

**10 TIPS  
FOR  
COMMISSIONING  
A SITE-SPECIFIC  
ARTWORK**

for Real Estate Developers

**DISTILL CREATIVE®**

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## TIP #1

# KNOW YOUR WHY

Before you decide to commission a site-specific artwork, you should have a clear reason for adding artwork to your site.

### Ask yourself:

- ***Do I need to attract new tenants?***

Whether in a new development or a redevelopment, you probably want to create a unique sense of place in order to draw in tenants who want to lease or rent your property.

- ***Do I need to retain the tenants I have?***

If you are redeveloping a property, adding new artwork will give your current tenants a new reason to love the site.

- ***Do I need to connect with the community?*** If you want your property to feel connected with the neighborhood, hiring a local artist to do site-specific work will help create that genuine connection to the surrounding area

- ***Do I need PR for my site?*** Maybe you just want to create buzz around your development.

Once you know why you want artwork on the site, the next step is to set a few goals around the artwork. They could include leasing up at a certain rate or supporting a local artist. Write down that goal and frame every meeting about this project around that goal.



## TIP #2

# Have a Deadline and Treat It Like a Development Project

I've noticed that often a development manager will express their interest in site-specific artwork late in the process of a new development project. It requires a rush to get the artwork installed in time for the building's opening. Instead of adding the art at the end of the development process, start thinking about it when you are first beginning to work on the development project.

You should have a goal for the project, a timeline, and a budget at least one year prior to installation—ideally 1.5 years prior to installation.

This will give you enough time to decide on your curator (whether in-house or hired), research artists and possibly put out a call (4-6 months), review submissions (2 months), contract the artist (1 month), finalize design (2-4 months), allow time for production (1-3 months) and installation (1 month). If you work with us at Distill Creative, we'll let you know how much time you'll need for your project and keep you on schedule.






TIP #3

# Decide Who Will Make the Final Decision and Who Will Make Sure This Project Happens

If you are going to have artwork commissioned for the site, you need to pick someone in house to oversee the project and decide on who will make the final decision on the artist and artwork. This can be the same person, but they can also be different people.

For example, maybe a development manager oversees the project, but the CEO has the final say on artwork. Every company is different. You may have a short list of people you need to have sign off on the final artist and artwork. Make sure you know who this is so that decisions can be made efficiently. If not, your competitors may catch up with their own innovative activations.





## TIP #4

# Set A Budget, Even If You Aren't Sure Yet

A goal, a budget, and a timeline early on is key to a successful project. If you don't know what your budget should be, consider hiring a consultant like us. At Distill Creative, we will research precedents and similar projects to your concept.

We can also figure out the permitting and government regulations that you may need to follow.

The earlier you bring us in, the more likely we can help solve bigger issues and work across departments for a holistic solution to chronic site problems.

Our Feasibility Study package will give you similar projects and suggestions based on your parameters.

You can also do this research yourself—look for similar sites and projects, then ask those developers how much they paid and how long those projects took.



## TIP #5

# Brainstorm Across Departments

One helpful thing to do early in the process is to have a brainstorming session and invite one person from each team that touches the site.

For example, you can invite a point person from the development, leasing, marketing, and property management teams. Ideally, every one of these teams will benefit from the project, so it's important to have them aligned. Distill Creative can facilitate brainstorming sessions to make the process seamless and fun!

It's important that you get buy-in early on so that the project will go smoothly later. You'll also want to make sure everyone understands who the decision maker ultimately is, so there's no confusion. As the project moves forward, you can keep the point person from each team updated and loop them in as needed.



## TIP #6

# Write a Creative Brief

Once you have a goal, deadline, budget, and some ideas from the brainstorming session, you should be able to write a creative brief for the artwork.

### **This should include the following:**

1. Goal of project
2. Target audience for project
3. How do you want to feel when you see/experience this project?
4. Inspiration: 3-5 examples of similar artworks that inspire this project
5. Location
6. Constraints/specific requirements
7. Budget
8. Timeline
9. Points of contact



A good creative brief is essential to get the right artist and artwork to commission for your project and have a successful project. This is a great thing to have ready if you hire an outside consultant to work on this project, but you can also hire the consultant to write this for you if you need to save time or do not have staff available to work on this.

At Distill Creative, we will walk you through the stages, help you understand your options, and get you past those creative hurdles to create a unique and exciting project.



TIP #7

# Share the Vision

Once you have a creative brief, circulate it with your point people from the other departments that will touch the property.

Get feedback or more information as needed. For example, maybe the area of the property doesn't have electricity so you'll need to make sure the artwork doesn't need lighting.

Or maybe the marketing team would like to use the artwork in promotional materials for leasing, you'll need to make sure there is language in the artist contract to be able to use the artwork for that purpose.







**TIP #8**

# **Allocate Staff or Hire out**

While you should always have one main person pushing this project internally, it may make sense to hire an outside consultant to curate and manage the actual commission.

Even a small art project can take a considerable amount of time, energy, and expertise. If you have someone on your development, marketing, or property management team who can take on this project, great!

If not, I suggest hiring an outside consultant to curate and project manage this for you.

Distill Creative specializes in site-specific art projects and creative activations, so consider hiring us to make sure your project is successful.



## TIP #9

# Prep a Contract Before You Need It

Your legal team will thank you if you have a contract ready before the final hour. You can ask your outside consultant for an example. You can either contract the artist directly, contract the consultant directly (who will then contract the artist), or contract the consultant and artist in a three-way contract.





TIP #10

# Discuss Maintenance

Part of your contract should include a maintenance manual and a touch-up quote from the artist so that you know how to clean or fix the artwork should anything happen to it. The complexity of this depends on the artwork. Or, perhaps you plan on replacing the artwork in the future with something else. If so, make sure this is part of the contract and that the artist is aware of what will happen with their work in the future.






## Resources:

Field Guide for Parks and Creative Placemaking by The Trust for Public Land.

This includes tips on what to include for a call for artists, artist contract, and what to consider for maintenance of artwork.

<https://www.tpl.org/field-guide-creative-placemaking-and-parks>



Creative placemaking resources:  
<https://distillcreative.com/creative-placemaking-resources>







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