



Cultural Strategic Plan

2026–2036

—City of—
PICKERING

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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.



I Key Takeaways

1 To remain adaptable in a rapidly changing community, the City of Pickering has developed three strategic documents to support the next decade (2026-2036) of Pickering's arts, culture, museum and public art programs and services.

2 The City of Pickering's Cultural Strategic Plan, Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan, and Art in Public Spaces Plan will collectively guide the City to effectively respond to shifting community needs and build a vibrant future. These Plans are rooted in a common, unified vision to reflect Pickering's creative identity and diverse community.

3 The development of the three Plans unfolded through four phases from August 2025–July 2026 and involved a mix of desk research, interest holder and community engagement, and strategy development. Engagement activities included:

- Senior management session
- Interdepartmental staff session
- Agency and opinion leader interviews
- Community questionnaire
- Project launch celebrations/open houses
- Interest holder focus groups
- High school engagement
- Indigenous engagement
- Engagement with City of Pickering's Anti-Black Racism Task Force
- Pickering Museum Village staff engagement
- Cultural Advisory Committee meeting

4 Across all engagement activities, participants consistently identified Pickering as being at a pivotal stage in its cultural evolution, shifting from a period of capacity-building toward one of identity definition. Major themes include:

- Emphasizing the role of arts, culture, and heritage in placemaking and identity formation as Pickering intensifies and transitions beyond a bedroom community.
- Strong demand for additional cultural venues, facilities, and gathering spaces, particularly within the downtown and other growth areas.
- Broad enthusiasm for expanded cultural infrastructure, programming, and access — prioritizing strategic locations and phased delivery.
- Reducing barriers to participation through improved transportation, geographic distribution of facilities, and awareness of cultural offerings.
- Interest in cultural approaches that enhance inclusion and belonging (including low-cost and low-barrier opportunities, diverse representation, and more participatory, community-engaged models of cultural development).
- Need for a Cultural Strategic Plan that is phased, practical, and grounded in realistic assessments of organizational capacity and long-term sustainability, rather than short-term ambition.

5 You belong in Pickering. Our Vision, Drivers and Values that guide the Plans include:

- **Safety:** We commit to fostering culturally, physically, and psychologically safe environments where diverse voices are welcomed and respected.
- **Collaboration:** We work across departments, sectors, and communities to co-create cultural initiatives that reflect shared leadership and local knowledge.
- **Sustainability:** We steward cultural resources responsibly to ensure long-term social, environmental, and financial resilience.
- **Learning:** We value curiosity, knowledge-sharing, and lifelong engagement through arts and heritage.
- **Creativity:** We embrace innovation, experimentation, and artistic excellence in shaping Pickering's evolving identity.
- **Accessibility:** We remove barriers to participation so that cultural life is inclusive, affordable, and reachable.
- **Relevance:** We remain responsive to demographic change, community needs, and evolving cultural practices.

6 The Strategic Priorities are of equal value and are not priority-ranked — they work to reinforce one-another and align with other major plans and policy areas of the City including the Official Plan, Corporate Strategic Plan (2024–2028), Recreation & Parks Ten Year Plan, Community Visitors Plan, and Economic Development Strategy:

- **Strategic Priority 1**
Foster placemaking and a distinct community identity.
- **Strategic Priority 2**
Celebrate interculturalism through the arts.
- **Strategic Priority 3**
Sustain and maintain a creative economy.
- **Strategic Priority 4**
Be future ready.
- **Strategic Priority 5**
Prioritize youth and young families.

7 The Overall Strategic Goals for the Plans are:

- Develop a distinct sense of place and enhanced community spaces for connection.
- Provide space where everyone feels they can participate in the cultural life of our city, and where diversity is welcomed.
- Recognize that artists and creative entrepreneurs are an important part of a thriving and valued cultural community.
- To enhance the capacity within the City and in the community for cultural development.
- To provide opportunities for youth activity and involvement in the arts as participants and producers, and family arts opportunities.

8 This document will be used by City of Pickering Staff to guide the implementation of the actions listed under each strategy and objective. Continued community participation will ensure the strategy may be assessed, adapted, and revised in response to changing needs of Pickering's creative ecosystem (see glossary in appendix).



1 Vision and Strategy

Vision and Strategy

The City of Pickering’s Cultural Strategic Plan, Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan, and Art in Public Spaces Plan will collectively guide the City to effectively respond to shifting community needs and build a vibrant future. Each plan is unique in their key deliverables to ensure the arts and culture sector receives the attention, direction, infrastructure and support required. **These plans are rooted in a common, unified vision** to reflect Pickering’s creative identity and diverse community.



Vision and Values

Vision

You belong in Pickering:
We're connected through culture, energized by community, and bringing public spaces to life.

Our Drivers and Values

- **Safety**
We commit to fostering culturally, physically, and psychologically safe environments where diverse voices are welcomed and respected.
- **Collaboration**
We work across departments, sectors, and communities to co-create cultural initiatives that reflect shared leadership and local knowledge.
- **Sustainability**
We steward cultural resources responsibly to ensure long-term social, environmental, and financial resilience.
- **Learning**
We value curiosity, knowledge-sharing, and lifelong engagement through arts and heritage.
- **Creativity**
We embrace innovation, experimentation, and artistic excellence in shaping Pickering's evolving identity.
- **Accessibility**
We remove barriers to participation so that cultural life is inclusive, affordable, and reachable.
- **Relevance**
We remain responsive to demographic change, community needs, and evolving cultural practices.

Framework for Success: Our Strategic Orientation

While the focus of the City of Pickering's previous Cultural Strategic Plan saw a growth-oriented building out and establishment of core cultural development functions including public art, the present plan seeks to hone in, improve, align, and refine core municipal cultural development and administration — Where does the City need to refine its processes and procedures? Where is more training required or a deepening of our work? How can we make better use of existing resources and 'right-size' our work? In short, the present plan's strategic orientation is a focused strategy that aims to 'sustain and maintain' while offering new opportunities to align with changing community needs and capacity.

The Strategic Priorities presented below, each with a specific goal and rationale, build off of the key emerging themes from the analysis phase of the process and reflect what was learned in the Context Setting Report — see Sections 2 and 3 of the plan. The objectives for each strategy will be realized through Supporting Actions which serve as the implementation activities over the next five years and sets the path forward for reflecting a distinct sense of place and identity through arts and culture. On-going actions reflect the core cultural development delivery work of the City while Supporting Actions are additional steps the City can take in achieving the plan's goals.

The Strategic Priorities are of equal value and are not priority-ranked, rather they work to reinforce one-another and align with other major plans and policy areas of the City including the Official Plan, Corporate Strategic Plan (2024–2028), and Economic Development Strategy:

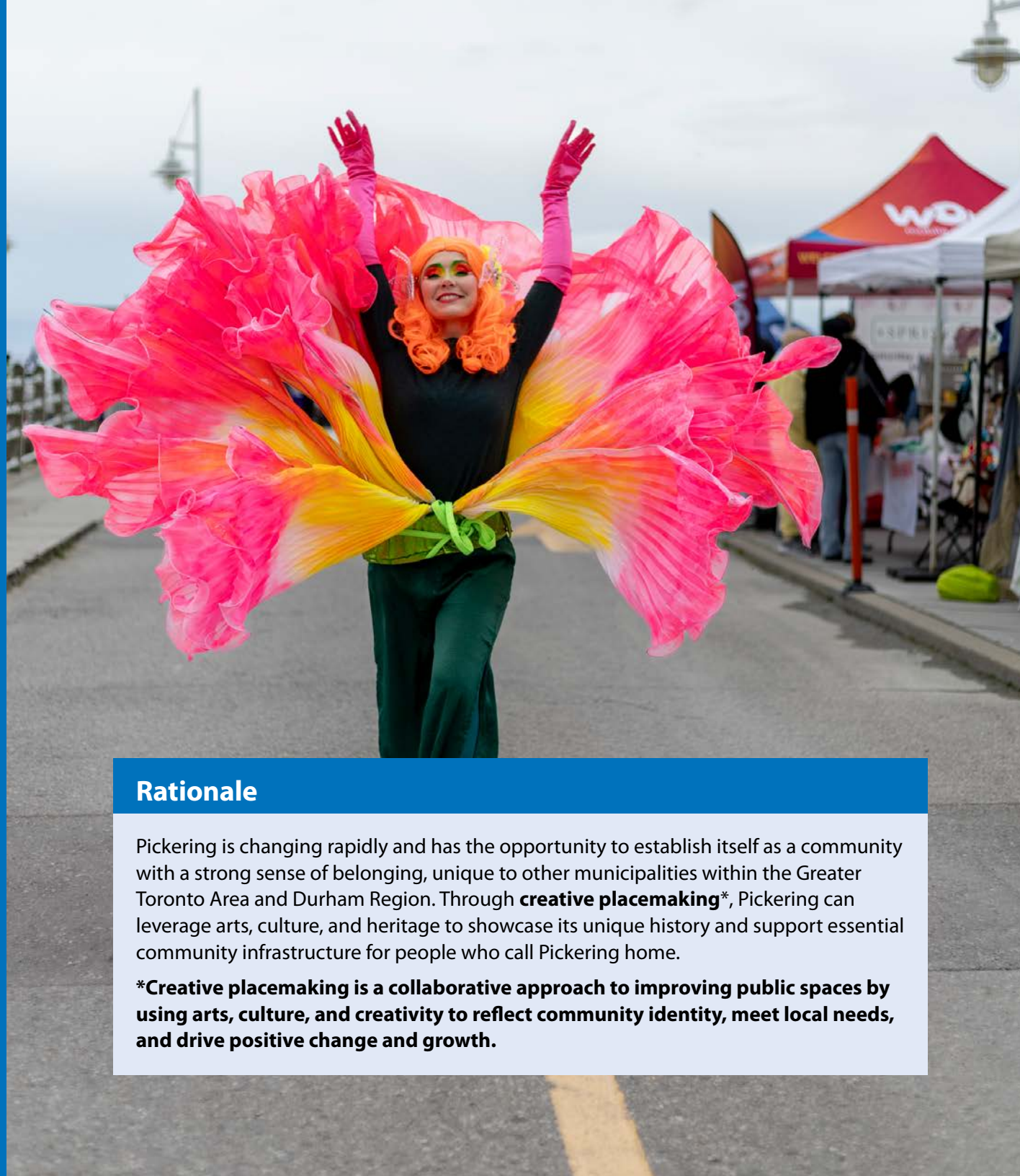
- **Strategic Priority 1**
Foster placemaking and a distinct community identity
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Prioritize youth and young families



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.



