

ART + PUBLIC UnLtd

The City of Calgary: Public Art Program Community Engagement Report

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Project Overview

ART+PUBLIC UnLtd was engaged in February 2020 by The City of Calgary through a competitive Request for Proposal process to support the investigation, and transition of its public art program to an external service provider. Our team supported The City through an engagement process and are now in the midst of the development of a procurement document to deliver on The City's Public Art Policy and aspects of the Civic Art Policy.

This document provides an outline of recommended future program pillars and guiding principles that emerge directly from key insights and findings across all engagement activities, an overview of which is provided in subsequent chapters.

Background on the New Direction for the Public Art Program:

The City of Calgary's Public Art Program has faced significant controversy, leading to City Council calling for a freeze on the program in 2017, which has been in place for the past 2+ years. Local economic and political context has contributed to ongoing challenges facing The City's Public Art Program. The program has come under severe scrutiny by public, media and some Councillors, in particular over concerns that a couple of high profile public art projects were deemed inaccessible, poor value for investment and were considered to have been implemented without adequately transparent decision making process and community engagement.

ART+PUBLIC UnLtd was engaged by The City from October 23 to November 6, 2019 to provide an overview and synthesis of recommendations for the future governance of The City of Calgary's Public Art Program as directed by Council in a Confidential Notice of Motion, passed September 30, 2019. Our scope in this first phase of work saw reviewing past and current research; conducting a review of comparable models in other jurisdictions; a review of local external organizations who may potentially have the skills and scope to deliver a public art program; conducting a risk and opportunity analysis around the use of an external delivery model; and providing recommendations around future governance of the program.

This first phase of work built a comprehensive knowledge of the challenges facing the Public Art Program moving forward. Through this process we gained a deeper understanding of the local and internal context, conducted background research, developed a risk/opportunity analysis for future scenarios and drafted a report with recommendations that were accepted by Council in November 2019. This report recommended that:

- The public art program be delivered by an external service provider;
- The City procure an external provider through a competitive process; and
- The process for procuring an external service provider includes a process for stakeholder and community engagement regarding what makes a successful public art program for Calgary.

In February 2020, ART+PUBLIC UnLtd was selected through a competitive Request for Proposal process to guide the transition of The City of Calgary's

Public Art Program, ensuring successful future governance and thriving new projects.

Future Program Pillars + Guiding Principles

ART+PUBLIC UnLtd has considered the key insights and findings across all engagement activities, as outlined in the following sections of this document, including the stakeholder interviews, online community engagement sessions and the public digital survey. The following program pillars and guiding principles are informed by all three layers of research, and were developed to clearly reflect what most Calgarians want for the future of The City of Calgary Public Art Program. These principles will inform the evaluation criteria to select the most qualified external organization to operate the program.

Reviewed across the depth and breadth of our engagement process, a successful public art program should be underpinned by three main pillars: a public art program that is **Engaging, Relevant** and **Accountable**.

Each of these pillars is supported by guiding principles, which should be reflected both in internal operations and the external program, and come directly from our extensive consultation across different sectors of Calgary's art and general public, who together make the primary audience for the program.

Engaging

Public art is an important part of a dynamic urban centre and Calgarians are looking for more ways to be involved in the public art of their city. The guiding principles of an engaging public art program should include:

1. A Strong and Coherent Vision

There is a need to develop and communicate a strong vision for the program, one that maintains its mission to serve the public. This vision should be bold, optimistic and forward looking.

2. Fostering Strong Relationships with Local Communities

Calgarians want to be regularly involved and informed about the public art collection and consulted with in matters related to the public art program. The program should build in meaningful opportunities for community members to work with artists, and input on the development of some art projects.

3. Communications

Communications at various stages of program and project delivery are important to build trust and support for public art. There are numerous milestones in project development that can be employed to bring people along on a project. Additionally, It's important that Calgarians have opportunities to learn about existing public art through activities like tours and school programs.

4. Learning and Advocacy

The program should find meaningful and deliberate ways to engage with and educate the public about public art. This could include youth learning opportunities and address more broadly the need to build an audience for public art that explores critical issues beyond the prevailing question of public art's place in the city.

5. Build on Past Successes

The City of Calgary has had a leadership role in successfully embedded artistic/civic collaboration— artists and arts organizations working with the City as partners— is something that should be carried forward into the future program.

6. Create a Vibrant Sense of Place and Go to Where The People Are

Responses overall suggest a broadly-held belief in the ability for an exceptional public art program to “put a city on the map”, and to create a sense of place that sets the city apart in a global context. A component of the program should be dedicated to commissioning landmark works that will become destinations.

The past program was challenged by restrictive siting policies tied to funding. The easing of these restrictions should enable thoughtful planning for future projects with respect to identifying opportunities for art that is accessible, interactive, and engaging.

Relevant

A robust and resilient public art program must resonate with Calgarians, and support cultural understanding across different publics. The guiding principles of a relevant public art program should include:

7. Commit to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

The cultural diversity of Calgary needs to be better reflected in all aspects of the program, across staffing, committees, artists, community engagement and the themes explored in the commissioning process. A refresh of the program at this time allows for intentional commitments to equity, diversity and inclusion to be embedded in both the operations and the program. This may include a diversity and inclusion mandate that directly addresses inequalities as it pertains to issues of race, gender, etc.

8. Amplify Indigenous Voices, Communities, and Artists

There is a strong call among participants to center Indigenous voices and stories in the program, to provide meaningful platforms for Indigenous artists and to play an active and purposeful role in weaving Indigenous histories and contemporary placemaking into future art opportunities.

