

## **IV.K.2 Fire Protection and Emergency Medical Services**

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### **1. INTRODUCTION**

This section addresses the potential impacts of the proposed Hidden Creeks Estates project on fire protection and emergency medical response services in the City of Los Angeles. Where potentially significant impacts are identified, mitigation measures are recommended to reduce such impacts to acceptable levels. Sources utilized in the preparation of this section include written correspondence with the City of Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD), consultation of the LAFD website (<http://www.lafd.org/>), and a Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis prepared for the project site by Scott Franklin Consulting.

### **2. METHODOLOGY**

Potential project impacts were evaluated based on communication with the LAFD to determine the ability of the LAFD to maintain adequate service ratios, response times, or other performance objectives in the City resulting from development of the proposed project. The Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP) was also contacted to determine whether the project sites met the fire flow and fire hydrant standards specified in the LAFD Fire Code. Additionally, the results included within the Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis, included in **Appendix IV.K.2** of this EIR, were used to determine whether or not potential wildfire risks would result in a significant impact to the project.

### **3. EXISTING CONDITIONS**

#### **a. Los Angeles County Fire Department**

The project site is currently located in an unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County. Existing fire protection and emergency medical services are provided by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Station 75, located 7.2 miles away in Chatsworth, is the closest station to the project site and contains a three-man engine. Due to the distance between the project site and Station 75, response times are in excess of 15 minutes.<sup>1</sup> The project site is located in a designated Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone.

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<sup>1</sup> Los Angeles County Fire Department. Danny Kolker, Planning Analyst. Personal communication on January 30, 2007.

## b. Fire Hazard

The project site is located in Browns Canyon and within an unincorporated portion of Los Angeles County, adjacent to the communities of Chatsworth and Porter Ranch. This area contains the highest number of wildfire incidences within Los Angeles County. During the summer, fall, and early winter months, the area is subject to weather extremes that have historically led to wildfire episodes.<sup>2</sup>

The summer fire threat comes with wind from the west or southwest, under a subtropical high pressure system aloft. During this time, air temperatures may exceed 100 degrees Fahrenheit which is coupled with an on-shore westerly wind in excess of 20 miles per hour (mph). In the fall and winter seasons, off-shore, down-slope Santa Ana wind episodes occur with precise regularity, occurring as early as mid-September and lasting through March. The off-shore air flow passes through Newhall Pass and increases in velocity as it moves through the drainages of the Santa Susana Mountains. Wind speeds in excess of 60 mph are common and may exceed 100 mph when the high altitude jet stream converges with the high pressure system over the Great Basin. These drying conditions draw moisture out of leaves, grasses, shrubs, and trees. Without moisture, the vegetation turns into fuel for fires.<sup>3</sup>

When air temperatures drop in the winter months, temperatures in the lower sections of the San Fernando Valley may plummet. This creates an air movement down-canyon, off of Oat Mountain, that may exceed 25 mph. This air movement can spread fires during the winter months.<sup>4</sup>

Vegetation found on site is primarily Coastal Live Oak woodland (*Quercus* species) and vegetation in the adjacent riparian area may be characterized as primarily Southern Live Oak riparian forest. While all vegetation will burn, some vegetation requires more heat in order to ignite and propagate flame. For example, dry grass will ignite immediately, while green grass must lose its moisture before it will ignite. Plants with a high level of oil also burn quicker and hotter compared to plants with a low level of oil. Chaparral plants found on site include Chamise, White Sage, Coastal Live Oak, and Mule Fat. When these plants are exposed to drying conditions, the percentage of their oil content increases as their moisture content decreases.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis prepared by Scott Franklin Consulting, June 21, 2007. (Appendix IV.K.2).

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

### c. Los Angeles Fire Department

Once annexed to the City of Los Angeles, fire protection emergency medical services would be provided by the LAFD. The LAFD is a full-spectrum life safety agency protecting approximately 4 million people in Los Angeles City. As stated in the City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework Element, fire prevention, fire protection and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) for the City of Los Angeles is provided by the LAFD.

