

PUBLIC ART



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



DEFINITION: WHAT IS IT?

1. What is public art?

Public art fits a much broader definition than art in a gallery or a museum. In simple terms, public art is any work of art or design that is created by an artist specifically to be sited in a public space.

Public art can take a variety of forms including sculptures and murals in and around buildings. It can also be incorporated into the very design of a building or object, such as: a manhole cover, paving pattern, lighting, seating, building facade, kiosk, gate, fountain, or play equipment.

Public artists work in all kinds of mediums: bronze, engraving, carving, fresco, mobile, collage, mosaic, tapestry, photograph, drawing, or earthwork to name a few. Public art can be permanent or temporary.



2. What are some examples of existing public art that I may have seen?

The Eiffel Tower in Paris (image A), the murals and sculptures in downtown Napa, the Grape Crusher on Highway 29 in Napa (B), the Sundial Bridge in Redding (E), the St. Louis Arch (F), the mosaic fountain at the Napa Mill (G), the "Bean" in Millennium Park in Chicago (H), the bow and arrow on San Francisco's Embarcadero (I), "Retro Woman" on the Fifth Street Parking Garage in downtown Napa (J), and "The Gates" in New York City's Central Park.



ECONOMICS: WHO PAYS? WHO BENEFITS?

3. What can public art do for a community? Why is it important?

Public art has the power to energize our public spaces, arouse our thinking, and transform the places where we live, work, and play into more welcoming and beautiful environments that invite interaction. By its presence alone public art can heighten our awareness, question our assumptions, transform a landscape, or express community values, and for these reasons it can have the power, over time, to transform a city's image. Public art helps define a community's identity and reveal the unique character of a specific neighborhood.



4. Does public art have economic benefits for a community?

Public art can have a tremendous economic impact. "The Sundial Bridge", a functional public art pedestrian bridge in Redding, California, generated an additional 12,000 hotel room stays during the first two months after it opened. Hotels report that the bridge continues to be the number-one attraction guests ask about.

The "WaterFire" public art project in Providence, Rhode Island, attracts 350,000 people annually, and translates into \$4 million in additional spending downtown annually. In addition, the "WaterFire" production annually puts \$270,000 directly back into the state, in the form of wages and spending on materials and technical skills. These are just a few examples of the economic impact of public art.

5. Who pays for public art?

Public art is typically funded through a percent-for-art ordinance that levies a fee on new public and private development. This fee is typically 1%, although there are examples ranging from ½ percent to 2% (such as in San Francisco). This fee is seen as an investment that the developer makes into the community, by enhancing the quality of life, increasing property values, and stimulating the economy. Occasionally some types of development are exempt from the fee, such as low-income housing and basic public infrastructure.



6. How and when is the fee calculated?

Typically, the fee is calculated and paid at the same time all other fees are calculated and paid: when the builder applies for the permit. It is based on the building value tables as set by the Building Official through City Council Resolution. These table values do not include land value and would not be adjusted if the project budget changes as a result of building change orders.

7. Could a public art ordinance create a deterrent to building in Napa?

Napa is surrounded by communities with public art ordinances — Petaluma, Santa Rosa, Rohnert Park, Novato, Walnut Creek, Sacramento, Oakland, Emeryville, Richmond, San Francisco, Dublin, etc. Most developers are accustomed to this type of fee for their project. Despite other development fees such as traffic, water etc. which are typically much higher than a Public Art fee, developers have been drawn to these areas because of their inherent attractions and Napa, with the Napa River, growing residential base, strong tourist population, wine industry, natural beauty and wine & food culture would likely fair no differently.



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8. How can a developer benefit from incorporating public art in his or her project?

Public art enhances the project by making the space more desirable for employees, tenants, and businesses. It elevates the project and helps raise awareness of the building as a new landmark. Studies have shown that public art features play an important role in distinguishing competing buildings, and that it facilitates rentals and reduces risk.

Public art is also the legacy the builder will leave behind for generations to enjoy. It is an investment in, and a gift to the community.

PROCESS: HOW DOES IT WORK?

9. Who chooses the art?

Public art programs across the country have different types of selection committees. These committees are designed to be representative of the community and informed by arts experts. The committees average between 7-9 members, and often include: arts professionals (professors, curators, artists, public art consultants), the developer, representatives from the jurisdiction's appropriate departments and planning commissions, and residents who live and/or work near the proposed site. Usually a new committee is formed for each public art project, to best reflect the interests of that project and site. Selection committee members may be appointed or approved by the City Council or the Arts Commission.



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10. How are offensive, controversial and otherwise inappropriate artworks prevented from being approved as public art?

Typically, when a public art work is solicited, the jurisdiction provides guidelines that specifically prohibit offensive and inappropriate artworks. Furthermore, each piece of artwork will go through an extensive selection process that includes local government and community representatives, and arts professionals. Aesthetics are subjective, but the process involves extensive community input, specifically from residents who live or work near the proposed site.



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11. What if the developer doesn't have an appropriate site in their building?

If the developer does not have an appropriate site, or if they are not interested in incorporating public art into their building, he or she can allocate the funds to a pooled fund that will be used to create public art projects elsewhere in the city.

12. For artwork funded through a pooled fund, who chooses the art and where it will be placed?

The City of Napa will develop a Public Art Master Plan which will help guide the creation and installation of new public art works. The artwork for these spaces would be procured through the process defined above.



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TIMING: WHY NOW?

13. Given the current economic climate and the serious community needs in other areas (schools, libraries, roads, etc.), why is the timing right for a public art ordinance?

The arts are a critical investment in the health of a community's economy. Most municipal assets are depreciating assets, both short term (cars, fire trucks, paving equipment) and longer term (buildings and other major infrastructure). Conversely, art generally increases in value over time. Study after study has demonstrated that the arts are often a significant component of a regional and local economy. Art attracts visitors and expenditures, and investment in public art creates an environment that encourages private and nonprofit investment in arts and cultural facilities in the same area.

Downtown Napa could experience half a million square feet of new development in the next few years, so the passing of a public art policy in the immediate future will have a tremendous affect on our city.

IMAGES:

- A) "The Eiffel Tower" (1889), designed by Gustave Eiffel, remains an enduring symbol of Paris, France;
- B) "The Grape Crusher" (1988), by Gino Miles, sits atop the Southern Crossing in Napa;
- C) "The Making of a Fresco Showing the Building of a City" (1931), mural by Diego Rivera at the Art Institute of San Francisco;
- D) "The Lincoln Memorial" (1922), sculptural portrait of the 16th US President by Daniel Chester French, in Washington, DC;
- E) "The Sundial Bridge" (2004), designed by Santiago Calatrava in Redding, CA;
- F) "The Gateway Arch" (1947), designed by Eero Saarinen, in St. Louis, MO;
- G) "The Living River" (2005), Alan Shepp's mosaic fountain on the Riverbend Performance Plaza at The Napa River Inn;
- H) "Cloud Gate (aka The Bean)" (2004) by Anish Kapoor for the City of Chicago Millennium Park Project;
- I) "Cupid's Span" (2002) by Claes Oldenburg at San Francisco's Embarcadero;
- J) "Retro Woman" (2008) by Gordon Huether at the Fifth Street Parking Garage in downtown Napa.



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