9. Build A Dynamic and Varied Program

The public art program will have a mandate to produce a dynamic program that provides a range of visitor experiences, encompassing temporary and permanent installations, and small to large scale projects. As well, the program will want to provide opportunities for

artists at different stages in their careers, explore different ways of implementing art in public, and identify different opportunities for artists to influence and play a role in the building and animation of the city. Examples to consider are The City's artist in residence and mentorship programs.

Calgarians are looking to public art to perform in different ways within the city. Some mentioned the need for public art that is bold, risk-taking and challenging, while others sought fun, joyful, and inspiring experiences. Others noted their interest in public art that is interactive, participatory and functional. At the core of these qualities is a need to have a program that responds, and continues to be responsive, to a wide range of audiences for public art.

10. Foster A Dynamic Mix of Local and International Talent

Calgarians want to promote opportunities for local artists and see programs that are geared towards career development for local talent. The new program should support and empower local artists, and play a role strengthening the local arts community more broadly in the city (i.e., through collaboration, mentorship, access to resources). However, it is recognized that a dialogue between local and international artists is essential to the growth of local artists and to Calgary's public art audience, and that fostering this dialogue through international commissions and opportunities will ensure one is not isolated from the other.

Accountable

Calgarians want to see a public art program that is accountable to the public. The guiding principles of an accountable public art program will include:

11. Financial Responsibility

Calgarians are looking for confidence that public funds will be managed carefully and spent in a way that will deliver programs for which Calgarians see a return on investment. Further, knowing that the public money will be given to a third party to manage, there is a need for spending to be well and regularly accounted for and reported on. A clear spending and reporting process will need to be articulated between The City (who is providing funds) and the third party organization (who is delivering the program). The establishment of a new program should be structured with a view towards minimizing funds spent on overhead and administration, and have targets for spending within Calgary (through fabrication etc).

12. Transparency

Lack of transparency has been a recurring issue, which has led to a lack of trust on the part of the public. As above, under Communications, the new program administrators will need to proactively communicate decision-making for the commissioning of artists and projects and program expenditures. As well, it is also important to communicate the value and significance of commissioned works.

13. Autonomy

The current transition is a positive move forward to depoliticize the public art program. This autonomy will allow for greater nimbleness and adaptability around procurement and communication processes, and should enable the future public art program to deliver a spectrum of programming (in scale, duration, media, etc).

14. Best Practice Standards

Applying contemporary best practices of artist selection, project development, implementation and collection management will be essential to upholding all other principles in this section.

Our Engagement Process

We designed a three-tiered engagement approach that would ensure we reached a broad section of Calgarians, arts community members, stakeholders and staff throughout this process. This includes in-depth stakeholder interviews to support our research phase, virtual community engagement sessions open to all Calgarians and a widely circulated digital survey. These three activities offered a range of engagement opportunities, from more involved participation like the engagement sessions, to a lighter touch, less time consuming digital survey.

- 1 Stakeholder Interviews
- 2 Virtual Community Engagement Sessions
- 3 Digital Survey

Combined, our engagement process reached 2746 Calgarians including local artists, members of the Public Art Alliance, members of the Public Art Board, City of Calgary staff, various public art program consultants and experts, City of Calgary Councillors, members of the Moh'kinsstis Public Art Guiding Circle and community members.

By The Numbers

33

Stakeholders
interviewed

68

Participants in online
engagement sessions

2645

Survey responses

First we conducted a series of stakeholder interviews, both one-on-ones and group interviews for in-depth input from a range of internal and external voices. We spoke to thirty-three (33) stakeholders in this research phase. Our objectives for these conversations were to learn about what public art means to Calgary and the potential for this transition, establish priorities for the values of the program, identify key issues to address and set ambitions for this next chapter. These interviews are part of the research phase of our work, which also included research into existing models, city structures and administrative opportunities. These interviews informed the design of our public engagement approach.

We then designed an in-person community stakeholder engagement session for the arts community and general public. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we re-designed the session to be virtual and hosted five (5) sessions online. The community engagement sessions were led and facilitated by Christina Bagatavicius, Community Engagement Specialist, working with the A+P team. The sessions were focused on informing Calgarians on this transition, getting their feedback on values for the public art program and providing an opportunity for The City to listen and learn from participants.

Running in conjunction with the design and facilitation of the engagement sessions, we designed and circulated a digital public survey. The objective of the survey was to create an engagement opportunity for those who couldn't attend a virtual session and to reach a broader group of Calgarians to input on the process. The survey focused on respondents' interest in public art, what values they want the future program to possess, what goals a successful program should focus on, and gave an opportunity to sign up for more information and leave final comments to be considered.

These engagement activities were our opportunity to help build understanding and support on this new direction and collect public feedback, which will be taken forward to help inform the values and principles that will shape the evaluation of proponent proposals through the procurement process. We're thankful for Calgarians' time and sharing of opinions and learnings. We've listened across these engagement opportunities to differing concerns in communities, promoted productive discussions across participants, and have reflected our key insights in this document.

Overview of Stakeholder Interviews

The purpose of these interviews was to support our overall information gathering process and research phase with insights from those closely connected to the public art program, subject matter experts and specialists in the field. This chapter provides an overview and synthesis of what we heard through the stakeholder interviews ART+PUBLIC UnLtd conducted March - May 2020. The key insights that emerged from these conversations helped us to learn about what public art means to Calgary, the potential for this transition to bolster program strengths and identify challenges to address in this process. These insights shaped the design of the public digital survey and virtual community engagement sessions.

