

City of Oshawa: Mural Art Evaluation Plan

Created by STEPS Public Art for the City of Oshawa



Notice of Revision to Document Content

Pursuant to City Council's direction at the October 28, 2024 meeting, regarding report ED-24-112: Mural Art Evaluation Plan, the "Recommendations on the Existing Murals" section (pages 51 to 62) has been removed to ensure the document reflects information endorsed by City Council.

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Land Acknowledgement

The City of Oshawa is situated on lands within the traditional and treaty territory of the Michi Saagiig and Chippewa Anishinaabeg and the signatories of the Williams Treaties, which include the Mississaugas of Scugog Island, Hiawatha, Curve Lake, and Alderville First Nations, and the Chippewas of Georgina Island, Rama and Beausoleil First Nations.

We are grateful for the Anishinaabeg who have cared for the land and waters within this territory since time immemorial.

We recognize that Oshawa is steeped in rich Indigenous history and is now present day home to many First Nations, Inuit and Métis people. We express gratitude for this diverse group of Indigenous Peoples who continue to care for the land and shape and strengthen our community.

'Oshawa' stems from an Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) word meaning "a crossing place" and has further translation as "the point at the crossing of the stream where the canoe was exchanged for the trail". When the word Oshawa was chosen as the name of our City, it reflected and recognized the importance of water and land to our community. Our City's name is a reminder of this important and powerful connection between people and place in the past but also of the present and for the future.

As a municipality, we are crossing over. We are committed to understanding the truth of our shared history, acknowledging our role in addressing the negative impacts that colonization continues to have on Indigenous Peoples, developing reciprocal relationships, and taking meaningful action toward reconciliation.

We are all Treaty people.

Acknowledgements

The City of Oshawa Mural Art Evaluation Plan was developed in partnership between the City of Oshawa Economic and Development Services, staff and the consulting team from STEPS Public Art, in consultation with the Cultural Leadership Council, Public Art Task Force and community members.

STEPS Public Art Team:

- Anjuli Solanki, Program Director
- Sam Mitjavile, Cultural Planning Manager
- Madison Kennedy, Cultural Planner
- Ima Esin, Cultural Planner
- Jo-Ann Bui, Cultural Planning Researcher

Executive Summary

Following the disbandment of the Downtown Action Committee (D.A.C.) in 2008, the City of Oshawa retained ownership of the D.A.C. mural program, including files, agreements and commitments. In 2023, the City of Oshawa hired STEPS Public Art, a charitable organization dedicated to fostering vibrant communities through public art. STEPS Public Art, renowned for its expertise in creating public art installations and developing art strategies, was tasked with reviewing 15 downtown murals originally created by the D.A.C. between the 1990s and early 2000s and develop a clear framework for the evaluation, management, maintenance and potential deaccessioning of these murals in the City of Oshawa's Public Art Collection over the next five years.

The planning process involved:

- Engagement with 207 stakeholders, including City staff, Cultural Leadership Council representatives, Public Art Task Force members, local public artists and 188 community members through a Feedback Form, to assess perceptions of the current murals and identify hopes and desires for the future of mural art in Oshawa;
- Research into best practices for the creation, maintenance, evaluation and deaccessioning of mural art, through a review of guidelines published by professional organizations specialized in the creation and conservation of mural art, an analysis of public art policies in various municipalities and the identification of inspiring case studies;
- Review of the history of the downtown murals, their legal status, and condition evaluation;
- Research on Oshawa's cultural context and current public art scene.

The present report complements existing policies, offers recommendations on the future of the 15 downtown murals under review, and provides guidelines and practical recommendations for the management of City of Oshawa murals, with specific focuses on maintenance and deaccession procedures.

Introduction

In the 1990s and early 2000s, the Downtown Action Committee¹ led the creation of numerous murals on behalf of the City of Oshawa within the City's downtown core. The remaining 15 murals, currently present on public and private properties, depict significant historical, cultural and social chapters in Oshawa's history.

The murals constitute a significant portion of the City of Oshawa's public art collection and have notable historical significance. However, created between 23 and 29 years ago, these works are nearing the end of their life expectancy; with the lifetime for exterior murals being generally considered to be between 10 and 20 years. Condition reports conducted in 2015, 2017 and 2022 showed these works were in various states of disrepair. In addition, the community consultation conducted during the development of the 2018 Public Art Master Plan revealed a strong desire for the existing murals to be updated and for there to be a more contemporary approach for future mural art.

Additionally, the growing municipal investment in public art creation and the support for downtown revitalization, formalized through Plan20Thirty, approved in 2022, offer an opportunity to review the role murals can play in beautifying downtown Oshawa.

In 2023, STEPS Public Art, a charitable organization dedicated to fostering vibrant communities through public art, with expertise in the creation of public art installations and the development of public art strategies, was hired by the City of Oshawa to conduct this review and offer a clear framework for the evaluation, management, maintenance, and possible deaccessioning of murals in the City of Oshawa's Public Art Collection, for the next five years. The present report complements existing policies, offers recommendations on the future of the remaining 15 downtown murals under review, and provides guidelines and practical recommendations for the management of City of Oshawa murals, with specific focuses on maintenance and deaccession procedures.

¹ This organization, which has since been disbanded, played a similar role to a Downtown Business Improvement Area.

Project Context

Background Information on the Downtown Murals

The 15 murals under review were commissioned between 1995 and 2001, in many cases through the since-disbanded Downtown Action Committee.

Information on the artists, themes and styles of the works

The artworks showcase the history of Oshawa, depicting significant milestones (detailed information on the murals' themes can be consulted in Appendix A, on page 87). Two of the works, located on Simcoe St. South in the carriageway, were created by several students of the O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and the Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School. The other artworks were created by nine artists, including one artist duo (Dan and Peter Sawatzky). As highlighted by many engagement participants, the works are very similar in style, espousing a realistic approach. This impression is reinforced by the fact that some of the mural creators were hired for several works: Tony Johnson created three murals, John Hood painted two works (including the series of panels depicting General Motors history), and two were authored by Robin Burgesse.

Legal status, Heritage Designations and potential impact of current projects

The works belong to the City of Oshawa's public art collection and full ownership of the artworks lie with the City. The City is responsible for the cost of the repair, insurance for the artwork, and removal for all 15 murals. Nine of the murals are located on private property.

The murals are located in the downtown core, in a concentrated area, in walking distance from one another. Key landmarks in the murals' immediate proximity include Oshawa City Hall, the Arts Resource Centre, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery, Oshawa Public Libraries – McLaughlin Branch and the Canadian Automotive Museum.

The following murals intersect with heritage designated properties as of May 2024:

- "Ontario Regiment – 130 Years of Service" and "Windfields Farm", 110 Simcoe St. S., are located in Memorial Park on the McLaughlin Bandshell. Memorial Park is a heritage designated property. By-Law 10-2024 includes the mural "Ontario Regiment – 130 Years of Service" as a heritage attribute, as well as the McLaughlin Bandshell. "Windfields Farm" is not listed as a heritage attribute in By-Law 10-2024.
- "Camp X", 100 Simcoe St. S., is located on a heritage-designated property but the mural is not listed as a heritage attribute in the designation By-Law 7-2020.
- "Oshawa 1935", 23 King St. W., is located on a heritage inventory Class A property.

- “Famous Oshawa Generals”, 78 King St. W., is located on a heritage inventory Class A property.
- “Oshawa 75th anniversary”, 121 Simcoe St. S., is located on a heritage inventory Class B property.

Three artworks are located on a building that is considered for redevelopment, the Go Bus Station at 47 Bond St. W., these murals include: “General Motors of Canada” murals, “Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary”, and “Oshawa’s Development (Historical Industry and Development)”.

Materiality and Physical Condition

To the exception of “Windfields Farm” and “Ontario Regiment – 130 Years of Services”, which are located on the McLaughlin Bandshell in Memorial Park as well as “Kingston Road Stage Coach” and “Skae’s Corner”, located in a carriageway on Simcoe St. South., which are painted on 1/8-inch plaster material embedded with a mesh stability layer, the other artworks were created on 1-inch thick Styrofoam type material covered with 1/8-inch of plaster embedded with a mesh stability layer affixed to the walls. This format has proven little resistant to the environmental damage accrued over time, and the colours of most murals are faded. In addition, the Styrofoam panels are very fragile. Due to the construction method, the murals could not be removed in one piece. Relocating the murals would be impractical. In addition to condition reports which are completed by the City, STEPS Public Art completed an evaluation in June 2023 (see Research Findings, Site and Condition Evaluation, page 20).

Public Art in Oshawa

Since the creation of the downtown murals in the mid to late 1990s and early 2000s, the City of Oshawa’s support for public art has continued. The public art collection has grown to include a number of sculptures. Notable works include Ron Baird’s “Oshawa Rising”, installed in 2011 inside City Hall and Noel Harding’s work “Reverb”, an impactful 19 feet high work acquired in partnership with The Robert McLaughlin Gallery in 2016 and installed outside Tribute Communities Centre, Durham Region’s premier sports and recreation facility.²

Furthermore, in the past 10 years, the City has advanced its arts and culture mandate and formalized its processes for public art acquisition through the development of key policies. The City’s Public Art Policy was approved in 2015 and followed by the Public Art Master Plan, approved in 2018, which offered a roadmap for the implementation of recommendations listed in the Public Art Policy.

² The [“Public Artworks” webpage](#) on the City of Oshawa’s website lists works present in the City’s public art collection.

The management of public art falls under the purview of the City of Oshawa's Economic Development Services branch. Following the recommendations included in the Public Art Policy, a Public Art Task Force was established in 2017. This volunteer committee supported the development and implementation of the Public Art Master Plan (P.A.M.P.), while advising the City of Oshawa on public art policies and priorities, reviewing public art donations, and making recommendations on juried public art competitions. The Public Art Task Force is currently composed of community representatives and members of local cultural organizations and of the Cultural Leadership Council.

Existing Policies

The Mural Art Evaluation Plan complements existing policies for the management of public art in Oshawa, and supports the priorities identified in recent municipal plans. Key policies and their relevance for the current report are summarized below.

Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan (approved in 2014)

"Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan," the City of Oshawa's Cultural Plan identified six strategic priorities and a list of strategies and action items to help Oshawa achieve its vision for culture, making Oshawa a city in which:

"Culture counts. Cultural vitality is widely acknowledged as essential to making Oshawa a creative, vibrant and sustainable community in which people and businesses are proud to live, work, learn and play. Culture engages and inspires residents and is a source of civic pride. Oshawa's strong creative cultural industries are major economic drivers in a thriving creative economy attracting talent and investment regionally, nationally and internationally. A 'culture of design' infuses decisions, producing a city that boasts a vital downtown and beautiful places throughout the community. Oshawa has embraced a vision of a living heritage connecting past and present and encompassing the diverse cultural traditions of all its residents. The City of Oshawa is recognized as a leading municipality integrating culture into all facets of planning and decision-making."³

The development of policies based on sound evidence and investment in public art initiatives was identified as one of the strategies supporting Strategic Direction 5, "Create Vibrant Places and Spaces."⁴ The following action items were identified:

- Review the City's existing mural program;
- Finalize and implement the Oshawa Public Art Policy and Program;

³ City of Oshawa, Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, 2014, p. 39, "A Vision for Arts and Culture".

⁴ Ibidem, p. 63.

- Establish a Public Art Committee to manage juried competitions for the City; and
- Establish a Public Art Fund.

This recommendation was followed with the development of the Public Art Policy and Public Art Master Plan, and the creation of the Public Art Reserve Fund. The Mural Art Evaluation Plan complements these documents, created to orient decision-making as it relates to public art initiatives.

Public Art Policy (approved in 2015)

The Public Art Policy provides a clear and consistent framework related to the administration, selection, and maintenance of public art in Oshawa. It was developed in consultation with community members and approved in 2015. The development of the Public Art Policy and of the ensuing Public Art Master Plan was a direct response to the City of Oshawa's cultural plan "Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan".

The framework includes guidelines for the deaccession of public art. City staff, in collaboration with the Public Art Task Force, will consider artwork(s) for deaccessioning when appropriate or necessary, and will provide a report to City Council for approval outlining the reasons for deaccessioning and the proposed method of disposal.

The Policy outlines situations under which a work might be deaccessioned:

- The art is deteriorating and restoration is not feasible
- The art is no longer relevant to the City's Public Art Inventory
- The art endangers public safety
- The art is too costly to insure or maintain
- The site is no longer accessible to the public and an alternative location cannot be found
- The art is discovered to have been stolen, or was offered to the City using fraudulent means
- Other situations, determined in the City's sole opinion

The Mural Art Evaluation Plan further defines relevant criteria for consideration when assessing the potential deaccession of a mural.

Public Art Master Plan (approved in 2018)

The Public Art Master Plan (P.A.M.P) was developed as a roadmap for the implementation of the City of Oshawa's Public Art Program, guiding its public art initiatives from 2018 to 2028. It extends the Public Art Policy and aligns with the existing policy frameworks from Oshawa's Strategic Plan, Downtown Plan 20Thirty, Active Transportation Master Plan, and the Diversity and Inclusion Plan.

The P.A.M.P. articulates:

- A city-wide vision for Oshawa's Public Art Program: "Oshawa will be a community where Public Art is innovative, diverse, and accessible to create vibrant public spaces and meaningful connections";
- A framework for site selection as well as identifying specific sites/potential projects, which notes sites should maximize the following objectives:
 - High visibility and public accessibility;
 - Cultural and/or historical significance to the community;
 - High response rate during the public consultation; and
 - Greater opportunity to link with other City projects (e.g., capital projects, special events);
- The prioritization of locations and future Public Art projects;
- A review of the mural program, including recommendations; and
- A proposed funding model for future acquisition and long-term care of Public Artworks.

The recommendations developed in the Mural Art Evaluation Plan will support the vision and be aligned with the guiding principles identified in the P.A.M.P.

The downtown area, where the murals under review are located, is identified in the P.A.M.P. as the first priority zone for public art due to its high volume of pedestrians, the concentration of businesses, services and retail and the presence of public transit nodes. The P.A.M.P. also notes that this area received the highest interest during the public consultation. In addition, Memorial Park, where two of the murals under consideration are located, was identified as one of the three key sites in this area that could be enhanced through public art installations.

Furthermore, the document includes a review of the existing Mural Program. As part of this review community consultation was conducted, which highlighted varied viewpoints on the downtown murals. The P.A.M.P. noted that "residents proudly cited the murals in the downtown core as a unique and special element to Oshawa's Public Art collection"⁵, while recording a "strong desire for the existing murals to be updated and a contemporary approach to mural arts be applied for any future mural projects."⁶ In addition, the P.A.M.P. mentioned that the murals were nearing their life expectancy while alerting on the fact that the temporary nature of mural artworks can be difficult for non-specialists to comprehend.

The Mural Art Evaluation Plan supports the recommendation made following the Mural Program review, which identified the need for a case-by-case study of each site to determine whether each mural should be relocated, repainted, deaccessioned or replaced by a new mural and suggested for more varied approaches to be considered.

⁵ City of Oshawa, Public Art Master Plan 2018-2028, p. 35.

⁶ Ibidem, p. 34.

Plan 20Thirty – Action Plan for Continued Downtown Revitalization (approved in June 2022)

In June 2022, Oshawa City Council approved Plan20Thirty, a new downtown revitalization action plan. Developed by a committee representing various economic sectors, this plan aims to support the revitalization of downtown Oshawa while promoting a business-friendly environment that supports further investment, expansion and retention of commercial entities in downtown Oshawa.

Plan20Thirty identifies seven strategic pillars in their action items to achieve the vision of creating “A Lively and Modern Urban Centre Where All Thrive.”⁷ The Mural Art Evaluation Plan supports action item 5 of Pillar 3 in the plan, which seeks to develop a renewed plan for murals in downtown Oshawa, balancing the preservation of historic murals with allocating a suitable budget for new murals and ongoing maintenance.

Additionally, Pillar 3 of Plan 20Thirty recognizes the value of developing public art to beautify physical spaces, suggesting opportunities for public art creations in the area (gateway features). Action item 4 of this pillar suggests the identification of potential surfaces for new art integrated on private buildings through the creation of a directory of willing property owners.

In 2023, Oshawa City Council approved the Economic Development Strategy which identifies public art initiatives within the “Cultural Vitality” strategic framework. Specifically, the action item notes that the City should “Commission, as per a defined business case/economic impact assessment, public art installations and sculptures to beautify public spaces and create a sense of cultural identity” and “Establish public art and locational criteria to guide investment”.

Installing Art on Private Property in the Downtown

Pursuant to Report ED-23-103 presented to Council by the Economic and Development Services Department on May 29, 2023⁸, the Public Art Policy has been amended to expand its definition of public art to permit the installation of City initiated art projects on private property in the downtown area, thereby significantly expanding the number of available canvases for public art.

⁷ City of Oshawa, Plan 20Thirty – Action Plan for Continued Downtown Revitalization, p. 2.

⁸ City of Oshawa, Public Report, Subject: Installing Art on Private Property in the Downtown, May 3, 2023.

Why a Mural Art Evaluation Plan?

The Benefits and Impacts of Public Art

Public art refers to the creative expressions across various mediums that are intentionally placed in public spaces, accessible to the community at no cost. According to the American Association for Public Art, public art is defined by “the unique association of how it is made, where it is, and what it means. Public art can express community values, enhance our environment, transform a landscape, heighten our awareness, or question our assumptions. Placed in public sites, this art is there for everyone, a form of collective community expression.”⁹

Public art can provide multiple social, cultural and economic benefits¹⁰. The establishment of clear policies helps municipalities leverage these positive impacts to help their cities thrive.

Social benefits

Public art meaningfully contributes to quality of life and community well-being, as public artworks beautify neighbourhoods, foster a unique sense of place and engage residents.

Furthermore, strengthened community pride can lead to additional social benefits, such as increased environmental stewardship and reduced likelihood of vandalism, creating a renewed commitment to caring for public spaces. By activating spaces that have been neglected or are suffering from disinvestment, these areas can experience increased foot traffic and a renewed sense of value. Underserved neighbourhoods stand to gain the most from strategic placemaking initiatives—such as public art projects—which have the potential to breathe new life into these communities.¹¹

Creating and engaging with art can also offer a multitude of mental and physical health benefits. Research has shown that this is most effectively achieved when the community is included in the public art process, and can cultivate a sense of ownership through participating in public consultation, workshops, and collaborative art creation surrounding the work.

