



SAVE OUR CAPITOL!

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A Battle Lost, But a War Not Over – Save Our Capitol! Continues the Fight to Save the Historic West Steps

(Sacramento, CA) – As hard demolition of the historic Capitol Annex began early in July, former state legislators, business leaders, preservationists, environmentalists, and others continue to express their disapproval of the \$1.2 billion Capitol Annex Project. Despite pleas by a supermajority of Californians to reconsider this damaging project, particularly in light of a budget deficit, the Legislature has continued to bulldoze ahead.

“The Capitol Annex certainly had issues, but this was to be expected for a building that was built more than 70 years ago, and had never been properly maintained; however, what the Legislature has failed to tell the public is that the entire premise for demolishing the Annex was built on a lie,” said Richard Cowan, former Chair of the Historic State Capitol Commission and representative of ***Save Our Capitol!*** “After multiple Public Records Act requests, there is no documentation that shows the building could not have been rehabilitated for a fraction of the proposed \$1.2 billion cost. Instead, the Legislature used “Demolition by Neglect” shamefully to destroy this iconic building that was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Yet, because of a court decision that found the Legislature violated California’s landmark environmental quality act, the Legislature is not allowed to build the new Annex until a revised final Environmental Impact Report which complies with CEQA is certified—meaning the Legislature is bulldozing forward with demolishing an historic building despite having no approved building plans.”

Following the court’s decision, the Department of General Services (DGS) was required to recirculate a revised Environmental Impact Report to allow the public to fully review and comment on the plans for the Capitol Annex, West Steps, and new underground parking garage. The Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report (RDEIR) became available on April 8 for public review and comment. On April 18, DGS held an informational hearing about the RDEIR changes, and received additional public comments during hearings on May 16 and June 6, with the official comment period closing on June 15. Individuals, organizations, and legislators submitted comments criticizing the proposed new Annex designs, citing concerns with aesthetics, compatibility with the historic Capitol, and safety of the planned glass skin exterior. Equally significant to the historic Capitol’s preservation, comments also were made regarding the destruction of the iconic West Steps for a visitor center, and concerns raised that trees have already died when they were supposed to be protected and relocated.

“The proposed renderings for the visitor center have shown that the West Steps will be unidentifiable and the Plaza, which provides California’s citizens with a place to assemble, rally, and demonstrate will

be greatly impacted, as space will be limited (Appendix C, Pgs. 201-203). California Highway Patrol officers have stated that the design will not allow people to gather on the proposed lower level, as it will block an entrance/exit and grossly limit demonstration capacities,” said Kate Riley, representative for Public Accountability for Our Capitol. “We absolutely cannot allow this vital place that has been used for decades to exercise our First Amendment rights to be closed off and changed for the worse. Future generations deserve better.”

Public comments also pointed out the problems with the placement of the visitor center, as well as the discrepancies within the RDEIR:

- “In addition to destroying the historic integrity of the West side of Capitol Park, locating the entrance to the visitor center below the Historic Capitol Building, drastically changes the appearance of its West (primary) façade. It is no longer the front of a beautiful 1874 building with stairs leading up to a grand portico and equally grand entrance doors. Instead, it is an 1874 building sitting incongruously on top of the 21st century entrance to the visitor center, the flat roof of which has a large skylight in the center of it and expands out into what once was the historic West Plaza.” (Karen Jacques, Preservation Sacramento.)
- “Given the substantial changes to the design and the increased impacts that result, the revised EIR should not have been limited to the subjects that the Court identified, but instead requires subsequent evaluation of all environmental impacts, as provided under CEQA Guidelines 15162.” (Nicole Sauviat Criste, Terra Nova Planning and Research, Inc.)
- “The new West Entrance for the Visitor Center covers the original Greek Revival architecture including the columns, capitals, cornice, doors, and other historic and significant features. The proposed West Entrance destroys the existing historic West steps, the West lawn, plaza, and the major entry to the Capitol. The West Plaza and Capitol Steps of the original restored Capitol—the site of innumerable marches, speeches, and celebrations—will be eliminated by a Visitor Center with a theme-park-style entrance.” (Milford Wayne Donaldson, an award-winning Architect, Former California State Historic Preservation Officer (CA SHPO), and Former Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, appointed by President Obama.)
- “The new Annex disrespects and overshadows the iconic dome with its large size and reflective glass façade. It denigrates the most important historic governmental landmark in California. The new Annex is substantially over size for the existing historic Capitol and results in the diminution and loss of the historic character of the Capitol.” (Milford Wayne Donaldson.)

Former legislators continue to come out in opposition to the controversial Capitol Annex Project. Most recently, former State Senate President Pro Tempore, Don Perata, penned a letter to Governor Gavin Newsom urging him to reconsider the project, and move forward with alternative designs that don’t waste money or decimate state history. Former Congressman Sam Farr also has expressed his disapproval of the project as a whole, stating, “At this pivotal time, rather than erase this irreplaceable site of historic governance by historic individuals, I urge you to embrace and to protect the State Capitol in its entirety.”

Save Our Capitol! is dedicated to saving the entire historic West side of the Capitol. While the historic Annex has been thrown away by the Legislature, the West Lawn, West Plaza, and West Steps still can be preserved and remain a pivotal place for California politics, and, importantly, the historic site for the people to participate in self-government at the people’s Capitol.

About Save Our Capitol!

*The purpose of **Save Our Capitol!** is to preserve the site of the historic Capitol and its surrounding Park as the center and symbol of Californians' right to truth, transparency, and trust in self-governance. Follow **Save Our Capitol!** on Twitter and act to #StopTheDemolition by visiting www.saveourcapitol.org*