



Board Report

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Agenda Number: 11.

PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING COMMITTEE APRIL 20, 2022

SUBJECT: UPDATE ON MARIACHI PLAZA

ACTION: RECEIVE AND FILE

RECOMMENDATION

RECEIVE AND FILE status update on Mariachi Plaza.

ISSUE

At the December 2020 Regular Board Meeting, the Board of Directors approved Directors' Solis and Dupont-Walker's Board motion to a) provide recommendations to streamline the management of Mariachi Plaza; and b) develop a cultural preservation strategy for Mariachi Plaza (Attachment A). Concerns were also raised about the maintenance and operations of Mariachi Plaza, which is partially owned by Metro and partially by the City of Los Angeles (COLA). In May 2021, staff provided an update on the maintenance and security of Mariachi Plaza, as well as noting the next steps to clarify and update agreements with COLA and to perform outreach about the use of Mariachi Plaza. This board report provides an update on those efforts.

BACKGROUND

Mariachi Plaza is referenced as a historical landmark and art and cultural center in the community of Boyle Heights at the cross streets of First Avenue and Boyle Street across from the old brick Boyle Hotel. In addition, it is a seamless pedestrian plaza covering multiple parcels connecting Metro's Mariachi Plaza L Line (Gold) station and the COLA owned area (including a kiosk which is a replica of Plaza Garibaldi in Mexico City).

Metro's Mariachi Plaza L Line (Gold) station was opened in 2009 and includes escalators, elevators, and stairways that lead down to the mezzanine level and platform level of the station. Metro's portion of the plaza also includes a stage area where third-party Metro permitted events to take place, such as a community market, health and wellness events, and the Annual Mariachi Festival.

DISCUSSION

Community Survey

Lee Andrews Group ("Consultant") was selected to conduct an assessment and analysis survey and

provide a report on the community's needs and uses of Mariachi Plaza. The survey was conducted in English and Spanish between November 20 and December 23, 2021, by Street Team Members (Promotoras). Survey questions included why the participant goes to Mariachi Plaza and what it means to them, what type of programming there should be and how programming decisions should be made, and how to best keep the community informed. The Mariachi Plaza Cultural Preservation Needs Assessment Community Survey Report ("Report"), which includes all the questions and responses, is contained in Attachment "B".

In total, 585 surveys were collected from ten (10) events held at Mariachi Plaza and other local events within a quarter mile of the Plaza. Participants accessed the survey either online, in-person or by scanning a QR code from their mobile device. As an incentive to solicit participation, a random drawing for three (3) gift cards (2-\$50 and 1-\$100) was held. Three (3) winners were randomly selected.

The top three survey participants were residents, transit riders and youth. The top reasons people visit Mariachi Plaza are to attend live events, because they live in the community and to purchase from street vendors. Safety, cleanliness and programming were the top three areas for improvement.

Of the 585 surveys collected, 68 participants (12% of all participants) identified themselves as an artist/performer/musician. This group of participants were then asked six (6) additional questions related to housing, homelessness, and access to affordable housing. Approximately 28% of the respondents indicated finding housing was a challenge and that they had been unhoused in the prior two years.

To enhance the survey collection efforts, the Consultant conducted two (2) focus groups by random selection from the 585 original participants. The focus groups were held in person and virtually on January 14, 2022, and January 28, 2022. They consisted of Mariachi performers, Mariachi students, Artists, community members, and teachers from the Boyle Heights area.

The Report recommends that as Metro investigates potential improvement efforts to be made at Mariachi Plaza, the meaningful engagement and input of stakeholders, residents and business owners who work and live near Mariachi Plaza is essential. Recommendations from the report include:

1. Community Engagement and Coordination

- The development of a community roundtable, consisting of residents, small business owners, artists, performers, and musicians for input on events on Mariachi Plaza.
- Improved coordination for use of the Mariachi Plaza kiosk and stage such as a single point of contact for permitting.
- Improved coordination of responsibility for public safety at Mariachi Plaza, such as meetings between all public safety agencies responsible to discuss community concerns.

2. Access and Affordability

- Partnering with elected officials who represent Mariachi Plaza to host events to discuss access and housing affordability programs with local stakeholders, this could include

- Housing non-profits in Los Angeles.
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 - Immigrants' rights non-profits in Los Angeles
 - Public agencies with housing access and affordability programs in Los Angeles
- Providing support services for Mariachi's and cultural space for Mariachi's through the joint development community space.

Mariachi Plaza remains a landmark of historical importance and cultural significance. It maintains a place of meaning for those who frequent the Plaza and for those that reside within the Boyle Heights community. Through continued engagement, Metro can support efforts to ensure that the cultural and historical integrity of Mariachi Plaza is maintained.

