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HISTORICAL MONUMENT**

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April 22, 2024

Honorable Members of the Budget, Finance & Innovation Committee
c/o Holly L. Wolcott
Office of the City Clerk
200 N. Spring Street, Rm. 360
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Re: FY 2024-25 Mayor's Proposed Budget- El Pueblo Comments

On behalf of El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument (El Pueblo), we thank Councilmember Bob Blumenfield and the Budget, Finance & Innovation Committee for the opportunity to provide comments concerning the Mayor's Proposed Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-25. We realize this has been a challenging time for our budget leadership in the Mayor's Office and City Administrative Office (CAO) and we are grateful for the time allocated to develop El Pueblo's budget for the coming fiscal year.

While we continue to be one of the more limited sized departments in the City of Los Angeles, we remain the cultural heart of Los Angeles and the first introduction to the city for thousands of visitors. With a visitorship that is both global and local, this will be especially true as we look to the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the 100th Anniversary of Olvera Street in 2030.

El Pueblo wishes to express its overall satisfaction with the Mayor's Proposed Budget in that it preserves our overall staffing size and structure except for the loss of one (1) resolution authority position in our accounting unit. While the department will be unable to expand services or pursue additional programming, we will be able to preserve El Pueblo's essential core operations and fulfill our mission.

In response to your April 12th letter, please see below the requested comments in support of a productive deliberation process for the proposed budget:



1) **Six (6) Achievable Goals with Current Allocation in Proposed Budget**

Based on reviewing the current proposed budget, the department believes the following six goals can be achieved with the proposed allocation:

- ***Maintain Essential Security Services on El Pueblo Campus***

As the El Pueblo site has continued to experience public safety issues, vandalism, large-scale theft of property, and other safety matters, the department is satisfied with the budget appropriation provided for onsite security services that is covered by the revenue fund. While we are in need of increased and focused security services, the allocation serves the estimated security personnel needs for the upcoming fiscal year. We continue to work with our LAPD partners and community stakeholders to ensure that El Pueblo remains a safe destination for all visitors to the historic site.

The proposed budget also contains CTIEP allocations for expanded security camera surveillance systems which will assist in improving the security infrastructure of the El Pueblo campus. Previous budget cycle allocated support for door keycard infrastructure that will also contribute to public safety for all stakeholders and visitors at El Pueblo.

- ***Maintain Minimal Accounting Functions for El Pueblo***

While the department is disappointed with the loss of one (1) resolution authority Accounting Clerk Trainee position, El Pueblo believes it can maintain its accounting functions intact with current staff. The accounting unit of El Pueblo is crucial for commercial rents, events fees, and other revenue collecting activities. The Senior Accountant II is as of this moment vacant but the department remains hopeful in back filling this crucial position through the Critical Hiring Prioritization process.

El Pueblo also welcomes the proposed budget's allocation of two (2) positions with the Office of the City Clerk to assist in the administrative accounting functions of smaller departments such as El Pueblo. This support is crucial to assist our accounting unit in light of the loss of the resolution authority position and the often complex inter-departmental financial transfers that must be conducted by the accounting staff.

- ***Maintain Essential Property Management Operations for El Pueblo***

The proposed budget keeps intact our existing staffing for our property management operations which includes commercial leases, request for proposals, facilities management, and work orders. The budget appropriation for contractual services with General Services Department (GSD) also maintains our current capacity for all maintenance and building management operations. While we believe that we need greater accountability and possible streamlining of these contracted services, the department is committed to working within our existing budgeted operations.

- ***Maintain Essential Staffing for all Six (6) El Pueblo Museums***

El Pueblo's six museums (Avila Adobe, Plaza Firehouse, Sepulveda House, Chinese American Museum, Italian American Museum, and America Tropical Interpretive Center) together constitute one of the city's largest collection of free cultural and educational destinations for visitors of all backgrounds. The current allocation for part-time Museum

Guides maintains our ability to open and manage our spaces from Tuesday to Sunday. We continue to thank the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) for their support of this crucial budget allocation in support of our museums.

