



Memorandum

TO: HONORABLE MAYOR
AND CITY COUNCIL

FROM: Jen Baker

SUBJECT: See Below

DATE: September 15, 2025

Approved

Date:

9/23/2025

COUNCIL DISTRICT: 6

SUBJECT: Donation Agreement with Donor Diane Brandenburg for the Peace Monument, an Artwork by Artist Mario Chiodo, Located at Arena Green West

RECOMMENDATION

Authorize the City Manager, or her designee, to negotiate a donation agreement to receive the Peace Monument, an artwork by artist Mario Chiodo from donor Diane Brandenburg, to be sited at Arena Green West in accordance with the City Council-approved Donation and Monument Policies.

SUMMARY AND OUTCOME

Local philanthropist Diane Brandenburg seeks to donate to the City of San José a large-scale public art sculpture, entitled the Peace Monument, at Arena Green West, a City-owned park space located at Santa Clara Street and Autumn Street. The total estimated cost of the project is estimated at \$3,300,000. Ms. Brandenburg intends to raise an estimated \$1,300,000 in funds for site improvements and to establish an endowment dedicated to the sculpture's ongoing care and preservation.

Ms. Brandenburg seeks to negotiate a donation agreement with the City of San José (City) in accordance with City Council-approved Donation and Monument Policies. Upon approval, the City Manager, or her designee, will negotiate a donation agreement with Ms. Brandenburg according to City Council-approved policies and best practices. Upon City Council approval, Ms. Brandenburg will fundraise for the remaining estimated site-improvement and maintenance endowment costs required by City Council adopted policies.

BACKGROUND

Diane Brandenburg commissioned artist Mario Chiodo to design and fabricate a bronze monument to be gifted to the City. In addition to the artwork, Ms. Brandenburg intends to raise an endowment for the sculpture's long-term conservation and preservation. Bronze sculptures require annual cleaning and waxing to preserve their protective patina, prevent corrosion, and ensure their long-term visual integrity.

The project team is comprised of Mario Chiodo, primary artist and fabricator; Chris Kent, landscape architect; and Kimberly Mulcahy, Project Coordinator. The intention is to design, fabricate, and install the monument by the end of 2026, contingent upon the successful raising of the necessary funds and City Council's approval of the negotiated donation agreement. The funds will be donated by Diane Brandenburg to cover staff costs for engineering review, contractor procurement, logistical and project coordination, any labor costs the City staff provides in service of this project, and costs associated with site improvements to accommodate the sculpture.

ANALYSIS

Concept and Design Proposal

In her written statement of her inspiration and intent for the Peace Monument, Diane Brandenburg wrote:

Upon waking one Sunday morning in 2024, a seed of thought reached out and asked: "*What can I—we—do to stop war?*" And when our individual conscience is awakened, what do we do with it?

What kind of world are we bringing our children into? Are we raising our sons and daughters to be ready to fight—and die—for the defense of our country?

A statement I once read by the late, great anthropologist Margaret Mead came to mind: "*When are we going to devise a system that creates peace instead of war?*" That was the seed thought. And it began to grow.

San José has grown from its grassroots beginnings into what it is today known throughout the world as Silicon Valley. Once called *the Valley of Heart's Delight*, it has always carried a spirit of abundance and possibility.

So why can't this city, with all it represents, be the one to start a Peace Movement? And how can we bring this thought to life?

That is what the Seed of Peace Movement can stand for. A movement that can grow, expanding from our city to others, and then to the world.

The City of San José, California, is standing up and declaring: “*We want peace, not war.*” And now, a monument is being planted at the grassroots level, from where it can grow—seeds of peace.

As shown in the Attachment, the Peace Monument features a large-scale female figure standing in the middle of six children and a penguin, all shown lifting the Earth together. According to the artist, this monument symbolizes unity, shared responsibility, and global cooperation in the pursuit of world peace. The central figure holds a dove and olive branch, traditional emblems of peace, while a circular shawl extends from her head and wraps around her body, partially enclosing the children and the Earth. Inscribed on the shawl are cultural peace symbols from around the world representing global diversity and interconnectedness.

The seven figures, six children, and a penguin represent the seven continents of the world. The penguin symbolizes Antarctica and highlights environmental themes and climate change. Animals representing Antarctica are currently being researched, and the penguin may be subject to change to another wildlife representation of a similar scale and style. The child representing North America draws inspiration from the Muwekma Ohlone people, incorporating a hummingbird to honor its cultural significance. The child representing Asia in the Peace Monument reflects a blend of features, with an emphasis on Vietnamese heritage, recognizing both Vietnamese and indigenous cultures honored at the site through existing public artworks, the Weaver’s Gift and The Sons of San José Vietnam War Memorial. The artist’s intention is to build upon these existing artworks, honoring the stories while acknowledging the diverse cultural fabric of San José’s community. The proposed monument will be approximately 18 feet tall and 15 feet wide.

