

**CULTURAL ARTS COMMITTEE
CITY OF PALM DESERT
STAFF REPORT**

MEETING DATE: September 10, 2025

PREPARED BY: Erica Powell, Management Analyst

SUBJECT: CALL FOR ENTRIES FOR THE EL PASEO SCULPTURE EXHIBITION

RECOMMENDATION:

Authorize staff to issue a Call for Entries seeking artists for the El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition.

BACKGROUND/ANALYSIS:

The City of Palm Desert organizes the El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition every two years, featuring temporary public art installations along El Paseo. Staff will release the Call for Entries in November 2025 for the upcoming exhibition, with a submission deadline of January 29, 2026.

To ensure broad visibility and attract a strong applicant pool, the Call will be promoted through multiple platforms, including Call for Entry (CaFE), CODAworx, Americans for the Arts, the Artists Center at the Galen, Desert Open Studios, the City's website, the Palm Desert Artist Registry, as well as press releases and social media outreach.

Based on past challenges related to customs, international shipping, and travel, eligibility will be limited to artists residing in the United States.

The Cultural Arts Committee will review submissions in February and March 2026 and forward recommendations to the City Council for final approval on April 9, 2026. The final selection will include 18 primary sculptures for placement along the El Paseo median (Highway 74 to Portola Avenue), eight (8) alternates for standard pads (8' x 8'), and six (6) alternates for Pad 16 (8' x 25'), to ensure coverage if selected artists are unable to participate.

Discussion:

At its February 14, 2024, meeting, the Cultural Arts Committee considered extending the exhibition term from two to three years. To gather input, staff surveyed current and past participating artists. Key findings included:

- General satisfaction with the two-year structure and \$5,000 honorarium
- Support for a three-year term, contingent on an increased honorarium
- Interest in additional support such as shipping assistance, per diem for travel, lodging options, and enhanced promotional efforts

Based on these findings, staff recommends the following for the 2027–2029 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition:

- Extend the exhibition term from two to three years

- Increase the artist honorarium from \$5,000 to \$7,500

Host a “Best in Show” award event in coordination with an existing El Paseo activation to enhance visibility and public engagement.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

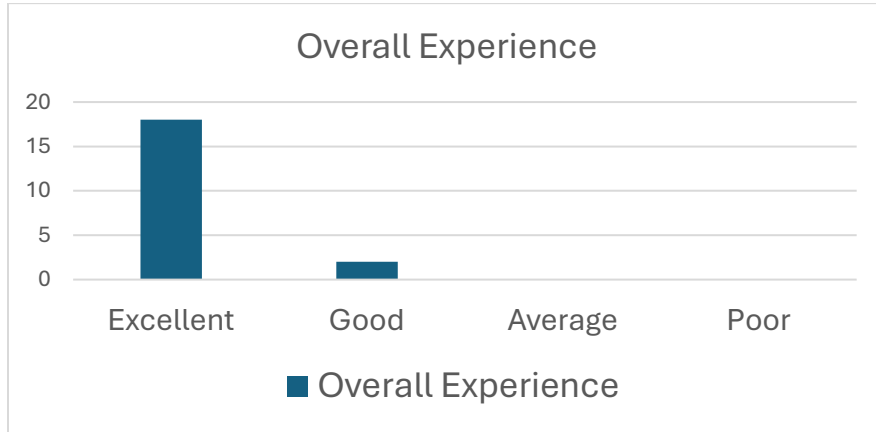
A total of \$220,000 has been earmarked for the 2027-2029 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition and will be included in the FY 2026-2027 budget.

ATTACHMENTS:

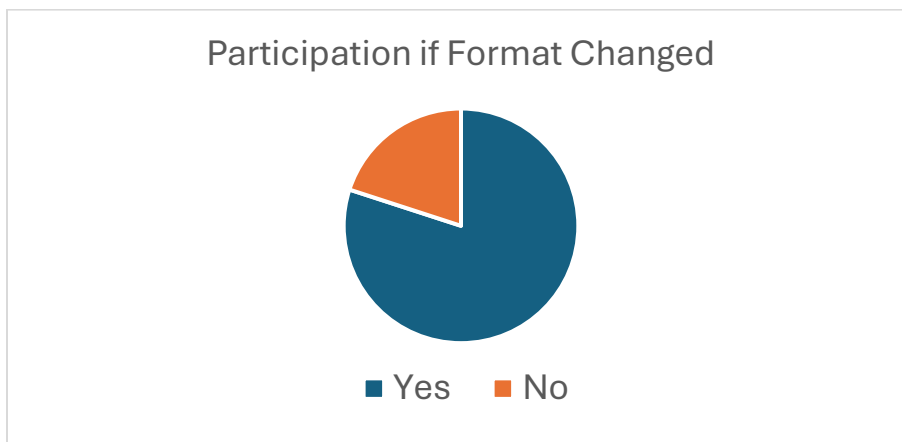
1. El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition Artist Survey
2. Draft 2027–2029 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition Call for Entries

