

APPROVED

REVISED

August 21 2025

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

BOARD REPORT

NO. 25- 150

DATE August 21, 2025

C.D. 4

BOARD OF RECREATION AND PARK COMMISSIONERS

SUBJECT: PURCHASE OF SPILLMAN ENGINEERING CAROUSEL LOCATED AT GRIFFITH PARK - CATEGORICAL EXEMPTION FROM THE PROVISIONS OF THE CALIFORNIA ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY ACT (CEQA) PURSUANT TO ARTICLE 19 , SECTION 15325(e) [ACQUISITION, SALE, OR OTHER TRANSFER TO PRESERVE HISTORICAL RESOURCES] AND SECTION 15331 [PROJECTS LIMITED TO MAINTENANCE, REPAIR, STABILIZATION, REHABILITATION, RESTORATION, PRESERVATION, CONSERVATION OR RECONSTRUCTION OF HISTORICAL RESOURCES IN A MANNER CONSISTENT WITH THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HISTORIC PROPERTIES WITH GUIDELINES FOR PRESERVING, REHABILITATING, RESTORING, AND RECONSTRUCTING HISTORIC BUILDINGS (1995), WEEKS AND GRIMMER] OF CALIFORNIA CEQA GUIDELINES AS WELL AS ARTICLE III, SECTION 1, CLASS 16 OF CITY CEQA GUIDELINES

*B. Aguirre _____

C. Santo Domingo _____

B. Jones _____

C. Stoneham _____

M. Rudnick MR

N. Williams _____

9/6
General Manager

Approved X

Disapproved _____

Withdrawn _____

If Approved: Board President _____

Board Secretary Sakin Sadi

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Authorize the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) to purchase the 1926 Spillman Engineering Carousel located in Griffith Park, along with its associated equipment and parts and as more fully described in this report ("Merry-Go-Round"), for a total price not to exceed \$1,000,000 (Purchase Price), to be paid to The R&J Amusement Company LLC (Seller);
2. Approve the reallocation of \$1,000,000 to Fund No. 302, Department No. 89 and Account No. 89TBD – Griffith Park Project.

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3. Authorize the Department Chief Accounting Employee to transfer \$1,000,000 from Fund No. 302, Department No. 89, Account No. 89270K-CM project fund to a new account Fund No. 302, Department No. 89 and Account No. 89TBD – Griffith Park Project.
4. Authorize the payment of the Purchase Price to the Seller upon receipt of all necessary approvals and in accordance with the terms and conditions for such purchase as may be required by the Department of General Service (GSD) as the purchasing agent for the City of Los Angeles;
5. Authorize RAP staff to coordinate the standard purchasing requirements and procedures with the GSD and any other City Department(s) as may be necessary in order to effectuate the purchase of the Merry-Go-Round;
6. Authorize RAP's General Manager or designee to execute any documents necessary to effectuate the purchase of the Merry-Go-Round, including any documents necessary to obtain approvals required by GSD's processes and procedures;
7. Determine that the Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19 , Section 15325(e) [Acquisition, sale, or other transfer to preserve historical resources] and Section 15331 [Projects limited to maintenance, repair, stabilization, rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, conservation or reconstruction of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995), Weeks and Grimmer] of California CEQA Guidelines as well as Article III, Section 1, Class 16 of City CEQA Guidelines and direct staff to file a Notice of Exemption (NOE) with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation;
8. Authorize RAP's Chief Accounting Employee to prepare a check to the Los Angeles County Clerk in the amount of \$75.00 for the purpose of filing a Notice of Exemption (NOE); and
9. Authorize RAP's Chief Accounting Employee to make technical corrections as necessary to carry out the intent of this Report.

SUMMARY

Griffith Park is the largest historic monument in the City of Los Angeles, comprised of cultural and historically-important sites such as Griffith Observatory, the Old Zoo, Fern Dell and, specifically for this report, the Griffith Park Historic Merry-Go-Round (Merry-Go-Round).

The Merry-Go-Round is a one-of-a-kind, historically significant carousel that has contributed to Griffith Park being a beloved and unique destination for Angelenos and visitors alike for nearly a century. Built in 1926 by the Spillman Engineering Corporation, the Merry-Go-Round was relocated from San Diego to Griffith Park in 1937.

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The Merry-Go-Round is privately owned and was operated as a concession by The R&J Amusement Company LLC (Seller) for decades, under a partnership between Mr. Warren Deasy and Mrs. Rosemary West. Upon Mr. Deasy's death in 2011, his interest in the Merry-Go-Round was left to his long-time employee Mr. Julio Gosdinski. Mr. Gosdinski and Mrs. West operated the Merry-Go-Round in partnership until Mr. Gosdinski's death in 2020, at which time his ownership interest in the Merry-Go-Round entered probate. His estate and Mrs. West are the sole members of the Seller, which wholly owns the Merry-Go-Round and its associated equipment.

The Merry-Go-Round was closed due to the Covid-19 pandemic in March 2020, and reopened in May 2021. It was then shuttered again in May 2022 due to a need for repairs and the uncertainty related to ownership. Since that time, the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) has been engaged in an effort to resolve the concessions-related issues and to reopen the Merry-Go-Round for the benefit of the public.

As discussed in more detail below, after thorough due diligence and consideration, RAP is recommending the purchase of the Merry-Go-Round to ensure that this historically significant community asset permanently remains in Griffith Park. The purchase is supported by a number of stakeholders including the Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust, Office of Councilmember Nithya Raman, the National Carousel Association and the Los Angeles Conservancy.

