

Ajax Arts and Culture Plan 2023 – 2033

Final Report

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Summary

This Arts and Culture Plan creates a roadmap to guide focus and investments and support for arts and culture in Ajax for the next 10 years.

The Plan outlines a strategy to support artists, arts and culture organizations, and creatives in Ajax for the benefit of the community. It includes specific objectives and actions, informed by the community and extensive research, as well as consultation with Town of Ajax staff. This strategy was developed using a 5-phase process: project initiation; desk research, stakeholder and community engagement, analysis, and reporting.

Engagement activities at a glance:



116 survey respondents



11 interviews



4 targeted focus groups



1 community consultation event

Community-informed vision for arts and culture in Ajax:

*“Ajax is **abundant** with **innovative, exciting, and accessible** arts and culture experiences, representing the **diverse mix** of people and cultures that call the Town home. Whether for residents or visitors, **arts and culture make Ajax for all.**”*

Identified priority needs for the Ajax Arts and Culture Plan:

	Reflecting Ajax's diverse cultures, with more programs and events sharing different cultures and targeting various demographics
	Better availability of cultural spaces
	Addressing transportation issues to increase participation
	Growing engagement via increased promotion
	Strategic integration with economic development and tourism
	Increasing municipal support
	Building relationships and addressing siloes in the sector

Strategic Goals and Objectives

The Arts and Culture Plan is structured around **five strategic goals** to help arts and culture thrive in Ajax. Each strategic goal is supported by key objectives, as outlined below.

Each objective has specific actions, to guide the Town of Ajax in achieving the objectives. The actions are detailed in the full Arts and Culture Plan.

Goal 1: Celebrate Ajax's Difference and Diversity

Celebrate Ajax's unique personality through a diverse offering of arts and cultural experiences, and use arts and culture to make Ajax's diversity easily visible. Build on Ajax's existing successes in festivals, events, and programs to attract residents and visitors to participate in arts and culture. *Objectives:*

- 1.1** Diversify events and programming to reflect the community and attract new audiences, creating opportunities for diverse artists, groups, and cultural organizations.
- 1.2** Strengthen relationships with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation to integrate Indigenous arts and culture into Ajax life.

Goal 2: Build Ajax's Reputation for Innovative, Exciting Arts and Culture

Use arts and culture to celebrate Ajax's unique personality. Leverage what makes Ajax different as a creative foundation for strategic community development and build Ajax's reputation for innovative and exciting arts and culture. Grow engagement by making communications more compelling to different audiences. *Objectives:*

- 2.1** Create a unique selling point (USP) and cultural brand for the Town's arts and cultural program, and the sector itself, that represents Ajax's diversity, rich cultures, and creativity.
- 2.2** Create innovative and compelling communications.

Goal 3: Make Space for Culture with Accessible Facilities

Ensure that spaces for culture in Ajax meet the needs of the community, and support the local arts, culture, and heritage sector. *Objectives:*

- 3.1** Grow awareness of spaces that are already available for arts and culture, to increase access.
- 3.2** Create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.
- 3.3** Address transportation and parking issues at cultural facilities.

Goal 4: Pursue Creative Placemaking

Integrate arts and culture more firmly into urban planning to beautify and build a sense of place in Ajax's public spaces. Create memorable places that people want to visit and spend time, growing a reputation for diverse creativity and innovation. Doing so will help to support economic development and tourism by encouraging more residents, visitors, and investment into the Town. *Objectives:*

- 4.1** Continue to implement Official Plan policies that incorporate a cultural lens by promoting placemaking, architectural excellence, public art, and sustainable mixed-use developments.
- 4.2** Enhance nightlife and cultural vibrancy by creating supportive policies.

Goal 5: Bolster Municipal Support for Ajax's Arts and Culture Sector

Strengthen Ajax's arts, culture, and heritage sector from within, building the organizational capacity of grassroots organizations. Build relationships within the sector to address siloes. *Objectives:*

- 5.1** Increase municipal capacity to support arts and culture.
- 5.2** Provide more opportunities for artists in Ajax.
- 5.3** Break down sector siloes and build collaboration in the sector.

Ajax Arts and Culture Plan

Vision

“ Ajax is **abundant** with **innovative, exciting** and **accessible** arts and culture experiences, representing the **diverse mix** of people and cultures that call the Town home. Whether for residents or visitors, **arts and culture make Ajax for all.** ”

Introduction

This Arts and Culture Plan reasserts the Town of Ajax’s commitment to supporting arts and culture. The purpose of the Plan is to create a roadmap to guide focus and investments in arts and culture in Ajax for the next 10 years.

The Plan includes specific actions to support artists, arts and culture organizations and creatives in Ajax. Through these actions, the Plan seeks to ensure that arts and culture is integrated into the community, and representative of all residents.

Ajax is a dynamic place with a rich mix of cultures from all over the world, and it is growing fast. Ajax’s multigenerational mix includes a large youth population as well as an expanding older cohort. While these groups often have different needs, Ajax is a place where people of all ages come together for community events and festivals – engaging both residents and visitors. This Plan presents ideas on how to build on these existing strengths, informed by the community.

By focusing on what is unique about Ajax, the Arts and Culture Plan hopes to achieve this vision: Creating an Ajax for all,¹ abundant with innovative, exciting, and accessible arts and culture experiences – representing the diverse mix of people and cultures that call the Town home.

What is Cultural Planning?

Cultural planning is a process of community consultation which aims to help towns and cities support arts and cultural development, to benefit the community. The planning process highlights a community’s unique strengths, gaps, and needs in relation to arts and culture. The aim is to strategically integrate arts and culture with wider municipal planning and strategies. Essentially, it means asking, “where are we now? Where do we want to be?” – and considers strategies to get there.²

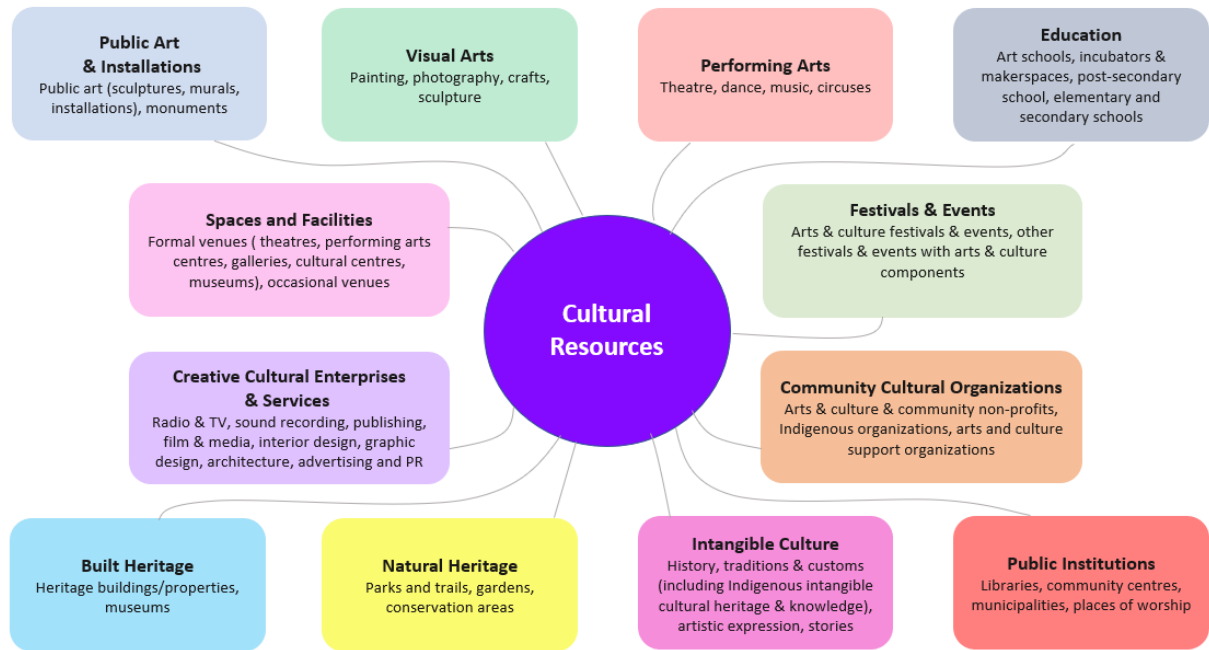
¹ Inspired by the “Ajax for All” multicultural campaign created by the Town of Ajax in partnership with OCASI (Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants), as many participants who engaged with the Arts and Culture planning process mentioned it as a successful, well-loved way of celebrating the Town’s diversity.

² Drawing from [Cultural Planning, Government of Ontario, 2022](#)

Defining Arts and Culture in Ajax – What's Included?

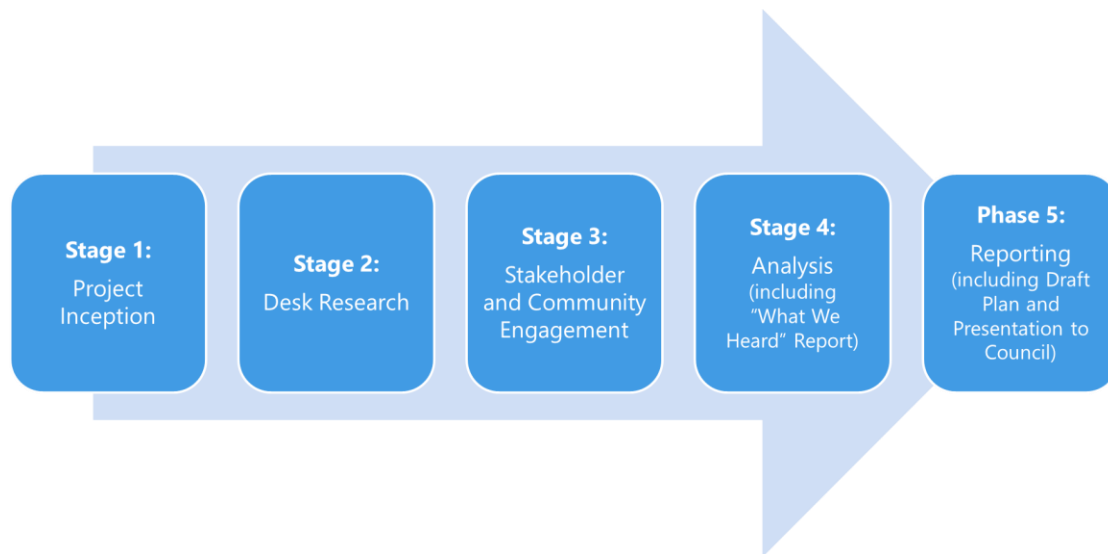
Arts and culture can be difficult to define because they mean many things to different people. This Plan defines arts and culture broadly – including tangible assets (like artworks and buildings), organized groups (such as performance and dance troupes), and intangible things (like stories and cultural traditions). The 'Cultural Resources Framework' below maps different types of arts and culture resources or assets.

Figure 1. Cultural Resources Framework



Source: Adapted from Municipal Cultural Planning Incorporated's Cultural Resources Mapping: Guide for Municipalities (2010), Statistics Canada Canadian Framework for Cultural Statistics (2011), and North Shore Culture Compass.

Planning Process



This strategy was developed using a **5-phase process**: project initiation; desk research, stakeholder and community engagement, analysis, and reporting.

