

A Five-Year Municipal Art Plan for the City of Olympia

Introduction: Mission and Goals of the Olympia Arts Commission

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Caption: Students from Thurgood Marshall Middle School Citizen Science Institute (CSI) Program with Teacher Tom Condon, visiting **Recomposing** by Abe Singer at Grass Lake Nature Park. CSI students participated in the development of the public art concept for the park.

The Olympia Arts Commission advises City Council on the art experiences of diverse communities of this region, through programs and opportunities that pro-actively foster arts and cultural activity for every segment of the community.

The Commission's purpose is to promote and encourage public programs that further development, public awareness, and interest in fine, literary and performing arts and cultural heritage, and to advise City Council in connection with these. The Olympia Arts Commission (OAC) was created to provide expertise regarding the visual and performing arts and cultural heritage, and to reach out within and beyond the community to expand artistic and cultural programs and services for the community members of the Olympia area. (Olympia Municipal Code (OMC) 2.100.100, 2.100.110)

Supported by City staff, the OAC pursues this mission through a public art program that includes programming and events, services, outreach, education and networking, and the purchase, placement and maintenance of works of art in the community.

1. Municipal Arts Plan (MAP): What and Why

The MAP is the annual budget and spending plan for the Municipal Arts Fund, and it provides direction and accountability for the use of public resources in support of the arts.

City Ordinance calls for the OAC to "prepare and recommend to the City Council for approval a plan and guidelines to carry out the City's art program," (OMC 2.100.140) and notes that a municipal arts plan should prescribe the projects to be funded from the municipal arts fund. "*Municipal Arts Plan* means a plan outlining the City expenditures of designated funds for public art projects for a one-year period." (OMC 2.100.160)

Olympia's public art programs and purchases are funded through two sources: a \$1 per capita allocation from the City's General Fund that was initiated in 1990, and a 1% for Art set-aside for new City construction projects over \$500,000 in value. Funds from these sources are deposited in a Municipal Arts Fund (MAF). The MAP establishes budgets for public art projects undertaken by the City, whether in conjunction with new capital projects or independent of them. Projects range from small (less than \$15k) to major (over \$50k) installations involving design teams, and may include visual, literary and performing arts.

2. Planning for Public Art

The OAC develops an Annual Work Plan that details program initiatives and activities of the City's art program to promote the work of local artists and the arts within our community, and for the purchase of public art (including paid performances) to enhance and enliven the community. These public art investments are the focus of the MAP.

To develop funding projections for the MAP and budgets for individual projects, City Arts staff work with Parks and Public Works staff to identify projects that trigger the 1% for Art set-aside. These projects and their locations, impacts, and estimated public art budgets are reviewed and considered by the Arts Commission. The Commission generates a complete project list that includes planned capital-funded purchases as well as other projects identified in the Commission's Annual Work Plan.

This project list forms the core of the Municipal Art Plan, which the Commission then recommends to City Council for approval.

In developing plans for public art projects, a number of conditions and values are considered to determine the best use of available resources for the benefit of the arts and the community. As a starting point, capital project-generated funds are considered for art projects at or near the site of the construction to enhance the public improvement, or to mitigate for the impact of the improvements. For large design/build projects, staff has piloted a process where the consultant has been required to bring a public artist into the design team. This approach eliminates redundancies in the process and ensures the participation of a public artist at the ground floor of complex design/build projects. The 1% for Art Funds are maintained and used for public art in those specific design/build projects. The Arts Commission reviews and provides comment on the developing art component as part of the general project community outreach, and City Council approves the art design as a seamless part of the overall construction design. Current design/build projects include West Bay Park, Jolene Unsoeld Community Park, Rebecca Howard Park and Percival Landing.

