



# Bala Ave.

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## PUBLIC ART PLAN

City/Ave  
District



# **THE PUBLIC ART PLAN**

**for Bala Avenue, in Bala Village  
Bala Cynwyd, Pennsylvania**

**focus area:  
Union Avenue to Montgomery Avenue**

**This report was created by  
Julia Guerrero, Civic Centered Consulting  
for Lower Merion Township**

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Members of the Bala Avenue of the Arts Board, including Daniella Weinberg,

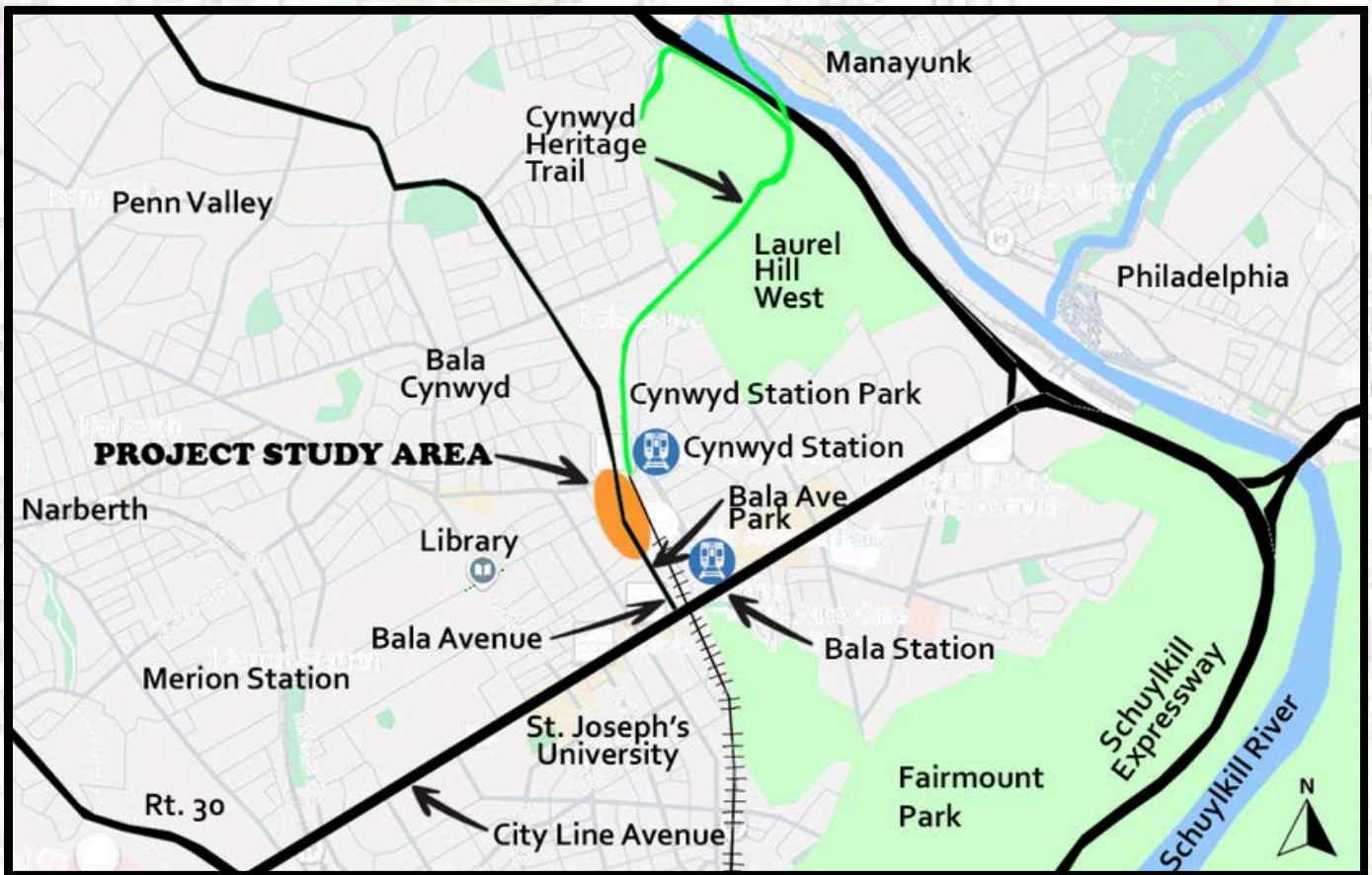
Roberta Fallon, Val Rossman, George Manos and Adam Lesnik

and Ex-Officio members Gilda L. Kramer, Bryan Fenstermaker and Louis E. Rossman

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# PROJECT AREA MAP



# OVERVIEW

## Why make a Public Art Plan?

Bala Avenue, in the heart of Bala Village, is a historic commercial corridor beloved in its community. Once a thriving town center with a movie theater and an array of local businesses, Bala Avenue now struggles with significant long-term commercial vacancy and a lack of investment. Due to this, the commercial core of Bala Avenue remains the 'hole in the doughnut' despite being surrounded by thriving, growing communities.

Despite this challenge, positive things are on the horizon for Bala Avenue. Stalled redevelopment plans for the Bala Avenue Development Project, located at the intersection of Bala Avenue and North Highland Avenue, are moving forward and will add 86 residential units to the corridor. Another bright spot is the Bala Avenue of the Arts (BAoA) non-profit, an organization actively planning a creative future for the corridor. There is a spark of fresh energy on Bala Avenue.

The Bala Avenue Public Art Plan seeks to recommend and accelerate arts-based improvements along Bala Avenue. The Plan outlines a vision for a more creative commercial corridor with arts-based activation methods, including public art, creative branding, and cultural programs, to draw visitors and bring neighbors together while creating a more attractive street. The projects recommended through the Plan will enhance and unify the streetscape and be a catalyst to drive attention to Bala Avenue and define it in a new light.

City Ave District's 2023 Retail Plan recommended a series of methods to enliven Bala Avenue, including initiating a public art and placemaking program, "Contemplate the creation and implementation of a program to stimulate public space with art and improve public space to encourage visitors to stay longer."

Public art and creative spaces improve communities by making them feel more welcoming, lively, and safe. The Public Art Plan provides a roadmap and a toolkit that uses arts and cultural activation methods to develop a greater sense of vibrancy for the corridor. The solution to Bala Avenue's long-standing challenges requires a significant public-private-philanthropic re-imagining of the corridor. The Public Art Plan alone isn't the solution to Bala Avenue's challenges, but it is a critical step in developing a fresh, creative future for the corridor.

## Vision and Goals Summary

The Public Art Plan offers a roadmap and toolkit to grow Bala Avenue into a visually unified, creative corridor destination with an artistic sense of place. The goals of the plan include:

1. Beautify the corridor
2. Create community spaces that bring neighbors together in creative experiences
3. Develop the connection between Bala Avenue and the Cynwyd Trail through art installations
4. Attract people to the area to see the art

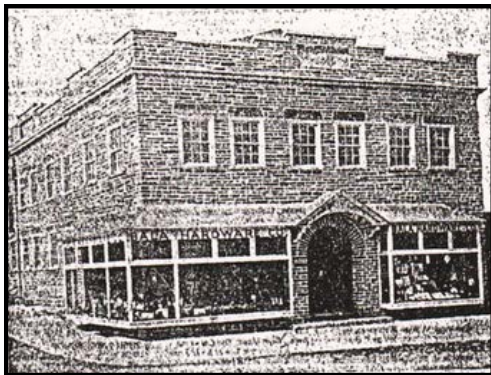
# INTRODUCTION TO BALA VILLAGE

**Bala Avenue has been a community gathering space centered around the arts for over a century**

Bala Avenue has long been a hub of cultural life in Lower Merion Township, thanks to its history of hosting civic and performing arts spaces.

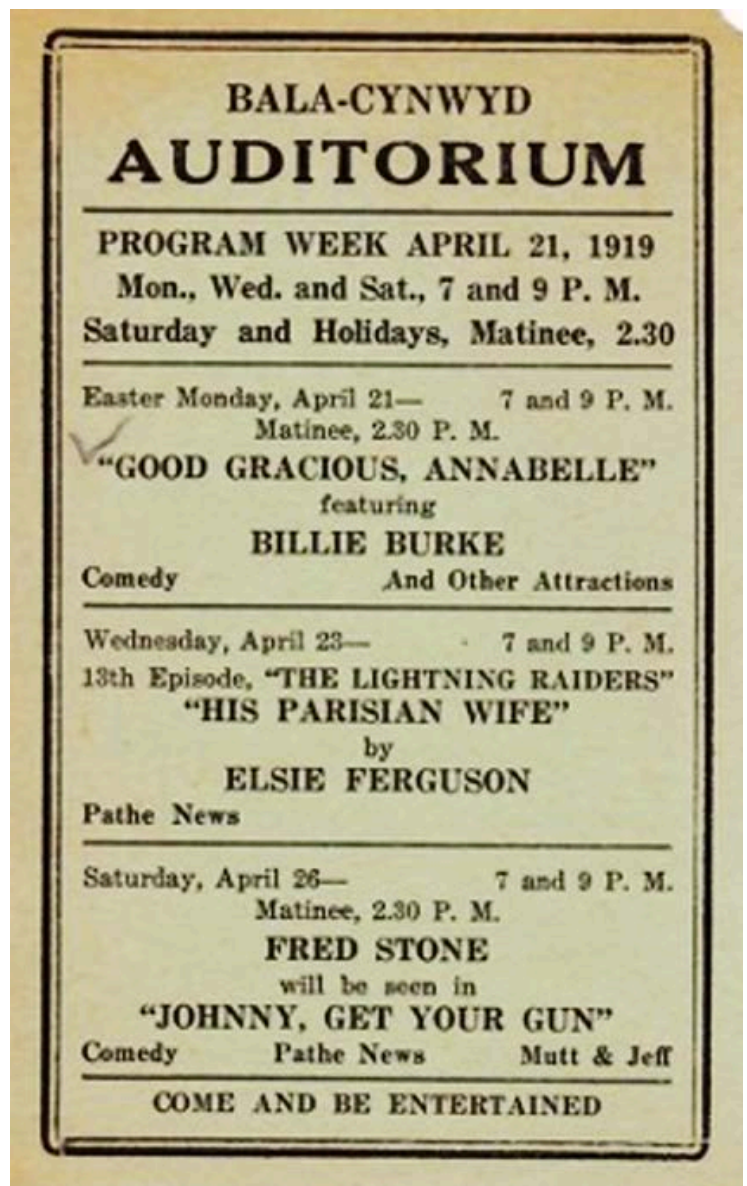
## **The Bala-Cynwyd Auditorium**

The Bala-Cynwyd Auditorium was the area's first civic gathering space and operated from 1913 to 1919. With a capacity of over 250 people, it welcomed musical performances, silent movies, dances, and fundraisers for local groups and WWI war efforts. Located at 200 Bala Avenue, a portion of the building remains intact today.



