Policy Brief No. 3 - Put El Paso's Streets First

Recommendation

Pause new public-art commitments until City Council reviews funding policy.



The Decision Before City Council

The proposed resolution before you today would amend the 2026 Public Art Plan. Its attached schedule lists $8.4 million in allocations. The City Council should defer new discretionary commitments while it reviews the policy that directs capital-project dollars towards public art.

Policy Principal - Well-maintained streets are essential public infrastructure, and safe, smooth streets improve the appearance and everyday experiences of El Paso's taxpayers.

$8.348 Million	2%	PAUSE
Total allocations shown in the proposed plan.	Public-art allocation from capital improvement projects.	No new discretionary commitments pending policy and legal review.

Today's Recommended City Council Action

1. **Defer adoption of today's amended plan or remove/defer new discretionary projects** until the City Council receives a written legal and fiscal review as follows: Ask staff to identify existing contracts, encumbrances, grant restrictions and amounts that are legally committed in the proposed $8.348 million to see what amount, if any, can be reallocated towards streets.

2. **Direct the City Attorney to review Ordinance No. 17424 and City Code § 2.40.070** to confirm the exact calculations and restrictions of the 2% public-art (§ 2.40.070(C)(1)) allocation and draft options to redirect this and future eligible allocations towards street repairs and maintenance.

3. **Direct the City Attorney to report back to the City Council if the Ordinance can be amended** by the Council to allocate future eligible allocations towards streets. If the City Attorney finds that the ordinance cannot be amended, the City Attorney should review whether the City Council can place a measure before the voters at the next available voting date to allow the voters to vote on whether they want the Ordinance repealed and replaced with a new Ordinance allocating the 2% eligible allocation towards street repairs.

Why This is a Sound Public-Purpose Choice

El Paso has ongoing problems of finding dependable sources of revenue for street maintenance. Redirecting future allocations or repealing the Ordinance allocating 2% of capital improvements expenses and replacing it with a new ordinance allocating the eligible 2% towards streets would address visible deterioration, improve safety and mobility, reduce the risk to our automobiles and beautify neighborhoods through well-kept public streets. Public art has value, but the Council should openly consider whether a fixed percentage of capital-project costs remains the best use of scarce public dollars when basic infrastructure needs compete for spending.

Disclosure: *Sam Armijo is running for the District 1 City Council Seat on the November 3, 2026 ballot.*