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Thanks to Eloise Damrosch, Director of Public Art at the Regional Arts and Culture Council, Portland, for her help with this report.

Photographs used in this report are intended to stimulate the reader’s imagination about public art possibilities.

Photos by Brian Foulkes, Dale Jones, Bill Flood.

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October 2000

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Developing Public Art
in Oregon’s Rural Communities

A Publication of the Arts Build Communities
Technical Assistance Program
OREGON ARTS COMMISSION

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Overview

This document is intended to help rural communities that are considering public art projects. It has been formatted as a series of questions (about public art) most commonly posed to the *Arts Build Communities Technical Assistance Team* by mayors, city managers and planners, county commissioners, educators, artists and arts enthusiasts, community volunteers and others who are looking to enhance their community with public art. These are the people we hope will find assistance and encouragement through this report.

The Oregon Arts Commission’s *Arts Build Communities Technical Assistance Team* assists rural and urban underserved communities in linking arts and cultural resources with local community development efforts. Team consultants are skilled in a variety of areas including local arts development, community design, public art, landscape architecture, folklore, education and youth development, community planning, micro-enterprise development, facility development and partnership development.

*Arts Build Communities* technical assistance is provided at no cost to communities. Consultant fees are paid through grant funds from the National Endowment for the Arts, matching funds from the Oregon Arts Commission and from its local and regional partners. The Commission works closely with Oregon’s Regional Arts Councils in this program (see Attachment A for regions and contacts).

Why public art?

The character of a place develops slowly through the interaction of all of its parts – its citizens and cultures and the way they shape the natural environment. Art can enhance a growing community, boost an economically challenged community, or provide a public amenity for the good of the community-at-large. Public art opportunities should first be considered within the context of the vision for the community. Consider how public art can enhance that vision.

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**“Gaia” and granite slide**
Baile Oakes, artist
Painted branches, driftwood, granite
Play structure at Tucker’s Grove Park, Santa Barbara, California.

**Portland Story Wall**
Jack McClarty, artist
Wood relief sculpture, each block representing a piece of local history
City Hall, Portland, Oregon
What is art?
What is public?
What is public art?

We use the term “art” broadly to signify those things that are visually meaningful. “Public” designates those places that, whether owned by the government or by a private entity, are open and accessible to the public. Public art may take many forms, including freestanding sculptures, landscape treatments, murals, fountains, kinetic pieces that move and react to the environment, and artist-designed functional elements such as lighting, paving, street furniture and bridges. It can be permanent or temporary, a single installation or part of an on-going process enhanced over time. It can include the written word or performances. Photographs used in this report will hopefully stimulate the reader’s imagination about public art possibilities.
In the Shadow of the Elm
Paul Sutinen, artist
Paving of light granite inlay within dark paving blocks
simulating the shadow of a large elm now gone.
South Park Blocks, Portland, Oregon
What is the context for public art?

Public art should be an integral part of the design and planning of a community, and each public art project should be connected to larger community-building efforts or city-wide goals, such as the creation of new or renewed public spaces, a new street or pedestrian path, or a new building. Communities can greatly benefit from a public art plan that identifies opportunities for public art.

Who is public art for?

What works in one community may not be the best project for another. Examining similar communities and projects can be useful for understanding the process, but truly successful projects allow the artist(s) and public art committee to develop their unique ideas. When a community seeks assistance from the Arts Build Communities Technical Assistance Team to specifically develop a mural, the Team helps them explore the most appropriate type of public art, given the character, history and current design of the community.

Design your community and your public art for yourselves. In that way you will enjoy your place, and it is likely that visitors will enjoy its unique character.
What is the first step?

Most public art processes are overseen by a committee of involved citizens (including neighbors to a proposed public art site), city officials and professionals (such as architects, artists, preservationists, historians, arts administrators, gallery owners, art teachers, etc.) This group can guide the process from the beginning, deciding on possible sites, themes for the project and, finally, selecting an artist(s) to generate proposals and complete the work. Public art committees typically range in size from five to fifteen members, depending on the scope and budget of the project(s). The committee informs the selection process and works toward assuring that the art is relevant to the community.

Community involvement in planning for public art is essential. It is a reflection of the democratic process and builds ownership and pride in the finished projects. Try to engage as many sectors of the community as possible, but remember that no single project can address all the needs, issues or desires of a community. Remind your community that a public art plan/design/program is carried out over time, and that this project should be approached as one part of an ongoing process of community development.

Is professional guidance needed?

Working with someone experienced in public art projects can save time and money, and result in a more successful product. Consider working with your local arts agency or your Regional Arts Council. Each Regional Arts Council is professionally staffed and has experience in project management. All can help identify artists and arts professionals that may assist with your project.
How does a community choose an artist for a project?

