

FOUR LENSES FOR LOOKING AT THE VALUE OF PUBLIC ART IN ARLINGTON

This paper sets a context for Arlington’s public art program, as it expects to complete four major projects throughout Arlington this fiscal year, and potentially fourteen additional projects by 2015. The paper provides a context for understanding the program’s accomplishments and impact on Arlington’s community life and urban landscape, and for discussing the impact these new projects will have on Arlington’s future. To build this context, the paper draws on a review of general research about public art by scholars from the U.S. and abroad, but it does not undertake original research on that topic. We also review the accomplishments of Arlington’s public art program, drawing on a broad set of parameters that have commonly been used to describe the impact that public art can have in communities.

This background material provides a foundation for public discussion, involving the general community as well as specific arts and culture audiences, about the accomplishments of the program. It also serves as the starting point for a broader examination of the key roles that the public art program can play in the cultural, economic and social life of Arlington in the future, and for a discussion about the directions the program might take in the coming years.

“Works of art add value to the built environment. They can transform places with added meaning, interaction, beauty and context, creating memorable encounters for people in those places.”¹



Chris Gardner’s Cupid’s Garden (1994) has become one of Rosslyn’s most familiar landmarks.

Over the next four years, Arlington’s public art program will complete some of its most ambitious and innovative projects since it was launched a decade ago. While the program has already celebrated many public art accomplishments, the vision of Arlington’s Public Art Policy (adopted in 2000) and its Public Art Master Plan (adopted in 2004) are about to make their mark on Arlington more clearly than ever before.

Arlington’s approach to public art has already won broad attention and acclaim. Five of its projects have received national recognition from the Public Art Network’s Year in Review, a curated selection of the year’s best public art projects,²

¹ Office of Public Art, *Add Value Add Art: A Public Art Resource Guide for Developers*, (Pittsburgh: Urban Redevelopment Authority of Pittsburgh, 2010).

² Ned Kahn, *Liquid Pixels*; Winnie Owens-Hart, *Memory Bricks*; Jann Rosen-Queralto, *Cultivus Loci, Suckahanna*; Ray King, *Flame* and Jack Sanders, Robert Gay and Butch Anthony, *CO2LED*.



Nancy Holt's Dark Star Park (1984) in Rosslyn, turns leftover public spaces into a civic asset in one of Arlington's densest business districts.

and one project, Nancy Holt's *Dark Star Park*, was cited as one the fifty best public art projects of the last fifty years by curator Jennifer McGregor.³

And just last year, an American Planning Association (APA) report on how arts and culture strategies create, reinforce and enhance a sense of place called out Arlington's public art master plan as one of four national case studies. APA recognized that "since 2000, the Arlington County Board has supported public art for promoting 'design excellence' and a 'high quality public realm.'"⁴

APA's commendation touches on important questions: What is the value of public art? What has Arlington's public art program contributed to the community, and what benefits can the public art program deliver to the community in the future?

Four Lenses for Looking at Public Art

While some form of public art can be found in almost every civilization, public art as we know it today can trace its roots to several key moments in American urban history: to the City Beautiful movement of the late Nineteenth Century, to the inclusion of artists on federal design projects during the Great Depression, and to the dawn of percent-for-art programs in the late 1950s. Each of these movements was a product of its place and time – in terms of how art was thought of as part of the visual appearance of the city and in terms of the opportunities and roles artists were given to shape the cityscape.

Just as the approaches to public art have evolved over the last century or more, the arguments for the value of public art have evolved as products of their time, as well. These arguments, which can be distilled into four main categories, might be more appropriately called *lenses for looking at the value of public art*. They are useful tools for considering the value of Arlington's public art program at this important juncture in its history.⁵

- *Public art is an essential element of place-making and civic design.* Public art is part of the broader visual environment of buildings,

³ McGregor prepared the list for the Public Art Network in 2009, on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of Philadelphia's public art ordinance, considered the nation's first percent-for-art requirement. McGregor, who is now the chief curator at Wave Hill, a botanical garden in The Bronx, was a co-author of Arlington's public art master plan.

⁴ Jeffrey Soule, "Community Character: How Arts and Cultural Strategies Create, Reinforce and Enhance Sense of Place," Arts and Culture Briefing Papers 03 (Washington, D.C.: American Planning Association, 2011). Available at this link: <http://www.planning.org/research/arts/briefingpapers/character.htm>

⁵ See Kevin F. McCarthy, Elizabeth H. Ondaatje, Laura Zakaras, Arthur Brooks, *Gifts of the Muse, Reframing the Debate About the Benefits of the Arts* (Washington: Rand Research in the Arts, 2004)

landscapes and infrastructure. It can promote a sense of place, contribute to legibility or way-finding, and generally support efforts for quality civic design.

- *Public art promotes community connectedness.* Public art projects, and the processes by which they are created, can heighten social and cultural awareness, strengthen community bonds, give voice to marginalized communities, and build a path to constructive civic participation.
- *Public art generates economic benefits.* Public art can help make a place more desirable for tourism, business location or development; generate activity through events; and support the broader creative economy.
- *Public art provides a path towards individual enrichment.* Public art provides people with access to art experiences that they might not otherwise have in the course of their daily lives. Everyone's experience with any form of art is, first and foremost, highly personal. These experiences can enrich us as individuals, enable us to enjoy our surroundings, sharpen our outlook on the world, and help us participate more fully as members of our communities.⁶

Lens One: Public Art is an Essential Element of Placemaking and Civic Design

Public art can have a profound impact on the visual character of a community. Viewed through this lens – how does public art impact civic design and placemaking? Arlington Public Art can point to a broad range of accomplishments.

