



PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY FOR OUR CAPITOL (PAC)

April 16, 2020

The Honorable Gavin Newsom, Governor of California
The Honorable Anthony Rendon, Speaker of the California State Assembly
The Honorable Toni Atkins, President Pro Tempore of the California State Senate
The Honorable Ken Cooley, Chair, Joint Rules Committee
The Honorable Bill Monning, Vice Chair, Joint Rules Committee
Honorable Members of the Joint Rules Committee
State Capitol, Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: *Budget Revisions to Capitol Annex Project*

Dear Governor Newsom and Legislative Leaders:

Thank you for your service to our State as we face an unprecedented global pandemic, and for seeking a reconsideration of the 2020 State Budget. We are writing to request that you take immediate action to halt work on the proposed Capitol Annex Project (Project). Please do not allow the certification of the Project's EIR, and place a moratorium on any further Project expenditures.

For multiple reasons outlined below, the Project raises serious concerns overall. But in light of the fiscal crisis facing our state, the Project must not move forward at this time. Funds for the Annex must be part of the fiscal retrenchment necessary to preserve critical resources for California's recovery.

We are members of Public Accountability for Our Capitol (PAC), a growing group of citizens and organizations deeply concerned about the proposed design of the Project. We are environmentalists, preservationists, tree champions, park enthusiasts, supporters of California's native communities, and advocates for government transparency and fiscal responsibility. We have joined together to ask that you pause this project to consider and pursue alternatives that will cost less to taxpayers, better protect our environment, and preserve the historic designation and aesthetic of our Capitol. Our concerns include the following:

1) Inappropriate Expenditure of Public Funds

Department of General Services (DGS) documents estimate the Project will cost taxpayers over \$750 million. While funds have been appropriated for the Project, the majority have not been spent, and only some preliminary design contracts have been awarded. Any unspent funds already allocated could be pulled back to help balance the General Fund deficit caused by the coronavirus. **Spending money on a project of this nature when many Californians are jobless, unhoused, and facing an uncertain future sends a distressing signal.**

2) Lack of Public Involvement in Design

Public outreach on the Project has been minimal and access to relevant documents is limited. The Historic State Capitol Commission, required by law to provide oversight, has been denied Project information. This led to the resignation of two Commission members (letters enclosed). Moreover, Native Communities have provided public comments indicating they have not been engaged in the process as required by law. **As Assemblymember Cooley has rightfully asserted, the Capitol is the "People's House," yet the people have not been meaningfully included in the Project.**

3) Irreversible Loss of Unique and Historical Trees and Landscape

If this Project continues as planned, there will be shocking tree loss around the Capitol. Although DGS asserts only 20-30 trees will be removed, the contractor who conducted the DEIR acknowledged the number is much higher.

There are over 100 trees in the Project footprint. Removing these trees will fundamentally and permanently degrade the landscape of Capitol Park.

Actions and Alternatives

In order to provide time for project re-design and direct critical funds for the State's recovery, we ask that the Governor and Legislature do the following:

Governor:

- i. Call on the Director of DGS to reject the current DEIR.
- ii. Place a moratorium on spending for Capitol Annex Project construction and request funds earmarked for this purpose be re-appropriated to the General Fund.
- iii. Call on the Legislature and DGS to develop lower-cost alternatives with lower environmental impact.

Legislature:

- i. Request DGS order an additional DEIR for the Project.
- ii. Delay additional spending on Capitol Annex Project construction until a redesign with lower cost-alternatives is completed.
- iii. Direct DGS to engage in robust public outreach regarding the Project's impacts, reaching out statewide, holding town halls, and delaying such meetings until well after the pandemic has passed and shelter-in-place restrictions have been lifted.
- iv. Ensure Native Communities participate in the planning process.
- v. Ensure a tree impact study is completed and made public, and utilize point-of-use notification for all trees impacted.
- vi. Provide requested documents to the California Historic State Capitol Commission and other public entities requesting information pertinent to design and environmental impact.
- vii. Update DGS and Annex Website regularly to accurately inform public about future hearings and opportunities to comment.

Our State Capitol is a public treasure. The Annex Project as currently proposed will cause irreparable damage to this unique historical, cultural, and environmental resource. At this moment in our State's great history, we must critically evaluate every proposed expenditure. We have attached a list of proposed alternatives which will better meet the needs of legislators and the public and reduce costs to taxpayers.

Every Californian is being called upon to sacrifice in this unprecedented time. We ask you to do the same. The pandemic and ensuing budget revisions compel the Legislature to more closely scrutinize and justify every expense related to the Project. We ask that you call for a design that is more fiscally and environmentally responsible, using a process that is truly open and inclusive.

If you would like more information regarding our concerns or would like additional details and plans for proposed alternatives, please contact us at PACAnnexProject@gmail.com.

