



Division of Land / Environmental Review

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DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT

VOLUME I (EIR THROUGH APPENDIX A)

BRENTWOOD-PACIFIC PALISADES COMMUNITY PLAN AREA

Stephen S. Wise Middle School Relocation Project

ENV-2003-4563-EIR

State Clearinghouse No. 2003101055

Council Districts 5 and 11

THIS DOCUMENT COMPRISES THE FIRST PART OF THE ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORT (EIR) FOR THE PROJECT DESCRIBED. THE FINAL EIR, WHICH WILL ALSO CIRCULATE FOR PUBLIC REVIEW AND COMMENT, WILL COMPRISE THE SECOND AND FINAL PART.

Project Address: Stephen S. Wise Middle School, 15900 & 16100 Mulholland Drive,
Los Angeles, CA 90049

Project Description: The project consists of the relocation of the existing 240-student Stephen S. Wise Middle School to a permanent location on the existing Milken Community High School (High School) campus, from currently leased facilities owned by the Bel Air Presbyterian Church, located approximately 0.52 mile west of the High School campus. The permitted enrollment of the Consolidated Middle School/High School site would be 240 Middle School students (grades 7 and 8) and 650 High School Students (grades 9 through 12), the same as currently permitted in the existing Stephen S. Wise Middle School and the High School. Proposed development for the Middle School consists of 30,000 square feet of classroom and ancillary space in four single-story structures. The Middle School would comprise 4.5 acres of the total 10.8-acre Middle School/High School campus.

The project also includes the development of physical education facilities and fields at a 2.8-acre nursery/pre-school site, located approximately 1,000 feet west of the proposed Consolidated Middle School/High School site, the Athletic Field site. The existing CUP for the nursery/pre-school permits 320 students at buildout. (A total of 290 students are permitted in the existing temporary buildings.) Under the proposed project, this facility, which is housed in several modular structures, would be permanently removed. Another component of the project includes minor improvements to the High School. Specifically, three existing balconies on the south side of the existing High School building would be enclosed for use as educational space, and a canopy would be added to the High School entrance and extended along walkways for protection during inclement weather.

APPLICANT:

Stephen S. Wise Temple

PREPARED BY:

**Environmental Review Section
Los Angeles City Planning Department**

July 2005

I. SUMMARY

In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Guidelines Section 15123, this Environmental Impact Report (EIR) begins with a brief summary of the proposed actions and their consequences. More detailed information regarding the project and its potential environmental effects are provided in the following sections of this EIR. Please refer to the Table of Contents for guidance.

A. PROPOSED PROJECT

The project consists of the relocation of the existing 240-student Stephen S. Wise Middle School to a permanent location on the existing Milken Community High School (High School) campus. The Stephen S. Wise Middle School currently operates in leased facilities owned by the Bel Air Presbyterian Church and located at 16190 Mulholland Drive, approximately 0.52 mile west of the High School campus at 15900 Mulholland Drive. The permitted enrollment of the Consolidated Middle School/High School site would be 240 Middle School students (grades 7 and 8) and 650 High School Students (grades 9 through 12), the same as currently permitted in the existing Stephen S. Wise Middle School and the High School. Proposed development for the Middle School consists of 30,000 square feet of classroom and ancillary space in four, single-story structures.¹ The Middle School would comprise 4.5-acres of the total 10.8-acre High School campus. With relocation of the Stephen S. Wise Middle School to the High School site, use of the Bel Air Presbyterian Church property south of Mulholland Drive for a 240-student Middle School may continue.

The project also includes the development of physical education facilities and fields at a 2.8-acre nursery/pre-school site, located approximately 1,000 feet west of the proposed Consolidated Middle School/High School site, the Athletic Field site. The existing CUP for the nursery/pre-school permits 320 students at buildout. (A total of 290 students are permitted in the existing temporary buildings.) Under the proposed project, this facility, which is housed in several modular structures, would be permanently removed. Another component of the project includes minor improvements to the High School. Specifically, three existing balconies on the south side of the existing High School building would be enclosed for use as educational space,

¹ The 30,000 square feet of program floor area excludes non-program areas such as covered walkways, hallways, and awnings, as well as area excluded by Code.

