

**From:** Samantha Mehlinger [mailto:samantham@longbeachcvb.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, April 5, 2021 4:44 PM  
**To:** CityClerk <CityClerk@longbeach.gov>  
**Subject:** Letter of Support for Agenda Item 20, Long Beach City Council, April 6

**-EXTERNAL-**




Dear Ms. De La Garza,

Attached, please find a letter of support from Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau President & CEO Steve Goodling for Agenda Item #20 scheduled for tomorrow's Long Beach City Council meeting on April 6. Please enter this letter into the record.

Thank you,

**Samantha Mehlinger**  
Director of Communications



**Direct** 562.495.8345 | **Cell** 562.896.3290 | LBCVB  
   @VisitLB | #MeetinLB



April 5, 2021

Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and  
Members of the Long Beach City Council  
Civic Center Plaza  
411 W. Ocean Blvd.  
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Agenda Item #20, Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center at Houghton Park

Dear Mayor Garcia and Members of the Long Beach City Council,

Please accept this correspondence on behalf of Steve Goodling, President & CEO of the Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB) as well as many members of the CVB Board of Directors, and enter into the public record for the Long Beach City Council meeting scheduled on April 6, 2021, support for naming the Houghton Community Center complex – as well as any City asset in future – after Doris Topsy-Elvord.

Doris played an instrumental role in the landmark achievement of attracting the 2004 Olympic swimming trials to Long Beach. When I called Doris, who was then serving on the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners, to ask for her support in bringing the trials to Long Beach, her first question to me was whether women would compete in the event – a characteristic response from someone who has always championed inclusion. When I said yes, Doris swiftly and successfully rallied the support of her fellow commissioners. The event brought world class athletes to the City of Long Beach, attracted visitors from all over the globe, and was ultimately instrumental in Long Beach's inclusion as a site for the 2028 Olympic Games in Los Angeles.

Doris has dedicated her life to serving the City of Long Beach, both through her work as an elected and appointed official and through impactful community leadership. In our City's history she will be remembered as an influential changemaker who broke the glass ceiling for women of color as the first Black Long Beach City Councilmember and member of the Long Beach Board of Harbor Commissioners, also holding the distinction of being twice-selected Vice Mayor. Her accomplishments, including her role in bringing Olympic sports to Long Beach, have created lasting positive effects for our City and deserve to be upheld in our collective memory.

The legacy of Doris Topsy-Elvord is befitting of any City facility or asset with community prominence, and I fully support the commemoration of her lifelong career of service to Long Beach. I look forward to the naming of the "Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center" at Houghton Park, and wish to express support for any future considerations to recognize her endeavors.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Goodling".

Steve Goodling  
President & CEO  
Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB)

**LONG BEACH CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

301 E. Ocean Blvd, Suite 1900 | Long Beach, CA 90802 | 562-436-3645



CC: Tom Modica, City Manager, City of Long Beach  
Linda Tatum, Director of Long Beach Development Services  
Brent Dennis, Director of the Long Beach Parks, Recreation and Marine Department

**LONG BEACH CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU**

301 E. Ocean Blvd, Suite 1900 | Long Beach, CA 90802 | 562-436-3645



**OFFICERS**

**Dr. Lance Robert, Sr.**  
President  
Professor  
*Los Angeles Southwest College*

April 2, 2021

**Ahmed Saafir**  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President  
*City of Long Beach/  
Former Civil Service Commissioner*

Hon. Rex Richardson  
Vice Mayor, City of Long Beach  
411 W. Ocean Blvd. 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802

**Dr. Todd Barnett**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President and  
Membership Chairman  
*Alliant International University*

Dear Vice Mayor Richardson:

**Larry Dillon**  
Chief Financial Officer  
Educator  
*Los Angeles United School District*

On behalf of the 100 Black Men of Long Beach, Inc., I would like to inform you that our membership recently voted to support your proposal of naming the Houghton Park Community Center after former Long Beach Councilmember and Harbor Commissioner Doris Topsy-Elvord.