⁹ Association for Public Art, “What is Public Art”, <https://www.associationforpublicart.org/what-is-public-art/>, consulted August 30, 2023.

¹⁰ STEPS Public Art and Toronto Metropolitan University, “[Inspired Art Impact: Public Art Measurement and Implementation Toolkit for Business Improvement Areas](#)”, literature review of the observed beneficial impacts of public art, p. 14-18, 2023.

¹¹ Housing Matters, “[How Public Art Can Improve Quality of Life and Advance Equity](#)”, Caitlin Young, November 16, 2022.

Cultural benefits

Public art celebrates local culture. A pivotal aspect of its presence is how it can nurture local pride and foster appreciation for the area. Beyond their aesthetic appeal, public artworks can be utilized to share information about a place, and educate the public about culture, history, heritage, politics, social issues and more.¹² It is an effective tool for storytelling and can initiate social change. This makes art a powerful tool for advocacy.

In addition, public art is a freely accessible art form that can be accessed by diverse audiences. This contributes to making art less exclusive, by reaching audiences who might not otherwise frequent museums or other cultural institutions due to economic or social barriers to participation. This was especially underlined in the responses to the community feedback form circulated during the planning process for the Public Art Master Plan: respondents viewed public art as a “more democratic form of art.”¹³

Economic benefits

Moreover, the presence of public art has been connected to economic growth in an area as it stimulates cultural tourism. This increase in tourism can attract new businesses and residents to the area, increasing spending in neighbourhoods and creating new employment opportunities. In addition, the presence of public art can encourage residents to spend more time in public areas, and result in increased spending.¹⁴ Vibrant, notable artworks, and intelligent placemaking can also help a city position itself as a “creative city”-following the concept developed by urban theorists such as Charles Landry¹⁵ and Richard Florida¹⁶-, resulting in increased attraction for workers and businesses.

Expected Outcomes of the Present Report

The Mural Art Evaluation Plan will:

- Outline recommendations for the future of the Oshawa downtown murals;
- Establish a clear framework for the evaluation, management, maintenance, and deaccessioning of mural art over the next five years, ensuring that the maintenance and deaccessioning of mural art can be effectively implemented;

¹² STEPS Public Art and Toronto Metropolitan University, “[Inspired Art Impact: Public Art Measurement and Implementation Toolkit for Business Improvement Areas](#)”, 2023.

¹³ City of Oshawa, Public Art Master Plan, p. 11.

¹⁴ STEPS Public Art and Toronto Metropolitan University, “[Public Art Measurement and Implementation Toolkit for Business Improvement Areas](#)”, 2023.

¹⁵ Landry, Charles, *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*, 2000.

¹⁶ Florida, Richard, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 2002.

- Outline challenges and opportunities for the development of a mural art ecosystem that will support the revitalization of downtown Oshawa;
- Help promote a culture of vibrant public art, by providing guidelines for managing future and existing mural art projects in the city that are based on current best practices and designed to assist the City of Oshawa in leveraging the potential benefits of public art.

Methodology

The Mural Art Evaluation Plan identifies a set of guiding principles for the management, maintenance and deaccession of murals. These principles were informed by insights collected through a research and engagement process conducted by STEPS Public Art.

The approach adopted for the development of the Mural Art Evaluation Plan rested on:

- Examining current uses and opportunities for use by mapping, documenting, and identifying area nodes, connections, barriers and stakeholders;
- Connecting with local stakeholders, including residents, businesses, municipal departments, and community, arts and culture organizations;
- Exploring existing approaches and methods of mural management, maintenance, and deaccession;
- Advising mural art production approaches through community and artist insights, and industry best-practices, installations, services, programming, and public space innovations.

Our methodology included the following three phases:

Framing Phase

- Collection of insights on the current state of the downtown murals, objectives for public art in Oshawa, and challenges and opportunities presented by mural art in the downtown area, through three focus groups with 11 City staff members and members of the Cultural Leadership Council and the Public Art Task Force.
- Background research on Oshawa's socio-demographic and economic context.
- Review of relevant City of Oshawa plans and policies, of previous condition reports for the downtown murals, and of information on the buildings on which the current murals are located (e.g., identification of redevelopment plans for certain locations).
- Analysis of public art policies and maintenance and deaccession guidelines in comparable municipalities.
- In-depth discussions with STEPS staff members and partners with expertise in the production and maintenance of mural artworks, to identify key relevant criteria for evaluating existing murals.

- Based on the collected information, the definition of a preliminary framework for the assessment of the existing murals was created.

Evaluation Phase

- Site visit: physical condition evaluation of the downtown murals, site assessment, identifying the co-visibility, use and physical condition of the buildings on which current murals are located.
- Collection of the insights, hopes and desires for the current murals and the future of mural art in the city through the engagement of key stakeholders: facilitation of one virtual roundtable with local artists and distribution of an online Feedback Form to residents, through ConnectOshawa.
- Based on the insights collected, development of recommendations for each of the murals under consideration.

Reporting Phase

- Development of the Mural Art Evaluation Plan, which includes research and engagement findings, recommendations for the maintenance, renovation, relocation or deaccession of current murals, a mural maintenance and deaccessioning framework strategy and recommendations for future mural projects.

Research Findings

Research: Context Analysis and Consultation

Background: Oshawa's history and recent development

The city of Oshawa is a vibrant city located in the province of Ontario, Canada in the Greater Golden Horseshoe region. It is the largest city in the Regional Municipality of Durham, situated on the northern shore of Lake Ontario, approximately 60 kilometers east of downtown Toronto. The City of Oshawa has seen a steady growth in its population over the last decade. In 2021, the city had a population of 175,383 – a ten percent increase from 2016¹⁷, which is double the provincial and federal rates. This population growth has been fueled by economic factors as well as the city's proximity to the Greater Toronto Area.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, "[Statistics Canada Census](#)", consulted August 5, 2023.

The City of Oshawa has a rich economic history which had a strong focus on manufacturing and automotive industries. General Motors (GM) has had a dominant presence in the City of Oshawa, as the company has operated a major assembly plant in the area for over a century.

While the automotive industry remains an important sector in Oshawa, the city has diversified its industries to include other sectors such as health care technology, education, advanced manufacturing, logistics, energy and IT¹⁸. The city is home to several notable post-secondary education institutions, such as Durham College, Ontario Tech University, Trent University Durham GTA and Queen's University School of Family Medicine in partnership with Lakeridge Health. Alongside these institutions, the Regional Innovation Centre (Spark Centre) offers start-up facilities for entrepreneurs and small businesses. These organizations play an important role in attracting national and international students, new residents and providing skilled labour to various industries in Oshawa and the surrounding regions.

Downtown Oshawa has been identified as an Urban Growth Centre in the Government of Ontario's Places to Grow initiative¹⁹. These centres are defined as places that are focal areas for investment in institutional and region-wide public services, to attract provincially, nationally or internationally significant employment uses and to accommodate a significant share of population and employment growth²⁰. More than 8,000 people work in the area and more than 3000 university students study in the downtown core²¹. Downtown Oshawa has many sports, culture and entertainment establishments, including the Canadian Automotive Museum, Ontario Philharmonic Orchestra, OSCC55+, Oshawa Public Libraries (McLaughlin Branch), Oshawa Sports Hall of Fame, Regent Theatre Ontario Tech, The Robert McLaughlin Gallery (R.M.G.) and post-secondary institutional campuses (e.g., Ontario Tech, Trent University Durham GTA Advanced Learning Centre), in addition to many independent events and entertainment venues, restaurants, bars, and cafes. Oshawa's downtown also boasts proximity to natural elements, such as bike paths, trails, the Oshawa Valley Botanical Gardens, Memorial Park, Civic Square, and the Oshawa Creek.

In 2019, the Durham Region Profile reported that Oshawa had the most jobs in the Durham region (27.7%), followed by Whitby (21%) and Pickering (16.9%). Durham Workforce Authority has reported that the unemployment rate in Oshawa was at 6.1%, below the provincial unemployment rate at 6.9 % and the national unemployment rate at 6.2%, as of June 2024²².

There are many natural assets across Oshawa, with 155 parks and approximately 40 km of paved trail. Notably the city has the Second Marsh Wildlife Area and Purple Woods Conservation

¹⁸ City of Oshawa website, "[Key Sectors](#)", consulted August 5, 2023.

¹⁹ Invest Durham website, "[City of Oshawa profile](#)", consulted August 5, 2023.

²⁰ Neptis website, "[Urban Growth Centres](#)", consulted August 5, 2023.

²¹ City of Oshawa website, "Operating a Business Downtown", <https://www.oshawa.ca/en/business-development/operating-a-business-downtown.aspx>

²² Durham Workforce Authority, "[Labour Force Report – June 2024](#)", consulted July 24, 2024.

Area. In 2014, the City of Oshawa launched their Cultural Map initiative that locates over 500 cultural assets in the city, from festivals and events, to heritage sites, cultural facilities and venues and existing public art.

Oshawa is a dynamic city, with a rapidly changing identity. The growth of the city's industries, demographics, and population contributes to a desire for a review of its public art identity in its downtown core. With Plan20Thirty and with the review conducted in the Mural Art Evaluation Plan, the City can begin to implement new revitalization initiatives.

Background: City of Oshawa Downtown

While there is a lot of economic opportunity in Oshawa, Oshawa's Downtown area has been identified as a Priority Neighbourhood by the Durham Region Health Department's Health Neighbourhoods project. Priority Neighbourhoods experience lower income levels, higher unemployment, and experience health challenges through a variety of health indicators.²³

There are many cities across North America that are experiencing an increase in mental health challenges, substance use, and housing needs, including downtown Oshawa. The livelihood of the downtown Oshawa community and the health and safety of the community members has been highlighted as a top priority for the Region of Durham and the City of Oshawa, and the revitalization initiative, Plan20Thirty, introduced by Oshawa City Council in June 2022, reflects this.

Plan 20Thirty comes at a critical time in downtown Oshawa's recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. The items included within Plan 20Thirty are extensive and support the revitalization of downtown Oshawa while enhancing business friendly environments that promote further investment, expansion and retention of commercial entities in downtown Oshawa.

In total, 60 action items were identified in the plan across seven core pillars to improve the community in downtown Oshawa:

1. Business Growth, Expansion & Retention
2. Residential Growth
3. The Physical Environment
4. Social Experience
5. Communications

²³ Durham Region website, "Downtown Oshawa Support", <https://www.durham.ca/en/living-here/downtown-oshawa-support.aspx>, consulted August 5, 2023.

6. Modernization & Innovation
7. Customer Service & Red Tape Reduction

In particular, Pillar 1: Business Growth, Expansion & Retention, and Pillar 3: The Physical Environment relate to advancing the mandate of the City's public art initiatives.

Initiatives related to Pillar 1 include promoting better business facade appearance and signage in downtown Oshawa, with one of the strategies to provide "accessible and artistic resources to facilitate more attractive facades in the Urban Growth Centre".

Initiatives related to Pillar 3 include creating a directory of property owners in the downtown area that are willing to have public art installations/murals on their property. There is also an initiative to support staff at the City of Oshawa to develop a renewed plan for murals in downtown Oshawa.

City staff will report on the progress of Plan 20Thirty annually through the Economic and Development Services Committee. The Public Art Evaluation Plan will directly respond to these initiatives and outline strategies to meet these goals to create a more welcoming and progressive space.

Site and Condition Evaluation

On June 23, 2023, members of STEPS Public Art, accompanied by City staff, conducted a site and condition evaluation. The visit focused on the material condition of the artworks and attendant plaques, as well as on an analysis of the works' placement (location significance and visibility).



Image 2 & 3: examples of synthetic stucco degradation

The overall condition of the murals is poor. The materials used to create these murals tend to be more prone to damage, compared to materials more often used for mural artworks, such as concrete, wood, metal, or painting directly onto the wall. Furthermore, this material lacks the durability to withstand physical impact, Canadian weather conditions and time²⁴.

Water damage was a recurring issue observed and impacted a majority of the murals. This is primarily due to the exposure of the interior panel material, through the "joints", or cracks in the mural substrate. These are issues related to the structural integrity of the panels, with frames

²⁴ Water Damage and EIFS, article by Nick Gromicko, CMI, posted on the International Association of Certified Home Inspectors website, www.nachi.org/water-damage-eifs.htm, consulted August 15, 2023.

falling apart and breaking, allowing water and moisture to percolate the art. This is evident when one examines the frame of the murals which shows unmistakable evidence of water damage; peeling paint, discoloration, and buckled/ misshapen surfaces.

Furthermore, this material is less resilient and more susceptible to damage from physical impacts. Multiple murals were identified with human made, impact defacement on the surface. This has two considerable impacts on the artwork, one by visually disturbing the image, and two by leading to an increase in weather-related damages, as water can more easily penetrate the material through the damaged surface.

Additionally, incidents of vandalism, such as graffiti, contribute to the degradation, while neglecting to clean the vandalism encourages further acts of vandalism. During the study it was found that murals in less visible areas experienced higher instances of vandalism, compared to their counterparts in highly populated areas with lots of “eyes on the streets.” Paying close attention to mural location and visibility is necessary to help prevent vandalism.

Murals painted on 1/8-inch of plaster material embedded with a mesh stability layer and attached to the wall without Styrofoam have sustained less physical damage from weather and humans.

Finally, the explanatory plaques that provide historical context regarding the scenes depicted in the murals range in condition, from poor to fair. In some cases, their location makes them less accessible to passersby.

Detailed observations, recorded on June 23, 2023, on the condition of each mural are provided in the below table.

Table 1: List of Oshawa's Downtown Mural with feedback – Note: Photographs of each mural are available in Appendices

Mural	Condition	Notes
“Full Steam Ahead”, Gus Froese, 64 Simcoe St. North	Fair	This mural is in better condition than many others evaluated. While there are some minor chips and marks on the wall, they don't detract significantly from the overall impression. One noticeable feature is a wash that covers the mural, creating a streaky effect. In addition, the mural's colours have lost their vibrancy. This mural is facing the sidewalk on a main street leading it to having good visibility.

"Oshawa 1935", Dan and Peter Sawatzky, 23 King St. West	Good	This mural stands out as being in notably better condition compared to many others evaluated in downtown Oshawa. Although there are minor chips and cracks throughout the artwork, as well as some slight water damage and chipping at the top of the mural, these imperfections do not significantly diminish its overall impact. Noteworthy is the presence of a streaky feature, lending to the mural a washed appearance. Additionally, there is a noticeable fading of colours, likely attributed to sun exposure over time. This mural is in a location that is often blocked by cars leading it to have medium visibility.
"General Motors of Canada", John Hood, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.	Poor	This mural exhibits significant deterioration. This could be due to its location in a highly used space along a busy road and high traffic intersection. Graffiti is present throughout. Though it doesn't obscure the main images, this vandalism is prominent. Large cracks and even missing chunks from some panels are evident, and there is a noticeable peeling edge, likely due to water damage. Additionally, watermarks cover the bottom section, indicating past water intrusion. Lastly, some panels show a streaky feature, contributing to a worn appearance and washing out the overall impact of the mural.
"Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service", John Hood, McLaughlin Bandshell, Memorial Park	Fair	This mural remains untouched by vandalism, preserving the integrity of its imagery. However, signs of aging are evident, with noticeable cracking, some crumbling along the bottom corners, and slight discoloration along the edges. The passage of time has left its mark on the mural, adding a touch of weathered character to its overall appearance. This mural is in a highly-used park, and would get heavy traffic walking by and high visibility by the community as well as the busy intersection near the park.
"Kingston Road Stage Coach", JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Melissa Verge, Nicol Janecko (Local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High	Poor	Among the murals assessed in downtown Oshawa, this one stands out as the most heavily graffitied. Beyond the graffiti, the mural displays noticeable chips and cracks throughout the artwork, as well as consistent damage along its edges. This mural is in a very hidden space, in an alleyway, where it is not visible to passersby and poorly lit. Furthermore, the concealed location leaves it a target for vandalism.

School), 12 Simcoe St. South in carriageway		
"Skae's Corners", JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Erin Hackney, Ian Mitchell and Mike Wystoski (Local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School), 14 Simcoe St. South in carriageway	Poor	This mural mirrors the condition of its neighboring mural, "Kingston Road Stage Coach", in the alleyway. Unfortunately, it also ranks among the most heavily graffitied. Additionally, noticeable cracks are present, particularly around the edges, and there is an accumulation of dirt and debris. Similar to the one above, the location of the mural increases the appeal of vandalism.
"Borsberry Music Hall", Brian Romagnoli, 31 Celina St.	Poor	This mural exhibits substantial damage, particularly along the bottom of the panel where there are noticeable cracks. Additionally, there are circular-shaped impact marks, likely caused by heavy force like a punch or hammer. Around these marks, significant portions of the mural are missing. Notably, a large crack runs down the center, appearing to have split the mural in two. Moreover, extensive water damage is evident on the side, likely due to an air conditioning unit from the above window, resulting in prominent yellow water streaks running down the mural. This mural is in a highly visible area on a main street, allowing it to be enjoyed frequently by community members.
"Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)", Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.	Poor	This mural exhibits noticeable dirt marks, including a prominent gray blotch and black scuff marks. There is a significant impact mark on the bottom right corner, revealing the underlying structure of the panel with exposed mesh, Styrofoam and panel material. Additionally, a substantial crack runs up the depicted woman's leg, accompanied by several other cracks, discoloration, and signs of water damage along the bottom section of the mural. This mural is on a busy street for cars and has decent visibility.
"Windfields Farm", David Yeatman, McLaughlin	Good	There are no noticeable cracks in the panel, and the structural integrity of the panel remains unaffected by water damage. However, there is a noticeable chip on the bottom right portion of the artwork, near the base of

Bandshell, Memorial Park		the building. Additionally, a few faded handprints have been graffitied onto the mural. Overall, similar to the others, this mural features the characteristic streaked wash, imparting a slightly faded appearance. This mural is in a highly visible area in a park, making it frequently viewed by community members.
"Driving Force", Rudolf Stussi, 22 Athol St. E.	Poor	The "Driving Force" mural displays numerous cracks and chips throughout the piece, with particularly noticeable chips near the man holding the badges. Additionally, there is substantial cracking and chipping around the vent, as well as a prominent water damage mark on the right side of the mural, resulting in a long yellow stain. Furthermore, the bottom portion of the mural appears to have suffered chipping and damage. Throughout the artwork, streaks are apparent, contributing to an overall appearance that is more faded and worn than it may actually be. This mural is not in a highly visible area and faces a parking lot.
Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary, Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.	Poor	The panels of this mural are in notably poor condition. One of the corners has suffered severe damage, resulting in a sizable chunk missing from the panel. The border is fractured and jagged, posing a potential hazard. Additionally, it shows visible staining from dirt and water damage. The bottom section of the mural exhibits significant discoloration and cracks, likely attributable to water exposure. Notably, the mural itself has developed a textured surface due to water permeating behind the panel. There is an impact mark, consistent with the appearance of being punched, kicked, or hammered, accompanied by substantial cracks and scuff marks. A major hole is present, along with smaller impact marks. Lastly, there are some instances of graffiti and names written on the mural, although they are somewhat obscure and do not significantly detract from the overall artwork.
"Recreation by the Lake", Tony Johnson, 72-74 Celina St.	Poor	"Recreation by the Lake" exhibits signs of damage. There are noticeable drip marks present over the first person on the left. Additionally, an impact mark is evident, which appears to have subsequently caused a streak resembling water damage running down the wall. Furthermore, two of the faces in the bottom left corner

		have suffered extensive damage, resulting in significant cracks and chips.
"Famous Oshawa Generals", Paul Ygartua, 78 King St. West	Poor	Similar to the others, this mural has endured significant cracks, holes, and water damage. At the bottom, there is a large square-shaped impact mark that has caused cracks to radiate outward. Additionally, numerous streaks run down the mural, some likely a result of water damage, especially in areas where water has seeped into the cracks. Notably, this mural has not been subjected to vandalism. This mural also faces a parking lot, and has bushes growing over the artwork. It is not in a very highly trafficked area.
"Oshawa's 75th Anniversary", Tony Johnson, 121 Simcoe St. South	Poor	This mural bears significant vandalism. The defacement seamlessly integrates with the artwork, making it challenging to notice from a distance. However, upon closer inspection, it becomes very apparent. The acts of vandalism encompass various elements, including small symbols, names, and added features on the human figures, like braces and mustaches. Additionally, the mural displays a bubbled texture due to water damage, along with a deliberate spiral crack. Lastly, there is a noticeable crack along the seam of the panel, giving it an appearance of being unkempt.
"Camp X", Tony Johnson, 100 Simcoe St. South	Poor	"Camp X" exhibited significant physical deterioration. A substantial portion of the lower section of the mural was absent, exposing the underlying brickwork. Additionally, in proximity to the missing segment, one could observe protruding mesh and Styrofoam from the structure, with cracks emanating from this point. The frame itself also displayed signs of cracking.

