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# WEST SIDE PUBLIC ART PROJECT: 2023 MAYOR'S GOAL

Engagement Report

January 2024



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# Executive Summary

Salt Lake City Mayor Mendenhall’s 2023 Plan includes a focus on strengthening our community by “creat[ing] inclusive and equitable opportunities for all, working intentionally toward safe, affordable, and equitable neighborhoods.” A specific aspect of this overarching objective is to “begin community engagement and site selection for iconic West Side public art installation(s).”

To support this initiative, the the Salt Lake City Art’s Council and Civic Engagement Team have started public engagement to better understand West Side residents’ community values, ideas about public art, and preferred locations for an art installation.

This engagement effort sought to to engage residents, organizations, and stakeholders in Salt Lake City, particularly those who live in Council Districts 1 and 2. Participants shared their thoughts and ideas through an online survey, in-person interactions, and a community conversation event hosted in November 2023.

This report presents the data and stories collected throughout this engagement process and will be used to guide the Arts Council in determining the project structure this project will follow.

By making decisions based on these findings and future engagement efforts, the Public Art Program can create a public art project that results in an artist commission that honors the diverse perspectives, cultures, and identities of the West Side. Gathered responses and stories are completely anonymous and all sensitive information has been redacted.

As outlined in the Strategic plan, the Salt Lake City Arts Council is working to foster equity in the community, bolster the arts through new and creative partnerships, and empower the arts sector as a whole.

Equity in Salt Lake City is acknowledging and addressing historic and current disparities experienced by our residents, employees, businesses, neighborhoods, and visitors. Salt Lake City provides access to resources and opportunities that support everyone in overcoming barriers to their success so that our community today, and generations tomorrow, can thrive.





## Key Takeaways at a Glance

From participant feedback in surveys, in-person interactions, and the community conversation event, the following main themes can be used to guide the decision of an artist and location for an iconic art piece on the West Side of Salt Lake City.

### Community Values

- 01** Diversity in people and culture
- 02** Community, families, and neighborhood pride
- 03** Nature- animals, trees, Jordan River Trail

### Concerns

- 01** Being overlooked, engagement ending too soon
- 02** Potential for vandalism or lack of maintenance plan
- 03** Gentrification

### Preferred Locations

- 01** Along the Jordan River Trail
- 02** Along major roads

### Ideas About Public Art

- 01** Should help create a gathering place
- 02** Should reflect the community and their values
- 03** Preference for murals & sculptures
- 04** Involve local artists and the community



# Methods & Findings

This first round of engagement began in May 2023, coming to a close November 2023. Engagement efforts included a public survey, tabling at community events, and hosting a community conversation event. This report explores the findings of the survey and experiences gathered over the 6-month period of engagement.

One of the primary methods of community engagement on this project was a public survey. All promotional materials were shared in both English and Spanish.

The survey and project awareness was promoted in following various methods:

## **Posted on applicable webpages:**

- Salt Lake City Arts Council's
- SLC Feedback Community

## **Shared in person at public events:**

- Partners in the Park, hosted by University Neighborhood Partners in West Salt Lake communities, on two separate occasions
- Groove in the Grove, Poplar grove's annual community event
- Art in the Heart of Fairpark community art festival

## **Emailed to applicable newsletters:**

- SLC Feedback Community
- Salt Lake City Arts Council

## **Posted about on Social Media:**

- Multiple posts to the Salt Lake City Arts Council Instagram account
- One post to the SLCgov Instagram account

## **Partnered with youth via Mestizo Arts & Activism.**

- A cohort of 6 youth (all students of color, with the majority of them being SLC West Side residents) from this group participated through the summer as "West Side Public Art Fellows." They helped conduct outreach and engagement by canvassing neighborhoods, engaging West Side residents, encouraging participation in this survey and project.

