

An Updated Vision for Arts & Culture in Aubrey Davis Park



Primavera II by Roslyn Mazzilli was the first artwork acquired for Aubrey Davis Park. Photographed by Jeff Reid.

Since its creation, the “Park on the Lid”, or Aubrey Davis Park, has been a primary location for Islanders to engage with arts and culture. As the I-90 construction neared completion in 1991, the city formed an I-90 ARTway Task Force to identify and implement public art opportunities throughout the corridor. Today, the park features nearly 25% of the City’s public art collection, stretching from *Playful Pup* by Gary Lee Price at the west end to *Gift of Reflection*, a steel sculpture by David Govedare at the east boat launch.

The first phase of the park’s public art opportunities opened in 1995 as the I-90 Outdoor Sculpture Gallery. The new gallery intended to enhance the Town Center portion of the park with public art and to enrich the Island’s sense of community and earned the city the Pacific Northwest Regional Arts and Humanities Award given by the National Recreation & Park Association in 1997 in recognition of the gallery.

In 1998, the I-90 ARTway Task Force and the Arts Council published a vision statement for the I-90 Sculpture Gallery. This vision emphasized enhancing open spaces, celebrating the unique landscape opportunity, and providing positive art experiences for the broadest audience possible. The city acquired the first keystone sculpture, *Primavera II* by Roslyn Mazzilli, with donations and grants, demonstrating the community’s commitment to public art. The gallery was renamed the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery in 2017 in honor of the long-time Island resident who was integral in founding the arts space; today, it showcases more than a dozen works of art and remains a focal point of the arts experience in Aubrey Davis Park.

Building on this rich history of providing positive public art opportunities in Aubrey Davis Park and recognizing that the park itself has become a treasured cultural resource in the community, the Mercer Island Arts Council has set forth this updated vision for art in the park:

Create and strengthen community connections through arts and culture.

Be it landscape art or interpretive signage, sound installation, or seasonal foliage, this vision reflects a broader plan to use arts and culture to deepen community connections to the park.

This document elaborates on this vision by outlining four tenets to guide how arts and culture can create and maintain a sense of place in Aubrey Davis Park.

CORE TENETS

Provide welcoming and inclusive spaces to express and experience creativity.

Experience art & nature through all seasons.

Cultivate an art-inspired environment.

Celebrate our Island - past, present, and future.

Provide welcoming and inclusive spaces to express and experience creativity.

Stretching from bridge-to-bridge on the north end of the Island, Aubrey Davis Park offers a prime place for community gathering and connection. Arts and cultural activities can be used to inspire park users to interact, to engage in meaningful dialogue, and to forge bonds with the park itself. Moreover, arts-based solutions for signage and park facilities can also be employed to inspire creativity and interest beyond traditional sculptures and new events.

Objectives

- Community Gathering
- Artmaking & Creative Expression
- Design for Inclusion



Blomster by Louise Hankes is on display for sale in the Greta Hackett Outdoor Sculpture Gallery, an existing space where visitors can engage with arts and culture in the park. Photographed by Jeff Reid.

Possible Opportunities

- Art and arts spaces as landmarks and focal points for community gathering
- Art and arts experiences that encourage exploration and discovery
- Community engagement in the public art selection and creation process
- Interactive art installations for everyone
- Accessibility year-round through lighting features and installations, artful shelter structures, and art-inspired safety elements (eg. Designed paths to signal traffic crossings)
- Art-inspired and creative elements incorporated into wayfinding and facilities

Experience nature and art through all seasons.

The park serves as an oasis - a place where Islanders, commuters, neighbors, and others can escape from urban life. Current and future arts and culture features should complement the park's natural landscape and offer ways to interact with nature and experience tranquility. Those experiences should be available in all seasons. Using arts and culture as a tool, park accessibility can also be improved so visitors can discover something new year-round.

Objectives

- Seasonal Experiences & Discoveries
- Sustainable Art Practices
- Exploration & Discovery



The Source by John Hoge is an existing work of public art installed in Luther Burbank Park and represents works that integrate into the natural landscape as well as inspire visitors to interact with it in different ways. Photographed by Jeff Reid.

Possible Opportunities

- Art integrated with natural landscapes
- Noise mitigation through art installations and features (eg. Sound installations and rainwater collection features)
- Art that reacts to and embraces the weather - solar, rainwater, wind
- Landscape and foliage that create a visual art experience
- Interactive art features that engage all senses (eg. Edible plants and climbable or touchable artwork)

Cultivate an art-inspired environment.

Whether exploring one of the park's many works of public art or attending events in the outdoor sculpture gallery, community members have many opportunities to engage with arts and culture in Aubrey Davis Park. Expanding on this artistic atmosphere through intentional curation and community-driven activities helps make the park a place community members want to visit and explore.

Objectives

- Performances & Events
- Public Art
- Artmaking

Possible Opportunities

- Showcase and build off existing artwork to create new experiences
- Provide spaces for arts events and performances
- Explore temporary art projects to inspire public engagement and expression
- Engage community members in the public art selection and creation process
- Provide opportunities for local artists



Hundreds of visitors enjoy Art UnCorked each year, a lively art and wine event hosted by the Mercer Island Chamber of Commerce in the outdoor sculpture gallery. Photographed by city staff.



Local artist Rachel Holloway completed the mural *Darwin's Dream* at the west end of the park in 2018. Photograph contributed by the artist.

Celebrate our Island - past, present, and future.

From legends shared by the Duwamish who foraged and hunted on the Island to Aubrey Davis's legacy of establishing the "Park on the Lid," the park has many stories to tell. Uncovering and highlighting these stories fosters community understanding of the Island's rich history and offers more opportunities to honor our place. With arts and cultural activities, we can build a bridge between past, present, and future, allowing future Islanders and regional neighbors to embrace the park.

Objectives

- Connect and Support the Island's Diverse Cultures
- Art that Reflects Natural and Cultural Heritage
- Pride - Honor Our Place

Possible Opportunities

- Introduce cultural events in collaboration with the community
- Design wayfinding and interpretive signage that tell the story of the Island and its people
- Strengthen partnerships with Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust and other local community groups
- Create areas for remembrance and reflection



Interpretive park signage like this kiosk installed in partnership with Mountains to Sound Greenway Trust can be creatively designed to highlight the Island's history and guide visitors through the park. Photographed by city staff.