



City of Santa Maria
Recreation & Parks
Department

CITY OF SANTA MARIA, CA
2025 Public Arts Master
Plan Update



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Submitted On:

10/7/2025



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Online Engagement

Introduction

This summary highlights a condensed version of a broader engagement report developed for the City of Santa Maria. It focuses specifically on feedback relevant to public art and the Public Art Master Plan. The City utilized Social Pinpoint, an online engagement tool featuring a survey, interactive map, and budget prioritization exercise, to collect community input from December 17, 2024, to April 15, 2025.

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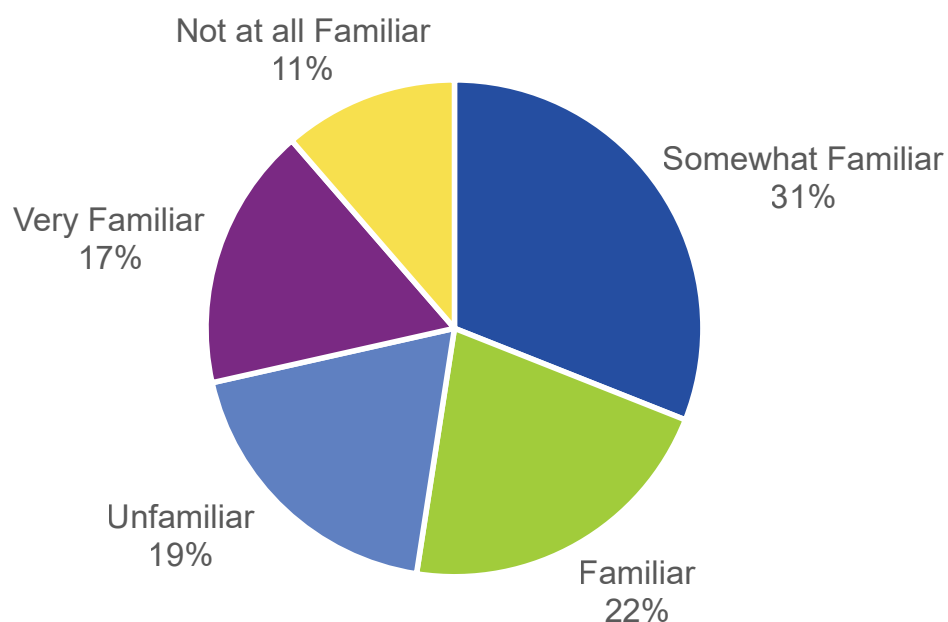


Survey

The Social Pinpoint site featured a short, eight-question survey for community members. Two questions of the survey were specific to public art.

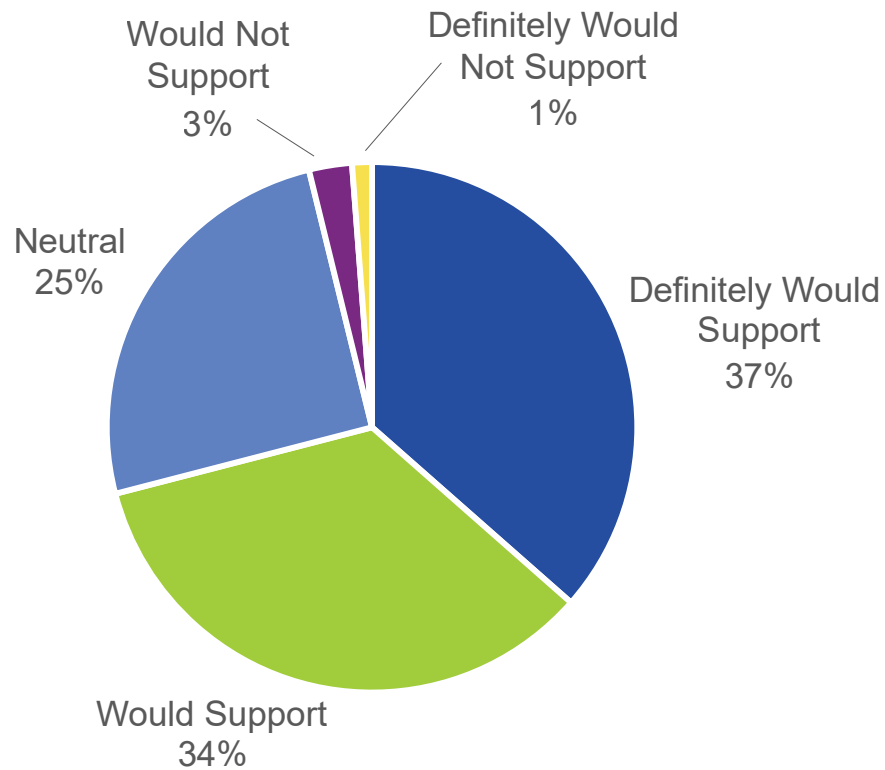
Question 4 of the survey asked respondents how familiar they are with public art in the City. Most respondents reported at least some awareness of public art in Santa Maria, with 70% indicating they are somewhat familiar (31%), familiar (22%), and very familiar (17%), while a smaller portion, 30%, said they were unfamiliar (19%) or not at all familiar (11%).

