



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

STAFF REPORT

To: Council

File No.: 7800-20

From: Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

Date: March 12, 2025

Subject: Strategic Cultural Plan and Implementation Strategy Adoption

PURPOSE: To present the final Strategic Cultural Plan (Attachment 1) and Strategic Cultural Plan Implementation Strategy (Attachment 2) for Council's adoption.

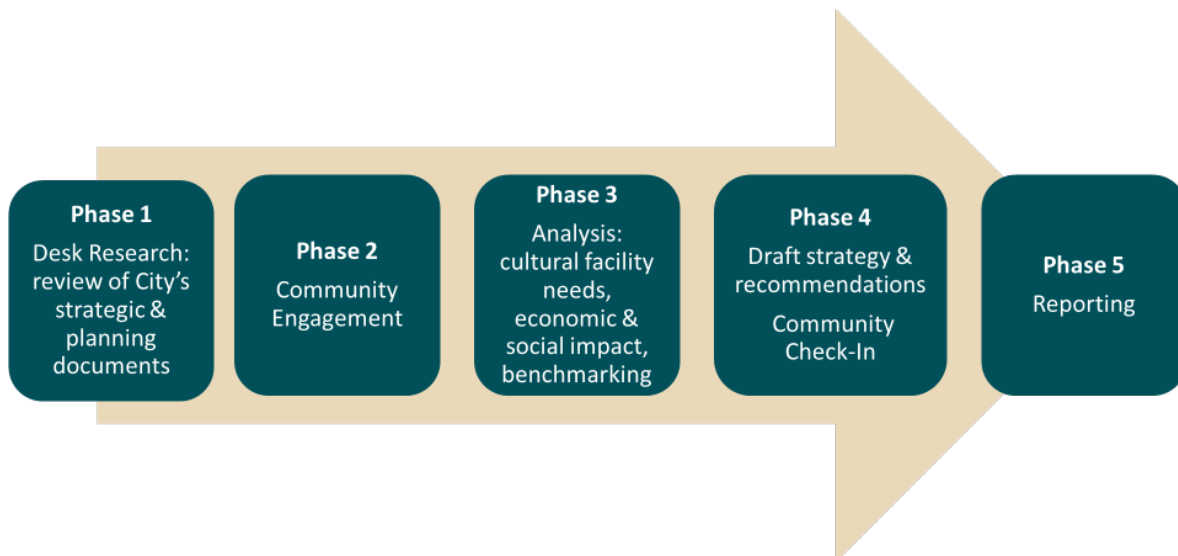
BACKGROUND:

The goal of the Strategic Cultural Plan (the Plan) is to highlight the impact and value of arts and culture in Courtenay and to provide a framework and roadmap to continue supporting this important aspect of community life. Over a ten-year period, the Strategic Cultural Plan lays out the vision, goals, objectives, and actions that will steer the City of Courtenay in the direction of a future in which arts and culture is integral to everyday life and Courtenay is recognized as a vibrant, sustainable arts and culture hub representing the diversity of residents, communities, and visitors alike.

Initiated in 2023, the Strategic Cultural Plan is a 2023-2026 Council Strategic Priority that is supported by several City policy and background documents: Cultural Services Review (2019), Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019), and Official Community Plan (OCP) (2022).

The Strategic Cultural Plan was developed through a five-phase process (see Figure 1) and included an extensive public community engagement process based on equity, diversity and inclusion principles that align with the City's OCP cardinal directions.

Figure 1: Project Overview



The Draft Strategic Cultural Plan consists of a vision and five overarching goals. Each goal consists of objectives and subsequent actions detailing recommendations for the City of Courtenay to consider in its implementation of the Strategic Cultural Plan over the next ten years and beyond. The Strategic Cultural Plan also includes research findings from the facility options analysis, benchmarking and comparative cultural service review, and social and economic impact analysis. These components were combined with the community engagement findings to form the draft Strategic Cultural Plan.