Mario Chiodo is an experienced bronze sculptor with over three decades of practice in the field of public art. Mr. Chiodo’s notable works include the Path of Thorns and Roses (Alexandria, VA), a memorial to the enslaved people of Alexandria; the Harriet Tubman Memorial (Wilmington, DE); Ohlone Tribute (Fremont, CA), a tribute to Native American heritage; the Dalai Lama Monument (Ithaca, NY); and the Pat Dando Sculpture (San José, CA), honoring the former San José Councilmember and Vice-Mayor.

Landscape architect Chris Kent will design the surrounding area as a site for reflection, dialogue, and education. The proposed location is Arena Green West, at the confluence of the Guadalupe River and the Los Gatos Creek, near the SAP Center, in the area of the park currently occupied by a circular granite stage. The site was also identified as part of the Stitching Districts initiative, which focuses on improving, connecting, and activating key gateways into the downtown core. The City will contribute approximately 20,638 square feet of parkland for the installation of the artwork and surrounding site improvements to accommodate the artwork. The potential valuation of the land is \$178,000.

City Council Policy 1-17: Donation, Sponsorship and Fundraising Policy and City Council Policy 9-14: Monument Policy

The Administration's negotiations of a donation agreement with Ms. Brandenburg will be in compliance with City Council Policy 1-17: Donation, Sponsorship and Fundraising Policy and City Council Policy 9-14: Monument Policy.

According to City Council Policy 1-17, the donor shall bear all costs associated with the Peace Monument, including design, engineering, fabrication, transport, site work (preparation/hardscape/landscape), utilities, permitting, inspection, installation, and related staff costs. The City shall not allocate General Fund resources for such purposes, ensuring that the donation reduces costs the City would otherwise incur. The donor shall deposit funds with the City sufficient to fully reimburse City staff costs incurred in the review, coordination, and oversight of the Peace Monument project. Once accepted, a donation becomes City property, and the City may maintain, replace, relocate, or dispose of it unless explicitly restricted. The donor acknowledges that upon Acceptance Notice and completion of required funding deposits, title to the monument shall vest with the City and the monument shall be subject to the City's full control.

The donor will be responsible for all City staff costs associated with the project, including review, design, fabrication, inspection, installation, preparation of required records and documentation, and ongoing maintenance of the artwork. The donation will also include funding for site improvements to accommodate the sculpture, including a base, hardscape, landscape, drainage, and electrical improvements. The donor will provide the City with an up-front payment of an estimated \$175,000 for project costs incurred by staff from the Department of Public Works and the City Manager's Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs, and first-year maintenance costs for the monument. Additionally, based on quotes obtained by the donor, the donor will establish an estimated \$300,000 endowment to fund the cost for 20 years of maintenance and potential catastrophic or significant damage to the monument. The endowment may be held by a third party, to be determined during contract negotiations. The 20-year term is based on the precedent set by the donation of the *Pat Dando* sculpture and staff's extensive experience in the long-term care and conservation of artworks. After this period, the City will cover the conservation costs subject to available funding.

The Peace Monument meets the criteria outlined in the Monument Policy:

- The Peace Monument qualifies as a monument because it is a permanent commemorative tribute to peace and unity.
- Designed by a professional artist, it is also considered "public art" and will be added to the City's Public Art Program inventory.
- Donor's commitment to fund design, fabrication, installation, permits, and a \$300,000 maintenance contribution aligns with donor obligations, although staff will confirm the sufficiency of the maintenance fund.

- Monument must meet standards for durability (bronze is acceptable), professional design, and community-wide significance.
- The Peace Monument design was approved the City's Public Art Committee on June 3, 2025.
- The Arts Commission recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager, or her designee, to negotiate a donation agreement at its September 15, 2025 regular meeting.

The City may consider accepting an agreement from a group to maintain the Peace Monument in perpetuity and in accordance with City Standards rather than a cash endowment. In any maintenance agreement, the City will require an up-front endowment or deposit to cover at least one year's maintenance of the monument to protect the City against future default.

Acceptance of this donation will be subject to the terms of the City Council policies and in alignment with the City Council-approved Upper Guadalupe River Master Plan and the goal of "integrating high impact public art and design throughout the community" in the City Council-approved Cultural Connection: San José's Cultural Plan.