# Survey

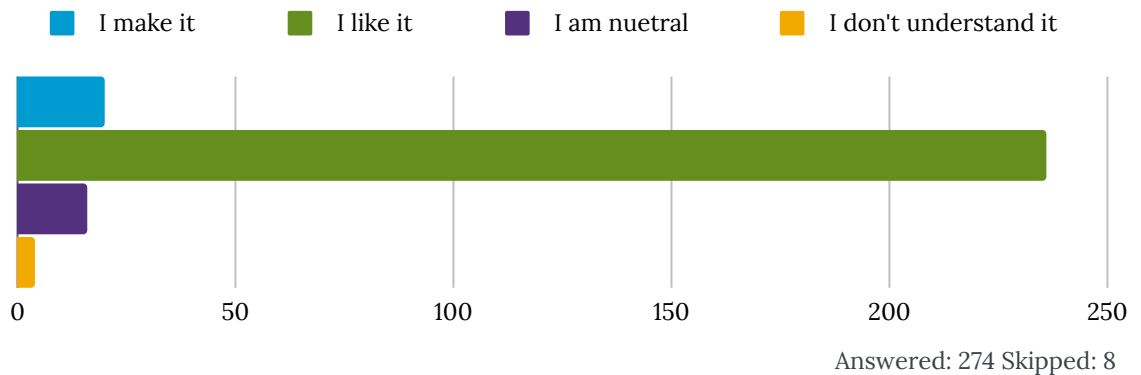
Using Survey123 by ESRI, the survey was published on both the Public Art Program’s webpage and the Salt Lake City Feedback Community webpage. The survey was promoted via social media, newsletters, and in-person community events. In total, 274 people took the survey, 32% identifying as a West Side Resident.

Participants were asked to respond to eight questions regarding public art preferences, community experiences, and potential locations.

The following section defines the survey questions with participant results and analysis.

## What’s your relationship with public art?

Participants were asked to select which phrase best described their relationship with public art. A clear majority of survey respondents indicated they like public art. This same trend was seen in those who identified as West Side residents (living in District 1 or 2).





## Describe a public art installation(s) in Salt Lake City, Utah or anywhere in the world that you like.

Respondents shared 170 different examples of art installations, both local and from around the world. The following trends were seen among both the general public and identified West Side residents responses.

23% of examples shared were from outside of Utah, with the most common installation named being “Cloud Gate” (the Bean) by Anish Kapoor in Chicago, IL.

62% of examples shared were from within Utah. The most common among them being “Out of the Blue” (the 9th & 9th Whale) by Stephen Kesler, painted by Mike Murdock, in Salt Lake City. Another highly mentioned installation was the “Bridge Over Barriers” Mosaic by Lily Yeah with participation from surrounding community members, in the 300 North I-15 underpass.

Many respondents did not include a specific art piece, but rather shared favorite locations or common styles found throughout the city. The most common among these comments were the murals throughout Salt Lake City, art along the Jordan River Trail and art found at different Trax stations.

Throughout both specific and general examples shared, sculptures and murals were the most common style of art identified among respondents.

See [appendix](#) for full list of comments.



“Cloud Gate” (the Bean) by Anish Kapoor in Chicago, IL



“Out of the Blue” (the 9th & 9th Whale) by Stephen Kesler, painted by Mike Murdock, in Salt Lake City

*“I love the big mural on n temple right next to red iguana by Jessica sobogal that says “Este barrio no se vende” with all of the recent gentrification of the west side it gives me hope and makes me feel like I have a voice. It makes me feel connected to my roots and the saying resonates with me so much.”*

**-West Side Resident**

## Do you have a personal story that connects you to the West Side of Salt Lake City that you'd like to share with the Public Art Program?

Respondents shared personal stories, connections, and attributes about the West Side neighborhoods. 70% of stories shared had a positive sentiment and 22% were neutral. Common themes among stories shared include the following:



Public Spaces



Art



Community & Connection



Culture & Diversity



Nature

See [appendix](#) for full list of comments.

Among the positive stories, respondents also shared some concerns and desires for the West Side. The most common concern was about gentrification on the West Side and the need for more support and resources to be brought to the West Side.

“I live on the westside and have seen this area and its people marginalized over and over again by the city, other neighborhoods, etc. sends an awful message to us – no one cares and we don't matter. many believe it and are not proud to be here or do not respect the spaces - because the message is "who cares". public art could be something to be proud of, a landmark for others to recognize or visit, a symbol of the area.”

**- West Side Resident**

“I live in the Rose Park neighborhood. The West Side of Salt Lake City is super important to me. The communities over here are strong and vibrant. I like that the artworks in these communities reflect this.”

**-West Side Resident**

“I love the Tam Bao Buddhist Temple and the Islamic Society of Bosniaks and the Free Church of Tonga. We are blessed to have such diversity in our community and it does wonders for my walks in the area”

**-West Side Resident**



## What place on Salt Lake City's West Side do you think could benefit from an iconic piece of public art?

Participants provided over 85 different locations on the West Side. Responses included locations such as parks and trails, neighborhoods, intersections or streets, community centers, and schools. The most common among these categories was parks and trails, specifically locations on and near the Jordan River Trail.