The LAFD's 3,562 uniformed personnel protect life, property, and the environment through their direct involvement in fire prevention, firefighting, emergency medical care, technical rescue, hazardous materials mitigation, disaster response, public education, and community service.<sup>6</sup> Currently, 346 non-sworn support personnel provide technical and administrative expertise in their corresponding pursuit to further the LAFD mission.<sup>7</sup>

A total of 1,091 uniformed firefighters per platoon duty shift, a 24-hour shift (including 223 serving as firefighters/paramedics), remain on duty at 103 neighborhood fire stations located across the LAFD's 470-square-mile jurisdiction. Last year, the LAFD responded a total of 728,487 times to various incidents.

The proposed Hidden Creeks Estates project site is currently outside the Los Angeles city limits; however, prior to build-out of the proposed project, the site would be annexed into the City of Los Angeles. Presently, only one existing roadway, Browns Canyon Road, leads to the project site. Fire Station 28 is the closest LAFD fire station to the project site.<sup>8</sup> LAFD Fire Station 8 and Fire Station 107 would also serve the project. Fire Station 28 is located 2.6 miles from the project site at 11641 Corbin Avenue in Porter Ranch, Fire Station 8 is 3.6 miles from the project site and is located 11351 Tampa Avenue in Porter Ranch, and Fire Station 107 is 4.3 miles from the project site and is located at 20225 Devonshire Street in Chatsworth. A map of the locations of these three fire stations that would serve the project upon annexation into the City of Los Angeles is provided in **Figure IV.K.2-1, Fire Stations Serving the Hidden Creeks Estates Project**.

Fire Station 28 is staffed with nine members at all times. Six members are assigned to the Light Force with a truck and engine. The staff consists of one Captain II; one Engineer; one Apparatus Operator; and three Firefighters, one of which is also a paramedic. Two members are assigned to the Basic Life Support

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<sup>6</sup> Los Angeles Fire Department. *About the Los Angeles Fire Department*. <http://www.cityofla.org/lafd/about.htm>. November 16, 2006.

<sup>7</sup> Los Angeles Fire Department. Captain II-Paramedic William N. Wells. Personal communication. November 27, 2006.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

(BLS) Rescue Ambulance and are known as Firefighter-EMT's. One member is assigned as the EMS Battalion Captain and is given the title of Captain-Paramedic.<sup>9</sup>

Fire Station 8 is staffed with six members at all times. Four members are assigned to the Fire Engine including: one Captain I; one Engineer; and two Firefighters, one of which is also a paramedic. Two members are assigned to the BLS Rescue Ambulance and are known as Firefighter-EMT's.<sup>10</sup>

Fire Station 107 is staffed with six members at all times. Four members are assigned to the Fire Engine. The staff includes one Captain I, one Engineer, and two Firefighters. Two members are assigned to the Paramedic Rescue Ambulance and are known as Firefighter-Paramedics.<sup>11</sup>

The response time for Fire Station 28 to the project site is estimated to be approximately 7.6 minutes, the response time from Fire Station 8 to the project site is estimated to be approximately 9.6 minutes, and the response time from Fire Station 107 to the project site is estimated to be approximately 11 minutes.<sup>12</sup> These response times do not meet the desired performance standards in the amended February 21, 1999, Los Angeles Fire Code (LAFD), Section 57.09.07. If response times to the site are exceeded, an automatic fire sprinkler system is required for each structure on the site. The maximum response distance for a low-density residential development from the nearest fire station housing an engine or truck company is 1.5 miles. According to Captain William Wells of the LAFD, services for the project area do not meet the desired performance standards of the LAFD.

#### **4. REGULATORY FRAMEWORK**

##### **a. City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework Element**

As stated in the City of Los Angeles General Plan Framework Element, fire prevention, fire protection, and EMS for the City of Los Angeles are provided by the LAFD. Fire department services are based on the community's needs, as determined by ongoing evaluations. When an evaluation indicates increased response time, the acquisition of equipment, personnel, and/or new stations is considered. As development occurs, LAFD reviews environmental impact reports and subdivisions applications for needed facilities. Where appropriate, construction of new facilities is required as a condition of development.

