



SMITHS FALLS ARTS MASTER PLAN

Prepared by Margo Hébert, Arts Consultant, MINC Designs for The Town of Smiths Falls in Partnership with the Smiths Falls District Arts and Culture Council

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“The artists, writers, musicians, actors, and creators keep the fabric of our community alive through the five senses. It’s imperative to remain committed to the contributions of our arts and cultural sector.”

Smiths Falls Cultural Plan 2021 – 2025, Strategy 3

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Incorporating visual storytelling in our community

The Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan (AMP) is a high-level document to inform the Town of Smiths Falls' Public Art Policy. Guided by extensive input through community consultation, the Master Plan's 17 actions in support of the Smiths Falls Cultural Plan (2021 – 2025) provides the framework for staff and the community for implementation of the Public Art Policy and for guiding the strategic investment for new public artworks within the Town of Smiths Falls.

The AMP serves as a reference document for public art planning purposes and includes recommendations for public art installation sites, themes and forms, maintenance, and defines the program's initiatives over the next two years. As a guide for public art planning, the AMP includes the objectives for the public art program, collection management and maintenance, establishes a funding and stewardship mechanism, and the processes by which the program responds to donations and gifts and how the private development public art program operates.

BACKGROUND

It has been recognized that the study and enjoyment of the arts contributes to long-term health benefits whether through acting, singing, playing musical instruments, writing, painting, watching, or listening to another's performance. Both active and passive participation in the arts support physical and mental well-being, social inclusion; acceptance; and community building.

In 2021, the Town of Smiths Falls adopted the Smiths Falls Municipal Cultural Plan 2021-2025, which highlights the role art and culture plays in helping the Town meet its goal of enhancing and maintaining the quality of life for residents and visitors. The plan is based on five key strategies:

- Cultivate Connection & Build Community Pride
- Ignite Inclusivity
- Support our Local Creative Sector
- Honour our Heritage & Learn from our Past
- Optimize Existing Landscape & Spaces

The five-year Smiths Falls Cultural Plan identifies opportunities and actions the Town of Smiths Falls can take to achieve its objectives of enhancing its travel and tourism sector while creating a stronger creative economy.

Strategy #4: Support Our Local Creative Sector

ACTION: Create experiences that relay our story including developing a plan for mural creation in key locations featuring historic storytelling themes.

Strategy #5: Optimizing Existing Landscapes and Spaces to focus on utilizing available spaces throughout Town while providing enhanced visibility and accessibility to residents and visitors ensuring these spaces are used to their ultimate potential.

ACTION: Increase usage of the Rideau Canal for tourism/cultural services by exploring the addition of cultural elements at central canal locations such as informational plaques, public art, or interactive displays that relay the story of the canal in Smiths Falls

ACTION: Develop a Program Plan for Town Square by including the addition of Public Art at Town Square and seek RFPs for its addition.

The creation of the Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan (AMP) builds on initiatives from the Culture Plan with more focus on the creation of public art in all forms. The plan is comprehensive and was developed through various communication channels with participation of Town staff, key partners, and the general public.

In 2021, The Town of Smiths Falls Economic Development and Tourism Department worked with consultants Iron & Ivory to develop downtown façade examples to assist property and business owners visualize aesthetic improvements to enhance the character of our downtown. This project also included a look into public art concepts in the form of murals, to further enhance and create public realm spaces. The project developed three key mural themes and identified four potential downtown locations for installation.

In 2022, The Town in partnership with the Downtown Business Association obtained a provincial grant for the creation of new public realm space in the downtown core. Location #2 (right) was the chosen site. The result was the Artscape Parkette featuring a mural designed by Dominic Laporte was installed on the Russell Street Parkette (close up on cover).

A thought-out public arts plan can greatly impact the community through inventiveness, imagination, and positive transformation. It bolsters communication and activities through the private and public sectors while focusing on artistic talent and the public environment. The Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan delivers a strong vision to the whole community and showcases how public art improves the quality and value of streetscapes, architecture, green space and other public places.



FACES OF SMITHS FALLS

This mural option takes a look back to the most prominent and integral citizens of Smiths Falls. A series consisting of artistic depictions of their faces as a way to remember their contribution to the city.

ABSTRACT AND COLORFUL

Reaching forward towards a vibrant tomorrow, this mural direction would be geometric, bright, and dynamic. Youthful colors and playful geometries would make a photogenic and brilliant impact on any facade.

LAYERED STORYTELLING

Smiths Falls has such a rich history worth capturing and retelling. This mural direction would take a layered approach, creating a depth and intensity through collage. The narrative of historical ups and downs would be recorded throughout time.

