

City of Richmond, Virginia

Public Art for Community Gardens Finalists

O'Keefe, Barry  
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Submitted: Apr 4 2022 4:29PM

GATEWAY LOCATIONS

The images included below are intended only to indicate the approximate scale and location of the gateway structure at each site. The final placement and design of these structures is the responsibility of the recipient of the artwork in question.

The approximate scale of gateway structures and possible locations of these structures is the responsibility of the recipient of the artwork in question.



Evaluations

Overall Rating

82.71

Rating Method: Cumulative

Range: 0 - 100

76

Charles Caldwell  
Apr 7 2022 10:09AM

Artistic Excellence: 19, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 8, Number of functional needs incorporated: 4, Budget completeness and accuracy: 7, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 9, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 5, Community engagement plan: 23, Tool shed security plans: 1

- 1. Gateway
- 2. Tool storage?
- 3. Seating

Impressive and sounds sturdy"

84

**Maggie Small**

Apr 6 2022 3:10PM

Artistic Excellence: 19, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 9, Number of functional needs incorporated: 9, Budget completeness and accuracy: 9, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 9, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 5, Community engagement plan: 19, Tool shed security plans: 5

*"Thorough and achievable vision and plan."*

89

**Matt Lively**

Apr 6 2022 5:54PM

Artistic Excellence: 24, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 9, Number of functional needs incorporated: 7, Budget completeness and accuracy: 10, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 10, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 5, Community engagement plan: 21, Tool shed security plans: 3

*"Super thorough. Trust his work and collaborators."*

84

**Ilesha Adu-Darko**

Apr 7 2022 6:08AM

Artistic Excellence: 20, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 8, Number of functional needs incorporated: 5, Budget completeness and accuracy: 7, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 10, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 5, Community engagement plan: 24, Tool shed security plans: 5

*"Very close to the allotted budget so would be worried about the potential overage.*

*Very solid proposal. I especially appreciate the projected timeline as well."*

56

**Duron Chavis**

Apr 7 2022 11:05AM

Artistic Excellence: 24, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 9, Community engagement plan: 23

94

**Randee Humphrey**

Apr 7 2022 11:49AM

Artistic Excellence: 25, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 10, Number of functional needs incorporated: 8, Budget completeness and accuracy: 8, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 8, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 5, Community engagement plan: 25, Tool shed security plans: 5

*"I really value the artist's clear intention to begin the project by conducting a deep investigation of the site and its relationship to the community. The artist's community engagement plan is the most solid and well-defined of all the proposals.*

*The artist has built a relationship with sub-contractors during previous collaborations and I have confidence in their assessments of the scope and budget for their expertise.*

*The artist has specified how the overall concept might be adapted for any of the three locations, so there seems to be built into the concept a degree of flexibility regarding function and final scope. I have confidence in the choice of materials and the prediction of low maintenance requirements.*

*Finally, I like the focus on Richmond's historical use of cast iron and how the sculptural quality of the gateway can be a defining expression of the garden's personality and community character."*

96

Kate Rivara

Apr 7 2022 1:39PM

Artistic Excellence: 25, Enhances garden's aesthetic experience: 10, Number of functional needs incorporated: 8, Budget completeness and accuracy: 10, Installation plan completeness and appropriateness: 10, Easy and cost-effective maintenance: 4, Community engagement plan: 24, Tool shed security plans: 5

## Community Garden Finalists

### 1. List your first, second and third choice for the garden you would prefer to work with.

- 1: Broad Rock
- 2: Alice Fitz
- 3: Charles Gilpin

### 2. Describe your project.

I believe that a successful response to this call demands a high level of site specificity. In my past work for Richmond neighborhoods, my design process has always begun with a deep investigation of the chosen site. Additionally, I believe that meaningful community engagement must be a conversation that can actually influence the trajectory of the design. Therefore the designs I am presenting in this proposal are necessarily preliminary, but all possible variations will be structured around 3 key elements: a gateway, storage, and seating

Each of these 3 elements will be produced using hand carved patterns made in wood, and cast in iron: providing a visual link that unifies different functional elements of the garden. The language of cast iron relief is modular: allowing for design elements to be repeated, remixed, and re-used in different ways. I propose to use this language to create a gateway, storage and seating at different locations across each garden site, unifying the site into a single aesthetic experience.

