



FREDERICK

ARTS & CULTURE

CITY OF FREDERICK

REQUEST FOR QUALIFICATIONS

Bearing Witness: Frederick's Sites of Enslavement Initiative Public Art Commission at City Hall

Issue Date: May 25, 2026

Proposal Deadline Extension: July 9, 11:59PM

Budget: \$45,000 (includes commission and fabrication)

INTRODUCTION

The City of Frederick Office of Arts & Culture in partnership with the Planning Department, invites qualified artists or artist-led teams to submit qualifications for a site-specific public art project incorporating narrative-based Augmented Reality (AR) technology at City Hall.

This public art call is specifically for an artwork that will be a part of the City's **Bearing Witness: Frederick's Sites of Enslavement Initiative** which seeks to identify, document, and interpret the sites located in the downtown historic district that are linked to the history of slavery. The City has partnered with the African American Resources Cultural and Heritage Society (AARCH) to share stories that have long gone untold. Through comprehensive research, the project aims to provide a deeper understanding of the city's past. A [Historic Context Report](#) was completed in the spring of 2025 and City Hall, which historically served as the court house, is one of 11 historic sites identified for interpretation. Artwork is critical to the storytelling of enslaved people on the local level, as few photographs are available.

The commission is supported in part by the National Endowment for the Arts.

PROJECT GOALS

- Bring new artwork to the City of Frederick which seeks to illuminate and interpret histories of enslavement connected to the City.
- The project must integrate physical and digital components to create an accessible, research-based, and publicly engaging interpretive experience.
- Address and engage residents of all ages and the wider community.
- The public art installation will be a part of the *Bearing Witness: Frederick's Sites of Enslavement* walking tour, expected to be completed by the spring of 2027, an outcome of the interpretation of historic sites linked to the institution of slavery.

REQUIREMENTS

- The selected artist or artist team will collaborate and meet regularly with the project team—including the Office of Arts and Culture, Planning Department and Historic Preservation Division, City of Frederick Public Art, Parks and Recreation and Historic Preservation Commissions, and project partners to coordinate project development. Progress meetings may occur virtually.
- The selected artist or artist team is expected to attend public meetings, as requested or required, in collaboration with the project team.
- The selected artist/artist team will be required to be onsite to participate in community engagement arranged by the City of Frederick, and the conversations may inform the final design(s).
- The selected artist/artist team will be required to obtain final design, material, and dimension approval from the Maryland Historic Trust (MHT) and the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). City staff can assist with this process.
- Artwork(s) will be located in an area with high pedestrian volumes and should be highly durable and low maintenance.
- Upon approval of the final concept design, the artist will work with the project team and relevant City Departments to oversee the installation of the public art.

ABOUT THE SITE



101 N Court Street, Frederick, MD 21701

The goal of this project is to help close a gap in scholarship related to the history, heritage, and culture of African Americans and the institution of slavery in the City of Frederick, Maryland, with a particular focus on sites situated in the Downtown Frederick Historic District. Identifying where the enslaved lived, worked, worshiped, learned, and gathered, along with sites that facilitated the sale, transport, bondage, and resistance of enslaved people are critical in understanding this historic context. The period of study spans from the City of Frederick's early settlement in the 1730s through the end of the Civil War.

City Hall, formerly the Frederick County Court House and its surrounding grounds (referred to as Court House Square), stands as a significant historical site, reflecting the grim realities of slavery and its institutional entrenchment in the region. This location was not merely a place of legal proceedings, but also a stage for public displays of punishment, underscoring its role in the oppression of African Americans.

The courthouse square was also a site of public corporal punishment. Recorded in Jacob Engelbrecht's diary on May 31, 1823, an enslaved man named William Patterson was publicly whipped in the square twenty-five times as punishment for stealing bread from his enslaver. This public whipping serves as a stark reminder of the harsh and inhumane treatment that enslaved people endured for even minor infractions, reinforcing the control exerted by enslavers.

The courthouse square thus served multiple roles in the perpetuation of slavery. It was a place where local laws were created, and public punishment endured, which reinforced

the institution of slavery and the subjugation of African Americans. The events that took place there are a testament to the nature of slavery, and the ways in which it was woven into the fabric of local governance and society. Further context is available by accessing the complete [Historic Context Report](#). The City can provide historic building photos and/ or mapping for reference.

Because of the sites location within the City of Frederick Historic Overlay, the public art project requires approval from the Maryland Historic Trust and the City's Historic Preservation Commission (HPC). The following HPC guidelines should be considered in developing proposals:

1. Definition. Public art refers to works of art that are placed or created outside and intended for public appreciation. Such artwork includes, but is not limited to, sculpture, murals, and mosaics. Functional aspects of streetscapes and landscapes, such as bridges, benches, and fencing may provide opportunities for artistic expressions and in certain situations will be evaluated as public art.

2. Review of Public Art. The Commission reviews all applications for public art with respect to its relationship to character-defining façades or features or its placement within a historic streetscape or landscape in addition to the effect of its attachment on any historic materials. The Commission shall not consider the content, color, subject matter or style of the proposed artwork. The Commission shall have final approval authority regarding height, massing, scale, materials, and placement. The Commission shall give great weight to the recommendation of the Public Art Commission when reviewing public art.

3. Placement. Public art should be located in a manner that complements the existing site design and streetscape, while not necessarily dominating the character-defining elevations of historic buildings or the streetscape. When selecting the location of public art, consideration should be given to the height, scale and massing of the installation, so that the artistic work does not irreversibly alter the character-defining features of historic buildings or damage historic materials.

