



# 2018-2023 executive summary

**UrbanArt Commission**

# letter from leadership

On behalf of the UrbanArt Commission board and staff, we are pleased to share a new strategic plan to guide UAC for the next five years and beyond. We, collectively and in partnership with an array of stakeholders, identified critical priorities and shifts in the scope and focus of our work. The deep and sustained conversations between Fall 2017 and Spring 2018 ultimately led us to reshape the mission and vision of the organization.

The most immediate priority identified in this process was to elevate equity across our entire body of work. This manifests in new strategies and programming around involving residents through more intentional engagement practices, and creating resources and capacity-building opportunities for Memphis-based artists. In the strengthening of neighborhood-centric relationships and artist capacity, UAC endeavors to link the power and possibility of creative expression to the collective well-being of our neighborhoods. We believe that arts and culture are key ingredients of the cake, not just the icing. UAC will work to ensure that neighborhoods throughout our city benefit from the development of public art and to place artists in partnership with residents to creatively address concerns specific to that space.

We are confident that this strategic plan will continue to grow with the organization beyond 2023 as it is centered around and responsive to our key stakeholders and vision for Memphis.

We are sincerely grateful to the UAC board, the strategic plan subcommittee, consultants from Beloved Community, Leslie Lynn Smith of Epicenter Memphis, and the UAC team for their time and partnership in this process. We also thank all of our partners involved, particularly The CLTV, who were highly engaged and provided invaluable insight throughout the planning process.

Sincerely,

**ED WALLIS**

UAC Board Chair

**LAUREN KENNEDY**

Executive Director



# 2018-2023 strategic plan

**Public art exists beyond the traditional barriers experienced by viewers when entering a museum, gallery or theater space through its placement in neighborhood centers, connecting corridors and gathering places. The success of public art, however, is not simply attributed to the accessibility of the project site, but also its response to and consideration of the place and people surrounding it. UAC's work is intrinsically rooted in Memphis; its public art must be inclusive and reflective of the experiences of its diverse citizens, the majority of whom are people of color. Through this strategic planning process, UAC sought to amplify the impact and possibilities of public art in Memphis.**

The strategic planning process began in Fall 2017 with a series of public listening sessions and small focus groups in which feedback from residents and artists impacted by UAC's work was shared. These conversations led to a recognition that UAC's commitment to equity required more than an articulated goal within the plan, but active demonstration through intentional practices and accountability mechanisms. The board and team ultimately elected to revisit the mission, vision and values of the organization and reflect on the gaps between the current impact of public art and its potential. Further feedback was gathered from UAC board, staff, artists, neighborhood leaders and partners in concert with strategic plan consultants.

In the planning process, UAC defined clear measures against which all work and practices will be evaluated to ensure the organization's alignment with diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) standards.\*

The expanded mission, vision and values outlined in this document center on UAC's promise to place people at the heart of its work. This promise is founded in acknowledgement that public art is as much about experiences uplifted and stories told in spaces, as it is about the production of objects; that the forms of public art are not relegated to traditional mural and sculpture projects; and that intentional levels of neighborhood engagement and artist support and capacity cannot be separated from developing meaningful public art.

This recognition has driven UAC to more deeply and directly embed neighborhood voice in how the organization executes its work. The following plan is a reflection of the feedback gathered and represents a critical shift in UAC's work.

## **PUBLIC ART** /puhb-lik-ahrt/

Creative experience in shared public spaces.

## **ARTIST** /ahr-tist/

Anyone with an established practice in the fields of visual, design, performing, craft, literary, video multimedia, interdisciplinary, and/or multidisciplinary arts.

\*See DEI standards information in appendix. More information available upon request.



# mission

**UAC creates opportunities for artists and neighborhoods to connect and shape spaces through public art.**

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# vision

**UAC aspires for art to be integral to a thriving and equitable Memphis.**

**FOR THIS TO BE TRUE, UAC BELIEVES TWO KEY COMPONENTS ARE CRITICAL:**

- Artists must be supported in advancing their careers and recognized as creative problem solvers.
- People most directly impacted by arts programming must be involved in identifying the goals and structure of those programs.

UAC believes in the power of creative expression and its potential to unlock opportunity, and transform places. The vision statement is founded on that belief and a recognition that UAC's work is one component of a larger arts ecosystem in Memphis.

