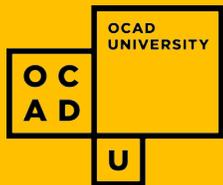


Redefining Public Art in Toronto



A collaborative project
by researchers from
OCAD University & the
University of Toronto

2017

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“Redefining Public Art in Toronto” provides a blueprint for the future of public art in Toronto. It makes a number of recommendations:

1

A renewed vision for public art in Toronto

Redefine public art

2

3

Public art everywhere

Simplify process

4

5

Robust funding for public art

Build new collaborations

6

7

Promote public art

Integrate public art into all future planning

8

Executive summary and major recommendations

Toronto is poised to become a leader in public art after four decades of significant investment. At the same time, Toronto is at an inflection point; our investment and overall initiative has lagged vis-à-vis peer cities like Chicago, San Francisco, and Ottawa. Toronto will thrive if we renew our commitment to a powerful public art presence for our city and support that commitment with appropriate private and public sector institutional capacity, funding, and collaboration.

Given the cultural diversity of Toronto, its Indigenous population, ongoing development, population growth, and the strength of its public institutions, Toronto should be known for the reach, diversity, and transformational power of public art in its downtown core and across its neighbourhoods and communities. Toronto is Canada's largest city and a dynamic hub of economic activity and immigration. It is increasingly a vertical city where the public realm plays a critical role in its social and recreational life. Public art can educate and engage youth, spark tourism, help us to understand ourselves better, and enhance our day-to-day experience of the urban environment. Public art can be a powerful force that serves many constituencies and can unify and challenge us across our cultural identities and neighbourhoods.

While at a turning point, Toronto has benefited from decades of significant investment in public art. City policy has harnessed the unprecedented development boom to make public art a compelling presence in the downtown core and other areas of intense growth. Development is now moving into other neighbourhoods, heralding opportunities for continued developer-driven public art investment outside of the downtown core. The number of public art works within the city borders is at an all-time high (700 public artworks in Toronto from 1967–2015), and various programs co-exist to deliver large-scale permanent work, festivals, and temporary and ephemeral installations across multiple media and scales.

Yet there are gaps and challenges. The City of Toronto lacks a public art master plan. Outside of intensive development zones, public art is scarce; and in the urban core there are few sites where it is aggregated into larger or interconnected projects. In comparison with other cities' public art policies and bylaws, Toronto lacks strong policy tools to bring public art to underserved areas. The City of Toronto does not mandate a significant place in its own infrastructure plans and budgets for public art. Moreover, Toronto's formal public art guidelines have not kept up with emergent global public art practices, which increasingly encourage more open and diverse ideas of what public art is and can be, emphasizing the power of public art for audience and viewer engagement. Even within the limits of its current policy framework, there is much that the City of Toronto could do to expand the scope and vision of public art. For example, public art created through the City's own capital projects offer opportunities to

realize projects beyond sculptural work, thereby redefining the notion of permanence when it comes to public art.

Over the last four decades public art has galvanized neighborhoods around the world, yet in Toronto it is a relatively untapped tool for engaging with and promoting vibrant and inclusive communities. Inspired by the potential of art in public space, a vigorous dialogue has sprung up from many sources with the goal of making Toronto a leader in global public art practice. Participants seek to evaluate current practice and explore future opportunities to expand the definition, practice, and support for public art in this city. Though this conversation transcends policy, policy is a key part of the puzzle. Spurred by this dialogue and by the relevance of public art to universities, researchers from OCAD University and the University of Toronto joined together to produce this report, *Redefining Public Art in Toronto*.

While the final chapter provides an in-depth discussion of our conclusions and recommendations, major recommendations are summarized below and structured into immediate actions and midterm actions.

1. A renewed vision for public art in Toronto

Immediate

- The City of Toronto must renew its commitment to public art.
- Establish the goal of international leadership in public art.
- Establish the goal of public art everywhere and end “public art deserts” outside the downtown core.
- Launch a one-year public art working group to develop a public art master plan (called for in the 2003 *Culture Plan for the Creative City* but never implemented). In the short term, establish a timeline and oversee implementation of immediately actionable proposals in this report. Include City of Toronto staff, public art experts, artists, developers, planners, and architects.
- Augment the public art master plan with an implementation plan and integrate public art planning into other key City planning documents and core values.

2. Redefine public art

Immediate

- Change Toronto’s definition of public art to encompass artworks of different typologies, durations, and media, from the temporary and ephemeral to semi-permanent and permanent installations and sculpture, media art, and performances, reflecting best practices in leading cities.

- Define inclusive eligibility for professional artists, interdisciplinary artists, and teams that include (for instance) artists, designers, architects, landscape artists, and new media artists-engineers.
- Support local, international, and emerging artists' projects.
- Create opportunities for Indigenous and culturally diverse voices.

3. Public art everywhere

Immediate

- Build a district-oriented approach into a new Public Art Master Plan while simultaneously fast-tracking new local-area public art plans.
- Deploy public art as a means to create community hubs and districts and to humanize and aestheticize much-needed infrastructure.
- Commission public art as a means of social engagement, dialogue, and social interaction, including all City of Toronto neighbourhoods.

Midterm

- Integrate public art into specific plans, including those of TOCore, Parks and Recreation, and other Toronto agencies.
- Aggressively deploy existing policy tools to pool public art contributions collected through Section 37 and City capital projects, hence creating dialogue across projects and spaces.
- Strengthen policy mechanisms that permit pooling existing and future funds from private and public sources.
- Establish a centralized and consolidated Public Art Trust Fund from City of Toronto capital projects and new funding sources, capable of targeting any part of the city.
- Partner with Toronto's existing Local Arts Services Organizations (LASOs) to build a strong public art presence in all parts of the city.
- Support purchases of existing works and loans as an economically viable means to expand public art works.

4. Simplify process

Immediate

- Create a single Public Art Office that spans Culture and Planning.
- Ensure that artists are engaged in site and project planning to better guarantee quality, integration, and cost.
- Create clear policies regarding process to acquire existing works: sustainability and stewardship for loans (lending practices), rentals, and purchases.

Midterm

- Create and more proactively implement flexible methods to acquire public art through open calls, invitational competitions (RFQ and RFP), commissions of new works, rentals, loans, and purchases of completed works.

5. Robust funding for public art

Immediate

- Implement Toronto City Council recommendation (2003) that the City of Toronto and its agencies apply a “per cent for art” program to all major capital projects, both for new buildings and infrastructure.
- Create a set-aside to service conservation of City of Toronto art works over the next five years to bring works up to appropriate standards, including conservation and annual reviews by conservators who will issue reports and updates.
- Mandate that the set-aside from developer-supported projects for maintenance (10 per cent or another agreed-upon amount) support an arms-length fund for conservation and annual reviews by conservators, who will issue reports and updates.