Rationale

Pickering is changing rapidly and has the opportunity to establish itself as a community with a strong sense of belonging, unique to other municipalities within the Greater Toronto Area and Durham Region. Through **creative placemaking***, Pickering can leverage arts, culture, and heritage to showcase its unique history and support essential community infrastructure for people who call Pickering home.

***Creative placemaking is a collaborative approach to improving public spaces by using arts, culture, and creativity to reflect community identity, meet local needs, and drive positive change and growth.**

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Identify opportunities for artistic animation and creative placemaking through policy, programming, and processes.

Supporting Actions:

- Encourage local wayfinding to integrate local character, resources and assets as part of broader creative placemaking.
- Explore expanding heritage conservation and interpretation/education opportunities for City-owned properties and community partners' sites.
- Explore modifying the Sign Regulations Bylaw to encourage creative signage structures and enhance the visual realm.
- Explore opportunities to integrate creative placemaking in city-wide and neighbourhood policy documents, including but not limited to the Pickering Forward Official Plan and in future Secondary Plans.
- Link to and support actions in the Art in Public Spaces Plan and the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan that advance creative placemaking.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Arts and culture are activated through the community, including currently under-used and under-served areas in Pickering.

Supporting Actions:

- Create an inventory of arts-ready public spaces, such as plazas and parks. Include the identification of priority sites for public art and creative placemaking. Include the details of any accessibility features in the surroundings (e.g., seating, shade, washrooms, and parking).
- Increase arts and cultural programming in neighborhood parks, public spaces, community facilities, and growth areas across the city.
- Partner with resident groups, community organizations, and local leaders to identify neighbourhood-specific cultural initiatives.
- Identify and utilize parks and other public areas as key gathering and performance spaces for multiple kinds of arts and culture activities.
- Integrate creative placemaking solutions into priority sites, such as light installations, façade interventions, self-guided art walks and runs, performance sites, and pop-up arts spots, as part of public art programming throughout the city.
- Identify opportunities for arts-based activated storefronts to enhance commercial spaces and lease opportunities in collaboration with economic development initiatives. Conduct consultation with businesses, property owners, and economic development partners to identify support for storefront art initiatives and temporary cultural activations before implementation.
- Use local transportation networks and public spaces as channels to communicate cultural heritage knowledge (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) and local stories.
- Encourage business and landowners to work on beautification efforts and show pride of place through regular maintenance and upkeep of their spaces and signage.
- Identify opportunities for creative placemaking specifically connected to cultural heritage or nature along trails and parks networks.

OBJECTIVE 1.3
Identify, meet, and maintain the demand for creative spaces and cultural facilities.

Supporting Actions:

- Develop a Cultural Spaces and Facilities Framework to serve as a guide for phased investment and planning, extending beyond City-owned facilities and spaces, that includes, but is not limited to:
 - Examine current real estate inventory for arts, culture and heritage uses, identify and collate the mapping and listing of all City-owned renovated spaces, as well as purpose-built venues.
 - Maintain active dialogue with the cultural community to stay current on space needs, including smaller venue performing arts spaces.
 - Continue to support the development of the Pickering Village Museum.
 - Seize opportunities to work with other levels of government to secure funding for identified new or renovated cultural spaces and facilities, and support related planning work (e.g., feasibility studies, needs assessments, architectural selection processes, and capital infrastructure).
- Determine City-identified spaces for temporary cultural activity (e.g., lobbies, street corners, empty lots, etc.), and provide community spaces for artists (temporary or permanent) to introduce artists in residence program in higher traffic areas.

OBJECTIVE 1.4
Integrate creative spaces and cultural amenities into new developments.

Supporting Actions:

- Consider exploring opportunities to develop urban guidelines, where appropriate, through community planning initiatives such as Secondary Plans, neighbourhood plans and significant redevelopment plans to support creative placemaking, and identifying opportunities for the integration of public art.
- Facilitate agreements and address insurance issues with local realtors and developers to utilize existing venues and unrented or vacated spaces for cultural uses for a possible tax reduction or other incentive.
- Look at regulatory measures that may be preventing the use and development of arts and creative productions spaces (including co-op models), and develop guidelines to allow more flexibility as appropriate.



OBJECTIVE 1.5
Placemaking meets people where they are at, ensuring that community identity is reflected in creators and participants.

Supporting Actions:

- Collaborate with local First Nations to explore the opportunity to increase the recognition of Indigenous culture, knowledge and language in the public realm through name restoration, public art, wayfinding initiatives, and community events.
- Continue to support low-cost access to spaces, creative tools, and resources, especially for emerging artists, equity-deserving groups and youth.
- Work to minimize physical and transportation barriers for those accessing indoor and outdoor spaces where arts and culture programming and events occur.



OBJECTIVE 1.6
Placemaking is integrated into the Art in Public Spaces policy and program

Supporting Actions:

- Review and update the City's public art policy and program to create robust and intentional public art programs to support diverse art in public space across Pickering.
- Establish an interdepartmental Art in Public Spaces staff team to identify, coordinate, and advance opportunities for a public art and creative placemaking, City planning process, and City projects, contributing to the development of a more welcoming people-centred, and vibrant public realm.
- Create a vision, including key objectives, for public art in the public art policy and program in alignment with the Cultural Strategic Plan.
- Expand the public art policy and program definition of art in public spaces to the following: 'Art in public spaces' (public art) is defined as original artwork selected, commissioned, created, designed, programmed, or donated for location in the public domain, and created by an artist. Artworks and activity may be permanent or transitory, functional, integrated, or discrete to the site. Artwork created or initiated by the community for the public realm, which may be led by an artist, is also considered public art.
- Create distinctive public art programming streams with the public art policy and programs that are consistent with most municipal public art programs to better guide and support art in public spaces: Civic and Capital projects, Creative placemaking, Community arts, and Acquisitions and maintenance.
- Ensure the creative placemaking public art program identifies specific ways to animate, interpret, and build awareness of public art, places, and intangible cultural assets through tours, workshops, storytelling, and other engagement pieces.



Key Performance Indicators

Quantitative

- Total number of cultural spaces available (accessible inventory including amenities)
- Number of cultural spaces identified for expansion or growth
- Number of First Nations cultural initiatives in the public realm and overall increase
- Building and development timelines for facility improvements and new cultural spaces
- Number of services, supports, presentation and studio spaces provided for creative community
- Regular accessibility audits/needs assessments for cultural spaces
- Amount of funding spent on art in public space year/year

Qualitative

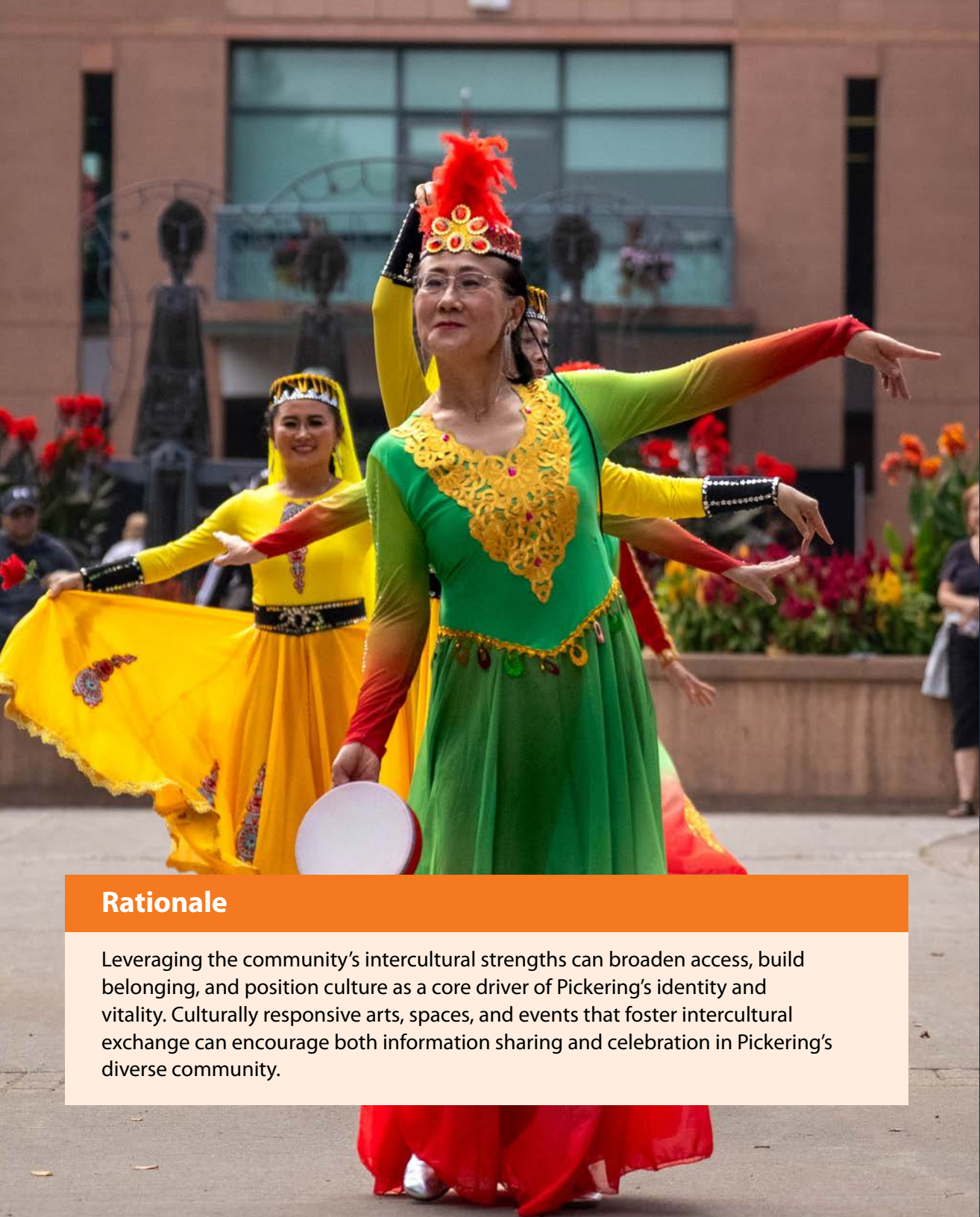
- Positive feedback received about utilizing and/or visiting cultural spaces (availability, booking, cost, experience)
- Visibility of local artists in the community and beyond
- Reputation of an inspiring municipality that fosters artistic expression and creation
- Positive feedback received from the public that there is improved access to cultural services, programs, and public spaces



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.



Rationale

Leveraging the community’s intercultural strengths can broaden access, build belonging, and position culture as a core driver of Pickering’s identity and vitality. Culturally responsive arts, spaces, and events that foster intercultural exchange can encourage both information sharing and celebration in Pickering’s diverse community.

