Public Art Roadmap

Creating A Vibrant Public Art Ecosystem in Montgomery County

Montgomery County Public Arts Trust
Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County
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arts&humanities
council of montgomery county

Cover: Michael Enn Sirvet, *Red Orchard Wall,* Fenton Street Urban Park

Right: Craig Craft, *Light Web*, Silver Spring

About the Public Art Roadmap

Montgomery County, Md., was an early adopter of the idea that local government should incorporate public art into facilities that are used and enjoyed by people throughout the county — libraries, parks, schools, urban places.

In 1983, it became the first locality in the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area to create an "Art in Architecture" program, based on models that were taking root at the time in communities around the country and in federal agencies. And it was one of the first communities anywhere in the U.S. to ask developers to provide public art, through a mechanism that has since become common, making public art an amenity in exchange for zoning benefits.

These commitments, dating back some forty years, have resulted in significant public art investments from many County departments and developers, with more than 350 permanent pieces now on view.

In recent years, however, the County's funding of public art have wavered, and its approaches to public art have not kept pace with the changes that have occurred in this dynamic field. Once a leader, the County now lags its peers in the region, in terms of both its financial commitment to public art, and the innovation it brings to that work.

This Public Art Roadmap is intended to chart a course for what the Public Arts Trust should do next.

The Roadmap process took place from October 2014 through June 2015. It involved a review of program documentation; numerous interviews with staff of County agencies engaged with public art, infrastructure development and planning; visits to most of the non-school artworks in the collection; a public internet survey; "lunch and learn" presentations with planning and transportation staff; review of numerous County planning documents, including the general plan, growth management plan, and area or sector plans; and monthly meetings with either the full Trust Steering Committee or a special Roadmap committee.

The first half of this Roadmap is devoted to raising the creative ambitions for public art in Montgomery County, and identifying projects that are likely candidates for success.

The second half is devoted to discussing how the Trust can shift from a reactive to a pro-active posture — how it can start the long and patient process of working strategically and public agencies and communities with the most innovative practices that can be found in public art.

Jim Sanborn, *Alluvium*, North Bethesda Marketplace

Key Findings and Recommendations

Montgomery County's Public Arts Trust is at a turning point.

- The County's commitment to funding public art is minimal, a fraction of what its ordinance allows.

- The County's public art approach, once a national leader, is lagging in terms of the innovation it is bringing to its work and in terms of some of its internal practices.

- The County's public art collection is lagging in genres of artworks that are at the forefront of current public art practice.

- The County's public art collection is not widely understood or appreciated by the public at large.

- The County's approach to incorporating public art in planning and private development has been relatively passive. There should be a closer linkage between urban design and public realm priorities and public art opportunities and priorities.

- The County's "public art ecology" – its network of artist and arts organizations that produce public art – is not strongly developed for a municipality of its size and resources.

The Public Arts Trust has key resources it can build on.

- A vision for public art, as expressed by the public and stakeholders, aligns with the development and infrastructure opportunities that exist in the County.

- The Trust has strong relationships with several County partners, including the Maryland–National Capitol Parks and Planning Commission, the Department of General Services and Montgomery County Public Schools.

- The Trust has a great deal of flexibility in how it can work, which provides it with more options for shaping its future.

The Public Arts Trust can take the following key steps.

- The Trust should focus its efforts on new types of artworks that create excitement and energy and get attention for public art again.

- The Trust should be strategic in the partnerships that it prioritizes, focusing on those that best help it achieve the goals of the Roadmap.

- The Trust should work with M-NCPPC's planning division to strengthen linkages between public art, planning and development.

- The Trust should look toward building a "public art ecosystem" that extends beyond the focused role it plays in managing the County's public art collection. It should strengthen the County's "public art ecology" through information, networking and support of public art practices.

- The Trust must re-build the public case for public art through outreach and engagement with County agencies, public art stakeholders and the community at large. This constituency should be mobilized to advocate for funding the Trust at the full level contemplated by the County's public art ordinance.

Ray King, *Luma Wave*, Marriott Conference Center, North Bethesda
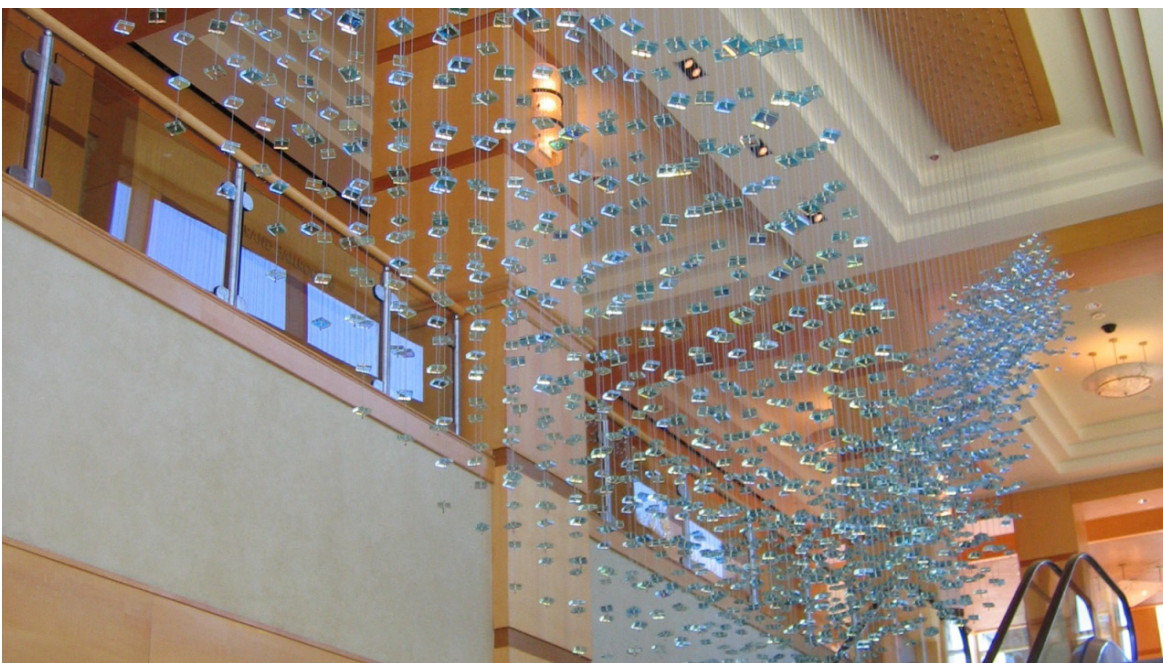
Montgomery at this Moment

Montgomery County, part of the Washington, D.C., metropolitan area, long ago evolved beyond its role as a bedroom community to the nation's capital, becoming a diverse, dynamic jurisdiction in its own right.

Economically, the County is a net importer of workers. Its economy is based on knowledge-based businesses, with a high concentration in research and development as well as government contracting, and it is one of the nation's leading bio-tech centers. However, while long-run projections are for steady population and employment growth, in terms of job growth, the County has been recovering more slowly from the recession than the nation as a whole.

Environmentally, Montgomery County has charted a steady path of growth management over the last half century, focusing development in corridors separated by green "wedges" and surrounded by an agricultural reserve. This pattern has been reinforced by investment in parks and open space, transportation infrastructure and policies that concentrate growth around transit nodes and urban centers. However, continued growth is outpacing past infrastructure investments, particularly in transportation.

Proposed Wheaton Town Square. This major new open space in the Wheaton Arts and
Entertainment District will feature public art by artist Norie Sato.

Demographically, the County's population is remarkably diverse; it is now a "majority-minority" jurisdiction. County residents are among the most highly educated in the country, and their per capita income is one of the highest. Yet disparities exist: a surprisingly large percentage of school-age children in the County are eligible for free and reduced meals assistance.

Montgomery's Road Ahead

One of the County's key challenges is that it is running out of fresh land to develop. Development is spreading eastward and pushing against the fringes of its developed corridor, into places where few transit options exist. At the same time, development is turning inward into already-built areas.

The County's challenges now are to focus development on infill sites, to expand its sub-regional transit infrastructure and to refine its urban development patterns so they reflect the quality of life that people are seeking, particularly denser, mixed-use, pedestrian-oriented areas.

A second challenge is that most of the County's residential fabric is single-family homes, which may not be adequate for either its aging population or the young professionals it seeks to attract. Meanwhile, new development in urban corridors is expensive, creating a "reverse generification"

WHEATON PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS

effect. This means the County will be focusing on diversifying its housing stock (creating places for "active and creative living") and refining its urban development patterns so they reflect a finer-grained mix of jobs and housing and provide affordable housing accessible to transit.

In terms of infrastructure, this means the County is likely to be investing more in urban open space; alternative transportation modes, such as bus rapid transit, bicycling and walking; and "smart" infrastructure that is optimized by data-driven strategies. Investment in higher education research and teaching facilities is also likely, and investment in senior services and facilities can be anticipated.

Demographically, the County – already a minority-majority community – is expected to continue its diversification, though the ultimate geographic distribution of various populations is difficult to project. The County will also see an aging population — the ratio of senior citizens to working-age population is expected to grow by 50 percent in the next fifteen years. A third trend is income stratification — if trends nationally and in Bethesda and Silver Spring are borne out elsewhere, the County can expect concentrations of higher-income households in urban cores, and the pushing of lower-income households into rings around the urban cores.

Since development will trend toward denser, mixed-use developments, generally in urban cores and areas served by transit, there will likely be a stronger emphasis on urban design and placemaking in area plans. The Art Review Committee can expect that more developments will come through Optional Method processes and are likely to include public art that supports placemaking goals. One concern is that the denser, mixed-use, transit-oriented developments that are likely to provide public art opportunities may in fact serve the most affluent members of the community.

