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City of Palm Desert and Palm Springs Art Museum Announce an Art Museum and Sculpture Garden in Palm Desert

PALM DESERT, CA (July 6, 2010) – In a joint statement today, the City of Palm Desert and the Palm Springs Art Museum announced an agreement for the Art Museum to lease from the City the building that currently houses the Palm Desert Visitors Center.

Located at 72-567 Highway 111 in Entrada del Paseo at the westernmost intersection of Highway 111 and El Paseo, this architecturally distinctive, LEED Certified building and the beautifully landscaped Eric Johnson Memorial Gardens surrounding it will become the site of a museum and sculpture garden to be known as the **Palm Springs Art Museum, Palm Desert**. The facility will be a branch of the Palm Springs Art Museum located in downtown Palm Springs.

Plans call for the presentation within the 8,400-square-foot building of ongoing exhibitions of internationally important art in different media including sculpture, painting, photography, art glass, and architecture and design. An ambitious education program meant for visitors of all ages will accompany these exhibitions, with school tours, artist demonstrations, curatorial lectures, art films, community days, family events, and other learning programs. Outdoors, the sensory experience of the Eric Johnson Memorial Garden, with its 250,000 square feet of sculpted, rolling landscape covered with native plantings, winding pathways, and water features will be further enhanced by the addition of major sculptures in both abstract and representational styles, creating the most important sculpture garden between Los Angeles and Phoenix.

The Palm Desert Visitors Center will continue to occupy its present location until autumn 2010, when it will move to new premises on El Paseo. The current timetable for the art museum in Palm Desert calls for an opening around the end of 2011 or beginning of 2012. It is anticipated that the museum will require approximately one year to make required building modifications, prepare its organizational systems, and to install works of art, both inside and out of the Visitor Center structure.

Commenting on the importance of this new program for the Palm Springs Art Museum, Museum Chairman Harold Meyerman noted: “Our Board for several years has contemplated a satellite location in the East Valley so that we can better serve the many schools and audiences that have to travel long distances

to Palm Springs. Palm Desert has long shown a commitment to the arts, so it is very exciting for us to partner in a joint venture with a city that shares our vision of the many great benefits a thriving cultural arts organization can bring to the area.”

Executive Director Steven Nash added: “We envision a creative and engaging program for this facility comparable to any other art museum of its size in the country. It really is a win-win situation for the museum, the City, and the whole region, and will also benefit, with more exposure and more membership, the main museum in Palm Springs.”

Palm Desert Mayor Cindy Finerty said the new museum will offer additional economic development opportunities for the City, new educational opportunities for residents, visitors, and area students, and increased visibility for nearby restaurants and retail businesses.

“On behalf of the City Council, I welcome the Palm Springs Art Museum to Palm Desert,” Finerty said. “This world-class museum joins the McCallum Theatre, The Living Desert, College of the Desert, Palm Desert’s Cal State and University of California campuses, and the many other amenities that make Palm Desert the cultural and educational heart of the Coachella Valley.”

Noting that the City has been recognized for its more than 150-piece Public Art Collection, Community Art Gallery, and its bi-annual El Paseo Invitational Sculpture Exhibition, Mayor Finerty added that art museum staff will be collaborating with City staff and Palm Desert’s Art in Public Places Commission to enhance an already renowned Public Art Program.

Completed in September 2005 at a cost of \$4.5 million, the building for the Palm Desert Visitors Center has been recognized for its environmentally friendly and energy efficient construction. It was the first building in the Coachella Valley to earn Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification. Criteria for green building ratings include water efficiency, efficient energy consumption, recycled materials, interior environmental quality, and sustainable site planning. The adjacent Eric Johnson Memorial Gardens feature drought tolerant landscaping and have also been recognized for excellence of landscape design.

The LEED Green Building Rating System™ is the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction, and operation of high performance green buildings.

For more information, please call 760-322-4814.

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