Midterm

- Create policy mechanisms that require developers to make public art projects a component of all new building projects in the City of Toronto, according to a clear set of guidelines. We acknowledge that the Ontario Planning Act does not currently enable this approach through Section 37. However, this practice is common in many Canadian, North American, and international cities. Possibilities include recognizing public art as an eligible development charge.
- Require that all City of Toronto agencies contribute a fixed percentage of their capital budgets towards public art.
- Develop new tools for funding public art. Possibilities include setting aside a portion of current billboard taxes for billboard public art, setting aside any new City hotel or vacant property tax, and provincial recognition of public art as an eligible development charge.
- Create a central Public Art Trust Fund to support significant public art projects. This fund would pool City of Toronto funds with other potential funding sources.
- Create specific project funds for Indigenous works, screen-based and media works, and works of shorter duration.
- Create opportunities for artist-run centres and post-secondary institutions to commission public art works that are temporary, created by emerging artists, and/or community-based.

- After the task force completes its work, create a “Friends of Public Art” group to foster collaboration and dialogue regarding public art in the City of Toronto and to build the Public Art Trust Fund.

6. Build new collaborations

Immediate

- Collaborate with the Ministry of Canadian Heritage to ensure that there is a public art set-aside for investments in cultural spaces funding in Toronto.

Midterm

- Strengthen collaborative programs between professionals, public institutions, the City of Toronto, the Toronto Arts Council, Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), neighbourhood and civic associations, developers, and universities.
- Promote public art exhibitions in public facilities, such as libraries, police and fire stations, community and civic centres, and municipal and provincial service centres, as well as cultural institutions and universities.
- Embed public artists in many city agencies, on the model of Edmonton’s “Art of Living” plan, Seattle’s Artist in-Residence program, or Vancouver’s Artist-Made Building Parts program.

7. Promote public art

Immediate

- Create online interactive tools to promote Toronto’s rich public art holdings by building on Ilana Altman’s *The Artful City*.
- Develop ongoing support for expert-led engagement with artworks in partnership with universities, existing public art agencies, public art leaders, and other groups, in collaboration with Tourism Toronto.
- Community consultations and community involvement in the function, site, and conceptual approach of a given public art project should be woven into both the process of choosing artists and finalizing commissions.

8. Integrate public art into all future planning

Midterm

- Integrate public art into all aspects of urban planning such as urban design guidelines. Use public art to enhance the meaning and impact of policy priorities, such as affordable housing, infrastructure developments, or environmental awareness.
- Review policy every ten years in recognition of the dynamic environment of Toronto.

Approach to research

The interdisciplinary OCAD University and University of Toronto team consisted of public art practitioners, curators, art and architectural historians, design thinkers, urban planners, and cultural sociologists. We deployed a mixed-method approach, beginning with a literature review. We then examined Toronto's own history through an overview of policy documents, interviews, and a quantitative analysis of the number of public art works produced in Toronto over time to understand where public art is produced and who is producing it. We considered the Canadian and international field of municipal public art policy and practice through a rigorous evaluation of policy documents in order to identify trends and future directions in the field. We undertook a deep comparative case study with Montreal, again using documents and 40 interviews from both cities as part of our qualitative approach.¹

Public art bylaws, zoning, and funding models vary from province to state and from city to town, as delineated in this document. But a common theme across policy and legal environments is that cities with a strong commitment to public art find a way to realize that commitment, whatever their distinctive policy challenges may be. Measured against the international trends in the field, Toronto has not kept up in the ways that we document.

We are suggesting new elements of programs and strategy as well as the implementation of previously proposed but unrealized ideas. But we are also supportive of much that exists in Toronto, seeing ways to update its currency for now and the future. Although not focused beyond Toronto, our recommendations may bear relevance for other cities in Ontario and beyond.

The report is structured as follows: **Chapter 1** provides a synthesis of our methods, while **Chapter 2** is a literature review. **Chapter 3** examines Toronto's history and practice through its policy documents and patterns of public art development over time. **Chapter 4** develops the international comparison, while **Chapter 5** discusses the results of our qualitative research, interviews with key public art stakeholders in Toronto. **Chapter 6** briefly reviews ideas from two public forums, the result of collaboration between the Art Gallery of Ontario and OCAD University. **Chapter 7** articulates the results of a close comparative case study with Montreal.

Chapter 8 reiterates our recommendations. It was clear that Toronto could adopt best practices from other Canadian cities, such as Ottawa and Montreal, as well as from international leaders such as San Francisco, while continuing to lead in

¹We did not undertake a comparative analysis of which artists and media are currently installed in Toronto and Montreal but did consider policy and practice as related to the temporality of art works in each city.

this city's considerable commitment to public art — not only through ongoing investments by the developer community, but also by expanding the City's own investment while pursuing other new funding tools.

Readers are encouraged to review the entire report, but may also wish to pick and choose particular chapters of interest. The table of contents contains hyperlinks to each chapter to make this easier.

Funding for this project was graciously provided by the Fondation Emmanuelle Gattuso, Leslie Gales, Metropia Developments/Howard Sokolowski, David Moos Art Advisory, Bill Morneau & Nancy McCain Foundation, the University of Toronto, and OnSite Gallery and the Office of the President, OCAD University. We acknowledge the important contribution of Ilana Altman's research to our conclusions. We thank David Moos for inspiring us to undertake this project.

We also extend a sincere thank you to our informal Advisory Group:

Mitchell Cohen
Elsa M. Fancello
Leslie Gales
Emmanuelle Gattuso
Claire Hopkinson
Peter Kingstone
Nancy McCain
David Moos
Anthony Sargeant
Carol Weinbaum

We thank our readers who gave helpful feedback to our draft: James Booty, Rebecca Carbin, Stuart Keeler, Bruce Kuwabara, Ciara McKeown, Terry Nicholson, and Catherine Dean and her City of Toronto colleagues.

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Chapter 1: Principles and Methods for Evaluating Public Art Policy in Toronto

This chapter outlines major principles and methods that inform our evaluation of public art policy in Toronto. It describes what we set out to understand, what we did to achieve this goal, and how we arrived at our conclusions. Our approach derives from the years of collective experience in policy analysis our team brings together.

We feature a multi-method approach in the service of understanding public art policy-making as a dynamic process in need of periodic review and renewal. We draw on several data sources and analytical techniques. Through an analysis of nearly 200 public art policy documents from almost 30 cities, we examine how Toronto's policies compare to major trends in the field and find that it lags behind in key areas. Through interviews with approximately 40 key public art stakeholders, we unpack opinions about what is working well and what could be improved. Analyzing a database of over 700 public artworks produced in Toronto from 1967–2015 (compiled by Ilana Altman from *The Artful City*) has allowed us to examine objective trends in the location of public art, who is commissioning it, and who is making it. A wide-ranging literature review places our research in the context of a long-running interdisciplinary conversation about public art and orients our recommendations about how to move forward.

The chapter is structured as follows:

- First, we elaborate the core principles guiding our research: “evolution,” “context,” and “consequences.”
- Second, we introduce the three major policy contexts we examined: the historical context of Toronto's public art policy; the international field of public art policy; and a deep comparative case study of Montreal.
- Third, we provide an overview of the main methods we utilized.

Core analytical principles: Evolution, context, consequences

Three key principles have guided our research: evolution, context, and consequences. This section elaborates each in turn and articulates their importance to our analysis.