Work was led by the Culture & Events section of the Town of Ajax’s Recreation & Culture department, in collaboration with [Nordicity](#), Town staff, arts and culture stakeholders, and the public. The Town of Ajax’s Mayor and Council also shared their perspectives on priorities for the plan in **1:1 interviews**. To ensure the Plan was community informed, the Arts and Culture Plan team hosted a **community consultation event** in February 2023, and **targeted focus groups** with members of Ajax’s arts and culture sector, equity priority groups (including members of ethnocultural community organizations and faith groups), youth and residents aged 55+, and Town of Ajax staff. There was also an **online community survey**, which was live from February to March 2023.

Engagement activities at a glance:



116 survey respondents



11 interviews



4 targeted focus groups



1 community consultation event

Project Context

Community Profile

Ajax is Growing Fast

Ajax is a dynamic, growing community. Ajax’s population grew by 6% between 2016 to 2021, from around 120,000 residents to over 126,000. The population is expected to reach over 134,000 by 2026 – an increase of 12% in 10 years.

Relatively Young, but Older Segment Expanding Rapidly

Ajax has a relatively young population. In 2021, 45% of Ajax’s population was aged under 35 years old, and the average resident age was 38.5 years. In comparison, the average age across the Durham Region was 40.2 years old, and 43% of the population was aged under 35. Despite Ajax’s comparatively young population, the picture is nuanced when it comes to age. The age range that is growing fastest in Ajax is the older segment – residents aged 55+. The 55+ age group increased by 60% between 2011 to 2021.

Table 1. Ajax Age Distribution from 2011 to 2021

Age Range	Age Distribution 2011	Age Distribution 2016	Age Distribution 2021	% change between 2011 to 2021
0 to 14 years	22,635 (21%)	23,660 (19.8%)	23,805 (18.8%)	5.17%
15 to 34 years	30,290 (28%)	32,140 (26.8%)	33,290 (26.4%)	9.90%
35 to 54 years	35,585 (32%)	35,900 (30.1%)	35,585 (28.1%)	0%
55+	21,090 (19%)	27,985 (23.4%)	33,990 (26.9%)	61.17%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021, 2016, 2011 Census

Diverse and Multicultural

Ajax is recognized as one of the most diverse communities in Canada. According to Census 2021 data, 65% of Ajax residents belong to a “visible minority”.³ In terms of ethnic origins, the largest demographic groups are White (35%), South Asian (26%), and Black (17%).⁴

Many Ajax residents are immigrants to Canada. According to Census 2021 data, 42% of Ajax residents are immigrants versus an average of 28% across the Durham Region. Besides English and French, the most common languages spoken most often at home in Ajax include Tamil, Urdu, Tagalog, Dari, and Mandarin. The vast majority of Ajax residents (92%) are citizens, meaning that most immigrant community members have been established in Canada for several years – at least three years, but typically longer.⁵ Among recent immigrants living in Ajax (those established within the past five years as of 2021), nearly three quarters (74%) were from Asia, with 12% from the Americas, 9% from Africa, and 4% from Europe (see charts below).

³ Statistics Canada definition: “Visible minority refers to whether a person belongs to a visible minority group as defined by the Employment Equity Act and, if so, the visible minority group to which the person belongs. The Employment Equity Act defines visible minorities as “persons, other than Aboriginal peoples, who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour”.

<https://www23.statcan.gc.ca/imdb/p3Var.pl?Function=DECI&Id=62026>

⁴ Statistics Canada Census 2021, Ajax Profile. <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/details/page.cfm?Lang=E&SearchText=Ajax&DGUIDlist=2013A000435001&GENDERlist=1,2,3&STATISTIClist=1&HEADERlist=0>

⁵ Estimation based on Statistics Canada data. [Trends in the Citizenship Rate Among New Immigrants to Canada](#), Statistics Canada, 2019.

Figure 2. Citizenship status of Ajax residents (Census 2021 data)

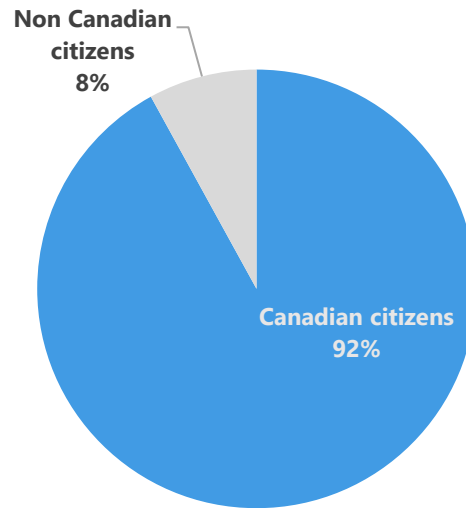
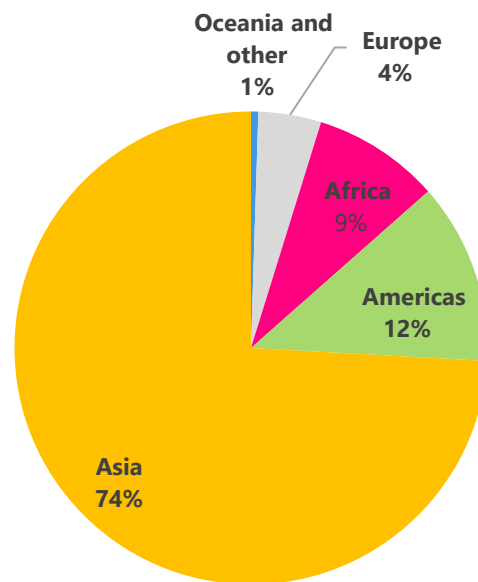


Figure 3. Place of birth of recent immigrant population in Ajax (Census 2021 data)



Town of Ajax Priorities

The Arts and Culture Plan can support a number of existing community priorities in Ajax. The following table outlines key priorities identified from a review of existing plans and strategies and indicates how the culture plan can support them.

Table 2. Existing Community Priorities in Ajax

Priority	Relevance and Community Focus Area	Municipal Plans
Celebrate the community's diversity	Diversity is a hallmark of the Ajax community Focus area that the Arts and Culture Plan can support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase and enhance variety and diversity of creative cultural experiences and programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town of Ajax Integrated Community Arts & Culture Plan – July 2006 ▪ Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 ▪ Age-friendly Ajax Community Plan 2020 ▪ Diversity and Community Engagement Plan June 2010; Phase 2 2017 - 2022 ▪ Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan
Enhance tourism	There is a desire to grow tourism, and an opportunity for arts and culture to support tourism attraction and place branding. Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Enhance tourism efforts focusing on sports tourism, festival and events, and quality of place elements. ▪ Leverage existing assets like Ajax Downs (horse racetrack) and Ajax Casino 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town of Ajax Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 ▪ Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 ▪ Ajax 65 Community Tourism Plan 2022 ▪ Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan
Develop Downtown	Ajax has a vision to transform its downtown core into a mixed-use, pedestrian-friendly centre, as the central focus for commercial, cultural, community, administrative and residential activities in the Town. Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Utilize arts and culture as a tool for downtown revitalization; public art initiatives, people and businesses downtown, and promoting mixed development to live, work, and play 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Town of Ajax Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 ▪ Ajax 65 Community Tourism Plan 2022 ▪ Central Ajax Intensification, Servicing & Transportation (CAIST) Strategy (2022) ▪ Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan

Priority	Relevance and Community Focus Area	Municipal Plans
Integrate arts and culture within municipal framework	<p>Synergies between arts and culture and other community priorities remain relevant.</p> <p>Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritize culture in municipal strategies and integrate a cultural lens to enable long-term sustainable growth of the sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan
Make Ajax an arts and culture hub	<p>There is a desire for a variety of arts and culture offerings in the community.</p> <p>Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support a climate where the arts, culture and heritage community can flourish through economic investment and cultural renewal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town of Ajax Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 Recreation and Parks Master Plan 2021 Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Ajax 65 Community Tourism Plan 2022 Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan
Support attractive place development	<p>There is a need for more cultural spaces in the community.</p> <p>Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support creative placemaking initiatives that contributes to the vibrancy of arts and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town of Ajax Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Recreation and Parks Master Plan 2021 Age-friendly Ajax Community Plan 2020 Ajax 65 Community Tourism Plan 2022
Create a sustainable, environmentally friendly community	<p>Ajax has a vision to become a less car-dependent community and is moving towards promoting active transportation (cycling, walking). There is also a desire for the Town to lead environmental sustainability initiatives.</p> <p>Focus areas that the Arts and Culture Plan can support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build pedestrian-friendly communities and advocate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Town of Ajax Economic Development Plan 2021-2025 Age-friendly Ajax Community Plan 2020 Recreation and Parks Master Plan 2021 Ajax Strategic Plan 2018-2022 Action 26: 2022-2026 Ajax Strategic Plan

Priority	Relevance and Community Focus Area	Municipal Plans
	for increased transit connectivity to attract visitors and local businesses <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Become a leader in sustainable cultural experiences and prioritize sustainability, resilience and environmental stewardship when faced with climate change pressures 	

What We Heard

Strengths

- Ajax has a diverse community with a wealth of cultures
- The Town has an interesting history – from Indigenous history to settler and World War II history
- St Francis Centre is a strength – the facility itself, and the programming it offers
- A wealth of public art and monuments are located across town, with supportive municipal policy for public art
- Pickering Village is a heritage asset with a rich history
- Ajax is home to popular Town and third party-run festivals and events, including Pickering Village JAM, Ajax Rotary Ribfest and Pumpkinville
- The Town offers a high quality of life, with direct access to nature – including six kilometres of park land along the stunning Ajax waterfront.
- The Town of Ajax has designated municipal roles for arts and culture, with a dedicated Culture & Events department.
- There is existing interest in arts and culture, with some well-established arts groups (non-profits and businesses) in the Town.

“St. Francis Centre is a first-class performing arts venue with a rich history offering affordable entertainment”

- Survey participant

“Pickering Village offers a sense of charm”

- Focus group participant

Weaknesses

- Ajax is not yet well known for arts and culture pursuits.
- There is generally low awareness of the variety of arts and culture offerings available in the Town, and a lack of engagement to seek out information
- There is a need for expanded representation and inclusiveness when it comes to arts and culture, to more wholly reflect the Town’s diversity
- Ajax has few dedicated spaces for arts and culture
- There is less programming targeting young adults compared with other groups, such as families and seniors
- Ajax has limited nightlife, with few signature restaurants and nightclubs or commercial venues that host live bands
- Ajax’s arts and culture sector has a lack of funding and staff and a need for more volunteers, limiting its capacity
- There are transportation challenges in the Town which can make it difficult for residents to participate in arts and culture activities. Key locations are far apart – such as the St Francis Centre and Ajax Community Centre – leading to a reliance on cars to get from place to place.

