

GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTERING THE CITY OF MERCER ISLAND PUBLIC ART PROGRAM

Overview

These guidelines establish the procedures for administering the City of Mercer Island (“City”) public art program.

The Mercer Island Arts Council (“Arts Council”) and City staff oversee the public art program and are responsible for ensuring it is fair, equitable, and appropriate given the scope of a specific project and the evolving needs of the Mercer Island community.

The Mercer Island City Council (“City Council”) is responsible for approving public art projects and, when necessary, may request additional process steps be taken outside those outlined in these guidelines.

This document outlines the following procedures:

- Developing a Public Art Project – The general process for seeking approval and launching a public art commission.
- Evaluating Submittals for Artist/Artwork Selection – The general process for evaluating artists and/or artworks submitted for a permanent public art acquisition or a request to temporarily exhibit art in public space.
- Accepting Community-Initiated Project Proposals – The general process for reviewing and accepting community-generated proposals for a permanent public art acquisition or a request to temporarily exhibit art in public space.
- Deaccessioning Public Art – The general process for withdrawing a work or works from the public art collection.

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Developing a Public Art Project

Procedure

When a new opportunity to commission a permanent work of public art is identified, the following process will be used to seek approval and launch the project.

1. Establish a Public Art Committee.

The Arts Council, in collaboration with City staff, will appoint a Public Art Committee consisting of 1-2 Arts Council members, City staff, and relevant project stakeholders, which could include other City board members, Mercer Island residents, outside consultants, and/or others interested in the project.

2. Develop the proposed project scope.

The Public Art Committee will propose an appropriate project scope that may include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Artist selection methods: Methods may include Open Competition, Limited Competition, or Direct Selection.
- Project goals: Identify metrics for gauging the success of the project, such as goals for artist/artwork representation, community engagement, use of sustainable materials, etc.
- Project site and context: Describe the project's location, intent, and historical, cultural, or other significance (if relevant). If a specific location is not proposed, identify potential sites available for the project.
- Public benefit: Describe the expected public benefit of the project, including the significance of the selected site, theme, etc.
- Project budget and schedule: Include major milestones such as Selection Panel review period, City Council approval date, and estimated project completion/installation date.
- Submittal requirements: Basic requirements are outlined at the end of this section. Additional materials may be required based on the scope and needs of the project.
- Proposed Selection Panel: Identify individuals to serve on the Selection Panel, the group responsible for reviewing artist/artwork submittals and recommending an artist/artwork for selection for the project. (More information about the Selection Panel is detailed in the "Evaluating Submittals for a Public Art Project" section.)

3. Seek approval of project scope.

Once the proposed project scope is developed, the Public Art Committee will present it to the Arts Council for review and recommendation. Depending on the scope of the project, the Public Art Committee may seek endorsement from other City Boards or Commissions before presenting to the Arts Council. City staff will transmit the Arts Council's final recommendation to the City Council for authorization to open the project for submittals.

4. Open the project for submittals.

Following City Council approval, City staff will develop and distribute a Request for Qualifications or Proposals based on the approved project scope.

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Submittal Requirements

Standard submittal requirements outlined in a Request for Qualifications include:

- Narrative of artwork intent/approach: The narrative should articulate the submitter's intent for the project, including how their work, process, and experience relate to the project. The narrative should explain how the proposed Artist/Artwork will meet the stated goals of the project.
- Artist's vision/approach: Describe the vision for the project, including the submitter's specific approach to the site, the themes, and/or the Mercer Island community in general. Include the submitter's personal and/or artistic approach to promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Sustainability.
- Community engagement approach: Summarize how the submitter intends to engage the community in the creative process.
- Artist's statement: Provide a brief bio that can be used in future communications and promotions about the project.
- Resume/CV: Submit a current, professional resume. Artist Teams should submit resumes for each team member compiled into one document.
- Images of previous work: Provide up to five (5) images of previous work by the Artist or Artist Team that demonstrate the submitter's ability to complete the project. (JPEG format, 1920 pixels maximum on the longest size, 72 dpi, with compression settings resulting in the best image quality where the file size remains under 2MB.)
- Ability to work within city government structure: Describe the submitter's ability to successfully execute a public art project, including previous work with local governments or other experience working with municipal staff, elected official, volunteer boards, or others to complete public sector projects.
- References: Submit three (3) current references, including the reference's name, phone, e-mail, and title as well as a brief description of the reference's professional association to the submitter.

