



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report

2nd Tuesday of the Month– October 12, 2021

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Introduction

The following Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report describes activities of the Arts & Culture Program for the Urbana Arts & Culture Commission. The report includes information regarding projects that are in progress, recent requests and recommendations from the public, staff activities, and upcoming events.

COVID-19 Crisis Impact

- **Return to In-Person Programs/Events:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is continuing some in-person and hybrid virtual events and programs, following the guidelines set forth in the Illinois Five-Phase Reopening Plan and consulting public health guidance. Urbana Arts and Culture staff are working to share relief program information, resources for local artists, and continue various initiatives.
- **Staffing Changes & Accommodations:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program staff have returned to in-person working at the City of Urbana office, utilizing a hybrid schedule to limit the number of staff working in the office at once. The program welcomed a number of new Arts and Culture Interns this past September and each intern has had a variety of new special projects spanning arts marketing, events planning, and general operational support. The program is currently exploring the possibility of hiring a part-time, temporary Program Specialist who will assist with programs and grants administration.

Updates on Current Projects

- **Urbana Arts Grant Program:** The 2021 Urbana Arts Grant applications have been released. Up to \$90,000 is available for artists and arts organizations for projects that promote arts and culture in Urbana. The Urbana Arts and Culture Program and Community Development Office is now utilizing Neighborly as a new software for grant tracking. The Office Support Specialist and Arts and Culture Coordinator worked collaboratively to develop electronic versions of Urbana Arts Grant applications, tracking, and final reporting processes. The Urbana Arts and Culture Interns assisted in data entry for all 2021 Urbana Arts Grantee applications and 2021 grantees were offered a training on Neighborly for final report submission this past August.
- In addition to digitizing all application and reporting processes, grantees from the 2020 and 2021 cycles continue to work with the Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator to coordinate events, marketing, and COVID-19 safety precautions.

- **AARP Community Challenge Grant - "Growing Community Public Art Initiative:"**
The "AARP Community Challenge provides small grants to fund quick-action projects that can help communities become more livable for people of all ages. Applications are accepted for projects to improve public spaces, housing, transportation, civic engagement, coronavirus recovery, diversity and inclusion, and more."

Urbana's *Growing Community* Initiative is a public art initiative that invites local artists to install artworks in selected local community gardens, inclusive of installation works, murals, sculptures, and creatively designed benches. Artwork, selected through a jury process, will engage the mission of each community garden, celebrating sustainability, diversity, the local food system, native plants, and community-building among neighbors. Selected artwork will not only engage in creative placemaking and beautification, but offer arts-based ways to amplify support for the work of our smaller community gardens and their amenities. The project was funded in the amount of \$20,000 through the AARP Community Challenge Grant.

Artworks selected through the jury process are being printed on job boxes, benches, raised garden beds, and shade sails--creating additional garden infrastructure and improving access and intergenerational engagement. *Growing Community* has partnered with Housing Authority's YouthBuild, DUCE Construction, and local artist Greg Stallmeyer for installation support. This month, artworks will be unveiled in the following gardens:

- ***Tropical Punch* by Cindy Sampson | Lierman Neighborhood Community Garden (Lierman and Washington Sts., Urbana, 61802) Unveiling -Saturday, Oct. 9th, 2021 | 2pm-4pm**
- ***Excerpts from the Garden* by Beth Darling | *Ashe Yemaya* by Saba Manetti-Tesfaye | *Peace Pole Project* by Goal Getters and Self-Made Kingz | *Habitat for Humanity Community Garden (1309 W Hill St, Urbana 61801) Unveiling - Thursday, Oct. 14th, 2021 | 5:30pm-6:30pm***
- ***Sun Flora Flora Flora* by Law Welle | *Cunningham Township Community Garden (205 W Green St, Urbana, 61801) Unveiling -Saturday, Oct. 23rd, 2021 | Time TBC***
- ***Flower Girl* by Ku Wilson | *Victory Park Community Gardens (1000 E. Green St. Urbana, 61802) | Unveiling -early November TBA***
- ***The Peace Garden (902 West Springfield Ave. Urbana, 61801) | Unveiling - early November TBA***
- ***Meadowbrook Community Gardens' Solidarity Plot (2808 S. Race St. Urbana, 61801). | Unveiling -early November TBA***

- **Urbana Poet Laureate Ashanti Files:** Urbana's Poet Laureate, Ashanti Files, continues to maintain a robust calendar of engagement and outreach. Her most recent engagements include:
 - **Teen Writer's Retreat:** Urbana Poet Laureate Ashanti Files, together with Urbana Arts and Culture Program and the Urbana Park District's Anita Purves Nature Center, hosted an inaugural Teen Writer's Retreat where 15 youth participants attended a day-long writer's workshop with nature walks and guided writing.
 - **Book Launch for *A WAKEN2*:** Urbana's Poet Laureate Ashanti Files celebrated the release of her new book *A WAKEN2: A Personal Workbook*. The book has poetry, prose, writing prompts and original artwork by Robbie Davis.

- **Urbana Youth Poet Laureate Program:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is still accepting applications from teen poets between the ages of 13 and 18 years old for its inaugural Youth Poet Laureate. In an effort to outreach to local teens, the Urbana Arts and Culture Coordinator has visited Urbana High School classrooms and Art Club and University Laboratory High School classrooms and Arts Honor Society. Additionally, nominations are still be accepted directly from teachers, parents, friends, and mentors. For more information including eligibility and application guidelines, visit: www.urbanailinois.us/poet.

