

## **STUDY SESSION**

**City Council  
December 10, 2019**

TO: Mayor and City Council

FROM: Jeff Boynton, City Manager

ORIGINATED BY: Julie Herrera, Senior Administrative Analyst

**SUBJECT: LA MIRADA STRATEGIC PLAN 2020 UPDATE**

### **BACKGROUND**

The Strategic Plan 2020, adopted in June of 2016, provides a guide for the City of La Mirada to identify priorities and achieve future goals and objectives. The plan builds on the City's record of success of being a safe, attractive, and thriving community where residents enjoy a high quality of life.

The Strategic Plan is supported by five core strategies with specific goals and actions to evaluate progress. Significant advancements have been made since the adoption of the Strategic Plan. Many of the goals outlined in the Strategic Plan have been achieved or are near completion. This update provides specific accomplishments over the last year.

### **FINDINGS**

#### **Ensure a Well-Managed City Government**

The City of La Mirada has a long-standing commitment to following responsible financial practices. The City continues to achieve financial stability by adopting and adhering to a balanced budget and maintaining a healthy level of reserves. At the end of Fiscal Year 2018-2019, the City's reserves were 130 percent of operating expenditures. The City also established a Pension Stabilization Trust to help address unfunded pension liabilities and prepare for the future. The City's outstanding financial management practices have earned La Mirada recognition by California State Auditor Elaine Howle, who announced a new publicly available online dashboard that ranks La Mirada as having the 11<sup>th</sup> lowest risk of fiscal challenge among cities in California. The auditor's online dashboard ranked the "fiscal health" for 471 cities in the state. The City also received a Certificate of Achievement for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 30th consecutive year for its Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR) by the Government Finance Officers Association of the United States and Canada (GFOA).

City departments routinely monitor fees to verify appropriate cost recovery for services. To ensure prices for single tickets at the La Mirada Theatre reflect the market, staff works with Jacobsen Consulting to review sales data for the McCoy Rigby Entertainment Series, as well as special presentations. Through weekly evaluations of

sales data and dynamic pricing, the Theatre earned an additional \$150,000 in revenue this past season. Rental rates at the Theatre were increased modestly over the last year and it is estimated it will help generate an additional \$3,000 in revenue in the 2019-20 season.

The Community Services Department modestly revised fees for facility reservations and youth recreation sports leagues. Fee adjustments for these programs were relatively minor. The department will continue to evaluate fees to ensure appropriate cost recovery.

City staff continues to make progress in seeking sponsors to help offset costs for community programs and events. This year, \$43,120 was raised in monetary and in-kind donations to assist with providing high quality community programming. A new marketing brochure was created to promote sponsorship opportunities.

The City's "Dedicated to Service philosophy" is embraced throughout the City's operations. To enhance services and provide greater convenience to residents, the City became an authorized United States Passport Acceptance Facility in May. Since then, staff has processed nearly 200 passports.

City staff continues to explore the use of technology to promote transparency, effectively communicate with the public, and enhance customer service. The La Mirada Theatre website was recently updated to create more user-friendly features for patrons. The Splash! website was redesigned and launched in April, offering a more visually appealing website which features more accessible information in fewer clicks. Improvements to the "frequently asked questions" section were also made to further improve customer service.

The City continues to improve its online presence by posting relevant information on the City's website in a timely manner. In addition, departments continue to increase posts to various social media platforms to maximize the promotion of City programs, events, and services. In May, the Community Services Facebook and Twitter accounts were merged with the City's general accounts to streamline postings. Since the merge, the City has gained an additional 338 followers on Facebook.

Facebook posts across City departments reached nearly 250 this year. All departments realized an increase in Facebook followers. The City has increased its outreach by creating "event pages" on Facebook for popular community events. Staff also continues to use videos across all social media platforms. Most recently, the City used its YouTube channel to feature a Splash! promotional video and promote the City's 'Most Business-Friendly City' award.

The "My La Mirada" service request system continues to allow the City to connect with the community. The number of registered users to the smartphone app continues to increase. As of November, there are 2,751 registered resident users. Of those, 755 have submitted at least one service request. The City conducted its first emergency

push notification successfully in September, as part of National Preparedness Month. This feature provides the City with a vital tool during a disaster situation.

### Provide a Safe Community

Public safety remains the City's highest priority. The City allocates significant resources towards reducing crime to preserve La Mirada as a safe community. La Mirada was once again able to maintain one of the lowest crime rates in the region. Current statistics indicate that crime has decreased by 14.38 percent in 2019.

Collaboration between the community and the City's Public Safety Team remains one of the most effective tools in preventing crime. Eighteen Neighborhood Watch meetings were held this year throughout La Mirada. Information on Neighborhood Watch was distributed at Back to School events to augment outreach efforts. Flyers were also distributed in Spanish. Public safety tips and information on public safety programs was also provided at the National Night Out event, Senior Health Fair, and through City publications, including the E-Watch digital newsletter, which has nearly 2,000 subscribers.

