

Agenda Report

December 8, 2014

TO: Honorable Mayor and City Council
FROM: Planning & Community Development Department
SUBJECT: REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF FINAL ART PLAN FOR THE SIERRA MADRE VILLA CORRIDOR PUBLIC ART PROJECT

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City Council:

1. Find that the recommended action is exempt from the California Environmental Quality Act ("CEQA") pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1: Existing Facilities);
2. Approve the Final Art Plan for the Sierra Madre Villa Corridor Public Art Project;
3. Adopt a Resolution accepting maintenance responsibility for the lifespan of the artwork in accordance with the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) requirements; and
4. Authorize the City Manager to execute all necessary documents with Caltrans to implement this Public Art Project.

ARTS AND CULTURE COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION:

On October 9, 2013, the Arts and Culture Commission recommended that the City Council approve the Final Art Plan for the Sierra Madre Villa Corridor Public Art Project.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

On October 9, 2013, the Arts and Culture Commission approved the Final Art Plan for the Sierra Madre Villa Pedestrian Corridor Public Art Project at the east side of the Sierra Madre Villa Avenue underpass of the 210 Freeway. The project, by proposed artist Kyungmi Shin, would be composed of three artwork elements: (1) five light pole word sculptures, (2) five light pole poetry medallions and (3) a mural on the retaining wall next to the sidewalk. Spanning the length of the freeway underpass, the artwork's intention is to create a colorful and inviting environment that encourages pedestrian activity and the use of public transit, particularly in relation to the adjacent Sierra Madre Villa Metro Gold Line Station. Further, the artwork would support local identity and make

a visual impact as a component of place-making. The proposed artwork's theme was developed in collaboration with the Public Works Department and contains descriptive and poetic transit-related words and images that reference five alternative modes of transportation: bus, train, bicycling, walking, and running.

With Council approval of the proposed Resolution and the execution of the City's amended Maintenance Agreement, Caltrans will issue an Encroachment Permit to allow for artwork installation.

BACKGROUND:

In July, 2011, City Council initiated a public art component to an existing transportation Capital Improvement (CIP) project, the Sierra Madre Villa Pedestrian Corridor. The Department of Public Works identified additional funding to enhance the public art project budget in August 2012. Subsequently, Cultural Affairs staff initiated development of the public art project per the Capital Public Art Program Guidelines.

Vision Statement and Project Outreach

A community stakeholder group, comprised of East Pasadena representatives, was convened on July 9 and August 29, 2012 at which time the following vision statement for the public art project was created and refined:

The Sierra Madre Villa Pedestrian Corridor public art project will reflect the theme generally of transportation (pedestrian, bicycle and auto) as well as the character of the East Pasadena neighborhood. The project will promote a safe and reflective passage through the corridor to the light rail station and beyond.

Artist Selection and Artwork Concept Development

Two community meetings were held on September 18 and October 16, 2012 to publicize the project and a Request for Qualifications was issued to solicit artists. The resulting 24 proposals were reviewed by a selection panel, which recommended artist Kyungmi Shin, of Shin Gray Studio. The artist was approved by the Arts and Cultural Commission on January 9, 2013. Ms. Shin then worked with the staff of the Cultural Affairs division and the Departments of Public Works and Transportation to develop a Concept Art Plan that was responsive to the site and the Vision Statement. The Arts and Culture Commission approved the Concept Art Plan on April 10, 2013 and a more fully articulated Final Art Plan on October 9, 2013. An additional Community Meeting to review the art concept was held on November 21, 2013.

ANALYSIS:

Site

Located in East Pasadena, this Capital Public Art Program project was developed with the Public Works Department and utilizes Federal Transit Funds and Metro Gold Line Surplus Funds. The entire Sierra Madre Villa Pedestrian Corridor (Corridor) project consisted of sidewalk expansion, lighting, landscaping and public art along the east side of the Sierra Madre Villa Avenue to and from the Sierra Madre Villa Metro Light Rail Station. The project is bounded by Colorado Boulevard to the south and Foothill Boulevard to the north. The Corridor is flanked by retail businesses to the south and a combination of multi-family residential and commercial properties to the north.

The Corridor creates a street level pathway from Colorado Boulevard to the south along Sierra Madre Villa Avenue to the Metro station and is envisioned to create a safe and welcoming passage to encourage pedestrian activity and to support the use of public transit. The project was constructed after studies revealed that a south pedestrian overpass bridge would not be feasible due to planned freeway widening.

