

City of Palm Desert Staff Report

Meeting Date: April 23, 2026

Prepared By: Erica Jimenez, Management Analyst II

Department: Public Works

Subject: Approval of Sculptures and Artist Honoraria for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition

Recommendation

1. Approve eighteen sculptures and six alternate sculptures for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition.
2. Approve an honorarium of \$6,000 for eighteen participating artists, for a total of \$108,000.
3. Authorize the City Attorney to make necessary non-monetary changes to the agreements.
4. Authorize the City Manager to negotiate and execute agreements.
5. Authorize the City Manager to substitute artwork from the designated alternate sculptures, if necessary.

Executive Summary

This item requests City Council approval of the sculptures, artist honoraria, and related agreements for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition. The biennial exhibition, established in 1992, is a key cultural program designed to enhance tourism and attract visitors to El Paseo. Following a nationwide Call for Artists that generated approximately 178 submissions, the Cultural Arts Committee (Committee) reviewed all entries and is recommending eighteen sculptures, along with six alternates, for installation along El Paseo.

Staff recommend that the City Council approve the selected sculptures, authorize a \$6,000 honorarium for each participating artist, and approve the execution of agreements with the selected artists. The total honorarium cost of \$108,000 for eighteen sculptures, along with related exhibition expenses, is included in the proposed FY 2026/27 Financial Plan in the Public Art budget and does not impact the General Fund.

Need for Action

City Council approval on April 23, 2026, is required to maintain the project schedule for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition.

Activity	Date
City Council approval of 2027/28 Exhibition	April 23, 2026
Execution of 18 contracts	April 23 – June 1, 2026
Scheduling 36 artists: deinstallation of 2025/26 Exhibition and installation of 2027/28 Exhibition	June 1 – July 31, 2026
Procure contractor for deinstallations and installations	August – September 2026
Deinstall 18 sculptures (2025/26 Exhibition)	October 2026
Install 18 sculptures (2027/28 Exhibition)	October – November 2026
Dedication planning and approvals	December 2026
Dedication event	January or early February 2027

Background

The El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition, established in 1992, is intended to enhance cultural tourism and attract visitors to El Paseo. The biennial exhibition features sculptures displayed within the medians along El Paseo between Highway 74 and Portola Avenue and is open to artists throughout the United States.

On September 10, 2025, the Committee reviewed and expressed support for the release of a Call for Artists for the 2027/28 Exhibition. On October 23, 2025, the City Council approved an increase in the artist honorarium from \$5,000 to \$6,000 per sculpture. Initiating the process at that time provides sufficient lead time for artist outreach, application submittals, and a thorough review and selection process by the Committee.

Following this direction, staff published the Call for Artists on the City’s website and on CaFÉ (CallForEntry.org), a nationally recognized artist application platform. The Call was further promoted through a press release and the City’s social media channels, including Instagram and Facebook. These outreach efforts were conducted over a three-month period, resulting in approximately 178 submissions from artists across the United States.

Based on prior challenges related to customs, international shipping, and travel, eligibility for this Exhibition was limited to artists residing in the United States.

Appointed Body Recommendation

At its March 11, 2026, meeting, the Committee reviewed all submissions and recommended eighteen sculptures and six alternate sculptures for the Exhibition.

Cultural Arts Committee Recommendation:

1. *Four Winds* — David Boyajian
2. *Balloon Heart (Pink)* — Mr. Brainwash on behalf of Dawson Cole Fine Art

3. *Lollipops (Red Ombre Version)* — Elena Bulatova
4. *Flight* — Hilde DeBruyne
5. *Prismatic Centrifuge* — Chris Georgesco
6. *Lola* — Sergey Gornushkin
7. *Legumious* — Steve Grater
8. *The Evening Blooms* — Cathrin Hoskinson
9. *Abundant Abode* — Jennifer Kapnek
10. *New Growth* — Lynda Keeler
11. *Encore* — Harold Linke
12. *Come Fly With Me* — Cole McLaughlin
13. *The Feather* — Kirk Seese
14. *Drop of Inspiration* — Steven Schubert
15. *Born to Bloom (Concept B)* — Superbloom
16. *Spiral Spirals* — Christopher Thomson
17. *Flora Totem* (rendering with pink and yellow top) — Jeff Zischke
18. (Pad 16: 8' x 25') *Hors d'oeuvre (3, 4, 5)* — Ross Kellogg

