



A new lawsuit challenges a plan to tear out the existing Capitol Annex at the state Capitol building in Downtown Sacramento and replace with a modern, glass building. The suit states that environmental considerations aren't complete but the project is still moving ahead.

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Plans to redevelop the Capitol Annex in Downtown Sacramento could be stymied by a new lawsuit challenging the project on environmental grounds.

Filed on behalf of a group called [Save the Capitol](#), Save the Trees, the suit in Sacramento County Superior Court states that the memorandum of understanding for the project calls for demolishing the existing annex and building in its place, causing impacts that aren't mitigated.

"Pursuant to the MOU, the Capitol Annex and much of the Capitol Park arboretum and Native American tribal resources would be demolished and destroyed for an incompatible glass-sheathed structure," states the suit, filed by Brandt-Hawley Law Group out of Sonoma County.

"The entryway, West Plaza and Capitol Steps — site of innumerable marches, speeches and celebrations — would be replaced by a Visitor Center with a theme-park-style entrance," it states.

Attorney [Susan Brandt-Hawley](#) could not be immediately reached for comment. The suit names various state agencies and a joint legislative committee as defendants. A message left at the office of Assemblymember [Ken Cooley](#), D-Rancho Cordova, a member of that committee who's defended the project, was not immediately returned Friday afternoon.

According to the suit, the project's proponents have moved ahead with the project without a final environmental impact report certified. The project's scope and details have also changed without adjusting the environmental impact report, the suit states.

Also, the suit states, the project environmental impact report doesn't specifically address mitigation for removal of several trees on the Capitol building's east side, where the annex building would be redeveloped.

The suit requests stoppage of any actions under the memorandum of understanding and requiring the California Department of General Services to revise and recirculate an environmental impact report for the project, as well as attorney fees.

Though no specific timeline was set, work on the Capitol Annex could start as soon as this fall, with completion of a 10-story "swing space" office building near the Capitol to house office space lost during the annex reconstruction.

Under the scope of the project, the existing annex from the 1950s would be demolished. In its place, a new "double-T" shaped building would have a visitors center, office space, parking and more.

According to the state, the [existing annex](#) is overcrowded, falls short of fire and safety codes and is verging on functional obsolescence. Project opponents have said it's possible to retain the existing annex and make it functional, rather than tearing it out entirely.

The estimated cost of the Capitol Annex project has hovered around \$1 billion in recent months.