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CITY OF LOS ANGELES
DEPARTMENT OF RECREATION AND PARKS

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TO: BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

FROM: JON KIRK MUKRJI
General Manager 

SUBJECT: CABRILLO MARINE AQUARIUM MASTER PLAN UPDATE

Cabrillo Marine Aquarium (CMA) is finishing the development of a Master Plan. This Master Plan will include an Interpretive Master Plan, an Exhibit Concept Plan and a Strategic Plan. Once completed, it will be submitted to the Board of Recreation and Park Commissioners (Board) for approval. The main components of this Master Plan have a common theme of improving the visitor experience at CMA.

BACKGROUND

The last CMA Master Plan was approved by the Board in 1995. That plan resulted in a \$10,000,000.00 expansion to the CMA that opened to the public in 2004. In accordance with the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), a Mitigated Negative Declaration was completed for the implementation of the CMA expansion program in December 2000. It is anticipated that the same level of CEQA compliance will be required for the update of the Master Plan. A coastal permit from the Port of Los Angeles will also be required to implement the elements of the Master Plan.

An approved and up-to-date Master Plan which includes a Strategic Plan is required for an institution to be accredited by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. The 1995 Master Plan has been essentially completed so it is time to put an updated Master Plan in place. The new Master Plan, once approved, will guide the development of the CMA for the next fifteen (15) to twenty (20) years.

A driving force for the components of this Master Plan is to improve the visitor experience at the CMA by renovating and upgrading current exhibits, incorporating new relevant topics into exhibit galleries, adding visitor amenities and building capacity to work with collaborators like local university scientists and AltaSea the new marine science research center in the Port of Los Angeles.

The Friends of CMA (FCMA) is the 501(3)c non-profit support group of the CMA, which has a current Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Los Angeles. The FCMA Board of Directors support the development of a new Master Plan for the CMA.

MASTER PLAN PROCESS

The FCMA funded this Master Planning process (\$75,000.00). It started with a request for proposals that resulted in ten (10) firms submitting responses. Of those, four (4) firms were interviewed and Split Rock Studios (SRS) of Minneapolis, Minnesota was chosen. Staff from SRS spent sixteen (16) days full days on-site conducting meetings with the CMA stakeholders, (CMA staff, volunteers, the FCMA Board members and staff, the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) staff, and teachers) as well as conducting the CMA visitor interviews.

The final report included the following components: a review of the Cabrillo Marine Museum/Aquarium history, audience analysis, interpretive exhibit analysis, phasing and budget, exhibit concept design and final recommendations.

CMA staff have begun the process of developing a strategic plan which includes a review of the CMA mission and vision statements and a comprehensive listing of value statements.

NEXT STEPS

Once the Master Plan is approved by the Board and the FCMA, a capital campaign strategy will be put into place to fund the first part of this plan. We anticipate the capital campaign for this phase will be required to obtain funding for infrastructure improvements as well as exhibit remodeling and upgrades. The second part of plan will seek funding for an upgraded visitor entrance that will serve as the orientation hub to the CMA, a new program animal holding area, additional exhibit space, and a new public sales area where the public can purchase souvenirs and educational materials.

This report was prepared by Michael Schaadt, Director, Cabrillo Marine Aquarium, and Michael A. Shull, Assistant General Manager, Planning, Construction, and Maintenance Branch.