



# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA REPORT



**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development

**MEETING DATE:** July 16, 2019

**PREPARED BY:** Kerri Zessau, Project Coordinator

**AGENDA LOCATION:** AR-1

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**TITLE:** Expenditure of Art in Public Places Funds in an Amount not to Exceed \$31,000.00 for the Installation of Two Neighborhood Treasure Landmarks Recognizing Francisco and Felix J. Gutierrez

**OBJECTIVE:** To authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$31,000 in restricted art funds to install two Neighborhood Treasure landmarks

**BACKGROUND:** Initiated in 2018 by the in Art in Public Places (AIPP) Committee, the Neighborhood Treasure program has worked to celebrate historically and culturally significant Monrovia through the installation of public art in residential neighborhoods. Pursuant to the Neighborhood Treasures program, individuals are identified for recognition based on input from local historians and Monrovia Area Partnership (MAP) Leaders. Then, each art piece is designed by an artist selected through a competitive process, and each installation includes a decorative informational plaque describing the community contributions of the subject being recognized. Finally, and of particular note, given that the program was designed to reinforce the importance of Monrovia's neighborhoods, each piece of art is placed into a specific residential neighborhood that is relevant to the identified community member.

To date, Monrovia has celebrated four Neighborhood Treasures, as follows:

- Colonel Allen Allensworth
  - March 10, 2018 at Second Baptist Church (925 South Shamrock Avenue)
- Kate Wright
  - August 18, 2018 on the 500 block of West Cypress Avenue
- Bettie Mae Scott
  - November 17, 2018 on the 500 Block of West Maple Avenue
- Japanese Monroviaans
  - June 8, 2019 at 300 West Cypress Avenue

Recently, the AIPP Committee has been working to develop plans for our next Neighborhood Treasure art piece, which would recognize the father and son duo of Francisco and Felix J. Gutierrez. Both individuals, and the entire Gutierrez family, have had a long history in Monrovia. Francisco Gutierrez was born in 1871 in La Misi3n Vieja (an area around Whittier Narrows). In 1905, he came to Monrovia and worked for the B. R. Davison Company as a cement foreman. Eventually, he opened his own cement business in 1925.

The 1928 Monrovia Business Directory lists Francisco Gutierrez as one of only two Spanish-surnamed business owners, and he did a considerable amount of work to help build Monrovia. Of particular note, Francisco Gutierrez was responsible for installing the sidewalks around the former Monrovia Plunge (and the site of our current Monrovia Historical Museum), Immaculate Conception Church, and the

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tennis courts at Recreation Park, as well as at a number of private homes in the community. Common to that era, the company that poured concrete would imprint their business name into the sidewalk, and even today, there are numerous sidewalks throughout Monrovia with the Gutierrez imprint.

