

# City of Iowa City

## Public Art Strategic Plan

### 2020—2025

Draft – August 2019

## Executive Summary

Public art has the power to energize our public spaces and profoundly transform the places where we live, work, and play. It generates community identity by creating a unique atmosphere and enhancing a sense of place. In functioning both as destination and embellishment, public art plays an important role in sustaining the local economy.

In the pages that follow, we document the process we used to gather feedback from the public regarding the direction Iowa City's Public Art Program should take in the future. The process was exciting and energizing because of the high value people in our community place on the arts. Residents and visitors alike look to the arts as a source of beauty, whimsy, and inspiration, and also as a vehicle we can rely on to shake us out of our comfort zones and draw us together.

After culling through survey responses and notes from thought-provoking conversations that occurred during public meetings and gatherings of arts professionals, we distilled five goals we will use to steer the Public Art Program for the next five years:

### **Vision**

The arts are at our core—they are a big part of what makes Iowa City unique. Public art brings beauty and excitement to our surroundings. It sparks us to find wonder and inspiration in new and unexpected places. By promoting imaginative opportunities to experience and create art together, we can build a community that values and encourages diverse voices. We will continue to use the Public Art Program to nurture creative placemaking, and to inspire, educate/ and enrich our community and its visitors through visual and experiential art. We will work to make Iowa City the Greatest Small City for the Arts in America.

## **Mission**

To create a stimulating public arts environment that reflects and celebrates Iowa City's rich history, culture, diversity and character.

## **Purpose**

To outline a five-year plan to create a more sustainable and diverse public art program designed to meet the interests and the needs of our growing community and to secure the funding necessary to support it.

# Public Art Goals and Strategies

Through the strategic planning process outlined below, the Public Art Advisory Committee has distilled the following five goals:

**Goal 1: Review the existing Public Art Program.** Adjust its policies, priorities and practices to better reflect our dynamic community. Devise creative ways to deliver a wide range of art opportunities—from performance art to permanent installations, participatory programs, and more to stimulate a vibrant public art environment that will enrich us all.

**Goal 2: Expand opportunities** to use public art to enliven and enhance areas throughout Iowa City to ensure that everyone in the community has a chance enjoy it.

**Goal 3: Secure and manage funding** to ensure an ongoing vibrant, sustainable Public Art Program as well as ensure the care and maintenance of existing public art assets.

**Goal 4: Collaborate** with municipal, civic, nonprofit, and private sector organizations to create opportunities for public art.

**Goal 5: Build awareness and promote understanding** about public art and the benefits of the arts in general.

To ensure these goals are met, we have written a timeline with detailed action steps and tasks. This action plan will move us towards reaching the goals and strategies for arts and culture as outlined in the IC2030: Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan Update, adopted May 14, 2013.

To provide context for future discussions, we also offer a brief history of the major accomplishments of the Public Art Program from its inception in 1997 to the present.

Given the importance of public art in making Iowa City both a vibrant place to live and an alluring destination for visitors, we are committed to securing stable funding sources to ensure the future of this vital program. We urge City Council to explore long-term funding options such as a hotel/motel tax set-aside, new requirements or incentives for private development projects, and other creative solutions.

# History of the Iowa City Public Art Program

Iowa City is defined by its flourishing arts and culture scene.

The Public Art Program was established by the City Council in 1997 to revitalize our public spaces and enhance Iowa City's reputation as a cultural destination and vibrant place to live and work.

The Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) was established to oversee the program to manage the budget, determine potential art installation sites, oversee the proposal and selection process, and curate the collection. The city's permanent public art collection is now valued at over \$1,000,000.

The Iowa City Public Art Program has sustained activity over the past twenty years despite regular adjustments to the funding levels.

Public art has the power to energize our public spaces, heighten our awareness, question our assumptions and profoundly transform the places where we live, work, and play. It generates community identity by creating a unique atmosphere and enhancing a sense of place. The Iowa City Public Art Program will continue to sustain and grow our investments in the arts.

