

PUBLIC ART PROJECT PLAN

CITY HALL AND MARKET SQUARE

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I. Introduction

The City of Alexandria's Public Art Implementation Plan sets out a process for the commissioning of new public art. For each project approved in Public Art Annual 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 Public Art Project Task Force develop a Public Art Project Plan that sets out the project goals, artist selection process, budget, timeline, and communications strategy. The Public Art Project Task Force then selects an artist, through a process set out in the Public Art Project Plan. The artist develops a concept, which is then approved by the Public Art Project Task Force and the Commission for the Arts.

This document is the Public Art Project Plan associated with renovations to City Hall and Market Square.

II. Site and Context

About the City of Alexandria

Alexandria, Virginia is a small historic seaport city of about 158,000 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 City Hall and Market Square

History and Background

Alexandria City Hall was erected on the site designated for the market and city hall when Alexandria was founded in 1749. The tall, steepled tower, which contrasts with the building's Second Empire-style massing and detailing, is a reconstruction of a tower designed by Benjamin H. Latrobe that was part of Alexandria's 1817 town hall. That hall burned in 1871, necessitating construction of the current building, designed by Adolph Cluss, a locally prominent architect who had designed the U.S. Department of Agriculture building in 1869 and Washington's Central Market in 1870. The new City Hall was U-shaped around a central courtyard. Originally, City Hall also housed the Masonic Lodge, court facility, and police and fire stations. Markets Stalls were located on the first floors of the west and north wings and in the courtyard. Today, only City offices remain. On the southern half of the City Hall block is a plaza completed in 1967. Through the years, the City Hall building has undergone several interior and exterior alterations. In the late 1940s, some interior renovation took place. In 1960-61, an addition was built on City Hall, filling in the old courtyard. The building was reoriented toward the south with the new entrance facing King Street and Market Square, an open, landscape plaza with central fountain, completed in 1967 as part of the Gadsby Commercial Urban Renewal Project. Beginning in 1981, the building was renovated to link the 1871 building and the 1961 addition with new elevators, stairs and corridors. City Hall is a great source of community pride, and houses many of the City government offices, including the second floor City Council Chambers. The building serves as a workplace for more than 300 City employees.

Current Status

After many years of service, major updates are needed throughout City Hall to repair aging building components, improve operating systems, optimize space utilization, improve building circulation and wayfinding, enhance security, and facilitate community engagement. The current Market Square plaza and garage require significant structural repairs, resulting in an opportunity to evaluate the design and function of the garage and plaza alongside City Hall. City Hall will require HVAC, plumbing and electrical upgrades along with more modern workspaces for City staff to serve residents and visitors.

Project Design Team

Managed by the Department of General Services, the design team for these projects includes the international design firm LEO A DALY, who will take the lead on the renovation of the 153-year-old City Hall building. Long-established Alexandria firms Rust Orling Architecture and LandDesign will bring local knowledge to the design of Market Square. Design is anticipated through early 2026, with construction taking place 2026-2028.

Project Goals for the Renovations

The project goals of the renovation are to:

- Re-energize City Hall as a center of gravity
- Strengthen its role as a civic center
- Preserve its iconic presence
- Expand its role as destination driver
- Create a vibrant, efficient workplace
- Ensure flexible and resilient planning for the future

For more information about the renovation project, please visit: <https://www.alexandriava.gov/CityHall>.

Integration of Public Art within the Renovated City Hall and Market Square

Opportunities for Permanent Public Art within City Hall and Market Square

The City of Alexandria's Public Art Annual Workplan recommends that the Public Art Program work with the Project Design Team to effectively incorporate public art into renovated spaces within City Hall and Market Square. Permanent public art should be incorporated into both interior and exterior spaces of the renovation. The Public Art Program recommends the following locations for permanent public art commissions, in order of priority established by the Public Art Project Task Force.

Interior Space Opportunities (first priority listed first)

1. Suspended Works
 - a. Example: Works suspended from the ceiling and visible upon entry into the building that might take advantage of natural lighting and enhance the space.
2. Walls
 - a. Example: Permanent works integrated into glass or tile.
3. Railings and Staircases
4. Flooring
 - a. Example: Artist designs incorporated into terrazzo flooring installed by a professional terrazzo contractor.

Exterior Space Opportunities within Market Square (first priority listed first)

1. Freestanding Works
 - a. Example: Sculpture within planned planting beds
2. Retaining Walls
3. Seating
4. Ground plane
 - a. Example: Works within concrete sidewalks or paving that might incorporate images or text.
5. Lighting

The Public Art Program will work with the Project Design Team to implement the top recommended interior and exterior public art opportunities. If a highly ranked opportunity is determined to be unfeasible, a lower ranked opportunity may be pursued. Additional opportunities may also be pursued based on budget availability.

Studio Art Collection

This Project Plan recommends that the City of Alexandria Office of the Arts expand on its studio artwork collection with the goal of purchasing artworks that may be placed on display inside the renovated City Hall and throughout other City buildings. An expanded studio art collection would allow for a flexible rotation of artwork in gathering spaces, conference rooms, and offices. It may also create additional opportunity for local and regional artists.

Temporary Public Art during Construction Activities

While City Hall and Market Square will be unavailable while the spaces are being renovated, temporary public art opportunities remain and should be explored throughout the multiyear construction period. Opportunities may include artist designs on building scrims or construction fencing/barricades. Alternatively, artists selected for permanent public art projects may have opportunities to engage more deeply with community members during the construction phase. This extended engagement could influence the development of their permanent artworks or lead to the creation of temporary works that could be displayed on-site or at other locations throughout the City.

