



# City of Emeryville

CALIFORNIA

## MEMORANDUM

**DATE:** June 17, 2025

**TO:** LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

**FROM:** Chadrick Smalley, Community Development Director

**SUBJECT:** **Resolution Of The City Council Of The City Of Emeryville Approving Artists Robert Ortbal, Stella Kalaw, Carrie Hott, Mila Moldenhawer, Ceci Bowman, Jennifer Mazzucco, Teresa Kalnoskas, Torreya Cummings And Alla Agafonov; And First Alternate Therese Lahaie, Second Alternate Ana Lisa Hedstrom, And Third Alternate Robin Bernstein For The *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program – Phase VIII* And Authorizing The City Manager To Execute Agreements With The Approved Artists For Final Design Of The Art Works In Amounts Not To Exceed \$5,000 For Each Artist**

### STAFF RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the City Council adopt the attached resolution approving artists Robert Ortbal, Stella Kalaw, Carrie Hott, Mila Moldenhawer, Ceci Bowman, Jennifer Mazzucco, Teresa Kalnoskas Torreya Cummings and Alla Agafonov; and designating first alternate Therese Lahaie, second alternate Ana Lisa Hedstrom, and third alternate Robin Bernstein for the *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program – Phase VIII*, and authorizing the City Manager to execute agreements with the approved artists for final design of the art works in amounts not to exceed \$5,000 for each artist.

### BACKGROUND

In 2009, the City Council authorized the Bus Shelter Temporary Art Program (“Program”) to place two-dimensional works by local artists in four bus shelters throughout the City. That year, the work of nine artists were selected for exhibition. As a result of the success of the Program, it has continued through 2025, with the works of artists exhibited for four months in the four locations. The Program is now in its eighth phase.

### DISCUSSION

At its February 9, 2023, meeting, the Public Art Committee (“PAC”) unanimously confirmed continuing the program’s theme “*FROM FERTILE GROUND: ART AND INNOVATION*” and, at its meeting on November 14, 2024, the PAC approved a Request for Proposals (RFP) based on this theme. Artists were encouraged to submit work that expresses an expansive view of “Fertile Ground” to include literal images related to flora and fauna; imagery tied to local or regional ecological systems and biodiversity; human impact on the environment; ecosystems related to the City’s regional shoreline; science and genetics, etc.; as well as more expansive interpretations. The theme also allows for a metaphorical interpretation of the artistic, cultural, scientific and technologic innovations based in or founded in Emeryville.

In January 2025 staff distributed the RFP for Phase VIII of the *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program*. Responses were due February 25, 2025. The project was open to artists over the age of 18 who live, work or attend school in Emeryville. Artists whose work was exhibited in the Program prior to 2020 were eligible to apply if the work they submitted was substantially different from the work exhibited in prior phases, or if they submitted as a team with another artist or professional in another discipline with a substantively different proposal. Artists were eligible to apply as individuals or as a team, but each applicant was required to provide evidence that they live, work or study in Emeryville. Distribution of the RFP included the City's Newsflash, posting on the Art in Public Places Facebook and Instagram pages, a post card announcement, web posting, and email distribution. By the application deadline of February 25, 2025, 17 applications had been received, 16 of which were deemed eligible. An additional five applications were submitted but not initially received due to technical issues.

On March 5, 2025, a five-member Selection Panel reviewed the initial 16 qualifying applications. The panel consisted of Mike Haggerty and Laura Rifkin representing the PAC; Kristen Zaremba, as an outside art professional; Erica Enriquez, representing the residential community; and Ellen Han, representing the City.

During the first round of reviews, the Selection Panel individually reviewed the artists' submissions according to the following criteria:

- Artistic excellence, including the quality and creativity of the artist's work.
- Appropriateness of images relative to the theme of "*From Fertile Ground: Art and Innovation*".
- Potential of the artist's work to spark viewers' interest in public art.
- Contribution to a diverse display works and media and innovation in artistic methods

The Selection Panel reviewed each qualifying artist. During a facilitated discussion, panelists were asked to give "yes" or "no" votes to indicate whether they wanted an artist to remain under consideration. Artists who received a majority of "yes" votes remained under consideration; those who received a majority of "maybe" and "no" votes were eliminated from further consideration. The panelists then individually scored nine finalists, giving each applicant scores in the categories indicated above with a score of 1-5, with five being the highest score.

The final round of discussion of the nine ranked artists resulted in six artists being selected as finalists, two artists selected as alternates, and one eliminated from further consideration, as follows:

The following list indicates the results of the scoring, in descending order.

- Robert Ortbal, 109 points
- Stella Kalaw, 106 points
- Carrie Hott 104 Points

- Mila Moldenhawer, 103 points
- Ceci Bowman, 96 points
- Jennifer Mazzucco, 88 points

The Selection Panel recommended specific consideration for several of the artists:

- Robert Ortbal to consider, as making new works for the series, including a diversity of figures by race, abilities and materials choice, including consideration of ecological materials
- Stella Kalaw's representation of Pixar trademarked elements raised concerns, and the Panel recommended in lieu of the inclusion of these elements, juxtaposition of current Pixar employees vs prior Del Monte employees or the plant façades, juxtaposed, may make for a more compelling composition. The inclusion of people in the series was emphasized as desirable.
- Carrie Hott's representation of site-specific details with research was of interest to the Panel, with variation among the series by site
- Ceci Bowman's submittal included a range of samples and the Panel recommended the series be based on the detail found in three of her submittals and this series be expanded to include a fourth work
- Jennifer Mazzucco submitted two samples of a grid of her works and the Panel recommended she create a series of four grids with nine works each for a visually compelling and complex array of works, highlighting the workmanship of the installations

At its meeting on March 13, 2025, the PAC reviewed the Selection Panel's recommendations and recommended that the City Council approve selecting the six finalists listed above and two alternates: Teresa Kalnoskas and Torrey Cummings.

