

# June 2024 Meeting Summary

## Overview

Building on the initial wave of public outreach that kicked off the first phase of development for the Laguna Beach Facilities Master Plan in May, City representatives joined two close-knit meetings in June to hear the concerns and ideas of groups that extensively utilize select facilities: the Laguna Beach Arts Alliance and the Friends of the Laguna Beach Library.

The Facilities Master Plan will assess the present and future needs of more than 288,000 square feet of facilities throughout Laguna Beach. These facilities include public safety buildings, community and art centers, parking lots, the library and more. The project team met with the Arts Alliance at City Hall on June 4, then a week later joined the board meeting of the Friends of the Library on June 11. Both meetings were more intimate and informal compared to the larger community kick-off in May, which helped lead to productive, open conversation and an exchange of ideas on the future of these facilities.

Extensive notes were taken during each of these meetings, with concerns and hopes alike being incorporated into the Plan's ongoing development. Below are some of the key points that arose during each of these discussions.

## Laguna Beach Arts Alliance

**Playhouse:** Despite the community groups seeking to use it having grown significantly, it's now much more difficult for them to secure use of the venue.

**Forum Theater:** Currently the space is not ADA compliance and thus those using the space for shows risk being shut down, which would considerably hurt a small theater group. There are access issues to the audience area, backstage, and bathrooms. The Festival of the Arts has already invested considerable money on the remodel, and the community would like the City to step in to help fund necessary improvements.

- *Suggested solution:* New elevator and ramp and expanding enclosed space into the patio to create ADA-compliant unisex bathrooms.

**The Bowl:** This space is considered impractical for big concerts – due to noise – or use as rental space, due to people having to bring their own equipment and the spacing of the audience not being ideal for performing arts.

**High School Theater:** Community does not have reliable access to the high school theater despite helping raise money to help upgrade it.

**Cultural Arts Center:** A consensus was found for a need to create a Community Cultural Arts Center. The Laguna Beach Arts Commission has money set aside for this and could use volunteers to help support. It was suggested that the City and Arts Groups come together to build a Community Arts Center.

- *Art Center examples from other towns included:* Scottsdale Fayetteville, Santa Fe and Brea
- *Suggested spaces for the arts center included:* The tennis courts, which attendees say are rarely utilized by Laguna Beach residents, or Saint Catherine's.
- *Facilities:* Questions surfaced if plans were already in the works for a multi-level facility with parking above or below the structure. Lateral buildings like this were discussed as a possible design plan.

## Friends of the Laguna Beach Library

**Capital Improvement Plan:** Focused on reinvesting, although the money isn't invested and is losing value to inflation and rising material costs. The deadline for improvements is set for August 2025, though there was discussion it might have originally been two years from the sale. If a non-profit campaign were to run, it would require a separate agreement.

**Community and Non-Profit Usage:** It was determined that public meeting rooms are insufficient for the needs of non-profits. Program attendance is high, but there are significant limitations on what can be done due to space constraints. Tustin rents community rooms through reservations, and this was discussed as a solution to county libraries who have discontinued such reservations.

**Chamber of Commerce:** The relocation of the Chamber of Commerce was discussed as a way of freeing up space for bathrooms and meeting rooms.

**Library Services:** A prevalent need was found for more space. The community needs study rooms and places to take business calls and Zoom meetings. More space is needed to manage popular tool and item rentals such as guitars, kitchen aids and toys. The library is often out of stock on items, highlighting space and resource allocation issues. Furthermore, the library experiences issues with neighboring restaurants with their dumpsters in proximity.

**Building and Safety Issues:** There is currently insufficient lighting and cameras outside, leading to theft and safety concerns. Parking issues from trucks at nearby restaurants block spaces and cause safety hazards.

**Community Engagement:** Lack of space impacts the library's ability to host events. The community would like to see a new coffee shop installed, perhaps on the roof of the library.

**Building improvements:** Foundational building improvements are seen as essential to keep the integrity and structure of the library. Irvine's new library project was mentioned as potentially a good model to use. A redesign is needed on the inside to meet needs, although a lack of funding seems to be the obstacle in making this happen.

## Additional Comments

### Parking

- Parking has generally moved backwards in the city due to large facilities and real estate realities – businesses are chewing into their own parking to expand.
- The tennis courts were identified as a large piece of land rarely used by city residents that could do a lot to alleviate parking concerns if the area is not used for the Cultural Arts

Center. Residents suggested that the courts could be moved to the top of a parking structure.

- Buses regularly take up space along the highway
- Residents would like to see more open, non-staff parking at City Hall