Evolution. To study public art policy in Toronto, we have adopted an evolutionary, or developmental, point of view. Central features of this perspective include:

- Public art policies are products of their times. They are adopted at particular moments by particular people, and defined by the assumptions, politics, social climate, and opportunities of a particular situation.
- Cities continue to grow and evolve after a policy framework is adopted.
- Public art itself is a dynamic practice that continuously changes.
- Therefore, public art policy must continuously grow and adapt, to the city and to public art practice.

Context. To understand the evolution of a policy framework, placing it in a comparative and historical context is crucial. Context is important for a number of reasons:

- Broadening horizons. We learn more about ourselves through learning about others. Comparison allows us to break out of parochial assumptions and to identify what is distinctive to Toronto, and what it shares with other cities.
- Seeing paths not taken and imagining alternative futures. Every decision comes at a crossroads, and once a path is taken it can seem inevitable. Examining historical and comparative context loosens up this sense of inevitability and reminds us that other options were available and could still be pursued. Policy ideas that may have been considered in the past but not implemented may be “ripe” at a later date.
- Understanding the original motivations, constraints, and opportunities that created Toronto’s public art policies, as well as understanding the ways that these policies have functioned in practice.

Consequences. We evaluate a policy not only by its original aspirations but also by its actual results in practice. Because of the inherent dynamism and complexity of a city, it is impossible to anticipate all the consequences of a policy framework. Hindsight allows us to identify the impact of past decisions and policy interpretations that may not have been evident at the time.

Three contexts: History of Toronto, international public art policy, Montreal

Our research begins from and builds upon a substantive literature review. With this review in mind, we examined Toronto’s public art policies in reference to three contexts:

- Toronto's own history
- The international field of municipal public art policy
- A deep comparative case study with Montreal

Each makes distinct contributions to our evaluation of public art policy in Toronto.

History of Toronto. Toronto's public art policies unfold within the history of Toronto. That history defines what sociologists refer to as the local "opportunity structure." While we might imagine nearly any policy idea in the abstract, the actual implementation of an idea is constrained and channeled in numerous ways. We thus examine how Toronto has changed since it implemented its public art policies in order to unpack emerging new opportunities and obligations for public art.

International public art policy field. Policy-makers often adopt elements of what are considered "best practice" at a given point in time, drawing on definitions developed in the international field. Yet these definitions evolve, and a city that was once at the vanguard can find itself out of step with the international consensus.

Periodically reviewing how the field has developed and comparing local practice to general trends is an effective way to discover where and how Toronto does and does not align with other similar cities around the world.

Close comparative case study with Montreal. Montreal has a long history as a global leader in public art. It has effectively managed controversy over specific artworks and sustained a growing and diversified investment in public art. While Toronto and Montreal operate in fairly distinct policy environments, a close study of an international and Canadian leader in the field brings distinctive value. It can provoke, inspire, and challenge Toronto to keep pace — and to push further. As the two cities have been and continue to be measured against one another, it makes sense to do so deliberately and carefully.

Main research methods and data sources

Building on an extensive literature review, our research employs four main methods: historical analysis of public art in Toronto, document analysis, interviews, and public forums and consultations. This section briefly provides an overview of each method and its associated data sources.



Figure 1. A sample of policy documents used in this report.

Literature review. We conducted a literature review of a wide-ranging academic and professional dialogue about public art. This dialogue has strong precedents in art, architectural, and urban planning histories. The conversation has grown to include fields as diverse as public policy, politics, cultural economics, economic development, architecture, urban studies, sociology, museum studies, curatorial studies, and cultural studies. In undertaking our research, we absorbed a great deal of this literature, looking for trends and recommendations. Our review was sharpened through participating in a major conference on public art held at York University, Toronto, in May 2017: [“Public Art: New Ways of Thinking and Working.”](#)

Document analysis. To understand both the history of public art policy-making in Toronto and the broader international context of public art policy, we gathered numerous policy-related documents. Generally, we gathered material from large, diverse, English-speaking cities. Figure 2 summarizes the resulting database.

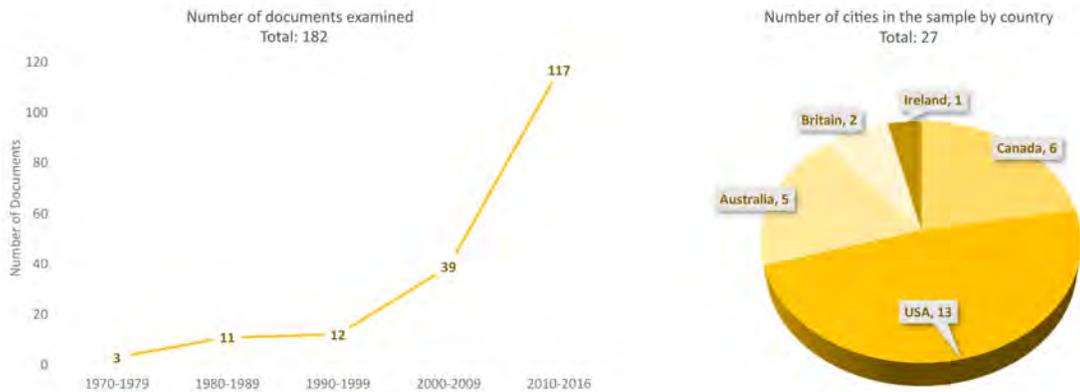


Figure 2. Policy document database. This figure shows the number of documents and cities included in our comparative policy analysis

To analyze these documents, we used two main approaches, qualitative coding and computational text analysis. To qualitatively code the documents, a team of researchers read a subset of the full corpus of documents (N=90) and recursively developed a set of key terms for systematically comparing the texts. In turn, we used qualitative coding software to mark and retrieve passages in documents that exemplify each theme. We additionally produced brief summaries for each city, to facilitate comparison. For a list of the qualitative coding used in our analysis, see **Appendix A**.

We also explored computational text analysis on the corpus of policy documents. Computational text analysis extracts words and phrases from texts and seeks patterns in their frequency and combination. It can provide a synoptic view of an entire corpus and provide a useful external check on conventional close reading. For this research, computational text analysis was primarily a supplement to our qualitative coding.