Supporting local artists should be a priority. However, community artists may not have the experience and special skills a public art project requires. There are many artists in Oregon with relevant public art experience. Experienced artists may mentor local artists with less experience if the situation permits. The Oregon Arts Commission can help guide a selection process and assist with the design and development of Requests for Qualifications (RFQ) or Requests for Proposals (RFP).

When should an artist become involved with the project?

Artists are unique problem-solvers. Including them (along with municipal staff, architects, and engineers) in the early stages of your planning process will allow optimal siting of the art, integration of the art within the broader project, cost savings, and a more interesting project design. In most cases, the sooner the artist is brought into a project, the better.
What type of art is appropriate?

There are many models for successful public art installation, and no one type of art is right for every application. Public art does not necessarily need to illustrate the community’s self-image, but it should address and/or complement it. Consider your community. What makes it unique? How can art express and enhance its identity? Consider the history of your community. What should future generations know about this place? Are there outstanding environmental elements that can be interpreted through public art? Perhaps the project can reflect the unique character of your town’s natural surroundings.

Use artists to generate ideas. Explore a variety of public art options and a number of possible sites before deciding on one. Too often people become fixed on a single idea and ignore proposals that better complement the site and, in the long run, create a more meaningful and unique project.

Don’t forget that some of the most exciting public art can be temporary. Consider including the performing or literary arts, or ongoing, changing visual art exhibits in your public art plans. Festivals can engage a wide variety of people in public art. Be sure to document temporary public art so that the community can look back, reflect, and remember.
What are appropriate sites for public art?

A site or sites may be chosen for a variety of reasons. It may be specific to a story about a person, an event or the community. The site may be selected for its visibility or simply because property development is offering an opportunity for public art.

Some public artworks welcome people to town, mark a town center, or provide shade and resting places in a park. Some are sited in “high traffic” areas, especially places frequented by pedestrians. Other common sites include highway entrances (for welcome markers and gateways), major public buildings, parks, schools, senior centers, police and fire stations, and town centers where people walk and gather.

As a community evaluates locations, it should:

- Study the community to identify prime sites for artwork. See what is already there.
- Identify existing community images and landmarks and consider how to integrate these.
- Generate as many ideas for sites as possible and evaluate them in terms of the community’s goals and resources. Possibilities are limitless, and new ones will continue to arise.

Chalk drawings on columns under the ramp of Lovejoy Bridge, a spontaneous, non-commissioned work by Tom Stefopoulos, artist
Portland, Oregon

Branch Bench
Nancy Merritt, artist
Orenco Station, Tri-Met Public Art Program
Portland, Oregon
Can new private development be an opportunity for public art?

Developers can be approached to discuss ways in which art can enhance their project and the community. Discussions can lead to an understanding that a successful public art project increases the quality of life in a community, making future projects more valuable, and that public art projects also can enhance the image of the developer.
How can you use existing interests and resources for a public art project?

Consider all the resources in the community as public art is planned. Are residents interested in organizing a project based on a specific place, hero, point in history, or critical community issue? Are other public works projects planned where art can be incorporated? Is there a history center or school with archives of students' stories of the town? Has anyone written about the town or taken oral histories from some of the early residents?

These resources can inform both the public art committee and artists.

*People Wall*
Elliot Erwitt and Norman Gobarty, artists
Life-size pictures of 150 people, depicting their roles in the community.
City Hall, Corning, New York

*Mill Creek Canyon*
Herbert Bayer, artist
Large earth sculpture which also acts as detention pond for the creek.
Kent, Washington
What will it cost? How do we pay for it? How do we maintain the public art?

Art installations can cost anywhere from hundreds to thousands of dollars. There are several models for funding public art, but none substitute for local contributions. When individuals, families, businesses and civic organizations invest dollars, they become personally invested. Such donations can be cited as matching funds when applying for grants. Also important to projects are “in-kind” donations of material, labor, and volunteer support. If the project is generated by a public entity (city, county, school or other government agency) you may be eligible for funds from public sources. Grants are available through the National Endowment for the Arts, Oregon Arts Commission (Arts Build Communities Grants Program), some regional arts councils and private foundations.

When planning for a public art project, consider not only artist fees and materials but also administrative costs, project management, selection panel expenses, artist design fees and travel costs, the expense of creating models and, if possible, future maintenance expenses. Planning for public art maintenance is important. A project loved by the community upon installation can turn into an embarrassment later if not well maintained.

An artist with experience in public art should be able to provide a detailed budget for the project. Assistance for estimating other related expenses may be available through the Oregon Arts Commission as well as regional and local arts agencies.

Many municipalities, counties and states require a certain percentage of the budget for new construction projects be designated for public art. In the state of Oregon, 1% of most state capital construction or renovation over $100,000 is earmarked for art. It may be possible for a city or town to implement a similar requirement. In addition to this type of formalized funding requirement, some private developers are willing to voluntarily include a portion of their project budget for public art, an arts space, or other arts programs in an effort to enlist the support of community members.
What happens when the public art project is completed?