At the same time, the Trust can expect to see the County grappling with social dynamics related to cultural diversity, income inequality, aging populations and suburban gentrification, suggesting new opportunities for artists interested in engaging with these issues.

All of these conditions — the County's economic base, its planning directions and its demographic trends — suggest fresh contexts and fruitful directions for public art projects. These projects can both support the urban fabric that the County believes it needs to be successful, and can stretch the definition of how artists work in the public realm.

Mark Parsons, *Big Burr*
Temporary installation in Little Bennett Regional Park
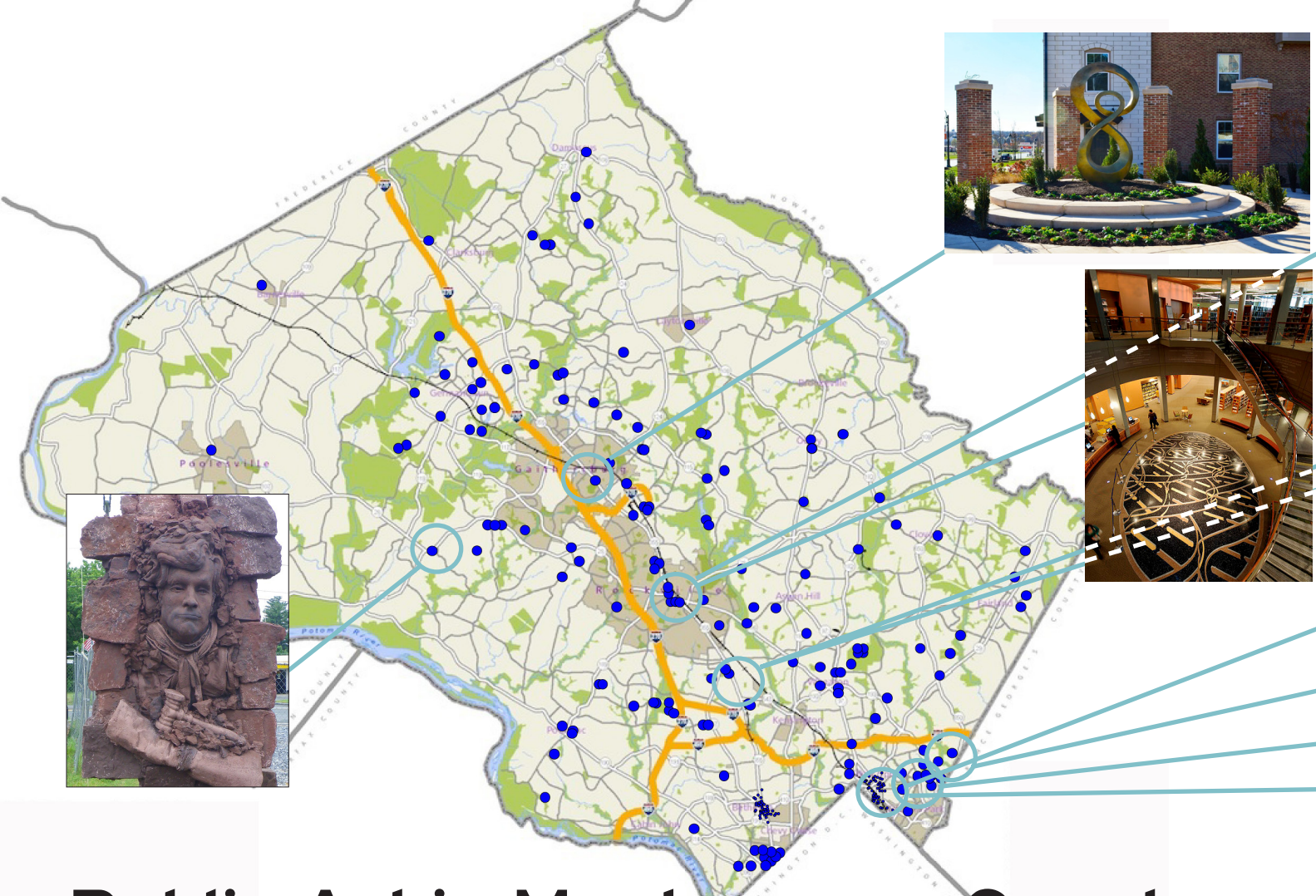
Public Art in Montgomery County

Today Montgomery County builds its public art collection in two ways — through a framework that dates back more than 40 years.

Public art in County facilities, such as parks, schools and recreation centers, is commissioned collaboratively by County agencies and the Public Arts Trust, a committee of the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County. Generally, projects have been initiated and funded by the agencies that host them, and the Trust has facilitated the commissioning process. In many cases, the scope and relationship of the art to the facility is determined through the agency's planning process, with oversight by the Trust Steering Committee but minimal involvement from professional public art staff.

Public art in private development is commissioned voluntarily by developers through provisions of the zoning code that require them to provide amenities related to their development. These projects are directly by developers and guided by M-NCPPC staff, with oversight by the Art Review Panel, which includes representatives of the Trust as well as local artists and designers.

This approach to working with developers dates back to 1974, when the County established a process by which developers in certain areas could commission public art as a way of fulfilling their open space requirements. At the time, this was a highly innovative twist on policies being experimented with in other jurisdictions, such as New York City, which instead offered generous zoning bonuses to developers who included public art.

A decade later, the County established its own public art program at the urging of Council member William Hanna, who had been mayor of Rockville when that city created its public art program in 1978. By then, other public agencies — Montgomery County Public Schools, M-NCPPC, and Montgomery College — were already operating their own percent for public art programs.

In 1995, all of the programs were consolidated under the umbrella of the Public Arts Trust, which was funded at a level of up to 0.05% of the County's capital budget, though agencies were welcome to include public art costs in their own project budgets. A comprehensive set of guidelines was completed in 2012.

Montgomery County's public art approach is decentralized in comparison to most programs elsewhere. In most places, the majority of the funding for public art and the respon-
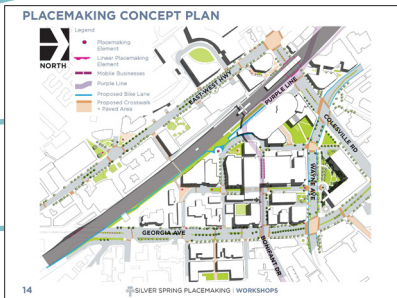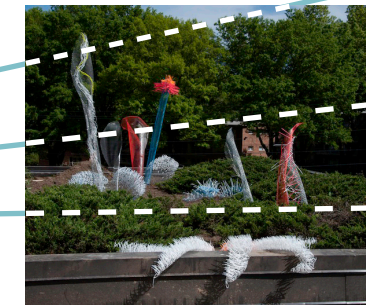
Top row, left to right:
Charles Strain, *Inner Being*, Gaithersburg (private commission); Brower Hatcher, *Flower of Rebirth*, Rockville (private commission); Ray King, *Luma Wave,* North Bethesda (Public Arts Trust); mosaic staircase, Quebec Terrace Apartments, Arts on the Block (community project).

Center row, left to right:
Heidi Lippmann, *Connections* (Public Arts Trust); mural at Pike and Rose development (private commission); Ray Kaskey, *The Hand* (private commission).

Bottom:
Alison Boliek, Nicole Hinkle, Carolina Uechi, Blossoms, University of Maryland Long Branch Studio (community project); Silver Spring Placemaking Plan (M-NCPPC).

sibility for commissioning projects is put in the hands of a professional public arts staff, with public art curatorial and project management backgrounds. While Montgomery County's approach is derived from decades of tradition, it makes it more difficult for the AHCMC to keep Montgomery County's public art program responsive to broad opportunities and community needs, and current in terms of public art practices.

It also is important to note that Montgomery County's public art infrastructure also extends beyond the efforts of County government and developers.

- The cities of Rockville and Gaithersburg both facilitate their own public art programs, commissioning new work and managing extensive collections.

- The Arts and Entertainment Districts in Bethesda and Silver Spring actively promote public art in their service areas and have facilitated small-scale projects such as murals.

- The non-profit organization Arts on the Block has produced several projects in the Silver Spring/Takoma Park area, including an ongoing series of projects at Carroll Gardens–Quebec Terrace.

- Long Branch: Exploring Sites in Transition is an ongoing initiative headed by three artists and University of Maryland faculty members, in collaboration with business and civic groups in Long Branch. The group has initiated small-scale, community-based projects for about two years.

- Silver Spring Placemaking, a partnership of M-NCPPC and Council Member Hans Riemer, has organized charrettes to study placemaking and public art strategies for various sites in Silver Spring over the last year. It has influenced thinking about how "creative placemaking" relates to long-term planning throughout the County.

- The Purple Line, a light-rail line that the state is building to connect Bethesda, Silver Spring and Prince George's County, will have a public art program.

Today, the evolution of public art beyond traditional percent for art or developer programs is the rule, not the exception. The breadth and strength of related public art organizations in Montgomery County is weak, compared to peer communities of comparable size and demographics. That sector should be nourished to advance the creation of public art in the County.

