

# Civic Design Review Overview and Guidelines

Civic Design Review is a Charter-mandated responsibility of the Arts Commission. The Civic Design Review Committee is composed of five Arts Commissioners appointed by the Mayor, including two architects, a landscape architect and two other design professionals and/or lay persons. The Committee reviews new and renovated capital projects to ensure excellence in the design of San Francisco's civic facilities and structures.

The mission of Civic Design Review is to ensure that any capital project improves the public realm, respects the natural environment and serves the best interests of the public.

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# Program Overview

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## About Civic Design Review

The San Francisco Arts Commission is mandated by City Charter Section 5.103 to approve the design of all structures placed on city property. The Charter gives authority to the Commission for the review and approval of “the design of all public structures, any private structure which extends over or upon any public property and any yards, courts, setbacks or usable open spaces which are an integral part of any such structure” (San Francisco Charter Section 5.103, 1996 revision).

The Charter thus mandates Arts Commission review of the exterior architecture and design of structures and yards, parks, courts, setbacks or usable open spaces integral to the structure. This responsibility is assigned to the Civic Design Review Committee.

A “structure” has been defined as any new or significantly remodeled building. This definition also incorporates permanent street furnishings, including, but not limited to: streetlights, benches, bollards, railings, water features, news racks, trash containers, wayfinding systems and plaques. Plaques are reviewed in conjunction with the Department of Public Works. Public Works Code 7798.5 requires Arts Commission approval of any plaque design prior to the issuance of an encroachment permit. Plaques are generally reviewed at one meeting and are not necessarily subject to the three-phased Civic Design Review. Plaques may also be reviewed administratively. There is no fee associated with the review of plaques.

### Legislation

Charter Section 5.103

Public Works Code Section 798.5

Administrative Code Section 3.19A

## Design Goals and Objectives

Excellence and originality  
Enduring quality  
Appropriateness to architectural context and to function or purpose  
Sustainability  
Precision in design

## Fees

Effective July 1, 2014, the standard Civic Design Review fee shall be \$10,220 to be paid by the Project Sponsor. This shall be paid as a lump-sum payment prior to being scheduled for Conceptual Review. Larger scale, complex projects or those involving a campus with multiple buildings may be assessed a higher fee.

Electronic fund transfers should be paid to:

Index code: 28CIVDESIGN\_PAR516

Sub-object code: 60127

Checks should be made out to: San Francisco Arts Commission

# Public Meetings

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## Meeting Times and Scheduling

The Civic Design Review Committee holds a standing meeting the third Monday of each month at 25 Van Ness Avenue in Suite 70. If the regularly scheduled meeting falls on a legal holiday, the meeting will be rescheduled to the Monday immediately preceding or following. Please check the Arts Commission website for accurate schedule information. Agendas are posted 72 hours in advance of the meeting in accordance with the Sunshine Ordinance.

At least two weeks prior to the meeting, contact the Civic Design Review Program Director to request placement on the agenda. The placement of a project on the agenda of the next Civic Design Review Committee meeting is contingent upon the submission of all required materials by the **5:00 p.m. deadline ten calendar days prior to the meeting**. This applies to all phases of review. Exceptions will not be made. Submission requirements are listed in the *Phases of Review* section of this document. Please ensure that the project title is consistent throughout all phases of review, and ensure that all prior review dates are accurately noted on the Request for Review forms. Projects will be placed on the agenda in order of receipt of a complete application package. If the project review queue has been filled, projects will be deferred to the next month's meeting.

## The Civic Design Review Meeting

Applicants should be prepared to make a brief and succinct presentation to the Civic Design Review Committee about the project. The presentation should include a concise narrative describing the conceptual premise of the design. Each presentation is allotted a specific time limit for the presentation. Following the presentation, the Commissioners may ask questions and make comments and/or recommendations for design modifications. Prior to the call for a vote by the Committee Chair, public comment will be taken.