Consultation findings

To establish an effective mural policy and strategy recommendations, it was crucial to consult with community stakeholders. By actively involving key stakeholders, we ensured that their perspectives, expertise, and concerns were taken into account when formulating the present report.

We reviewed the findings of previous consultations, summarized in the Public Art Master Plan, and engaged 207 stakeholders through three activities, which included:

- Three focus groups with 11 representatives from City staff, the Cultural Leadership Council, and the Public Art Task Force, conducted in May 2023. These focus group discussions were instrumental in learning more about the history of the murals and collecting key stakeholder hopes for the future of mural art in downtown Oshawa.
- A roundtable discussion with local artists, conducted in July 2023. Eight local artists provided feedback on the downtown murals, shared recommendations on maintenance policies and material use for future murals, and insights on the current strengths, challenges, and opportunities for the development of a thriving mural art scene in Oshawa.
- A feedback form, distributed through ConnectOshawa from July 10, 2023 to August 8, 2023, and widely promoted through the City of Oshawa's communication tools. This form invited residents to share their feedback on the murals and their hopes for the future of mural art in the city. 188 community members responded to the feedback form, and an additional 134 visited several feedback form pages, gaining information on this municipal initiative.

The results of the Feedback Form can be found in Appendix C.

Previous consultation findings

During the planning process for the Oshawa Public Art Master Plan, approved by City Council in 2018, community engagement collected feedback on the downtown murals and on desires for public art.

The engagement showed that "residents proudly cited the murals in the downtown core as a unique and special element to Oshawa's Public Art collection", but that there was a "strong desire for the existing murals to be updated and a contemporary approach to mural arts be applied for any future mural projects." In addition, community feedback was largely positive regarding the potential impacts of public art. Participants saw public art as a way to beautify the city and felt that public art was a more democratic art medium than other disciplines. In addition, the downtown area came out as the first priority zone for the installation of new public art in community consultations.

Focus Group Discussions with City Staff, Cultural Leadership Council members and Public Art Task Force members

Role of mural art in downtown Oshawa and preferred themes and artistic styles

Participants noted that murals should liven up and beautify the area, to help address the need for improvement in the downtown core. This desire to revitalize the area aligns with Plan20Thirty, which highlighted the decline in traffic even before the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additionally, contributors noted that Oshawa's downtown is unique within the Durham region, and expressed an interest in using public art, such as murals, to position Oshawa as a tourism destination, taking advantage of the area's distinct architecture. The murals should also spark social dialogue, promote diversity, reflect history, create opportunities for artists, showcase artists and businesses, invite interaction, and generate engagement on social media platforms.

Interviewees hoped to see the development of new mural art that would reflect the city's changing identity. Contributors especially wished to see a reflection of the following local strengths:

- Post-secondary education - contributors noted that the universities and college plays a crucial role and attracts newcomers from around the world;
- Technological innovation;
- Diversifying community, marked by rapid growth (in part due to an influx of people from Toronto) and the presence of key immigrant communities, such as the Ukrainian and Caribbean newcomer populations.

They also wished to see an increase in works that would contribute to building relationships with Indigenous communities and showcase values of inclusion, and of forward-looking, innovative art.

In addition, there was a desire to move away from the exclusively illustrative nature and sole focus on Oshawa's history that characterizes the current mural art collection and to provide greater artistic freedom to artists.

Review of existing murals

Participants called for a compromise to be found between the celebration of historic elements and the desire to present a more contemporary and future-forward image for Oshawa. Contributors highlighted the need to preserve historically significant scenes and some expressed a strong attachment for themes depicted in select artworks, deemed central to Oshawa's identity, such as the McLaughlin Carriage Works and General Motors. One participant remarked that "These murals are important in communicating our history so something should definitely be retained: there is a connection to them, there is pride about them, there is a lot of appreciation for the existing murals."

However, contributors all noted that the murals were aged and did not reflect the current diversity and economy of Oshawa. Many felt that some of the artworks, in their current state, did not positively contribute to positioning Oshawa as an attractive city. Some expressed concerns regarding the murals placed on private properties, feeling that worn out and especially vandalized murals have the potential to impact the value of the property or raise concerns for prospective business owners. Contributors all felt a partial renewal or a revitalization of works would be positively received, as many artworks have lost their vibrancy or are in poor condition, while there is a strong desire for beautification in the downtown area. Concerns were also expressed on the lack of diversity in the scenes depicted and on elements that might run counter to Truth and Reconciliation goals.

In addition, participants noted that murals were located on buildings of varying significance and visibility, which would affect recommendations. Two murals are located on the McLaughlin Bandshell in Memorial Park, a site of obvious symbolic significance and that has been identified as having a strong placemaking potential, while others, such as "Driving Force," were situated in parking areas, with limited visibility.

Finally, contributors expected that the degree of attachment to artworks, for community members, might vary depending on the nature of the elements represented, with works depicting key cultural markers, such as General Motors, hockey, or scenes from the city's industrial history, being ranked especially highly. They recommended for additional consultations to be carried out for any artworks for which an alteration would be considered. The proposed stakeholders referenced in the consultations include veterans (especially for "Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service" mural), business owners, seniors, Oshawa's Historical Society, Oshawa Folk Arts Council, and local artists, the Polish, Ukrainian, and Caribbean communities. These recommendations reflect the importance of engaging multiple perspectives and ensuring representation from various community members who have a personal interest in the murals and their impact on the city of Oshawa.

Artist roundtables

On July 25, 2023, STEPS Public Art hosted a virtual roundtable with eight local artists. To create space for more in-depth discussions, participants were broken down into three smaller groups, and their insights were then shared at the end of the roundtable with all participants.

The aim was to collect the insights of artists, mural creators, and arts professionals who have a significant connection to Oshawa and/or the Durham region, or who are an Indigenous person with a connection to the traditional territory that Oshawa now occupies. Questions focused on the current downtown murals, the local sector's strengths and opportunities, and hopes for the future of mural art in Oshawa. These discussions are summarized below.

Feedback on downtown murals

Overall feedback - "I appreciate the history of these works, but I do feel some of these are dated"

- While participants highlighted the murals had historical significance, they approach to the themes depicted. One participant summarized these contrasted feelings, noting: "downtown murals are a staple, but a refresh would bring a good change."
- Participants overwhelmingly agreed that the murals had historical significance. However, many participants critiqued the way this history was represented and regretted the lack of presentation of recent developments.
- Opinions diverged on what should be the future treatment of these works. While all participants hoped for more new mural art in the city, some wished to see the current works be replaced by new artworks, noting in one case that "they have served their purpose," while others hoped to see a redesign that would maintain a link with the original concept, rather than "fully erasing it". A third group expressed a preference for maintenance and renovation, with repainting for the faded colours.
- A few participants cautioned against inviting an artist to redesign an old artwork, as they felt this could be deemed injurious to the author of the original artwork.
- These opinions also varied depending on the artwork. Indeed, as outlined below, in the collected feedback per artwork, some works were the focus of a higher attachment than others - especially those related to key cultural touchpoints for Oshawa.
- Some contributors asked for a consideration of the current and future use of sites, which might not be aligned with the artworks currently displayed in these locations. They felt a refresh, with fully new artworks, would offer an opportunity to newly activate and animate these sites.
- Participants noted many residents are deeply attached to the murals.

Style, condition and themes

- Style and condition:
 - A key criticism rested on the lack of vibrancy of the artworks. Some participants critiqued the initial colour palettes, noting the prevalence of beige and pastel colours and lack of bolder hues, and all noted that the works were extremely faded or "worn out", due to the degradation that has happened over time.
 - Some participants appreciated the realistic style of the artworks, but many artists noted the lack of stylistic diversity. Participants noted that while there is a strong value in having public artworks that signify important cultural moments, these can be expressed through different art styles, and do not have to be limited to realistic depictions. A few participants disliked what they termed the "semi-realistic" style of artworks.

- Different opinions emerged on the themes represented in the artworks and the ones that were missing from depictions. Some elements were repeatedly mentioned as important cultural markers for Oshawa:
 - A large number of participants highlighted Oshawa's history as a manufacturing city, and the importance of General Motors, which many wish to see memorialized in local public art - though some noted that this might be done through other artworks than the General Motors murals.
 - Several participants expressed their affection for the commemorative murals and noted the central relevance of military history and of veterans to Oshawa.
 - Windfields Farm was also noted as a key local asset. However, some participants noted that the mural, located on the McLaughlin Bandshell, is quite remote from where the farm was.
 - Hockey and the Oshawa Generals were another key cultural marker. Nevertheless, some mentioned that, in a participant's words "even hockey can be very political," and disliked the undertones of violence that can be associated with the sport.
 - Several participants appreciated the representation of women workers on the "Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)" mural as well as that of nurses on the "Victorian Order of Nurses – 100th Anniversary" artwork, which they felt added more diversity in depictions that overwhelmingly focus on male figures and commemorated key workers' history facts, in particular the inclusion of women in the local union.
 - The landscape, and in particular the lake, which is depicted in a few murals, as well as the tree lines, were mentioned as key assets of present-day Oshawa. However, commentators wished for more up-to-date depictions of these assets.
- In alignment with the general consensus on the outdated character of the murals, participants noted that key elements and themes were missing from the murals:
 - The lack of diversity was repeatedly highlighted. Participants noted that the figures depicted were overwhelmingly white and male, and some artists felt the murals were emblematic of a colonial perspective and embodied "systemic whiteness." One participant lamented what they termed a "lack of representation across the board - in terms of race, gender, homelessness."
 - Many participants noted Indigenous history, presence and perspectives should be showcased in Oshawa public art, evoking the significance of Oshawa's location, memorialized in the city's name as the "crossing point."²⁵

²⁵ The name "Oshawa" stems from an Anishinaabemowin (Ojibwe language) word meaning "a crossing place" and has further translation as "that point at the crossing of the stream where the canoe was exchanged for the trail." For more information, see [Oshawa Museum Blog, Indigenous history](#).

- While many appreciated the showcase of historical themes, some participants felt these were out of date and not relevant to our current times. One artist noted that the works “lack the ability to appeal with the current landscape.”
- Some contributors wished to see more recent developments represented, possibly through depictions bridging the past, present, and future. New developments, which participants felt should be celebrated through public art, included: the City’s increasing diversity, newcomers’ cultures (in particular, local Ukrainian, Polish, and Caribbean communities, as well as Italian, Greek, Chinese, and Indian communities), the transition from industry to technological innovation, Fiesta Week, peonies and the Peony Festival.

Recommendations for future mural art

Roles of mural art in the downtown area

Participants wished to see new creations and cited several expected benefits:

- Beautification, bringing back a sense of vibrancy and joy contributors felt was lacking, and re-attracting residents, visitors and businesses to the area.
- Contributing to social cohesion, bridging the gap between residents, celebrating diversity and increasing social awareness, and fostering community pride.
- Supporting a creative social environment to increase the area’s attractiveness.
- Fostering new discussions, through thought-provoking pieces.

Hopes for the future of mural art and public art in Oshawa at large

Participants especially wished for a higher representation of local artists, privileging Oshawa or Durham region artists, and emerging artists.

Other recommendations included:

- Wider thematic and stylistic diversity:
 - Broader mix of genres, with inclusion of styles such as graffiti.
 - Inclusion of abstract artworks or works on themes not directly related to Oshawa’s culture. Participants noted the central focus should be on celebrating art and that murals should not all be centered on Oshawa’s history and present day.
- More freedom and connection to artists outside of the traditional visual arts sector:
 - There was a desire for less thematic guidance and for more freedom to be given to artists, with broader guidelines in calls for artists, to collect new ideas on themes and styles from artists.

- Numerous artists spoke in favour of increasing the number of legal graffiti walls, where anyone can come and practice their skills. They mentioned the Urban Art Park²⁶ at the Donovan Recreation Centre, which was created following a City-led study in 2016, and the Diana Princess of Wales Park in Pickering.
- A number of contributors noted the roots of murals lie in graffiti art, and wished to see this celebrated in municipal murals.
- Contributors also mentioned that there was immense creativity in fields other than the traditional visual arts sector and in disciplines traditionally seen as more “low brow”, which should be celebrated. One contributor referenced an artist market and tattoo shop, noting that “the art in there is representing Oshawa in a really unique way.”
- Increasing the accessibility and visibility of calls for artists.

Specific opportunities were mentioned:

- Artists noted the downtown core in its current state lacked vibrancy and could be animated through new art.
- In addition, a number of types of walls were suggested for activation, including:
 - Murals on highways and bridges that would celebrate Oshawa in a visual way for people travelling into town.
 - Northern Oshawa, with activation of suburban areas.
 - Places of religious worship.
- Leveraging local strengths, such as the O’Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute
- Celebrating the local diversity. Suggestions included:
 - Inviting artists from the communities whose cultures are celebrated during Fiesta Week to create murals to be unveiled during the festival.
 - Creating a space for Black artists.
 - Contributors warned against tokenism, which they felt was especially strong for Indigenous artists.

Life expectancy

Artists agreed on the benefits of future murals having a planned shorter life expectancy:

- Several participants felt 10 years was a good period - while some artists considered even shorter periods, such as 5 years, as it would leave enough time for an artwork to be appreciated and make an impact, while avoiding it becoming outdated. Several artists noted that 10 years was a long period of time for an exterior mural, which may result in works becoming outdated and deteriorating.
- Participants recommended planning for a mix of shorter- and longer-term artworks.

²⁶ City of Oshawa website, “[Urban Art Park](#)” article, consulted September 3, 2023.

- Participants mentioned among benefits for having a shorter lifetime for artworks that this would bring change, open space up for new ideas and fresh takes, and create more opportunities for artists and excitement for audiences. This would also enhance the appreciation of artworks and decrease vandalism, by avoiding works staying on display once their condition (and perhaps relevancy) has deteriorated.
- Interviewees highlighted that these benefits were aligned with the expected impact of the medium, noting that murals should bring communities together, and that this would be better achieved through regular updates rather than by, as they termed it, “having one artist on the wall for 20 years.”
- Participants were in favour of a pre-defined life expectancy, after which works would be decommissioned and replaced, rather than the current approach for the downtown murals. They felt a shorter life span with a higher investment in maintenance over a shortened period of time would better serve the artworks. One participant recommended for the City to “figure out the timeline for maintenance/ replacement rather than letting them go on too long.”

Participants shared recommendations on materials to use to improve mural art preservation:

- Change in materials: artists criticized the use of Styrofoam panels in the existing murals, recommending to instead paint on the wall or reserve the use of Styrofoam panels for short-term temporary artworks. One artist suggested covering artworks with plexiglass where appropriate.
- Using exterior grade or marine grade paint and anti-graffiti sealing.
- Painting on aluminum, with a planned life expectancy of 5-7 years, and using a primer.
- The materials used should be adapted to the planned life expectancy: e.g., choosing lower-budget and easily removable options for works expected to be decommissioned after 10 years.

Community consultation

STEPS Public Art, in collaboration with the City of Oshawa, developed a feedback form, administered through ConnectOshawa, to collect insights from the community.

Several topics were explored:

- Feedback on the existing downtown murals.
- Hopes and desires for the future of mural art in downtown Oshawa, in terms of subject matter, artistic style, and artist selection.
- Criteria for the maintenance of mural artworks.

The City of Oshawa communicated widely to inform residents about this initiative.

Communication and outreach activities included:

- Connect Oshawa e-newsletter distributed on July 20, 2023, to 2,368 subscribers
- Constant Contact e-newsletter distributed on July 19, 2023 to 1,341 subscribers
- Oshawa This Week advertisement published on July 21, 2023
- Ongoing social messaging, including Facebook and Instagram posts on the City's social media channels
- A community information pop-up session was held at Delpark Homes Centre, on Thursday, July 27, 2023.

