

Communication from Public

Name: Pat Winters

Date Submitted: 02/09/2021 04:41 PM

Council File No: 16-1472-S7

Comments for Public Posting: For the reasons in the attached document, I strongly support Councilperson Cedillo's motion to add the Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area as a Special Use District to the Hillside Construction Regulations. It is my understanding that the regulations have successfully addressed construction problems in other hillside areas of the city and we would appreciate equal treatment.

PW

February 8, 2021

Los Angeles City Council Planning and Land Use Management Committee
Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Chair
Councilmember Gilbert A. Cedillo
Councilmember Bob Blumenfield
Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas
Councilmember John S. Lee

clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org
LACouncilComment.com

Re: File 16-1472-S7
Motion to add Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area as a SUD to
Hillside Construction Regulations
Hearing date: February 16, 2021

Dear Council Members:

As a long-time resident of Mount Washington, I am very concerned about the plethora of construction sites on the very narrow, winding substandard streets on steep hillsides. Unlike previous years when homeowners sought to build and live in the neighborhood, many of these sites are speculative and the builders seemingly feel no need to respect the community during the construction process. The cumulative effect is distressing and dangerous.

Therefore, I am asking you to add our neighborhood as a SUD to the Hillside Construction Regulations as proposed by Councilperson Cedillo.

Much of this area has retained a rustic quality. The streets are narrow and winding, and sometimes only exist on paper. Many are not paved and are single-lane at best. GPS doesn't always recognize that a street only exists on paper, and it never reveals that a road is akin to a hiking trail. This results in large construction vehicles driving on roads that cannot sustain the weight or size. We need haul routes for every construction site to assure safe access for all-residents and contractors alike.

As the pictures below illustrate, when construction materials and equipment are stored on the roadway, there is no room for emergency vehicles or even a regular sedan to pass, much less accommodate two-way traffic. As the one photo documents, there is only a 9 foot passage between the construction equipment and the edge of the road on Glenalbyn. This is a very high fire severity hazard area and these obstructions pose a very real health and safety hazard, both for evacuation routes and emergency egress.

Moreover, the storage of materials and equipment on the roadway creates a severe hazard at night because there are no warning lights or other safety measures taken. These rustic roads are not brightly lit and this creates a life-threatening safety hazard since the materials obstruct the roadway and leave a narrow passage for vehicles.

The photographs also show how the massive excavation on the steep hillsides fills the air with dust and the streets with dirt and debris. The unhealthful air quality is dangerous for residents. The dusty residue on the streets creates dangerous driving and walking conditions.

Construction equipment and trucks are notorious for completely blocking roadways without benefit of flag persons or other safety precautions. If an emergency vehicle needed access it could not get it—there is often only one way in and out of an area and construction does not take this into consideration when it blocks the roadway.

We need safe construction practices and enforcement of regulations to address these safety issues before there is another serious injury or fire.



Narrow substandard dirt road on Glenalbyn leading to 3 active constructions sites with at least 2 more sites pending.



Construction materials stored on the street opposite the construction site and down the street with no night-time safety lights and no street permit displayed. Porta-potty on the roadway. Construction equipment parked on the roadway and fencing in the road. Taken on a "paved" portion of Glenalbyn.



Distance between stored equipment and edge of road is only 9 feet 7 inches—too narrow for emergency vehicles to pass and too narrow for other vehicles to pass safely.



Equipment and materials obstructing the roadway. Dust from extensive excavation covers the road and the neighbors' property and vehicles. Heavy equipment damages the fragile roadways and they are not repaired.



Massive hillside excavation with accompanying dust, dirt and debris affecting neighbors.



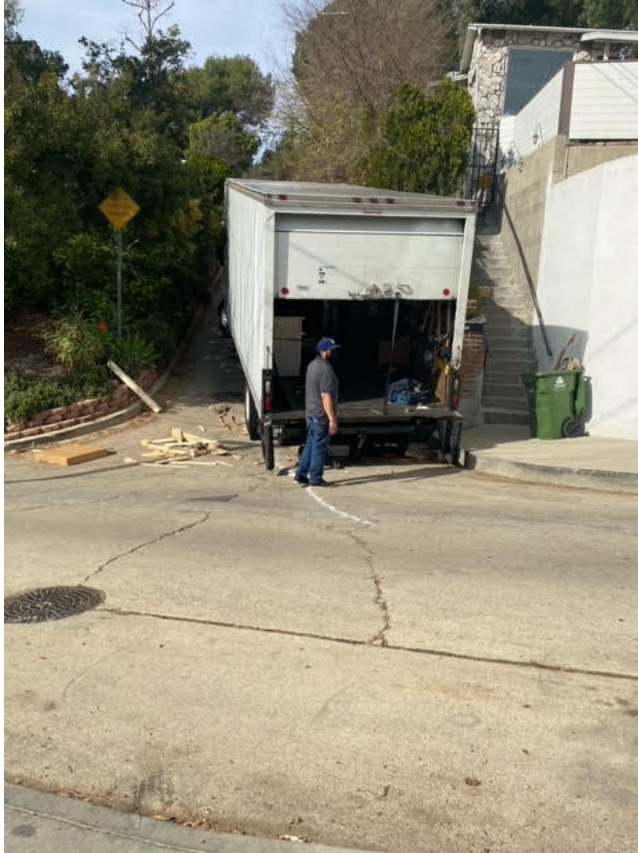
Glenalbyn equipment parked on roadway with no safety cones or other night-time warning lights. Dust and dirt from sites accumulating on the road and neighbors' vehicles. Air quality is poor.