Foundation Elements were also introduced as an underpinning layer, identifying what will be required to direct the Plan’s vision into achievable goals. The Foundational Elements (Figure 2) establish the core priorities that need to be in place to guide the phasing and actions throughout the implementation of Courtenay’s Strategic Cultural Plan.

Figure 2: Foundational Elements



The Draft Strategic Plan was presented to Council at the September 25, 2024 Council meeting where Council resolved the following:

*THAT Council receive for information the draft Strategic Cultural Plan (Attachment 1); and,
THAT Council direct staff to proceed with the next steps towards the completion of the Strategic Cultural Plan as detailed in this staff report.*

Following Council’s direction, Staff posted the draft Strategic Cultural Plan along with the Strategic Cultural Plan Summary (Attachment 3) on the website project website. A short questionnaire seeking feedback from the public on the level of support for the vision statement, objectives, goals, actions and any further feedback was made available from October 8th to November 6th, 2024. A summary of the survey results can be found in the next section of this report.

In addition to the public survey, staff engaged directly with key interested parties including Indigenous serving organizations and the City’s four core cultural partners to gain deeper feedback on the draft Plan.

DISCUSSION:

Community Engagement Summary

The community engagement framework to inform the development of the plan was guided by the OCP’s cardinal directions and intentional approaches to engage a diverse representation of Courtenay’s communities in both a broad and deep way. In addition to a public survey and direct engagement with the arts and culture sector, staff arranged conversations with community organizations representing equity priority groups as intermediaries including Indigenous peoples, people of colour, persons with disabilities, youth, new and emerging artists, people who are unhoused, 2SLGBTQIA+, and newcomers. A summary of engagement activities carried out throughout the project are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Phase 2 Engagement Activities

| Engagement Activity | Number of People |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Development of the Strategic Cultural Plan (Phase 2) | |
| Arts and Culture Round Table Focus Group | 38 participants |
| 1 on 1 interviews with cultural service providers, City staff, arts and culture interest groups, and equity priority groups including K’ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis Association and Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society. | 24 interviews & 54 participants |
| Group conversations with equity priority communities. | 28 participants |
| On-line community survey | ~700 respondents |
| Public Drop-In Event Downtown Courtenay Summer Street Market | |
| Community Check-In on Draft Vision, Goals & Objectives (Phase 4) | |
| Community Check-In Public Event | 40 participants |
| Online Survey | 78 respondents |
| Draft Strategic Cultural Plan Reporting (Phase 5) | |
| Online Survey | ~149 respondents |
| Follow up in-person conversations with representatives from the MIKI'SIW Métis Association, Wachiay Friendship Centre and Indigenous Women’s Sharing Society and attendance at the Comox Valley Regional District Reconciliation Advisory Table | 20 participants/4 engagement sessions |
| Facilitated session with the City’s core cultural partners: Sid Williams Theatre Society, Comox Valley Arts, Courtenay and District Historical Society and Comox Valley Art Gallery Society | 4 participants/2 City staff members |

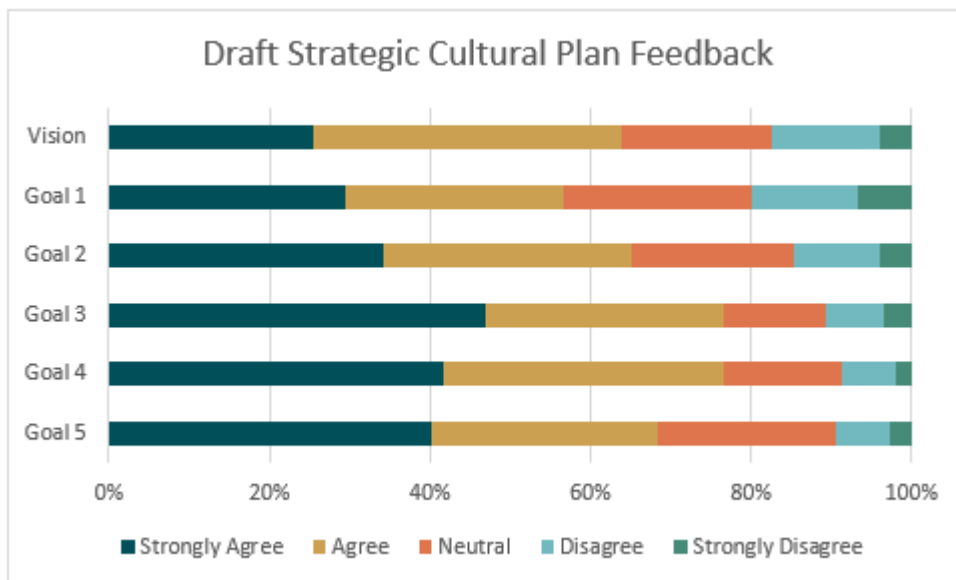
Draft Strategic Cultural Plan Engagement

