



# ART AT THE HEART OF PICTON

A MAIN STREET PLACEMAKING STRATEGY  
CENTRED IN ART AND COMMUNITY



PRINCE  
EDWARD  
COUNTY  
ARTS  
COUNCIL





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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

## Land Acknowledgement:

We acknowledge that we work, live, meet and create on the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg, Wendat and Haudenosaunee peoples and adjacent to the Kanien'keha:ka (Mohawk) community of Tyendinaga. Today, Prince Edward County is home to hundreds of Indigenous community members. Through migratory and settlement patterns, they have been present on and stewarded this land for hundreds and thousands of years.

## With Thanks To:

We are very thankful to everyone who took the time to meet with us and share their challenges, hopes, and vision for Picton Main Street - from businesses and residents to arts organizations, artists, funders, community associations, and more.

This project is supported by the My Main Street program, the Canadian Urban Institute, and the Government of Canada through the [Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario](#) (FedDev Ontario).



# COUNTY ARTS

This Strategy was developed by [County Arts](#) (the Prince Edward County Arts Council) in the fall of 2024. Our mission is to enrich the community by actively supporting and promoting the arts and artists as an essential part of life in Prince Edward County.

We do this by engaging residents through free/sliding scale hands-on arts programming; connecting artists to audiences through our annual signature events; supporting artists' career development through grants, residencies, and teaching and promotional opportunities; advocating for the arts and their benefits for our community; and more. Learn more at [countyarts.ca](http://countyarts.ca).



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As Prince Edward County's arts anchor organization, County Arts is privileged to witness the immense, meaningful impacts - social, economic, and more - the arts and artists make in our community every day. But we also know that with the right supports, our ability to positively impact our collective well-being has the potential for exponential growth.

Thanks to a My Main Street Community Activator grant, in Fall 2024 County Arts worked with interest holders to develop this arts-focused Placemaking Strategy for Picton's historical Main Street. By highlighting cross-sector partnership and other opportunities, the Strategy aims to enhance Main Street's retail traffic and vibrancy year-round through increased attendance and engagement with Picton's wide-ranging artistic and cultural offerings, and to promote Picton as an arts & culture destination for the benefit of the whole community.

Using an Asset-Based Community Development-inspired approach, we highlight a range of strengths and synergistic opportunities - propelled by the creativity of our unique arts community - that interest holders can harness to collectively address our shared challenges.

**The Strategy outlines the following four Strategic Directions which, along with 12 accompanying recommendations for action, provide a roadmap for bringing this vision to life:**

- 1) Partner to create engaging arts experiences** - including through facilitating communication between event producers, and partnering to produce and support the creation of arts experiences
- 2) Partner to promote engaging arts experiences** - through the new Art at the Heart of Picton branding collateral, cross-promotional marketing partnerships, and more
- 3) Measure and share impact and audience data** - to help supporters understand the impact of their support, and provide event organizers with insights to help increase attendance and engagement
- 4) Create welcoming public places for & through public art activations** in and around Main Street

While the focus of this specific grant and Placemaking Strategy is on Picton Main Street, we hold high hopes for its community-wide ripple effects, and for its potential to serve as a model for other rural Main Streets in Prince Edward County and beyond.



# BACKGROUND

## WHY AN ARTS-FOCUSED PLACEMAKING STRATEGY FOR PICTON? WHY NOW?

**Prince Edward County** is a rural community situated on the shores of Lake Ontario and the Bay of Quinte. Our growing population of 25,000 residents lives in and between a handful of hamlets and small towns. Referred to as "The County", the region has deep agricultural roots and is known for its picturesque shorelines and beaches, abundance of arts & culture offerings, and internationally-renowned restaurants, wineries, breweries, distilleries, and cideries.

**Picton** is Prince Edward County's largest town, with 4,500 residents and counting. It has the largest mix of shopping, services, arts & culture offerings, heritage homes/architecture and historical buildings in the County. Picton is home to the Picton Harbour & Marina, six public parks, and the lively Picton Farmers' Market from May-October. It has a friendly "small-town" feel while serving as a bustling community and economic hub for locals. The town is also a thoroughfare for both residents and the hundreds of thousands of tourists who visit our beaches, wineries, and other popular destinations each year.

**Creators and lovers of the arts** are drawn to Prince Edward County. It has the highest concentration of artists in Ontario, and the seventh highest in all of Canada - tied with Stratford and Niagara on the Lake which are home to year-round international theatre festivals. 2.3% of our workforce are artists - more than double the national average (1). The County is also home to dozens of performing and multidisciplinary arts groups and festivals, galleries, artisan markets, Studio Tours, the PEC Arts Trail, the Art in the County juried exhibition, and more. Picton Main Street alone is home to dozens of arts businesses and organizations offering hundreds of year round arts experiences.

**Despite these bountiful assets, our community is confronting some major challenges.** Residents are grappling with the skyrocketing cost of living, a shortage of mental and physical health supports, and more; local businesses are feeling the brunt of inflation, labour shortages, and reduced traffic in the off-season; and local artists and arts organizations struggle to secure the funding they need to continue creating in and uplifting our community.



# SUPPORTING AND HARNESSING THE POWER OF OUR CREATIVE COMMUNITY

As the local arts anchor organization, County Arts is privileged to witness the immense, meaningful impact the arts and artists make in our community every day - but we also know there is the potential to do so much more.

In early 2024, we moved the County Arts Lab - our artist-centred community space dedicated to artistic experimentation and creation - into our new location on the Main Street level of the historic Picton Armoury building. This major milestone enabled us to secure a well-equipped home for all of our arts education opportunities and events - including our beloved Art in the County juried exhibition - and begin to unlock the full potential of our arts community through increased access to space, equipment, and new audiences.

Our new location also brought a new opportunity: In August 2024 we were awarded Community Activator funding from the My Main Street program, the Canadian Urban Institute, and the Government of Canada through the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).

Our aim with the funded project is to support and expand the potential of not only County Arts, but our broader creative community, to drive social, economic, and cultural vibrancy on Picton Main Street, enhancing quality of life for residents and visitors alike.

A key component of this initiative was the development of this **Arts-Focused Placemaking Strategy for Picton** to help address some of the challenges facing both Main Street Picton and the broader community. By highlighting cross-sector partnership opportunities and harnessing the potential of our creative community, this Strategy aims to help:

- Increase residents' and visitors' engagement with Picton's wide-ranging artistic and cultural offerings
- Increase retail traffic and vibrancy on and around Picton Main Street
- Promote Picton as an arts & culture destination for the benefit of local residents, business owners, and other key interest holders



# APPROACH

Inspired by Prince Edward County's recent [Thrive Community Economies pilot project](#), we used an **Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD)-inspired approach**: "Where a deficit-based approach starts by identifying needs, ABCD identifies and builds upon community strengths. It empowers individuals and groups to come together, with institutions in support when required, to develop their strengths, working together to build on the identified assets of all involved." (Tamarack Institute) (2)

## ACTIVITIES & TIMELINE

### Phase 1 - Research & Asset Mapping (August-September)

- Identified interest holders including arts & culture organizations and events presenters and venues; retail businesses including local accommodators; and others including the Picton BIA, Picton Recreation Committee, Visit the County (PEC's Destination Marketing and Management Organization), the municipality, and more
- Analyzed relevant Plans and other documents, including community engagement results from PEC's recent public art planning process
- Researched best practices, tools, and solutions in other communities

### Phase 2 - Community Engagement (October-November)

- Developed a survey for businesses and an interview script for interest holders
- Promoted and implemented the survey through the Picton BIA and direct outreach with local businesses
- Interviewed key interest holders

### Phase 3 - Analysis & Plan Development (November-December)

- Compiled and analyzed results of surveys and interviews
- Developed Strategy and began implementation of key actions (e.g. Art at the Heart of Picton Branding Project)
- Design and launch of Placemaking Strategy

## SCOPE

This project focuses on the specific geographic area of Picton Main Street, and within one block of Main Street (e.g. north to King Street and south to York/Mary Street), between: Bay Street/Crystal Palace and Chapel/Mary Street.

However, the aim is for the entire community of PEC artists and residents to experience its positive ripple effects. Picton Main Street-based activities of County Arts and other arts organizations support artists living (and organizations working) throughout Prince Edward County. County Arts is also seeking funding to carry out a similar project with a broader Prince Edward County focus.

