

# PUBLIC ART PROJECT PLAN

PROJECT PLAN FOR OLD TOWN NORTH

DATE APPROVED: March 16, 2021

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## I. Introduction

The City of Alexandria's Public Art Implementation Plan outlined a vision and goals for the public art program and established three Creative Directions: Time and Place, Neighborhoods & Gathering Spaces, and Natural and Urban Systems.

The Plan also sets out a process for the commissioning of new public art. For each project approved in the Annual Public Art Work Plan, the Commission for the Arts appoints a Public Art Project Task Force to advise on the entire project development process. The staff and the Project Task Force develop a Project Plan that sets out the project goals, artist selection process, budget, timeline and communications strategy. The Project Task Force then selects an artist, through a process set out in the Project Plan. The artist develops a concept, which is then approved by the Project Task Force and the Commission for the Arts.

This document is the Project Plan for public art in Old Town North.

## II. Site and Context

### **About the City of Alexandria**

Alexandria, Virginia is a small historic seaport city of about 150,000 residents located on the Potomac River, minutes from Washington, D.C. It is best known for its historic Old Town but is also home to federal agencies such as the U.S. Patent & Trademark Office, the Defense Department and the headquarters of the National Science Foundation.

### **About Old Town North**

Alexandria is a City of vibrant neighborhoods. The Old Town North neighborhood has its own unique character and rich history. Located in the northeastern park of the City, Old Town North is bordered by the Potomac River to the east, Oronoco Street to the south, the southern end of Daingerfield Island to the north, and Washington Street generally to the west. Old Town North is home to two important cultural institutions – The Art League and MetroStage – as well as businesses in the creative sectors and to residents who enjoy the cultural activities that take place in the area.

During the 19th century, farming and industry in Old Town North had grown due to the area's proximity to the Potomac River which served as an entry port for the movement of goods from river to the Chesapeake and Ohio Canal, via the Alexandria Canal, and later from the river to the Washington and Ohio Railroad. For the latter part of the 20th century, many factors contributed to the area's transition to the mixed-use neighborhood it is today with multi-modal connections to neighborhoods to the north, west and south and to Washington, DC and the greater Washington Metropolitan Region.

The change to a mixed-use character began earnestly in the 1960s when industry began to slow for various reasons such as antiquated factories and changes in shipping technology and land prices, leaving an opportunity for redevelopment in this area. Much of the redevelopment that followed was office with some hotels and residential uses. The 1992 Old Town North Small Area Plan (OTN SAP) stressed the need for a more balanced mix, including retail focus areas and more residential.

Today, Old Town North has further evolved into a defined community with a mixture of uses and a series of remaining development parcels that are now more likely positioned for redevelopment. It is important to ensure the right tools are in place to help guide these remaining redevelopment opportunities in a manner that builds on the 1992 OTN SAP and is consistent with the community's vision.

## Establishment of Arts and Cultural District

In April 2018, City Council approved the establishment of an Arts and Cultural District in Old Town North, one of the Small Area Plan's implementation recommendations. The new Arts and Cultural District Overlay zoning text amendment outlines the incentives for the creation of arts and cultural spaces within the District. The text amendment also establishes definitions for ground floor arts and cultural tenant space and an arts and cultural anchor space.

The Virginia Chapter of the American Planning Association has awarded the City of Alexandria with the 2018 Terry Holzheimer Economic Development Award for the establishment of the Old Town North Arts and Cultural District. The Old Town North Small Area Plan, adopted by City Council in June 2017, prioritizes economic development and placemaking with recommended strategies for a balanced mix of uses, attraction of retail, arts and cultural uses, and creation of affordable housing options across all income levels.

## Public Art in Old Town North

The Old Town North Small Area Plan establishes North Fairfax Street as an Arts Corridor, where public art installations and arts and cultural uses are concentrated to create a critical mass of creative uses. This corridor is intended to attract all types of creative uses, such as visual and performing arts venues, galleries, and studios, as well as businesses or stores in creative fields such as media, marketing, handcrafting, art supply, and design. These uses serve to strengthen the corridor's sense of place and the vitality of the creative economy.

Since 2019 staff has been meeting with members of the Old Town North Alliance to discuss opportunities for City-commissioned public art in the area and presented a series of short, medium, and long term ideas that could be incorporated into the public art annual workplan process. The lack of city-owned spaces in Old Town North continues to be a challenge to bringing city-commissioned public art to the area and requires a unique approach to the process.

