



Natural History Museum  
of Los Angeles County  
900 Exposition Boulevard  
Los Angeles, CA 90007  
tel 213.763.3301  
fax 213.763.7538  
www.nhm.org

## ADOPTED

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES

#5

November 28, 2017

*Lori Glasgow*  
LORI GLASGOW  
EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga**  
President and Director

November 28, 2017

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, CA 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**HEARING ON INCREASING THE REGULAR ADMISSION AND PARKING FEES AT  
THE NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM AND GEORGE C. PAGE MUSEUM  
(ALL DISTRICTS)  
3 VOTES**

**SUBJECT**

The recommended actions will allow the Natural History Museum to continue and expand public free accessibility for residents of Los Angeles County and surrounding neighborhoods.

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD AFTER PUBLIC HEARING:**

1. Find that the proposed actions are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because they do not constitute a project pursuant to Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines.
2. Set the regular admission fee at \$15, for the Natural History Museum and the George C. Page Museum, effective January 1, 2018.

3. Delegate the authority to the Director to increase parking fees in the future, not to exceed \$20, to align with any future increase in parking fees charged at the adjacent parking lots operated by the State of California or by the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, with notification to each Supervisorial District before implementation of such parking fee increase.

### **PURPOSE OF AND JUSTIFICATION FOR THE RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

The proposed admission and parking fees increase will allow the Natural History Museum (NHM) to raise adult admission fees from \$12 to \$15 at both the NHM in Exposition Park and at the George C. Page Museum at La Brea Tar Pits (Page Museum) in Hancock Park to fund increasing costs associated with NHM's expanded offerings of free public programs, new exhibitions, educational outreach and collections at the facilities and in the community.

NHM, through its agreement with the County, operates and maintains the NHM at the Exposition Park site, the Page Museum in Hancock Park and the William S. Hart Museum in Newhall. Under the agreement between the County and William S. Hart Museum, there is no admission fee charged for accessibility to the collection artifacts on public display at the mansion museum.

The last NHM and Page Museum admission fee increase was in 2011 and parking fee increase was in 2016.

Over the past six years, the NHM has enhanced the guest experience and educational offerings at both Exposition Park and Hancock Park, adding new permanent and special exhibition halls, a new 3 ½-acre Nature Garden, a new Butterfly Pavilion, along with new public programs and urban nature initiatives in the communities.

The additional revenue from the proposed admission fee for NHM and Page Museum increase will help defray the rising costs of operating three museum facilities, as well as support new community outreach programs in each district. It will also help to cover the expenses related to the increase in the minimum wage for staff and vendors over the past three years.

For 104 years, the NHM has been one of the most accessible museums in Los Angeles with approximately one third of its 1.3 million annual visitors attending for free, including over 200,000 schoolchildren. NHM attracts one of the most diverse audiences of any museum in the country, reflecting the richness and diversity of Los Angeles County.

*Programs and Accessibility*

NHM is committed to remaining accessible through continuing free admission to our three museums for schoolchildren, teachers, active members of the military and underserved community members, including EBT cardholders.

Currently, NHM provides free admission to Los Angeles County residents 13 days throughout the year at the Exposition Park and Hancock Park sites, and offers a rich array of free public programs and activities, including the new Summer Nights in the Garden events during July and August in Exposition Park.

To become even more accessible to the community, NHM will be offering free admission for Los Angeles County residents from 3 to 5 pm, Monday through Friday. This additional free access will be timed to coincide with the admission increase.

In addition, the public is admitted free at all times to the William S. Hart Museum. NHM and Page Museum will also continue their programs of free admission to all student groups with advance reservations from accredited schools, a policy that was initiated in July of 1999.

Moving beyond its own walls into the community, NHM has increased the number of offsite educational programs, including visits of our Mobile Museums (Ocean and Archaeology Experiences) to Los Angeles County schools, serving more than 28,000 students across all districts. A third mobile museum is currently in concept development. We have also expanded citizen science community activities, including wildlife hunts and Bioblitzes in public parks and at County libraries as well as new collaborations with the County Parks & Recreation Department for summer STEAM camps and the Parks After Dark program.

In April 2011, the Board approved an increase in admission price, raising the adult price from \$9 to \$12 to defray increasing costs for enhanced exhibition and education programs. NHM has conducted a comprehensive survey (see Attachment) of other museums in Los Angeles and around the United States and found that the proposed fees are well within the range charged by similar institutions, and are among the lowest in the County.

*Parking*

NHM in Exposition Park has approximately 220 parking spaces in its Car Park that opened in May 2011. The Car Park and 3 ½ acres of new green space and "learning gardens" replaced the two existing surface parking lots.

In February 2016, NHM requested, and the Board approved, an increase in parking fees from \$10 to \$12 to match the fees at adjacent lots. At that time, the Board approved a

motion requesting NHM to return for any future parking fee increases. It is anticipated that the State will increase its parking fees in 2018. In addition, at Hancock Park, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA) has also raised their parking fee from \$14 to \$16. This has put pressure on our museum parking lot for visitors to the Page Museum.

