

January 27, 2014

Scott Johnson, Associate Planner  
City of Sacramento, Community Development Department  
Environmental Planning Services  
300 Richards Boulevard, Third Floor  
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Our non-profit, Sacramento Modern, is a 501(c)(3) organization dedicated to promoting, preserving, and protecting modern art, architecture, and design in the Sacramento region. We have been observing the developments and discussions surrounding the proposed Entertainment and Sports Complex and would like to comment on the Draft EIR. Specifically, we would like to address the findings in the Report regarding the work of John S. Bolles and Associates.

Macy's West (1963) by John S. Bolles

We respectfully disagree with the analysis that Macy's West in the Downtown Plaza is ineligible for historic designation because its historic integrity has been diminished. Our evaluation and conclusion regarding the building is that it maintains a high degree of integrity in the following areas: its intact character defining features and design; the preponderance of original materials and their condition; the demonstrated workmanship involved in the building's construction; and its original location and feeling, which are comparable over time. Moreover, the building is highly recognizable (even though arguably reversible alterations/modifications have been made to one of its four sides). Also, according to our research, the building's distinctive trademark decorative overhang was the first of its kind among the Macy's designed by John S. Bolles.

Portions of the Downtown Plaza (1972) by John S. Bolles and Associates

SacMod has been extensively researching the original design of the Plaza. We have conducted several site visits, examined various documents, and interviewed Albert Sanchez, AIA, original designer from John S. Bolles and Associates. Mr. Sanchez was the Project Director for the Plaza's design under Project Architect Peter Rooke-Ley. Scans of images shared from Mr. Sanchez's portfolio can be seen online via <http://bit.ly/sacmodplaza0>

We believe the original Plaza design by John S. Bolles and Associates is an iconic and irreplaceable example of Brutalism, an important architectural movement. In particular, the unique features of the Plaza — the faceted exterior planes, organic curvilinear forms, the extensive use of redwood, textured concrete, and the many sculptural terra cotta wall panels — comprise an intact architectural resource unlike any other in our city. Ideally, we would prefer

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that another site be chosen for the proposed Complex and that the targeted buildings at the Plaza remain and be restored and/or adaptively repurposed.

One of the truly unique aspects of the Plaza are the multiple circa 1971 terra cotta sculptural wall panels. We counted roughly 38 of these original panels that are still intact. Our photographs of these panels can be viewed online via the following links:

<http://bit.ly/sacmodplaza1>

<http://bit.ly/sacmodplaza2>

<http://bit.ly/sacmodplaza3>

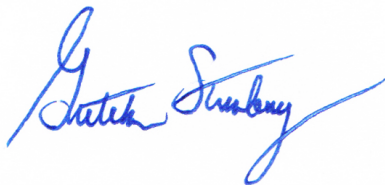
These unusual and rare installations were conceptualized and designed by Albert Sanchez. It was Mr. Sanchez's vision to create an artistic statement on various exterior walls throughout the Plaza. He contacted the Hans Sumpf Company of Fresno and began working on the panels in a collaborative effort with the company's art director and sculptor John Bennett. Of note, Hans Sumpf was a highly acclaimed ceramic company, especially during the mid-20th century. Master ceramist and sculptor Stan Bitters worked at Sumpf from 1959-1965; he was both a colleague of and artistic inspiration for John Bennett. From our research, ceramic panels by Mr. Bennett from the early 1970s are highly prized and valued by art collectors.

Per Mr. Sanchez, the panels were made in the following manner: "We laid each panel on a concrete slab floor in his (Bennett's) studio, layered the material, made the impressions, cut into tile size, numbered each tile, kiln dried the adobe and transported to the job site for installation." The tiles were affixed in place at the site with mastic. Some of the terra cotta panels included light fixtures that allowed light to shine from one sculpted surface to another.

SacMod does not recommend that the portions of the Plaza designed by John S. Bolles and Associates be demolished. However, if plans for demolition proceed, we strongly recommend that all of the sculptural wall surfaces be preserved and repurposed as public art in Sacramento, perhaps even as part of the new proposed Entertainment and Sports Complex. The panels, in situ, evoke a sense of place and identity unique to our city. If preservation in place is not possible or achievable, it remains imperative that the sculptural wall surfaces be removed and preserved for display or repurposed use in a public or private installation.

We would also like to offer our technical assistance and support in selecting and repurposing any preserved panels.

Respectfully submitted,



Gretchen Steinberg, President, SacMod

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