Town of Smiths Falls | 996 Concept Design | January 22, 2021 | IRON & IVORY

LOCATION 1
SIDE OF REXALL



LOCATION 2
SIDE OF SHOPPERS MART



LOCATION 3
SIDE GERBOS



LOCATION 4
SIDE OF SMOKE EFFEX



Town of Smiths Falls | 996 Concept Design | January 22, 2021

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan consultation process was completed in partnership with the Town of Smiths Falls and The Smiths Falls and District Arts & Culture Council. Events and public engagements were designed to be creative and interactive.

RIDEAU ARTIST OF THE YEAR (RAY) & SUMMER ARTISAN MARKET

August 6 & 7, 2022 Heritage House Museum (Over 250 Participants)

Town Staff at the Heritage House Museum hosted the Rideau Artist of the Year and Summer Artisan Market. This two-day event featured an art competition where artists used the scenery on the grounds of Old Slys, the Rideau Canal, and the Heritage House Museum as subject matter. During the competition, artists and artisans were invited to engage in one-on-one interviews and surveys on the importance of public art.

PUBLIC ARTS FORUM

September 28, 2022 – The Station Theatre (50 Participants)

A Public Arts Forum was held to engage Smiths Falls' citizens, as well as community arts and culture organizations on the proposed AMP. To kick off the consultation process, the event included a presentation from The Town to provide participants with an overview of this new project and capture thoughts and inspire ideas looking through a public art lens. The City of Kingston presented a look into what a successful plan can achieve in a community. Participants then made their way through various engagement stations to capture ideas, concerns, and opinions on what public art means in Smiths Falls and where it should be located.

SFDCI YOUTH ENGAGEMENT

October 19, 2022 (35 Students)

The Town of Smiths Falls made a presentation to engage secondary school art students to gain a youth's perspective of public art. Students were very interested in using the skate park to create and share artwork and to add interest to the park itself. They envisioned a painted apparatus or a large ground mural that could incorporate ramps and other structures. They also wanted to see blank canvases throughout the park where youth could create and display art on a rotating basis.

ONLINE "I ♥ PUBLIC ART" SURVEY

September 1 – November 30, 2022 (113 Participants)

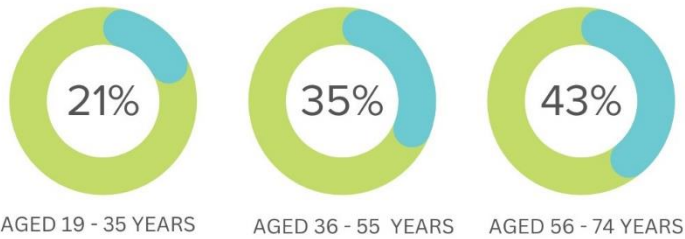
With the ongoing challenges brought on by the COVID pandemic the Economic Development and Tourism Department established an online survey through Speak Up Smiths Falls to reach a wider audience for consultation. The campaign marketed as "I Heart Public Art" allowed Smiths Falls residents, business owners, and key partners a chance to participate anonymously and give their feedback on the curation, installation, and funding for public art.

The importance of having a community lead initiative, with support and direction from the Town of Smiths Falls, will ensure that art installations of all forms are developed through a consultation process. Implementation should also seek input from the community with a focus on Smiths Falls artists where possible.

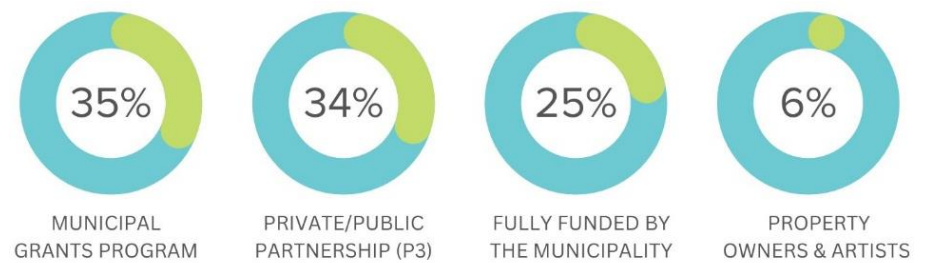
PUBLIC CONSULTATION RESULTS

Through the Public Arts Survey and other consultation, residents responded to a series of questions including: What is the role of public art? What role do you feel the Town should play in fostering and supporting Public Art? Here are select highlights of responses:

