



**Wendell Appearance Commission**  
**Board Room**  
**409 Landing View Drive, Wendell, NC, 27591**  
**Regular Session Agenda**  
**Tuesday, February 17, 2026 @ 7:00 PM**

**CALL TO ORDER**

**1. ADJUSTMENT AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA & MINIUTES**

1.a October 6, 2025 Appearance Commission Meeting Minutes

Staff Contact: Jeannine Ngwira  
Planner II

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**2. NEW BUSINESS**

2.a Presentation on the Town of Wendell Draft Public Art Plan

Staff Contact: Bryan Coates  
Planning Director

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**3. PLANNING DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

**ADJOURN**



# Item Cover Page

**APPEARANCE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM REPORT**

**DATE:** February 17, 2026

**SUBMITTED BY:** Jeannine Ngwira

**ITEM TYPE:** Minutes

**AGENDA SECTION:** ADJUSTMENT AND APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA & MINIUTES

**SUBJECT:** October 6, 2025 Appearance Commission Meeting Minutes

**ATTACHMENTS:**  
[10.06.25 AC Meeting Minutes\\_Draft.docx](#)

# Appearance Commission Meeting October 6, 2025 Minutes

**Members Present:** Kaitlyn Sanderson, Jordan Russell, and Andrea Burnham

**Members Absent:** Kate Benson, Marjorie Lynch, Katie Rossi and Natasha Emmanuel

**Staff Present:** Bryan Coates Planning Director, Jeannine Ngwira Planner II and Tyler Newman Communications Manager

## Meeting Called to Order & Welcome:

The meeting was called to order at 7:00 p.m. A quorum was established per the bylaws.

### 1. Adjustment and Approval of the Agenda and June 7, 2025 Minutes

Andrea Burnham made a motion to approve the agenda and minutes. Jordan Russell seconded the motion.

### 2. New Business

#### a. Halloween/Holiday Decorating Contest

*Mr. Coates gave the following presentation:*

## Halloween Decorating Contest

Update- Signups as of 10/6/2025 – 14 Total

Signups end- October 15<sup>th</sup>

Voting is Oct. 17<sup>th</sup>- 27<sup>th</sup>

### Categories

- Spookiest,
- Most Festive
- Best Business

2024 – 7 total signups

Winners will get a sign and trophy



\*Photos- Town of Cornelius Winners 2023

## Holiday Decorating Contest

### Dates

- Start Advertising Contest- Week of November 2nd
- Signups through December 8th
- Public Voting- Week of 11<sup>th</sup> through 21st
- Winners announced December 22nd
- Yard Signs for Winners & Trophy

### Categories

- Best Business
- Best Lights
- Best Inflatables
- Winter Wonderland

2024 Total Signups- 12



Mr. Coates introduced Tyler Newman Communications Manager and explained that he will be highly involved in this year's decorating contests.

### **3. Planning Director's Update**

Mr. Coates said that Catdaddy's mural has been completed and they have been reimbursed for their Downtown Improvement Grant.

Mr. Coates also said that Universal Chevrolet's mural will be starting soon.

### **4. Adjourn to Next Regularly Scheduled Meeting**

- Andrea Burnham made a motion to adjourn. Kaitlyn Sanderson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 7:21 pm.



# Item Cover Page

## APPEARANCE COMMISSION AGENDA ITEM REPORT

**DATE:** February 17, 2026

**SUBMITTED BY:** Bryan Coates, Planning

**ITEM TYPE:** Planning

**AGENDA SECTION:** NEW BUSINESS

**SUBJECT:** Presentation on the Town of Wendell Draft Public Art Plan

**ITEM SUMMARY:** The Town of Wendell Public Art Master Plan establishes a comprehensive vision and framework for integrating public art throughout the town as a catalyst for identity, pride, economic vitality, and enhanced quality of life. Developed through town engagement in 2024-2025, this plan reflects public support and provides strategic direction for the next 7-10 years of the town's cultural development.

**ATTACHMENTS:**  
[Town of Wendell Public Art Master Plan Draft.pdf](#)

# Town of Wendell Public Art Master Plan



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# Executive Summary

The Town of Wendell Public Art Master Plan establishes a comprehensive vision and framework for integrating public art throughout the town as a catalyst for identity, pride, economic vitality, and enhanced quality of life. Developed through town engagement in 2024-2025, this plan reflects public support and provides strategic direction for the next 7-10 years of the town's cultural development.

## Plan Vision

To celebrate Wendell as a vibrant arts community that celebrates its agricultural heritage and small-town charm while embracing growth, where public art serves as a unifying force that connects neighborhoods and generations.

## What We Heard

Community engagement revealed clear priorities: beautification of streets and public spaces (50%), creating welcoming social spaces (42%), and telling local stories that convey community identity (34%). Residents expressed strong preferences for murals (79%), landscape art (73%), and music/performance pieces (65%), with downtown (68%), parks and facilities (43%), and gateway entrances (29%) identified as priority locations.