Left to right: from *Main Line Times*, September 11, 1986; Auditorium flyer, 1919

All images are courtesy of the Lower Merion Historical Society.



**BALA-CYNWYD  
AUDITORIUM**

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**PROGRAM WEEK APRIL 21, 1919**  
Mon., Wed. and Sat., 7 and 9 P. M.  
Saturday and Holidays, Matinee, 2.30

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Easter Monday, April 21— 7 and 9 P. M.  
Matinee, 2.30 P. M.

✓ **“GOOD GRACIOUS, ANNABELLE”**  
featuring  
**BILLIE BURKE**  
Comedy And Other Attractions

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Wednesday, April 23— 7 and 9 P. M.  
13th Episode, **“THE LIGHTNING RAIDERS”**  
**“HIS PARISIAN WIFE”**  
by  
**ELSIE FERGUSON**  
Pathe News

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Saturday, April 26— 7 and 9 P. M.  
Matinee, 2.30 P. M.  
**FRED STONE**  
will be seen in  
**“JOHNNY, GET YOUR GUN”**  
Comedy Pathe News Mutt & Jeff

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**COME AND BE ENTERTAINED**

## The Bala Theatre

Bala Avenue's main anchor is the historic and beloved Bala Theatre, which closed in 2014 and has remained shuttered. Opened in 1926 as the Egyptian Theatre, it continues to be the centerpiece of Bala Avenue despite its closure.

The Art Deco, Egyptian Revival-style theater has a capacity of 1,450 people. Designed as a vaudeville theater, it has a deep performance stage, a unique characteristic among existing theaters from that time, and a desirable feature for contemporary presenters and audiences. The building was awarded Class I designation on the Lower Merion Township Historic Resources Inventory.

Community members continue to advocate for its revival, which is considered the lynchpin to unlock the potential of the entire corridor.



Clockwise: Streetscape view by Denise Storti, 1950; Theater bulletin, March 16, 1955; Exterior view of the theater, undated; Interior view of the theater, undated  
All images are courtesy of [www.cinematreasures.org](http://www.cinematreasures.org)

**Though neither space functions today, they speak to Bala Avenue's long history as a hub for arts and culture.**

**This Public Art Plan looks to create a 'full circle moment' and pathways for new cultural vitality and community arts experiences on Bala Avenue.**

## The Commercial Corridor

Bala Avenue is Bala Village's historic commercial corridor, with its densest portion stretching from Union Avenue to Montgomery Avenue. This stretch is the focal point of this plan's study area.

Despite its adjacency to City Avenue and two SEPTA regional rail stations, the corridor has long struggled with high vacancy rates. City Ave District - which includes Bala Avenue - conducted a Retail Study in 2023 that noted that "Bala Avenue has struggled with chronic vacancy, and its current retail tenants do not meet the needs or desires of the neighborhood. In particular, its lack of walkable food & beverage options is a major missed opportunity. Many refer to this as the 'Bala Avenue Problem,' highlighting the long-term nature of the issue."

Community members often cite Bala Theatre's closure as a significant contributing cause of the corridor's struggle with vacancy. The reinvention of the theater would create a signature cultural space and instantly be the heart of a renewed cultural district. However, despite being deeply important to the cultural vitality of this community, such an undertaking is beyond the scope of this plan, which is solely focused on arts initiatives in the public realm.

## Bala Avenue of the Arts Non-Profit

The Bala Avenue of the Arts (BAoA) is a resident-driven non-profit organization committed to implementing arts-focused initiatives to grow Bala Avenue into a dynamic hub of art and creative programming. BAoA envisions Bala Avenue as a vibrant, thriving arts destination transformed through arts and culture. Many of the Lower Merion residents on the Board have long advocated for improvements to the corridor.

BAoA partners with City Ave District to host the Bala Avenue Art Walk. The festival, now in its second year, is considered by BAoA as their 'north star.' The 2024 Art Walk included 30 artist vendors, 6 community vendors, 4 make-and-take crafters, and 6 food vendors. Approximately 1,700-2,000 guests attended the event.

BAoA and City Ave District also partnered in 2023 to create a pop-up art gallery in a vacant storefront at 159 Bala Avenue. City Ave District has additional storefront activation programs along Bala Avenue, including 202 and 205 Bala Avenue.



## The Community

Bala Cynwyd is a highly walkable and dense inner-ring suburb. Thanks to its walkability, access to regional rail, and local amenities, it is an area known as ‘where the urban meets the suburban.’

Ten thousand people live within two miles of Bala Avenue, an area surrounded by a mix of single-family residences and large-scale apartment complexes. An active civic association, the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, includes residents and local businesses working together to strengthen the community.

Bala Cynwyd is known as a place where people from vastly different economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds come together peacefully. The area has a large and active Jewish population, including a growing Orthodox community.

Residents are proud to note that this is a diverse and welcoming community.

## The Cynwyd Heritage Trail

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail is a two-mile recreational trail from Cynwyd Station to the Manayunk Viaduct and onto Belmont Avenue. Plans are underway to extend the trail and create increased regional connections. The trail is a well-loved community asset and an active civic space. The connection point between Bala Avenue and the trail is through an unmarked public easement through the BMW dealership’s parking garage. The trail’s stewards, Friends of the Cynwyd Heritage Trail, are dedicated to supporting and improving the trail.



# INFORMATION-GATHERING PROCESS

## Survey & Engagement Summary

Community input was essential to developing the Public Art Plan. Public engagement in the planning process included:

- Stakeholder meetings of Township officials, City Ave District staff, and civic leaders offered guidance and feedback throughout the development of the Public Art Plan.
- Bala Avenue of the Arts (BAoA) Board Members provided insights into the corridor's history, their hopes for the Plan, and their vision for its future. Other participants included representatives from the Neighborhood Club of Bala Cynwyd, the Lower Merion Conservancy, and the Lower Merion Historical Society.
- A public survey gauged the community's interest in art forms, thematic questions, and goals for the works of art. The survey was hosted on the Township website for approximately one month, from July to August 2024. The Township and City Ave District promoted the survey through social media, email newsletters, and print materials. The survey received 396 responses.
- Survey findings were summarized on information boards at the 2024 Bala Avenue Art Walk.

## Key Findings from Stakeholder and BAoA Feedback Meetings

Stakeholders and BAoA members participated in feedback sessions to share their unique perspectives on Bala Village and its history, challenges, and potential.

Their observations included the following about Bala Village:

- "It has a sense of place."
- "It could be great again."
- "There is a welcoming scale."

Participants expressed an interest in:

- Seeing the theater used again either as a theater or as another performance or community space
- Giving people a reason to come to Bala Avenue
- Creating gathering spaces for community members

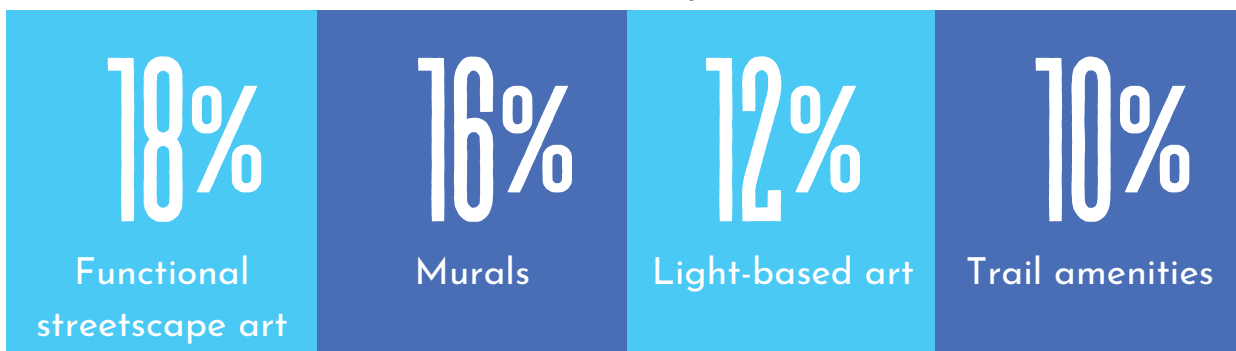
**"People feel like  
Bala Avenue  
belongs to its  
residents"**

-community stakeholder participant

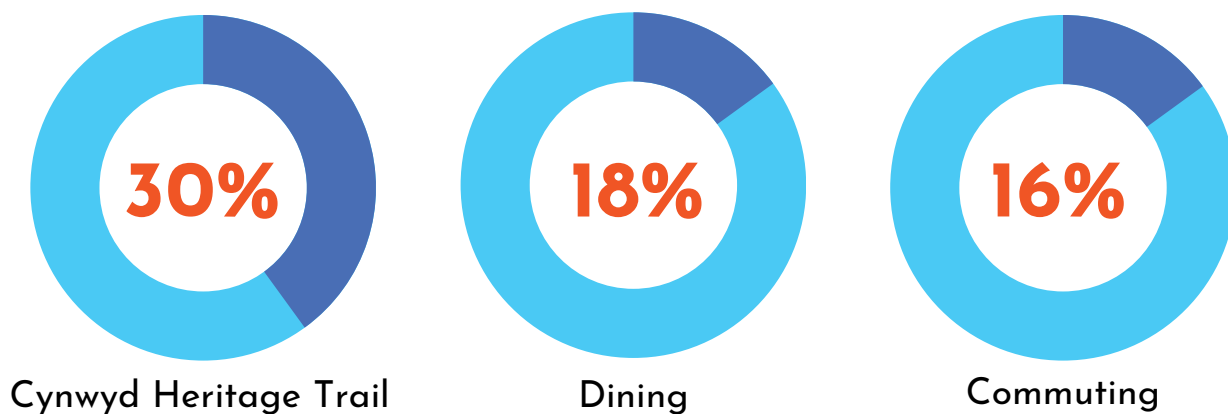
# COMMUNITY SURVEY

## FINDINGS - OVERVIEW

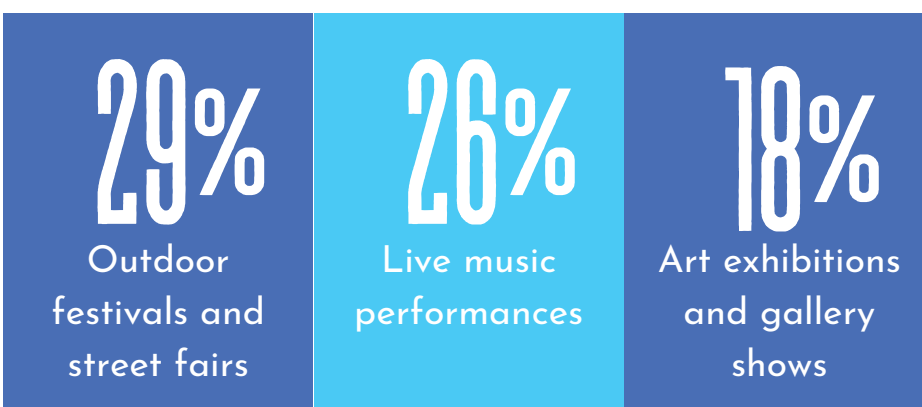
### PREFERRED PUBLIC ART PROJECTS



### PRIMARY ATTRACTIONS



### POPULAR ART PROGRAMS



The responses reflect a desire for art that celebrates the community's diversity, history, and natural beauty, while also fostering a sense of inclusivity, creativity, and neighborliness.

