



MEMO TO: Parks and Human Services Committee of the Whole

FROM: Carolyn Hope, Park Planning and Cultural Arts Manager
Chris Weber, Cultural Arts Administrator

DATE: 10/1/19

SUBJECT: Briefing on Artist Proposal for SR 520 Regional Trail Project

I. PURPOSE ☒ For Info Only ☐ Potential Agenda Item ☐ Scheduled for Council Action

II. RECOMMENDATION
Brief the City Council on the final art concept, #PridePortal, for the SR 520 Grade Separation at NE 40th Street project

III. DEPARTMENT CONTACTS
Carrie Hite, Parks and Recreation Director, 425-556-2326
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IV. BACKGROUND
The SR 520 Grade Separation at NE 40th Street project ("project") replaces the current 520 Trail at grade crossing of 40th Street with a tunnel for pedestrians and bicycles that connects to the 520 Trail, 40th Street, and the Redmond Technology Center Pedestrian/Bicycle Bridge.

This project was prioritized during the planning for the Public Art Plan as an exemplary Leading with Art and Cultural Engagement (LACE) or integrated public art project in Overlake Village. The project is located in a high-volume pedestrian environment and will help improve the pedestrian experience in the tunnel. The city advertised a call for artists in 2016, 45 applications were received, and the Arts and Culture Commission selected Alvin Huang of Synthesis Design + Architecture (artist). The artist was tasked to develop an art concept and work with the engineering team to incorporate the artwork into the final engineering plans.

The role of the artist is to create an inspiring trail experience for both pedestrians and cyclists through contemporary art that will engage the creative class workforce that will use this tunnel daily. Redmond is particularly interested in the development of creative spaces that reflect or celebrate Overlake and the people within it.

This project is fully funded by Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT) and the agency agreed to allow a public art project if it fit within the standard elements of the tunnel, such as tiles and railings. Since 2017, staff members from the Cultural Arts team and Transportation Planning worked with the artist, the Arts and Culture Commission, and WSDOT to evaluate options that would meet everyone's goals. Earlier this year, WSDOT approved of the concept of the artist developing a design on the tiles that would be placed in the interior of the tunnel and expanding the tiles to include the ceiling of the tunnel. The artist refined his conceptual design based on feedback from staff, WSDOT and the Arts and Culture Commission. On July 11, 2019, the Arts and Culture Commission approved the final conceptual design for the artwork, called #PridePortal, according to the City of Redmond's Visual Arts Collection Management Plan.

DESCRIPTION

The artist's proposal #PridePortal is a permanent public artwork that transforms the SR520/40th St. tunnel from an infrastructural underpass between opposing sides of Microsoft's Redmond campus into a dimensional portal that momentarily transports visitors to another virtual dimension. The project celebrates the northwest's LGBTQ+ community and the legacy of the technology industry in Redmond that creates civic pride and placemaking for the City of Redmond. The artwork is an immersive space - detached from the reality of the physical world - that references historical techniques of constructed perspective to produce a trompe l'oeil (three-dimensional illusion) that imagines an expansive and totalizing grid populated with a forest of palm trees set against a rainbow sunset.

The artwork utilizes conceptual contrasts between illusion and reality to highlight the other-worldly qualities of the dimension contained within the portal. The grid is used to illustrate the expansiveness of the field, creating the illusion of the narrow tunnel as an all-encompassing landscape, while the array of palm trees immediately distances visitors from the physical reality of the Northwestern rainforests and weather, and the chromatic spectrum of the sky transforms the iconic Pride rainbow from a representational object into an immersive experience.

The projection of a single-point perspective is taken from the north entry to the tunnel and projected to the walls, ceilings, of the underpass in the form of a two-dimensional tile mosaic. The dark, long, and narrow underpass becomes a gateway to another world that simultaneously expands (in width) and shortens (in length). However, as one enters the tunnel the illusion is revealed, and the hi-resolution imagery from a single perspective becomes a low-resolution composition of tiled pixels.

The entire artwork is a tile mosaic that will be fabricated by Artaic using robotic technology and innovative design tools to customize, design and fabricate custom mosaic installations. The tiles will be installed by the construction contractor using standard tiling installation techniques.

A. Analysis

Process to Date

Three versions of this proposal were presented to the Arts and Culture Commission on June 13, 2019, January 10, 2019, and July 11, 2019 (final recommendation). During that time, the proposal was also vetted with the project funding agency, Washington Department of Transportation. The artist used the feedback from the Arts and Culture Commission, Washington Department of Transportation and city staff to update the proposal.

Service Delivery or Fiscal Impacts

The cost estimate for this public art project is \$90,300 for fabrication and installation. It will be jointly funded from the project (\$32,200), using WSDOT grant funding, and the public art fund (\$57,100) to cover the artwork to be applied to the tiles and for the artwork to cover the ceiling, which was not part of WSDOT's original cost estimate. The project is expected to occur between 2020 and 2021, when the public art fund is expected to have revenues of \$231,000 from eligible parks and facilities capital projects.

The Arts and Culture Commission recommended the use of these funds for this project and the Finance Department confirmed the use of the public art funds for this project. A budget adjustment can be made at the end of the year.

The art tiles within this tunnel will be maintained by the public art program maintenance contractors. There will be an annual cleaning program. Tiles are graffiti resistant and tile replacement will occur as needed using the original fabricator.

V. TIME CONSTRAINTS

Synthesis Design + Architecture is now working on final construction documents with the engineering team. The project is anticipated to go out for bid around at the end of 2019 and complete construction by the end of Summer 2021.

VI. LIST OF ATTACHMENTS

A Final art concept, #PridePortal