

February 2017

***Re: California Nursery Historical Park –
Final Draft Master Plan – January 19, 2017***

Dear California Nursery Historical Park Planners and Supporters:

The Washington Township Museum of Local History (WTMLH) and its parent historical groups strongly support the decision to include a large interpretive/education center in the California Nursery Historical Park. We endorse the size and chosen location, as outlined in the draft master plan. It is well positioned for street visibility and fits with the chosen aesthetic for the park. We also want to call attention to advantageous timing that could help with programming the space to tell even more powerfully the story that makes this an historical treasure.

The significance of the California Nursery site is inextricably connected with the settlements and small towns that have become today's vibrant City of Fremont. As you are well aware, this place has long been home for people of innovation in industry, agriculture, and commerce with examples that include Horner's harvester, Rix's almond huller, the development of renowned wineries, Kimber farms poultry research, and later General Motors, Apple Computers, NUMMI, and Tesla.

For more than 20 years, the WTMLH and its parent organizations (Washington Township Historical Society and Mission Peak Heritage Foundation) have developed and supported programs that capture and share our history through special programs and tours—at our current museum building, at Rancho Higuera Historical Park, in the town centers and at other locations throughout the community. We develop and support historical publications, oral history projects, and video programming, and we manage unique and extensive collections and archives. We also support and work cooperatively with other historical sites and organizations, such as the Old Mission San Jose Museum, the Niles Depot Museum and the Niles Essanay Silent Film Museum, among others.

Regrettably for us, our collection has outgrown the space currently available to display it. Fortunately for the City, we have arrived at a point where we can offer to share our resources to make the interpretive/education center one that will attract Fremont residents and make it a “must see” when visitors are in town.

We envision the interpretive center to be a community center of learning, activity, and celebrations crafted to reach out and engage our diverse community. It will be a place where the WTMLH's museum and programs are expanded and brought forward into the new wave of

understanding and sharing history, with electronically enhanced exhibits, areas for children that are hands-on, and a striking use of graphics and color.

One of many possible scenarios is as follows:

The upper floor of the interpretive center is where the history of Fremont comes to life through the stories of the workers in the nursery, in the nearby fields, in the factories, in small and large businesses, as well as local people in sports, education, entertainment, and the arts. The exhibits, both permanent and rotating, celebrate our multi-cultural community heritage and demonstrate how different ethnic groups have made the city strong, helping us to earn the All-American City Award. No one is left out of the historical narrative – history no longer simply means “way back when”, but it comes full circle to present day.

The lower floor houses a small café and kitchen, bookstore, research center, administrative offices, and meeting and conference areas. This place is the catalyst for community engagement, where individuals and local groups meet and work together to celebrate Fremont and California Nursery history. There is also an interpretive display that connects visitors to information about other historical sites and organizations -- a Chamber of Commerce for local history, if you will.

The interpretive center will be a place where programs and exhibits celebrate the rich history of this area from the Ohlone natives through our ever-changing multicultural population and from agriculture to high tech. It will be the place to experience and learn about our diverse community.

The interpretive center will also enhance the history that is already present on the property, that of California Nursery. In collaboration with Math Science Nucleus and other non-profit groups, WTMLH personnel will host historical tours of the galleries and the grounds as we work together in our shared goal of celebrating the history of Fremont and California Nursery with citizens and visitors.

The City of Fremont merits a state of the art educational/interpretive center that tells the whole story of the past for present and future generations.

We thank you for your time and consideration and look forward to working together moving forward.

Sincerely,

The Washington Township Museum of Local History