OBJECTIVE 2.1
Our ethno-cultural diversity, heritage, growth, and change as a community is celebrated.

Supporting Actions:

- Support the implementation of the City of Pickering Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Strategy by encouraging opportunities for community-driven cultural initiatives and EDI-related education.
- Engage local Indigenous, Black, multicultural, 2SLGBTQ+, D/deaf and disability groups to identify diverse and needs-specific programming, accessibility concerns, and foster interculturalism.
- Deliver programs, events, communications campaigns, and partnerships that increase awareness of Pickering's diverse communities and cultural traditions to strengthen inclusive participation.
- Facilitate continuing engagement and dialogue among the multicultural community; youth, seniors, new residents, immigrants, people with disabilities and the 2SLGBTQ+ and gender diverse community.
- Explore opportunities to link and connect with other initiatives, plans and programs (including but not limited to the EDI Strategy) both within the City and out in the community to advance both this Strategy and other projects with similar objectives.
- Build intercultural pride as a tool for community well-being and for opening up dialogue and opportunities for marginalized communities through inclusivity initiatives (e.g., free events and programs) with identified partners.
- Support artist exchanges, intercultural festivals, exhibitions, workshops, and performances that bring together diverse cultural communities.
- Develop programs, exhibits, public art projects, and digital content that share local stories and increase awareness of Pickering's heritage and communities.

OBJECTIVE 2.2
Promote social change arts practices, and arts-based strategies for addressing matters of civic importance.

Supporting Actions:

- Continue to support the use of the Accessibility Checklist in partnership with community organizations, and explore the possibility of an Arts and Culture Accessibility Fund.
- Encourage access and participation to arts and culture through transportation planning with a focus on cyclists and joggers/pedestrians.
- Promote and/or fund workshops that help with training, advocacy and education in these areas.
- Identify and respond to opportunities to address intercultural needs through arts and culture.

OBJECTIVE 2.3
Celebrate Pickering's rich ethno-cultural diversity, and heritage legacy through culinary-arts and music based festivals and events.

Supporting Actions:

- Continue to provide funding and support for multicultural events led by or in partnership with community groups.
- Encourage newcomers to learn about the ethno-cultural diversity of Pickering and the City's unique heritage.
- Support and host events that use music and food to connect and promote social inclusion and diversity.
- Make heritage and historical information available to new residents, addressing the diversity of cultures that make up Pickering's heritage including Indigenous heritage.



Key Performance Indicators

Quantitative

- Number of free or low-cost spaces, tools, and resources offered
- Total partnerships and consultations with artists from Equity Deserving Groups
- Number and value of tiered pricing options
- Number of on-farm diversified uses operations
- Number of active agricultural organization within the City
- Number of neighbourhood champions engaged with

Qualitative

- Improved perceptions of the ease of accessing arts and cultural events in Pickering
- Positive testimonials on the impact of municipal-led initiatives to remove barriers for participation
- Positive feedback on the availability of information relevant to cultural events, programming, and professional development opportunities
- Positive experience navigating the City's websites (in general and specific to arts and culture updates)
- Cultural programming online brochures available in digital PDF format align with accessibility requirements (WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards or higher)
- Calendar of online events is regularly updated (e.g., on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis)
- Residents and art participants indicate that they believe arts and culture are distributed geographically across the community



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

Rationale

Pickering is already fostering a creative economy. Through the strategic allocation of resources, a strong creative economy can be further strengthened and diversified to help build strong, vibrant communities, promote civic engagement, and drive economic growth.

OBJECTIVE 3.1

Continue to enhance understanding amongst interest holders and decision makers of the value of arts, culture, heritage and creative community as part of Pickering's attraction and retention mix (e.g., festivals, events, agri-based events, cultural tours, open studios etc.) and brand-building.

Supporting Actions:

- Enhance the strategic positioning of cultural development within festivals and events to align with any local and regional tourism strategy development planning.
- Identify partnership opportunities with developers, business associations, venue operators and event producers to generate increased cultural economic activity and raise the profile of culture as an economic driver.
- Carry out a regular schedule of economic impact evaluation of the local cultural sector and cultural spaces mapping to monitor the attraction and attrition of creative spaces for production and presentation (e.g., maker spaces, artist studios, film and production spaces, video and game design studios etc.).
- Ensure tourism and economic development representation on the Cultural Roundtable, and cultural representation in Destination Pickering and other economic development bodies, as appropriate.
- Work towards enhancing cultural tourism marketing of a broader range of local cultural attractions.
- Prepare an annual report to Council on the outcomes of this strategy.

OBJECTIVE 3.2

Leverage local cultural resources and assets to distinguish Pickering as an arts and culture destination.

Supporting Actions:

- Provide regular updates to the team responsible for the 2024-2027 Community Visitor Plan, and seek opportunities for cross-collaboration to maximize culture as a visitor attraction.
- Increase awareness and visibility initiatives, including an arts and culture brand or campaign, to facilitate residents and visitors access to information about arts and cultural resources, events, festivals, venues, concerts, etc.
- Develop partnerships between farm operators, artists, event organizers, and tourism stakeholders to create rural cultural experiences and agritourism opportunities.
- Work with landowners, developers, and the agricultural community to explore opportunities to preserve and repurpose existing farms, agricultural buildings, or heritage agricultural landscapes within new neighbourhood, so they can become focal points or community gathering spaces.
- Carry out consistent annual baseline data collection amongst local cultural resources and assets and encourage tourism leads to share relevant visitor profile data to encourage audience development.
- Ensure destination branding reflects authentic local community cultural identity inputs, diversity, and local cultural resources and assets.

OBJECTIVE 3.3

Further integrate creative economy strategies into economic development planning.

Supporting Actions:

- With identified partners, promote arts and business partnerships and generate spin-off cultural economic activity to raise the profile of culture as an economic generator.
- Encourage involvement of cultural and creative businesses and arts groups in local business networking activities to stimulate collaboration and partnerships.
- Continue to encourage film industry activity in the city to attract spending, create employment and raise the profile of Pickering.

OBJECTIVE 3.4**Work with creative entrepreneurs on skills development.****Supporting Actions:**

- Offer small business training and social enterprise and link to creative entrepreneurs' initiatives, such as the creation of cooperatives or collectives.
- In collaboration with other City departments and partners, develop a toolkit for managing creative entrepreneur businesses, and encourage 'buy local' campaigns, and the use of local creations in City ceremonies and gifts (a gifts policy).
- Share new models in non-profits and social enterprises and earned revenue streams with arts and culture organizations.
- Through inter-departmental cooperation help to reduce red tape and provide further support in collaboration with the creative entrepreneur community.
- Expand opportunities for professional development, mentorship, and skill building opportunities for artists, administrators, and cultural organizations.
- Foster partnerships with and among underrepresented groups including people with disabilities to foster knowledge-sharing as well as individual and organizational development.
- Develop a Heritage Strategy incorporating community engagement, heritage conservation priorities, commemoration initiatives, and placemaking opportunities that celebrate Pickering's cultural heritage assets.
- Explore new ways to encourage creative industries to locate in Pickering.
- Partner with the Pickering's Sustainability Division, artists, and arts organizations to support environmental awareness, sustainability initiatives and community-based climate action projects.

**Key Performance Indicators****Quantitative**

- Number of staff hours dedicated
- Number of interdepartmental collaborations
- Number of established and emerging artists/arts and culture organizations promoted by the City (via web/print/social channels)
- Total new strategic relationships established
- Participation in regional cultural development initiatives

- Number of meetings with local First Nations
- Number of champions engaged
- Breadth and number of lecture series, seminars, panels, and community dialogues on arts, culture and heritage
- Number of advocacy requests to levels of government and arts funding bodies
- A campaign to increase awareness of the strategy and support for Pickering's creative community

Qualitative

- Reputation as a cooperative and bold municipality
- Positive feedback from artists and arts organizations on the effectiveness of municipal grants and opportunities
- Success stories demonstrating positive outcomes from strategic partnerships
- Increased awareness, support, and advocacy for arts and culture in Pickering



Strategic Priority 4 Be future ready

GOAL

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



Rationale

When cultural development is positioned at a strategic level within municipal organizational structures there are greater impacts on the social, economic, and environmental well-being of a community. Pickering is at a pivotal stage in its cultural development with the opportunity to further **capacity-building*** within community groups and support local community-driven programming by shifting the City's role to be more of a facilitator and convener (rather than only being a direct-supplier of services).

***capacity-building is the process of developing and strengthening the skills, resources, and systems an organization needs to better achieve its purpose.**

OBJECTIVE 4.1

Enhanced capacity-building is fostered in the community through the City's role — its strategic initiatives, departments, bylaws, policies, and programs.

Supporting Actions:

- Create and grow a Cultural Development Fund that provides financial support for local arts, culture, heritage, and community-led initiatives consistent with City priorities.
- Review the City's grant program every five years to explore the possibility of increasing the funds available for developing temporary art intervention projects that respond to community needs.
- Continue to foster a cultural development lens across City departments, making sure culture is at the table in City planning.
- Act as a community connector by bringing people together to listen and identify opportunities for collaboration and finding solutions, and minimize red tape that prevents cultural development.
- Regularly review partnership agreements to ensure compliance and relevancy to City priorities, including Indigenous and youth focused initiatives.
- Where possible, social innovation (e.g., tool libraries and cultural hubs) is encouraged to effect solutions for cultural development.
- Explore the potential for an annual cultural report card process as a measurement for cultural development.
- Align and update Official Plan policies and the Corporate Strategic Plan to integrate and include cultural planning goals identified. Ensure cultural planning directions are reflected in City policies and plans.
- Continue to encourage using cross-department teams in cultural development.

- Support the development of a local arts council to serve a centralized arts and culture hub and community-based cultural development function.
- Increase collaboration with regional cultural development partners (from events to arts and culture programming to heritage and public art).

OBJECTIVE 4.2

Build awareness and visibility of arts and culture (including events, heritage and public art) among residents.

Supporting Actions:

- Develop and implement a comprehensive arts and culture Communications Strategy to build audiences and awareness.
- As part of the Communications Strategy to support the implementation of the plan, create an awareness campaign surrounding the value, benefits and impact of arts and culture on an annual basis.
- Create a centralized culture platform to feature and promote arts, culture and events; programs; shared resources; etc.
- Continue the opportunity to use local transportation networks as channels to communicate awareness of events and programs (e.g., buses, bus shelter ads, GO Train, GO Bus etc.) in collaboration with Durham Regional Transit.



