

West Village at Calabasas Proposed Development - Environmental Concerns

The Draft Environmental Impact Report describes the proposed project: "*The planned development would convert a portion of the site's natural areas, which contain natural hillsides, oak trees, seep-fed wetland features, and ephemeral drainages, into graded pads designed to support buildings, roadways, drainage improvements, and re-contoured and remediated slopes. Overall, proposed grading would involve re-contouring the existing hillsides and filling the existing canyon feature to create a series of building pads.*"

Located at Las Virgenes and Agoura Roads in Calabasas, the project proposes 180 multi-family units split into 15 3-story buildings combined with almost 6000 square-feet of commercial space.

- All land on the 77-acre parcel, except for 16 acres, is existing protected open space, zoned as Open Space – Development Restricted (OS-DR). The 11-acre development will have a graded footprint of 35 acres. It will take about two years to grade the 2.6 million cubic yards of earth, which includes about 20 acres of OS-DR.
- The entire site is identified as a L.A. County Significant Ecological Area and is entirely within a Calabasas Wildlife Linkage and Corridor. It's just 1/4 mile outside of the Santa Monica – Sierra Madre Connection.
- The project would reduce the existing 1-mile wide Wildlife Linkage and Corridor by 25%. There is no mitigation for this loss.
- Prominent features on the land include four wetlands, fed by year-round natural seeps. An ephemeral stream discharges into Las Virgenes Creek, then converges with Malibu Creek before reaching Malibu Lagoon and the Pacific Ocean.
- There are 4968 linear-feet of wetlands, non-wetlands water, stream bed and adjacent riparian habitat. About 76% (3778 linear-feet) will be "disturbed". About 2 acres of streambed/banks and associated riparian vegetation will be removed. Only five annual inspections are planned as part of the mitigation.
- An ancient landslide is in the protected open space. Remedial grading is about 2.4 million cubic yards; non-remedial grading is 218,770 cubic yards. A smaller project could be done without remedial grading. The remedial grading in protected open space enables the developer to have a larger project.
- The land is home to five Special-Status animals (Cooper's hawk, Nuttall's woodpecker, Allen's hummingbird, oak titmouse and southern California rufous-crowned sparrow) and two Special-Status plants (Catalina mariposa lily and California black walnut). These are California Department of Fish & Wildlife designations.
- The land is home to six Special-Status plant communities considered significant biotic habitat under the Calabasas General Plan (Coast Live Oak Woodland, Cattail-Saltgrass Marsh, Yerba Mansa Meadow, Bulrush-Saltgrass Marsh, Mulefat Thickets and Arroyo Willow Thickets). About 30% of the original habitat would be lost, including virtually all of the Cattail-Saltgrass Marsh, Yerba Mansa Meadow and Mulefat Thicket. They will attempt to recreate these valuable communities with salvaged plant cuttings.
- The last Habitat Assessment was February 2012 – one of the driest years on record. Since then, the area has had significant rainfall, potentially changing habitats. The threatened California red-legged frog has been making a comeback in Calabasas. A new Habitat Assessment should be done determine if the frog is on-site.
- Forty-five oak trees (25 of which are heritage oaks) will be removed.