

CITY OF SAN LEANDRO

Meeting Date: February 10, 2016

STAFF REPORT

TO: San Leandro Arts Commission

BY: Lars Halle
Development Coordinator, Office of Business Development

TITLE: Staff Report for the Art Commission's Review of Portfolio Submissions for the Second Phase of the Utility Box Art Project

RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff requests that the Arts Commission engage in an interactive exercise to aid in determining the strongest candidates for selection to receive a commission to create original artwork to be included in the second phase of the Utility Box Art Project.

BACKGROUND

On November 16, 2013, the City held an Arts and Culture Town Hall meeting to present ongoing cultural art programs in the City and to seek input on future programs. The format was interactive and offered multiple opportunities for participants to provide direction on the City's arts and culture programs. The utility box mural wrap demonstration presented by staff received enthusiastic support from the public at the meeting.

Based on that feedback, City staff initiated a pilot program to install art on several utility boxes in the City. Through a partnership with the Earth Island Institute's Streets Alive program, the Office of Business Development identified and installed art on 16 boxes in 7 locations. Reproductions of original art were installed by means of polymer wrap on all utility boxes.

The public's reception of the Utility Box Art project has been positive. In 2015, the Office of Business Development arranged walking tours for members of the community to view the artwork and meet the artists.

PHASE II IMPLEMENTATION

In the Fiscal Year 2015-16 Budget, funds were appropriated for a second phase of Utility Box Art installations. The Earth Island Institute, working in partnership with Athen B. Gallery was engaged to issue a Call for Artists, aid in the selection process, prepare Caltrans permitting documents, and coordinate the preparation, printing, and installation of artwork on 25 additional utility boxes in 15

locations. During this phase, staff estimates that 15 boxes will receive polymer wraps, while 10 boxes will be painted on-site. Caltrans and PG&E do not permit painting on their boxes, so only boxes owned by the City are available for live painting.

In December 2015, a Call for Artists was issued with a submission deadline of January 19, 2016. After reviewing the submissions and feedback from Athen B. Gallery, staff has identified 26 artist submissions that would be appropriate for this project. Staff anticipates selecting 14 artists to create art for this project, one for each location (an artist for the 15th location, adjacent to the Davis West neighborhood, will be selected separately, at a meeting of neighborhood residents). Several locations include more than one utility box, but staff recommends that each location be constrained to a consistent aesthetic from just one artist.

At this time, the Arts Commission is invited to engage in an exercise that will provide feedback on the portfolio submissions for this phase of the project and assist in the selection of artists for the next round of utility box art installations. An overview of the candidates is attached, with samples from each artist. Artists based in San Leandro are noted as such.

At the February 10, 2015 Arts Commission meeting, staff will present printed versions of the attached artist summaries and the Commission will be asked to participate in a “dot exercise.” Each Commissioner will be given 10 dots and asked to allocate them to the artists that they most support for this project. It is possible to allocate one or more dots to any given artists. For example, a Commissioner can allocate one dot each to each of his or her top ten choices. Alternatively, a Commissioner might opt to allocate all ten dots to one artist, or any other variant of these two approaches.

Feedback from this exercise will be used to select artists for the project. Once selected, artists will be engaged to create original artworks. City staff and Athen B. Gallery will work with artists to match artists with locations, and determine who will paint on location and who will produce artwork for a polymer wrap. Athen B. Gallery will coordinate permitting with Caltrans and PG&E, and oversee the implementation process. City staff will assist with Encroachment Permits for the installation process.

The project is expected to be completed by the end of 2016.