



Art In Public Spaces Plan

— City of —
PICKERING



Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that the City of Pickering resides on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations. This acknowledgement reminds us of our responsibilities to our relationships with the First Peoples of Canada, and to the ancestral lands on which we learn, share, work, and live.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Context Setting

Across Canada, municipalities are navigating a period of constrained cultural funding while prioritizing major infrastructure like roads and other significant civic capital investments. In this context, arts and cultural planning has increasingly shifted toward models that sustain cultural vitality through strategic integration with placemaking, infrastructure, and community development initiatives. Rather than relying solely on large permanent commissions, cities are expanding flexible approaches, such as temporary exhibitions, artist residencies, and community-led activations, to maintain visible arts activity, support artists, and animate public space in cost-effective ways.

Pickering's context is notably strong within this national landscape. The City has demonstrated significant leadership and investment in culture, including substantial increases to Cultural Services funding over the past four years, representing more than \$70 million in cultural infrastructure and program investment. Pickering also maintains a healthy public art budget and a growing cultural services portfolio, positioning the city well to continue advancing ambitious arts and placemaking initiatives as part of its broader growth strategy.

In keeping with Pickering's broader placemaking priorities, the 2026 Cultural Strategic Plan, and the City's ongoing growth trajectory, this Art in Public Spaces Plan focuses on maintaining and strengthening the City's robust level of arts activity while amplifying new opportunities through temporary, digital, and community-responsive programs. This approach builds on the City's existing investment and ensures that art in public spaces continues to contribute to civic identity, support neighbourhood beautification, public gathering, tourism, community participation, and storytelling across Pickering.

CITY OF PICKERING | ART IN PUBLIC SPACES PLAN

Summary of Recommendations

It is recommended that the City of Pickering adopt an expanded definition of art in public spaces and implement a coherent, city-wide program that responds to rapid population growth by:

1. Addressing geographic gaps through a clear siting framework that prioritizes civic and cultural hubs, parks/waterfront, transit corridors/gateways, and neighbourhood nodes, especially Claremont, Seaton, and intensification areas.
2. Aligning delivery with the Cultural Strategic Plan through five core program areas (civic/capital, developer contributions, temporary/creative placemaking, community engagement including artist-in-residence and animators models, and education and maintenance.).
3. Embedding equity, accessibility, and Indigenous-led partnerships into commissioning and governance.
4. Modernizing procurement, policy, lifecycle planning, and funding to ensure continued sustainability.
5. Strengthening interpretation, promotion, and public education — through signage, digital tools, tours, and storytelling — to build resident awareness, knowledge-sharing, and pride of place around both existing and future artworks.

1.2 What Is Art in Public Spaces?

Art in public spaces (also referred to as public art¹) is defined as original artwork selected, commissioned, created, programmed, or donated for placement within the public domain and created by an artist. Artworks may be permanent or temporary, functional or aesthetic, integrated into architecture, infrastructure, or landscape, or discrete installations located within a particular site. Artwork initiated or created by the community for the public realm is also considered art in public spaces.

The term "art in public spaces" is used throughout this plan to reflect an inclusive understanding of artistic practice beyond the narrow lens of sculptures and murals. This term recognizes that multiple artistic disciplines, including but not limited to visual art, digital media, performance, storytelling, and participatory practices, can contribute to the activation and animation of public spaces. In contemporary municipal practice, art in public spaces extends beyond sculptures and murals to support placemaking, cultural expression, social cohesion and city-building objectives.

Municipalities increasingly use art in public spaces as a strategic tool to interpret local histories, reflect diverse community identities, foster belonging, and enhance the quality and experience of the public realm. In Pickering, art in public spaces contributes to the City's evolving identity, supports community well-being, and aligns with broader goals for sustainable growth and cultural development articulated in municipal policy frameworks.

Key Terms

Key terms referenced throughout the plan include:

- **Art in Public Spaces:** Art, located in the public realm, that contributes to placemaking and cultural meaning, with the capacity to interpret historic, social, cultural, and narrative dimensions that distinguish communities and create a sense of place.
- **Creative Placemaking:** An evolving field of practice that intentionally leverages arts, culture, and creativity to serve community interests while advancing broader agendas for growth, equity, and transformation and enhancing character and quality of place.
- **Public Realm:** Publicly accessible places and spaces, including streets, parks, plazas, waterfronts, civic facilities, building facades, and privately owned public spaces.
- **Creative Engagement:** is the use of arts, culture, and creative processes to meaningfully involve residents in shaping civic spaces, programs and decisions.

¹ Americans for the Arts. (n.d.). Public art. <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/public-art>

1.3 Community and Place Profile

Demographics and Urban Growth Context

The City of Pickering is a rapidly growing municipality located in Durham Region, adjacent to Toronto, Markham, Ajax, and Uxbridge, and extending south to Lake Ontario. Pickering is transitioning from a suburban community to a more complete and urbanized city, with significant growth anticipated in the downtown core, transit corridors, and emerging communities.

Pickering's Official Plan guides long-term land use, transportation, and resource management and is periodically reviewed to respond to changing economic, social, and environmental conditions. Population growth forecasts indicate substantial expansion over the coming decades, with projections identifying Pickering as a key growth area within the Region of Durham and the Greater Golden Horseshoe.

Downtown Pickering is designated as an Urban Growth Centre and Mobility Hub by the Province of Ontario, designed to become a high-density, mixed-use community with a target of 200 residents and jobs per hectare by 2031. This growth is intended to enhance the City's vitality, support economic development, and strengthen civic identity.

This urban transformation presents opportunities for art in public spaces to contribute to placemaking, identity-building and community cohesion in both established and more emerging neighbourhoods.

² City of Pickering. (2025). Community vision and priorities: Pickering Official Plan review public information centre presentation. https://www.pickering.ca/media/14vbxgq/pic-3-presentation_acc.pdf

Indigenous Context

The City of Pickering is situated on land within the Treaty and traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and Williams Treaties signatories of the Mississauga and Chippewa Nations. Pickering is also home to many Indigenous persons and communities who represent other diverse, distinct, and autonomous Indigenous nations.²

This plan recognizes Indigenous rights, knowledge systems, and cultural practices, and supports opportunities for Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered art in public spaces initiatives. Indigenous public art can contribute to meaningful representation within Pickering's evolving public realm, and should be developed through respectful relationships and appropriate protocols.

Cultural Assets and Public Realm Overview

As identified in the 2026 Cultural Strategic Plan Pickering's creative ecosystem* includes a network of cultural facilities, heritage assets, creative practitioners, festivals, and community organizations that contribute to the City's identity and quality of life. The plan recognizes that arts, culture, and heritage define community identity, contribute to economic and social development, and create a sense of place and belonging.

This Art in Public Spaces Plan relates primarily to the 2026 Cultural Strategic Plan's Strategic Priority 1 — Foster placemaking and a distinct community identity. Pickering's public realm includes the waterfront, trail networks, civic and cultural facilities, neighbourhood parks and plazas, streetscapes, and emerging downtown and transit-oriented development areas. These spaces provide a significant platform for art in public spaces to enhance place identity, foster social interaction, and support Pickering's evolving urban form.

*Creative Ecosystem: The interconnection of cultural resources in a community. The arts function as a part of a larger network of industries with each cultural resource playing an important role in shaping the city's arts and culture scene. Facilities, spaces, festivals, makers, artists, designers, arts organizations, tourism, and business all interact with and rely on each other to support the well-being and vitality of a vibrant city.



1.4 Existing Public Art and Cultural Infrastructure

Pickering has an established and growing portfolio of public art, supported by municipal programs, capital investments, and partnerships. As of 2026, the City identified over 47 public artworks across Pickering, including permanent sculptures, murals, digital and temporary installations distributed across civic, waterfront, museum, suburban, and gateway locations. The City's Public Art Plan 2023–2026 organizes existing and planned public art initiatives across five primary zones: Civic Centre, Waterfront, Pickering Museum Village and Greenwood Park, Suburban Areas and Gateways and Hubs.

Cultural infrastructure in Pickering includes the Pickering Museum Village, public libraries, recreation and community centres, waterfront and trail systems, and a range of festivals and cultural events. Together, these assets provide a platform for integrated art in public spaces initiatives that support cultural expression, placemaking, and community development. This plan builds on existing public art investments and aligns with municipal objectives for placemaking, community identity, and high-quality public realm design.



1.5 Methodology and Plan Development Approach

The City of Pickering Art in Public Spaces Plan was developed simultaneously alongside the 2026 Cultural Strategic Plan and Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan through a collaborative and multi-layered research and policy review process to ensure alignment with municipal planning and strategic priorities. Key components of the methodology included:

- Review of municipal policy frameworks, including the Pickering Official Plan, Public Art Policy, Public Art Plan, Cultural Strategic Plan, Corporate Strategic Plan, and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy.
- Comparative review of public art strategies, policies, and governance models from Canadian and international municipalities.
- Review of existing public art assets, siting opportunities, and public realm typologies within Pickering.
- Review of engagement and consultation to align art in public spaces planning with cultural planning priorities.

This methodology ensured that the plan is grounded in municipal policy, aligned with city-building priorities, and informed by contemporary practices in public art planning, creative placemaking, and cultural policy.



1.6 Gaps and Opportunities in Pickering's Art in Public Spaces

While Pickering has developed a growing portfolio of public art across civic, waterfront, museum, and suburban contexts, spatial and thematic gaps remain that present strategic opportunities for future investment. Public art is currently concentrated in the City Hall/Civic Centre, waterfront, and Pickering Museum Village areas, with comparatively limited presence in Central/North Pickering (i.e., Clarendon) and emerging growth areas such as Seaton and intensification corridors, raising equity considerations related to geographic access and representation. As Pickering continues to intensify along transit corridors, mixed-use nodes, and gateway sites, there is an opportunity to integrate art in public spaces into infrastructure projects, streetscapes, and transit-oriented developments to support placemaking and identity-building in high-growth areas. Alongside new investment, there is also a growing need to build public awareness, education, and pride of place by strengthening interpretation and promotion of existing artworks through storytelling, tours, digital platforms and accessible information-sharing that deepens residents' understanding of the City's public art collection and cultural narratives.

