



Pacific Palisades Community Council

February 5, 2024

Honorable Traci Park
Councilwoman, Los Angeles City Council District 11

Via email

Re: Hillside Construction Problems and Public Safety in Pacific Palisades

Dear Councilwoman Park:

As you know, Pacific Palisades Community Council (PPCC) represents many hillside residential areas with narrow streets and limited points of entry and exit, including in the Castellammare and Paseo Miramar neighborhoods (Area One), in the Highlands and Marquez Knolls areas (Areas Two and Three), and in additional PPCC areas located north and south of Sunset Blvd., which have hillside-designated lots situated along substandard streets with limited access points.

For residents' safety, emergency vehicles must be able to pass through hillside streets freely and quickly. When an emergency medical situation arises, it is imperative that residents are able to get help without delay. Moreover, Pacific Palisades is located entirely within the designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone (VHFHSZ), and some of our hillside neighborhoods are distant from the fire station that serves them. Protecting the ability of first responders to enter, and of residents to evacuate quickly should a catastrophic fire or other disaster occur, is a critical matter of public safety.

Our hillside neighborhoods have experienced the adverse impacts of high-density construction, resulting in hazardous conditions which threaten residents' safety and also create potential liability for the City. A recent egregious example occurred on Paseo Miramar in Area One, as evidenced by an alarming recording that was shown at the public PPCC meeting on October 26, 2023 and is posted on the PPCC website. We strongly encourage you to view the video at:

<https://www.dropbox.com/sc/fo/4fmur01pic9uj30cbpqbd/h?dl=0&preview=ONE+WAY+OUT%2C+1080p.mp4&rkey=266joflnqtyoy0e69ula4ltn>

As the video demonstrates, ongoing construction on Paseo Miramar has caused frequent roadway blockages in densely populated roads, lasting for extended periods and jeopardizing the public safety of thousands of residents. Emergency vehicles and residents could not enter or exit the neighborhood. Builders and workers ignored neighbors' pleas to coordinate hauling and construction activities so that the streets could be cleared. As a result, a highly dangerous and frightening situation continued, not only disrupting ingress and egress, but also putting lives at risk. PPCC board and community members alike expressed shock and dismay to learn of these hazardous conditions and have urged that measures be implemented in our hillside neighborhoods to mitigate the clear risk to public safety.

We note that the following situations are especially hazardous:

- Areas with multiple haul routes operating at the same time or with a single haul route operating with very heavy traffic;

- Failure of sites utilizing the same ingress and egress points to coordinate their hauling and large deliveries, including cement trucks;
- Failure of sites to provide appropriate traffic control when hauling or receiving deliveries;
- Failure of sites to verify “passability” of streets prior to attempting deliveries of oversized construction equipment;
- Worker parking, material storage and construction bins and trailers narrowing roads to a single lane of traffic;
- Sites utilizing cul-de-sacs for parking and storage of materials.

We acknowledge that home construction and renovation is in demand and widespread in Pacific Palisades. We are also conscious of, and respect, constituents’ property rights. But putting residents’ lives at risk during construction is an unacceptable cost.

PPCC appreciates that CD 11 Palisades Deputy Michael Amster has been working with LADBS on a temporary solution to the problems on Paseo Miramar. At the same time, we believe that public safety demands implementation of more permanent measures to prevent these types of construction site hazards from occurring more broadly in VHFHSZ hillside areas of Pacific Palisades.