Public Art Contributes to a Visually Pleasing Urban Environment

Public art can counterbalance “the equation of homogenizing urban development or modernist planning and the erosion of senses of place.”⁷

Modern public art programs emerged, to a large degree, as a reaction to what many people regarded as the “placeless” Modern design movement that began to dominate urban development in the mid-Twentieth Century. Arlington's program originally followed in this vein, focusing on larger private development projects in places like Rosslyn, and has evolved into an exploration of the visual character of urban infrastructure throughout the County.

The first project completed in this vein remains one of Arlington's most iconic and significant works of public art – Nancy Holt's *Dark Star Park* (1984) at the southern gateway to Rosslyn, where Fort Myer Drive and Lynn Street meet the Meade Street Bridge. The project, created in conjunction with a building being developed adjacent to the site and with support from the developer, turns the left-over spaces created by the roadways leading into and out of Rosslyn into a civic asset – an artwork that functions at human scale, a green respite in the center of one of Arlington's densest business districts, a gateway and an homage to the founder of Rosslyn.⁸

Arlington's public art master plan urges a strong focus on integrating the work of artists into everyday infrastructure and capital projects as a way of enhancing their appearance – a modern take on artistic traditions such as Art Nouveau design, the

⁶ Some researchers argue that these individual transformations can lead to the most powerful impacts that public art can have on a community McCarthy et. al., *ibid.*

⁷ Hall and Roberston, 12.

⁸ To read more about this and other public art projects in Arlington, see the brochure, Arlington County Public Art Highlights, available for download at <http://www.arlingtonarts.org/cultural-affairs/public-art-in-arlington.aspx>. This site also contains a link to Arlington's public art master plan.

Arts and Crafts Movement and WPA-era public works design. *Untitled* (Linn Meyers, 2012) is a recently-completed series of glass partition walls, etched with the artist's drawings, that create privacy screening for the public conference rooms of the County's offices at Courthouse Plaza. Upstairs, *Transmission* (Richard Chartier, Laura Traverso, 2006) is an indoor mural that graces the walls of the Arlington Virginia Network studios.



The luminous sculptures that make up Cliff Garten's proposed Corridor of Light will line North Lynn Street in Rosslyn, taking Arlington's approach of integrating art into infrastructure to a new scale.

Before long, Arlington Public Art will complete two projects that take this approach to a scale that has not been seen before in this community. Artist Vicki Scuri has designed a pattern for the concrete retaining walls that are being built at the new Arlington Boulevard / Courthouse Road / 10th Street interchange. Artist Cliff Garten is creating a series of monumental torchers – literally a *Corridor of Light* – that will line North Lynn Street in Rosslyn, connecting the Key Bridge and the Meade Street Bridge.

These efforts are also setting a standard for the private sector. With the encouragement of Arlington County's Department of Community Planning,

Housing and Development (DCPHD) and guidance from Arlington Public Art, Dominion Virginia Power commissioned St. Louis artist Ben Fehrmann to design a new perimeter enhancement for its substation between Wilson Boulevard and Fairfax Drive, in the west end of Clarendon. Fehrmann's recently completed project will beautify the pedestrian and vehicular path between the Clarendon and Virginia Square submarkets.

Public Art Can Create a "Sense of Place" by Enhancing Ordinary Design Elements and Places

*"Public art supplies another layer of sensitivity to the development process, complementing (and challenging) the work of architecture and landscape design."*⁹ —David Patten, Artist

Public art projects can do more than simply make public spaces and infrastructure more beautiful. Public art can also make places more *distinct and memorable*, thereby strengthening people's attachment to the civic landscape, through the creation of artworks that are unique to each site.

Several soon-to-be-completed County infrastructure projects reflect this way of thinking. In Clarendon, the design collaborative Thoughtbarn will soon complete a comprehensive sign package for James Hunter Park. In Pentagon City, Eric Howeler & Meejin Yoon are turning the median of Hayes Street, near the Metro entrances, into a fanciful streetscape that includes a place of respite for pedestrians. Both of these design enhancement projects will confer a unique identity upon ordinary places, creating visual references that set them apart from other parks and boulevards in Arlington.

Public art can also create a sense of place at a broader level, in that a community's overall

⁹ David Patten, artist.



Anna and David by Miriam Schapiro (1987) provides a bold visual image that is anchored to Rosslyn in many people's memories, helping create a sense of place for this area.

identity can be anchored to powerful visual images, such as a distinctive artwork. For many years two of Rosslyn's most familiar landmarks have been *Anna and David* (Miriam Schapiro, 1987, 1525 Wilson Boulevard) and *Cupid's Garden* (Chris Gardner, 1994, traffic island at Wilson Boulevard and Oak Street).

Public Art Can Create a "Sense of Place" by Uncovering Hidden Layers of Meaning

Public art can develop "an awareness of tradition or identity unique to a place."

It can "replace a quality that has vanished from a place or has been ignored."¹⁰

It can "declare the worth of a place and a time in our shared culture."¹¹

Many of the County's public art projects strive to connect to a deeper understanding of what Arlington is all about. Arlington's public art master plan encouraged artists to consider three themes in their work:

- "Federal Arlington" suggests an investigation of the multifaceted relationships between Arlington and the Nation's Capital next door, a theme that is being mined by Christian Moeller's *Bit Map*. This gateway project in Rosslyn, on a screen wall that will surround the Virginia Dominion Power substation at Fort Myer Drive and 19th Street, will include a vast bit-map drawing of feathers.¹² Moeller is exploring the intersection of patriotic and environmental themes – the symbolism of the American bald eagle, whose habitat in the Potomac River nearby is being restored – in a contemporary artistic medium.
- "Global Arlington" suggests an exploration of the ever-expanding connections between Arlington and world culture through its diversifying population base and the reach of businesses, cultural and government entities located in the County. Sans Façon's *Limelight* (2011), a temporary project that helped kick off the opening of Artisphere, is part of a traveling public art project organized in cities and cultures around the world. Sans Façon lit ordinary spaces and sidewalks with spotlights, as if they were a stage; the pools of light inspired people to engage in playful, lighthearted performance, and the action was captured in photography.
- "Historic Arlington" suggests that artists mine Arlington's rich regional history. Arlington's Public Art Program and its Heritage Arts Program have collaborated on research, photo collecting and oral history projects in High

¹⁰ Hall and Roberston, 12.

