now tasked to provide ambulance vans and escorts for 64 people, many in wheelchairs and some on oxygen.

Jeremy Wineberg watches the feed from his home security cameras as flames light up the kitchen window. In the morning, a neighbor shares pictures of the street. One single house is in rubble, still burning. It is his.

The home Lee Mintz was scheduled to show also has burned down. "Everyone was out for themselves," she says days later. "There was so much paranoia. You were stuck and you didn't have anywhere to go. ... I definitely think L.A. dropped the ball. I don't think we were prepared. Nobody told us where to go. It was chaos."

David and Kelli Swartz are among the lucky. Their house survived, but there is smoke damage. They plan to return when it's safe to do so.

In response to questions about the delay in sending evacuation orders, the Los Angeles city emergency management department said it issued every alert the city Fire Department requested.

The LAFD declined to respond.

*Times staff writer Noah Haggerty contributed to this report.*





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NBC NEWS



## Bulldozer moves cars blocking Palisades Fire escape route



SAVE

Authorities used a bulldozer to reopen a road full of vehicles that had been abandoned as gridlock made it difficult for people to evacuate from the Palisades Fire in Los Angeles.

Jan. 7, 2025

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CALIFORNIA

## Inside the desperate, chaotic escape from Pacific Palisades: ‘If you go any further you will die’



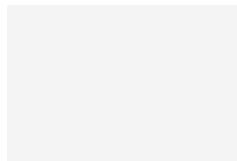
Beachfront homes are devastated by the Palisades fire on PCH in Malibu. (Brian van der Brug/Los Angeles Times)

By Jack Flemming, Summer Lin, Hannah Fry and Ian James

Jan. 8, 2025 3 PM PT

A dry wind was already stirring when the sun rose over Pacific Palisades on Tuesday, fitful gusts whipping palm fronds seaward and making eucalyptus limbs creek and groan. The forecast called for [an all-out windstorm](#) by midday over chaparral that hadn't seen rain for eight months.

Fires were predicted all over Southern California. The air was eerie and electric, and residents in “the Palisades” could only pray that nothing ignited, because for all its wealth and beauty, this slice of coastal paradise had all the makings for an inferno.



CALIFORNIA

**What happened during the first four days of the Eaton, Palisades fires in Southern California**

Jan. 10, 2025

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Within three hours, black smoke billowing down from the hills blotted out the sun as locals fled, streets jammed with cars, and anxiety turned to flat-out panic.

[The Palisades fire](#) started out as a small brush fire around 10:30 a.m. near Piedra Morada Drive, but the Santa Ana winds quickly drove the flames — and

a blizzard of embers — through the dry brush onto the neighborhoods below.

Darrin Hurwitz was working at his home on Las Lomas Drive, about a mile down the hill from the fire's origin, when he noticed the smoke around 10:35. As soon as he saw it, he packed a bag with clothes for his two children, laptops, medications and a few pieces of art and family heirlooms.

He was on the road within minutes.

The larger streets such as Palisades Drive and Sunset Boulevard were already clotted with cars, so he used back roads to escape. Homes were already in flames. He figures he saw at least 20 burn.

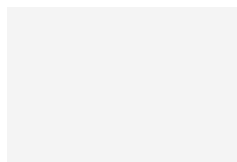
“Things were moving so quickly. Within a few minutes there were multiple fires between the Palisades Highlands and looking out over the ocean,” he said.

Hurwitz was surprised by the lack of fire response. He said it took the better part of an hour before he began to see more than a sporadic number of fire engines.

A Southern California native, Hurwitz moved back from the East Coast to the Palisades two years ago.

Since then, he has worried about the fire risk.

ADVERTISEMENT



CALIFORNIA

**Sunset Boulevard in ruins: Fire's massive scale comes into focus in Pacific Palisades**

Jan. 8, 2025

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“There hasn’t been a day I’ve lived there where I haven’t thought, one, this is the most beautiful place in the world, and two, it may all go up in flames at some point,” Hurwitz said. “This is the price, unfortunately, we pay to live in paradise.”

While wildfires have become an almost [annual reality for Malibu](#) to the west, [Pacific Palisades](#) has largely been spared from disasters in recent years. But when the heaviest Santa Anas of the winter hit when the rains have yet to come, everywhere near that dry native vegetation is at risk.

Pacific Palisades has its own unique vulnerabilities, caught between the rugged expanses of Malibu and the tighter neighborhoods of Santa Monica, where condos and apartment buildings are crammed toward the beach. It might not be as prone to fire as Malibu, but it's twice as dense, and in that mix of wild and urban, a wildfire can cause extreme damage.

By 11:30 a.m., schools were evacuated. It was the last time the buildings of [Palisades Charter Elementary](#) would ever hold students; overnight, the school was destroyed.

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CALIFORNIA

**Hazardous wildfire smoke is making L.A. air hard to breathe**

Jan. 8, 2025

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Just before noon, Gregg Champion, 56, sped his company car over to [Start-Up Recovery](#), a drug treatment and addiction center that he runs. Staff members had evacuated all clients. Champion was running about 100 yards away from the door when he was stopped by a firefighter.

