



ANN ARBOR PUBLIC ART COMMISSION

ANNUAL REPORT [2024]



Introduction

2023-2024 was a year celebrating the history of two-hundred-year-old Ann Arbor. The leadership of the Ann Arbor Public Art Commission (AAPAC) transitioned from Allison Neal to Fang Zhang as Chair and Jamall Bufford remained as vice-chair. Commissioners include Allison Neal, Marianetta Porter, Sarah Fuller, Sophie Grillet, John Kotarski, Peggy Leonard, and Mary Thiefels.

This annual report covers the achievements of AAPAC in initiating and collaborating the following art projects which have been realized in the city.

Bicentennial Celebrations



With the aim of enhancing civic pride and celebrating its 200th anniversary in 2024, Ann Arbor City Council launched a design contest for the City Flag open to residents of all ages in 2023, which attracted hundreds of proposals.

These proposals were reviewed and narrowed down to five finalists and then put out to a public vote. As a result, the selected flag was chosen which was created by **Dennis Scherdt**.

2024 New Ann Arbor City Flag is Here!



Dennis Scherdt is a 2011 graduate of Ann Arbor Public Schools, dual enrolled at Pioneer High and Community High. He studied graphic design at Washtenaw Community College and has since worked as a senior designer and currently a web developer at Studio 32, a local creative design and marketing agency.

Moreover, Ann Arbor has celebrated its Bicentennial in 2024 in many creative, inclusive and unique projects. **The Ann Arbor Bicentennial Murals project** incorporates abstract art on basketball courts at two Ann Arbor parks - Bicentennial Park (formerly Southeast Area Park) and Leslie Park.

The Bicentennial Murals Committee selected the top three artist-submitted designs and later local residents voted on the final design.



After a month-long voting period, over 2,100 votes came from community members. The design submitted by **Amanda Humphrey and Joe Trumpey** was chosen. “There are many aspects of Ann Arbor that could have been areas of focus, but we chose a more abstract and metaphorical representation of our city evolving over time with the river that changes as it flows into the foreground,” said Humphrey and Trumpey.



The design depicts the Huron River and burr oaks in the foreground, echoing features of the bicentennial logo. The background depicts a stylized skyline featuring centers of art, culture, education, and residential life in Ann Arbor. The abstract river represents how our city has changed through time, and its colorful facets as we move into the future.

PowerArt! is back for 2024!

Creative Washtenaw manages the public art program in cooperation with the Ann Arbor Downtown Development Authority (AADDA). The art champions, Larry and Lucie Nisson, additionally supported this project. Eleven new works by Washtenaw-based artists were chosen.

This is a public art project that wraps traffic signal boxes in downtown Ann Arbor with vinyl-printed replicas of local artists' work. To date, 26 PowerArt! boxes have been installed.

(<https://creativewashtenaw.org/power-art-installations-in-ann-arbor/>)



The Downtown Ann Arbor Historical Street Exhibit Program

It is a series of permanent sidewalk exhibits at sixteen landmark sites throughout downtown Ann Arbor. Each exhibit has a theme. The first exhibit, installed in 1999, illustrates the hustle and bustle of town life that once centered on

Courthouse Square. Subsequent exhibits throughout the downtown showcase the city's artistic heritage and the roles of business, banking, manufacturing and education in various design and installation processes involved and a list of donors and sponsors in the community. Click on “[Exhibits and Map](#)” to see the sixteen sites and their themes. Click on a site number on the map to view all the images and text currently installed at that site.

This [video](#), narrated by Ann Arbor historian Wytan Stevens, traces the evolution of the project from a grassroots-level initiative to a community-wide enterprise generously funded and supported by Ann Arbor citizens, local government, and corporations.

BICENTENNIAL CLOSING CEREMONY

Ann Arbor Bicentennial closing celebration was Dec. 14, 2024 ([Ann Arbor Bicentennial Closing Celebration](#)) at Ann Arbor Skyline High School. The community event included entertainment, refreshments and reflection on the activities and initiatives that took place throughout 2024.

And before we say bye to the bicentennial, we have a last chance to buy some limited-edition A200 merch!

Check out the online [Ann Arbor Bicentennial store](#) to get your gear before it's gone!

Maintenance of Public Art

[A comprehensive list of public artworks](#) is available for review. Recent changes to staffing and city programs will necessitate revisions to the current maintenance plan. To date, the city has not received any reports of damage or repairs.

Capital Improvement Project (CIP) Enhancements

Find the complete list of current council-approved potential [CIP Enhancements](#) (Appendix A).

