

Public Art Program Prioritization Working Session. Working Session to Identify and Prioritize Future Public Art Programming for the City of Alameda

To: Honorable Chair and
Members of the Public Art Commission

From: Lois Butler
Economic Development Manager

Date: April 15, 2019

RE: Public Art Program Prioritization Working Session. Working Session to Identify and Prioritize Future Public Art Programming for the City of Alameda

BACKGROUND

Alameda Municipal Code Section 30-98 Public Art in New Commercial, Industrial, Residential and Municipal Construction (Ordinance) requires that major development projects include onsite public art. The Ordinance also permits an applicant to pay a fee in lieu of providing the art on site. Any in-lieu fees collected are deposited in the dedicated Public Art Fund (Fund). The Fund can then only be used by the City to provide or support public art.

Since September of 2017, the City of Alameda has released three Requests for Proposals (RFPs) for public art in Alameda, resulting in the award of thirteen public art grants, totaling \$623,645. Eleven of these grants were funded through the Public Art Fund, and two through the Tidelands Fund. The grants are listed below, and Exhibit A contains a complete summary of all funded artwork, including artist and artwork name, description, and funding amount.

- Rockspinners, Zach Coffin
- Gateway Columns, Norman Moore
- Love Our Island Art Walk, Rhythmix Cultural Works
- Astro Mural, Dan Fontes
- Bronze Squid, Rossella Scapini and Luke Heimbigner
- Dragon Dance, Dmitrii Volkov
- Island City Waterways, Rhythmix Cultural Works
- Animate Dance Festival, West End Arts and Entertainment District
- The American Landscape, Sacred and Profane
- Second Friday Art Walk, Island Alliance for the Arts
- Opera in the Park, Island City Opera
- Lunar New Year Celebration, West Alameda Business Association
- Plein Air Paintout, Frank Bette Center

Four of the original thirteen grants have been completed, and nine are still in process. Exhibit A includes further information regarding the status and timing of each grant.

DISCUSSION

Since 2017, the Public Art Commission (PAC), City staff, and members of the arts community have generated a number of additional ideas for public art programming in the City of Alameda. The goal of this working session is to identify and prioritize those ideas for implementation over the next five to seven years, within the context of funding and staff availability.

Considerations for Future Work Planning

Fund Balance

The Public Art Fund currently has an available balance of \$166,753. This includes recent contributions from Carmel Partners for the Admirals Cove rental homes project.

Future funding is dependent on new development choosing to pay into the fund instead of providing onsite art. At this time, staff does not know of any upcoming contributions to the Fund. However, Exhibit B contains a summary of planned and proposed development in Alameda that is subject to the Ordinance. These developments may include public art onsite, and/or an in-lieu fee contribution to the Public Art Fund.

Use of Fund for Physical and/or Cultural Art

The current Ordinance allows for up to 25 percent of the Fund to be used for cultural arts and arts programming. In the last RFP, one physical public art grant for \$25,000 was not awarded. This money remains in the Fund, and is earmarked for physical artwork. Of the remaining Fund balance, staff would recommend that 75% be dedicated to physical public art, and 25% to cultural arts and arts programming. As a result, there is currently up to \$131,315 available for physical public artwork, and up to \$35,438 available for cultural arts and arts programming.

Staff Availability

The nine outstanding public art grants require ongoing administration, including contracting, invoicing, and artist support. In addition, the five outstanding physical art grants require extensive administration in the form of document review, permitting assistance, inspections and continued facilitation. Please see Exhibit C for the Physical Art Grant Checklist which summarizes the workflow for physical public art.

City staff anticipates that the ongoing administration of these grants will require significant staff time over the next two years. In addition, staff also co-manages the Art in City Hall program, which requires minor, but continuous, administration.

Potential Programs

A series of potential programs are summarized below, along with an estimation of the time and resources that would be associated with implementing each. Many of these programs would require further research and development to implement.

Identify Priority Locations for Public Art

The original RFP for physical public art in Alameda did not identify locations for the art; rather, it requested that artists work with private property owners and/or public agencies to propose locations for their artwork. Based on feedback from proposing artists, the arts community, and best practices from other municipal public art programs, staff recommends that future physical public art RFPs be location-based. This means that locations for public art would be identified in advance, and each RFP would be issued for work in a specific location. Responding artists would then submit site-specific proposals.

In order to facilitate this, staff recommends a community process to identify and prioritize locations for future public art. This process may include one or more community meetings, a survey, and/or other public outreach methods. In addition, staff time will be required to review and vet proposed locations to ensure availability of the location and suitability for public art.

