

Agenda Report

TO: CITY COUNCIL
THROUGH: LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE

DATE: AUGUST 21, 2001

FROM: CITY MANAGER

SUBJECT: AUTHORIZATION TO APPLY TO THE GETTY GRANT PROGRAM FOR A
"PRESERVE L.A." PLANNING GRANT FOR SIX FOUNTAINS IN THE CIVIC
CENTER AND MEMORIAL PARK

CITY MANAGER'S RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the City Council authorize the staff to apply to the Getty Grant Program for an \$8,000 grant to develop a conservation plan for the four Batchelder tile fountains in the Civic Center and Memorial Park and the courtyard fountains in City Hall and the Central Library.

BACKGROUND

The Getty Grant Program is presently accepting applications for "Preserve L.A.," a three-year initiative begun in 2000 to support the conservation of landmark buildings and sites in Los Angeles County. This program mostly funds planning grants—up to \$75,000—to evaluate the condition of a historic resource and to develop a conservation plan for its long-term maintenance and use. The Getty also funds implementation grants—up to \$250,000—for the actual "bricks-and-mortar" conservation work. Implementation grants, however, require a detailed conservation plan and matching funds equal to the amount of the grant award.

The grant program targets historic buildings and sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places and owned by nonprofit, charitable, or government organizations. It also limits funding to conservation of buildings and sites that are accessible to the public and used to benefit the community.

Last year, the City received a \$50,000 grant to develop illustrated design guidelines, based on the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, for use in landmark districts. This project, nearing completion, is scheduled for presentation to the City Council in October or November.

This year the staff recommends that the City apply for a planning grant to develop a "needs assessment" and scope of work to conserve and rehabilitate six public fountains in the Civic Center and Memorial Park. These fountains are: the ceremonial Baroque-style fountain (1927) in the courtyard of City Hall; the small single-basin fountain (1927) in the courtyard of the Central Library; the two tiled fountains (1932) on the east side of the intersection of N. Marengo Avenue and W. Holly Street in the Civic Center; and the two tiled fountains (1932) flanking the Gold Shell in Memorial Park. All of the fountains require cleaning, improvements to water circulation and drainage, and repairs to surface fissures and spalled or missing material.

Staff reviewed this proposal with the director of the Getty Grant Program and received a preliminary approval to proceed with an application. If funded, the project would pay for the services of a consultant experienced in materials and art conservation to:

- Assess the condition of the fountains, including the tiles and decorative cast stone basins and bas reliefs on the fountain in the courtyard;
- Conduct tests to determine the most appropriate conservation techniques for the fountains;
- Prepare drawings, detailed written specifications, and cost estimates for cleaning, stabilizing, and conserving their historic features; and
- Compile and synthesize this information into a comprehensive report.

Following completion and acceptance of this study, the City could then apply to the Getty Center for an implementation grant (in August 2002) for physical work to the six fountains. In that event, the City would need to identify matching funds in order to receive the grant.

All of the fountains proposed for study in this grant are on sites listed in the National Register of Historic Places. They are publicly owned and accessible to the public. The tiled fountains are significant for their association with Ernest A. Batchelder (1875-1957). Installed in 1932, the fountains appear to be the only freestanding fountains in a public setting with tiles from the Batchelder-Wilson Company. The two fountains in Memorial Park were a gift to the City from the local chapter of the Daughters of Union Veterans. Ernest Batchelder donated the tiles for the other two fountains; the City funded construction of these two fountains as a local job-creating program during the Great Depression. The fountain in the courtyard of City Hall is among the most impressive and historic public fountains in California.

This initiative supports the goals and objectives of the Memorial Park Master Plan, the planning efforts to enhance public spaces in the Civic Center, and the restoration and rehabilitation of City Hall.

Future Applications to Preserve L.A. Grant Program

In general, the Preserve L.A. grant program does not accept applications until completion of a previously funded project. The program coordinator agreed to accept this application from the City because of the modest amount of funding, the distinction of the Civic Center, and the rarity of the fountains (especially the tiled water fountains).

The staff also asked the program coordinator to visit Pasadena and inspect sites that may qualify for future funding. Some sites that may qualify for funding include the Gold Shell in Memorial Park, City Hall (e.g., repairs to deteriorated ornamental features on the exterior, repainting of the two flag poles), and historic street lights.

Thusfar, the Getty Center has committed to funding the Preserve L.A. grants for only one more year. An extension to the grant program, however, may be announced later this year.


Fiscal Impact

Application for the grant has a minor fiscal impact, limited to staff time for photography and completion of the forms. If the City receives a grant, it would have revenue to pay for the

services of an art conservator. Accompanying the grant would be the routine—but minor—costs of hiring a conservator, monitoring expenses, assisting the consultant with technical studies and budget estimates, and reporting on completion of the project to the Getty Grant Program.

The cost estimate of \$8,000 to complete a planning study came from an art conservation firm, based in Los Angeles, which recently completed extensive repair and conservation work to the War Memorial Flagstaff with a grant from the Save Outdoor Sculpture program.

Respectfully submitted,


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