

April 8, 2023  
Bel Air Park Rebuttal to Education First's (EF) Proposal

The homeowners in Bel Air Park (the "Community"), the community immediately adjacent to the American Jewish University, are opposed to EF's proposal to use the campus as a year-round study-abroad program for international students. While we do not oppose an educational use in theory, we have communicated our specific concerns regarding EF's proposed use for over four months; nevertheless, EF continues to proceed with their plans over the Community's objections.

As opposed to a non-profit school like AJU, Education First is a FOR-PROFIT privately-owned foreign company, which means that its best interests are served by housing as many international students on campus as possible. EF seeks to **more than triple the number of student residents** allowed under the current Conditional Use Permit (CUP) from 200 to 700 students. EF also seeks a total enrollment of 900-1200 students (depending on the time of year), which far exceeds that allowed by the CUP or any other school in the Mulholland Corridor. Even more alarming is EF's deliberate misinterpretation of the CUP, which does not contemplate all students on campus at once.

The biggest concern of the homeowners is safety, especially considering we live in one of the highest fire risk areas of Los Angeles. Indeed, the risk is so high that many homeowners struggle to obtain fire insurance. During the Skirball fire of 2017, over 1,000 homeowners from the Community as well as the homeowners from Bel Air Crest (our neighbor to the South) were forced to evacuate using Casiano Road, the only road out. Additionally, we were all forced by the fire path to head East onto Mulholland Drive, a highly trafficked 2-lane road. A 1.5-mile drive from Casiano Road to Beverly Glen Blvd. took over 1 hour that day! EF's proposal to host an additional 1,200 students (plus an undisclosed number of faculty and staff) presents a grave threat to human life, not only to EF's own students but to the Community and all surrounding schools and institutions along the Mulholland Corridor. To date, EF has ignored our concerns regarding fire safety and has failed to provide us with an evacuation plan. Rather, EF has suggested (again, over our objection) that they do not need an evacuation plan and/or instead, they will obtain approval for a "shelter in place" order. "Shelter in Place" is a dangerous last resort option, and truly a preposterous notion during a fire emergency.

AJU's CUP was issued in 1966 when only one elementary school was open along the Mulholland Corridor, before any homes in the Community were even built. Since that time, nearly 10 other schools and institutions have opened, resulting in thousands of people using Mulholland Drive on a daily basis. There have been almost no changes to the infrastructure of the area. If anything, **any new CUP should approve less than 200 students**, not more! Imagine the impact of an additional 1200 students plus faculty and staff on roads, power, sanitation, and wildlife. The fundamental fabric of the neighborhood and Mulholland Corridor would be adversely impacted.

EF has shown little regard for the concerns of the homeowners. As early as December, 2022, the homeowners shared their primary concerns were the number of students living on campus, total enrollment, parking, and safety. EF took these concerns to their board and returned with a revised proposal in March, 2023 that **increased** the number of students residing on campus. They altered their proposal to address some of our less important concerns while ignoring the most significant ones.

In summary, we urge the Planning and Land Use Committee not to approve any proposal by EF unless and until it begins to actually work in good faith with the Community. We hope it is apparent to the PLU that the Community is engaged in this process, but we do not have a good faith partner and as a result, are proceeding with cautious skepticism of EF and maintain our opposition.