

# ART PLAN FOR THE PRO PARKS 2000 LEVY



Carolyn Law, Seattle Arts Commission



ART PLAN – Executive Summary  
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*“Landscapes – both seen in passing and experienced at leisure – can affect our well-being . . . Experiencing places with our senses, feeling connected to the land, to history, and to other people, is integral to the health of people and the planet.”*

Tony Hiss, *Creating Places Worth Experiencing*,  
Landscape Architecture, July 2002

## Background

In September 2001, the Seattle Arts Commission placed arts planner Carolyn Law “in residence” at Seattle Parks and Recreation’s Major Projects and Planning Division. Her charge was to develop an Art Plan for an important levy, Pro Parks 2000. This levy charts an astonishing amount of capital work to be done throughout Seattle’s park system from 2000 to 2006. The levy will generate approximately \$1.2 million One Percent for Art funds.

The goal of the Art Plan was to create a comprehensive vision for the role of art in Seattle’s growing parks system, a vision grounded in an understanding of what parks mean to Seattle’s residents. Additionally, it was crucial to understand the distinctive nature of an urban park experience, the various layers of park development that have occurred in Seattle over time, and the choices available for art in parks. Bringing a contemporary perspective to these issues played a vital role in shaping this new opportunity to involve artists in Seattle’s parks.

In the full Art Plan, these issues and questions are examined in depth and reveal the path taken to reach the most artistically dynamic vision possible for these art projects. The Art Plan provides both the conceptual and practical framework leading to fulfillment of this vision.

One strength of this Art Plan is that it completely intertwines the viewpoints and objectives of Seattle Parks and Recreation

and Seattle Arts Commission, and when implemented, will positively enhance park sites for all users. Linking the visions of these two departments, for parks and the public art within them, promises Seattle a legacy of deeply enriching, experiential artworks. This cohesive view will also allow Parks and Recreation and the Arts Commission to fashion a collaborative approach and process for each public art project that strengthens each outcome.



During the six-month residency, the arts planner developed knowledgeable relationships with Parks and Recreation staff in all divisions. Working side by side with staff, she forged effective working relationships based on a solid comprehension of Seattle Parks and Recreation’s mission, goals and working processes; an informed exchange of vision, shared ideas and information; conversations with Parks and Recreation Division staff; and numerous site visits, alone and with staff. The arts planner talked with key stakeholders including Seattle Parks Foundation; Design Commission; Planning

Commission; City departments, including Department of Neighborhoods and Seattle Public Utilities; and community representatives. She also researched the topics of urban parks and artwork derived from an interest in the natural world, sited in natural environments or parks.

The residency at Parks and Recreation was essential for clarifying a vision for the Art Plan. This vision is strongly informed by several of the central goals for Seattle’s parks, including:

- support community sharing and building;
- provide welcoming, safe opportunities to play, learn and contemplate;
- create a respite from the pressures of urban life;
- instill a fundamental understanding of the value of and connection to nature; and
- inspire people to be good environmental and civic stewards.

These goals complement one of the Seattle Arts Commission Public Art Program’s primary goals:

- engage artists in actively exploring the City’s cultural identity and civic values and develop public places through art.

The Art Plan is poised to create an exciting and inspiring cohesive network of art that will thread its way through the city, connecting place to place and inspiring conversations between people and place.

## **Art Plan: Recommendations**

### **Vision**

The primary vision focuses on artists making art within park settings that provide respite from urban life and an occasion to reflect on and connect with the natural world. These artworks will draw their essential concepts, metaphors, and materials from nature and from the character and patterns of use in each particular park. These enduring artworks will create engaging, interactive places (or areas) of deep meaning and unique imagination that creatively express a purpose and use — offering all generations a specific experience within each park.

### **Components**

#### **Major Projects**

The majority of Percent for Art funds will be dedicated to the development of major art projects that address this vision in a significant and extraordinary fashion. Artworks that draw their concepts from nature and the specific character of their unique park environment will be commissioned at selected parks in sectors throughout the city.

