

City of Alexandria, Virginia

MEMORANDUM

DATE: JULY 21, 2026
TO: ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION FOR THE ARTS
FROM: MEIKA DAUS, PUBLIC ART SENIOR MANAGER, OFFICE OF THE ARTS 
RE: PUBLIC ART AT WILLIAM RAMSAY RECREATION CENTER (CFMP) (**EXPEDITED REQUEST**)
PROJECT PLAN, ARTIST SELECTION AND MURAL CONCEPT

Request:

The City of Alexandria Public Art Program is requesting the approval of a public art project plan, artist, and mural concept for the William Ramsay Recreation Center, which is the process of scheduling maintenance upgrades. Public art staff has received an expedited request to commission a mural for the interior of the recreation center upon completion of renovations, including repainting, planned for August 2026.

Background:

The Department of Recreation Parks and Cultural Activities (RPCA) Consolidated Facilities Maintenance Plan (CFMP) is a pool of capital funding that is used by RPCA for small-scale capital and maintenance projects throughout the city's park system, including recreation centers. The planning and implementation of these projects is done on a short-term basis. Sometimes these small-scale improvements provide an opportunity for an associated public art project. The approved FY26-FY28 Public Art Annual Work Plan identified that the Public Art Program should coordinate with future CFMP projects and be able to respond rapidly to public art opportunities if they arise.

Within William Ramsay Recreation Center, located at 5650 Sanger Avenue in the West End, facility staff is looking for opportunities to enhance and refresh the interior of the facility. While a major capital improvement is not planned, interior repainting and entryway improvements are expected during Summer 2026. RPCA leadership has requested that a mural be commissioned for the interior atrium space as a part of the renovation.

Public Art Project Benchmarks

- June 16, 2026: Public Art Task Force Members appointed by the Alexandria Commission for the Arts.
- June 29, 2026: Site Visit to William Ramsay Recreation Center and discussion of public art project goals and strategy.
- July 7, 2026: Task Force Meeting #1 to recommend the project plan and artist selection approach.
- July 8, 2026: Artists provided a project summary and invited to submit proposals for the Ramsay mural project.
- July 9th and 11th: Artist site visits to Ramsay.
- July 14, 2026: Artists Concepts Due.
- July 15, 2026: Task Force Meeting #2 to recommend the artist and concept.

Ramsay Mural Project Plan

Address: 5650 Sanger Avenue, Alexandria VA 22311

Location: Lobby mural with 2nd mural in a dance studio

Background: The City's Department of Parks Recreation and Cultural Activities has plans to renovate the William Ramsay Recreation Center in August 2026 and would like to incorporate new interior murals as a key feature of the renovation. The lobby will be painted in neutral colors (white) by the first week in August, removing some current wall paintings in the space.

Task Force Members

Lauren Miller, Arts Commissioner
Tia Norris, Arts Commissioner
Dan Altman, Nova Raft, Community Stakeholder
Shawnta Driver, Community Stakeholder
Ismenia Molina, Community Stakeholder
Laura Durham, Project Stakeholder, Deputy Director of the Department of Recreation, Parks & Cultural Activities
Lucresha C. Murphy-Tate, Recreation Manager, William Ramsay Recreation Center

Recommended Project Goals:

- **Celebrate art** in the renovation of William Ramsay Recreation Center that embraces cultural diversity, celebrates this community, **is inviting**, and makes visitors feel welcome.
- Incorporate the recreation center theme **“friends from all places”**.
- **Engage** the recreation center participants in the art process.
- **Improve the visual identity** of Ramsay and **unify the spaces**.
- Incorporate artwork that is **timeless** and **ages well**.

Budget:

- \$500 to each artist to prepare concepts (up to 3 artists)
- \$1,000 for community engagement
- \$10,000 for murals in the lobby
- Additional \$8,000 for mural in the dance studio

Total project budget = \$20,000

Timeline:

	Timeframe (no later than)
Artist submits proposal (project approach incorporating the rec center theme: Friends from All Places)	July 14
Arts Commission approves artist selection	July 21
Artist begins community engagement	July 25 12pm-3pm (event date)
Artist submits final mural designs for staff review	August 10, 2026
Artist installs work in lobby	August 15-August 21, 2026
Artist attends recreation center ribbon cutting event	August 22, 2026 (event date)
Artist completes lobby mural and dance studio mural	September 2026

Project Stakeholders

Recreation Center Camps and Participants
NOVA RAFT (Resettling Afghan Families Together)
Parents and Families
William Ramsay Elementary School (Summer School Participants)

Community Engagement Concepts

Attendance at Live at the Top of the Hill at William Ramsay on Saturday, July 25, 2026, from 12pm-3pm to engage with the public about the concept

Day at the recreation center to engage with program participants for both indoor and outdoor activities.

Attend ribbon cutting event.

Artist Selection

Utilize applications from the Mural Artist Roster call for artists and invite artists who have worked at similar scales.

- Prioritize DMV area artists (in consideration of the expedited project schedule, travel times, and familiarity with the City)
- Prioritize artists with experience in community engagement
- Prioritize experienced artists

Invite artists to develop concepts and describe how they might approach the project and address the theme, “Friends from All Places”.

Community engagement strategies should also be addressed.

Discussion of Artist Selection and Concept

In response to the invitation from staff to three applicants who applied to the Mural Artist Roster call for artists, two artists indicated that they were able to meet the project timeline and were invited to William Ramsay Recreation Center to review the space and prepare design concepts.

The two design concepts were forwarded to the full project task force for review on July 14th. On July 15, 2026, the Task Force met, discussed the concepts in relationship to the overall project goals, and recommended Tammy Barnes of Washington, D.C. for the project.

Below are descriptions of the mural and art activation concepts provided by the artist:

Recreation Center Open Lobby Concept– Friends from All Places: *This design is representational of the groups of people who frequent Ramsay Recreation Center; people who have backgrounds of Afghan, African American, and Latina/o/x decent. As a way to make this theme universal to any human, the mural design is influenced by the traditional textile patterns of these cultures. Circles of textile patterns with Latin-inspired patterns, African-prints, and possibly of textile patterns of Afghan traditional rug making would overlay a continuous wave, or through-line, that wraps the entire space. This through-line would be painted as a gradient of purple, orange, and yellow and is a symbol of the interconnectedness of our human existence. When the textile pattern overlays the through-line, the pattern turns into a silhouette, as a subtle way of demonstrating each of us are influenced by our heritages.*

Dance Studio Concept– Dance Your Heart Out, Kid!: *The theme of the dance studio would center around the colloquial phrase, “Dance your heart out, kid!” and the similar phrase in Spanish, “Baila con el alma!” (translates to ‘dancing with all your soul’). Because the Dance studio is an exercise space for all ages (young to older adults), the theme of ‘Dance your heart out, kid!’ is a way to connect these generations. For older adults who may be dancing for exercise, dancing can be a way to connect to the freedom of their inner child. For young people who may be dancing for a team sport, the turn of phrase encourages them to keep going as they learn new techniques. The theme should illicit joy across all genders and ages.*

Collaborative Art Activation— Friends from All Places: *Utilizing the empty, modular office wall at the entrance of Ramsay Rec. Center, an 8ft tall x 12ft wide canvas would be constructed with three (3) ¼" plywood sheets. The plywood sheets would hang from the modular wall's top beam and be at a height that both adults and young people could reach the canvas. Prior to installation of the sheets, the Lead Artist would paint different circles/ovals, some would be colors representing differences in melanin, other circles would be non-traditional colors. Community participants would be encouraged to select any circle and draw a self-portrait and write their name.*

Recommendation

Approval of the public art task force's project plan, the artist recommendation of Tammy Barnes, and the mural concepts for the William Ramsay Mural Project. The artist's concepts will be further refined by the artist through the community engagement process, prior to painting the murals.

