

# Sacramento's most famous landmark is getting a makeover. Here are 3 Capitol Annex designs

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The California Capitol is on track to get a makeover despite the economic fallout of the new recession, with plans to bulldoze the east wing office annex and replace it with an updated model by 2025.

Within those architectural blueprints are three design models under consideration to replace the warren of offices attached to the historic white building: [a square, a circle and a "double T."](#)

The trio of options is part of the \$755 million plan approved in 2018 to rid the Capitol of what lawmakers have characterized as an asbestos-infested and unwelcoming corner of the People's House.

It was unclear whether lawmakers would have to scrap the construction plans as California entered a recession this spring at the start of the pandemic.

But Assemblyman Ken Cooley, the Rancho Cordova Democrat who's spearheaded the renovation effort for years, rejected calls to pause the project because the Legislature has the authority to pay for it by selling bonds.

Cooley said the new annex will strengthen the way "California conceives of and deliberates on ideas for our future."

"The goal really is to support participation in our government," Cooley said.

After unveiling the geometric options to his colleagues during a meeting last month, Cooley said the next steps are to pick a final plan, deadline to be determined. Lawmakers are scheduled to move into a temporary so-called "[swing-space](#)" of temporary offices downtown by the end of next year.

All three designs for the renovated annex promise additional daylight, views of Capitol Park's historic trees and easy mobility through the floors of the executive suite, legislative offices and hearing rooms, said José Luis Palacios, the design director for Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, a firm working on the project.

Here are the options:

## **THE SQUARE**

Perhaps the simplest option, or the “most recognizable,” Lob explained, is the square. This shape already works well with the geometry of the west side and would align with the north and south of the rotunda and its wings.

A potential snag is that the square building could run up against the [historic moon tree](#), a redwood planted in 1976 after it traveled to the moon as a seed during the [Apollo 14 mission](#).



A rendering shows the proposed “square” concept for the state Capitol annex project, one of three concepts presented in a legislative hearing in September 2020. *JOINT RULES COMMITTEE*

## **THE ‘DOUBLE T’**

This model is the more prominent of the three options.

The shape “cinches” in the middle, meaning more trees could be spared during construction, said Chloe Lob, an associate at the design firm. The “rhythm” of the in-and-out of the T-shaped structures “emulates” the east side, while keeping the rotunda as the more distinguished portion of the Capitol.

Most of the square footage would be in the back, or larger T structure, to avoid impacting trees.



A rendering shows the proposed “double T” concept for the state Capitol annex project, one of three concepts presented in a legislative hearing in September 2020. *JOINT RULES COMMITTEE*

## **THE CIRCLE**

The most eye-catching of the designs is the circle, which could serve as an ideal gallery-like space for exhibits.

From above, the circle would look quite large. At eye-level, it would always be “receding away from you,” Lob said, making the shape more geometrically compact so on the ground, you wouldn’t see the full “volume” of the building.

The round window at the top of the dome would also offer plenty of sunlight for visitors walking through the building.



A rendering shows the proposed “circle” concept for the state Capitol annex project, one of three concepts presented in a legislative hearing in September 2020.



A group of people walk past the Capitol Annex an east-facing addition to the Capitol built in the 1950s on March 9, 2020. A group of conservationists is concerned that the the plan to renovate the annex renovation and build an underground visitor center will affect about 100 historic trees in Capitol Park. PAUL KITAGAKI JR. [PKITAGAKI@SACBEE.COM](mailto:PKITAGAKI@SACBEE.COM)



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