FORM GEN. 160 (Rev. 11-02)

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTERDEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

Date: December 15, 2023

To: Michael Amster, Field Deputy, Brentwood/Pacific Palisades/West Los Angeles, Council District 11

From: Morton Price, Engineering Geologist II
Geotechnical Engineering Division

Morton Price
Digitally signed by Morton Price
DN: C=US, E=morton.price@lacity.org, O=Geotechnical Engineering Division, OU=Bureau of Engineering, CN=Morton Price
Date: 2023.12.15 12:19:56-08'00'

Subject: Response to Comments Regarding Field Investigation No. 23-222

Transmitted herein are responses to comments pertaining to a Field Investigation (FI) prepared by the Geotechnical Engineering Division (GED) dated November 14, 2023. The comments from Christ Spitz of the Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) were received by the GED on November 17, 2023 via Michael Amster of Council District Office No. 11.

The comments and responses are formatted such that each question (Q) as presented by the PPCC is addressed by GED's Answer (A).

Q1: The report states that the field investigation occurred in August 2023. I and others have been writing to the City to alert officials of residents' concerns since May (immediately after the slide occurred). Why was this report not completed or made available until November?

A1: The GED has been attentive to the slide area since early 2022. This past winter and spring, the GED responded to over one hundred storm related repairs and triage responses across the City in which entire roads had been closed due to storm related damage all with varying degrees of emergency response necessity. Also, in the beginning of September 2023, the GED was tasked with the design and construction of a repair to Temescal Canyon Boulevard including a groundwater collection system. This project impacted many people in the Palisades Area and required GED to re-prioritize the workload.

While it is true that the formal field investigation of the slide was initiated in August, a drone flight was requested to allow for a closeup view of the landslide. The drone flight was conducted on August 30, 2023. Time was necessary to search for records of the road and retaining structure design and construction and to review and evaluate the drone data. Considering that the roadway along Via de Las Olas in the vicinity of the slide did not show any signs of distress, resources were prioritized to meet the demands

of Temescal Canyon and many other emergencies resulting in a delay of this field investigation completion.

Q2: According to the report, the bluffs form an "eroding cliff," with a "history of constant erosion and landslides." What reasonably or realistically can be done to mitigate the erosion and landslides? Are there any specific plans for measures to mitigate the erosion, and if so, when will those measures take place?

A2: With respect to mitigation of the erosion and landslide, GED would like to point out that the slide occurred in a section of oversaturated buttress fill which was placed in about 1994 that was meant to address the erosion and adverse geologic conditions. A potential mitigation measure would be to construct a new buttress fill with adequate drainage control. The City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) has been notified of the landslide and erosion issues. Unfortunately, a solution, funding and timeline of any follow up mitigation is not available at this time.

Q3: The report indicates that the existing bulkhead is undermined, corroded and in an ever-deteriorating condition, with roots that have broken through. Further, the slope beneath the bulkhead is "susceptible to further movement and erosion which will cause the undermining of the bulkhead to continue." What reasonably or realistically can be done to replace or substantially improve the condition of the bulkhead, in order to arrest further undermining? Are there any specific plans for measures to replace or improve the bulkhead, and if so, when will those measures take place?

A3: The bulkhead is in the City right of way and was referred to GED's Hillside Slope Stability Program (HSSSP) for scoring and ranking as a possible capital improvement project. A funding request for a replacement bulkhead was submitted as part of GED's construction budget request for Fiscal Year 24-25.

Q4: The report indicates that the bluff is "dipping out of slope," which is "unfavorable to gross slope stability." What reasonably or realistically can be done to mitigate this condition? Are there any specific plans for measures to mitigate the "dipping out of slope" condition, and if so, when will those measures take place?

A4: The dipping out of slope condition and the unfavorable slope conditions that it creates is a result of the geologic conditions of the bluffs. As discussed in A2, replacing the buttress fill with appropriate drainage control would be a possible solution to mitigate the geologic conditions. Please refer to A2 for possible mitigation measures.

Q5: What impediments, if any, are there to instituting measures to mitigate erosion, the "dipping out of slope" condition, and/or to replace or improve the bulkhead (per Qs 2, 3 and 4 above)? What can be done to overcome any impediments?

