

SAVE HILGARD

Dear Neighbors,

Exactly one year ago, we were told by the Agora developers, Drs. Eraj Basseri and Ted Khalili, that they will build a 16-story high rise that would forever change the zoning of Hilgard Avenue. Last December, the newly-formed North Westwood Neighborhood Council gave the developer team their support, and its leader paraded their premature Agora endorsement throughout UCLA.

Since 2017, the Agora team produced fancy architectural renderings, hired an army of layers and lobbyists, and spent well over \$1M, including lobbying dollars, to influence decision-makers in City Hall.

Despite those powerful forces, our united Westwood community organized a fast and effective advocacy campaign, Save Hilgard. **We are writing to thank you and congratulate our community on an important victory against "round one" of the Agora. The 16-story Agora High Rise as we know it is dead.** Here's why:

- 1) Less than one year after they bought it, the developers abruptly sold the Malcolm home behind 900 Hilgard a few weeks ago and assured the buyers during escrow that they have "since decided not to proceed with the 16 floor high rise." The developer went on to say, "We would not have sold this property if we had decided to proceed," and, "At present time we have no plans to build. We just signed a new tenant."
- 2) We have confirmed that the developers signed a new 3-year lease at 900 Hilgard. The tenant, HelloTech, moved in after extensive tenant improvements and was told by the owners that there will be no building for at least the 3 years ahead.
- 3) Last week, Councilman Koretz's office informed us that the developers were instructed to evaluate other potential sites for the project, including a nearby DWP-owned site. No alternative site was viable. Councilman Koretz said at our May HWPOA Annual Meeting that he instructed the developers to move the Agora elsewhere, or build to a height the community would support, although Koretz didn't take an official position on the project.
- 4) The Agora application has been on hold with LA City Planning since January. This week, we received an email from the Planning Dept advising us that the developers are considering a re-design of the project. The developers have not withdrawn the file, and the Planner is allowing the file to stay open despite the inaction for now.

We are continuing to monitor the lobbying dollars and any planning updates closely, as the project may resurface in another version to try to appease the community. If the developers come back with another outrageous proposal, we are ready to take that on.

We are certain the developers now realize the strength of our united Westwood community. Even several UCLA student groups pushed back on the Agora scheme, as it was clearly never intended to be affordable housing as falsely advertised. Fortunately, UCLA Housing is pressing ahead with its construction of 5200 beds of new student housing in Westwood including holistic student amenities.

What is more remarkable than this outstanding outcome is the level of intelligence, action and unity that our community forged through the Save Hilgard efforts. We received invaluable tips, advice and tools almost daily from experienced leaders and real estate professionals.

The Board of the Holmby-Westwood Property Owners Association (HWPOA), led by Sandy Brown, was strategic, laser-sharp responsive, and generous at every step. Thanks also to the EIGHT other community associations/groups, including the Westwood Neighborhood Council (WWNC), that voted with us unanimously and early on, sending a loud message to the City and to the Agora developers.

Special thanks go to all of our neighbors who contributed to our grassroots campaign and to our 1200+ petition signers. We were constantly energized knowing the depth of our community's support.

Happy Thanksgiving!

P.S. Please feel free to discard or recycle your lawn sign. If we ever need to resurrect our opposition efforts, we will make new ones.

Thank you!
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