



ARTS COUNCIL CITY OF MERCER ISLAND

AC 26-10
October 21, 2026
Regular Business

AGENDA BILL INFORMATION

TITLE:	AC 26-10: 2025-2026 Art in Public Places Update	☒ Discussion Only
RECOMMENDED ACTION:	Receive update.	☐ Action Needed: ☐ Motion ☐ Recommendation
STAFF:	Shelby Perrault, Interim Capital Division Manager Sarah Bluvas, CIP Project Manager	
EXHIBITS:	1. 6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places	

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this agenda bill is to provide an update on the City of Mercer Island (City) Art in Public Places program for the 2025-2026 biennium.

- Pursuant to Mercer Island City Code ([MICC 4.40.200](#)), the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund (1% Fund) pools contributions from qualifying capital improvement program projects to support public art projects on Mercer Island.
- The 1% Fund supports care of the City's public art collection, which includes more than 60 works of 2D and 3D artwork installed at public parks, facilities, and ROW around Mercer Island.
- Periodically, the Mercer Island Arts Council (Arts Council) may also recommend use of 1% funds to implement new public art projects to the Mercer Island City Council (City Council).
- City staff manage the Mercer Island public art collection, including coordinating routine public art maintenance and periodic restoration needs; identifying opportunities for public art integration into capital projects; and developing content for STQRY, the City's digital platform for engaging the community with arts, culture, and history/heritage.
- The City Council approved the 6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places (Exhibit 1) in September 2025 to guide internal decision-making for the public art program ([AB 6770](#)).
- During the Arts Council meeting, staff will provide a 2025-2026 update for the Art in Public Places program, including reviewing the current 1% Fund balance, and highlight public art projects anticipated for the 2027-2028 biennium.

BACKGROUND

The City Council adopted [Ord. No. A-108](#) in 1993, which established the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund (1% Fund) to support the acquisition and maintenance of visual artworks for the public realm ([AB 2578](#)). The 1% Fund is established by [MICC 4.40.200](#), which requires all qualifying capital improvement projects to set aside 1% of the total project cost to support permanent public art installations. On July 1, 2025, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 25C-19](#), which amended MICC 04.40.200 to allow the Council to fully or partially exempt capital projects from the 1% for Art Fund contribution requirements ([AB 6725](#)).

Contributions to the 1% Fund are used to integrate public art into a capital project or banked for future use. Pursuant to [MICC 3.55.050](#), the Mercer Island Arts Council (Arts Council) recommends public art projects to the City Council, using appropriations from the 1% Fund. Recent projects include:

- Acquisition of *Twin Foxes* by Georgia Gerber (2015)

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- Commission of *Island Icons (Town Center Banners)* by Pamela Edwards (2018)
 - Restoration of the Luther Burbank Park Playground Mosaic Murals by Sandy Glass and Jose Orantes (2024)

City staff manage the Mercer Island public art collection, which consists of more than 60 works of 2D and 3D art located at public parks and facilities around Mercer Island. Staff maintain public art records; coordinate routine public art maintenance and periodic restorations; identify opportunities for public art integration into capital projects; and other activities related to the care and interpretation of the public art collection.

Information about the public art collection is shared on the City website at www.mercerisland.gov/publicart and STQRY, the City's digital platform for engaging the community in arts, culture, and history/heritage. STQRY is accessible via the free "Explore Mercer Island" app in the App Store or Google Play; by scanning the QR code on a public art sign or history plaque/interpretive sign; or visiting mercerisland.stqry.app on a desktop or mobile device.

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

2025-2026 PUBLIC ART PROJECT PROGRESS

Over the 2025-2026 biennium, several public art projects have been completed and/or continued to progress. Details about project work are provided below. A project map and images of work completed during the biennium will be shared with the Arts Council during the meeting.

