

NON  
NON  
NON

ARTS

OK  
HARBOR



PLAN





**"The creation of a thousand forests  
is in one acorn."**

**-- Ralph Waldo Emerson**

Newcomers and Longtimers, families and friends,  
this plan is dedicated to you.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

### **Mayor**

Ronnie Wright

### **City Council**

Tara Hizon, Mayor Pro Tempore

Barbara Armes

James P. Marrow

Eric Marshall

Bryan Stucky

Christopher Wiegenstein

Jim Woessner

### **City Staff**

Sabrina Combs, City Administrator

Magi Aguilar, Communications Officer

Brian Smith, Director of Parks & Recreation

Liz Lange, Recreation Manager

### **Arts Commission**

JR Russell, Chair

Cynthia Mason, Vice Chair

Tracy Davidson

Karla Freund

MaryElizabeth Himes

Therese Kingsbury

Valerie Steely

Reese Wasinger

### **Consultant Team**

Lesley Bain, Framework

Yuansi (Bobo) Cai, Framework

Leila Jackson, Framework

Perri Howard, Velocity Made Good

Annie Sieger, Sieger Consulting



# Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Shaping The Vision</b>	<b>15</b>
Community Input	19
Arts In Oak Harbor	25
OH Arts Is...	29
<b>Building The Structure</b>	<b>35</b>
The Structure	36
Procedures	38
Sustaining Public Arts	45
Funding Opportunities	47
<b>Opportunities &amp; Potential Actions</b>	<b>55</b>



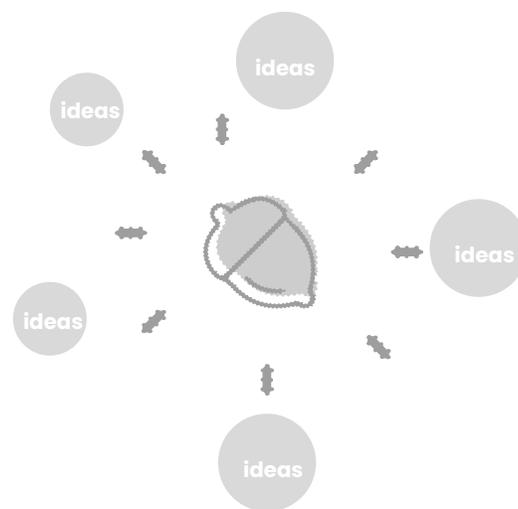
# **Executive Summary**

---

The intent of this plan is to create a shared vision for the arts in Oak Harbor, and set out a process to guide the City in most effectively supporting the arts in ways that provide public benefit and further City goals. This plan has been developed in consultation with the Oak Harbor Arts Commission, City staff, and the broader community; it includes consideration of the current offerings of arts in Oak Harbor and exploration of new opportunities for arts and culture. The plan includes themes that came out of community input, criteria for project selection, partnership and funding opportunities, and a toolkit of best practices for arts administration. The project also includes an arts website with an interactive map identifying public art in Oak Harbor with information about the artists.

## The Uniqueness of Oak Harbor

Whidbey Island's largest and most diverse city, Oak Harbor is a destination for the practical needs of Whidbey Island residents, the home of a major naval air base, and a historic community set in a spectacular natural setting. There are many corollaries to Oak Harbor's unique characteristics: Because people move into the community from a wide variety of places for various lengths of time, there is an opportunity for cultural activities to bring people together, fostering exchanges between newcomers and long-timers, students and elders, and people of all ages and backgrounds. Because visitors tend to see Oak Harbor from Route 20, there may be opportunities for arts-based wayfinding to bring them into the historic center of town. The arts could be harnessed to better connect the downtown to the waterfront, to make visible connections to local history and ecological processes, and to support families and intergenerational connections. This plan looks for



### Ideas Seed the Vision

Much like a seed gives rise to a plant, community ideas form the foundation and are synchronized into a clear and shared vision, from which the arts scene thrives.

---

these opportunities for arts and culture to benefit the full breadth of the people of Oak Harbor and put forth criteria that will maximize the public benefit of the City's efforts regarding the arts.

## Arts in Oak Harbor

The first observation of this plan is that Oak Harbor is rich in arts and culture, and that the strength and presence of the arts may not be fully appreciated. Many events, murals, performances, student programs, festivals, and other artistic efforts enrich the lives of the majority of Oak Harbor residents. Thousands of people enjoy the Oak Harbor Music Festival; children's art is on display at community events; hundreds of students are part of the school's band program; over a hundred people sing in the Oak Harbor Community Chorus. A variety of sculptures and plaques connect viewers to unique aspects of local history, the trees that give Oak Harbor its name, and the close connection to military families.

One of the goals of the plan is to broaden the definition of arts and culture beyond what many people consider something for just a small part of Oak Harbor residents, and to recognize and value the current richness of art-related activities and offerings. A hashtag—"OH Arts is"—was created to solicit input on the breadth of what can be included in arts and culture in Oak Harbor. These images depict the wide range of arts and culture that already contribute to the quality of life and the distinctiveness of Oak Harbor's setting and its people.

## Relationship to City goals and policies

An important component of this plan is the connection between the City's overall vision and goals and the potential for art-related activities to further those goals. Community input and the goals from the current Comprehensive Plan are well aligned. A number of policies in the Urban Design element are related to the arts, including:

- Improving urban design considerations that define the city's character (Urban Design Goal 3)
- Developing an aesthetically pleasing public realm that promotes street life, opportunities for community interactions, and commercial and social activities (Urban Design Goal 4)
- Enhancing the pedestrian experience and improving connections and access to the waterfront. (Urban Design Goal 6)
- Enhancing the entryways to Oak Harbor and promoting an aesthetically pleasing first impression of Oak Harbor which will promote tourism (Urban Design Goal 9)

Arts-related activities can also be suited to further goals regarding economics, public utilities, transportation, and the environment.

*Ancient Garry Oak trees grace the skyline in a city that invests in its waterfront and beautiful views. A town rich in diverse culture, Oak Harbor fosters art and hosts world renowned races, annual concerts, exciting parades, and family-friendly festivals.*

*--From the Culture goal, Oak Harbor 2036*

# Oak Harbor arts: Existing Conditions

Existing arts and culture in Oak Harbor are varied and strong, but need more visibility.



**a theater of our own**



**beautiful words on a utility box**



**singing along**



**fun in local businesses**



**buskers on Pioneer Way**



**kids art and kids play**



**murals that connect to history (Allgire Project)**



**stories on the waterfront**



**iconic and interactive sculpture**

---

## Community Conversations and Themes

Outreach included focus groups, open houses, bus tours, walking events, a presence at local events, and visiting galleries, music venues, local businesses and organizations.

In these discussions, several themes were consistently raised. Visibility of the arts, physical and social connectivity are challenging in Oak Harbor, and the city's assets and arts-related activities too often feel hidden. For many Whidbey visitors, the city identity is formed by Route 20 rather than Historical Downtown and the harbor; Historical Downtown, the waterfront, the marina, and the naval base are close but still feel disconnected. People, too, could be better connected, especially newcomers that are in town for a limited time. Input suggested that cooperation and coordination among cultural leaders and organizations would help their efforts be more effective.

For the Arts Commission, a set of best practices and procedures will improve their effectiveness as shepherds of City efforts in the arts. The Art Plan can provide a toolkit for them, with a range of potential actions and a set of criteria to discern which projects will best serve the community of Oak Harbor.

People also expressed the desire for additional venues for cultural activities. Pioneer Way and Windjammer Park are excellent locations during good weather, but new indoor space could host year-round youth programs, performances, classes and maker space.

## Opportunities & Potential Actions

There are many opportunities for adding and enriching arts and culture in Oak Harbor. Priority opportunities are those that address the topics of concern heard during the outreach process and those that are in sync with the goals of the City of Oak Harbor.

### Visibility and Identity

- Make attractive, artistic gateways into town that read at a scale for drivers
- Direct people to Historical Downtown and the waterfront from Route 20, using art treatment as wayfinding.
- Make good use of the new website and interactive public art map
- Hold a major event as a regional attractor and community celebration

### Connectivity

- Make better connections between Historical Downtown and the waterfront, with actions such as art treatment on Dock Street, at the City parking lot on Dock Street, the Transit Center and to Flintstone Park.
- Strengthen connections between Historical Downtown and Skagit Valley College, Catalina Park and the Marina, using art to make the walk more interesting and testing ideas with temporary art prior to longer term pedestrian treatments.

---

## Cooperation and Coordination

- Convene arts and culture leaders to coordinate schedules and efforts, possibly with the Arts Commission as host.
- Partner with Oak Harbor’s arts organizations, community groups, military organizations, and schools to support art-related efforts that further City goals.

## New Venues

- Participate in discussion with organizations exploring building new venues, and support those efforts in ways that are appropriate for the City as a partner.
- Consider the use of publicly-owned properties for use as cultural space, specifically, the Interpretive Center at the water treatment plan.

## Arts in the Neighborhoods

- Use art to bring attention to water quality with storm drains throughout the City.
- Create an “art sparks” program to fund community-led arts activities and projects in neighborhood parks.

## Thoughtful Procedures

- Follow best practices set out in the Arts Plan for Arts Commission’s project selection criteria, artist commissioning, and other processes.

# Structure for Implementation

The intent of this plan is to help the City and the Arts Commission to make good decisions in choosing arts activities that maximize public benefit, and operate according to best practices in terms of processes and procedures. In addition, the City should consider dedicating staffing time for project management and monitoring to execute this Plan.



### Annual Review and Planning: A

cornerstone for reflection, celebrating achievements, honoring art champions, and setting next year’s priorities. Engage City Council in discussions and planning to align efforts and achieve shared goals.

**Project Candidates:** Potential projects—sourced from this plan, Arts Commissioners, City staff, or the community—are assessed using the Project Candidate Worksheet.

**Project Selection:** Selected projects are aligned with budget, staffing, and public benefit criteria to ensure feasibility.

**Action Plan:** Approved projects are assigned Project Leads and organized into an Annual Action Plan. Emerging opportunities during the year are evaluated for inclusion.

**Project Implementation:** Project Leads use Project Implementation Worksheets to clarify objectives, resources, and milestones.

**Meeting Protocols:** Regular meetings allow leads to share status updates, enabling informed discussions and timely actions.

---

## Arts and Culture Economy

**Oak Harbor’s arts scene has strong potential as an economic driver, attracting visitors and supporting local businesses.** According to *The Economic Impact of Travel in Island County, WA*, in 2022, the city accounted for 44% of Whidbey Island’s travel impact and 16% of lodging sales, underscoring its role in tourism. With strong support from the Park and Recreation Department, the school district, and local businesses, the arts thrive in historic downtown and public spaces, where more than 50 public and private artworks are documented in this report’s appendix.

### Arts and Culture Economic Activity in Oak Harbor

To assess Oak Harbor’s role in the arts and culture economy, this Plan compares its share of Island County’s overall arts activity to its population share, using taxable retail sales as a proxy for the city’s arts economy.

While the city represents 28.1% of Island County’s population, it only accounts for 27.7% of countywide taxable retail sales in “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation,” slightly underperforming its proportional “fair share” compared to its peer cities, suggesting untapped potential for growth in the sector.

### Current Investment in Arts and Culture

The City’s primary funding mechanism for arts and culture, the Creative Arts Fund, is derived from a 0.25% allocation of utility tax proceeds. As of 2024, the fund has an estimated balance of \$284,468, reflecting a significant accumulation of revenues over the past decade. This balance highlights both the need to spend down accumulated funds and the opportunity to invest in a major project that could catalyze this Arts Plan.

Additional funding for arts activities comes from lodging tax revenues through the Civic Improvement Fund, supporting tourism-related events. In 2024, the lodging tax grants funded arts-related events led by Oak Harbor Music Festival, Main Street Association, and Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce. Both the City and County Lodging Tax Advisory Committees continue to support arts initiatives.

### Increasing Investment in Arts and Culture

To enhance Oak Harbor’s position as a leader in arts and culture and increase the City’s investment in arts and culture activities, the plan outlines strategies:

- Increase the Creative Arts Fund’s share of utility tax revenues.
- Consider establishing a Creative District in the historic downtown to unlock state funding opportunities.
- Identify opportunities to pursue both City and County Lodging Tax competitive funding for tourism-driving arts and culture activities.
- Support capacity building for local arts organizations and consider partnering with 501(c)(3) organizations to capture state and national funding opportunities.



HISTORIC DOWNTOWN OAK HARBOR  
FOUNDED JANUARY 4, 1851

			
	<p><i>This mural is dedicated to the people of Oak Harbor past, present and future. Sept. 2013</i></p>		



# 01

## Shaping The Vision



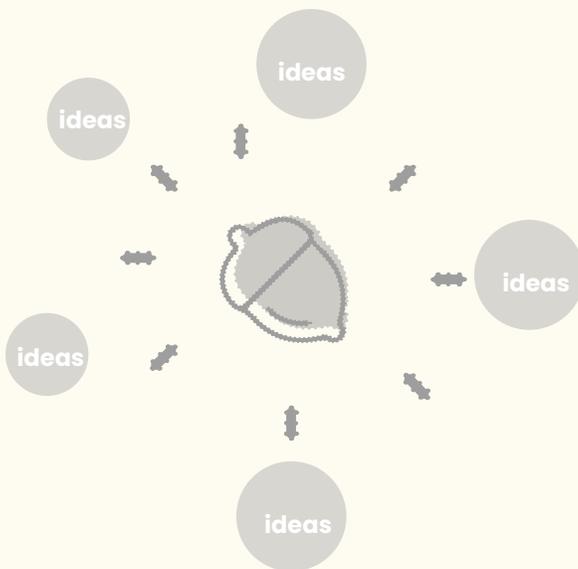
The arts spring from and shape Oak Harbor's identity, showcasing our unique character, our natural beauty and our diverse heritages, enriching us as creative individuals and bringing us together as a community with opportunities for everyone to share and enjoy.

---

## Shaping the Vision

### Ideas Seed the Vision

Much like a seed gives rise to a plant, community ideas form the foundation and are synchronized into a clear and shared vision, from which cultural richness thrives.

