

White Paper

ART IN PLACE

IMPLEMENTATION WORKSHOP

June 18, 2026

ULI Philadelphia

WHERE THE FUTURE IS BUILT

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ABOUT ULI

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The Urban Land Institute (ULI) was established in 1936 as a nonprofit educational and research institute. It is supported by more than 45,000 members in 82 countries representing all aspects of land use and development disciplines. ULI's mission is to provide leadership in the responsible use of land to create and sustain thriving communities worldwide. ULI Philadelphia has nearly 900 members in the Philadelphia District Council, which includes the Philadelphia metropolitan area, Central Pennsylvania, the Lehigh Valley, Southern New Jersey and Delaware.

ULI provides guidance to nonprofits and municipalities seeking solutions to land use challenges. Its Technical Assistance Panels objectively evaluate specific needs and make recommendations on implementation in an atmosphere free of politics and preconceptions. ULI member and non-member professionals provide their expertise in a voluntary capacity and each has signed an agreement to prevent current and potential conflicts of interest.

ABOUT ART IN PLACE

A global cohort of ULI National and District Councils working to connect artists, developers, and community voices to enhance real estate value and drive more inclusive real estate outcomes. Art in Place (AIP) amplifies community voices and artist perspectives to drive more inclusive and participatory real estate development processes. With financial and programmatic support from the ULI Healthy Places team, participating councils are working to advance artist-engaged partnerships in real estate to produce equitable outcomes, empower collective action, and repair the social fabric.

OVERVIEW

ULI Philadelphia's Art in Place Implementation Workshop was held on June 18, 2026, at the Cambridge Innovation Center (CIC) campus in Philadelphia's University City neighborhood. The meeting was the culmination of a series of three events, beginning with a first convening, Making the Business Case for Art in Place, which was held on February 26-27, 2025.

Making the Business Case for Art in Place Technical Assistance Workshop (Part 1): February 26-27, 2025

ULI members and practitioners from across North America gathered for two days to explore the concept of public art in real estate development. The group toured Park Towne Place in Philadelphia's Museum District, a residential high-rise apartment building with a multifaceted public art program managed by nonprofit arts organization InLiquid in collaboration with Park Towne Place's developer Air Communities. Park Towne Place hosts gallery spaces, art-themed corridors, artist studios, a residency program, and lobbies with installed works by local artists. In addition, practitioners presented case studies from Creative Philadelphia's Percent for Art program, MASSIVart in Toronto, Canada, and Context Community Development Studio in Phoenix, Arizona. Attendees were asked to consider these questions:

1. How can public art be integrated in the earliest stages of real estate development?
2. What are some best practices for integrating art in these projects?
3. Who are the players that need to be involved?
4. What makes a successful public art real estate project?
5. What are the major barriers that prohibit public art in development and how can they be mitigated?

Discussion

Over the two days, participants identified challenges and recommendations for promoting the inclusion of public art in real estate development.

1. *Challenge: Outside of percent for art programs, developers are rarely setting aside funding for public art integration.*

   Recommendations:

   - Consider creative financing options such as grants, cultural funds, and public-private partnerships to fund public art.
   - Use social capital: Draw on relationships for collective community resources.
   - Look for ways to implement art in a building's functional components to minimize cost while uniquely adding interest to the space.

2. *Challenge: Managing the integration of public art is a complex process that depends on skilled coordination—often, there's a cultural and linguistic disconnect between artists and developers requiring translation.*

   Recommendations:

- Start and plan early. Build public art into the development from the earliest stages.
- Identify experts to bridge the gaps.
- Create road maps for developers to help other developers navigate the process from community engagement to local policy to permitting considerations.

3. *Challenge: A negative perception or lack of awareness about public art in addition to a lack of institutional support may be a barrier for developers who might otherwise consider its inclusion in their projects.*

   Recommendations:

   - Communicate ROI and engage partners from the beginning.
   - Build in data gathering
   - Find and communicate the mission behind the project.
   - Establish a brand and market it. Build the development's brand equity by marketing public art amenities and programming.

Making the Business Case for Art in Place Workshop (Part 2): April 29, 2025

As a follow-up, the case studies, above feedback and insights gathered during the February meeting were assembled into a report that was shared at a three-hour event held on April 29, 2025 at CIC Philadelphia. After the presentation, attendees broke into four groups to discuss these additional questions:

- How can cities and municipalities simplify and incentivize the inclusion of art in small infill projects?
- What are some strategies developers and arts professionals can adopt for ongoing maintenance and conservation of public art, and how should they be implemented?
- What are some of the specific challenges around the community engagement process for integrating public art in real estate and how can these challenges be addressed?

