

Communication from Public

Name: Lois Becker

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Council File No: 21-0828

Comments for Public Posting: Attached please find a letter from Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners' Association (BASPOA) expressing our opposition to the Los Angeles Zoo Vision Plan's overly growth-inducing, highly impactful and inappropriate, habitat-destroying ALTERNATIVE 2. Thank you. Lois Becker BASPOA Community Liaison



Sent via email

The Honorable John Lee, Mike Bonin, Herb Wesson
Arts, Parks, Health, Education, and Neighborhoods Committee
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

April 18, 2022

Re: LA Zoo CF 21-0828; BASPOA OPPOSES ALTERNATIVE 2

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to you on behalf of Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners' Association (BASPOA) to express the very serious concerns of our Santa Monica Mountains residential community regarding the proposed **Alternative 2** of the Los Angeles Zoo Vision Project and the threat that it poses to what is surely one of LA's greatest treasures -- an amazing belt of mountain wildlands miraculously surviving, right in the very heart of our city.

The vision plan targets 23 acres of precious native habitat, which it refers to, somewhat pejoratively, as "underutilized and underdeveloped" -- traits the Applicant clearly sees as problems in need of correction. But, ecologically speaking, this property is perfectly developed. It is, in fact, one of the largest, most complex and pristine, protected Mediterranean ecosystems in the world today.

Underutilized? Tell that to the over 1,000 plant species and some 500 avian, reptilian, amphibian and mammalian species that depend on it for their survival!

Underdeveloped? But that is precisely what makes this particular real estate parcel so valuable and what gives Griffith Park, at the eastern end of the Santa Monicas range, the distinction of being one of the largest municipal wilderness parks in the country.

It's no accident that Griffith Park is home to both the LA Zoo and to world-famous mountain lion P22. The so-called *underdevelopment* and *underutilization* are not problems to be solved. They are priceless assets that make Los Angeles unique among all the cities of the world. This is the delicate balance we need to focus on when contemplating any development or intensification of uses on this extraordinary, one-of-a-kind, environmentally sensitive site.

Under the guise of "zoo improvements", Alternative 2 proposes removal of over 220 protected trees, in violation of the City's Protected Tree Ordinance, in order to replace them with multiple visitor centers featuring restaurants, viewing areas, and shops -- facilities suitable for party, conference, and evening event rentals. Only 35% of the 23 acres would actually be dedicated to improvements in animal care, study and facilities; while 65% would be tourist attractions bearing no relation to the zoo's mission: a vineyard, the California Visitor Center with a view of the vineyard, "Condor Canyon", a funicular, an African safari-style "adventure zone" carved out of the Santa Monica Mountains' own native oak woodlands (a loss which cannot be mitigated, since it takes 50 to 70 years to replace a mature oak tree). These are obvious growth-inducing features and obviously inappropriate to the natural setting. Yet, a completely inappropriate multi-level parking structure aside, the Zoo's Vision Plan barely acknowledges, let alone mitigates, the traffic congestion and other negative impacts that are entirely foreseeable consequences of this proposed project.

If Alt 2 is allowed to go forward, it will do irreparable damage to the urban wilderness of Griffith Park and the Santa Monica Mountains.

Bel Air Skycrest joins the Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations in **supporting Alternative 1**. Alt 1 will be far less impactful on, and much more environmentally compatible with, our beautiful Santa Monica Mountains ecosystem. Alternative 1 will allow the zoo to achieve its most important goals without sacrificing irreplaceable habitat and protected trees or displacing any of our 500 native animal species in the process.

Please reject Alternative 2's overly commercial theme park facilities and vibe in favor of a deeper, more meaningful vision -- one which honors and preserves the precious native habitat of Griffith Park while elevating Zoo facilities to create a world class institution for the study and preservation of the world's endangered animals. Such a project would bring the zoo and its extraordinary setting together in a truly

meaningful way, creating a powerful experience for the public and a powerful vision, not just for the LA Zoo but for the future of the City itself.

Alternative 2 is NOT the vision Los Angeles needs.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lois Becker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Lois Becker
BASPOA Community Liaison

cc: Mayor Eric Garcetti
Councilmembers Nithya Raman, Gil Cedillo, Paul Krekorian, Councilmember Bob Blumenfeld, Councilmember Paul Koretz, Councilmember Nury Martinez, Councilmember Monica Rodriguez, Councilmember Marqueece Harris-Dawson, Councilmember Curren D. Price, Jr., Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell, Councilmember Kevin de Leon, Councilmember Joe Buscaino
The Federation of Hillside and Canyon Associations