# KEY TERMS & DEFINITIONS

- **Placemaking** - A process where people work together to reimagine and reshape their community in order to strengthen feelings of connection and spur economic activity. Activities can include “The development of strategies, partnerships and capacities that will facilitate a focused, deliberate path to revitalizing or strengthening a downtown or commercial district’s economy through intentional and creative placemaking”. (3)
- **Creative placemaking** - An evolving field of practice that leverages the power of the arts, culture, and creativity to serve a community’s interest while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation in a way that also builds character and quality of place. (3)
- **Interest holder** - Individuals and groups who have an interest in and/or may be affected by an initiative (Note: given concerns around the word “stakeholder”, particularly with regards to working with Indigenous communities, County Arts is endeavouring to replace it with the term “interest holder” - see [4] in Sources section at the end of this document for more information).
- **Activation** - Temporary use of a space that aims to draw visitors or create unique experiences where no permanent infrastructure is installed. (3)
- **Arts & culture organizations** operate within the creative and/or cultural sectors, producing, presenting, selling, and/or facilitating artistic and cultural experiences, products, or services. These organizations focus on activities related to visual arts, performing arts, cultural heritage, literary arts, music, design, crafts, and/or film. For the purposes of this project, they may include:
  - Galleries that display and sell artwork
  - Artist studios that are open to the public
  - Theatres and other venues that regularly present dedicated arts events - theatre performances, concerts, artist talks, literary events/readings, exhibitions, etc.
  - Organizations that regularly offer arts-related classes or workshops
  - Organizations that present arts festivals and events
  - Retail stores with at least 75% of inventory dedicated to goods handcrafted by local artists
  - Art supply stores selling materials for artists
  - Museums and archives that collect and maintain cultural heritage materials in the public interest



# WHAT WE LEARNED

## HOW CAN THE ARTS BENEFIT OUR COMMUNITY?

To set the foundation for this Strategy, it is important that all players gain a holistic understanding of how artists, their work, and arts experiences benefit our community.

### ECONOMIC CONTRIBUTIONS

Arts events can play a key role in building and maintaining a robust, sustainable economy. **“The Artistic Dividend”** refers to the additional impact for a regional economy that would not occur without the presence of artists. Markusen (5) explains that in a rural economy this generally occurs in 4 ways. The presence of artists:

#### 1) Enables local citizens to divert expenditures

that they would have spent on other forms of consumption elsewhere **into local purchases that in turn support other local incomes**

**2) Attracts artists who** are seeking to relocate to an arts-rich community, who **bring their own economic potential** (sales, grants, and more) and inject new ideas and into the local community.

**3) Brings in visitors from neighbouring and faraway places.** Visitors to PEC are more likely than the Ontario average to include arts-related activities in their itinerary.

Arts & culture tourists stay longer and spend significantly more, producing positive ripple effects throughout the community including increased spend in local restaurants, shops, and more. These valuable visitors contribute 30% of total tourist spending while representing only 13% of all trips, and 40% stay for three days or more, compared to just 13% of other tourists (6), helping bolster Municipal Accommodation Tax revenues. The average impact of an overnight trip is \$450 (compared to \$75 from a daytripper),

**4) Plays a role in keeping Main Streets vibrant and vital centers,** if arts activities and facilities are located in historic downtowns.

### SPOTLIGHT - COUNTY ARTS

- County Arts generates \$1.6 million in direct and indirect economic benefits for the community each year.
- Half of County Arts' event visitors are from out of town. The majority of them stay overnight, with almost all overnight visitors staying in PEC for two nights or more.

# COMMUNITY WELL-BEING

The power of the arts - and shared community arts experiences in particular - to heal, inspire, and bring us together is unrivaled.

Culture-goers say the biggest impact art and cultural organizations have on their community is uplifting people and adding to the quality of life (7). 93% of Ontarians believe that arts activities help enrich the quality of our lives (8).

County Arts' free art for well-being programming is inspired by research showing that art-making can reduce stress and activate reward pathways in the brain, and that group art-making experiences can help maintain community ties and reduce isolation (9).

Citing the proven health and social benefits of participatory arts activities, the World Health Organization has called on arts organizations to make health and well-being an integral and strategic part of their work (10).

88% of Ontarians agree that participating in arts activities builds a shared sense of community identity (8). Renowned political scientist Robert Putnam and his colleagues found that the arts have a "singular advantage" in rebuilding "Social capital" - an umbrella term for a range of social factors such as networks, norms, trust, social identity, belonging, and more:

**"Cultural activities are enjoyable and fun. Unlike attending meetings or voting - what we call 'civic broccoli' because they're good for all but unpleasant to many - artistic performance is akin to civic fruit. We have fun and enjoy the arts, even as they do us good."**

(11)



# COMMUNITY ASSETS

Picton is fortunate to possess an abundance of community assets. Our community's strengths can be harnessed to support and increase engagement in arts & culture activities and all of Main Street's offerings.

## 1 - BUSINESSES & ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

Picton has the highest concentration of businesses and entrepreneurs in the County. Main Street alone is home to hundreds of services and retail providing goods and services to a wide ranging clientele - from "Mom and Pop" establishments to unique shops and bustling, sought-after culinary offerings.

### Among respondents to our Business Survey:

- 96% are open to exploring cross-promotional activities with local arts organizations/events
- The majority are open to promoting events with posters and rack cards/brochures
- The majority are open to hosting artists/their work (e.g. pop-up/live performance, demonstration, workshop, art exhibition)

## 2 - LOCATION & BUILT, CULTURAL, NATURAL HERITAGE

Picton is at the geographical centre of the County, and close to both regional centres like Belleville and Kingston and major centres such as Toronto and Montreal. It has waterfront at the Picton Harbour, and is a 20 minute drive from the stunning beaches of Sandbanks Provincial Park. It offers easy access to green spaces like Delhi Park, Benson Park, the Millennium Trail, and Macaulay Mountain Conservation Area.

It is also close to the quaint villages of Bloomfield and Wellington and their amenities, and to Base 31 - the "destination in progress" and development project located at the former Camp Picton, which is drawing in thousands of visitors per year. Picton's built heritage and historic downtown adds to its charm, and visitors and residents alike can delve deeper into our cultural heritage at the Macaulay Heritage Park featuring the Macaulay Church Museum and historic Macaulay House.



### 3 - RESIDENTS

Picton is the most densely populated town in Prince Edward County, and our population is projected to double in the next 10 years. For a rural area, Picton and Prince Edward County are home to a relatively significant “arts-going” public, with thousands of residents keen to enjoy and support local arts & culture events year-round. The public art planning process revealed a strong desire for more art to enliven and beautify our public spaces. However, our community's socio-economic challenges should be front-of-mind to ensure cost is not a barrier to experiencing the joy and proven health benefits of local arts experiences.

### 4 - COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS & SCHOOLS

There are several non-arts-related nonprofits serving the community along and near Main Street, including the ROC Youth Services, Prince Edward Learning Centre, and Community Living Prince Edward. Our region's only high school, Prince Edward Collegiate Institute, is just a few blocks away. County Arts and other arts nonprofits have partnered with many of these organizations to provide free access to participatory art-making experiences.

Partnerships involving community-engaged public art projects can provide residents of all ages, including equity-denied groups, with a public platform for sharing their perspectives with the broader community.



### 5 - TOURISM ECONOMY

In 2023, Prince Edward County welcomed an impressive 326,000 unique visitors. On average there were 7 repeat visits for each guest, and a total of 2.4 million visits over the year (12). In our business survey, 73% of respondents reported that over 50% of their customers are out-of-town visitors with 43% of businesses reporting that their customers are an even split of residents and visitors.

Stay PEC, the PEC Accommodation Association is a non-profit tourism marketing and organization representing hundreds of accommodators. Prince Edward County's hotels, motels, inns, Bed and Breakfasts, cottages, and partial and whole Short Term Accommodations (STAs) represent 1200+ units and beds.



## 6 - LOCAL BUSINESS & COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS

Picton's Business Improvement Association and Recreation Committee have hardworking leadership and teams who are committed to creating a strong and vibrant town. They understand the potential impact of arts & culture events and are keen to support and leverage them for community benefit. The Picton Recreation Committee offers financial as well as in-kind (including volunteer) support for recreation and culture events, including arts activities. The PEC Chamber of Commerce also acts as a unifying force and voice for local businesses, and has a public location in the heart of Picton.

