



City of Culver City

Staff Report

File #: 26-763, **Version:** 1

Item #: A-2

CAC - ACTION ITEM: (1) Consideration of the CAC Public Art Subcommittee's Recommendation Regarding an "Architecture as Art" Proposal at 9810-9814 Washington Boulevard by Brooks Scarpa Huber on Behalf of Rethink Culver, LLC.; (2) Review, Discuss, and Provide Comments; and, (3) Make a Motion to Accept the CAC Public Art Subcommittee's Recommendation.

Meeting Date: April 21, 2026

Contact Person/Dept: Sam Lee / Office of Economic and Cultural Development

Phone Number: (310) 253-6001

Fiscal Impact: Yes ☐ No ☒

General Fund: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Hearing: ☐

Action Item: ☒

Attachments: Yes ☐ No ☒

Public Notification: Meetings and Agendas - Cultural Affairs Commission (04/16/26)

Department Approval: Sally Unsworth, Cultural Affairs Manager (04/16/26)

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommends that the Cultural Affairs Commission (1) Considers the CAC Public Art Subcommittee's Recommendation Regarding an "Architecture as Art" proposal at 9810-9814 Washington Boulevard by Brooks Scarpa Huber on Behalf of Rethink Culver, LLC.; (2) Review, Discuss, and Provide Comments; (3) Make a Motion to Accept the CAC Public Art Subcommittee's Recommendation.

BACKGROUND

"Architecture as Art" was approved by the City Council in 1995 as an option in fulfilling the City's public art requirement for tenant improvement projects (exceeding \$250,000) and new development projects (in excess of \$500,000). Specific language was added under Sections §15.06.165 and §15.06.170 of the City's Public Art Ordinance #2013-003 to include this component. In summary, these criteria state that the architect shall be substantially recognized in the art world; the underlying concept of the architecture shall be expressive of high artistic merit and extend beyond the utilitarian; the materials and craftsmanship shall be of high quality; and, the architecture shall meet all the general criteria of Section §15.06.130 et seq. for placement of artwork on private property. Detailed procedures for approving Architecture as Art are also included in the ordinance.

DISCUSSION

In February 2026, Staff were successful in procuring a full panel with two commercial Culver City architects (who are also Culver City residents), one visual artist, one public art administrator, and one general professional. The revised proposal, evaluation guidelines, scoresheet, and the APPP ordinance were provided to each panelist two weeks in advance of the scheduled review meeting. The Professional Review Panel (Panel) was comprised of the following:

- Nelson Algaze, Founding Principal & CEO, SAA INTERIORS+ARCHITECTURE
- Richard Berliner, Principal, Berliner Architects
- Katy Krantz, Multidisciplinary Artist & Former Culver City Artist Laureate
- Naomi Okuyama, Santa Monica Cultural Affairs Supervisor
- Meghan Pressman, Managing Director/CEO, Center Theatre Group

After thorough independent review of the proposal materials and consideration of the stated scoring criteria, each Panelist submitted their own scores privately to City staff. The Panelists's individual scores were aggregated and resulted in an average of **47.2 points out of a total of 100 possible points** based on the following four scoring components:

- Conceptual Development (up to 25 points)
- Innovative Materiality (up to 25 points)
- Spatial & Experiential Integration (up to 25 points)
- Contextual Integration (up to 25 points)

On Thursday, March 12, 2026, City staff and the five members of the Panel convened in-person, along with the Brooks Scarpa Huber team (Architect Team). The detailed proposal was presented to the Panel by the Architect Team. The Panel asked clarifying questions and discussed the project in greater detail with the Architect Team. Then the Panel met privately with City staff to discuss the proposal and make their final recommendations.

The Panel ultimately rejected the proposal because it did not meet the review criteria outlined in the municipal code and in the accompanying evaluative scoring criteria provided.

Some comments from the panelists are paraphrased below for context of their determination.

- The development is visually appealing and thoughtfully designed. However, when evaluated against the Ordinance criteria, the artistic component is not clearly expressed. While the architecture is strong, it does not fully read as art within the context of an Architecture as Art proposal.
- There are many examples where architecture successfully rises to the level of art through clear integration and collaboration. In this case, elements such as the screens and louvers are interesting but do not clearly function as distinct artistic features. The proposal could benefit from a more pronounced gesture that differentiates artistic intent from functional design.
- The written narrative is compelling and presents an engaging vision. However, that strength is not fully realized in the presentation materials. There is also concern that approving this

proposal could set a precedent that lowers the threshold for future projects.

- A key concern is the project's civic presence and public engagement. The design appears primarily oriented toward residents, and features like the staircase may not generate the anticipated level of public interaction. Additionally, limited visibility and proximity to existing destinations may reduce its broader impact on pedestrian activity.

On Tuesday, March 31, 2026, a Special Meeting of the Cultural Affairs Commission's Public Art Subcommittee was held to review the Panel's recommendation. The Subcommittee members agreed with the Panelist's assessment that the proposal should be rejected based on the Criteria for Approving Architecture as Art (Sections §15.06.165 and §15.06.170 of the Art in Public Places Ordinance). The Subcommittee is now advancing that recommendation to the full Cultural Affairs Commission for approval.

FISCAL ANALYSIS

Given that there already exists an Art in Public Places requirement associated with the pending development and governed by options outline in the City's municipal code, there is not a direct fiscal impact other than staff time devoted to guiding the process.

RECOMMENDED MOTIONS

That the Cultural Affairs Commission:

1. Consider the Professional Review Panel and Public Art Subcommittee Recommendations to Reject the Architecture as Art proposal; and,
2. Review, discuss and provide comments; and,
3. Make a motion and approve.