

Public Art Policy set to get green-light from Council

As Aurora begins work this week on a special crosswalk on Yonge Street and Murray Drive to honour veterans and the community's war dead, Council is poised to formally sign off on a new, formalized Public Art Policy.

Local lawmakers this month are being asked to approve the formal Public Art Policy (P.A.P.) that gives clear guidelines on the acquisition and management of public art by the Town going forward ? including those that might be part of new municipal construction projects, donations from artists, and public art funded by developers and businesses.

A P.A.P. has long been sought by Council and the most recent process to draft it was ratified this past May.

According to a report before Council by Phil Rose, Aurora's Manager of Cultural Services, the P.A.P. will not only govern acquisition and management, but oversee how public money is spent on art.

?The Town's Public Art program will be funded through a combination of capital and operating budgets: in line with the objectives of the Town's Official Plan, one percent of the capital budget for all major regional and local municipal buildings is to be dedicated to public art; the Town will maintain a Public Art Reserve Fund to receive financial contributions and in-kind gifts from both public and private groups; the fund is to be used to acquire public art in accordance with the Town's definition of ?public art'; the Public Art Reserve Fund may also be used to establish public art in accordance with the Town's definition of public art; the Town will also maintain an operating budget to fund the maintenance and conservation of public art,? says Rose.

The report notes that Aurora's Public Art Reserves stood at \$375,200 at the end of last year and it recommends that \$100,000 of this money be earmarked for the first public art project under this policy for 2026.

Potential areas where public art could be focused include civic sites, gateways into Aurora from other municipalities, parks and trails, heritage areas, including the historic downtown core, transit hubs, intensified streetscapes within the Aurora Promenade area, and recreation facilities.

Proposed criteria for evaluating public art include accessibility and visibility of the sites proposed, how the proposed artwork ?relates? to the area it is intended, and capacity of a site to house public art.

Successfully placed works of art will be owned by the Town once installation is complete.

?Public art projects are recommended by a selection panel established by the Cultural Services Division,? says Rose. ?The intent is to ensure artists are chosen based on merit through a process informed by expertise and community input. Artist proposals may be solicited through an open competition, through invited submissions, or through a curatorial process leading to direct commission.

?Public art projects shall be recommended by an Art Selection Panel established by the Cultural Services Division for a given project. Panels shall serve on projects for which they are established or projects that [are] assigned to it by the Cultural Services Division. Even if a public art project is recommended by the panel, the Cultural Services Division and/or Council may, at its discretion, not approve the selection.?

Artists and their proposals will be evaluated on the criteria of: qualifications, including previous work experience of similar scope; artistic merit; capacity to deliver the project from design to installation; responsiveness to the site and the neighbourhood within which it is situated; alignment with project terms of reference; and technical feasibility. Additional consideration will also be given to the durability of the proposed material, construction methods, and the maintenance required to keep it up.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter