



Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

Post Office Box 353, Agoura Hills, California 91301

August, 2007, MEETING (www.lvhf.org)

There will not be a meeting at Diamond X ranch this month because the last Calabasas General Plan Advisory Committee Public Workshop will be held that evening and we encourage all delegates to attend.

Here are the details for that meeting:

General Plan Advisory Committee (GPAC) Public Workshop No. 3

August 16, 2007

6:00 p.m.

**Agoura/Calabasas Community Center
27040 Malibu Hills Road
Calabasas, CA. 91301**

Have a look at the article below to learn more about what the GPAC has been up to.
See you at Diamond X the third Thursday in September.

CALABASAS GPAC MAKES RECOMMENDATIONS ON SEVERAL DRAFT GENERAL PLAN ISSUES

The Calabasas General Plan Advisory Committee (“GPAC”) at its July 25th Meeting discussed and made recommendations to consultants on several important issues in the Draft Calabasas General Plan.

VISION STATEMENT

Language of a proposed Draft General Plan Vision Statement containing 3 themes broken down into 17 goals was discussed by GPAC. These goals will ultimately become the basis for general plan policies, which will in turn become the basis for our new zoning and development codes.

You might say the “General Plan train” is starting to leave the station, and those who would like to influence its direction and destination had better get on board now rather than wait until after its adoption, since the decisions being made now will become the basis for future zoning and development approvals.

Remember — as Westside residents recently discovered — a General Plan is like a Constitution for future growth and development. If the General Plan permits a certain type of land use or intensity of development at a certain location, it will be very difficult to deny that land use or intensity of development when it comes time for a decision on a pending development.

It’s sort of like concrete that’s soft and easily shaped when it’s first poured, but eventually becomes hard as a rock. The best time to shape future land uses in the area around your community is while the General Plan is being formed and considered for adoption; not after it’s taken final shape and been adopted. Into a “hardened” land use “constitution”.

ADDITIONAL RECREATION FIELDS

The next issue GPAC discussed was how and where to recommend development of additional Recreation Fields.

The consultants claimed Calabasas “has a current need of an additional 8 soccer (or other sports) fields” based on standards developed by the National Recreation and Park Association. Possible future playfield sites recommended by the General Plan consultants include,

- 2 to 4 additional fields at LVUSD school sites
- City and State Park land southeast of De Anza Park.
- Hillsides northwest of De Anza Park
- Calabasas Landfill (after its closure in fifteen years)

“CONVENIENCE CENTERS-COUNTRY STORES”

Another issue brought up by staff and consultants was a possible need to provide for “country stores” or convenience stores in outlying areas of the City to cut down on the amount of driving time and traffic congestion along Mulholland and around existing commercial centers.

The consultants recommended looking into providing “Country Stores” at two locations,

- on Mulholland across from Calabasas High School
- modernizing at the existing “strip commercial center” on upper LasVirgenes Road

There was some discussion of the proposed site across from the High School, and staff also brought up the possibility of providing for some sort of convenience store further out on Mulholland in the vicinity of Calabasas Highlands.

“MIXED USE DISTRICTS”

The consultants presented a recommendation for the creation of Mixed Use Districts – “villages of shops, employment centers, and housing that (would) facilitate walking between uses and create a destination for City residents and visitors.”

As the GPAC Staff Report pointed out “Each of the areas under consideration is already designated for and primarily developed with non-residential uses so (that it) could be ‘redeveloped’ with a more mixed use character without disrupting established residential neighborhoods. Another advantage of creating mixed use districts in these areas is that they could (enable) the City to meet its affordable Regional Housing Needs Assessment (RHNA) requirements without facilitating housing developments in hillside areas.”

“In order to facilitate ‘walkability’ and to provide incentives for owners to consider developing their properties with mixed use developments, it is anticipated that some increase in land use intensity will be required... A preliminary analysis ... indicated that a minimum floor to area ratio (FAR) of 0.75 would likely be needed in order to create the financial incentives for landowners to consider redeveloping their properties.” (At present commercial and retail developments in the City are limited to an FAR of between 0.4 and 0.6.)

The three areas recommended for possible redevelopment into Mixed Use Districts in the Draft Calabasas General Plan are,

- “TOWN CENTER” (The Commons, Calabasas Inn) (103 ac)
- “ CRAFTSMAN CORNERS” (68 ac) (not in Calabasas now)
- “ AGOURA ROAD/LAS VIRGENES” (Albertson’s) (149 ac)

0.75 is the minimum FAR being considered for the proposed Town Center and Craftsman Corner Mixed Use Districts, with over 80% of those areas proposed for an FAR of 1.0. “Somewhat lower FARs (0.5 to 0.75) are considered for some portions of the Agoura-Las Virgenes (Mixed Use) District because of the lower existing levels of development intensity in that area.”