### **General Art Opportunity Fund**

This program creates a General Arts Fund for smaller scale art projects. This fund provides flexibility to develop unique, integrated artworks guided by the plan’s vision, in parks that vary in character from the Major Project artworks. It allows the Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation to address shifting priorities, as development continues in the city, and emerging potential, as parkland is acquired during the life of the levy. The fund also makes it possible to encourage participation among talented emerging artists. General Art Opportunity Fund projects will also be dispersed throughout the city.

### **In-house Parks and Recreation Projects**

An annual fund for In-house Parks and Recreation Projects allows Parks and Recreation staff to engage in a new level of creativity by adding aesthetic components to their projects. The funds can be used to engage artists from pre-qualified rosters to work on selected projects.

### **Writer-in-Residence**

A residency project will bring a writer to Parks and Recreation. The selected writer will develop written work to be used in myriad ways to enhance the communication of Parks Department mission and stories, enliven a range of written materials developed and used by Parks for public and community interaction, investigate the life and meaning of parks, allow Parks and Recreation staff to reflect on the work they do and more.

### **Conclusion**

The detailed Art Plan, background in urban parks and Seattle’s parks, sites, budgets and selection methods for the levy program are described in the following pages. The Art Plan proposes a course of action encompassing high expectations and great promise for artists and the city on a scale that we can rarely tackle. Commitment to stay the course of this plan will result in Seattle achieving a group of exciting, cohesive, and fully integrated artwork projects — projects that will energetically contribute to the personality of our city.



ART PLAN

FOR THE PRO PARKS 2000 LEVY

Carolyn Law, Seattle Arts Commission

*“People come to parks with simple needs: rest, relaxation, recreation and respite from the city. Good parks meet these needs, but then also respond to deeper yearnings, giving us ideas, hope, and a sense of possibility in our own lives and communities . . . Parks, in turn, broaden our own capacity to imagine . . . The key is to offer a rich variety of experiences that spark the imagination and illuminate what it means to be fully alive.”*

Steve Coleman, “The Invisible Park”

## Overview

We are at a unique and unprecedented moment in Seattle’s impressive history of exemplary public art – a moment to think on a wholly different scale, to reach for a commanding vision to drive the creation of public art in parks. With \$1.2 million in public art funding through the Pro Parks 2000 Levy, Seattle can envision and realize inspired public artworks in selected parks throughout the city within the short time span of six years.

The Pro Parks Art Plan challenges artists to create significant public artworks – works with an emphasis on art that derives

content and meaning from a full and thoughtful understanding of urban parks – whose concepts spring from an urban natural setting and become tangibly embedded in the earth of a chosen park. These artworks will establish a physical and conceptual network of art elements strategically located throughout Seattle’s park system that will leave indelible impressions and enhance the experience of a variety of parks.

The Pro Parks Art Plan calls for artists to establish uniquely imaginative artistic zones or places in parks. The art envisioned by this plan will not exist in isolation but in relation with other





park elements. Each artwork will establish its own pattern of interactive use that recognizes and complements the purposes and functions associated with other areas of the park. In acknowledging that urban parks are essentially about a natural place within the city, the Seattle Arts Commission will ask artists to use nature as a resource and medium, so that the artworks will enhance people's ability to relate to and respect the natural world. By bringing an artistic voice into our parks, we enliven and enhance them.

The resulting public artworks will enrich people's lives by connecting them more tangibly to parks while also transporting them beyond their normal frame of reference. This plan envisions artworks that beckon people again and again. Art will spark the imagination of visitors, inspire thoughts and feelings, and bring to mind ideas about the balance between humans and nature. It will strengthen the web of connections among individuals, communities, and natural elements within our urban environment. Through the Pro Parks Levy, remarkable public art and strong contemporary landscape design will welcome people into parks. Their interactions with places of meaning will build a heritage for all generations and contribute to a more deeply rooted sense of community.

## WHAT IS AN URBAN PARK?

- The life and meaning of urban parks is layered and complex.
- They provide people a very different set of possibilities from other urban public spaces.
- Urban parks provide a meaningful connection to the natural within the built environment .

When we think about parks, it is easy to presume that we understand implicitly what parks are, what they mean and how they work for people. After all, most of us have strong memories and feelings associated with parks. But we should examine our assumptions and understandings about parks in order to site art in them.

