

THOMAS A. BROWN



LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

7 September 2006

Gloria Sciara, Project Manager
City of Santa Clara, Planning Division
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Santa Clara, CA 95050

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Re: BAREC EIR (Santa Clara Gardens)

Dear Sirs;

It is my understanding that an EIR prepared for the State of California has declared the property not to have historical significance. I wish to protest this finding. Not Historic?

In the late 1920s the Santa Clara Valley still had extensive orchards, and the Deciduous Fruit station, as it came to be called (now Bay Area Research and Extension Center, BAREC), was of great support to fruit growers all over northern California. With increasing urbanization in the 1950s and 1960s, it broadened its research efforts to fruits and ornamental species for the home gardener. It was the out-doors, hands-on laboratory for us landscape architects; the County Extension officers relied on it to come up with answers to our new questions. It has been an educational facility for many aspects of the community and has had an incalculable effect upon the garden-like appearance of our suburbs.

There was vision here; imagining what new needs would be encountered and providing hard data research on a welter of topics such as new useful species of Eucalyptus trees for home and street, new Strawberry varieties and hundreds of other projects. As experiments were concluded they made way for new experiments; this is just like earlier research projects undertaken by Luther Burbank in Santa Rosa but here on a much grander scale. His home and a small portion of his grounds have been restored to tell his story. The same sort of story should be told about BAREC, which, coincidentally, began its horticultural and agricultural contribution only a couple of years after Burbank's death in 1926. Would anyone say the Burbank grounds are not historic?

The commercial value of Burbank's work dwindled rapidly after his death; the results of the work at BAREC continue. Surely better uses can be found for this land than housing, uses that reflect its historical importance and maintain a horticultural connection for the future. But to claim that the land has no historical significance is so blatantly in error that it calls into question the impartiality and accuracy of the entire EIR.

I consider myself as one of California's leading historical preservation landscape architects and educators. I have 40 years of private practice as a landscape architect and have taught garden/landscape history at the University of California Berkeley's Landscape Architecture Department for 12 years and also at the UC Extension for 14 years. I am incoming president of the California Gardens and Landscape History Society. Some of my company's recent historical preservation design work is a plan for the University of Arizona and also one for the Leland Stanford Mansion in Sacramento.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Brown

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