## Five Strategic Goals

The plan is organized around five interconnected goals that emerged directly from stakeholder and community input:

**Goal 1: Build Community Identity and Pride** through neighborhood-specific projects, storytelling initiatives, and intergenerational collaborations that bridge Wendell's established residents and newcomers.

**Goal 2: Enhance Public Spaces and Beautification** by integrating art into downtown revitalization, parks and greenways, gateway entrances, and functional infrastructure improvements.

**Goal 3: Support Economic Development and Tourism** by expanding the Mural Trail, supporting local businesses through art partnerships, leveraging major community events, and attracting creative businesses.

**Goal 4: Build Strategic Partnerships and Regional Connections** through collaboration with the United Arts Council, private sector engagement, and artist professional networks.

**Goal 5: Establish Art Funding Policy and Management Systems** by diversifying funding sources, integrating art into development processes, establishing efficient program management, and planning for long-term sustainability.

### Curatorial Framework

Five curatorial themes guide artistic direction: Agricultural Heritage ("Rooted in the Land"), Community Unity ("Bridging Generations, Building Together"), Small-Town Character ("Where Community Thrives"), Natural Environment ("At the Fall Line: Where Landscapes Meet"), and Growth and Progress ("Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future"). These frameworks ensure public art reflects Wendell's authentic character while remaining responsive to the town's evolution.

### Funding Strategy

The plan recommends multiple sustainable funding mechanisms including a "Percent for Art" ordinance dedicating 1% of municipal capital improvement project budgets to public art, private development contributions that respect North Carolina legal limitations, donor partnerships, grant opportunities, and community-led initiatives. This diversified approach ensures program stability while encouraging broad community participation.

### Implementation Approach

The plan proposes phased implementation over 7-10 years, beginning with policy adoption and committee restructuring, followed by pilot projects coordinated with the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan and private development opportunities. The transition from the Appearance Commission to a dedicated Public Art Committee with expanded membership and enhanced roles will provide governance and strategic direction.

### Expected Outcomes

Through thoughtful implementation of this plan, Wendell will create a distinctive identity as an arts community, enhance the beauty and functionality of public spaces, support local economic development and tourism, strengthen community connections, and establish sustainable systems for long-term program success. The plan positions public art not as decoration, but as essential infrastructure for building the vibrant, connected community that residents envision for Wendell's future.

# Introduction

## Purpose of the Plan

The Wendell Public Art Master Plan, developed in 2025, establishes a comprehensive framework for integrating public art throughout the Town of Wendell, North Carolina. This plan envisions a healthy and thriving community where public art is woven into city initiatives, neighborhood revitalization efforts, and private development, ensuring every resident and visitor can experience quality art and creative expression as part of their daily lives.

This Public Art Master Plan serves as a strategic document to guide Wendell staff, the Public Art Committee, elected officials, developers, and design consultants in planning the town's cultural priorities and public art initiatives. The plan provides methodology, tools, and processes for executing projects of all scales while establishing a framework for roles, responsibilities, funding, and collection maintenance.

## The Town of Wendell

Wendell is strategically located in the east-central region of North Carolina, where the rolling hills of the Piedmont meet the Atlantic Coastal Plain. This geographic position places the town along the "Fall Line," a natural boundary marked by the appearance of rapids and waterfalls in local creeks and rivers as they flow from the higher Piedmont to the coastal plains below. This central location offers residents easy access to diverse North Carolina landscapes—approximately two and a half hours west of Atlantic Beach's coastline and four hours east of the majestic Great Smoky Mountains.

## Founding and Early Settlement

The story of Wendell begins with agricultural hardship and the resilience of farming families. In the 1850s, tobacco farmers in Granville County faced devastating crop failures caused by a plant disease known as the Granville County Wilt. Rather than surrender to this agricultural crisis, these determined families made the difficult decision to abandon their established farms and seek more fertile land where they could rebuild their livelihoods.

As these families settled in the area, a small but thriving village began to take shape. When the time came to give their community a name, residents turned to local schoolteacher M.A. Griffin for guidance. Drawing from his love of literature, Griffin proposed "Wendell" in honor of his favorite poet, Oliver Wendell Holmes. Interestingly, the townspeople adopted their own pronunciation, emphasizing each syllable equally—a linguistic tradition that continues to distinguish Wendell from the poet's more familiar pronunciation.

The community was officially incorporated in 1903, formalizing its status as a North Carolina town. The Town seal, adopted on April 4, 1963, represents nearly six decades of civic identity and pride.

