News Release

For Immediate Release

Completion of the Big Easel Recreation Project

Altona, MB. DATE: July 10, 2026

The Town of Altona is pleased to announce the recreation of the community's Big Easel, with all restoration work scheduled to be completed by July 21, just in time to welcome visitors for this year's Sunflower Festival. Residents and visitors are warmly invited to attend the official presentation on July 21 and be among the first to see the newly recreated landmark.

Conceived by artist and educator Cameron Cross, the giant easel featuring Vincent van Gogh's Sunflowers has become one of Altona's most recognizable landmarks. Since its installation in 1998, it has welcomed residents and visitors alike and has become woven into the fabric of Altona's identity as the Sunflower Capital of Manitoba.

After 27 years of exposure to the elements, the original artwork had reached the end of its lifespan and required replacement. Cameron Cross once again led the recreation, carefully reproducing the famous painting while incorporating significant improvements to ensure the landmark will endure for many years to come.

The restored artwork consists of four panels, each measuring 8 feet by 24 feet, which together create a canvas measuring 24 feet wide by 32 feet tall. The new artwork has been constructed using modern materials and techniques designed for long-term durability. Unlike the original panels, the artwork is built on marine-grade ¾-inch plywood, offering superior resistance to moisture. Each panel is reinforced with two layers of 1.5-ounce fiberglass mat, with rounded edges fully sealed in fiberglass to prevent water infiltration.

The panels were finished with a protective gel coat, followed by an industrial-grade primer designed for the automotive coating system used on the artwork. Two layers of industrial automotive paint were then applied, including a textured finish that recreates the distinctive brushstrokes of Van Gogh's masterpiece while providing exceptional durability. A final automotive clear coat was applied over the entire surface for added protection.

Once completed, the four panels were mounted onto the existing 8,000-pound steel frame. The seams between the panels were carefully blended so the finished piece appears as one continuous painting. The completed structure will be lifted into place by crane and installed on the 23-metre steel easel on July 20, ahead of the official presentation on July 21.

The recreation project was made possible through a combination of insurance proceeds, municipal funding, and generous donations from community members following feedback received through the Town's community survey.

Reflecting on the project, artist Cameron Cross shared his appreciation for the opportunity to recreate one of Altona's most cherished landmarks.

"It has been incredibly rewarding to return to Altona and recreate this painting nearly three decades after the original was installed. The Big Easel has become much more than a landmark—it's a symbol of the community's identity. I'm truly grateful to everyone who supported this restoration and helped bring it to life."

Mayor Harv Schroeder also expressed his appreciation to everyone who contributed to the project.

"On behalf of Council, I would like to thank Cameron Cross for taking on the important task of recreating our iconic Van Gogh Sunflowers painting. This landmark represents both the history of our community and Altona's identity as the Sunflower Capital of Canada. For the past 27 years, it has stood as a symbol of Altona, and thanks to this recreation, it will continue to welcome residents and visitors for generations to come. I would also like to thank our community for its incredible support throughout this project."

The Town of Altona extends its sincere appreciation to Cameron Cross and everyone who contributed to the recreation of this beloved landmark.

Residents and visitors are invited to attend the official presentation of the restored Big Easel.

Official Presentation

Date: Tuesday, July 21, 2026
Time: 10:00 a.m.
Rain Date: Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
Location: 10 Ave NE, Altona, MB

Following the presentation, everyone is encouraged to stop by and admire the recreated Big Easel—one of Altona's most recognizable landmarks—as it continues to welcome residents and visitors and stand as a lasting symbol of Altona for generations to come.

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