



*An Overview and Guidelines for the City's*  
**PUBLIC ARTS PROGRAM**





# A VIBRANT VISION

# for a VIBRANT COMMUNITY

Art in public places invigorates residential and commercial zones, developing new places of beauty, interest, public awareness and public pride. It has the capacity to reveal insights about our natural surroundings, cultural history, and community connections. It can encourage ownership of public spaces. Art in civic environments can contribute to furthering the goals and objectives of City departments and capital projects, involving citizens in the design of public spaces. Public artworks have the capacity to directly express that which is most important about National City's multi-cultural civic pride, its history, its profound sense of community and its future. And in communities which strive for excellence in public art as well as public participation, both citizens and civic leaders can develop a new and important appreciation of themselves, their individuality, their civic cohesion and, perhaps most important, their enduring idea of "community."



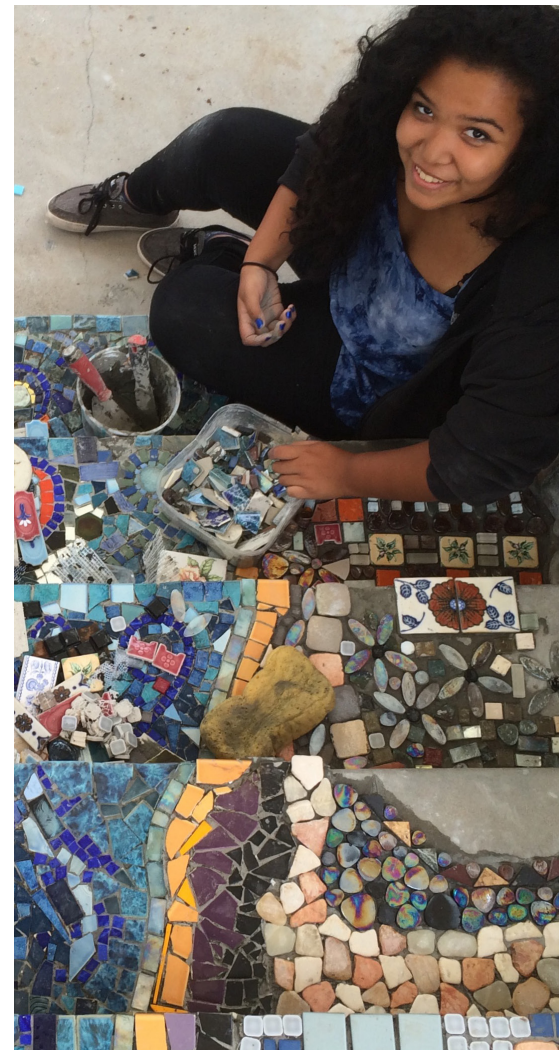
## Public Art: A Strategy for Moving Ahead

Like buildings, streetscapes and parks, public art is an important part of the public landscape. With the completion of the A.R.T.S. Center, art has assumed a new and important dimension in National City. Interest in art has ramped up quickly and so have community arts activities, especially public art. Key examples include the Butterfly Park and the A Avenue Stormwater Educational Art Wall behind City Hall.

But these and other public art projects in the city also call attention to the fact that a public art plan is timely and necessary. Just as the General Plan lays out a strategic vision of future development in the city, a Public Art Plan is needed to guide National City's future in art, education and culture. The Creating Vibrant Neighborhoods Initiative, energized by A.R.T.S, envisions the addition of many new public art projects in the next three years in an effort to bring beauty and pride to National City. As with architecture and development, public art aspirations should dovetail with the long-range plans of the city for the betterment of its citizens.

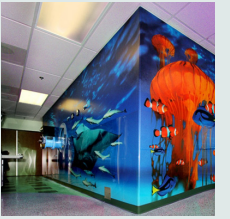
This document is not meant to define specific sites for future public art installations; nor is it an effort to articulate creative styles, nor impose arbitrary rules about public art content. Successful municipal public art programs stand on

three principles: a clear and forceful vision such as this document; a responsible and imaginative management of an arts program the content of which, by definition, springs from the imagination; and a reliable source of funds.



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## Art Program Components: Beyond Decoration to Civic Engagement



Public art might seem like a new idea but it is as old as Western civilization and embodies the best of it, from ancient Greeks to the equally cultured Romans. The art and monuments of those cultures, now thousands of years old, still attract millions each year to experience these aesthetic wonders.

