

**SUPPLEMENTAL
REPORT TO THE HEARING OFFICER**

DATE ISSUED:	June 18, 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	

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

After the Report to the Hearing Officer was issued on June 5, 2025, LA County Planning staff (“Staff”) received five letters of opposition to the Project.

The first letter is from Paul Edelman of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (“SMMC”) and is attached as Exhibit A-1. The letter expresses concerns with the Project and states that the Project applicant has illegally graded approximately 0.26 acres of land within the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority’s (“MRCA”) Summit Valley – Ed Edelman Park to the north. While aerial photos do show that grading was conducted within the parkland area to the north, no grading or zoning violations were ever issued for this work. Staff is currently conducting research to determine the legality of, and responsibility for, this grading. The letter also states that, by moving the residence further to the south, the Project would be moved outside of the 50-foot significant ridgeline buffer and that location would result in less

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.

off-site brush clearance within parkland to the north. However, Staff would like to note that, at that location, the residence would still require a variance because it would be within 50 vertical feet of the significant ridgeline, and it would likely require more grading because it would be near the edge of the existing graded pad. Also, the County cannot require off-site brush clearance within state-owned parkland. Staff's understanding is that brush clearance cannot be required in the parkland to the north because it is owned and managed by the MRCA, which is a joint-power authority that includes SMMC as a state agency. However, Staff will conduct further research on this issue.

The other four letters are from area residents and the Topanga Chamber of Commerce. These letters 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. These letters are attached as Exhibit B-1.

Staff will issue an additional Supplemental Report to the Hearing Officer with a recommendation on June 23, 2025. 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-1	Letter from Paul Edelman with SMMC (6/12/25)
EXHIBIT B-1	Four (4) additional letters of opposition to the Project

SANTA MONICA MOUNTAINS CONSERVANCY

KING GILLETTE RANCH
26800 MULHOLLAND HIGHWAY
CALABASAS, CA 91302
PHONE (310) 589-3200
FAX (310) 589-3200
WWW.SMMC.CA.GOV



June 12, 2025

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:

The Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (Conservancy) 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. Both the attached aerial photographs and those in the staff report clearly show that the applicant has done substantial grading and land filling on MRCA parkland including the filling of 200 feet of a USGS mapped drainage on public land. The attached low elevation drone photographs further confirm this illegal grading that destroyed 0.26 acres of vegetation and natural soils on MRCA land.

Because the project has already significantly adversely impacted public land beyond the subject parcel boundary, it cannot qualify for a Class 3 Categorical Exemption. The destroyed public land is in the County-designated Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area (SEA) which qualifies as a sensitive environment.

It also appears that the grading conducted to reach the MRCA land also graded beyond the grading limits approved in 2006. Furthermore, this northernmost grading on the subject parcel and the MRCA parcel form a unified block of fill within a drainage (see attached drone photographs.) As a result, the stability of fill on the subject property is dependent on fill on the MRCA property.

The subject project is also integral with the adjacent residential project under construction to the immediate west. At least 90 percent of the impacts of the project's 655 feet of road grading/widening occur on that subject adjacent property. The project description is further flawed because it does not address where the hundreds of cubic yard of cut for the road widening construction would be placed. This project has been piecemealed through the CEQA process, and its impacts must be analyzed in a more

cumulative manner with four other projects under construction between the subject lot and Topanga Canyon Boulevard.

The staff report and supporting environmental analysis (Environmental Determination) are significantly flawed for omitting both the existence of the existing offsite grading impacts and of any analysis of potential impacts from said illegal grading. The applicant's submitted Burden of Proof on why a variance to develop on the significant ridge line is invalid - first because it stated that any development site other than exactly that house location on pad site would result in filling a drainage, cause extensive extra grading, and unnecessarily damage additional habitat. Well, the applicant demonstrated that the proposed project already illegally caused all three of those types of harm. The current project description is thus inadequate.