EVALUATION AND FOLLOW-UP

Upon City Council-approved direction and negotiation of a donation agreement with the Peace Monument donor, the Administration will return to the City Council to recommend the approval of entering into a Donation Agreement in accordance with City Council-approved policies. Should any additional evaluation of project logistics result in changes to the nature or scope of the donation, labor costs, or impacts to City infrastructure, staff will provide a report back to City Council at the time of the donation agreement recommendation.

COST SUMMARY/IMPLICATIONS

The City will contribute approximately 20,638 sq. ft of parkland for the installation of the artwork and surrounding site improvements to accommodate the artwork. The potential valuation of the land is \$178,000. In accordance with Council Policy 1-17, the donor shall bear all costs associated with the Peace Monument, including design, engineering, fabrication, transport, site work (preparation/hardscape/landscape), utilities, permitting, inspection, installation, and related staff costs. The City shall not allocate General Fund resources for such purposes, ensuring that the donation reduces costs the City would otherwise incur.

If the City Council approves the authorization to negotiate a donation agreement, the Administration will return to the City Council at a later date with a recommended

agreement and corresponding budget actions to recognize and appropriate funds for staff and project costs.

COORDINATION

Staff from the Office of Mayor Matt Mahan, District 6 Council Office, and Department of Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services have been engaged in the project development since its inception. This memorandum has been coordinated with the City Attorney's Office, the City Manager's Budget Office, and the Parks, Recreation and Neighborhood Services Department.

PUBLIC OUTREACH

This memorandum will be posted on the City's Council Agenda website for the October 7, 2025 City Council meeting.

Project Coordinator Kimberly Mulcahy has taken the lead in organizing the community outreach efforts. In addition to hosting the community meeting and engaging directly with City departments, the Mayor's Office, and Council Districts 3 and 6, Kimberly Mulcahy has conducted targeted outreach to a range of local stakeholders. She has met with representatives of Little Italy, Sharks Sports & Entertainment, Guadalupe Park Conservancy, the Muwekma Ohlone community, the Rotary Club of San José, and nearby neighborhood associations. During these conversations, renderings and descriptions of the proposed Peace Monument have been shared to gather feedback and build alignment. To date, community and stakeholder receptivity to the project has been positive and supportive.

Beyond these direct engagements, the work's momentum has been amplified by artist Mario Chiodo's significant social media presence. With over 140,000 followers on Instagram, Mr. Chiodo has actively shared the design evolution and clay modeling process. Mrs. Mulcahy plans to sustain and expand this community outreach as the project advances.

Meetings held in conjunction with this project:

<u>Date</u>	<u>What</u>	<u>Purpose</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Convener</u>
8/28/24	Key stakeholder meeting	Project overview and design development	Online	Office of Mayor Matt Mahan
5/07/25	Public Meeting	Community input on monument project and design	Little Italy Museum	Project Coordinator
5/12/25	Key stakeholder meeting	Donor met with Muwekma Ohlone Tribal representatives to discuss design	Private	Donor
6/03/25	Public Meeting	Public Art Committee design approval	City Hall	San José Public Art Committee
8/20/25	Public Meeting	Parks and Recreation Commission	San José Fire Department Training Center and Emergency Operations Center	Parks, Recreation, and Neighborhood Services Department
9/15/25	Public Meeting	Arts Commission	City Hall	City Manager's Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs

COMMISSION RECOMMENDATION AND INPUT

This item was presented to the Public Art Committee, which reviewed and approved the concept design on June 3, 2025, and recommended the item as a donation to be reviewed by the Arts Commission. The Arts Commission reviewed the donation at its regularly scheduled meeting on September 15, 2025, and recommended that the City Council authorize the City Manager, or her designee, to negotiate a donation agreement to receive the Peace Monument, an artwork by artist Mario Chiodo from donor Diane Brandenburg, to be sited at Arena Green West in accordance with the City Council-approved Donation and Monument Policies.

CEQA

Not a Project, File No. PP17-002, Consultant services for design, study, inspection, or other professional services with no commitment to future action.

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Page 8

PUBLIC SUBSIDY REPORTING

This item does not include a public subsidy as defined in section 53083 or 53083.1 of the California Government Code or the City's Open Government Resolution.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jen Baker', is positioned above the printed name.

Jen Baker

Director

City Manager's Office of Economic
Development and Cultural Affairs

For questions, please contact Kerry Adams Hapner, Director of Cultural Affairs, City Manager's Office of Economic Development and Cultural Affairs at (408) 793-4333.

ATTACHMENT

Sculpture Renderings and Site Map

Attachment: Sculpture Rendering and Site Map

Rendering of proposed Peace Monument at Arena Green West



Front of Proposed Peace Monument



Back of Proposed Peace Monument



Proposed Area to be Impacted by the Artwork Installation at Arena Green West