Figure 1: Question 4 – How familiar are you with public art in Santa Maria?



Question 5 asked respondents how much they support additional public art displays in the City. The majority of respondents (71%) expressed support for additional public art display areas in Santa Maria, while only a small fraction (4%) indicated opposition.

Figure 2: Question 5 – To what degree would you support additional areas of display for public art in Santa Maria?

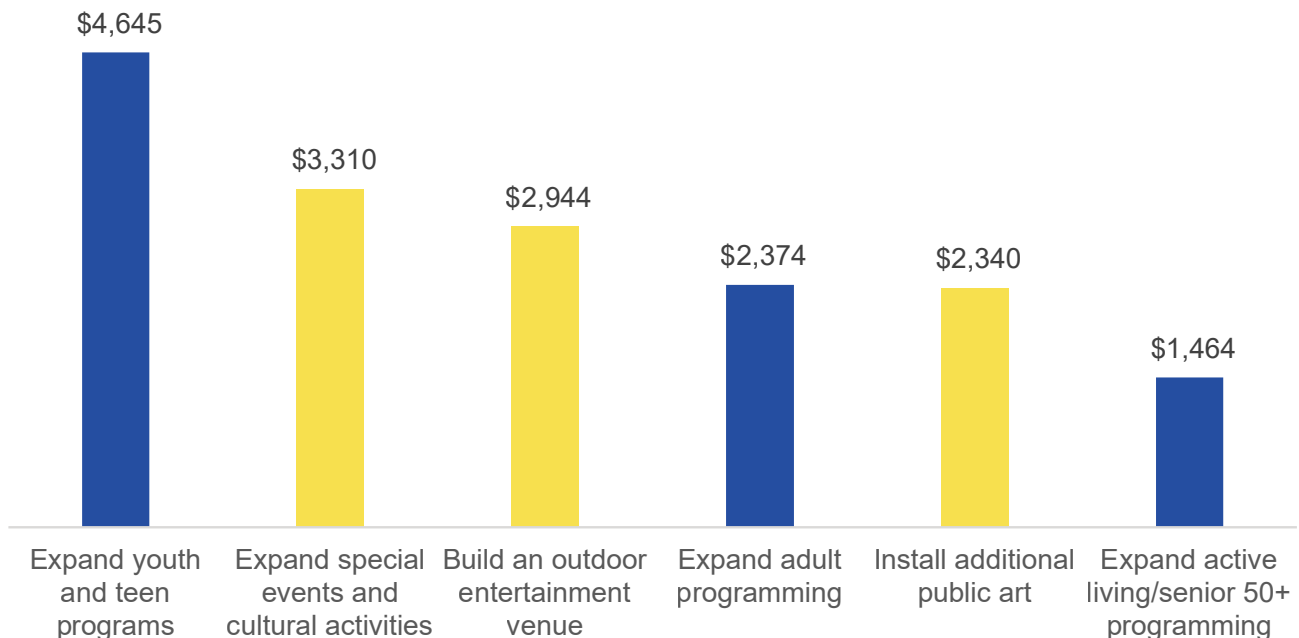




Budget Prioritization

The budget feature gathered insights on how stakeholders would prioritize funding for key facilities, amenities, and programs. Participants were given a virtual budget of \$100 to allocate across various items. A total of 180 responses were received, resulting in a combined budget allocation of \$17,077. The budget categories highlighted in purple are relevant to public art with \$3,310 of funds being allocated to expanding special events and culture activities, \$2,944 for building an outdoor entertainment venue, and \$2,440 for installing additional public art.