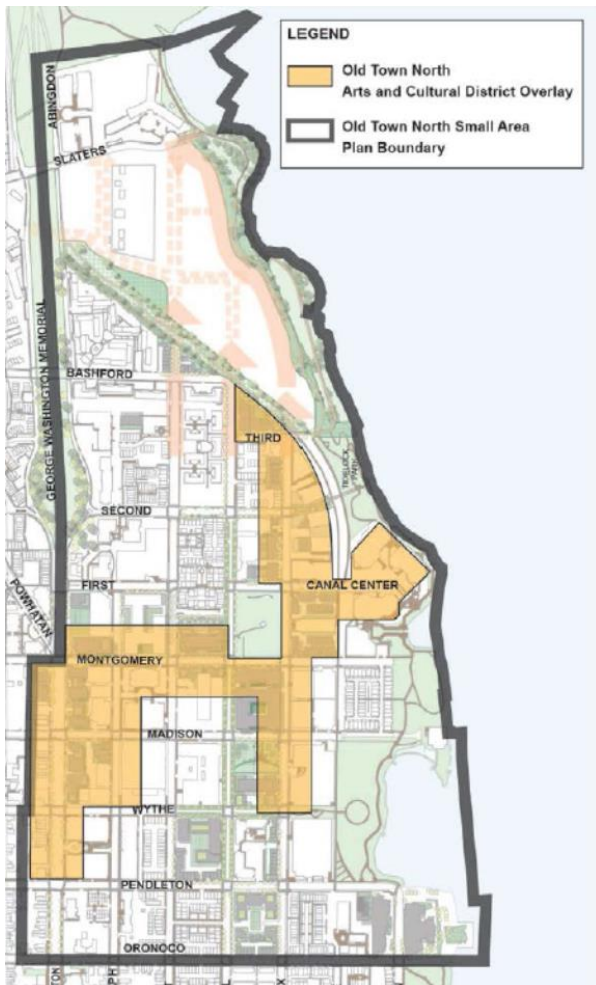
## Maps & Photos



Community's Vision for Arts and Cultural Uses in Old Town North by Greg Gersch

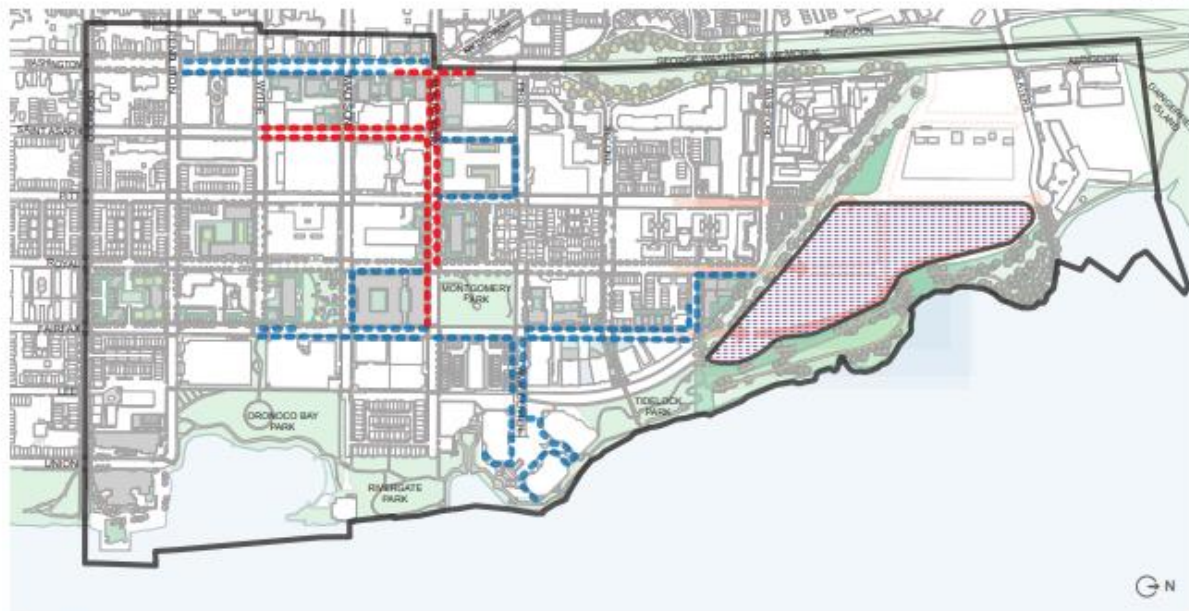


Boundary map of Old Town North



Old Town North Arts & Culture District Overlay

Figure 2.04: Retail/Arts and Cultural Areas and Corridors



LEGEND

- - - Required Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses
- - - Optional Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses
- Area for Retail or Arts and Cultural Uses
- Plan Boundary

Note:  
The final location and amount of retail or arts and cultural uses for the former power plant site will be established as part of the Coordinated Development District (CDD) approval(s) for the site.

