
HALDIMAND COUNTY

Report CDP-03-2025 Introduction of a Public Arts and Culture Strategy For Consideration by Council in Committee on April 29, 2025



Objective:

To receive Council approval for adoption of the Haldimand County Public Arts and Culture Strategy, as well as the associated recommendations including the Public Arts and Culture Policy.

Recommendations:

1. THAT Report CDP-03-2025 Introduction of a Public Arts and Culture Strategy be received;
2. AND THAT the Haldimand County Public Arts and Culture Strategy and associated Public Arts and Culture Policy, both attached to Report CDP-03-2025, be approved;
3. AND THAT the recommendations associated with implementation and next steps of the Strategy, as outlined in Report CDP-03-2025, be approved and adopted.

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Approved: Mark Merritt, CPA, CA, Acting Chief Administrative Officer

Executive Summary:

In February 2024, Haldimand County Council passed the following resolution in relation to developing a public arts initiative based upon growing community interest:

“THAT staff be directed to report back to a future Council in Committee meeting regarding options for an arts and culture policy.”

Staff began the development of a Public Arts and Culture Strategy—and associated Policy—in October with two in-person community consultation sessions and the release of a community survey to gather input. Based on the initial community engagement, staff provided Council with an update in December through report CDP-15-2024.

In January, using the information gathered from the fall sessions and the survey, staff hosted two final in-person community meetings to build out the proposed Strategy and Policy.

At this time, Council is asked to approve the Public Arts and Culture Strategy—including the Public Arts and Culture Policy and staff’s recommended implementation plan and next steps—within Report CDP-03-2025.

Background:

Arts and culture contribute significantly to Haldimand County's sense of place, well-being and civic pride. Arts and culture also inspire, bring communities together and provide opportunities for residents to enjoy and contribute to a creative and healthy community.

Working in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, the proposed Public Arts and Culture Strategy includes a vision for arts and culture in Haldimand County and outlines priorities and short-and-long-term action plans that are achievable, sector-responsive and support the needs of a growing and diverse community. The associated Public Arts Policy will provide the structure to decision-making and resource allocation.

Analysis:

Since 2010, with the creation of the Community Development & Partnerships (CDP) Division, there has been growing community interest in and appreciation for the need for and benefit of arts and culture to support a vibrant, engaged, diverse and inclusive community.

County Support of Heritage, Arts and Culture

In the past decade, Haldimand County has made considerable investments in its heritage, arts and cultural facilities and resources, and supported many innovative public arts and culture activities, including, but not limited to:

- During design/construction of the Haldimand County Administration Building (HCAB), installed display cases and Heritage & Culture Television (HCTV) in the atrium lobby to showcase Haldimand's history, arts and culture through exhibits, film and video; also, created a climate-controlled collections area for Haldimand's artifacts and archives;
- Construction of the new Heritage Centre in 2019 (co-located with the Cayuga Library);
- At Edinburgh Square Heritage & Cultural Centre in Caledonia—a provincially-designated building—restoration of the heritage windows 2023-2024 (\$600,000) and approval for an \$850,000 project to make the interior accessible (elevator, washrooms and stairs);
- At Wilson MacDonald Memorial School Museum in Selkirk, installation of an accessible front entrance (ramp and front door with actuator) and washrooms;
- In 2021, the Heritage & Culture Unit launched the extremely popular Paddle Art Tour Haldimand (PATH) throughout Haldimand's communities, which has evolved into the Public Art Tour Haldimand and brings creative new public art initiatives to residents and visitors annually;
- Major exhibitions such as the Juried Art Show, now in its 26th season, as well as ongoing exhibitions at the three museums, HCAB and several library locations;
- Special capital initiatives through CDP's Community Partnership Program (CPP) including installation of the Canfield Black Settlement Marker, the Port Maitland Cairn celebrating that community's diverse history, installations in collaboration with the province's Waterlution/Great Art for Great Lakes group and the planned installation of historical storyboards along Dunnville's waterfront;
- Community collaborations to recognize Haldimand's arts and cultural heritage including Emancipation Day to celebrate Haldimand's local Black history and "We Chair-ish You in Haldimand County" a partnership between Haldimand Museums and Grade 12 students in Cayuga and Dunnville to transform old wooden chairs into one-of-a-kind works of art; and,
- Ongoing programming, workshops and camps for residents of all ages.

