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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Planning and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development
Report: #2024-EDT-9
Date: June 4, 2024

Subject:

Arts and Culture Mapping Report

Recommendation:

That the Planning and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide background information for an Arts and Culture Collaborative Mapping Report which was received by Durham Region in March 2024 from the Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative.
- 1.2 Committee is advised that Lauren Gould, CEO of the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, representing the Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative, will be appearing as a delegation to the June 4, 2024, meeting.

2. Background

- 2.1 A new grassroots initiative formed in 2021 which acts as a pan-regional, unincorporated organization. The Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative (the Collaborative) have been meeting on a regular basis to collaborate across municipal borders and boundaries and have discussed potential areas for improvement in programming delivery to support arts and culture in Durham Region.

- 2.2 In a letter to Regional staff from the Collaborative in February 2023 the group invited Durham to explore opportunities for creating region-wide support and resources for artists, creatives, and cultural workers. The letter was signed by 12 large arts and culture organizations in the region, as well as about 100 additional signatures from artists, arts and culture workers, and arts industry advocates from all areas of Durham Region.
- 2.3 The letter made three specific requests for support with a phased approach. Phase one asked for support to gain an understanding of the arts and culture sector which would survey residents, artists and arts workers, complete a mapping exercise, and provide a report on the full picture of arts and culture in the region.
- 2.4 Regional staff responded with a commitment to assist with phase one of the Collaborative's plans. With \$20,000 in funding sourced from the Region's 2023 approved operational budget, the Collaborative hired consultants to conduct research on understanding the arts and culture landscape in Durham Region. Almost 200 individuals participated in the process.

3. Arts and Culture as a Strategic Economic Priority

- 3.1 Cultural tourism is one of the fastest growing segments of the tourism industry, accounting for about 40 per cent of tourism worldwide. (State of the Ontario Tourism Industry Report, 2022) Further, the average arts and culture trip generates nearly triple the economic impact of non-arts and culture-related trips. (Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, August 2023)
- 3.2 Durham Region has a strong cultural sector. It is home to Parkwood National Historic Site which, in addition to its role as a historical museum and tourism destination, is a top 10 filming location in Canada. Other major assets and cultural attractions include The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Station Gallery and the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington, the Ontario Philharmonic, Canadian Automotive Museum, multiple local history museums, public art destinations, as well as an array of art associations, galleries, artist studios, venues, makers' hubs, and tourism loops.
- 3.3 In Durham Region, the arts, cultural, and creative industries cluster spans a wide range of business types. Creative businesses and organizations provide social value to residents, while helping to attract tourism and new residents. These destinations and workforce are vital to the region's Quality of Place, while also playing a critical role in creating jobs and prosperity in our local economies.

- 3.4 As a result of the above factors, arts, culture, and the creative industries are identified as a 'Priority Cluster' in the Economic Development and Tourism strategic plan, Ready Set Future: A PLACE Blueprint for Durham (Ready Set Future) as well as its subplan Growing North Durham. It is also identified in the draft Durham Tourism Action Plan, which will be presented to Planning and Economic Development Committee in September 2024.
- 3.5 Following Council direction, in 2023, the Region engaged with the community and arts sector to inform the development of a [public art and creative placemaking policy and program](#) for Durham Region to facilitate and enable projects on Regional property. The policy and program will be presented to Regional Council for approval in September 2024.
- 3.6 As identified in Ready Set Future, growth in the arts, cultural, and creative industries contribute to the magnetism of a community for talented workforce and visitors. Various actions in Ready Set Future address the arts and culture industries, with specific examples including:
- a. Action 3.2.1. Develop cluster growth strategies for key priority clusters: future energy, next-generation mobility, arts and creative, applied digital technology, and agri-food.
 - b. Action 4.2.1 Explore the creation of a fund that supports the region's diverse arts and cultural industries including creative and culinary businesses, events, festivals and placemaking.
- 3.7 While Regional staff resources are currently focused on specific strategies to further develop Film and Television as well as Music sectors, future actions may include more specific activities that support arts and culture activities more broadly in line with strategic priorities.
- 3.8 In Durham Region, Area Municipal staff also play a vital role by fostering vibrant local culture through a tapestry of arts and cultural programming, including festivals and events that showcase the distinct charm of each municipality.