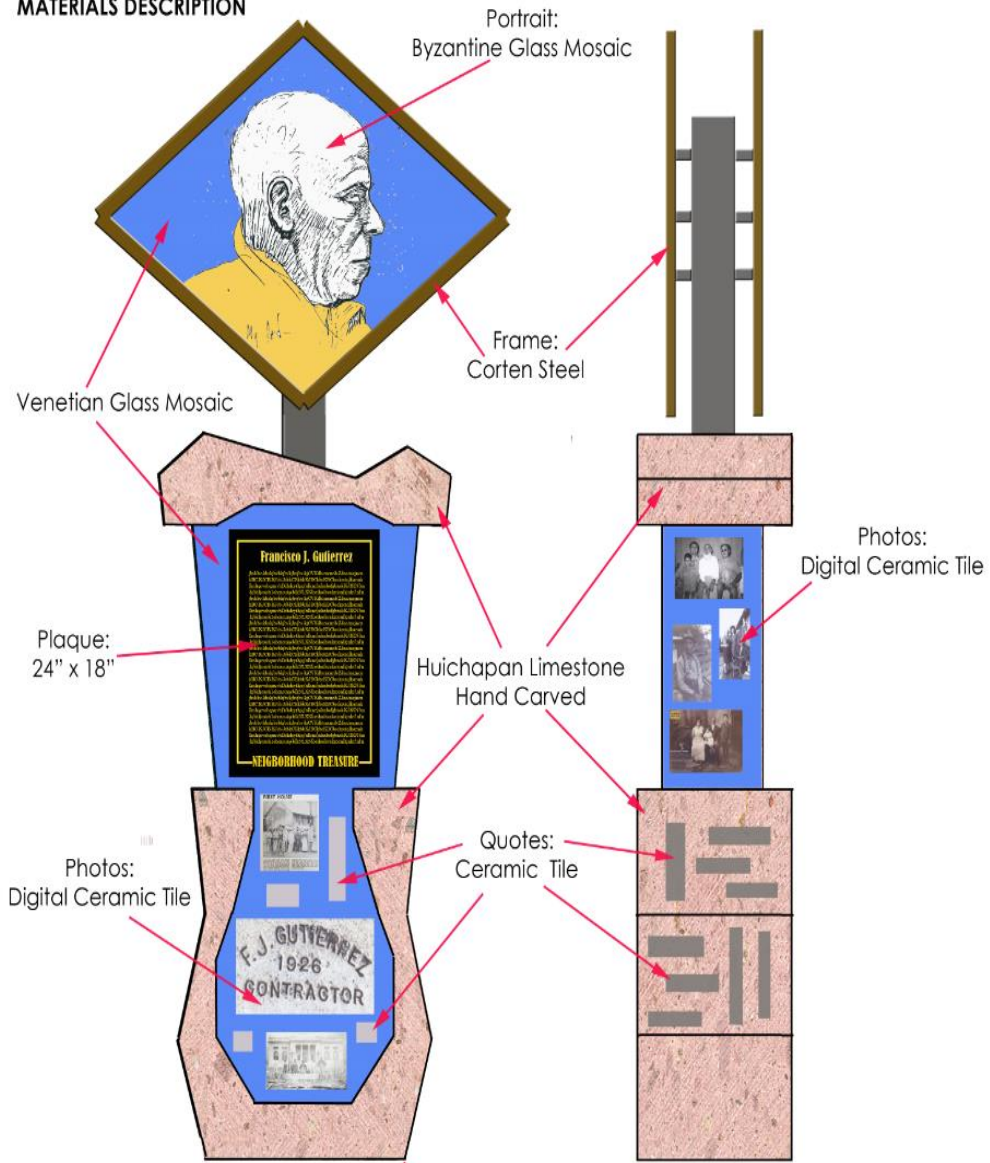
Francisco's son, Felix J. Gutierrez, was born in 1918. Felix Gutierrez attended Pasadena Junior College to study art, and during that time, he started a newspaper called *Mexican Voice*. Launched from his home, Felix Gutierrez was the writer, artist, and editor of the paper, which provided an important voice for the Mexican American movement throughout the Southwest portions of the United States. In an editorial with political cartoons, *Mexican Voice* questioned the inequity that Mexican volunteers were considered "white" by the World War II draft board, but "colored" by school districts and neighbors. Felix Gutierrez's efforts, through *Mexican Voice*, helped lead to the development of a better integrated, more tolerant and fairer society, both in Monrovia and beyond.

