

**FOR PUBLIC COMMENTS: Special Study Session—October 22, 2024**

Dear Friends,

We can still SAVE OUR TREES! It's not too late!

Even with the recent publicly revealed proposed building of 344 housing units by developers on eight city-owned lots in Uptown Whittier (which changed the original plans from a streetscape beautification plan to a public works project and inflated the budget from \$2 to \$20 million dollars to accommodate the addition of a large water main for this purpose), there is NO need to clear cut all 108 legacy Ficus trees on Greenleaf Avenue as stated by Public Works Director Kyle Cason on August 20<sup>th</sup> during the City Council meeting. Clear cutting may be more cost effective for developers, but the price of robbing our community of the shade, health benefits, and beauty of our legacy Ficus trees is beyond price. Careful root and tree pruning, as pointed out by well-respected arborists (not on City payroll) and many Whittier residents, can SAVE OUR TREES. It's not too late to listen to over 6,500 Whittier residents who have signed a petition and asked to do just that.

There is a WIN-WIN proposal outlined in the Pedestrian Promenade Option presented in the City Council meeting by several people in person and via email on July 9<sup>th</sup> during Public Comments.

On that day, local residents and community advocates, shared that on June 18, 2022, three plans for the revitalization of Uptown were discussed. One of the options proposed by SWA that night was called the **Pedestrian Promenade Option**. This SWA designed Pedestrian Promenade option preserves 70% of the Uptown Ficus trees (70%--unlike the current plan that was recently adopted to chop them all down). The Pedestrian Promenade Option offers a pedestrian-only street experience (no parking), a park like environment, large dining and gathering patios, and new and enhanced landscaping. When the City surveyed the local Uptown community about a pedestrian only Option, 86% of the general community supported a Pedestrian Promenade Option; including 74% of business owners and 83% of the Uptown property owners.

**1/2 Block Concept - 2021 Pedestrian Promenade Option**



Of the three options proposed that night **ONLY** the **Pedestrian Promenade Option** offers a WIN-WIN solution that will accommodate new construction and keep the shade canopy and our TREES.

**Here's a SWA visualization of the eco-friendly Pedestrian Promenade Option (see visualization photo below).**



**The Pedestrian Promenade Option shown above was jettisoned in favor of the current 2024 Plan that will see 108 Ficus trees in Uptown cut down and destroyed (see visualization photo below).**



**(Note: the replacement tree pictured above IS NOT the actual size of tree that will be planted in 2024-2025 if the current Plan moves forward—the pictured tree size represents the projected 20-year growth)**

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Considering the current warming patterns and heat waves we are experiencing (with a predicted 5-7 degree increase over current temperatures in the near future), the currently approved Plan will destroy our protective shade canopy. The proposed tree replacement will not provide the same shade and health benefits in Uptown for at best 60 years, at worst, 80 years to come! Rather than improving business, this kind of concrete desert will discourage foot traffic. You can't walk a child, you can't walk a dog, you can't enjoy a day with your family strolling beneath a leafy canopy, visiting shops and frequenting restaurants or going to the movies because it will be TOO HOT TO SHOP.

Recent temperature readings in Uptown on a hot day are proof:  
Under the Ficus shade canopy: 81 degrees  
On the Concrete Pavement (no shade): 145 degrees

Please do the *right* thing—listen to your constituents--reject the current Plan--and **adopt the Pedestrian Promenade Option** that was submitted by SWA and supported by the local community and is more eco-people friendly and will SAVE OUR TREES, OUR HEALTH, AND OUR BUSINESSES.

Thank you for your consideration and the work you do on behalf of the community.

Best,

Patti McCarthy  
Whittier Resident