



Public Art Process Review

Stakeholder Engagement Summary Report: What we Heard

May 17, 2018

Project overview

This is in response to the Notice of Motion NM2017-32 from September 2017. Administration must report back with recommendations by Q2 2018 on a new process.

In 2004, Council implemented the Public Art Policy “to pursue the integration of public art into the cultural fabric of Calgary, recognizing public art as a vital ingredient in Calgary’s ongoing development as a great city.” In 2017 September, Council directed Administration to report back with a progress update in Q1 2018 on recommendations on a new process for this policy.

Council directed Administration to investigate best practices for: fully engaging the public and their feedback; accommodating concept submissions from artists that foster and enhance local, regional, national and culturally appropriate artists; researching mechanisms for allocating tax dollars during economic downturns; and briefing Council and communicating to the public on the selection of successful candidates for public art projects. Public engagement will be conducted to better understand citizens’ expectations about their involvement in the public art process and to inform recommendations of how The City can improve both when and how citizens are involved.

This engagement strategy addressed the need to engage with the public on the current process and on where in the process to receive their feedback and ways to communicate to the public about public art in general. Other points of the Notice of Motion will be addressed by Administration but are not within the scope of public engagement at this point.

This report is a summary of what we heard from participants in phase one (people with direct experience of the process) and phase two (online feedback open to all Calgarians).

Engagement overview

Phase one engagement collected input from targeted groups who had experienced the current public art process with the priority on local artists and citizens who had been part of the process in the past two years. We held two in-person workshops in late January 2018 and an online survey for those who couldn’t attend in-person. There were 65 people at the workshops and 44 responses from artists online. This feedback helped us create the questions for the public engagement of page two.

The phase two engagement opportunity was available online for all citizens from March 27, 2018 to April 15, 2018. We received 7,450 responses and had 15,624 unique visitors to the webpage.

What we asked

Phase 1: We asked people to identify the steps in the Public Art process they had been a part of and then expand on the general challenges and improvements for the current process. We also asked them to



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generate categories or types of art and locations for art that would have the most positive impact on the community.

Phase 2: We asked people to give input in a few areas about public art in general and about the current engagement and communications process. The questions we asked included: selecting from options on their view of the purpose of public art, the types and locations of art that would have the most positive impact on the city, and how they would like to be communicated about public art. There was also a question that outlined the current process and how public input is used and asked you to tell us which of those steps were most important to have public input and why.

What we heard

Phase 1: We heard that those people with some experience of Calgary's public art process do not clearly understand "the" process and suggested that there is often more than one process depending on many factors. There were concerns that Public Art Board members and even the local artist community being ill informed did not position them to be allies or advocates of public art in Calgary. Most participants felt the communications of public art should and could be greatly improved including the website/online communications, more communications throughout (and beyond) specific public art projects and should have more involvement of or even driven by the artist(s) hired to do the work. People also suggested that being clear about the Jury selection process or how citizens apply to be part of public art juries was important. As well as more generally, there being better communications about all opportunities for public input into the public art projects. Additional concerns related to the language in the RFPs being limiting in many ways (including for artists with less experience – often local or of diverse cultural backgrounds) and that how funding is assigned is a challenge too. There were also many suggestions (and some frustrations too) for the questions to generate art types and location types that will be used in framing questions to the public in phase two.

Phase 2: We received a variety of answers to all the questions and many conflicting perspectives. This means it's hard to make generalizations without noting how one type of answer (or theme) of ideas interacted or conflicted with another group of answers. For example: many people were disappointed with recent public artworks and felt that if there had been more public input there would have been less disappointment. There were others who said that public art is meant to start a conversation and there may never be a time when all public art is liked or celebrated by everyone.

We heard from those who responded that the most important purposes for public art were: enhancing the beauty of my community, creating meaning or connection to my community, sparking conversation/thought provoking, tells the story of our history and is a source of community pride. We also heard that public art in places where people walk and gather is very important as well as to have art in the downtown/inner city. However, others said they didn't think the art should be tied to the location of a capital project (infrastructure/construction) because that would leave some neighbourhoods or areas without art and would also impact the types of art that should be created to make it accessible to people.



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Many citizens do want to be involved in the public art process, to have their values, voices and ideas heard and reflected in public art but also to know more or be aware of projects and how and why the projects came to be. Contrasting this, we also heard some questions about why The City spends money on public art and some people expressed concerns that spending decisions need to be considered in light of other social or economic priorities.

