CITY COUNCIL
NEW BUSINESS

JUNE 6, 2022

SUBJECT: **NEW WEST HOLLYWOOD CITY PLAYHOUSE FACILITY**

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STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:

The City Council will receive an update on the current Coast Playhouse structure and provide direction regarding next steps for a new City Playhouse including moving forward with a consultant selection process for designing a replacement facility.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Receive this update on the state of the current Coast Playhouse.
2. Review design visions generated to date and direct staff to move forward with developing a replacement strategy for the existing structure.
3. Direct staff to establish a Playhouse Design Steering Committee to weigh the design vision alternatives and make recommendations to the City Council regarding the selection of a preferred design team.
4. Authorize a total project budget not to exceed $6.5 million for costs related to the design and construction for a new playhouse facility.

BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:

In 2017, the City of West Hollywood acquired the performing arts facility known as the Coast Playhouse located at 8325 Santa Monica Boulevard. Staff has worked with a consultant team to assess the existing facility. However, it has not programmed and utilized the space because of concerns surrounding poorly functioning restrooms, outdated technology and mechanical equipment, inadequate accessibility to key spaces, and issues related to public safety.

The Playhouse was constructed in 1925 along the original Route 66. The existing building area is approximately 2,790 square feet on a lot totaling 3,749 square feet. The playhouse most recently functioned as an Equity Waiver Theater (maximum 99 seats) hosting plays and readings. Over its history, the Playhouse has been used both as a theatrical facility and a film house. However, the building itself has undergone many changes through the decades and, as a result, a Facilities and Recreation Services Department 2016 survey determined that there is no substantive evidence to indicate the property is historically,

culturally, or architecturally significant.

The playhouse site is housed within a commercial structure zoned CC1 – Commercial Community 1. The property, and the entire block to its east is owned by the City. The project site is located mid-block on the north side of the Boulevard between Flores Street and Sweetzer Avenue, across the street from the West Hollywood City Hall. While there is an existing 2,627 square feet parking lot that serves commercial business on the remaining east portion of the block, there is currently no dedicated on-site parking for the playhouse. The property is within walking distance of a public parking garage at North Kings Road and Santa Monica Boulevard, as well as an automated parking garage located behind City Hall.

Rehabilitation Study

The existing playhouse structure has numerous public safety and accessibility issues that are not compliant with the current building and zoning codes. City staff commissioned an existing building assessment to analyze various rehabilitation options, including partial deconstruction with renovation to bring the playhouse in conformance with current building and zoning codes. This 2021 assessment study revealed that the structure and building systems are in very poor condition, contain numerous potential hazards to public safety, and is non-compliant from a disabled access standpoint. The study indicated that there were little components salvageable and there would likely be significant hidden costs associated with rehabilitating the entire building. Over a year ago, total rehabilitation costs for the playhouse were estimated to be approximately $4.78 million (Tier 2). The estimated cost under Tier 1 was only to bring the building to code; however, it did not include other enhancements to incorporate various arts and performance program elements needed for the playhouse to be successful. The rehabilitation would also reduce the number of seats from 99 to 70. See Attachment A for the complete report.

Based on high estimated costs to refurbish the existing playhouse, staff concluded that it seemed prudent to also study scenarios of a full demolition and new construction that would creatively achieve a more efficient and climate responsive vision for a new facility that might better serve the needs of our local art community and that might be achieved within a similar footprint and within a relatively similar budget range.

Concept Visioning Exercise

In June 2020, the city staff invited four pre-qualified firms from the Urban Design and Architecture Studio on-call bench contract list to participate in a visioning exercise to imagine possibilities for a new playhouse building. The following professional architectural firms participated:

- BAR Architects
- Grimshaw Architects
- Lehrer Architects
- Perkins and Will

The focus of this visioning exercise scope was to explore the potential for a new 5,000

square feet multi-use art and performance facility (with capacity for community programming when available) that would be flexible, inclusive, and climate-responsive to replace the existing structure. This facility also had to be envisioned so that it could easily be incorporated (with potential program expansion) into a larger full-block mixed-use housing development in the future. Therefore, design visions were to emphasize specific program requirements, namely (a) a strong urban presence along the public way with appropriate transition from public space, (b) forward thinking design strategies and material selections in accordance with our local micro-climate, sustainable principles, and resilient practices, (c) internal arts programming flexibility with no fixed seating, (d) an ability to expand in the future to the east or the west, (e) a potential for portions of roof top areas to carry additional live loads in the future, and (f) ways for the current surface parking lot to the east to be reconfigured or transformed as a pre- or post-event space without eliminating the current parking capacity.