The Civic Design Review Committee will either move to approve the project as presented, take no action, or will approve the project with specific recommendations for design modifications to be presented at a future meeting. When the project is next submitted for review, the applicant should clearly indicate how each of the Committee's concerns, comments and/or contingencies has been addressed. If the Committee recommends approval, the motion will be placed on the Consent Calendar for the full Arts Commission at its next regularly scheduled meeting, usually the first Monday of each month. Applicants are not required to present their project at the full Arts Commission meeting unless specifically requested by the Civic Design Review Committee.

### Public Comment and Community Participation

Public participation and access to information are an important part of the public process. The Committee Chair calls for public comment on each agenda item. Members of the public will also have the opportunity for general public comments at the start of the meeting.

It is the responsibility of the project applicant to inform the community and neighbors in the vicinity of the project about the Civic Design Review Committee's authority. The public should be advised in a timely manner about their opportunity to make public comment to the Civic Design Review Committee prior to a vote being taken on the project. Applicants should consider using social media, community newsletters or neighborhood newspapers to publicize the schedule for upcoming Civic Design Review of the project. The agenda is posted online, at the Main Public Library and at the Arts Commission office a minimum of 72 hours prior to the meeting.

# Phases of Review

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Civic Design Review process typically consists of four stages which include an Informational or Conceptual presentation for projects with budgets over \$5 million, and three formal phases of approval that align with the typical design and delivery process for capital improvement projects. Projects with budgets less than \$5 million will have three formal phases of approval and are not required to make an Informational or Conceptual presentation. Please see the *Other Types of Review* section for more information on variations from the four-stage review. The phases of review are:

Conceptual or Informational Review

Phase 1: Schematic Design

Phase 2: Design Development

Phase 3: Construction Documents

# Conceptual Design

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All projects with construction budgets over \$5 million are required to make a Conceptual Design presentation prior to commencing environmental review. However, all designers who have projects to be reviewed by the Commission, regardless of budget, are welcome to present their Conceptual Design prior to Phase I Schematic Design.

The Committee is introduced to the project and its purpose at this first meeting. This phase of review is a high-level overview of the project goals, vision, conceptual ideas and design strategy. The presentation should include sketches of at least two possible designs and images that inspired or influenced the design. The presentation should be no longer than 15 minutes. This allows the Committee to provide comments and suggestions prior to the submission of the Phase 1 Schematic Design presentation.

Submit the following materials by 5:00 p.m. ten days prior to review:

- Request for Review form
- Written concept statement

## Presentation Requirements

- Site plan, map or aerial photograph identifying the location of the project and its context
- Site photographs or street view images that illustrate the overall context for the project
- Images of applicable references or inspiration for the design
- Conceptual sketches and current design trajectory
- A summary of the large idea that is the theoretical basis for the proposed design.



# Phase 1: Schematic Design

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The Phase 1 presentation is critical in defining the schematic form of the project. The introduction should establish the history of the structure, the project sponsor's goals, programming concerns, specific requirements, functions and the services performed within the building. The Committee will review the building's form and massing and the preliminary design within its context. The presentation should also include the site and landscape design developed to the same level as the building. Specific design features such as the building entry should be articulated. Areas of concern should be highlighted and possible approaches to solutions presented. The applicant should identify any General Plan considerations, environmental review issues, or comments from other reviewing agencies that may affect the design. The presentation should be approximately 15 to 20 minutes in length unless a longer presentation time is agreed upon by the Civic Design Review Program Director.

Submit the following materials a minimum of ten days prior to review, by 5:00 p.m.:

- Civic Design Review Fee: \$10,220
- Request for Review Form with dates of all prior reviews, Art Enrichment Form, Civic Art Collection Form
- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the landscape and architectural drawings, including 3D renderings (via CD or email)
- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the presentation (via CD or email)
- Two hard copies of colored prints sized 8 1/2" x 11" and 11"x17" of the presentation
- If the presentation includes images that should not be published online for security reasons, please provide an additional PDF, no more than 25mb, suitable for online publication

## Presentation Requirements

- Three-dimensional electronic renderings including schematic plans, exterior elevations and renderings, building perspectives and sections. Based on the conceptual design, this should illustrate the architectural solutions to the project.

