

STAFF REPORT

Date: December 11, 2024

To: Mayor and City Council

Through: Jackie Bryant, Interim City Manager

Subject: Staff Report (For Possible Action): Presentation of Lear Theater/First Church of Christ, Scientist Historic Structure Report and discussion and possible direction for next steps for the Lear Theater/First Church of Christ, Scientist located at 501 Riverside Drive.

From: Megan Berner, Arts and Culture Manager

Department: City Manager's Office – Arts and Culture

Summary:

Council previously allocated \$1,000,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF) to the Lear Theater for repairs and improvements to landscaping and security. The original budgeted projects included commissioning a Historic Structures Report (HSR). The purpose of the Historic Structure Report is to provide a document that will be used as a comprehensive planning tool for the proactive maintenance and future rehabilitation of the Lear Theater. Staff is seeking direction from Council on next steps for the Lear Theater/First Church of Christ, Scientist based on the information in the Historic Structures Report.

Alignment with Strategic Plan:

Arts, Parks, and Historical Resources
Economic and Community Development

Previous Council Action:

March 8, 2023 – Council approved a \$1,000,000 allocation to the Lear Theater for Landscaping/Fence Repairs/Improvements (to include a Historic Structures Report) from State and Local Fiscal Recovery Funds.

Background:

On March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) establishing the Coronavirus State and Local Fiscal Recovery Fund (SLFRF). The SLFRF allocates funding to state, county, and local governments to support efforts to recover from the impacts of the

COVID-19 pandemic. Reno City Council has approved priority categories based on Treasury requirements, community input, City of Reno Strategic Plan, and Reno City Council priorities. These are:

- Access to Healthcare
- Affordable Housing
- Community Projects
- Pandemic Response
- Parks & Recreation
- Public Safety
- Senior Support

The Lear Theater has preservation covenants on the property through 2060 because it has received federal funding from the Historic Preservation Fund under past ownership. Those covenants are passed on to any future owners of the property. The covenants state that all visual and structural alterations must have permission from the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). This also means that all updates to the building and the site must be done within the guidelines of the Secretary of the Interior's (SOI) Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. As the Lear is listed on the Local Register of Historic Places, the Historical Resources Commission will be part of the approvals for any changes to the exterior of the building via the Certificate of Appropriateness process.

Discussion:

With guidance from the Historical Resources Commission (HRC), City Staff drafted an RFQ for a consultant to conduct a Historical Structure Report (HSR) on the Lear. The HRC reviewed qualifications at their February 8, 2024 meeting and subsequently provided a recommendation to hire Architectural Resources Group to conduct the HSR. This report has been completed and the contents comply with National Park Services Director's *Order 28: Cultural Resource Management Guideline*, Chapter 8 and *Preservation Brief 43: The Preparation and Use of Historic Structure Reports*.

This HSR conveys information about the design and construction of the Lear Theater in two main sections: 1) Developmental history and 2) Treatment and Use. The Developmental History section comprises a chronology of development and use; a historical background and context; a physical description and a list of character-defining features and materials; and a discussion of significance. This section also provides a comprehensive analysis of the building's interior and exterior conditions, and examines the building's structural, mechanical, electrical, fire protection, and plumbing systems.

The Treatment and Use section provides a comprehensive set of recommendations for the building, including three conceptual alternatives for future uses. The proposed treatment was

developed in accordance with *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Properties (The Standards)*.

The HSR shows the building to be in fair to poor condition overall.

The HSR was reviewed by the HRC at their meeting on November 14, 2024. At this meeting, the HRC made the following recommendations:

- Prioritize building stabilization (Option 1 from the HSR) and install the new secure fence as previously proposed (estimated cost \$717,000).
- Conduct a market and feasibility study along with community engagement that includes stakeholders such as nonprofits, developers, contractors, and the general public. This included seeking funding to hire a consultant to lead this work (estimated cost \$125,000-150,000).

Potential options for moving forward are:

- Prioritize building stabilization to prevent further deterioration during short-term vacancy (Option 1 from the HSR). This includes repairing windows, sealing opens joints, repairing stucco, removing existing temporary membrane and installing new sheathing, and replacing roofing.
- Find funding to install the new secure fence as previously proposed.
- Engage a consultant to do a market and feasibility study.
- Engage a consultant to conduct community engagement and input on uses for the building that includes stakeholder groups.
- Issue a request for proposals or a letter of interest process to allow for interested parties to submit proposals for adaptive reuse or development of the building.

All recommendations from the HRC have a financial cost associated with them, and there are currently no funds budgeted for the Lear beyond remaining payments due. Council may also choose to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) to evaluate proposals for the space from outside entities.

Financial Implications:

There are currently no funds budgeted or allocated for future projects or maintenance for the Lear. Financial implications will be determined based on direction from Council. If repairs, outreach consultants, studies, or improvements are recommended, a funding source will need to be determined by Council.

Legal Implications:

Legal review completed for compliance with City procedures and Nevada law.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends Council give direction on the next steps for the Lear.

Proposed Motion:

I move to direct staff to issue a request for proposal (RFP) or proceed with changes as directed by Council.

Attachments:

Final Lear Theater HSR