The Middle School is designed as four linked buildings paralleling Mulholland Drive, on a north-rising terraced site below the gradient of the street. The proposed buildings would feature varied-height, sloping roofs, stepped facades, and low profile buildings replicating the gradient changes on Mulholland Drive. All portions of the buildings would be single story, with a maximum height of 18.5 feet above finished grade. Building materials would be natural tones similar to the natural setting and other nearby uses and would be consistent with the general character of the institutional corridor. Natural landscaping on the northern portion of the site would provide a transition between the street, project buildings and courtyard/student area and would minimize the potential contrast with the surrounding setting and aesthetic character of the area. The proposed landscape plan at the Middle School site would consist of native plants and landscaping adjacent to Mulholland Drive and would include an informal arrangement of native plants and trees, with accent landscaping at the entrance to the site.

At the proposed Athletic Fields site, existing temporary classrooms would be removed and the site would be improved with a running track, grassy field areas, basketball/volleyball courts and batting cages. Those areas not containing grass (e.g., the track and courts) would contain natural toned playing surfaces. A 760-square-foot, 12-foot-high field house, containing washrooms and equipment storage rooms, would be located along the western edge of the site.

The project would be consistent with the aesthetics standards and policies of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan, including building heights, yard requirements, roofs, and allowable materials for fences, gates and walls. Among the proposed project actions is a request for a plan exception to allow buildings at the Middle School site to penetrate the Viewshed, as defined in the Mulholland Scenic Parkway Specific Plan. Granting an exception would not cause substantial adverse impacts, would be consistent with the general intent of the Specific Plan and would address that intent in the context of the unique circumstances of the project site. The project is consistent with the height limits otherwise applicable to the site (18.5 feet versus the allowed 40-foot limit), and the project has been designed to fit into the hillside with minimal effect on views. All buildings would fall below the grade of Mulholland Drive, and the building locations reduce the penetration to limited areas that are less visually accessible. Therefore, the project would be consistent with the general intent of the Viewshed provisions of the Specific Plan's Design and Preservation Guidelines.

Overall, implementation of project would not detract from the valued visual character of the community or area; introduce an inappropriate contrast between proposed project elements and existing features that embody the project area's valued aesthetic image; remove existing features that substantially contribute to the character or image of the area; or be inconsistent with the goals and polices of the Community Plan that are applicable to aesthetics.

(2) Views

The project sites, including the Consolidated Middle School/High School site and the Athletic Fields site, are visible from public and private locations in the area. Public views are generally those obtained by travelers along Mulholland Drive. Private views are originated from institutional uses such as schools and places of worship and a limited number of homes at more distant locations. The most notable view location in the area is Mulholland Drive, a scenic parkway. Other notable, public view locations are Sepulveda Boulevard, and I-405. In addition, limited public views and some private views are available from nearby and outlying hillside areas.

Views of and over the Middle School site from Mulholland Drive are extremely limited. The only notable view of the project site is from southbound Mulholland Drive, from approximately 400 feet north of Walt Disney Drive. From this location, viewers see the project site set into the depression below the Mulholland Drive roadway, its surrounding landscaping, and adjacent hillsides located to the north and east. From this perspective, the Middle School buildings would lie below the horizontal view line and no unique view resources would be blocked. In addition, the existing Middle School site is currently altered from its natural character and does not contain any features that would distinguish it as a unique view resource. The nearest major vista point, the Grove Major Vista Point is located 0.9 mile west of Sepulveda Boulevard. The project site is not visible from this vista point due to the winding road and intervening vegetation. Therefore, development of the Consolidated Middle School/High School site would not substantially obstruct a recognized or valued view currently enjoyed from a public roadway.

Views into the Athletic Fields Site from public and private vantage points are limited due to the vegetation surrounding the site, the steep upward slope along the eastern boundary of the site, and the screened fences along the western boundary. The proposed Athletic Field would be set back approximately 40 feet from Mulholland Drive at its closest point and would extend a maximum of 32 feet into the unutilized portion of the Mulholland Drive right-of-way. No prominent views would be blocked or altered as a result of the proposed outdoor uses in this location, and impacts would be less than significant.

(3) Light and Glare

Within the Middle School site, pole lighting would be installed along the internal roadway and parking area, and security lighting would be placed along the building and walkways. All outdoor lighting would be low-level and would be shielded and directed away from off-site areas. Landscape lighting would be directed downward and emit low illumination. The proposed project would not result in a change in ambient illumination levels as a result of

Mitigation Measure B-2: Streets shall be swept as needed during construction, but not more frequently than hourly, if visible soil material has been carried onto adjacent public paved roads.

