



Civic Arts Commission

COMMUNICATION TO COUNCIL

Date: December 7, 2023
To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Dana Blecher, Chair, Civic Arts Commission
Subject: AAO#1 Funds for the “Capital Projects Grant Program”

The Civic Arts Commissions urges Council to allocate \$300,000 annually for the capital projects grant program for Berkeley-based nonprofit arts and cultural organizations. This amount is currently on the Budget Referral list for AAO#1 on the December 12, 2023 Council meeting agenda. The recommended funding for this grant program would help retain and sustain the vitality of Berkeley’s arts sector through real estate and capital project support.

This funding request originated as a response to a referral from Council to the Civic Arts Commission “to develop a grant program available for arts and cultural organizations to support retaining and improving creative spaces for artists.” The referral originally appeared on the agenda of the October 29, 2019 Council meeting and was sponsored by Councilmembers Rashi Kesarwani and Lori Droste. Currently, there is no formal process for awarding capital improvement funds to arts and cultural organizations. Historically, specific arts organizations in need of capital funding have made requests directly to Council and subsequently some have been awarded one-time funding allocations through the City’s annual budget process.

The Civic Arts Commission recommends that Council fund a formal Capital Projects grant program managed by Civic Arts staff with awards to individual organizations be approved by the Civic Arts Commission. This grant program would be administered through a competitive process, and allow Berkeley-based non-profit arts organizations to access funds for documented capital improvement needs, including but not limited to: accessibility upgrades, updated ventilation and filtration systems, elevators, roof improvements, electrical systems, and other capital projects or facility upgrades.

Allocating funds for a Capital Projects Grant Program would allow for an open and transparent grant process. The Civic Arts program currently has a robust grant program; which is administered in keeping with national, state and regional best practices in grant making. Similarly, the program will be able to provide an efficient implementation of a local capital grants program for Berkeley’s arts organizations.

If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact the Civic Arts Commission Chair, Dana Blecher through the Commission Secretary, Jennifer Lovvorn at JLovvorn@berkeleyca.gov.