The feedback form received 188 answers. 86.63% of respondents were Oshawa residents or business/property owners. Responses were received from participants from the five wards, with the highest percentage (29.81%) coming from people living or owning a business or property in Ward 4, where downtown Oshawa is located and the lowest from Ward 1 (8.70%). The age of respondents was aligned with the overall distribution of population per age groups in Oshawa, where 66.8% of the population belongs to the 15 to 64 years age group, the average age is 40.9 and the median age 41.2²⁷. The leading age group among respondents was 35-44 (32.62%), followed by the 25-34 age group (21.39%). The lowest intake came from the younger segment: 2.13% for the 18-24 age group and 0.53% for the 17 and under segment.

Key highlights are summarized below and more detailed information on respondents' feedback can be found in Appendix C - Feedback Form, on page 111.

- Regarding what should be the **role of murals in Downtown Oshawa** (participants were invited to select up to 3 options):
 - The leading selection was "Beautification" (59.45%), followed by "Support artistic creation" (43.24%) and "Promote community pride" (41.08%) followed by (38.8%) who selected "Honour community history" as the role murals should play in the area.
 - Items ranked the lowest were "Showcase local environmental features" (4.32%), "Communicate a vision for the future of Oshawa" (9.19%) and "Create a social connection" (14.59%).
- **Preferred styles of art for murals around the city** (participants were invited to rank options, from most preferred (1) to least preferred (6)):
 - The leading selection was "Vibrant/ Playful / Whimsical" (2.49).
 - Out of the 188 respondents to the feedback form, 40 participants selected "Other" for this question and shared additional comments on what they would like to see. Five participants wished to see Indigenous art, mentioning in particular Indigenous futurism and Woodland Art style exploring the relationship between people, animals and plants. Seven participants wished to see more innovative types of artworks, suggesting the inclusion of digital elements, augmented reality or specific art styles they felt would be especially impactful,

²⁷ City of Oshawa website, [Demographics](#), consulted September 3, 2023.

such as trompe l'oeil, pop art, the inclusion of poetry/ written words, or Arabic calligraphy. Adjectives used to describe desired artworks showed an appetite for modern and daring creations: "visionary," "creative visions," "colourful," "inspirational." Finally, five participants specifically noted a desire for artworks that would communicate the local history or be specific to the area.

- **Artist selection:** there is a marked preference for selected artists to be local creators (55.85%), with descending percentages correlated to the increasing distance from Oshawa (regional, 16.49%, national, 5.85% and international, 2.65%). This is aligned with the feedback collected through the artist roundtable. That said, a notable percentage of respondents expressed indifference to the artists' place of residence (19.15%).
- **Most relevant criteria when deciding whether to maintain a mural artwork** (participants were invited to choose up to 3 options): the leading criterion, by a significant margin, was the aesthetic quality of the artwork (65.93%), followed by the extent to which the artwork reflects current-day Oshawa and the desires of its communities (52.20%) and the alignment between the work and the function of the public space in which it is located (48.35%)
- **Preferred murals:** participants were invited to select from the list of the 15 murals which especially appealed to them.
 - Preferred artworks were "Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service" (59.55%), "Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)" (48.88%), "General Motors of Canada" (47.19%) and "Windfields Farm" (46.63%). This is aligned with the qualitative feedback collected throughout the engagement period, which identified the themes depicted in these artworks as especially emblematic of the city's history - with a specific interest for "Oshawa's Development" stemming from the representation of women union members, which differs from other depictions of the city's industrial history.
 - The artwork that was selected by the lowest number of respondents was "Driving Force" (18.54%).
- Finally, out of the 188 respondents to the feedback form, 69 chose to leave an additional comment in response to the open prompt "Do you have any other comments?" The relatively high response rate (nearly 37% of respondents) is indicative of the interest Oshawa residents have in the future of the downtown murals.
- Comments showed strongly contrasted opinions. The largest group of comments (14.49%) was from respondents expressing a strong desire for renewal. These respondents felt that some of the original murals no longer served the needs of downtown Oshawa. Comments included²⁸: "There are murals in downtown Oshawa that are dated and no longer reflect the city's current diversity. These could be replaced with new work," "We have some lovely murals, but they are over 20 years old. I am all for

²⁸ Comments have not been edited, and any spelling mistakes have been preserved.

giving downtown a fresh look,” with two contributors characterizing the murals as “completely outdated” and “so dated” Several contributors specifically wished for a shift, in future works, away from the focus on the past that has characterized downtown murals: “Do not want to see more murals that reflect our history. History is important but public art can be so much more. It can create a sense of place, strong brand identity,” “With all the available space in the downtown core, we need to stop focusing on the historical aspects of the region and brighten up an otherwise dull core. Art creates conversation and there’s much more to talk about aside from the whitewashed history of Oshawa,” “No more “old timey” and no more GM artwork please. More “looking forward” The physical degradation of the murals was pinpointed as an issue, since some felt the works in their current state did not beautify the area: “Murals should enhance the space it’s in. If it begins to look rundown, it becomes an eye-sore and its purpose defeated.” As appears in some of the above-quoted comments, the perceived lack of diversity in the scenes represented in the downtown murals was often critiqued. One contributor said “I think times have changed and current murals do not reflect diversity and inclusion,” while another expressed a “wish for more Indigenous art.”

- Six comments (8.70% of total comments) were from contributors expressing their love for the current murals. Two of these noted historically significant murals should be preserved, worrying that renewal might result in an erasure of past works: “Please do not cast aside generations of history for new ideas, keep Oshawa Generals, General Motors, McLaughlin, Camp X, World Wars, etc. as they are but add new ones to represent the future,” “Some of the murals hold historical and cultural significance to the city, and I think these deserve to be preserved.” These contributors praised the focus on the city’s history, with one other noting: “I love that they are representative of Oshawa and its history.” This group of comments generally wished to see more new creations: “I love the murals around Oshawa! They’re fantastic and I hope to see more of them created in the future,” “I love the murals downtown. It’s a unique characteristic to Oshawa compared to other cities and towns - certainly regionally. I’d love to see more investment in them and keep that mural tradition alive in Oshawa!”
- Many of the contributors referred to challenges experienced in the downtown area, with differing opinions on the extent to which mural art could help remediate these problems.

Consolidated feedback on each mural

We have summarized below the quantitative and qualitative feedback received on each of the downtown murals, through the focus groups, artist roundtable discussions and the community feedback form. Artworks are ranked in descending order of public preference, based on the quantitative data collected through the community feedback form (percentage of respondents having selected the artwork in response to Question 5, “Review the photographs of the 15 murals under consideration as part of the Mural Art Evaluation Plan. Which murals appeal to you the most? (Select all that apply)”).

Table 2: Consolidated Engagement Feedback for Each Mural

Mural title	Consolidated engagement feedback
Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work:</u> 59.55% • The artwork was unanimously noted as having strong significance, as it celebrates Oshawa veterans and adds commemorative art to Memorial Park. • Oshawa's military history was repeatedly mentioned as essential to local culture. • However, several participants noted that although this mural was emblematic of Oshawa, it lacked representation of more recent military engagements and contained a few historical inaccuracies. • In addition, some participants felt that the depiction of the Northwest Resistance ran counter to Truth and Reconciliation goals. • There was an overwhelming consensus that Oshawa's military history should be represented in Memorial Park. While most participants asked for this artwork to be maintained, some suggested revising elements that are historically inaccurate and adding new representations for more recent developments. Others felt a more abstract work resonating with this theme might be more appropriate than additions for each new and future central development.
Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work:</u> 48.88% • Responses to the feedback form mark a strong attachment to this work. • Engagement participants who expressed a preference for this artwork especially praised its theme, noting that the inclusion of female workers in unions was a laudable and important milestone in Oshawa's history. • Participants also felt this mural offered a more diverse and fulsome depiction of the city's industrial history. • Opinions on the artwork's style diverged. Some participants especially appreciated the trompe l'oeil aspects of the work, which seems carved in stone.
General Motors of Canada	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work:</u> 47.19% • The high ranking for this artwork is aligned with the historical significance of General Motors for the City of Oshawa. Indeed, General Motors and the automotive industry overall were repeatedly cited as central historical assets that should be showcased, and many participants strongly desired to see these works be preserved. • However, an equally high number of participants felt the works were "dated" and expressed concerns about the prevalence of General Motors in public artworks and communication overall, feeling that this did not reflect the current state and industries of the city. A large number of participants wished to see a move away from this theme, which one commenter to the feedback form expressed as "No more "old timey" and

	no more GM artwork please. More "looking forward".
Windfields Farm	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 46.63%</u> • Windfields Farm and Northern Dancer were repeatedly noted as key elements of pride for Oshawa. • However, feedback from the engaged stakeholder groups noted a lack of alignment between the artwork's theme and its location in Memorial Park and felt the bandshell was not the right location for the work. In addition to the lack of memorial significance of the artwork, some contributors thought the theme perpetuated a disconnect with the current demographic of the area today. • Many participants noted that Windfields Farm's legacy is now meaningfully celebrated at and around the original location of the farm. Participants suggested relocating the artwork, if possible, or creating a new work in this area. • In addition, many felt the artwork was aged - both in terms of its material condition and art style - and needed either a refresh or to be replaced. Specific comments included: "Cool, I would miss it, but a better version would be appreciated" and "I wouldn't be opposed to having something new done in the North end now that it's been developed and is closer to the actual site." • Finally, in view of the key symbolic significance of Memorial Park and the observed potential for placemaking and revitalization, participants wondered if the opportunity should be explored to use the wall for the creation of a new, more vibrant artwork.
Borsberry Music Hall	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 44.94 %</u> • While music was mentioned as important to Oshawa's history and present-day culture, this mural's theme, contrary to the above-mentioned artworks was not noted as central to Oshawa's history. • Reasons given for attachment to this artwork centered around its style (especially, the use of more vibrant colours, trompe l'oeil elements, and play with perspective) and its visibility.
Famous Oshawa Generals	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 42.13%</u> • Participants repeatedly underlined the importance of hockey to Oshawa's history, and one commenter specifically expressed a wish to see this artwork preserved. Others noted that it was a beloved work among families and hockey fans. • The mural's location is not optimal, as the artwork faces the wrong direction of a one-way-street, which results in its visibility being limited. Some participants specifically noted that they were previously unaware of this artwork's existence. In addition, the mural is very faded and the surface has sustained significant damages. All participants noted this artwork, if it was to be maintained, needed to be revitalized, with some worrying that its current condition might negatively impact the city's

	image. Several participants wished for it to be moved to another location - something that would unfortunately not be practical due to the level of conservation required during relocation. Some felt hockey might be better celebrated through the creation of new works, in thematically relevant locations such as Delpark Home Centre.
Oshawa 1935	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 42.13%</u> - Most participants in the focus groups or roundtables expressed neutral feelings in regard to this artwork. This was similarly visible in the feedback form: while some murals were repeatedly mentioned in participants' comments, both positive and more critical, such as "General Motors", "Windfields Farm" or "Oshawa Generals", this work was not specifically cited. - This mural reproduces a street view captured in a 1935 photograph. - Some participants appreciated the artwork's "lively, animated style" and liked that it offered a window into the past. - However, many questioned the artwork's relevance, as they felt 1935 was not an especially significant date in the history of Oshawa. - Some hoped for references to the City's past to be presented in a more appealing way, with useful didactic content: e.g., being led to interactive information through QR codes.
Camp X	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 38.76%</u> - Limited feedback was provided by engagement participants on this work. - Several participants remarked this mural was in an especially run-down state. - Some felt the artwork's focus was reflective of a "colonial perspective."
Full Steam Ahead	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 36.51%</u> - Some participants in the focus groups felt this artwork had strong historical significance, as it depicts the historic connection to Carriage works, since it is placed close to the location of Robert McLaughlin's original carriage works (50, 52 and 54 Simcoe Street North). - Many participants felt this mural was in poor condition, and would need to be revitalized if preserved.
Victorian Order of Nurses	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 29.12%</u> Commentators lauded the artwork's theme. However, several participants, while acknowledging the importance of the theme, found the artwork to be outdated and not aligned with the city's artistic aspirations.
Recreation by the Lake	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 26.40%</u> Several contributors found this mural to have limited historical significance.

Kingston Road Stage Coach	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 25.84%</u> • A few contributors noted the relevance of the work's placement in an original carriage way. • Many pointed out that the work was heavily vandalized, and placed in an alleyway that experienced loitering concerns, noting that this location did not constitute a suitable canvas for a mural, nor did the artwork notably help alleviate the problems identified in this location.
Oshawa's 75th Anniversary	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 25.28%</u> • Many participants felt the artwork presented Oshawa's history in a way that did not reflect the city's diversity. • In addition, many worried that the representation of a totem pole on the artwork ran counter to Truth and Reconciliation goals and is representative of Indigenous communities not based within Ontario.
Skae's Corner	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 22.47%</u> • This work constitutes an ensemble with "Kingston Road Stage Coach", and collected similar feedback to this work.
Driving Force	<u>Percentage of respondents who selected this work: 18.54%</u> • While some participants appreciated the artwork's style, with its nod to expressionism, all noted the work was in poor condition and placed in an unsuitable location for the presentation of public art.

Research - Review of mural art policies and relevant initiatives in comparable municipalities

Mural art life expectancy, conservation and deaccession recommendations

To identify the best practices for mural art management, maintenance and deaccession, STEPS conducted a review of the guidelines provided by professional associations and of policies in various municipalities. Key insights are summarized below.

Mural art is generally recognized to have a limited life expectancy, however targeted actions, starting with the planning and production process, can help extend a work's life span

As noted in the "Caring for an existing mural" article on the Government of Canada website,

years”, with some murals lasting more than 20 years, if adequately created and preserved.²⁹ Indeed, the harsh outdoor conditions to which murals are exposed in a Canadian context, combined with the impacts of pollution and in certain cases, human actions such as vandalism along with the changing use of public spaces, all affect an artworks’ condition. In addition, public artworks’ unique context and the wide range of stakeholders (e.g., city agencies, artists, business owners, community members) that should be considered in decision-making require supplementary guidelines compared to those established for the conservation of museum art pieces, exhibited or stored in controlled environments, leaving space open for removal when a mural’s state is deemed to negatively affect its environment.

As noted by participants in the Oshawa artist roundtables hosted on July 25, 2023 (see Consultation Findings, Artist Roundtables), a planned shorter life span can in some cases provide advantages, by opening more space for new creations and ensuring artworks remain current, both in their physical condition as well as thematic or stylistic approach. Similarly, in 2014, public art expert Ciara McKeown, in the article entitled ““It’s Not Forever”: Temporary Works and Deaccessioning”³⁰ noted a then-recent “shift towards durational works that focus on experience and process over object-based work.” She called for municipal policies, funding, and programs that reflect “the need and desire for both shorter and longer-term public art” and affirmed that “deaccession is not a bad word.” Rather than considering deaccession as an after the fact decision, she recommended there be clearly identified artwork lifespan expectations and decommissioning plans outlined at the onset of projects, which is in line with what artists consulted by STEPS Public Art shared as being an integral approach to long-term temporal public art installations like murals. Potential advantages of combining longer-term projects with shorter-term creations include: increased freedom and agility in the creative process, better overall public art collection management, and increased reactivity of public art to the evolution of its environment and surrounding community. Although this is highlighted for temporal works, we have increasingly also seen the requirement of permanent public art works being deaccessioned due to outdated or controversial historical representations that are not appropriate.

However, as noted in Oshawa’s Public Art Master Plan, murals’ temporary lifespans “can be challenging for residents to comprehend” For example, murals become embedded in the life of local communities, who might have strong emotional attachment to the works. Mural Arts Philadelphia, in an article explaining the reason for replacing a mural they had produced, note that “the reality of mural making is that [no mural] will last forever”, but acknowledge the

²⁹ Government of Canada website, “[Caring for an existing mural](#)”, consulted June 5, 2023.

³⁰ American for the Arts Blog, ““It’s Not Forever”: Temporary Works and Deaccessioning”, Ciara McKeown, February 5, 2014.

strong emotions that connect community members to public artworks: “When you walk by an image every day, you see yourself in that wall, and it becomes part of the fabric of your life.”³¹

Conservation starts with the artwork planning stage

In cases where there is a strong interest for a mural artwork to achieve a higher life expectancy, specific conservation measures must be planned from the start of the project. While restoration might be possible in some case, a mural’s life span mostly depends on the decisions made at the time of creation, with three key factors affecting a work’s longevity: paint quality used for the mural (in particular ensuring that the paint being used is the most appropriate for the surface), mural surface preparation (and wall or surface condition), and mural location (locations that are confronted by extreme exposure to the elements or are in areas where vandalism or exposed to certain substances such as salt for deicing roads will have greater weathering impacts).

The Canadian Conservation Institute and The Getty Conservation Institute offer detailed guidelines for the conservation of outdoor murals, which can orient the City of Oshawa’s future projects.³² Three dimensions must be considered:

- Mural planning: choice of location, support and installation method, support preparation;
- Determination of procedures for ongoing maintenance (including periodic inspection, cleaning, and repair), which should be planned and funded at the project’ onset;
- Planned processes for treatment or relocation should damage occur.

These guidelines, completed by STEPS Public Art’s first-hand experience in mural production and maintenance, have informed the following recommendations for updates to the City of Oshawa’s mural production and maintenance policies (see the Recommendations section of this report, page 48).

Processes and Policies for the Removal of Public Artworks

Transparent processes and policies for the deaccession of murals are essential. Based on the analysis of policies and case studies of deaccession initiatives, STEPS Public Art identified the following best practices:

- Community engagement and communication. In view of the many stakeholders affected by the removal of murals, it is essential that community members be engaged

³¹ Mural Arts Philadelphia Blog Post, “[The Lifespan of a Mural: Starting Fresh in Germantown](#)”, Laura Kochman, last updated August 4, 2017.

³² Government of Canada Publications, Canadian Conservation Institute, “Conservation guidelines for outdoor murals”, resource available [online](#) and The Getty Conservation Institute website, “[The Conservation of Outdoor Contemporary Murals](#)”, article by GCI senior project specialist with extensive experience in the conservation of archaeological, historic, and modern murals Leslie Rainer.

throughout deaccession processes and, in cases of deaccessions, be clearly informed about the reasons that have led to the decision.

- Clear decision-making processes. Most public art policies include a set of conditions under which an artwork might be considered for deaccession.

The comparison of public art policies in three Canadian municipalities of varying sizes shows that most of these conditions fall under three main categories. This is outlined in the table below.

Table 3: Comparison of conditions under which a work might be considered for deaccession, in the public art policies of Vancouver, Edmonton and Barrie.