Online Survey Results

Approximately 149 responses were received on the public check-in survey. Although the participation rate was much lower than received in the initial survey, it is not out of the norm to receive a lower rate of participation after the extensive consultation process in earlier phases. Each participant was asked what

their level of agreement was for the vision, five overarching goals, and corresponding objectives of the Plan. The results of the survey are summarized in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Draft Strategic Cultural Plan – Level of Agreement with Vision, Goals, and Objectives



Overall the level of support for the vision, goals, and objectives of the draft Strategic Cultural Plan were high, with over 80% of respondents indicating strong agreement, agreement, or neutral agreement, including higher levels of support (~90%) for the goals and objectives related to cultural spaces, bolstering community arts, and strategic development of the sector.

Survey participants were also given an opportunity to provide written feedback which is summarized below.

Vision Statement:

- Some respondents felt the statement could be more concise and questioned whether arts and culture can address deeper community issues.
- Comments that the vision should focus on a broader cultural strategy.
- Calls for a more balanced and practical approach that aligns cultural development with the city's broader priorities.

Goal 1: Advance Truth and Reconciliation through Arts and Culture

- Support for free training for local Indigenous peoples (K'ómoks First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and Urban Indigenous communities).
- Emphasis that engagement with Indigenous communities must be sincere and meaningful.
- Some felt that reconciliation efforts should be balanced with broader cultural inclusion.

Goal 2: Build Community Resilience through Arts and Culture

- Call for more public spaces (outdoor and indoor) for community use, including areas with tables for work and socializing.

- Recommendations for intergenerational programs, heritage preservation, and cross-cultural collaborations.
- Calls for grassroots-led cultural growth rather than a top-down government approach.
- Emphasis on aligning cultural strategies with broader community engagement efforts.

Goal 3: Develop More Accessible and Affordable Spaces

- Concerns over limited accessible venues
- Calls for affordable rehearsal spaces for musicians and multi-use downtown venues.
- Suggestions to invest in existing infrastructure (Filberg Centre, Lewis Centre, and art gallery) rather than new projects.
- Strong advocacy for a new, multi-functional venue with a performance hall, meeting rooms, café, and washroom facilities.
- Desire for affordable studio spaces, particularly for ceramics and other creative disciplines.
- Inclusion of technological supports for the hearing impaired.

Goal 4: Bolster Community Arts

- Frustration over the removal of the CV Art building's gift shop, which previously showcased local artists.
- Desire for better engagement with choral and theatre communities through collaborative structures.
- Call for more support for local arts organizations, particularly volunteer-led initiatives.
- Suggestions for increasing financial incentives to support community-led arts initiatives.
- Interest in expanding cultural events in Courtenay to attract more participation and increase visibility for the arts sector.

