



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

City of Palo Alto Staff Report to Public Art Commission

October 12, 2017

RE: Agenda Item 1, Charleston-Arastradero Corridor

Recommendation:

Staff recommends that the Public Art Commission approve the artwork designed by Susan Zoccola associated with the Charleston-Arastradero Corridor Project.

Executive Summary

The City of Palo Alto's Public Art Program manages the public art in municipal project funds transferred annually as part of the budget cycle in accordance with Ordinance Number 5301, Municipal Code 2.26.070 (Public Art for Municipal Projects). Due to the high visibility of the Charleston-Arastradero Corridor Project and multiple opportunities to incorporate artwork, staff initiated the artist selection process in March of 2016. After reviewing the qualified artists in the Public Art pre-qualified pool, staff presented the work of twenty different artists to a selection panel composed of the project Landscape Architect Linda Gates, Cubberley artist Charles Coates, community member Lynda Lumish, Assistant Director of Community Services Rhyena Halpern who oversees the Arts & Science Division, and Public Art Commission Chair Jim Migdal. From that selection panel, five artists were selected for an interview. Once the interviews were completed, Susan Zoccola was selected as the artist for the project. The Public Art Commission approved Susan Zoccola as the project artist at its September 15, 2016 meeting. The contract was approved by City Council December 12, 2016. Zoccola traveled to Palo Alto in January 2017 to meet with the design team and initiate her design development.

Background

The Charleston-Arastradero Corridor is a high volume, 2.3 mile roadway serving 11 schools, several parks, shopping centers, commercial uses, a library, day care centers, non-profit organizations, and two community centers. The corridor extends from East Charleston Road at Fabian Way to Arastradero Road at Gunn High School.

Trial striping plans were previously implemented on Charleston Road in 2006 and on Arastradero Road in 2010 and were approved for permanent retention in 2008 and 2012 respectively. The final phase of the project will install new landscaped medians, corner bulb-outs, green bike lanes, and other enhanced bicycle and pedestrian improvements consistent with the concept plan line approved by the City Council in September 2015. The final phase will also include the construction of green infrastructure - storm water features that filter pollutants from storm water and reduce the amount of storm water runoff.

Extensive public outreach was done to develop the preferred concept plan line to add the landscaping and pedestrian/bicycle improvements to the corridor. The City hosted four community workshops and presented the plan twice to the Palo Alto Pedestrian and Bicycle Advisory Committee while developing a preferred plan line concept that was unanimously approved by both the Planning and Transportation Commission and the City Council.

Following the approval of the concept plan line by City Council in September 2015, the design team began working on the final design for implementation in the spring of 2017. A community workshop was hosted in March 2016 to gain public input on the proposed landscaping plans and planting palette. The landscaping plans presented for comment at the meeting can be accessed here: <http://www.cityofpaloalto.org/civicax/filebank/documents/51412>. Comments received at this most recent meeting mostly were to focus on the plants as the aesthetic part of the project and to not clutter the corridor with unnecessary signage. Residents also expressed concern about sight triangles that need to be improved at key intersections.

Artwork Concept Development:

After meeting with the design team in January and touring the corridor, Zoccola began exploring a number of potential concepts, including light pole mounted artworks and freestanding concepts. The pole mounted concepts were not feasible due to the diversity of pole types and age of the poles not engineered to support the additional load of artwork. Due to the many constraints of trees, underground utilities, fire department access needs, and rights of way, and a desire to spread the artwork elements throughout the corridor, the final five sites were determined as the best for siting artworks.

Susan Zoccola says:

The concept here came out of my visits to the City, driving up and down the Arastradero Charleston corridor, meetings with City planners, as well as research into Palo Alto's history and who lives and works there. Since my work is fundamentally inspired by natural forms and systems, I was initially intrigued by the aspects of water and natural water filtration in the corridor landscape design. Thinking about water and how to bring attention to that part of the project with the artwork, my mind then went to diatoms:

Diatoms are single-celled algae that form a silica-based cell wall. They are broken up into two major groups, the centric **diatoms** and the pennate **diatoms**, based on the form of their frustule. **Diatoms** live in all aquatic environments, including the ocean, freshwater lakes, and moist soils.

Then from the shapes of diatoms came the confluence of roads and trails with biology: wheels. The sculptural forms that have evolved out of this long collaborative process are clearly wheels - in motion, collaged, different sizes and colors. The number of bicycles at the schools I drove by blew my mind - very cool.

Each of the 5 particular sites' limitations and opportunities have informed the shape and scale of the artworks. My hope is that the series of sculptures will help to create a

welcoming episodic experience of discovery along the route. They will be seen differently from many angles and directions of travel, and will hopefully help to define this as a distinct and cared for path for bicyclists, cars, and pedestrians, which has been made more beautiful by the addition of good design, trees, plants and some art.

Informed by the intent of the project – a heavily trafficked corridor in which the streetscape project is intended to enhance bike and pedestrian safety, Zoccola set out to create wheel based compositions marking entrances and key places along the corridor that would be dynamic for drivers, pedestrians and cyclists alike while marking a few places along the corridor for drivers to pay extra attention looking for cyclists.

Discussion:

The estimated construction budget is \$9 Million, with construction forecast for fiscal years FY 2017- FY 2019, creating an estimated public art budget of \$90,000. Although the construction is planned to be phased, the final design for the entire corridor is complete.

Timeline, Resource Impact, and Policy Implications

Upon Public Art Commission approval of the concept, Zoccola can begin detailed design and fabrication of the sculptures. Construction of the corridor will begin in Spring 2018. The artwork(s) will be installed in coordination with the overall construction project.

The funds in the amount of \$90,000 for the contract came from the pooled percent for art funds allocated to the Public Art Program associated with the Public Art for Municipal Projects Ordinance. The Ordinance Number 5301, Municipal Code 2.26.070 (Public Art for Municipal Projects) requires that 1% of the CIP budget for municipal projects is allocated for the commission of public art.