



CITY OF
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City of Palo Alto Staff Report to Public Art Commission

Meeting Date: January 21, 2021

RE: Agenda Item 3 - Race and Equity Public Art

Discussion:

At the City Council's November 2, 2020 meeting, the City Council voted to refer the development of permanent public art on King Plaza reflecting the City's commitment to race and equity to the Public Art Commission on the consent calendar. The staff report for the November 2, 2020 City Council consent agenda item can be found [here](#) (staff report #11708).

For the temporary public art program, Public Art staff has operated under a number of restrictions on the plaza for the protection of the existing infrastructure. Some of these limitations include a strict weight limit of one hundred pounds per square foot and a restriction against bolting into or penetrating the plaza in any way. Public Art met with Public Works in November, reviewing some of these restrictions and identifying potential opportunities for the inclusion of permanent artwork at King Plaza, including use of the former fountain and the façade of City Hall. These barriers and opportunities were presented to the PAC at the November 19 Public Art Commission meeting and discussion.

The PAC expressed overall support for exploring a permanent platform for ongoing rotating artworks addressing race and equity, and staff will present some of the cost and logistical implications of that kind of programming at the January 21st PAC meeting. Some of the feedback from the PAC also focused on the need for community input and engagement at the beginning of the project to ensure that whatever artwork is commissioned is meaningful and impactful. Some commissioners also expressed a desire to review the Human Relations Commission's report on Black and Brown Lives in Palo Alto to use as a resource in informing the framework of the project and any future calls to artists. The HRC report will be discussed in a study session with City Council Tuesday, January 19th and can be read [here](#). (staff report #11911)

Staff will present a number of options for the PAC to consider in moving this effort forward based on best practices and current trends in the field of public art at the January 21st meeting. Staff would like to gather feedback from the Public Art Commission regarding some of the following topics at the January meeting:

- General support for either a permanent artwork or a permanent platform for rotating artwork.
- The fate of the existing temporary public art program on King Plaza and the viability of continuing that program with the new racial equity temporary or permanent artwork.
- How the racial equity-based artwork may include an in-depth community outreach element or might relate to an artist residency.
- Next steps in outreach and community feedback in the development of the artwork.

Based on the feedback from the Public Art Commission, staff will map out a timeline for the path forward with critical next steps and budget implications.