- A digital scale model is recommended for larger projects
- Exterior material selections or options should be included in the presentation images, to be followed up in Phase 2 with actual samples
- PowerPoint of 5 to 15 slides
- Images of the design progression including references and inspiration
- Information on the community outreach process
- Photographs of the actual building site and the immediate surrounding area
- Site plan
- If outdoor spaces are an integral part of the structure, include schematic landscape strategy including topographical constraints and opportunities along with a preliminary planting list and elevation or photos of plant groupings
- A visual representation of the public art if it is integrated into the exterior building design or placed on the site, outside of the building

# Phase 2: Design Development

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Phase 2 is the review of a substantially designed project. This presentation should be more developed and detailed than the prior Schematic Design approved in Phase 1. The design presentation should reflect the final form and design of the structure of the building, the overall site, and the landscape. The presentation drawings must clearly demonstrate all materials to be used and their corresponding treatments and color, landscape elements, lighting and the signage to be placed on building exterior as developed from Schematic Design. The design development should incorporate any conditions from the Phase 1 approval.

The project applicant must address how areas of concern, comments and contingencies from Phase 1 have been addressed and/or resolved, showing before and after drawings. Paper study models as well as a physical materials board are essential components of the presentation. The presentation should be approximately 20 minutes in duration unless a longer presentation time is agreed upon by the Civic Design Review Program Director. The project designers may not proceed with construction documents until Phase 2 approval is received from the Civic Design Review Committee.

Submit the following materials a minimum of ten days prior to review, by 5:00 p.m.:

- Civic Design Review Fee (\$10,220), if not already paid
- Request for Review form with dates of all prior reviews and updated construction budget
- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the presentation (via CD or email)
- Two hard copies of colored prints sized 8 1/2" x 11" and 11"x17" of the presentation
- If the presentation includes images that should not be published online for security reasons, please provide an additional PDF, no more than 25mb, suitable for online publication

### Presentation Requirements

- Three-dimensional study models and renderings for any structure over 5,000 square feet, and a landscape model or detailed landscape sections if appropriate to the project
- Developed exterior elevations and exterior renderings with exterior details for key parts of the building
- Materials and color boards
- A paper study model if needed to clarify the design refinements
- If outdoor spaces are an integral part of the structure, include detailed site plan including any landscape plans with cut sheets of plant materials including size and species with common name and planting elevations in color
- Examples of exterior graphics and signage and their location on building
- Description and cut sheets of any site furnishings in areas that are an integral part of the structure
- Physical materials board with samples of materials, colors and finishes
- A visual representation of the public art if it is integrated into the exterior building design or placed on the site, outside of the building

# Phase 3:

## Construction Documents

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Phase 3 is the final approval of your project's design by the Arts Commission and ensures that the completed project conforms to the previously approved Phase 2 submittal. The Phase 3 presentation must successfully address any contingencies associated with the Phase 2 approval and any proposed or required changes.

Should any design changes that affect the exterior and/or overall look of the approved design occur after Phase 3 review or as a result of the bid process, it is the project applicant's responsibility to inform Arts Commission staff prior to the commencement of construction. This should be done by submitting the changes to staff, who will then determine if the changes are significant enough to warrant further Civic Design Review. Any changes that occur during construction or post-construction must also be documented and conveyed to the Civic Design Review Program Director.

The Commission resolution number documenting Phase 3 final approval will be found at <http://sfgov.org/arts/full-commission/meetings>, in the minutes for the full Commission meeting following the date of the Civic Design Review Committee meeting. Or you may contact the Civic Design Review Program Director for assistance.

