

Oshawa City Council – February 24, 2025

Durham Region's Sculptural Bench Public Art Initiative in the City of Oshawa in 2025
(File: 03-05) (Ward 4)

It is recommended to City Council:

Whereas, City of Oshawa staff received correspondence from Region of Durham staff dated February 18, 2025 regarding public art and creative placemaking program initiatives (see Attachment 1); and,

Whereas, the Region of Durham is commissioning a Region-wide public art project that aims to have sculptural benches located in downtown areas, including the commission of a sculptural bench on land owned by the City that is immediately adjacent to a Durham Region Transit stop located at Bond Street East Westbound at Mary Street; and,

Whereas, the Region of Durham intends to acquire, own, install and care for the sculptural bench at no cost to the City of Oshawa aside from staff time to facilitate and develop agreements, arrange logistics and review designs and technical requirements; and,

Whereas, the City's Economic and Development Services staff have met and discussed the initiatives contained in the correspondence with Regional staff; and,

Whereas, public art installations in Oshawa are a community-wide benefit and that this proposed partnership with Durham Region regarding these initiatives supports Oshawa's Public Art Policy ("P.A.P.") as well as the objectives outlined in the Oshawa Strategic Plan 2024 – 2027: "Innovate. Belong. Care. Lead.", Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan, the Public Art Master Plan, the Oshawa Economic Development Strategy and the Downtown 20/Thirty Plan; and,

Whereas, the City of Oshawa's P.A.P. identifies City Council's responsibilities which include approving the related budget, expenditures and sites of public art projects located in or on City-owned buildings and spaces in Oshawa; and,

Whereas, the P.A.P. allows partnerships with external organizations who wish to utilize municipally owned land to install public art and allows for partnership arrangements through which ownership of artworks acquired do not fall to the City; and,

Whereas, Oshawa's Public Art Master Plan identifies the downtown urban core as a priority zone for public art projects on account of high pedestrian and vehicular use; and,

Whereas, the City's Economic Development Services staff as well as members of the Public Art Task Force generally support the sculptural bench project and partnership with the Region of Durham as well as the proposed location; and,

Whereas, City staff in the City's Engineering Services branch have reviewed the proposed location and do not have capital concerns with the site and support the general location identified;

Therefore be it resolved that based on Item CNCL-25-09 dated February 24, 2025 concerning a sculptural bench project with the Region of Durham:

1. That the location of Bond Street East Westbound at Mary Street near the Durham Region Transit stop be approved for the purposes of the sculptural bench project per Oshawa's Public Art Policy; and,
2. That City staff be directed to engage with the Region of Durham to develop the sculptural bench project parameters including, but not limited to, the scope of the partnership, site specific logistics and placement, installation, accessibility, safety, and design reviews; and,
3. That the Commissioner, Economic and Development Services Department be authorized to execute an agreement with the Region of Durham outlining the terms and conditions arising out of City staff's engagement with Durham Region, together with such other documents as required in a form and content satisfactory to the Commissioner, Economic and Development Services Department and the City Solicitor.



February 18, 2025

Hailey Wright, Director, Business and Economic Development
City of Oshawa
50 Centre Street South
Oshawa, ON L1H 3Z7

Dear Ms. Wright,

**The Regional
Municipality of
Durham**

Office of the Chief
Administrative Officer

605 Rossland Rd. E.
Level 5
PO Box 623
Whitby, ON L1N 6A3
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905-668-7711
1-800-372-1102
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**RE: Durham Region's Public Art and Creative Placemaking
Program Initiatives in the City of Oshawa in 2025**

In 2023, Durham Regional Council [directed](#) staff to develop a Regional Public Art Program to support regional public art projects, provide opportunities for area municipal and community collaboration, and support Regional strategic goals. Local area municipalities, including the City of Oshawa, have long been proponents of public art. As a major land and infrastructure owner, Durham Region recognizes its role in creating vibrant, welcoming spaces and making art accessible to all.