Attachments

Work Samples from Tammy Barnes (all images courtesy of the Artist)



Large scale, 3-sided exterior mural using latex paint on faux wood siding of trailer. Client is the construction and building management company facilitating the development of DC's newest named neighborhood, "Bridge District" in Ward 8. The design reflects the requested theme of how humans interact with biophilic architectural design, featuring native plants, insects, and wildlife. A third side of the trailer features their corporate branding.



Biophilic DC

Latex exterior paint on siding

14.5' x 213' x 0'

Artwork for Sale: No

\$16,000.00

2025

Public Art

Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: 623 Howard Rd SE, Washington, DC

Public Art Program: Bridge District c/o Indie Walls

A large-scale, 3-sided exterior mural that beautifies the construction management company trailer of a new neighborhood development called Bridge District. The design reflects how humans interact with biophilic architectural design, featuring native plants, insects, and wildlife; plus, corp. logo.

Public art is a powerful medium for storytelling and community transformation. The mural, titled Ever-Present, painted for the 2025 NoMa in Color Murals Festival, honors the Nacotchtank (Anacostans) and Piscataway Peoples, the original stewards of the lands along the Anacostia and Potomac rivers that make up the southern borders of modern-day Washington, DC. At the mural's center, a stylized Nacotchtank woman emerges from the riverbanks, surrounded by imagery that bridges past and present. Her upward gaze embodies continuity, reverence, and renewal—echoing how the Nacotchtank lived in relationship with the land and its ecosystems.

Modern symbolism shown in the American Shad, DC's state fish, and the Wood Thrush, DC's state bird, offers movement to the piece in the skies and waterways, while the blossom of a Paw Paw tree, a regional species known for its custard-like fruit, anchors the mural to land. Known as a "town of traders," the Nacotchtank figure features a fox fur pelt resting across their shoulder. The "three sisters" crops—corn, squash, and beans—present in the lower portion of the mural, reference the Nacotchtank's agriculture, while the leaves of the Paw Paw blossom carry an added layer of meaning: they reference DC's Roosevelt Island—then known as Analostan or Anacostine Island—the last place the Nacotchtank are recorded as having taken refuge.

Truth and acknowledgment are vital to building respect across heritage and difference. This mural is created in that spirit—honoring their legacy, acknowledging the histories of displacement and violence, and remembering the resilience of all who came before us. We invite you to pause and reflect on the many legacies that connect us across time and community.



"Ever-Present"

Exterior latex paint on concrete

11.25' x 25' x 0'

2025

Public Art

Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: Metropolitan Branch Trail at Alethia Tanner Park, 227 Harry Thomas Way NE, Washington, DC 20002

Public Art Program: NoMa in Color Mural Festival

Painted for the 10th Annual NoMa in Color Mural Festival, "Ever-Present," is a mural that honors the indigenous people of Washington, DC. This mural, deeply researched, includes images that tell the story of the original stewards of our lands and it honors the violence they endured.

I served as Lead Muralist on a \$30,000 grant award from the DC Commission on Arts & Humanities for the program Color the Curb: Traffic Calming Ground Murals. I, with a team of two other muralists, created a 3-class, tiered curriculum about murals and public art. We taught this in the partnering DC Public School, Maury Elementary, to gather ideas for the mural images from the students. Our team then created design plans inspired by the students for two intersections, painted as curb extensions to calm traffic near the school. Select photos below show classroom activity and final mural installation.



Color the Curb 2025: Maury Elementary Traffic Calming Murals

StreetBond Epoxy Paint on Pavement

200' x 400' x 0'