Discussion

1. Simplifying and Incentivizing Art for Small Infill Projects

Current Challenges

- Arduous Administrative Burden: Municipal processes, documentation, and regulatory requirements are an incredibly heavy lift for individual artists. Without intervention, art is highly vulnerable to being value-engineered out of a project entirely.
- Zoning Bottlenecks: Current public art density bonuses (which yield additional height, unit counts, or a 50% to 100% floor area ratio increase) are restricted to a few high-density commercial zoning classifications (like CMX4 and CMX5)—and select overlays and small-scale infill developers are locked out of these incentives.
- Regulatory Threat: Municipal Licenses and Inspections can regulate non-traditional or light-use arts spaces out of existence. Many spaces only survive by intentionally flying under the regulatory radar.

Proposed Solutions

- Expand Art Bonuses to Lower-Density Zoning: Participants recommended expanding public art zoning bonuses to lower-density zoning districts and a broader array of neighborhood overlays, allowing smaller infill projects to tap into height or unit count incentives.

- Optimize Process and Establish Dedicated Staffing: Municipalities should redesign the actual user experience of applying for these programs. By eliminating redundant compliance steps and establishing a consolidated, consistently staffed cultural affairs office, cities can provide a centralized, predictable point of contact.
- Expedite Reviews and Broaden Definitions: Incentivize small developers by offering an expedited zoning and design review process if they include public art. Additionally, the definition of "art" can be expanded to include practical neighborhood infrastructure like artist-designed trash cans, planters, and public right-of-way seating.
- Build Pre-Qualified Artist Lists: The city should maintain a pre-vetted list of local artists to simplify the procurement process for small developers, while simultaneously establishing ethical standards to prevent extractive partnerships.

2. Strategies for Ongoing Maintenance and Conservation

Current Challenges

- Rising and Volatile Contract Costs: The cost of project maintenance and basic materials is steadily climbing, introducing unpredictable variables into otherwise steady property management budgets.
- Liability and Ownership: When public installations begin to weather, code enforcement can trigger a conflict between the property owner and the artist over who is legally and financially responsible.
- Prohibitive Permitting and Event Costs: Securing special event permits and the mandatory insurance required for public programming can be a massive financial barrier. Furthermore, hosting street festivals often requires paying double-time for municipal police and garbage trucks.

Proposed Solutions

- Front-End Maintenance Manuals and Lifespans: Developers should bring a professional art conservator into the design phase to consult on material durability. The final contract must explicitly define the expected lifespan of the artwork and include a comprehensive maintenance manual detailing exactly how to steward the asset once it’s transferred to property management.
- Dedicated Infrastructure Facilities Budgets: Savvy developers must view art not as a surface decoration, but as a core piece of the building's physical

infrastructure. Financial models should set aside a specific line item within the long-term facilities budget specifically for art conservation.

- Activation to Fund Maintenance: Property managers should deliberately budget for ongoing events and programming centered around the artwork. Curating public spaces and bringing the community into the space fosters local ownership and generates the visibility needed to organically sustain funding for its care.

Art in Place Implementation Workshop (Part 3): June 19, 2026

A year later, returning participants from the previous events joined new ones at the one-day Implementation Workshop held at CIC, to focus on putting the learnings from the earlier sessions and report into practice.

The morning opened as Matt Norris, senior director of Healthy Places at the Urban Land Institute, shared high-level takeaways from ULI's recently published report, "Best Practices in Developer Artist Collaboration," based on the Art in Place initiative's 10 district and national council projects in cities across the globe, which include Philadelphia in addition to Indiana, Cleveland, Austin, Louisiana, Tampa Bay, Arkansas, Germany, France, and Hong Kong.

With the goal of bridging the divide between developers and arts organizations, the report summarizes a decade of data, including a member survey, research and publications, Art in Place cohort projects, and practitioner research.

The five recommended best practices include:

1. Leverage artist collaboration to boost real estate value: Developers understand and respond to economic metrics (such as faster lease-ups, lower tenant turnover, and community buy-in) to justify art projects.
2. Be expansive about the role artists can play in project design and programming: Rather than treating art as a surface-level addition at the end of a project (e.g., a single mural or lobby painting), developers should bring artists in early to influence site design, wayfinding, lighting, landscaping, and community engagement.
3. Make artist engagement a formal and transparent process. Informal, relationship-based selection can create friction and mistrust. Successful collaborations rely on clear RFAs/RFPs, transparent budgeting, upfront defined criteria, and explicit contracts covering scopes, timelines, compensation, and intellectual property.
4. Engage artists early and throughout the development process: Bringing in artists early for the design process creates a sense of ownership and connection, and artists should be treated as partners across the life of the art project.
5. Leverage intermediaries: Intermediary consultants or organizations serve as a crucial bridge between the "corporate brain" of a developer and the "creative brain" of an artist, helping to translate language, manage processes, and navigate logistical hurdles.

