

**REQUEST FOR ARTIST  
QUALIFICATIONS**

# RACCOON RIVER PARK PLAYGROUND

# PUBLIC ART SENSORY WALL PROJECT



# REQUEST FOR ARTIST QUALIFICATIONS RACCOON RIVER PARK PLAYGROUND PUBLIC ART SENSORY WALL PROJECT

City of West Des Moines, Iowa  
Public Art Commission Opportunity

## ABOUT WEST DES MOINES

The City of West Des Moines, Iowa, is a rapidly growing community located within the Des Moines/West Des Moines Metropolitan Area. West Des Moines has a wide array of amenities and services and provides residents with broad access to a high quality of life. A recent ETC Institute survey found that 94% of West Des Moines residents are satisfied with the quality of life, and overall satisfaction with City services is 42% above the national average.

Some notable facts about the community include:

- 2020 population was 68,723
- 8th largest city in Iowa
- \$3.6 billion worth of development in the last five years
- More than 1,500 acres of parkland and open space, two aquatic centers, a softball complex, nature lodge, archery range, amphitheater, boathouse, dog park, cemetery, and a multi-use sports and event space facility
- 69-mile trail system that connects to the Central Iowa Trail system

See more at: [www.wdm.iowa.gov](http://www.wdm.iowa.gov)

West Des Moines aims to be a welcoming community that provides services and opportunities to all residents and visitors regardless of ability. Some notable facts about children with special needs in and around West Des Moines include:

- 39,000 children are affected by a special healthcare need
- 1 in 4 children has been diagnosed with autism
- 1,500 students are enrolled in the West Des Moines Community Schools Special Education program; an additional 2,000 students have 504 Plans

## WEST DES MOINES PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

The vision of the West Moines Public Art Program is the creation of a diverse collection of public works of art of high aesthetic and intellectual quality and excellence along with a program that promotes cultural expression and artistic appreciation. At the heart of the aspiration for public art in West Des Moines is the wish for an authentic, rich, and diverse arts culture that is seen and understood as uniquely arising from the community – an arts culture that benefits and enriches all those who live in, work in, and visit West Des Moines.

The mission of the West Des Moines Public Art Program is to create a city with enriching public spaces incorporating public works of art that offer moments of discovery and opportunities for reflection and growth—a city with public art woven into the fine-grain detail of the public infrastructure. The Public Art Program champions excellence in art, design, architecture, and landscape. The Public Art Program and Collection should be the most visible symbols of West Des Moines' commitment to creativity, diversity of ideas and expression, and socio-cultural multiplicity. A creative city provides inclusive and equitable environments for its residents, business communities, and visitors, extending opportunities for life-long learning and community connection.

The primary goals of the Public Art Program are to develop an aesthetically interesting environment, to integrate public works of art into public spaces, and to promote tourism and the economic vitality of West Des Moines through the enhancement of public spaces.

See more at: [www.wdm.iowa.gov/PublicArt](http://www.wdm.iowa.gov/PublicArt)

## ABOUT THIS OPPORTUNITY

### Raccoon River Park Playground Public Art Sensory Wall Project Art Statement

Raccoon River Park, located at 2500 Grand Avenue in West Des Moines, Iowa, was established in the late 1990s and has become the city's most visible and highly used park. Park amenities include a 232-acre lake, beach, shelters, boathouse, archery facility, dog park, nature lodge, multi-use trail, fishing pier, softball and soccer complexes, and large playground. Two public artworks, *Even Water* and *Aqua Strata*, can be found in the park and were commissioned by the Public Arts Advisory Commission within the past four years to inform park users of effective water quality practices and their impact on the natural environment. Raccoon River Park is heavily used by thousands of visitors each year. Because of this, the original playground equipment began to show signs of age and wear and came to the end of its useful life when it was removed in the fall of 2022.

A new, inclusive playground is currently being constructed, and plans feature improvements that will welcome children and families of all abilities to learn, play, and grow together. The playground will enable all children to develop physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally. A **commissioned sensory wall that incorporates public art** will be a focal point of the playground. The sensory wall will encourage visitors of all ages and development levels to feel comfortable, relaxed, and welcome in the park.

The West Des Moines Public Arts Advisory Commission and Raccoon River Park Playground Public Art Work Group want every person who experiences the artwork to feel invited and welcomed to the park. It is of the utmost importance that the public art sensory wall is playful and accessible for and to all. The Commission and Work Group want the public art sensory wall to be part of a calming space that provides a respite from other playground activities. In addition, the artwork should complement and relate to the natural elements of the park.

The project will include a permanent commissioned work of sensory art to be sited on public property within the confines of the Raccoon River Park Playground site plan [see attached renderings]. The work of art will be a single piece made up of multiple interactive elements.

**The total budget for the project is \$75,000.** This not-to-exceed total must cover all design fees, fabrication, installation, site visits, and other related expenses as defined by contract.

