



# CALL TO ARTISTS

## REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

# HONORING OUR PAST CREATING OUR LEGACY

## ALBERTA STREET HISTORICAL MARKERS PROJECT

Through this Request for Qualifications (RFQ), Alberta Main Street (AMS), a nonprofit community and economic development organization, is seeking an artist or artist-led team interested in a collaborative process to develop permanent **public artwork in the form of historical and cultural markers that honor and document the history of the African American community on Alberta Street** and are inspired by stories collected from past and present African American community members.

The artist or artist team will work closely with AMS, the Historical Marker Leadership Committee (HMLC), and storytellers to create markers inspired by stories told by community members.

This Request for Qualifications (RFQ) provides information on the scope of the project and information to aid in preparing responses. AMS reserves the right to waive any or all formalities and to reject any or all responses if it determines it is in its best interest to do so.

### **RFQ Issue Date**

October 18, 2017

### **Submission Deadline**

Tuesday, November 21, 2017 3:00 p.m. Pacific Time

### **Pre-application Informational Meeting**

There will be a pre-proposal meeting for artists and team members interested in applying for this project on **Thursday, November 2, 2017 at 7:00 p.m.** at St. Andrew Catholic Church Community Center - 806 NE Alberta Street in the San Andres Room. Please RSVP to [RFQ@albertamainst.org](mailto:RFQ@albertamainst.org)

### **Project Goals**

- Honor and commemorate the history of the African American community on Alberta Street
- Ensure authentic community involvement in creating a shared public space by engaging community members to highlight the unique history and character of our neighborhood
- Raise community awareness about African American history on Alberta Street



Alberta Main Street advances efforts to develop Alberta Street as a vibrant, creative, equitable, and sustainable commercial district serving residents and visitors to our community.

## Project Background

On February 24, 2015, AMS held a community check-in (“Honoring Our Past, Planning Our Future”) to identify priorities for our work moving forward. At this gathering, many historically underserved and underrepresented stakeholders shared that they have not benefited from overall improvements on Alberta Street. There was a call for effective ways to embrace the rich African American history of the street.

Taking these ideas into consideration, AMS applied for and was awarded grant funding for Equitable Alberta Street, a project that expands AMS’ capacity to address issues related to equity, diversity and inclusion. A core component of this project is to **honor and embrace the rich history of the African American community on Alberta Street**. To begin addressing this goal, AMS is initiating an equitable placemaking project to create historical and cultural markers within the district.

There are layers of history on Alberta Street from the early twentieth century to the present that speak to the experience of African American community members. AMS seeks to honor this history through tangible cultural/historical markers in the public right of way that are inspired by stories:

- from current or former King, Vernon, Sabin, or Concordia residents whose lives and families have been impacted by social and economic changes in the area,
- about historically significant events on or impacting Alberta Street, or
- that recollect a personally significant event or experience on Alberta Street.

## Brief History of Alberta Street

The sidewalks and storefronts that line Alberta Street have borne witness to incredible changes over the last 135 years. This rich history continues to play a significant role in our shared identity, offering important lessons as we continue to live, work, and contribute to a flourishing and vibrant community.

### 1880s to 1920s

Alberta Street was first established as a commercial corridor by immigrants from Eastern Europe in the 1880s. Increased commercial development along the street warranted a streetcar by 1903, and in turn, more Eastern European immigrants came to the area to take advantage of its easy access to the city center without the hustle and bustle of downtown Portland. With the construction of grocery stores, barber shops, restaurants, theater, and library along Alberta Street and the many Eastern European-style churches built throughout the surrounding neighborhoods, these early pioneers laid the foundation of Alberta’s diverse commercial offerings and cultural identities.



### 1920s to 1940s

As cars became the preferred method of transportation, pedestrian activity along Alberta Street declined and, as a consequence, so did the once-bustling businesses. Newly constructed Interstate Avenue syphoned traffic away from Alberta Street and pushed cars towards the new supermarkets and larger-scale stores that lined Portland’s new north-south corridor. The streetcar ended its service in 1948, the same year that the Vanport Flood displaced thousands of African-American and low-income families from their North Portland residences. Many of these families relocated to the Alberta area, and over just a few years, the demographics of the community shifted from a predominantly Eastern European community to a predominantly African-American community.