Overall, we spoke with 33 stakeholders consisting of:

- City of Calgary Staff
- Members of the Public Art Board
- Public Art Alliance
- Public Art Consultants and External Practitioners
- Local Artists
- City Councillors

We asked questions around local context, values and vision, community, proponent qualifications, and hopes for the future.

What We Heard

The following are key discussion points that emerged from stakeholder interviews:

1. **Transparency:** Stakeholders referred repeatedly to a lack of transparency in program delivery over the course of several years. This has led to a lack of trust that really came to a head in the decision to transition the program to a third-party service provider; there is a need to rebuild that relationship and improve transparency.
2. **Autonomy:** The majority of stakeholders view the transition as a positive move forward to depoliticize the public art program.
3. **Build on past successes:** Consider the program's rich history, strengths and challenges when building out the future direction for the program. There is an opportunity to build on the expertise and collaborative relationships within The City and beyond. In particular, stakeholders mentioned the significant achievements and relationship-building that came out of the Artist in Residence program hosted by the Utilities and Environment Protections (UEP) department of The City. This program became WATERSHED+, an artist-led program of commissioning, exhibition and events that engaged the public in numerous ways around the the city's waterways and infrastructure. Stakeholders noted that this practice of embedded collaboration was something that should be carried forward into the future program.

4. **A Strong and Coherent Vision:** There is a need to develop and communicate a strong vision for the program, and to retain its mission to serve the public. There is a perceived lack of alignment within The City on how to implement public art. Stakeholders believe that the transition should allow for thoughtful planning.
5. **Diversity and Inclusion:** Stakeholders believed that diversity and inclusion need to be embedded in the program—reflected in the selection of artists and the hiring of staff. Build out a more accessible procurement process with a defined diversity and inclusion mandate (e.g. Indigenous, queer, immigrant communities).
6. **Arts Community Support:** The program should continue to support and empower local artists, and strengthen the local arts community in the city (e.g. through collaboration, mentorship, access to resources).
7. **Learning and Advocacy:** The program should find meaningful ways to engage with and educate the public about public art (e.g. address lack of public support with public art funding; lack of knowledge of public art collection and types of public art). Public engagement is seen as crucial by stakeholders. The program needs to feel valuable and relevant to garner the support of Calgarians.
8. **Best Practice Standards:** Calgary needs a full and varied public art program that is internationally current, while locally responsive and relevant. Applying best practices of artist selection, project development, implementation and collection management, will allow for some projects within the program to focus on attracting renowned

talent while others may have more of an emphasis on strong community involvement. Overall, the result is a program of the highest calibre in terms of opportunities for both artists and the public.

Overview of Community Engagement Sessions

The goal for the online community engagement sessions was to have conversations with Calgarians on how to make the City of Calgary Public Art Program successful and thriving. These online sessions were interactive and collaborative, focusing on prioritizing values and discussions around key issues that the public felt were missing after reviewing the work to date. Participants' input from these sessions will inform the procurement process to find the most qualified external organization to operate the future work of the program. This was also a key opportunity for the City to share to the public about the transition and actively listen to community members' insights and concerns.

By The Numbers

97/100

Total sign-ups for
the sessions

68

Total attendees

8-17

Range of participants
per session

We hosted a total of five (5) one-hour online sessions:

- Tuesday, June 16, 2020, 12:00 - 1:00 P.M.
- Wednesday, June 17, 2020, 5:00 - 6:00 P.M.

- Thursday, June 18, 2020, 9:00 - 10:00 A.M.
- Monday, June 22, 2020 11:00 A.M. - 12:00 P.M.
- Monday, June 22, 2020, 5:00 -6:00 P.M.

Participants were invited through The City of Calgary's communications channels (including email newsletter, social media posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, a news release to local media), content on The City of Calgary website and ART+PUBLIC UnLtd's outreach emails to local community groups and organizations. In order to brief participants on the project in advance of the sessions, a 'backgrounder' document was provided with information on the new direction for the public art program. Additionally, participants were given a short presentation on the engagement process during the session.

Facilitation Approach

These one-hour community engagement sessions were designed and facilitated to encourage listening, discussion and feedback using a variety of digital tools on Microsoft Teams and Mentimeter. Each session kicked off with an interactive icebreaker activity (i.e., "How are you feeling today?"), a land acknowledgement, and a short introduction to set the goals and expectations for the session. ART+PUBLIC UnLtd provided a brief presentation on the project, which was followed by a 10-minute Q&A led by Jennifer Thompson, Manager of Arts & Culture at The City of Calgary. Attendees were then invited to participate in two interactive group exercises, and were able to view the results in real-time; these on-screen results were used as a starting point for group discussions. Throughout the session, participants were given opportunities to speak using a chat box and/or through video chat by using the hand raised feature.