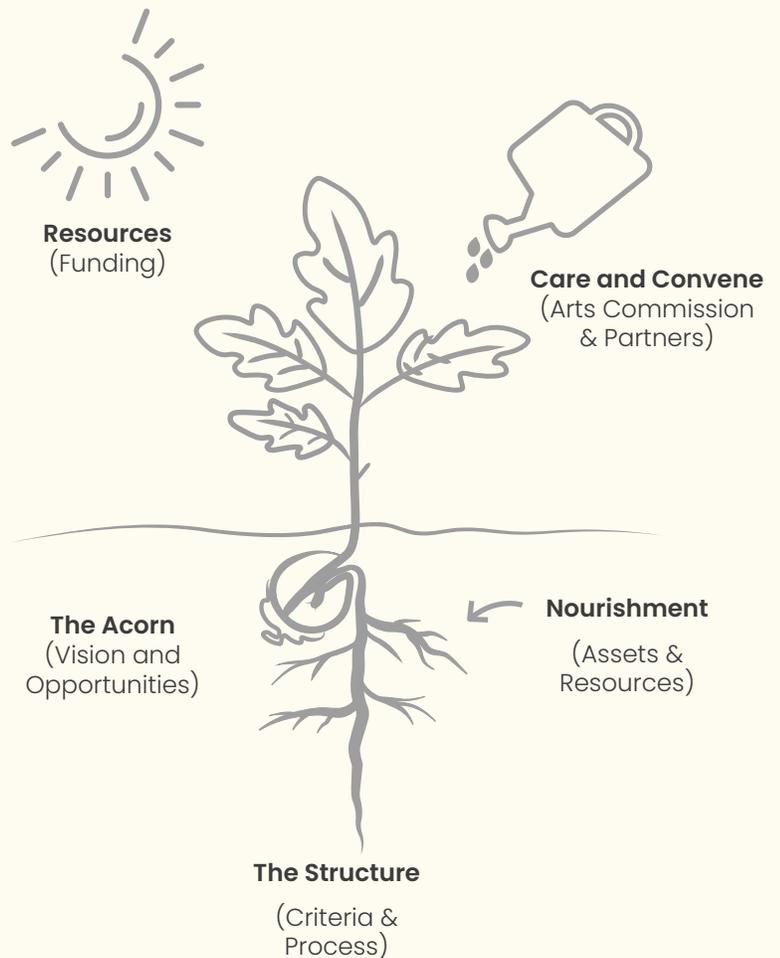


## Building the Structure

### The Vision Take Root

The seed sends out a root and a stem and begins to grow into a plant

The young plant grows and draws nourishment from the soil through its roots.



---

## Exploring Opportunities and Taking Actions

### Mature and Blossom into Reality

The young tree continues to grow and develop branches and leaves, as it matures with a thick trunk and a broad canopy.





---

# Community Input

## Process

From April to September, the project team hosted a diverse array of outreach events to gather community input. These included public drop-in sessions, focus group interviews, surveys, bus tours, and a sound walk. The team explored the city on foot and by bus, engaging with local events such as Holland Happening, the July 4th Celebration, the Oak Harbor Music Festival, and the Military Appreciation Picnic. An expanded engagement summary in an Appendix document.

Our goal for outreach was to understand what arts and culture meant to the people of Oak Harbor, and how it could strengthen the community and the city's identity. By connecting with local organizations, attending events, visiting galleries and music venues, and having conversations with residents, we heard a variety of opinions not only on what the role of the arts should be, but a generally narrow view of what arts in Oak Harbor already meant. Many in the community shared that they didn't feel the arts were "for them." One of the goals of this plan became highlighting the actual breadth of arts and culture. The "OH Arts Is!" initiative sought to capture and define the breadth of arts and culture in Oak Harbor, and the role and significance of art in their individual lives and shared public life.

The following section in this chapter summarizes ideas that reflect Oak Harbor's unique identity, along with the themes gathered on how art can elevate and amplify the city's character.

A community visioning survey was conducted from April to October to explore what the community envisions for the arts. Of the 131 participants, 4% were students, 9% single adults, 56% families, and 30% retirees. The next page summarizes the survey highlights.



**341**  
Website  
Unique visitors



**220**  
Contact  
Email List



**64**  
Conversation  
& Focus Groups  
Attendees



**131**  
Survey Responses



**2+2+1+1**  
Event Pop-ups &  
Drop-in Sessions  
Bus Tour & Arts Walk

## PROJECT KICK-OFF

APRIL 2024

- Holland Happening Pop-up
- Project Website Launch
- Project Survey Launch



## COMMUNITY VISIONING

JUNE 2024

- Public Drop-in Session
- Sound Walk with Artist
- Public Arts Inventory Bus Tour
- Focus Group Discussion x4



## THEMES AND IDEAS

JULY 2024

- Public Drop-in Session
- Focus Group Discussion x4
- Independence Day Parade Pop-Up
- Virtual Focus Group



## DRAFT PLAN, STAKEHOLDER CONFIRMATION

SEPTEMBER 2024

- Public Drop-in Session
- Pop-up at Military Appreciation Picnic



## SYNTHESIS, FINAL PLAN

MARCH 2025



---

## Themes We Heard

### Visibility and Identity

The community strongly desires increased visibility for Oak Harbor’s arts and creativity, emphasizing that its attractiveness is often hidden, with Historical Downtown hard to find, and current communication methods struggling to break through the “noise” in people’s lives.

### Connectivity

The community desires improved connectivity, noting that Historical Downtown is not well linked to the highway or the waterfront. There is also a call for greater walkability, especially connecting key areas like the Navy base, Marina, Yacht Club, and Catalina Park to Historical Downtown.

### Cooperation / Coordination

The community recognizes a need for better cooperation and coordination in the arts, suggesting that gathering leaders to improve scheduling and create unified messaging, with the Arts Commission serving as a coordinating umbrella, could strengthen collaboration among arts leadership and other civic organizations.

### New Venues

Participants in the performing arts have expressed a need for more venues, particularly for larger performances. There is also a desire for an all-ages music venue and interest in an arts “hub” that integrates visual and performing arts, classrooms, and a maker space.

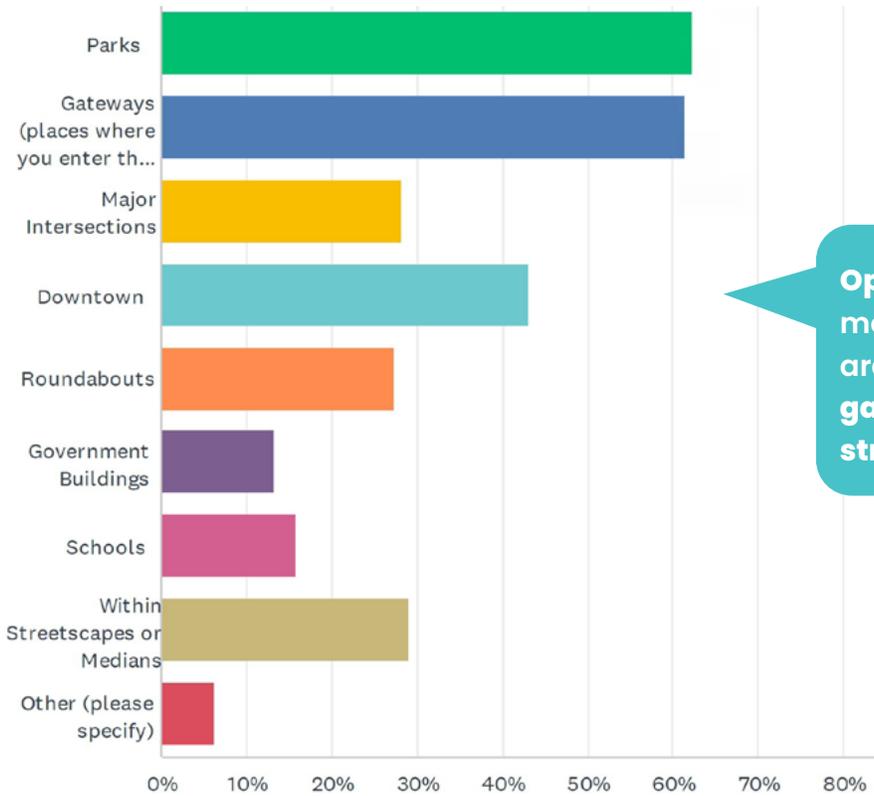
### Arts in the Neighborhoods

While there is value to the concentration of public art in Historical Downtown, the arts should extend citywide, with neighborhood parks serving as ideal locations to connect residents and offer opportunities for community-based art.

### Thoughtful Procedures

The Arts Commissioners are keen to establish thoughtful procedures to enhance the approach to arts in Oak Harbor, including setting clear priorities and rationales. For public art, there is a need for procedures to determine art locations, select artists, and manage artwork, with specific provisions for maintenance, relocation, and deaccession.

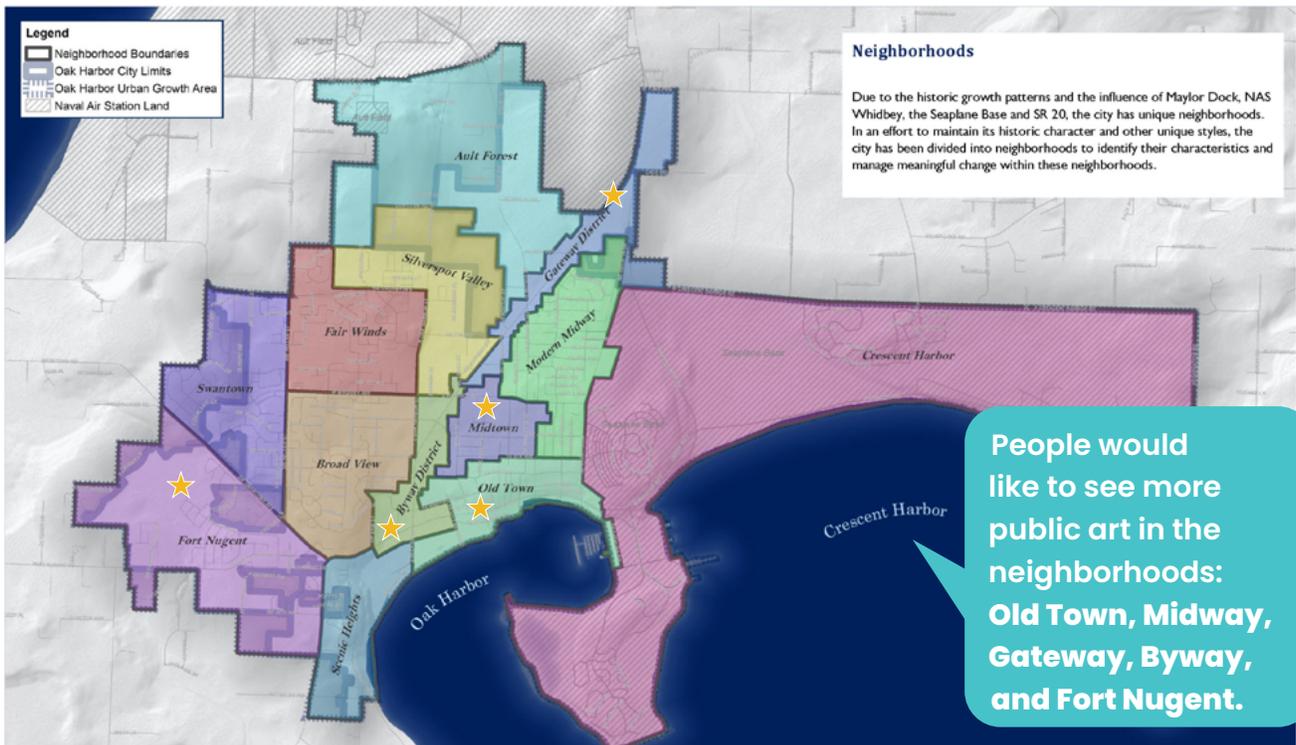




Where specifically do you see opportunities for more public art pieces?

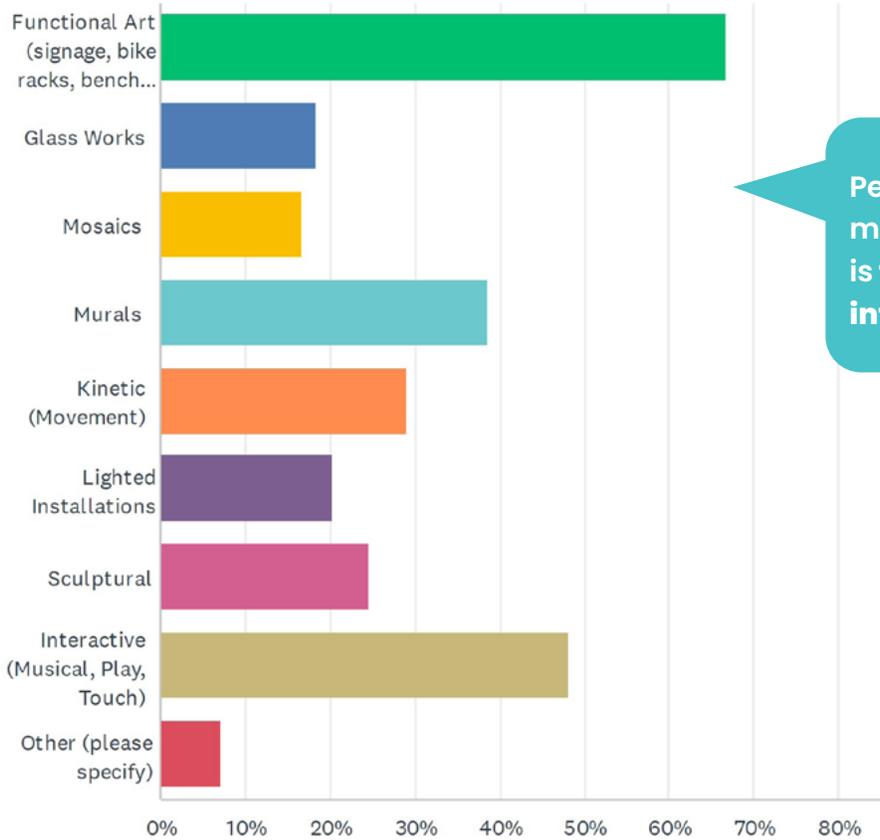
**Opportunities for more public art are seen in parks, gateways, downtown, streetscapes.**

Where would you like to see more public art in Oak Harbor?