While there weren't many CIP projects with art enhancements that occurred during this timeframe, the commission continued to work on supporting projects and public art enhancements in Ann Arbor.

All of the CIP enhancements that are approved are now flagged within the city's Allowance system which allows project managers to see art assigned to projects and plan and coordinate with departments as necessary.

TR-SC-19-02, Nixon Street Improvements Design:

This is also a new project, and since it is only design work the scope is still unclear so an enhancement budget may be hard to project. However, it seems like an ideal opportunity to bring public art to a neighborhood outside the downtown core, and we encourage support to have the designers work with the AAPAC to look for opportunities for public art.

Public Art Projects

Murals That Bridge



“Murals That Bridge”, a local public art initiative aimed at creating landmark attractions, at the “gates” to our community, for all who live in and visit Ann Arbor, MI. The railroad metal overpass and concrete underpasses on Huron Street near North First Street & Main St near M-14 was identified for public art. The first of 2 overpass projects, slated for 2024-2025, was completed in August of 2024.

The project, spearheaded by Lucie & Larry Nisson, was in partnership with TreeTown Murals, WATCO Railroad, NorthStar Painting, the City of Ann Arbor and MDOT.

The bridge was completely restored before adding the murals and welcome messaging. The residents of Delonis center were invited to help paint during an organized community paint day. All requirements for this project were initiated by MDOT under their “Aesthetic Enhancement Criteria.”

Eberwhite Neighborhood Mini Roundabout Community Mural



Painted in June of 2024, this roundabout brings together 5 neighborhood intersections, located near Eberwhite Elementary School. The idea was the brainchild of neighborhood residents Robin Suter, Lucie and Larry Nisson. The three of them engaged both TreeTown Murals, composed of artists: Mary Thiefels & Danijel Matanic, for the design and facilitation and the Ann Arbor Art Center for public art funding and support. Painted in 2 days during the bi-annual Art Hop event, 100’s of people over the weekend both visiting the event and residents from the neighborhood joined in to help paint. TTM invited area highschool students to

help facilitate and paint, adding a unique youth leadership component. The roundabout was power washed before being painted using the highest quality concrete paints from Sherwin Williams.

They Will All Be Dreaming



The inspiration for "They Will All Be Dreaming" stemmed from a desire to bring a touch of escapism into the everyday environment. The artist, **Tess Marhofer**, CMI Medical Illustrator, finished the project on October 23, 2023.

Fascinated by the idea of finding solace and inspiration in the sky, particularly during times of stress and uncertainty. She entitled the project "They Will All Be Dreaming," as a nod to daydreaming, introspection, and the ethereal beauty of nature.

This mural is a reminder that even amidst the chaos of life, there's a tranquil world above, waiting to ignite our imagination and provide a sanctuary for dreamers and thinkers alike.

Public Art Donation

To honor Ann Arbor’s 200th birthday, the Ann Arbor Art Fair dedicated and donated a sculpture to the city called the “Tree of Life,” created by Ohio-based artist **Richard Morgan**. The new sculpture was installed at the corner of State Street and North University Avenue and was presented to the city by the three art fair directors on July 16 coinciding with activities celebrating the kickoff of the art fair (July 18-20, 2024).



Further support for the project's installation came from:

Tree of Life Sculpture, by Richard Morgan - Picture by Allison Neal taken during the 2024 Ann Arbor Art Fair.

Donated to the city of Ann Arbor in honor of the Bicentennial by the Ann Arbor Art Fair - July 2024; with special thanks Doan Companies & Wade Trim

A Metamorphosis of the Tree

City art donation from UM Prison Creative Arts Project (PCAP) | LSA Residential College | University of Michigan, this mural is a metamorphosis of the tree, evolving into a kaleidoscope of butterflies that were individually created by community members' visually responding to the prompt "*What does "community" and/or "progress" mean to you?"*" The final product resulted in 3 - 4' x 5' panels that are designed to be hung as a triptych.)



AAPAC Endowment

The Ann Arbor Public Art Commission continues to raise funds for public art project installation, maintenance, etc. by way of an endowment at the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation. No new donations or funds were raised outside of the interest earned by this endowment.

AAPAC Public Outreach

A new channel for learning more about what AAPAC has been created.

Follow its Instagram (<https://www.instagram.com/aa.pac>)

Conclusion

The AAPAC continues to make progress and work with the city to promote, maintain, and install new public artworks throughout the city. Although the commission is limited due to funding constraints, commissioners are encouraged by the community's continued support and positive attitude towards promoting public art projects and fostering art appreciation in the community.

(Presented by Ann Arbor Public Art Commission, December 2024)