“If you go any further, you will die,” he said the firefighter told him.

Champion struggled to breathe. He could feel the heat from the flames and looked through the clouds of smoke and saw that the fire was between two houses.

“I was almost consumed by smoke,” Champion said. “I was very dizzy and I thought I wasn’t going to make it.”

Champion said a prayer to himself and then: “All right, God, we’re going to lose [my business], but I better make it down the hill back to my family.”

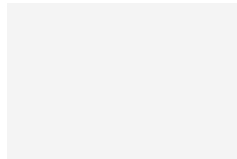
Firefighters guided him down the hill and he headed to his home on Grenola Street. He and his family gathered overnight bags and personal items and sat through an hour and a half of traffic before making it out of Pacific Palisades. They landed at one of Champion’s offices in Santa Monica on Tuesday afternoon and were trying find a hotel room.

“The best thing you can do is prepare to evacuate,” he said. “I have three beautiful daughters, an amazing wife and two dogs and I’m just going to be safe rather than sorry.”

At 10:15 a.m., Charming Evelyn found herself in the wrong place at the wrong time. She doesn’t live in the Palisades, but she was house-sitting for

vacationing friends in a home just west of Temescal Canyon when, during a Zoom call, she glanced out the window and saw smoke and flames on the hillside.

She had to go. But she didn't have a car.



CALIFORNIA

**'What I imagined hell would be like.' Two friends try to save Pacific Palisades home from raging fire**

Jan. 8, 2025

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Breathing was getting harder, so she put on a mask and grabbed her laptop and her friends' dog, a poodle mix named Cleveland, along with his food. She called a friend, who picked her up.

"It was terrifying to see that small plume of smoke grow into this huge plume of smoke while we were waiting," Evelyn said. "I thought it was really close."

On Wednesday, Evelyn confirmed that the house burned down.

Flames engulfed hillside homes with propane tanks outside and gun ammunition inside. Palisades suddenly sounded like a war zone. Palms were bending sideways and tree limbs were snapping

now. Canyons became bellows, fanning flames and driving the smoke to the coast and over the Pacific.

The hissing wind pushed black smoke down Temescal Canyon, sending residents choking toward the beach.

Stories from celebrity residents started surfacing on social media. Eugene Levy was fleeing in his car. James Woods [posted a video](#) from his driveway of his neighbors' houses swallowed in fire. Steve Guttenberg [popped up on KTLA-TV](#) at 1 p.m. with a public service announcement, urging fleeing residents to leave keys in their car when abandoning their vehicles.

“If anybody has a car, leave the keys in the car so we can move your car so that these firetrucks can get up Palisades Drive,” the “Police Academy” star said.

The neighborhood's streets — narrow, snaking through hills and canyons — had become parking lots as panicked locals stuck in bumper-to-bumper traffic bailed out of their vehicles and fled on foot.

Even the few main thoroughfares — Palisades Drive, Sunset Boulevard, Pacific Coast Highway — were gridlocked with stuck and abandoned cars.

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**Palisades residents face traffic gridlock,  
panic as fire blazes through community:  
'It looks grim'**

Jan. 7, 2025

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Shortly after 1 p.m., Ellen Delosh-Bacher found herself stuck at the intersection of Palisades and Sunset. She was in downtown L.A. when she heard about the fire and was rushing to her Palisades home to get her 95-year-old mother, her caregiver and their two dogs.

As she sat in panic behind the wheel, the fire exploded right behind a Starbucks along the road. Cops began running down the street telling anyone stuck in traffic, "Run for your lives."

Delosh-Bacher abandoned her car, keys still in the ignition, and ran the half-mile down to the beach.

She stood amid the nuclear orange smoke, trying to reach her mother.

"This is like an apocalypse," she said.

By 3 p.m., bulldozers were moving in, pushing abandoned, keyless cars out of the way to clear the path for the firetrucks.

The dozer operators were gentle at first, trying not to damage the cars. But as the situation got more desperate, they had no choice but to ram cars into one another and flip them onto their sides.

Under the black smoke, evacuees now traveled only by the light of the fire.

As night came, two friends, Orly Israel and Tanner Charles, fought to save Israel's hillside home.

Charles is a storm chaser visiting from Minneapolis, and they had spent the day documenting the fire.

“It was like what I would imagine hell would be like,” Israel said. “We'd hear so many explosions in the neighborhood, propane tanks exploding. It was just insane.”

When the fire approached Israel's home, the pair tried to fight it off with garden hoses. Israel sprayed the backyard, Charles handled the front.

Palm trees burst into flames, showering the property with fiery debris. When the backyard was fully engulfed in flames, they decided they had to flee.

“Let's get out of here. We tried our best,” Charles said in a [video](#) later posted on his X account.