While it would be easy to limit the definition of an urban park to a simple notion of green space in a city used for structured recreation or passive relaxation, parks are much more layered and complex. Urban parks are clearly public places, yet they differ from other public places in the urban environment, such as downtown open spaces, plazas and lobbies of office and government buildings, water treatment or health services facilities. While these other places are mostly occupied with the "business" of work and life, parks are essentially divorced from the task-oriented part of a day or week. They fulfill different needs by providing space for recreation, reflection, and restoration. Being in a park or open space can help us "shift gears," and create more open space in our consciousness. This might all happen on an unconscious, casual level.

Many urban parks are comprised of diverse elements and characteristics rolled together in different configurations. The main unifying element in parks, however, is the presence of nature. Within that framework, the other elements that exist in any given park depend on its size and location. Seattle parks can typically include a combination of open space, diverse views, visual or physical access to water, a variety of wooded and landscaped areas, meadows, many kinds of paths, play equipment, picnic

## **Background: The Pro Parks Levy**

Balancing our desire for parks and open space with other urban growth issues has been the subject of much discussion in recent years. Beginning in the mid-1990s, the City of Seattle initiated



a citywide growth management planning effort. Led by the Department of Neighborhoods, each of 38 Seattle neighborhoods that had been designated as “Urban Villages” developed a comprehensive plan to absorb growth. Through this planning, neighborhood groups came to understand which elements of urban living were of extreme value to residents. High on most neighborhood lists, if they were not focused on basic needs, was

green, open space. In other words, more parks. The City of Seattle, too, was aware that open land was and continues to be a quickly dwindling commodity. The City responded by proposing a far-reaching park levy that was passed by the voters.

This 2000 Pro Parks Levy is funding acquisitions, development, maintenance and programs for parks citywide. As of 2002, Seattle is already bustling with activity centered on parks of all sizes and types, and this work will continue through 2006 and perhaps beyond. Through this levy, the city can establish a contemporary citywide legacy for parks, adding a rich layer over earlier broad visions for our park system.

The final breadth of the levy’s impact will be astounding. Seattle Parks and Recreation will renovate many existing parks and create several major new parks, with strong contemporary landscape design that exemplifies the best current understanding of how to create meaningful and functional urban green spaces. The levy also affords Parks and Recreation the opportunity to shepherd through to fruition the neighborhood open space initiatives that constructively build community, to fill parkland gaps equitably, and to seize unique opportunities to create open space in a city where land is at a premium.

## WHAT IS AN URBAN PARK?



tables (perhaps with shelters), active recreation areas. While these various elements could exist in isolation, in Seattle's parks they usually exist in relation to one other. For example, even if one doesn't use the play equipment, play may flavor a large area of a park. Or if people are sitting contemplating a view, their reflective stance flavors the feeling of that area for others who are walking by or taking in a larger view from a distance.

Parks contribute a unique quality to urban life, serving an extraordinary number of functions. They can play an important role in creating a sense of balance, whether one experiences them peripherally when driving past or actively by entering them. When driving, merely seeing a stretch of green and sensing an opening in the density has a soothing effect. But it is upon entering urban parks that people are given a vital chance to follow their feet, eyes, senses, and thoughts of the day. In parks that are more natural—with a vista, access to water, a walking path, and/or a stand of trees—a person can have a deep experience of nature within the same city where they take care of daily affairs. Of primary importance is the fact that when we step into a park, we are in a predominantly growing rather than a built environment. We are given an opportunity to feel the elements, sense nature, and see and think beyond the confines of the urban grid. Urban parks constitute a crucial source of respite and outlet from the pressures and realities of daily urban life.

Urban parks are also social places, diversely populated by people of different ages and ethnic backgrounds in various social groupings. In this sense parks are places that offer the possibility for different social interactions than most people encounter in their daily lives. There are also fluctuations in the numbers of people using parks, which influence our experiences. At a given time, a park might offer a solitary experience; an hour later, one might encounter an exuberant level of activity. A park experience is influenced by whether one comes alone or with family or friends, and sometimes by who else happens to be there at the same time. Whether visiting a park just once or repeatedly over time, each

## What is Our Current Art Opportunity?

- Art can reveal a profound link between the inherent nature and meaning of a park with the art concepts.
- Art can create extraordinary experiences.