That idea was brought to the new American continent from the outset. Our public buildings, such as state capitols and the U.S. capitol, echo the domed wonders of ancient Rome and were symbols of our ambition and energy as a new nation. Later, public libraries, city halls and other government buildings took the shape of exalted crucibles of democracy. Much later, in the City Beautiful movement of the early 20th Century, many Beaux Arts-style public buildings were built and incorporated statuary and other artistic motifs.

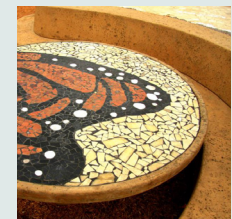
The Great Depression triggered massive public investment that built city halls, libraries, schools and monuments, including some in National City, such as Kimball Elementary. They provided jobs to millions of men out-of-work and often employed out-of-work artists to execute murals and statues that became integral to the architecture. San Diego County's Administration Center on Pacific Highway was dedicated in 1938 and includes original murals inside and a sculpture in front by Donal Hoard of pioneer women.

The U.S. government began to assign one percent of budgets for new federal buildings to art. States and municipalities followed and the practice became widespread by the end of the 20th Century, as did the custom of applying it to major new private development.



The conviction underlying this document is that art in public spaces is less about placing neutral, indistinct or decorative, static objects in new settings than it is about embracing civic energy and multiculturalism. With that as a guide, this Public Art Program overview and plan has been developed.

*“Public artworks have the capacity to directly express that which is most important about National City's multi-cultural civic pride, its history and its sense of place.”*







## Types Of Public Art: An Overview

A major guiding inspiration of National City's public art program will be the Creating Vital Neighborhoods Initiative. A major guiding hand will be A.R.T.S. acting as the public arts program's administrative and coordinating entity. This document offers an overview of the kinds of projects that make a public art program meaningful and community-centered. They apply to both publicly funded projects and those funded by philanthropic entities.



### OUR GOALS

- *Contribute to National City's identity as a cultural destination*
- *Make art of enduring excellence an essential element in the development and redevelopment of National City and its neighborhoods*
- *Use art to recognize the cultural diversity that is and has been part of National City's history*
- *Commission and purchase artwork from local, regional and national artists who can weave diverse artistic disciplines, cultural perspectives and life experiences into the fabric of our community*
- *Engage residents and visitors through education and outreach programs about our public art collection*
- *Broaden the role of the artist in the community and create opportunities for artists to pursue creative careers in National City*



**CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS** are commissioned to fulfill a functional need at a specific site within a public space or as part of a major construction project. Private construction projects will have a 1 percent arts budget; public projects will have a 2 percent arts budget. Examples of such construction-related and functional artworks might include a sculptural element in the center of a hotel passenger-loading vehicle circle, or the multi-lingual depiction of a famous library-related quotation on the south façade of the National City Public Library. Completely functional examples include the spirited "Red Arrow" bike racks developed through National City's A.R.T.S Center, a terrific example of functional art that demands first to be noticed as art so it can then be discovered as a device securely anchor bicycles. An area of both challenge and promise in functional art lies in re-envisioning some of the hundreds of publicly visible property-boundary fences as potential sites for public art. Fences are an important fixture of urban life, but they can be neglected and become dysfunctional eyesores. Restoring them through artistic treatments can transform dilapidated fences to eye-appealing fixtures on our landscape.

**GATEWAYS, LANDMARKS AND MEMORIAL ARTWORKS** contribute to the identity of their location, are easily identifiable and can achieve meaning transcending the art itself. Gateway or landmark art might be situated at National City's major routes into the city from I-5 and I-805, making an interesting visual "announcement" of a visitor's arrival into the city. Another use might be to define a commercial, arts or education district. The Veteran's Memorial on 12th St. at Kimball

Park, including a roundabout with plaques for the five armed services, is an example of a memorial artwork. An ongoing community engagement aspect of that project is that residents can purchase honorary plaques for the nearby Veterans Wall of Honor.

**EDUCATIONAL, HISTORICAL & CULTURAL STATEMENTS IN ARTWORK** comment or reflect on places, and in the process, educate the public with their vision and content. An example is the "Portals in Time" installation (2007) by San Diego public artist Paul Hobson, bridges National City Boulevard at 9th St. and helps delineate a pedestrian promenade between the historic Brick Blocks and the new Southwestern College Educational Center. It depicts National City's distinct phases of history and identity: the Kumeyaay period; the Spanish period, the early agricultural period of the late 19th Century, the modern industrial period – as well as the city's current identity as center of the San Diego region's Filipino community. Such projects might also include complete historical timelines or artworks that help interpret the site or purpose of the project. These works often have a distinct "site specific" identity: their meaning would be all but erased if located elsewhere.

