

# **BRENTWOOD RESIDENTS COALITION**

May 4, 2010

Los Angeles City Planning Commission  
c/o James Williams, Executive Assistant  
200 North Spring Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012-3242  
Sent Via E-mail  
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**Re: City Planning Case No. CPC-2010-0581-CA  
Brentwood Residents Coalition Support for Baseline Hillside Ordinance**

Dear City Planning Commissioners:

The Brentwood Residents Coalition (BRC) is a grass roots, non-profit advocacy group whose purposes are to preserve and enhance the environment and quality of life in Brentwood, to protect the integrity of residential neighborhoods, to assist with planning, to uphold zoning and municipal codes, to encourage traffic safety, and to educate the public on issues that affect quality of life and the environment. The BRC strongly supports the proposed Baseline Hillside Ordinance (BHO).

The BHO was crafted in response to concerns raised by residents of hillside areas and members of the public who enjoy the natural beauty and recreational opportunities within the hillside areas. For years now, the hillsides have been targeted by speculative developers and others seeking to gain large profits by over-developing hillside lots, to maximize their own short-term profits at the expense of those with long-term interests in maintaining the hillside environment, including hillside residents and those enjoying public trails and scenic overviews.

This out-of-scale development not only destroys the natural beauty of the hillsides, it creates hillside instability, which has taken lives and property, and caused other safety risks, including water pollution when over-development of hillside properties leaves insufficient space for septic systems and causes erosion problems that lead to construction materials and other debris being carried in flood waters during storms – leading to groundwater and storm-drain pollution that empties into the ocean.

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For too long the City has lacked an effective mechanism for controlling these problems because destruction of the hillsides often proceeds “by right,” despite the devastating impact on the environment. While other cities have taken action by passing protective measures, and some areas within the City have done so as well, the City as a whole has, until now, done too little to protect hillside areas.

The Baseline Hillside Ordinance is a modest first step in bringing reasonable control to the wholesale destruction of our hillsides. The BHO does not preclude development. It merely provides that if the specified threshold limitations are exceeded, a public process is triggered to evaluate the impact on the community and the environment. This process is absolutely necessary if the hillside-development policies that are already enshrined in Community Plans throughout the City are to have any real impact.

The Brentwood-Pacific Palisades Community Plan, like other Community Plans that include hillside areas, state the objectives of (1) limiting the intensity and density of development in hillside areas to accommodate the natural topography and infrastructure; (2) preserving, enhancing and restoring the natural scenic value of the land by, among other things, subordinating structures to natural features and terrain and minimizing intrusions into scenic open spaces and natural features; and (3) preserving existing views. *Objective Nos. 1-3, 1-6 and 1-6.6.* The BHO makes possible the reasonable application of these Community Plan objectives during the public review process that will be triggered by non-compliance with the BHO’s baseline limitations.

The BHO’s procedural safeguards are critical to protection of the environment and quality of life within hillside areas. After years of development that is out of character and scale, the hillside areas are defaced with (1) scarred terrain from excavations from unfinished development projects; (2) unsightly retaining walls that evade existing ordinances by physical connection to residential structures, thereby intruding on the natural landscape and scenic views on a by-right basis; and (3) McMansions that do not respect the character and natural topography of the hillsides. Some of these over-sized structures sit empty for years – all to the detriment of those already residing in the hillside communities.

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The Brentwood Residents Coalition strongly supports the Baseline Hillside Ordinance because it will provide a much needed layer of protection by applying balanced baseline limitations in hillside areas, which are subject to reasonable accommodations if the developer can demonstrate, during public proceedings, that the baseline limits can be exceeded without harming the environment or surrounding community. We urge you to approve the Baseline Hillside Ordinance.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'W.S. Rosen', written in a cursive style.

*Wendy-Sue Rosen, President  
Brentwood Residents Coalition*