Seattle has been a leader in the field of public art, making major contributions in the realm of art and artistic place-making in the built environment. We have wonderful examples of public artworks that contribute significant ideas and aesthetic qualities to buildings, plazas and urban infrastructure, and clearly provide different ways to understand and use these “built” sites. However, most of the art we have placed in parks, though beautiful, does not demonstrate a profound link between the inherent nature and meaning of a park site and the concepts of the art, nor does it provide new ways of seeing and using the park.

For the Pro Parks program, the Seattle Arts Commission will challenge artists to articulate their ideas about the natural environment and a specific park environment within an urban context, through the creation of an intrinsic experience orchestrated by an artwork that creates a zone or place within the park. Art-

ists will draw resources and potentially materials from nature to conceive and build artworks that choreograph an interaction with the setting. These interactions will reveal something about the natural world versus the world controlled by human hands. Importantly, the works would not have meaning in another location because they are created in response to their particular settings. This artwork will have the power to work into the hearts and minds of park users and strive to be moving and stimulating.

Pro Parks will provide opportunities and challenges for artists to create interactive art experiences that stand shoulder-to-shoulder with active parks experiences like walking, playing games or picnicking, and also “essential” or “inspirational” park experiences. These essential experiences might include taking in distant views and the palpable quiet “heard” from the meadows and bluffs of Discovery Park, walking in Schmitz Preserve amidst huge trees with filtered light flickering, seeing downtown Seattle rising out of Lake Union from the top of Kite Hill in Gasworks Park, walking “into” Lake Washington on the marsh trail hearing the lapping water and feeling the breezes, coming upon



a magnificent old tree in a wooded area or exploring the intricacies of Kubota Gardens.

Art projects created within Pro Parks should have as much presence, resonance and approachable meaning as the park experiences described. Raising these expectations prompts everyone to be conscious of the inherent worth and meaning of parks, of nature, of the senses, and of the rewards of reflection. What better opportunity than uniting good design of a park with an artist's concepts, interpretations and artwork to elevate the meaning and experience of these relatively small pieces of earth.



Collectively, these works will weave throughout the entire parks system, establishing a Seattle Parks and Recreation signature or legacy that comes from the Pro Parks era. These artworks can plant the seeds for a distinctive new approach to art in Seattle parks that can be further developed and flourish beyond the finite period of the Pro Parks Levy.

## WHAT IS AN URBAN PARK?

incidence contributes to a web of memories. The social dynamic and compiling of individual and collective memories are as inextricably tied to what a park means as how it looks or what activities are possible there.

While parks are used for many specific active and passive uses, they also can be the scenes of unexpected interaction that creates new connections or provokes new thoughts. For example, the soccer players who just finished their game can wind up in conversation with someone out walking their dog. Or a father starts out on a quiet walk with his child, and they meet others in the park and start up a quick game of ball or tag. Or you notice that a group is bird-watching and you join in. These are but a few examples of how people using parks are open to changes in what was originally planned or what is happening. This possibility of shifting psychological and physical choices seems to be a very interesting part of the fundamental dynamic of urban parks.

As growth spurs physical and cultural changes in the city, we develop different civic goals for how parks function. Today's park designers consider how parks can bring people together and build community, provide respite from the crush of contemporary life, instill a fundamental sense of value of and connection to nature, inspire people to be good environmental stewards, and provide safe places for recreation and relaxation.

Understanding urban parks' meaning and importance for city dwellers now and into the future is also informed by reviewing changes in how parks have been viewed over time. Reassessing goals for design and use from era to era is as important for parks as it is for architecture and urban planning. It is equally important to understand the fundamental perception, meaning and uses of urban parks, and discovering those that cut across time. All of this gives us a fuller portrait of a park.