\$30,000.00

2025

Public Art

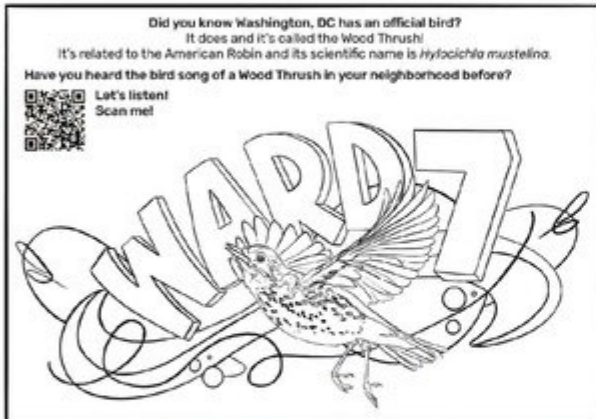
Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: 13th & C Sts. NE, Washington, DC and C St. & Tennessee Ave NE, Washington, DC

Public Art Program: Color the Curb Grant through DC Commission on Arts and Humanities with DDOT and DCPS

Funded by the DC Commission on the Arts and Humanities through the Color the Curb: School Safety Program, a \$30,000 grant award. A partnership with the District Department of Transportation and DC Public Schools to support artists creating community-engaged safety murals near select DCPS schools.

"Ward 7 Soars" is a mural completed for the Anacostia Murals Fest '26. The design features the official bird of DC, the Wood Thrush. In the design, a Wood Thrush flies upward across the "Ward 7" lettering, symbolizing the ability to rise above storms, obstacles, and difficult paths. The bird represents hope, strength, and perseverance, reflecting the people of Ward 7 and a resilient community that continues to grow and rise together. I created a coloring page where the creative can scan a QR code and hear a Wood Thrush's bird song. Lastly, I painted "Big D" logo along side the mural, per the owners request.



Ward 7 Soars

Latex exterior paint on brick

10" x 14" x 0"

\$5,000.00

2026

Public Art

Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: 4169 Minnesota Ave NE, Washington, DC, Big D Liquor

Public Art Program: Anacostia Murals Fest '26

"Ward 7 Soars," created for Anacostia Murals Fest '26, features a Wood Thrush flying above the Ward 7 lettering, symbolizing hope, strength, and resilience. A QR-linked coloring page lets viewers hear the bird's song. The owner's requested "Big D" logo was also painted alongside the mural

I designed and facilitated a Family Crafts arts activation for the City of Alexandria Office of the Arts at the Alexandria Jazz Festival 2025. I created a custom coloring sheet for a coloring table, and two tables where any age could make their own musical instruments out of everyday objects.



Alexandria Jazz Festival 2025 Family Crafts Table

upcycled, everyday objects

8" x 6" x 3"