From an environmental and climate action perspective, city goals and policies seek to foster innovation and incorporate non-mechanical, passively designed solutions, to encourage regeneration of natural eco-systems beyond mere sustainable practices, to reduce energy consumption and promote environmental stewardship, and to integrate thoughtful design solutions that elevate thermal comfort and promote healthy interiors. For this project, creative urban design, orientation, building and site amenities, eco-friendly materials, systems and assemblies, natural daylighting and cross ventilation, and universal access etc. were also strongly encouraged.

The initial visioning exercise brought to light potential solutions with exciting siting, programming, operational, and climate-responsive design opportunities. Each team had the opportunity to present their concept visions to the city leadership team and numerous city divisions that would be involved with the operation and maintenance of the Playhouse. Based on the internal input received, staff requested that BAR Architects, Grimshaw, and Perkins and Will develop their visions further to include more specific, detailed programmatic analysis, greater specificity in their concepts, and opinions of probable cost. In March 2022, each team resubmitted their concept visions with preliminary cost opinions. See Attachment B with a summary of each proposal.

Figure 3 BAR Architects Concept Proposal

Figure 2 Grimshaw Architects Concept Proposal

Figure 1 Perkins and Will Concept Proposal

Arts Programming

In 2017, Council approved *WeHo Arts: The Plan*, a community-based cultural plan for the City of West Hollywood. Developed through an extensive 18-month process, *The Plan* guides the work of the City's Arts Division and Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission. Physical space for the arts was identified as the most important community priority and the Playhouse will be the City's first dedicated arts facility. The Plan is guided by 5 principles: 1) Space; 2) Engagement; 3) Support; 4) Visibility; and 5) Experimentation. A complete version of the cultural plan and quick guide of its recommendations are available at https://www.weho.org/community/arts-and-culture/cultural-plan.

West Hollywood has a talented performing arts community that often struggles to find spaces to create, rehearse, and present in West Hollywood. Approximately 40% of arts grantees request the use of a city facility for their funded presentation. Many dance, theatre, music and spoken word performance groups have utilized city facilities such as: Council Chambers, Fiesta Hall, and Kings Road Park. But there are significant limitations in the existing spaces for performance groups, such as green rooms, adequate lighting, and the ability to accommodate complex sets.

The Playhouse will provide the city with a much-needed dedicated performance space (as recommended in the 2007 Cultural Facilities Needs Assessment), and will provide opportunities for live theatre, concerts, art exhibitions, and rehearsals. The Playhouse will serve as an arts and cultural event center, to support nonprofit arts organizations and artists with an accessible venue in the city's center. Staff is considering different operational strategies to oversee the Playhouse including city as sole operator, city leasing the property to a resident company (theatre, performing arts, or non-profit arts organization) for performances, and combination of the two scenarios. The Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission will participate in the development of the programming for the Playhouse.

Next Steps

Based on an evaluation of refurbishing the existing playhouse and the results of the visioning/cost analysis exercise for a new playhouse building, staff recommends moving forward with selecting a design team to lead the effort for a new playhouse facility. The cost difference between a refurbishment and new facility is minimal and the benefits of a new facility, with a 41% increase in seating capacity, that is programmatically broader ranging, is fully operational (with the latest equipment and technologies), and supports a flexible use of spaces, would better serve a more diverse and inclusive community of artists.

To better inform a preferred design team selection process that best reflects the city's core values and community-based goals, staff recommends establishing a Playhouse Design Steering Committee to advise staff regarding urban and facility design considerations and to inform any program recommendations to the City Council. In addition to city staff, this Committee would consist of the following representatives:

1. Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission members (2)

2. Public Facilities Commission member (1)
3. Senior Advisory Board member (1)
4. Disabilities Advisory Board member (1)
5. Lesbian and Gay Advisory Board member (1)
6. Design and construction professionals selected by staff to provide expertise regarding feasibility (3)

After obtaining guidance from the Steering Committee and weighing programmatic and internal maintenance and operational considerations, staff will return to the City Council with a recommendation identifying the preferred design team and a proposed contract for the design, production drawings, and specifications for bidding the project. Below is a preliminary project schedule.

