

## **Explore Millburn - Short Hills Five-Year Public Art Master Plan (2027–2031)**

### **Request for Proposals (RFP)**

Issue Date: February 2, 2026

Contact: Steven Grillo

#### **1. Introduction & Background**

Explore Millburn–Short Hills ("Explore") is the management entity for the Special Improvement District (SID) serving Millburn's five commercial districts. For the past four years, Explore has successfully installed and maintained a growing portfolio of public art installations throughout the SID. These projects have enhanced the visual character of the district, supported placemaking efforts, and fostered community pride. Cornerstone works such as the Millburn Art Alley have become recognizable community assets. Additionally, Explore has worked with local partners including the Millburn Cultural, Education, Diversity and the Arts group (CEDA) to collaborate on projects and develop strategic community partnerships. Millburn is also a Main Street New Jersey community - the highest level of downtown recognition in New Jersey. This Master Plan is funded in part through a grant from Essex County which has supported Explore's work for the past four years.

#### **2. Project Purpose**

Explore Millburn–Short Hills will seek proposals from qualified consultants or consultancy teams to develop a comprehensive, inclusive, and actionable Public Art Master Plan. The plan will serve as a long-term roadmap for integrating public art into the fabric of Millburn across a diverse range of locations, artistic mediums, audiences, and partners.

The Public Art Master Plan will be a living document - flexible, adaptable, and responsive - that supports both near-term implementation and long-term alignment with the goals of the Main Street New Jersey and Main Street America programs. The Main Street Approach offers a community-based revitalization framework that supports downtown transformation while remaining adaptable to local conditions. Consultants should demonstrate familiarity with:

- Main Street America and Main Street New Jersey principles
- Design-focused placemaking strategies
- ADA-compliant design and accessibility best practices (including Main Street America design guidelines)
- Historic preservation and combining public art with historic buildings and areas

### 3. Project Goals

At a minimum, the selected consultant will produce:

- A written Five-Year Public Art Master Plan addressing all items in Section 3
- High-level budget considerations for future projects (excluding construction costs)
- A summary presentation suitable for public and stakeholder meetings
- Digital-ready materials that can be adapted for Explore's website

The Public Art Master Plan should address the following goals:

#### *A. Site Identification & Activation*

- Conduct a visual and contextual audit of the SID and surrounding areas.
- Identify 10–15 priority locations for new public art installations.
- Prioritize sites with high pedestrian activity, strong visibility, or underutilized space.
- Consider opportunities on both public and private property, with appropriate city and/or property owner cooperation.
- Focus on critical pedestrian areas including:
  - Municipal parking deck, Millburn Art Alley, train stations and public parking lots and parks

#### *B. Diverse Mediums & Forms*

- Expand beyond murals to include:
  - Sculpture, light installations and projections, temporary or seasonal installations
  - Interactive art - especially with ties to the history of the Township
  - Functional public art (e.g., artist-designed benches, bike racks, planters)
- Evaluate feasibility based on location, permitting, budget, ADA compliance, durability, and long-term maintenance.
- Encourage art that can be enjoyed by individuals with mobility, visual, or sensory impairments.

#### *C. Cultural Engagement & Inclusion*

- Develop culturally inclusive art reflective of Millburn's demographics, including its strong and growing Asian-American population.
- Propose partnerships with cultural organizations, local artists, schools, and community groups, as well as religious and ethnic organizations, local historical society and historic preservation groups, environmental advocates and veterans' organizations.
- Encourage bilingual or multilingual interpretive signage.

#### *D. Digital Presence & Branding*

- Provide recommendations for enhancing Explore’s public art webpage as part of a broader rebranding and website redesign.
- Include guidance for:
  - An interactive map of existing and future installations
  - Artist biographies and project narratives
  - Behind-the-scenes and process-oriented content including social media strategies
  - Updates on upcoming projects and opportunities for engagement
- Identify the digital platform as a central hub for artists, residents, visitors, funders, and partners.

#### *E. Long-Term Vision Projects*

- Include a conceptual framework for future initiatives such as an Art & Music Trail - a destination-centric art walk that will feature musical instrument installations.
- Highlight opportunities to celebrate the legacy of the Paper Mill Playhouse and its role in Millburn’s arts ecosystem.
- Identify potential future funding pathways

### **4. Budget**

The total project budget is \$7,500. Proposals should clearly outline:

- Scope of services within this budget
- Task-based or phase-based fee structure

### **5. Consultant Qualifications**

Consultants should demonstrate:

- Experience developing public art master plans or cultural planning documents
- Familiarity with Main Street programs, downtown revitalization and historic preservation
- Strong community engagement and facilitation skills
- Experience with inclusive, equitable, and ADA-compliant design strategies

### **6. Proposal Requirements**

Proposals should include:

1. Cover letter outlining interest and approach
2. A description of proposed work for all work listed in Section 3
3. Relevant experience and examples of similar work and key personnel
4. Proposed timeline
5. Detailed budget

## **7. Evaluation Criteria**

Proposals will be evaluated based on:

- Understanding of project goals and context
- Quality and feasibility of proposed approach
- Demonstrated experience with similar projects
- Commitment to equity, inclusion, and accessibility
- Ability to deliver within the stated budget

## **8. Anticipated Schedule**

- RFP Issued: February 2, 2026
- Proposals Due: February 28, 2026
- Consultant Interviews (if applicable): Completed by March 15, 2026
- Selection: March 26, 2026
- Project Start: April 1, 2026
- Project Completion: September 30, 2026

Submissions must be sent via email to Steve Grillo, Executive Director, [Steve@exploremillburnshorthills.org](mailto:Steve@exploremillburnshorthills.org) no later than 4PM on February 28, 2026. Late submissions will not be accepted.