

# City of El Segundo Cultural Arts Master Plan

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## Introduction

The City of El Segundo is a vibrant and dynamic community that values creativity, innovation, and cultural expression. As we continue to grow and evolve, the arts have become a vital force in shaping our identity, enriching our lives, and fostering a sense of place. Recognizing the power of arts and culture to transform communities, the City of El Segundo has developed this Cultural Arts Master Plan to serve as a roadmap for cultivating a thriving and sustainable cultural environment that benefits residents, artists, businesses, and visitors alike.

This Cultural Arts Master Plan reflects the City's commitment to integrating arts and culture into the fabric of civic life. It provides a strategic framework for expanding access to cultural opportunities, supporting artists, enhancing public spaces through public art, and fostering partnerships with organizations and stakeholders who share our vision for a creative and inclusive community.

The plan outlines clear goals, priorities, and actionable strategies that align with the City's broader vision for economic development, community engagement, and quality of life. It is grounded in the belief that arts and culture are essential drivers of a strong local economy, vibrant neighborhoods, and personal well-being.

With the leadership of the City's Cultural Arts Division and the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee, this plan reflects El Segundo's dedication to honoring its rich history while embracing new opportunities for cultural innovation and growth.

Together, we will create a legacy of arts and culture that celebrates creativity, inspires connection, and positions El Segundo as a cultural hub in the region for generations to come.

**Why Now?** In 2019, the City of El Segundo adopted the 1% for Arts Ordinance (Ordinance 1594), establishing a Cultural Development Program aimed at integrating public art and cultural initiatives into new development projects. This ordinance requires that 1% of eligible development project costs be allocated to arts and culture, providing a dedicated funding source to enhance the City's cultural landscape.

Over the past five years, the Cultural Development Program has supported the creation of public art installations, cultural events, and initiatives that have brought new energy to El Segundo. However, the COVID-19 pandemic presented significant challenges, causing a global halt across every sector and delaying impactful initiatives. Without an established plan to provide a clear vision, competing priorities, unclear roles, and limited resources hindered progress. This milestone marks a pivotal moment to reassess and reshape the City's approach to cultural arts and outline a clear path forward.

El Segundo has long been a place where innovation and entrepreneurialism thrive, with a strong tradition of fostering cutting-edge industries, creative enterprises, and forward-thinking businesses. Despite this culture of ingenuity, the arts sector has struggled to achieve its full potential. This Cultural Arts Master Plan presents a unique opportunity to strengthen the arts sector, enhance cultural offerings, and add lasting cultural value to the City. By investing in the arts, El Segundo can ensure that creativity remains at the heart of its identity, complementing its innovative spirit while enriching the lives of residents and visitors alike.

This Cultural Arts Master Plan comes at a crucial time. It builds upon the successes of the past five years while addressing emerging opportunities and challenges. By evaluating the impact of the 1% for Arts Ordinance and leveraging its potential, the City is poised to strengthen its role as a regional leader in arts and culture. This plan sets forth a strategic vision to expand cultural programming, foster creative partnerships, and elevate the role of arts in enhancing community identity and economic vitality.

The timing of this plan reflects the City's dedication to creating a sustainable cultural ecosystem that supports artists, engages the community, and enhances El Segundo's reputation as a thriving center for creativity and innovation.

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# Focusing on El Segundo's Cultural Needs

**Access to Arts and Culture** Access to arts and culture is a cornerstone of a thriving community. In El Segundo, ensuring that residents of all ages and backgrounds can participate in and benefit from cultural activities is a top priority. Over the past few years, El Segundo has experienced an exodus of cultural institutions that have been pillars in the city's cultural landscape. The El Segundo Museum of Art, a critically acclaimed contemporary art space that focused on community engagement, left El Segundo to operate in satellite spaces outside of the city. We also saw the American Youth Symphony and Zimmerman Automobile Museum close their doors permanently. El Segundo already had a limited offering of cultural spaces, so these were devastating losses to the community.

With no dedicated visual art spaces, such as professional galleries or museums, El Segundo residents are forced to visit other areas of the county to gain access to the visual arts. The lack of access to arts and culture venues and experiences puts added pressure on the Cultural Arts Division to promote access for the community. Expanding programs that bring art into schools, neighborhoods, and public spaces will help create a more inclusive cultural environment. This includes fostering partnerships with local organizations to provide affordable and accessible cultural experiences for all.