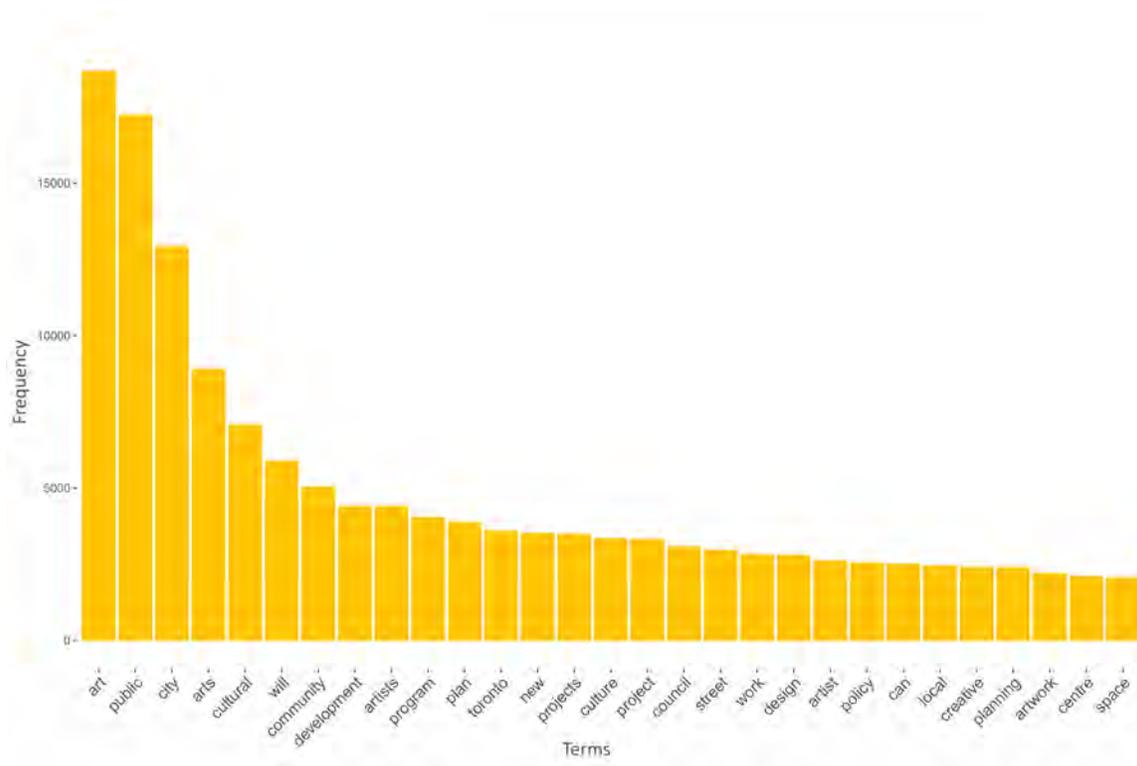


Figure 3. Most frequent words in policy documents corpus. This figure shows the most frequent terms in the set of public art policy documents we examined. It shows some of common themes that arise in many public art policy discussions, internationally, such as a concern with community building, supporting artists, streetscapes, urban space, and creativity.

Interviews. Documents show the official version of a policy, and reviewing these formal statements is a crucial feature of understanding a policy regime. But they do not capture the full scope of actual practice or the process through which policies were produced.

To better understand this background and application, we conducted interviews with expert informants in Toronto and Montreal. Our interviewees were drawn from a pool of key stakeholders in public art policy. We sought a range of expertise from various domains and perspectives. The main stakeholder categories included:

- architects
- art consultants
- artists and curators
- art institutions and organizations
- city officers
- councillors

- developers
- major public art commission organizations
- philanthropists

While more interviews are always possible, our goal — given the limits of time and resources — was not completeness, but what is sometimes called “saturation.” As interview responses settle into a few recurrent patterns, we approach saturation. Adding more interviews enhances the robustness of findings, but does not alter their overall character.

We conducted a total of 40 semi-structured interviews using a standardized interview guide for consistency and allowing interviews to unfold in spontaneous ways. Each interview was recorded, transcribed, and analyzed by two team members in terms of the themes in the interview guide, and then collaboratively interpreted by the full study team. We sought to understand how various key players understood public art in Toronto from their distinctive vantage points, and we then combined these into a map of the overall field.

For the full list of interviewees and the interview guide, see **Appendices B, C, and D**.

Public forums and consultations. We undertook a series of public forums that were created in collaboration with the Art Gallery of Ontario (AGO), organized by Ala Roushan and Xenia Benivolski with input and organizational support from the AGO’s manager of Studio and Group Learning, Paola Poletto. The forums were held at OCAD University and the AGO. These events included presentations by architects, artists, curators, art consultants, and agencies and institutions, all engaged in public art practice in Toronto and other urban centres and representing a range of opinion, experience, and practices. They provided an analysis of current practices, alternate strategies, and case studies.

The dialogue and recommendations were synthesized to form a component of this report. In addition, we presented our research to an informal reference group made up of experts within the Toronto public art context. We also presented our research at the public art conference at York University in May 2017, and have since incorporated elements of feedback into our recommendations.

Trend analysis. We examined trends in the actual works of public art produced in Toronto. To do this, we used a dataset of over 700 public artworks in Toronto from 1967–2015 that was compiled by Ilana Altman from *The Artful City*. This dataset includes rich metadata about each work, such as the artist, year, location, artist gender, artist country, medium, and commissioning program.

Altman and her collaborators designed an illuminating series of maps with this data and exhibited it at the AGO. We add to their mapping effort by using various graphical and quantitative techniques to show trends over time.



Figure 4. Map of Toronto featuring 716 public art works, 1967 to 2015.¹ Image courtesy of *The Artful City*.

¹ Credits for *The Artful City Map* are as follows:
Project founder and lead: Ilana Altman, *The Artful City*
Project lead: Jeff Biggar, *The Artful City*
Cartography: Kai Salmela
GIS and data support: Taylor Blake and Isabel Ritchie, Martin Prosperity Institute
716 public art works, 1967 to 2015. Data sources: the City of Toronto's Public Art and Monuments Collection, the City of Toronto's Percent for Public Art Program, the City of Toronto's StreetARToronto, the Toronto Transit Commission, Waterfront Toronto, York University, and the University of Toronto.

Chapter 2: Literature Review — Key Themes from the Interdisciplinary Dialogue about Public Art

This chapter summarizes key ideas from a broad interdisciplinary dialogue about public art. The chapter is organized around brief discussions of major themes in this discourse. Key topics include: the emergence of public art as a public policy target; the focus on large-scale urban projects; public art and urbanism; the linkage between public art and infrastructure (such as bridges, power or waste facilities, and airports or transportation systems); public art beyond urban contexts; public art and social change; the public art selection process; the role of public art in relation to education and educational institutions; and the reception of public art.

The emergence of public art as a municipal policy target

Cultural theorists have argued that “citizens of a place tend to use its culture as an identity marker,” with public art seen as “the punctuation and intonation of public space,” (Ten Eyck & Dona-Reveco, 2016). As such, the public art landscape is “conditioned by both national and local policy, and national and local history, culture, and identity,” (Zebracki, 2011). Research has shown that differentialities in cultural policies can and do affect the production of public art (Zebracki, 2011).

In fact, public art is now a standard element in many cities’ suite of cultural policies, but this was not always the case. Much literature discusses the historical process that led to the integration of public art into urban planning more broadly. It highlights changes coming both from the perspective of art and the perspective of cities, which intertwined to generate contemporary public art practice.

