

# East Palo Alto Heroes & Legends at Cooley Landing Park

## Request for Qualifications - Public Art Dyson & Womack and the East Palo Alto Community Archive (EPACA)

Released March 6, 2025

The East Palo Alto Community Archive (EPACA) Heroes & Legends project will implement a permanent public artwork in the city of East Palo Alto at Cooley Landing Park. The East Palo Alto Community Archive invites artists to respond to the dynamic history of East Palo Alto, interpreting its unique past, present, and future aspirations through a public art installation that will resonate with and celebrate the community's multifaceted identity—an identity rooted in power, change, and community.

The Heroes & Legends public art commission is a project of the East Palo Alto Community Archive (EPACA) and was made possible through a grant award from the State of California's State Coastal Conservancy. The mission of the EPACA is to collect, share, promote, celebrate, and preserve the unique history of the East Palo Alto community for future generations. East Palo Alto is a community of cultural and economic empowerment, a place where memory and resilience shape its future, and where residents learn from the past to collectively imagine the city's next chapter. The EPACA seeks to ensure that the history of East Palo Alto is both a source of inspiration and a tool for future development, strengthening the connection between past, present, and future generations.

## PROJECT OPPORTUNITY

Cooley Landing Park in East Palo Alto presents a unique opportunity for public art to tell the story of grassroots community leaders who founded and developed the City of East Palo Alto. East Palo Alto's long-standing efforts to self-empower and attain equitable access to resources continue to shape the city today. However, many of the Latinx, Pacific Islander, and Black leaders who laid the foundation for these successes remain unrecognized in public spaces. This public art commission seeks to change that, ensuring these voices and contributions are acknowledged and that the history of success in the community is celebrated.

Too often, the mainstream narrative told about East Palo Alto is one of trauma and perceived deficiencies, overlooking the community's strength, diversity, and the wealth the community has always possessed—its people, culture, and deep sense of belonging. By telling these stories at Cooley Landing Park, we expect to

reclaim and amplify these stories through public art that is both recognizable in its connection to East Palo Alto's incorporation story and reflective of its ever-changing nature while fostering ownership in this remarkable public space.

By centering themes of resilience, diversity, and love, the artwork at Cooley Landing Park will elevate the experiences of East Palo Alto's frontline workers, entrepreneurs, activists, and organizers. The installation will embody the community's intergenerational bonds, where family means no one is left behind, and opportunity still exists, though not without vigilance and continued activism. It will acknowledge the grief and loss felt by those displaced yet maintain the dignity of their connection to East Palo Alto, honoring those who return like a pilgrimage to remember and reconnect.

Cooley Landing Park, situated on the San Francisco Bay Trail adjacent to the MROSD-owned Ravenswood Open Space Preserve at one end of the planned Bay to Sea Trail, is an accessible open space that already engages and inspires many visitors from diverse backgrounds. With a walking trail running along its length and the newly built Cooley Landing Education Center, a 3,900-square-foot community building used for workshops and educational activities, the park offers a landscape that is calm, expansive, and full of potential for meaningful artistic interventions. It is a place where interconnection, solidarity, and rootedness can be visually and experientially represented.

The Artist or Artist Team selected for the Cooley Landing Park project will be encouraged to explore a variety of approaches, from interactive installations woven into the walking trail to sculptural works that can act as focal points within the landscape. Materiality and form should harmonize with the peninsula's natural surroundings, with an emphasis on durability and environmental sensitivity. The Artist or Artist Team will work collaboratively with the project team and the community, drawing from oral histories and lived experiences to shape how the art engages people on-site. One primary goal of the commission is to support ownership and belonging at Cooley Landing Park by creating inclusive outdoor spaces that reflect the perspectives of BIPOC and other historically underrepresented communities.

To inform the artwork's conceptual and aesthetic foundation, artists will have access to the East Palo Alto Community Archive, which houses invaluable historical and cultural resources. This research phase, combined with a robust community engagement plan, will guide the design and development of the final artwork(s) to ensure that it reflects and represents the community's heritage and aspirations. Through thoughtful design, the artwork should drive meaningful engagement, elevating Cooley Landing Park as an accessible and inclusive public space that celebrates and honors the diverse voices within East Palo Alto. The project should reinforce the idea that East Palo Alto is an asset to the region, its people are an asset to the world, and the community's spirit of love, family, and empowerment endures.

## ELIGIBILITY & CONSIDERATIONS

### Eligibility

We encourage artists from any career level to apply, including artists with limited public art experience. Artists ages 18 and older may apply individually or collaboratively as a team. Artists applying as a team will have a track record of working together and will apply with a portfolio of joint work. Any artist team selected through this RFQ must retain the same composition of individual team members until the completion of the commission. Any artist teams selected will receive one commission and stipend to be shared among team members.

Artists who are historically underrepresented individuals/groups (including artists identifying as Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC), Latinx, Asian, Pacific Islander, Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Bisexual, and Queer (LGBTBQ+) artists, artists with disabilities, emerging and self-taught artists) are encouraged to apply.

### Considerations

- Artists or Artist Teams who live and work within East Palo Alto or demonstrate a clear connection to East Palo Alto will be strongly considered.
- Studio artists and artists from all career levels interested in pursuing public art projects are also encouraged to apply. Artists who have not previously worked in public art are invited to utilize the written response to outline their knowledge of and interest in public art.
- We strongly encourage historically underrepresented individuals/groups to apply.
- A person who is a current employee or member of the East Palo Alto Community Archive (EPACA) may not be selected or commissioned pursuant to this RFQ.