Estimated time to complete: 4-6 months

Funding requirement: Minimal

Staff time: Moderate

Revise Public Art Ordinance

Currently, the Ordinance requires developers to contribute 1% of their building costs to the creation of public art at their project, or via an in-lieu fee to the Fund. Historically, the majority of developers have chosen to create public art on site. In order to encourage deposits into the Fund, the Ordinance may be revised to offer a discount to developers who choose to pay the in-lieu fee. For example, the City of Berkeley's Public Art Ordinance requires developers to contribute 1.75% of their building costs to onsite public art, or 0.8% to its public art fund as an in-lieu fee.

A revision of the Public Art Ordinance may also consider other changes, including dedicating a portion of the Fund for long-term maintenance costs (a best practice in effect in San Francisco and other cities), and/or clarifying existing language. Revising the Ordinance will also include interdepartmental coordination and Planning Board review.

Estimated time to complete: 6-8 months

Funding requirement: Minimal
Staff time: Moderate

Small Grants Pilot Program

There are many arts organizations in Alameda that could benefit from smaller grant amounts, and providing smaller grants would allow the public arts program to support a wider range of efforts. Although specific program guidelines would require additional research and development, preliminary research suggests that a Small Grants Pilot Program could provide grants from \$500 to \$2,000 for cultural or visual arts in Alameda.

One of challenges of this program would be the ongoing staff time required to manage the call for applications, and administer a large number of small grants. In order to mitigate this, staff recommends that a cap be placed on the number of grants, and that - should it become an annual program - the application and evaluation process be conducted once per year, rather than as a rolling applications process.

Estimated time: 2-4 months; plus ongoing implementation
Funding requirement: Minimum of \$15,000
Staff time: High

Vacant Storefront Mural Program

Vacant storefronts represent an opportunity to bring more artwork to Alameda's commercial districts. A Vacant Storefront Mural Program would provide grants of \$1,500 to \$3,000 to business and property owners to install a temporary vinyl "murals" in their vacant storefronts. Staff would commission artists to create a series of designs, from which staff and the grantees could work together to select the appropriate design for each storefront.

Estimated time: 4-6 months; plus ongoing implementation
Funding requirement: Minimum of \$20,000
Staff time: High

Release New RFP for Public Art

The existing fund balance could be dedicated to new RFPs for physical art and cultural art and arts programming in Alameda, similar to those released over the last two years. Staff would recommend, however, that priority locations for physical art be identified prior to releasing another physical art RFP.

Estimated time: 6-8 months per RFP to selection; administration time will vary based artwork funded.

Funding requirement: up to \$131,315 for physical public art, \$35,438 for cultural public art

Staff time: Moderate-High

Alameda Point Art Park

There are several parks in development at Alameda Point. Two are new parks in Site A that are already full designed. Another is Enterprise Park, located between Encinal Boat Launch Facility and the U.S.S. Hornet.

The Alameda Recreation and Parks Department and Recreation and Parks Commission plan to start a public input process to develop a Master Plan for this park in 2019. An “art park,” with a number of art pieces concentrated in one area could be considered in the public process as a design element. In order to create a critical mass of artwork, this option would require utilizing the remaining public art funding as well as additional funding resources in this location over time.

Estimated time: 12-18 months as part of the Enterprise Park Master Plan public input process; plus long-term implementation

Funding requirement: up to \$131,315 for physical public art, plus substantial future public art funding

Staff time: Moderate

Call for Artists: Pre-Qualified Artist Pool

Currently, most developers choose to fulfill their public art requirement onsite. In these cases, the PAC reviews the proposed artwork to ensure that (a) the artist has demonstrated qualifications as a professional artist, (b) the artwork is publicly accessible, (c) the materials are durable and cost-effective, and (d) the budget meets the program requirements. The PAC does not have the ability to approve or deny artwork based on content alone.

The creation of a pre-qualified artist pool is one way to increase the PAC’s influence over the quality of the artwork that is installed onsite at new developments. To do this, the City would release a Call for Artists interested working in Alameda. Artists would be evaluated and selected based on a portfolio of existing work. Developers would have the option to choose from the pre-qualified artist pool, knowing that the artists on this list were supported by the PAC.

Estimated time: 2-4 months

Funding requirement: Minimal

Staff time: Low

RECOMMENDATION

Identify and prioritize future public art programming for the City of Alameda.

Respectfully Submitted,
Lois Butler
Economic Development Manager

By,
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Economic Development Analyst

Exhibits:

- A. Summary of Funded Artwork
- B. Eligibility of Upcoming Projects for the Public Art Requirement
- C. Physical Art Grant Checklist