

Washington Park to get major piece of public art

By JOURNAL STAFF

When most people walk or drive past the entrance to Washington Park at Central Avenue and Paterson Plank Road in the Jersey City Heights, they likely see — or look past — a rather nondescript circular grassy patch on one side, brightened a bit by a few bushes.

"In that area, people have no kind of art. We're looking for quality."

BEN JONES
ARTIST

When the members of the Hudson County Public Art Commission go by, they see endless possibilities.

The site, on the Union City border, has been chosen for the county's inaugural public art competition, and artists everywhere are being asked to start thinking about what they would like to see there.

Applications to compete for the \$175,000 public art project are being taken through April 16. From the pool of artists who send in their qualifications, five

finalists will be selected to submit design proposals.

The finished piece will be funded by a 1 percent set-aside of the county's capital outlay budget, according to William LaRosa, administrator of the county Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development.

Hudson is the only one of New Jersey's 21 counties to have the 1 percent set-aside for public art, LaRosa said, adding that the intention is to foster beauty and pride in neighborhoods as well as support the fine arts.

Members of the commission who outlined the project to The Jersey Journal's editorial board this week agreed.

"In that area, those people have no kind of art," renowned artist and New Jersey City University professor Ben Jones said of the densely populated, working-class neighborhood that surrounds Washington Park.

"We're looking for quality," he added.

This first of what the commission hopes will become an annual art project at county facilities around Hudson will go inside the circle, which is 43 feet, 8 inches in diameter.

Any type of public art will be considered except works that

incorporate light or water. The process is so open-ended that the commission decided against using the word "sculpture" in any of its materials.

"We want to keep our minds as open as possible," said Jersey City Museum Executive Director Marion Grzesiak. "We have no preconceived notions of what this can be."

Commission members prom-

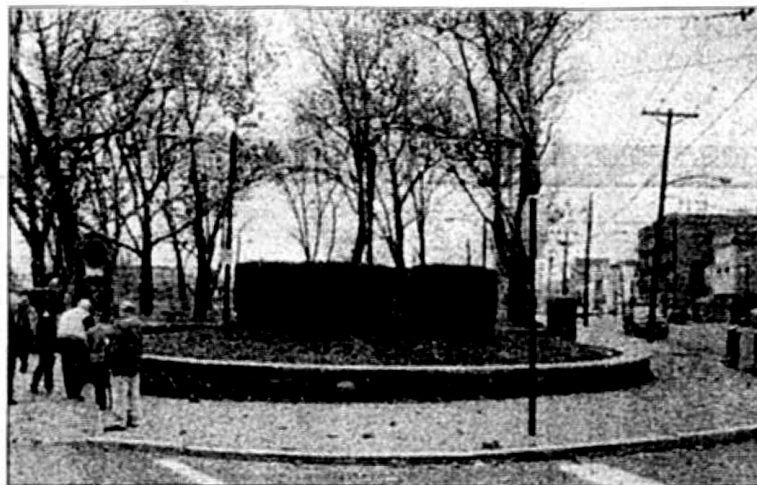
"We want to keep our minds as open as possible. We have no preconceived notions of what this can be."

MARION GRZESIAK
JERSEY CITY MUSEUM

ised the editorial board that the public will be included in the selection process.

The five finalists' submissions will be exhibited at the Brennan Courthouse, at Newark and Baldwin avenues in Jersey City, before the final selection is made.

"We want this to be a world-class public art project," LaRosa said.



THE ENTRANCE to Washington Park at Paterson Plank Road and Central Avenue.

Artists must tell why they'd be best

Artists interested in being considered for the \$175,000 Hudson County public art project have until 5 p.m. April 16 to answer the Request for Qualifications.

To apply, call the Hudson County Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs at (201) 459-2070 or go to www.hudson-countynj.org or www.visit-hudson.org.

RFQs should include an application form, resume, slides or digital examples of past work, up to three letters of recommendation and an artist's statement.

RFQs will be whittled down to five finalists who will each receive \$1,500 and be invited to submit designs by July 6.

The design submissions will be available for public

review and judged by: William LaRosa, administrator of the county Office of Cultural and Heritage Affairs/Tourism Development; Benjamin J. Dineen, president of St. Dominic Academy in Jersey City; David Edwards, Hudson County Community College dean of instruction; Marion Grzesiak, executive director of the Jersey City Museum; Valerie Hufnagel, president of Hufnagel Landscaping Inc. of North Bergen; Ben Jones, an artist and professor at New Jersey City University; Dean Marchetto, president of Dean Marchetto Architects in Hoboken; photographer and Jersey City Planning Board member Leon Yost, and Meredith Lippman, program development specialist with LaRosa's office.