The funding for art generated by small capital projects is often too small to be very effective. In these cases, funds from multiple projects may be combined, or \$1 per capita funds added when available, to create a viable public art project budget. Balancing opportunities for multiple small projects versus fewer, more significant projects is an important planning consideration. Combining funds can bring a significant installation of public art to a capital improvement project that is too small to generate funds on its own, but which may be desirable because of location or community access. Until complete, priority for smaller projects or transportation related project funds will be directed toward completion of the eight projects that make up the Art Crossings Project. In selecting projects, programs and works of art, the OAC will consider how proposals accomplish the following:

- **Contribute to broad distribution of public art throughout Olympia.**
Commissioners will consider the relative representation of art among City neighborhoods, and seek to distribute public art broadly throughout the community.
- **Provide for diverse forms of art within the public collection.**
A wide range of style, media, subjects and viewpoints will offer perspective and interest for everyone.
- **Bring new ideas, innovation, or thinking to the community.** Encourage community conversation with focus on broader art experiences and culture and heritage focus.
- **Achieve a balanced City collection that includes a strong local base but also has regional and national reach.**
- **Ensure artwork is maintainable and safe.**
- **Ensure artwork is well-suited to chosen site or venue.**

3. Equity, Inclusion and Belonging

As an organization, the City of Olympia understands the power and influence government has to impact the daily lives of our residents, and the power to shape policies and practices that reduce inequities stemming from institutional and structural racism and oppression. In addition, the Parks, Arts and Recreation Department is committed to deepening engagement with underrepresented community members through creativity, innovation and relationship building to better provide a

parks, arts and recreation system where all Olympians feel they belong. For the public art program, this includes:

- Building jury panels where members bring diverse perspectives and/or life experience.
- Continuing to provide opportunities for any member of the public to help select artwork through community voting on Traffic Box Wraps and through the Percival Plinth Project.
- Pursuing additional outreach to underserved communities in public art planning processes, including most recently, Arts Crossing #3 and the Grass Lake Nature Park Project.
- Providing projects at multiple skill levels, so artists can grow into more complex projects.

4. Project List for 2026

The following slate of projects is diverse in arts disciplines and are located throughout Olympia. These investments in the arts support current and future endeavors, care for the collection we have and offer opportunities for local and regional artists, from youth through professional, to benefit the community and shared built environment. Together, this slate of initiatives will contribute to the creative and cultural arts in Olympia in the following ways:

- Expanding a diversity of the arts deeper into our neighborhoods and beyond the downtown core,
- Investing in the future of the arts and artists in our community, and showcasing their talent,
- Continuing with successful programs that are embraced by the community.

Squaxin Island Tribe Representation - \$36,000 - “Mother of Restoration” Həʔapus̓sqʷəbay” (Ha-push Squay-bay) by Andrea Wilbur Sigo was approved by City Council in 2024, and will be installed in downtown Olympia following site improvements to the location in 2026.

Traffic Box Wraps - \$18,000 - In 2025, 10 new traffic wraps were installed in Olympia, with 10 more planned for 2026.

Music Out Loud - \$3,000 - Funding for 9 street performances during the summer months. These originally were tied to three sidewalk mosaics in downtown Olympia, and have evolved into a partnership with the Olympia Downtown Alliance’s LoveOly event, keeping all three performances in their festival area.

Percival Plinth Project - \$42,000 - This ongoing project hosts loaned sculpture (up to 18) for an exhibition of one year along Percival Landing. During the month of July, the public is invited to vote for the sculpture they wish for the City to purchase. Following the exhibition, that sculpture moves to City Hall for one year and then into a City park or facility.

Olympia Art Crossings - Sited at key “gateway” locations surrounding the downtown, creative works of art that reflect Olympia’s neighborhoods and community, and mark passage between downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. This budget launches project #4 in 2026, which will complete half of the eight total locations in the project. Acceptance of an NEA matching grant applied for in 2025 would allow for Art Crossing #5 to be developed at the same time.

Poet Laureate - \$3,400 - Biennial Poet Laureate program, to promote poetry as an art form, expand access to the literary arts, connect the community to poetry, and promote poetry as a community voice that contributes to a sense of place. Funds cover an annual honoraria and small fund for

insurance, materials and supplies. Increased funds proposed for 2025 provides a small increase for reimbursable expenses of \$250 a year, and a stipend increase of \$400 a year.

Artist-In-Residence Program - \$4,950 - Increased budget covers 3, three month drumming workshops over the course of a year, by three different instructors, to serve residents of Drexel House, Lotus Court and Unity Commons. Program to move forward in partnership with the PARC Foundation.

