



Cultural Arts Commission

Annual Report - January 2024 to July 2025

Overview of the Cultural Arts Commission

Purpose

Per the Chapter IV Ordinance, the responsibilities of the Cultural Arts Commission are:

1. Serve as an advocate for the Rockville community on cultural and arts activities to ensure that residents can equitably experience the benefits of the arts, such as social cohesion, personal health and well-being, and educational achievement;
2. Advise the Mayor and Council on ways to enhance Rockville's sense of community through City-sponsored cultural events;
3. Recommend to the Mayor and Council appropriate programs, activities, and utilization policies for City facilities which will contribute to the development of the City as a cultural center;
4. Recommend to the Mayor and Council grants and aid opportunities which promote cultural activity in the City;
5. Identify opportunities for students of all ages and abilities to participate in arts education programs;
6. Represent the collective interests of Rockville's arts groups and artists before the Mayor and Council;
7. Review proposals to incorporate works of art in public architecture, pursuant to Article III of this chapter;
8. Create committees and task forces from the membership of the Commission, as necessary, to focus on public art project development, artist selection, and to provide public art recommendations to the Commission to be acted on by the Commission in open meeting; and
9. Support cultural and arts activities that increase Rockville's economic prosperity.

The Cultural Arts Commission may make recommendations to the City Manager and the Mayor and Council on the annual budget, as it pertains to the arts.

Overview of the Cultural Arts Commission

Members and Liaisons as of June 30, 2025

Commissioners:

Karen Askin (Chair)
Melissa Beattie
Frances Bevington
Cristin Cash
Michelle Chite
Howard Henry Jung, Jr.
Susan Hoffman
Liz Ortuzar
Brian Rogers



Flight of Fancy, by artist Andy Dahl, College Gardens Park.

Liaisons:

Mayor Monique Ashton, The Mayor and Council Liaison
Anne O'Dell, Arts and Culture Program Manager, City Manager's Office, Staff Liaison

Overview of the Cultural Arts Commission

Public Art Committees

Temporary Public Art Committee

The Temporary Public Art Committee was formed to provide guidance to the city on the development of a temporary arts program. The program aims to enable the city to more quickly deploy funds allocated to public art in support of art projects of a temporary nature that are responsive to current events and contemporaneous activities that are meaningful to city residents.

Members: Frances Bevington (Committee Chair), Karen Askin, Howard Henry Jung, Jr.



Overview of the Cultural Arts Commission

Public Art Committees continued

Permanent Public Art Committee

The CAC recognizes that there are occasions when permanent artworks may be more desirable than temporary artworks. Examples include works intended to commemorate significant events, civic sculptures that are designed to be durable enhancements to public spaces, memorials that recognize historical figures, and community landmarks that build neighborhood identity. The CAC and the Committee will work with the City to define sites and general themes for permanent art projects utilizing public input and emphasizing highly visible locations.

Member: Liz Ortuzar (Committee Chair)

Accomplishments and Updates

Temporary Public Art Committee

Public Engagement: Commissioners reviewed and provided feedback on resident surveys produced by city staff that informed the development of the Twinbrook Community Recreation Center Annex and College Gardens Park murals and attended community engagement events hosted by the city that allowed the artists to directly hear feedback from community members.

Administrative Updates: The Temporary Public Art Committee meets on a monthly basis to advise and provide guidance to city staff in planning murals and art activities connected to city-hosted events. From Jan. 1, 2024 - July 1, 2025, the Subcommittee met 12 times, with a six month hiatus while the City onboarded a new Arts and Culture Program Manager.

Commissioner Activities: Commissioners participated in artist selection committees for Twinbrook Community Recreation Center Annex and College Gardens Park murals and attended the Mayor and Council meeting on July 29, 2024 to speak in support of the Twinbrook and College Gardens murals.

Accomplishments and Updates continued

Temporary Public Art Committee

Completed Public Art Projects

Fern Reclamation, Chalk Riot

Flight of Fancy, Andy Dahl

Deaccessioned Public Art

The Hatter of Rockville, Meghan Marlatt



Fern Reclamation, by artist collective Chalk Riot, Beall Avenue.

Objectives for Fiscal Year 2026

Temporary Public Art Committee

Public Engagement: Given Mayor and Council's interest in public participation in the public art projects, particularly the recent murals that the Temporary Arts Committee helped plan and advocate for, the city should consider developing a plan for inclusion of diverse perspectives in public engagement activities to identify and implement strategies for increasing public engagement with groups that reflect the full diversity of the resident population, with input and guidance from all City Boards and Commissions that engage with the public.

