

Wooster Square Monument Committee Public Art Project Call to Artists

In June of 2020, the City of New Haven removed the statue of Christopher Columbus from Wooster Square Park. Shortly thereafter, Mayor Justin Elicker formed the Wooster Square Monument Committee, a diverse group comprised of neighborhood residents, members of various Italian American Societies and representatives of the City of New Haven. The Committee of 25 members first met in August 2020 and adopted a Mission Statement, Guiding Principles and Process it would follow. The Mission Statement states: “the goal of the committee appointed by Mayor Elicker is to determine an appropriate monument to honor the contributions of Italian American heritage in New Haven. The committee will research and develop the form and identity for a monument, statue, or other symbol of appropriate dimension and stature that represents the Italian American experience and placed atop the existing or, if necessary modified pedestal in Wooster Square Park.”

In September 2020 the Committee published a Request for Ideas inviting members of the Greater New Haven community to submit ideas for this public art project. By October 12, 2020, the last date for submission of ideas, over 100 people responded. Over the next weeks and months, the Committee reviewed every submission, categorized them and began discussions which led to the conclusion that no single person or historical figure would be a suitable replacement for the Columbus statue. Instead, the Committee, inspired by many of the submissions decided to commission a public art installation that tells the story of Italian immigration to New Haven and Wooster Square, as well as the contributions Italian immigrants and their descendants have made to the City of New Haven. This story will be told through the use of four (4) metal fabricated storyboards set around the foundation in a garden setting. Both sides of the storyboards will be used to tell the story through the use of factual written history and images (photographs) contributed by members of the New Haven community. The Committee has prepared a draft of the story which is attached as Exhibit A. The Committee further decided that what will sit atop the foundation be directly tied to the story of the Italian Immigrant experience and the sculpture that will tell this story accurately be left up to the artist.

The committee looks forward to reviewing your ideas for this public art project, having meaningful and open discussions and ultimately awarding this project to the person or persons who best exemplify our goal.

Wooster Square Monument Committee

Introduction

The City of New Haven, via the New Haven Parks Department, New Haven Historic District Commission, New Haven Board of Alders and the Wooster Square Monument Committee, invites artists to apply to create designs for The Story of Italian Immigration to New Haven and the contributions of the immigrant community to New Haven and Wooster Square, in Wooster Square Park on the site where the statue of Christopher Columbus once stood.

Call released: Monday April 1, 2021

Deadline for questions: Wednesday April 30, 2021, noon EST

Deadline for responses: Thursday May 31, 2021, 11:59pm EST

Project Context

This Call to Artists opportunity is part of the creation of The Story of Italian Immigration in New Haven and Wooster Square, in Wooster Square Park. The Wooster Square Monument Committee is accepting qualifications from interested artists with the intent to contract with the artist(s) for the design of an interpretive art element for the project. The purpose for the request for qualifications is to evaluate artist(s) ability to design, either alone or collaboratively, a sculpture to sit atop the existing modified foundation and incorporating four panels telling the story of Italian Immigration to the City of New Haven and Wooster Square, in a garden setting around the foundation.

This work of public art aims to honor Italian immigrants who made the choice to leave their home and begin a new life of hope and dreams in America, and further honor their contributions to New Haven and the area known as Wooster Square.

The Wooster Square Monument Committee is currently seeking to collaborate with representatives of the sub-committee to redesign the interpretive art element depicting the story of Italian Immigration to New Haven and Wooster Square that is either a new concept or based off the existing concept. The story will begin with “The Voyage” and continue on to modern day New Haven and Wooster Square. It will tell the story of hard work, determination, sacrifice, discrimination, family and faith. The story will be told on four panels, using both sides, set around the existing foundation. On the panels will be both a written narrative and local family photographs. The panels will be set around the foundation, in a garden setting. The goal is to create a space of respite, where neighbors and visitors can socialize, and the community and students can learn. We are asking the artist to design a sculpture to sit atop the existing modified foundation that reflects the Italian American Immigrant Experience. The sculpture **may not** be of any single person or historical figure. An interpretive design of the project can be seen in the photo marked Appendix A. The story to be told on the panels can be read on Appendix A.

The Wooster Square Monument Committee and the City of New Haven are anticipating a sculpture or functional work of public art that honors the hard work and sacrifice of New Haven’s Italian American community. We hope for an engaging work of art that responds to the landscape and the community of Wooster Square and New Haven and invokes the spirit and influence of Italian Americans.

Wooster Square Monument Committee Timeline and Process

| RFQ Timeline | |
|--|---|
| Monday March 1, 2021 | RFQ released |
| Wednesday March 31, 2021 | Deadline for questions |
| Thursday April 1, 2021 | Deadline to respond to the RFQ, midnight EST local |
| May 2021 | Selection Committee reviews submissions, interviews with selected artists/teams; specific Date and time TBD (local and non-local artists may interview remotely) |
| May/June 2021 | Artist/team contract executed |
| Proposed Project Timeline (subject to change) | |
| Summer 2021 | Artist/team design phase |
| Fall 2021 | Fabrication and installation |

Budget

The total budget for the Wooster Square Monument Committee public art project is \$250,000. The budget includes the artist's fee and all of the artist's costs associated with the proposal, design, fabrication, installation and contingency. A preliminary itemized budget is required to apply but is subject to change until the full committee approves the artist/team's final design.

