

So why public art?

Public art can engage the public, democratize access to art, and commemorate important narratives. However, the presence (and the absence of) certain people and events in the artworks with which we commemorate history affects the narrative we tell our communities.

Art in the public sphere carries great weight.

Public Art represents the culture of a community and are vessels for what we choose to honor and make permanent. It's not just the weight of the stone-it's the weight of a country created through enslavement, genocide, and exploitative labor of Black, Indigenous, Latinx, Asian American, and people of color, and the complicity with which we have allowed these symbols of white supremacy to stand for so long.

Public art can reflect and make permanently visible our deepest beliefs, both good and bad. Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Public Art is for everyone, a form of collective community expression.

Public art reflects how we see the world and how the world sees us.

This public art is intended to spark conversations about property ownership, displacement, and the persuasive language used in tourism and realty marketing. This site was chosen because it is the center of town, at the site of a monument to an enslaver who denounced Northern abolitionists, adamantly opposed emancipation, and argued against civil rights.

(for more info. about the art and organizing behind this public art intervention – lydiasee.com/if-you-lived-here)

IF YOU LIVED HERE YOU'D BE HOME(LESS)

"public art can be a vehicle for the sharing of life-affirming thoughts" - bell hooks

HI THERE – If you're downtown today, it's likely that you're a tourist in our city. Thank you for spending money here, however it is important for you to know that many of those who directly benefit from your tourism are not those who perform the labor necessary for tourism to occur, and those who have systematically been displaced by the culture of tourism here. The cost of living is astronomically high and rising, and the cost of tourism weighs heavily on this community.

Please read on for more info., and **HOW YOU CAN HELP.**

According to the 2020 Regional Housing Needs Assessment conducted by the City of Asheville, **the steep rise in housing costs and sparse inventory of homes priced under \$200,000 in the Asheville area is slated to worsen over the coming decade.** Moreover, nearly 18,000 renter households in Buncombe Co. pay disproportionately high shares of their income towards housing costs, with **46.1% paying more than 30% of their income toward housing and 19.4% of renters paying over 50%.**

-

At the Jan. 7 2021 meeting of the City of Asheville Affordable Housing Committee, they discussed the “sobering statistic” that **right now, in Asheville, there are less than 20 homes for sale under \$275,000.**

-

Beginning in the late 1950s, Asheville and other cities across the United States displaced an estimated 50,000 to 60,000 families each year — most of them Black — in what white city officials called urban renewal, but which the writer James Baldwin called “Negro removal.”

Prior to Urban Renewal, 58% of Black families in Asheville owned their own homes. Today, in Buncombe County: 41.3% of Black households own their own homes, below the national average. 90.2% of all homeowners are white, compared to 3.9% for African-Americans, and the county’s Black population was approximately 6.3% 2019.

2/3 of white households —65.9%— owned their own homes in Buncombe County in 2020, compared to 41.3% for Blacks, a gap of 24.6 points. Because of education, income and wage disparities, Blacks are less likely to be able to afford to enter the real estate market than whites and profit from soaring real estate prices in Asheville and Buncombe Co.

(<https://avlwatchdog.org/black-home-ownership-and-the-promise-of-reparations/>)

In Buncombe County:

+ median home price is: \$318,199

+ median rent is: \$996.78

+ living wage for someone with no dependents is

\$17.30/\$15.30 with insurance, while minimum wage is \$7.50,

and poverty wage is \$6.20

(payscale.com / justeconomicswnc.org)

-

What is wealth reclamation?

“Wealth Reclamation — The process of rehabilitating extracted and privately controlled wealth to restore and nurture community health and vitality.”

Wealth Reclamation Academy of Practitioners

<https://www.reclaimcommunitywealth.org/>

-

To contribute to wealth reclamation in Asheville:

⇒ <https://linktr.ee/avlsurvival> // @avlsurvival IG + Venmo

⇒ <https://linktr.ee/ashevilleforjustice> // @ashevilleforjustice IG + Venmo

⇒ <https://abclt.org/>

ABCLT is a nonprofit that seeks to establish permanently affordable residential, commercial, and community spaces that empower Black, Indigenous, People of Color, and low-to moderate-income residents to build social, economic, and cultural capital.

⇒ belovedasheville.com/ // @belovedasheville IG

⇒ differentwrlld.com/ // @differentwrlld IG

Black-led space for creatives opening 2021

⇒ engagingcollections.org // @engagingcollections

Publication and Art Residency uplifting omitted voices from archives and special collections