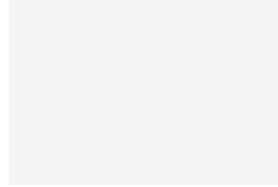
After one last look at Israel's childhood home of 20 years, the pair bolted. It didn't survive the night.

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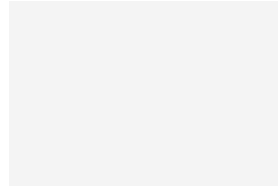
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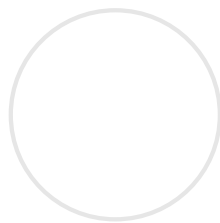
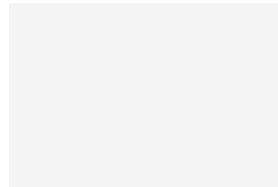
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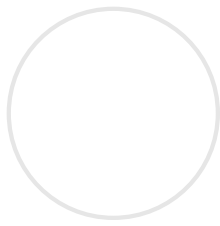
Jan. 11, 2025



### Jack Flemming

Jack Flemming covers real estate for the Los Angeles Times. He was raised in St. Louis and studied journalism at the University of Missouri. Before joining The Times as an intern in 2017, he wrote for the Columbia Missourian and Politico Europe.

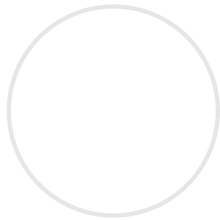
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## **Summer Lin**

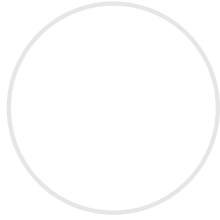
Summer Lin is a reporter on the Fast Break Desk, the Los Angeles Times' breaking news team. Before coming to The Times, she covered breaking news for the Mercury News and national politics and California courts for McClatchy's publications, including the Miami Herald. An East Coast native, Lin moved to California after graduating from Boston College and Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism. Lin was among The Times' staff members who covered the Monterey Park mass shooting in 2023, which was recognized by the Pulitzer Board as a finalist in breaking news.

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## **Hannah Fry**

Hannah Fry covers breaking news for the Los Angeles Times. She most recently covered Orange County for The Times and has written extensively about criminal trials, housing, politics and government. In 2020, Fry was part of the team that was a Pulitzer finalist for its coverage of a boat fire that killed 34 people off the coast of Santa Barbara. Fry came to The Times from the Daily Pilot, where she covered coastal cities, education and crime. An Orange County native, Fry started her career as an intern at the Orange County Register.



## **Ian James**

Ian James is a reporter who focuses on water and climate change in California and the West. Before joining the Los Angeles Times in 2021, he was an environment reporter at the Arizona Republic and the Desert Sun. He previously worked for the Associated Press as a correspondent in the Caribbean and as bureau chief in Venezuela. Follow him on Bluesky @ianjames.bsky.social and on X @ByIanJames.

SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT E



**XAVIER BECERRA**  
*Attorney General*

*State of California*  
**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

1300 I STREET, SUITE 125  
P.O. BOX 944255  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2550

Public: (916) 445-9555  
Telephone: (916) 210-7797  
Facsimile: (916) 327-2319  
E-Mail: Nicole.Rinke@doj.ca.gov

October 25, 2019

Planning Commission of Monterey County  
Monterey County Resource Management Agency  
Attn: Mike Novo  
1441 Schilling Place – South, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901  
*Sent via email: novom@co.monterey.ca.us*

**Re: Paraiso Springs Resort, Project No. PLN040183**

Dear Mr. Novo and Commissioners,

We appreciate your preparation of a Final Environment Impact Report (“FEIR”) responding to public comments on the previous two Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Reports (“RDEIRs”), including the comments we submitted on March 20, 2019 and July 9, 2019 regarding wildfire risks associated with the proposed Paraiso Springs Resort Development (the “Project”). After reviewing the additional information presented, we acknowledge and appreciate that you have provided more information regarding wildfire risks associated with the proposed Project and have revised certain mitigation measures to address some of those wildfire risks. While the additional information improves the Project and the environmental documents, we remain concerned that the Project still does not comply with state evacuation and fire suppression access requirements for development in a State Responsibility Area (“SRA”).<sup>1</sup> In addition, the FEIR’s discussion of the wildfire risks associated with the Project, particularly related to evacuation in the event of a wildfire, remains inadequate.

The Project does not comply with the state’s dead-end road limitations and road width limitations applicable to development within an SRA. (Cal. Code. Regs., tit. 14, §§ 1273.08 and 1273.01; adopted pursuant to Pub. Resources Code § 4290.) In response to our July 9, 2019 comments regarding the Project’s failure to comply with SRA regulations, the FEIR claims that Paraiso Springs Road is an existing road and thus exempt from such regulations. (FEIR, p. 617.) In support of such an exemption, the FEIR cites to Monterey County Code section 18.56.020(B)(2)(a) which states “[r]egulations contained in this chapter do not apply to the following building, construction, or development activities... (a) Existing structures, roads,

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<sup>1</sup> This letter is not intended, and should not be construed, as an exhaustive discussion of the FEIR’s compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) or the Project’s compliance with other applicable legal requirements.

streets and private lanes or facilities.” (FEIR, p. 23.) However, neither the Monterey County Code nor the SRA regulations support an exemption for this Project for several reasons.