**Dr. Rashon Graham**  
Secretary  
*John Hancock Property*

As you know, the potential Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center will consist of over 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 will continue to serve over 95,000 residents. Many impactful services and programs will be offered, including senior citizen activities like crafts and dancing, youth programs, sports, and meal programs. 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. 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.

**BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

**Eric Burroughs**  
Health & Wellness Chairman  
*Long Beach Veterans  
Administration Hospital*

Most importantly, the naming of the Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center will serve as a beacon of light for so many who adore her both personally and professionally.

**Damon Cagnolatti**  
Education Chairman  
Professor  
*Cerritos College*

Again, we enthusiastically support the renaming the Houghton Park Community Center after "Mother Doris."

**Lionel Jenkins**  
Economic Empowerment Chairman  
*Engineer - Raytheon*

Thank you for your time in reading this letter. Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me.

**Jesse B. Johnson, Jr.**  
Founder/ President Emeritus  
Corporate Relations & Fundraising  
Chairman  
*City of Long Beach (retired)*

Sincerely,

*Dr. Lance Robert, DPA*  
Dr. Lance Robert  
President, 100 Black Men of Long Beach

**Howard Perry**  
Publicity, Marketing and  
Editorial Chairman  
*First Team Real Estate*

**Dr. Lance Robert**  
President & Mentoring Chairman  
*Professor - L.A. Southwest College*

**Chris Wilson**  
Governmental & Public Affairs  
Chairman  
*L.A. County Business Federation*

**HONORARY MEMBER**

**Pastor Welton Pleasant**  
*Christ Second Baptist Church  
Long Beach, California*





**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
Washington, DC 20515

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SAN PEDRO, CA 90731  
(310) 831-1799

701 E. CARSON STREET  
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8650 CALIFORNIA AVENUE  
SOUTH GATE, CA 90280

April 6, 2021

Long Beach City Council  
411 W Ocean Blvd, Civic Chambers  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Honorable City Councilmembers:

I write in regard to the recommendation to consider naming the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex, the “Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center.” As the Representative of the North Long Beach community in Congress, which includes Houghton Park, I commend the City for honoring the legacy of the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council.

Ms. Topsy-Elvord’s leadership was fundamental in bringing equity to City Hall. Her advocacy on behalf of residents went far beyond the 6<sup>th</sup> District in Central Long Beach. In her over three decades of public service, Ms. Topsy-Elvord advocated for policies to expand economic inclusion for residents and businesses of color. And as a co-founder of Long Beach’s African American Heritage Society, she successfully led the historic site designation of the home of civil rights icons, Ernest and Lillian McBride.

Nominated to serve as a Port of Long Beach Harbor Commissioner, Ms. Topsy-Elvord was the first Black individual and the third woman to serve on the five-member Harbor Commission in its nearly 80-year history. During her tenure, she was instrumental in expanding the Port's Small Business Enterprise Program and the Green Port Policy. These programs were essential in supporting small businesses and addressing environmental injustices in port communities.

Within North Long Beach, Houghton Park is a source of community pride. As one of only five regional parks within the city, the park serves the needs of our community with after school, teen and senior programs, including computer classes, social clubs, fitness activities, homework assistance, arts and crafts, and a Youth Employment Network Program. By providing equitable access to educational, recreational, and supportive services, Houghton Park embodies the values of Ms. Topsy-Elvord’s legacy.

NANETTE DIAZ BARRAGÁN  
44TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA  
[FACEBOOK.COM/CONGRESSWOMANBARRAGAN](https://www.facebook.com/congresswomanbarragan)  
[TWITTER: @REPBARRAGAN](https://twitter.com/REPBARRAGAN)

COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE



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Washington, DC 20515

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*Rep. Barragán*  
*Page 2*

The naming of the Houghton Park Community Center after Doris Topsy-Elvord will be a source of pride for the City of Long Beach and for my entire congressional district.