## Survey Question:

# WHAT IMPORTANT THING ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE REFLECTED IN ARTWORKS ALONG BALA AVENUE?

### DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

- Different cultures
- Ethnicities
- Religions
- Identities (including LGBTQ+)
- Strong focus on inclusion and tolerance

### COMMUNITY AND NEIGHBORLINESS

- Close-knit nature of the community
- Neighbors care for each other and work together
- A village with a strong sense of community

### HISTORY AND HERITAGE

- Welsh origins
- The Orthodox Jewish community
- Connection to the Pennsylvania Railroad
- Other historic landmarks

### NATURE AND ENVIRONMENT

- Area's natural beauty, including its parks and trees
- Connection to the Cynwyd Heritage Trail
- Community's appreciation of its natural surroundings.

### VIBRANCY AND MODERNITY

- Bold, bright, and modern artistic
- Add vibrancy to the area with art

### PUBLIC SPACE & ACCESSIBILITY

- Ensure that public spaces are aesthetically pleasing and functional
- Art should engage people of all ages
- Make the area more welcoming and livelier

### CULTURAL HERITAGE AND IDENTITY

- Reflect the various cultural heritages present in Bala Cynwyd, including Jewish pride, Welsh roots, and other cultural contributions.

### CREATIVITY AND LOCAL TALENT

- Showcase the creativity of local artists, including those of all ages and backgrounds
- Involve the community in creating and selecting the art.

## COMMUNITY CONCERNS

Some respondents expressed concerns in the survey about the potential for art installations to clash with the area's character or become too permanent. Others stressed that artistic decisions should be made carefully, considering the community's identity and aesthetics.

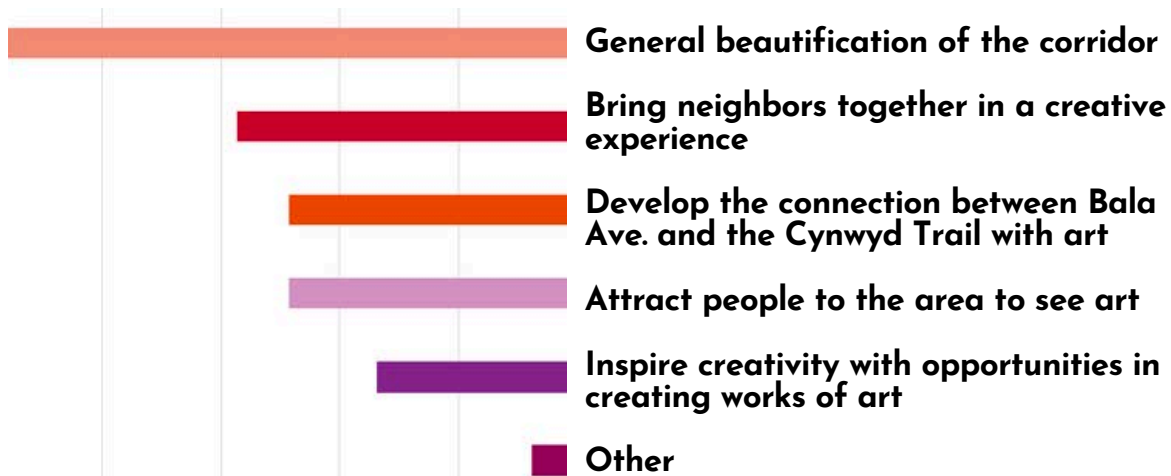
These concerns must inform art project planning to ensure community members' support is earned and maintained.

## OTHER SURVEY QUESTIONS AND RESPONSES:

### WHICH OF THESE TYPES OF PUBLIC ART PROJECTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PLANNED FOR BALA AVENUE?



### WHAT WOULD YOU WANT ART ON BALA AVENUE TO DO?



### WHAT TYPE OF ART PROGRAMS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE HERE?



# VISION STATEMENT

The Public Art Plan envisions Bala Avenue as a **visually unified creative corridor** at the heart of Bala Village.

Public art, creative placemaking, and arts and culture strategies will create an **artistic sense of place** and help to turn the corridor into a **cultural destination**.

*The community survey identified the following public art goals for Bala Village. The recommended strategies are a collection of ways to realize each goal.*

# GOALS & STRATEGIES

## Goal 1: Beautify the Corridor

Bala Avenue, at the heart of Bala Village, has a charming small-town feel. Its historic architecture is varied and visually interesting, but vacant storefronts can overwhelm the street. The following strategies focus on the parts of that problem that public art and creative placemaking can improve, specifically the arts-based improvement of the streetscape and the utilization of vacant storefronts as art opportunities. These efforts will create fresh energy and move Bala Avenue towards feeling like the town center that it is.

### Strategies:

- Create a visual identity for the corridor through a logo and branding. A forward-looking graphic vision should speak to the neighborhood's spark of creative vitality.
- Visually distinguish the corridor through gateway signage at either end of the commercial corridor. To visually unify the corridor, utilize smaller signage, such as pole banners.
- Engage business and property owners to understand how artistic interventions can address their needs while improving the streetscape. For example, do property owners have a blank wall that could become the home for a new mural, or would new planters with art enhance their storefronts?
- Create right-sized public art opportunities for each area of Bala Avenue. Refer to the following menu of public art strategies by zone.
- Offer micro-grants for local community members, businesses, and artists to improve the streetscape through art and creative elements.
- Encourage future development projects or improvement initiatives to include artistic elements in their designs and public spaces.
- Temporarily activate the existing construction fencing with quick and low-cost art interventions.
- The community survey cited arts workshops and classes for all ages as an area of interest. When developing public art or cultural projects, consider including these opportunities to bring neighbors together in creative experiences.

## Goal 2:

# Develop creative community spaces that bring neighbors together in creative experiences

The survey indicates that community members actively seek out arts and culture events and are interested in seeing more arts and culture experiences on Bala Avenue. Despite the corridor's limited public gathering spaces, there are opportunities to define spaces for hosting performances and creative community events.

## Strategies:

- The community survey indicated significant interest in having live music and performing arts on Bala Avenue. Utilizing otherwise passive spaces, such as the pocket park at the BMW dealership or Cynwyd Station Park, can be an opportunity to develop creative community gathering spaces. Use public art- murals, overhead sculptural installations, or lighting - to define the space and indicate its use.
- Support creative programming in community spaces, such as poetry readings, musical performances, or film screenings. Develop a calendar of events (first Fridays or weekly events) based on the organizers' capacity and the community members' interests.
- Partner with local developers or property owners to create a community 'third space' - a casual gathering space outside home and work. A community art gallery is a versatile way to activate a vacant storefront or a small retail space. Creating a business model that involves renting the space out for special events can help ensure its longevity as a community gathering space.
- As developers or property owners anticipate vacancies, local partners should encourage them to activate those spaces with artistic uses, such as art galleries, pop-up installations, artist markets, or artist studio space. Maintain a list of artists or organizations interested in using such spaces so owners can quickly connect to potential users.
- Create temporary and performance-based art installations (e.g., an art trail, a poetry walk, a sidewalk chalk stencil project, a 'Jane's Walk' storytelling tour of the corridor) that bring people together for a limited-time arts experience.
- The community survey indicated an interest in seeing theater and dance performances on Bala Avenue, but hosting those events throughout the year requires a dedicated indoor performance space. Consider developing partnerships with local educational and cultural organizations looking to expand their offerings into this part of the suburbs. Look to unconventional performance locations for inspiration, such as Philadanco's performances at Gray 30th Street Station. Consider a partnership with the Bala Gymnasium as a location for public gatherings.



## Goal 3:

# Develop the connection between Bala Avenue and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail through art installations

The Cynwyd Heritage Trail is a significant asset to the area and was the reason most respondents cited in the community survey for coming to Bala Avenue. The popular biking trail and footpath will soon be extended to the Schuylkill River, increasing regional connectivity.

Currently, there is no visual connection between Bala Avenue and the trail. Nothing on the trail marks Bala Avenue, and nothing on Bala Avenue marks the trail. Increasing the visibility of the connection will draw more visitors to the area and position Bala Avenue as a connection point between the neighborhood and the trail. Public art at this location will highlight the connection point and increase the area's visibility. Partnership with the dealership and the Cynwyd Heritage Trail leadership will be essential to the success of these efforts.

## Strategies:

- Visually mark the trail entrance from Bala Avenue through art and signage. Since the connection point goes through the garage of the BMW dealership, identify areas for artistic intervention that meet any design standards the dealership must maintain.
- Consider an installation in the right-of-way, including asphalt art and creative signage, to highlight the trail connection.
- Visually mark the entrance to Bala Avenue from the trail. Consider approaches such as murals on the rear of the buildings facing the trail, where the owners may be more agreeable to artistic intervention. Large-scale murals can add color and interest while complementing the trail's naturalistic environment.
- Develop art installations along the trail, especially at Bala Avenue. Consider sculptural signage, wayfinding, selfie stations, sculptural art, and functional installations, such as bike racks and benches.
- Place functional amenities, like bike racks, on Bala Avenue for trail users.

## Goal 4:

# Nurture Bala Avenue's growing reputation as a place to experience the arts

Attracting people to Bala Avenue for creative experiences can draw fresh attention to the area and attract new audiences.