Further, both the Burden of Proof and the staff report analysis are both flawed because their only alternative considered to not developing within 50 feet of the ridgeline is to move the development to where no variance would be required. In contrast, by moving the house location on the existing pad, significant public benefits can be obtained via a significant reduction of permanent required brush clearance on the MRCA parkland and on the subject parcel. The subject analyses fail because they both frame the ridgeline development as a black and white matter when there are many shades of grey on where the existing pad will allow a substantially equivalent sized house.

A single story, 3,500-square-foot-house could fit on the southwest most portion of the existing pad almost eliminating required annual brush clearance on MRCA parkland. Per the attached figure, with a 50 foot shift in the house footprint, the required clearance on MRCA parkland would drop from 0.18 acres to 0.04 acres. In all cases, a home on the subject pad would force over four acres of permanent brush clearance in Santa Monica Mountains Significant Ecological Area. Moving the house on the pad moves that permanent clearance zone off of the sensitive resource of public parkland on to private property.

Moving the house to the southwest on the existing pad also makes it easier to take advantage of the large fill slope to the southwest to create better defensible space particularly in concert with the brush clearance required for the house under construction to the immediate west. If the subject house is moved southwestward on pad, less fuel modification would have to occur in the mature onsite chaparral to the east and the house would be better protected from future fire and embers coming from the east. If the County is going to continue allow the construction of ridge top houses surrounded by hundreds of acres of chaparral at the end of steep 1500-foot-long narrow driveways, and grant variances to do so, the County should require that the siting of said houses to maximize fire safety and to minimize damage to sensitive resources and public

parkland acquired with public funds. Not to mention eliminate allowing this project to plant scores of non-native pepper trees in its fuel modification zones.

The hearing must be delayed; and the County must first require a new environmental analysis that reflects this illegal grading on adjacent public parkland. That analysis must include definitive, time certain measures to eliminate the fill from MRCA land and to reestablish perennial native vegetation on all affected areas to the satisfaction of the County biologist. That restoration must occur at the applicant's expense. A new spring biological survey on MRCA land must be conducted because heavy machinery will have to work on public land. The attached figures show the extent of the damage footprint on MRCA property.

The whole Burden of Proof idea that the only way to preserve the applicant's property rights is to grant the Variance is totally flawed. This letter demonstrates that substantial economic gain is available to the property owner with a house on the existing pad that significantly better avoids permanent brushing impacts to public parkland in a Significant Ecological Area. The pad and its grading were approved with the full knowledge of all those involved that it was bisected by a Significant Ridgeline. There was obvious inherent risk. The applicant acquired the property knowing that a Variance was and is required to build on the pad. The applicant now has no rights to build on the pad. There are no absolute property rights to be preserved to build on the ridgeline. The County has complete authority to dictate what rights this applicant has to develop on the ridgeline. The County should do what is in the best public interest.

The County can achieve a balance of adequate applicant economic reward with resource protection by requiring a plan to shift the house to the southwest on the existing pad -- all the while requiring full restoration of the buried MRCA parkland. Any less of a public benefit outcome totally defeats the value of protecting ridgelines, rewards multiple actions detrimental to commons, and would set a poor precedent. Granting this Variance would be a granting a special privilege to an applicant that graded and filled on adjacent public parkland. Moving the house on the existing pad is not the strict application of zoning regulations. Rather, it constitutes the full granting of a Variance for a better public serving project. As demonstrated in this letter, granting of such a slightly different Variance will not result in practical difficulties or unnecessary hardships.

Contrary to the staff report, the project as proposed is far from consistent with the below 2000 LUP policy:

Policy VI-21: Encourage siting of developments to include setbacks that protect public lands, streams, scenic features, views, and other natural features and that maximize open

Hearing Officer

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space areas; project density and structure placement shall be consistent with the need to minimize vegetation clearance for fire protection.