Defining Values

The first of these exercises asked participants to prioritize three values from a longlist of values that emerged from initial research and stakeholder interviews. These values include:

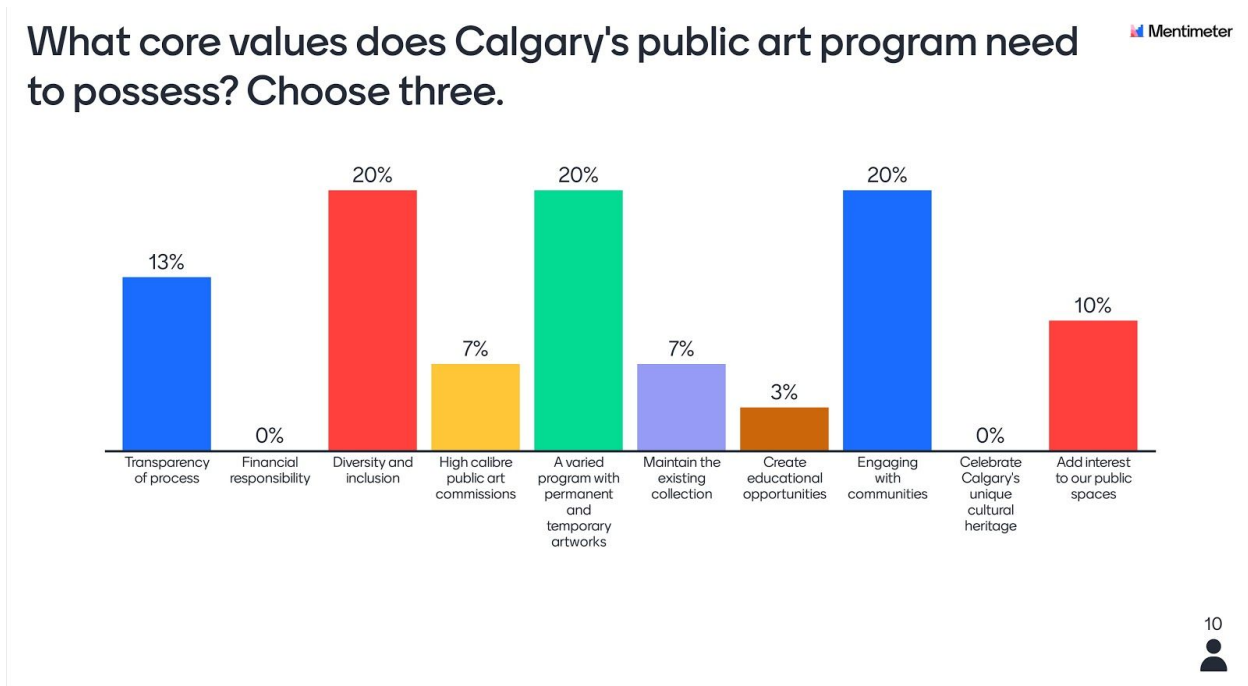
- Transparency of process
- Financial responsibility
- Diversity and inclusion
- High calibre Public Art commissions
- A varied program with permanent and temporary art works
- Maintain the existing collection
- Create educational opportunities
- Engaging with communities
- Celebrate Calgary's unique cultural heritage
- Add interest to our public space

Participants were prompted to answer a multiple choice question on the web-based tool Mentimeter. Each participant chose the top 3 values they believe should be at the core of the public art program.

Across all of the sessions, the top three priorities were:

- 1. A varied program with permanent and temporary artworks**
 - 5 of 5 groups chose a varied program in their top three
- 2. Diversity and inclusion**
 - 3 of 5 groups chose Diversity and Inclusion in their top three
- 3. Engaging with communities**

- 3 of 5 groups chose engaging with communities in their top three



Example of values polling activity.

What Is Missing?

In the next activity, we asked participants if there were any values missing from the presented list. Participants used the Mentimeter tool to add values they would like to see in this list. Results were aggregated in real-time, and visualized in a dynamic “word cloud.” Participants were also invited to discuss and elaborate on their responses.

Overall, a significant number of responses were centered on inclusion—particularly with Indigenous communities—and engaging the local community. Another common thread is the need for public art to be “where the people are”. Participants were vocal about their dislike with the

current sites for public art in the city. Participants also stated that they would like public art in the city to be fun, interactive, and engaging; others expressed that there is an opportunity for the program to be more risk-taking, bold, and challenging.



Feedback from one group for the What Is Missing activity.

Key Insights from the Community Engagement Sessions:

ART+PUBLIC UnLtd synthesized the data from the two main activities, as well as the input from the chat and the transcription of the conversations across all of the sessions. The following are key insights that reflect what resonated most strongly with participants.

1. Build A Dynamic and Varied Program

Participants expressed the need for a rich and dynamic program that provides a range of visitor experiences, encompassing temporary and permanent installations, and small to large scale projects. Participants also elaborated on the many qualities they looked for in public art. Some mentioned the need for public art that is bold, risk-taking and challenging, while others sought fun, joyful, and inspiring experiences. Others noted their interest in public art that is interactive, participatory and functional, which was a critical response to existing public art installations that were deemed inaccessible to the public. At the core of these qualities is a need to have a program that is relevant and engaging to today's audiences—one that responds, and continues to be responsive, to a wide range of audience needs for public art. Although there is a sense that the program cannot appeal to the majority of public tastes, many participants also noted that the program should always strive to be innovative and forward-thinking—to be unafraid to push boundaries and to never “play it safe.”

- “There is a message here to go big, bold, inspiring, and risk-taking.”
- “Take risks and engage.”
- “There should be an element of inspiration—art to beautify the space and enjoy where we live.”

2. Amplify Indigenous Voices, Communities, and Artists

Across all five of the online sessions, we heard that meaningful engagement of Indigenous artists and Treaty 7 First Nations communities is critical for the public art program. There is a strong call among participants to center Indigenous voices and stories in the program, and to be a platform for Indigenous artists.

- “Indigenous heritage is unique ... Let’s celebrate it.”
- “Treaty 7 participation needs to be ongoing ... The relationship needs to be built ... There hasn’t been any gift exchange ... when we speak of traditions. The art program should call for Treaty 7 artists first, and every program should include an Indigenous artist.”
- “How do we make sure the land acknowledgements impact people? How do we engage people better?”