The BIA's web and social media presence is growing, and their newsletter and Facebook group represent key opportunities to inform the business community about initiatives and events. They have hosted several successful events this year (see below), and help sponsor other community-initiated events through their Community Investment and Activation Program.



## 7 - MAIN STREET EVENTS

Business owners generally perceive events that bring people into the downtown core, such as sidewalk sales, street festivals, and markets with live music, buskers, and more as having a positive impact on retail traffic. There is a desire for more events like the Night Market, Art Crawl, County Adaptation Film Festival, and the April 2024 Eclipse Party, with particular interest in quarterly or monthly "after dark" / "late night" events. Businesses also noted that weekend-long events attracting overnight visitors, who have more time to stroll along Main Street, and events in the quieter off-season, are especially impactful. Businesses would like to see more activations that encourage exploration of the town, such as tours and public art installations, with opportunities to veer off to adjacent areas and back on to Main Street.

## 8 - ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

As storytellers and creative entrepreneurs, artists are uniquely positioned to enhance the depth and breadth of residents' and visitors' connections to the creative spirit, natural beauty, and stories of Prince Edward County.

96% of business survey respondents agree that arts & culture should be highlighted as a key part of Picton's identity/brand. Prince Edward County has the highest concentration of artists in Ontario, and Picton is home to dozens of arts organizations, including the iconic Regent Theatre, several art galleries, the County Arts Lab, and the PEC Library which hosts regular literary events, workshop spaces, and more. Picton is also home base for many events taking place throughout the year, including the PEC Jazz Festival and Chamber Music Festival, Gather in the County, the Firelight Lantern Festival, theatre performances by Shatterbox Theatre, Theatre Roulant, Driftwood Theatre, and many more.

Arts activities play an important role in drawing in residents and visitors to the Main Street area. As an example, during the 2024 edition of Art in the County, our annual juried exhibition, welcomed over 2000 visitors and residents to our new Main Street location. Evening events keep the street lively after regular business hours, and - as arts events are mostly indoor - can bolster the year-round economy.

Base 31, a new cultural destination just outside of Picton is drawing in thousands of arts-going visitors to the area through performances and other arts experiences, and will be opening their new museum in 2025.

**“ART AND CREATIVITY IS DEEPLY EMBEDDED HERE, AND IS A SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENTIATOR THAT PICTON CAN LEVERAGE FOR ATTRACTING VISITORS AS WELL AS NEW OR RETURNING RESIDENTS.”**

**- BUSINESS SURVEY RESPONDENT**

Performances and activations like the Department of Illumination's beloved giant puppets bring joy and whimsy to Main Street not only during the annual Firelight Lantern Festival and parade, but also help infuse other Main Street events with arts-fueled awe. The Picton Fall Art Crawl, organized by Radiator Collective and Gather in the County, helped enliven Main Street on a chilly, traditionally quiet, October evening.

Cultural events and tours, such as local heritage advocate Peter Lockyer's [History Nights series](#), can help deepen the connection of both residents and visitors to our local heritage,

Beyond driving vibrancy and business along Main Street, arts organizations can also offer businesses promotional opportunities. The majority of business survey respondents indicated interest in arts organizations including the business' logo/ad in print material (e.g. program, brochures, rack cards), on their websites, and on signs at arts events. Several businesses were also open to developing bundle packages and offering event attendees discounts or other kinds of promotions at their business.

### **SPOTLIGHT - CAFF X BOOKS AND CO.**

The Regent Theatre's County Adaptation Film Festival (CAFF) and Books & Company carried out a successful collaboration this year, with CAFF promoting Books & Co. with their audience and Books & Co. offering CAFF attendees a 15% discount on CAFF-associated books.



## 9 - COUNTY ARTS

County Arts is working to secure the necessary funding to transform the County Arts Lab, now located on the Main Street level of the historic Picton Armoury, into our region's first multi-use arts venue equipped for exhibitions, performances, residencies, installations, and more. Since moving to this new space in February 2024, we have welcomed over 3000 residents, visitors, and artists through meaningful, engaging arts experiences including Art in the County, our annual juried exhibition.

County Arts has 300+ members and a member mailing list of 550+ artists and arts supporters. As the go-to local arts resource, we help businesses and other organizations:

- Connect with the arts community to share opportunities and invitations to collaborate
- Understand how to respectfully work with artists, including through advocacy around artists' rights and industry-standard fees

We promote local arts events through What's On, the go-to local events calendar, and with an audience of 7000+ arts-loving followers and subscribers through our Artscene newsletter, Artscene on 99.3 County FM radio show, and social media.

## 10 - VISIT THE COUNTY (DMMO)

Visit the County, Prince Edward County's official Destination Marketing & Management Organization, receives their funding from Municipal Accommodation Tax revenues. They oversee marketing and promotion, product development, visitor services, and support tourism management for the region. Their marketing efforts represent important promotional opportunities for local arts events, particularly for out-of-market visitors.

## 11 - THE COUNTY FOUNDATION

The County Foundation, Prince Edward County's community foundation, annually allocates approximately \$2 million in funds to support various community causes, including arts organizations, through the administration of grant programs, donor advised funds, and more. Through their Vital Signs initiative, they collect and share data relating to community strengths and challenges - an essential resource for arts organizations seeking to design programming that responds to the needs of local residents.

## 12 - THE MUNICIPALITY

The Corporation of the County of Prince Edward is a single tier municipality that provides public services to residents, visitors, and businesses of the County.

### **Municipal Staff & Council**

Many municipal staffers and Council Members recognize the important role artists and arts organizations/events play in helping the municipality achieve its objectives and vision for our shared community, and work to support the arts community through investments, resource sharing, collaboration, policymaking, and more. A recent success story is the collaboration between County Arts and the municipality to develop a Public Art Plan and secure a 3-year investment and partnership agreement with County Arts to create and implement the County's first public art program.

**The County Museums** offer opportunities to engage with local heritage and reflect on the compelling ties it shares with Prince Edward County's vibrant and contemporary culture. They are the guardians of 35 buildings/structures and an estimated 50,000 artifacts. These assets provide the basis for art exhibitions and educational programmes, research, performances, lectures, outreach, and more. Picton's Macaulay Church Museum is home to the award-winning A Path Forward exhibit co-curated by the Tsi Tyónnheht Onkwawén:na, the Downie Wenjack Fund and The County Museums. This permanent and evolving exhibit explores truth and reconciliation, highlighting the shared past, present, and future of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in our community through powerful contemporary Indigenous artwork and a dynamic historical narrative,

### **Guiding Documents**

The Municipality's guiding documents recognize the importance of, and advocate for investing in, both local arts & culture initiatives and Picton Main Street. Here are a few examples:

- "The County shall recognize the tremendous contribution that arts and culture make to the County's quality of life and local economy by promoting and supporting local artists, arts and cultural organizations" (Official Plan 2021).
- "Identify and celebrate The County's vibrant heritage, arts and cultural assets by encouraging creative activation of our heritage and cultural spaces" (Strategic Plan 2023-2026).
- The Picton Urban Centre Secondary Plan (2020) recognizes the "Downtown Core" as the primary traditional main street shopping, business, office, and tourism centre of the community and a focal point for public gatherings, festive and civic occasions, cultural events, and tourism, encouraging "entertainment" uses to create a healthy and vibrant commercial area" that remains so after business hours.
- The Picton Downtown Revitalization Action Plan (2018) advocates for establishing "Downtown Picton" as a central gathering and year-round destination with street festivals and more.
- Arts activities can play a role in driving virtually every aspect of the Thrive PEC Community Vision (2022).
- The PEC Public Art Plan 2025-2030 (2024) provides a community-informed roadmap and vision for public art in Prince Edward County (more in Strategic Direction 4: Create welcoming public spaces for & through public art activations).



# COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

Despite Prince Edward County's plentiful assets, our engagement activities and research highlighted many challenges being faced by local residents and community institutions.

## 1 - CHALLENGES FACING RESIDENTS

Many County residents are struggling with our community's income disparity, food insecurity, and housing affordability challenges. Our median income is 10% lower than the Ontario average, and Picton has a higher proportion of residents experiencing residential instability and economic dependency. Marginalization, defined as "the exclusion of individuals or groups from full access to opportunities due to factors including race, gender, or economic status", is on the rise (13).

