

Helpful Information About the Public Art Field

Public Art is a field of practice for professional public artists who create site specific works in the public realm to create a destination and sense of place; celebrate cultures, geographies, and histories of a location; encourage civic dialogue and engagement; and improve the built environment so that it is an enjoyable place people want to be. Public artworks can be made of any number of materials and may incorporate technology, lighting, and the surrounding landscape. Public Art is a professional field. The artists who make a career in it are highly skilled and able to meet public safety requirements and incorporate community engagement to create art that is durable and meaningful for its intended place.

An informative document about the benefits of Public Art and the field of practice may be found online at: <https://www.arlingtonva.us/files/sharedassets/public/v/2/public-art/documents/public-art-and-private-development-resource-guide.pdf>

While this document focuses on Art in Private Development, it is relevant for the larger field and practice of Public Art. It is important to note that Rockville's requirement for developers to contribute to Public Art has criteria to determine if some projects are not required to participate in the program. If a developer is not required to participate, it is best not to request inclusion of permanent or temporary Public Art because the construction project itself provides a community benefit or is being done because of required upgrades or repairs.

It is important to note that there are generally two types of Public Art projects: permanent and temporary. **Permanent Public Art** is fabricated with durable materials, is easily maintained, and lasts for decades when properly maintained. Permanent Public Art should be placed on sites where risks of vandalism and environmental damage are not likely. Examples of permanent Public Art are sculptures, signage, playground equipment, shade structures, lighting elements, and transportation and infrastructure projects. The artist leads the design, fabrication, and installation of these projects, incorporating artistic design and treatment of the materials into the project.

Temporary Public Art is not intended to last for a long duration of time. Its presentation may be a few months to less than ten years. Before installing temporary Public Art, several factors must be evaluated to determine if the project should be pursued. Factors include, and are not limited to, the resources to produce, maintain, and replace the artwork or restore the site; the likelihood of vandalism and environmental damage; as well as the effects the temporary public artwork will have on its location and where it is installed so that its removal will not incur extraordinary financial costs. Examples of temporary Public Art are murals, sculptures, and interactive sculptures or installations that encourage civic dialogue and tourism.

Public Art is different than Community Arts programs because their purposes are different. **Community Arts** programs involve a professional artist who is skilled in community engagement, leading activities that engage people who typically do not create art and/or have various skills levels and experience with different artforms. Community Arts is often used as a tool to engage people through music, theater, literary arts, and visual arts with the participants and artists working together as co-creators of the artwork. A more expansive definition and history of Community Art may be found at: <https://www.tate.org.uk/art/art-terms/c/community-art>