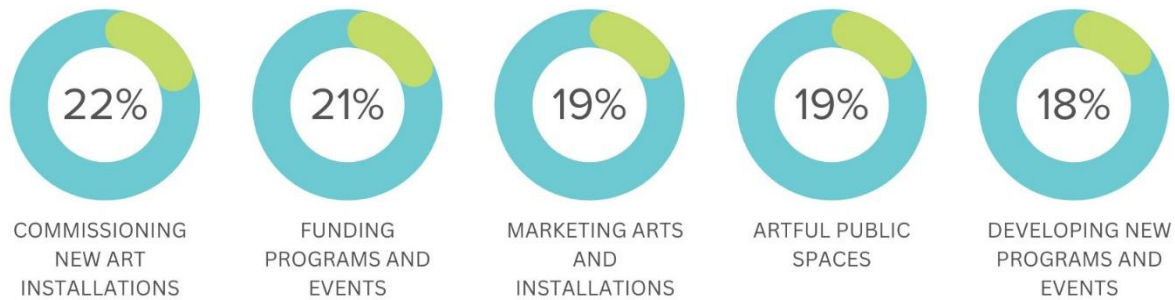
Age range of respondents



How respondents think public art should be funded



Respondents view of the Town's role in public art



Locations where respondents would like to see public art



Importance of having public art in our community



PUBLIC FEEDBACK

Captured from the community, artistic groups, and staff during public and private consultation meetings:

- Seek clarification and permission from Parks Canada regarding temporary and permanent art installations in proximity near or on federally owned land and waterways
- Public art installations should enhance the natural beauty of an area while inspiring creativity along waterways, local parks, and the downtown
- Public art should not be limited to one theme or style and should include a wide variety of elements that celebrates our heritage and tells a story of Smiths Falls in a way that is contemporary and inclusive
- Public art should be interactive, when possible
- Support for local emerging artists and arts groups should be through a variety of art forms
- The need for involving the community in creative place-making decisions including the acquisition and commissioning of new public art
- Town staff identified a need to create clear rationale for allocating public art investments and resources including mechanisms and criteria for prioritizing capital projects to be selected for a public art component
- Town staff recognized the need for a clear maintenance and deaccession plan for public art and the need to address current neglected primary locations
- When possible, artists hired to do the installations should be local and the public should be involved when deciding on public art installations.

PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF AMP

The purpose of the Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan (AMP) is to evaluate the Town's obligation of its past, present, and future and to deliver a practical timeframe to be utilized over the coming year(s).

Specifically, the AMP seeks to present the community with a vision of how public art can enhance public spaces, architecture, and landscapes. Additionally, it delineates the procedures for the ongoing implementation of Smiths Falls' Public Art Policy.

THE ROLE

As identified in the Public Survey, the role public art plays within a municipality is multi-faceted. At its genesis, it supports artists and artistic creation. Artwork may activate social change and further inspire creativity. A robust public art plan supports economic and community development and tourism goals through neighbourhood beautification and place making.

KEY OBJECTIVES OF AMP

The production or appreciation of art contributes to the rich and unique history of the Town and is a catalyst for community engagement, activation, tourism, and partnerships.

THE AMP WILL ACHIEVE SEVERAL KEY OBJECTIVES, INCLUDING:

- (1) Providing staff with a structured framework for creating and maintaining public art within the municipality, with a focus on fostering community engagement.
- (2) Coordinating collections management to ensure a cohesive approach to acquisitions, and de-accessioning.
- (3) Establish consistent standards for Public Art in civic initiatives, public realms, and private sector projects, ensuring an enhanced artistic presence throughout the Town.

Adherence to AMP will ensure that the Town of Smiths Falls will actively promote artistic expression, cultural diversity, and an inclusive environment. Additionally, it can stimulate community participation, making sure that Public Art becomes an integral part of the city's identity and urban development.

THE BIG PICTURE

WHAT IS PUBLIC ART?

Public art is a visual art form in any media created by an Artist with the express consent to be installed and displayed in a public site to be incorporated into the community through engagement. It is work that is specifically created to be enjoyed by the general public and has become a key part of community "Place Making".

ADDING VALUE

Public art adds enormous value to the cultural, aesthetic, and economic vitality of a community. It is principle of good urban design that contributes to a community's identity, fostering community pride and a sense of belonging, and enhances the quality of life for its residents and visitors.

SOME KEY CHARACTERISTICS

Common characteristics of public art are public access and accessibility, community involvement in the design, and process (including public funding). Works can be permanent or temporary.

PERMANENT ART

Art installations intended to remain for years at a time and have a planned maintenance schedule. Types of permanent art include sculptures, monuments, and integrated artworks.

TEMPORARY ART

Art installations intended for a brief duration of time, typically not exceeding 2 years. Types of temporary art include performance art, banners, street art, and festivals.

VISION

To animate the Town of Smiths Falls into a vibrant cultural and artistic community through promoting and supporting artistic engagement and visibility of artists, while building on community pride, and enhancing the local economy and beauty.