*“Recognition of the historical and contemporary contributions and existence of **Indigenous people are pretty absent** in Ajax’s art and culture scene”*
- Interview participant

Threats

- Ajax could miss economic opportunities by overlooking art and culture’s potential role in developing a creative hub and attracting residents and visitors
- Youth and creative talent may move away or not choose to move to Ajax if they are looking to live in more of a cultural hub
- There is a lack of understanding from some residents on the importance of arts and culture investment
- There is a risk that residents will choose to spend money on arts and culture in other nearby towns/cities instead of Ajax, missing opportunities to benefit the local economy
- As Ajax grows, there is a risk of unattractive urban development that lacks a sense of place
- Low engagement with Indigenous communities, particularly the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation, may limit efforts towards reconciliation

*“I attend **arts programs in Pickering** because they are not available in Ajax”*
- Survey participant

Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to use arts and culture to highlight and celebrate what makes Ajax special
- Shared arts and culture experiences can enhance community cohesion and understanding through cultural exchange
- By developing more programs and grants to support the community, Ajax can celebrate local arts and artists, creating income and professional development opportunities
- There’s an opportunity to leverage the success of Town-delivered events to offer a more varied and diverse range of arts and culture experiences
- The Town can grow the local arts and culture sector by supporting it through a variety of mechanisms (e.g., grants, networking opportunities), creating a stronger creative community that is a highly attractive place to live, work, and play
- By creating an arts and culture hub with dedicated spaces, Ajax can put the arts firmly on the map in the Town – supporting the local sector and community groups, and providing more opportunities for residents to participate
- There’s an opportunity to use arts and culture to develop attractive spaces with a sense of place – beyond public art only. Doing so can help build the character of the Town, attracting more visitors, residents, and outside investment
- The Town can support wider community priorities by integrating arts and culture more deeply with other strategies (e.g., Economic Development, Tourism, and Parks and Recreation, and Planning)
- By upskilling the large youth population in creative skills, Ajax can equip the next generation for the future world of work, where original, innovative thinking will be highly prized

*“We need to create a place and a space and a **town that people want to come to.**”*
- Arts sector participant

Identified Priority Needs for the Arts and Culture Plan



Reflecting Ajax’s diverse cultures, with more programs and events sharing different cultures and targeting various demographics

Almost half (45%) of adult survey respondents (aged 19-65) selected “engaging the community in celebrating the cultural heritage of diverse groups” as their top priority for the cultural plan. While Ajax is demographically and culturally diverse, several engagement participants noted that arts and culture in Ajax is not yet representative of that diversity. For example, some participants noted that there is a focus on Ajax’s military history, but less so on other aspects of Ajax’s history including the Indigenous heritage of the area and stories relating to other groups with different cultural backgrounds that have contributed to building Ajax.

Some participants noted that arts and culture programs are not tailored enough to Ajax’s diverse population. For example, the St Francis Centre is

perceived to offer more programming for seniors than other age groups, and Town-led events are considered by some not to adequately represent of the population. To broaden participation, there also appears to be a need for more evening programming so that those at work or school during the daytime can participate.



Better availability of cultural spaces

According to survey respondents, the two most critical needs relating to arts and culture in Ajax both relate to space – a need for more rehearsal or creation spaces (63%), and more performance or exhibition spaces (60%). While Ajax has some quality cultural spaces and facilities, participants from the cultural sector noted some specific gaps in the available cultural infrastructure – especially the need for larger, multi-purpose spaces. Specifically, arts and culture participants highlighted the need for well-equipped medium to large cultural performance spaces – e.g., a 200–500-seat theatre. These participants suggested that a new arts and culture centre could fulfil the need for such a performance space, while also offering rehearsal spaces, breakout rooms, makerspace and ‘messy space’ for activities such as painting or woodwork. Additionally, it could offer shared equipment and storage space for community arts and culture organizations.

Some participants said that they find it difficult to find affordable spaces to rent for arts and culture activities. However, it appears that there is a lack of awareness of some of the supports available, such as Town spaces being available for non-profits to rent at a discounted rate. An additional need highlighted by some participants is the need for access to a large space, such as a fairground, for major cultural events. Such a space would enable Ajax to host events for thousands of people, attracting more visitors.

Despite logistical challenges in hosting events and programming at the Waterfront, several community members said that they want cultural events to be hosted there. Additionally, it was reported that residents from outside of South Ajax can be discouraged from visiting due to limited parking and a lack of amenities (i.e., cafes, restaurants, etc.).



Addressing transportation issues to increase participation

Many key locations for arts and culture in Ajax – such as the St Francis Centre and Pat Bayly Square – are located far apart. As such, community members cannot walk between them. Many residents feel they do not have many options when it comes to transportation to events, given the limited public transit and rideshare opportunities in Ajax. Of the driving population, many described limited parking at venues as a concern, especially during large-scale events and festivals.



Growing engagement via increased promotion

Many participants described not knowing what is going on in relation to arts and culture in Ajax, or where to find information. There can be a perception that there is “no arts and culture” in Ajax, despite many established and burgeoning grassroots organizations and creatives, and a range of events and festivals on offer. This lack of awareness poses a major barrier to participation. Furthermore, different residents have very different needs and preferences when it comes to communications. Older residents reported preferring printed materials such as a “what’s on” brochure, while young residents underscored the vital importance of social media and the need to engage them in a different way. In addition, information on programming is often not accessible in different languages, reflecting Ajax’s diverse community and large number of newcomers. Within the arts and culture sector specifically, arts leaders are aware of the need to bolster their communications but are hindered by capacity challenges such as a lack of paid staff, volunteers, and funding.



Strategic integration with economic development and tourism

Arts, culture, and heritage are an economic catalyst, and a major driver of tourism in many communities worldwide. However, the research indicated that they are currently underutilized when it comes to tourism and other forms of economic development in Ajax. For example, placemaking is typically viewed in terms of sculptures and other public artworks rather than from a broader perspective, and there can be an assumption that as a “sports town”, visitors to Ajax are not interested in culture. Currently, there is little promotion of the arts and culture offering in Ajax outside of the community.



Increasing municipal support

Although the Town of Ajax has a demonstrated commitment to arts and culture – including dedicated Culture & Events staff, operational funding for the St Francis Centre and active events programming – there are still some gaps. Needs highlighted by participants include more funding for community arts and culture organizations, and more information on existing funding opportunities available to them. Additionally, some participants noted that they would like to see more diversity among municipal staff.

Community arts and culture non-profit organizations often face capacity challenges in terms of funding and staff, and recruiting volunteers. As such, they underscored how transformational it would be if the Town could offer or facilitate shared services to support their work – such as a shared landline number to forward calls, a shared treasurer, shared marketing channels and email marketing lists, and grant-writing support.



Building relationships and addressing siloes

Another barrier expressed by participants relates to the limited opportunities for community partnerships and collaboration across the art and culture community. For example, there can be a lack of connection between cultural groups and these groups are often unsure on how and where to create those connections. Additionally, groups of people with different cultural backgrounds often do not overlap. As such, participants in the arts and culture sector described siloes in the sector, and a desire for increased connection and collaboration.

Strategic Goals

The Ajax Arts and Culture Plan has several components: a **vision** for arts and culture, informed by the community; **strategic goals**; **objectives** linked to each goal; and specific **actions** linked to each objective (Figure 4). The implementation plan – or ‘roadmap’ – will follow. The purpose of the roadmap is to outline which actions need to happen when, with key performance indicators so the Town can monitor progress towards the goals.

The strategic goals are at the heart of the Ajax Arts and Culture Plan. They are the key ingredients that will guide the Town on where to focus efforts to support arts and culture across the next 10 years. The goals below were directly informed by the community vision for arts and culture in Ajax, and engagement findings – particularly the priority needs. The goals were also supported by a detailed review of other municipal strategies for the Town of Ajax.

Figure 4. Components of a strategic arts and culture plan



At A Glance – Goals and Objectives

Goal 1: Celebrate Ajax’s Difference and Diversity

Celebrate Ajax’s unique personality through a diverse offering of arts and cultural experiences, and use arts and culture to make Ajax’s diversity easily visible. Build on Ajax’s existing successes in festivals, events, and programs to attract residents and visitors to participate in arts and culture.

Objectives:

- 1.1** Diversify events and initiatives to reflect the community and attract new audiences, creating opportunities for diverse artists, groups and cultural organizations.
- 1.2** Strengthen relationships with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation to integrate Indigenous arts and culture into Ajax life.

Goal 2: Build Ajax’s Reputation for Innovative, Exciting Arts and Culture

Use arts and culture to celebrate Ajax’s unique personality. Leverage what makes Ajax different as a creative foundation for strategic community development and build Ajax’s reputation for innovative and exciting arts and culture. Grow engagement by making communications more compelling to different audiences.

Objectives:

- 2.1** Create a unique selling point (USP) and cultural brand for the Town’s arts and culture sector that represents Ajax’s diversity, rich cultures, and creativity.
- 2.2** Create innovative and compelling communications.

Goal 3: Make Space for Culture with Accessible Facilities

Ensure that spaces for culture in Ajax meet the needs of the community, and support the local arts, culture, and heritage sector.

Objectives:

- 3.1** Grow awareness of spaces that are already available for arts and culture, to increase access.
- 3.2** Create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.
- 3.3** Address transportation and parking issues at cultural facilities.

Goal 4: Pursue Creative Placemaking

Integrate arts and culture more firmly into urban planning to beautify and build a sense of place in Ajax's public spaces. Create memorable places that people want to visit and spend time, growing a reputation for diverse creativity and innovation. Doing so will help to support economic development and tourism by encouraging more residents, visitors, and investment into the Town.

Objectives:

- 4.1** Continue to implement Official Plan policies that incorporate a cultural lens by promoting placemaking, architectural excellence, public art, and sustainable mixed-use developments.
- 4.2** Enhance nightlife and cultural vibrancy by creating supportive policies.

Goal 5: Bolster Municipal Support for Ajax's Arts and Culture Sector

Strengthen Ajax's arts, culture, and heritage sector from within, building the organizational capacity of grassroots organizations. Build relationships within the sector to address siloes.

Objectives:

- 5.1** Increase municipal capacity to support arts and culture.
- 5.2** Provide more opportunities for artists in Ajax.
- 5.3** Break down sector siloes and build collaboration in the sector.

Goal 1: Celebrate Ajax's Difference and Diversity

Purpose

- *Celebrate Ajax's unique personality through a diverse arts and culture offering.*
- *Make Ajax's diversity easily visible through arts and culture.*
- *Build on Ajax's existing successes in festivals, events, and programs to attract residents and visitors to participate in arts and culture.*

Objective 1.1: Diversify events and initiatives to reflect the community and attract new audiences, creating opportunities for diverse artists, groups, and cultural organizations.

Actions:

- 1.1.1. Audit participation at existing festivals, events, and programs (including gathering audience demographic data), to develop a benchmark for future analytics and reporting.
- 1.1.2. Build relationships with businesses, faith centres, and any other groups to encourage local opportunities for artists to showcase their artforms.
- 1.1.3. Create accessible materials on how to host events for community event organizers (i.e., a digital toolbox). This action will help build capacity for community-led, grassroots events.
- 1.1.4. Co-create festivals, events, and programs, partnering with community groups so the Town of Ajax can help create or support more programs or events to appeal to different community members. This approach will help to ensure that the range of activities on offer is representative of Ajax residents and responsive to their needs.
- 1.1.5. Support increased access to the Ajax Partnership Fund and in-kind offerings for local artists and non-profit culture organizations, for example via:
 - Targeted outreach for initiatives focused on days/months of cultural significance (i.e., Black History Month, South Asian and Asian Heritage Month, Chinese New Year, Pride Month, etc.).
 - Proactively supporting Indigenous arts and cultural partnerships through the Ajax Partnership Fund.
- 1.1.6. Review Street Naming Policy and/or Commemorative Naming Policy to ensure representation of diverse cultural communities.
- 1.1.7. Broaden the scope of the historical plaque program to commemorate important/influential people, rather than just buildings/sites.
- 1.1.8. Consider creating an arts-themed signature event for Ajax that is unique to Durham Region.