Additionally, while recent projects have begun to incorporate Indigenous-led works, there is an opportunity to expand Indigenous representation and partnerships through relationship building, sustained Indigenous-led commissions, storytelling, mentorship, and land-based public art that reflects Indigenous histories, stories, contemporary presence and futures. Strengthening community-based and participatory public art in diverse neighbourhoods/hamlets, particularly youth- and newcomer-serving areas, also presents an opportunity to enhance belonging, cultural expression, and local capacity building across Pickering's evolving urban landscape.



1.7 What We Heard: Engagement Summary

Our Process

Following the project's Community Engagement and Communications Framework, the engagement team engaged with City staff, community interest holders and the broader Pickering community to develop the Cultural Strategic Plan and related Art in Public Spaces Plan and Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan. Special attention was paid to ensuring that voices that may not typically be heard during large-scale engagement events were sought out, leading to engagement with key art-based stakeholders and community organizations, the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, Pickering Anti-Black Racism Task Force, and High School and Youth leaders.

The comprehensive engagement process was designed to ensure impactful public consultation on the future vision of cultural development, including museums, heritage, and art in public spaces in Pickering. The engagement approach included both small, workshop style sessions and a large community questionnaire with over 600 responses to understand the community experience at both small and large scales.

The final strategies were developed with community. The following section is a summary of the activities and key engagement findings related specifically to the Art in Public Spaces Plan.

Engagement at a Glance

- **Senior Management Session**
September 22, 2025
- **Interdepartmental Staff Session**
September 22, 2025
- **Agency and Opinion Leader Interviews** (Six)
September 25, 2025–October 9, 2025
- **Community Questionnaire**
October 31–December 20, 2025
- **Open Houses** (Four)
November 12 and November 13, 2025
- **Art in Public Spaces Focus Group**
November 14, 2025
- **Museum and Heritage Focus Group**
November 14, 2025
- **High School and Youth Leader Sessions**
November 20, 21, 28, December 9, 2025
- **Indigenous Relationship Building Circle**
November 25, 2025
- **Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce**
January 8, 2026
- **Pickering Museum Village Staff Session**
January 14, 2026

Overall: Major Themes

Engagement participants identified art in public spaces as an important tool for placemaking, neighbourhood activation, and strengthening everyday encounters with culture. Participants emphasized that public art should meaningfully reflect Pickering's distinct histories, cultures, and communities, including through the inclusion of local artists and locally relevant narratives.

Participants also highlighted opportunities for art in public spaces to support wayfinding, reinforce neighbourhood identity, and be integrated into parks, streetscapes, transit corridors, and civic infrastructure. In addition to permanent installations, there was interest in temporary and rotating works that allow for experimentation, broader artist participation, and responsiveness to changing community contexts.

Engagement feedback suggests that art in public spaces is most valued when it is contextually grounded, locally relevant, and integrated into everyday environments rather than treated as standalone or purely symbolic interventions. While participants expressed interest in both permanent and temporary works, these preferences highlight the need for a clear curatorial and governance framework to balance experimentation, maintenance, and long-term stewardship.

Senior Management Session

September 22, 2025

At the senior management level, the consultant emphasized the need for a culture plan that is laser-focused given the current and forthcoming sector realities and economic outlook. The senior team agreed that a targeted scope that is actionable, and financially realistic, given the City's looming budget pressures and competing capital priorities.

They acknowledged culture's role in enhancing community identity, placemaking, and civic pride, while also underscoring the need to safeguard existing cultural assets. Leaders noted progress in areas such as art in public spaces integration, expanded community grants, and improvements in equity, diversity, and inclusion, but also raised concerns around heritage preservation, resident awareness of culture, and the tension between hamlets and urban growth.

Discussions underscored the urgency of rooting new developments in local heritage, identifying key art in public spaces sites and placemaking opportunities, and sustaining the City's progress in museum programming and heritage interpretation.



Interdepartmental Staff Session

September 22, 2025

The staff engagement session echoed these perspectives, with frontline and interdepartmental staff describing cultural services as highly collaborative and integrated across City functions. They pointed to key strengths (such as inclusive events, strong museum engagement, and a growing art in public spaces presence); however, staff also flagged key gaps:

- Inadequate performing arts and event spaces
- Accessibility challenges
- Strained relationships with Indigenous communities
- Outdated policies, and insufficient resources to meet growing demands

Opportunities identified included:

- Strengthening Indigenous partnerships
- Investing in new facilities and transit access
- Expanding placemaking initiatives, and,
- Bringing museum and cultural programming directly into communities
- Staff articulated aspirations for expanded programming, new performance venues, and stronger visibility of cultural offerings, alongside "big ideas", such as artist live/workspaces and neighbourhood-level activation. These sessions present a clear picture: Pickering has built a solid foundation of cultural services and assets, supported by strong leadership and staff collaboration. Simultaneously, there is a shared recognition that the City is at a critical inflection point — needing to balance financial realities with ambitious goals for growth, inclusivity, and civic identity. The insights will guide the development of a phased, practical cultural plan that strengthens Pickering's distinctiveness, while addressing gaps in infrastructure, equity, and policy.



Agency and Opinion Leader Interviews (Six)

September 25–October 9, 2025

Interviews were conducted with six Agency and Opinion leaders selected by City of Pickering staff to gather their insights into potential funding sources and governance models, as well as partnership and service delivery models, to help us understand and confirm broader trends in the cultural sector at large.

Agency and opinion leaders view Pickering as being at a pivotal stage in its cultural evolution, moving from building capacity to defining its identity within Durham Region and the Greater Toronto Area. The interviews revealed strong optimism about Pickering's cultural potential and underscored the need for more coordinated governance, sustainable funding, and authentic community engagement.

- Pickering's rapid demographic growth, diversity, and strong civic leadership are key cultural assets.
- The Dorsay Community & Heritage Centre was identified as a transformative opportunity to link heritage, community, and contemporary culture.
- Success will rely on sustainable operational models, cross-departmental collaboration, and the integration of culture with tourism and economic development.

Key Themes and Insights

1. Culture as a Public Good and Driver of Livability

- Culture must be positioned as essential infrastructure, not a 'nice-to-have.'
- Cultural development contributes directly to belonging, identity, and community pride.
- Plans must ensure that all residents can see themselves represented through accessible, everyday cultural experiences.

2. Collaboration, Governance, and Regional Partnerships

- A coordinated approach is needed across divisions (Culture, Tourism, Economic Development, etc.).
- Regional collaboration across Durham municipalities is essential.
- Partnerships with business, education, and tourism sectors can expand visibility, attract investment, and diversify revenue streams.

3. Inclusion and Authentic Engagement

- Interviewees emphasized deep, relationship-based engagement with communities over one-off consultations.
- Co-created programming and exhibitions that transfer authorship to communities build stronger connections and relevance.

- Focus areas include Indigenous partnership-building, youth engagement, and ensuring representation of newcomer and equity-deserving communities.

4. Financial Sustainability and Innovation

- Rising costs and reduced funding require diversified revenue sources, sponsorships, and entrepreneurial models.
- Linking culture to economic tools such as the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) and cultural tourism strategies was recommended.
- Interviewees cautioned against overly aspirational plans, advocating for phased, achievable actions with clear return-on-investment measures.

5. Museums and Art in Public Spaces as Anchors for Inclusion

- The Pickering Museum Village and Dorsay Community & Heritage Centre can redefine how heritage and contemporary culture intersect.
- Museums are evolving from preservation toward identity-affirming storytelling.
- Opportunity for art in public spaces to extend beyond civic nodes to new neighbourhoods and use interactive and digital tools to enhance accessibility and engagement.

Community Questionnaire

October 31–December 20, 2025

A Community Questionnaire was available on **LetsTalkPickering.ca** from October 31st, 2025 until December 20, 2025. The survey received 635 responses, with the majority (n=461) from youth aged 13–17. The next most popular age demographic were older adults, aged 65+ (n=52). This points to the community questionnaire data including a significant youth bias. Most respondents (n=583) indicated they lived in Pickering, with other respondents working or visiting often.

A minority of responses expressed concerns about property tax rates and public expenditures on arts, culture, and heritage. This suggests that municipal spending on arts, culture, and heritage should be consistent and transparent, communication about cultural investment must be clear, and that innovative funding approaches (e.g., partnerships with the private sector) should be explored where possible.

- **When asked about their vision for arts, culture, and heritage in Pickering, respondents were interested in increased prominence and diversity in programming, while preserving heritage and ensuring that cultural initiatives were reflective of the community.**
- **Respondents were active participants in arts, culture, and museum/heritage offerings within the last three years.** Special events, festivals and cultural ceremonies were the most common response (n=380), followed by natural heritage sites (n=304). Respondents who chose the 'other' option shared that they participated in informal events, workshops, hobbies, sports, or events in Toronto.
- **Respondents enjoy several aspects of culture in Pickering, including the opportunity to connect with neighbours and family through programming, existing public art, greenspace, programming, and intercultural opportunities.**

- **Respondents were interested in increased activities/ experiences of interest to them** (n=450), when asked about what factors would encourage them to participate more. More free time, increased options nearby, and more cultural spaces/facilities were also popular factors.
- **Peer to peer channels (such as social media), as well as community posters/word of mouth, were the most common methods respondents used to learn about arts, culture, and heritage.** Local news/media, city communications, and library event listings and posters were also commonly used.
- **There is an appetite for outdoor gathering spaces and large, dedicated cultural spaces or facilities among survey respondents.** Some respondents also indicated that they leave Pickering to participate in intercultural events, as well as events such as live music, theatre, and opera.
- **There is a need to increase access and awareness of arts, culture, and heritage experience across neighbourhoods and hamlets.** While 221 respondents indicated that they do have access to arts, culture, and heritage in their local neighbourhood or hamlet, the large number of respondents who indicated 'I don't know' (n=241) or 'no' (n=173) points to this need.
- **Respondents expressed mixed opinions on whether they felt that current arts, culture, and heritage offerings reflect Pickering's changing and diverse population.** Many respondents indicated that arts, culture, and heritage offerings are becoming more diverse.
- **Local access to arts, culture, and heritage in respondents' neighbourhood/hamlet is important.** A combined 296 respondents indicated that access to arts, culture, and heritage in their neighbourhood or hamlet was 'very important' or 'important,' with an additional 225 respondents indicating it was somewhat important.

