

CITY OF PALM DESERT STAFF REPORT

MEETING DATE: January 9, 2025

PREPARED BY: Erica Powell, Management Analyst
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SUBJECT: APPROVE SPONSORSHIP FOR THE 2025 DESERT X EXHIBITION IN
THE AMOUNT OF \$35,000

RECOMMENDATION:

1. Approve sponsorship in the amount of \$35,000 with The Desert Biennial for its 2025 *Desert X* Exhibition to be held March 8 to May 11, 2025.
2. Authorize staff to finalize negotiations of the Sponsorship Agreement with The Desert Biennial.
3. Authorize the City Manager to execute the Sponsorship Agreement and any associated documents, subject to the approval as to form by the City Attorney.
4. Waive all permit and inspection fees associated with *Desert X*.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The City has received a sponsorship request from The Desert Biennial for the 2025 Desert X Exhibition, scheduled to run from **March 8 to May 11, 2025**. Beginning in 2017, the City of Palm Desert has actively participated in and sponsored this internationally acclaimed event. Installations hosted in Palm Desert have consistently been ranked among the most well attended during the last three biennial exhibitions. Recognizing the significance of this event, the Cultural Arts Committee included the 2025 Desert X Sponsorship as a priority in its Fiscal Year 2024-25 Workplan, which was approved by the City Council on March 28, 2024.

For 2025, Desert X has proposed two potential installations to be sited on City-owned properties at the following locations:

- **Cap Homme / Ralph Adams Park:** Previously the site of Claudia Comte's *Curves and ZigZags* and Superflex's *Dive-In*.
- **Northeast corner of Portola Avenue and Frank Sinatra Drive:** Previously the site of Phillip K. Smith's *The Circle of Land and Sky* and Eduardo Sarabia's *The Passenger*.

Desert X Impact

According to Desert X's 2022 Exhibition Report:

- The 2021 Desert X exhibition attracted **650,000 site visits** to 10 installations located throughout the Coachella Valley over a nine-week period.
- Of the 15,000 visitors surveyed during Desert X 2021:
 - Over **50%** traveled 50-250 miles specifically to attend the event.
 - **40%** stayed in hotels or Airbnb accommodations.
 - More than **90%** expressed their intent to visit Desert X in the future.

Given these impactful numbers and the ongoing success of Desert X in drawing tourism and enhancing cultural engagement in Palm Desert, this request represents an opportunity to continue supporting a key cultural and economic driver for the region.

Strategic Plan Objective:

Sponsorship of the 2025 *Desert X* Exhibition contributes to the Arts & Culture Mini-Vision contained in the Strategic Plan, which states:

“Palm Desert is the cultural core of the Coachella Valley. Cultural tourism drives economic growth in Palm Desert. The community is host to internationally recognized cultural events that bring significant economic benefits to the City. Palm Desert is a leader in arts education, ensuring a well-rounded population that possesses high levels of creativity and critical thinking skills.”

Commission Recommendation:

At its regular meeting of December 11, 2024, the Cultural Arts Committee (CAC) unanimously recommended that the City Council approve a sponsorship request for the 2025 *Desert X* Exhibition, with a vote of 7-0, with Committee Members Adney, Boren, Flint, Hauer, Mitze, Rose, and Simley voting aye.

Additionally, at its regular meeting of January 7, 2025, staff presented an informational report on the 2025 *Desert X* Exhibition to the Parks and Recreation Commission of artwork being installed at Cap Homme / Ralph Adams Park. An update on the Commissions comments will be provided at the City Council meeting.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

The Desert Biennial is requesting sponsorship in the amount of \$35,000 for support of two land art installations and creation of free public programming in Palm Desert in relation to the 2025 *Desert X* Exhibition.

Comparisons of previous Desert X sponsorships:

YEAR	AMOUNT
2023	\$25,000
2021	\$20,000
2019	\$10,000
2017	\$35,000

The increased sponsorship request for 2025 is due to the rising costs of materials and labor.

Funding in the amount of \$25,000 is available in the Public Art Fund, Account No. 4364650-4309200, and the remaining \$10,000 is available in the City’s Marketing budget, Account No. 1104417-4322000. The only additional impact anticipated to the General Fund is the requested waiver of permit fees. The full cost to waive fees cannot be determined until the art installations are complete. Staff will collect the information and report back on the comprehensive waiver costs.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Desert X 2025 Presentation
2. Desert X 2025 City of Palm Desert Funding Proposal
3. Draft Sponsorship Agreement
4. FY 24/25 Cultural Arts Committee Workplan