The growth of public art beyond historical monuments emerged dramatically in the last century. This growth was sparked by shifting paradigms in aesthetic sensibility, such as the advent of modernism and the removal of decorative elements from architecture (Finkelpearl, 2000). Policy transformations gave these changes broader impact. Writers chronicle the expansion of public art through the 1980s with the passage of percentage for the arts ordinances in many cities (Finkelpearl, 2000; Bringham-Hall, 2016; Cartiere & Zebracki, 2016). They highlight how “central and local governments embraced public art as a vehicle for urban change and a way for cities to compete for urbanism and business,” (Speight, 2016) in both established metropolises and smaller centres. This is particularly due to a shift towards a focus on economic objectives in cultural strategies, as “culture is more and more the business of cities,” (Zukin, 1995; Grodach & Loukaitou-Sideris, 2007). Today, policy discourse has moved from “supporting culture...towards the terminology of investing in culture,” and with that, the quality of public art has increasingly been measured by

benchmarks of “international appreciation and success,” (Saukkonen, 2013). The literature also discusses how public art maintains a continued, if contested, value in helping cities and their inhabitants live together successfully: “[To] harness a political imagination towards demonstrating and actualizing different ways of being in the world together,” (Cartiere & Zebracki, 2016) which suggests an interventionist and local role for public art. Goldstein’s (2005) *Public Art by the Book* brought together a number of cities’ experiences in building and implementing public art policies, offering a detailed nuts and bolts roadmap for local governments, arts organizations, arts professionals, and artists.

A major concern, however, is that “cultural policy has little standing or interface with city planning departments and their management of land use and visioning of the city’s physical future,” (Markusen & Gadwa, 2010). As such, some argue that it is not the “success” of public art installations that matters, but rather how public art is integrated within city planning processes overall (Pollock & Paddison, 2010). The concept of “embeddedness” marks a turn away from the emphasis on art and culture as economic activities, to a better understanding of the complex system of institutional and societal, as well as economic, factors that frames the network of interactions between actors involved in the public art process (Pollock & Paddison, 2010). Pollock explores this concept within the British context and identifies three main factors that challenge a commitment to public art within local policy practices, namely funding or economic constraints, visibility within local practice, and dialogues surrounding meanings and readings given to public art (Pollock & Paddison, 2010).

Taking the concept of embeddedness one step further, there have also been recent discussions regarding the potential merits of “planner-artists collaborations,” (Metzger, 2011). This shifts the established perspectives on the role of culture in spatial planning from a focus on “planning *for* culture” to “planning *with* culture” — to not ask what planning can do to enhance culture, but to see whether artists “can provide useful help in invigorating common bureaucratic forms of planning,” (Metzger, 2011).

Vision and definition: Large public artworks

Scale has been a central topic in many discussions of public art. A number of writers chronicle the impact and power of large-scale urban projects, both permanent and temporary. Jenny Moussa Spring (2015) presents evidence of the power of urban interventions in reconfiguring and re-approaching public spaces. She highlights Nick Cave’s *HEARD.NYC*, which transformed Grand Central Terminal’s Vanderbilt Hall with a herd of thirty colourful life-size horses that broke into choreographed music twice a day, and Canadian Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s 2013 *Voice Tunnel*, commissioned by the New York City Department of Transportation (DOT), which transformed the Manhattan Park Avenue Tunnel. Participants controlled the light intensity of 300 lights by speaking into an

intercom that looped and regulated sound over the miles of tunnel (Smith, 2016). Toronto's Nuit Blanche festival has supported projects of this scale over its ten years of existence. Its contemporary examples of artworks span a wide range of media, from the sculptural to the digital. The archive of monumental and temporary works from Nuit Blanche can be accessed [here](#) (Nuit Blanche Toronto) and [here](#) (Scotiabank Nuit Blanche: Toronto, Canada, 2006–2015).



Figure 5. Kelly Richardson, *Mariner 9*, 2012.² Photo credit: Colin Davison.

Ambitious large-scale projects are highly complex and can attract enthusiastic general audiences. Cher Krause Knight (2011) argues that popular culture and successful monumental projects mutually support one another. An example of this is a giant inflatable rubber duck: the *Rubber Duck* by Florentijn Hofman has berthed in Sydney, Taiwan, and many other harbours since its 2013 inception to the present.³ Monumental works such as Clemence Eliard and Elise Morin's *Waste Landscape* (Victionary, 2013) or Kurt Perschke's *RedBall* (Victionary,

² Three-channel HD video installation with 5.1 audio, 43' x 9' (variable). Originally commissioned by Tyneside Cinema, UK.

³ A replica created by events producer Craig Samborski was a recent and controversial visitor to the Toronto waterfront.

2013) can overcome and reframe architectural space. Many writers demonstrate links between ambitious projects and private capital or philanthropic investment. Outstanding examples include Millennium Park in Chicago; the California Scenario, a one-and-a-half acre sculpture garden between two towers in Costa Mesa commissioned by the Segerstrom family of Orange County (Basa, 2008); the Brazilian art and ecology park of [Inhotim](#); the High Line in New York City; and the Drive Line in Chicago.

In synthesizing these sources, we find consensus that the definition of public art should be wide and inclusive, encouraging work across scales, durations, and media. This consensus informs our recommendation for Toronto's revised definition of public art.

Definition and impacts: Urbanism

As public art has taken its place as a centrepiece of urban cultural policy, a wide-ranging discussion of its impact on contemporary urbanism has ensued. Urbanists Hall and Robertson (2010) note that many have proposed that public art can promote a range of virtues, such as helping residents develop a sense of personal and/or civic identity and a sense of place; addressing community needs; tackling social exclusion; serving up educational value; and promoting social change. They also call for a deep examination of these claims. Jane Jacobs and Robert Venturi supported the integration of public art as a means to reintroduce complexity and contradiction within urbanism, in contrast to modernism's stark and people-less world view (Finkelpearl, 2000). Urbanists and cultural critics have become increasingly alarmed as public art projects become a means of gentrification. They highlight how public art can lead to "the transformation of unpopular and stigmatized urban neighbourhoods and the renewal of urban housing markets," (Cameron & Coaffee, 2005). Concerns about the relative power of artists as opposed to planners, developers, and architects figure in this dialogue (Miles, 1997).

Other authors discuss the possible impacts of public art in the developing world. According to the recent UNESCO report *Culture, Urban, Future: Global Report for Sustainable Urban Development*, public art has a role to play in enhancing the quality of the built environment and in building a sustainable urban ecology. The report stresses how this impact depends on a more holistic planning, that is, "place-making for sensory experience, for sight, sound, smell, touch and taste must be drive by art and culture that collectively and powerfully reinforce sense of place," (UNESCO, 2016). In Dakar, the annual Festigraff Festival celebrates the core of young graffiti artists who are part of a social movement to make Dakar an open and accessible city (UNESCO, 2016). Sao Paulo boasts an extensive mural program.

Infrastructure

As public art has been integrated into many cities' policy frameworks, it has become more deeply intertwined with their overall city-building agendas. Infrastructure projects (bridges, transportation systems, airports, waterways, waste and power stations) have been core targets. Public art increasingly plays a role in improving the design accessibility and public acceptance of infrastructure projects, and in underscoring the presence and importance of transportation systems (Finkelpearl, 2000; Singer et al., 2007; Doherty, 2015). Canada has a long history of public art playing a role in its airports, ostensibly celebrating Canadian and regional identities, and inevitably engendering controversy about audiences for such work and popular understandings of local identity (Flaman, 2009).

