

Lyons Canyon Ranch

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5.13 FIRE SERVICES

This section provides an analysis of fire services, which is based on information provided by the County of Los Angeles Fire Department (Fire Department). The Fire Department maintains ultimate review and approval authority over aspects of the proposed development that relate to fire protection, and may identify further recommendations and/or requirements.

5.13.1 ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES

The County of Los Angeles Fire Department provides fire protection service to the unincorporated area. The Santa Clarita Valley is supported by eight fire stations and three fire camps. The jurisdictional station for the Specific Plan area is Fire Station 124, located at 25111 Pico Canyon Road.¹ Additional fire protection services would be provided by the closest available district response units. Should a significant incident occur, the project site would be served by the resources of the Fire Department including the eight stations that have primary jurisdiction within the Santa Clarita Valley.

A description of the operational characteristics of the stations closest to the site is provided below.

- ◆ Los Angeles County Fire Station 124 is located at 25111 Pico Canyon Road, approximately 3.0 miles north of the project site. The station maintains one fire engine and one paramedic squad, and is supported by five firefighters, two of whom are paramedics. The response time from the station to the project site would range from approximately 5.5 minutes to 9.3 minutes.²
- ◆ Los Angeles County Fire Station 73 is located at 24875 N. San Fernando Rod and is approximately 4.0 miles northeast of the project site. The station maintains an engine company and a paramedic squad, for a total staffing of seven personnel. The response time from the station to the project site would range from approximately 7.4 minutes to 10.7 minutes.³

The Fire Department also maintains three fire camps with three fire crews, which include Los Angeles County Jail inmate teams of 12 to 15 fire laborers. These camps are located in San Francisquito Canyon, in Soledad Canyon, and at the Peter Pitchess Honor Rancho. An additional County non-inmate crew of eight to ten members provides wildland fire fighting protection for the Santa Clarita Valley area.

¹ Per written correspondence with David R. Leininger, Chief, Forestry Division Prevention Bureau, on April 8, 2003.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

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The level of service provided to areas within the unincorporated area is determined by the Fire Department. Nationally recognized response time targets for urban areas is five minutes for a basic life support unit (engine company) and eight minutes for an advanced life support unit (paramedic squad). The Fire Department is currently meeting these standards.⁴ The average response time in the City of Santa Clarita during 2003 was five minutes and 43 seconds.⁵ It should be noted that the City encompasses rural and undeveloped areas as well as urban areas.

The Fire Department annually updates their Five-Year Capital Plan. This plan identifies anticipated facilities that would be constructed during the five-year planning horizon. Funding used for land acquisitions, facility improvements, and partial funding of new equipment is generated through the Fire Department's Developer Fee Program, which is collected at the time building permits are issued. Funding used for increases in staffing is generated from local property taxes. The applicant is required to pay fees under the County Fire Department Developer Fee Program for land and construction of fire stations, and the full cost of fire fighting equipment.

WILDLAND FIRE HAZARD POTENTIAL

The Fire Department designates lands in the county in regards to their potential for wildland fire hazards. These designations are made by the County Forester, and are based on criteria, including an area's accessibility, amount and type of vegetative cover, water availability, and topography. The two designations used by the Fire Department are Moderate Fire Hazard Zone and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Areas within the County not designated as either a Moderate Fire Hazard Zone or Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone are not considered to be subject to wildland fire hazards.

The differences between Moderate Fire Hazard Zone and Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone designations are relatively minor, in that one or more of the four criteria (access, topography, vegetation, and water) may pose less of a constraint in Moderate Fire Hazard Zone than in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Additionally, the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone has more restrictive building requirements than the Moderate Fire Hazard Zone, and is considered to be the most severe fire zone. The Fire Department has designated the project site as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.⁶

However, the frequency of fire events may be diminished as a result of fire prevention and fire suppression activities. Fire prevention activities include prescribed burns, vegetation thinning/removal, and creation of buffer zones; whereas fire suppression involves measures, which control fires once they have started (i.e., fuel breaks, use of fire fighting equipment, etc.).

⁴ Per written correspondence with David R. Leininger, Chief, Forestry Division Prevention Bureau, on April 8, 2003.

⁵ Telephone communication with Danny Kolker, Planning Analyst, Planning Division, Los Angeles County Fire Department, June 24, 2005.

⁶ Per written correspondence with David R. Leininger, Chief, Forestry Division Prevention Bureau, on April 8, 2003.

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Generally, fire prevention for urban development in wildland fire hazard areas focuses on restricting the types of building materials used, building design, and incorporating setbacks. Development within the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone is required to meet the building construction requirements specified in the City's Building and Safety Code (refer to the *Fire Codes and Guidelines* discussion).