III. Maps, Photos, and Exhibits

Site Location



301 King St, Alexandria, VA 22314

Historic Images of City Hall



1871 – Historic
Alexandria



1960s – Era of Urban
Renewal

Current Images of City Hall



Present Day City Hall
and Market Square



Model of Present Day City Hall and Market Square

Concepts for City Hall and Market Square Redesign



IV. Goals

The Alexandria Public Art Program is interested in commissioning artwork associated with this major revision to City Hall and Market Square. The program goals of the public art project are to:

- Foster a welcoming and inclusive civic space that invites all Alexandrians—longtime residents, newcomers, and visitors—to engage in civic life and feel a sense of belonging and ownership.
- Inspire, delight and engage the public and create memorable experiences.
- Honor Alexandria’s rich and layered past while celebrating its future.
- Respond meaningfully to the physical and environmental context of City Hall and Market Square.
- Amplify Alexandria’s reputation as a vibrant arts destination.

V. Project Scope

- The selected artist(s) or artist team(s) will work with the City to develop plans for one or more pieces of public art within the renovation project.
- The selected artist/artist team will be required to be onsite to participate in community engagement arranged by the City of Alexandria, and the conversations may inform the final design(s).
- The artist/artist team will be required to meet regularly with representatives of the City to coordinate on the project development. Progress meetings may occur virtually.
- Depending on the design, the artist/artist team is expected to obtain professionally certified drawings prior to final approval of the public art by the City.
- The design of the artwork(s) should be appropriate for and inspire all audiences.
- Artwork(s) will be located in areas with high pedestrian volumes and should be highly durable and low maintenance.

VI. Selection Process

For the permanent public art commissions integrated into City Hall and Market Square, the Office of the Arts will issue a national call for artists. Finalists will be selected and given the opportunity to come to Alexandria, meet with staff, and interview with the Task Force.

Public Art Task Force

The Public Art Task Force helps shape the Public Art Project Plan, and recommends the selection of artists and the approval of concepts.

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

- Scott Abeles
- Alvah Beander

The Community Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Laurie Axelrod
- Candace Edgerley

Project Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Jenine Kotob, Assistant Director of Capital Projects with the City of Alexandria’s Department of General Services
- Irena Savakova, Vice President, Global Design Principal, LEO A DALY

Artist Selection Process and Concept Approval

A nationwide open call process will be used to select artists for the permanent public art opportunities described in this Public Art Project Plan. In the event a narrow public art opportunity is being pursued, an invitational process may be utilized with advanced notice to the Public Art Task Force and Arts Commission.

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 this Project Plan. The call will be issued via an online application system (Café – callforentry.org). Interested artists or artist teams will be welcome to submit a letter of interest, qualifications, and work samples.

The Public Art Task Force will review the applications and qualifications and recommend artists or artist teams. The selected artists or artist teams will be approved by the Commission for the Arts.

The selected artists or artist teams will develop Concept Proposals in collaboration with the Office of the Arts staff, consultants, and other partners. The Concept Proposals will include renderings, narrative descriptions, fabrication methods, budgets, and timelines. The Concept Proposals will be reviewed for feedback by the Task Force and be recommended for approval by Commission for the Arts prior to execution.

VII. Timeline

Individual timelines should be drafted based upon the specific indoor or outdoor opportunity that is being pursued, and provided to the Public Art Task Force in advance of a Call for Artists being issued. The timeline should be coordinated with the construction timeframe for that aspect of the project. Construction of the renovations to City Hall and Market Square are anticipated to take place between 2026 and 2028.

June 2025	Task Force reviews and approves Project Plan*
June	Project Plan submitted to Commission for the Arts for approval*
TBD	Staff develops and issues Call for Artists via Café (callforentry.org)
TBD	Review qualifications and select artist/artist team*
TBD	Artist Interviews (optional)*
TBD	Task Force Recommends Artist*
TBD	Arts Commission Approval of Artist
TBD	Artist contract
TBD	Artist site visit and Community Engagement*
TBD	Artist presents concept for Task Force approval*
TBD	Concept approved by Commission for the Arts
TBD	Artist submits final design for technical review
TBD	Fabrication
TBD	Installation

*Steps with which the task force has a role.

VIII. Budget

Indoor Public Art Opportunity

Artist design, fabrication, installation, and contingency	\$150,000
Total	\$150,000

Outdoor Public Art Opportunity

Artist design, fabrication, installation, and contingency	\$150,000
Total	\$150,000

Temporary Public Art during Construction Activities

Artist design, fabrication, installation, and contingency	\$20,000
Total	\$20,000

IX. Community Engagement, Marketing and Communications

Community engagement, marketing and communications should be geared toward engaging with existing citywide stakeholders for the City Hall and Market Square renovation project as well as bringing new audiences to experience the artwork.

Stakeholders

The Public Art Task Force recommends that **citywide stakeholders** are informed about the status of public art at City Hall and Market Square. In order to engage with this large stakeholder base, public art updates will be provided to the Project Design Team, so those updates can be included in communications about the overall renovation project.

Stakeholders will include, but are not limited to:

- ACPS Students
- Boards and Commissions
- Building/Site Tenants and City Employees
- Old Town Business Owners
- Old Town Farmers Market
- Old Town Civic
- Residents from across the city
- Torpedo Factory Art Center Artists

Marketing and Communications

Marketing and communications will integrate with the City Hall and Market Square communications plan. Additionally, the Office of the Arts staff will develop a marketing and communications strategy for the public art that is consistent with other larger public art projects in the city.

The marketing plan may include:

- Web-based information about the project.
- 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.
- Word of mouth, outreach.
- Engagement events/activations.