- ***Initiation of El Pueblo Master Plan Process in Coordination with Bureau of Engineering (BOE)***

As has been stated before, the El Pueblo site has lacked a comprehensive master plan since 1981. The proposed budget continues the support to initiate a new updated master plan process in coordination with the Bureau of Engineering. As of this writing, the selected on-call consultant for master planning and design services is tentatively scheduled to go before the Public Works Commission on April 26, 2024. We look forward to announcing this tremendous endeavor that will reap great benefits to the future of El Pueblo.

- ***Complete Expansion of Chinese-American Museum in Historic Garnier Building***

Expansion of the Chinese-American Museum in the historic Garnier Building will increase gallery spaces and programming opportunities for one of El Pueblo's cultural museums. The proposed budget's allocations will not have an adverse impact on this capital project. This current project is a product of a public-private partnership with the Friends of the Chinese American Museum.

2) El Pueblo Department's Proposed Changes

The department respectfully proposes only two (2) changes to the proposed budget for El Pueblo in the pursuit of improving and expanding revenue generating activities and bettering the cultural and historical significance of the site:

Change 1: Allocation of one (1) El Pueblo Curator II Position

The department is disappointed with the lack of an El Pueblo Curator II position in the proposed budget as we believe strongly that the funding for the position will be adequately provided through the *El Pueblo de Los Angeles Historical Monument Revenue Fund*. The department intended to allocate an additional \$67,244 (nine months of salary at Step 7) to Account 1010 Salaries General for the position, only slightly increasing the department's salary obligations. In addition the department projected increased revenue to offset costs through robust programming, improved exhibitions, event bookings and rental fees, and expanded parking revenue.

Change 2: Reduction in Special Events Appropriation

As cultural event programming is crucial for El Pueblo's visitorship and parking revenue, the department is concerned with the nearly 66% reduction in the Special Events appropriation as it is already a modest amount for event programming. While a one-time reduction, we believe our revenue generation will be impacted along with community concerns for the potential loss of cultural programming at El Pueblo.



3) Critically Needed Positions/Repurposing Existing Positions or Restructuring

With a proposed staff of ten (10) full-time regular positions minus the loss of one (1) resolution authority, El Pueblo is unable to repurpose any existing positions to fill critically needed positions such as the El Pueblo Curator II position. The department also believes strongly that allocated budgeting for part-time staff positions cannot serve to manage some of the core duties for critically needed positions. We welcome any feedback or input that can assist us better restructuring our staffing in pursuit of more streamlined and effective operations at El Pueblo.

4) Equity and El Pueblo Budget Requests

As the cultural heart of Los Angeles, El Pueblo is responsible for telling the story of the multicultural founding and growth of our great city. As such, all budget requests are centered on an equity-focused lens that seeks to create a space that is welcoming to communities of all backgrounds in the most expansive and inclusive possible way. El Pueblo's very creation as a department is centered on uplifting communities that were very often underrepresented in the historical narratives of our city. The department's budget requests for Fiscal Year 2024-25 remain grounded in equitable progressive approaches to our management of the site:

- The department is proud that its hiring practices for both full-time and part-time staff have created a diverse workforce that exceeded our racial and gender goals from our original 2020 Racial Equity Action Plan. In particular to our Museum Guide positions, the museum workforce that interpret our cultural spaces is predominantly people of color from diverse age ranges.

- The appropriations for the El Pueblo Master Plan process will initiate an innovative land-use exercise in highlighting the needs of Indigenous-Native American community stakeholders at El Pueblo. This was most recently expressed through Mayor Karen Bass' rededication of the former Father Serra Park site at El Pueblo as *Yaanga Park* in November 2023. The master plan will provide the road map to further actions in the future to properly plan for inclusion of such underrepresented voices at El Pueblo.

- The initial budget request for an El Pueblo Curator II position was fully centered on an equity focused program that would be led by this staff position. Our site's cultural and historical significance to BIPOC communities necessitates a full-time cultural practitioner with the necessary skills to interpret and help tell their stories. This position will help address equity and accessibility in how we present and interpret the city's history to all visitors by refreshing outdated exhibitions, signage, and other onsite interpretation that currently tells a very narrow story of our city's multicultural heritage.



Thank you again for this opportunity to respond to the proposed Fiscal Year 24-25 budget in support of the city's historic and cultural birthplace. We look forward to this year's budgetary process in support of El Pueblo and the entire City of Los Angeles.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Arturo Chavez", written in a cursive style.

Arturo Chavez
General Manager

