

## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Citizens Say No to Disneyland's Massive Eastern Gateway Project**

Anaheim, CA, January 23, 2017

Not All is Magic in Disney's Kingdom

Disneyland's proposed Eastern Gateway Project is not about magic. It's about making it almost impossible for Disney visitors to eat anywhere but in Disney's expensive restaurants, shop anywhere but in Disney stores, or sleep anywhere but in Disney's very expensive hotels.

That means neighborhood businesses on Harbor Boulevard will probably not survive, and their 8,500 employees could be out of work. Most of those hotels, restaurants and shops are locally owned (some with franchises), and most are offering much more affordable prices than in-the-park businesses. As many as 70 percent of their current customers are there for the Disney visit.

Now Disney plans to build the "Eastern Gateway Project," creating a path that moves Disney visitors from I-5 into the park, with no chance to stop at any of the businesses on Harbor Boulevard. They won't even see the local businesses, because they will be behind walls or on the bridge above.

The project includes a seven-story parking tower, an eight-acre transportation hub, a new security check station and, finally, a pedestrian bridge over Harbor Boulevard into the park. It is part of a pledge Disney made to invest in Anaheim in exchange for the city's agreement that it would not impose a tax on admissions for 45 years.

"The City has been extraordinarily generous in its long-term no-tax-on-tickets promise to Disneyland," said Robert Harbin, Executive Director of the Harbor Boulevard Merchants Coalition. "We anticipate that some of that spirit will come back to Anaheim with an openness to the needs of the community. Disney's investment of \$1 billion can help us or hurt us."

Although the City of Anaheim has welcomed Disney's billion-dollar investment, which includes the gateway project, it is now facing opposition from many people in the community. The gateway project will be a hardship for Disney-bound families, a disaster for neighborhood businesses and a threat to the environment and well being of the city.

The "gateway" project severs the connection between the Anaheim community and Disneyland.

It may also be illegal. The impact and details of the massive project are governed by California's Environmental Quality Act, Anaheim's municipal code and binding commitments since the park opened in 1955.

It may be illegal, for example, to heedlessly cause dozens of successful businesses to fail and close. In the Anaheim Resort Specific Plan and the Anaheim Municipal Code, Harbor Boulevard is expected to be a "high quality pedestrian environment" serving as the core of the Anaheim resort area. The Anaheim Resort Plan also describes Harbor Boulevard as "an active street environment for shopping, dining and lodging within walking distance from the theme parks." If the theme parks arrange to keep their visitors off Harbor Boulevard, it will no longer be an active environment for them.

Another requirement of the law is the Environmental Impact Report, which says the new construction should be designed to "provide convenient access to all hotel, restaurant, and retail opportunities in the Anaheim Resort to enhance the areawide tourist experience." The Anaheim Resort Specific Plan also declares this intent: to "safeguard and enhance property values." Instead of providing convenient access or enhancing property values, the gateway project separates Disney tourists from Harbor Boulevard and Anaheim by walling off any access.

Another red flag on the question of legality is a 20-year-old City-Disney commitment: any "proposed development shall not limit or adversely affect the growth and development potential of adjoining lands or the general area." That will be a broken promise if the gateway project proceeds as it is proposed now.

One problem with knowing which parts of the project will be legal and which will not is the vagueness of the proposal. The plans that Disney has submitted to the city are based on a 24-year-old environmental report, and the

plans are incomplete. They are not adequate to supply any reassurance that the project will not damage the safety, health and well being of visitors to the park and the surrounding community of Anaheim.

A standing-room-only crowd of Anaheim residents who want that reassurance packed a Dec. 12 meeting of the Planning Commission.

The neighborhood had already organized the Harbor Boulevard Merchants Coalition to monitor the progress of the project and fight any elements that threaten their livelihood and their neighborhood.

As a result of the new Coalition and the sentiments of the crowd at the planning meeting, the Commission has postponed the Jan. 23 meeting to consider Disney's permit. That gives time to the City and Disneyland to negotiate approval of the project. The Coalition and other affected people want to be involved in the proceedings.

“We hope and expect to work it out to the benefit of all, considering the long and fruitful partnership the City and Disney have enjoyed,” Harbin said. “Disneyland has meant a lot to this community, and it can continue indefinitely to have a strong positive meaning if it understands and honors what the community as a whole needs to thrive.”

The Coalition and the community of Anaheim are asking for:

- A commitment from the City and Disneyland to form an ad hoc work group, as well as hold additional public workshops. Disney has indicated that they do not want to hold any additional public workshops. This continuing lack of transparency on the part of Disney stands in the way of creating a project that is respectful to the community and in compliance with State and local laws and regulations.
- A current and thorough environmental impact report as required by the California Environmental Quality Act, including close scrutiny of the likelihood that the project will cause urban decay and blight.
- A better looking design of all the elements. Nothing in the project, as shown in the plans that have been made public, looks appealing to viewers from outside the park. The state law requires new construction to avoid aesthetic dissonance. Urban decay, the law notes, is caused by ugly additions to a neighborhood as well as by division of a historically unified area.
- Direct access to and from the bridge from Harbor Boulevard. Security clearances will have to be conducted nearer to the park, if not within it. If the security clearances are conducted outside the park, the City will have to consider and mitigate the risks that will come with moving the security clearance from Disney property, where it is now, to a site the city must protect close to hotels, shops and restaurants.
- A written commitment to never close the existing east gate to the park. It admits visitors directly from Harbor Boulevard, without subjecting them to a 20-minute hike past, through and over the parking tower, transportation hub, security complex and bridge.
- A comprehensive wayfinding sign program informing visitors of entertainment, lodging, dining and shopping opportunities in the neighborhood.

For additional information please visit [www.saynotodisney.com](http://www.saynotodisney.com) or contact:

Robert (Red) Harbin  
Executive Director  
Harbor Boulevard Merchants Coalition  
510-290-0829  
[info@saynotodisney.com](mailto:info@saynotodisney.com)