



DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SERVICES

Economic Development Division

Urbana Arts & Culture Program Monthly Progress Report

2nd Tuesday of the Month– February 9, 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 beginning to return to in-person events and programs, following the guidelines set forth in the Illinois Five-Phase Reopening Plan and consulting public health guidance. Some events continue to be held virtually and 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 June and each intern has had a variety of new special projects spanning arts marketing, events planning, and general operational support. The Office Support Specialist for Community Development (former Program Specialist for Arts and Culture and the Market) continues to assist with the Urbana Arts Grant program. The program is currently exploring the possibility of hiring a part-time Program Specialist.

Updates on Current Projects

- **Urbana Arts Grant Program:** 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 will be trained to use Neighborly for final report submission in 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.

- **Boneyard Arts Festival 2021:** 40 North's Boneyard Arts Festival offered the first in-person festival that the City of Urbana has seen in over a year. Twenty-nine of the 53 participating venues were in Urbana and the Urbana Arts and Culture Program contributed 6 events over the course of the weekend. These events included:
 - **A Boneyard Meet the Artist with Nathan Westerman** | Corner of Illinois and Vine Sts. next to City Hall in association with The Great ARTDoors
 - **A Boneyard Meet the Artist with Greg Stallmeyer** | Boneyard Creek Crossing, NE Corner of Race and Griggs Sts in Downtown Urbana in association with the Urbana Sculpture Project
 - **Urbana Grows Wild! Youth Chalk-a-Thon** with Artist Kinsey Fitzgerald and DJ KamauMau | Cherry Alley at The Urbana Free Library featuring Joyful Bubbles and UrVana distributing art kits for youth
 - **Urbana Celebrates the Boneyard** | Boneyard Creek Crossing, Corner of Race and Griggs Sts. | Featuring music by Dance Music Therapy, Joyful Bubbles, live art by Cody Shrinker, We Wanna Woke Community Justice Choir, and UrVana's Art Kits distribution
 - **STARGAZERS: Art and Poetry Exhibition** by collaborating artists Shaya Robinson and Stacey Robinson | The Urbana Free Library
 - **REMOTE WORK: A UHS AP Art Class Exhibition** | Urbana-Champaign Independent Media Center Gallery

Additionally, UrVana Mobile Kid's Art Project, funded by an Urbana Arts Grant, brought art kits to under-served neighborhoods in Urbana.

- **Urbana Utility Box Mural Program/Murals on Glass:** Urbana Arts and Culture Program unveiled the inaugural cycle of the Urbana Utility Box Mural Program, featuring the following works:
 - GREENHOUSE II | Megan Hinds | NE Corner of Race and Main Sts in Urbana
 - GUILT TRIP | BLACKMAU (Kamau Grantham and Stacey Robinson) | Corner of Main and Vine Sts in Urbana
 - CONVERGENT EVOLUTION | EKAH | Crystal Lake Park Family Aquatic Center Entrance (1401 N Broadway Ave, Urbana)

The Urbana Utility Box Mural Virtual Unveiling was featured on UPTV6 Urbana Public Television and online through the Urbana Arts and Culture Program's social media channels. The project was highlighted in local arts magazine, Smile Politely.

The Urbana Arts and Culture Program will release the next call for submissions later this month to install works on 4 additional utility boxes and a municipal building as part of Murals on Glass.

- **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 design and 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 resources (public seating, civic engagement, storytelling, and gathering).

Artworks selected through the jury process will be chosen for the creative and innovative ways they invite engagement with the dynamic local history of community gardens, showcase the cultural diversity of Urbana, and create additional garden infrastructure (benches, games, music, and vibrancy) and improve disability access, language accessibility, and intergenerational engagement. The project was funded in the amount of \$20,000 through the AARP Community Challenge Grant, an award that will go to City Council for acceptance. The grant will fund artist honorariums, materials costs, installation costs, and administrative fees.

- **CO+RE Community and Research Partnership Grant - "Disability-Aware Cities:"**
CO+RE is "a pilot program supported by the University of Illinois Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation, is intended to foster and extend community-campus partnerships and civic scholarship." The City of Urbana's Arts and Culture Program is deeply excited about this project, which will bring together local nonprofit PACE, Inc., Krannert Art Museum, the College of Applied Health Sciences, and the Urbana Arts and Culture Program, among other partnerships to elevate the diverse experiences of people living with disabilities, forge new conversations around accessibility, grow collaborative relationships between campus and community, and ground in the power of public art.

The project includes listening sessions, an oral history project wherein the experiences of people with disabilities navigating the built environment is shared through story-sharing and public art, transcribed and translated into various local languages. The project involves teams of collaborators and will result in a dynamic public art project at the intersection of arts and social change with site installations throughout the City of Urbana. The project was funded in the amount of \$15,000 for Stage I funding by the University of Illinois Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research and Innovation. The grant is written to and managed by Krannert Art Museum, but the Urbana Arts and Culture Program and City of Urbana will gain an innovative public art project funded directly through the awarded grant.

- **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:
 - Attending Martha's Vineyard Institute for Creative Writing for a retreat this past June as a Voices of Color Poet Fellow "These fellowships assist MVICW with our commitment to expanding the American literary canon by promoting voices from a wide array of cultural backgrounds, and to increasing philanthropic support for writers of color in the arts." (via mvicw.com)
 - The Poet Laureate's Showcase | June 28th, 2021 | The Urbana Free Library
An evening of readings from local poets selected by the Urbana Poet Laureate. This year's line-up included readings from Adeyinka Alasade, Cielo Jones, Dawn Blackman, Ja Nelle Davenport-Pleasure, Jazmine Summerville, Marva Nelson, Ruby Mendenhall, Sandra Flows, Shaya Robinson AKA Chocolate Star, and the Writers of Oya.
 - Writers of Oya Summer Session has begun and Urbana Poet Laureate, Ashanti Files, has been meeting weekly with participating middle school and high school girl writers.

- **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.urbaillinois.us/poet.

- **Young Artist's Studio:** In collaboration with The Urbana Free Library, the Urbana Arts and Culture Program hosted Urbana Grows Wild Youth Chalk-a-Thon as the first in-person Young Artist's Studio in over a year in honor of Boneyard Arts Festival. 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 artist Elizabeth "Ei" Pabon presenting *Kids Dance Bomba!* In this interactive lesson, young creatives will learn the dance, rhythms, and history of the Puerto Rican tradition of Bomba! Guest teacher, Eli Pabon, is a multi-talented dancer, singer, lyricist, instructor/educator, grant writer, and percussionist. Born and raised in Boston to a Puerto Rican family of performers and educators, she grew up learning the importance of music and dance in health, education, healing, resistance, and community-building.

- **ART NOW!:** This month's ART NOW! mini documentary series features local painter, Atef Ayadi and airs on Urbana Public Television twice a week throughout the month and on the UPTV6 YouTube channel.

- **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.

The Great ARTdoors Committee is working together to produce events in conjunction with the sculptural works on display including panel discussions, scavenger hunts, and various artist talks and local viewings.

- **Artist of the Corridor Exhibitions:** Artist of the Corridor exhibitions will resume later this month as the *REMOTE WORK* Exhibition is installed at City Hall and *STARGAZERS* remains on display at The Urbana Free Library.
- **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 will be on display later this month 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.
- **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.