



# Memorandum

**TO:** PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE

**FROM:** Michael Ogilvie

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** March 30, 2023

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**Council District: 3**

**SUBJECT:** **The San José Walls 2023 workplan for murals to be created and maintained on City property in various locations along the Guadalupe River Park and Trail within the jurisdiction of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy to include a new artwork project by Ruben Escalante**

## RECOMMENDATION

Review and take action to approve San José Walls 2023 workplan for projects along the Guadalupe River Park and Trails in locations within the jurisdiction of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy, to include a design development proposal for new mural artwork by San José artist Ruben Escalante. (Not a City of San José Public Art Program project.)

**DATE OF ARTIST SELECTION:** Winter 2022-2023 through a curatorial format. Artist selected is local.

**BUDGET:** Not a city funded project

**LOCATION:** Guadalupe River Park Trail, various locations within the jurisdiction of the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy

## PROJECT DESCRIPTION

San José Walls (SJW), formally POW! WOW! San José, was established in 2017; it is Northern California's regional branch of the Worldwide Walls network of festivals that happen in over 20 cities around the world. SJW is led locally by Empire Seven Studios – a contemporary urban art gallery and cultural institution in San José's Japantown District.

In recent years, SJW has grown into a premiere Bay Area art festival. Much more than a multi-day festival, SJW is an event with economic and community impact and is also a vehicle to celebrate San José's past, present, and future culture. To date, SJW has produced over 70 murals and visual art installations throughout the City with a focus on underserved neighborhoods. SJW's goal is to strengthen community ties by bringing local and worldwide contemporary art to San José to highlight the diversity the city has to offer.

SJW works in collaboration with the Guadalupe River Park Conservancy (GRPC) to oversee the creation of murals along the Guadalupe River Trail in locations adjacent to downtown San José. The GRPC provides community leadership for the development and active use of the Guadalupe River Park & Gardens through education, advocacy, and stewardship. A true gem of San José, the

Conservancy is visited by more than 400,000 visitors annually. A major asset within the Conservancy is the Guadalupe River Park and Trail. This three-mile ribbon of parkland runs along the banks of the Guadalupe River in the heart of downtown San José. Through their ongoing collaboration, SJW and GRPC intend to enhance natural spaces with public art murals with the shared objective of improving the quality of life in the community. Their shared vision is to create the longest continued mural art corridor in the Bay Area.

For 2023, SJW plans to expand the Art Walk with 10 mural installations at three different locations throughout the current Art Walk footprint via the 2023 SJ Walls AIR (Artist in Residency) program. The AIR program is scheduled for 5/5/23-5/12/23. Having already completed multiple projects within the GRPC, SJW intends to accomplish the following with this expansion:

- Increase the number of installations within the existing SJW footprint to enhance the visitor experience.
- Activate street level locations to improve wayfinding and entice visitors down to the trail.
- Add programming opportunities within the GRPC to increase awareness and community engagement

SJW's new artwork project for 2023 will be a group of small mural artworks created by artist Ruben Escalante and is titled *Good Dads Go To Heaven*. As described by the artist, "The group of artworks honors Chicax dads who made sure toxic inheritance ends with them. Portrayed are fathers of different generations and backgrounds who made sure to spend time with their kids and give them every opportunity for a life they never had." These artworks will be sited on a series of endcaps of stairways along the Guadalupe River Trail.

Artist Ruben Escalante is a visual artist and Director of the Teen Tech Center at MACLA. Since graduating from Film School Ruben has worked with elementary schools, focusing on art therapy. In 2018 they started an artist collective called Emo Kids of Color, E.K.O.C for short, who bridge social gaps by exposing underserved communities to art and subculture. In 2022, Ruben was featured in a national campaign as an artist and organizer who holds safe space for fellow LGBTQIA+ humans.

In addition to this new artwork project, SJW also intends to do restoration work on some of its existing projects. These include the restoration of Roan Victor's mural on the Woz Way bridge over the Guadalupe River, and in August 2023 they plan to restore the Kristina Micotti Mural along the Guadalupe River Trail.

Approval of this recommendation is with the understanding by SJW and the GRPC that, for the life of the murals, all maintenance and repair of the murals is entirely the responsibility of SJW and the GRPC and will not be the responsibility of the City of San José or its Public Art Program.

SJW and GPRC have multiple partnerships to support ongoing maintenance of the Art Walk. These include Beautify SJ, SJ Conservation/Resilience Corps, and Groundwerx. Each of these organizations provides support to help keep existing installations clean and to prepare future installation sites to ensure a successful application. Additionally, they have increased the application of anti-graffiti clear coating from four coats to six coats and have created a new subdivision within the GRPC's existing volunteer programming to focus specifically on graffiti removal. This group is called the "Tag Team." For each piece on the Art Walk there is a line item in GRPC's annual budget specifically for

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maintenance costs. Their shared goal is to continue to develop an improved and sustainable ongoing maintenance plan for public art along the trail.

## **PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The visioning and development of the plan for the Guadalupe River Trail Art Walk is the result of planning done by GRPC and SJW (when it was still represented as PWSJ) at the outset of the project. This planning work was done in coordination with the District 3 Council Office and included extensive online survey work by GRPC seeking feedback about Guadalupe River Park and the type of art people would like to see along the trail – there were 70 participants in that effort. There was also a community engagement forum hosted in conjunction with Children’s Discovery Museum (the site adjacent to the first mural in the art walk; 45 people participated in that forum which included polls and survey questions.

/s/

MICHAEL OGILVIE,  
Public Art Director