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OF SUNSET PARK

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August 1, 2010

To: SMC Board of Trustees and President Chui Tsang
From: Board of Directors, Friends of Sunset Park
Re: Final EIR for the SMC Facilities Master Plan 2010 Update

While supporting the educational mission of Santa Monica College, the FOSP Board of Directors has the following comments on the Final EIR (Environmental Impact Review) for the Facilities Master Plan 2010 Update, which the SMC Board of Trustees will vote to approve or disapprove on August 3, 2010:

1. Demolition/construction impacts on nearby residents and students at nearby schools, including noise, vibrations, diesel exhaust, asbestos, cement dust, and other particulate matter
2. Destroying mature trees
3. Increased traffic in alleys and the effect on pedestrian safety
4. Additional traffic impacts
5. Bus routes which impact residents but serve only SMC
6. Inaccurate information on SMC enrollment used in documents
7. Sustainable SMC?
8. Fiscal responsibility
9. Conclusion

How will the 2010 Master Plan Update impact residents and students at schools near the Main Campus?

1. Demolition/construction: The plan includes demolishing the 3-story cement Corsair Stadium structure on 16th St., the dark green Liberal Arts classroom building on Pearl Street, the Letters and Science building, the Math Complex, the Library Village, the P.E. building, and the ESL building.

These demolition/construction projects will result in huge amounts of landfill waste, concrete dust and other air pollutants, possible asbestos removal, noise and vibrations from 50

diesel haul truck trips per day on Pearl and on 16th (which is posted “No trucks over 3 tons”), and other short-term construction and long-term operational air quality impacts.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (SCAQMD) wrote a June 4, 2010 comment re the Draft EIR stating that, “AQMD staff is concerned that the lead agency [SMC] failed to quantify localized air quality impacts from oxides of nitrogen (NOx) and particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) emissions during project construction and operation.”

Much of the demolition and diesel truck traffic will occur very close to the outdoor playground at the John Adams Child Development Center/Head Start/California State Pre-school Program at 2320 17th St. (just south of Pearl St.)

According to college documents, Corsair Stadium includes more than 600 feet of street frontage along 16th Street and more than 200 feet of street frontage along Pearl Street. It is directly across the street from a residential neighborhood on 16th and directly across the street from John Adams Middle School on Pearl. According to the plan, “Primary access [to the new stadium] should be located at the corner of 16th Street and Pearl Street.”

Regarding noise, the document states that construction activities that exceed 80 decibels will occur between 10 AM and 3 PM – perfect timing for students at John Adams Middle School, especially the choirs, bands and orchestras that rehearse in the music building at 17th and Pearl.

Homes across 16th St. from SMC already suffered structural damage during the construction of the Swim Center. Imagine what residents’ lives will be like when the 3-story cement Corsair Stadium structure is demolished and rebuilt.

And it’s unnecessary. A Corsair Stadium Seismic Study done in 2006, summarized in Appendix D of the Final EIR, included *“recommended retrofits to the existing stadium in order to upgrade to meet the life safety performance objective.”*

What’s the alternative to the demolition and reconstruction of Corsair Stadium? REMODEL AND RETROFIT!

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- 2. Destroying mature trees: The Draft Master Plan 2010 Update describes the existing lawn and trees on Pearl St. in front of the Liberal Arts building as follows: “Liberal Arts Green - Lawn area with mature trees. Under-utilized passive space. This area currently lacks definition and is too large.”

Pp. 72 and 74 of the same document show that the Replacement Math & Science Extension classroom building on Pearl St., replacing the Liberal Arts building, will be located much closer to the sidewalk, resulting in the destruction of many mature trees, including a huge Moreton Bay Fig tree at the SW corner of the Liberal Arts building.

What’s the alternative to demolition and replacement of the Liberal Arts building and destruction of mature trees? REMODEL AND RETROFIT!

3. Traffic in alleys and its effect on pedestrian safety: Another concern is vehicular access to the 500-space underground parking structure currently under construction under the new Student Services/Administration building near Pico and 20th. These 500 parking spaces could result in up to 3,000 daily car trips, and the college plans to allow access not just from Pico Blvd. but also from the college driveway on Pearl St. just west of 20th St. (where the street is narrow), from 20th Court (the alley just west of 20th St., behind homes), the east-west alley just north of Pearl (between residences), and the east-west alley just south of Pico (between an apartment building and a gas station).

Many student pedestrians from SMC and from John Adams Middle School will have to cross those alleys on their way to and from school, dodging SMC drivers-in-a-hurry. 20th and Pearl is one of the few “F” rated non-signalized intersections in Santa Monica in both the peak AM and peak PM hours. Dozens of buses pass through the intersection (the Crosstown Ride, the Sunset Ride, the Line 6 SMC Commuter, and the white SMC inter-campus shuttle which picks up passengers on Pearl near 17th).

