



PARKS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT

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ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

Meeting: July 27, 2026

Subject

2026 Artist Awards Program and Theme Selection

Recommended Action

1. Receive a presentation on the 2026 Artist Awards Program; and
2. Discuss and select a theme for the 2026 Artist Awards Program.

Discussion

Background

The purpose of the Arts and Culture Commission is to foster and encourage artistic expression and achievement in the fields of visual, verbal, and performing arts while preserving and advancing the arts for the benefit of the citizens of Cupertino. Every year the commission presents awards to deserving artists in recognition of local talent in these fields. The City Council budgets \$2,050 in cash awards for the Artist Award program.

In 2024 the Arts and Culture Commission reviewed and updated the Artist Awards Descriptions and Application Requirements (Attachment A) and Artist Awards Evaluation Forms (Attachment B) for the three award categories: Distinguished Artist, Emerging Artist, and Young Artist. The Platinum winner in each category is awarded \$1,000, \$750 and \$150 (per Young Artist age group) respectively. While the Young Artist Award category focuses on recognition of local achievements in visual arts, the Distinguished and Emerging Artists can participate in any of the following artistic categories: visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, or digital arts.

Next Steps

Below is the anticipated timeline of events for the 2026 Artist Awards Program, including responsibilities of City staff and the Arts and Culture Commissioners:

Month	Timeline and Responsibilities of City Staff and Commissioners
July	Commissioners discuss and finalize Artist Awards theme.

August	Staff to update website (cupertino.gov/artawards) and promotional flyers. Commissioners begin outreach by informing their respective networks of Artist Award application timeline.
September	Artist applications open September 1. Staff to promote program on social media and send eNotification to past participants. Commissioners continue to generate interest through outreach efforts.
October	Artist Award application period closes at 4:30 p.m. on October 1. Staff to compile artists applications for Commissioner review.
November	Commissioners select award winners at the November Arts and Culture Commission meeting. Staff to notify applicants of entry status.
January	Commission presents awards to selected winners at the January Arts and Culture Commission Artist Awards Ceremony and Art Exhibition. Staff to display winning artwork, update website with award winners, and processes prize payments.

The theme for the 2026 Artist Awards Program will need to be discussed and finalized. For reference, previous themes have included *The Year 2020 - The New Normal*, *What Makes Me Smile*, *A Day Without Screen Time*, *Your Dreams for the Future*, *Your Vision for the Future of Cupertino*, *Artist's Identity: What Influences You*, *Building Sustainable Community*, and *Threads that Bind Us*. Staff will then update the Artist Awards Program Flyers (Attachment C) with the chosen theme and email the final version to the commission.

Sustainability Impact

No sustainability impact.

Fiscal Impact

The Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget includes \$2,050 in cash awards for this program.

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Reviewed by: Carolyn McDowell, Assistant Director of Parks and Recreation

Approved for Submission by: Rachelle Sander, Director of Parks and Recreation

Attachments:

A – Artist Awards Descriptions and Application Requirements

B – Artist Awards Evaluation Forms

C – Artist Awards Program Flyers