Mitigation Measure B-3: General contractors shall maintain and operate construction equipment so as to minimize exhaust emissions. During construction, trucks and vehicles in loading and unloading queues will have their engines turned off when not in use, to reduce vehicle emissions. Construction activities should be phased and scheduled to avoid emissions peaks and discontinued during second-stage smog alerts.

Mitigation Measure B-4: To the extent feasible, electric-powered construction equipment shall utilize electricity from power poles rather than temporary diesel power generators and/or gasoline power generators.

d. Level of Significance After Mitigation

Construction activities for the Middle School would exceed SCAQMD daily emission thresholds for regional NO_x, even after implementation of all feasible mitigation measures. Therefore, construction of the project would have a significant and unavoidable impact on regional air quality. With regard to localized emissions, the mitigation measures would reduce localized PM₁₀ emissions at the Curtis School and the Mirman School to below the SCAQMD localized significance thresholds. Therefore, construction of the project would result in impacts on local air quality that are less than significant at both project sites.

3. Biological Resources

a. Environmental Impacts

The project site is not located within a designated Los Angeles County Significant Ecological Area (SEA). Due to the lack of native vegetation and the absence of listed endangered, threatened, rare, protected, candidate, or sensitive species on the project site, the previously developed condition of the project sites and abundance of non-native ornamental landscaping, the project is not expected to result in the loss of individuals, or the reduction of existing habitat of a state or federally listed endangered, threatened, rare, protected, candidate, or sensitive species, or a reduction in a locally designated natural habitat community. The project is also not expected to interfere with habitat such that normal species behaviors are disturbed to the degree that may diminish the chances for long-term survival of a sensitive species. In addition, no riparian vegetation, sensitive natural community, waters or wetlands are present on the project site.

The project site does not appear to support regional movement of wildlife between the eastern and western portions of the Santa Monica Mountains, due to the densely developed areas to the north of the project site and the presence of large, arterial highways to the east. Regional wildlife movement is not occurring in the area of the Mulholland overpass and wildlife movement in this area for the purpose of crossing the I-405 Freeway would be unlikely. Since the proposed project is occurring within already developed areas of the current campus, significant impacts associated with wildlife corridors or other biological resources are not expected to occur.

Of the 19 oak trees located on the proposed Middle School site, a total of 11 oak trees would be removed for development. One oak tree would be removed from the Athletic Fields site. Oak trees would be replaced on a minimum two-to-one basis in accordance with City of Los Angeles Ordinance No. 153,478. With adherence to the Oak Tree Ordinance and with the implementation of mitigation measures, the project would not result in the loss of individuals or reduction of existing habitat of a locally designated plant community. Thus, the project's impact relative to on-site oak trees would be reduced to a level that is less than significant.

b. Cumulative Impacts

Since the six related projects consist of infill development on previously disturbed land, impacts on biological resources would not be significant. Related projects would be analyzed on a case-by-case basis for their impacts to oak trees pursuant to City of Los Angeles Oak Tree Ordinance. Thus, no cumulative impact to biological resources would occur.

c. Mitigation Measures

The following mitigation measures would apply to oak trees subject to the City of Los Angeles Oak Tree Ordinance (Ord. No. 153,478).

(1) Tree Protection Measures Prior to Construction

Throughout the construction period, the preserved oak trees shall be protected by fencing and signage. All contractors shall be made aware of the tree protection measures.

Mitigation Measure C-1: Communication: All construction work potentially impacting any protected oak tree shall be approved by, performed under the supervision of, and inspected by a certified arborist or registered consulting arborist. This arborist shall also oversee all maintenance work on the oak trees including irrigation, pruning and spraying. The on-site construction supervisor shall be responsible to ensure that all contractors, equipment operators, spotters,



