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Hollywood Center Refutes CGS Claims

'False and misleading statements' threaten agency's reputation, defy basic scientific principles

The Hollywood Center development team today sent a letter to the state agency that oversees California Geological Survey (CGS), lashing out at blatant “false and misleading statements” regarding the seismic safety of the mixed-use development proposed for surface parking lots adjacent to the Capitol Records Building and demanding the California State Mining and Geology Board conduct an investigation.

In particular, the communications to the State Agency assails a recent letter from CGS to the City of Los Angeles purporting “new” evidence from the US Geological Survey that hypothesizes that a strand of an active fault runs through the Hollywood Center project site.

“This highly inflammatory claim misconstrues the USGS Study, ignores basic scientific standards, and sadly represents yet another example of a concerted, years-long effort from somewhere within CGS to push a preordained conclusion at the risk of the agency’s reputation and basic scientific principles,” reads the letter to Steve Bohlen of the State of California Natural Resources Agency. “The underlying bias is clear from the letter’s unwarranted dismissal of exhaustive subsurface studies that consistently found evidence precluding the possibility of an active fault on the property.”

According to the letter, which was prepared in concert with top geotechnical experts, CGS is ignoring years of scientific research that demonstrates there is no evidence of an active fault at the project site.

The State of California has developed a particular protocol for investigating earthquake faults through the Alquist-Priolo Act. It is the State’s responsibility to identify and map potential fault zones, and local government’s duty to closely examine each development proposal in those zones for active faults to determine whether a site is safe to build on.

With Hollywood Center, that protocol has been adhered to time and again. A new Geology and Soils study was prepared for the draft environmental impact report (DEIR), published earlier this year. That study, which was signed off on by the City Geologist, concluded that there is no Holocene-active faulting beneath the project site and therefore the site is safe to build on according to State and City requirements.

Yet CGS officials continue to undermine this established process by making false statements, specifically singling out the Hollywood Center project site.

“We will not speculate on CGS’ motives for submitting such a misleading letter at this late stage, other than to say that over the last several years, it appears that factions at CGS have pursued an arbitrary and capricious campaign to improperly influence the findings on this Project, regardless of what the scientific evidence demonstrated,” the letter reads.

Two subsurface geological studies were performed on the site over the course of the last five years by Group Delta, a leading geotechnical engineering firm; one was dated March 6, 2015 and the other July 19, 2019. Both studies were peer reviewed by another leading geological consulting firm, Earth Consultants International.

Group Delta geologists, the City geologist, and the State’s own CGS geologists personally entered the trenches to observe whether there was any Holocene-age fault movement. Following this inspection, all participating geologists unanimously concluded that there was demonstrable evidence precluding the possibility of an active fault. This conclusion is a clear example of the scientific process at work, with the entirety of research being collected, studied, and concluded on in a collaborative fashion.

“CGS still refuses to accept the science and continues to chase a preordained conclusion that has been repeatedly disproven by the facts,” said Philip Aarons of MP Los Angeles. “When the science does not support an active fault, that science should be respected, not undermined by repeatedly disregarding the exhaustive, reliable data that demonstrates no active faults exist on the site.”

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