



WHAT WE HEARD REPORT (PART 1)

Public Art in Okotoks

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PREAMBLE

During the Alberta Centennial year in 2005, the Town of Okotoks Culture and Heritage Services conducted a Sculpture Symposium. Three sculptors created sandstone sculptures and suddenly Okotoks had a small public art collection.

On October 24, 2005, Okotoks Town Council approved Public Arts Program Guidelines (The Program) to provide direction for the acquisition, placement, maintenance and de-accession of public art works. The report recommended that the Town of Okotoks “begin the process towards” establishing The Program that would increase awareness, understanding, and acceptance of public art and involve community in the process of enhancing public space.



"The Town of Okotoks recognizes that the arts contribute to the quality of life of its citizens." -- Public Art Guidelines

The Program included two key sections:

1. Establishing a Public Art Advisory Committee as a sub-committee of the Culture, Parks, and Recreation Committee.
2. Establishing a maintenance fund.

Neither of these recommendations occurred for the following reasons:

1. Changes in management took place in Culture & Heritage Services between 2005 and 2009 and priorities shifted.
2. The Town of Okotoks assessed committee structures in 2013 and reduced the number of committees, making the establishment of a Public Art Advisory Committee contrary to direction.
3. The Town of Okotoks again analyzed committee structures in 2018 and reduced the number to key governance committees in favour of focusing on public engagement and specialized task forces.

PREAMBLE CONTINUED

Even without the formal establishment of the actions suggested in The Program, the Town of Okotoks has taken on numerous public art projects including:

1. The permanent mounting of the three sculptures created at the symposium at the Okotoks Art Gallery (2 sculptures) and the Okotoks Public Library (1 sculpture)
2. The donation of twenty original Bill Holder paintings
3. The donation of one Jeff Wilson painting
4. The Pubble People mural at the Okotoks Recreation Centre
5. The Canada Mural Mosaic train mural celebrating Canada's 150th birthday at the Pason Arena
6. Five "Art in the Hall" exhibit spaces in Town of Okotoks properties.
7. The Salute to Our Veterans memorial wall on Veteran's Way.
8. The Paint-a-Potty project in collaboration with Ecole Secondaire Foothills Composite High School/Alberta High School of Fine Arts



Further, several municipal changes have occurred over the past 13 years including a revised growth model, a community visioning exercise, and the creation of Growing Together: A Culture, Heritage & Arts Master Plan (CHAMP II) which will guide the Town of Okotoks for the next 15 to 20 years.

Item C1 in CHAMP II is "Develop public art policy & program." Culture and Heritage Services began to accomplish this in the fall of 2018 by engaging the community through a survey and a daylong public art session designed to inform and gather information from residents

This What We Heard Report presents the results of these engagements.

"the arts will affect the community in a fundamental and positive way" -- Public Art Guidelines

SURVEY METHOD

In September 2018, the Town of Okotoks issued a survey to the public with the following questions:

- 1** People have different understandings public art. What do you think about public art?
- 2** What places would you like to see public art as part of the community?
- 3** What type of public art would be the best for Okotoks?
- 4** How would you like to be involved with public art in Okotoks?
- 5** Why did you choose your top ranked selection to question four?
- 6** In what ways do you want to learn about public art in Okotoks?
- 7** How should the public art be paid for?
- 8** Do you have any other comments?



Sixty-eight people responded to the survey. This represents 0.23% of Okotoks 29,002 population (2018).

The following section presents a summary of those results and then identifies themes of responses with analysis.

Verbatim responses follow the thematic analysis.

"Public art provides a flavour to a community." -- Survey Response

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Overall this survey shows that respondents are in support of public art in general. However, a 0.23% response rate is low. This could be for various reasons, including:

- 1) Okotokians accept public art as presented
- 2) Public art is not a high priority for Okotokians
- 3) Okotoks residents are experiencing “survey fatigue,” or
- 4) The survey took place in late August through September when many residents were away on holidays or active returning to work and school.

Question one included eighteen questions about potential roles public art can play in Okotoks. The survey respondents suggested that public art can or does play a significant role in the lives of people in the community. Responses ranged from 39% of respondents saying that public art connects them to visitors and neighbors to 90% saying that it beautifies the community. Only five percent of responses said that public art is not something the community should support and 3% said they do not like public art. Sixty-five respondents answered this question and three skipped.