**GATHERING PLACES** are specific art projects created with extensive public involvement based on the Pomegranate Center methodology. They are projects in which community members are involved:

- from the beginning in site selection
- in the concept design process
- site planning, preparation and construction
- in the ongoing programming and maintenance of the space

Community planning processes are divided into practical steps. Teamwork and collaboration are integral, and participants of all ages, from students to those at various career levels, are involved. The process emphasizes:

- collective creativity and many viewpoints
- heritage of place and community history
- the idea that, together, all of us know more than any one of us
- blending various skills and expertise
- imagining new solutions that are good for the whole community
- deep listening and creative thinking so all ideas become potential solutions

Butterfly Park in National City is an example of a Gathering Place that helps trigger all sorts of community activity in a public park.

**ARTISTS' PERSONAL EXPRESSIONS** are those in which the artist addresses issues of form, compositional design, the concept of beauty or other philosophical considerations. These works may be abstract or representational but are inherently about a particular artist's vision. Excellent public art programs are generally characterized by artistic diversity: not everyone can be expected to like every project from the outset. Indeed, the Statue of Liberty itself was at first attacked mercilessly – one of hundreds of such examples. Energized, alive and ambitious communities like National City thrive on diversity, and diversity rests on rich ongoing harmonies, not a single repeating voice.

The categories – Gateways, Landmarks and Memorials; Gathering Space artworks; and works of Personal Expression – will often be solicited through the RFP/RFQ process.

**GIFTS AND UNSOLICITED PROPOSALS** have a place in National City's public arts program. Those who wish to donate works of art of any kind to the City must contact staff, which will facilitate the consideration of the requested donation. Works are accepted based on a recommendation by the Public Art Committee and acceptance by the City Council. Considerations will be the quality, condition, content, future maintenance requirements, site appropriateness and relevance of the work to the collection. Unsolicited proposals can range from projects to transform the exteriors of utility boxes, to works such as the Roberto Salas' metal "butterfly path" sculptures accomplished with support from the San Diego Museum of Art and the James Irvine Foundation. It should not be assumed that an offer to donate art will be accepted simply because it is a donation.



In the realm of public art, it is the public engagement, discussion, interaction and, hopefully, understanding that is triggered by art that adds meaning and life to the public landscape. With great art, the conversation about an artwork, favorable and critical, often eclipses the art object itself as the contribution to community strength and civic pride.

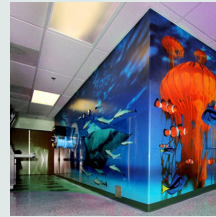
### OUR OBJECTIVES

- *Provide for the proper maintenance and programming of the public art projects and sites.*
- *Facilitate partnerships and collaborative opportunities for artists to work with community organizations, public departments and agencies, private businesses and institutions*
- *Nurture the integration of art, architecture and landscape architecture throughout the City*
- *Encourage art that is responsive to its site*
- *Address public art as early as possible in each project*
- *Provide for public participation in art selection and the celebration of completed works*
- *Build a collection that represents broadly diverse styles and aesthetic attitudes*



## Program Components

**PERMANENT ART WORKS** are created for specific sites and are maintained in perpetuity. Works may be two-dimensional, such as murals, or three-dimensional, such as a free-standing sculpture. Examples include the Stormwater Educational Art Wall behind City Hall and the Gathering Place at Butterfly Park at Palm Avenue and 20th Street.



## Funding: "Percent-for-Arts" Ordinance

To implement the public arts program, the City Council will consider a landmark "percent-for-arts ordinance" allocating two per cent for public art on eligible, new municipal capital improvement projects and major renovations of public buildings. Appropriate art projects for such buildings will be initiated in partnership with departments to further their goals and objectives.

The ordinance will apply to all major private developments as well. Major developments will be required to integrate 1 percent of project costs into onsite public art, or to pay an equivalent in-lieu payment to the city for use in the project area. Developers understand that public art in the communal and pedestrian spaces of their projects adds to the site's unique character and attractiveness, engendering community spirit and helping to establish a sense of place and pride.

