Art Commission Application Form

You must submit the following along with this form as a single PDF.

- Individual or organizational statement (250 word max)
- Letter of intent that includes history of project and its impact on the community (500 word max)
- Visual materials (See Art Commission Guidelines for requirement)
- Budget describing cost of materials, artist fees, maintenance, installation, etc.
- Two letters of support from project partners or neighborhood organizations
- One letter of support from the Department of Public Works or Department of Mobility & Infrastructure

Notes:

- You may be required to hold a Development Activities Meeting with the applicable Registered Community Organization prior to Hearing. For more information, visit pittsburghpa.gov/dcp/rci.
- After receiving Art Commission approval, any necessary permits, certificates of occupancy, legal agreements, or other city approvals are still required. These must be applied for separately at the appropriate City departments and are the responsibility of the applicant.
- Application format is a digital copy of full application form, required documents, and the presentation to be projected at the Hearing as one single PDF. Send all documents to pacd@pittsburghpa.gov.

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Project Information

Type of Project:  
- Conceptual Review
- Conceptual/Final Review
- Final Review
- Courtesy Review

Has this project been come before Art Commission before?

- [X] No  
- [X] Yes, when: __10-27-21__

Duration of project: From ____/____/____ to ____/____/____

Permanent?  
- No  
- [X] Yes
Conceptual Review for Art in Parks
Marlana Adele Vassar

Project Location

Address: Highland Park – Left side of entry garden

Neighborhood: Highland Park

Applicant Information

Name: Sarah Minnaert, Public Art & Civic Design Division, Department of City Planning

Mailing Address: 200 Ross St, 4th Floor, Pittsburgh PA 15219

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Relationship or Role in Project: Public Art & Civic Design Manager
Marlana Adele Vassar

Marlana Adele Vassar is a Pittsburgh-area artist and University of Pittsburgh alum (2006). Largely self-taught as an artist, Vassar’s philosophy of balancing style and substance has attracted a diverse audience to her work. She weaves symbolism, surrealism and rich storytelling into figures and patterns, resulting in works that are personal yet open to interpretation.

Vassar began her career as a graphic designer with the intention to move into game design, however a series of personal events turned her focus to the world of fine art. Since 2008, her work has been featured nationwide in museums, galleries and public projects. Known for her lavish style and attention to detail, Vassar has earned numerous accolades for her works. Her most recent accomplishments include public projects with the City of Pittsburgh and Oasis Community Kitchen, along with several private commissions.
Highland Park

Highland Park opened in 1893 on farmland once owned by the Negley family. The park covers 377 acres.

Features of the park include a Victorian entry garden, swimming pool, athletic courts, bike track, community gathering spaces, hiking trails, and the Highland Park Reservoir. The park also contains the Pittsburgh Zoo, first opened in 1898.
Project Narrative

While gathering feedback for this project, community members have mentioned interest in artwork that includes cultural diversity and accessibility. I have kept these points in mind while considering the rich history of Highland Park, and created designs for a piece that keeps these interests in mind while complementing the existing art and landscape of the park.

My inspiration for the initial concept started with the Guiseppe Moretti sculptures located throughout the park. Despite prominent distribution throughout the park, many respondents mentioned that they barely noticed these classical statues due to their location. Additionally, several comments mentioned that while the statues are impressive, they don’t feel a connection to the overall mood and subject matter displayed in the mythological figures.
Project Narrative

Edward Manning Bigelow’s vision for Highland Park was rooted in greatness, so the piers and sculptures add to this mood. The Moretti sculptures are from a time period where artists were commissioned for public art instead of collaborating, and where man’s triumph over nature needed to be emphasized. So it’s understandable that large classical sculptures were an ideal reflection of the park’s original vision. In modern times, however, figurative works need to speak to the changing world through representation and accessibility. I think that a sculpture in a similar style that emphasizes traits like respect, humility and kindness can be just as great, so I used these ideas for the design and mood of my figurative work.
Project Narrative

To create balance with this new artwork, I incorporated art nouveau-inspired elements that are found throughout my previous works and in the park, and blended these with modern ideas for a balance of classical and contemporary style. For the placement, I suggested a few areas in the park that would be low-maintenance, yet accessible to residents so that they can see the artwork up close. The accessibility point is also addressed in the work’s size, as a child-size sculpture will be less intimidating to visitors, easier to place, and simpler to maintain over the years. Ideally, the sculpture would be a bronze, however I am gathering additional quotes for other outdoor-safe sculpture materials in case this is better for the project specifications.
Project Narrative

I thought that it was very important to provide symbols of progress and possibility with this work, so the figure is a person coexisting with nature rather than trying to tame it. The figure design also addresses the diversity point, since there are currently no people of color or female children represented in the park’s sculptures. There is a possibility for touches of color to be added to this design as well, which will provide another visual symbol of diversity and refer to other artworks in the park besides the Moretti sculptures. (For example, the Animal Adventure mosaic wall and mosaics that will be installed in the Super Playground.)

After meeting with the fabricator they determined that at least one of the designs would be possible with a few adjustments to the details, so I have reworked a few things in the designs and we will continue making minor adjustments as needed, but the main ideas and inspiration still remain in the design. I shared the budget details and they have determined that at least one bronze would be possible if the design adjustments are considered. They also mentioned that they would try their best to adhere to a six-month turnaround time, however due to COVID-related delays they were unable to guarantee exact due dates in a contract.
Concept Design
Proposed Location
Proposed Location
Proposed Location
Budget: $40,000

- Artist Fee: $8,000
- Materials and Fabrication: $21,000
- Delivery and Installation Cost (estimated): $5,000
- Contingency: $6,000