Type of condition	Vancouver	Edmonton	Barrie
	Criteria listed in the City of Vancouver's Deaccession Guidelines ³³	Criteria listed in the City of Edmonton's Public Art Conservation, De-accession and Re-site Policy ³⁴	Criteria listed in the City of Barrie's Public Art Policy ³⁵
The work is of inferior quality, community feedback recommends a removal and/or the work is no longer deemed suitable for the purposes of the public art collection	"It is of clearly inferior quality; or, in the opinion of the Committee, the work has received consistent adverse public reaction over a period of seven or more years; or the prevailing climate of public opinion recommends a review."	"There has been significant and documented adverse reaction to the Artwork from the public over an extended period, normally a minimum of ten years from the date of acceptance of the Artwork into the Civic Art Collection", or "The artwork is deemed by the EAC and the City to no longer be suitable for the purposes of the Civic Art Collection."	Not applicable

³³ City of Vancouver, [Deaccession Guidelines For Removing Artwork from Public Sites Under City or Park Board Jurisdiction](#), article 4.0. Conditions, p. 1.

³⁴ City of Edmonton, [Public Art Conservation, De-accession and Re-site](#), 9 April 2009, article 2.2. De-accession and Resting, p. 3.

³⁵ City of Barrie, [Public Art Policy](#), interim policy update, May 2021, p. 11.

Maintenance costs are excessive and/or the artwork's current condition raises safety concerns	The artwork "possesses faults of design or workmanship which result in excessive or unreasonable maintenance, a threat to public safety, and/or damage to an extent where repair is unreasonable or impractical."	"The artwork in its site creates a potential danger to members of the public" and "The cost of maintaining or restoring the Artwork is prohibitive."	"Endangerment to public safety," "excessive repair or maintenance," or "irreparable damage."
Destruction or changes to the site have occurred, significantly affecting the artwork's survival or appreciation	"Destruction of or changes to the site threaten the artwork's survival or result in a significant diminishing of its artistic integrity and effectiveness."	"The artwork's site has changed and is no longer appropriate or secure for the artwork."	"No longer accessible to the public" "Site redevelopment or demolition of the site incorporating the Public Art"

Case studies: Preservation and De-accession

Collingwood, Beverly Smith's Mural "Heading Dockside": A Mindful Approach to De-accession

The municipality of Collingwood has a robust and thoughtful Public Art Policy, considering the full life span of Public Art projects from ideation, selection, acquisition, funding allocations, maintenance and, when required, deaccessioning. Despite Collingwood boasting a significantly smaller population than Oshawa, this policy and approach is worthy of consideration.³⁶ Their mindful approach to deaccessioning is demonstrated in the 2019 removal of a 20-year-old mural by Beverly Smith, "Heading Dockside."

As the artwork had been created on a wooden panel subject to significant weather-related decay, it was unlikely that the mural could be revitalized or repainted, necessitating removal. The municipality's Customer & Corporate Service department presented a recommendation to remove the mural and replace it with a new artwork, which was ratified by municipal councillors. In accordance with Collingwood's Public Art Policy guidelines, the new mural was selected through a call for local artists. In recognition of the significance of the mural itself as well as its role in this community, original artist Beverly Smith was invited to join the selection committee, ensuring that she was included in the mural replacement process.³⁷ In addition, the town made multiple photographic records of the piece to preserve its legacy. The town also

³⁶ Town of Collingwood Public Art Policy (2017).

³⁷ Engel, Erika (January, 2017). "[There could be a new mural in town by next fall](#)"

communicated widely on the decision, ensuring that community members were informed of the reasons for the artwork's removal and the chosen process. Multiple articles appeared in the local press. Interviewed by Simcoe.com, Beverly Smith reported being satisfied with the town's decision, noting: "I'm very happy it's been up this long. One would like to think that it would be up forever and ever, but it's exciting thinking about what will come next."³⁸

Installed on a historic building in downtown Collingwood, the price of removal was \$30,000. Originally constructed in 1861, the original installation and removal of the panel mural resulted in significant damage to the building facade, necessitating a costly restoration process.³⁹ While the replacement mural was ultimately relocated to an alternate location in Collingwood,⁴⁰ this thoughtful approach engaged both the original artist and the local community, and respected the role this piece of public art played in the daily life of Collingwood residents for nearly 20 years.

This example provides key learnings for mindful deaccession projects:

- Clear decision processes, and transparent communication on the reasons for the artwork's removal.
- Close collaboration with the original artist.
- Appropriate celebration of the original artwork and the role it has played in the community, through communication and documentation.

Toronto, "Connections Mural" by lead artist Rob Matejka: A Commitment to Restoration / A Costly Oversight

The City of Toronto has an overarching Public Art Strategy, which supports a vision for "Creativity and Community — Everywhere." Section 3.6 offers directions for the "protection of public art works through proactive maintenance and conservation"⁴¹ and the Street Art Toronto program requires artists or initiatives funded by the program to hold back 10% of the project budget for maintenance within a 5-year period after the mural's production.

The effects of this commitment can be seen in Street Art Toronto's approach to restoration of the 2016 "Connections Mural" located in Toronto's North York.

Originally produced in 2016 through public funding, the "Connections Mural" by lead artist Rob Matejka with community and volunteer assistance was a deeply community-engaged project,

³⁸ Simcoe.com, "Artist happy with longevity of Collingwood mural", by Ian Adams, Thursday, April 11, 2019

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Collingwood Downtown BIA Board of Management Agenda and Meeting Minutes (Thursday, April 8, 2021)

⁴¹ City of Toronto Public Art Strategy: 2020/2023.

experienced by thousands of passersby daily.⁴² Located on a cement wall adjacent to a busy street, the natural degradation of the mural was hastened by significant vandalism, reducing its lifespan to a mere four (4) years. The approach taken by Street Art Toronto (StART) and Mural Routes, a local arts organization, was to remediate through restoration. While a different artist team was engaged for the restoration, the original ethos and intent of the 2016 mural were honoured by the 2020 team, who utilized the same techniques for design creation as employed by the original artist team.⁴³

A significant note from this project is the lack of maintenance planning as part of the 2016 mural production. A significant amount of time and labour went into the 2020 restoration, with the majority of time spent painting over the vandalism. Had a top-coat been applied at the end of the 2016 production, this remediation would have involved a professional power wash at approximately \$1,500. In contrast, the final cost of this restoration is estimated to be in the tens of thousands of dollars.

Milton: Failure to Consult

In 2022, the Downtown Milton Business Improvement Area (BIA) commenced the restoration and remodel of a mural located in the Spice O'Life parkette on Main Street and Charles Street. The mural was originally commissioned in the 1990s by the Downtown Milton BIA. Located in the heart of downtown, in a widely-used parkette, the artwork was well-identified by residents. Community members had a strong emotional attachment to the artwork, noting it had been the backdrop of many cherished memories. As a result, when residents, who had not been adequately consulted upon or informed of the upcoming restoration, noticed the wall being primed and covered up, outrage ensued.

The mural then became part of STEPS' I HeART Main Street program, allowing STEPS Public Art to support the BIA as they moved forward with the remodel of the wall.

The first step in this process was explaining why the mural had to be redone: the wall was in disrepair and in need of extensive renovations in order to maintain the integrity of the building on which the mural was located. In addition, the mural itself showed damage, as exposure to weather and UV light had caused the image and paint to deteriorate. Furthermore, concerns had been expressed on the theme of the artwork. Inspired by a collection of colourful postcards printed by T.C. Livingston in the early 1990s to promote "Livingston Park", the mural depicted adults and children enjoying recreational activities at the pond including taking a walk, rowing and playing and socializing. Many felt that this imagery did not reflect the current diversity of the city. Indeed, between 2001 and 2011, Milton was considered Canada's fastest growing

⁴² [Mural Maintenance at the Connections Mural](#) (September 23, 2020)

⁴³ Ibid.

municipality⁴⁴. During this time, Milton's population became much more diverse, with notable newcomer communities coming from Pakistan, India, the Philippines, and Egypt.⁴⁵ The BIA aimed to capture this diverse population in a refreshed mural, to increase the parkette's inclusivity, making it more welcoming to all.

STEPS Public Art recommended involving community members in the design process for the new artwork. A stand was set up at a local festival inviting people to discuss the revisioning of the mural with BIA members. Printed images of the blank wall were handed out to the community, encouraging them to draw what they may want to replace the mural with. These images and insights helped shape the final design, which reflected elements community members considered emblematic of Milton: the arts, nature, architecture, and the diversity of the town's inhabitants.

In order to commemorate the old mural, a plaque was created and installed in the park with high quality images of the original mural and a blurb about its history. Concluding the new installation, a community celebration took place to celebrate the new artwork and give thanks to the old mural.

Key learnings:

- Consulting with and informing community members prior to a mural removal is essential.
- The commemoration of landmarks the community has a strong emotional attachment to and considers central to the local cultural identity can take multiple forms. If a mural is deaccessioned, its memory can be preserved and celebrated through diverse means, and can include: photographic documentation, made available either online or close to the original artwork location; oral history collection, collecting stories from community members for whom the mural might have been the backdrop for key life events; provision of information on the work's history (covering the history of its creation, that of its presentation and information on the artwork content).
- It is valuable to involve community members in the development process of new public artworks.

⁴⁴ The Canadian Encyclopedia website. "[Milton](#)", content obtained May 18, 2023.

⁴⁵ The Canadian Encyclopedia website. "[Milton](#)", content obtained May 18, 2023.

Recommendations

Downtown Murals Assessment

Framework – Mural Assessment Criteria

Framework Description

A set of criteria was established to guide the review of the downtown murals, focused on six main considerations:

- Artwork life expectancy
- Thematic significance/community appreciation
- Visual appeal
- Alignment with the intended use of the space
- Physical condition
- Maintenance cost

These criteria were informed by the review of public art policies, with specific attention to maintenance and deaccession policies, and by the review of Oshawa's specific context. For each dimension, a descriptor can be selected:

- Good – indicates a strong reason to preserve the work
- Neutral
- Poor – indicates a strong reason to consider deaccession

Criteria are described in the below table.

Table 4: Mural Assessment Criteria

<i>Dimension</i>	Good	Neutral	Poor
Life expectancy	- Work created in the past 10-15 years.	- Work created over 15 years ago.	- <i>Not applicable</i>
Physical Condition	- Excellent/ Good	- The work is slightly aged, but still in good condition.	- The mural is visibly aged, in disrepair or has been vandalized, and/or; - The mural's condition

			presents a safety risk (in this latter case, a swift review is recommended).
Maintenance cost	- Minimal maintenance is required to keep the work in good condition.	- <i>Not applicable</i>	- The cost of the adequate care and maintenance required for the project is higher than 10% of its original value, adjusted to take inflation into account, and/or; - The work cannot be restored to a good condition without significant alteration/complete renovation.
Thematic significance / Community appreciation	- The work itself is of key cultural significance, and/or; - The work depicts elements that are of key significance for the city and strongly contributes to memorializing these elements, and/or; - Community members have a strong emotional attachment to the artwork, which is seen as central to the city's cultural identity.	- The work depicts elements that are of key significance for the city, but which are already sufficiently memorialized elsewhere, and/or; - The work is not of notable significance.	- Public feedback recommends a review, to replace the artwork with a work of more significance or appropriateness, and/or; - Artwork contains material which could be considered inappropriate, discriminatory, hateful, abusive, culturally appropriative or otherwise offensive.
Visual appeal	- The work strongly contributes to beautifying the space - to be assessed by an art curator, and/or;	- The work is not of notable significance.	- The work is of markedly inferior quality to other works in the collection, and/or;

	- The work is of notable artistic significance (e.g., work by a renowned local artist).		- The work is of markedly poor/ aged quality, to the extent that it reflects poorly on the city.
Alignment with the intended use of the space	- The work is strongly tied to the function of the space it is installed in.	- The work has no marked connection to the space's function.	- The work is in tension with the space's function and placemaking needs.

Notes on the intended use of this framework

In which contexts should this framework be used?

These criteria are not meant to replace the list of situations under which, according to "Article 5.4. Deaccessioning" of the City of Oshawa's Public Art Policy, deaccession of a public artwork might be considered. Rather, it is intended as a decision-making tool that can guide the review of mural artworks for which deaccession might be considered. In addition, these criteria were developed specifically for outdoor mural artworks. Should this framework be applied to other types of public art, some criteria would need to be revised accordingly.

How will criteria be assessed?

When appropriate, it is recommended that professionals with relevant expertise assess how murals rank on each of these dimensions.

For example, these might include:

- Thematic significance/community appreciation: historians, heritage specialists, whose insights should be complemented by a community consultation;
- Visual Appeal: art historians, curators, conservators, artists;
- Alignment with the intended use of the space: urban planners, architects, whose insights should be complemented by a consultation of those that use the space (e.g., community members, business and property owners);
- Physical condition: maintenance and conservation specialists;
- Maintenance cost: maintenance and conservation specialists.

How will this framework support decision-making?

The decision for each reviewed mural should be made on an analysis of the combination of criteria. We have chosen to use descriptions rather than points that would result in a final numeric appreciation on which to base the decision, to encourage a critical, case-by-case review. Indeed, depending on the situation, some criteria might be weighted more heavily than others. More importantly, this framework should help decide on a fulsome action plan adapted to each unique situation, rather than be used to simply arbitrate between maintenance and deaccession.

Notice of Revision to Document Content

Pursuant to City Council's direction at the October 28, 2024 meeting, regarding report ED-24-112: Mural Art Evaluation Plan, the "Recommendations on the Existing Murals" section (pages 51 to 62) has been removed to ensure the document reflects information endorsed by City Council.

Additional Recommendations

Best practices and suggested policy updates for mural art

Site selection and Production Planning

Available canvases

Oshawa's 2015 Public Art Policy, in section "4.0. Site Selection Acquisition" targeted municipal buildings, street features (i.e., gateways/entrances, tunnels, roads, and bridges), parks, and trails. In addition, pursuant to a report presented to Council by the City of Oshawa's Economic

and Development Services on May 3, 2023⁴⁶, The Public Art Policy has been amended to expand its definition of public art to permit the installation of City initiated art projects on private property in the downtown area, thereby significantly expanding the number of available canvases for public art.

Wherever possible, new development applicants should be encouraged to include public art in their proposals to contribute to a vibrant and ever-evolving public realm that reflects the local character and residents. There is also the recognition of the potential of street furniture (e.g., benches) as viable public art canvases thus expanding the opportunities for residents to experience public art as part of everyday activities.

Conservation considerations - Site selection, prepping, surface preparation and protection

A mural's location plays an important role in its conservation. In the case of murals intended for long-term presentation (20 years and more), a suitable site should be selected and/or consideration of physical modifications implemented to prevent environmental damage to the artwork (i.e.: adequate surface prepping, appropriate quality material use, etc.).

Considerations to take into account include:

- What are the environmental conditions? Avoiding sites with high exposure to/ limited protection against sunlight, abrasive winds, rain, snow or pollution is recommended. If painting on south-facing walls, ensure that quality materials are used and consider applying a UV protectant top-coat to extend lifespans beyond 15 years.
- Will the site be exposed to substances such as ice, salt or gravel, for instance during road de-icing?
- What are the features surrounding the surface considered for the mural? Do they provide protection or could they lead to damages? For instance, an overhang might provide protection to the elements and to sun exposure. Conversely, murals painted with no overhang are at higher risk of water infiltration. If painting on brick ensure that breathable house paint is used as a primer/material to prevent bubbling.
- Is the site prone to vandalism, or is it in an area that might encourage vandalism (for instance, hidden from the view of passersby)?
- How is the site used? Are there activities in the vicinity that might result in impact damage?

As part of the pre-production planning, a site-wide assessment is recommended, including observation of pedestrians and (in the case of works on or near roadways) vehicular traffic flows and volumes, with a site hazard assessment conducted by the artist and production

⁴⁶ City of Oshawa, Public Report, ED-23-103 Installing Art on Private Property in the Downtown, May 3, 2023.

management team to ensure all appropriate precautions are taken. Entrances and exits to the production site should be clearly marked, with barricades and signage advising passersby of the production and provide information on alternative routes if necessary.

Site preparation needs vary widely based on specific substrate, the current state of the substrate, as well as anticipated weather conditions. As a general rule, each substrate should be examined for major faults, cracks, and in the case of buildings, the presence of live electrical wires. Surface preparation begins with the control of hazards, such as professional assessment of live wires, followed by repair of faults which may impede the adhesion of paint/mounting panels. A professional power wash is recommended prior to the application of exterior primer and sealant, to ensure paint adhesion.

It is best practice to produce outdoor murals during the summer months to a) reduce the likelihood of rain during painting, and b) to ensure external temperatures are high enough for product adhesion.

Maintenance and Lifespan

Outdoor artworks are exposed to severe conditions and pollution throughout the year, which will affect the artworks over time. Standards established to include long-term care of public art should begin with a comprehensive inventory of the collection, its material composition, site placement, and condition. Responsibilities and obligations for the maintenance and conservation of artworks on private lands and/or properties are included in the terms and conditions of each property owner agreement.

Many public art programs consider murals temporary, with a lifetime of approximately 10 to 20 years. Murals are more vulnerable to weather damage, infrastructural changes, or evolution in urban planning than other forms of public art since they often cannot be relocated easily. The Oshawa murals under consideration are largely applied to a Styrofoam panel substrate which make them vulnerable to weather conditions, challenging to remediate, and difficult to remove without damaging the artworks themselves.

Public art policies typically recommend that an art maintenance budget be established for each current and future public art mural at a minimum of 10% of the total project budget within a certain time span (e.g., the City of Toronto has a time cap of 5 years for city funded projects), and that the annual contribution be transferred and administered through the reserve in order to more effectively fund and track activity related to the maintenance and conservation of City-owned art. The City should continue to support a sustainable source of funding for the long-term conservation and maintenance of its art collections. Through the Public Art Master Plan, Oshawa City Council committed annual funding of \$20,000 for temporary/semi-permanent acquisitions, \$2,000 towards maintenance and conservation, and an annual reserve contribution of \$60,000 to fund projects with a longer life cycle. With this in mind, it may be necessary to

increase the annual budget contributions as new permanent public art projects are completed, and the City's collection increases over the years. Furthermore, maintenance of projects that are integrated into or as part of public infrastructures, such as benches or light standards, should, where possible, be financed through the annual operating budgets of the relevant Oshawa City department responsible for the infrastructure. Any proposed maintenance should be conducted in consultation with the property owner and the City.