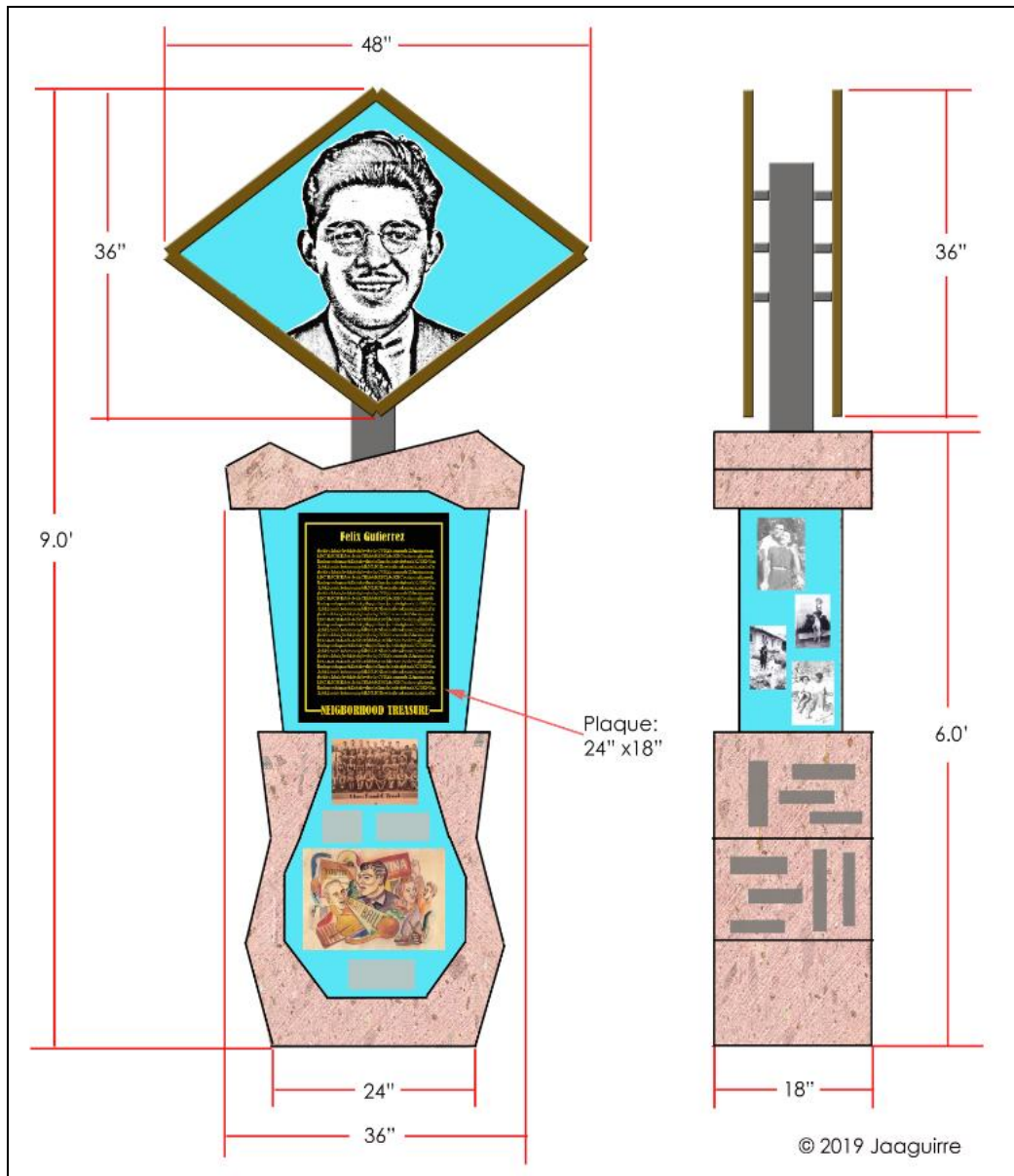
Given the positive cultural and community impacts that Francisco and Felix Gutierrez made here in Monrovia, on January 16, 2019, the AIPP Committee voted unanimously to honor both men through the Neighborhood Treasures program. A copy of the Staff Report from that meeting is attached included as an attachment to this report.

**ANALYSIS:** As part of the overall Neighborhood Treasures project to recognize Francisco and Felix Gutierrez, a *Call for Artist* was released on January 21, 2019. The document was distributed to numerous artists and groups, including the Monrovia Association of Fine Arts (MAFA).

After reviewing the responses received, the AIPP Committee recommended that the City move forward with artwork submitted by Jose Antonio Aguirre, who has over 30 years of experience in the professional art world. Mr. Aguirre's design is unique and places an emphasis on honoring both men individually. His vision is to create a four-sided statue comprised of various materials. Two sides of the statue would be dedicated to Francisco and the other two to his son, Felix. A copy of the proposed artwork is included below for consideration.

