The name of the program is derived from the principal that a percent of the project's gross construction costs is dedicated to Public Art. This guiding principal has been used for decades in hundreds of programs across North America and Europe. City Planning's Percent for Public Art Program success is due to the ongoing commitment by private developers, working within the City's process, the planning division, and the community.

To see the entire public art program, including dozens of installations commissioned and paid for by private developers, visit the webpage at www.toronto.ca/percentforpublicart.

Jennifer Keesmaat, Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning

ALL PHOTOS USED IN THIS BROCHURE ARE FROM THE PRIVATE DEVELOPER PROJECTS AND HAVE BEEN PROVIDED BY THE OWNERS FOR NON-COMMERCIAL PURPOSES.

THE CITY OF TORONTO'S PERCENT FOR PUBLIC ART PROGRAM IS BASED ON THE CITY PLANNING DIVISION'S URBAN DESIGN SECTION PLAN FOR PUBLIC ART OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PUBLIC REALM – ON PRIVATE LANDS, ON PUBLIC LANDS, FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND CIVIC CAPITAL PROJECTS.
Public art can vary widely in type, scale and value. All public art installations generated from City Planning’s Percent for Public Art Program, whether on publicly or privately owned lands, must be permanent features and accessible to the public to view and experience. The overall objective is to create public art that adds character and distinction to a site, neighbouring area or major destination.

Many installations become city-wide landmarks and city streetscapes and have contributed to the quality of the public realm by animating spaces through unexpected moments of beauty, amusement, reflection or intrigue. Today, public art is recognized as an integral component of successful city-building and attractive place-making.

The first policies to promote and implement public art were adopted by the former City of Toronto in 1985, resulting in a strong link between public realm initiatives in new, major commercial and residential developments. Toronto’s Official Plan includes the Public Art Section (3.1.4) which sets out the City’s goals for public art along with a set of supporting policy statements. These include encouraging the inclusion of public art in all significant private sector developments and the endorsement of the “Percent for Public Art” funding principle. To demonstrate leadership and commitment, there are policies encouraging the City to include a public art component in major, municipal capital projects and on properties under the City’s jurisdiction.

Section 5.1.1 identifies public art as an eligible community benefit to be secured through voluntary Section 37 agreements in return for granting increased development rights to private developers. These agreements have proven to be a significant funding source for public art projects and have produced remarkable results across the City.

The Percent for Public Art Program is administered by City Planning’s Urban Design section and is an embedded feature of the development approvals process. Funds secured from large developments are typically used to provide on-site works of public art on private lands. Contributions from smaller developments are more often pooled on a ward basis as donations towards the creation of public art located on public lands or in civic infrastructure projects. On occasion, hybrid on-site/off-site agreements for public art installations are arranged. In 2017 City Planning produced the “Percent for Public Art Program Guidelines”, which contains a clear description of the process to be followed in the commissioning of public art by private development.

IN NEW CONDOS, ART IS NOW A CRUCIAL PART OF THE DEAL

TIM McKEOUGH, NEW YORK TIMES, JULY 28, 2017

“Public art–the feel-good hit that makes us linger—and spend money” — MEG BARTHOLOMEW, THE GUARDIAN, JUNE 8, 2017

Over the years, public art has been acknowledged in many ways, including:

2017: Toronto Urban Design Awards, Award of Excellence - Elements - “Two Circles”, artist: Micah Lexier, Brookfield Properties
2017: Toronto Urban Design Awards, Award of Merit - Small Open Spaces - “Ice Condominiums at York Centre”, artists: Vong Phaophanit & Claire Oboussier, David Trautimas, Lanterra Developments/Cadillac Fairview

PUBLIC ART–THE FEEL-GOOD HIT THAT MAKES US LINGER—AND SPEND MONEY

MEG BARTHOLOMEW, THE GUARDIAN, JUNE 8, 2017