Following an extensive engagement campaign in August 2023, which reached over 80,000 people and gathered 234 survey responses, Durham Region's Public Art and Creative Placemaking Program and policy were approved by Regional Council in September 2024 ([2024-COW-35](#)). Community feedback was instrumental in shaping the program's guiding principles and identifying priority locations.

In 2025, Durham Region has the following public art and placemaking initiatives planned:

Muskoka Chair Placemaking Project

The [Muskoka Chair Placemaking Project](#) began as a celebration of Durham Region's 50th anniversary, with two chairs placed in each local area municipality including Purple Woods Conservation Area in Oshawa. Following positive community feedback, the Region has expanded the initiative by purchasing forty additional Muskoka chairs for installation across community spaces in 2025. The City of Oshawa has recently received eight of these chairs, bringing its total to ten.

Traffic Control Box Wrap Program

We are continuing our successful program of wrapping traffic control boxes with licensed artwork. These pieces were chosen by a community art selection committee in 2024 and serve as an aesthetically pleasing alternative to the standard foliage pattern traditionally used by the Durham Region Works Department to deter graffiti, stickers, and postering. This initiative beautifies our streetscapes, supports local artists, and maintains the functional aspects of graffiti prevention.

Sculptural Bench Project

Durham Region is implementing an innovative sculptural bench program. Up to six benches will be located at Durham Region Transit stops without existing seating amenities. Sites were selected in consideration of community preferences (detailed in our [Public Art and Creative Placemaking Policy Engagement Summary Report](#)) and based on a site suitability assessment by Durham Region Transit and the Durham Region Works Department. These benches are being designed in compliance with the City of Oshawa's accessibility design standards, ensuring they are both beautiful and functional for all residents.

Ritson Placemaking Project (350 Ritson Road South)

Placemaking is the art and science of transforming ordinary spaces into vibrant, lively places where people want to spend time. This project will see a temporary community space established using 'light touch' placemaking approaches and public art to make the Regionally owned site useable, aesthetically appealing and inviting. We are working with City staff to identify areas for partnership and to ensure compliance with City By-Laws. All installations and features will be chosen with due regard for the [Gibb Street - Olive Avenue road connection works](#) tentatively scheduled to commence in 2028. The site may be enhanced in 2026 and 2027 based on community preferences and feedback. In 2028, it is expected that the features will be removed or relocated to allow for scheduled roadworks. This innovative project directly aligns with Durham Region's new [Strategic Plan](#), creating a welcoming space to enhance community connections.

Public Art Project Approval Request

Durham Region will continue to implement public art and creative placemaking projects on Regionally-owned property as defined in the Region's [Public Art and Creative Placemaking Policy](#). We will seek Oshawa Council approval for sites for public art where the proposed project is not on Regionally property, as stipulated by the City's [Public Art Policy](#).

In consideration of the above, the Region is respectfully requesting Council approval to install a public art bench at the Durham Region Transit stop at Bond Street East westbound at Mary Street.

The bench will be owned, installed and maintained by the Region in accordance with the Region's Public Art and Creative Placemaking Policy and consistent with other Durham Region Transit bus stop amenities. No financial or ongoing contribution is being requested from the City of Oshawa. Regional staff will work collaboratively with City staff and the City's Public Art Task Force, where appropriate, to finalize the exact location of the bench, suggest refinements to the artist's proposed design, and to ensure that the bench complies with City of Oshawa's Accessibility Design Standards.

We believe these projects align with both Durham Region's public art objectives and the City of Oshawa's vision for innovative, diverse, accessible and vibrant public spaces and meaningful connections. The projects demonstrate our commitment to collaborative placemaking and the integration of public art into everyday infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Rochon', with a long, sweeping underline.

Caitlin Rochon

Manager, Corporate Initiatives

cc: Catherine Richards, Senior Manager, Special Events and Culture, City of Oshawa