To help keep the museum experience as accessible as possible and to reduce the pressure on our parking facilities, we have partnered with METRO to encourage ridership among visitors to the museum and offer a \$2 discount to those who show their TAP cards. Currently 15% of museum visitors come by METRO.

NHM would like its Director to have the authority to gradually raise NHM parking fees, not to exceed \$20, to align with the adjacent State of California and LACMA's parking lots, while still ensuring the greatest possible accessibility for our audience. NHM will only increase the parking fees after the State of California and LACMA have increased their parking fees. In addition, NHM will notify the Board Offices before implementation of any such parking fee increase.

### **IMPLEMENTATION OF STRATEGIC PLAN GOALS**

The County Strategic Plan directs the provisions of Strategy II.2, Expand Access to Recreational and Cultural Opportunities, and Promote Active and Healthy Lifestyles. The recommended actions will allow NHM to generate additional revenue to maintain and increase accessibility to the quality and diversity of programs and exhibit spaces inside and outside the museum.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

There will be no fiscal impact to the County.  
The proposed admission fees are as follows:

	Current Admissions	Proposed
Adults	\$12	\$15
Seniors/Students/Youth (13-17)	\$9	\$12
Child (3-12)	\$5	\$7
Child 2 & under	Free	Free

NHM anticipates a minimum net increase of \$1.6 million from admission fees, based on gross revenue generated from the proposed price increase of \$2.1 million less \$530,000 in lost revenue related to the extended free hours of 3 to 5 pm Monday through Friday.

Approval of delegated authority to the Director to increase parking fees will alleviate an unexpected parking expenditure to NHM's operating budget, which is funded by

revenue generated by the Natural History Museum Foundation and an annual contribution of net County cost.

All admissions and parking revenue will be retained by the Natural History Museum Foundation to support exhibitions and education programs.

The recommended actions do not affect the net County costs contributions.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

Section 5120 of the Public Resources Code allows your Board to exercise any power necessary and proper to promote the objects and purposes of NHM.

A public hearing is required pursuant to Government Code Section 66018 prior to the approval of new fees.

A Notice of Public Hearing was published by the Executive Office in accordance with Government Code Section 6062a, as required by Section 66018 of the Government Code.

With regard to fees imposed by local government, Proposition 26 amends Article XI 11 of the California Constitution (Proposition 218), to provide that any charge by a local government is deemed to be a tax, unless the charges qualify for one or more of the seven expressly enumerated exceptions. Charges imposed for entrance to and use of local government property are a specific exception.

The proposed increases in admission and parking fees are specifically for entrance to and use of NHM and Page Museum and help defray the cost of enhanced exhibition and education program for the specific benefit or privilege to the patrons, and constitute a charge for services to the payer for enrichment in history and science programs. Therefore, the proposed increases in both the admission and parking fees are not impacted by Proposition 26.

### **CONTRACTING PROCESS**

Not Applicable.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL DOCUMENTATION**

Find that the proposed increases to the admission and parking fees at NHM are exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) because they do not constitute a project pursuant to Section 15378 of the CEQA Guidelines.

**IMPACT ON PROGRAMS**

These recommendations will permit NHM to increase and continue to offer quality exhibits, educational programs, and accessibility to a wide audience of visitors at all its facilities.

**CONCLUSION**

It is recommended that the Executive Office, Board of Supervisors, return two certified copies of the Minute Order, and the adopted and stamped Board letter to NHM for further processing.

Respectfully submitted,



Dr. Lori Bettison-Varga  
President and Director

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Attachment

- c: Executive Office, Board of Supervisors
- Chief Executive Officer
- County Counsel
- Auditor-Controller
- President, Natural History Museum Foundation
- President, Board of Governors

Attachment

Comparable Pricing Benchmarks 2010-2017

	2010/2011	2017	% Change
	<u>ADULT GENERAL ADMISSION</u>		
Natural History Museum	\$12.00	\$15.00	25%
La Brea Tar Pits and Museum	(current)	(proposed)	
The Autry Museum	\$9.00	\$14.00	56%
Discovery Cube	\$12.95	\$17.95	39%
Huntington Library (weekend)	\$20.00	\$29.00	45%
LACMA*	\$15.00	\$15.00	0%
Los Angeles Zoo	\$13.00	\$21.00	62%
Long Beach Aquarium of the Pacific	\$25.00	\$29.95	20%
Petersen Automotive Museum	\$10.00	\$16.00	60%
California Science Center	Free	Free	0%
The Getty Center	Free	Free	0%
American Museum of Natural History	\$16.00	\$23.00	44%
California Academy of Science, SF	\$24.95	\$35.95	44%
The Field Museum, Chicago	\$15.00	\$22.00	47%

\* Admission increase anticipated over the next year