

November 7, 2023

The Honorable Marqueece Harris-Dawson
Chair, Committee on Planning and Land Use Management
Los Angeles City Council
200 N. Spring Street
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: Harvard Westlake River Park Project (Case Numbers: CPC-2020-1511-VCU-SPR and ENV-2020-1512-EIR)

On behalf of our office, we would like to sincerely thank everyone we have talked to since welcoming much of Studio City into our district who has shared their thoughts, feedback, concerns, and priorities for the proposed Harvard-Westlake River Park Project (Project). While this effort predates Councilmember Raman's time in office by many years, we are encouraged by the high level of engagement by community stakeholders, city departments, elected officials, and the applicant on this significant development proposal, and worked hard to ensure that this Project was treated with care and attention.

We inherited a Project that went through many changes in the last decade, under contentious circumstances at times. Occupied by a private nine-hole, 27-par golf course and tennis facility, the site was purchased by Harvard-Westlake School from the family that owned and operated Weddington Golf and Tennis in 2017 for the purpose of redesigning, building, and operating an athletic and recreational facility for the School's students and the general public. The sale and purchase took place after previous proposals for the 16-acre property by the Weddington family, such as one which included preservation of golfing and tennis on the site while adding housing units, failed to move forward because of community opposition to adding any housing to the site.

Though the previous owners no longer found it feasible to operate the site under its existing uses, and the City can't afford to purchase it, we empathize with people in the neighborhood who feel a palpable emotional connection to the golf and tennis facilities; it has been a part of their community for generations. We proactively met with Harvard-Westlake School (School) to raise issues and recommendations brought forward by community members such as ways to: address shared access to facilities for public use, increase publicly accessible green spaces onsite, reduce the scale, improve pedestrian safety, enhance the public realm, activate firmer transportation demand management strategies, limit special events, promote green building and environmental protections, and reduce traffic, noise, and construction impacts, and we pushed for amenities that can honor the recreational legacy of this property.

On August 14th, we provided the City Planning Commission with a detailed letter that proposed multiple requests with the hope that these can be turned into binding, enforceable conditions in a future Letter of Determination. This request was honored by the School and the City Planning Commission. Our office was able to achieve the following, as detailed in the current Letter of Determination:

- **Maximizing Public Use, Access, and Managing Onsite Events**
 - Ensuring that the publicly accessible green space portion of the property is usable Monday through Sunday from 7 am to 9 pm, and that no Harvard-Westlake associated athletic events, practices, or games will take place on Sundays.
 - Formalizing a clear process to access public use facilities, including the tennis courts, pool, athletic fields, running track, and gymnasium, that maximizes access opportunities for individuals in addition to community-based organizations.
 - Decreasing the overall number of onsite events from close to 30 down to 20.
 - No football games at this proposed site.

- **Enhancing the Public Realm**
 - Removing the proposed three-foot high fence along Valley Spring Lane and Bellaire Avenue to ensure the site feels open and approachable.

- Improving and properly maintaining the Zev Yaroslavsky LA River Greenway Trail on the north side of the Los Angeles River.
 - Replacing the decomposed granite in the outdoor open courtyard adjacent to the clubhouse building and the tennis courts to create a new publicly accessible pocket park.
 - Installing a new controlled pedestrian crosswalk and a continuous ADA-accessible public walkway with new wayfinding signage between the southwest corner of Valleyheart Drive North, Whitsett Avenue, and the entrance of the Zev Yaroslavsky LA River Greenway Trail.
 - Requiring ADA-compliance on all publicly accessible paths to ensure community access and connection.
- **Prioritizing Sustainability**
 - Constructing carbon-free buildings and using electric engine shuttles between the Upper Campus and the project site.
 - Preserving onsite mature trees to the greatest extent possible, and increasing the net total of native trees.
 - **Operationalizing Neighborhood Courtesy**
 - Prohibiting the rental, lease, or use of the property other than by Harvard-Westlake and its related organizations, as well as prohibiting filming on the property for commercial purposes.
 - Expanding on the City of Los Angeles' enforceable Good Neighbor Construction Practices and providing regular reports and updates to the local neighborhood council.
 - Coordinating construction activities with neighboring projects to ensure minimal disruption in the area.

While comprehensive, these requests were not as inclusive as we had hoped for in the Determination Letter. Therefore, our office would like to respectfully propose the following voluntary requests and modifications for the PLUM Committee's consideration, all of which the applicant has agreed to (new recommended language is underlined):

- Amend Condition 20 by adding Subsection H to read as follows:
 - The School shall allow individuals access to Field B, including the track, from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. year-round except between the months of June, July, and August, when they are in use by the School for camps. The applicant may require individuals to execute an annual liability waiver and conduct a background check to grant access to Field B.
- Amend Condition 18, Subsection C VI to read as follows:
 - Swimming Pool (for members of pre-approved swim programs and individuals, when not in use by the School) - 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m., weekdays except between the months of June, July, and August, when they are in use by the School for camp. However, the School may, in its discretion, expand public hours of use for the swimming pool up to 8:00 p.m., daily. The applicant may require individuals to execute an annual liability waiver and conduct a background check to grant access to the Swimming Pool.
- Amend Condition 18, Subsection A V. to read as follows:
 - On Federal holidays, School activities, athletic or otherwise, are limited to indoor use only and can occur from 9:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
- Add a new condition confirming no Olympic-related events, including athletic games or otherwise, at the project site.

Our office is grateful for the good faith collaboration among all who worked diligently to get to this pivotal stage in the process. We are committed to making sure that Harvard-Westlake School follows through on being a responsible and responsive owner and developer, and look forward to working with residents to ensure the site becomes part of a new chapter for our community we can all be proud of. We respectfully ask for your support and a denial of the appeals.

Sincerely,

Mashaal Majid

Deputy Chief of Staff for Los Angeles City Councilmember Nithya Raman, 4th Council District