

# **PUBLIC ART** PROPOSALS

AN ARTIST WORKBOOK



a publication of

**ARTSHUNTSMVILLE**

CELEBRATING THE CREATIVE SIDE

Huntsville, Alabama

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## INTRODUCTION

Huntsville's vision for public art is growing and changing. Our city's vision for public art as stated in the Public Art Master Plan outlines how public art can impact the future growth and development of North Alabama.

The City of Huntsville Public Art Program is a collaborative effort between the City of Huntsville and Arts Huntsville. The mission of the City of Huntsville Public Art Program is to foster the commissioning, acquisition and presentation of permanent and temporary public art, act as a steward of the City's public art collection, and engage the public in the collection.

The Huntsville Public Art Program will accomplish this mission by directly commissioning artwork, encouraging and providing technical support for public art in private development, supporting community public art projects, and facilitating artist-initiated public art projects.

Part of realizing this vision involves engaging more local and regional artists in the public art process. At the time of this publication, only a small number of artists in Huntsville and Alabama are experienced public artists. This workbook is intended to serve as a resource to encourage our local professional artists to bring their work to the public arena in order to grow the pool of public artists within our city, state, and region.

## WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

Defining public art as an artwork temporarily or permanently installed in a public place is too limiting. Public art can be a variety of artistic forms; it can be indoors or outdoors; representational or abstract. It can be integrated with architecture or free standing, and it can be functional, commemorative, decorative, interactive, or even performative.



Huntsville's Public Art Master Plan recommends that public art in Huntsville should:

- Contribute to the quality and unique character of Huntsville's public spaces and built environment
- Build pride, ownership and connectivity throughout the entire Huntsville community
- Make the community's creative energy and commitment to the arts a visible and tangible part of the experience of being in Huntsville
- Lift the spirit and engage the mind

## YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A PUBLIC ARTIST

Being a public artist comes with unique responsibilities that are distinct from private artistic practice. These responsibilities require you to align your work with the goals defined by external direction; your work must be relevant to the community it serves and you must allow it to be shaped in collaboration with project partners that represent that community.

To rise to the unique challenge of meeting this responsibility, you are required to **communicate effectively and transparently** about the work you will create. This communication is reciprocal; you must listen to the needs and requirements of your public 'client', and you must in turn be prepared to ask questions and be available as a participant in a comprehensive and arguably unlimited conversation about all aspects of the project (site conditions, population served, materials, process, artistic goals). These communications will be both verbal and written.

You are responsible for **opening your artistic process** to the commissioning agency, project partners, advisory committees, elected officials, other stakeholders, and the general public.

You are responsible for **engaging in an iterative process**. You will be asked to listen to suggestions and make revisions to your work, and understand your role as a collaborator.

You are responsible for **adhering to an agreed-upon timeline**. While certain timeline alterations may prove unavoidable, you are expected as a public artist to make consistent progress and commit your best effort towards timeline adherence.

You will also need to carefully **manage all funds** for your project. Your artist award will be inclusive of all costs towards producing the artwork and in some cases, installing the artwork, based on the conditions defined in your contract.

Artist proposals serve to communicate how you, as an artist, will meet these responsibilities. This workbook is primarily a tool to help assure that you cover all of these points in your proposal and demonstrate your preparedness to meet public art responsibilities.

## FINDING OPPORTUNITIES

This workbook is primarily geared towards advising artists on preparing proposals for local calls supported by Arts Huntsville. Arts Huntsville lists its currently-available local public art opportunities at [artshuntsville.slideroom.com](http://artshuntsville.slideroom.com). You may also receive notifications via email by signing up for our mailing list by emailing [info@artshuntsville.com](mailto:info@artshuntsville.com) and requesting receipt of our monthly Artist Opportunities newsletter.

Additional public art commission notifications are scattered over hundreds of national, state government, municipal government, arts council sites, and elsewhere. Joining email listservs is the best way to receive timely information from established programs.

## TYPES OF PUBLIC ART COMMISSIONS

Arts Huntsville facilitates the commissioning of public art projects in a variety of ways. This includes **open calls** which are open to any eligible artist, **invitationals** in which a select number of artists are specifically invited to submit a sketch or full proposal for consideration, and **direct selection**, in which a single artist is invited to accept a commission for a piece.

Which method is used depends on a variety of factors including timeline limitations and funding sources. Artists new to the public art arena are encouraged to apply to as many open calls as possible. Artists that are not selected for an open call commission still get their work in front of the eyes of jurors, public art administrators, and other relevant personnel. This dramatically increases an artist's chances of being tapped for an invitational or direct selection.

There are two main types of 'Calls for Artists':

## REQUESTS FOR QUALIFICATIONS (RFQ)

An RFQ is commonly used when the commissioning body is interested in a larger pool of applicants for a project. This is usually an open call, but can occasionally be used as a method to conduct an invitational. Applicants are asked to submit qualifying materials only. This typically includes (but is not necessarily limited to) a resume, examples of past work, a letter of interest, and professional references.