3. Commit to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Participants expressed a need for the program to deepen its relationships with BIPOC and immigrant communities in Calgary, and to institutionalize equity, diversity and inclusion throughout the program. Acknowledging the significance of the Black Lives Matter and Indigenous Lives Matter movements, many participants called for BIPOC leadership. Others noted the need for gender equity, and for greater representation of women artists for the commissions coming out of the program. The program should also commit to diversity and inclusion in its public mandate, and should be made actionable, accountable, and transparent in areas such as staffing and commissioning. The cultural diversity of Calgary needs to be better reflected in all aspects of the program, across staffing, committees, artists, community engagement and the themes explored in the commissioning process. It was noted that the phrase ‘diversity and inclusion’ can feel inadequate or empty if it is not paired with actionable and transparent processes.

- “Diversity needs to be very intentional and needs to be a priority. Build it into the program.”
- “As an immigrant, some of us don’t always connect with [public art]. So we need to share context and create new entry points for people.”

- “The senior level board and managers need to reflect the diversity of this city.”
- “The processes we run in the future should allow for a diverse group of artists to participate, not just artists with extensive portfolios.”

4. Foster a Strong Relationship with Local Communities

Participants called for more community engagement and involvement with the public art program. Many believe that community engagement strengthens the work. Some mentioned mentorship opportunities and resources for the arts community, youth learning opportunities and, more broadly, the need to build a more knowledgeable audience through education activities. Communications are also seen as important to inform and engage Calgarians about public art, and to amplify the power of storytelling. Participants expressed concerns regarding transparency and accountability, noting that improving communications could build trust and increase visibility with local communities. The new administrators would need to be able to communicate why certain artists and projects are commissioned, as well as the importance and value of the work.

- “It could be a great time to invest in community engagement on a very real level.”
- “Transparency and community engagement needs to happen during the process of creating a new work.”
- “If the community is involved, everyone has an option to participate and there may be less negative feedback from community members ... I want to be more involved.”
- “Have artistic intent at the site. Give the story in the form of a placard. This might help with interpretation.”

5. Foster A Dynamic Mix of Local and International Talent

There is a tension between participants who want a focus on commissioning local artists only, and others who see international commissions as important for the visibility and strength of the program. Overall, participants want to foster local talent and support the local economy, but an appropriate balance of local and international commissions needs thoughtful planning and communication.

- “I think balance is key in terms of local artist pieces and also some larger artists with worldwide exposure.”
- “Work with organizations to help provide local artists the skills and tools they require to meet the criteria needed for public art installations.”
- “We need to support local artists so that they can grow.”

6. Meet People Where They Are

Many participants noted the challenge of poor siting with past commissions tied to capital and infrastructure projects and funding requirements, resulting in works that are not placed in accessible or walkable public spaces. Participants noted that public art pieces have the potential to enrich public spaces, and expressed the need for the thoughtful planning of locations for new commissions. Projects should reflect a significant site-specificity with respect to the selection of landmarks, stories and points of connection with the immediate surroundings of the project site. Some asked questions around the feasibility of moving existing works. Many also noted that public art installations should be sensitive to the scale and landscape of the environment, and should be placed “where people are” at a “human scale.”

Within this conversation, a participant noted that ongoing programming around public art could further strengthen its connection to a particular site. The intellectual and physical access to sites have been an issue in the past.

- “The requirement of having art at the site of infrastructure was flawed. Opening it up to place the art into the communities for whom the infrastructure is created will open up the possibilities for community engagement.”
- “What’s been most criticized in the past is the location of the works. The public has not understood the selection of location, and the location selection has been disappointing ... I want more thought put towards choosing the site well.”
- “I enjoy the art that you can ... walk by as opposed to the large art pieces next to a highway.”
- “Ongoing programming at the sites of public art, not just install, open, done.”

Overview of Digital Survey

The objective of the digital survey is to reach a broader group of Calgarians, and to provide another platform for local Calgary residents—especially for those who were not able to attend a virtual session—to input on the process. The survey focused on respondents' interests in public art, what values they want the future program to possess, and what goals a successful program should focus on. The survey also gave respondents an opportunity to sign up for more information, and ample room for open and additional feedback. For the purposes of this document we have provided a high level overview of responses from key questions. The survey was open from May 20 - June 30, 2020.

Respondent Information & Survey Distribution

2645

Number of responses

100%

Completion rate

18

Number of questions

Focus of Questions:

A mix of multiple choice, sliding scale and short answer questions focusing on:

- Responding to draft values for the public art program
- Prioritizing goals for the program
- Add additional comments and concerns to be considered

Set Up & Survey Logic:

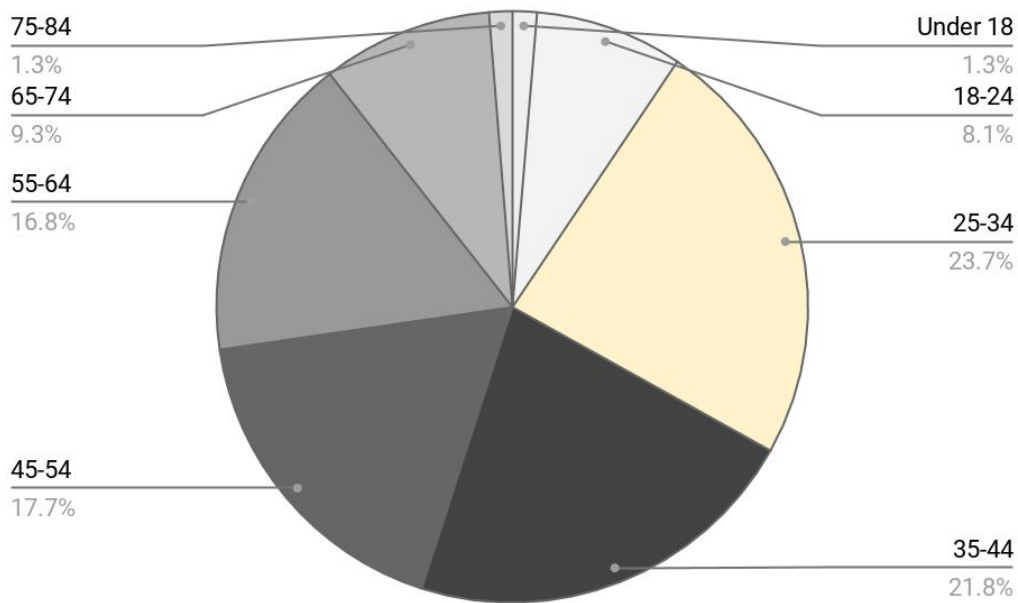
- Contributors were kept anonymous
- We used Survey Monkey and allowed for people to input their email address if they want to stay up to date via The City of Calgary's email list
- The survey was circulated through The City of Calgary's communications channels, as well as via ART+PUBLIC UnLtd's outreach emails to community organizations in Calgary.

Respondent Profile Overview:

We asked some optional questions to better understand who we reached through this survey and to get a sense of their interest in public art.

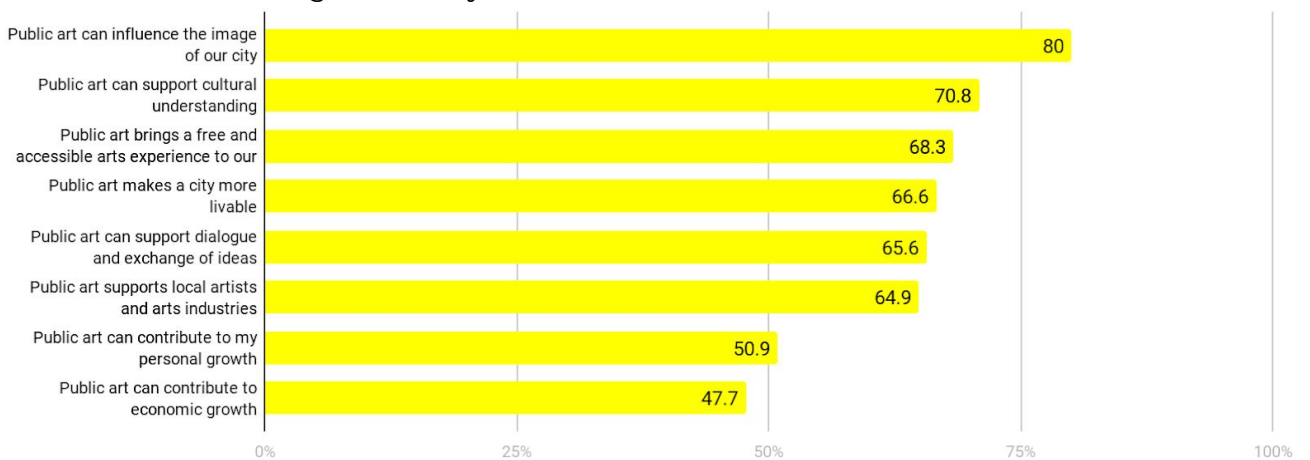
- 88% have heard about The City of Calgary Public Art Program
- 58% visit public art in Calgary
- 65% go to see public art outside of Calgary
- 27% identify as artists or arts and culture workers
- 23% have attended a City of Calgary public consultation session before

