

ART PLAN - Implementation  
FOR THE PRO PARKS 2000 LEVY  
Carolyn Law, Seattle Arts Commission



## **Framework for Relationship Between Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation**

### **Background**

While the Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation have worked together in the past on public art projects, there had been little groundwork laid for a true partnership. At this point, because of the scale of the Pro Parks Levy and the One Percent for Art funds generated, the two departments agreed to focus on building such a relationship. To foster the bond, the arts planner was placed in-residence at Parks and Recreation. This crucial step has resulted in a very encouraging outcome.

The planning phase has established a well-developed, respectful communication link between the Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation. In order to see the Art Plan through, this link will be safe-guarded, kept alive and lively. Seattle Parks and Recreation has come to rely on the planner to keep the lines and layers of communication flowing, to act as a much needed on-the-spot art resource internally and externally, to follow-up on issues and ideas related to projects, to initiate discussions, to investigate possibilities – in other words, to be the “Pro Parks Plus art guru” within the Planning and Development Division of Parks and Recreation.

Having the planner in-residence at Parks and Recreation greatly facilitated this communication, and administrators at both departments were fully committed to supporting this joint planning venture. Seattle Parks and Recreation has been generously responsive and accessible to the planner. Since the planning phase has turned out so well, everyone agrees on the need to continue housing the Art Commission representative at Parks and Recreation for the implementation phase of the Pro Parks Art Plan.

### **Art Plan Implementation**

The goal during this Art Plan's implementation is to have the Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation become lifetime partners in the service of artists working in parks in ways that enhance the missions of the two agencies and the character and meaning of parks for the community.

With the completion of the planning process, an Arts Commission project manager will be put in place to implement the Art Plan. This project manager will continue to be housed at Parks and Recreation. The larger share of keeping communication going about the Art Plan and the projects as they begin among all the important parties will, of necessity, be placed on the shoulders of the Art Plan Project manager, because the Arts Commission will house the Art Plan's concepts and be the keeper of the Art Plan's history as it unfolds. This responsibility is of no small consequence to the final

outcome of the art projects and must be done conscientiously. Currently it is expected that the arts planner will serve in the capacity of project manager for the Art Plan.

It is imperative that the Art Plan project manager continues to be expansive in communicating with various members of Seattle Parks and Recreation. To narrow the focus down to only key administrators and Pro Parks project managers would be a mistake. Keeping as many people in the communication loop as possible during all phases of implementing the Art Plan will not only ensure that the projects are excellent but also changes the culture of Parks and Recreation in relation to artists working on their turf.



As the relationship between the departments matures, Parks and Recreation personnel will become more knowledgeable about how the Arts Commission's processes works, how artists work, and ultimately, how art and parks can merge and create exponentially more possibilities for park users and the city park system. As Parks and Recreation becomes more well-versed in the role art and artists can play in parks, two things should happen. They will be able to join the Arts Commission in being an advocate for public art, expressing a vision and understanding of artists working in parks to the larger community. If Parks and Recreation chooses, they will be able to promote an internal discussion about the potential for art in parks. By doing so they can become full contributors to the thinking that defines the direction of future opportunities.

### **Educating and Informing Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation Staffs**

As the planning phase is wrapped up, it is important for the Pro Parks project manager for the art projects to begin a diligent education of Parks and Recreation staff about the Art Plan's vision, goals and implementation process. Obviously, this information must be delivered to all Pro Parks project management staff. But it is equally important to reach out to those working in administration, the various geographic areas of the city park system, maintenance, communications, etc.

With an enormous number of projects taking place simultaneously, everyone needs to share language to describe the

vision, goals and processes of the Art Plan and be able to walk community members through imagining the new art that will be in the parks. Everyone involved needs to be aware that building an understanding within the departments and the community broadens the possibilities and the degree of success for the art and artists. This level and kind of communication has other potentials. It can clarify what essential parts of the park should be handled through the creative design work of the consultants taking place under the stewardship of Parks and Recreation and what part the art can play in the park. Also any level of conceptual discussion revolving around what parks mean to people, how they work, what experiences do you want to foster within parks, etc. expands the culture of understanding.