The Public Art Collection

Arts Facility
Economic Development
Environment
General Government
Human Services
Libraries
Montgomery College
Parks
Private Development
Public Safety
Public Schools
Recreation
Transportation

The public artworks commissioned in Montgomery County can be thought of as a collection, just like the artworks that are owned and shown by a museum. In that light, we can consider the mix of artworks that have been commissioned, their location throughout the County, and how they relate to current ideas about public art and urban design.
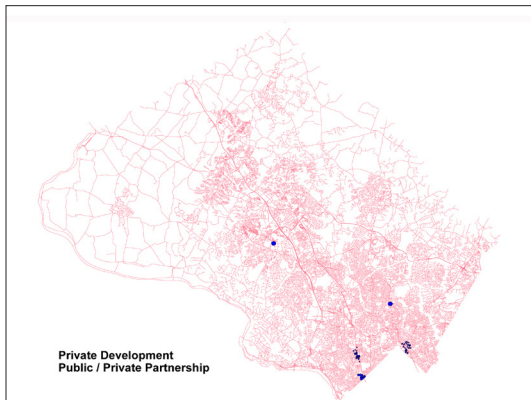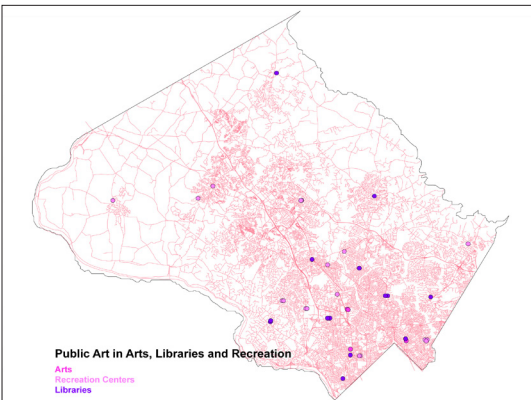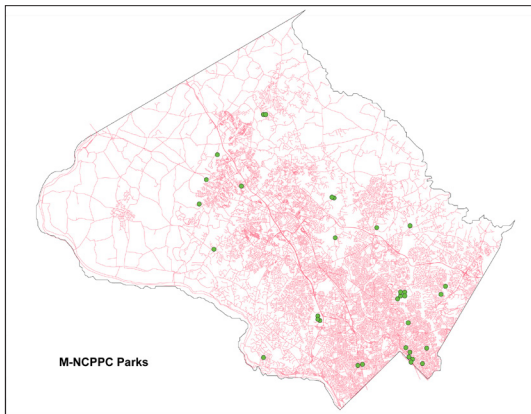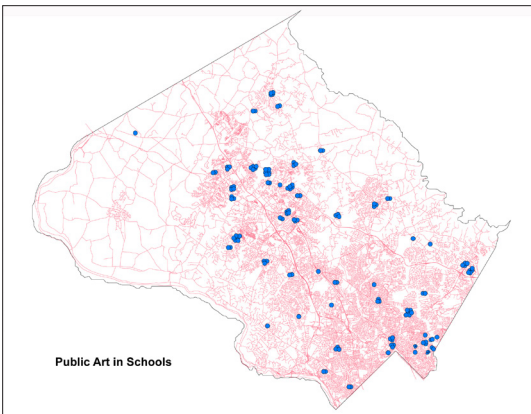
Montgomery County's public art collection includes 258 artworks, not including its substantial collection of works on paper. In addition, 86 projects have been commissioned by private developers or through public-private partnerships. Though they are not part of the formal collection, they are considered in this analysis. These are some of the highlights:
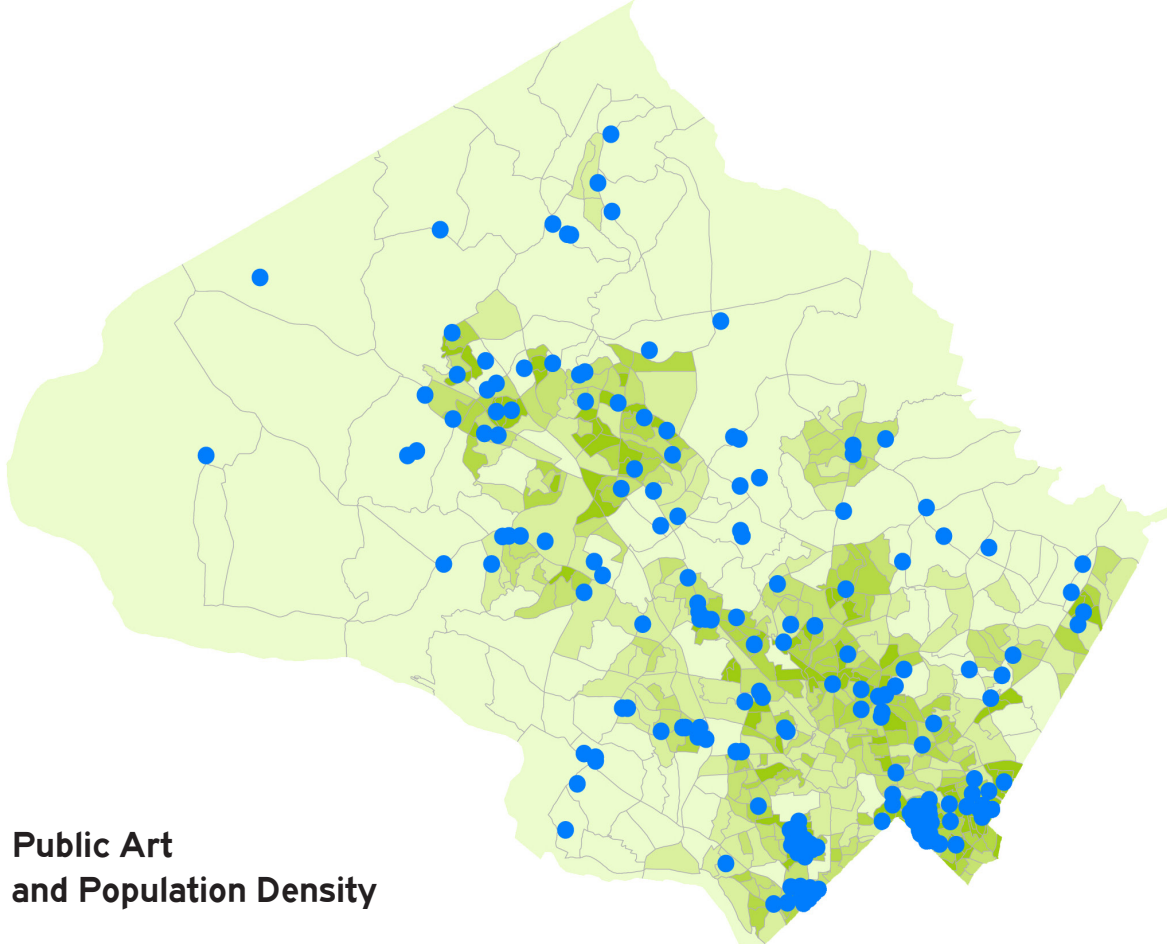
• The County's artworks speak largely of a particular period in time, dating back to a quarter-century ago. The bulk of them, about 60 percent, were commissioned in the late eighties or early 1990s. There has been a smaller but steady pace of new commissions recently; about 15 percent of the collection dates from the last decade.

• More than 75 percent of the County's public art (both the County's collection and private developer projects) is clustered in three types of places: public schools, parks and recreation facilities, and the urban centers of Bethesda and Silver Spring. Beyond that, the collection is fairly well dispersed throughout the urbanized areas of the I-270 corridor, less well represented on older arterial corridors in East County and in second-ring residential areas just outside the Beltway.

• The artworks commissioned by the County have largely been traditional in their approach, with about 70 percent being sculpture, statues, murals or other wall-mounted art. Among developer projects, there has been a significantly higher percentage of fountains, functional artworks, light works, new media and urban space projects.
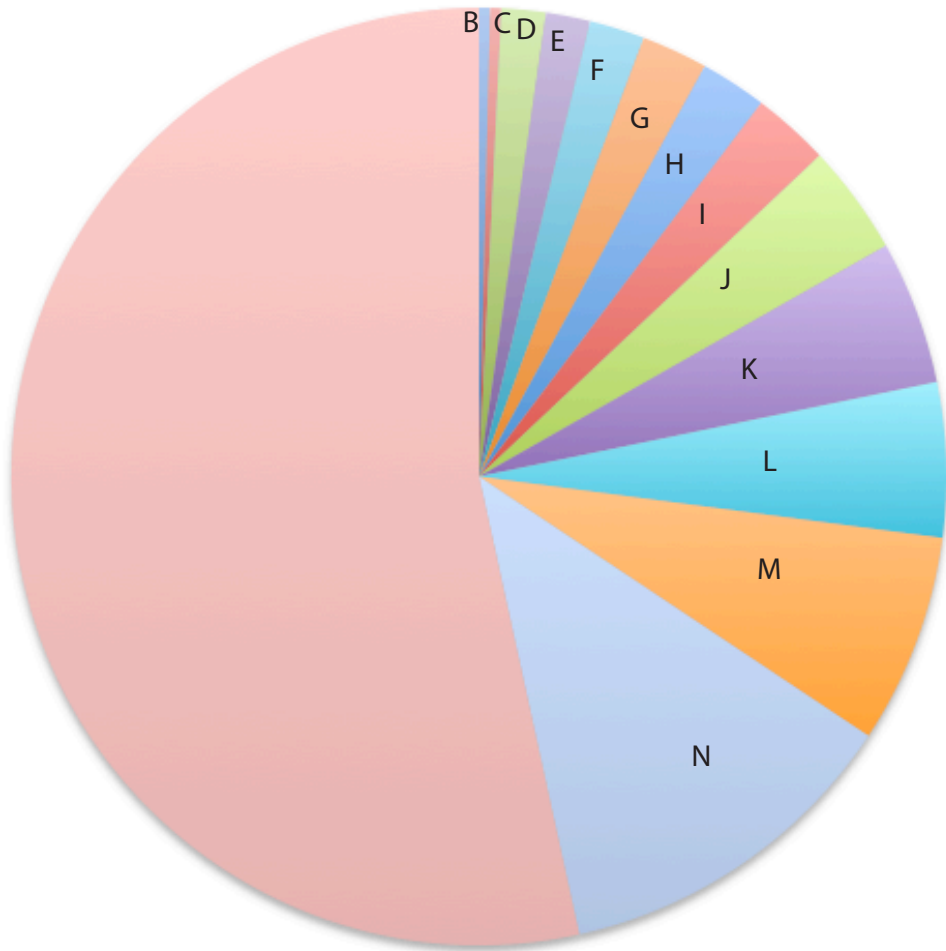
A   Public Schools (140)
B   Economic Development (1)
C   Environment (1)
D   Arts Facility (4)
E   Urban Space (4)
F   General Government (5)
G   Public Safety (6)
H   Montgomery College (6)
I   Human Services (7)
J   Unknown (12)
K   Transportation (13)
L   Libraries (14)
M   Recreation (19)
N   Parks (32)