- Create a Working Group to research the best opportunity for a new signature event for Ajax, considering themes and trends while responding to market demand and gaps.
- 1.1.9 Consider a wider, more innovative range of corporate sponsorship for festivals, events, and cultural initiatives to mitigate increased events costs.
- Undertake a review of the Town of Ajax's current sponsorship policies and philosophies.

Objective 1.2: Strengthen relationships with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation to integrate Indigenous arts and culture into Ajax life.

Actions:

- 1.2.1 Investigate partnerships with Indigenous communities to discuss ways to integrate Indigenous arts, culture, and stories into the Town in a way that benefits Nation members.
- 1.2.2 Investigate partnerships for Indigenous consultation and representation in program development/delivery and policy development related to arts and culture.
- For example, this may include partnering on a comprehensive Indigenous history research project to seek more fulsome representation of human history in the municipality.

Goal 2: Build Ajax's Reputation for Innovative, Exciting Arts and Culture

Purpose

- *Use arts and culture to celebrate Ajax's unique personality.*
- *Leverage what makes Ajax different as a creative foundation for strategic community development.*
- *Grow engagement with arts and culture in Ajax – both initiatives led by grassroots organizations and those led by the Town of Ajax.*
- *Make communications more compelling to different audiences, to build Ajax's reputation for innovative and exciting arts and culture.*

Objective 2.1: Create a unique selling point (USP) and cultural brand for the Town's arts and culture sector that represents Ajax's diversity, rich cultures, and creativity.

Actions:

- 2.1.1 Convene a Staff Working Group to research and discuss the creation of a cultural brand, with diverse representation from across the Corporation. Evaluate internal capacity to create the brand and involve sector representation in choosing the brand.

- 2.1.2 Develop a variety of outreach methods and tangible promotions to disseminate the new cultural brand throughout the community, with focus on grassroots relationship building and community outreach.
- 2.1.3 Audit current engagement with arts and culture in Ajax – including the Town’s communications.
- 2.1.4 Ensure Tourism and Economic Development Plan updates and implementation consider how arts and cultural elements can be leveraged in line with the cultural brand to help bolster and increase tourism interest and business attraction and retention in Ajax.
 - Consider ways for arts and culture to enhance Ajax’s sports tourism offer. For example, by promoting arts and culture activities and events to sports visitors, the Town could encourage them to extend their stays and spend more in the community.

Objective 2.2: Create innovative and compelling communications.

Actions:

- 2.2.1 Create an innovative new marketing and communications strategy in line with the new cultural brand. Promote the cultural brand and “what’s on” within Ajax and surrounding communities to attract participants and visitors.
- 2.2.2 Develop tailored arts and culture marketing and communication strategies designed to engage Ajax’s diverse audiences, (i.e., youth, residents aged 55+, residents with different ethnocultural backgrounds, visitors, etc.) to include a variety of communication methods including social media, web based, print, signage, etc.
 - Survey these target audiences, enlisting support from the Youth Engagement Advisory Committee, Age-Friendly Committee, and other partners to gain insight into their needs and interests.
 - Consider a targeted campaign to grow volunteering in Ajax’s arts and culture sector, for example with local non-profit organizations.
 - Consider providing communications in other languages spoken widely in Ajax.
 - Reinststate the printed brochure program, to appeal to residents who prefer printed materials.
- 2.2.3 Update the “Ajax on the Map” cultural mapping resource tool to reveal and communicate arts, culture, and heritage assets throughout Ajax. If possible, engage the arts and culture sector and wider community in this process.
- 2.2.4 Incorporate a digital component to public art installations, memorials, and historical plaques to provide access to further information (e.g., QR codes).
- 2.2.5 Investigate opportunities for innovative street level, grassroots marketing. For example, this could include implementing atrium wraps at the St Francis Centre, using the Town’s street banner program, and working with community groups to promote what is happening in relation to arts and culture throughout Ajax.

- 2.2.6 Develop an awareness campaign of arts and culture in Ajax, including maps and itineraries such as heritage walks, public art walks, and day or weekend tourism itineraries. Share these communications with tourism and community partners, and make the information easy to find online. Where possible, include transit information and details on where to park.

Goal 3: Make Space for Culture with Accessible Facilities

Purpose

- *Ensure that spaces for culture in Ajax meet the needs of the community and support the arts and culture sector.*

Objective 3.1: Grow awareness of spaces that are already available for arts and culture, to increase access.

Actions:

- 3.1.1 Make partnership funding and fee waiver information for Town rental spaces to non-profit groups clear, outlining the criteria and “how to” in an accessible way to ensure that the information is readily available to the community. Initiatives could potentially include offering community information sessions and ‘how to’ guides and providing print materials in multiple languages.
- 3.1.2 Develop a comprehensive list of built and natural locations in Ajax to be added to provincial databases for film and television productions. Update all databases to market the Town of Ajax’s cultural assets for use and exposure through film.
- 3.1.3 Rebrand the St Francis Centre to raise awareness of the venue, grow engagement rates, and overcome the perception that it is still a working church. Possible efforts to rebrand and raise awareness of the Centre could involve renaming the facility, removing the cross from the steeple (to be saved in the Ajax Archives), reviewing the programming to have a stronger multicultural focus, more programs targeting youth, and improving signage to the venue.
- 3.1.4 Consider hosting size appropriate cultural programming in alternative spaces, such as public parks and squares. Potential locations could include the Greenwood Conservation Area, Rotary Park at the Waterfront, and building on programming at Pat Bayly Square (i.e., potentially year-round programming, including pop-up markets and live performances).
- 3.1.5 Consider ways to encourage businesses to rent commercial buildings to grassroots organizations, or to provide space for cultural purposes (i.e., offering artists/performers and non-profit culture organizations discounted rates to lease empty spaces on a temporary basis for pop-up or short-term art exhibitions, markets, and rehearsal spaces).
- 3.1.6 Maintain historic/creative space inventory and use existing inventory to highlight heritage properties.

Objective 3.2: Create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.

Actions:

- 3.2.1 Ensure that one of the requirements of development RFPs is to take a creative approach to architectural and interior design, including opportunities for local artists and cultural organizations to participate in design charrette workshops.
- 3.2.2 Explore the feasibility of incorporating arts and cultural spaces and assets (such as the Ajax Wall of Fame) into the planned Pickering Village Community Hub, in line with the Official Community Plan (principle K), as well as in facility renovations such as the Ajax Community Centre and St. Andrews Community Centre.
 - Consider the need for storage and rehearsal/preparation space as well as performance/exhibition space.
- 3.2.3 Consider future capital plans and how this will affect current arts and cultural groups and their regular usage, considering their unique needs and where they will be housed if displaced during construction/renovations.
- 3.2.4 Assess the feasibility of expanding the seating capacity at the St Francis Centre with the aim of creating a larger performing arts venue (200+ seat theatre).
- 3.2.5 Investigate ways to increase funding for arts, culture, and heritage spaces, including capital improvements and repairs, through sourcing and soliciting grants and sponsorship/naming rights.
- 3.2.6 Consider ways to provide space to make Ajax's archives and historical artifacts accessible to the community. Engage the Ajax Public Library in this process to tell Ajax's story in public spaces.

If there is opportunity to partner with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (via paid opportunities) – and the Indigenous community feels it is beneficial and appropriate – incorporate Indigenous stories, culture, and heritage.

 - Refresh heritage and archives displays/exhibits to capture a broader representation of Ajax's history, and include digital assets such as QR codes and interactive exhibits.
- 3.2.7 Consider the acquisition of heritage properties when cultural facilities are required, and it is economically feasible to do so.
- 3.2.8 Examine land use permissions and available municipal finance tools, such as tax incentives or community improvement plans, to encourage development or re-purposing of spaces focused on arts creation and programming, and to encourage the installation of art.
- 3.2.9 Consider how the development of a fairground in Ajax could support large-scale arts and culture events, particularly to attract visitors from outside of the region – exploring multiple potential sites.

Objective 3.3: Address transportation and parking issues at cultural facilities.*Actions:*

- 3.3.1 Consult with Durham Region Transit to investigate the feasibility of linking up more arts and culture spaces on bus routes, including the St Francis Centre and community centres.
- 3.3.2 Conduct an internal transportation study for events and programming relating to arts and culture (i.e., car and bike usage, shuttle usage, walking and parking), to see how access can be further improved.

Goal 4: Pursue Creative Placemaking**Purpose**

- *Integrate arts and culture more firmly into planning, to build a sense of place in Ajax's public spaces.*
- *Help support economic development and tourism by creating memorable places where people want to visit and spend time, helping to attract more residents, visitors, and investment into the Town.*

Objective 4.1: Continue to implement Official Plan policies that incorporate a cultural lens by promoting placemaking, architectural excellence, public art, and sustainable mixed-use developments.*Actions:*

- 4.1.1 Explore opportunities to increase input into parks design to ensure elements of arts and culture are consistently included within park designs. This may include but is not limited to: functional art; interactive playground installations such as outdoor musical equipment for children; mazes and labyrinths; sound and video installations; cultural interpretation; and spaces for outdoor performances.
 - Consider opportunities for such placemaking elements within planned and future projects, including Carruthers Trail, North Field Community Park, Fieldgate Linear Park, Sundial Downtown Park, and Frisco Road Nature Trail.
- 4.1.2 Develop a new Art in Public Spaces Plan through staff and community consultation, identifying locations throughout Ajax for public art, as well as the types of art appropriate for each location (e.g., sculpture, mural, functional art, fountain, earthwork, etc.).
 - Potential aspects of a new public art plan could include prioritizing the works of local artists including Indigenous community members, creating a program of rotating, temporary or 'pop-up' artworks, and sharing artworks with other communities.
- 4.1.3 Explore ways to make public art at the Waterfront more visible and to encourage the public to spend more time there – for example by offering refreshments and more picnic spaces. This exploration could be part of the Waterfront Management

Plan Study planned for 2024 and tie in with the Rotary Park Pavilion Feasibility Study.

- 4.1.4 Prioritize heritage properties when engaging in placemaking initiatives.
- 4.1.5 Continue efforts to identify and protect heritage properties via designation (i.e., individual and heritage conservation district) under the Ontario Heritage Act.
- 4.1.6 Ensure that the Community Benefits Charge strategy includes and dedicates % funds for public art and placemaking (in line with the definition in 4.1.8 below) for new build developments. Consult the Arts and Culture Steering Committee (proposed in Goal 5) in the development of the strategy.
- 4.1.7 Continue to consider and promote public art and placemaking in new development and consult the Arts and Culture Steering Committee on proposed art installations.
- 4.1.8 As a component of the Secondary Plan process for various areas of interest in the Town, or as part of an Urban Design Brief for significant mixed-use developments, develop placemaking plans. Consider placemaking in its broadest sense, including artistic approaches to architecture and creative approaches to sidewalk features and amenities, as well as public art, live cultural programming, signage and interpretation, specific support of the arts and culture in that location, etc. Placemaking could also include looking for ways to incorporate social media-friendly photo opportunities (“Instagrammable moments”) into public spaces. *This action also relates to objective 3.2 – create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.*

Objective 4.2: Enhance nightlife and cultural vibrancy by creating supportive policies.

