HISTORIC HIGHLAND PARK NEIGHBORHOOD COUNCIL
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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
CALIFORNIA

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Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council

May 6, 2021

Attn: Congressman Jimmy Gomez, Senator Maria Elene Durazo, Councilmember Gil Cedillo, Councilmember Kevin DeLeon, Assemblymember Wendy Carrillo, Supervisor Hilda Solis

From: Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council

RE: Environmental site assessment of York Park.

Dear Government Officials,

The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council (HHPNC), community members, and stakeholders will not be satisfied until an Environmental Site Assessment is completed at York Park, and witnessed by members of the Sustainability Committee Task Force. The HHPNC, representing more than 60,000 resident stakeholders, calls upon all of you to support the funding and authorization of an Environmental Site Assessment to resolve concerns regarding the site's history of gasoline leakage and environmental remediation efforts.

The HHPNC Sustainability Committee meets regularly and has established a separate Task Force to further review evidence, hear stakeholder experiences, and gain valuable insight from local scientists. As a result of these efforts, the Committee maintains that available public documents of past remediation efforts are insufficient. Additional feedback and information now leads to apprehension around the thoroughness of clean-up activities leading to the park's development. The issues are as follows.

One resident was previously interested in purchasing the York Park property when it was still a gas station, and requested paperwork on the site's history and environmental review. Records obtained through the Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety showed that one abatement occurred on site, including the full replacement of dirt. The records also show that there was a considerable diesel pipe leak in the 1980s. This was discovered when the gas station was replacing their tanks due to a change in technology and possible corrosion. When the site's wells were tested for holding gasoline, there was immediate volume loss due to the leak. It is unknown how long the pipe leaked occurred, as the site sat vacant for a long time. It is believed that the area surrounding the gas station became saturated with gasoline and caused the soil to leach as well as other possible impacts to underground infrastructure. Furthermore, multiple community stakeholders remarked that the gas station owners and its tenants regularly ignored abatement orders over the years.

In 2009, the site's issues were reviewed with the HHPNC Land Use Committee in order to propose alternative uses, including a park. Stakeholders met with José Huizar's office, and the agenda and notes from the meetings are presently available. Ultimately, José Huizar was able to get a grant approved to purchase the property for development of the park. In the light of José Huizar's crimes, every action and past behaviors need to be reevaluated. As our community has understandably lost all trust in Jose Huizar, we do not find sufficient the paperwork that shows the California Water Board signed off on the remediation efforts.

Prior to Park construction, a second site abatement did occur but in an insufficient manner. There is no documentation of how much soil was removed, who transferred it, and where it ended up. At the same time, some neighbors believe that they saw earth removal activity and hauling by trucks; others claim to have not witnessed this. In addition, paperwork shows a vapor barrier would have been mandated had the site contained a retail building. Since the site became a park, it is unclear if a vapor barrier was installed. As a result, photos and/or video proof of the soil removal and proof of the installed vapor barrier are necessary.

Furthermore, it is believed that the pre-park remediation efforts were done by a bad actor. The contracted environmental clean-up group, AGI and Corsair LLC (the owner of

the property) were successfully sued by the State of California for illegal disposal of lead hazardous waste at another remediation in the Los Angeles region.

Stakeholders, on their time and through their own resources, held air quality readings held at York Park in early March to better understand immediate surface-level exposure. Their work was conducted using a Photoionization Detector to scan soils and catch any volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and other gases, such as gasoline. All readings showed 0.0 parts per million, indicating there is presently no VOCs at surface level and possibly through the top-level of park surface.

In April, soil samples were taken through the park at one foot depth, which of course includes fill soil that was placed on top of the original soil. No gasoline or VOCs were detected, but TPH-Diesel showed at 11.3 mg/kg. This is barely above the detection limit and below the screening level of the California Water Board. It is of the opinion that further evaluation is warranted, but that its existence does not represent immediate concern to human health. Multiple core samples at various depths will support additional safety screening.

In the meantime, it is clear that the Highland Park community is paying attention. Fliers are being posted anonymously at the Park demanding review by the California Water Board.

To resolve these issues, we are seeking the following:

- Additional soil samples and independent testing to clear immediate safety issues, although this does not resolve the larger issue of subsurface contaminant
- Documentation of earthwork, dirt removal, and remediation including the existence of a proper vapor barrier
- A formal Environmental Site Assessment to comprehensively and fully assess the site's current and historical environmental quality...this should include (but not be limited to):
    1. Check for vapor barrier
    2. 5 soil borings to 5 feet, with soil samples at 2 and 5 feet below ground surface (one for groundwater sampling)
    3. 5 soil vapor probes at 2 feet, can be in the same borings
    4. Allow for members of York Park Task Force & HHPNC to bear witness to ESA

We look forward to working together to ensure the safety of our community, especially our most vulnerable members – our children.

The Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council Vote: YES__14__ NO___ 0__.
Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Estrella Sainburg
President
Historic Highland Park Neighborhood Council