

Hillside Federation Newsletter February, 2012



www.hillsidefederation.org

Giant Towers Proposed on Prominent Peaks

Wendy-Sue Rosen and Tom Freeman



Similar tower

The City of Los Angeles recently applied for and has now been awarded a federal Recovery Act grant of approximately \$7 million for “upgrades” to five existing telecommunications sites. The grant is designed to facilitate communications among City and County emergency responders. The City has retained environmental consulting firm UltraSystems to assist with the environmental review process for this project. On January 17, 2012, UltraSystems, joined by representatives of the Los Angeles Fire

Agenda

February 1, 2012

7:00 pm

I. Call to Order

Guest Speaker: Dennis Zine - “Clean Hands”

Telecommunication Tower on San Vicente
Peak - Ole Barré, Ultra Systems

II. Approval of Jan. 4, 2012 minutes

III. Officers’ Reports

A. President’s Report

B. Treasurer’s Report

2012 Dues renewal

IV. New Business

A. Removal of tree canopy - Gillian Caloff

B. Open Space for Laurel Canyon/
Mulholland - Paul Edelman, David Giron

C. 9115 Wonderland Ave. - Carol Sidlow

V. Old Business

A. Sign Ordinance

VI. Adjournment

Pinz Bowling Center, next to Jerry’s Deli

12655 Ventura Blvd., Studio City 91604

101 between Coldwater Canyon exit
and Laurel Canyon exit

The mission of the Hillside Federation shall be: To protect the property and the quality of life of the residents of the Santa Monica Mountains and other hillside areas of Los Angeles and its environs, and to encourage and promote those policies and programs which will best preserve the natural topography and wildlife of the mountains and hillsides for the benefit of all the people of Los Angeles.

Department, LAPD, the Bureau of Engineering, and the Mayor’s Office, made a presentation to representatives of public trails advocacy groups and homeowner associations from the Mandeville Canyon, Brentwood Hills, and Bel Air Skycrest areas.

UltraSystems explained that, although it has described this project as an “upgrade” to the existing communications system, the plans call for the construction of two new, 180-foot high communications towers that will be placed atop prominent mountain peaks—San Vicente Peak and Verdugo Peak—within the Santa Monica and Verdugo Mountains. These towers will be orange and white, with a 700-watt red light atop each tower flashing at the rate of 40 times per minute.

The communications tower on San Vicente Peak will be located on City property at the former Nike Missile Tracking Station, above Mandeville Canyon and Encino Hills, at the crossroads and within view of the popular Westridge, Canyonback and Sullivan Canyon public trails, and atop a prominent ridge within the “inner corridor” of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway. These public trails are contiguous with the 20,000 acre urban wilderness park known as the “Big Wild.” The adverse aesthetic impacts of a 180-foot tower atop one of the highest mountain peaks in the area, commanding 360-degree views of these protected public trails and the residential areas within the natural scenic environment are obvious. Vicente Peak is also the location of the San Vicente Mountain Park where the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy has transformed the Nike Missile Tracking Station into an

interpretive center focusing on the history of the Cold War.

San Vicente Peak, which rises approximately 2,000 feet above sea level, is identified as both a “Prominent Ridge” and a “Major Vista Point” under the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan. UltraSystems confirmed at the meeting that, in compliance with the Specific Plan, this project will be presented to the Mulholland Design Review Board and the City Planning Commission because it will both impact a Prominent Ridge and violate the Specific Plan’s height restrictions.

Community members raised many questions and concerns during and after the January 17th meeting, including the following:

- (1) Have any studies been conducted to determine the impact of the tower on the public trails within the viewshed?
- (2) Have any studies been conducted to determine the number of homes from which the tower and its flashing beacon will be visible?
- (3) How will the structure impact sightlines from public trails within the Santa Monica Mountains?
- (4) What is the position of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy on the proposed tower and its impacts?
- (5) How many microwave dishes will be installed on the tower?
- (6) How many microwave dishes can (in terms of capacity) be installed on the tower?
- (7) Is there anything that would prevent the City from leasing space on the tower to private interests for the installation of microwave dishes, additional antennas or other types of communications equipment?
- (8) Will more communications towers be installed in the future, creating the type of

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PRESIDENT Marian Dodge CHAIRMAN Charley Mims VICE PRESIDENTS Mark Stratton Wendy-Sue Rosen SECRETARY Donna Messinger TREASURER Don Andres			

“antenna park” found in other areas? (9) What prevents the City from later using this area as an antenna park given the potential profits from doing so? (10) What risks are created by the use of the microwave dishes at San Vicente Mountain Park? (11) Will public access to this public parkland be restricted in any way upon installation of microwave dishes on the tower? — or after a certain number of microwave dishes are installed? (12) What risks are created by the use of the microwave dishes in such close proximity to residential areas? (13) Has there been any investigation of the risk that would be created by the 180-foot tower in such close proximity to the reservoir used by aircraft to fight fires in the area and within the flight path of fire-fighting planes, including Super Scooper aircraft? (14) What impact will the microwave dishes or antennas have on migratory birds?