The Corridor project supports one of the Guiding Principles of the General Plan Mobility Element that seeks to enable Pasadena to be “a city where people can circulate without cars.” The East Pasadena Specific Plan similarly encourages transit-oriented development and the “creation of a multi-modal access corridor for bicycle, pedestrian and shuttle connections to the light rail station.”

The inclusion of public art in the Corridor also distributes cultural enhancements to East Pasadena, an area that was identified as culturally underserved in the Cultural Nexus Master Plan. The Sierra Madre Villa Project also supports the Public Art Master Plan which includes a recommendation to commission artist-designed enhancements for freeway entrances, overpasses and off-ramps through light, color or media projects.

Artwork Location

Ms. Shin’s proposed artwork is intended to impact the east side of the 210 freeway underpass in order to focus on the pedestrian experience of the site. The artwork is proposed to be located along Sierra Madre Villa Avenue between the southern end of the 210 Freeway underpass and the freeway’s westbound off-ramp to the north. The artwork would span the entire underpass, which stretches approximately 300 feet.

The City is in the process of adjusting the existing second northbound traffic signal at the site for increased vehicular visibility. Caltrans has confirmed that the light pole and retaining wall artwork installations may proceed independent of the signal head updates.

Art Concept

The proposed art concept, titled *Road Blossoms*, is planned to improve the pedestrian experience along the freeway underpass and create a more pleasant overall environment. Inspired by the idea of promoting the use of public transportation, bicycling, walking and running, the artist has designed a three-part artwork consisting of: 1) sculptural word sculptures, 2) artistic poetry medallions and 3) a mural.

1. *Light Pole Art Banners: Word Sculptures*

Each of five light poles will contain an artist designed “word sculpture,” consisting of one descriptive, action-oriented text: “TRAIN,” “BUS,” “WALK,” “RUN,” and “BIKE.”

Each aluminum sculpture will be water-jet cut to include the shapes of both sides of the two words and will be painted to achieve a shading effect. The sculptures would be visible and readable by pedestrians walking both to and from the Light Rail Station. Selectively colored to correspond to the project’s overall color scheme of orange, blue, yellow, green and chartreuse, each word sculpture will be attached to the western exposure of each light pole.

2. *Light Pole Art Banners: Poetry Medallions*

Artist-designed poetry medallions are the second component of the light pole art banners. Each of these circular artworks will be affixed on the eastern exposure of the five light poles. The two-sided aluminum medallions will incorporate a poetic combination of an image and one word of text that is descriptive of each transportation modes outlined in the word sculptures. The medallion images and word combinations are:

- “FRIENDS” with an image of two children through a bus window;
- “WIND” with an image of a historic bicycle;
- “BREATHE” with two adults jogging;
- “SKY” with a family walking, and;
- “JOURNEY” with an image of a modern train.

The image for each medallion will be cut within the metal surface and will be visible as negative space, creating a sense of three-dimensionality. The corresponding word will be painted onto each side of the medallion in white onto a background color.

Together, the word sculptures and poetry medallions are created as art banners for each of the five light poles. Each will be installed at a minimum height of approximately 8 feet from the ground without obstruction from commercial and street signage. The unified theme of these two art elements is intended to engage viewers and encourage walking as an opportunity to connect with the outdoors, to evoke interest, curiosity and elicit meaningful connections. Their text combinations are:

- “TRAIN/JOURNEY,”
- “BUS/FRIENDS,”
- “WALK/SKY,”
- “RUN/BREATHE,” and;
- “BIKE/WIND.”

The incorporation of negative space allows for a more dynamic artwork that can reflect changing light conditions and will slightly obscure portions of the word poems, providing a sense of subtlety. Viewers may decipher these literary and visual puzzles through repeated viewing and contemplation. *Road Blossoms* is an extension of the artist’s previous work that uses negative space to emphasize and tell impactful stories.

3. *Retaining Wall Mural*

Road Blossoms will also introduce a painted mural on the eastern retaining wall as the third component of this public art project. The mural imagery will consist of a combination of circular designs inspired by wheels and referencing the various modes of transportation highlighted on the artwork banners. The selected color palette unifies all three art elements and references grapes, oranges and other citrus fruit as well as the sun—in homage to the cultivated farms in the early agricultural settlement of East Pasadena. The mural paint will meet the Caltrans requirement to allow for visibility of any cracks in the concrete structure.