The Phase 3 presentation is generally briefer than the other phases of review and should be no longer than ten minutes in duration unless there are contingencies to address from the Phase 2 approval.

Submit the following materials a minimum of ten days prior to review, by 5:00 p.m.:

- Civic Design Review Fee (\$10,220), if not already paid. Please note that your project will not be scheduled for Phase 3 if any portion of the Civic Design Review fee has not been paid.
- Request for Review form with final construction budget and final adjusted Art Enrichment budget

- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the landscape and architectural construction drawings which include building elevations, sections and perspectives (via CD or email)
- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the presentation (via CD or email)
- If the presentation includes images that should not be published online for security reasons, please provide an additional PDF (no more than 25mb) suitable for online publication

#### Presentation Requirements

- Final construction documents
- Highlighted changes to the Phase 2 approval based on conditions and contingencies
- One half-size set of 95% substantially complete project working drawings (architectural and landscape only) for reference during the meeting
- A visual representation of the public art if it is integrated into the exterior building design or placed on the site, outside of the building

# Coordinating Various City Approval Processes

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Most projects are required to obtain other regulatory approvals in addition to that of the Arts Commission. Below is a guide to where Civic Design Review fits into some possible requirements. Please make certain that you work with staff associated with the following departments and commissions:

## Department of City Planning/Historic Preservation Commission

If your project is considered a historic landmark or resource and/or is located in a historic district, approval from the Historic Preservation Commission may be required. If Historic Preservation approval is required, in general, it is recommended to seek this approval between Phase 1 and Phase 2 of Civic Design Review.

## Environmental Review

The environmental review process may often span several phases of Civic Design Review but scheduling depends greatly on the specifics of each project. In general, the projects should present their preliminary design concepts to Civic Design prior to entering into the environmental review process and submit final Phase 3 documents after completing environmental review. Please submit copies of any draft or final environmental review documents that are available at the time of any design submittals.

## Other Reviews

Other review processes that may affect design must be resolved before a final Phase 3 approval from the Arts Commission can be granted.

# Informal Work Sessions

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In an effort to facilitate the successful design of projects in an informal and interactive work environment, up to two Civic Design Review Commissioners are generally available to review projects in progress on the third Monday of every month from 12:30 p.m. to 2:30 p.m. This meeting takes place at the Department of Public Works in the Department of Design and Construction at 30 Van Ness Avenue on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor. This time is typically reserved for DPW-designed projects; however, arrangements can be made for non-DPW projects to be scheduled for review by contacting the Civic Design Review Program Director.

## Additional Support

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For clarification of information or directions conveyed by the Committee during a Civic Design Review meeting, please contact the Civic Design Review Program Director. Audio recordings of each Civic Design hearing are available the day after the hearing and may be found on the City's website (<http://sfgov.org/arts/audio-archive-3>). To further facilitate communication and expedite approvals, drawings-in-progress may be informally submitted to staff for transmittal to the Committee between meetings.



# Art Enrichment

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In accordance with Section 3.19 of the San Francisco Administrative Code, two percent (2%) of the final estimated construction costs must be allocated for art enrichment. This includes both aboveground and underground costs unless specifically exempted by the Art Enrichment Ordinance.

Civic Design Review applicants are required to contact the Public Art Program Director prior to submitting a Request for Review form for either the conceptual or Phase 1 Civic Design presentation. This maximizes the opportunities for public art to be incorporated into the project in a meaningful way and allows it to be coordinated with and planned for in the design documents.

The Phase 3 Request for Review form requires an updated construction cost estimate and a corresponding updated art enrichment allocation if applicable.

Contact the Public Art Program Director for further information:  
(415) 252-2587

# Civic Art Collection

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All Civic Design Review applicants must submit a form stating whether there are any existing artworks installed at the site. A site inspection must be performed to ensure that all existing artworks are identified. This will allow the Arts Commission to ensure that the artwork is protected during construction and/or removed and reinstalled. All costs related to the protection of the artwork, its removal, storage and reinstallation shall be borne by the capital project apart from the project's art enrichment allocation.