UAC is uniquely positioned to further this vision by working in public spaces with a wide array of stakeholders. In order to move towards this vision for Memphis and deliver on the organization's mission, UAC will shape decisions and programming around these key values.

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# values

**TRANSPARENCY.** We believe that one way we can earn trust with our stakeholders is by being transparent about our decision-making. We create intentional opportunities to make our processes public by sharing our expectations and regularly incorporating feedback.

**EQUITY.** Our commitment to equity is rooted in our respect for humanity. We believe that equity begins with listening to and caring for all stakeholders and leads us to outcomes that cannot be predicted by a person's identities. We recognize the need for new systems that address historic barriers to opportunity and access for communities of color, women, LGBTQIA, differently abled, and indigenous peoples.

**MEMPHIS.** Memphians shine when they design their own solutions, therefore we seek to embed local voice in all of our decisions. We honor the multiplicity of voices and experiences represented across the different neighborhoods of our city.

**PEOPLE.** People are at the center of our work. We build the platforms for individuals to produce and share creative experiences.

**GROWTH.** We are always learning. We listen to understand and identify new opportunities that further support our stakeholders. When our processes or programs change, it is in service to the changing needs in our communities.





# goals

The goals and objectives identified in this plan create new possibilities and interactions in the development of public art in Memphis. UAC's commitment to the values identified will guide the team's work across all goals. UAC staff will track measurements around anticipated outcomes on an annual basis throughout the five-year strategic plan, as well as the organization's alignment to the defined DEI standards\*

\*See DEI standards information in appendix. More information available upon request.

# goal 1

## **An increasing number of Memphis-based artists have the capacity to participate in public art.**

UAC is committed to supporting more Memphis-based artists and arts practices by creating greater entry points to the public art process. This will be done through new programming as well as leveraging existing processes to build interest and participation, and artists' capacity to develop public art, navigate the commissions process, and meaningfully engage with the neighborhoods for which they are creating.

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# goal 2

## **UAC will increase visibility and connections to public art in neighborhoods across the city through sustained reciprocal relationships.**

The people impacted most directly by public art across the city must be included and able to shape projects in their spaces, including the identification of opportunities and development of forms and ideas for public art. Through work around this goal, UAC will focus on building meaningful and sustained relationships with the unique neighborhoods throughout Memphis by increasing presence at existing community meetings, inviting and incorporating consistent dialogue and feedback, and tailoring engagement strategies for different communities. These ongoing conversations will ultimately inform how UAC's work is executed as it relates to specific spaces.

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# goal 3

## **The scope of public art produced by UAC across the city will expand.**

UAC will leverage public and private funds to equitably support new program development in all Memphis neighborhoods, increase the density and impact of public art, and support new media and methods for public art. Identifying funds and strategically allocating those funds will be critical to successfully implementing all components of the strategic plan; this goal will be closely integrated with UAC's fund development strategy.

appendix

# diversity, equity & inclusion standards for urban art commission

july 2018



# diversity, equity & inclusion standards

**UAC has adopted the Equity at Work standards and indicators from Beloved Community. Over the next five years, we are aligning our strategies to achieve the following standards.**

## Diversity

The demographics of stakeholders in every level of UAC are representative of the city of Memphis. Our demographic diversity prioritizes: socio-economic, race, ethnicity, linguistic, sex, disability, and nationality as federally-reported data. Our demographic diversity also include self-reported identities such as: gender, sexual orientation, religion, and neighborhood affiliations.

- 1. Awareness**
- 2. Application**
- 3. Participation**
- 4. Selection (where applicable)**

## Equity

Equity is examined. UAC examines and adjusts all processes and decisions to insure that access and outcomes cannot be correlated to demographic diversity. Organizational processes and decisions insure that all demographics are equally represented in selection, programming, decision-making, and outcomes. This extends from entry/selection to promotion and retention to negative consequences.

- 1. Internal Equity audits (finance, training, staffing assignments, etc.)**
- 2. Advancement (staffing)**
- 3. Assignment (staffing)**
- 4. Financial**
- 5. Performance outcomes**

## Inclusion

Stakeholders have ample opportunities to contribute to the decisions that impact their work and/or services within UAC's work. Stakeholder inclusion progresses from comfort and belonging to continuous, profound, shared power and accountability.

- 1. Language**
- 2. Shared voice/power**
- 3. Self reports: belonging**



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