**MATERIALS DESCRIPTION**





The overall art piece would be 9 feet tall and 48 inches wide at its widest point. The images of the Treasures will be made of mosaic glass. In addition to the mosaic portraits, there would be digital ceramic tiles installed showcasing family images and significant life quotes surrounded by limestone.

Of note, Mr. Aguirre also indicated as part of his submittal that he has secured a donation from the Mexican Cultural Institute of Los Angeles to cover the cost of the limestone for the artwork, which is valued at \$12,000. Furthermore, Mr. Aguirre is an accomplished artist, with a portfolio of public art having been displayed at universities, civic plazas, theme parks, and shopping centers nationally and internationally. He specializes in various stages of design, fabrication, and installation of 2D and 3D public art. Mr. Aguirre was also the artist commissioned to create the glass mosaic and granite sculpture next to the Azusa Gold Line entrance.

***Recommended Location***

Regarding the location of the artwork, both staff and the AIPP Committee recommended that the piece be installed on the southeast corner of Shamrock Avenue and Lemon Avenue, which constitutes the northwest corner of Recreation Park. There is a nexus between the proposed neighborhood location and the Gutierrez family. As previously noted, Francisco Gutierrez’s company poured the sidewalks around Recreation Park, and it was also an area that Felix Gutierrez frequented during his youth.

Of note, during the AIPP Committee meeting on June 26, 2019, representatives advocating for Francisco and Felix Gutierrez requested that the City consider placing the Neighborhood Treasure artwork for both individuals in Old Town on Myrtle Avenue in front of the Monrovia Public Library. The request was also made in writing in a letter dated June 26, 2019, a copy of which is attached to this report.

After considerable testimony and deliberation, the AIPP Committee determined that locating the Neighborhood Treasure artwork for Francisco and Felix Gutierrez in a commercial district, as opposed to a relevant residential neighborhood, would be incompatible with the provisions of the Neighborhood Treasures program. Furthermore, it was noted during the review process that outside of a granite memorial recognizing William Monroe (the founder of the City of Monrovia), no other individual has been formally recognized by the City in Old Town.

If the City Council authorizes this Neighborhood Treasure in honor Francisco and Felix Gutierrez, the installation of the artwork is scheduled to take place at the beginning of September, with an unveiling and celebration event planned for September 14, 2019.

**FISCAL IMPACT:** The amount budgeted for the two Neighborhood Treasures is \$31,000 which will cover the cost of design, fabrication, and installation. Funding for the project is available in the City's Art in Public Places Fund.

**OPTIONS:** The following options are presented for the City Council's consideration:

1. Approve the proposal by Jose Antonio Aguirre and appropriate an amount not to exceed \$31,000 for the fabrication and installation of the Neighborhood Treasures Landmark Post recognizing Francisco and Felix Gutierrez at the southeast corner of Shamrock Avenue and Lemon Avenue.
2. Do not approve this project and provide staff with additional direction.

**RECOMMENDATION:** Both the AIPP Committee and staff recommend Option 1.

**COUNCIL ACTION REQUIRED:** If the City Council concurs, the appropriate action would be a motion to appropriate and authorize the expenditure of an amount not to exceed \$31,000 from the Art in Public Places fund for the installation of a Neighborhood Treasures Landmark recognizing Francisco and Felix Gutierrez at the southeast corner of Shamrock Avenue and Lemon Avenue, and authorize the City Manager to execute the necessary documents in a form approved by the City Attorney.



# ART IN PUBLIC PLACES COMMITTEE AGENDA REPORT



**DEPARTMENT:** Community Development

**MEETING DATE** January 16, 2019

**PREPARED BY:** Craig Jimenez, Director

AR-1

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**TITLE:** Neighborhood Treasures– Consideration of Recipient and Location of Artwork

**DISCUSSION / ANALYSIS:** As you know, the Art in Public Places and the City Council approved the Neighborhood Treasures program to recognize the contributions of Monrovia through public art in neighborhoods. During 2018, the first three Treasures were installed: Colonel Allen Allensworth, humanitarian Kate Wright and WASP test pilot Bettie Mae Scott.