If approved, following the purchase of the Merry-Go-Round, RAP plans to engage these stakeholder and other partners to coordinate a fundraising effort for the rehabilitation and restoration of the Merry-Go-Round, which may require a multi-year effort. RAP would then also develop and release a Request for Proposal for operation, maintenance and ongoing preservation and conservation of the Merry-Go-Round.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

As mentioned above, the Merry-Go-Round was built by the Spillman Engineering Corporation in 1926 and was relocated from San Diego to Griffith Park in 1937. Featuring 68 wood-carved and bejeweled horses in four rows, with examples of Loeff, Spillman and Carmel jumper horses throughout, it boasts two chariots and an elaborately-detailed ceiling kit. It also includes a Stinson 165 Military Band Organ which plays over 1,500 hundred songs.

The Merry-Go-Round is one of the only examples of a Spillman Engineering 4-Abreast Carousel that remains intact in North America. It sits against a hillside, surrounded by trees, near the Old Zoo Picnic Area and Shane's Inspiration Playground, in the heart of Griffith Park. The Merry-Go-Round is the location where celebrities of the day would be sighted including "Gone with the Wind" star Olivia de Havilland and a young film producer now known throughout the world as Walt Disney. In fact, Walt Disney regularly frequented the Merry-Go-Round on Saturdays, watching his daughters ride around and daydreaming of one day creating his own theme park. This very merry-go-round, with its beautifully crafted horses and chariots, is widely recognized as the inspiration behind the vision that would one day become Disneyland.

The Stinson Organ plays familiar, classical music which reverberates throughout the park

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adding to the perfect atmosphere of a memorable family day in the park and an unparalleled experience of delight and magic for adults and children alike.

On January 27, 2009, the City of Los Angeles Department of City Planning's Cultural Heritage Commission declared Griffith Park to be Historical Cultural Monument #942 and specifically recognized that the Merry-Go-Round is a character-defining feature and contributing element to the cultural, economic and social history of the City of Los Angeles.

ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Given its deep, historical connection to Griffith Park and its significance as a specialized item of unique craftsmanship, RAP believes it is essential to retain this asset, restore and preserve it, and eventually reopen the Merry-Go-Round for the benefit of the public.

As a result of the Merry-Go-Round's closure and a portion of its ownership interests entering probate, RAP and other Griffith Park stakeholders became concerned regarding the process to restore and reopen the Merry-Go-Round. After initial discussions, the Merry-Go-Round's ownership representatives communicated their intent to sell the asset. These circumstances presented a unique opportunity for RAP to consider purchasing the Merry-Go-Round for a fair-market price, and though the sellers indicated their desire for the Merry-Go-Round to remain in Griffith Park in order to continue providing a public benefit, the alternative possibility emerged that a third-party buyer could purchase the Merry-Go-Round and potentially relocate it. RAP staff therefore entered into discussions with the Merry-Go-Round's ownership representatives and began conducting appropriate due diligence.

RAP researched the ownership of the Merry-Go-Round to verify which individuals through which business entities had authority to sell the Merry-Go-Round. RAP also consulted with the Office of the City Attorney and with GSD regarding the purchase. GSD is the Chief Purchasing agent of the City of Los Angeles and requires documentation and a walk-through in such purchases including an inventory verification.

On June 24, 2024, RAP conducted an initial walkthrough of the Merry-Go-Round. Several members of the Cultural Heritage Commission were in attendance, several carousel experts, the Senior Architect at the Office of Historic Resources and ownership representatives.

RAP then obtained three independent appraisals by qualified experts including A&E Sculpting, National Carousel Association, and Antique Carousels (Attachment A). Based on these three separate appraisals of the Merry-Go-Round and an extensive search of similar merry-go-rounds in North America as well as upon several conversations with the National Carousel Association, RAP determined in 2024 that a fair market price is in the range of approximately nine hundred thousand dollars (\$900,000) to one million dollars (\$1,000,000), not including additional significant inventory items such as historical benches and replacement horses and decorative panels.

After sharing the results of these appraisals, both sellers negotiating through their attorneys agreed to a purchase price of one million dollars (\$1,000,000). The sellers have noted that they

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have received purchase offers of higher amounts but wish to see the Merry-Go-Round remain in Griffith Park.

On July 31, 2025, RAP conducted an additional inventory inspection and verification with the current owners in attendance. The owners and RAP mutually agreed upon an inventory checklist and checked every portion of the property for the presence of and condition of the items included. The list of items to be acquired is set forth in Attachment 3 of this Report.

Under the instruction of GSD, RAP is currently obtaining all required documentation for the purchase from the owners and preparing the necessary documents to effectuate the purchase if approved by the Board.

RESTORATION AND REOPENING PROCESS

Based upon initial assessments, the Merry-Go-Round requires mechanical repairs and restoration work in order for its reopening and ongoing operation. Various stakeholder and partners have expressed interest in supporting the effort to rehabilitate, restore, preserve and conserve the Merry-Go-Round. As such, if the purchase recommendation is approved by the Board, RAP would undertake a fundraising effort to effectuate these efforts, the full scope and cost of which requires further assessment.

In parallel to a fundraising effort and the initiation of repairs and restoration, RAP would also develop an RFP for the ongoing operations and maintenance of the Merry-Go-Round that would result in a concessions or operating agreement.

RAP anticipates these steps to represent a multi-year effort and staff would therefore report back to the Board with status updates on a reopening timeline.

It should also be noted that the "Park Center" area of Griffith Park in which the Merry-Go-Round is located is currently undergoing several new and exciting projects including, but not limited to upgrades to the Griffith Park Visitor Center, establishment of the Griffith Park Performing Arts Stage, and a new food and beverage cafe, that will benefit the public and the park.

TREES AND SHADE

Approval of this Report will have no impact on existing trees and shade at Griffith Park.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

The proposed Project consists of an acquisition to preserve historical resources and of the rehabilitation, restoration, preservation, and conservation of historical resources in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring, and Reconstructing Historic Buildings (1995), Weeks and Grimmer.