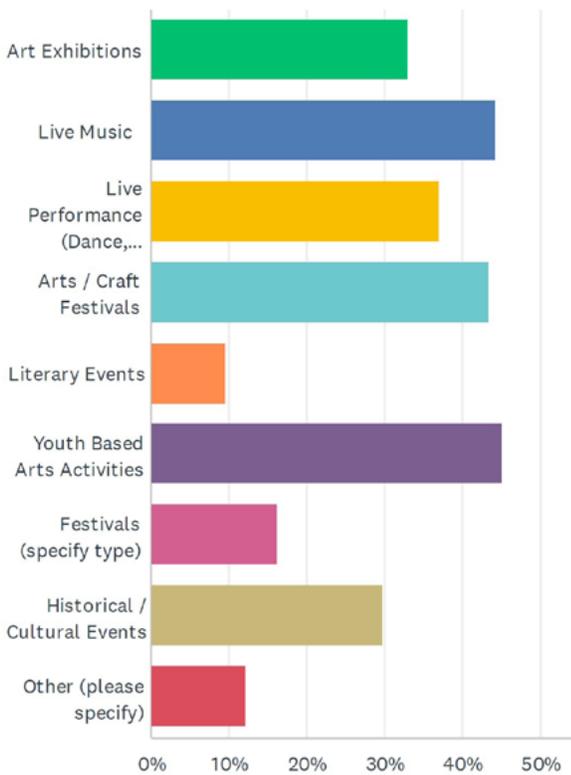
**People would like to see more public art in the neighborhoods: Old Town, Midway, Gateway, Byway, and Fort Nugent.**

What types of public art would you like to see more of in Oak Harbor?



People would like more public art that is **functional and interactive.**

Something I'd like to see more of in Oak Harbor is...



They also want a **variety of arts activities.**

Other (Please Specify)

- Maritime Renaissance
- Maker centers that allow art for all
- Outdoor movies, Food truck area. Outdoor storytime for families
- Permanent auditorium for musical/theater performance
- More water activity
- Adult art classes/activities and cultural events
- Film festivals.
- Public Art Museum that features rotating local and curated pieces

---

# Arts In Oak Harbor

## The Existing Arts Ecosystem

We start with enumerating the current arts offerings in Oak Harbor, both to recognize and honor the work that is being done by many community members and organizations, and to note where there are opportunities to strengthen the arts in Oak Harbor.

- **50+ pieces of art**, owned by both public and private entities, are featured in Public Spaces.
- **16+ sculptures and murals in Downtown** Oak Harbor beautifully enhance historic buildings and enrich the city's unique sense of place.
- **Strong visual and performing arts programs in the schools**
- **Well-attended community events**, including the Music Fest, Whidbey Island Marathon, 4th of July celebration, and Holland Happening.
- **Performing arts** including the Whidbey Playhouse, the Community Chorus, and school performances.
- **A variety of local businesses with arts-related exhibitions and activities**, a historic downtown, and a healthy downtown organization hosting performances and events.
- **44% of Whidbey Island's travel impact and 16% of lodging sales** in 2022 come from Oak Harbor, according to *The Economic Impact of Travel in Island County, WA (2022)*. Travel impacts reflect the economic activity generated by travel, including transportation, lodging, dining, and recreation.
- **A strong commitment to the arts** from the Park and Recreation Department and the school district.

---

## Art and the Uniqueness of Oak Harbor

**Oak Harbor has an enviable set of assets and amenities that offer a rich starting point for artistic expression that can magnify the unique sense of place.** These assets range from an exceptional waterfront setting to a diverse set of community members that call it home. The city's proud military heritage, anchored by Naval Air Station Whidbey Island, is complemented by a small-town atmosphere that respects both history and diverse cultures. With excellent educational opportunities, numerous community organizations and an affordable cost of living, generations return to Oak Harbor to raise their families.

**The city is deeply connected to nature, taking great pride in its maritime setting, distinctive Garry Oak trees, and rich history, honoring the Indigenous peoples who have long called this harbor home, as well as its agricultural and maritime roots.** These themes are all found in the public art, interpretive signs, and murals of Oak Harbor.

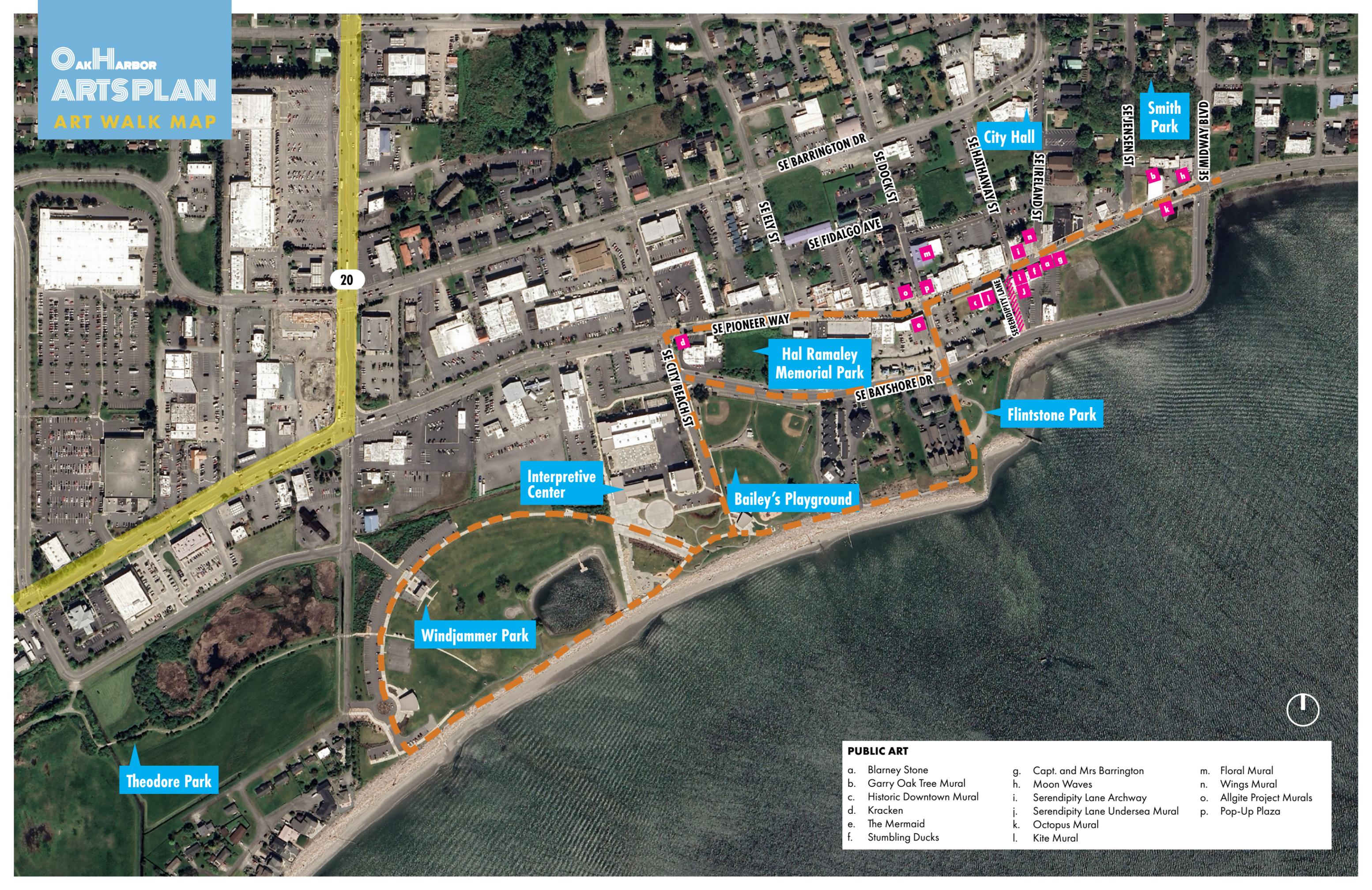
**Oak Harbor is a city that knows how to throw great events.** The Music Festival draws thousands of people locally and regionally as summer draws to a close. The community comes together with a shared patriotic spirit for the 4th of July celebration, and honors the various heritages at the Holland Happening in the spring, showcasing the art of Oak Harbor's children.

**The arts are central to the attractiveness of Oak Harbor.** Historical Downtown's local shops and restaurants, murals, music and events are key to community identity and public life. Many of the city's sculptures enliven Pioneer Way, including the mermaid, an octopus with tentacles around a utility pole, and the stumbling duckling.

**The waterfront and Windjammer Park also host a wide variety of public art pieces and activities.** Some relate to the city's history. Others were lovingly created to honor members of the community— the obelisk commemorating fallen airmen, the garden in honor of Oak Harbor's teachers, and the Japanese garden. There is art by and for children, with the library's story walk and the children's art near the whimsical shipwreck at the spray park.

**Oak Harbor is a creative community,** with strong visual and performing arts programs in the schools and popular arts organizations including the community theater and chorale people.

*Oak Harbor does an excellent job of creating arts offerings that engage the community in events and public art that honors the characteristics of its unique location and history. **Still, it is not as recognized as it should be as an arts leader by its residents, locally, and regionally.***



Theodore Park

Windjammer Park

Interpretive Center

Bailey's Playground

Flintstone Park

Hal Ramaley Memorial Park

City Hall

Smith Park

20

**PUBLIC ART**

- |                            |                                    |                           |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------|
| a. Blarney Stone           | g. Capt. and Mrs Barrington        | m. Floral Mural           |
| b. Garry Oak Tree Mural    | h. Moon Waves                      | n. Wings Mural            |
| c. Historic Downtown Mural | i. Serendipity Lane Archway        | o. Allgite Project Murals |
| d. Kracken                 | j. Serendipity Lane Undersea Mural | p. Pop-Up Plaza           |
| e. The Mermaid             | k. Octopus Mural                   |                           |
| f. Stumbling Ducks         | l. Kite Mural                      |                           |





---

# OH Arts Is...

## Recognizing the Arts

In exploring the range of creative endeavors in Oak Harbor, it was clear that the community is rich in public art and community events. Yet people expressed the sentiment that art was too often seen as something “not for them”. One of the goals of this plan is to **encourage the understanding of the arts as broader than just for “art people”**. Some of Oak Harbor’s sculptures are particularly loved even by those who don’t think of themselves as art lovers—kids taking a ride in the Flintstone car, or sitting beside the mermaid. People singing together at karaoke night, programs that gift guitars to veterans, live music at the skate shop.

“OH Arts is” collects images that **spotlight the breadth** of what the arts mean in the community, and the value it brings. That **recognition and visibility are key** to supporting the activities, the public art, the learning and sharing opportunities that bring people together, build skills and relationships, and make Oak Harbor such a desirable place to live. The arts are for the people of Oak Harbor.

### The arts are for all of us.

There are many ways to participate in creative activities, celebrations, and shared traditions.

### The arts create invitations.

OH Arts is...showcases ways that cultural offerings welcome participation in the community by those who live here, and an enticement to visitors.

### The arts are a source of pride.

The arts can be a source of pride for the community and serve as an antidote to the commercial aesthetic along the highway that many Whidbey Island visitors never get past.



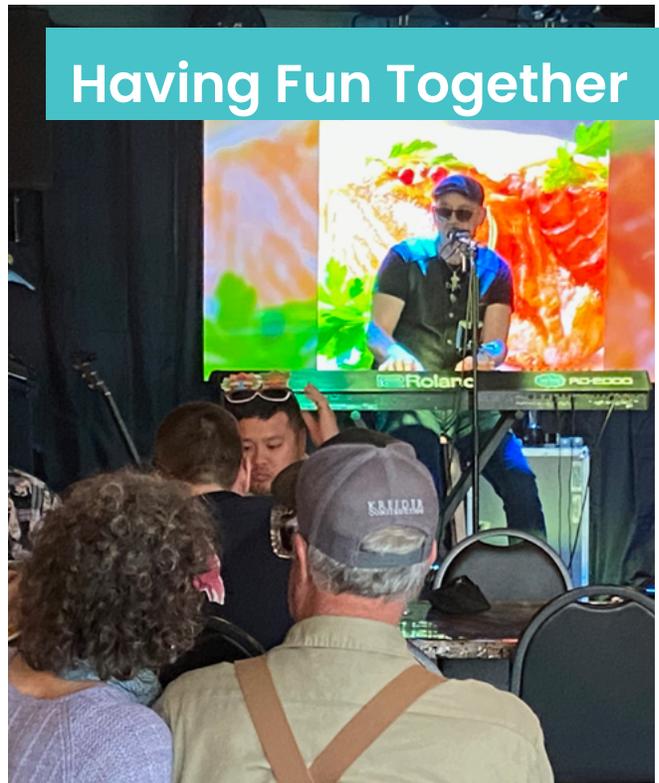
FIG 1. The “OH Arts Is” online submission is a Facebook arts campaign where the community shares what art means to them.

*Art in Oak Harbor is about...*

**Creative Energy**



**Having Fun Together**



*Art in Oak Harbor is about...*

**Appreciating our Unique Beauty**



**Connecting to History, Honoring People**

## Art in Oak Harbor is about...



Expressing Meaning



Defining Oak Harbor's Image

Art in Oak Harbor is about...