## Historic Landmarks and Institutions

Wendell's commitment to preserving its heritage is evident in its historic architecture and institutions. The town's oldest institution, Hephzibah Baptist Church, was founded in 1809—predating the town's settlement by several decades and serving as a spiritual anchor for the growing community. The town's first post office, built in 1891, stands as a testament to Wendell's early civic development. This historic building has been carefully restored by the Wendell Historical Society, ensuring future generations can appreciate this important piece of local history. Wendell's architectural and historical significance is formally recognized through six properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. 1) Dr. Thomas H. Avera House 2) Harmony Plantation 3) Riley Hill School 4) Sunnyside 5) Wendell Boulevard Historic District and 6) Wendell Commercial Historic District.

## Art and Cultural Heritage

Wendell embraces both its agricultural roots and its evolving identity through public art that tells the community's story. The community's artistic landscape has expanded beyond individual pieces to encompass neighborhood installations, including decorative pigs in the Wendell Falls development and a whimsical lizard sculpture that once adorned a local ATM.

Most notably, Wendell has developed an innovative Mural Trail—an interactive outdoor gallery featuring murals painted on downtown buildings. This self-guided cultural experience invites visitors to explore the town's artistic expression while enjoying local dining and coffee shops. The trail is enhanced by a digital map that guides visitors through the community's growing collection of public art.

Complementing the Mural Trail, Wendell also offers a Historic Trail, allowing residents and visitors to explore the town's rich past while appreciating its artistic present. Together, these trails represent Wendell's commitment to honoring its heritage while embracing creative expression as a cornerstone of community identity.

# Building Community Through Public Art

## Creating Connection and Pride

Public art refers to artworks that are created, installed, and displayed in publicly accessible spaces, designed to be encountered by general audiences outside of traditional gallery or museum contexts. Public art encompasses a broad range of media and forms, including sculptures, murals, installations, digital displays, performance spaces, and site-specific interventions. Public art frequently addresses themes of community identity, collective memory, civic values, and social issues, while also serving as a tool for enhanced quality of life, economic development and tourism.

**Wendell recognizes that public art is for all.**

## How Public Art Strengthens Wendell

For Wendell, public art will contribute to:

1. **Beautification and Aesthetic Enhancement:** Transforming ordinary spaces into visually appealing and engaging environments and creating a sense of pride and vibrancy.
2. **Community Identity and Belonging:** Representing Wendell's values, history, and culture, and celebrating shared heritage and connection.
7. **Public Health and Well-being:** Improving mental health, reducing stress, and promoting social interaction.
4. **Economic Development:** Attracting and delighting visitors, boosting local businesses and creating economic opportunities.
5. **Education and Learning:** Serving as a learning tool, providing opportunities for people to engage with art and explore different perspectives.
6. **Urban Design and Placemaking:** Contributing to the overall design of urban spaces and creating more livable and enjoyable environments for residents and visitors.
8. **Community Engagement and Participation:** Involving community members in the design and creation process and creating a sense of ownership and pride.

## Town and County Plan Alignment

Wendell's Public Art Master Plan represents more than an isolated cultural initiative—it serves as a connecting thread for the town's comprehensive planning efforts.

### Blueprint Wendell 2030: Preserving Character While Embracing Growth

This plan directly supports Blueprint Wendell 2030's vision by creating tangible expressions of the town's agricultural heritage and small-town charm. As Wendell navigates the delicate balance between honoring its tobacco farming roots and welcoming new residents, public art provides a visual language that bridges past and future. Murals depicting historical narratives, landscape art that celebrates the town's rural character, and community-engaged projects ensure that growth doesn't erase identity—instead, it enriches and evolves it. The plan's emphasis on downtown revitalization and economic development aligns with Blueprint 2030's goals, using art installations to attract visitors, increase foot traffic, and create a distinctive sense of place.

### Wendell Strategic Plan: Building Community Pride and Quality of Life

Where the Strategic Plan calls for enhanced quality of life and stronger community pride, this plan can align through accessible, family-friendly installations that bring residents together. The focus on creating welcoming spaces for social interaction directly supports the Strategic Plan's community building objectives. By incorporating art into parks, greenways, and public facilities, the plan changes everyday infrastructure into opportunities for connection. The emphasis on youth involvement and intergenerational programming ensures that public art serves all residents, from longtime families to the growing population of young professionals in Wendell.

### Wake County Cultural Plan: Regional Coordination and Resource Sharing

The partnership with the United Arts Council ensures that Wendell's artistic vision contributes to and benefits from regional cultural initiatives. This alignment prevents duplication of efforts while leveraging county-wide resources, professional networks, and funding opportunities. By coordinating with the broader Triangle area's cultural tourism efforts, Wendell's public art becomes part of a larger regional narrative that attracts visitors and supports economic development. The collaboration also ensures best practices sharing with neighboring municipalities and access to county-level expertise in artist selection and project management.

### Downtown Streetscape Master Plan: Timing Art with Infrastructure

Perhaps most strategically, this plan aligns perfectly with the Downtown Streetscape Master Plan. This coordination ensures that artistic elements integrate seamlessly with infrastructure improvements rather than being retrofitted afterward. The plan capitalizes on major

investments around Third Street Apollo and can maximize public investment by creating a cohesive downtown experience where art and infrastructure work together to support both residents and businesses.

