



City of Austin

Recommendation for Action

File #: 25-1088, **Agenda Item #:** 8.

6/5/2025

Posting Language

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with Raul Buitrago, d/b/a Wolf Council Productions LLC, in an amount not to exceed \$416,000 for artwork for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Lower-Level Pedestrian Crossings Art in Public Places Project. Funding: \$62,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining years of the agreement is contingent upon available funding in future budgets.

Lead Department

Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment.

Fiscal Note

Funding in the amount of \$62,000 is available in the Capital Budget of the Aviation Department. Funding for the remaining \$354,000 of this contract will be added as the construction phases begin.

For More Information:

Angela Means, Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music & Entertainment, 512-974-1624; Morgan Messick, Assistant Director, Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment, 512-974-7873.

Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:

In August 2024, the Art in Public Places (AIPP) Panel and Arts Commission approved the “Art in Public Places Sites and Opportunities Plan for Austin-Bergstrom International Airport,” which identified and scoped three phases of AIPP opportunities within the current Airport Expansion & Development Program (AEDP).

On April 7, 2025, the AIPP Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Lower-Level Pedestrian Crossings AIPP Project, naming Raul Buitrago, d/b/a Wolf Council Productions LLC, as the selected artist and Kemba Opio as the alternate for the \$416,000 commission. (Motion by Chair Lemmo second by Panel Member Davis; approved 5-0-0, with one vacancy and Arts Commission Liaison Maldonado absent).

On April 21, 2025, the Austin Arts Commission approved the selection process recommendation for the Austin-Bergstrom International Airport Lower-Level Pedestrian Crossings AIPP Project, naming Raul Buitrago, dba Wolf Council Productions LLC, as the selected artist and Kemba Opio as the alternate for the \$416,000 commission. (Motion by Vice Chair Schmalbach, second by Commissioner Houston; approved 6-0-1, with Commissioners Kracheni, Hussain, Gray, and Maldonado absent).

Additional Backup Information:

This commission is part of Phase II of the City’s AIPP initiative, implemented in collaboration with the Airport Expansion and Development Program (AEDP) at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport (AUS). Developed in partnership by the Office of Arts, Culture, Music, and Entertainment (ACME) and the Department of Aviation, the phased AIPP plan was approved by the Arts Commission in August 2024.

Phase II prioritizes the inclusion of Texas-based artists, building on the nationally focused Phase I. Of the seven commissions awarded in this phase, four were granted to Austin-based artists, including this project. Phase II continues the City's focus on elevating local voices while delivering innovative, meaningful public art experiences in civic infrastructure.

Artist Selection Process: Lower-Level Pedestrian Crossings AIPP Project

This project was part of a broader Phase II open Request for Qualifications (RFQ) process focused on Texas-based talent:

Application & Outreach:

- RFQ released: January 3, 2025
- Submission Deadline: February 2, 2025
- Promotion included City newsletters, PublicArtist.org, social media, and community outreach
- Artist information and pre-submittal meetings were held on January 22 and 23, 2025
- 195 total applications were received; 112 met the minimum qualifications

Panel Review & Interviews:

- The panel convened March 4, 2025, to review applications
- Finalist interviews occurred March 21, March 25, and April 1, 2025

Final Recommendation:

- Recommended Artist: Raul Buitrago - Austin, TX
- Alternate: Kemba Opio - Austin, TX

The recommendation was approved by the AIPP Panel on April 7 and affirmed by the Austin Arts Commission on April 21, 2025.

About the Artist

Raul Buitrago is a photographer, director, musician, and sound-artist based in Austin, Texas. His interdisciplinary practice is rooted in storytelling, using both visual and auditory mediums to highlight community resilience, cultural identity, and emotional depth. Buitrago's thoughtful and immersive approach makes him ideally positioned to activate the Lower-Level Pedestrian Crossing with an artwork that honors place and people alike.

Project Context Within the AUS AIPP Plan

This project is one of seven Phase II commissions within the AUS AIPP program. While Phase I focused on national artists, Phase II emphasizes Texas-based artists, particularly those living and working in Austin. Phase III will be reserved exclusively for Austin-based creatives.

This phased model:

- Ensures a balance of excellence and equity,
- Prioritizes meaningful engagement with local artists, and
- Aligns with the AEDP infrastructure timeline.

All commissions are expected to be completed by 2030, in time for the full opening of the new concourse and terminal expansions at AUS.