

March 22, 2021

The Honorable Ken Cooley
Chair, Joint Rules Committee
State Capitol, Room 3013
Sacramento, CA

Re: March 22 Hearing on State Capitol Annex Project

Honorable Chair Cooley, Vice Chair Hertzberg, and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of Save Our Capitol, this correspondence addresses historical and historic architectural considerations associated with the Capitol Annex Project and is based on the currently available range of planning and environmental documents.

Based thereon, the historic significance of the Capitol Annex encompasses its inclusion as a primary part of two designated National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic properties and its direct association to three other historic properties:

1. *The State Capitol Complex*, consisting of the 1874 Capitol Building and the 1951 East Wing (aka Annex) and which together are recorded as a single building. The State Capitol Complex also includes Capitol Park and The Insectary.
2. *The State Government Building District*, which consists of twelve State of California buildings, including the State Capitol Complex, and the Capitol Park.
3. The Capitol also directly adjoins a third National Register property, *The Capitol Extension Group*, which comprises the setting and buildings directly west of the Capitol, the 1920s design of which framed the historic Capitol from the Capitol Mall.
4. The Capitol Mall is itself a City of Sacramento historic resource.
5. Moreover, the 1935 Tower Bridge that anchors the west end of the Capitol Mall is yet another NRHP designated property with a direct association to the Capitol and the architect of which, Alfred Eichler, was also the architect of the Capitol Annex.

These are uniquely numerous layers of historical and cultural significance directly associated with the Capitol. Few historic properties can claim such deeply layered historical associations and contributions to the State of California.

In the extensive planning records and environmental analyses there is not an alternative that would evaluate retaining and rehabilitating the Annex, despite the extremely strong historic resource conclusions of the Capitol Annex Project Draft EIR:

“Significance after Mitigation... even after application of... mitigation measures, [the Project’s] impact would remain significant and unavoidable because the Capitol Annex, which represents approximately half of [the] monumental building in the NRHP-listed complex, **would be permanently and completely destroyed, and the West Lawn of Capitol Park would be intensely modified, to the point of potentially not conveying its period of significance**” (from *Recirculated Draft Environmental Impact Report for the Capitol Annex Project*, January 2020, p4.12-34, bold added for emphasis).

Thus, as the EIR directly acknowledges – even without the benefit of detailed plans with which to cumulatively assess an actual project – conceptual implementation of the removal and replacement of the Annex building, combined with a very large new addition to the Capitol and new garage, would surround the Capitol with new construction and unequivocally alter the historic Capitol along with its historic setting and landscape – **to the extent that the identified historic significance and NRHP status of the State Capitol Complex would likely be forfeited.**

In addition, a specific effect of the current demolition and expansion plans would be the erasure of a centrally representative aspect from the historically essential Post-WWII period in California, even as there is clear evidence of alternatives that could retain the Annex as a forthright representation of California at midcentury. This alternative would retain and rehabilitate the Capitol Annex to improve programmatic and spatial needs and to meet present and future structural and infrastructural requirements. Rehabilitation efforts would additionally include the directly associated historic landscapes.

The choice is between erasing or embracing a central part of California's history. The State faced this same choice 70+ years ago, when the decision was made to retain rather than to replace the Capitol. At that juncture, historic properties were of nominal interest to American society, so that period of time was ripe for changes that would sweep away the past. Nonetheless, the Capitol was valued and thus retained and added to with a building that embodied modern design and construction while also respecting and deferring to the original Capitol. In the decades since, those very principles were enshrined in historic preservation practice and which remain central to historic architectural and landscape practices today.

To reiterate, underlying this consultation are the following observations:

1. The Capitol as a whole has outstanding historic significance;
2. The currently conceived Capitol Annex Project would diminish and potentially forfeit the Capitol's historic significance;
3. Feasible project alternatives exist that have not, to our knowledge, been adequately evaluated.

Respectfully Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Mark Hulbert", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Mark Hulbert
Preservation Architect and Historic Resource Consultant