



# Memorandum

**TO:** PUBLIC ART COMMITTEE

**FROM:** MICHAEL OGILVIE

**SUBJECT:** SEE BELOW

**DATE:** June 1, 2023

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**Council District: 3**

**RECOMMENDATION:** Review and take action on the recommendation to approve the concept design proposal by artist Jesse Hernandez for an artwork treatment on the exterior of the new Fire Station 8.

**DATE OF ARTIST SELECTION:** September 2022

**ARTWORK BUDGET:** \$80,000

**LOCATION:** The project site is the new Fire Station 8 that will be built at 601 E Santa Clara Street in Downtown San José.

**BACKGROUND:**

The passage of the Measure T Public Safety Bond in the November 2018 election supported plans for the City to build a number of new fire stations. A new Fire Station 8 one of those. Located on E. Santa Clara Street at 13<sup>th</sup> Street it will replace an older, smaller station located further east on Santa Clara Street.

Fire Station 8 was already significantly designed when the project was opened up to the City of San José Public Art Program's (SJPA) direct involvement. This eliminated the opportunity for an artist to collaborate with the project design team on integration of public art elements into the base project design and limited the opportunities for public art. In a series of discussions, the base project team identified what they considered to be the best, preferred options for public art: the main one they identified was for a vertical sculpture in a prominent location in front of the building along the E. Santa Clara St. facility façade. As a result, the Public Art team compiled a list of prospective sculptural artists to be considered for this project.

Unexpectedly, the base project team informed staff that it was discovered that a water main flows directly beneath the proposed sculpture site and that, because of this, the plan for a sculpture was no longer viable. In the collaborative discussions that resulted from this change in plans, the location for this public art element moved to two large exterior walls facing Santa Clara St. that flank the gated entry to the station. This option has very high visibility and high impact, which is in alignment with the Public Art Masterplan and required artistic approaches to be 2-dimensional or bas-relief work. Given the physical and structural characteristics of this site and its proximity to the sidewalk along this very busy urban corridor, there was agreement that some form of flatscape metal mural artwork would be the best option. Design work for the project must be completed in the coming months. It was therefore necessary to bring a skilled, experienced public artist on board as soon as possible so use of the existing mural artist roster was employed; artist; Jesse Hernandez was selected from the SJPA Public Artists roster.

Artist Jesse Hernandez is a highly accomplished mural artist. He's completed a mural project (located on DuPont St.) comprised of four largescale murals for the San José Public Art Program's "Right the Blight" project. He has completed other projects in locations including the Oakland Museum of California and in commercial settings San Francisco, Napa and others. His creative work is featured in a wide range of settings that include work for major

local professional sports franchises as well as for the SF Symphony. He describes his style as "Urban Aztec," a combination of street art and Aztec influences, capturing movement and depth fused with sharp lines, and powerful color. He considers creation of public artworks to be the ultimate medium, as he finds that the viewer's interactions and inspiration it creates is unforgettable, and he is drawn to transforming a surface into a new spectacle, creating historic landmarks and interactions. He always seeks to honor the community and value their input when creating a new artwork. His stated goal is to create something that will inspire future generations.

Bringing Jesse Hernandez onto this project also achieves a goal of engaging a local artist in a project of a different scale than they may have previously worked on which will support expansion of their capacity as a public artist.

**CONCEPT**

Artist Jesse Hernandez artwork concept is for a metal “mural” on the two walls flanking the entrance to Fire Station 8’s gated exterior rear lot. His design is focused on cultural imagery of Tlaloc, the Aztec folkloric deity associated with water, aligned to the very direct relationship between water and firefighting. Hernandez integrates contemporary elements related to firefighting into the design, such as imagery suggesting a fire hose and SJFD’s badge icon. The Aztec-influenced imagery aligns well to the culture of this area.

The artwork will be displayed on the two walls in mirror image on each side of the entry gate. The artwork will be created in cut metal. SJFD and members of the design team have expressed a preference for the walls behind the cut metal to be painted in fire engine red, the color that is featured on other parts of the building which helps to unify the metal mural design with the architecture. The expressive style of the artwork design provides a counterpoint to the rectilinear design of the facility, making for visual interest and placemaking.

**PUBLIC OUTREACH**

The City’s Department of Public Works (DPW) was well underway with the design of Fire Station 8 at the time they convened the public meetings listed below to share proposed designs for the new station and provide for community input on possible approaches to public art. Considerably outreach was done for both meetings.

Public Art Committee Liaison: None assigned.

Public meetings held in conjunction with this project:

<b>Date</b>	<b>What</b>	<b>Purpose</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Convener</b>
9/20/17	Artist Selection Panel meeting	Create a pre-qualified artist roster	City Hall	SJPA
10/20/21	Community meeting	Presentation by Public Works of building design options for community input and introduction to public art as an element	Online via Zoom	Public Works Dept. and District 3 Council Office
12/13/21	Community meeting	Presentation by Public Works of building design options for community input and introduction to public art as an element	Online via Zoom	Public Works Dept. and District 3 Council Office
4/23/23	Focus Group	Meeting with District 3 Council Office’s community outreach staff for visioning	Online via Zoom	SJPA
10/4/22	Public Art Committee meeting	Report to PAC on artist selection of Jesse Hernandez	Online via Zoom	SJPA

/s/  
 MICHAEL OGILVIE  
 Public Art Director