One of the key components of the program is to affirm and reinforce the importance and value of Monrovia's neighborhoods through the recognition of individuals that have contributed to the community through public art in their neighborhoods. The community's reception to the program has been terrific and staff is proposing to highlight Neighborhood Treasures as one of Monrovia's flagship public art initiatives.

### ***Francisco and Felix J. Gutierrez***

Staff has identified Francisco and his son Felix J. Gutierrez as the inspiration for the next Neighborhood Treasure installation. The Gutierrez family has a long history in California and Monrovia. The parents of Francisco Gutierrez originally came to California during the Gold Rush. He was born in 1871 in La Misión Vieja (an area around Whittier Narrows). Francisco worked as a foreman in orange packing houses and was a Los Angeles Deputy Sheriff stationed in Arcadia. In 1905, he came to Monrovia and worked for the B. R. Davison Company as a cement foreman. Eventually, he opened his own cement business in 1925. Gutierrez did a considerable amount of work in Monrovia, including the installation of sidewalks around the Monrovia Plunge, Immaculate Conception Church, the tennis courts at Recreation Park as well as a number of private homes in town. Common to that era, the company that poured concrete would imprint the business name into the sidewalk. There are still sidewalks in Monrovia with the Gutierrez imprint.

Francisco's son, Felix J. Gutierrez, was born in 1918. Life in Monrovia was segregated at the time and Felix and many of his friends would only be able to swim one day a week at the pool where his father helped build the sidewalks. Felix went to Monrovia Arcadia Duarte (MAD) High School and was one of only two Mexicans to graduate in 1937. He lettered in track and was staff artist for the school's Wildcat newspaper.

Felix was ambitious. He attended Pasadena Junior College to study art. Around that same time, he started a newspaper, Mexican Voice. Launched from his home, Felix was the writer, artist, editor, and spoke for the Mexican American movement throughout the Southwest. In an editorial with political cartoons, Mexican Voice questioned the inequity that Mexican volunteers were considered "white" by the World War II draft board, but "colored" by Monrovia Plunge standards, school districts, and neighbors. Mexicans could only sit on the right side of the theater and could not patronize some restaurants on Myrtle. This movement included speaking to the Monrovia City Council in 1939 to assert their rights and requesting integration, by comparing their segregation with that of Jews in Germany. His efforts, through Mexican Voice, helped lead to the development of a better integrated, more tolerant and fairer society, both in Monrovia and beyond.

**ATTACHMENT C**

### ***Next Steps***

Typically, working with community and MAP leaders as well as City Historian Steve Baker, staff will select the next Neighborhood Treasure and release the Call of Artists prior to review by the AIPP. However, staff is looking for direction from the Committee on a couple fronts. First, as the program has now completed its first year, staff wants to confirm that the Committee continues to believe that this is an appropriate and worthwhile use of the City's Public Art Funds.

Additionally, over the past month, staff has worked with the Gutierrez family and Steve Baker to compile and confirm information regarding Francisco and Felix further cementing staff's belief that they are a great match for the Neighborhood Treasures program.

As part of these discussions, it was expressed that the family would like the artwork placed around Library Park based on their family's long standing emphasis on the importance of education. However, as this program was intended to focus on the addition of art pieces in neighborhoods, this appears to be outside the scope of the program. One of the primary goals of Neighborhood Treasures is to identify pivotal members of the community and recognize them throughout Monrovia's neighborhoods.

With the exception of the memorial bench program, Old Town has not been used for a recognition program of individuals. Additionally, the City Council has expressed a desire to develop a separate program to identify and memorialize prominent Monrovia's. Although still in the early planning stages, one of the areas being considered for this is in Old Town. Until that program is fully vetted and approved by the City Council, staff believes that it would be premature to approve a separate recognition program in Old Town.