Sincerely,

*Nanette Diaz Barragán*

Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES**

822 KENNETH HAHN HALL OF ADMINISTRATION / LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA 90012

Telephone (213) 974-4444 / FAX (213) 626-6941

**JANICE HAHN**  
SUPERVISOR, FOURTH DISTRICT

April 6, 2021

Mayor Robert Garcia and Member of the Long Beach City Council  
City of Long Beach  
411 W. Ocean Boulevard, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Re: Request to consider naming Houghton Community Center Complex after Doris Topsy-Elvord

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council,

I am writing today in support of the recommendation to name the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex, the "Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center." The core tenants of Doris's life and legacy are reflected in what Houghton Park brings to the community through its student and senior programming.

I had the privilege of working with this incredible woman over the years. I believe naming the community center after her ensures that her legacy of being a tireless advocate for the city she loves will not be forgotten. I strongly urge support of this recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Janice Hahn".

JANICE HAHN  
Supervisor, Fourth District  
County of Los Angeles

JH:hc

STATE CAPITOL  
P.O. BOX 942849  
SACRAMENTO, CA 94249-0064  
(916) 319-2064  
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Assemblymember.Gipson@assembly.ca.gov



COMMITTEES  
BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONS  
GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION  
HUMAN SERVICES  
INSURANCE  
TRANSPORTATION

April 6, 2021

On behalf of the residents of the 64<sup>th</sup> California State Assembly District, I am writing to you in support of Tuesday April 6th recommendation to refer to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Government, Personnel, and Elections Committee for consideration the naming of the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex, the "Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center."

Mother Doris is a "Mother of Equity" and is credited for introducing equity to City Hall. In 1992, she became the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council and holds the honor of being twice unanimously selected as the Vice Mayor of Long Beach.

She fought for policies to expand economic inclusion for residents and businesses of color. She helped co-found Long Beach's African American Heritage Society and led the successful proposal designating the home of civil rights icons Ernest and Lillian McBride 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 individual 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.

As one of only five regional parks within our city, Houghton Park has a regional service area. It serves the needs of seniors and youth with space for after school, teen, and senior programs. Some of the impactful services and programs offered include senior programs such as computer classes, social clubs and fitness activities, and youth programs like homework assistance, sports, arts and crafts, and a Youth Employment Network Program. These offerings to support community's youth, seniors, health, and social needs, encompass core tenets of Mother Doris' legacy. Naming the community center after Mother Doris will create not only a source of local pride, but citywide and regional pride.

Thank you for your consideration and continued dedication to our Long Beach community. If you have any questions regarding my position on this matter, please contact my District Director, Victor Ibarra, at (310) 324-6408.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike A. Gipson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**Mike A. Gipson**

Assemblymember, 64<sup>th</sup> District  
Chair, Assembly Democratic Caucus

**ALAN LOWENTHAL**  
47TH DISTRICT, CALIFORNIA

COMMITTEE ON NATURAL RESOURCES  
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April 2, 2021

Long Beach City Council  
411 West Ocean Blvd, 11th Floor  
Long Beach, California 90802

Dear Councilmembers:

I am writing to you in support of Tuesday April 6<sup>th</sup> recommendation to refer to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Government, Personnel, and Elections Committee for consideration naming the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex the “Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center.”

Doris and I began our public service as city officials together when we ran for city council and won in the 1992 election. Since then, we were, and remain, rather inseparable in advancing our public service goals of creating equity and justice in society. Many times, on city council she and I were the deciding votes on passing progressive policies that set Long Beach ahead of other cities that followed behind us. I was proud to serve with her, I am proud to call her a dear friend, and I am proud to publicly recognize her at any opportunity I can.

Mother Doris is a “*Mother of Equity*” and is credited for introducing equity to City Hall. In 1992, she became the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council and holds the honor of being twice unanimously selected as the Vice Mayor of Long Beach

She fought for policies to expand economic inclusion for residents and businesses of color. She helped co-found Long Beach’s African American Heritage Society and led the successful proposal designating the home of civil rights icons Ernest and Lillian McBride 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 individual 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.

As one of only five regional parks within our city, Houghton Park has a regional service area. It serves the needs of seniors and youth with space for after school, teen, and senior programs.