4. Arts and Culture Sector Report Recommendations

- 4.1 In March 2024, Regional staff received a report titled "Phase 1 Report: Research and Mapping of Durham Region's Arts and Culture Sector" from the Collaborative which contains a summary of findings, key take aways, a cultural asset map and four recommendations, which are:

1. Create an Open-Access and Community-Populated Database
2. Enhance Regional Capacity and Collaboration
3. Explore Regional Arts Council Models
4. Hire a dedicated Regional Staff Person

4.2 A copy of the Phase 1 report is attached as Attachment #1.

5. Staff Response and Next Steps

5.1 Since receiving the report, Regional staff in Economic Development and Tourism along with the CAO's office – Strategic Initiatives have actioned the following areas:

- a. Submitted two CityStudio projects which address recommendations from the report: Recommendation 1: Create an Open-Access and Community Populated Database and Recommendation 2: Explore Regional Arts Council Models. CityStudio is a model of experiential learning that sees projects taken on by post-secondary students in collaboration with Regional staff. Responses to these calls for projects may be received in September 2024.
- b. In response to Recommendation 2: Enhance Regional Capacity and Collaboration, staff have reviewed past approaches to hosting ongoing collaborative meetings between museums and other arts industry groups. Staff identified an opportunity to re-establish a centralized role in enabling organized, collaborative discussion within the arts and culture sector. Staff will meet with the Collaborative and identify the best method for this facilitation.

5.2 In response to Recommendation 4: Hire a dedicated Regional Staff Person, staff are unable to recommend this action within the approved 2024 Business Plan and Budget. The request will be considered by staff in future budget years.

6. Relationship to Strategic Plan

6.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Priority 3.1 - Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business.
- b. Priority 3.2 - Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth.

7. Conclusion

7.1 The vision for a prosperous economic future for Durham Region includes that it has a distinct identity for arts, culture and creative industries.

7.2 Staff will continue to work with the arts and culture sector, including through the Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative, to support the recommendations of the report, and continue to explore other opportunities to help strengthen the regional arts and culture sector.

8. Attachments

Attachment #1: Phase 1 Report: Research and Mapping of Durham Region's Arts and Culture Sector

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Planning and
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Nancy Taylor for
Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative

Phase 1 Report: Research and Mapping of Durham Region's Arts and Culture Sector

February 2024

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Executive Summary

Introduction

Durham Region¹ is home to many creatives, artists, collectives, groups, organizations, and municipalities that provide arts and culture experiences. These experiences not only provide enjoyment for residents and visitors, but they also contribute significantly to the overall vibrancy, sense of community, well-being, and economic strength within the region. With that being said, Durham Region's arts and culture sector is facing challenges that require increased support, advocacy and collaboration across the region.

What is this project?

In the summer of 2022, an ad-hoc group of artists, volunteers and residents formed the Durham Arts and Culture Collaborative (“the Collaborative”) and began meeting to discuss opportunities for better collaboration, visibility and advocacy for the arts and culture sector in the region. Following a [letter](#) addressed to the Regional Municipality of Durham (“Region of Durham”) in February 2023, outlining a strategic three-phase plan, the Collaborative received support for Phase 1, focused on comprehensive research of the local arts and culture sector. Between the summer and fall of 2023, the Collaborative hired external consultants Sara Udow and Jao Dantes to conduct this research.

What We Heard - Key Takeaways

Arts and Culture in the Durham Region today:

While there is a vibrant arts and culture scene with passion and excitement, this is a challenging time for many artists, creatives, and cultural workers. Organizations and artists are still recovering from the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, costs of living are on the rise, and volunteerism is on the decline. This context threatens the ability of local arts and cultural organizations and individual artists and creatives to thrive in a sustainable way.

What's needed to make arts and culture thrive in Durham Region:

- More regional connections to support networking and collaboration opportunities amongst artists, creatives, and entrepreneurs in the region. This includes networking and professional development opportunities.
- Increased communications and promotions for arts and cultural events, programs, activities, and paid/employment opportunities. This validates the Collaborative's initial idea that developing a centralized artist database is a critical step to support local artists and creatives.

¹ *Note: This report uses “Region of Durham” to refer to the regional municipality whereas “Durham Region” refers to the region more generally.*

- Better collaboration and communication between the different levels of government, local educational institutions, and arts organizations. Specifically, we heard the need for the Region of Durham to better engage the local municipalities when working on broader arts and cultural policies, strategies, and supports.
- Advocacy for the value of arts and culture, as well as increased funding, at a regional level.
- Tap into the opportunities that a more collaborative and cohesive arts and culture sector can create, including its role in building a region-wide identity, and contributing to tourism and economic development.

