

Executive Summary

Many cities in North America have municipally-administered and -funded public art programs. Rather than focusing on the commemorative and abstract sculpture that has characterized public art in the past, these programs provide for the creation of public art that is site-specific, relevant, meaningful, and accessible to citizens. Public art of this form has the potential of helping to create a unique sense of place or identity for a city. This report explores the idea of formulating such a public art program for the City of Kingston.

Three precedent case studies of public art programs are chosen for study. These are the programs in Seattle, Vancouver, and Ottawa.

Seattle's program was chosen as a precedent case study because it is one of the most well-known and widely-respected public art programs in North America, and is used as a prototype for other cities wishing to establish their own public art programs (Cruikshank & Korza 1988). Vancouver's program was chosen due to its strong community public art component; since this type of public art is community-generated, it has a high potential for creating a unique sense of place for the city. Ottawa's program was studied as Ottawa is similar to Kingston in terms of historical architecture, climate, and governmental context.

A qualitative approach was used for the analysis. A literature review revealed elements that are common to most public art programs. These elements include administrative structure, funding mechanisms, provisions for the maintenance of public artworks, artist selection process, and public education initiatives. An argument is presented for the place- or identity-making component of each of the programs, and these components

are described in detail. Seattle's place-making mechanism is the use of collaborative design teams; Vancouver's is the use of community public art and strong public participation in program administration and artist selection processes; and Ottawa's is the focus on local artists. Other programs were also studied, and examples from these programs are used for illustrative purposes.

The existing cultural infrastructure in Kingston is analyzed to determine the likelihood of implementation of a public art program. It is concluded that the climate is generally favourable for such a program. This conclusion is drawn for four reasons. First, the City of Kingston has included arts and cultural issues in its strategic planning exercise, indicating recognition of the importance of municipal consideration of and support for the arts. Second, the local economic development corporation and community arts council have jointly undertaken an initiative to determine the value of cultural tourism for the city, indicating local business recognition of the importance of the arts. Third, informal public art in Kingston, especially the more recent works, are taken as an acceptance of and interest in including art in the urban landscape. Finally, groups responsible for public art such as those on Queen's campus have begun to plan ahead for the siting of artworks.

Policies and guidelines are formulated for the proposed public art program for Kingston. The program should initially be based on civic initiatives and funds, but may be expanded to include a private sector component. It should focus solely on local artists, as it is argued that the use of local artists contributes to place-making.

Two specific components that are suggested for the program are community public art and civic public art through the use of collaborative design teams. Community public art

and the use of design teams in civic public art are chosen for their strengths in place-making.

An administrative structure is suggested that provides for public input into the administrative process. This is achieved through the use of a Public Art Committee composed of artists, arts professionals, architects, and members of the public to oversee the program. A staff member from Strategic and Long Range Planning should be designated to act as a program coordinator. Representatives from civic departments (Culture and Recreation Services, Parks, Public Works and Transportation, and Utilities Kingston) should be appointed to formulate project plans for public art, in cooperation with the staff liaison, to be presented to the Committee. Community groups, in collaboration with artists, propose public art projects in this structure. The project selection process should be performed annually. Final approval for all projects rests with City Council.

Funding, it is argued, should come from the municipal budget. In this regard, an annual budget should be formulated by the Planning staff liaison, and civic departments involved in the program should be required to allocate a certain proportion of their annual budgets to the program. A 'pooling' mechanism should be set up in order to provide for the most efficient and effective use of funds with final budgetary approval resting with City Council.

Artist selection panels should be established by the Public Art Committee, and have a mandatory citizen representation component.

Public education initiatives are a major component of the program. Information about the program and projects should be posted on the City of Kingston website, distributed in the form of brochures, and published in the Kingston Whig-Standard. Seminars and lectures would be held. Workshops could be provided for community groups wishing to take part in the community public art program.

An annual program evaluation mechanism would be established, and the program would be reviewed after three years in order to determine whether either reduction or expansion of the program scope should be considered. Suggestions are given for possible evaluation objectives and criteria including place-making, public accountability, funding usage, the success of design teams, and public reaction to artworks.

Limitations of the research must be taken into account. These relate to the size and nature of the sample used in the analysis, the lack of an evaluation mechanism for the precedent case studies, and the lack of input on the proposed guidelines from the arts community and municipal staff and politicians.

The cultural climate of Kingston seems to be conducive to the adoption of a local public art program at this time, and it is hoped that ideas from this report could be considered for possible implementation in the near future.