

**City of Culver City, California
Agenda Item Report**

Meeting Date: 09/08/2014

Item Number: JA-1

JOINT CITY COUNCIL AND SUCCESSOR AGENCY AGENDA ITEM: 1) Approval of the Temporary Installation of an Historic Cold-War Era Guardhouse within the Former Washington Boulevard Right-of-Way between Main Street and Ince Boulevard; and 2) Approval of a Related License Agreement.

Contact Person / Department:

Joe Susca/CDD

Todd Tipton/ CDD

Phone Number:

(310) 253-5763

(310) 253-5783

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☒ No ☐

General Fund: Yes ☒ No ☐

Public Hearing: ☐

Action Item: ☒

Attachments: ☒

Commission Action Required: Yes ☐ No ☒ Date: _____

Public Notification (E-Mail) Meetings and Agendas – City Council (09/03/14); Meetings and Agendas - Successor Agency (09/03/14); The Culver City Chamber of Commerce (09/02/14); The Downtown Business Association (09/02/14); Wende Museum (08/13/14)

Department Approval:

Sol Blumenfeld (08/28/14)

City Attorney Approval:

Carol Schwab (by H. Baker) (09/02/14)

Chief Financial Officer Approval:

Jeff Muir (by M. Noller) (09/03/14)

Executive Director/City Manager Approval:

John M. Nachbar (09/03/14)

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends the City Council and the Successor Agency to the Culver City Redevelopment Agency Board (Successor Agency Board) approve a request from the Wende Museum (Wende) to produce a temporary installation of an historic Cold-War Era Guardhouse from Berlin, Germany on a portion of the former Washington Boulevard right-of-way between Main Street and Ince Boulevard from October 19 to November 2, 2014, waive the associated rental and permit fees in the amount of \$7,703.68 and approve a related license agreement.

BACKGROUND:

Wende is a non-profit organization that was incorporated in 2002 “to address the wholesale neglect and rampant destruction of Cold War materials from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that followed the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.” Wende is currently located at 5741 Buckingham Parkway in Culver City but is in the process of a major renovation of the City-owned former National Guard Armory located at 10808 Culver Boulevard in anticipation of relocating its administrative offices and collection to the renovated building.

On November 12, 2012 the City Council approved a 75-year Memorandum of Lease Agreement (Lease) with Wende that would allow its relocation to 10808 Culver Boulevard provided the museum obtains all necessary building and development

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permits. On April 14, 2014, the City Council approved a Comprehensive Plan authorizing the use of the former Armory to accommodate the museum and related parking. The Lease includes an annual \$1.00 rental fee and requires Wende to raise capital to renovate the former Armory. Wende has been issued building permits for the renovations, and the first phase of their capital campaign has raised nearly all of the \$1.5 million needed to complete the renovation.¹ Wende anticipates completing the renovations and opening by November 8, 2014 to coincide with the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The Lease requires Wende to provide public benefits in the form of free admission days, community outreach, education, and presentations and to work cooperatively with other arts and cultural organizations. If the City Council and Successor Agency Board approve Wende's request as outlined below, the historic Guardhouse installation will partly contribute toward satisfying the public benefit requirements of the Lease.²

On August 12, 2014, the Cultural Affairs Commission (CAC) reviewed the Guardhouse installation and recommended Wende cross promote the event by reaching out to the Culver City Unified School District, the Downtown Business Association and the Culver Hotel. The CAC also recommended that an explanation about the installation be provided at the site so that visitors can be informed about the object's historical significance and the artist's vision. Wende is in the process of fabricating the educational sign and implementing their outreach efforts. Additional CAC comments are attached (see Attachment No. 3).

DISCUSSION:

In March 2014, Wende submitted a written request (see Attachment No. 1) to use of a portion of the former Washington Boulevard segment between Main Street and Ince Boulevard (See Attachment No. 2) for the period between October 19 to November 2, 2014 to display the historic Der Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst ("ADN" translation: The state News Service of the former German Democratic Republic – East Germany) Guardhouse. Wende requests: (1) the Successor Agency Board waive the standard rental rate of \$450 per day (\$6,750 for a 15-day rental period) for use of the former Washington Boulevard right-of-way, and (2) the City Council waive the \$953.68 fee for the Temporary Use Permit.

The artist's vision is entitled "*Some power, which hardly looked like power, said I'm only perfect in an empty room,*" and consists of a clothed, sculpted figure that is seated in the Guardhouse. The figure is watching a monitor that plays footage of captured exotic birds. The absurdity of communism is mirrored playfully in this poetic gesture of a lonesome figure watching birds on a screen, which replicates the rigid border control that was once integral to society in Communist East Germany. Members of the public are encouraged to peer through the Guardhouse windows to see what is inside. The Guardhouse will be illuminated at night for easy viewing.

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The Guardhouse was originally located at the entrance of the Public German News Service Headquarters from 1971 to 1992 in East Berlin.³ Its temporary installation in Culver City will celebrate the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Once the Guardhouse's temporary installation is complete, it will be relocated to its permanent home at Wende's new location at 10808 Culver Boulevard.⁴

If approved by the City Council and the Successor Agency Board, Wende will launch a media campaign to promote the installation that includes international/domestic press releases, social media, e-mail blasts using Wende's and Goethe-Institut's distribution lists. Additionally, all of the artists involved will promote the installation through their respective galleries as well. KCET's Artbound will be doing a piece about the Gatehouse, and LA Magazine is considering doing a feature article as well.

Also, if approved, a license agreement will be executed between the Successor Agency and Wende for the installation of Guardhouse and the use of the former right-of-way for the event period.

FISCAL ANALYSIS:

The standard rental fee for use of the closed off roadway is \$450 per day pursuant to the current fee schedule. If approved, the amount of the rental waiver for the 15-day use is \$6,750, and a waiver of the City's temporary use permit fee is \$953.68 (for a total of \$7,703.68 in fees waived).

Installation of the Guardhouse will not interfere with the SA's ability to rent the closed off roadway (primarily to entertainment production companies), as its placement atop the median island allows vehicles to drive around it.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. May 19, 2014 Letter from the Wende
2. Site plan, images and the artist's vision of the ADN Guardhouse installation
3. August 12, 2014 Cultural Affairs Commission Comments

MOTIONS:

That the City Council:

Waive the Temporary Use Permit application fee in the amount of \$953.68.

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That the Successor Agency Board:

1. Approve a license agreement with the Wende Museum authorizing Wende to utilize the former Washington Boulevard right-of-way and waiving the rental fee in the amount of \$6,750 for the Guardhouse installation; and
2. Authorize the Successor Agency General Counsel to review/prepare the necessary documents; and,
3. Authorize the Executive Director to execute such documents on behalf of the Successor Agency.

NOTES:

¹ Benedikt Taschen, who is also leading the design of the renovation, contributed \$500K toward the project. For more information, visit: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/publisher-benedikt-taschen-takes-leading-220000682.html>

² The ADN Guardhouse installation is a collaboration between the Wende Museum and artist Friedrich Kunath of Blum & Poe, the El Segundo Museum of Art, the City of Los Angeles' District 4, the Sister Cities of Los Angeles, Villa Aurora and the Consulate General of the Federal Republic of Germany.

³ For more information about the ADN Guardhouse, visit: <http://www.adn-pfoertnerhaus.de/about>

⁴ Staff has been in contact with representatives from Combined. Based upon those contacts, it is estimated the 9300 Culver Boulevard (Parcel B) property transfer (which is conditioned on a number of actions that will take months to complete) will not occur until the summer of 2015. Therefore, this proposed use will not impact the Parcel B and Town Plaza expansion development projects.