

Ladyface Specific Plan



January 5, 2005

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Mr. Michael K. Kamino
Director of Planning and Community Development
City of Agoura Hills
30001 Ladyface Court
Agoura Hills, CA 91301

RE: Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan Amendment

Dear Mike:

Following our conversation of December 7, 2004, I have endeavored to take a look at the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan as adopted by the City in 1991 to try to get a feel for what it might take financially to address some of the issues we discussed. As I understand it, the driving force behind the discussion of whether or not to amend the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan has to do with developing more restrictive standards that would lessen the development potential of those portions of Ladyface Mountain that fall below the development limit line of 1100 foot elevation on the flanks and slopes of the mountain. The reason for these amendments as we understand it would be to lessen the visual impact of development of those lands that are currently developable.

As you know, amending the Specific Plan with such a purpose is likely to meet with stiff landowner opposition. As a legislative act, it would also require a CEQA determination that would be keenly scrutinized by the land owners impacted by the proposed amendments. Therefore, the Specific Plan Amendment/CEQA compliance process is likely to be more trying, more expensive, and more time consuming than you might think. Therefore, we are presenting four (4) ways one could look at this issue along with varying degrees of expense and other implications that are presented associated with each option.

Mike, we know the numbers presented in the attached Report on Options and Implications are rough, but at least it should give you some sense of what my professional judgment tells me these processes would involve in terms of funds and schedule. If your full City Council is truly interested in pursuing any one of these avenues, please know that we would be most interested in assisting you this regard. To that extent, if you would want us to prepare a Scope of Work for any one of these options, with detailed task orders and budgets, we could do so upon your request.



Mike Kamino
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Please give me a call if you have any questions, concerns, or thoughts about what we have written. Otherwise, I'll await your response on whether you need us to do anything further. Thanks for your faith in us and we'll look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,

RRM Design Group

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'T. Keith Gurnee', is written over a horizontal line.

T. Keith Gurnee
Principal

cc: Eric Justesen, RRM Design Group

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**Ladyface Mountain
 Specific Plan Amendment
 Report on Options and Implications
 December 20, 2004
 Revised: January 5, 2005**

Option 1: Amend the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan

This Option would require going through the document, determining which sections need to be changed, developing alternative approaches to development standards, working through those alternative approaches with City staff, the Planning Commission, and City Council, and settling on the approach the City wants to pursue in terms of amending the Specific Plan. It would also include the development of select site plans to show how the new guidelines would affect the site planning and visual appearance of structures under the new design guidelines.

Because your traffic impact fees for development on Ladyface Mountain are predicated on a certain level of development, there would probably be a need for additional traffic analysis and possibly an adjustment to the traffic impact fees. Were we to do this we would probably use W-Trans, the traffic engineers who were part of our team on the Agoura Village project.

This process is likely to be highly controversial with the affected land owners who will likely challenge the CEQA compliance process every step of the way. One could anticipate that an EIR would need to be prepared and it will need to be a bulletproof EIR if it is to withstand the challenges one can expect to come from this process. Hence, the process is likely to be expensive.

Implications:

The planning costs of the Specific Plan amendments themselves could run from as low as \$50,000 with a minimal number of amendments and public meetings, to up to \$90,000 with more comprehensive amendments and multiple hearings. The traffic engineering and analysis component would likely run \$25,000-\$30,000 and the Environmental Impact Report could run anywhere from \$60,000 for a relatively straight forward process to \$100,000 or more if the EIR is challenged every step of the way. Therefore, the total cost could run between \$145,000 to \$220,000 to prepare and take 12 to 18 months to complete.

Pros: This would be one of the more legally defensible approaches to controlling further development on Ladyface Mountain.

Cons: This option would likely be legally challenged by the affected property owners, potentially adding more costs and causing further delays in processing.



Option 2: Prepare Ladyface Mountain Design Guidelines

Instead of amending the Specific Plan, this Option would involve the preparation of new design guidelines and visual standards for new development in the areas below the 1100 foot elevation on Ladyface Mountain. These design guidelines would address such issues as site planning, massing, visual impacts from Agoura Road, materials, colors, landscape standards, etc. These design guidelines would likely be developed through more of an open public process than a Specific Plan Amendment process.

Implications:

Depending on the level of detail in the design guidelines, it could cost anywhere from \$65,000-\$85,000 and take 6 to 8 months to produce, adopt, and publish.

Pros: Developing design guidelines would cost considerably less and take less than half the time it would take to complete the Specific Plan Amendment process. Further, design guidelines are not necessarily subject to CEQA, obviating the need to go through an expensive, risky, and time consuming process.

Cons: By developing design guidelines without amending the Specific Plan it may leave landowners with the expectation that they could still achieve levels of development that would hypothetically be possible on their property under the Specific Plan today. However, the existing levels of development allowed may be practically unachievable due to more restrictive design guidelines. This may set up a dichotomy between the design guidelines and the Specific Plan that may have to be corrected later, particularly if the design guidelines are viewed as inconsistent with the existing Specific Plan.

Option 3: Use the City's CEQA Process to Mitigate Visual Impacts

Under this Option you would not prepare design guidelines or amend the Specific Plan, but rather develop a strategy for processing applications on Ladyface Mountain that would require a CEQA assessment and visual analysis of development applications with a directive to minimize the visual impact of new development on Ladyface Mountain. This process may require an amendment to your existing City CEQA guidelines to reflect the unique application of rules to Ladyface Mountain and you would probably need to program how the visual analyses and mitigation of visual impacts would be handled in a clear and a consistent way of for all the properties in the Ladyface Mountain planning area.

Implications:

Developing a strategy to use CEQA analysis in specifically examining the issue of visual impacts may require computer visual simulations of how future development projects would appear before and after from key vantage points in the community.

Pros: Developing such a strategy could run approximately \$25,000, the least amount of expense associated with any of these options.

Cons: Staff workload is likely to increase with the administration of multiple CEQA compliance documents.



Option 4: Prepare Both a Specific Plan Amendment and a Comprehensive Set of Design Guidelines for Ladyface Mountain

This option would involve developing new Specific Plan standards, regulations, rules and procedures, coupled with a set of design guidelines to show how the standards and rules would be applied to the physical development of properties on the lower slopes of Ladyface Mountain. This would likely include a visual analysis of the Old Agoura Road corridor at the base of Ladyface Mountain and the development of hypothetical site plans for each of the individual undeveloped properties at the base of Ladyface Mountain to show how the guidelines could be applied.

Implications:

The Specific Plan amendments with design guidelines and traffic analysis would cost approximately \$140,000-\$160,000, with the EIR costing \$110,000 to \$125,000 or a total of \$240,000 to \$285,000. It would also take 16 to 24 months to complete.

Pros: This approach would probably be the most legally reliable of all of the Options.

Cons: This approach is likely to be controversial with the vacant landowners who will likely challenge the Specific Plan amendments, design guidelines, and CEQA compliance documents throughout the process of its preparation and adoption. This would also be the most expensive of the options.