



**TOWN OF LOS GATOS
COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT**

MEETING DATE: 12/03/2019

ITEM NO: 19

DATE: December 3, 2019
TO: Mayor and Town Council
FROM: Laurel Prevetti, Town Manager
SUBJECT: Approve the “El Gato” Design by Artist Matt Babcock for the Pilot Los Gatos Gateway Marker as Recommended by the Arts and Culture Commission

RECOMMENDATION:

Approve the “El Gato” design by artist Matt Babcock for the pilot Los Gatos Gateway Marker as recommended by the Arts and Culture Commission.

BACKGROUND:

On January 31, 2017 at a Council Priority Setting Session, Council approved allocating \$25,000 to the ACC for use in a project supporting public arts. The ACC returned to Council on April 10, 2017 proposing to use the funds to install gateway monuments or markers at various ingress and egress points in Town. The long-term vision of the project as defined by the ACC was to create distinctive, “selfie-worthy”, artistic gateways which would eventually be installed at five to seven different high-traffic locations in Town. The proposal presented here is for an initial monument at a specific location to test or pilot a gateway program.

The ACC worked with Parks and Public Works staff to identify and assess over a dozen potential locations around Town including Highway 17 onramp approach/South Santa Cruz Avenue and Wood Road, Highway 85/Samaritan Drive and Los Gatos Boulevard, Winchester Boulevard and Knowles Drive, and others. Sites with pending street work, traffic issues, right-of-way agreements with CalTrans, or other logistical considerations were excluded as the pilot site, though will be considered again at a future time as the project expands. The center median at Highway 9 and Alberto Way east of the Highway 17 onramp and offramp was ultimately selected as the pilot location due to it being both high traffic and free of additional logistical or safety concerns.

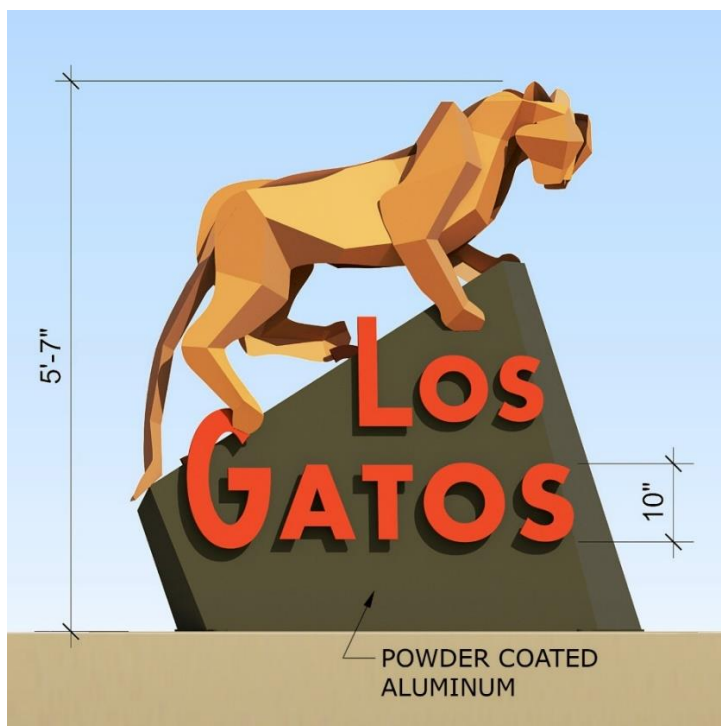
PREPARED BY: Ryan Baker
Library Director, Staff Liaison for Arts and Culture Commission

Reviewed by: Town Manager, Assistant Town Manager, Town Attorney, and Finance Director

DISCUSSION:

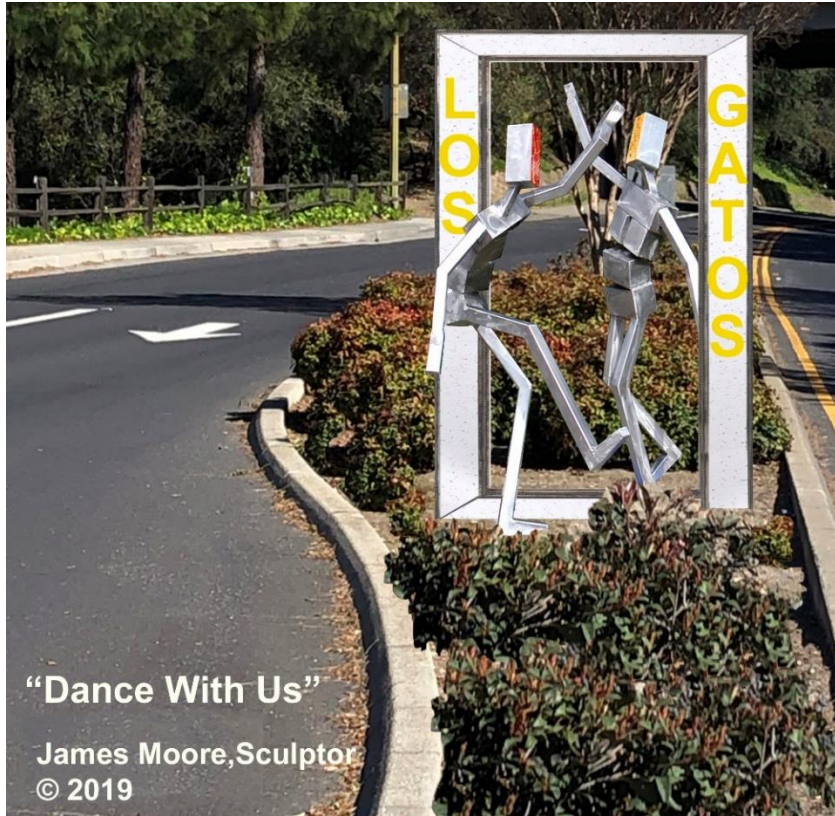
The ACC created a competitive selection process that involved a Call for Artists/Request for Qualifications (RFQ) which was released on September 26, 2018 and closed after an extended deadline of December 28, 2018. It was advertised on State and national call for artist outlets as well as promoted to local residents through direct communication and outreach with local art organizations and galleries, postings on Nextdoor, Town social media, and Chamber of Commerce social media. A competitive award of a flat \$20,000 commission to include all of the artist's costs up to the point of on-site delivery was offered to the final selected artist. At the close of the extended deadline, a total of 14 portfolio applications received met the professional background and experience criteria defined in the RFQ. There were no gateway renderings as part of the initial submittals.

The ACC used a standardized rubric working within the Town's Public Art Selection Policy to assess the portfolio applications and past art installation experience of the qualified artists. The three highest-scoring finalists were invited to design and propose a site-specific gateway monument. These proposals were presented by the artists at a special meeting of the ACC on September 18, 2019. The proposals submitted from the three finalists were: "El Gato" proposed by Washington-based artist Matt Babcock; "Dance with Us" proposed by San Jose-based artist James Moore; and "Cougar" proposed by Washington-based artist team White and McJunkin. Additional details of their proposals are contained in Attachment 1.



Proposal by artist Matt Babcock. "El Gato"

DISCUSSION (continued):



Proposal by artist James Moore. "Dance with Us"



Proposal by artist team White & McJunkin. "Cougar"

DISCUSSION (continued):

To gather public input on the submitted designs, the ACC arranged to create a display in the Library from September 19 to October 16, 2019 showcasing the three proposed designs. The designs were also posted on the ACC's page of the Town's website with an invitation to submit comments. 193 comments were submitted by members of the public at the Library. No electronic comments or emails were received. At the subsequent regular meeting of the ACC on October 16, 2019, the ACC reviewed all public comments which showed 60% in support of the proposal submitted by Matt Babcock, 11% in support of the proposal submitted by artist team White and McJunkin, and 8% in support of the proposal by artist James Moore. Of the remaining comments, 3% expressed general support of the proposals without committing to a top choice, 12% expressed support of the project in general but expressed dislike of the presented proposals, and 6% expressed disapproval of the project in general.

At the same meeting the ACC took into account multiple aspects of the three final proposals in addition to the public comment received. The ACC discussed artistic expression as it represents a wide variety of ages and opinions, character fit for the Town, long term maintenance, and cultural relevance.

At its October 16, 2019 meeting, the ACC voted unanimously in favor to recommend commissioning the concept proposal by Matt Babcock titled "El Gato" to be produced as the first gateway marker.

Under the Town's Public Art Selection Policy, final selection approval for the commission of any public artwork does not rest with the ACC. Rather, Council must make a final selection approval.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS:

If Council approves the ACC's recommendation, the Town will enter into an agreement with the artist regarding the production of the piece, which is within the financial authority of the Town Manager. The ACC will work with the artist to refine project details. Parks and Public Works (PPW), including the Town's Traffic Engineer, will work with the artist to refine any logistical and safety details, timeline, and delivery. PPW will undertake the on-site installation once the artwork is received and Town will be responsible for the long-term maintenance of the piece.

Should the Council not be in favor of the ACC's recommendation, Council may wish to commission the artwork from one of the other two final artists. In the event that Council does not wish to approve any of the submitted proposals, the ACC would reconsider the parameters of the project and return to Council at a later date with an alternative plan for moving forward. In such case, the ACC would welcome any additional direction Council may have regarding the parameters or scope of the project.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS (continued):

The ACC expresses its thanks to the Town Council for their support of this project.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. The Council may choose to support the ACC's recommendation as presented in this staff report to commission the proposal presented by Matt Babcock.
2. The Council may choose to deny the ACC's recommendation and award a commission to one of the other two artist proposals.
3. The Council may choose to deny the ACC's recommendation and additionally not award a commission to any of the presented artists.

FISCAL IMPACT:

Costs associated with the project are already included in the FY19-20 Capital Improvement budget.

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT:

This is not a project defined under CEQA, and no further action is required.

Attachment:

1. Artist Proposal Materials [Includes Site Design Proposal, Artist Statement, Public Art Curriculum Vitae (CV), and Portfolio Sample]