FIRE CODES AND GUIDELINES

The availability of sufficient on-site water pressure is a basic requirement of the Fire Department. The Fire Department requires sufficient capacity for fire flow for public hydrants at residential locations of 2,000 gallons per minute (gpm) residual pressure for a two-hour duration for single-family residential and 3,000 gpm residual pressure for a three-hour duration for multi-family residential.⁷ These rates are determined based upon square footage of proposed structures.

Either the Newhall County Water District (NCWD) or the Valencia Water Company (VWC) could provide adequate fire flows in addition to meeting domestic demands.⁸

Due to the relatively high fire hazard potential that exists in the Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, development within these areas is subject to various governmental codes, guidelines, and programs which are aimed at reducing the hazard potential to acceptable levels. The County of Los Angeles has prepared Fuel Modification Plan Guidelines, which set forth guidelines and landscape criteria for all new construction to implement ordinances relating to fuel modification planning and help reduce the threat of fires in high hazard areas.⁹ Per Section 1117.2.1 of the County Fire Code: "*A fuel modification plan, a landscape plan and an irrigation plan ... shall be submitted with any subdivision of land or prior to any new construction ... where the structure or subdivision is located within areas designated as a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone in the Los Angeles County Building Code.*" A fuel modification plan identifies specific zones within a property, which are subject to fuel modification. A fuel modification zone is a strip of land where combustible native or ornamental vegetation has been modified and/or partially or totally replaced with drought tolerant, fire resistant plants.

⁷ The Los Angeles County Fire Department (LACFD) Fire Flow Requirements by building type are referenced from Azusa Light and Water Department's *Year 2000 Water System Master Plan Update*, adopted 2000.

⁸ *SB 610 Water Supply Assessment for the Lyons Canyon Ranch Project*, Science Applications International Corporation, September 2004.

⁹ Fuel Modification Plan Guidelines for Projects Located in Fire Zone 4 of Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zones, County of Los Angeles Fire Department, Prevention Bureau, Forestry Division, Brush Clearance Section, Adopted January, 1998.

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5.13.2 SIGNIFICANCE THRESHOLD CRITERIA

Appendix G of the *CEQA Guidelines* contains the Initial Study Environmental Checklist form used during preparation of the project Initial Study, which is contained in Appendix A of this EIR. The Initial Study includes questions relating to fire services. The issues presented in the Initial Study Checklist have been utilized as thresholds of significance in this Section. Accordingly, a project may create a significant environmental impact if one or more of the following occurs:

- ◆ Substantial adverse physical impacts associated with the provision of new or physically altered governmental facilities, need for new or physically altered governmental facilities, the construction of which could cause significant environmental impacts, in order to maintain acceptable service ratios, response times or other performance objectives.

Additionally, based upon the Los Angeles County Fire Code, the proposed project would create a significant threat to the safety of future residents and users of the project site if the project:

- ◆ Is located in a high fire hazard area (such as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone);
- ◆ Is in a high fire hazard area, and is served by inadequate access due to length, width, surface material, turnarounds, or grade of access roads;
- ◆ Is in a high fire hazard area and has more than 75 dwelling units on a single means of access;
- ◆ Is located in an area having inadequate water and pressure to meet fire flow standards; or
- ◆ Is located in close proximity to potential dangerous fire hazard conditions or uses such as refineries, storage of flammable materials, or explosives manufacturing.

5.13.3 IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

CONSTRUCTION-RELATED IMPACTS

- ◆ ***CONSTRUCTION OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT WOULD RESULT IN AN INCREASED DEMAND FOR FIRE SERVICES.***

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Currently, the project site is undeveloped and does not have fire hydrants or water mains serving the site. Unimproved dirt roads extend onto the project site; however, these roads do not meet fire equipment access standards. Due to the lack of fire equipment access and water lines providing fire flows on the project site, construction activities would have a significant impact on fire protection without mitigation.

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Mitigation measures that would reduce construction-related fire impacts to a less than significant level would include conducting brush clearance prior to the initiation of construction activities, availability of adequate water to service construction activities, and that all construction-related requirements of the Fuel Modification Plan, landscape plan and irrigation plan, as approved by the Fire Department, be fulfilled. As the proposed project builds out, construction would also be required to comply with all applicable Building and Fire Code requirements for such items as types of roofing materials, building construction, brush clearance, water mains, fire hydrant flows, hydrant spacing, access and design, and other hazard reduction programs for Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, as set forth by the County Forester and Fire Warden. Implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would reduce impacts to a less than significant impact.

Mitigation Measures:

FS1 All proposed development on the site must comply with applicable state and County code and ordinance requirements for fire protection.

FS2 Prior to the issuance of a certificate of occupancy, the project applicant shall dedicate to the Los Angeles County Fire Department, a 1.26 acre fire station site at the northeast corner of the proposed project. The fire station site must be constructed and dedicated to the Los Angeles County Fire Department in accordance with the provisions of the AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CONSOLIDATED FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY AND WESTERN PACIFIC HOUSING – LYONS CANYON PARTNERS, LLC.