#### 1. Gateway

I propose to create a beautiful and functional gateway structure for my assigned garden site, drawing inspiration from Richmond's iconic cast-iron porches. This gateway will be located to maximize the visibility of the garden to pedestrian and vehicle traffic, and provide a clear visual invitation and welcome to the site. Intricate relief carvings cast in iron will present a tactile and visual experience that tells a story about the history, identity and priorities of the site, to be identified through an intentional and thorough community engagement process. Carvings may reference important plant species, historical context, values and aspirations of each gardening community. Carved lettering will be included above the central entryway to help increase the visibility and legibility of the site as a community space. Gardens are often defined by low-lying elements, which can be difficult to see and experience from a distance. The verticality of a gateway has unique potential to create an iconic visual reference point for the site. The gateway will feature a shallow alcove, framed by cast iron ornament designed to function as venues for community messages, offering neighbors a reason and opportunity to stop and linger, and welcoming all visitors into a dialogue with the space, and with each other.

#### 2. Shed

The central panel of the gateway will also be used as the facade of a shed designed to meet the storage needs of the assigned site. The cast iron facade will unify the storage space with the visual identity of the site defined by the gateway. A cast iron gate will allow the shed to be closed and securely locked to protect valuable tools and materials. The remaining 3 walls of the shed will be constructed from cedar siding affixed to a steel frame, with recycled aluminum roofing. The durable metal frame will be securely anchored to a poured concrete slab.

#### 3. Seating

Seating for each site will be designed using modular cast iron forms. Each bench will consist of 2 cast iron sides, connected by cedar boards. This is a time-tested approach to constructing garden furniture, which will be

approached with creative, custom forms that unify the bench designs with the gateway and storage shed. At least two custom benches will be produced for each site, but up to 4 could be easily produced with minimal additions to the project budget to meet the seating needs of each site.

#### SITE SPECIFICS

Alice Fitz

The has an existing path and perimeter fence, with the main entrance at the east corner. There is potential at this site to integrate the central archway into the existing perimeter fence. This site has very limited shade, and so an enclosed gateway with ample shade would be ideal here.

Charles Gilpin

The northeast entrance to the site is the ideal location for a gateway. as the southern entrance is very narrow. Existing seating is in disrepair. Additional benches will likely need to be produced for this site.

Broad Rock

The main pathway meets the sidewalk in two locations. At the west of the site there is greater visibility to pedestrians and vehicles, and more space to position a gateway without disrupting or crowding existing features. There is potential to integrate an archway with an existing trellis above the main path.

Because there are existing shade structures, shade trees, and water catchment structures at this site, the gateway could be simplified, and additional resources could be diverted to expanding the capacity of the storage shed or increasing the number of benches cast.

#### INVESTIGATING ORNAMENT

The proposed piece makes extensive use of ornamentation. This visual vocabulary makes reference to 19th century cast iron porches in the city, but also seeks to engage with revived contemporary interest in ornamentation. Contemporary architects such as Jun Aoki and Herzog and De Meuron are known for their innovative approaches to ornamentation. Some analyses of the re-emergence of ornament in contemporary architecture echo modernist critiques linking ornamentation inextricably with power, prestige and excess, in opposition to democratic and egalitarian values. Others view contemporary ornamentation primarily as a consequence of new digital modeling, 3D printing and CNC technology. In this project I will employ ornament in the service of egalitarian and democratic values using only analog processes. I believe that ornament and pattern can be understood as an outgrowth of an unmet need for public spaces that operate at a truly human scale, providing an intimate tactile and sensory experience that invites prolonged physical engagement and rewards close physical proximity with further unveiling. I seek to meet these needs through my work.

