



The Corporation of the Township of King Report to Council

From: Community Services Department – Heritage and Culture Division
Report Number: COM-HEC-2024-003
Date: Monday, April 14, 2025
Title: **Public Art Program**

Recommendation

1. That Council receive Report COM-HEC-2024-003.
2. That Council adopt the Corporate Public Art Policy (COR-POL-115) as attached in Appendix A of this document; and
3. That an amendment to By-law 2021-046 to add a new reserve fund to establish a Public Art Reserve Fund as outlined in Appendix A to Report COM-HEC-2024-003 be approved.

1. Report Highlights

- Township of King has a history of supporting arts and culture through various initiatives and a Public Art Policy is essential for fostering a vibrant and inclusive community.
- Public art enhances quality of life, community pride, and economic vitality.
- Funding for public art has been limited and reliant on external funding sources.
- Increased requests for public art led to the need for a more sustainable program with enhanced transparency and accountability.
- Proposed policy allows for increased accountability with decisions to be made by committee with increased community engagement.
- Proposed Public Art Reserve funding would be derived from allocation applied from capital projects with budgets greater than \$100,000 and a reserve fund to be capped at \$250,000.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this report is to approve the proposed Corporate Public Art Policy (COR-POL-115). Pending approval, the related Public Art Procedure (PRC-PRO-149) will be approved internally, dictating internal practices towards public art; and the Township of King's commitment to the promotions of arts and artists moving forward.

3. Background

The Township of King has a longstanding history of supporting arts and culture through the ownership and operation of the King Heritage & Cultural Centre (KHCC), and support for community groups such as Arts Society King, among others. Through these channels, several small, community-led public art initiatives have been realized, including the Banner Program, the installation of the York Region Trail Marker at the KHCC, and the rotating art displays at the King Township Municipal Centre.

Despite the success of these projects, funding and resources dedicated to public art is limited and reliant on grants, donations, and external support. Prior to 2022, there was no dedicated public art budget for the Township. In the 2025 operating budget \$7,500 is allocated towards public art. Over the past five years, this funding has been beneficial. However, requests for public art to enliven public spaces have steadily increased from Council members, local businesses, and community partners. Unfortunately, the allocated funds are insufficient to support larger, more impactful projects. Additionally, the use of these funds has been at the discretion of staff. While staff have consulted with groups such as Arts Society King and the King Heritage & Cultural Centre Advisory Board for guidance, there has been limited community involvement.

In order to create a more sustainable program with sufficient resources, increased accountability, and a higher level of community involvement, Heritage & Culture staff began researching municipal public art programs in other municipalities known for their positive reputation for art in public spaces. This research included a jurisdictional scan of other policies, procedures, and programs, and meeting with municipal staff who manage them. Neighbouring municipalities such as Vaughan, Markham, Richmond Hill all have comprehensive Public Art Programs that govern the installation of all Public Art within their municipalities. Priorities in each program reflected in the proposed Policy are citizen engagement, site selection process, maintenance plans and a sustainable funding model.

Through these conversations, Township staff met with City of Kitchener, who have been running a highly successful Public Art program for over 20 years using a version of the proposed model. Township staff have since used this as a model for the proposed Public Art Policy (COR-POL-115) (Appendix A) and the Public Art Procedure (PRC-PRO-149) (Appendix B).

4. Analysis

4.1. Purpose of a Public Art Program

A Public Art Policy is essential for fostering a vibrant and inclusive community. It ensures that art is accessible to everyone, enriching public spaces and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. Public art can reflect the cultural diversity and history of a community, creating a sense of identity and pride. Public art can stimulate economic growth

by attracting tourists and encouraging local businesses. A well-defined Public Art Policy provides a framework for the selection, funding, and maintenance of artworks, ensuring that they are thoughtfully integrated into the urban landscape and preserved for future generations. By investing in public art, the Township demonstrates a commitment to cultural enrichment and community engagement.

The Township of King values public art as a key asset that enhances quality of life, community pride, public aesthetics, and contributes to cultural, social, and economic vitality. Celebrating our culture and heritage, reflecting diversity, expressing shared values, and defining our unique identity, public art aligns with the Township's goal of creating an appealing, sustainable community. Establishing a standardized and transparent process for the selection, acquisition, maintenance and de-accession of public art and providing a sustainable funding model for the management of public art will ensure that this is done through a standardized and transparent process.

4.2. Environmental Comparison

Several Ontario municipalities have successfully established and implemented formal public art programs to encourage the integration of art into public spaces. Staff reviewed several existing programs from municipalities of various sizes and developed a model best suited for King. A consistent method identified in the majority of programs was ensuring funds in a dedicated reserve must be used exclusively for expenses directly associated with public art, including but not limited to acquisition, design, fabrication, installation, documentation, programming, governance and administration of the selection process, collection, inventory, insurance, staffing, legal requirements, deaccession of artistic works and overall policy reviews.

Other key components identified include ensuring the availability of resources, such as funding, staff time, materials, marketing, and locations. It is also essential to incorporate community input through transparent procedures and active consultation practices with a community committee. Furthermore, having a knowledgeable and proactive internal committee representing all departments will help provide input and assist with execution and long-term maintenance.

