Memorandum

To

James R. Tebbetts, Environmental Specialist II, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering

CC

Ohaji K. Abdallah, Architectural Associate II/Project Manager, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering

Subject

Cultural Resources Assessment of Rancho Cienega Celes King III Pool Demolition Project (Project No. 60575000)

From

Trina Meiser, Senior Historic Preservation Planner
Marc Beherec, Senior Archaeologist

Date

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Introduction

The City of Los Angeles (City) proposes to demolish the Celes King III Indoor Pool and convert the site into a community front lawn and playground area (project). The Department of Public Works, Bureau of Engineering (LABOE) is the lead agency. Under the separate Initial Study/Mitigated Negative Declaration (IS/MND) for Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project prepared by AECOM, the City of Los Angeles is constructing a new sports complex on the 30-acre park property. Under that IS/MND dated March 2016, the Celes King III Pool was to remain in place. Now, the City proposes demolishing the existing Celes King III Indoor Pool. The facility was constructed in 1963, is aging, and presents substantial maintenance challenges. In addition, the pool no longer meets the standards for competition pools. The City proposes demolishing the building, and grade and landscape the building site. Building on previous studies for the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project, this report documents the cultural resources assessment of the project, specifically new impacts of the proposed demolition of the Celes King III Pool. This analysis was conducted by AECOM cultural resources staff who meet the Secretary of the Interior’s Professional Qualification Standards (36 Code of Federal Regulations [C.F.R.] Part 61) for archaeology, history and architectural history, in compliance with the guidelines of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA).

Project Location

The project site is located in the southeast quadrant of the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex at 5001 Rodeo Road in the West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community of the City of Los Angeles. Generally, the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex is bounded by the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (Metro) Expo Line light rail transit system to the north (along Exposition Boulevard), Dorsey High School to the east, residential land uses to the south across Rodeo Road, and commercial uses to the west. The project site is bounded by a paved surface parking lot to the west, a tennis shop approved for demolition to the north, tennis courts to the east, and Rodeo Road to the south. Figure 1 shows the regional location of the project site. Figure 2 shows the project site within the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex.
Project Description

The proposed project would conduct required hazardous materials abatement, drain water from the existing Celes King III Pool, and demolish the Celes King III Pool building. Following demolition, construction activities would include infill of the pool pit, rough grading of the site, utilities installation, landscaping and hardscaping, and installation of playground and shade structures.

Demolition and construction activities would last approximately 12 months from December 2020 to December 2021. Conducting the required hazardous materials abatement, draining water from the existing Celes King III Pool, and demolishing the Celes King III Pool building would last approximately 4 months. Approximately 14,000 cubic yards of demolition debris would be exported from the project site. Infill of the pool pit would last approximately 2 months, requiring approximately 1,600 cubic yards of soil to be imported for backfill. Rough grading of the site, utility installations, landscaping and hardscaping, and installation of playground and shade structures would last approximately 6 months. Demolition and construction activities would require an average of 10 truck roundtrips per day, with a peak of 18 daily truck roundtrips occurring during one month for the infill of the pool pit. A total of approximately 20 construction workers would be on-site each day. Demolition and hazardous materials abatement would require approximately four types of equipment, consisting of a demolition excavator, articulating dump truck, street sweeper, and 20 yard roll off bins. Construction activities would require approximately four types of equipment, consisting of a compactor, several 20 yard roll off bins, street sweepers, and several backhoes/skip loaders, as well as concrete trucks as necessary. It is not anticipated that any trees be removed as part of the proposed project. Following construction, the project site would operate similarly to existing conditions, and the community front lawn and playground area would have passive uses.

The existing Rancho Cienega Sports Complex is currently developed as a sports complex. The existing complex contains a variety of facilities, including a gymnasium, basketball courts, baseball diamond, child play area, community room, football field, handball courts, picnic tables, soccer field, skate park, and tennis courts. The Rancho Cienega Sports Complex has been approved for construction and demolition activities as part of the recently approved Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project. Phase 1 of the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project would include demolition and construction of the indoor gymnasium to the northwest of the project site, demolition of the existing restroom facilities and construction of a new indoor pool, bathhouse facility, and multiuse building to the northwest of the project site, rehabilitation of the tennis shop to the north of the project site, construction of a new stadium overlook and concession stand to the northwest of the project site, and improvements to the primary parking lot along Rodeo Road directly adjacent to the project site on the west. Phase 2 of the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project would include demolition of parking lots, outdated electrical and plumbing infrastructure, asphalt maintenance driveways and concrete sidewalks, and construction of a driveway, off street parking, park infrastructure (including landscaping and furniture), a tennis block with bleachers and a shade structure, bleachers and a shade structure for the baseball field, and a stadium block that includes a press box, concession stand, elevated bleachers, and restrooms. Construction of the proposed project would occur following the end of Phase 1 and prior to the commencement of Phase 2 of the approved Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project.

