

In accordance with our mandate under Article II, Section 1 of Council Policy 600-24 to make recommendations to the City Council, Planning Commission, and City staff concerning the preparation of or amendment to a land use plan, the Serra Mesa Planning Group hereby presents the following comments for inclusion in the staff report to the Planning Commission and City Council on the Proposed Amendment to the Serra Mesa Community Plan (Phyllis Place Connection).

This report recommends against amending the Serra Mesa Community Plan to include the Phyllis Place connection for the following reasons:

1. The emergency connection is redundant and is neither required nor necessary.
2. The connection will not improve overall traffic flow in the study area and, in fact, will degrade it.
3. The proposed Amendment has been rejected numerous prior times by the Planning Commission and the City Council.
4. The connection is overwhelmingly opposed by the affected Community.

EMERGENCY ROAD CONNECTION

When the City Council requested the initiation of this Community Plan Amendment in 2008, their discussion was heavily focused on public safety, emergency evacuation, and fire department access. (See “History of CPA” section of this report.)

The Phyllis Place connection is not required to provide emergency access to Quarry Falls from Serra Mesa and the north. The project is already designed with emergency vehicle access at Kaplan Drive.¹

The existing Kaplan Drive connection is superior to the proposed Phyllis Place connection in two ways: slope and environmental impact.

SLOPE: The Kaplan Drive connection will have a slope of 3.6% along the steepest possible path, or 1.6% along a more favorable path. The Phyllis Place connection along Franklin Ridge Road would have a slope of at least 8.6%, and as much as 9.1%.² For comparison, the average slope on Texas Street coming out of Mission Valley (with LOS F) is about 9%, while the cross-slope on a sidewalk for drainage is 2%. (A smaller slope represents a shallower grade and is preferable.)³ Clearly, in consideration of grade, the Kaplan Drive connection is far favorable to the Phyllis Place connection.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT: Adding a second emergency road connection at Phyllis Place connection would require replacing a pedestrian trail with a paved roadway. This raises multiple environmental concerns. It divides the Phyllis Place Park in half and

¹ “Access for emergency vehicles shall be provided in the northwestern portion of the Foothills District at the terminus of Kaplan Drive in the adjacent Abbots Hill neighborhood of Serra Mesa.” Quarry Falls Specific Plan, page 8-20. This connection is also shown on the Quarry Falls VTM and described in the PEIR on page 3-28.

² Based on Grading Study dated November 24, 2004, prepared by P&D Consultants. Analyzed by Dicken Hall, Civil Engineering Designer, Ret., with 56 years experience including the County of San Diego

³ The City of San Diego Street Design Manual allows a maximum grade of 7% for a Four Lane Urban Major, the designation of the proposed Phyllis Place connection.

reduces the available parkland. It requires relocation of a high-pressure gas line. But, most of all, the road would be constructed through sensitive habitat, particularly coastal sage scrub.

The Kaplan Drive connection avoids all of these issues, since the Serra Mesa portion of the connection already exists and the only new portions of the Kaplan Drive connection will be on reclaimed mining operations land. Clearly, in consideration of environmental concerns, the Kaplan Drive connection is far favorable to the Phyllis Place connection.

QUARRY FALLS TRAFFIC STUDY

[Removed due to lack of consideration of mitigation effects. Please see updated report.]

HISTORY OF CPA

This process represents the fourth time this Community Plan Amendment has been considered by the Planning Commission and the third time by the City Council.

The Planning Commission denied the CPA initiation on May 6, 2004, on December 23, 2004, and on September 18, 2008.

The City Council denied the CPA initiation, upholding the decision of the Planning Commission, on March 15, 2005.

The City Council voted to initiate the CPA on October 21, 2008, as an information gathering process. In their discussion, most Councilmembers focused on the issue of emergency-only access, particularly for public safety and evacuation in the case of fire.

Unfortunately, no one who was so authorized informed the Council during this discussion that there is already an emergency-only connection from Quarry Falls to Serra Mesa designed into the project at Kaplan Drive.

SERRA MESA COMMUNITY OPPOSITION

The citizens of Serra Mesa have time and time again expressed their opposition to this road connection, starting with the Serra Mesa Community Plan in 1977.

The original Serra Mesa Community Plan included the Natural Resource (Sand and Gravel) Operations in what is now Mission Valley, and contained detailed plans for their eventual re-use.

The SMCP was very clear that

All lowland development should be oriented away from the mesa.

and

Streets serving new lowland development should be connected to the lowland road network, and not to major streets serving residential areas on the mesa.⁴

The SMCP specifically addressed the Quarry Falls project area, stating:

Vehicular access should be gained from a street network off Friars Road, Mission Center Road and Stadium Way.⁵

Since the first days of the discussion of this project, and certainly documented since the scoping of the PEIR, the residents of Serra Mesa have objected to this specific connection at Phyllis Place.

Surveys have been done of the community to ensure that the Serra Mesa Community Council and the Serra Mesa Planning Group are accurately representing the majority of residents, landowners, and businesspeople in Serra Mesa. The community overwhelmingly supports the Phyllis Place Park and opposes the Phyllis Place road connection.

The Serra Mesa Planning Group and members of the community have repeatedly expressed strong opposition to the Phyllis Place road connection in writing and in person at all stages of the development process for Quarry Falls, and continue to express their opposition to the proposed Community Plan Amendment.

⁴ SMCP p.75 ¶ 1 (1977)

⁵ SMCP p.76, NRPU #2 (1977)