If the City decides to distribute a Request for Proposals, the following additional submittal materials will be required:

- Artwork concept design(s): Provide concept designs, including potential site locations, for the proposed artwork(s). Include up to five (5) images, including sketches, plans, models, renderings, precedents, or concepts.
- Cost estimates: Provide cost estimates for each proposed art piece, including best estimates of current year material, artist time, and installation costs.

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Evaluating Submittals for Artist/Artwork Selection

Procedure

When the City receives submittals for a permanent or temporary public art project, a Selection Panel will review submittals and recommend a preferred selection. The Selection Panel may consist of the following individuals:

- Working artist generally recognized for producing quality work
- Resident with special interest in the proposed project – Based on the project scope and location
- General resident
- Mercer Island Arts Council Member – Serves as the Chair of the Selection Panel
- Other Mercer Island Board or Commission Member(s) – Based on the project scope and location
- Mercer Island City Council Member
- City Staff – Non-voting member
- Other individuals as appropriate

Once a Selection Panel is identified, the following process will be administered.

1. Review submittals.

Panelists will individually review and preliminarily score submittals using the Four Public Art Pillars Selection Criteria outlined at the end of this section.

2. Convene the Selection Panel.

After individually reviewing the submittals, Panelists will meet to review each submittal, compare their preliminary scores, and rank the submittals. Depending on the Panel's rankings and the scope of the project, the Panel may choose to invite a finalist or finalists to a second-round interview. Finalists will be compensated with an honorarium, the amount of which will be determined based on the overall project budget but will not be less than \$500 per finalist.

3. Seek approval of artist or artwork selection.

Once the Selection Panel reaches a consensus, the Chair will report the Panel's decision to the Arts Council for review and recommendation. City staff will transmit the Arts Council's recommendation to the City Council for approval and budget appropriation (if necessary).

4. Implement the project.

Upon City Council approval, City staff will notify all finalists of the result and move forward with the appropriate administrative steps (execute a contract, complete the donor transfer, etc.).

Conflict of Interest

To avoid any conflict of interest or appearance thereof, any Panelist having an association with an applicant must state their conflict of interest. The Selection Panel Chair will determine if the association exempts the Panelist from discussion or dismissal from the Selection Panel.

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Rejection of All Submittals

If the Selection Panel finds that no submittal conforms to the Selection Criteria, it may recommend that the Arts Council:

- Reject all submittals and request a new solicitation;
- Cancel the project; or
- Another option as identified by the Arts Council and/or City staff.

Four Public Art Pillars Selection Criteria

The criteria for selecting artists and/or artwork are based on Four Public Art Pillars outlined below.

Commented [SB1]: Does the Arts Council want each pillar to be weighted evenly?

Public Art Pillar	Evaluation Questions	Score
Aesthetic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality – Does the proposal demonstrate high artistic merit? • Representation – Will the proposal add new mediums, materials, artmaking processes, styles/genres, and/or artists to the public art collection? • Originality and Innovation – Will the proposal bring something fresh and unique to the public art collection? • Sustainability – Is resource conservation thoughtfully considered for the design and creation of the proposed project? 	
Place	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Context – Does the proposal demonstrate understanding of the project site and its historical, cultural, and environmental context? • Functionality – How will the proposal integrate into and/or enhance site? • Sense of Identity – Will the proposal enhance and/or cultivate a strong sense of place for residents and visitors? 	
Connection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiration – Will the proposal provoke feeling in the viewer? • Collaboration – Does the proposal provide opportunities for Mercer Island residents, community groups, and others to participate in the public art process? • Diversity – Will the proposed project resonate with people of diverse abilities, backgrounds, and beliefs? • Community Cohesion – Will the proposal foster community dialogue and enhance community members’ understanding of each other? • Inclusion & Accessibility – Does the proposal provide a safe and inclusive public art experience for all? 	
Longevity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staying Power – Does the proposal demonstrate appeal for future Mercer Island generations? • Collection Care – Can the proposed project be completed and maintained within budget? 	
Total Score (out of 100)		