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According to the parcel profile report retrieved on August 13, 2025, this site is not within a coastal, or methane zone. It is in a liquefaction zone and within a City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (HCM#942). The acquisition of this structure has the goal to preserve its historic characteristics and will not increase the risk of liquefaction or affect the historic nature of the site, so there is no reasonable possibility that the proposed Project may impact on an environmental resource of hazardous or critical concern or have a significant effect due to unusual circumstances. No other known projects would involve cumulatively significant impacts, and no future projects would result from the proposed Project. As of August 13, 2025, the State Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) (Envirostor at www.envirostor.dtsc.ca.gov) and the State Water Resources Control Board (SWRCB) (Geotracker at <https://geotracker.waterboards.ca.gov/>) have not listed the Project site or any contaminated sites near the Project area (within 1,000 feet). According to the Caltrans Scenic Highway Map there is no scenic highway located within the vicinity of the proposed Project or within its site. Furthermore, the proposed Project is within Griffith Park a City of Los Angeles Historic Cultural Monument (HCM#942) and is one of the contributing elements to the determination of the historic value of the site. As the acquisition has the goal to restore and preserve the historic characteristics of this structure, the project will not have any significant effect on historic resources.

Based on this information, staff recommends that the Board determine that the proposed Project is categorically exempt from the provisions of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) pursuant to Article 19, Section 15325(e) and 15331 of California CEQA Guidelines and Article III Section 1, Class 16 of City CEQA Guidelines. Staff will file a Notice of Exemption with the Los Angeles County Clerk and the Governor's Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation upon Board's approval.

FISCAL IMPACT

RAP may see a potential increase to revenue dependent on the outcome of any future concessionaire agreement.

This Report was prepared by Tracy James, Project Assistant, John Busby, Senior Management Analyst II, and Matthew Rudnick, Executive Officer.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS/EXHIBITS

1. Three (3) independent appraisals, assessments of the Merry-Go-Round
2. Letters of Support:
 - a. Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust
 - b. Councilmember Nithya Raman, District 4
 - c. National Carousel Association
 - d. Los Angeles Conservancy
3. List of Acquired Items

APPRAISAL



FOUR-ROW SPILLMAN ENGINEERING CAROUSEL
CIRCA 1926
CORRECT MIXTURE OF SPILLMAN, LOOFF AND CARMEL STYLE
FIGURES
CURRENTLY LOCATED AT GRIFFITH PARK, CA

APPRAISAL PROVIDED
BY, A & E SCULPTING
3831 Catalina St. Unit E. Los Alamitos, CA, 90720
EMAIL: aandesculpting@gmail.com TEL: 562-706-6598

CERTIFIED APPRAISAL

To Whom This May concern,

This is to certify that A & E Sculpting has been in the business of identification, valuation, consulting, restoration and custom fabricating carousels since 1986.

A visual inspection of the 1926 Spillman Engineering Carousel located at Griffith Park, CA was performed on June 30th, 2024. This inspection was done with the purpose to determine current Fair Market Value of all its parts individually and as unit in its present condition.

Permission for this inspection was granted by owner of record:
Rosemary West, of San Diego, CA

VALUATION EFFECTIVE DATE: July, 2024

MECHANICAL FABRICATOR: Spillman Engineering,
North Tonawanda, NY

CARVING STYLES ON CAROUSEL: Spillman, Charles Loeff and Charles Carmel

CIRCA: 1926

NUMBER OF SECTIONS: 18

NUMBER OF ROWS: 4 - very rare

Number of Figures: 68 Horses, all

jumpers **Number of Chariots:** 2

Material of figures: Hand carved from Basswood and extinct Poplar species

Original Ceilings: Yes, all original to carousel, very rare

Rounding Boards: Yes with paintings (circa 1950's)

Center Surround: Yes, original to carousel - rare

GRIFFITH PARK MERRY GO ROUND PROVENANCE

Fabricator: Spillman Engineering Corporation. The factory was located at the corner of Goundry and Oliver Street in North Tonawanda, NY.

The carousel was commissioned in 1925 by the Spreckels family. It was completed in 1926 and originally operated at Mission Beach Amusement Center in San Diego.

The ornate park size carousel features jumping 68 horses in 4 rows, 2 chariots and an elaborate ceiling kit. Four Row carousels are extremely rare.

All of the figures are hand carved from mainly Basswood and Poplar. There are Charles Looff, Marcus Illions and Carmel figures present on this carousel as well.

In 1937 the Davis family purchased the carousel from the Spreckles and relocated it to its present home at Griffith Park. They built the carousel building niched into the side of the hill as well. The Davis family are also responsible for the historic carousels at Balboa Park, San Diego; Tilden Park, Berkley; and the carousel at Golden Gate Park, San Francisco.

Before the 1926 Spillman, a 1911 Herschell-Spillman carousel operated at Griffith Park. The 1911 carousel was moved to Tilden Park, where it is still operates.

Rosemary West purchased the carousel 38 years ago and is currently half owner of the carousel. The other owner, Julio Gosdinski passed away in August 2020. His share of the carousel is currently being settled in probate court with his mother and sister ultimately being the beneficiaries of the his estate.



Griffith Park, CA
1926 Spillman, Looff Four-Row Carousel
COURTESY OF THE DAVID BILBES COLLECTION

CONDITION REPORT

Mechanicals

Currently the carousel is unoperable. It could not be made to move by pushing the carousel manually. From what could be observed the top/thrust bearing is cracked, gears have excessive wear, pillow blocks are loose, and cranks have excessive movement (one is missing).

The carousel mechanicals show decades of wear consistent with its age and the many original parts present. This is to be expected of ninety eight year old carousel mechanicals that have been in continuous operation until two years ago.

Sweeps, Mud Seals, Center Pole and Floors

The wooden parts of the mechanism appear to be sound, which is extremely valuable.

Center pole appears in good condition and not modified.