First, whether Paraiso Springs Road is an existing road is inconsequential. Paraiso Springs Road will now be the *sole* access to new commercial construction within an SRA. (February 2018 RDEIR, p. 2-45.) SRA regulations explicitly “apply to: (1) the perimeters and access to all residential, commercial, and industrial building construction within the SRA approved after January 1, 1991...” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1270.02, emphasis added.) It is indisputable that the Project involves commercial building construction within the SRA approved after January 1, 1991. Thus, the Monterey County Code exemption for existing roads is inapposite – the Paraiso Springs Road is now “access” to a Project that falls within the scope of the SRA regulations. In addition, the SRA regulations do not expressly exempt all existing roads. (14 Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1270.02(d) [exempting “[r]oads used solely for agricultural, mining, or the management and harvesting of wood products”].) The Monterey County Code cannot be read to apply less stringent standards than the SRA regulations because counties that assume responsibility for fire prevention and suppression in SRAs must “provide[] the same or higher intensity of fire protection to these lands as is provided under existing levels of state protection in other comparable areas of the state.” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1658.)

Second, contrary to the assertions in the FEIR (p. 22), the problems with the existing road cannot be cured through an exception pursuant to California Code of Regulations, title 14, section 1270.06 (outlining a process to apply for an exception to the applicability of the SRA regulations). An exception under that regulation still must provide “the same practical effect as” the SRA regulations. As the FEIR acknowledges, “the Fire Protection Plan cannot modify the dead-end nature of the road” (p. 618). Accordingly, the practical effect of prohibiting dead-end roads of certain lengths in an SRA, which are important to timely evacuation and fire suppression access, cannot be achieved through an exception. In addition, the Project applicant has not applied for an exception. (FEIR, p. 23.)

Third, annexation of Project land into the Mission-Soledad Rural Fire Protection District will not cure violations of the SRA regulations (see FEIR, p. 23 [describing annexation].) Annexation does not exempt a project from SRA regulations. Land can be both within a fire protection district and within the SRA. (Health & Saf. Code § 13811.)

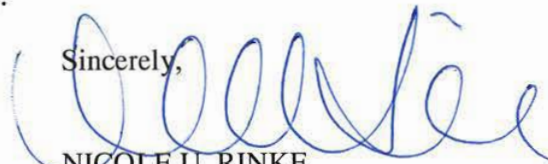
Finally, we note that exempting the Project from the SRA regulations simply because Paraiso Springs Road is a pre-existing road would undermine the intent of the SRA regulations. SRA regulations are meant to ensure that “[t]he future design and construction of structures, subdivisions and developments in the SRA shall provide for basic emergency access...” (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1270.01(b).) Constructing a new resort that includes a nearly 150,000 square foot hotel, an over 18,000 square foot “hamlet” with a spa and retail buildings, and over 75 timeshare units (February 2018 RDEIR, pp. 2-20, 2-27) at the end of a narrow road that exceeds the dead-end road regulations undermines emergency access in the SRA. While this road may have been exempt from SRA width and dead-end road limitations prior to development

of the Project, there is no basis for an interpretation that allows construction within the SRA of a large new resort that would depend upon the use of that road for the sole emergency access to and evacuation from the Project. It is the construction of a new project that triggers the application of the SRA regulations; the fact that the Project is being constructed at the end of an existing road does not negate the triggering effect of the new construction. A contrary interpretation would incentivize development without adequate evacuation routes and emergency access in the SRA rather than prevent it.

From a CEQA perspective, the concerns with SRA non-compliance are exacerbated by the gaps that remain in the disclosures the County is providing related to the wildfire risks associated with the Project and specifically the risks associated with evacuation. We will not reiterate our previous comments here, but at this time note the following continuing concerns related to evacuation: (1) the analysis related to evacuees trying to leave the site while emergency response personnel are trying to access the site remains inadequate and conclusory (FEIR, p. 623 [citing back to the Fire Protection Plan and the Wildland Fire Evacuation Plan, which identifies the issue (June 2019 RDEIR, p. 164), but does not describe how it will be addressed]); and (2) the reasonableness of the evacuation time – estimated to be a minimum of 17-18 minutes - has not been defined or compared to a standard of significance, nor is it supported by substantial evidence (June 2019 RDEIR, pp. 61, 140, 141-142).<sup>2</sup>

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and respectfully request that you refrain from certifying the FEIR until it is revised accordingly and refrain from approving the Project until it complies with the SRA. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



NICOLE U. RINKE  
Deputy Attorney General  
HEATHER LESLIE  
Deputy Attorney General

For XAVIER BECERRA  
Attorney General

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<sup>2</sup> We also note that some of our previous comments have not been as fully addressed as would be desirable to fully inform decision-makers and the public. For example, the FEIR assumes that the Project will exacerbate wildfire risk, but does not describe the risk in any detail, making it more difficult to evaluate and address that risk and the associated issues related to evacuation. (See June 2019 RDEIR, p. 64.)