UltraSystems said that it would eventually answer all of the questions raised at the meeting and afterwards. But the so-called “visual impact study” that was presented during the meeting raises concerns about *how* those questions will be answered. UltraSystems presented a series of photographs purporting to depict what the 180-foot tower would look like from certain select locations. Members of the audience with knowledge of the surrounding public trails and residential areas expressed concern that the “Photoshopped” depiction of the tower did not accurately reflect its likely prominence. Many members of the audience expressed the concern that only “story poles” or other constructions could accurately gauge the tower’s impact on views. The photos were also criticized based on the very narrow selection of areas depicted compared to the many areas that will actually be impacted. The many scenic public trails with views of San Vicente Peak were not represented in the selective photo array. Other photographs appeared to have been selected to include telephone poles and other obstructions to the natural viewshed that created the misleading impression that the existing views of the Peak from the trails are not aesthetically pleasing.

When asked whether there were alternatives to such an intrusively high tower, it became clear that there are alternatives, but they have not been studied or seriously considered. Trail users expressed concern that, if this 180-foot tower is installed, it will forever change the way they use

the trails. Several audience members stated that, given the serious impacts of installing a 180-foot communications tower in the midst of the Santa Monica Mountains and the Big Wild, the potential environmental impacts of the proposed tower and alternatives to the tower must be analyzed in an environmental impact report.

UltraSystems will make a presentation to the Hillside Federation at its February 1, 2012 meeting.

**Mulholland Scenic Parkway Design
Review Board**
Meets 1st & 3rd Thursday of the month,
6:30 pm
Marvin Braude Constituents Service Center
6262 Van Nuys Blvd. Van Nuys, CA
1st floor conference room

Web Site
The Hillside Federation has a new web site, www.hillsidefederation.org. One of the things we want to do is have live links to the web sites of all our member organizations. Please send us the link to your association's web site. In return, we ask that you post a link to the Hillside Federation web site on your web site.

A Tales of Two Cities Sign Ordinance and Hollywood Community Plan

Marian Dodge



Donald Seligman

If the LA Zoo gets a Sign District, it could look like this.

“It was the best of times; it was the worst of times.” So begins Dickens’ classic novel, *A Tale of Two Cities*. The description would apply equally well to recent hearings at City Hall.

The Sign Ordinance was heard again by the Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) committee on Dec. 5. The original intent of the Sign Ordinance is to provide a net reduction in signage. Under the latest version of the ordinance, sign companies can install two sq. ft. of new billboard for every one sq. ft. of existing billboard they remove as long as the developer provides a community benefit such as planting a tree or widening a sidewalk—amenities that are usually required of new projects anyway. Your average second grader can probably tell you that $+2 - 1 = +1$.

Companies with billboards in violation of their permit could apply for an “adjustment” to make their billboard 20% larger than allowed, giving a nice reward to scofflaws.

Comprehensive Sign Programs designed for areas such as a mall or campus were initially supposed to be only for on-site signs. Now they can have as much off-site signage as they want as long as it is not visible from the public right-of-way. Besides leading to a proliferation of advertising, it could encourage strange

architectural elements to keep the ads from being seen from the street.

Los Angeles currently has two Sign Districts: Hollywood and Downtown. The latest version of the ordinance includes 17 grandfathered in Sign Districts! These basically have no restrictions as they fall under the old rules rather than the new Sign Ordinance.

The LA Zoo has requested permission for a Sign District! The surprise move occurred Friday afternoon before the Monday Special Meeting. (A Special Meeting is a standard tactic used to slip in controversial items because a special meeting requires only 24-hour notice of the agenda rather than the normal 72.) The public was shocked. The move is an effort to generate revenue for the zoo so that it will not be privatized. According to PLUM Chair Reyes, the Mayor exempted the LA Zoo from the Sign Ordinance in his 2010 budget.

The section of the ordinance that was to have prohibited signs in city parks as stated at the previous hearing now includes an *unless*—unless it is in a Sign District (p. 20). That’s a huge *unless* that leaves our city parks including Griffith Park open to signage.

At the hearing everyone who spoke on behalf of a neighborhood council or a community group representing every district in the City, including Hillside Federation President Marian Dodge, was vehemently opposed to a Sign District for the zoo and to commercial signage in city parks. However, the public’s comments were ignored.

