

## **The Park at Ladyface Mountain**

A Senior Housing Community

City of Agoura Hills

Los Angeles County A.P.N. 2061-01-025

November 1, 2004

## **PROJECT DESCRIPTION**

Ladyface Park is a proposed senior housing community at the west end of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan Area. The project consists of 12 freestanding houses and 23 condominiums to fulfill California Statutes minimum density requirement for senior housing on a 7.1-acre site. These units will be clustered among 12 small buildings and a single multi-housing condominium unit with underground parking. The architecture will be consistent with the Architectural Design Standards and Guidelines for the City of Agoura Hills and the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan.

## **BACKGROUND**

On September 2002, on a pre-screen review the applicants presented to the Agoura Hills City Council our Senior Housing project consisting of 48 Condominiums. At that time, the applicants received the full support of the entire council in a non-binding 5 to 0 vote supporting our concept for a senior project, with comments that this project would be an asset to the Agoura Hills community and in balance with the natural surroundings of the Ladyface Mountain. Subsequently, the Hillside Ordinance slope density calculations were applied to our project, reducing the density from the proposed 48 units to just 20 units following the city cluster development guidelines. Due to the reduced density, the project changed in character from condominiums to senior residential houses. Site plans and architectural studies for 20 homes were developed in preparation for the application of a Conditional Use Permit. Unfortunately, on April of 2004, the applicants were advised by our attorneys that our project could not qualify for Senior housing under section 51.3.4 of the California Civil Code, known as the Unruh Civil Rights Act, which states:

*“Senior citizen housing development” means a residential development developed, substantially rehabilitated, or substantially renovated for, senior citizens that has at least 35 dwelling units.”*

**As such, in order to qualify under the California Civil Code, the project is being re-submitted to the council for Pre-Screen Review seeking its support and comment on a Senior Housing Project consisting of 35 units.**

## **LADYFACE MOUNTAIN SPECIFIC PLAN**

Ladyface Mountain is a unique natural asset of the community. Ten years ago, the City of Agoura Hills adopted the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan whose purpose was:

1. To ensure that all development at the base of Ladyface Mountain is compatible with the unique nature of this natural asset.
2. To encourage the coordinated development of a mixture of business park, commercial and limited residential uses within the study area.
3. To encourage developers to address compatibility of proposed projects with infrastructure capacity.

The end result was a plan that would ensure the preservation of unique natural resources, insure compatibility with the neighborhood, and would not overburden infrastructure capacity. This plan sets specific guidelines for review and approval of projects, and provides for Specific Plan Amendments.

The Specific Plan currently states that this parcel may be developed as a business park with 24,000 sq. ft. of building area (Table IV-1), which may be increased to 34,000 sq. ft. with a conditional use permit (Table IV-2). The allowable developable pad area is 2.42 acres. The Hillside Guidelines indicate an allowable development area of 4.79 acres (Table IV-1). The traffic budget for the allowable business park use is 65 peak hour trips.

## **WHY SENIOR HOUSING?**

Over the next twenty years, more than 45 million Americans will be reaching retirement age. The housing needs for this age group are unique and for the most part have been ignored. The federal and state governments are advising, and in some cases mandating that individual communities include this type of housing in the housing elements of their general plans. This site is ideally suited to solve this growing problem.

Ladyface Park is intended to serve this need and will significantly reduce the environmental impacts on Ladyface Mountain and the existing environment.

## **PROPOSE PROJECT**

During deliberations for the Specific Plan, housing was one of the possible uses for the area. Although this use may have had a lesser environmental impact, despite an already existing multiunit apartment complex right next to the proposed site, the deciding factor against residential uses was the lack of school infrastructure south of the 101 freeway. Thus, the only permitted

residential use became senior housing. Ladyface Mountain Park would be an independent living, senior housing and condominium complex.

The site is a 7.1-acre site surrounded by apartment buildings and single-family residences on the west, office buildings on the north, an undeveloped parcel on the east, and Ladyface Mountain to the south. The topography gently slopes up towards the south with increasing numbers of oak trees on steeper ascending slopes. Two watercourses divide the parcel into two natural pad areas and a third watercourse separates the parcel from the neighbors to the east. The west half of the parcel abuts to an apartment complex.

The project proposes to build 12 homes and 23 condominium units on a total development area of approximately 1.7 acres, inclusive of parking and roadways. This contrasts dramatically with the 2.42 acres permitted by the Ladyface Specific Plan and the 4.79 allowable pad area under the Hillside Guidelines (Table IV-1).

The project would widen Agoura Road along its northerly property line, consistent with city of Agoura Hills standards. The two existing detention basins would be restructured to meet current federal, state, and county flood control requirements. The west watercourse and detention basin would be designed to serve as trailhead park for the Ladyface Mountain, thus preserving the existing topography and natural environment.

The density of the project equates to five units per acre, comparable to single family developments, but because of its clustered character, it will leave open and natural more than 80% of the site. Although currently not permitted under the Specific Plan, this residential Senior Housing concept is more consistent with the purpose of the Specific Plan, and adjoining land uses. The quiet nature of this site and proposed development is ideally suited for senior housing.