Alternate Sculptures

In the event any selected artist is unable to participate, the following alternate sculptures are recommended:

Pad 16 (8' x 25'):

- *Monumental Sail Sculptures* — Ada Da Silva
- *Hurricane* — Ray Katz
- *Individuality* — Dominic Panziera

Standard Pads (8' x 8'):

- *Chief Eye-Heart-Gut, Archer of the West* — Jimmy Descant
- *Focused Anomaly* — Jeff Glode Wise
- *Pelegrino* — Hugo Heredia Barrera

While the Committee recommended the sculptures listed above, should the City Council elect to substitute any of the selections, staff recommend that replacements be selected from the list of alternate sculptures.

Legal Review

This report has been reviewed by the City Attorney's Office.

Financial Impact

Funds in the amount of \$290,000 have been included in the proposed FY 2026/27 Financial Plan and Capital Improvement Project (CIP) List for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition under Art in Public Places Account No. 4364650-4400100. These costs include artist honoraria of \$6,000 per artist, totaling \$108,000.

Remaining funds will support exhibition-related expenses, including signage identifying each art piece on the display pads, competitively procured contractor services for installation and de-installation, crane services (to be performed by the City's existing on-call contractor), marketing efforts (including production of a promotional material and publication in *Sculpture Magazine*), and costs associated with the dedication event. Sufficient funds are available to cover all anticipated expenses; therefore, there is no financial impact to the General Fund.

Budget Item	Cost
Artist Honoraria (18 artists at \$6,000 each)	\$108,000
Crane Services (estimate)	\$20,000
Contractor for deinstallation/installation (estimate)	\$70,000
Sculpture/Artist signage (estimate)	\$10,000
Photography (estimate)	\$3,000
Design and Print of Rack Card (estimate)	\$5,000
Advertising: Sculpture magazine (estimated two insertions)	\$14,000
Advertising: Palm Springs Life (estimate)	\$5,000
Dedication Event for 2027/28 Exhibition (estimate)	\$3,500
Additional Public Art Costs/Art Insurance	\$25,136
Subtotal	\$263,636
Contingency 10%	\$26,364
Total FY 2026-27 Proposed Public Art Capital Budget	\$290,000

Attachments

1. Selections for the 2027/28 El Paseo Sculpture Exhibition
2. Draft Contract

Conflict of Interest Awareness Checklist

Note: *This checklist is informational only and does not constitute a legal determination. Each Councilmember remains responsible for identifying, disclosing, and evaluating any disqualifying interests under the Political Reform Act and applicable FPPC regulations.*

1. Site-Specific Property Interest

Does this item involve a project site or other identifiable real property?

Yes

No

If yes, identify the project site: Medians along El Paseo between Highway 74 and Portola Avenue.

Councilmembers should consider whether they own, lease, or hold interests in real property within 1,000 feet of the project site. (Gov. Code § 87103(b); FPPC Reg. 18702.2).

2. SB 1439 / Gov. Code § 84308 Applicability (Campaign Contributions)

Does this item involve a license, permit, other entitlement for use, or a contract or franchise agreement that is not competitively bid, a labor agreement, or a personal employment contract?

Yes

No

If yes, identify parties: Selected artists and any representative/gallery involved in the proposed agreements, including David Boyajian; Mr. Brainwash and Dawson Cole Fine Art; Elena Bulatova; Hilde DeBruyne; Chris Georgesco; Sergey Gornushkin; Steve Grater; Cathrin Hoskinson; Jennifer Kapnek; Lynda Keeler; Harold Linke; Cole McLaughlin; Kirk Seese; Steven Schubert; Superbloom; Christopher Thomson; Jeff Zischke; Ross Kellogg; and alternate artists Ada Da Silva, Ray Katz, Dominic Panziera, Jimmy Descant, Jeff Glode Wise, and Hugo Heredia Barrera

Councilmembers should review campaign contributions received within the prior 12 months from parties or participants to the proceeding and must not accept contributions over \$500 from those parties for 12 months following the final decision. (Gov. Code § 84308).