Therefore the planner recommends that in regard to Parks and Recreation, the Art Plan project manager:

- update upper level management and the superintendent on the progress of the Art Plan on a regular basis;
- attend the project management and Pro Parks Steering and Oversight Committee meetings;
- occasionally attend Division meetings to update staff on developments; and
- establish an on-going relationship with Maintenance to regular updates about projects in development and discuss ideas and issues related to regular maintenance procedures of art in parks.

## **Workplan**

### **Process**

There are both large and small work issues that should be addressed. Using the standard tool of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is a very good method to clarify this partnership as we prepare to move forward with implementing the projects in the Art Plan. Typically, the Arts Commission develops a MOU that outlines all the details of how two parties work together to accomplish a stated goal on a project by project basis. Since we will have approximately 20 art projects developed under this Art Plan, laying the groundwork for a working partnership between the two departments should be thoughtfully attended to at the outset of the implementation phase.

The Art Plan project manager must develop broad relationships with the Pro Parks and Community Centers project management staff. Ideally, these relationships will also become defined by a sense of partnership, as both project managers will be guiding the art project to completion. Project management will involve handling communication to the design consultants, the community, and the artist and fostering a “team” sensibility. Obviously the Art Plan project manager is solely responsible for the details of the artist’s contract, design phase and implementation, but in the broader sense, if both

the Arts Commission and Parks Department project managers are on the same page in terms of thinking and use of descriptive language, the chances of an exceptional outcome increase many fold.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

This plan recommends that this document be developed at the outset for these projects rather than reacting to the need as a project comes on-line. Agreeing on the tenets of an understanding will further cement the positive work that took place during the planning process. The MOU for these projects will be based on the standard language of such a document, but with attention to details that apply here. The MOU will be crafted by the head of the Arts Commission's Public and Community Arts Division, the Art Plan project manager, the Director of the Planning and Development Division and the head of Pro Parks Project Management of Parks and Recreation.

### **Language About Art Projects in Requests For Qualifications (RFQ) and Contracts For Design Consultants**

Standard language will be developed jointly by the Art Plan project manager and the appropriate Parks and Recreation representatives for inclusion in the project Request for Qualifications (RFQ) and contracts. This language will clearly indicate that design consultants will be interfacing with a

project artist and what will be required in terms of time and intent. Several versions will be written to cover issues with different types of art projects, so appropriate paperwork can be drawn up quickly for each RFQ or contract by Parks and Recreation project managers.

Following is an example of possible contract language:

The Pro Parks Art Plan specifies that an artist will be commissioned to create art for a site selected within the park. The artwork will define an experience that will impact the area of the chosen site in the park. The artist will respond to the landscape design, the park's character and the patterns of use in the entire park.

The consultant will meet with the artist two to three times to:

- share information and ideas (the consultant will orient the artist to the landscape design and the artist will share art concepts);
- confer on any aspects of the art project that fulfill some aspect of the design and therefore could capture or share dollars from the construction budget; and
- determine if any part of the art concept could be included in the construction documents and determine who is responsible for the inclusion of any agreed-upon details and how they will be carried out.

## **Relationship with Parks Maintenance**

### **History**

The Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation have some history of working together on art issues. They have developed a Memorandum of Understanding that outlines individual responsibilities for the maintenance of the current commissioned and donated artworks on park sites. There is also an established policy covering the acceptance and placement of donated artworks for park sites.

With this new set of projects coming on line, it is recommended that the Art Plan project manager establish a strong relationship with people in the Maintenance Division. This will enable the maintenance staff to become familiar with the range of art that could possibly be sited in the parks and to share their invaluable knowledge regarding

general and specific maintenance and siting issues with the Art Plan project manager. This information could then become part of the orientation of the selected artists. Also, a communication channel would be established allowing maintenance staff to offer insightful suggestions to artists about the use and care of park sites that might be applicable during the design phase, etc.

It is recommended that a representative of Maintenance be an active member of the Arts Commission's review group established for the Pro Parks artists' designs.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU)**

For the Pro Parks Art Plan, it has been decided that a new MOU regarding the long term care of artworks will be drafted and formally agreed upon before we begin the implementation phase of the Pro Parks art projects.



## **Site Selection Process for Parks and Artwork Sites**

### **Establishing a Decision Making Group**

The final selection of park sites for two of three components of the Art Plan that involve sites is critically important. Any review of necessary changes to or final selection of sites must be dealt with formally with the goals of the Art Plan in mind in order to benefit the final outcome of the One Percent for Art projects.