Adding Character



All About the Kids



Building Skills

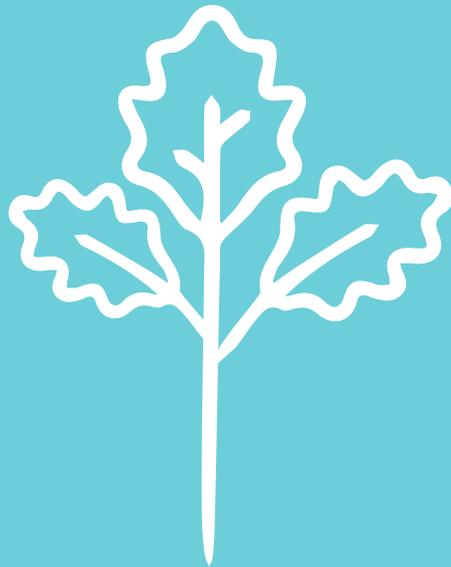


Stronger Connections



# 02

## **Building The Structure**



---

# The Structure

Public artistic expressions of all kinds enrich the cultural, economic, educational, and social fabric of the community, contributing to the well-being and quality of life for residents. To that end, the City has a structure in place to address providing the public benefits of art through the empowerment of the Arts Commission. This arts plan is intended to strengthen that structure, align the City's activities with the needs and desires of the community, and to create a set of procedures and other tools that will better organize the process of selecting and delivering arts-related activities in Oak Harbor.

## Creating a Successful Structure

This Plan builds on the policy foundation by synchronizing it with public input and setting out more specific actions. These goals become the basis of criteria for project selection and resource allocation. Collectively, the arts projects will help achieve the breadth of these goals.

### Aligning with City Goals

A solid structure begins with the vision and goals of the City of Oak Harbor, and consideration of how arts and cultural activities can help to accomplish them. The City's vision is to be a *"vibrant Whidbey Island waterfront community where everyone is welcome and encouraged to thrive"*, with goals that include improving the appearance and livability of the community.

### Defining Responsibilities

The primary mechanism for harnessing the arts is through the Arts Commission, and the Commission is the focus of this Plan. An additional goal of this Plan is to look for opportunities for coordination of arts planning with the City's guiding policy documents, particularly the Comprehensive Plan, and where appropriate, coordinating efforts among City departments for achieving mutual goals (see Appendix 1).

---

The Arts Commission makes recommendations to the Mayor and City Council on activities, projects, and programs that the City should sponsor or undertake to promote the aims outlined on the Arts Commission website. The mission statement will be revisited bi-annually:

- *Foster arts and cultural programs for the enrichment of the City and its residents old and new*
- *Foster the development of a local arts community, encouraging an environment for the success of working individual artists*
- *Coordinate and strengthen new and existing art organizations and develop cooperation with regional entities*
- *Develop a program for public art, including identifying sources of funding*
- *Further the vision of Oak Harbor as a vibrant and progressive community*

Coordinating with the Arts Commission to execute this Plan, the City should consider dedicating staffing time for management and monitoring, such as an arts coordinator and arts supervisor, to manage the website, facilitate arts activities, oversee public art programs, and support arts and culture events.

## **Organization and Procedures**

A successful arts and culture program begins with the implementation of best practices in its administration. This includes establishing clear and efficient organizational procedures and applying thoughtful criteria when selecting actions and projects to ensure alignment with program goals and community needs.

## **Program and Activity Selection**

Encourage creativity and skill-building among individuals and groups by supporting diverse and inclusive arts initiatives. Selection processes should be guided by the established organizational procedures.

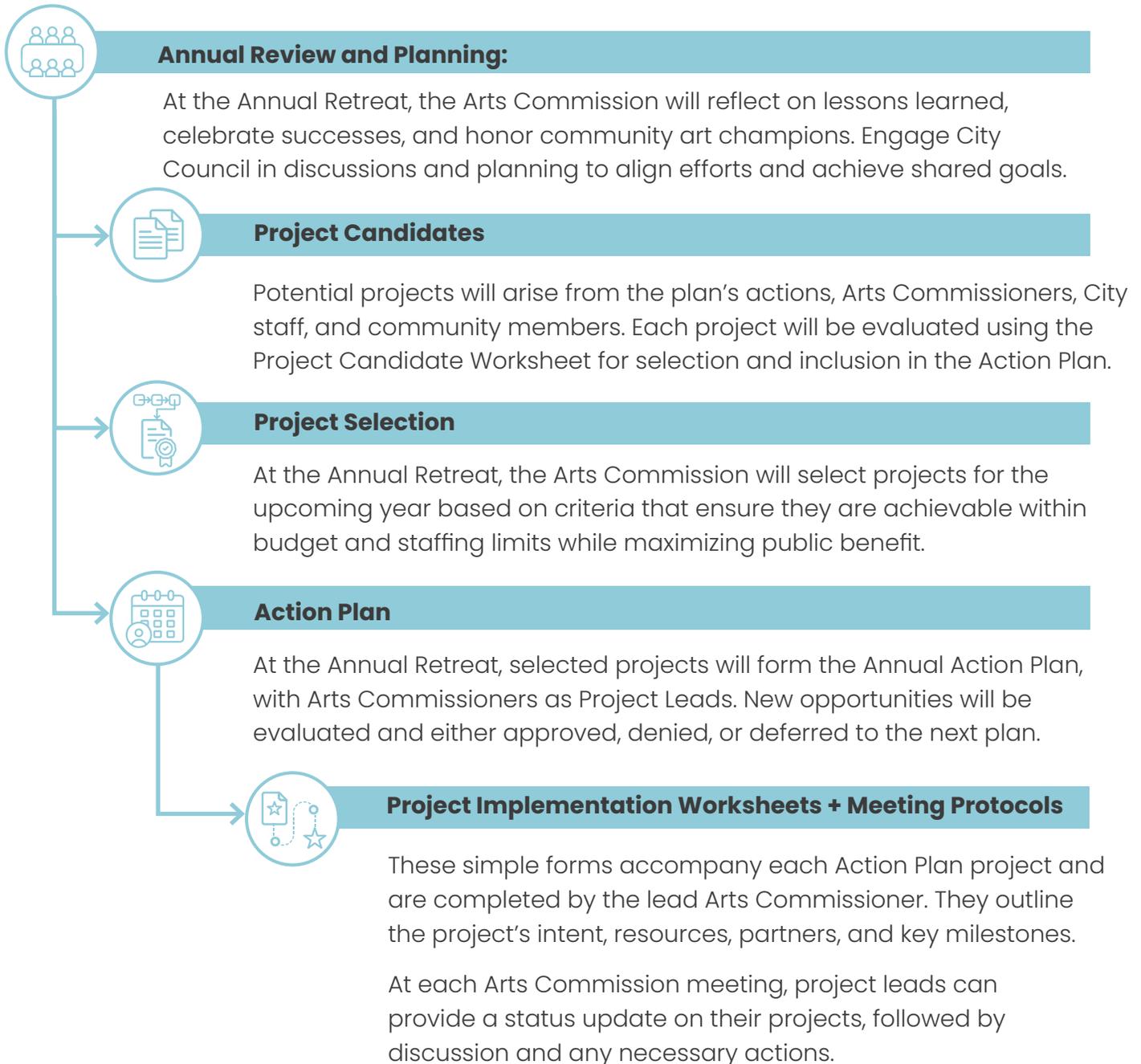
Programs and activities should inspire participation, reflect the city's cultural identity, and seize opportunities to further city objectives through arts and culture, fostering a vibrant and connected community.

---

# Procedures

## Enacting Procedures

Expanding Oak Harbor’s arts scene begins with establishing procedures. The following set of procedures aims to guide project selection, ensuring thoughtful planning aligned with the community’s vision.



---

## Criteria for Selecting Actions

The City's first charge of the Arts Commission is to foster arts and cultural programs for the enrichment of the people of Oak Harbor. A set of criteria is needed in order to successfully fulfill this mission. These criteria, based on the consistent themes from public input, are suggested for adoption by the Arts Commission. It is important to note that not every project will achieve all the goals, but the selection of the group of projects for each year should accomplish a range of criteria.



**Visibility:** Does the project make arts and culture more visible to a large number of people? Does it contribute to showing Oak Harbor's creativity to both residents and visitors? Does it strengthen the image of Oak Harbor?



**Connectivity:** Does the project help to enhance physical connections within the city and/or improve wayfinding?



**Coordination:** Does the project bring together people in the arts community and/or leadership to work together and leverage time and resources?



**Geographic Distribution:** Does the project bring arts out into the neighborhoods and engage local community members in shaping their public spaces? Alternatively, does it contribute to an attractive cluster of arts in an important geographic location, such as the waterfront, the historic area, key pathways, etc?



**Serving the breadth of the community:** Who does the project serve in the community? Does it offer needed programs, events, or public art for communities that are currently underserved? Does outreach show that the project is meaningful to the communities it serves?



**Increasing Space for Arts and Culture:** Does the project help add needed space for the arts? What are the City's and Arts Commission's roles and are they key to project success?



**Level of Benefit/Level of Investment:** Does the level of effort and resources needed for the project result in a benefit in line with the commitment of resources?

# Arts Commission Annual Retreat

## Year One Step-by-Step



With the adoption of this plan, the Arts Commission effectively adopts the tools included in this plan: criteria for project selection, procedures based on best practices.



Update the City website to include a more complete and engaging inventory of Oak Harbor's public art. This is being done as part of this plan.

### At the Annual Retreat:



Hold an **Annual Arts Commission Retreat** to assess the prior year's lessons learned and create an Annual Action Plan based on the selection criteria. The initial retreat should be a facilitated, day-long session, evaluated afterward to inform subsequent retreats. **Engage City Council** in discussions and planning to align efforts and achieve shared goals.



Arts Commissioners will bring a set of **Candidate Project Worksheets** to be moved forward over a three-year period.



**Select a set of projects**, based on the Project Selection Matrix and addressing a range of audiences, levels of ambition, and time frames, using the sample project selection matrix as a basis.



Create a **Action Plan** that will put into motion the set of projects selected for the year, identifying an Arts Commission member to be the Project Lead for the implementation. The Project Lead will fill out the Project Implementation Plan to track their project.

### After the Annual Retreat:



Assess **communication** methods and coordination opportunities with local and regional organizations.



At the monthly Arts Commission meeting, the Project Lead should provide an **update on each project**, including its implementation progress and any identified needs.

# Candidate Project Worksheet



Candidate Projects need an Arts Commission sponsor to ensure sufficient interest and commitment. Any member of the community can suggest a candidate project. See the fillable form in Appendix 2.

CANDIDATE PROJECT [EXAMPLE]	
<b>Project Overview</b>	
Project Name:	
Location:	
People / Organization Involved:	
Proposed Timeline:	
Proposed Budget:	
Project Description:	
Support Needed from Arts Commission:	
Description of How the Proposal Meets the Criteria	AC EVALUATION
<i>Score each item: 1 = Meets Expectations; 2 = Exceeds Expectations; 3 = Outstanding</i>	
<b>Visibility:</b> Does the project make arts and culture more visible to a large number of people? Does it contribute to showing Oak Harbor’s creativity to both residents and visitors? Does it strengthen the image of Oak Harbor?	☆☆☆
<b>Connectivity:</b> Does the project help to enhance physical connections within the city and/or improve wayfinding?	☆☆☆
<b>Coordination:</b> Does the project bring together people in the arts community and/or leadership to work together and leverage time and resources?	☆☆☆
<b>Geographic Distribution:</b> Does the project bring arts out into the neighborhoods and engage local community members in shaping their public spaces? Alternatively, does it contribute to an attractive cluster of arts in an important geographic location, such as the waterfront, the historic area, key pathways, etc?	☆☆☆
<b>Serving the breadth of the community:</b> Who does the project serve in the community? Does it offer needed programs, events, or public art for communities that are currently underserved? Does outreach show that the project is meaningful to the communities it serves?	☆☆☆
<b>Increasing Space for Arts and Culture:</b> Does the project help add needed space for the arts? Are the City’s and Arts Commission roles key to success?	☆☆☆
<b>Level of Benefit/Level of Investment:</b> Does the level of effort and resources needed for the project result in a benefit in line with the commitment of resources?	☆☆☆
<b>Arts Commission Evaluation / Notes</b>	
 Check this box if the project is selected	

# Project Selection Matrix



The Matrix shown below illustrates how a set of projects can be considered in regard to the selection criteria, budget, and timeline. Ideally, the matrix will include low-budget near-term projects, mid-term projects, and setting up ambitious and/ or longer-term projects. It will clarify how the projects fit into the resources available, including people’s time and financial resources. Each individual project is then considered separately in terms of how it will be implemented. Even for the longer term projects, a lead should be selected, with a plan for near term actions to set up the resources and the process needed over time. See the fillable form in Appendix 2.

PROJECT SELECTION MATRIX [EXAMPLE]					
Values	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	AC Lead	Budget
Visibility	Mural			<i>name here</i>	\$
		Gateway Arts - 1			\$\$\$
			Gateway Arts - 2		\$\$\$
Connectivity	Chalk the Sidewalk				\$
		DT Wayfindings -1			\$\$\$
			DT Wayfindings -3		\$\$\$
Coordination	Artist Roster		Refresh Roster		\$
		Annual Award			\$
			Quarterly Arts Mixer		\$
Geographic Distribution	Transit Center Arts				\$\$
		Youth Film Program			\$\$
			Art Sparks		\$\$
New Venues	Interpretive Center Activation				\$
		Interpretive Center Event Series	Interpretive Center Event Series		\$\$
... ..					

# Annual Action Plan



The Arts Commission should develop an Annual Public Art Action Plan that outlines proposed public art activities and projects for the coming year.

The Action Plan should include a budget request for Arts Commission operating funds, covering administrative, project management, curatorial and planning support; grants to artists and organizations; and expenses for communications and marketing.

The Action Plan should also list new and ongoing public art projects, including location, proposed budgets, allocation, artist selection process or artist (if already selected), anticipated completion date and a brief project description. This would be an informational report to the Mayor and Commission, and would be similar to the project status reports that Arts Commission already produces. See the fillable form in Appendix 2.

Coordinating with the Arts Commission to execute this Plan, the City should consider dedicating staffing time for management and monitoring, such as an arts coordinator and arts supervisor, to manage the website, facilitate arts activities, oversee public art programs, and support arts and culture events.