## Plan Development Process

The multi-phase planning process ensures that the Wendell Public Art Master Plan reflects community values and priorities while incorporating professional best practices and strategic municipal planning. The community input, targeted business engagement, and planning consultation created a robust foundation for the plan development. The collaborative approach between Town staff, community members, and business owners demonstrates Wendell's commitment to inclusive, strategic planning that honors the town's heritage while positioning it for continued growth and cultural vitality.

### Phase 1: Initial Research and Foundation

(November 2023 - March 2024)

A designated group of staff from the Town of Wendell gathered information and collaborative feedback to develop the Wendell Public Art Master Plan. The first step was to gather information on other public art master plans. Staff communicated with other towns and studied other master plan documents to understand best practices and successful implementation strategies.

The task group developed a comprehensive public art survey to gain quantitative and qualitative information about community preferences and priorities. This survey was strategically distributed through multiple channels: posted on the town website and social media platforms and administered in person at multiple townwide events to ensure broad community participation.

### Phase 2: Engagement and Data Collection

(March 2024 – March 2025)

#### Public Engagement

The community survey garnered significant participation with approximately 314 completed responses from residents, stakeholders, and visitors. The results revealed overwhelming support for public art, with 96% of respondents wanting more public art in the town. Key findings included strong preferences for murals, landscape art, and music/performance pieces, with respondents emphasizing public art's role in beautifying public spaces, creating welcoming environments, and fostering community pride.

## Business Engagement

A targeted business survey was conducted with 14 local business owners and managers representing diverse sectors including retail, restaurant/culinary, professional services, and entertainment. This survey revealed that 50% of businesses were very interested in having public art installed on or near their properties, with 43% having previously considered commissioning murals or public art. Business owners identified increased foot traffic, enhanced cultural identity, and beautification as primary benefits, while expressing manageable concerns about maintenance and content appropriateness.

## Supplemental Engagement

Recognizing the need for specific expertise in public art planning and limited time that staff had for planning, the Town of Wendell engaged Cultural Planning Group (CPG) to assist in finalizing the Public Art Master Plan. CPG conducted additional stakeholder engagement and expanded the current public art plan draft and developed comprehensive guidelines.

## Phase 3: Plan Development

(April 2025 - June 2025)

Based on the extensive community input, professional consultation, and strategic analysis, the planning team developed focused goals and strategies. Public art guidelines, and ordinances.

## Phase 4: Plan Implementation

It is anticipated the plan will be adopted by the Town of Wendell in November 2025. Implementation for the plan goals and funding policies may be sectioned into 3-4 phases over 7-10 years.

## Engagement Results Highlights

*"A community with art is a statement that this area is safe because it requires vulnerability to create... the town has a populous that is not merely surviving but is actively thriving and celebrating life and the beauty it has to offer." - Local Business Owner*

### **What impact the community wants to celebrate through public art...**

- Agricultural heritage (tobacco farming history)
- Small-town charm with entrepreneurial spirit
- Multi-generational community
- Family-oriented with increasing younger residents
- Diverse community including county residents who visit
- Desire to become "one community" between old and new

### **Strong Support for Public Art:**

- 96% want more public art in Wendell
- 77% consider public art extremely or very important in streetscapes
- 78% consider art extremely or very important in new community facilities

### **Preferred Art Types:**

1. **Murals** (79% preference) - Most popular form
2. **Landscape Art** (73%) - Using landscape to showcase architectural art
3. **Music/Performance** (65%) - Strong support for performing arts
4. **Architectural Art** (64%) - Art fused with architecture
5. **Community Art** (50%) - Community-engaged and generated art

### **Priority Locations:**

1. **Downtown** (68%) - Primary focus area
2. **Town Parks and Facilities** (43%) - Secondary priority
3. **Gateways/Entrances** (29%) - Welcome installations
4. **Greenways/Public Trails** (24%) - Art along pathways

### **Primary Motivations:**

1. **Beautification** (50%) - Enhance public spaces
2. **Community Gathering** (42%) - Create welcoming social spaces
3. **Local Identity** (34%) - Tell stories and convey community character
4. **Inspiration** (23%) - Uplift residents and visitors
5. **Economic Development** (18%) - Attract visitors and businesses

### **Business Interest and Support: (Small sample)**

- 50% very interested in public art near their businesses
- 43% have considered commissioning art
- 76% interested in murals
- 57% see enhanced cultural identity and community pride as top benefits
- 43% expect increased foot traffic and beautification benefits

### **Business Concerns: (Small sample)**

- Maintenance responsibilities (38%)
- Content appropriateness (31%)
- Potential vandalism (15%)
- Impact on building structure (15%)

# The Plan

## Plan Vision

To celebrate Wendell as a vibrant arts community that celebrates its agricultural heritage and small-town charm while embracing growth, where public art serves as a unifying force that connects neighborhoods and generations.