Celebrate! Celebrations of public art projects are great ways to bring together a variety of people in the community to honor their hard work and creative visions.

*Waiting for the Interurban*
Richard Beyer, artist
Bronze sculpture adopted by the neighborhood and decorated for birthdays, holidays, anniversaries and other special events.
Fremont district of Seattle, Washington

*Keepsies*
Ann LaRose, artist
Bronze sculpture on city street of three boys playing marbles.
Boise, Idaho
Voice of the River: Public Art and Landscaping Concept Plan

LEO ADLER MEMORIAL PARKWAY
BAKER CITY, OREGON

August 1997

Scale

NORTH

PREPARED BY: Voice of the River Design Team
National Park Service, Rivers Trails & Conservation Assistance.
Walker & Macy, Landscape Architects
Valerie Otani and Fernanda D’Agostino, Artists
Leo Adler Memorial Parks Committee
Oregon Arts Commission
Voice of the River: Public Art and Landscaping Concept Plan
Dan Warnock, Jr., of Warnock Ranches in Baker County, talks about water and irrigation issues to artists developing *The Voice of the River*, a public art and landscaping plan for the Powder River in Baker City. The project was collectively funded by the Oregon Arts Commission, USDA Forest Service and National Park Service.
Regional Arts Councils in Oregon

**Arts Council of Southern Oregon**
* Serving Josephine and Jackson counties*
33 North Central, Suite 300
Medford, Oregon 97501
tel: 541-779-2820  fax: 541-772-4945
artscouncilso@juno.com

**Central Oregon Arts Association**
* Serving Crook, Deschutes and Jefferson counties*
Mirror Pond Gallery
875 NW Brooks Street
Bend, Oregon 97701
tel: 541-317-9324  fax: 541-317-5653
Cate O’Hagan, Executive Director
info@centraloregonarts.com
mirrorpondgallery@centraloregonarts.com

**Columbia Gorge Arts and Culture Council**
* Serving Hood River, Wasco and Sherman counties*
P. O. Box 1543
Hood River, Oregon 97031
office tel: 541-387-5031
Leigh Hancock, Executive Director
lhancock@hoodriver.k12.or.us
http://www.gorgearts.org

**Eastern Oregon Regional Arts Council**
* Serving Harney, Malheur, Baker, Grant, Wallowa, Union, Umatilla, Morrow, Gilliam and Wheeler counties*
c/o Eastern Oregon University
One University Boulevard
LaGrande, Oregon 97850
tel: 541-962-3624  fax: 530-327-9436
eorac@eou.edu

**Lane Arts Council**
* Serving Lane County*
44 West Broadway, Suite 304
Eugene, Oregon 97401
tel: 541-485-2278  fax: 541-485-2478
Douglas Beauchamp, Executive Director
douglas@lanearts.org
lanearts@lanearts.org
http://www.lanearts.org

**Linn-Benton Council for the Arts**
* Serving Linn and Benton counties*
Corvallis Arts Center
700 SW Madison
Corvallis, Oregon 97330
tel: 541-754-1551  fax: 541-754-1552
Steve Rothermund, Executive Director
stever@caclbca.org
http://www.caclbca.org

**Mid-Valley Arts Council**
* Serving Marion, Polk and Yamhill counties*
170 High Street SE
Salem, Oregon 97301
Karen Ramsden, Executive Director
mvac@callATG.com

**Oregon Coast Council for the Arts**
* Serving Columbia, Clatsop, Tillamook, Lincoln, Coos and Curry counties*
street: 777 W. Olive Street
mailing: PO Box 1315
Newport, Oregon 97365
tel: 541-265-9231 or 1-888-701-7123
fax: 541-265-9464
Frank Geltner, Executive Director
fgeltner@coastarts.org
occa@coastarts.org
http://www.coastarts.org

**Regional Arts and Culture Council**
* Serving Multnomah, Washington and Clackamas counties*
Gus J. Solomon Courthouse
620 SW Main, Street, Suite 420
Portland, Oregon 97205
tel: 503-823-5111  fax: 503-823-5432
Eloise Damrosch, Director of Public Art
edamrosch@racc.org
info@racc.org
http://www.racc.org

**Umpqua Valley Arts Association**
* Serving Douglas County*
street: 1624 W. Harvard
mailing: PO Box 1105
Roseburg, Oregon 97470
tel: 541-672-2532  fax: 541-672-7696
Eileen Paul, Executive Director
uvaa@mail.coos.or.us
http://www.coos.or.us/~uvaa
STATEWIDE RESOURCES

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FAX: 503-986-0260
TDD: 503-986-0123
http://art.econ.state.or.us
The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine Commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of the Economic and Community Development Department in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities.