ANNUAL ACTION PLAN [EXAMPLE]				
Project	Schedule Milestones	Task Lead	Timeline	Budget
Ongoing Arts Programs Promotion	Task 1: Review program calendar	ALL	Jan	\$
	Task 2: Update program calendar	City	Jan	
	Task 3: Update web pages	City	Ongoing	
Sponsor Art Show	Task 1: Update application form	Team A	Feb	\$\$
	Task 2: Project Promotion	City	Feb ~ Mar	
	Task 3: Application selection	Team B	Mar	
	Task 4: Event Day!	All	Mar	
Street Mural	Task 1: Request for proposal	Team C	Apr ~ May	\$\$
	Task 2: Application selection	Team C	May	
	Task 3: Design development + Implementation	Team C	May ~ Jul	
	Task 4: Community celebration	All	Aug	

# Project Implementation Plan



Bringing even simple projects to life requires a level of project management. This management can happen in a variety of ways, by tapping staff at partner organizations, relying on City staff, or using the time and expertise of Arts Commission members. Some actions need to be City led, for example, the signing of contracts, or decisions on public property. Being organized and clear about the implementation of each project, regardless of its level of difficulty, will support successful implementation.

A sample Project Implementation Plan is shown below. For complex public art commission work, please refer to the Appendix 5 “From Vision to Public Display: A Step-by-Step Guide to Commissioning Public Art.” [See the fillable form in Appendix 2.](#)

PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION [EXAMPLE]			
<b>Project</b>			
Project Name:			
Lead Commissioner:			
Project Objective:			
Relationship to Criteria:			
<b>Resources</b>			
Budget:			
Available Funding:			
City Staffing Needs:			
Partners:		Organization/Contact:	
		Organization/Contact:	
<b>Schedule Milestones</b>			
Task 1: Description	Expected Date Complete:	Date Completed:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Task 2:	Expected Date Complete:	Date Completed:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Task 3:	Expected Date Complete:	Date Completed:	<input type="checkbox"/>
Task 4:	Expected Date Complete:	Date Completed:	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Notes</b>			

---

# Sustaining Public Arts

Oak Harbor’s public art scene is alive and growing! The city is home to over 50 unique artworks, each with its own story to tell. From towering sculptures to vibrant murals, our collection reflects the city’s diverse spirit.

Implementation is when ideas and aspirations take root and thrive! Commissioning public art is a collaborative journey. Artists, fabricators, engineers, stakeholders, and city leaders work together to create something extraordinary. It is a complex process with unique challenges. Whether it be a downtown busker program, a new mural, or the commissioning of a landmark artwork – art takes time! It is not unusual for public artworks and events to take up to two or three years to complete, and the projects themselves can be complex. Often, different team members are engaged during different phases, and it’s important to keep momentum up and everyone informed every step of the way.

This toolkit ensures that the collection continues to thrive by maintaining and managing current artworks, planning for changes like relocating or deaccessioning a particular piece, and exploring new ways to creatively engage the community.

## Commissioning of an Art Work

### Call for Art

This Art Protocols (Appendix 3) outlines the steps for commissioning public art, from inviting submissions to celebrating the final installation. A “Call for Art” is an invitation for artists to submit their work for potential inclusion in a public exhibition, project, or competition. The most common methods of soliciting artists are through a Request for Qualifications (RFQ), which seeks their qualifications, or a Request for Proposals (RFP), which asks for a project proposal. Appendix 4 provides an example of a Call for Art template.

---

## From Vision to Public Display

To ensure a successful project, this Plan outlined nine key milestones (Appendix 5.) From the initial artist selection to the final public unveiling, these steps guide us toward a vibrant, inspiring piece of art or creatively engaging event for our community. Each milestone is a moment to be celebrated, from groundbreaking for a sculpture, to the live painting of a mural, as we transform vision into reality.



*FIG 2. Members of the City of Oak Harbor and Sculpture Northwest cut the ribbon for the Angel de Creatividad at Flintstone Park. SAM FLETCHER*

## Relocating an Art Work

Relocation means a procedure for the movement of an artwork from one location to another. The Art Protocols (Appendix 3) outlines the steps for relocating a public artwork, ensuring a respectful and careful process that honors the artist's vision and complies with legal requirements. Each step aims to preserve the integrity of the artwork while facilitating its move to a new location.

## Deaccessioning an Art Work

Deaccession means a procedure for the withdrawal of an artwork from the public arts collection and the determination of its future disposition. The Art Protocols (Appendix 3) outlines the steps for deaccessioning a public artwork, ensuring a thoughtful process that involves the artist and the community. The goal is to responsibly manage the artwork's future, whether through return, donation, or sale, while maintaining proper documentation and transparency.

---

# Funding Opportunities

This chapter evaluates Oak Harbor’s arts and culture economy, focusing on indicators like population share, taxable retail sales, and comparisons with peer cities. It examines current investments in arts and culture, identifies untapped potential, and outlines strategies to increase investment in the sector summarized as follows:

- Oak Harbor is home to a large majority (almost 89%) of Island County’s population in incorporated areas, and is the center of retail, service, education, lodging, and food service. Oak Harbor’s arts sector slightly underperforms its population share in Island County, but as the economic and population center of the island, Oak Harbor has a clear opportunity to further develop its “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” sector.
- The Creative Arts Fund, supported by utility tax proceeds, provides opportunities for investment in arts projects. Strategic use of these funds can increase Oak Harbor’s identity, economy, and quality of life.
- Strategies to increase arts investment include boosting the Creative Arts Fund, establishing a Creative District, pursuing Lodging Tax funding, and supporting capacity building and partnerships with local organizations for state and national funding.

## Arts and Culture Economy on Whidbey Island

The City of Oak Harbor’s status as the largest City (by population and area) in Island County, and more specifically on Whidbey Island, and the somewhat isolated nature of Whidbey Island is critical context that impacts the City’s existing and future arts economy.

Island County is comprised of Whidbey Island and Camano Island, and, as of 2024, has an overall population of approximately 88,650. Island County is primarily unincorporated, with only approximately 31% of the population residing in a City. Almost 89% of the incorporated population, 28% of the county’s population overall, resides in Oak Harbor.

---

Despite the fact that such a large share (almost 70%) of Island County’s population is unincorporated, the County does not have a dedicated arts and culture program or staff. This is consistent with most counties in Washington, and consistent with what many feel are counties’ role in municipal service provision in Washington as counties are intended to serve rural communities, while helping ensure growth occurs in urban areas, like cities, who provide urban services, like access to arts and culture and arts and culture services and programming.

This isn’t to say that no arts activities occur in counties generally, or Island County, specifically. Island County does have a policy for accepting gifts of art work, has recently explored arts based public engagement, and does collect and disburse lodging tax revenue (an estimated \$805,000 in 2024) allocating 40% of collections to chambers of commerce (and all chamber events); 20% to museums, historical societies, and Ebey’s Landing National Historical Reserve; 30% to non-chamber related community events; and 10% for one-time capital funding requests). Historically, the program has funded approximately 20-25 proposals for Whidbey and Camano Island events, visitor centers, and tourism activities. In 2024, it funded many historical, cultural, and arts related organizations in and around Oak Harbor (listed following), however, it did not directly fund the the City’s arts related activities.

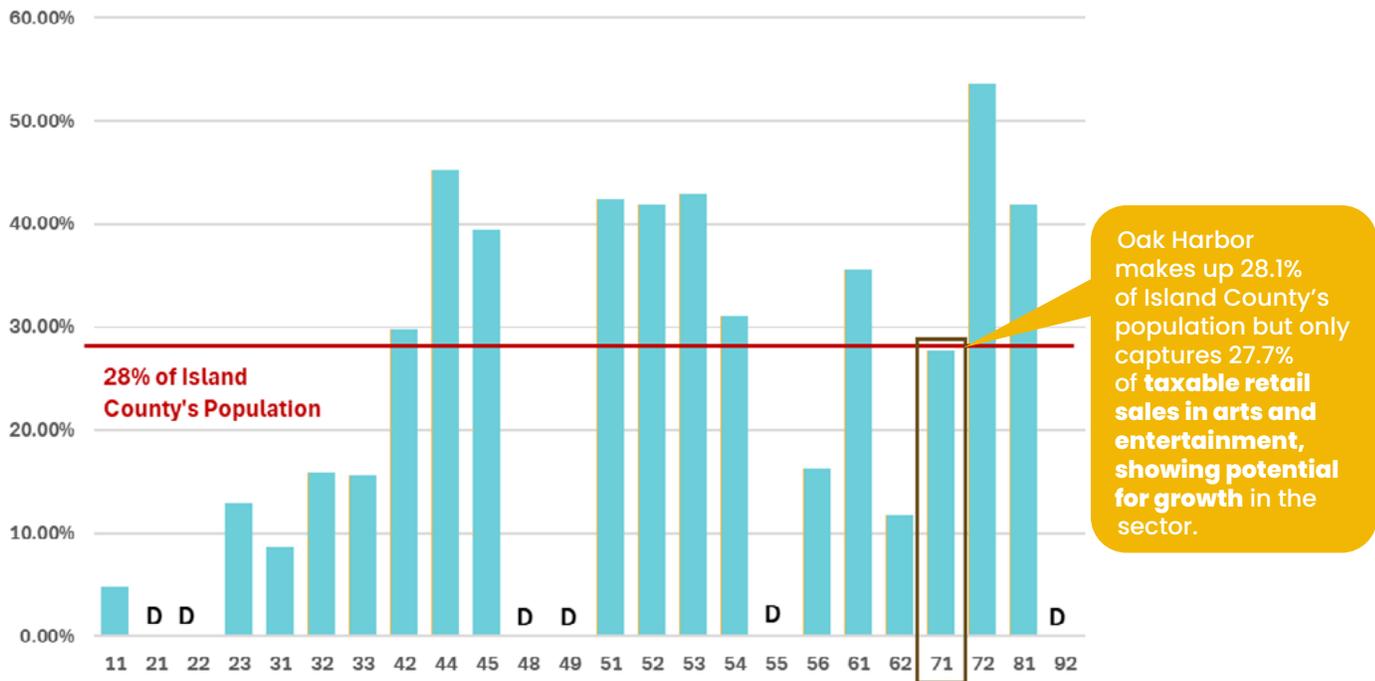
- Ebey’s landing National Historical Reserve (\$18,000)
- South Whidbey Historical Society (\$12,000)
- Island County Historical Society Museum (\$50,000)
- Whidbey Island Center for the Arts (\$43,000)
- Coupeville Historical Waterfront Association (\$9,000)
- Penn Cove Water Festival (\$4,000)
- Island Shakespeare Festival (\$21,000)
- Whidbey Island Arts Council (\$12,500)
- Price Sculpture Forest (\$9,500)
- Oak Harbor Music Festival (\$27,500)
- Oak Harbor Main Street (\$22,500)

In 2024, the lodging tax grants funded arts-related events organized by the Oak Harbor Music Festival, the Main Street Association, and the Oak Harbor Chamber of Commerce, demonstrating that the County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee may be willing to directly fund City arts-related events and programs in the future.

# Taxable Retail Sales in the Arts Sector

Given the City's geographic context and its role as the largest City on Whidbey Island, and therefore the primary provider of urban services there, it is obvious that Oak Harbor can and should play a large role in defining the Island's arts ecosystem. To understand whether or not this is already occurring, it is useful to consider whether the City is capturing arts and culture economy market share to its full potential or whether there are opportunities for it the arts and culture industry in Oak Harbor to grow. One way to consider this is by comparing Oak Harbor's current share of Island County's overall arts and culture economic activity compared to its share of the population. This is somewhat reductive as we must use proxy measures for Oak Harbor's arts and culture economy, in this case, taxable retail sales.

FIG 3. City of Oak Harbor's Share of Taxable Retail Sales Compared to Island County Overall, 2023



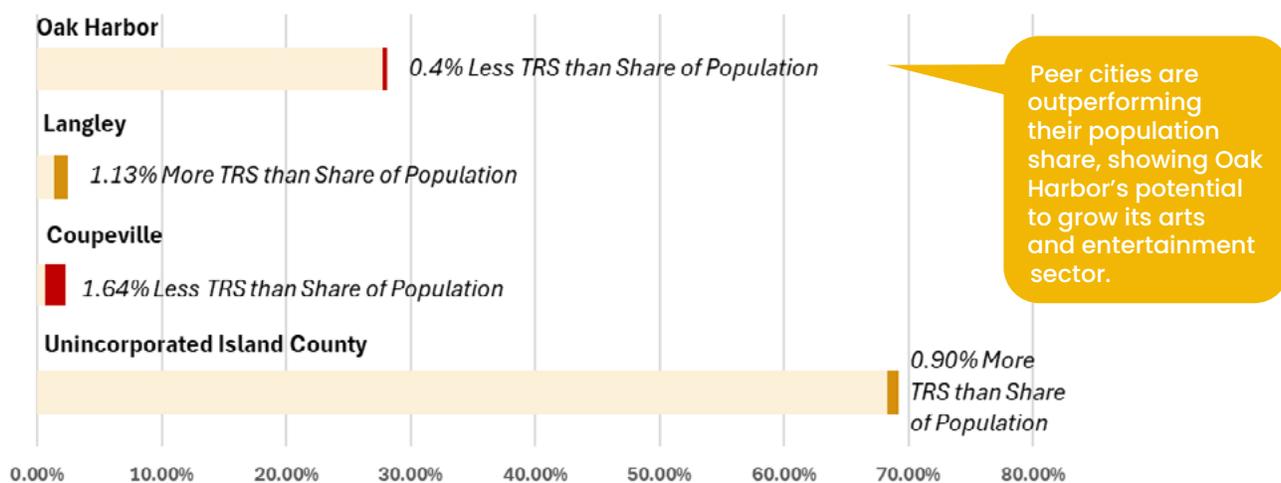
Note: The letter "D" indicates that data have been withheld to avoid disclosure of individual firm information. This is required by the excise tax confidentiality statute.

