

Release date: December 8, 2021

Call for Expressions of Interest: Public Artwork for the TPSS Building, Gilman Square, Somerville, MA

The Somerville Arts Council, City of Somerville, the MBTA, and the Gilman Square Neighborhood Association (GSNA) are seeking qualifications from artists interested in creating a public artwork for Gilman Square for the MBTA's Traction Power Substation (TPSS) Building. The structure is part of the new Green Line T station located at the intersection of Medford and Pearl Street. Gilman Square is home to Somerville High School and City Hall, Mad Oyster Studios, and celebrated restaurant Sarma. The Gilman Square Neighborhood Association is actively working with the City of Somerville to define parameters for future development that include a vibrant arts community, greenspace, retail, and industry. This is Gilman Square's first major public art installation and it will be highly visible. It should serve as an iconic beacon to welcome people to the area.

If you are an artist (or team) who has successfully completed murals or other public art installations, please apply to this open call by January 28, 2022.

Note: Only individual artist(s) or non-profit organizations can apply for this call. If you are a for-profit business, individuals within your firm can apply. All contracting will be with individuals or non-profits.

BACKGROUND

The newly built Traction Power Substation (TPSS) Building shown in Appendix A will generate and control power along the MBTA's extended Green Line which will stop in Gilman Square on its way to Medford. The building is a two-story substation clad in precast concrete insulated panels. The building provides AC Power to the Gilman and Magoun Stations and DC power from the Medford Viaduct to approximately School Street. Gilman Square had a railroad station nine decades ago. The neighborhood is rapidly changing with the heralded opening of this new subway platform along with all the development it brings.

In partnership with the MBTA, the City of Somerville and the Somerville Arts Council announce this call for an artwork to be installed on the northeast, northwest and southwest walls of the TPSS building in September of 2022. (See Appendix B for building images)

This Call for Artists builds on recommendations developed by the Gilman Square Neighborhood Association (GSNA) which were arrived at through a process of community engagement and

included a survey of community members about preferences for public art in the square. We hope that this will be the first of many public art opportunities in Gilman Square.

This Request for Qualifications is to solicit artists or artist teams who are interested in being considered for the design of a public artwork for this site that will:

- Create a new iconic landmark for Gilman Square
- Be stable and relatively maintenance-free for 10+ years
- Adhere to MBTA specifications for site limitations (no building facade penetration but attachments onto the facades, with limitations, will be considered)
- Design a public artwork that acknowledges Gilman Square's place as the center of Somerville - an arts city and steadfast immigrant gateway - located down the hill from Somerville High School and City Hall and near to the new Green Line Station that knits together Boston and Somerville.
- Include the community in a collaborative process

ARTIST STIPEND

The chosen finalist will receive a fixed fee of \$80,000. This stipend includes all expenses associated with the completion of the project, including, artist(s) labor and coordination, payment to sub-contractors, supplies, travel, equipment, housing, insurance. Final applicant is expected to fully manage the project with support of the Arts Council. This amount will be distributed upon completion of milestones noted in the final contract.

INTENDED PROCESS

To reach our goal with this project, we have established a two-step procurement process. The first step is to solicit RFQ responses from artist(s) with qualifications. The second step is to choose three finalists from the RFQ process who will then respond to the second step, the RFP component. The committee will review based on a transparent qualification selection process for each step. The three finalists will receive a stipend of \$1,000 to further their proposal based on the RFP. Once an applicant is chosen, they will work with the City, MBTA, and committee to finalize design documents for execution of a contract and the agreed upon work.

PHASE ONE: REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS REVIEW CRITERIA

The City invites artists or artist teams to submit examples of past work for the Committee to review. Eligibility is based upon the following review criteria:

- artistic excellence and achievement as evidenced by the materials submitted
- relevance of previous professional experience with projects of similar scale and scope
- demonstrated ability to successfully collaborate with public agencies and community members at all phases of the process
- ability to address site specific conditions.

HOW TO APPLY

There is no submission fee. Submissions must be completed online through the following link: <https://forms.gle/3BdwH6eajjWyGoe36>

Artists must submit all of the following materials for consideration:

Statement of Interest (300 words max)

Provide a narrative description of your interest in the commission and your qualifications for undertaking such a project; how your art practice and process can be translated to this project and how you might approach this project. The panel is looking for artist(s) who are able to take a novel approach to the project theme; artist(s) who will ultimately create a work that is responsive to the surrounding environment with the potential to engage and resonate within the community. If you are applying as an artist team, your statement of interest should reflect the work and approach of the team. ***The first phase of the process is a Request for Qualifications; specific proposals are not required at this time.***

Artist's Statement (300 words max)

Provide a narrative description of your past work and current practice, including reference to submitted work samples, as relevant.

Statement (alternative to above) Provide a maximum one-minute video about yourself and your work. (Again, this can be done instead of above.)

Resume or CV (2 pages max)

Provide a current resume or CV (max. 2 pages), highlighting artistic excellence, any community engagement work, and experience working with multiple stakeholders. Be sure to include any relevant public or private commissioning experience. If you are applying as an artist team, combine your information into a maximum of a four-page PDF document that summarizes each team members' qualifications.