¹¹ Jack Becker, "Public Art, An Essential Component of Creating Communities," AFTA Monograph Series (Washington, D.C.: Americans for the Arts, 2004), 6.

¹² The project, *Bit-Wall* for the Arlington Substation, is being commissioned by Monday Properties as part of Arlington's public art in private development program. It will wrap the Dominion substation at N. Ft. Myer Drive, 19th Street and N. Moore Street.

View Park and Nauck, two traditionally African-American communities. This effort accompanied a public art project in High View Park and will provide a foundation for a public art project that will be incorporated into a new village square planned for Nauck.

A number of Arlington Public Art's projects in recent years have tackled yet another topic: the character of Arlington's urban and natural environment. Jann Rosen-Queralt's *Cultivus Loci: Suckahanna* (Powhatan Springs Park, 2004) is perhaps the most significant project of this type. The main feature is a rain garden that collects storm water from surfaces in the park and filters it, before it drains into a cistern and into Long Branch Creek. The rain garden also doubles as a hands-on playscape, thereby engaging park visitors in a tactile way with the water cycle and the native landscape.

Public Art Can Contribute to Wayfinding – Helping People Understand their Orientation in the Cityscape

For many years, urban designers and environmental graphic designers have believed that special visual features – such as architectural embellishments, memorable artworks or landscapes – can strengthen people's perceptions of the layout of a city and their ability to find their way around.¹³

Arlington Public Art has been successful at commissioning numerous works that serve as either gateways or thresholds into different areas of Arlington. For example, Ballston includes two pieces that act as gateways to the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor – *Flame* (Ray King, 2006, Glebe Road and Fairfax Drive) and *Bud/Blossom* (Wendy Ross, 2003, Glebe Road and Wilson Boulevard); both



Works like Ned Kahn's Liquid Pixels (2002) can provide paths to individual enrichment, enabling us to enjoy our surroundings and sharpen our outlook on the world.

of these have become familiar markers to people driving, busing, walking and biking through the Rosslyn-Ballston Corridor. In Hall's Hill High View Park, two projects by Winnie Owens Hart – *The Family* and *Memory Bricks* – not only recall the history of the neighborhood, but turn the park into a symbolic entrance to the community.¹⁴

New projects are also in store, including a “western gateway” on Columbia Pike, where the new streetcar line will cross into Fairfax at one of the ten locations indicated as gateways in the County's wayfinding study. In South Arlington, an artist-designed fence enhancement for the Water Pollution Control Plant (Remy & Veenhuizen) will serve as a gateway to people entering Arlington from Route 1.

Other artworks provide a “you are here” moment, letting people know that they have arrived at the heart of a community, particularly areas considered to be Arlington's “urban villages.” Arlington's

¹³ Examples of this literature include Kevin Lynch, *The Image of the City* (Cambridge: Harvard-MIT Joint Center for Urban Studies, 1960), Jack Nasar, *The Evaluative Image of the City*, (New York: Sage Publications, 1997) and Per Mollerup, *Wayshowing: A Guide to Environmental Signage, Principles and Practices*, (Lars Mueller, 2005).

¹⁴ The park was recently featured in the Washington Post: Cheryl A. Kenny, “Preserving History, and Harmony,” Washington Post, April 28, 2012, E9.

public art master plan mapped a dozen such spots already on the books in County planning documents (from existing Metro station areas, to new spaces proposed in the Columbia Pike Form-Based Code, to the Nauck Village Square) and recommended a focus on commissioning art in these places.

Come up from the Virginia Square Metro, and you will see Tom Ashcraft and Y. David Chung's *Virginia Square Metro Plaza Enhancements* (2003). Shirlington Plaza is anchored by Martha Jackson Jarvis' *Downstream Flow* (2006), while Erwin Redl's light project, *Flow* (2006), identifies the Shirlington Library, which faces the plaza. At Courthouse Plaza, Jesus Moroles' *Courthouse River Plaza* (2009) terminates the view along the pedestrian promenade there.

Artworks also anchor public places created through private development, particularly large, multiphase development projects. At Potomac Yard, Larry Kirkland's *Wonder Wander* (2011), which includes a sculpture, fountain and seating, is the centerpiece of Center Park. At Metropolitan Park in Pentagon City, Phillip K. Smith III is creating a pair of Corten steel sculptures (*Line to Circle, Arc-Line-Arc*) that anchor the end spaces of a heavily used public green.



Y. David Chung's mural (2000) at the Rosslyn Metro station interprets Arlington's local narratives and helps build a sense of shared history that is integral to community identity.

Public Art Can Support a Community's Aspirations for a Quality Civic Realm

One of Arlington Public Art's most ambitious goals has been to raise the expectation of designers, planners and communities for excellence in civic design – the public spaces, parks, streetscapes and other urban landscapes that are a community's shared urban spaces. Public art often plays a bridging role between the work of architects, landscape architects, urban designers, planners and other professionals who shape the public realm. Arlington Public Art's staff has used both the project development process as well as broader advocacy to advance this vision.

It can take many years for public art to have an impact on the largest infrastructure systems, and some of the projects that will be unveiled in the near future reflect many years of planning and project development.