16% of respondents identified specific neighborhoods or the West Side as a whole. The most frequently mentioned neighborhood was Rose Park.

11% identified specific streets or intersections, the most common streets among them being North Temple, Redwood Road, California Avenue, and 900 West.

Many respondents also mentioned they would like to see art on the new traffic circle on 500 N 1300 W. In addition, many expressed the desire to see art in the 900 S 900 W area to support the 9 Line Trail and grow a “West Side 9th & 9th.”

See [appendix](#) for full list of comments.

In addition to the online survey, data for this question was gathered in person using a map and push pins. Residents who were contacted at in person events were invited to add a pin to the map where they would like to see an iconic public art installation on the West Side. Two maps were used over the 6 months of engagement.



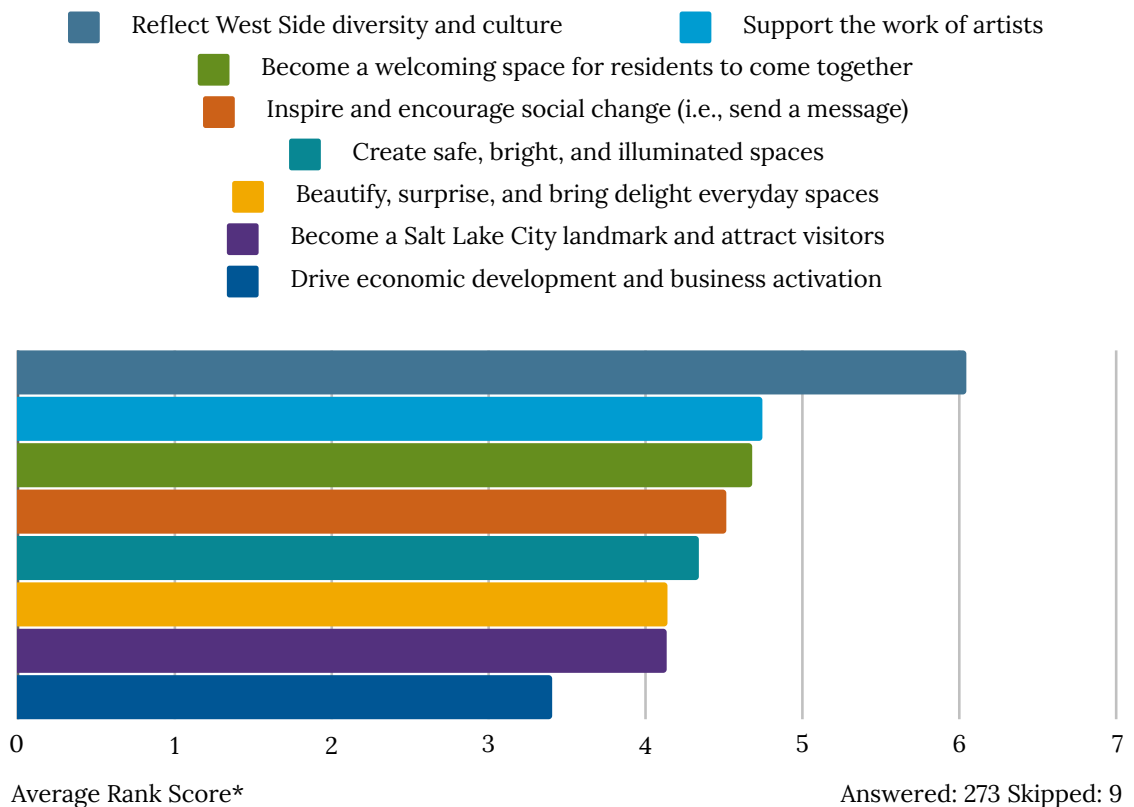


## What should be the most important aspect to consider for an iconic piece of public art on the West Side?

When given the choices below, the highest ranked answer given by survey respondents was “Reflect West Side diversity and culture” with an average rank score of 6.045. The next highest ranked answer was “Support the work of artists” at 4.745 followed by “Become a welcoming space for residents to come together” at 4.68.

The lowest ranked answer for this question was “Drive economic development and business activation” with a rank score of 3.405.

The highest ranked answer of “Reflect West Side diversity and culture” is a topic also seen frequently in the open response comments, suggesting that survey respondents find this aspect of public art to be high value.