Frequently we heard that “concept selection” and “artist selection” were important steps in the process to have citizen input, but also more generally, that being involved early helped people feel their input would have meaningful impact to the process, the artwork and the related costs. People also said they wanted to be involved at right time where they felt their personal skills or experience would be most useful or the experience and perspectives of citizens in general would be the most useful. Some also identified the need to allow the artist to have a creative process that allowed artists to use their skills and talents freely to create art. Additionally, there were concerns about costs and being involved in determining costs for art work, but also that having more people involved throughout the process can also be costly.

Below, there are some additional summary points from the Phase 2 public engagement, broken down by question.

Verbatim Comments & Full Reports

Verbatim comments are an essential part of the engagement process and report. They are the exact input that people provided from both phases and are used in the analysis to create the themes and generalizations used to help make recommendations.

To see the full data summary and the verbatim comments please see the reports online at www.engage.calgary.ca/Public-Art-NOM for there is one report for each phase in the “Documents” section.

Or search *Public Art* in the Research and Engagement Library where both reports are in one document <http://www.calgary.ca/cfod/csc/Pages/Research-Library.aspx>.



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Summary of Public Input – Phase 2

Question 1

We asked: Different people have different perception of the purpose of public art. Please help us understand your perception. Choose up to 5 from 13 options.

What we heard summary:

The options most often selected as any spot in the top “five most important” were:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhances the beauty of my community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a source of community pride
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creates meaning or connection to my community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tells the story of our history
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparks conversation/thought provoking

The options identified most often in 1 st (most important to the participant) were:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Enhances the beauty of my community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Creates meaning or connection to my community
<input type="checkbox"/>	Sparks conversation/thought provoking
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tells the story of our history
<input type="checkbox"/>	Is a source of community pride

Question 2

We asked: Tell us the types of places you feel public art will have the most positive impact on Calgary. Chose all that apply (from a list of 13 options).

What we heard summary:

The options most often selected as “likely to have the most positive impact” were:	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Places where people walk
<input type="checkbox"/>	Downtown / Inner City
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community hubs / gathering places
<input type="checkbox"/>	Parks and natural spaces



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Question 3

We asked: Tell us the types of art you feel would have the most positive impact on Calgary. (Choose all that apply from a list of 10.)

What we heard summary:

The options most often selected as “likely to have the most positive impact” were:	
	Murals
	Sculptures/object based art
	Functional art
	Art that uses natural elements

Question 4

We asked: Tell us what steps you would like to be involved in – which is most important to you? (Rank up to all seven steps/choices in order of importance)

What we heard summary: In the full report the summary shows that most steps were selected a similar number of times showing that many people wanted to be involved in most or all of the steps. However, it is very important to understand “why” people wanted to be involved in the process (see question 5 below and the full analysis in the [full report online](#)).

The steps in the process most often selected at all as “most important to be involved in” in order of most to least frequent:	
	Concept selection
	Artist selection
	Jury panel selection

The steps identified most often as “1 st most important to be involved in” in order of most to least frequent:	
	Concept selection
	Capital project initiation/planning
	Artist selection
	Jury panel selection



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Question 5

We asked: Based on the step you chose [from question 4] **as most important for public involvement, tell us why you chose that.** (Note: Steps 2, 8 and 9 were not given as options to be selected.)

We heard summary: These were the most frequent reasons provided for each step. The top two themes were selected for each but if the third highest was very close in frequency it is also listed. (See the entire list of themes and descriptions in the [full report online](#).)

Step name	Most common themes (from this list in the full report)
Step 1: capital project initiation/ planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt this step was most important because it would be the greatest impact to the process or final artwork • Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful • Felt that this step would address their concern about how much money or time resources are spent on public art
Step 3 : call for submissions goes out to artists (RFP/Q)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt the step they chose as most important would be the greatest impact to the process or final artwork • Felt that this step would have the best ability to select/showcase more local artists • Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful
Step 4: jury panel selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful • Felt the step they chose as most important would be the greatest impact to the process or final artwork • Jury members should better reflect the public
Step 5: artist selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt that this step would have the best ability to select/showcase more local artists • Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful
Step 6: artist concept creation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful • Felt the step they chose as most important would be the greatest impact to the process or final artwork



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Step 7: concept selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Felt the step they chose as most important would be the greatest impact to the process or final artwork• Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful
Step 10: Unveiling /event / celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Felt this step was most important because it would be the place they were best able to provide input or that general citizen input would be most useful• Appreciates public art in general/likes seeing the art• Felt this step would be the best place to help build ownership of the art or build community through the process