- 11: Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing and Hunting
- 21: Mining, Quarrying, and Oil and Gas Extraction
- 22: Utilities
- 23: Construction
- 31-33: Manufacturing
- 42: Wholesale Trade
- 44-45: Retail Trade
- 48-49: Transportation and Warehousing
- 51: Information
- 52: Finance and Insurance

- 53: Real Estate and Rental and Leasing
- 54: Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services
- 55: Management of Companies and Enterprises
- 56: Administrative and Support and Waste Management and Remediation Services
- 61: Educational Services
- 62: Health Care and Social Assistance
- 71: Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation
- 72: Accommodation and Food Services
- 81: Other Services (except Public Administration)
- 92: Public Administration

In 2023, Oak Harbor was approximately 28.1% of Island County’s population and captured approximately 27.7% of its taxable retail sales related to “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” (that is, it captured slightly less than its “fair share” of countywide taxable retail sales based on its population). To better understand this trend, we compared the City of Oak Harbor’s capture of “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” taxable retail sales to the other two incorporated areas in Island County (the City’s of Coupeville and Langley) and unincorporated Island County. We found that both Langley and unincorporated Island County are collecting more than their “fair share” of countywide taxable retail sales based on its population, as shown in figure below.

FIG 4. City of Oak Harbor’s Share of Taxable Retail Sales Compared to Island County Overall, 2023



Proportional to its size, the City of Langley is collecting far more taxable retail sales related to “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” than we might expect. This matches perceptions of the City of Langley’s stronghold over arts and culture activities on Whidbey Island, however, it also demonstrates that despite Langley’s perceived strength in the “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” industry, the City of Oak Harbor still has far more economic activity related to that industry.

According to *The Economic Impact of Travel in Island County, WA (2022)*, Oak Harbor leads Whidbey Island with 44% of the highest share of travel impact and 16% of lodging sales. These travel impacts consider transportation, lodging, dining, and recreation. As the economic and population center of the island, Oak Harbor has a clear opportunity to further develop its “Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation” sector.

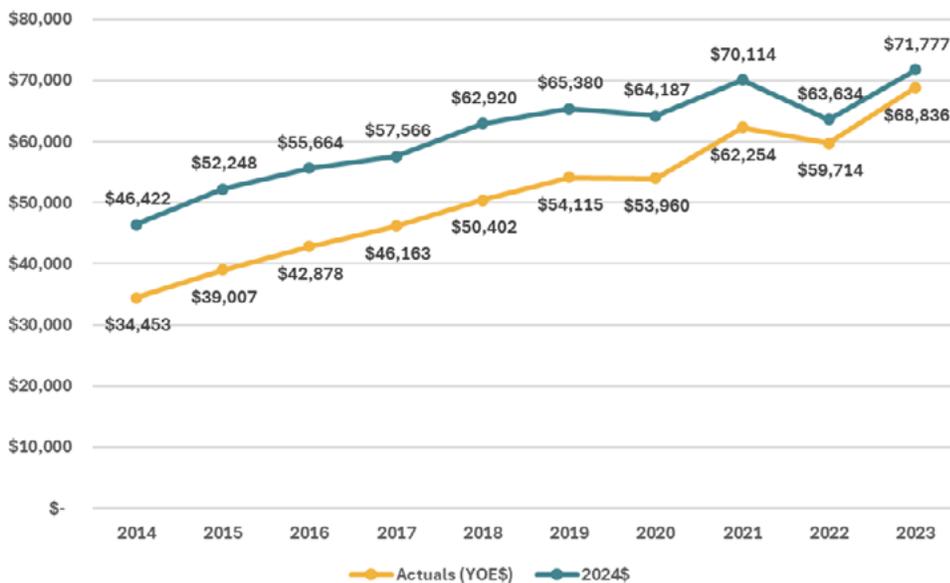
# Current Investment in Arts and Culture

## Creative Arts Fund

The City of Oak Harbor records its arts revenues and activities in Fund 115, known as the Creative Arts Fund (previously named the “Arts Acquisition and Maintenance” fund). The primary revenue collected within this fund is one-quarter percent of the proceeds of the City’s utility tax on Water, Sewer, and Solid Waste. These funds are dedicated to fostering the creative arts in the City. **The Creative Arts Fund has historically collected a quarter-percent of the proceeds from the City’s utility tax**, the value of which increased when the City raised its utility tax from 6.25% to 9.832% in July 2024. Council’s decision to increase utility taxes was based on a desire to be more in line with the statewide municipal average. While the increased tax rate did marginally increase the utility taxes available for creative arts, the City Council noted that additional tax collections due to the utility tax increase are primarily earmarked for public safety and indigent defense.

Utility taxes are based off collections from 1) City owned utilities and 2) non-City utilities such as electric, gas, Island Disposal, and telephone. Collections track closely with utility rates and economic activity but have also been buttressed by the ongoing transition from land-line telephones to cell phones. While utility tax proceeds are influenced by economic activity, they are not as volatile as some city revenue sources (for example, retail sales and use tax). Taxes are collected in the Utility Fund and transferred to the General Fund and the Cultural Arts Fund.

FIG 5. Creative Arts Fund Revenues, FY 2014 to 2023, Actuals (YOES) and 2024\$



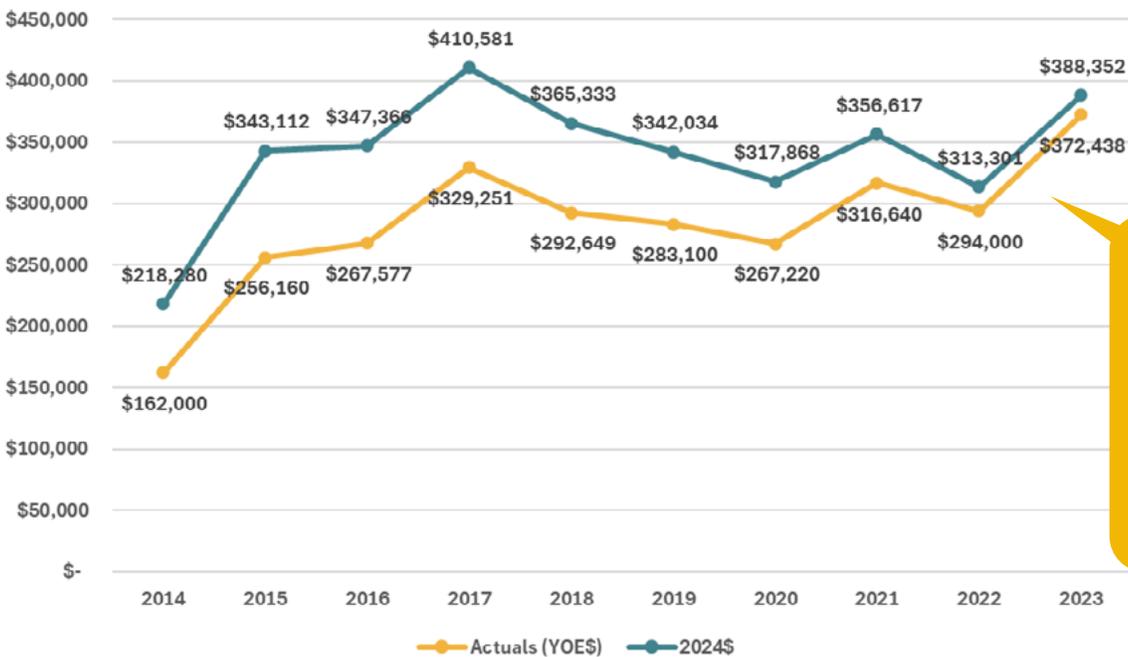
This chart presents the Creative Arts Fund revenues as both actuals and inflation adjusted values to demonstrate the growth of this revenue source over time.

Creative Arts Fund resources have historically been primarily spent on operations and maintenance, with larger capital outlay in some years, like FY 2023. However, **a key theme of activity within the Creative Arts Fund has been the limited spend-down of its resources.** As of 2024, the Creative Arts Fund had an estimated beginning budgeted fund balance of \$284,468. This represents a significant accumulation of total revenues over the last decade, identifying both a need to spend down revenues in the Creative Arts Fund as they are an accumulated and the **opportunity for a major project to catalyze this Arts Plan.**

## Lodging (Hotel-Motel) Tax

The Civic Improvement Fund (#116) receives hotel/motel tax revenues for expenditure on promotion of tourism. The City receives both the basic 2% and the additional 2% lodging taxes. The City of Oak Harbor currently levies 2% on lodging charges; this is the maximum lodging tax rate City’s are eligible to charge, as codified in RCW 67.28.181. **City Lodging Tax funds are reserved for “promotional activities which draw tourists” within the municipal boundaries of the City of Oak Harbor and all events must be open to the public, per RCW 67.28.080.**

FIG 6. Civic Improvement Fund (Lodging Tax) Revenues, FY 2014 to 2023, Actuals (YOES) and 2024\$



This chart presents the Civic Improvement Fund revenues as both actuals and inflation adjusted values to demonstrate the growth of this revenue source over time.

---

The City's Civic Improvement Fund revenues are primarily expended through a Lodging Tax grant program. **City of Oak Harbor's Lodging Tax grant program is administered by the City's Lodging Tax Advisory Committee and awards funds to special events, festivals and programs.** The grant program administered through a competitive application process. Like in the case of the County Lodging Tax grant program, historically, these funds have been available for historical, cultural, and arts related organizations, including the City of Oak Harbor itself. In 2025, these historical, cultural, and arts related awards include:

- Oak Harbor Music Festival (\$42,000)
- Oak Harbor Main Street – Historic Downtown Marketing (\$17,500)
- City of Oak Harbor Parks and Recreation – Chalk Fest (\$17,000)
- Whidbey Playhouse (\$12,000)
- Meerkerk Gardens – Snowdrop Celebration and Peak Boom Events (\$7,500)
- PBY Memorial Foundation – Northwest Naval Air Museum (\$6,000)
- Island County Master Gardener – Whidbey Gardening Workshop (\$4,000)
- The City of Oak Harbor also received a grant for \$25,000 for the Whidbey Island Marathon.



FIG 7. Island Thrift, Oak Harbor Music Festival 2022

---

## Increasing Investment in Arts and Culture

As discussed previously, the Creative Arts Fund had an estimated beginning budgeted fund balance of \$284,468 at the start of 2024. This represents a significant accumulation of total revenues over the last decade, identifying an opportunity to more aggressively invest in arts and culture in Oak Harbor. It is reasonable to assume that some of the hesitation related to spending down Creative Arts Fund resources is a need to balance capital outlay with the lifecycle costs of operating and maintaining acquisitions from purchase through the deaccession process.

Further, the City of Oak Harbor recently increased its primary source of funding for creative arts, by increasing its utility tax rate; it is unlikely that the City will increase this tax rate again, in the near term. Instead, we must consider more specific and targeted strategies for increasing investment in arts and culture in Oak Harbor:

- **Increase share of Utility Tax revenues to the Creative Arts Fund.** The City could reallocate its budget such that a greater share of the City's Utility tax revenues (currently only 0.25% of the City's 9.832% Utility Tax) revenues are available for Arts and Culture purposes. This may be challenging, as City Council has already established that the additional revenues from the City's increased Utility Tax for public safety and indigent defense.
- **Establish a Creative District.** The City of Oak Harbor could consider establishing a Creative District to enhance arts and culture activities in its historic downtown. Although this program does require some upfront effort, including the establishment of a community planning team, comprehensive planning, and certification, it offers a \$10,000 startup operating grant to launch your District program and up to \$50,000 in capital project funding for small-scale projects within your District. Oak Harbor's historic downtown and the art walk area have strong potential to become a creative district when the time is right. Langley has already established a Creative District.
- **Identify opportunities to pursue both City and County Lodging Tax competitive funding for arts and culture purposes.** It's clear that both the City and County Lodging Tax Advisory Committees are willing to fund the City of Oak Harbor directly. The City should consider opportunities to pursue this funding for tourism-driving arts and culture activities.
- **Support capacity building and partnership.** Lastly, although it will not increase the City's resources for arts and culture in Oak Harbor, the City could consider opportunities to support capacity building for arts and culture organizations in and serving Oak Harbor to help them more effectively pursue competitive funding for their activities, including from the City and County Lodging Tax Advisory Committee. The City may also consider partnering with local 501(c)(3) organizations to access state and national funding opportunities, such as ArtsWA or National Endowment for the Arts grants, which often require a foundation or collaboration with nonprofit partner.

# 03

# Opportunities & Potential Actions

*A tree deep-rooted yet dancing still.*

- Octavio Paz



---

# Opportunities and Potential Actions

For each of the primary topics we heard about from the community, listed on page 21, there are various possibilities arts-related actions. Opportunities and ideas for addressing these topics are included here, with examples that have been successful in other communities, as possible future actions for Oak Harbor. The ideas are not in order of priority, but should be considered per a menu of achievable, diverse priorities using the project selection matrix on page 42.