Please direct any future correspondence to my attention email at edelman@smmc.ca.gov, by phone at 310-589-3200 ext. 128, or at the above letterhead address.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Paul Edelman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

PAUL EDELMAN

Deputy Director

Natural Resources and Planning

 2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd proposed 4,000 sqft home and pool

 SMMC MRCA Owned/Managed Property

 Significant Ridgelines

0.18 acres of permanent fuel modification on public land (200' from proposed structure)

Public Parkland Boundary

Public Parkland Boundary

ood

2346 Topanga Canyon Blvd



2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd proposed 4,000 sqft home and pool

SMMC MRCA Owned/Managed Property

Significant Ridgelines

200+ feet of USGS mapped stream & 0.26 acres of public parkland currently destroyed

0.18 acres of permanent fuel modification on public land (200' from proposed structure)

Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park

Public Parkland Boundary

Public Parkland Boundary

house

pool

APN 4434-013-002
2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd

2346 Topanga Canyon Blvd



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Feet

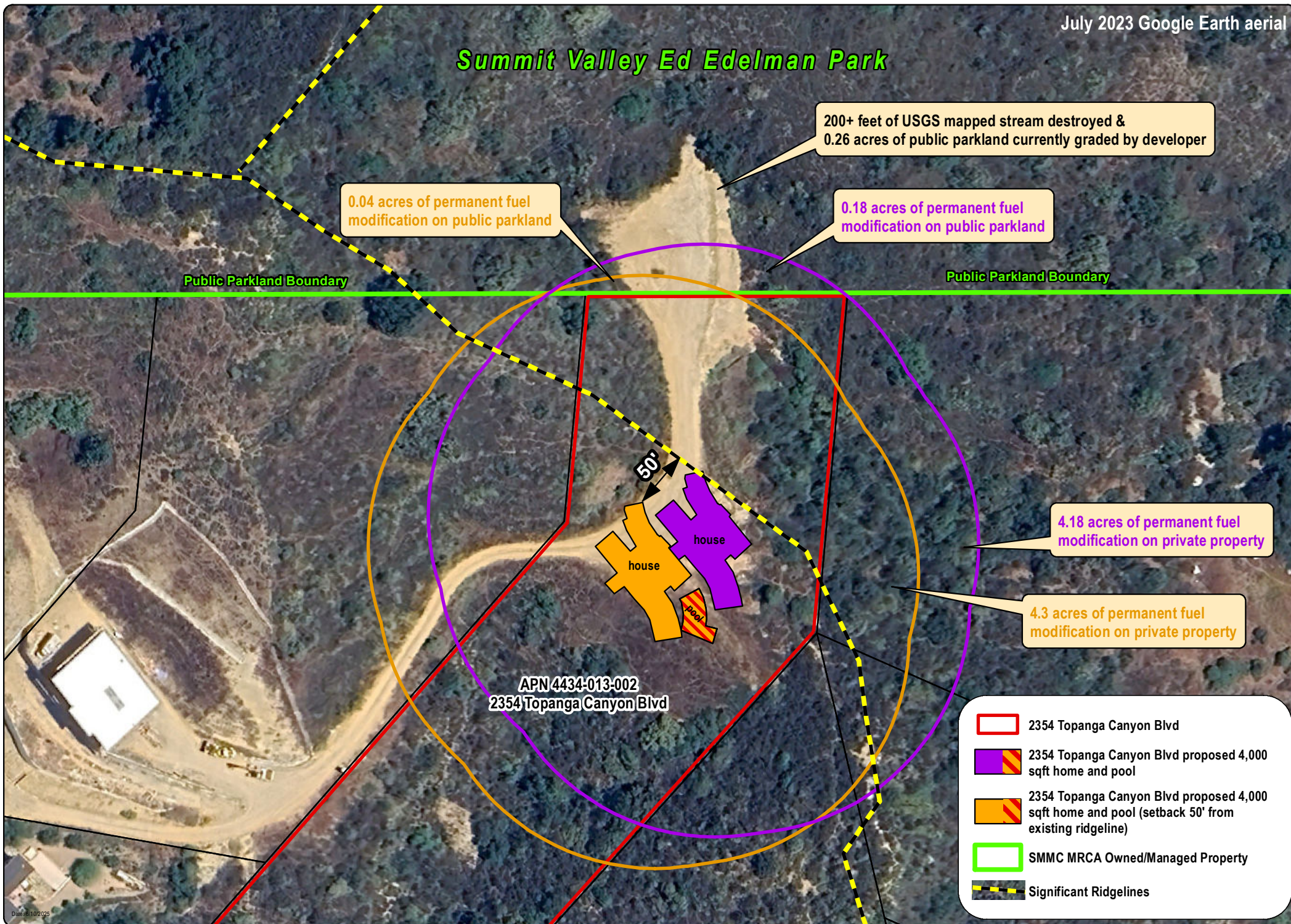
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Summit Valley Ed Edelman Park