2012 NE Alberta, 1932  
(City of Portland Archives)

### 1950s to 1990s

Alberta Street faced many challenges. An influx of new residents initially helped Alberta Street flourish, but the surrounding neighborhoods became increasingly impoverished as families displaced by urban renewal initiatives moved to the area. Banking institutions often refused to provide mortgages or loans to qualified people for houses and businesses in the area, a process known as “redlining,” and the interest rates associated with loans that were made available greatly exceeded rates in other parts of the city. As a result of the low ownership rates in the area, the appearance and vitality of Alberta Street began to deteriorate. Commercial vacancy rates soared, and the remaining businesses locked their doors and barred in their windows during business hours.



South side of Alberta Street between NE  
18th & 19th Ave, 1997

## Brief History of Alberta Street (continued)

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### 1990s

The revitalization of Alberta Street and the surrounding neighborhoods is an accomplishment of the hard work that many people, activists, and volunteer and community organizations.

Roslyn Hill was critical to the revitalization efforts. A Portland native, Roslyn was one of the original developers on Alberta Street in the 1990s and one of the first to see the potential to rebuild its strong business community. Roslyn bought a tax foreclosed building on the corner of NE 14th Place and Alberta Street in 1993, and with the assistance of a storefront improvement loan, she transformed it into Roslyn's Garden Coffee House (now the Tin Shed). She went on to buy and fix up a dozen buildings and leased to tenants with community-based rules: no bars on windows, no locked doors during business hours, and an expectation that business owners would interact with the community.



Soon after Roslyn Hill began to invest in Alberta Street, additional businesses opened with a shared vision for Alberta Street's future. Magnus Johannesson purchased the Rexall Pharmacy building in 1993, and Richard Sanchez opened a small taqueria behind his Mexican grocery store at 28th and Alberta that quickly attracted large crowds. Donna and Sal Guardino opened Guardino Gallery at NE 30th in 1997. From 1996 to 1999, business activity nearly doubled, growing from 60 businesses to 112.



Several additional factors contributed to the revitalization of the area. In 1993, the Portland Development Commission (PDC) established the Oregon Convention Center Urban Renewal Area (OCCURA) that included the western end of Alberta Street up to NE 15th Avenue. This allowed for tax increment funds to be used toward further redevelopment efforts along the street and made properties within that area eligible for the PDC's Storefront Improvement Program. The inclusion of Alberta Street in the OCCURA was largely the result of Sam Brooks' efforts. Brooks founded and currently chairs the Oregon Association of Minority Entrepreneurs (OAME) and is the CEO at Brooks Staffing.



In 1996, Sabin Community Development Corporation (Sabin CDC) engaged community members in creating a plan for Alberta Street. Three citizen committees formed – Commercial Revitalization, Street Beautification and Streetscape. Each took on tasks to clean up the street, make it look better and attract business and investment.

### 2000 - 2010

The Street was safer, occupancy rates were increasing, and despite the economic downturn, new development continued. While progress on Alberta Street was significant, it was clear there was still work to be done to complete and sustain existing efforts, support and foster new projects, programs, and activities, and to preserve Alberta Street's character and assets.

### Moving Forward

Thanks to the hard work of residents, merchants, activists and volunteers, Alberta Street is now back on the map, not as a symbol of urban decline and violence, but as a desirable place to live and open a business. With this change comes challenge. A consequence has been a decline in the number of African-American residents in the surrounding neighborhoods as well as in small business ownership.

On February 24, 2015, Alberta Main Street held a community gathering called "Honoring Our Past, Planning Our Future" to gather input from local community members and identify organizational priorities moving forward. Many attendees shared that they have not benefited from overall improvements, citing a lack of resources, relationships and knowledge necessary to take advantage of economic opportunities available to them. There was also a call for effective ways to mitigate the harmful effects of displacement and to engage youth. While we cannot turn back the clock, there is a clear and compelling need to address these issues and to close the equity gap in our community.

Alberta Main Street developed an equity strategy and goals to guide our efforts:

1. Ensure Alberta Main Street's leadership is comprised of skilled and dedicated community leaders, who reflect the diversity and understand the needs of the community we serve.
2. Ensure resources provided by Alberta Main Street, including but not limited to capital projects, business programs and Alberta Street Fair, reach a diverse group of community members, businesses, and property owners.
3. Increase outreach to ensure events, programs and projects welcome and involve a diverse group of community members.
4. Ensure participation in Alberta Main Street is broad-based, and is representative of our larger community.

## Alberta Street Historical Markers Project Project Details

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### Issued by

Alberta Main Street (AMS)

### Project Summary

Through this RFQ, AMS seeks to commission an artist or artist team to develop permanent public artwork in the form of historical and cultural markers (Markers) that honor and document the history of the African American community on Alberta Street and are inspired by stories collected from past and present African American community members.