- Cliff Garten's *Corridor of Light* in Rosslyn not only reflects the reinvention of street lighting infrastructure as a urban design element that marks gateways, nodes and passages through the city, but also represents a breakthrough approach to developing an art project that can be developed in segments as public and private investment in the area proceeds.
- Vicki Scuri's retaining wall and lighting project for the Arlington Boulevard/Courthouse Road interchange projects represents the first time any municipality in Virginia has managed to incorporate public art into a state highway project at this scale.

Other projects have resulted from careful planning and persistent advocacy.

- Richard Deutsch's installation, *Echo*, is at Penrose Square, one of four new public spaces along the Columbia Pike Corridor that were called for in the Columbia Pike Form-Based

Code. Arlington's public art master plan noted that Arlington had more than a dozen new civic squares recommended in its various planning documents, and it recommended that this new network of public spaces could support a new generation of public artworks.

- D.I.R.T. Studio's *Watermarks* will infuse an Army Corps of Engineers stream reclamation project on Four Mile Run with artistic vision for marking outfalls, places where underground, unseen stormwater infrastructure interfaces with the river corridor. In addition, Arlington Public Art's emphasis on design quality throughout the Four Mile Run project led to the selection of a team led by Buro Happold for the Four Mile Run Pedestrian Bicyclist Bridge.¹⁵
- The opportunity of building an aesthetic enhancement at the Dominion Virginia Power substation in Clarendon was originally identified through the 2006 Clarendon Sector Plan process¹⁶ and in the public art master plan as one element of an infrastructure system located throughout Arlington. Dominion undertook the project with encouragement from Arlington County's DCPHD and guidance from Arlington Public Art.

These accomplishments of linking artists' work to planning, funding, contracting and partnerships are evidence of the "under the hood" expertise that Arlington's public art program has developed, and which is necessary to make ambitious public art projects possible and lay the groundwork for future projects. These projects underscore that successful projects are a collaborative effort that begins with a commitment to delivering extraordinary civic design in a complicated design and decision-making environment.



Cultivus Loci: Suckahanna (2004) by Jann Rosen-Queralt at Powhatan Springs Park.

Lens Two: Public Art Promotes Community Connectedness

A second lens for looking at the value of public art involves the consideration of its social benefits. This viewpoint arguably was brought into focus by artists and critics who argued, as a reaction to the earliest local and federal public art initiatives in the 1960s, that public art should rightfully involve an engagement with the cultural, social and political aspects of a place, not only its visual aspects. These concerns showed up in artists' practices in the 1960s and they began to crystallize in the literature some years later.¹⁷

Today, it is commonly claimed that public art can strengthen social bonds and community connect-

¹⁵ <http://www.4milerun.org>

¹⁶ [http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/Documents/8785Dec 2006 staff report_attachments.pdf](http://www.arlingtonva.us/Departments/CPHD/Documents/8785Dec%202006%20staff%20report_attachments.pdf) (p 10)

¹⁷ The first of several seminal books on this topic was *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art*, edited by Suzanne Lacy. Bay Press, 1995. Mary Jane Jacobs' multi-artist exhibition, *Places with A Past*, at the Charleston Spoleto Festival in 1991, also brought wide attention to this approach.

edness. Sometimes these benefits result from the process of commissioning and designing a public artwork, which often involves comprehensive community outreach and engagement. Sometimes they result from the topic of the project, or an artist's approach to it, particularly when it expresses narratives that are unique or familiar to a community. Both outcomes are central to the accomplishments of Arlington Public Art.

Public Art Supports Community Connectedness by Expressing the Stories that Hold a Place Together

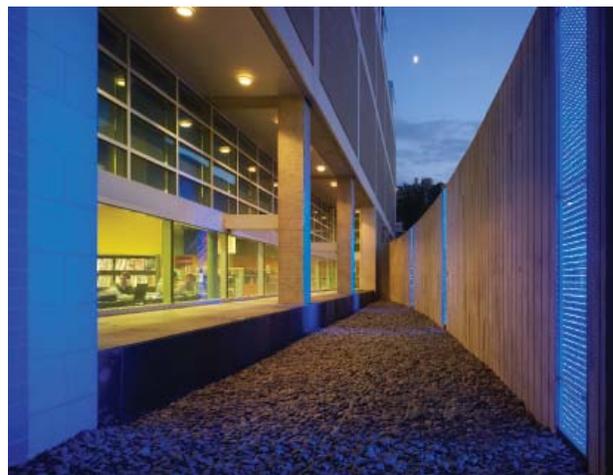
*Public art projects have sought to articulate and communicate what some have seen as four values fundamental to community development: Shared history, identity, needs and aspirations.*¹⁸

This is one of the most traditional lenses for viewing public art. In Arlington, *shared history* is most prominently resonant in the monuments and architecture that forge our shared national identity — memorials such as the Iwo Jima Memorial and the Air Force Memorial, the architecture of the Pentagon, the landscape and monuments of Arlington National Cemetery. These are not only icons of our national identity, but also part of Arlington's shared identity because so many of its residents and businesses are part of the defense community.

The New Deal-era murals in the Clarendon Post Office, by local artist Auriel Bessemer (*Agricultural and Industrial Scenes – Sketches of Virginia*, 1940) represent a historical–regional expression of Arlington's shared identity and aspirations by depicting familiar landmarks such as Great Falls and Roosevelt Island. They are an example of federally-funded public artworks that promoted local narratives and artistic voices, created in the

broader service of promoting community identity and stability during the economic turmoil of the Great Depression. The murals were restored with the guidance of Arlington Public Art and reinstalled in 2007.¹⁹

More recent works, such as *Rossllyn* (Y. David Chung, 2000, Rosslyn Metro) follow this heroic, almost mythological tradition, adding contemporary interpretations of Arlington's local narratives. Ed Bisese's temporary installation, *A Condensed History of Clarendon* (1999), explored this with four playful, almost cartoonish sculptural figures that represented various eras of Arlington's history merged with the artist's own childhood memories.



