



ATTACHMENT: DRAFT PUBLIC ART VISION, MISSION, GUIDING PRINCIPLES, AND OPPORTUNITIES

March 24, 2026

1. VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The following draft statements took into consideration the key takeaways from the public engagement, including the on-line questionnaire, tabling, roundtables and individual interviews. The Drafts have been reviewed and revised with feedback from the project's staff team and the Public Art Advisory Committee.

Key Takeaways from Public Engagement

The following is a brief summary of the key takeaways from the public engagement process:

- **Interactive & Functional:** Respondents want hands-on, playful art that serves dual purposes (climbing structures, benches, shade pavilions, play areas).
- **Vibrant & Memorable Design:** Respondents value colorful, visually striking art that lifts spirits during long winters and creates lasting impressions that shape community identity.
- **Art that Connects People to Nature:** There is strong interest in artworks using natural materials, honoring local landscapes, and celebrating the County's agricultural heritage and environmental identity.
- **Gathering & Inclusivity:** Art should foster togetherness and belonging through shared spaces. Celebrating local culture, history, and Indigenous heritage strengthens community pride.
- **Everyday Integration:** Respondents want art in high-traffic spaces like bridges, tunnels, and roundabouts. Strong interest in rotating/temporary exhibits.
- **Local Artists & Cultural Expression** Art should reflect Dakota County's unique character, diverse cultures, and history.

Vision Statement

Vision Statement Parameters

The vision statement should answer the question "What impact should public art have in Dakota County?"

Draft Vision

Public art in Dakota County is where creativity, curiosity, and community thrive together. Art transforms everyday life as it is woven into County services and the public spaces where people live, work, and play, by:

- Honoring Dakota County's diverse cultures of the past and present

- Enhancing spaces where residents gather, interact, and build community through accessible, engaging artworks that foster learning, engagement, and play
- Highlighting Dakota County's natural environment, ecological systems, landscapes, waterways, and commitment to sustainability

Mission Statement

Mission Statement Parameters

The mission statement should answer the question “What does Dakota County do to support public art?”

Draft Mission

Dakota County:

- Engages artists as creative partners in Dakota County initiatives, bringing artistic perspectives to planning, design, and service-delivery
- Promotes community access to and engagement with public art
- Commissions and acquires public art for County-owned facilities and public spaces
- Stewards Dakota County's public art collection, ensuring its preservation and accessibility
- Supports the growth of the arts community in Dakota County
- Partners with other entities (cities, nonprofits, developers) creating public art in Dakota County

Guiding Principles

Guiding Principles Parameters

Guiding Principles should answer the question "What values and commitments guide how Dakota County operates and makes decisions relative to public art?"

Guiding Principles

- Public art will be accessible and integrated into the everyday experience of people who live in, work in, and visit Dakota County
- Artwork will respect the diverse histories, cultures, and lived experiences of Dakota County's residents.
- Selection and commissioning processes will be transparent, equitable, and aligned with best practices.
- Community engagement will be ongoing throughout the public art process, ensuring resident voices and local perspectives inform decisions and shape outcomes.
- Public art commissions support working artists by providing fair compensation and respecting artists' rights as creators.
- Artworks will be designed with long-term maintenance and material durability in mind, ensuring cost-effective and responsible use of public resources.

- Artworks will consider environmental impact, prioritizing sustainable practices where feasible.
- Public art commissions will balance proven practices with opportunities for innovation, supporting artists in exploring new forms and materials.
- The impact and effectiveness of public art will be regularly evaluated using community feedback and professional assessment to continuously improve.

2. INVENTORY OF OPPORTUNITIES

In January, project team held a series of meetings with Dakota County departments to explore how art can be integrated across Dakota County departments and services. The following list are potential opportunities and a starting point for conversation. The categories were developed to help organize the various public art opportunities identified thus far. Each category includes a set of projects opportunities based on a similar set of characteristics tied to process, media, artist scope, etc.

Opportunities Tied to Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

When Dakota County is beginning the scoping for a significant public-facing CIP project, the host County Department should engage the capital project managers in a conversation about public art. These conversations should result in a set of goals for art for the project, the proposed scope of the project, possible locations for art, and how art can be resourced.