Staff met with 75 businesses through the Business Watch Program to provide information on crime trends and crime prevention tips. An educational campaign to encourage safe practices during non-operating hours was highlighted on a new handout called "Safeguard Your Business." Public Safety staff also continues to attend Chamber of Commerce meetings to provide crime and safety updates to business members.

The City remains a strong partner with the Norwalk-La Mirada Unified School District to provide a safe environment in the schools and offer programs that deter involvement with alcohol, drugs, gangs, and vandalism. Public Safety staff continues to be visible on campus. Staff collaborated with Helpline Youth Counseling (HYC) and the School District to implement Choices, a pilot program to help at-risk youth by providing temporary interventions and valuable life skills. The program began in late October and will continue throughout the school year. The City also co-sponsored a presentation to La Mirada High School students in November regarding the dangers of vaping.

The City collaborated with Biola University and first responders to hold a community-wide disaster exercise as part of the statewide earthquake awareness campaign, the Great California ShakeOut. The exercise included a test of Biola's new Earthquake Early Warning System (EWS).

Staff continues to evaluate opportunities to heighten safety at City parks. A review of potential placement of security cameras at select parks was completed. A security camera was installed at Neff Park and is currently being assessed. Installation of a security camera at Frontier Park is underway.

Public Works staff continues to review the condition of City sidewalks to ensure safe routes for pedestrians are provided. The Sidewalk Inspection Policy is currently under

review. To provide a safe travel for cyclists, bike lanes are being considered for Biola Avenue, Stage Road, and Adelfa Drive.

### Promote a High Quality of Life

The Strategic Plan builds upon the City's past successes in keeping La Mirada a desirable community. Quality housing, safe neighborhoods, and a variety of first-class amenities and cultural programming have been hallmarks of the La Mirada community for nearly 60 years.

Quality parks continue to be important to local families. The new playgrounds at Gardenhill and Windermere parks marked the completion of playground upgrades at all City parks over the last four years. In partnership with the California Department of Transportation (CalTrans) and TreePeople, 60 new trees were planted at Neff Park to minimize the environmental impacts of the I-5 freeway widening project. This project will beautify Neff Park and the surrounding neighborhood.

The City continues to offer family-oriented events and a wide variety of high-quality recreation, aquatics, leisure, and cultural programs. The La Mirada Theatre for the Performing Arts continues to be regarded among the top theatres in the region for its exceptional live productions and highly acclaimed presentations. New experiences such as the "Opening Night Club" and "The Making Of" pre-show talks continue to add value for subscribers.

The Theatre has completed vital facility improvements including the installation of all new auditorium seats. Two front rows will also be added beginning March 2020 to increase capacity by 60 seats for some shows. Sound system upgrades were completed and upgrades to the backstage area and lobby are currently taking place.

The La Mirada Theatre continues to develop new cultural opportunities for teens and young adults. The theatre offers \$15 tickets to students for the first three weeks of the McCoy Rigby Entertainment shows. Also, staff is exploring opportunities for a new student usher program next year.

Community events continue to bring the La Mirada community together. Staff has made several minor modifications to important community events such as the Salute to Veterans event, Concerts Under the Stars and Night Market, and Stroll in the Park, which were well received by participants. The Night Market was expanded to the Stroll in the Park event this year to enhance the summertime experience.

Community events will continue to be evaluated to explore potential enhancements. As March of 2020 marks the City's 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, staff will return some elements of the Celebration in the Park to commemorate this special milestone by hosting one of the regularly scheduled Concerts in the Park at Neff Park.

Construction on the new waterslide feature at Buccaneer Bay has begun. A six-lane mat racer slide and two aqua tube body slides are being added to one of La Mirada's

favorite family destinations. Construction of the new feature will continue through May of 2020. The new slide will help kick off the summer season.

Preserving La Mirada's history remains an important endeavor. In November, the Theatre celebrated the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of *Canto 79*, the towering sculpture that was unveiled at the Theatre in 1979.

New roofs were installed on the Neff Mansion, the George House, and the Carriage Barn. Significant restoration to the physical condition of the buildings was also completed to preserve the City's history and ensure the Neff Estate can be enjoyed by future generations.

The Historical Preservation Advisory Council (HPAC) has embarked on a project to update the Walking and Bicycle Historical Tour brochure, which may potentially include additional historical sites. This project will coincide with the City's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary. HPAC is also in the process of replacing tree identification plaques at Neff park, as the variety of tree species is one of the park's truly unique features.

#### Provide Quality Planning and Infrastructure

Measure I funds have enabled the City to replace aging streets and roads over the past five years. Construction on Phase 5 neighborhood improvements, which covers the largest area of work compared to the previous phases of Measure I improvements, began in spring. The project area includes all residential streets bounded by Imperial Highway, Biola Avenue, Stage Road, Valley View Avenue, and Milan Creek. The work includes pavement rehabilitation, replacement of damaged curb, gutter and sidewalk, upgrades to existing and placement of new handicap curb access ramps, and slurry seal of recently repaved streets within the project area. Storm drain improvements within the frontage road of Valley View Avenue and on Foster Road are also included in this project. Construction of Phase 5 is approximately 80 percent complete and is expected to be finished by early next year. Measure I funds only partially funded Phase 5, and other available funding, including SB 1, gas tax, and Measures M and R, will be used to supplement this project.