A5: Measures to mitigate erosion and/or to replace or improve the bulkhead will require coordination between the various stakeholders, including but not limited to the Bureau of Engineering, Department of Building and Safety, Department of Recreation and Parks, Cal Trans and the Coastal Commission. Specific details of coordination and tasks will vary depending on design and funding information that is still pending (see A2 and A6 below).

Q6: The report indicates that subsurface water moves through the formation and discharges at the slope face as a contact spring. Moreover, there is "constant water seepage" (both from groundwater and irrigation on the mesa). GED recommended that "the landslide be investigated and characterized to determine the appropriate slope and drainage repair." It does not appear that any further subsurface investigation has been conducted to date. Why not? Will such an investigation take place, and if so, when and by whom?

A6: Such an investigation would be undertaken by some combination of City forces and consultants and/or contractors retained by the City and requires funding approval as well as oversight by the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety. The FI is the gateway process to get the other steps moving forward which includes additional investigation and mitigation and is not intended to replace or serve as an official Geotechnical Report.

Q7: In light of expected coming rains from El Nino -- and given what occurred just a few months ago with the widely reported catastrophic Rolling Hills bluff failure, due to subsurface water conditions -- neighbors have justifiable concerns about the potential of a major bluff failure. Has BOE/the City placed a priority on conducting further investigation and developing a plan for repair and bluff stabilization? When can we expect this to occur? If not, why not?

A7: Please refer to A2 and A6, in addition since funding has not yet been identified, a plan for investigation and/or repair of the slope has not been prepared.

Q8: The report indicates that the roadway (Via de las Olas) is in good condition and doesn't show signs of distress. Why, in that case, is caution tape still up along the bluff edge of the roadway (6 months after the slide)? What exactly is the danger? Is the roadway safe to drive on? Why has fencing and signage not been installed on the bluff edge, as it is along other portions of Via de las Olas, to warn drivers and pedestrians of the danger? Will fencing and signage be installed, and if so, when. If not, why not -- and will the caution tape ever be removed?

A8: Caution tape has been placed at the location to keep curious onlookers from getting too close to the slope edge. At this point, there is no plan to place fencing and signage as the caution tape provides ample warning.

Q9: The report indicates that repair of the slide will require cooperation between RAP, Caltrans and LADBS. Have these agencies been notified of the situation and what, if anything, is being done to obtain their cooperation? Is there any concern for Caltrans workers who are frequently present below the slope area where the slide occurred? How is their safety being ensured (is GED aware of the massive Via de las Olas slide in the 1950s that literally buried a Caltrans worker alive)?

A9: The FI is transmitted to these agencies to alert them (in case they do not already know) of the conditions and plan accordingly. To the City's knowledge, Caltrans does not have staff working below the landslide on a regular basis. The access road to the George Wolfberg Park at Potrero Canyon access road from PCH has been closed to all vehicles due to the landslide. The slide mass while blocking this access road is currently at rest and has not moved since April of 2023. Please note that the area of the access road that has been impacted is currently beyond the limits of public access for the park. Caution tape and temporary fencing have been placed around the slide proximity that will alert any workers to a hazard.

Q10: GED recommended that the landslide be investigated and characterized to determine the appropriate slope and drainage repair. Was it investigated? What is the repair plan (see related additional questions above)?

A10: Please refer to A2.

Q11: GED recommended that the Hillside Slope Stability Program rank the bulkhead repair as a capital improvement project. Has that been done? What is the status/ranking?

A11: See response A3.

Q12: The slide debris now rests on a rough trail below the slope that is expected (from plans) to eventually become a pedestrian trail from Temescal Canyon Rd. to Potrero Canyon, and where a portion of the proposed bridge to the Canyon may be located. The huge debris pile can be seen from PCH. Neighbors are greatly concerned with safety risks not only to residents but also to trail users/park visitors going forward, as a result of these conditions. What plans, if any, are in place to remove the debris pile and to ensure public safety in this area (e.g., by possibly relocating the eventual trail farther away from potential future slope failure)?

A12: The debris pile will be assessed and included in considerations for the trail location and layout during design of the Palisades Pedestrian Trail project.

Q13: Can GED/BOE/the City assure residents that there is little or no risk of a catastrophic bluff failure in the near future, such that the road may give way and/or homes may be undermined? (Longtime residents also recall the decades-ago failure of the bluff along Friends St./Potrero Canyon, leading to homes tumbling down into the canyon.)

A13: At this point, GED does not see evidence from a surficial point of view of any distress to the roadway or nearby homes.