LOUISVILLE DOWNTOWN PARTNERSHIP

Request for Qualifications
Functional Public Art Installation – Downtown Louisville

Budget Range: $70k-$75k
Activated: 9/11/2026
Submission Deadline: 10/19/2026

Overview
Louisville Downtown Partnership (LDP) is seeking an artist or artist-led design team to create a functional public art installation for an under-utilized green space in Downtown Louisville. The installation must actively solve a real problem in the public realm while also serving as a distinctive, high-quality work of art.

We are looking for artists who work at the intersection of art, furniture design, architecture, and landscape — sometimes described as functional public art, artist-designed street furniture, or creative placemaking.

Views of green space from north (left) and south sides of the park (right).

What This Installation Should Do
Selected artists should design for the following downtown opportunities:

- Lack of seating — there is no place for people to comfortably sit, rest, or gather
- Lack of shade — site offers no relief from sun or heat
- Lack of lighting — feels unwelcoming after dark

A successful installation should address at least one of these — ideally two— through its form and function, not just its decoration.

The installation must be designed to be relocatable — bolted, ballasted, or otherwise reversibly installed is preferred rather than requiring permanent foundations. The design should anticipate the possibility of the piece being moved to a second location in the future.

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Background

Downtown Louisville has several underutilized or underdeveloped public spaces that would benefit from creative, human-centered interventions. Rather than waiting for permanent capital improvements, LDP wants to test what's possible with a well-designed, relocatable installation — one that can prove out a concept, activate a space, and be moved or adapted as our Downtown continues to change.

This project is as much about changing behavior as it is about design. We see short-term, well-designed installations as a proven way to reset people's relationship to a space and build new habits around it, and we want the selected artist to design with that goal in mind, not just the physical function of the piece.

This particular site is also slated for a larger redevelopment in the next several years. That timeline is exactly why this project matters now: the space is too important to downtown to sit inactive in the meantime. We want people to enjoy the space and use it differently before redevelopment begins.

This park sits in one of the most central and heavily trafficked locations downtown adjacent to the Kentucky International Convention Center and the Louisville Visitors Center. Despite the volume of foot traffic along its edges, the lawn itself goes largely unused; people walk past it but rarely step onto it. Currently, the only regular activation is on Wednesdays in the summer, when an LDP food truck event brings temporary tables and chairs to the fountain area. LDP's broader goal is for the full park and plaza to support more consistent use and event activity year-round.

The lawn previously had benches, removed after becoming a site for sleeping — a concern property owners remain sensitive to today. Removing the benches eventually left the lawn with no reason for anyone to use it. Past issues with the space is a real design constraint we want artists to engage with thoughtfully, not sidestep.

Aerial view of the park in downtown Louisville.

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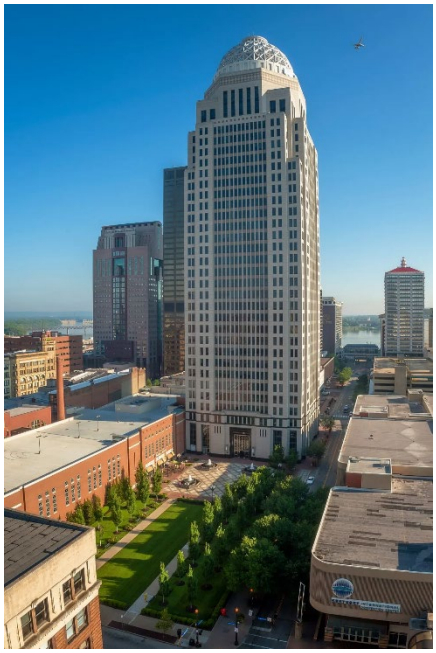

Elevated views of the park from the south. Photo on the right shows the proximity to the convention center.

Site Information
The site is located in a park that sits at the intersection of S 4th Street and W Jefferson Street in Downtown Louisville.