Reinstallation of Now We Are One by Phillip Levine

Reinstallation of *Now We Are One* by Phillip Levine was completed in January 2025 by the City's Parks Maintenance team and Art Work FAS, a local public art handling and restoration firm. The figurative sculpture honors long-time Mercer Island resident and public servant Cleveland "Cleve" Anschell. It was removed in 2020 due to damage to its base. A new base was constructed in 2023, and the piece was stored off-site until it could be reinstalled at First Hill Park ahead of construction of the First Hill Park Playground Replacement capital project. The playground renovation was completed in fall 2025 and reopened to the community in January 2026.

Restoration of Totem by Bernard Hosey

Restoration of *Totem* by Bernard Hosey was completed in June 2025 by Alloy Arts, the City's contract public art conservator. This abstract steel sculpture was donated to the City in 1984 by the Mercer Island Visual Arts League (MIVAL) and is located at Roanoke Park. A July 2023 condition assessment by Alloy Arts identified significant corrosion, paint loss, and visible rust spots. Restoration work included cleaning and sanding the sculpture, treating and sealing rust spots, repainting the sculpture, and cleaning the concrete base. This project was completed in conjunction with the Roanoke Park Playground Replacement capital project, which opened to the public in September 2025.

Restoration of Summer in the Wetlands by Natalie Oswald

Summer in the Wetlands by Natalie Oswald is a 120-foot-long mural painted on the east wall of the sport courts at Luther Burbank Park. In 2024, the City began improvements to the sport courts, including converting them for pickleball as the primary use. During construction, an unfinished section of the mural outside the court fencing was exposed, and panels inside the courts were stained by asphalt spray. Following resurfacing of the sport courts in June 2025, Alloy Arts completed restoration of the mural in July 2025. The work included completing the unfinished mural panel, cleaning the mural, touching up paint details, and resealing the mural with an anti-graffiti coating.

STQRY Content Updates

Pronounced “story,” this is the City’s digital platform for connecting the community with local arts, culture, and heritage/history. Launched by the Arts Council in 2014, the platform features more than 30 entries highlighting works in the City’s public art collection, sculptures on view or for sale in the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery, and historic sites and landmarks, including Riley Cove at Lincoln Landing. In 2025, the City migrated its content to a new platform feature and completed comprehensive updates to all existing entries. Community members can explore the island through the “Explore Mercer Island” app, available in the App Store and Google Play; by scanning QR codes on public art signage, historical plaques, and interpretive signage throughout Mercer Island; or by visiting mercerisland.stqry.app via a desktop or mobile device. Annual costs associated with hosting STQRY are covered by the Recreation operating budget.

6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places Approval

On September 16, 2025, the City Council approved the 6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places (6-Year Work Plan), an internal planning document to guide decision-making for the Mercer Island public art program ([AB 6770](#)). From May 2024 to April 2025, staff and the Arts Council developed the Work Plan, which identifies goals for the City’s public art program; public art opportunities to consider over the 6-year planning horizon; guidance for community engagement and collection management; and other information to support the Mercer Island public art program. The approved 6-Year Work Plan is provided as Exhibit 1.

Public Art Integration Opportunities for Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan

At the October 2025 Regular Arts Council Meeting, staff presented an update on the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan and sought Arts Council input on opportunities to integrate public art into the plan ([AC 25-05](#)). The Arts Council learned about the preference to maintain the natural character of the park through the site design and reviewed specific public art types and methods for public art implementation to incorporate into the design process. On April 7, 2026, the City Council approved Resolution No. 1692 adopting the Deane’s Children’s Park Site Plan ([AB 6902](#)). The adopted plan identifies opportunities for integrating public art and community collaborations into wayfinding, seating amenities, and the proposed restroom building as well as future restoration and enhancement of *Kenton’s Dragon* by Kenton Pies. The Arts Council will be engaged in developing these public art opportunities during future phases of the park design process.