PEC youth have lower graduation rates and testing scores compared to Ontario peers, and just 34% of local youth report that they "always" have enough money to meet basic needs. (14).

Other challenges include a shortage of physical and mental health supports, the need to protect our unique sense of place and identity in a period of rapid development and change (13), and a need for more welcoming, vibrant, and safe public spaces ([Public Art Plan 2025-2030](#)).

**Many Prince Edward County artists are among the growing proportion of County residents struggling to make ends meet**, and must make significant financial sacrifices to practice their craft. The median personal income of local artists (from all sources) is \$33,200, 30% lower than that of all workers in the County (\$47,600). Their median employment income is \$8,900, roughly one-quarter of that of all workers in the County (\$36,400) (1).

86% of County artists are self-employed, much higher than the rate among all Ontario artists (69%) (1). They have limited access to the kinds of educational and financial opportunities available in larger centres. Artists must also continually work to counter the undervaluing of their time and work, and fight for industry-standard (e.g. [CARFAC](#)) wages.

Prince Edward County's high concentration of artists relative to local resources (more on this in the next section) exacerbates these challenges.





## 2 - CHALLENGES FACING ARTS ORGANIZATIONS

Increasing access to the health benefits and enjoyment of art experiences is a key priority for County Arts; we assume that this aspiration is shared by most local arts organizations, and that in an ideal world we would prefer for everyone, regardless of financial resources, to be able to access our offerings. But artists need and deserve to be compensated for their work, and the survival of arts venues and other infrastructure requires ongoing investment. As a result, most arts events require subsidies - either through ticket sales or other sources - to break even.

Yet despite the myriad benefits artists and events bring to our community, securing sustainable funding to produce work and arts experiences is a continual struggle for many local arts organizations.

The funding landscape for arts organizations is bleak and worsening, County Arts is fortunate to be one of only 12 of 40 Arts Councils in Ontario receiving operating funding from the Ontario Arts Council, but our grant (\$13,000) represents just 2.9% of our annual budget.

In 2024, arts-related grants awarded through the Municipal Community Grants program were slashed in half, with just \$32,000 in grants supporting local arts initiatives in 2024 (an investment of just \$1.25 per capita).

In small communities, successful arts & culture events tend to have a very high rate of buy-in and involvement from the local business community, including through financial and in-kind sponsorships. But businesses are also feeling the crunch, and given the relative size of our business community, many are overwhelmed with sponsorship requests from the local nonprofit community. Event sponsors need to understand the return on their investment, which can be challenging given the often intangible impact of participation in arts experiences. Arts organizations need support and resources to gather the data and stories needed to adequately paint the picture of their impact.

Patterns of cultural consumption spurred by the online availability of media were further impacted by pandemic-induced “cocooning” These trends have resulted in an increase in the private consumption of artwork from home - to the detriment of in-person event attendance (16).

There are also concerns around the capacity of our small rural population to support our relatively high number of arts events and organizations. As a result, many artists and arts organizations rely heavily on purchases of work or tickets by visitors to the County. But these opportunities diminish significantly in the off-season, causing some artists and arts organizations to struggle from November-April.

### 3 - CHALLENGES FACING BUSINESSES

Beyond the broader pressing challenges small businesses must contend with, including economic uncertainty, inflation, and staffing shortages, downtown businesses noted several concerns relating specifically to their Main Street location and presence:

**1) Pedestrian access:** Several businesses noted Main Street’s “pedestrian unfriendliness” due to the quantity and speed of vehicular traffic and resulting noise and dust. Other concerns related to the insufficient seating/benches and the lack of an official public “town square” to encourage lingering in spaces further away from the street. The absence of a crosswalk at Town Hill means that some businesses, especially those located between Ross Street and Bridge Street on the south side of Main Street, struggle to attract pedestrian traffic. Businesses adjacent to Main Street, for example those in the Armoury and down alleyways and side streets, also find it challenging to attract customers.

**2) Parking and accessibility:** Parking is a recurring challenge for both businesses and customers, with businesses expressing the need for more free parking options. While the municipality recently added more accessible spots in and around Main Street, customers with mobility issues still struggle to access businesses, particularly during the high tourist season.

**3) Challenges attracting visitors to town -** While the tourist season is a boon for many businesses, there is still untapped potential to attract Prince Edward County’s 326,000 annual visitors to Picton, many of whom bypass town for rural destinations like beaches and wineries.

The introduction of mandatory day passes to access Sandbanks Provincial Parks has reduced “accidental tourist” numbers, making opportunities to promote Picton and its offerings with prospective out-of-town visitors all the more important.

**4) Slower business in the off season and evenings -** With Prince Edward County’s beaches as the region’s main tourism driver, many businesses find it challenging to remain afloat during the shoulder season. There is also limited evening traffic for most of the year, making it less attractive for businesses to stay open late.

**5) Need for more tourist information -** 87% of business survey respondents report that customers request information about local events and things to do. They identified a need for more access to print materials - including maps, brochures/rack cards - to distribute, suggesting they should be easy to carry and include up-to-date links / QR codes to websites with more detailed information. Picton does not have an official visitor information centre, though Visit the County and the PEC Chamber of Commerce (located in the Armoury in the heart of Picton) piloted a kiosk this summer.





**7) Nearby commercial hubs** - Given the proximity of Base 31 to Main Street and the magnitude of that planned development, some businesses highlighted the need to ensure that our historical Main Street remains bustling and vibrant as the retail offerings at Base 31 grow.

## 4 - CHALLENGES RELATING TO COMMUNITY EVENTS

In general, businesses noted that well-planned and well-executed events and activities - particularly those that have a concerted focus on shopping and sales like the November 2024 Night Market event - can lead to increased sales. However, our engagement efforts brought to light the following challenges.

**Event Planning and Coordination** - Given our relatively small and dispersed rural population, a “double up” of events seeking to attract a similar audience can be problematic for attendance levels and success, particularly during the shoulder seasons. On the other side of the coin, a confluence of events can also present opportunities to partner and drive business to respective offerings.

Event organizers noted the need for a centralized forum for event presenters to keep one another informed - well in advance - about their plans. Business owners also noted their desire for advance notice about opportunities to participate in events, and to be kept in the loop about local events so they are well-equipped to inform customers.

**Funding** - Many interest holders believe that community events represent an enormous untapped opportunity for our community. Securing funding to expand and enhance these events, including by engaging local artists and arts organizations to create and layer in arts experiences, is necessary to help them reach and deliver on their full potential.

**Promotion** - Event organizers noted their need for more information about marketing opportunities, especially affordable ones, including cross-promotional partnerships with local businesses. They noted that submitting to the multitude of local event listings can be time consuming, and that apart from two poster boxes, free advertising opportunities on Main Street itself are few and far between.

**Execution** - All events contributing to a vibrant Main Street were viewed in a favourable light, with a caveat that during street closures, accessibility should remain a top priority and the public needs to be kept well-informed. Some interest holders noted that nearly half of Main Street businesses are services as opposed to retail, leaving a high number of “dead”/dark storefronts during evening shopping hours and nighttime events.



## 5 - CHALLENGES FACING SPONSORS & FUNDERS

While local business sponsors and institutional funders are keen to contribute financial and in-kind support to arts events and organizations, they also face their own resource constraints. Regardless of the motivations of business supporters and institutional funders wishing to support arts events and arts organizations, they all share a need to understand the impact of their potential and actual support in order to get involved.

Additionally, as noted in the [Thrive PEC Initial Summary Findings Report](#), there can be confusion around who is responsible for what when it comes to economic development in the community. While the municipality, businesses and entrepreneurs, community organizations, and resident groups can all play a role, these efforts require stable funding and a centralized coordinating body to be successful.



## 6 - CHALLENGES FACING VISITORS

Visitors to PEC are more likely than the Ontario average to include arts-related activities in their itinerary (2022 Optiks Numeris data obtained by Visit the County), and a key trend is a desire for timed, bookable experiences. These factors confirm a valuable growth opportunity for the arts community, but artists and arts organizations require access to resources and support to enhance market readiness and create engaging, successful arts experiences.

