

Save Our Chinatown Committee

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Lawsuit Filed Against Planned Building on Riverside Chinatown Site

Riverside, CA--Riverside community activist Jean Wong and the recently-formed Save Our Chinatown Committee filed suit Thursday to overturn Riverside City Council approval of an office building on the site of the old Riverside Chinatown at the corner of Brockton and Tequesquite. (Planning Case P06-1237.)

The law firm of Johnson and Sedlack of Temecula, environmental law specialists, filed a petition for writ of mandate challenging the City of Riverside's approval of a Design Review, Certificate of Appropriateness, the adoption of an Environmental Impact Report ("EIR") and the approval of variances. The Project involves the development of a three-story, 65,281 square foot medical office building with related parking on approximately 4.2 acres in an area known as Riverside's Second Chinatown.

Riverside's Second Chinatown is an archaeological site of significant value and is presently listed as City Landmark #19, as a County Landmark, as a State Point of Historical Interest, and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. It is the last major remaining Chinatown archaeological site in California, and Riverside Chinatown was the principal center for Chinese immigrant labor in the citrus industry, that historians say could not have been developed without Chinese techniques, tools and skilled labor.

The Real Party in Interest, Jacobs Development Company, was the project applicant. The Petition challenges the adequacy of the environmental analysis, including the failure to adopt certain and effective mitigation, improperly deferring mitigation, failing to adopt the environmentally superior alternative and failure to make adequate findings.

The Petition also challenges the Riverside County Office of Education's decision to sell the property and enter into a Agreement for Purchase and Sale without conducting environmental review of the

consequences of their actions. The petition also challenges the Office's failure to comply with its own resolutions designed to provide protection for the historic site.

"We believe that the City of Riverside simply failed to follow either the law or common sense in considering this case," states Wong. "They did not seriously consider alternatives that would protect the site from destruction, they discarded or ignored the practical advice of hundreds of concerned residents and experts, and the outcome of the process appeared to be predetermined in favor of whatever the developer wanted. We are determined to protect our precious heritage, and see that the City of Riverside and the Riverside County Office of Education follow the law."

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