Actions:

- 4.2.1 Utilize programs within the Town’s Community Improvement Plans to attract land uses that facilitate nightlife and cultural vibrancy (i.e., patio grants and programs that incentivize restaurant, art gallery, and museum uses).
- 4.2.2 Consider creating a Steering Committee to develop a sustainable vision and action plan for nightlife in Ajax, and to advocate for the nighttime economy.
- 4.2.3 Consider ways to develop municipal policies/incentives to encourage partnerships between businesses, and local artists, groups, and organizations. For example, this may include the Town creating a store front design program or introducing local businesses to musicians and performers so they can perform in commercial spaces.
- 4.2.4 Consider the development of an annual night market for Ajax to capitalize on the nighttime economy. Consider hosting the night market at the future Ajax fairground.
- 4.2.5 Explore approaches to attracting more signature restaurants to Ajax, especially in locations of strategic interest to the development of the Town. For example, consider ways to market Ajax as an attractive location for restaurant businesses,

and/or to make licensing and permit processes as accessible as possible. As part of this approach, consider ways to adjust zoning by-laws to make it easier for restaurants to incorporate patios and outdoor seating areas, to help animate the built environment.

- 4.2.6 Explore ways to encourage businesses such as bars, clubs, and restaurants to offer live entertainment such as DJs or live bands, to encourage community members to socialize in Ajax rather than neighbouring communities – especially youth. Potential methods include incentives such as lower commercial property taxes, tax rebates, or accommodating noise by-laws in specific zones.

Goal 5: Bolster Municipal Support for Ajax’s Arts and Culture Sector

Purpose

- *Strengthen Ajax’s arts, culture, and heritage sector to build capacity.*
- *Build relationships and address sector siloes.*

Objective 5.1: Increase municipal capacity to support arts and culture.

Actions:

- 5.1.1 Create an internal Arts and Culture Steering Committee with representation from each Town department to lead the implementation of the Arts and Culture Plan. *The Committee can play a key role in implementing Objective 4.1 – incorporating a cultural lens on planning and development.*
- 5.1.2 Investigate the feasibility of providing marketing support to non-profits via the Town of Ajax’s community events calendar, e-news, and social media outlets.
- 5.1.3 Create new positions at the Town of Ajax to support arts and culture. Recommended positions:
- Cultural Coordinator (full time) to be the main sector liaison to provide artists, groups, and organizations with guidance, resources, and support.
 - Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator (full time) to support the implementation of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work plan, working closely with the public and community partners to promote belonging and visibility in the Town while providing support and delivering programs internally and externally.
 - Festivals and Events Coordinator (full time) to support new Town festivals and events.
 - Cultural Programming Assistant (part time) to support the delivery of new arts and cultural initiatives.
- 5.1.4 Consider opportunities to increase support for designated heritage properties outside of the Community Improvement Plan areas.

Objective 5.2: Provide more opportunities for artists in Ajax.

Actions:

- 5.2.1 Create Artist in Residence and Poet Laureate in Residence programs for the Town of Ajax, which include an educational component (i.e., artists to offer workshops or talks).
 - Consider utilizing the Community Art in Public Spaces Review Panel to judge submissions for these programs.
- 5.2.2 Investigate ways to increase opportunities for artists to exhibit, perform, and sell their work in Ajax's public spaces, making artists a more visible component of life in Ajax while providing them with new revenue generating opportunities. Opportunities could include arts markets, outdoor pop-up performances, fostering new business connections, etc.

Objective 5.3: Break down sector siloes and build collaboration in the sector.

- 5.3.1 Revitalize the former CultureLink program so the Town of Ajax can play a convening role, hosting regular sector networking sessions for those working or volunteering in the arts, culture, and heritage sector.
 - The new Cultural Coordinator position could develop and deliver the revitalized CultureLink networking sessions. The sessions could encourage knowledge sharing, including a talk from a practitioner or organization followed by Q&A and a discussion of key issues, and share progress on the implementation of the Arts and Culture Plan.
- 5.3.2 Expand the Arts and Culture page on the municipal website to become more of a hub for the local sector, hosting relevant and useful information for the sector. This expansion could potentially be part of the Ajax.ca website redesign budgeted for 2025.
 - Include an inventory of available support opportunities and programs available for the arts sector, and promote these to local artists for increased access to funding and other supports.
- 5.3.3 Consider how the Town of Ajax could provide shared services to core arts and culture organizations, potentially including support with grant applications and potentially access to shared equipment.

Implementation

The following table prioritizes Arts and Culture Plan actions. The actions are divided into short-term actions (i.e., to be undertaken within the next 1-3 years), medium-term (4-6 years) and long-term (7-10 years). Key performance indicators are suggested for each action.

Table 3. Prioritized Actions

Goal 1: Celebrate Ajax’s Difference and Diversity		
1.1 Diversify events and initiatives to reflect the community and attract new audiences, creating opportunities for diverse artists, groups, and cultural organizations.		
Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
1.1.1 Audit participation at existing festivals, events, and programs (including gathering audience demographic data), to develop a benchmark for future analytics and reporting.	Baseline established for future reporting; monitor and grow engagement year on year; increased participation among equity priority communities.	Short Term 2023/2024
1.1.2 Build relationships with businesses, faith centres, and any other groups, to encourage local opportunities for artists to showcase their artforms.	Number of new opportunities for artists working with local partners such as businesses, faith centres, and other community groups; number of opportunities for artists from equity priority communities	Short Term 2023/2024
1.1.3 Create accessible materials on how to host events for community event organizers (i.e., a digital toolbox). This action will help build capacity for community-led, grassroots events.	Digital toolbox created and distributed to community event organizers; information readily available online; monitoring downloads over time; increased in number of community events planned	Short Term 2024
1.1.4 Co-create festivals, events, and programs, partnering with community groups so the Town of Ajax can help create or support more programs or events to appeal to different community members. This approach will help to ensure that the range of activities on offer is representative of Ajax residents and responsive to their needs.	Number of new festivals, events, and programs co-created with community groups; increased attendance rates in these initiatives, particularly among equity priority community members	Short Term and ongoing

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1.1.5 Support increased access to the Ajax Partnership Fund and in-kind offerings for local artists and non-profit culture organizations, for example via: Targeted outreach for initiatives focused on days/months of cultural significance (i.e., Black History Month, South Asian and Asian Heritage Month, Chinese New Year, Pride Month, etc.). Proactively supporting Indigenous arts and cultural partnerships through the Ajax Partnership Fund. 	Number of new applicants to the Ajax Partnership Fund from equity priority communities; number of funded initiatives led by equity priority groups; more diverse programming in Ajax	Short Term
1.1.6 Review Street Naming Policy and/or Commemorative Naming Policy to ensure representation of diverse cultural communities.	Number of newly named streets/commemorative places connected with equity priority communities	Short Term
1.1.7 Broaden the scope of the historical plaque program to commemorate important/influential people, rather than just buildings/sites.	Number of historical plaques named after important/influential Ajax residents, past or present	Medium Term
1.1.8 Consider creating an arts-themed signature event for Ajax that is unique to the Durham Region. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create a working group to research the best opportunity for a new signature event for Ajax, considering themes and trends while responding to market demand and gaps 	First pilot event hosted, with representation of diverse artists and cultural groups; increasing participant rates year on year; number of attendees from outside the region (i.e., increased tourism to Ajax)	Medium Term
1.1.9 Consider a wider, more innovative range of corporate sponsorship for festivals, events, and cultural initiatives to mitigate increased event costs. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake a review of the Town of Ajax's current sponsorship policies and philosophies. 	Increased number of corporate sponsorships secured for festivals, events, and cultural initiatives; increased capacity for those that receive sponsorship	Medium Term
1.2 Strengthen relationships with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation to integrate Indigenous arts and culture in Ajax life.		
Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
1.2.1 Investigate partnerships with Indigenous communities to discuss ways to integrate Indigenous arts, culture, and stories into the Town in a way that benefits Nation members.	Relationship established with the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation in relation to arts and cultural collaboration with agreed protocols; increased communication with other regional Indigenous communities; number of new	Short Term

	initiatives developed in partnership with MSIFN and other Indigenous communities/groups	
1.2.2 Investigate partnerships for Indigenous consultation and representation in program development/delivery and policy development related to arts and culture. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> For example, this may include partnering on a comprehensive Indigenous history research project to seek more fulsome representation of human history in the municipality. 	Improved representation of Indigenous artists/organizations in program development/delivery and policy development; number of initiatives developed with Indigenous partners	Short Term and ongoing

Goal 2: Build Ajax's Reputation for Innovative, Exciting Arts and Culture

2.1 Create a unique selling point (USP) and cultural brand for the Town's arts and culture sector that represents Ajax's diversity, rich cultures, and creativity.

Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
2.1.1 Convene a Staff Working Group to research and discuss the creation of a cultural brand, with diverse representation from across the corporation. Evaluate internal capacity to create the brand and involve sector representation in choosing the brand.	Staff working group created and meeting regularly; launch of a new cultural brand for Ajax	Short Term 2023/2024
2.1.2 Develop a variety of outreach methods and tangible promotions to disseminate the new cultural brand throughout the community, with focus on grassroots relationship building and community outreach.	Increased recognition of Ajax's new cultural brand within the town, region, and province; grassroots organizations and other partners sharing and promoting the new cultural brand	Medium Term
2.1.3 Audit current engagement with the arts and culture sector in Ajax – including the Town's communications.	Audit conducted; action items identified for growing engagement with arts and culture in Ajax	Medium Term
2.1.4 Ensure Tourism and Economic Development Plan updates and implementation consider how arts and cultural elements can be leveraged in line with the cultural brand to help bolster and increase tourism interest and business attraction and retention in Ajax.	Increased tourism interest and business attraction and retention that can be directly or partly attributed to arts and culture elements	Medium Term

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider ways for arts and culture to enhance Ajax’s sports tourism offer. For example, by promoting arts and culture activities and events to sports visitors, the Town could encourage them to extend their stays and spend more in the community. 		
<p>2.2 Create innovative and compelling communications.</p>		
<p>2.2.1 Create an innovative new marketing and communications strategy in line with the new cultural brand. Promote the cultural brand and “what’s on” within Ajax and surrounding communities to attract participants and visitors</p>	<p>Marketing and communications strategy developed in line with the new cultural brand; number of new campaigns created; level of engagement with online materials; increased visitors/tourist numbers; increased participation and volunteering rates at arts and culture events, festivals, and programs hosted within Ajax</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>2.2.2 Develop tailored arts and culture marketing and communication strategies designed to engage Ajax’s diverse audiences, (i.e., youth, residents aged 55+, residents with different ethnocultural backgrounds, visitors, etc.) to include a variety of communication methods including social media, web based, print, signage, etc.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey these target audiences, enlisting support from the Youth Engagement Advisory Committee, Age-Friendly Committee, and other partners to gain insight into their needs and interests. Consider a targeted campaign to grow volunteering in Ajax’s arts and culture sector, for example with local non-profit organizations. Consider providing communications in other languages spoken widely in Ajax. Reinstate the printed brochure program, to appeal to residents who prefer printed materials. 	<p>Number of new campaigns created; impressions and engagement levels among target audiences with digital content; increased number of printed materials received by community members; increased number of participants and volunteers in Ajax’s arts and culture sector from target audiences</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p> <p>2024</p> <p>2024</p> <p>2024/2025</p> <p>2024</p>
<p>2.2.3 Update the “Ajax on the Map” cultural mapping resource tool to reveal and communicate arts, culture, and heritage assets throughout Ajax. If possible, engage the arts and culture sector and wider community in this process.</p>	<p>“Ajax on the Map” online cultural mapping resource relaunched; number of assets contributed to the map by community members; number of visits to the webpage</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