Open Houses (Four)

November 12 and November 13, 2025

Community members met during four, two-hour open houses held at community centres on November 12 and 13, 2025. The target audiences included northern neighbourhoods and hamlets, Whitevale A&C Centre Board/Members, Arts and Museum interest holders, and Pickering residents. Attendees were encouraged to contribute to Sounding Boards (physical boards they could write their input on) and complete the community questionnaire.

Participants expressed a strong desire for increased arts and culture programming options. Some participants stressed the need for increased awareness of culture in the community, for example through more emails and newsletters. Several participants expressed a need for the Cultural Plan to encourage diversity that is representative of Pickering's population through events that encourage interculturalism. Affordability and availability of arts and culture were also mentioned repeatedly, particularly in terms of affordable or free spaces to enjoy culture.

Art in Public Spaces Focus Group

November 14, 2025

Participants identified that art in public spaces is an important opportunity for placemaking and activating the public realm. Several proposed incorporating public art with recreation opportunities, such as outdoor space and community centres. Some expressed a desire for more art in public spaces. Two participants identified an opportunity to incorporate Indigenous names or land acknowledgement in art in public spaces or street naming processes. Participants also expressed a strong affinity for the local Waterfront, a potential location for future art in public space initiatives.

High School and Youth Consultant Sessions

November 20, 21, 28, 2025

High school students from St. Mary's Catholic Secondary School and Dunbarton High School were engaged at their schools on November 20, 21 and 28, 2025. These students were consulted for their perspectives related to improving cultural programs and services in the city, as well as their opinion on what themes and or types of art in public spaces should be featured in Pickering. The student solutions included billboards and outdoor signs for wayfinding and attraction, strategic partnerships with schools, community groups and influencers, and free/affordable experiential opportunities and events.



Indigenous Relationship Building Circle

November 25, 2025

The Indigenous Relationship Building Circle (IRBC) met to discuss the impact of a new Cultural Strategic Plan on their community, and how they would like their culture and values reflected in the plan.

Highlights from the conversation included:

- More opportunities to showcase Indigenous arts, performance and heritage, including a space for Powwows.
- Improved communication tactics from the City to inform Indigenous participants on cultural goings-on.
- More inclusive engagement methods are needed in order to include Indigenous participants in cultural offerings.
- Improved municipal systems and policies (i.e., event planning, finance and insurance) are needed in order to gain trust with local Indigenous groups, especially artists.
- Support employment and funding opportunities for Indigenous youth to work in cultural sector.

Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce

January 8, 2026

The Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce (PABRT) is a committee of Council appointees who work in partnership with the Pickering community, Durham-based organizations, businesses, and the City of Pickering.

Highlights from the conversation about the plan development included:

- Equity must be embedded in cultural budgeting, with funding and grants designed to be accessible to smaller and grassroots community groups.
- Clearer procurement pathways are needed so community organizations and artists can better understand and participate in calls for artists, RFPs, and City processes.
- City staff capacity and liaison support are critical to successfully connect community groups with resources, policies, and procedures.
- Museums and cultural institutions should strengthen their community presence, engage contemporary audiences, and participate more visibly in community events.
- Local cultural heroes and underrepresented voices should be celebrated through public art, storytelling, and visible interventions across public spaces.
- Art in public spaces should be used as a tool for dialogue, community engagement, and reflection of Pickering's diverse cultural identity.
- Consistent and accessible communication is essential, so residents are aware of cultural initiatives, events, and opportunities to participate.
- Evaluation and feedback loops with the community must be ongoing, with KPIs and metrics embedded into both projects and City cultural processes.
- Cultural development should focus on continued sustainability, moving from initiation to refinement, stabilization, and long-term maintenance of initiatives.



2 Strategic Alignment with Cultural Strategic Plan

2.1 Strategic Alignment

The Pickering Art in Public Spaces Plan establishes a framework to guide the City's approach to commissioning, siting, governance, and stewardship of art in public spaces. The recommendations are structured around four interrelated objectives that support Pickering's broader Cultural Strategic Plan and its 5 Strategic Priorities as follows:

Strategic Priority 1

Foster placemaking and a distinct community identity

Goal: There is a pride of place and enhanced community spaces for connection in Pickering.

Creative placemaking strengthens the relationship between people and place. It integrates culture, heritage, land, and public space to foster identity, pride, and belonging. For Pickering, this includes ensuring that cultural spaces—both indoor and outdoor—reflect the city's history and evolving community.

Strategic Priority 2

Celebrate interculturalism through the arts

Goal: Everyone feels they can safely and inclusively participate in the cultural life of our city where diversity is welcomed.

Intercultural celebration recognizes and values the diversity of Pickering's residents. It promotes inclusive storytelling, shared experiences, and opportunities for cultural exchange, ensuring that all communities see themselves reflected in the city's cultural life.

Strategic Priority 3

Sustain and maintain a creative economy

Goal: Pickering is recognized as an all-season cultural tourism destination and home to a thriving and sustained community of artists and creative workers.

The creative economy supports local artists, cultural producers, and creative enterprises. It contributes to economic development, tourism, and community vitality through mission-aligned cultural programming, partnerships, and revenue-generating opportunities.

Strategic Priority 4

Be future ready

Goal: There is enhanced capacity within the City and in the community for cultural development.

Future-ready cultural development strengthens institutional capacity, professional practice, interdepartmental collaboration, and long-term success. It ensures that cultural infrastructure and programming evolve alongside community growth and demographic change.

Strategic Priority 5

Prioritize youth and young families

Goal: Youth are active and involved in the arts as participants and producers, and there are abundant family arts opportunities.

Youth and family engagement ensure that cultural participation begins early and continues throughout the life course. It prioritizes experiential, creative, and accessible opportunities that invite young residents to shape and contribute to Pickering's cultural future.

Together, these recommendations move public art in Pickering from a series of discrete projects toward a coherent civic infrastructure that contributes to identity, livability, reconciliation, and sustainable urban growth.



The Pickering Art in Public Spaces Plan is designed to advance these priorities through four focused art in public spaces objectives:

1 Sharing Identities, Histories, and Stories of Place

The City should integrate community-engaged processes throughout the public art commissioning lifecycle, ensuring that storytelling, dialogue, and knowledge sharing inform projects from early planning through to long-term interpretation. Engagement activities may occur at multiple stages of a commission, including site identification and planning, artist call promotion, community feedback on proposals, launch events, and post-installation programming.

Conduct community consultations, artist engagement sessions, and heritage storytelling programs to inform public art projects which can provide structured opportunities for residents, local historians, artists, Indigenous Elders, and community organizations to share perspectives and contribute place-based knowledge. These activities strengthen transparency and communication around public art projects while helping artists engage more deeply with the social and cultural context of Pickering's land, waterways, neighbourhoods, and communities.

Digital and hybrid interpretation tools, including QR-linked content, augmented reality, and online archives, can further extend the reach and lifespan of public artworks by sharing the stories, research, and community voices connected to each project beyond the moment of installation.

2 Creating a Distinct and Vibrant Public Realm

Alongside commissioning permanent public art, the City should pilot temporary and rotating installations — including projection-based works and urban digital screens — to activate underutilized sites and introduce contemporary public art practices. These types of initiatives allow the City to test new ideas, animate public spaces, and bring visible arts activity to different neighbourhoods while supporting a wide range of artists and creative practices.

Pilot Artist-in-Residence opportunities within major capital projects, planning initiatives, parks development, and community engagement activities where specific project outcomes can be identified. In these programs, artists work alongside planners, engineers, and landscape architects during early project phases — participating in site research, community engagement, and design discussions — to bring creative perspectives to how infrastructure and public space can be experienced. For example, the City of Calgary's Watershed+ program placed artist Sans façon in residence within the City's Water Services division, where artistic research and engagement activities informed conversations about water infrastructure, ecology, and public awareness. While not every capital project will require a formal residency, this model illustrates how artists can contribute to broader civic conversations and help identify opportunities for integrated artworks, interpretive elements, or creative public space interventions as projects are being planned.

Interactive artworks that invite movement, play, reflection, and gathering should also be prioritized in parks, civic plazas, waterfront areas, and transit-adjacent spaces, supporting a lively and welcoming public realm across the city.

3 Belonging, Access, and Lifelong Creative Engagement

The City should strengthen the capacity of the local arts community by creating mentorship opportunities, artist exchanges, and paid roles for emerging artists, youth, and community animators to participate in public art programs.

Public art commissions should be designed to engage a wide range of residents across ages, abilities and cultural backgrounds. This may include artworks and programs that support different ways of experiencing and interacting with art — such as tactile elements, seating or gathering spaces, opportunities for play or participation, multilingual interpretation, and programming that invites families, youth, and seniors to take part.

Digital access points, including online public art maps, audio guides, and artist interviews, can further expand participation by making it easier for residents and visitors to discover artworks and learn about the stories and ideas behind them.

