

May 27, 2015

Submitted by email

Jesse M. Martinez, President
Mission Hills Neighborhood Council
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Re: Proposed project at Mission Hills Plaza and historic significance of Mission Hills Bowl

Dear Mr. Martinez,

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, thank you for the opportunity to submit comments on the proposed project at the Mission Hills Plaza and, more specifically, the potential impact on the historic Mission Hills Bowl (10430 N. Sepulveda Boulevard). We understand that representatives from the development team will present their current plans for the property and overall site to the public during your monthly stakeholder meeting on June 1, 2015.

Designed by noted Los Angeles architect Martin Stern, Jr. and completed in 1957, Mission Hills Bowl is a rare, intact example of a Googie bowling alley in the San Fernando Valley. Its modern glass and steel design, coupled with jutting angles and bold signage, embody the optimism and futuristic sensibilities of postwar Los Angeles and its burgeoning car culture.

In 2014, Mission Hills Bowl was identified as eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, the California Register of Historical Resources, and as a Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument through SurveyLA, the City of Los Angeles' comprehensive citywide survey of historic resources. The property was determined significant for its distinctive Googie architecture and for its role in the development of the Valley's commercial and recreational landscape.¹

Because Mission Hills Bowl is a known historic resource, any proposed project that would have a substantial adverse change should acknowledge the property as an "historical resource" under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and include a thorough examination of preservation alternatives through the preparation of an Environmental Impact Report (EIR). Substantial adverse

¹ City of Los Angeles, "Historic Resources Survey Report: Mission Hills-Panorama City-North Hills Community Plan Area." Prepared by Architectural Resources Group, Inc., March 20, 2014.



changes, or significant impacts, may include demolition, destruction, relocation, or alteration.

A key policy under CEQA is the lead agency's duty to "take all action necessary to provide the people of this state with... historic environmental qualities...and preserve for future generations...examples of major periods of California history."² To this end, CEQA "requires public agencies to deny approval of a project with significant adverse effects when feasible alternatives or feasible mitigation measures can substantially lessen such effects."³

Courts often refer to the EIR as "the heart" of CEQA, providing decision makers with an in-depth review of projects with potentially significant environmental impacts and analyzing alternatives that would reduce or avoid those impacts.⁴ CEQA Guidelines require a range of alternatives to be considered in the EIR that would feasibly attain most of the basic project objectives but would avoid or "substantially lessen" the project's significant adverse environmental effects. The lead agency cannot merely adopt a statement of overriding considerations and approve a project with significant impacts; it must first adopt feasible alternatives and mitigation measures.⁵

The Conservancy looks forward to working with community stakeholders, civic leaders, and the project team to ensure that Mission Hills Bowl, a dynamic historic resource in the San Fernando Valley, is sensitively incorporated into and revitalized as a result of the proposed project. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at 213-430-4203 or afine@laconservancy.org.

About the Los Angeles Conservancy:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with over 6,000 members throughout the Los Angeles area. Established in 1978, the Conservancy works to preserve and revitalize the significant architectural and cultural heritage of Los Angeles County through advocacy and education. The Conservancy's all-volunteer Modern Committee has been at the forefront of preserving mid-century architecture since its inception in 1984.

Sincerely,

Adrian Scott Fine

Adrian Scott Fine
Director of Advocacy

² Public Resources Code §21001 (b), (c).

³ *Sierra Club v. Gilroy City Council* (1990) 222 Cal. App.3d 30, 41; also see PRC §§ 21002, 21002.1.

⁴ *County of Inyo v. Yorty* (1973) 32 Cal.App.3d 795; *Laurel Heights Improvement Association v. Regents of the University of California* (1993) 6 Cal.4th 1112, 1123.

⁵ PRC §§ 21081; *Friends of Sierra Madre v. City of Sierra Madre* (2001) 25 Cal.4th 165, 185.



cc: City Councilmember Felipe Fuentes, Council District 7
Borzou Rahimi, Mission Hills Neighborhood Council Zoning and Land Use Committee
City of Los Angeles, Office of Historic Resources

