

SUBJECT: 1343 LAUREL AVENUE – LAUREL HOUSE  
PREPARED BY: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT  
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**STATEMENT ON THE SUBJECT:**

The Commission will receive a presentation from staff and provide feedback about the feasibility study for the 1343 Laurel Avenue, Laurel House & Park project.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Provide feedback about the feasibility study for the 1343 Laurel Avenue, Laurel House & Park project.

**BACKGROUND / ANALYSIS:**

The City-owned real property at 1343 N. Laurel Avenue consists of a 30,000 square foot lot, a 7,177 square foot former single-family dwelling, and an unattached accessory structure that is approximately 2,379 square feet and consists of a chauffer's cottage and garages. The original portions of the structures were built in 1917. The conversion of the original single-family residence into four apartment units and the southerly four car garage addition were completed in 1941. The property was designated as a Local Cultural Resource by the City of West Hollywood in 1994.

At its meeting of March 1, 2010, the City Council directed staff to develop a plan to open the grounds at 1343 Laurel Avenue as open space on a temporary/interim basis for public use. From 2013-2014, the City conducted an extensive community visioning process for the Laurel property. The community expressed support for several potential uses during the visioning process and prioritized several factors, including:

- Access to more community gathering spaces.
- Activation as an Arts and Cultural Center.
- Maintenance and/or enhancements of the property's use for peacefulness and beauty.
- Preservation of the house and gardens, but activation through new features and programming.
- Continued use for dog walking.

At its meeting on February 20, 2018, the City Council received a report forwarded by the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission focusing on Artist-in-Residence programs, including consideration of the use of 1343 Laurel as a potential Artist-in-Residence site. This

recommendation was forwarded to the City Council 1343 Laurel Subcommittee for further review and consideration.

The Laurel Subcommittee held a brainstorming session with several of their appointed commissioners from the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, Planning Commission, Historic Preservation Commission, and Public Facilities Commission, to discuss the proposal to establish an artist-in-residence program at 1343 N. Laurel Avenue. They discussed the following components of an artist-in-residence program:

- Potential activation of the components of the structure to serve as temporary residences and/or artist studio workspace.
- Use of the ground floor of the main house for community space (e.g., salons, art classes, gallery space, music recitals, etc.) and the outdoor space remaining as a neighborhood public park.
- Option to seek out an arts-oriented non-profit to manage the building and/or the program.

## **FEASIBILITY STUDY**

On June 3, 2019, the City Council directed staff to engage a consultant to perform an updated feasibility study that includes potential uses and estimated costs for the Laurel House (1343 N. Laurel Ave). The Council directed staff to present the findings of the feasibility study to the Historic Preservation Commission, Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission, and the Public Facilities Commission.

In February 2021, the City engaged Historic Resources Group (“HRG”) to conduct a feasibility study to document existing conditions on the property; identify potential work items that would be needed to bring the property up to code and a condition that would accommodate the proposed use options, and to prepare the budget estimate for that potential work. The study included:

- Site documentation of current conditions on the property
- City staff and Laurel Subcommittee of City Council input
- Conceptual plans for the four identified uses for the property as described in the Community Visioning Report (Attachment A)
- Estimated probable costs for each identified option

These options were presented to the Laurel Subcommittee on April 19, 2022 where the Subcommittee directed staff to further develop the Arts and Culture Option 2. This option proposes to renovate the first floor of the Main House and grounds to support an art gallery and community gathering space. Redesign the garage space into artist studios or performing arts rehearsal spaces. Renovate exterior grounds to accommodate a small performance space and/or sculpture garden. Renovate and designate the second floor of the Main House into four, unique, Artist-in-Residence living accommodations. (Attachment B) The subcommittee further directed staff to study the feasibility of relocating the City archives into the carriage house and incorporating a reading room into

this space. The Subcommittee also directed staff to continue to maintain the passive dog area as part of the overall design of the site. In reviewing the four options the Subcommittee's recommendation was primarily driven by the consideration the facility should not try to be all things and focus on an Arts and Culture adaptation.

Staff has prepared a capital budget request which will provide funds to conduct further community engagement and engage an architect for the purpose of preparing preliminary design documents.

### **ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCE PROGRAM**

On August 21, 2017, City Council approved *WeHo Arts: The Plan (The Plan)*, a community-based cultural plan. Among the recommendations is that the City of West Hollywood should invest in improving and expanding arts uses in City-owned facilities and open land. The spatial needs of artists were constant themes in the cultural planning conversations. In general, conversations revolved around affordable housing for artists in West Hollywood, affordable studio space, and office space for nonprofit organizations or other small or informal businesses to use to launch their creative practices.

In February 2018, City Council received a report forwarded by the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission focusing on Artist-in-Residence programs, including consideration of the use of 1343 Laurel as a potential Artist-in-Residence site (Attachment C).

The Artist-in-Residence program guidelines for 1343 Laurel will be developed by staff, under the purview of the Performing Arts and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee of the Arts and Cultural Affairs Commission. The development of the program guidelines will further define the purpose of the program, goals and defined community benefit, duration of the residency, artist eligibility, selection process, process to administer the program, and other needs not yet identified.

### **EXHIBITS:**

- A. Community Visioning Report
- B. Feasibility Study: Arts and Culture, option 2
- C. Staff Report: Cultural Plan Implementation: Study and Consideration of Artist Residences

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