There are several approach to maintenance and remediation, should they be required. Each of these recommendations assumes the use of a non-Styrofoam based substrate (for example, applying the mural directly to the building face, or mounting a panel of aluminum or weather-treated lumber). Including maintenance and remediation responsibilities in any artist signed agreement is best practice, as this allows the artist to ensure any changes or remediation are in line with the original artistic intention and design. However, this can be challenging as many artists working at this scale travel nationally and internationally in professional capacities, making it difficult to secure them at times of vandalism, in such cases contracting that allows for remote approval for others to provide touchups should be considered. Alternatively, the use of an anti-graffiti and UV protection topcoat reduces the need for artist touch-ups, maintains colour vibrancy over a longer period than unprotected murals, and allow for the outsourcing of any vandalism remediation treatments to local power-washing/graffiti remediation companies. It should be noted that some artists are opposed to the use of such topcoats, especially in dust heavy locations, as dust and dirt do tend to adhere to these topcoats.

Vital to the efficient and responsive remediation of any defacement or damage is the need to regularly inspect each mural in the City's collection. These visits should be scheduled every two years. Additional visits can be planned in response to citizens' notice of vandalism or damage.

Choice of materials

There are a wide variety of materials appropriate for exterior presentation. The choice of materials, both for the surface and paint, should be made depending on the planned lifetime of the artwork. Styrofoam boards are appropriate only for artworks with a limited lifespan, those intended to remain stationary until final deaccessioning, or for indoor presentation. To extend the lifetime of public art works presented in the public realm, we recommend moving away from the Styrofoam panels widely used until this point in favour of the following substrates:

- 1) Aluminum: Aluminum is easy to work with, durable, lightweight, and has a high resistance to corrosion. Artworks may be applied as a painted mural with appropriate preparation, or professionally applied as vinyl printed with a digital design. The potential lifespan for painted murals on aluminum panels is up to 10 years, provided a protective top-coat is applied. By contrast, the lifespan of digitally printed vinyl is approximately one (1) to ten (10) years on glass surfaces.

- 2) Wood Panel: There are a variety of wooden panels available through home renovation stores which can be utilized for temporary/movable public art murals. Medium density overlaid (MDO) plywood is an exterior plywood with a weather-resistant resin overlay that resists water, weather and wear. It has a smooth texture ready for primer and paint. Again, a protective topcoat is needed to preserve colour vibrancy and further prevent water damage.
- 3) Direct Application: The simplest approach to public art murals is to apply the artworks directly to the building face. The selection of brick and/or stucco allows for direct, permanent application of painted mural art, with vibrancy retained by the protective top coat for up to 10 years while providing for a gentle fade with time until the 10 year mark. When painting on bricks, and especially on heritage buildings, appropriate paint should be used to allow for breathability and avoid damaging the bricks. A mural painted on brick could be left to fade away or be painted over, or it could be removed by power washing (however this might damage the bricks).

Insurance & safety considerations

Safety concerns are heightened when working in the public realm, as there are many variables to consider and control. As mentioned above, site preparation begins with a safety and hazards assessment to identify danger at the site. This includes, but is not limited to:

- The presence of live wires on or near the mural wall;
- Uneven ground surface conditions (i.e.: significant inclines, potholes and cracks in the sidewalk or pavement);
- Presence of garbage and/or biohazards at the site;
- Pedestrian and vehicular traffic levels and direction;
- Lighting if production will extend beyond sunset;
- Presence of water and working cell phone in case of emergency;
- On-site and on-call contacts established during all production hours.

These considerations do not preclude a mural from taking place, but proper safety investments need to be put in place to mitigate/ prevent risk.

In assessing each individual artist and/or subcontractor working at the site consider:

- Familiarity with the site and materials;
- Experience and comfort working in the public realm;
- Emerging/early career artists require additional support;
- Honour any accommodation/additional support requests.

In assessing safe use of equipment at site consider:

- Is anyone on site Working at Heights;
- Is there heavy machinery needed for production (i.e.: scissor lifts, boom lifts);
- If so, does the artist team have the necessary certifications (i.e.: Working at Heights and Elevated/Aerial Platform training)?
- Are ventilators necessary? If so, ensure the artist has a ready supply of filters on hand.

Deaccession

The City of Oshawa's Public Art Policy outlines processes for the deaccession of public artworks. City staff, in collaboration with the Public Art Task Force, will consider artwork(s) for deaccessioning when appropriate or necessary, and will provide a report to City Council for approval outlining the reasons for deaccessioning and the proposed method of disposal.

The Policy outlines situations under which a work might be deaccessioned:

- The art is deteriorating and restoration is not feasible
- The art is no longer relevant to the City's Public Art Inventory
- The art endangers public safety
- The art is too costly to insure or maintain
- The site is no longer accessible to the public and an alternative location cannot be found
- The art is discovered to have been stolen, or was offered to the City using fraudulent means
- Other situations, determined in the City's sole opinion

The framework for mural assessments completes these processes and can be used as a decision-making tool when evaluating the need to de-accession an outdoor mural.

We recommend that a committee of impartial professionals, with relevant expertise (e.g., art historians, conservators, curators, architects, etc.) provide insights on artworks considered for deaccession. In addition, the City of Oshawa could explore other best practices when considering the deaccession of an artwork, including the consultation of the artist, artist's estate or donor; community consultation and clear information to constituents on the reasons for any deaccession; and, in the case of artwork removal or destruction, adequate documentation and memorialization.

Several dimensions should be factored in when considering deaccession, such as:

- General information: information about the artwork, narrative on the history of the work and its acquisition;
- Reasons for the artworks deaccession, including insights provided by consulted professionals;

- Summary of consultations conducted, including correspondence with the artist and information on community and stakeholder engagement, to inform the public of the artwork review and collect insights;
- Budget considerations: value of the work to be deaccessioned, budget for the removal of the artwork and, if relevant, estimated cost of maintenance should the artwork be preserved;
- Suggested action (relocation, removal, destruction, or sale) with information on the means of disposal or disposition of the artwork.

Potential Inspirations for Future Mural Projects

The City of Oshawa is committed to supporting a vibrant public art sector, one that helps achieve the vision outlined in the Public Art Master Plan: “Oshawa will be a community where Public Art is innovative, diverse, and accessible to create vibrant public spaces and meaningful connections.” The engagement conducted throughout the Mural Art Evaluation Plan shows that community members have a strong desire for innovative and vibrant public art projects. For mural art, the Public Art Master Plan envisions positioning the City of Oshawa through the development of a mural art festival. To truly innovate in this area, STEPS Public Art recommends exploring new surfaces, formats, and creation processes. The below section provides suggestions for future mural art and examples of creations that can serve as sources of inspiration.

Exploring different placement options and compositions

The Oshawa downtown murals are all placed on flat walls and all present a rectangular format. Considering other placements would extend the number of canvases available and could contribute to the visibility of artworks, by using unexpected surfaces. In addition, compositions that play with the building surface, for instance through creatively integrating elements such as windows or doors in its composition, could be explored.

Ground Murals

Description

Painting murals on the ground, on surfaces such as parking spaces, pavements, pathways, roads, laneways, parks and skate parks, can contribute to beautifying public spaces, support wayfinding and highlight specific areas. Vibrant colours and geometric shapes are often used for ground murals. Ground murals strongly contribute to placemaking. Indeed, joyful creations can help activate a space, creating a playful atmosphere and inviting passersby to slow down and interact with other community members, especially in areas such as parks. Ground murals with bold colours can also help make narrow alleyways more attractive, and are sometimes used to

increase the safety of spaces that, due to their relatively hidden nature, can attract illegal activities. Painting all or part of a wall as well as the ground can create an especially inviting scene.

Practical considerations

- The paint used for ground murals should incorporate an anti-slip component, either as a top coat or mixed in with the paint.
- Preparation: for surfaces such as roads or pathways in particular, extensive cleaning should be done before painting, to remove any oil that might prevent the paint from adhering to the surface.
- The artwork rendering should be reviewed by relevant municipal services prior to the installation, to ensure that it does not hide or detract from essential ground signage.

Examples

South Granville Plaza East: Transforming a Plaza into a Colorful Walking Canvas

In 2023, Vancouver's South Granville BIA and artist collective WKNDRS, with support from STEPS Public Art's I HeART Main Street program, transformed a plaza through the creation of a joyful ground mural. The design was inspired by art deco elements, and used modern colours and shapes to create a visually stunning space. The design was carefully developed to create a cohesive ensemble: it complemented a wall mural with the words "It's the Little Things" previously created by the same artists, and furniture in the plaza has been carefully selected to match the colours and design of the mural, creating a cohesive and visually appealing space. This creation breathed new life into the space, providing a welcoming space that encourages residents and visitors to spend time in the plaza and sample offerings from restaurants and cafes. The mural has quickly become a popular spot for selfies, generating visibility for the plaza and businesses through social media posts.



Image 4: South Granville Plaza East before the mural creation

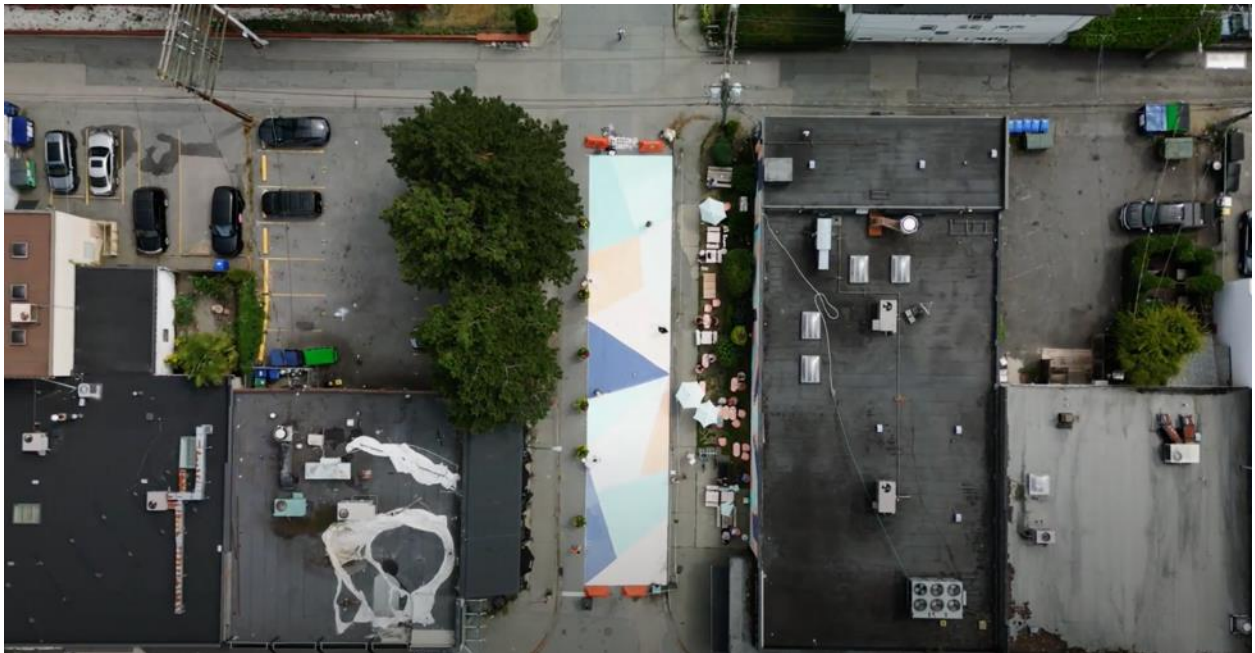


Image 5: Aerial view, excerpted from a video by David Geary, shot during the mural production



Image 6: South Granville Plaza East, during the mural production, photograph by David Geary

City of Brampton, Vivian Lane: Transforming a disused laneway into a destination

The City of Brampton, together with its partners the Downtown Brampton Business Improvement Area (BIA) and 8 80 Cities, transformed Vivian Lane into a vibrant destination for people of all ages as part of the broader Activate Downtown Brampton program supported by the My Main Street Community Activator Program. The mural was designed and produced by local artist Abiola Idowu, with assistance by over 40 community volunteers. Pop-up trees, planters flexible seating, sandboxes, and lighting were also installed in the laneway. The space was transformed into a destination for residents and families. Through Activate Downtown Brampton, the space was programmed, with activities such as workshops and live music.



Image 7 & 8: Vivian Lane before and after the mural creation

Lindsey Lickers Ground Mural in Rowntree Mills Park: Supporting wayfinding and showcasing Indigenous teachings

Since 2020, Lindsey Lickers, Mushkiiki Nibi Kwe (Medicine Water Woman), has been leading From Weeds We Grow: Restoration of Relationship, a land-based placemaking project which engages a diverse network of residents and community members, working to restore our relationship with the land, Indigenous communities, and each other. This project is part of From Weeds We Grow⁴⁷, a series of initiatives in Toronto's Rexdale community, supported by STEPS Public Art, which address residents' desire to reconnect and develop new relationships with Rowntree Mills Park, Toronto's fifth largest green park, which saw more than a decade of restricted access to interior roadways and parking areas following complaints regarding criminal activity.⁴⁸

Throughout 2021, Lindsey Lickers invited participants to explore their connections through a series of activities, including a Water Teaching Session led by Kanate'hson, Elder Renee Thomas-Hill, and a participatory beading circle led by Lindsey, organized along the Humber River, which explored the importance of our local waterways, and two exhibits to showcase the resulting beadwork by workshop participants. At the conclusion of this series, Lindsey Lickers created a large-scale ground mural inspired by water teachings, painted with assistance from community members. The mural highlights an important entrance to the Humber River Trail and Rowntree Mills Park. A collaborative effort between STEPS Public Art and Park People, this artwork has not only beautified the space, but deepened connections between residents, community members and the park itself, offering a place to gather, a landmark to support navigation, and a reminder of our obligations to the Humber River, Rowntree Mills Park, and all of creation.

⁴⁷ STEPS Public Art Website, [From Weeds We Grow webpage](#)

⁴⁸ CBC News, "[Residents want to open up access to "huge" city park](#)", article by Michael Smee, published April 18, 2019.



Image 9: ground mural created by Lindsey Lickers, in Rowntree Mills Park

Arts Milton's Exclusively Inclusive: Using sidewalk murals to promote inclusion

Arts Milton's Exclusively Inclusive initiative is a public art project that explores the themes of racism and hate with the hope that we can all do better. In 2023, for the second year of the initiative, Arts Milton, in collaboration with their partners the Town of Milton and Red T Kids Media, invited five artists (Aparna Rangnekar, Hope Flynn, Reilly Knowles, David Anthony, and Yen Linh Thai) to transform the sidewalk of Hugh Lane into a captivating visual narrative that celebrates diversity, inclusivity, and the power of art. The artists, selected through an open call, will each create two murals. The artwork aims to reflect the richness and beauty of the local community's tapestry. Community members were encouraged to join Arts Milton throughout the production period.



Image 10: Hugh Lane ground murals, by Yen Linh Thai, Aparna Rangnekar and Reilly Knowles

Unusual Canvases

While flat surfaces offer easy-to-activate canvases, innovating in the placement of mural art by decorating surfaces that are rarely painted can help artworks become more memorable. The examples below provide illustrations of such projects.

Popsilos: Encouraging Agri-Tourism through Activating Farm Architecture

The Popsilos project, in the Prescott-Russell countryside, combines art and agri-food tourism in a self-guided circuit that leads visitors to giant murals painted on the silos of local farms, while inviting them to stop at producers' or artisans' shops to check out local products. The project was originally launched to accompany Canada's 150th, and has since grown with the addition of new works. The meeting of an artform traditionally associated with urban settings within a rural setting makes for a strongly identified project, and the activation of the uncommon canvas presented by an iconic, monumental emblem of architecture, the silo, results in striking artworks. The project helps support participating farmers, who sells products and benefit from tourism.

The first seven silos paintings averaged 60 to 65 ft. in height and cost about \$40,000 each⁴⁹. The initiative was principally funded through public support, including a \$150,000 government grant for the celebration of the 150th anniversary of Canadian confederation and a 2020 \$100,000 grant in support from the Government of Canada through the Canadian Experiences Fund (CEF), delivered by the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

The project could serve as an inspiration for the adaptive reuse of former manufacturing architectural assets in Oshawa.



Image 11: Popsilo artwork by Dodo Ose

Innovative Compositions

Using Multiple Canvases to Create Anamorphic Designs

In 2019, Medianeras, a street artist duo from Argentina, was invited by the Vancouver Mural Festival to produce an artwork. The canvas provided a challenge, as the business owner requested the inclusion of the utility box in proximity to the wall surface be included in the

⁴⁹ Farmers Forum, "[EASTERN ONTARIO: There are now seven silo murals in Prescott-Russell](#)", by Elizabeth Gay, August 24, 2020.

artwork. In response, the artists created an anamorphic mural that used both surfaces to create a striking work.



Image 12 & 13: left: wall and utility box, before the mural creation; right: "Freedom", artwork by Medianeras, 68 E. 2nd Avenue, Vancouver

Other examples of works using a similar technique are featured below:



Image 14 & 15: left: artwork by Mique Michelle; right: artwork by Jieun June Kim and Moises Frank

Tyler Toews' Trompe L'Oeil Mural, Summer Moon Festival

The Summer Moon festival in Sault St. Marie invites local and regional artists from across the province to create and paint mural works in the downtown area. Community members are invited to participate in this landmark arts and culture event, whether it be by watching mural productions, participating in workshops, assisting with site preparation, attending block parties, visiting arts and crafts markets or taking in live music.

Canadian artist Tyler Toews participated in the festival, creating a striking trompe l'oeil mural that seamlessly integrates the building's commercial signage.



Image 16: mural by Tyler Toews

Shalak Attack, "Daily Migration": Incorporating Building Features to Create A Striking Image

"Daily Migration" is a community based, participatory public art project that began in the summer of 2020 offering social connection through three unique yet interconnected programming threads: community engagement sessions, collaborative arts workshops, and an online exhibition featuring artwork and writings of workshop participants. Canadian-Chilean artist Shalak Attack, known for their distinctive murals, presents a visual journey of shared community stories about arrival, departure, home and longing. The project culminated in the creation of a 1,400 square foot mural in September 2021, transforming Wilson TTC Station into a vibrant cultural space, with art to be enjoyed by 17,000+ daily visitors. The artwork's composition, with its use of the TTC entrance door, makes for a striking artwork.



Image 17: "Daily Migration," Shalak Attack

Enhancing Mural Art through the Addition of Interactive and 3D components

Audio-visual components and Augmented Reality

Adding interactive elements to murals offers several benefits:

- Combining a well-established art form with innovative technologies would help position Oshawa as a forward-looking city;
- Encouraging community residents to engage with the works and discover additional contents;
- Providing different means to experience the artworks, enhancing accessibility.