In order to support both arts events and business offerings, visitors need easy opportunities to learn about them. Based on feedback from businesses, visitors would appreciate more print materials and the opportunity to access a comprehensive, staffed tourist information centre with regular (including weekend) opening hours.

# STRATEGY:

## PARTNER TO CATALYZE ARTS & CULTURE EXPERIENCES THAT ENHANCE MAIN STREET'S ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL VIBRANCY

There is a strong belief among interest holders from all sectors that arts & culture are central to Picton's identity, and can play an important role in addressing our community's challenges. But this can only happen if a strong, cross-sector network of collaborators is in place. The rest of this document presents a comprehensive strategy for catalyzing these partnerships to increase engagement of residents, visitors, and businesses in arts experiences, and catalyze all of their positive economic, social, and cultural ripple effects for Picton Main Street and the broader community.

**The Strategy outlines 4 Strategic Directions, each accompanied by a series of recommendations, to enable its implementation:**

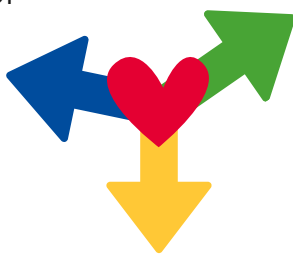
- 1) Partner to create engaging arts experiences
- 2) Partner to promote engaging arts experiences
- 3) Measure and share impact and audience data
- 4) Create welcoming public places for & through public art activations



This graphic offers an “At a Glance” look how the Strategy’s partners and pieces components fit together:

### 1) GOVERNMENT FUNDERS, BUSINESS OWNERS, AND COMMUNITY ASSOCIATIONS:

- Provide in-kind and financial support to catalyze and promote accessible arts experiences and creative placemaking initiatives
- Create income generation opportunities for local artists
- Gain understanding of impact of their investment



### 2) ARTISTS & ARTS ORGANIZATIONS:

- Benefit residents & visitors through accessible arts experiences
- Promote and drive traffic to businesses
- Enhance and enliven Main Street & surrounding public spaces
- Gain capacity and resources to collect and share impact data with supporters on their investment

### 3) RESIDENTS AND VISITORS

- Learn about and engage in accessible arts experiences
- Support Main Street businesses alongside engaging in arts experiences
- Support & encourage artists & arts organizations through their participation
- Visitors contribute to MAT revenues that can be reinvested in arts experiences



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1: PARTNER TO CREATE ENGAGING ARTS EXPERIENCES

We know that arts & culture activities bring myriad benefits to our community, and that artists and arts organizations need support to create and promote them. Yet arts event producers must concern themselves not only with artistic excellence, artistic intention and freedom, compensation for artists and their work, and thoughtful curation - they must also consider the accessibility and relevance of their experiences to the surrounding community.

**1) Accessible** - In his 2024 book *The Audacity of Relevance*, Alex Sarian (16) writes: "If the arts don't belong to people, they don't feel a sense of belonging in them." Producers should continually strive to make arts experiences financially accessible and inclusive, to ensure that all community members feel welcomed and can reap their positive benefits. Ideally, an arts & culture-rich community can offer a mix of bookable/timed experiences and those that can be "happened upon", bringing surprise and delight to visitors and residents alike.

**"WHEN WE APPROACH THE FUTURE OF THE ARTS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF COMMUNAL AND COLLECTIVE PARTICIPATION INSTEAD OF TRANSACTIONAL CONSUMPTION, WE FIND OURSELVES ASKING VERY DIFFERENT QUESTIONS ABOUT HOW TO FOSTER ENGAGEMENT."**

ALEX SARIAN, *THE AUDACITY OF RELEVANCE*

**2) Relevant** - Our motivations for attending arts experiences extend well beyond a need for entertainment or retail therapy. In a recent survey of arts & culture goers, respondents ranked "**learning new things**" as their top motivation for attending arts events. Sarian also writes of the importance of arts events as "**shared experiences**" and opportunities for emotional referencing: "a key process by which empathy is taught and experienced".

Arts organizations should remain curious about their current and potential audiences, continually evaluating their activities to ensure they remain responsive to community interests and needs. Not only will producing relevant events result in higher attendance and engagement levels. It will also help funders understand the impact of these experiences and their support, and continually reinvest in the artists and organizations that are producing them.

**Strategic Direction #1**, outlined in the following pages, focuses on partnering to create engaging arts experiences. As interest holders read and begin to implement recommendations, the needs and interests of audience members - residents and visitors alike - should remain front of mind.



## RECOMMENDATION 1.1 - FACILITATE COMMUNICATION IN THE PLANNING STAGES

The creation of a simple, centralized communications channel would help address issues of event duplication/audience overlap and facilitate synergies between events by helping organizers of all event types keep one another informed and plan collaborative efforts well before events are promoted publicly. Given its broad industry representation, the new Four Seasons Working Group (convened by the PEC Chamber of Commerce with the aim of spurring year-round economic activity) could be a suitable forum to begin exploring this idea.

## RECOMMENDATION 1.2 - PARTNER TO PRODUCE & SUPPORT ARTS EVENTS

There is a desire from all types of interest holders for more arts events on and in venues along Main Street.

1) Producing arts events, and layering arts experiences into existing events, on Main Street - Businesses and residents alike are keen to see more regular (e.g. on a quarterly or monthly basis) 1) stand-alone arts events like the 2024 Fall Art Crawl take over Main Street and 2) arts experiences like paint-arounds, live performances and temporary art installations layered into other Main Street events (as occurred during the November Night Market event). The latter would help ensure a “critical mass” of participants.

Both the Picton BIA and Recreation Committee are eager to support these efforts. The BIA’s Community Investment and Activation Program provides financial and in-kind support to events that are “accessible, open to everyone, and position Picton as the event destination” among other criteria. Eligible costs include artist fees, promotion fees, and coordination fees. The Picton Recreation Committee welcomes organizers to present requests for in-kind (volunteer) and/or financial support at their meetings. County Arts may also be able to assist with artist fee contributions or promotional support, and some events may qualify for The County Foundation’s Neighbourhood Small Grants program.

Businesses can contribute to these efforts by staying open during events like the Night Market, and several also indicated they would be open to hosting live performances in their spaces. One interest holder held up Almonte’s Puppets Up! festival as a shining example of a town fully investing in a local arts event.

Event organizers can implement a variety of measures to ensure access to opportunities for artists who identify with equity-denied groups. For example, County Arts’ applies a voluntary Self-Identification Framework and Equity Priority Policy to our competitive application processes (more info at [countyarts.ca/funding](https://countyarts.ca/funding)).



## 2) Supporting arts events taking place in and around Main Street venues

- Given the increased foot traffic and engaging experiences these events bring to the Main Street area, local businesses, and community members, arts organizations should explore the following local funding opportunities (following guidance for collecting and sharing data and impact outlined in Strategic Direction 3): business sponsors, the municipality (see Recommendation 1.4), Visit the County's [Partnership Funding program](#), and [Stay PEC's](#) out-of-market promotional support.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.3 - PARTNER TO PRODUCE FREE PARTICIPATORY ARTS EXPERIENCES

Seeking to respond to community needs outlined in our local Vital Signs Data Bank, and often in partnership with fellow community organizations, several local arts organizations are working hard to ensure all community members can enjoy the health and social benefits of participating in arts experiences.

At County Arts, this takes the form of offering: Art Together, our free drop-in artmaking program; free community-engaged artmaking projects in partnership with local organizations including ROC Youth Services and Community Living Prince Edward; free classroom tours during Art in the County; bursaries and sliding scale pricing for our paid programming; and more.

Arts organizations interested in delivering these kinds of programs should explore the following funding opportunities:

- Vital Impact Fund, the Huff Family Fund, Neighbourhood Small Grants, and Donor Advised Funds programs administered by [The County Foundation](#)
- Artists in the Community Grant programs offered by [County Arts](#) and the [Ontario Arts Council](#)

- [Stark Family Fund](#), administered by the Community Foundation for Kingston & Area
- [Davies Charitable Foundation](#)
- [John M & Bernice Parrott Foundation](#)

The Picton branch of the PEC Library may also be able to offer resources for these kinds of activities, including meeting space, equipment (e.g. recording studio), and more.

