



North of Montana Association

www.smnoma.org

**Santa Monica
Northeast Neighbors**

www.neneighbors.org



www.wilmont.org



www.midcityneighbors.org

October 16, 2013

TO: The members of the Santa Monica City Council

CC: Media contacts, City Manager, Santa Monica Conservancy, Friends of Palisades Park, Parks and Recreation Commission, Landmarks Commission

FROM: The North of Montana Association; Santa Monica Northeast Neighbors; Wilshire Montana Neighborhood Coalition; Santa Monica Mid City Neighbors;

SUBJECT: Amendment to Chapter 4.55 of the Municipal Code Related to Commercial Fitness at Palisades Park – Council action on October 8, 2013

We are writing to express our extreme disappointment with the City Council's provisional vote last week to adopt an ordinance that would allow commercial fitness instruction, classes and camps in Palisades Park. We regard commercialization of Palisades Park as a betrayal of the public trust.

Please reconsider your decision.

Palisades Park is more than a municipal resource. It is a national treasure, America's gateway to the Pacific, a cherished view corridor that daily welcomes thousands of people, both local residents and visitors from all over the world.

More than 120 years ago, Santa Monica founders Sen. John P. Jones and Arcadia Bandini de Baker donated the park for the public's enjoyment. Ever since then, it has been a treasured and tranquil spot for walking, running, strolling, biking, picnicking, exercising, admiring the sunset and sitting in silent contemplation.

Sadly, Council's action has soiled that vital legacy. We are now faced with the prospect of city-authorized private businesses using Palisades Park land for profit-making purposes that directly contradict the original intent of our founders. If the ordinance is enacted as currently written, private businesses will be free to use taxpayer-supported lands as their private fiefs, interfering with the public's use and enjoyment of the historic lands that make up Palisades Park.

Under the measure that received provisional approval from the Santa Monica City Council last week, members of the public would be barred from the use of four newly designated "commercial group training zones" for up to 15 hours a day, 6 days a week, from 6 a.m. to 9 pm. And during that time, the quiet beach sounds of breezes and birds that have characterized this precious land from the time of the Tongva and before would be drowned out by loud rock music and the noise of trainers shouting instructions. "Tweet, tweet" would be replaced by "Hut, hut." Tranquility and silent contemplation would be banished.

Is commercial activity an appropriate use for this precious strip of land? Let us put the question another way. Would it be acceptable to license commercial trainers to hold profit-making classes on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.? Should commercial trainers profit from holding fitness classes in front of the Washington Monument or the Lincoln Memorial? Clearly not. Nor should they be allowed to operate their businesses in Palisades Park.

The argument made before Council, that banning fitness classes in the park would be "elitist," we think ignores the larger point. We would argue that it is "elitist" to offer prime park enjoyment to those who are fit enough, wealthy enough and athletic enough to participate in organized fitness classes, depriving everyone else of the means to enjoy the park as they desire.

Palisades Park belongs to everyone – not just those who enjoy commercial fitness classes, and those who would profit by using taxpayer-funded land to support their businesses.

Please reconsider your decision.

Ban all commercial fitness activity from Palisades Park.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Board of Directors, North of Montana Association
The Board of Directors, Santa Monica Northeast Neighbors
The Board of Directors, Wilshire Montana Neighborhood Coalition
The Board of Directors, Santa Monica Mid City Neighbors

For more on the history of Palisades Park, see:

LA Times article, 2010: <http://articles.latimes.com/2010/jun/09/local/la-me-adv-palisades-park-20100609>

City Landmark Assessment Report, 2007:

<http://www.smgov.net/departments/PCD/agendas/Landmarks-Commission/2007/20070910/PCR%20Palisades%20Park%20Final%20Report%20%2808-2007%29.pdf>

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