Key Performance Indicators

Quantitative

- Total number of artists, cultural activities, and programs (annual)
- Generated economic activity from creative community (annual)
- Total number of submissions received from artists related to new creative placemaking opportunities
- Level of engagement with local artists, arts and culture organizations, and community groups
- Number of professional development, mentorship, and skill building opportunities offered
- Number of partnerships with developers, business associations, venue operators and event producers
- Number of new creative wayfinding initiatives
- Digital engagement (social media, website traffic, time spent, new and repeat visitors, and conversions)

Qualitative

- Cultural development is viewed as a necessity by the City as demonstrated by its links to other principal plans
- Enhanced awareness of Pickering's creative ecosystem at regional, provincial and potentially national levels
- Recognition of Pickering as a must-visit destination
- Reputation of being a strong location for artistic professional development and economic growth
- Local residents demonstrating pride of place



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.



Rationale

Generational shifts in arts audiences and increased arts experiences for families is one of the broader trends that will have significant influence on cultural development and programming over the next five to ten years in Canada. As Pickering's population is growing and continues to attract young families and newcomers (which offers new audiences and creators for cultural programs that inspire intergenerational participation), and helps to reduce misconduct in high-risk youth and lowers crime.

OBJECTIVE 5.1

Increase access to arts and culture opportunities for youth and children, and encourage family participation.

Supporting Actions:

- Ensure arts and culture is represented and included in work plans for the Teen Advisory Group (T.A.G) and Pickering Activity Council 4 Teens (PAC4Teens) to advise on the implementation and development of this strategic priority.
- Explore the establishment of a sustained and multi-year funded (sponsored) local program for arts engagement for young people across all art forms.
- Work collaboratively with organizations in the area who provide services and programs to children and young people.
- Align with and take direction from leading models and practice of arts engagement for young people in challenging and complex situations.
- Work with local School District partners to make arts and creative opportunities available to youth.
- Identify service agreement opportunities with arts, culture and heritage organizations to include, youth and family arts policies, programs and directions as part of their operating agreements with the City and through other mechanisms such as strategic plans.
- Encourage local business associations and other groups to create a youth-friendly atmosphere through services, events and businesses.

OBJECTIVE 5.2

To create and develop ways to nurture and celebrate the ambition, enthusiasm and talent of local children and youth in the arts.

Supporting Actions:

- Establish a cohort of 'arts champions': established artists, industry experts and 'household names/influencers' to promote the value of youth arts in the community.
- With identified partners, explore the possibility of developing a youth employment and/or volunteering initiative to increase opportunities for young people to gain employment experience in the arts and creative industries.
- Establish and promote a calendar of young people's and family arts events to celebrate and showcase talent and encourage family and community support and engagement.
- Continue to carry out the City's Youth Arts Award and Youth Art Show (juried show with prize).
- Identify opportunities to share good practice in children and young people's arts within the local cultural sector.
- Work with potential partners such as key arts and culture organizations; youth and children's organizations, and the local School District; to develop and implement a Young Arts Ambassador's program to encourage careers in arts and culture, and peer engagement.

OBJECTIVE 5.3

Increase Family Arts opportunities City-wide.

Supporting Actions:

- Increase family arts and cultural programming at existing cultural venues and underutilized venues.
- Support the development of existing and new family arts- and culture-based events and programs, and sites and spaces such as: Farmers' Market; Pickering Museum Village; Pop-Up hangouts (beanbag chairs, materials to create art); Family reading/puzzles/games night; Movies in the Park; etc.
- Deliver programs that enable youth and families to document, share, and celebrate local stories through visual arts, digital media, performance, and heritage projects.
- Integrate and align with key sub-plans such as the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan, Art in Public Spaces Plan, and Recreation & Parks Ten Year Plan.

**OBJECTIVE 5.4**

Sustain a youth and family arts sector and initiatives by developing capacity in the community.

Supporting Actions:

- Identify ways of financially supporting youth and family arts programming and development, and involve local cultural leaders and businesses in funding opportunities.
- Follow best practice and success models for youth and family arts initiatives and link with Youth Strategy implementation.
- Increase local digital-based opportunities for young people to engage with the arts.
- Explore partnership and new grant opportunities, including microgrants with First Nations, Urban Indigenous Peoples and Artists, and Indigenous youth.
- Collaborate with artists specializing in Performing Arts for Young Audiences (PYA) to guide programming.
- Develop an evaluation framework to assess progress and inform future development of this strategic priority and ensure that all art forms and heritage are included and represented in the implementation and development of this strategic priority.



Key Performance Indicators

Quantitative

- Established cohort of 'arts champions' to promote the value of youth arts in the community
- Number of local digital-based opportunities for young people to engage with the arts
- Number cultural programs offered for youth
- Total number of existing and new family arts- and culture-based events and programs, and sites and spaces

Qualitative

- Positive feedback that youth are active and involved in the arts as participants and producers
- Public perception that family arts opportunities abound
- Reputation of an inspiring municipality that fosters artistic expression and creation

Ongoing Actions

The following are 'evergreen actions' from the City's previous Cultural Plan, to be continued over the course of this Cultural Strategic Plan and to be considered beyond 2036.

- Increase the City's role in supporting and networking cultural groups within the community.
- Identify a strategy to address transportation issues at venues that host major cultural events. Consider transportation in the selection and design of new venues.
- Engage cultural groups in the development of strategies that encourage resident cultural engagement between North and South Pickering.
- Maintain a Cultural Advisory Committee made up of staff, Council, and community representation that champions the implementation of the Cultural Strategic Plan.
- Maintain a cross-departmental Corporate Cultural Plan Committee to advance implementation of the Cultural Strategic Plan.
- Provide internal and external training and professional development opportunities to staff to enhance understanding of cultural development. This professional development can help staff stay informed on leading practices and identify whether they might be appropriate to the Pickering context.
- Ensure that cultural sites and assets are included in the platform or equivalent data base.
- Explore methods to encourage or remove barriers to the private and non-profit sectors to building and operating small venues.





2 Our Planning Context

Our Planning Context

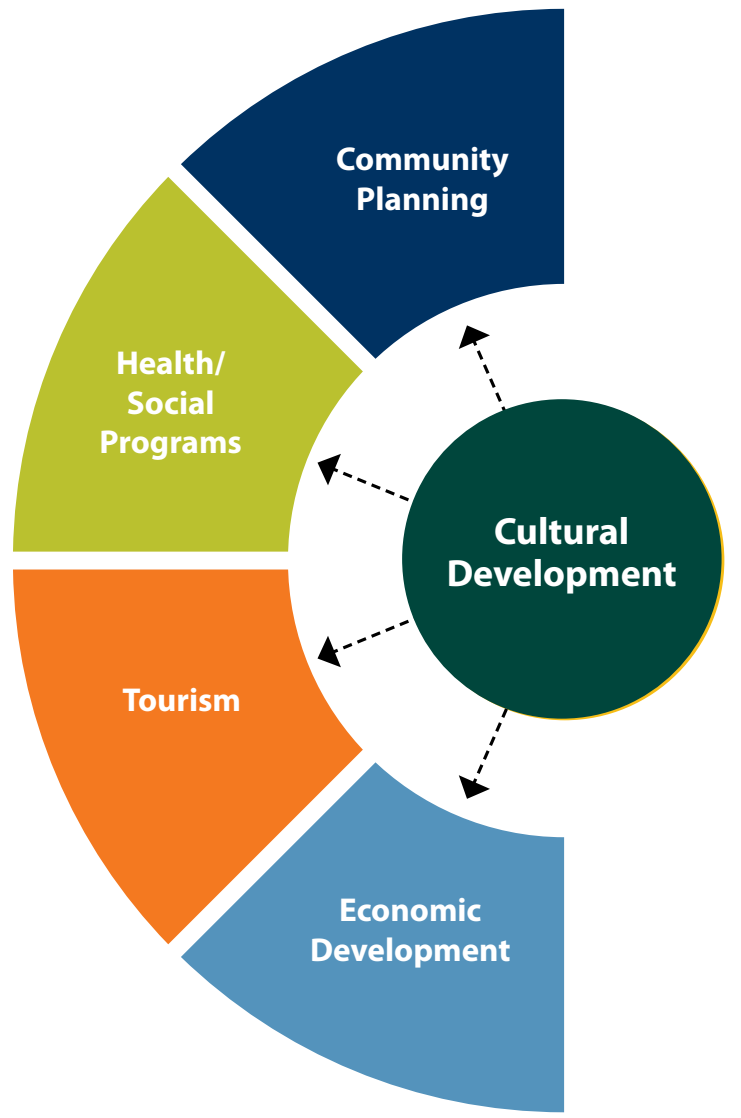
A Few Key Terms

What is Culture?
Culture is a broad term and relates to who we are and how we live when used in a cultural development context.

What are the Arts?
The subdivision of culture, composed of many expressive and creative disciplines. The term encompasses: visual and applied arts (e.g., painting, printmaking, drawing, sculpture, crafts, pottery and ceramics, photography, film and video), theatre, music, song, spoken word, literary arts and dance.

What is Cultural Development?
Cultural development is defined as strategic and integrated planning that leverages a community's unique cultural resources and assets for the social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefit of the city and society. Strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Investing in arts and cultural facilities (art galleries, museums, theatres, concert halls etc.)
- Producing public festivals and events, and programming arts and culture activities
- Implementing public art and creative placemaking initiatives (transformed underused public spaces for creative or playful uses)
- Attracting and supporting creative industries (film, television, publishing, design, fashion, music, etc.)





Background

The impact of Canada's arts and culture sector was an estimated \$65 billion in direct contribution to Canada's GDP and supported 1.1 million jobs across the country in 2024.¹

Arts and Culture play a strong role in placemaking, community building, tourism, and economic development. There are numerous direct and indirect social and livability benefits resulting from cultural development.

