

Norfolk seeks artist for “rising tides” project in arts district

- [By Eric Hartley | The Virginian-Pilot](#) | Mar 4, 2016



- [Steve Earley | The Virginian-Pilot](#)

A man looks back at his flooded car on Monticello Avenue in Norfolk on Saturday, July 11, 2015.

NORFOLK

The city’s arts district is not only a hub of creativity and culture, it also has some of the worst flooding in Norfolk.

So it’s an appropriate future home for public art meant to spark discussion about the threat from rising seas.

Norfolk received a \$75,000 federal grant last year for the “Art and Rising Tides” project. Now the city is trying to find an artist to design it and make it a reality.

In a formal request for proposals filed Friday, the city asked artists to submit applications by April 1. The artist chosen after a monthslong screening process will

create “environmental public art that will address Norfolk’s relationship with water,” the city document says.

Public officials and community leaders hope the art, scheduled to be finished by spring 2017, will inspire discussion – and even solutions.

“I think art is a great way to talk about issues that need to be solved,” said Ann Stokes, chairwoman of the city’s Public Art Commission. “So to have an artist come in and create something that is going to capture people’s imagination, or maybe challenge them or show them some solutions that maybe they hadn’t thought of, I think it increases the dialogue among the rest of the community.”

The artwork could be in any medium, composed of one large piece or a series throughout the arts district. The city wants the piece to be symbolic and functional.

“Artists may want to physically demonstrate solutions and may include permeable surfaces, water retention swales, cisterns, rain barrels or green or blue roofs,” the request for proposals says. “The work should be hopeful, provocative, revealing and tell the story of the water.”

The city plans to spend \$121,000, including \$75,000 in grant money from the National Endowment for the Arts.

The grant was part of the organization’s “Our Towns” project, which gives money for works of art that “contribute toward the livability of communities.” The Elizabeth River Project also received \$50,000 as part of the same competition to help commission a set of sculptures in Paradise Creek Nature Park in Portsmouth’s Cradock area.

The artist who creates Norfolk’s Art and Rising Tides piece will be chosen by a committee of Public Arts Commission members and people in the business, community and art worlds.

That committee will interview up to three finalists and recommend its choice to the full Public Arts Commission, Stokes said.

Eric Hartley, 757-932-7511, eric.hartley@pilotonline.com