



MEMORANDUM

DATE: November 10, 2015

TO: Bellevue Parks & Community Services Board

FROM: Mary Pat Byrne, Arts Program Manager

SUBJECT: ARTS PROGRAM OVERVIEW AND UPDATE
(Information only; no Board action requested)

The City provides cultural programming through both the Parks & Community Services Department (Parks) and the Arts Program in the Planning & Community Development Department (PCD). Parks and the Arts Program have a strong, collaborative partnership built over a period of more than twenty years. There are differences between the programs that result in broader benefit to the community. Parks stewards land and buildings, and its cultural programming is appropriately focused on the land and in the buildings in its care. The Arts Program collaborates on some of the cultural activities taking place there, and also collaborates on activities taking place throughout the community. It also works specifically to strengthen and encourage the artists and the arts groups that serve our community.

In response to questions from Parks & Community Services Board members, I will provide an overview of the Arts Program and the role of the Arts Commission. There are many areas in which Parks staff and Arts Program staff collaborate and coordinate, and these will be described as well. I'll also be happy to respond to questions.

Major Arts Program Activities

- Provides funding for artists and arts groups working in Bellevue,
- Commissions temporary and permanent public art and maintains them
- Develops arts and cultural policies for the Comprehensive Plan and the Cultural Compass, the city's cultural plan which is a reference document for the Comprehensive Plan.
- Engages in a variety of initiatives geared toward enlivening the experience of living, working and playing in Bellevue
- Serves as liaison to the Bellevue Arts Commission. The Arts Commission advises both City Council and the Arts Program on matters pertaining to arts in the community.

The Arts Program is staffed with 1.5 FTE and is funded through both the General Fund and the Capital Investment Program (CIP). Public Art, a capital program, is funded in the CIP. Funding programs and other activities are funded in the General Fund. In other cities, arts programs are the main programmers of festivals and cultural events. Bellevue is fortunate to have many organizations such as the Bellevue Downtown Association, the Bellevue Arts Museum and nearly 35 other organizations that take on that role. Bellevue's Arts Program focuses on a more catalytic role that gives it less visibility perhaps, but allows for a greater impact in the community.

Public Art

The Public Art Program is perhaps the most visible. Through this program the City commissions, purchases or borrows temporary and permanent works of art to display on publicly owned or leased property. These funds are also used to maintain the art.

Three strategic goals set the priorities for the Public Art Program.

1. Use public art to establish or enhance an urban walkway extending from City Hall to the Waterfront.
2. Facilitate Private Investment in Public Art.
3. Engage Neighborhoods in Commissioning Public Art.

Public Art in Bellevue's Parks. The Arts Program and PCD do not steward land, and so partners with those who do in order to place art. Historically, there is a strong partnership between Parks & Community Services and the Arts Program, and many public art works are sited in Bellevue's parks and community centers. Permanent public art works are found at North Bellevue Community Center, Northwest Arts Center, Highland Community Center, Crossroads Community Center, and South Bellevue Community Center, and in parks such as the Downtown Park, Chism Beach Park, Hidden Valley, Ashwood Plaza, and the Botanical Garden.

Bellevue's public artworks are both commissioned for their sites, such as *Salmon Woman and Raven* at Highland Community Center, and some are purchased then placed in parks and other locations, such as *Arc with Four Forms*, the stainless steel, wind-driven sculpture in the Downtown Park. During the 1990's and up to about 2005, many artworks acquired by the City were purchased from the biennial sculpture exhibition, now known as Bellwether. Most of these artworks found homes in parks. Arts Program and Parks staff worked together to identify locations for the art based on both aesthetic and safety considerations. By mutual consent, however, this practice waned over time in favor of commissioning art designed specifically for the park. As a result, the pace of adding permanent work to the City's public art collection has slowed, but the end result is hopefully more satisfying.

Commissioning permanent artworks is a slow process and can take years. Lively temporary art projects put surprise and additional interest into the city's streetscape, and may stretch the boundaries of what people consider art. Compared to permanent artworks, they can be commissioned rapidly and sited in less conventional locations perhaps.

Bellwether. The Public Art Program's most visible temporary project is Bellwether, a biennial exhibition of sculpture and installation art. Bellwether extends from City Hall to the Downtown Park, siting as many as 45 artworks at these two locations and along a path that connects them. Artworks from around the US and Canada are loaned to the City through a competitive application process and selected by a jury of arts professionals. Established in 1992, the exhibition has grown and changed to better serve program goals. In 2010 the Arts Commission sharpened the exhibition's focus by linking its various sites into an art walk that traces the route of the envisioned permanent art walk.

