

Town of Whitby

Staff Report

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Report Title: Public Art Policy Framework

Report to: Committee of the Whole

Date of meeting: February 27, 2023

Report Number: CAO 03-23

Department(s) Responsible:

Office of the Chief Administrative Officer

Submitted by:

Sarah Klein, Director, Strategic Initiatives

Acknowledged by M. Gaskell, Chief Administrative Officer

For additional information, contact:

Sophia Sousa, Coordinator, Culture & Tourism

Lara Scott, Program Manager, Events, Tourism, and Culture

1. Recommendation:

1. That Report CAO 03-23 be received for information;
2. That Council endorse the Public Art Policy Framework as presented in Report CAO 03-23; and,
3. That Staff be directed to prepare a final Public Art Policy to be presented to Council in Q4 2023.

2. Highlights:

- The development of a Public Art Policy was identified in the Town's Official Plan under Section 6 – Community Development and subsequently as an action item in the Town's Culture Plan under Direction Three: Connecting Places, Goal 4, Action B.
- The purpose of a Public Art Policy is to support new commissions, grow the Town's collection, and develop a standardized process for the lifecycle of public art projects for the Town of Whitby.
- The report provides an overview of the Public Art Policy Framework that was initiated in September 2022 and includes four phases;
 - Phase 1: Environmental Scan;

- Phase 2: Comparator Analysis;
- Phase 3: Community Engagement; and
- Phase 4: Development of the Public Art Policy.
- Phases 1 and 2 were completed in December 2022, and highlights of these findings are provided in this report.
- Community engagement will be a key component in the completion of the Public Art Policy and is anticipated to commence in Q1 2023. The community will be engaged via a Connect Whitby campaign, while key community stakeholders from arts and culture organizations and Town staff will be invited to participate on a Steering Committee. Individual interviews will take place with Mayor, Council, Town staff, and additional community stakeholders.

3. Background:

In March 2021, Council adopted the Town's First Culture Plan, Culture Connects Whitby, as noted in Report [CMS 03-21](#). Culture Connects Whitby provides strategic directions and actions to guide cultural activity until 2031. It outlines actions to promote and enhance Whitby's existing cultural assets, attract new cultural activities, demonstrate a commitment to local art and culture, spur economic development, and contribute to other Town goals. Public art is mentioned throughout the Culture Plan but primarily in Direction 3: Connecting Places and Direction 4: Connecting Stories. The Culture Plan echoes the Official Plan in calling for the development of a Public Art Policy under Direction 3, Goal 4, Action B, stating:

“Implement Official Plan Policy 6.2.3.19.5, ‘develop a Public Art Policy and guidelines, in consultation with the community, to guide the acquisition, funding, location, and integration of public art in public and private spaces in the community.’ Art policies and guidelines shall involve artists and the community in the decision-making process.”

Public art is defined in two existing Town of Whitby documents: The Public Art Donation and Loan Policy (2011) and the Culture Plan. According to the Town of Whitby's Public Art Donation and Loan Policy, public art is referred to “as visual works of decorative or functional purpose owned or managed by the Town of Whitby.” According to the Culture Plan, public art is defined as “any media that has been produced by an artist for publicly accessible space and is intended to engage the public. It can take the form of permanent, temporary or socially engaged art”. Public art consists of participatory art, permanent art, and temporary art.

Public art adds value to a community by reflecting on the uniqueness of a given place. At its core, public art is free and accessible, encouraging community members of different abilities, backgrounds, and identities to engage with art. Local pride, community identity, and a sense of belonging are strengthened

through shared experiences of public art. Public art transforms the built environment, inviting the community to connect with spaces in new and unexpected ways.

The purpose of a Public Art Policy would be to support new commissions and grow the Town's collection through projects that reflect Whitby's history and culture and contributes to the identity of place in creative and symbolic ways. Public art would elevate and enhance the quality of life for Whitby's residents while driving tourism and economic development. A Public Art Policy would support the development of a standardized process that outlines the lifecycle of public art projects for the Town of Whitby from the initial concept to selection, fabrication, maintenance, and deaccessioning (if needed).

The Town of Whitby has an existing Public Art Donation and Loan Policy however, the policy has not been updated since approval in 2011 and does not reflect the contemporary public art donation and loan needs of the Town of Whitby. Further, the 2011 policy is limited to existing artworks donated (permanent) or loaned (temporary) to the Town and does not address new commissions or projects. As a result, public art projects are undertaken on a case-by-case basis with no formal or standardized process for new commissions, maintenance, and inventory tracking.

4. Discussion:

In September 2022, the development of the Public Art Policy Framework was initiated. The framework includes four phases, two of which have already been completed and were shared with Council through the Council Information Index on February 10, 2023. Phases of the project are outlined below and detailed in Attachment 1.

Phase 1: Environmental Scan (Completed)

The Environmental Scan provided an overview of the current state of Whitby's Public Art Program, including links to relevant municipal documents, existing inventory of public art, works on loan, new commission and maintenance processes, staff resources, and municipal budget. Overall, the Environmental Scan showcased that the Town of Whitby does not have a formalized process for new public art projects, maintenance, or collection management and that the extent of Town-owned and loaned works across all municipal facilities is unknown. In addition, the Town does not have any capital or operating budget allocated towards public art, and the commission of artwork has been on a case-by-case basis.