Participants then heard three case studies from Philadelphia developers, including Scout Ltd., Brandywine Realty Trust, and Wexford Science and Technology LLC, before breaking out into groups to share successes and wins in their own public art implementation projects. In the afternoon, they toured Wexford's uCity Square, Innovation Plaza and Pivot Park to see firsthand the projects discussed in the case study. The day concluded with the group dividing up again to tackle two topics for brainstorming: ideas to de-risk artist collaborations for owners and operators; and ideas to build capacity of artists and organizations to partner with owners.

Case Studies

BOK BUILDIN AND VIA (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

The Bok Building is a former trade high school in South Philadelphia that closed its doors in 2013. In 2014, Scout Ltd. purchased the Art Deco property and redeveloped it as a mixed-use facility with its classrooms transformed into artist studios, retail shops, restaurants, office space, event space, and more. With a strong belief in the economic and cultural value that creatives bring to city life, Scout specifically prioritized making "dirty" space available. Today, 39 percent of the building is used by working artists, and an additional 22 percent houses creative services. One third of the building is occupied by nonprofit organizations. Bok makes favorable economic conditions for artists and creatives by offering small spaces and flexible lease terms, while working closely with them to adopt and evolve their space within the building as their needs change. An internal marketing and events team helps build community with Open Studio nights, artisan markets, and events at the rooftop Bok Bar. With 250,000 general visitors every year—including 5,000 visitors attending Open Studios—the Bok has become a hub for creative and cultural life in Philadelphia as well as a visitor destination. Public art has been incorporated at the level of signage and branding across the building and temporary installations from artists across a range of media have provided a platform for tenants while enlivening the experience of visiting the building. More recently, Scout Ltd. has built on this success with its purchase and redevelopment of two Center City properties in 2025 from the abruptly bankrupted University of the Arts campus, Dorrance Hamilton Hall and the Furness Building. Named the Village of Industry and Art (VIA), the newer project includes the largest ever affordable residential space for artists in Philly, along with artist and maker studios, office space, retail, and an outdoor bar and gathering area. Currently, 39 artists and organizations have signed leases in the properties and VIA is establishing an artist residency program. The goal of the project is to center art and keep artists on the Avenue of the Arts, and, as with Bok, to ultimately support the vibrancy of the city by fostering creative life.

ART AT THE YARDS (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

As part of its Schuylkill Yard development, Brandywine Realty Trust launched the Art at the Yards project in 2025, Working in collaboration with Drexel University and Mural Arts Philadelphia, Brandywine created Highline Park and public art installations activating unused space under a railroad bridge along a pedestrian walkway in the city's innovation hub. Working closely with Amtrak, Brandywine installed canopies to shield the meadow area from falling debris from overhead trains. The project incorporated "Schuylkill Falls," a mural by noted artists David Guinn and Justin Miller, in which a two-dimensional painting is augmented by sensor-activated lights that flash in changing patterns as

pedestrians pass by. A landscaped meadow area is crowned with a sculpture, “Galaxyscape Zone,” by West Philadelphia artist Anthony Bayne, Senior, made from salvaged materials. An alleyway further down the road was lit with string lights and adorned with “Best Philly: Mural Row,” featuring 12 works by six different artists, interpreting concepts of West Philadelphia community.

UCITY SQUARE / INNOVATION PLAZA / PIVOT PARK (PHILADELPHIA, PA)

Wexford Science & Technology, LLC’s Philadelphia innovation campus, uCity Square, encompasses 8 properties, and an 8 million square foot master planned community housing more than 200 companies. A small assessment fee from the developer’s university, research, technology, and healthcare tenants funds a knowledge community director role, public art projects, and arts programming. During the walking tour, several examples highlighted both how the company has consistently invested in art in its development practice, and how its creative spaces function on the ground:

- Science Center Lobby (375 Market St): Intentionally redesigned to move security turnstiles back, keeping the bright, free Wi-Fi space entirely open to the public from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. After experimenting, it has been determined that lobby installations work best as hanging or wall-mounted art.
- Innovation Plaza: A multi-partner collaboration (including Penn and Wexford) that re-established a pedestrian cut-through along the historic 37th Street corridor where a high school used to stand. Large, glowing red structures lit from within define the plaza's visual identity at night.
- Pivot Park: A brightly multi-hued statue acta as a visual inflection point, guiding people off Market Street. Notably, the artist was selected via a conversational interview rather than through a blind proposal. The artist collaborated directly with the development team and landscape architect from the start, presenting a neutral white physical model before later revealing the final color palette for the piece.
- The Lawn at uCity Square: A temporary activation of a future development site built over the rubble of a former high school. The site has no built-in plumbing/water access, requiring specialized watering trucks to keep the landscaping berms alive. It also faces complex property management divisions (different firms own adjacent parcels), making everyday signage, guerrilla urbanism wayfinding, and site maintenance a constant logistical juggling act. Managed by a small team, it currently acts as a flexible community gathering space featuring:

- A massive infrastructure canopy and furniture inherited for free from the closed 30th Street Station Porch activation
- A unique furniture partnership with a 3rd-year Drexel Architecture class, where students design and build full-scale wooden chairs to test durability against the elements
- A highly curated rotation of roughly 40 food truck vendors and a recurring concert series run with support from the University City District (UCD)

Successes, Challenges and Solutions

The group spent the remainder of the day sharing success stories, ongoing challenges, and proposing new solutions to address those challenges.

RECENT SUCCESSES

- “Platform X,” Step Outside’s graffiti exhibition at the underground concourse of Suburban Station
- Temporary activations related to the FIFA World Cup in Philadelphia, including new Gateways Murals welcoming visitors and celebrating Philly’s history and culture
- VIA’s five-day Celebration of Life event which engaged the University of the Arts community ahead of the buildings’ redevelopment and invited former students, alumni, faculty and neighbors to create a living memorial to the school.

ONGOING CHALLENGES

- Communication Gaps: As previously noted, a fundamental disconnect arises between developers and creatives, over timelines and logistics and artist workflows. This can lead to tension over design revisions, expectations of scale, and a lack of shared professional dialogue.
- Capacity and Resource Deficits: Small arts nonprofits and individual artists frequently lack the administrative capacity to manage complex development requirements. Conversely, property management teams are rarely equipped to manage or curate art spaces effectively without stretching their staff thin.
- Insurance and Liability: Securing the high levels of liability and umbrella insurance required by developers or city entities is a massive barrier to entry for local artists. While short-term activations are popular, navigating municipal self-insurance or land bank regulations can completely halt a project.
- Legal Costs and Legal Overreach: Bringing lawyers into a collaborative creative conversation can raise suspicion and create anxiety. Small scale community partners or food vendors frequently cannot afford the $1,000+ legal fees required just to review or extend a short contract.

- Longevity, Archiving, and Stewardship: Long-term maintenance of public art poses significant legal and financial questions. Participants noted a severe lack of clear documentation regarding who owns a piece in perpetuity, who is responsible for repairing it if it breaks (e.g., if a tree falls on a sculpture), and how to archive structural details when an arts institution abruptly closes.
- Curation vs. Openness: Maintaining a cohesive, mission-driven aesthetic curation can sometimes lie in conflict with supporting a broader, more diverse pool of unseen local artists.
- The Politics of the Public Sphere: Placing art in public areas is inherently political, with the work acting as a monument that signals societal values. Missteps in cultural representation can alienate surrounding neighborhood demographics and attitudes change over time, creating a need to revisit and reevaluate the work.
- Defining Value: Finding or articulating value is a complicated process as the value cannot always be defined in strictly tangible terms. While developers use language around economic metrics (such as faster lease-ups, lower tenant turnover, and community buy-in), participants argued that value must be defined more broadly to include social and cultural capital.

PROPOSED SOLUTIONS

Participants were asked to brainstorm ideas to de-risk artist collaborations for owners and operators as well as ideas to build capacity of artists and organizations to partner with owners.

1. Shifting Production Costs and Liabilities

One of the most highly praised, high-impact solutions aimed to decouple artistic vision from industrial execution to protect artists:

- Ideas-Only Hiring and In-House Fabrication: Instead of forcing artists to manage massive fabrication projects, developers would contract artists solely for their ideas and creative designs. The developer would then bring the fabrication completely in-house or contract directly with professional fabricators, taking on the direct funding, structural liability, and industrial execution.
- Standardizing the Handoff: The group recommended establishing clear industry benchmarks to govern the physical handoff between the artist's concept design and the industrial fabricators.