Purpose of Arts & Culture Planning

Cultural planning is a place-based, consultative approach to planning and development that begins with identifying and mapping a community's cultural resources and proceeds to developing a plan for

managing those resources. Importantly, the process outlines how cultural resources will be integrated across local government planning and decision-making to achieve the community's goals, and how culture can support the four essential pillars of sustainability:

- Economic prosperity;
- Social equity;
- Environmental responsibility; and,
- Cultural vitality.

The purpose of a Public Arts & Culture Strategy is to help Haldimand County understand the external factors impacting the sector including:

- Creating action plans to reach our goals;
- Managing challenges and adjusting plans as needed; and,
- Using resources wisely.

Haldimand's Strategy is a plan of action, developed in partnership with the community and heavily informed by the recommendations of the Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy (2024), the Haldimand County Strategic Plan (2025-2045) and the Resident Satisfaction Survey (2024).

Complementary to the Strategy is the Public Arts & Culture Policy, which provides the internal framework to guide decision-making and ensure consistency and transparency of process, procedures and resource allocation. It is a governance tool that outlines the principles of action (identified in the Strategy) and addresses internal business.

Developing a Homegrown Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy

In 2018, Haldimand's Heritage & Culture Unit initiated the development of its first Public Arts Policy. Through community engagement, the intention was to build a vision and process to:

- Celebrate the community's history and culture by developing, managing and preserving an art collection that enhances interior and exterior public spaces;
- Encourage and benefit resident artisans; and,
- Show commitment to the value and significance of historic and contemporary art which informs, enlightens and inspires people to look at their community in a new way.

The resulting 'Open Spaces Gathering' report identified six priorities for consideration in a Haldimand-made Public Arts Policy:

1. Story-Telling: Working together with Indigenous and non-Indigenous artists and art supporters to tell the history of our community through historical art, landmarks, storyboards, music and more;
2. Creation of a Public Arts and Culture Advisory Committee;
3. Making the Arts Accessible to All: Proactively finding ways to involve citizens of all ages to engage with, foster a love for and appreciate local arts and culture;
4. Connecting Art to the Natural Environment;
5. Sustainability in the Arts; and,
6. Cultural and Community Mapping.

In 2024-2025, CDP's Heritage & Culture staff revisited the work of developing a Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy. Four community engagement sessions were facilitated (two each in October 2024 and January 2025), including discussions and small-table exercises, and an online survey was made available for the public.

In total, 45 participants engaged in the two-hour in-person sessions and another ten provided online input. Participants represented the fields of visual arts (painting, sculpture, murals, displays, graphic arts, photography, etc.), crafts/maker activities, performing arts, festivals and events organizers, heritage, museum/library exhibits and programming, landscape/environmental arts and more.

A Vision for the Arts and Culture in Haldimand County

Nearly all of the participants agreed the sector would like Haldimand County's assistance in facilitating networking and other partnership activities to help it grow and thrive. Key priorities for the sector include:

- Preservation of cultural legacies (digitization, living archives, oral histories);
- Creation of cultural hubs (one or more; start small and at the grassroots level);
- Expand cultural programming (dance, music, theatre, photography, festivals);
- Expand art installations in public spaces (murals, storyboards, photography);
- Investigate the potential for an artists' cooperative;
- Explore public/private partnerships;
- Develop more programming for children: low or no cost and accessible for all;
- Create local opportunities for increased communications and networking meetings within the sector to build support and capacity for artists, creators and makers; and,
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the community/sector participants and Haldimand County.