**XAVIER BECERRA**  
*Attorney General*

*State of California*  
**DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE**

1300 I STREET, SUITE 125  
P.O. BOX 944255  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94244-2550

Public: (916) 445-9555  
Telephone: (916) 210-7797  
Facsimile: (916) 327-2319  
E-Mail: Nicole.Rinke@doj.ca.gov

March 20, 2019

Planning Commission of Monterey County  
Monterey County Resource Management Agency  
Attn: Mike Novo  
1441 Schilling Place – South, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Salinas, CA 93901  
*Sent via email: novom@co.monterey.ca.us*

**Re: Paraiso Springs Resort, Project No. PLN040183**

Dear Mr. Novo and Commissioners,

Our office has reviewed the Final Environmental Impact Report (“FEIR”) and the Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (“DEIR”) for the proposed Paraiso Springs Resort Development (“Project”) and respectfully submits the following comments. We request that you consider our comments prior to certifying the FEIR. We spoke with County Counsel and staff on March 20, 2019 and alerted them we would be submitting comments prior to your consideration of the FEIR at your March 27, 2019 Planning Commission meeting.

The Attorney General’s Office submits these comments pursuant to the Attorney General’s independent power and duty to protect the environment and natural resources of the State from pollution, impairment, or destruction, and in furtherance of the public interest. (See Cal. Const., art. V, § 13; Gov. Code, §§ 12511, 12600-12612; *D’Amico v. Bd. of Medical Examiners* (1974) 11 Cal.3d 1, 14-15.)<sup>1</sup> In the wake of the State’s deadliest wildfires this past year and the increased occurrence of fires anticipated throughout the State in coming years, it is particularly important that local jurisdictions carefully review and consider new developments in fire prone areas. This is particularly important for new developments proposed in the wildland urban interface or in other relatively undeveloped and remote areas, like the area where the Project is proposed.

Paraiso Springs Resort, LLC, proposes to develop a spa resort along the floor of a canyon in the foothills at the end of rural Paraiso Springs Road in a “very high fire sensitivity

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<sup>1</sup> This letter is not intended, and should not be construed, as an exhaustive discussion of the FEIR’s and DEIR’s compliance with the California Environmental Quality Act (“CEQA”) or the Project’s compliance with other applicable legal requirements.

zone.” The Project site is bordered to the east by grazing and farm land, and to the north, south and west by the Santa Lucia Mountains. (DEIR 2-1.) The Project site was previously operated as a commercial hot springs resort beginning in 1874. (DEIR 3-137.) The site has seen several fires over the years that have destroyed various structures on the Property, including a fire in 1891 that destroyed one of the more substantial buildings on the property, a fire in 1928 that destroyed the hotel, the bathhouse, a garage, the dance hall, and some other smaller buildings, and another major fire in 1954 that destroyed the rebuilt hotel and annex. (DEIR 2-15, 3-137-3-138.)

Paraiso Springs Road, the sole ingress and egress to the site,<sup>2</sup> is a narrow, two-lane road varying in width from 16 to 22 feet that dead ends at the Project site. (DEIR 2-45.) The road currently serves approximately 90 vehicles per day associated with single-family residences and local vineyards. (DEIR 3-329.) The Project would include the development of 103 hotel rooms, 77 multi-bedroom timeshare units, three restaurants, entertainment facilities, and various spa amenities at the end of this narrow two-lane rural road. (DEIR 2-17 – 2-18.) It is anticipated that there would be several hundred people at the resort on peak days. With the Project at 100% occupancy, there would be over 400 additional vehicle trips per day on the road. (DEIR 3-336.)<sup>3</sup> Additionally, because of parking limitations at the proposed Project site and limitations with the capacity of the rural access road, the Project proposes to shuttle in many of the guests and 90% of all employees from a parking lot nearly two miles away. (DEIR 3-335 – 3-336.)

Monterey County, as the lead agency, has prepared a FEIR for the proposed Project. Despite the acknowledgment that the Project is located in a “very high fire sensitivity zone,” the FEIR fails to adequately address the risk of fire in several important respects.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> In response to CalFire’s comments on the DEIR, the FEIR suggests that there is a service road for ingress and egress at the rear of the development. (FEIR, Response to comment letter No. 18, 2-12.) The response cites to maps within the DEIR. (*Ibid.*) These maps show service roads *within* the development, but these roads do not appear to provide ingress and egress *to the Project site*.

<sup>3</sup> We note that several commenters questioned whether the traffic analysis for the Project underestimated the trips that will be associated with the Project. (See, e.g., FEIR, Comment Letter 10 (p 20-23).) While we have not evaluated the adequacy of the traffic analysis, we are concerned that the number of visitors accessing the site may be even higher than anticipated in the FEIR, which would exacerbate our concerns regarding the risks associated with wildfires and the FEIR’s inadequate analysis of those risks.