Age of Respondents



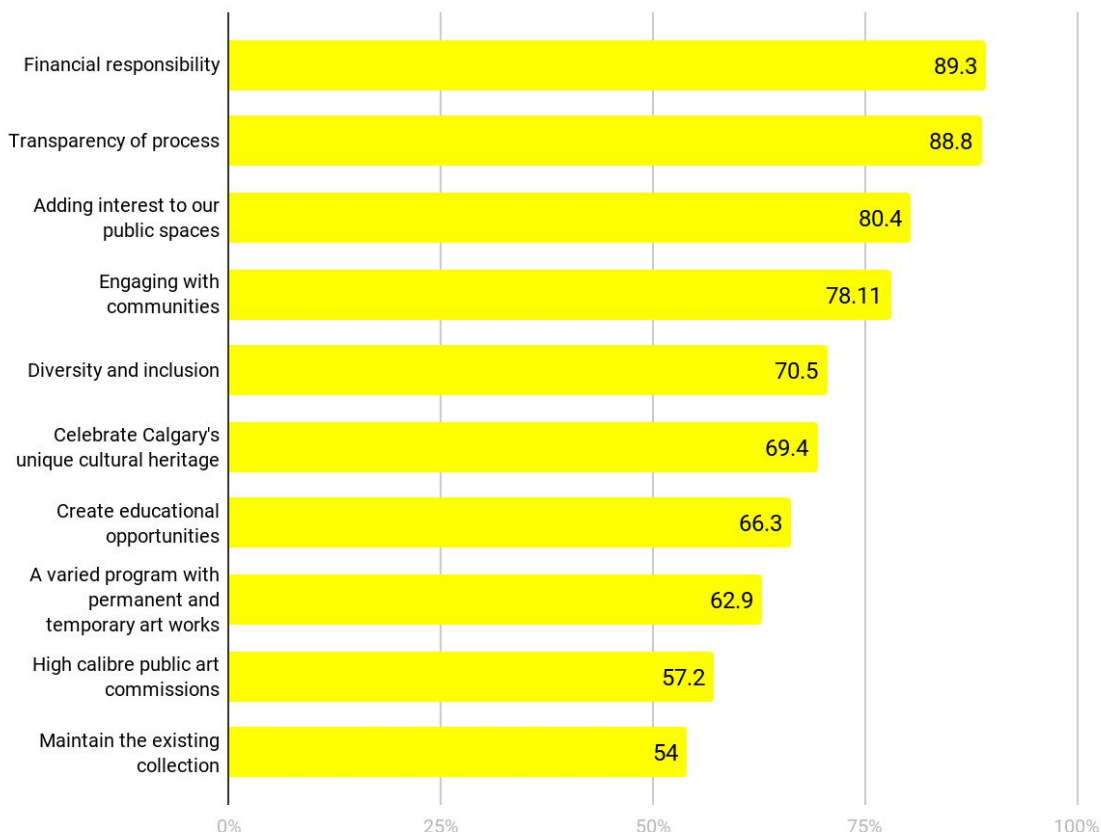
Views On Public Art*

Out of 8 statements centered on the value of public art, 80% of respondents believe public art can influence the image of our city.



Core Values*

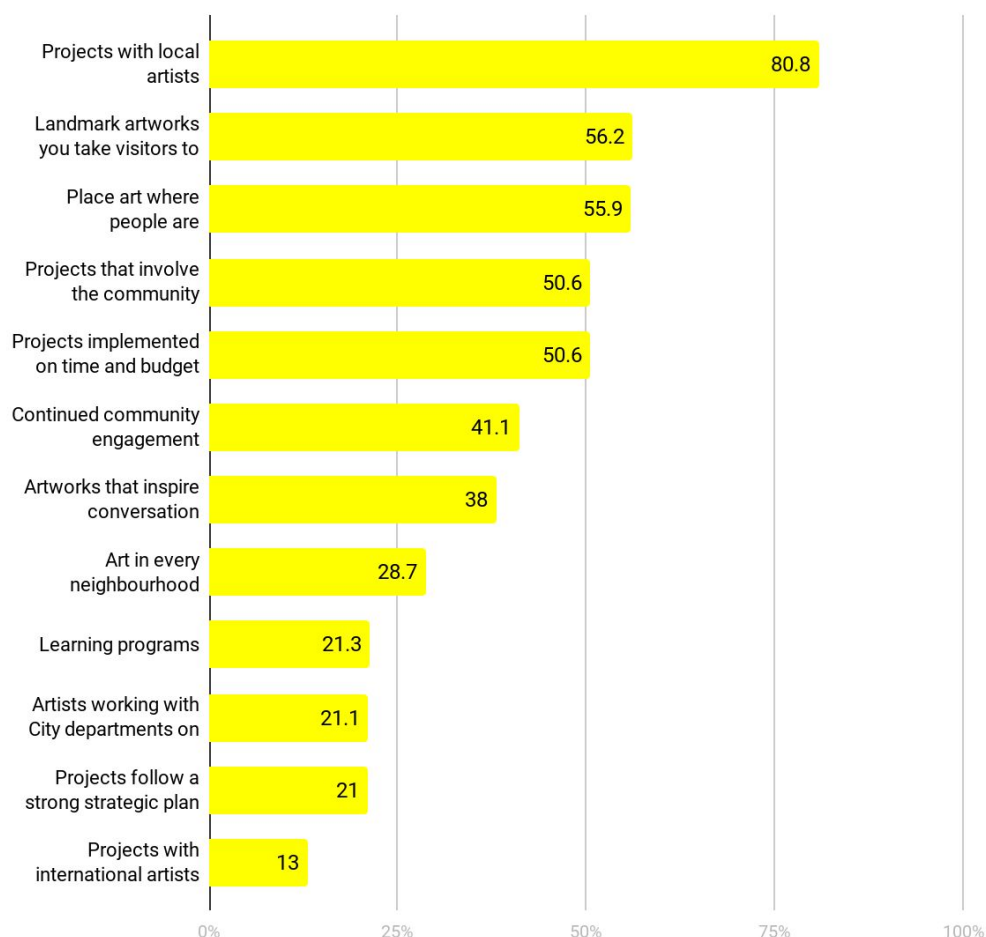
Financial responsibility, transparency of process and adding interest to our public spaces came out most strongly as the core values that respondents' felt the public art program needs to possess.



* Note: Data shown is an aggregate of "strongly agree" and "somewhat agree" responses.

Goals and Objectives

When asked to select their top five goals for a successful public art program for Calgary, respondents rated projects with local artists, landmark artworks you take visitors to see, place art where people are, projects that involved the community and projects implemented on time and budget as priorities out of 12 options.