Figure 2.05: North Fairfax Street Arts Corridor



LEGEND

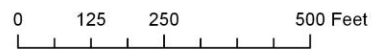
- - - Arts Corridor
- Potential Location for Public Art
- Potential Sculpture Garden
- Existing Arts and cultural Institutions
- Potential New Innovative/Signature Uses
- Plan Boundary

Note: Figure is for illustrative purposes only. Public art is encouraged along North Fairfax Street. The final location of public art will be determined as part of the development review process.



Old Town North: Public Art Project  
Manhole Cover Map

- DManhole
- DGravityMain



### III. Goals

The Alexandria Public Art Program is interested in commissioning artists to create a site-specific, permanent work of art for Old Town North.

The program goals of the Old Town North public art project are to:

- Recognize/celebrate OTN as an Arts and Culture District.
- Respect the identity of Old Town North and tells the story of its unique history.
- Bring a new work of public art to Old Town North that is informed by the context of the site.

### Project Scope (2021)

The City of Alexandria will commission up to three (3) artists to create a design to be used to cast approximately 24 unique stormwater covers throughout Old Town North, with a focus on Fairfax Street. Artists will be required to visit the area and create a design that is representative and inspired by Old Town North. Opportunities to include the stormwater “apron” in the design will also be reviewed as part of this project.

### IV. Selection Process

For the Old Town North project, the Office of the Arts will issue a *tri-state* call for artists. Three artists will be selected and given the opportunity to come to Alexandria and visit Old Town North, meet with staff, and interview with the Task Force.

#### Old Town North Task Force

The Old Town North Task Force helps shape the Project Plan for the project and recommends selection of artist(s) and approval of concept(s).

The two Commission for the Arts representatives on the Task Force are:

- Gayle Converse
- Matthew Stensrud

The Community Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Carolyn Griffin
- Ryan Whitaker

Project Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Gavin Pellitteri, City of Alexandria T&ES

#### Artist Selection Process and Concept Approval

An [open call](#) process for artists living and working in Virginia, Maryland, and Washington, D.C. will be used to select artists for the project.

In accordance with the Public Art Implementation Plan and Policy, the Office of the Arts, will draft a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) based on the information provided in the Project Plan. This call will be issued via an online application system. Interested artists/artist teams will be welcome to submit a letter of interest, qualifications, and work samples.



The Task Force will review the letters of interest and qualifications and recommend an artist for the project. The selected artist/artist team will be approved by the Commission for the Arts.

The selected artist/artist team will develop a Concept Proposal/s in collaboration with the Office of the Arts staff, consultants, and other partners. The Concept Proposal/s will include a rendering, narrative description, fabrication methods, budget and timeline. The Concept Proposal will be reviewed for feedback by the Task Force and be recommended for approval by Commission for the Arts prior to execution.

## V. Timeline

March	Task Force reviews and recommends the Project Plan
March 16	Project Plan submitted to Commission for the Arts for approval
March	Staff develops call to artists
March/April	Issue Call for Artists
April/May	Call to Artists closes
April/May	Task Force will review and score artist qualifications and select artist/artist team
May	Artist Interviews (optional)
May/June	Task Force meets and makes final artist recommendation
May 18/June 15	Arts Commission approves task force recommendation
May/June	Artist contract
June/July	Artist site visit and community engagement
July/August	Selected artist presents proposal
July/August	Proposals reviewed by Task Force and approved by Commission for the Arts
August	Final design is submitted to fabricator
TBD	Fabrication
TBD	Installation
TBD	Completion

Individual timelines will be identified for each project.

## VI. Project Budget

<b>From Public Art Fund</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>
Artist design,	\$2,000
Fabrication	\$5,500
Delivery	\$1,500
Contingency	\$1,500
Programming & communications (specific to the public art project)	\$500
Option for Additional Artist(s)	\$4,000
Installation Contingency	\$1,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$15,000</b>

Budgets will be identified on a project per project basis in accordance with public art best practices.

## VII. Community Engagement, Marketing and Communications

Community engagement, marketing and communications should be geared toward engaging with existing stakeholders as well as bringing new audiences to experience the artwork. It will explore initiatives to promote Old Town North's branding and marketing programs, expand arts and cultural venues, and programming for the enjoyment of residents, employees, and visitors of the area.

### Stakeholders

Community engagement, marketing, and communications should build upon the existing stakeholder base for art and tourism in Alexandria and the stakeholders in Old Town North. These will include, but not limited to, representatives from:

- Old Town North Alliance
- Old Town North Community Partnership
- Old Town North Farmers Market
- North Old Town Independent Citizens Association (NOTICE)
- Others as identified

### Marketing and Communications

The Office of the Arts staff will develop a marketing and communications strategy that will include:

- Materials in languages relevant to the nearby community.
- Web-based information about the project.
- Social media announcements about specific events.
- Print materials about the exhibition to be distributed at local tourist information areas.
- Media releases to local and national publications and blogs.
- Print and/or online advertising in local and regional publications.
- Micro-targeted online / social media advertising.