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Accepting Community-Initiated Project Proposals

Procedure

Occasionally, members of the Arts Council, the community, or local organizations may propose a public art project for the City's consideration. The City may choose to establish a formal "Call for Project Proposals" or accept proposals on a rolling basis. To properly evaluate these proposals, the following process will be used.

1. Intake proposal.

City staff review project proposals and determine, in consultation with Arts Council leadership, whether the proposal should be transmitted to the Arts Council for review.

2. Present proposal to the Arts Council.

When a proposal is sent to the Arts Council for review, the proposal author will be invited to present to the Arts Council at a regular or special meeting. Following their presentation, the author will be excused from the meeting, and the Arts Council will review the proposal using the Four Public Art Pillars Selection Criteria and either:

- Preliminarily accept the proposal;
- Reject the proposal;
- Seek additional information from the proposal author; or
- Request other next steps as identified by the Arts Council and/or City staff.

3. Advance the project proposal.

If the Arts Council decides to preliminarily accept the proposal, they may choose to recommend the following:

- Add the project to the Project Opportunities List for consideration in a future biennium;
- Prioritize the project in the current biennium; or
- Another option as identified by the Arts Council and/or City staff.

Following preliminary acceptance, City staff will seek relevant approvals, which may include from other City departments impacted by the proposed project and the City Council.

Proposal Requirements

Community-initiated project proposals will include, but not be limited to, the following materials:

- Project overview
- Proposed location
- Design concepts
- Anticipated budget and funding strategy
- Demonstration of community support
- Description of public benefit
- Preferred project timeline

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Deaccessioning Public Art

Deaccession is a procedure to permanently withdraw an artwork from the public art collection. All artworks owned by the City are eligible for deaccession. (For donated works, all legal documents relating to the donation will be consulted prior to beginning the deaccession process.)

City staff are responsible for assessing the public art collection and recommending deaccession needs to the Arts Council. Works will be carefully and impartially evaluated within the context of the entire collection, and staff may consult other qualified individuals, including the artist, an art conservator, an appraiser, a curator, and/or the City Attorney's office, before recommending deaccession. Additionally, staff may consider notifying community members and groups that a work is being considered for deaccession.

Criteria for Deaccession

A deaccession may be recommended for one or more of the following reasons:

- The artwork is being displaced from its current location and cannot be re-sited.
- The artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated, and repair is impractical or unfeasible.
- The condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed by the City.
- The artwork endangers public safety.
- The artwork is not, or is only rarely, exhibited due to the lack of a suitable installation site.
- The artwork has been determined to be significantly incompatible or inferior in the context of the public art collection.
- The City wishes to replace the artwork with work of more significance by the same artist.
- The artwork requires excessive maintenance or has faults of design or workmanship.
- In the case of site-specific artwork, the artwork is destroyed by severely altering its relationship to the site.

Seeking Approval to Deaccession

After a work has been identified for deaccession, City staff will present the need to the Arts Council for review and recommendation to the City Council. Upon receiving the Arts Council's recommendation, City staff will transmit the recommendation to the City Council for approval at a regularly scheduled meeting. Once City Council approves the recommendation, City staff will move forward with finalizing the deaccession, including coordinating deinstallation needs, updating the public art record, and messaging to the public.

Disposing of Deaccessioned Artwork

Depending on the condition of the artwork and the conditions of the deaccession, City staff and the Arts Council may recommend that the work be:

- Returned to the artist;
- Traded for one or more works of comparable value by the artist;
- Sold in compliance with law and policies governing surplus property;
- Responsibly destroyed; or
- Responsibly disposed of in some other manner not described here.