Administrative Activities: The CAC recommends the development of a strategic plan that unifies the city's Art in Public Places and Art in Public Architecture programs. The City should define clear goals and objectives for these programs along with an evaluation and sustainability plan that allows for long-term planning and maintenance.

Commissioner Activities: The temporary arts subcommittee plans to continue to advocate for new murals and expanded art activities at city-hosted events, with a particular emphasis on expanding art activities beyond visual arts to include performing and literary arts.

Accomplishments and Updates

Permanent Public Art Committee

Public Engagement: Activities included a public survey on community vision for public art and a Mosaic Magic workshop with artist Paul Santoleri as part of the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center public art project. Commissioner Ortuzar also volunteered at PRIDE 2025.

Administrative Updates: Commissioner Ortuzar reviewed Request for Proposals for public art projects and survey responses from residents about public art projects that were used to inform project designs. Regularly scheduled bi-monthly meetings began in 2025 with the Arts and Culture Program Manager to discuss progress on current projects and planning directions of future projects.

Commissioner Activities: Commissioner Ortuzar joined the art selection committee for the Memory Walk Park public art project, continued serving as a member of the art selection committee for the Rockville Swim and Fitness Center public art project, and Presented to the Mayor and Council at the July 11, 2024 Council Meeting.

Accomplishments and Updates continued

Permanent Public Art Committee

Completed Public Art Projects

Wave, A Celebration of Maryland's Biome, Paul Santoleri, Swim and Fitness Center Mosaic

Current Public Art Project Sites

Memory Walk Park Public Art Project

Future Public Art Project Sites

David Scull Park (FY26)

Bike Fix-It Stations (planning FY26, implementation FY27 pending budget approval)



Wave: A Celebration of Maryland's Biome, by artist Paul Santoleri, Swim Center.

Objectives for Fiscal Year 2026

Permanent Public Art Committee

Public Engagement: Continue with Lincoln Park Memory Walk, ensuring the voices of the community are heard.

Administrative Activities: Work in consultation with staff on pre-planning initiatives for the Arts and Culture Program as a whole and the public art program as a subsection of the larger strategic plan, as well as developing a conservation and maintenance plan for the public art collection. Available for other activities as needed.

Commissioner Activities: Will participate in activities as needed.

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Recognition of VisArts' Work

The Cultural Arts Commission wishes to recognize VisArts on its work to acquire funding for and installing the mural, *Color Full Community*, by artist Rose Jaffe, on one side of the Lincoln Park Community Center. The project was funded by a grant from the Maryland State Arts Council and administered by VisArts, an arts nonprofit organization headquartered in Rockville. The mural was accessioned into Rockville's Art in Public Places Public Art collection in 2024.



Color Full Community, by artist Rose Jaffe, Lincoln Park Community Center.

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Recognition of Staff Work

The Cultural Arts Commission wishes to recognize staff work done to conserve and maintain the Public Art collection.

On behalf of the city, Anne O'Dell, Arts and Culture Program Manager, applied for and was awarded a \$30,000 conservation grant from the Maryland State Arts Council to conserve five artworks in the city's Public Art collection. This is the maximum grant award made for the conservation of public artworks.

Anne O'Dell also contracted Past Matters, LLC, to assess the Public Art collection and conserve and restore five artworks in the collection. The conservation and assessment work is funded by the Maryland State Arts Council grant and will be conducted in Fiscal Year 2026.

Objectives for Fiscal Year 2026

Cultural Arts Commission

The Commission's objectives for Fiscal Year 2026 are:

- Work with staff and the Art Selection Committees to approve public art projects in the Fiscal Year 2026 staff workplan.
- Discuss and work with staff to create three committees outlined in the March 2025 Staff report (Public Art Committee, Events and Programs Committee, Community Engagement Committee).
- Work with staff to build relationships needed for equitable community engagement.
- The CAC continues to advocate that the City begin the process of developing a long-term strategic plan for the arts in Rockville. As is noted in the permanent and temporary public art subcommittee reports, a strategic plan would provide much needed guidance to City's public art programs, in addition to providing a roadmap for the city to achieve other desired outcomes in the arts, such as the designation of the City as an arts and entertainment district.
- As was noted in the temporary public art subcommittee report, the CAC recommends developing a plan for diverse perspectives that represents a shared understanding among the Mayor and Council, city staff, and the CAC about expectations for community engagement in the art in public places and art in public development programs.