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To: Board of Commissioners
El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument

From: Arturo Chavez, El Pueblo General Manager
Edgar Garcia, El Pueblo Assistant General Manager

Subject: **Assessment Concerning a Request by the El Pueblo Board of Commissioners for the Possible Development of a Request for Proposal to Identify a Non-Profit to Provide Programming at El Pueblo that Promotes Mexican Culture, Art and History**

INTRODUCTION

At the June 10, 2021 meeting of the Board of Commissioners of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument (“El Pueblo”), the Commissioners discussed an item related to input on the development of a Request for Proposal to identify a non-profit to provide programming at El Pueblo that promotes Mexican culture, art, and history [Item 6.2]. Commission President Patricia Alarcon, Commissioner Irma Beserra Nuñez, and Commissioner Jesse Marez expressed interest in discussing with El Pueblo staff the prospects of a possible Request for Proposals (RFP).

After ongoing research by El Pueblo staff, a meeting with the three Commissioners took place on September 10, 2021 that discussed the viability of a Request for Proposals and the role of both past and present organizations tied to Mexican culture, art, and history.

After careful consideration by El Pueblo staff, the Department is recommending to not pursue a formal Request for Proposals to identify a potential non-profit that would provide programming at El Pueblo in exchange for a no-cost lease to occupy office space at El Pueblo. The Department instead recommends the following course of action:



- 1) Pursue partnerships with non-profit organizations that exhibit a demonstrable track record of successfully promoting Mexican history, art, and culture (as well as other related cultural expressions tied to Mexican culture such as Hispanic, Latina, Latino, Latinx, Chicano, Chicana, etc.)
- 2) Facilitate partnerships and programming opportunities with agencies and organizations with close physical proximity to El Pueblo such as La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, Museum of Social Justice, METRO Art, as well as other esteemed arts and cultural agencies and organizations such as the Department of Cultural Affairs, L.A. County Department of Arts & Culture, Self Help Graphics, Museum of Latin American Art, MOCA, LACMA, and the Getty Museum.
- 3) Meet regularly with El Pueblo-affiliated museums and cultural organizations to coordinate programming, exhibitions, and cultural activities to better coordinate partnerships.

The long history of El Pueblo's historic district is grounded on our rich and complex ties to Native American, Indigenous, Spanish, African, Mexican, and Mexican-American identities and its interweaving and engagement with other cultural groups and identities such as Chinese-American, Italian-American, African-American, and a whole host of other cultural groups. El Pueblo staff are committed to the proper and respectful representation of all communities, highlighting our connections as Angelenos.

BACKGROUND AND ASSESSMENT

El Pueblo staff were prompted by the El Pueblo Commissioners on June 10, 2021 to begin consideration of an RFP to identify a potential non-profit that would provide programming that focuses on Mexican history, culture and art and who would occupy vacant office spaces and exhibition areas in the Biscailuz Building.

Since the formation of the Department, El Pueblo has hosted several annual events directly tied to Mexican culture, art, and history in collaboration with partners such as the Olvera Street Merchant Association Foundation (OSMAF) and the Catholic Archdiocese of Los Angeles. This includes the annual Blessing of the Animals, Muertos Art Walk, Dia de los Muertos, Day of the Virgen de Guadalupe, and the holiday themed Las Posadas. As documented by Dr. Bill Estrada, the Los Posadas tradition for example has been celebrated at the Plaza since the early 1800s by the Pueblo's first residents. El Pueblo also hosted and coordinated Cinco de Mayor and most recently the El Grito/Mexican Independence Celebration.

El Pueblo continues to be recognized for this Mexican-themed programming in coordination with Olvera Street Merchants and our stakeholders. While the pandemic has compromised much of this programming schedule in the last two years, El Pueblo staff is committed to supporting and hosting this programming in partnership with our stakeholders in a spirit of inclusion and representation of our rich cultural heritage.