## Developing the Conceptual Approach

The Arts Commission recommends several guiding parameters for the Pro Parks art projects. These parameters are a response to the scale and uniqueness of the levy opportunity, the complexity of the design schedules, and a desire to achieve the most from the available art budget for such a large citywide program. They include:

- find a meaningful correlation between the possibilities suggested by the park sites and possible approaches to art in parks;
- allow artists to focus on framing their own creative response to a park, rather than participating in a collaborative effort with a designer where the artwork becomes more dispersed in the design;
- place an emphasis on the creation of art by spending One

Percent for Art funds directly on artwork, design time and materials related to an artwork;

- develop the art projects in parallel to parks design process if the schedules permit, so artists and designers can share concerns about the design and use of the park, look for any possible overlaps of design, construction and art that would make sharing funds possible, and piggyback on community process; and
- develop the art projects separately from the park and its design if the design and construction schedule has proceeded ahead of the art schedule.





## WHAT ABOUT SEATTLE'S URBAN PARKS?

- A greater wild environment surrounds Seattle, which is visible from many parks.
- The array of park environments within our system is striking.

Seattle is a city of striking topography that is situated in a magnificent surrounding landscape of mountain ranges and bodies of water. Much of what we see beyond the city and suburban limits is wild. Perhaps in response to that immense wilderness right at hand, Seattle's planners have had the foresight over the years to provide outstanding open space, and parks for outdoor recreation and contemplation.

Seattle's park system was established in 1884. The first Park Bond was funded in 1906 for development of a Seattle Olmsted Plan, followed by two subsequent bonds during the next four years to build out much of the plan. The Olmsted Plan for Seattle, like the firm's plans for so many other cities, provided a backbone of elegant green spaces in the form of boulevards and parks that run through the city making classic, restful connections.

Throughout much of the past century the City of Seattle continued to protect, develop and expand its park system. Park development and acquisition work was supported through the federal Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps programs, and ongoing Parks Department bond and levy programs like the 1970s FORWARD THRUST program. As a result, Seattle has an interestingly layered network of different sizes and types of parks that span the history of the city. As our network of parks becomes more intricate, our citizens have more choices depending on how they feel, how much time they have, whom they want to go with and what kind of setting they want to be in.

## The Conceptual Approach

In developing a conceptual approach to the Pro Parks Art Plan, the idea of directly addressing nature within the urban context resonated as opportune and appropriate, as well as timeless. Since parks are essentially about diverse experiences, it seemed clear that an artwork should fold into a park's character and identity by carving out its own place and meaning coupled with crafting a unique way to experience the park through the art. This approach is broad enough to accommodate all the selected parks



and particularly Dexter Pit and Fremont Peaks Parks, the two sites that cried out to be treated as a whole, as an artwork.

The conceptual approach for this Art Plan emphasizes art, nature and experience. To that end, the bulk of the art funds will be earmarked for creating major art projects in a small group of important sites being developed through the levy.

For each project, if there is a design consultant, that consultant will be asked to do their best planning and design work; the

artist will then respond to the design, the Art Plan vision and goals and the particular characteristics of the park site to develop their art response to the park. To ensure the best possible results, all the necessary groundwork to enable the creation of a seamless opportunity for the artists will be established by the Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation project management staff working together. This conceptual and practical approach will allow artists to conceive artworks that can be experienced as unique and complementary components within the parks.



## Recommended Components of the Art Plan

A principal consideration in devising the components of the Art Plan was to understand and honor the urban parks in our system. This understanding had to merge with a way to afford artists a diverse range of clear, bold opportunities to develop artworks with exceptional concepts and aesthetics for these parks. This current opportunity to commission a variety of artworks should set a strong precedent that could be built upon in the future.



Proudly, Seattle continues to expand upon this inheritance. The citizens consistently support efforts to save, protect, and create new open space and parkland for present and future generations, including the recent Pro Parks levy. Current efforts are fueled by support and activity from many quarters-city government and departments, citizens-at-large, and neighborhood groups, both small and large.

Many of Seattle's parks have a distinctive character from parks in other cities. They are places where the combination of the visible surroundings, the sequence of the patterns of use, the landscape and the living things in the park conspire to clearly put the visitor in relation to nature on many levels. While Seattle's setting is not as viscerally wild as that of cities in Alaska, neither is it as reined in as with cities like New York, Chicago or even San Francisco. Our parks are not simply about open space recreation because they are connected in many ways to our greater surroundings. The handiwork of humans cannot totally obscure this more untamed environment we are situated in. As a result, there is a constant awareness of being part of a larger natural world. This is an underlying component of the consciousness of this city.

