



# **CITY OF BARRIE PUBLIC ART STRATEGY UPDATE & NEXT STEPS**

**Council Presentation  
Infrastructure Committee**

**May 14th, 2025**



# PUBLIC ART IN BARRIE – SETTING THE STAGE

## 2012 to 2025

- Dedicated annual budget for public art
- Established a dedicated Barrie Public Art Committee
- Evolution from volunteer committee run to dedicated part-time staff supported by BPAC
- Permanent public art installations
- Developed several temporary programs, including two annual programs (Brightening Barriers & Traffic Cabinet)
- Hosted a large-scale temporary public art exhibition featuring national and regional contemporary artists (Seeds to Sow)
- Partnership development to advance public art in the City.

In this short time, Barrie has been identified as a leader in public art for surrounding central Ontario municipalities.



*The Moon Paint Jam, Organized by Shalak, 2024, Donaleigh's Public House*

**Public Art is an element of city building  
– adding value to public spaces,  
enhancing quality of life, and  
strengthening a city's attractiveness and  
competitive advantage.**

# PROGRAM INSIGHTS – WHAT WE HEARD

This Public Art Strategy builds on benchmarking research and community engagement undertaken as part of the Culture Master Plan Update. The following are key insights heard from participants about Barrie’s public art program:

## STRENGTHS

- Clear processes for City commissions and donations.
- Collaborative decision-making through The Barrie Public Art Committee (BPAC).
- Diverse and Engaging Public Art Collection featuring a variety of styles and mediums.
- Strong Cross-departmental Partnerships.
- Support for Local Artists.

## CHALLENGES

- Limited funding capacity for program expansion and large-scale, landmark artworks.
- Works are concentrated in the downtown and along the waterfront.

## ASPIRATIONS

- Expand Public Art across the city bringing art into all neighborhoods.
- Prioritize high-impact locations at key gathering places as focal points for new public art.
- Celebrate Barrie by showcasing local talent reflecting the city’s diverse communities and histories.
- Enhance Indigenous visibility and participation by strengthening relationships with Rights-Holders and Indigenous Peoples.





*The Horn and The Heart*, John McEwen, 2020, Meridian Place

# BARRIE'S PUBLIC ART VISION

Public art will become a defining feature of Barrie's identity and its communities, celebrating local talent while positioning Barrie as a cultural destination that attracts national and international artists.

Cities with successful public art programs strengthen their civic identity, cultural tourism, economic growth and long-term community well-being.

# PUBLIC ART GOALS

**Public Art in  
Every Ward**

**Create a Diverse  
Public Art Program**

**Support  
Local  
Artists**

**Collaborate with  
Indigenous  
Peoples**

**Attract  
National and  
International  
Talent**

**Promote Equity  
and Inclusion**

**Engage the  
Community**

**Promote  
Sustainability  
and  
Environmental  
Stewardship**

# PUBLIC ART CATEGORIES

## Permanent / Long Term

These artworks are part of the City's public art collection and were commissioned, purchased by, or donated to the City.

The care and maintenance of these objects is managed by city staff.

## Temporary & Exhibitions

Public art that is on view for a short period of time (typically 5 years or less) or part of a time-specific program.

## Infrastructure / Public Realm

These artworks are commissioned by the city through interdepartmental partnerships. Can be temporary or long-term.

To date, most of these works have been temporary in nature, fabricated to beautify civic infrastructure.



# THEMES & LOCATIONS

**Artwork themes** emerged from community engagement when asked what values public art should embody:

- Celebrating Community
- Championing Sustainability
- Embracing Diversity
- Fostering Innovation
- Honouring History and Heritage
- Prioritizing Indigeneity

**Key locations** emerged from community engagement, and city reports, including Waterfront Strategy and Official Plan.

- Community and Cultural Facilities
- The Waterfront
- Parks and Natural Spaces
- Corridors and Gateways



Traffic cabinet artwork by Leandra Almeida, 2024,  
Livingstone Street West & Sunnidale Road

# RECOMMENDATIONS

## INCORPORATING BEST PRACTICES INTO POLICY

- MASSIVart provided several best practices across a number of processes to update the *City of Barrie Public Art Policy 2012* (Updated 2021) including:
  - artist selection
  - location assessment
  - community engagement

## GOVERNANCE MODEL

- Council's Role: oversight and funding - approving all policies and funding allocations
- Recommendation to add a Barrie Indigenous Advisory Circle and Interdepartmental Working Group to provide input into public art program and inform decision-making.
- Develop specific budget envelopes for project types to strengthen budget and planning work

## STRATEGIC RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

- Interdepartmental Working Group on public art with representative(s) from each relevant Municipal department to strengthen integration of public art into municipal programs and initiatives
- Continue to build relationships with local Indigenous Peoples. Explore developing an Indigenous Advisory Circle or subcommittee to support identifying practices and processes for working with and supporting Indigenous artists and communities, as well as identifying opportunities to increase the visibility of Indigenous Peoples.



# BUILDING CAPACITY: RECOMMENDATIONS

The Public Art Program is generally at capacity within its current program funding and resource allocations. To achieve the goals in the strategy over the 10-year horizon, increased resourcing, both financial and human, will be needed to scale the program.

## Recommendations Include:

- Explore **incentive programs for private sector contributions** for public art during or before construction of a development or redevelopment (e.g., public art on construction hoarding, subsidies to activate vacant or underdeveloped spaces, etc.)
- Assess potential revenue tools and develop a Barrie-specific model to develop capacity to fund public art. Examples include:
  - **Resume the 10% increase for the annual contributions** to the Public Art Reserve Fund over the next 10-year period to expand funding for Temporary / Exhibition projects.
  - Explore opportunities to expand funding for Permanent/Long-Term artworks and Public Realm Infrastructure. For example, **develop a Municipal Capital Projects Percent-for-Public-Art program**, starting with an initial allocation of 0.5% for select Municipal capital projects with specific construction budgets (ie. over \$1 million).
  - Explore **options to use Municipal Fees & Services charges** to supplement Public Art funding.
- Grow human resource capacity for a **Full-time Public Art Officer** position.

# 2026 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

- **Update the City of Barrie Public Art Policy 2012 (update 2021) in alignment with the Public Art Strategy recommendations**
- **Form an Inter-departmental Working Group to identify project opportunities for public art**
- **Complete a feasibility/revenue tool assessment to identify revenue opportunities to build sustainable funding capacity for public art in alignment with the public art strategy, with consideration for:**
  - **A mix of temporary and permanent/long-term programming**
  - **Opportunities to engage the development community**
- **Fully operationalize current Public Art Reserve allocation to support temporary projects**
- **Strengthen partnerships with MacLaren Art Centre in alignment with their new strategy**
- **Develop Messaging and Communications Plan for sharing the Public Art Strategy**

# NEXT STEPS

For 2026, staff are recommending the use of existing budgets, dedicated reserve funds and resources to accomplish some of the short-term recommendations outlined in the Public Art Strategy.

Although there is no new funding ask associated with these actions, operationalizing the remaining public art reserve allocation would inject \$30,000 investment into temporary art programming for the City.

1. That the annual Public Art Reserve allocation of \$60,408.76 be fully operationalized to support temporary art projects on annual basis including the Traffic Cabinet program, Brightening Barriers, with any unused funds being allocated to the Public Art Reserve;
2. Complete feasibility/revenue tool assessment to identify revenue opportunities to build sustainable funding capacity for public art via the mechanisms identified in the Public Art Strategy and develop a model to be presented to General Committee