Flow (2006) by Erwin Redl at Shirlington Library.

The expression of shared identity need not reflect only the dominant identity or culture in a place, but also the various subcultures that may or may not be easy to see. Recently, for example, Arlington Public Art organized an exhibition, *Faces of Sustainability* (Jason Horowitz, Mary Noble Ours) that commissioned photographs of local residents

¹⁸ Tim Hall and Iain Roberston, "Public Art and Urban Regeneration: Advocacy, Claims and Critical Debates," *Landscape Research* 26:1 (2001).

¹⁹ See <http://www.wpamurals.com/virginia.htm>.

who embraced sustainable practices in their everyday lives, and projected them in Rosslyn during FotoWeek DC in 2009.

The shared history, identity, needs and aspirations of Nauck, one of Arlington's historically African-American communities, will be explored through public art incorporated into the development of a new village square. Though the project is likely to be years away from development, groundwork has already been laid through the Nauck Community Heritage Project, a collaboration between Arlington's Cultural Affairs Division and Arlington's DCPHD. "Staff members contacted community leaders from local churches and organizations and worked with them to involve local residents in storytelling projects to inspire the designer and redevelopers of the Nauck Town Square Project and the Nauck Village Center."²⁰

Public Art Fosters Community Connectedness by Generating Civic Dialogue

*Public art can be active in the development of tangible networks and inter-personal links, promoting social development and cohesion.*²¹

Public art, as it is generally practiced today, is concerned with commissioning art that is relevant to the context of the place where it is located. Projects are considered successful if the artist can demonstrate insight not only into the urban design context of a place, but also the history of the place and the goals, aspirations and visions of the people who live and work there.

With this emphasis on site-specificity, public art programs, including Arlington's, have been developing a variety of opportunities for people to have

meaningful input and involvement in public art projects. This involvement fosters civic dialogue about the place, and through this dialogue people develop a deeper connection to the future of the place, and to each other.

Community involvement can be instrumental in getting this right. When Dominion Virginia Power began the process of commissioning an artist-designed enclosure for its substation in Clarendon, Dominion knew it needed to involve people who intimately knew the site. Working with Arlington Public Art and Arlington's DCPHD, Dominion identified a stakeholder group that helped articulate project goals, interviewed finalists and recommended the selection of an artist. The selected artist, Ben Fehrmann, then met individually with members of the stakeholder group to learn about the neighborhood and understand their perceptions of the substation. The group also reviewed and gave feedback on the final design. This involvement not only made the project stronger, but also gave community members a chance to share their expertise and guide the outcome, creating a stronger sense of ownership and connectedness than might have been expected.

Community members were also a valuable resource to artists Tejo Remy and Rene Veenhuizen on the Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP) fence enhancement project. To kick off the design phase, Arlington Public Art designed creative ways for the artists to meet the community and learn about context of the site. These included a community "walking safari" along Four Mile Run with a local naturalist who led a discussion of the flora and fauna in the area, a "coffee break" where people could meet the artists, and a community tour of the inside the WPCP. These encounters

²⁰ Kelly Ann Beavers and Kimberley Hodgson, AICP, "Community Engagement: How Arts and Cultural Strategies Enhance Community Engagement and Participation," Arts and Culture Briefing Papers 04 (Washington, D.C.: American Planning Association, 2011). Available at this link: <http://www.planning.org/research/arts/briefingpapers/engagement.htm>

²¹ Hall and Roberston, 10, paraphrasing "Community Council of Lincolnshire."



Winnie Owens Hart's *The Family* (2004) provides a "you are here moment," letting people know they've arrived at the heart of a community.

with the community helped the artists understand the community's relationship to these places and will help inform their design.

Community members can also have a role in the design, making and stewardship of art projects, deepening their involvement and connection to place. In 2012, artist Doug Retzler was commissioned to create a temporary public artwork for the Arlington Arts Center. His project, *Gourd Palace*, will be a temporary structure made of bamboo and planted with gourd vines. His project started with a "Family Day" workshop, at which

parents and kids were invited to create mini-models of what the Gourd Palace might look like. These ideas will help inform the final design. Retzler has also made connections with Arlington's urban agriculture initiative to enlist volunteers to maintain Gourd Palace during the growing season.

Public Art Can Make Marginalized Communities More Visible by Giving Voice to their Viewpoints

*Art that raises viewpoints for inclusion in the public debate can support a vibrant cultural, social and political atmosphere that is essential to meaningful civic discussion.*²²

Sometimes the challenge is to include voices that are not normally heard in civic processes; voices that for some reason do not feel empowered and are likely to bear the brunt of impending change. This takes special efforts at reaching out and engaging people, but it is the work that many artists like to do.

Columbia Pike is a focal point for this type of work in Arlington. Floating Lab Collective (FLC) has been asked by Arlington Public Art to create a public art process and project, in conjunction with the development of the Arlington Mill Community Center, that can investigate the transformations that are expected to occur along the Pike. Some of the major influences in the area, such as the passage of the form-based code and the construction of a streetcar line, have the potential of accelerating population shifts along the corridor. It is expected that FLC will model its work after an earlier project of theirs, the "Floating Museum," in which they collected artifacts from stakeholders in an area and placed them in a do-it-yourself museum.

²² Hall and Roberston, 14.

Arlington Mill will also include a kiosk that will make available the archives of the Columbia Pike Documentary Project, which is being undertaken by an independent, multi-disciplinary team of Arlington artists,²³ whose goal is to use photography and oral history to document life along the Pike as it undergoes a major transformation.

LENS THREE: Public Art Generates Economic Benefits

In recent years, yet another lens for looking at the value of arts and culture programs has emerged: What is the economic impact of the arts or, more broadly, of the creative economy?