MISSION

Public Art plays a vital role in the continued growth of Smiths Falls' economy and contributes to an enhanced quality of life. The Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan will identify creative placemaking mechanisms to encourage, support and celebrate local Art and Culture that benefit artists, residents, and visitors alike.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The Town of Smiths Falls Arts Master Plan summarizes the Guiding Principles for public art in Town:

- Utilizes the landscape or nature and existing infrastructure
- Prioritizes areas in need of art enhancements
- Being accessible and understanding of community needs, wants, and desires
- Being inclusive, innovative, and tell stories relevant to the community
- Highlight local artists across all art forms
- Be showcased in accessible locations
- Foster artistic creativity within the Town.

STRATEGIC FOCUS

Public art will incorporate the following project parameters and can include murals, sculpture, performances, and arts events:

PUBLIC ART CAPITAL PROJECTS

Public Art Capital Projects to be included in the Town's capital planning and budgeting process taking new and refurbished facilities, parks, and infrastructure into consideration. Artwork will be accessioned into and deaccessioned from the Town's Collection.

ART IN PUBLIC PLACES

The Town will create opportunities to foster diverse cultural expression in municipally owned spaces, public areas, and neighborhoods by commissioning and displaying temporary public artwork in various art forms, including temporary art and street art. These works will not be integrated into the Town's Collection.

COMMUNITY ARTS, PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT, AND EDUCATION

Involving the local community will help shape the Town of Smiths Falls' commitment to fostering place making throughout the Town. Residents will be encouraged to actively participate in public and community arts initiatives through attendance, artistic creation, public consultations, educational activities, and promotional efforts. Projects aimed to support community arts, public engagement, and education will not be included in the Town's Collection.

DEVELOPING ARTISTS AND THE ARTS AND CULTURAL SECTOR

To foster the growth of local artists, curators, and cultural workers through training programs, mentorships, and workshops for emerging artists across diverse disciplines. This aims to enhance the quality, frequency, and diversity in cultural programs. In turn, this will support employment opportunities for the cultural sector and help to retain working professional artists within the Town.

PUBLIC ART INCLUSION PROGRAM

Promoting the integration of public art into major building developments by infusing the concept in urban design and land use planning procedures. Municipal staff will provide support to private developers and other public entities in procuring, funding, and the care of public art.

SMITHS FALLS ARTS MASTER PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

A. Create a structured framework to expand and preserve public art within the municipality.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- A1. Adopt a Public Art Policy that provides the municipality with guidelines to acquire, manage, and maintain and/or decommission public art assets.
- A2. Establish a Public Arts Advisory Committee (PAAC) that will implement the Arts Master Plan Policy, make recommendations for future public art initiatives and programs and review and make recommendations of public art installations related to the CIP Façade Improvement Program.
- A3. Develop public art commissioning guidelines and associated templates for proposal submissions, evaluation and approval, and includes public engagement opportunities as part of the acquisition process.
- A4. Develop a Master List of current (and future) Public Art Assets to identify ownership, assess and monitor condition, and maintenance requirements and agreements.
- A5. Establish a Public Art Deaccession Management Plan and include Public Art Assets into the Municipalities Asset Management Plan.
- A6. Work with Planning and Building Department staff to increase the percentage for public art integration as part of its planning approval policies and processes.

B. Foster and support placemaking through public art investments.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- B1. Collaborate with artists, arts organizations, and other arts partners including local schools and organizations to grow opportunities for digital-based and performing arts initiatives (outdoor LED screens, digital projection/animation of monuments/buildings, buskers, outdoor theatre, etc.).
- B2. Develop a project list and costing for short term and long-term public art installations and project.

- B3. Explore the use of and support for pop-up, temporary, functional and integrated public art, including but not limited to tactical urbanism, street art, hoarding art, streetscaping, utility boxes, street banners, light posts, benches, and digital platforms.
- B4. Research, benchmark, and analyze viable options for alternate sources of public art funding include grants, partnerships, and/or sponsorships.
- B5. Integrate public art assets into tourism offerings and develop marketing and promotional materials.
- B6. Work with Public Works and Community Services Departments to identify opportunities for public art in capital and infrastructure improvements (benches, play equipment, manhole covers, water tower, bridges, retaining walls, lighting, etc.).

C. Establish financially conscious and structured approaches to supporting public art in Smiths Falls.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- D1. Review and make amendments to the Town of Smiths Falls Municipal Corporate Sponsorship, Advertisement, and Donation Policy (BY-LAW No. 10095-2019) to align with the needs of the Public Arts Policy.
- D2. Investigate a dedicated program budget and cost sharing opportunities to fund temporary and public art projects and events that animate public spaces and/or showcase artworks for a limited period of time.
- D3. Establish a Public Arts Capital Reserve to support future acquisitions, maintenance and deaccession of municipal Public Art assets.
- D4. Collaborate with public and private partners to identify opportunities for joint initiatives, to leverage additional capital funds, and to ensure the technical feasibility of new public art projects. These partnerships could include higher institutions of learning and creative industries.