County Agencies that have Commissioned Public Art

Public Art in Schools

M-NCPPC Parks

Public Art in Arts, Libraries and Recreation
Arts
Recreation Centers
Libraries

Private Development
Public / Private Partnership
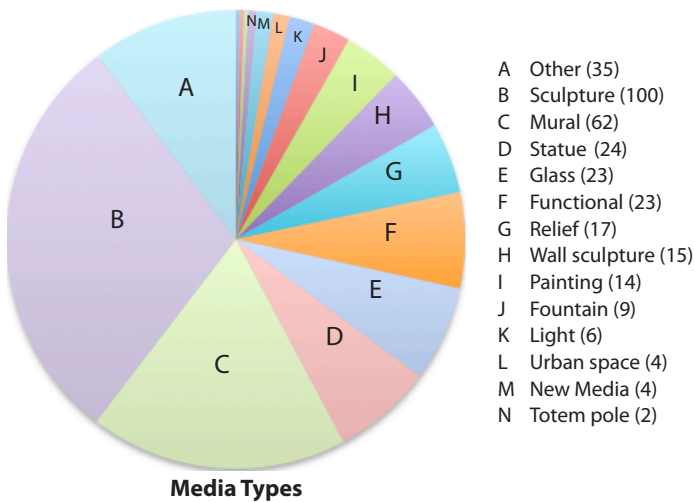
Public Art
and Population Density

This map compares the distribution of public art in the County to the distribution of population. Each colored area represents a quarter-mile radius around artworks in the County's collection.

The map indicates that relative to population, "second ring" suburbs along the Beltway, areas between the cores of Bethesda and Silver Spring, and growing suburbs in East County are among the least served by public art.

Also, the municipalities of Gaithersburg, Rockville, Kensington and Takoma Park have fewer County public art projects, relative to population. (Projects created through Gaithersburg's and Rockville's processes are not mapped.)
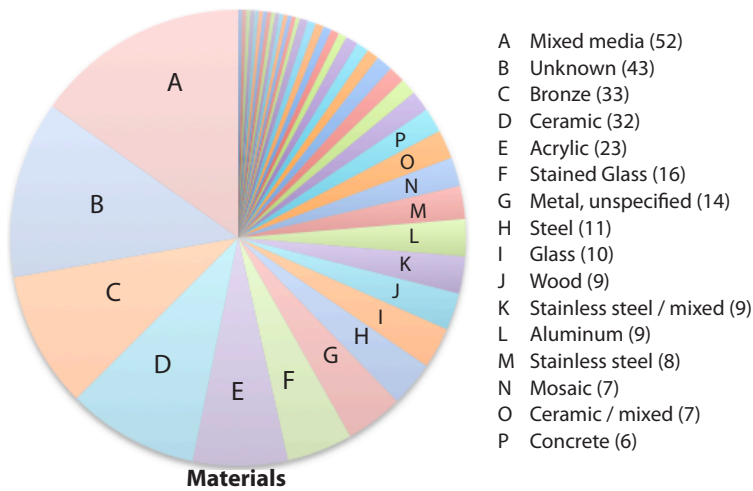

- There is a diverse range of materials, consistent with the genres of work (sculpture, mural) predominant in the County. However, the materials tends towards traditional and conventional in the practice of public art (such as bronze, steel, stainless steel, glass and aluminum sculpture; acrylic, ceramic tile and mosaic murals). While light and digital media projects are slowing coming into the collection, there are other new media genres, such as video, that are not represented.

- There has been little exploration of integrated / functional works, environmental works, natural materials, text-based projects or those that incorporate dynamic elements (sound, motion, light). Social practice, temporary or time-based pieces are not well-represented or well-documented in the collection.

These are some other observations about the collection.

- Compared to other municipalities the size of Montgomery County, there is a preponderance of projects at schools and fewer projects incorporated into infrastructure.

- There are relatively few projects related to environmental systems or transportation systems.

- There are few projects at Montgomery College, given the scale of its current capital development program and its founding role in the County's public art program.

- There has been little experimentation with temporary projects, especially those that cross genres with performing arts, or projects that are a way of testing new media work.

- Developers have taken on the most ambitious projects, in terms of scale, media and integration with public space.

- The collection is under-represented in East County and "second-ring" suburbs along the Beltway. The municipalities of Gaithersburg, Rockville, Kensington and Takoma Park also have fewer County public art projects, relative to population. (Projects created through Gaithersburg's and Rockville's processes are not considered in the analysis.)

What Artistic Media Are Represented in the Collection?

A   Other (35)
B   Sculpture (100)
C   Mural (62)
D   Statue (24)
E   Glass (23)
F   Functional (23)
G   Relief (17)
H   Wall sculpture (15)
I   Painting (14)
J   Fountain (9)
K   Light (6)
L   Urban space (4)
M   New Media (4)
N   Totem pole (2)

Media Types

By far the most prevalent type of artwork in the collection is sculpture, including statuary (124). Murals are next most prevalent (62). Functional artworks (23) and glass artworks (23) follow. The rest of the artworks are spread over a variety of media/genres. Uniquely, there are two totem poles, one roof installation, one temporary project location, one environmental sculpture and one sound sculpture.

What Materials Are Montgomery County's Public Artworks Made of?

A   Mixed media (52)
B   Unknown (43)
C   Bronze (33)
D   Ceramic (32)
E   Acrylic (23)
F   Stained Glass (16)
G   Metal, unspecified (14)
H   Steel (11)
I   Glass (10)
J   Wood (9)
K   Stainless steel / mixed (9)
L   Aluminum (9)
M   Stainless steel (8)
N   Mosaic (7)
O   Ceramic / mixed (7)
P   Concrete (6)

Materials

The County's collection comprises a diverse range of materials, consistent with the genres of artworks that are predominant in the County.

The preponderance of materials tends towards traditional and conventional, such as bronze, steel, stainless steel and aluminum sculpture; acrylic, ceramic tile and mosaic murals.

There has been little exploration of integrated / functional works, environmental works, natural materials, text-based projects, or those that incorporate dynamic elements (sound, motion, light).

When Was Montgomery County's Public Art Commissioned?
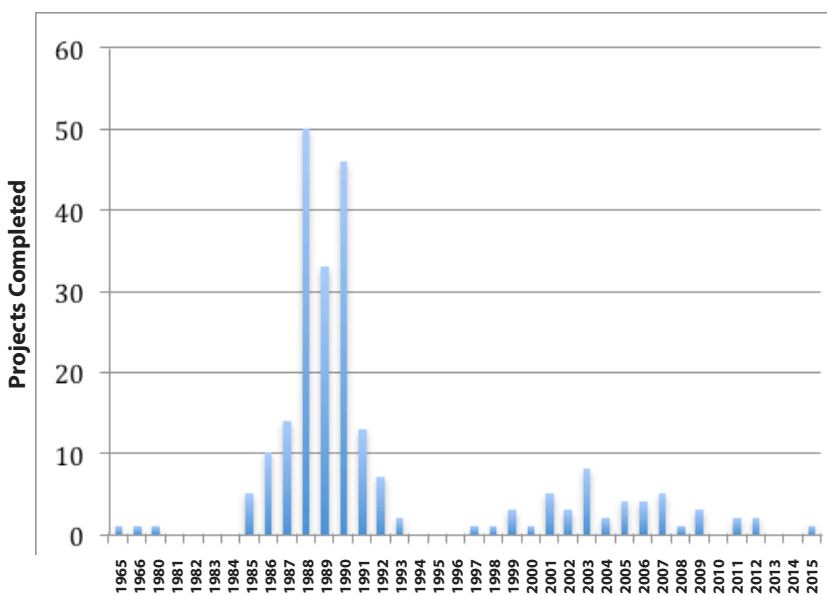
The bulk of Montgomery County's artworks, about 60 percent, were commissioned in the late eighties or early 1990s, largely in conjunction with an aggressive building program at Montgomery County Public Schools. There has been a smaller but steady pace of new commissions recently; about 15 percent of the collection dates from the last decade. This means that much of the County's public art collection reflects a particular time and place, and that the collection has been slow at diversifying. It also means that the collection can expect increasing maintenance and conservation expenses related to its aging collection.

What People Say about Public Art

Deirdre Saunder, *Silver Creek*, Silver Spring

What the Public Art Trust Steering Committee Says About Public Art

During the development of the Road Map, the Public Art Trust Steering Committee met several times to discuss the priorities it saw for public art in Montgomery County.

Genres of Public Art

The PATSC members recommended the prioritization of projects that helped create gathering places around the County, continued emphasis on artworks integrated into County infrastructure, new attention to projects related to environmental issues and stormwater management systems, and more experimentation with temporary projects.

Goals for Public Art

Reviewing the existing collection, PATSC members noted that Montgomery County's most successful public has these qualities:
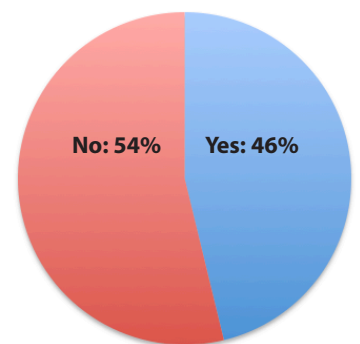
- Well integrated into site (architecturally or outdoors) in terms of scale, material.