Hearing Officer

Los Angeles County Regional Planning

320 West Temple Street Los Angeles, CA 90012

I am writing regarding project # R2005-01452-(3) Variance # 200900001 2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline Development

This proposed variance for the building of a home on the ridgeline at 2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd should be denied.

As a resident of Topanga for almost 2 decades, I have come to respect the beauty of this place... the rolling hills, sprawling meadows and volcanic mountain faces. The nature that lives in this place, both plant and animal, is testimony to Topanga Canyon being a precious sanctuary in the middle of a county inhabited by 10,000 residents.

We need to protect this special place and not allow it to be carved up and sold out to the highest bidder. Once it's gone- it's gone forever.

This project will forever scar Topanga's ridgeline. It's proposal to cut down and pave over a rolling hillside for access and building of a massive compound is not a resident building a dream home, it's an exhibition of gluttony- a developer that is doing it just because they can.

The applicant has already shown no regard for existing habitat or rules as one can plainly see the property has already been graded. Homes can be built with respect for the community and the environment.

Please deny this variance,

William Alford

Topanga Resident 18 years, Trash Warriors, Arson Watch, Topanga Volunteer Fire & Forestry Department

From: [DRP Public Comment](#)
To: [Tyler Montgomery](#); [Robert Glaser](#)
Cc: [DRP Public Comment](#)
Subject: RE: Variance No. 200900001
Date: Monday, June 16, 2025 6:54:37 AM

Please see email regarding tomorrow's project located on 2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard. Thank you.

ELIDA LUNA (she/her/hers)

COMMISSION SECRETARY, Operations & Major Projects (OMP)

Direct: (213) 974-6409

Email: eluna@planning.lacounty.gov

From: ken mazur <kenmazur@earthlink.net>
Sent: Sunday, June 15, 2025 8:44 PM
To: DRP Public Comment <comment@planning.lacounty.gov>
Subject: Variance No. 200900001

CAUTION: External Email. Proceed Responsibly.

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

June 13, 2025

Dear Hearing Officer:

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

The above proposed variance for the building of a home on the ridgeline at 2354 Topanga Canyon Blvd. should be denied. The ridgeline ordinance was created after much debate with public input. The property in question has already been illegally graded multiple times with significant encroachment and damage to *protected public lands* in Edelman Park. The applicant has shown little regard for existing North Area Plan regulations, nor the existing protected lands, having extensively graded this area as far back as 2003 without the relevant permits.

There are alternative sites on the property where a home could be built without impacting the natural existing scenic nature of this ridge or requiring a variance. A commitment to keeping the beauty of the Santa Monica Mountains intact, while allowing for the use of private land is one of the functions of the North Area Plan. Homes can be built and dreams realized without disregard for the community, the environment and unique scenic nature of the Canyon.

Please deny this variance.

Thank you,

Ken Mazu (not the applicant)

818 434 0828

kenmazur@earthlink.net

Topanga Resident for thirty-five years.

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

June 15th, 2025

Dear Hearing Officer,

As a Veterinarian, I took an important vow to always provide my very best of energy, effort and concentrated focus for the benefit and well-being of the animals.

Regarding the above ridgeline variance request, as a 13-year resident of Topanga Canyon, I would like to speak for the unspoken, natural wildlife within our special community.

The ridgeline for the above project is located on the natural watershed that many wildlife creatures and native plants depend on. Further interference rather than restoration of the watershed stream can have an impact on the ecosystem including decreased animal populations, increased competition for resources, habitat loss and an increased susceptibility of diseases within wildlife.