### RECOMMENDATION 1.4 - ADVOCATE FOR MUNICIPAL SUPPORT FOR THE ARTS & MAIN STREET ACTIVATIONS

To date, the only opportunity for arts organizations to secure municipal support has been through the Municipal Community Grants program, which has gone through a restructuring process this year. To help secure a dedicated funding stream for the arts, a separate **PEC Arts Fund** seeded with Municipal Accommodation Tax funding and administered by The County Foundation is being proposed. If it passes, starting in 2025 arts-mandated organizations will have access to this new arts-specific granting program. It will offer opportunities for operating and multi-year funding, as well as in-kind space rental.

Starting in 2025, the municipality's new **public art program** will help facilitate both community-initiated public art projects as well as municipal commissions.

However, there is still room for municipal support of the arts and Main Street activities to grow. With the arts community's support, County Arts should and will continue to advocate for more **investment in and inclusion of the arts in municipal initiatives**. Interest holders should also advocate for the creation of new funding programs based on best practices in other municipalities (continued on next page).



For example, the City of Kawartha Lakes offers several [Business Incentives and Funding programs](#) including a **Local Economic Development Support Grant** supporting not-for-profit organizations who undertake local economic development initiatives and a **Cultural Facilities Operating Support Grant** providing operational funding for cultural not-for-profits who offer public programming in their own facility.

## RECOMMENDATION 1.5 - IDENTIFY NON-LOCAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

The following non-local funding opportunities can support the development of engaging arts experiences and Main Street initiatives for residents and visitors (County Arts will add this to our [Resources page](#) and continually grow and promote it with arts organizations):

- [RTO9 \(Regional Tourism Organization\) Partnership Funding program](#)
- [Experience Ontario](#) - for festivals and events with a tourism economic impact
- [Eastern Ontario Development Fund](#) for economic projects, open to businesses and nonprofits
- [Seniors Community Grant Program](#)
- [Canada Cultural Spaces Fund](#)
- [Ontario Arts Council](#), [Canada Council for the Arts](#)
- [Ontario Trillium Foundation](#)
- [OMAFRA's Downtown Revitalization Program](#)

## RECOMMENDATION 1.6 - SUPPORT AND PROMOTE COUNTY ARTS AS A COMMUNITY RESOURCE

County Arts currently acts as a resource for businesses and organizations seeking to connect and work with artists and arts organizations, including through our Member Newsletter, Member Profiles on [countyarts.ca](#), and more. In 2025, we will promote this role more widely and develop and promote a “How To” resource for working with artists to help facilitate respectful collaborations with artists in our community.

We will also continue to work with Visit the County to try and secure funding for market readiness training for Prince Edward County artists and arts organizations offering experiences to the public.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2: PARTNER TO PROMOTE ENGAGING ARTS EXPERIENCES

Hundreds of arts activities take place on Picton Main Street and in nearby venues every year, and Picton Main Street is home to dozens of arts businesses, venues, and more. Yet arts & culture are not currently at the forefront of “Brand Picton”.

Enhancing and increasing opportunities to promote Picton’s Main Street as an arts & culture destination will help drive increased traffic not only to arts events, but to all surrounding Main Street businesses. This strategic direction focuses on increasing awareness of Picton’s arts events for

### **3 broad groups of potential participants:**

- Reaching visitors and PEC residents who are physically present on Main Street
- Reaching PEC residents through other means (e.g. through online channels)
- Reaching potential visitors to PEC (e.g. through online channels)

Depending on the nature of the event and the needs of event organizers and collaborators, the following recommendations may result in **2-way cross-promotional activities** or **“pro bono”** arrangements without direct/tangible benefits to the supporter.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2.1 - PRODUCE MARKETING COLLATERAL PROMOTING PICTON AS AN ARTS DESTINATION & PICTON ARTS EVENTS**

Interest holders agreed on the need for new marketing collateral to increase the awareness of Picton Main Street’s abundance of arts & culture offerings among residents and visitors alike. As part of the broader Art at the Heart of Picton project, we worked with local artist Ambivalently Yours at Picton-based Northern Branding Studio to create a new branding package.

### **The Art at the Heart of Picton branding package includes:**

- Logo with and without artistic icons (featured on the front page of this Strategy)
- Foldable brochure including an illustrated map of the downtown section of Main Street with the highest concentration of arts businesses and activities, a list of eligible annual arts event producers/events, a list of eligible restaurants that host live music, etc.
- Poster
- Small vinyl window sticker

The brochure, poster, and sticker will include a link and QR code inviting people to visit [countyarts.ca/picton](https://countyarts.ca/picton) to learn about arts & culture activities happening in town that day, weekend, month, etc.

The map section will focus on “brick & mortar” locations including arts venues, shops, galleries, and workshop spaces, but the brochure will also list event presenters who operate in and around Main Street and nearby businesses and organizations offering arts & culture experiences.

County Arts will launch the branding package through a digital marketing strategy and distribute the posters, brochures, and stickers at a variety of locations throughout Picton. The Picton BIA will cover distribution costs in other PEC locations.

**Next Steps** will include evaluating success by surveying businesses who distribute brochures, and organizations who are listed on the Map; and exploring a collective marketing approach to cover the costs of updating, printing, and distributing the brochure in future years.

## **RECOMMENDATION 2.2 - IDENTIFY & FACILITATE ONLINE PROMOTION OPPORTUNITIES**

### **1) Online event listings**

[Countyarts.ca/whats-on](https://countyarts.ca/whats-on) is County Arts’ online listing for arts events in Prince Edward County. It is the top organic result for an “arts events in Prince Edward County” search on Google, meaning that it receives the most clicks and has the highest click-through rate. We have added a location filter for different regions of the County to improve functionality, allowing us to have a Picton landing page ([Countyarts.ca/Picton](https://countyarts.ca/Picton)) for arts events taking place in town.

County Arts continually encourages arts organizations across Prince Edward County to submit events, and will continue to do the same with event organizers and businesses featured in the Art at the Heart of Picton marketing collateral.

We will measure and report back on the branding collateral’s impact on website visitor numbers to demonstrate the value of submitting events.

Other relevant local event listings appear on the [Visit the County](#) (geared towards out-of-town visitors) and [Experience Picton](#) websites. [What’s On Quinte](#) has a broader regional focus.

While it can be time consuming to submit arts events to multiple listings, each has the potential to help event organizers reach different audiences. If technically possible, these organizations should consider adding links to other event listings to their own listing pages to maximize the reach of each one.

### **2) Newsletters & Social Media**

A key advantage of submitting to online listings is that events may be prioritized for inclusion in the listing organizations’ newsletters and social media feeds. County Arts’ arts-loving audience includes 1600+ subscribers to our monthly Artscene Newsletter and 5000+ social media followers. Events listed on our What’s On page may be included in Artscene newsletter and our summer weekly What’s On posts on our social channels.

The Picton BIA Newsletter is an efficient way to reach Picton businesses to promote events and other opportunities (listings can be emailed to [info@experiencepicton.com](mailto:info@experiencepicton.com)). Event organizers can tag the social accounts of County Arts, the Picton BIA, and Visit the County, and relevant/collaborating Main Street businesses to help spread the word about events.

County Arts should continue to work with Visit the County to increase promotion of Picton’s and Prince Edward County’s arts scenes with out-of-market audiences.



## RECOMMENDATION 2.3 - IDENTIFY & FACILITATE PRINT & PHYSICAL PROMOTIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

**1) Printed materials** such as maps, brochures/rack cards, pamphlets, and calendars providing information about local events and attractions remain very popular with visitors. These should be easy to carry and include QR codes and up-to-date links to websites with more information. They can be distributed in/through a variety of locations/methods:

- **10 Visitor information locations** ([list here](#)) run from June to October. This summer, Visit the County also ran a pilot kiosk in the PEC Chamber of Commerce's central Picton Main Street location. This enabled the Chamber to expand their public opening hours and tourism information services.
- **Accommodations** - Through accommodators ([list here](#)). Depending on the nature of the event, Stay PEC may also be able to help promote with their members.
- **Businesses along Main Street and throughout PEC** - As noted in the "Assets" section, the majority of businesses are open to displaying and distributing print materials.

