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Here are my comments about the new Greenleaf Promenade design (Amendment to the Uptown Streetscape Plan dated 11/27/23), in anticipation of the Council Study Session:

A lot of time, effort and cost went into the creation of the Uptown Whittier Streetscape Beautification Plan (5/28/19), as approved by the City Council via Resolution 2019-32.

There were 3 Community Meetings (1/30/16, 1/11/17 and 2/8/17) in which many alternatives and ideas were exchanged on the 2019 design. Community input was incorporated into the design. There were compromises by the opposing participants. The main compromise was removal of problem trees over an extended period of time. I reviewed the 2019 design documents and I believe that this plan was well prepared and reasonable.

The phased removal of the ficus trees was a key topic addressed. 3 alternatives were proposed at those meetings: (a) Keep every other ficus, (b) Keep ficus at angled parking, (c) Remove all ficus. A poll was also included in the study, where 59% of 133 votes included the retention of the ficus trees in either an every other or every third tree fashion. I believe that alternatives (a) or (b) is a reasonable compromise. There are also 25 other healthy non-intrusive (non-ficus trees) that are being removed along with the ficus.

The community needs to know why this “phased” tree & hardscape replacement strategy was abandoned entirely and replaced with a wholesale/scorched earth design. There is a lot of discussion on this on social media.

I believe that the Negative Declaration (December 2023) contains these specific inconsistencies and should be revised with a community preservation point of view:

- Item 3.1- Aesthetics, pages 27 & 28. Items (a) and (c) should have had alternative discussion for “New Potential Significant Impact” or “New Mitigation Is Required”. The conclusion that No Impact is not fully supported by the discussion statements. The community believes that there is significant impact.
- Item 3.3- Air Quality, page 30. Item (b). The loss of mature trees should result in a net increase in local pollutants. This should have had a “New Potential Significant Impact” or “New Mitigation Is Required” conclusion. The community believes that there is significant impact from the significant mature tree loss.
- Item 3.4- Biological Resources, page 34. Item (e). The existence of the Local Tree Ordinance should have resulted in a “New Potential Significant Impact” or “New Mitigation Is Required” conclusion rather than a No Impact conclusion. The whole point of the Tree Ordinance was to protect single trees, as well as a neighborhood of trees. The community believes that there is significant impact. Alternate discussion is warranted.
- Item 3.5- Cultural Resources, page 36. Item (a). It could be argued that the community of trees in the Uptown area are a significant historical resource. This should have had a “New Potential Significant Impact” or “New Mitigation Is Required” conclusion. Alternate discussion is warranted.
- Item 3.11- Land Use and Planning, page 49. Item (b). The new project does not fully comply with the Specific Plan, especially to the wholesale removal of the trees. This should have had a “New Potential Significant Impact” or “New Mitigation Is Required” conclusion. Alternate discussion is warranted.

Please re-evaluate the decision on the Greenleaf Promenade and consider a phased tree replacement and hardscape design instead of the scorched earth design.

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Former Design Review Board member

CC: CM; ACM; CA; Council; Original to CC; Public Binder; Department