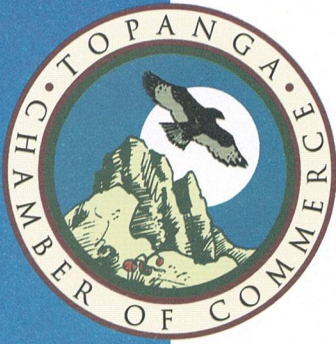
As we share our homes within a natural habitat adjacent to State Parks and protected public open space lands, building a home in Topanga that has a negative impact to nature is counterintuitive and should not even be a consideration. It's important to seek a solution to live within nature for sustainability and admiration, not on top of nature with development.

On behalf of the wildlife within Topanga Canyon, we would greatly appreciate it if you will please deny this variance request.

Thank you for your time.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Phusita'.

Phusita Nakphairat, DVM (Dr. Pooh)



Topanga Chamber of Commerce
Where Business Thrives, Naturally

P.O. Box 185, Topanga, CA 90290
TopangaChamber.org
310.455.0790

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

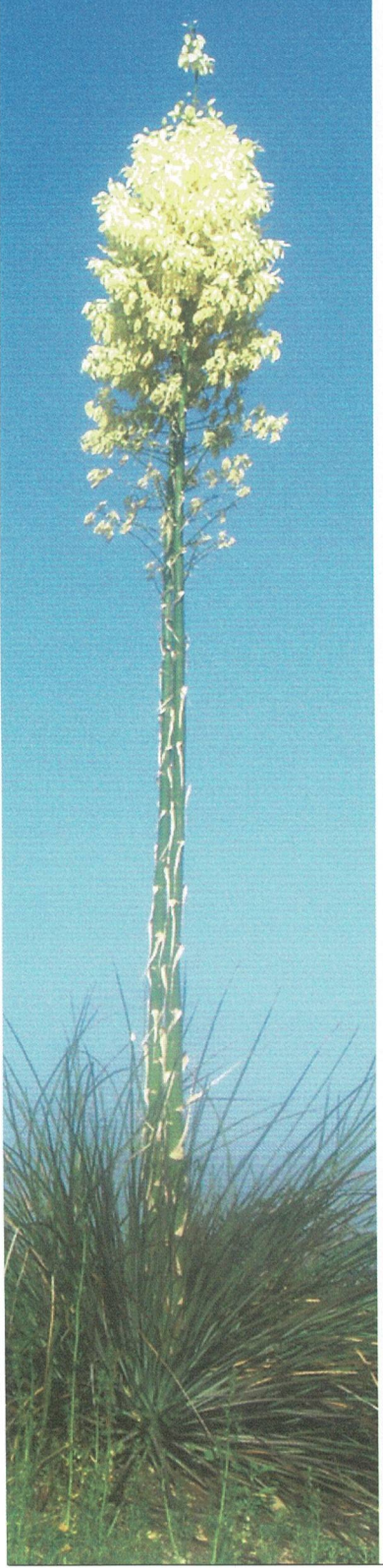
Re: Project No. R2005-01452-(3) Variance No. 200900001
2354 Topanga Canyon Boulevard – Significant Ridgeline

Dear Hearing Officer

The Topanga Chamber of Commerce has been serving Topanga for over 75 years. We have supported local businesses and work hard to help Topanga thrive. It is because of our rustic, natural beauty that many of our member businesses and their customers come to Topanga to shop, dine, and experience nature.

Topanga has stayed Topanga thanks to the hard-fought battles our Community has taken part in. The LA County ordinance preventing developers from building on a significant ridgeline helps in this way. When folks come to Topanga, they know they are in a special place by not seeing homes built on Ridgelines or the bright lights these houses often use to light up our night sky, possibly in violation of the County's dark sky ordinance.

All Topangans and our visitors enjoy land that was saved from development, like the epic battle fought to support the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy's acquisition of Summit Vally Park in the 90's. Now a developer is proposing to build out and



encroach on part of that protected land. The Ridgeline Ordinance was created to stop this type of development from happening. It should be followed.

We recommend denial of the request in question and that the recommendations stated in the Conservancy's testimony be respected and followed. Thank you for this opportunity to comment on this project.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R. Fomalont', with a stylized flourish extending to the left.

Ronald Fomalont

President, Topanga Chamber of Commerce