Each of these artists attended the March 13, 2025, PAC meeting and heard and responded affirmatively to these comments.

On April 3, 2025, staff became aware that an applicant had submitted an eligible application but it had not been delivered for review. Staff investigated and determined that, due to technical errors originating from long project titles, five applications had not been forwarded to staff for review. One of the five was deemed ineligible due to recent participation in a prior Phase of the program, leaving four to be considered.

Staff recommended that rather than reconsider the prior artists nominated for consideration, that a third year be added to the program to accommodate consideration of the four misdirected applications and the two alternates. The PAC had asked during its review of the initial applicant pool whether the Phase duration could be extended to include the alternates, indicating appetite for expansion of the Phase.

On May 5, 2025, the Selection Panel reviewed the four additional applications and the two alternates. The panel was the same as convened in March 2025 with one change: Assistant Planner Alyssa Chung was the City staff representative rather than Ellen Han, due to availability.

The Selection Panel considered the following six artists for inclusion in an expanded Phase VIII of the program, to include three additional artists in a third year:

1. Alla Agafonov
2. Teresa Kalnoskas,
3. Torrey Cummings
4. Therese Lahaie
5. Ana Lisa Hedstrom
6. Robin Bernstein

Upon review of the proposals and discussion of the multiple merits of each artist being considered, the Selection Panel unanimously agreed the alternates in the original selection, Teresa Kalnoskas and Torrey Cummings should be afforded an opportunity to participate in the third year and ultimately recommended Alla Agafonov be included as well. The Selection Panel recommended the PAC could pick two or three alternates from the remaining applicants: Therese Lahaie, Ana Lisa Hedstrom and Robin Bernstein.

The Selection Panel recommended the following for the recommended artists:

- Torrey Cummings was advised to select works with an unconventional composition or with a “weedier and unkept” look rather than the more garden-like images. Further, staff advised a QR code could be included in the text rather than in the image, as done in prior installations
- Alla Agafonov was advised to create works in the “fertile ground” between her past works in treed landscapes and her photography submitted in shoreline spaces, focusing on the mudflats and the Emeryville Crescent’s intertidal zone.

At its meeting on May 15, 2025, the PAC reviewed the Selection Panel’s additional recommendations and recommended that the City Council approve a third year of programming and contract with the nine finalists as recommended by the Selection Panel:

1. Robert Ortbal,
2. Stella Kalaw,
3. Carrie Hott,
4. Mila Moldenhawer,
5. Ceci Bowman,
6. Jennifer Mazzucco
7. Teresa Kalnoskas,
8. Torrey Cummings
9. Alla Agafonov

Further, the PAC recommended that the City Council acknowledge and honor three alternates in the following order, noting that, should an artist in the above list be unavailable, the alternates would be offered the opportunity to replace the artist in the following order: 1. Therese Lahaie 2. Ana Lisa Hedstrom 3. Robin Bernstein

The other ten artists were noted for their skill and were appreciated for the time taken to apply. The PAC encouraged the artists to submit in the next cycle.

## **FISCAL IMPACT**

The PAC's and staff's recommendation are to execute agreements with the nine selected artists in amounts not to exceed \$5,000 for each artist, for a total expenditure of \$45,000. The City's Operating Budget for Fiscal Year 2025 -2026 includes sufficient funds from the Public Art Fund (Fund 243) to support the *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program* artist contracts as well as professional services (i.e graphic design and printing) required to administer the program.

Expenses will be paid in the year incurred, with three of the artists' works scheduled to be printed and installed in Fiscal Year 2025-2026, three in Fiscal Year 2026-2027, and three in 2027-2028.

## **STAFF COMMUNICATION WITH THE PUBLIC**

As noted above, on March 13, 2025, and May 15, 2025, the PAC unanimously recommended that the City Council approve the selection of artists and alternates and authorize the City Manager to execute agreements with the nine artists in amounts not-to-exceed \$5,000 per agreement.

## **CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

City staff, the PAC and City Council members and their spouses are all precluded from consideration in the Program, as are artists whose work was purchased through the *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program* from 2020 through 2024. Two applications were not considered, due to these considerations.

## **CONCLUSION**

Phase VIII of the *Sharon Wilchar Bus Shelter Art Program* will continue a sixteen-year tradition of supporting local artists. This program and the Purchase Award Program are the City's only art programs designed to specifically support Emeryville residents and workers. Support for local artists was confirmed as a top goal in the 2016 Public Art Master Plan. Staff recommend that the City Council adopt the attached resolution approving the installation of the work of nine local artists and three alternates, to be displayed in four-month intervals from September of 2025 to August of 2028.

**PREPARED BY:** Amber Evans, Community and Economic Development Coordinator II

**APPROVED AND FORWARDED TO THE  
CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EMERYVILLE:**

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "LaTanya Bellow", is written over a horizontal line.

LaTanya Bellow, City Manager

**ATTACHMENTS:**

- Draft Resolution
  - Attachment 1. Art Work Imagery by Proposed Artists