



## Percent-for-Art Programs

### Overview:

The Americans for the Arts Public Art Network (PAN) encourage cities to establish new Percent-for-Art ordinances for municipal capital improvement projects. PAN is a program of Americans for the Arts that develops tools and strategies to improve communities through public art. PAN encourages municipal arts and cultural staff to work in collaboration with designated arts commissions to serve as a resource and curatorial partner in the commissioning, site selection, installation and preservation of public art projects. Cities should include public art in ongoing design, planning and redevelopment.

### Background:

Public art programs are charged with administering the development and management of public art in their communities. The methods used to build a public art program include, commissioning artwork for temporary installation, purchasing existing artwork for permanent or temporary display, placing artists on design teams and creating artist-in-residence opportunities. In addition to creating new work, public art programs are charged with maintaining their public art collections, developing educational programming, creating public art resources including printed materials and websites, seeking out partnerships and opportunities with public and private organizations, and acting as a source for public art information.

Since 1959, local Percent-for-Art ordinances have been applied to publicly-funded capital improvement projects. Today, cities are also expanding Percent-for-Art programs to include private development. Today, there exist approximately 350 public art programs in the United States. The vast majority (97%) of public art programs are housed within an umbrella organization such as a local arts agency or municipality. Nationally, 283 of the 350 public art programs are located within government agencies based within city, country or state government. Typically, public art programs with the largest budgets tend to operate within a government agency. Their largest source of revenue is from dedicated bond revenues and their largest expenditures are for art commissions and purchases.

In 2001, the average budget of the nation's public art programs grew 27.4% to \$779,968 during 2001. In fact, the average public art budget nearly doubled between 1998 and 2001 – increasing an average of 23.5% annually. In government public art programs, the average budget has grown 30% annually. In 2003, the average budget of a government program was \$911,594. Government programs receive 91% of their funding from government sources, including the most common source, Percent-for-Art ordinances. Government programs typically spend 10.5% of their budgets on administration and

staffing. In 2007, PAN will conduct a nationwide survey to revise and update data since the 2003 survey.

There is a misconception that public art is located only in larger cities. In fact, the largest growth of public art programs has been on the small city, suburban, and town level. Of the 350 public art programs in the United States, 111 of them serve populations of 150,000 or less. Nationally, 86 programs serve populations of 1 million or more.

The number of projects completed by public art programs is outstanding. On average, public art programs have completed 69 public art projects since their inception, including commissions, purchases, and conservation projects. Multiply that by 350, and over 24,000 public art artworks have been completed by public art programs in the United States. This is a conservative estimate since works from early government sponsored programs such as the WPA and the more recent NEA Art in Public Places Program are not included in this number, nor are the public artworks commissioned by private organizations or community groups who seek to develop individual projects.

Presently, public art programs are seeking to dig deeper, beyond just commissioning new works, to develop relationships with the communities and artists they serve. However, educational programming, artist services, conservation and maintenance of existing public art work are where public art programs require improvement. While government programs have the largest budgets and spend more money on art commissions and purchases than private non-profit programs, PAN found that private non-profit programs spend more money than government programs on conservation, artist outreach, and educational programming.

Here, these findings illustrate the importance of not just commissioning new work of the highest artistic quality, but on the need to keep up the excitement about the public art work beyond the ribbon cutting. In short, if public art is not maintained in the community physically through conservation or intellectually, through programming and information, the community will lose their close relationship to public art that artwork that exists in the commissioning process. The challenge is how to fund these complimentary programs.

In the development of new public art programs and projects there is no template for implementation. What works in one location cannot be dropped in place and expected to work in another. Through PAN's research, we found that public art programs are stable and growing nationwide. Nationwide, municipalities are leveraging their public art funding to have an increased impact on the communities they serve.

**Talking Points:**

- Supporting the arts through Percent-for-Art programs is a way to give back to the community in return for the ability to create new artwork.
- Enhancing the identity and character of communities through public art directly supports cultural tourism and economic development strategies.
- Public art gives a city character and identity that makes it appealing to residents and helps to further attract visitors.
- The placement of public art projects enhances the image of a city - its landscape and architecture.
- Artists and designers working together offers opportunities to respond creatively to design challenges and enhances the design and development process for all parties.
- The growing interest in public art is affecting the fundamentals of city development and revitalization and is having an impact on national urban design and planning trends.
- Arts commissions should play a lead role in the commissioning, site selection, installation and preservation of public art projects.