Respectfully Yours,

Public Accountability for our Capitol (PAC)

Paula Peper

US Forest Service Ecologist (retired)

Historic State Capitol Commission (resigned)



Richard F. Cowan, PE



Ray Tretheway

Executive Director, Sacramento Tree Foundation



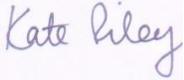
Barbara Leary

Executive Committee Chair, Sierra Club Sacramento Group



Kate Riley

Sacramento Urban Forestry Master Plan Update, Stakeholder Representative



Elise Fandrich, JD



Karen Jacques

Trees For Sacramento



Gretchen Steinberg

Historic Preservation Advocate



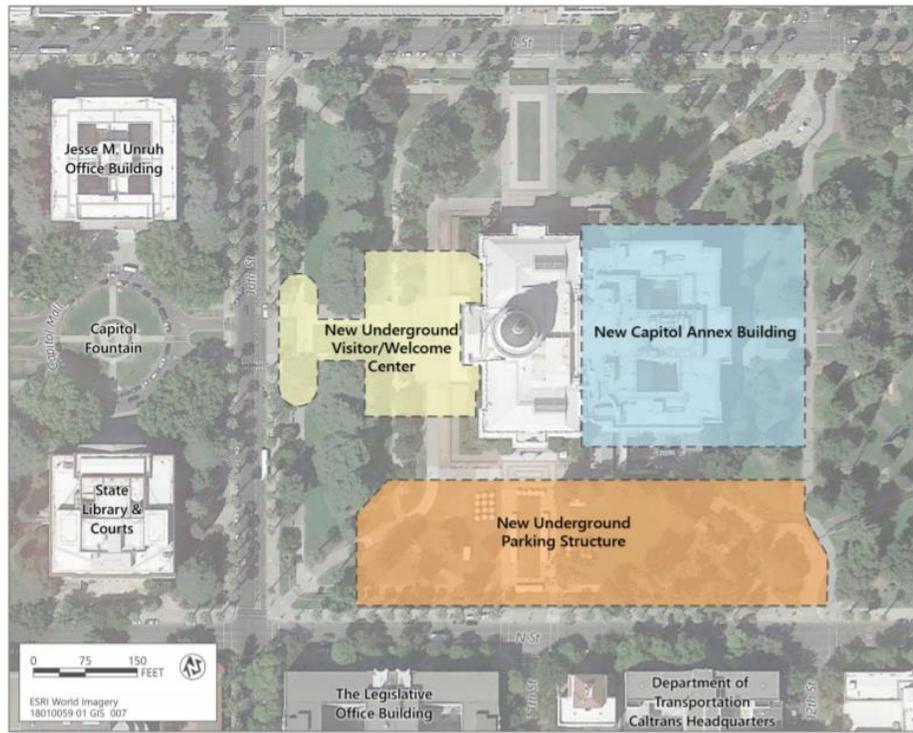
CC:

Stephanie Coleman, Department of General Services
Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 6
Los Angeles Times
San Francisco Chronicle
Sacramento Bee
Capitol Public Radio
San Jose Mercury News
Orange County Register
SacTown Magazine
Comstocks
KCRA 3, ABC 10, CBS 13

Enclosures:

Resignation Letters from Paula Peper and Dick Cowan, former Historic State Capitol Commissioners
Letter from Terra Nova Commenting on Recirculated DEIR
Letter from California Capitol Historic Preservation Society

Project Overview and Proposed Alternatives



Proposed Alternatives:

- i. **Eliminate the Parking Garage from Project.** This will save over \$50 million and protect 40 trees located in the Parking Garage footprint. Removing historical trees to build private parking during a climate crisis sends the wrong message to Californians. The Legislature can convert the state fleet garage on 10th between O and P, or build above-ground parking on existing state land between P and Q, 11th and 12th Streets, or the Veterans Affairs vacant lot between P and Q, 12th and 13th.
- ii. **Optimize Utilization of New Office on 10th and O Street.** Once completed, the new offsite “Swing Space” will provide more square footage and office space than the current annex. (See Below). The Swing Space could be used indefinitely, saving \$750 million and preserving the historic Capitol and Park as is. The Legislature could also remain in the Swing Space longer while the Annex is retrofitted instead of demolished and rebuilt.

	Proposed CAP Project	Current Annex	10th & O Swing Space	Annex + Swing Space
Total Square Footage	525,000 sq. ft.	325,000 sq. ft.	472,000 sq. ft.	797,000 sq. ft (or + 272,000)
Total Parking Spaces	200 spaces	150 spaces	135 spaces	285 spaces (or + 85)

- iii. **Renovate rather than rebuild the Annex.** Space can be added to the existing Annex without increasing the footprint. For example, 60% additional square feet could be acquired by filling two existing lightwells and building out the 6th floor penthouse. A renovation could include a new visitor center and office space and save significant funds to use elsewhere.
- iv. **Ensure new design for Visitor Center protects historic West Plaza of Capitol.** The Visitor Center as currently proposed will destroy the West Plaza, a historical gathering place for Californians that has been used for meetings, demonstrations, rallies, expositions, and public events for decades.