### 3. Describe your strategy for engaging the public.

I believe that the community engaged should not be viewed as a passive audience, but as a client with real needs and real expertise. I will follow a 3-part process for engagement and input that I have used with clients for public arts commissions in the past:

#### 1 - Listening

I will organize a conversation with garden membership, and an open invitation to community members, with a special emphasis on the garden's closest neighbors, within a one block radius. I'll work to organize this listening session through several organizations: the chosen Community Garden, Parks and Rec, the local Neighborhood Association. We'll work to promote the listening session through social media groups, but also, crucially, through door-to door canvassing with fliers. At the listening session, we'll use a World Cafe Discussion format, using guided questions, and small, round-table discussions to break down the hierarchical, lecture format of discussions, and encourage more authentic, unscripted conversation. I know that the World Cafe format can build a sense of connection and empowerment in group discussions because I used it to structure a public lecture series at Gallery5 in 2019, including a conversation about Richmond & Public Art. This method is guided by 7 principles:

- 1- Set The Context,
- 2- Create a Hospitable Space,
- 3- Explore Questions that Matter,
- 4- Encourage Everyone's Contribution,
- 5- Connect Diverse Perspectives,
- 6- Listen Together for Patterns and Insights,
- 7- Share Collective Discoveries

As a part of these conversations, I'll present the core concept of the project as approved by the PAC to community members. Part of our conversation will focus on generating ideas for possible visual references to incorporate into patterns and ornamentation. Part of our conversation will focus on the specific needs and

patterns of work and life within the Garden Site. Part of our conversation will focus on larger issues in the wider community and city at large, and the more expansive values, priorities and visions of the assembled community members.

This format will result in several different notes documents - my own, but also notes generated within small group discussions. I will take those notes, and my experiences and impressions from our initial listening session back into the studio, along with site maps, photography of the site, and measurements to begin the process of creating.

## 2 - Iterating

Using specifics from our listening conversations, and from my observations and measurements of the site, I'll begin creating sketches, and pattern concepts, seeking to present 2-3 strong variations to a small group of key stakeholders, focusing on Garden Membership. These sketches will not only share my visual approach, but plans for installation and use of the site.

Design feedback conversations will engage a significantly smaller group than initial listening sessions, and take a survey format, to allow for unbiased views to be expressed in privacy. In my experience facilitating critiques with my students at VCU, the best, most specific and sincere feedback is often shared in written critiques. Spoken critique can be dominated by a few loud voices, and provide limited time for each participant to formulate ideas and respond.

## 3- Refining

Using feedback from surveys, I'll produce the final designs in detail. This is the most labor intensive step in the process, taking more than 90 percent of my budgeted hours - but each previous step is necessary to ensure that the work produced truly serves the needs and represents the values of the key stakeholders. Once final designs are complete, they will be presented to a small group of key stakeholders for approval. Only subtle modifications will be possible at this late stage.

## 4 - Installing

At least one Community Work Day will be scheduled to assist with digging foundations, concrete pours and assembling benches. These activities can benefit from volunteer assistance, but don't require volunteers to come in with specialized knowledge or skills. Chris Burke, certified concrete contractor, has experience managing volunteer support at concrete pours for the local skate community.

## 5 - Celebrating

I will work with key stakeholders to help plan an unveiling/ celebratory event to unveil the work to a wider public, and ceremonially mark the conclusion of the project.

### 4. Attach a detailed budget, not to exceed \$30,000.



### 5. How do you plan to ensure the security of the tool shed component?

The proposed shed has a cast iron gate, which will be able to be locked with a durable padlock or u-lock.

If additional safety measures beyond a secure lock are required, I will work with the key stakeholders early in the design process to build such safety measures into the toolshed (for example a gate which can be secured at the ground, and locked at the closure.)

