

Earthquake at City Hall – Foes of Millenium Project Prevail

By [John Schwada](#)

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Dateline Hollywood – The Hollywood earthquake map released today by the California Geological Survey vindicates community groups that have been fighting a David vs. Goliath battle against City Hall’s assertions that no active earthquake fault runs through the proposed Millennium Hollywood project site.

“The California Geological Survey map today confirms what my clients have been saying – that the Hollywood Earthquake Fault runs right through the Millennium property,” said Robert P. Silverstein, attorney for a citywide coalition of community groups suing to overturn the Los Angeles City Council’s questionable July 24 approval of the Millennium Hollywood project.

The map, Mr. Silverstein said, should be another nail in the coffin of the Millennium project, at least as approved by the City Council. “Maybe they can squeeze a much smaller building somewhere on this property, if at all,” he said. “But it is improbable that anything like the giant twin skyscrapers the City Council approved can ever be built.”

Soon after the Council approval of the Millennium project last summer, Mr. Silverstein filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn the Council’s decision. That lawsuit, still pending in Los Angeles Superior Court, claims the city repeatedly broke its own rules and state laws to whitewash the Millennium project.

“This map will now become ‘Exhibit 1’ in our lawsuit,” said Mr. Silverstein.

Speaking of Political Geography

The map not only provides scientific clarity about the seismic geography of Hollywood, but also brings into focus the outrageous political geography of City Hall, he said.

For years, City Hall has done everything to hide mounting evidence of an earthquake fault across the Millennium site, according to project opponents.

“A New York developer spent an eye-popping \$5 million to lobby L.A. City Hall to get these two skyscrapers approved,” Mr. Silverstein said. “But now that false victory has been upended by an unimpeachable scientific study.”

“If not for my clients’ unwavering commitment to good government, this outrageous fraud would have succeeded. The lives of thousands of people who would have lived in, visited or worked in this project would have been put at risk.

“Today is a great day for those seeking truth and justice.”

State geologist Dr. John Parrish recently outlined the extreme dangers of building on an active earthquake fault. “[Y]ou don’t build a structure for human habitation across the surface rupture of a fault,” Dr. Parrish said. “When that fault moves the next time, it’s going to rupture on the surface. It will tear the foundations out from underneath the building. No matter how strong you think you build, the foundations are ripped in opposite directions. The building is going to be worthless and cause possible catastrophic damage to the area.”

George Abrahams, a tireless community activist and one of Mr. Silverstein’s clients in the Millennium lawsuit, called for a grand jury investigation to review how the Millennium project won its approvals. “This whole matter stinks so badly that it’s time for a criminal investigation to get to the bottom of how City Hall colluded with the developer for so long to hide the truth,” said Mr. Abrahams.

Prying Open a Worm Can?

“The authorities should look at how many other projects have recently been approved for construction on earthquake faults. Our fight against the Millennium scandal has been the catalyst for exposing City Hall’s unconscionable decisions to allow projects to be built in dangerous earthquake zones. I believe there should be a grand jury investigation of the city’s conduct.”

“This map is a devastating indictment of those who tried to discredit my clients as Nimbys,” said Mr. Silverstein. Mayor Eric Garcetti, who until recently represented Hollywood on the City Council, and the current Hollywood Councilman, Mitch O’Farrell, Mr. Garcetti’s former top deputy, were prominent Millennium project cheerleaders, Mr. Silverstein noted.

The day the City Council approved the project, Mr. O’Farrell stood on the steps of City Hall and emphatically told reporters there was no evidence of an earthquake fault on the Millennium property. Later, when opponents called for an independent investigation of the Millennium earthquake issue, Mr. O’Farrell’s press spokesman rejected that notion, telling the Los Angeles Times and told the LA Times: “[O’Farrell] is confident in the city process.”

“City officials have just been handed a resounding rebuke by the state of California and science,” said Mr. Silverstein.

“Millennium cheerleaders, like Garcetti and O’Farrell, insulted and ignored my clients who repeatedly warned them about seismic safety issues,” said the attorney.

“The Millennium boosters claimed this project was needed to revive Hollywood. They said it would be a ‘game-changer.’ Yes, the Millennium project will be a game-changer, but not in the way they

envisioned.

“The public deserves to know what Garcetti and O’Farrell knew about the problematic seismic issues facing this project, when they knew them, and what they did behind closed doors about them.

“Were Garcetti and O’Farrell just duped by city staff and the developer? Or were they co-conspirators? In either case, they don’t look good.”

Secret emails obtained by opponents last July through a Public Records Act request confirmed that top officials in the city’s Dept. of Building and Safety, at least as early as March 2012, suspected there was an earthquake problem affecting the project.

Their suspicions may have been triggered by a little-known geotechnical report submitted to the city by the developer’s hired geologists in *November 2011*. This found anomalies in the water table on the Millennium property suggestive of earthquake activity. Still, the developer’s geotechnical report essentially swept the findings under a rug.

Building and Safety directed the Millennium developer in the spring of 2012 to conduct a new fault investigation. Findings submitted by the developer’s geologists to the city in November 2012 also found fresh evidence suggestive of earthquake activity on the Millennium site. This concerned discrepancies in the layers of earth on the site. Yet, the findings were also dismissed in this report. The Millennium developer’s geologists are now being investigated by the state Licensing Board for Professional Engineers, Land Surveyors, and Geologists.

“Just one more sad example of how City Hall has sold out the public through the Millennium controversy,” Mr. Silverstein said.

Mr. Schwada may be contacted at John.schwada@gmail.com