

City of Long Beach
Working Together to Serve



Memorandum

To: Mayor and City Council

March 2, 2010

From: Robert Garcia, First District *RG*
Suja Lowenthal, Second District *SL*
Patrick O'Donnell, Fourth District *PO*

Subject: Cultural Master Plan

REQUESTED ACTION:

Request the City Manager include the Long Beach Cultural Master Plan and its update entitled, "*Create Long Beach*" into the *Long Beach 2030 General Plan* to ensure our long-term commitment to arts and culture and sustainable economic development.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Long Beach has a rich and diverse history of arts and culture dating back to its inception, contributing significantly to the fabric of our city, its economic development and traditions. In the late 1800s, founding farming families such as Lowe and Bixby, as well as community groups like the Long Beach Library Association, Ebell Club and the Chautauqua Assembly paved the way for a thriving arts and cultural scene. At the turn of the century, the famed Red Cars brought thousands of people to Long Beach and its newly built Bath House, Walk of a Thousand Lights (Pike) and the Pavilion, where the likes of Italian bandleaders Nicola Danatelli and Marco Vesslia enticed throngs of visitors to this overnight seaside attraction. In 1912, the Balboa Feature Film Company established by request of Thomas Edison, set up shop on 8 acres downtown at Alamitos and Sixth Street and featured the talents of Fatty Arbuckle, Theda Bara Jackie Saunders, Ruth Roland, Henry King, Lewis Cody, William Desmond Taylor, and Baby Marie Osborne.

Throughout our history, business leaders understood the direct correlation between a flourishing arts and cultural setting and successful economic development. Oil on Signal Hill and a downtown building boom in 1921 led businessman James Savery to organize the Wayside Colony, "a row of studios and shops along Atlantic Avenue where artists could sell their works." From this colony of artists came the Long Beach Community Players and an organization known as Long Beach Arts, an art association that sponsored major events and projects throughout the city. Indeed, the institutions, organizations and traditions we hold dear today can be traced to the artists and cultural leaders of decades and centuries past.

By the 1960's, arts councils and commissions recognized the need to "marshal resources to enhance the cultural life of the city." (Long Beach Community Cultural Plan, 1996) The Long Beach

Regional Arts Council, formed in 1968, became the forerunner to the Public Corporation for the Arts (PCA), collaborating with hundreds of arts organizations and artists throughout Long Beach.

In 1996, an unprecedented visioning and planning initiative involving hundreds of representatives from our civic, arts, cultural, education, business and community sectors created the first Long Beach Community Cultural Plan. The plan gave life to the aspirations of groups and individuals throughout the city, confirming the vitality of arts and culture among ethnicities, socio-economic levels and geographic areas. It clarified our collective sense of civic purpose and pride.

The Community Cultural Plan was also unequivocal about the integral role of arts and culture in our city's economy through employment and stimulation of economic activity. A vibrant arts and cultural community improves the quality of life for residents and attracts visitors to Long Beach in service to its businesses. Long before Richard Florida told us about the importance of a "creative class", our Community Cultural Plan had already captured our rich history of creative classes and set the tone for the next era of economic inspiration. The challenge lay in recognizing opportunities and marshalling resources from public and private sectors to transcend various industries and economies. This challenge has not changed over the years, but a new round of discussions and an updated Community Cultural Plan has our residents, businesses and organizations talking about the current status of the arts in our city and their fundamental role in our city's economic, social and civic culture.

Create Long Beach began with the partnership between the Arts Council for Long Beach and the City's Economic Development and Cultural Affairs Bureau. It is a ten-year plan framework developed through the participation of a broad-based steering committee, two dynamic community forums and several small groups meetings. It includes an economic analysis of the arts in Long Beach and an assessment of the recommendations from the 1996 Community Cultural Plan.

According to City documents, "The General Plan sets forth the goals, policies and directions the City will take in managing its future. The General Plan is the citizens' "blueprint" for development; the guide to achieving our vision. California law requires each local government to adopt a local General Plan, which must contain at least seven elements: Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Conservation, Noise, Open Space and Safety." Planning staff asked community members to help answer the following questions during the process of updating the General Plan:

Where should new development occur in our City and what should it look like?
How do we encourage jobs within our City and what types of jobs do we need?
How do we balance new development with the historic assets of our past?

Jobs, development and historic assets are precisely the types of topics that could be informed by the Cultural Master Plan and its update. Integrating this document into our city planning is a symbolic *and* practical gesture, acknowledging the importance of arts and culture in all those elements of city making that ultimately contribute to quality of life and economic development. Clearly, the true value of the Cultural Master Plan will be measured through its inclusion in public and private sector projects, architecture, corridor revitalization, redevelopment and community development. Therefore, we encourage the City Manager to further integrate arts and culture into our civic ethos by including this document in the General Plan.