## Strategies:

- Currently, the most impactful creative draw to Bala Village is through the Bala Avenue Art Walk. Continue to support Bala Avenue Art Walk's success and growth. In its second year, the festival includes high-quality craft vendors, food trucks, pop-up art galleries, live music, and interactive crafting stations. It attracts a large audience and brings many new faces to Bala Avenue. Build on the event's success by supporting its growth. Use the event to showcase future art initiatives and recruit arts volunteers and ambassadors.
- Create a Bala Village-centric communication channel. This active resource can inform the public about local arts efforts and promote partnerships with surrounding arts and cultural organizations.
- Plan for limited-time events such as pop-up exhibits, arts crawls, and light-based events to grow interest and activity in the area.
- Encourage participatory art-making that brings together community members and visitors. The survey indicated strong community interest in opportunities to create works of art. Murals, asphalt art, and pop-ups can offer new ways to bring people together in creative experiences.
- Develop artistic connections between the commercial corridor and nearby popular spots, including Bala Avenue Park or apartment buildings. Sharing information about Bala Avenue arts initiatives with residents will create new connections with neighbors and grow local arts audiences.
- Provide information about parking and mass transit options for events. Consider arranging to use local parking lots such as at the Bala Gymnasium as much as possible.

# PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT

**Bala Avenue is a compact commercial corridor with several distinct zones, each with a unique set of characteristics and opportunities for art within each. These subsections include:**



*Overview of Bala Avenue study area, with zones overlaid*

- Zone 1: BMW Dealership and connection point with Cynwyd Heritage Trail**
- Zone 2: Theater and surrounding retail spaces**
- Zone 3: Retail spaces with less density and more open space**
- Zone 4: Dense area of commercial storefronts**
- Zone 5: Currently a vacant lot, but with redevelopment plans underway**
- Zone 6: Dense area of commercial storefronts**

# PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT BY ZONE

## Zone 1: Car dealership, and connection point with Cynwyd Heritage Trail

<b>Assets</b>	Montgomery Avenue gateway with high visibility	<b>Art Objectives</b>	Create a strong visual gateway to Bala Avenue
	Cynwyd Heritage Trail connection		Enhance the connection to Trail from Bala Avenue and vice versa
	Facade facing the Cynwyd Heritage Trail		Announce arrival at Bala Avenue from the Trail
	Pocket park		Utilize the pocket park and Cynwyd Park as active community gathering spaces
	Wide sidewalks		Create community-centric arts interventions in the public right of way without impeding foot traffic
	Cynwyd Station rail access		Create a strong link to the station to engage regional rail users

## Zone 2: Theater

<b>Assets</b>	Historic but vacant theater "the missing piece of the Bala Avenue puzzle"	<b>Art Objectives</b>	Temporarily activate unoccupied or underutilized storefronts with a series of window installations
	Shops with a mix of occupancy and vacancy		Activate streetscape despite vacancies

## Zone 3: Transition and Connective Zone

<b>Assets</b>	Gateway from City Avenue	<b>Art Objectives</b>	Announce arrival on Bala Avenue for people traveling from City Avenue
	Structures are less dense and more spread out than the rest of the commercial corridor		-Create a visual link between this section and the denser commercial corridor -Make the most of the open space to create free-standing works of art
	Mix of vacant and occupied ground floor spaces		Temporarily activate unoccupied or underutilized storefronts with a series of window installations

# PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITY ASSESSMENT BY ZONE

## Zone 4: Storefronts (1)

Assets

Mix of vacant and occupied ground floor spaces

Narrow walking zone with many objects occupying the narrow sidewalk - meters, trash cans, planters, light poles, etc.

Art Objectives

Temporarily activate unoccupied or underutilized storefronts with a series of window installations

Consider installations with a physically low or narrow profile, or activation of walking surface with art

## Zone 5: Vacant Lot / Future Redevelopment Site

Assets

Extremely derelict condition

The 'hole' in an otherwise contiguous commercial stretch

Art Objectives

Use art to temporarily 'stitch' this commercial stretch back together, both before and during future construction

For the future redevelopment, encourage the integration of art and creative placemaking into the new design

## Zone 6: Storefronts (1)

Assets

Montgomery Avenue gateway with high visibility

Mix of vacant and occupied ground floor spaces

Narrow walking zone with many objects occupying the narrow sidewalk - meters, trash cans, planters, light poles, etc.

Art Objectives

Temporarily activate unoccupied or underutilized storefronts with a series of window installations

Temporarily activate unoccupied or underutilized storefronts with a series of window installations

Activate and unify the stretch with a series of low-profile art installations

# PUBLIC ART OVERVIEW

## General considerations when commissioning public art:

- **Create art that is of high quality in its design and execution:** The most significant community concern with creating art here is that it must be done at a high level of quality and responsive to Bala Avenue's architectural character. Engage professional artists and ensure that their designs are specific to the historic character of Bala Avenue.
- **Develop an inclusive process:** Engage a wide array of community members in the public art planning process so that the art reflects the community as a whole.
- **Create a competitive process:** When resources allow, create a competitive artist commissioning process rather than directly selecting an artist. A public, transparent artist selection process encourages artists to participate and helps the public see why the art exists.
- **Get lots of feedback:** Create meaningful, structured opportunities for community members to help define the project, review art proposals, and help shape the project.
- **Create art at various scales:** Due to the relatively small size of the Bala Avenue corridor, art can make a sizeable impact, even with a limited art project budget.
- **Make a splash:** Go for projects with maximum impact while still appropriate for its context.
- **Support artists:** Support artists' businesses by ensuring they are always paid for their work.
- **Plan for the long term:** Build art maintenance into the planning process by ensuring funds are available to keep the art looking great.

## Public Art Strategies by Zone:

ZONES	FUNCTIONAL STREETScape ART	MURALS	LIGHT-BASED ART	ARTISTIC TRAIL AMMENITIES	SCULPTURE (PERMANENT)	STOREFRONT ACTIVATION	SCULPTURE (TEMPORARY)	BANNERS / SIGNAGE	ASPHALT ART	FAST & FUN INSTALLATION
Zone 1: BMW & Trail	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	
Zone 2: Theater						✓		✓		✓
Zone 3: Transition	✓		✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Zone 4: Storefronts - 1	✓					✓		✓		✓
Zone 5: Lot / Future Dev.								✓		✓
Zone 6: Storefronts - 2	✓		✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓

# PUBLIC ART STRATEGIES

The following menu of public art and creative placemaking strategies illustrates ways to utilize art along Bala Avenue to create a more creative and unified streetscape. These strategies offer opportunities to consider how the art can enhance the public space and reflect Bala Avenue's unique identity.

Each type of art activation strategy was selected based on community interest and applicability within the spatial constraints on Bala Avenue. To provide inspiration, each type of project is illustrated with images of real public art projects.

# FUNCTIONAL STREETScape ART

Artist-designed or artist-enhanced streetscape elements. These smaller-scale projects can include enhancements to existing streetscape elements, like planters or functional objects created by artists. Projects under this category may consist of planters, bike racks, benches, or trash can wraps. Funds earmarked for non-art streetscape improvements can support or supplement these efforts.

Duration: medium-term (3-10 years)



*"Beltline Bike Rack" by Hawk Dsgn*



*artist unknown*



*painted planter by Chinon Maria*



*"nails" by Christian Moeller*



*"Geoscape Mural" by L Star Murals*

## MURALS

Murals are a cost-efficient way to create a visually impactful work of art and engage community members in its creation. They may be painted directly onto walls, painted on parachute cloth in a studio and professionally installed, or created digitally, printed on scrim fabric, and hung from a façade. Professional muralists should be engaged in leading projects to ensure that the art has a high artistic quality and that it is professionally applied onto an appropriately prepared wall surface. Murals require limited upkeep aside from cleaning and periodic re-coating.

Duration: medium-term (10 years+)



# LIGHT-BASED ART

These works of art can be sculptural during the day and illuminated at night or projection-based and only viewable at night. Either way, they can attract people to the area in the evening and visually distinguish the corridor.

Duration: short-term (less than one year +)

Project examples:



*LUMA Projection Arts Festival*



*location unknown*



*University Ave Streetscape by RDG Planning & Design*



*"Superbloom" by Creative Machines*

# PERMANENT SCULPTURES

Permanent sculptures provide an enduring visual presence, but the cost to create and maintain this type of art can be significant. Permanent sculptures can be made of lasting materials like steel, bronze, glass, and powder-coated metals. Lighting, landscaping, signage, and interpretative programs will enhance these projects.

Duration: long-term (25 years+)

# STOREFRONT ART INSTALLATIONS

Temporary installations in vacant or underutilized storefronts can create a rotating gallery of works of art, work that has already begun between BAoA and City Ave District. Future activations can include designs printed on wraps or 3D installations placed within storefronts. Commissioning entities can create design criteria to ensure the installations can be quickly removed or relocated as required. Thematic or seasonal-themed window murals or installations that utilize multiple storefronts would create a more significant cultural experience on Bala Avenue.

Duration: short-term (seasonal+)



Fenwick of Bond Street display, by Andrei Robu



Dutch Ministry Entrance by Studio Lennarts & De Bruijnu



Multiple artists, Central PA Festival of the Arts



Bisbee Arizona Arts & Culture District Signage

# BANNERS AND SIGNAGE

Artists can design light pole banners for installation along Bala Avenue. The banners will add visual cohesion to the streetscape while displaying unique works of art. Switching out the banners seasonally or annually will ensure continued visual interest.

Duration: short-term (quarterly - 1 year+)

# TEMPORARY ART - ART EXPERIENCES

Temporary sculptures and installations allow artists to be more adventurous in their material selection and design since these works of art don't have to stand the test of time. They can be in place for as little as a day to a year or more.

Duration: short-term (1 day - 1 year+)



Space Coast Mural Festival



"Choose Your Own Adventure" by Graham Projects



"Little Cloud Sky" by Friends With You



"La Flor De Mi Madre" by Naomi Rag



"Ascension of Polka Dots" by Yayoi Kusama

# TEMPORARY ART - VISUAL ART

# ASPHALT ART

Murals can be painted directly onto streets, crosswalks, or pedestrian spaces to calm traffic and designate special zones. These projects are short-term art activation methods that create quick impact and offer significant opportunities to engage community members in its creation. Asphalt art must be painted with appropriate materials to maximize its longevity and ensure compatibility with the paved surface.