The initial list of park sites was carefully compiled to allow the vision and goals of the Art Plan to flourish. Any revisiting of site choices for the Major Art Projects and the final selection of sites in the more flexible category of General Opportunity Fund Projects must be done thoughtfully, but also boldly. Therefore it is necessary to set in place a strong, consistent mechanism that will handle review of any changes or problems with sites, selection of any alternate park sites for the Major Art Projects, and final site selection for the General Opportunity Fund sites.

A small, representative group will be established to be on call for such actions. The representatives need to be familiar with either the park system, the Pro Parks Levy and Levy Art Plan and/or public art. Their recommendation on site changes and additions will be taken to Parks and Recreation Superintendent for discussion and approval.

It is recommended that the Pro Parks site selection group

(name to be determined), making the choices for the major and general opportunity fund projects, be comprised of the following representatives:

#### **Parks and Recreation:**

- head of Pro Parks project management;
- a member of the new centralized Parks Department Review body; and
- a representative from maintenance.

#### **Seattle Arts Commission:**

- Public and Community Arts Program Director;
- Art Plan project manager; and
- Arts Commissioner from the Public Art Advisory Committee.

### **Sites for Major Art Projects**

Inherent in working on an Art Plan of this nature and scale with a long time frame is the possibility of changes that impact the initial site list. If a site change is required, the goal is to select an alternate site that will make an equal or greater contribution to the overall vision of the Pro Park Art Plan. Any alternate choice should be made after looking carefully at any art projects that are underway, any significant changes to the Pro Parks project list, and assessment of any completed Pro Parks work and its impact on the park system and communities. That is, alternate sites should be selected with knowledgeable consideration for the status of the parks system and art projects at that time coupled with the Art Plan's vision, goals and criteria.

For some of these projects, while not required, it may be necessary to develop parameters for siting artworks within a park. If so, the parameters should be structured to support the ability of an artist to create an artwork guided by the vision and goals of the Art Plan.

### **Sites for General Art Opportunity Fund Projects**

The site list for this category is intentionally left open-ended, although there is an initial list of sites that will be evaluated as they come on line. As such, there will likely be a need for the decision making body to meet to make on-going determinations on sites over the next few years.

The site selection process for this component of the Art Plan will take into account the implementation schedule and design direction of projects on the initial list assembled during the planning phase of the Art Plan. It will also address any new acquisitions or projects being funded through the Pro Parks Levy General Art Opportunity Fund that are of significance and perhaps present a better opportunity than the original group of sites. As well, any sites that have been reevaluated as to their importance will be considered. The decision making body will review the Art Plan's vision, goals and criteria of the Pro Parks Art Plan for that category of project, and couple this with consideration of the success and impact of any Pro Park art projects that are under development or are complete.

### **Process for Developing the Scope for the Writer-in-Residence**

This project is an exciting experiment. While it is easy to imagine what a photographer-in-residence might produce and how images could be used, the Arts Commission and Parks Department are open to developing an initial scope for this opportunity for a writer. Once a writer is selected, it could be helpful at the outset of the residency to include the writer in a discussion refining the residency goals and possible ways the writer's work could be used. It is hoped that this residency will take place towards the beginning of the implementation of the Art Plan.

For this component, it is important to spend the initial planning time to develop an outline of the goals and aspirations of the residency and to determine the type of writer we seek. The Art Plan recommends that a one-time group be convened to take on this task. The group would be comprised of:

- Art Plan Project Manager;
- Arts Commission Public and Community Art Program Director;
- Parks Department P.R./Communication writer;
- Arts Commission Communications Director; and
- representatives of Richard Hugo House and possibly The Washington Center for the Book.

This group will understand the workings of Seattle Parks and Recreation and past Arts Commission projects that dealt with writers. They will then brainstorm approaches to writing that might be most effective within this context and opportunity, and how writing could be used within Parks and Recreation. An outline for the residency will be developed from this group's work.



## **Artist Selection Process: Major Art Projects**

The Pro Parks Art Plan projects have a specialized and challenging scope. They are clearly for artists who have a strong conceptual framework and substantial experience creating work that fits the vision and opportunity. Based on the planner's research to date, these projects need to be broadly promoted in order to reach the smaller number of artists who have the background to take them on.