This question is being raised for several reasons. Public agencies are looking very carefully at the value of expenditures that are not considered part of their core services.²⁴ Philanthropic funders are looking for innovation and are eager to document the impact of the programs they support. Policy makers are trying to understand the role that arts, culture and creative activity play in the broader economic development and livability of cities. And arts organizations are sensing an opportunity to expand their audiences and funding bases by aligning themselves with new missions.

The economic arguments for public art tend to fall into three categories:

- Public art can activate areas, which builds foot traffic and can lead to spending and tax revenue,
- Public art can add value to the development of specific projects or districts, and
- Public art is a form of creative expression that can support the creative economy overall.

There have been many claims and much debate, but not much definitive research, about how public art (or arts, culture and the creative economy in general) can accomplish these things. Nevertheless, these arguments can provide insight into the value that public art provides to Arlington County.

Public Art Activates Urban Spaces

Public art installations, especially temporary and event-based projects, can generate substantial amounts of foot traffic and by extension, visitor expenditures and business revenue. The small amount of research in this area tends to support that conclusion for blockbuster events and major capital investments, at least.



In 2006, Butch Anthony's Bike Oasis Kiosk piloted a program to create opportunities for small business kiosks in major pedestrian neighborhoods. It is now permanently sited at Barcroft Park, where it is used by Phoenix Bikes, a social entrepreneurship program for youth.

²³ The project is being undertaken by Todd Endo, Paula Endo, Lloyd Wolf, Mimi Xang Ho, Duy Tran, Aleksandra Lagkueva, and others. The project is sponsored by the Urban Alternatives Foundation.

²⁴ For example, discussion is focused on these benefits because they align with "an increasingly output-oriented, quantitative approach to public sector management." Jackson, et. al., xi

For example, *The Gates* and *The Waterfalls* in New York City generated tens of millions of dollars in economic activity from people who visited to see those artworks. Chicago's Millennium Park, which includes *Cloud Gate*, *Crown Fountain*, temporary exhibitions and artistically designed gardens, architecture and infrastructure, is generating an estimated \$190 million in visitor spending a year, as well as \$18 million year in taxes and 600 or more jobs.²⁵

Other research suggests that the best way for arts organizations to build their audiences is not through tourism, but to strengthen their local and regional draws, so public exhibitions that make art more accessible to the public are more likely to help them build their audiences as well. Closer to home, Washington, D.C., recently staged the ambitious 5x5 program, with 25 curated works and associated projects spread throughout the city in April and May 2012, while the Hirshhorn Museum at the same time staged a major projection project by Doug Aitken. Baltimore recently supported *Open Walls*, a curated installation of a dozen temporary murals by world-renowned street artists.

In recent years, Arlington Public Art has staged several significant temporary or event-based projects, aimed to attract by local and regional audiences to Arlington's retail and business centers.

- *Bike Oasis Kiosk* (Butch Anthony, 2006/2008) was installed at the north end of Rosslyn. This playful structure, made out recycled bicycle parts and street signs, served as a bike rental station years before bike-sharing systems became popular. It's do-it-yourself aesthetic contrasted with Rosslyn's commercial architecture and made bicycle use seem fun.
- In 2007, Arlington Public Art staged *CO₂LED*, a summer-long project in conjunction with the

County's Planet Arlington world music festival, in a traffic triangle on the other end of Rosslyn. By night, a glowing array of hundreds of LEDs, ensconced in recycled water bottles (and powered by solar energy harvested during the day) created a temporary gateway to Rosslyn. This eco-friendly field of light created a commentary on patterns of urban consumption and waste. This project was able to attract regional attention through publication in the *Washington Post*.

- The *Faces of Sustainability* photography and projection project was organized in conjunction with FotoWeek DC, generating foot traffic in Rosslyn because of its link to this regional event.
- *Drift*, an impromptu dance staged at the Arlington Farmers' Market in Courthouse, in 2010 by the Liz Lerman Dance Exchange, was likewise tied into a regional arts initiative, D.C. Dance Week. It was designed to highlight the County's efforts toward making Arlington environmentally sustainable.

Public Art Can Make Urban Districts and Development Projects Attractive, Lively and Successful

There is no question that arts and culture programming, including public art, is now regarded as a key ingredient for the success of urban places.

For example, it is *de rigueur* nowadays for organizations that manage major public spaces to launch their own public art initiatives. Millennium Park, the High Line, Madison Square Park, the Rose Kennedy Greenway, Times Square and community development corporations in countless neighborhoods all believe their investment in art projects and cultural programming adds to the mix that will attract visitors, business and residents to their areas.

²⁵ Goodman Williams Group, URS Corporation, Millennium Park Economic Impact Study (Chicago: Department of Planning and Development, 2005).

Even developers are recognizing the connection between art, culture and their own success. The Millennium Park study estimated that the park stimulated \$1.4 billion in residential development that would not have otherwise occurred.²⁶ Reports from Los Angeles also suggest that developers find that art projects play a valuable role in marketing their property.²⁷ It is not surprising to find mall, corporate park and office building management companies staging exhibitions or building their own collections.²⁸

Arlington Public Art has supported this idea over the years. In its early years, the public art program presented temporary artworks in Clarendon's Central Park, Maury Park at the Arlington Art Center, in Gateway Park in Rosslyn and along Four Mile Run. Eight years ago, the public art master plan explicitly emphasized the concentration of projects in transit corridors (Rosslyn–Ballston/Orange Line, Jefferson Davis/Blue and Yellow Lines, Columbia Pike) as well as Arlington's main riparian and recreation corridor, Four Mile Run. The strategy has been to consolidate artworks in Arlington's most walkable, accessible areas, so they can be seen by the most people and support the development and the identity of those areas, which are the anchors of Arlington's public realm.

