

UrbanArt Advocacy Brief

Public Art Means Local Jobs

Public artworks produced by local artists help keep the local economy solvent, and further enables Memphis to matriculate as a creative center of world renown. Nationwide, artists retain 10-15% of project funds for design fees and labor with the remainder going to local businesses supplying materials, design and fabrication services, and to the hiring of production assistants. UrbanArt is currently striving to perfect a system that could enable artists to retain as much as 20%. This means Memphis artists are able to continue to pay their mortgages, meet their city and county tax obligations, and feed and clothe their families while contributing to the greater 'livability' of our city that their art fosters. Although the City's Percent for Art program only requires 60% of its projects be produced by local artists in any 5 year period, UrbanArt has surpassed this mark by coordinating local artists to create 84% of its public art projects. Even when projects are produced by artists living outside Shelby County, they partner with local vendors, ensuring a large portion of project budgets are spent locally.

Impact

Public art enhances the city's image as a creative center of world renown and improves the quality of life of our public realm. It serves to further economic development by making more attractive spaces in which residents and visitors prefer to do business, raise families, and enjoy their leisure time activities. Public art is an internationally accepted means of alleviating blight and urban decay by reducing graffiti and other vandalism to public assets. It heightens awareness of our city's rich cultural heritage, as well as builds community engagement between cultures, ethnicities, and generations, making our city a stronger community in the process.

Tourism

While our city is legendary for its innate creativity that has transformed the world through music, the built environment does not currently reflect the spirit of the city on the surface. When tourists arrive they now find a city beleaguered by overgrown vacant lots and empty, dilapidated buildings. By cultivating a public domain that is visually appealing, Memphis becomes known as a uniquely attractive city to which visitors wish to return, promoting our city as a travel destination internationally.

Talent Retention and Recruitment

Currently, Memphis is attempting to position itself as a world leader in the film, music, biotech and transportation logistics industries. These fields are recruiting highly skilled workers from across the country and around the world. 'Quality of life' is a key factor for such top talent when deciding where to re-locate and raise families, as well as for businesses seeking to start new projects. Public artworks are widely acknowledged as low-cost, high-impact, contributions to increasing this 'quality of life' factor within a city that not only attracts new residents and businesses, but that influences local youth upon graduation of high school and college to decide to seek employment and build careers in their hometown.

UrbanArt is an independent non-profit organization committed to the development of public art and urban design in Memphis. All donations are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Contact: 901.454.0474 / info@urbanartcommission.org