




## MEMORANDUM

**TO:** Mayor and Council

**FROM:** Kimberly A. McNeeley, CPRP, Acting Director  
Austin Parks and Recreation Department (PARD) 

**DATE:** November 26, 2018

**SUBJECT:** Artist Access Program Update

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On December 14, 2017, City Council allocated \$240,000 for the specified purpose of extending the evening hours at PARD's Cultural Centers to provide access to free or low-cost rehearsal and performance space for Austin's artists. In an effort to ensure expenditure criteria was sufficiently satisfied, PARD identified the Artist Access Program as an appropriate artist selection and funding distribution mechanism. Because of expressed concerns, in January, 2018, PARD elected to pause the application process for the Artist Access Program to further engage the community.

PARD organized a panel composed of commissioners from each of seven relevant Council-appointed commissions. In cooperation with the panel, PARD conducted a number of community engagement sessions. With this community engagement, PARD intended to ensure all community artists had an opportunity to contribute to the Artist Access Program development. Additionally, PARD greatly relied upon the panel's guidance in establishing the Artist Access Program.

PARD considers this community engagement process successful. The process concluded with a panel recommendation that all current artist applicants access the program without adjudication in a transitional year of the program, fiscal year 2019. The community panel recommended an application process for the FY2020 pilot program. Applications are currently being taken as recommended. Staff succeeded in following through with all other the community engagement panel recommendations.

While the Council-appointed Board for the Emma S. Barrientos Mexican American Cultural Center (ESB-MACC) sent a representative to participate in the community engagement process, the Board itself voted to not participate in the Artist Access Program because they wish to continue the Latino Arts Residency Program which exclusively serves Latino artists. Additionally, the ESB-MACC Board requests the use of Hotel Occupancy funds through the approved Council action of December 14, 2017, to support and fund the continuation of the Latino Arts Residency Program.

City of Austin Law Department has advised that it is allowable to conduct the concurrent operation of the Artist Access Program and the Latino Arts Residency Program. PARD intends to respect the wishes of the ESB-MACC Board and operate the Artist Access Program and the Latino Arts Residency Program concurrently. However, PARD recommends that the newly allocated funding be dedicated to Artist Access Program participants. The Artist Access Program has had extensive community engagement, including input from both Austin community representatives and artists, whereas the Latino Arts Residency Program has not. Additionally, the Artist Access Program has been designed with program and spending criteria specific to meeting Hotel Occupancy fund spending requirements. The same does not hold true for the Latino Arts Residency Program.

At this time, the Latino Arts Residency Program conducts four residencies at the ESB-MACC, with contracts that expire in September of 2019. Based upon guidance from the community and from the City of Austin Law Department, PARD intends to continue with the Latino Arts Residency Program in its current form through

September of 2019. Simultaneously, PARD will begin a community engagement process to determine program process revisions to the Latino Arts Residency Program to address any remaining concerns. Changes to the program will be implemented in September of 2019. Any changes will be guided by the recommendations received through the engagement process and the Law Department.

Should you have any questions, please contact my office at (512) 974-6722.

cc: Spencer Cronk, City Manager  
Sara Hensley, Interim Assistant City Manager  
Rebecca Giello, Interim Director, Economic Development Department