



ARTS COUNCIL STAFF REPORT

Item 3
September 14, 2021
Regular Business

AGENDA ITEM INFORMATION

TITLE: RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Luther Burbank Docks and Waterfront Renovation Project – Public Art/Placemaking Components Discuss opportunities for <i>Handsome Bollards</i> and additional integrated artwork as part of the capital project.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion Only <input type="checkbox"/> Action Needed: <input type="checkbox"/> Motion <input type="checkbox"/> Ordinance <input type="checkbox"/> Resolution
STAFF: COUNCIL LIAISON: EXHIBITS:	Paul West, CIP Project Manager Anna Spooner, Landscape Architect, Anchor QEA n/a <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Luther Burbank Dock and Waterfront Concept Design 2. 30% design sheet S-020 Overwater Stair Details 3. 30% design sheet G-021 Composite Site Plan 	

SUMMARY

The docks and adjacent waterfront at Luther Burbank Park were constructed in 1974. Inspection of the docks in 2014 revealed extensive rot and structural defects that would require major repairs. The cost estimate for these repairs represented a significant investment into a dock system that was not meeting the current public needs for boating and shoreline access. Instead, the City decided to pursue a redesign of the docks to better serve the current needs. (See more project information on [Let's Talk.](#))

In 2020, the Parks and Recreation Commission (PRC) was tasked with developing a conceptual design for the docks. They recommended to City Council a concept design that also included needed improvements to the adjacent waterfront (See Exhibit 1). The City Council approved this concept design in May 2021 and authorized development of a 30% design for review by the PRC. A preliminary 30% design is currently being reviewed by the Parks and Recreation Commission, which is expected to make a recommendation to City Council in fall 2021.

Tonight, staff will present an overview of the project to the Arts Council and seek input related to the *Handsome Bollards* installation as well as opportunities for integrating public art and/or placemaking elements into the final project using 1% for Art in Public Places funding generated by the project. The timeline for this project requires that an option for the *Handsome Bollards* be determined in the 30% design phase. However, the project is not expected to complete design until the end of 2023. This allows approximately two years to develop any new art element the Arts Council wishes to pursue. The project is expected to be constructed in 2024.

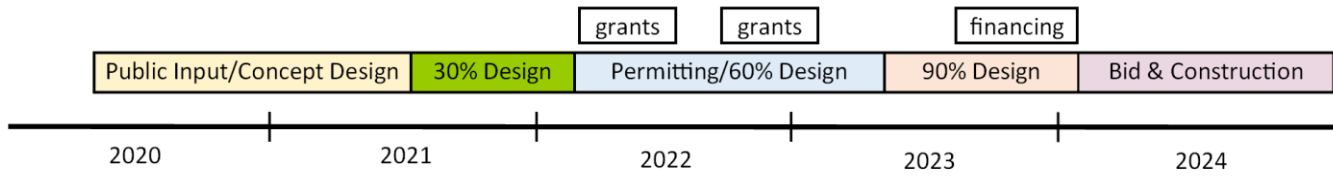


Figure 1: project timeline

HANDSOME BOLLARDS INTEGRATION

Handsome Bollards is a sculpture installation along the lake edge of the waterfront plaza at Luther Burbank Park. It consists of fifteen metal “hand” castings in aluminum and bronze mounted on steel posts with steel chain running between the hands. It was created by Tom Jay in 1971 and transferred to the City of Mercer Island during the acquisition of Luther Burbank Park. It was recently repaired in 2019-2020 after water and corrosion had weakened its structural attachment to the concrete bulkhead and damaged the surrounding masonry. A portion of these repairs were funded by the 1% for Art in Public Places (1% for Art) fund.



