FORM GEN. 160 (Rev. 8-12)

CITY OF LOS ANGELES
INTER-DEPARTMENTAL CORRESPONDENCE

DATE: August 6, 2026

TO: The Honorable City Council

FROM: Steve Kang
President, Board of Public Works
Chief Film Liaison

SUBJECT: CF 25-1503: KEEP HOLLYWOOD HOME – SOUNDSTAGE CERTIFICATION AND FAST-TRACK INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM

RECOMMENDATION
That the City Council receive and file this report, as it is provided for informational purposes only.

DISCUSSION
CF 25-1503 directed respective departments to develop and present a Citywide Soundstage Certification and Fast-Track Infrastructure Program that included numerous elements. Under the facilitation of the Board of Public Works, departments have been regularly meeting to discuss existing procedures, challenges, and opportunities associated with this Council direction. This report includes an overview of existing programs, and it is recommended that these be used as a basis for the type of new program envisioned in the motion.

Department of City Planning (DCP)
While the Department of City Planning (DCP) is not engaged in the day-to-day film permitting operations of the City, it does play an instrumental role in facilitating the construction of new entertainment and production studio uses, as well as the expansion and modernization of historic entertainment studio lots through its land use entitlement processes. These developments are typically well-connected to job centers and public transit and generate a significant number of job-producing uses, particularly in the entertainment/studio and tourism industries throughout Los Angeles.

Recognizing both the historic and future needs of the industry, DCP has initiated land use policy and entitlement review programs to support the development, retention and expansion of entertainment and media-related uses. Specifically, the Hollywood and Downtown Community Plans have been recently updated to foster entertainment and production studio uses, introducing new zoning regulations to facilitate such developments and streamline project approvals. In

addition, the Department has utilized specialized entitlement tools for the review and approval of large-scale production studio projects, such as Specific Plans and Sign Districts, to allow for flexibility in multi-phase development and to cater to the dynamic needs of the entertainment industry.

Due to evolving dynamics within the entertainment industry, there has been an increase in proposals for new large-scale studios and the expansion or redevelopment of existing campus facilities. Due to their scale, these projects typically require specialized environmental review and the preparation of Environmental Impact Reports (EIRs) under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). The Department's Major Projects Section is responsible for reviewing regionally-significant projects with associated EIRs, and is currently managing several entertainment and production studio projects totaling over 5.6 million square feet of proposed development, with individual projects ranging from over 120,000 square feet to over two million square feet of floor area. Other entitlement requests for smaller production studio projects that do not trigger the need for an EIR have taken advantage of the Department's expedited processing services which guarantees a scheduled public hearing within three months of the project's deemed complete date. In recent years, the Expedited Processing Section has processed a total of 1.3 million square feet of entertainment and production studio uses as recently as 2023.

The creation of CEQA exemptions by the state for existing production studio campuses seeking to modernize facilities within a specified amount of net new square footage could streamline the overall land use entitlement process for these facilities.

Los Angeles Department of Water and Power (LADWP)

At this time, it is difficult to determine utility readiness without knowing what the expected load would be for the new soundstages. LADWP's Power System usually begins working on the design and installation of power infrastructure when a request for electrical services is received from the customer, which often happens after construction has already begun or inspections have been completed by other departments, like LADBS and Public Works BOE. LADWP will build out the system based on the customer's needs and the scope of the project (i.e., location, power needs, etc.). To streamline this process, Power System would be open to engaging with the customer and coordinating with other partner departments at earlier stages to improve communication and expedite permit approval/certification.

Department of Building and Safety (LADBS)

The Department of Building and Safety (LADBS) currently maintains an express-service program intended to guide customers efficiently through plan check and inspection. Studio and soundstage projects are identified as eligible to apply regardless of permit valuation.

Upon approval into the program, a Case Manager is assigned to the project. The Case Manager evaluates project needs and provides assistance with code information, permit applications, plan

check submittal, communication with plan check engineers and inspection staff, inspection results, and the advancement of inspections and final approvals.

The program includes:

- application and assignment of a Case Manager;
- an initial project meeting to review project status and permit-related materials;
- guidance on plan submittal, corrections, clearances, verifications, and Ready to Issue processing;
- assistance with permit issuance;
- assistance coordinating inspections and supplemental permits during construction; and
- assistance with Temporary Certificate of Occupancy and Certificate of Occupancy processing at completion.

For new soundstage construction, complete applications are assigned to a plan checker within 12 days of screening. Applicants are then notified within 22 days of any required corrections and outstanding clearances. Inspections are scheduled for the day after a request is submitted.

LADBS also provides publicly available program materials describing eligibility, access, and the general service pathway for studio and soundstage projects under the express program. The materials also describe the principal process stages from application through completion, including permit documents, plan submittal, corrections and clearances, permit issuance, inspections, supplemental permits, and certificate-of-occupancy processing.

Los Angeles Fire Department (LAFD)
The Fire Department's (LAFD) Fire Development Services tests and certifies fire sprinklers, pumps and generators for buildings during the certification process. Fire Development Services review is triggered when a building applies for a Certificate of Occupancy through LADBS. A unified interdepartmental workflow involving LAFD would still need LADBS to complete its certification process first.

FilmLA
Though FilmLA is not named as a responding department in this motion, it supports the City's efforts to streamline the certification process for sound stage operators, reduce compliance costs and allow filming by right at more independent stages.

Clear consistent standards can help provide predictability for stage operators and productions and support local job growth. Those standards should take into account stages' ability to provide on-site parking for crew and production equipment; any use of surrounding streets for that purpose introduces a film permit requirement.

Coordination with the Office of the State Fire Marshal will be important to develop clear guidance regarding temporary stage-use facilities. When local approaches to regulating these facilities vary, it can make planning more difficult and may lead producers to choose other jurisdictions.

As the City evaluates program requirements, FilmLA recommends consultation with independent soundstage owners and independent producers to ensure requirements are workable across different types and sizes of production. We would be pleased to support outreach to these parties and assist the City in convening them for discussion.