



CITY OF LARKSPUR
Staff Report

August 18, 2021, City Council Meeting

DATE: August 9, 2021

TO: Honorable Mayor Haroff and the Larkspur City Council

FROM: Julian Skinner, Public Works Director

SUBJECT: CONDITION OF LARKSPUR CITY HALL (400 MAGNOLIA AVENUE) AND
OPTIONS FOR RENOVATING, REBUILDING, OR REPURPOSING, INCLUDING
TEMPORARILY/ PERMANENTLY RELOCATING CITY OPERATIONS

ACTION REQUESTED

Receive staff update and provide direction as indicated.

SUMMARY AND BACKGROUND

Located at 400 Magnolia Avenue, Larkspur City Hall currently contains various City staff offices, the Council Chamber, and the Larkspur Library. Over the years, studies and condition assessments have identified deficiencies in the 108-year old building's structure and many of its systems. Many routine repair and maintenance tasks have been complicated by and become more expensive due to the many related issues with the building. The building is significantly deficient in seismic structure, heating ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC), electrical, fire sprinkler and alarm and accessibility. Accessibility is of particular concern, as recent evaluations suggest that if the City undertakes any significant work on City Hall, it must bring the entire property into compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Recent assessments indicate that portions of the building's structure are nearing end-of-life. Staff is concerned that if these items are left unaddressed, conditions will soon reach a point that the building will be deemed unsuitable for public services and have to be closed immediately. To avoid a significant disruption in public services, staff proposes the City begin planning and then implementing temporary or permanent relocation of the services offered in City Hall. Simultaneously, staff proposes initiating a process to plan the future use of the building.

Staff recently requested a preliminary assessment of rehabilitating or placing City Hall. The estimated construction cost to renovate the 400 Magnolia Avenue building to current codes, including interior remodel/reconfiguration is \$7.5 million. Including all architect/design/management and contingency fees, the total cost is estimated to be \$10 million. The building houses approximately 9,300 square feet of space. A preliminary budget for a new 9,300 square foot building for a similar use would be \$9 million.

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Based on cost alone, the decision to replace the current building with new construction makes sense. However, the building is a part of the Downtown Historical District and its importance and relevance in this context requires analysis if the Council is inclined to explore this option.

In light of the significant cost to rehabilitate or replace City Hall, another option the Council might consider is the permanent relocation of city services and the repurposing of the building by another party.

Additionally, in light of the City's plan, through its partnership with the Commons Foundation, to relocate the Larkspur Library to the Community Facility Parcel at Rose Lane, should it ultimately be decided that city offices and the Council Chamber be restored to the building at 400 Magnolia Avenue, the Larkspur Library should not be part of the redesigned building. The Library should be kept in whatever temporary condition is identified until such time as the new facility at Rose Lane is available.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The Larkspur City Hall was built at its present site, 400 Magnolia Avenue in 1913 as a two-story wood-framed structure on a concrete foundation. Originally built at 8,800 square feet (SF), due to several additions, the building now includes approximately 9,300 SF of floor space.

400 Magnolia Avenue Approximate Floor Areas

	First Floor (SF)	Second Floor (SF)	Total (SF)
City offices	680	1,775	2,455
Library	4,030 (includes mezzanine)	0	4,030
Council Chambers	0	970	970
Support	700	1145	1,845
Total	5,410	3,890	9,300

Support areas include hallways, closets, washrooms, elevator, etc.

Over the years, the building has undergone several renovations and reconfigurations; however, the bulk of the shell and structure of the building has not been upgraded in its 108-year life. As identified in several building analyses dating back to 1988, the building does not meet current building codes for seismic restraint – there are deficiencies in the foundation, floors and interior and exterior walls that make the building more vulnerable to collapse in an earthquake.

Other significant building deficiencies include lack of fire sprinklers, as well as mechanical, electrical and alarm systems and an elevator that are out of date and not reliable. The HVAC system has been repaired and replaced on numerous occasions; however, a system overhaul including all new ducts and components would be required to be fully functional. Partial replacement HVAC systems have historically been unable to meet the building's cooling needs during hotter summer days. Each one of the required upgrades has significant cost and the expense of one system alone is difficult to justify without considering more extensive work.

The most recent significant building work was a window replacement and minor second floor reconfiguration completed in 2016. In response to a window "voluntarily separating" from the building, an inventory of window conditions was completed and 56 windows were ultimately identified for replacement. A number of unanticipated building structure issues emerged during the window replacement project, including the finding of deteriorated/rotted structural members. The additional work required to replace/patch what was discovered during this work resulting in the final project cost ballooning from the awarded amount of \$220,000 to a final cost of \$415,000. Similarly, a 2016 exterior painting project resulted in significant additional costs for replacement of trim and gutter components that were found not to be in functioning condition.

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In early 2021, staff engaged the services of Kitchell CEM to review the various reports and assessments of 400 Magnolia Avenue and update the same to reflect the condition of the building today. Kitchell's review noted that several of the building's systems were approaching the end of their service life and that plans for their replacement should be initiated. Together with the previously identified seismic, accessibility and associated remodel needs, they estimate the cost of work that needs to be performed to be \$10,000,000, inclusive of engineering, management and contingency allowances.