Figure 2: Handsome Bollards, looking north

During concept design for the waterfront plaza, the landscape architect predicted that permitting for plaza improvements could trigger the installation of a code-compliant railing on the edge of the bulkhead next to *Handsome Bollards*, which would have a significant visual impact on the installation. The landscape architect suggested that stairs down to the water from the bulkhead could avoid the need for the railing while providing seating and offer additional unprogrammed space to reduce congestion in the passage next to the Boiler Building. The stairs would function like bleacher seating for informal gathering. However, this element would increase the dock project’s overwater coverage and may not survive permitting.

The PRC liked the bulkhead steps in concept. However, commissioners wanted to understand how *Handsome Bollards* would function with the steps and to weigh the environmental impacts and costs involved. Their questions could not be answered without additional design work, and the Arts Council still needed to provide input related to the installation. It was agreed to keep the stairs in the concept plan and explore permitting and *Handsome Bollards* integration issues during 30% design development.

In the 30% design for the overwater stairs, the landscape architect proposes three 18-inch-wide treads constructed of fiberglass grating. The bottom step would be at the level of the lake during the high-water period from mid-May to early July (See Exhibit 2). The chain links in the *Handsome Bollards* installation would be removed in five locations to allow access to the stairs. However, each “hand” would continue to hold a chain, preserving a current function of the artwork.

If the City is unable to construct the overwater stairs, alternatives include repurposing the *Handsome Bollards* “hand” castings in a new location/function or conducting further risk assessment with the current configuration.

PUBLIC ART INTEGRATION

This capital project is expected to generate significant 1% for Art revenue (possibly in the range of \$30,000 to \$40,000) and offers a significant placemaking opportunity to add new public art to this park location. The 30% design currently identifies general opportunities that would be developed with further design (See Exhibit 3).



Figure 3: existing waterfront plaza with the boiler building on the right and restrooms on the left

Tonight, staff seek input on the public art element for this capital project. To begin this process, the design team asks the Arts Council to consider the following:

1. Types of art/media: Pursue “integrated public art” rather than stand-alone sculptures for this site. Examples of “integrated public art” that could apply are:
 - a. Sculptural elements that define entrances to the site and pertain to themes (outlined below)
 - b. Paving treatments with embedded materials and text
 - c. Use of tile with images or other designs integrated into seawalls or building walls
 - d. Functional elements such as custom benches, shade structures, an information kiosk etc., that express boating or sailing building techniques

2. Art themes:

- a. Water/Island maps in paving: Mercer Island, Lake Washington, Central Puget Sound/Lake WA/Lake Sammamish and connecting waterways with public access points
- b. Human-powered boat construction as an artform: sails, paddles/oars, boat/canoe/kayak/rowing shell hulls
- c. Local history/heritage pertaining to boat types, boat transportation including stories and landing sites on Mercer Island to surrounding cities: Mosquito fleet; stories of how locals use non-motorized boats as transportation in the past, including tribes, and pioneers/early settlers; history of the former/proposed waterfront features, such as the Calkins Hotel and the 1905 Olmsted proposed park plan
- d. Local natural history: the big earthquake that resulted in Lake Washington's "sunken forest"; changes to the lake; historic vs. present lake level, fluctuations, and contributing watershed changes (Note the south shoreline trail adjacent to this project will include art/interpretation related to salmon out-migration through Lake Washington.)

Any combination of options listed above could be developed in one of three ways:

- The current design team develops creative elements, treatments, or components as they develop the design.
- An artist is selected to join the design team and works in tandem as the design moves forward.
- An artist is selected to work semi-independently using the landscape plan to develop a chosen conceptual theme.

The type of art and the theme may influence which process we utilize. For example, functional elements would likely be more successful if the design team has some direct involvement with the creative process.

NEXT STEPS

The design team will take Arts Council input on these two topics. Through this input, a few options may emerge for further consideration. Staff will summarize the meeting results and report back to Arts Council later this fall on the status of the 30% design. The next engagement period will be to determine final direction in the 60% design phase. There will be two or three meetings in 2022 and 2023 where concept and process will be further developed.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Discuss opportunities for *Handsome Bollards* and additional integrated artwork as part of the capital project.