

May 13, 2021

Honorable Daryl Supernaw, Councilmember District 4

Honorable Cindy Allen, Councilmember District 2

Honorable Al Austin, Councilmember District 8

SUBJECT: "SUPPORT ITEM #3 DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER" at Houghton Park

Dear Member of Government, Personnel, and Elections Oversight Committee,

We respectfully recommend naming the community center at Houghton Park the DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER.

As Long Beach's first Black Councilwoman, two-term Vice Mayor, and Harbor Commissioner, Doris Topsy-Elvord (Doris) has a decades-long legacy of servant leadership that enhanced the lives of many in and around Long Beach. She served with distinction, pioneered many firsts, and paved the way for Black leadership and civic engagement across the city. Evidenced by her moniker, *Mother Doris*, Doris consistently uplifts others and is respected and admired. **As we approach Doris's 90th Birthday (June 2021), it is befitting that the City of Long Beach commemorates her extensive contributions by naming the new community center at Houghton Park the DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER.**

Vice Mayor Topsy-Elvord has been in Long Beach for more than 75 years, including living in Central and Uptown Long Beach, and remains a lifelong resident. As such, her relationships and influence are deeply rooted and citywide. She attended and graduated from St. Anthony Elementary and High School, where she was the only Black student and later attended California State University, Long Beach.

In 1992, she became the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council and holds the honor of being unanimously selected twice as the Vice Mayor of Long Beach in 1996 and 1998. She helped co-found the Long Beach African American Heritage Society and led the successful proposal designating the home of civil rights icons Ernest and Lillian McBride as a historic site. Nominated to serve as a Port of Long Beach Harbor Commissioner by then-Mayor Beverly O'Neill, Doris was the first Black and, at the time, only the third woman to serve on the five-member port commission in its nearly 80-year history. During her tenure at the port, she was instrumental in expanding the Port's Small Business Enterprise Program and the Green Port Policy. Both programs are still thriving today.

With the enduring support of her husband, Ralph, children, and grandchildren, Doris has a remarkable record of civic service, community engagement, stewardship, and leadership. Vice Mayor Doris represented all of Long Beach. Her civic service history, community engagement, and leadership continue to have lasting impacts on our entire city. Her commitment and stewardship earned her deep admiration and great respect from a wide breadth of friends,

colleagues, educational and civic leaders, and countless others. In short, Doris created opportunities for diversity, equity, and inclusion that did not exist prior to her advocacy and leadership.

The Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center will encompass the community center at Houghton Park. The newly built community center boasts more than 26,000 square feet, with two large multi-purpose rooms, a courtyard, a Teen Digital Academy, a weightlifting gym, and a sound/plant garden. As a regional park, the center serves over 95,000 residents. Many impactful services and programs are offered, including senior citizen activities such as crafts and dancing, youth programs such as after school and sports, and meal programs.

Future development plans will transform the entire park into a comprehensive complex serving the community's youth, health, and social needs, core tenets of Mother Doris's legacy. Plans include a gym, a new signature playground, and the restoration of the original historic clubhouse. Set to open this summer is the North Health Facility, a health and workforce center to advance equity for North Long Beach residents.

Signage for the Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center is envisioned to be prominently displayed along the main entrance. A dedication area outlining the significance of her service to the City of Long Beach will be displayed.

With respect and admiration, the undersigned wholeheartedly recommend that Doris Topsy-Elvord be commended and recognized for her countless and pioneering contributions to the Long Beach community along with her significant professional, educational, and civic accomplishments. And, ***therefore, we recommend naming the community complex at Houghton Park the "DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER."***

Undersigned respectfully,

Steering Committee Members

Hon. Steven Neal

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Steven and Jackie Topsy

Michelle Dobson

Cecile Harris-Walters

Joni Ricks-Oddie

Sharon Diggs Jackson

Wayne Chaney, Sr.

Marcus Tyson

Community Leaders

Ahmed Saafir, Community Leader

Minnie Douglas, Ed.D.,R.N., Health Education Consultant

Robin S. Thorne, CEO, CTI Environmental, Inc.

Richard "Dick" Gaylord, Realtor

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Ms. Robbie N. Butler – Speak Up Empowerment Foundation, Inc.

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Darick J. Simpson, Community Leader

Robert Jenkins, Community Leader

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Phyllis Venable, CEO Silhouette Consulting Group

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Paula Wood, Executive Director of Success in Challenges Inc.

Aaron Blackburn, Derricks on Atlantic Restaurant, Private Investigator

Dr. Alex Norman, Community Leader

Rich Archbold, Community Leader

Dr. Farah Naz Khaleghi, Executive Director,
Long Beach Community Improvement
League

Gail Schwander, Vice President, Long Beach
City College

Paul Garman, Musical Theater West

Gina Rushing McGuire, St. Anthony High
School

Everett Glenn, Chairman & CEO, BOSS
Programs

Ernest and Peggy Trotter Preacely,
Community Leaders

North Long Beach Neighborhood Leaders

Val Lerch, Vice Mayor Ret.

Ralph Brook, Co-President, Houghton Park
Neighborhood Association

Otis Hogan, Co-President, Houghton Park
Neighborhood Association

Maricela Renteria De Rivera, Houghton Park
Neighborhood Association

Jimmy Murray, Starr King Neighborhood
Association

Shirley Murray, Star King Neighborhood
Association

Jeff Rowe, President Neyham
Neighborhood Association

Faith Leaders

Pastor Gregory Sanders

Colleen Bentley, Community Leader

Byron Bolton, Community Leader

Janet McCarthy, Community Leader

David & Sharon McLucas, Owners,
Forgotten Images

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