



West Hills Neighborhood Council

*"It's our neighborhood.
Let's build a community."*

February 12, 2021

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Via U.S. Mail & Email

Councilmember John Lee

Los Angeles City Council

200 N. Spring Street, Room 405

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: LAUSD's Proposed Employees' Affordable Housing at the Highlander Rd. Site

Dear Councilmember Lee:

One of the mandates of the Board of Directors of the West Hills Neighborhood Council (WHNC) is to safeguard the safety and interests of its stakeholders.

A large majority of stakeholders who reside near and around the 7.3-acre site of the former Highlander Rd. Elementary School, 23834 Highlander Rd., West Hills, CA 91307, are and continue to be opposed to the LAUSD plan to select developers to build rental housing for its teachers and employees and "for other members of the community", pursuant to AB 3308, on the Highlander site space that was originally designed and used for an elementary school.

As they did in 2017 when LAUSD proposed the building of a large visual and performing arts high school at the Highlander site, the Highlander stakeholders have once again come to the WHNC, seeking support in opposing the building of any such housing on very basic but extremely strong grounds of safety, traffic, noise and pollution, protection of quality of life issues of present residents, and feasibility issues that would endanger lives. The danger and damage to stakeholders in this area will be severe should this proposal be approved. The reasons are many, but we present you only a few:

Traffic and Safety

1. The **sole** public street access to the site is Highlander Rd., a totally single-family residential, east/west collector street which already accommodates at least 1,500 cars daily. Adding traffic from a 7.3 acre housing project will greatly increase the existing traffic dilemma.



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2. No less than **eight** totally residential north/south streets feed into Highlander. That **sole** public street accesses two **very** busy and accident-prone north/south major highways, which are Platt Avenue and Valley Circle Blvd. Traffic statistics show that each of those major highways carry upwards of approximately 20,000 cars **per day**. There are traffic control signals at both the east and west termini of Highlander Rd. The traffic control signal at Highlander and Valley Circle was installed approximately two years ago. A copy of the LADOT traffic study from 2015 to support the 2018 installation of the traffic control signal at Highlander and Valley Circle, proving the already existing major dangerous traffic flow, is attached as Exhibit A.
3. The Streets and Transportation Committee of the WHNC has identified this area as a troubled traffic area with speeding drivers who completely ignore stop signs, including teenagers traveling that route as a shortcut to high schools in the area. Just the ingress and egress for a 7.3 acre housing project would add many more vehicles to a street already plagued by speeding drivers. In fact, in September, 2015, a pedestrian was **struck and killed** by a speeding vehicle travelling eastbound on Highlander, directly in front of the school site.
4. Occupants of a 7.3 acre housing site (approximately 150 or more “households”) could add at least 300 to 400 more cars to Highlander’s already very busy traffic flow. Further, parking for that number of cars may not be accommodated on the 7.3 acre site, leaving only two-lane Highlander (and various side streets) to absorb the overflow. The congestion would result in gridlock, and emergency vehicles would be impacted. Mail delivery and trash pick-up on Highlander would be impacted, and it would be difficult for fire trucks and ambulances to accommodate any emergency should one occur. The additional noise and pollution from the increased traffic would detrimentally affect the neighborhood.
5. Additionally, the influx of many more residents would also detrimentally affect the protection of and life issues of the present residents of the neighborhood.
6. In 2019, WHNC’s Cultural, Community and Senior Center (CCS) Committee held numerous meetings with LAUSD’s Board member Scott Schmerelson to discuss the possibility of locating a CCS center at the Highlander site. Those communications also included CD 12 Councilmember John Lee.

Those meetings are still ongoing. However, the housing plan totally omits any reference of such a CCS center. The WHNC and CD 12 do not understand why Highlander is included in the housing list when it was already being considered for another, very important use.

7. Further, the Highlander community has always expressed that the community needs an elementary school or a pre-school or a middle school and is fully in favor of WHNC’s CCS

center plans. The Highlander property is large enough to support both a school and a cultural, community and senior center.