- The park address is 220 S 4th Street, Louisville, KY 40202. On google maps it is called Park of the Four Fountains. Residents call it Aegon Plaza. The green park area is owned by the city.
- The site is the green lawn area that sits inside the walking paths. The fountain area is not part of the project.
- Most of the foot traffic is downtown workers and out-of-town visitors on their way to and from the convention center.
- The center lawn is about 145 feet long and 40 feet wide.

Scope of Work
We anticipate the selected artist/team will:

1. Develop a concept design responsive to the site and the problem(s) it addresses
2. Present the concept to LDP and relevant stakeholders for feedback
3. Finalize design, materials, and engineering for outdoor durability and public safety
4. Fabricate and install the piece
5. Provide maintenance guidance and, if applicable, a plan for future relocation

What We're Looking For
We welcome responses from individual artists, artist collectives, or multidisciplinary design studios. We're especially interested in teams with experience in:

- Outdoor, weather-durable materials and fabrication
- Functional/furniture-scale public art (seating, shade structures, lighting elements, kiosks, etc.)
- Temporary or modular public installations
- Incorporating local history, culture, or storytelling into design
- Working with cities, downtown organizations, or community stakeholders

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Submission Requirements
Please submit the following as a PDFs:

- **Letter of interest** (1 page) describing your interest in this project and relevant experience
- **Portfolio** of 2-4 past projects, with images, that best demonstrate functional public art, outdoor durability, and/or temporary installation experience
- **Resume and References** plus 2–3 contacts from past public art or municipal clients

Selection Process
The selection committee will have representatives from LDP, the Mayor's Office, the Commission on Public Art (COPA), and adjacent property owners. Applications will be evaluated using the scoring system at the end of this document. Artists living close to Louisville will receive additional points.

From this review, the committee will select a short list of finalists, who will be invited to develop a full proposal for the project. Each finalist will receive a $1,000 stipend for their proposal, with the exception of the artist or team ultimately selected for the project. The awarded artist or artist team will be notified no later than the end of December 2026.

Selection Criteria
Responses and portfolios will be evaluated on:

- Demonstrated ability to create art that is genuinely functional (not just decorative)
- Quality and originality of past work
- Experience with outdoor materials, durability, and public safety
- Experience with temporary and/or relocatable installations
- Ability to incorporate local storytelling, history, or context
- Collaborative approach and communication style

Budget
The budget is intended to pay for travel, artist and design fees, insurance, materials, equipment, fabrication, and installation.

Submission Instructions
Deadline: October 12, 2026 at 11:59pm ET

- Please use the Application Form. All information will be collected in the form, including uploaded files
- Portfolio (2-4 relevant works) can be links to website pages or digital files
- Artist or artist team name must be in the name of each file uploaded

Timeline
Milestones in 2026 and 2027

- RFQ issued: September 11
- Questions due: September 21
- Open Q&A Session: September 28, noon-1pm ET
- Applications due: October 19
- Finalists announced: November 2
- Finalist interviews: November 16-20
- Proposals due: December 7

- Artist selected: December 21
- Site visit & concept phase: January – March 2027
- Fabrication & installation: April – July 2027
- Target completion: August 1, 2027

Questions
Please send questions by September 21, 2026. Contact Jenny Cutshaw, 502-614-4129, jcutshaw@louisvilledowntown.org

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Scoring
Applicants will be evaluated using the following criteria:

Portfolio Review –70 points

- Artistic Quality & Style – 35 points

  Quality and originality of past work
  Ability to incorporate local storytelling, history, or context

- Relevance of Work – 35 points

  Demonstrated ability to create art that is genuinely functional (not just decorative)
  Experience with outdoor materials, durability, and public safety
  Experience with temporary and/or relocatable installations

Letter of Interest – 20 points

- Communication – 20 points

  Collaborative approach and communication style

Artist Residence – 5 points

- Artists living in Kentucky – 5 points

Resume & Reference – 5 points

- Included in submission – 5 points

Total Possible Points: 100