

City of Suwanee Public Art Initiative

Public Art Ordinance Guide for Developers

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Public Arts Ordinance: On March 25, 2008, Suwanee City Council approved an ordinance designed to encourage and facilitate the creation and placement of art within the City, both in public spaces owned by the City of Suwanee and within private developments—residential and commercial. This ordinance underscores a belief that inclusion of art in development projects is viewed as having legitimacy of purpose and common good comparable to architectural standards, landscaping requirements or zoning restrictions already enforced by the City.

To whom this applies: The ordinance requires that as part of the formal planning and approval process of any private development project within the City of Suwanee, its developer meet with the Public Arts Commission at an advertised, regularly scheduled, public meeting of the Commission to present and discuss plans for incorporating art in their projects.

Objective: All developers are asked to voluntarily include in their private construction projects public art with a value approximately equal to 1 percent of the total project cost, including construction and land (this suggested amount is within the middle range *required* by other municipal governments). As an alternative, a contribution of equal value may be given to the public art fund that is administered by the City. These funds will be used for the acquisition or commission of art on City-owned sites or for other art-related purposes including, but not limited to, art educational programs, shows, and special events. Forms that a public arts contribution might take are explained more fully in the following document. They may, however, include the following:

- *Providing public art on the development site.*
- *Providing public art off development site.*
- *Contributing to the Public Art Fund.*

Why contribute public art or funds for public art: The presence of art in and around office buildings, shopping malls and strip centers, residential developments, even factories and warehouses, as well as parks and rights-of-way, has become a standard by which residents and businesses alike judge the quality and vitality of a community. Virtually every major city in the country, as well as thousands of smaller, vibrant cities and communities, have instituted public arts programs—most are mandatory. This is because public art is seen as evidence of enlightened, innovative community leadership and commitment. Developers who fund creation of public art are perceived as legitimate community stakeholders who embrace the values and share the long-term interests of the citizenry in enhancing their City. In this way public art is seen as a way for developers to “give-back” to the community in which they expect to profit in an enduring way. It is good community relations. The social and economic benefits of public arts programs are explained in greater detail in a Georgia Council of the Arts document that is available for review from the Commission.

What kind of art: For the purpose of this ordinance, art is defined broadly. It applies to original works of art that are durable and accessible to the public; reflect an awareness of the site, both physically and socially; and that fit the historical and cultural values and sensibilities of the community. Site specific installations of artwork may be functional, stand-alone, or integrated into the architecture of buildings in the form of architectural elements such as unique and creatively executed gates, entryways, sitting areas, fountains and walkways.

What follows: The attached document describes in greater detail the purpose and applicability of the Public Arts Ordinance. You’ll find suggestions of the kinds of art projects that would be considered suitable, along with helpful criteria for selecting art and artists. It also includes, for illustrative purposes only and not necessarily as endorsements, examples of public art installations in locations throughout the world.

Overview

The City of Suwanee has long been recognized as a forward-looking community in which citizens are willing to commit substantial financial resources toward creating an environment that is attractive, while functional, and enhances their quality of life. The City's acres of parks, miles of greenways, numerous public events, high architectural standards, and innovative identity branding are examples of this commitment. The City's growth and its ranking in *Money Magazine* as one of the ten best small cities in the United States are proof of the success of this formula. It is why Suwanee stands out and why it can boast about its quality demographics.



What has been missing, however, is an element that is increasingly found in cities, large and small, throughout the United States and much of the developed world: art. Not art cloistered in the halls of museums or shut up behind the doors of expensive private galleries. But art that can be seen and enjoyed by everyone: by the public in public places. Public Art.

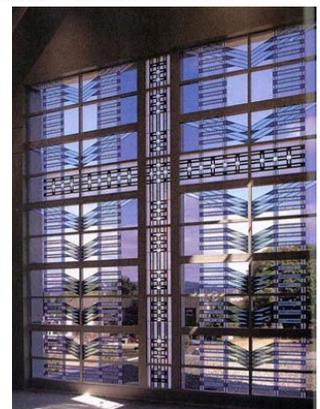


Public art contributes to the livability and character of a community, enhances the visual quality of the built environment and raises and preserves property values. Today, the presence of art—visually and intellectually accessible to the public—integrated into commercial and residential developments as well as in parks and on rights of way, has become a touchstone for judging the quality and desirability of a community for residents and businesses alike.