## 6. Describe your installation plan.

### MATERIALS

Note: Many of the materials required will be managed by subcontractors, and are therefore not included in detail. I have included those materials and equipment that I require for the design work and pattern making I will be executing without assistance for this project.

Consumable Materials for Design: Pencils (assortment), paper, tracing paper, sandpaper (assortment) basswood blanks

Equipment for Design: Light table, Adobe Creative Suite, chisels and gouges (assortment), sharpening tools, miter saw, jeweler's saw, drill and bits. I have access to a full woodshop through my work at the Visual Arts Center of Richmond.

### SUBCONTRACTORS

This list of contractors includes their letters of support sent to me via email to be included with this application.

#### 1. Sam Morgan - Contractor, OK Foundry

"As an artist who specializes in working with cast iron and a six year contractor with OK Foundry, I am writing to confirm the feasibility of Barry O'Keefe's project proposal. Barry and I have discussed the components, their scale, and the level of detail that we are able to capture in the sand casting process and I am confident that his proposal falls well within the scope of our work at the foundry. In my time working with OK Foundry we have cast numerous reliefs exceeding the size of Barry's proposed components. As a fellow resident of the City of Richmond, I am excited by the prospect of Barry's proposal and would be excited to work with him on making it a reality. After discussing the scope of work and quantities of each casting proposed I would estimate the cost of the project to OK Foundry to be approximately \$14,000.00. Thank you for your consideration. Sincerely, Sam Morgan, Artist, Fabricator, (804) 432-8826"

#### 2. Brian Wysong - Certified Welder

"My name is Brian Wysong and I have been a welder for 10 years. After completing the available welding courses at VCU arts, I received training and certifications in Mig and Tig welding by Richmond technical Center from 2009-2011. Upon completion I apprenticed under a traditional Blacksmith in the Richmond area for two years. I then welded for and eventually ran the metal department at an architectural supply firm in Richmond Wellborn and Wright from 2014-2016. The last 6 years I have spent working for myself on welding projects that I am passionate about. I have worked on and installed many different projects across the city ranging from structural to sculptural. I created architectural frame supports for Barry's "Open Inbox" series of wooden sculptures in Richmond Parks. I look forward to being part of another important project. All my best, Brian Wysong (804)298-9255"

#### 3. Chris Burke - Certified Concrete Contractor

"Definitely interested in the project. Would look really cool. Drafted a preliminary cost breakdown, can definitely shrink the cost a little bit if the footers are deemed unnecessary. This estimate includes 18" deep footers and slabs for both structures.  
Chris Burke, 804.690.7895"

### PRODUCTION TIMELINE

1. Community Engagement 1: Listening
2. Design 1: Iteration
3. Community Engagement 2: Feedback Survey
4. Design 2: Refinement
5. Community Engagement 3: Final Approvals
6. Design 3: Carving Pattern originals for casting. (90 hours of work)
7. Production 1: Casting elements, taking precise measurements
8. Once patterns are complete, casting at the foundry can begin
9. Production 2: Welding of frames for archway, storage shed  
Once all casting is complete, final measurements can be taken to produce the welded frames for the archway and storage shed.

10. Production 3: Pre-assembly (offsite)

Cast iron elements will be affixed to welded steel frames in the studios at OK Foundry. Roofing elements will be pre-assembled. All elements will be packed flat into a standard size box truck, requiring no specialized vehicle or rigging.

11. Installation 1: Pouring Concrete footings and slabs at site

Once assembly is complete, precise measurements will be taken and used to produce the forms for pouring concrete footings and slabs, and correct placement of anchoring bolts. There are 5 days of active work in the concrete process. The day of the pour will be scheduled as a community work day for the chosen Community Garden. (Benches can also be assembled at this work day.)

