

May 7, 2024

Conny B. McCormack  
6799 Worsham Dr.  
Whittier, CA. 90602

Whittier City Council  
13230 Penn St.  
Whittier, CA. 90602

Dear Mayor & City Council Members:

This letter focuses on last week's special City Council meeting/study session about the ongoing tree controversy and encapsulates the testimony I intend to deliver at tonight City Council meeting during the Public Comment period (remotely, via Zoom link). First, I would like to clarify that planting 28 NEW ficus trees in Pasadena last year on Green St. was pre-approved by their City's Urban Forestry Department. Yes, those ficus trees were purchased by a non-profit organization, but those ficus trees were planted by a city-provided contractor, and they were planted in Pasadena's right of way<sup>1</sup>.

The remainder of my comments address last week's staff report & slide presentation. The City Manager made the incredulous statement that the project configuration of the previous Gardens of Whittier/Streetscape Plan is **impossible & never could be done**. How audacious for the City Manager to assert that the Streetscape Plan that this City Council formally adopted in 2019 was never going to be possible! What gives the City Manager the power or authority to issue such a decree? He attempted to justify his assessment by stating the trees need a 22-26 ft. protection zone -- that is a recommended best practice, it is NOT required! Council member Dutra asked with such a large protection radius, "Why would we plant ANY trees where there is concrete?" Ficus tree canopies thrive here in Whittier and ALL over S CA streets without following that huge spacing "guideline."

The Streetscape Plan your Council approved in 2019 followed the legal tree succession requirements clearly stated in Whittier's Uptown Specific Plan & Tree Manual, including the real definition of phasing-In tree removal & replacement: removing some of the ficus trees while the replacement trees grow up, BEFORE removing the remainder of the trees, thereby KEEPING THE CANOPY! But at last week's meeting, the City Manager conjured up an entirely

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<sup>1</sup> After my Public Comment at the April 30, 2024 special City Council meeting/study session, in which I showed pictures of the new ficus trees planted in Pasadena in March 2023 to fill in the City's canopy of ficus trees on Green St., a City of Whittier staff member was called to the podium. She said those new ficus trees were planted by a private organization, implicating little city involvement. It was a collaborative project between the City of Pasadena and Pasadena Beautiful (a private organization) that donated the trees; those new ficus trees are on City property, and they will be maintained by the City of Pasadena.

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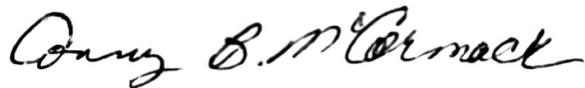
Council Meeting: \_\_\_\_\_  
Agenda Item No: \_\_\_\_\_

different definition of Tree Phasing. He declared that since the Greenleaf Promenade Plan constitutes only 7% of the total Uptown area, removing all the trees at once on three blocks of Greenleaf is only the first phase. In effect, he previewed that ALL the ficus trees in Uptown will be on the chopping block in upcoming, sequential "phases."

The overflowing City Council Chamber last week, AND the citizen petition with over 3,000 signatures and growing, clearly reveal the incredible strength of the public uprising against your draconian tree removal Plan. While those 3 blocks of Greenleaf may only be 7% of Uptown, they are the very HEART of our City. Like removing our beating hearts, which are less than ½ % of our body weight, would kill us!

As I've repeated during Public Comment at every City Council meeting since this crisis began, I believe that a viable solution can emerge in the weeks ahead to deliver much-needed, taxpayer-funded Uptown improvements that both residents AND business owners can accept, **without** sacrificing our City's most recognizable feature: our magnificent canopy of trees.

Sincerely,



Conny B. McCormack  
28-yr resident of Whittier  
L.A. County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (Ret.)

On the following page:

A picture of new ficus trees planted in Pasadena on Arbor Day in March 2023

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



New ficus trees planted in Pasadena on Arbor Day in March 2023