



City of Pomona

CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION STAFF REPORT

ADMINISTRATION | OFFICE OF ECONOMIC BUSINESS AFFAIRS

January 26, 2026

TO: Cultural Arts Commission

FROM: Ata Khan, Deputy Director of OEBA
Jocelyn Ayala, AIPP Program Manager

SUBJECT: 2026 Watercolor Contest

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Approve use of \$5,000.00 from the Art in Public Places fund for the 2026 Watercolor Contest for Pomona High School students.

FISCAL IMPACT

The proposed resolutions would require a total of \$5,000.00 be utilized from the Art in Public Places fund. This funding encompasses the awards and additional watercolor materials.

BACKGROUND

In the early 2000s, the Cultural Arts Commission began offering contests titled "Youth Art Projects" featuring different mediums, programmatic events, and hosting venues. While this has always been a City event, Pomona Unified School District has supported in the communication to students and art teachers regarding the contest. By 2011, the event evolved into "High School Art Projects", and during this year the Cultural Arts Commission chose to have watercolors as the only medium with the hosting venue being the dA Center for the Arts in downtown Pomona. From then onward, the City of Pomona has hosted an Annual Watercolor Contest for Pomona High School Students annually with an Exhibition of finalists displayed at the dA Center for the Arts. In 2020, the Watercolor contest was paused due to the unforeseen closure of City Hall in response to the global Covid-19 breakout resulting in limited staff resources to hold the competition.

On February 26, 2024, Cultural Arts Commission approved bringing back the Watercolor contest with the alteration of the awards number and amount.

	Finalists (6)	Semi-Finalists (6)	Honorable Mentions (6)
Pre-2020	\$50	\$30	\$20
	Finalists (3)	Semi-Finalists (3)	Honorable Mentions (3)
2024 - current	\$200	\$100	\$50

TIMELINE

Contest Opens	January 27, 2026
Contest Closes	March 23, 2026 by 6PM
Artwork Judging	March 24 – March 30, 2026
Awards Notifications	March 31, 2025

Exhibition and Reception	April 10, 2025 at 6PM
Artwork Pick-up from City Hall	May 4 – 7, 2026

CONTEST THEMES

The Watercolor Contest has been consistent in utilizing the theme of “My Pomona” in landscape forms (urban, natural, inhabited, personal, etc.) for many years. As the City intends to honor Arts, Culture, and Creativity Month in April, where this year’s theme from CA for the Arts is “Boundless Culture & Creativity: The Essence of Freedom” with a sub-theme of “Building Joy, Action + Power”, the theme for this year’s Watercolor Contest would be a combination of the two themes.

Thus, the theme would be where do we find or see “Boundless Culture & Creativity: The Essence of Freedom” in Pomona.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

Last year, the City offered a watercolor workshop for contest eligible students interested in engaging with watercolors for free. This workshop included all materials for free and was recorded for future use. This effort was made to expand the pool of applicants and meet the needs of students who have either not had access to the arts or specifically have never worked with watercolors in Pomona.

Amongst offering materials for free for any eligible contestants, this year we would offer a 3-part series of watercolor workshops that slowly build on different types of techniques in the month of February. These sessions would be held in-person but also recorded and offer virtual attendance.

CONTEST JUDGING

As utilized in the past, the California Art Education Association (CAEA) Rubric for judging artwork will be used for judging this year’s Watercolor Contest.

There will be creation of a sub-committee that consists of 4 members—3 Artists and 1 Art Teacher—with a background in Watercolor use as a medium.

CITY HALL YEAR EXHIBIT

As an additional component to this contest in the past, there was an addition of the winners being on display in City Hall. Staff seeks to reopen this component as an exciting way to further engage with Youth and Civic Center. This would require the purchase of reusable frames, the digitization of artwork (students retain originals if desired), printing of artwork, temporary artwork labels, a placard to explain the watercolor contest, photo of winners and offer a QR-code to access resources for watercolor learning, and hardware/materials necessary for installation. There would be a total of 10 artworks, 1 photo of contestants, and 1 informational poster about the contest on display.

As an extension of this Exhibit in City Hall, Staff would seek to do a Youth Photography contest for Summer 2026.

CONSISTENCY WITH AIPP ACTION PLAN

This item supports Art in Public Places (AIPP) Action plan goal 3 – Public Art Activations.

Attachments:

1. Resolution 2025-003
2. Contest Guidelines
3. Contest Application