

October 5, 2020

The Honorable Paul Koretz
Los Angeles City Council, 5th District
200 N. Spring Street
Room 440
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Paul.Koretz@lacity.org

Dear Councilmember Koretz:

Our families care deeply about helping the homeless population in Los Angeles. Many of us have volunteered our time and money over the years to help various organizations provide much needed assistance to the homeless. We are sad to see so many people suffering on our streets and we could not agree more that something must be done to help solve this ever-growing crisis in our city. We disagree, however, that the solution is to provide homeless housing at our beloved Rancho Park—the heart and soul of our community—at the expense of the health and safety of our families.

Whether it is our family picnics, playing tennis, golf, basketball, or soccer, walking our dogs, jogging and exercising, or taking leisurely walks, our park is where our community comes together and where our kids can roam free and feel safe. This is one of the main reasons many of our families moved here in the first place, remain here for generations, and why our neighborhood continues to attract new families. Based on our first-hand experience with the Mayor's recent "temporary" takeover of the park's recreation center and parking lot, your long-term plan would not only irreparably damage our park, but also our entire neighborhood and community, regardless of whether the proposed housing is for "only" 25 people instead of the over 100 people under the Mayor's program.

When the Mayor's temporary plan was announced, many of us were greatly concerned. Many in our community were also willing to rely on the Mayor's assurances that the plan was only temporary and felt that in these unprecedented times of COVID-19, we should come together to get through this state of emergency and make shared sacrifices on a temporary basis. Over the past six months, however, our community has become largely united in wondering whether the good will and cooperation that we showed was worth the long-term harm to our safe, peaceful, and beautiful neighborhood.

Since the trailers arrived, members of our community have seen countless homeless people roaming our neighborhoods throughout the day, in some instances threatening our residents and our children with violence (and in some cases actually committing violence), sleeping on sidewalks directly in front of our homes, using drugs, urinating on our streets in broad day light, leaving mattresses, alcohol bottles, needles and other drug paraphernalia, blankets, carts, and even condoms strewn on the ground. We have never seen anything remotely like this before.

Fortunately, the Mayor's temporary program will end soon without our need for action; the Mayor's office has assured us that the trailers program will begin to unwind this month and will be completely removed from the park by the end of November. But now we have come to learn that you are actively considering and perhaps actually proposing a plan to build long-term homeless housing at the park.

We are deeply concerned that just as our neighborhood's havoc is about to end and our recovery is in sight, we are now facing the prospect of a plan that will undoubtedly cause irreparable harm to the health and safety of our park and to our community as a whole. As you know, we are an informed and active community, and we are committed to working with the City in an open, transparent, and collaborative

manner to resolve this situation. We understand there is a homeless crisis, a federal court order, and, we
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all agree, a need to help this vulnerable population. But we must come up with a plan that makes sense for everyone without putting the health and safety of our community at risk by building long-term housing at Rancho Park.

Even if the health and safety of our community were not reason enough for you to reconsider, there are other troubling considerations to keep in mind. Rancho Park is located in the Open Space (OS) Zone, and, as you know, long-term housing for the homeless is not an appropriate use for this zoning designation. It is our understanding that the City's Recreation and Parks Department is against this plan. Further, there is an active oil well located just 400 feet from your proposed homeless housing site. Just last month, on September 11, 2020, you wrote, "And I am one of the principle co-authors of the legislation calling for 2,500 foot health and safety buffer zones around oil and gas operations in the City, legislation which we expect will eventually shut down the West Pico Drill Site permanently" (see attached letter). Finally, by allowing homeless housing in Rancho Park, you would be creating a precedent that would lead to permanent housing at all other City parks, which will certainly be disruptive to those communities and engender similar concerns.

We respectfully request that you immediately revoke any proposal to build housing for the homeless at Rancho Park, whether temporarily or long-term. Please know that despite our objection to this proposal, we stand committed to helping you and the City address the homeless crisis and are eager to contribute to this very important cause in any other way. We look forward to working with you to find an alternative and mutually acceptable solution.

Thank you for your understanding and cooperation.

Respectfully,

Residents of District 5

Enclosures

cc: Mayor Eric Garcetti (via email)
Ms. Angel Izard (via email)
Ms. Ana Guerrero (via email)
Ms. Lisa Payne (via email)
Mr. Kevin Taylor (via email)
Ms. Amy Perkins (via email)

Committees:

Chair

Personnel & Animal Welfare

Vice Chair

Energy, Climate Change &
Environmental Justice

Ad Hoc Committee on Police
Reform

Member

Budget and Finance
Transportation

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Councilmember, Fifth District

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September 11, 2020

Dear Neighbors,

Thank you all so much for sharing your concerns about the West Pico Drill Site, located at the corner of Pico and Doheny. NASE (Neighbors for a Safe Environment) has had a long and contentious relationship with this drill site and I appreciate your strong advocacy over two decades on behalf of community, friends and neighbors. I also appreciate, as always, the work and focus of the South Robertson Neighborhoods Council, who is always on top of issues affecting the surrounding neighborhoods and has a long history of mutual cooperation with my staff and I.

