

Coalition seeks community benefits as part of Raiders development plan

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OAKLAND - A coalition of community groups called on the prospective developer of a new football stadium at the Oakland Coliseum complex to make a written commitment to include good jobs, affordable housing and other community benefits as part of the project.

Jahmese Myres of the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy said Floyd Kephart, who heads an investor group that has an exclusive negotiating agreement with the city of Oakland and Alameda County for a Coliseum project that would also include housing, retail stores, hotels and office space, has begun meeting with community groups but hasn't put any commitments into writing.

"We're hopeful about the beginning of discussions about community benefits but we feel there's still a long way to go," Myres said at a rally outside an office building at 1111 Broadway in Oakland, where Kephart's lawyer is located and where Kephart spends time when he's in Oakland.

The coalition hand-delivered delivered a letter containing its demands to Kephart's lawyer's office as well as to Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf.

Kephart is the chairman of the board of Renaissance Companies, a San Diego firm that advises hedge funds, private equity groups and financial institutions. The investor group he heads is called New City Development LLC.

The group's deadline for submitting a detailed plan to Oakland and Alameda County officials is Aug. 21.

An amended exclusive negotiating agreement with New City Development earlier this year that was approved by the Oakland City Council and the Alameda County Board of Supervisors in March called for community benefits, such as guarantees that local residents be hired, that the project include affordable housing and environmental mitigation.

But Towanda Sherry, an East Oakland resident who's with the Oakland United Coalition, said, "We need to see everything in writing because we want to make sure we're not lost in the shuffle."

Sherry said, "We want to make sure that East Oakland residents aren't displaced because when rents get pushed up by developments people often get pushed out."

She said Kephart has begun meeting with some community groups but hasn't met with all the groups that would be impacted by a development at the Coliseum site.

Referring to the Aug. 21 deadline for Kephart's group to submit its plan, Sherry said, "Time is running out."

There have been questions about whether Kephart's group can come up with the funding and a workable plan for the Coliseum site, but Sherry said even if the investor group's efforts don't come to fruition there will likely be some type of development at the site and city and county officials should insist on community benefits for any project there.

"East Oakland will be developed and the city and the county are in a good position to negotiate," she said.

Myres said, "There will be something there so it doesn't matter what the development is. There should be community benefits."

In addition to the East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy, the Oakland United Coalition includes labor unions and other community groups such as Just Cause, Communities for a Better Environment, Public Advocates and the Faith Alliance for a Moral Economy.

Online:

http://www.insidebayarea.com/news/ci_28634526/coalition-seeks-community-benefits-as-part-of-raiders-development-plan