

GGPNC OFFICERS

PRESIDENT
Phillip Gasteler
VICE-PRESIDENTS
Bruce Carroll- Administration
Rosemary DeMonte - Outreach
TREASURER
Tomas O'Grady
SECRETARY
Mark F. Mauceri (Interin)



**Greater Griffith Park
Neighborhood Council**
*Your Neighborhood. Your Voice.
Your Council.*



PO Box 27003
Los Angeles, CA 90027
323-908-6054
www.GGPNC.org
GGPNC@GGPNC.org
Certified Council #35

June 29, 2009

Janice Hahn, Chair
Tony Cardenas
Bernard Parks,
Ed Reyes.
Bill Rosendahl
The Board of Referred Powers
Los Angeles City Hall
200 North Spring Street
Los Angeles, California 90012

File 2009-002
Proposed Expansion of Autry
Museum in Griffith Park
Hearing held: June 30, 2009

Dear Honorable Councilmembers:

Greater Griffith Park Neighborhood Council ("GGPNC"), in whose area the proposed expansion is located, respectfully requests that you DO NOT APPROVE the project or lease amendment in the form now presented to you. The GGPNC values the Autry as an important part of our community. However, among other matters discussed below, the size of the proposed expansion, its impact on Griffith Park, its impact on City resources, and its potential impact on the Southwest Museum community as well as the Griffith Park community, raise substantial issues regarding the present proposal. Thus, while the GGPNC supports some expansion of the Autry, it is extremely important that the expansion be limited and conditioned as noted below and in the attached prior communications.

We attach our letters of September 22, 2008, to the Planning Department, of October 18, 2007, to the Department of Recreation and Parks regarding the EIR and of October 6, 2008, to Jon Kirk Mukri, General Manager of the Department of Recreation and Parks regarding the proposed amendment to the lease.

I. The Project.

Griffith Park is zoned Open Space. Reasonable limits on the size of buildings in such areas preserve their integrity as open spaces.

If completed as proposed, the expanded Autry National Center in Griffith Park will increase from 161,271 square feet to 290,271 square feet. The enlarged facility will be four times larger than the newly expanded Griffith Observatory, and the expanded portion of the Observatory is underground and does not impinge on the open space. Moreover, the proposed enlarged Autry will be 61,000 sq. ft. larger than the West Exhibit Hall of the Los Angeles Convention Center. The increase sought by the applicant would be controversial if proposed for a private property in a Commercial or Residential Zone; it is even more so for a public property in an Open Space zone.

The Autry seeks to double the permissible building height in an Open Space zone from 30 feet to 60 feet and, in the case of the tower element, nearly quadruple the allowable height (112 feet is proposed). The expanded volume and the height and signing variances sought may have a precedent-setting nature for future structures in Griffith Park.

The Autry's justification for the addition of 129,000 square feet is its absorption of the Southwest Museum collection. This collection previously was housed in a 30,000 square feet building, sharing that space with other museum functions. Admittedly that world-famous collection has outgrown the current buildings, but a modest additional building on that site could provide adequate space to show that important collection in the ambience which the donors of that collection intended.

II. The Lease Amendment.

The project is likely to cost over Two Hundred Million Dollars.

Yet the lease payments to the City remain at \$1 per year.

The Autry has used the lease in the past to gain a very substantial benefit from this \$1 a year rental. It has rented the park land for private events unrelated to museum or park missions. For example last year the Netflix Band from TV outdoor concert was held there which cross-promoted the Netflix video rental business and TV celebrities with hit shows. The Autry again plans for July 25, 2009, the Brew Haw Haw Beer Tasting Festival on the facility's south lawn which will feature a beer tasting. According to the Autry's web site, the general rental fee charged by them for this location is \$4,500-\$5,500 per day, representing a very generous profit on their daily rental from the City of less than 3/10 of a

cent a day for the 12+ acres it controls in Griffith Park. We believe the proposed lease with the Autry should be revised to set reasonable limits on the type of events that can be hosted, with special attention paid to the relationship of events to the Autry's mission as a museum and a community resource, as well as to the public's right of free access to the Park. The limits imposed by the Department of Recreation and Parks in response to comments of the GGPNC and others regarding use of the Griffith Observatory may serve as a model in some measure for events at the Autry.

Some provision must be made for the cost to the City in additional maintenance of Griffith Park due solely or principally to the existence and operation of the Autry in the Park. The GGPNC questions the extent to which the City may appropriately continue to provide a subsidy to a private museum within Griffith Park. We are advised that the Autry values this lease at an excess of ten million dollars. That is, one of the principal assets of the Autry is the difference between the rental under the lease and the fair value of the property leased. The Council should ask whether the City should be giving away this value, as well as the cost of increased Park maintenance and services.

Of even more importance, the lease amendment fails to include a provision requested by GGPNC to provide for a completion guarantee bond ensuring that once a project is commenced it will be completed. The financial statements of the Autry do not establish that it has either the wherewithal or the proven ability to raise funds for such a large project. What will be the consequence to the City if the project breaks ground -- basically partial demolition of the existing building (which reverts to the City at the end of the lease) -- and the Autry runs out of funds? Will the City be put in the position of having to complete the project at its expense, or to accept a project which was not part of the original bargain?

The City has an obligation to avoid direct or indirect subsidies to private entities, to require that use of public lands will include appropriate benefit to the community, and to ensure that projects approved for public lands will be adequately funded to completion and used as originally approved.

We appreciate your careful consideration of this most important issue.



Philip Gasteier, President

Cc; Tom LaBonge
Barbara Greaves