



San Mateo County Public Art Policy

VISION

Public Art has the power to educate, inspire, and shape our identity as individuals and as a community. We envision a County with vibrant public spaces where artwork celebrates the extraordinary diversity and history of our communities, and sparks delight and creativity in residents and visitors alike. Our vision is a future in which San Mateo County's well-designed and engaging artworks create a sense of belonging for the county's diverse communities and encourage people to fully appreciate and utilize public spaces. Public Art is an essential component of a thriving community, and a banner of the County's aspirations for our shared future.

1. MISSION AND GOALS

The mission of San Mateo County's Public Art policy is to:

- 1.1 Promote a rich, diverse, and stimulating cultural environment to enhance the County's vitality and enrich the lives of the county's residents, visitors, and employees;
- 1.2 Establish public standards and a public process for decisions about adding works of art in public spaces;
- 1.3 Celebrate and reflect the diversity of the County by establishing equitable and community-engaged processes for artist selection;
- 1.4 Build relationships and nurture collaborations with diverse artists in the county, in particular those from underserved communities that may not be connected to traditional networks;
- 1.5 Establish and nurture ongoing collaborative planning relationships between The Office of Arts and Culture and other County departments; and
- 1.6 Honor local and regional artists that reflect the diversity of our county and encourage and promote emerging artists by marking them in the public landscape through their artwork.

2. DEFINITION OF PUBLIC ART

The Office of Arts and Culture is guided by the following definition of public art:

Art objects placed permanently in a shared and publicly accessible place (indoors or outdoors). Artwork can be freestanding work or integrated into the architecture of buildings or the landscape of outdoor spaces.

A. Public art includes: functional, ornamental, expressive, or installation art donated or commissioned, or otherwise acquired that are located in publicly accessible space.

B. Art media includes, but is not limited to: sculptures, painting, murals, photography, drawings, prints, mixed media, electronic media, gardens, memorials, light works, or statuary, made from clay, fiber, textiles, wood, metal, plastic, or other material.

3. FUNDING

The methods for funding of public art can include General Fund allocations, or the inauguration of a percent-for-arts programs. Alternative funding sources might include government grant monies and private (including business) donations and grants. In addition to the cost of the artwork, funds should pay for administration, acquisition and construction, as well as maintenance, insurance and all other costs associated with the artwork.

4. CRITERIA FOR APPROVAL (SITE AND ARTWORK)

All departments will work in consultation with the Office of Arts and Culture after a decision has been made to pursue public art on an upcoming project. Prior to approving a site for an artwork and prior to approving the artwork itself, The Office of Arts and Culture shall take into consideration the following:

- 4.1 Relationship of proposed artwork to existing or future architectural features, natural features (landscaping, etc.), and urban design (pedestrian walkways, etc.);
- 4.2 Public access to and visibility of the artwork;
- 4.3 Public safety;
- 4.4 Overall aesthetic merit and the artwork's ability to enhance the public's experience of the site;
- 4.5 Relationship of the proposed artwork to existing artworks within the site's vicinity;
- 4.6 Exhibition of the artwork does not contradict the County's values of environmental sustainability, accessibility, and cultural inclusiveness;
- 4.7 Appropriate for the site in scale, media, and context;
- 4.8 Supports inclusivity by ensuring diverse cultural representations in the art and avoiding themes related, but not limited to, religion, politics, violence, or nudity; and

4.9 Building and other code requirements;

4.10 Physical integrity of materials and construction for endurance.

After an artist, proposal, and project site has been selected, the Office of Arts and Culture may hold community meetings for input and feedback. A minimum of one Supervisor shall participate in this process.

5. ARTIST SELECTION PROCESS AND CRITERIA

SELECTION PROCESS

Depending on the project, the Office of Arts and Culture may:

- a) issue an open call for artists and/or emerging artists; or
- b) hold a limited invitational competition.

To ensure fairness and openness, open calls and limited invitational projects will use the standards outlined in the County Cultural Equity Statement and County Galleries' calls for artists. Calls and invitationals will be promoted to the County at large using County communication methods, with particular attention to reaching artists from disadvantaged backgrounds or communities that may not be connected to traditional artist networks.

