

MEMORANDUM

TO: Planning Commission

FROM: Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board

SUBJECT: LPAB Comments – Coliseum Area Specific Plan

DATE: September 24, 2014 _____

At its regular meeting of September 8, 2014, the Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB) heard public comments and provided cultural resource related comments on the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Coliseum Area Specific Plan, its Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR), and related documents.

Public Speakers:

Naomi Schiff, Oakland Heritage Alliance, said the proposed mitigations were inadequate. Documentation should be done regardless, and doesn't mitigate loss of a resource. Both the Arena and the Coliseum should be restored and reused. Monetary mitigations have to be proportionate to the size of "these gigantic structures built with public funds." Contribution to the Façade Improvement Program could be appropriate, since both the program and the Coliseum complex are of citywide significance. Getting rid of billboards could be another mitigation.

Chris Dobbins, Joint Powers Authority and Oakland Sports, described the economic value of sports venues to the city. The Coliseum complex is "iconic but dated." It exemplifies the 1960s fashion for multi-purpose facilities in big parking lots. It is now the last shared facility and the fourth oldest stadium in the country, and both teams want to leave. City and County are still paying for improvements made in the 1980s.

Board Comments:

Board requested serious exploration of alternative uses for the Arena (which is retained in several of the Plan alternatives), including non-venue uses such as offices. Since this is a long-range plan, consideration should be given to the short cycle of obsolescence for sports facilities.

Board chair Garry argued that since the Plan and DEIR in effect approve demolition of the Coliseum, the demolition findings developed by the Landmarks Board and added to the Planning Code in 2010 should be addressed. The findings require applicants to furnish detailed information to decision makers on a building's economic viability, soundness, maintenance history, appraised value, public benefits, reuse potential, etc. Typically, the City reviews demolition findings and the new proposal at the same time. However, in this Plan demolition is implicitly approved with certification of the EIR, and a replacement project comes later, so the complete information mandated by the demolition findings should be available now.

Specific Plan staff noted that a Plan and EIR in themselves don't approve demolition – it might be found likely or unavoidable, but any actual project would still need Planning review for entitlements, and that is when the demolition findings would be made. However, “we could provide more information for eventual making of the findings” and could consult the City Attorney's office about the process.

Board members commented favorably on Naomi Schiff's proposals that monetary mitigations should be based on a formula proportioned to the size and importance of the resource, and that the Façade Improvement Program would be a worthwhile beneficiary.