



Public Arts & Culture Strategy

April 2025





Land Acknowledgement

As we gather, we humbly acknowledge that Haldimand County sits on the ancestral land of many generations of Indigenous nations, who have been here since time immemorial.

Today, this land continues to be home to many Indigenous peoples, including the Six Nations of the Grand River and the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation, as well as non-Indigenous settlers from a variety of backgrounds. As a community, we have a shared responsibility for stewardship of the land on which we live and work. We are grateful for the opportunity to work together and to share the land we all call home.

Acknowledging reminds us that our living conditions are directly related to the abundant resources of the Indigenous peoples. We commit to continue learning, reflecting on our past, and working in allyship with Indigenous communities, toward respective community goals and objectives, in peace, respect and friendship.



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Haldimand County’s Strategic Vision

Distinct, yet connected communities where growth and innovation harmonize with rural life, creating a vibrant and sustainable future for all.

Strategic Plan (2025-2045)



Report Overview – Creativity, Community, Everywhere

Arts and cultural pursuits can define a community: its history, creativity, aspirations and civic values.

In Haldimand County, arts and culture contribute significantly to a sense of place, well-being and civic pride in our communities. Arts and culture inspire, bring communities together, celebrate our history and heritage and provide opportunities for residents and visitors to enjoy and contribute to a creative and healthy community.

Working in collaboration with community partners and stakeholders, the **Public Arts and Culture Strategy** reflects a vision for arts and culture in Haldimand County, outlines priorities and actions that are achievable and supports the needs of a growing and diverse community. A supporting **Policy** provides structure to decision-making and resource allocation.

Public art refers to art that is in the public realm: indoors or outdoors; on public or private property; purchased with either public or private funds. It includes, but is not limited to, original sculptures, murals, monuments, mosaics, photography, paintings, graphic arts, landscaping/earthwork, tableaux, vignettes, kinetic works, creative displays.

Public culture refers to the values, customs, heritage and traditions which characterize Haldimand's communities. Culture is inclusive and reflects the elements and traits of peoples of historical and contemporary settlement, popular culture and the places, physical amenities, events, products and creations that contribute to such values, customs and traditions.

In the context of public art, public culture strategies aim to use art to foster community engagement, cultural expression and civic dialogue, often through participatory processes and by integrating art into urban planning and development.

With this **Public Arts & Culture Strategy**—and associated Policy—Haldimand County is reinforcing a long-term commitment to its creative communities, everywhere.

The vitality of a city is not measured in its commerce, but in its art.

Albert Einstein



Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of the **Public Arts & Culture Strategy** is to help Haldimand County understand the external factors impacting the sector, including action plans to reach our goals, managing challenges and adjusting plans as needed and using resources wisely. The Strategy will be informed by the recommendations of Haldimand's 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.

Haldimand's Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy (2024)

In 2024, Haldimand County Council approved the **Community & Recreation Facilities Strategy** (CRFS), an evidence-based approach to planning for major community and recreation facilities, initiatives and programming over a twenty-year horizon.

The CRFS identified that resident needs and expectations are rising.

With a current population of 50,400 (growing to 68,000 by 2041), Haldimand County will need new and renewed facilities and programs that support the recreation, wellness and cultural pursuits vital to the high quality of life that Haldimand envisions for its residents and are critical to supporting continued growth.

Based on significant public engagement and demographics, the CRFS recommended Haldimand County work with community organizations and stakeholders to prepare a Public Arts & Culture Strategy and explore the establishment of an arts and cultural hub.



Strength lies in differences, not in similarities.

Stephen R. Covey

Guiding Principles

The following aspirational and directional statements are intended to guide the future-facing development and implementation of the Public Arts & Culture 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
- 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
- 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
- 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—that initiatives and experiences are accessible to all
- 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 include 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
- 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.



Local Context

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

In that time, Haldimand County has made considerable investments in its heritage, arts and culture facilities and resources, and has supported many innovative public arts and culture activities.

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;
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 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
- Identify the roles and responsibilities of the community/sector participants and Haldimand County.



How else can Haldimand County support the sector?

- Participants would like the County to help facilitate more partnership projects like the Paddle Art Tour Haldimand (PATH), installations through Haldimand's Community Partnership Program, storyboards, oral histories, etc.
- Work with the sector to develop strategies for sustainability of the arts and culture in Haldimand County.
- Explore the possibility of a dedicated public arts and culture facility to support programming, making and creating, teaching and mentoring, meeting and networking.
- Work with the arts and culture community to better promote its activities and generate support and build capacity.
- Identify opportunities to work with under-represented communities, emerging artists and marginalized community members to create more diverse and inclusive experiences.
- Be a 'professional development' resource to artists/creators, e.g. provide workshops on grant-writing, business development, social media, etc. to enhance business development and administrative skills.
- Collaborate with the sector to host a major festival.
- Use the Grand River and Haldimand's natural environment for more innovative programming and events.
- Preserve our local history including built environment, talents, skills, stories, etc.
- Consider a mentor/mentee program.
- Expand support for cultural programming, e.g. include young people designing games, winemakers, culinary artists, diverse materials and other innovative makers.
- Consider a Culture Trade Fair to showcase local talents.
- Host a "passport" event, similar to the PATH.
- More intergenerational opportunities.
- Engage children and the Youth Advisory Committee as "guest curators" at museums and other County locations.
- Host regular (bi-annual), open meetings where all creators, makers and artists are welcome.

If art is to nourish the roots of our culture, society must set the artist free to follow his vision wherever it takes him. "

John F. Kennedy



Recommendations

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; • 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); • 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; • Supports the inclusion of public art through the urban design and land use planning process.
4. Create a restricted Capital Grants 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 capital installations to benefit the community and civic life; • Allows Haldimand to leverage the resources of our communities.
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 restricted reserve funds (e.g. Parkland Reserve), allows the accumulation of donations and third-party contributions—without them being designated to a specific project—to allocate to larger, strategic projects.



Recommendation	Rationale
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 strong and vibrant arts and culture; • A cooperative, volunteer-based model similar to those used in sports and other sectors.
7. Identify current and future Programming Partnership opportunities with the sector.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build on existing contacts; 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; • 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.	<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.



Art...tells us that difference is not something to fear. It fosters fellow-feeling and engenders compassion. It cuts through the wall of ego and privilege that we allow to separate us from our better selves. It puts us back in touch with the empathy, decency, and care I believe we were born with.

Max Wyman

From “The Compassionate Imagination: How the Arts are Central to a Functioning Democracy.”

Next Steps & Implementation

Although some of the identified recommendations will require additional resources, there is an opportunity to continue building momentum for Haldimand County’s public arts and culture initiatives, including the following:

- Council to approve the Public Arts & Culture Strategy and Policy;
- Heritage & Culture staff will follow up with those individuals and groups which participated in the community consultation to share the 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;
- 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.).