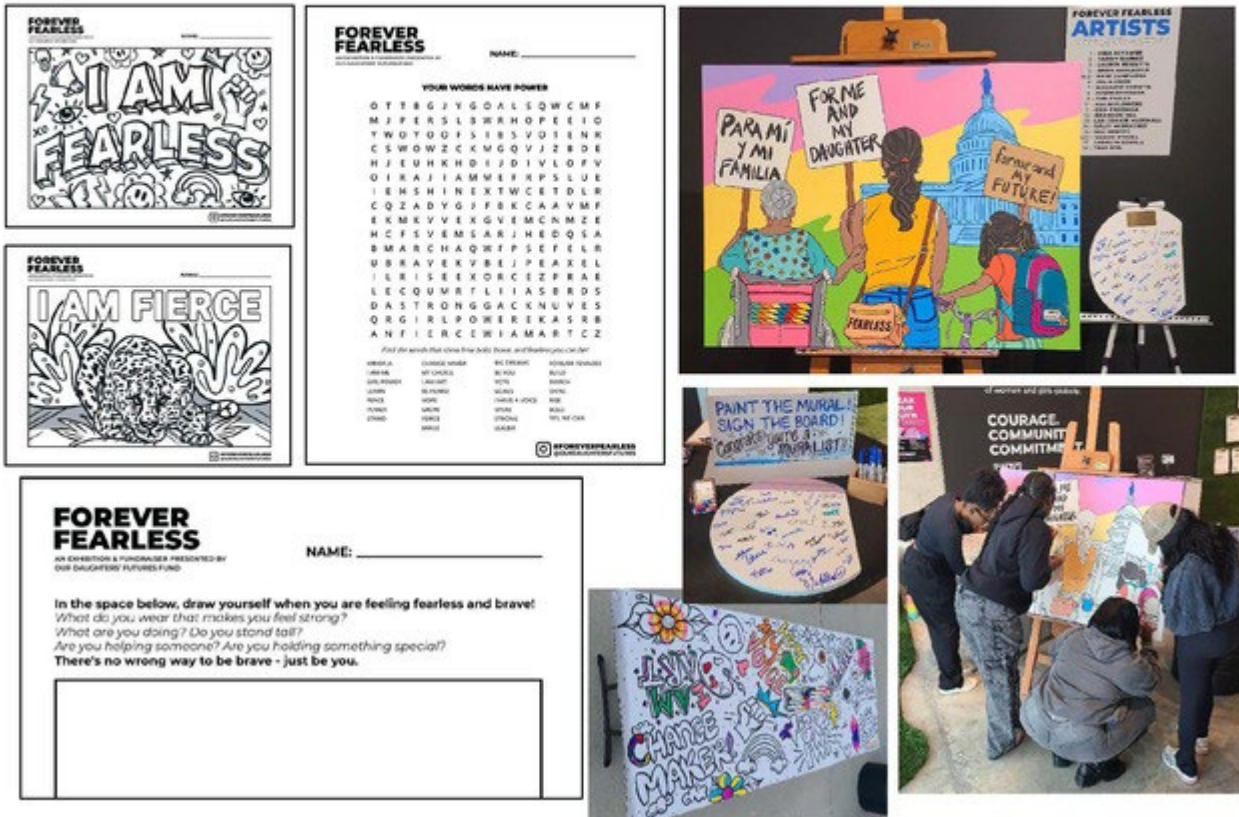
2025

Craft

Art in Public Places: No

I designed and facilitated a Family Crafts arts activation for the City of Alexandria Office of the Arts at the Alexandria Jazz Festival 2025. I created a custom coloring sheet for a coloring table, and two tables where any age could make their own musical instruments out of everyday objects.

Community Mural for the Forever Fearless Exhibition by Our Daughters' Futures Fund. Custom activity sheets for the exhibition space and community coloring table for an exhibition reception. These were all provided pro-bono to enhance community engagement for this public art exhibition in support of the rights of women and girls.



"Fearless Generations"

Acrylics on Canvas

36" x 48" x 1.5"

2025

Visual Arts

Art in Public Places: No

Community mural, custom activity sheets, and a community coloring table created for the Forever Fearless exhibition by Our Daughters' Futures Fund. All were provided pro bono to support community engagement and the rights of women and girls.



Community Mural MLK JR Service Day Sasha Bruce Youthwork
 Role: Tammy Barnes, Lead Muralist
 Medium: Acrylics on canvas Dimensions: 6ft x 10ft

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra joined by Sasha Bruce Youth Advisory Council, Sasha Bruce Staff, HHS Political Appointees, and volunteers paint walls and a mural in honor of Martin Luther King Jr. Day at the Sasha Bruce Youth work Inc. Drop-In Center Monday, January 15, 2024 in Hyattsville, MD. (Official HHS Photo by Amy Rossetti)



Brighter Days

Acrylics on canvas

6' x 11' x 3"

2024

Mural

Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: Bruce Empowerment Zone, Sasha Bruce Youthwork, 7723 Barlowe Rd, Hyattsville, MD 20785

Public Art Program: non-profit organization commission

Community Mural MLK JR Service Day Sasha Bruce Youthwork with guest U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Secretary Xavier Becerra joined by Sasha Bruce Youth Advisory Council, Sasha Bruce Staff, HHS staff.



SWDC Street Light Banners

Digital Art on Vinyl

74" x 36" x 0.25"

\$5,000.00

2025

Public Art

Art in Public Places: Yes

Location: Streets throughout Southwest DC

Public Art Program: SWBID Public Art Program

These six designs of street light banners celebrate the unique history and culture of Southwest DC.