Los Angeles County Regional Planning  
320 W. Temple St.  
Room 1354  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Attn: Brianna Menke  

Re: Proposed Hillside Ordinance

We would like to thank County staff for giving us the opportunity to comment on their proposed revisions to the existing Hillside Ordinance as part of the One Valley-One Vision (OVOV) General Plan update. Since much of our work in located in the Santa Clarita Valley, we use the Santa Clarita Valley Area Plan (SCVAP) as approved on 12-6-90. At the present time hillside slopes deemed to be greater than 25% based upon a slope analysis are limited based upon the Maximum Density threshold for those lands within ¼ mile of existing urban categories. The densities allowed are a maximum of 1 dwelling unit (DU) per acre. Those areas outside the contiguous ¼ mile are permitted a maximum of 1 DU per 2 acres. Any density over a minimum the Low Density threshold requires that the developer file a Hillside Management Conditional Use Permit. The proposed Hillside Ordinance seeks to greatly limit any proposed subdivision consisting of more than 2 lots in those areas above 25% regardless. The current SCVAP does permit limited development in those designated as non-urban (HM, N1 & N2) as long as we do not exceed the land use limits. Using the slope analysis process a formula was used to determine the maximum as well as a minimum allowable dwelling units that were permitted. If the subdivision contained less units then the minimum, a Hillside CUP was not required. With regard to urban designated land (U1, U2, U3 and U4) generally the allowed dwelling units fell between the midpoint and maximum density depending if any additional amenities were provided. The addition of a park site within the project tended to allow a dwelling unit count closer to the maximum density. The newly proposed Hillside Ordinance tends to minimize the effects of the land use category. This is because the new OVOV has generalized the vacant land rather than trying to consistently adjust for the changing topography. As a result a site contain a sizable number of allowable DU’s, however if the average slope is in excess of 25%, then no units could be
developed there if staff is allowed to determine the uses. It is because of that we are of the opinion that the current rules as they now stand are stringent enough to limit development in those areas over 25% and still maintain good planning practices. With regard to allowing open space area in lots within a project that is 40 acres or less is being too restrictive and too limiting. Typically the County’ Park and Rec Department is not willing to administer area of land that are generally not flat (<3%). In addition, the size of such projects is deemed to be too small for the creation of an HOA. Therefore, one is left with area containing steep terrain that nobody wants. The 40-acre maximum should either be increased significantly or deleted as a requirement. There should be an increase should by a least a 100 to 200 acres to allow better develop of the subject site. The lot width of a maximum of 65 feet is not practicable. This requirement should be dropped and left open ended.

In summary, while current HM development limitations are restrictive it did allow for creative solutions that were found satisfactory for our clients as well as being acceptable by both staff and the Commission. With the approval of this new Ordinance, it will further restrict any new development to the point that many of the current projects in the system would no longer apply. Ironically, the presentation available housing after yours identifies California as having an acute housing shortage in the near future.

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