### **Call For Artists**

The development of the prospectus is critical. Descriptions of all the essential aspects of the projects will have to be clear and strong. The prospectus will include descriptive and informative language about:

- Seattle's park system;
- the Art Plan's vision and goals;
- the art opportunity as an invitation to make art and also to engage the public in a public space; and
- site descriptions for a particular call.

In addition, the prospectus should be imbued with a sense of the unique opportunity these projects provide for artists and the city.

Artists will be asked to submit twenty slides of representative work, a letter of interest, resume and references. Rather than the usual letter of interest, artists will be asked to write re-

sponses to a short list of questions that are designed to give a panel more comprehensive background information and a sense of how this opportunity is interpreted and understood. It is recommended that the Arts Commission use a national call for these projects and also invite select regional, national and international artists to apply. In order to expand the reach of the prospectus, the Arts Commission staff and the Pro Parks Project Manager should investigate and contact various resources to increase the size of both the mailing list and the list of artists invited to apply.

### **Selection Process**

In most cases, two to three projects will be grouped for a selection process because of Pro Parks project schedules, efficiency, and generating interest in the artist community. For each round, the selection process will include an initial panel meeting to develop a short list of artists to be interviewed, and a second panel meeting to interview artists and make the final selections. Additionally each panel will be asked to develop a list of strong candidates who were not selected so they can be invited to apply for a subsequent round of projects.

### **Selection Panels**

The composition of the selection panels is critical. Equally important is a careful, thorough panel orientation that brings every member to a full understanding of the nature of the Art

Plan and the particular projects under their purview.

It is recommended that there be a “standing core group” of at least two people for the panel that would participate in all the Major Art Projects selection processes. A strong argument can be made that this practice will help ensure that the intent of the Plan is carried through over the course of the four to five years of levy work. The panelists who serve through all the selection processes would contribute to establishing the sense of cohesiveness and history that we aspire to in the working processes of the Art Plan, as well as in the final group of artworks.

The panel for the Major Art Projects will be composed of the following members:

- two artists with far-reaching outdoor site experience in public art (preferably natural sites) and strong conceptual skills;
- an arts professional experienced with artists working in a natural context;
- a landscape design professional with either solid experience or strong theoretical foundation in highly creative natural urban park design; and
- a community member with extensive urban park system involvement.

### **Panel Orientation**

The selection panels will receive an in-depth orientation. Prior to gathering, each member should read the Art Plan and

also pertinent resource and source materials provided by the Arts Commission. The panel orientation will include:

- a discussion about the Art Plan and support material held with the panel, facilitated by the director of the Public Art Program and the Art Plan project manager, to establish a mutual understanding of its content, vision, and goals (this discussion should include Seattle Parks and Recreation Superintendent and other Parks and Recreation representatives);
- a slide presentation and discussion of artworks that are similar to work we would be striving to commission in order to clarify what is unique about these projects; and
- comprehensive site visits of all major art project sites.

## **Artist Orientation**

It is critical to spend time orienting the selected artists through a process similar to that used for the selection panel members. The goals of an orientation are:

- ensure the artists clearly understand the vision and goals of the Art Plan and their creative opportunity;
- describe the physical and maintenance parameters for working in a public park system and working in Parks and Recreation in particular;
- orient the artists to their particular park and site; and
- explain the process for concept to final design development of the artwork and the approval process.

## **Community Process**

To ensure that any community associated with an artwork site participates in the implementation of an Art Plan project, either a general community meeting or a meeting of a representative group for the park site will be undertaken to present the Art Plan and discuss the various qualities and particulars of a site. The community will be encouraged to share their feelings and understanding of the park site with the Art Commission in order to develop a more detailed description of the art opportunity that builds on the vision and goals of the Art Plan. All pertinent site information would be incorporated into the call for artists.

For the artist selection process, the community will be invited to designate one-two representatives to act as advisors to the selection panel for their project. At this time, the representatives would be asked to help in orienting the panel and providing appropriate comments on the artists applicants as the selection process enrolls.

Following artist selection, the artist will meet with the community to share backgrounds and insights about and hopes for the site. The artist will meet at agreed upon benchmarks with a designated group that represents the park to share the artwork concept as it is developed and to elicit comments. If desirable, the artist would make a presentation to a broader community group.