Duration: short-term (6 mo. - 1 year, depending on the impact of traffic on the surface)



Asphalt art by Roadsworth



"City Full of Color" by Kapitza



"Walking on Words", artist unknown



Installation by Christy Caravaglio

# FAST AND FUN INSTALLATIONS

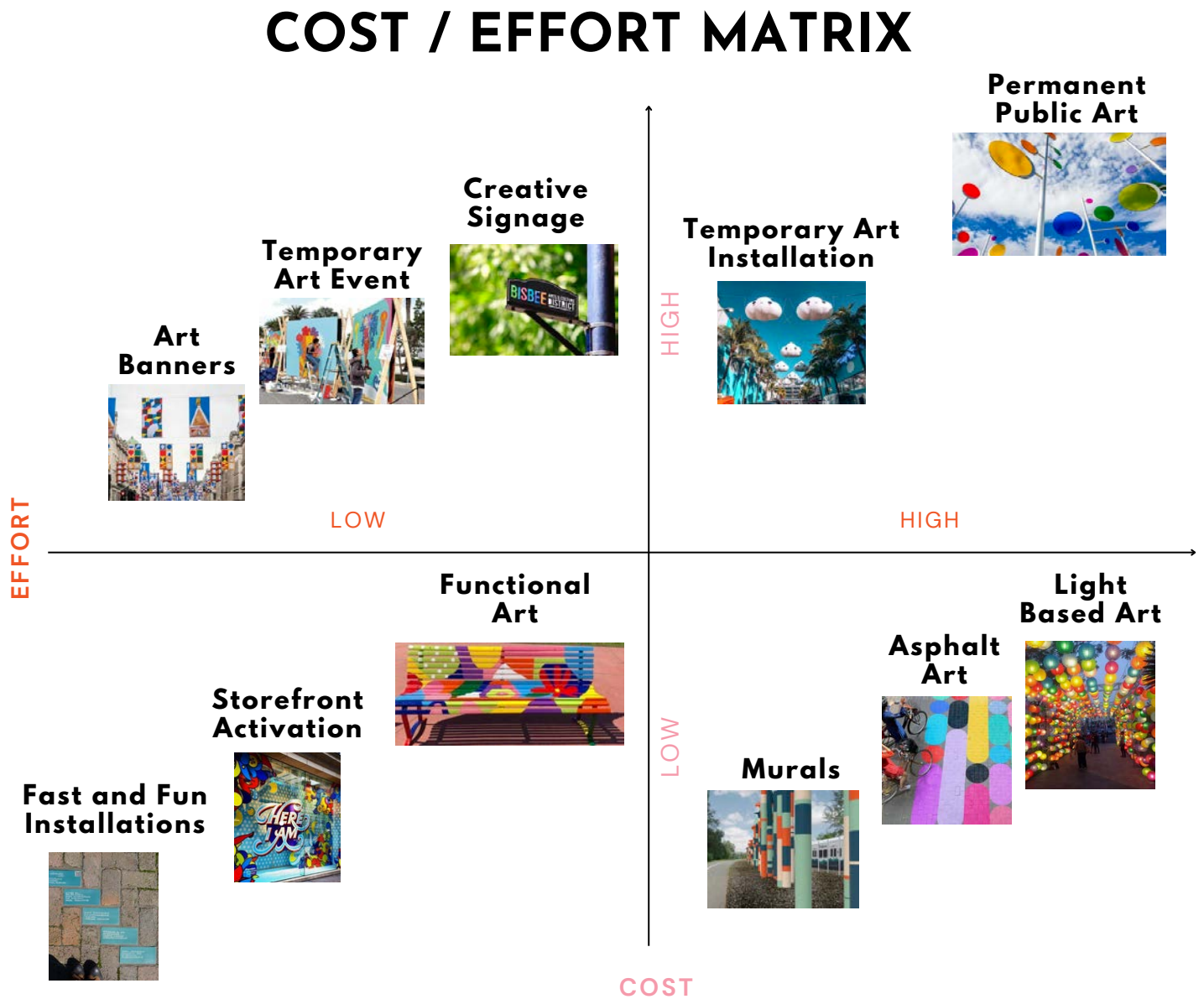
Temporary tactical installations often use ordinary materials to create art for a limited display. They are also a great way to introduce other art forms, including poetry, sound art, photography, and more. Since they are temporary, plan their removal as part of the commissioning process.

On a corridor like Bala Avenue, where there is limited public space available for art installations, Fast and Fun projects are an ideal option because they make the most of physical limitations and result in projects with minimal maintenance, if any.

Duration: short-term (less than one year)

# PUBLIC ART STRATEGIES

## COST / EFFORT MATRIX



# NEXT STEPS

## IMPLEMENTING THE PUBLIC ART PLAN

The following steps can be undertaken by Bala Avenue of the Arts, Lower Merion Township, City Ave District, or other local stakeholders to implement public art initiatives in Bala Village

- 1. Begin with a demonstration public art project at a high-profile location on Bala Avenue.** Consider staff/volunteer capacity to implement projects or secure outside support. Develop a straightforward process that engages community members in planning and execution and creates a shared definition of a successful public art project.
- 2. Consider a micro-grant program** to realize targeted, arts-based improvements within Bala Village. This approach relies on the passion and interest of community members to implement the projects. Identify local artistic resources (artists, performers, educators, advocates, and curators) who can leverage local support and resources.
- 3. Develop a 'Friends of' group** for Bala Avenue to foster and organize local support. Regular engagement with this group will help to identify arts and culture opportunities and secure volunteer participation.
- 4. Engage business and property owners** as partners in arts planning and arts initiatives. Their involvement will help to grow new ideas and increased connectivity between residents and local businesses.

# APPENDIX

## SURVEY RESULTS

# SURVEY RESULTS

SUMMER 2024

WE'RE BRINGING ART TO BALA AVENUE!

BALA AVENUE  
PUBLIC  
ART  
SURVEY





# SURVEY METHODOLOGY AND PARTICIPATION OVERVIEW

- The survey was created by Civic Centered in collaboration with community groups, stakeholders, and civic leaders. It was hosted on the Township website and promoted through social media, email newsletters, and print materials. The survey was open for approximately one month, from July to August.
- The survey received 396 responses, representing about 4% of Bala Cynwyd's population. The majority of respondents (69%) reside in the 19004 zip code, which covers Bala Cynwyd. A smaller but significant portion of participants come from nearby areas, with 9% residing in Wynnewood (19096) and 8% in Merion Station (19066). Other respondents are from adjacent communities, including Ardmore, Narberth, and Bryn Mawr.
- In terms of age distribution, the survey captured a balanced representation from various age groups. Respondents aged 30-49 and 65+ made up the largest portions, each accounting for 32% of the total. Those aged 50-64 comprised 26% of participants, while the younger demographic (18-29) and those who preferred not to disclose their age each represented 5% of the respondents.

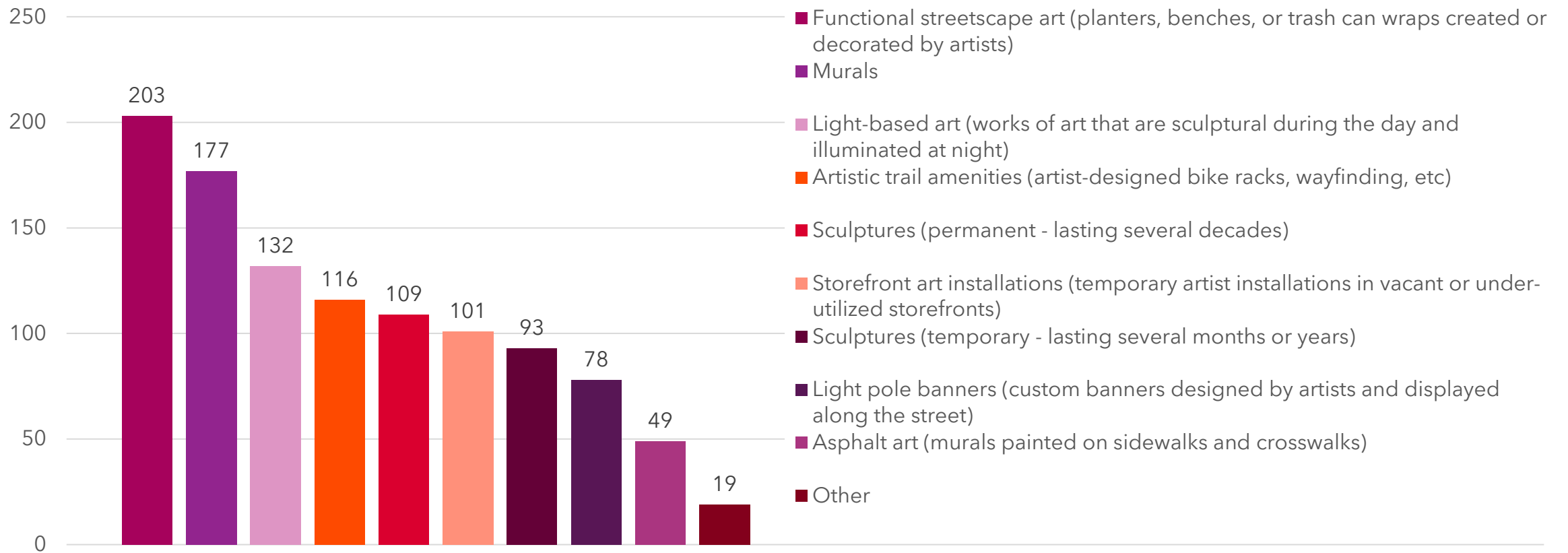
# KEY TAKEAWAYS

- **Preferred Public Art Projects:** Respondents favor functional streetscape art like planters and benches (17.79%), murals (16.4%), and light-based art installations (11.74%), with a significant interest also in artistic trail amenities like bike racks (10.05%).
- **Desired Impact of Public Art:** The primary goals for new public art on Bala Avenue are general beautification (33%), fostering community engagement (20%), and enhancing the connection with the Cynwyd Heritage Trail (17%).
- **Popular Art Programs:** Outdoor festivals and street fairs (29.32%) and live music performances (25.97%) are the most desired art programs, followed by art exhibitions and gallery shows (17.8%).
- **Engagement Frequency:** Most visit Bala Avenue weekly (22%), while a significant portion visits rarely or monthly, indicating varied levels of regular interaction with the area.
- **Primary Attractions:** Recreation on the Cynwyd Heritage Trail (30%) and dining (18%) are the main reasons people visit Bala Avenue, with commuting also being a notable factor (16%).
- **Preferred Cultural Events:** Concerts (24%) and theater productions (21%) are the most popular cultural events, with a notable interest in cultural festivals and community events (17%).
- **Attendance at Cultural Events:** A large portion of respondents attend cultural events a few times a year (43%), while 36% attend monthly, suggesting a moderate level of cultural engagement within the community.