Some of the impactful services and programs offered include senior programs such as computer classes, social clubs and fitness activities, and youth programs like homework assistance, sports, arts and crafts, and a Youth Employment Network Program. These offerings to support community's youth, seniors, health, and social needs, encompass core tenets of Mother Doris' legacy. Naming the community center after Mother Doris will create not only a source of local pride, but citywide and regional pride.

If you have any questions of me regarding my position, please contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Alan Lowenthal". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress

STANDING COMMITTEES  
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AND COMMUNICATIONS  
ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY  
HEALTH  
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# California State Senate



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CHAIR, PORTS AND GOODS  
MOVEMENT

SPECIAL COMMITTEE  
PANDEMIC EMERGENCY  
RESPONSE

**SENATOR LENA A. GONZALEZ**  
THIRTY-THIRD SENATE DISTRICT

CHAIR, SENATE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION

April 6, 2021

Mayor Robert Garcia and Long Beach City Council  
411 W. Ocean Blvd., 11th Floor  
Long Beach, CA 90802

RE: Agenda Item 20, Naming of Houghton Community Center Complex

Honorable Mayor and Members of the City Council:

As the State Senator representing California's 33<sup>rd</sup> District and the great City of Long Beach – I write to express my full support of agenda item 20 to refer to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Government, Personnel, and Elections Committee for the consideration of naming the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex, the "Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center."

Doris Topsy-Elvord has been instrumental in laying the foundation for leaders across the city. Known by our community as "*Mother of Equity*" – she is credited with introducing equity to Long Beach City Hall. In 1992, she became the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council. Doris Topsy- co-founded the Long Beach's African American Heritage Society which lead to the successful proposal of designating the home of civil rights icons Ernest and Lillian McBride a historic site. She was later nominated to serve as a Port of Long Beach Harbor Commissioner by then-Mayor Beverly O'Neill. Doris was the first Black individual, 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.

Furthermore, Houghton Park serves the needs of our seniors, youth, and families with space for after school, teen, and senior programs. These contributions to support our community's health and social needs encompass core tenets of Mother Doris' legacy and promote community pride. For these reasons, I fully support the renaming of the Houghton Park Community Center complex as the Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center. Should you have any questions regarding my support on this matter please do not hesitate to contact my office at (562) 256-7921.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lena Gonzalez".

Lena Gonzalez  
Senator, Senate District 33

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STATE CAPITOL, ROOM 2068  
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FAX (562) 256-9991

HUNTINGTON PARK DISTRICT OFFICE  
6550 MILES AVE., 2ND FLOOR  
HUNTINGTON PARK, CA 90255  
TEL (323) 277-4560  
FAX (323) 277-4528





**Date:** April 6<sup>th</sup>, 2021

**To:** Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia and Members of the City Council

**From:** Vice Mayor Rex Richardson, Ninth District  
Councilmember Suely Saro, Sixth District  
Councilmember Roberto Uranga, Seventh District  
Councilmember Al Austin, Eighth District

**Subject:** Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center at Houghton Park

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Recommendation to refer to the Parks and Recreation Commission and the Government, Personnel, and Elections Committee for consideration the naming of the newly renovated Houghton Community Center complex, the “Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center” in recognition of the legacy, contributions, and service of beloved Long Beach citywide community leader, Vice Mayor Doris Topsy-Elvord.

And further, recommend the City Manager identify additional sites of significance to the African American community, and all underrepresented communities, for the purposes of historic preservation, landmarking, and inclusion in the updated Citywide Historic Context Statement.

### **Discussion**

In June 2020, the City of Long Beach completed construction on the new Houghton Park Community Center. The new center encompasses 30,000 sq. ft. of programmable space, a newly built 6,400 square foot LEED certified conference space, new outdoor courtyards, a newly renovated social hall, two large multipurpose rooms, a weightlifting gym, computer lab, a sound/plant garden, and the original Houghton clubhouse – a historic landmark originally built in 1930.

