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May 19, 2022

Sent Electronically

More Song  
City of Los Angeles, Department of City Planning  
200 North Spring Street, Room 763  
Los Angeles, CA 90012  
Email: [more.song@lacity.org](mailto:more.song@lacity.org)

**RE: Dinah's Sepulveda Project Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA), ENV-2021-4938-SCEA**

Dear More Song:

On behalf of the Los Angeles Conservancy, I'm writing to comment on the Dinah's Sepulveda Project (Project) Sustainable Communities Environmental Assessment (SCEA). As proposed the Project includes demolition and removal of some existing structures from the project site, with retention and preservation of the Dinah's Family Restaurant building. The project site would be developed with an eight-story, 362-unit multi-family residential building, with approximately 3,700 square feet of ground-floor restaurant space fronting Sepulveda Boulevard. Of the 362 proposed units, 41 would be restricted to very low income households. The proposed new building would total approximately 365,623 square feet, which along with the existing Dinah's Family Restaurant, would result in a floor area ratio (FAR) of 3.85:1, and would reach 96 feet and 4 inches in height as measured to the top of the elevator structure.

As we understand, the Project would retain the majority of the Dinah's Family Restaurant building, including its character-defining features and materials. As proposed in the SCEA report, the building would continue to house a restaurant program. Previous alterations would be removed including 587 square-feet at the rear of the building, which was added in 1959 and has not been determined to be a character defining feature by Architectural Resources Group (ARG) who completed the Project's Historical Resources Technical Report (Technical Report).

The Conservancy commends the Project team for pursuing a win-win solution that retains and incorporates an existing eligible historic resource while adding density to the site. We believe this project, with some



additional measures added, may well serve as a model for future developments with similar types of development.

**I. Dinah’s Family Restaurant is an eligible historic resource and more clarity should be given to its future rehabilitation**

Dinah’s Family Restaurant was deemed eligible for designation at the state and local levels as discussed in the Project’s Historical Resources Technical Report. ARG determined the building eligible under Criterion A/1 for its association with postwar commercial development patterns in Westchester and for Criterion C/3 for its Googie architecture. Due to its loss of material integrity, ARG determined the building not-eligible for designation at the national level.

Dinah’s Family Restaurant at 6521 South Sepulveda Boulevard is a one-story Googie style coffee shop. The building was originally constructed in 1957 as the Henn’s Restaurant and designed by Jacob Tracht for owners Howard Fox and Harry Quinn. Since it opened, Dinah’s has become a community institution hosting numerous local organizations and a meeting place for friends and family. Throughout that time, alterations including new windows, doors, and interior modifications have been made to the property. However, the property still retains its ability to convey its significance as a Googie coffee-shop from the 1950s.

We commend the applicant’s dedication to rehabilitating the Dinah’s building and would appreciate greater clarity as to the rehabilitation plan. At present, Project Design Features (PDF) include:

- PDF-1 Oversight of Rehabilitation of Dinah’s Building: The rehabilitation of Dinah’s Family Restaurant, and the treatment of all of its materials, features, and immediate site, shall be overseen by a historic architect meeting the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards in Architecture and/or Historic Architecture.
- PDF-2 Treatment of Dinah’s Restaurant Signs
  - o Bucket Sign: The Dinah’s bucket sign, located at the rear of the building, shall be removed from its current location and relocated within the Project Site. The bucket portion of the sign shall either be preserved and integrated somewhere in the Project’s open space areas as an art piece, or the bucket sign or a portion thereof shall be relocated in front of the Dinah’s building at the southeast corner of the Project Site.
  - o Pylon Sign at the Corner of Sepulveda Boulevard and Centinela Avenue: The Dinah’s Fried Chicken sign, located at the corner of Sepulveda Boulevard and Centinela Avenue, shall be removed from its current location and either stored at an appropriate and secure location or donated to a local sign museum.

The Conservancy believes additional details are necessary to provide greater clarity on the intended rehabilitation work, with detailed information about what may be preserved and what may be lost in the Project scope. For instance, is there a timeline for the completion of the rehabilitation work to Dinah’s and will this be in coordination with the new construction and/or sequenced to occur afterwards? The Conservancy wants to ensure this work will be completed and commence as part of the Project timeline and scope.



## **II. Legacy Business support as a mitigation measure.**

Since 1959, Dinah's Family Restaurant has become an iconic legacy business, with strong ties to the surrounding community. The diner's comfort food and atmosphere have built a loyal clientele with many regulars patronizing the restaurant for decades. During that time, it has served as a meeting hub for local community organizations, such as the Westchester Toastmasters Club, the Westchester YW Wives Club, and the Culver City Community Coordinating Council. Dinah's has also hosted events including the Hughes Employees Assoc. Sports Car Club, health insurance workshops and seminars, and club anniversary parties among others.

Legacy businesses are generally those that have been in operation for twenty years or more. These businesses are what makes each neighborhood unique by creating rich community identity, a sense of place, and belonging for customers and neighbors. The Conservancy believes strongly that mitigation measures to protect Dinah's as a business should be included in the plan for this reason. Such measures may include but are not limited to right of return, as well as rental and other economic assistance incentives.

Does the Project intend to retain the Dinah's operation, and if so, will it be disturbed or closed during the construction process? Retention of this important legacy business is important. Greater clarity should be provided to ensure all steps are being taken to maintain this longtime, community serving business.

## **III. The Conservancy requests a meeting with the Project team.**

We thank the Project team for meeting with our staff in the past and request further meetings to discuss the proposed rehabilitation work and how the team might best preserve Dinah's. With our expertise in historic preservation, we are well suited to assist the Project team further with any issues they may face when dealing with historic resources and the future rehabilitation.

## **IV. Conclusion**

In conclusion, we commend the Project team for their dedication to preserving the Dinah's Family Restaurant building as part of their redevelopment project that adds significant density and housing to the site. However, we would appreciate greater clarity as to the Project's rehabilitation plan beyond what is provided in the Environmental Impact Analysis and Historical Resources Technical Report. Furthermore, we believe additional mitigation measures should be put in place to protect Dinah's as a legacy business and not solely the building itself. The Conservancy welcomes the opportunity to meet with the Project team to discuss potential plans and provide assistance where applicable.



**About the Los Angeles Conservancy:**

The Los Angeles Conservancy is the largest local historic preservation organization in the United States, with nearly 5,000 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.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (213) 430-4203 or [afine@laconservancy.org](mailto:afine@laconservancy.org) should you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,



Adrian Scott Fine  
Senior Director of Advocacy

