



## Art in Public Places Project Prospectus

### Brush Square, District 9

### Artwork Budget: \$60,000

#### Project Summary

The City of Austin Art in Public Places (AIPP) program of the Cultural Arts Division, Economic Development Department seeks to commission a permanent exterior public artwork that engages with the history of the site, integrates with the natural beauty and showcases the stories of the surrounding area.

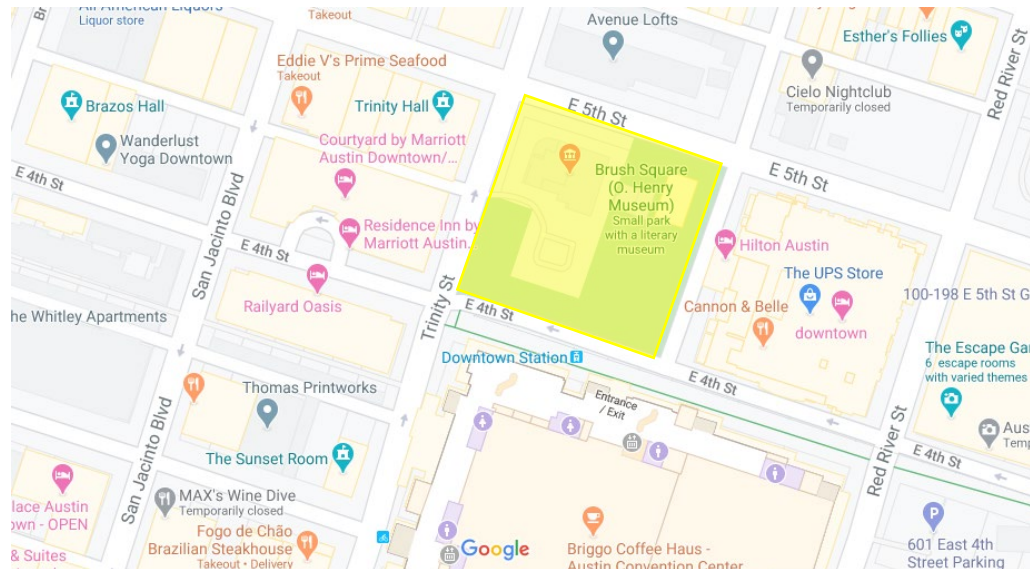
#### Project Background\*

\*Art in Public Places strives to reference accurate sources, however, AIPP is not an historical organization. Background information is meant only as a brief starting point to the depth of history at City sites.

Brush Square is located between 5<sup>th</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets and Neches and Trinity Streets. Brush Square is home to the O. Henry Museum and the Austin Fire Department Station #1. Over the years, the Square was used as a rail stop, a cotton yard, a repository for the O. Henry house (relocated from its nearby location in 1934) and the Susanna Dickinson house (relocated in 2003), a location for the City's first Central Fire Station in 1938, and for many years, a fenced parking lot. Only in 1969, when the City of Austin made plans to convert much of the site into a permanent parking lot, did public opinion and advocacy insist that the park instead be reinvented as a public open space.

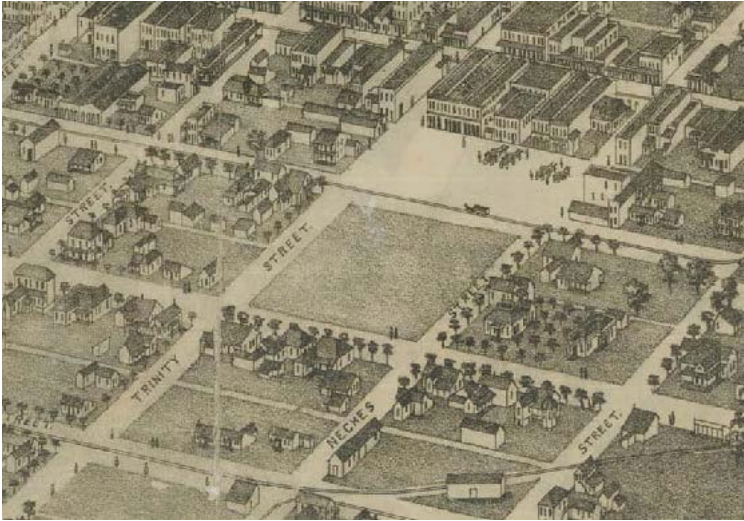
Brush Square is one of the three remaining original downtown squares as envisioned in Edwin Waller's 1839 plan for Austin. Waller's plan set aside four blocks for public squares; today, Republic Square, Wooldridge Square, and Brush Square remain public parks. Brush Square is named for Seba Bogart Brush, a merchant, who used the Square to store cotton prior to his death in 1874. As late as 1900, Sanborn Maps show the Alliance Cotton Yard operated on the site and constructed a cotton shed and office.

