

Ann Arbor Public Art Commission 2017-2018 Year-end Report

Overview

2017-2018 saw continued progress transitioning the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission (AAPAC) from administering public art selections to providing strategic advice to Council and staff. To that end, twelve municipal construction projects have been added to the previous seven recommendations. The Commission believes that these projects have potential for public art using criteria developed in coordination with staff and submitted to Council.

The AAPAC retreat was held in February and, after much discussion, it was decided to focus the limited time during the year in three additional areas: tracking recommendations to Council, promoting existing public art, and including a youth perspective to the deliberations. (Recommendations to achieve these goals are below).

AAPAC acted as advisors for three new public art projects including the: Stadium Blvd retaining wall art, manhole cover art and a rotating Gallery in Council Chambers. These projects were administered by city staff and the Ann Arbor Art Center. The Commission also helped facilitate repairs to the Allmendinger Park mural.

Additionally, the strategic advice provided to staff for the \$1M Bloomberg Challenge grant competition helped lead the selection process for Ann Arbor's submission to Bloomberg.

Finally, the Public Art Commission is pleased to welcome, Deb Mexicotte, as a new Art Commissioner and bid fond farewell to Bob Miller. Bob was the former chair and served on the commissioner for over six years. He will be missed.

CIP Recommendations

Per Chapter 24 of the City Code, one of the primary responsibilities of the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission is to make recommendations to City Council for capital investment projects which may be suitable for enhancement with public art. After extensive work with City staff, to whom an offer of thanks for their time and input is necessary, the following list was developed and approved by Council as having potential for further consideration for public art as the project moves to the design stage:

1. MF-CB-14-01: Fire Station #2 Reconstruction. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$30,000 (1%) be added to the \$3,000,000 project budget.
2. MF-CB-18-03: New Fire Station A. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$43,000 (1%) be added to the \$4,350,000 project budget.
3. MF-CB-18-05: New Fire Station B. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$27,000 (1%) be added to the \$2,700,000 project budget.
4. MF-PR-10-01: Playgrounds and Neighborhood Parks. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$5,000 be added to each of the annual \$100,000 project budgets for upcoming years.
5. TR-AP-99-11: Terminal Expansion at A2 Airport. The scope of the project is

apparently still to be determined, but if it involves a public area the possibilities for flight-themed artwork seem worth pursuing. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$20,000 be added to the \$776,000 project budget.

6. TR-AT-18-22: Expansion of the Border to Border trail in the Fuller/Maiden Lane area. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$50,000 be added to the \$1,750,000 project budget.

7. TR-SC-08-01: Intersection improvement of Fuller/Maiden Lane area near the Medical Center. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$100,000 be added to the roughly \$4,600,000 project budget.

8. TR-AT-10-38, Connector; TR-AT-10-22, Downtown Wally Station. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$500,000 be added to the \$143,360,000 project budget. 9. TR-AT-08-03, Plymouth Road Wally Station. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$50,000 be added to the \$920,000 project budget.

10. TR-OT-18-11, TR-OT-18-10, TR-OT-18-08, TR-OT-18-02, TR-OT-18-12, TR-OT-18-07, and TR-OT-18-13: Downtown streetscape projects. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of 1% be added to each project budget.

11. UT-WS-16-17: Water Treatment Plant Replacement Project. Understand the plant itself is not open to the public for security reasons, but art on or by the fence around the plant could be a welcome improvement to the neighborhood. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$150,000 be added to the \$82,400,000 project budget.

12. TR-SC-18-02 and TR-SC-18-19: Two phases of road reconstruction of the Springwater neighborhood in southeast Ann Arbor (the project also includes multiple other utility projects). This is a relatively modest income area of Ann Arbor that would not be served by other public art. Recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of \$65,000 be added to the project budget; this appears to be about 1% of the coordinated road and utility projects.

13. TR-OT-18-09, First & Ashley Two-Way Conversion & Streetscapes: This replaces two streetscape projects that were previously included in item 17 above. We continue to recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of 1% of the streetscape portions of the budget.

14. TR-OT-18-02, Huron Streetscape: This project was also previously included in item 17 above, but has been expanded and the timing accelerated in the proposed CIP. We continue to recommend a preliminary enhancement budget of 1% of the streetscape portions of the budget.

