

Mission

The mission of the Trust is to enrich the greater Rochester area by ensuring the continued celebration, promotion and advocacy of the arts and humanities

Vision

Inspiring a milieu where arts and culture flourish

The Trust is a nonprofit organization governed by a board that includes policymakers, philanthropists, artistic practitioners, business and community leaders, and the public. We practice a generative thought process that results in obtainable solutions for arts and culturally related topics.

Background

In July 2015, the Trust engaged the services of Forecast Public Art, a Twin Cities-based organization with 38 years of experience in public art initiatives, to create a plan for development of a Public Art Master Plan for the City of Rochester. The project was funded by the Trust, City of Rochester and private donors.

Professionals from Forecast worked with volunteers from the Trust and from an established Public Art Master Plan Steering Committee, whose members included artists, community arts advocates, government leaders, economic and human service representatives, business leaders, and educators. These volunteers served as advisors to Forecast, gathered pertinent material, and led constituent discussions.

Forecast professionals collected information from numerous sources, including:

- Constituent interviews, work sessions, and planning meetings
- Assessment of current public art throughout the City
- Interviews with 12 key community leaders
- Focus Groups with more than 60 persons representing neighborhoods, artists, social and cultural services, educators and business developers
- Results of a survey designed to gather public input for outlining the vision, goals, and framework for shaping public art in Rochester. (The survey was conducted online and in paper form and garnered 1134 respondents)
- Area organization and planning documents, such as the Destination Medical Center, Rochester Downtown Master Plan, City Park Department, K-16 schools, Chamber of Commerce, and Rochester Area Economic Development, Inc.



*Peace Fountain, installed 1989
Peace Plaza, downtown Rochester
Sculptor: Charles E. Gagnon*

Benefits of supporting a Public Art Master Plan

Community participants in the planning process said that a Public Art Master Plan would be beneficial for Rochester for the following reasons:

- *Ensure that Rochester will have visible and vibrant public art*
- *Create an environment of support for current and emerging artists*
- *Provide for organizational structure and a means in which to manage public art*
- *Serve as an incentive for Rochester to attract and retain working artists*
- *Assist elected officials when awarding contracts or approving funds for public art*
- *Raise awareness about the value Rochester places on the arts*
- *Attract tourists / create additional visitor attractions*
- *Build a creative class / workforce*
- *Define a process to encourage, support, and maintain public art*
- *Coordinate efforts to connect the private sector with artists and art organizations*
- *Grow an arts ecosystem*
- *Establish standards and best practices for public art*



“This is a great opportunity to get ahead of arts and culture trends...not just keep pace with it”

“Art in a community is a sign that it is progressive, forward thinking and cares about the health and well being of the community”

“Public art improves everyday lives, bottom line”

“Everyone has some sort of way to express the subjective side of what it means to be human”

“This is the right time to make things happen and improve cultural offerings in Rochester”

“Challenge every organization or entity to have an arts policy of some sort – no matter how big or small”

“Art is not just what the artist produces, but also the conversation that is fostered by the art”

Embracing growth and vitality to create a center of art and culture

An aggregate benefit of the information gathered during the Public Art Master Plan research project provides evidence that residents believe timing is right to advocate for a viable public art program within the context of a more comprehensive Arts and Cultural Plan for the City of Rochester.

Participants throughout the 18 months of research discussed numerous topics. They included:

- Rochester’s continued growth and vitality
- Emerging cultural communities
- Need for increased arts programming for youth and other groups
- Desire to be inclusive and to celebrate diversity
- Generosity of private donors for the arts
- Keen sensitivity for the need to support working artists
- The impact of arts for healing and for promoting social dialogue
- Increased attention to local needs for a workforce with 21st Century skills
- Opportunities for increased collaboration among artists and arts organizations
- Increased awareness of the number of entities including art in their strategic plans.