## **Public Art Funding - 1999 -2019**

1999 - \$100,000

2000 - \$100,000

2001- \$75,000

2002 - \$100,000

2003 - \$50,000

2004 -\$50,000

2005 - \$50,000

2006 - \$50,000

2007- \$50,000

2008 - \$50,000

2009 - \$50,000

2010 - \$15,000  
2011 - \$15,000  
2012 - \$15,000  
2013 - \$1500  
2014- \$10,000  
2015- \$15,000  
2016- \$15,000  
2017- \$15,000  
2018- \$25,000  
2019- \$25,000

## Snapshot of Major Projects

### **Downtown**

Weatherdance Fountain  
Five Pedestrian Mall Sculptures  
Iowa Avenue Literary Walk  
Irving Weber Sculpture  
Northside Literary Walk

### **Neighborhood Art**

Goosetown and Northside Street Markers  
Longfellow Historic Markers and Wing's Return  
Wetherby Park Shelter Project  
Pheasant Hill Park Mosaic Bench and Plinth  
Grant Wood Neighborhood of Seasons Mosaic Column  
Woodland Walkway—Pheasant Hill Park

### **Parks**

Just for Kicks—Kickers Soccer Park  
Bird in Flight—Sycamore Greenway Trail  
Walk in Beauty—Benton Hill Park  
Love is Strange—Willow Creek Park  
Simple Flight—Peninsula Park

### **City Buildings**

Court Street Transportation Center Wayfinding  
Komorebi, Iowa City City Hall Lobby  
Playful Investigation, Mercer Aquatic Center  
Exploring Iowa's Renewable Energy, Robert A Lee Recreation Center  
Dancing Water Glass Panels, Robert A Lee Recreation Center

### **Murals**

Whole—Under the College Street Bridge

Step up Mural, Mercer Park  
Underwater Scene Mural, Fairmeadows Park

**\*Ongoing annual projects include the Public Art Matching Fund program, Poetry in Public, and Kidztent at the Iowa Arts Festival.**

## Art in Iowa City's Comprehensive Plan

The Public Art Strategic Plan was developed to align with the goals and strategies for arts and culture as outlined in the Iowa City Comprehensive Plan (IC2030: Comprehensive Plan and Strategic Plan Update, adopted May 14, 2013)

- Explore new funding sources for Arts and Culture projects and programs such as Hotel/Motel tax revenue, crowd-funding, a “percent for art” ordinance, and new grant funding
- Seek the participation of diverse populations (e.g. young and old) when developing cultural programs
- Increase visibility and awareness of Arts and Culture programs
- Explore opportunities for new Arts and Culture venues that will attract visitors to Iowa City
- Seek representation of diverse populations on the Public Arts Committee
- Develop an Arts and Culture plan that includes all neighborhoods
- Continue to provide opportunities for Neighborhood Art

## Strategic Planning Process

The Public Art Advisory Committee began the process for development of this plan in January 2019. A series of community engagement opportunities were developed that occurred over the next six months.

- **December 2018:** Request from the City Council to draft a strategic plan
- **February 28, 2019:** First art professionals meeting provides initial guidance.
- **March 8th, 2019:** First Public Input Meeting
- **March 20- April 21, 2019:** Public Art Survey is open to the public
- **April 2019:** Compiled the survey result
- **May 9th, 2019:** Second Art Professionals Meeting review of survey results and goals
- **May 15th, 2019:** Second Public Input Meeting
- **June 6th, 2019:** PAAC review of Goals and Art Professional Notes—Create a Second Draft
- **June 21st, 2019:** Second Draft to the Arts Professionals Group
- **July 11th, 2019:** PAAC Meeting to Review the second draft and make changes to the Tasks and Action steps coming from the goals
- **August 1st, 2019:** PAAC Meeting review the third draft
- **August 13th—August 31st, 2019:** Strategic plan draft is posted online and open for public comment
- **September 5th, 2019:** PAAC Meeting Public Input Meeting