## **Artist Selection Process: General Art Opportunity Fund Projects Call For Artists**

It is recommended that these projects use one of the Arts Commission rosters when appropriate for the timing and scope of a project. If the roster does not have enough qualified artists for a particular opportunity, the Art Plan project manager and the Public and Community Art Program Manager will discuss the option of having a regional open call to either select artists or develop another small roster.

To promote these projects, either a letter to roster artists or a prospectus for an open call will clearly and strongly describe the objectives and background information of the projects, just as we will do for the Major Art Projects. The prospectus will include descriptive and informative language about:

- Seattle's park system;
- the Art Plan's vision and goals;
- how these projects fit into the overall group of art projects;
- how these projects are about artists making art but art creates a unique experience within the park; and
- site descriptions for a particular call.

If there is an open call, artists will be asked to submit 15 to 20 appropriate, representative slides of their strongest work with a letter of interest and resume. If a roster is used, artists will submit a letter of interest.

## **Selection Process**

For each round, the selection process will have two parts: an initial panel meeting to develop a short list of artists to be interviewed or to develop proposals, and a second panel meeting to interview artists or review proposals and then make the final artist selection.

The determination of whether to conduct an interview process or a proposal based process for final artist selection will be made by the Arts Commission after reviewing the opportunity for an artist at a particular site.



## **Selection Panel**

The composition of the panel is important. Equally important is a thorough panel orientation that brings every member to a full understanding of the nature of the Art Plan and the particular projects under their purview.

If a roster is not used, the panel for the General Art Opportunity Fund Projects will be composed of the following members:

- an artist with outdoor site experience in public art and strong conceptual skills;
- Parks and Recreation Project Manager;
- a landscape design or urban planning professional with experience designing smaller urban parks; and
- a community member with broad urban park system involvement.

If a roster is used, the selection panel will be composed of the following members:

- a community member who can represent the larger community;

- either the landscape designer for the park site or a designer or urban planning professional with experience designing smaller urban parks; and
- Parks and Recreation Project Manager.

## **Panel Orientation**

As with the Major Art Projects, General Art Opportunity Fund Project panels will get a thorough orientation. Panelists will be asked to read the Art Plan and any pertinent resource and support material supplied prior to the first meeting. The panel orientation will include:

- a discussion about the Art Plan and support material, facilitated by the director of the Public Art Program and the Art Plan project manager, to establish a mutual understanding of its content, vision, and goals (this discussion will be attended by key Parks Department representatives including the Superintendent);
- a slide presentation and discussion of artworks that are similar to work we would be striving to commission in order to clarify what is unique about these projects; and
- comprehensive site visits of all Major Art Project sites.



## Artist Orientation

The General Art Opportunity Fund Project artists will also receive a full orientation. The goals of the orientation are to:

- ensure the artists clearly understand the vision and goals of the Art Plan and their creative opportunity;
- describe the physical and maintenance parameters for working in a public park system and working in the Seattle Park department in particular;
- orient the artists to their particular park and site; and
- explain the concept development and approval process.



## Community Process

A process similar to that for the Major Art Projects will be used for this component. To ensure that any community associated with an artwork site participates in the implementation of an Art Plan project, either a general community meeting or a meeting of a representative group for the park site will be undertaken to present the Art Plan and discuss the various qualities and particulars of a site. The community will be encouraged to share their feelings and understanding of the park site with the Art Commission in order to develop a more detailed description of the art opportunity that builds on the vision and goals of the Art Plan. All pertinent site information would be incorporated into the call for artists.

For the artist selection process, the community will be invited to designate one-two representatives to participate on the selection panel for their project. These community members should be selected for their ability to represent and work for the larger community.

Following artist selection, the artist will meet with the community to share backgrounds and insights about and hopes for the site. The artist will meet at agreed upon benchmarks with a designated group that represents the park to share the artwork concept as it is developed and to elicit comments. If desirable, the artist would make a presentation to a broader community group.

# **Art Project Review Process**

## **Art Concept Review**

For the Major Art Projects, it is recommended to conduct more design reviews than is standard Arts Commission procedure, due to the scope of the projects. They will be reviewed at the following benchmarks:

- response to site and initial concepts;
- concept review;
- mid-point final design development; and
- final design.

For the General Art Opportunity Fund Projects, the schedule and benchmarks for review will follow standard Arts Commission procedure, which includes a review of concepts and final design.