Not to scale

Source: Eagle Aerial, 2000

Figure 2
Project Area and Nearby Uses

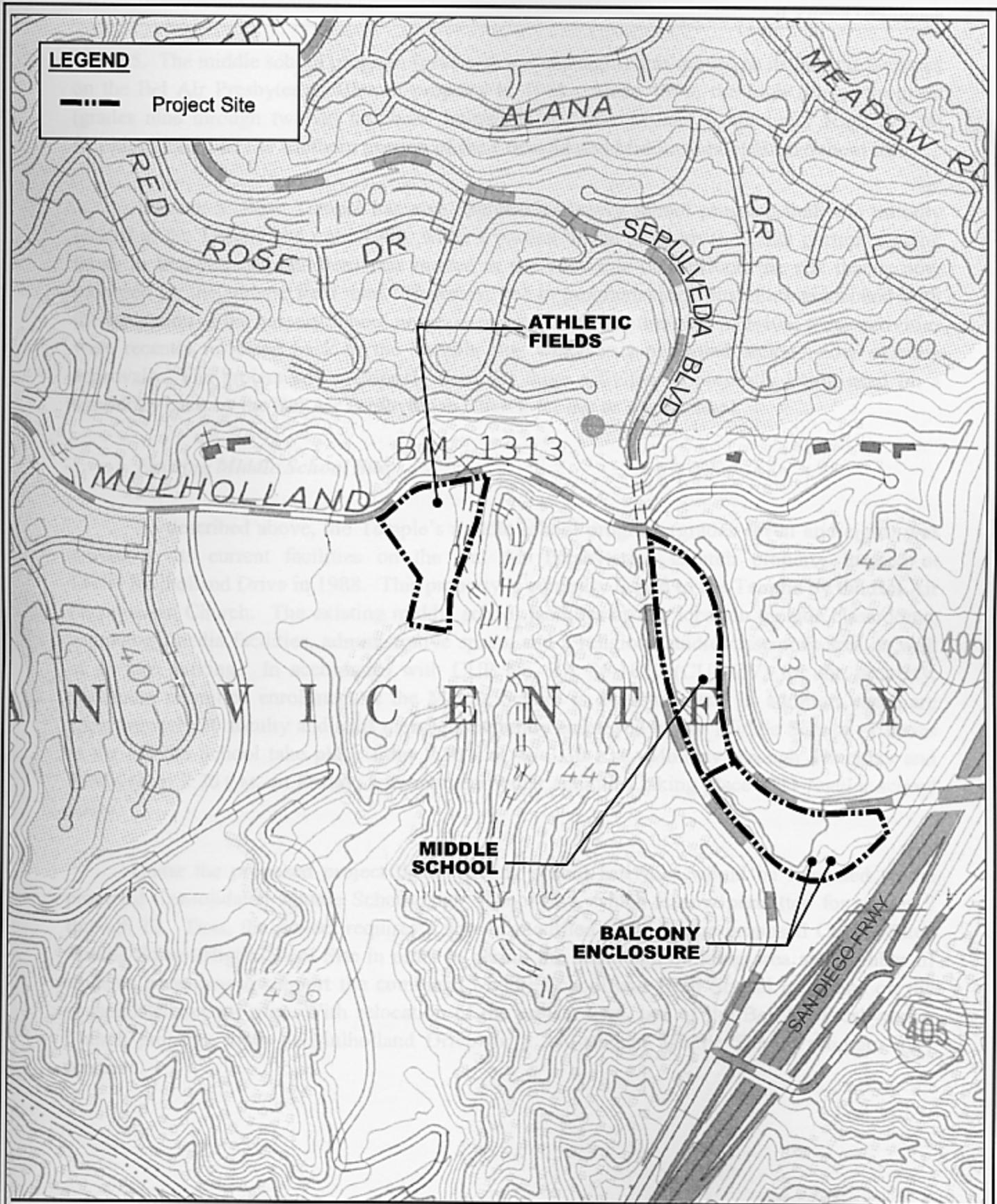
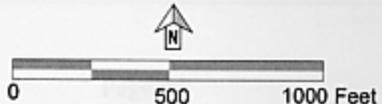
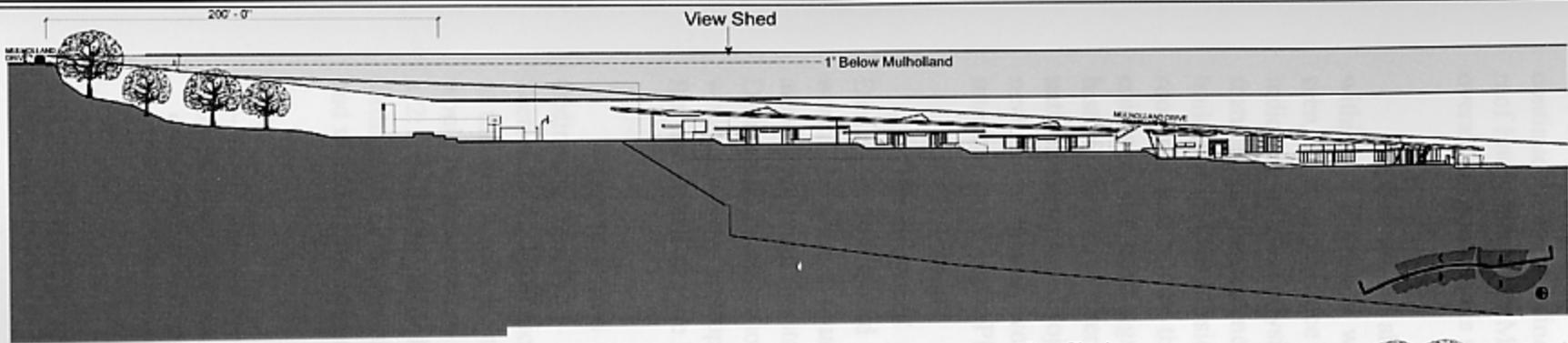


