



STAFF REPORT

DATE: 11/05/2025
TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council Members
FROM: Community Services Department

2025-385

REQUEST FOR CITY COUNCIL ACTION

SUBJECT:
HISTORIC CIVIC CENTER OPERATIONS PLAN UPDATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This staff report requests that the City Council provide direction on optimizing the Historic Civic Center. The City of Corona's Strategic Plan includes a strategy under the goal Sense of Place to "Designate the Historic Civic Center as Corona's center for the arts and relocate all non-arts lessees." The Historic Civic Center Operations Plan provides a roadmap to help implement this strategy, including concepts and options for future programming and optimization of the Historic Civic Center.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

That the City Council provide direction on the optimization of the Historic Civic Center.

BACKGROUND & HISTORY:

The Historic Civic Center (HCC) was constructed in 1923 and served as Corona's second high school until 1962, when it became Corona City Hall. In 2005, a new City Hall was built, and the Historic Civic Center was re-purposed to host mixed-use programs and leases with local non-profits, arts organizations, and service providers. This same year, the HCC was added to the National Register of Historic Places, the official list of the nation's historic places worthy of preservation.

The HCC campus comprises the main building and three auxiliary buildings, which offer a range of community programming. The main building includes multiple classrooms and suites, a community room, and a 383-seat theater. The auxiliary buildings include the East Annex, which is currently leased for arts and theater programming; the historic gymnasium, used for city sports programming; and the Vicentia Activity Center, used for afterschool programming.

In 2021, the City Council adopted the City of Corona Strategic Plan that includes strategies under the goal Sense of Place to 1) Renovate the Historic Civic Center to become the City's premier performing and visual arts center, and 2) Designate the Historic Civic Center as Corona's center for the arts and relocate all non-arts lessees.

On April 16, 2025, staff presented the draft HCC Operations Plan to the City Council, outlining proposed programming improvements, facility repairs and maintenance, and an implementation plan. During the meeting, the City Council directed staff to proceed with plans to improve the HCC building and campus, and to work with the HCC arts partners on integrating them into the operations plan.

ANALYSIS:

From May – October 2025, staff met individually with each of the HCC arts partners to collect feedback about their programming and site needs. The key takeaways from these meetings are: 1) all arts partners like their current set up and lease arrangement at the HCC, and no change is desired; 2) most arts partners expressed openness to sharing space under certain conditions; and 3) several suggestions were offered for improvements to the building and suites.

Based on the feedback received from the arts partners, staff has prepared three options for the City Council to consider regarding the future optimization of the Historic Civic Center.

Option 1 – Minimal Change

- Relocate all non-arts tenants
- Complete renovations on vacant suites
- Transition city-run arts programs to vacant suites
- Defer improvements on arts tenants' suites until facility optimization can occur

Option 2 – Phase-In Facility Optimization

- Same as Option 1, AND:
- Evaluate demand for city-run programs
- Phase in facility optimization based on city program expansion needs and the needs of other tenants
- Improve remaining suites as space becomes available and/or existing tenants can accommodate renovations within program schedules

Option 3 – Full Facility Optimization

- Same as Option 1, BUT:

- Conduct improvements on the full building and campus
- Transition city-run arts programs to HCC and expand programming
- Fully implement facility optimizations to maximize arts programming and HCC usage

Staff is seeking direction from the City Council on their desired facility optimization for the HCC based on the options listed above.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

There is no financial impact associated with the City Council's review and feedback of the HCC Operations Plan. The maintenance and repairs identified for the HCC site and building are preliminary estimates, and a formal assessment and scope of work are needed to determine the final cost of all improvements. Individual projects and contracts for site and building improvements will be brought to City Council, as needed, for final review and approval.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

This action is exempt pursuant to Section 15061(b)(3) of the Guidelines for the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA), which states that a project is exempt from CEQA if the activity is covered by the commonsense exemption that CEQA applies only to projects that have the potential for causing a significant effect on the environment. Where it can be seen with certainty that there is no possibility that the activity in question may have a significant effect on the environment, the activity is not subject to CEQA. This action seeks feedback on an operations plan for the Historic Civic Center. Therefore, no environmental analysis is required.

PREPARED BY: DONNA FINCH, COMMUNITY SERVICES DIRECTOR

REVIEWED BY: BRETT CHANNING, ASSISTANT CITY MANAGER

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Exhibit 1 – Historic Civic Center Operations Plan Update