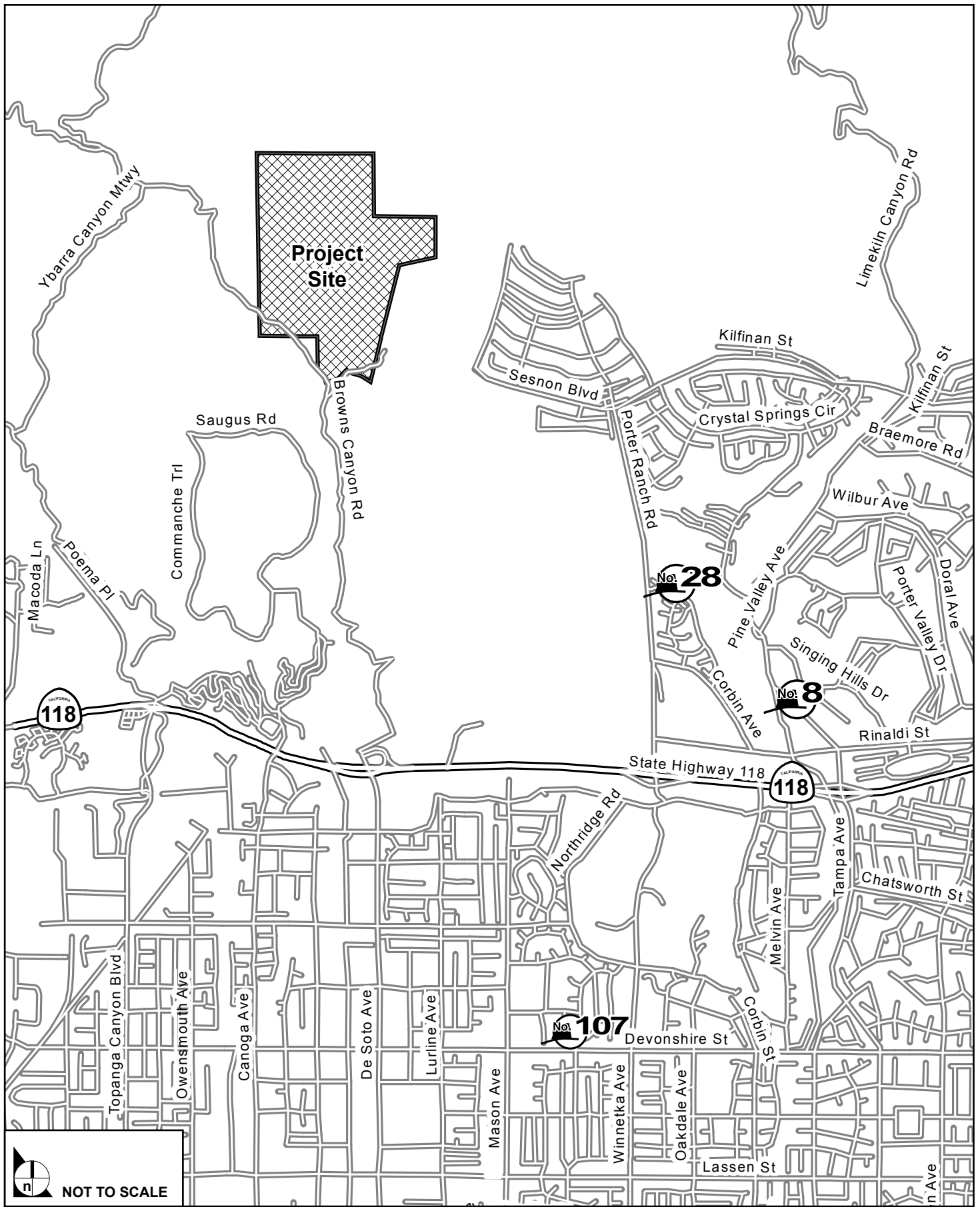
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<sup>9</sup> Los Angeles Fire Department. Captain II-Paramedic William N. Wells. Personal communication. November 27, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.