- Demonstrates care in design and maintenance.

- Engages multiple senses, not just sight –sound, feel.

- Transforms the site into a place that can be inhabited by people, that provides a unique experience in that place.

- Located in a place that is activated by people, that allows for multiple use, both special and everyday activities.

- Visually memorable as a landmark, relating to the scale of the place and the way it is experienced.

- Has a storyline / backstory the community can recognize, is important and is engaging.

Program Priorities
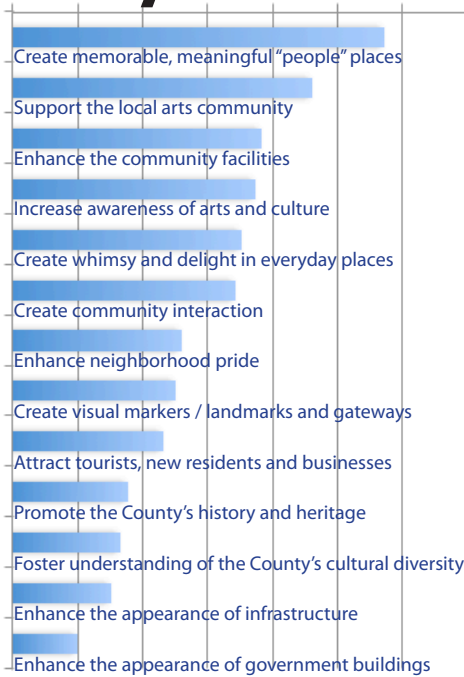
Two priorities stood out prominently, "develop a collection management plan" and "raise public awareness about public art through educational programs and activities," in that order. The third priority was commissioning temporary artworks, and creating opportunities for local artist, which scored similarly.

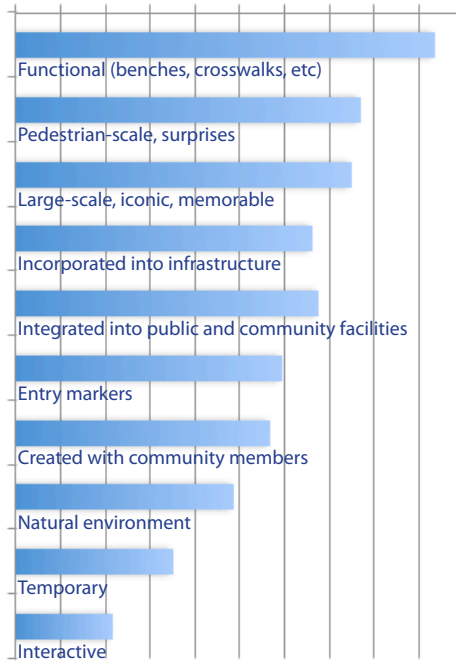**Did you know that Montgomery County has a public art program?**

No: 54%   Yes: 46%

Why?

- Create memorable, meaningful "people" places
- Support the local arts community
- Enhance the community facilities
- Increase awareness of arts and culture
- Create whimsy and delight in everyday places
- Create community interaction
- Enhance neighborhood pride
- Create visual markers / landmarks and gateways
- Attract tourists, new residents and businesses
- Promote the County's history and heritage
- Foster understanding of the County's cultural diversity
- Enhance the appearance of infrastructure
- Enhance the appearance of government buildings

What impact should public art have in Montgomery County?

What?

- Functional (benches, crosswalks, etc)
- Pedestrian-scale, surprises
- Large-scale, iconic, memorable
- Incorporated into infrastructure
- Integrated into public and community facilities
- Entry markers
- Created with community members
- Natural environment
- Temporary
- Interactive

What approaches to public art would you like to see?

Where?

- Public spaces / pedestrian areas in urban centers
- Community and civic facilities
- Gateways and landmarks / County
- Gateways and landmarks / neighborhoods
- Public schools
- Transit corridors
- Parks and stream corridors
- Gateways and landmarks / urban centers
- Bikeways and bike trails
- Interactive, incorporating new technology
- Parking garages
- Montgomery College

What are the priority locations for public art?

What the Public Says About Public Art

Montgomery County's public art collection is at a cross-roads, judging by the responses to an online survey conducted over the winter and spring as part of the Roadmap research process.

On the upside, survey respondents expressed the belief that public art had positive impact on the County's urban cores because it brings color, beauty and energy to the streets, making ordinary places a bit more lively. They said that public art made Montgomery County's urban centers inviting, interesting, attractive and vibrant, and conveyed the impression that art, artists and the public realm are valued.

But that is counterbalanced with the finding that many people don't have much awareness of the public art in the County. Only about half the survey respondents said they knew there is a public art program, and of 31 representative artworks shown, only one artwork was recognized by at least half of the respondents. This may be related to the finding that half of the County's collection is in Bethesda or Silver Spring, which might not be visited by most people in the County, or at schools, where artworks are not highly visible to the general public.

Respondents also expressed mixed feelings about the quality: Nearly half the people answering a question about how Silver Spring's public art affects their impression of the area said that the art was too much part of the background, not of high enough quality or not cohesiv enough. This may be related to the genres of work that are on view or to their scale or siting relative to surrounding development.

While Montgomery County consists of a wide variety of landscapes, from suburban cores to agricultural reserves, a strong majority of respondents urged that public art continue to be focused on the urbanizing areas of the County. Beyond that, respondents urged a focus on community and civic facilities, and on gateways to the County and its various subareas.

The most important goals for public art, respondents said, would be to "create memorable, meaningful people places throughout the County" and "support the local arts community." The next group of goals received about the same weighting: "Enhance the appearance of parks, recreation centers, libraries, schools," "increase awareness of arts districts," "create whimsy and delight in everyday places" and "create community interaction, strengthen social networks and connections."

The Upshot

People prefer to see public art in urban cores, where art can be engaging and interactive and enhance the experience of the streetscape. They would be interested in projects that strengthen the local arts community, social networks and community connections. Secondarily, they are interested in projects that enhance community and civic facilities and arts districts.

Roadmap: Artistic Focus

Judy Sutton Moore, *Art Alley,* Silver Spring

Vicki Scuri, *Rock Creek Trail Pedestrian Bridge.* Photo © Roger Foley

Mark Parsons, *Big Burr*

Placemaking

Examples:

Art Alley (Judy Sutton Moore)
Silver Creek (Deidre Saunder)

Why:

Placemaking projects are popular with the public, a priority for the PATSC, and of interest to M-NCPPC.

Placemaking projects can attract outside funding. They can cross-pollinate with many art forms, such as performance. There are many artists interested in this work.

Opportunities:

Urban Cores
Urban Parks
Optional Method Projects

Who:

M-NCPPC Parks and Planning
M-NCPPC Parks
Developers
Arts Districts

Infrastructure

Example:

Rock Creek Pedestrian Bridge
(Vicki Scuri)

Why:

The public is interested in functional projects, especially those that enhance the streetscape in pedestrian areas. Integratged projects can stretch public art budgets and have a strong visual impact.

Opportunities:

Transit, streetscape, trails
Urban parks
Stormwater systems
Optional Method Projects

Who:

MC-DOT
M-NCPPC Parks

Temporary

Example:

*Big Burr*
(Mark Parsons)

Why:

Can address goals of placemaking, supporting local artists, and strengthening community connections.

Can allow for cross-disciplinary work, which allows for more innovation

Can be flexible in location.

Can be inexpensive.

Can engage new audiences and partners.

Opportunities:

Anywhere

Who:

AHCMC
Arts Districts
Arts non-profits
M-NCPPC Parks and Planning
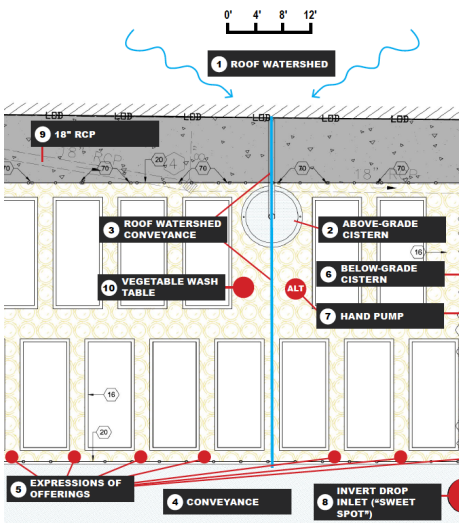
Buster Simpson,
Concept for Woodside Urban Park, Silver Spring

Matthew Mazzotta,
Wheaton Outdoor Living Room

United Therapuetics pedestrian bridge,
Silver Spring

Environmental

Example:

Woodside Urban Park
(Buster Simpson)

Why:

Can connect people with critical public issues.

Can strengthen County's existing commitments to park and stream corridors and agricultural landscapes.

Can contrast with urbanizing landscapes.

Opportunities:

Parks

Stormwater management

Who:

M-NCPPC Parks

Environment

Social Practice

Example:

Outdoor Living Room, Wheaton
(Matthew Mazzotta)

Why:

Can address issues, such as aging, health, housing, refugee resettlement, that are important to the County.

Can allow for cross-disciplinary work, which allows for more innovation.

Can be flexible in location and inexpensive.

Can engage new audiences and partners.

Opportunities:

Recreation, health and senior centers

Immigrant and refugee services

Criminal justice system

Who:

Culture and Recreation

Health and Human Services

Arts Districts

Arts non-profits

Science, Tech

Example:

Coastline (Jim Sanborn),
United Therapeutics

Why:

Represents an important part of the County's economy that is not reflected very strongly in public art.

Represents a genre that is popular with artists but under-represented in the collection.

