



CITY OF  
**PALO  
ALTO**

## City Council Staff Report

**From: City Manager**

**Report Type: CONSENT CALENDAR**  
**Lead Department: Community Services**

**Meeting Date: September 9, 2024**

Report #:2407-3307

### **TITLE**

Approval of Professional Services Contract C25192226 with Magical Bridge Foundation in an Amount Not-to Exceed \$150,000 to Provide Recreational Programming (“Magical Services”) for a Term of One Year; CEQA Status – Not a project.

### **RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the City Council approve and authorize the City Manager or designee to execute Contract No. C25192226 (Attachment A), with Magical Bridge Foundation to provide recreational programming (“Magical Series”) for a term of one year in a total amount not-to-exceed \$150,000.

This is in alignment with the actions approved in the FY 2025 Adopted Budget.

### **BACKGROUND**

Magical Bridge Foundation launched as a non-profit organization in 2016 and is headquartered in Palo Alto, California. Magical Bridge’s mission is to create multigenerational playgrounds, parks, and programs for more inclusive communities. They strive to build more playgrounds and advocate for parks and programs to include the whole family, regardless of ability or disability. The Magical Bridge Foundation has implemented eight award-winning, custom playgrounds to the public, with many more in development. Magical Bridge designs playgrounds for all ages and abilities by removing the physical and social barriers of today’s typical playgrounds to give everyone in the community a place to play, learn, and connect. Palo Alto is home to the first Magical Bridge Playground, which opened in 2015 after seven years of design research, advocacy efforts, and fundraising.

The City of Palo Alto’s Community Services Department has been partnering with Magical Bridge Foundation since 2018 to offer an annual summer concert series that welcomes audience members of all ages and abilities, and has provided support to the Palo Alto Children’s Theatre in developing the “Magical Series” (offerings that are mindful of developmental rather than chronological age groups, adjusted sensory environments, and smaller class and audience

participation). The City Council also adopted new staff resource in FY 2024 that has recently been hired, Therapeutic Recreation and Accessibility Coordinator that will be focused on building out accessibility programming within CSD services.

## **ANALYSIS**

On May 21, 2024, during the FY 2025 budget process, the City Council Finance Committee recommended establishing a Citywide Special Events & Programming budget comprising of \$265,000. One-time allocations were approved for FY 2025 towards United Nations Association Film Festival, 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays, Neighbors Abroad, Environmental Volunteers, and Magical Bridge programming & events. This initiative was then approved by the full City Council on June 17, 2024, as part of the FY 2025 Adopted Operating Budget.

The City of Palo Alto is now moving to a formalized annual contract in the amount of \$150,000 to allow Magical Bridge to create and source recreational programming (“Magical Series”) that gives people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to enjoy leisure and community building activities in a safe and supportive environment that fosters an enriching experience for all who participate. This agreement will also provide for the development and operation of the Kindness Ambassador Program – Magical Bridge's proprietary volunteer engagement system, which invites adults and teens, regardless of ability or disability, the opportunity to promote kindness and inclusion on and off the playground. The goal is for everyone to have fun, learn new skills, and engage in the community.

City staff have been partnering with Magical Bridge Foundation since 2018 offering the “Magical Series” and have been very satisfied with their programs and partnership on an adhoc or individual program basis.

This expanded partnership was awarded to Magical Bridge Foundation during the Fiscal Year 2025 budget process as one-time funding. For Fiscal Year 2026 and ongoing, staff will establish a process to determine how to disburse the funds for Special Events and Programming among various nonprofit partners.

## **FISCAL/RESOURCE IMPACT**

Funding for this contract is available in the Fiscal Year 2025 Adopted Operating Budget approved by City Council on June 17, 2024.

The City Council appropriated \$246,000 in Fiscal Year 2025 for Citywide Special Events and Programming. In FY25 Council determined the funds to be disbursed as follows:

- \$150,000 for Magical Bridge
- \$45,000 for United Nations Association Film Festival
- \$40,000 for 3<sup>rd</sup> Thursdays (via the Palo Alto Chamber of Commerce)
- \$11,000 for Environmental Volunteers

For FY2026 and ongoing, \$235,000 is appropriated for Citywide Special Events and Programming and a process will be established by staff over the next year to determine how to disburse the funds as part of the Fiscal Year budget process.

### **STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

The “Magical Series” was developed within the Community Services Department with Magical Bridge Foundation in 2018 in response to data collected by the California Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) report that stated 1-in-8 California youth receive special education services, as well as feedback from parents and caregivers in the Palo Alto community who cited a lack of programs for their neurodivergent children. Furthermore, Community Services staff have experienced many instances of participants with special needs being enrolled in classes that were not designed or sufficiently staffed to offer necessary special education accommodations, which impacted the experience for all participants and educators.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

The services provided in this agreement do not constitute a “project” under CEQA section 15061(b)(3).

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: Magical Bridge Foundation, Contract C25192226

### **APPROVED BY:**

Kristen O'Kane, Community Services Director