Although simple in form, the circles’ colors, placement, and shape serve to maintain the visual and thematic connection between the retaining wall and the light pole banner elements. The overall effect of these colorful additions will complement the underpass and nearby landscape upgrades.

The original proposal included a painted ceiling mural. The project was reviewed by Caltrans and was subsequently revised to relocate this component to a retaining wall in response to a Caltrans engineering request. The revised location is on the east side retaining wall, along the northbound sidewalk.

Lighting of Artwork

The light pole art elements are proposed to be lit by ambient light from the adjacent light fixtures. The light poles are illuminated during both day and night time.

Project Budget

This project has two funding sources, Federal Transit Funds and Metro Gold Line Surplus Funds. Federal Transit Funds are subject to the Capital Public Art Program requirement. The total public art project budget of \$50,000 was appropriated to the Capital Public Art Fund by City Council on September 24, 2012.

The artwork budget includes the expenses for the artist selection and outreach process, artwork design, fabrication, and transportation to the site. Engineering designs of the

overall Corridor Project, permits, inspections, and installation of artwork and identification signage will be provided by the Department of Public Works.

The City has completed the initial phase of the project; the Concept and Final Art Plans have been developed, reviewed and approved by the Arts & Culture Commission. Costs expended to date are \$20,000. The remaining \$30,000 will fund fabrication, artwork delivery, installation and project Final Documentation.

Project Maintenance and Repair

Because the proposed public art project would be located on Caltrans property, a formal application was submitted to Caltrans to initiate the review and approval process. The City's existing Landscape Maintenance Agreement was amended by Caltrans to include a provision for the artwork and upon City Council adoption of the attached Resolution accepting maintenance responsibility, Caltrans will issue an Encroachment permit to allow for the installation of artwork at the site.

The Capital Public Art Program Guidelines provide that the Public Works Department is responsible for regular maintenance and related costs. Maintenance for the project is projected to be minimal, and may include paint retouching, power washing and graffiti removal. An anti-graffiti coating will be applied to preserve the integrity of the artwork and reduce maintenance costs.

Major damages would require a review by a professional art conservator with the right of first refusal for reasonable repairs accorded to the artist as a provision of the contract. The Capital Public Art Fund would bear the responsibility for artwork conservation should major damage occur. The public art project has been identified to have a ten-year lifespan to reflect the expected duration of the project. At the conclusion of the ten-year period, Caltrans requires that the site be returned to its former condition.

Public Review

At the City Council District 4 Community Meeting on November 21, 2013, staff and the artist presented the proposed public artwork to the community with a PowerPoint presentation and design board. The Artist's design board was left on temporary display at Victory Park Recreation Center for a period of three weeks for further public exposure to the proposed project.

COUNCIL POLICY CONSIDERATION:

The proposed Sierra Madre Corridor public art project is consistent with:

- Guiding Principles of the General Plan Mobility Element
- East Pasadena Specific Plan
- Cultural Nexus Cultural Master Plan
- Public Art Master Plan

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS:

The project is categorically exempt from CEQA pursuant to State CEQA Guidelines Section 15301 (Class 1: Existing Facilities). The Class 1 categorical exemption covers the repair, maintenance, or minor alteration of existing public or private facilities, including existing highways and streets, sidewalks, gutters, bicycle and pedestrian trails, and similar facilities, involving negligible or no expansion of use. The proposed art installation (and all related approvals) would constitute a minor alteration to the existing pedestrian way along Sierra Madre Villa Avenue. The proposed project would not increase the capacity of the sidewalk or the street, but is rather intended for beautification and to improve the pedestrian and transit rider experience.

FISCAL IMPACT:

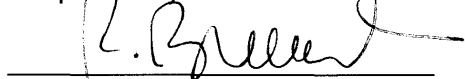
The cost of this action will be \$30,000. Funding for this action will be addressed by the utilization of existing budgeted appropriations in the Capital Public Art Fund, account 310-442000-98175. It is anticipated that \$30,000 of the cost will be spent during the current fiscal year. Indirect and support costs such as maintenance are anticipated to be minimal for the life of the project and will be addressed by utilization of existing and future Public Works Maintenance budget appropriations.

Respectfully submitted,



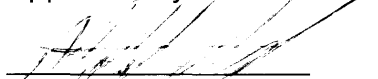
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Attachment: (1)

Attachment A – Sierra Madre Villa Pedestrian Corridor Public Art Project