

Communication from Public

Name: Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association

Date Submitted: 10/17/2026 04:46 PM

Council File No: 26-1081-S1

Comments for Public Posting: On behalf of the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association (SHNA) regarding the Riverwalk project issues discussed during the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee hearing on October 13, 2026. SHNA represents approximately 120 homeowners and renters living south of Ventura Boulevard, immediately adjacent to the proposed development. Our neighborhood is among those most directly affected by increased traffic, emergency-access limitations, and wildfire evacuation challenges along this corridor. We recognize the considerable effort invested in this development and want to see the site revitalized. However, we remain deeply concerned that the City's review has not adequately addressed one of its most fundamental responsibilities: ensuring that residents can evacuate or find refuge, safely during a wildfire or other major emergency. Please enter the attached document explaining our concerns, suggestions & request for action into public record. We look forward to meaningful collaboration. Respectfully Steve Wolf Administrator
Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association.

FORMAL WRITTEN PUBLIC COMMENT

Re: Riverwalk Project — Formal Submission for the Public Record and Request for Council Consideration

October 16, 2026

Submitted to: Los Angeles City Council; Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee; Department of City Planning; Office of the City Clerk

Regarding: Riverwalk Project — Evacuation Safety, Infrastructure, and Community Participation

Council File Number: [26-1081 & 26-1081-S1]

On behalf of the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association (SHNA), representing 120 households, south of Ventura between Fairway Ave. and Whitsett, in Studio City. We respectfully request that the attached correspondence be entered into the official Council File for the Riverwalk project.

We further request that this correspondence be distributed to members of the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee and the Los Angeles City Council, and included among the materials available for consideration at the next scheduled hearing concerning the project.

Given the significant public-safety concerns outlined in our letter, we request that the Committee and Council formally consider these issues and address our recommendations before taking final action on the project, and provide written acknowledgment of receipt and confirmation that this correspondence has been incorporated into the official public record.

Submitted by:

Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association (SHNA)

3761 Sunswept Drive Studio City, CA 91604

Administration - Steve Wolf stevewolfdads@gmail.com & Jeremy Adell Adell_jeremy@yahoo.com

External Development & Impact Committee - Sherye Ifergan Sherye@gmail.com , Mike Shoel, mjshoel@ariztical.com Harvey Myman, Harvery@harveymy-man.com

Infrastructure & Maintenance Committee - Marilyn Wilson marilyn@marilynwilson.tv Josh Porro, joshporro@gmail.com Jeff Ballard, ballardjeffrey@yahoo.com Heather Myman heathiemac@me.com

Security Committee - Gaye Hirsch, Ghirsch1018@gmail.com Steven Pato steven@brightstarin-s.com

Zoning & Housing Committee - Amir Abdizadeh, amir@amirlawgroup.com Bijan Rafie-Tari bijanrt@gmail.com

October 16, 2026

Riverwalk Project — Evacuation Safety, Infrastructure, and Community Participation

Dear Committee Members, Planning Staff, and Neighbors,

I am writing on behalf of the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association (SHNA) regarding the Riverwalk project issues discussed during the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee hearing on October 13, 2026.

SHNA represents approximately 120 homeowners and renters living south of Ventura Boulevard, immediately adjacent to the proposed development. Our neighborhood is among those most directly affected by increased traffic, emergency-access limitations, and wildfire evacuation challenges along this corridor.

We support the responsible redevelopment of this site. We cannot support moving forward without adequately addressing the safety of the residents who will live in the development and the surrounding communities.

The proposed project offers substantial benefits, including opportunities for neighborhood-serving businesses, lower-income housing, and improved access to the Los Angeles River, open space, native landscaping, and additional shade trees along Ventura Boulevard. We also appreciate the developer's commitment of \$675,000 toward tree planting and stewardship of the riverfront bordering the project.

These are meaningful community improvements. We recognize the considerable effort invested in this development and want to see the site revitalized. However, we remain deeply concerned that the City's review has not adequately addressed one of its most fundamental responsibilities: ensuring that residents can evacuate or find refuge, safely during a wildfire or other major emergency.

