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An Activity of UNA Whittier  
6 June 2024

To: The Whittier City Council: Mayor Pro Tem Cathy Warner and Council Members Fernando Dutra, Octavio Martinez, and Mary Ann Pacheco  
Cc: Mayor Joe Vinatieri and City Manager Brian Saeki

Subject: Greenleaf Promenade Design Amendment

WAEC calls for the city to consider substantial changes to the approved Final Greenleaf Promenade Design Amendment.

We support the analysis by the Whittier Conservancy describing the importance of trees in an urban forest. We also support the plea by the Save the Trees movement to avoid the mass demolition of every tree in the project area.

We have additional remarks based on the City's objectives to "establish Uptown Whittier as a vibrant urban destination" that we think also need serious consideration.

First, does the plan consider that **planet Earth is facing an environmental crisis** caused by greenhouse gases emitted from fossil fuels? To date, it seems the most effective way to combat the problem is to vastly increase the number of trees.

As the Whittier Conservancy has pointed out, the city once agreed to replace any tree removed. The project will eliminate over 100 large trees and replace them with fewer than 40 smaller ones. Does this mean the previous policy is null and void? We hope not. A narrow-minded approach of removing trees and then replacing them with fewer, smaller trees, is

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wrong for our children, wrong for our grandchildren and wrong for our planet.

Second, **will a barren three-block-long street**, lined with over twenty look-alike places to eat *al fresco* next to a busy street used by fossil fuel burning and noise-generating cars, trucks, and motorcycles, **be a “vibrant urban destination”**? We doubt it. The only “people magnets” we identify in the drawings are the “grassy area” and a small vacant lot upgraded to park status. The ideas submitted by local citizens during the two “charrettes” held several years ago suggested many ideas that would attract visitors.

The current community reactions to the sterile design have provoked a fresh wave of people-centered and tree-centered ideas. As these come to our attention, we will pass them on to the Council for consideration. A professional design team knowledgeable of how to create places that attract people needs to review and evaluate these ideas and incorporate the best ones into a modified plan.

Third, **does the design do justice to Whittier’s historic core?** Whittier has a special place in the history of greater Los Angeles. It includes the Native American tribes, the Spanish colonists and Mexican statehood, Pio Pico’s residence, the city’s creation as the first Quaker city west of the Mississippi (the basepoint of the survey is at Greenleaf and Philadelphia), the childhood homes of one US President (Richard Nixon) and one First Lady (Lou Henry Hoover) as well as pioneers in auto and airplane racing.

Furthermore, our little city has hosted pioneering institutions, including Whittier College, the Whittier Art Gallery, and the Fred C Nellis School for Juvenile Offenders, all of which are fundamental to California history. We see no indication that the design team thought about how this project could draw on this rich history to make Whittier even more unique in the vast sprawl of shopping centers and strip malls that define the newer Los Angeles and Orange County cities.

Finally, **is there any commitment to establish and maintain a verdant environment in uptown?** Experience shows that landscaping amenities are the last item added to reconstruction projects and the first to be cut when engineering aspects run over budget. Where is the guarantee that the city is committed to creating and maintaining a verdant Greenleaf Avenue?

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WAEC urges more thorough consideration of this project, including greater sensitivity to residents who are regular visitors to Uptown Whittier merchants. The consultants' engineer-driven design addresses a list of practical problems faced by property owners and the Los Angeles County Fire Department, but it lacks the human spirit that our city deserves.

Respectfully submitted,

John Beynon  
Bianca Salgado  
Monica Sena  
Anthony Avila  
Ken Bodger  
Stephanie Vallejo

Signed: John Beynon, Bianca Salgado, Monica Sena, Anthony Avila, Ken Bodger, Stephanie Vallejo