



Catherine Palmer <council@babnc.org>

Fire Hazard in Bel-Air Park

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Dear Members of the Land Use Committee of Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council,

In follow up to my previous email, I wanted to raise specific fire hazard concerns regarding Education First's (EF, a for-profit international language school) proposal to purchase the American Jewish University and convert it to an English Language Boarding school. While I think that repurposing the American Jewish University to be used as an educational institution is a good idea, the proposal that was presented by EF is incredibly disturbing and dangerous.

To reiterate, EF wants to house 700 students on the campus year-round. AJU has never housed more than 200 students on campus since its inception. The campus was never designed for such a large occupancy. EF has also proposed to shuttle 200 more students to the campus on a daily basis from

September - June and an additional 500 students during the summertime for an overall enrollment of 900 and 1200 students, depending on the time of year. The American Jewish University was built with a Conditional Use Permit that allows for only 200 students to live on campus at any given time. The CUP also does not allow 900-1200 students to be on campus at the same time. Additionally, these numbers do not take into consideration the number of faculty and auxiliary staff that will be needed to manage and teach that many students.

Furthermore, the campus was constructed in the 1970s, more than 50 years ago. There have been no significant changes to the infrastructure of the campus or roads and areas surrounding the campus to allow for such an increase in population. I have concerns over the power utilization of that many students, especially given the frequent power outages in Los Angeles, and how this increased usage will impact my community. I have concerns about the sewage system and its capability to handle an additional 1200 students as well as the ancillary staff and faculty that will be needed on campus to manage that many students. There is only one way in and one way out of our community for all 150 homeowners and their families (Casiano Road) and this connects to a 2 lane, heavily trafficked street (Mulholland Drive). And during emergencies, the hundreds of homeowners from Bel-Air Crest and Mountaingate would also need to evacuate using that one exit.

As residents of the Bel-Air community, we have a deep understanding and awareness of the risk to life and property from the far too frequent wildfires. In late 2017, our community was forced to evacuate, more correctly flee, our homes as the fast-moving fires raced up the Sepulveda corridor. What we were reminded of and quite evident was how approximately 500 residents trying to escape a single lane road onto and already congested major thoroughfare, Mulholland Drive, was a daunting task.

My grave concern now is how the expansion of a school that for a half century had typically housed only several hundred to grow to 3-4x the size of our existing neighborhood, exposes the broader neighborhood and their very own students to an even greater risk of harm. If a fire broke out at 2am on one of the hillsides and the community only had minutes to evacuate, adding 1,000 students **and** faculty/services with the existing infrastructure from 50 years ago would result in an even more difficult transition to safety than we faced five years ago. Additional roads and exits are not planned and the school only plans to add to the congestion at our neighborhood's only (single lane) entrance and exit.

I ask that this committee consider the safety of our longstanding community, the lives of the students on campus and the broader Mulholland area when

considering whether this plan, as currently proposed, aids the safety of the community in times of fire danger, or more clearly, adds further obstacles to evacuations, first responders and a greater chance of loss of life.

I respectfully request, the Land Use Committee deny the current proposal for the elevated number of students to ensure the safety of all.

Sincerely,
Joe Kim