SOURCE: Impact Sciences, Inc. – November 2006

FIGURE IV.K.2-1

Fire Stations Serving the Hidden Creeks Estates Project

According to the Framework Element, emergency medical services are provided through the Bureau of Emergency Medical Services. The City standard for EMS is 1.5 miles, similar to that of the desirable response distance for engine companies for neighborhood land uses. Most ambulances are accompanied by trained paramedics to provide additional service other than only transport. LAFD considers EMS to be providing adequate service.

Specific to the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan Area are goals and policies set forth by the City of Los Angeles in the General Plan Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan that relate to fire services. A description of applicable goals and policies is provided below.

**b. Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan**

The Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan states that the development of public facilities, such as fire stations, should be sequenced and timed to provide a balance between land use and public services at all times. The intensity of planned land use and the density of the population which can be accommodated thereon shall be partly limited in accordance with the availability of fire protection services and facilities.

Design features could reduce the risk of fire hazards and are recommended by the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan. Development in the vicinity of natural vegetation or high fire danger should include special irrigation facilities, fire-retardant plantings, and construction features for protection against brush fires. Also, recreational areas and parks should be consistent with fire safety recommendations set in the Community Plan.

**c. Fire Flow**

Fire flow requirements vary from 2,000 gallons per minute (gpm) in low density residential areas to 12,000 gpm in high density commercial or industrial areas. A minimum residual water pressure of 20 pounds per square inch (psi) is to remain in the water system, with the required gallons per minute flowing.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Personal communication with Douglass Barry, Assistant Fire Marshal, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety, Los Angeles Fire Department, May 4, 2006.

**5. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT ANALYSIS**

**a. Significance Criteria**

The *L.A. CEQA Thresholds Guide* indicates that the determination of a project’s significance to fire protection and emergency medical services shall be made on a case by case basis, considering:

FIRE-1 A project would normally have a significant impact on fire protection if it requires the addition of a new fire station or the expansion, consolidation or relocation of an existing facility to maintain service.

Standards of the LAFD that are applicable to the proposed project are listed in **Table IV.K.2-1, LAFD Fire Code Standards Applicable to the Proposed Project**. These are the standards for low-density residential developments, which corresponds to the land uses proposed for the Hidden Creeks Estates project.

**Table IV.K.2-1  
LAFD Fire Code Standards Applicable to the Proposed Project**

<b>Fire Code Standard</b>	<b>For Low Density Residential</b>
Fire flow	2,000 gallons per minute from three adjacent hydrants flowing simultaneously
Land area served by hydrant	100,000 sq. ft.
Distance between hydrants along roads or fire lanes	600 ft.
Type of hydrant	2-1/2" X 4" double fire hydrant
Response distance	1-1/2 miles

*Source: Los Angeles Fire Department. Los Angeles Municipal Code, Chapter V – Public Safety and Protection, Article 7 – Fire Protection and Prevention (Fire Code), Section 57.09.06, Tables 9-A, 9-B, 9-C. Los Angeles, California: May 12, 1987. Retrieved from <http://www.lafd.org/library/code.pdf>. sq. ft. = square feet*

The Los Angeles Municipal Code (LAMC) states maximum response distances to ensure proper fire and emergency medical services in the service area. Maximum response distances from fire stations to different land uses are listed in **Table IV.K-2-2, Maximum Response Distances for Land Uses**.