### Location

NE Alberta Street between NE 10th - 31st Avenue  
(specific installation sites TBD)

### Project Scope

AMS seeks to **maximize visibility and impact** given the project budget.

### Project Budget

The project budget is approximately **\$30,000** and is inclusive of all costs associated with this project including, but not limited to, artist fees, subcontractors' fees, engineering, materials, fabrication, transportation, installation (including any site modification), and post installation documentation.

### Eligibility

This call is open to professional artists residing and eligible to work in the United States, and/or teams led by such artists. Preference will be given to Portland metro area based artists, particularly those with **demonstrable deep connections to Alberta Street or lived experience as part of the African American community affected by change on Alberta Street.**

Artists without the means of fabrication and installation should not be deterred from submitting qualifications, as AMS will work with them to find partners to build their capacity.

### Teams

Artists are encouraged to submit as teams that could include, but are not limited to artists of all disciplines, people with technical expertise, historians, and/or non-professionals who have connections to the Alberta Street community and the history of Alberta Street.

### Project Considerations

- Artist or artist team will be expected to collaborate with the storyteller(s) whose story is the inspiration for the Marker.
- Markers should represent the Alberta Street African American community and history in a thoughtful, insightful, creative, and respectful manner.
- This call is not limited to any specific medium. AMS is not predetermining the form.

### Physical Considerations

Submissions must comply with regulatory requirements. Objects that are mass-produced or of standard manufacture are not eligible for consideration. Additionally, the Markers should:

- Create a street identity that is inspired by the texture, character and diversity of the community.
- Provide continuity but with diversity of form and concept.
- Support concept of sustainability in materials, production, longevity, etc.
- Be safe, low maintenance, vandal resistant and able to withstand intense weather conditions.
- Complement the existing surroundings and infrastructure.
- Be accessible to a broad audience.

### Design Proposal Honorarium

Selected finalists will receive a maximum of \$500 for design fees following the submission and presentation of a Design Proposal.

## Project Management

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AMS has engaged Diversa to manage this project. The selected artist or artist team will contract directly with AMS to successfully complete the full scope of the project within the project budget and on schedule.

### Project Manager

Zoe Piliafas

Diversa

(971) 277-0072

[RFQ@albertamainst.org](mailto:RFQ@albertamainst.org)

Diversa uses stories and technology to create new worlds. Our stories connect us. When stories are collected from diverse individuals and combined into a larger narrative, they become even more powerful. Diversa's work is always evolving to embrace the world's most challenging problems by learning the stories that center the solutions.

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**Funding provided by Prosper Portland, Oregon Arts Commission, Pacific Power Foundation, Oregon Community Foundation and many individual contributions.**

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## Submission Requirements

Artists or artist teams responding to this RFQ must submit complete responses to the information required in this section. All required materials must be **submitted at one time via one submittal method**. To conserve resources, electronic submissions are encouraged but not required.

Respondents should present the required information in a clear and concise manner.

- I. **Curriculum Vitae or Resumé** with contact information (name, address, telephone, email) for artist or team lead; may include links to web materials. (maximum 2 pages, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins)
- II. **Letter of interest (aka artist statement)** addressing conceptual interest in the project and demonstrating the ability to produce quality work. Include why you are interested in this project and your connection to Alberta Street or the African American community affected by change on Alberta Street. (maximum 2 pages, single-spaced, 12-point font, 1-inch margins)
- III. **Digital images of past works**, including public art, with particular emphasis on works of a similar scope or utilizing similar techniques and preferably created with the past four years. (minimum 6 images, maximum 10 images per team member) Please closely observe the following guidelines for the submittal of digital images:
  - ▶ Format: .jpg/.jpeg
  - ▶ Resolution: minimum 72dpi; maximum 100 dpi
  - ▶ Size: minimum 5.5" x 7"; maximum 11" x 14").
  - ▶ File name: artist's last name, first initial, underscore, and number corresponding to the number on the image list. For example ObamaB\_01.jpeg.
- IV. **Annotated image list** of past works accompanying the digital images (see digital instructions above) with artist's name, title of work, year, location, media, and budget (if applicable). Describe the project concept in one to two sentences maximum.
- V. **References**. Provide a minimum of two (2) and no more than five (5) project references. For each reference, provide contact information (name, phone and email), a short description of the project, highlighting any similarities to this project, and a photograph of the referenced project. References may or may not be contacted.
- VI. [if applying as a team] **Team description**, including roles (maximum 2 pages) If applying as a team please designate one team member as the primary contact and provide email/phone contact information for that person on each page of the application materials.

