



# City of Austin

## Recommendation for Action

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**File #:** 26-1747, **Agenda Item #:** 2.

5/21/2026

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### **Posting Language**

Authorize negotiation and execution of an agreement with artist Jessica Bell for artwork for the St. John Site Redevelopment Art in Public Places Project for a total amount not to exceed \$235,000. Funding: \$235,000 is available in the Capital Budget of Austin Financial Services.

### **Lead Department**

Austin Arts, Culture, Music and Entertainment.

### **Fiscal Note**

Funding in the amount of \$235,000 is available in the Capital Budget of Austin Financial Services.

### **For More Information:**

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

### **Council Committee, Boards and Commission Action:**

On June 9, 2025, the Art in Public Places (AIPP) Panel approved the selection process recommendation for the St. John Site Redevelopment AIPP Project, naming Maxwell Emcays the recommended artist and Jessica Bell the alternate artist for the \$235,000 commission. (Motion by Kristi-Anne Shaer, Andrew Danziger seconded. Motion passed on a 3-0-0 vote).

On June 16, 2025, the Austin Arts Commission approved the AIPP Panel selection recommendation for the St. John Site Redevelopment AIPP Project, naming Maxwell Emcays the recommended artist and Jessica Bell the alternate artist for the \$235,000 commission. The item passed on consent. (Motion by Commissioner Zisman, Commissioner Schmalbach's second on an 8-0 vote with Commissioner Keys, Garza, and Kracheni absent).

### **Additional Backup Information:**

Austin Arts, Culture, Music and Entertainment (ACME) AIPP Program and Austin Financial Services sought to commission a Texas-based professional visual artist to design, fabricate, and install artwork for the St. John Site Redevelopment AIPP Project. The goal of the project is to commission Texas-based artists and/or artist teams who, in collaboration with City staff and community stakeholders, design artwork that integrates with the physical site.

The artwork should be relevant to the St. John Redevelopment Project and how it serves the community and conceptually accessible to staff and the local community. The artist will work in collaboration with the project team, stakeholders, and City staff to design and create artwork that adds additional value to the site. Austin Financial Services reviewed and provided input on the public art project outline prior to its approval by the AIPP Panel and Arts Commission.

On March 15, 2025, a Request for Qualifications was released to Texas-based artists aged 18 years or older who live and work in the State of Texas. Artist outreach included an in-person artist information meeting at the St. John Library Branch on February 11, 2025, and multiple online promotional postings to the AIPP website,

and AIPP and Cultural Arts Division newsletters and social media.

The total budget available for the project is \$235,000, inclusive of embedded artist time, design, insurance, and all fabrication and installation-related costs.

**Artist Selection:**

On April 11, 2025, the selection panel reviewed 29 applications and recommended six semi-finalists to submit conceptual proposals for the project. On May 30, 2025, Maxwell Emcays was named as the selected artist team, Jessica Bell as the first alternate artist, and Olaniyi Rasheed Akindiya as the second alternate artist for the \$235,000 commission, respectively. The AIPP Panel and the Arts Commission approved the selection process recommendation at their June 2025 meetings.

**Selection Panel Voting Panelists**

- Arielle Austin, artist
- Nailah Sankofa, artist
- Damon Moseley, artist

**Selection Panel Non-Voting Advisors**

- Raymond Castillo, community advisor
- Emilie Young, community advisor
- Dr. Patricia Alford, community advisor
- Carson Chapman, TBG partners
- Stephanie Lemmo, LA-N-D
- Callie Phillips, Greystar
- Christine Freundl - FSD Project Manager

**Selection Meeting Facilitators**

- Ryan Runcie, AIPP Coordinator
- Jaime Castillo, AIPP Program Manager

Due to the Council resolution directing staff to update the AIPP Ordinances, this contract authorization was put on hold while the review process took place. Staff are now seeking authorization for the contract.

**About the Artist:**

Jessica Bell is a recognized National Community and Public Art Artist specializing in large-scale, mixed-media, fiber, and metal sculpture. Her public art installations are located across the country. Her bold, colorful, and interactive work has earned her recognition through press, grants, and museum solo exhibitions.

With a strong foundation in arts education, including nearly two decades of experience teaching children and adults, Bell often incorporates community outreach and youth involvement into her projects. Her practice seamlessly blends expert craftsmanship, storytelling, and accessibility. Bell's ultimate goal is to create art that is not only visually impactful but also powerfully rooted in connection, culture, and shared experience.