Area of Potential Effects

The previous cultural resource study for the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project (AECOM 2015) investigated an Area of Potential Effects (APE) that encompassed the entire Rancho Cienega Park, including the current project area. Within the previous APE, one historical resource (as defined in California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5) was identified, the Celes King III Pool (Plates 1 and 2). Because no other historical resources were identified within the vicinity of the Celes King III Pool,
it is unlikely that the project will result in any indirect visual, atmospheric, and audible effects to other historical resources. Therefore, the APE for this project is limited to the project footprint, including all areas of ground disturbance. The vertical extent of the APE accounts for proposed grading and excavation activities. Figure 3 shows the APE.

Plate 1. Celes King III Pool, exterior.

Plate 2. Celes King III Pool, interior.

Identification of Historical Resources

Based on the findings of the previous cultural resource study for the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project (AECOM 2015), which included a cultural resources records search at the South Central Coastal Information Center, Native American contact program and Sacred Land files search, additional archival research, pedestrian survey, and paleontological records search, the APE contains one historical resource and potential areas of archaeological and paleontological sensitivity. The Celes King III Indoor Pool was found eligible under Criterion 3 of the California Register of Historical Resources for its distinctive modern design for a civic building in Los Angeles, and is considered a historical resource as defined in California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5. As the project would
be constructed in an area with known prehistoric and historic archaeological and paleontological sensitivity, prehistoric and/or historic archaeological resources and paleontological resources may be present within the APE. Such resources may lie beneath the surface obscured by existing pavement or vegetation.

**Assembly Bill (AB) 52 Consultation**

AB 52 modified CEQA to directly address tribal concerns from the beginning of the planning process. AB 52 established a new category of resources in the California Environmental Quality Act called tribal cultural resources (TCRs). TCRs are resources which are “Sites, features, places, cultural landscapes, sacred places, and objects with cultural value to a California Native American tribe” that are also eligible for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources (CRHR) or a local register, or are determined by a lead agency, in consultation with California Native American tribes, to be significant. AB 52 mandates direct government-to-government consultation with interested tribes in order to identify and protect TCRs.

On behalf of the LABOE and in support of its responsibilities under AB 52, AECOM conducted a Native American contact program to inform interested parties of the project and to address any concerns regarding TCRs or other resources that might be affected by the project. The program involved contacting Native American representatives identified by the Native American Heritage Commission (NAHC) to solicit comments and concerns regarding the project.

A letter was prepared and mailed to the NAHC on May 21, 2018. The letters requested that a Sacred Lands File check be conducted for the project and that contact information be provided for Native American groups or individuals that may have concerns about cultural resources in the project area. The NAHC responded in a letter sent via email on May 30, 2018. The letter indicated that a Sacred Lands File search had been conducted with negative results. The letter also included an attached list of Native American contacts whom it indicated may have information about Native American cultural resources within the project area.

Letters were mailed on June 6, 2018, to the six parties indicated on the NAHC contact list:
- Chairperson Anthony Morales of the Gabrieleno/Tongva San Gabriel Band of Mission Indians,
- Chairperson Andrew Salas of the Gabrieleno Band of Mission Indians – Kizh Nation,
- Charles Alvarez of the Gabrieleno-Tongva Tribe,
- Chairperson Robert F. Dorame of the Gabrieleno Tongva Indians of California Tribal Council,
- Chairperson Sandonne Goad of the Gabrieleno/Tongva Nation, and
- Chairperson Donna Yocum of the San Fernando Band of Mission Indians.

Maps depicting the APE and response forms were attached to each letter. Follow-up phone calls were made to each of these parties on July 18, 2018. Documents pertaining to the Native American contact program are attached as Appendix B.

Two tribes responded to the letter, and an additional two tribes commented in the course of follow-up calls.
- Chairperson Robert F. Dorame called in response to the letter on June 14, 2018. Mr. Dorame stated that the project area is known to his tribe to be sensitive for cultural resources. He is
particular concerned about the potential for human remains, because the CHRIS records search identified sites with human remains less than 0.5 mile from the project area. Mr. Dorame requested both an archaeological monitor and a tribal monitor be present during ground-disturbing activities. Mr. Dorame also requested direct government-to-government consultation.

- Chairperson Anthony Morales was reached by phone on July 18, 2018. Mr. Morales stated that the West Los Angeles area is spiritually and culturally sensitive for his tribe because of the number of archaeological sites encountered in the area. Mr. Morales said that he recommends Native American monitoring, and requests that a member of his tribe be used as a monitor. Mr. Morales also requested direct government-to-government consultation.
- Chairperson Donna Yocum was reached by phone on July 18, 2018. Ms. Yocum informed us that, her tribe would defer to more local tribes. She recommended we contact the Gabrielino groups for comment.