- **October 2019:** Present the Strategic Plan to the City Council

## **Arts Professional Steering Committee Meetings**

The Public Art Advisory Committee convened a group of local arts professionals to act as a steering committee to help guide the process for developing the Public Art Strategic Plan. The Steering Committee met twice. At the first meeting, the group helped fine tune the mechanisms used to solicit ideas and feedback from the public. At the second meeting, members helped evaluate the public input received. They also reviewed proposed goals and action plans and provided insights and suggestions of additional areas to be considered for inclusion in the strategic plan.

## **Public Meetings**

The Public Art Advisory Committee hosted two public Input meetings. The first meeting provided opportunities for general feedback regarding topics such as:

**Where should public art be located?**

**What should public art do?**

**What form should public art take?**

**What other types of art would you like to see?**

At the second meeting, the PAAC solicited comments on the results of the public survey outlined below. In addition to many general comments regarding the survey results, there was extensive discussion regarding the potential role of the City in assisting in the creation of a public art center in Iowa City.

## **Online Survey**

The feedback received at the public meetings was used to guide development of a Public Art Survey that was made available online for public responses over a three-week period in April 2019. A public display was also placed in the Iowa City Public Library that provided the opportunity for visitors to respond. Members of the Public Art Advisory Committee also participated in one-on-one canvassing of visitors to the Iowa City Pedestrian Mall one Saturday afternoon.

### **Survey Results**

The amount of input and enthusiasm that was exhibited in the responses to the survey demonstrates that the citizens of Iowa City consider public art to be an important, if not critical component to the quality of life in the community.

### **Who Participated?**

Five hundred responses were received to the online survey with almost 100% completion of each survey. Visitors to the library completed 22 surveys, and pedestrian mall visitors completed another 23 surveys.

## **The survey questions and the results.**

### **Question 1: My relationship with Public Art**

I like it: 86%

I make it: 7%

I am neutral: 5%

I dislike it: 1%

I don't understand it: 0%

### **Question 2: Where do you live in Iowa City**

Central: 28%

Southeast: 14%

Northeast: 11%

Southwest: 10%

Other area/city: 8%

North: 7%

Northwest: 7%

South: 6%

North Corridor: 4%

Downtown: 3%

South Central: 1%

### **Question 3: What is your age**

Under 18 years: 0%

18-24 years: 6%

25-34 years: 21%

35-44 years: 29%

45-54 years: 15%

55-64 years: 13%

65+ years :16%

### **Question 4: Most Favorite Example of Public Art**

Co-Exist Mural: 41%  
Weatherdance: 16%  
Iowa Avenue Literary Walk: 15%  
Goosetown Mural: 14%  
Irving Weber Statue: 4%  
Prairie Box (temporary): 3%  
Dancing Water: 2%  
Four Modular Piece: 2%  
Longfellow Historic Markers: 2%  
Northside Street Sign Markers: 1%

**Question 5: Least Favorite**

Four Modular Piece: 54%  
Prairie Box (temporary): 14%  
Irving Weber Statue: 10%  
Longfellow Historic Markers: 5%  
Northside Street Markers: 5%  
Dancing Water: 4%  
Iowa Avenue Literary Walk: 4%  
Co-Exist Mural: 2%  
Goosetown Mural: 1%  
Weatherdance: 1%

**Question 6: What should the role of public art be?**

Beautify: 64%  
Establish a sense of place: 54%  
Inspire creativity: 42%  
Create neighborhood identity: 34%  
Support artists: 27%  
Community development: 22%  
Engage children and families: 22%  
Functional (benches, bike racks, etc.): 12%  
Tourism/economic development: 10%  
Social change: 10%  
Other: 4%

