SUPPLEMENTAL
REPORT TO THE HEARING OFFICER

DATE ISSUED:	June 23, 2025		
HEARING DATE:	June 24, 2025	AGENDA ITEM:	5
PROJECT NUMBER:	R2005-01452-(3)		
PERMIT NUMBER(S):	Variance No. 200900001		
SUPERVISORIAL DISTRICT:	3		
PROJECT LOCATION:	2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard, Topanga		
OWNER:	CMI Corporate Marketing, Inc.		
APPLICANT:	Cory Isaacson		
CASE PLANNER:	Tyler Montgomery, Principal Regional Planner TMontgomery@planning.lacounty.gov		

RECOMMENDATION

The following recommendation is made prior to the public hearing and is subject to change based upon testimony and/or documentary evidence presented at the public hearing:

LA County Planning staff ("Staff") recommends **APPROVAL** of Project Number R2005-01452-(3), Variance Number 200900001, based on the Findings (Exhibit C – Findings) attached to the Report to the Hearing Officer dated June 5, 2025, and subject to the Draft Conditions of Approval (Exhibit D – Conditions of Approval) attached to the Report to the Hearing Officer dated June 5, 2025.

Staff recommends the following motions:

CEQA:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, CLOSE THE PUBLIC HEARING AND FIND THAT THE PROJECT IS CATEGORICALLY EXEMPT PURSUANT TO STATE AND LOCAL CEQA GUIDELINES.

ENTITLEMENTS:

I, THE HEARING OFFICER, APPROVE VARIANCE NUMBER 200900001 SUBJECT TO THE ATTACHED FINDINGS AND CONDITIONS.

BACKGROUND

This agenda item is a request to construct a new 4,000-square-foot single-family residence within 50 feet of a mapped significant ridgeline ("Project") in the A-1-5 (Light Agricultural – Five-Acre Minimum Required Lot Area) and within the Santa Monica Mountains North Area Community Standards District ("CSD"), pursuant to County Code Section 22.56.260 as it existed in 2009.[1]

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

After the previous Supplemental Report to the Hearing Officer was issued on June 18, 2025, Staff received one letter of support for the Project (Exhibit A-2) and five additional letters of opposition to the Project (Exhibit B-2). The one letter of support is from an immediate neighbor. One of the four additional letters of opposition is from the Topanga Association for a Scenic Community, and the other four additional letters of opposition are from area residents. These letters of opposition object to placing structures within a designated significant ridgeline due to aesthetic concerns. They also state that the significant ridgeline regulations in the Santa Monica Mountains North Area CSD were carefully considered before their adoption and should be upheld via denial of this Variance. Some letters of opposition also cite the unpermitted grading within the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's ("MRCA") Summit Valley – Ed Edelman Park to the north of the Project Site, which they contend was conducted by the applicant.

Staff has researched the grading that conducted on the MRCA property to the north of the Project Site. No permits were issued for this grading, which occurred sometime between 2022 and 2023, according to aerial photos (see Exhibit C-2). The applicant states that he is not responsible for this grading and has no knowledge of who is responsible.

Based on Staff's research using aerial photos, the Project Site was relatively undisturbed in 2006, when Zoning Conformance Review No. 200600712 ("ZCR") and grading permits were issued for a solid fill project to create an access driveway and a flat pad with drainage structures. Specifically, the ZCR and grading permits authorized 1,999 cubic yards of grading, consisting of 500 cubic yards of cut, 1,499 cubic yards of fill, and 999 cubic yards of import. The result of this permitted grading can be seen in the aerial photos from 2008. After 2008, the Project Site was relatively untouched until 2021, when grading permits were first issued for development on the two adjacent properties to the west, which share a driveway with the Project Site. At that time, it appears the pad for the Project Site was again scraped and used for the storage of construction materials and equipment, and additional fill was gradually added to the MRCA property to the north of the Project Site, which is located at the end of the shared driveway.

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[1] Note: Pursuant to County Code Section 22.246.020 (Applicability of Zone Changes and Ordinance Amendments), the Project applicant chose to have the complete Variance application be subject to the zoning and regulations in effect at the time it was submitted in 2009.

Staff visited the Project Site on June 23, 2025, and took photos (Exhibit D-2). Staff observed ongoing grading and home construction on the two adjacent properties to the west of the Project Site and also observed that the area of unpermitted grading is being used for the unsecured storage of earthmoving equipment and construction materials. Therefore, Staff believes, but has not confirmed, that this unpermitted fill may be the result of grading and construction activity on one or both of the adjacent properties to the west of the Project Site. Regardless, Staff has determined that the unpermitted grading should be addressed as a separate violation unrelated to the Project because is not located on the Project Site.