**Table IV.K.2-2  
Maximum Response Distances for Land Uses**

Land Use	Maximum Response Distance (miles)	
	Engine Company	Truck Company
Neighborhood Land Uses		
Low Density Residential/High Density Residential/Neighborhood	1.50	2.00
Regional Land Uses		
Commercial Industrial/Commercial	1.00	1.50
Commercial and Industrial Centers		
High Density Commercial/High Density Industrial	0.75	1.00

*Source: Los Angeles Fire Code, Los Angeles Municipal Code, Section 57.09.07*

## **b. Project Impacts**

*FIRE-1 Impacts related to fire are considered significant based on whether or not the proposed project requires additional equipment, personnel or facilities and to review a project's emergency features.*

### ***Construction***

The proposed project site is located within a historical wildfire corridor. The project site is located in the Los Angeles County's Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone. Once annexed to the City, the City's High Hazard Fire Zone boundaries would most likely be extended to include the project site due to the site's proximity to neighboring High Hazard Fire Zone areas. Elevated temperatures and winds in excess of 20 miles per hour creating drying conditions for the coastal live oak woodland vegetation and may create a fire hazard for the proposed construction staff.

The Hidden Creeks Estates project site is currently served by the Los Angeles County Fire Department. Upon annexation of the site into the City of Los Angeles, fire protection and emergency medical services would be provided by the City of Los Angeles. Since construction would not occur until the site is annexed to the City, necessary increases in emergency services associated with project implementation would not impact the Los Angeles County Fire Department. The proposed extension of a Mason Avenue would provide primary road access to the site for project residents and emergency service providers. However, until the Mason Avenue extension is completed, Browns Canyon Road would be accessible for emergency services.

Current structural fire hazard risks are low because of the undeveloped nature of the project site. Construction activities would increase the amount of people and activity on the site. There are no existing fire hydrants on site, but implementation of **MM-FIRE-4** would result in the construction of three



hydrants capable of releasing 2,000 gallons per minute flowing simultaneously, as required by the LAFD Fire Code. Therefore, with implementation of mitigation, potentially significant impacts during project construction would be reduced to a less than significant level.

### *Operation*

Implementation of the Hidden Creeks Estates project would include annexation of the project site into the City of Los Angeles and would result in the construction of new structures in a currently undeveloped area thereby increasing the population and intensity of development in the project vicinity. Upon completion of project construction, 188 new residences accommodating approximately 549 new residents, a new public park, and an equestrian facility capable of holding approximately 100 horses would be introduced. With annexation of the site into the City of Los Angeles, the service area for LAFD would be expanded. Additionally, as a result of the new structures and the associated population increase, there would be an increase in demand for fire protection and emergency medical services for residences, recreational and equestrian-related fire services.

As discussed above, Fire Station 28, as well as other LAFD fire stations, would provide fire protection services to the project site.<sup>14</sup> A mutual agreement with the Los Angeles County Fire Department would also make County fire fighters available for fire protection services. The proposed project site is located within a historical wildfire corridor and is presently within a Very High Fire Hazard Severity Zone as defined by Los Angeles County. Once annexed to the City, the City's High Hazard Fire Zone boundaries would most likely be extended to include the project site. Response distances for fire protection and emergency medical services to the proposed project site would not meet the performance standards of the LAFC of 1.5 miles for low-density residential neighborhoods. The three closest fire stations to the project are Fire Station 28, Fire Station 9, and Fire Station 107 located approximately 2.6 miles, 3.6 miles, and 4.3 miles away, respectively. According to the LAFD, current stations containing equipment and fire protection services are in excess of five minutes from the project site and do not adequately meet the additional demands that would be generated through the implementation of the proposed project.<sup>15</sup>

However, as part of the proposed project, several improvements would be incorporated into the project design to reduce the historical risk of wildfire on the project site. There are currently no fire hydrants located on the project site. With project implementation, four fire hydrants would be installed throughout the site adjacent to structures in accordance with LAFD and City of Los Angeles standards.

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<sup>14</sup> Fire Paramedic Lenske. Los Angeles Fire Department Building Administration. Communication via 3-1-1 Service. March 14, 2007.

<sup>15</sup> Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis prepared by Scott Franklin Consulting. May 15, 2006 (**Appendix IV.K.2**).

