

PUBLIC ART PROJECT PLAN

POWHATAN PARK

Approved: October 21, 2025

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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 the renovation of Powhatan Park.

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 North East Alexandria

North East Alexandria is north of the city's historic Old Town and immediately west of Old Town North. At its last census, North East had a population of about 2,200 people and 1,295 households. In the 19th century, this part of Alexandria served to connect the City with rural areas. Powhatan Street carried trade goods and people to the Washington and Alexandria Turnpike (est. 1808).

About Powhatan Park and the Surrounding Neighborhoods

Powhatan Park is a 1.5-acre neighborhood park between North Henry Street and Douglas Street, a block north of where traffic on Richmont Highway/Route 1 splits into one-way roadways through the center of the city. The area east of the park is the Westover neighborhood, which is a residential area characterized by townhouses built in the 1930's. West of the park, across Richmond Highway, is a commercial and residential area that has experienced significant change, including recent mid- and high-rise multifamily redevelopment. The park largely serves the surrounding neighborhoods, but its location is highly visible to surrounding local and regional traffic due to its location along Richmond Highway.

The park features a recently refurbished basketball court, playground and multi-sport (pickleball, soccer, tennis) hard-surface court. It includes a passive open space that is popular for dog walking. The City's [Neighborhood Park Plan for Powhatan Park \(2015\)](#) includes recommendations for additional improvements: creating a plaza at the end of Douglas Street and adding a shade structure and game tables. It also recommends new edge treatments, such as a green alley on Douglas Street, and a better landscape barrier between the park and Henry Street.

About Powhatan Park Public Art

The approved [FY2024-2026 Public Art Annual Workplan](#), recommends that public art be added to the park, in consultation with the community, potentially to further the goals of the park renovation. The plan acknowledges that the project goals should include not only physical improvements but also support the resilience of the community through involvement in the public art process.

The Powhatan Park Public Art Task Force has identified public art opportunities in the park. The Task Force recommends the commissioning of public art to support a noise mitigation project, like a wall, or other type of barrier, to provide a sense of separation between the area of the proposed playground renovation in the northernmost portion of the site and Richmond Highway/Route 1. Additionally, the Task Force recommends that the selected public artist provide gateway or entrance features at the two primary pedestrian entrances into the park—one on the primary entrance at Douglas Street and the other at the southern park entrance along the site's frontage on Richmond Highway/Route 1. A unified public art approach could improve the sense of identity at the park.

While the Task Force discussed the opportunity for public art to be incorporated into a planned shade structure, the current public art project budget would not sufficiently support this public art opportunity along with the others.

III. Maps, Photos, and Exhibits

Site Location



Existing Conditions



Powhatan Park Plan Recommendations



Draft Concept for Powhatan Park Renovations



Photographs of Powhatan Park



Existing Playground



Proximity of playground to Richmond Highway/Route 1 where a future barrier is recommended.



Park entrance on Douglas Street where a gateway or entrance feature is recommended.



Southernmost park entrance on Richmond Highway/Route 1
where a gateway or entrance feature is recommended.

IV. Goals

The Alexandria Public Art Program is interested in commissioning artwork to support the renovation of Powhatan Park. The program goals of the public art project are to:

- Bring new artwork to Alexandria that is inspired by the site history and context, and reflects the values of the surrounding neighborhood.
- Improve the sense of identity at the park by providing artwork with a unifying theme that integrates with the park redesign.
- Inspire, delight, and engage children, families and the wider community.
- Improve the appearance of the park from Route 1 through the use of color and/or form.
- Enhance the design of the park and make it a place where people want to spend time and have memorable experiences.

V. Project Scope

- The selected artist or artist team will work with the City to develop plans for 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, 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:

- Catherine Dehoney
- Paul Painter

The Community Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Sara Kohn
- Debi Steinbacher

Project Stakeholders for the Task Force include:

- Daniel Unkle, Urban Planner and Landscape Architect with the City of Alexandria's Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities

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 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

The timeline for the public art within Powhatan Park should be coordinated with the park's construction. The southern half of the park will be constructed with Phase 1. The northern section of the park, including the playground and any associated fencing or walls, will be constructed with Phase 2.

Estimated Park Timeline

July-Dec. 2025	Design Phase I & II
Jan.-May 2026	Park Plan Approvals
Aug.- Dec. 2026	Phase 1 Park Construction (to include gateway or entrance features)
TBD	Phase 2 Park Construction (to include artwork integrated into barriers or walls)

Estimated Public Art Timeline

June 2025	Task Force appointed by the Arts Commission.
Sept.	Task Force reviews and approves Project Plan*
Oct.	Project Plan submitted to Commission for the Arts for approval*
Nov.	Staff develops and issues Call for Artists via Café (callforentry.org)
Dec.	Review qualifications and select artist/artist team*
Dec/Jan	Artist Interviews (optional)*
Jan 2026	Task Force Recommends Artist*
Jan	Arts Commission Approval of Artist
Feb.	Artist contract
March	Artist site visit and Community Engagement*
May	Artist presents concept for Task Force approval*
June	Concept approved by Commission for the Arts
July	Artist submits final design for technical review
July-October	Fabrication
TBD	Installation

*Steps with which the task force has a role.

Budget

Artist design, fabrication, installation, and contingency for Phase 1 (Gateway Features)	\$100,000
Artist design for Phase 2 (Walls and Barriers)	\$10,000
Total	\$110,000

The timing of Phase 2 construction is not currently determined. Additionally, the public art budget for Phase 2 is subject to the availability of future funding. For planning purposes only, the budget for implementing public art during Phase 2 is estimated at an additional \$100,000.

VIII. Community Engagement, Marketing and Communications

Stakeholders

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

- North East Citizens Association
- Surrounding residents

Marketing and Communications

The Office of the Arts staff will develop a marketing and communications strategy for the public art that will engage existing stakeholders as well as bring new audiences to experience the artwork. Information/materials should be provided in languages relevant to the nearby communities. The marketing plan could 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 with the surrounding community.