



STAFF REPORT

HERITAGE & CULTURAL ARTS COMMISSION

DATE: April 14, 2016

TO: Honorable Chair and Commissioners

FROM: Tegan McLane, Cultural Arts & Heritage Manager 

SUBJECT: Utility Box Art Pilot Program Theme and Selection Process
By: Tegan McLane, Cultural Arts & Heritage Manager

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The City Council has approved Public Art Fund monies to be used for Utility Box Art Pilot Program and provided direction for the Commission to select a theme and approve artist selection procedures.

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Staff estimates the cost for a Utility Box Art Pilot Program – including artist payments and Staff time – to be approximately \$7,700. Per the Public Art Ordinance, this project is eligible for funding with Public Art Fund monies, and Council has approved \$8,000 for the purpose of this program.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the Commission: 1) Determine whether to issue an open call for proposals to be evaluated by an ad hoc committee, or to pre-qualify artists; 2) Determine whether to allow submissions from high school-age artists sponsored by a visual arts teacher or professional visual artist who would be responsible for ensuring the work is of professional quality and completed in a timely fashion; and 3) Determine a single theme for all boxes in the Pilot Program, or one theme for the boxes in the Village Parkway District of the Downtown Specific Plan and a second theme for the boxes in the Dublin High School neighborhood.

DESCRIPTION:

At the March 1, 2016 meeting, the City Council approved a Utility Box Art Pilot Program proposed by Staff and recommended by the Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission. The City Council allocated \$8,000 for use on a six-box pilot program in the Village Parkway District and Dublin High School neighborhood. However, the City Council declined to get further involved in artist selection procedures or to select a theme, and requested these items be determined by Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission.

Based on Dublin's Public Art Master Plan and input from surrounding cities, Staff recommends that the pilot program invite proposals from local professional artists who have the demonstrated ability to complete such a project. Proposals would be evaluated by an ad-hoc committee of stakeholders that would include two Commission members, and representatives from the public and business communities. Alternatively, Staff could develop a pre-qualified artists list, per the Public Art Master Plan. Ultimately, the Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission would recommend box designs to the City Council for final approval.

At its February 10 meeting, the Commission recommended that the three boxes closest to Dublin High School be assigned to high school-age artists, under the supervision of an adult sponsor. To meet the Public Art Master Plan requirements, the sponsor would need to be a visual art teacher or professional visual artist serving as a mentor to the students.

Also at its February 10 meeting, the Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission discussed the need for general thematic guidelines, perhaps one theme to unify the Downtown boxes and another to unify the High School neighborhood boxes. Another possibility would be to establish a theme that could potentially be carried throughout the City, should the City Council wish to continue the program. For example, artists could be asked to create designs reflecting the new City brand: "The New American Backyard," which was adopted last year.

Heritage and Cultural Arts Commission recommended these possible themes at its February 10 meeting:

- Flowers
- Historical scenes in *trompe l'oeil* style
- Variations on a shamrock theme
- Historical photos printed and wrapped onto the boxes

Of the options the Commission previously recommended, Staff believes the 'variations on a shamrock theme' is more specific to Dublin and offers the widest possible opportunity for artist interpretation.

The flower theme, while likely to generate bright and attractive artwork, has been done in nearby cities, including Pleasanton. A call for historic scenes in *trompe l'oeil* style will severely limit the artist pool, and may preclude some very talented local artists who do not work in that style.

The historical photo option, while attractive and educational, may not qualify for use of public art funds. The Public Art Master Plan currently requires all artwork to be "designed by professional visual artists." Historical photos alone would not qualify. However, historical photos could be considered if embellished or turned into a collage by a visual artist. If 'embellished or collaged historical photos' is selected as a theme, staff recommends covering the boxes with printed wraps to ensure that the photos are accurately reproduced. Wraps are typically affixed by a sign maker, so the artists would not be part of the installation process.

NOTICING REQUIREMENTS/PUBLIC OUTREACH:

None.

ATTACHMENTS:

None.