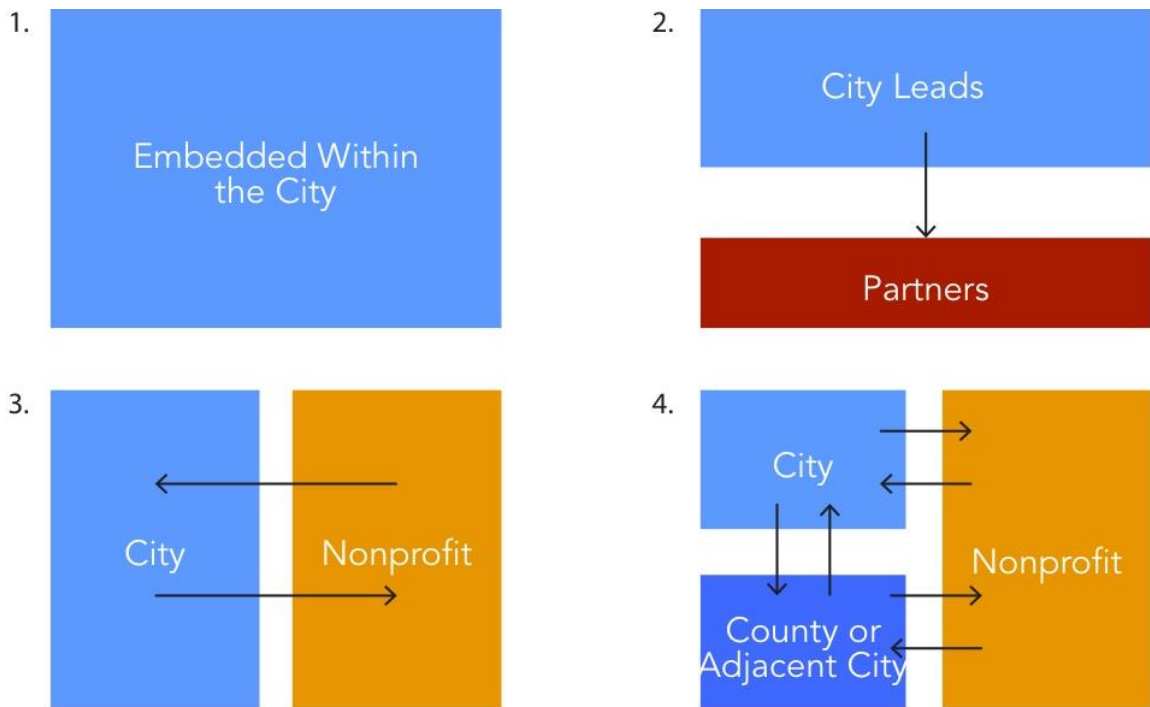
These discussions led Forecast to encourage Rochester to position itself as a center for arts and culture. The Trust foresaw research and development of a Public Art Master Plan as the first step toward establishing an innovative program for arts and culture.



Choosing an organizational structure for Rochester

Forecast offered sample organizational structures for consideration to support a Public Art program for Rochester. Illustration #1 is an option implemented by cities that have an arts commission that is internal to the city.

In the second model (illustration #2) the City leads and partners (usually nonprofit organizations) facilitate community engagement and work with the private sector. Forecast recommends this model for Rochester, but notes that it will require a budget of \$500,000-\$700,000 to cover staffing, programs, acquisitions, consultant services, and administration.



Given feedback from City leaders on current priorities, model #3 is likely a more realistic approach for successfully supporting a comprehensive Public Art Master Plan. In this structure (illustration #3) the nonprofit organization leads the program and strategically works with other entities, including the City.

Illustration #4 represents a regional approach led by a nonprofit in partnership with multiple government agencies. Following successful development and assured sustainability of a City program, this model could be explored and effected.

Next steps...



Determine an operational structure.