## ELIGIBILITY

### Invited artist or artist team:

- Must have completed one commissioned outdoor public work of art of \$25,000 or more
- Must show an understanding of neurodiverse populations and accessibility design best practices
- Must demonstrate the ability to work within playground safety standards and guidelines
- Can reside anywhere in the continental United States
- Must be able to travel to West Des Moines if selected

## SELECTION & PROJECT CRITERIA

### Selection of a finalist or finalists will be based on the following criteria:

- Quality of letter of interest
- Quality of work samples
- Ability of artist/team to complete the project based on bio and prior work experience

## SELECTION & PROJECT CRITERIA CONT.

Approval of artwork proposed by the selected artist will be based on the following criteria:

- Fulfills the Raccoon River Park Playground Public Art Statement [see above]
- Must be a single artwork with multiple sensory elements; interactive and engaging with kinetic, tactile, and colorful elements
- Must adhere to current ASTM and CPSC playground safety standards and guidelines
- Must be low maintenance and durable, able to withstand weather conditions
- Must be site-specific; installed on public property within the confines of the Raccoon River Park Playground site plan
- Installed on pre-poured frost [3'6" deep] footing to be provided by City's playground contractor; exact footing location and dimensions to be coordinated with City and contractor prior to final design proposal
- Includes a high level of community engagement that is incorporated into the development of a final proposal and/or the artwork itself

## SELECTION PROCESS OVERVIEW

This is an open request for qualifications for artists who meet the eligibility requirements. Artists' materials will be pre-screened to ensure all applicants meet eligibility requirements. The Work Group will review eligible applications and select up to three finalists/finalist teams to participate in an interview. Interviews will be held virtually. Further interview information will be provided to the finalists.

Upon completion of an interview, one artist/artist team will be commissioned to develop, fabricate, and install the permanent artwork. Additional requirements will be outlined in instructions to finalists. Please see the following timeline for further details.

### Work Group Members

Kelly Kunzler	Least of These Foundation	Melissa Clarke-Wharff	Co-Founder, Can Play
Rachel Bussan	WDM Library, Neurodivergent	Diane Boyd	PAAC Commissioner
Kristine Dreckman	Parent of Neurodivergent child	Mahesh Mathrubatham	PAAC Commissioner
Ryan Penning	WDM P&R, Assistant Director		

## REQUIRED SUBMISSION MATERIALS

In digital format only.

Provide the following in a single PDF document:

- Contact information for artist/artist team members
- One to three-page letter describing interest in the project and approach to design; please include statements addressing eligibility criteria, community engagement, and other project criteria
- One-page biographical information or resume for lead artist [include one paragraph for each team member if artist-led team]
- Three references [contact information only] for recently completed projects
- Document listing 2-3 work samples that have been completed within the last 5 years; must include a brief description, budget, and up to 5 images for each work sample

**NOTE: Do not submit a visual proposal for sensory wall artwork at this time**

## PROPOSED SCHEDULE

[Schedule may be subject to change]

November 14, 2022	RFQ announced
January 9, 2023	RFQ submission deadline
January 10-13, 2023	Work Group reviews and selects finalists
Week of January 16, 2023	Finalist interviews [held virtually]
January 26, 2023	Contract with selected artist/team approved by Public Arts Advisory Commission
February 6, 2023	Contract with selected artist/team approved by City Council
February-March 2023	Final design developed by artist/team; approved by Work Group
March 23, 2023	Final design proposal approved by Public Arts Advisory Commission
March-April 2023	Design development commences; once approved, fabrication commences
October 2023	Project installation complete

Please submit all RFQ materials via email to Allison Ullestad, Arts, Culture, and Enrichment Supervisor, [Allison.Ullestad@wdm.iowa.gov](mailto:Allison.Ullestad@wdm.iowa.gov). Include "Raccoon River Park Playground Public Art Sensory Wall Project" in the subject line.

All materials must be received by **4:00 p.m. CST on Monday, January 9, 2023**. No submissions will be accepted after this time.

## PHOTO DESCRIPTIONS

- 1 Playground sensory area; sensory wall left blank for illustrative purposes only
- 2 Sensory area playground equipment
- 3 Overall plan of playground
- 4 View of playground looking northwest
- 5 Raccoon River Park; playground area is circled
- 6 Raccoon River Park; playground area is circled
- 7 Raccoon River Park; playground area is circled
- 8 Softball Complex
- 9 Fishing Pier
- 10 Boathouse
- 11 Nature Lodge
- 12 Multi-use trail
- 13 Archery Facility
- 14 Dog Park
- 15 Even Water public art
- 16 Aqua Strata public art participant paintings
- 17 Overhead photo of Even Water public art
- 18 Aqua Strata public art in Nature Lodge



**SENSORY ART WALL**



**CHILL SPINNER**



**COZY DOME**



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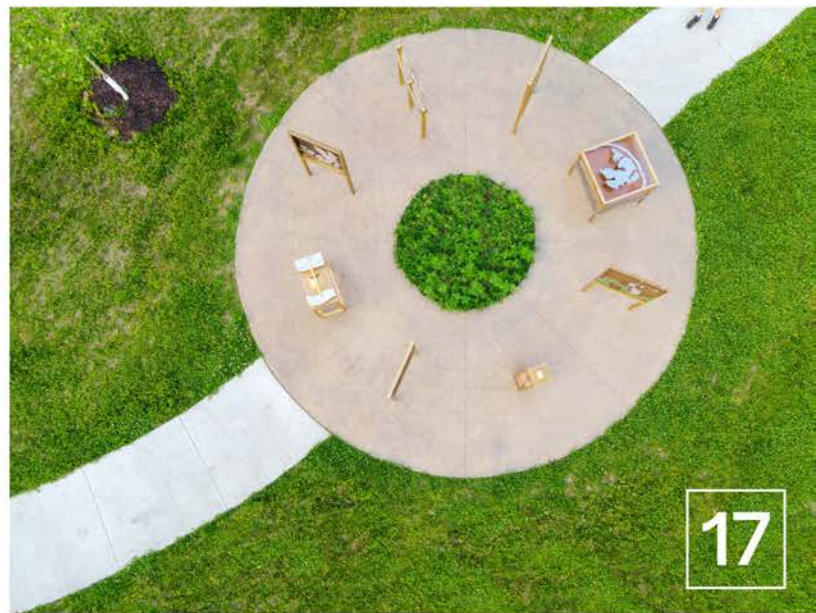
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