

# The Truth and Facts about the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden's Vital Mission Plan

## The Garden remains 99 percent open space

The plan leaves 99 percent of the Garden's property unbuilt for research, education, and display. New buildings have been carefully designed adjacent to existing buildings and are shielded from view with landscaping. The Vital Mission Plan calls for just 23,697 sq.ft. of new Garden buildings, the bare-bones needed to fulfill our mission and half of what we had previously proposed. Of the 11 new non-residential buildings proposed, three are simple shade structures. The plan also calls for 5 new staff residences to help address our own workforce housing needs and reduce traffic in Mission Canyon.

"The existing development in each of the sub-areas comprising the Garden is in all but a few instances concealed from public view by terrain features and onsite vegetation."

Source: DEIR Aesthetics & Visual Section 4.1-12

## After planting 5,642 oak trees, the Garden will remove 11 healthy oaks and plant more than 200 new oaks

The Botanic Garden is a created environment - nearly every tree and every plant that exists on the property was planted by the Garden over the last 81 years, including 5,642 oaks. To add new facilities, but mostly to improve fire vehicle access, 11 healthy oaks (and 37 oaks in poor health) need to be removed. We will replace not just the 11 healthy oaks but all oaks by replanting at a 5 to 1 ratio, as well as contributing to the Oak Woodlands Conservation Fund.

"Overall, the proposed project would not result in substantial impacts to the site's visual resources including its oak woodlands and landforms."

Source: DEIR Visual Resource Impact Finding page 4.1-12

"For each oak tree removal, the applicant shall plant ten (10), 1-gallon size coast live oak trees obtained from locally occurring saplings or seed stock, preferably from the same watershed."

Source: DEIR Biology Section 4.3-24

This letter about our Vital Mission Plan was distributed by the group calling itself the "Friends of Mission Canyon." There are a number of serious misstatements and mistakes. We have corrected and documented the facts.

From: Friends of Mission Canyon  
Save Santa Barbara Botanic Gardens

Major proposed changes to SBBG threaten to change the character, ambiance, and historic legacy of this beautiful rural site.

Some of the proposed changes include:

- Twenty one highly visible new structures, some on ridges and steep slopes, with a combined area of 35,357 square feet, and major renovation of nearly all existing buildings, more than doubling the current foot print to 67,356 square feet.
- The removal of over 80 trees (approximately 50 of them native oaks), with some oaks up to 18" in diameter marked for removal.
- The grading of approximately 11,000 cubic yards of earth and construction of new retaining walls that will permanently change the natural topography.
- 1.5 acres of additional hard paved surfaces including the paving over once natural trails.

## Minimal grading for new buildings - most grading is needed for increased fire vehicle access

"The project has been designed such that the bulk of the project would be accommodated within relatively flat areas that have previously been disturbed...The majority of grading is necessary to improve existing roads and driveways and bring them into conformance with County Fire Department standards. As such, grading is kept to a minimum where feasible."

Source: DEIR page 5-4.

## Interlocking stone paths ensure accessibility and reduce erosion

Many of the Botanic Garden's special exhibits and displays are not accessible to the disabled. Using permeable surfaces, our property will be accessible to all our visitors. In addition, these surfaces prevent erosion and help protect fragile displays.

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### Property fence protects endangered species

The Botanic Garden is a nationally acclaimed living museum. Just like a museum of art, we must protect our valuable collections and reduce liability. We have gone to great lengths to ensure that, while protecting our collections, we also allow neighbors who are members to continue to have special access while the Garden is open. The fence has also been specially designed with portals to allow the animals in Mission Canyon to continue to freely roam.

“Proposed fencing is necessary to protect valuable and rare plant collections and sensitive exhibits, as well as to improve security and fire protection. Currently, nearby residents who are also members of the Garden and who have been granted permission are permitted access to Garden paths via existing secured gates during regular operating hours.”

Source: DEIR Project Description page 2-15

### New equipment will be state-of-the-art and will not impact the neighborhood

Only 1% of the property will be built, leaving more than 98% unbuilt gardens to provide a natural shield to any noise. The small amount of equipment from the modest improvements will be nearly impossible to hear.

The addition of heating or air conditioning equipment, a requirement for the Botanic Garden as a non-residential property, will not create significant impacts on the neighborhood.

Source: DEIR Noise Page 4.8-11

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- A plan to encircle the entire garden site with a 6' high chain link fence, blocking wildlife access and escape, closing emergency exit routes and barring informal access to the garden that the local community has enjoyed for decades.
- Fourteen new compressors, substantially increasing ambient background noise.
- Substantial amounts of additional lighting, including 11 new lighting fixtures in the main parking lot alone, and dozens of new fixtures inside the Garden.
- The addition of commercial food service and a kitchen facility that will substantially extend and intensify non-garden related activities such as weddings, high-heeled parties, etc. Prepackaged food will create litter and impact wildlife attracted to food waste and human handouts.
- A fire management plan that inadequately addresses the ever-increasing fire danger and safe emergency evacuation, that will only be exacerbated by intensified use.

### More than 77 acres of gardens shield lighting

As with other elements of the plan, the lighting has been carefully designed so that it will not have significant impacts on the surrounding neighborhood. The proposed lighting will also increase the safety of the Garden's staff and visitors.

“The new lighting proposed is placed in locations that are “screened from view by surrounding vegetation and/or obscured from view entirely by intervening terrain features.”

Source: DEIR Aesthetics and Visual Resources page 4.1-19 – 4.1-20

### Kitchen reduced to just 226 square feet

The “commercial food service and a kitchen facility” referenced in this statement is actually a 226 sq.ft. area (the size of most residential kitchens) and incapable of generating substantial food waste.

### Fire protection in Mission Canyon will be improved

The Vital Mission Plan will help improve fire safety for all of Mission Canyon. The Botanic Garden already serves as an irrigated fire break, and will improve fire protection by adding a new water line and six new hydrants. The Vital Mission Plan will protect the Canyon even more with the following components:

- Six additional commercial hydrants and four new residential hydrants
- Sprinklers in all new and existing buildings
- New turn-around will provide better access for emergency vehicles
- Closing the Garden to visitors on Red Flag Days as declared by County Fire Chiefs
- Providing a shelter-in-place
- Defensible fire-safe landscaping
- Class A fire resistant building materials

For more information call 456-0759 or email [info@sbbgvitalmission.com](mailto:info@sbbgvitalmission.com)