<p>2.2.4 Incorporate a digital component to public art installations, memorials, and historical plaques to provide access to further information (e.g., QR codes).</p>	<p>Number of digital components added to places of interest in Ajax; level of engagement with those components (e.g., measured via number of visits to webpage/video linked to QR code)</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>2.2.5 Investigate opportunities for innovative street-level, grassroots marketing. For example, this could include implementing atrium wraps at the St Francis Centre, using the Town’s street banner program, and working with community groups to promote what is happening in relation to arts and culture throughout Ajax.</p>	<p>Number of new street-level marketing assets at key locations around town; increased promotion of arts and culture community groups’ activities by the Town of Ajax</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>2.2.6 Develop an awareness campaign of arts and culture in Ajax, including maps and itineraries such as heritage walks, public art walks, and day or weekend tourism itineraries. Share these communications with tourism and community partners, and make the information easy to find online. Where possible, include transit information and details on where to park.</p>	<p>Awareness campaign developed and launched; number and length of visits to relevant webpages; increased awareness among target audiences</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>

<p>Goal 3: Make Space for Culture with Accessible Facilities</p>		
<p>3.1 Grow awareness of spaces that are already available for arts and culture, to increase access.</p>		
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</p>	<p>Implementation</p>
<p>3.1.1 Make partnership funding and fee waiver information for Town rental spaces to non- profit groups clear, outlining the criteria and “how to” in an accessible way to ensure that the information is readily available to the community. Initiatives could potentially include offering community information sessions and ‘how to’ guides and providing print materials in multiple languages.</p>	<p>Funding and fee waiver materials created and published; number of website visits and downloads; reduction in questions directed to staff on partnership funding and fee waiver information; qualitative feedback/comments received from non-profits and partners that materials are helpful; more community organizations applying for partnership funding and using rental spaces</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>3.1.2 Develop a comprehensive list of built and natural locations in Ajax to be added to provincial databases for film and television productions. Update</p>	<p>Locations added to provincial databases for film and television and maintained over</p>	<p>Short Term 2024</p>

all databases to market the Town of Ajax's cultural assets for use and exposure through film.	time; increase in the number of productions being filmed in Ajax	
3.1.3 Rebrand the St Francis Centre to raise awareness of the venue, grow engagement rates, and overcome the perception that it is still a working church. Possible efforts to rebrand and raise awareness of the Centre could involve renaming the facility, removing the cross from the steeple (to be saved in the Ajax Archives), reviewing the programming to have a stronger multicultural focus, more programs targeting youth, and improving signage to the venue.	St Francis Centre rebranded; increased ticket sales and attendance rates for St Francis Centre shows – particularly among key target audiences; increase in number of multicultural and youth-focused programs	Medium Term
3.1.4 Consider hosting size-appropriate cultural programming in alternative spaces, such as public parks and squares. Potential locations could include the Greenwood Conservation Area, Rotary Park at the Waterfront, and building on programming at Pat Bayly Square (i.e., potentially year-round programming, including pop-up markets and live performances).	Number of cultural programs offered in alternative spaces in Ajax; increased participation in outdoor cultural programming	Medium Term
3.1.5 Consider ways to encourage businesses to rent commercial buildings to grassroots organizations, or to provide space for cultural purposes (i.e., offering artists/performers and non-profit culture organizations discounted rates to lease empty spaces on a temporary basis for pop-up or short-term art exhibitions, markets, and rehearsal spaces.)	Number of commercial building spaces rented to grassroots culture organizations on short-term or temporary basis; number of partnerships between businesses and grassroots arts and culture organizations;	Medium Term
3.1.6 Maintain historic/creative space inventory and use existing inventory to highlight heritage properties.	Level of engagement/usage of inventory (i.e., number of times historic/creative space inventory used in cultural planning exercises)	Medium Term
3.2 Create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.		
Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
3.2.1 Ensure that one of the requirements of RFPs is to take a creative approach to the architectural and interior design, including opportunities for local artists and cultural organizations to participate in design charrette workshops.	Architectural RFPs include a requirement to take a creative approach to design; increase in creative design in new developments	Short Term

<p>3.2.2 Explore the feasibility of incorporating arts and cultural spaces and assets (such as the Ajax Wall of Fame) into the planned Pickering Village Community Hub, in line with the Official Community Plan (principle K), as well as in facility renovations such as the Ajax Community Centre and St. Andrews Community Centre.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider the need for storage and rehearsal/preparation space as well as performance/exhibition space. 	<p>Arts and culture spaces incorporated into the Pickering Village Community Hub; number of new arts and culture spaces and amenities at Ajax community centres.</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>3.2.3 Consider future capital plans and how this will affect current arts and cultural groups and their regular usage, considering their unique needs and where they will be housed if displaced during construction/renovations.</p>	<p>Involvement of affected arts and culture groups in focus groups and design charrettes relating to future capital plans; other options provided to groups displaced during construction/renovations</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>3.2.4 Assess the feasibility of expanding the seating capacity at the St Francis Centre with the aim of creating a larger performing arts venue (200+ seat theatre).</p>	<p>Feasibility study conducted</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>3.2.5 Investigate ways to increase funding for arts, culture, and heritage spaces, including capital improvements and repairs, through sourcing and soliciting grants and sponsorship/naming rights.</p>	<p>Creation and promotion of sponsorship/naming rights packages for cultural facilities; increase in revenue/funding for arts/culture spaces</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>3.2.6 Consider ways to provide space to make Ajax's archives and historical artifacts accessible to the community. Engage the Ajax Public Library in this process to tell Ajax's story in public spaces.</p> <p>If there is opportunity to partner with Elders and Knowledge Keepers from the Mississaugas of Scugog Island First Nation (via paid opportunities) – and the Indigenous community feels it is beneficial and appropriate – incorporate Indigenous stories, culture, and heritage.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Refresh heritage and archives displays/exhibits to capture a broader representation of Ajax's history, and include digital assets such as QR codes and interactive exhibits. 	<p>Number of new exhibits, plaques and experiences in public spaces that tell Ajax's story; number of new initiatives that incorporate Indigenous stories, history and knowledge</p>	<p>Medium to Long Term</p>
<p>3.2.7 Consider the acquisition of heritage properties when cultural facilities are required, and it is economically feasible to do so.</p>	<p>Number of heritage properties acquired and repurposed as cultural facilities</p>	<p>Long Term</p>

3.2.8 Examine land use permissions and available municipal finance tools, such as tax incentives or community improvement plans, to encourage development or re-purposing of spaces focused on arts creation and programming, and to encourage the installation of art.	Development of new regulatory measures for arts and culture spaces and municipal finance tools to fund cultural spaces	Long Term
3.2.9 Consider how the development of a fairground in Ajax could support large-scale arts and culture events, particularly to attract visitors from outside of the region – exploring multiple potential sites.	Study completed into options for large-scale arts and culture events that could take place at the fairground; number of new events at the fairground, including large-scale events from outside of Ajax; attendance numbers from within Ajax, the region, and beyond	Long Term
3.3 Address transportation and parking issues at cultural facilities.		
Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
3.3.1 Consult with Durham Region Transit to investigate the feasibility of linking up more arts and culture spaces on bus routes, including the St Francis Centre and community centres.	Transit study completed; more arts and culture spaces connected via regular transit routes	Medium Term
3.3.2 Conduct an internal transportation study for events and programming relating to arts and culture (i.e., car and bike usage, shuttle usage, walking and parking), to see how access can be further improved.	Internal transportation study completed with number of action items for improves transportation access; increased frequency of public transit journeys to arts and culture venues/activities; increased number of participants walking/cycling to venues/activities; fewer complaints about parking options at venues; increased attendance at venues/activities	Medium Term

Goal 4: Pursue Creative Placemaking

4.1 Continue to implement Official Plan policies that incorporate a cultural lens by promoting placemaking, architectural excellence, public art, and sustainable mixed-use developments.

Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
<p>4.1.1 Explore opportunities to increase input into parks design to ensure elements of arts and culture are consistently included within park designs. This may include but is not limited to: functional art; interactive playground installations such as outdoor musical equipment for children; mazes and labyrinths; sound and video installations; cultural interpretation; and spaces for outdoor performances.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider opportunities for such placemaking elements within planned and future projects, including Carruthers Trail, North Field Community Park, Fieldgate Linear Park, Sundial Downtown Park, and Frisco Road Nature Trail. 	<p>New guidelines created on how to incorporate arts and culture into Ajax's parks; cultural placemaking is further integrated into City planning projects and processes; more arts and culture activations in Ajax parks</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4.1.2 Develop a new Art in Public Spaces Plan through staff and community consultation, identifying locations throughout Ajax for public art, as well as the types of art appropriate for each location (e.g., sculpture, mural, functional art, fountain, earthwork, etc.).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential aspects of a new public art plan could include prioritizing the works of local artists including Indigenous community members, creating a program of rotating, temporary or 'pop-up' artworks, and sharing artworks with other communities. 	<p>Art in Public Spaces Plan developed and launched; number of new public art pieces planned/installed in Ajax – particularly artworks by local and/or Indigenous artists</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4.1.3 Explore ways to make public art at the Waterfront more visible and to encourage the public to spend more time there – for example by offering refreshments and more picnic spaces. This exploration could be part of the Waterfront Management Plan Study planned for 2024 and tie in with the Rotary Park Pavilion Feasibility Study.</p>	<p>Completion of study of ways to make public art at the Waterfront more visible; improved visibility of public art at the Waterfront (public awareness measured by location-based polling), increased number of visitors to the Waterfront</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4.1.4 Prioritize heritage properties when engaging in placemaking initiatives.</p>	<p>Number of placemaking plans that feature heritage properties</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>4.1.5 Continue efforts to identify and protect heritage properties via designation (i.e., individual and heritage conservation district) under the Ontario Heritage Act.</p>	<p>Number of heritage properties designated</p>	<p>Short Term and Ongoing</p>
<p>4.1.6 Ensure that the Community Benefits Charge strategy includes and dedicates funds for public art and placemaking (in line with the definition in</p>	<p>Percent of funds in the Community Benefits Charge strategy dedicated to public art and</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term</p>

4.1.8 below) for new build developments. Consult the Arts and Culture Steering Committee (proposed in Goal 5) in the development of the strategy.	placemaking; amount of money available to fund public art projects	
4.1.7 Continue to consider and promote public art and placemaking in new developments and consult the Arts and Culture Steering Committee on proposed art installations.	Creative placemaking guidelines shared with developers; process established for the Arts and Culture Steering Committee to have a say in proposed art installations; number of placemaking projects/initiatives planned and implemented	Short to Medium Term
4.1.8 Develop placemaking plans as a component of the Secondary Plan process for various areas of interest in the Town, or as part of an Urban Design Brief for significant mixed-use developments. Consider placemaking in its broadest sense, including artistic approaches to architecture and creative approaches to sidewalk features and amenities, as well as public art, live cultural programming, signage and interpretation, specific support of the arts and culture in that location, etc. Placemaking could also include looking for ways to incorporate social media-friendly photo opportunities (“Instagrammable moments”) into public spaces. <i>This action also relates to Objective 3.2 – create new spaces for arts, culture, and heritage in Ajax.</i>	Incorporation of placemaking plans into urban planning design processes; number of placemaking activations in each location; given number of social media posts tagged in that location by members of the public	Medium Term
4.2 Enhance nightlife and cultural vibrancy by creating supportive policies.		
Actions	Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Implementation
4.2.1 Utilize programs within the Town’s Community Improvement Plans to attract land uses that facilitate nightlife and cultural vibrancy (i.e., patio grants and programs that incentivize restaurant, art gallery, and museum uses).	Number of new cultural and nightlife assets attracted to Ajax (e.g., commercial galleries, bars that offer live music, etc.)	Short Term
4.2.2 Consider creating a Steering Committee to develop a sustainable vision and action plan for nightlife in Ajax, and to advocate for the nighttime economy.	Development of a sustainable vision and action plan for nightlife in Ajax; more cultural nighttime entertainment options in Ajax	Medium Term