Coordinating with the City Parks Department and City Plan Department, the artist will manage fabrication, oversight, and installation of the artwork. The artist will also support publicity and outreach associated with the project and be responsible for quality control throughout fabrication and installation.

Who Should Apply / Eligibility

This Call to Artists is open to professional artists. The artist should work in three-dimensional design, installation, historical interpretation, etc. Artists are expected to have completed prior outdoor art projects or installation. Artists and designers of diverse backgrounds and/or who have cultural, historic, and/or artistic connection to Italian American history are strongly encouraged to apply.

Non-Discrimination

The Wooster Square Monument Committee will not discriminate on the basis of race, color, sex, age, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, ancestry, or disability, nor will it consider projects that discriminate on these attributes.

Project Site

This public work of art will be located on the south side of Wooster Square Park in New Haven, Connecticut, on and around the existing modified foundation. Please refer to site map marked Appendix A.

Artist Responsibilities

The selected artist is responsible for:

- Conducting site and historical research as needed
- Coordinating with the landscape architect who you have collaborated with or has been selected by the committee to work collaboratively with the artist, and the professional fabricator and retained by the Committee to determine appropriate materials, scaling and siting of the Artwork
- Conduct 2-3 meetings with the Committee and city staff, as needed, to present concept and design development

Selection Process

The members of the sub-committee of the Wooster Square Monument Committee will review the submitted qualifications. The three selected finalists will have the opportunity to visit the site and meet with the Wooster Square Monument Committee. Finalist may receive a modest stipend to develop a design for the project and deliver a proposal of composition, concept statement and process. The Monument Committee will conduct a review of the final design. One artist or artist team will be selected to realize their proposal.

Selection Criteria

The Committee will review proposals using the following criteria:

- Does the artist's Statement of Interest express particular attention to this project, connecting this project to their past and future work?
- Does the artist's Initial Project Concept Narrative respond to the design goals and cultural context as described in this RFQ?
- Does the artist's concept include materials that are durable, permanent, easily maintained, safe and reflective of the time period (1870-1930)?
- Does the artist/s portfolio demonstrate a strong, high quality artistic vision?
- Does the artist have experience in comparable projects and artistic disciplines?
- Does the artist have experience working with communities and with diverse groups of people?
- Is the artist/s previous work or proposed project sustainable, secure and technically feasible?
- Has the artist's previous work been completed within the timeline and budget and is the artist able to work within the Committees timeline and budget?

How to Respond to the RFQ

To respond to this Call to Artists, prepare your application materials and submit your written proposal via email to woostersquaremc@gmail.com. **Please note that we are not requesting design work at this time; you will be asked to communicate your artistic concept through a written proposal only.** The following files are required:

- **Artistic Description**
Please provide background information including s bio, resume/CV, or other information that best highlights the strength of the applicant. PDF, DOC or DOCX file types only; maximum five files.

- **Statement of Interest (500 words or fewer)**
Narrative describing the artist's interest in this project, connecting this project to the artist's past and future work
- **Initial Project Concept Narrative (500 words or fewer)**
Narrative describing an initial artistic concept for this public work of art (including dimensions, materials, etc.)
- **Relevant Work Samples**
Up to 5 relevant work samples and a numbered, annotated image list with title, media, dimensions, location, brief description, date of work, project budget, and project partners if applicable. Accepted file types: JPEG, TIFF, PNG, AVI, WMV, or MP4
- **References**
Please include contact information for up to three (3) professional references for the artist. PDF, DOC or DOCX file types only.
- **Itemized Budget**
Please provide and initial budget of your project expenses using the template provided in Appendix B. If price proposal is based on time spent, please provide your hourly rate. ODF, DOC, DOCX, XLS, or XLSX file types only.
- **Contact**
Please contact Bill Iovanne, Jr., Laura Florio Luzzi or Rev. Harlon Dalton with any questions: woostersquaremc@gmail.com.

Appendix A -1 (The Story)

This is an outline of what we envision for the monument. Four vertical panels made of metal, arranged around the pedestal perhaps at each corner. The lowered pedestal would have a figure or symbol mounted at the top.

There would be a hard scape setting around the immediate area surrounding the pedestal for easier maintenance and accessibility to the panels that are designed to be viewed at eye level. A garden will surround the area with simple benches placed along the perimeter to encourage visitors to remain for quiet reflection.

Each panel would contain a simple narrative and archival photographs will be used throughout because of the detail they possess. The narrative follows a simple storyline from the voyage to becoming proud Italian Americans.