Phase 2: Comparator Analysis (Completed)

From October 2022 to December 2022, the Creative Communities team interviewed 17 individuals who represented 14 municipalities in Canada (with emphasis on those located in Ontario) to complete a Comparator Analysis.

Communities that were interviewed include Ajax, Barrie, Burlington, Durham Region, Halton Hills, Hamilton, Kingston, Mississauga, Oshawa, Ottawa, Peterborough, Pickering, Toronto, and Winnipeg.

Consideration was given to municipalities located in Durham Region to understand the regional context and insights related to public art. A representative from Durham Region was interviewed as part of the Comparator Analysis as the Region is undergoing a similar process to establish a Public Art Program for region owned properties. On January 18, 2023, a Report was brought forward to Regional Committee of the Whole to endorse the establishment of a Regional Public Art Program to provide a framework for incorporating public art on Regional infrastructure. The Town will ensure that its Public Art Policy will align to the Regional Policy and that conversations and collaboration between the Town and Region regarding public art continue.

The interviews provided best practice insights and key findings related to how public art is defined in policies, project initiation, locations of public artworks, the formation of boards, working groups, and juries, public engagement in the development of public art policies and projects, funding sources, and overall learnings.

Based on the findings from the Environmental Scan and Comparator Analysis, the following are recurring themes for the Town of Whitby to consider during the development of the Public Art Policy:

1. Develop a standardized process for public art projects.
2. Track and maintain public art collection inventory.
3. Revisit the definition of public art, keep it broad, and omit timelines associated with public art lifecycle.
4. Create an internal working group for public art projects.
5. Engage the public as early as possible in public art projects.
6. Capital funding for new projects is ideal and a maintenance reserve should be established.
7. Establish a new or exempted procurement or purchasing process for public art projects.
8. Create a competitive local artist market by offering education and training.

Phase 3: Community Engagement (Anticipated for Q1- Q3 2023)

A variety of engagement tools will be used to gather community insights related to the Public Art Policy, including a survey via Connect Whitby, the establishment of a Steering Committee that will support the development of a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) assessment and feedback on the draft Public Art Policy, and individual interviews with community and Town stakeholders. Four main audiences will be engaged as part of this phase; key stakeholders from Whitby's arts community, Town staff, Mayor and Council, and the public. A Community Engagement and Stakeholder Findings Report will be prepared to summarize findings from feedback collected through Phase 3.

Phase 4: Development of Public Art Policy (Anticipated for Q3-Q4 2023)

The development of the Public Art Policy will take place in Q3-Q4 2023, considering findings and recommendations from all previously completed phases. The final policy will be presented to Council in Q4 2023 for approval.

Next Steps:

The next steps include generating a list of potential Steering Committee members, inviting proposed members to an introductory meeting, and developing questions and content for the Connect Whitby webpage, as well as interview questions for stakeholders and Mayor and Council.

5. Financial Considerations:

The Town does not have an on-going/annual source of funding for public art initiatives in the budget. In the past, public art was funded through sponsorship, private donations, grants, or on an ad-hoc basis.

In the 2023 budget, a decision item for annual Public Art funding was provided for Council consideration: \$375,000 was proposed over a 10-year period as part of the Creative Communities reserve fund. Due to other budget priorities, this decision item was not included in the approved 2023 Budget. Once the Public Art Policy is finalized and approved by Council, incremental property tax funding may be required to implement public art in future years.

6. Communication and Public Engagement:

Public feedback will be gathered via a Connect Whitby survey to understand how community members define public art and what they would like to see in terms of themes, locations, and mediums. Survey findings will help inform areas of improvement for Whitby's public art program and existing elements that should remain unchanged. Following the approval of the Public Art Policy Framework, a communications plan in collaboration with the Town's Communications and Creative Services Team will be developed and executed to support the rollout of the Connect Whitby campaign at an appropriate time. Key community stakeholders from arts and culture organizations and a few Town staff will be invited to participate on a Steering Committee, while individual interviews will take place with Mayor, Council, Town staff, and additional community stakeholders.

7. Input from Departments/Sources:

The draft Public Art Policy will be circulated to the project Steering Committee and internal Town departments to gather feedback which will be reflected in the final Public Art Policy to be presented to Council for approval in Q4 2023.

8. Strategic Priorities:

This report aligns with the Town’s Strategic Priorities by fostering innovation and focusing on making processes better, optimizing decision-making capabilities, engaging staff and the community in the process, and designing service delivery around customer needs. The Public Art Policy will ensure accessibility is taken into consideration to ensure that it is inclusive to all people and abilities. This report aligns with the Corporate Sustainability Plan by supporting the guiding principle “We will improve quality of life by valuing people and places”. Furthermore, through public art, Whitby will attract, create, and facilitate meaningful partnerships in the creative sector and support opportunities for economic development that foster a diverse local economy.

9. Attachments:

Attachment 1 – Staff Report CAO 03-23 - Public Art Policy Project Framework