12. Installation 2: Transport of welded frames, cast iron elements to site, assembly

Flat steel and cast iron elements will be transported to the garden site, and assembled with support from contractor Brian Wysong. All vertical elements will be anchored to concrete with anchor bolts. Assembly will take 1-2 days of active work with a small crew. Once metal frames are erected and secured, wood siding will be added to complete the walls of the storage shed. Following the completion of Assembly, the project will be ready for unveiling.

13. Community Engagement 4: Community Unveiling

**7. Describe anticipated maintenance requirements.**

Because this project relies primarily on cast iron, and welded steel frames it unusually and remarkably long-lived and low-maintenance. Many cast-iron architectural features from the 1890s and earlier are still in use today across the city today.

**Cast Iron**

All cast iron work will be treated with a Black Max Rust converter - a permanent living finish that does not require maintenance for the lifetime of the metalwork. It is less expensive than other finishes, requires no maintenance, and is significantly more sustainable and less toxic than any other finish.

**Concrete**

A concrete slab lasts on average 75-100 years under good conditions.

**Cedar**

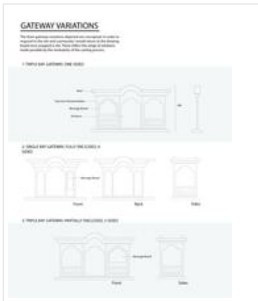
The cedar siding used in the construction of the storage shed is known for its longevity, especially when treated with a stain. Shed siding should last, conservatively, 35 years, though well-cared for cedar siding can last up to 70 years. A second application of stain or sealant every 5-10 years could extend the lifespan of the wood. When the wood reaches the end of its lifespan, the shed is designed such that siding can easily be replaced. The cedar lumber used to complete the benches will be the shortest lived of the project elements. This wood will likely need to be replaced in 10-15 years. The cast Iron sides of each bench should last 75+ years.

**Aluminum**

The average lifespan of aluminum roofing is 50 years, though it can also last up to 70 under good conditions.

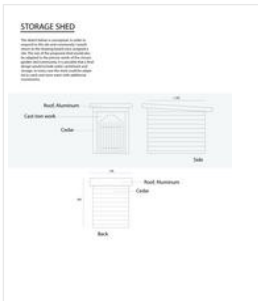


# Media



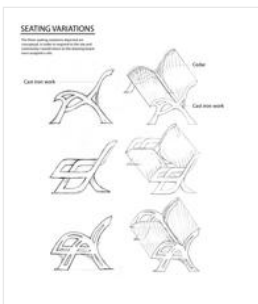
## "Gateway Variations"

(Document)



## "Storage Shed"

(Document)



## "Seating Variations"

(Document)



## "GATEWAY CONSTRUCTION"

(Document)





### "Gateway Locations"



### "Bronze Tests"

Depicted are cast bronze ornaments I produced for a past project. I produced these castings using hand-carved wax originals, duplicated in a plaster relief molds, and finally poured in a plaster investment mold. These tests are included as documentation of my familiarity with the processes and design considerations required by the casting process.



### "Drawing Board"

This image documents my light table/drawing board as I generated ideas for this proposal. These preliminary sketches are included as an insight into my ideation process, which will continue when I am assigned a garden to work with.



### "Pattern"

A full scale pattern drawing produced for the Richmond Department of Community Graphics in 2020. This image is included as an insight into my pattern-making process, and to illustrate one of the intermediate steps between concept sketches, like the ones provided, and production.



### "Richmond Department of Community Graphics"

This slide of past work features a sculptural piece that uses some of the same pattern making and woodworking skills that I will employ to create originals for use in the casting process.

## GATEWAY LOCATIONS

The images included below are intended only to indicate the approximate scale and location of the gateway structures at each site. The 2-dimensional rendering of these structures is not intended to be representative of the intended outcome.

For more accurate sense of gateway construction and possible variations of form, please refer to the Gateway Variations, and Gateway Construction slides.