Traffic signal improvements were completed along La Mirada Boulevard. The intersections included Hutchins Drive, Tacuba Drive, University Drive, Foster Road, Civic Center Drive, Alicante Road, Excelsior Drive, Ocaso Avenue, and Santa Gertrudes Avenue. Upgrades included the installation of additional signal heads, upgrades to pedestrian signal head and push buttons, and the replacement of safety lights with energy efficient LED overhead safety lights to improve pedestrian and commuter safety. Additional traffic signal upgrades are planned along Rosecrans Avenue beginning early 2020. Improvements on Santa Gertrudes Avenue will take place next fiscal year.

Extensive work along a three-mile stretch of roadway to install new irrigation, concrete ribbons, new cobblestone near turn pockets, and the planting of California-friendly trees, foliage and flowers is near completion along the medians of La Mirada Boulevard

from Leffingwell Road to Alondra Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue from Valley View Avenue to Beach Boulevard. These improvements will enhance the aesthetic appeal of the roadways, while using less water than natural turf required. Medians along La Mirada Boulevard and Rosecrans Avenue are expected to be completed in January 2020. Similar improvements to the medians along Valley View Avenue are expected to be under construction early next year.

A contract has been awarded for the replacement of street name signs citywide. This project will improve the aesthetics of faded street signs and conform to current regulatory traffic requirements. Larger lettering will be included in the new signs for better visibility. The signs are being manufactured and will be installed in early 2020.

Public Works staff has completed a self-evaluation plan of City facilities and the public-right-of-way to ensure compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Staff is reviewing the evaluation results and drafting a transition plan.

Community Development staff continues to review City Codes to ensure quality planning and the protection of properties. This year, the Zoning Ordinance was amended to include regulations for short-term rentals, electrified fences, front setback and new parking standards.

The City continues to provide qualifying residents financial assistance for damaged block walls along major arterials through the Arterial Block Wall Loan Program. Funding for two walls has been approved, with one wall nearing completion and the other set to be completed early next year.

Planning Division staff has completed 578 administrative reviews, 39 sign reviews, and four administrative adjustments to date in 2019. The Building Division has processed 2,914 transactions with a work valuation of \$105,719,972. Staff continues to work with residents and developers to maintain the high standards of new development.

Construction of the I-5 Freeway widening through La Mirada continues. The project, which is managed by CalTrans, recently achieved completion of a fourth southbound freeway lane on the I-5 and the completion of the first half of the new Valley View Avenue bridge. Benefits of the project include better traffic flow along Valley View Avenue and safer intersections for commuters and pedestrians. Completion of the second half of Valley View Avenue Bridge is expected in late 2021. Staff will continue to work with CalTrans to resolve issues affecting businesses and motorists.

#### Support a Strong Local Economy

The City of La Mirada works cooperatively with local businesses to support local jobs and enhance the tax base to support a strong local economy. The City was recognized by the Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation (LAEDC) as the 2019 'Most Business-Friendly City' for these efforts. The City was a finalist among four cities with a population less than 50,000. This is the second time the City has received this prestigious award, following a five year waiting period set by the LAEDC.

City staff continues to market key properties to potential retailers and restaurants to enhance La Mirada's privately-owned shopping centers. The City also continues to partner with the La Mirada Chamber of Commerce to support the local business community. Three business workshops were held in 2019, in partnership with the Chamber and SCORE. The City also sponsored the Chamber as an 'Elite Chamber Champion' in support of the Chamber's new business plan and vision.

La Mirada's commitment to business-friendly practices continues to attract new businesses. Several new businesses have opened this year including Chick-fil-A, Burger IM, Civitas Coffee, Ding Tea, Quezada's Tacos, Dollar Tree, and Dream Beauty Suites. Building permits have been issued for Popeyes Chicken. Permits for La Casa del Cocinero and Tepeyac Café are currently under review. In addition, Taco Bell and Burger King were among businesses that completed substantial improvements this year. Penske Truck Leasing also completed the installation of new electric truck charging stations.

As the State's housing crisis continues and demands for additional housing are imposed upon cities, City staff continues to explore opportunities to meet its regional housing needs. Structural plans for a 28-unit apartment building are currently under review. Building permits were issued for six, single-family homes on Biola Avenue. In addition, plans for a three-story 39-unit condominiums on Valley View Avenue are underway.

The City remains committed to achieving the goals set forth in the Strategic Plan 2020. Much has been achieved in 2019 and City staff is working on completing the goals that were set by the end of next year.

### **RECOMMENDED ACTION**

It is recommended the City Council review and discuss the Strategic Plan 2020 update.