

Staff Report



Development Services Department

www.kitchener.ca

REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: February 26, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Cory Bluhm, Executive Director, Economic Development, 519-741-2200 ext. 7065

PREPARED BY: Eric Rumble, Arts & Creative Industries Coordinator, 519-741-2200 ext. 7424

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All ward(s)

DATE OF REPORT: January 25, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-026

SUBJECT: Public art policy review and revisions

RECOMMENDATION:

That the proposed revisions to public art policy GOV-COR-816 be accepted; and further,

That five artworks displayed at two City-run cultural facilities be incorporated into the public art collection.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to articulate revisions and improvements to the City's 1% for public art policy, with the goal of improving its implementation in the future.
- The key finding of this report is that the policy has been applied inconsistently and adjustments can be made to modernize its content and recalibrate its effectiveness.
- The financial implications are that allotments dictated by the policy will become consistently integrated into applicable capital projects.
- Community engagement included consultation with the Public Art Working Group.
- This report supports the delivery of core services.

BACKGROUND:

For various reasons, internal awareness of the City's public art policy has dwindled in the last decade. This has led to inconsistent application of the policy. Notable civic reconstruction projects that have not resulted in a public art commission or acquisition include recent City Hall exterior renovations, phase one of RBJ Schlegel Park, and updates to green spaces and trail networks.

To recalibrate the policy and ensure better implementation going forward, Arts & Creative Industries (A&CI) staff spent 2023 reviewing the existing policy document. This effort to

revive and improve the policy involved discussing changes and updates to policy content with relevant City divisions and developing process adjustments to support its efficient and consistent application.

Additionally, A&CI staff consulted comparable cities' policies for reference and possible approaches to consider during future review cycles. Staff also observed that the budget thresholds to produce public artworks to a standard for inclusion in the City's collection in the 2000s are not aligned with 2020s art industry commissions and professional expenses.

Regarding this report's second recommendation, five artworks that are not part of the City's public art collection are currently on display at cultural facilities in the A&CI portfolio. Two artworks at 44 Gaukel Creative Workspace were developed during its pilot period. When the Conrad Centre for the Performing Arts was donated to the City, three pre-existing artworks came into the City's possession.

REPORT:

With the goal of improving the understanding and application of the 1% for Public Art policy across the corporation, A&CI staff undertook a policy and process review. As a result, staff propose a series of document changes and updates to achieve:

- more effective processes for forecasting and integrating public art allotments into interdepartmental workflows;
- more appropriate allotment thresholds (floor and ceiling) for producing projects for inclusion in the public art collection; and,
- more opportunities for citizen engagement and arts sector development.

Appended to this report is a version of the existing policy with tracked edits and additions.

Process Improvements

More effective process changes include an interdepartmental working group that will meet annually (see section 4.7 of appended policy edit) to align future public art projects and budget allotments with capital forecasts. Other adjustments aim to clarify details related to allocation eligibility, project types and locations, general definitions and various City staff accountabilities.

These projects will inform the interdepartmental working group's initial inventory of upcoming projects:

- RBJ Schlegel Park development;
- Mill-Courtland Community Centre expansion;
- City Hall Customer Service Centre renovation;
- Utilization of allotment from the Civic Centre parking garage development; and,
- A second attempt to solicit an artwork for Doon Pioneer Park Community Centre.

The working group will also investigate future opportunities such as park improvements, cycling trail redevelopments, upgrades to community centres and pools, as well as significant partnerships such as Conestoga College's Creative Industries School and the Bramm Yards redevelopment.

Funding Allocations

More appropriate allotment changes include raising the minimum budget to produce a public artwork for the collection from \$10,000 to \$30,000, raising the individual project maximum to \$500,000, and clarified consolidated account opportunities (section 4.4).

This means that a civic improvement project with site development, construction and contingency costs of \$3 million to \$50 million would receive an allotment between \$30,000 and \$500,000 to produce an on-site public artwork. Allotments from projects with lower or higher costs would factor into the consolidated public art account, to be used to create and site projects in underserved areas, for special projects or related professional services.

