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COUNCILWOMAN GREUEL PROTECTS HILLSIDE COMMUNITIES BY STRENGTHENING SLOPE-DENSITY ORDINANCE

LOS ANGELES – Continuing her efforts to improve the efficiency of the City’s permitting process, Councilwoman Wendy Greuel led the City Council to unanimously approve a new ordinance that will close loopholes on density regulations in Los Angeles’ hillside communities.

“Too often in our City we see planning disputes escalate because developers and community members are interpreting the slope-density ordinance differently,” said Councilwoman Greuel who represents many hillside communities including Sunland-Tujunga, Shadow Hills and Studio City. “The ordinance we approved today will clarify density entitlements and more thoroughly protect the safety and integrity of our hillside neighborhoods.”

The City’s slope-density regulations were established to reduce the density of housing in hillside areas. The regulations attempt to reduce the number of lots per acre allowed by the Los Angeles Municipal Code in relation to the steepness of the property. Generally, that means the steeper the slope, the fewer the number of permitted lots.

“Councilwoman Greuel’s ordinance will preserve more of the natural hillside, allow for a more streamlined and efficient process as the City Planning Department evaluates potential development projects in hillside communities”, said Principal Urban Designer Simon Pastucha. “This will provide us with a clear set of standards to use and reduce confusion and bureaucracy in the planning process.”

The new ordinance amends the Los Angeles Municipal Code to clarify the way slope-density can be calculated in order to provide a definitive density number for each project and to minimize grading, drainage and natural land alterations. In order to improve accuracy, the ordinance will now require that all maps used in for slope-density calculations be prepared by a civil engineer or land surveyor licensed by the State of California. The ordinance also requires that all maps and calculation be made available to the public and subject to verification.

(more)



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Councilwoman Greuel introduced the measure to improve slope-density regulations in 2006 after an extended battle over a project in her district that would have developed 887 untouched acres of the Verdugo Mountains. According to the developer's calculations, 169 lots were permitted across the steep mountainside.

Community members produced several other slope-density calculations which showed allowable lots ranging from 45 to 109. After extensive negotiations, Councilwoman Greuel was able to preserve 85% of the land in question as permanent open space.

The former slope-density ordinance often produced a variety of results for the same parcel of land, due to the type of map utilized and the array of methods used to measure the lengths of contour lines. Technical advancements and increased property values over the past two decades have changed the nature of hillside building and increased the likelihood of calculation discrepancies, particularly in areas where the land exceeds a slope of 50%

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