

For Immediate Release

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Wilkinsburg Establishes a Community Art and Civic Design Commission

New legislative body will review art and design projects for public and commercial property in the Borough of Wilkinsburg.

The Wilkinsburg Borough Council voted on November 18th to adopt Ordinance 2831 to establish a Community Art and Civic Design Commission. The eleven member body will include design and arts professionals, community representatives, and Council members. The Council will begin to consider applications for members for the new Commission in January.

"The Community Art and Civic Design Commission will be a valuable resource in Wilkinsburg. The Commission was established to review design proposals to encourage high quality design for our community," says Council Member Tracey Evans, "Very importantly, the Commission will also seek feedback from residents and business owners about art and design projects."

For the past year, a group of Wilkinsburg residents have participated on a Public Art Steering Committee to develop public art guidelines and procedures for Wilkinsburg. This process was connected to the Borough's Comprehensive Plan, and involved many community meetings, learning about best practices for art and design review, seeing examples of public art projects and review bodies, and considering what methods would be ideal for Wilkinsburg.

The Steering Committee identified that a legislative body is needed in Wilkinsburg to review art, architecture, landscape architecture, memorials, and monuments for public property and commercial property. The Committee created the legislation for the Community Art and Civic Design Commission. In addition to reviewing projects, the Commission will have the ability to seek community feedback on art and design projects, engage in research and planning efforts, and organize educational programs and materials about art and design for the community.

"As a Wilkinsburg resident interested in creating public art projects for our borough, I'm thrilled there will be a qualified sounding board to refine proposals. Participating in the Steering Committee has been a rewarding experience," says Lazae LaSpina, a local Wilkinsburg artist.

The Borough of Wilkinsburg received a grant from The Heinz Endowments for this project. The Borough hired the Office of Public Art (OPA) to consult on the project. OPA is a partnership between the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council and the City of Pittsburgh. As part of their work, Renee Piechocki and Lea Donatelli participated in the Borough's comprehensive plan process and established the Public Art Steering Committee.

"This Commission will be a model for other municipalities in the region who are looking to establish a method to review public art and design projects," says Renee Piechocki of the Office of Public Art. "The next step for the Commission is to establish bylaws and guidelines. We will

be benchmarking national programs to seek out best practices and develop methods that will work in Wilkesburg.”

Community members who are interested in learning more can visit the Borough's website www.wilkesburgpa.gov to review the legislation, read the guidelines for the Commission's membership, and download a talent bank application. For additional information, contact Marla Marcinko at 412-244-2906 or mmarcinko@wilkesburgpa.gov.