This major undertaking takes a year of planning and preparation work to reach its opening day, usually a Friday night in late June. Arts Program staff work in partnership with Parks Resource

Management, and most departments in City Hall. We also partner with property owners and managers to site art along the art walk route. Printed and online catalogs with pictures and information on each artwork, as well as tour maps help viewers find and enjoy the artworks. A free app, STQRY shows the location of each artwork on a map using GPS and provides images and information on each artwork.

Lamp Post Project: For the last several years, the Public Art Program has partnered with the Bellevue Arts Museum to commissioned art focused on the Pedestrian Corridor's lamp posts and trees. Currently, passersby can enjoy work by Elizabeth Gahan who created a series of colorful, geometric art works attached to nearly 30 lamp posts along NE 6th between Bellevue way and 108th Ave. NE.

Current Projects to Commission Public Art in Parks

Meydenbauer Bay Park Phase 1 Public Art. Our largest current project is to integrate public art into the Meydenbauer Bay Park Phase 1 Design. Three artists have been commissioned to design artworks, and their designs are on display between November 9 and 16 at the Bellevue Regional Library for public comment. In keeping with the Public Art Program's goals, Meydenbauer Bay Park Phase 1 is a crucial opportunity to commission permanent art that anchors the western end of the Art Walk. Working closely with Parks Sr. Project Manager Robin Cole and Project Landscape Architect Peter Hummel of Anchor QEA, the artists created designs for art that embrace the park's history and natural environment, complementing the park's design. As future phases of the park are developed, we hope to continue to integrate public art that supports the design and intended activities of each phase.

Lattawood Park. To address the Public Art Program's third goal, to engage neighborhoods in commissioning public art, a new project to commission art for Lattawood Park is in the planning stages. There are few public artworks south of I-90. In a brainstorming session with the Arts Commission, Lattawood Park was suggested as a site for a future project. Staff researched the site and met with both park planners and Parks resource management staff to better understand the park and its surroundings, and to gauge their support for an art project there. Parks staff responded positively, and Arts Program staff are initiating contact with the surrounding neighborhoods to launch the project.

Supporting Artists and Arts Groups Working in Bellevue

The Arts Program also encourages the growth of arts in Bellevue by supporting artists and arts groups working in Bellevue. We provide technical and networking assistance, and we provide funding. Each year the Arts Commission develops recommendations to Council for distributing \$110,000 to artists and arts groups working in Bellevue. A panel of Commissioners and an arts professional review applications and formulate the recommendations for the full Commission to review. In recent years the number of applications has trended upward, and most of the increase is comprised of culturally diverse arts groups.

Two funding programs allow the Commission to tailor support to be its most effective in encouraging and supporting artists and arts groups working in our community. This two-pronged approach aligns with best practices in the field.

Eastside Arts Partnerships is an organizational funding program and provides a fairly predictable level of funding for eleven arts groups that are doing all or most of their work in Bellevue. Examples include Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue Youth Symphony Orchestras, and Music Works Northwest. The panel looks at their financials each year as well as their programming and accomplishments in the previous year

The Special Projects funding program is strictly project-oriented, and attracts a wide variety of artists and arts organizations. This year, twenty-five organizations applied for funding; eleven represent multicultural artists and arts groups; two others include strongly multicultural content in their offerings.

Other Interesting, Ephemeral Work and Partnerships with Parks

In the world of performing arts, there have been many collaborations between the Arts Program and Parks, thanks to Parks Resource Management, Assistant Director Shelley Brittingham, and members of her group which includes the Botanical Garden, the community centers, and Kelsey Creek Park. In 2015 “Pianos in the Parks” came to Ashwood Plaza at the Bellevue Regional Library, the Downtown Park, and the Botanical Garden. Each year, Eva Stone of Stone Dance Productions not only produces the best dance festival in the region at Meydenbauer Center, supported with Special Projects funding, she also offers free dance workshops for all levels of dance at community centers, arranged by Ms. Brittingham and community center managers. In the past, Special Projects funded Theatre Simple who collaborated with the Botanical Garden to stage an audience participation version of Alice and the White Rabbit that sprawled throughout the gardens. There are many more examples.

Future Directions for the Arts Program

It is expected that the Arts Program will continue its major program area activities and its collaboration with Parks & Community Services. New avenues of activity for the Arts Program are emerging as well. Increasingly, arts groups are challenged by lack of suitable or affordable venues for performing, exhibiting, storing and operations, and we are looking at ways to assist. The Grand Connection vision includes vibrant art activity of all kinds, and the Arts Program will need to elaborate on what that could mean. Opportunities to develop artist live/work space may arise from transit oriented development and affordable housing projects. As the City’s Economic Development Program grows, the arts will have opportunities to play a larger role in that arena as well. The Bel Red Arts District presents a wealth of challenges and possibilities to consider and develop. In relation to Parks, collaborations implementing the City’s Diversity Initiative Plan are an especially promising direction.