Social Return on Investment

- Builds community identity and pride
- Improves residents' sense of belonging and place attachment
- Builds interpersonal ties and promotes volunteering
- Increases inclusion and celebrates diversity
- Builds social networks
- Enhances perceptions of safety and comfort
- Reduces misconduct in high-risk youth, lowers crime
- Relieves stress and helps well-being
- Contributes to improved physical, mental, and emotional health
- Opportunities to support climate action and resilience

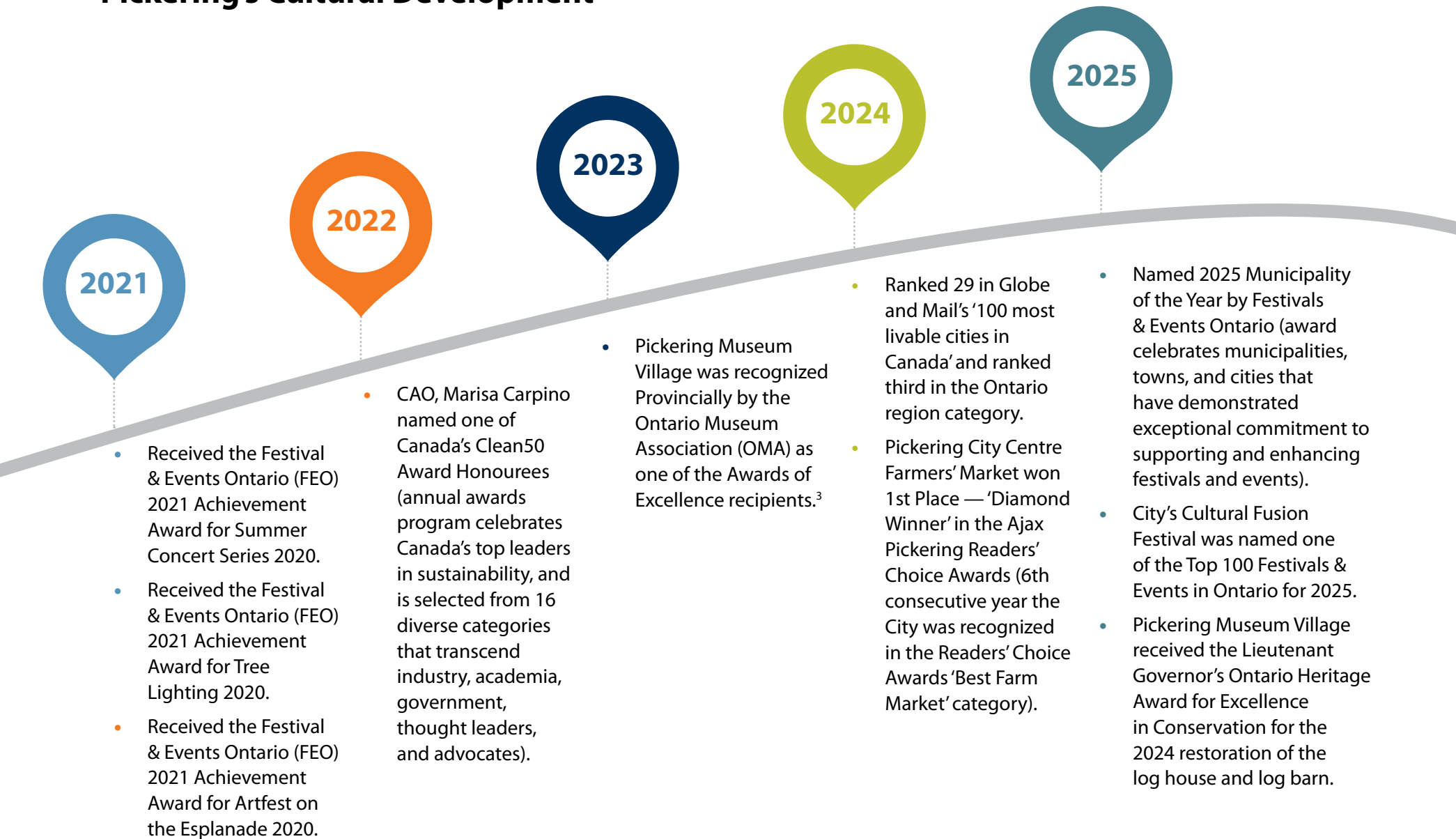
Economic Advantages

- Each \$1 invested in the cultural sector, provides ~\$6 direct return on investment and up to \$12
- Economic generator: induces spending as do their audiences
- Fosters a creative scene that spurs economic growth in creative industries
- Fast-growing job categories
- Cultural infrastructure projects generate economic activity
- Critical to investment and attraction strategies: tourists, businesses, new residents and investors
- Outperforms traditional areas of Canada's economy

These benefits have led to an understanding that cultural amenities and delivery are no longer a 'nice to have' or a 'frill' in local government. Increasingly, cultural development is included in the core suite of municipal services offered to strengthen a community's cultural identity and grow its creative economy.

¹ Statistics Canada

Key Recent Achievements in Pickering's Cultural Development²



² <https://www.pickering.ca/council-city-administration/awards>

³ <https://www.pickering.ca/news/posts/pickering-museum-village-receives-honourable-mention-for-ontario-award-of-excellence-in-exhibitions>

Municipal Cultural Development Continuum

In keeping with leading development practices, the Municipal Cultural Development Continuum (Dr. Greg Baeker, Municipal World) serves as a framework for evaluation.

Pickering is currently situated in a few of the phases — including Beautification Effort, Economic Driver, and Community Amenities.

- 1 Beautification Effort**
Canadian municipalities became immersed in cultural planning in the post-war era (Arts and heritage collections, Buildings, Monuments)
- 2 Economic Driver**
Cities made the case for the economic value of culture (Downtown revitalization, Tourism)
- 3 Community Amenities**
Tackling urban issues and investment in community features (Public art, festivals and events, tangible culture, arts, and heritage infrastructure)
- 4 Creative City**
Integrated in urban planning, creative worker attraction (Creative industries, cultural mapping, cultural districts)
- 5 Sustainable City**
Culture as a quality-of-life value, social cohesion, social capital (Cultural democracy, cultural vitality)
- 6 Intercultural City**
Contributing to community outcomes and cultural identity (Cultural democracy, (re)defining cultural meanings, intangible culture)

About the Project

The Durham Region and its municipalities are seeing significant changes and demographic shifts. Pickering's cultural sector is expanding in tandem with rapid population growth and diversification. With over one-third of its residents being immigrants, the city demonstrates strong community engagement through festivals, public art, and museum programs.

As a rapidly changing community, the City of Pickering developed three strategic documents to collectively guide the next decade (2026–2036) of Pickering's arts, culture, museum and public art programs and services.

Supported by a common vision, each plan is unique in their key deliverables:

- **Cultural Strategic Plan (CSP)**
This is the Primary Plan from which the two other supporting plans flow that establishes the unified, city-wide vision and overarching goals for arts and culture in Pickering.
- **Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan (MSP)**
Reflects the evolving role of Pickering Museum Village from a pioneer village to a more diverse community hub and major tourist destination.
- **Art in Public Spaces Plan (APSP)**
Identifies opportunities for further growth and enhanced integration of creative placemaking.

Input was gathered from City staff, community leaders, cultural interest holders, and the general public to shape the unified vision that reflects Pickering's growing and diverse population, honours Indigenous relationships, and supports inclusive, innovative cultural development.



Approach and Timeline

The development of the City of Pickering Cultural Strategic Plan involved a mix of desk research, interest holder and community engagement, and strategy development.

The planning process unfolded through four phases, which was carried out in a condensed timeline by a large project team of consultants and the City of Pickering CSP Working Committee, in order to meet the City's goal for the Plan's adoption that was anticipated for July 2026.



Planning Context

Local Context

- ✓ Taken over by regional plans
- ✓ Rapid population growth
- ✓ Ethno-cultural diverse urban setting
- ✓ Rapid growth within the City itself (transition)
- ✓ Lack of wrap around cultural amenities (e.g., restaurants; assets such as performance spaces)
- ✓ Built heritage in decline
- ✓ Shifting community identity
- ✓ Farm heritage loss
- ✓ 2000s Pickering begins its own development plan
- ✓ Complete community: Northeast Pickering Secondary and Seaton Development
- ✓ Economic outlook — Federal and Provincial funding in decline for cultural development — no 'new money'

Drivers

- ✓ Truth and Reconciliation calls to action and new CMA policies
- ✓ Move from 'bedroom' community identity
- ✓ Major cultural sector shifts
- ✓ Arts organizations in increasing precarity
- ✓ Lack of focused identity/narrative
- ✓ Need for 'cultural destination'
- ✓ Major film/destination/scene
- ✓ Need for gathering spaces at different levels of scale
- ✓ Introductory public art portfolio

Community and Regional Profile

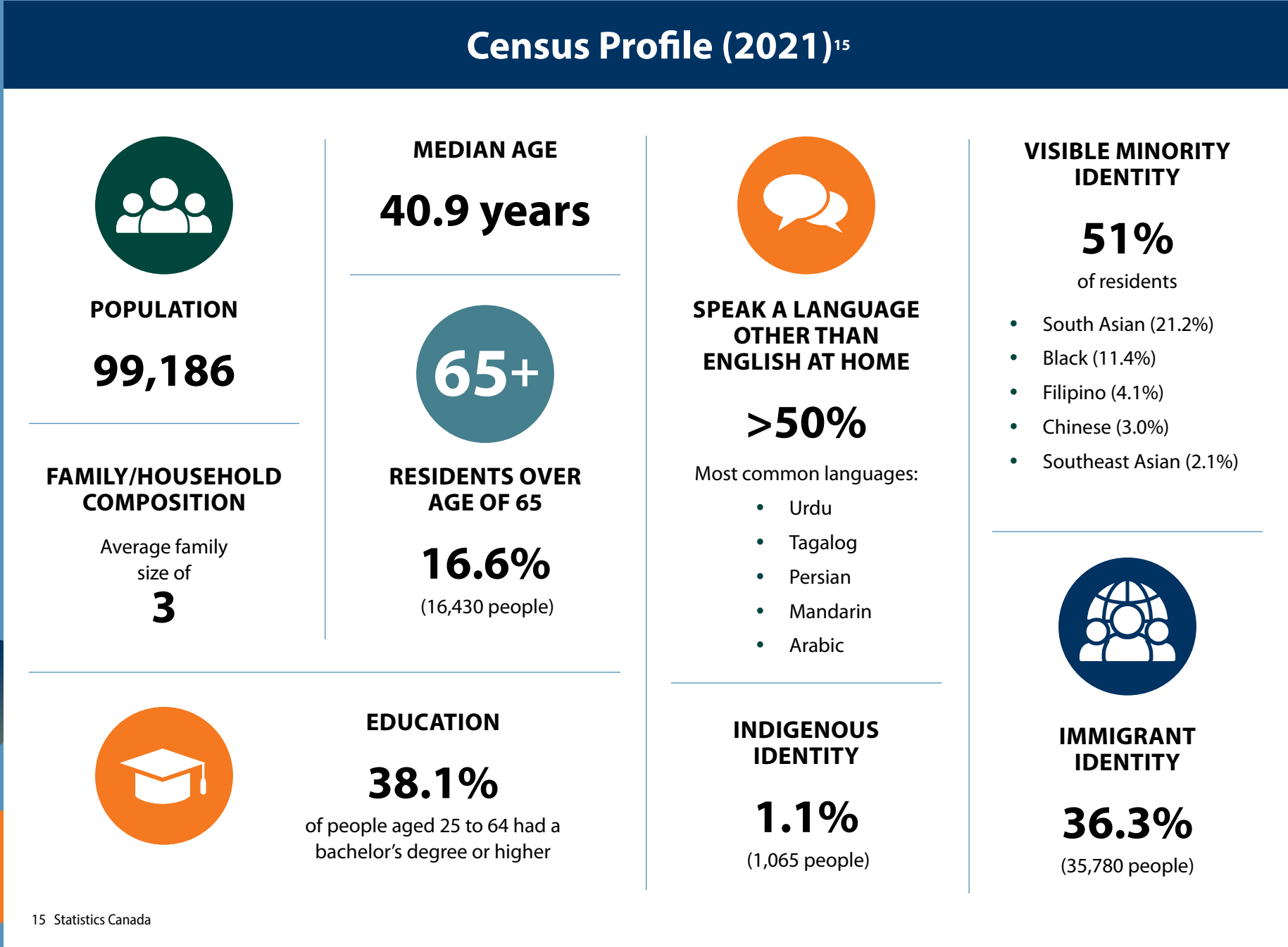
Pickering is a rapidly growing city on the shores of Lake Ontario, located within Durham Region and the traditional territory of the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation and other Williams Treaties signatories. The city's population is forecasted to grow significantly in the coming decades (85% by 2042). The Seaton development alone is expected to bring 70,000 new residents and 35,000 jobs, and the Northeast Pickering Secondary Plan adding another 40,000 residents and 10,000 jobs.⁴