The project would meet the fire flow requirement of 4,000 gpm from the four fire hydrants flowing simultaneously as required by the LAFD for the project site.<sup>16</sup>

Additionally, new and improved emergency access to the site would be provided. Access to the project site would be available via both the newly extended Mason Avenue as well as via Browns Canyon Road. As part of the proposed project, Browns Canyon Road would be spot-widened for turnouts in 14 locations north of De Soto Avenue and south of the project site, as discussed in detail in **Section II, Project Description**. With these emergency access road improvements incorporated into the proposed project, adequate emergency access would exist for both the LAFD and the Los Angeles County Fire Department.

The project would also establish a firefighting helistop within the proposed public park which would allow Fire Department helicopters to refill their onboard water supply for fire suppression during potential wildfire incidents. Additionally, the public park would provide an evacuation area where residents and their animals would be able to seek shelter during a potential wildfire incident. The park would be protected by a 200-foot fuel modification zone, as further described in **MM-FIRE-7**. The provision for residents and their animals to “Shelter-in-Place” would reduce the risk associated with potential on-site fire hazards.<sup>17</sup>

Even with incorporation of these project components, impacts associated with the provision of adequate fire protection would still be potentially significant upon project build-out. As such, mitigation is required. However, with the implementation of mitigation measures **MM-FIRE-1** through **MM-FIRE-12** listed below, potentially significant impacts from fire hazards would be reduced to less than significant levels.

### c. Cumulative Impacts

Implementation of the proposed project would result in the construction of residential and recreational land uses within the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch community. As discussed in **Section III, General Description of Environmental Setting**, additional related projects are proposed and/or planned within the project vicinity. Both the project and other planned and approved developments throughout the City would cumulatively increase the need for services from the LAFD. This demand would be met by increases in staffing and equipment as needed, which would be funded by developer fees and the

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<sup>16</sup> Personal communication with Douglass Barry, Assistant Fire Marshal, Bureau of Fire Prevention and Public Safety, Los Angeles Fire Department, May 4, 2006.

<sup>17</sup> Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis prepared by Scott Franklin Consulting, June 21, 2007. (**Appendix IV.K.2**).

increased tax base associated with the proposed project. Moreover, each project is subject to review by LAFD to ensure that adequate emergency response exists and that adequate emergency site access is provided. Therefore, with the implementation of identified mitigation, the project would not individually or cumulatively result in significant impacts to fire protection and emergency medical services.

**d. Mitigation Measures**

- MM-FIRE-1 The use of construction and design features, which reduces fire potential and/or promotes containment, including increased spacing between buildings, noncombustible roofs, fire-resistant landscaping, and special irrigation facilities, shall be implemented. Design features shall be reviewed and approved by the Fire Chief prior to project approval.
- MM-FIRE-2 Upon completion of project construction, a diagram of each portion of the property, including access routes and any additional information that might facilitate fire and emergency medical response, shall be submitted to the City of Los Angeles Fire Marshall.
- MM-FIRE-3 During project construction, the contractor shall ensure that roads and alleyways remain unobstructed to provide for emergency access at all times.
- MM-FIRE-4 The project applicant shall coordinate with the LAFD to design and implement fire hydrants in compliance with the LAFD Fire Code for low-density residential developments prior to project approval. All fire hydrants must be 2-1/2" X 4" double hydrants and be placed adjacent to structures in the project site.
- MM-FIRE-5 Recreational areas and parks proposed by the project shall be consistent with fire safety recommendations set in the Chatsworth-Porter Ranch Community Plan. Design plans shall be reviewed and approved by the Fire Marshall prior to project approval.
- MM-FIRE-6 The Hidden Creeks Estates Home Owners Association (HOA) will report annually to the City of Los Angeles Fire Marshall that Hidden Creeks Estates development is in compliance with requirements set forth in the Fire/Vegetation Management Plan and Wildfire Risk Analysis and all mitigation measures included below no later than May 1<sup>st</sup> each year.

