

To: COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 9/2/2025

Subject: Cambridge Recreation Complex Public Art Recommendation

Submitted By: Alix Aitken, Acting Director of Recreation and Culture

Prepared By: Stephen Lavigne, Supervisor of Recreation – Arts and Culture

Report No.: 25-001-CS

File No.: C1101

Wards Affected: All Wards

RECOMMENDATION(S):

THAT Report 25-001-CS Recreation Complex Public Art Recommendation be received;

AND THAT the recommended finalist as presented by the Recreation Complex Public Art Jury and Arts and Culture Advisory Committee be accepted;

AND THAT Council direct staff to award the contract and approve the commissioning of the Public Art piece;

AND THAT ongoing maintenance and preservation costs be funded by the Public Art Reserve Fund as per the Public Art Policy C.30-140;

AND FURTHER THAT the Mayor and Clerk delegate authority to execute a Public Art Contract with the approved artist satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to request Council approval to accept the decision from the Recreation Complex Public Art Jury (Jury) and Arts and Culture Advisory Committee (ACAC) to commission the work of the finalist for the Recreation Complex Public Art Proposal.

Key Findings

Following the City's Public Art Policy (C.30-140), the Jury and ACAC have unanimously selected Jordan Bennett as the successful applicant.

Financial Implications

The Terms of Reference for New Recreation Complex Public Art were approved in November 2024, including a total budget of \$200,000 to be funded through the Recreation Complex Construction Capital Project A/00463-41. As proposed in the Terms of Reference, short listed artists were invited to submit confirmation of budget adherence with estimated allocations totaling \$175,000. The estimated budget for Jordan Bennett's proposal is included on page 12 of 25-001-CS Appendix A - Jordan Bennett Proposal. The remaining \$25,000 will account for contingencies and additional expenses incurred.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT:

Strategic Action

Objective(s): WELLBEING - Connect people to services that support individual and community wellbeing

Strategic Action: Encourage safe and healthy neighbourhoods

OR

Core Service

Program: Choose a Program

Core Service: Choose a Core Service

The City of Cambridge believes that public art makes a significant positive contribution to society and its quality of life, that public art adds value to the cultural, aesthetic and economic vitality of a community, and that public art should be accessible to all. Public art aligns with the City's objective of placemaking, to promote and create a wide range of destinations and activities for the public. It supports the City's strategic action of creating and activating spaces that offer things for people to do.

BACKGROUND:

As determined through consultation and public engagement for the Arts and Culture Action Plan, the City of Cambridge has a limited number of works in its Public Art

Collection in comparison to other municipalities of similar size. The new Recreation Complex is a signature facility for the City of Cambridge, and as such, will showcase a new custom piece of public art that will demonstrate the City's commitment to the Action Plan, and to investing in arts, culture and placemaking.

The City of Cambridge supports the inclusion of art in public spaces. The objectives of the Public Art Policy include:

- Public art is available and accessible
- Adequate funding is provided to acquire and preserve public art
- A collection of works representing the highest quality by professional artists and artisans is built

From the Public Art Policy C-30.140, the Terms of Reference – Rec Complex Public Art outline the process by which this piece of public art will be acquired.

The Public Art Subcommittee compiled a ranked shortlist of artists.

Stage One of the process consisted of City Staff inviting four shortlisted artists to submit a public art proposal for the Cambridge Recreation Complex, 655 Wesley Blvd., Cambridge ON.

Stage Two consisted of the Jury reviewing two submissions received through the invitations. The Jury included nationally recognized experts and local representatives from the art sector. The Jury unanimously selected Jordan Bennett's proposal (please see 25-001-CS Appendix A - Jordan Bennett proposal).

ANALYSIS:

Key factors contributing to the selection of Jordan Bennett's proposal:

- Conceptually, Jordan Bennett's visual language references traditional Mi'kmaq teachings and creation stories. He intends to employ this graphic lexicon to tell a visual story about Cambridge, with a thematic focus on community and the connection between species. These themes align with the spirit of the facility itself, a space that above all will foster connection within our community.
- Formally, Bennett's use of bright colours and graphic motifs will make the installation accessible to all viewers. His use of textiles reflects the region's early industrial history, while the integration of harvested stones from the region will connect the artwork to the land, honouring the host nations of the Anishinaabe, Chonnonton, and Haudenosaunee.
- Jordan Bennett is supported by an experienced project management team at IOTA Studios, and professional fabricators for each unique element, which will

ensure efficient collaboration with the Recreation Complex Project Management Team and MJMA Architects where necessary.

- Successful execution of several large-scale public artworks, including a number of suspended installations, proves the artists ability to complete this project as proposed.

Due to these factors, the recommendation to move forward with Jordan Bennett's proposal for the public art project at the Recreation Complex is submitted to Council for approval.

