

April 7, 2025

To: Raul Campillo, Councilmember District 7

CC: Todd Gloria, Mayor of San Diego
Joe LaCava, Councilmember District 1
Jennifer Campbell, Councilmember District 2
Stephen Whitbrun, Councilmember District 3
David Foster III, Councilmember District 4
Marni Von Wilpert, Councilmember District 5
Kent Lee, Councilmember District 6
Vivian Moreno, Councilmember District 8
Sean Elo-Rivera, Councilmember District 9
Robert Logan, Fire Chief
Heidi VonBlum, City Planning Director

FROM: The Linda Vista Planning Group

DATE: April 7, 2025

RE: Halting Infill Development in High Fire Risk Zones Within Linda Vista

Recently, the Community Planners Committee (CPC) called upon the Mayor and City Council to immediately halt granting permits and approvals for any infill projects that more than double the presently approved number of dwelling units per parcel located in Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones. In its letter, dated January 30, 2025, CPC drew attention to the recent wildfires in the Los Angeles area and noted concerns about San Diego and whether the continued increases in density will aggravate and increase fire hazards here.

At its March 2025 meeting, the Linda Vista Planning Group voted unanimously to endorse and stand by the CPC's letter to the Mayor and City Council. We further wish to draw additional attention to the particular concerns of the Linda Vista Community.

As you may recall, Linda Vista had its own fire scare recently when a fire broke out across from Fashion Valley Mall along Friars Road. Residents in the Fashion Hills neighborhood located on top of the mesa overlooking the valley were evacuated and several other neighborhoods in Linda Vista

received alerts to be ready for possible evacuation orders. Fortunately, firefighters quickly brought that blaze under control and there was little damage to nearby structures. But that it happened reinforces the vulnerability Linda Vista faces. Indeed, the very topography of the Linda Vista mesa renders it a vulnerable community as it is bounded by Tecolote Canyon to the north, and brush-lined hills to the east and south rising from the Mission Valley floor to the mesa. Most of the area within Linda Vista's boundaries is characterized by the State Fire Marshal as High and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones.

Of particular concern to the Linda Vista residents is reassurance of critical infrastructure to ensure adequate evacuation routes. Of note, Linda Vista is an older community in the heart of San Diego. Many of its residential streets are significantly narrower than those found in newer neighborhoods. This poses a potential challenge for the ingress and egress of emergency vehicles, particularly large fire engines.

Permitting an increase in per-parcel density beyond doubling has a direct impact upon accessibility. The reality is that when three or more units are planned for a space that was originally only intended as a single-family unit, additional vehicle traffic and parking will occur. Without mandated parking on the property for such new "apartment" homes, the already narrow streets become even more cluttered with additional vehicles which only exacerbates the already challenging ingress and egress of emergency vehicles.

Additionally, allowing higher density without adequate parking, forces some residents to rely on walking or biking. The City's answer for this mobility problem is public transit. But such an answer offers no comfort to that resident who, in the event of a fire emergency, must flee on foot or bike.

Brush abatement continues to be a concern. Again, the topography of Linda Vista reveals that it is surrounded by brush. And yet it does not appear that the City is interested, let alone equipped, to control the significant amount of brush that can readily ignite in our annual Santa Ana conditions. This lack of regular and proactive brush abatement only heightening the vulnerability the Linda Vista community already faces.

In short, because of the foregoing identified challenges the Linda Vista community faces, we call upon you to support an immediate halt on the granting of permits and approvals of infill projects that more than double per-parcel occupancy in high fire risk zones in Linda Vista, until further study can be conducted to ensure that such projects can be accomplished without further aggravating the fire risks in the community.

Thank you for your attention and consideration of this important matter.

add'l cc: Korral Taylor, Miles Noel, Alma Lowry