An evaluation framework would be established as part of Staff's Action Plan to help the City understand the impact of the program over time. This may include tracking indicators such as participation in engagement activities, representation of local and emerging artists in commissions, geographic distribution of artworks across neighbourhoods, accessibility of artworks and interpretation materials, and community feedback on how public art contributes to a sense of belonging and connection to place.

4 Ensuring Sustainable and Resilient Public Art Activity

The City should update its public art policies and procedures to include environmental and financial sustainability criteria, lifecycle planning, and clear maintenance and deaccessioning guidelines. Building on the City's existing asset management list, lifecycle planning should address the ongoing conservation, maintenance, repair and documentation of public artworks.

The implementation of this plan should align commissioning schedules, staffing, funding and municipal priorities. As outlined in the Cultural Strategic Plan, the City should develop a sustainable funding strategy for public art while pursuing external funding from provincial and federal governments, philanthropic sources and the tourism sector.

Alongside permanent commissions, the City should continue to support temporary exhibitions, rotating installations, community activations, festivals and interpretive programs. Durable, low-impact materials should be prioritized for landmark and permanent commissions, while environmentally sustainable materials and practices should be encouraged for temporary and rotational programming.

Art in Public Spaces Precedent:



Lookout at Storm King, 2023, Martin Puryear, Hudson Valley, New York
Credit: Jeffrey Jenkins.

2.2 Art in Public Spaces Role Supporting Cultural Strategic Plan Priorities

Table 1: Alignment between Cultural Strategic Plan (CSP) Priorities and the Art in Public Spaces Plan (APSP) Objectives

CSP STRATEGIC PRIORITIES	APSP OBJECTIVE 1: Sharing Identities, Histories, and Stories of Place	APSP OBJECTIVE 2: Creating a Distinct and Vibrant Public Realm	APSP OBJECTIVE 3: Belonging, Access, and Lifelong Creative Engagement	APSP OBJECTIVE 4: Ensuring Sustainable and Resilient Public Art Activity
 Foster placemaking and a distinct community identity	✓	✓	✓	
 Celebrate interculturalism through the arts	✓	✓	✓	
 Sustain and maintain a creative economy		✓	✓	✓
 Be future ready		✓		✓
 Prioritize youth and young families	✓		✓	



3 Vision and Program Areas

3.1 Vision for Art in Public Spaces in Pickering

Connected Conversations

Guided by the idea that people, movement, and exchange shape the city, Pickering's Art in Public Spaces program will reflect the connection between neighbourhoods, cultures, transit corridors, and shared civic spaces. Public art creates recognizable landmarks, animates public spaces, celebrates local stories, supports tourism, and improves the experience of parks, trails, civic spaces, and neighbourhoods, creating moments to pause, gather, and connect.

Embracing innovation, Pickering's Art in Public Spaces program will expand beyond physical form to include digital, media, and interactive works that layer stories onto streets, stations, parks, and public spaces. Through embedding artists into civic planning processes and through the establishment of an Animators Circle, public art will amplify diverse voices, and contribute to making civic spaces more responsive and inclusive.

The program will champion experimentation and change, using temporary exhibitions and time-based projects as platforms for dialogue, and discovery. These temporary works will test new ideas, activate underused spaces, and invite community participation, allowing public art in Pickering to remain dynamic, adaptive, and forward-looking.

Together, permanent, digital, and temporary works that evolve alongside the city, strengthens connections between people and place, and reflects Pickering as a city in motion, shaped by creativity, curiosity, and collective experience. Guided by principles of equity, creativity, and sustainability, public art will interpret place, foster belonging, and enhance the quality and identity of Pickering's public realm across civic spaces, neighbourhoods, waterfronts, and growth areas.



3.2 Guiding Principles for Art in Public Spaces

The guiding principles for the City of Pickering's Art in Public Spaces Plan are informed by research, the cultural plan engagement processes, and best practices in municipal public art planning across Canada. Together, these principles articulate the values and priorities that will shape the future of art in public spaces in Pickering and guide decision-making across commissioning, programming, partnerships and site integration. Grounded in commitments to equity and inclusion, place-responsiveness, community building, artistic excellence and innovation, learning and capacity building, integration with city-building, and long-term sustainability, the principles ensure that art in public spaces contributes meaningfully to civic life and supports a dynamic and resilient creative ecosystem.

Equity and Inclusion

Ensure public art reflects Pickering's diverse communities, histories, and identities, and supports equitable geographic distribution and access.

Place-Responsiveness

Ground artworks in the ecological, cultural, and social context of Pickering's land, waterways, neighbourhoods and built environment.

Community Collaboration

Prioritize participatory processes, partnerships, and community-led initiatives in public art development.



Artistic Excellence and Innovation

Support high-quality artistic practices across disciplines, scales, and media, including digital and interdisciplinary forms.

Learning and Capacity Building

Embed mentorship, training, and professional development within public art processes to expand the field of public art and support artists in transitioning from studio-based practice to the public realm. This includes integrating mentorship components into commissions, involving emerging and diverse practitioners on public art jury committees, and offering workshops, site tours, and learning opportunities that build knowledge across artists, staff, and community partners.

Integration with City-Building

Embed artists and creative processes in planning, design, and capital projects to shape the public realm.

Sustainability

Ensure artworks are designed, fabricated, and maintained with environmental, financial, and operational sustainability in mind.

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



The Glass House
2023, Tom Fruin, Lake Nona, Florida
Lake Nona public art program and art festival:
2-day festival, local/national artists, participatory.



DREAM.IT.DO.IT AND INTER. NATION.ALL.WATERS
2015, John Runnels, The Woodlands, Texas
Waterfront activation through connected art in public spaces.



Meditation in a Beech Wood
1996, Martin Puryear, Wanås Foundation,
Knislinge, Sweden
Permanent and temporary works in forested
estate, embedded art, participatory programming.

3.3 Program Areas

It is recommended that the City adopt and implement five core Art in Public Spaces program areas to provide a clear, consistent, and scalable framework for delivering art across Pickering. Together, these program areas establish a balanced approach that integrates public art into civic and capital projects and creative placemaking initiatives, while also embedding artists and community voices within municipal processes and ensuring long-term stewardship through maintenance and education. By organizing art in public spaces delivery through these five core programs, the City can clarify roles and expectations, align investment with growth and infrastructure planning, support equity and innovation, and build a coherent, city-wide Art in Public Spaces program that is responsive to community needs and is sustainable over time.

Program Area 1

Civic and Capital Projects

Program Area 2

Education, Youth and Families

Program Area 3

Creative Placemaking Program for Temporary, Street Art, and Art Activations

Program Area 4

Community Public Art and Engagement Program

Program Area 5

Maintenance

Program Area 1

Civic and Capital Projects

Goal

To integrate high-quality art in public spaces into municipally funded civic and capital projects so that public infrastructure reflects Pickering’s cultural identity and supports meaningful community connection.

Supporting Actions

1. Integrate Public Art Early in Capital Planning

Require consideration of art in public spaces at the earliest stages of planning and design for eligible civic and capital projects, including parks, civic buildings, streetscapes, waterfront improvements, transit-related infrastructure and other major upgrades.

Art in public spaces should be prioritized in projects with high public visibility, civic significance and frequent public use. This includes, but is not limited to: community centres, libraries, cultural and recreation facilities, publicly accessible plazas, civic administration buildings, transit hubs and stations, major parks and waterfront destinations, gateways and prominent intersections and large-scale infrastructure projects.

2. Maintain Clear Funding Mechanisms

Maintain annual contributions to the dedicated Public Art Reserve Fund to ensure consistent and predictable investment within eligible capital projects.

3. Support a Range of Public Art Typologies

Continue to support a variety of public art approaches, including permanent works, integrated and functional artworks, digital and temporary installations. Encourage opportunities to incorporate art into civic infrastructure and public space design — such as bridges, seating, lighting and landscape features — so that artistic expression is embedded within everyday public environments.

4. Adopt a Curatorial Approach

Adopt a curatorial approach to the Arts in Public Spaces program so that individual commissions contribute to a broader civic vision rather than functioning as stand-alone projects. Curatorial guidance throughout the commissioning lifecycle — from project planning and working with artist selection panels through fabrication, installation, interpretation — can help ensure that artworks respond to site context, reflect community input, and collectively build a recognizable identity for Pickering’s public realm over time.

Advances Strategic Priorities:



Placemaking



Future Ready

5. Maintain Technical Oversight

Continue to require artists as part of their scope of work to secure qualified technical review as part of their proposals and implementation plans. This includes engaging licensed professionals (e.g., structural engineers, lighting or media specialists) to certify the safety, durability, and technical feasibility of artworks, including stamped drawings and fabrication specifications where required.

6. Align Commissions with Operations

Coordinate art in public spaces commissions with project teams, consultants, and City staff to align artworks with project timelines, operational needs, accessibility standards, and maintenance requirements.

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



Fungi of the Wood
2024, LeuWebb Projects, Mississauga, Ontario
Fungi of the Woods is an artwork that is accessible physically, sonically, and tactilely. The ground plane, seating, and tabletop surfaces are barrier-free. The concrete and rubberized surfacing has clearances for wheelchairs. In terms of sensory activations, the tall sculptural mushroom stem will have raised dimple-like forms that people can run their hands upon, and the hollow metal forms will ring upon tapping. People of varying abilities will be able to engage with the artwork independently and with dignity.



Peeled Pavement
2015, Jill Anholt, Toronto, Ontario
Embedded sidewalk installation on Mill street that reveals found industrial artifacts cast in bronze.

Program Area 2 Education, Youth and Families

Goal

Support lifelong learning and meaningful engagement with art by connecting residents of all ages — particularly youth and families — to the stories, processes, and ideas behind the City's Art in Public Spaces program.

Supporting Actions

1. Integrate Learning and Public Programming

Complement public art installations with ongoing educational and community programming, such as tours, artist talks, workshops, and participatory events. In alignment with the Cultural Strategic Plan, develop targeted opportunities for youth and families that encourage creative exploration, learning and connection to place.

2. Expand Public Education and Interpretation Tools

Enhance access to art in public spaces through interpretive and educational tools, including signage, digital platforms and self-guided tours. Develop accessible and engaging content such as artist interviews, audio guides, and online maps to increase public awareness, understanding, and appreciation of artworks. Strengthen partnerships with local schools and educational organizations to support youth engagement.

3. Support Knowledge Sharing and Sector Development

Create opportunities for knowledge exchange between artists, City staff, and the broader community. This may include artist talks, process documentation, case studies, and public-facing content that shares insights into how art in public spaces projects are developed and realized. Where possible, highlight local artists and projects to build awareness of Pickering's creative community.

4. Build Internal Capacity Through Targeted Public Art Training

Continue to strengthen the City's ability to plan, deliver, and steward art in public spaces by supporting ongoing capacity-building opportunities for staff. Targeted training can help reinforce existing expertise, support cross-department alignment, and ensure consistent, best-practice-informed implementation of the Art in Public Spaces program.

As part of this, the City may consider engaging a qualified Art in Public Spaces consultant to design and deliver tailored training sessions that respond to staff interests and evolving program needs. Potential topics could include: curatorial frameworks and program-wide approaches, artist procurement and selection processes, project management for public art, private sector integration, community engagement and participation, temporary and experimental public art and communications and interpretation.

Advances Strategic Priorities:



Creative
Economy



Future Ready



Youth &
Families

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



The Peacemaker's Canoe
2021, Jay Havens, Toronto, Ontario
Part of Waterfront Toronto's Temporary
Public Art Program.



Discovery Phase
2015, Monument Lab, Philadelphia,
Pennsylvania
Community engagement pop-up.

Program Area 3

Creative Placemaking Program for Temporary, Street Art, and Art Activations

Goal

To animate public spaces through temporary, experimental, digital and community-responsive art that encourages creative expression, participation, and place-based identity.

Supporting Actions

- 1. Expand Temporary and Street Art Programming**
Build upon existing initiatives such as the Community Banner Series to support a wider range of temporary, street-based, and site-responsive artworks. This could include an expanded Mural Program and Art in Transit program at new bus shelters/GO stations, digital artwork commissions, etc.
- 2. Establish a Recurring Temporary Public Art Exhibition**
Deliver a curated, seasonal temporary public art exhibition or festival that commissions time-limited artworks (example: 4-6 months) across civic and community spaces, encouraging experimentation and artistic innovation.
- 3. Leverage Partnerships for Program Delivery**
Consult and partner with cultural organizations, educational institutions, small businesses, and community groups to collaboratively deliver temporary public art initiatives and share resources, expertise, and audiences.
- 4. Activate Underused and Transitional Spaces**
Identify vacant, underused, or redevelopment sites suitable for temporary public art, murals, installations, and community events. Use temporary public art as a flexible tool to activate underutilized sites, support placemaking in evolving neighbourhoods, and pilot potential locations or approaches for future permanent artworks.

Advances Strategic Priorities:

-  Placemaking
-  Interculturalism
-  Future Ready

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



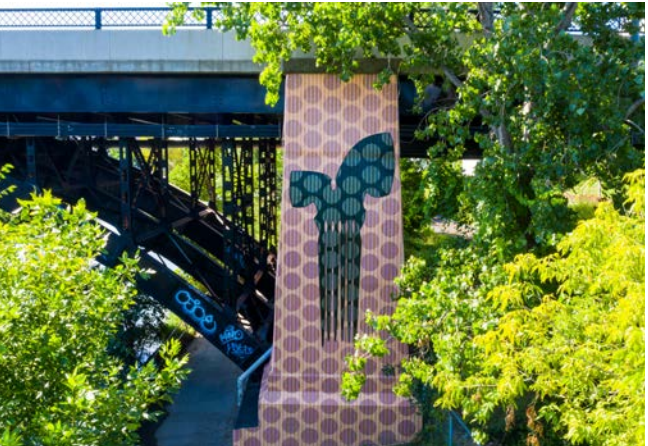
We Caught a UFO!
2024, Xavier Madden and Katja Banović, Winter Stations, Toronto, Ontario

Winter Stations is an international design competition held annually in Toronto, Canada. Since 2015, they have invited artists, architects, designers, and students to reimagine lifeguard stations as interactive public art installations, transforming city beaches into an open-air exhibition each winter.



We Are Atmosphere
2024, Lisa Hirmer, Barrie, Ontario

Seeds to Sow, (2024) was the City of Barrie's first large-scale temporary public art exhibition, featuring six site-specific installations that transformed spaces across Barrie from September 27 to November 8, 2024. Curated by Katie Lawson, in collaboration with the Barrie Public Art Committee (BPAC) and Carol-Ann Ryan, the City's former Public Art Coordinator and Artistic Director of the exhibition, Seeds to Sow was a community-wide effort.



Reube (V. Stepanova and M. Vionnet)
Beth Stuart, 2019, Toronto, Ontario

A mural commission part of the Don River Valley Park Art Program.

Program Area 4 Community Public Art and Engagement Program

Goal

To embed artistic practice and community knowledge within municipal processes and public life to support equity, innovation, and inclusive placemaking.

Supporting Actions

1. Establish a City Artist-in-Residence (AiR) Program

Embed artists within City departments to support creative approaches to policy development, public engagement, communication, and public-realm planning.

Examples of this approach include:

- Watershed+ hosted by The City of Calgary's UEP department with the Public Art Program.
- City of Toronto's inaugural Artist-in-Residence (2023-24) Maria Hupfield worked alongside the City's Urban Forestry team.
- City of Boston's Artist-in-Residence Program — various artists have collaborated with staff to explore issues such as mobility, housing access, and civic engagement.
- City of Seattle Public Artist-in-Residence (PAIR) program — artists have explored topics including climate change, transportation access, community resilience with departments including Transportation, Office of Sustainability and Environment, Public utilities.

Outcomes from programs like these include but are not limited to: the creation of new artwork i.e., temporary public art installations/murals, research reports, projects that translate policy issues into accessible community dialogue, community engagement activities (storytelling tours/walks, etc.), exhibitions etc.

2. Create a Black, Indigenous, and people of colour Animators Circle

In keeping with the learnings from engagement with the Pickering Anti-Racism Taskforce, establish a paid cohort of Black, Indigenous, and people of colour artists and arts professionals to activate existing public art interpretation and activations, through storytelling, performances, tours, and community-led engagement.

3. Integrate Mentorship and Capacity Building

Position the Black, Indigenous, and people of colour Animators Circle as a mentorship platform offering workshops, peer learning, and pathways into public art and civic cultural work for emerging artists. Integrate mentorship requirements as part of artists' scope in new commission opportunities.

Advances Strategic Priorities:



Interculturalism



Creative
Economy



Youth & Families

4. Advance Indigenous-Led Decision-Making

Convene all Indigenous selection committees for Indigenous-focused public art commissions to ensure Indigenous cultural protocols, and self-determination guide project outcomes. This action will require an update to the Public Art Policy.

5. Integrate various community engagement tactics throughout the commissioning lifecycle.

Identify early, mid-planning and launch community engagements, activities, workshops to share project process and updates throughout.

6. Identify Community-Led and Community Co-created opportunities

i.e., community mural wall, community recipes book project, etc.)

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



Touch Sanitation
1979-80, Mierle Laderman Ukeles, New York, New York

Four decades as the artist-in-residence of the New York Department of Sanitation.



Nkweshkoodaadidaa Ekobiyyag
2024, Maria Hupfield, Toronto, Ontario

City of Toronto's inaugural Artist-in-Residence (2023-24) with the City's Urban Forestry team, Taylor Creek bridge.



Fire Hydrant Drinking Fountains
2015, Sans façon with City of Calgary, Calgary, Alberta

Part of Watershed+ hosted by The City of Calgary's UEP department with the Public Art Program.

Program Area 5 Maintenance

Goal

To ensure the long-term care, sustainability, and public understanding of Pickering's art in public spaces assets.

Supporting Actions

1. Update the City's Public Art Policy and procedures to align with the five core program areas.

- a. Expand the definition of public art to art in public spaces. Explicitly include: temporary work, digital and media-based work, socially engaged / process-based practices, artist-led placemaking (when artist-driven) to align the policy with the recommendations in this plan and contemporary practices.
- b. Clarify Role of Temporary, Digital and Rotating art in public spaces: Temporary art in the policy (Sections 10.03–10.04) does not define it's strategic use. Include the function of temporary work as a pilot for permanent commissions, an activation tool for underutilized sites and as an overall program stream. Integrate digital work into this definition.
- c. Include a Deaccessioning Framework that establishes criteria for removal, a clear relocation process, conservation review requirements, community notification protocols, replacement strategies and documentation standards.

The City should also establish a multi-year curatorial framework for the Art in Public Spaces program. The framework should define thematic priorities (such as the waterfront, growth areas, and Indigenous placekeeping) alongside geographic strategies and program streams for temporary, integrated, permanent and community-based projects. This will strengthen the program's curatorial and programmatic logic and shift planning beyond the existing site-by-site approach.

This curatorial oversight leadership function may be provided internally by City staff or externally through an appointed consultant or curator.

- d. Convene all Indigenous selection committees for Indigenous-focused public art commissions.
- e. Update community engagement (Section 21) to acknowledge engagement is not episodic but can be embedded in the commissioning lifecycle (site identification, proposal feedback, launch + post-install programming). This will support tools like artist-led engagement/artist-in-residence programming, community ambassadors programs, etc.
- f. Introduce Evaluation & Reporting Framework: Add annual reporting requirements including the documentation of the number of projects delivered, artist demographics, geographic distribution, budget allocation (including temporary vs permanent breakdown), community participation.