I must admit I have been fairly surprised by some of the negative responses my staff and I have received, given that I have been one of the City Council's leaders in regaining a foothold on an out-of-control oil and gas industry which has operated for decades without proper oversight. After my legislation with Councilmember Bonin to [ban fracking](#) in Los Angeles got stalled, it became apparent from the departmental responses that we could not move forward without an oil and gas expert, so we introduced [legislation](#) in April 2015 to hire one -- the Petroleum Administrator. I worked with then-Council President Wesson through several stages of [legislation](#) to develop the position. And I am one of the principle co-authors of the [legislation](#) calling for 2,500 foot health and safety buffer zones around oil and gas operations in the City, legislation which we expect will eventually shut down the West Pico Drill Site permanently.

People have complained that we didn't act on the West Pico Drill Site earlier. Before last year, my office had received just one complaint about the site. Unfortunately, we need more than that if we are to be

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able to spur our overburdened city bureaucracy into action. We need specific odors or noises reported at

specific times to help us make a case for increased scrutiny. Once we did hear more loudly from Rabbi Bookstein and the community and subsequently found out from NASE about the existing settlement agreement that the oil companies operating the West Pico Drill Site had clearly violated, we immediately contacted the Planning Department. This directly resulted in the current Zoning Administrator hearings about the site. I also asked the Fire Department, which is the department currently tasked with regularly inspecting oil and gas operations within the City, to perform inspections and document violations, which they have done, toward building a strong case of ongoing malfeasance against the operator.

We all want the same thing. Oil and gas operations are an inherently incompatible land use with neighborhoods, schools, hospitals, houses of faith and, frankly, anywhere that people live and breathe. Our friends and neighbors must be protected from these operations.

The November 2019 letter from Neighbors for a Safe Environment requested five items:

a) **ZA Review of Conditions** – This is currently occurring. I introduced [this motion](#) to institute a clear and transparent transition plan to cover change of operators or a change of Councilmembers going forward and we expect Planning to keep it going every five years. As I will be termed out in 2022, the community may want to consider engaging the next Councilmember before five years are up.

b) **Request for inspection** – The ZA Review of Conditions *is* an inspection and is following established protocol. On June 22, 2020, the following City departments visited the location for an onsite inspection: the Office of the Zoning Administration, Office of Petroleum and Natural Gas Administration and Safety, and Los Angeles Fire Department. I had also previously asked the Fire Department to conduct additional inspections, which they did.

c) **Request for annual inspection** - I am supportive of the ZA adding a new condition to require an annual inspection at this site. I also support the ongoing citywide legislation for annual inspections of all drill sites, which needs to be approved by the entire City Council. The fee study has finally been completed by the consultant and a report is forthcoming.

d) **Fence-Line monitoring** - I support adding a new condition of use requiring fence-line emissions monitoring.

e) **Request to Amend Condition 78 to include 5 year reviews** - I am not opposed, but do not believe this is necessary as it is already a requirement of the legal settlement.

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I wanted to give you some of the details of my plans for the site, so that you can realize we are all working toward the same goals:

- I will soon be introducing a motion requesting that the City Attorney's Environment Justice Unit investigate the code violations the Fire Department found on the site. This may result in criminal

charges, and at a minimum, will put violations into the legal record.

- I will introduce a motion directing the LAFD to report on the results of their investigation and what they found on site.
- I will examine the Zoning Administrator’s Letter of Determination to see what additional violations will be found there, as well. And if the findings are inadequate, we will appeal.

My staff and I, after serious consultation with the City Attorney’s office, have also met with Jamie Hall, a local California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) Attorney who has the distinction of having actually won a recent CEQA case before the California Supreme Court, which is enough to convince me of his expertise. This confirmed our belief that the CEQA actions called for in the online petition signed by community members, while certainly well-intentioned, are guided by a misunderstanding of the CEQA process and how it relates to this specific Zoning Administrator’s inspection process, a Review of Conditions. Rather than asking the applicant to file for an additional entitlement to authorize unpermitted activity and conducting environment review, we believe the value to the community would be best served by vigorously enforcing the law and stopping that illegal and unpermitted activity.

In this case, the Zoning Administrator is only conducting a Review of Conditions. The ZA has not been asked for, nor would this office support, any expansion or modification of the previous use. Nor may they authorize the continuation of any illegal, unpermitted activity. Simply put, any such activity must be discontinued. A Review of Conditions, in and of itself, has no environmental impact and therefore a CEQA exemption is appropriate. Again, the unpermitted work on the site is not covered by CEQA under the current ZA case as it is not included in the project description and can’t be legalized under this instant request. If the applicant chooses in the future to file an additional application to legalize unpermitted improvements to the site, that application would require a robust and detailed CEQA report, which would only be beneficial to the oil company. But this is not the case now. No such permit has been applied for and this office would oppose such a request and would advocate for the highest level of environmental review authorized under the law – a full Environmental Impact Report (EIR).

Lastly, I strongly encourage you to continue to report any nuisances that you feel may be occurring at the drill site or the production site, located at 9101 West Pico Boulevard, such as noise, odor, dust, smoke or vibration to the following:

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The Office of Zoning Administration	South Coast AQMD		
RE:ZA-1989-17683-P A2 ATTN: Dylan Sittig, City Planning Associate 200 N. Spring St, Rm. 720 Los Angeles, CA	1-800-CUT-SMOG (1-800-288-7664) Or The South Coast Air Quality	Los Angeles Department of	

Department
200 North Main Street,
16th Floor Los
Angeles, CA 90012
(213) 978-3800

Los Angeles Fire

Again, once the ZA proceedings reach their completion, I will appeal the report if necessary.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul Koretz".

PAUL KORETZ

Councilmember, 5th District