



CITY OF
**PALO
ALTO**

Public Art Commission Staff Report

From: Elise DeMarzo, Manager Community Services Sr Programs

Meeting Date: June 19, 2025

Report #: 2506-4839

TITLE

Downtown Parking Garage - Informational update on the Downtown Parking Garage project development and recommendation that PAC allocate funds in the amount of up to \$30,600 for conceptual design by artist Amy Landesberg for the new Downtown Parking Garage.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Public Art Commission approves funding in the amount of \$30,600 to allow staff engage artist Amy Landesberg in a professional services agreement to develop conceptual design for public art integrated into a new 274-space parking garage at 375 Hamilton Avenue.

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Parking Garage project was initially included in the Council's 2014 Infrastructure Plan. The City intended to construct a new parking garage on an existing City-owned surface Parking Lot D located at 375 Hamilton Avenue on the corner of Waverley Street in the Downtown Business District. In 2017-18, Watry Design, Inc. (Watry) conducted the preliminary design and environmental review for a six-level parking structure. City Council certified the Environmental Impact Report (SCH # 2017052040) and approved the project's planning application in February 2019.

In August 2017 the Public Art Commission reviewed the proposed project design to consider opportunities for the integration of artwork at the site and gave input on the public art element of the project directing staff to proceed with artist selection. Staff utilized the 35 qualified artists in our prequalified pool for this project and assembled a selection panel of key stakeholders and arts professionals for the project, including Ken Hayes (Project Architect); Ben Miyaji (PAC Vice-Chair); Jon Graves (Pacific Art League Director); Justine Chaussen (Pace Gallery Director); Holly Boyd (CPA Public Works Project Manager); Christopher Jette (Palo Alto resident and Stanford sound artist); and Mila Zelkha (Palo Alto Downtown Board Member and Public Art

Commissioner). Atlanta-based artist Amy Landesberg was selected as the project artist for the Downtown parking garage¹.

In November 2017 she was approved by the PAC as the project artist and upon entering a design development contract with the City to design a well-integrated public art that would increase visual wayfinding for pedestrians and vehicles and reflect character of the downtown area, Landesberg commenced her research and community engagement to help inform her design. Landesberg presented her conceptual design, inspired by the topography of Palo Alto, to the PAC in March 2018, which was approved unanimously.

However, in 2018 the construction project was put on hold to allow for further evaluation of alternative parking management strategies. The artist's contract term for design development services ended in 2020.

In December 2023, Council directed staff to resume work on the Downtown Parking Garage project. In December 2024, Council authorized a contract with Watry to provide design, environmental review, and construction administration services for the New Downtown Parking Garage. The consultant presented several conceptual options for the Downtown Parking Garage. On April 14, 2025 City Council reviewed the proposals and provided direction to pursue the design option that reduces the garage's parking footprint, with the assumption that future residential housing will be developed next to the parking structure, facing Waverley Street. This option offers the best balance of parking capacity and residential development. It includes 274 stalls, with the added benefit of creating landscaped public space prior to construction of the residential phase².

ANALYSIS

Public Art staff reached out to artist Amy Landesberg to inform her about the resumed development project and confirm her interest and availability as the project artist to continue development of artwork for the garage structure. The artist confirmed her interest and met with the staff and design team. Upon reviewing the current design plans and discussing the project with the team, the artist explained that the focus of her artistic practice has evolved and expressed her preference to potentially create a new design for the Downtown Garage. Once the artist and the design team have a new design concept ready, that design concept will be presented to the Public Art Commission for approval prior to initiating detailed design drawings and fabrication can commence.

¹ Public Art Commission, November 16, 2017; Agenda Item #5; <https://www.paloalto.gov/files/assets/public/v/1/community-services/public-art-commission/downtown-parking-garage-art-commission-staff-reportnov.pdf>

² City Council, April 14, 2025 Agenda Item #11; SR# 2501-3991
<https://cityofpaloalto.primegov.com/Portal/Meeting?meetingTemplatId=16036>

FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT

The new design development contract with artist Amy Landesberg will be funded from the City's pooled public art Capital Improvement funds in the Art in Public Spaces CIP (AC-86017). The estimated construction budget is \$23 Million, with construction forecasted for fiscal years FY 2026- FY 2027, creating an estimated public art budget of \$230,000. Once construction at the site commences, it is anticipated to take 12 months to complete the construction. Staff will return to the PAC with the additional request for funding for the fabrication and delivery of artwork once the new conceptual design is approved. The project is hoping to get through the detailed design phase by the end of this calendar year.