

Ann Arbor Public Art Commission

October 26

Work Session Report

The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission held a work session to discuss the challenges of the city's public art program, consider the causes of those challenges, and to put forward ideas that could become solutions that might reverse the causes of the program's challenges.

The meeting was facilitated, and it was formatted as a brainstorming session. The Commissioners were asked to put forth answers to the following questions:

1. *What are our biggest challenges from the community's perspective?*
2. *What are the primary causes?*
3. *What can be done to improve the situation?*
 - 3a. *Are there any major advantages or drawbacks to making these improvements?*
 - 3b. *What needs to be done to get there, or, is anything keeping us from making these improvements?*

All discussion fell under three items of categorization: Challenges, Causes, and Solutions, and each discussion point was visually categorized as such.

Challenges

In answering the first question, a handful of challenges were verbalized. Similar Challenges were grouped together. The outcome of the session identified five groups of Challenges.

1. The time frame for a project is too long; there should be more art in the community
2. Annual Plan of projects needs better public input; community not aware of AAPAC's efforts
3. What is happening to the amount of money not being spent?; there is confusion about the funding source, the percentage, and allocation; should money be spent on public art?
4. Why can't there be temporary, or performance art; the community is unaware of AAPACs limitations on art "placement"
5. Why are non-local artists being selected for projects?

These groups of Challenges were prioritized in the order they are listed. (The first two groups of Challenges tied as a priority and no commissioners viewed the last challenge as a priority.)

Causes of the Challenges and Solutions

Project Time-Frame & More Art in Community Challenge

Commissioners discussed the amount of time public art projects take. They described public art as parallel and similar to any capital project the city undertakes. The steps involved in completing a work of public art were brought up. The Commission has developed system to approach each public art project—AAPAC follows an outlined Project Steps procedure. Reexamining that procedure, and developing other procedures for projects of a particular type, such as a process for non-commissioned work, was found to be a potential solution.

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<i>It takes several steps and time to complete a project</i>	<i>A program to purchase non-commissioned art is currently being developed</i>
	<i>Streamline the process - accept non-commissioned work, accept temporary art</i>
	<i>Benchmark Time frame for getting projects in the ground (from other commissions)</i>
	<i>Develop "programs" with a reoccurring process - banners, streets</i>

Commissioners were very vocal about their role as working volunteers. The Commission talked about the amount of staff time they have available to them and the fact that they have been without dedicated staff for a large portion of the time since the public art program’s creation. The Commission felt the expectations of the public art program to produce work are misaligned, when considering their intended function, as a body of governance, against their unintended role, functioning as managers.

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<i>AAPAC is an advisory Board</i>	<i>Provide more staff support time</i>
<i>Not enough commissioners who are volunteers</i>	<i>Better understanding about how staff time can be allocated (simplify allocation)</i>
	<i>Align community expectations with available staff and commission hours</i>

Public Input on Project’s Plan & Public Awareness of AAPAC Efforts Challenge

Just as staff time and the commission’s working role is a problem when examining the number of projects completed and the time involved in moving projects forward, it is also seen as a cause of the lack of public input for the public art program’s Annual Plan and the lack of community awareness for what AAPAC is doing. Lack of public input on the selection of projects was identified as a challenge. Using staff to increase public participation and public awareness was accepted as a solution. Also, “broadening” the scope of potential projects to include in the Annual Plan, in an effort to consider different types of public art projects, was voiced as an issue that could be improved.

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
<i>AAPAC is perceived as staff</i>	<i>AAPAC develop a "broader vision" about public art and engage the community about the Annual Plan</i>
	<i>Empower staff to be a resource to AAPAC (doing the work)</i>
	<i>Better defined roles - city staff needs ownership; provide staff support; AAPAC governs</i>
	<i>Improve Council communications (esp. with Annual Plan</i>
	<i>AAPAC developed the bylaws and guidelines "tell that story"</i>

Funding Source, Fund Spending, and Funding of Program Challenge

No causes were identified. Most of the discussion referenced the latest proposed changes to the public art ordinance, which include a three-year window-of-time in which to spend any pooled public art funding. The Commission talked about adding more time to that "window" and briefly spoke about how acceptable it was to have a time limit to create projects.

<i>Solutions</i>
Continue to educate community about ordinance & AAPAC's mission
Ask for a 2 year extension after the 3 year deadline
Develop a more acceptable approach to the proposed "3 year time limit"

Permanence of Art and Limitations on Art Placement Challenge

If public art could include temporary art, there would be need to be structural changes to the program to allow it, which would require changes to the ordinance (or, more specifically, changes to the source of the funding). Investigating alternatives, that would allow rotating artwork, or a reoccurring program with a defined lifespan, might be achieved without any fundamental changes to the public art program.

<i>Causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
ordinance limits AAPAC -permanent; city-owned; source funding	Develop "programs" and define projects lifespan
there is a confusion about the definition of "permanent"	Establish funding for promotion
	Develop partnerships "facilitate" art in the community
	ordinance amendment to better define and allow temporary