



CITY of CALABASAS

PLANNING COMMISSION AGENDA REPORT
JUNE 18, 2020

TO: Members of the Planning Commission

FROM: Maureen Tamuri, AIA, AICP
Community Development Director

PROPOSAL: Ridgeline Overview: Review of Existing Ridgeline Mapping

RECOMMENDATION: That the Planning Commission receives and files this second of three background reports regarding Significant Ridgelines.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning Commission receives and files this second of three background reports regarding Significant Ridgelines.

REVIEW AUTHORITY:

The Planning Commission is reviewing this report because the City Council, at its meeting of September 28, 2016, asked the Planning Commission to study and make a recommendation to the Council on amending the current anomalies in the Significant Ridgeline mapping.

BACKGROUND

Planning Staff identified current abnormalities in the mapping of ridgelines as identified in our 2016 staff report to the City Council. This report provides a greater level of detail regarding the mapping anomalies, in addition to a more accurate count of properties on ridgelines.

Using the City's Digital Mapping program, which contains as a base layer the ridgeline maps as they were transferred from the 2035 General Plan adopted in 2008, Staff offers the following background information.

Total Count

- 1) There are a total of 271 properties located on mapped ridgelines, or approximately 0.11% of the 8,878 parcels identified in the last Census.
 - a. A total of 218 properties, or 80% of the sites, are developed with homes, HOA common areas or roadways, where the ridgelines have been significantly altered;
 - b. A total of 43 properties, or 16% of the sites, fall into a “protected” status, in that they have no development potential due to their ownership status and/or zoning. Entities holding such parcels include Federal and State park agencies, the County of Los Angeles, LVMWD, the City of Calabasas, the MRT (a non- profit) and HOA’s;
 - c. A total of 10 properties, or 4% of the sites, are undeveloped with zoning which supports at least one residence. Of these sites, only three have undisturbed natural ridgelines;

Length

- 1) While the City’s ridgeline maps extend far beyond the City’s boundaries, Staff measured the length of all sites within the City boundaries in order to determine the potential for visual alteration in the future. The lineal length of significant ridgelines total 14.2 miles.
 - a. The 43 properties with “protected” status are 7.45 miles long, representing 51% of significant ridgeline length;
 - b. The 218 developed properties are 6.49 miles long, representing 44% of significant ridgeline length;
 - c. The 10 undeveloped properties are .78 miles long, representing 5% of significant ridgeline length.

Ridgeline Alterations

The largest group of altered ridgelines are in the gated HOA’s of Vista Pointe, Westridge, the Oaks and the Oaks Estates. Due to the extensive tract grading and subsequent large home development, there is no discernable ridgeline present. Grading efforts within Vista Pointe, Westridge and the Oaks have left a largely flattened ridgeline under which a strict application of the “fifty foot away from and 50 foot below” code language contained in Chapter 17.20.150 C.2 would potentially encapsulate hundreds of additional structures

within those communities. Further, the General Plan objective in III.B Hillside management to “Maintain and/or restore...primary ridgelines” in these communities is impossible.

STAFF ANALYSIS:

The mapping analysis of significant ridgelines reveals that the City’s longstanding efforts to protect development of natural ridgelines was not accomplished, and that 44% of the natural ridgeline was significantly altered as part of housing tract approvals, grading and subsequent development. While earlier versions of the General Plan and Development Codes provided better guidance on the management of ridgeline properties based on the land’s resource value, later versions lost this nuance and do not distinguish between developed properties, and the remaining 10 undeveloped ridgeline sites. Further, application of scenic corridor standards for visibility of ridgelines cannot be had due to altered ridgeline and mountaintop configurations in many developed areas.

These leaves open the question of what effort should be undertaken to re-map the inaccurate ridgelines, and what modifications should be made to the Development Code to better reflect developed properties which occupy 80% of all properties within the City which are on mapped ridgelines.

ATTACHMENTS:

- Exhibit A: Ridgeline Mapping Power Point Presentation dated June 18, 2020
- Exhibit B: Municipal Code Section 17.20.150 – Hillside and Ridgeline Development