CRITERIA

For each public art project, the Office of Arts and Culture will assemble a diverse committee of knowledgeable people in the arts and culture sector, including public art experts and County Arts Commissioners. The committee will judge applicants and their proposals. Preference will be given to San Mateo County residents; however, the committee is not limited to the use of local artists. The committee will select artists based on:

- 5.1 Artistic merit and vision of body of work, including: artist's proven ability to create artwork that generates positive community impact and conversation, and enhances the experience of public spaces;
- 5.2 Professional experience and record of commitment to satisfactory project completion;
- 5.3 Ability to translate artistic concepts into materials that are appropriate for public space, taking into consideration maintenance and safety;
- 5.4 Appropriateness and feasibility of the artist's proposal;
- 5.5 Demonstrates a vision that will promote a sense of belonging for the diverse communities that make up the county, and the ability to create artwork that is socially, environmentally, historically sensitive; and

- 5.6 Ability and willingness to collaborate with County staff, design and engineering professionals, and other diverse stakeholders.

County Arts Commissioners and members of their immediate family are ineligible. San Mateo County staff and members of their immediate family are also ineligible.

6. DECOMMISSIONING, RELOCATION, ALTERATION OF PUBLIC ART

The Office of Arts and Culture reserves the right to relocate, remove, decommission, or dispose of artworks for any of the following reasons:

- 6.1 Condition or security of the artwork cannot be reasonably guaranteed;
- 6.2 Artwork has been damaged or has deteriorated to the point where repair is impractical, unreasonable, infeasible, or would render the work false;
- 6.3 Significant changes in use, character, or actual design of the site require a re-evaluation of the relationship of the artwork to the site;
- 6.4 Artwork no longer exists due to theft, accident, or natural disaster; or
- 6.5 Artwork is determined to be fraudulent, not authentic, or in violation of copyright law.

The artist whose work of art is being considered for removal shall be notified in advance of said action.

7. MAINTENANCE OF PUBLIC ART

San Mateo County is responsible for the maintenance of indoor and outdoor public artworks. Reasonable effort will be made to return artwork to its original condition and integrity when repair is needed due to aging, damage, or vandalism. A good faith effort will be made to notify artists of these actions.

8. PUBLIC OWNERSHIP OF ART

It is the County's intent to obtain ownership of rights to publish, display, reproduce, promote or sell any works of art created, solicited, donated or commissioned by the County for public display. Any call for art should include language making clear that submissions will be considered property of the County, unless otherwise specified. This policy in no way intends to abrogate any rights of the artist to use and promote their work consistent with any intellectual property rights they may have in the production.

ADDENDA

SAMPLE CALL FOR ARTISTS

SAMPLE FLOW CHART FOR PROJECTS

[SAMPLE]

CALL FOR ARTISTS

(Language to be adapted to the specific project)

The Office of Arts and Culture is pleased to announce an open call for public artwork proposals. We are seeking an artist or artist team to create the design for public artwork at **[insert site here]**

[Opening statement about the specific site for the public artwork that gives pertinent details and direction for artists' proposals, including project background and project budget.]

Complete application packages must be submitted online to **[insert email]** by **[deadline]**.

ELIGIBILITY

The call is open to all artists/artist teams residing in the state of California.

All applications must include the following:

- Artist(s) biography/philosophy (300-400 words).
- Résumé(s)/CV(s).
- 3-7 representative images of recent work completed within the last five years. Artwork images should demonstrate the artist(s) can create and commission durable artwork adequate for the outdoor elements and a public setting. Images of artwork should have annotated descriptions (title, date art was created, dimensions, type of media, location of installation).
- Links to relevant online portfolios or social media.
- Proposal for a public artwork: Your proposal can be any length and any format, and must include a) artwork design; b) artwork medium type; c) estimated time to commission the artwork. We recommend a visual (hand sketch or computer-generated image) alongside a brief description.
- Diversity statement, optional (200-300 words).

SELECTION

The selection process will begin in **[insert date]**. The project committee will review and jury all proposals. Proposals will be judged on criteria in the San Mateo County Public Art Policy.

The Office of Arts and Culture is committed to supporting local and regional artists from every background. We strongly encourage artists of color, LGBTQ+ artists, immigrant artists, and artists with disabilities to apply.

Due to the amount of submissions, not every artist will be contacted.

San Mateo County Public Art Approval Flow Chart