# PUBLIC ART CAN TAKE MANY FORMS, FROM PERMANENT SCULPTURES TO TEMPORARY ART INSTALLATIONS.

## WHICH OF THESE TYPES OF PUBLIC ART PROJECTS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE PLANNED FOR BALA AVENUE IN THE FUTURE? (SELECT UP TO FIVE)



# WHAT IMPORTANT THING ABOUT YOUR COMMUNITY WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE REFLECTED IN NEW WORKS OF ART ALONG BALA AVENUE?

The survey responses regarding what important aspects of the community should be reflected in new works of art along Bala Avenue can be summarized into several key themes:

**Diversity and Inclusion:** A significant number of respondents emphasized the importance of showcasing the community's diversity, including different cultures, ethnicities, religions, and identities (including LGBTQ+). There was also a strong focus on inclusion and tolerance.

**Community and Neighborliness:** Many responses highlighted the close-knit nature of the community, where neighbors care for each other and work together. The idea of Bala Cynwyd as a village with a strong sense of community was a recurring theme.

**History and Heritage:** The community's rich history, including its Welsh origins, the presence of the Orthodox Jewish community, and the area's connection to the Pennsylvania Railroad and other historical landmarks, was frequently mentioned as important to reflect in the art.

**Nature and Environment:** The natural beauty of the area, including its parks, trees, and connection to the Cynwyd Trail, was another prevalent theme. Respondents expressed a desire for the art to reflect the community's appreciation of its natural surroundings.

**Creativity and Local Talent:** Several respondents suggested that the art should showcase the creativity of local artists, including those of all ages and backgrounds. There was also an emphasis on involving the community in the creation and selection of the art.

**Vibrancy and Modernity:** Some responses called for bold, bright, and modern artistic expressions that would bring vibrancy to Bala Avenue and make it an attractive place for both residents and visitors.

**Public Space and Accessibility:** A few respondents mentioned the importance of ensuring that public spaces are aesthetically pleasing and functional, with art installations that engage people of all ages and make the area more welcoming and lively.

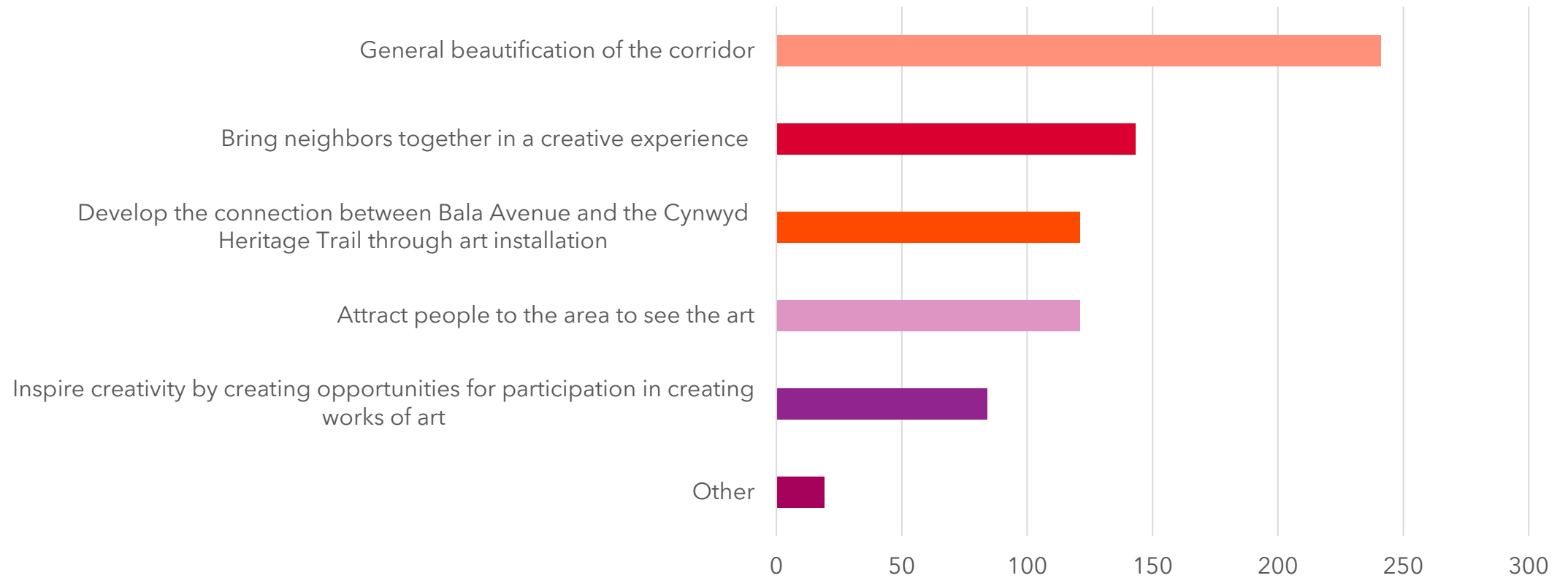
**Cultural Heritage and Identity:** The importance of reflecting the various cultural heritages present in Bala Cynwyd, including Jewish pride, Welsh roots, and other cultural contributions, was a key theme.

**Concerns and Criticism:** Some respondents expressed concerns about the potential for art installations to clash with the character of the area or become too permanent. Others stressed that any artistic decisions should be made carefully, considering the community's identity and aesthetic.

In summary, the responses reflect a desire for art that celebrates the community's diversity, history, and natural beauty, while also fostering a sense of inclusivity, creativity, and neighborliness.



# WHAT WOULD YOU WANT NEW PUBLIC ART ON BALA AVENUE TO DO? (SELECT UP TO THREE)



# WHAT THEMES WOULD YOU WANT TO SEE EXPLORED IN A NEW MURAL FOR BALA AVENUE?

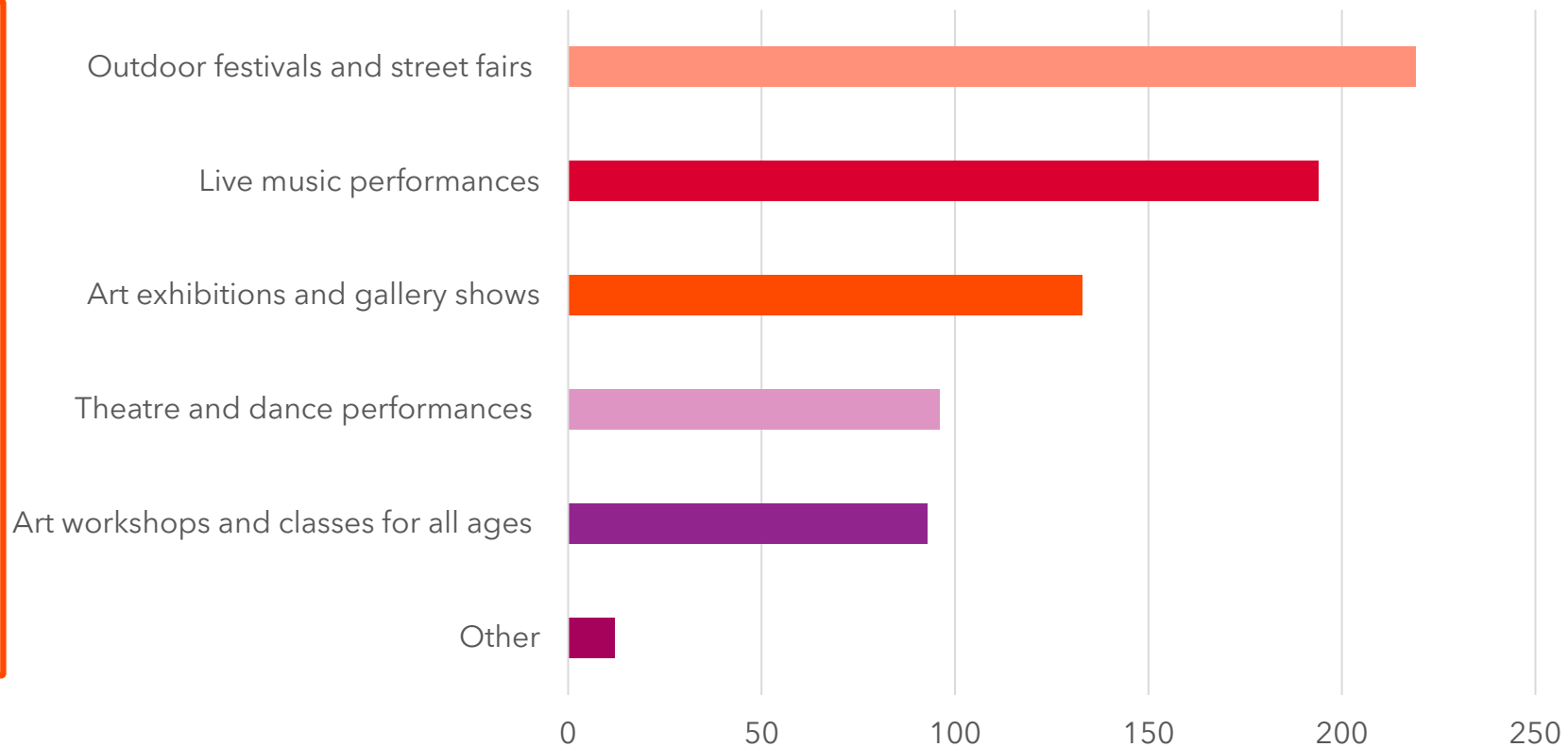
The survey responses regarding themes for a new mural on Bala Avenue can be summarized into several categories:

- **Historical Significance:** Many respondents emphasized the importance of reflecting the history of the area, including Bala Cynwyd's past, local historical figures, Welsh heritage, and railroad history.
- **Nature and Environment:** A significant number of responses mentioned nature, flora, fauna, green spaces, and the connection to nearby trails like the Cynwyd Heritage Trail. Themes of environmental sustainability and protection of native species were also highlighted.
- **Community and Diversity:** Respondents frequently mentioned themes of community, inclusivity, and cultural diversity. There were calls to celebrate the multicultural fabric of Bala Cynwyd, including recognition of various ethnic groups, religions, and social unity.
- **Art and Aesthetics:** Some responses focused on the mural's aesthetic aspects, suggesting modern and contemporary themes, vibrancy, and color. Others emphasized the importance of the mural being visually appealing and in harmony with the neighborhood's character.
- **Connection between City and Suburbs:** A theme emerged around Bala Cynwyd's role as a bridge between Philadelphia and the Main Line, reflecting both urban and suburban identities.
- **Positive Values:** Several respondents suggested that the mural should promote positive values like peace, unity, love, kindness, and community collaboration.
- **Resistance and Concerns:** A minority of respondents expressed resistance to the idea of a mural, citing concerns about its permanence, potential for political or controversial themes, and the quality of execution.