During the site visit, Staff also observed that none of the story poles can be seen from Topanga Canyon Boulevard, which is the only public road in the vicinity. This observation demonstrates that the single-family residence will not be visible from the public right-of-way. Staff took photos of the story poles placed on the Project Site and a yellow bulldozer that appeared to have been recently parked just to the south of the story poles. The applicant states that the bulldozer is not his and does not have his permission to be parked on the Project Site. However, the bulldozer can be viewed from Topanga Canyon Boulevard, which illustrates that moving the single-family residence further south, as suggested by the MRCA in its previous letter, would almost certainly result in it being visible from Topanga Canyon Boulevard, which is a designated scenic route. The single-family residence in its currently proposed location would most likely be visible from existing trails that traverse the MRCA parkland to the north of the Project Site. However, these trails are 200 feet higher in elevation than the Project Site. As a result of these observations, Staff believes the proposed 18-foot-tall single-family residence's location on the Project Site is appropriate because placing it more than 50 feet from the mapped significant ridgeline would result in significantly more grading of steep slopes as well as a greater visual impact from Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Tyler Montgomery of the Coastal Development Services Section at tmontgomery@planning.lacounty.gov.

Report Reviewed By: Rob Glaser
Robert Glaser, Supervising Regional Planner

Report Approved By: M. Glaser
Mitch Glaser, Assistant Administrator

LIST OF ATTACHED EXHIBITS	
EXHIBIT A-2	Letter of support for the Project
EXHIBIT B-2	Five (5) additional letters of opposition to the Project
EXHIBIT C-2	Timeline of aerial photos (2006 to 2024)
EXHIBIT D-2	Site photos (June 23, 2025)

From: brian.spitznagel@gmail.com
To: Tyler Montgomery
Subject: 2354 N Topanga Cyn Blvd Project
Date: Monday, June 16, 2025 3:05:05 PM

CAUTION: External Email. Proceed Responsibly.

Hi Mr. Montgomery,

My name is Brian Spitznagel, I live at 2410 N Topanga Blvd, a direct neighbor of Mr. Issacson's proposed project.
I just wanted to reach out to you and voice my support for his project to move forward.

All the best,

Brian Spitznagel
M. 310.210.2455

Please consider the environment before printing this email.

From: Eileen Delehanty Pearkes
To: Tyler Montgomery
Subject: Regarding project #R2005-01452-(3) Variance #200900001 2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard
Date: Thursday, June 19, 2025 2:48:47 PM

CAUTION: External Email. Proceed Responsibly.

to the LA county planning department:

As a resident of Topanga Canyon living in a modest 1910 home in the oldest part of Topanga Canyon, I strongly oppose any request for a ridgeline variance, **in particular for this address, 2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd.**

The lot's location - **adjacent to the Edelman Park open space lands** - once again calls into question important conservation values that have long protected the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy against human-centricity. Edelman Park was once destined to be a golf course and condos, before it was stopped by local opposition. The recent wildfires place even more value on unburned, safe areas for wildlife to inhabit and traverse.

During Covid, Topanga Canyon endured a fresh onslaught of commercializing forces from outside the area, ones that naturally led to a desire for more expensive, ridgetop homes. In the aftermath of the fires, Topanga real estate listings have ballooned to almost 70 homes for sale, some of them on ridgelines, with few purchasers in sight.

Meanwhile, Topanga must stand firm as it always has - to protect visual beauty, preserve open space for wildlife habitats and keep the night dark for several species of owls.

Thank you,

Eileen Delehanty Pearkes
1237 Old Topanga Canyon Road
Topanaga CA 90290

TOPANGA ASSOCIATION FOR A SCENIC COMMUNITY
PO BOX 352, TOPANGA CA. 90290

Hearing Officer
Los Angeles County Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Project No. R2005-01452-(3) Variance No. 200900001
2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline

Dear Hearing Officer

Our organization formed in 1963 and represents many Topanga Residents takes this opportunity to comment on the above project number and their request to ask for a variance in order to encroach on to the Ridgeline in Topanga.

Looking at all the material available and being very familiar with this area, we must agree completely with the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy in their assessment.
The scenic quality of the Ridgeline has been compromised. The size of the home and garage that is proposed has taken it to the maximum footage allowed. This has caused extreme damage to the enviroment.