Examples of inspiring creations are described below.

Augmented Reality: City of Brampton, "Beyond the Plate" Storefront Windows

Augmented Reality (AR) content can further animate mural artworks. Content can take various forms, such as the animated images of components of the mural, adding music, and adding new elements to the mural altogether. AR allows artists to incorporate innovative and dynamic elements into the mural, enhancing traditional visual public art.

For example, Beyond the Plate was a project that responded to the needs of Downtown Brampton's local small business community and its cultural workers, forging partnerships to create community-engaged activations that leveraged underutilized and vacant commercial spaces in Brampton's downtown to exhibit new artwork. The exhibit showcased the diversity of cultural cuisines found in the city and extensive research was conducted to ensure that the illustrations were accurate and true to their respective origins. The artwork was featured on

vacant storefronts and enhanced through AR components. The AR creations showed animated elements of the original piece accompanied by recorded testimonials of community members sharing their stories of cooking and sharing favourite foods. Adding AR allowed viewers to interact with the artwork in a unique and immersive way.



Image 18: photograph of audience members watching the augmented reality content created for "Beyond the Plate" by Jenn Liv

Key takeaways:

- **Fostering Relationships:** Allowing artists who typically work in different mediums to collaborate and cultivate new relationships provides an opportunity for mutual learning and growth within their creative practices.
- **Community Engagement online:** This project encouraged individuals to use their phones to experience the artwork fully, naturally inspiring them to capture and share photos on their social media platforms.
- **Innovative:** AR is an innovative platform that combines technology with traditional art, using the power of new technologies to further enhance traditional public art mediums.

Audio-visual Components: Bloor Annex BIA, "Interconnection Audio Stories: Knowledge, Myths & Legends" and "The Band of Storytellers".

The Bloor Annex Business Improvement Area (BIA) in Toronto, Ontario, took the initiative to enhance two existing murals in their neighbourhood by incorporating audio elements, breathing new life into them and enhancing the narrative they aim to convey. The audio content provided a multi-sensory experience, which combined description, storytelling, poetry recitation and music to create more immersive and accessible art. This also enabled individuals who are visually impaired to engage with the murals by accessing an audio description and summary of its narrative.

The audio components were educational, teaching historical stories only sometimes learned in mainstream educational systems. One focused on traditional Indigenous creation stories while

the other delved into the history of the BIA, illuminating the often overlooked narrative of Jamaican and other Caribbean immigrants who settled in the community during the 1950s, with a notable connection to jazz. For both projects, the creation of audio components resulted from a partnership between an artist and a community member.

Key takeaways:

- **Accessibility:** audio components increase accessibility by providing a multi-sensory experience.
- **Educational:** audiovisual content adds an educational component to the works by sharing stories in an inviting format.
- **Engagement:** increase engagement with local community members through participation in the recording and through offering multiple avenues to engage with the artwork.
- **Integration of technology:** adding audio components blends modern technology with traditional visual art forms.
- **Oral History:** in many Indigenous communities, orally sharing history and stories holds great importance; this practice aligns with that tradition, specifically aligning with the mural focused on Indigenous creation stories.

Playing with Light: Snelgrove Community Centre

Incorporating lighting elements into a mural adds an extra layer to the artwork, especially in the evening and colder months. Light features are eye-catching, transforming the mural into a new masterpiece as night falls, offering a variety of perspectives depending on the time of day. Light has the ability to add detail, texture, depth and colour to the artwork. Not only does it enhance the mural's aesthetic, but it also increases safety and accessibility by increasing the visibility of the artwork and surrounding area.

The City of Brampton is taking a progressive approach to incorporate light into the revitalization of its Snelgrove Community Centre. This revitalization will transform the building's roof into a sky scene. Artists LeuWebb will paint the roof in vibrant colors, and fasten decorative cloud shapes sculpted out of dichroic, colour shifting film adhered to clear acrylic. These 3D elements will create an interplay with the roof's color, through light effects that will vary with the sunlight.

This addition will contribute to creating a welcoming environment and establish the Snelgrove Community Centre as a local landmark, ahead of its transformation into an arts and culture venue.

Key Findings:

- **Aesthetic:** Light adds additional details and elements to the artwork, giving it more depth and making it more dynamic, which leads to varying perspectives and experiences, transforming with the evolving phases of the day.

Three Dimensional (3D) Elements, Barrie Business Improvement Area - The Land Knows You

Adding three-dimensional (3D) elements to a mural enhances its visual impact by adding depth, making the work more eye-catching and visually striking. 3D elements can be designed to complement the building itself but also be added to places where traditional mural mediums, such as paint, cannot go, for example, protruding into a window or lingering off a wall. Furthermore, you can use 3D elements to make murals more accessible by adding tactile elements, increasing the experience for individuals with visual impairments. In addition, depending on the material used, 3D elements can be installed more flexibly as they can be affixed in the colder months while also having the ability to be moved around and taken down, allowing them to be semi-permanent if desired.

In 2022, Downtown Barrie BIA invited artist Astehtsi Otsistohkwa (Morningstar) Jewell to activate a wall which the BIA had previously painted pink, turning it into a selfie spot. They wished to further animate the wall without altering the paint's integrity, which led them to create "The Land Knows You", a mural made up of multiple 3D elements that were installed on the wall, which turned the wall into a completely new artwork while keeping the memories of the old wall. In addition, a documentary film was created, with a recording of the artist and of Anishinaabe storyteller, Sarain Fox, offering additional ways to discover the mural.

Key Findings:

- **Accessibility:** 3D elements can be designed to include tactile components, making the mural accessible to individuals with visual impairments.
- **Increased Visual Experience:** 3D elements create more depth and texture and make the work more eye-catching and memorable, since this is an uncommon format.
- **Installation flexibility:** There is a wider range as to when you can install 3D elements while also having the ability to remove and replace them if needed.



Image 18: "The Land Knows You", by Astehtsi Otsistohkwa (Morningstar) Jewell

Innovative Ways to Represent History and Community

Sharing historical stories helps to conserve cultural heritage and traditions, through connecting individuals to the roots of the community and providing a deeper understanding of how the neighbourhood came to be, while also highlighting the changes that have happened since. When undertaking projects focused on history, it is important to consider whose history and narratives we are showcasing, and to ensure a diverse range of backgrounds and stories are represented. The below section contains examples of creative and culturally responsive ways to showcase local history through mural.

Port Carling Wall: Creating a Mosaic out of Photographs

In Port Carling, a 111-by-45-foot photo mosaic made up of 905 individual pictures was installed. Seen at a distance, from District Road 118 or from boats on the bay, the pictures come together to create the image of the RMS Sagamo passing through the Port Carling locks circa 1922, while people passing closer to the wall can appreciate the individual photographs, which capture moments of time in the lives of residents of Port Carling during the village's first century, from 1860 to 1960. As noted by the Township of Muskoka Lake, the mural's purpose was fourfold: "to serve as a spectacular tourist attraction; to stimulate further revitalization of

Port Carling; to foster community pride and to reflect the heritage of Muskoka Lakes Township.”⁵⁰

Key learnings:

- Innovation: as this project exemplifies with its use of the techniques perfected by Toronto Digital Imaging and Magic Mosaics, murals can showcase historical moments while leveraging innovative technologies or formats, to combine the celebration of local history with a forward-looking approach.
- Diversity of histories: it is important to include a diversity of stories from different communities and cultural groups. This mosaic, with its more than 900 scenes from the village’s past, strongly showcases the idea that a community is made up of various destinies and, in addition to showcasing a cultural identity marker (the RMS Sagamo), invites viewers to reflect upon the various lives and perspectives that have shaped Port Carling.
- Education and involvement of community members: it is valuable to learn about the history of an area and look at the successes and mistakes of the past. The creation of murals reflecting local histories offers the opportunity to engage community members, to involve them in the (re)discovery of local histories and to collect their perspectives. For this project, the mural creators had support from the Township of Muskoka Lakes and volunteers and staff from the Muskoka Lakes Museum and the Norma and Miller Alloway Muskoka Lakes Library, who came together to research photographs.



Image 19: Port Calling Mural

⁵⁰ Township of Muskoka Lakes website, [Port Calling Wall webpage](#)

St. Clair Mural: Community-Engaged Placemaking

The St. Clair mural, commissioned by Slate Asset Management, is an eight-story mural produced by STEPS Public Art in collaboration with British artist Phlegm and which transformed Toronto's midtown neighbourhood into a cultural destination. The imagery was inspired by insights from hundreds of local residents and business owners about what the neighbourhood and what Toronto means to them. The community members appreciate the familiar images in the mural as they reflect specific Toronto gems they shared. Now, the mural is an iconic landmark in Toronto helping to shape what people think of when you say Yonge and St. Clair. Through successful placemaking, this project strongly contributed to the revitalization of the area, as noted by Slate Director of Asset Management Katie Fong: "We couldn't have anticipated the positive response and interest that the St. Clair mural has generated from the community. The success of this project has given us a new energy and way to look at how we would like to see the area develop."⁵¹

Key Findings:

- An iconic landmark: with its memorable design that serves as a visual symbol that defines and amplifies the identity of the Yonge and St. Clair area, this mural contributes to placemaking.
- Combining international visibility with locally-rooted action: the invitation of an internationally reputed artist, with the ability to realize a highly complex and technical project helped the area gain international recognition. This does not mean that the project was distanced from local communities. 72,000 community members were engaged through a wide array of activities and identified the local landmarks which come together as a mosaic in the final artwork. In-depth engagement provided community members with a sense of belonging and ownership, building stronger community ties and appreciation for the mural. In addition, local artist Stephanie Bellefleur was engaged on the project as a mentee and trained by Phlegm, contributing to building capacity within the local artistic scene.

⁵¹ STEPS Public Art, [St. Clair Mural](#).



Image 20: St. Clair Mural, by Phlegm

Debra Sparrow, "Blanketing the City": Celebrating Coast Salish Weaving throughout the City of Vancouver

With "Blanketing the City", acclaimed Musqueam Weaver and Graphic Designer Debra Sparrow celebrates the resurgence of Coast Salish weaving in profoundly visible, public and accessible spaces across the city by transforming Coast Salish textile patterns into giant murals that also incorporated contemporary design elements. Produced by the Vancouver Mural Festival, these murals were created on highly visible surfaces, from buildings to cement pillars across the city.

Key learnings:

- Using public art to support Truth and Reconciliation goals: as underlined by the Vancouver Mural Festival, this series contributes to "the reversal of the systemic suppression of the visual culture of the local nations in the public spaces of Vancouver."⁵² It reinscribes in public spaces the visual culture of the people who have

⁵² Vancouver Mural Festival, "[Blanketing the City: A Mural Series](#)"

thrived on those lands for thousands of years. The artist also sees this series as belonging to a process of “creating new channels of transmission of Indigenous knowledge across generations, cultures and communities.”⁵³

- Non-figurative ways to showcase local histories: while the Oshawa downtown murals all resort to figurative depictions of specific scenes or locations to represent the local history, the same objective can be achieved through other artistic styles. Here, the use of Coast Salish weaving motifs strongly embeds the historical and current present of Coast Salish people into the city’s fabric. The format also lends itself to a wide variety of surfaces, from flat walls to pillars of different shapes.



Image 21: one of the murals created as part of Debra Sparrow’s “Blanketing the City” series

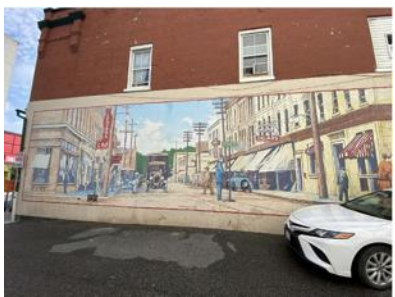
⁵³ Ibidem.

Appendices

Appendix A - Downtown Murals

The information in this section on the artists, dates of creation, location and themes of the 15 downtown murals was taken from presentation of Public Artworks available on the City of Oshawa website.⁵⁴

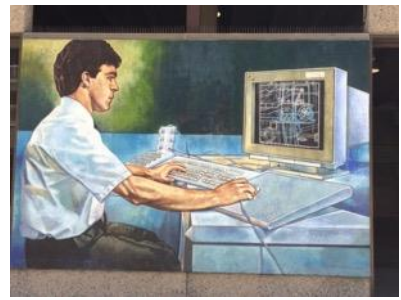
Table 5: Mural Locations, Details, and Photographs

Mural and Location	Details	Image
Oshawa 1935 by Dan and Peter Sawatzky 23 King St. W.	Commissioned in 1995. The mural was created by father and son team Dan and Peter Sawatzky. This mural depicts Oshawa's Four Corners on Kingston Rd. (now King St. and Simcoe St) as it would have appeared in 1935. It exhibits the manually operated traffic sign, used and operated by Officer Ed Stauffer as he directed traffic during busy times. Down in the heart of Oshawa on the main street were train tracks for the Oshawa Carriage Works, which remained until 1962.	
Full Steam Ahead by Gus Froese 64 Simcoe St. N.	Commissioned in 1995. The mural was created by Gus Froese. Full Steam Ahead is a collage celebrating the history of Oshawa and the Oshawa Carriage Works. Located at the back of the mural is Parkwood Estate and how it stands today. Also painted in the mural is one of Oshawa Carriage works cars, a 1924 McLaughlin Buick. On the extreme right is an original depiction of the Queen's Hotel. Established in 1874 it boasted state of the art technology with en-suite bathrooms, running water, and electricity. Painted in the centre is the Oshawa Carriage Works with their employees out front. Back behind the Oshawa Carriage Works is	

⁵⁴ City of Oshawa website, [Public Artworks](#), consulted July 15, 2024.

	Oshawa's Newspaper at the time. "The Oshawa Daily Reformer" later to become the "Oshawa Times". On the far left of the mural is a depiction of the Oshawa Harbour and Barnhart's Pavilion, the local dance hall, where people went to socialize and dance.	
Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development) by Robin Burgesse 47 Bond St. W.	Commissioned in 1996. The mural was created by Robin Burgesse. This mural portrays Oshawa's development with the slogan "Building on a Strong Foundation". Listed at the top are early companies from Oshawa's past. The panels below depict scenes from three influential companies - Warren Mills, Williams Piano Factory, and the McLaughlin Carriage Company. Many local faces are also featured.	
General Motors of Canada by John Hood 47 Bond St. W.	Commissioned in 1996. The mural was created by John Hood. The first panel illustrates members of the McLaughlin Family, founders of the McLaughlin Carriage Company and McLaughlin Motor Car Company, the forerunner of General Motors of Canada. The second panel shows GM's car symbols: Buick, Saturn, Pontiac, Oldsmobile, Chevrolet, GMC, and Cadillac. The diversity of the work force is illustrated on the third panel through the use of gender, race and age. Through the instillation of technology, car designs change as shown on the fourth panel. The Crash Test Dummies found at the GM South Plant are painted on to the fifth panel. The loon found on the sixth panel is seen at either the GM Canada Headquarters, at the McLaughlin Bay, or the Second Marsh project. The inspiration for the next portion of the mural came from an actual letter and enclosed photograph. It shows three generations: a grandmother, a mother, and a granddaughter, standing proudly in front of their new "Sunfires." They wrote GM expressing how pleased they were with	

their new cars. In the final panel painted are two examples of the cars produced in Oshawa: the Buick Century and the GMC Pick-up.



Windfields Farm by David Yeatman McLaughlin Bandshell, Memorial Park 110 Simcoe St. S.	Commissioned in 1996. The mural was created by David Yeatman. Windfields Farm was the home of champion racehorse Northern Dancer. Both the 1964 Kentucky Derby and Queen's Plate winner, Northern Dancer is pictured after his historic Kentucky Derby win with jockey Bill Hartack and EP Taylor, owner of Windfields Farm. Windfields Farm became one of the most renowned thoroughbred stables in North America.	
Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service by John Hood McLaughlin Bandshell, Memorial Park 110 Simcoe St. S.	Commissioned in 1996. The mural was created by John Hood. This mural commemorates the 130 year history of Oshawa's own Ontario Regiment and its involvement in the nation's conflicts and UN peacekeeping missions. All of the medals depicted at the bottom of the mural are accurate representations of Canadian Military decorations.	
Driving Force by Rudolf Stussi 22 Athol St. E.	Commissioned in 1996. The mural was created by Rudolf Stussi. The evolution of Oshawa's automobile industry is depicted in this mural. In 1899, the McLaughlin Carriage Factory was destroyed by fire, but was rebuilt within a year. The McLaughlin Motor Car Company, founded in 1907, began producing automobiles and, in 1918, became General Motors of Canada. The mural illustrates the role of General Motors during the Second World War in the manufacture of combat vehicles. The far right of the mural depicts the later technological advancements in automobile production.	

Borsberry Music Hall by Brian Romagnoli 31 Celina St.	Commissioned in 1997. The mural was created by Brian Romagnoli. This mural depicts Borsberry Music Hall, a 700 seat theatre that was located on the north side of King St., just east of Simcoe St., in the early 20th century. It played host to a number of dramatic and musical productions. The inside of the Borsberry Music Hall is portrayed as a montage on the mural. Pictured outside the Music Hall is a McLaughlin Buick from 1924. The artist decided to give the mural a little life and incorporated the doorway to the apartments into the mural painting it blue and yellow.	
Recreation by the Lake by Tony Johnson 72-74 Celina St.	Commissioned in 1997. The mural was created by Tony Johnson. The Lake Ontario Waterfront is pictured in this mural. It was a favourite gathering place for the Oshawa middle class. Streetcars running north and south along Simcoe St. were a popular means of getting to the waterfront. Barnhart's Pavilion (pictured in the background) was famous throughout Oshawa and beyond for its Friday night dances. Also pictured is "The Ocean Wave", a merry-go-round that was a prominent fixture at the lake.	
Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary by Robin Burgesse 47 Bond St. (West wall of GO Bus Terminal)	Commissioned in 1997. The mural was created by Robin Burgesse. The Victorian Order of Nurses Mural depicts the 100-year history of the VON. It was commissioned by the VON Durham branch. The VON was founded by Lady Isabel Aberdeen, the wife of the Governor General, on the request of the National Council of Women as Canada's "memorial" for Queen Victoria's 1897 Diamond Jubilee.	