15. TR-PF-19-01, Ann-Ashley Parking Structure Expansion: This is a new project; we recommend an enhancement budget of \$100,000 be included in the project budget.

16. TR-SC-19-02, Nixon Street Improvements Design: This is also a new project, and since it is only design work the scope is still unclear so an enhancement budget may be hard to project. However, it seems like an ideal opportunity to bring public art to a neighborhood outside the downtown core, and we encourage support to have the designers work with the A2PAC to look for opportunities for public art.

Recommendations on the Art Selection Process

Per Chapter 24 of the City Code, the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission is tasked with making recommendations to City Council regarding the selection process for public art. Our recommendations are as follows:

These recommendations should not be taken as criticism of past selection processes, which have been effective in identifying quality artworks, and which we presume used the best procedures identified to that point. But no process is perfect, and we have identified some areas we would like to see done differently going forward. We have tried to group these into related areas of focus:

I. Balancing artistic quality with the practical considerations which are a unique aspect of public art:

- A. The primary goal should be making the best artistic selection from a pool of qualified applicants. The selection will have to meet a wide variety of practical threshold considerations (cost, durability, maintainability, public safety, etc.), but artistic quality compatible with the goals of the project is a foremost factor in the decision.
- B. Evaluation of submissions for the practical considerations should happen-early in the process, so preferred artistic candidates do not arise from multiple reviews only to have one or more cut down by practical concerns.
- C. The initial RFP to artists should note particular practical and artistic concerns for the anticipated project location.
- D. Ideally, the initial practical evaluations of submissions would occur simultaneously with the initial artistic evaluations. If preferred artistic submissions do not meet all the practical evaluations, the artists should be offered the opportunity to try to address them to preserve the preferred artistic approach.
- E. We recognize that practical considerations will need to be re-evaluated through the selection process, if more information is gathered about prospective artworks that might reveal potential issues. Again, the artist(s) will be given the opportunity to address practical concerns and so the artistic integrity of the selection process is maintained.

II. Organizing the Selection Process:

- A. The selection process will vary for different projects; at a minimum there should be a “Major Project” process and a “Minor Project” process. We do not think we can determine a bright line between the two; perhaps it should be determined by Council when the project budget is approved, based on recommendations from staff.
- B. Major projects would presumably involve an outside consultant managing a more intensive and public selection process, and be used for artworks which are larger, probably more expensive, more prominent, or have other unique features. Minor projects might be smaller artworks, perhaps more often within buildings or in residential neighborhoods, and be more staff driven with volunteer committees either recommending or deciding on a preferred selection or a small group of options.

- C. There needs to be very strict consistency (and clarity) regarding the intended process, between the consultant contract, the RFP to artists, and public statements about the selection.
- D. Any volunteer selection committee should have at least 5 members (not including a non-voting staff manager). If the staff manager is not the appropriate person to evaluate the practical aspects of the proposed project, the committee shall include a representative for the city who is able to perform that function. The rest of the committee will include at least 40% representation by people in the arts community (practicing artists, gallery owners, art teachers, or arts administrators from schools, museums, or non-profit arts organizations). The balance of the committee should include people living or working in the neighborhood of the artwork if possible.

III. **Working with Artists:**

- A. We believe the artistic conception and design, (not just the final implementation) is the basis for a successful project and therefore has value. This significant output of time and effort on the part of the artist should be recognized and the City should not expect artists to put forth that time and effort for free (such as by requiring unique artistic submittals as a response to an RFP). As a result, we recommend the procurement process (especially for major projects) lean toward a qualifications-based selection, where artists are picked or at least winnowed based on experience, ability, references, and other qualifications. This may result in a “winner” being picked to develop an artistic concept, as was done with the Fish artwork; or with several being given stipends to develop preliminary concepts, as was done with the Stadium Bridges artwork. Minor projects might involve selecting from existing artworks that artists can submit from their available stock, or concepts they are intending to develop.
- B. Some public artworks will involve large scale and require significant engineering capability (such as for foundation design) that may be beyond the capacity of otherwise capable artists or artist team. Where appropriate, having the RFP note that the City will assist (by staff or outside consultants) with such engineering would help level the playing field for artists, when a selected project is shown to be capable of having a successful engineered solution.
- C. Although we generally understand that the art procurement process must follow City guidelines, we encourage the City to review those processes to avoid making them too onerous and thereby discouraging participation. Artists, unlike other professional services consultants, may not be as accustomed to or prepared for indemnification clauses, complex insurance requirements, and other legal issues. At a minimum, the RFP needs to be clear about what the City’s requirements will be, so the artist can at least go in with an understanding of what he or she is getting into.