Pickering's economy is diverse, balancing longstanding sectors with emerging industries. Established strengths include energy,⁵ advanced manufacturing,⁶ logistics, and information technology, which are anchored by major employment lands like the 800-acre Innovation Corridor,⁷ and industrial hubs. Major infrastructure moves, including widening Highway 7,⁸ and the permanent removal of 407 East tolls,⁹ further support goods movement and investment. The energy sector remains a flagship: the Pickering Nuclear Generating Station's proposed refurbishment is projected to contribute ~11,000 jobs per year and \$19.4 billion to Ontario's GDP over 11 years.¹⁰

Protected landscapes (such as Rouge National Urban Park and the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve) strengthen Pickering's natural appeal. Tourism and entertainment are accelerating through Durham Live¹¹ and the recently opened Porsche Experience Centre Toronto.¹² The city also benefits from a strong regional education and talent pipeline, drawing on 11 nearby universities and colleges.¹³ Many residents express a want for growth to be balanced with livability – ensuring infrastructure, transit, and green spaces keep pace with density.¹⁴



- 4 https://www.pickering.ca/media/glfdepvo/accessible_pickering_profile-_doc.pdf
- 5 <https://www.opg.com/communities/host-communities/southern-ontario-durham>
- 6 <https://www.pickering.ca/news/posts/wonderbrands-innovation-business-park-to-rise-in-pickering>
- 7 https://issuu.com/breezepublishing/docs/pm0011_-_your_city_issue_3-final?fr=sN2Q5MTQ1NDU1NjU
- 8 <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1004430/ontario-expanding-highway-7-from-pickering-to-markham>
- 9 <https://news.ontario.ca/en/release/1005909/ontario-permanently-cutting-the-gas-tax-and-taking-tolls-off-highway-407-east>
- 10 https://www.pickering.ca/media/glfdepvo/accessible_pickering_profile-_doc.pdf
- 11 <https://www.dlive.ca>
- 12 <https://www.porsche.com/canada/en/experience/toronto>
- 13 <https://www.pickering.ca/media/rbfecesi/final-pickering-infographic-web.pdf>
- 14 <https://www.pickering.ca/media/in3cw5bm/final-appendix-c-pickering-forward-online-survey-pic4-acc.pdf>



Linkages to City Planning Initiatives

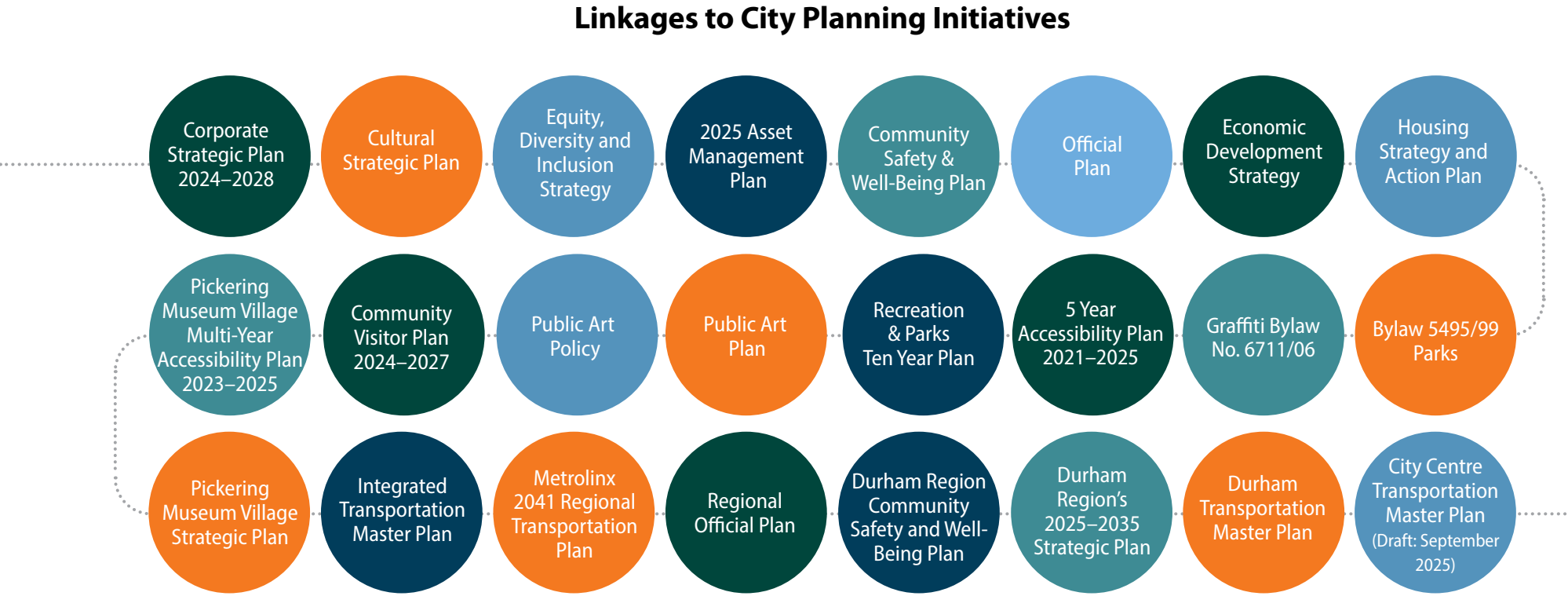
To align planning efforts with parallel and intersecting initiatives, the City of Pickering Context and Engagement Report identified key policies, plans, strategies, and practices that align with existing plans and strategies.

Overall, the City of Pickering supports cultural development through the strategic integration of arts and cultural considerations in some high-level planning documents. An increased profile of culture, including museums and art in public spaces, could help enhance the ‘culture for culture’ in Pickering.

Pride of Place

“The aim of creative city-making is to think of your City as a living work of art, where citizens can involve and engage themselves in the creation of a transformed place.”

— Charles Landry,
Creative and the City: Thinking Through the Steps



Broader Cultural Sector Context

This section includes a summary of the major trends that contribute to a complex and evolving cultural landscape – a detailed overview is outlined in the City of Pickering Context and Engagement Report.



Summary of Major Cultural Sector Trends

1 Broad Societal and Global Pressures

- The climate crisis and the role arts and culture plays in mitigating climate change.
- The role of technology and changing nature of work through artificial intelligence (AI).
- The affordability crisis; cost of living and cost of art-making/creative spaces are too high.
- Economic and political instability; tariffs' impacts on Canadian cultural imports/exports.

2 Policy, Funding, and Structural Shifts

- Scaled-back corporate sponsorships and art in public spaces funding.
- Lifecycle of arts organizations: many arts organizations are having difficulty moving to an established phase or shifting to a turnaround mode after a period of gradual decline.
- New operating models for arts organizations that are more entrepreneurial in nature.
- Further capacity-building within community groups, supporting grassroots community-driven programming, shifting a City's role to be more of a facilitator and convener (rather than a direct-supplier of services).

3 Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA) and Reconciliation

- Upholding Calls to Action of Truth and Reconciliation (specifically #67 and #70, which directly call up the Canadian Museums Association and Canadian Association of Archivists).
- Innovations in D/deaf, and Disability arts and accessibility to the arts.
- Creating safer and more inclusive spaces for community dialogue through the arts (e.g., social-change arts practices).

4 Audience Trends and Cultural Participation

- Festivals are struggling to rebuild audiences; challenges in funding, climate change adaptation, and safety concerns.
- Shifting from passive consumption of arts and culture to more participatory arts experiences.
- Generational shifts in arts audiences and increased arts experiences for families
- Outdoor arts, creative placemaking and co-activations of spaces.

Summary of Museum and Heritage Trends

Important trends and significant changes have taken place in the heritage sector in Canada that will continue to challenge the meaning and role of museums and heritage sites. These trends include:

1. Policy, Funding, and Structural Shifts

- Recommendations and museum standards for implementing UNDRIP and supporting Indigenous self-determination in museums outlined in Moved to Action: Activating UNDRIP in Canadian Museums.¹⁶
- Updated National Museum Policy from 1990 with five key themes.¹⁷
 1. Role of heritage institutions in society
 2. Financial sustainability and resilience
 3. Advancing reconciliation with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples
 4. Embracing equity, diversity and inclusion
 5. Preservation and access as core functions
- Governments across Canada are implementing laws and regulations that consider traditional measures of accessibility.
- Shifts in funding to balance support for emerging and equity-deserving organizations.
- Increase in austerity budgets amid growing economic uncertainty with lower levels of funding overall.
- Organizations seeking more support from private philanthropy, diversified revenues, and niche investment streams.

¹⁶ https://museums.ca/uploaded/web/TRC_2022/Report-CMA-MovedToAction.pdf
¹⁷ <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/renewal-museum-policy/what-we-heard.html>
¹⁸ https://museums.ca/site/reportsandpublications/museonline/winter2022_weatheringstorms

2. Evolving Role Within a Community

- No longer solely spaces of preservation.
- Museums are expanding to include services to “drive social innovation, embrace new technologies and foster inclusive communities.” (ICOM, 2025)
- Responsibility to transform deeply colonial institutions to break down the barriers that exist for equity-deserving individuals to share their stories, in the efforts to heal from collective trauma.
- Storytelling remains the main means of impactful visitor experience.

