



## Recommendation for Action

**File #:** 23-2211, **Agenda Item #:** 16.

7/20/2023

### **Posting Language**

Approve a resolution to revise the guidelines for the Austin City Hall Artists' Exhibition Program and to transfer administration of the program from the Economic Development Department to the Austin Public Library.

### **Lead Department**

Economic Development.

### **Fiscal Note**

Funding is available in the adopted FY23 Budget and proposed FY24 Budget of the Economic Development Department.

### **Prior Council Action:**

February 17, 2005 - Council approved Resolution No. 20050217-28 adopting the mission statement and guidelines for the Austin City Hall Artists' Exhibition Program.

December 11, 2014 - Council approved Resolution No. 20141211-030 accepting the revised mission statement relating to the Austin City Hall Artists' Exhibition Program and the Cultural Arts Program Exhibition Series Guidelines for Austin City Hall.

August 18, 2016 - Council approved Resolution No. 20160818-29 accepting revisions to the Austin City Hall Artists' Exhibition Program.

### **For More Information:**

Sylvia Holt-Rabb, Director, Economic Development Department, 512-974-3131; Roosevelt Weeks, Director, Austin Public Library; 512-974-7444.

### **Additional Backup Information:**

The Austin City Hall Artists' Exhibition Series, also known as *The People's Gallery*, has exhibited the loaned work of almost 1,900 local artists since 2005, and averages approximately 50% new artists exhibiting each year. The exhibition series provides opportunities for local artists to exhibit their works on city property and for citizens and tourists to experience Austin's arts and culture in the seat of Austin's City government.

Staff periodically review the program guidelines and recommend changes for more effective or efficient operation of the Exhibition Series. As a result of the most recent review, the Economic Development Department (EDD) is recommending transfer of the program's administration to the Austin Public Library (APL) for several reasons, including:

- EDD has moved all staff to offices at the City's Ben White facility and no longer maintains offices at City Hall, making it more difficult to maintain oversight and operations of the Exhibitions (whereas APL's Central Library location is three blocks from City Hall and has closer proximity to maintain oversight and operation of the exhibition by its staff).
- EDD does not have dedicated staff to administer the program (whereas APL's Central Library

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includes a 2700 sq ft. professional art gallery and has staff dedicated to the gallery's operation and exhibitions whose skill and expertise match the needs of the program).

- EDD's program of work has expanded to absorb several pandemic-related relief and recovery initiatives, which has added significantly to the workload of current staff. This increase in workload necessitated the hiring of a consultant to manage the exhibition currently on display, extending the exhibition from rotating works every year to every two years, and putting the People's Choice acquisition and site-specific commission component of the exhibition on hiatus.
- APL has historically maintained its own departmental artwork Collections Management policy and practice, integrating and installing artworks in not only the Central Library, but also its many branch libraries, as a way to showcase local talent and connect more deeply to APL customers of all ages and backgrounds through artistic work.
- Allowing APL to program the exhibition provides opportunities for both artists and the Austin community to more deeply connect with the resources and programming offered by APL, including curating artworks that complement books, recordings, videos, and other assets in APL's collection. The People's Gallery offers a unique opportunity to expand APL's mission to a new audience.

The transfer from EDD to APL has been discussed and mutually accepted by both departments and will be governed by provisions in a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines terms of transfer, the roles and responsibilities of each party, and the budget available to facilitate the transfer and operation for the next two exhibition cycles. It is to formally take effect upon Council approval of the updated exhibition guidelines included as backup.