- **Young Artist's Studio:** In collaboration with The Urbana Free Library, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program hosted a virtual Mosaic Making Workshop for youth 5 and up. Young Artist Studio workshops will continue to be offered both virtually and in-person over the coming months. If attending virtual sessions, participants are asked to register on The Urbana Free Library's website to obtain the link and password. The upcoming workshop features CU Folk and Roots presenting *Instrument Petting Zoo!* In this interactive lesson, young creatives will learn about a wide variety of folk music instruments through the CU Folk and Roots Festival's Instrument Petting Zoo. Youth will get a chance to pick up an instrument, learn how to hold it, find out what instrument family it belongs to, and learn the names of its different parts. This event is a pre-cursor to the upcoming 13th Annual CU Folk and Roots Festival which will be held October 21-23, 2021. Weather permitting, the CU Folk and Roots Festival's Instrument Petting Zoo will be held in Cherry Alley. In the case of inclement weather, the program will move indoors to the Lewis Auditorium.

- **ART NOW!:** This month's ART NOW! mini documentary series features the Urbana Museum of Photography and airs on Urbana Public Television twice a week throughout the month and on the UPTV6 YouTube channel.

- **COVID-19 Relief for Individual Artists & Arts and Cultural Organizations:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Coordinator has been in close communication with the local arts and culture community to promote various relief programs and upcoming grant deadlines.

- **Murals on Glass:** Murals on Glass is an initiative to feature local artworks on downtown Urbana windows.

On Tuesday, October 5th, Urbana Arts and Culture Program and Commission celebrated local artist Jen Gibas and her piece "Reef" displayed on the front windows of the Urbana Park District's Indoor Aquatic Center. Visit the Urbana Indoor Aquatic Center located within Urbana Middle School (102 E Michigan Ave, Urbana, IL 61801) from 5:30pm-6:30pm for a reception and ribbon-cutting.

"Reef" is a meditation on the magic of underwater landscapes, and its aim is to take viewers to a place of wonder, especially in this time when we can't do much physical traveling. Selected artist Jen Gibas is a medical illustrator and animator who works at the University of Illinois. She currently creates online course animations about anatomy and physiology for the College of Veterinary Medicine.

- **Urbana Utility Box Murals:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program released the call for art for Utility Box Murals and juries met to review artwork. An announcement will be coming soon with installation locations and selected artists for the next cycle of this program to display artworks on Urbana-area traffic and utility boxes.



Urbana Utility Box Mural Program

- **The Great ARTdoors:** The 2021 cycle of Great ARTdoors, a collaboration between the Spurlock Museum, the Urbana Park District, the Champaign Park District, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program, and 40 North Champaign County Arts Council have been installed in the following Urbana locations:
 - HARVEST | Kim Curtis | Weaver Park (2205 E Main St, Urbana)
 - WAITING TO FLY | Mohan Tracy | Crystal Lake Park (901 N. Broadway, Urbana)
 - MELT | Greg Stallmeyer | Chief Shemauger Park (1001 E Kerr Ave, Urbana)
 - ENTRE CHIEN ET LOUP (BETWEEN DOG AND WOLF) | EKAH | South Ridge Park (3008 S Myra Ridge Dr, Urbana)
 - POD NO. 7 | K. Hieronymus W | Lierman Neighborhood Community Garden (Washington & Lierman, Urbana)
 - TRANSCENDENCE IN THE GARDEN | Nathan Westerman | City of Urbana - Corner of Illinois and Vine Sts.

In conjunction with the installations, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program and Spurlock Museum held two interactive hybrid events: Contemporary Conversations: The Great ARTDoors Artist's in Dialogue. Over 50 people attended (virtually or in-person) both sessions.

- **Artist of the Corridor Exhibitions:** Artist of the Corridor continues to exhibit *JUXTAPOSITIONED: The Art and Words of Durango Mendoza*, an exhibit of photographs, sculpture, assemblage, and word images by the late Mvskoke artist/writer, Durango Mendoza (June 23, 1945–October 5, 2020). The exhibit is funded in part by an Urbana Arts and Culture Grant and the work will remain on display at City Hall and The Urbana Free Library through the end of the year.
- **Urbana Sculpture Project:** The City of Urbana Arts & Culture Program collaborates with Public Art League (and now 40 North) to select sculptures for placement in the City of Urbana. Urbana Arts and Culture Commissioners selected their favorites and staff continue to work with Public Art League to confirm sponsorship and placement. The Urbana Arts and Culture Program is seeking to extend the displays of *Peek Between the Trees*, *Races*, and *Ice Pops* and installed *What is the Good?* by Greg Stallmeyer in Boneyard Creek Crossing in advance of Boneyard Arts Festival.
- **Street Pole Banner Art:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program has launched a new street pole banner art initiative. This initial cycle welcomes selected art from Carlie Upchurch, BLACKMAU (Kamau Grantham and Stacey Robinson), Beth Darling, Ralph Roether, K Hieronymus W, Phil Strang, Marc-Anthony Macon, and EKAH. Street pole banners are now on display in Downtown Urbana.
- **Imagine Urbana Comprehensive Plan:** The Urbana Arts and Culture Program will be supporting the City of Urbana's comprehensive planning efforts by offering some coordinated programming that invites the community to share their visions for Urbana through arts practices, as well as specifically envision Urbana's local arts and cultural landscape 20 years from now. Potential engagement opportunities include arts-specific listening sessions and sponsored programs this spring.