

# FRANKLIN-COLDWATER CANYON NEIGHBORS

FEBRUARY 4, 2021

Ms. Rachel Fox  
Ms. Megan Healy  
Council District 4  
200 N Spring St, Suite 415  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE : Extension of Hillside Construction Regulation Zoning Ordinance (HCR) to Franklin/Coldwater

Dear Rachel and Megan:

Thank you for taking the time to meet with us last month to discuss our concerns about being included in the Hillside Construction Regulation zoning ordinance (“HCR”) and our concerns about rogue developers like Mohamed Hadid in our community. Further to our chat, the following is a one-stop resource guide with hyperlinked annotations pertaining to the pertinent issues.

## **WHO WE ARE**

We are a coalition of residents in the Franklin - Coldwater Canyon and adjacent hillside areas in Council District 4. Our group also includes thousands of visitors to Franklin Canyon Park and other stakeholders from all over Southern California. For further background, please see:

- <https://www.hillsidesagainsthadid.org>
- NextDoor: [https://nextdoor.com/g/5seljxy0n/?is=nav\\_bar](https://nextdoor.com/g/5seljxy0n/?is=nav_bar)
- <https://www.facebook.com/SaveHastainTrail>

## **CORE CONTACTS – STEERING COMMITTEE**

- *Steven L. Weinberg* - Board Member (alternate) Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council Franklin-Coldwater Seat, Lead and Founder, Hillsides Against Hadid.org, 20 year Resident of Coldwater Canyon;  
[Steven@WeinLawGroup.com](mailto:Steven@WeinLawGroup.com)
- *Jamie Hall* - Officer, Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council, Vice President – Legislative Affairs, President of Laurel Canyon Association and the Laurel Canyon Land Trust;  
[jamie.hall@channellawgroup.com](mailto:jamie.hall@channellawgroup.com)
- *Stephanie Savage* – Board Member, Bel-Air Beverly Crest Neighborhood Council, Laurel Canyon Association, Planning and Land Use Committee; Architectural and Entitlements specialty;  
[mike.stephanie@prodigy.net](mailto:mike.stephanie@prodigy.net)
- *Paul Edelman* - Chief of Natural Resources and Planning for the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority (MRCA), and Deputy Director of the Santa Monica Mountains Conservancy (SMMC); [Paul Edleman Bio](#)  
[edelman@smmc.ca.gov](mailto:edelman@smmc.ca.gov)

- Amy Adelson – Resident of Coldwater Canyon; Organizer and Member of Bowmont-Hazen Neighborhood Association; writer/producer; and [amyadelson1@aol.com](mailto:amyadelson1@aol.com)
- Marcia Lewis Smith, Principal, Lewis Smith Media; Communications and media consulting, Public relations and messaging development. [MLS@lsmprco.com](mailto:MLS@lsmprco.com)

## **WHAT WE SEEK**

We are fighting to keep our community and hillsides safe from rogue mega-mansion developers. We seek to accomplish this goal by advocating for meaningful laws tailored to preserving and protecting our remaining hillsides and wildlife habitat.

Our current focus is extending an *existing zoning ordinance* called the Hillside Construction Regulation (“HCR”) ([Ordinance No. 184827](#)) to protect Franklin/Coldwater Canyons. The HCR was initially passed in 2017 (LA Clerk’s File [16-1472-SI](#)) but our neighborhood (from the western border of the Bird Streets to the western border of CD 4), was inexplicably left out of the HCR.

This loophole recently allowed a mega-mansion builder named Mohamed Hadid to begin developing 97 acres of land that he owns in Franklin Canyon Park and to destroy the park’s hillsides. A motion is now pending in City Council to extend the HCR to our neighborhood and close the loophole. (LA City Clerk’s File [20-1101](#)). In short, we need the Councilmember’s immediate support and leadership to push this measure through City Council so that it can be signed into law as swiftly as possible.