## 2) Posters and Banners

Arts organizations can take advantage of the following physical promotional opportunities in and around Main Street:

- The BIA operates **2 poster boxes/kiosks** on Main Street at the corners of Elizabeth and Walton on a first come first served basis - send inquiries to [info@experiencepicton.com](mailto:info@experiencepicton.com)
- Several businesses (including Books & Company and Kelly's Shop) have used their **storefront windows** to promote arts events and their walls (including the Beau Bistro) to display the work of local artists.
- The **chalkboard** on the side of The Regent Theatre and **community bulletin boards** inside local businesses
- Banners - to inquire about hanging **over-street banners**, contact Bev Williams ([bwilliams@pecounty.on.ca](mailto:bwilliams@pecounty.on.ca)) at the Municipality. For major Picton-based events, organizers may also be able to use the Main Street lamp posts; email the Picton BIA at [info@experiencepicton.com](mailto:info@experiencepicton.com) to inquire.

**Other ideas to explore** that surfaced during the interest holder engagement phase include:

- Repair and add poster display opportunities at the Mary Street and King Street parking lots
- Install a third poster box/kiosk (currently in storage) in a central location on the south side of Main Street, e.g. in front of the Armoury (there may be constraints associated with digging/locates)
- Engage identifiable "Ambassadors" to walk along Main Street providing visitor information
- Purchase and display digital signboard to promote events at the PEC Chamber of Commerce, to be visible from Armoury Square
- Display brochures on County Transit buses

# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3: MEASURE AND SHARE IMPACT AND VISITOR DATA

Arts-based nonprofits are operating with tight budgets in a competitive funding landscape. To facilitate the cross-sector partnerships at the heart of this strategy, event supporters need to understand the return on their investment, whether related to a financial bottom line, community impact, or other objective. Visitor and impact data can also play a crucial role in helping arts organizations make decisions on where to invest their marketing budgets and how to improve their offerings.

## RECOMMENDATION 3.1 - COLLECT DATA

### 1) Make a Plan / Select Indicators

The first step is to determine who needs which kinds of data and why. The answers will depend on a variety of factors including the nature of the event; the needs of funders, supporters, and attendees; and the organization's mandate and capacity. Event Impacts, a UK organization, has developed a [comprehensive toolkit](#) for event evaluation focusing on 5 categories:

#### **Social**

- Community: How does the event change people's perceptions of a place?
- Health and Well-being
- Equity, Diversity & inclusion
- Volunteering & skills acquisition

#### **Economic**

- Direct economic impact: what additional spend can be attributed to the event?
- Total economic impact: adds in 'secondary'/indirect economic impacts
- Employment: spending and job creation within local organizations
- Long-term: economic impact beyond the event, e.g. spending on venues/infrastructure

**Attendance** - attendance numbers, audience profiles, and audience satisfaction

**Environmental** - including carbon footprint, waste impacts, and more.

**Media** - including volume & reach, tone & engagement, and reputational change

### 2) Decide on Methods & Develop Instruments

Once relevant categories and indicators have been selected (see Event Impacts Toolkit and this [Animating Democracy resource](#) for examples), organizers can then identify and develop appropriate data collection methods based on their needs and capacity. If the organization sells tickets online they might already have valuable audience information such as area and postal codes at their fingertips.

In some cases, organizations might need to develop new instruments. Creating and running a simple **participant survey** can be a relatively easy and effective place to start. The survey can be distributed in person at the event or sent out to participants after the event if their email addresses are available (an incentive, such as entry into a draw for a prize, can help increase participation). Mass Cultural Council's [Festivals Toolkit](#) provides helpful tips, examples, and pros & cons for various survey approaches.

### **Example: County Arts Participant Surveys**

- At our Art in the County and The Maker's Hand events, County Arts volunteers ask visitors to fill out a short survey on site to understand the proportion of attendees who are residents vs. visitors; for visitors, where are they coming from, whether they are staying overnight, for how many nights, and in what type of accommodation; whether they came to PEC specifically for the event, etc.
- We regularly survey our community programming participants to understand our impact on relevant objectives including skills development, well-being, social connectedness and more. We then use this data to improve and secure funding for these offerings.

Another helpful instrument for determining and communicating the economic impact of arts activities is the federal government's **CAHSEIM** (Culture, Arts, Heritage and Sport Economic Impact Model) calculator. It measures an event's or organization's direct economic impact and ripple effects using indicators such as GDP, labour income, and employment.

## **RECOMMENDATION 3.2 - SHARE IMPACT**

Once collected, this data can not only inform planning and marketing efforts. It is also instrumental in helping organizations form and nurture partnerships with funders and secure support for future activities. Granting programs will have specific reporting requirements, but the following steps focus on individual and business sponsors. Ideally, the life cycle of an event sponsorship will look something like this:

**1) Case for Support** - The event organizer prepares and presents a "Case for Support" (templates can easily be found online). This is a foundational, customizable document which describes the initiative and its actual or potential impact on the supporter's objectives, along with the benefits/perks (e.g. promotional, free tickets, etc.) the supporter will receive in exchange for their support.

**2) Ongoing stewardship and benefits** - Before, during, and after the event, the organizer should deliver the agreed-upon benefits at the appropriate moments.

**3) Reporting** - Shortly after the event, the organizer should prepare and present a follow-up report sharing as much quantitative and qualitative data as possible to demonstrate the success and impact of the event and promotional benefits.

[Business/Arts' Youtube page](#) contains many useful videos for arts organizations seeking to secure and maintain sponsors for their activities.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4: CREATE WELCOMING PUBLIC PLACES FOR & THROUGH PUBLIC ART ACTIVATIONS

“PUBLIC SPACES HAVE THE POWER TO FOSTER UNDERSTANDING, INSPIRE MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND OWNERSHIP, AND INSTILL JOY. EVERY PARK, MARKET, STREET, AND ALLEY IS A LITMUS TEST FOR BELONGING.”

JAY PITTER, PLACEMAKER AND AUTHOR

## RECOMMENDATION 4.1: PARTNER TO FACILITATE PUBLIC ART INSTALLATIONS AND ACTIVATIONS

There is a strong desire from all interest holders to increase, enhance, and enliven public spaces along Main Street through arts & culture experiences. Arts activities and art-filled public spaces can encourage passersby to “linger” and bring people together, helping strengthen connections between neighbors.

While transforming Picton into a fully people-centred, welcoming destination is beyond the scope of this Strategy, the arts can play a key role in helping us work towards this dream. This final section is meant to inspire and guide the kinds of cross-sector collaborations - between businesses, the Picton BIA, community organizations, and PEC’s new public art program - we need to help us take the first steps.

## GUIDING CONCEPT #1 : PEOPLE-CENTRED PLACEMAKING

*“Placemaking refers to community-led or -supported projects that aim to improve places and the connection between the people who share them... Anyone can be a placemaker: municipalities, local businesses, community organizations, and people of all ages, abilities and backgrounds.” (3)*

Successful people-centred placemaking in Picton will require meaningful community engagement, investment, and cross-sector collaboration, and should be guided by the following placemaking principles (highlighted in this Project for Public Spaces [article](#) (17)):

**1) Multi-use destinations / Power of 10+** - The idea behind this concept is that places thrive when users have a range of reasons to be there, e.g. places and opportunities to sit, play, eat, learn, meet, and of course - experience art.

**2) Community Anchors** - How can building owners and designers work together to promote an “architecture of place” that redefines the public gathering roles these institutions play in communities?

**3) Think of streets and sidewalks as public spaces** - Design for appropriate speeds with traffic calming measures, make sidewalks wide, well lit, and welcoming with seating, patios, and public art - asphalt art in particular has been shown to enhance safety ([Bloomberg Philanthropies](#)). The installation of crosswalks at the top of Town Hill would enhance both pedestrian safety and access to retail businesses along both sides of Main Street.

### **GUIDING CONCEPT #2: EQUITABLE PLACEMAKING**

Beyond the considerations of financial accessibility outlined above, any placemaking and public space initiatives taking place in Picton - arts-based or otherwise - must consider the needs of the entire community, balancing driving “business” with the availability of affordable housing and mechanisms to mitigate the displacement of residents and small businesses.

