

Residents File Lawsuit Against Mohamed Hadid and the City of L.A. Demanding Demolition of Colossal Bel-Air Mega-Mansion

City orders against the incomplete project at 901 Strada Vecchia have gone ignored and unenforced, endangering neighbors near the dangerously unstable development; *Site includes secret underground levels and the world's largest in-home IMAX, all unpermitted*

LOS ANGELES (June 7, 2018) – Citing dozens of brazen building violations and years of disobeyed City orders, neighbors of the massive mega-mansion under construction at 901 Strada Vecchia Road filed a lawsuit today against celebrity developer Mohamed Hadid and the City of Los Angeles demanding the demolition of the towering structure built on a steep and unstable hillside.

The lawsuit details the extraordinary danger posed by the still-unfinished project, which has already triggered multiple landslides and mudslides onto the property of neighbors downslope, as well as Hadid's audacious efforts to conceal his work from City inspectors. The lawsuit calls on the City to enforce its own previous order from April 2015 requiring the project's demolition to restore the safety of the neighborhood.

"The City of Los Angeles has failed to act on an order issued by the City's Board of Building and Safety Commissioners over three years ago, telling Mohamed Hadid to immediately tear down this grossly illegal mansion," said Victor De la Cruz, lead attorney for the plaintiffs. "That order was final, yet it has not been enforced. This inaction reinforces the dangerous message that one can purposefully scheme to flout the City's laws and request forgiveness later in order to reap tens of millions of dollars in profit that would not otherwise be obtainable to the many law-abiding developers who carefully follow the law in designing and building their projects."

Since acquiring the Bel-Air property and beginning construction in 2011, Hadid has engaged in repeated and reckless violations of the Los Angeles Municipal Code to build the home rising approximately 70 feet high and measuring 30,000 square feet, according to the lawsuit, more than twice the size permitted by the Municipal Code. Hadid created an illegal building pad by grading without permits and misrepresenting the property's natural grade, after which he constructed numerous other elements that are entirely unpermitted and illegal, including multiple underground stories and the largest known in-home IMAX theater in the world.

Further, he sought to deceive inspectors from the L.A. Department of Building and Safety by concealing the extent of his work through the strategic use of tarps, plants and secret walls.

Between 2011 and 2015, the City issued 11 “Order to Comply” citations, including several that required all construction to stop immediately. Hadid ignored all 11 orders, leading the Los Angeles City Attorney to file criminal charges against him in 2015. Hadid pleaded no contest to three criminal counts and was sentenced to 200 hours of community service, fines and probation.

“Despite the criminal conviction, terms of his probation, and lack of valid permits, Hadid and his agents and/or employees have continued efforts to construct and complete the Hadid Development, without regard for Plaintiffs’ safety,” the lawsuit states.

Inexplicably, the City’s Department of Building and Safety has failed to enforce the April 2015 order and the Board of Building and Safety Commissioners’ ruling directing Hadid to destroy and remove all illegal construction from the site. The Commissioners’ ruling was final. Years later, the project has not been demolished and remains a substantial threat to the homes below. The lawsuit seeks a writ of mandate to force the City to enforce the demolition order.

The steep, seismically-active region has had a history of slope failures over the years. Hadid’s commercial-scale construction activity has reshaped the hillside and added enormous pressure to the site, accelerating the pace of slope failures onto neighboring property owned by Hadid’s two closest neighbors, plaintiffs John and Judith Bedrosian and Joseph and Beatriz Horacek. Some neighbors have felt compelled to leave their homes altogether during the rainy season for fear of catastrophe.

“After seven years of this painful saga, this community is fed up,” said De la Cruz. “Mohamed Hadid has made a mockery of the City’s laws and the safety of his neighbors, and astonishingly the City of Los Angeles has turned a blind eye. But no one is above the law, and it’s time for this hazardous and illegal eyesore to come down once and for all. These are not merely technical violations. They are as enormous as the illegal structure itself. At this stage, the only way to bring this illegal mansion into compliance is to tear it down and start over.”

In February 2018, a request was made to the City Attorney’s office to take steps to cause the demolition of the illegal development in order to abate the nuisance. The City Attorney has refused to act to cause the demolition and protect residents and their property.

The lawsuit comes amid growing demands from the community for the City to take action against the notorious mega-mansion, which has been dubbed “the Starship Enterprise” in international news coverage. Also today, numerous opponents spoke out against the project at a City Planning Department Zoning Administrator hearing and scores of residents have signed up to support the demolition of the project on a dedicated new website, TearItDown.net.