



July 27, 2020

## The City of Calgary Public Art Program Engagement Sessions: Q&A

Thank you for joining our engagement sessions for the new direction of The City of Calgary's public art program. Your feedback, comments and input on our activities are currently being synthesized alongside our other engagement activities. This will create a report that will inform the procurement document to find the best external organization to run the public art program.

Throughout five engagement sessions we created opportunities for participants to ask questions via the chat box and/or by using the hands raised tool to speak. We have collected those thoughtful questions into this document to share with all participants with answers provided by The City of Calgary's public art program team. Our hope is that sharing this Q&A will create transparency and give insight into the kinds of questions that were asked in the sessions.

### Questions and Answers Across Five Engagement Sessions:

1. Q: Who will manage the collection?
  - a. The City has been collecting art for 100+ years and have around 1400 works in the collection. The items are City of Calgary assets and how we move ahead must be in the best interests of the collection and Calgarians. As part of the decision around who will steward the collection moving ahead, we are reviewing best practices to manage the collection, including models in Edmonton and Winnipeg as precedents for us in this work.
  
2. Q: Will the site-specific funding rule change?

- a. We have recently shifted to a pooling funding model based on community need and away from single infrastructure projects based on the direction from Council. This gives more flexibility to where we can site works and to respond to community needs.
3. Q: Who will be on the selection committee?
- a. The selection panel has yet to be finalized. It will be a combination of arts professionals and community members, a member of council, and Rebecca from Art+Public UnLtd with internal staff.
4. Q: Why can we not focus on functional art? For example: the bike racks on Glenmore trail, etc. Why not use the public art budget for things like wayfinding on pathway systems?
- a. We've completed a mix of projects in the past. Some of the functional public art The City has commissioned include: three water system-themed manhole covers; Seed Pod at Prairie Winds Park, which incorporates seating; Rhythms, a two-piece functional sculpture; and three public art benches at Rundle LRT station. In the future, we see this mix of projects being continued, which will be decided upon based on the identified community needed.
5. Q: How would the funds be handled?
- a. The external organization would be established in a similar format to the City's current Civic Partners process. Civic Partners are not-for-profit organizations that operate at arm's-length and independently from The City. The City has formal relationships with 14 Civic Partners, including the Calgary Zoo, Fort Calgary, Heritage Park and the Aero Space Museum. The Civic Partner policy requires stringent accountability, with annual goals and reporting to City Council. City liaisons assist this work. It is the expectation that the new public art organization would follow a similar accountability and reporting processes.
6. Q: Is the Esker Foundation among those who may be invited to propose?
- a. We hope any not-for-profit organizations with sympathetic mandates will consider putting in a bid.
7. Q: How does a call to artists competition work at The City?
- a. In the past at The City of Calgary, a call to artists was either a request for qualifications or a request for proposals that was distributed through a variety of channels, then artists sent in their submission, and all the submissions were rated by a selection panel against the criteria listed in the call. Artists have told us that how we designed and sent out our calls in the past was not inclusive enough or flexible enough, and that we needed to improve to reduce barriers and allow for more opportunities for emerging artists and underrepresented artists. A model like Edmonton demonstrated a more flexible, inclusive process with their Indigenous art park. Edmonton's public art program is run by an arms-length organization, and they operate with a 1% funding structure that is similar to Calgary's. Having more flexibility with an external organization will help Calgary build in more mechanisms for integration like this.

8. Q: What would be the term for an arts organization? Say three years, and in the third year another organization takes over?
- a. It is not our intent to choose a new organization on a revolving basis. A fixed term will be negotiated with the selected organization. We still have some work to do on the details, but The City intends to choose an organization that can operate the program long term.
9. Q: What is the citizen component/level of involvement with the arts organization?
- a. It is expected that the new public art organization will incorporate a high level of citizen engagement into their processes. This is one area in which an external organization will be more nimble than The City. The City is bound by restrictions related to corporate procurement and communication standards. By moving the program to an external organization it will allow the organization to move more quickly and respond to today's industry standard and community needs.
10. Can we apply to be public members of the selection committee?
- a. The selection panel for the external organization will include community members. The method of selection is currently under development. Any calls for public members will be announced through our Public Art website. Please watch for announcements on The City of Calgary's website at [www.calgary.ca/publicart](http://www.calgary.ca/publicart).
11. Some of my favourite art in Calgary is the art that incorporates the local area (i.e., 8th street and 1st street underpasses, Stephen Ave windbreaks), how does a private company work with city planning for these sorts of integrations?
- a. The City will be actively working with the new organization through the Arts and Culture division to support any projects which have been identified through community priority that overlap with City infrastructure.
12. Can you please elaborate on your use of the word 'autonomy'?
- a. This transition will allow more independence in decision making, procurement, risk tolerance and communications than The City of Calgary as a \$4 billion dollar organization currently has. In addition, this will allow the organization to work more closely and more quickly to deliver high quality public art for Calgarians.
13. Will the % for public art policy still exist?
- a. Yes
14. Has the money been collected for the past 2 years?
- a. Yes. The budget has been frozen, but contributions based on the policy have continued into the Public Art Reserve.
15. Can we still participate in the survey?