As the new Houghton Park Complex offers new services and amenities to the community, the City of Long Beach has a unique opportunity to reimagine the identity and historic context of the facility to better connect and inspire the community, by naming the complex in honor of an inspirational citywide public servant, **Doris Topsy-Elvord.**

Doris Topsy-Elvord has been in Long Beach for more than 75 years, as a resident of Central and Uptown Long Beach and remains a lifelong resident. As such, her relationships and influence are deeply rooted, and citywide. 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.

In 1992, she became the first Black woman elected to the Long Beach City Council and holds the distinction of being twice selected as the Vice Mayor of Long Beach in 1996 and 1998.

Mother Doris is a "*Mother of Equity*" and is credited for introducing equity to City Hall. She fought for policies to expand economic inclusion for residents and businesses of color. She helped co-found Long Beach's African American Heritage Society and led the successful proposal designating the home of civil rights icons Ernest and Lillian McBride 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 individual 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.

The new Houghton Park community center complex is designed to be a park that embodies Mother Doris' values. Through her advocacy and leadership, Doris created opportunities for diversity, equity, and inclusion - opportunities that will continue to be provided by the Community Center. It is designed to advance equity and improve the quality of life for residents. Upon completion of the renovations at the park's Center for Families and Youth this summer, the complex will offer new services for teens and families, with a new health clinic, public health services, Pacific Gateway Workforce Center, and workspace for community-based organizations.

Future plans for the park include signature playground, an indoor gym, and restoration of the historic clubhouse.

As one of only five regional parks within our city, Houghton Park has a regional service area. It serves the needs of seniors and youth with space for after school, teen, and senior programs. Some of the impactful services and programs offered include senior programs such as computer classes, social clubs and fitness activities, and youth programs like homework assistance, sports, arts and crafts, and a Youth Employment Network Program. These offerings to support community's youth, seniors, health, and social needs, encompass core tenets of Mother Doris' legacy. Naming the community center after Mother Doris will create not only a source of local pride, but citywide and regional pride.

According to City of Long Beach administrative policy (AR8-7), "City-owned land, buildings and facilities will not normally be named after living persons unless the City Council deems it appropriate to take such action on the basis of a significant contribution,



monetary or otherwise, which warrants a deviation from this policy guideline." Vice Mayor Doris Topsy-Elvord most certainly meets the exception to this policy.

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 complex at Houghton Park, the *Doris Topsy-Elvord Community Center*.

Special thanks to the members of the Doris Topsy-Elvord Naming Steering Committee:

- Hon. Steven Neal
- Steven and Jackie Topsy
- Cecile Harris-Walters
- Sharon Diggs Jackson
- Marcus Tyson
- Anitra Dempsey
- Michelle Dobson
- Joni Ricks-Oddie
- Wayne Chaney

Special thanks to the Offices of Dr. Suely Saro, 6<sup>th</sup> District, Roberto Uranga, 7<sup>th</sup> District, and Al Austin, 8<sup>th</sup> for joining in support of this historic proposal.

### **Equity Lens**

The proposal is consistent with Long Beach Reconciliation Initiative – Initial Report:

Goal 1: Strategy 1. *End systemic racism in Long Beach, in all local government and partner agencies, through internal transformation.*

- A. Read past research, integrate it, and build on it by continuing to document the role of racism throughout the history of Long Beach and incorporate it into the Historic Context Statement and racial equity timeline. Immediate*
- B. Create a process to review the names of public parks, schools (in partnership with LBUSD), buildings, and monuments with a racial equity lens. Short Term*

In a column in the Hechinger Report in 2017, by Dr. Andre Perry, a contributing writer, is a David M. Rubenstein Fellow at The Brookings Institution founding dean of urban education at Davenport University in Grand Rapids, MI, racial equity in naming of public institutions and landmarks is about making history, not erasing it. "The built environment is so much more than shelter, urban planning and architecture — it reflects our very



commitment to democracy. Our statues are monuments of the state of our democracy as much as they honor our beloved.”

This recommendation is appropriate and acknowledges cultural context. The City of Long Beach is updating its Historic Context Statement and preparing its first-ever historic context statement focused on Race and Suburbanization. These documents allow decisions to be rooted in a deeper understanding of the City’s history and evolution, including the communities of color that have helped shape it.