Advances Strategic Priorities:

- Interculturalism
- Future Ready

The City is not currently prioritizing a private development public art program stream. Should the City choose to pursue this in the future, it is recommended to:

- g. Expand section 22 Public Art Development by the Private Sector and 23 Funding of the policy to enable developer sponsorship of temporary public art initiatives such as festivals, rotating digital commissions, or short-term installations as part of broader placemaking objectives.
 - h. Develop detailed program guidelines for working with the private sector to outline eligibility, contribution options, timelines, roles, and responsibilities to provide clarity and predictability for developers.
 - i. Advance internal conversations to explore eligible private development projects to contribute to public art through a percentage of construction value (for example 0.5% – 2% of eligible construction value) or a fixed per-unit rate, secured through planning approvals and agreements.
2. Implement a Program-wide Public Art Maintenance Framework
- Establish clear standards, responsibilities, and funding mechanisms for the ongoing maintenance, conservation, and lifecycle management of public artworks.

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



Afraspektion
2025, Toronto, Ontario
A festival and celebration of Black culture, Afrofuturism, and community in Toronto organized by Co-Leads Nico & Queen of Oddside Arts.



AG + BA, El Anatsui, 2021, Augmented Reality, Toronto, Ontario
Part of Seeing the Invisible, installation view, Sourauren Park, 2023.



4 Public Art Siting and Program Typologies



4.1 Siting

Civic and Cultural Hubs

Civic and cultural hubs represent the most visible and symbolic locations for art in public spaces, serving as focal points for gathering, cultural expression and civic identity. Future commissions in these areas should reinforce Pickering's evolving civic narrative while complementing existing artworks and programming infrastructure.

Priority Sites and Timelines

City Centre Park

(Glenanna Road, across from City Hall)

Design: 2026

Construction: 2027–2028

- Major new downtown destination park and future civic anchor.
- Opportunity for landmark-scale, interactive, and gathering-oriented works integrated into landscape design.
- Potential for phased temporary installations during construction to animate the site and build anticipation.

Seaton Recreation Complex & Library

(Southeast corner of the re-aligned Whitevale Road/future Alexander Knox & Sidelane 24/future Burkholder Drive)

Design: Ongoing 2026

Construction: 2030–2032

- Major cultural hub within the Seaton growth area.
- Opportunities for integrated architectural commissions, interior works, digital installations, and community-engaged projects reflecting emerging neighbourhood identities.
- Potential to embed artist-in-residence models during early planning stages.

Dorsay Community & Heritage Centre/Post Manor Block

- Post Manor flagged following the 2024 feasibility study for potential art gallery space.
- Council has requested a development update in 2027.
- Opportunity to consider integrated public art and interpretive strategies across the broader block, linking heritage, future cultural infrastructure, and civic storytelling.
- Completion of the planned shade structure artwork in the west garden (installation anticipated for 2027).

Animal shelter adjacent to Fire Hall #1

- Opportunity for mid-scale public art commission.

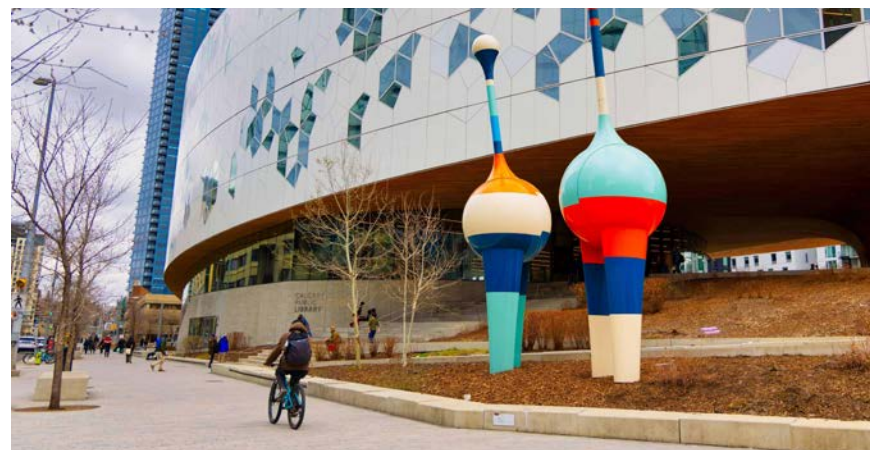
Fire Hall #5

- Opportunity for modest public art integrated into the landscape.

Siting Considerations

- Embed artists early in capital design teams.
- Prioritize durable, accessible, and high-impact works.
- Use civic hubs as anchors for mentorship, education, and rotating programming streams.

Art in Public Spaces Precedent:



TRIO, 2015, Christian Moeller, Calgary, Alberta

Parks, Waterfront, and Open Space

Parks and waterfront areas offer strong opportunities for placemaking, environmental storytelling, and recreational engagement. Future art in public spaces should enhance ecological awareness, support gathering and movement, and create distinctive destination experiences.

Priority Sites and Timelines

Frenchman's Bay West Park and Waterfront System

- Expand on recent investment (e.g., Water is Medicine, 2023).
- Opportunities for shoreline and trail-based commissions, temporary installations, and seasonal programming (eastern side).
- Potential for environmental and Indigenous-led storytelling initiatives.
- Consider a coordinated waterfront temporary programming stream linking existing works (e.g., Millennium Mast, Kijimba Kind series).
- Opportunities for trail markers, light-based works, and interpretive installations.

Beachfront Park

(West Side, Liverpool Road South)

Design: 2026

Construction: 2027–2028

- Opportunity for waterfront-responsive works, gathering features, and integrated seating/play elements.
- Potential for seasonal programming and shoreline interpretation initiatives.

Dave Ryan Community Park
(Southeast corner of Mulberry Lane and Alexander Knox Road)

- Design:** 2026
Construction: 2027
- Neighbourhood-scale park opportunity for integrated functional artworks (shade, seating, play features).
 - Potential for community-engaged or mentorship-based commissions during early growth phases.

Greenwood Community Park
(Greenwood Road, across from Gate 3 of Pickering Museum Village)

- Design:** 2027
Construction: 2028
- Opportunity for permanent commission integrated into park renewal.
 - Consider heritage and industrial context interpretation in collaboration with community stakeholders.

- Whitevale Open Space**
(Future Opportunity)
- Timeline currently unknown.
 - Given Whitevale’s cultural significance and its relationship to Seaton, this site presents potential for integrated landscape-based public art, interpretive installations, and/or Indigenous-led storytelling initiatives.

- Seaton Neighbourhood Connection Trails**
- Planning:** 2026–2027
Construction: TBD
- Strong opportunity for Indigenous interpretive designs, trail markers, sculptural wayfinding, sound-based works, or land-based storytelling initiatives.
 - Align art integration with early trail planning to ensure cohesive design.

- Siting Considerations**
- Integrate art with ecological design and sustainability objectives.
 - Prioritize durability in waterfront and exposed environments.
 - Support temporary and rotating works to ensure year-round activation.
 - Create connected experiences across trail and waterfront systems.



Campfire, 2024, Michael Belmore and Herman Mejia, Toronto, Ontario

Transit, Gateways, and Corridors

Transit routes, gateways, and major corridors shape first impressions of the city and provide high-visibility opportunities for distributed art in public spaces. Future initiatives should build on existing banner, mural, and utility box programs while introducing more cohesive gateway strategies. Art in public spaces can foster heritage conservation and interpretation animation for City-owned properties and community partners’ sites (as per Objective 1.1 in the 2026 Cultural Strategic Plan).

Priority Sites and Timelines

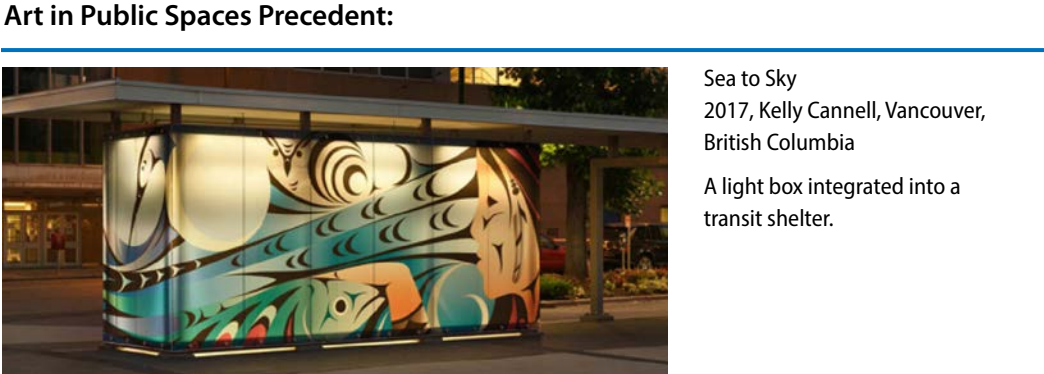
- All-Wheels Park**
(Highway 2 Corridor)
- Construction:** 2027
- No vertical structures permitted.
 - New skatepark provides opportunities for youth-focused and embedded features.
 - Placemaking elements such as artist-designed benches, integrated surfaces, ground-based graphics, murals and functional furniture as well as light-based works could work well.
 - Strong opportunity for youth-led and emerging artist commissions.

- Kingston Road Corridor & Brock Road/Kingston Road Development Node**
- Condo development proposed 2028–2030.
 - Opportunity to coordinate with private development for integrated public art through future contribution frameworks or negotiated agreements if desired.

- Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) — Kingston Corridor**
(Metrolinx/DRT)
- Metrolinx maintains a robust public art policy.
 - Opportunity for coordinated integration of art at mobility nodes, shelters, and transit-adjacent spaces.
 - The City can provide policy direction supporting collaboration, ensuring that transit-related commissions reflect local identity and align with municipal cultural objectives.
 - Given daily interaction volumes, transit-integrated art represents one of the highest-impact public art platforms in the city.