Mud Seals have a lot of dirt, but visually appear in good condition.

The sweeps are made of quality wood and always further inspection is recommended, but all eighteen appear to be visually sound with original hardware. This type of wood is virtually irreplaceable and very costly.

The floors are in good condition. Fresh paint is always recommended, but this work does not need to be performed immediately. California weather and being covered all these years have preserved them, a worth valued at around one hundred fifty thousand dollars for material and labor.

It is very rare to have a carousel such as this one; it has never been taken apart and placed in storage therefore the wooden parts appear to be sound. Wooden components of this length tend to warp when parted and stored for a period of time.

Rounding Boards (outer to decoration with Paintings)

All eighteen are there and are tin backed. The tin skins are rusting and need to be treated. Antique scenery panels are included with the carousel making them valuable. Restoration of these parts are need to be done immediately before the backing rust through.

Interior Panels and Housing (center surround to cover the mechanicals)

These are very rare and original to the carousel seem in great condition. All eighteen panels contain original paintings.

Carousel Figures

All of the carousel figures are exquisitely carved and highly decorated; probably one most decorated carousels ever carved. It is very unusual for a carousel to have every row of figures as elaborate as this carousel. They have over forty years of wear and require extensive restoration. All figures are very consistent with the period and style of carvings. It is very interesting carosel created at a period when some of the must renowned carvers of the time contributed to this carousel. Some of these carvers are Charles Loeff, creator of the Santa Monica Pier and brought the concept of pleasure piers to the US. Charles Carmel creator of

Rye Playland, NY carousel. Marcus Illions one the most prolific carvers creator of the coveted Illions Supreme Carousel. The collaboration of styles on this carousel is consistent and well documented for this period in carousel history. These carvers wee know to be friends and contribute to Spillman Engineering custom carousels.

Figures are fully restorable and would be worth at least twice as much as present value. There might be pockets of original paint in the corners that have not suffer from erosion.



CURRENT VALUE

Carousel Figures

16 Outside Row Horses	\$ 9,500 ea	= \$152,000
16 Second Row Horses	\$ 8,000 ea.	= \$128,000
18 Third Row Horses	\$ 5,500 ea.	= \$ 99,000
18 Fourth Row Horses	\$ 4,500 ea.	= \$ 81,000

Chariots

3 complete chariots (1 extra)	\$ 5,000 ea.	= \$ 15,000
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Estimated Value of horses in present condition **\$475,000**

The Trim

18 Rounding Boards	\$ 4,500 ea	= \$ 81,000
18 Shields	\$ 2,000 ea	= \$ 36,000
18 Upper Row Inner Housing	\$ 2,500 ea	= \$ 45,000
15 Lower Inner Housing	\$ 1,500 ea	= \$ 22,500
18 Ceiling Panels	\$ 1,000 ea	= \$ 18,000

Estimated Value of trim in present condition **\$202,500**

Estimated Value of Frame & Mechanicals in present condition **\$225,000**

Total Fair Market Value of Individual Parts is Estimated at \$902,000

Taking into account the excellent provenance of this carousel as entire surviving 1926 carousel unit that has never been parted out, retains its original figures, original chariots, most of its original mechanical hardware, accounting that it has never been placed in storage therefore preventing warpage of the wooden structural parts is very rare and has added value.

We don't know of any four row carousels being built in present time, it would be very costly.

The fact that this carousel has historic meaning to Los Angeles since has operated in Griffith Park since 1937 has value. It is well documented this specific carousel being a contributing inspiration to the creation of Disneyland. Many Angelinos grew up riding this carousel and has been background to many Hollywood movies earning this carousel cultural significance to Los Angeles and collectors. All of this adds to its desirability and value as Unit.

Total Value of Entire Carousel as a Unit \$1,000,000

This APPRAISAL was prepared by A And E Sculpting with up to date information on carousel sales and carousel historic sales in the past 20 years. There are no exact comparison to this carousel as it is a four row carousel therefore being larger and having more figures than the typical full size carousel.

We do not represent the carousel for sale. We do not agree to purchase this carousel, and assume no responsibility.



ADRIANA ROTH, OWNER, A&E SCULPTING

7/28/24

DATE

A & E SCULPTING
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Bette L. Largent, President
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Spokane, Wa 99208-9308

www.nca-usa.org

Letter of Appraisal

Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round

1926 Spillman Engineering, -San Diego, California, 1926-1935, Los Angeles, California 1937-to 2008

This appraisal is not a binding price. It is an estimate of value by the Board of the National Carousel Association which was founded in 1973. It was derived by the history of the origins of the figures, the history of the figures on the established machine and the history of the machine within the community, replacement costs, and the mechanical components which make up a total unit— The Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round.

16 OUTSIDE ROW FIGURES	
5 Loeff, @35,000	\$175,000
11 Spillman @12,000	132,000
16 SECOND ROW FIGURES	
3 Loeff @11,000	33,000
13 Spillman @ 10,000	130,000
18 THIRD ROW FIGURES	
4 Loeff @ 6,600	26,400
13 Spillman @ 6,000	78,000
1 Carmel	6,600
18 FOURTH ROW FIGURES	
3 Loeff @ 5,500	16,500
14 Spillman @ 5,000	5,000
1 Carmel @ 5,500	5,500
2 CHARIOTS @ 6,000	12,000
BAND ORGAN—STINSON, 201 ROLLS, REPLACEMENT	
BAND ORGAN-N. TONAWANDA, (PART OF LOWER SURROUND) 106 ROLLS	45,000
FRAME with mechanics (with ring arm.)	35,000
ROUNDING BOARDS + extra set, Lincoln Park Spillman	25,000
EXTRA FIGURES, Lincoln Park Spillman @ 6,600	26,400
EXTRA CHARIOT, Lincoln Park Spillman @ 6,000	6,000
SUBTOTAL	757,400
*PREMIUM FOR ORIGINAL FIGURES,INTACT, OPERATING, NATIONAL HISTORY @ 20%	151,480
TOTAL VALUE	\$908,880.00

*

15 Loeffs, rare 1885-1887

2 Carmel, rare design carvings

51 Spillman

Second set of original paintings, Lincoln Park Spillman

Additional figures from Lincoln Park Spillman, only remaining survivors of fire.

building's historic character. Eligible projects may include typical repairs to building features such as roofs, windows and porches; painting; interior work; and potentially additions. Loan amounts and terms may vary. It should be noted that the program may take substantial staff time to operate and monitor.