Projects at Discovery Channel and United Technologies popular in Silver Spring

Opportunities:

Great Seneca Science Center

White Oak Science Center

Montgomery College

Optional method projects

Who:

Montgomery College

Economic Development

Developers

Deirdre Saunder, *The Wave*, Germantown Aquatic Center
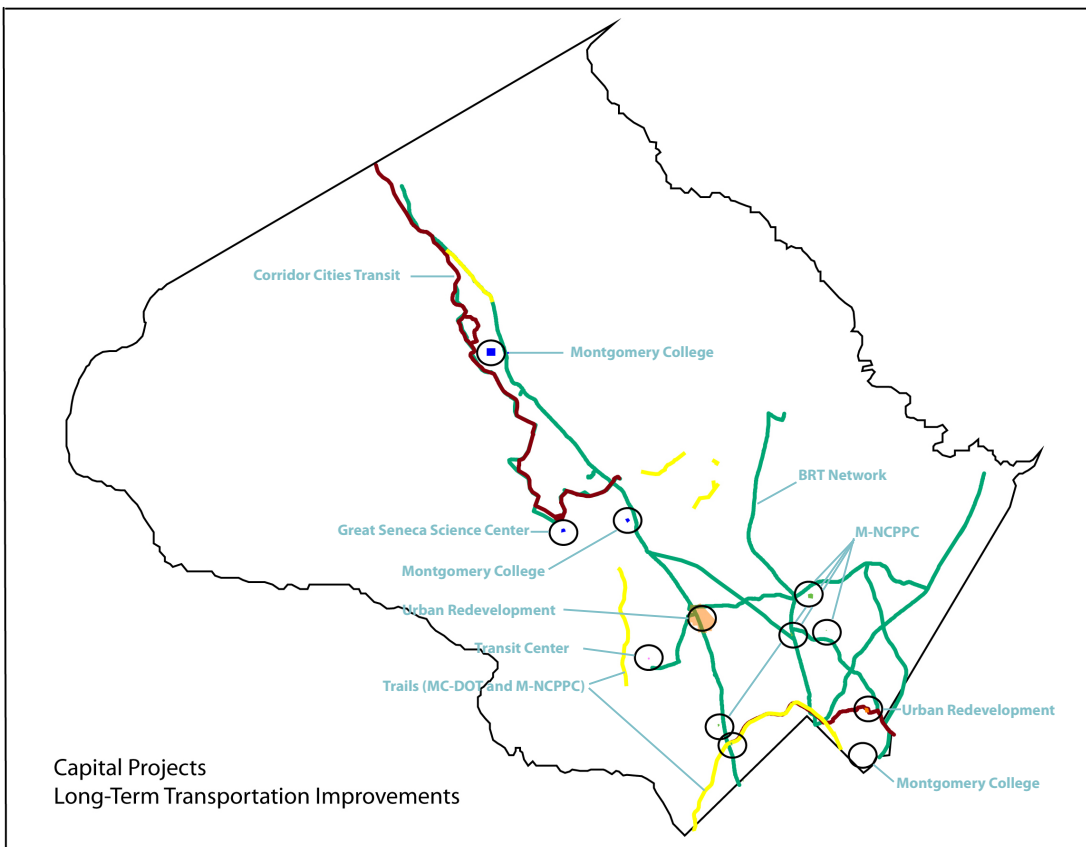
Horizon: Public Art in Capital Projects

The Public Arts Trust was created in 1995 as an umbrella entity to advise the Arts and Humanities Council and other County agencies on the development and stewardship of the County's public art collection. Those agencies include departments directly managed by the County as well as quasi-independent entities such as the M-NCPPC, Montgomery County Public Schools and Montgomery College.

The Trust is structured as a steering committee of representatives of these agencies. It also includes several at-large members, including representatives of the Gaithersburg and Rockville public art programs.

The County does not have a formal percent-for-art program; therefore, County agencies take on projects voluntarily. Capital budget staff and agency project managers identify potential projects and bring them to the Trust Steering Committee for consideration, using criteria in the Montgomery County Public Art Guidelines. Then, agency project managers initiate, plan and manage the projects, with assistance from the Trust in artist selection. The Trust does not have full-time professional staff, and therefore it does not have the resources to track the Capital Improvement Program, develop projects or manage them once the artist has been selected.

In the future, the Public Arts Trust should be more proactive in urging departments to take on projects that meet its goals, more selective in taking on projects, and more active in managing the public art component of County projects. Generally, projects should be undertaken with County agencies if:

- the project can help the agency advance its mission and achieve its goals for the project,
- there is expressed community interest for public art as part of the project,
- the projects can help the Trust the meet its goals of expanding the distribution of public art into under-served areas,
- the project can help the Trust meet its goals of developing work in new genres, and
- the agency is willing to maintain the artwork.

Corridor Cities Transit

Montgomery College

BRT Network

Great Seneca Science Center

M-NCPPC

Montgomery College

Urban Redevelopment

Transit Center

Urban Redevelopment

Trails (MC-DOT and M-NCPPC)

Montgomery College

Capital Projects
Long-Term Transportation Improvements

Potential Opportunities for Public Art in Capital Projects

Montgomery County Public Schools

• Focus on the maintenance, conservation and de-accession of artworks in the existing collection, as appropriate.

M-NCPPC / Planning

• Develop tools for incorporating public art recommendations in area plans.

• Incorporate public art in the Wheaton Headquarters project. This is a private development being developed as a turnkey property for the County.

M-NCPPC / Parks

• Provide guidance in identifying opportunities and priorities, and technical support in developing projects. Look for opportunities to do placemaking and environmental projects, particularly in underserved areas, and for opportunites related to M-NCPPC priorities of urban parks and trails.

• Collaborate on incorporation of public art into Woodside Urban Park, Caroline Freedland Urban Park and Hillandale Local Park.

Montgomery College

• The College has not commissioned new works for several years, but there are large capital projects and potentially interesting public art opportunities in the works: Germantown Student Center, Rockville Student Center, Takoma Park Math and Sciences Center. These could be some of the more significant commissions in the coming years, and potentially could be linked to the goal of developing projects related to the County's science and technology sector.

• The College has also raised questions about conservation and maintenance that need to be addressed.

MC-DOT

• Short-term opportunities for pedestrian and bike zones have been identified. The Trust will have to play a strong hands-on role for these to happen.

• Near-term possibility for a two-dimensional work along the Met Branch Trail.

• The best opportunities are bus-rapid-transit corridors, because they connect communities in areas of the County that are underserved by a public art. The Trust should position public art to be a component of these projects.

Economic Development

• The Public Arts Trust has not typically collaborated with Economic Development. However, areas such as the Great Seneca Science Corridor, the Universities at Shady Grove and the White Oak Science Gateway are attracting businesses in the research and life sciences sector. The Trust should explore partnerships with the Economic Development Corporation to develop artworks that speak to that sector of the County's economy.

Culture and Recreation

• Two current capital projects are in areas that are underserved by public art: Wheaton Library and Good Hope Road Recreation Center. The library is also adjacent to the Wheaton Arts and Entertainment District.

Health and Human Services

• The Public Arts Trust has not collaborated recently with the Department of Health and Human Services. The Trust should consider exploring a partnership with Health and Human Services to develop artworks that speak to the issue of the County's aging population.
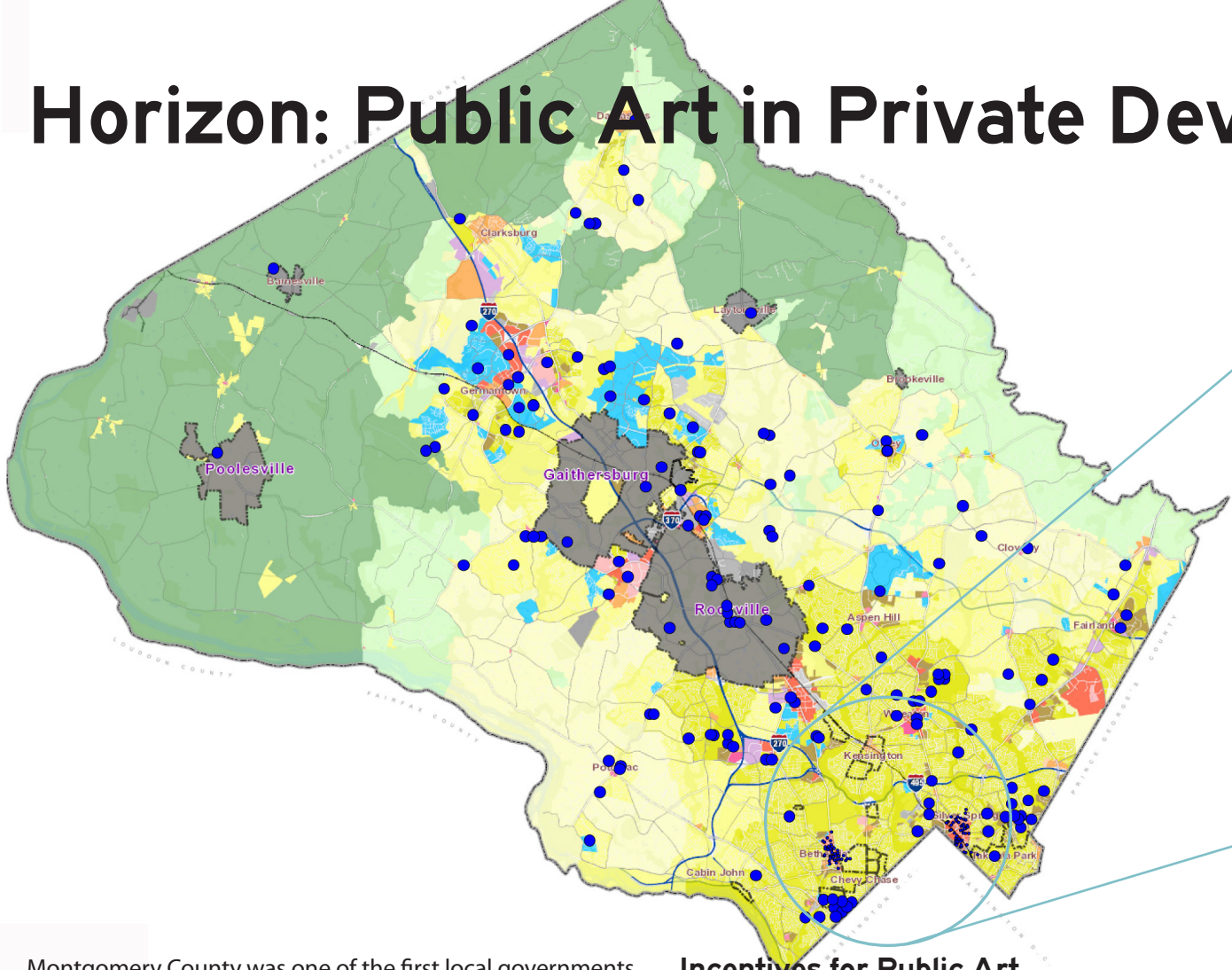
Montgomery County was one of the first local governments in the U.S. to encourage developers to create public art in exchange for zoning benefits — a process that has been in place for one way or another for more than forty years.

