



2012 – 2013 City of Albuquerque Public Art Survey Results

In December 2013 and early January 2013, the City of Albuquerque Public Art Program conducted a nationally reaching, on-line public art survey. The survey link was distributed through local and national e-mail listserves and subscriptions, local print and digital news media and tourism outlets with the potential to reach over 250,000 people. The survey included two components, one for locals and one for visitors - those who live outside the metropolitan area and identified themselves as visitors instead of locals. Within 45 days, 1300 people took the survey with local and visitor participation almost equal, locals at 50.6% and visitors at 49.4%

Simplified demographic questions showed participation by 62% female and 38% males, and of all respondents, 84% had some college level education. The participants varied by age with 52% of respondents identified with the Baby Boom Generation, 21.3% identified with Generation X, 15.9% identified with the Traditionalist Generation (born between 1925 and 1945), 10.3% identified with the Millennial Generation and just 0.4% identified with Generation Z (born 2001 to present).

Many claims have been made about the impact that public art can have on a community's sense of identity as well as how visitors view the community, but studies show that such correlations are difficult to support. In an effort to learn about participants' attitudes towards and experiences with public art, questions for both visitors and locals were asked about their awareness of public art and its relationship to community identity. Additionally, questions in this survey were designed to explore potential correlations between public art awareness in one's local community and increased awareness in another locale.

Of the visitors, 77% had been to Albuquerque within the past year. Most noticed some form of public art in promotional materials before they arrived, 42%, and they most certainly noticed public art after they arrived, 92%. While they did not come to Albuquerque just for public art, although 5.3% actually did, general arts and cultural offerings in Albuquerque did play a role in their decision to come, 75%. Eighty-seven percent felt that the public art enhanced their visit while here. Forty-two percent of the visitors took pictures of public art while in Albuquerque, but only 33% would use a smart phone app to find it. Upon returning home, 52% of Albuquerque's visitors say they have included Albuquerque's public art while talking about their trip. Sixty-one percent of visitors notice public art when they travel and 31% actually look for public art they travel. Eighty seven percent now have an increased awareness of Albuquerque's public art and 84.5% believe they will have an increased awareness of public art when traveling to other cities after having been to Albuquerque.

When it comes to understanding how locals feel about public art, program administrator and artists want to know if the citizens feel like they have any ownership of public artworks even though they may not have directly been part of the process. Ninety percent of local respondents believe that public art is a good use of public money. Seventy-one percent of locals feel that public art enhances their notion of the “spirit of Albuquerque” which ranges from a sense of natural landscapes, diversity, cultural richness, relaxed and unhurried atmosphere, affordable and authentic. While 86% of locals responded that public art improves the quality of life in Albuquerque and 80% feel it enhances being a resident here, 51% feel ownership of the art. Close to sixty percent feel that if art is located in a public place, it can be seen by the public for free and if it is paid for by public money then it should be considered public art. Only 18% felt that public art procured through a public process made it “public”. Of the respondents, 13% have participated in a public art process and 26% have participated in a neighborhood or community planning process where public art was discussed.

The Albuquerque public art collection currently has 800 works of art in the collection. Most locals are aware of about 50. Only 4% are aware of more than 200 artworks. Many feel that Albuquerque’s public art works are unique, regional “quirky” and urban. Twenty-six percent feel the artworks are timeless while 12% felt they are dated. Regardless of the style, 86% feel that the artworks are cared for.

Local respondents use Albuquerque’s public art in a variety of ways, for example locals use them as landmarks, for sightseeing with visitors, and to photograph. The emerging use of public art for geocaching was 5.5%. Less than a quarter of the local respondents use public art as a gathering place. 70% feel that public art would be better served with signage and/or interpretative information associated with public art, yet 97% say they have never used a public art smart phone app. However, 70% said they would use one if Albuquerque had one. Thirty-six percent use Albuquerque’s public art as inspiration for other art. People who take pictures of public art say they would be willing to share those images with others as long as it is not for commercial purposes, 50%, or to share on social media outlets, 49%.

Part of the impetus for this survey was to gauge what kinds of public art Albuquerqueans would like to have and where. Local respondents were allowed to check off their top 5 desired types of artworks, their top 3 themes and their top 5 choices for locations. Architectural art, functional art, murals, stand alone sculptures and land art were the top five voter getters. Art that represents cultural symbols or traditions and playful or whimsical art were voted highest in themes, with beautiful art and iconic art which tied for 3rd place. Historic and landscape inspired art were 4th. Bike trails, downtown, along transit routes, and on the interstates, including overpasses and underpasses, were the top locations where respondents wanted more public art. While public art at school ranked a close 6th, funding mechanisms currently do not allow for city 1% for Art funds to be used at Albuquerque Public Schools.