New focus areas for Arlington Public Art are the Columbia Pike Corridor, the Jefferson Davis Highway Corridor (U.S. 1 and Crystal City) and Pentagon City. This follows overall County plans that are laying the groundwork for public infrastructure and private development – including the Columbia Pike Form Based Code, the Crystal City Sector Plan, and a new streetcar corridor that will link all of these areas. The art program's activities



Invisible Forces (1987) by Jim Sanborn.

include guiding new civic art and private development commissions, as well as developing a master plan for incorporating art into the streetcar line that passes through Pentagon City and connects the Jefferson Davis Corridor to the Columbia Pike Corridor – the program's first focused planning project since the master plan was completed.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Dan Rosenfeld, "The Financial Case for Public Art," *The Atlantic Cities* (May 28, 2012). Search www.atlanticcities.com

²⁸ For example, NorthPark Center, Dallas; Hall Office Park, Frisco, Texas; Lever House, New York.

A Creative Economy Should Foster an Environment that Supports the Appreciation and Pursuit of Creative Activity

This argument about the nexus between art and economic development is simple: Create the impression that your community is open to creativity and innovation, and you will be able to attract the kind of creative and entrepreneurial people and businesses that lead to vigorous economic activity.

This has long been a focus of Arlington Cultural Affairs, and the public art program has played a leadership role. Just as the program has been focused on commissioning projects that provide a broad set of benefits for Arlington's urban landscape, it has also focused on presenting work from a judicious mix of emerging, established, local and national artists. Arlington's public art staff and the consultants who manage private projects have been able to recruit the best of new, regional and national artistic talent to work in the County.

The breadth of public art work that can be found in Arlington is remarkable.

- Emerging national artists and design collaboratives such as Eric Howeler and Meejin Yoon (Hayes Street), Ben Fehrmann (Dominion Substation), Erwin Redl (Shirlington Library), D.I.R.T. Studio (Four Mile Run) and Thoughtbarn (James Hunter Park) have been given some of their earliest permanent art commissions in Arlington.
- Well-known and established national artists such as Cliff Garten (Corridor of Light), Vicki Scuri (Arlington Boulevard/Courthouse Road interchange), Christian Moeller (*Bit Map*), Doug Hollis (*Wave Arbor*) and Larry Kirkland (*Wonder Wander*) have come to Arlington to tackle some of their complex work.
- At that same time, a cross-section of accomplished artists from the Washington metropolitan area are prominently featured in the collection as well: David Chung, Tom Ashcraft,

Linn Meyers, Richard Chartier, Laura Traverso, Martha Jackson Jarvis, Kendall Buster, Jann Rosen-Queralt and Foon Sham.

In addition, Arlington Public Art is actively helping to build a support infrastructure for artists who want to build their practices in Arlington. It is collaborating with the Washington Project for the Arts to stage a professional practices series that will help build the capacity of local artists.

Arlington Public Art's success in attracting this range of artists, providing them with opportunities to do ambitious projects, and placing their work in the streets and open spaces that people experience everyday, conveys a powerful message about the County's embrace of creative excellence. Arlington's public art clearly communicates that the County is a place where civic life, community and business thrive.



Untitled (2000) by Kendall Buster at Verizon Plaza.

LENS FOUR: Public Art Provides a Path Toward Individual Enrichment

*Participation in arts projects is able to extend the participation of individuals in the broader social life of urban areas.*²⁹

Most of the benefits of public art discussed so far can be considered “instrumental” benefits, or ways in which public art helps promote broader environmental design, social or economic goals.³⁰

But some arts advocates argue that there is another set of “intrinsic” benefits, which are derived from the basic proposition that people’s individual lives, and their ability to participate in society, can be enriched through their engagement with public art.

This view takes as its starting proposition that people are drawn to the arts for personal, emotional, visceral reasons: “the arts can provide [people] with meaning and with a distinctive type of pleasure and emotional stimulation.” They are not drawn to the arts because they want to fulfill some policy goal.

Despite the fact that “intrinsic” benefits are highly individualized, they can nevertheless lead to powerful social outcomes. They can not only enrich individuals but also “lead to the development of individual capacities and community cohesiveness that are of benefit to the public sphere.”³¹

This means that public art has a value that is, perhaps, more fundamental than any measurable

design, community or economic impacts that it might otherwise have: it promotes a higher level of personal satisfaction and self-awareness, thereby enhancing the capabilities of individuals to engage in community and civic life. Considered in this light, public art adds greatly to the experience of living and working in Arlington in several ways.

Public Art Provides People with a Chance to Experience Art in their Everyday Lives

Public art “*reach(es) audiences outside of museums galleries and theatres, and [it] add[s] to the beauty of everyday life. ... Public art is for everyone and it is for free. Many people don’t visit museums or attend the theatre; anybody can experience public art.*”³²

Public art, because it is located in places that are part of everyday life, provides countless opportunities for people to engage with the arts, to learn about art, talk about art and have their days and lives shaped by their encounters with art.

Imagine arriving at a ford in Four Mile Run and happening upon boulders with strange words carved in them: *Isis, Artemis*. One’s mind is immediately filled with questions: How did those words get onto those boulders? Who put them there? What do they mean? That is public art, creating a moment of wonder, surprise or introspection.³³

Imagine cresting the Meade Street Bridge and seeing in front of you a bright array of glowing water bottles on sticks, and beyond that giant concrete spheres. Imagine continuing on through a corridor of ceremonial torches along North Lynn Street,

²⁹ Ibid., 15.

³⁰ Jackson, et. al., introduced the concept of the distinction between the “instrumental” and “intrinsic” benefits of arts and culture, including public art. “Instrumental” benefits are that are “viewed as a means of achieving broad social and economic goals that have nothing to do with the art per se.” Jackson, et. al., xi

³¹ Ibid., xv

³² Becker, 6, 9.