IV. **Community Involvement and Community Concerns regarding the selection process:**

- A. Public votes may not always be necessary, desirable, or practical; but if there is a public vote, it should be the final determination in the process.

- B. Many of the comments public art gets from the citizenry relate to the desire to support local artists. We have not yet received the legal opinion we requested regarding what options are available in terms of preferences for local artists, but if such preferences are a possibility, then we would be supportive of a modest preference (such as one item out of several on a score sheet). We would not want the local preference to outweigh the quality of the art, but it seems a reasonable way to decide between two otherwise-similar candidates.
- V. **AAPAC Involvement in the selection process:**
- A. A2PAC members may serve on selection committees, but should make up less than 50% of the committee.
 - B. A2PAC's final recommendation of any selection to council should be based on its determination of whether the process used was consistent with the published intentions and with A2PAC's recommendations. A2PAC as an organization does not make artistic judgments.

Art Commission Retreat Objectives

Tracking Recommendations

Interest was expressed in having the AAPAC be a champion for each enhanced project, to be involved in early discussions with the project engineer about possible locations and types of artwork that may be suitable for that project as its parameters become clearer. The Commission has a desire to continue to be involved early, allowing a better chance of the artwork being integrated into the overall project design instead of applied after the fact. The champion may also help to determine the appropriate process for art selection; this might include a recommendation on whether it should be a Major or Minor project per the Selection Process Recommendations approved at the November 2017 AAPAC meeting. The champion would not necessarily be expected to serve on the subsequent selection committee.

Based on this discussion, the following are primary steps in project tracking:

1. Approval of project enhancement in CIP.
2. City decision to move forward with enhanced project listed in CIP.
3. Assignment of City engineer (or outside consultant for DDA project).
4. Determination of AAPAC project champion.
5. Champion works with Engineer on preliminary determination of scope and locations of artwork based on determined scope and design of overall project.
6. The Art Enhancement is determined to be a Major or Minor Project, which suggests likely artwork selection processes and costs.
7. Project scope and budget is approved by Council, along with final enhancement budget and process.
8. Selection process is conducted and artwork is selected.
9. AAPAC votes on whether appropriate process was followed, prior to Council final vote to move forward with artwork.
10. Artwork is produced and installed.

Promoting Existing Public Art

The Promotions and Marketing Committee was formed to carry out the general goal to “Provide educational information and identify public art works already in place so that residents and visitors to Ann Arbor can more easily find and understand the city’s collection.”

This committee has set out to achieve this goal with a focus on three main accomplishments:

1. Update AAPAC city website: <https://www.a2gov.org/departments/public-services/Pages/Public-Art.aspx>
2. Update AAPAC collection on MI Art Tours site: http://www.miarttours.com/home/search-result?tour_id=97
3. Add plaques to each AAPAC artwork that identifies the artist, title of the work, date of installation, AAPAC/City of Ann Arbor, and (Maybe) QR code to more information on the website

Actions taken to date:

- ❖ Working with staff, the content of the city’s Ann Arbor Public Art Commission web page with a focus on current projects such as the stadium bridge piece, manhole covers, and city council chambers gallery art.
- ❖ A request has been submitted to city staff to determine if the city has a complete inventory of all city owned artwork and/or artwork displayed in public buildings or in public spaces.
 - This list is necessary to ensure all three of the accomplishments listed above are achieved thoroughly and completely
- ❖ Inquires made on whether the city has a media strategy for promoting the awareness of all the city’s works of art.
- ❖ Researching how other cities are acknowledging/publicly identifying their public art collection in order to make a recommendation to city staff on a variety of options Ann Arbor may pursue to identify its collection.