For several years, the Albuquerque Arts Board and Public Art Program have explored the possibilities of commissioning a large iconic artwork to be Albuquerque’s landmark, do not miss, public art installation. When asked where such an artwork should be located, the future Rail Yards development came in as the top location at 28% with Civic Plaza and the City’s

Gateways close behind at 23% and 22% respectively. While a specific question was not set up to ask if people felt that commissioning an iconic artwork was favored, the comments reveal that respondents have mixed feelings about one large artwork vs. numerous smaller works located throughout the entire city.

As expected, comments from both visitors and locals provide interesting insights to those who participate in the survey. Many comments were very supportive and others were constructively critical. Several visitors were former residents who obviously keep up with the city's news while others clearly identify themselves as prospective residents in the near future. Visitors had similar experiences with special events and activities throughout the year where arts and cultural offerings were part of the draw. Locals took more time to write longer comments sharing specific ideas and even artists' names they'd like to see included in the public art collection. Many fondly describe a particular public artwork with which they had a favorable interaction. Others expressed their aversion to particular objects or to public art in general. Comments indicate that both visitors and residents feel that arts and culture is an important part of Albuquerque's identity and as one respondent simply stated, "More please."

Albuquerque Public Art Survey Summary

Demographic Information

- Over 1,600 started the survey and over 1,300 finished the survey.
- 62% of respondents identified as female, 38% identified as male.
- 52% of respondents identified with the Baby Boom Generation, 21.3% identified with Generation X, 15.9% identified with the Traditionalist Generation (born between 1925 and 1945), 10.3% identified with the Millennial Generation and just 0.4% identified with Generation Z (born 2001 to present).
- 42.8% of respondents had an Undergraduate degree, 36.8% had a Graduate degree, 15.6% had a high school diploma, and 4.6% had a PhD.
- 49.4% of total respondents were visitors to Albuquerque while 50.6% were residents.

Visitor Information

- Over half (57.3%) responded that their primary purpose for visiting Albuquerque was for leisure activities. 30.9% responded that it was to visit family, 24.9% came for a special event, 24.1% came for arts and cultural offerings, 10.5% came for business, 5.3% came for the public art and 2.7% came for a convention.
- While visiting Albuquerque, visitors noticed public artworks Downtown (63.1%), at the airport (57.3%), at cultural venues (55.7%), along highways and interstates (52.3%), along major arterial streets (31.9%), in neighborhood parks (28.1%), and at the Convention Center (9.7%), while 8.3% of respondents answered "other" and 7.4% did not notice any public art.
- 40.7% of visitors "definitely" had an expectation of a sense of place about Albuquerque and another 34.3% "somewhat" had an expectation of a sense of place. 25% had no expectations or hadn't given the idea much thought.

- 67.6% thought public art enhanced their experience in Albuquerque, 20% thought it “somewhat” enhanced their experience, while 12.4% thought public art had no effect on their experience.
- 73.4% responded that they were “likely” to visit specific public artworks if they returned to Albuquerque, 18.6% responded that it was “not likely, but would like to see public art in the places they visit” and 8.4% thought it was “not likely” they would visit specific public artworks if they returned.
- 96.2% of visitors have never used a public art smart phone app but 33.3% said they would “likely” or “very likely” use one if Albuquerque offered one.
- After visiting Albuquerque, 86.7% of visitors responded that they “definitely” or “somewhat” have an increased awareness about public art in Albuquerque and 84.5% responded that they “definitely” or “somewhat” have an increased awareness of public art in other cities they may visit after coming to Albuquerque. However, only 46.3% of visitors responded that they “definitely” or “somewhat” have an increased awareness of public art in their home community.