EXISTING POLICY / BY-LAW(S):

Public Art Policy C-30.140

FINANCIAL IMPACT:

Capital Costs

As per Public Art Policy C-30.140, the Public Art Reserve Fund receives annual transfers of \$25,000 from the Capital Works Reserve Fund. The Public Art Reserve Fund is further supported by contributions equal to one per cent of capital construction budgets with budgets over \$100,000. As per the policy, the maximum amount transferred to the Fund from a civic facility capital project will be \$200,000. Eligible projects include new construction or construction that achieve major changes in the scope of the facility such as new programs, services, or functions. Projects that are funded from Development Charges are not eligible for providing a contribution to the Public Art Reserve Fund. Private sector and community gifts and donations are also encouraged and enabled.

In lieu of a contribution to the Public Art Reserve Fund, the new Recreation Complex will deliver a new piece of public art, funded through the construction budget A/00463-41 for a total of \$200,000. The amount dedicated to the artwork supply and installation will equal \$175,000; the remaining \$25,000 will account for contingencies and additional expenses incurred.

Operating Costs

Any ongoing operating costs including maintenance and preservation of the new art piece will be funded by the Public Art Reserve Fund as per the Public Art Policy C-30.140. Operating costs will be dependent on the unique characteristics of the artwork. These costs will be determined in collaboration with the artist and through regular condition reports prepared by a qualified curator as per the Public Art Policy.

PUBLIC VALUE:

The City of Cambridge recognizes that public art is a powerful placemaking tool that both beautifies and animates the places we inhabit. Public art brings the community together, activates imagination and creativity, and encourages deeper engagement with the public realm and surrounding environment. Public art also brings art from Canada and abroad to Cambridge community members. Through public art we can cultivate vibrant spaces, highlight the city's natural and heritage assets, and celebrate both the historic and contemporary stories and spaces that reflect all those who live, work and play in Cambridge.

This project aligns with the Public Value Principle of Engagement: The Arts and Culture community was engaged through the Jury process and consultation with ACAC. Professionals with backgrounds in a range of art disciplines including sculpture, architecture, and public art contributed to the creation of the invitational short list and participated throughout the jurying process.

Once installed, this work of art will continue to engage the greater Cambridge Community. Contemporary Art in public space has the power to inspire, encourage, and challenge viewers. The accessible nature of Jordan Bennett's proposal was a key factor in it being selected. Brightly coloured graphic patterns and the recognizable reference to Ursa Minor provide viewers with entry points to the work, encouraging inclusive participation more than passive viewing. The Recreation Complex will host a range of City-run programming in aquatics, fitness, and sports. In addition, proximity to and collaboration with Cambridge Public Libraries and local School Boards will make the Complex a recreational hub for the City's diverse publics. This work of art will welcome an audience of all ages and backgrounds with a range of interests and passions; it will foster dialogue with and among visitors about not just art, but about ourselves, our history and our land.

ADVISORY COMMITTEE INPUT:

Advisory Committees Consulted:

Representatives from the Public Art Subcommittee worked within the approved Terms of Reference to invite and review proposals from high-caliber, internationally recognized artists. Following unanimous selection of Jordan Bennett's proposal, the Subcommittee presented the proposal to ACAC. In July, ACAC passed a motion to support this proposal and the recommendation to move forward with the commissioning of this project.

PUBLIC INPUT:

Public input was invited from the jury and ACAC; each being comprised on community members with a passion for arts and culture. Jordan Bennett also intends to engage community consultation during initial site visits for the project.

INTERNAL / EXTERNAL CONSULTATION:

The Recreation Complex Project Management Team made recommendations for the ultimate location and size of the public art installation based on structural design of the new facility; this location was vetted through the Recreation Complex Steering Committee. The preferred location was recommended for its visibility and long-term secured protection from vandalism and outdoor elements, located at the heart of the new Recreation Complex. Architectural drawings and specifications, prepared by MJMA Architects, were delivered to the Arts and Culture Advisory Committee and the Public Art Subcommittee, incorporated into the Terms of Reference, and shared with the artists to inform their proposals.

CONCLUSION:

This initiative will support and improve wellbeing in the community by creating a sense of belonging and civic pride. Commissioning an artist of Jordan Bennett's caliber ensures an impressive addition to the City's growing public art collection. This legacy piece will be a symbol of the City's ongoing support of art and artists, while contributing to the overall impact of this new signature Recreation Facility.

REPORT IMPACTS:

Agreement: **Yes**

By-law: **No**

Budget Amendment: **No**

Policy: **No**

APPROVALS:

This report has gone through the appropriate workflow and has been reviewed and or approved by the following as required:

Director

General Manager

Chief Financial Officer

City Solicitor

City Manager

ATTACHMENTS:

When naming attachments please use the following format:

1. 24-001-CS Appendix A – Jordan Bennett Proposal
2. 24-001-CS Appendix B – Recreation Complex Public Art Terms of Reference