



## **PRESS RELEASE**

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### **Landmark Agreement Reached On Hillside Project**

**Yorba Linda, CA August 31, 2016** – The citizen’s group Protect Our Homes and Hills (POHAH) has reached a landmark settlement agreement with North County BRS—the applicant for the Cielo Vista project, the smaller of two housing projects proposed in the hills above Yorba Linda. Having faced gridlock evacuating from the devastating 2008 Freeway Complex Fire, residents were concerned about adding another 450 houses in the hills. They have been working diligently for four years fighting both the Cielo Vista project and the larger Esperanza Hills project next to Chino Hills State Park. Both projects are located in unincorporated Orange County.

The 340-unit Esperanza Hills project on 460 acres was approved by the Orange County Board of Supervisors in June 2015. POHAH litigated this project since it went through the approval process first. Along with four other co-petitioners, POHAH won a California Environmental Quality Act lawsuit in late June 2016 overturning the Esperanza Hills project approvals, entitlements, and Environmental Impact Report.

The 87-acre Cielo Vista project, originally proposed in 2012 as 112 units, lies immediately west and south of Esperanza Hills. Working in conjunction with North County BRS, an agreement was reached that further reduces development impacts, reduces housing density, improves fire safety, ensures gravity-fed water is used and air quality standards are met, reduces visual impacts, and makes the project more compatible with existing neighborhoods.

North County BRS will place a conservation easement over nearly 30 acres of the northern most region of its property—permanently restricting its use. Brian Gass, co-chair of POHAH states, “We secured a land manager, a management endowment, and a legal defense fund, so residents can rest assured that Esperanza Hills will never be able to use the city parkland in San Antonio Canyon as a roadway. Instead, Esperanza Hills is now restricted to a narrow corridor connecting to Aspen Way.” The agreement, signed in August, precludes use of the

controversial San Antonio Canyon area, which residents vehemently opposed, but the County of Orange and City of Yorba Linda wanted to use as the Esperanza Hills' primary access.

Marlene Nelson, co-chair of POHAH, relayed, "Since our involvement in the Cielo Vista project, the density has been reduced 30%. It's down to 80 units to more closely align with existing neighborhood densities." She continues, "Several lots are deed restricted to single story. North County BRS has also agreed to incorporate a visual buffer to reduce impacts along its entire southern and western border." Specific plant materials have been incorporated into the agreement that keep the community more fire safe and account for the ongoing drought.

In addition, in an unprecedented arrangement, North County BRS is funding the creation of a Community Fire Protection Plan, Fire Safe Council, and has dedicated monthly funding from the future homeowners' association to implement the Plan. Residents are confident that with these measures and the required gravity-fed water systems, existing and future homeowners will be safer than with what had been previously proposed.

The POHAH Leadership Team, consisting of residents west and south of both projects, continue to fight the Esperanza Hills battle, but have agreed to not oppose Cielo Vista due to the concessions made by North County BRS. "At a minimum we've improved the Cielo Vista project," says Ms. Nelson. "And, we remain fully engaged and now 100% focused on the Esperanza Hills project."

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*Protect Our Homes and Hills is a community organization based in Yorba Linda. Learn more at [ProtectYorbaLinda.com](http://ProtectYorbaLinda.com).*