THE CHALLENGE OF PUBLIC ART EVALUATION: LESSONS FROM TWO ARLINGTON CASE STUDIES

LONG BRIDGE PARK

FOUR MILE RUN

SPRING 2012
# EXPLORING EVALUATION FOR PUBLIC ART

## Artist Charge (Survey and Contract Analysis)

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## WPCP Fence Enhancement Surveys

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## Long Bridge Park Post Occupancy Evaluation (POE)

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ARTIST CHARGE: Purpose of Study

HYPOTHESIS

Requiring site analysis, public engagement and temporary installation will improve both public awareness and involvement with public art.

METHODOLOGY

Survey of artists who have completed projects for Arlington

Review of artist contract
Administered by Arlington Economic Development since 2011

Public Art Policy adopted in 2000

Public Art Master Plan adopted in 2004

Program guidelines for County-initiated approved in 2005

$5 million budget - $3 million developer contributions (Public Art Fund) / $2 million general and CIP funds

2.8 full time staff

Long history of developer-initiated public art projects beginning in 1979 with the commission of Nancy Holt's Dark Star Park.

40+ temporary projects since 1987

60+ projects in permanent collection

Typically 25-30 developer-initiated and 15-20 County projects underway
ARTIST CHARGE: Excerpts from Online Artist Survey

Public Art in Arlington County

1. In reference to your work in Arlington County, at what stage in the process did (do) you become involved?

2. How did you conduct site analysis on your Arlington project site? Is this typical of the way you conduct site analysis?

3. Are you involved in Arlington’s community activities? If so, how?

4. How did you engage with the general public during your process?

5. How did public engagement affect your installation?
ARTIST CHARGE: Survey Summary

• Artists conduct little, if any, site analysis.

• Artists are interested in opportunities for informal dialogue with public.

• Most artists have experience with both temporary and permanent pieces.

• Limitations of online survey
ARTIST CHARGE: Recommendations

1. Site analysis should be given more emphasis

2. Temporary installations can be a way to engage the public at preliminary stages of project

3. Re-examine public engagement
   • Different requirements for selected local artists versus non-local artists (staff may need to assist artists from out of town).
   • These requirements can be formulated by the project team and included in the call for proposals and artist contract.
WPCP Fence Enhancement Project

Surveys of attitudes about project priorities and site attributes from three types of stakeholders in the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) project

Three Stakeholder Groups:

- Official Advisory Coordination Group (online survey)
- Plant Employees (online and hand distributed survey)
- Users of 4 Mile Run Park (intercept survey)
WPCP Fence Enhancement Public Art Project

Artist: Remy & Veenhuizen (Netherlands)

Enhancement to existing fence along Four Mile Run stream & Eades St

Estimated completion: Fall 2013
Methods of Engagement

A. Create Graphic Survey and Signs

B. Distribute Bottled Water With Survey
   - Visit Site at Various Times of the Week
   - Gather and Analyze Data

Thank you!
RESULTS

OPINION OF PUBLIC ART INFLUENCE

Question:
Do You Think Public Art Would Enhance the Area?

Conclusion:
The majority of the individuals that frequent the area the most feel that the site would be improved by public art.
Question: How would you describe the area in three words?
SELECTED SURVEY RESULTS

- All groups feel that public art is a major opportunity to enhance area.

- Users of 4 Mile Run Park strongly feel public art would enhance area. Plant employees less sure.

- Both ACG and plant employees feel that public art is an opportunity to help 4 Mile Run Park users become more aware of the plant and its function.

-(Fun Statistic) Neither the ACG nor the employees described the area as “Smelly”, the word that was most used by the 4 Mile Run Park users.

Recommendations for Future:

- Keep working on additional responses from the three stakeholder groups and other neighborhood groups.

- Complete additional surveys of stakeholders, workers, and users after installation.

- Analyze changes in attitudes after installation of public art and compare results with previous surveys.

- Use this survey as a prototype and aid in planning future public art projects
POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION: WAVE ARBOR
POST OCCUPANCY EVALUATION

Used to assess the performance and aesthetics of a site from the users’ point of view.

- Solicits qualitative data
- Allows stakeholders input
- Produces ‘snap-shot’ data
- Non-professional opinions

(Preiser & Nasar, 2007)
PERCEPTIONS OF PUBLIC ART

Public Art:

• May not be recognized as art by users.
• Is often integrated into overall design.
• Is a challenge for users to evaluate.
• Is often still used by an audience even when they are unaware that it is art.

(Reframing Public Art Audience Use, Interpretation and Appreciation, Senie, 2003)
Wave Arbor is a pair of wind-activated sculptures by nationally recognized artist Doug Hollis. Each structure supports 22 kinetic wing-like elements that move in response to the wind.
Questions 2 & 3: Which of the following possible park logos would you use to brand this park? Why?

- Respondents often chose a logo that reflected their activity in the park.
Question 4: Do you see that structure over there? How would you describe it? *(Wave Arbor)*

- Many had not noticed the artwork. This could be related to its thorough integration with the site and the replication of materials.
- Several users thought the structure generated alternative energy and were disappointed to find out that it did not.
- Many were curious about what the structure did or why it was there.
VII. FINDINGS

Question 8: Does participating in this survey change your view of the art?

- About 42% indicated that the survey had changed their viewpoint, knowledge, or interest in the work.

- This finding also supports the installation of descriptive signage about *Wave Arbor*.

- Almost one third of the no responses were from individuals that already knew the piece was an artwork.
CONCLUSION

• Users were excited to learn more about the work.

• The desire for integration with the overall design and architecture might be at odds with the goal for an iconic artwork or “beacon.”

• Users appreciate the value of good design but find it harder to articulate how an artwork impacts their personal experience.