3. Sustainability and Advocacy

- Digital interactives, augmented reality, and immersive technologies can be resource-heavy and challenging for non-technical staff to maintain, and risk becoming dated or unsustainable.
- Museums are reckoning with their own carbon footprint and emergency response readiness, while grappling with the growing risk to collections due to climate disasters, crises, and conflicts.¹⁸
- Many museum facilities require urgent upgrades to meet modern environmental standards.
- Opportunities for increased return on investment (ROI) and economic impact through authentic experiences and place-based storytelling.
- Canadian organizations are increasing advocacy work in response to pressures that put heritage at risk.

“A museum is a not-for-profit, permanent institution in the service of society that researches, collects, conserves, interprets and exhibits tangible and intangible heritage. Open to the public, accessible and inclusive, museums foster diversity and sustainability. They operate and communicate ethically, professionally and with the participation of communities, offering varied experiences for education, enjoyment, reflection and knowledge sharing.”

— International Council of Museums (2022)

Summary Art in Public Spaces Trends

The following trends demonstrate the necessary shifts municipalities are making in order to keep art in public spaces relevant and sustainable:

1. Funding and Processes Shifts

- Cities are moving beyond single-source funding to strengthen and stabilize art in public spaces investment.
- Dedicating a small percentage of major capital budgets to build flexible reserve funds for long-term planning (rather than tied to specific projects).
- Increasingly dedicating funds to preserve, conserve, and repair growing collections to ensure longevity and public trust.
- Moving beyond traditional juries with new selection models that include community voting, artist-in-residence programs, and participatory processes that build engagement.
- Cities are creating layered programs that ensure art in public spaces thrives at multiple scales and contexts.

2. Innovative and Accessible Design

- Experimenting with digital platforms, mobile exhibitions, and interactive displays to increase public access to municipal art collections.
- Pop-up, time-limited, and experimental works are on the rise, creating dynamic experiences that respond to contemporary issues and community interests .
- Accessibility is being prioritized to ensure works are inclusive across physical, sensory, and cultural dimensions so that all residents can engage.
- Expanding beyond traditional bronze sculptures to enhance the inclusivity, impact, and sustainability of art in public spaces initiatives.
- Now often incorporates ecological values — using sustainable materials, regenerative practices, and designs that respond to environmental priorities.

Art in public spaces is a more inclusive term that captures a comprehensive image of creative and artistic possibilities such as murals and statues, but also performance-based work, artistic programming, and creative placemaking.

More than just aesthetics, art in public spaces is a tool that is used by municipalities to respond to global population shifts, environmental fluctuations, and the increased complexity of civic issues.



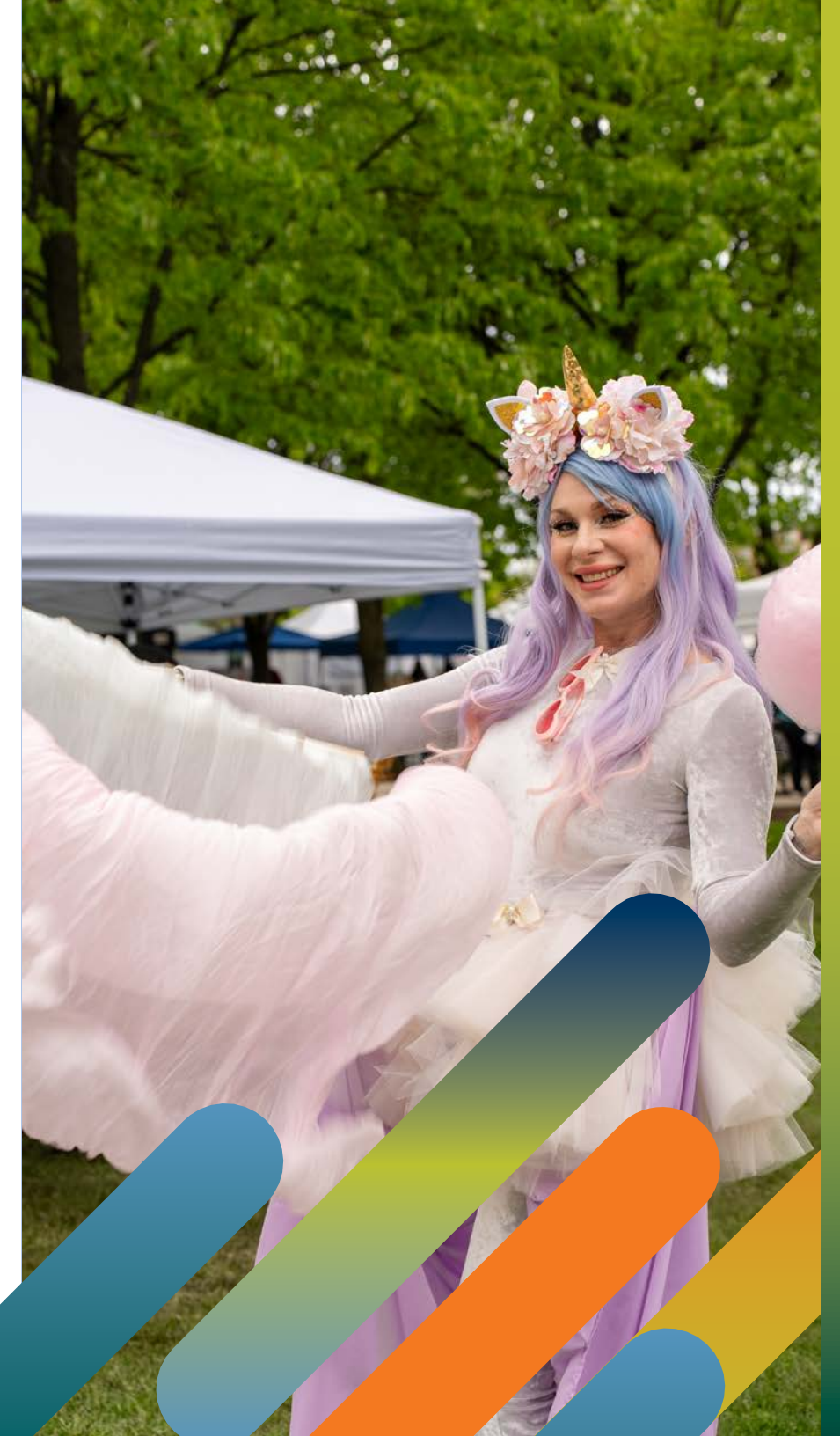


3 What We Heard: Engagement Summary

Our Process

Following the project's Community Engagement and Communications Framework, the Consulting Team engaged with City staff, community interest holders, and the broader Pickering community to develop the Cultural Strategic Plan and related Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan and Art in Public Spaces Plan.

The process prioritized ensuring that voices that may not typically be heard during large-scale engagement events were sought out, leading to engagement with the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, Pickering Anti-Black Racism Task Force, and High School and Youth Consultants. Engagement activities were designed to ensure impactful public consultation on the future vision of cultural development, including museums, heritage, and art in public spaces in Pickering.



Engagement at a Glance

WORKSHOPS

Senior Management
September 22, 2025

8
departments

Pickering Anti-Black Racism Taskforce
January 8, 2026

5
participants

Interdepartmental Staff
September 22, 2025

2
sessions

Pickering Museum Village Staff
January 14, 2026

10
participants

Art in Public Spaces Focus Group
November 14, 2025

8
participants

Museum and Heritage Focus Group
November 14, 2025

12
participants

INTERVIEWS

Agency and Opinion Leaders
September 25, 2025–October 9, 2025

6
interviewees

ON-SITE SESSIONS

High School Youth
November 20, 21, 28, 2025

~845
students

COMMUNITY QUESTIONNAIRE

General Public
October 31–
December 20, 2025

635
responses

OPEN HOUSE

General Public
November 12 and 13, 2025

6
open houses

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING CIRCLE

Indigenous Communities
November 25, 2025

4
attendees

Analyzing Engagement Data

With the sizable amount of engagement inputs, the Consultant Team analyzed data and generated key themes by:

- Creating engagement questions, process, and design based on identified themes to help direct and focus participant discussions
- Reviewing and validating early themes with the City and key interest holders
- Grouping similar content from comments and reporting back to participants at sessions once input was received
- Asking community questionnaire participants to rank resonating ideas/themes to prioritize for the vision and strategic priorities
- Transcribing and coding the data to key themes that was subject to project team discussion, sensemaking, validation, and synthesis

Key Engagement Findings

The following sections summarize key findings from the different engagement activities.

City of Pickering Staff Sessions

- Senior team acknowledged culture’s role in enhancing community identity, placemaking, and civic pride, while also underscoring the need to safeguard existing cultural assets.
- 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.
- 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.
- 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.

Agency and Opinion Leader Interviews

- 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.

Community Questionnaire

- Respondents enjoy several aspects of culture in Pickering (including opportunities to connect with neighbours and family through programming, existing public art, greenspace, programming, and intercultural opportunities) and were active participants in arts, culture, and museum/heritage offerings within the last three years.
- Local access to arts, culture, and heritage is important and there is a need to increase access and awareness of arts, culture, and heritage experience across neighbourhoods and hamlets.
- Mixed opinions on whether they felt that current arts, culture, and heritage offerings reflect Pickering's changing and diverse population.
- There is an appetite for outdoor gathering spaces and large, dedicated cultural spaces or facilities.
- 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.

“Pickering already has a great foundation in arts, culture, and heritage, and I hope to see continued investment in programs and events that are inclusive, family-focused, and reflective of the city's growing diversity.”



Open Houses

- Strong desire for increased arts and culture programming options and awareness of culture in the community.
- There is 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 mentioned repeatedly, particularly in terms of affordable or free spaces to enjoy culture.

Help us determine the future of Pickering's **culture**, museum and art in public spaces offerings and services!

How can the City of Pickering create a more vibrant arts and culture scene—what's your vision?

What are your top priorities for arts and culture in Pickering?



WANT TO SHARE MORE? Scan the QR Code or visit us at letstalkpickering.ca/culturalsp to learn more about our upcoming engagement opportunities.

City of
PICKERING

Focus Groups

Museum and Heritage Summary can be found in the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan.

Art in Public Spaces Summary can be found in the Art in Public Spaces Plan.

High School Youth

- Focus on maintaining and improving the quality of the community gathering spaces (e.g., local mall) that encouraged their ability to gather with their friends.
- Had an interest in developing an activated public realm and overall community vibrancy.
- Valued having access to nature, outdoor arts opportunities (such as festivals and other public celebrations), and spaces to showcase 'the quiet nature of the City' was important.
- Expressed more cultural and entertainment facilities that welcome younger audiences was important to them.

