

June 18, 2024

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

Dear Mayor and City Council Members:

After reading the 17-page staff report attached to the June 18<sup>th</sup> special City Council agenda, INSULT is the one word that describes it. Everyone knows the design of the **current** project prohibits retention of existing trees; the staff report relies on repeating that mantra ad nauseum. It represents a complete disregard for what the **vast majority** of Whittier residents have repeatedly said and vociferously advocate: RE-DESIGN THIS “BEAUTIFICATION” PROJECT TO ACCOMMODATE AT LEAST HALF OF THE TREES TO KEEP THE CANOPY!

In my June 11 letter, reiterated during Public Comments at the City Council meeting that evening, and in a follow-up Public Records Request (PRR), I asked “Before Whittier embarks upon a \$20+ million project with the goal of bringing more customers to businesses in a revitalized Uptown area, was any research conducted to provide evidence/data to show the likelihood of achieving that objective, or are you just hoping for such an outcome?” The staff report relies on resident responses to an online survey in mid-2021, and to charrettes and other meetings in 2021 and 2022, when there was NO MENTION of removing all the mature trees at once! The June 18 staff report<sup>1</sup> clearly reveals that you have NO data or evidence that more customers are likely to come to Uptown. Apparently, you think it’s worth it to gamble that more customers will come, even at the ludicrously high price of executing the healthy, shady canopy of trees on those three blocks of Greenleaf Av in the heart of Uptown.

By contrast, the evidence and strength of the public outcry is clearly revealed by 4,083+ signatures, and growing daily, on a Petition to Save our Trees in Uptown Whittier<sup>2</sup>, overflowing crowds protesting total tree removal at the special City Council meetings on Feb. 20 and April 30, hundreds of letters sent to you, several rallies to Save Our Trees, and widespread media coverage capturing the surprise, dismay and anger of the VAST majority of residents<sup>3</sup>. The message is obvious: People come to Whittier because it is unique and distinctive with an exceptional canopy of trees.

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<sup>1</sup> And the response to my PRR request merely points me to that staff report.

<sup>2</sup> See petition at <https://chnng.it/fFN5cS8yVP>. It now has 4,083+ signatures and growing daily. A hardcopy printout of petition signatures was presented to you on April 30 by Noa Larios, Whittier Cal High senior, and Eva Rodriguez, Fullerton College freshman who originated it (at that time, there were approximately 2,500 signers). The petition clearly advocates a phase-in approach; its wording is against “eliminating ALL of Uptown’s ficus trees at once, rather than the previously discussed Streetscape Plan to gradually replace them.”

<sup>3</sup> Including a number of business owners/managers in the Uptown area, as revealed by media coverage.

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

Your actions have created a crescendo of public outrage. If you decide tonight to proceed with the Greenleaf Promenade plan you adopted on Dec. 12, 2023<sup>4</sup> calling for chopping down the existing trees, it is predictable that such action will provoke an even greater uprising of residents. Residents WILL NOT stand by and watch you carry out this destruction of the urban forest in the heart of our City.

Through multiple letters and public comments<sup>5</sup> over the past six months, and recent, individual phone calls with many of you, I have reiterated what you already know: everyone supports improving Uptown, and that achieving that goal and maintaining the tree canopy are not mutually exclusive. Please listen and act accordingly.

The overriding question still remains: WHY are you, our elected representatives, so obstinate and dismissive of the outraged voices of thousands of City residents? You have the power to enact a viable compromise solution to begin the healing process for our community. Instead, if you decide to chop down all of these trees, you will stoke the flames of dissent instead of quelling the public's outrage. It's your choice and your legacy.

All the best,



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

Cc: Brian Saeki, City Manager  
Rigo Garcia, City Clerk

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<sup>4</sup> With only extremely minor "concessions" to plant replacement trees that are somewhat larger than previously contemplated, and to string up some fabric for shade as referenced in staff report.

<sup>5</sup> Letters to you dated Feb. 5, Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar. 26, Apr. 30, May 7, May 28, and June 11, and public comments on Jan. 23, Feb. 13, Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar 12, March 26, Apr. 23, Apr. 30, May 14, May 28 and June 11 incorporated by reference.