The City's first train tracks passed north of Brush Square along E. 5th Street and were later re-routed onto E. 4th Street. A train depot had been planned for the block north of Brush Square but was never constructed. In 1872, the Old Depot Hotel on E. 5th Street was opened in anticipation of the unbuilt



depot. The site later became known as Market Square and served as a public plaza before being developed as offices for the Texas State Department of Health in the 1930s and later as the Avenue Lofts in the 1950s.

Between 1893 and 1895, the author William Sidney Porter, better known as O. Henry, resided in Austin in a nearby rental house that was later relocated to Brush Square in 1934. The structure now houses the O. Henry Museum, operated by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department. Construction of the Central Fire Station No. 1 concluded on site in 1938. Edwin Kreisle and Max Brooks designed the building, which remains an important example of Art Moderne style.



Brush Square in 1890. (Brush Square History and Design Study 2008)

The Square also houses the former home of Susanna Dickinson, a famous survivor of the Battle of the Alamo. This residence was moved from the block to the east of the Square in 2003 for the construction of the Hilton Hotel and is also operated by the City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department.

#### **Brush Square Renovation**

Brush Square is located at a busy downtown location serving residents, businesses, and visitors fronting the Austin Convention Center and the Capital Metropolitan Transportation Authority (CapMetro's) new Downtown Station, which

is currently under construction. Through the Brush Square Vision Planning process, several design principles guided the layout of the park renovations. They include:

- Ensure that the first phase of improvements results in a high-quality open space befitting the historic stature of Brush Square.
- Improve the usability of the open space by reducing the impact of the existing parking lot.
- Improve circulation and visual access to the Square, improve security, and enhance the quality of the pedestrian experience with improved streetscapes and shade.
- Provide opportunities for informal, day-to-day uses while accommodating major civic celebrations.
- Protect existing trees and improve the ecological health, natural beauty, and environmental quality of the Square.
- Preserve and enhance the three existing museums and provide new, diverse programming opportunities in the park for all residents and visitors.

The Square is also the site of major events such as the annual O. Henry Pun-Off, which attracts hundreds of attendees and international competitors each year. Open space is limited by the fire station's operations, which require much of the park to be used as a parking lot and equipment staging area.

The Square unfortunately sees above average criminal activity, primarily related to persons experiencing homelessness and substance abuse issues, and the park suffers from poor visibility, access, and sufficient lighting to make it an attractive space after dark. These limitations further encourage illicit behavior and the perception of a lack of personal safety. A recent security pilot at the Square has produced positive results in reducing criminal activity at the site.

Fortunately, there is renewed interest in creating vibrant public spaces as downtown Austin increases in residential population and with the increased capacity and efforts of the Downtown Austin Alliance. The Brush Square master plan builds off these efforts and intends to guide the design of an exemplary public space at Brush Square.

Park improvements are organized into two phases. The first phase continues use of both the parking lot and fire station on site.



*Fire Station #1 (Austin History Center, 1938)*



*Susanna Dickinson Museum (current)*



*O. Henry Museum (Current)*

## Budget

The City of Austin Parks and Recreation Department received authorization of a bond in 2018. This bond featured funding for phase I updates to Brush Square Downtown Park. The 2% for the AIPP project is generated from this 2018 bond and land acquisition funds. The total award for the artist contract is \$60,000, inclusive of design, fabrication, and installation, including engineering fees, travel and shipping expenses, insurance, and all other project-related costs.

## Public Art Goals & Priorities

The AIPP program seeks to commission works of art of redeeming quality that advance public understanding of visual art and enhance the aesthetic quality of public places. This can be accomplished through the selection of a qualified artist or artist team who can innovatively and thoughtfully design within the context of this project.

To engage local voices, AIPP collaborated with the Parks Department, Downtown Austin Alliance, Downtown Austin Neighborhood Association to host two online engagement community meetings. The feedback was compiled into AIPP project goals, which were then finalized with community comment.

The resulting goals for the Brush Square AIPP Project are to select an artist/artist team who will design artwork that:

- Engages with the unique history of the adjacent museums and the heritage of the site as a cross-road;
- Integrates with the beauty and nature of the surrounding oak trees;
- Weaves together stories from a variety of nearby events including the pun-off, music festivals and tourist attractions;
- Contributes to the depth and breadth of the City of Austin's art collection; and
- Is accessible physically and conceptually by visitors of all ages to the park.

## AIPP Alignment with City of Austin Vision

As it approaches its 200th anniversary, Austin is a beacon of sustainability, social equity and economic opportunity; where diversity and creativity are celebrated; where community needs and values are recognized; where leadership comes from its citizens and where the necessities of life are affordable and accessible to all.

