



September 18, 2002

Dario Herrera
Chair, Clark County Commissioners
500 S. Grand Central Parkway
Las Vegas, NV 89155

Re: Item MP-736-02; Proposed *Cielo Encantado* Housing Development at Red Rocks National Conservation Area

Commissioner Herrera:

I write on behalf of The Access Fund to urge you to reject any proposed zoning changes and development plans that would allow the proposed 8,400 home subdivision adjacent to the Red Rocks National Conservation Area. Called *Cielo Encantado* by British developers John Laing Homes, this massive housing complex would forever change the special environment at Red Rocks that many Nevadans—and Americans—treasure.

The Access Fund

The Access Fund is a 501(c) 3 non-profit advocacy group representing the interests of climbers throughout the United States, and is America's largest national climbing organization with over 15,000 members and affiliates from across the country. We advocate on behalf of approximately one million climbers in the United States. Many of our members reside in the Las Vegas area.

The Access Fund's mission is to keep climbing areas open and to conserve the climbing environment. Preserving the opportunity to climb and the diversity of the climbing experience are fundamental to our mission. Working in cooperation with climbers, other recreational users, public land managers and private land owners, The Access Fund promotes the responsible use and sound management of climbing resources.

The preserving outstanding natural viewsheds is an important component of our mission and we have been very successful in mobilizing both our constituents and members of the climbing community against any development plans that would significantly alter the natural landscape near climbing resources. We believe that the proposed *Cielo Encantado* development easily rises to this unacceptable level.



Climbing at Red Rocks

Red Rocks is one of the outstanding rockclimbing resources of this country and is recognized worldwide. The quality and length of the Aztec Sandstone found at Red Rocks is truly unique. Climbing “routes” here vary from short to extremely tall, and offer the full range of difficulties and stylistic challenges. Accordingly, climbers of all abilities travel regularly to Red Rocks to experience its unique attributes. Red Rocks also provides one of the nations few winter climbing areas because of the moderate temperatures found here during that season.

I have personally climbed at Red Rocks since the early 1980s when relatively few climbers could be found roaming its amazing canyons. Now climbers come from across the country—and internationally—to climb here. An aspect of Red Rocks that makes it special is the sense of adventure that can found in its many canyons. The view from high on the cliff faces is breathtaking. In marked contrast to Las Vegas—a town geared to entertainment and gaming—Red Rocks offers enticements of a different nature: Peace, serenity and beauty. *Cielo Encantado* would forever destroy these important values.

Red Rocks National Conservation Area

A National Conservation Area (NCA) is an area of public land set aside “[i]n order to conserve, protect and enhance [the area] for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations.” In 1990, special legislation supported by the Nevada congressional delegation declared the Red Rock Canyon area of southern Nevada to be a National Conservation Area, only the seventh to be designated nationally. As stated in its enabling legislation, the Red Rocks NCA was created

In order to conserve, protect and enhance for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations the area in southern Nevada containing and surrounding the Red Rock Canyon and the unique and nationally important geologic, archeological, ecological, cultural, scenic, scientific, wildlife, riparian, wilderness, endangered species and recreation resources of the public lands therein contained, there is established the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area.

16 U.S.C. 460ccc et seq. This enormous housing subdivision would do much to limit the values acknowledged in this legislation. The proposed *Cielo Encantado* development on the Blue Diamond Hill would build 8,400 homes, attract 21,000 people, and construct a four-lane highway, schools, commercial centers and other associated developments. In addition to the ugly scar on the landscape, this proposal would also contribute significant light, noise and air pollution to the area. While the proposed development



does not lie within the boundary of the NCA, it will border the NCA on three sides. However, *Cielo Encantado* would lie within what is topographically and ecologically Red Rock Canyon, and the traffic and visual impact that would result from this massive housing development in such close proximity would have disastrous and permanent impacts aesthetically and environmentally on Red Rock Canyon.

Moreover, this very month the US House of Representatives passed a bill through its Committee on Resources that authorized the acquisition of lands for inclusion in the Red Rock Canyon National Conservation Area. *See* H.R. 4141. In so doing, the Resources Committee found that Red Rocks “is a natural resource of major significance to the people of Nevada and the United States” and that it “must be protected in its natural state for the enjoyment of future generations of Nevadans and Americans, and enhanced wherever possible.” The Committee on Resources passed this bill because the “protection of this high-ground acreage would preserve an important element of the western Las Vegas Valley view-shed.” Allowing *Cielo Encantado* to go forward would do much to undermine the work that the US House Resource Committee felt was so important to protect the environment in the Red Rocks area.

* * *

Momentum is rapidly growing in opposition to *Cielo Encantado*. Many locals, including regional politicians and the media, have gone on record in opposition to this proposal. Environmental and recreation advocacy groups are rallying their membership to fight this proposal, and now the climbing community—a group that is very passionate about preserving this unique resource—is ramping up its opposition to this ill-advised housing subdivision.

The Access Fund and climbers across the country implore you to reject this proposal that would irrevocably degrade the great natural treasure of Red Rocks. Please do your part to preserve this special area for future generations.

Sincerely,

Jason Keith
Policy Analyst
The Access Fund



Cc: Clark County Commissioners
Clark County Planning Commission
The Honorable Harry Reid, United States Senate
The Honorable John Ensign, United States Senate
The Honorable Jim Gibbons, United States House of Representatives
Senator Christine Milburn, Nevada State Senate
Representative Kathy Von Tobel, Nevada State Assembly
Evan Blythin, Chairman, Red Rock Citizens Advisory Council
Mark Limage, Director, Las Vegas Climber's Liaison Council
Robert V. Abbey, Nevada State Director, Bureau of Land Management
Las Vegas *SUN*
Las Vegas *Review-Journal*
Las Vegas *Weekly*
Las Vegas *Mercury*
Las Vegas *City Life*
Steve Matous, Executive Director, The Access Fund
John Bliss, Nevada Regional Coordinator, The Access Fund