- Major Entry Corridors**
(Highway 401/407 and Primary Gateways)
- Expand gateway strategies through sculptural markers, lighting installations, and landscape-integrated works.
 - Align with streetscape upgrades and growth planning.

- Siting Considerations**
- Ensure visibility from both pedestrian and vehicular perspectives.
 - Support cohesive visual identity along corridors.
 - Coordinate early with external agencies (e.g., Metrolinx) and private developers if/when appropriate.
 - Expand smaller-scale commissions to support emerging and local artists.



Neighbourhood and Community Nodes

Neighbourhood-scale art in public spaces fosters local identity, community pride, and everyday cultural encounters. Future investment should focus on equitable geographic distribution and community-informed processes, particularly in growth areas.

Priority Sites and Opportunities

Seaton Growth Areas and New Neighbourhood Parks

- Align with Dave Ryan Park, Seaton trails, and Recreation Complex.
- Expand integrated works in parks, schools, and civic facilities.
- Support identity-building initiatives for new communities.

Neighbourhood Community Centres and Libraries

- Continue small-scale commissions and community mural initiatives.
- Embed participatory and mentorship-based programming.

Pickering Museum Village and Rural Areas

- Build on recent placemaking and digital exhibition initiatives.
- Opportunities for temporary installations, artist residencies, and interpretive works.
- Support heritage-responsive commissions.

Siting Considerations

- Align closely with confirmed capital timelines (2026–2032 horizon).
- Integrate art at early design stages to maximize impact and cost efficiency.
- Balance investment across downtown, waterfront, growth areas, and rural sites.
- Coordinate with transit agencies and private development partners when appropriate.
- Integrate permanent, temporary, digital, and functional typologies.
- Support reconciliation, environmental stewardship, and inclusive civic storytelling.

Art in Public Spaces Precedents:



Ogimaa Mikana Project
2016, Susan Blight, Toronto, Ontario

The text on this Billboard artwork in Toronto's Parkdale neighbourhood is in Anishinaabemowin, the Ojibway language. In English it translates to "If you want to learn something, first you must learn this."



Furled Trail
2018, Studio HUIZENGA, New Westminster, British Columbia

Public art bus shelter outside Queensborough Community Centre in New Westminster.

4.2 Program Typologies

Permanent Works (5+ years)

Typology: Sculptures, monuments, architectural integrations, embedded bridges and infrastructure.

Permanent works form the long-term cultural anchors of Pickering — signature pieces that define areas, support wayfinding and signal a commitment to quality and legacy. These pieces are sometimes referenced as ‘landmark’ commissions.

Key Features

- Durable materials (stone, bronze, corten steel, reinforced concrete, aluminum, etc.).
- Artist involvement in early design phases to integrate with landscape and infrastructure.
- Lighting and accessibility designed for year-round visibility and safety.

Lifecycle Planning

- **Maintenance horizon:** every 5–10 years.
- **Expected lifespan:** 20–30 years with periodic restoration.

Temporary and Semi-Permanent Works

Typology: Murals, pop-ups, rotating and interactive sculpture displays, performances, guided walks, workshops, festivals, artist-in-residence programming, and ephemeral events.

Art installations range from rotating physical artworks to annual arts festivals, keeping Pickering's program responsive and energetic. These installations can activate the natural environment and community nodes, encouraging ongoing discovery and creative experimentation.

Key Features

- Ideal for both national and local artist participation, allowing for open calls.
- Enable flexible experimentation and event-based programming.
- Create opportunities for connecting and building a sense of community.
- Foster visibility through social media engagement and community pride.

Lifecycle Planning

- **Maintenance horizon:** ongoing repeat programming that will require annual review and/or planning.
- **Expected lifespan:** Short term (1 day to 12 months) and Temporary (1 year to 5 years), depending on materials and weather exposure; event-based; renewal each fiscal year.

New Media/Digital

Typology: New media installations, digital works, sound art, light based projects

New media artworks leverage video, light, sound, and digital technologies to highlight innovation in connection to the environment. They also create ample opportunity for arts based mentorship as well as means of activating site, place and history through multi-sensorial art experiences. Examples include digital boards, and AR/App or sound based projects.

Key Features

- Leverage digital technologies to showcase Pickering's unique identity, heritage and stories.
- Rotating works that can activate public spaces and showcase local and emerging talent.
- Potential for artist mentorship and building connections with local arts institutions/create 'offsite' programming partnerships.

Lifecycle Planning

- **Maintenance horizon:** Annual and temporary programming.
- **Expected lifespan:** Rotating, event, and learning-based, renewable each fiscal or academic year.

Programmatic and Participatory Activations

Typology: Community-engaged art projects, artist-led workshops, temporary participatory installations, performance and social practice works, artist residencies, co-creation initiatives.

Programmatic and participatory activations emphasize process-based and community-engaged artistic practices that invite residents, visitors, and local organizations to actively shape and contribute to art experiences. These initiatives prioritize dialogue and learning, positioning public art as a platform for civic engagement, cultural exchange, and creative expression. They create opportunities to animate public space through workshops, temporary installations, performances, and artist-led activities that reflect local stories, identities and aspirations. Examples include artist-in-residence programs embedded in civic spaces, seasonal creative workshops, tours and art walks.

Key Features

- Foster community participation in the development and presentation of public art.
- Activate public spaces through temporary and seasonal programming.
- Support local artists through facilitation roles, residencies, and participatory commissions.
- Provide accessible entry points for residents of all ages and backgrounds to engage with art in public spaces.
- Enable partnerships with community organizations, schools, cultural groups, and local businesses.
- Create opportunities for mentorship, skills development, and capacity building across the local arts community.

Lifecycle Planning

- **Maintenance horizon:** Short-term and seasonal program management, facilitation, and documentation.
- **Expected lifespan:** Project-based and renewable; typically delivered through annual, seasonal, or multi-year program cycles aligned with community priorities and available resources.



5 Governance

5.1 Procurement & Art Selection

The procurement and selection of Art in Public Spaces projects for the City of Pickering will be guided by the principles and procedures established in the City's existing Public Art Policy. The policy outlines procurement methods, evaluation criteria and commissioning administration guidelines to ensure that commissioned artworks are of high artistic quality, responsive to site and community context, and aligned with the City's broader vision for arts and culture.

A transparent, consistent, and professionally administered program is essential to uphold artistic excellence, fairness and public trust, while also creating meaningful opportunities for artists at all stages of their careers.

This section of the plan outlines existing procurement and evaluation methods to benefit artists and residents' understanding and engagement with the program.

Procurement Methods

Public art projects at the City of Pickering will be commissioned through a range of procurement methods suited to the type, scale, and context of the work:

- **Open Calls:** Widely publicized calls for proposals from artists across local, national, and international contexts, ensuring diverse voices and perspectives.
- **Invitational Calls:** Curated shortlists of artists invited to submit proposals, appropriate for highly specialized or site-sensitive commissions.
- **Direct Commissions:** Artist(s) selected directly by the Project Team, used in cases where specific expertise, lived experience, or practice is uniquely suited to the opportunity.
- **Artist Rosters & Prequalification:** Establishing a pool of pre-qualified artists to streamline selection for multiple or smaller-scale opportunities i.e., rotating mural commissions, etc.

Selection Process Overview:

1. **Cultural Advisory Committee:** The Cultural Advisory Committee (CAC) identifies opportunities for stakeholder and community engagement and provides community input on matters relating to the provision of cultural services. The CAC assists City staff with the development, consultation, and implementation of the Cultural Strategic Plan.
2. **Public Art Jury:** An advisory body convened on a project-by-project basis that includes a balanced mix of arts professionals, community representatives and municipal staff. The committee operates within the City's public art policies, procurement procedures, and curatorial framework to ensure that all public art commissions are selected through transparent, fair, and professionally informed processes.
3. **Call & Shortlisting (RFQ phase):** Use open or invitational RFQs (Request for Qualifications) for major commissions, ensuring diverse representation of artists.
4. **Concept Development (RFP phase):** Shortlisted artists develop and present proposals reviewed by the jury for feasibility, relevance, and alignment with project goals.
5. **Community Engagement and Input:** Incorporate citizen feedback through workshops, exhibitions, surveys, and digital platforms at key stages of the project lifecycle, including early concept development, mid-project and final installation or unveiling.
6. **Commissioning & Fabrication:** Ensure contracts outline materials, maintenance, and lifespan to balance permanent and temporary works.
7. **Installation & Documentation:** All artworks should include interpretive signage and digital cataloguing for future reference and storytelling.

Evaluation Criteria

Evaluation criteria are unique to each public art opportunity. As outlined in the City of Pickering's Public Art Policy (09.04) each commission opportunity needs a set of evaluation criteria that reflects the project's intent, based on a number of factors which can include:

1. **Artistic Excellence:** Originality, innovation, and aesthetic quality of the concept.
2. **Alignment with Vision & Principles:** Responsiveness to the goals, vision and guiding principles or mandate of the project.
3. **Site Responsiveness:** Sensitivity to physical, social, cultural, and ecological context.
4. **Feasibility:** Practicality of execution, ability to manage a project, including budget, timeline, and maintenance considerations.
5. **Community & Cultural Relevance:** Ability to engage and resonate with diverse audiences, including intergenerational and cross-cultural participation.
6. **Sustainability:** Use of durable and/or ecological materials and processes that contribute to long-term stewardship.

