

# LOS ANGELES; Project's foes won't drop fight; The Millennium Hollywood project's approval by L.A. doesn't sway those who still see fault risk.

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## ABSTRACT

The ruling prevents the city from granting building permits for the project, pending whether the developer drafts a new environmental impact report.

## FULL TEXT

Opponents of the Millennium Hollywood project said Tuesday that they disagreed with the city's approval of the developer's seismic studies, which found that no active earthquake fault runs under the property.

The studies, completed for the city by Millennium's geologist, concluded that an earthquake fault was probably located deep beneath the property but that it was too old to be considered active.

State geology officials last year reached a different conclusion: An active fault slices through part of the project site, according to the state's official zoning map of the Hollywood fault released in November.

George Abrahams, a community activist who opposes the development, questioned the city's approval. He said he would continue to fight the project.

"When the state is saying A, and the city is saying B, they can't both be right," Abrahams said. "Someone has to be wrong. And I trust the state geologist."

Abrahams and others have legally challenged the project. This spring, the project was put on hold after a Los Angeles County court found that the city of L.A. failed to fully assess how the \$1-billion development would affect traffic and surrounding neighborhoods. The ruling prevents the city from granting building permits for the project, pending whether the developer drafts a new environmental impact report.

Philip Aarons, a founder of Millennium Partners, pledged to continue the project, which would replace parking and rental car lots next to the Capitol Records tower. The project will be completed "in a manner that conforms to the highest earthquake resiliency standards," he said in a statement.

California law defines faults that ruptured within the last 11,000 years as active. The Hollywood fault was forced into the spotlight in 2013, when the L.A. City Council approved the Millennium project even after state officials said the project might be in an active earthquake fault zone.

Under state law, developers in the fault zone are generally required to prove that new buildings can be built safely away from active faults.

The final say over whether a structure can be built lies with city building officials, who must determine whether a developer has done sufficient underground study.

Robert P. Silverstein, the lawyer representing Millennium's opponents, said the city's approval despite the state geologist's conclusion last year was "disappointing but ultimately not surprising." He cited the city's approval of Millennium's previous seismic studies.

"Now their fallback argument is that the fault is not active," Silverstein said.

State officials this week said the city's approval does not change their documentation of the Hollywood fault.

"The zone maps have done exactly what they're intended to do -- focus the attention on where we think the faults lie," said Tim McCrink of the California Geological Survey. "It's in the city of L.A.'s hands at this point."

Studies by Millennium's geotechnical consultant, Group Delta, showed that there probably is a fault under the property that roughly follows the path indicated on the state's zoning map. However, contrary to the state's conclusions, the studies showed that the "inferred" fault was estimated to be at least 150,000 years old.

City building officials in June agreed with this conclusion, which was also reviewed by a third-party firm, Earth Consultants International.

Group Delta has also completed detailed seismic studies under three nearby properties, including the site of the former KFWB radio studio. Working on all four properties was like piecing together a "geological jigsaw puzzle," said Michael Reader, the company's chief executive.

City building officials have also approved these seismic studies in recent months. Officials specified that during construction, the projects' engineering geologists must observe all excavations to verify there are no active faults under the properties.

"If evidence of active faulting is observed, the Grading Division shall be notified immediately," according to the approval letters by the city Department of Building and Safety.

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## DETAILS

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