CHARLES GILPIN



BROAD ROCK



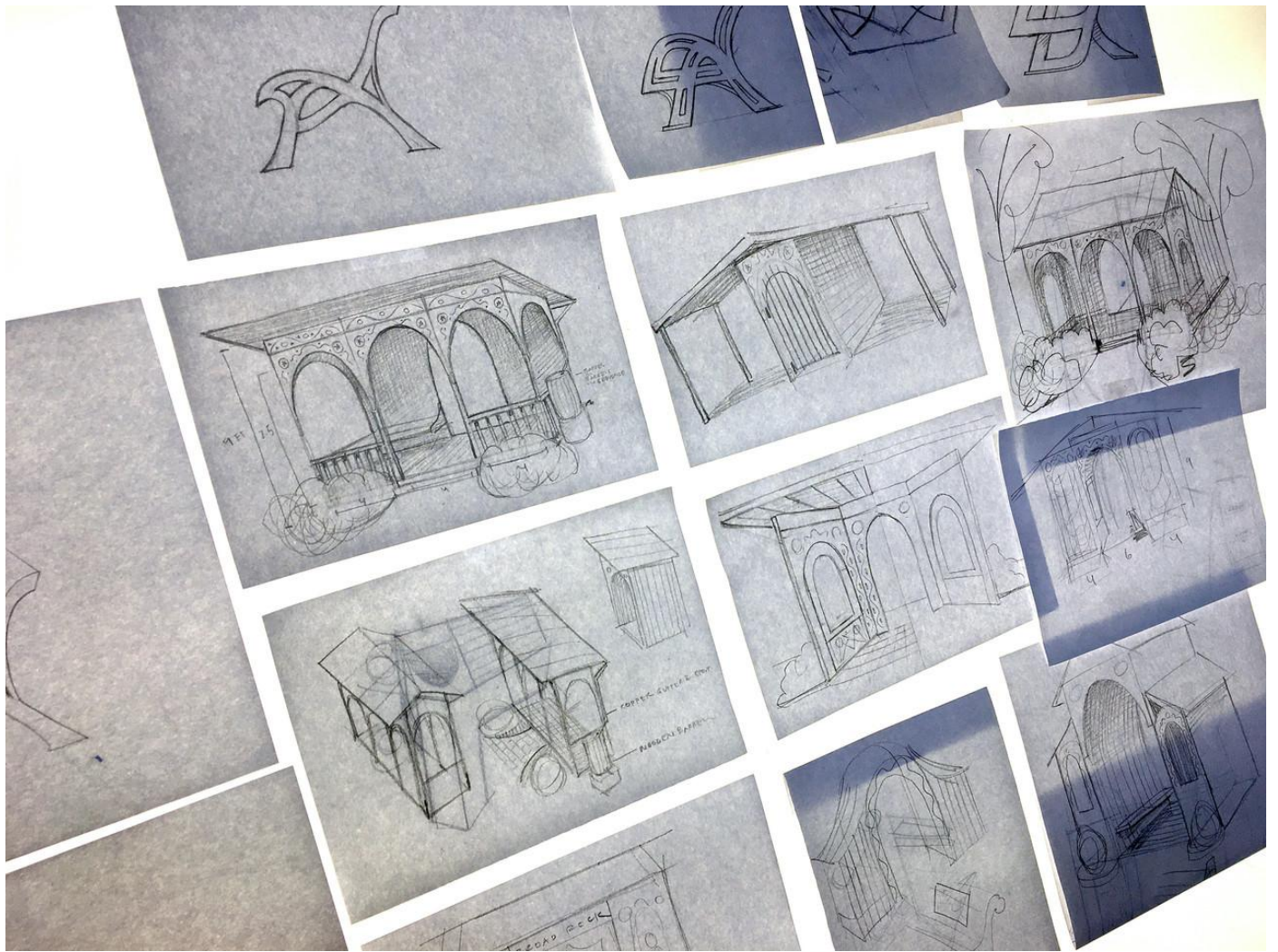
ALICE FITZ

"Gateway Locations"



"Bronze Tests"





"Drawing Board"



"Pattern"