Famous Oshawa Generals by Paul Ygartua 78 King St. W.	Commissioned in 1997. The mural was created by Paul Ygartua. The Oshawa Generals Major Junior Hockey franchise was established for the 1937-38 season and immediately became a hockey powerhouse by winning seven consecutive Ontario championships through to 1944. The team has won five additional Ontario titles since then and has been the Memorial Cup champion four times, in 1939, 1940, 1944, and 1990. Featured are well-known Oshawa Generals stars of the past, including Billy Taylor, Bobby Orr, Terry O'Reilly and Eric Lindros.	
Kingston Road Stage Coach by JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Melissa Verge, and Nicol Janecko 12 Simcoe St. S. (Carriageway)	Commissioned in 1998. The mural was created by JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Melissa Verge, and Nicol Janecko who were local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School. This mural depicts the first stage coach line that operated on Kingston Rd. (Highway 2) between Fort Frontenac (Kingston) and Fork York (Toronto), 1817 to 1855. The last stop before Fort York was at Oshawa House on the northeast corner of King and Centre St.	
Skae's Corner by JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Erin Hackney, Ian Mitchell and Mile Wystoski 14 Simcoe St. S. (Carriageway)	Commissioned in 1999. The mural was created by JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Erin Hackney, Ian Mitchell and Mile Wystoski, students from students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer. This mural depicts life at the four corners, 1840 to 1850. Skae's Corners became the Village of Oshawa in 1842. The first post office in Oshawa was located in the General Store owned by Skae and McDonald (the checkerboard building in the mural). The mural image looks outward from the porch at Munroe's Tavern where, in 1850, the Village of Oshawa Council held its first meeting. The other two buildings depicted are JD Hoitt's Carriage Shop and JB Warren's General	

	Store.	
Oshawa's 75th Anniversary by Tony Johnson 121 Simcoe St. S.	Commissioned in 2000. The mural was created by Tony Johnson. Incorporated as a City in 1924, Oshawa celebrated its 75th anniversary in 1999. This mural is a collage of important people and places in Oshawa's history including: Donald Jackson, world famous figure skater; Lloyd Chadburn, a hero of the Second World War; Honourable Colonel Michael Starr, former Oshawa Mayor and Federal Labour minister; Robert Attersley, former Oshawa Generals hockey player; and Colonel R. S. and George McLaughlin, co-founders of General Motors of Canada, who, along with their wives, Adelaide and Annie, were patrons of Camp Samac, Memorial Park, Girl Guides, Boy Scouts, and the Canadian Automotive Museum.	
Camp X by Tony Johnson 100 Simcoe St. S. (South wall of Oshawa Power Building).	Commissioned in 2001. The mural was created by Tony Johnson. On December 6, 1941, Camp X – Special Training School 103 officially opened on the shores of Lake Ontario. Under auspices of British Prime Minister Winston Churchill's Special Operations Executive and his Canadian Chief of Security, Sir William Stephenson, five hundred secret agent graduates were schooled in a grueling ten to twelve week curriculum that included hand-to-hand combat, interrogation techniques, psychological warfare, explosives training as well as espionage, sabotage and survival skills behind enemy lines. Hydra, the immensely powerful short wave radio installation at Camp X, had William "Bill" Hardcastle, among its key operators. Ian Fleming, author and creator of "James Bond", was also trained here.	

Appendix B - Condition Evaluation – Photographic Documentation

Photographs taken during the condition evaluation conducted by STEPS Public Art in June 2023 are included in this section.

Figure One: "Full Steam Ahead" (Gus Froese, 64 Simcoe St. North) - Full Mural



Figure Two: "Full Steam Ahead" (Gus Froese, 64 Simcoe St. North) – Dirt, streaks, and chips



Figure Three: "Oshawa 1935" (Dan and Peter Sawatzky, 23 King St. West) – Full Mural



Figure Four: "Oshawa 1935" (Dan and Peter Sawatzky, 23 King St. West) – Vandalism and impact damage



Figure Five: "Oshawa 1935" (Dan and Peter Sawatzky, 23 King St. West) – Cracks



Figure Six: "General Motors of Canada" (John Hood, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Impact damage and cracks



Figure Seven: "General Motors of Canada" (John Hood, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Impact damage, cracks, steaks, and peeling



Figure Eight: "General Motors of Canada" (John Hood, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) - Frames in the best condition



Figure Nine: "Ontario Regiment (130 Years of Service)" (John Hood, McLaughlin Bandshell Memorial Park) - Full Mural



Figure Ten: "Kingston Road Stage Coach" (JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Melissa Verge, Nicol Janecko, local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School, 12 Simcoe St. South in carriageway) – Cracks, impact damage, vandalism



Figure Eleven: "Skae's Corners" (JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Erin Hackney, Ian Mitchell and Mike Wystoski, local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High

School, 14 Simcoe St. South in carriageway) – Cracks, impact damage, vandalism



Figure Twelve: "Borsberry Music Hall" (Brian Romagnoli, 31 Celina St.) – Full Mural



Figure Thirteen: "Borsberry Music Hall" (Brian Romagnoli, 31 Celina St.) – Cracks, water damage, discoloration



Figure Fourteen: "Borsberry Music Hall" (Brian Romagnoli, 31 Celina St.) – Water damage and discoloration from air conditioning



Figure Fifteen: "Oshawa' Development (Historical Industry and Development)" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Full Mural



Figure Sixteen: "Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Impact Damage and cracks





Figure Eighteen: "Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development)" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Vandalism



Figure Nineteen: "Windfields Farm" (David Yeatman, McLaughlin Bandshell Memorial Park) – Full Mural



Figure Twenty: "Windfields Farm" (David Yeatman, McLaughlin Bandshell Memorial Park) – Chipping



Figure Twenty-one: "Windfields Farm" (David Yeatman, McLaughlin Bandshell Memorial Park) – Handprints



Figure Twenty-two: "Driving Force" (Rudolf Stussi, 22 Athol St. East) – Full Mural



Figure Twenty-three: "Driving Force" (Rudolf Stussi, 22 Athol St. East) – Cracks, chips and streaks



Figure Twenty-four: "Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Full Image



Figure Twenty-five: "Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Impact Damage



Figure Twenty-six: "Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary" (Robin Burgesse, Go Bus Station, 47 Bond St.) – Broken Frame



Figure Twenty-seven: "Recreation by the Lake" (Tony Johnson, 72-74 Celina St.) – Full Mural



Figure Twenty-eight: "Recreation by the Lake" (Tony Johnson, 72-74 Celina St.) – Impact Damage



Figure Twenty-nine: "Famous Oshawa Generals" (Paul Ygartua, 78 King St. West) – Full Mural



Figure Thirty: "Famous Oshawa Generals" (Paul Ygartua, 78 King St. West) – Streaks, cracks and water damage

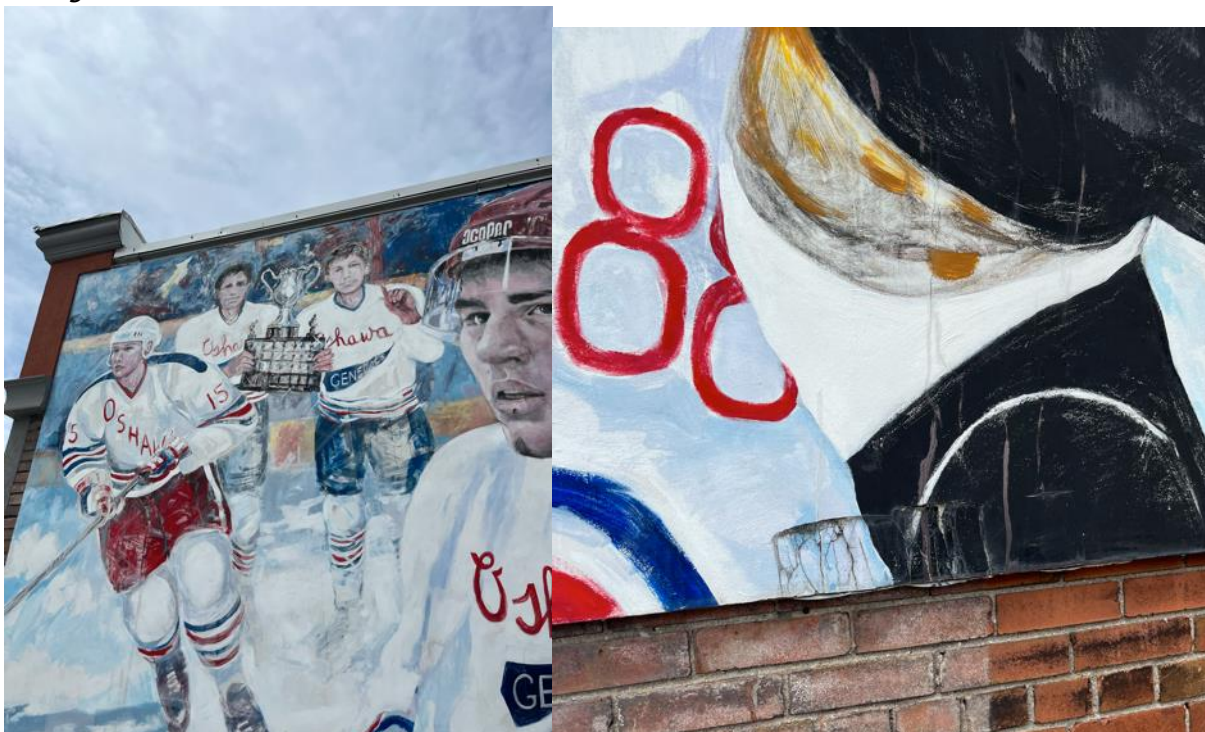


Figure Thirty-one: "Camp X" (Tony Johnson, 100 Simcoe St. South) – Full Mural



Figure Thirty-two: "Camp X" (Tony Johnson, 100 Simcoe St. South) – South impact damage



Figure Thirty-three: "Camp X" (Tony Johnson, 100 Simcoe St. South) – Frame



Figure Thirty-four: "Oshawa's 75th Anniversary" (Tony Johnson, 121 Simcoe St. South) – Full Mural



Figure Thirty-five: "Oshawa's 75th Anniversary" (Tony Johnson, 121 Simcoe St. South) – Vandalism

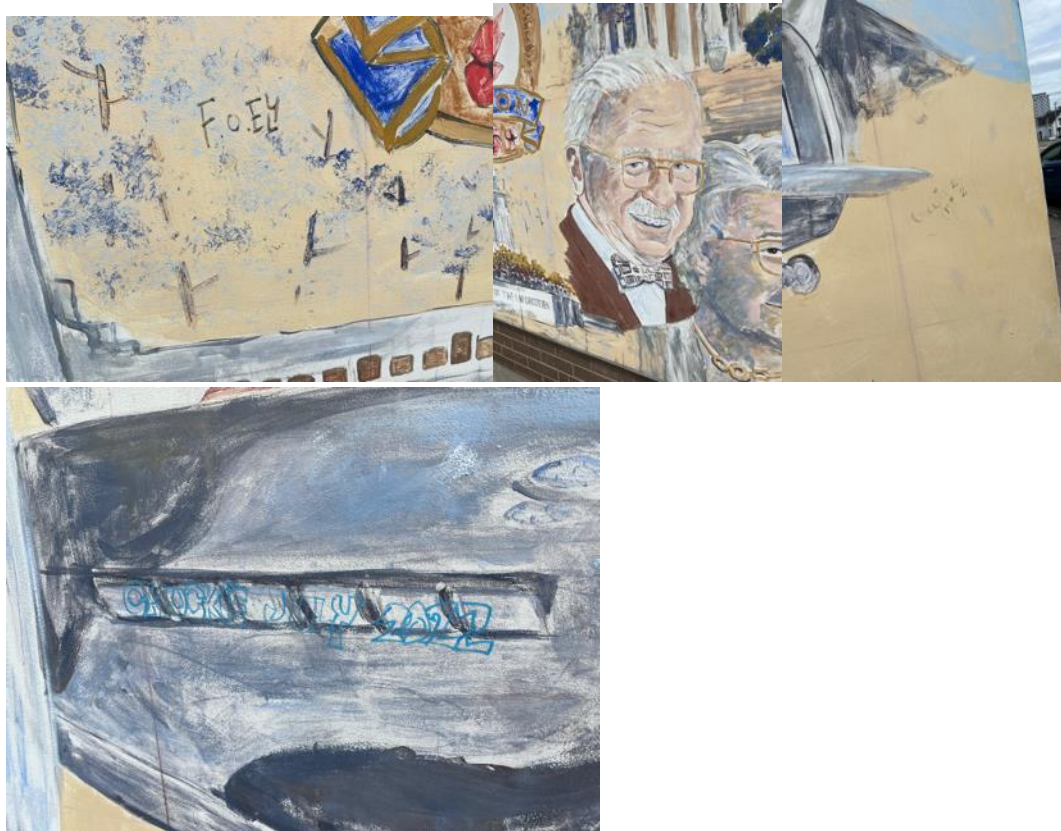


Figure Thirty-six: "Oshawa's 75th Anniversary" (Tony Johnson, 121 Simcoe St. South) – Impact damage



Appendix C - Feedback Form

This feedback form was conducted through ConnectOshawa from July 10, 2023 to August 8, 2023. The feedback form was widely promoted through the City of Oshawa's communication tools. This form invited residents to share their feedback on the murals and their hopes for the future of mural art in the city. 188 community members responded to the feedback form, and an additional 134 visited several feedback form pages, gaining information on this municipal initiative.

Question 1. What do you believe the role of murals in Downtown Oshawa should be? Select up to three options.

- 59.45% Beautification
- 43.24% Support artistic creation
- 41.08% Promote community pride
- 38.80% Honour community history
- 34.59% Reflect local diversity and culture
- 24.86% Encourage residents and visitors to spend time downtown
- 16.76% Draw tourism
- 14.59% Create a social connection
- 9.19% Communicate a vision for the future of Oshawa
- 4.32% Showcase local environmental features
- 2% Other

5 participants chose to skip this question.

Question 2. What styles of art would you like to see in murals around the city? Please rank from most preferred (1) to least preferred (6).

Options selected, from most to least preferred:

1. Vibrant/ playful/ whimsical (2.49)
2. Realism (3.09)
3. Figurative (e.g., featuring human faces or figures) (3.36)
4. Expressionist/ non-representational (3.36)
5. Street art (i.e., graffiti-inspired) (3.7)
6. Geometric (4.9)
7. Other (5.09)

5 participants chose to skip this question.

**Question 3. Would you prefer the new murals be created by artist who are...?
(Select from the following)**

- 55.85% - Local
- 16.49% - Regional
- 5.85% - National
- 2.65% - International
- 19.15% - Indifferent

1 participant chose to skip this question.

Question 4. When deciding whether to maintain a mural artwork, which criterion would you rank the most highly? Select up to three (3) options.

- 65.93% - The aesthetic quality of the artwork
- 52.20% - The extent to which the artwork reflects current-day Oshawa and the desires of its communities
- 48.35% - The alignment between the work and the function of the public space in which it is located.
- 42.76% - The age of the mural (many public art programs consider murals to be temporary, with a lifespan of 10-20 years)
- 8.79% - Other

7 participants chose to skip this question.

Question 5. Review the photographs of the 15 murals under consideration as part of the Mural Art Evaluation Plan. Which murals appeal to you the most? (Select all that apply)

In descending order of preference, artworks selected were:

1. 59.55% - Ontario Regiment - 130 Years of Service, John Hood, McLaughlin Bandshell, Memorial Park
2. 48.88% - Oshawa's Development (Historical Industry and Development), Robin Burgesse, 47 Bond Street
3. 47.19% - General Motors of Canada, John Hood, 47 Bond Street
4. 46.63% - Windfields Farm, Dave Yeatman, McLaughlin Bandshell, Memorial Park
5. 44.94 % - Borsberry Music Hall, Brian Romagnoli, 31 Celina Street.
6. 42.13% - Oshawa 1935, Dan and Peter Sawatzky, 23 King Street West
7. 42.13% - Famous Oshawa Generals, Paul Ygartua, 78 King Street West⁵⁵

⁵⁵ 76 King St. West was the address listed for the mural when the feedback form was available. The planning site map has confirmed it as 78 King St. West in May 2024.

8. 38.76% - Camp X, Tony Johnson, 100 Simcoe Street South
9. 36.51% - Full Steam Ahead, Gus Froese, 64 Simcoe Street North
10. 29.12% - Victorian Order of Nurses - 100th Anniversary, Robin Burgesse, 47 Bond Street
11. 26.40% - Recreation by the Lake, Tony Johnson, 72-74 Celina Street
12. 25.84% - Kingston Road Stage Coach, Artists: JR Hunter, Matt Whelan, Melissa Verge, Nicol Janecko (Local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School), 12 Simcoe Street South in the carriageway.
13. 25.28% - Oshawa's 75th Anniversary, Tony Johnson, 121 Simcoe St. South
14. 22.47% - Skae's Corners, Artists: Jr Hunter, Matt Whelan, Erin Hackney, Ian Mitchell and Mike Wystoski (Local students of O'Neill Collegiate and Vocational Institute and Monsignor Paul Dwyer Catholic High School), 14 Simcoe Street South in the carriageway.
15. 18.54% - Driving Force, Rudolf Stussi, 22 Athol Street East⁵⁶

11 participants chose to skip this question.

Demographic information

How old are you?

- 32.62% 35 - 44
- 21.39% 25 - 34
- 16.04% 55 - 64
- 12.83% 45 - 54
- 9.09% 65 - 74
- 5.34% 75+
- 2.13% 18-24
- 0.53% 17 and under

2 participants chose to skip this question.

Are you an Oshawa resident, and/or Oshawa business/property owner?

- 86.63% Yes
- 13.37% No

2 participants chose to skip this question.

⁵⁶ 15 Celina St. was the address listed for the mural when the feedback form was available. The planning site map has confirmed it as 22 Athol St. E. in May 2024.

What ward do you live in/ is your business/property located in?

- 8.70% Ward 1
- 17.39% Ward 2
- 18.01% Ward 3
- 29.81% Ward 4
- 22.36% Ward 5
- 8.07% Don't know

28 participants chose to skip this question.

How did you learn about this community engagement opportunity?

- 3.37% City Facility
- 55.10% Social Media
- 30.34% Email
- 6.74% City of Oshawa website
- 6.74% Other
- 5.62% Word of Mouth
- 3.93% Connect Oshawa website
- 2.81% Oshawa This Week
- 0.56% Mailed or hand-delivered item
- 0.56% Poster

11 participants chose to skip this question.

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