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LA supervisors OK proposed downtown LA Broad museum

Aug. 17, 2010 | [KPCC Wire Services](#) | KPCCShare:    [Mail](#) [Print](#) [Comment \(1\)](#)

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors today endorsed a plan to build a downtown museum to house Eli and Edythe Broad's contemporary art collection as part of the Grand Avenue Project.

The billionaire philanthropist has not yet decided on a location. Santa Monica is also in the running.

The Board of Supervisors is the third of four boards with authority over the Grand Avenue Project. The Community Redevelopment Agency board and Los Angeles City Council have already endorsed the museum idea.

The Grand Avenue Authority, a joint powers authority of state and local officials, will meet Monday to consider the proposal.

The museum would replace retail uses originally proposed as part of the \$3 billion, mixed-use Grand Avenue Project. The Broad Collection, as the museum is named in board documents, would occupy the southwest corner of Second Street and Grand Avenue under a 99-year ground lease. The site is across from the Walt Disney Concert

Hall.

Development costs for the museum and an underground parking structure are estimated at \$80 to \$100 million, which would be privately financed by Broad. The philanthropist would also provide a \$200 million endowment for the institution.

As part of the deal, Broad would pay an additional \$7.7 million to be used for affordable housing in phase two of the project.

Members of the arts community urged the supervisors to approve the proposal.

"The Broad collection is one of the country's greatest private collections," said David Johnson, co-chair of the Museum of Contemporary Art's Board of Trustees. He added that he expected "many opportunities for the Broad Foundation and MOCA to work together."

The museum would "bring an intensity and energy to the arts community" downtown, said Stephen Rountree, president of the Music Center.

"Contemporary art draws younger audiences ... For the Music Center, this is a critical audience for the future."

Central City Association President and Chief Executive Officer Carol Schatz called the recently negotiated \$7.7 million payment "beyond generous" and estimated that the museum alone would create 1,500 jobs.

The Economic Development Corporation projected \$234 million in economic benefits related to the museum, Schatz said. In support of that estimate, she offered a calculation by county tax officials that property taxes downtown increased by \$134 million from 2001 to 2009 -- a jump she attributed to a "downtown renaissance."

"(The museum is also) going to attract a lot of tourists -- who pay a lot of sales tax," Schatz said following the meeting. The contemporary museum is projected to draw 200,000 visitors annually.

Santa Monica officials have already approved a plan to develop the museum on a rent-free site next to the Civic Auditorium, and a spokeswoman for Broad said he was still considering both options.

"Mr. Broad needs to know that the (downtown) project can (go forward) before he makes a final decision," said Karen Denne of the Broad Foundation.

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Wow! How rare indeed is it that private parties step to the plate to cough up \$300 million towards a cultural institution, and toss in some affordable housing and a couple thousand jobs at that? So rare that it's practically unheard of - without some massive subsidies.

If CCA is on board, something tell me that there's ample public money going into private pockets, but this piece doesn't say. Given the cloak-and-dagger means by which the Grand Avenue project has moved forward so far, let's have a bit more critical examination, please, of the latest turn. Three card monte, anybody?

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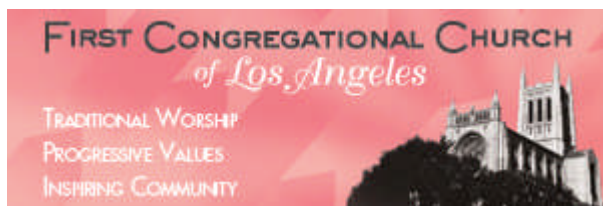


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