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

Subject: Greenleaf Promenade: YES you CAN – SI se PUEDE!

Dear City Council Members:

For more than six months, many Whittier residents have provided you with a wealth of information on how it is indeed possible to save most of the existing trees during the planned Greenleaf Promenade redevelopment project. Because your City Council has asked “what are other cities doing?”, I have once again been researching that. I recently discovered a document that peaked my interest: “The City of Santa Monica’s Guide to Planning and Protection of Public Trees During Construction Projects.” In that document is a picture of a huge ficus tree with a deep ditch alongside it dug during a large construction project.



500 Broadway:
Collaboration with applicant & 3rd party arborists opening an exploratory trench to review and mitigate conflicting roots for steel-beam installation prior to excavation & shoring. GC waters trees monthly & provides plant health care treatments for sustained tree health during demo and construction.

Trees were methodically pruned for property line clearance & tower crane installation of 8-story structure to be developed to the property line.



Seeking to learn more about it, I called and spoke with an Urban Forestry Coordinator for the City of Santa Monica, the ISA certified arborist in charge of tree preservation during construction projects. He told me that picture was from a major project about six years ago at 5th St. and Broadway in Santa Monica. The developer submitted plans to tear down a one-story building to erect a new 8-story building, but a row of large ficus trees was in the way. The developer wanted to chop down ALL of the ficus trees in front of the building although that would have eviscerated the canopy of large ficus trees shading both sides of the street.

The Urban Forestry Coordinator told me that Santa Monica starts projects with an expectation to try to save trees, which was done successfully with great effort on this project. He said the

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project forced a high level of coordination between the developer and the City. Tree health was assessed and, of course, Tree Protection Zones were involved. Trees and tree roots had to be trimmed back significantly. But it resulted in a successful development project with new housing units & retail without sacrificing the existing mature ficus trees that continue to thrive.



Further research revealed that Santa Monica’s prior experience attempting to remove 54 ficus trees for a downtown development project is eerily similar to Whittier’s current tree controversy <https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2007-oct-06-me-ficus6-story.html>. Seventeen years ago, that project ignited residents’ outrage, with ongoing protests, followed by legal action. Residents successfully halted further tree destruction. Today, most of those tall ficus trees are still standing. Pitifully, the replacement trees cast only a weak shadow and provide no viable shade 15 years after planting.



Parking meter shade is similar to replacement trees in Santa Monica....

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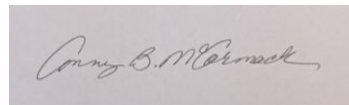
As described to you in my letter of April 29 entitled *A Tale of Two Cities*¹, my previous research revealed the cities of Pasadena and Beverly Hills have taken opposite approaches over the past two years regarding ficus trees when confronting development and beautification. Last year, Pasadena planted 28 NEW ficus trees on Green St. to fill in empty spaces in their mature ficus tree canopy. By contrast, Beverly Hills removed ficus trees on one side of an entire block of Robertson Blvd; outraged residents sued. That litigation is still pending 18 months later.

Fortunately, there IS a WIN-WIN solution to Whittier's tree controversy. As I wrote to you in my letter of July 8, and summarized during public comments at your July 9 City Council meeting, that solution was designed by SWA, the City's project architects, and presented to you two years ago. It would retain 70+% of the existing tree canopy and result in a beautiful Pedestrian Promenade on Greenleaf Av supported by a super-majority of residents and businesses as shown by results of the City's professional contracted Community Survey. SWA told you then it can be done, you know it can be done, and we know it can be done!

Why is it that Whittier's leadership majority does not comprehend that preserving existing mature trees CAN be achieved alongside new development? So many other cities in S. CA are doing that. It is NOT mutually exclusive. Why are you ignoring vociferous and sustained public outcry at Council meetings? That outrage is clearly demonstrated by 5,766 signatures, growing daily, on the Petition to Save Our Trees in Uptown Whittier: <https://chng.it/ffN5c8yVP>

At your special City Council meeting tomorrow, you will once again have the opportunity to get this project right with the support and enthusiasm of Whittier residents and businesses whom you were elected to represent. Now is the time to do it: YES you CAN! SI se PUEDE!

Sincerely,



Conny McCormack
Former L.A. Co. Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (ret.)
28-year resident of Whittier

cc: Mayor Joe Vinatieri
Brian Saeki, City Manager
Rigo Garcia, City Clerk

¹ Letters to you dated Feb. 5, Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar. 26, Apr. 29, May 7, May 28, June 11, June 18, July 9, and July 23 and public comments on Jan. 23, Feb. 13, Feb. 20, Feb. 27, Mar 12, March 26, Apr. 23, Apr. 30, May 14, May 28, June 11, June 18, July 9 and July 23, and Aug. 13 incorporated by reference.