The Role of a Regional Arts Council:

- There is strong support for a Regional Arts Council with a broad focus and commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.
- There are different understandings of what the role of an arts council would be. For Durham Region, the focus of an arts council could be on advocacy, networking and information-sharing, not program delivery.
- Regardless of the direction taken or the main goal of a regional arts council, it will need funding to support its work.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Create an Open-Access and Community-Populated Database

- Develop a community-populated database for Durham Region-based artists, creatives, arts organizations, venues, resources, and events. This database will serve as a central hub for information sharing, networking, and promotion within the region and connect artists, cultural workers, and community members with opportunities.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Regional Capacity and Collaboration

- Increase resources and collaboration at the regional level to better support and align with arts and culture activities.
- Establish a regional arts and cultural working group to foster collaboration, avoid duplication of efforts amongst partners, and create a shared vision for the arts and culture sector.

Recommendation 3: Explore Regional Arts Council Models

- Continue exploring regional and municipal approaches to support arts and culture through dialogue with existing arts organizations and councils in the region.
- Conduct a review of comparable regional arts councils and innovative models to determine the most suitable framework for the Region of Durham.

Recommendation 4: Hire a dedicated Regional Staff Person

- Hire a dedicated staff member at the Region of Durham to engage the creative community, manage this work and support Invest Durham’s 2023-2027 Strategy and Action Plan, recognizing the sustained efforts that go beyond volunteer contributions.

Read more about the recommendations and next steps in the [Recommendations](#) section of this report.

Introduction

Arts and cultural experiences in the Durham Region² not only provide enjoyment for residents and visitors, they also contribute significantly to the overall vibrancy, sense of community, individual well-being, and economic strength. Durham Region is home to many diverse creatives, artists, collectives, groups, and organizations, as well as institutional and municipal partners, that help bring arts and cultural experiences of various disciplines including across rural and urban settings and for a wide diversity of participants including youth, families, seniors, and newcomers.

The Region of Durham recognizes the benefits of arts and culture. It recently approved a regional Public Art Program and Invest Durham's strategy, which includes a pillar around arts and culture. There is an opportunity to continue to build upon the momentum of regional directions and the passion of various arts and cultural groups across the region to build a stronger and more collaborative arts and cultural sector.

Project Overview

Since 2022, the Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative has been advocating for greater support for arts and culture across the region. In February 2023, the Collaborative shared [a letter to the Region of Durham](#) to explore opportunities for region-wide support and resources for artists, creatives, and cultural workers. The letter outlined a three-phased approach to achieve success, with Phase 1 proposed as an opportunity to conduct in-depth research of the arts and culture sector within the region.

With support from the Region of Durham, the Collaborative and external consultants Sara Udow and Jao Dantes, conducted in-depth research on understanding the arts and culture landscape in Durham Region. Work included:

- Background research;
- Interviews and focus groups with artists, municipalities, institutions and the Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative;
- An online survey engaging the general public and arts and cultural community;
- The development of a crowdsourced cultural asset map.

Almost 200 people participated in this process. More information on the activities can be found in [Appendix A: Detailed Summary of What We Heard](#).

² Note: This report uses "Region of Durham" to refer to the regional municipality whereas "Durham Region" refers to the region more generally.

What We Heard - Key Takeaways from Phase 1

Key takeaways, recommendations, and next steps from Phase 1 of the project are shared below. For more details on how we arrived at these key takeaways and recommendations, please visit [Appendix A: Detailed Summary of What We Heard](#).

What We Asked

Throughout engagement (including the focus groups, interviews, and an online survey), we asked participants to share perspectives and ideas on the following core project questions:

- What is the arts and culture scene in Durham Region today (what's happening, what's working well, trends, etc.)?
- What is needed to support the arts and culture scene in Durham Region into the future?
- Is a regional arts council needed? If so, what is the possible role(s) of a Regional Arts Council unique to Durham Region?

What We Heard

Arts and Culture in Durham Region Today

Durham Region's arts and culture scene is vibrant, active, and growing! Through our engagements, we heard that there are "great institutions, events, passionate people and talent" and a "groundswell" of support and excitement for arts and culture more generally in Durham. Specifically, participants named local institutions like The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Station Gallery, Scugog Arts Council, Visual Arts Centre of Clarington and public libraries as places that have historically stewarded and continue to host arts and culture experiences and opportunities. In addition, we heard that local businesses like breweries, cafés, cideries and other unexpected informal spaces have started providing arts-based programming or exhibiting spaces, understanding that arts and culture help build business and community.