Significant infrastructure projects continue to this day, whether it is the extensive art presentations at Pearson Airport curated by No. 9 (Davies, 2015), the permanent installations commissioned by the Greater Toronto Airport Authority, or the ambitious plans for Metrolinx in the Greater Toronto Area. In 2012, Jennifer Marman and Daniel Borins colourfully wrapped a GO train in the moving performance *Art Train Conductor No. 9* (Davies, 2015). Infrastructure projects can take an experimental and performance-based approach. Mierle Laderman Ukeles's *Maintenance and Sanitation Art* has placed the artist as the official artist-in-residence at New York City's Department of Sanitation (DSNY) since 1977, based on her *Manifesto! Maintenance Art*, 1969 (Finkelpearl, 2000; Scott, 2016).

The powerful nature of these works has inspired our recommendation for deeply embedding public art in Toronto's infrastructure projects, for making the city's currently voluntary program mandatory, and for including a set-aside for public art in provincial and federal building projects in our city.

Outside of the city

While much of the conversation has concerned the expanding role of public art in cities, public art also occurs outside of urban contexts. Artists' projects include well-publicized non-urban activities, such as Futurefarmers' creation of the *Bakehouse* in Loalmenningen, an intervention regarding food policies and rural farming networks, and Blast Theory's repositioning of an abandoned boat which referenced the loss of the fishing industry and growth of human trafficking and migration (Doherty, 2015). Some art that contemplates Indigenous rights and territory, such as Partners in Art's [LandMarks2017](#), and other contemporary issues, are sited outside of cities.

Impacts: Social change and public art

One of the most significant questions in both public art practice and discourse has been the relationship between public art and social change. A number of volumes focus on and argue for accentuating this relationship, often in opposition to a permanent, sculptural, or aesthetic function for public art (Helguera, 2011; Lacy, 1994). Discourse regarding public art is now centered in debates about its potential within urban life and culture to “treat public art works not just as aesthetic installations, but as agents that participate in the social and cultural evolution of cities,” (Radice & Boudreault-Fournier, 2017). This thinking rejects the notion of place-making altogether, preferring “artistic strategies of unsettling notions of place, rather than those of place-making, and a belief in the important role that art can play in social justice,” (Doherty, 2015). Julie Boivin (2009) suggests that while there are heightened expectations that artists will capture and express context and identity, “it is an extremely delicate matter to structure spaces to correspond to a predetermined or overdetermined identity.”

One goal of these projects is to bring artists into direct engagement with audiences to deal with compelling issues of our times (Lacy, 1994). Hence community interaction in the development of public art projects receives consideration, with care taken by artists and project organizers to support community-driven projects when appropriate and to permit artists to also work in dialogue with communities — but not at their behest (Doherty, 2015). Doherty offers a wide variety of critical methodologies for artists’ engagement: “displacement, intervention, disorientation, occupation, perpetuation,” (Doherty, 2015). For example, Sydney uses public art in Chinatown as a means to “address the social and cultural aspects of the area and tell the stories of the contributions of Asian-Australians to communities like Sydney,” (UNESCO, 2016).

Education and educational institutions

Colleges and universities have acted as collecting agencies and collaborators, as well as educators for the next generation of artists, conservators, curators, architects and developers, with specific public art programs, streams, or minors that are found in faculties of fine art, architecture, planning, or public policy. Concordia University has a large and diverse collection, as does York University, the University of California, Los Angeles, and Carnegie Mellon University. These institutions illustrate the value of robust public art policies, and, optimally, the integration of public art into the institution’s master plan “by building and enhancing physical environments in which experience, investigation, analysis, and dialogue about the human experience — past and present — can flourish...where community can learn, live, and dialogue with an experience rich in meaning,” (Grenier, 2009). Most famously, the Stuart Collection at the University of California, San Diego, is a multi-year collaboration between the university and the Stuart Foundation (with investment by the National

Endowment for the Arts and other donors) that began in 1982 and has integrated public art into building infrastructure and throughout the campus.

Universities such as York University have spurred dialogue regarding best practices in public art through conferences such as the “Public Art: New Ways of Thinking and Working” conference organized by public art consultant Ciara McKeown and Brendon Vickers, Chair of the Department of Visual Art and Art History at York University.

Educational value extends beyond campuses. Other post-secondary institutions (such as OCAD University’s Art and Social Change Program) have created outreach programs in which public art practices occur within neighbourhoods and communities, allowing public school students’ work to be exhibited side by side with that of professional artists. Andrew Davies, who leads No. 9 (an arts organization that uses art and design to bring awareness to environmental concerns), emphasizes the potential for educating youth to be the next generation of sustainable planners and public artists. An illustrative project is *Imagining My Sustainable City*, exhibited at Toronto’s Evergreen Brickworks in 2014. This project was produced with the Toronto District School Board, in collaboration with one grade 7-8 class from each city ward. Students and artists participated in a four-day sustainable urban planning and design program featuring “civic engagement, governance, and living a sustainable lifestyle,” (Davies, 2015).

Public art selection processes

The inherent dynamism and complexity that exists within the multi-stakeholder public art process has been identified to be at tension with the “desire for linear decision-making processes [within public agencies],” (Lidman & Bisesi, 2005; DeShazo & Smith, 2014). As such, there has been growing debate around the need for public agency leaders to “rethink...long-established rational decision-making processes,” (Lidman & Bisesi 2005) and consider changes that allow for more collaborative approaches to the administration of public art programs.

A number of writers and anthologies (Krause Knight & Senie, 2016; Basa, 2008; Goldstein, 2005) discuss, critique, and propose changes in the process of choosing public artworks. Basa (2008) describes and evaluates the use of slide or image registries, open calls, and invitational calls from a pre-qualified slide library; direct purchases and rentals; RFQs in which artists submit evidence of qualifications based on past work; and RFPs where artists submit ideas in the form of concepts, sketches, and narratives, and which require an understanding of site and context in order to succeed.

Other writers trace the history of efforts to engage artists early in the process of site and project planning. Some feel that the community consultative role that

artists once played has been normalized by city planning norms, while others continue to argue and demonstrate that the best projects engage artists at the inception, and that artists have a critical role to play in imagining urban parks, waterfronts, districts, and major infrastructure (R.E. Millward, 2017; UNESCO, 2016). There are also those who claim that it is the role of public agencies to support artists by actively seeking citizen engagement (DeShazo & Smith, 2014). The Winnipeg Arts Council provides a prime example of a practice common to many cities, as its staff begins community consultation even before a public art call is drafted, so that contacts are already set up for artists once they are selected (Cwynar et al., 2017).

The reception of public art

Other writers tackle the issue of the critical rejection of public art projects, with in-depth studies of controversies in Montreal, such as the case of Glibert Boyer's *Memoire ardente* (Rodriguez, 2009) or, most famously, Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* in New York City's Federal Plaza (Cartiere & Willis, 2008; Mitchell, 1992). In both instances, the artist's work was eventually removed. These controversies are seen in their best light as a means to engage citizens in discourse, or the "heart of cosmopolitan democratism that intrinsically offers room for potential conflict and open, ardent dialogues between ambivalent vistas (Zebracki, 2016).

Reception has become a growing component of public art analysis, drawing from sociology, actor network theory, and psychology, rather than looking at the city planners', architect's, artist's, or program's intentions (Lossau & Stevens, 2015; Radice & Boudreault-Fournier, 2017; Vernet, 2017). Topics include the ergonomics of public art experience for viewers; environmental (that is, flora and fauna) uses of public artworks in the context of human use; or the appropriation, misuse, and counter-use of artworks. Some theorists are interested not only in the time and space relationships of public art but the ways that these works structure flow and movement within urban spaces (Bringham-Hall, 2016).

