

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2009



The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: The Committee of the Whole
From: Chief Administrative Officer
Report: #2023-COW-2
Date: January 18, 2023

Subject:

Development of a Regional Public Art Program

Recommendation:

That the Committee of the Whole recommends to Regional Council:

- A) That Regional Council endorse the establishment of a Regional Public Art Program to provide a framework for incorporating public art on Regional infrastructure, land, and other projects with opportunity for creative placemaking;
 - B) That a Public Art Working Group be created and comprised of local experts from the creative community to support the development and maintenance of the Public Art Policy and provide recommendations for ongoing public art projects.
-

Report:

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To provide an update on the implementation of the Pilot Public Art Project; and
- 1.2 To recommend that a Regional Public Art Program be developed to support regional public art projects, provide opportunities for area municipal and community collaboration, and support Regional strategic goals.

2. Background

- 2.1 Public art elevates community identity and is often a mechanism for cultural connection and social inclusion. It creates thought provoking, energized spaces, and contributes to a unique regional identity.
- 2.2 Public art will elevate Durham's cultural, social, and economic potential and drive Regional objectives. Benefits of public art align with Inclusive Tourism and Quality

of Place goals as outlined in the recently endorsed Ready Set Future Economic Development and Tourism strategy and contribute to Durham's distinct cultural identity.

- a. Public art improves community image and enhances vibrancy of downtown cores. This attracts visitors, residents, and investors, and drives traffic to local business in surrounding areas.
 - b. Public art is a mechanism of cultural expression, is reflective of and represents various communities and diverse populations. It celebrates diversity, is inclusive and accessible for both residents and visitors.
 - c. Public art can reflect local voices, often using input from residents and people with lived experiences to inform art projects.
- 2.3 In Durham, area municipalities lead public art within their respective Arts, Culture, and Heritage divisions. Most Durham lakeshore municipalities have an established public art policy to advance broader public art and/or culture priorities.
- a. The Region has a process in place for the use of Regional infrastructure for public art purposes (see [Report 2017-COW-285](#)).
- 2.4 Comparable regional municipalities are also investing in public art policies to enhance creative placemaking, elevate a sense of identity, and raise cultural profile.
- a. The Region of Waterloo has an established public art policy and program. One notable project is the ION public art collection along the ION light rail corridor. This work enhances the transit experience and improves cultural components of the community.
 - b. Niagara Region's Culture Plan identifies an action to establish standard guidelines and processes to support a public art program that can be used by the region and guide local municipalities. The region supports public art through initiatives such as the Public Realm Investment Program to support local municipality enhancement to regional roads.
- 2.5 A Regional Public Art Program would be a conduit for creative synergy; non-profit organizations and our creative industries across the region are working with arts and culture groups to strengthen the art community and support more coordination and collaboration with the Region.

3. Pilot Public Art Project

- 3.1 In 2021, the Region partnered with Durham College Fine Art students to create artwork representative of the community through its established Community Collaborative Project program.
- 3.2 A working group with staff from Economic Development, Works, Finance, and the CAO's Office informed the process, developed selection criteria, and reviewed artwork.

- 3.3 Residents were engaged to inform the theme of the pilot project. An engagement survey posted on YourDurham.ca and shared through social media captured 160 responses, with majority showing an interest in art that celebrates diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility. Additional feedback indicated a desire to see more public art in the community.
- 3.4 Students completed the artwork in April 2022. The selected pieces will be installed in the courtyard area at Regional Headquarters, displaying 14 unique expressions of diverse identities and experiences (see Attachment 1).
- 3.5 Knowledge gained through the successful pilot will support the development of a Regional Public Art Program. Staff who participated in the pilot will inform the policy and broader program planning.

4. Municipal Environmental Scan

- 4.1 Staff conducted an environmental scan of nearby municipalities with experience in public art to learn of best practices.
- 4.2 Regional, local, and single tier municipal perspectives were captured through a review of existing policies and eight informational interviews.
- 4.3 Through this research, the following elements were identified as requirements to a successful public art program:
 - A public art policy outlining procedures for art acquisition, selection, maintenance, collections management, and de-accession;
 - Governance bodies to support development, maintenance, and review of the policy and make recommendations; and
 - Budget allocation to support projects, with a portion reserved for ongoing maintenance.
- 4.4 Additional insights gathered through the research included:
 - Identifying a clear role for Councillors to provide community expertise;
 - Considering equitable distribution of art so it is accessible in communities beyond downtown cores (e.g., priority neighbourhoods);
 - Placing value on smaller scale projects which produce tangible outcomes in a shorter turnaround time; and
 - Identifying opportunities to partner or consult with area municipalities early into projects where appropriate.