Given the impacts of inflation and based on the costs to produce recent projects, allotments of less than \$30,000 are unlikely to result in the procurement of public art that is both substantial in size and built to last. While murals are a feasible option below that threshold, the intent of the 1% policy is to secure more permanent, enduring works of art.

It is also important to stress that a \$500,000 project would be rare. This elevated upper threshold aims to enable the City to commission and produce a significant statement artwork in the context of a once-in-a-generation opportunity such as RBJ Schlegel Park.

Additional Opportunities

Staff anticipate more opportunities may result from an internal refresh of the policy after the revised version is approved. Opportunities could include using smaller allotments to develop semi-permanent projects such as a series of limited-scale design features integrated into various green space improvements.

The A&CI team aspires to provide opportunities to animate the public realm that are appropriate for emerging, mid-career and established artists. Pursuing a spectrum of projects of varied scales, budgets and complexity will aid professional development of the local visual arts sector and provide more ways for local artists to engage in public space.

Adding existing artworks to the City's collection

To properly maintain and preserve a few artworks displayed at cultural facilities owned and managed by the City, staff recommend adding the artworks to the public art collection.

Two of these artworks are installed inside Conrad Centre for the Performing Arts:

- *Thalia's Curtain* (2001) by Carol Bradley
- Warnock MacMillan stones by Lois Scott, year unknown

Additionally, installed on the Conrad Centre exterior is *Between the Acts* (2002) by Jane Buyers. Maintenance guides will need to be resourced for all three donated artworks.

Two artworks commissioned during the pilot period of the Creative Hub at 44 Gaukel were developed in close collaboration with City staff, both of which are relatively simple to care for and can enhance the affordable artists' workspace project as it continues to evolve.

They include:

- *In the Keep of Change* (2020) by My Pet Skeleton (aka Vincent Marcone) was produced to visually symbolize the Creative Hub mandate and installed on the 44 Gaukel exterior using a unique fastening system developed by City print shop staff.
- The collected contributions from The Beasting project, composed of black ink visual artworks by nearly 80 artists from 2020-2023 (and with future contributions anticipated), is a core attraction inside the facility.

Other artworks in the public realm that involve more complicated conditions, such as being sited on private property, could be considered during the next policy review cycle or as individual cases. Staff have identified these five artworks as priorities because they all lack clear ownership while also being featured assets of active, City-led cultural facilities.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports the delivery of core services.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The recommendation has no impact on the Capital or Operating budgets. The 1% policy will be more consistently applied to individual budgets on a project-by-project basis.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

COLLABORATE – The following internal colleagues were consulted by A&CI staff to inform the revisions in the proposed policy edit:

- Heather Liddycoat, former Design & Construction Project Manager
- Ashley Visneski, Parks & Open Space Design & Development Manager
- Mark Hildebrand, Neighbourhood Programs & Services Director
- Steve Allen, Engineering Design & Approvals Manager
- Becki Hamilton, Budget Analyst
- Sandro Bassanese, Site Plan Supervisor
- Natalie Goss, Policy & Research Manager
- Darren Kropf, Active Transportation & Development Manager
- Beatrice Powell, Facilities Asset & Energy Management Manager

The City’s Public Art Working Group, a subcommittee of the Arts & Culture Advisory Committee composed of arts professionals who advise staff on related processes and projects, was supportive of the policy changes in discussions during summer 2023. Selection criteria for public artwork juries in the policy edit was informed by reviewers hired in 2022 to provide equity and inclusion perspectives on the call for proposals template.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- DSD-21-173 Addition of deaccession process to GOV-COR-816
- June 2016 Policy I-816 template reformatted to new numbering system
- November 2011 & August 2010 Policy amendments as per Council directives

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager – Development Services

ATTACHMENTS:

Attachment A – edited version of the GOV-COR-816 policy with adjustments tracked.

Attachment B – details about the cost to produce various projects in the City public art collection for comparative reference, as well as examples of public artworks with \$500,000 project budgets from other municipalities.

Attachment C – images of artworks to be incorporated into the public art collection.