**Question 7: I want to see public art in this location**

Downtown streets and alleys: 65%  
Unexpected places: 52%



Pedestrian walkways and trails: 43%  
Parks: 38%  
Public buildings: 29%  
My neighborhood: 19%  
Along the river: 16%  
Vacant lots: 15%  
Buses/bus stops: 14%  
Other: 5%

**Question 8: The type of public art I most enjoy is**

Murals: 81%  
Sculpture: 57%  
Street furniture (benches, bike racks): 41%  
Wayfinding (signage, crosswalks): 27%  
Earthworks: 23%  
Community events to create art: 15%  
Music/sounds installation: 13%  
Pop-up/temporary: 13%  
Theater: 7%  
Projections: 6%  
Performance art: 5%  
Other: 5%  
Dance: 3%

**Question 9: If Iowa City were to commission a large/monumental, iconic public artwork, where should it be located?**

Downtown: 44%  
Gateways or major entrances to town (Dubuque St., North Dodge, Highway 6): 21%  
In a park (Chauncey Swan, College Green, Hickory Hill): 15%  
Nowhere. Iowa City doesn't need a large iconic public artwork: 14%  
Other: 5%

**Question 10: I would like to see public art in Iowa City reflect**

Playfulness and whimsy: 67%  
Beauty: 57%  
Cultural symbols and traditions: 56%  
Landscape/nature: 56%

History/Monumental: 37%

Political: 7%

Other: 7%

High tech: 6%

## Public Art Goals and Strategies Work Plan

**Goal 1:** Review the existing Public Art Program. Adjust its policies, priorities, and practices to better reflect our dynamic community. Devise creative ways to deliver a wide range of art opportunities—from performance art to permanent installations, participatory programs, and more—to stimulate a vibrant public art environment that will enrich us all.

1. Review and update existing policies and procedures for selection, installation, maintenance, and conservation of artworks in public spaces and civic facilities
  - a. Review existing policies and procedures - update as necessary
  - b. PAAC adoption and City Council presentation
  - c. Timeline: November/December 2019
  
2. Evaluate structure, size, practices, and accessibility of the Public Art Advisory Committee
  - a. Review existing by-laws
  - b. Consider expansion of committee membership
  - c. Consider meeting time in the evening to encourage more public participation
  - d. Reevaluate location of meeting
  - e. Timeline: November 2019/December 2019
  
3. Encourage people to see art in new ways, in unexpected places, and spaces
  - a. Develop projects/programs/criteria that encourage these opportunities
  - b. Expand opportunities to create functional art installations
  - c. Expand opportunities to engage public in unexpected, ephemeral art experiences
  - d. Timeline: Ongoing
  
4. Collaborate with other community arts entities to encourage innovative projects and public arts activities that make Iowa City a public art destination
  - a. Incorporate opportunities that encourage fresh ideas/creative interpretation
  - b. Ensure programming draws new audiences and generates helpful feedback
  - c. Timeline: Ongoing

5. Develop a method by which the public can provide ongoing input opportunities to solicit feedback
  - a. Incorporate audience feedback for programs/project where possible
  - b. Conduct annual survey for general public input
  - c. Initiate annual gathering of arts organizations/professionals to optimize coordination among partners
  - d. Timeline: January 2020
  
6. Seek opportunities to prioritize the involvement of our large pool of talented local artist
  - a. Determine geographic area for the term “local artists”
  - b. Develop a baseline of information about activities in which local artists have participated
  - c. Determine needs of local artists that can be addressed by public art programs and activities
  - d. Ensure that programs that respond to these needs are developed and involve local artists
  - e. Timeline: Ongoing
  
7. Develop criteria to define what determines progress; quantitative and qualitative. Review annually
  - a. Programming outcomes are reviewed annually, and this information is used to refine programming for the year
  - b. Timeline: January 2020/ongoing

**Goal 2:** Expand opportunities to use public art to enliven and enhance areas throughout Iowa City to ensure that everyone in the community has a chance to enjoy it.

