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P.O. Box 2190

North Hills, CA 91393

(818) 892-8899

board@

northhillswestnc.org

Serving the neighbors

Of North Hills West

Advising the Mayor

and City Council of

Los Angeles

November 19, 2008

LETTER OF OPPOSITION

Office of Zoning Administrator

7th Floor

200 North Spring St.

Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: ZA-2008-2304-2V-SPP Request for Variance to modify two existing buildings and construct 149 affordable efficiency units at 16111 Plummer St. North Hills 91343 Hearing date: TBA

To whom it may concern:

After careful consideration and review of the subject request, at our regularly held public meeting on November 19, 2008, and with a proper vote taken, the prevailing decision of this Neighborhood Council was to oppose the referenced case for the following reasons:

The proposed use will be detrimental to the public health, safety, and welfare

Applicants have not been entirely factual as to the nature of the facility for which they request a Variance.

Applicant, A Community of Friends, is a developer specializing in high density, low income housing, including large scale sober living complexes.

Applicant New Directions (ND Sepulveda) operates an **in patient** rehabilitation treatment facility and program for veterans addicted to drugs and/or alcohol located on the campus of the VA Hospital, Westwood. Patients participating in this program are confined to the treatment facility and the grounds of the VA Westwood Campus. Such will not be the case at the VA Hospital Sepulveda (North Hills) campus.

We submit that the intended use of the proposed apartment complex has been substantially misrepresented In the Master Land Use Permit Application and request which states “the retrofit of two medical buildings into a 149 unit apartment complex for ‘homeless’ veterans.”

While that may be one of the proposed uses, in fact, it is not the only one. It will not be just supportive housing for “homeless” veterans or even necessarily for veterans. Rather, it appears, the primary intended use will



Certified by the Department of Neighborhood Empowerment, City of Los Angeles

be as a large scale Sober-Living facility. According to the applicants' testimony before the NHWNC and the Community, "tenants will be clean and sober graduates of the in patient New Directions program at the VA Westwood, who are free to come and go at will." Under questioning, however, applicants admitted that, at least, some of these former patients and would be tenants are on Methadone, an addictive synthetic morphine/heroin. Further, Methadone is dispensed currently from building 10, at the North Hills facility and, when questioned, the VA spokesperson, announced publicly that "the VA would never stop dispensing Methadone."

Per the Lease, Page 6, Article 2 Consideration for Lease, Item A. 3. states ""Operate and manage the Project as a drug-free environment and as Abstinence expected (Dry) Housing pursuant to which the use or possession of (non-prescription) drugs or alcohol on the Property shall be prohibited, and the terms of such prohibition shall be: (a) binding upon each tenant of Lessee on the Property, etc.) Methadone is a prescription drug and therefore is **not prohibited**, Not only will the tenants have free access to the drug, they will not be confined to campus but will be free to come and go and roam the adjacent single family neighborhood at will.

Neighbors have complained for years that Methadone was being openly sold, or traded for other drugs, on the sidewalks and street corners surrounding the North Hills facility. Inasmuch as users of Methadone have simply substituted one addiction for another, and since these patients will not be confined to the VA grounds, it is the position of the community and this council that the proposed tenants are not and will not be "clean and sober." Thus, the proposed use is unacceptable.

Additionally, the community feels that if the proposed tenants were in fact clean and sober, they could find both work and other affordable housing, thus should not be homeless and should not be housed at what was designated to be a medical facility for Veterans only. Moreover, there are many other locations in multiple density zoned neighborhoods that would be far more appropriate, and far less expensive, in which either "supportive affordable housing" or sober living facilities for veterans and/or others could and should be located.

Upon instructions from the Los Angeles City Council and its Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUM), the Los Angeles Department of City Planning is currently drafting a Citywide Ordinance to regulate and control Sober Living and other Group Homes. Should this request be approved prior to enactment of said Ordinance, this facility would likely be exempt from future regulation under the new Ordinance. Therefore approval of the request would be contrary to good zoning practice.

The existing medical buildings which would be modified were formerly occupied by the psychiatric unit. This country is currently embroiled in two major wars, Iraq and Afghanistan. Those veterans who survive will return here with serious psychiatric, psychological and emotional problems including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). PTSD goes largely undiagnosed and, often, untreated due to a lack of proper VA medical facilities and treatment centers. The VA North Hills facility serves thousands of veterans as far north as San Luis Obispo. There are insufficient resources or facilities at the VA Westwood to house or treat all of those who return in need. Thus, both the Veterans and the taxpayers would be better served by restoration of buildings 4 and 5 for their intended use as a psychiatric Unit.

Location is Improper in relation to adjacent uses and surrounding development:

Although the proposed location is on the grounds of a Veterans Administration Hospital property zoned PF-1. The Property is surrounded on all four sides by single family dwellings zoned either RA-1 or RS-1, with one property on the Northwest corner of Woodley Avenue and Lassen Street, zoned A2-1 on which L.A. Baptist High School is located. There are no apartment buildings located anywhere in the adjacent or immediate area.

Introduction of two low-income apartment buildings, with 149 units, and the attendant increase in traffic in the middle of a single family residential area is unacceptable to the community and to this Neighborhood Council

Approval of a Variance for this project would be a violation of good zoning practices and the intent of the General Plan which is to preserve and enhance stable single family neighborhoods. It would set a dangerous precedent and open up not only the remainder of the VA Hospital property but the entire surrounding area to the type of undesirable, high density over-development and attendant blight that exists on the east side of the I-405.

We are confident that upon proper review of the facts, you will also agree that the requested use is unacceptable.

Please be advised that since the NHWNC Board of Governors will not be meeting in December, due to the Christmas Holidays, this letter reflects only our initial objections and opposition to the proposed use. Once, the NHWNC Land Use Committee has had time to properly review the Environmental Report MND-2008-2305-EAF, they will be submitting a separate letter with additional objections prior to the hearing.

Please provide copies of the Hearing Notification and the decision letter to this Neighborhood Council at the letter head address and to Mr. Nichan Kulukian, Chair, NHWNC Land Use Committee at: 17454 Golden Lane, Granada Hills, CA 91344

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,
NORTH HILLS WEST NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL


By: Lewis Brown, President

cc: Councilmember Greig Smith and Deputies Phyllis Winger and Hannah Lee
Mr. Lee Ambers for the Applicants