EXAMPLE	
Cuyahoga County Heritage Home Loan Program (HHLP)	
http://development.cuyahogacounty.us/en-US/housing-development.aspx	
Cleveland Restoration Society Heritage Homes Program:	
http://www.clevelandrestoration.org/homeowner/	

Neighborhood Organizations

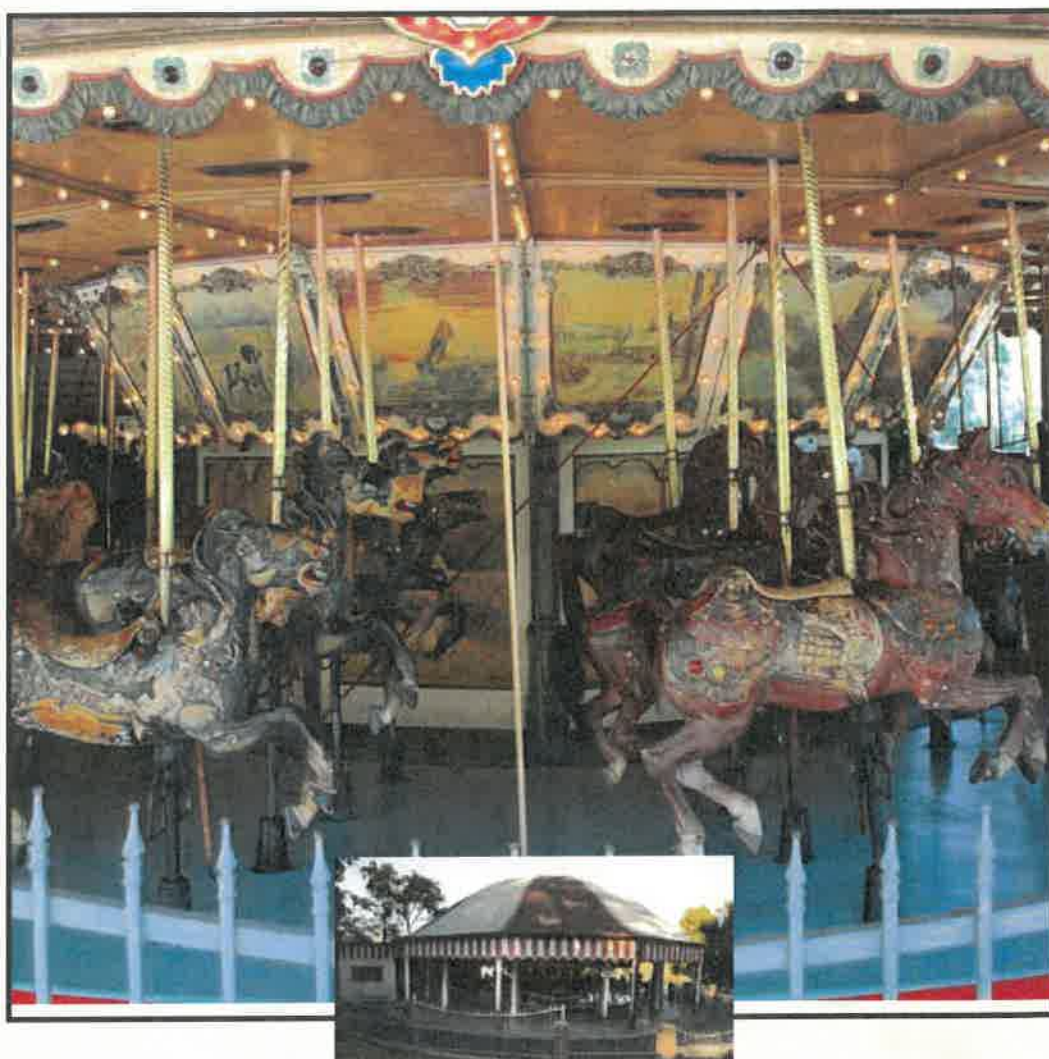
Word of mouth is sometimes the best source of finding a good craftsperson, contractor or other historic preservation professional. Neighborhood and preservation organizations may be a good source for database lists and technical assistance guidelines and recommendations. Websites may include lists of architects, contractors and other professionals experienced with working on historic properties.

EXAMPLES	
Anaheim Colony	http://www.anaheimcolony.com/
City of San Jose, Historic Preservation	
http://www.sanjoseca.gov/index.aspx?NID=1760	

Preservation Revolving Funds

Preservation revolving funds help to preserve, restore, and maintain buildings and properties of historical and architectural importance within a specific area for the benefit of future generations. A fund empowers an organization to purchase endangered properties, take action to preserve the property, then resell the property, making the proceeds available to save the next building. A fund is a worthy preservation tool that saves historic resources, supports grassroots improvement efforts, enhances the quality of life in communities, and puts an organization in the real estate market with the developer.

A P P R A I S A L



CIRCA 1926

**FOUR-ROW SPILLMAN ENG. CAROUSEL
WITH SPILLMAN LOOFF AND CARMEL HORSES
OPERATES AT GRIFFITH PARK, CA**



AntiqueCarousels.com

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– CERTIFIED APPRAISAL –

To Whom it May Concern,

This is to certify that I am engaged in the business of identification, valuation, consulting, consignment sales, and appraisal of fine antique carousel art of all descriptions.