Summary of Significant Building Component Replacement Costs

	Component	Approximate Cost*
1	Seismic Retrofit	\$1,200,000
2	Renovation (including ADA)	\$5,500,000
3	HVAC	\$1,025,000
4	Elevator	\$180,000
5	Fire Sprinklers	\$150,000
6	Electrical and Lighting	\$435,000
7	Fire Alarm/ detection system	\$190,000
8	Roofing	\$70,000
9	Miscellaneous other	\$1,650,000
	Total estimated (including engineering, management, contingencies etc.)	\$10,000,000

* The costs shown are for individual work items without consideration of impacts on other building components or work items. The seismic work would trigger most of the item 2 work as the seismic work would remove most of the buildings wall and floor coverings.

Given the expense of individual upgrades required and the likely impact they would have on the remainder of the building, staff does not believe any significant expense should be undertaken without evaluating a complete building remodel/renovation.

Without addressing building deficiencies in a timely manner, the likelihood of a significant component failure and resulting loss of building use is considered high. Without appropriate planning, such an unplanned building closure could result in significant costs to the City beyond any cost of repair or reconstruction.

Staff recommends the City commence planning for a significant (\$10 million) improvement to 400 Magnolia Avenue. Staff notes that the \$10,000,000 price tag for improvements to 400 Magnolia Avenue is likely equivalent to the cost of constructing a new building of similar size (9,300 SF.) Consideration of such an expenditure warrants an analysis of options for building city offices, Council Chamber, and library in an alternate location and repurposing 400 Magnolia Avenue. There has for some time been conversations about locating a new library at the Community Facilities Parcel (CFP) at Rose Lane, including a recent Master Plan process. While there has been little to no community conversations about relocating city offices and Council Chamber, the current building condition and need for significant, costly work warrants an evaluation.

In the event it is determined that some combination of City Hall/Library/Council Chamber should remain in a renovated 400 Magnolia Avenue, the scope of work required is such that temporary relocation would be required during construction. Temporary relocation could be leasing existing space, temporary location in modular units or construction of alternate accommodations to be repurposed upon that operation moving back into 400 Magnolia.

The below list summarizes the early discussion points to be considered in evaluating the disposition of 400 Magnolia Avenue. It is staff's opinion that continuing operations as-is at 400 Magnolia Avenue is not sustainable, and it is staff's recommendation that alternatives be developed and vetted with the public in

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the very near future so as to avoid a more costly circumstance where the building becomes unusable due to sudden failure of one or more of the identified components.

The below questions do not need to be answered ‘yes/no’ at this point, but feedback is requested if any of the proposals are deemed as not feasible/ not acceptable or if any are highly desirable. In addition, it is appropriate to suggest alternate options that may not have been considered below. A matrix follows the list summarizing the options assuming the answer to the first question is ‘yes.’

400 Magnolia Avenue:

- Should the City explore significant renovation of 400 Magnolia to address all identified deficiencies?
- Should a renovated 400 Magnolia Avenue include space for city offices? Library? Council chambers? Other public uses?
- Should other existing (private) spaces/ buildings be considered for city offices? Library? Council chamber? – and if so should 400 Magnolia Avenue be improved by the City for alternate public use? Or should the City initiate a process to identify an alternate (private) use?
- Should new city offices (City Hall) be considered as part of the CFP development at Rose Lane?

Temporary Location of 400 Magnolia Avenue operations:

- Should the library temporarily operate from portable/modular units (no foundation)?
- Should the library temporarily operate from a more permanent modular unit (with a foundation) that could be incorporated into ultimate development of the Community Facilities Parcel at Rose Lane? *(It should be noted that the more this option is expedited, the less likely the resulting structure may be compatible with future development of the site.)*
- Should an existing building be explored for temporary library operations?

For temporary city offices, the following options have been identified as preliminary options:

- portable modular units at the CFP next to temporary library,
- portable modular units at Piper Park (former location of Public Works trailers)
- permanent modular building at Piper Park location, suitable for future repurposing should City offices return to 400 Magnolia.
- lease existing office space.
- It should be noted that there may be some shared use options for some portions of city offices, including at the City’s Corporation Yard and at Central Marin Police Authority; however, some functions such as the permit counter will need a dedicated space that has not been identified as being available at an existing city-controlled location.

Due to the limited use of the Council Chamber staff recommends a temporary shared use be explored; in recent years, City Council meetings have been held at the Central Marin Police Authority and at the Tamalpais Unified High School District facilities when City Hall is not available.

Matrix of city operations options			
Time frame	City offices	Library	Council Chamber
Temporary	Portable at CFP Portable at Piper Modular at Piper Lease space Share space as available	Portable at CFP Modular at CFP Lease space	Share space
Final	400 Magnolia CFP New construction not at CFP Lease space	400 Magnolia CFP Lease Space	400 Magnolia CFP

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Ideally, a temporary relocation of operations would be identified and secured such that relocation could occur within twelve months. The community engagement, planning and construction of new permanent facilities, whether they be at 400 Magnolia Avenue or elsewhere, is estimated to be a three-year process.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no significant funding identified for the recommended work at 400 Magnolia Avenue or new facilities at this time. Staff will be working on a funding plan, concurrent with Council direction on alternatives.

ENVIRONMENTAL STATUS

The requested action is for Council to provide direction to staff on alternatives to return with more information. There is no binding action or alteration proposed that could affect the environment in the action requested, and as such there is no CEQA analysis required. CEQA analysis will be undertaken when a project is identified.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends the City Council provide direction to staff to staff on alternatives to further evaluate for discussion at future City Council meeting.

Respectfully submitted,
Julian Skinner, Public Works Director