Artists and residents alike feel connected to these places. The mix of formal and informal spaces that make up Durham Region's arts and culture scene is shown in the community-generated [Cultural Asset Map](#) created as part of this process.

However, there are significant challenges identified:

Artists (and everyone) are experiencing financial hardships. While interest and support for arts and culture in the region is growing, there are still many hardships for artists in the region. Artists engaged in the focus group and interviews say it is hard to practice art when the cost of living is so high. For the most part, they shared that they do not feel like

there is adequate funding or support for their work. For instance, some shared that they often have to pay to be in shows or as vendors for local events. Artists suggested the need for support with capacity building (understanding the funding landscape) and advocating for better payment/hiring practices (e.g. flexible grant systems, timelines and payment schedules).

The arts sector is still recovering from COVID. There have been venue closures, audience participation is changing, and volunteerism has dropped. While there is some optimism for the future, there is still a sense of uncertainty about how the sector will recover.

People aren't aware of what's happening in Durham Region. While we heard that there is a lot of arts and culture activity in the region, across the board we heard that there is a lack of awareness, communications, or promotion of what is going on.

*"It's hard to practice my art when I have to worry about being able to live."
- Focus group participant*

*"There is a lot happening. In order to take full advantage, we need to start collaborating and working together - There are great examples in Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo."
- Focus group participant*

*"[Durham Region's arts and culture scene is] definitely on an uphill swing but we need more accessible ways for both the public and artists to be involved!"
- Survey respondent*

What's needed to make arts and culture thrive in Durham Region

Artists are craving connection and community. There are passionate people and great opportunities in Durham Region, as well as a sense of "openness" amongst artists. However, the arts and culture scene as a whole feels disconnected. Artists and creatives are looking for more opportunities to connect, network, and collaborate. On a regional level, this may look like professional development, networking event spaces, and more communications that support awareness of the arts.

Many of the artists engaged through the focus group and interviews say they recently moved to or relocated to Durham Region from Toronto or elsewhere and are looking for more opportunities to learn about the region, understand opportunities for work, and network in the area.

"So many people are over Toronto...there are phenomenal creative people in Durham Region" - Interviewee

Municipalities are increasingly supporting arts and culture, but more collaboration is needed between the different levels of government. The Region of Durham and many of the local municipalities are actively involved in arts and culture program delivery (events,

festivals, art galleries, etc.) and policy development. While the Region of Durham and municipalities are connected, we heard the need for more strategic collaboration to effectively align resources and initiatives, while avoiding duplication of municipal efforts.

*"We have a growing and motivated arts community, but it is not interconnected or greatly supported by the municipalities."
- Survey respondent*

Exploring the connections between arts, culture, tourism, place-making, and economic development is vital. Durham Region, despite its diverse identities (urban versus rural, for instance), has a common and unifying thread that can be stitched together through arts and culture. Municipal and regional leaders recognize that arts and culture can enhance Durham Region's appeal as a desirable place to live, visit, and work. This understanding presents an opportunity to use arts and culture to support the goals outlined in the 2023 - 2027 Invest Durham Strategy and Action Plan.

*"I find myself having to actively seek [activities] out and do the research; whether it be to view shows and events or to apply to them. It has always been a small community in my opinion, slightly elitist or an inside club that is almost difficult to enter (and not worth being a part of). I am starting to see the changes implemented by the cities and the region however, and I am looking forward to the future of it."
- Survey respondent*

Tangible Opportunities shared:

We heard from participants that the tangible opportunities to help make arts and culture thrive are all elements of what a regional arts council could offer, aligning with the Collaborative's previous research findings:

- Prioritize communications and promotions for arts and cultural events, programs, and activities.
- Share paid and employment opportunities with artists and cultural workers. This could include developing and maintaining an artist database alongside the regional municipality.
- Provide networking and professional development opportunities for local artists, creatives, and entrepreneurs.
- Advocate for the local arts community at a regional, provincial, and national level. This includes finding ways for the Region of Durham and local municipalities to work together. In addition, better collaboration and alignment between the different levels of government was recommended.

*"We need a central spot to fund artists' work."
- Municipality/Institution Focus Group Participant*

The Role of a Regional Arts Council

People engaged generally like the idea of creating a regional arts council, or at least having a centralized point of contact to support and promote arts and culture in Durham Region. Here are two main principles and values they thought it should have:

1. The arts council should be wide-ranging and include various artistic disciplines, not just those in fine arts and visual arts.
2. The arts council needs to support a diversity of artists from various demographics, and be rooted in principles of equity and inclusion, empathy and care.

