

Mt. Lebanon Uptown Public Art Master Plan

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INTRODUCTION

The Uptown Public Art Master Plan is Mt. Lebanon’s first public art plan, and is a part of the Vibrant Uptown initiative. Vibrant Uptown is a comprehensive public realm improvement project that has three interwoven components: Capital Improvement (i.e. sidewalks/lighting), Enhance Connections throughout the Uptown District that join mass transit, businesses, public spaces, and Incorporate Placemaking Principles. Each component is part of one project – Vibrant Uptown. As an integral part of the Placemaking initiative, the Mt. Lebanon Partnership is creating a Public Art Master Plan for the Uptown business district. The Uptown Public Art Master Plan (“Master Plan”) is intended to aid the Municipality and the Partnership in determining which, how, and where public art should be installed. While this plan specifically addresses the Uptown District, it is intended to become a template for future public art throughout the Municipality.

What is public art? Public art refers to art or design elements that have been planned and executed by an artist or artist team with the intention of being installed or presented in the public sphere, usually outdoors and accessible to all. It can help to create a sense of place, give community members points of engagement with their neighborhood, highlight special characteristics or features, and help to give an area a distinct visual identity.

The purpose of this Master Plan is to establish a protocol for the process of commissioning public artworks for Uptown and the Health Loop. The Master Plan articulates the vision, goals and guiding principles of the Uptown Public Art program, defines project types, and also includes an inventory of existing potential sites for public artworks with Priority Sites indicated. The Administrative Guidelines section defines key terms, roles and responsibilities, and outlines the project planning and artist selection and commissioning process. The Appendix includes an inventory of potential sites, a report on the public engagement survey, templates and samples of calls for artists and contracts, as well as a Best Practices document.

VISION, GOALS, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Vision – What is the vision for the future?

Mt. Lebanon Partnership will facilitate a range of public artworks and creative projects in the Uptown and Health Loop areas that will:

- Contribute to the creation of an engaging experience and distinctive visual identity for the Uptown district that will attract residents and become a template for public art installations throughout the municipality
- Improve the pedestrian experience of Uptown and the Health Loop
- Create accessible opportunities for engagement and community building
- Celebrate the unique assets of Mt. Lebanon, including, but not limited to, the history, local landscape, and architecture of the area
- Create artworks that are welcoming to all

Goals – What will we do to reach the vision?

- Create temporary projects that engage neighborhood residents and artists
- Create short term projects- 1-2 years
- Commission long-term/permanent “landmark” artworks by professional artists that contribute to the visual character of the neighborhood and promote Uptown as a destination
- Commission artist-designed streetscape elements that add amenities to the district

Guiding Principles – What are the values that will guide the process?

- Artistic Quality: Artwork will be of the highest artistic quality.
- Relevance (Site-specificity): Artworks will relate to Mt. Lebanon and its residents through community engagement, imagery, themes, concepts, and/or materials used.
- Accessibility: New artworks should go beyond standard ADA requirements to be truly accessible to all members of our community
- Inclusivity: Welcome participation from all people regardless of gender, race, class, religion, sexuality, disability, and income level. (Maybe this should be combined with Accessibility?)
- Responsiveness: Artwork will be developed through a process that responds to opportunities and needs as well as the priorities laid out in plans such as the Uptown Strategic Plan and the Streetscaping Plan.
- Sustainability: New artworks and designs will employ sustainable practices in design, materials, and environmental considerations.

PUBLIC ART PLAN

Scope of Plan

This Master Plan addresses the geographic area of Mt. Lebanon’s central business district, known as Uptown, spanning from 733 to 600 Washington Road, and the Health Loop, a loop including Parse way to Shady Drive East to Alfred Street. It is intended to be used as a guideline for all public art projects that utilize public funding or take place or are installed on public land, as well as exhibits of loaned artwork in publicly accessible areas.

Summary of Public Engagement Survey Results

A public survey containing 5 questions was distributed to gather input about residents’ thoughts about public art in Uptown. The survey was distributed in two ways: written surveys were distributed at the annual Artists Market in September 2019, resulting in 70 completed surveys, and an online version was sent out and live during November and December, resulting in 408 responses. A summary of responses is included below, and a complete report of all submitted responses is included in the Appendix.

To the first question, “What would you like public art in Uptown to do?”, the three top responses, selected from a list, were “Help to create a unique visual identity for Uptown”, “Create a more engaging Uptown experience”, and “Attract residents to Uptown district.”