Sample evaluation categories for a permanent public artwork:

A. Artistic Excellence (70 points)

- Expression of artistic vision (25 points)
- Innovation of concept and overall quality of approach (20 points)
- Community Engagement and Communication Strategy (15 points)
- Interpretation of site and thematic context (10 points)

B. Feasibility (25 points)

- Feasibility of project execution (15 points)
- Demonstrated durability and safety of proposed artwork materials and configuration (5 points)
- Maintenance requirements and plan (5 points)

C. Proposed Collaborative Approach (5 points)

- Collaborative strategy for detailed design development process with the Project Team (5 points)



6 Maintenance/Stewardship

6.1 Caring for Art in Public Spaces

A strong stewardship framework is essential to ensuring that Pickering's public art collection remains safe, accessible, relevant, and reflective of community values over time. As the City implements the Art in Public Spaces program a coordinated approach to maintenance, monitoring, and policy renewal will support both the longevity of artworks and the ongoing vitality of the program.

1. Collection Care and Lifecycle Planning

The City will maintain a comprehensive inventory of all municipally owned and supported public artworks, including permanent, temporary, and integrated works. Regular condition assessments and maintenance schedules will be established to ensure artworks remain structurally sound, visually legible, and safe for public interaction. Maintenance responsibilities will be clearly defined at the time of commissioning/acquisition and incorporated into project budgets and agreements. Lifecycle planning (including conservation, repair, relocation, or deaccessioning where necessary) will be guided by professional conservation standards and municipal asset-management practices.



2. Policy Review and Updates

To support the evolving scope of art in public spaces in Pickering, the City will review and update its existing Public Art Policy (CUL 130) to ensure alignment with current practices and program directions as outlined in this document in program area 5.

3. Temporary and Community-Centered Artworks

As temporary exhibitions, community projects, and artist-led activations become a more prominent part of Pickering's program, clear stewardship protocols will be required. Temporary artworks will be subject to defined installation durations, maintenance expectations, and removal plans established through artist and partner agreements. Community-centered works including murals, participatory installations, and neighbourhood-based projects will include shared maintenance strategies and clear timelines for refresh, replacement, or decommissioning.

In the future, if/when the City decides to develop more partnerships with local business and property owners, it is recommended that they develop an agreement outlining roles related to community conversations, installation, insurance, maintenance and eventual removal/replacement ensuring responsibilities are clear.

4. Communications, Monitoring, Interpretation, and Public Feedback

Ongoing monitoring of the public art collection will support both physical care and community relevance. The City will respond to damage, vandalism, or public concerns in a timely and transparent manner, as outlined in the graffiti procedure established in 2025. Interpretation tools such as signage, digital guides, and online maps will help residents and visitors understand and value the collection/program, strengthening community stewardship.

As public art often engages complex histories and diverse perspectives, the City will maintain clear protocols related to content concerns, censorship, and respectful dialogue, following the Ontario Human Rights Code and the City of Pickering's Respectful Conduct Policy (ADM 260). These processes will prioritize artistic integrity while ensuring that artworks remain aligned with municipal values of inclusion, equity and public accountability.

The City is currently prioritizing public art sites that are supported by appropriate lighting and located within areas covered by security cameras, enabling effective monitoring of the artworks.

Through proactive maintenance, updated policies, communications and collaborative stewardship, Pickering's public art collection and Art in Public Spaces program will be cared for as a civic asset. This approach ensures that artworks remain safe, meaningful, and responsive to the community while supporting artists and partners in sustaining a vibrant and evolving public realm.



7 Funding Sources

7.1 Leveraging Public, Private, and Community Investment

Sustainable public art programs rely on diversified and flexible funding models. As municipal budgets across Canada face increasing pressure and competing capital priorities, it is neither practical nor resilient for public art initiatives to depend on a single funding stream.

The City of Pickering has already demonstrated success in this area — securing significant external grant funding, leveraging sponsorship opportunities and allocating budget surpluses to the Public Art Reserve. Building on this strong foundation, it is recommended that the City continue to formalize and expand a diversified funding framework that sustains a consistent level of arts activity while leveraging partnerships and strategic opportunities.

In addition to allocating public art funding through eligible municipal capital projects, Pickering can strengthen its program through a combination of complementary approaches, including:

- Integration of public art into civic and capital projects such as parks, facilities, streetscapes, and waterfront improvements.
- Partnerships with local arts organizations, community groups, and cultural institutions to deliver programming and temporary projects.
- Collaboration with businesses, and tourism partners to support public art that animates commercial areas and destinations.
- Partnerships with educational institutions and other public agencies to embed artists and creative initiatives within shared projects.
- Donations or sponsorships from individuals, foundations and the private sector to support specific commissions or programs.

Additional opportunities may be explored as appropriate, including leveraging special project or legacy funding tied to major civic initiatives (for example, in 2022 the philanthropic citizen group Legacy Art Project Toronto (LAPT) in collaboration with Waterfront Toronto funded a new monument to share Terry Fox's story) and exploring partnerships that align public art with tourism, economic development, and placemaking goals. Temporary exhibitions, artist residencies, and community-based programs also provide cost-effective ways to expand cultural activity and attract external funding through grants and sponsorship.

By adopting a diversified funding approach, the City of Pickering can maintain and eventually grow its public art program in a financially responsible manner, ensuring that public art continues to contribute to civic identity, community connection, and a vibrant public realm as the city evolves.

Art in Public Spaces Precedent:



We Are Shaped By The Obstacles We Face
2023, Jon Sasaki, Toronto, Ontario

A citizen-initiated and funded public art project dedicated to the spirit of courage, determination, and action that Terry Fox embodied. The permanent integrated public art and landscape architecture installation in collaboration with landscape architects DTHA sits next to Toronto Music Garden by the Martin Goodman Trail.

8 Going Forward

8.1 Implementation and Next Steps

The Pickering Art in Public Spaces Plan establishes a long-term framework for integrating art into civic life, city-building, and community development. Implementation will require a coordinated, phased approach that aligns policy updates, staffing, partnerships, and funding with the City's broader cultural and infrastructure priorities.

Moving forward, the recommendations in this plan are designed to be scalable and adaptable. Implementation can be achieved with short-term actions that strengthen the existing program while building a comprehensive city-wide Art in Public Spaces program over time. A phased approach will allow the City to build capacity while maintaining flexibility to respond to growth, funding conditions, and emerging opportunities.



CITY OF PICKERING | ART IN PUBLIC SPACES PLAN

Phase 1: Foundation Building (Years 1-3)

- Updating the Public Art Policy and related procedures to align with the five core program areas and contemporary public art practices.
- Confirming governance, staffing roles, and interdepartmental coordination mechanisms.
- Developing clear program guidelines for civic projects, temporary programming, and community initiatives.
- Establishing a comprehensive inventory and maintenance tracking system for the existing public art collection.
- Identifying priority sites and pilot opportunities for temporary and integrated public art.
- Building relationships with local organizations, Indigenous leaders, schools, and community groups. Initiating partnerships when appropriate.

Phase 2: Program Integration (Years 2-5)

- Resume internal conversations on the development of a Private Developer Public Art Program and associated contribution framework.
- Launching recurring temporary public art and creative placemaking initiatives.
- Piloting an Artist-in-Residence program within municipal departments.
- Establishing the Black, Indigenous, and people of colour Animators Circle and mentorship opportunities.
- Integrating art in public spaces into major civic and capital projects at early planning stages.
- Expanding digital and interpretive platforms to increase access and visibility.

Phase 3: Program Evaluation and Sustainability (Years 5+)

- Evaluating program outcomes and equity impacts using defined metrics and feedback mechanisms.
- Refining funding models and partnerships to ensure long-term stability.
- Expanding the public art collection strategically across growth areas and neighbourhoods/hamlets.
- Continuing policy review cycles to reflect emerging practices and technologies.
- Strengthening Pickering's reputation as a city that supports artists and creative placemaking.

Organizational Alignment

Successful implementation will depend on strong coordination across municipal departments and external partners. Art in public spaces intersects with planning, parks, recreation, engineering, facilities, economic development, and communications.

To support effective delivery, it is recommended that the City:

- Confirm clear internal leadership and staff responsibilities for program coordination and oversight.
- Establish interdepartmental working relationships to embed public art in capital planning and development review processes.
- Continue to engage advisory committees, community members, and cultural partners in shaping program directions.
- Ensure transparent procurement, selection, and evaluation processes that align with municipal standards.

Partnerships

Partnerships will be central to sustaining a vibrant and responsive Art in Public Spaces program. Collaboration with artists, Indigenous partners, cultural organizations, educational institutions, developers, and local businesses will expand program reach and leverage shared resources.

Key partnership priorities include:

- Building long-term relationships with Indigenous artists and communities grounded in respect and appropriate protocols.
- Collaborating with local arts and community organizations to deliver temporary and community-based initiatives.
- Engaging schools, youth organizations, and post-secondary institutions in education and mentorship opportunities.
- Leveraging regional and national networks to bring new artistic perspectives and opportunities to Pickering.

Evaluation

Ongoing evaluation will ensure that the Art in Public Spaces program remains responsive, equitable and aligned with municipal priorities. The City should establish simple but meaningful metrics to assess:

- Geographic distribution and accessibility of art in public spaces.
- Representation of diverse artists and communities.
- Community engagement and participation levels.
- Integration of art in public spaces into capital and development projects.
- Condition and maintenance of the public art collection.
- Public awareness and perception of the program.

Conclusion

Pickering is experiencing significant growth and transformation. Art in public spaces has the potential to play a vital role in shaping how residents and visitors experience the city, fostering belonging, interpreting places and enhancing the public realm.

By implementing the recommendations of this plan through a phased, collaborative, and sustainable approach, the City can build a coherent and resilient Art in Public Spaces program that evolves alongside Pickering's communities and landscapes.

Through sustained investment, collaboration and partnerships and integrated planning, art in public spaces will continue to contribute to Pickering's identity as a creative, inclusive, and forward-looking city- one where public spaces reflect shared stories, support cultural expression, and invite connection across generations and neighbourhoods.



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