1. Conduct an inventory and prioritize potential areas for future consideration of public art and arts activities throughout Iowa City, particularly underserved areas; update annually
  - a. Sites identified and prioritized including interior and exterior
  - b. Seek out non-traditional locations
  - c. Each site/location evaluated for arts options encouraging fresh ideas for opportunities
  - d. Information used to refine projects and activities for next year
  - e. Timeline: February 2020/ongoing
  
2. Create a framework to define how these locations can be made available for temporary art exhibits as well as an evaluation process by which an artist can propose a project in an undiscovered public location
  - a. Revisit draft of Temporary Art Installation Policy
  - b. Research Art on Loan program and determine how or if to pursue this option

- c. Timeline: February 2020/ongoing
3. Generate community involvement with art projects.
  - Reinststitute the Neighborhood Art Program which enables neighborhoods to work with local artists to develop public art installation(s) that reflects the identity of the neighborhood.
  - Encourage interactive or performance arts activities or workshops in various locations for all ages.
  - Encourage private property owners to incorporate art on their own property for public enjoyment.
  - Promote our local artists by providing opportunities to showcase their work through studio tours, neighborhood art festivals, etc.
    - a. Review Neighborhood Art Program guidelines, adjust as necessary
    - b. Determine method of implementation/level of funding
    - c. Develop program/methods for expanding interactive/performing arts/events
    - d. Evaluate existing Public Art in Private Places program to encourage private investment in visual arts on private property. Evaluate incentives/consider funding programs to encourage involvement
    - e. Evaluate opportunities for hosting private artist exhibits/events including City facilities, parks, coordination opportunities with existing programming, etc. Consider funding directed towards coordination/administration costs
    - f. Timeline: March 2020/ongoing
4. Expand the concept of public art with spontaneous arts experiences in non-traditional settings
  - a. Develop special arts experiences in unique settings designed and/or organized when feasible
  - b. Timeline: Ongoing
5. Develop and implement a policy for soliciting and accepting donations, memorial gifts or loans of artwork
  - a. Review existing policies, amend/add as necessary
  - b. Promote opportunities on regular basis
  - c. Timeline: February 2020/ongoing
6. Continue to seek opportunities for temporary exhibitions of artwork throughout the community both in public and private locations
  - a. Develop program/process that encourages these opportunities
  - b. Promote on a regular basis
  - c. Consider establishment of sculpture garden, annual rotating art exhibit or other
  - d. Timeline: February 2020/ongoing

**Goal 3:** Secure and manage funding for the public art program and the care and maintenance of public art assets.

1. Develop a staffing and resource model to ensure that the goals of the Public Art Program are achieved
  - a. Develop Public Art Program goals and outcomes
  - b. Determine programming priorities for five-year period
  - c. Determine estimate of administrative requirements
  - d. Determine funding sources/opportunities for administrative costs
  - e. Timeline: July 2020
  
2. Identify and secure funding sources that will provide for a sustainable, reliable resource to ensure the realization of the Public Art Strategic Plan. Options could include:
  - HOTEL/MOTEL TAX SET-ASIDE
  - PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT PERCENT FOR ART- Enables development bonus (density/height/etc.) if private developers provide a percent of total development costs to be utilized for the arts. Currently available in the Riverfront Crossings Redevelopment Area.
  - PERCENT FOR PUBLIC ART – Consider including percent of capital project costs to project to install public art as part of the project (bridges, streetscapes, etc.) if deemed appropriate
  - GENERAL FUND ANNUAL ALLOCATION
  - ENDOWMENT FUND (Community Foundation of Johnson County)
  - GRANTS
  - PRIVATE FUNDRAISING
  - a. Evaluate options, develop recommendation, and propose to the City Council
  - b. Continue to evaluate supplementary funding sources an/or partnerships as they become available
  - c. Evaluate funding annually and incorporate strategic increases as necessary
  - d. Timeline: March 2020
  