MM-FIRE-7 The Hidden Creeks Estates HOA shall ensure that a 200-foot minimum Fuel Management Zone is in place, and cleared annually, around each structure on the project site. The 200-foot Fuel Management Zone shall be divided as follows:

**Zone A:** Zone A will begin at the structure and extend out 50 feet from the structure. The zone must be irrigated, tree spacing will be 30 feet between canopies, shrub spacing will be 15 feet between canopies, lawn or low lying plants will be used as ground cover, and areas beneath Oak trees need not be irrigated.

**Zone B:** Zone B will begin at the 51-foot mark of Zone A and extend out to 100 feet from structure. The zone may be irrigated, shrubs will not exceed 18 inches in height, tree spacing will be 30 feet between canopies, and shrub spacing will be 15 feet between canopies.

**Zone C:** Zone C will begin at the 101-foot mark of Zone B and extend out to 200 feet from structure. All natural vegetation will be thinned out by 70 percent and all dead vegetation including grass will be maintained at less than 4 inches in height. If the Zone is not irrigated, the area may be covered with chipped biomass 4 inches deep. No tree limb shall be within 10 feet of a chimney, including outdoor barbeques. Trees must be maintained free of dead branches. Trees must be limbed up 4 feet or 1/3 the height of the tree. Trees over driveways or roads must be limbed up to 15 feet. The shrub height limit is 2 feet.

MM-FIRE-8 The following shrubs and trees are highly flammable and will not be planted within the project area:

- Sage species (*Salvia* spp.)
- Pampas grass – *Cortaderia* spp.
- Cypress – *Cupressus* spp.
- Eucalyptus – *Eucalyptus* spp.
- Juniper – *Juniperus* spp.
- Pine – *Pinus* spp.
- Cedar – *Cedrus* spp.

The following shrubs and trees will be used for general landscaping and will undergo annual maintenance, as overseen by the Hidden Creeks Estates HOA:

- Coastal live oak – *Quercus* spp.

- California Sycamore – *Platanus racemosa*
- Cottonwood – *Populus fremontii*
- Willow – *Salix* spp.
- Mule Fat – *Baccharis salicifolia*
- California Bay – *Umbellularia californica*
- California Black Walnut – *Juglans californica*
- Liquidambar – *Liquidambar styraciflua*
- *Ceanothus* spp.
- Toyon – *Heteromeles arbutifolia*
- Mountain Mahogany – *Cercocarpus betuloides*
- Holly leaf cherry – *Prunus ilicifolia*
- Dwarf periwinkle – *Vinca minor*
- Grass – *Stipa* spp.

MM-FIRE-9 The Hidden Creeks Estates HOA shall ensure annually that all roads and driveways provide a 15-foot clearance on each side. The clearance must comply with Fuel Management Zone A requirements, with trees set back so the canopy is kept 15 feet above the road bed to allow sufficient fire equipment access.

MM-FIRE-10 The Hidden Creeks Estates developer and HOA shall ensure that any wood fencing chosen for fencing wildland/open space areas shall be made of heavy timber, at least 2 inches thick or greater, and set back 5 feet from the wildland/open space area. Chipped biomass, rock, and gravel or bare ground shall be maintained for at least 5 feet on each side of the wooden fence.

MM-FIRE-11 The Hidden Creeks Estates developer and HOA shall ensure that in all planted areas outside of the “wet” zones, the uniform spacing of shrubs may be modified by the clustering of smaller shrubs thereby creating drifts of them as long as such clustering does not result in an average spacing less than 15 feet on center.

MM-FIRE-12 In order to mitigate the inadequacy of fire protection due to travel distance and response time, sprinkler systems shall be required throughout any structure to be built in accordance with the Los Angeles Municipal Code, Section 57.09.07.

**e. Adverse Effects**

Due to the high fire hazard danger associated with the project site location and the current long response times from the LAFD, mitigation measures have been included in order to reduce potentially significant impacts resulting from construction of the proposed project. Primary fire and emergency medical service impacts associated with the proposed project would be reduced to a less than significant level through the implementation of the identified mitigation measures.