**Investment in Community** Investing in the community through the arts strengthens social bonds and enhances quality of life. By prioritizing creative investment and community-led initiatives, the City can build a cultural ecosystem that reflects the unique character of El Segundo. Through investments in cultural assets like public art and facilities, supporting grassroots projects, partnerships with existing institutions, and collaborative events, the City can build a cultural legacy and will foster a sense of ownership and pride among residents.

**Capacity of the Arts Sector** A robust arts sector requires strong infrastructure, resources, and leadership. Strengthening the resources for the Cultural Arts Division will help build the capacity of El Segundo's arts organizations and practitioners, ensuring long-term sustainability and growth. This includes providing professional development opportunities, enhancing grant programs, establishing incentives for arts organizations to make El Segundo home, and fostering an environment where creative industries can thrive.

**Achieving Our Global Potential** El Segundo's innovative spirit positions it as a potential leader on the global cultural stage. By leveraging its unique blend of creativity and entrepreneurship, the City can develop programs and initiatives that attract international recognition. El Segundo's position neighboring LAX also allows us to leverage our unique opportunity as a cultural introduction to Los Angeles County. By building a world-class public art collection, offering inspiring and resonating public programs, and fostering cross-cultural exchanges, El Segundo can be positioned as a destination for creative tourism.

**Civic and Economic Impact** Arts and culture contribute significantly to civic pride and economic vitality. Public art installations, cultural festivals, and creative placemaking projects can transform public spaces and drive foot traffic to local businesses. The Cultural Arts Master Plan aims to harness these benefits, creating a vibrant and economically dynamic cultural landscape that supports both the community and local businesses.

Following the growing success of the El Segundo Art Walk, the Cultural Arts Division can establish additional partnerships that will draw audiences and increase tourism.

**Commitment to Sustainability of the Arts** Sustainability is critical to the success of El Segundo's cultural initiatives. By embedding sustainable practices into the planning and execution of arts programs, the City can ensure their longevity and resilience. Currently, the Cultural Arts Division's only source of revenue is the 1% for Art fees collected through the Cultural Development Program. With this funding tied to private development, and businesses having the option to produce public art instead of paying into the Cultural Development Fund, this is not a reliable income source to provide consistent and stable operations of the Division. Furthermore, El Segundo's 1% for Art ordinance is one of the most conservative in the County, with \$2 million being the threshold to trigger developer participation. Prioritizing diverse income sources and leveraging long-term partnerships will be key to achieving sustainability.

With stronger financial positioning, El Segundo can build a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable cultural ecosystem that meets the evolving needs of its community and positions the City as a regional leader in arts and culture.

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## Vision, Mission, and Purpose of the Plan

**Vision:** To be an internationally recognized arts destination where creative ideas take off.

**Mission:** The mission of the Cultural Arts Plan is to engage community, civic, business, and artistic partners in providing captivating experiences, programs, and public art that elevate the City of El Segundo.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this Cultural Arts Plan is to create the framework for structuring, prioritizing, and delivering Arts and Culture experiences for the community of El Segundo.

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## Goals of the Plan

**Goal 1: Cultural Arts is Stable, Sustainable, and Well-Resourced**

Success Indicators: Cultural Arts has the resources to operate without interruption and consistently deliver impactful initiatives every year.

- Objective A: Provide information and background necessary to help the City Council and the Executive Team understand the purpose of the Cultural Development Fund and adhere to the Administrative Guidelines that govern its use and stewardship.
- Objective B: Secure City Council approval for general funds to support the operating costs of Cultural Arts, including staff salaries, marketing, administrative costs, and professional development.
- Objective C: Establish a Cultural Arts Reserve Fund to support the division during economic downturns and unforeseen circumstances.

**Goal 2: Create a standardized methodology for identifying and implementing Cultural Arts initiatives utilizing the appropriate funding sources**

- Objective A: Amend Ordinance 1594 to clarify definitions and processes, minimizing varying interpretations that impact enforcement.
- Objective B: Establish a clear process for the City to use Cultural Development Funds for city-led initiatives, modeled after the process for developers.
- Objective C: Confirm the City of El Segundo has a clear understanding of staff, committee, and Council roles and responsibilities in relation to Cultural Arts administration.
- Objective D: Develop a communications plan for Cultural Arts.