## Plan Goals

The goals and strategies for Wendell's Public Art Master Plan emerge directly from community input, stakeholder interviews, and the town's broader planning initiatives. With 96% of survey respondents expressing desire for more public art in Wendell, these goals provide a roadmap for creating a vibrant public art program that reflects the community's values while supporting economic development and quality of life enhancement.

### GOAL 1: Build Community Identity and Pride

Based on survey findings that 34% of respondents prioritize public art "to tell our stories and convey who we are," this goal emphasizes using art to strengthen community identity across generational and demographic lines.

#### **1.1 Strengthen Neighborhood Identity**

- Support neighborhood-specific art projects that reflect unique community character
- Encourage resident-initiated art projects on public property through streamlined processes
- Create artistic gateway markers for different neighborhoods and districts
- Develop mobile art programs that rotate through various community areas

#### **1.2 Create a Community Storytelling Initiative**

- Partner with Wendell Historical Society to integrate historical narratives into contemporary art projects
- Develop oral history collection projects that capture stories from longtime residents and newcomers
- Establish community story-sharing opportunities where residents can contribute their Wendell experiences

#### **1.3 Implement Intergenerational Art Projects**

- Design collaborative projects that pair longtime residents with newcomers in creative activities

- Establish mentorship programs connecting established local artists with emerging talent
- Create family-friendly interactive installations that encourage cross-generational engagement
- Develop artist-led community workshop series that bring together diverse age groups for shared art creation

## GOAL 2: Enhance Public Spaces and Beautification

*Transform Wendell's public realm into welcoming, beautiful spaces that improve quality of life*

Reflecting the top survey priority where 50% of respondents identified "beautifying streets and public spaces" as most important, this goal focuses on strategic aesthetic improvements throughout the community.

### **2.1 Integrate Art into Downtown Revitalization**

- Coordinate public art placement with the Downtown Streetscape master plan
- Develop artistic crosswalks, wayfinding systems, and pedestrian infrastructure
- Support storefront art programs and window installation projects for vacant buildings
- Create artistic alleyway activation throughout downtown corridor

### **2.2 Enhance Parks and Recreational Spaces**

- Commission permanent installations for Main Street Park, Hollybrook Park, and future park facilities
- Develop artistic enhancements for the pollinator garden
- Create sculpture trails along existing and planned greenway systems
- Integrate art into playground design and park infrastructure

### **2.3 Beautify Gateway Entrances and Major Corridors**

- Design distinctive gateway installations that announce Wendell's character to visitors
- Develop artistic treatments for major roadway corridors and town entrances
- Establish artistic landscaping that complements natural environment themes

### **2.4 Improve Functional Infrastructure Through Art**

- Commission artist-designed benches, bike racks, bus stops, and street furniture
- Develop artistic stormwater management features that address infrastructure needs
- Create decorative utility box and infrastructure wrapping programs
- Design artistic fencing, railings, and barriers that maintain community openness

## GOAL 3: Support Economic Development and Tourism

*Leverage public art to attract visitors, support local businesses, and stimulate economic growth*

Addressing business community priorities where 43% identified "increased foot traffic" and 57% prioritized "enhanced cultural identity" as key benefits, this goal connects art investment to economic outcomes.

### **3.1 Develop Art Tourism Infrastructure**

- Expand and enhance the existing Digital Mural Trail Map with new installations
- Develop partnerships with regional tourism organizations to promote Wendell's art assets
- Establish art-focused events that draw visitors during peak seasons

### **3.2 Support Local Business Through Art Partnerships**

- Provide business owners with resources and guidelines for commissioning murals and installations
- Develop collaborative art projects spanning multiple businesses
- Create artist-in-residence programs (Town) that activate commercial districts

### **3.3 Leverage Major Events for Art Programming**

- Integrate art programming into Harvest Festival, Meet on Main events, and Wendell Market Events
- Reactivate live painting events and plein air programs during community celebrations
- Create temporary installations that complement seasonal programming
- Establish performance art integration into existing festivals and events

### **3.4 Attract Creative Businesses**

- Promote Wendell as an artist-friendly community to attract creative businesses
- Develop affordable studio spaces and creative workspace initiatives
- Support creative entrepreneurship through public art commissioning opportunities
- Partner with regional arts organizations to establish Wendell as a cultural destination

# GOAL 4: Build Strategic Partnerships and Regional Connections

*Leverage partnerships to expand resources, expertise, and community impact*

Drawing from successful examples mentioned in stakeholder interviews and regional collaboration opportunities, this goal emphasizes building networks that strengthen Wendell's public art program.