<p>4.2.3 Consider ways to develop municipal policies/incentives to encourage partnerships between businesses, and local artists, groups, and organizations. For example, this may include the Town creating a store front design program or introducing local businesses to musicians and performers so they can perform in commercial spaces.</p>	<p>Number of collaborations and partnerships initiated and undertaken between businesses, and local artists, groups, and organizations</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>4.2.4 Consider the development of an annual night market for Ajax to capitalize on the nighttime economy. Consider hosting the night market at the future Ajax fairground.</p>	<p>Annual night market established; increase in number of vendors and attendance annually</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>4.2.5 Explore approaches to attracting more signature restaurants to Ajax, especially in locations of strategic interest to the development of the Town. For example, consider ways to market Ajax as an attractive location for restaurant businesses, and/or to make licensing and permit processes as accessible as possible. As part of this approach, consider ways to make it easier for restaurants to incorporate patios and outdoor seating areas, to help animate the built environment.</p>	<p>Strategy developed to attract more signature restaurants; adjusted zoning by-laws to accommodate patio/outdoor dining; number of signature restaurants attracted to Ajax</p>	<p>Long Term</p>
<p>4.2.6 Explore ways to encourage businesses such as bars, clubs, and restaurants to offer live entertainment such as DJs or live bands, to encourage community members to socialize in Ajax rather than neighbouring communities – especially youth. Potential methods include incentives such as lower commercial property taxes, tax rebates, or accommodating noise by-laws in specific zones.</p>	<p>Increased number of live entertainment shows hosted in Ajax; increased spending in Ajax bars and restaurants; more web traffic searching terms like 'live music Ajax' (measured using Google Trends)</p>	<p>Long Term</p>

Goal 5: Bolster Municipal Support for Ajax's Arts and Culture Sector

5.1 Increase municipal capacity to support arts and culture.

Actions		Implementation
<p>5.1.1 Create an internal Arts and Culture Steering Committee with representation from each Town department to lead the implementation of the Arts and Culture Plan. <i>The Committee can play a key role in implementing Objective 4.1 – Continue to implement Official Plan policies that incorporate a cultural lens by</i></p>	<p>Arts and Culture Steering Committee established with a mandate to oversee the implementation of the Arts and Culture Plan; number of goals, objectives, and actions met; positive feedback from arts and culture</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

<p><i>promoting placemaking, architectural excellence, public art, and sustainable mixed-use developments.</i></p>	<p>sector and wider community (based on comments/enquiries received)</p>	
<p>5.1.2 Investigate the feasibility of providing marketing support to non-profits via the Town of Ajax's community events calendar, e-news, and social media outlets.</p>	<p>Internal investigation conducted into how the Town can provide marketing support and the additional resources required; If viable, plan developed with clear roles, responsibilities and timelines; number of community-led events and initiatives promoted via the Town of Ajax marketing channels annually</p>	<p>Short Term</p>
<p>5.1.3 Create new positions at the Town of Ajax to support arts and culture. Recommended positions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cultural Coordinator (full time) to be the main sector liaison to provide artists, groups, and organizations with guidance, resources, and support. ▪ Diversity and Inclusion Coordinator (full time) to support the implementation of the diversity, equity, and inclusion work plan, working closely with the public and community partners to promote belonging and visibility in the Town while providing support and delivering programs internally and externally. ▪ Festivals and Events Coordinator (full time) to support new Town festivals and events. ▪ Cultural Programming Assistant (part time) to support the delivery of new arts and cultural initiatives. 	<p>Positions created and filled and staff retained over time</p>	<p>Short to Medium Term 2024 2025 2025/2026</p>
<p>5.1.4 Consider opportunities to increase support for designated heritage properties outside of the Community Improvement Plan areas.</p>	<p>New tools identified for the municipal support of designated heritage properties; number of heritage properties supported by those supports</p>	<p>Long Term</p>
<p>5.2 Provide more opportunities for artists in Ajax.</p>		
<p>Actions</p>		<p>Implementation</p>

<p>5.2.1 Create Artist in Residence and Poet Laureate in Residence programs for the Town of Ajax that include an educational component (i.e., artists to offer workshops or talks).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider utilizing the Community Art in Public Spaces Review Panel to judge submissions for these programs 	<p>Artist in Residence program established; Poet Laureate in Residence program established; number of applications/nominations received year to year – especially from equity priority communities; number of successful residence placements; number of Artists and Poets in Residence-led workshops hosted each year</p>	<p>Short Term 2024</p>
<p>5.2.2 Investigate ways to increase opportunities for artists to exhibit, perform, and sell their work in Ajax’s public spaces, making artists a more visible component of life in Ajax while providing them with new revenue generating opportunities. Opportunities could include arts markets, outdoor pop-up performances, fostering new business connections, etc.</p>	<p>Increased number of opportunities for artists to exhibit, perform and sell their work in Ajax’s public spaces; increased visibility of Ajax artists according to qualitative feedback; increased artist revenue</p>	<p>Medium Term</p>
<p>5.3 Break down sector siloes and build collaboration in the sector.</p>		
<p>Actions</p>	<p>Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)</p>	<p>Implementation</p>
<p>5.3.1 Revitalize the former CultureLink program so the Town of Ajax can play a convening role, hosting regular sector networking sessions for those working or volunteering in the arts, culture, and heritage sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The new Cultural Coordinator position could develop and deliver the revitalized CultureLink networking sessions. The sessions could encourage knowledge sharing, including a talk from a practitioner or organization followed by Q&A and a discussion of key issues, and share progress on the implementation of the Arts and Culture Plan. 	<p>CultureLink revitalized and regularly hosted by the Town; number of new connections forged within the sector; number of new collaborations/partnerships arising from those introductions</p>	<p>Short Term 2023/2024</p>
<p>5.3.2 Expand the Arts and Culture page on the municipal website to become more of a hub for the local sector, hosting relevant and useful information for the sector. This expansion could potentially be part of the Ajax.ca website redesign budgeted for 2025.</p> <p>Include an inventory of available support opportunities and programs available for the arts sector, and promote these to local artists for increased access to funding and other supports.</p>	<p>Audit of Arts and Culture page conducted; page(s) relaunched with additional information and updated quarterly; level of engagement with the page(s) measured in terms of webpage hits, time spent on page, and number of downloads (if applicable); positive qualitative feedback received</p>	<p>Short Term</p>

5.3.3 Consider how the Town of Ajax could provide shared services to core arts and culture organizations, potentially including support with grant applications and potentially access to shared equipment.

Study conducted into the shared services most in demand and the feasibility of the Town providing them; launch of shared services; use of shared services by arts and culture organizations; impact of shared services on organizations (investigating both tangible and intangible impact – i.e., number of successful grant applications; perception of the value of those services)

Medium Term

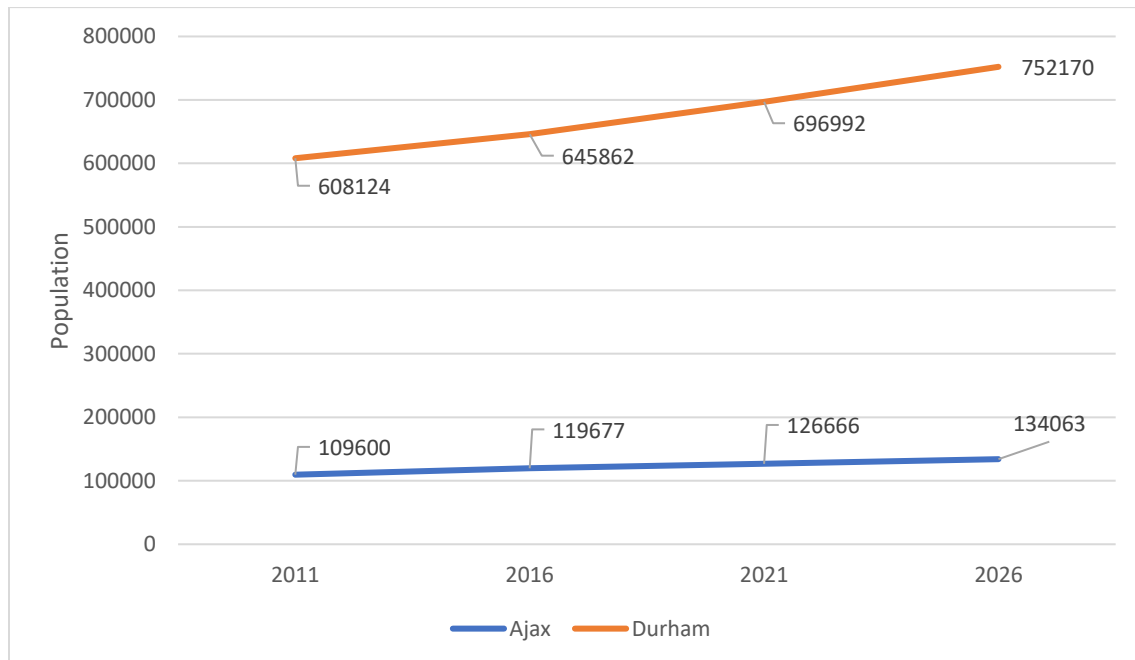
Appendix A. Community Profile

Nordicity conducted a community profile for Ajax and compared it with the greater Durham Region. The community profile is presented by an analysis of the key findings from Canada’s Census with a focus on population, age distribution, language and immigration data with visual charts.

Ajax is growing fast

The population in Ajax is growing fast, with Statistics Canada reporting the population for Ajax in **2021** was **126,666**. Ajax has experienced a **5-year compound annual growth rate of 1.14%** between 2016 to 2021. If the growth continues at a similar rate, Ajax’s population is expected to grow **from 119,677 in 2016 to 134,063 by 2026**, which is an **increase of 12%** in 10 years. For the Durham Region, the **population** is expected to grow **from 645,862 in 2016 to 752,170 in 2026**, which is an increase of **about 16%**.

Figure 5. Population growth in Ajax and Durham Region (2011-2026)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021, 2016, 2011 Census

Young population – but the older segment is growing fastest

Ajax has a young population overall, but its older population is growing at a rapid rate. The **largest age group** for Ajax from 2011 to 2021 is adults aged **35 to 54 years old**. **Children (0-14 years of age)** comprised **18.8% of the Ajax population** in 2021 – similar to the Durham Region average of 18%. In addition, there was an **increase in the proportion of residents 55+** between 2011 and 2021 in Ajax. The **older demographic (55+)** grew by around **60%**, which is the **highest growth rate** in comparison to the other age groups (15 to 34 years at about 10%, 0

to 14 years at about 5%). Another age group range (35 to 54 years) did not see much growth change from 2011 to 2021.