Question two queried respondents about where public art should be located. The survey revealed strong support of public art in places where people gather or pass by and that this can serve as an identifier. Eighty-nine percent recommended that downtown placement was important with a low of 5% responding that the community did not need public art. Sixty-six respondents answered this question and two skipped.



Question three considered what type of public art would be best for Okotoks with eighty-five percent of respondents focusing less on the actual type of art, but rather that Okotoks is best enlivened with art created by Alberta artists. This suggests that art and artists be selected using a method that includes a territorial anchoring, perhaps limiting the scope of Requests for Proposals to the province. The second most popular selection was murals or paintings, with functional art rising to the top of the survey. Only 6% said that public art was not suited for Okotoks. Sixty-five respondents answered this question and three skipped.

Question four asked how respondents would like to be involved in the public art process. Clearly, respondents want to be engaged in the art selection and location selection process. Sixty-one percent of respondents desired to be involved in both the selection of the art and the selection of the location. (Cont.)

SURVEY ANALYSIS

(Cont.) Several respondents skipped this question, suggesting involvement was less important than other elements of the process; however, responses to question five contradict this analysis. (This is addressed the Survey Themes section of this document.)

Sixty-one respondents answered this question and seven skipped.

Question five asked why respondents answered the way they did to question four. This question gauged what the community wanted and how they wanted to be involved. Culture and Heritage Services categorized the responses into 11 common themes. Each response that addressed the theme was given a score of one (1).

The themes were:

Want to be involved in selection and/or placement

Support -- responses stated support for public art.

Vibrant Community -- responses suggested that public art enhanced community in some way.

Do Not Support -- responses stated they did not support for public art.

Do Not Want To Be Involved -- responses stated they did not support for public art.

Municipal Lead --respondent felt the Town of Okotoks should solely lead the process.

Fund -- respondents mentioned anything about how public art should, or should not, be funded.



Govern -- respondents commented on anything to do with how public art should be governed in Okotoks.

Public Lead -- respondent felt the public should solely lead the process.

Inform & Engage -- respondent felt wanted to learn more but not necessarily be involved in the process.

Did Not Like Survey --respondent commented on the survey being faulty.

Fifty-six respondents answered question, 12 skipped.

Question six asked how respondents would like to learn about public art. Responses suggested that the best method to reach people was through Facebook and the Town of Okotoks Website. The top choices by respondents were social media with 35% and the Town of Okotoks website with 29%. The newspaper came in third with a significant drop to less than 10%. Other answers were negligible. All sixty-eight respondents answered this question.

SURVEY ANALYSIS

Question seven asked where public art funding should come from. Federal and Provincial grants* received the most support with 83%, with private donations (78%) and the Town of Okotoks (71%) coming in second and third. Sponsorship came in fourth with 67% support. Less than 5% of respondents said tax dollars should not be used to support public art. Sixty-eight respondents answered question.

Question eight asked whether respondents has any other comments, presenting an open forum for any areas not addressed. Responses were categorized into eight common themes and scored one when the response addressed the theme.

The themes were:

Vibrant Community -- responses suggested that public art enhanced community in some way.

Support -- respondents stated support for public art.

Fund -- respondents mentioned anything about how public art should, or should not, be funded.

Want to be involved in selection and/or placement -- respondent stated they wanted to be involved in selection and/or placement of public art.

Support Local --respondent stated that they preferred art created by local/provincial artists.

** Being that Federal and Provincial grants are most often matching grants, the Town would need to lead this process likely even if matching funds were presented by a private donation.*



What should the art look like --respondent commented on public art's appearance.

Do Not Support -- respondent stated they did not support for public art.

Inform & Engage -- respondent felt wanted to learn more but not necessarily be involved in the process.

Thirty-five respondents answered this question; thirty-three did not.

