

>>> Barbara Greaves 8/3/2009 1:52 PM >>>

>>> Colleen Mason <cmasonheller@yahoo.com> 8/3/2009 12:47 PM >>>

Dear Ms Greaves and Los Angeles City Council PLUM Committee:

In July of 1969, the Apollo XI's astronauts accomplished their historic landing on the Moon. President Richard Nixon then chose the recently completed Century Plaza Hotel to celebrate their safe return. He was joined by 50 members of Congress, 44 state governors, and ambassadors representing 83 countries from around the world in the showcase Century City venue to herald the event. Broadcast live on all three television networks, the event remains the most elaborate and memorable state dinner ever held on the West Coast. It is a sad irony that on the 40th anniversary of that momentous event the landmark hotel chosen to honor the astronauts and memorialize their achievements is fighting for a continuing role in history.

The collective memory of Los Angeles as a distinct urban culture is sadly defined in very transient terms. The architectural history of Los Angeles is fractured and vulnerable, and we have unfortunately lost more than we've retained. I have lived here not yet 35 years but even I find myself trying to remember a vanished shadow city to my native Angeleno kids. Los Angeles is a cultural orphan constantly in the care of temporary guardians who do not cherish the architecture, the communities, nor the people as they continually destroy the cultural context that binds our City. Blind pursuit of development dollars frenetically propels us into poor decisions and irrevocable losses to the fabric of Los Angeles. The pursuit leaves the City over burdened with the resulting impacts which tax our transportation, road capacity, emergency personnel, energy, water, and educational system.

The promised redevelopment of the Century Plaza Hotel as a "green" mecca is a cheap deception. The real likelihood is that it will take near 50 years to recoup the environmental cost of demolishing the current facility and replacing it. The existing buildings are less than 50 years old. Will we be looking at another demolition when this planned replacement project reaches 50 years and thus never realize any green advantage at all? Reduce, reuse and recycle should apply to city planning and development and not just to individuals.

The promise of jobs is specious as well. The jobs lost if the hotel goes down are long term, permanent jobs. Construction jobs are temporary and the time it takes to finish the project will see most of the current Century Plaza workers fail to return or unable to find employment in the new facility. Those are immediate economic liabilities, in the worst financial climate since the depression, for which there is no remedy.

I am encouraged that Councilman Paul Koretz has proposed a motion to add the Century Plaza Hotel to the list of cultural and historical monuments. It is a proud and beautiful hotel that has hosted presidents and heroes, celebrities and those not so famous, for a generation of events and celebrations. Its sweeping curves are a graceful entrance to the urban vision that has stimulated the growth of Century City for near fifty years and it is well worthy of the cultural designation and preservation thoughtfully sought by Councilman Koretz.

Sincerely,

Colleen Mason Heller
Cheviot Hills Homeowners Association