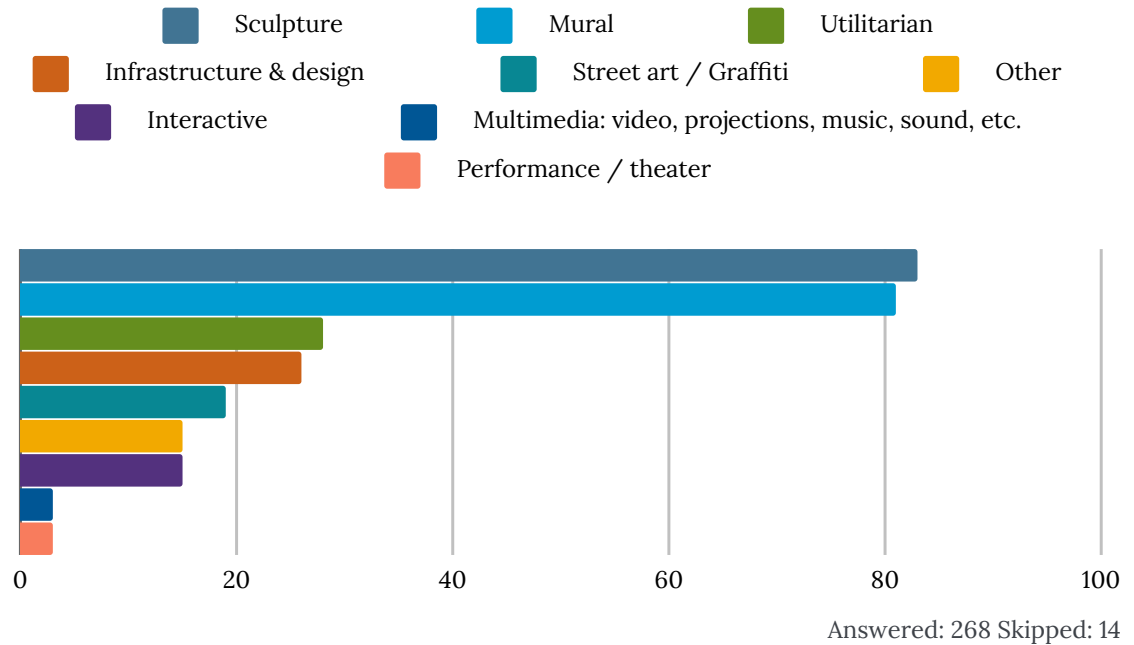


\*Ranking questions calculate the average ranking for each answer choice so we can determine which answer choice was most preferred overall. The answer choice with the largest average ranking is the most preferred choice.



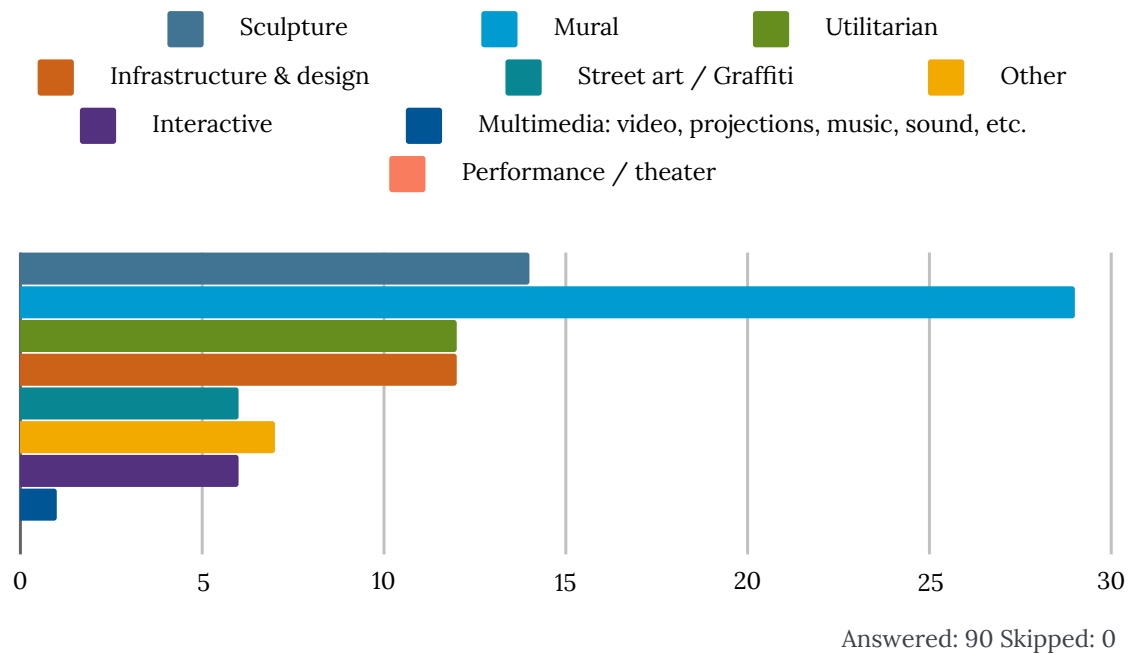
## What type of public art do you enjoy most?