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/imagine-austin-vision>

### City of Austin's Strategic Direction 2023 (SD23)

The Austin City Council adopted a strategic direction guiding the City for the next three to five years.

SD23 outlines a shared vision and six outcomes of which two directly guide Art in Public Places:

Economic Opportunity & Affordability and Culture and Lifelong learning.

- As part of the SD23 process Art in Public Places and the Economic Development Department will quantify a number of key performance measures including, participants who are satisfied with City-offered culture and lifelong learning events, activities, and resources, and number of jobs supported. The Department will use that data to better align decision making and budget allocations.
- Because artists are small businesses, Art in Public Places may ask commissioned artists to outline how many jobs were supported based on their current City of Austin contract as well as whether the contract strengthened their overall business operations.

### Commitment to Equity

Art in Public Places embraces cultural equity. It is the goal of the program to ensure as many people as possible have meaningful engagements with public art and access to viewing, experiencing, and creating artwork.

- Art in Public Places actively seeks to provide members of historically underrepresented communities, which can include identities such as Black or African-American, Arab-American, Asian-American, Hispanic or LatinX, Pacific Islander, Indigenous Nations, LGBTQIA, or a person with a disability, with equitable access to public art opportunities.
- In support of this commitment, the program will make every effort to expand access to the collection and programmatic decision-making.
- For each project, every effort will be made to comprise project selection panels and finalist pools for Art in Public Places commissions with representatives from a variety of historically underrepresented communities to better reflect the diversity of Austin.



## Possible Artwork Opportunities (renderings provided by Asakura Robinson)



*Indicates possible artwork locations for Brush Square*

The community has stated a preference for the artwork being inspired by the history, nature and stories surrounding the site. Artists who are familiar with Downtown Austin, the O. Henry Museum, AFD Station #1 and/or surrounding community are highly encouraged to apply. One potential artwork location (the wall facing the large lawn) is designated on the plan drawing above, as well as other possible locations. The final artwork site will be determined in collaboration between the selected artist, City staff, and the community.







## Artist Information Meeting

To ensure information about the project is available to all interested artists, an artist information meeting will be held during the open application period a date to be determined. Due to the constraints of COVID-19, this meeting will likely be held **virtually**. The purpose of the meeting is to further explain the parameters of the project and outline the application procedures. The meeting will include discussion of possible locations and opportunities for artwork. AIPP staff and project representatives will be available to answer questions. The presented materials will be posted to City's website after the meeting: [www.austintexas.gov/department/aipp-opportunities](http://www.austintexas.gov/department/aipp-opportunities).

## Artist Eligibility

Applicants should meet the following requirements:

- Professional visual artist or artist team;
- At least 18 years of age; and
- Live in the 7-county Austin metropolitan area (Williamson, Travis, Bastrop, Caldwell, Hays, Burnet, and Blanco counties).

Full-time, permanent City of Austin employees are ineligible to apply. Employees of the project consultants and sub-consultants are also ineligible to apply. Artists who are under an active contract with the Art in Public Places program at the time of application are ineligible to apply.

Applications not meeting all eligibility criteria will be withdrawn from consideration.

## Submission Requirements

Applications must be received online via [www.PublicArtist.org](http://www.PublicArtist.org) no later than **5:00 pm (CST) on Thursday, January TBD, 2022**. For technical assistance with your application, please contact [info@publicartist.org](mailto:info@publicartist.org) or 210-701-0775 (9:00 am – 5:00 pm).

Applications include: a series of short answers; 10 images of completed relevant artwork with the required descriptions; resume; and 3 professional references.



The short answers will be response to the following prompts on the application. These are questions that we've formulated to help artists put their best foot forward in introducing themselves and their practice to the jury. Applicants are asked to respond to each question below in 100 – 200 words per question.

1. What does the jury need to know about you and your work as an artist? What is your public art experience?
2. What excites you about the Brush Square public art project?
3. What is your connection to the Brush Square and are you familiar with the history or heritage of the surrounding neighborhoods and downtown Austin?

4. As an artist, what role has community engagement or social practice played in your work? If you haven't worked with community, are you interested in doing so and why?

## Selection Criteria

The selection of an artist or artist team shall be based on artist qualifications that best meet the requirements contained in this Project Prospectus. The Jury will review and consider the following evaluation criteria:

- » Artistic merit and technical expertise;
- » Ability to engage the community in which the artwork is being proposed; and
- » Demonstrated success completing works of art.

