

## Public Art Strategy set to come before Council this spring

A long-awaited municipal-wide guide to public art will be coming before Council this spring for review.

Funding for public art – such as murals and sculptures – is included in the municipal budget each year, but the policy will help evaluate the merits of each proposal and establish guidelines on public engagement.

The Cultural Services Division will be responsible for the administration of the public art program and the implementation of the Public Art Strategy, says Phil Rose, Aurora's Manager of Cultural Services, in a report before this week's Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee meeting. Staff will prepare an annual Public Art Workplan with recommendations regarding proposed public art projects, including preferred site locations, public engagement and targeted consultation with impacted parties, scope, funding and selection panel membership.

Public art sites will be selected based on an assessment of the following evaluation criteria: Accessibility – is the site accessible by various modes of transportation within Aurora; Visibility – is the site easily visible and is it in proximity to high pedestrian activity; Relationship to proposed artwork – does the location possess unique architectural and/or natural features and will the addition of public art enhance the overall environment and public experience of this location?

In addition to money already allocated in the budget, the next step proposes an additional \$12,500 within the 2026 Operating Budget for the maintenance and conservation of public art.

The Public Art Strategy will direct the development and implementation of a successful public art program in Aurora from 2025 to 2029, including prioritizing potential sites and opportunities for new public art practices within our municipal boundaries, says Rose. It also establishes transparent processes for the administration and implementation of public art projects that foster strong partnerships, embrace diverse perspectives, and showcases local artistic creativity.

Public art proposals that move forward will need to be planned in alignment with the Town's Public Art Vision and Values; informed through established processes that gain community feedback through a range of online and in-person engagement tools created by one or more professional artists, with priority given to artists with relevant knowledge of the Town, its diverse communities, and its histories; planned and executed for the specific purpose of being placed and experienced in a public space; relevant to the site or context in which it is placed and experienced by the public; and acquired using the Town's established processes and community engagement channels.

Further factors include site and location, which is broken down into eight categories.

These include Key Civic Sites such as Aurora Town Square; Gateways into Aurora, such as Highway 404 and Wellington; Heritage Areas, such as the historic downtown core and the Northeast Old Aurora Heritage Conservation District; Parks and Trails; Major Private Developments like Addison Hall Business Park and Smart Centres; Transit Hubs and Corridors, such as the Major Transit Station Area around the Aurora GO Station and the planned Yonge Street Multi-Use Path; Streetscapes within Intensification Areas, like the Aurora Promenade Cultural Precinct; and Sports and Recreation Facilities.

**By Brock Weir**