This process, called the Optional Method of development, is managed by M-NCPPC planning staff and advised by the Art Review Panel, which consists of planners, architects, artists, developers, and curators. Optional Method developments are approved by the County's Planning Board. The role of the Art Review Panel, which is appointed by the Planning Board, is to make recommendations that "ensure that public art provides an appropriate public art amenity for the private development project."

Over the years, the process has resulted in significant additions to the County's public art collection. More than 70 artworks are completed or in process, most of them in the urban cores Bethesda or Silver Spring.

While the Optional Method has been around long enough for developers, planners and artists to feel comfortable with how it works, the process has not kept up with best practices elsewhere and new issues have surfaced. Generally, these relate to ensuring that the public art is a public amenity, and to the management of an aging collection.

Incentives for Public Art

Developers using the Optional Method have many options for providing public benefits. Public art is not always as advantageous as other options.

- *Strengthen incentives for public art in the Optional Method point system*. Consider making public art a mandatory amenity in priority areas, or link public art to other options, such as urban spaces or parking garages, where it would make sense.

Project Review Issues

There is no requirement for exactly when a development team must meet with the Art Review Panel and what facets of the project the panel should comment on. The panel does not necessarily have input into key early decisiomaking. Thus the panel's role in guiding any given project is unpredictable, and its role as an overall steward of public art is inconsistent.

- *Goal setting*. The broader context for any particular developer's public art contribution – for how the public will actually benefit from the artwork – is not always clear. The examination of the public art component in the context of the site plan, of the overall public realm strategies for the district in which the project is located, and of the overall goals for public art in Montgomery County, is largely left to the development team.

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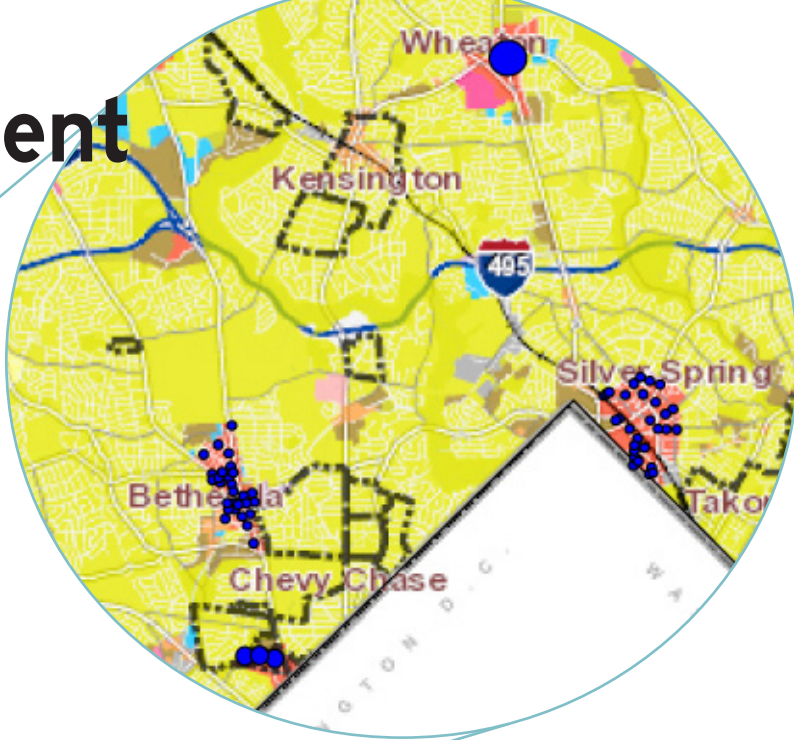
Optional Method Outcomes

Until recently, all of the artworks commissioned through the Optional Method were in Bethesda, Chevy Chase and Silver Spring. Recently one was commissioned in Wheaton.

The County's new zoning ordinance opens potential in the East County, Germantown, Great Seneca Science Center, Twin Brook and Wheaton areas.

- *Artist selection.* The County has no guidlines for artist selection for developer projects. Some municipalites require developers to use consultants, use competitive processes, involve members of the oversight committee in their selection process, and/or have artist selections approved. Some localities restrict artists from receiving multiple commissions within a period of time. These considerations are important to building a fresh and vibrant collection, providing opportunities for a wider variety of artists, ensuring that artists with an established and distinguished artistic practice are selected, and maintaining a proper distance between public art, commercial expression and branding.

Collection Management Issues

- As Optional Method projects age, and as the ownership of the properties changes, questions about ownership and maintenance of the public art have arisen. Sometimes subsequent owners aren't always aware they own the artwork, why it was created or how to maintain it. County records of the public art amenity have not been created, recorded or archived in a systematic way, and the County does not have a clear position for intervening in issues that arise.

- Processes for relocating or removing Optional Method projects are not clearly articluated. There is no requirement for a property owner to provide compensation, or a corresponding public benefit, for removing an artwork.

The Upshot

Montgomery County's approach to encouraging developers to include public art was groundbreaking when it was created, and has helped enrich public spaces in the densest urban centers. Clearly, public art that enriches the pedestrian environments of urban areas remains a high priority for County residents. However, to keep pace with these expectations, and to ensure sound management of artworks going forward, the Trust should consider the following:

- Include public art recommendations in area plans, to provide guidance in areas where Optional Method zoning is allowed.

- Involve the Public Art Trust in the interagency review phase of Optional Method projects and to submit recommendations.

- Develop clear coordination between the public art review process, the development approval process, and the emerging urban design review process.

- Standardize documentation of Optional Method projects and agreements between the County and the developer, and maintain records at both M-NCPPC and AHCMC.

- Require AHCMC or PATSC comment on removal or relocation of Optional Method artworks. Require compensation, such as a contribution to the Public Art Fund, if a project is removed.

Horizon:
Montgomery County's
Public Art Ecosystem

When Montgomery County began laying the groundwork for its public art programs in the 1970s and 1980s, the field was driven by public agencies that were establishing "percent for art" programs. These included cities such as Philadelphia, federal agencies such as the General Services Administration, and regional entities such as the New York Metropolitan Transportation Authority.

Today, the field of public art has expanded vastly. It has generated great interest not only in the arts and culture community, but also among designers and planners of all sorts, public-private partnerships that manage areas like downtowns and parks, and developers and property management companies. Museums, universities and galleries are programming art in the public realm. Artists in an increasingly wide range of disciplines – including music, dance, spoken word, literature and theatre – are developing public work. Public art curating is a fresh new field.

In short, the field of public art has evolved beyond public agencies including public art in their projects; it now embraces all manner of artists and arts organizations who consider work in the public realm as an integral part of their practice.

Compared to localities its size, Montgomery County's public art ecosystem is still in a nascent stage. And our public survey indicated that public awareness of and support of public art is not at the level that might be expected after having programs in place for as long as Montgomery County has.

Not surprisingly, County funding for public art falls far below the amount permitted in the County's public art ordinance.

In building its roadmap for the future, the Arts and Humanities Council and the Public Arts Trust should consider not only how to re-invigorate County government and developer public art initiatives, but also consider how to can cultivate the health of the County's broader public art ecosystem.

The first step is to recalibrate and re-inspire relationships with County agencies by changing the way the Trust works. The Trust should orient itself toward pushing the message out and meeting agencies and communities on their turf.

• Continue ongoing direct consultations with key partners: M-NCPPC Planning, M-NCPPC Parks, Transportation, Schools, General Services

• Develop new lines of communication with agencies like Montgomery College and Economic Development, where new opportunities may be found.

• Organize periodic "lunch and learns" for project managers and leadership in partner agencies to inform them about Trust activities and about the broad directions for public art in the County, and to learn about how public art can help them achieve their missions.