Most RFQs use a tiered approach to selection. Based on the qualifying materials submitted, the pool of applicants is narrowed by a selection committee to 3-5 artists to move forward in the competition. Semi-finalists may be asked to submit either a sketch or a more detailed proposal, for which they receive a stipend as compensation.

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS (RFP)

A project is launched with an RFP when a commissioning body wants an already-qualified pool of applicants or when streamlining the process is necessary. In an RFP, artists are asked to submit a detailed proposal for a specific project along with their qualifications.

Artists receive a stipend as compensation for proposals with the exception of those prepared for **artist-initiated projects**.

**Artist-Initiated Projects** occur when the project site, concept, and other details of the proposal are defined by the artist rather than by a commissioning body. Since there is no commissioning body, these proposals are uncompensated. The artist's proposal either includes an artist-identified funding source, or the artist is applying to an RFP similar to a grant application, in which Arts Huntsville serves as the dispenser of grant funding for projects.

## HOW TO PREPARE A PROPOSAL

A complete proposal is essential for artists hoping to be selected for a commission or artist-initiated project. A successful proposal clearly communicates not only an artist's idea for a project, but also demonstrates to the commissioning body that the artist is professional, responsible, and prepared to meet all the public artist responsibilities outlined earlier in this document. A successful proposal will anticipate any possible question the commissioning body may have, and will preemptively answer as many of these questions as possible.

Arts Huntsville highly recommends referencing the following worksheets for artists responding to RFPs, especially those new to the public art arena. Artists may present proposals in a variety of formats, but using this resource to inform proposal development will dramatically increase chances of acceptance, especially on more complicated or higher-budget projects.

This worksheet and the worksheets on the following pages are a preliminary resource designed to assist artists with the early steps compiling necessary material for a thorough public art proposal. This content should be extrapolated upon, typed, and embedded in a final proposal for submission, typically in PDF format.

Title of Work: \_\_\_\_\_

Artist Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials: \_\_\_\_\_ Dimensions (WxDxH): \_\_\_\_\_

**Additional follow-up questions to consider addressing in your proposal’s basic info narrative:**

- How will the proposed artwork serve public interests? (Wayfinding, gathering place, community pride, storytelling, functional, aesthetic enhancement, etc)
- How will the proposed artwork be broadly accessible to diverse members of the community?
- What does your proposed artwork uniquely add to Huntsville’s public art collection?

Site Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Describe Relevance to Site: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In some RFPs there is a single site, while in others artists are competing for several related sites. Your answers above should reflect a site preference, if you have one.

**ARTIST-INITIATED PROJECTS ONLY:** Artist will be indicating a site with agreement from a site partner. In these cases only, artist should gather contributing narrative from the site partner as well as address any potential concerns about site choice. Historically-protected sites and buildings, for example, are often unsuitable for public art installations or murals. Obtaining as many documented permissions as possible will increase your chances at proposal acceptance.

Site Partner Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

Site Partner Statement: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Complete proposals should include thorough sketches or other visual representations of the proposed artwork. This can include but is not limited to complete artwork (for murals or digital submissions), photos of models or maquettes, concept sketches and renderings, technical or CAD drawings, and engineer drawings.

The worksheet below is intended as space to organize and brainstorm concept sketches for your proposed artwork, especially for 3D artists. Your final proposal should include multiple pages with polished visual documentation clearly communicating as many details about your planned piece as possible.

Front View:

Side View:

Rear View:

Isometric View:

Contextual Site Rendering:

CAD Sketches/Notes on Required Engineering Documents:

*Consider footers, concrete foundations, fasteners or attachment points. Note that proposals for more complex installations will benefit from including professional engineering schematics. Plan & budget accordingly.*



# PUBLIC ART TIMELINE WORKSHEET

You are advised to include a comprehensive timeline into your proposal. For some projects, particularly those that involve simple fabrication and installation, this timeline may be short and linear. Other projects are more complex and have multiple concurrent tasks. For these projects, a timeline format that can illustrate task overlap is helpful for jurors to see.

The worksheet below demonstrates one method of creating this type of timeline; Boxes along the 'Task Name' axis can be labeled and checked or shaded in bar graph style to show the time durations of overlapping tasks. Your date axis can be modified in a variety of ways to provide more clarity for your particular project. For some projects, MM/YY may be most appropriate for the time axes, while others may best be designated by Week 1, Week 2, etc, and so on.