3. Identify strategies to cover maintenance and conservation of public art
  - a. Conduct a regular condition assessment of all the artworks in the City's public art collection to determine which pieces need maintenance or conservation, or should be evaluated for deaccessioning
  - b. Prioritize conservation needs
  - c. Identify and secure funding to provide the necessary treatment and secure those funds in a revolving fund accessible when needed
  - d. Secure the services of a professional conservator for assessment and/or conservation if

necessary. Conditional assessments of the entire public art collection conducted and priorities developed

- e. Timeline: ongoing

**Goal 4:** Collaborate with municipal, civic, nonprofit, and private sector organizations to create opportunities for public art.

1. Develop a process to incorporate Public Art Program staff, the PAAC and/or artists into early design discussions and planning for capital projects including infrastructure, public facilities and open spaces.
  - a. Inform and involve City departments about the plans and potential for implementation of the Public Art Master Plan and the Guidelines and Procedures for Public Art
  - b. Identify and meet with key departments where public art partnerships and collaborations can be developed, and identify opportunities for partnerships and collaboration on public art projects at the time of construction or later
  - c. Work with existing City departments/committees considering wayfinding projects that may incorporate artwork
  - d. Timeline: April 2020/ongoing
2. Cultivate partnerships in all sectors of the community (Artifactory, Public Space One, Summer of the Arts, Iowa City Downtown District, Stanley Art Museum, University of Iowa School of Art, University of Iowa Hospital and Clinics Project Art, etc.) to assist with acquisition of artwork and spaces for artwork and/or arts activities
  - a. Determine all potential partners
  - b. Include in all meeting notifications and planning processes
  - c. Consider annual joint meeting to share projects/ideas/etc.
  - d. Timeline: January 2020/ongoing
3. Support efforts by local arts organizations to create a community art center that provides a place for the public to learn, practice, and exhibit fine arts and crafts by continuing engagement and providing resources as available
  - a. Encourage and maintain ongoing communication with involved entities
  - b. Evaluate and seek out funding opportunities as available
  - c. Act as resource/advocate as appropriate
  - d. Timeline: Ongoing
4. Promote incorporation of public art in private development
  - a. Encourage city staff to work with private developers on the potential value of public art

- and possible opportunities to include art as part of their developments
- b. Explore the feasibility for an ordinance requiring public art in private development; provide incentives as possible
- c. Timeline: March 2020/ongoing

**Goal 5:** Build awareness and promote understanding about public art and the benefits of the arts in general.

1. Develop a promotional campaign about the City's public art collection that targets all available media and that will reach all segments of the population
  - Identify and implement community awareness strategies for every public art project installed.
  - Identify new ways to get the word out about arts events and opportunities
  - Highlight specific artworks, telling the story of the artist and the history of the work
  - Explore using digital media application to create a self-guided tour of the City's public art including the opportunity to crowd source feedback by the public regarding art installations
    - a. Identify target audiences and develop promotional campaign
    - b. Develop community awareness strategies and implement for all public art projects
    - c. Capture and utilize other promotional opportunities
    - d. Identify and widely publicize events and/or opportunities
    - e. Explore digital media opportunities that would enable the public to learn about public art through a self-guided tour application
  - Timeline: March 2020/Ongoing
2. Assemble and maintain a variety of communication and/or media networks to target audiences of all ages and backgrounds
  - a. Identify various communication and/ or media networks and cultivate and activate for promotional efforts
  - b. Timeline: March 2020/Ongoing
3. Coordinate with other arts organizations to sponsor regular events to showcase art projects/programs/opportunities
  - a. Develop artists database to feature local artists and their work. Make publicly available
  - b. Create an e-source bank of programming opportunities, networks and contact information developed for communities to access if desired
  - c. Timeline: 2020/Ongoing

4. Develop annual report to be presented to the City Council detailing accomplishments and spending over the past year
  - a. Reinstitute an annual report
  - b. Timeline: 2020/Ongoing