**"I believe the location public art is placed in is important [and] unveiling and dedicating of public art is an opportunity for the community to take part."
-- Survey Response**

QUESTION 1

People have different understandings of public art. What do you think about public art?
(Check all that apply)



- | | |
|--|----------|
| • Beautifies the community | • 90.32% |
| • Promotes artistry | • 77.42% |
| • Is something my community should support | • 77.42% |
| • Makes me think/provokes thoughts and conversation | • 62.90% |
| • Is something I'm proud of | • 62.90% |
| • Enhances community identity by providing meaning | • 58.06% |
| • Encourages and enhances community participation | • 53.23% |
| • Informs us about history | • 51.61% |
| • Encourages cultural connection | • 51.61% |
| • Entertains me | • 48.39% |
| • Provides something for me to interact with | • 46.77% |
| • Honours key events or people | • 46.77% |
| • Showcases the environment | • 45.16% |
| • Teaches us something | • 41.94% |
| • Promotes activity | • 35.48% |
| • Connects me to visitors and neighbors | • 38.71% |
| • Is something that should my community should not support | • 4.84% |
| • Is something I don't like | • 3.23% |

QUESTION 2

Where would you like to see public art as part of the community? (Check all that apply)



• Downtown	• 88.71%
• Parks and pathways	• 79.03%
• On street furniture i.e. utility boxes	• 77.42%
• In gathering spaces (Rec Centre, Arenas, etc.)	• 72.58%
• Sides of buildings	• 70.97%
• Along popular walking routes	• 69.35%
• Places that I don't expect it to be like under bridges, in alleys, or stairways.	• 62.90%
• In neighborhoods around Okotoks (ie. Cimarron, Mountainview, Tower Hill)	• 54.84%
• Gateways and community entrances	• 53.23%
• On main roads	• 41.94%
• Online	• 17.74%
• I don't want public art in Okotoks	• 4.84%

QUESTION 3

Which type of public art would be the best for Okotoks? (Check all that apply)



• Art created by Alberta artists	85.71%
• Large scale paintings or murals	80.95%
• Functional i.e. bike racks, water fountains, etc.	74.60%
• Sculptures	66.67%
• Nature-based i.e. fountains, flags, living vegetation walls	60.32%
• Performance-based art i.e. plays, literary readings, concerts, etc.	57.14%
• Interactive art	53.97%
• Art created by Canadian artists	47.62%
• Art created by Western Canadian artists	46.03%
• Technology-based i.e. auditory, video, light, etc.	33.33%
• Limited term i.e. remains in one place for time restricted periods	25.40%
• Art created by International artists	17.46%
• None	6.35

QUESTION 4

How would you like to be involved with public art in Okotoks? (Check all that apply)



Selection jury	• 61.02%
Location selection/recommendation	• 61.02%
Concept selection	• 52.54%
At the dedication of unveiling ceremony	• 45.76%
Request for Proposals/Quote review	• 32.20%

Sixty-one respondents answered this question and seven skipped.

QUESTION 5 THEMES

Why did you choose your answer to number 4?



QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I grew up in Okotoks and moved back to start a family. I feel I know this towns spaces inside and out. I am also a huge proponent of public art, if the process is done properly.
- I trust the town to have a process in place to do the selection/quote... process. I don't believe that asking everyone their personal opinion will move things ahead. That is the process of electing people that we trust will represent our best interest.
- Involvement
- Long term involvement with arts and culture in the community. It is an opportunity to see what we can do and tell other people about it.
- As a supplier, there could be a conflict
- I love public art. I have lived in lots of places (Ottawa, Toronto, Jerusalem, USA) and there was great public art. Calgary does DO public art, but watching them get it wrong twice now in the last few years (the rocks & sticks by Transcanada and the previous waste of public resources) makes me concerned as a new Okotoks resident that there needs to be better municipal oversight and that bad art shouldn't necessarily be publicly funded; there should be a moderate level of consensus re: what's acceptable.

QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- With my skill set, I would be well suited to event creation around public art
- I don't want to see a big blue ring like Calgary but want to see more art incorporated in Okotoks. Would like to see a neat bridge design like the Peace Bridge (but less expensive) for the footbridge
- Because I couldn't move on to number 6 without doing so!
- ?
- Art is something that is intepretive. Using the public perspective by many members of the public rather than just staff members keeps perspective fresh and new.
- I think as public art the community should be involved in the selection process
- Because people should participate in choosing the artist too
- Public art is an important way to define and enhance ones community. I support it and am willing to be involved in the process.
- Not sure I feel qualified to do any of the above
- Public art is a very important part of the community and I would enjoy being involved in any aspect that ensures projects would move forward through a thoughtful process.

QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I love art and think some of the Calgary decisions were poorly made. I'd like to have an opinion on what goes up in our town and what my taxes are funding.
- It would be rewarding to be able to contribute to the community in this way.
- I would like to have input into what public art is selected and where it goes!
- My time is too limited to serve on any committees but I would happily respond to polls about specific pieces and support unveilings!
- I believe the location public art is placed in is important, That unveiling and dedicating of public art is an opportunity for the community to take part. Being part of the jury would be my way of ensuring that I had my say in the process and avoiding problems like Calgary has had with their public art installations in the past.
- Because I have an appreciation for art, and I love to see beautiful art around town.
- The arts are very important to me and I plan on living in Okotoks for a long time. As such, I want to make sure the town has a healthy arts scene.
- I feel like people get hung up about weird things when it comes to public art. I have no qualifications, but I do feel like I could help balance the discussions.
- Can't complain if you're involved in the decision process. I also have a background in design and visual arts.

QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I could provide a valuable voice for the community as a local artist
- I feel I have a long time knowledge of Okotoks and area
- I've been on a selection jury before and very much enjoyed it, but I don't believe I would necessarily be the best person to decide the exact location of the pieces.
- I would love to be involved in the creation and support of public art as much as possible.
- Funny how this survey is written. I think the public should vote on. And decide if they want their tax dollars wasted on art.
- Because it's public money
- Because it's important to involve the community in decisions but would like a knowledgeable committee to narrow the appropriate choices first before presenting to the public
- I have taken my turn helping choose public art concepts, selection and locations for public art and I have assisted in finding funding for public art. It is someone else's turn.
- I want some part in the art community
- The public should have a say in which art or art form is displayed .
- I am an artist and I would love to be involved in the creation of public art and support of public art as much as possible.

QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- i love are in various forms, online, painting, sculpture but I am not an artist
- Like to see it presented. Like to have a say in where it ends up and what it is. Online vote or paper vote at an info session.
- Make sure we t is accessible to all
- Unnecessary spending! This is a want not a need!
- To ensure mayor and council do not put it somewhere that interrupts my neighbour and spend a fortune on it
- I'm not a resident of Okotoks - I live in Turner Valley so it's not appropriate for me to be on a selection jury or similar function
- I am a strong advocate of art that is accessible to the whole community and believe that Okotoks needs more.
- I feel it is important people choosing art for display in public have art knowledge or experience.
- Like to help create a positive cultural identity for Okotoks.
- I am very interested in Art in Okotoks
- As an art teacher and local artist, and a long time member of the OAG and the Okotoks Arts Council I would sincerely appreciate being involved in as many intricacies that this initiative would generate. This would provide for me a broader understanding of the world of public art within my community. And in addition, the experience would accommodate a deeper understanding when I take my art students' local field trips.

QUESTION 5

Why did you choose your answer to number 4? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I was involved with similar juries while president on the Okotoks Arts Council. In my business life, I also juried and arranged for shows.
- Prefer to be an observer.
- It's important to me to contribute to the society and very important that this should not be controlled by bureaucrats or a cabal of local artists
- This is how I can contribute
- Because that is how I would like to be involved
- I prefer to be on the spot point for encouraging and supporting our local/western Canadian artists.
- I think location is important. Calgary has had issues putting public art on roadways. They need to be viewed on foot to appreciate it.
- Past participation and the idea of having some input toward community art
- i am an artist, I have many years of jury experience and arts community development
- Like to see how other people react to it's unveiling
- So I can be part of what we choose.
- I'm not sure I'm qualified to be involved and don't have the time to do so.

QUESTION 6

How would you like to learn about public art in Okotoks?



• Social media - Facebook	34.92%
• Town website	28.57%
• Newspaper	9.52%
• Radio	6.35%
• Other	6.35%
• Artist talk	4.76%
• Artist website	3.17%
• Social media - Twitter	1.59%
• Social media - Instagram	1.59%
• Non-Town website	1.59%
• Word of mouth	1.59%
• Social media - Youtube	0.00%

• Sixty-eight respondents answered this question, zero skipped.

QUESTION 7

How should the public art be paid for? (Check all that apply)



- | | |
|---|----------|
| • Grants (Federal and Provincial) | • 82.54% |
| • Private Donations | • 77.78% |
| • Town of Okotoks | • 71.43% |
| • Sponsorships | • 66.67% |
| • Public art is not important to the community and should not be supported by tax dollars | • 4.76% |

QUESTION 8

THEMES

Do you have any other comments?



