

August 25, 2016

Sent via electronic mail to:
May.Sirinopwongsagon@lacity.org

Ms. May Sirinopwongsagon
Department of City Planning
Expedited Processing Section
200 N. Spring Street, Room 763
Los Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 978-1372

Re: Comments on Proposed Commercial Development in Porter Ranch
City Planning Case No. CPC-2016-838-DA

Dear Ms. Sirinopwongsagon:

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the commercial development planned in Porter Ranch. This development is named "The Village at Porter Ranch" and will be located on the northwest corner of Rinaldi Street and Porter Ranch Drive. The Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council (PRNC) has been following the overall planning effort and has provided input on this Development in the past.

The PRNC is tasked with advocating for our community in front of City Council and City government. To that end, the PRNC is keenly aware of the concerns of many members of the community about the impact of this development on Porter Ranch, and on about the changes in the terms of the agreement between the City and the developer. With this letter, we bring to your attention some of these concerns. We ask that the Planning Commission seriously take these concerns into consideration during its deliberations on this matter.

Environmental Impact

It is our understanding that the Environmental Impact Report (EIR) was developed in the 1980's, and its conclusions and recommendations seem to continue to be carried forward through 2016 and beyond. First, the actual report is not readily available to the public to review and understand. We are confident that it is available somewhere and would ask that we obtain an electronic copy of it so we can properly post it on our website. More importantly, we are concerned that many of the assumptions made almost 30 years ago about the environmental impact of this project may no longer be valid. For example, even without any traffic contribution from the new hundreds of residential units being constructed along with the commercial development, there is already a significant traffic congestion problem on Rinaldi Street that spills over from the 118 Freeway traffic each day. At the time the EIR

was written, the 118 Freeway hardly had any traffic on it, let alone cause congestion on side streets. With the addition of the residential and commercial developments, it is safe to assume that there will be far more congestion problems that will impact the community greatly, not only from an inconvenience perspective, but also from a health perspective as we breathe the vehicle emissions during the daily periods of stop-and-go traffic on Rinaldi Street. Unfortunately, this street crosses all streets that lead into the community heading north from the San Fernando Valley, and therefore, everyone living in the community will encounter its traffic. At a minimum, we believe that a new traffic study is needed to update the assumptions based on today's traffic conditions.

In addition, an EIR developed in the 1980's would not address the energy and water consumption concerns of today's California. This commercial development, along with the hundreds of homes being built simultaneously, will likely put a significant additional load on an already strained LADWP network that could not have been predicted in the 1980's. LADWP is implementing an aggressive incentive program to reduce power consumption and promote alternative energy sources. Yet, this development does not appear to have any plans to implement energy conservation measures. In our opinion, this developer should work with LADWP to design and implement state-of-the-art energy conservation measures, and take advantage of the large open parking lot to harness as much of the sun's energy as possible and reduce reliance on the electric grid.

For all the above reasons and others, the PRNC asks that a thorough re-examination of the EIR's assumptions regarding this and other environmental impacts be conducted, and not accept the Negative Declaration made by the developer.

Agreement Terms Regarding Public Benefits

The Porter Ranch Specific Plan formalized under City Ordinance 166,068 in July 1990 included specific provisions related to Public Benefits to the Community that the developer and the City agreed to. The PRNC is concerned that these provisions have been either removed or greatly reduced in the current project plan. We ask that the developer maintain its commitment to provide these benefits to the Community as originally agreed to, and that the City does not approve this project without these benefits in place. The specific benefits were stated as follows:

1. The construction of a community meeting facility to seat no less than 300 people, and should be constructed so as to be divided into four separate meeting areas of 75 seats each. The developer seems to be asserting that they have met this requirement by the multipurpose room added at the Porter Ranch Community School (PRCS). However, the PRNC is concerned that the community's use of this facility is allowed under an existing agreement between the City and LAUSD, which expires around 2022. The agreement does not provide for any guarantees of the continued availability of the room for the community. Moreover, the facility is not available to the community at all times. Its use is limited by LAUSD to specific hours of the day. In addition, any community use of this room during weekend days is contingent on LAUSD assigning a staff member to open the facility. It is our understanding that there have been instances when LAUSD denied community access to the facility over the weekend because they could not find a staff member able to provide

access to the room. While we understand LAUSD's need to control access to the school grounds and facilities, these limitations are in clear conflict with the intended plan of providing a community room that is available to the community without limitations. From our perspective, we assert that this requirement has not yet been met.

2. The dedication to the City a two-acre site for government offices or other municipal buildings and uses, including a public library facility. The developer is now going to replace these two acres with a single community room in the commercial development, and their argument is that the City does not have the resources to build the facilities on this site. Regardless of whether the City currently does or does not have the resources to construct the facilities at this site, this site is intended to be to the benefit of the Community, and it is the community that will need to work with the City to make those resources available, either now or in the future. The PRNC asks that this site remain as part of the agreement and be available to the Community as we move forward.
3. An operational childcare facility for up to 100 children initially, with an ultimate capacity of 250 children. PRNC does not see this facility being proposed anywhere in the current plan. The developer stated at one of the hearings that the Shepherd of the Hills Church across the street has a child-care facility, and somehow that facility is supposed to satisfy this requirement under the agreement. The PRNC does not understand how the child-care facility clearly spelled out in the Specific Plan is being transferred to a private entity over which the City has no jurisdiction! This is not an acceptable modification to the PRNC.
4. Sums equal to one percent (1%) of the permit value of all the commercial buildings under the Specific Plan are to be deposited in an interest-bearing Porter Ranch Art Trust Account, and are to be used in purchasing public art and/or for the capital cost and maintenance cost to display such acquired art with the Specific Plan area. The agreement also calls for the establishment of a third-party entity (aside from City and Developer) to be called the Porter Ranch Arts Council, whose role is to administer such account. This Council was supposed to be created in 2009 or earlier. To our knowledge, this Council was never created, and we are not aware of the creation of any Art Trust Account to date. Since many commercial facilities have already been permitted and constructed as part of the early phases of this development, the PRNC is concerned that the funds have either never been paid by the developer, or have been utilized for other purposes in clear violation of the Agreement.

In the final analysis, the PRNC has serious concerns over the progress of the development and its lack of conformance to the requirements of the Porter Ranch Specific Plan, as well as concerns over the environmental and health impacts of the development that may not have been captured by the 30-year old EIR. For these reasons, the PRNC urges the Commission to consider the following:

1. Request that the project be suspended until a thorough update to the technical assumptions of the EIR regarding all the environmental impacts of the project be conducted based on today's conditions. This update should be conducted by a third-party with significant participation of members of the community. The PRNC would be willing to nominate individuals to serve on a

review committee of the updated EIR. This committee will then submit its review comments to the Commission before the project proceeds to the next step.

2. Request that the developer conforms to the terms of the Specific Plan to the satisfaction of the City and the Community. This request is specific to the Public benefits items discussed in this letter.

We hope that the Commission will seriously consider our comments and concerns, and we are ready to discuss our concerns with the Commission at any time.

Respectfully Yours,



Issam Najm, Ph.D., P.E.

Board President

Porter Ranch Neighborhood Council

cc: PRNC Board Members
Councilman Mitchell Englander
Mayor Eric Garcetti