The consultation sessions also included discussion about the values which should govern the new Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy as well as Haldimand's approach to working with the sector. The following guiding principles were developed by staff—based on participant input and engagement—and are the core aspirational and directional statements intended to guide the future-facing development and implementation of the Strategy and Policy:

1. Innovative & Open-Minded

- A flexible, imaginative and “made in Haldimand” approach is taken to enliven public spaces, infrastructure and experiences to add character, promote discovery and create spaces for connection;
- Find innovative solutions to support success and be ready when opportunities arise; and,
- Leverage community/partner strengths and knowledge to advance public arts, culture and creative placemaking initiatives.

2. Collaborative & Engaging

- Public art can be an entry point into conversations about truth and reconciliation. Indigenous communities will be appropriately engaged to identify opportunities to restore visibility to these communities and generate dialogue about the legacy of colonialism and a shared path forward;
- Proposals respond to a demonstrated community public arts and culture interest and support the objectives of the Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy; and,
- Engage residents in decision-making.

3. Diverse & Inclusive

- Ensure cultural equity;
- Support local artists, creators and makers as much as possible to reflect the diversity of the community, including marginalized peoples and groups; and,
- Ensure decision-making about which installations/experiences to support gives consideration to representation of the community's civic history and cultural and artistic heritage.

4. Accessible & Equitable

- All potential partnership proposals are vetted through one entry point and process in Haldimand County to ensure a fair, clear and consistent approach to decision-making;
- Ensure—as much as possible—initiatives and experiences are accessible to all; and,
- Pay artists, creators and makers fairly.

5. Sustainable & Resilient

- Proposed projects/activities will align with Haldimand's strategic objectives, including the Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy;
- Proposal includes a well-researched and sound financial plan;
- Potential partners are able to demonstrate a positive impact (short-and-long-term) of the project in terms of measuring outcomes, benefit and/or value-added in the community and methods of evaluation; and,
- Potential partners (public, community or private) must demonstrate capacity to fulfill the roles and obligations outlined in the project/activity, including organizational capacity, functional capacity and financial accountability.

Recommendations:

Staff in the Community Development & Partnerships (CDP) Division will engage across Haldimand County Divisions to identify existing policies and processes which would allow some recommendations to be initiated immediately. Other longer-term activities will be included for consideration in future capital and operating budgets or through third-party funding.

Recommendation	Rationale
1. Implement a Public Arts & Culture Policy , administered through the CDP Division's Heritage & Culture Unit.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creates a fair, clear and consistent municipal approach to cultural equity and the integration of arts/culture in civic life and assets;• Builds on the Unit's existing arts and culture installations, projects, programming and activities; and,• Provides structure to public arts and culture administrative processes.
2. The CDP Division's Community Partnership Program (CPP) continues to be the process to consider requests for public arts/culture initiatives on County/County-adjacent property.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• An existing, established and effective process to assess and approve arts and culture initiatives and proposals (public and private); and,• Leverages the resources, talents and creativity of artists/makers and their supporters to enhance the community.
3. Incorporate a Public Art Development Program .	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Investigate the feasibility of allocating 1% of major development project budgets to the inclusion—in the design phase—of public art; and,• Supports the inclusion of public art through the urban design and land use planning process.
4. Create a specific Capital Grants Reserve Fund —much like the CPP Reserve—dedicated to public arts and culture project requests.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encourages community groups to identify unique installations to benefit the community and civic life; and,• Allows Haldimand to leverage the resources of our communities, community groups and artists.