For more information on AIPP project selection criteria, see:

[http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/aipp\\_selection\\_criteria.pdf](http://www.austintexas.gov/sites/default/files/files/aipp_selection_criteria.pdf)

## Selection Process

A Request for Qualifications (RFQ) will be distributed and applications must be submitted through PublicArtist.org by the deadline. The City of Austin Art in Public Places Panel will convene a jury to evaluate the submissions. The jury and advisors will review qualifications and select three to five finalists for interviews *unless there is consensus on the selection of recommending one applicant and one alternate*. The jury and advisors will then convene for interviews and select one artist/artist team and one alternate. This recommendation will be presented to the Art in Public Places Panel and Austin Arts Commission for approval. The approved artist(s) will be put under a design + commission contract to coordinate with the City and project team to develop a final design, which is also subject to approval by the AIPP Panel and the Austin Arts Commission prior to fabrication and installation.

## Jury & Project Advisors

A 3 or 5 -member jury shall be chosen to include at least 1 visual artist. Possible jury members include:

- » Ryan Runcie, Artist and Muralist
- » Rehab El Sadek, Visual Artist
- » Sam Barboza, Artist and Muralist
- » Brandi Mask, Public Art Board, Discovery Green
- » Shiva Jabarnia, Urban Designer at dwg.

Project advisors will be invited to participate in the process to provide assistance and expertise to the jury. The project advisors to the jury may include:

- » Scott Sinn – Project Manager, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Austin
- » Laura Esparza – Museums and Cultural Centers, Parks and Recreation Department, City of Austin
- » Brendan Wittstruck – Principal, Landscape Architect, Asakura Robinson
- » Ted Eubanks—Austin Historian
- » Melissa Parr – Brush Square Museum
- » Philip Wiley – Community Advisor, Downtown Austin Neighborhood Alliance
- » Joel Nolan – AIPP Panel Project Liaison
- » Maria Luisa "Lulu" Flores – Austin Arts Commission, District 9



The jury will be supported by:

- » Sue Lambe, AIPP Program Manager, Cultural Arts Division, Economic Development Department, City of Austin
- » Marjorie Flanagan, AIPP Sr. Project Manager, Cultural Arts Division, Economic Development Department, City of Austin

No gallery owner, dealer, or art agent may serve as a juror due to the potential for conflict of interest. No juror may serve more than once in any two-year period in an attempt to bring a diversity of interests to the selection process and to more precisely match the expertise of the jury members to each project.

## **Tentative Schedule (Subject to Change)**

### 2021

November Prospectus approval

### 2022

January Request for Qualifications released  
Artist Information Session

February Call closes  
Artist Interviews & Selection

March Artist Selection Recommendation approval  
Artist under Contract

April/May Project Kick-off  
Community Engagement  
Possible Construction Project start date

July Mid-Design Review

August/Sept. Conservation Review/RAS/UDE

October Final Design for approval

November Artist Notice to Proceed & Contract

December Fabrication

### 2022

March Installation

December Artwork dedication to coincide with Park renovation completion

## **Contact/Questions**

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**Resources:**

National Register of Historic Places Digital Asset Management System #00000454.

Brush Square History and Design Study. 2008.

<http://www.downtownaustin.com/daa/ouraustinstory>

<http://downtownaustin.com/vision>

<https://austin.uli.org/local-initiatives/technical-assistance-panelsadvisoryservice-panels/tap-permanent-downtown-train-station/>

[https://www.capmetro.org/uploadedFiles/New2016/ProjectConnect/Project\\_Connect\\_Vision\\_2018/Project-Connect-Vision-Plan-092618-v7.pdf](https://www.capmetro.org/uploadedFiles/New2016/ProjectConnect/Project_Connect_Vision_2018/Project-Connect-Vision-Plan-092618-v7.pdf)

<https://capmetro.org/about-projectconnect/>

<http://connections2025.org/draft-plan-screenreader/>

<http://www.austintexas.gov/wayfinding>

<http://www.downtownaustin.com/sites/default/files/filepicker/50/ParksandOpenSpaceMasterPlan.pdf>

<http://www.austintexas.gov/page/parks-recreation-long-range-plan-landfacilities-and-programs-lrp-adopted-november-2010>

<https://www.capmetro.org/downtownstation/>

<http://txdac.org/texas-historical-markers/old-depot-hotel/>

<http://www.austintexas.gov/edims/document.cfm?id=277351>

<http://www.downtownaustin.com/news-article/e-5th-street-and-colorado-streetbeing-converted-two-way-streets>

[ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/PARDPlanningCIP/McKnight\\_HistoricResources/Wooldridge%20Planning%20Resources/3\\_13\\_13\\_Downtown%20Squares\\_FINAL.pdf](ftp://ftp.ci.austin.tx.us/PARDPlanningCIP/McKnight_HistoricResources/Wooldridge%20Planning%20Resources/3_13_13_Downtown%20Squares_FINAL.pdf)