Clarifying the role of a Regional Arts Council:

There were different understandings of a Regional Arts Council's role. For many of the interviewees, the main roles of a Regional Arts Council should be to advocate and lobby on behalf of artists, support networking, professional development, and share information and promotions. However, others have expressed an interest in having an arts council organize and deliver arts and cultural programming (by putting on art exhibitions and events). For instance, survey respondents selected "Support municipalities to deliver arts and cultural programming (51%)" as the top initiative for a regional arts council. The potential role of a Regional Arts Council in Durham Region needs to be clarified. Regardless of the direction taken or the main goal of a regional arts council, it will need funding to support the work.

Recommendations

The Collaborative initially proposed a three-phased roadmap to help foster a successful and thriving arts and culture sector for the region. This report marks the end of Phase 1. The following section provides recommendations on what is needed to achieve a thriving collaborative arts and culture sector, along with a suggestion that a dedicated staff person is critical for the success of these initiatives.

Recommendation 1: Create an Open-Access and Community-Populated Database

Develop a community-populated database for Durham Region-based artists, creatives, arts organizations, venues, and events. This database will serve as a central hub for information sharing, networking, and promotion within the region.

The Collaborative identified the need for a database as part of their letter to the Regional Chair and CEO in February 2023. The need for a database was validated and emphasized as a priority through the engagements. A database can be a first step for artists, creatives, organizations and municipalities to share information, connect and network, and promote what's happening in the region.

Recommendation 2: Enhance Regional Capacity and Collaboration

- Increase resources and collaboration at the regional municipality to better support and align with arts and culture needs.
- Establish a regional arts and culture working group to foster collaboration, avoid duplication of efforts, and create a shared vision for the arts and culture sector.

We heard a need for the Region of Durham and local municipalities to reconnect and work more collaboratively, instead of in silos, on arts and culture initiatives. We saw how excited leaders were to come together, share, and collaborate in our focus group session with municipal staff, educational institutions, and anchor organizations.

Recommendation 3: Explore Regional Arts Council Models

- Continue exploring regional and municipal approaches to support arts and culture, through dialogue with existing arts organizations and councils.
- Conduct a review of comparable regional arts councils and innovative models to determine the most suitable framework for Region of Durham.

In the Collaborative's original letter to the Region of Durham, they suggested Phase 3 as the establishment of a Regional Arts Council. However, we also know that this is a challenging time for arts councils. Over the next several months, the Region of Durham could continue to engage existing local art and cultural organizations and arts councils (e.g., Pineridge Arts Council, which is currently in the process of re-envisioning their role in the region). In addition, the Region of Durham could conduct a review of comparable regional arts councils (e.g., York Region, Hamilton Region, Kingston area, Windsor area, etc.) and explore/research other innovative models (such as the City of Brampton's experience setting up the [Brampton Arts Organization](#)) to see what supports and framework makes sense in Durham Region.

Recommendation 4: Hire a dedicated Regional Staff Person

- Hire a dedicated staff member at the Region of Durham to manage this work and support Invest Durham's 2023-2027 Strategy and Action Plan, recognizing the sustained efforts that go beyond volunteer contributions.

Dedicated volunteers have led the current work to date. However, managing this work as a "passion project" is not sustainable, responsible, or reflective of the value of this sector in a quickly growing landscape. A dedicated staff member is needed to efficiently coordinate and manage the workflow. It's possible to draw insights from the relevant example of the City of Brampton's experience incubating the Brampton Arts Organization shared above.

In addition, the staff person can support implementing Invest Durham's 2023-2027 Strategy. As identified in the Strategy and learned through this process, there are many opportunities to better integrate arts and culture within the regional municipality's Economic Development and Tourism division, recognizing the benefits of placemaking and community building. Having a regional arts and culture representative to work closely with Economic Development and Tourism can offer insights and aid in action delivery for this strategy, especially Priority 4: Creativity.

A staff person can also work with a third-party consultant to continue this work, including database development, engagement with municipalities and the Region of Durham, and continued research on models and approaches for support.

Next Steps

Immediate next steps to support the recommendations are included below.

1. Share Phase 1 findings and continue to build capacity and momentum with regional artists, organizations, cultural workers, and audience members
 - This can include a broader public workshop, event or party intended for artists, creatives and cultural workers to review and discuss the report findings.
 - Host a "Reflection and Next Steps" session with the appropriate regional and municipal arts and culture staff to continue conversations on how to align efforts through a working session.
2. Review and revise the proposed phases, staffing, and associated costs, based on the recommendations listed above.

