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# AGENDA REPORT

**TO:** Sabrina B. Landreth  
City Administrator

**FROM:** Richard J. Luna  
Assistant to the City  
Administrator

**SUBJECT:** Oakland Museum of California  
Improvement Projects

**DATE:** May 22, 2019

City Administrator Approval

Date:

5/30/19

## RECOMMENDATION

**Staff Recommends That The City Council Receive An Informational Report From The City Administrator On The Status Of The Oakland Museum Of California And The Garden Remodeling At 10<sup>th</sup> And 12<sup>th</sup> Street, And The Garden Improvement Project And Timeline For Approval And Implementation.**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Oakland Museum of California ("Museum" or "OMCA") is planning strategic and narrowly focused enhancements to its campus in order to provide improved access by the community to the Museum, gardens, and programs. The project is led by a design team comprising of Mark Cavagnero and Associates (who designed the prior Museum renovation project in 2010), and Hood Design, landscape architects of Oakland. The total budget for this proposed scope of work is approximately \$18 million, which will be supported through a \$15 million private fundraising campaign and other eligible funds. The project will entail two new accessible entries to the Museum building on its corner at 12<sup>th</sup> Street and on 10<sup>th</sup> Street near the stairway to the lower level. In addition, the Museum is proposing the addition of improved ADA access within the gardens themselves, and upgrades to the Museum café. The project will also entail replanting within the gardens to replace plantings and trees that are at the end of their lifespan, as well as to create new landscape environments that are environmentally sustainable and offer new opportunities for education and interpretation.

Currently, Planning and Building Department (PBD) staff are preparing a Historic Resource Evaluation (HRE) for the Museum per direction from the Landmark Preservation Advisory Board (LPAB). Based on the HRE findings, PBD staff will determine the appropriate entitlement path for the project and report back to the LPAB this summer. Additionally, staff intends to bring an informational report to the Planning Commission given the importance of the OMCA in the community.

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## **BACKGROUND / LEGISLATIVE HISTORY**

### **History of the Museum Campus**

When the Oakland Museum opened in September 1969, it was heralded as a revolution in museum architecture. In contrast to many museums with imposing edifices and grand entrances, the design by building architect Kevin Roche and landscape architect Dan Kiley envisioned the campus to be part of the urban fabric and most importantly, as Roche said, to consider "the pleasure, the comfort, and the convenience of the museum-goer. The museum is intended to be a warm, friendly, informal place where the visitor may browse at leisure through buildings and shaded walks and gardens and reflect on the spectacular variety of California's natural history, the significance of its cultural heritage, and the beauty of its art."

From 2008 to 2010, the Museum undertook the first major renovation of its landmark campus in a project led by architect Mark Cavagnero and Associates. For the renovation, a new entry was added to Oak Street to provide a stronger street presence and sense of arrival to the building and the three levels of galleries were connected by a covered canopy to create a greater sense of cohesion as well as protection in inclement weather. Two new galleries were added onto the third level Gallery of California Art from two previously outdoor sculpture courtyards, enlarging the exhibition space as well as providing higher ceilings for the display of larger scale art work. Finally, an ADA ramp on the Oak Street side was added to provide accessible entry from the new more prominent entrance, various infrastructure improvements were made both within the galleries themselves and with systems throughout the building, and visitor amenities including a new store and ticketing desk were added to support the Museum's initiatives related to both visitor experience and revenue generation.

## **ANALYSIS AND POLICY ALTERNATIVES**

### **Proposed New Improvements**

The current proposed enhancements extend the Museum's master plan into the next phase of improvements. These improvements are designed to:

- Create a strong sense of visibility and connection between the Museum campus and the surrounding neighborhood, and particularly Lake Merritt, the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center (also known as the Oakland Municipal Auditorium), Laney College, neighborhood residents and the blocks adjacent to BART;
- Provide new, more efficient, and accessible entries into critical spaces within the Museum, namely the gardens and the Museum café which serves as a primary program and event space, and to enhance the interior café space;
- Elevate the Museum gardens as a destination unto themselves as a new public park for Oakland more readily accessible for use and as a site of expanded programming and interpretation open to the public outside Museum hours;
- Build upon the successful renovation of Lake Merritt by adding a visible and easily accessible entry at 12<sup>th</sup> Street so lake users can also enjoy the Museum and its gardens;
- Improve accessibility by reducing travel distances and barriers for all visitors; and

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- Improve infrastructure and visitor amenities that were not addressed in the last phase of the building, including lighting, security, event support, and wayfinding.

Proposed improvements include:

**12<sup>th</sup> Street and Enhanced Access:** The Museum will open the 12<sup>th</sup> Street corner with its large, imposing walls to create an entry to beckon visitors from Lake Merritt and the surrounding area into the gardens and the galleries beyond. An accessible ramp at that entry will permit visitors in wheelchairs, with strollers, or with mobility challenges to enter, and then to continue to the second level of the Museum via a new ADA ramp. (The only current accessible entry into the Museum once within the gardens is through the elevator at the extreme opposite side of the campus). The improvements at this entry will link to and coordinate with other landscape enhancements between the Museum campus and the Henry J. Kaiser Convention Center and Calvin Simmons Theater. New lighting at the 12<sup>th</sup> Street entry will improve visibility and safety in the evening hours.

**Gardens with Enhanced Community Programming & Interpretation:** The gardens will be replanted with plantings that evoke the original design vision of Dan Kiley, including with species that are more sustainable and highlight interpretive approaches that relate to other Museum exhibitions and programs, such as links to the uses of plants by various cultures or plants that tie to Citizen Science programs. The Museum's outdoor sculpture will be curated with the intent of conserving and highlighting the most important works in the collection, and new lighting, seating and a stage will be added to support a wide range of uses within the gardens, from large-scale festivals and concerts, to school programs and summer camps, to more intimate and casual usage of the space.