### ***Recommendation***

Staff's recommendation is that if the committee feels that Neighborhood Treasures is an appropriate venue to recognize the contributions of the Gutierrez family, then staff will follow the established process with the release of a Call for Artist, selection by the AIPP committee and final approval by the City Council. Ultimately, it will be unveiled at an upcoming MAP block party in a relevant and appropriate neighborhood location. There are a couple of preliminary locations that are being considered, however, staff will continue to investigate potential locations, including research by the City Historian Steve Baker and further discussion with the family.

If the Committee determines that this continues to be an appropriate use of the City's Art Funds and that Francisco and Felix are a good fit for this program, then staff will initiate the established process beginning with the release of a Call for Artists, selection of the art by the AIPP Committee who then makes a recommendation to the City Council and, if approved an anticipated installation in June. The estimated budget for the project is \$15,000.

**Félix F. Gutiérrez, Ph.D.**  
**632 Milan Avenue**  
**South Pasadena, CA 91030**

June 7, 2019

Arts in Public Places Committee  
City of Monrovia  
415 S. Ivy Avenue  
Monrovia, CA 91016

Dear Members of the Arts in Public Places Committee:

Thank you for considering Arts in Public Places recognition of Francisco J. Gutiérrez and Félix J. Gutiérrez, early-20th century Monrovia leaders who made Monrovia a better place through construction projects across the city and by encouraging young people to improve themselves and others through education and organizing.

Although the Monrovia of their era segregated them and others in many ways, this father and son pair overcame the limits imposed and made the most of the opportunities available. They helped others to do the same. Their ambition, hard work, and belief in the American ideal of equality helped build a better Monrovia. Their lives are good stories for all who want Monrovia to stand for equal opportunity.

Francisco's cement work can be seen across Monrovia in sidewalks, public works, driveways, and curbs still in use, some bear his imprint: F. J. Gutierrez Contractor. His older son Frank worked with him and later as a City of Monrovia cement worker: two-generations of Monrovia construction workers spanning the early 1900s into the 1950s.

Félix's impact as an artist, journalist and organizer began at Monrovia-Arcadia-Duarte High School and YMCA in the 1930s. In 1938 he launched *The Mexican Voice* magazine from his Monrovia home. It continued into the 1950s and was read across the Southwest. In 1942 he co-founded the Mexican-American Movement. Both advocated progress through education and local organizing.

When Mayor Tom Adams told me in 2016 that the City of Monrovia planned to honor my grandfather and father I was overwhelmed with gratitude. Later he suggested exploring places along Myrtle Avenue, site of other public arts projects. We felt this was appropriate because both honorees worked to make Mexican Americans part of mainstream Monrovia.

Since two persons are to be honored, we looked for a place offering two sides visible along sidewalks crossing in two directions. This duality also reflects contributions to Monrovia in two important areas: construction and education. We propose a site at the sidewalk intersection in front of the library on Myrtle Avenue. This provides views of a public art installation at a crossroads featuring cement sidewalks, curbs and walkways leading to the library as a place of education and learning.

**ATTACHMENT B**

As you consider a design for this memorial, we respectfully ask you also consider whether the library sidewalk location is best for two Monrovia residents who moved beyond their segregated neighborhood to improve all of Monrovia. They daily left and returned to their home “below the tracks” to work, study and do business with others in areas where they could not live or be treated as equals. Both are examples of how people of all colors made Monrovia the city it became and is still becoming.

Thank you for considering our request that you consider the library sidewalk site for this inspirational public art. Materials documenting Francisco J. and Felix J. Gutierrez’s contributions to Monrovia have been provided to city staff.

I look forward to being with you at the June 26 meeting for the review and recommendation of this project. If you have any comments or questions, please contact me at [ffgutier@usc.edu](mailto:ffgutier@usc.edu).

Best wishes in your deliberations and decision,

Félix F. Gutiérrez on Behalf of the Gutiérrez Family