8. LAUSD is also ignoring the fact of the anticipated growth of Warner Center in the neighboring community of Woodland Hills, projected at over 19,000 units. That growth will result in 4,000 to 5,000 new students. The Highlander site is one of only three vacant school sites in the West Valley which can accommodate the new schools which will be necessary to accommodate those new students.
9. The LAUSD proposal also allows for a “developer exchange”. LAUSD’s Chief Facilities Executive, Mark Hovatter, said fears of homeless housing were unfounded, but once properties are exchanged to a developer, it’s out of LAUSD’s control as to what happens with them. LAUSD’s plan for housing on vacant school sites may be predicated upon such exchanges.
10. Last but not least, the presentation of LAUSD’s plan at this point in time, when a pandemic is raging, and many stakeholders have experienced loss of family, jobs, even the ability of sending their children to school, and the “end” is still not in sight, is extremely insensitive to the stakeholders during this period of trouble and sorrow.

Conclusion

LAUSD’s plan to use Highlander for housing is in total disregard for traffic and safety, noise and pollution, protection and quality of life, the Highlander community and the WHNC’s input. Furthermore, the plan is in total opposition with the community’s wishes for a CCS center and/or an elementary or pre-school or middle school on that site. The Board of the WHNC strongly urges LAUSD to reconsider its plans to build housing at the Highlander site.

The Board of the WHNC and the West Hills stakeholders will continue to work to protect the safety and interests of our stakeholders and the needs of future students for an elementary or a pre-school at the Highlander site, and the needs of the community for a Cultural, Community & Senior Center. We urge the LAUSD to abandon the Highlander site for a proposed housing development entirely. We are in this together and the solution can be solved by us working together.

WHNC and the stakeholders suggest and request LAUSD to delay any action concerning the Highlander site until at least mid-2021 to allow community engagement with Councilmember John Lee, Board member Scott Schmerelson, and Superintendent Austin Beautner at a special WHNC Zoning and Planning meeting, hopefully in February, 2021, to begin to address stakeholders' concerns on the many issues expressed in this letter.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Brin

Daniel J. Brin, President/Co-Chair
West Hills Neighborhood Council

Charlene Rothstein

Charlene Rothstein, Co-Chair/Vice- President
West Hills Neighborhood Council

Office of the City Clerk

Administrative Services

Division

Neighborhood Council (NC) Funding Program

Board Action Certification (BAC) Form



NC Name: West Hills

Meeting Date: 02/04/2021

Budget Fiscal Year: 2020-2021

Agenda Item No: 21-0008

Board Motion and/or Public Benefit Statement (CIP and NPG):

Discussion and possible action regarding the LAUSD proposal for the Highlander Road school site and a letter approved by Zoning and Planning on January 25, 2021

Method of Payment: (Select One)

Check

Credit Card

Board Member Reimbursement

Vote Count

Recused Board Members must leave the room prior to any discussion and may not return to the room until after the vote is complete.

Board Member's First and Last Name	Board Position	Yes	No	Abstain	Absent	Ineligible	Recused
Abkarians, Aida	Board Member	X					
Barta, Faye	Board Member	X					
Begun, Brian	Board Member		X				
Bell, Sandi	Board Member	X					
Booth, Thomas	Board Member		X				
Brin, Dan	President	X					
Brostoff, Bob	Board Member				X		
Butler, Esperanza	Board Member				X		
El-Atrache, Tariq	Board Member	X					
Greenwood, Carolyn	Treasurer	X					
Javdani, Marie	Board Member		X				
Klea, Bonnie	Board Member	X					
Mogri, Saif	Controller	X					
Naturman, Olivia	Board Member		X				
Ostreicher, Daniel	Board Member		X				
Randall, Steve	Board Member	X					
Rose, Bill	Board Member	X					
Rothstein, Charlene	Vice-President	X					
Scearce, Tony	Board Member		X				
Schreibman, Myrl	Board Member	X					
Trent, Joan	Board Member	X					
Uzameck, Alec	Board Member				X		
Vanderhoof, Brad	Secretary			X			
Yvanek-Garb, Joanne	Board Member	X					
Board Quorum: 13	Total:	14	6	1	3	0	0

We, the authorized signers of the above named Neighborhood Council, declare that the information presented on this form is accurate and complete, and that a public meeting was held in accordance with all laws, policies, and procedures. The above was approved by the Neighborhood Council Board, at a Brown Act compliant public meeting where a quorum of the Board was present.