Fed Ex truck stuck near Colina and Glenwood on deteriorating narrow roadway.



Concrete truck and construction vehicle completely blocking roadway near Glenwood and Colina.



No haul routes means trucks routinely take substandard streets that are inadequate to support their weight and length, and become “stuck” in the pavement. This further damages the inadequate and aging roadway, resulting in even more problems. Road near Colina and Glenwood.

Unrestricted construction is threatening the health and safety of our community and impairing our quality of life. I fully support Councilperson Cedillo’s motion to add the Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area as a special use district protected by the Hillside Construction Regulations, as are similar other hillside areas in the city.

Sincerely,

Pat Winters
resident

Communication from Public

Name: Mount Washington Homeowners Alliance Pat Winters
Date Submitted: 02/09/2021 02:47 PM
Council File No: 16-1472-S7
Comments for Public Posting: This document was previously submitted on January 15 but is not on the public documents online. Please accept it

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January 14, 2021

Los Angeles City Council Planning and
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Via: clerk.plumcommittee@lacity.org
LACouncilComment.com
Cc: Bill.Cody@lacity.org

Re: **File 16-1472-S7**

Motion to add Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area
as a SUD to Hillside Construction Regulations
Hearing date: February 4, 2021

Dear Council Members:

The Mount Washington Homeowners Alliance, which represents residents of Mount Washington, previously submitted 29 pages of health and safety information illustrating why our area needs to be added as a SUD to the HCR. Like the other hillside communities that are already included under the HCR, the topography of Mount Washington creates critical health and safety issues, especially because this is a very high fire hazard severity zone. The HCR is the best way to address these issues, and we submit these additional facts in support of the motion by Council District 1.

THE MOUNT WASHINGTON AREA IS A “NIGHTMARE FOR EMERGENCY VEHICLES”

LAFD considers most of Mount Washington “**a nightmare for emergency vehicles**”. (Jan. 12, 2021 interview with Engineer Greg Stonebreaker of Station 44 in Cypress Park, which is the primary fire station responding to Mount Washington.) Every time firefighters receive a call in Mount Washington, they are delayed because they can

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barely get their trucks through the steep, narrow streets. Engineer Stonebreaker told us that the firefighters literally have to hang out both sides of the vehicles to direct the engineer through the roads which are often as narrow as 12 feet. Even a vehicle that is legally parked but a few inches from the curb will delay an emergency response and potentially cost lives.

FRANK HERNANDEZ DIED BECAUSE EMERGENCY RESPONSE VEHICLES WERE BLOCKED BY A LEGALLY PARKED VEHICLE ON AVENUE 44 NEAR FRONTENAC.

Mr. Hernandez lived in the 500 block of W Avenue 44. Avenue 44 is approximately 20 feet wide (a wide road by Mount Washington standards) with multiple turns as it winds up the hill.

A fire broke out in his small house and Mr. Hernandez was able to get to the back door before he was overcome with smoke. If crews had been able to promptly respond to the address, he may have been saved.

The fire was reported quickly by neighbors who lived lower down Avenue 44 and also by witnesses who could see the fire from Montecito Heights. The LAFD fire truck responding to those calls, however, got stuck at the bottom of the hill for at least ten minutes because they could not get past a legally parked pickup truck. The owner of the truck was not home at the time, but his wife was eventually able to locate the spare keys and move the pickup so that emergency responders could get through.

The only potential secondary access would have been via Frontenac Avenue which is largely inaccessible to emergency vehicles because of its narrow partially paved condition. LAFD refused to use it that evening because of the substandard condition of the road. Mr. Hernandez's house was at the corner of Frontenac and Avenue 44.

Moreover, if the fire had spread there was *no available evacuation route*. LAFD had five or six trucks there that night. They lined Avenue 44 from top to bottom. Residents would have been forced to flee on foot if the fire had spread into the canyon.