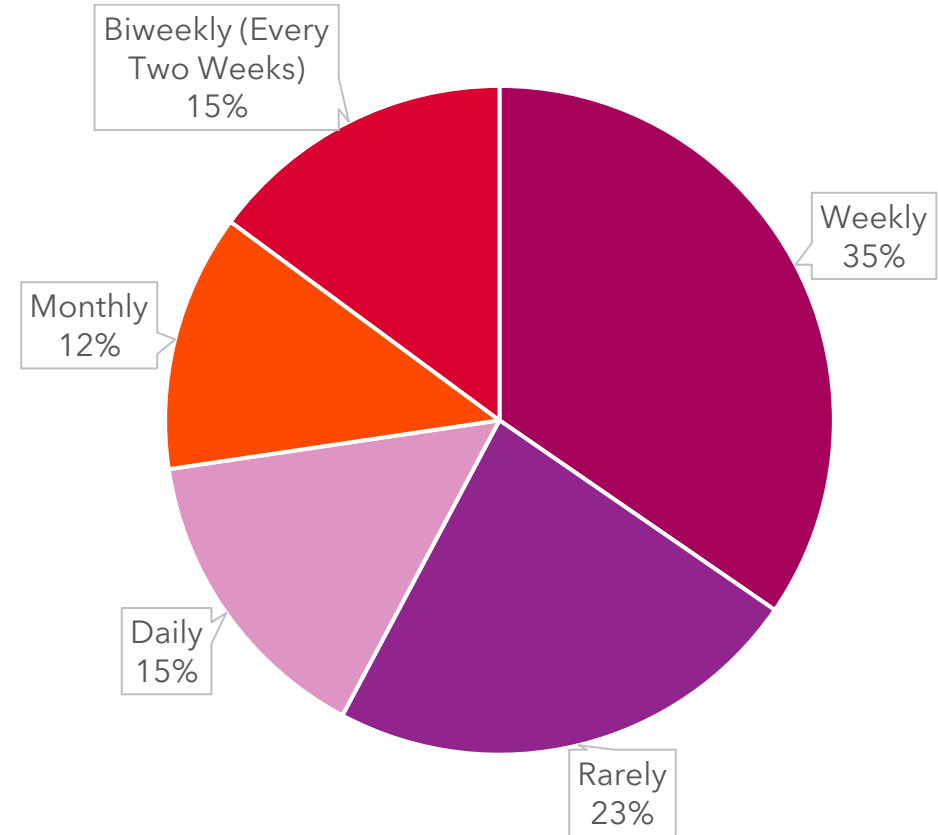
In summary, the prevailing themes are history, nature, community diversity, positive values, and aesthetic harmony, with some concern about ensuring the mural aligns with local tastes and character.



# WHAT TYPES OF ART PROGRAMS WOULD YOU LIKE TO SEE ON BALA AVENUE? (SELECT UP TO THREE)

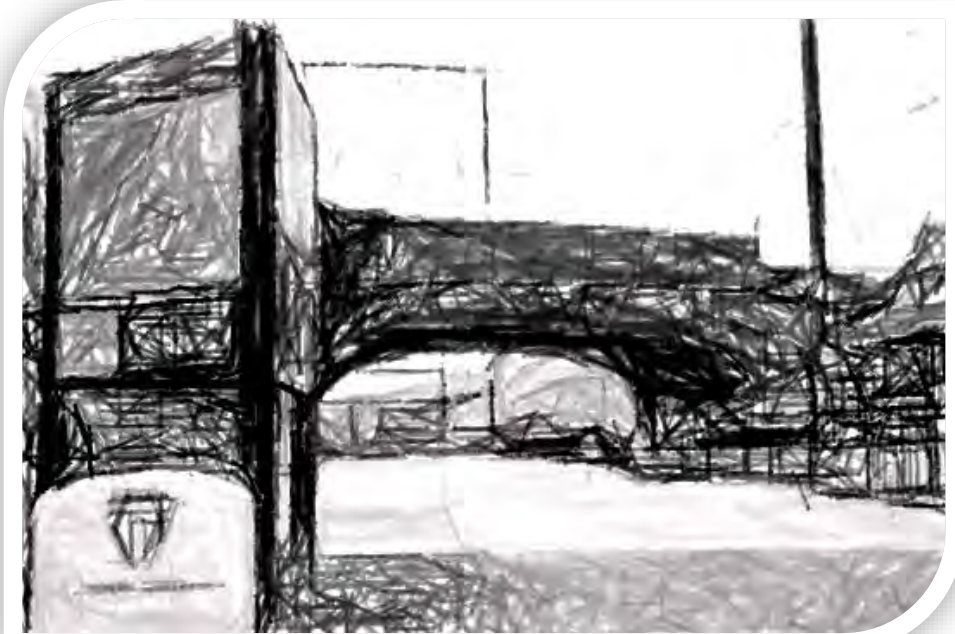
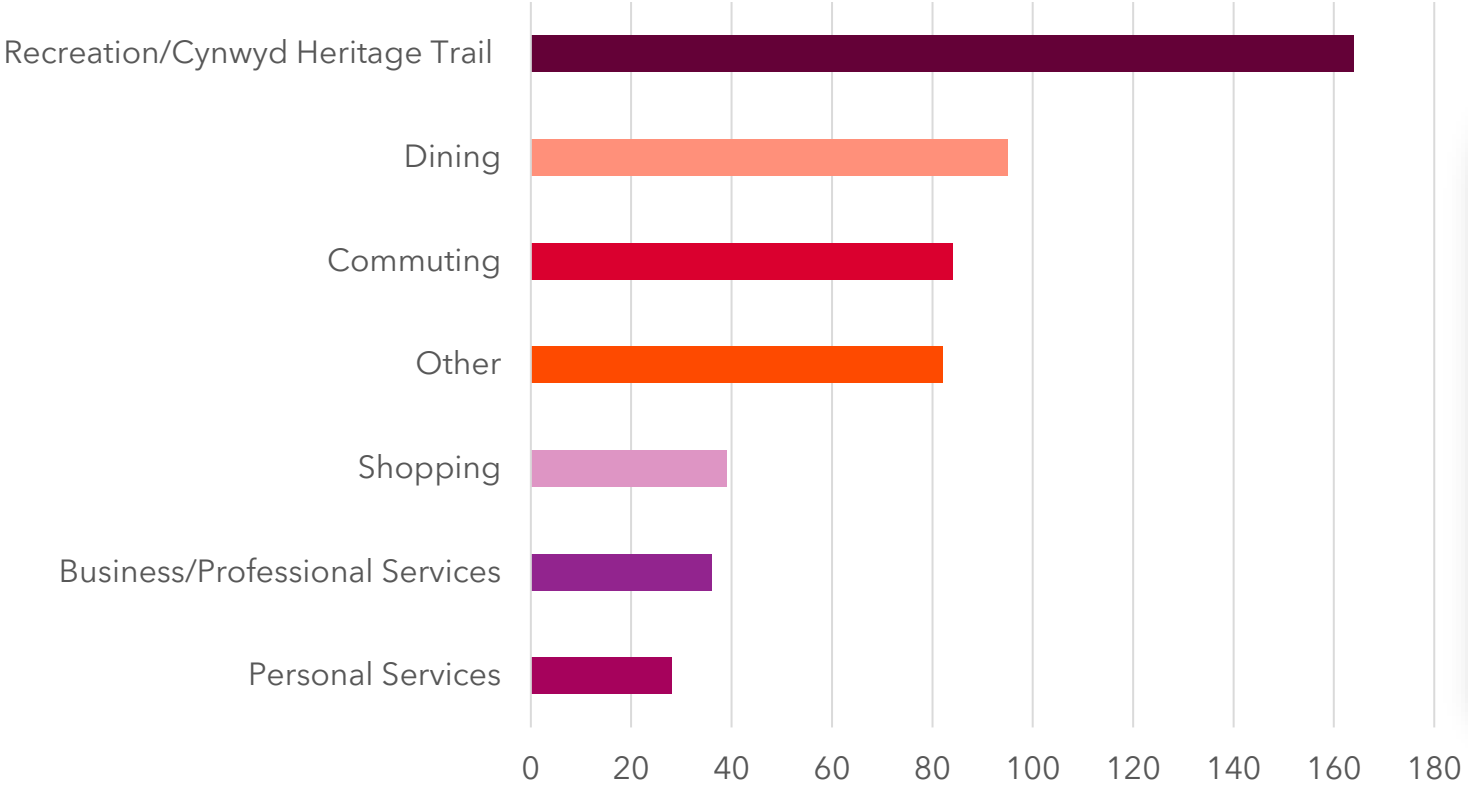