Overall, survey respondents picked “Sculptures” as their favorite art style, followed closely by “Murals” with a strong drop-off between the next art style.



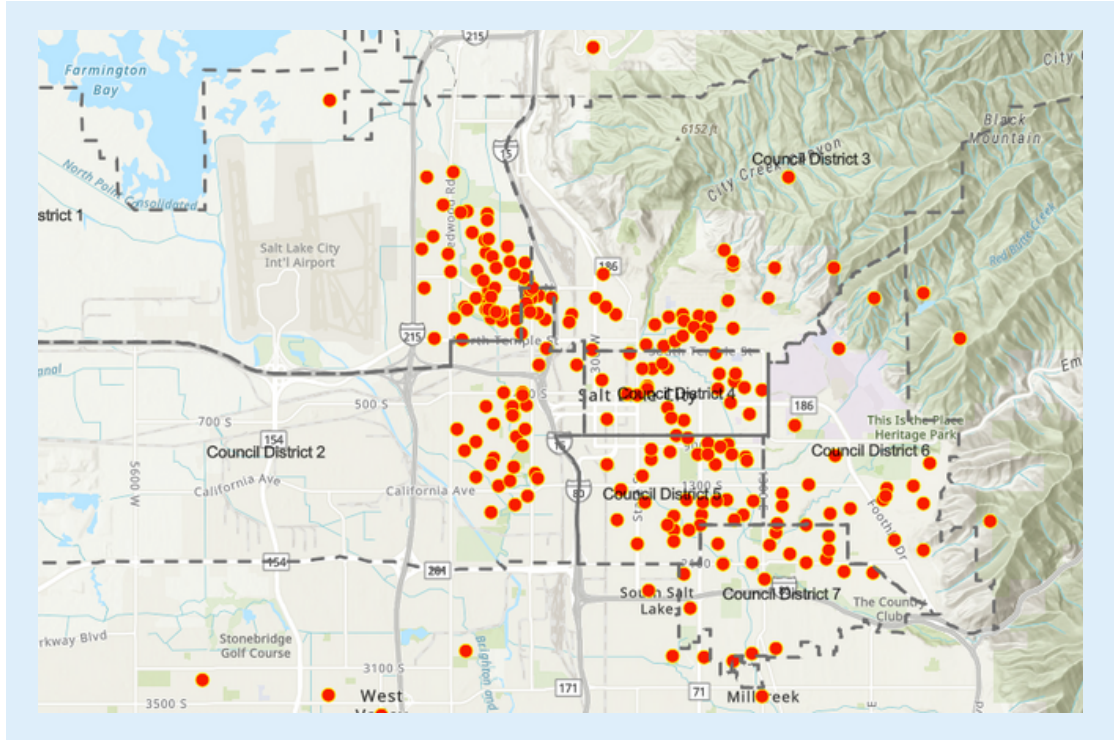
When looking at responses only from West Side residents, “Murals” were a clear favorite, with more than double the next highest response of “Sculpture”.

When considering an art style for the future, this data shows that West Side residents prefer “Murals” over other art styles.



## Demographic Data

Every City Council District was represented in this data collection. 42% of respondents identified as living on the west side in Districts 1 & 2.



Number of Respondents	City Council District	City Council Member
47	District 1	Victoria Petro
42	District 2	Alejandro Puy
32	District 3	Chris Wharton
26	District 4	Eva Lopez Chavez
34	District 5	Darin Mano
18	District 6	Dan Dugan
19	District 7	Sarah Young

# Community Conversation Event

To expand the input received from the surveys, West Side community leaders, contributors and residents were invited to attend the “West Side Public Art Community Conversation” event on November 16, 2023. This event began with a free meal, followed by a presentation about the public art program to provide context which flowed into a community conversation in a World Cafe format. After the facilitated conversation, a member of the Public Art Program shared closing remarks. Participants were invited to stay and continue talking with their neighbors, and many took advantage of that time.