- Institutional Anchors as Liability Shields: Participants proposed partnering with major local universities (such as Drexel, Temple, or Jefferson) to let the institutions take on the structural liabilities and administrative capacities that individual creators and operators struggle to carry.
- Minimize Costs for Artists: American Artisan Craft Insurance is an example of an affordable workaround at roughly $25/month for individual artists.

2. Professional Education and Advocacy Tools

To bridge the communication gap between the creative and corporate or developer mindsets, participants focused on solutions to integrate disparate points of view via education and outreach among existing professional networks:

- AIA/SLA Continuing Education Credits: Build public art budgeting, procurement, and collaboration processes directly into the required continuing education such as Lunch and Learns for licensed architects and landscape architects. This equips architects to serve as early, knowledgeable advocates to developers.
- Modernize Legal Templates: Participants noted that standard legal contracts and templates provided by groups like the Volunteer Lawyers for the Arts are vastly out of date, with many originating from the early 2000s. Funding an update of these legal tools to explicitly account for modern complexities like AI usage rights and social media promotion would help better prepare artists for engagement with developers.
- Developer Peer Advocacy and Case Studies: Rather than relying on arts groups to convince real estate executives, mobilize already-engaged developers to actively showcase financial ROI case studies to their peers. One participant noted that developers could spur an "arts and culture arms race" by including art as amenity and ensuring that art-focused developments are recognized through high-profile industry awards.

3. Public Policy and Creative Financing

The afternoon sessions brought forward a variety of legislative, municipal, and philanthropic interventions to systematically fund projects:

- Creative Housing Vouchers: To combat the ongoing displacement and pricing-out of the local creative class, implement specific city housing vouchers or certificates that incentivize developers to reserve flexible, affordable live-work maker spaces for artists.

- Municipal Round-Up Programs: Create a voluntary municipal program where property owners could round up their city tax bills by cents or dollars, with the surplus funneling into a dedicated public arts fund.
- Tax Reforms (Vacancy and Sales Tax):
    - Implement a Vacancy Tax modeled after New York City to penalize owners leaving storefronts empty, while providing tax-free status to properties that hand over vacant spaces to artists for temporary activations.
    - Eliminate or heavily reduce state and local Sales Tax on the purchase of local art and cultural pieces to stimulate the creative economy.
- Right-Sizing Grant Processes: To eliminate the burden of unpaid labor for artists who are not full-time grant writers, philanthropy should adopt low-barrier application processes. The Knight Foundation's 5-question initial screening was cited as a model to emulate.
- Developer-Funded Business Incubators: Because art schools heavily neglect business training, developers can directly fund technical business education programs (covering accounting, marketing, photography, and contract negotiation through organizations like CultureWorks, giving developers a direct pipeline to highly professionalized local talent.

4. Operational De-Risking

When pitching to rigid financial partners, the most effective tool is hard public data:

- Proof-of-Concept Pop-Ups: To convince skeptical real estate lenders and conservative bankers who control project financing, developers should use highly temporary, low-cost pop-up activations as empirical proof. Demonstrating that a temporary activation can pull tens of thousands of people to a site provides the exact common sense data required to get a major permanent real estate loan approved.
- The Instagram Moment: When dealing with massive corporate developers where philosophical arguments about community joy fail, participants noted that framing a public sculpture or landscape design strictly as a calculated Instagram moment serves as an incredibly effective, highly modern shorthand to secure corporate **buy-in.**

Appendix: Implementation Workshop Attendees

Antonio Wooten, SHIFT Capital, Leasing Community Manager

Charlotte Cohen, Association for Public Art, Executive Director

Jenn Patrino, TierView Development, Principal

Jessie Lawrence, Director, Planning & Development at the City of Philadelphia

Julia Guerrero, Civic Centered, Principal

Karen Blanchard, SITIO architecture + urbanism, Principal

Kiersten Mailler, Wexford Science & Technology, LLC, Knowledge & Community Director

Lily Goodspeed, Scout, Leasing & Community Manager

Lindsey Scannapieco, Scout, Managing Partner

Nicole McDonald, The Rail Park, Deputy Director

Nora Bergsten, CBP Architects, Associate

Rachel Zimmerman, InLiquid, Founder, Visionary, and Executive Director

Stacey Mosley, Brandywine Realty Trust, Senior Director, Development & Research

Sydney Conaway, Program Coordinator for PHDC's Percent for Art Program, PHDC



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