Appendix A:

Detailed Summary of What We Heard

This appendix outlines in finer detail the process undertaken in Phase 1. The summary is broken down into:

- [Project process](#) (overview of what activities took place)
- [What we heard from artists](#)
- [What we heard from institutions and municipalities](#)
- [Online survey takeaways](#)

Project Process

Phase 1 took place through the summer and fall of 2023, including the following engagement activities:

Activity	Description	Metrics
Durham Region Arts and Culture Collaborative Focus Group	A foundational conversation to get perspectives from highly active and engaged community members within the arts and culture scene. The focus group provided context setting and facilitated a strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and challenges analysis.	8 participants
Interviews	One-on-one conversations with artists, creatives, arts workers, and municipal staff to get a comprehensive and in-depth snapshot of the current conditions for arts and culture in Durham Region.	4 interviews conducted
Artist Focus Group	A virtual conversation with local artists ranging from emerging to established; new versus long-term in Durham Region to gather artist perspectives and experiences.	6 artists
Government/ Municipalities Focus Group	A virtual conversation with cultural workers across government, municipal, non-profit, and arts organization settings across the region. This session focused on understanding the experiences of arts administrators and municipal institutions for arts and culture.	14 participants
Survey	An online survey understanding broad	132 responses; 98

	perspectives on arts and culture in Durham Region currently and into the future. The survey had a branching logic asking specific questions for artists, creatives, and cultural workers.	(74.2%) artists, creatives, arts workers; 34 (25.8%) broader public
Cultural Mapping	An interactive mapping activity included in the survey and shared with engagement participants to map out arts and culture places and experiences across the region.	155 pinpoints

What we heard from artists (focus groups and interviews)

- The resonating message is that artists want to come together! Artists appreciate the formal spaces like the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Station Gallery, and public libraries to connect. To complement this, artists are interested in more informal spaces where people can come together and connect in more social, less structured, and fun ways. These informal spaces can also serve as lower-barrier places to make and exhibit art.
- Another resonating message is that art is essential. From the focus groups and interviews, a continued theme emerged, asking the region to acknowledge that arts and culture are integral to everyday life. It is an expression of who we are as individuals, as a community, and as a region. Arts and culture create a sense of place and belonging while serving as a medium for Durham Region residents to connect, relate to each other, build relationships, and foster community for everyone.
- Local artists desire to share spaces together, come together across disciplines, and foster a community feel rooted in collaboration, co-learning, and networking (examples shared were events/programs at Whitby Public Library, local breweries, and the former [“Living Room” artist space](#)).
- Artists in Durham Region are facing a unique, context-specific financial crisis:
 - Artists do not feel like there is adequate funding for their work including conversations related to lack of opportunity for emerging/new artists and mid-career artists. Artists say they are barely making a livable income to sustain life in Durham Region.
 - For local artists and cultural producers, some are facing a barrier to participating, such as being required to pay to be a vendor or showcase art at local events and exhibition places.
 - Artist relationships with money and finances differ from Toronto.

- Some say there are more options for studio spaces, but there are fewer exhibition, performance, or commission opportunities (with appropriate pay) than in Toronto.
 - Durham Region housing prices are perceived as comparable to Toronto while having fewer opportunities for arts and culture work, funding and connections.
 - Artists want support securing and managing funds.
- Artists want more opportunities for young, local, and/or emerging artists. They see public art opportunities or opportunities with the regional municipality and local municipalities as valuable.

"I have noticed that the majority of participants at art events are older people. It's fantastic that there is a place for them to get together and create but I would also love to see arts programs that draw in 20-40 year olds as well. I think the major obstacle for that demographic is cost. It is hard to obtain funding for the arts but I believe if Durham set aside more of its budget for arts programming it would be more widely accessible to the community." - Survey respondent

- Some artists provided ideas on how regional initiatives or a regional arts council can operate including:
 - A need focus on empathy, care, and humanity in the work
 - Integrate trauma-informed processes to support artists from historically excluded backgrounds
 - Rooting services and programming in equity and inclusion

*"Networking events feel more legitimate coming from an arts council"
- Artist focus group participant*

What we heard from institutions and municipalities (focus groups and interviews)

- The municipalities feel disconnected and lack relationships, collaboration and synergy. There is a desire for better communication and alignment on services and programming across the regional municipality and the local municipalities to avoid overlap and duplication.