The conversation consisted of four questions, exploring the strengths of the West Side, the impact of public art, and the participants desires and concerns for this project. Participants were separated into groups of 4-5 people for the small group discussions. After each question was presented, participants

had two-minutes of silent pondering. With the tables covered in butcher paper, participants were encouraged to write down or draw out any thoughts they had during this time. The group was then able to share their thoughts with the small group and carry out a conversation together.

Each table had an assigned note-taker to capture main themes and ideas shared. After the allotted 10 minutes for discussions, two note-takers shared with the larger groups a synopsis of the conversation had in their smaller groups. Before moving on to the next question, participants were asked to switch tables and find a new group. The same process occurred for all four questions.

19 community members participated the conversation. This section will describe the questions and key highlights from their conversations with additional analysis.







## Discussion Question 2- West Side Attributes in Art:

**With the West Side's highlights in mind, how do you think these ideas can be expressed through public art?**

Building off the first discussion question, participants discussed potential themes, feelings and appearances of a future iconic public art piece on the West Side. four common topics emerged from this conversation: desired elements, ideas to be incorporated, desires for what the piece will do and desires for what the art will represent.

### Desired Elements:

- Colorful
- Interactive
- Beautiful/Wow Factor

### Ideas to Include:

- Flags
- Icons to the neighborhood: roses, turkeys, peacocks
- Lungs

### What the Art Will Do:

- Create a gathering place
- Provide a sense of identity/unity/ownership
- Be a green space
- Start conversations

### What the Art Will Represent:

- Reflect the community
  - diversity, culture, nations, languages, lgbtq, immigrants
- Resilience



## Discussion Question 3- Project Concerns:

**What concerns do you have about placing an iconic public art installation on the West Side? How can we reduce those concerns?**

Participants had the opportunity to share any concerns they had about this project and offer potential solutions.

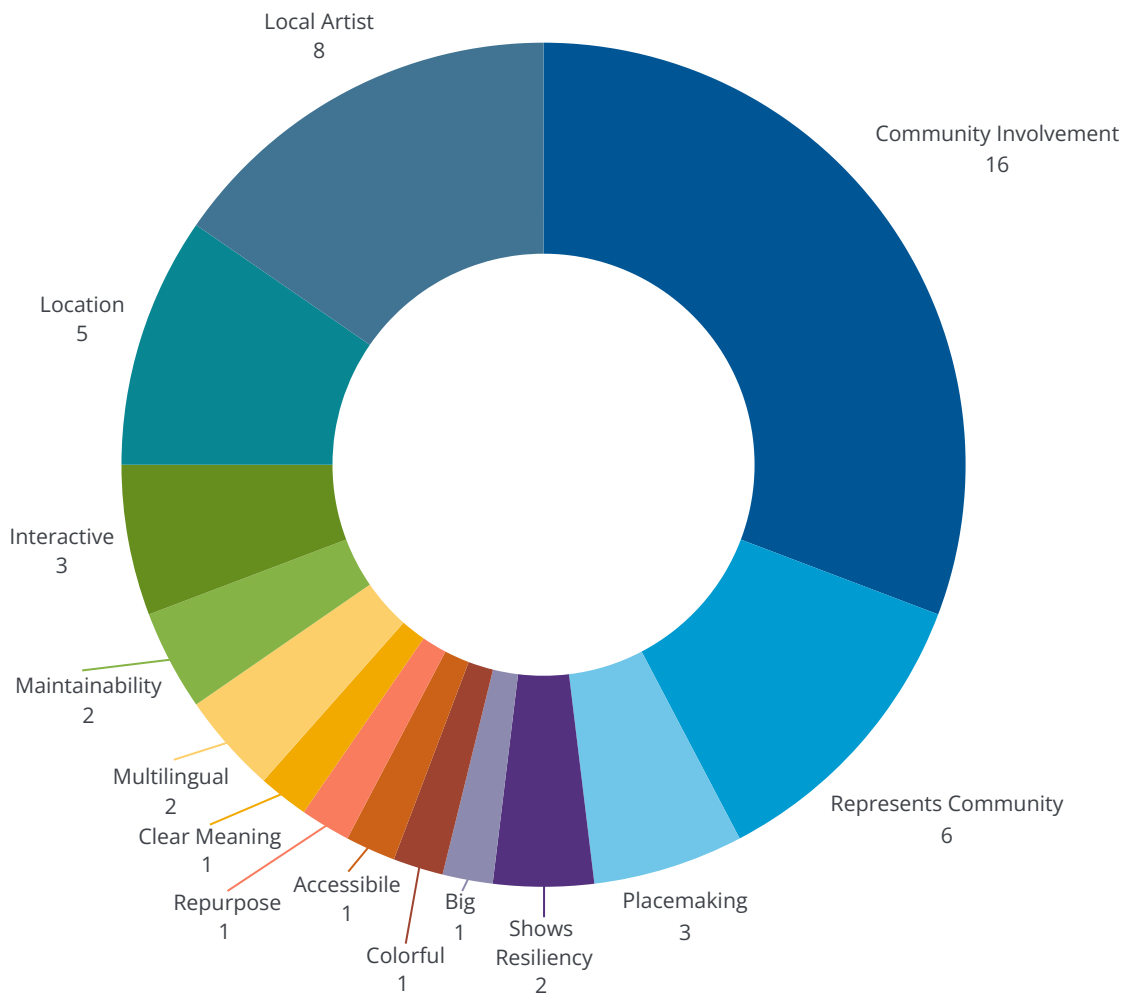
Common Concerns	Offered Solutions
Engagement will end too soon or there will not be enough	Have more engagement, involve the community every step of the way
The art will not reflect the community	Have a local artist
Potential for vandalism	Choose the right location Have neighborhood watch Use barriers
The location; the potential for congestion or it not being central	When choosing consider: What place represents the entire West Side? What is a central place? Where is there business activation?
Want a local artist or at least someone familiar with the community	Engage high school artists
Could lead to gentrification	Have a local artist- third spaces are often gentrifying, but not if they are sponsored by the community (not outsiders)
Maintenance plan/potential neglect	"Adopt and art piece" for community members