I hear by certify that I am familiar with the following listed and described piece(s), the property of:

Rosemary West, et al
San Diego California, USA

VALUATION EFFECTIVE DATE: July, 2024

FAIR MARKET VALUATION/APPRAISAL: \$948,000

ARTIST/BUILDER: Spillman Engineering, North Tonawanda, NY.

DESCRIPTION: c. 1926. 4-Row Spillman Engineering/Loeff/Carmel, all horse, all jumpers. Rare carousel in very old paint.

HISTORY AND RARITY:

Every historic carousel has two values. The sentimental value of being 100 years old and giving smiles to millions, from infants on their first ride, to world-famous celebrities and all those between; and there is the value of the wooden, hand-carved horses, and elaborate trim, rounding boards and center housing art, all very collectible as individual pieces.

In the late decades of the 21st century, with so many carousels in the country and small parks failing all over with the rise of Disney and Six flags and the super parks, these prized carousels became worth more with the figures sold to collectors than as a whole. With the collector market pretty well saturated and soft, and few prized carousel remaining, these precious rides are again worth more as a whole than a sum of their pieces.

This historic ride was built in 1926 and brought to the park in 1937, after operating in San Diego. It features 68 horses and a large band organ. It was placed in a new building which was just down the road from old The Griffith Park, LA Zoo.

It was the Davis Family who brought the 1926 Spillman carousel to Griffith Park. They built the beautiful building niched into the side of the hill as well. Oliver F., Ross R., and J. O. Davis, three generations. In addition to The Griffith Park Carousel, the Davis family are also



Third generation of the Davis family, J. O. Davis on the carousel in the 1950s.

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responsible for the historic carousels at Balboa Park, San Diego; Tilden Park, Berkeley, CA; and instrumental in placing the carousel in Golden Gate Park, San Francisco. In those days, the Griffith Park Zoo was just down (or up) the road. Even more animals came to Griffith Park from Lincoln Park, where the Davis' had their main carousel operation.

The Griffith Park Zoo opened in 1913 intending to give the animals a more natural setting. Cages were carved right into the hills around it, and, although it attracted 2 million visitors a year, in 1966, the animals were moved to the new LA Zoo, 2 miles away. In addition to closing the old zoo, the park closed the road past the carousel. Griffith Park Drive went up past the carousel to the old zoo, not far away, and also went all the way to the new zoo, but was soon closed at the carousel parking lot, cutting off the carousel at a dead end. Plenty of families and kids of all ages find the historic carousel in the park on the weekends. The carousel also does well to exploit its own character and good looks, and is quite often the location for filming and/or private parties. Being stuck on a dead-end road, at the top of the hill with so many activities in the park below, has made things hard over time for the iconic carousel.

In the day, the carousel was always considered the heart and soul of the park. The Griffith Park carousel, atop the hill, looking down on the rest of the activities in Griffith Park deserves its place. With proper attention and operation, the carousel will return to its place as the heart and soul of the park with the appreciation of the city, the region, the country and the world as one of the finest remaining grand carousels in operation from the Golden Age of American of carousels. Through the years the Griffith Park carousel has always been a star with everyone from inner-city kids to Hollywood films and everyone in between. Famously, a young Walt Disney would often visit the beloved Los Angeles merry-go-round. As his daughter rode around with wide smiles, he would chat with Ross Davis and pick his brain as Walt developed his dream that would become Disneyland.

OLD/ORIGINAL PAINT:

Often coveted by collectors, there is something very special about one of these century-old, hand-carved carousel figures in original or old paint patina. Needless to say, for many reasons, there are very few that you can still ride. The Kit Carson, circa 1905 PTC #6 carousel in Colorado is famously one, restored to its original paint. The Griffith Park carousel is another as it retains the old paint of the exceptional, unknown to most, Nate Boleus, the longtime artist for the Davis carousel family. These wonderful carvings and Nate's paint artistry and stenciling came together many decades ago and the horses now wear the patina of decades, encompassing millions of riders as well as endless film, television and commercial credits. Restoring these horses and the entire carousel in this old paint patina will assure its retention of its position as one of the most rare and finest operating historic carousels in the country.



No new paint could ever replicate the beauty of the worn Nate Boleus paint on these horses.

626-639-0313 • antiquecarousels@gmail.com

509 INDIANA COURT • SOUTH PASADENA, CA 91030

AntiqueCarousels.com

The Griffith Park Carousel Valuation -

Appraised Value Breakdown and Support:

THE CAROUSEL HORSES, CHARIOTS, TRIM--ROUNDING BOARDS, INNER HOUSING:

THE HORSES:

The horses on the Griffith Park carousel horses are as rare as any "Golden Age" carousel operating. There are many operating PTC, Dentzel, Illions, etc., with some amazing carvings -- but these are among the finest carvings ever to come from the Spillman Eng. shop (including some additions from Loeff and Carmel). With a long standing and close relationship with Herschell-Spillman as a representative selling their carousels on the west coast, and later Spillman Eng., Ross Davis most certainly requested this carousel be extra special. Nearly every horse, (all jumpers) has elaborate carvings; dragons, drapes, armor, jewels, and more.

HORSES/CHARIOTS: (68 horses - 3 chariots) -

Horses -

16 - Outside Row Jumpers	- \$10,500 ea = \$168,000
16 - 2nd Row Jumpers	- \$8,500 ea = \$136,000
18 - 3rd Row Jumper	- \$7,000 ea = \$126,000
18 - 4th Row Jumpers	- \$5,500 ea = \$99,000

Chariots-

3 full chariots pieces	- \$5,000 ea = \$15,000
------------------------	-------------------------

EST. Value of horses and chariots total: - \$544,000

THE TRIM:

Some rounding boards have been restored and shields. Others in very old paint. Inner housing trim in very old paint as with ceiling panels. Few carousels have these. They add a special touch.