Murals in Parks Pilot Project - \$10,000 - First pilot projects to take place at Yauger Park and Sunrise Park.

City Hall Exhibitions - \$500 - This line item remains open to respond to costs for community exhibitions that arise. Recent exhibitions include Hummingbird Studios Quilt Exhibition, Welcome Blanket Project and Rebecca Howard portrait and planning documents. Staff have been approached by the Washington State University Extension office about a United Nations International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists planned in 2026.

Arts Walk Cover Art - \$2000 - Via competitive process, artists are selected each year to create a new artwork for use in marketing materials for spring and summer Arts Walk. The framed artwork becomes part of the City's public art collection. Budget increase would bring compensation for each image to \$1000.

Kaiser Woods - \$30,000 - This park is currently undeveloped but is slated to be Olympia's first park to have dedicated mountain biking trails. Project to engage youth of the Squaxin Island Tribe working under a master carver to create cedar sculptures interspersed throughout the site.

Daley Arts Center - The Armory Building is undergoing renovation for energy efficiency and public safety, 2025-2027. Renovation does not qualify for 1% for Art funding, so staff will apply for grants to develop public art on the site, as available.

4. Planning Context

Beginning in 2015 the OAC adopted a five-year budget planning horizon to allow a longer look ahead, facilitating planning for prospective capital projects that will be phased over several years, and for ongoing costs associated with others.

Taken together with the efforts described in the 2026 Work Plan, this 2026 budget and MAP reflect a continuing effort to build supportive social and practical infrastructure for the arts and artists in Olympia, supporting the creative energy that the arts bring to our community.

5. Other Activities

Maintenance and conservation efforts are necessary to preserve the integrity of the City's collection for the benefit of the community. 2025 saw major cleaning and resealing of "Walking on Land by Water" on West Bay Drive. Vehicular accidents caused damage to "Triumph of the Vegetables" and "Crossroads of Connection: Fruits" (Art Crossing #3), and in 2025 insurance and contracting processes began for repair and replacement, which will be completed in 2026. Two contracted foundation/pedestals are planned for 2025. Annual art cleaning/maintenance is completed with assistance of a part-time parks seasonal staff person.

Budget Summary and 5-Year Prospective (for Planning Purposes)

FIVE YEAR MUNICIPAL ART PLAN	2025 Actual	2026 Budget	2027 Budget	2028 Budget	2029 Budget	2030 Budget
Available Fund Balance	352,724	337,738	93,986	91,606	71,226	50,846
Revenue Total	94,443	111,470	57,970	57,970	57,970	57,970
Interest Earnings	11,137					
\$1 per Olympian	56,900	57,970	57,970	57,970	57,970	57,970
LBA Field 2 Renovation (1% for Art)	6,182					
Blvd Road Trail Crossing (1% for Art)	6,179					
Kaiser Woods (1% for Art)	14,045					
Art Crossing #3 (Restitution)		53,500				
Triumph of the Vegetables (Restitution)						
Expense Total	110,553	355,222	60,350	78,350	78,350	60,350
Admin/Maintenance Expenses	6,383	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000	4,000
Project Costs	104,170	351,222	56,350	74,350	74,350	56,350
Squaxin Island Tribe Representation	8,000	36,000				
Murals in Parks		10,000				
Traffic Box Wrap (Fabricator search in 2024, 2027)	15,423	18,000		18,000	18,000	
Music Out Loud	1,100	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000	3,000
Percival Plinth Project	37,209	42,000	42,000	42,000	42,000	42,000
Olympia Art Crossings		110,000				
City Hall Rotating Exhibition		500	500	500	500	500
Arts Walk Cover Purchase	1,500	1,500	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Poet Laureate	2,750	3,400	3,400	3,400	3,400	3,400
Artist in Residence	1,088	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950	4,950
Kaiser Woods Park Improvements		30,000				
Grass Lake Nature Park	22,000					
Contracted Conservation/Construction	13,476	91,372				
Insurance	500	500	500	500	500	500
Revenue - Expense	(14,986)	(243,752)	(2,380)	(20,380)	(20,380)	(2,380)