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Winter Parkers meet Sir David Adjaye. 3.

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Cultural consortium



"Man Carving His Own Destiny" is featured in the sculpture garden at the Albin Polasek Museum.

Winter Park's Arts and Culture Subcommittee launched to promote the city's creative offerings.

TROY HERRING
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

Winter Park is full of quality art museums and culture – but the city wants to take it a step further.

Turning Winter Park into a destination for the arts has become an important aspect from the 2015 Vision Winter Park process. The yearlong initiative was conducted as a means to attain a vision for the future of the city.

Public input and focus groups developed multiple concepts to help build the city's future, and from that initiative sprung the idea to develop a special committee on the arts.

In August 2016, the City Commission decided to act on the new concept and a month later, the Arts and Culture Subcommittee held its first official meeting.

"It truly is very hyper-local – it's very focused on Winter Park entities and programs only," said Clarissa Howard, Winter Park's director of communications. "It's to enhance and improve the awareness and visibility of the nonprofit arts and culture organizations that offer programming in the city limits."

As a subcommittee on the arts, the initiative works under the guidance of the city's Public Art Advisory Board.

The official members of the subcommittee include seven organizations – the Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens, Bach Festival Society of Winter Park, Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art, Cornell Fine Arts Museum, Creadlé School of Art, Public Art Advisory Board, and the Winter Park History Museum.

The seven members of the subcommittee, selected by the City Commission to vote on subjects as a centralized group, actually represent 22 different art entities.

One of the representatives of the group is Debbie Komanski, executive director and CEO at the Polasek.



Photos by Troy Herring

"Evoking Memories" by Albin Polasek is on display in the sculpture garden.

"The nonprofits and the cultural groups in town actually have a close bond with each other; all of us have a common purpose and we really admire each other," Komanski said. "We knew we would always be stronger if we could put together a core group."

Years ago, Komanski said, an attempt to put together a committee was made but fizzled under a variety of obstacles, including changes in local government.

An important aspect of finally having a consortium is creating a cohesive plan to market their organizations. A big problem that entities, such as the Polasek, have faced has been people simply not knowing the museums are there.

"We are trying to brand this in a way so we can inform our own citizens of all the things we are doing and make it easy to find information," Komanski said. "Also, do more of an outreach out of the community to let visitors know, that are interested in art and culture, there is an alternative to theme parks."

Although the goal of marketing the different arts organizations plays a vital role in the subcommittee's desire to bring people in, there is also a more holistic goal.

Catherine Hinman, director of public affairs and subcommittee representative for the Morse Museum, believes bringing visitors to the arts groups will have positive impacts on the individuals themselves.

PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Albin Polasek Museum and Sculpture Gardens
- Bach Festival Society of Winter Park
- Charles Hosmer Morse Museum of American Art
- Cornell Fine Arts Museum
- Creadlé School of Art
- Public Art Advisory Board
- Winter Park History Museum

"The arts do inspire ... and essentially really improve your life," Hinman said. "Our collectors that assemble our collection, would say, 'Make art a part of your life.' Most people in Winter Park have moved here because, I think, those are the town's values."

Although members still are ironing out details, Hinman said the group currently is planning out a special weekend in February 2018 to celebrate the arts.

"Our plans for the February weekend – Feb. 16, 17, and 18 – is to have free admission," Hinman said. "The hardest people to attract to these resources, as much as we want them there, are locals. Seventy-five percent of the people who visit this museum are tourists, but we are still here – we were founded for and exist for, the local community!"

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