Resident Information

- 68.3% of residents thought “Natural Landscapes” best captured the spirit/personality of Albuquerque. 47.6% thought it was “Diversity”, 44.5% thought it was “Culture”, and 36.2% thought it was the “Relaxed/Unhurried” atmosphere. 71.6% thought that Albuquerque’s public art enhances that spirit/personality, 22.2% thought it “somewhat” enhances that spirit, while only 6.8% thought it didn’t or were not sure.
- Only 3.7% of residents didn’t think public art is a good use of public money, while 6.2% were “unsure.” The rest, or 90.2% think it is a good use of public money.
- 86.5% of residents feel that public art improves their quality of life, 7% think it doesn’t and 6.6% are “unsure.”
- 51.5% of residents feel they have some ownership of the public art in Albuquerque, 31.6% disagree and 16.9% have no opinion.
- 93.4% of residents think that public art enhances or “somewhat enhances” their experience of being an Albuquerque resident. 4.7% do not think it does, while 1.8% are unsure.
- Residents were pretty split when it came to using public art as landmarks with 49.2% responding that they do use public art as landmarks and 50.8% responding that they do not. 73.9% of residents do not use public art as a gathering place, while 26.1% do.
- 75.6% use public art for sightseeing with visitors, 49.3% photograph public art, 36.9% use public art as inspiration for their art and 5.6% use it for geocaching activities.
- 69.9% of residents think that public art should have signage and/or interpretive information nearby, 10.1% do not think public art needs signage, and 20% were “unsure.”
- 76.3% responded that public art has increased their appreciation of the arts and culture of the area, 14.8% didn’t think it increased their appreciation, and 8.9% were “unsure.” 72.6% responded that public art has increased their appreciation of ARTISTS, 16.5% didn’t think it increased their appreciation, and 10.9% were “unsure.”
- 57.6% of residents responded that they are aware of “up to 50” public artworks in Albuquerque. 22.8% were aware of “less than 10”, 12.7% were aware of “up to 100”,

3.9% were aware of “more than 200” and 3% were aware of “up to 200” artworks. The Albuquerque Public Art collection holds more than 800 artworks.

- When asked to describe how public art looks and feels in Albuquerque, residents responded that it was “unique” (62.2%), “regional” (61.3%), “quirky” (57.2%), “urban” (34.7%), “iconic” (30.6%), “timeless” (26.4%), and “dated” (12.4%). 7.8% didn’t know or “don’t get it at all.”
- 58.3% of residents think that Albuquerque’s public art is cared for reasonably or very well. 28.5% think it is cared for “as needed,” and 13.2% think it is not cared for enough or never cared for.
- 12.9% of respondents have participated in a public art selection process and 26% have participated in a neighborhood, community or planning process where public art was discussed.
- 50.3% of respondents are willing to share their photographs of public art with anyone for any use, commercial or not. 49.2% would share on social media outlets. 27% would make photos available to copy from internet with limited commercial use and credit to the photographer. 23.6% would make photos available to copy from internet for private or educational use only, and 13.3% would be willing to share photos via non-downloadable sharing only.
- Only 3.3% of residents responded that they currently use a public art smart phone app. However, 44.4% responded that they would “very likely” or “likely” use an Albuquerque-based public art smart phone app if it was available. 41.2% responded that it would be “unlikely”, while 14.55 were unsure.
- 75.5% of residents would like to see more public art integrated into architecture projects, 67% would like to see more functional public artworks such as benches, bike racks etc., 65.7% would like to see more murals, 62.8% would like to see more free standing sculptures, 57.9% would like to see more land art, and 53.5% would like to see more mosaic projects. Other types of art residents would like to see in Albuquerque included, monumental art (49%), light art (41.5%), digital media artworks (25.6%), temporary art (22.8%), and memorials (22%).
- 53.2% of residents would like to see more public art that addresses “cultural symbols and traditions,” 47.8% would like to see art that addresses “playfulness and whimsy,” 43% would like to see artworks that address “beauty,” and 42.6% would like to see artworks that become “iconic.” Residents would also like to see public artworks that address themes related to history (41.3%), landscape (40.7%), visionary (37.1%), high-tech (13.6%), and political ideas (9.2%).
- When it comes to locating future public artworks, Albuquerque residents would like to see more art along biking and walking trails (53%), in the Downtown area (48%), along transit routes (47.7%), along interstates (41.1%), on highway and street bridge overpasses (35%), at schools (33.9%), in the NE quadrant (33.6%), at cultural venues such as the BioPark and museums (32.6%), in the NW quadrant (27.8%), and in Old Town (26.9%).
- If the Arts Board were to decide to commission a large/monumental, iconic public artwork, residents think it should be located at the future Rail Yards development (28.2%), Civic Plaza (23.5%), at entrances to the City/”gateways” (22.2%), the Big-I (19.5%), Central Ave and the river (14.4%), in the foothills (8.9%), and Balloon Fiesta Park (6.1%).

Those interested in the complete survey results for academic and research purposes can contact the Albuquerque Public Art Program at publicart@cabq.gov or by calling 505-768-3566.