

- Five of the seven *Gateway Figures* at the corner of Sunset Highway and 77th Avenue SE were damaged in two separate vehicle collisions (2020 and 2025) and are currently stored off-site. The estimated cost to repair the figures is \$18,966.
- Repairs for four of the damaged figures will be covered by an insurance claim. After the City's \$5,000 deductible, an insurance reimbursement of approximately \$10,000 is anticipated. Staff will coordinate with the Mercer Island Arts Council on a plan for reinstallation once repairs are complete. Given that the *Gateway* installation has been damaged frequently since 1997, staff will work with the Arts Council to evaluate whether an alternative Town Center location is more appropriate for re-siting the figures.
- The total cost to reinstall *Fire Flower* and repair *Gateway Figures* is \$40,666.
- To complete both projects by the end of 2026, staff recommend a \$30,836 budget appropriation from Fund 140. This total is calculated by applying the remaining 2026 public art maintenance budget of \$9,830 toward the \$40,666 project total.
- As of June 30, 2026, the Fund 140 unassigned fund balance is \$211,032.

BACKGROUND

The Mercer Island public art collection includes nearly 70 works of two- and three-dimensional art installed in City parks, buildings, and other public locations around the Island. Much of the collection was partially or fully acquired using the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund (Fund 140).

Fund 140 is established by [MICC 4.40.200](#) and funded by 1% of total project costs for qualifying capital improvement projects, which include City-funded construction and repair of public buildings and parks as well as new construction of public streets, sidewalks, and parking facilities. More information about the City's public art collection can be found at www.mercerisland.gov/publicart.

Maintenance of the public art collection is supported through an annual public art maintenance appropriation from Fund 140. Routine maintenance typically focuses on outdoor sculptures and includes cleaning, waxing, sealing, repainting, and other activities to preserve the life and longevity of the collection. The City also completes repairs to individual pieces as needs arise. Recent public art restoration projects include the Luther Burbank Park Mosaic Murals installed at the playground (2024) and *Summer in the Wetlands*, the mural by Natalie Oswald installed at the Jake Jacobson Pickleball Courts (2025).

ISSUE/DISCUSSION

2026 PUBLIC ART RESTORATION NEEDS

Two significant public art restoration needs have developed in 2026. A summary of each project is provided below, and images of the artwork are attached as Exhibits 1 and 2.

Fire Flower by Gisel Berman

This abstract bronze sculpture was commissioned in 1983 by the City and installed in the plaza at the former Farmers New World Life Insurance building in Town Center (now Riot Games). In November 2020, the sculpture was significantly damaged during an attempted theft. Since then, staff have worked with the Mercer Island Arts Council (Arts Council) to steward a restoration plan.

At its [February 23, 2021 Special Meeting](#), the Arts Council endorsed staff's recommendation to re-site 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 to the sculpture were partially funded by an insurance claim and completed in 2022, with total insurance reimbursement of \$9,909. Following restoration, the artwork was stored off-site until construction of the Xing Hua project began.

In May 2026, the Xing Hua team notified staff that the project site would be ready for *Fire Flower* installation in summer 2026. Staff have coordinated reinstallation needs with the Xing Hua construction manager and Art Work Fine Art Services, a local public art handling and restoration firm, and anticipate the sculpture will be returned to Town Center by the end of 2026. The estimated cost to transport the sculpture from the storage facility and complete the installation is \$21,700.

Gateway Figures by Garth Edwards

The *Gateway* installation by Garth Edwards was commissioned in 1997 as part of Town Center redevelopment. The artwork consists of seven larger-than-life steel figures that “greet” Mercer Island visitors at the corner of Sunset Highway and 77th Avenue SE.

In October 2020, Parks staff removed one figure that had been damaged during a vehicle collision and stored it at the City Public Works Shop. Four other figures were damaged during a vehicle collision in October 2025, and staff coordinated with Art Work Fine Art Services to transport all five figures to the City’s off-site public art storage facility until they could be repaired.

Repair needs include disassembling the figures; straightening the steel using specialized press and heat-forming equipment; sandblasting, re-galvanizing, and re-coating the components; and reassembling the figures on steel plate bases for reinstallation. The estimated cost to repair five figures is \$18,966.

Repair costs for the four figures damaged in October 2025 collision will be reimbursed by an insurance claim, less the City’s \$5,000 deductible. No insurance claim was filed for the figure damaged in 2020, so costs for its repair will not be reimbursed. The repair estimate does not include costs for reinstalling the sculptures in the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery in Town Center.

Once repairs are complete, staff will work with the Arts Council to develop a reinstallation plan. Given that the *Gateway* installation has been damaged frequently since 1997, staff will work with the Arts Council to evaluate whether an alternative Town Center location is more appropriate for re-siting the figures.

FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACTS

As of June 30, 2026, unassigned fund balance in Fund 140 is \$211,032. To date, approximately \$5,170 of the annual public art maintenance operating budget has been committed to the reinstallation of *Now We Are One* by Phillip Levine at First Hill Park and ongoing monthly public art storage fees, although storage costs are expected to decrease once *Fire Flower* is reinstalled. After accounting for these existing commitments, sufficient funding remains in Fund 140 to support the proposed appropriation.

The total estimated costs to reinstall *Fire Flower* and repair the damaged *Gateway Figures* is \$40,666. Staff request a \$30,836 appropriation from Fund 140, which, when combined with the remaining \$9,830 from the 2026 annual public art appropriation, will fully fund both projects.

Approximately \$10,000 of the *Gateway Figures* repair cost will be reimbursed through insurance. Any insurance reimbursement or other unspent project funds will be returned to Fund 140 following project completion, subject to City Council budget approval.

NEXT STEPS

Upon approval of the appropriation request, staff will contract with Art Work Fine Art Services and GOODLIKE LLC to complete these public art restoration projects. After *Fire Flower* is reinstalled in Town Center, staff will update STQRY, the City's digital platform for engaging the community in arts, culture, and heritage, with a new entry for the artwork and promote its reinstallation via City channels.

Once the repairs to *Gateway Figures* are complete, staff will work with the Arts Council to develop a reinstallation plan. Updates on project progress will be shared with the City Council via the City Manager's Report at future meetings.

RECOMMENDED ACTION

Appropriate \$30,836 from the 1% for Art in Public Places Fund and authorize the City Manager to execute general services agreements to reinstall *Fire Flower* by Gizel Berman and repair *Gateway Figures* by Garth Edwards.