1. The Critical Question of Evacuation and Emergency Access Remains Unanswered

The Board of the Studio City Neighborhood Council (SCNC) conditionally supported CPC-2025-5697-DB-PR-SPPC-MCUP-VHCA&VTT-84453 ("Riverwalk at Studio City") pending review of existing traffic studies and their ability to ensure safe and efficient evacuation due to earthquakes fires, other disaster and examine the cumulative effects of developments at Riverwalk, Sportsman's Apartments, Harvard Westlake River Park, Sunswept Place and the hillside homes south of Ventura Boulevard. Studying the "Pacific Palisades Fire Evacuation Crisis" from hillside homes to Sunset Boulevard and Pacific Coast Highway, the January 2025 fires in Runyon Canyon and Sunswept Hill would be a part of this review.

An appeal presented by attorney Amy Minter raised serious concerns about the inadequacy of pre-existing studies being referenced for approval of Riverwalk and other planned mixed use projects along the Ventura Boulevard Corridor. These studies do not take into consideration the cumulative impact of adding 2000 new residences, 814 residential units, and more than 1,600 additional residents at Riverwalk alone, without a current, real-time comprehensive evacuation plan, consideration by City Council and public transparency.

The appeal was supported by an evacuation analysis prepared by fire-safety engineering firm Jensen Hughes, which modeled wildfire evacuation conditions affecting Studio City and surrounding hillside neighborhoods.

According to the "Jenson Hughes Analysis", the highest probability of fire reaching the Riverwalk site comes from fires starting immediately south of Ventura, around Fairway Ave a main access point for the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood (p.23). Under existing conditions, it would take four to six hours for evacuating residents in the surrounding area to reach the freeway; addition of new residential developments at Riverwalk & Sportsman Apartments would add an additional 27 minutes to the evacuation time.

Unfortunately, the PLUM Committee did not substantively address the alarming evacuation findings presented in the appeal; this warrants a public response.

How will the City safely evacuate existing hillside residents, the additional residents of Riverwalk, and occupants of other proposed developments along this already-congested corridor? Where will those residents go if evacuation routes become impassable?

We believe the City should also consider a designated, defensible emergency refuge area, or “Safe Harbor,” for residents who cannot evacuate safely. Such a location would require a formal safety assessment and operational approval by LAFD.

One possibility worth evaluating is the Harvard-Westlake Sports Center, given its proximity to Fire Station 78. We discussed this concept with Captain II Brian Harris at Fire station 78. It deserves further consideration.

2. A CEQA Exemption Should Not Become an Exemption From Public Safety

The applicant’s attorney argued that the project qualifies for an exemption from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and therefore does not require an additional evacuation study.

Even if that interpretation is procedurally correct, it leaves a critical question unanswered: **Does a statutory exemption from environmental review relieve the City of its responsibility to understand and address foreseeable threats to public safety?**

At a September 8, 2026, Studio City Residents Association meeting, Assembly member Nick Schultz discussed concerns about the current housing-streamlining legislation and the possibility that developers could use such provisions to avoid costly evacuation studies and infrastructure modifications in high-fire-risk areas.

He indicated that this issue warranted further monitoring and legislative consideration

Regardless of the legal pathway used to approve housing, existing infrastructure limitations and foreseeable evacuation risks should be understood before additional population and traffic are introduced.

3. The Developer’s 21-Minute Evacuation Claim Requires Clarification

During the hearing, the applicant’s attorney stated that the developer had conducted a study demonstrating that the project could be evacuated in approximately 21 minutes. We find this characterization deeply concerning because it appears to go beyond what the underlying report establishes.

The “Dudek Document”, identified as a draft, qualitative analysis, estimates that approximately 1,040 resident vehicles could clear a specified segment of Ventura Boulevard in 21 minutes, under assumptions that do not account for competing traffic. (p.34)

That is fundamentally different from demonstrating that residents can safely evacuate the development and surrounding community during an actual emergency.

As presented, the analysis does not adequately account for:

- Existing residents traveling along Ventura Boulevard.
- Hillside residents entering the corridor from constrained neighborhood streets.
- Vehicles associated with the project’s approximately 766 commercial parking spaces.
- Traffic generated by neighboring residential and commercial developments.
- Simultaneous evacuation demand during a wildfire.
- Roadway obstructions, emergency vehicle movements, or earthquake-related infrastructure damage.

The report also contains a reference to the “Gateway Center Project,” (p.21) raising questions about whether portions of the analysis were adapted from another development and are site specific.

