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DEVELOPING A PUBLIC ART POLICY (Part 1)

By Mayor Bill Beamish

“Our public spaces are critical to a civic life that honours and celebrates our humanity and history and responds to cultural and political change...public art continues to enrich our environment, promotes us to ask questions and feeds our imaginations.” (Smith McNally and Hsu, ‘Conservation of Contemporary Public Art’, The Getty Conservation Institute, Fall 2012.)

In 2006, the Gibsons Public Art Advisory Committee (GPAAC) was first appointed by Council to respond to interest expressed by the community in acquiring and displaying art that culturally enriches public spaces in the community, including those in new developments.

At that time, there was an initiative to paint utility boxes in strategic locations and to support plans for public murals. As well, art was being incorporated in new construction projects and several businesses showed interest in displaying locally produced art that recognized the overall importance of art and artists in our community and region.

While the initial GPAAC was disbanded after a few years of relative inactivity and lack of budget or financial support from Council, an inventory conducted in 2020 recorded over 30 paintings, murals and carvings that are present in Gibsons and which, because of their location and visibility, can be considered as ‘public art’ (even though they may be privately commissioned and owned).

The increasingly popular annual Sunshine Coast Art Crawl also demonstrates the importance of art and artists to our community and our need engage with local artists to find opportunities to acquire and incorporate examples of their work in our buildings and public spaces.

However, it is evident that there is no overarching theme or vision for what public art could be, where it should be located, and how it should be acquired, paid for and maintained. Additionally, there is a need to maintain and or replace some art such as the mural in Winegarden Park, which has deteriorated beyond our ability to repair it. In 2020, the Town of Gibsons’ Council appointed a new GPAAC. The committee met several times, and soon discovered that developing a plan to acquire Public Art has many challenges.

Next time, I’ll tell you about those challenges, and how we intend to address them.

In the meantime, if you have ideas you’d like to share about Public Art please email me at mayor@gibsons.ca or give me a call at 604-989-2364.



Bill Beamish
Mayor of Gibsons