Education and Outreach Considerations:

- 85.5% somewhat and strongly agree Calgarians should be regularly involved and informed about the public art collection
- 66.3% somewhat and strongly agree activities like tours, school programs and travelling exhibitions are important
- 64.63% somewhat and strongly agree it's important that Calgarians have educational opportunities to learn about public art

Key Findings from the Digital Survey:

1. The Importance of Fiscal Responsibility

In addition to the feedback within the survey structure, a number of respondents felt strongly enough about the importance of financial responsibility that they left additional comments about this aspect. The big ticket price associated with the couple of particularly problematic pieces that contributed to major public backlash, political intervention and program freezing, has really highlighted within Calgary a need to ensure that the public art program delivers value for taxpayer investment. These comments have not indicated that the money should not be spent, but instead that it should be managed carefully and spent in a way that will deliver programs for which Calgarians see a return on investment. Further, knowing that the public money will be given to a third party to manage, there is concern that the spending be well and regularly accounted for and reported on. This includes having a program that is able to deliver projects without excessive funds spent on administration, sees funds spent in Calgary (through fabrication etc) and creates a program at a calibre that attracts people to Calgary, as artists, as educators, as visitors.

- “PLEASE, take a look at the budget of how much these "public art" projects cost. Between the NE "blue ring", the rocks at win sport & "convergence" (3 of many) city council has justified spending over 1.89 million while also cutting things such as fire, medical and police.”
- “I appreciate art and recognize that it has value. I believe that we have to reimagine the program to support local artists while being fiscally responsible. Some of the past projects have been ridiculous in costs that many can be better spent to support other programs, like homeless, food insecurity... continue the program but on a smaller scale and use local artists to keep costs in check.”

- “I believe the vibrancy and international draw of our city can be maintained without spending on additional art installments. Fiscal responsibility is strongly needed.”

2. Focus on Supporting Local Artists and Economy

There were a number of comments emphasizing a strong desire to see the public art opportunities and related funds stay within the Calgary community and economy. This was expressed through comments about ensuring Calgary-based or Albertan artists are awarded commissions, or programs are designed to highlight local artists, as well as efforts made to ensure that works are fabricated within the city or province.

- “Public art in Calgary is too often created by artists from outside of Calgary or Alberta.”
- “It is important to have artwork by local and Indigenous artists on display at all times.”
- “Please do more programs with LOCAL ARTISTS. We have one of the top art and design universities and thus have a huge pool of amazing LOCAL talent!”

3. Create a Vibrant Sense of Place

Survey comments overall suggest a broadly held belief in the ability for an exceptional public art program to “put a city on the map”, to create a sense of place that sets the city apart in a global context and draws people. This was indicated in comments referring to landmark works that would draw visitors, exciting art opportunities that would draw local and international artists to create work, and overall, a leading program that attracts local and international talent, both directly and indirectly (with public art having the

ability to brand a place as leading edge, therefore drawing talent in other industries who want to live in an exciting place with a dynamic cultural environment and streetscape). Respondents also noted the power of public art to make the city more livable and vibrant.

- “Calgary is beautiful as it is but if focused on in the correct way it could become a destination for culture and art alongside all the other things that bring people to this city.”
- “The public art program has really made the city more liveable in recent years. I love going to different parts of the city to explore public art and I believe it makes our city a better place.”
- “Celebration of local and international artists is also important.”

4. Learn from Siting Issues in the Past

The strict adherence of site definition that characterized the implementation of Calgary’s Percent for Art program prior to freezing, has been modified at this point and the future program operator will be able to site work more meaningfully. However, the previous rules have stood out in people’s memory as particularly problematic, primarily as this rendered works inaccessible to the public.

- “Please no more abstract blue rings in the middle of nowhere.”
- “Place art where people are (ie. walkable public spaces), not along underpasses and freeways. The 1% art allocation does not need to be tied to every site, it should be shifted to areas where people can access.”
- “The biggest problem with the program has been the requirement that art be placed at the site of the project from which the funds for the art are derived. How am I supposed to really experience Bowfort Towers,

which is all about materials and the interplay of light and shadow from various angles? I can't actually visit it."

5. The Current Economic Climate

There were a number of comments indicating a concern for spending any money on public art within the current economic climate and recent events with the novel COVID-19 pandemic. Some respondents felt that now is not the time for The City to focus on public art, wanting a stronger focus on creating jobs and helping people in a time of crisis.

- "When a city is in good economic growth, an art program is great. When a city has been suffering from a bad economy for years, an art program becomes a horrible misuse of funds."
- "Art is not essential at this point and time."
- "Put the lines for art towards helping people in this time of crises ... Now is not the time to spend money on art."

6. A Need for More Public Art in the City

A number of respondents finished off their survey with additional comments about the need for more public art in the city. Participants noted the value that public art brings to a city and its citizens, and discussion about offering a diversity of opportunities for artists to influence and play a role in the building and animation of the city.

- "Public art promotes the feeling of community within our city."
- "Public art is integral to a thriving city. Art that is accessible to all is critical in a world where significant disparities exist."

- “Let's be an impressive city, not a boring one. We MUST have public art for our souls.”

7. Community Engagement, Transparency and Accountability Are Key to the Program's Success

In addition to the feedback within the survey structure, a number of respondents felt strongly enough about transparency, accountability and community engagement that they left additional comments about this aspect. A number of respondents felt that too often, the process of public art commissioning did not involve the public in decisions around what public art opportunities are, how artists are selected, how project budgets are managed, what artworks mean, and other elements of public art delivery.

- “Transparency is important to a point. Certainly tax payers need to have input into work that is paid for by tax dollars and need to know how decisions are made regarding what work is commissioned. However, as an art professor I do not tell my plumber how to fix my toilet. I want transparency with regard to what he is doing and why, but I need to trust his expertise.”
- “Community engagement might help people understand the projects better.”
- “I think it is vital to the culture and community of the city that we continue to promote public art. This can be achieved through greater public engagement for those that don't understand the benefits and see it predominantly from a fiscal perspective.”

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