



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## City of Palo Alto Staff Report to Public Art Commission

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**Meeting Date: September 21, 2023**

**RE: Agenda Item 4**

### **Recommendation**

Staff recommends that Public Art Commission approve the conceptual design of the artwork by UrbanRock Design for Boulware Park.

### **Background**

The City of Palo Alto Public Art Program operates in accordance with Chapter 2.26 Visual Art in Public Places Policy of Palo Alto Municipal Code. The [Municipal Percent for Art Policy](#) specifies that the City will budget one percent (1%) of its construction costs to include public art for City capital improvement projects that have a visual impact on the surrounding environment by altering a site through new construction or reconstruction, at the initial stages of design, thereby ensuring that art elements become an integral part of the overall design.

In 2015, in order to strengthen its ongoing commitment to the City's municipal public art program, the Palo Alto City Council amended the Palo Alto Municipal Code to add Section 2.26.070 "[Public Art for Municipal Projects](#)" to Chapter 2.26 (Visual Art in Public Places). The Ordinance enhanced the funds available for public art and increased flexibility to provide art experiences that are timely and relevant throughout the community. According to the Ordinance, one percent (1%) of the City's annual Capital Improvement Program (CIP) budget devoted to public art is deposited into the Public Art Fund. Funds may be used at any appropriate site within Palo Alto for permanent or temporary public art projects. Additionally, funds from two or more CIP projects may be pooled to fund a single work of art.

The Boulware Park Renovation Capital Improvement Project was initially set up to focus improvements on the existing Boulware Park parcel. With the purchase of the Birch Street Property the scope of the park project has expanded to include this new parcel. The City has coordinated a community-based design process on how to combine the two parcels and which park amenities would be included. For more information regarding the previously held

community meetings and presentations to the Park and Recreation Commission, visit the project [website](#).

## **Discussion**

Public Art staff presented opportunities for public art integration into Boulware Park to the Public Art Commission (PAC) on August 18, 2022. The PAC was supportive of the opportunities and integration of art into the park and approved funds in the amount of \$90,000 plus a ten percent contingency for the project. Public Art Staff attended the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) September 27, 2022 meeting to gather feedback from the PRC about public art for Boulware Park. The PRC was supportive of the opportunities presented for art integration and Commissioner Oche volunteered to participate in the selection process.

After gaining feedback from PAC and PRC, staff reached out to artists in Public Art's pre-qualified pool of artists who work in murals and functional sculpture or railing treatments to gauge their availability and interest in the project. Of the twenty-eight artists that responded, staff removed artists that have not worked on public art projects of this scale, ultimately presenting twenty artists and their portfolios of work to a selection panel made up of Amber Morgan Smith, Artist / Ventura Community Member; Cynthia Cao, Artist / Public Art Administrator; Joy Oche, Parks and Recreation Commissioner; Ken Joye, Artist / Ventura Community Member; Hsinya Shen, Public Art Commissioner; Chandrika Marla, Artist, Cubberley Artist Studio Program; and Peter Jensen, Landscape Architect for the project. The selection panel recommended UrbanRock Design for the commission after considering their diverse portfolio of functional and interactive sculptures. The Public Art Commission approved UrbanRock Design as the project artist team at their November 17, 2022 meeting.

The professional services agreement with UrbanRock was approved by City Council December 19, 2022. The artists visited Palo Alto in February, met with staff from various City departments, and walked the site and neighborhood. The artists also met with the City Historian to learn more about Mr. Boulware and the Ventura neighborhood history. Staff and the artists hosted an online meet the artists event March 8<sup>th</sup> for the public to meet the artists and tell them about their thoughts on Boulware Park and the Ventura neighborhood. The meeting was recorded and made available to the public afterward to allow any members of the public who were not available to view the video and make comments via email.

The community shared a lot of the history of the site, including information about the cannery building and the influence the cannery had on the demographics of the Ventura neighborhood. Housing and the community in the neighborhood came up several times, with participants sharing information about gatherings and potluck dinners in the park. Several participants

mentioned a desire for something climbable or functional seating without interfering in planned usage of the site.

The artists have been working with staff on concepts over the past few months and agreed on the direction that the proposal for *Settlement* has taken (See Attachment A). Upon approval, the artists will continue community engagement to finalize the text to be incorporated into the sculpture. Boulware Park groundbreaking took place September 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, and the project is under construction. The estimated timeline for sculpture installation is Summer 2024.

## **Attachment A:**

### **Artist Statement by Jeanine Centuori & Russell Rock of UrbanRock Art & Design Studio**

#### ***Settlement***

This piece is to be located in Boulware Park within the Ventura Neighborhood of Palo Alto. The park is integral to the neighborhood and is surrounded by pedestrian friendly entrances. Tree-lined streets of the neighborhood make seamless connections to this beloved park that is enjoyed by many residents.

***Settlement*** references the actions of making one's home as well as the shifting movement that occurs in the act of settling. The Ventura Neighborhood is a unique settlement in Palo Alto, a place of diversity and openness where many found their home. It is also an eclectic artistic environment with dynamic change. Settlement refers to both the quiet settling into home and the dynamics that occur in the process.

***Settlement*** is an interactive sculptural form that provides casual seating within its wrapped shape. A continuous ribbon-like strip forms itself loosely into a house shape that presents different profiles from various view angles. This sense of forming, becoming, and building references the Ventura Neighborhood as a dynamic place of openness and change. Its contours are poised between resilience and strength, qualities that are essential to the Ventura Neighborhood.

Two colored metal strips follow the form and are engraved with words harkening to both the past and present qualities of the neighborhood. These words would possibly reference the Cannery as a significant history, as well as qualities of the community such as interactive, lively, friendly, creative. These terms are to be determined in collaboration with a neighborhood community session.

#### **Materials**

The materials are to be powder-coated aluminum and plastic recycled lumber. Both of these materials are chosen for their aesthetic quality and durability suited for a public site. Plastic recycled lumber is commonly used in public settings for benches, boardwalks, and playground equipment.

The angular aluminum frame is tubular with welded joints and other stiffeners along edges. The plastic recycled lumber boards are two different colors, one on the interior and the other on the exterior. The continuous strip of aluminum holds the text components that are to be machined or milled into the material. This gesture would provide a layer of detail portraying community stories within the framework of the sculpture. All of the metal components would be power-coated.

#### **Dimensions**

The piece is about 8 ft x 16 ft in area, and about 12 ft tall. The concrete slab is about 12 ft x 20 ft in area.