These issues deserve clarification and independent review. **Clearing a segment of roadway is not the same as reaching safety. Evacuating a building is not the same as evacuating a community.**

4. The Greatest Risk May Be to Residents Outside the Development

The “Jensen Hughes Analysis” raises another critical issue: some of the residents facing the greatest evacuation challenges may not live within the Riverwalk development itself.

Many Studio City hillside neighborhoods, including those represented by SHNA, depend on narrow streets, limited exits, and lengthy routes before reaching major thoroughfares. During a wildfire or earthquake, these residents must descend from the hills and merge into the same Ventura Boulevard corridor used by the development’s occupants and surrounding communities. This creates the potential for severe congestion at precisely the moment when rapid evacuation and emergency-vehicle access are most critical. The consequences of additional residential density cannot be evaluated solely within the boundaries of an individual development. They must be considered in relation to the existing neighborhoods, intersections, roadways, and emergency-response systems that serve the entire area.

5. Our Existing Infrastructure Is Already Inadequate.

SHNA raised concerns with Council District 4, the City Council, LAFD, and LAPD regarding our Community’s substandard, deteriorating road infrastructure, well before learning of the Riverwalk proposal. The “Jenson Hughes Analysis” also supports our road concerns as a Modeled Safety Risk.

Our - narrow, deteriorating roads, compromised retaining walls, storm runoff, erosion problems, and intersections make them increasingly dangerous to navigate for residents and city services. Many roadway sections in our neighborhood have tight turns, and width less than 12 feet wide, substantially narrower than the 20-foot fire-apparatus access standard. Although existing roads may be subject to different requirements, this severely compromised width creates serious operational concerns for emergency vehicles.

Particularly troubling are the conditions affecting the intersections of Whitsitt Avenue, Ventura Boulevard, Sunswept Drive, Laurel Terrace and nearby hillside access roads, including Fairway Ave & Ventura Boulevard. These are not merely inconveniences affecting daily mobility; they affect emergency response, and the ability of residents to evacuate while first responders attempt to enter the neighborhood.

For years, our requests for meaningful infrastructure improvements have largely resulted in temporary repairs, deferred action, or explanations that the required engineering solutions are too costly or complicated. Pothole repairs cannot resolve structural roadway integrity, guard rails, exposed high voltage conduit, inadequate intersections, or the continuing effects of hillside slippage and water erosion. These problems have accumulated over decades and exacerbated by inconsistent maintenance, inadequate code enforcement, and the absence of coordinated long-term infrastructure planning.

Nithya Raman maintains there are no funds available for community road improvement per Mayor Bass, who in her recent Mayoral debate, acknowledged the broader concern about long-term infrastructure planning and interdepartmental coordination. Our neighborhood illustrates why those issues require immediate attention.

If our streets and intersections cannot adequately serve existing residents during ordinary daily conditions, how can they be expected to accommodate a major evacuation during a wind-driven wildfire or earthquake?

The 2025 Sunswept Fire demonstrated the vulnerability of our community. Residents experienced first-hand the fear and uncertainty of evacuating through constrained hillside roads while emergency responders attempted to gain access. We cannot continue to defer these basic infrastructure deficiencies, while simultaneously approving substantial increases in population and traffic without a comprehensive plan to address them.

Relying on idealized traffic calculations as evidence of adequate emergency evacuation capacity is folly. The appropriate question is not simply whether the law requires a particular study. It is whether the City has sufficient evidence to conclude that the people who will occupy the 814 Riverwalk Apartments - the thousands of residents already living nearby, and the residents who will live in the additional 1600 units planned on this stretch of Ventura Boulevard, can safely reach protected locations during an emergency.

7. Developer Contributions Should Reflect the Community's Most Urgent Needs

Councilmember Raman referenced the developer's financial contributions to community benefits. While appreciated, why are they funding **riverfront enhancements while serious public-safety deficiencies remain?** We ask the City Council to clarify how developer contributions factor into project approvals and whether legally permissible contributions could be directed toward critical public safety improvements, including intersection capacity, emergency access routes, vulnerable roadways, and potential emergency refuge areas. **Community benefits are welcome, but they must not substitute for essential infrastructure improvements that protect existing and future residents.**

8. Community Outreach Must Be More Affective

During the hearing, Councilmember Raman referred to her office's engagement with the community. We acknowledge that outreach occurred, particularly through the Studio City Neighborhood Council.