These problems may be addressed in many ways, including but not limited to:

- 1) Implementing restrictions on issuance of haul route permits in hillside areas, such as
 - requiring phased hauling of multiple projects along a proposed haul route, so that hauling for projects within 1000 feet of existing projects along the same haul route would be delayed until hauling is completed on the existing project;
 - verifying actual width of continuously paved roadway before permit issuance;
 - requiring photographs to be taken of the condition of paved roadway before permit issuance;
 - limiting the number of haul route permits issued within a certain period of time for projects on streets using a single ingress and egress point;
 - requiring large equipment and vehicles (debris bins, trailers, cement mixers, etc.) to be placed on site whenever possible, and/or requiring permits issued by the Department of Public Works/Bureau of Street Services (BSS) for any such temporary placement in the public right of way;
 - requiring worker and construction vehicle parking on-site or on one side of the street only, whenever possible; and/or requiring worker shuttles;
 - requiring compliance with permitted construction/demolition hours;
 - requiring developer to take steps to avoid blockage of roadway for deliveries or debris removal; and, if temporary roadway blockage is unavoidable, requiring developer to assign flag persons to assist with pedestrian and vehicle traffic;
 - requiring developer to distribute the “Good Neighbor Construction Practices” chart and information about an LADBS portal for residents’ complaints/concerns, as set forth in #s 3 and 4 below.

2) Modifying the haul route process in additional ways, such as limiting of allowable grading, using deputy inspectors assigned by LADBS rather than chosen by developers, banning transfer of approved haul routes with transfer of property ownership, requiring assignment of approved routes to by-right hauling and large material/equipment deliveries, extending hillside haul route rules to large material/equipment deliveries, and using revenue from bonds collected for street repair for repair of specific streets damaged by construction traffic, particularly hauling.

3) Requiring developer compliance, as a condition of building permit issuance, with all haul route permit conditions and with the “General Construction Requirements,” as set forth in the “Good Neighbor Construction Practices” chart issued by LADBS, LADOT & BSS: and further requiring developer to distribute copies of the “Good Neighbor Construction Practices” chart to all addresses along the haul route (see #1 above). See the chart at: https://www.ladbs.org/docs/default-source/publications/misc-publications/good-neighbor-construction-practices.pdf?sfvrsn=aa56eb53_5;

4) Requesting that LADBS install a prominent/easily accessible portal on the LADBS website for residents in hillside areas to lodge complaints/concerns about adverse impacts on public safety during construction/demolition and to assure neighbors that their concerns will be promptly addressed; and further requiring developer to provide information about the portal to all addresses along the haul route (see #1 above). This portal, the code enforcement section of the LADBS permit and inspection report, and the MY311 site should all describe specific actions taken in response to any complaint.

5) Implementing stronger penalties to ensure compliance with current regulations and deter future infractions (including possibly increasing penalties under the Administrative Citation Enforcement program, LAMC Section 11.2.01, *et seq.*)

6) Considering possible future designation of certain Pacific Palisades hillside areas as “Hillside Construction Districts,” under the Hillside Construction Regulation (HCR) ordinance (regulations passed in 2017 with measures to alleviate hazardous construction conditions in certain hillside areas designated as HCR Districts) – to be determined at a later date, after further study of the ordinance’s status and applicability to conditions in Pacific Palisades.

We urgently request that you assist with implementation of appropriate measures, such as those suggested above, to mitigate hazardous construction impacts in our hillside neighborhoods.

In addition, we also request your assistance in arranging for attendance of knowledgeable LADBS, LADOT and BSS officials at an upcoming PPCC meeting, to provide information and answer questions about the status and scope of the haul route “task force” and “Haul Route Monitoring Program” described on the LADBS website:

<https://www.ladbs.org/services/core-services/inspection/inspection-special-assistance/haul-route-monitoring-program>.

These matters were taken up and discussed at the public PPCC board meeting on January 25, 2024, when the PPCC board [unanimously] approved the LUC’s recommendation to submit this letter expressing our concerns and suggestions for measures to mitigate hazards at hillside construction sites in Pacific Palisades.

We look forward to working with you and your staff to implement effective solutions as soon as possible. Thank you as always for your consideration and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

Maryam Zar
PPCC President

Christina Spitz and Steve Cron
Co-Chairs, PPCC LUC

cc (*via email*):

CD 11 staff: Jeff Khau, Planning Deputy; Juan Fregoso, District Director; Michael Amster, Palisades Deputy