



Public Art Commission, RFQ

O.J. Watson Park Concessions

Area Sculpture

City of Wichita



Issue Date: 07/20/2026

Qualifications Due: 08/17/2026, 11:59 p.m. CDT



Introduction



The City of Wichita invites professional artists and artist teams with a demonstrated history of completing complex, permanent, outdoor public art projects to submit their qualifications for a \$45,000 public art commission for O.J. Watson Park. The start of this project is scheduled to begin in Fall of 2026. It is anticipated that the installation of the art will be completed in Fall of 2027. Emerging artists are encouraged to apply.



O.J. Watson Park Background

O.J. Watson Park is one of Wichita's most beloved and heavily visited public parks, encompassing approximately 119 acres along the Arkansas River corridor in south Wichita. Originally developed from a former sand pit, the park has evolved into a regional destination that combines natural landscapes, recreational amenities, and community gathering spaces. The park features a large central lake, mature trees, open lawns, fishing areas, playgrounds, picnic shelters, and an extensive network of walking paths. Family-oriented attractions—including a miniature train, pedal boats, miniature golf, pony rides, volleyball courts, and seasonal events—draw visitors of all ages throughout the year.

As a destination for recreation, celebrations, and outdoor experiences, O.J. Watson Park welcomes a diverse audience that includes families, tourists, event attendees, recreational users, and community organizations. The park's blend of natural beauty, active programming, and year-round visitation offers a unique opportunity for a landmark sculpture that can serve as a visual destination, create memorable visitor experiences, and strengthen the park's identity as one of Wichita's premier public gathering places.



Art Goals or Criteria

The City of Wichita seeks an artist or artist team to create a permanent public artwork that celebrates the spirit of recreation, discovery, and family experiences that define O.J. Watson Park. Located within one of the park's most active gathering areas, the artwork should become a memorable destination that enriches the visitor experience while complementing the surrounding amenities.

Successful proposals should strive to:

- Create a welcoming and visually engaging landmark that is easily recognized as a destination within the park.
- Enhance the visitor experience by encouraging exploration, interaction, and moments of delight for people of all ages.
- Reflect the themes of outdoor recreation, movement, play, and connection to nature without relying on literal representation.
- Complement the surrounding lake, train station, concessions area, and recreational activities through thoughtful scale, materials, and siting.
- Provide opportunities for visitors to gather, rest, meet, and create lasting memories, including serving as a popular photo destination.
- Demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship and use durable, low-maintenance materials suitable for a high-traffic public park.



Artwork Location: Concessions Area

The proposed artwork site is located within the activity hub of O.J. Watson Park, adjacent to the park's concessions building which is where visitors buy tickets for the pony rides, train rides, paddle boating, mini-golfing, kayaking, and other amenities that exist within the park. The concessions building area is a center spot surrounded by these attractions, including the miniature train station, the mini golf course, the fishing dock where paddleboats and kayaks are stationed, and the central lake. This area serves as one of the park's primary gathering spaces, welcoming thousands of visitors each year who come to enjoy family outings, birthday parties, school field trips, and seasonal events.

The concessions building functions as a central destination where visitors purchase refreshments, rent recreational equipment, and gather before exploring the park. The surrounding plaza and walkways experience consistent pedestrian activity throughout the day, with visitors moving between the train station, lakeside docks, picnic areas, playgrounds, and recreational amenities.

The site offers expansive views of the lake, where paddleboats and kayaks create a vibrant, ever-changing backdrop. Nearby mature trees provide shade and frame views across the water, while open lawn areas accommodate informal gatherings and recreation. The nearby miniature train adds a sense of movement, nostalgia, and excitement as it departs regularly with passengers of all ages, reinforcing the site's identity as the recreational heart of the park.





Photos taken during recent landscape renovations.

Concessions Area





Site Location

The park is located at 3022 S McLean, Wichita, KS 67217. The Concessions area is located on the northeast side of the park.

Final artwork location will be located on the grounds of the Concessions Area, with the precise location determined in consultation with the artist and project team.



Project Budget

ART BUDGET: \$45,000

The art budget is inclusive of all costs and fees for the artist to execute the project from design through structural engineering, fabrication, site preparation, transportation/delivery, and installation to the site. Installation, structural engineering, site preparation, and delivery will be coordinated with the project team.

Design Proposal Fee

Finalists will be paid \$1,000 to develop proposals.



Project Timeline

- RFQ open via CAFE online application system: 07/20/2026
- Artists questions due: 08/07/2026, 4:00 p.m. CDT
- Qualifications due: 08/17/2026, 11:59 p.m. CDT
- Review of qualifications: 08/24/2026 – 09/04/2026
- Notification of finalists: 09/11/2026
- Finalist concept proposals due: 10/12/2026, 4:00 p.m. CDT
- Review of proposals: 10/13/2026-10/23/2026
- Notification of award: 10/28/2026
- Installation: Fall 2027

**All dates are approximate and subject to change*



Eligibility

Professional artists living and working in the United States are eligible to apply. The City of Wichita has many local firms that can assist with the development, fabrication, and installation of the artwork. The committee prefers to have local firms involved in the project when possible and will give preference to artists who plan to utilize these local resources.

This could include:

- Engineers for developing stamp drawings
- Concrete firms for pouring the footers
- Fabricators
- Installation crews
- Lighting specialists
- Landscape architects

It is the declared policy and practice of the City of Wichita to extend equal employment opportunities to all qualified persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, religion, national origin, ancestry, marital status, age, political affiliation, sexual orientation, disability, or other non-merit factors.



Selection Process

Applicants will be reviewed and ranked by a selection committee comprised of City staff and relevant stakeholders. Interviews are not anticipated to be a part of the selection process but may be used in the event of a narrow margin between rankings.

Questions

All inquiries should be emailed to Ranim Abiali at rabiali@wichita.gov by 08/07/2026, 4:00 p.m. CDT.



Selection Criteria

Applicants will be shortlisted based on a competitive review of the following:

Artistic excellence: demonstrated vision, professional process and presentation, and quality craftsmanship in examples of past work; examples provided should be relevant to how the artist will approach this public art opportunity.

Creative process: examples of past work should illustrate the artist(s) unique approach to their artistic design process; examples provided should be relevant to how the artist will approach this public art opportunity and demonstrate a pragmatic approach to project development and installation.

Ability: demonstrated experience with artistic medium and fabrication (or management of fabrication and production) and executing large-scale outdoor artwork (or other relevant experience), effective communication strategies including updates with all key stakeholders, delivering contractual milestones, and managing allocated budgets in a timely fashion.

Meaningful relationship of the creative and conceptual aspects of their artistic process with the purpose of this project as expressed in the Letter of Interest (LOI).



Submittal Requirements

Each artist or artist team must submit an entirely digital application via CaFÉ (callforentry.org). Incomplete applications will not be considered.

1. Six (6) to ten (10) total images of past public art (or other relevant projects) and infrastructure projects by the artist or artist team's lead artist(s).
2. Optional: One (1) video, edited to no more than two (2) minutes in length, may also be submitted, but is not required.
3. A one (1) page Letter of Interest (LOI) stating why this opportunity is meaningful and appropriate for the applicant's work, as well as potential approach to this project. If the artist does not have a demonstrated history of public art, please share your ability to conceptualize, communicate, and support the delivery of a public artwork.
4. Resume or CV not to exceed 2 pages. If applying as an artist team, provide a resume/CV for each team member and a list of key team members and their roles/affiliations in one PDF.
5. Three (3) professional references.



Thank You

Please submit your application on CaFÉ (callforentry.org) by 11:59 pm CDT on 08/17/2026.