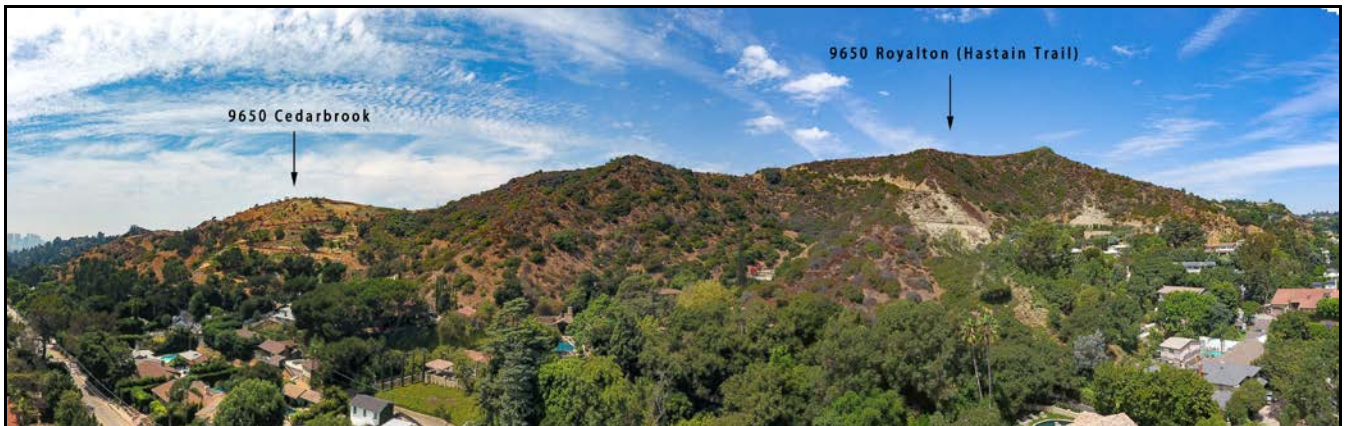
## **HOW WE GOT HERE: MOHAMED HADID - BACKGROUND (STRADA VECCHIA)**

[Mohamed Hadid](#) is a mega-mansion builder who is newsworthy lately for destroying a residential hillside in Bel-Air at Strada Vecchia and creating chaos in the process. Among other things, Hadid was: (1) convicted of criminal violations of the Los Angeles Building & Safety Codes (including building without permits, violating the scope of issued permits and violating stop-work orders); (2) ordered by the Santa Monica Superior Court to dismantle unpermitted and unsafe structures; and (3) responsible for a torrent of contentious civil litigation with neighbors and the City.

- Reyes, Emily Alpert; Smith, Dakota. ["Bel-Air mega-mansion developer Mohamed Hadid sentenced with community service, fines"](#). Los Angeles Times
- Reyes, Emily Alpert. ["Celebrity developer pleads no contest to Bel-Air mega-mansion charges. But what happens to the 30,000-square-foot estate?"](#).

## **HADID TARGETS FRANKLIN/COLDWATER CANYON (CEDARBROOK & ROYALTON)**

Despite the neighborhood nightmare at Strada Vecchia, in 2018 LADBS handed Hadid new building permits to destroy yet *another* pristine LA hillside, this time in Franklin/Coldwater Canyon at [9560 Cedarbrook](#) (“Cedarbrook”). Hadid is now using the Cedarbrook permits as a gateway to develop the rest of the land he owns in [Franklin Canyon Park](#) which is [approx. 97 acres](#). In addition to Cedarbrook, Hadid owns [9650 Royalton](#) (“Royalton”) which has already been targeted as his next mega-mansion project. This image shows the Coldwater Canyon side of the Franklin Canyon hillsides which are currently targeted by Hadid and his bulldozers:



### **Cedarbrook**

Cedarbrook is a [78,000 sq.ft. hotel-sized mega-mansion](#) which includes a 2000 foot elevated driveway and several 30’ high retaining walls. Below are images of the environmental disaster caused by the initial grading and concrete retaining wall work as of June 2020.



**Before Hadid**



**After Hadid**

To understand the enormous size (and environmental impact) of Cedarbrook, please see these [Drone aerial images of the site](#) in context of surrounding hillsides and wildlife habitat. Please also view these short videos of the environmental disaster at Cedarbrook shot by a drone pilot: (1) [Drone Video - August 30, 2020](#) (2) [Drone Video - December 18, 2020](#)

As seen from the sky, the destruction of the environment and wildlife habitat is apocalyptic. This massively out-of-scale project has also created immediate life-safety issues in our community, including, but not limited to, substandard streets clogged with heavy equipment, an army of construction workers, parking congestion, hillside erosion and myriad extreme fire hazards.

## **Royalton**

Hadid has recently commenced the permitting process for another perversely out-of-scale mansion (e.g., exceeding 75,000 square feet) at [9650 Royalton](#) (“Royalton”) slated to occupy the plateau of the Hastain Trail in [Franklin Canyon Park](#), a popular recreational destination used by thousands of Los Angeles area residents annually and owned by the National Park Service.



The location of the Royalton mansion is where Hadid illegally graded a decade ago, triggering the “Friends of the Hastain Trail” litigation from 2011–2016.

[California Court of Appeal Decision](#)

[LAIST Article on Litigation](#)

[Curbed Article on Litigation](#)

As background, Hastain Trail follows a historic fire road in the southern part of Franklin Canyon Park and has been continually used by the public as a nature walk and hiking trail since the 1960s and remains an important public open-space resource and wildlife habitat and corridor.

