

Region of Waterloo
Planning, Development, and Legislative Services
Cultural Services

To: Administration and Finance Committee

Meeting Date: January 14, 2025

Report Title: Region of Waterloo Public Art Policy

1. Recommendation

That the Regional Municipality of Waterloo approve the updated Public Art Policy as described and attached in Appendix A of Report PDL-CUL-25-001, dated January 14, 2025.

2. Purpose / Issue:

To approve the updated Public Art Policy (Appendix A) to guide the Region of Waterloo Public Art Program.

3. Strategic Plan:

The proposed Public Art Policy supports **Equitable Services and Opportunities**. Through collaboration and innovative offerings, we will provide equitable, accessible services across Waterloo Region that support the social determinants of health, safety and complete communities as we grow.

4. Report Highlights:

- The Region’s current Public Art Policy (Appendix B) was approved in 2002 when the Public Art Program was established. As the program has grown in complexity, the Region requires a policy that outlines the industry standard for acquisition, maintenance, and deaccession protocols.
- The purpose of the Region of Waterloo Public Art Policy is to provide a framework for decision-making, outlining the ‘why, how, and who’ of the Public Art Program. The Policy:
 - establishes standardized and transparent procedures for the selection, acquisition, display, maintenance, and disposition of Public Art

- provides guidance to staff, Council, Public Art Advisory Committee members, and jurors for implementing the Public Art Program
- The proposed policy includes:
 - a mandate, and language throughout the document, that outlines Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion as a key actionable component in all work plans associated with the Public Art Program
 - site selection criteria to aid staff and the Public Art Advisory Committee in transparent, equitable decision-making
 - a streamlined funding model for the Public Art Program that increases collaboration between departments and makes possible the integration of public art into Regional Capital Growth projects
- The financial implications of an updated funding model has the potential to incur an average spending increase of \$50,000 annually, increasing the annual allocation to the Public Art Reserve from approximately \$100,000 to \$150,000, on average.
- There is no recommended change to the annual \$75,000 contribution to the Public Art Reserve from the Tax Levy. This money is used for ongoing maintenance of the Region's 25 permanent public art assets; temporary loans of artwork for public display; community-based initiatives such as the UW Fine Arts partnership; and to supplement new acquisition costs as needed
- There is no impact to the 2025 Budget

5. Background:

Cultural Services staff have worked with their colleagues in Facilities, Design and Construction, Housing, Transportation, Finance, and the Office of Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion to develop the updated draft Policy (Appendix A). The draft received significant contributions from previous Public Art Advisory Committee (PAAC) members and, more recently, from the newly appointed PAAC members.

During several conversations with PAAC members about the Public Art Policy, three main areas were earmarked for more research and consideration. PAAC directed staff to rework the policy to include:

1. Specific language around commitments to Reconciliation, Equity, Accessibility, Diversity, and Inclusion;
2. A formalized Site Selection Process to aid staff and PAAC in determining the location of Public Art Projects;

3. An updated Funding Model that can better support the increasing costs of art acquisitions and maintenance.

Over several months, Cultural Services staff conducted research to address the above concerns. The draft Policy was shared with Regional staff from the Office of Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (REDI) for strategic direction. From there, PAAC members contributed specific language around REDI priorities throughout the Policy. Staff from the REDI team also met with PAAC members to provide direction and support on how to prioritize Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity & Inclusion in our work plans to ensure the language in the policy is actionable through a methodology that can be updated and customized for each Public Art project. Additionally, members of the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee were consulted for their input on the policy through an accessibility lens.

Regarding points #2 and #3, Cultural Services staff conducted a scan of best practices for public art site selection and funding models locally, across the Province, and Nationally. Staff consulted key internal partners such as Regional Project Managers, Asset Management staff, and Finance staff before updating the Site Selection and Funding sections of the proposed Policy.

Staff findings and recommendations were discussed with PAAC members, and a number of drafts of the Public Art Policy were circulated and edited by the membership. All community and staff feedback has been consolidated into the attached draft Policy which received endorsement from PAAC in September of 2024.

The draft Policy is now ready for review by the Administration and Finance Committee.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Public Engagement: Past members of the Public Art Advisory Committee made significant contributions to the draft policy in 2019. Newly appointed PAAC members provided additional contributions to all aspects of the policy. The PAAC membership comprises local artists, curators, and arts educators.

Members of the Grand River Accessibility Advisory Committee provided feedback on the draft Policy during a consultation process in the summer of 2024.

Local Municipal Engagement: Arts and Culture staff from all cities and townships in the Region had an opportunity to review the draft policy to provide feedback, which was included in the draft. Regional staff consulted field experts from Ontario-based institutions, and Municipalities across Canada to gather best practices in Public Art and Collections policy development. Local and National Policies were referenced to aid in the development of the attached draft.

7. Financial Implications:

There is no recommended increase to the annual contribution of \$75,000 to the Public Art Reserve from the Tax Levy. There is no immediate impact to the 2025 Budget.

If approved by Council, Large Capital Growth projects with an overall budget of \$1Million or more will no longer be obligated to contribute \$30,000 to the Public Art Reserve. Instead, Regional sites deemed suitable for a public art acquisition (as per the Site Selection process in the draft policy), will allocate funds in their budget for the cost of a public art acquisition. With this model, only those sites receiving public art will pay for public art.

This change will result in an increased expenditure on new acquisitions of approximately \$50,000 on average per year. Note that this figure is an average: Some years will see no additional expenditure on art, while other years will see a higher spend based on eligible project developments. The chart below shows an example of potential future contributions to the reserve.

Sample of future large projects with potential for Public Art	Proposed Funding Model		Current Funding Model*
The sites below have not been confirmed for public art and are being used for estimate purposes only:	2024-33 Capital Budget	Estimated Cost of Public Art	
Housing 140 Weber	\$25,965,000	\$150,000	
Kitchener Central Transit Hub	\$130,000,000	\$300,000	
WRPS Public Safety Communication Centre	\$73,269,000	\$175,000	
Airport Operation Centre Expansion	\$14,000,000	\$100,000	
WRH Community Centres	\$4,000,000	\$75,000	
Total cost levied on capital		\$800,000	\$270,000*
Estimated additional spend (total cost/10 yrs)		80,000**	27,000**
Current annual contribution		75,000	75,000
Total estimated annual contribution to reserve		\$155,000	\$102,000

*Current program levies \$30,000 per project over \$1.0 million for 9 eligible projects in the 2024-33 period

**To be funded as per capital budget - capital reserves or debentures

The implications of keeping the current funding model is that significant development projects that are high priority sites for a Public Artwork may not receive an art project due to lack of early budgeting. In addition, because the current model requires small contributions from across the Region to accrue, staff are missing opportunities to integrate a Public Art project into the design of new developments. Instead, artwork is added after RFPs and construction has concluded. This limits the type of artwork that can be acquired, and results in retrofitting sites that have completed their construction phase, which can cost significantly more than is necessary.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

If Council approves the recommended Public Art Policy, communications will begin with Regional Project Managers, Facilities Planning, and Asset Management staff to determine which sites fit the Site Selection criteria outlined in the policy. With the Public Art Advisory Committee's endorsement, staff will begin early budget discussions for potential public art acquisitions.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Draft Public Art Policy

Appendix B: 2002 Public Art Policy

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Reviewed By: Julian Kingston, Director, Cultural Services

Approved By: Rod Regier, Commissioner, Planning, Development, Legislative Services