4.3. Economic Impact

Statistics collected by the [Ontario Arts Council](#) (Appendix C) have found that the arts significantly bolster Ontario's economy, contributing \$27.5 billion annually, which is 3.3% of the province's GDP. Cultural and recreational amenities play a vital role in downtown revitalization, with 83% of surveyed municipalities affirming their effectiveness. A thriving arts scene attracts top talent and businesses, with 65% of business leaders and skilled workers acknowledging this benefit. Arts and culture activities also draw 9.5 million overnight tourists, generating \$3.7 billion in GDP, as these tourists spend more and stay longer. The majority of Ontarians (79%) support public funding for the arts, recognizing their importance to individual and community well-being, and their contribution to making communities better places to live.

4.4. Artist Fees

In addition to costs associated with the production, installation and maintenance of public art, artists must be compensated fairly for their work. Individual artist fees will vary based on their experience and reputation, as well as the size and scope of the work proposed. As this can be subjective, all those looking to commission or purchase art from Canadian artists are encouraged to follow the guidelines set by the Canadian Artists Representation Le Front Des Artistes Canadiens (CARFAC), who create an annual schedule of fees to establish minimum fees to be paid to Canadian artists. Recently CARFAC has created a [Public Art Tool Kit](#) (Appendix D) as a guide, and will be the model staff follow to ensure that all artists working with the Township of King are ethically compensated.

As seen in Appendix E projects can range in size, scope and cost. Annual expenditures will vary year-to-year depending on resources available. Within the current budget projects have been limited to smaller community-based projects such as the Pollinator Puzzles and Canadian Library Project.

5. Financial Considerations

The addition of a Public Art Reserve Fund would provide opportunities to promote public art, enhancing the Township's cultural and aesthetic appeal. The reserve fund will accumulate with contributions from the capital budget and will be capped at \$250,000. Any use of the reserve fund would be as part of the annual budget process or as a separate report to council for approval of any use of the reserve funds.

It is recommended that an allocation of capital projects greater than \$100,000 have a contribution to the reserve fund to be determine with consultation of the project manager (below or up to a limit of 1% of budget value). This would include public facilities, parks, trails, specified road projects, and other public gathering spaces. This will exclude any capital project funded by development charges (DC) as culture projects are not DC eligible.

To reduce financial risk to on-going approved projects the reserve will be established through a staged process over a three-year period:

- **2025:** Policy and Procedure
- **2026:** Consult with departments as part of the 2026 budget process to allocate funds to the Public Art Reserve Fund. To start an Interdepartmental Public Art Planning Team and the Public Art Committee.
- **2027:** Identify future capital projects to be funded by the Public Art Reserve Fund.

Further considerations should be made for the long-term maintenance and repair of these projects. As outlined in the Policy, each artist will be required to submit a maintenance plan, including proposed costs, as part of their proposal, which will impact which proposals are

selected. Projects with complex or expensive maintenance needs may not be accepted, although all works will require some annual care. To assist with this, the existing \$7,500 currently allocated in the budget will be designated for annual maintenance and repair, with any increases requested through the annual budget process as required.

6. Alignment to Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Corporate Strategic Plan (CSP) was adopted by Council on June 12, 2023. The CSP reflects the priorities of upmost importance to the community and defines the obligations and commitments of the Township of King to its citizens and to the public. The CSP is aligned with the Townships long-term vision defined in the “Our King” Official Plan. The CSP also aims to ensure that staff initiatives focus on and work towards supporting King’s Vision, Mission and Values.

This report is in alignment with the CSP’s Priority Area(s), and/or associated Objective(s) and/or Key Results(s):

Priority Area: Complete Communities

Objective: Enrich community well-being and make King the ideal place to live, work and play.

Key Result: Not Applicable.

A vibrant public art program can transform the town of King into an extraordinary place to work, live, and play. By integrating art into public spaces, the program fosters a sense of community and cultural enrichment that enhances the daily lives of residents and visitors alike. Public art installations, whether murals, sculptures, or interactive pieces, provide aesthetic beauty and stimulate intellectual engagement, making the town more inviting and inspiring. They serve as landmarks and conversation starters, creating a shared identity and pride among the inhabitants. Moreover, public art can boost the local economy by attracting tourists and supporting local artists, thereby creating job opportunities and promoting a lively cultural scene. For employees and businesses, an environment adorned with thoughtful art can lead to increased creativity, productivity, and overall job satisfaction. For families and individuals, the accessibility to art makes King an appealing place to call home, offering a rich tapestry of experiences that enhance the quality of life.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, the proposed Public Art Policy and the establishment of a Public Art Reserve Fund represent significant steps towards fostering a vibrant and inclusive community in the Township of King. By adopting this policy, the Township will ensure that public art is accessible to everyone, enriching public spaces and enhancing the quality of life for residents and visitors alike. The policy provides a structured framework for the selection, funding, and maintenance of public artworks, ensuring their thoughtful integration into the urban landscape and preservation for future generations. Furthermore, the economic benefits of a thriving arts

scene, as evidenced by the Ontario Arts Council, underscore the importance of investing in public art. This initiative aligns with the Township's strategic goals of creating an appealing, sustainable community and demonstrates a commitment to cultural enrichment and community engagement.

8. Attachments

Appendix A – Corporate Public Art Policy (COR-POL-115)

Appendix B - Public Art Procedure (PRC-PRO-149)

Appendix C – [Ontario Art Council Return on Investment](#)

Appendix D – [CARFAC Public Art Tool Kit](#)

Appendix E - Example proposals for future public art projects

Prepared by:

Erika Baird

Heritage & Cultural Supervisor

Recommended by:

Chris Fasciano

Director, Community Services

Approved for submission by:

Daniel Kostopoulos

Chief Administrative Officer