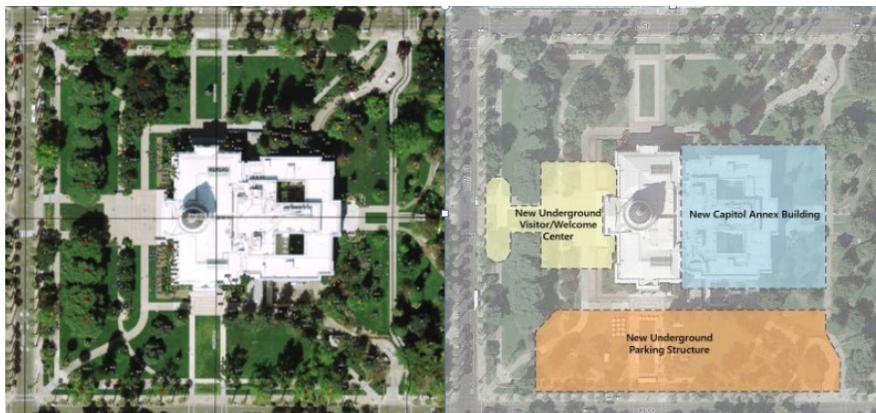


# PUBLIC ACCOUNTABILITY for Our CAPITOL



## The Proposed Capitol Annex Project

The Capitol Annex Project is overseen by the Joint Rules Committee of the California State Legislature. The project is intended to address deferred maintenance and infrastructure issues in the historic 1952 Annex addition, address security issues, and to expand space for additional legislative staff. **Since the authorizing legislation passed, the very few details that have been shared with the public indicate an expanded scope of work and tremendous resulting damage to Capitol Park's trees, vistas, and gathering spaces.** Since the authorizing legislation was passed **the obligation to study preservation and reuse of the historic Annex has not been met.**

The Capitol Annex Project has 3 main components:

1. Demolition and **replacement of the existing Capitol Annex building**
2. **Destruction of the West Steps historic public gathering space and iconic trees,** for construction of an underground visitor center and event space
3. **Excavation and tree removal on the south western corner of Capitol Park** to provide more underground parking for legislators and other high-ranking officials

Public comment on the draft EIR closed on March 2, 2020. **Local tree advocates and the Historic State Capitol Commission submitted comments to the Department of General Services that a tree study is needed before this project is approved.** Approval of the EIR is pending and could occur without any further public review or committee hearing.

The bundled projects have been steered through the legislative process without transparency being provided to the public or the Historic State Capitol Commission, which is charged with advisory oversight. **In March, two commissioners resigned due to the obstruction and secrecy of the process.**

**"Legislative and executive branch employees have been directed to not respond to our questions and to not discuss the viable options we see to preserve California's history, irreplaceable Capitol Park trees, and its West side "front-yard" gathering place.** The closed-door secrecy culture of this project is very unusual." – Richard Cowan, in his letter of resignation from the Historic State Capitol Commission, March 17, 2020

## Alternatives to the Proposed Capitol Annex Project Plan

Viable alternatives to the proposed Capitol Annex Project exist. **In creating the Draft EIR for the Annex project, DGS (acting for the Legislature) relegated the Reconstruction option to the "Options not Considered" list.** The Historic State Capitol Commission believes this is contrary to the law governing Historic Buildings. It advised the legislature and DGS of this view in writing.

## Capitol Park Trees

Capitol Park is an arboretum of rare specimens from around the world and a living museum of California history. **The health, air quality, habitat and climate benefits of irreplaceable Capitol Park trees, and their historic legacy, cannot be ignored.** Current climate conditions and the destruction of space for deep root systems, will not support the future growth of trees to the same stature as those threatened under the current Annex project proposal.

Over 100 trees are within the footprint of the Annex Project plan. **The draft EIR has no plan for tree protection, tree removal, mitigation, or the future landscape of Capitol Park.** No plan has been publicized – or available to the Historic Capitol Commission – by the Joint Rules Committee or DGS.

In an era when the state is asking the public to drive less and protect our environment, **removing huge trees which sequester carbon and provide urban cooling, to build a private parking lot for state officials is simply unacceptable.** Post-Coronavirus, the plan and alternatives deserve more scrutiny.

## Fiscal Impacts

The state has failed to provide clear and consistent figures for the total cost of the project. **One document from 2017 indicates a total cost of \$507 million, but another from 2019 provides a total estimate of \$755 million.** The estimate for the underground parking garage alone is over \$50 million.

On April 2, Governor Newsom announced that the 2019 Budget will be reviewed, due to the current Coronavirus crisis. The huge cost of the Annex project is unjustified - **the legislature needs to eliminate the project completely, or find ways to re-design the project to reduce the cost to taxpayers.**

## Protection for the Capitol Building and Park Grounds

The proposed parking garage alone will remove nearly 40 trees, including redwoods over 100 feet tall and trees planted in 1887 when the Capitol was first built. **The Capitol Park Master Plan recommended by the Historic State Capitol Commission has been delayed by the Joint Rules Committee until after the Capitol Annex Project is completed;** after the destruction to the trees and grounds is done.

**The plan to build an entrance to a new underground visitor center proposes to destroy the current open public space used by generations for gatherings, celebrations and rallies on the Capitol West Steps.** It would also remove iconic cedar trees that have framed the Capitol for a century.

The excavation of the grounds and the impacts of the construction process, are noted in the draft EIR as potentially damaging to the historic Capitol building. **The archaeological resources and historic artifacts of the local Native American nations would be disrupted by the excavation.** Tribal leaders objected to the environmental review process and the resulting draft EIR.

## Design Alternatives and the Future of California

**The Legislation that authorized the East Annex project allowed for either reconstruction of the existing Annex or demolition.** The East Annex with its spartan Mid Century design is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and deserves consideration for restoration and reuse. **From the start, the Joint Rules Committee promoted the demolition option as the sole option.**

The lure of having all of the Legislature in one building is strong. But it is not realistic. **California's population, complexity, and needs will continue to increase. The idea of demolishing the East Annex for a bigger East Annex that will soon also be too small is unwise.** Continued use of the new Swing Space legislative annex building can be part of the solution.

**The Capitol Annex Project must be halted until there is a reevaluation of the impacts on the Capitol building, Capitol Park and new realities for the future of the people and the state of California.**