5. Proposed Regional Public Art Program

- 5.1 Municipal best practices and outcomes from the Region's pilot public art project informed the proposed Program. It will act as a framework for incorporating public art on a regional scale. Key components of the proposed Program include:

a. Vision

- The vision will provide Regional context for public art, and reflect Regional commitments to collaboration, economic investment, and social inclusion.
- The vision will demonstrate how implementation of public art drives outcomes of Regional priorities. Public art aligns with Strategic Plan priorities in Community Vitality and Economic Prosperity, creating opportunities for creative placemaking to support complete neighbourhoods and building Durham's cultural identity to advance economic development goals in the Ready Set Future strategy.

b. Governance

- Regional Council will be responsible for the review and approval of the Regional Public Art Program and Policy, review and approval the annual budget, and review individual projects as needed. Regional staff will manage the administration and art selection through the Working Group and Juries described below.
- Cross-departmental staff will support the program and policy development. Expertise from this group will be consulted on future projects as required.
- The following governance bodies will be established to support the Regional Public Art Program.
 - (a) A Public Art Working Group to support policy development, review proposals, and make recommendations. The Working Group will be recruited through an open call to members of the local creative industries and community members at large. Regional staff will facilitate meetings and group activities.
 - (b) Juries to support art selection and review submissions. Juries are established by the Working Group on a case-by-case basis.
- The Region recognizes recent community efforts to advocate for a Regional Arts and Culture Council and would seek expertise from this group to support development of the Public Art Advisory Committee and potential selection jury members for future projects.

c. Site Selection

- Site selection for public art installations will be determined as part of the review of project proposals and as determined by Regional staff (asset owners) in consultation of the Working Group. It is recommended that criteria for priority locations and infrastructure to guide this process be established by Regional staff with input from the Working Group.

d. Acquisition

- Commissions will follow a competition process as recommended by the Advisory Committee. Other avenues of acquisition should be considered including donations, loans, and direct purchases.
- e. Regional Public Art Policy will define key components of the Program in more detail, including:
- Acquisition scenarios and different selection processes will be defined.
 - Governance groups, roles and purposes will be defined, including Terms of Reference.
 - Collections management will outline ownership, inventory processes, installation, maintenance and conservation, insurance, storage, disposal and de-accessioning.
 - Funding sources will include operating budgets, senior government funding, and private and community sector contributions.
 - Existing requirements for permits, licenses and permissions for the installation of public art on Regional infrastructure will be incorporated into the Public Art Policy.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 Funding for the Public Art Program can be accommodated within the CAO's Office community relations budget. Should the initial Public Art Program expand in the future, staff will request additional funds through the annual Business Planning and Budgets process.
- 6.2 Maintenance costs for public art installations will be included within the operating budget of the department responsible for the ongoing maintenance of art installations once in place.

7. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 7.1 This report aligns with the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:
- a. Goal 2: Community Vitality. Objective: To foster an exceptional quality of life with services that contribute to strong neighbourhoods, vibrant and diverse communities and influence our safety and well-being.
 - Objective 2.1- Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
 - b. Goal 3: Economic Prosperity. Objective: To build a strong and resilient economy that maximizes opportunities for business and employment growth, innovation, and partnership.

- Objective 3.2- Leverage Durham's prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Public art strengthens community identity, supports a thriving creative industry, and bolsters local economy and tourism.
- 8.2 Many area municipalities in Durham have an established public art policy and nearby regional municipalities are developing programs to support broader culture goals.
- 8.3 A Regional Public Art Program would bring opportunities to collaborate with area municipalities and drive cultural and economic priorities.
- 8.4 It is recommended that a Regional Public Art Program be established to guide governance and policy for incorporating public art on Regional infrastructure and development projects.
- 8.5 It is recommended that a Public Art Advisory Committee be established to support the development of the Program and Policy and oversee ongoing projects once the Program is established.
- 8.6 This report has been reviewed by the CAO's Office, Finance, Planning and Economic Development and Works Departments.
- 8.7 Report prepared by: Linnea Veloce, Policy Advisor, and Alison Burgess, Manager Corporate Initiatives.
- 8.8 Report approved by: Sandra Austin, Director, Strategic Initiatives.

9. Attachments

Attachment #1- Public Art Pilot Project Installation.

Respectfully submitted,

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachment 1 for Report #2023-COW-2
Public Art Pilot Project Installation