# Art Enrichment and Civic Design Review

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The San Francisco Arts Commission encourages project sponsors to work with Public Art staff at the inception of the project's design to plan for a meaningful integration of the artwork into the project site.

To the extent that the art enrichment is integrated into the exterior design of the building, or the landscape, a joint meeting of the Civic Design Review Committee and the Visual Arts Committee may be convened to review the artwork relative to its integration within the site.

## Temporary Projects and Structures

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Per resolution of the Arts Commission, projects or structures placed on public property with duration of up to two years are not subject to Civic Design Review. This does not refer to the placement of artworks on public property.

# Plaque Review

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## Which Plaques Require Approval?

Commemorative plaques to be placed on City-owned property or sidewalks require review by the Civic Design Review Committee. The Committee reviews their design, siting, orientation and context. Some plaques are exempt or eligible for administrative review based on certain conditions explained below. There is no charge for the review of plaques.

Submit the following materials ten days prior to review:

- Request for Review form
- One electronic copy (PDF, no more than 25mb) of the presentation submitted via CD, flash drive, or email to the Program Manager
- One color copy (8 1/2" x 11" minimum to 11"x17" maximum) of the presentation

### Presentation Requirements

- Photographs of the site and the immediate surrounding area
- Images of the proposed plaque design
- Rendering of the plaque in its proposed location
- For multiple plaques, provide a map or site plan of all of the proposed locations

## Exempt Projects

The types of plaques listed below do not need review by the Arts Commission.

- Replacement plaques with an identical design to the previous plaque
- Any plaque not on property owned by the City and County of San Francisco

## Administrative Review

Administrative review is conducted by the Civic Design Review Program Director and does not require a presentation to the Civic Design Review Committee. The Committee Chair or the Director of Cultural Affairs may delegate projects to the Civic Design Review Program Director for administrative review.

The following types of projects are eligible for Administrative Review:

- A plaque that is added to an existing series of plaques following a previously approved design
- A plaque using a previously approved design
- A single stand-alone plaque

## City Approval Process

### Board of Supervisors

- Each plaque project must receive a resolution from the Board of Supervisors endorsing the project. A copy of this resolution should be included with submission materials to the Civic Design Review Committee.

### Department of Public Works: Street Use and Mapping

- Projects must be reviewed by the Department of Public Works (“DPW”) to ensure they comply with all requirements regarding the slip coefficient and other Building Code and safety concerns.

### Arts Commission—Civic Design Review Committee

- After receiving a resolution from the Board of Supervisors and approval by the Department of Public Works, the design of the plaque must be reviewed by the Arts Commission per the requirements listed above.

### Mayor’s Office on Disability

- Check with the Mayor’s Office on Disability to ensure that the plaque complies with accessibility requirements.

# Other Types of Review

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## Administrative Review

Staff may review certain projects administratively. These types of projects are small in scope and can range from installation of standard street furnishings to modifications of a previously approved project. Installation of a single plaque, bench, bicycle rack or signage can usually be reviewed administratively while a series of plaques or a streetscape will generally need to be presented to the Civic Design Review Committee. The Civic Design Review Program Director will make the determination at the time of the request in consultation with the Civic Design Review Committee Chair or with the Director of Cultural Affairs. A fee will be charged for administrative review that is commensurate with the staff time involved.

To request an Administrative Review, contact the Program Director, briefly describe the project, and provide images or drawings of the existing condition and the modification.

## Small Project Review

Many small projects are eligible to have a modified review process. This review process will combine the review of one or two phases into one meeting. Before requesting a Small Project Review, please speak with the Civic Design Review Program Director to determine if this is an appropriate approach and to determine the timeline for the design review.

# Motions and Contingencies

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## Approval with Contingencies

The Committee may add contingencies or conditions to the motion approving a particular phase. This allows the project to move forward to meet its schedule, but also ensures that specific items will be addressed and resolved in the next phase of review.