• Organize constituencies for public art for CIP projects that are the priorities of the Trust, so project managers hear about it and build public art into their budgets.
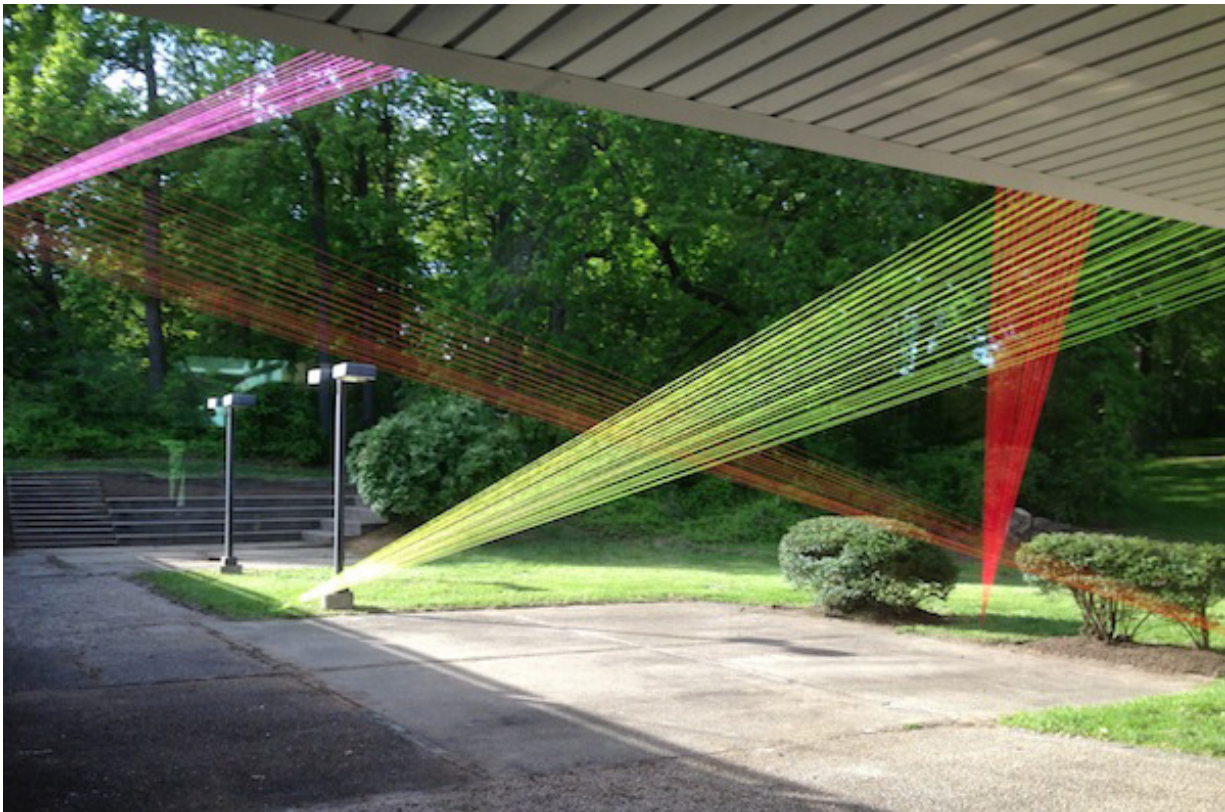
Above: Stephen Neuheuser, Matthew Miller, Kristen Yeung, *In Plane Sight,* Long Branch: Exploring Sites in Transition

Left: Judy Sutton Moore, *The Takoma Trees at Grant,* Takoma Piney–Branch Park

- Convene the Trust Steering Committee less frequently, about once a year, in a summit conference mode to discuss accomplishments, priorities and annual workplan. If necessary, maintain a small executive committee of two or three people, including liaison to the Art Review Panel.

In addition to their core work of collaborating with County agencies on strategically important public art projects, the AHCMC and the Public Arts Trust should focus on the following strategies to cultivate the County's broader public art ecosystem:

- Create easily accessible baseline information about public art resources in Montgomery County.

- Build on existing MCATLAS and AHCMC web resources. First, clean up those databases and consolidate them. Second, add information about municipal collections and public art in private development projects. Where a good external platform exists (such as in Silver Spring) connect to that rather than duplicating it.

- Continue adding supplemental content about specific projects when possible. The effort should focus on developing content related to current projects, and secondarily on backfilling content about the existing collection. In both cases, documentation that seeks out and incorporate audience voices will be an important way of connecting with the public.

- Build a "public art newswire" for artists, public, arts organizations and arts administrators in the County.

- Foster intra-County and regional professional public art networking and sharing of resources.

- Provide a method for sharing materials such as artist lists, contracts, evaluation mechanisms.

- Convene rotating gatherings in each public art hot-spot — Rockville, Gaithersburg, Silver Spring, Bethesda — that couple the business of the Public Arts Trust and site visits to County public art resources.

- Organize tours and events that connect the County's public art ecosystem with regional resources, such as public art programs in other jurisdictions, schools, and exhibitions.

- Link project development resources to organizational and artist development.

- Tie funding and professional support for new commissions to the strengthening of local arts organizations and artists.

This approach to building a public art ecosystem – supporting the mission of an array of County agencies, and supporting the development of the County's arts and culture sector – could be the basis of a reinvigorated budget request that returns the Public Arts Trust to the level envisioned in the County's public art ordinance.

Roadmap: Five Campaigns for Public A

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Five Campaigns for Public Art

The AHCMC and Trust should organize its work in coming years around the idea of five campaigns for public art – systemic sets of strategies and tactics that will galvanize public energy, partnerships and resources around reinvigorating efforts for public art in Montgomery County.

Artistic Focus

The Trust should focus its efforts cultivating on new types of artworks that create excitement and energy and get attention for public art again.

Placemaking

Montgomery County has a few projects of this type. Trust steering committee members and the public think that this should be a priority. Placemaking projects are popular for outside funding.

Infrastructure

Montgomery County has few artworks that are integrated into infrastrucure. Though investment in infrastructure systems is declining, the Trust should consider these opportunities when they are relevant to other goals.

Temporary

Temporary artworks are popular with the public, artists and planners, and can obtain outside funding. They can be a way of unleasing creative activity, bringing more artists into the public art process, and engaging the public.

Environment

Though not highly ranked by the public or the Trust committee, the trust should look for key opportunities for environmental projects, given the increasing urgency of environmental issues such as global warming.

Social Practice

This genre of work is popular with artists and can help the Trust reach new audiences, raise public awareness about critical issues, and reach underserved communities.

Science and Technology

Montgomery County is the third-largest biotech research center in the U.S. In the long run, this could lead to interesting projects and outside funding.

Key Partners

The Trust should be strategic in the partnerships that it prioritizes, focusing on those that best help acheive the Roadmap goals.

M-NCPPC / Parks

By collaborating with M-NCPPC, the Trust can look for opportunities to do placemaking and environmental projects, particularly in underserved areas.

The Trust can provide guidance in identifying opportunities and priorities, and technical support in developing projects.

Transportation

Short-term opportunities for pedestrian and bike zones have been identified — particularly in the Wheaton A&E. The Trust will need to play a strong hands-on role. The best opportunities – transit corridors – seem to be very long-term. The Trust should work to position public art to be an accepted component of those corridors.

Montgomery College

Foster discussion of opportunities for public art in its capital program. This might lead to some of the more significant commissions in coming years. Though the college is in areas well-served by public art, it connects to a diverse range of County residents.

The College has also raised questions about conservation and maintenance that need to be addressed.

Economic Development

The Trust should build relationships with the County's economic development agency and science-related institutions and industries. This may be a good topic for an artist residency.

Art

3

Working with Planning and Development

The County's approach to incorporating public art in planning and private development has been relatively passive.

The Trust should work with M-NCPPC's planning division to strengthen linkages between public art, planning, public realm policy and development.

Long-Range Planning

• Include public art recommendations in area plans, to provide guidance in areas where Optional Method zoning is allowed.

Optional Method Public Art Projects

There are several ways that the County can support strong public art outcomes.

• Involve the Public Art Trust in the interagency review phase of Optional Method projects and to submit recommendations.

• Develop clear coordination between the public art review process, the development approval process, and the emerging urban design review process.

• Standardize documentation of Optional Method projects and agreements between the County and the developer, and maintain records at both M-NCPPC and AHCMC.

• Require AHCMC or PATASC comment on removal or relocation of Optional Method artworks. Require compensation, such as a contribution to the Public Art Fund, if a project is removed.

4

Building a Robust Public Art Infrastructure

The AHCMC should build a public art ecosystem that extends beyond the role it plays in managing the County's public art collection. It should strengthen the County's public art ecology through information, networking and support of public art practices.

Reinventing AHCMC's Role

• Build a consolidated public art portal for information about public art in the County. The portal should include all work in the public and private collections of the County, the cities of Gaithersburg, Rockville and Takoma Park, and the areas of Bethesda and Silver Spring.

• Create a newswire about public art news and topics in Montgomery County and the region. Focus on both arts and general audiences.

• Identify resources the County, the cities and others working on public art in the County can share – artist lists, technical documents, planning, evaluation, outreach and training — can share.

Reinventing the PATSC

• Develop ongoing one-on-one consultations with key partners: M-NCPPC Planning, M-NCPPC Parks, Transportation, College, MCPS and DGS

• Organize periodic "lunch and learns" in different partner agencies.

• Convene Trust Steering Committee once a year in a summit conference mode to discuss annual workplan.

Restoring Funding for Public Art

The County's public art ordinance, if fully followed (up to 0.05 of 1% of certain capital budgets), would generate $300,000 to $400,000 a year. AHCMC should launch a campaign to show what this budget could achieve, and compare it to budgets in similar jurisdictions.

5

Building an Audience for Public Art

The Trust must re-build the public case for public art through outreach and engagement with County agencies, public art stakeholders and the community at large. This constituency should be mobilized to advocate for funding the Trust at the full level contemplated by the County's public art ordinance.

1. Build a consolidated public art portal for all information about public art in the County. The portal should include all work in the public and private collections of the County, the cities of Gaithersburg and Rockville, and the areas of Bethesda and Silver Spring.

2. Create a consolidated newswire about public art news and topics in Montgomery County, and the region. Focus on both arts and general audiences.

3. Support and publicize temporary art projects, including creative placemaking, as key "entryways" into public art.

4. Build constituencies for public art for targetted CIP projects, so the project managers hear about it.

5. Ensure that public art professionals are involved in M-NCPPC-sponsored area plans, especially in areas where public art is encouraged through the optional method.

6. Collaborate with M-NCPPC and professional organizations to generate events, awards and other dialogue and recognition of public art in Montgomery County.

Montgomery County Public Art Roadmap