Parks Opportunities in 2026-2030 CIP

- Lake Byllesby Regional Park
- Lebanon Hills Regional Park
- Thompson Park
- Spring Lake Park Preserve
- Whitetail Woods

Library Opportunities in 2026-2030 CIP

- Burnhaven Library
- Wescott Library
- Robert Trail Library
- Inver Glen Library

Opportunities that May Be Integrated into Future CIPs

- County Service Center Public Lobbies
- Community Corrections Lobbies
- Child and Family Service Lobbies and Family Spaces
- Public Health Department Reception Areas and Clinical Spaces

- Dakota County Jail Family Visit Spaces
- Child and Family Service Department Lobbies and Family Spaces
- Veterans Services Lobbies
- Display Spaces for Temporary Exhibits
- Outdoor Spaces at County Buildings

Opportunities for Murals

There are opportunities throughout Dakota County for murals of different scales. These are projects that are generally not tied to Capital Projects and can be done when the resources are available.

- Greenway Tunnels. *Continued partnerships to develop a series of murals in Greenway Tunnels, both existing and new.*
- Park Murals. *A mural roster and annual budget to paint murals on building exteriors, pavement areas, and other flat surfaces.*
- Park and Greenway Retaining Walls. *There are opportunities for murals on retaining walls throughout the parks system. The Mississippi River Greenway has many opportunities retaining wall greenways, including the longest mural on the Mississippi Greenway.*

Opportunities for Artist-Designed Functional Elements and Furnishings

There are many opportunities, mostly in parks and along greenways, for artist-designed functional elements and site furnishings.

- Artist-Designed Habitats
- Artist-Designed Bird Window Treatments
- Park Pavement Art
- Artist Designed “Now Entering” Signs and other Wayfinding
- Nature Play Art
- Dog Park Art
- Artist Designed Benches/Seating

Opportunities to Engage Artists in Residence and Artist Consultants

Several County Departments expressed an interest in working with an artist to engage with the Department and the people they serve in creative ways. This could be through an artist residency or through contracting with artists as consultants or advisors with specific outcomes or deliverables in mind.

- Parks Artist in Residence. *Residency focused on key interpretative goals. Could utilize campground, shelters.*
- Planning Department Artist in Residence. *Engaging artists to bring a creative lens to planning initiatives. Could be involved in designing community engagement and creative idea generation.*

- Reduce and Reuse Artist in Residence. *An artist embedded in Environmental Resources who develops projects that help demonstrate (and teach how to) reuse of materials to keep them out of the waste stream.*
- Public Health Department Art Therapist/Educator. *Engage an art therapist and/or educator to design activities that children and parents can do together at service centers or during home visits.*
- Family Services Art Therapist. *Engage an art therapist to develop art-driven tools for working with families and creative evaluation techniques.*

Partnerships

The Dakota County Historical Society (DCHS) is a nonprofit organization that partners with Dakota County. DCHS envisions public art as a way to engage people in aspects of the county's history.

- George Daniels Story. *Project in discussion for LeDuc Estate, which is managed by DCHS. Daniels was an enslaved person who escaped; plans to tell his story through public art.*
- Black Heritage Trail Art. *Project in discussion in Hastings, partnership with the City. Highlights thriving Black community (1857–1954); absence of Black residents (1954–1980s). Historic church burned down due to arson; plans to memorialize it. Interest in expanding trail throughout the county.*

Other Park and Greenway Ideas

Staff expressed interest in specific projects for Dakota County parks and greenways. Where these support priorities in existing park long-range plans and greenway interpretive plans, the plan is noted.

Parks

- Byllesby Dam Artifacts (Lake Byllesby Regional Park Master Plan)
- Spring Lake Park Reserve – Bison and Native American Art Exhibits (Spring Lake Park Reserve Master Plan)
- Iconic Art/Selfie Spots in Parks

Greenways

- North Creek Greenway / Minnesota Zoo Pollinator Art Installation (North Creek Greenway Master Plan)
- Minnesota River Greenway – *Giant Fish Sculptures showcasing the top 5 fish species in this section of the Minnesota River* (Minnesota River Cultural Resources Interpretive Plan)
- Minnesota River Greenway - Mendota Work Camp 1 – *Art installation exploring the history African Americans in the Works Progress Administration* (Minnesota River Cultural Resources Interpretive Plan)
- Veterans Memorial Greenway - *Gold Star Families Memorial Sculpture* (Veterans Memorial Greenway Interpretive Memorial Plan)
- Musical Mile installation where sound changes based on bicycle speed



Projects Currently Underway

The following projects are currently underway.

- Wentworth Library (*Grant funded: Mn Arts and Cultural Heritage - Legacy Funds*)
- Unity Trail Mosaic Art Bench Project (*Grant funded: Metropolitan Council Equity Grant*)
- Veterans Memorial Greenway Mural (*Grant funded: Mn Department of Administration*)
- Student Art Contest (*Public Art Advisory Committee Budget, funded through the County Levy*)