<sup>4</sup> We understand that LandWatch submitted comments to the County on January 15, 2019 raising many of these same issues. The FEIR does not include a response to these comments.

**I. THE FEIR MUST ANALYZE THE INCREASED RISK OF WILDFIRE THAT WILL RESULT FROM THE PROJECT.**

The FEIR does not, but should, analyze the increased risk of wildfire that will result from siting the proposed development within a high fire sensitivity zone. The DEIR discussed emergency access to the site in the event of fire and onsite measures to provide fire protection.<sup>5</sup> However, the DEIR did not disclose that locating new development in a high fire sensitivity zone will itself increase the risk of fire and, as a result, increase the risk of exposing existing residents in the area as well as guests and employees of the resort to an increased risk of fire. (See CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2, subd. (a) [requiring the evaluation of potentially significant environmental impacts of locating development in areas susceptible to hazardous conditions such as wildfire risk areas, especially as identified in hazard maps and risk assessments].)<sup>6</sup> It is well-accepted that building in wildland areas increases the risk and severity of fires.<sup>7</sup> The California

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<sup>5</sup> A preliminary fire protection plan was prepared for the Project. (DEIR 2-55.) Fire protection elements include hydrants, sprinkler systems, and the use of fire-resistant building materials. (DEIR 2-55 – 2-56.) The Project also includes vegetation management for defensible space. (See e.g., DEIR 3-81 – 3-80.) Cal Fire’s Department of Forestry and Fire Protection commented on, among other issues, the adequacy of the vegetation management discussed in the DEIR. (FEIR Comment Letter 18.) In response to these comments, the FEIR simply refers back to the DEIR and does not provide any additional commitments or project modifications. (FEIR, Responses to Comment Letter 18, 2-12.)

<sup>6</sup> Our comments are based on the CEQA Guidelines in effect prior to the recent 2019 update, but it is worth noting that the update confirms and clarifies the need to consider wildfire risks as part of the environmental review for new developments subject to CEQA.

<sup>7</sup> See, e.g., Rapid Growth of the U.S. Wildland-Urban Interface Raises Wildfire Risk (February 6, 2018) (<https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/115/13/3314.full.pdf>); *New York Times*, Climate Change is Fueling Wildfires Nationwide, New Report Warns (November, 2018) (<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2018/11/27/climate/wildfire-global-warming.html>); *Scientific American*, Living on the Edge: Wildfires Pose a Growing Risk to Homes Built Near Wilderness Areas (<https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/living-on-the-edge-wildfires-pose-a-growing-risk-to-homes-built-near-wilderness-areas/>); USDA, Wildfire, Wildlands, and People: Understanding and Preparing for Wildfire in the Wildland-Urban Interface (January 2013) ([https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs\\_gtr299.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr299.pdf)). While these articles and reports largely focus on the risks of locating housing within fire-prone areas, the same risks would appear to apply for commercial establishments offering overnight lodging. The issue with locating development in these areas is that most fires are human induced, so bringing people into wildland areas creates an increased risk that fire will occur. (*Ibid.*) In addition, the risks of fire are exacerbated because development in wildland areas alters the natural environment (e.g., it fragments native vegetation, introduces nonnatives species, and disturbs soils). (See Rapid Growth of the U.S. Wildland-Urban Interface Raises Wildfire Risk (February 6, 2018) (<https://www.pnas.org/content/pnas/115/13/3314.full.pdf>)). Further, fire management in developed wildland areas is more challenging because it is more difficult to fight fires in these

Supreme Court has confirmed that this kind of risk must be considered as part of the CEQA analysis for a proposed project. (*California Building Industry Assn. v. Bay Area Air Quality Management Dist.* (2015) 62 Cal.4th 369, 388 [holding that while CEQA does not require consideration of the environment's effect on a project, it does require analysis of the project's impacts on the existing environment].)

Concerns regarding the Project's impact on the occurrence of wildfires were raised in public comments on the DEIR. For example, Lois Panziera noted that "[w]hen more people are added to a high severity fire area, the potential for fires will occur." (FEIR, Letter 7, Comment 75.) In response, the FEIR simply refers back to the DEIR. (FEIR 2-58 – 2-59.) However, as explained above, the DEIR did not address the increased risk of fires that will result from locating new development within a high fire sensitivity zone. The County should address these issues prior to certifying the FEIR.

