

**DATE:** July 8, 2026

**TO:** Visual Arts Committee

**FROM:** Kirstin Hinds, Economic Development Strategist

**SUBJECT:** **Artist Selection Pilot Procedure**

---

**PURPOSE**

To discuss the pilot implementation of a modified artist selection procedure involving a dedicated Artist Selection Panel for the upcoming Public Safety Building project.

**BACKGROUND AND ANALYSIS**

Through ongoing research for the Public Art Strategy, staff have identified that many peer cities use a two-tiered selection process, a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) followed by a Request for Proposals (RFP), as a best practice for high-budget projects. In this model, a temporary, project-specific artist selection panel is convened to review open portfolios (RFQ) and narrow down a shortlist of finalists. These finalists are then invited and compensated to develop site-specific design concepts (RFP) for the Visual Arts Committee's (VAC) final review and recommendation to City Council.

Utilizing an artist selection panel strengthens the project's foundation by fostering community investment and providing professional oversight, and streamlines the VAC process by presenting the Committee with a curated selection of design concepts for final deliberation. The artist selection model allows for outside professional and technical review and feedback on the artists' expertise. A qualification-based first round enhances equity and access by evaluating artists based on their proven capability and portfolio, rather than comparing varying levels of design concepts. Additionally, removing the barrier of unpaid design labor for entry encourages a more diverse pool of applicants, particularly from emerging artists.

Staff recommends piloting the artist selection panel procedure for the upcoming Public Safety Building project (\$400,000 public art budget). Given the project's scale and role as a permanent civic anchor in Downtown Mountain View, there is a greater opportunity to implement best practices for large-cap projects, including compensating finalists for their design proposals. Smaller-scale projects may continue to follow the traditional single-call procedure, allocating the entire budget to the art installation.

The Public Safety Building project, which will be formally introduced to the Committee in September 2026, involves constructing a new public safety headquarters and demolishing the existing police and fire administration buildings. The facility will serve as a civic anchor with the art reflecting the values of the community and City departments that it serves.

The composition and timeline of the panel will be tailored and adjusted to the project's needs. Potential artist selection panelists may include public safety staff (Police and Fire), downtown community representatives (such as the Downtown Committee or Downtown Business Association), technical design peers (architects or engineers), and outside public art professionals to provide industry-standard jury feedback.

The tentative structure will follow a flexible process, which may include:

1. **Project Introduction (September 2026):** Briefing with the VAC and the artist selection panel.
2. **RFQ Phase (Fall 2026):** Open call for portfolios and artist experience.
3. **Qualification Review (Fall 2026):** VAC and Artist Selection Panel review and score submissions to shortlist finalists.
4. **RFP Phase:** Shortlisted finalists are invited to develop site-specific design concepts for VAC review.
5. **Final Recommendation:** Design concepts are presented to the VAC for deliberation and recommendation to the City Council.
6. **Council Approval:** Final contract award by the City Council.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Following the VAC's discussion and feedback, staff will finalize the panel's scope and begin stakeholder recruitment. The Public Safety Building project is tentatively scheduled to return to VAC in fall 2026 for further discussion around themes and specific locations for art.