Date	Task
June 2022	City Council authorizes staff to move forward with establishing a Playhouse Design Steering Committee
June – September 2022	Staff works with each Commission/ Advisory Board to appoint a representative to participate in the Design Steering Committee. Each design team will have the opportunity to present their vision to the committee. Committee will advise Council regarding strengths and weakness of each vision.
October 2022	City Council approval of preferred design team, scope of work, and budget for Schematic Design and Design Development, and Construction Documents.
May 2023	City Council approval of the final project design and the budget for construction
June 2023	Staff commences a bid process and selection of a contracting firm
Oct 2023	Construction anticipated to begin.

CONFORMANCE WITH VISION 2020 AND THE GOALS OF THE WEST HOLLYWOOD GENERAL PLAN:

This item is consistent with the Primary Strategic Goal(s) (PSG) and/or Ongoing Strategic Program(s) (OSP) of:

- OSP-8: Enhance the Cultural and Creative Life of the Community.

In addition, this item is compliant with the following goal(s) of the West Hollywood General Plan:

- ED-3: Provide for continued economic growth through development and public improvements.
- LU-1: Maintain an urban form and land use pattern that enhances quality of life and meets the community's vision for its future.
- ED-7: Enhance the City as a regional, national, and international destination for the entertainment, nightlife, dining, and retail industries that are key to West Hollywood's fiscal health.

EVALUATION PROCESSES:

The Playhouse Design Steering Committee will evaluate each firm's proposal and provide guidance to staff in making a recommendation to the City Council regarding selection of the preferred design team to move forward.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND HEALTH:

A new environmentally responsive art performance facility design that reflects the city's adopted Climate Action Plan will more closely realize meaningful implementation of the city's environmental sustainability and health goals for the community than a rehabilitated building in severe decay.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

Staff recommends forming a Playhouse Design Steering Committee with representatives from multiple Commissions and Boards alongside professional expertise to ensure a cross pollination of community points of view.

OFFICE OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITY:

CITY MANAGER'S DEPARTMENT / URBAN DESIGN AND ARCHITECTURE STUDIO

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT / ARTS DIVISION

FISCAL IMPACT:

Approval of this staff report would authorize a total project budget not to exceed $6.5 million for costs related to design and construction for a new playhouse facility. The cost of Phase 3 of the project, which will include professional services for schematic design, design development and construction documentation of the preferred design is estimated to be approximately $550,000 to $650,000. The cost of phase 4 of the project is estimated to be $5 to $6 million.

Approximately $5.3 million was originally allocated by City Council for purchase and rehabilitation of the playhouse. After the purchase was completed in 2017, $2.83 million remained for rehabilitation and maintenance. Of this, $2.75 million remains available for design and construction. Additional funding, up to the estimated total project budget, would be requested as the project progresses, likely upon the award of a construction agreement.

Below is a breakdown of each phase of the project to date:

Phase	Tasks	Amount
Phase 1	Concept Design Visions	$ 24,000 (completed)
Phase 2	Design Steering Committee to select preferred concept design	-
Phase 3	City Council approval of Schematic Design, Design Development, Construction Documents	$ 550,000 - $ 650,000
Phase 4	City Council approval of Construction Administration and Implementation	$ 5 – 6 million

AMOUNT	DESCRIPTION
$ 550,000 - $ 650,000	Phase 3 consulting costs will be funded from the $2.75 million previously budgeted for the rehabilitation of the facility (100-4-40-41-702030 CIP 55-26).
$ 5-6 million	Phase 4 construction costs will be partially funded from remaining funds previously budged for rehabilitation of the facility. The balance of funds needed for construction will be requested when the construction agreement is awarded.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A – Cost Opinion for Playhouse Refurbishment

ATTACHMENT B – Concept Visions for Playhouse Replacement