Authorized Signature

Authorized Signature

Print/Type Name: Carolyn Greenwood

Print/Type Name: Dan Brin

Date: February 4, 2021

Date: February 4, 2021

**CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION**

May 1, 2015

TRAFFIC
CONTROL
REPORT

12- West Valley- #39319
Highlander Rd & Valley Circle Bl

Traffic Signal

DETERMINATIONS:

1. That a new traffic signal, along with appropriate signs, red curb, and pavement markings, be authorized for installation at the intersection of Highlander Road and Valley Circle Boulevard. (LAMC 80.08, 80.08.2, 80.37 and 80.55)
2. That the authority for the existing stop sign control for eastbound and westbound Highlander Road be rescinded at the time the traffic signal becomes operational (LAMC 80.07.1);
3. That the traffic signal installation recommended by the Department of Transportation be added to a list of non-funded, but approved projects, since no funding can be identified at this time to pay for this project.

DISCUSSION:

The Department of Transportation has received several requests from Mr. Wayne Sippel, on behalf of himself and his neighbors who live in the neighborhoods off of Highlander Road, near Valley Circle Boulevard. This intersection used to be controlled by an all-way stop control, but a few years ago it was changed to just partial stop sign control for Highlander Road. He feels that cars are traveling faster than before, making it difficult to exit from Highlander Road onto Valley Circle Boulevard, or to walk across the street, and that the two-way left-turn lanes on Valley Circle are confusing. He would like to have a traffic signal here.

In response to his letter to the General Manager of the Department of Transportation, an on-site field meeting was held in November 2014 with DOT staff, Mr. Sippel, and about 50 of his neighbors. During the meeting, case after case was made for the need for a traffic signal at this intersection, based on pedestrian safety, restricted driver visibility with oncoming traffic on Valley Circle Boulevard, recent crashes at this intersection, and to provide traffic relief from the proposed school coming to the neighborhood. Although the DOT had studied this intersection for a traffic signal in the past, a new signal study was promised due to the significant concerns raised by the community at this meeting.

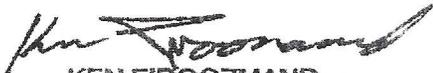
Valley Circle Boulevard is designated as a "Major Highway" in the Community Plan of the City's General Plan, and carries almost 20,000 vehicles per day. Highlander Road is designated as a "Local Street" west of Valley Circle Boulevard, and as a "Collector Street" east of Valley Circle Boulevard, and carries almost 1,500 vehicles per day. There are residential neighborhoods off of both sides of Valley Circle Boulevard, with Highlander Road as the main roadway in and out of the communities. The posted speed limit on Valley Circle Boulevard is 45 miles per hour.

The traffic signal study included a review of the Police Department's records of reported traffic collisions from July 31, 2010 to July 31, 2013, a manual traffic count, an automatic 24-hour count, a review of the striping plan, and field investigations of the existing traffic control devices, traffic flow,

and visibility conditions at this intersection. The manual count showed hourly volumes for four different hours on Highlander Road of over 60 vehicles per hour, combined with volumes on Valley Boulevard of at least 1,323 vehicles per hour for the same hours. Also, the peak hour volume on Highlander Road is 77 vehicles per hour, with 1,750 vehicles per hour on Valley Circle Boulevard during the same hour (5 PM to 6 PM). As a result, the MUTCD "Four Hour Vehicular Volume" and "Peak Hour" criteria for traffic signal control are both met.

The installation of the traffic signal, as described in the Determination, will provide for the orderly movement of all roadway users at this location and is therefore recommended.

Recommended by:



KEN FIROOZMAND
Transportation Engineer
West Valley District

Approved by:



BRIAN R. GALLAGHER
Senior Transportation Engineer
Valley District Operations Division

BRG:brg
TCR signal HighlanderValleyCircle15

C: Councilmember Mitchell Englander, 12th District, Attn: Brian Oh
Mr. Wayne Sippel, email: sipstoy@mac.com /
LADOT Pedestrian Program, Attn: Pauline Chan
LADOT District Research & Support, Attn: Nader Asmar
LADOT Signal Design
LADOT Signal Timing