Percent-for-art allocations are appropriated from eligible capital projects when the capital budget is set during budget development. Funds may remain with the site or project that triggered the allocation or they may be pooled for larger projects. The percent-for-arts should be viewed as a program to make a significant visual and geographic impact, integrating art into neighborhoods across the city.



## Site Selection

In selecting a site suitable for public art, the criteria should include, but not be limited to, the following:

- Is a site publicly accessible, allowing for the public and the work of art to interact?
- Is the site on public property or is the owner of the site a partner in the project?
- Does the site suggest art opportunities that would extend the breadth, vitality and quality of National City's Public Art Program?
- Will art on the site enhance the pedestrian experience of the space and contribute to the visual interest of the area?
- Does the site fall within the prominent paths of circulation (a city entry point or gateway, transit corridor, or plaza area), or is the site situated near a place of congregation (park, transportation centers, entertainment or retail centers)?
- Is the site one that would help identify a neighborhood or district, communicating its unique characteristics to those who pass by?

**TEMPORARY PUBLIC ARTWORKS** can be visual or performing art. They are, by nature, relatively short-lived, compared to a permanent projects. An example might be street banners or a mural series on selected spaces whose content could change every six months. Another example might be something like chalk art street drawings, which later wear away. Public performances such as dance festivals are another example. Such projects might allow the artist to be more experimental or conceptual because long-term creative affirmation or material viability of the work is not at issue.



## Administration and Oversight

National City's A.R.T.S. Center will be designated, under a contract with the city, to administer public art projects. The responsibility of A.R.T.S. will include selection and placement of art works, using criteria set forth in this program document, a set of standards of excellence to apply to all projects and funds generated under the city's new "percent-for-arts" program. A.R.T.S. will map possible "gateway" spots and other possible locations for types of public art. And they will be guided by the arts component of the General Plan which lists Art, Culture and Education as components of an overall public art plan.

As the program and funding develop, the City may consider adding partners or staff who can perform arts administration oversight similar to what will be provided by A.R.T.S.

## Community Outreach and Public Education

Public education is a cornerstone of any successful public art program. It is anticipated that, in time, materials may be developed for walking tours and that volunteer docents will be found to interpret public art to students at all levels, interested citizens and visitors from outside the city. Outreach can also extend to clubs and professional groups of architects, city planners, etc.

- To manage educational programs for the public to promote understanding and acceptance of public art including tours, podcasts, videos, and curriculum materials for K-12
- To develop, maintain and promote an effective website with informative content
- To encourage dialogue about public art and about the art selection process
- To establish opportunities for the participation of National City youth in public art projects
- To actively promote the City's Public Art Program as commissioning art, artist residencies, and opportunities to exhibit
- To identify and pursue private, business and civic sources of revenue for public art

## Community Engagement and Involvement

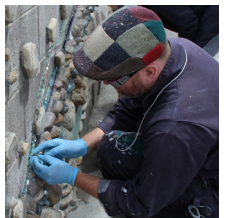
To embrace civic energy and multi-culturalism, this plan is built on a commitment to community engagement in the creation of public art. Several types of engagement are envisioned, appropriate to the project at hand:

1. In the selection of sites for public art
2. In the selection of artists through the RFP/RFQ processes;
3. In the development of conceptual designs and plans
4. In determination of final designs;
5. In pre-build, pre-construction activities;
6. In building and construction;
7. In maintenance and programming.

It's unlikely that all types of engagement will be appropriate for all projects; the key will be to administer each public art project with the needed type and level of community engagement.

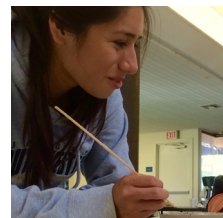
## Maintenance and Programming

All permanent, City owned public artworks are maintained and programmed by A.R.T.S. and the city of National City or contract employees. As the collection grows, so does the need for increased maintenance and care of the aging art. Artwork is evaluated annually and maintenance projections are prepared as part of A.R.T.S. and the City's budgets.





*“Public artworks have the capacity bring private and public interests together, all under one community.”*



## Public Arts Program – Projects, Process & Participants

From its Marina District to its eastern boundary, and from its northern border to its southern edge, National City has numerous potential sites for public art placement that will lend beauty, drama, identity and a sense of pride to the city. This diagram shows the relationships and components of a successful public arts program in National City.



DRAFT PUBLIC ARTS PROGRAM - for review by Public Art Committee