## SELECTION PROCESS

The Community Public Art Committee (CPAC) will support the selection of the Artist or Artist Team for the public art commission. The CPAC is a group of East Palo Alto residents and stakeholders selected by the EPACA, who will act as the artist selection committee for the art opportunity.

The Art Consultant will evaluate responses to the Request for Qualifications (RFQ), presenting a short list of Artists or Artist Teams to the CPAC for evaluation and selection. Selected Artists or Artist Teams will work with the CPAC and the Community Advisory Council (CAC), a larger group of community stakeholders, to develop the final concept and design proposal. The CAC will advise on community engagement and provide leadership and support for the art opportunity.

Applications are due **April 30, 2025, by 11:59 PM (PST)**, and must be electronically submitted to Dyson & Womack through the online submission platform at: [www.dysonwomack.com/EPACA](http://www.dysonwomack.com/EPACA).

## EVALUATION

Applications will be evaluated based on Artistic Engagement and Cultural Equity as defined below.

Artistic Engagement is identified by the strength of the artist’s conceptual framework as it relates to communities, sites, and historical/social/political contexts. Through their prior work and written statement, applicants should demonstrate that they have an interest in producing art in the public sphere. Specifically, we are looking for ways artists surprise, challenge, improve, or advance how we perceive art in public spaces and a critical understanding of how public art and community engage one another.

Artists with little or no experience completing public art projects may instead articulate their understanding of and interest in public art and this commission through their written statements.

Prior work portfolios may include examples of public, studio, gallery, and other commissioned artworks. They will be evaluated for skill, distinction, or value related to the artist’s career level and historical/cultural contexts.

Cultural Equity is articulated by the value placed on representation and inclusion. In practice, this means considering representation not only through the Artist or Artist Team selected but also for the communities served and the perspectives represented in their artwork. Increasing access and opportunity within public art is an active value that requires diligence and a clear understanding of historical barriers to inclusion. Evaluation will be based on the artist’s ability to demonstrate an understanding of the themes and goals of the project and provide a meaningful contribution to the project.

The final commission awards will be based on a combination of factors determined to be in the best interest of the EPACA Heroes & Legends project.

## BUDGET

The selected Artist or Artist Team will receive a budget between \$120,000 to \$150,000 for the permanent public artwork. Commission budgets are inclusive of Artist or Artist Team fees, artwork fabrication, production and installation, insurance, permits, and all costs associated with the delivery of the permanent public artwork.

## PROJECT TIMELINE

### RFQ Timeline

RFQ released	Thursday, March 6, 2025
RFQ submission deadline	Wednesday, April 30, 2025 at 11:59 PM (PST)
RFQ selected artists notified	June 2025

## Art Timeline

Artist Contracting	June 2025 - July 2025
Community Engagement & Proposal Development	July 2025 - September 2025
Artwork Fabrication	October 2025 - February 2026
Artwork Installation	March 2026 - May 2026

## APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

**Contact Information.** Artists or Artist Teams must provide contact information (teams must provide info for each team member, and one artist must be identified as the lead contact for the team).

**Resume/CV.** Please provide 1-2 pages (maximum) outlining your professional art qualifications, which may include previous projects, experience, education/training, and other related credentials. Artist Teams should provide a separate Resume/CV for each team member.

**Letter of Interest (LOI).** Please provide 1-2 pages (maximum) articulating the Artist or Artists Teams interest in developing a public art proposal for EPACA Heroes & Legends Public Art Commission at Cooley Landing Park. The LOI should:

- Express the applicants interest in or connection to East Palo Alto and Cooley Landing Park, highlighting any understanding of the community's history, culture, and identity;
- Demonstrate experience in community engagement, showcasing the applicant's ability to collaborate with local communities and briefly sharing any past projects that reflect this approach;
- Articulate the applicant's approach to this opportunity, sharing how their artistic practice or conceptual approach aligns with the project's intent; and
- Convey the applicant's understanding of the project's goals and vision, demonstrating how they believe their work can contribute to a sense of belonging and representation.

**Portfolio of Past Projects.** The portfolio should include completed artworks that best exemplify the current trajectory of the applicant's artistic practice. Past projects can include public artwork, but public art experience is not a requirement for application. The portfolio can include up to 10 media files; acceptable formats include PDFs, images, video, or audio files.

## HOW TO APPLY

Applications must be submitted electronically through the online platform at [www.dysonwomack.com/EPACA](http://www.dysonwomack.com/EPACA) by **April 30, 2025, at 11:59 PM (PST)**. An artist may only apply once, individually or as part of a team. Applications submitted late or through other means than the submission platform will not be reviewed.

## TERMS & CONDITIONS

Dyson & Womack and the East Palo Alto Community Archive (EPACA) reserve the right to decline all applications submitted in response to this RFQ, to terminate the selection proceedings, or to combine, eliminate, or otherwise amend the commission opportunity at any time. Artists identified through this RFQ process are not guaranteed a commission or the opportunity to develop a public art project or proposal. The release of this RFQ in no way binds Dyson & Womack or EPACA to the commissioning of any artists, artist teams, or artworks.

## ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

We strongly encourage applicants to review all the materials and supporting documents before responding to this RFQ.

[East Palo Alto Heroes & Legends Art Plan](#)