Indigenous Relationship Building Circle

- More opportunities for showcasing Indigenous arts, performance and heritage, including a space for Powwows.
- Need for 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

- 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 sustainability, moving from initiation to refinement, stabilization, and long-term maintenance of initiatives.

Pickering Museum Village Staff Session

Summary can be found in the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan.



Overall Major Themes

Across all engagement activities, participants consistently identified Pickering as being at a pivotal stage in its cultural evolution, shifting from a period of capacity-building toward one of identity definition.

Major themes include:

- Emphasizing the role of arts, culture, and heritage in placemaking and identity formation as Pickering intensifies and transitions beyond a bedroom community.
- Strong demand for additional cultural venues, facilities, and gathering spaces, particularly within the City Centre and other growth areas.
- Broad enthusiasm for expanded cultural infrastructure, programming, and access — prioritizing strategic locations and phased delivery.
- Reducing barriers to participation through improved transportation, geographic distribution of facilities, and awareness of cultural offerings.
- Interest in cultural approaches that enhance inclusion and belonging (including low-cost and low-barrier opportunities, diverse representation, and more participatory, community-engaged models of cultural development).
- Need for a Cultural Strategic Plan that is phased, practical, and grounded in realistic assessments of organizational capacity and long-term sustainability, rather than short-term ambition.



4 Moving Forward: Role of the City and Implementation

Moving Forward: Role of the City and Implementation

An Implementation Framework will be used by City of Pickering Staff to guide the implementation of the Actions listed under each strategy and objective. Continued community participation will ensure the strategy may be assessed, adapted, and revised in response to changing needs of Pickering's creative ecosystem.

This Cultural Strategic Plan, along with the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan and Art in Public Spaces Plan, may be enhanced to honour what we learn and will keep the City accountable to our commitments.



Year 1 Implementation

- The support of an internal working group (1-2 members) is recommended for the first year to guide staff in furthering their understanding of municipal cultural development, art in public spaces, and current museum and heritage practices; embodying the plan; transferring the actions into operations level; and integrating cultural development into the work of the City.
- Focus on professional development across all three areas (cultural development, art in public spaces, and museum and heritage practices), while integrating these plans more holistically across the three functions within the City to diminish the work along staff lines and minimize siloes.
- Create an interdepartmental working group to encourage cultural development at a strategic level within City hall.
- Convene regular Community Cultural Roundtables to build up capacity out in the community, share knowledge, and connect with arts and cultural workers, and to identify opportunities for collaboration with community.
- Bring cultural development collaboration and partnership to a regional level by meeting with peers in Durham Region on a regular basis to share practices and identify opportunities for partnership in cultural development delivery.
- Work towards an arts and culture campaign supported by a communications and engagement strategy to make arts and culture offerings more visible to the community.

Role of the City and Continued Engagement

Continuing to promote and widely share the elements of the Cultural Strategic Plan is essential to achieving the goals and addressing the strategic priorities of this plan.

The Plan denotes specific actions to further foster communication and collaboration among arts, culture and heritage groups and with other sectors. Communication and engagement opportunities to share the plan should include but are not limited to:

1. A launch event with community partners to build awareness around the plan and its directions.
2. A Communications Strategy outlining updates, announcements and articles to local media and the public, including leveraging social media sources among partner groups.
3. Releasing updates through a regular newsletter and other distribution lists.
4. Linking with community events throughout the calendar year to carry out creative engagement activities related to the plan.
5. Hosting Cultural Leadership Roundtable meetings and an Annual Cultural Forum.

The associated Action Plan (or Implementation Framework) will provide guidance for essential implementation items including:

- Roles and Responsibilities
- Communications and Ongoing Engagement
- Priority-setting and Timelines
- Metrics/KPIs
- Resource Considerations



Acknowledgements



The arts and creativity are vital components of a well-rounded and fulfilling life for Pickering residents. The Cultural Strategic Plan 2026-2036 weaves a path across the community and impacts health, well-being, and fulfillment of Pickering's residents and visitors. The creation of the plan has been a truly community-wide endeavour with many enthusiastic and knowledgeable participants.

A sincere thanks to all community members who attended sessions and contributed to the making of this plan, including the leadership of City Council and staff.

We are grateful to the Indigenous Relationship Building Circle, the Anti-Black Racism Taskforce, and the Cultural Advisory Committee for the opportunity to listen and learn from them in their sharing of priorities and needs for the plan.

Thank you Mayor and Members of Council.

Thank you to City Staff: Marisa Carpino, Chief Administrative Officer; Laura Gibbs, Director of Community Services; Kyle Bentley, Director, City Development & CBO; Kevin Heathcote, Director, City Infrastructure; Jennifer Eddy, Director, Human Resources; Susan Cassel, City Clerk; Anthony Jagdeo, Senior Project Manager, Digital Services; Vince Plouffe, Division Head, Facility Management & Construction; Marilou Murray, Manager, Community Services Administration & Strategic Initiatives; Krystal Roberts, Manager, Cultural Services; Karen Coleman, Manager, Recreation Services; Richard Holborn, Director, Engineering Services.

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Finally, the Cultural Strategic Plan, alongside the Pickering Museum Village Strategic Plan and the Art in Public Spaces Plan, was guided by Patricia Huntsman, Principal of Patricia Huntsman Culture + Communication, and a multidisciplinary team of cultural development, communications, public art, and museum professionals: Justine Bochenek; Em Cussen; Laurel Lawry; Erin McDonald; Bridget MacIntosh; Sagan MacIsaac; Amanda McCulley; and Juan Tanus.
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Appendices

Appendix A: Glossary of Terms

Arts

A subdivision of culture, composed of many expressive and creative disciplines. The term encompasses: visual and applied arts (e.g., painting, printmaking, drawing, sculpture, crafts, pottery and ceramics, photography, film and video), theatre, music, song, spoken word, literary arts and dance.

Capacity-Building

The process of developing and strengthening the skills, resources, and systems an organization needs to better achieve its purpose.

Community Activations

Fun and interactive engagement activities that use arts-based methods (e.g., drawing, colouring, making, and gamifying) to brainstorm a shared vision and strategic priorities for a plan. Community Activations can be a mix of temporary and permanent installations, ranging from activities such as a family-friendly 'chalk party,' to community bench or mural painting.

Community Working Group

Groups that contribute to the development of a strategy and are often composed of multigenerational and multicultural members mirroring the local ecosystem and the various aspects of life in the community. Includes key arts and culture partners, equity-deserving groups, business owners, tourism and related sector partners.

Creative Community

Communities where the local government considers urban investment in culture and creativity significant to prosperity and quality of life. These are municipalities where creative and cultural activity is considered important to the community's quality of place, and to help reclaim and revitalize neighbourhoods. In creative communities, local government enables more innovative thinking and problem solving across all departments and sectors of the economy to shape a community's identity in the face of increasing competition for talent, investment, and recognition. Creative and cultural activity is supported as a powerful vehicle for community development and engagement, providing opportunities for economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods and social groups. These communities represent a new generation and an evolving model for community planning and culture.

Creative Economy

An economy driven by ideas, innovation, knowledge, diversity, collaboration, and creativity. It encompasses the creative industries in which ideas and intellectual property produce value and generate wealth. It represents an aggregation of a complex collection of industrial and creative service sectors including design, media, advertising, film, music, performing arts, publishing, and interactive software development.

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.

Creative Placemaking

A collaborative approach to improving public spaces by using arts, culture, and creativity to reflect community identity, meet local needs, and drive positive change and growth.

Culture

The arts, multiculturalism, and heritage resources and activities as practiced and preserved in a community. These practices reflect the beliefs, experiences, and creative aspirations of people in a specific geographic and/or political area.

Cultural Development

Strategic and integrated planning that leverages a community's unique cultural resources and assets for the social, economic, environmental, and cultural benefit of the city and society. Strategies may include, but are not limited to:

- Investing in arts and cultural facilities (art galleries, museums, theatres, concert halls etc.)
- Producing public festivals and events, and programming arts and culture activities
- Implementing public art and creative placemaking initiatives (transformed underused public spaces for creative or playful uses)
- Attracting and supporting creative industries (film, television, publishing, design, fashion, music, etc.)

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (EDIA)

- **Equity** strives to ensure fairness in how people are treated with respect to the unique circumstances that shape their lives and access to resources and/or opportunities. This includes accounting for historical factors that have resulted in discrimination and disadvantage for various groups, such as experiences of colonialism and enslavement of Indigenous and Black communities. Equity recognizes that these forms of oppression have, over time, contributed to the marginalization of these communities in ways that have deprived them of fundamental resources and opportunities needed to thrive in the world.
- **Diversity** recognizes that a community is comprised of individuals with unique and differing identities that influence how they experience the world around them for better or for worse. These identities can be defined by such categories as age, sex, gender, race, ethnicity, ability, income, employment, and many others. Notably, the Ontario Human Rights Code enumerates 17 protected grounds that prohibit discrimination against individuals in the areas of employment, housing, services, unions and ovational association and contracts (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2024), which signifies a legislated responsibility to protect diverse identities. It must be recognized that people have multiple and intersecting identities — the variations and combinations of which can result in power and privilege for some and disadvantage for others that can themselves change in different situations.
- **Inclusion** builds upon diversity and strives to ensure that community members feel a sense of belonging and are able to fully participate in society. Inclusion is about ensuring that individuals can bring their whole and authentic selves to a place and feel welcomed, valued and empowered.

- **Accessibility** means that everyone — with varying abilities — has the right to participate fully in society. It can also be understood as “a set of solutions that empower the greatest number of people to participate in the activities in question in the most effective ways possible” (UNESCO, 2021). In the arts and culture sector, accessibility refers to the quality in which cultural experiences and activities can be fully participated in, experienced, and enjoyed through the practice of removing physical, technological, financial, sensory, and social barriers for individuals of all abilities and backgrounds.

Heritage

Resources include artifacts and architecture, historic and prehistoric resources, and archival and interpretive material and activity. Significant objects and structures are protected by legislation distinguishing between items that are merely old and those deemed valuable according to notable public aesthetic, educational, and social significance.

Interculturalism

Support for cross-cultural dialogue.

Multiculturalism

Respects all cultural and/or racial groups in a society equally, affording all the same rights and opportunities.

Sounding Boards

An engagement tool utilized for collecting both passive and active insights from the general public and to generate excitement for the project. Interactive and suitable for participants of all ages and backgrounds. Often include a QR code or website URL for participants to learn more information about the project and other engagement opportunities.

**Appendix B:
City of Pickering Context and
Engagement Report**

Context Report and Engagement Report available upon request and will be shared on the City’s website once the plan is finalized.