Councilmember LaBonge urged caution when putting signs in city parks, but he said the Little League needs banners to recognize donors. We have to find a balance. Rec & Parks General Manager Jon Kirk Mukri said that if McDonald’s offered to sponsor signs promoting a healthier diet, they wanted to be able to accept it. The City Attorney advised caution; there is a fine line where a sign thanking a donor crosses over into advertising. Sections should not be removed from the ordinance unless you have well thought-out replacement language.

After much discussion the PLUM committee agreed to approve the ordinance and send it to the City Attorney, approved the Zoo request for a Sign District, and the Arts, Parks Committee will work out some language for signage in parks. In the meantime if anyone wants a sign in a city park, it will come to City Council for approval. The public got a few crumbs. The sign companies

got what they wanted and are still asking for more. "It was the worst of times."

Three days later the City Planning Commission heard the Hollywood Community Plan. The plan has been in process for eight years. City Planners have held numerous meetings throughout the area and had presentations to local neighborhood councils. Although densification (higher buildings, more people, more traffic) has been increased along the transit corridors such as Hollywood Blvd., Sunset Blvd., and Santa Monica Blvd., several neighborhoods requested and were granted permission to retain their current density levels.

The Hillside Federation requested that the recently adopted Baseline Hillside Ordinance and Slope Density Ordinance as well as the upcoming Ridgeline Protection Ordinance and Retaining Wall Ordinance be included in the Plan. All four ordinances assure sensitive development in the hillside areas to protect as much of the natural terrain and open space as possible. All four ordinances were included in the plan. Two items that would only have benefited single developers were deleted at our request. The Federation got everything it asked for. City Planning even thanked the Hillside Federation for their assistance with the Slope Density Ordinance. "It was the best of times."

So how does one account for the disparity in the way these two city policies were treated? About ten years ago respected City Councilmember Mike Feuer decided to run for City Attorney. The *LA Weekly* rated him the highest qualified candidate for that seat in the City.

[\(Click here: Endorsements - Page 2 - News - Los Angeles - LA Weekly\)](#)

Feuer's only opposition was a political unknown named Rocky Delgadillo. However Feuer had angered the sign companies by supporting LA's ban on billboards.

<http://articles.latimes.com/2001/mar/14/local/me-37435>

Soon large billboards shouting "Rocky" in large letters that closely resembled the "Rocky" movie posters sprang up all over the city, courtesy of the sign companies. Feuer narrowly lost the election. The sign companies don't even have to buy influence any more; all they have to do is have their attorneys and lobbyists stand in the back of the room where they are very visible to Council.

The message is clear: give us what we want or we'll see that you are not elected or reelected.

What can you do?

For up-to-date information on the Sign Ordinance go to www.banbillboardblight.org. For more information on the Hollywood Community Plan go to <http://cityplanning.lacity.org/> and look under What's New! Write to *all* councilmembers and tell them your opinion.

Welcome New Member
Organization!

Sunset Hills HOA

Save these dates for Hillside Federation meetings

March 7

April 4

May 2

June 6

July 11

August - NO meeting

September 5

October 3

November 7

December 5

Hillside Federation
January 4, 2012
Draft minutes

I. Call to Order

President Marian Dodge called the meeting to order at 7:20. Members introduced themselves.

Guest Speaker: Don Loze - Ridgeline Ordinance

Don Loze from Benedict Canyon has been working with the Planning Department on a Ridgeline Protection Ordinance to preserve the Santa Monica Mountains, one of the city's most important assets. It was to have been included in the Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO) but was pulled out for fear it would keep the BHO from being passed. Erick Lopez, who did the BHO, will be working on it. The problem now is funding to complete the ordinance. The estimate for completion, including topography analysis, is approximately \$940,000 and one year. The County and Mt. Washington already have models that could be the basis for a city ordinance. Koretz' motion CF# 11-1441 went to the CLA and CAO; it is supposed to come back to PLUM. Ridge lines are a dangerous place to build because of landslides. Changing the ridge line changes the ecosystem and the viewscape. The Mulholland Design Review Board will be involved.

MOTION: Wendy-Sue Rosen moved that the Federation support the city moving forward to draft a Ridgeline Protection Ordinance. The motion passed.

II. Approval of Nov. 2, 2011 minutes

The minutes were approved as corrected with the addition of the guests present.

III. Officers' Reports

A. President's Report

The Holiday Party was very successful. Twenty-two organizations attended, twelve officials, for a total of 68 guests. Marian thanked Mel Remba for being our host, Don Andres for the name tags, place cards, and guest lists, Wendy-Sue Rosen for the photographs, and Charley Mims and Don Andres for providing the wine. New Chair Emeritus Alan Kishbaugh sent a lovely thank you note.