**10<sup>th</sup> Street Improvements:** Another major component of the Museum's campus in addition to the gardens that was not touched in the last renovation was the 10<sup>th</sup> Street side of the building and its gardens. This area, however, has become one of the Museum's most active with Friday Nights at OMCA, a program that was launched six years ago. Now, each week, thousands of visitors gather on 10<sup>th</sup> Street to enjoy food trucks, live music, dance and performance, as well as family activities. Here, the Museum proposes to extend the welcoming invitation for participation by the community all the way from the Lake Merritt side of the campus, through the Museum campus, and finally to the neighborhood on 10<sup>th</sup> Street which will undergo transformation in the coming years with the Lake Merritt BART redevelopment, the City's planned public realm improvements, potential Laney College improvements, and other new and renewed buildings. To achieve this, a new accessible entry will be added directly from the 10<sup>th</sup> Street side into the Museum and a new window opening will be constructed above the amphitheater at the café façade to provide visibility to the café, program and event space within. The new entry will also provide food service opportunities to neighborhood residents and visitors even when the Museum building itself is not open. Interior improvements will make the café space more flexible for its wide range of uses, such as expanding the café into a space that it originally contained and now serves as offices, and adding new lighting and audio/visual support. Enhancements will also be made to the grounds on the 10<sup>th</sup> Street side of the campus to extend seating areas (particularly for Friday night programming), improve visibility, and create more inviting space for programming and gathering.

The Museum envisions these enhancements not only as an extension of the master planning process that began many years ago and was executed in its first phases from 2008 to 2010, but are manifestations of the original vision of Roche and Kiley. In all, the proposed enhancements underscore OMCA's distinctive role as a civic anchor and community "town square" and gathering space for Oakland residents and visitors.

### **Timeline and Entitlement Process**

In terms of the planning and entitlement process, the LPAB considered the Museum's preapplication at their regularly scheduled meeting in January 2019. The LPAB advised PBD staff to prepare a HRE of the OMCA to consider any future entitlement application and to bring any application to the LPAB for review. At this time, PBD staff is preparing the HRE as a basis for future evaluation of projects related to the OMCA and the next steps with the planning process will be determined based on the HRE evaluation. It is expected that the project application will be presented to the LPAB and the Planning Commission this summer, with approval of necessary entitlements anticipated by end of summer 2019. Construction is expected to begin December 2019 with the improvements completed by July 2020.

### **FISCAL IMPACT**

#### **Funding for Improvement Projects**

The Museum's campus plan project will be supported by private funds through the Museum's \$85 million "All In" comprehensive fundraising campaign. Of the total goal, \$15 million is designated toward capital improvements, including the gardens and campus plan, with the remainder for operating and program support over a five-year period (\$30 million in total) and growth of endowment (\$40 million). To date, the Museum has raised \$66 million toward the overall \$85 million goal and close to \$12 million of the \$15 million goal for capital improvements. The Museum anticipates achieving the full \$15 million in private support by the time the campus plan is announced to the public at events and ceremonies celebrating OMCA's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary in September 2019.

The Museum is working with Equity Community Builders (ECB) to secure New Markets Tax Credits (NMTCs) and ECB has reached out to several Community Development Entities (CDEs), including Oakland Renaissance New Markets Tax Credits (ORNMTC), a City-controlled CDE.

#### **City Funding**

There are no City funds dedicated to these improvement projects. In the proposed Fiscal Year (FY) 2019-21 Capital Improvement Program (CIP), \$567,000 General Purpose Funds are included per the City's and Museum's 30-year Lease Agreement for annual allocations for major repairs to existing facilities and equipment. These CIP funds will not be applied to the campus plan project.

The Museum is also entering into the final two years of a 10 year, \$43 million grant agreement with the City to fund program activity and care for the City's collection of art works. Over the

next two fiscal years, the City is committed to funding \$3.2 million (in FY 2019-20) and \$3.0 million (in FY 2020-21), respectively.

### **PUBLIC OUTREACH / INTEREST**

No additional public outreach was deemed necessary for this report other than the standard posting of the City Council Agenda.

### **COORDINATION**

Staff coordinated with Lori Fogarty, Executive Director at OMCA, Economic and Workforce Development Department and PBD staff in preparing this report.

### **SUSTAINABLE OPPORTUNITIES**

***Economic:*** The improvement projects, when completed, will help attract more patrons to the Museum and the Museum café. Upon completion, the café will have hours beyond the Museum's, and will provide a new dining destination for residents and visitors to the Lake Merritt area. Improvements to the Museum could also serve as a catalyst for new economic development opportunities in the surrounding area.

***Environmental:*** The Museum's entrance upgrades will improve walkability in and around Lake Merritt and its connection to the Lake Merritt BART station. The entrances will also allow access to the gardens during non-Museum hours, thereby creating a new park space for people recreating in and around the Museum. The new plants and landscape design in the gardens project are designed to be more sustainable and eco-friendly.

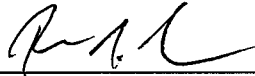
***Social Equity:*** Improved ADA access will enhance accessibility to the Museum and the gardens. The Museum's entrance upgrades allow for more seamless access to the Museum and gardens and into Lake Merritt as visitors are traveling to and from the Lake Merritt BART station. The Museum also offers a number of free and reduced entry admission fees for visitors.

**ACTION REQUESTED OF THE CITY COUNCIL**

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For questions regarding this report, please contact Richard J. Luna, Assistant to the City Administrator, at 510-238-4756.

Respectfully submitted,



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RICHARD J. LUNA  
Assistant to the City Administrator