*“Without equity, community redevelopment can improve a physical place but leave the people behind, stifle broad creativity, bring economic benefit only to a few, lead to a homogeneous community, or displace many. The tools of arts and culture can accelerate equity, build communities of opportunity, and design for broadly shared prosperity.”* (Creating Change through Arts, Culture, and Equitable Development: [A Policy and Practice Primer](#)) (18)

### **GUIDING CONCEPT #3: A COMMUNITY-INFORMED VISION FOR PUBLIC ART IN PICTON**

County Arts recently carried out extensive community engagement activities while developing Prince Edward County’s first [Public Art Plan](#) (19). The Plan was approved and County Arts is entering into a 3-year partnership agreement with the municipality to facilitate the development and implementation of our community’s first public art program. The Plan and program are County-wide, but the following key learnings can help guide the creation of public art in and around Main Street Picton.

#### **Residents want to see:**

- “Functional” public art, surface art/murals, sculptures, etc.
- Public art in parks, around libraries, and along Main Street (with specific mentions of around the Picton Library and Picton’s alleyways)
- A mix of temporary activations and longer term installations

#### **Residents want public art to play a role in:**

- **Indigenous Placemaking**, which “aims to restore an Indigenous presence within the natural and built environment that: may be expressed through language, art and design; is rooted in Indigenous Knowledge; and is approached through Indigenous participation and collaboration” (U of T Scarborough)
- Enhancing our **built heritage**
- Creating **equitable, inclusive, accessible opportunities** for residents and artists to reflect and tell all of our stories

**“PUBLIC ART ENGENDERS PARTICIPATION AND CARE IN THE CONSIDERATION OF PUBLIC SPACE ... THE MORE WE PARTICIPATE, OBSERVE AND CARE THE MORE ENRICHED OUR PUBLIC REALM WILL BE.”**

**- PUBLIC ART PLAN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT SURVEY RESPONDENT**

## LOCATIONS FOR PUBLIC ART ACTIVATIONS

### 1) Picton Main Street

Picton Main Street itself can be seen as a canvas, with public art incorporated into **streetscaping elements** (e.g. benches, shade structures, signage, vinyl wrapped utility boxes, fencing, tree cages, poster boxes etc.) and **traffic calming efforts** (for example through pavement murals). **Storefront windows** - particularly when they are vacant/closed for winter - can be used to exhibit visual art (CARFAC fees should always apply).

### 2) Informal “Town Square”

The Picton Secondary Plan, Downtown Revitalization Action Plan, and Heritage Conservation District Study all recommend consulting surrounding landowners on the creation of a central gathering place or “town square” on the land fronting the Picton Library (municipally-owned) and the Picton Armoury, as well as the Naval Marine Archive across the street (both privately owned): “This one break in the streetwall, framed by civic buildings and functions, creates a strong sense that you have arrived at an important central place in the town”. (Heritage Conservation District Study) (20)

The newly renovated **Picton Library Branch’s** plans to add features such as seating and public art on the east and front sides of the building presents an exciting opportunity to create a vibrant community gathering place.

The **Picton Armoury** owners are also keen to activate the front courtyard with lighting, public art, and arts activities: recent activations include the opening party for the County Adaptation Film Festival (CAFF), performances during CAFF by Indigenous musicians on the National Day for Truth & Reconciliation, and the 2021 Art in Isolation visual art exhibition run by the Department of Illumination.



However, given that the Armoury and Naval Archive courtyards are privately owned, future planning efforts might consider engaging a broad spectrum of community members in placemaking conversations to explore the potential of other central, publicly owned spaces that could be enhanced for gatherings and arts activities.

### 3) Pedestrian connections to nearby public spaces

There is enormous potential for using public art and placemaking to enhance pedestrian connections - including alleys like Lipson’s and Cobbler’s Way (on either side of Books & Company) - between Main Street and surrounding neighbourhoods and public spaces including Market Square, Benson Park, Delhi Park, and the Picton Harbour. Alleyway activations in particular have the potential to create unexpected moments of delight and opportunities to pause, linger, and connect with fellow community members and our shared stories.

# PARTNERING FOR IMPLEMENTATION



## **In the words of Henri Matisse: “Creativity takes courage.”**

It is County Arts' hope that the Art at the Heart of Picton Placemaking Strategy will help plant the seeds for a courageous, cross-sectoral approach to harnessing the immense potential of our creative community and other assets to drive vibrancy, prosperity, and well-being in Picton and beyond.

It will require both resources and a collaborative, ongoing effort to implement and ensure this Strategy remains a relevant and useful roadmap for Picton Main Street. County Arts will work with local arts organizations and other key interest holders - including the Picton BIA, PEC Chamber of Commerce, Municipality of Prince Edward, and Visit the County - to help catalyze the necessary partnerships and opportunities to bring this collective vision to life.

The full roll-out of the Strategy and Art at the Heart of Picton branding collateral will take place in 2025. These efforts will include a digital promotion strategy to residents and visitors, as well as targeted outreach to businesses and arts organizations. We hope this Strategy will help inspire these key players to connect and work together to increase engagement in all of Picton Main Street's offerings.

County Arts has high hopes for the community-wide ripple effects of this Strategy - on residents, community organizations, businesses and more - and for its potential to serve as a model for other rural Main Streets in Prince Edward County and beyond.

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# IMAGE / ARTWORK CREDITS

Heading backgrounds and P. 39 - Wisdom of the Universe by Christi Belcourt at The Andrew

P. 1 - Picton Night Market photo featuring the Department of Illumination's Fire Bear puppet (Credit: Logan Somers), November 2024

P. 2 - Young art student at the County Arts Lab | Lori Meeboer, Owner of County Creative Gallery

P. 3 - Whispering Winds Singers & Dancers and Tyendinaga Women's Water Drum Singers perform at the Armoury Square as part of Truth & Reconciliation Day activities at the County Adaptation Film Festival, September 2024 (Credit: David Vaughan) | Picton Public Art Walk at the Picton Fairgrounds, October 2023

P. 4 - Tomas Del Balso's Forever Wild mural series at Carbon Gallery (now Proudest Pony PEC)

Firelight Lantern Festival by The Department of Illumination, Picton | Photo credit: Ramesh Pooran

P. 6 - From L-R: Nolan Hubbard performing during Picton Night Market in front of Savon du Bois; Kelly's Shop during Picton Night Market; Lisa Bozikovic during Wild Thing Parade, May 2022

P. 10 - Youth Artists and Facilitators for Do You Belong Here temporary mural installation by youth artists, collaboration between County Arts and ROC Youth Services, 2023

P. 11 - The Royal Hotel | County Creative Gallery during the Picton Night Market

P. 12 - Youth Craft Academy students at the County Arts Lab

P. 13 - Picton Night Market | Department of Illumination's Firelight Lantern Festival at the Crystal Palace

P. 15 - 2024 Art in the County Exhibition opening night at the County Arts Lab

P. 17 - Artist Kaya Joan doing live surface art during the York Street Laneway Reimagined event, September 2023

P. 18 - Northfire Circus performing at November 2024 Firelight Lantern Festival

P. 19 - Live music at Coaches Pub

P. 20 - Shatterbox Theatre's November 2024 production of Cabaret at The CAPE Picton

P. 21 - Firelight Lantern Festival parade with The Regent Theatre marquee in the background | Remarks during Driftwood Theatre's December 2023 production of William Shakespeare's A Christmas Carol at the Regent Theatre

P. 22 - Prince Edward Collegiate Institute Grade 2 Visit to 2024 Art in the County exhibition

P. 23 - Community Mural created by ROC Youth Services youth guided by Tomas Del Balso on the back of the Circle K

P. 25 - Ceramist Dawn Stafrace Middleton on her pottery wheel in front of her Yellow Studio during the September 2024 Sidewalk Sale

P. 27 - Free Range Poetry (Karen Palmer) writing live poetry at the Gather Textile Market Pop-Up during the Fall Art Crawl | Print-making at Art Together, free drop-in program at the County Arts Lab

P. 30 - Department of Illumination's Firelight Lantern Festival at the Crystal Palace

P. 35 - Chrissy Poitras and Kyle Topping painting a mural on the facade of Kelly's Shop

P. 36 - Music at Port Milford Faculty Concert, 2024 | Picton Public Art Walk, in York Street Laneway beside The Regent Theatre

P. 37 - Picton painted picnic table by Nella Casson | Art Together participants at the County Arts Lab

p. 38 - A Moment of Reflection: an artistic representation of Ohèn:ton Karihwatéhkwén by Melissa Brant | Macaulay Church Museum