We believe this project as the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy does, must be analyzed in its entirety with the significate and cumulative effects from it and the other structures already built between it and Topanga Canyon Blvd. The project and its height can be viewed from Topanga Canyon Blvd (State Highway 27) demonstrated by the Story Poles that were put in place.

The degradation of the public land (Summit Valley Park) is fully evident by the pictures presented to you. It is for this reason and many other statements given to you by each of the organizations and residents submitted a more detail review by the County must be had. Simply put we are dealing with a president setting decision. By allowing this varience you will continue to degrade our lovely community.
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Hearing Officer
Los Angeles County Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

Project No. R2005-01452-(3) Variance No. 200900001
2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline

Dear Hearing Officer:

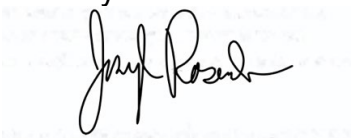
My name is Joseph Rosendo and I am a resident of Topanga since 2007.
After looking at the material available on the proposal asking for a variance,
I must stand with all of the Topanga organizations and residents opposing the variance request.

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy, The Topanga Association for a Scenic Community and the residents who offered their thoughts on this development are correct in their analysis.

This project has impeded onto Conservancy property and must be either redesigned and made smaller or made to go through a more stringent review. The intent of the LA County Ridgeline ordinance was created to protect all of the Significate Ridgelines in the Santa Monica Mountains.

This should be a slam dunk decision. The construction and infringement on the ridgeline go against the ordinance and a variance MUST be denied. Protect and Preserve our Santa Monica Mountain Ridgelines.

Thank you.



Joseph Rosendo
Topanga Chamber of Commerce
Community Liaison
Topanga Canyon Boulevard Trash Warriors
Co-Founder
Box 1541
Topanga, CA 90290
310-699-8668
liaison@TopangaChamber.org
TopangaChamber.org

Hearing Officer
Los Angeles County Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

16 June 2025

Re: Project No. R2005-01452-(3) Variance No. 200900001
2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline

Dear Hearing Officer –

I am writing as a 21-year resident of Topanga Canyon and like many, an admirer of the scenic resources which brings protected wildlife and other appreciators of nature to this unique and special canyon community.

New development comes at a cost to the natural landscape, the wildlife and the visual beauty which are our scenic resources. It therefore must be done in a methodical and considered manner to minimize its intrusion and exist *within* the land, not *on top* of the land. This variance is a request for the structure to sit *on top* of the land.

The property at 2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard has been scared with unpermitted grading, has encroached on protected public lands in Edelman Park and has disrupted a natural watershed and sensitive wildlife habitat. Efforts should be focused on restoring what scenic resources were adversely impacted, not proposed actions to further develop it.

The 4,000 square foot monument will deface the natural ridgeline with its structural surface walls, while blinding sunlight reflections off the glass will become intrusive to the scenic beauty. Light illumination trespass will replace a natural, darkened, silhouetted mountain landscape which also invades our protected night skies.

To approve a variance of an existing ridgeline ordinance set forth after great efforts to protect the scenic resources for future generations would be irresponsible.

It's important to protect the visual beauty which identifies the culture of the Topanga Canyon community, nurtures businesses and recreational activities, allows wildlife to thrive and provides residents a quality of life that promotes a mental and physical well-being.

We have all traveled through various towns and those that are the most unique, most memorable and most appreciated, tend to be the ones that are most preserved, most protected and most respected. Other forgotten towns or landscapes are not lost to the natural

circumstances of time, but to decisions by local leaders over the years allowing adverse development to erase what should have been protected.

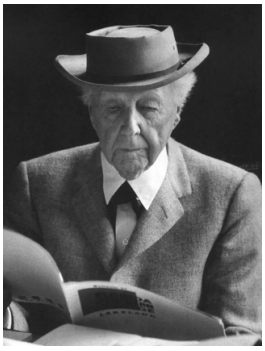
Stewardship is a great privilege and when we have a scenic resource such as Topanga Canyon, it is our collective responsibility to protect it for the enjoyment of many and not allow it to be exploited for the benefit of a few.

If we lose interest in protecting the integrity of our natural landscape, we're losing interest in protecting the integrity of our wildlife, our community and our culture.

Please deny this variance.

Thank you.

D. Todd Davidovich
Topanga Canyon, California



No house should ever be on a hill or on anything. It should be of the hill. Belonging to it. Hill and house should live together each the happier for the other. If you build a house on a hill, you lose the hill. – Frank Lloyd Wright

Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation, Inc.

