

Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force

NEWS RELEASE

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Palm Springs City Council Approves Design for Palm Springs AIDS Memorial

Fundraising Continues in Order to Commence Engineering and Fabrication



PALM SPRINGS, CA (November 22, 2024) – The Palm Springs City Council voted 4-0 (with one council member absent) to accept the recommendation of the Palm Springs Public Arts Commission to approve the design and placement of the much-anticipated Palm Springs AIDS Memorial last night during a scheduled council meeting. The Council also approved allocating \$65,000 to the Memorial to assist in the installation and increased the city's funding contribution to be a total of \$125,000. The Council acted on a recommendation from the Public Arts Commission which earlier had accepted and approved the design of the Memorial and recommended to the Council that it also approve the design and designate funds for installation. The Memorial is a gift to the City by the Palm Springs AIDS Memorial Task Force and commemorates the many lives lost to AIDS while honoring the caregivers and

survivors in the community. The idea of the Memorial has been in progress since 2012 and was designed pro bono by award-winning artist Phillip K. Smith III starting in 2020. In addition to the physical structure, an accompanying online component of the Memorial will be created and accessed via a QR code that will be prominently displayed within the Memorial site. This online experience is being conceptualized now, and details will be shared as it progresses. The goal is to unveil the Memorial in the Downtown Park along with the online experience between Fall 2025 and Spring 2026.

“We are thrilled that the Palm Springs City Council acted on the recommendation of the Public Arts Commission and approved the Memorial,” said Dan Spencer, Task Force spokesperson. “Selecting the highly visible Downtown Park as its location ensures that the many visitors and residents of this city will now have an opportunity to appreciate the significance of the AIDS crisis and its tremendous impact on our community. We thank the many community members who helped us shape the design and scope of this Memorial and are grateful to the Public Arts Commissioners and City Council members who endorsed this project. I am also very grateful to the hard-working members of our Task Force who have been driving this project for many years, and to Phillip K. Smith III for his outstanding design. We now enter our next stage of raising the remaining funds needed so we may install this Memorial on schedule.”

A previous design of the Memorial had been approved by the City Council in 2021 but some members of the community later voiced concerns about it, requesting that the Memorial design consider a more open, community-minded process. With this in mind, in January of 2024, the Task Force discontinued the original design and held a series of listening sessions with members of the community, who provided input on what they thought the Memorial should represent. At those sessions, participants expressed a desire that the new design would communicate hope, loss, grief, gratitude, and love, among other concepts and emotions. The sessions culminated with a community Town Hall where additional input was received. The Task Force then reviewed all the input and Smith incorporated these into his concept for a new, more robust Memorial design.

“The incredibly important community input we received during the Listening Sessions significantly impacted my concepts around the new Memorial design,” said Phillip K. Smith, III. “There is an immense community of support and love around those living with HIV/AIDS that is and has always been unique to Palm Springs. This new Memorial design would not have been possible without the community’s generous sharing of raw emotions, intimate memories of lost loved ones, and stories about the powerful network of caregivers here in Palm Springs. We hope that the community feels that its voice has been heard and supports the singular goal of this Memorial: ensuring the lives of those lost to HIV/AIDS are never forgotten.”



Re-envisioned as a distinct space for remembrance and reflection, the new Memorial design, titled “The Well of Love”, focuses on three messages: Forever Remembered, Forever Loved, and Forever Celebrated. Merging tears of joy with tears of sorrow, each of these three messages are conceptualized across three different, vertically oriented, cast-glass and reflective “pools” of tears. Tilted down at 7 degrees, each face reflects and collages the viewer, desert sky and surrounding landscape across the three-dimensional water-rippled surface. Additionally, twin entries and

benches within a 20' diameter space create a more significant and accessible space for the Memorial within the Downtown Park.

Smith continued, "I am honored to have been part of this project from the beginning, through the challenges, and now into the new design and approvals. We needed the community's input to get to where we are. And now we need the community's generous financial support to make this Memorial a reality. Today's endorsement of the new design by the Palm Springs City Council, as well as the City's financial support, marks an impressive moment for this project that's been in the making for more than a decade."

Renderings of the Memorial and a comprehensive description of the physical structure and the accompanying virtual site may be found at <https://presentation.psaidsmemorial.org/>.

The Task Force will now enter the final phase of fundraising. Given the expanded new design, the budget for the project increased to \$1.2 million. Currently, about \$700,000 is needed to complete the project. The Task Force continues to welcome donations at all levels of support for this important project. Donations may be made at <https://psaidsmemorial.org/community-leadership-donor-tiers/>. To note, the Task Force has partnered with DAP Health to act solely as the fiscal processing agent for 501(c)(3) donations to the Memorial.

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