18 Rounding Boards	- \$5,500 ea = \$99,000
18 Shields	- \$2,500 ea = \$45,000
18 Upper row inner housing	- \$2,500 ea = \$45,000
15 Lower row inner housing	- \$1,000 ea = \$15,000

EST. Value of all decorative trim total: - \$204,000

THE MECHANISM:

A four-row jumping mechanism is a rare thing and not built as well today as they were then. The mechanism currently needs some mechanical attention and repair. Including 18 ceiling panels in old paint.

EST. Value of rare four-row mechanism. - \$200,000

TOTAL:

JULY 2024, Appraised Value of 1926 Spillman carousel complete - \$948,0000

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– CERTIFIED APPRAISAL –

DESCRIPTION: c. 1926 Spillman Grand Park Carousel - Operating/Griffith Park/CA

OWNER: Rosemary West

VALUATION EFFECTIVE DATE: July, 2024

APPRAISAL BREAKDOWN:

HORSES AND CHARIOTS - \$544,000.

ROUNDING BOARD/INNER TRIM - \$204,000.

MECHANISM/FRAME - \$200,000.

TOTAL APPRAISED VALUE: \$948,000.



This appraisal/valuation of this piece is based on the approximate price of comparable pieces of like quality. I do not agree to purchase this merchandise, and assume no liability.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'R.G. Hopkins'.

Roland G. Hopkins, Owner, Operator, AntiqueCarousels.com

July 24, 2024

Date

626-639-0313 • antiquecarousels@gmail.com

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1926-27 GRIFFITH PARK SPILLMAN/LOOFF/CARMEL







Griffith Park
Ross R. Davis. LINCOLN Park. L.A.



LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY

November 13, 2024

Department of Recreation and Parks Commission
County of Los Angeles 1000 S. Fremont Avenue
A-9 West Building, Unit #40
Alhambra, CA 91803

RE: LETTER OF SUPPORT FOR THE PURCHASE OF THE HISTORIC GRIFFITH PARK
MERRY-GO-ROUND

To the Department of Recreation and Parks Commission:

The Los Angeles Conservancy is a nonprofit membership organization whose mission is to work through education and advocacy to recognize, preserve, and revitalize the historic architectural and cultural resources of Los Angeles County. Founded in 1978 to save the Central Library in downtown L.A. from demolition, we have the largest membership of any local preservation organization in the United States. We proactively work on preservation issues throughout the County and in response to specific threats to cultural and architectural historic resources. We also produce walking tours, neighborhood explorations, and education events that reach thousands of Los Angeles residents, visitors, and K-12 students, bringing them closer to the historic buildings, cultural heritage, and unique spaces that make Los Angeles so special.

One of those unique spaces is Griffith Park. In 2009, Griffith Park was designated as an Historic-Cultural Monument (HCM)--the largest HCM in Los Angeles--to recognize its significance and ensure its long-term preservation. The Los Angeles Conservancy has been active in Griffith Park for many years, working to highlight and educate the public about its historic features, including the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round. The Merry-Go-Round's significance within the context of Griffith Park cannot be overstated. Over the eight decades that it has stood in Griffith Park, its history has dovetailed with internationally known entities such as Disney, social and civil rights movements, and multiple generations of Los Angelenos. The Merry-Go-Round is also a rare and historic structure in its own right. Built in 1926 by the Spillman Engineering Company, it was brought to Griffith Park in 1937 by the Davis Bros. Auto Merry-Go-Round Company. There are 68 jumping horses on the Merry-Go-Round, which were hand-carved by Spillman designers. A Stinson 165 Military Band Organ, reputed to be the largest band organ accompanying a carousel on the West Coast, plays over 1500 selections of marches and waltz music.



LOS ANGELES
CONSERVANCY

The L.A. Conservancy most recently featured the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round during the City-wide celebration in honor of Griffith Park's 125 anniversary, held three years ago in partnership with the City of Los Angeles Department of Recreation and Parks. During that event, which was free to the public, experts from ONE Archives at the USC Libraries were on site to discuss the important role the Merry-Go-Round played in LGBTQ+ history. The Los Angeles Theatre Organ Society also had representatives there to talk about the Merry-Go-Round, and L.A. Conservancy guides offered interpretation about the Merry-Go-Round's storied place in Disney history as the credited site of Walt Disney's inspiration for his theme park. Over 6,000 people attended the event.

The L.A. Conservancy would like to express our support for the purchase of the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round by the Department of Recreation and Parks, and for its commitment to ensuring the Merry-Go-Round stay permanently in Griffith Park. The contextual history of the Merry-Go-Round within Griffith Park makes it imperative that it stay in its current location. To divorce one from the other would be a tremendous loss to Los Angeles's culture heritage, and to the generations who have enjoyed this beloved L.A. landmark, as well as those to come.

We look forward to the approval of this submittal, and offer our continued support concerning this action, should you require it.

If you have any questions, please contact Adrian Scott Fine, President and CEO, at (213) 623-2489, or at afine@laconservancy.org.

Sincerely,

Adrian Scott Fine

President and CEO, Los Angeles Conservancy



**NITHYA
RAMAN**

Los Angeles
City Councilmember
4th District

11/7/2024

Department of Recreation and Parks Board of Commissioners
221 N Figueroa St, Ste 300
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Board of Commissioners,

I am writing to express my enthusiastic support for the Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP) to purchase the historic Griffith Park Merry-go-Round, located at Park Center in Griffith Park. For decades this merry-go-round brought joy to Angelenos and visitors alike, and it remains a crucial part of our City's living history. Purchasing, restoring, and preserving this iconic structure will serve the best interest of Angelenos, providing an opportunity for families to create new memories for generations to come.