Hastain Trail is within National Park Service boundaries, but [extensive portions](#) (including the plateau) belong to Hadid. Completion of the Royalton mansion would likely result in closure of the Hadid-owned portions of the Hastain Trail, including the plateau. Please see this [drone footage of the Royalton mansion building site at the plateau of Hastain Trail](#).

## **WHAT CONSTITUENTS OF CD-4 NEED**

### **The Hillside Construction Regulation Zoning (HCR) Overlay - Background**

The only way stop builders like Mohamed Hadid are meaningful zoning laws so that massively out-of-scale and environmentally destructive developments (like Cedarbrook and Royalton) don't obtain permits in the first instance. With those concerns in mind, the Hillside Construction Regulation (HCR) ([Ordinance No. 184827](#)) was passed in 2017 ([LA Council File: 6-1472-sl](#)) as a pilot program to regulate construction in hillside areas and included, among other things, discretionary review for very large scale projects.

As a pilot program, however, the HCR was not rolled out to all vulnerable neighborhoods (as intended) at the same time. Among others, Franklin Canyon and Coldwater Canyon (from Mulholland Drive to Beverly Hills and the western border of the Bird Streets to the western border of CD4) were missed. This massive loophole opened the door for Hadid and his bulldozers. Thus, in the Summer of 2020, shocked Coldwater Canyon neighbors watched in horror as an entire hillside at Cedarbrook was absolutely decimated in a few days by Hadid's men without any advance notice, public hearings or community involvement.

Such destruction would never have been allowed if the HCR ordinance had been in force at Franklin/Coldwater as originally contemplated. This is because it mandates that any single family dwelling project planned to exceed 17,500 square feet pass "Site Plan Review" pursuant to [LAMC § 16.05](#) (See Section D.7. of the HCR ordinance: "Review Procedures for single family home developments larger than 17,500 square feet.") Site Plan Review is rigorous. It contemplates environmental impact consideration, CEQA compliance and public hearings. It is safe to say that both Cedarbrook and Royalton would fail Site Plan Review and be stopped before they started.

Extension of the HCR ordinance will not be a challenging or time consuming endeavor. It was already accomplished successfully for a previously excluded neighborhood in 2018. In that instance, the HCR was extended to the Bird Streets and Laurel Canyon [\[LA Council File: 16-1472-s2\]](#) so there is

an easy path to follow. Additionally, as explained below, former Councilman Ryu started the process last year, so the ball is already rolling in the right direction. [[LA Council File: 20-1101](#)];

### **The Measure to Extend The HCR Ordinance Has Already Been Launched**

As we discussed, Councilmember Ryu took decisive and immediate action last summer on our behalf by advancing a package of motions in City Council aimed specifically at stopping out-of-scale builders like Hadid, including the motion to extend the HCR ordinance to cover Franklin/Coldwater. Following former Councilmember Ryu's introduction of the measures in City Council, all PLUM reports were adopted unanimously:

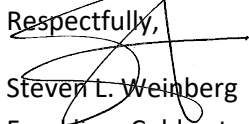
Measures aimed at stopping Hadid and other builders like him:

- (1) Extension of the HCR zoning ordinance to cover Franklin/Coldwater [[LA Council File: 20-1101](#)];
- (2) Revision of the single family dwelling size cap down to 15,750 [[LA Council File: 20-1098](#)]; and
- (3) Amendment of the array of penalties available for violations of building codes including, denying building permits to a builder at one site, where the builder has violated the law at other sites [[LA Council File: 20-0975](#)].)

By way of this introduction letter, we ask that Councilmember Raman continue to champion these motions, including, specifically, the motion to extend the HCR ordinance to cover Franklin/Coldwater. The HCR ordinance has been successful and highly effective in Bel-Air, Laurel Canyon and the Bird Streets. It has protected homeowners from overdevelopment, massive construction sites' overburdened haul routes and critical life-safety issues. At the same time, it is narrowly tailored to fully allow homeowners to renovate and builders to construct appropriate homes in scale with the existing homes.

The time to act decisively is now. The absence of HCR zoning for Franklin/Coldwater (and the gaping loophole it leaves) currently entices builders from all over the world to come to our community and follow in Hadid's footsteps. Extension of HCR zoning ordinance (and other measures described above) would close that loophole and be a game changer. Leading on these protective measures would also comprise concrete proof of Councilmember Raman's commitment to the environment.

Respectfully,

  
Steven L. Weinberg  
Franklin – Coldwater Canyon Neighbors  
Founder of Hillsides Against Hadid.org