This action also acknowledges the city’s evolution. The North Long Beach community is large and diverse. It is home to over 90,000 residents, encompassing 40% of the city’s Black residents – now the largest concentration of Black residents within the City of Long Beach. It is home to the Michelle Obama Neighborhood Library, Jordan High School, and a focal point for new community revitalization.

**Fiscal Impact**

As part of the recommendation, staff is requested to identify and costs associated with updating signage and appropriate recognition associated with the community center naming and dedication.

**Suggested Action**

Approve recommendation.

**Attachments:**

Exhibit 1: Photo of Houghton Park Community Center

Exhibit 2: Community Letter



ANNOUNCING THE PROPOSED NAMING OF  
THE HOUGHTON PARK COMMUNITY CENTER TO

# DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER

*In honor of Mother Doris Topsy-Elvord, a distinguished City leader and  
the first African American woman elected to Long Beach City Council*



OFFICE OF VICE MAYOR REX RICHARDSON

April 6, 2021

Honorable Mayor Robert Garcia  
Honorable Rex Richardson, Vice Mayor, 9th District  
Honorable Members of the Long Beach City Council

**SUBJECT: "DORIS TOPSY-ELVORD COMMUNITY CENTER" at Houghton Park**

Dear Mayor and Members of the City Council,

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 to the Mayor and City Council 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

Anitra Dempsey

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

Felton Williams, Ph.D., LBUSD Board President, Retired

Wilma D. Powell, Community Leader, City of Long Beach (Port of Long Beach) Retiree

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

Lydia A. Hollie, JD/MAED, Community Leader

Darick J. Simpson, Community Leader

Robert Jenkins, Community Leader

Dr. Lance Robert, Community Leader

Carl Kemp, Community Leader  
Dr. Oliver & Mrs. Lisa Brooks, Community Leaders

Beverly O'Neill, Mayor City of Long Beach

Sally Lewis, Community Leader

Tony Gales, Community Leader

Walter Larkins, Economic Development Commissioner

Barbara Sullivan George, Community Leader

Ivy Arlinda Goolsby, Community Leader

Phyllis Venable, CEO Silhouette Consulting Group

Lori Ann Farrell Harrison, Community Leader

Jean Bixby Smith, Bixby Family

Ron Nelson, Executive Director Long Beach Museum of Art

Gail Schwandner, Retired, Dean Workforce Development Long Beach City College

Dr. Ruth Hayes, Community Leader

Malcolm Bennett, International Realty and Investments

Steve Goodling, Long Beach Convention & Visitors Bureau

Senay Kenfe, Community Leader

Treana Allen, Community Leader

Dr. Sabrina Sanders, Community Leader

H. Maxie Viltz, Community Leader

Evelyn D. Knight, Community Leader

Dale E. Clinton, Civil Service Commissioner Retired, Community Leader

Carolyn Caldwell, Community Leader

Ron Arias, Director, Long Beach Health Department, Retired

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

Robin D. Perry, Esq., President, Long Beach  
Bar Association, Chairman, St. Mary Medical  
Center Foundation Board of Trustees

Maurice Anderson, Former Staff, Legislative  
Analyst

Davian Freeman, Former Staff, Legislative  
Analyst

Nicole Ballard, President, African American  
Heritage Society Long Beach

Juanita Dopplemore, President, Collins  
Neighborhood Association

Dan Pressburg, President, DeForest Park  
Neighborhood Association

Renette Mazza, Co-President, Hamilton  
Neighborhood Association

Jerry Fink, Co-President, Hamilton  
Neighborhood Association

Linda Campbell, Co-President, Hamilton  
Park Neighborhood Association

Nubia Cedeño, Chair, Citizens Advisory  
Commission on Disabilities

Bishop W.T. Ervin



Pastor Artis T. Lanier, Sr.

Pastor Torie Russell, Sr.

Pastor Eddie Patterson

Dr. Leon Wood

Pastor, Reginald Giving, Sr.

Dr. Bruce Riley