

DRAFT
WASHINGTON AS COMMEMORATION
Capital Cities Case Study Research Study

APPENDIX D
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

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APPENDIX D: BOSTON

City Population: 589,000; Metropolitan Area Population: 4.4 million

Commemoration Planning in Boston

Historically, the premiere location for commemorative works has been the Boston Common (one of the oldest public parks in the U.S.), the adjacent Boston Public Garden (the first U.S. botanical garden) and along Commonwealth Avenue Mall, which links them to the rest of Frederick Law Olmstead's seven miles of linear parks known as the Emerald Necklace. Today, these locations are considered "complete" and a city moratorium has been placed on new commemorations, although a few works have been added despite the prohibition.

The Boston Arts Commission (BAC) has the legal authority to approve, locate and preserve all interior and exterior public art on property owned by the City of Boston, including monuments and other commemorative works. First established in 1890, the BAC is appointed by the Mayor and consists of five Boston residents nominated by cultural institutions in the city.

Commemorative Subject Matter and/or Thematic Analysis

With the highly visible locations off-limits to new commemorations, proposals for new works have shifted to parks, libraries and other community facilities in Boston's neighborhoods, many of which continue to maintain a strong ethnic or cultural identity. As a result, commemorative subject matter is sometimes repeated across neighborhoods. There are at least four Vietnam War memorials in adjacent or nearby neighborhoods, for example. Typically, 60-70% of the approximately 20 or so works in the development pipeline at any one time are commemorative in nature. Commemorations often have greater difficulty than contemporary works in securing outside funding, which is a key reason that many proposed works are never constructed.

Although there are currently more than 600 public art and commemorative works in the BAC's database, themes of Boston's commemorations have not been systematically analyzed. Many of the works are related to military events or political figures because these subjects are readily accepted by the communities. Unlike other cities, however, Boston has not seen many requests to commemorate local victims or tragedies, such as car accidents, even though there is no minimum time lapse required before a subject can be commemorated.¹

With so many memorials proposed by community groups for their own neighborhoods, the BAC rarely takes a position on subject matter. The BAC's official policy guidelines state only that the "BAC is more likely to support proposals for artwork which are place specific and contextually appropriate," but do not provide more detailed criteria.

Process to Establish New Works

The BAC's *Guidelines for Permanent Public Art Installation in Boston (Guidelines)* outlines the steps for locating new public works of art or commemorations on city property. The *Guidelines* have been modified repeatedly over the past few years.

One unique feature of Boston's commemoration process is the city-maintained trust that can fund new public art and commemorations. The Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund was established in 1892, when the successful Boston attorney directed in his will that one-third of his estate be set aside in a special open space improvement fund for the City of Boston.² Although the board administering this trust is independent, the BAC does have some representation.

Monument proponents can apply to the Browne Fund twice during the development of their proposals; once for financial assistance in the planning and design phase and again for construction funding. The Browne Fund accepts applications for funding twice per year. In most cases, the maximum amount the Browne Fund grants is \$20,000 for planning and design and \$75,000 for fabrication. Since the total cost of new works typically ranges from \$150,000 to \$300,000 including landscaping, monument proponents usually need to raise additional capital to complete the work. The City of Boston rarely contributes financially to development or maintenance of public art unless it is independently undertaking a public works project that would support it.

The *Guidelines* set forth a detailed set of step-by-step instructions for the development of new monuments and memorials in Boston. A synopsis of this process is as follows:

Step 1: Application for planning funds

- Applicants can apply for planning and design funds for the artwork from the Edward Ingersoll Browne Fund, a public trust of the City of Boston.
- Applications are accepted twice per year.
- Applications may proceed without funding from the trust.

Step 2: Informational meeting with BAC staff

- BAC staff explains the process and may ask for more information from the applicant about the “goals for the artwork” and plans to date.

Step 3: Artist selection

- All public art proponents are required to select an outside “BAC-approved advisor” to help guide the proposal through the process.
- Proponent has 3 options for selecting an artist:
 - Open competition
 - Request for Qualifications
 - Invitational process with at least 3 candidates
- The proponent’s selection committee, at minimum, must include the following:
 - 1 BAC-appointed liaison
 - 2 neighborhood or community representatives with a “vested interest in the project”
 - 1 visual arts professional
 - 1 representative of the host agency or site owner
 - 1 project designer (if the artwork is part of a larger development project)
- Competition finalists or artists who are invited to prepare a detailed proposal will be paid a stipend for their creative work (typically funded by the planning funds the proponent has acquired from the Browne Fund).

Step 4: Submission of preliminary design concept

- Proponent and artist meet with BAC for feedback on final design.
- Proponent must also provide a fundraising strategy to create an endowment for routine maintenance (Note that the Browne Fund allows capital repair every 5 years).

Step 5: Application for implementation funds

- Proponent can apply to the Browne Fund for development of artwork.
- Applications are accepted twice per year.
- Funding is not disbursed until BAC approves final design.

Step 6: Final design development

- Artist develops final design with help of a BAC-approved conservator.
- Conservator approves the materials and schedule for maintenance of the artwork, which determines the endowment for perpetual maintenance.

- BAC appoints a project manager from the Mayor’s Office of Arts, Tourism, and Special Events to coordinate intermediate meetings with city departments, as appropriate.
- Proponent must hold at least one community meeting and public display of the proposed artwork.

Step 7: Application for BAC design approval

- Proponent presents final design to BAC, which approves design (and location) or recommends changes within 30 days.
- Proponent has two additional opportunities to satisfy BAC.
- If approved, Browne funding is disbursed.

Step 8: Project fabrication and interim reports

- Artist develops work and submits interim reports to BAC regarding progress and any changes to approved design.
- BAC must approve final design and location in writing before installation.

Step 9: Documentation record and accession

- After the artwork is installed, the proponent submits a “documentation record” to the BAC detailing the artwork, which remains on record along with all other documentation for the project.
- City formally accepts the artwork into its collection.

Selected Commemorations in Boston

a. Boston Women’s Memorial

The Boston Women’s Memorial, dedicated in 2003, received an unusually significant amount of press coverage and support from City Hall, in part because the Mayor strongly supported the work and his wife served on the commission to develop it. Despite the moratorium, the work was placed on the Commonwealth Avenue and features three Bostonian women: First Lady Abigail Adams, women’s rights activist Lucy Stone and African-American poet Phyllis Wheatley. The sculpture group has received some criticism because the bronze statues are composed in a conversational circle even though they were not alive during the same time periods.



Boston Women’s Memorial

b. 9/11 Memorial

The 9/11 Memorial is located adjacent to the lagoon in the Boston Public Garden famous for its swan boats (shown at right). Dedicated in 2004, the landscape memorial is so subtle that the BAC had to include it in their recently released Art Guide because visitors were having trouble finding it. City officials recall no opposition to the work despite the presence of multiple conservation groups that have reacted strongly against other proposed



9/11 Memorial

commemorations within the park. The \$250,000 memorial was paid for through private donations and a \$100,000 grant secured by the late Senator Edward Kennedy.

Photo credits

Boston 9/11 Memorial – Flickr user StarrGazer,
<http://www.flickr.com/photos/20197422@N00/169642640>

Boston Women's Memorial – Newington-Cropsey Cultural Studies Center,
http://nccsc.net/asset/original_filename/736/BERGMANN2LARGE.jpg

¹ Goodfellow, personal interview.

² http://www.cityofboston.gov/arts/visual/perm_publicart.asp