"In the past, municipalities didn't have enough glue to come up with projects together and deliver them" - Interviewee

- There is a lack of clarity across local municipalities on jurisdictions between them and the regional municipality when it comes to arts and culture (e.g. public art programs/policies, etc.) Understanding these relationships and gaining clarity will influence any potential roles or mandates of a regional arts council.

“We have a growing and motivated arts community, but it is not interconnected or greatly supported by the municipalities.” - Survey respondent

- We heard that there needs to be advocacy for arts and culture, and the importance and value of it in the region. Specifically, we heard that a Regional Arts Council, once established, should prioritize advocacy as a core piece of its mandate.
- Volunteerism is rapidly decreasing and recruitment is getting challenging. There was discussion about how small grassroots and even larger arts organizations can survive without volunteers, and also what other structures and opportunities are there to avoid relying on volunteering for organizations to survive.
- Institutions and municipalities have divergent opinions on whether a regional arts council should facilitate services (provide and deliver programs) or serve artists through other supports (promotions, advocacy, funding). There was also discussion on how an arts council could serve as a bridge or connector between artists and municipalities.
- There is a call to action by institutions and municipalities that the regional arts council needs to be for everyone, rooted in equity, diversity and inclusion.
- There is more to explore about connecting arts and culture to tourism and economic development. More so, there is interest in leveraging arts and culture in place-making and urban development as Durham Region grows and intensifies.

“There are a lot of different activities happening across the Region, but I would like to see increased support of them through municipal funding (which would help these events be even better and provide additional compensation to artists in recognition of their contributions to the community) & municipal promotion to ensure the public knows about them so they could be better attended.” - Survey respondent

Online survey takeaways

On Durham Region's arts and culture scene today

- **When asked how they would describe arts and cultural activities in Durham Region, just over half of survey respondents (53%) say that is “just ok”. 25% say it’s “really good”, 12% say it’s “not good” or “bad”. When asked to elaborate, recurring themes included:**
 - There is a lot of arts and culture activity in the region but there is a lack of awareness, communications, or promotion of what is going on.
 - There is not a lot of acknowledgement or celebration of the great work and activities taking place.
 - A majority of events are catered to attracting the general public but there are not many events or networking opportunities focused on artists, the arts community, or artist professional development.
 - For local artists, there are limited opportunities (paid or unpaid) to practice art, get commissioned, or exhibit. This applies to both established and emerging artists.
- **When asked how they participate in cultural experiences, the following experiences were selected the most:**
 - Festivals and events (80%)
 - Public art (78%)
 - Galleries and museums (78%)
 - Public libraries and community centres (73%)
 - Live performances (68%)
 - Participatory classes, workshops (39%)
 - Cultural community groups (36%)
- **When asked about how they hear about arts and culture experiences, respondents indicated:**
 - Social media (77%)
 - Word of mouth / personal connection (58%)
 - Arts/cultural organizations (52%)
 - The Region of Durham communications channels (33%)
 - Find it difficult to know about things (30%)
 - Traditional Media - Print/TV/Radio (16%)

On opportunities, challenges, and potential regional initiatives for Durham Region's arts and culture scene tomorrow

- **From a pre-identified list of opportunities (learned through research and prior engagement), respondents indicated the following top 3 opportunities:**

- Engage local artists community (69%)
- Galvanize desire for arts and culture more generally (60%)
- Facilitate partnerships (57%)
- **From a pre-identified list of challenges (learned through research and prior engagement), respondents indicated the following top 3 challenges:**
 - Lack of awareness of arts and cultural activities/opportunities (67%)
 - Lack of funding (67%)
 - Lack of advocacy for arts and culture (39%)
- **From a pre-identified list of potential initiatives for a regional arts council, respondents selected the top 4 initiatives:**
 - Support municipalities to deliver arts and cultural programming (51%)
 - Support communications and awareness (46%)
 - Facilitate more studio spaces and maker spaces in the region (42%)
 - Advocacy for artists and creatives at a regional level (41%)

