

St. John's Well Child Center

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February 22, 2001

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

VIA FACSIMILE: 213-580-5542

Dear Mr. Sholebo,

St. John's Well Child Center is a free medical and dental clinic for children at the intersection of Adams and Figueroa, four blocks south of the Staples Center. St. John's Well Child Center provides free medical and dental services to more than 15,000 children from the area and neighborhoods adjacent to and surrounding the Staples Center each year. We have been providing these uninterrupted and critical health care services at our current location for more than 38 years. The clinic was founded by the Los Angeles Pediatrics Society and St. John's Episcopal Church in 1963. We are a community-based, nonprofit health clinic for children from birth to 18 years of age.

We are writing to provide our comments to the draft EIR for the proposed Sports and Entertainment District. We are most concerned about how the proposed project will affect community residents and children in the area, who are predominately low-income Latinos and African Americans. We believe that the people living in the neighborhoods surrounding the existing Staples Center already suffer negative impacts from current operations, including the ongoing elimination of affordable housing; dramatically increased traffic and associated air and noise pollution; a marked rise in crime and vandalism; and decreased pedestrian and public safety. These neighborhoods have the highest levels of lead poisoning and asthma in children in the city. In the two years since the Staples Center was completed these numbers have risen dramatically. As you may know, Asthma and high blood lead levels (which can lead to brain damage) are a direct result of pollutants in the air and results from construction dust, dirt and airborne pollutants. The neighborhood adjacent to the Staples Center is now a federally-certified "lead hot zone" because of the large numbers of children with lead poisoning.

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While the rest of the region benefits from the Staples Center operations, the residents who live and work closest to Staples bear the heaviest environmental and economic burdens.

For example, yesterday, during the Grammy Awards event at the Staples Center, one of the children at the clinic who is under six years old, had to be hospitalized because of a series of asthma attacks. Because of the traffic instigated and unmitigated by the Grammy event, an ambulance was unable to reach the clinic. The response time was significantly extended because of the event at the Staples Center and could have resulted in serious injury or death to this emergency patient. Luckily, members of the clinic carried the child south along Figueroa, walking six blocks until traffic was less congested and the ambulance could reach the child.

With the proposed 3.75 million square foot project expansion to the site, we believe these 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 EIR to adequately address the traffic mitigation measures necessary to sustain a development of such magnitude. We need mitigation measures to assure the health and safety of our 15,000 patients, all of whom are children who live in the area impacted on by the project.

It was very unfortunate that the city decided to only permit 45 days on public comment, which made it impossible for health and safety experts associated with St. John's Well Child Center to "way in" with their analysis. We are most concerned about the failure of the EIR to address the negative air and noise quality impacts of the construction and operations, the possible violation of water quality regulations and the decreasing health status of the area's children as a direct result of the construction and completion of this project.

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 the Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice (of which the Well Child Center is a founding member), 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 policy, and:

- 3) That the city review and implement analysis on the direct health and safety dangers to the residents and children of the area given current asthma and lead statistics and develop mitigation measures to address the "lead hot zone" issues that are a direct result of the Staples Project and would be further exacerbated by the project expansion.

We hope you will seriously consider the requests and demands outlined in this letter. The health and safety of tens of thousands of children who live in the area are directly at stake!

Sincerely,



Jim Mangia
Executive Director

Cc: Figueroa Corridor Coalition for Economic Justice