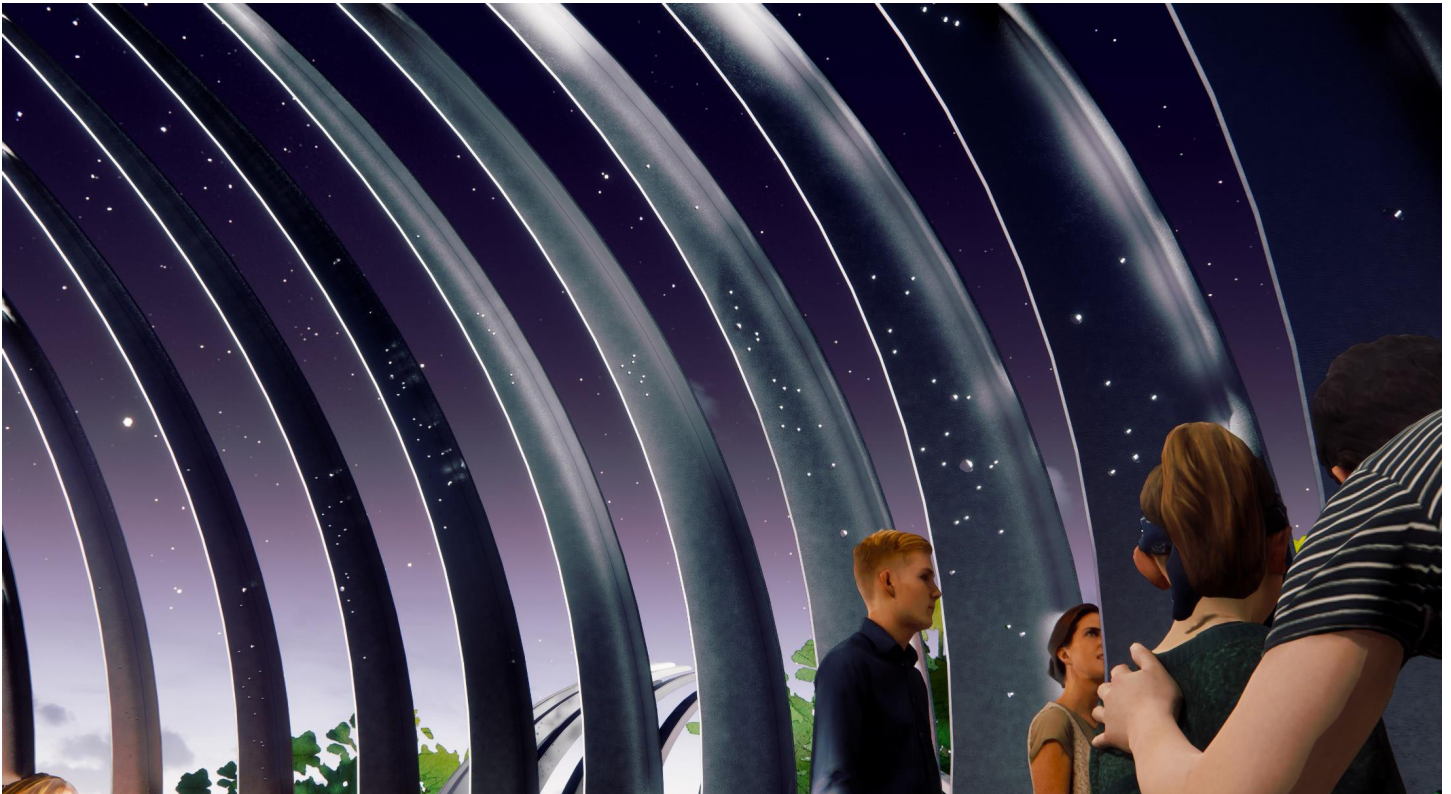
Task Name	Time Axis											



## PREPARING YOUR PRESENTATION

In many cases, artists writing proposals will also be invited to give a verbal presentation of their proposal, either virtually or in person. Sometimes, this is not requested if the proposal is a sketch or otherwise simple project, such as a digital design or mural.

Presentations should be prepared in a manner that offers a concise overview of your proposal; there is no need to include all your proposal details, as all the jurors will have a copy of your proposal file available for reference as needed. Your presentation is your opportunity to demonstrate your passion and to tell your story. It's also an opportunity to re-frame some of your proposal content to offer an alternate perspective; for example broad-view horizontal renderings of an installation, videos, or animated infographics that offer additional context and clarify your vision.



Be sure to practice keeping your presentation duration to the allocated time, and leave 5-10 minutes to allow time to answer any follow-up questions from the jurors.

## ADDITIONAL SUPPORT

If you require additional assistance in proposal or presentation preparation, Arts Huntsville is here to help! You may ask questions or request draft reviews from our Public Art Program Manager. Arts Huntsville's Public Art Program Manager is an administrative position and never a voting member of any public art selection panel. She can, however, answer artist questions, provide additional background information on a particular project, and offer artists insight as to how you can refine your proposal or presentation to better align with project needs.

The Public Art Program manager can be reached by emailing [publicart@artshuntsville.org](mailto:publicart@artshuntsville.org) or calling the Arts Huntsville office at (256) 519-2787, 9 am - 4 pm Mondays through Fridays.