These dialogues regarding public art practice and policy provided valuable consideration for our recommendations.

Chapter 3: Public Art Policy in the Context of Toronto's Evolution as a Global City

This section reviews Toronto's main public art policies, highlighting their significant features, overall results, and how the City has changed since their initial formulation. The message of the chapter is that while Toronto's public art policies have borne significant impacts, they fall short of their full potential.

Several features of how public art policy in Toronto has been formulated and interpreted produce unfortunate consequences, such as:

- public art “deserts” (areas of the city bereft of formal arts and culture in the public realm)
- maintenance challenges
- a narrow range of styles and media
- gender inequity
- decreasing shares of work held in public trust and sited with a view to the widest public impact

Toronto has grown and changed in numerous ways that demand a more comprehensive, vigorous, and creative approach to public art. It has been the home of major commissions, such as the first Anish Kapoor public art work in North America (1995), located on the perimeter of the CBC building. Not only is Toronto big, dense, diverse, and economically and politically divided, it also has a robust arts sector and a strong cultural and public art policy capacity both within and outside the City.

The cumulative effect of these changes is to place Toronto at a significant crossroads. Public art can hold the city back, entrench its divisions, and symbolize its unwillingness to experiment — or public art can push us forward, connect our communities, and catalyze our collective creativity. The good news is that the very same processes and penchant for creativity that have brought us to this juncture make it increasingly likely that Toronto can seize the moment and realize the full capacity of public art to enhance its urban environment.

Public art policy in Toronto: Historical background

While Toronto has a legacy of public art going back at least to the nineteenth century, the first formal municipal policies emerged in the mid-1980s. These policies were formulated in part out of a sense at the time that public art was being commissioned through “ad hoc, one off deals with politicians, private citizens, and philanthropic partners,” (Biggar, 2016).

Over time, the City of Toronto developed more formal procedures, led by advocates from diverse sectors spanning business, the arts, planning, policy, and more. These policies co-existed with a number of parallel policies emerging across the Toronto metropolitan area, in Scarborough, North York, Etobicoke, East York, and York, as well as the Municipality of Metropolitan Toronto.

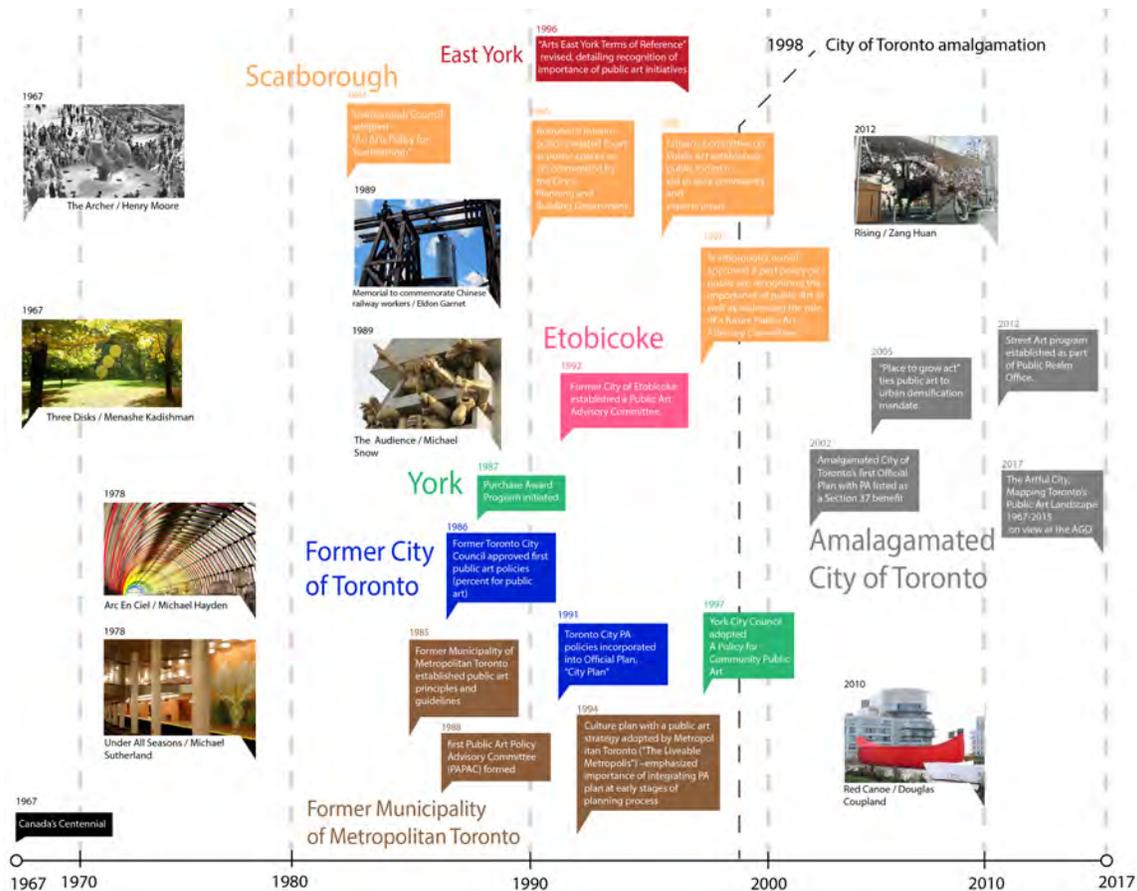


Figure 6. Timeline of public art policy in Toronto.

Public art policy in pre-amalgamation Toronto was a highly complex affair with multiple overlapping agencies. Some key features include:

- In 1991, Toronto became the first city in Canada to incorporate public art into its Official Plan, joining other cities in seeking a “per cent for art” from large private development projects, typically around one per cent of qualified construction costs.¹

¹ Montreal’s per cent for art policy began in 1961, but this was a provincial ordinance.

- In the early incarnations of the Percent for Public Art program, the City mandated public art contributions on many private developments, generally through requirements on rezoning and Official Plan amendments.
- This requirement was challenged, and City Council clarified that public art contributions were voluntary, not mandatory. The policy has remained voluntary ever since.
- Pre-amalgamation Toronto had a budget for temporary projects, but this was not carried forward after amalgamation.

1998 saw the legal creation of the amalgamated City of Toronto, but it took several years for the new City to harmonize the policies from the former municipalities. This was a very difficult process, the scope and challenge of which is important to appreciate. Staff from multiple agencies with different levels of experience had to be coordinated. Common ground across distinct political cultures had to be found. All of this played out with the recent memory of a 1990s recession in the background and significant uncertainty around what the future version of Toronto would be like. While we may be in a position to judge the resulting policies with the benefit of hindsight, it is likely that anything produced from out of such a chaotic moment would require rethinking nearly two decades later.



Figure 7. Cover of *Public Art in Private Development: Policy Recommendations* (2001). Image courtesy of Sterling Finlayson Architects.