Public Art Integration Opportunities for Clarke and Groveland Joint Infrastructure Plan

At the April 2026 Regular Arts Council Meeting, staff presented an update on the Clarke and Groveland Joint Infrastructure Plan currently being developed and sought Arts Council input on opportunities to integrate public art at each park ([AC 26-05](#)). The Arts Council reviewed specific public art opportunity areas at each park as well as potential themes, project types for public art, and identifies preferred opportunities to be documented in the final Joint Infrastructure Plan. The Arts Council identified the following preferred themes and public art opportunities:

- Themes for Public Art Projects: Nature/natural character of the parks; historic elements of/community connection to the parks; and youth engagement in developing public art projects
- Clarke Beach Park: Fish sculpture or other artistic seating at the North Beach area; interpretive elements along the shoreline highlighting ecological functions and habitat restoration; and/or restroom building mural
- Groveland Beach Park: Preference for artistic wayfinding elements; sculptural/artistic play elements at the renovated playground; sculptural/artistic seating along the proposed tree canopy boardwalk; and/or restroom building mural

Luther Burbank Park Historical Tour Launch

In 2024, the City completed Phase 1 Renovations to the Boiler Building at Luther Burbank Park. This project was partially funded by a Heritage Capital Projects grant from the Washington State Historical Society. As a condition of the grant, the City developed a new interpretive program that utilizes STQRY. The self-guided tour invites park patrons to explore some of the park's rich cultural and natural history, from the early days of Mercer Island entrepreneur C.C. Calkins through the Luther Burbank School era. The tour includes stops at five locations:

- Boiler Building
- Luther Burbank Administrative Building
- Former School Parade Grounds (located near the park flagpole)
- Dairy Barn Ruins
- Calkins Point

Four tour locations are denoted with bronze historical plaques designed by Marsha Rollinger and fabricated by Two Ravens Studio in Tacoma, WA. Rollinger was selected in 2023 as the artist for the Luther Burbank Park Dock and Waterfront Improvements Art in Public Places project. She collaborated with City staff to carry the aesthetic of that project into the historical plaques, creating a cohesive visual identity across the park's interpretive elements. The dock and waterfront public art installation is anticipated in late 2027, in conjunction with capital project construction. The tour also includes a stop at the Dairy Barn Ruins, where an interpretive sign was installed in 2025 in collaboration with the Mercer Island Historical Society and Friends of Luther Burbank Park. Costs associated with designing, fabricating, and installing the bronze plaques were covered by the capital project budgets for the Boiler Building and dock/waterfront projects.

Reinstallation of Fire Flower by Gisel Berman

Fire Flower by Gisel Berman was commissioned in 1982 by the City and the Farmers New World Life Insurance Company for installation at the Farmers offices (now Riot Games). In 2020, the sculpture was damaged during an attempted theft and removed from display while staff developed a restoration plan. At the [February 23, 2021, Regular Arts Council Meeting](#), the Arts Council endorsed staff's recommendation to relocate the sculpture in Town Center, at the corner of SE 29th Street and 78th Avenue SE, as part of the [Xing Hua mixed-use development](#). Repairs were partially funded through an insurance claim and completed in 2022 by Two Ravens Studio in consultation with ArtSite. Following restoration, the artwork was stored off-site until construction of the Xing Hua development progressed. In May 2026, the Xing Hua development team notified staff that the site would be ready for installation in summer 2026. Staff coordinated installation with the development's construction manager and Art Work FAS, and *Fire Flower* was reinstalled in August 2026. Community members can now view the sculpture at the Lunara building, across the street from the MIVAL Gallery. In early 2027, staff will add *Fire Flower* to the City's STQRY digital platform, install public art signage, and promote the sculpture's new location to the community.

Restoration of Gateway Figures by Garth Edwards

In October 2025, the *Gateway Figures* installation at 77th Avenue SE and Sunset Highway was damaged in a vehicle collision. The concrete wall was repaired in early 2026, and staff are coordinating with Travis Leonard, a local metal fabricator and public artist, to repair the sculptures. Once the repair is complete, staff will return to the Arts Council to coordinate a plan for reinstalling the sculptures in Mercer Island Town Center.

2025-2026 PUBLIC ART DONATION REQUESTS

City staff and the Arts Council occasionally receive requests to donate artworks to the City's public art collection. Donation proposals are first reviewed internally by relevant City departments to determine

feasibility. If deemed appropriate by staff, the proposal is then transmitted to the Arts Council for review using the artist and artwork selection evaluation process outlined in the [Guidelines for Administering the Mercer Island Public Art Program](#). Most recently, the City received *Raven*, a photograph by Ron Reeder that was donated in 2023 by MIVAL.

During the 2025-2026 biennium, the City evaluated three donation requests, summarized below.

Hokusai 20 by Jeffery Laudenslager

At the October 2025 Regular Arts Council Meeting, staff presented a proposal from Mercer Island residents Robert and Laura Ellen Muglia to donate the sculpture *Hokusai 20* by Jeffery Laudenslager to the City ([AC 25-07](#)). The Arts Council supported staff's recommendation to explore the feasibility of the proposed donation, including potential installation in the North Mercer Way roundabout in Town Center. In late 2025 and early 2026, staff reviewed installation requirements with the artist and his structural engineer; consulted with the City's Right-of-Way and Engineering teams; and contacted the Washington State Department of Transportation (WSDOT), which owns a portion of the roundabout and must provide final approval for artwork installation. Through conversations with WSDOT, staff learned that the agency does not permit kinetic artwork on its property, pursuant to Section 905.04(2) of the [WSDOT Design Manual](#). Staff communicated this restriction to the donors in February 2026, and the proposed donation is currently on hold.

Sculpture by Louis Holtzman

In December 2025, Mercer Island resident and local artist Louis Holtzman submitted a request to donate a sculpture for installation at the right-of-way area at 4004 Island Crest Way. Staff provided information on the process for submitting a formal donation proposal, which was received in February 2026. Members of the Right-of-Way, Engineering, and Parks Maintenance teams reviewed the proposal. In June 2026, staff also met with Holtzman at the site to review potential locations. Following an additional review with the Interim Parks, Recreation and Facilities Director in September 2026, staff determined that the proposed site was not suitable for public artwork. This determination was communicated to Holtzman in October 2026, and staff are working with him to identify alternative locations for the sculpture. Staff will return to the Arts Council in 2027 to review an updated proposal and seek a formal recommendation regarding acceptance of the donation.

Sculptures by Kevin Au

In late September 2026, Mercer Island resident and local artist Kevin Au contacted the City with a request to donate two sculptures. Staff provided information on the process for submitting a public art donation proposal and will update the Arts Council at a future meeting as the process progresses.

1% FUND BALANCE

The 1% Fund is established by [MICC 4.40.200](#), which requires all qualifying capital improvement projects to set aside 1% of the total project cost to support permanent public art installations. Qualifying capital improvement projects as defined by the City code include construction projects for parks, public facilities, public streets, sidewalks, and parking facilities.

On July 1, 2025, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 25C-19](#), which amended MICC 04.40.200 to allow the Council to fully or partially exempt capital projects from the 1% for Art Fund contribution requirements ([AB 6725](#)). In 2025, 13 capital improvement projects contributed \$52,475 to the 1% Fund. The 1% Fund balance as of September 30, 2026, is \$194,865.

Table 1. below summarizes 1% Fund expenditures during the 2025-2026 biennium, including anticipated expenses through the end of 2026.

TABLE 1: 2025-2026 1% FOR ART IN PUBLIC PLACES FUND EXPENDITURES		
Expenditure	2025 Costs	2026 Costs
Routine Public Art Maintenance	\$11,180	\$ -
Monthly Public Art Storage	\$3,090	\$5,295
Reinstallation of <i>Now We Are One</i> by Phillip Levine	\$1,832	\$ -
Restoration of <i>Gateway Figures</i> by Garth Edwards	\$1,365	\$19,000
Restoration of <i>Totem</i> by Bernard Hosey	\$8,333	\$ -
Restoration of <i>Summer in the Wetlands</i> by Natalie Oswald*	\$4,653	\$ -
Reinstallation of <i>Fire Flower</i> by Gizel Berman	\$350	\$14,766
Total 2025-2026 1% Fund Expenditures	\$30,803	\$39,061

*50% of the cost to restore *Summer in the Wetlands* was covered by capital project budget 90.25.0046 Luther Burbank Park Sport Courts Renovation. The total cost to restore the mural was \$9,306.

ANTICIPATED 2027-2028 PUBLIC ART WORK PLAN ITEMS

Staff have identified the following public art work plan items for the 2027-2028 biennium. These items were selected based on upcoming capital project construction, the Project Opportunities List included in the 6-Year Work Plan (page 4 and Appendix A), and ongoing collection care and maintenance needs.

1. Complete installation of the *Mercer Island Medallions* public art package during construction of the Luther Burbank Park Waterfront Improvements Project.

In October 2023, the Arts Council recommended that the City Council accept the *Mercer Island Medallions* public art package developed by local artist Marsha Rollinger for construction during the Luther Burbank Park Dock and Waterfront Improvements project ([Video Recording](#) | Discussion begins at 50:10). The package includes twelve bronze medallions inspired by Mercer Island life, a light pole fixture, kiosk embellishments, and Boiler Building decals, all designed to establish the Luther Burbank Park waterfront as a unique destination. The City Council awarded the construction contract to Quigg Bros., Inc., on September 1, 2026, and staff anticipate construction beginning in November 2026. Public art elements will be installed near the end of the project schedule. Fabrication and installation of the four elements, including artist oversight during installation, are budgeted at \$97,000 within the overall capital project budget. This expenditure is included in the overall project budget, and no additional appropriation from the 1% Fund is needed at this time.

2. Complete restoration of the *Gateway Figures* by Garth Edwards.

As noted above, staff are stewarding the contracting process to repair *Gateway Figures*, with work anticipated to begin in 2027 and including repair of one figure damaged in 2020 and four figures damaged in 2025. The estimated repair cost is \$19,000 and will be partially offset by insurance reimbursement. The City Council appropriated additional funds to support the repair on July 14, 2026 ([AB 6970](#)). Once repair is complete, staff will work with the Arts Council to develop a reinstallation plan. Given the frequency of damage to the sculptures since they were installed in 1997, staff will also work with the Arts Council to evaluate whether an alternative location in Town Center is more appropriate for the sculptures.

3. Complete annual routine collection care activities.

City staff plan for annual care and maintenance of the public art collection, including coordinating sculpture cleaning, updating public art records, and enhancing STQRY content. During the 2027-2028 biennium, staff anticipate scheduling routine maintenance for five to seven sculptures annually; reviewing public art records to identify potential deaccessioning needs; replacing public art signage; and adding five public artwork entries to STQRY. An annual appropriation of \$15,000 from the 1%

Fund supports routine collection care, and staff will provide periodic updates to the Arts Council via the Department Report at Regular Meetings.

4. Complete a periodic update to the 6-Year Work Plan for Art in Public Places.

The 6-Year Work Plan provides a high-level process for completing periodic updates to the Work Plan, including updating the Project Opportunities List. Staff will return in 2027 to seek input from the Arts Council to inform the periodic update.

5. Review and recommend updates to the 1% for Art Fund ordinance.

On July 1, 2025, the City Council adopted [Ordinance No. 25C-19](#), which amended MICC 04.40.200 to allow the Council to fully or partially exempt capital projects from the 1% for Art Fund contribution requirements ([AB 6725](#)). The Council also directed staff to review the 1% for Art Fund in collaboration with the Arts Council. Staff intended to bring this forward to the Arts Council in 2026 but delayed the project until a broader review of the Arts & Culture Comprehensive Plan could be completed. Staff anticipate reviewing the 1% for Art Fund ordinance during the 2027-2028 biennium as part of the Arts & Culture Comprehensive Plan review. The Arts Council's recommendation for the 1% Art Fund will be transmitted to the City Council following that process.

NEXT STEPS

Staff will update the Arts Council on 2027-2028 public art projects in future staff reports and department updates at regular Arts Council meetings as work progresses. Staff will also work with Arts Council leadership to schedule public art work plan items for the 2027-2028 Arts Council planning schedule.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Receive update.