## Visibility

*Increase visibility of creativity, beauty, and quality of life in Oak Harbor, magnifying the unique qualities of the people and place.*

1. [Civic Entries and Alternative Routes](#)
2. [Create Artistic Gateways into Town](#)
3. [Arts in Transit / Poetry in Motion](#)
4. [Plaque & Marketing Initiatives](#)

## Connectivity

*Improve the image of the city to the people that live here and to visitors*

5. [Chalk the Dock](#)
6. [Connect to Marina and the College](#)

## Cooperation / Coordination

*Help connect the people of OH to the place and each other*

7. [Be the Convener](#)
8. [Honors and Awards Program](#)
9. [Flags for All](#)

## New Venues

*Encourage creativity and skill building to individuals and groups*

10. [Interpretive Center: Arts + Science](#)
11. [Support New Venues](#)

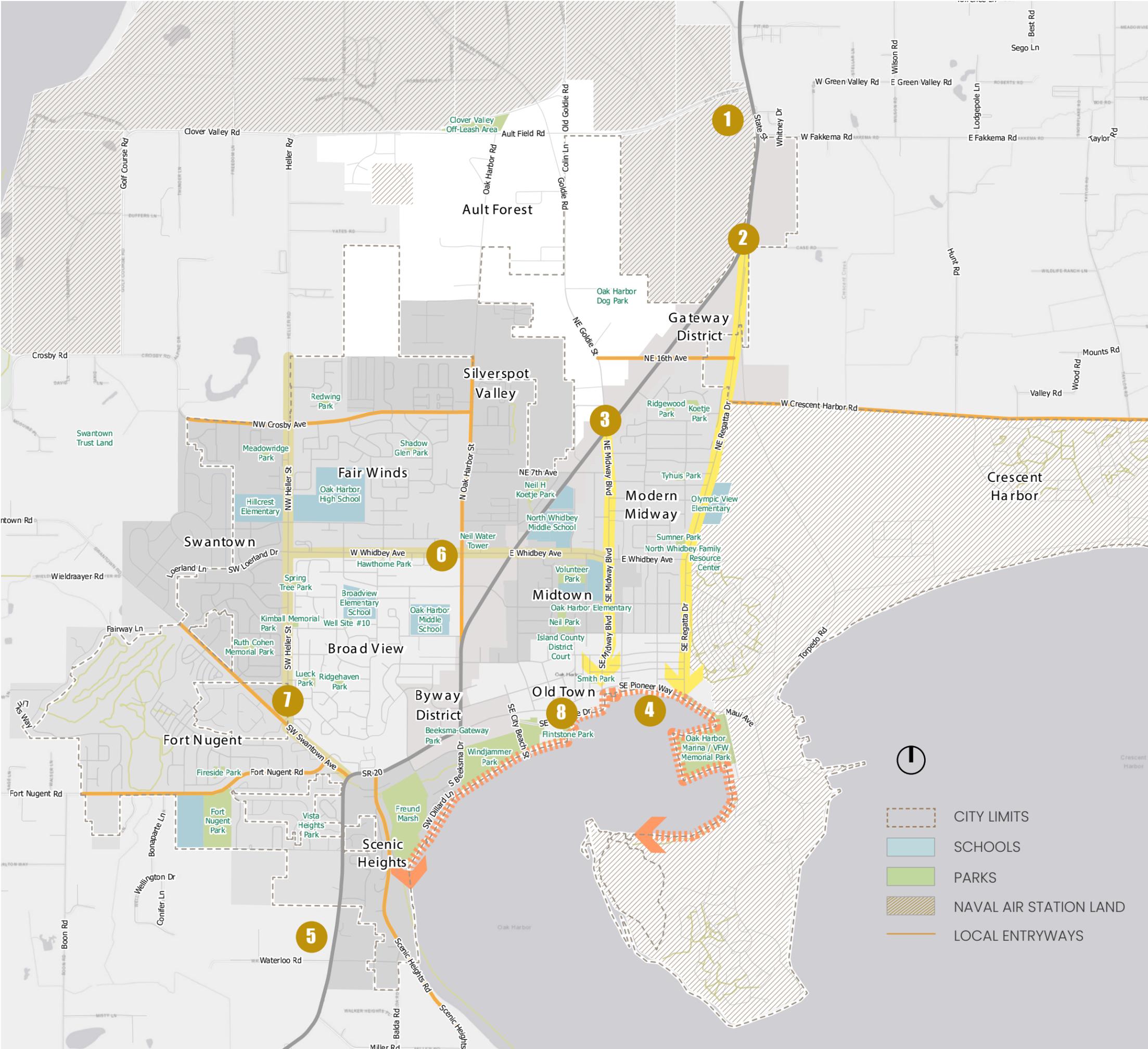
## Arts in the Neighborhoods

*Balance art in the neighborhoods and a concentration of art in the downtown*

12. [Neighborhood Art Sparks](#)
13. [Youth Video Sparks](#)
14. [Storm Drain Art Initiative](#)

# Opportunities Map

- 1. North Gateway** – Along SR-20, from Fakkema Road to approximately 1,500 feet north of the SR-20/NE 16th Avenue intersection.
- 2. Regatta Drive: Alternate Route to Downtown**
- 3. Midway Drive: Alternate Route to Downtown**
- 4. East Gateway / Marina-to-Waterfront Connection** – Along Pioneer Way, from Regatta Drive to Midway Boulevard.
- 5. South Gateway** – Along SR-20 from Waterloo Road to the SR-20/Swantown Road intersection.
- 6. Whidbey Avenue: Multimodal Street Improvements** – A key corridor connecting multiple schools, offering opportunities for youth-focused arts projects.
- 7. Heller Street: Neighborhood Art Sparks** – Playgrounds along this street present opportunities for community art initiatives.
- 8. Dock Street / Transit Station / City's Parking Lot** – As the first point of arrival and departure for bus travelers, infuse the space with an artistic welcome and farewell.
- 9. Local Entryways** – Oak Harbor Road, Goldie Road, Auvil Road, Regatta Drive, NE 16th Avenue, Swantown Road, Ft. Nugent Road, Heller Road, Crosby Road, Crescent Harbor Road, and Scenic Heights Road (highlighted on Map).



# 1. Civic Entries and Alternate Routes

Enhance connections to downtown and the waterfront from Route 20 with arts (see Opportunities Map items #1, 2, 3, 5, 9.)

- Install art treatments along Midway Boulevard, such as street murals and artistic wayfinding elements, to draw people toward downtown and the waterfront.
- Explore potential enhancements on Regatta Drive, including art installations, if the Navy is interested in collaborating.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Input from electeds, City Departments
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$\$\$\$

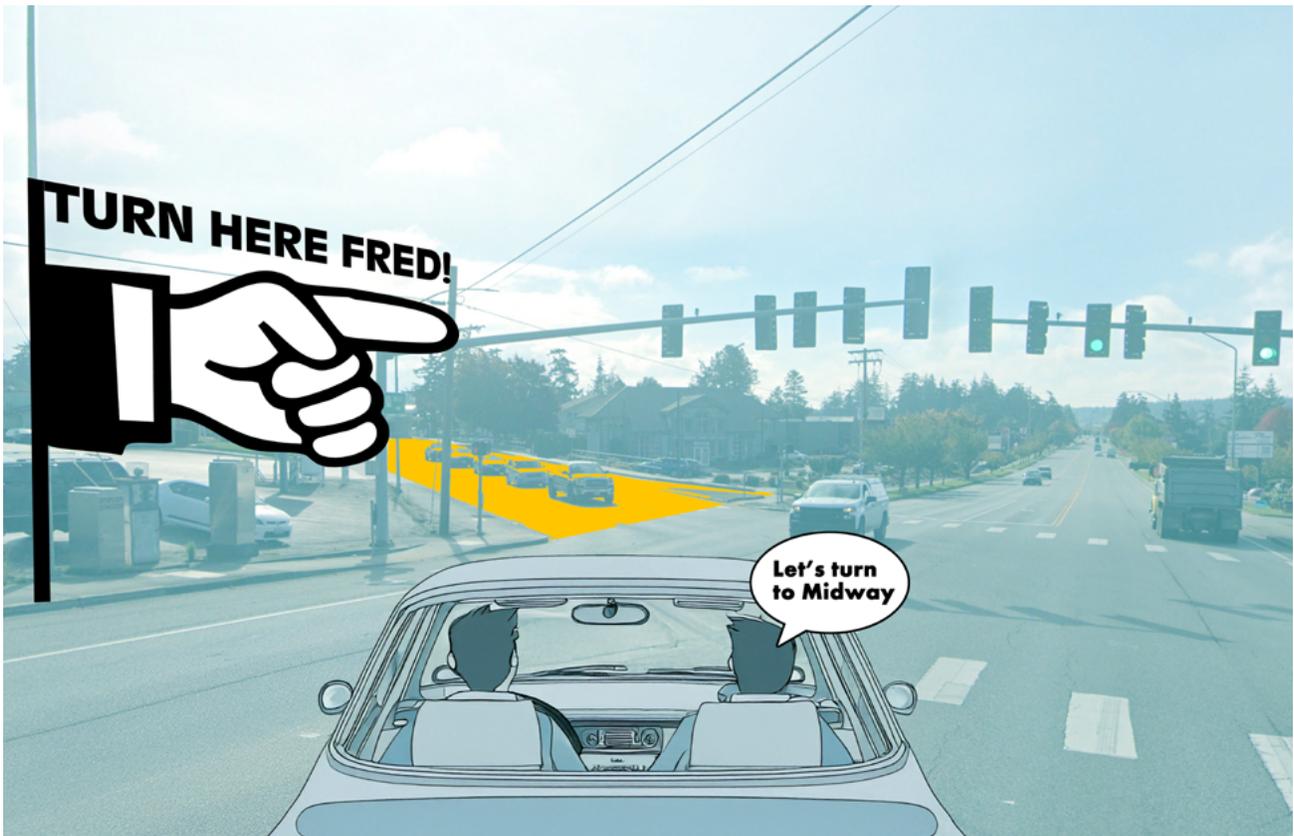


FIG 9. Cartoon illustrating the concept of a creative turn sign on R20 to guide people toward Midway.

## 2. Create Artistic Gateways Into Town

Create artistic gateways at a scale visible to drivers as they approach the town. This will improve the first impression, offering a welcoming and attractive experience for visitors while reinforcing the City's identity.

- Identify key entry points and prioritize sites (see Opportunities Map items #1, 2, 3, 5, 9.)
- Assess and consider improvements to existing welcome signs at the north and south entries to enhance visibility and appeal.
- Collaborate with artists and community stakeholders to design unique sculptures with welcoming themes that reflect the town's character and are easily recognizable from a distance.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Mid Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Input from electeds, City Departments, Public
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$\$\$\$



FIG 10. Twisp entry sculptures, Perri & Craig Howard



FIG 11. Olympia Art Crossings, Andrea Winbur-Sigo

### 3. Plaque and Marketing Initiatives

Develop a branding package to showcase public art in the city and arts programs funded by the Arts Commission.

- Create plaques for public art installations
- Consider adding a QR code link to the Oak Harbor Public Art Inventory website for the background stories of the arts.
- Develop a cohesive marketing identity for Arts Commission materials, including tents, table covers, feather flags, and event stickers, to create a recognizable and unified presence at public events.
- Coordinate with City branding, such as logo, fonts, and colors.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Quick Win!
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Plaque Installation News Release
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$ ~ \$\$\$

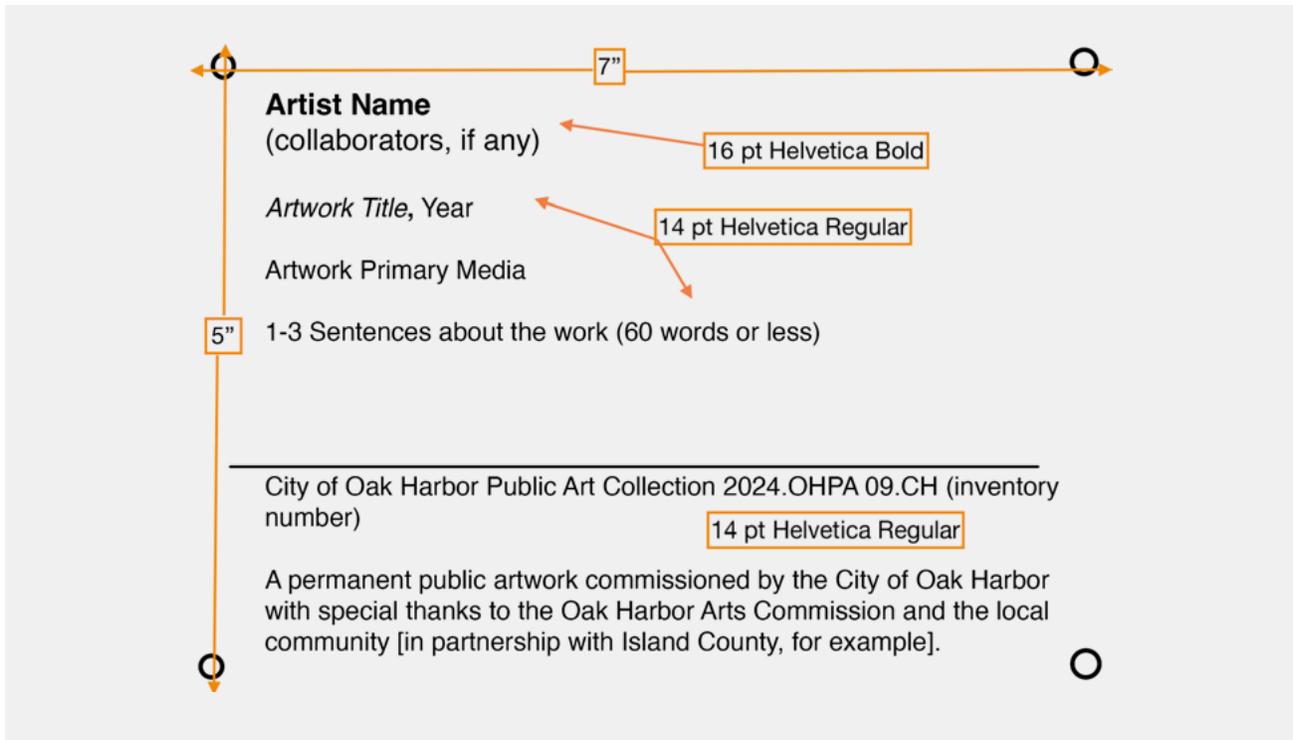


FIG 12. Example artwork plaque: suggested use of durable 24-gauge aluminum with etched black lettering, sized at 5" x 7". Includes an inventory ID for easy identification, such as 2024.OHPA.02.PLH (year, Oak Harbor Public Art, artwork number, artist initials).

## 4. Art in Transit / Poetry in Motion

Partner with Island Transit to transform the transfer center into a vibrant introduction to Oak Harbor. As the first point of arrival and departure for bus travelers, infuse the space with an artistic welcome and farewell. See Opportunities Map items #8. Ideas include:

- Paint the station’s with art and provide handout that direct visitors to arts venues.
- Displaying poems in spaces where commuters or pedestrians may encounter them enriches and elevates the daily experience, turning moments of waiting or transit into opportunities for inspiration and a deeper connection to the arts.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Quick Win!
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Oversight of art content
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Island Transit (incl, funding)
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Input from electeds, City Departments
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 13. Poetry on Buses showcases local poets, replacing ads with their words on King County Metro buses. From 1992 to 2007, this initiative brought art to everyday bus rides.