The City has identified two ~12-feet in diameter concrete pads on the front grounds of the site for reuse. The concrete pads once housed two bronze busts of former U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice, Roger Brooke Taney, who played a key role in the 1857 Dred Scott decision which denied citizenship to African Americans and affirmed slavery and Governor Thomas Johnson, Maryland's first Governor and a slave owner. The busts were removed in 2017 after City Council and Historic Preservation Commission approval. The public art commission and related signage will be installed in close proximity to an illustrated historic marker that also interprets the site.

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

The selected proposal must:

1. Present a historically grounded narrative addressing the history and legacy of enslavement and honoring the people who lived through the experience.
2. Be compatible with installation on the existing ~12” diameter concrete pad(s).
3. Ideally, incorporate AR or similar digital overlay technology accessible via personal mobile devices or other accessible digital tools.
4. Include physical site element(s) (e.g., markers, sculptural triggers, architectural integration, or signage) that activate or complement the AR experience.
5. Demonstrate meaningful community engagement and collaboration.
6. Ensure ADA accessibility and equitable public access.
7. Be feasible within the \$45,000 allocated budget.
8. Include a maintenance plan.

SCOPE

The selected Artist/Team (“Contractor”) shall:

A. Research & Content Development

- Utilize the existing research conducted by the City about the institution of slavery and meet with City staff to learn about the site and consider other interpretive efforts taking place at the site. The City welcomes additional research in collaboration with research local historians, archives, and/or cultural institutions.
- Develop a narrative framework supported by existing and additional research conducted.
- Participate in community engagement arranged by the City of Frederick. The conversations may inform the final design(s).

B. Design & Development

- Develop a conceptual and final designs for physical and digital components.
- Produce AR content (e.g., 3D models, geolocated audio, text overlays, animation, archival media integration).

- Provide user-access instructions (e.g., QR codes, signage).
- The design of the artwork(s) should be appropriate for and inspire all audiences.
- Depending on the design, the artist/team is expected to obtain professionally certified drawings prior to final approval of the public art by the City.

C. Fabrication & Installation

- Fabricate and install approved physical components on the existing concrete pad(s). The City will cover the cost of permits and provide installation and site preparation support of up to \$5,200.
- Meet regularly with representatives of the City to coordinate with City staff on the project development. Progress meetings may occur virtually.
- Provide all necessary insurance documentation.

D. Technical Implementation

- Utilize web-based AR preferred (no required app download unless justified).
- Ensure compatibility across common mobile operating systems.
- Provide technical support documentation, and a plan for transitioning management of any hosting site to the City.

E. Documentation & Closeout

- Deliver final documentation package including:
 - Maintenance plan
 - Source files and administrative access credentials (as negotiated)

BUDGET

Total compensation shall not exceed **\$45,000**, inclusive of:

- Artist fees
- Consultant fees (if any)
- AR development/programming and initial site hosting, if required
- Fabrication and materials
- Insurance
- Installation (if the proposed artwork exceeds the available budget of \$5,200 allocated by the City for installation and site preparation)
- Development and submission of maintenance plan
- Contingency

No additional funds will be available.

PROJECT TIMELINE

- RFQ Release: May 25, 2026
- Submission Deadline: July 9, 2026, 11:59 PM
- Panel Review: July 13-14 2026
- Interviews (if required): July 15, 2026
- Semi-finalist Artist Selection: July 21, 2026
- Final Proposal Due: August 21, 2026
- Public Engagement Period: through September 18, 2026
- Final Artist Selection: September 25, 2026
- Contract Execution: September 30, 2026
- Research & Engagement Phase: October – December 2026
- Installation Completion: May 2027
- Public Unveiling: June 19, 2027

SELECTION AND REVIEW PROCESS

Submittals will be reviewed by a Task Force comprised of representatives from the City of Frederick Public Art Commission, community and project stakeholders. The three artists or artist teams selected to develop full proposals will receive a \$1,000 honorarium for their time. The City will organize a presentation in front of the Public Art Commission and allow for public input prior to selecting the final artist for the commission.

ARTIST SELECTION CRITERIA

Applicants must demonstrate the following qualifications:

- Artistic merit of body of work.
- Prior public art experience with projects of a similar scale and budget.
- Experience working with communities to design engaging artwork.
- Experience in collaborating with City staff, stakeholders, and design and engineering professionals
- Appropriateness of qualifications for the project.
- Effective communication and organizational skills.
- Probability of successful execution of the project.
- Experience in working with historic themes is beneficial.

SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Proposals must include:

1. **Letter of Interest** (max 2 pages)
 - a. Describing your interest in the project, how your public art approach aligns with the project goals, and the role community engagement plays in your work.
2. **Work Samples** (max 5 pages)
 - a. Demonstrating projects of a similar scope and/or budget as the project
3. **Preliminary Budget** (itemized)
4. **Qualifications**
 - a. CV (max 3 pages per key team member)
5. **References** (3 professional contacts)
 - a. Names, titles, phone numbers and emails

Please do not send specific proposals at this time.

ELIGIBILITY

Artists or artist-led teams, anywhere in the United States are welcome to apply. Artists or artist-led teams must be 18 years or older to apply and have prior public art experience.

City employees and selection panel members are not eligible. Late submissions will not be accepted.

SUBMISSIONS

Proposals should be submitted as one combined PDF with your full name and date of submission as the file name (e.g., Jane Doe_12.20.2025.pdf) to Laila Jadallah, Manager of Arts and Culture, LJadallah@CityofFrederickMD.gov or 301-600-1334.

QUESTIONS

Laila Jadallah, Manager of Arts and Culture, LJadallah@CityofFrederickMD.gov or 301-600-1334.