The proposed senior housing will:

1. Serve the State Mandated housing needs of the City of Agoura Hills, consistent with the Housing Element of the General Plan.
2. Be consistent with the intent and purpose of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan.
3. Allow for better integration of smaller buildings within the existing topography.
4. Allow for the preservation of existing oak trees and maintenance of a more naturally occurring landscape.
5. Preserve and enhance the natural assets of this site and Ladyface Mountain.
6. Provide the economic viability to build the parking underground.

7. Create a smaller and more diverse architectural appearance.
8. Will be a better transition between the adjoining housing projects and the rest of the Plan area.
9. Will require a pad area significantly smaller than permitted under the Specific Plan.
10. Will reduce the traffic impact 80%.

## **SPECIFIC PLAN AMENDMENT**

The proponents of this project clearly understand the proposed use will require a Specific Plan Amendment. The Specific Plan provides the opportunity for the City Council to make amendments to the plan in Section V-4.D. This provision reads as follows:

Applications for an amendment to this Specific Plan shall be reviewed in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 9820 of the Zoning Ordinance. Specific Plan amendments may deal with issues such as changes in permitted land uses, maximum building area, development standards, or any other issues relevant to the development of the property subject to this Specific Plan. In reviewing an amendment, the Planning Commission and the City Council shall consider the following factors:

1. Whether the amendment is consistent with the General Plan
2. Whether the intent and purpose of the Specific Plan is preserved.
3. Whether the amendment is sensitive to the maintenance and protection of the natural terrain and environment.
4. Whether adequate traffic generation will exceed the acceptable levels of service established by the Specific Plan
5. Whether circulation to and from the Specific Plan area will be maintained.
6. Whether public services and utilities will adequately serve the Specific Plan area.

The applicants believe that the proposed project would provide a positive response to all of the above.

## **SPECIFIC PLAN OBJECTIVE**

The Specific Plan also provides objectives to serve the intent and purpose of the Specific Plan. The plan lists the following objectives:

1. Preparation of an array of analyses, which will provide the base information necessary to coordinate the development potential of Ladyface Mountain.
2. Preservation of Ladyface Mountain as a natural landmark and open space resource.
3. Sensitivity to natural features, archeological deposits, geologic hazards, oak trees, and natural drain courses.
4. Limitations on development to the area below the 1,100-foot elevation (i.e., the top building shall not exceed 1,100 ft elevation).
5. An appropriate character and design of potential development to assure compatibility with the natural hillside open space and existing surrounding land uses.
6. A traffic budget assigned to each parcel such that an acceptable level of services is maintained. Traffic generated by future developments should be analyzed to determine its effects on the level of service of the surrounding streets and intersections, and any needed mitigation measures.
7. Restrict land uses and densities such that development is sensitive to the unique character of the area.
8. Manufactured slopes not to exceed 2:1 ratio.
9. Minimum use of retaining walls.

The key advantages of a senior housing project compared with a business park/office complex are the reduction in parking and traffic impacts, as well as the ability to integrate and weave smaller buildings into the existing topography and natural landscape. Not only is this a desirable objective for the Specific Plan, but also it is extremely important to creating a quiet and naturally beautiful community for the residents.

All of the above objectives can be met with either the senior housing project, or the allowable business park. The main question is which of these two projects does a better job of achieving the intent and purpose of the Ladyface Mountain Specific Plan? Again, the residential project is clearly superior.

## **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT**

A Conditional Use Permit is required for all projects within the plan area. The plan's **CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT PROCEDURES** are a further test of compliance with the Specific Plan. These procedures state:

To ensure that all developments are compatible with the guidelines and standards of this specific plan, a Conditional Use Permit is required for all new construction and additions, subject to the following findings:

1. The proposed use is consistent with the objectives of Section 9670 of the City Zoning Ordinance and the purposes of the zoning district in which the use is located.
2. The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding properties.
3. The proposed use and the conditions under which it would be operated or maintained will not be detrimental to the public health, safety or welfare.
4. The distance from other similar and like uses is sufficient to maintain the diversity of the community.
5. The proposed use will not mar the property's unique natural elements and has a positive relationship to the character of Ladyface Mountain.
6. Adequate evidence and guarantees have been provided to indicate that all provisions of the Specific Plan is satisfied.
7. The proposed use is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies of the General Plan.

The burden of proof for positive findings are outlined in the Environmental Constraints Investigation and Initial Environmental Study for the project completed by the City's Environmental Analyst on July 15, 2001 (Attached). This report lists the environmental studies that will be required to prepare a final environmental analysis for the project. Most of these reports have been prepared with positive and supportive conclusions for the proposed project.

The report also states that the proposed development "poses some significant constraints for the applicant that will require City guidance to resolve". The applicant has extensively discussed the proposal with Staff, and sought guidance. It is within this context, that it is suggested that the applicant repeat the process of Pre-Screen Review and resubmit a preliminary application to the Economic Development Committee of the City Council for their review and comment. This proposal is submitted for your consideration.