But public art cannot sprout spontaneously out of the ground. It must be created by talented and skilled artists and paid for. It must be appropriate for its site, and it must be placed where it can be seen and enjoyed. The City of Suwanee, for example, has committed space and funds to include art in its new City Hall. Through the Public Arts Ordinance, the City is looking to all community stakeholders to help bring art to the public place. The City views developers as stakeholders since they too have a financial and physical stake in Suwanee continuing to be a desirable, thriving and growing community. Developers are therefore asked to enhance their projects by creating and placing art within their own sites, or on public lands within the City of Suwanee for the enjoyment of all its citizens and visitors. Developers may alternatively choose to contribute funds to the Public Arts Commission for the purpose of funding future art projects or arts-related events.



To the public, the inclusion of art in development projects, or financial contributions to fund public art projects elsewhere in the city or art-related events/programs, will be viewed positively as the generous act of enlightened developers giving back to the community. In addition to giving recognition to funders of future arts projects, the City will use its communications resources, including its contacts and substantial goodwill with the media, to inform the citizenry of the participating developer's public art project and publicize their generous and enlightened activities on behalf of the community.



I. Purpose

It is the intent and purpose of the Public Arts Ordinance to aesthetically enhance our environment and enrich the lives of Suwanee's citizens as they go through their daily activities by encouraging the voluntary installation of works of art where they will be visible to the public. This includes private commercial and residential developments as well City-owned properties. Importantly, the ordinance calls for all public art projects to reflect the aesthetic, cultural and social values of the community.



II. Applicability

All developers are *requested* to include in their private construction projects public art with a value approximately equal to 1 percent of the total project cost—construction and land—or to make a contribution of equal value to the public art fund. This fund is dedicated to the acquisition or commission of public art at another location within the City or to the creation of arts-related events or programs. This 1 percent of project cost figure would include, in addition to the actual art acquisition cost, art consultant fees; professional artist(s) fees; costs for design and/or fabrication of art including materials, insurance, permits, taxes, site preparation, pedestals, foundations or other structures to support the artwork; delivery and installation charges; and signage such as an acknowledgement plaque to identify the artist, work, and development.

III. Definitions

For the purpose of the City of Suwanee public art initiative, art is defined broadly in order to expand beyond the traditional understanding of the term to encourage as much variety as possible throughout the City. We endeavor to encourage creativity, not just artistically but conceptually. Basically, *public art* means original works of art that are durable and accessible to the public and that may possess functional as well as aesthetic qualities that reflect an awareness of the site, both physically and socially, and that fit the historical and cultural values and sensibilities of the community. The relationship of artwork and the site should be considered in terms of the physical dimensions, social dynamics, local character and surrounding context of the site, existing or planned.



Therefore, site specific installations of artwork could be functional, stand-alone, or integrated into the architecture of buildings in the form of gates, entryways, sitting areas, and walkways. So, while public art is not defined as a bicycle rack, it could be defined as a bicycle rack that is original, attractive and artfully designed and executed. Similarly, a plaza wouldn't necessarily be artwork, but a unique paving pattern, might turn it into one. To achieve the goals of the ordinance, such public art projects should be of exceptional quality and enduring value.

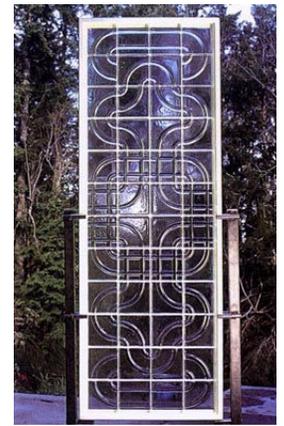


Most public art will fit into one of the following categories: architectural metals, architectural ceramics, mosaics and wall reliefs, architectural glass, architectural elements, murals and trompe l'oeil, atrium sculpture and representational sculpture.

