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SAJE

Lateef Sholebo, Project Coordinator
Environmental Review Section
Los Angeles City Planning Department
221 N. Figueroa, Room 1540
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: Draft EIR 2000-3577, Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment District

Dear Mr. Sholebo:

Strategic Actions
for a Just Economy
Plan Estratégicas
para una Economía Justa
100 Kenwood Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90007
Tel: 213/732-9961
Fax: 213/733-8831

I am writing on behalf of Strategic Actions for a Just Economy (SAJE) in response to the Draft Environmental Impact Report (DEIR) for the Los Angeles Sports and Entertainment District. As an organization committed to pursuing economic benefits for working class people throughout Los Angeles, and particularly in the neighborhoods surrounding the Figueroa Corridor, we have an investment in ensuring that the rights of the residents in the area surrounding Staples Center are protected.

SAJE is most concerned about how the proposed project will impact residents of the surrounding neighborhoods, who are predominantly low-income people of color. In extensive communication with 200+ of these residents over the past six months, we have learned that they already experience negative impacts from current operations of the Staples arena on a daily basis. These impacts include a dramatic increase in traffic and associated air and noise pollution; a marked rise in crime and vandalism; and decreased pedestrian and public safety. Finally, there has been an ongoing elimination of affordable housing in the area, including close to 200 units which were demolished when Staples Center was first constructed. Since that time, area residents have informed us that several of their landlords have ceased to provide services to their buildings -- in anticipation, we assume, of being able to sell the buildings and lots at inflated values to LA Arena Company or other developers.

It is clear to us, through our direct communication with these residents, that while the rest of the region benefits from the Staples Center's operations, those who live and work closest to Staples bear the heaviest environmental and economic burdens.

We are tremendously concerned that, with the proposed 3.75 million square foot project expansion, the local residents will be even more negatively impacted by both the proposed 7-year construction plan and ongoing operations of the project. We are most concerned about the failure of the draft EIR to adequately address the imminent gentrification of the surrounding community, including physical deterioration of buildings due to neglect and the loss of affordable housing in the area; the complete lack of an environmental energy analysis in the draft EIR; the identified negative air and noise quality impacts of the construction and operations; and the possible violation of water quality regulations.

Specifically, we request the following:

- 1) The City properly and thoroughly address the significant environmental impacts identified in the draft EIR through mitigation measures that are community developed and community based;

- 2) The City review and implement the requests for additional analysis and mitigation measures developed by Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice in their comments to the draft EIR;
- 3) The City request that a full energy analysis be completed in the final EIR, including appropriate mitigation and conservation measures as required by CEQA;
- 4) The City provide all of the final EIR materials translated into Spanish so that community residents can take an active part in this important decision-making process. To refuse to translate the materials would be a violation of civil rights law, and bad public policy; and
- 5) The City request that the Developer incorporate into the Project proposal community benefits such as affordable housing, quality jobs and community services that will help mitigate negative Project impacts. These benefits are outlined in the FCCEJ's comments to the DEIR.

In our letter of October 10th, 2000, in response to the Notice of Preparation (NOP) of the EIR, we indicated a concern that the community be effectively consulted in the course of planning this major development, in order to ensure that the surrounding community does not experience further detrimental impact. In our letter of February 15th, 2001, we requested an extension of the public comment period to provide for a coherent and comprehensive community response to the draft EIR. We are disappointed that this request was denied.

We respectfully request that the City take a serious and thoughtful approach to addressing this community's concerns regarding the proposed project.

Sincerely,



Linda Haas
Executive Director

Cc: Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice (FCCEJ)