**Additional Recommendation:** If there are several artists working in the same general timeframe, the presentations will be grouped whenever possible. This will be beneficial to the artists, designers and staff and will also streamline the review process for the reviewing body.

## **Review Group**

The Arts Commission wishes to create the most efficient review process possible given the number of projects being done through the Art Plan. The review of projects will be most effective (and efficient) if the Arts Commission and Parks Department work together as a team in the review

process, sharing comments and insights with each other and the artists while at the same table.

Therefore, it is recommended that standing representatives from Parks and Recreation join the Public Art Advisory Committee, meeting together to review all the projects under this Art Plan. Seattle Parks and Recreation representatives should be:

- Parks and Recreation Pro Parks Project Manager;
- member of Parks and Recreation's new project review body; and
- Parks Department representative from Maintenance.

It is highly recommended that every effort be made to keep this review group intact for the duration of the Art Plan projects. The accrued history will be very important in the review of the complete group of projects, helping to establish a strong sense of cohesiveness that is a critical goal of this Art Plan.



## **Criteria for Selection of a Project for the Major Art Projects and General Opportunity Fund**

These criteria were developed in the planning process and guided the site selection for the Art Plan's major art projects. They will also be used if some unforeseen developments occur that necessitate changes in the site list of Major Art Projects and in the on-going determination of the General Art Opportunity Fund sites.

As a group, the projects:

- allow the Seattle Arts Commission and Seattle Parks and Recreation to establish and successfully contribute a coherent vision of art in parks developed through the Levy to the city;
- attract people to the variety of sites within the city specifically to experience the art because the artworks establish a unique sense of place and provide exciting, memorable experiences;
- are distributed throughout the city in a thoughtful, equitable way. (Consider Seattle Parks Gap Analysis information.);
- contribute to an overall perception of art being woven into the fabric of the Parks and Recreation system; and
- are distinctive from the artwork being created for projects implemented with the Neighborhood Matching Fund Grants.

Each project:

- provides a compelling artistic opportunity for an artist;
- provides an artistic opportunity that is meaningful to the citizens;
- makes a unique contribution to the group of projects;
- gives the artist an opportune site within a park or the entire site to create a significant place for people to have an experience or interact;
- enhances some special aspect of the park (i.e., a view) or quality (i.e., a transition zone or some interesting topographic feature);
- can be successful within existing budget and scheduling constraints;
- has the potential to meet the vision and goals of the Art Plan;
- has the potential to become a citywide and/or sector-wide “icon”; and
- has other possible funding sources to partner with the One Percent for Art money, or, demonstrates how the One Percent for Art money can act as “seed money.”



## **Art Plan—Initial Conceptual Approaches**

Both Seattle Parks and Recreation and the Seattle Arts Commission recognized the two important aspects of this levy - the One Percent for Art funds generated and developing a thoughtful plan for the use of those funds. To support the development of a comprehensive Art Plan with a new vision for art in parks, the Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation joined hands, marking the beginning of an auspicious partnership. The Arts Commission placed arts planner Carolyn Law “in residence” at Parks and Recreation, to conduct the research and build the relationships needed to develop this Arts Plan.

Over a six-month period, Carolyn Law developed knowledgeable relationships with Ken Bounds, Seattle Parks and Recreation’s superintendent, and staff in the administration, planning, development, acquisition, landscape architecture, major maintenance, and project management divisions. Working side by side with staff, she forged relationships based on a comprehension of the mission, goals and working processes of Parks and Recreation; shared ideas, information and visions with Seattle Parks and Recreation Division staff; and made numerous site visits alone and with staff. The arts planner talked with key stakeholders including the Seattle Parks Foundation; the Design Commission; the Planning Commission; Seattle departments, including Department of

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

In addition to her thorough study of the levy sites through design drawings, maps, descriptions, and photographs, Law conducted site visits to almost every levy site as well as to other park sites throughout the city. She visited some sites on her own, and others in the company of key people from Parks and Recreation and Arts Commission. The experiential knowledge gained in these site visits greatly enhanced her understanding of the park system and informed every aspect of this Art Plan’s development. She began winnowing down the formidable list of levy sites to a shorter list of parks that were especially suited for art projects because of a notable characteristic, be it physical siting, location in the city, view, mix of uses, access, potential to become a destination, etc. From that point forward, the Plan’s site list and conceptual approach developed hand in hand.

