

To: County of Santa Barbara  
Board of Supervisors

17 March 2009

Botanic Garden: Herb Parker Structure

With due respect to the Historic Landmark Commission's past commitment to the Garden's legacy, I think its recent approval for this large structure in the upper meadow has seriously compromised the Garden's essential character-defining features. I disagree with the Garden administrators' argument that this project is consistent with prior exhibits. None before have been so massive or allowed to remain for so long a period as the proposed Herb Parker Structure.

The meadow is a live theatre. Its carpet of low-growing plants and wildflowers, and unobstructed view of the mountains are the actors – *the only actors*. They represent the seasonal changes of our native flora. Historically this unbroken panorama has been the centerpiece and main attraction for visitors to the garden. Bringing into this theatre a 1,200 sq ft structure would break up the integrity of the scene by drawing attention to the structure at the expense of the surrounding environment. It would take away the spotlight much as an actor delivering a soliloquy, (in this case, a 3-year monologue) upstages the other actors.

The Herb Parker Sculpture is not a minor structure. It is a semi-permanent building that requires a building permit like any other building. Although it is a temporary project, it will set a firm precedent for the future. There will be requests for other similar exhibits to keep the visitors coming for reasons other than a genuine interest in native plants in their historic setting, and as a tourist attraction it will accumulate all the attendant problems that impact the surrounding neighborhood.

. Because of the sensitivity of the area in a restricted setting, at the very least, the Board of Supervisors should require an Environmental Impact Report.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Bates Bonadeo member  
Santa Barbara Botanic Garden