Built in 1926 and re-located to its permanent home in Griffith Park in 1937, this historic merry-go-round features 68 hand carved and bejeweled horses, featuring an array of Loof, Spillman, and Carmel-style carousel horses. This carousel is the only remaining four-abreast Spillman carousel on the west coast and maybe even in the United States. It also includes a 165 Stinson Military Organ which plays over 1500 songs. It is an extremely rare example of a bygone era.

I am thrilled that the opportunity has arisen for RAP to purchase this treasured asset and that the Department is taking the lead to ensure it will be able to operate brilliantly once again.

The Merry-go-Round is actually where Walt Disney dreamt up his idea for Disneyland, and seeing the merry-go-round in the beautiful setting of Griffith Park, one can see why.

The Griffith Park Merry-go-Round is a crown jewel of our landmark park and our entire park system and I hope you all will support the Board Report and the purchase of this historic landmark.

Sincerely,

Nithya Raman
LA City Councilmember, 4th District



National Carousel Association
Dedicated to the Preservation of the Classic Carousel
Carousels.org

Patrick Wentzel President
2310 Highland Avenue
Parkersburg, WV 26101

November 7, 2024

Dear Recreation and Parks Commissioners,

The National Carousel Association (NCA) supports the purchase of the Griffith Park carousel by the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks (RAP). Culturally and historically important, the Griffith Park carousel is one of less than 175 classic carousels currently in operation. This carousel is a rare and unusual design built in 1926 by the Spillman Engineering Company of North Tonawanda, New York.

The Davis family brought the Griffith Park carousel and other carousels to the west coast as part of their amusement business. The Griffith Park carousel remains one of a few carousels left from their large amusement operation. This carousel has operated in Southern California for nearly a century and at Griffith Park since 1937.

This is a rare opportunity for the Los Angeles City Department of Recreation and Parks to purchase a carousel of this great importance and historic to Los Angeles. Generations of families have enjoyed riding the Griffith Park carousel. NCA looks forward to the day the Griffith Park carousel can again be listed as active in the NCA census of operating carousels.

Please reach out to me if I can provide any additional information or help that will secure the future of this important carousel.

Sincerely,

Patrick Wentzel
President

November 20,2024

Los Angeles City Department of Recreation Parks
Recreation and Parks Commissioners
Figueroa Plaza, 221 N.Figueroa Street, Suite 300
Los Angeles, CA 90012

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE PURCHASE OF GRIFFITH PARK MERRY-GO-ROUND

Dear Recreation and Parks Commissioners:

The Griffith J. Griffith Charitable Trust represents the interests of Col. Griffith, who donated the original 3,015 acres of Griffith Park to the City of Los Angeles in 1896. The purchase being advocated here supports Col. Griffith's vision for Griffith Park—that LA's premier park be a haven for family-friendly outings at an affordable price.

The Merry-Go-Round dates to 1935 when Ross Davis received permission to place a carousel near the entrance to the Griffith Park Zoo, (referred to today as the Old Zoo). Rides cost a nickel, or six rides for a quarter. After the original three-abreast carousel proved a success, it was replaced in 1937 with the four-abreast all-horse Spillman that is the subject of this letter. Mr. Davis made the attraction permanent by building a structure around it, which stands to this day.

The carousel being considered for purchase began its life at Mission Beach Park in San Diego and was an attraction from 1933-35 at the San Diego Exposition. It was a special order featuring prized hand-carved Charles Loeff horses, some created in the 1920s, while others go back to the 1880s. The carousel is also known for its Wurlitzer Band Organ.

Along with generations of Los Angeles children, the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round has had noteworthy visitors. Olivia de Havilland occasionally visited with her sister. Walt Disney was a frequent visitor, sitting on a bench while his children rode. Mr. Disney was impressed enough with the Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round that he hired Mr. Davis to find him a similar carousel for an amusement park that he was planning. Mr. Disney got his carousel, which has operated at Disneyland since its opening in 1955.

It is vital that the carousel be purchased, securing its continued existence in Griffith Park. We further look forward to the carousel's refurbishment with a keen eye to its historical significance. And we feel that municipal ownership and operation will guarantee that it remains a low-cost family attraction.

If you have any questions, please contact Mike Eberts of the Trust at (323)404-5439 or via email at meberts@glendale.edu.

Sincerely,

Mike Eberts
Clare Darden
Van Griffith
Trustees

GRIFFITH PARK CAROUSEL ASSETS

- Carrousel – Horses (68), Chariots (2), Mechanism, Surround, Crown Sections, Paintings, Painted Ceiling, Painted Access panel
- Horse – Restored by and on loan to Disneyland
- “Crispy Critter” – Burned horse from Linclon Park Carousel
- Extra Chariot – Not installed on MGR
- Original Paintings (10) – Extra set by Nate Boleus for Restoration
- “Disney Bench” – Bench from time of Walt Disney MGR visits with daughters
- Stinson Band Organ & approx. 200 Music Rolls
- Ticket Booth
- Gift Stand – Large display cabinet on wheels
- Various Historic MGR Memorabilia – Tickets, Photos, etc.
- Vintage “Griffith Park Merry-Go-Round” neon clock
- Various Signage related to MGR operations
- “Party Zone” fence and gate
- Picnic Benches (2)
- Dedication Benches (3) – Includes bench from Disney family
- Brass Ring Mechanism (includes swing arm and net – may not be complete)
- Scaffolding Pieces
- Kitchen Appliances – Freezer & Refrigerator
- Misc. Kitchen Accessories (popcorn machine, cotton candy machine, metal tables, etc.)
- Antique Roll-Top Desk
- Misc. Accumulation of Vintage Mechanical MGR pieces (in attic and back room)
- Stock of Light Bulbs for MGR