



Information Item

Date: February 15, 2007

To: Mayor and City Council
From: Andy Agle, Director of Housing and Economic Development
Subject: Third Street Promenade Dolphin Change Program

Introduction

This report is to advise the City Council of staff's intent to remove the bronze dolphin adjacent to the North Pavilion at 1260 Third Street Promenade at the request of the Bayside District Corporation. The dolphin ("the 1200 block dolphin") has created a maintenance burden for the Bayside District and attempts to improve its maintenance have been unsuccessful. This report provides the history of the Third Street Promenade Dolphin Change Program, operational issues specific to the 1200 block dolphin, and information on the removal of the 1200 block dolphin.

Background

The Dolphin Change Program was created in 1993 by the Bayside District Corporation Board and was funded in partnership with the Santa Monica Chamber of Commerce. Each dolphin cost approximately \$5,000. Since the program's inception, a total of four dolphins have been installed, including two on the Third Street Promenade, one on the Pier and one on Main Street.

The program was created in response to aggressive panhandling that was becoming prevalent on the Third Street Promenade and throughout the downtown. The tag line for the dolphin change program was “Make Your Change Help Not Hurt” and the proceeds from the program have been given as grants to non-profit organizations dedicated to benefiting the lives of people in need in the Santa Monica area. During 2006, the Bayside District Corporation Board collected \$7,000 from the dolphins and awarded a grant in the amount of \$5,000 to Ocean Park Community Center, Daybreak Day Center and Shelter. To date, grants exceeding \$120,000 have been given to groups including Step Up On Second, Ocean Park Community Center, CLARE Foundation, Westside Food Bank, and Chrysalis. The 1200 block dolphin was installed in 1996 and is now slated for removal.

Bayside District Corporation staff coordinates the collection and distribution of donations from all four dolphins. The dolphin banks are emptied approximately four to six times per year. The two dolphins on the Promenade are banks, with lockboxes located below grade. Because the lockboxes of the Promenade dolphins are subterranean, they are very difficult to open and empty. The locks are flush to the ground and quickly fill up with grime, debris, and water. Water from rain and pressure washing seeps into the lockboxes, requiring a wet vacuum and toilet auger to clean them out.

The problems with leakage and debris developed almost immediately upon installation of the dolphins. Over the years, numerous efforts have been made to rectify these problems. The dolphin designer initially attempted to make modifications, but was

unsuccessful in remedying the problems. The vault on the 1200 block dolphin was replaced in its entirety approximately five years ago. The locks have been sealed and resealed multiple times, which has worked fairly well for all of the dolphins except the one on the 1200 block. Bank components have been changed out and replaced with pieces that were expected to be more water-proof, but nothing has worked permanently. A locksmith's services are required twice a year, on average, simply to open the lockbox.

The dolphin bank on the 1200 block is particularly troublesome because of its location on the downward side of the sloping Promenade. This makes it especially vulnerable to water and debris. When it was last emptied in June 2006, six gallons of water runoff were removed from the bank. This money is extremely difficult to collect, clean, and then deposit. Some bills are torn beyond recognition, rendering the donations ineffective.

Discussion

Removal of the 1200 block dolphin has been evaluated by Bayside and City staff, in light of the maintenance challenges, difficulty in retrieval of donations and destruction of some donations. Staff believes it is appropriate to remove the dolphin at this time, as other improvements are being constructed adjacent to the North Pavilion, including installation of an outdoor dining area. Following the removal of this dolphin, three other dolphins will remain in the City as receptacles for donations to the homeless (on the Third Street Promenade, on the Pier and in the Main Street area). Other ideas for

collecting donations to help the homeless have been suggested and may be considered in the future. For example, the Urban Institute's December 2006 report on *Ending Homelessness in Santa Monica* discussed a model program in Baltimore where the City installed old parking meters in hotels, stores and restaurants and encouraged shoppers to drop coins into the meters for future distribution to homeless providers. Other programs may be considered.

Bayside District staff provided 1200 block dolphin removal information to the Bayside Board via e-mail, in the Executive Director's written report, and by verbal announcement at a Board meeting. The Board took no action on this information. Staff has notified the artist, Peter Ehrlich, at his last known address, of the intended removal, storage, and potential eventual re-use of the dolphin within the context of another public service program designed to discourage direct giving to panhandlers, but has received no response. The Cultural Affairs Division has concurred with the removal of the dolphin, as the dolphins are not part of the City's public art program.

Staff intends to place the dolphin in storage in the Bayside District, to allow for its potential future reuse.

Prepared by: Miriam Mack, Economic Development Manager