The Commission’s website contains downloadable guidelines and applications for each of its grant programs as well as information on Oregon’s Percent for Public Art Program and extensive links to other web-based arts resources.

LIVABLE OREGON
621 Morrison, Suite 1300
Portland, OR 97205
Phone: 503-222-2182
www.livable.org
Livable Oregon assists in building livable communities through education, advocacy and special projects. Their website includes a section devoted to placemaking, a process which engages community residents in the process of revitalizing an underused community place. The process upgrades existing public spaces through small-scale, short-term projects such as traffic calming, pedestrian improvements and street furniture.

For more information, contact Brian Scott at Livable Oregon.

OREGON LOCAL ARTS AGENCIES
Contact the Oregon Arts Commission for further information.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Oregon Parks and Recreation Department
1115 Commercial Street NE, Suite 1
Salem, OR 97302-1002
Phone: 503-378-4168
Fax: 503-378-6447
The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office consults with tribal and local governments, public agencies, private non-profit organizations, and citizens to provide support and technical assistance in all aspects of historic preservation.

For more information, contact James Hamrick at ext. 231
www.arcweb.sos.state.or.us/SHPO/shpoabout.html

OREGON TOURISM COMMISSION
775 Summer Street NE
Salem, OR 97301-1282
Phone: 503-986-0000
FAX: 503-986-0001
TTY: 503-986-0123
www.traveloregon.com
The mission of the Oregon Tourism Commission is to encourage economic growth and to enhance the quality of life in the state through a strengthened economic impact of tourism. The Commission’s Matching Grants Program was created to help strengthen Oregon’s tourism infrastructure by providing seed money to municipalities, non-profits, tribes, and ports for tourism-related marketing and development projects.

For more information, contact Mandy Cole, Tourism Development Manager
NATIONAL RESOURCES

AMERICANS FOR THE ARTS
1000 Vermont Avenue NW
12th Floor
Washington DC 20005
Phone: 202-371-2830
FAX: 202-371-0424
One East 53rd Street
New York, NY 10022
Phone: 212-223-2787
FAX: 212-980-4857
www.artsusa.org

Americans for the Arts is a national organization that strives to make arts more accessible to every adult and child in America. To this end, Americans for the Arts works with cultural organizations, arts and business leaders and individuals to provide leadership, education and information that will encourage support for the arts and culture in our nation’s communities. The web site covers Community Development, Government and Public Affairs, Public Art, Resource Development, Rural and Small Communities, and many other topics.

ARTS EXTENSION SERVICE
Division of Continuing Education
University of Massachusetts
Box 31650
Amherst, MA 01003-1650
Phone: 413-545-2360
FAX: 413-545-3351
aes@admin.umass.edu
http://www.umass.edu/aes/

The Arts Extension Service has, since 1973, connected the arts with communities through education. AES is a national, nonprofit arts service organization, a program of the Division of Continuing Education, University of Massachusetts Amherst. The agency strives to achieve access to and integration of the arts in communities through continuing education for artists, arts organizations and community leaders. While AES is based in Massachusetts, they offer a wide variety of resources applicable to communities nationally. Publications include the classic primer of public art, Going Public: a field guide to art in public places by Jeffrey L. Cruikshank and Pam Korza. Published in cooperation with the Visual Arts Program of the National Endowment for the Arts. ISBN 0-945464-00-2. 1988.

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE ARTS
1100 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20506
Phone: 202-682-5400
http://arts.endow.gov/

This web site is a comprehensive guide to the NEA, providing descriptions of their grant programs as well as applications and guidelines. It also lists a broad range of related resources and links to other organizations.

PARTNERS FOR LIVABLE COMMUNITIES
1429 21st Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20036
Phone: 202-887-5990
FAX: 202-466-4845
www.livable.com

Partners for Livable Communities is a non-profit organization committed to improving community by working with community development organizations, foundations and city governments every day to initiate dramatic changes designed to increase the livability of communities around the nation. The web site provides information on their programs and services, as well as an extensive list of useful books and publications.

PROJECT FOR PUBLIC SPACES, INC.
153 Waverly Place, 4th Floor
New York, NY 10014
Phone: 212-620-5660
FAX: 212-620-3821
E-mail: pps@pps.org
www.pps.org

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a non-profit organization that for 25 years has successfully carried out its mission to build communities by creating the special places that build community life. PPS has brought its technical assistance, research and educational efforts to over 1000 communities, throughout the United States as well as abroad, to improve the comfort, attractiveness, social and economic use and vitality of their public spaces. For a complete description of programs and services, see their web site.
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Oregon.artscomm@state.or.us

October 2000

Fare Well
Don Merkt, artist
Functional cast iron waste-water drain at Water Pollution Lab, Portland, Oregon

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