According to City of Santa Monica 2006 counts, 25,427 cars travel on 20th St. and 4,178 cars travel on Pearl St. Police Department counts show that 130 JAMS students cross the 20th and Pearl intersection every day, plus hundreds of SMC students. Putting more cars into that intersection by using the Pearl St. driveway and the 20th Court alley for access to the parking under the new Students Services building is a “recipe for disaster.”

What’s the alternative to SMC students driving through alleys behind homes? Route car traffic from the parking structure under the new Student Services building onto Pico Blvd., neither onto alleys behind homes, nor onto a narrow section of Pearl Street near 20th Street.

4. Additional traffic impacts: The Final EIR described significant effects on traffic and transportation, including a net increase of 5,678 daily weekday car trips.

Among the 36 intersections with “significant and unavoidable impact” are Lincoln at Pico and Ocean Park Blvd. (OPB); 18th at Pico and OPB; 20th at Pearl; 21st at OPB; 22nd at OPB; 23rd at Pico, Pearl and OPB; Cloverfield at Pearl; Centinela at Pico; Walgrave at Rose; I-10 freeway entrances and exits.

Among 13 street segments with “significant and unavoidable impacts” are 14th St. between Pico and Cedar; Pearl St. between 16th and 20th; and segments of both 20th and 23rd Streets.

According to SMC, “There are no feasible mitigation measures that would reduce all of the potential individual traffic impacts.”

5. Bus routes which impact residents but only serve SMC – The Draft EIR suggested reducing bus traffic on 20th between Pico and OPB by shortening the historic Crosstown route to go no further south than Pico. The FOSP Board comment on the Draft EIR stated that “The Crosstown is the one bus route [on 20th St.] that serves residents, so to shorten its route so that it no longer connects with the #8 line on Ocean Park Blvd. solves

nothing. The solution is to re-route the college-serving bus routes off of residential streets and onto arterials.”

The college’s response on p. III-9 of the Final EIR makes no sense. It talks about the Sun-set Ride, which very few residents use, and makes no mention of the Line 6 SMC Commuter or the SMC inter-campus shuttle, both of which could just as easily be re-routed off of 20th between Pico and OPB, and onto Pico.

6. Inaccurate information on SMC enrollment used in documents – The FOSP Board comment on the Draft EIR referred to the discrepancy between the college’s figure of 30,000 students and the California Community College Chancellor’s Office figure of 32,327 students at SMC in Fall 2009.

In the Final EIR, the college responds on p.III-22 by publishing the “Final Enrollment Headcount” which shows 29,771 students in 2005 and 34,288 students in 2010. On-line students went from 3,024 in 2005 to 7,125 in 2010.

So while the number of students taking classes online increased by 4,101, the total enrollment increased by 4,517, or 15%. Therefore, even though online enrollment increased, there was apparently not a reduction in the number of students on campus, but rather an increase.

And, at its July 7, 2009 meeting, the SMC Board of Trustees approved \$681,700 for advertising for student recruitment on KPWR FM, KROQ FM, LA Weekly, the Santa Monica Daily Press, La Opinion newspaper, the Los Angeles Sentinel newspaper, the Korean Directory, surfsantamonica.com, Big Blue Bus, Facebook, and Google, in order to grow the enrollment even further.

7. Sustainable SMC? – Retrofitting and remodeling would be the wise decision for a college that prides itself on its environmental audit, its recycling program, Sustainable Works, its A.A. degree in Environmental Studies, its new Project Manager for Sustainability, its four primary Strategic Initiatives which include “Creating and maintaining a sustainable campus,” its focus on “Analysis of human activity and its impact on Earth’s natural environments,” and Student Learning Outcomes that include, “Through their experiences at SMC, students will take responsibility for their own impact on the Earth by living a sustainable and ethical life style.”

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8. Fiscal responsibility – The SMC Trustees have a fiscal responsibility to be frugal stewards of Santa Monica’s and Malibu’s educational dollars, replacing only those structures that actually need replacement. Santa Monica and Malibu residents will spend approximately \$1.2 billion paying for Measure U (2002), Measure S (2004), and Measure AA (2008). While it’s true that facilities bond funds can only be spent on construction, the expenditures should be limited to necessary construction.

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9. Conclusion: The FOSP Board of Directors urges the SMC Board of Trustees to:
- a. direct staff to re-route the planned access to parking under the new Student Services building to Pico Blvd.,
 - b. re-route college-serving bus lines off of narrow residential streets,
 - c. stop spending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars recruiting students from the Los Angeles Community College District, from out of state, and from outside the country, and
 - d. consider the health and welfare of nearby families and school children and, therefore, choose to RETROFIT and REMODEL instead of continuing to tear down and replace every building on the main campus.