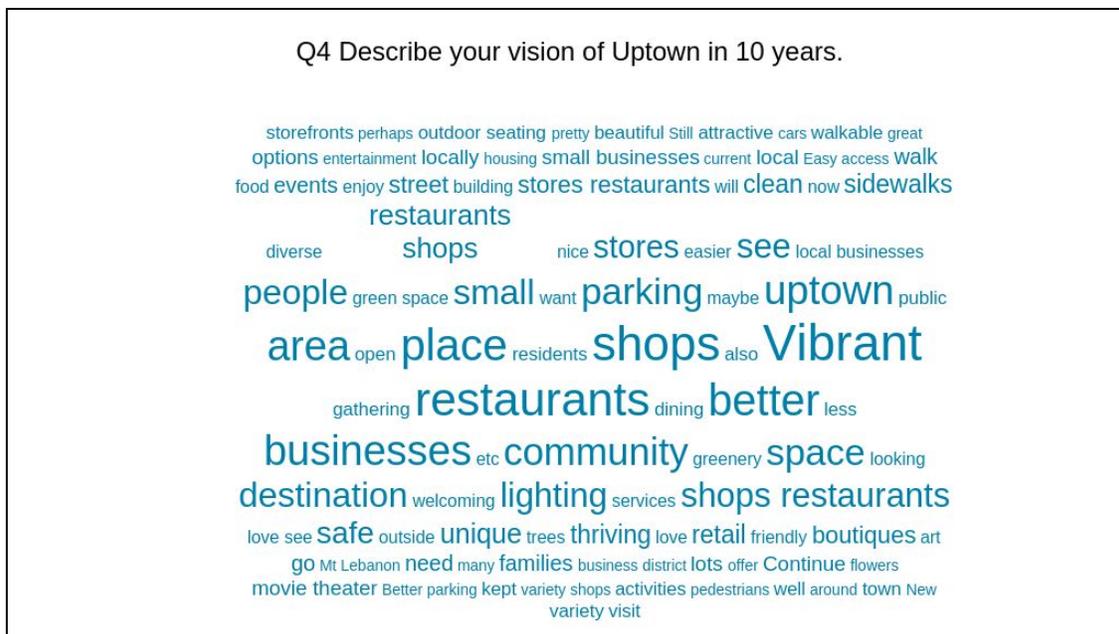
When asked what makes Mt. Lebanon different from other communities, walkability was a very strong theme, followed by a sense of community and good schools. The top 100 most common words included in the responses can be seen in the word cloud below, with the larger size indicating the greater popularity of the word.



When asked about features of the neighborhood or other themes that they would like to see highlighted or addressed in artworks, history was a popular answer, along with landscape (both as a theme and as an actual element in terms of planters and plants) and architecture.



When asked about their vision of the Uptown district in 10 years, many respondents mentioned restaurants, more varied small businesses and shopping.



Project Types

Three project types, based on the duration and needed investment, have been defined by the Design Committee. Each site includes the project types the committee feels is most appropriate for that location. The three types are defined as follows:

Temporary - Under 1 year, e.g. Sidewalk poems, performance art, live music, Live art production, art demonstrations, temporary sign art, etc. Minimal to Moderate Investment.

Short Term - 1-2 years, e.g. light pole banners, vinyl window installations, temporary printed art, pop-up art windows/storefronts, etc. Minimal to Moderate Investment.

Permanent - Over 2 years, e.g. functional art/design (bike racks, benches, etc.), dedicated sculptures/installations, painted murals, etc. Maximum Investment.

Prioritizing Sites for Public Art

A number of factors will come into play when prioritizing projects and sites. As Mt. Lebanon currently does not have a dedicated funding stream for public art, the availability of funding and the types of projects it can be used for will necessarily play a large role in deciding which projects happen. Since this is a new program, smaller-budget, temporary projects that directly engage local artists and residents are a key way to build visibility and vital community support at this stage. Specific opportunities will also be generated by the major streetscape renovations planned for the Uptown district. This could include temporary projects on sidewalks and other elements that are slated for demolition, earmarking some of the new streetscape elements for artistic intervention or design, or creating new permanent sites specifically for public art.

Priority Sites

There are many existing locations in Uptown and the Health Loop that offer potential locations for public art. Some of these might be ideal for short-term or temporary projects, while others might be locations for long-term or permanent works. As these areas change and develop in the coming years, new sites will likely become available. Sites are divided into two areas: Uptown and the Health Loop.

A full inventory of all sites identified as potential locations for public art is included in the Appendices.