5. Create a Public Art Program Reserve Fund to accept donations and third-party contributions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Similar to Haldimand's other dedicated reserve funds (e.g., Parkland Reserve), allows the accumulation of donations and third-party contributions—without them being designated in advance to a specific project—to allocate to strategic projects.
6. Investigate the possibility of an under-utilized County facility becoming a centralized Public Arts & Culture Centre/Cooperative .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supports a recommendation in the Community & Recreation Facility Strategy (2024); A dedicated hub supporting artists and innovators to create new programs and opportunities that engage the community in developing a strong and vibrant arts and culture scene; and, A cooperative, volunteer-based model similar to those used in sports and other sectors.
7. Identify current and future Programming Partnership opportunities within the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build on existing relationships; opening of the Hagersville Library + Active Living Centre; the planned Community Programming Strategy.
8. Working with CDP's Heritage & Culture Unit, develop a Guest Curators Program .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allows community groups/school classes to become part of creating a diverse public arts and culture experience in Haldimand; and, Integrates the community in designing and programming display areas (HCAB, museums, etc.) and digital programming.
9. Create a County-wide Arts & Culture Festival .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> An opportunity for artists/makers/cultural innovators to come together to showcase Haldimand's public arts and culture talents and experiences.
10. Identify opportunities through Economic Development and Tourism's (EDT) Community Improvement Program to support businesses with the costs of creating public art. This would require an amendment to the current CIP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uses an existing County program to encourage the business community to identify and commit to creating public space-adjacent projects which beautify and connect commerce to community.
11. Create Resources (materials, workshops) to support the business side of being an artist.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Creates opportunities to build capacity and sustainability of an arts and culture community.

Next Steps:

The introduction of a Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy at this time is ideal as Haldimand County approaches its 25th anniversary in 2026. If report CDP-03-2025 and the associated recommendations are approved, staff will begin to work on the following:

- Heritage & Culture staff will follow up with those individuals and groups who participated in the community consultation to share the outcomes and direction from Council;
- Sequencing of the recommendations in the Strategy—including budgets and target dates for initiation—will be undertaken based on Haldimand County's existing policies, processes and resources;

- Engage with existing Council-appointed Committees (Haldimand Museums Advisory Board, Heritage Haldimand, Accessibility, Business Development, Diversity, Equity & Inclusion, Seniors, Trails, Youth, etc.) to identify opportunities for collaboration and support;
- Engage with staff in appropriate Divisions to determine the feasibility and opportunities to further recommendations through existing policies, processes and resources; and,
- Prepare a financial plan that identifies and leverages existing and potential sources of revenue (Haldimand County capital and operating budgets, third-party funding and grants, etc.).

Details about the Public Arts and Culture Strategy, Policy and associated implementation plan—including opportunities for continued community engagement—will continue to be shared on Haldimand County’s website.

Financial/Legal Implications:

At this time, the Public Arts and Culture Strategy and Policy (and Report CDP-03-2025) do not include any immediate budget requests or impacts. However, the Strategy and staff report to Council outline a number of recommendations which could impact future capital and operating budgets, including the establishment of reserve funds, should Council approve these initiatives. The intention is that these recommendations would be further assessed in collaboration with Finance and other relevant Divisions with any financial commitments being fully vetted through the applicable annual budget process.

Additionally, the establishment of a new Reserve/Reserve Fund requires an amendment to Haldimand’s existing by-law for such funds. An amendment to the by-law is not recommended at this time until the purpose of each of these recommended funds is better defined and there is a dedicated funding source established/identified.

As with any Master Strategy/Plan, the financial impacts will be incorporated into the Council approved Long Term Financial Plan scheduled to be initiated later this year.

Stakeholder Impacts:

The development of the Haldimand County Public Arts and Culture Strategy and Policy was led by staff from the Community Development & Partnerships Division and its Heritage & Culture Unit. It has been informed by research into best practices as well as meaningful and broad community engagement through both the dedicated Public Arts and Culture community consultation and the consultation and associated recommendations from the recently-approved Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy.

Report Impacts:

Agreement: No

By-law: No

Budget Amendment: No

Policy: Yes

References:

1. December 10, 2024 Report to Council – [CDP-15-2024 Heritage and Culture Public Arts and Culture Strategy Development Update](#).

2. December 10, 2024 Report to Council – [CDP-18-2024 Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy Final Report and Recommendations](#).
3. [Community Partnership Program Policy \(No. 2011-01\)](#).

Attachments:

1. Public Arts and Culture Strategy.
2. Public Arts and Culture Policy.