In a number of Seattle's parks, people can move into areas where their view is directed well beyond the park's boundaries to the vast landscape surrounding the city. A view can skip across the built world to the natural world, providing mental and visual material to put the park in a larger context. A majority of people may not go to these distant places, but they are not far from mind because they are a part of our everyday visual reference. For example, on a vast scale we can easily be reminded of the power of nature when we see the volcanic peaks of Mt. Rainier and Mt. Baker, or the mountain ranges to the east and west. In a park, we can encounter or catch a view of Puget Sound, with the coldness of its water and the drama of the waves and tides. People can focus a

## **The Primary Focus – Major Art Projects Sited Artworks**

### **The Vision**

The sites for the art projects will be parks, throughout the city, that provide respite from urban life and an occasion to reflect on and connect with the natural world at a micro and macro level. The artworks will draw their essential concepts, metaphors and materials from nature, as well as the character and patterns of use in each particular park. These enduring artworks will create engaging, interactive places (or areas) of deep meaning, and unique imagination offering all generations of people a specific experience within each park.



**The goals for Major Art Projects are:**

- use nature as a primary resource and potential medium;
- create an artwork for each selected park that provides a unique and/or extraordinary interactive experience within the park setting;
- place the artwork in relation to other activities in each park;
- use the characteristics of a particular park's setting as a departure point and intrinsically tie the art concept to the park so completely that the artwork would not be meaningful in another setting;
- first consider art concepts and experience, and second, to integrate any functional aspects imaginatively;
- take a multi-sensory approach whenever possible;
- create artworks that are so compelling that people will be drawn to them time and again, returning to share them with others; and
- have each artwork make a strong contribution to a cohesive series of artworks that encourage reflection on and experience of the natural world.

### **The Other Components of the Art Plan**

While the Major Art Projects provide an opportunity for artists to develop works that connect people with nature, some of Seattle's urban parks provide different types of opportunities for artists. Therefore three additional programs are recommended: General Art Opportunity Fund, In-house Parks and Recreation Projects and Writer-in-Residence.

There are many differences in function within the wide variety of park types. Some of the more urban, less natural, parks play a significant role in providing open space within a neighborhood. A smaller park's "neighborhood" can be defined as a few surrounding blocks or a portion of the larger neighborhood area, depending on the location and size of the park. As opposed to the parks considered for the Major Art Projects, most of these parks are more closely linked with their surrounding built environment than they are with the natural world. These smaller parks typically have a more limited set of uses (small play areas, some benches, etc.) and areas of hardscape mixed with a more limited amount of green space or landscaping. It is important to include some of these small urban parks within this Art Plan.

There also is a desire to provide some flexibility within the overall Art Plan in anticipation of certain changes and developments, such as providing for art in a new park that might come into being during the life of the Pro Parks Levy. Flexibility could also be important for recognizing a developing park project that

large-scale natural issue down to a smaller natural setting by being aware of issues concerning our wild salmon and its habitat needs within the city limits. On a more human scale, we can look at plants and insects in parks that are part of the indigenous ecosystem, or walk next to creeks that feed Puget Sound and provide links to the salmon's cycle. Both perspectives, the distant and the near, provide an opportunity to consider the intertwined dynamic of humans and the micro and macro environment.

Seattle's parks have a fascinating array of environments, from wooded to marshy to meadow-like areas. This mix within the physical dimensions of our parks lets us focus in on the living, growing and natural forces taking place. Our attention can turn to the plants and trees, animal and insect life, light, wind, rain, temperature, etc. The incredible diversity within our parks gives ample opportunity to consider how it feels, physically and mentally, to be in a natural environment. In many of our parks, sights, smells and sounds can be taken in that give you a visceral sense of how a natural area differs from a neighborhood full of houses and apartments, the neighborhood business districts or downtown.



appears to have a greater impact than was initially anticipated, or being able to respond to an unexpected opportunity that arises in an underserved area of the city.

Finally, we wanted to create a mixture of projects of different scales and budgets in order to provide opportunities for the widest possible range of artists, from accomplished to emerging public artists.

To that end, the following additional components were developed and incorporated into the final Pro Parks Art Plan.

**General Art Opportunity Fund:**

- provides built-in flexibility to allow the Art Plan to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that arise;
- allows for additional art projects, in smaller urban parks, that realize important aspects of the vision and goals for the major projects; and
- allows for the development of projects for emerging artists.

Artworks in several parks that constitute an important opportunity for the city or a local community will be commissioned within the General Art Opportunity Fund. The focus would be on smaller urban parks of particular significance to a smaller geographic area of the city.





### **Writer-in-Residence:**

- provides a residency project, of a duration to be determined, for a writer to explore the meaning of parks through written pieces (this could include an exploration of Seattle Parks and Recreation – the staff and the work they undertake – as well as community uses of and feelings about parks);
- offers the opportunity to develop creative writing material that can generate fresh ways to connect people to the experience of parks (this material could be used in a myriad of ways by Parks and Recreation to enhance their work); and
- will explore a variety of publishing and distribution methods.

From this writer's exploration of the Parks and Recreation system, the written material produced will help communicate the mission of Parks and Recreation and the diverse meaning of parks to the citizens. This store of written material could be used by staff over a period of years to enliven materials for community outreach and interaction, to broaden the discussion about the life and meaning of parks among staff and with community members, to insert into Parks written material, on kiosks in parks settings, and for other undiscovered uses.

### **Choosing the Art Sites**

The selected sites for art projects are diverse, in size, location and character, yet share several key attributes. Each Major Art Project site has a clear potential for an artwork that can inspire a conversation between people and their natural surroundings. At the same time, each has the potential to create an artistic



experience that addresses the immediate, as well as the distant surroundings outside the park's physical boundaries. And, each site has something that is, subjectively, "extra". For the General Art Opportunity Project sites, considering the relative importance to the surrounding area is crucial, as well as establishing that there is a meaningful opportunity for an artist.

Site selection for art projects grew from continuing discussions between the arts planner and the web of people participating from the beginning of the planning process. In evaluating the four possible approaches, consideration was given to which approach would offer the Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation the best opportunity to:

- further develop the budding partnership unfolding through the planning process and collaborate on the development and implementation of the artwork;
- bring to fruition a Pro Parks Levy Art in Parks legacy that evidences "big picture thinking" and has the power to stand alongside other important urban design legacies;
- grasp what truly is a one-of-a-kind moment in the city's development of parks and potentially for the merging of art in urban parks;
- make the most exhilarating match between possible artwork concepts applied to a park system with the potential afforded by the available sites; and
- deliver comprehensible artistic experiences within a park setting that resonates with the diverse public.

Jordan's *Waterworks Garden*, part of a wastewater treatment plant in Renton or Robert Morris' *Untitled* gravel pit reclamation project in Kent. Some sculptures interact with natural forces such as the wind (Doug Hollis' *Sound Garden* at the National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Administration and R. Allen Jensen's *Stroke* at Greenlake), or a natural setting such as a shoreline (George Trakas' *Berth Haven* at NOAA). So we have some history. With this Art Plan we can move forward with a meaningful and dynamic approach for this moment.

While Seattle has artworks that are aesthetically pleasing in their locations and in some ways change our perceptions of the landscape, most artworks in Seattle's parks are not closely linked to their sites, nor do they evolve from the natural landscape. With the exception of several pieces located at NOAA adjacent to Sand Point Magnuson Park, which grew out of an awareness of the natural dimensions of the area and make connections to it virtually no Seattle artworks are fundamentally linked to the ideas and materials of nature.

Since urban parks are human products, and human use is mostly given the highest priority, it is easy for us to forget one of the strongest arguments for creating and protecting urban green spaces. That is, they are growing places inhabited by plants and creatures that are part of the balance of life. Experiencing this counterbalance of urban living makes life in the city richer. Art in a park can provide similar counterbalance — something simultaneously tangible and intangible that goes beyond what is provided through landscape design and programmed uses. In many ways, artwork can sit at that pivotal balancing point between the manmade landscape and our understanding of what the land itself is and holds. Art can heighten the gestalt relationship between humans and nature found in a park.