FIG 14. Poems in Passage by the Toronto Transit Commission amplifies the voices of diverse poets, offering them a platform to share their work with thousands of commuters and transit riders.

## 5. Chalk the Dock – Connect Historical Downtown to Waterfront

Transform the journey from downtown to the waterfront with vibrant arts, starting at the Dock Street area and extending through the City parking lot to the Transit Center. See Opportunities Map items #8.

As a vital entry point for both drivers and bus passengers, this area offers a unique opportunity to engage visitors with directional art that guides them from their arrival to downtown or Flintstone Park/ waterfront.

- A chalk art demonstration project could be introduced as a temporary street art activity to invite community participation and test the concept. This pilot project could lay the foundation for a long-term street mural initiative

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Quick Win!
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Partner in organizing, promoting, boots on the ground
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Nearby Business
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 16. A new, creative wayfinding mural has been painted around the Municipal Building in downtown Calgary and offers visitors ground level directions to various Calgary landmarks. DARREN KRAUSE / LIVEWIRE CALGARY



FIG 15. Rendering illustrating how art could enhance Dock Street, creating a stronger connection to the waterfront.

## 6. Connect to Marina and the College

Create a vibrant, art-filled pathway connecting Historical Downtown to the college, Catalina Park, and the marina. See Opportunities Map items #4. Use art to enhance the walking experience, testing ideas for long-term pedestrian improvements. Ideas include:

- Incorporate mile markers to add visual interest and guide pedestrians along the route.
- Create a bold, standout event to serve as a regional draw and community highlight. An event like Harbor Illumination could serve this purpose, bringing together the local community while attracting visitors from across the region to celebrate art, culture, and creativity.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Mid Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Skagit Valley College Oak Harbor Yacht Club
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Collaborate with Parks and Recreation Department and Marina projects
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$ ~ \$\$



FIG 18. Hull, MA, Harbor Illumination



FIG 17. Jim Collins, mile markers, Chattanooga TN

## 7. Be the Convener

Bring together arts and culture leaders to align schedules and efforts. The Arts Commission could serve as an umbrella organization, coordinating and facilitating collaboration across the community. Event ideas:

- Consider hosting a quarterly “Arts & Culture Networking Mixer” organized by the Arts Commission. The event would bring together artists, cultural organizations, and community leaders to discuss collaboration opportunities, share resources, and learn about city initiatives.
- Integrating this with existing events would maximize participation. Explore collaboration with existing events, such as the Chamber Member Luncheon, to serve a similar networking and coordination function.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Partner in organizing, promoting, boots on the ground
<b>Partners</b>	Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation, Chamber of the Commerce, Other organizations and cultural leaders
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 19. The Renton Art Lounge, co-organized by the Renton Arts Commission and Black River Cultural Arts Center, is a monthly gathering where artists can connect. Each event features a short program designed to expand skills and inspire creativity.

## 8. Honors and Awards Program

Establish an annual honor and award program to celebrate individuals and organizations making a positive impact through the arts. The Oak Harbor Mayor’s Art Award could be introduced, with a clear selection process and criteria, recognizing Art Makers, Doers, and Visionaries. A celebratory event, hosted by the Arts Commission and the Mayor’s office, would announce the recipients and highlight their contributions, fostering community pride and promoting the arts.

Draft Criteria for Art Makers, Doers, and Visionaries:

- **Artistic Excellence:** Demonstrated creativity and skill in their artistic field.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Selection Process Celebration / Publicity
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Collaborate with the Mayor Office
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$

- **Community Impact & Leadership:** Recognizing contributions to Oak Harbor’s arts, active involvement, and the ability to inspire others.
- **Longevity of Service:** Sustained commitment to the arts and community.



FIG 20. The Mayor’s Award for the Arts is an annual recognition by the City of Springfield, Illinois, honoring exceptional contributions to the arts. Nominations require a completed form and a two-page narrative highlighting artistic merit, community service, impact, and overall contributions.

## 9. Flags for All

One theme from the outreach is to spark pride in Oak Harbor and use art to heal and unite the community. A proposed initiative is an event and installation, such as *Flags for All*, where residents and visitors create personalized flags that reflect their identities, cultures, and communities. These flags could be prominently displayed at the Windjammer Park entry pavilion, turning the space into a reflection of collective identity, celebrating connections, and highlighting the diverse voices that shape Oak Harbor.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Collaborate with Parks and Recreation Department on installation
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Chamber of Commerce, US Navy, Big Brothers/Sisters
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 21. Rendering illustrating the installation of flags displayed at the Windjammer Park entry pavilion.

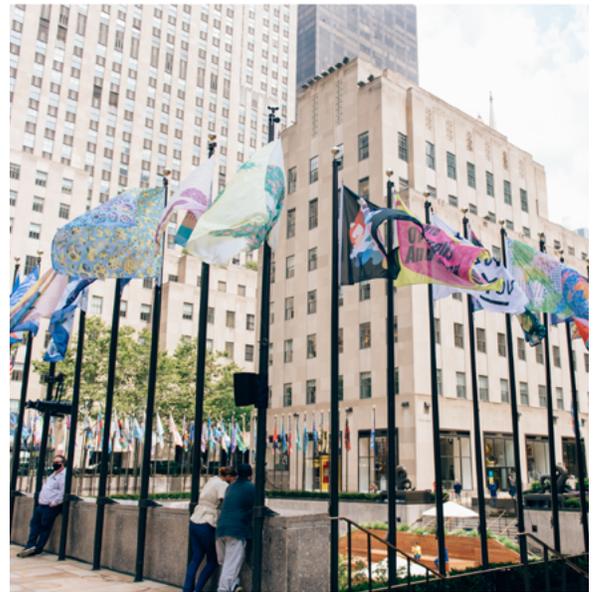


FIG 22. The Flag Project Rockefeller Center NYC

## 10. Interpretive Center: Arts + Science

Partner with the Parks and Recreation Department to schedule use of the Interpretive Center. Its ample parking and proximity to the splash park, a popular spot for children in the summer, make it a great location for gallery exhibitions, guest talks, and small group workshops in the conference room.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Continue Programming (Happening already!)
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Curating Content, Outreach / Publicity Selection Process
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Retrofit existing and more operability at south wall
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$ ~ \$\$\$

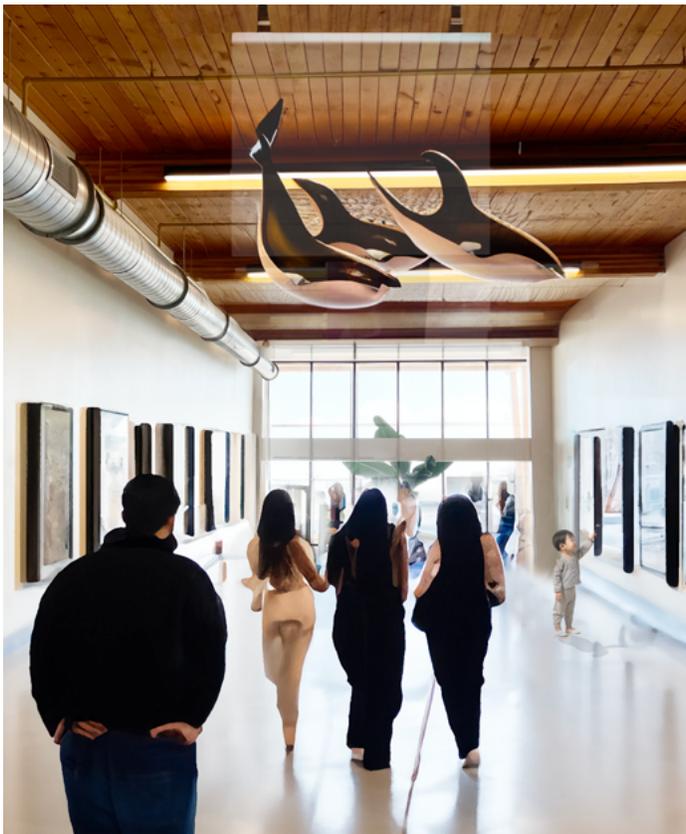


FIG 24. Rendering illustrated the interpretive center has great potential to serve as a small gallery.

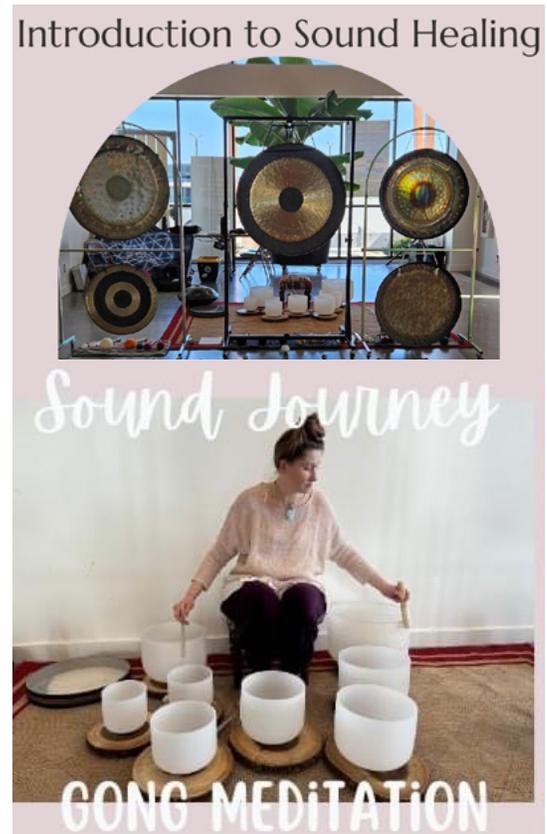


FIG 23. Sound Healing Meditation event at the Interpretive Center in Fall 2024

# 11. Support New Venues

There are organizations exploring the idea of building new venues. The Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation is leading two initiatives including the construction of a Performing Arts & Events Center and the creation of a Maker Space in Oak Harbor.

The Arts Commission may wish to be part of those conversations or play a role in a City partnership.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Long Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Partner
<b>PARTNERS</b>	Oak Harbor Creative Arts Foundation , Chamber of Commerce
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 25. Oak Harbor High School Choir a signature venue showcasing the city's vibrant performing arts.

## 12. Neighborhood Art Sparks

Beyond downtown, art should ripple into the neighborhoods, reaching deeper into the daily life of Oak Harbor. Neighborhood parks, as natural gathering spaces, offer an ideal setting to connect residents and ignite creativity. See Opportunities Map items #6, 7.

- The community has expressed interest in small neighborhood arts projects like the “Art Sparks” program. This initiative could collaborate with the Parks and Recreation Department on neighborhood playground enhancements, offering small grants for community members to create art or art experiences that resonate with daily use and activate the playgrounds.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Collaborate with Parks and Recreation Department
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$ ~ \$\$



FIG 27. Small-scale interactive arts installation at Seattle Design Festival



FIG 26. A dancer from Kaleidoscope Dance Company performs at the Small Sparks Neighborhood Matching Fund supporter event. MARK LINSAY

# 13. Youth Video Sparks

Through an internship program, hire local students to create video content that introduces public art and interviews local artists. Partner with local artists and filmmakers to provide young people with opportunities to learn about film-making.

Participants create films that tell personal stories and explore local topics, including public art and community culture. For instance, participants in the program have created films that document the city's public murals and sculpture, giving these works visibility through the perspectives of local youth. Such programs not only provide technical skills training but also give young people a voice in the broader conversation about community identity and public art.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Quick Win!
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Collaborate with Parks and Recreation Department
<b>Partner</b>	Schools
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$ ~ \$\$

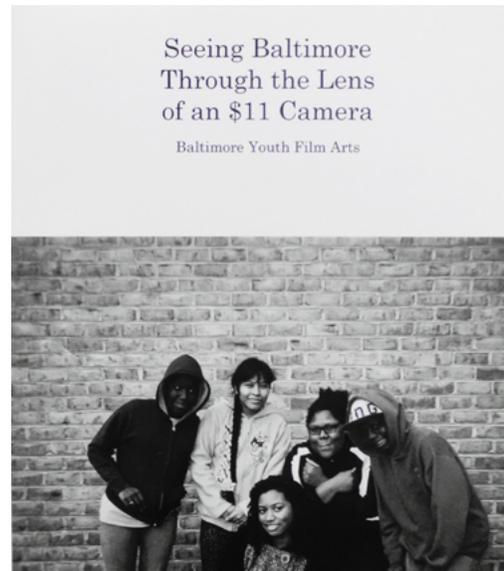


FIG 28. The Baltimore Youth Film Arts (BYFA) program offers workshops for young people aged 16 to 29, helping them develop film-making skills while documenting and promoting public art in their communities.

## 14. Storm Drain Art Initiative

Create a program in which individuals or groups can adopt a storm drain and create murals around it, bringing each one to life.

This project could combine artistic expression and environmental education, with murals featuring nature and vibrant colors designed to highlight the importance of clean water. It could be part of a broader effort to integrate art throughout the city while educating the public about environmental issues.

Similar to the hydrant painting project in collaboration with the Fire Department, the Storm Drain Art program would be a collaborate with the Public Works Department.

<b>TIMELINE</b>	Near Term
<b>AC ROLE</b>	Instigator Art Work Selection
<b>CITY ROLE</b>	Public Works lead and fund
<b>RESOURCE</b>	\$



FIG 29. The Storm Drain Style-off, a public art project by Knox County Stormwater and Public Libraries, features community-designed murals on storm drains to raise awareness about stormwater pollution. The murals are documented annually and awarded for their artistic expression.





## **Thank You**

A heartfelt thank you to everyone who contributed to the Oak Harbor Arts Plan. Your support and passion have helped shape a vision for a vibrant, creative community.

*As a mighty oak stands tall,  
creativity roots,  
branches blooms,  
and the arts enrich Oak Harbor.*