The voice and conscience of the Santa Monica Mountains since 1968

Hearing Officer
Los Angeles County Regional Planning
320 West Temple Street
LosAngeles, California 90012

Project No. R2005-01452-(3) Variance No. 200900001
2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline

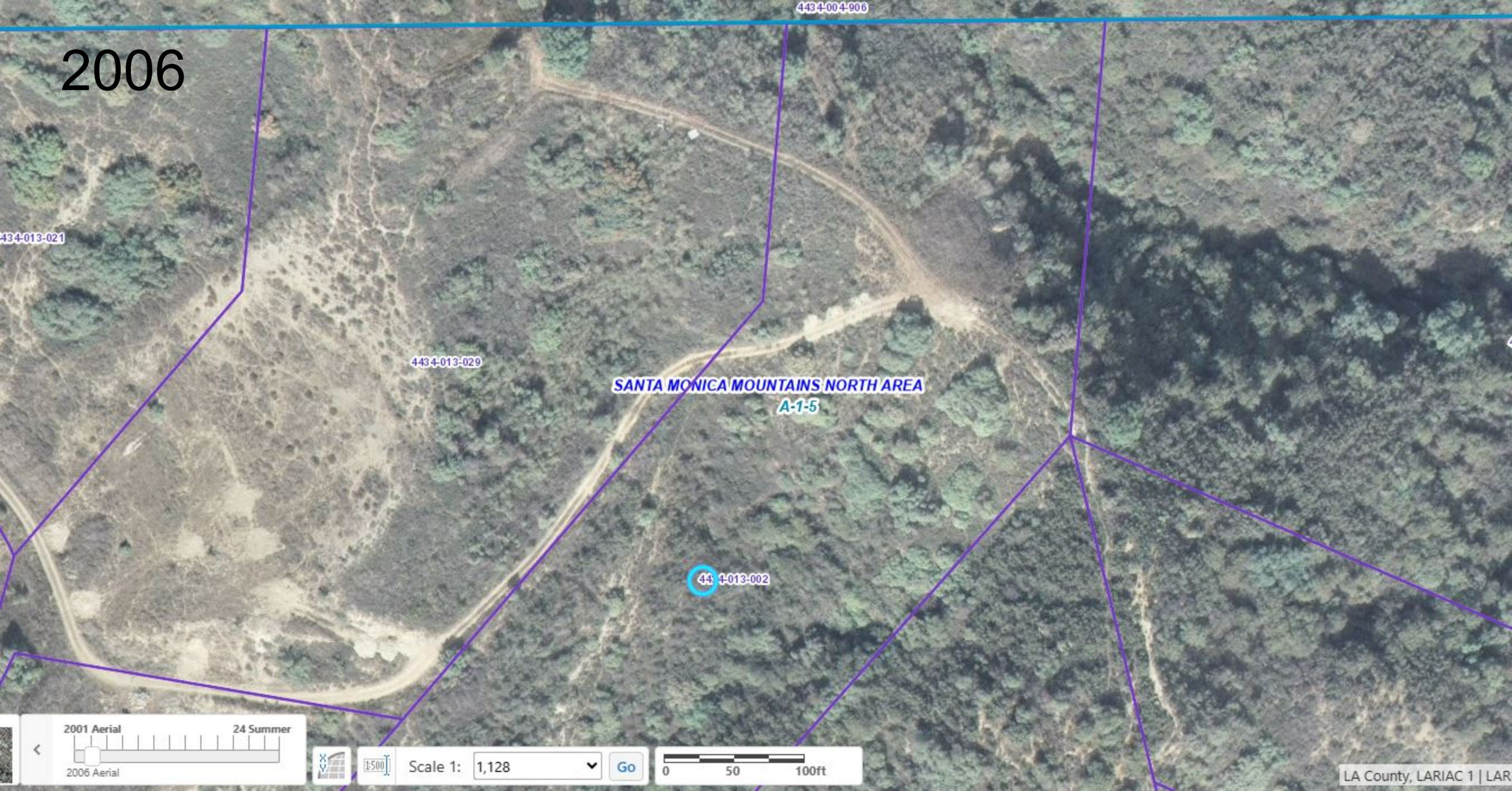
Dear Hearing Officer

The Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation offers the following comments on the proposed Variance to develop on a significant ridgeline in Topanga Canyon adjacent the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's (MRCA) Summit Valley – Ed Edelman Park.