**Goal 3: Cultural Arts builds a cultural legacy for El Segundo and establishes a reputation as an arts destination**

- Objective A: Build a quality public art collection that sets a best-practice example, promotes both local and international artists, and is admired by the community.
- Objective B: Invest in impactful programming that promotes the arts and engages the community.
- Objective C: Ensure Cultural Arts initiatives are culturally relevant to El Segundo, promote diversity and inclusion, and offer equitable opportunities for artists.

**Goal 4: Cultural Arts sparks cultural investment in El Segundo**

- Objective A: Provide incentives for arts and culture organizations to operate in El Segundo.
  - Objective B: Build partnerships with other organizations to support new and diverse initiatives for El Segundo.
  - Objective C: Establish cultural facilities, including a Cultural Arts Center and gallery space in the Public Library, as part of the City's capital assets.
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# City and Private Partnership

## *El Segundo's Ordinance 1594*

El Segundo's 1% for Arts Ordinance (Ordinance 1594) serves as a cornerstone for fostering collaboration between the City and private developers. This forward-thinking policy mandates that 1% of the total construction costs for eligible development projects valued at over \$2 million be allocated to public art or cultural contributions. By leveraging private investments, the ordinance ensures that arts and culture are integrated into the City's growth and development.

Since its adoption in 2019, Ordinance 1594 has provided a funding stream to support a wide array of cultural initiatives, from public art installations to community events. Developers have embraced the opportunity to leave a lasting cultural legacy in El Segundo, working alongside the Cultural Arts Division to create projects that reflect the City's unique character and values. The ordinance has not only enhanced the visual landscape of El Segundo but has also strengthened the partnership between the public and private sectors, fostering a shared commitment to cultural enrichment.

## *Developer Strategy*

To maximize the impact of Ordinance 1594, the City of El Segundo is committed to developing a strategy that incentivizes developers to contribute to the Cultural Development Fund rather than creating on-site public art. By directing funds into a centralized pool, the City can allocate resources more strategically, ensuring that projects align with broader cultural goals and community needs.

Key elements of this incentive strategy include:

- **Streamlined Approval Process:** Offering developers a more efficient and expedited approval process when they opt to pay the 1% fee in-lieu to the Cultural Development Fund and implement a payment process that will allow for less up-front costs to developers. This reduces the complexity and time required for planning and executing on-site art projects, while allowing for more flexibility in financing for the company.
- **Expanded Impact:** Highlighting how contributions to the Cultural Development Fund enable larger-scale, community-wide initiatives, such as signature public art projects, citywide cultural events, and enhancements to cultural infrastructure.
- **Flexible Use of Funds:** Ensuring developers that their contributions will be used effectively to support diverse and impactful cultural programs, ranging from permanent art installations to temporary exhibits, festivals, and educational workshops.
- **Recognition and Branding Opportunities:** Providing public recognition for developers who contribute to the Cultural Development Fund, including naming opportunities for major projects or events, press releases, and features in City communications.

Acknowledgement of the developers who contribute to the Cultural Development Fund will be featured on the Cultural Arts webpage and annual reports.

- **Collaborative Vision:** Engaging developers in the broader vision for cultural development through regular forums, planning sessions, and partnerships that align their investments with the City's cultural objectives. Develop campaigns for social media that profile partnering developers, highlighting their commitment to arts and culture in El Segundo

By shifting the focus from individual on-site installations to collective investment in the Cultural Development Fund, the City can achieve greater flexibility, equity, and impact in its cultural programming. This approach not only benefits developers by streamlining processes and offering recognition but also ensures a cohesive and strategic development of El Segundo's cultural landscape.

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## Public Art Road Map

Public art has the unique ability to transform spaces, provoke thought, and foster community pride. It enhances the visual landscape of a city while telling stories that reflect the history, values, and aspirations of its people. In El Segundo, public art plays a crucial role in creating a sense of place and identity, enriching the daily lives of residents and attracting visitors from near and far.

The Public Art Road Map outlines a strategic approach to integrating public art into El Segundo's urban fabric. This chapter provides a framework for identifying key opportunities, setting priorities, and ensuring the thoughtful and impactful placement of public art projects throughout the city. By establishing clear guidelines and leveraging the expertise of artists, planners, and community stakeholders, El Segundo can create a cohesive and inspiring public art program that resonates with all who experience it.

This chapter will explore the City's vision for public art, highlight best practices, and offer actionable steps to achieve a dynamic and engaging public art landscape. It underscores the importance of collaboration, innovation, and community involvement in bringing the public art vision to life, ensuring that the arts remain a vital and celebrated aspect of El Segundo's cultural identity.