Figure 3: Budget Responses Summary



Ideas Wall

Through the Ideas Wall, community members provided open-ended feedback on public art and recreation programs in Santa Maria. While the tool featured nine categories, it did not include a dedicated category for Public Art. As a result, relevant comments appeared across multiple categories and are summarized below.

- Make public art more accessible through community-led mural projects and designated graffiti spaces.
- Concerns were raised about overly strict qualification criteria for utility box art, which may have limited participation.
- The eagle sculpture in front of Abel Maldonado Center was criticized; there's a call for more diverse public art, especially along Main Street.
- There's a need for more adult-focused creative programs, including opportunities to contribute to public art and city beautification.
- Murals and sculptures are suggested to add color and vibrancy to the city, countering the industrial appearance of new developments.
- Outdated bike racks should be replaced with modern, artistic designs that serve both function and aesthetics, particularly in parks and downtown.
- Participants want interactive public art features, like trails with art elements or scavenger hunts, to engage children and families.
- Student art should be showcased in more public settings outside schools, especially in areas that feel dull or lacking in color.
- Youth-oriented art installations, such as those with popular themes, were mentioned as a way to better connect with younger audiences.
- Existing murals are appreciated, and there's strong interest in seeing more throughout the city.
- Public art at locations like the Natural History Museum, such as utility box displays, was noted as a positive example worth expanding.

Interactive Map

The interactive map feature invited community members to share location-specific feedback on public art and recreational spaces in Santa Maria. Participants identified preferred sites for outdoor entertainment, existing recreation areas, potential new amenities, and public art installations. The comments summarized below reflect input specifically related to Public Art.

2811	SANTA BARBARA DRIVE	Suggested that public art would enhance a popular walking area along Santa Barbara Drive.
230	EAST MAIN STREET	Thought this location would be a good spot for public art.
301	COOK STREET	Recommended adding artwork to the parking lot walls at the mall.
345	TOWN CENTER W	Requested more artwork within the mall area.
1953	VIA ESTABLO AVENUE	General call for more public art in the area.
1500	SOUTH BROADWAY	Mentioned this area could benefit from some art.
2124	GARDEN DRIVE	Noted this entry point into town looks neglected and recommended public art to improve its appearance.



Community Engagement

Introduction

Community engagement is a key element when it comes to planning and development for local governments. It becomes a two-way process between the citizens of the community and the local agency. In most cases, it provides a platform for staff and citizens to share and voice their opinions while hoping to inform the agency of decisions that impact their quality of life.

In most instances, the community engagement processes have the capacity to create a shared vision of the City's plans, and when successful, help to create an outcome that reflects the community's values and likely increases their support.

Santa Maria worked closely with the BerryDunn team to hold community focus groups, public workshops, and leadership meetings. Below are comments and priorities from the community engagement that are specific to Public Art.

Leadership Interviews

BerryDunn consulting team facilitated leadership interviews with the mayor, city council members, internal partners, and department directors on October 21, 2024. The following is a summary of the conversations and comments received during five leadership interviews engaging City of Santa Maria leaders.