Panel 1, Side one. The Voyage

They came from the ancient towns and villages of Southern Italy, filled with hope, fears and a belief in the promise of America. Here are men, women and children leaving everything behind to live their lives in this land of opportunity. They travelled in steerage and withstood terrible conditions in order to seek their dream, but the dream was deferred because they were met with prejudice and discrimination. In the end, they prevailed because they worked hard and dedicated themselves to creating a place to call home.

Images:

Ship

Manifest

Map of southern Italy

Ellis Island

Immigrant images

Panel 2, Side one. The Neighborhood

They settled in neighborhoods throughout New Haven close to the workplaces that were available to them. They lived in tenements and small apartments that provided only the basic amenities. Somehow, they managed to make these places home, and surrounded themselves with familiar reminders of the things they left behind. They clustered together and supported each other. Mutual aid societies were formed to provide assistance in times of need, and the family was at the center of their lives.

Images:

Vintage New Haven neighborhoods

Typical buildings of the era

Society founders' photos

Fig tree/gardens

Panel 3, Side one. Working

They found employment in all of the local industries. Men and women worked long hours under difficult conditions in order to provide for their families. They worked in dress and shirt shops, manufactured clocks, corsets and hardware, quarried and carved stone, and provided necessary services. Their strong work ethic became the foundation for the growth of manufacturing throughout the area in the early twentieth century.

Images:

Strouse Adler

Yale colleges

Women in dress shop, Sargent Manufacturing, Clock Co., Labor and union

Franklin St. fire

Men on strike

Panel 4, Side one. Entrepreneurs

They created opportunities to provide goods and services within their neighborhoods. Small family-operated stores offered familiar foods and all the necessities in a friendly setting.

There were grocery and fruit markets, butcher shops, tailors and bakeries, macaroni factories and service providers. Within the first generation the immigrants had created business enterprises that continue to this day. As entrance into the professions became possible for the children, they began to provide medical, legal and financial services within their own community. Hard work and a desire to succeed created a productive environment.

Images:

Local owners' stores

Pepe's/ Sally's

Pastry shops

Fox on Park soda

Macaroni factory

Panel 1, Side two. Becoming a Community

The growth of the neighborhoods offered opportunities for religious societies to be established that provided links back to their homes in Italy. Other organizations were formed to foster pride in their Italian heritage. In 1895 St Michael, the first ethnic Italian church was established to minister to the religious and social needs of the Wooster Square community, followed by St Anthony in the Hill neighborhood. They recognized that honoring their cultural and religious traditions was an important aspect in the creation of their identity here. Everyone provided assistance for those in need and they took care of their own.

Images:

St Michael/St Anthony

Street festa

First Communion/May crowning

Organizational symbols

Panel 2, Side two. Learning to be an American

Neighborhood schools became the primary sources for the education and Americanization of the children and adults as well. The schools were the means of integration into the cultural, historical, and political environment in which they now lived. Within the first generation of residence here, boys and girls were seeking opportunities to enter the professions and gained admission into colleges and universities. They also served as community leaders and public servants and participated in all aspects of government. Young men and women proudly served their country in the armed forces. The American dream was beginning to become a reality.

Images:

New Haven school photos

Graduation photos eighth grade/high school/college

Americanization class photo

Political events

Panel 3, Side two. Being an Italian American

They developed a unique, blended community that became the foundation for our current definition of the Italian American.

The fusion of the traditions and customs of the old world with our American culture and ideals has become their identifying characteristic. Love of family, respect for the past, hard work, and fulfilling the promise of their future in America became the hallmarks of our modern-day Italian Americans. This is the end of the voyage that began 150 years ago, and the beginning of a new opportunity for us to carry their aspirations forward so that future generations will continue to enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Images:

Holiday family celebrations

Family gatherings

Italian/American flag

Panel 4, Side two. Wooster Square

Wooster Square today is a neighborhood rich in tradition with an appreciation of its unique place in history. It is a symbolic bridge between the old and the new and it continues to be the spiritual and emotional home to Italian Americans from throughout the region.

The promise of the American dream still lies ahead for many who would aspire to participate in it, just as the Italians did almost 150 years ago. The mosaic of America grows richer with each succeeding generation of immigrants who come to our shores seeking freedom and opportunity.

Images:

Cherry trees,

Wooster Place home,

Wooster St arch,

Children playing in the park

Newly arrived immigrants

Appendix B – Budget Template

Please itemize your project expenses using the template below or something similar. The City and the Committee requires that total project costs will be less than or equal to \$250,000.

| Budget Item | Dollar Amount |
|--|----------------------|
| Design, including models, maquette's, etc. | |
| Materials | |
| Fabrication | |
| Installation | |
| Documentation | |
| Project management/administration | |
| Public presentation & policy materials (artist talk) | |
| Artist fee | |
| Insurance, as needed | |
| Subcontractors | |
| Other expense: | |
| Other expense: | |
| Total project cost | |
| | |
| | |

Explanation of other expenses: