



## Arts, Culture & Heritage Commission Staff Report

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**Date:** February 15, 2023

**From:** Erika Valentine, Arts & Culture Program Coordinator

**Subject:** Overview of Public Art Assessment

### **Recommended Action:**

Review and discuss findings from Public Art Assessment as well as included attachments.

### **Background:**

In 2002 the City Manager was first approached by Steve Spicer and Jesse Swickard with a concept of a Public Art sculpture program. Spicer is considered the Founder of the City's initial sculpture program as he initiated fundraising, gathered City support and determined locations. In 2003 Spicer established a core nonprofit organization called Wilsonville Citizens for Public Art (WCPA). A rotating sculpture program took place and the City also purchased multiple pieces from the rotating sculpture program. In 2008 Founder and prime fundraiser Steve Spicer passed away, and WCPA activity and programs decreased and ultimately cease to exist. There is a plaque to Spicer's service which is located on the walkway near the Parks and Recreation Administration Building.

The City currently has approximately 30 Public Art Pieces. The number is an approximation due to some plaques, engravings and water features/fountains being counted, but not consistently within the existing Public Art Records. The definition of Public Art can vary, but typically is classified as being completed by an artist, so oftentimes plaques, engravings and fountains are not classified as Public Art. The City also has 5 empty concrete pads that are installed, that were previously used for rotating sculptures. The pads are still installed although there has not been a rotating sculpture program in over a decade.

Staff noted that there are locations that have many different public art pieces clustered within close proximity to each other. For example, at Town Center Park there are 6 pieces located there, which is largely due to the Korean War Memorial. However, this area also includes 2 additional pieces ('Apache' and 'The Guardian') that do not have a cultural significance or tie into the Korean War Memorial. There are also 6 pieces clustered at the Wilsonville Transit Center. There are 5 pieces surrounding the Library. There are also multiple pieces at Graham Oak's Nature Park, which are owned by METRO.

The majority of the collection consists of stationary metal sculpture pieces, although 2 pieces are interactive or have movement such as 'The Interactivators' piece at the Transit Center where you can move the figures along a track. The majority of the collection are steel, bronze, and other metals. Approximately 5 pieces have colorful elements (colors other than brown, black, silver, etc). Public art can include mural, sculpture, memorials, integrated architectural or landscape architectural work, community art, digital new media, etc. The 'Beauty in the Bridge' project is considered a tile mural, though that is the only mural currently.

Jesse Swickard is the artist for approximately 25% of the City's entire collection. Staff noted it is unusual for one City to have so many pieces by one artist.

The majority of the City's collection are acquisitions/donations and not commissioned or site-specific. As a result a majority of the collection has no recognizable relationship to the physical space or landscape around it. The majority of the collection are pieces that artists created and then later were sold to the City.

Examples of site-specific work are the bronze horsetails found along Boeckman Road. This piece was inspired by geology and pre-historic flora and fauna. When a work is site-specific, it means that a specific location was determined first. Then an artist will create a unique and original piece, specifically designed and inspired for the space in mind. Another example of a site-specific piece is "The Library is a Garden of the Mind" which is a stone and mosaic tile piece outside the children's department at the library. The piece depicts children reading, which relates to the space it is in.

When a piece is commissioned by an artist, there is typically a back and forth creative process between the artist and the client (City) which may include an arts commission such as the ACHC providing input or desires for the piece, the artist learning about the community and/or physical space, getting community input, etc.

Within the existing collection there are two female artists: Laurel Marie Hagner who did the glass elements on 4 pieces and Dallas Cole who did the mosaic wall piece at the Library. Within the existing collection 1 artist, Mauricio Saldana, is Latino. The rest of the artists are White.

While staff was doing the assessment they noted some minor maintenance issues such as plants growing into pieces or pieces being dirty. Currently there are no public art maintenance plans or policies being followed, which is critical for a public art collection. By staying on top of maintenance you save a lot of time, money and damage down the road. Additionally, maintaining public art ensures that the legacy of the work, the artist and the community will be preserved and continued. Staff was able to reach out to City's Facilities Supervisor in the Public Works Department who was previously involved with Public Art Maintenance to start the conversation on the future development of maintenance plans. Staff also noted that most pieces do not have plaques. This has made it more challenging to figure out certain critical information such as the year pieces got installed. Missing plaques and signage also do not identify or honor the artists.

**Attachments:**

Glossary of Terms

Outline of Municipal Public Art Program Policies and Procedures

Public Art Funding Sources

Guiding Questions for the Development of a Public Art Program – Americans for the Arts