Please refer to Appendix P of this Draft EIR for the full text of this agreement.

FS3 The project shall prepare a Fuel Modification Plan (which includes a landscape plan and irrigation plan) as required for projects located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. The Fuel Modification Plan shall be submitted and approved by the County Fire Department and the Department of Regional Planning prior to issuance of grading permit. The Fuel Modification Plan shall depict a fuel modification zone in conformance with the Fuel Modification Ordinance in effect at the time of subdivision. The fuel modification plan shall not conflict with the revegetation plan as directed in Section 5.6, *Biological Resources*.

FS4 Brush clearance shall be conducted prior to initiation of construction activities in accordance with Los Angeles County Fire Department requirements.

FS5 Adequate access to all buildings on the project site shall be provided for emergency vehicles during the building construction process.

FS6 Adequate water availability shall be provided to service construction activities.

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Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

OPERATIONAL IMPACTS

◆ ***OPERATIONS OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD RESULT IN AN INCREASED DEMAND FOR FIRE SERVICES.***

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis The buildout of the project site, development would involve the construction of 190 dwelling units. Fire Station 124 is currently the jurisdictional company for the project site with primary responsibility for fire protection services. This station is located approximately three miles from the project site at Stevenson Ranch Parkway and Pico Canyon Road.

The Fire Department had stated that the previously proposed project (consisting of 835 residential units) would be required to provide a fire station site as a condition of approval for the project. The current proposal to construct 190 single-family residences would not require construction of this new fire station site. Nevertheless, the project applicant is voluntarily proposing to construct the 1.26 acre site to improve fire and emergency service in the area. The new 8,000-square-foot fire station would be located on a 1.26-acre site, located at the northeast corner of subject site. Direct access would be provided via "A" Street and would serve the proposed project and surrounding communities, as necessary. In addition, Fire Stations 73 and 126, which are in reasonable proximity to the project site, could provide additional fire protection services for the proposed project.

Paramedic services are provided by the Los Angeles County Fire Department from their fire stations and a private ambulance company under contract with the City of Santa Clarita.

Development of the fire station on-site is considered an in-lieu donation in place of payment of the Fire Department's Developer Fees Program. Future developments within the County would be required to pay for Fire Department Developer Fees program, which would provide the tax revenues for the operation and staffing of the fire station. Finally, the proposed project would be required to meet County codes and requirements relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the site during both the construction and operational stages of the project. As a result, operation of the proposed project would not diminish the staffing or the response times of existing fire stations in the Santa Clarita Valley, and would not create a special fire protection problem on the site that would result in a decline in existing services levels in the Valley. Therefore, implementation of the recommended mitigation measures and development of a fire station on-site would reduce fire service impacts to a less than significant level.

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Mitigation Measures:

General

- FS7.** The project shall comply with the Los Angeles County Fire Department Development standards with respect to access roadways, building orientation, brush clearance, fire flows,

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

WILDLAND FIRE HAZARDS

- ◆ ***DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROPOSED PROJECT COULD INCREASE WILDLAND FIRE HAZARDS.***

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Development of the proposed project would result in the construction of residential uses in areas that have been designated as Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Characteristics of the project site that contribute to this designation include: access, lack of adequate water supplies, topography, and vegetative cover. An analysis of the site's fire hazard potential relative to these factors is presented below.

Access

Two primary entrances are proposed from The Old Road: the primary entry in the northern project boundary and a secondary project entry approximately ¼ mile south. A primary residential street extends from each entry. The secondary residential street connects to "A" Street farther to the south. The simple circulation system would provide adequate emergency access to all development sites.

County/City code requirements specify that no more than 75 dwelling units can be built on a single means of access within the project area. The internal circulation system for the proposed project would be consistent with County standards regarding access. The proposed project would be required to comply with all circulation and access requirements imposed upon the project by the Fire Department (refer to Mitigation Measures FS7 through FS9). Consequently, no significant vehicular access-related impacts are expected to occur as a result of project implementation.

Water Supply

The proposed water system for the proposed project would provide water service for domestic and non-domestic uses (refer to Section 5.11, Water and Wastewater, for further information). This system would also provide water supplies sufficient to support fire suppression activity in the event of wildland or structural fires. The proposed water supply system would include water mains and fire hydrants, and the provision of fire flows to meet County standards. Given that a

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long-term source of water must exist for the proposed project prior to the issuance of building permits, and that a water supply system is proposed that would meet County fire flow requirements, no significant water-related fire hazards would occur.