The residency greatly helped to demonstrate both the immensity and scale of the levy’s impact, and the rare promise of the opportunity for public art. Through observation, conversation, and research, the arts planner explored the options and framed several key questions. The answers to these questions provided a solid foundation for making choices and guided the Plan’s eventual vision and goals. The answers also in-

formed decisions about the final components and site choices of the Art Plan.

Other important issues guiding a conceptual approach came out of an initial discussion with Parks and Recreation Superintendent Ken Bounds, held to establish any additional guidelines for this opportunity. For the art projects, he enthusiastically supported thinking on an expansive scale and pushing the ideas about art in parks in a thought-provoking new direction. It was also very important to him for future generations to be able to look back and see a clear connection



to the Pro Parks period of park development, through the resulting artworks and the approach to park design. He also supported the possibility of working with park sites beyond those listed in the levy, in keeping with the citywide nature of the levy, if a strong supporting rationale could be provided.

Next, Law developed four possible conceptual approaches for consideration, based on her research. By this point she had conducted site research including the site visits and conversations with key people in both departments about what sites had interesting potential. She had also exchanged ideas and

information with many people associated with the levy and the city. (Of particular importance were conversations with Ken Bounds and Erin Devoto from Parks and Recreation, the Seattle Design Commission and the Arts Commission Public Art Advisory Committee.) The conceptual approaches also reflected her extensive research on urban parks, landscape design and planning, historical cultural expressions within the landscape, and artists working with the environment or in outdoor, park-like settings. These four draft conceptual approaches were presented to the Arts Commission Public Art Committee and key Parks and Recreation people:

## **1. Art Makes a Connection to the Natural World**

Parks provide a respite from urban life and allow people to be in a more natural environment. Art that connects to the natural world can establish a unique zone within the park that defines an opportunity to experience the non-urban, natural world of the park in an extraordinary way. This experiential art area can be located in relationship to other park experiences and patterns of use like walking a path, picnicking, using a play area, taking in a view, etc. Sites in a park with some particular quality or characteristic, such as a view or a special wooded area or meadow, will be sought out.

## **2. Art Broadens a “Community Park” Experience**

Urban parks can have an impact on an entire neighborhood, not just the immediate surroundings. Art can add an experience that is clearly unique from standard design or programming. A successful art experience can intertwine with the activities and design of the park, enhancing the overall experience of the open space.

## **3. The Park is Art**

In some parks, an artist can work as the lead designer of the entire site or a large piece of a site. The artist would be the

primary designer, selecting the landscape architect as a partner in the process. The artist will design the park as an artwork with a strong concept, aesthetic and sense of experience to support a set of pre-determined functional uses that match the potential of the site.

## **4. Art Creates A Unique Experience Within a Park**

Artwork can add a distinctive layer of meaning to a park and provide a variety of imaginative interactive uses that bring a new idea, experience and use into the setting. For this concept, a range of park types are selected, of varying sizes, from natural to urban, reflecting the mix of the whole parks system.



## Site Selection Process

The arts planner narrowed the site list down to a short list of the strongest candidates that met the Art Plan's site criteria.

The list included the most important major parks being developed through the levy as well as other parks located throughout the city which demonstrated an alignment with the project criteria but also had that "subjective" promise of something extra.

The short list of possible sites was placed alongside the blended conceptual approach to see if the proposed central concept for the Art Plan was a good match with the sites. Then a question was asked to key decision-makers: Did the conceptual approach, matched with the most interesting sites, inspire confidence that the resulting artwork would fulfill the Art Plan's vision and goals? The planner's recommendation, which was accepted, was that it did.

The following initial conceptual approaches were developed to examine the range of possibilities available. Once developed these were further developed and then examined for strengths and weaknesses.

During the course of the levy, the same key decision-makers who were involved during the development of the Art Plan will determine sites for this category of project. The Pro Parks Art Plan Project Manager will be responsible for on-going research and evaluation of sites on the list and any new sites that arise during the next two to three years. From this work, the project manager will make recommendations to the new review body (formerly CORE, reconfigured in 2002) for Parks and Recreation and the Arts Commission (Director of Public and Community Art and the Public Art Committee of the Arts Commission) for discussion and approval. Decisions will continue to be guided by the vision, goals and criteria of the Art Plan and also consider the impact and status of art projects that have been completed or are underway.