COLA Coordination

In March, 2022, a land survey of Mariachi Plaza was completed identifying property boundary lines between COLA and Metro (Attachment C). It was determined that the total square footage (sq.ft) of Mariachi Plaza is 74,892.6 sq.ft. The COLA portion is 41,105.6 sq.ft. (54.89%) and the Metro portion is 33,787 sq.ft. (45.11%). The Record of Survey is currently under review for recordation with the County of Los Angeles Records office.

Discussions have begun with the COLA to prepare an agreement defining areas of responsibility for a holistic approach to permitting, maintenance, repair and use of Mariachi Plaza.

Programming

Permit issuance for events has resumed within the Plaza following COVID-19 Pandemic, City and County guidelines for outdoor activities. Metro staff will work to develop a community roundtable, consisting of residents, small business owners, artists, performers, and musicians for input on future programming for Mariachi Plaza.

Maintenance and Security

Metro Facilities Maintenance continues to provide improvements, regular maintenance, and repairs within the plaza. Metro Security continues to provide extra contract security services seven (7) days a week at the mezzanine, platform, and plaza areas.

Joint Development

On February 10, 2022, the Boyle Heights Design Review Advisory Committee (DRAC) met to provide comment on the updated schematic design submittal for the joint development project proposed adjacent to the Plaza. The project developer, East Los Angeles Community Corporation (ELACC), and its consultants presented an updated design responding to previous feedback on the proposed project. The new design calls for a reduction in height to four stories while maintaining the proposed 60 units of affordable housing. The ground floor will include 5,000 square feet of community space and an adjacent community garden at the corner of Bailey Street and Pennsylvania Avenue. The new design also provides tenants of the development with a rooftop amenity deck that will provide open air access designed to maximize safety and security. At this meeting, members of the DRAC gave generally positive feedback on the revised design elements and recommended to proceed to present the project at the Boyle Heights Neighborhood Council - Planning and Land Use Committee (PLUC).

On March 7, 2022, the PLUC received a similar presentation from the ELACC team. After considerable deliberation and before the PLUC was able to render a recommendation on the project, the meeting lost its quorum. ELACC has expressed a commitment to maintain an open dialogue with the Neighborhood Council and present the project when scheduled as it simultaneously continues its entitlement process with the City's Planning Department.

As part of the ongoing feedback this project has received, ELACC is in the process of completing its Cultural Preservation Plan as requested by the Metro Board. Once it is completed and reviewed by Metro staff, it will provide tangible guidelines on how to maintain the art, influence, and cultural significance of the mariachi community and other creative arts members in and around the Plaza. The guidelines will identify options for outreach, technical assistance, business development, residential tenant screening and other needed services by those who access the Plaza regularly, including Mariachis.

At its December 2020 meeting, the Board authorized an extension to the ENA until June 15, 2021, and provided options for three additional six (6) month periods, contingent on staff reporting back to the Board prior to the exercise of any of those options. Based on continued progress, staff notified the Board and executed the first option in December 2021. Both ELACC and Metro staff have concluded a certain number of deliverables specific to entitlements and financing requirements still need to be addressed thus requiring another six month extension in June 2022.

EQUITY PLATFORM

Metro's Equity Platform is being addressed through improvements, consistent management and organized use of Mariachi Plaza for Mariachi performers, artists, educational institutes, community groups and members from the Boyle Heights area.

The survey performed by the consultant was to engage the local businesses and community members in providing feedback for activities held at Mariachi Plaza. Results from the survey will be used to address and implement programming, safety, security and cleanliness for the users of Mariachi Plaza with historical and community connections to Boyle Heights. Based on Metro's goal to provide equitable options to the businesses and local community of Boyle Heights, implementation of enhanced programming and electronic permitting process will allow the community to more easily schedule and receive permits for mariachi performers, cultural artists, community events, local church and school events.

IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS

Recommendation supports strategic plan goal # 2 to provide outstanding trip experiences for all and Goal #3, to enhance community and lives through mobility and access through opportunities

NEXT STEPS

Next steps will include formation of a round table meeting format held by the COLA and Metro with the community surrounding Mariachi Plaza and negotiating an agreement between COLA and Metro for the holistic management of Mariachi Plaza permitting, event management, maintenance, security,

and repairs.

ATTACHMENTS

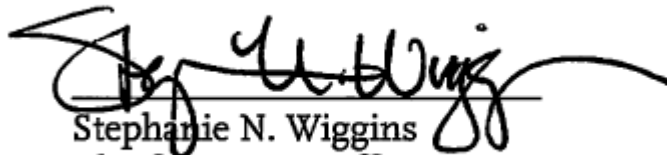
Attachment A -Directors Solis and Dupont-Walker Motion #2020-0816, Cultural Preservation at Mariachi Plaza

Attachment B - Mariachi Plaza Cultural Preservation Needs Assessment Community Survey Report & Survey Results, Prepared by Lee Andrews Group

Attachment C - Mariachi Plaza Survey Map

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