## **4.1 Build Regional Arts Collaborations**

- Coordinate with United Arts Council to align with County Cultural Plan
- Participate in regional arts trails and tourism promotion efforts
- Share resources and best practices with neighboring communities
- Collaborate on grant applications and joint programming opportunities

## **4.2 Engage Private Sector Partnerships**

- Develop corporate sponsorship opportunities for major public art projects
- Include business advisory groups to guide commercial district art development
- Engage local service organizations and clubs in public art support

## **4.3 Foster Artist and Creative Professional Networks**

- Establish relationships with regional artist guilds and professional organizations
- Create visiting artist and artist-in-residence programs
- Develop professional development opportunities for local artists
- Build networks with curators, arts administrators, and cultural professionals

## GOAL 5: Establish Art Funding Policy and Management Systems

Create reliable funding mechanisms and efficient management systems to support long-term program success addressing the need for long-term funding mechanisms, this goal ensures program sustainability and growth.

### 5.1 Diversify Funding Sources

- Pursue adoption of a Percent for Art Ordinance applying to Town capital improvement projects
- Develop private funding solicitation from individuals, corporations, foundations, and organizations (Foundation model)
- Establish grant writing capacity for state, federal, and foundation funding opportunities

### 5.2 Integrate Art into Development Processes

- Update Unified Development Ordinance (UDO) to include public art requirements and incentives
- Strengthen public art commitment in the Town's Water Allocation Policy
- Develop fee in-lieu for developers preferring financial contributions
- Create toolkits and resources encouraging private sector art inclusion

### 5.3 Establish Efficient Program Management

- Transition Appearance Commission to dedicated Public Art Committee with expanded roles and onboard all members with the Plan and Guidelines
- Use Wendell Public Art Guidelines that establish clear artist selection protocols including RFQ, RFP, and roster systems
- Create collection management and documentation protocols

### 5.4 Plan for Long-Term Sustainability

- Establish annual budget allocation for art program administration
- Develop maintenance and conservation funding mechanisms
- Create deaccession protocols for artwork reaching end of useful life
- Establish insurance and risk management procedures for public art collection

# Public Art Curatorial Framework

## Introduction

The curatorial framework for Wendell's public art program emerges from extensive community engagement, stakeholder interviews, and a comprehensive understanding of the town's unique identity as a community in transition. With 96% of survey respondents expressing desire for more public art, and strong preferences for murals (79%), landscape art (73%), and music/performance pieces (65%), this framework provides the creative foundation for developing meaningful artistic experiences that celebrate Wendell's past while embracing its future.

The framework identified below will guide the focus of public art projects and align with the overall mission and vision of the Town of Wendell. Through stakeholder conversations, the community survey, and tours of Wendell, potential creative directions for public art emerged alongside categories of potential sites. The creative directions for the public art program will continue to evolve based on public art trends, community input, commissioned artists, and the changing landscape of Wendell as a growing town. Artists will help conceptualize projects and visualize the relationship between public art and the selected location.

## Curatorial Themes

### 1. Agricultural Heritage

*"Rooted in the Land"*

Wendell's identity is deeply rooted in its agricultural past, particularly tobacco farming traditions that shaped the community's character. This theme celebrates the connection to land that brought the original settlers from Granville County following the tobacco blight and honors the farming families who built the foundation of today's community.

*Possible Artistic Expressions:*

- Installations that educate about sustainable agriculture and local food systems
- Artistic interpretation of the town's seal and agricultural symbols
- Public art that incorporates actual agricultural elements like community gardens

### 2. Community Unity

*"Bridging Generations, Building Together"*

As stakeholders noted, Wendell is experiencing a transition between established residents and new residents. This theme focuses on creating art that brings together the multi-generational

community (including families with 200+ year local histories alongside young families in their 30s) and builds bridges between established residents and newcomers.

*Possible Artistic Expressions:*

- Collaborative mural projects that feature stories from different generations
- Public gathering spaces enhanced with artistic elements that encourage intergenerational interaction
- Art installations that celebrate both longtime residents and newcomers' contributions to community
- Interactive storytelling installations where community members can share their Wendell experiences

### **3. Small-Town Character**

*"Wendell: Where Community Thrives"*

This theme captures the entrepreneurial spirit, family values, and neighborly connections that define Wendell's character. As residents describe it as "the place to be," this theme emphasizes the warmth, accessibility, and authentic community spirit that makes Wendell special.

*Possible Artistic Expressions:*

- Functional art that enhances downtown walkability (artistic benches, bike racks, wayfinding)
- Storefront and window art programs that support local businesses
- Interactive installations that encourage connections and chance encounters
- Art that reflects family-friendly values and creates safe, welcoming spaces for all ages

### **4. Natural Environment**

*"At the Fall Line: Where Landscapes Meet"*

Wendell's unique geography at the Fall Line, where the Piedmont meets the Atlantic Coastal Plain, provides rich inspiration for environmental art. The community's existing pollinator gardens and commitment to ecological stewardship offer opportunities for art that educates and celebrates local ecosystems.