### *The Plunge Mosaic Installation*

The Urho Saari Swim Stadium, aka “The Plunge,” is a cherished historical recreation facility in El Segundo that is currently undergoing a transformative interior renovation. The public art project for The Plunge will be a prominent component of the facility’s renovation, located in a highly visible and central location. The public art will complement the restored aesthetic and

architectural elements of The Plunge and reflect the facility's history and significance to the community

- **Budget:** \$127,500
- **Estimated Completion:** Q4 2025
- **Public Art Type:** Mosaic Tile Mural

### *Teen Center Mural*

The Teen Center is a dedicated space for youth, featuring activity and gathering space inside and a basketball court and skateboard ramp on campus. A painted mural will be dedicated to the exterior wall of the Teen Center.

- **Budget:** \$20,000
- **Estimated Completion:** Q3 2026
- **Public Art Type:** Mural

### *Municipal Plaza Light Installation*

El Segundo's City Hall is centered downtown on Main Street, with a large community plaza that connects City Hall and El Segundo Police Department. The plaza is an active gathering space for the public, particularly during the El Segundo Farmers Market and special events such as Joy Around the World. This location offers a highly visible and central space for a public artwork. By commissioning a light-based artwork, the plaza can be activated and enjoyed during evening hours, adding to the charm and vibrancy of Main Street.

- **Budget:** \$200,000
- **Estimated Completion:** Q4 2027
- **Public Art Type:** Light Sculpture/Installation

### *Clutters Park Observatory*

Clutters Park is a popular gathering space located off Imperial Highway. It is frequented by aviation enthusiasts as it offers a direct view of LAX to watch planes take off and land. To enhance the aesthetics of the space, increase safety, and offer more functionality, an artwork that serves as an aviation observatory that integrates landscape design, architecture, and nature would be ideal to enhance the user experience of the park.

- **Budget:** \$400,000
- **Estimated Completion:** Q1 2028
- **Public Art Type:** Functional Art/Environmental Art

### **West Basin Painted Canisters**

In partnership with West Basin Municipal Water District, an opportunity to enhance public utility infrastructure exists by commissioning artists to paint the West Basin utility canisters located throughout El Segundo. Focusing on themes of water, marine life, and the environment, the painted canister program offers enhanced beautification.

- **Budget:** \$10,000 (Sponsored by West Basin)
- **Estimated Completion:** Q4 2026
- **Public Art Type:** Painted Mural

### *Library Park Sculpture Garden*

Library Park is a large greenspace frequently used by the community. The public gathers here for leisure, and it is frequently programmed with community events such as concerts in the park. Library Park provides a central and popular location to feature a sculpture garden, a collection of small to mid-scale temporary or permanent artworks to enhance the user experience of the park. By allocating a dedicated section of the park for a sculpture garden, permanent artworks can be added over time, in combination of temporary artworks

- **Budget:** \$200,000
- **Estimated Completion:** Q4 2027, ongoing
- **Public Art Type:** Sculpture

## Programming Framework

Arts programming is an essential component of a vibrant and sustainable arts and culture ecosystem. It fosters public engagement with fresh and thought-provoking ideas, unites the community through shared experiences, and ensures El Segundo remains an activated and dynamic city. This framework outlines the cornerstone programs offered by the Cultural Arts Division, designed to establish consistent and impactful initiatives that align with the overarching vision of this Master Plan.

### *Literary Arts*

**Poet Laureate Program** Launched in 2022, the Poet Laureate Program welcomed Hope Anita Smith as the inaugural Poet Laureate. Her tenure was highly successful, sparking widespread enthusiasm for poetry within the community. Building on this success, the program continues with Kweku John as the Poet Laureate for 2025-2026. This initiative promotes literary arts and engages residents through the transformative power of poetry.

- **Annual Budget:** \$10,000

## *Visual Artists in Community*

Piloted in 2022, this program invited four artists to immerse themselves within the community and produce new bodies of work inspired by their experiences. It provided residents with a meaningful connection to the arts and fostered unique, locally resonant creations.

- **Expansion Opportunity:** Partner with the school district to establish an artist-in-residence program, directly engaging students and youth.
- **Annual Budget:** \$20,000 (2 artists per year)

## *Art Exhibitions*

The El Segundo Public Library has periodically hosted art exhibitions, affirming its role as a cultural hub. Establishing a regular exhibition schedule would further solidify this identity. Although current exhibitions are limited to a single wall in the Reading Lounge, a modest renovation could expand the exhibition space and enhance its quality to meet museum standards.

