

September 28, 2017

Richard Barron, President
Cultural Heritage Commission
Attention: Melissa Jones
Office of Historic Resources
City Hall, 200 N. Sprint Street, Room 559
Los Angeles, CA 90012
Email: melissa.jones@lacity.org

Dear President Barron and Members of the Commission:

I've had the honor of working to improve public access to parks, open space, and natural systems in the City of Los Angeles for three decades. Part of my experience was in collaboration with Peter Walker, a longtime colleague and mentor. As a past Cultural Heritage Commissioner, I understand the importance and impact of your role in protecting significant cultural landscapes as well as important buildings.

I write today to urge the Board to designate Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park as a Historic-Cultural Monument. While currently underappreciated and underutilized as a public park, it was conceived in direct response to the lack of open space associated with most postwar development of the time. The City of Los Angeles recognized the value of Liberty Park in the 1968 City Planning Commission Case No. 21684 when it wrote:

Although the subject C4-4 zoned Wilshire Boulevard frontage is not utilized for commercial purposes, but developed with the aforementioned attractively landscaped plaza, the interests of good zoning practices and relevant considerations of public necessity, convenience and general welfare, would best be served by retaining this open space asset to the community and preclude further intensification of land use in this block.

Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park tells the story of postwar development along Wilshire Boulevard, of public-private partnership to give back to the City, of the City acting to protect open space for future generations, and of architects and landscape architects working together to create a cohesive and elegant design. And, it was designed by architects Gordon Bunshaft and Edward Charles Bassett of Skidmore, Owings & Merrill (SOM) with landscape architect Peter Walker of Sasaki, Walker & Associates (SWA) ... some of our nation's most talented designers of the time. As a cultural landmark, this place deserves to be protected.

Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park is a flexible space with opportunities for different types of experiences. It's a respite from urban intensity both visually and physically. The landscape represents a period when architects and landscape architects developed an approach to the site and the city fabric that was human-scaled and responsive to its context: an approach that is now being recognized and re-adopted by designers. From a humanistic design perspective, this place deserves to be protected.

In addition to its cultural and humanistic attributes, Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park serves a vital ecological role. Now more than ever we need green spaces, trees, and living landscapes to clean the air, absorb and treat urban runoff, and cool our city. From an ecological perspective, this place deserves to be protected.

Please vote to protect Beneficial Plaza and Liberty Park as a cultural landmark, a vital respite in a dense urban area, and an ecologically important landscape.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mia Lehrer". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Mia Lehrer
President

cc: Save Liberty Park