## II. THE FEIR SHOULD ADDRESS EVACUATION IN THE EVENT OF FIRE.

Based upon the onsite fire fighting infrastructure (sprinkler systems, etc.) and the Project proponent's commitment to develop a fire protection plan, the DEIR concludes that the "occupants would be protected to the extent possible in the case of fire" such that the potential impacts associated with wildfire hazards would be less than significant. (DEIR 3-215 – 3-216.) The DEIR describes emergency access to the site, but does *not* address: (i) the evacuation of employees and guests in the event of a fire, (ii) the increased challenges that existing users of the sole ingress and egress road will face in the event of an evacuation due to the added users on the road, or (iii) the increased challenges that firefighters and emergency responders would face accessing the site and preventing the spread of a wildfire due to the simultaneous evacuation of guests and employees from the Project and neighboring areas. The EIR should include a more robust discussion of the fire hazards and describe the evacuation plan for guests and employees, as well as neighboring residents and existing users of Paraiso Springs Road. (See *Clews Land & Livestock, LLC v. City of San Diego* (2017) 19 Cal.App.5th 161, 194 [discussing whether or not the EIR adequately considered the risk of fire to future users of the project site, including acceptable evacuation plans]; *California Clean Energy Committee v. County of Placer* (Cal. Ct. App., Dec. 22, 2015, No. C072680) 2015 WL 9412772 [concluding that the EIR failed to adequately evaluate evacuation issues associated with the project].)

In response to public comments, including from CalFire's Department of Forestry and Fire Protection, asking about evacuation plans (see Comment Letter 18 starting on FEIR 2-11), the FEIR promises that a final Fire Protection Plan that includes evacuation procedures will be developed. (FEIR 2-12.) Meaningful analysis of the risk of fire and evacuation plans should not be deferred until after the FEIR is certified and the Project is approved. (See CEQA Guidelines

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landscapes and fire management strategies that allow natural fires to burn are not an option. (*Ibid.*; see also *USDA, Wildfire, Wildlands, and People: Understanding and Preparing for Wildfire in the Wildland-Urban Interface* (January 2013) ([https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs\\_gtr299.pdf](https://www.fs.fed.us/rm/pubs/rmrs_gtr299.pdf)).

Section 15126.4(a)(1)(B).) While the deferment of mitigation measures may sometimes be appropriate, here no basis has been provided for why the evacuation plan was not already prepared as part of the DEIR or FEIR, nor have any performance standards or potential mitigation measures been identified. (*Ibid*; see also, e.g., *San Joaquin Raptor Rescue Center v. County of Merced* (2007) 149 Cal.App.4th 645, 671 [mitigation measure that included development of a post-FEIR management plan was found to be improperly deferred mitigation where no basis was provided for why the development of mitigation measures needed to be deferred to future plans and, no specific criteria, performance standards, or potential mitigation measures were set forth in the EIR].) In addition, based on the discussion in the DEIR, we are concerned that the Fire Protection Plan, when it is developed, may not adequately address the totality of issues related to evacuation (see above).

### **III. THE PROJECT MUST COMPLY WITH THE REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE RESPONSIBILITY AREAS.**

The Project is located in a State Responsibility Area, which is an area for which the Board of Forestry and Fire Protection has designated the State to be financially responsible for preventing and suppressing fires. (Pub. Resources Code, § 4102.) Local jurisdictions may adopt standards for wildfire protections in State Responsibility Areas, but those standards must be at least as stringent as the State's minimum standards and be certified by the State. (Pub. Resources Code, § 4117.) Monterey County has adopted standards for this purpose. (Monterey County Code, §§ 18.56.010 – 18.56.100.) The proposed Project does not appear to comply with these standards.

First, Paraiso Springs Road is a dead end road that terminates at the proposed Project location. Both the County and State standards limit dead end roads to a cumulative length not to exceed 5,280 feet. (Monterey County Code § 18.56.060(11); Cal. Code. Regs., tit. 14, § 1273.09.) The Paraiso Springs Road that would serve as the sole ingress and egress for the Project is 1.9 miles long or 10,032 feet according to Google maps, nearly double the allowable limit. The FEIR and DEIR do not address the Project's failure to comply with the length limitation for dead end roads in State Responsibility Areas.

Second, the width of Paraiso Springs Road will not comply with the local or State standards. State standards generally require a minimum of two 10-foot traffic lanes. (Cal. Code Regs., tit. 14, § 1273.01.)<sup>8</sup> The Project proposes to widen "*the majority of Paraiso Springs Road to either 18 or 20 feet wide.*" (DEIR 3-340.) However, the FEIR explains that the road will only be widened "*where feasible.*" (FEIR 2-10). The Project proponent should commit to widening not just a majority of the road, but the entirety of the road, to a distance that complies with the applicable standards.

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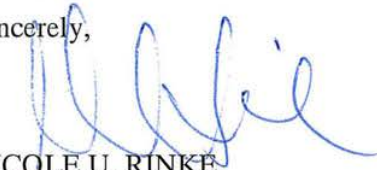
<sup>8</sup> The County requires that all roads have a minimum of two 9-foot traffic lanes. (Monterey County Code, § 18.56.060(3).) Therefore, the State's more stringent requirement would control.

