



*Friends of
Knowl and Park*

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NEW LEGAL APPEAL FILED BY ENVIRONMENTAL GROUPS IN KNOWLAND PARK CASE

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Attorneys for Friends of Knowland Park and the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society today filed an amended legal petition in Alameda County Superior Court charging that the city approved a 50+-acre Oakland Zoo development project for the wildland areas of Knowland Park in violation of the Seismic Hazards Mapping Act. Under the Act, a geotechnical report is required to be prepared and submitted to the state prior to approval of a project located in a mapped seismic hazard zone. While this issue was raised in public comments as early as March, 2011 (http://www.knowlandpark.com/FOKP_Comments_Page/index.html), the City Council approved the project without it.

The proposed Zoo development sites a multistory building proposed to house an interpretive center, gift shop, restaurant and offices in a known seismic hazard zone. The project also includes an aerial gondola ride, which according to Friends of Knowland Park, is likewise affected.

“The northern half of the planned California Interpretive Center building and at least three of the eight independent gondola support structures lie within a defined seismic hazard zone,” said Ruth Malone, co-chair, Friends of Knowland Park. “These defined zones were specifically developed by state law to help protect the public. Waiting until after a project is approved to prepare these reports makes no sense.”

The groups filed a lawsuit in July 2011 charging that the City violated the California Environmental Quality Act in approving the Zoo theme park development. Knowland Park is a thriving ecosystem that is home to an abundance of wildlife, including mountain lions, bobcats, foxes, coyotes, deer, hawks, owls, and at least one federally threatened species, the Alameda Whipsnake. It is also a hotspot for rare native flora. “This legal issue directly relates to the project’s environmentally destructive impacts since the Interpretive Center and gondola poles are slated to be located adjacent to rare chaparral plant communities and Whipsnake habitat. The City’s environmental documentation concedes that the location of these structures may be moved pending future studies, and such a move could impact an even greater amount of Whipsnake and chaparral habitat,” said Mack Casterman of the East Bay Chapter of the California Native Plant Society.

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