Impacts Assessment

Historical Resources

A significant impact would result if the project caused a substantial adverse change to the significance of a historical resource, as defined in California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5. The Celes King III Pool is a historical resource that is significant under CRHR Criterion 3 for its modern architectural design. Its character-defining features include the stylized configuration of windows primarily on the south side of the building that continue on the east and west sides, its roof slope, and the presence of the indoor pool. Demolition of the Celes King III Pool would cause a substantial adverse change to the historical resource by the removal of all of its features, and would result in a significant and unavoidable impact under CEQA.

Measures should be implemented to mitigate the significant impact; however, demolition would still result in a significant and unavoidable impact. Mitigation may include archival documentation consistent with the standards of the National Park Service’s Historic American Building Survey (HABS) documentation, which is described by the NPS as “the last means of preservation of a property; when a property is to be demolished, its documentation provides future researcher access to valuable information that otherwise would be lost” (Russell 1990). Proposed mitigation measures are listed below.

Mitigation Measure CULT-1: Prior to demolition, Secretary of the Interior-qualified professionals in history or architectural history shall perform photo recordation and documentation consistent with HABS documentation. HABS-type documentation shall consist of large-format archival photographs, reproductions of historic drawings, if available, a sketch map, and written data (e.g., historic context, building description) that comprise a detailed record that reflects the building’s historical significance. Following completion of the HABS-type documentation, the materials shall be placed on file with LABOE, the Los Angeles Public Library, and the LA Conservancy.

Mitigation Measure CULT-2: A display and interpretive material for public exhibition concerning the history of the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex and the Celes King III Indoor Pool shall be developed. The display and interpretive material shall incorporate information produced in the HABS-like documentation and historical research related to the historical resource. This display and interpretive material shall be available to the public in a physical and/or digital format, such as a poster or website page.

Implementation of Mitigation Measures CULT-1 and CULT-2 would not retain or preserve the character-defining features of the historical resource, and would not reduce the substantial adverse
change to the historical resource. Implementation of the mitigation measures would not lower the impact of demolition to a level less than significant; therefore, the project would result in a significant and unavoidable impact on a historical resource. No impacts would occur from the operation of the project.

Archaeological Resources

A significant impact would occur if the project caused a substantial adverse change in the significance of an archaeological resource, as defined in California Code of Regulations Section 15064.5. Following demolition of the Celes King III Pool building, construction activities would include hazardous materials abatement, rough grading, infill of the pool pit, utility installations, landscaping and hardscaping, and installation of playground and shade structures. The project may have direct impacts on subsurface archaeological resources that may be encountered during construction. Disturbance of archaeological resources would result in a significant impact under CEQA.

Archival research revealed that five prehistoric sites, including one burial site, are located less than 0.5-mile west of the site. The closest site is less than 0.15-mile west of the project site. Some of these are deeply buried by alluvium. For example, the human remains uncovered approximately 0.5-mile southeast of the project site lay up to 23 feet below the 1924 ground surface. Archaeological sites may also be buried by the placement of fill that was imported to the Rancho Cienega Sports Center property during its development beginning in the 1930s. The lack of surface evidence of archaeological materials does not preclude the possibility that subsurface archaeological materials may exist. The presence of alluvium may mean that any surface evidence of archaeological materials has been buried and could be encountered during excavation. Based on the cultural resources assessment for the Rancho Cienega Sports Complex Project, the project site is culturally sensitive for prehistoric and/or historic archaeological resources. Because the potential to encounter archaeological resources exists for this project, archaeological monitoring should be conducted during all ground-disturbing activities into native soils. Because of previous disturbances to the site, this depth is unknown. Mitigation Measure CULT-3 should be implemented to ensure that any potential impacts remain less than significant.

Mitigation Measure CULT-3: Archaeological monitoring shall consist of spot checking until native soils are observed, at which time monitoring will be conducted full time. The archaeological monitor shall have the authority to redirect construction equipment in the event potential archaeological resources are encountered. If archaeological resources are encountered, work in the vicinity of the discovery shall halt until appropriate treatment or further investigation of the resource is determined by a qualified archaeologist in accordance with the provisions of CEQA Guidelines Section 15064.5. In addition, it is recommended that the construction personnel and staff receive training on possible archaeological resources that may be present in the area to establish an understanding of what to look for during ground-disturbing activities.