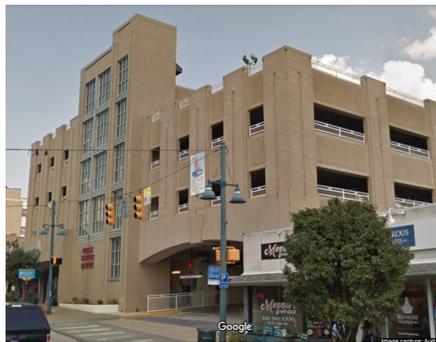
The following sites have been identified as Priority sites by the Design Committee. Each site includes the project types the committee feels is most appropriate for that location.



Safety Building - entrance

The Safety building is at the north entrance to the Uptown district, and is high-visibility location. Sites for artwork might include the planters at the entrance or portions of the building facade.

Project type(s): Permanent



North Garage - windows facing Washington Blvd. and south wall

The North Garage windows are a high visibility site as they are quite large and face the Cedar Ave. intersection. This could provide an excellent site for temporary artwork that could change regularly. This might be designed as window transparencies to be printed and installed on the inside of the windows by a local printer. This could be an ideal way to involve local artists.

Project type(s): Short term, Permanent



Clearview Commons retaining wall

This is a potential site for a mural.

Project type(s): Short Term, Permanent



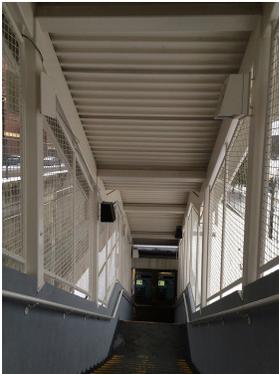
LRT Portal - entrance and “windows” in stairway

The LRT Portal is a main entry point to Uptown and is used by many commuters on a daily basis, but currently lacks the feel of an entrance to a distinctive place. Multiple potential sites for artworks include the facade of the Portal, the sidewalk outside the portal, and the stairway including the open “windows”. Project type(s): Permanent



LRT Portal from Parse Way and LRT Station shelter

The rear of the LRT Portal facing Parse Way offers a site of a mural or wall-mounted artwork, The connection between the station shelter and Portal could be enhanced with a ground mural, which would provide a more welcoming approach to Uptown and serve as wayfinding. Project type(s): Permanent



LRT Stop stairwell, interior and exterior

The LRT Stop stairwell, both the interior and the exterior facing Shady Drive, offer additional opportunities to emphasize this as the entryway to a distinctive neighborhood. Project type(s): Permanent



Crosswalks in business district: Shady, Academy, Cedar, Alfred and Central

Artist-designed crosswalks in the business district could be used to visually highlight the business district while increasing pedestrian safety. Designs could change on a regular basis, creating buzz and excitement, and would be a great way to engage local artists and designers. Note: Washington Road is controlled by PENNDOT while side streets are municipal. Project type(s): Short term

ADMINISTRATIVE PLAN

Definitions

Call for Artists - Notice of a public art or exhibition opportunity that gives artists the information they need to know in order to apply for the project. Primary types of calls include Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and Request for Proposals (RFP).

Commission of artist - The engagement of an artist to create a new artwork, or to provide existing work for a particular location.

Concept design - The initial design generated by an artist, which may be shown through sketches, maquettes, or diagrams, and is typically accompanied by an initial cost estimate.

Design Committee - A standing committee of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership focused on design related issues in the Uptown district including all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials.

Final design and construction documents - The design generated by an artist in which design details, placement, construction details, installation specifications, and cost estimates are finalized, and relevant documents are completed and stamped by a licensed engineer.

Invitational Call for Artists - A Call for Artists in which selected artists are specifically invited to apply for an opportunity via a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or a Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Artists should be invited based on the quality of their previous work and its appropriateness for the project, and their qualifications for the specific conditions of the project.

Mt. Lebanon Partnership - A group whose mission is to create a vibrant community in Mt. Lebanon by promoting economic growth and preventing or correcting deterioration through the implementation of economic restructuring, design, promotions and organizational plans developed by the Mt. Lebanon Partnership Board of Directors on behalf of business owners, property owners, residents and volunteers with the Mt. Lebanon commercial districts. The Board of Directors of the Partnership are community minded individuals with a passion for downtown revitalization. They are small business owners, professionals, community stakeholders and residents. The Partnership works in a cooperative relationship with the municipality to achieve mutually beneficial objectives.

Open Call for Artists - A call for artists for a specific project which any artist may apply to, provided they meet the eligibility requirements stated in the application materials. This may take the form of a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or a Request for Proposals (RFP) process.