At “theoretical buildout” Town Center would have 419 to 639 new residential units and a total of 3.0 to 3.3 million square feet of office and retail (currently this area has no residential; 1.3 million square feet retail/commercial); Craftsman Corner would have 566 to 664 residential units and 1.58 to 1.86 million square feet of office and retail (currently it has no residential; 1.0 million square feet commercial/retail); Agoura/Las Virgenes Mixed Use District would have a potential for 426 to 1,112 residential units and 3.1 million to 3.9 million square feet of office and retail at “theoretical buildout” (currently it has 90 residential units; 1.2 million square feet of commercial/retail).

HILLSIDE MOUNTAINOUS CLUSTERING

The consultants sounded out GPAC about the desirability of clustering in the Hillside Mountainous zone, which allows one house per 40 acres as a matter of right, and one house per ten acres if the development meets the current General Plan Performance Standards. Clustering would make it possible to preserve large parts of these generally hilly parcels as open space instead of scattering “ranchettes” all over the property.

Most land designated “Hillside Mountainous” is along the southern boundary of the City south of Mulwood and Calabasas Park or on Upper Las Virgenes Road. Full buildout of this land would add 37 to 146 new homes.

SPECIAL MOBILE HOME PARK ZONING

Calabasas Village is currently zoned “Multi-Family”. The consultants asked how GPAC would feel about a special “Mobile Home Park” zoning designation for Calabasas Village instead.

SOME AGENDA ITEMS FOR THE THIRD PUBLIC WORKSHOP ON THE GENERAL PLAN

The Agenda includes,

- “Review Community Vision, draft Goals, Land Use scenarios, etc.” (see above)
- “Group and various exercises”
- A brief opportunity for public comment at the end

For those who may be out of town or otherwise unable to attend the Public Workshop, the Agenda indicates the Workshop will be video taped and, presumably, shown on Calabasas TV.

WATER! WATER! BUT NOT A DROP TO DRINK!

In recent issues we've been highlighting the fact that we have just experienced the driest rainy season on record – less than 20% of normal rainfall locally — less than 30% statewide, and less than 40% in the Sierra, where most of our water comes from. (The fact that this drought is statewide probably means making up the deficit by stealing more water from our neighbors to the north is probably not going to be an option.)

As the Las Virgenes Municipal Water District pointed out in the latest issue of its Newsletter, *The Current Flow*, "... we're okay for now, because of stored water from previous years". However, that won't continue to be the case if we have entered a dry cycle and experience a succession of dry years.

Those of us who have lived here for a while have gained some understanding of the limits on the ability of our Mediterranean climate to supply all of our water needs, but there is a constant turnover in our communities, and many of the new arrivals are coming from parts of the country – or the world – where water is abundant and its availability is taken for granted.

That's why member associations need to do their part to make sure all their members – especially new arrivals – understand the importance of water conservation this year.

The latest issue of *The Current Flow* makes several suggestions on how we can help conserve water,

- "Turf is a water guzzler"; consider replacing it with more drought-tolerant plants.
- Try watering less often, with shorter running times.
- Don't run sprinklers during the heat of the day.
- Cover pools and spas when not in use.
- Replace "high flow" with "low flow" fixtures
- Repair leaking faucets and fixtures promptly.

For homeowners and associations with common areas, LVMWD is offering rebates for the installation of a Weather-Based Irrigation Controller (WBIC), which waters landscaping only when it needs water, rather than on an automatically-timed schedule that ignores temperature, cloud cover, rainfall, and other variables that affect the water needs of landscaping. For more information on Weather-Based Irrigation Controllers, call 251-2100 or logon to www.LVMWD.com under "Conservation".

* * * * *

Drought means less water for home, pool, and landscaping use, but it also means an increased risk of brush fires, especially with the heavy growth we have experienced in recent wet years.

The Los Angeles County Fire Department is doing an especially diligent job of fire inspection this year. They are not only concerned with ensuring adequate clearance of weeds and brush, but also with landscape plantings that can ignite in the heat of a fire, such as Italian Cypress, Juniper, and Eucalyptus, especially if they're too close to the house or the chimney.

In addition, residents who planted shrubs and trees more suited to subtropical climates may have had them killed back in February's freeze. Even if these shrubs and trees may appear to have experienced a full recovery, there could still be dead growth underneath the new greenery that could ignite in a brush fire.

If residents or member associations have any questions about brush clearance or the safety of their landscaping, they should contact their local fire station.

NEW LOS ANGELES COUNTY GENERAL PLAN

On July 26 Los Angeles County held a Public Meeting at LVMWD Headquarters to introduce the new Draft County General Plan. A couple of dozen residents attended. Questions revolved mainly around trails.

Those who may feel they are being "general planned" to death can take comfort in the fact that, for our area, the new County General Plan will be largely composed of the policies of the North Area Plan and the pending Santa Monica Mountains LCP, so we don't need to go through a whole new planning process.