Members of the Public Art Master Plan Steering Committee reviewed the draft report on March 15th and provided insight into the advantages and disadvantages of the four model operational plans suggested by the Trust's consultant as well as the needed resources to support each of the structures. This input will be shared with City Council at a Meeting of the Whole on Monday, March 27 at 3:30 p.m. It is recommended that throughout April, members of the Trust will conduct Phase Two interviews with City stakeholders and arts leaders. The Trust Board will review the information and provide a more detailed recommendation for City leaders as to the organizational(s) that best meet the needs of Rochester for developing a comprehensive Public Art Master Plan. Once chosen, representatives will determine timeline and initiate organizational activities in conjunction with city leaders and arts stakeholders.



Create a database of existing public art.

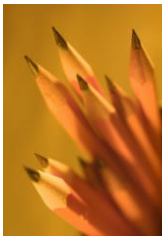
We are pleased to announce that Paul Zellweger, principal of ArborWay Labs, has offered to design and build a database management system and web application at no cost to the Trust, City or to any participating organization to manage the area's public art collection. Zellweger is a 35-year veteran of the database industry and a software inventor with over a dozen U.S. Patents issued to date. ArborWay Labs is a Rochester-based research and development firm. It has recently completed a new database development system that took three years to design, build and test. This new system is called the automatic relational technology or ART Studio. This pro bono contribution to the public art project will enable Rochester to have a complete database of our public art whose content can be accessible on the Internet. This innovative technology will enable end-users, most likely on the Internet, the ability to access and view Rochester's public art from any place in the world. The artwork will be accessible by mobile phone, tablet or desktop. The Studio also makes it easy to browse and explore art objects from any number of different perspectives, including subject matter, artist, style, material or any other data to enhance this virtual museum experience. When users locate something that interests them, a prominent picture of the art object can be displayed. Text or an audio clip to describe or explain the work can accompany each picture. These capabilities mean that anyone, from any place, can visit Rochester and see what makes the area unique and worthy of a visit.

The ART Studio technology is a database tool that fully complies with the federal laws on accessibility for the visually impaired.



Engage the community.

Interested community residents or constituents can participate as individuals or members of schools or special interest groups to identify, define, and research best practices and innovative approaches to public art on topics of interest to them. This will be engaging for community constituents and provide opportunity for involvement by residents who stated during the research process that they do not feel their voice has been heard in Rochester. Topics identified could include: Street Art, Green Art, Social Practice Art, Creative Place Making, Artist-in-residence, Political, Urban Design, Murals, Sustainable Art, New Genre Art, Monuments and memorials. This project can be led by a steering committee or college intern and involve civic, social and youth organizations, healthcare facilities, churches and schools. Opportunities for photographing public artwork will be especially welcomed.



Prepare operational materials.

Once the City has determined its desired operational structure and a leader is designated, that individual may choose to form a task force and/or solicit individual expertise for assistance in determining governance and community involvement, preparing budgets and identifying funding sources, researching and preparing policies and procedures, reviewing legal and compliance issues, determining staffing, and locating office. It will be beneficial to identify provisions of applicable state laws or governing rules such as the Percentage for Art program and the Art and Cultural Heritage Act of the Minnesota State Legislature to determine whether or not these programs may be a source of funding for Rochester.

Much of the work required above can be obtained from existing programs in effect in other cities and organizations.



Celebrate.

Rochester has a proven heritage of excellence in the arts and has opportunity to utilize the arts in services and programs that will reflect community values, contribute to the City’s growth and economic vitality, transform landscapes, provide opportunities for learning, and to celebrate the rich diversity of Rochester citizens. An active Public Art Master Plan can serve as the gateway to further programs and cultural activities to enhance the quality of life for all residents.

This is cause for celebration.



Now get to work.

It’s great to finally have a framework for a public art program, but success is warranted only if we roll up our sleeves, get to work channeling our vision into reality, and consider what is in the best interest of Rochester.

Let’s not throw away our shot.