1. What are the key issues or values in the community that should be considered while developing the Master Plan?

- Perception of use of funding (fix potholes vs install public art)
- Exposing youth to arts and culture

2. What three things would you like to see as an outcome of this planning process?

- Public art in the right-of-way
- Young people involved in the arts
- Provide a broad range of programs, services, and events

3. What do you feel is the role of the City in providing recreational programs, events, and services, and public art?

- Essential (provider/facilitator)
- Must be prioritized in the budget
- Play a key role
- Fundamental to quality of life

4. What do you think the Departments' priorities should be for leisure services moving forward over the next 5 years?

- Enhance public art
- Dedicate part of enterprise funding to go to public art
- Negotiate with developers to install public art

Community Engagement Results

BerryDunn consulting team facilitated community engagement workshops (two sessions) and focus group sessions (four sessions) with a variety of stakeholders representing the community including individuals from the school district, libraries, and community clubs and groups. The following is a summary of the conversations and comments received during the engagement period of January 14, 2025, to January 16, 2025.

Focus Group Sessions

What are the strengths of the programs and services offered by the Department that should be continued over the next several years?

Strong collaboration with schools, nonprofits, and local artists enhances public engagement, while the Department's experienced and communicative staff ensure high-quality services.

What additional programs or activities do you feel should offer that are currently not available?

Many stakeholders want more visual and performing arts classes, low-cost or subsidized arts programs, and collaborations with nonprofits to make these offerings more accessible.

What additional public art would you like to see and where?

The responses emphasize the importance of integrating public art into everyday spaces, making it more accessible and reflective of the community's identity. Suggestions include murals, pole banners, and student/youth-created art displayed in high-traffic areas like underpasses, crosswalks, bus stops, and benches. There is a strong desire for a dedicated art center for local artists, functional art along trails, and interactive elements like QR codes with music or art scavenger hunts. Participants also support incorporating art into urban design, such as painted chairs, flowerpots, and performance-based pop-up events.

During the next 5 years, what should the top priorities be for the Recreation and Parks Department?

Fostering community identity through large-scale events, arts, and partnerships will strengthen local pride and engagement.

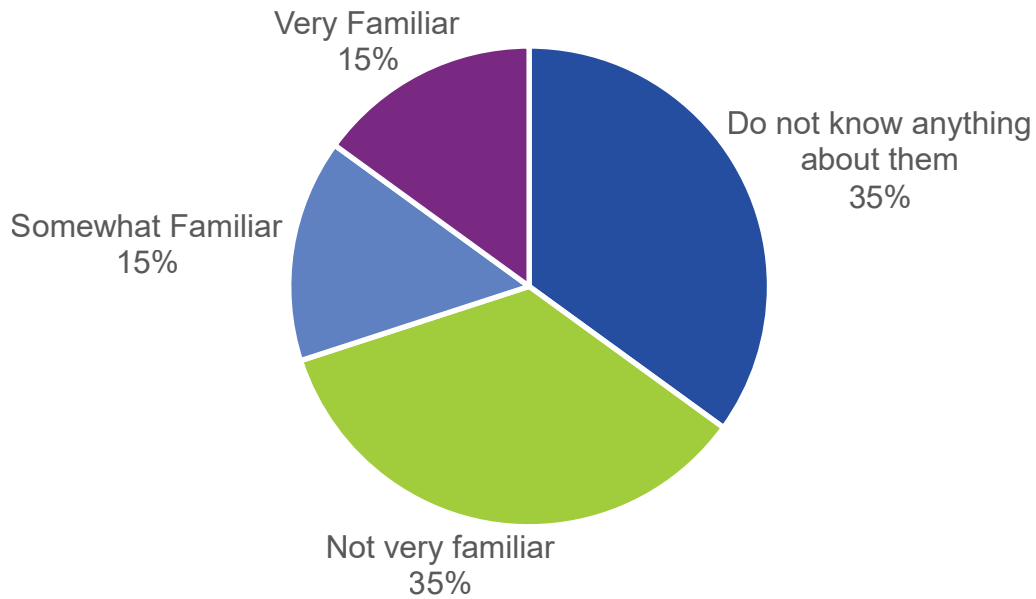
Community Workshop Sessions

What new programs/activities do you feel should be offered by the Department?