2025 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition Artist Survey

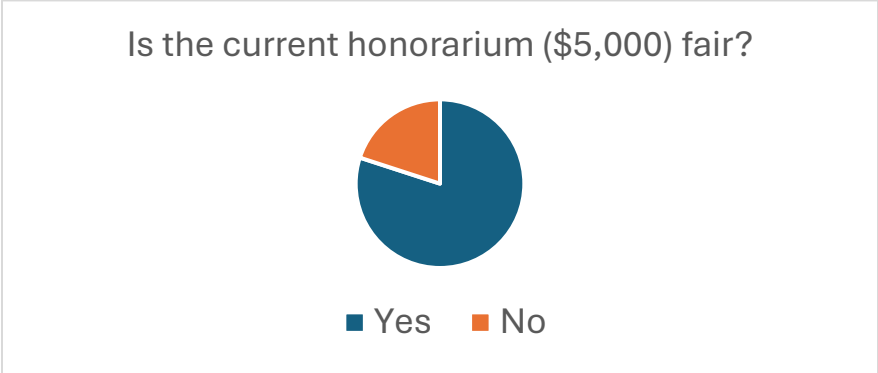
- How would you rate your overall experience participating in the El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition?



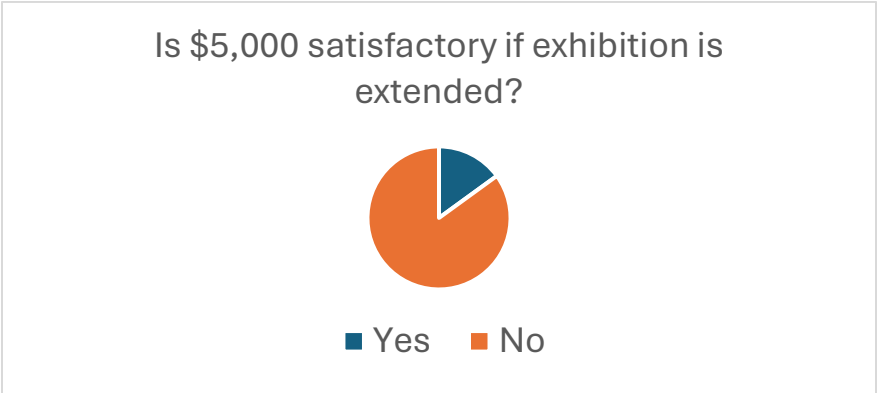
- What aspects of the exhibition did you enjoy the most?
 - Ease of installation
 - Publicity/Exposure
 - Location
 - Staff
 - Organized
- Were there any aspect of the exhibition you found challenging or less enjoyable?
 - Shipping
 - Small budget
- If the exhibition format changed (e.g. length - possibly 3 years), would you still be interested in participating?



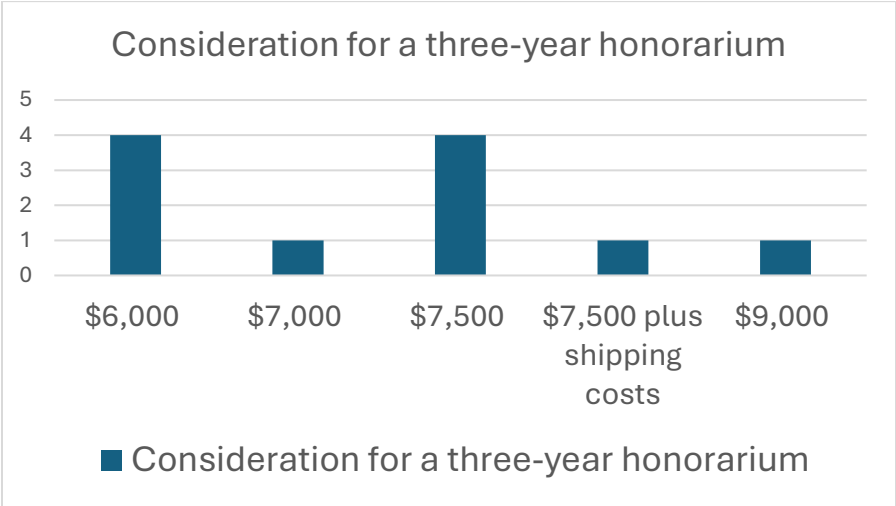
- The current honorarium for the El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition is \$5,000 for a two-year display. The City also covers installation, deinstallation, photography, advertising, an online tour, and maintenance. Based on your experience, do you feel this is a fair compensation for your time and investment?



- If the exhibition were extended to a three-year display period, would you consider the current \$5,000 honorarium to still be satisfactory?



- If not, what amount would you consider appropriate for a three-year exhibition?



- What motivates you to participate in this exhibition?
 1. Exposure
 2. Contacts and Networking
 3. Possible Sales

- Do you have any suggestions on how we can improve the El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition for artists or the public?
 - Per diem for travel based on distance
 - Better compensation and promotion
 - Hotel accommodations
 - Ability to accept shipped artworks and re-crate and return them
 - Create a music and art festival or an event to promote the artwork
 - Bigger budget for fewer artists to support more memorable and inspiring work

- Where are you based (city, state or region)?
 - Massachusetts
 - Palm Springs, CA
 - Louisiana
 - Texas
 - Washington
 - Iowa
 - Santa Rosa, CA
 - Colorado
 - Hemet, CA
 - Oregon
 - Michigan
 - San Diego County
 - Arizona
 - Los Angeles