



PAUL KREKORIAN

COUNCILMEMBER • DISTRICT 2

PAULKREKORIAN.ORG

[f KREKORIAN](https://www.facebook.com/KREKORIAN)

[PAULKREKORIAN](https://twitter.com/PAULKREKORIAN)

September 15, 2016

David H. Ambroz
President, City Planning Commission
200 North Main Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Laurel Plaza/NoHo West, 12001 Oxnard Street, North Hollywood, CA 91606

Dear President Ambroz:

Since I took office in January 2010, I have continually emphasized that my top economic development priority is the redevelopment of Laurel Plaza and the adjacent Valley Plaza site in North Hollywood. Given the history of these properties and their unmatched potential as economic engines of the East San Fernando Valley, I have worked with the community to ensure that any projects proposed for the sites would be assets to our neighborhood and catalysts for improving the area.

With the current NoHo West proposal, I am happy to say that we now have a very good redevelopment opportunity that will revive the beloved Laurel Plaza property, and bring more entertainment, retail and commercial opportunities to the area, along with hundreds of good jobs. The project in front of you does not require a General Plan Amendment and the developer is proposing far less housing density on the site than what is allowed under its current zoning. The developer could have come to the City with a by-right, highly dense residential-only project. Instead, the proposal before you is a project heavy on entertainment, retail and office space. Because the current proposal is a better fit for the surrounding community, and for all the reasons enumerated in this letter, I urge the City Planning Commission to support the project.

From economic might to blight

From the 1950s into the 1980s, Laurel Plaza shopping center was a vitally important source of economic activity, jobs, entertainment and community services. Since the devastating 1994 Northridge Earthquake, the shopping center and surrounding

commercial properties along the Laurel Canyon commercial corridor have been in serious decline.

After Northridge, the City of Los Angeles adopted the Community Redevelopment Agency (CRA) Earthquake Disaster Assistance Plan for the Laurel Canyon commercial corridor. Despite the creation of the CRA and several development proposals, these sites have failed to redevelop for more than two decades, resulting in the area becoming an underutilized space that attracted little more than blight to the community. Some of the development attempts were victims of the Great Recession, the elimination of the CRA by the state, and the foreclosure of parts of the property; others were not economically viable proposals or did not include the commercial and entertainment amenities that the community wants, needs and deserves.

Revitalizing Laurel Plaza

Before the CPC now is a project that meets all the criteria for economic revitalization in the area. NoHo West at the Laurel Plaza site will provide a shot of adrenaline to the area by delivering retail and entertainment facilities for the community. The project includes 327,850 square feet of exciting commercial space that will draw people from throughout Los Angeles and beyond, including shops, a movie theater, a grocery store and a fitness center. It will also create 244,150 square feet of new, state-of-the-art office space to bring hundreds of high paying jobs back to the San Fernando Valley. To make the project viable, and to bring new families to the area, it will include 642 units of housing.

What makes NoHo West even more urgent for the community is the impending closure of Macy's, the only remaining retail property that currently sits on the site. Macy's is shuttering the store, along with more than 100 others, as part of a nationwide streamlining of its brick and mortar operations. Come October, the largely unoccupied Laurel Plaza will be left almost entirely vacant.

A better fit for the community

Since the proposal's unveiling last year, my office has received a considerable amount of feedback from residents in Laurel Grove and North Hollywood about NoHo West. Many of the comments have been supportive, a tiny few oppose any development on the near-empty lot and others have specific concerns with parts of the proposal. All of this feedback has been helpful in my evaluation of the project. In response to this feedback, I have demanded that the owners of the Laurel Plaza site adjust their proposal to make it a better fit for everyone in the neighborhood.

Because of my insistence that the project meet the needs of the local community, the developer has made significant concessions relating to size, use mix, aesthetics, traffic, parking, landscaping, project sequencing and labor. As a result of my office's efforts, the developer has agreed to all of the following improvements to the original proposal:

1. Lowering the amount of housing by 100 units;
2. Adding nearly 30,000 square feet of additional commercial space to the project;
3. Increasing the amount of open space and green space on the project, in addition to the courtyards and plazas already included in the original proposal;
4. Removing the bridge connecting the residential buildings;
5. Lowering the overall height of the project and adding tiers from Erwin Street, Radford Avenue, and the Laurel Hall School, which will push the bulk of the height increases to the interior of the property and away from the adjacent residential community;
6. Waiting to complete the residential units until the Macy's building is converted into a new office and retail building and a substantial portion of the new retail is built;
7. Adding landscaping and maintaining the medians surrounding the property, including those on Erwin Street, Radford Avenue, Laurel Canyon Boulevard and Oxnard Street;
8. Improving building design elements to break up the massing of the buildings.
9. Adding more courtyards around the building to improve the aesthetic feel of the space;
10. Ensuring that 75 percent of the 1,200 construction jobs for the commercial center are union jobs;

The developer has also agreed to assist with the following traffic and parking mitigations to ease congestion, preserve neighborhood access to parking, and promote bicycle and pedestrian safety:

1. Studying the establishment of a Permit Parking District in the community surrounding the development;

2. Incorporating mitigations from the traffic study performed for the project, including double left turn lanes, left turn arrows, dedicated right turn lanes, additional lanes, freeway ramp improvements and technology enhancements to our existing systems, including an intersection camera, along with substantial bike and pedestrian improvements;
3. Adding traffic improvements beyond those listed in the traffic study, including:
 - a. Improved crosswalks in the area;
 - b. Studying a half closure of the southbound lanes on Radford Avenue south of Oxnard Street;
 - c. Installing “Keep Clear” road markings and “Do Not Block Intersection” signage within the community to address the existing traffic issues at Colfax Avenue and Califa Street, Colfax Avenue and Collins Street, Oxnard Street and Vantage Avenue, and Oxnard Street and Carpenter Avenue;
 - d. Working with LADOT on establishing a shuttle service connecting residents, employees, and customers directly to the NoHo Red Line station.

I also expect the developer to continue to work closely with community groups to address any outstanding issues that remain, and to continue this dialogue through the construction phase.

With the aforementioned changes to the project, I now feel that I can lend my strong support to NoHo West. The Mid-Town North Hollywood Neighborhood Council, Laurel Hall School—the closest neighbor to the site—and numerous individuals in the community have all come out in support of this project. They see it for what it is—an opportunity for the Valley to realize the commercial potential that still exists on this underutilized site by bringing shopping and entertainment options back to Laurel Plaza. Most importantly, NoHo West will complement and enhance the character of the community. By contrast, failure to move forward with this project would diminish the neighborhood by allowing worsening blight and continuing degradation of this community.

If you have additional questions, please feel free to contact my Director of Planning and the Environment, Karo Torossian, at karo.torossian@lacity.org or (213) 473-7002.

Very truly yours,



PAUL KREKORIAN
Councilmember, Second District

cc: Director of Planning Vince Bertoni
Vice President Renee Dake Wilson
Commissioner Robert L. Ahn
Commissioner Caroline Choe
Commissioner Richard Katz
Commissioner John W. Mack
Commissioner Samantha Millman
Commissioner Dana Perlman
Commissioner Veronica Padilla
Mid-Town North Hollywood Neighborhood Council
Laurel Grove Neighborhood Association