# HOW OFTEN ARE YOU ON BALA AVENUE?

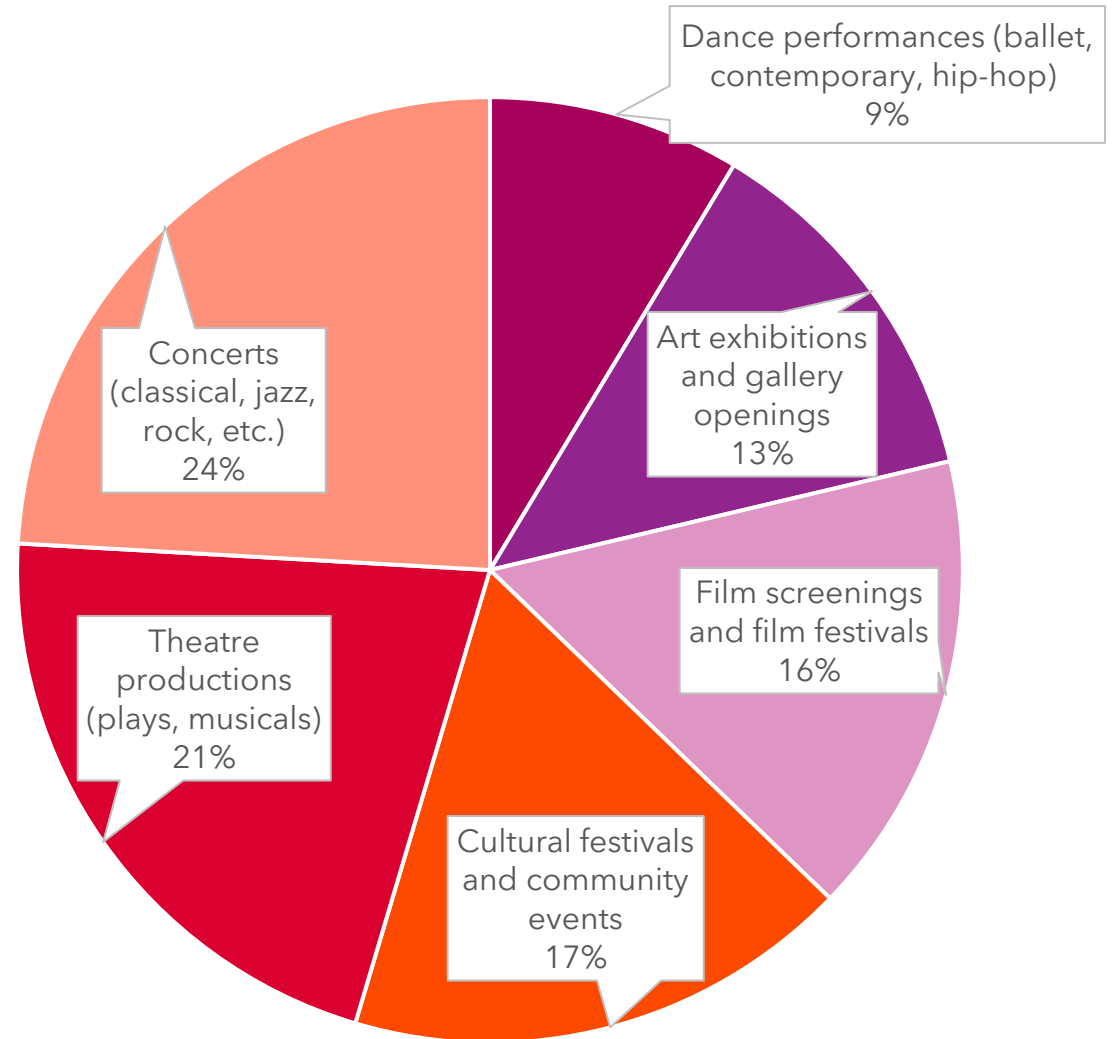




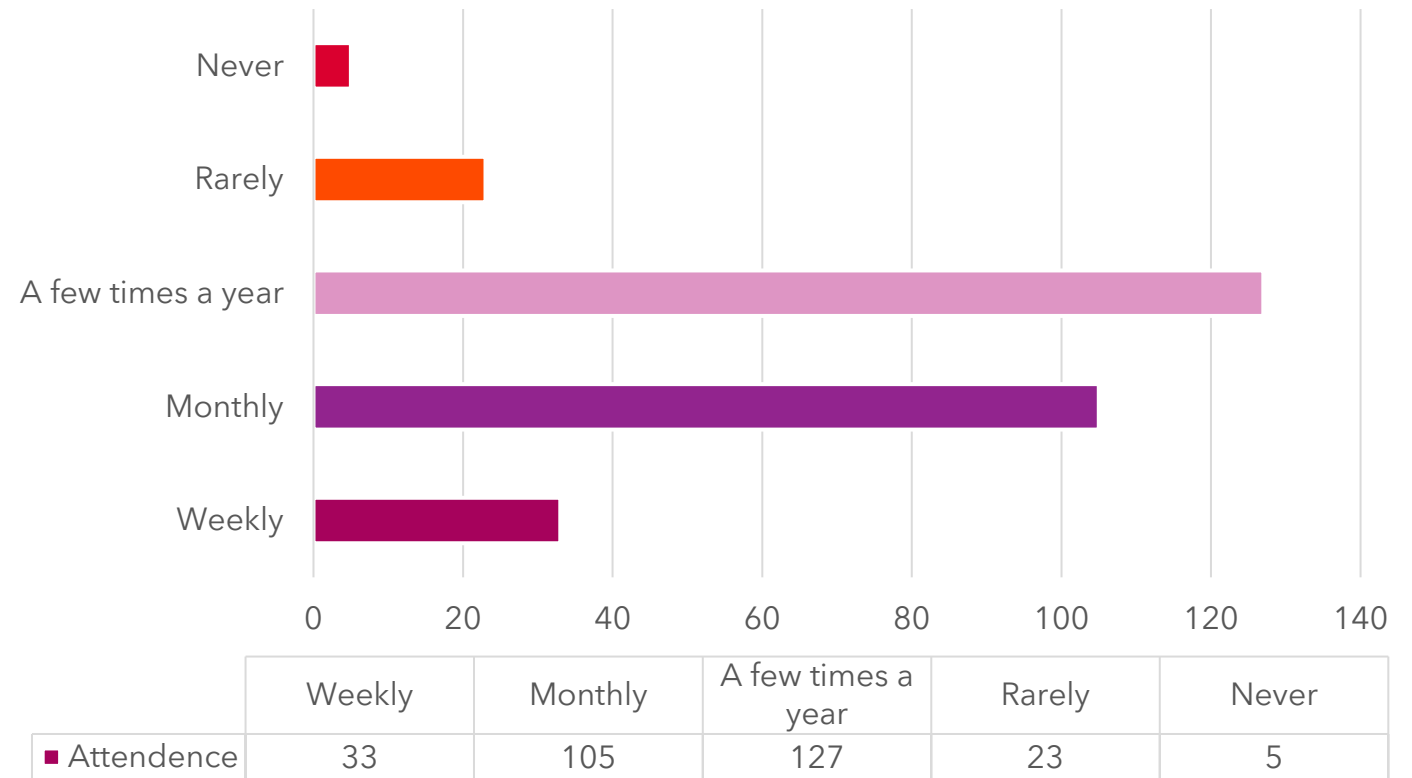
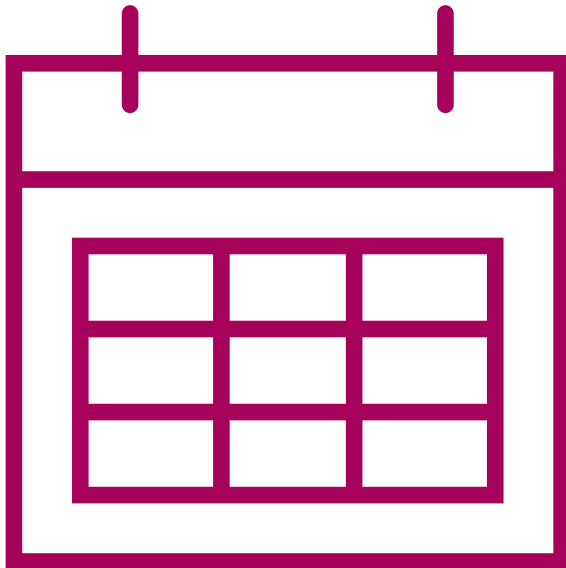
# WHAT BRINGS YOU TO BALA AVENUE?



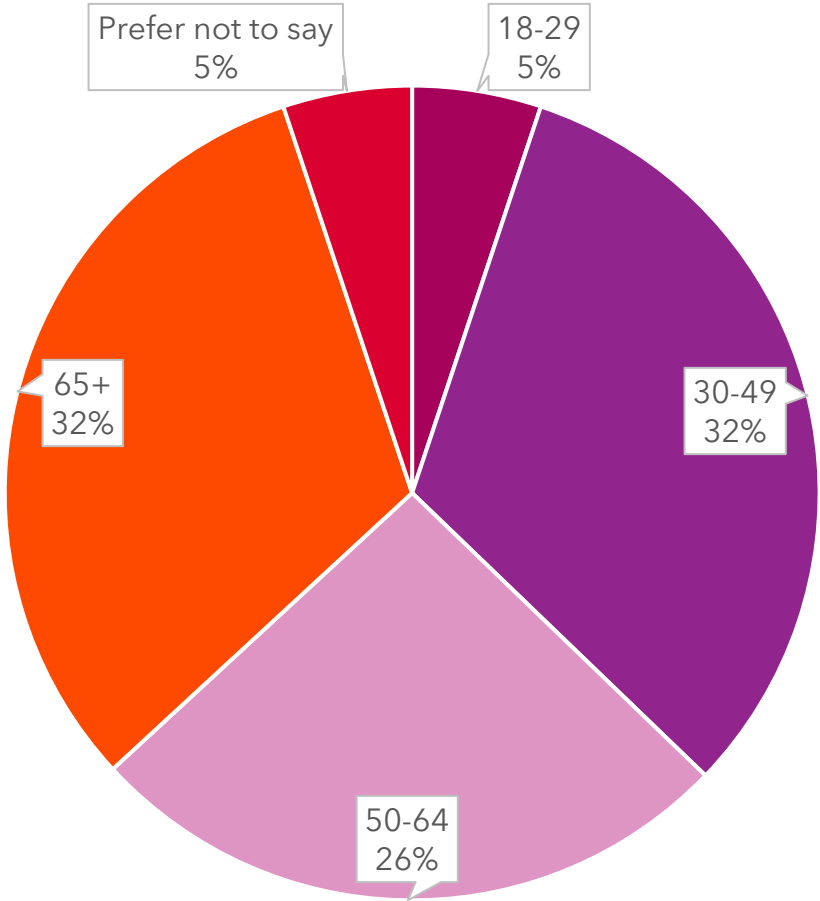
# WHAT TYPE OF ART EVENTS DO YOU USUALLY PURCHASE TICKETS TO SEE? (SELECT ALL THAT APPLY)



# HOW OFTEN DO YOU ATTEND ART AND CULTURAL EVENTS?



# WHAT AGE GROUP DO YOU BELONG TO?



# WHAT ZIP CODE DO YOU RESIDE IN?

- **Predominant Zip Code:** The overwhelming majority of respondents reside in Bala Cynwyd, 19004 zip code (69%).
- **Secondary Zip Codes:** The next most common zip codes are nearby communities of 19096 (Wynnewood, 9%) and 19066 (Merion Station, 8%).
- **Other Zip Codes:** A smaller number of respondents listed other zip codes such as 19003 (Ardmore), 19072 (Narberth), 19010 (Bryn Mawr).