We are in full agreement with all of the comments made asking that the request for a Variance on the above project be denied. After reading the report done by Regional Planning staff and then reviewing the comments made by the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy and all of the residents in Topanga, it is clear that this project needs further review.

The Ridgeline Ordinance is clear in its intent. There should be no building on any significant Ridgeline in the Santa Monica Mountains either in the Coastal Zone or the North Area. This ordinance was implemented after abuses to our Ridgelines happened over and over. A very dangerous precedence will be set if this project is approved

Thank you
Joan Slimocosky
Roger Pugliese
Co-Presidents
Las Virgenes Homeowners Federation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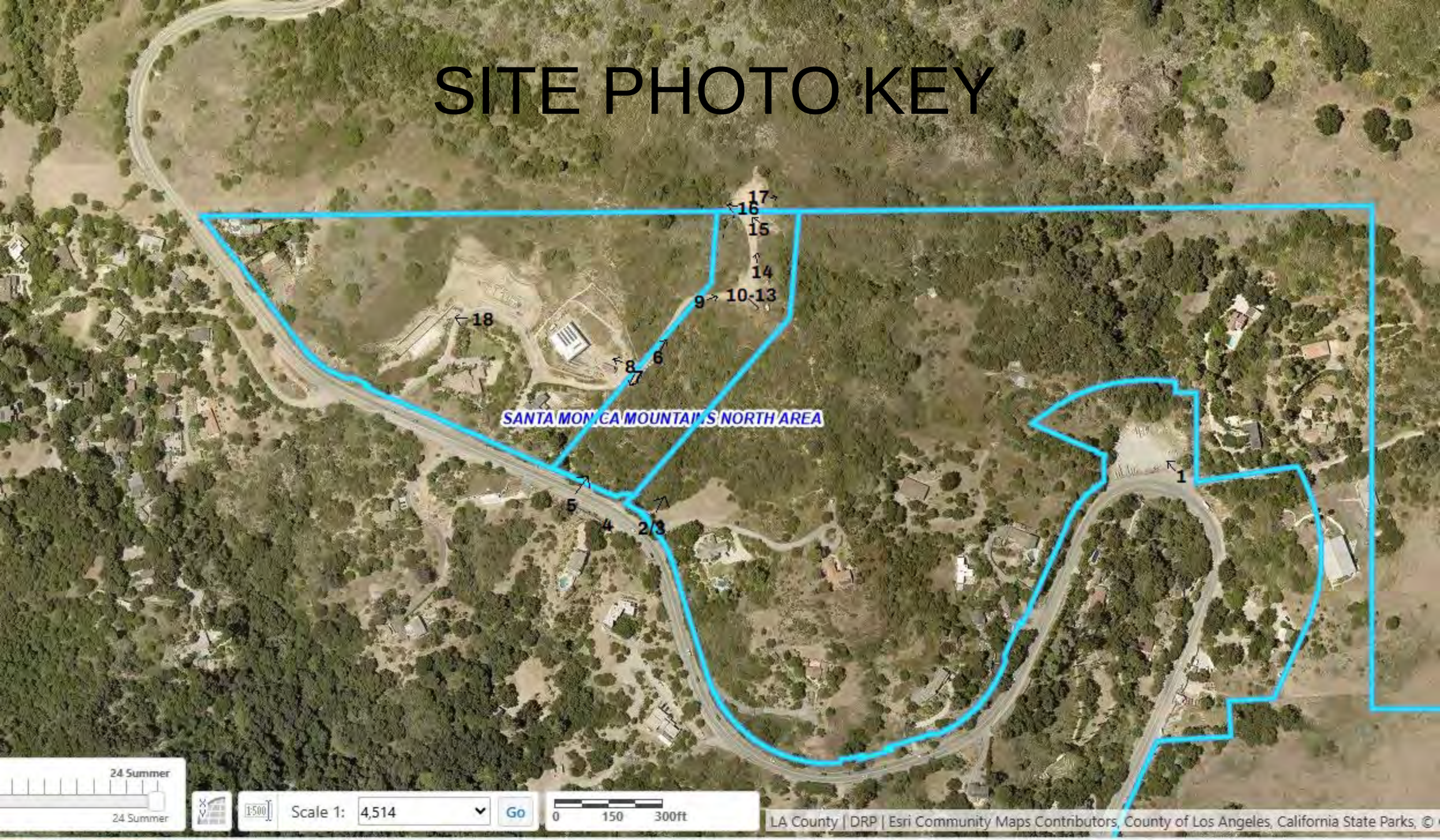

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