Table 4. Ajax Age Distribution from 2011 to 2021

Age Range	Age Distribution 2011	Age Distribution 2016	Age Distribution 2021	% change between 2011 to 2021
0 to 14 years	22,635 (21%)	23,660 (19.8%)	23,805 (18.8%)	5.17%
15 to 34 years	30,290 (28%)	32,140 (26.8%)	33,290 (26.4%)	9.90%
35 to 54 years	35,585 (32%)	35,900 (30.1%)	35,585 (28.1%)	0%
55+	21,090 (19%)	27,985 (23.4%)	33,990 (26.9%)	61.17%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021, 2016, 2011 Census

Table 5. Durham Region Age Distribution from 2011 to 2021

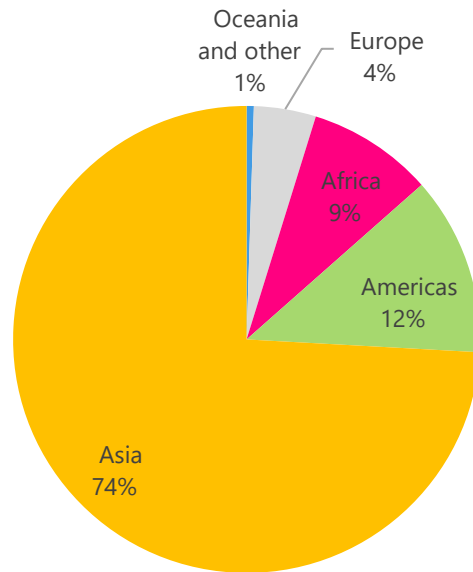
Age Range	Age Distribution 2011	Age Distribution 2016	Age Distribution 2021	% change between 2011 to 2021
0 to 14 years	113,030 (19%)	116,185 (18%)	125,505 (18%)	11%
15 to 34 years	157,440 (26%)	163,435 (25.3%)	174,495 (25.1%)	11%
35 to 54 years	191,105 (31%)	186,925 (28.9%)	188,115 (27%)	2%
55+	146,560 (24%)	179,325 (27.8%)	208,890 (29.9%)	43%

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021, 2016, 2011 Census

Diverse population

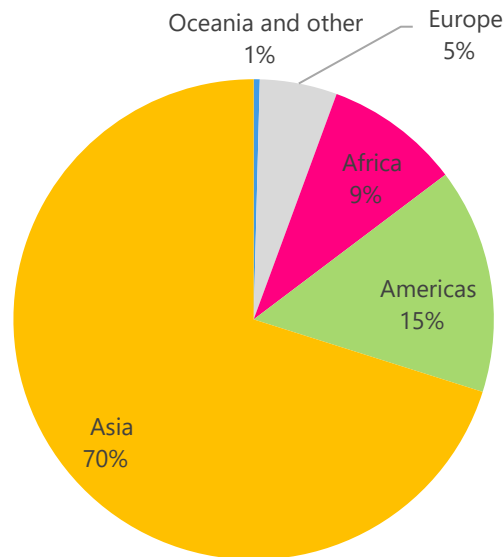
The population of Ajax is diverse and has a high proportion of immigrants. When observing the Statistics Canada Census for 2021, **Ajax** has seen the **largest percentage of recent immigrants** come **from Asia with 74%** while the Durham Region had witnessed a similar trend with 70% of recent immigrants from countries in Asia (see Figures 6 and 7).

Figure 6. Place of birth for the recent immigrant population in Ajax (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Figure 7. Place of birth for the recent immigrant population in Durham Region (2021)



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Furthermore, the languages spoken in Ajax also reflect this diversity. As seen in Table 6, The top languages spoken at home in Ajax aside from English and French include Tamil (4,635), Urdu (3,065), Tagalog (1,295), Dari (1,150), and Mandarin (1,020) – similar to the ‘top five’ in the

Durham Region.

Table 6. Language spoken most often at home in Ajax and Durham Region in 2021

Language Spoken Most Often at Home (Number of People)	Ajax	Durham Region
English	96,590	596,420
French	720	3,540
Arabic	785	2,535
Tagalog (Pilipino, Filipino)	1,295	3,550
Tamil	4,635	10,590
Bengali	715	2,070
Gujarati	970	2,760
Punjabi (Panjabi)	790	2,130
Urdu	3,065	8,730
Dari	1,150	2,955
Mandarin	1,020	4,440

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

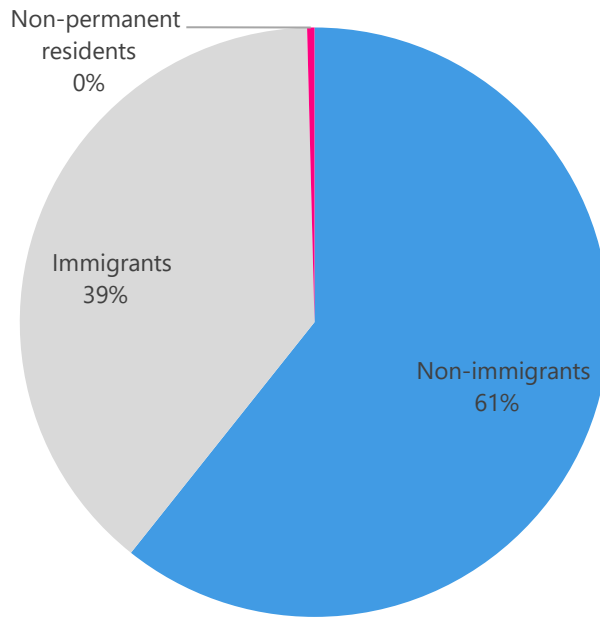
When comparing immigration data in Ajax between 2016 and 2021, one can notice a decrease of **non-immigrants**⁶ to Ajax **from 61% in 2016 to 57% in 2021** (Figures 8 and 9). In addition, the percentage of **immigrants**⁷ from 2016 to 2021 has **increase from 39% to 42%** as well as the population of **non-permanent residents 0.4% in 2016 to 1% in 2021**.

⁶ Statistics Canada defines non-immigrants as “persons who are Canadian citizens by birth”.

⁷ Statistics Canada defines immigrants as “persons who are or who have ever been landed immigrants or permanent residents. Such persons have been granted the right to live in Canada permanently by immigration authorities. Immigrants who have obtained Canadian citizenship by naturalization are included in this category”.

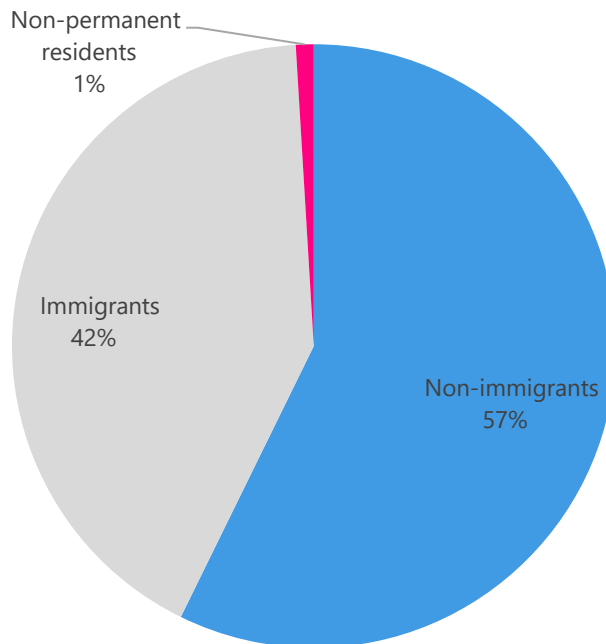
⁸ Statistics Canada defines non-permanent residents as “persons from another country with a usual place of residence in Canada and who have a work or study permit or who have claimed refugee status (asylum claimants)”.

Figure 8. Immigration data in Ajax in 2016



Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census

Figure 9. Immigration data in Ajax in 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, 2021 Census

Appendix C. Municipal Arts and Culture Micro-Grant Case Studies

The City of Guelph in Ontario recently launched a [Community Micro-Grant Program](#) for individuals, artists, groups and not-for-profit organizations, who are eligible for up to a \$1000 in support of an arts and cultural initiatives. The funds are given towards initiatives that focus on 'activating art' in the community (i.e., projects representing all artistic forms and practices that are made publicly available) and 'activating neighborhood' (i.e., initiatives that bring the community together and create connections). The program is open to all arts projects in the community; however, the program prioritizes initiatives that focus on **equity and reconciliation** in the community, including initiatives led by members of equity-deserving groups in the community. The micro-grant program is a unique partnership between the [City of Guelph](#) and the [Guelph Arts Council](#) (GAC). GAC is supported by the City through a community benefit agreement and is responsible for administering the micro-grant program. The granting procedure itself is different as the process is **artist-led**, representing a move away from grant processes led by municipalities and funders. The approach allows artists to receive funds based on their own determination of the project they would like to do. Phase 1 of the funds were administered in April 2023 with initiatives receiving between \$500 to \$1000. Information on application to the program can be found in the [Activating Community Micro-Grant Guidelines](#). Arts and cultural organizations can also access funding from other [Community Investment](#) programs offered by the City.

The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo (RMWB) provides an [Arts, Culture and Heritage Pilot Grant](#) to provide micro-grant funding to individual artists and cultural groups. The grant stream supports arts, culture and heritage projects which contribute to realizing the priorities of the [Wood Buffalo Culture Plan](#). This pilot funding initiative has a total value of \$50,000 to respond to identified needs from the Wood Buffalo Culture Plan in order to support the Plan's vision of RMWB as a place of culturally diverse and socially inclusive municipality where arts, culture and heritage are essential parts of its social, economic and environmental well-being. Applicants are required to describe how their activities align with one or more priorities from the Wood Buffalo Culture Plan including: 1) fostering a healthy environment for arts and culture, 2) further developing cultural facilities and resources, 3) supporting collaboration and innovation, 4) encouraging diversity, inclusivity, and accessibility, and 5) improving awareness of the value of culture. Successful individuals or groups will receive a maximum of \$5,000. Other funding streams available to non-profits (including arts and culture organizations) include [Community Impact Grant](#), [Community Capital Grant](#), and [Games Legacy Grant](#).

Cowichan Valley Regional District (CVRD) on Vancouver Island plays a crucial role in enhancing the arts and culture scene of the Cowichan Region. The CVRD's Arts and Culture Division was established to provide annual funding for sub-regional arts councils, give opportunities to arts organizations through grants, and increase collaboration and partnerships between arts and cultural organizations on regional, provincial, and national initiatives. Aside from providing operational funding for the [Cowichan Performing Arts Centre](#) which is a function of the Arts & Culture Division of the Cowichan Valley Regional District's Recreation & Culture Department (\$2,340,000 in 2022), the CVRD offers annual funding to five sub-regional

arts councils and grants in aid for non-profit arts and culture organizations at the value of \$130,000 annually. The CVRD also provides regional [Arts and Culture Grants](#) for arts and culture organizations with the aim of assisting community groups within CVRD to provide artistic programs for residents, build community and organizational capacity to deliver artistic programs, and promote partnerships and sharing of financial costs in CVRD. Arts and culture organizations need to meet the criteria listed within the [Arts & Culture Disbursement Policy](#). The grants provided can be used for annual operational funding or special one-time project funding for organizations. In 2022, the total value of the Arts & Culture Grants was approximately \$39,000 and was awarded to a number of [recipients](#) including Chemainus Theatre Festival Society (\$5,000), Cowichan Valley Public Art Gallery Society (\$2,000), and Ladysmith Little Theatre Society (\$4,200).