- **Library Renovation Budget:** \$30,000
- **Annual Exhibition Budget:** \$6,000 (4 exhibitions per year, \$1,500 artist fee per exhibition)

## *Festival of Holidays*

Previously known as "Joy Around the World," this annual event highlights cultural diversity through celebrations of various winter holidays, including Christmas, Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, Diwali, Nochebuena, and Omisoka. The festival features artist performances, children's activities, a holiday market, and the traditional Christmas Tree Lighting. Expanding the festival into a month-long series of satellite programs would deepen residents' understanding of these holidays while enhancing community engagement.

- **Annual Budget:** \$25,000

## *Concerts in the Park*

A longstanding tradition, the Concerts in the Park series is a cherished summer activity for residents. Transitioning this program from the Recreation Division to Cultural Arts would allow for a broader range of culturally diverse performers to be showcased.

- **Annual Budget:** \$15,000

## *Public Art Tours*

In 2024, the Cultural Arts Division organized its first public art tour during the El Segundo Art Walk. This curated excursion introduced attendees to the city's public art installations, providing context and fostering appreciation. Regularly scheduled tours would ensure broader engagement with El Segundo's growing public art collection.

- **Annual Budget:** \$10,000 (4 tours per year, \$2,500 per tour)

## Partnerships & Community Support

Strong partnerships and community support form the backbone of a thriving cultural landscape. Collaboration among the City, local organizations, businesses, and residents has driven the success of past initiatives. By leveraging these partnerships, El Segundo can amplify its cultural impact and ensure arts remain an integral aspect of civic life. This section outlines strategies to cultivate and strengthen these vital connections.

### *Partnership Initiatives*

**El Segundo Art Walk (ESAW)** A hallmark event, the El Segundo Art Walk continues to grow in attendance and impact. While the City currently provides the majority of funding, transitioning to a more balanced partnership model—with Cultural Arts contributing in-kind support—will ensure sustainability and alignment with divisional objectives.

**El Segundo Film Festival** With its numerous venues suitable for film screenings, El Segundo is well-positioned to host an annual film festival. Partnering with an experienced organization to curate and manage the event would support local institutions like the Old Town Music Hall and drive tourism to benefit local businesses.

### *Community Support Initiatives*

**Small Community Grant** Nonprofit and community organizations will have access to a one-time grant of \$6,000 to support arts and culture-related activities. The Arts & Culture Advisory Committee will oversee the grant process.

**Incubator Program** Attracting arts organizations to establish themselves in El Segundo would enhance the city's cultural vitality. The Incubator Program offers financial incentives, providing organizations with decreasing annual installments over three years, enabling them to achieve self-sufficiency and secure stable funding.

# Resources and Investment in Cultural Arts

The Cultural Arts Master Plan lays the groundwork for a long-lasting and impactful legacy of arts and culture in El Segundo. Achieving this vision requires robust resource allocation and sustained investment.

## *Financial Stability*

Currently, the Cultural Arts Division relies solely on developer contributions through the 1% fees outlined in Ordinance 1594. This creates financial uncertainty, as developers may choose to commission on-site public art instead of contributing fees. Furthermore, fluctuating commercial development impacts revenue streams. To mitigate these challenges, the City must explore alternative funding models, including:

- Establishing a public percent-for-art ordinance alongside the private/developer ordinance.
- Amending Ordinance 1594 to include multi-unit residential developments and reduce the project threshold from \$2 million to \$1 million.
- Allocating General Fund resources to staff salaries, freeing Cultural Development Fund revenues for public art and programs.

## *Staffing*

Currently, only one full-time staff member is dedicated to Cultural Arts, a limitation that hampers effective plan implementation. Additional personnel are essential. Recommended positions include:

- **Cultural Arts Manager:** Overseeing divisional administration, developer projects, and City-led public art initiatives.
- **Cultural Arts Coordinator:** Facilitating public programs and events.

# Recommendations to Council

1. Update and revise the Cultural Arts Administrative Guidelines to streamline processes for City-led public art commissions and artist selection.
2. Amend Ordinance 1594 to increase revenue potential and broaden its scope.
3. Approve the creation of an additional Cultural Arts staff position.
4. Fund Cultural Arts staff salaries from the General Fund to ensure operational stability and demonstrate the City's commitment to arts and culture.