**IV. THE PROJECT SHOULD PROVIDE PROXIMAL ACCESS TO A FIRE STATION.**

Despite a request from the local fire district, the Project proponent has declined to construct a small fire station onsite, concluding that it would be “incompatible with resort operations.” (DEIR 3-307.) The closest fire station is nine miles away, which the program Google Maps reports is an 18-minute drive. The DEIR claims the fire station is within the 15 minutes recommended by the applicable Monterey County General Plan. (DEIR 3-307.) Public comments on the DEIR noted the Project site is not within a 15-minute response time from the Soledad fire station. (See, e.g., Letter 7, Comment 74 starting on FEIR 2-33 and Letter 8, Comment 5 starting on FEIR 2-61). Rather than provide factual support for the DEIR’s claim that the fire station is within 15 minutes from the Project site or revise the Project so that it complies with the Monterey County General Plan recommendation, the FEIR simply restates the DEIR’s conclusion that “the project would not warrant construction of new or expanded facilities in order to maintain ... response times....” (FEIR 2-11). The FEIR should be revised to accurately reflect the distance of the nearest fire station to the Project site and should require compliance with the policy prescribed by the General Plan—preferably with construction of a fire station onsite as requested by the local fire district.

We appreciate your consideration of our comments and respectfully request that you defer certification of the FEIR and approval of the Project until you more fully address the risks of wildfire associated with the Project. If you have any questions or would like to discuss our comments, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



NICOLE U. RINKE  
Deputy Attorney General  
HEATHER C. LESLIE  
Deputy Attorney General

For XAVIER BECERRA  
Attorney General

SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

## ATTACHMENT F

# SAFRR

PLUM Case No. APCSV-2016-4179-SPE-DRB-SPP-MSP-ZV-ZAD; CEQA No. ENV-2016-4180-EIR (SCH # 2018041016)

Los Angeles County Office of the Assessor  
Viewing Property and Property

Property Assessment Information System

Parcel Details

I want to...

- Property records are kept at the West District Office
- View Assessment Map on this site available?
- View other EAGs

**Property Information**

Assessor's ID No: 5572-004-026  
Address: 3050 PLINYON CANYON RD LOG ANGELES CA 90046  
Property Type: Single Family Residential  
Region / Cluster: 09 / 09160  
Tax Rate Area (TRA): 00067  
[View Assessor Map](#)  
[View Index Map](#)

**Recent Sales Information**

Latest Sale Date:  
Indicated Sale Price:  
[Search for Recent Sales](#)

**2024 - Roll Values**

Recording Date:	10/04/2012
Land:	\$457,822
Improvements:	\$618,806
Personal Property:	\$0
Fixtures:	\$0
Homestead* Exemption:	\$0
Real Estate Exemption:	\$0
Personal Property Exemption:	\$0
Fixture Exemptions:	\$0

LA County | County of Los Angeles, Bureau of Land Management, Earl H. P. Gorman, INCREMENT P...

## Communication from Public

**Name:** Heritage Properties

**Date Submitted:** 03/25/2025 07:55 AM

**Council File No:** 24-1371

**Comments for Public Posting:** I recommend DENIAL of these discretionary actions and APPROVAL of the APPEAL in this case. This Applicant does indeed own an unusual piece of property with a home already built on it. There is a right to that single home, and an addition and accessory uses built in accordance with the Baseline Hillside Ordinance, with a safe access road, code-compliant retaining walls, and code compliant Haul Route. The unusual location is NOT a HARDSHIP. . On a 197,000 sf piece of land, they can figure out how to build far more than everyone else and still follow all our codes. There is not a right unless you grant it to a number of outsized discretionary requests-- a 2nd house (dwelling unit) on an RE-zoned property with a house where it is not allowed --with a full kitchen-- which could otherwise only be legally built as an ADU; overheight retaining walls (noncompliant with Zoning Code) extending 400' long, behind which masses of excavated dirt may be allowed to be piled; a "maybe it is maybe it isn't" Haul Route exceeding calculated at potentially 3,000 truck trips at 9 cubic yards on a substandard street shared with hikers in a public park;; locating a house at most likely the most prominent ridgetop in this half of the City; allowing a substandard street with a single way out used by the public as a hiking trail. This is NOT a case of "will this applicant be allowed to build his house"? It is a case of a specific design being proposed that is unacceptable in this specific location, creating problems and dangers, when a "by right" project could be built. It is a case of conferring the right to do something avoidable and bad when its perfectly possible to do something code compliant. People do it every day. The cynical part of this is that the true case isn't revealed-- by building a 2nd home on a single family lot, in a zone where only an ADU is allowed on the lot if the 2nd unit is a dwelling unit (ADU) , this applicant is avoiding triggering rent control (2 units on a lot) , which brings with it a prohibition of Air Bn B (short term rentals). PLUM has been snookered on this before. A prominent modern house in the hills asks for giant variances and becomes an AirBnB party house. You can deny these discretionary approvals due to the overall situation being in the midst of an area of extreme fire danger, with apparent substandard fire access, especially to 2 homes. To pretend this is not 2 homes means pretending that there is adequate fire access, when this same area burned in a scary

Sunset Fire. They can build what the RE 15 zone allows, and be honest about it. If this house will be approved, DENY the "maybe" Haul Route-- if they need a Haul Route, make them honest and come back. And deny the variance for the 2nd kitchen.