Public Art - Art or design elements that have been planned and executed by an artist or artist team with the intention of being installed or presented in the public sphere, usually outside and accessible to all. The guidelines and procedures in this plan also pertain to indoor displays of artwork in publicly accessible areas in the Uptown district.

Request for Proposals - A call for artists that requires artists to submit credentials, typically in the form of a resume and work samples, as well as a conceptual proposal for the project. Other common required submission materials include a letter of interest, references, and an artist statement.

Request for Qualifications - A call for artists that requires artists to submit credentials, typically in the form of a resume and work samples. Other common required submission materials include a letter of interest, references, and an artist statement.

Site-Specific Artwork - Artworks that are created to fit the context of a particular site.

Roles and Responsibilities

Mt. Lebanon Commission

Description: The Mt. Lebanon Commission is a 5-member legislative body of Mt. Lebanon.

Responsibilities:

- Approve expenditure of municipal grant funding, part of which may be earmarked for public art
- Approve Concept Designs and Final Designs recommended by the Art Selection Committee and the Mt. Lebanon Partnership.

Mt. Lebanon Partnership

Description: The Partnership is a nonprofit organization composed of a 13-member Board of Directors. The mission of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership is to create a vibrant community in Mt. Lebanon by promoting economic growth and preventing or correcting deterioration through the implementation of economic restructuring, design, promotions and organizational plans developed by the Mt. Lebanon Partnership Board of Directors on behalf of business owners, property owners, residents and volunteers with the Mt. Lebanon commercial districts.

Responsibilities:

- The Art Selection Committee's recommendations go to the full Partnership for approval before going to the Commissioners.

Design Committee of Mt. Lebanon Partnership

Description: A standing committee of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership focused on design related issues in the Uptown district including all of its physical elements: public and private buildings, storefronts, signs, public spaces, parking areas, street furniture, public art, landscaping, merchandising, window displays, and promotional materials.

Responsibilities:

- Oversee the Uptown Public Art program as outlined in this plan, including partnering with other bodies/orgs for fundraising and initiating and managing projects.
- Serve on Artist Selection Committees
- Recruit community members to serve on Artist Selection Committees
- Promote public art in the Uptown and Health Loop districts

Art Selection Committee

Description: An art selection Committee is an ad-hoc Committee of the Partnership that reviews artist application materials for a public art project. The Mt. Lebanon Partnership will compose a committee of at least 6 people to best fit the needs of a particular project.

Each Art Selection Committee should include:

- At least 3 members of the Mt. Lebanon Partnership Design Committee
- Local artists / arts professionals, especially those with expertise similar to the project
- A resident or owner of a business/property in the Uptown or Health Loop district
- If applicable, a person with expertise in designing to improve accessibility as appropriate to the particular project

The following may be included in an advisory (non-voting) role:

- If applicable, a sculpture conservator or other specialist
- If applicable, a representative from the Planning Office, Public Works Department, or other municipal staff
- If applicable, a representative from Port Authority or other involved parties

Responsibilities:

- Review artist application materials and select finalist(s)
- Interview artists, review concepts, and recommend final selection.
- Review and recommend approval of artist Concept Design and Final Design.

Project Planning

Planning for a new project should begin with the following steps:

- Define the specific opportunity - the site and project type
- Identify project partners and key stakeholders, including the eventual owner of the artwork, and communicate with them about the scope and goals of project
- Decide on the realistic expected lifespan of the project, what care or maintenance will likely be needed for the duration, and who will be responsible.
- Discover the needed permits, permissions, or coordination with other construction
- Create a realistic budget and timeline.
- Set aside an amount equal to 10% of the project budget for repairs or maintenance

Once the basics of the project are established , a project plan should be generated, which includes the following information (much of this is information that will be included in the RFQ or RFP to artists):

- Description of the project location and any relevant site details.
- Project goals
- Evaluation criteria that will be used when reviewing artists qualifications and concept designs. The Guiding Principles listed above form a foundation for evaluation, to which specific criteria for a given project can be added.
- Project budget
- The project schedule, including when the call for artists is released, the application deadline, when concept designs are due, when selection decision will be made, and the deadline for when project should be completed / installed.
- A list of project partners and stakeholders, including the eventual owners of the artwork
- The artist's scope of work
- The expected lifespan of the project
- The artist selection method.
- A list of potential candidates for the Art Selection Committee
- Community engagement strategies to be used and specific groups that should be involved.
- A communications / marketing strategy for promoting the project - both in the call for artist stage and following stages that need public involvement
- Potential partners and any necessary agreements

Public Art Commissioning Process

Once a project has been defined and a project plan has been created, the commissioning process should follow these steps:

Form an Art Selection Committee

A Selection Committee should be formed for each project. It should be composed of a minimum of 6 members including representatives of the design committee and other groups as outlined in the Roles and Responsibilities section. Other professionals may be invited to join the Committee discussion as advisory (non-voting) capacity. For example, for public art projects that are part of construction projects, architects from that design team might be included, or for a permanent public sculpture, an art

conservator might be asked to advise. For artworks that will be owned by the municipality, a representative from the municipality may be invited to participate in an advisory capacity.