However, that makes the passage of a good Santa Monica Mountains LCP all the more important, since there will be no overriding General Plan policies to modify it.

There is one change in the new County General Plan; it proposes to designate all undeveloped land in the Santa Monica Mountains as a County Significant Ecological Area.

In the current County General Plan, there are nine areas in the County portion of the Santa Monicas that are designated SEA's, including Malibu Canyon, Cold Creek, some of the hills east of Cornell Road, and some of the hills along the Freeway west of the Calabasas Grade. (Triangle Ranch is partially in an "SEA".)

The new proposal to create a "Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area" is in part based on the growing realization among scientists that wildlife cannot be protected in small isolated patches of habitat. Modern scientists talk in terms of "connectivity" and "habitat linkages" and the importance of "genetic diversity." (Or as our former Congressman Brad Sherman puts it, "Mountain lions should not have to date their cousins.")

As the County General Plan is finalized and comes up for hearing, the usual "Land Use Preservation" suspects will undoubtedly put out slick, glossy mailers claiming that making all undeveloped land a County SEA will mean people can't swim in their swimming pool, mow their lawn, or plant petunias.

Of course, that's not the case at all. The SEA designation will apply only to new homes in undeveloped, natural areas. Existing homes, driveways, patios, and horse corrals will not be affected.

In addition, the new County General Plan will not apply to the incorporated cities of Agoura Hills and Calabasas.

The present County General Plan includes very general and relatively weak policies that state a county "intent" to "preserve (SEAs) in as viable a natural condition as possible", and that new development must be "designed to be highly compatible with the biotic resources present". New developments in Significant Ecological Areas are reviewed by one of two advisory committees of experts (SEATAC or ERB) to ensure conformity with the above, relatively toothless, County SEA policies.

In the '80's and 90's the County approved some large developments in the Palo Comado SEA (New Millennium, Mont Calabasas), but, in each case land dedications were required that preserved large areas of oak savanna on the property that might otherwise have not been preserved.

Best guess from County planners is that, if the Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area remains part of the new County General Plan, in the future, those who want to subdivide or develop in presently unspoiled areas of this proposed SEA will, in addition to other County permit requirements, be expected to seek the advice of SEATAC or the Environmental Review Board on siting and design.

One could look on this as just one more bureaucratic roadblock to progress, or one could look on it as something akin to CC&Rs — part of the price we pay for living in "God's Country" and a step to ensure that our surroundings continue to reflect the natural beauty we moved here to enjoy.

AN "ACTION ALERT" FROM THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND

This year, the National Park Service has an opportunity to acquire the 207.5-acre Malibu Creek property for Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area. An appropriation of \$3.3 million from the Land and Water Conservation Fund through the FY 2008 Interior Appropriations bill is needed to preserve this land.

Your message is key to securing critical funding in Fiscal Year 2008!

The Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area was established in 1978 to protect land in the mountains northwest of the Los Angeles basin. In creating this park, Congress noted the region's important scenic, recreational, and historic resources, as well as the public health benefits from protecting lands in the Santa Monica Mountains.

Available for acquisition in FY 2008 is the 207.5-acre Malibu Creek property, which is almost completely surrounded by federal and state parkland. Immediately adjacent southeast of the property is Malibu Creek State Park, and federal parklands, including the Peter Strauss Ranch unit, are immediately adjacent to the north, east, west, and southwest. Protection of the property would consolidate public ownership in an area with exceptional scenic and recreational

resources covered by sensitive chaparral forest growth. The landscape provides habitat for mule deer, mountain lions, foxes, coyotes, and valley quail. Significant archeological and geologic resources are present on the tracts including artwork, pictographs, and symbols on rocky features.

Already in a desirable scenic location just south of Mulholland Highway and three miles south of the 101 freeway, the property is being actively marketed as sites for ranch compound units. The current landowner is willing to sell the property to the National Park Service for conservation, but only for a limited time before it is sold for development. Adding it to the Santa Monica Mountains National Recreation Area would prevent further fragmentation and development within the recreation area's boundaries.

Please Act Now!

Congress will soon finalize its priorities for the Land and Water Conservation Fund for FY 2008. Please contact Congressman Waxman, thank him for his support, and encourage his continued efforts to secure \$3.3 million for Santa Monica Mountains NRA through the Land and Water Conservation Fund in FY 2008.

PLEASE CONTACT:

The Honorable Henry Waxman
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Phone: 202 225-3976
Fax: 202 225-4099

(NOTE: There is a significant delay in the delivery of letters to Members of Congress due to security concerns. Instead, we strongly encourage you to fax, call, or electronically contact your Member of Congress in order to ensure prompt receipt. For online contact, please go to the congressional websites listed below and follow instructions for constituent contact.)

Website: www.house.gov/waxman