AMS reserves the right to request additional information from individual artists.

Please feel welcome to contact us ahead of the deadline if you have any questions about the application.

Zoe Piliafas | (971) 277-0072 | [RFQ@albertamainst.org](mailto:RFQ@albertamainst.org)

## Evaluation Criteria

AMS is dedicated to selecting an artist or artist team who create artworks of redeeming quality that advance the understanding of visual art and enhance public space. AMS will select the artist or artist team that best meets the requirements, based on the information contained in their response to the RFQ and any reference checks conducted. Specifically, in the selection of finalists, the selection committee will review and consider the following evaluation criteria:

1. Artistic merit of body of work;
2. Strong conceptual skills with innovative and effective approaches demonstrated in other creative projects;
3. Ability to design artwork that is sensitive to social, environmental, historical, and/or other relevant contexts;
4. Ability to translate artistic concepts into materials that are appropriate for public space, taking into consideration maintenance, safety, and longevity;
5. Ability and willingness to collaborate with AMS staff and volunteers, design and engineering professionals, stakeholders, and contractors;
6. Probability of successful execution and completion of project;
7. Ability to design, fabricate, and complete public art projects and/or custom architectural elements on time and in budget;
8. Appropriateness of qualifications for the project;
9. Effective communication and organizational skills; and
10. The quality and comprehensiveness of the submission package.

Preference will be given to Portland metro area based artists, particularly those with demonstrable deep connections to Alberta Street or lived experience as part of the African American community affected by change on Alberta Street.

After evaluating, the selection committee will narrow the pool of applicants to one to three finalists who will be invited develop a Design Proposal. Each finalist will be provided with a creative brief highlighting the selected stories will be paid an honorarium not to exceed \$500 for the development of their Design Proposal.

Design Proposals will be subject to review and acceptance by the HMLC, AMS Board of Directors, and the AMS Design Committee. AMS anticipates selecting one artist or artist team to complete the project.

## How to Apply

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RFQ responses should be submitted in one of the following ways. All materials must be submitted at the same time using the same method.



**Email** link to a Dropbox or Google folder containing all application materials to [RFQ@albertamainst.org](mailto:RFQ@albertamainst.org)



**Mail or deliver** response on a **flash drive** containing all materials as PDFs and deliver to:  
Alberta Main Street  
1722 NE Alberta Street  
Portland, OR 97211



**Upload** your files via the Alberta Main Street website: [albertamainst.org](http://albertamainst.org)

## About Us

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**Alberta Main Street** is a volunteer-driven 501(c)3 nonprofit community and economic development organization focused on intentional and equitable neighborhood scale economic development between NE 10th and NE 31st Avenues. Founded in 2010, Alberta Main Street advances efforts to develop Alberta Street as a vibrant, creative, equitable, and sustainable commercial district serving residents and visitors to our community. Four volunteer-driven committees (design, promotion, business development and equity) and our Board of Directors have a proven track record for coordinating high quality programs, projects and activities.

- Supporting Independent Small Businesses. AMS provides professional development and networking opportunities for small business owners via bi-monthly small business seminars and mixers.
- Creating a Sense of Place. AMS strengthens the connection between people and the places we share and strives to make Alberta Street a safer, cleaner, and more vibrant place.
- Civic Engagement Activities and Events. AMS creates community-building opportunities for local residents to engage in their community.

AMS builds relationships and seeks community-based solutions to challenges by leveraging the resources within the community. We believe Alberta Street should be a place where all people from all backgrounds can thrive.

**Diversa** is a multimedia production company that combines story + art + technology to create new worlds. We believe stories connect us. When stories are collected from diverse individuals and combined into a larger narrative, they become even more powerful. Our work is always evolving to embrace the world's most challenging problems by learning the stories that center the solutions.



Naim Hasan Photography 2017

## Schedule

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### Post RFQ

October 16, 2017

### RFQ Responses due

**Tuesday November 21, 2017 by 3 p.m. Pacific Time**

### Finalist(s) selected and notified

Friday December 22, 2017

### Finalist(s) Preliminary Design Proposals due

January 19, 2018

### Finalist(s) Final Design Proposals due

February 19, 2018

### Commission Awarded

March 9, 2018

### Markers Installed

September 30, 2018

*AMS reserves the right to modify this schedule as required.*