



THE GARDEN CONSERVANCY

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Kathryn Barger
Los Angeles County Supervisor
215 N. Marengo Ave., Suite 120,
Pasadena, CA 91101

Re: the proposed Arcadia Arboretum Natural Treatment and Groundwater Recharge Project

Dear Ms. Barger,

The Garden Conservancy, the nation's leading nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving, sharing, and celebrating America's gardens and diverse gardening traditions for the education and inspiration of the public, joins environmental advocates, horticulturists, and community members in opposing this project.

The Los Angeles County Arboretum and Botanic Garden (the "Arboretum") is described by the County's own website as a "natural and historic wonder ... [and] one of the nation's top tourist destinations." The Arboretum welcomes more than 500,000 visitors and 17,000 school children annually. For more than 65 years, the successful public/private partnership between the County and the Los Angeles Arboretum Foundation has preserved and nurtured the Arboretum, ensuring its valuable horticultural, historic and educational resources are free and accessible to visitors of all ages.

As a preservationist myself and the leader of an organization dedicated to preserving gardens, I am extremely concerned that four acres of the Arboretum would be converted to a storm water treatment facility, putting as many as 425 trees at risk. The proposed plan would divert storm water to the Arboretum's Australia section into a series of groundwater recharge ponds. Using Arboretum land for this project **would result in the loss of hundreds of irreplaceable botanical specimens**, including heritage trees and endangered species. Some of the trees targeted for removal are 70 years old and over 100 feet tall.

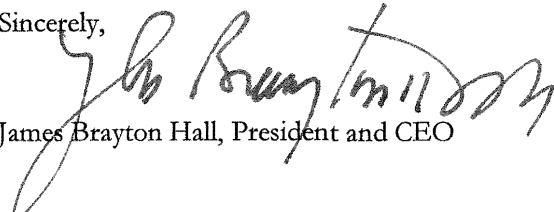
In addition, because the project will involve significant excavation, **there is also the risk of adverse impacts to the surrounding Arboretum landscape (and neighborhoods) from airborne dust and debris** from excavation/construction activities, and, potentially, alterations to the area's existing hydrology, which is already burdened from current storm water drainage.

The Los Angeles Conservancy (the largest membership-based historic preservation organization in the country) has recognized the Arboretum's significance with their Royce Neuschatz Award for Historic Landscapes. With the completion of a Cultural Landscape Report and Treatment Plan in 2017, the Conservancy also noted that "County administrators are now well-equipped to maintain, protect, and adapt the Arboretum's diverse resources over time." The proposed project clearly conflicts with this responsibility.

Preserving arboreta and public gardens as public resources is essential to preserving our shared cultural heritage and sense of place.

On behalf of the Garden Conservancy and our board of directors, I commend the County's efforts to manage stormwater and to protect the regional watershed, but strongly urge the County to consider alternative locations for this project.

Sincerely,



James Brayton Hall, President and CEO

January 28, 2021