## Clarification of Comments from the Civic Design Review Meeting

The official minutes of each Committee meeting will be published within ten working days of the meeting. The audio recording of the meeting is available the following day. Please contact the Civic Design Review Program Director should you have need for further clarification.

## Changes to an Approved Design

Any design changes made subsequent to receipt of Phase 3 approval of a project, including those changes made during and post-construction, must be reported to the Civic Design Review Program Director. Staff will determine whether the changes require a return to the Civic Design Review Committee or if the modifications may be reviewed administratively. It is important for the project team to carefully coordinate other mandated approvals and reviews prior to Phase 3.

## Final Approval

Phase 3 is the final approval of your project's design by the Arts Commission. The resolution number documenting approval will be found at <http://sfgov.org/arts/full-commission/meetings>, in the minutes for the full Commission meeting following the date of the Civic Design Review Committee meeting. Or you may contact the Civic Design Review Program Director for assistance.

# Frequently Asked Questions

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## Can I get feedback on my design before the next meeting?

Yes! Informal work sessions with up to two Civic Design Review Commissioners are scheduled on the third Monday of each month from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. Please contact the Director of Design and Construction at Department of Public Works (“DPW”) for projects managed and designed by DPW. The Civic Design Review Program Director will assist you with the scheduling of reviews for projects designed by private architects and landscape architects.

## Which projects need to be reviewed?

City Charter Section 5.103 stipulates that any project that is on or over City-owned property must be reviewed by the Civic Design Review Committee regardless of its funding source. Projects undertaken by the War Memorial, the Asian Art Museum, the Fine Arts Museums and the Port of San Francisco, and projects under state or federal jurisdiction, are not subject to Civic Design Review. Projects with a duration of two years or less are considered temporary by the Civic Design Review Committee and do not require Civic Design Review approval.

## What is considered a structure?

A “structure” has been identified as any new or significantly remodeled building. This definition also includes permanent street furnishings, including, but not limited to: streetlights, benches, bollards, railings, water features, news racks, trash containers, wayfinding systems and plaques.

## How much is the Civic Design Review fee?

**Effective July 1, 2014**, in accordance with City Ordinance 319.A, each project will be charged a lump-sum fee of \$10,220. Larger, more complex projects or those involving a campus of several buildings or

facilities may be assessed a higher fee at the discretion of the Director of Cultural Affairs. The fees are subject to change each new fiscal year.

### How do I pay the fees?

Journal entries (electronic fund transfers) from other City departments should be paid to:

Index code: 28CIVDESIGN\_PAR516

Sub-object code: 60127

Payments may also be sent by check to the “San Francisco Arts Commission” at 25 Van Ness, Suite 345, San Francisco, CA 94102.

### Is the Conceptual Design Phase mandatory?

Yes, the Conceptual Design presentation is mandatory for all projects with budgets in excess of \$5 million. The design should be at a very preliminary stage of development. The goal of reviewing projects at the Conceptual Design Phase is to avoid unnecessary costs and delays that may be associated with subsequent Civic Design recommendations if they occur later in the design process.

### Who can I contact with other questions?

Please contact the Civic Design Review Program Director at (415) 252-2585 with any additional questions you may have.

### Why does Civic Design matter?

Well-considered quality design can beautify our neighborhoods, build pride in communities, promote access to facilities, and improve the quality of the built environment in our city. The Civic Design Review Committee ensures that designers consider their projects’ impact on the community, and the context in which they will be located, throughout the design process. The mission of Civic Design Review is to ensure that any capital project improves the public realm, respects the natural environment and serves the best interests of the public.



For any additional questions, please contact:

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Civic Design Review Program Director  
San Francisco Arts Commission  
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San Francisco, CA 94102  
Phone: (415) 252-2585  
Website: [sfartscommission.org/CDR/home/](http://sfartscommission.org/CDR/home/)