QUESTION 8

Do you have any other comments? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- The cities/towns around the world that I love all have beautiful, inspiring, thought provoking public art. Cities like Austin TX, Edmonton has just recently started an amazing public art program.
- I would love to see more arts around town. This could also be a way of attracting more visitors if promote the right way. (Online resources like kids booklets/ trésor hunts/ discovery tours...)
- No
- Not at this time.
- Look forward to seeing what will come out of this exercise, and seeing more art in our community
- What about art events like Scotiabank Nuit Blanche in Toronto? Could be a less expensive way for the Town to raise the interest in art in the community and have a bigger impact faster; art is also expensive unfortunately.
- Public art enhances the neighbourhood you live in. Plus it will draw visitors to the area and be good for local business. Sidney in B.C has wonderful sculptures along the seafront walk. It's donated to the town by the artists but all pieces are for sale. The town gets to vote on which art they buy to keep to leVe in place or move to an another area. Example, a bull dog on a skate board was purchased by the town and moved to the location of the new skate park.

QUESTION 8

Do you have any other comments? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I would like the public art to be tasteful since we are largely a community of young families. More provocative art could be viewed at places where largely adults only congregate
- You won't please everyone regardless of how this is done but at least if a variety of people provide opinions, it can be done for the majority rather than a few.
- n/a
- People should participate more in it
- Thanks for doing this. Look forward to seeing what unfolds.
- Some level of public engagement needs to be considered with any new public art, particularly if there is Town funding involved, with an understanding that final decision making comes from a designated, well-informed committee and jury.
- No
- It is not mandatory that art be local. Art is meant to assist us to empathize with people we otherwise couldn't. Therefore, it may be beneficial to have art shared from other places. We could have an exchange with a "Sister City".

QUESTION 8

Do you have any other comments? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- Prior to selecting artwork, it would be wise to obtain input from the communities involved (obviously) and ensure various means of communication to engage the public in the process. Supporting local, and Alberta artists should be a priority, but also providing the public with something to cherish and be proud of is equally key.
- This should be shared with the Public by more media radio, web site and social media but this survey only allowed one media Very important to our community
- I don't think our tax dollars should be paying for art. It should be private money . People are taxed enough in this town .
- Spending tax dollars on art means the government has lost sight of their mandate to provide services and art is not a service. Art needs to be user pay.
- Question six should be all that apply. I picked the first one and it went right on to number 7 before I could even read all of the answers.
- Thank you for consulting with the public. I doubt public input will influence decisions made. Survey results are usually manipulated to achieve a predetermined outcome.
- Let's support art in any way we can
- Public art is an accepted way to show community to locals and visitors.

QUESTION 8

Do you have any other comments? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- #6 - only let us choose one answer?? Answer: all social media sites, newspaper, radio, signs around town. Art is good. Ugly and terrible art (i.e.: Bowfort Towers and that naked mermaid by the library) are bad. Go less “out there” and more “blend in” to add to the town - not make the news cycle for the wrong reasons. Oh, and not pay \$1M - no matter what the art is. LOTS of local unknown artists would happily contribute for way less.
- No
- So many other projects this money could go to!
- Art stimulates creative thinking in all aspects of life. It is important.
- Thanks
- Yes, I would have liked to have selected all of the options listed on question #6;) And would like to see more education on their importance of supporting local artists and more emphasis on local artists' achievements within Okotoks.
- I support this greatly and hope to not only see more public art in Okotoks but be part of it.
- Local artists should be the main focus!
- need to be very careful if funded by sponsorship, especially corporate, as they will often come with strings attached

QUESTION 8

Do you have any other comments? (verbatim answers, without edits to spelling or grammar)



- I think art is communal and therefore needs to start at the grassroots. Funded by the town, private donations, and grants that enable artists to produce work, and in turn subsidize business owners to show/participant in making the arts a viable part of our town. Increased arts brings increased visitors!
- A theme that makes us unique. Something repeated throughout town that draws in visitors. Much like Chemainus BC has murals we need an art project all over town that sets us apart.
- I would like to learn about public art from all sources. All public art provides a flavour to a community.
- Q 6 did not allow multiple choices...as I wanted to pick several, I chose "Other" Q7 The last choice "no tax \$" is poorly worded and confuses 2 issues
- No
- Please learn from Calgary of what NOT to do. Victoria and Vancouver BC are much better examples of finding pleasing public art pieces.