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From: Environmental Quality Affairs Citizens Advisory Committee (EQAC)

Subject: Comments on NOP for City Hall and Park Project
Some points to consider and some concerns follow.

It's important that the design include only native vegetation and open space is maximized. Walking/bike trails should appropriately connect the site with the community, perhaps in the city hall gardens adjacent to Avocado Avenue. A geotechnical report should be done to measure the infiltration rate, therefore determining whether the use of permeable walkways and driveways would be beneficial.

Due to the proximity of surrounding major retail and other businesses, a plan to facilitate construction parking and traffic will need to be drafted and included for review so there will be little impact on the community during that phase.

The current size, functionality and any future expansion of the library should be evaluated. Is there demand for more library space, and, if so, has future library expansion been taken into account in the design of the new city hall and park?

The design team has included future expansion plans for the city hall. How much expansion of the city hall in the future will be needed? We would recommend that the new city hall be built for current and future demand. Newport Beach is nearly a fully developed city. Modern technology and advances in communication are limiting the amount of time spent by employees working in offices. Future demand could be little or none for expansion.

Parking is always an important issue in any coastal community, including ours. The inconspicuous city hall parking structure appears to adequately address this issue. We would recommend that carpooling be encouraged by providing designated preferred parking stalls for carpoolers. Are the proposed 520 spaces adequate? Would the parking structure be better placed nearer to Avocado Avenue? If the MacArthur Blvd. side is the correct placement, perhaps there needs to be a MacArthur access to improve traffic flow, especially during peak ingress and egress. The EIR should analyze the impact of library usage on parking and traffic flow, including the possibility of separating library/City Hall and shopping center access. Will library parking access be available from MacArthur Blvd.?

The location of the city council chamber is another issue that could be a concern. The amphitheater could be oriented so that the audience is not facing the driveway and city hall entrance. This could be distracting. Other city amphitheaters should be investigated to determine what has worked best.

The playground area of the park is a positive addition. Safety in placement is important for this feature, with appropriate caution with proximity to the wetlands and MacArthur Blvd.

The proposed site is bordered on the west by Avocado and on the east by MacArthur and both have been designated as "Coastal View Roads" by the city. To the west of Avocado, and at a lower elevation, is a significant commercial development, including Fashion Island. Directly to the east, across MacArthur Blvd. and at a higher elevation, is an established and view oriented residential neighborhood. MacArthur Blvd. crests at San Joaquin Road while traversing south towards the Pacific Ocean, at which point a beautiful and natural scenic vista opens with breathtaking views over the project site of the ocean, Catalina Island and beyond. As such, the proposed construction at the site will have a potentially negative impact on this noted scenic vista. This view is currently enjoyed by visitors to our city, the neighborhood to the east and other residents who visit the site for beautiful views and recreation. Since the project calls for a 90,000 sf. city hall and a 20,000 sf. expansion of the library and a related large parking structure, this represents a negative impact on the area's aesthetics. This negative impact will also be significant at night as a result of the light and glare which will come from the addition of substantial lighting sources, including night long security and parking lighting. All aspects of aesthetics should be addressed in the EIR, including relevant corrective measures necessary to mitigate the significant negative impact detailed in his paragraph.

It should also be noted that the unique topography that gives rise to the site's scenic vistas also makes the site a unique and natural buffer zone between the neighboring residential community to the east and the congestion and noise of the expansive and commercial area to the west. Thus, the corrective measures and mitigation studies and measures that should be addressed in the EIR to lessen the impact on aesthetics need also take into account the preservation of the buffer zone quality of the site as it currently exists.