References

Provide the name, phone number and email addresses of two (2) professional references that have experience working with you as a partner or client on a creative project. Please indicate their position and your relationship to each reference.

Work Samples

Provide up to 10 jpegs of completed work. If you are applying as an artist team, designate one artist to be the team leader to submit your information, along with team member(s) images and resume/bio(s). Submissions from artist teams should reflect samples from each artist on the team, and not exceed the overall submission limit of 10 images.

Work Sample List

Provide a list of submitted work, including title, date, materials and dimensions, budget and locations. Include 1-2 sentence descriptions as needed.

PHASE TWO: REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (We are NOT Requesting RFP applications at this time below is merely illustrative of our full process.)

As part of Phase Two, the city will invite three selected finalists to develop site-specific proposals for review by the Committee. Finalists will receive an honorarium of \$1,000 for submission of a proposal regardless of the number of concepts submitted, inclusive of presentation materials and travel.

Proposals must include:

- a detailed project description including schedule and budget
- scale models, renderings, or detailed sketches of intended visual proposal a 45-minute interview
- Details information of proposed materials and application/installation methods
- Detailed maintenance information statement
- a public presentation

Finalists will also be required to visit the site and debrief with the MBTA prior to developing proposals.

Proposals will be due by March 7, 2022. The Selection Panel will be moderated by the Somerville Arts Council and composed of members of the Gilman Square Neighborhood Association, representatives from the Somerville Office of Strategic Planning and Community Development and the MBTA, as well as members of the local arts community. The Panel will recommend the winning artist following MBTA approval, with notification by April 7.

The City of Somerville aspires to commission artwork of the highest caliber possible especially drawn from regionally-based artists, while reflecting contemporary art practices. The conceptual RFP proposals will be judged according to the following review criteria:

- Appropriateness of each artist's approach to the site's architecture, function, and users;
- Skilled craftsmanship;
- Clarity of artistic vision;
- Consideration of the cost and durability of the artist's chosen materials which must be durable and low maintenance; (materials must be MBTA-approved)
- The project must enhance a positive and welcoming environment to the public
- Suitability to the site including understanding of the scale of the building and urban environment.
- The ability to successfully participate with the community at all phases of the process
- Promotion of specific private or corporate business interests in artistic undertakings is prohibited. Appropriate credit will be allowed.
- If selected, the artist will be required to maintain general liability insurance and adhere to any MBTA regulations.

TIMELINES

Release of Call/RFQ: Wednesday, Dec. 8th, 2021

Deadline for RFQ submissions: Friday, Jan. 28th, 2022, 11:59 pm

Review of RFQs: Jan 28th thru March 2nd 2022

Selection/ Notification/ Release of RFP for Finalists: March 7th 2022

Deadline of RFP submissions: April 8, 2022

Notification of awardee: May 9, 2022

QUESTIONS

Please direct all inquiries regarding this open call to Gregory Jenkins at the Somerville Arts Council: gjenkins@somervillema.gov

USEFUL LINKS

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Somerville_Junction

<https://www.mbta.com/projects/green-line-extension-glx>

<https://www.somervillema.gov/sites/default/files/tracking-the-t-brochure-draft-2.pdf>

<https://voice.somervillema.gov/gilman-square-plan-implementation/widgets/12420/documents>

<https://www.somervillebydesign.com/station-areas/gilman-square/>

<https://gilmansquare.org/history-of-gilman-square/>

APPENDIX A

Specific guidance concerning work on Gilman and MBTA property.

- *Access to the Traction Power Substation or to the interior of the Traction Power Substation shall not be blocked by any installation or during any installation.*
- *The south east side of the building is off-limits due to existing mechanical installations. Access to this area is not available.*
- *Landscaping shall be protected during any installation.*
- *Installations shall not interfere with the use, function, durability, maintainability or service life of the building or site.*
- *The Traction Power Station building exterior walls are precast concrete insulated panels with embedded steel pre-stressed reinforcing strands. Penetrations and attachments into the building exterior are not allowed.*
- *The function and structural integrity of the building shall remain in place at all times.*
- *Existing elements already installed on the building shall not be moved or blocked by any installation including but not limited to, lights, antennas, cabinets, ductwork, louvers and fans.*
- *Murals of film, paint or other materials applied to the building are to be coordinated with the precast panel manufacturer, Oldcastle Infrastructure, to assure material compatibility with the precast panels.*
- *Any mural needs to follow the requirements of the Temporary Mural Program/Policy, and any permanent/integral art needs to follow the requirements of the Integral Art program. In both cases, a license application will be required through Mass Realty Group to determine the acceptability of the proposed installation, and any conditions that may pertain. These both incorporate required protections for MBTA and the Visual Artist Law*

APPENDIX B

Images of TPSS:

TPSS BUILDING, NORTHEAST FACE, MEDFORD STREET (AND PEARL STREET)



TPSS BUILDING, NORTHWEST FACE (WITH NEW HIGH SCHOOL IN BACKGROUND)



TPSS BUILDING, SOUTHWEST FACE (WITH MEDFORD STREET BRIDGE IN BACKGROUND)

