

CITY OF LA CROSSE ARTS BOARD

Proposal for a SCULPTURE PARK: **NEHOSTÓ ART PARK** (DRAFT)

September 2018 (draft revised June 2020, with proposed adoption of place name **Nehostó**)

BACKGROUND and VISION

Nehostó, formerly known as Riverside North, exists between the proposed River Point development and the La Crosse River, and is the art park recently approved by the City Arts Board.

The board is working with other council committees and with the City Council to realize this important part of its mission:

“analyze gaps and opportunities in programming, support, funding, and promotion for the arts, cultural activity and economic development.” Notable gaps include the city’s lack of a sculpture park, nonexistent public art by Native Americans, and no native place names. Further, while the city boasts a wealth of public art in designated places such as city parks (featuring sculpture by local artists), and other city-owned venues (such as the *Confluence* mural on the west façade of the Pump House), no space exists for contemporary, experimental art in the medium of sculpture. In large part, our culture (nationally and locally) demonstrates a predilection for permanent monuments and sculpture. Contemporary art, spanning at least the last five decades, has sought a different concept of sculpture in public places, embracing instead a temporal, ephemeral nature, in the form of earthworks and site-specific sculpture. Another notable gap is the absence of inclusivity in cultural activity, specifically (Ho-Chunk) place names of public lands within the city. Bordered by the La Crosse River to the south and the new River Point development to the north, this wild space was, like the entire river valley, Ho-Chunk Land. With an expressed intention to honor native peoples, specifically the Ho-Chunk people who maintain a presence in the area, the board received a name from the Ho-Chunk Tribal Elder Court that describes the space: **Nehostó (water comes together)**. The newly designated still “wild” space of Riverside North (**Nehostó Art Park**) presents a unique location and opportunity to realize this vision. From our formative conversations on how this space might be utilized, at least two significant sculptural proposals have been brought before the board, one of which was designed by a Ho-Chunk artist.

OBSERVATIONS and PRECEDENTS

What we envision is a space that will accommodate innovative, contemporary sculpture/installation by regional and national artists. The area that will become **Nehostó Sculpture park** currently exists as an extension of the network of recreational trails in the city center, as it connects with the La Crosse River Marsh Trails, the International Friendship Gardens and Riverside Park. We have identified similar initiatives for sculpture parks, including the following (3 of which are on public/city-owned land):

Stevens Point Sculpture Park (founded in 2009) <http://stevenspointsculpturepark.org/>,

Socrates Sculpture Park (Queens, NY; founded in 1986) <http://socratessculpturepark.org/>.

The Greenway (Boston; founded in 2008) <https://www.rosekennedygreenway.org/art/>

Franconia Sculpture Park (founded 1996) <https://www.franconia.org/>

These venues feature some temporal sculpture installations, which is part of our vision for **Nehostó Art Park**. Further, there is strong potential for utilizing the space as an outdoor creative laboratory by area schools, such as Summit Environmental School, the School of Technology and the Arts I & II, area higher education institutions. The Arts Board envisions this space as an intersection of art, nature, and culture. We are especially interested in engaging the Ho Chunk Nation in developing site-specific sculpture for **Nehostó**, and in commissioning a sculpture that creates a gateway to this special, unique space. In proximity to the proposed mixed-use development of River Point, the sculpture park could inspire a segue to more public art in park and commercial spaces to the north of the trail.

INAUGURAL SCULPTURES

The Arts Board is in dialogue with the family of Truman Lowe (1944-2019), an internationally recognized Ho-Chunk sculptor with ties to La Crosse, discussing the possibility to include one of his works in **Nehostó**. Possibilities include a gateway form or a bird effigy. Lowe's work is open-form, connecting closely with nature both visually and conceptually. The Arts Board recently approved another sculpture for **Nehostó**, a piece called "The Arch of Nature." The sculpture, designed by Roald Gundersen, is inspired by the Losey Memorial Arch at the entrance to Oak Grove Cemetery, which is based on the triumphal arch of antiquity. "The Arch of Nature" celebrates the triumph of nature's ability to survive by changing, acknowledging the ephemerality of our existence. Both of these inaugural sculptures could function as gateway features, transitioning from our urban world into the wetland habitat, passages between downtown and the new River Point development.

CITY of LA CROSSE ARTS BOARD MISSION

The purpose of the Arts Board is to focus on four principal areas: Development of the Arts District as identified in City Vision 2020; to serve as forum to receive proposals and forward them to appropriate Council committee; work as advocate for the arts by commenting of policies and plans of the City and by seeking non-City funding for its advancement; and to analyze gaps and opportunities in programming, support, funding, and promotion for the arts, cultural activity and economic development.