On artist experiences

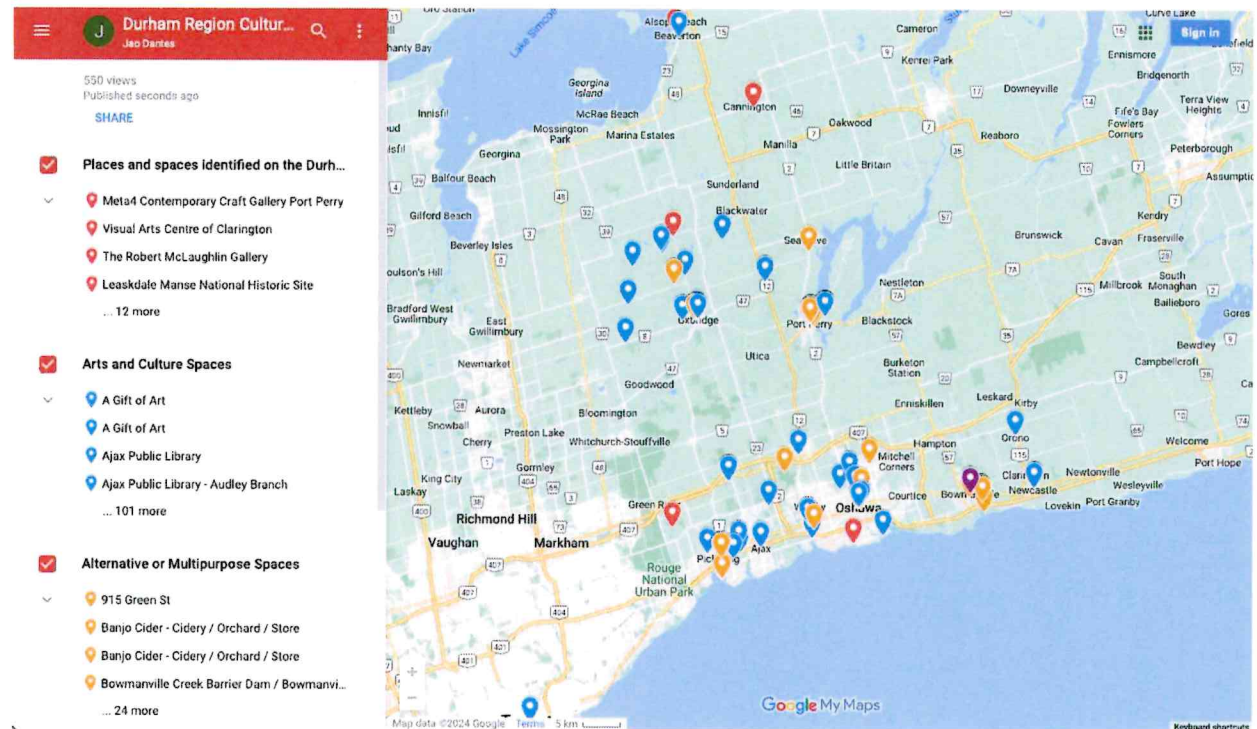
- **Overall, when asked about the top 3 things they love about Durham Region, artists, creatives, and arts workers most selected:**
 - General enthusiasm and support for arts and culture (39%)
 - The collaborative nature of the arts community and potential for partnerships (38%)
 - The mix of urban and rural arts experiences (32%)
 - Local businesses are supportive of arts and culture (31%)
- **When asked how they access funds, artist, creatives, and arts workers selected:**
 - Canada Arts Council (49%)
 - Ontario Trillium Foundation (48%)
 - Ontario Arts Council (47%)
 - Municipalities (32%)
 - Central Counties Tourism (25%)
 - The Region of Durham (24%)
 - Scugog Arts Council (23%)
 - Durham Community Foundation (9%)
 - Ontario Cultural Attraction Fund (5%)

Appendix B: Cultural Asset Map

Cultural Asset Map

The cultural mapping activity for Phase 1 was completed through an interactive Google Map with an option for manual written entries. All pinpoints have been consolidated on Google Maps. To show volumetric data, the inventory has kept multiple pinpoints of the same destination.

► [Click here to see the interactive map](#)



Cultural mapping takeaways

Further to the development of the cultural mapping inventory itself, the process also shared some takeaways for consideration:

- Some spaces with multiple/recurring entries include the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Visual Arts Centre Clarington, Meta4 Contemporary Craft Art Gallery, Whitby Public Library, the general Port Perry area, and Scugog Arts Council.

- Identified places and spaces are predominantly formal spaces (art galleries, museums, libraries, etc.) with some informal or multi-use spaces (breweries with live music or drag nights, art studios, house concert venues, weekly open mic nights, summer destinations, public libraries).
- While most entries are located around Oshawa, some added locations outside the larger municipalities, including:
 - Woodpile - a house concert venue in Zephyr ON
 - Two Blokes Cider in Seagrave ON
 - Greenbank Centennial Hall in Greenbank ON
 - Parks and waterfront locations across the Durham Region