- a. The survey closed on June 30, but if you still have feedback, please email it to [publicart@calgary.ca](mailto:publicart@calgary.ca).

16. What steps are you taking to target youth?

- a. The recent shift to a pooled funding model based on community priorities gives the public art program more flexibility, as we are no longer restricted to work on projects tied to infrastructure. We've been looking at this, but we haven't targeted youth as a demographic in the past because of the requirements for art and infrastructure to be tied together. We expect the new organization will do more in this regard.

17. Have you considered some youth volunteer individuals or groups that would like to engage in the public art, not for profit but for resume building, experience, mentorship and getting their voices out there?

- a. Similar to above we now have much more flexibility than in the past. Historically we've had a youth murals project, and some youth helped with the utility boxes projects but there are many good examples across Canada when it comes to youth engagement that we will be investigating.

18. Is there a scale relationship to artwork? ie: would the evaluation matrix change based on the budget? I would agree that younger artists do need a chance and if those smaller projects are limited to Calgary/Alberta that would help their resume.

- a. Yes, the evaluation matrix for calls to artists can be adjusted depending on the project needs. As part of this feedback process, artists have told us to weigh the matrix more towards the letter of interest and less toward the experience on past projects to open up opportunities for emerging artists and artists who are new to public art. Currently, procurement restriction, due to trade agreement legislation, prevents us from excluding submissions based on location, but the more the project requires an in-depth understanding of the Calgary region, the more qualified local artists will be.

19. Re: % for funding requirement - matrices can be difficult for young artists. In other parts of the world like Europe they run competitions based on the strength of a proposal. Is this a possibility?

- a. Running competitions based on a Request for Proposal is a possibility, but through this feedback process, artists have told us this is not their preferred method. To deliver a well-developed proposal could involve hundreds of hours of unpaid work. In addition, proposals completed without the community research stage often results in public art that is not connected well with its place. There are alternatives to a Request for Proposal, such as a two-stage process where several artists are commissioned for a research and concept development stage, instead of doing that work for free in a competition phase. Other alternatives to encourage emerging artists are weighing the evaluation matrix to focus more on a letter of interest and less on past project experience.

20. The upcoming 5th Street Underpass had the design aspect and fabrication aspect split out and treated as a design-build. Is this a direction that will be explored more often? It seems like a great method to breed collaboration on unique projects, and get the right people involved to manage projects efficiently.

- a. Through our connections and liasons in the Arts and Culture division we will be looking for all opportunities to work with the new organization when appropriate based on community priority.

21. Regarding the City collection, WOW 1400 works. Is there a list available? There is only a few on the map, mostly covers downtown area? Is the "Banks of the Bow" and "Wonderland" classed as one of the 1400 public works belonging to the City of Calgary Public Art Collections? Or just works on public display or semi public land.

- a. We are currently updating a map with the works to better communicate this for all who are interested.

22. I would like to know how local artists are being chosen? Do you feel it's had enough diversity? How do you plan to do more and how?

- a. With this transition, there will be more flexibility with an external organization in the procurement and communications process and also more ability to respond to priorities as identified by the community which based on the feedback received through engagement would include local artists, diverse artist populations and to respond more quickly to community.

23. Will it go out to a tender that's advertised or will certain orgs be directly contacted? Will there be transparency? Will you publish who is going to bid?

- a. A request for proposals or request for qualifications will be issued publicly. We will do a pre-panel discussion to answer questions from interested organizations. Information will be shared on the City of Calgary MERX procurement system, [calgary.ca/publicart](http://calgary.ca/publicart) and through existing communication channels including the public art newsletter. The names of the organizations will not be shared publicly.

24. Will the collection be tendered out separately from the public art programming?

- a. This decision is still under review and will be finalized prior to the release of the RFP. The decision will be based on a best practice review, review of the collection and the requirements of the pieces when obtained and insurance and legal requirements.

25. What will happen to the staff?

- a. As the review continues to take shape, should there be any staffing changes, leadership will engage staff as soon as they can. In addition, for unionized employees, The City is committed to working with their Union executives.

26. Why this change?

- a. Council has provided Administration with a policy direction to have the program delivered externally to support a more nimble and dynamic program for Calgarians, and to alleviate some of the current concerns around engagement, procurement and communications.

27. Will operating funds still come from the city?

- a. Yes, the funds will be provided in an operating grant to the new organization along with a capital grant to support new project developments.

28. How will it be 'depoliticized'?

- a. Moving this program externally will allow for a separate organization who is not tied to the requirements of The City of Calgary to act more nimbly and to connect more directly with Calgarians through a Board of Directors and agile organization. Greater connection to community with a community priority focus will create projects which connect more directly with Calgarians.