

Berggruen Institute

More than 500 interested community members attended a community forum regarding the Berggruen Institute project, proposed for a former residential project site and related open space on approximately 450 acres located in the hills between the Getty Center and Mountaingate communities on the west side of the Sepulveda Pass. The private forum, held at the Skirball Center on January 21, 2018, was hosted by a number of westside homeowners associations and other community groups.

The panel was moderated by Hillside President Charley Mims. Panelists included three representatives of the Berggruen Institute including one of its architects, Wendy-Sue Rosen (Brentwood Residents Coalition), attorney Tom Freeman (Canyon Back Alliance), Eric Edmunds (President, Save Our Mountains, Inc. and Chair of the Sierra Club Santa Monica Mtns. Taskforce), Michael Leslie (President, Brentwood Hills Homeowners Assoc.), John Binder (President, Upper Mandeville Canyon Assoc.), Teri Redman Kahn (Brentwood Community Council's environmental representative), and Travis Longcore, Ph.D. (USC Asst. Prof. of Architecture, Spatial Sciences, and Biological Sciences). A number of local elected officials or their representatives were present, including Councilmember Mike Bonin (CD-11, the council district in which the proposed project is located), a deputy from County Supervisor Sheila Kuehl's office, and a field representative for Mayor Garcetti.

Berggruen Institute representatives began the forum by describing the Institute's mission and presenting details of the project in its currently proposed form. Primary project features include the main glass-walled institute building to be located at a prominent overlook on the site, a scholar village, and chairman's residence. According to the Environmental Assessment Form submitted to the City of Los Angeles, the current proposal also includes several cottages and a pavilion to be located on a ridge to the west of the primary structures.

Community speakers then summarized their many concerns about the project, including significant impacts to the site's open space and trails, which connect the site to the "Big Wild" region of the Santa Monica Mountains. On-site trails and open space **are protected by recorded continued easements** won in litigation against the previous site owner by several of the community groups represented on the panel. Other community panelists discussed their grave concerns about fire safety, due to the project's location entirely within the designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone and noting that the project site is on a landfill that continues to generate significant methane gas. In addition, community members are concerned about additional traffic within the already overburdened I-405 transportation corridor (the I-405 currently has 300,000 daily car trips, expected to increase to 450,000 daily trips over the next decade). Finally, concerns include that the design of the project will harm wildlife due to loss of habitat and mobility.

The meeting finished with a brief opportunity for questions from the audience, comprised mainly of additional questions to the Berggruen Institute representatives regarding community concerns. For more information, the Los Angeles Times published an August 2017 article on the project's preliminary designs, available at: <https://tinyurl.com/yb768omy>. Community group Protect Our Wildlands has an information page at: <https://www.protectourwildlands.org>.