The newly amalgamated City did undertake a deliberate planning process to consider options for its new public art policy. The Planning and Culture Divisions commissioned a report by Sterling Finlayson Architects (SFA), which appeared in 2001. SFA made three major recommendations:

1. The City of Toronto must renew its commitment to the creation of public art through its capital budget citywide through the Official Plan.
2. The development community, as good corporate citizens, must continue to voluntarily support the creation of public art in private developments within a comprehensive planning framework.
3. A public art trust fund be established that advocates for public art and solicits donations from businesses, corporations and citizens who believe in the value of public art (SFA, 2001).

SFA noted that these three recommendations were meant to work in tandem, and that relying primarily on voluntary private contributions would be less effective. The third recommendation was not implemented; a public art trust fund was never established.

SFA's first recommendation was only partially and somewhat tepidly met. The City encouraged its agencies to set aside one per cent of capital costs for its major projects. However, the policy is not mandatory, is unevenly applied, and the Public Art Office is understaffed. Nor is there a clear definition of what constitutes a "major project."

It was the second recommendation that became the centrepiece of the post-amalgamation approach to public art. As SFA recommended, Section 37 of the Ontario Planning Act became its linchpin. Section 37 allows the City to exchange zoning exceptions (for height and density) for "[community benefits](#)."

In the 2002 Official Plan, public art was officially made an eligible community benefit. It is an attractive one to many in the developer community, in that public art directly enhances the value of a development, and a developer may choose to retain ownership over the work. This was an innovative use of Section 37, one that has generated a great deal of high-quality public art, and Toronto remains one of the few cities in Ontario to recognize public art as an eligible benefit. However, public art is only one among several worthy eligible benefits, and it must compete with them in negotiations among developers, city councillors, planners, and community groups. The result is that one per cent is more of an aspiration than a mandate.

SFA made some additional recommendations that are worth highlighting, as they remain relevant today. They recommended that the City diversify the process and structure the Percent for Public Art program so that it could support:

- new media and temporary artworks

- artists on the design team as early-stage collaborators with architects, engineers, and landscape architects
- special competitions by invitation for emerging artists on smaller-scale projects
- a mentoring system whereby emerging artists could intern on projects with established artists
- pooling public and private funds in public art grants targeting underserved areas
- awards
- catalogues, maps, and tours
- educational programs

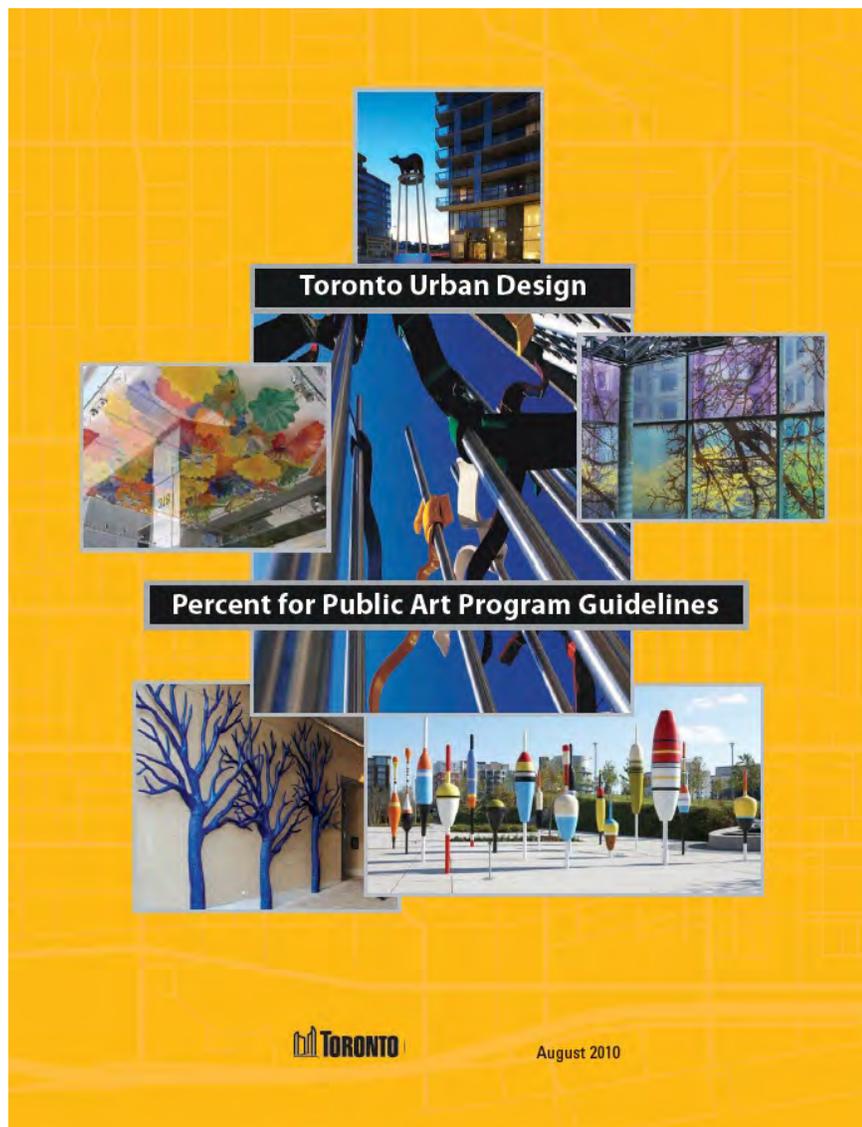


Figure 8. Cover of Toronto Urban Design, *Percent for Public Art Program Guidelines* (2010). Image courtesy of Toronto City Planning, Urban Design.

Very few of these recommendations have been implemented, and some have been formally discouraged. For instance, the official guidelines for Toronto City Planning's Percent for Public Art program state, "Typically, public artists produce site-specific sculptures and prominent installations," (2010). As the implementation of Section 37 benefits tend to be guided by related Official Plan policies, this statement has tended to encourage a less diversified collection than SFA's recommendations envisioned, despite some notable exceptions.

On a positive note, the Toronto Sculpture Garden (TSG) continued to operate during this period, as it had since 1981. It provided a venue for innovative, temporary, contemporary sculpture, and a training ground for emerging public artists to hone their skills. However, the exhibition program that sustained it was terminated in 2014. While it has since languished for lack of funding, with support from public and private donors, it could once again play a valuable role.

Overall, the opportunity that opened up at the time of amalgamation to build a more sustainable and robust policy framework was missed. The critical inflection point the city currently finds itself in grew directly out of the partial measures taken at that time. They led to an explosion of mostly traditional public art in a few areas, without strong policy mechanisms to compensate and adapt to the challenges of a rapidly changing city.

Main elements of Toronto public art policy after 2002

From out of the ferment of amalgamation, the main elements of Toronto's public art policy framework congealed into a form that has largely remained unchanged since. The Percent for Public Art program is overseen by Urban Design (which is part of the Planning department) and operates in collaboration with what is now Economic Development and Culture, in which the Public Art Office is housed. Section 37 remains the primary policy tool used to generate funds for public art.

Projects that choose to use their Section 37 benefits for public art have two options, on-site and off-site (or a combination thereof).