- Visual arts programs and installations
- Festivals
- Investing in culturally competent programming

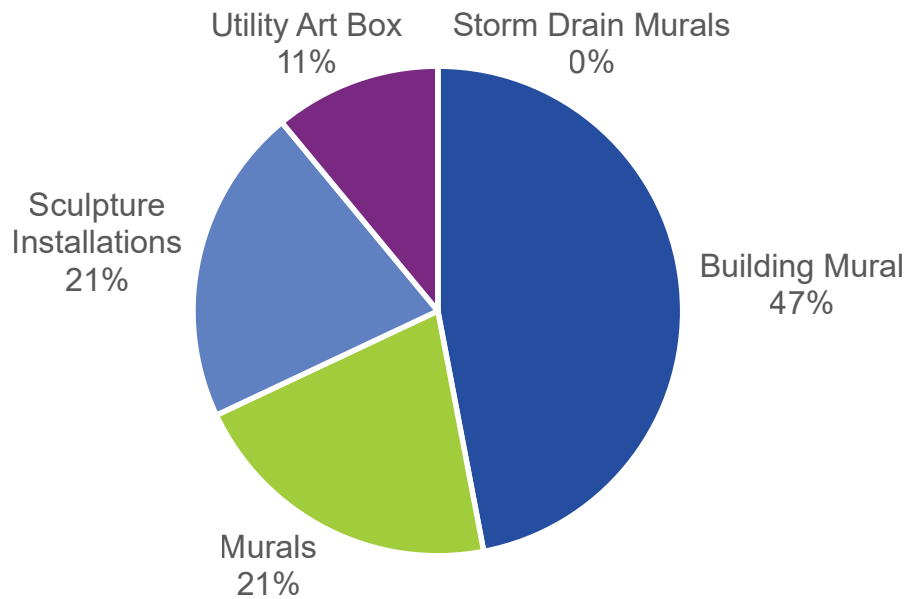
How familiar are you with the public art program in Santa Maria?

Figure 4: Familiarity with the public art program in Santa Maria



What other types of public art would you like to see in the future?

Figure 5: Types of public art community members want to see



Conclusion

Based on the responses from the leadership interviews, focus groups and community workshops, participants are familiar (70%) with the public art program currently being administered by the Recreation and Parks Department. City leadership indicated that they felt the role of the city in public art was essential both as a provider and a facilitator. They saw it as fundamental to the community's quality of life and that the city should play a key role in the installation of public art by prioritizing it in the city budget. However, they did note that they fight a perception of the use of public funds, noting some community members look at fixing potholes vs installing public art. Finally, leadership felt dedicating part of the enterprise funding and negotiating with developers to install public art into their projects were two ways to help fund the program.

When asked about what additional art the participants in the focus groups would like to see, the responses emphasize the importance of integrating public art into everyday spaces, making it more accessible and reflective of the community's identity. Suggestions include murals, pole banners, and student/youth-created art displayed in high-traffic areas like underpasses, crosswalks, bus stops, and benches. Finally, when asked about priorities for the next 5-years, participants emphasized fostering community identity through large-scale events, arts, and partnerships that will strengthen local pride and engagement.

Where do we go from here?

The Public Art Master Plan was adopted in 2019 with a set of 7 goals and implementation strategies to address those goals.

Goal 1

Use public art to support Santa Maria's identity, intertwining culture, people, neighborhoods and ideas to create a memorable urban landscape that respects the past and builds for the future.

Goal 2

Embrace public art as a citywide beautification effort. Facilitate public art and public art partnerships with City Departments, private developers, and arts and cultural organizations.

Goal 3

Celebrate Santa Maria's unique entries to downtown and its neighborhoods—such as the Carriage District, freeway entrances, overpasses and off ramps—by enhancing (or continuing to enhance) the work of artists.

Goal 4

Employ public art to encourage a more walkable city.

Goal 5

Commission public art that emphasizes parks and neighborhoods.

Goal 6

Create a Public Art in Private Development Program to more actively contribute to Santa Maria's cultural and economic health.

Goal 7

Support temporary artwork installations and performance-based arts events in areas with strong pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

The Recreation and Parks Department has made great strides in the last 5 years toward implementing the master plan goals. Based on the community and leadership input, the Department should continue to work to implement the goals and strategies identified in the 2019 Public Art Master Plan.



Licet Romero

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