

## Public Arts Commission of Oxford – Vision Statement

The Public Arts Commission of Oxford (PACO) envisions the city of Oxford as an arts community. PACO is dedicated to creative place-making through organizing activities, finding venues, designing events, encouraging participation of the local artists community and the public at large, collaborating with non-profits and businesses, and promoting the experiences that engender both enjoyment and understanding of the arts. This position is founded on our firm belief, supported by research and statistics provided by the National Endowment for the Arts, that the presence of the arts in many forms is an as yet unrealized economic advantage for Oxford. The development of the arts will make Oxford stronger as a destination, offer education as well as entertainment, create beauty and pride, build cross-cultural and cross-economic understanding, and engender collaboration between institutions, non-profits, business, and civic groups. In short, the arts will make Oxford a better place to reside, to establish businesses, and to visit.

“Public art” spans a broad set of meanings, from objects that are placed in permanent or semi-permanent locations to activities that involve an audience or participation of people of all ages. Art includes music, drama, poetry, photography, graphics, workshops, classes, and many other opportunities for creating and making as well as viewing and enjoying. This includes festivals, exhibits, and tours. Art also celebrates identity: civic, historical, temporal, cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic. Art should be among the first things that greet people arriving in Oxford by car or bus; and, in the near future, by train. Art can be engaged in “trails” that facilitate and enliven way-finding throughout Oxford with major and minor installations at transportation hubs and areas of focal gathering such as major parking areas, the farmer’s market, the OAT system, solar array, as well as perennial and pollinator gardens. Murals painted on the alley faces of uptown structures can transform what may seem like dingy left-over spaces into active spaces to walk and explore.

PACO recognizes that a community of artists exists in Oxford. It is our intention to encourage collaboration with this existing community in order to strengthen it as well as to reach out to and welcome artists from outside Oxford. In essence, PACO seeks to serve as a nexus of the arts on behalf of the city and the local artist community and in collaboration with institutional entities such as the Oxford Community Arts Center, the Miami University Performing Arts Series, the Miami University College of Creative Arts, local civic and religious organizations, and the Talawanda Public Schools. PACO also suggests that it invite ongoing proactive

dialog with representatives from the Oxford Community Arts Center, the Miami College of Creative Arts, and the arts community in Oxford.

PACO also seeks partnerships between the city and local businesses as a way to promote art in private places as well as public and to secure steady and robust funding. Although the commission receives a modest budget from the city, additional ways of funding must be pursued. In conjunction with the City of Oxford, PACO will apply for grants from the Oxford Community Foundation, the Ohio Arts Council, and other local, regional, and national granting agencies. These include ArtSTART and ArtNEXT grants from the Ohio Arts Council, Rural Design and Citizens Institute for Rural Design grants from the National Endowment for the Arts.

PACO will also seek arts partners among local and regional businesses by developing a program in which businesses can sponsor art activities in several ways. This includes using empty commercial spaces in the Uptown business district for the purposes of gallery space, studio space, and such activities as workshops, classes, and meetings. PACO will invite property owners to provide selected buildings as the location for mural paintings. Businesses will also be solicited to offer financial support for art activities, especially those related to the business pursuits of the potential donor.

Given the potential power of the arts, PACO proposes that the arts should proactively be a part of the new comprehensive plan being developed by the City Council, not an after-thought. The advantages of creative place-making should inform decisions about streets and traffic, parks and recreation, economic and commercial development, designated land use, and partnerships with Miami University. PACO also recommends that the City of Oxford consider establishing a “Percent for Art” fund for supporting creative place-making when new development is approved. We believe that PACO (its chair or a designated member) should be invited to comment on public infrastructure projects and on specific projects under consideration by key boards and commissions, especially any at a \$200,000 level or higher. PACO should be asked to comment on these projects when staff reports are finalized on Friday before regular Council meeting on Tuesday; and, when appropriate, at the Council meeting.

We view ourselves as facilitators of the arts in Oxford. There is always a mixture of ideas, attitudes, opinions, and comprehensions about the arts so, we intend to solicit and be responsive to ideas, input, and critiques of our work from Oxford residents. To do this, we intend to have an annual meeting in which the citizens are asked to make suggestions about what they would like to see in the way of public

art, how they respond to what we have done, and what they do and do not understand about choices PACO has made. We also propose that every project be evaluated upon completion by public commentary in either oral or written form. By being transparent and democratic about our work, we will function more effectively as advocates, educators, and facilitators of the arts in our City.

Based on the renowned success of these kinds of activities in locations such as Hamilton OH and Athens OH and countless other civic entities across the nation, PACO intends to embark on projects that will bring attention to the public at large about the aesthetic and economic value of the arts in our community.