## Discussion Question 4- Project Priorities:

With the entire conversation in mind, what do you see as the top priorities to consider for this public art installation? What should the Arts Council prioritize as it develops the project? If you could convey one important thing about the West Side to the commissioned artist who creates this piece, what would that be?

Participants were able to share what they feel should be the top priority for this project. The most common response was the desire for strong community involvement throughout this project.





# Key Takeaways

These key takeaways are based on the feedback, ideas, and stories provided during engagement. This section identifies community values, participant ideas, preferred installation location and potential concerns about this project. Although many valuable ideas, concerns, and comments were shared, focusing on these main themes can help guide the decision for a location, artist and overall goals for an iconic public art piece on the West Side.

## Community Values

- 01** Diversity in people and culture
- 02** Community, families, and neighborhood pride
- 03** Nature- animals, trees, Jordan River Trail

## Concerns

- 01** Being overlooked, engagement ending too soon
- 02** Potential for vandalism or lack of maintenance plan
- 03** Gentrification

## Preferred Locations

- 01** Parks and open spaces along the Jordan River Trail
- 02** Along major roads

## Ideas About Public Art

- 01** Should help create a gathering place
- 02** Should reflect the community and their values
- 03** Preference for murals & sculptures
- 04** Involve local artists and the community

# Community Values

Based on stories shared from residents and what people love about the West Side, the following community values have been identified.

## 01 Diversity in people and culture

The West Side is home to various people, churches, cultural festivals, and restaurants, creating a unique and diverse community. Participants in engagement expressed their love for the differences and diversity that thrives within their communities. There was a strong sentiment of belonging and inclusion among comments as well as celebration in the different foods, languages and traditions that thrive on the West Side.

## 02 Community, families, and neighborhood pride

A common trend in stories and comments was a sense of community and camaraderie among West Side residents. Many participants mentioned a feeling of “coming home” when moving or returning to the West Side. It has been identified as a place for families to live, gather, and grow—whether that family is by blood or by choice. In addition, participants mentioned feeling pride in their individual neighborhoods and the greater community of the West Side.

## 03 Nature- animals, trees, Jordan River Trail

Throughout the various questions asked during engagement, nature was a common answer. Residents continually mentioned their love for the wild life that live and grow in their communities including the wild bunnies, turkeys or peacocks that roam the streets, the large tree canopies that shadow their neighborhoods, or the flow of the Jordan River and the escape the trail provides. Nature is important to West Side residents, a part of their community they would like to preserve and enhance.