CD4 field representative, Sidney Liss, was informed of SHNA's infrastructure and public-safety concerns which remain unresolved. His position was vacant for 8 months' during the period of critical public hearings. We look forward to working with Won Jung, the new CD4 field representative, toward meaningful solutions. We also believe our CD4 Councilmember - Nithya Raman and City Council, play an important coordinating role and must bring together Planning, LADOT, LAFD, LAPD, the Emergency Management Department, Developers, and Representation including the SCNC, Studio City Residents Association (SCRA), and Residents. These problems cross departmental boundaries and cannot be resolved through isolated responses from individual agencies.

6. Our Requests to the PLUM Committee, City Planning, and City Council

We respectfully request that the City take the following actions before final approval of the Riverwalk project:

1. Require an independent, comprehensive traffic and evacuation analysis.

Conduct an independent, field-validated assessment of existing traffic conditions, emergency access, and evacuation capacity along the "Ventura Boulevard Corridor". The analysis should include the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood, adjacent Hillside communities, Riverwalk Apartments, Sportsmen's Apartments, Sunswept Place Apartments (Proposed by Developer - Peter Austin not to be confused with the Sunswept Hill Neighborhood), commercial visitors, and cumulative impacts during construction and full occupancy. It should model realistic emergency conditions, (not idealized), including simultaneous evacuation demand, intersection bottlenecks, emergency-vehicle access, and potential roadway obstructions.

2. Evaluate a designated emergency refuge or "Safe Harbor."

Work with LAFD and emergency-management professionals to determine whether a defensible emergency refuge area can be established for residents unable to evacuate safely, including an evaluation of the Harvard-Westlake Sports Center or other appropriate locations.

3. Make formal public findings regarding evacuation and emergency access.

Require written findings from the appropriate City departments, coordinated with LAFD, LAPD, and the Emergency Management Department, addressing evacuation capacity, emergency ingress and egress, and the ability of existing infrastructure to support additional development.

4. Respond formally to the “Jensen Hughes Evacuation Analysis”.

Provide a substantive, written response to the findings submitted with the appeal, including any areas of disagreement, supporting technical evidence, and identification of unresolved safety concerns.

5. Establish a binding, coordinated emergency evacuation plan.

Require an enforceable project-specific emergency plan that integrates with a broader neighborhood and corridor-wide evacuation strategy, including clear responsibilities for implementation, coordination, and periodic review.

6. Prioritize critical evacuation infrastructure and intersection improvements.

Evaluate legally permissible developer contributions and public funding sources for roadway repairs, emergency-access improvements, upgrades to critical intersections serving the project and surrounding hillside communities. This should include the Whitsett/Ventura/Sunswept intersection and other identified evacuation bottlenecks.

7. Correct and clarify the public record regarding the parkway modification.

Ensure that the final hearing record accurately reflects the inclusion of planted parkways and acknowledges the appellant whose request brought this improvement forward.

8. Expand community consultation.

Engage the Studio City Residents Association, SHNA, and other affected community organizations—not solely the Studio City Neighborhood Council—before final approval.

9. Publish all final amendments in clear, accessible language.

Provide the public with the complete amendments, a plain-language explanation of what changed, and sufficient time for meaningful review before the project advances to the full City Council.

Conclusion: Responsible Development Must Include Responsible Safety Planning

The Riverwalk project has the potential to become a model for thoughtful redevelopment, bringing much-needed housing, neighborhood services, open space, and improved access to the Los Angeles River. We recognize these benefits and want the project to succeed. **But success must be measured not only by what we build, but by whether we protect the people who live there and in the surrounding communities.**

As Southern California once again faces dangerous wildfires and evacuations, we are reminded of the devastating Eaton, Palisades, and Sunswept fires of 2025. These events underscore an urgent reality: **Evacuation planning and infrastructure improvements cannot wait until the next tragedy.**

SHNA supports responsible development. We simply insist that **public safety be an essential part of that responsibility—not an afterthought.** Both existing residents and Riverwalk's future residents deserve that commitment.

We look forward to working collectively to achieve this goal and **know that our City leadership will ensure that public safety remains a priority at every stage of development.**

Respectfully,

Steve Wolf

On behalf of Sunswept Hill Neighborhood Association

3761 Sunswept Drive Studio City, CA 91604 m (248) 561-4771 email: stevewolfdds@gmail.com Administrator SHNA