Topography

The project site is characterized by hilly topography on either side of the site's central feature, the east-west trending Lyon Canyon drainage.¹⁰ Elevations in the project site range from approximately 1,325 feet above mean sea level (msl) to approximately 1,702 msl and the topography consists of gradual to very steep slopes.¹¹ Lyons Canyon trends easterly across the southwesterly portion of the project site and turn northerly in the central and northern portions. Numerous tributary canyons "branch" out from Lyons Canyon and extend to the southerly property boundary. The southerly portion of the project site encompasses the northern ridges and canyons of Towsley Canyon.¹²

Vegetative Cover

The project site was completely burned as a result of the October 2003 Simi Wildfire, which has significantly altered the vegetation on-site. The fire burned all vegetation on-site and killed several wildlife species.¹³ Prior to the wildfire, the canyon floors were typically covered with native grasses, shrubs and trees and natural slopes were typically covered with moderately dense to dense shrubs. The predominant vegetation types on-site included Riparian Scrub, Riparian Woodland, California Annual Grassland, Coastal Sage Scrub, Chaparral, California Walnut Woodland, and Coast Live Oak Woodland.¹⁴ The majority of the above described habitat is beginning to recover. However, the overall density has been substantially decreased.

The project site is adjacent to limited areas with moderate to heavy vegetative cover. The plant communities that make up this cover are highly combustible and, without mitigation, would present a high fire hazard to development in these areas, which would be a significant impact because development in these areas would pose a special fire protection problem. As development of the project site occurs, fire hazards associated with the natural vegetative cover would be eliminated due to the replacement of this cover with urban landscape vegetation, which is irrigated and less combustible than the existing vegetation. The potential for wildland fire hazards would still exist at the wildland/urban interface due to: vacant and/or limited development to the west, increased human activity, and the potential for fires due to accidental and arson-related causes.

¹⁰ *Phase I Cultural Resources Assessment for Lyons Canyon Ranch Specific Plan*, BonTerra Consulting, November 5, 2004.

¹¹ *Biological Technical Report*, BonTerra Consulting, November 2004.

¹² *Preliminary Geotechnical Report*, Pacific Soils Engineering, Inc. March 10, 2004.

¹³ *Delineation of Jurisdictional Waters and Riparian Habitats for Lyon Canyon Ranch*, David Magney Environmental Consulting, March 2004.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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Without mitigation, such impacts could be significant. The proposed project would be required to meet County codes and requirements relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the site during both the construction and operational stages of the project. This includes preparation of a Fuel Modification Plan, landscape plan and irrigation plan. Consequently, no significant impacts with regard to vegetative cover would occur. In conclusion, while the project site is located within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone, project components (development of a fire station on-site), compliance with County codes and implementation of the recommended mitigation measures would reduce hazards associated with wildland fires to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures: Refer to Mitigation Measures FS1 through FS15.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

5.13.4 CUMULATIVE IMPACTS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

- ◆ ***DEVELOPMENT ASSOCIATED WITH THE PROPOSED PROJECT AND RELATED PROJECTS WOULD INCREASE DEMANDS FOR FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES IN THE SANTA CLARITA VALLEY.***

Level of Significance Prior to Mitigation: Less Than Significant Impact.

Impact Analysis: Future development of the proposed project within the County, future development within surrounding incorporated and unincorporated areas, and related projects would be required to provide funds to the Fire Department Developer Fees program, as deemed appropriate by the LACFD, which would provide the tax revenues for the operation and staffing of local fire service facilities. If determined necessary, the LACFD may require the construction of new fire protection facilities to meet anticipated service demands, as is the case with the proposed project. Based on the LACFD's standard developer fee of \$0.3716 per square foot of development, the proposed project and related projects would require payment of approximately \$229,463 to maintain adequate fire service¹⁵. In-lieu of developer fee payment, the project applicant has entered into an agreement with the Los Angeles County Fire Department for dedication of a 1.26 acre fire station site in the northeast corner of the project. Furthermore, the proposed project and related projects are required to meet County codes and requirements relative to providing adequate fire protection services to the site during both the construction and operational stages of the project. Additionally, because development projects in the Santa Clarita Valley are subject to review and approval by the LACFD, all developments must meet LACFD's fire flow, fuel modification, and site access requirements to protect developments against structure and wildland fire hazards. Consequently, operation of cumulative projects would not diminish the staffing or the response times of existing fire stations in the Santa Clarita Valley, and would not create a special fire protection problem on the various sites that would

¹⁵ Fee calculations assume an average square footage of 3,250 x 190 x \$0.3716 = \$229,463

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result in a decline in existing service levels in the area or pose a an unacceptable fire risk to people or structures. Therefore, payment of fees or the development of new fire facilities, as required by the LACFD, would reduce cumulative fire service impacts to a less than significant level.

Mitigation Measures: No mitigation measures are required.

Level of Significance After Mitigation: Not applicable.