More broadly, public art may include the production of permanent innovative tangible objects including, but not limited to:



- Paintings
- Carvings
- Engravings
- Sculptures
- Mobiles
- Bas reliefs
- Mosaics
- Murals
- Collages
- Fountains of unique and/or original design
- Dedicated public space — unique plaza surfaces



IV. Developer’s Contribution Suggestions

To facilitate the process, developers are encouraged to submit a letter to the Public Arts Commission prior to their public meeting with the Commission, outlining how they plan to participate in the City’s public arts initiative. The letter will be the basis of discussion at an open, regularly scheduled public meeting of the Commission.

Below are examples of the form participation in the public arts program may take. These represent suggestions, and the Commission is open to other ideas proposed by the developer.

1. Provide public art on the development site

Provide public art on the development site, with an acquisition and installation value equal to 1 percent of the total project cost consistent with the guidelines suggested in this document. For public access and enjoyment, all works of public art located on private parcels should be installed outside of any and all buildings and be visible or accessible from an adjacent public right of way or in an area where the public would have access. The Commission is prepared to provide developers considering placing art on their sites with resources for identifying appropriate types of artworks and artists.



2. Provide public art on City-owned property

Install public art, with an acquisition value equal to 1 percent of the project cost, on City property, rather than the property proposed for development. While such a contribution would be greatly appreciated, its appropriateness, durability and long-term maintenance costs must be considered by the Public Arts Commission and approved by City Council. Sites located in the City’s 2030 Master Plan and/or other public sites approved by the Public Arts Commission and City Council may be considered for this option. If the artwork is accepted, its donor will be recognized in a visible and permanent manner at the site.



3. Contribute to the Public Art Fund.

In lieu of providing artwork on or off a development site, a developer may choose to contribute an amount equal to 1 percent of the project cost to the City’s Public Art Fund. These funds will be used for the artistic enrichment of the City’s public spaces or for the funding of arts-related programs and events within the city. As previously described, the City will use its communications resources, including its contacts and substantial goodwill with the media, to inform the citizenry of the participating developer’s public art contribution.

V. Public Art Plan Components

If creation of a public work of art is the way in which a developer chooses to participate in the Suwanee public arts initiative, the Commission suggests that the developer and Commission have periodic dialogue, not for the Commission to dictate what shape the contribution will take, but to help ensure that whatever artwork is selected is consistent with achieving the positive outcome envisioned by the public arts initiative. The vehicle for initiating this dialogue is a simple public art plan, created by the developer, that might include all or some of the following elements:

1. A written description—dimensions, materials, etc., as well as, if available, photographs, models or renderings of the proposed art project.
2. The artist's resume of credentials and, if available, photographic examples of previous installations.
3. A site plan indicating location of the art.
4. A cost estimate of any newly commissioned art or an independent appraisal of any existing piece.



VI. Artist Selection Criteria

While developers are free to select any artist to create a piece of art for their project, it can be a daunting task to find one with the talent, skill, and experience to execute a work that is appropriate for the project and consistent with the objectives of the Public Arts Ordinance. To assist in this process, the Public Arts Commission may provide resources including established arts organizations such as the Georgia Council for the Arts.



Developers may wish to retain a professional art consultant to assist in the selection of a qualified artist for their public art project.

As a general rule, in order to ensure quality and the highest artistic standards, it is recommended that artists meet at least two of the following criteria:

- The artist has completed other public commissions on a similar scale
- The artist has received awards, grants or fellowships
- The artist's works are included in private, corporate or museum collections
- The artist has participated in exhibitions at major museums or galleries



VII. Project/artwork Selection Criteria

General considerations for defining appropriateness of public art projects:

- Will Suwanee residents enjoy it?
- Would a typical resident find it offensive?
- Does it project a clear feeling—powerful, moving, contemplative, humorous or playful?
- Does it complement or conflict with its setting?
- Is it appropriate, in content and presentation, for the majority of potential viewers?
- Is it unique or derivative?
- Does it relate in anyway to the character or history of Suwanee or the surrounding community?
- Is it well executed?
- Is it physically as well as esthetically durable and not a public hazard?
- Is it attractive and does it enhance its site and the community?