³³ J.W. Mahoney, OnSite Sculpture Project: Named Stones, 1989



Winnie Owens Hart's work Memory Bricks at High View Park (2004) provides a welcoming gesture and a sense of familiarity and is one example of how public art can create places that people can anchor their lives to and invest in as citizens and community members.

until the Potomac opens up in front of you. That is public art, transforming a mundane journey into a series of memorable events.³⁴

Imagine playing on playground equipment like you've never seen before, and finding out it is a play sculpture (*Speilschiff*) by an artist (Bonifatius Stirnberg) from Arlington's German sister city, Aachen. That is public art inspiring you to take imaginary journeys.³⁵

Imagine walking along a street and coming across a metal wall that shimmers as the wind blows across it; or discovering a wall of cascading water from which two eyes, carved into two monoliths, are peering at you.³⁶

These are the kinds of experiences that people in Arlington have because of the public art that has been commissioned here. Together, Arlington's

collection of artworks create moments that pull people out of the ordinary routines of life, and which can create a shared experience and conversation that are the basis of civic participation.

Public Art Offers People New Ways of Seeing the World Which Can Help Cultivate Empathy, Personal Growth and Stronger Social Connections

People can grow as individuals, members of a community and citizens through their encounters with public art. This can happen through their direct experience with art as well as the conversations that public art prompts, conversations that help to broaden social connections and networks.³⁷ A number of Arlington Public Art commissions demonstrate how public art can accomplish this.

- Jann Rosen-Queralt's *Cultivus Loci* is an immersive environment, complete with an operable hand pump that gives people an opportunity to explore a rain garden with all of their senses. Located in Powhatan Springs Park, it functions as a locus for community conversation about how storm water is managed.
- *Bike Oasis Kiosk* and *CO₂LED*, located on the north and south ends of Rosslyn, instigated discussions around their surprising presence in the streetscape, and then around the questions they raised about recycling and about alternative means of transportation and energy.
- Two projects in the years just after 9/11 explored ideas of freedom and civic society in post-9/11 Arlington – Liz Canner's *Moving Visions* video series, and *Skintalks* (Anita Walsh, Megan Maher, Katie Morris, Adam Fowler), a project in which people wore messages on adhesive bandages as they went about their normal routines in Arlington.

³⁴ Anthony et. Al., *CO2LED*; Nancy Holt, *Dark Star Park*; Cliff Garten, *Corridor of Light*.

³⁵ Bonifatius Stirnberg, *Speilschiff* (Play Ship), 2007, Maury Park, Arlington Arts Center

³⁶ Ned Kahn, *Liquid Pixels*; Larry Kirkland, *Wonder Wander*.

³⁷ Jackson, et. al., xv-xvi

- *Watermarks*, the outfall marking project that will be installed along Four Mile Run, will prompt people to think anew about the connections between natural environmental systems and engineered infrastructure.

While many public art initiatives are focused on the practice of placemaking, projects like this are powerful because they use places as provocations; they not only reinforce our received notions of place, but they also use the characteristics of place to help people sharpen their skills of engagement with the many points of view that can be embedded in a place. These are some of the essential skills necessary for community building and civic participation.

Public Art Can Create Places that are Welcoming for People to Inhabit

Arlington Public Art also contributes to people's experience of living and working in Arlington by creating places that are comfortable and welcoming.

Sometimes this comes in subtle, human gestures, such as the mosaic medallions that welcome people to the Bon Air Park rose garden, or Linn Meyers' glass panels on the Courthouse Plaza conference rooms. Kendall Buster's ethereal hanging sculptures (*Untitled*, 2007) and Foon Sham's wooden sculpture (*AYA*, 2007) at the Bennett Park apartments lend a human scale, visual detail and tactile quality to the lobby in which they are located. Sometimes this comes in grand moments, as with Erwin Redl's light project, *Flow*, on the façade of the Signature Theatre, or Doug Hollis' *Wave Arbor* in Long Bridge Park.



Arlington Public Art has been able to recruit the best of new, regional, and national artistic talent to work in the County, including internationally known artist Douglas Hollis, who created Wave Arbor (2011) for Long Bridge Park.

Additionally, sometimes this happens because artworks create a sense of familiarity and continuity, such as the Winnie Owens Hart's work at High View Park.

However public art accomplishes this, by establishing places that are welcoming, comfortable and familiar, public art is promoting places that people can anchor their lives to and invest in as citizens and community members. A place that is loved, even because of one's personal reactions to it, is a place that is more likely to be taken care of, defended, and built upon as a foundation for a richly invested personal life and, in turn, a more strongly woven civic life.

Conclusion

The four lenses for looking at public art articulated here, which are drawn from a wide range of commentary and research on the value of public art, make one conclusion abundantly clear: The expectations placed on public art are enormous. Depending on the circumstances, public art might be expected to promote good civic design, strengthen community, support economic growth, or provide enriching experiences for people. Often, it is expected to accomplish all of the above.

These four lenses also bring Arlington Public Art's accomplishments into perspective: Arlington's public art program has presented a remarkably robust body of artwork that has left its mark on Arlington in many ways. Public art is now clearly

part of Arlington County's approach to placemaking, community development, economic growth, and paths to individual growth and fulfillment for its residents. Whether projects work as gateways, places of community pride, or conversation starters – whether they have been created by the nation's finest artists or Arlington's own local talent – they have added an unmistakable texture to Arlington's life and landscape.

What this speaks to most is the steady vision that has guided the program – Arlington's public art policy, its public art master plan, and the leadership, partnerships and community engagement that have catalyzed and guided projects. As the fruits of Arlington Public Art's efforts come into view, these four lenses for looking at the value of public art provide a clear framework for carrying the vision forward.

This paper was prepared for Arlington Economic Development by Todd Bressi, Urban Design • Place Planning • Public Art; with Meridith McKinley, Via Partnership