In May the Hillside Federation will turn 60 years old. We need an ad hoc committee to plan a party. Donna Messinger, Don Andres, Nickie

Miner, and Tony Tucci volunteered to serve on the planning committee.

We need good photos of the hills for our Facebook page and other photos of your neighborhood.

The Federation had 55 members in 1995. We want to work on increasing membership. Marian asked for recommendations for other groups and contacts for them.

B. Treasurer's Report

This year the federation was able to increase the amount in the checking account because of new memberships and economizing by reducing mailings.

The 2012 dues renewal will be sent by e-mail to reduce copying and postage costs. We need to make sure we have the correct e-mail contact information for each organization. The \$150 dues are due March 1.

IV. New Business

A. Brush Clearance Ordinance

Councilmember Paul Koretz submitted motion CF# 09-1977 S1 regarding fire safety during brush clearance. The motion only addresses precautions to be taken during brush clearance. It should include all construction activities. It was decided to meet with Koretz' staff to explain that his motion should be amended to include all construction activities.

V. Old Business

A. Hollywood Community Plan update - Marian Dodge

The Federation requested that the Planning Department include the Baseline Hillside Ordinance, Slope Density Ordinance and upcoming Ridgeline Protection Ordinance and Retaining Wall Ordinance. We also asked that they remove the extension of Granito Dr. and the weakening of the slope density requested by a developer in the Sunset/Doheny area. The Federation got everything that it requested included in the plan which will serve as a template for other community plans.

B. Sign Ordinance update - Wendy-Sue Rosen

The consideration of the Sign Ordinance at PLUM on Dec. 5 was a debacle. There was much public testimony against the ordinance because it no longer provides for a net reduction in signs. The public was opposed to the creation of a Sign District in the LA Zoo. However PLUM approved the proposed ordinance and "grandfathering in" a Sign District for the zoo. Cross-promotional

advertising will now be allowed in Comprehensive Sign Programs thus allowing off-site signage where it used to be only on-site signs. Lobbyists want to do away with the take-down requirement entirely. The Federation needs to get more councilmembers to oppose the ordinance. We need to get our organizations and individuals to send letters to the council.

C. Stanley Hills Dr. appeal - Tony Tucci

A developer is planning to build three homes on Stanley Hills Dr. One of the conditions was that he provide a wildlife corridor. A year and a half later he went to the Chief Zoning Administrator who dismissed that condition. The residents appealed the decision and hired an attorney. At the second hearing before the Central Planning Commission the Chief Zoning Administrator reversed part of her decision and required the developer to change the design of one of the homes to allow for the wildlife corridor. The residents, who had the support of the Federation and the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, were victorious.

D. Franklin Canyon update

The developer of 9650 Royalton is requesting a lot line adjustment. Wendy Rosen reported that neighbors in Benedict Canyon discovered that if you are disturbing more than 60,000 cubic yards of dirt, you need to make a report and get a Mitigated Negative Declaration. Save Franklin Canyon should ask their council office to declare a substandard property lien.

E. Clean Hands Ordinance update - Wendy-Sue Rosen

Councilmember Zine's proposed ordinance is going to Council on Jan. 10. It is to mirror LA County's ordinance; however the county has no by-right projects. The ordinance must apply to both discretionary and by-right projects or it will be meaningless since most projects are by right.

F. Announcements:

There will be a meeting Jan. 17 at the West LA City Hall regarding a 200-foot communications tower on San Vicente Peak above Mandeville Canyon.

Marian read an article from Curbed LA about the proposed demolition of a Bart Prince-designed home in Malibu which fits gracefully into the hill. It is to be replaced by a 28-foot high Tuscan McMansion. The Malibu Planning Commission has exempted the project from CEQA.

Marian requested that members let her know of issues in their neighborhoods ASAP and also share success stories.

VI. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 9:02 pm.

Donna Messinger, Recording Secretary

Members Present:

Bel Air Skycrest	Barbara Dohrmann
Benedict Canyon	Nickie Miner
Brentwood Res. Coal.	Don Keller
Canyon Back Alliance	Wendy-Sue Rosen
Franklin Av/Hlwd Bl.	Don Andres
	Yvonne Hessler
Franklin Hills Res.	Charley Mims
Hollywood Heights	Donna Messinger
Kagel Canyon	Kit Paull
Laurel Canyon	Tony Tucci
Lookout Mountain	Steve Poster
Los Feliz Impvmt.	Marian Dodge
Nichols Canyon	Madeline O'Donnell
Sherman Oaks	Niles Chapman
Studio City	Claudia Freedle

Guests Present:

Benedict Canyon Don Loze

Motions:

If you are planning on making a motion at the meeting, please prepare your motion ahead of time and bring enough copies for all member associations. This will make it easier for the directors to consider the merits of the motion and easier for the secretary to record it.