*Possible Artistic Expressions:*

- Pollinator garden art installations that support and enhance existing ecological initiatives
- Sculptural elements along greenways and trails that interpret local flora and fauna
- Art that celebrates the Fall Line geography

- Educational art installations about local ecosystems, native plants, and wildlife

## 5. Growth and Progress

*"Honoring the Past, Embracing the Future"*

This theme addresses Wendell's rapid growth while maintaining its historical character and small-town charm. It celebrates innovation and progress while ensuring new development respects and enhances the community's existing identity.

*Possible Artistic Expressions:*

- Gateway art at town entrances that welcome visitors and announce Wendell's character
- Art integrated into new development projects that connects them to historical context
- Temporary installations that experiment with new artistic approaches while respecting tradition
- Public art that visualizes Wendell's growth story and future aspirations

## Future Evolution

This curatorial framework is designed to be responsive and adaptive. As Wendell continues to grow and evolve, the themes and concepts should be regularly revisited and refined.

# Potential Public Art Sites

## Priority Areas for Installation

### Tier 1 – Near-Term:

- **Downtown Core** - Integration with Streetscape Master Plan
- **Third Street Apollo** - Large performance space with art integration potential
- **Main Street Park** - Central gathering space
- **Private Development Integration** - Developer collaboration projects including Town Gateways.

### Tier 2 - Medium-Term:

- **Greenway System** - Sculpture trail development
- **Pleasant Grove** - New development public spaces
- **Hollybrook Park** - Community recreation area

### Tier 3 - Long-Term:

- **Senior Center** - Enhanced programming space with existing kiln
- **Neighborhood Entrances** - Community identity markers
- **Alleyway Activation** - Downtown connectivity and discovery
- **School Partnerships** - Educational art integration

# Administrative Framework

## Public Art Ordinance and Policy

### "Percent for Art" Ordinance for Capital Improvement Projects (CIP)

This ordinance applies to all Town capital improvement projects including:

- Public building construction or renovation
- Highway construction or reconstruction
- Large-scale utility projects
- Park facility construction or reconstruction
- Other capital projects within the Town limits

**Funding Allocation:** 1% of eligible construction budget dedicated to public art, with flexibility for pooling funds across projects for larger installations, strategic placement of art, cultural spaces, or artist incubators or residencies. Percent for Art funds may be, but do not need to be, used on the site of the construction project.

## Funding Mechanisms

### A. Public Funding Sources

#### 1. Municipal Capital Projects (Percent for Art Ordinance)

- **Percentage:** 1% of eligible construction project costs
- **Eligible Costs:** "Hard" construction costs including materials, labor, and installation (excluding professional services, land acquisition, and moveable equipment)
- **Minimum Threshold:** Projects exceeding \$100,000 in construction value
- **Implementation:** Funds allocated during project budget development phase
- **Pooling Option:** Town may pool funds from multiple smaller projects to create opportunities for larger, more significant installations and to fund other allowable uses not on the site of the construction project.

#### 2. Annual Operating Budget

- Dedicated line item for Public Art Program administration
- Funding for temporary exhibitions and programming
- Artist-in-residence program support
- Maintenance and conservation of existing collection
- Public art events and educational initiatives

### 3. Grant Funding

- State arts council grants
- Federal funding (NEA, NEH)
- Regional tourism development grants
- County cultural development funding
- Foundation grants for specific projects

### B. Private Development Contributions

Given North Carolina legal limitations on mandatory development fees, Wendell will employ a **flexible incentive-based approach** that encourages private sector participation in public art while respecting state law constraints.

#### Option 1: Voluntary Public Art Integration

##### Applicability:

- Commercial developments with construction value exceeding \$500,000
- Multi-family residential projects with 20 or more dwelling units
- Mixed-use developments meeting either threshold above
- Industrial developments with construction value exceeding \$1,000,000

##### Developer Choices:

a) **On-Site Installation** - Install qualifying public art on-site equal to 0.75% of total construction cost

- Art must be accessible to the general public during reasonable hours
- Permanently installed and maintained by property owner
- Designed by professional artist
- Approved by Public Art Committee
- Include maintenance plan and funding mechanism

b) **In-Lieu Fee Payment** - Contribute equivalent amount (1% of construction cost) to Town's Public Art Fund

- Payment made prior to certificate of occupancy
- Minimum contribution of \$5,000
- Funds designated for public art at nearby public spaces when feasible
- Town provides receipt and recognition as community arts supporter

c) **Artist Live/Work Space** - Provide artist studio/gallery space equal to 3% of total square footage

- Space must be affordable to working artists
- Minimum 3-year commitment
- Includes exhibition space open to public minimum 15 hours/week
- Priority to local and North Carolina artists

**Option 2: Design Alternative Mechanism (UDO Integration)**

Developers may request flexibility on Unified Development Ordinance requirements by proposing public art installations:

**Eligible Incentives:**

- Reduced parking requirements
- Increased building height
- Reduced setback requirements
- Increased lot coverage
- Facade articulation alternatives
- Open space requirement modifications
- Enhanced density allowances in designated districts

