

Greenbacks vs. Green Space:

A Positive Development

*Editorial by Marc Annotti
President, DS Ventures*

DS Ventures is proposing to design 37 detached single-family homes on more than six acres of land at Mulholland Drive and San Feliciano Drive. A great deal of care has gone into this project to create much-needed housing while maintaining the natural beauty that makes this community unique.

Our goal is to create an addition to the community that is consistent with the quality of the surrounding neighborhood and is sensitive to our neighbors and the beauty of the property. By integrating community feedback into our project, we have created a family-oriented, community-minded project that meets this goal.

Preserving the existing oak trees and wildlife has been our highest priority and the defining aspect by which we have structured this project. Though the current R1 zoning permits 54 units on this property, DS Ventures is planning 37 three and four-bedroom detached family homes between 2,400-3,200 square feet in size. The zoning

modification we are seeking allows us to group the homes by reducing private yards for the sole purpose of ensuring the preservation of more than 90% of the oak trees on the property.

In, addition, much of the existing open area is designated as common space to be maintained by the Homeowners Association. This project also ensures the maintenance of the adjacent right-of-way along Mulholland Corridor, keeping it free of debris and brush that can often become an eyesore and hazard to the neighbors.

DS Ventures is excited to be your new neighbor, and we look forward to continuing to work closely with the community as we proceed through the approval process. We will continue to update you on the project and are available to answer any questions you may have.

We at DS Ventures appreciate the opportunity to share our vision with the community.



Photo of a portion of the Oak Savanna

Builders want more

Residents want

It's getting to be a familiar story throughout Woodland Hills. The last plots of open space are in the cross hairs of developers targeting new housing tracts. Large, tree-shaded lots in Walnut Acres and College Acres that once held modest post-WWII California ranch houses are being sliced and diced into tiny cookie-cutter plots. New, de-facto streets are mushrooming up as homeowners sell off their back yards for flag lot construction.

Because of skyrocketing commuting times and costs, the Woodland Hills area is coming under intense pressure from builders looking to squeeze as many homes as they can on the last available parcels of land, or shoehorn multiple dwellings into existing communities.

"It's getting to be a serious problem

New Denser Development...



because so many of the homes being built are totally out of character with the existing communities," stated Herb Madsen, who represents stakeholders in the Walnut Acres tract. "We're seeing densities increased two or three times over what the area's original plans called for, and that impacts traffic, support systems like schools and even the look of a neigh-

borhood. It destroys the value of a large-lot community and drives everyone's property values down."

In-fill building has its supporters. Many developers quickly note that LA needs additional housing, and they're filling that need. Others adhere to the belief that property owners have a right to maximize the value of their property—even if it means slicing off hunks of it to cram in two or three new structures.

On the other side are the homeowners—many, long-time neighborhood residents—who complain that this wild orgy of building permanently scars their neighborhoods, altering the character and lifestyle from what originally attracted so many of them in the first place.

"We're not against a sane policy of

The latest developments in the war



... as viewed from San Feliciano Road.

... units per acre.

... more open space.

An Un-neighborly Idea

*Editorial by Dave Breliant
President, Save Oak Savanna*

In June, 2005 Woodland Hills neighbors adjacent to 6.2 acres of mostly open land at Mulholland and San Feliciano Drives discovered it was slated for condo development. They organized as Save Oak Savanna (SOS), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit group with an extensive website: www.saveoaksavanna.org. SOS continues to grow in size and strength with membership now over 600.

SOS met with the developer, DS Ventures, who revealed their plan to build 37 box-style, 3-story detached condo homes that exceed height limits and degrade the surrounding viewshed. This requires approval of a condo subdivision and zoning changes from the current R1-1 to RD-6 (designed for condos and apartments). They also require several exceptions to the Mulholland Scenic Corridor Specific Plan, the removal of mature oak trees, erection of 11 ft. high retaining walls and roads built over extensive tree root systems, effectively killing many more mature oak trees.

SOS believes that neither the

developer nor the proposed project offers any sensitivity to the community concerns, despite the developer's representations otherwise. From the first meeting on, SOS read the developer's message loud and clear as they told SOS the project would be built as planned, and to just accept it.

SOS believes the developer consistently misrepresents the truth, such as claiming they could build 54 units. This is a fallacy that each lot would be only 5,000 sq. ft. and does not allow for trees, streets, sidewalks, hillsides or open space.

SOS does not object to lawful development of the property under current zoning, provided it is consistent and compatible with the surrounding neighborhood. The developer would be able to make a substantial profit by building 1 and 2-story luxury residences without any zoning changes or exceptions to the specific plan, and keeping the woodlands and hillsides intact.

...Among Existing Homes



grown rather 'chummy'."

Klenner's observations are echoed by Pat Patton of the WHWCNC's Planning and Land Use Management (PLUM) Committee. "A lot of times the Councilman's office isn't even given the courtesy of being told what's being approved by Planning, and the Neighborhood Council

is not consulted. We're hoping the new Planning Director will bring some sense of responsibility to the community."

One of the area's biggest developer vs. homeowner battles is about to be waged over a 6-acre parcel that adjoins a DWP watershed on San Feliciano Drive, north of Mulholland Drive across from Louisville High School. As yet, no hearings have taken place, but each side seems to be gearing up for a pitched battle (See both accompanying viewpoints).

"We're going to see more and more hostile confrontations between homeowners and builders until the Planning Department starts working with this community," predicted Patton. "They've got to start listening to the people whose lives are impacted by their decisions."