# Preferred Locations

After learning from West Side and other Salt Lake City residents via survey, in-person interactions, and the community conversation event, the following preferred locations for an iconic art installation have been identified:

## 01 Parks and open spaces along the Jordan River Trail

West Side residents highly value the Jordan River Trail and all that it offers. Many expressed love for the art that already exists along the trail and would like to see more. Various parks and major intersections along the trail were named as potential locations.

## 02 Along Major Roads

Participants named major roads, such as North Temple, Redwood Road, California Avenue and 900 West, as potential locations for the new public art piece. Many mentioned that major roads such as these are good locations as they are very public and visible. Allowing for the art to be in a place that everyone, include those simply traveling through the West Side, can contribute to the piece becoming iconic.



# Ideas About Public Art

Based on stories shared from residents and what people love about the West Side, the following ideas regarding public art have been identified.

## 01 **Create a gathering place**

As community and belonging is important to West Side residents, it is appropriate that there were many suggestions to utilize a new public art installation to create a new or stronger gathering place on the West Side. Residents suggested that the chosen location be public and easy to access so that they may come together and enjoy the art. There were comments about making the art a conversation starter, adding to the sense of gathering and community.

## 02 **Reflect the Community & Their Values**

Engagement participants repeatedly expressed their desire for this new public art piece to properly reflect the West Side community and their values. They feel as though for this piece to truly be “iconic” and be embraced by the community, they should be able to relate to the art and see themselves. It was important the art represent the community as a whole, not just one group or culture.

## 03 **Murals & Sculptures**

Whether it was by sharing examples of art installations that they enjoyed or by clearly stating it, murals and sculptures were the most preferred style of art among participants. Residents expressed the desire that the art be appropriate in size for the chosen location.

## 04 **Local Artist & Community Involvement**

Residents would prefer that the artist for this project be local to the West Side to ensure that they fully understand and represent the community. In addition, participants shared strong sentiments that they are involved in the preparation and possibly the creation of this iconic public art piece.

# Concerns

After learning from West Side and other Salt Lake City residents via survey, in-person interactions, and the community conversation event, the following concerns have been identified:

## 01 **Being Overlooked**

West Side residents repeatedly mentioned their history about being overlooked and ignored in various situations. They expressed concern, based on past experience, that engagement will stop after this first effort. Residents would like to be included and engaged throughout the entire process of this project to ensure that their values and preferences are being prioritized.

## 02 **Potential for Vandalism**

Although many participants are excited about an iconic public art piece coming to the West Side, many are also concerned about the potential vandalism that will occur. Many residents would like to see a plan for maintenance and vandalism prevention be incorporated into the placement, design, and installation of the piece. Residents fear that once an art piece will be placed, the City will not support them in keeping it safe, thus losing its effect as an iconic piece.

## 03 **Gentrification**

Gentrification is an on going issue on the West Side. Many participants brought up concerns about how a new iconic art installation could contribute to this issue. Residents would like to see the art enhance their neighborhoods, but not push them out. Participants mentioned how this should be strongly considered as plans for this project move forward.



# Next Steps & Recommendations

The data in this report should be shared with Arts Council Staff, the Salt Lake Art Design Board, those working to select applicants for future public art on the west side, and with artist who want to learn more about Salt Lake City's west side community art values.

This document contains insights directly from Salt Lake City residents on public art and should be used in the decision-making process on future public artwork. When new Salt Lake City Arts Council projects are being developed and planned, the key take aways from this report should be reflected on.

When additional information is needed, more community engagement should take place. This report contains the information from a Phase 1 of engagement, aiming to give general insights on what the community's goals are for an iconic public artwork on the West Side of Salt Lake City.

Another phase of engagement before artwork is completed is highly recommended. When the Salt Lake City Arts Council has more specific information on the project, it would be a good time to check back in with the community to get more specific feedback.





# Appendix

## [Full list of survey comments](#)



- For comments responding to “Describe a public art installation(s) in Salt Lake City, Utah or anywhere in the world that you like.” see pages 1-18.
- For comments responding to “Do you have a personal story that connects you to the West Side of Salt Lake City that you’d like to share with the Public Art Program?” see pages 19-28.
- For comments responding to “What place on Salt Lake City’s West Side do you think could benefit from an iconic piece of public art?” see pages 28-34.
- For comments responding to “What’s one thing you love about Salt Lake City’s West Side?” see pages 35-40.



Civic Engagement Team  
Information Management Services  
Salt Lake City