Including a Youth Perspective

As part of promoting the awareness of public art, Commission feels that the city’s public art program could be enhanced by including a youth perspective. A recommendation to staff consider three initiatives:

1. Involve youth in the commission through commission or committee work
 - A. Student Member at-large for committee
 - B. 1 year junior student commission appointment

Preliminary Tasks

- Outreach to organizations to publicize/recruit
- Create a simple job description and responsibilities for both commission member and committee member.
- Match student with a mentor for the year

2. Involve youth in public input

Preliminary Tasks

- Develop list of organizations to send info (schools, youth organizations, libraries, Skatepark ,sports facilities, Ann Arbor Art Center, Fool Moon, apps)
- Determine what methodology (portals, apps, displays, etc.) will most likely be seen by students. Look for ways that allow immediate response rather than “remember to vote”

3. Develop a youth voice

Preliminary Tasks

- Seek to include youth on task forces
- Work with leadership to find opportunities for hearing from youth about what excites them about art

New Public Artwork

City Gallery

Ann Arbor Art Center was contracted to curate rotating exhibitions in City Council Chambers. Each exhibition highlights the diverse talent and creativity of local artists. Each exhibit is promoted on the Art Center’s website. This is a one-year pilot project.

Manhole Cover Artwork

The Ann Arbor Art Center was contracted to administer a selection process for artwork designs that will be incorporated into manhole covers produced for the City. These manhole covers will be part of normal replacements and the foundry will not charge extra for this custom design.

The public viewed six semi-finalists online and voted for one. The three top designs were selected. Each winner will receive a \$1000 stipend from the City of Ann Arbor and have their design produced for approximately two years on new cast iron manhole covers installed throughout the City.

The winners are:

Laurie Borggreve of Edina, MN for “Horizon”



Taylor Mentzer of Ann Arbor for “Kayak”



Shaun Whitehouse of Ann Arbor for “Tower and Tree”



Stadium Boulevard Retaining Wall Artwork

The Ann Arbor Art Center was contracted to administer a selection process for the Stadium Boulevard retaining wall. A call for art was posted and received 60 submissions, which were later reduced to three semi-finalists: Brian Brush, Katherine Larson, and Lisa Sauvé. The Art Center and city staff recommended Brian Brush and his piece called Leaven. The Art Commission found that the consultant’s contract was followed and through the CIP Committee, the Commission established ***Recommendations on the Art Selection Process***.

Allmendinger Park Mosaic repairs

Mary Thieffels mural, “Nourishing Healthy Seeds”, was vandalized with repairs costing \$2,600. Mary has agreed to make the repairs and it was suggested that lighting and dummy cameras be installed as a deterrent to future vandalism.

Bloomberg Challenge

Bloomberg Philanthropies invited Ann Arbor to participate in their Public Art Challenge. This was for proposals for temporary public art projects and Bloomberg will donate up to \$1 million each to three cities. At the request of Mayor Taylor, a review committee that included the City Administrator Lazarus, Mayor Taylor, Executive Assistant Christine Schopieray, Art Commission Vice Chair Allison Buck and Public Art Liaison Venita Harrison received several submissions and led a review which recommended FLOAT by Shary Brown as the City’s submission. Although Float was not selected as a finalists by Bloomberg, this collaborative effort included input and support from Huron River Water Council; Riverside Arts; City of Ypsilanti DDA and the FestiFools and FoolMoon Project. Appreciation must go to everyone who shared their

enthusiasm and expertise on this great project. All were impressed with its creativity and ability of the team to pull the proposal together quickly on such short notice.

FLOAT: Shary Brown, designed a signature inclusive event, built by and for the community, on and along the Huron River, as it runs through Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti — to raise appreciation and awareness about the River's history and ecology, to encourage sustainable practices, and to generate recreational, cultural, and economic impact in both cities through a positive, shared event.

WonderFool Productions will coordinate and host a series of community meetings to cultivate potential community partners, develop the programs and evaluate the specific community needs to be addressed in FLOAT. Art teaching and creative making workshops will be held in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti in partner facilities and in the River's parks. Local artists will also be commissioned to make collaborative pieces and installations which explore various aspects of the Huron River. These creative activities will culminate in a community built art festival — floating, walking and riding between the two communities in a connected and shared celebration. The community built pieces, park improvements and interactive installations may remain in the parks for the season or permanently.