



## CITY OF BANNING STAFF REPORT

**TO:** CITY COUNCIL

**FROM:** Douglas Schulze, City Manager

**PREPARED BY:** Ralph Wright, Parks and Recreation Director

**MEETING DATE:** December 12, 2023

**SUBJECT:** Update to the City Council on Potential Grants for the Repplier Park Playhouse Bowl Improvements

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### **RECOMMENDATION:**

Receive and file.

### **BACKGROUND:**

The Playhouse Bowl Amphitheater in Repplier Park is an amazing gem and has a long and storied history in Banning. The amphitheater is home to one of Banning Signature Events, the Evening Concert Series held in August each year. The concert series began in 1952 and has run for over 70 years. The series has an annual compliment of four or five Thursday night concerts with up to 2,000 people in attendance for each concert. Many of the attendees are from neighboring cities. Additionally, the amphitheater hosts many private functions from birthday parties, music events and a number of religious fellowship outreach events each year. The Playhouse Bowl has also held numerous school activities such as graduations, end of year parties and events offered by non-profits for the Community. Lastly, the Playhouse Bowl Building and Amphitheater holds a number of ongoing Parks and Recreation programs and events such as a preschool program, our annual summer day camp program and events such as our annual Hispanic Heritage Celebration.

The 2022 Hispanic Heritage event took place from 11:00 am to 3pm in late September. The temperatures were very warm that day and although there are trees that surround the amphitheater, the amphitheater seating area and stage have almost no protection from the sun. During the event there were hundreds of attendees who gathered off to the side of the Playhouse Bowl under trees to avoid the high temperatures and sun. Mayor Alberto Sanchez attended the event and has met with staff to discuss potential improvement ideas and led to a request to add this item to the Agenda.

The Parks and Recreation Commission is in the process of creating a capital improvement plan for the Parks System including the Playhouse Bowl Amphitheater and has met with members of the Playhouse Bowl Association to discuss desired improvements. As the Capital Improvement Plan is completed and approved, the hope is to start to have conceptual plans or shovel ready projects in place when funding is secured.

Some of the improvement ideas are smaller and within the scope of general park and facility maintenance and the park's staff have made some improvements and will make additional improvements over the next year such as:

- Stage improvements; small concrete work, re-coating the stage itself
- Removal of rock amenities on either side of the stage
- Repairs of concrete in seating area disturbed by root growth

- Painting the interior of the Playhouse Bowl Building.

Some larger improvements such as lighting improvements such as up-lighting in walkways, perimeter lighting around seating area, and replacement of bleacher lighting. The Banning Electric Utility installed string lighting around the perimeter prior to the 2023 August Concert Series and they were an amazing addition and the Electric Utility has been assisting with a consultant to look at options for up-lighting as well as bleacher lighting.

Lastly, there are a number of larger improvements that are still being discussed and require significant funding. Some of those improvements include:

- The installation of shade over seating area and stage;
- Replacement of the existing bathrooms and or installation of additional restroom facilities;
- Electrical upgrades for seamless band and equipment tie ins
- Playhouse Bowl Building redesign and expansion.

In 2009 the City had conceptual drawings made of potential Playhouse Bowl expansion and improvements but it was determined that the cost of the design options was prohibitive and did not go forward.

### **POTENTIAL GRANT OPPORTUNITIES**

Staff continually looks at grant opportunities for park system improvements and has worked with our Grant Program Manager for potential grants for Playhouse Bowl Improvements.

Below is a list of potential funding sources that the Parks and Recreation Department is looking at for Playhouse Bowl Improvements that staff is investigating. This list is not inclusive of all opportunities but shows diverse opportunity directions:

Land and Water Conservation Fund and CNRA Urban Greening have funded shade structures and amphitheater projects in the past but, in combination with other amenities/upgrades. The Department has just submitted a grant application for the CRNA Urban Greening for improvements to Repplier Park that would include the installation of shade over both the Playhouse Bowl Stage and Amphitheater seating Area.

Statewide Parks Program is delayed until 2025. Statewide Park Program (SPP) The SPP is a California State Grant that can be used to improve existing as well as add Park Facilities.

The American Academy of Dermatology, shade structure grant maximum is \$8,000. <https://www.aad.org/public/public-health/shade-structure-grants>

Arts endowments and Foundations – One open opportunity is the National Endowment for the Arts - Our Town program will not pay for construction/renovations but, will pay for community-based planning and design of a new or remodeled facility (\$25-50K grant with equal match required. <https://www.arts.gov/grants/our-town>  
2023/24 PTG Shade Structure Program – open to 501c3 non-profits and schools. Applications due 12/31. <https://qgi1wzfn.paperform.co/>

Non-Profit and Family Foundations – One option we found was the Levitt Foundation “We partner with communities to activate underused outdoor spaces creating welcoming inclusive destinations where the power of free live music brings people together and invigorates community life.” [Levitt.org](http://Levitt.org) Not currently open, but a possible option in the future.

Potential Corporate Giving and Grant programs – Numerous multi-national and National corporations offer Community funding options. Two examples are: T-Mobile Hometown Grant Program – Has a maximum award of \$50,000 <https://www.t-mobile.com/brand/hometown-grants> Current application

window deadline 12/31/23. Grant has 3 or 4 annual application windows Wells Fargo Community Giving – <https://www.wellsfargo.com/about/corporate-responsibility/community-giving/>

Potential Corporate Sponsorship – Naming rights for the amphitheater or the amenities could secure both one-time and ongoing funding options.

These are a few of the potential funding sources that staff is investigating. There are new funding opportunities available on a consistent basis and staff receives numerous grant opportunity reports each month and is always looking for potential grants for Park System improvements.

**JUSTIFICATION:**

The Playhouse Bowl Amphitheater is an amazing amenity for the City of Banning that is not used to its full potential. Staff has met with local artists about the potential for a annual jazz festival, a summer and seasonal theater program has been discussed as well as numerous small scale garage and battle of the band type of events are in the pipeline. Improvements to the Playhouse Bowl will benefit the community with the addition of varied cultural events and programs and can provide significant economic benefit to Banning.

**FISCAL IMPACT:**

There is no Fiscal Impact Associated with this item.

**ALTERNATIVES:**

Not applicable.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. [Conceptual Playhouse Bowl Stage and Seating shade - July 2023.pdf](#)
2. [Concept Design Playhouse Bowl -2009.pdf](#)