

APPROVED
JAN 16 2019

BOARD REPORT

**BOARD OF RECREATION
AND PARK COMMISSIONERS**

NO. 19-010

DATE January 16, 2019

C.D. 4

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: GRIFFITH OBSERVATORY — VISITOR ACCESS IMPROVEMENT PROJECT;
CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION FROM THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL
QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO ARTICLE III, SECTION 1, CLASS 1(3)
[MINOR ALTERATIONS TO EXISTING INFRASTRUCTURES] AND 1(12)
[OUTDOOR LIGHTING AND FENCING FOR SECURITY AND OPERATIONS]
OF THE CITY CEQA GUIDELINES

AP Diaz	_____	V. Israel	_____
R. Barajas	_____	*S. Piña-Cortez	
H. Fujita	_____	N. Williams	_____

_____ 
General Manager

Approved X

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) Chief Accounting Employee to allocate up to One Million, Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,800,000) in special funds from accounts:

Fund 205/88/88170J	Griffith Observatory Improvements	\$612,844.90
Fund 205/88/88130L	Griffith Observatory Restorations	\$34,166.15
Fund 302/89/89270K-TBD	Capital Improvements	\$300,000.00
Fund 302/89/89817M-GP	Griffith Park Pay Parking	\$552,988.95
Fund 302/89/89620K-00	Griffith Observatory Surcharge	\$300,000.00
	TOTAL	<u>\$1,800,000.00</u>

for the Griffith Observatory — Visitor Access Improvement Project (Project) .

2. Find that the Project is categorically exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption (NOE);
3. Authorize the RAP Chief Accounting Employee to prepare a check to the Los Angeles County Clerk in the amount of Seventy-five dollars (\$75.00) for the purpose of filing a NOE for the Project; and,
4. Authorize the RAP Chief Accounting Employee to make technical corrections as necessary to carry out the intent of this Report.
5. Approve the scope of work for the Project as described in this Report.

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SUMMARY

Griffith Park is located at 4730 Crystal Springs Drive in the Hollywood community of the City. This 4,281.73-acre park provides a variety of recreation programs and activities for the local community. Approximately 18,155 residents live within a one-half (1/2)-mile walking distance of Griffith Park. Due to the facilities, features, programs, and services it provides, Griffith Park meets the standard for a Regional Park, as defined in the City's Public Recreation Plan.

PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of work for the Project has three primary components.

Added Street Lighting [PRJ21244] (\$1,000,000). The Project (W.O. # PRJ21244) will improve lighting for all of the Observatory's parking lots, roadways, and intersections. It will place new street lights along the existing sidewalk on West Observatory Road and the new sidewalks on East Observatory Road and Vermont Canyon Road. It will also increase the number of street lights along the sidewalks that ring the Observatory's parking lots.

In addition, taller lights will be added at the two major Observatory intersections and in the center of the public parking lot. These lights will increase safety for drivers and pedestrians and help safeguard Observatory and Park staff who are working in those areas. One of the key benefits of adding these particular lights will be the removal of diesel-powered light towers, which have been used as a stop-gap measure to provide essential safety lighting. This removal will reduce noise, improve air quality, and create a much more pleasant and effective lighting environment for Park visitors.

All of the new light poles, including the tall ones, are in the same style and form (scalloped concrete poles and sculpted glass globes) as the existing lights, so the entire program will look unified and consistent with the history and atmosphere of the park. A key improvement, however, will be that ALL of the lighting fixtures (on top of the new AND existing poles) will use warm LED bulbs and will only shine downward. This change will save energy and reduce substantially the amount of light pollution into the sky around the Observatory, which will benefit nightly telescope observation.

New Sidewalk [PRJ21251] (\$725,000). The existing asphalt walkway on East Observatory Road will be replaced with a new sidewalk and fencing, in the same style and form as the adjacent sidewalk on Vermont Canyon Road. This new sidewalk will connect the Vermont Canyon sidewalk to the truncated sidewalk near the top of East Observatory Road and will create a safe, continuous pathway for those walking to the Observatory from the parking at the Greek Theatre. As an increasing number of Observatory visitors now park in the Greek Theatre area, the new sidewalk will be used by hundreds of thousands of people each year.

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The Project will include the demolition of existing curbs and adjacent railings and will provide trenching for electrical conduits. The new sidewalk will include pouring of new concrete walkways, curbs, and gutters; installation of safety railing; and provision of new parking regulation and wayfinding/informational signage. This work will improve the safety of park visitors and improve overall circulation for both pedestrians and vehicles. Installation of the new sidewalk will also improve drainage along East Observatory Road and will elevate pedestrians above the flow of the water (which is not true of the current walkway, which is at the same grade as the road). The Project will also repair an area of slope degradation along the road adjacent to the sidewalk.

Realigned Parking Lots (\$75,000). The Project will reconfigure the Observatory's parking spaces and orientation to improve the flow of the one-way loop of traffic and to separate those visitors who are parking from the DASH and tour buses, shared ride vehicles, and through traffic on the hilltop. The changes will reduce congestion and make visitor parking easier and faster and lead to an improved welcome for an Observatory experience.

RAP's staff estimates these improvements will cost approximately One Million Eight Hundred Thousand Dollars (\$1,800,000)

PROJECT SCHEDULE

February 25 – March 15, 2019	East Observatory Road sidewalk/street light installation
March 16 – April 21, 2019	Spring break (no work)
April 22 – May 6, 2019	West Observatory Road street light installation, and Observatory air conditioning equipment replacement
May 6 – May 17, 2019	Hilltop parking area reconfiguration, and Parking area lighting installation

While all the work has been planned to minimize disruption of public access to Griffith Observatory, there will be one period in which the Observatory must be closed to enable the work to take place safely:

April 22 - May 6, 2019 Entire Observatory CLOSED to public

Griffith Observatory and RAP will energetically publicize this closure to help visitors be aware and permit visitors to develop alternate plans. Actions will include continued meetings with neighborhood groups, the Griffith Park Advisory Board, and the Los Feliz Neighborhood Council; website notifications; announcements through social media; assistance from Council District 4; and physical signs and message boards along the roads to the Observatory. While the Observatory regrets any closure, this work is important for visitor safety and access, and the work cannot proceed safely and effectively unless the Observatory is closed.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The proposed Project consists of minor alterations to an existing street and to an existing parking lot, of the replacement and modernization of an existing illumination system and of the replacement of existing fences. Therefore RAP staff recommends that the Board determine that

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this Project is exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act pursuant to Article III, Section 1, Class 1(3) and Class 1(12) of City CEQA Guidelines, as well as pursuant to Article 19, section 15301 and 15301(c) of California CEQA Guidelines.

FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

The approval of this allocation of special funds for the Project will have no fiscal impact on RAP's General Fund. The estimated costs for the Project are anticipated to be funded solely from special funds or funding sources other than RAP's General Fund.

The maintenance of the proposed park improvements can be performed by current staff with no overall impact to existing maintenance services.

This Board Report was prepared by Mark Pine, Observatory Deputy Director.

ATTACHMENT

Aerial map of areas of improvements.

ATTACHMENT 1

Griffith Observatory Visitor Access Improvement Project

PROJECT WORK AREA