Select the Artist and Concept Design

The first phase of the selection process is to develop and issue either a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) or a Request for Proposals (RFP). Either of these may be done as an Open Call for Artists or an Invitational Call for Artists.

- Request for Qualifications - an RFQ is the most commonly used selection process. An RFQ should include a description of the project and site, context, project goals, key stakeholders, budget, timeline, artist scope of work and submission instructions. This is a two-part process. In the first step, artist submissions are reviewed, and finalists are selected. In the second step, finalists are paid a fee to develop concept designs, which typically include a written project description, images or a model, a list of materials and fabrication techniques, and a detailed budget and timeline if applicable. These concept proposals are then reviewed by the Art Selection Committee, and a final selection is made. Selections should be made based on the values outlined in the Guiding Principles, as well as the specific project criteria outlined in the project plan. The Committee's recommendation then goes to The full Partnership for approval. If the project involves public finding or occurs on public property, it then goes to the Commission for approval. Once the project has been awarded, the artist proceeds with Final Design. A sample RFQ is included in the Appendices.

An alternate version of this process is to use an interview-based selection, in which finalists are selected based on qualifications, and then interviewed by the Art Selection Committee. A selection is made based on the interview, and then the artist would proceed with the design development process.

- Request for Proposals - An RFP is less commonly used, and will typically get less response from artists. In this process, artists are required to submit a concept proposal as part of the initial submission materials. Because artists are not paid for creation of their proposals in this process, it should only be used for smaller projects requiring a very simple proposal, such as a 2-D design with no detailed project budget required. This type of application process tends to attract less-experienced artists who may not have a portfolio of previous professional to submit to an RFQ. For this reason, it can be a way to open the door to local artists to participate in public art, regardless of their experience level.

Execute the Artist Contract

Once the artist has been selected as a finalist, the municipality or eventual owner of the artwork would enter into an agreement with the artist to develop a Concept Design, and if the artist has been awarded the project, an agreement to develop a final design and related documentation, and to fabricate and install the artwork, as appropriate to the project. A template of an artist contract is included in the Appendices.

Final Design and Fabrication

During the final design phase the artist refines the design, developing the technical details including fabrication materials and techniques and the budget. Depending on the specifics of the project, the artist may be required to have elements of the projects reviewed and stamped by a licensed engineer. The project manager may be required to submit appropriate documentation to relevant municipal offices.

Installation

The design committee (or other project manager) should obtain all necessary permits and permissions and ensure that any site preparation or infrastructure is in place before installation. The design committee or project manager should also coordinate installation with necessary municipal departments and property owners.

Maintenance

After installation, a maintenance plan should be obtained from the artist. This should include written instructions for proper maintenance of the work, documentation of all materials and fabrication processes used, contact information for all fabricators, brand names and sources for materials used, and any applicable manufacturer's warranties. A maintenance form to be filled out by the artist is included in the Appendices.

Funding for repairs or maintenance, about 10% of the project budget (or more if deemed necessary) should be set aside for the lifespan of the project.

For new artworks , the artists should warranty the work against defects in workmanship for 1 year.

Donated or loaned artworks (including artwork loaned for temporary exhibits)

In the event that a party is interested in donating or loaning artwork for temporary exhibit or permanent installation on public property (including indoor exhibits), the following steps should be taken:

1. The donor/lender should contact the Design Committee to inquire about the availability of the site. (The Committee should consider creating a public email address for this purpose.)
2. The donor/lender should complete an Application for Donation / Loan of Artwork and submit the completed application and necessary materials to the Design Committee.
3. Depending on the specifics of the proposed artwork donation/loan, the Design Committee may review the application and make a decision, or may choose to assemble an Art Selection Committee, including key stakeholders, specialists, etc.
4. The decision for the Design Committee or Art Selection Committee follows the same process as for other recommended proposals, going to the full Partnership for approval, and if necessary, to the full Commission.

APPENDICES

- A. Inventory of existing potential sites
- B. Public Art Survey - Complete Report of responses
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