**Requirements:**

- Public art value must equal or exceed cost of standard compliance
- Art must align with Town's curatorial framework in public art plan
- Professional artist engagement required
- Maintenance plan and perpetual public access agreement

**Option 3: Overlay District Incentives**

**Downtown Overlay District**

- Bonus density and/or height when developers include public art installations on-site or contribute funds to the Town's Public Art Fund
- Enhanced storefront flexibility for businesses incorporating art programs
- Expedited permitting for projects including significant public art components

**Gateway Corridor Overlay (Future consideration)**

- Public art requirements for large-scale development along major entrances
- Collaborative gateway monument opportunities with Town Public Art Program
- Coordinated aesthetic standards with artistic elements

**Option 4: Water Allocation Policy Integration**

**Strengthened Commitment:** Projects requiring water allocation may demonstrate community benefit through public art contributions:

- Bonus points in allocation scoring for public art commitments
- Priority consideration for developments incorporating art
- Flexible implementation allowing either on-site or in-lieu contributions
- Recognition program for developers exceeding baseline expectations

### **Option 5: Special District Requirements**

#### **Future Historic or Cultural Districts:**

- Mandatory cultural amenity requirements in designated special districts
- Options similar to private development contributions above
- Enhanced standards for appropriateness and historical sensitivity
- Collaboration with Historic Society

## **C. Donor Monetary Contributions**

### **1. Individual Donations**

#### **Direct Monetary Gifts:**

- Tax-deductible contributions to Town's Public Art Fund
- Recognition opportunities scaled to contribution level

#### **Art Donations (See Guidelines)**

- Existing artwork gifted to Town collection
- Professional appraisal required for works valued over \$5,000
- Subject to Public Art Committee review and approval
- Donation agreement specifying maintenance responsibilities
- Consideration of ongoing costs and collection alignment

## **D. Additional Funding Strategies**

### **1. Crowdfunding and Community Campaigns**

- Project-specific fundraising for community-initiated art
- Online platforms for broad-based small donor engagement
- Matching grant opportunities to incentivize participation
- Neighborhood-led fundraising for local installations
-

## **2. Special Events and Programs**

- Fundraising events (art walks, studio tours, benefit concerts)
- Percentage of event proceeds to Public Art Fund
- Artist market vendor fees
- Merchandise sales featuring public art imagery

## **3. Tourism Development Integration**

- Tourism occupancy tax allocations for art that attracts visitors
- Marketing partnerships highlighting art destinations
- Economic impact documentation to justify continued investment

## **Funding Decision Framework**

### **Public Art Committee Authority:**

- Projects up to \$15,000: Committee approval sufficient
- Projects \$15,001-\$50,000: Committee recommendation, Town Manager approval
- Projects over \$50,000: Committee recommendation, Town Council approval
- Emergency maintenance up to \$5,000: Staff authorization with Committee notification

### **Funding Priorities:**

- Alignment with Plan goals and curatorial framework
- Geographic distribution across Town
- Mix of permanent and temporary installations
- Balance between emerging and established artists
- Maintenance sustainability
- Community engagement opportunities

### **Transparency and Reporting:**

- Annual public report on all funding sources and expenditures
- Public Art Fund balance published quarterly
- Project budgets disclosed during approval process
- Donor recognition published annually (with permission)

# Management Structure

## Planning Department Responsibilities

- Staff liaison to Public Art Committee
- Coordinate with development review process
- Manage private development art agreements
- Track in-lieu fee payments and ensure proper allocation
- Maintain public art inventory and documentation
- Coordinate interdepartmental collaboration

## From Appearance Committee to Public Art Committee

### Enhanced Composition and Duties:

- Expanded membership to include arts professionals
- Review and recommend all public art proposals
- Develop and update program guidelines
- Establish artist selection protocols
- Review maintenance and conservation needs
- Community outreach and education
- Annual work plan development
- Partnership development and stewardship

### Chair and Vice Chair Leadership:

- Enhanced roles with greater responsibility
- Training and professional development support
- Liaison with regional arts organizations
- Public spokesperson for program
- Coordination with Town staff and elected officials

## **Implementation Timeline (draft)**

### **Year 1-2 (2026-2028):**

- Adopt Public Art Ordinance and funding mechanisms
- Establish Public Art Fund and accounting procedures
- Transition Appearance Committee to Public Art Committee
- Develop UDO amendments with incentive language
- Create standard agreements for private development partnerships

### **Year 3-4 (2028-2030):**

- Implement first percent-for-art CIP projects
- Launch private development incentive program
- Establish donor recognition program
- Create foundation partnership for endowment
- Pilot community crowdfunding project

### **Year 5-6 (2030-2032):**

- Evaluate and refine funding mechanisms
- Expand developer partnership toolkit
- Strengthen corporate sponsorship program
- Consider overlay district art requirements
- Document economic impact and community benefits

