



Date: February 12, 2019

To: Mayor and Members of the City Council

From: Patrick H. West, City Manager *PHW*

Subject: **African American Cultural Center Community Visioning Update**

On February 20, 2018, Councilman Austin, supported by Vice-Mayor Andrews and Councilmember Richardson, introduced and City Council approved an item requesting the City Manager to work with community stakeholders to identify potential City-owned sites in Long Beach for an African American Cultural Center. On May 15, 2018, City staff provided a memorandum with an inventory of potential sites. Staff also recommended further exploration with a subject matter expert experienced in the design, construction, operation, maintenance, and funding of historical/cultural institutions, as well as community engagement, contingent on the identification of funding.

Community engagement with the requisite cultural and institutional planning expertise would facilitate the creation of a community vision for the operations of an African American Cultural Center, including a general understanding of related organizational, operating, site and facility requirements. The vision would help guide and strengthen the feasibility analysis of any potential sites and actions dedicated to the future development of an African American Cultural Center.

On September 4, 2018, while adopting the 2019 Budget, City Council approved \$50,000 in one-time funds to support planning and outreach efforts for the African American Cultural Center visioning process. As a result, staff initiated a request for quotes to hire two consultants: (1) a community engagement consultant to conduct a comprehensive process to gather and synthesize input from the African American community, and (2) a cultural and institutional planning consultant to facilitate the community visioning process, provide professional insight on best practices for the development and operations of cultural-heritage and museum facilities, and to complete a needs assessment based on the final vision. The scope of work also included a requirement for both consultants to work together with City staff and a community advisory committee, made up of community leaders, to complete the visioning process.

In December 2018, staff selected Lord Cultural Resources as the cultural and institutional planning consultant and Environ Architecture, Inc., as the community engagement consultant. Lord Cultural Resources is the world's largest cultural professional practice providing specialized planning services in the museum, cultural and heritage sector and has helped develop many African American cultural centers and museums around the country, including the National Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, DC, and the Harlem African Burial Ground Memorial and Cultural Center in New York.

Environ Architecture, Inc., is a local firm that has executed outreach assignments related to Mental Health America, East Division Police Department Sub-station, and Belmont Aquatic

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Facility. Environ has partnered with Tasha W. Hunter, President of the Arts Council for Long Beach, to support facilitation of the community engagement process.

On the evening of Tuesday, January 29, 2019, the City initiated the visioning process with a community kick-off meeting at the Art Expo Center. Over 80 residents and community leaders provided input, asked questions, and heard presentations from Councilman Austin, Deputy City Manager Kevin Jackson, and the consultant teams. Residents can participate in the community engagement process in the coming months through community roundtables, focus groups, internet surveys, and more. The Community Advisory Committee will hold its first meeting on February 26, 2019 at 5:30 p.m. at the Art Expo Center, 4321 Atlantic Avenue. These meetings are open to the public and will occur on the last Tuesday of each month through July 2019. For more information on the community visioning process and activities, please visit: <http://www.longbeach.gov/iteam/priorities/african-american-cultural-center-visioning-process/>

If you have questions, or require additional information concerning this initiative, please contact Deputy City Manager Kevin Jackson at (562) 570-5028.

KJ:TC
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