Paleontological Resources

A significant impact would occur if grading or excavation activities associated with the proposed project disturbed unique paleontological resources or unique geologic features. Following demolition of the Celes King III Pool building, construction activities would include hazardous materials abatement, rough grading, infill of the pool pit, utility installations, landscaping and hardscaping, and installation of playground and shade structures. The project may have direct impacts on unknown, subsurface paleontological resources that may be encountered during construction. Disturbance of paleontological resources would result in a significant impact under CEQA.
Archival research indicates that excavations near the project site extending into older Quaternary have encountered significant vertebrate fossils. In some places, Quaternary older alluvium and significant fossil remains may lay close to the surface. For example, the closest fossil locality recorded by the Natural History Museum of Los Angeles County, near the intersection of Rodeo Road and Sycamore Avenue, encountered a fossil horse at a depth of 6 feet below ground surface. As the project would be constructed in an area with known paleontological sensitivity, excavations into undisturbed older Quaternary layers, which vary in depth within the project vicinity, may disturb significant paleontological resources that potentially lie beneath the surface obscured by existing pavement or vegetation. Such resources may lie beneath the surface obscured by existing pavement or vegetation. As such, paleontological monitoring is recommended during ground-disturbing activities in areas of paleontological sensitivity. Mitigation Measure CULT-4 should be implemented to ensure that any potential impacts remain less than significant.

Mitigation Measure CULT-4: Excavations into undisturbed older Quaternary layers, which vary in depth within the project site, shall be monitored. Monitoring shall consist of spot checking until native soils are observed, at which time monitoring shall be conducted full-time. In the event that potential paleontological resources are encountered, a qualified paleontologist shall be retained to recover and record any fossil remains discovered. Any fossils, should they be recovered, shall be prepared, identified, and catalogued before curation in an accredited repository designated by the lead agency.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure CULT-4, potential impacts to paleontological resources during construction activities associated with the project would be less than significant. No impacts would occur from the operation of the project.

Tribal Cultural Resources

A significant impact would occur if the project caused a substantial adverse change in the significance of a TCR, as defined in California Public Resources Code Section 21074. Although no TCRs have been identified within the project area, as noted above, the project site is culturally sensitive for buried prehistoric and/or historic archaeological resources that could include TCRs. Native American individuals identified by the NAHC as representatives of California Indian Tribes have requested that both archaeological and Native American monitoring be conducted during ground-disturbing activities. Moreover, they have requested ongoing government-to-government consultation throughout the life of the project.

Mitigation Measure TCR-1: A trained Native American consultant or consultants shall be engaged to monitor ground-disturbing work in the area containing the Native American cultural resources. The consultant or consultants shall be selected from the interested Native American parties who consulted on the project. This monitoring shall occur on an as-needed basis as determined by LABOE in consultation with interested tribes, and shall be intended to ensure that Native American concerns are taken into account during the construction process. The Native American consultant will report findings to LABOE or its archaeological consultant, which will disseminate the information to the consulting Native American parties. The Native American parties identified by the NAHC shall be consulted regarding the treatment and final disposition of any materials of Native American origin found during the course of the project, if any, and will assist LABOE in determining whether these materials constitute TCRs.

With implementation of Mitigation Measure TCR-1, potential impacts to tribal cultural resources identified during construction activities for the proposed project would be less than significant. In addition, no impacts would occur from the operation of the proposed project.
Summary

The project would result in impacts to cultural resources. The Celes King III Pool is a historical resource under CEQA, and the project would cause a substantial adverse change to the historical resource from demolition, resulting in a significant and unavoidable impact. Mitigation Measures CULT-1 and CULT-2 should be implemented to reduce the impact, but implementation will not reduce the impact to a level less than significant. The project also has the potential to impact unknown, subsurface archaeological, paleontological, and tribal cultural resources from excavation and grading activities. Implementation of Mitigation Measures CULT-3 and CULT-4 would reduce potential impacts to a level less than significant. TCR-1 will reduce the impact to tribal cultural resources to a less-than-significant level and satisfy LABOE’s consultation requirements under AB 52.

References

AECOM
2015 Draft Cultural Resources Assessment Rancho Cienega Sports Complex (Celes King III Pool) Project, Los Angeles, California. Prepared for LABOE.


Russell, Caroline H.

Attachments

A. Maps
B. AB 52 Correspondence (Confidential)
Attachment A
Maps
Figure 2

Path: \USLA1FS002\pdd_prod\Projfile\2015\60440382_LABOE_RanchoCienega\400 - Technical\Cultural\GIS\Layout\Fig2_LABOE_RanchoCienega_Project_Location_20150928.mxd, 10/21/2015, Aziz Bakkoury

Cultural Resources Assessment Rancho Cienega Celes King III Pool Project

Source: USGS 7.5" Quadrangle (Hollywood 1966 - Revised 1981)
Figure 3
APE Map

Cultural Resources Assessment Rancho Cienega Celes King III Pool Project
Attachment B
AB 52 Correspondence
(Confidential)