Partnerships and the Cultural Infrastructure of El Pueblo and the City of Los Angeles

El Pueblo is fortunate to both contain and be surrounded by existing museums and organizations, all forming part of the rich cultural infrastructure of Los Angeles. In the past, El Pueblo staff recognize that there have been lost opportunities to partner with other organizations and agencies and create synergy amongst the city's cultural network. This has led to missed opportunities with neighboring arts and cultural organizations such as La Plaza de Cultura y Artes and agencies like METRO Art. As staff, we have first-hand realized missed opportunities after the fact, such as events affiliated with Mexican culture that could have been coordinated together.

As a prescient example, we have learned from past mistakes and recently worked with La Plaza de Cultura y Artes to ensure that the LéaLA Literary Festival, one of the largest Spanish-language book fairs in the nation, was properly advertised by El Pueblo both on the ground and on social media. As El Pueblo staff have often stated, visitors to the El Pueblo and surrounding areas do not distinguish their visit based on whether they are on City, County, State, or METRO owned and managed land. The "campus" or district must read as a cohesive whole both physically and programming wise or it will continue to suffer from a sense of disjointedness.

With specific efforts to highlight and promote Mexican culture at El Pueblo, our future partnerships with established agencies and organizations will be of an open and accessible nature to all entities that exhibit a proven track record of programming. Apart from El Pueblo staff's discretion, the Department will seek the input of the Board of Commissioners and El Pueblo stakeholders in identifying potential partners.

Financial Considerations

Owing to our current fiscal responsibilities to the City of Los Angeles, available office space at El Pueblo and specifically the Biscailuz Building would currently be better suited for rent-paying revenue-generating entities rather than to a non-profit organization that would be unable to provide rental fees to the Department.

El Pueblo staff are well aware that in today's current economic environment, most arts and cultural organizations are unable to take on additional fee-based office and exhibition space. As such, any potential RFP would have had to advertise lease agreements with \$1 dollar a year arrangements or free rent. At the moment, with the effects of the pandemic on rents at El Pueblo, this would be fiscally irresponsible for the Department. Pursuing meaningful partnerships with organizations for programming would result in the same value-added objectives while preserving opportunities to lease existing available office space.

Regular Meetings El Pueblo Affiliated Museums and Cultural Agencies & Organizations

In the effort to coordinate activities and programming with our existing collection of museums, agencies and organizations, El Pueblo staff would like to implement regular

meetings with the goal of better coordinating the cultural activities at El Pueblo. El Pueblo staff will lead the meetings with a spirit of inclusivity and equity for our cultural partners and will report regularly to the Commission on the outcomes from these meetings. We will also invite a representative(s) of the El Pueblo Board of Commissioners to be present at the meetings.

Specifically with regards to promoting Mexican culture, art, and history, the meetings will facilitate both short-term and long-term partnerships that specifically tie into topics and themes tied to Mexico. As part of this objective a representative of the Consul General of Mexico will also be invited to attend.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That the El Pueblo Commission:

- 1) Instruct the Department to pursue partnerships with non-profit organizations that exhibit a demonstrable track record of successfully promoting Mexican history, art, and culture (as well as other related cultural expressions tied to Mexican culture such as Hispanic, Latina, Latino, Latinx, Chicano, Chicanx, etc.) subject to any applicable City contracting requirements.
- 2) Instruct the Department to facilitate partnerships and programming opportunities with agencies and organizations with close physical proximity to El Pueblo such as La Plaza de Cultura y Artes, Museum of Social Justice, METRO Art, as well as other esteemed arts and cultural agencies and organizations such as the Department of Cultural Affairs, L.A. County Department of Arts & Culture, Self Help Graphics, Museum of Latin American Art, MOCA, LACMA, and the Getty Museum subject to any applicable City contracting requirements.
- 3) Request Department staff to implement regular meetings with El Pueblo-affiliated museums and cultural organizations to coordinate programming, exhibitions, and cultural activities to better coordinate partnerships.