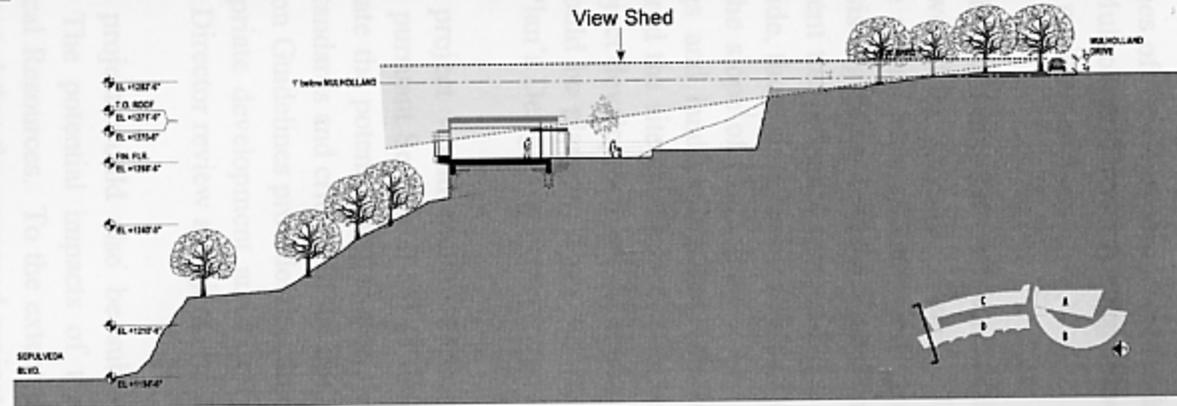
Figure 3
 Topography Surrounding
 the Project Sites



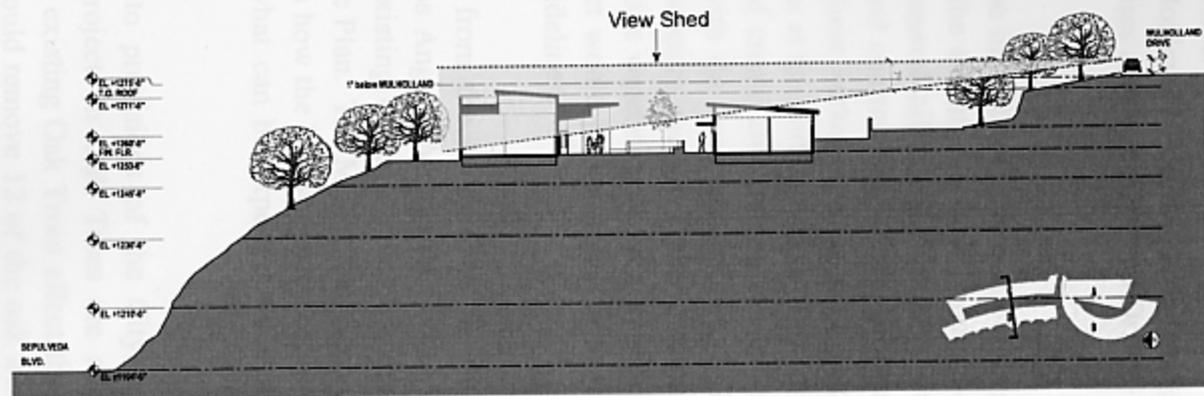
Source: U.S.G.S Topographic Map Beverly Hills and Van Nuys Quadrangles.



Cross Section 1



Cross Section 2



Cross Section 3



Figure 14
View Cross Sections

Source: Shimahara Illustration, 2005