After the fire was extinguished, emergency responders had difficulty leaving the site because their only option was to back down Avenue 44. Frontenac, the only other street, was so narrow and in such disrepair that they could not use it.

The Los Angeles Times reported on the fire:

<https://www.latimes.com/local/la-xpm-2014-feb-22-la-me-0223-house-fire-20140223-story.html>



“Paved” road on Frontenac which LAFD determined was too dangerous to use.



Frontenac—orange cone warns of cliff-like drop off. When it rains, the mud makes it impassable.



Frontenac near Avenue 44, the location of the fire.



Corner of Frontenac and Ave 44, the location where the fire occurred. Visible damage to road signs and no parking signs caused by trucks attempting to maneuver the 20-foot wide road with vehicles legally parked on it.



Technically Ave 44 is the minimum required 20 feet wide, making it one of the wider streets on the hillside, yet fire trucks could not access the area because of a legally parked vehicle such as those in the picture.

EMERGENCY RESPONDERS ARE FRUSTRATED

Unfortunately, this is not an unusual occurrence. Rather, emergency responders encounter problems accessing our area on a regular basis. **“The frustration is real”** according to Station 44.

Firefighters regularly have to get on the air horn to alert neighbors to move vehicles so emergency responders can get through. If a car is parked sticking out into the street,

emergency responders have to find the owner and get the car moved because they cannot get through. There have been times when the fire department has called to have cars towed so they can respond to emergencies, and then the tow truck gets stuck. “Turning around” or leaving a call site means backing down the same problematic street because there is usually only one route in and out of location, as in the case of Mr. Hernandez.

Keith Hiorns, a resident on Kilbourn, described a recent encounter:

I was coming up the hill on Future Street from San Fernando Road on the north side and there's a fire truck with lights flashing trying to come down Future Street along with another vehicle or two trying to come up the hill along with me.

One of the firemen actually had to get out of the fire truck to try and guide the truck backward so myself and another car could park to the side which would allow the fire truck to pass.

Another neighbor, Alexis Djivre who resides on Killarney, stated:

There have been numerous times when I have seen the Fire Department's ladder trucks attempt to maneuver the sharp turns and steep roads on Killarney Avenue. One night, I saw flashing lights, and looked out to see firemen in the street. I asked if there was an emergency, and they said they had just responded to a call, and were trying to turn their truck around, but literally had to get out of the truck to help the engineer back it down the hill to an area where they could turn around.

It is clear that Mount Washington is one of the areas of Los Angeles that is of heightened concern for fire and emergency response. For example, after the fire that scorched Bel-Air in 2018, fire officials identified areas of critical concern, including: “Hollywood Hills, Los Feliz, Sherman Oaks, Sunland-Tujunga and **Mount Washington**.”

<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-homeless-track-fires-20180105-story.html>

To further put this in perspective, Mount Washington has the second steepest street in Los Angeles--one of the 10 steepest in the United States.

<https://www.latimes.com/local/california/la-me-lopez-echo-park-traffic-20180404-story.html> .

These streets were laid out 100 years ago and, as the Los Angeles Times noted, were “designed for goats, not people or cars.”

It's not just the steep hillsides; the condition of the streets in Mount Washington is among the worst in the City. See,

<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-garcetti-street-fees-20180609-story.html>

“The streets in the poorest shape tend to be in hillside neighborhoods, such as the Hollywood Hills, **Mount Washington**, Los Feliz and Bel-Air.” [i.e., other areas that are already protected as SUD under the HCR]. (<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-la-now-live-grading-la-streets-20130506-dto-story.html>) Although other areas are getting street repairs, many of our streets are not:

<https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-street-repairs-20160814-snap-story.html>

“We all know that our street needs to be repaired — and we don’t have any expectation that it’s going to happen in our lifetime, said Mark Kenyon.”

Surging construction activity and the resultant increased density exacerbates these conditions. As noted in our earlier submission, construction materials and equipment are left overnight on these narrow streets; construction trucks not using safe haul routes use roads that are not accessible and then become embedded in the roadway; concrete trucks convoy up the hill completely blocking access; concrete trucks not using safe haul routes use roads that are too steep causing spillage onto the road and dangerous driving conditions; and two-way traffic is routinely blocked by construction activity.

Although being added as a SUD to the HCR will not address all of the health and safety issues we confront, it is a significant step in improving the safety and quality of life for residents in the Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area. For ease of reference, we attach a map of the Specific Plan perimeter. We respectfully request that the Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area be added as a SUD without delay.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Winters', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Patricia Winters, Acting Land Use Chair
The Mount Washington Homeowners’ Alliance

Attachment: Map of Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan area

Mount Washington/Glassell Park Specific Plan



Specific Plan Area