

January 15, 2024

Dear L.A. County Board of Supervisors,

On behalf of myself and the students in my classroom at Open Magnet Charter School in LAUSD, I am writing to express our strong support for the La Brea Tar Pits Master Plan. The Natural History Museums of Los Angeles County is an exemplary institution and has been our invaluable partner for many, many years. I have been teaching for 32 years and have taken many, many classes on field trips to the Tar Pits and the Natural History Museum and my students always leave enthusiastic about what they have learned and wanting to know more. I was also on the Teacher Advisory Council and had the wonderful opportunity to see first-hand more of the behind the scenes work that happens at the Tar Pits and the truly important work they are doing there, not just in the educational realm, but also our scientific understanding of so many things.

As home to the world's largest collection of Ice Age fossils and the only active urban excavation site, La Brea Tar Pits has been a unique educational and cultural treasure for a century. I have enjoyed and appreciated the ways it has grown and changed since I first brought students there decades ago and I am looking forward to what will come when the new Master Plan is enacted. The Master Plan will greatly enhance the capacity for world-class research and educational programming by doubling lab facilities, enlarging exhibition space, and expanding immersive, hands-on opportunities for students to participate in real-time scientific discovery. The grounds, too, will be transformed into a premier learning environment with educational displays and historical native plants, along with new recreational spaces and amenities open to the entire community.

The Master Plan will bring immense benefits to Los Angeles County, increasing access and educational opportunities for L.A.'s diverse population and global visitors, providing significant economic impact, and creating the preeminent venue for the public to engage with the wonders of science and appreciate the importance of safeguarding our planet in an era of climate change. And, as we know from our very recent tragedies, everyone having a deep understanding of how to protect our Earth from the effects of climate change is increasingly important.

I am excited to continue our partnership with NHM, and to continue being able to learn, and lead my students in learning ever more about the wonders of our natural environment and its past, and urge you to approve the plan to modernize the La Brea Tar Pits.

Sincerely,
Denise Benjamin
LAUSD Teacher