Goal 5: Support the Strategic Development of the Cultural Sector

- Concerns over the vague language in action items (e.g., "consider"), with calls for more concrete commitments.
- Desire for more evening events (music, comedy, art shows) alongside local food venues to create a vibrant downtown.
- Agreement with developing downtown as a cultural hub but also a need to address issues such as crime, homelessness, and substance use.
- Skepticism about the plan's ability to result in meaningful change, with calls for clear implementation timelines and oversight.
- Questions about the frequency of plan reviews and whether there will be adequate financial support for its goals.
- Calls for stronger regional collaboration involving Comox, Cumberland, and the broader district.
- Action 5.2.3 (Create a working group to develop a sustainable vision and action plan for nightlife in Courtenay and advocate for the nighttime economy), will be vital for the Valley's development and expanding population.

Overall, survey results show that there is strong support for expanding accessible and affordable arts spaces, increasing opportunities for local artists, and fostering community resilience through cultural initiatives. Many respondents emphasized the need for clear implementation plans, regional collaboration, and financial accountability to ensure meaningful progress. Questions were raised about the cost of the plan, its feasibility without regional involvement, and whether taxpayer funds should focus on pressing social issues like safety and homelessness before arts investment. There are also calls for a grassroots, community-driven approach.

Specific changes to the draft Strategic Cultural Plan were not made as a result of survey feedback as there was high levels of support indicated and the specific pieces of feedback regarding areas of focus, cost and capacity, reporting and accountability, and regional collaboration are addressed either through specific actions outlined in the plan or through the Implementation Plan accompanying this report.

K'ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis Association, and Indigenous Serving Community Organization Engagement

As a follow up to the release of the draft strategic plan, staff reached out to K'ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis Association, and other Urban Indigenous serving community organizations requesting a follow up conversation. In addition, the draft Strategic Cultural Plan was shared with the Comox Valley Reconciliation Advisory Table for discussion. With the foundational element of "Advance Reconciliation Across All Initiatives" and the first goal of the plan as "Advance Truth and Reconciliation through Arts and Culture," it was essential to seek feedback from K'ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis Association Inuit and Urban Indigenous community members through separate and direct consultation in alignment with the distinction-based approach to Indigenous engagement.

A summary of the feedback received from MIKI'SIW Métis Association, Indigenous Women's Sharing Society and Wachai Friendship Centre is summarized below:

K'ómoks First Nation

At the time of the submission of this report, a follow up opportunity to meet K'ómoks First Nation Chief and Band Council to receive feedback in addition to previous engagement had not presented itself. However, in the City's commitment to advance truth and reconciliation and ensure Indigenous involvement in the development of this Plan, the Strategic Cultural Plan will remain a living document. The Plan will be open to dialogue and adjustment over time and as and when K'ómoks First Nation has the capacity to engage and share feedback on the Plan and how the Plan can support their priorities.

MIKI'SIW Métis Association

The feedback highlighted the need for greater inclusion of Indigenous languages, such as incorporating local Indigenous greetings and signage in public spaces. The MIKI'SIW Métis Association shared that it requires stable operational funding, including support for an executive director and administrative resources, as well as event inclusion. Métis cultural competency training for City staff and the community was identified as a need, along with a request that local government consider employing Indigenous cultural coordinators or liaisons to lead initiatives. Recommendations were made to change the language in the strategic cultural plan to emphasize relationship-building rather than transactional terms like "leveraging" or "consider." There was support for honorarium policies to be established in consultation with Indigenous Knowledge Keepers, referencing models such as the BC College of Nurses and Midwives. Support was also provided for the identified need for space, programming collaboration, and funding. Improved accessibility, such as free ticket programs, was identified as essential to lowering barriers to arts and culture participation. Additionally, it was identified that Métis representation should be ensured in arts and culture committees, with appropriate compensation. Specific feedback regarding the vision was provided to acknowledge all Indigenous groups beyond KFN as well as the visual representation of Métis culture in the SCP summary. Additionally, there was support for a centralized community event calendar to provide better access to information.

MIKI'SIW Métis Association provided a letter (Attachment 4) that expressed the importance of clarifying the distinctions-based approach and how MIKI'SIW Métis Association sees it being honoured and respected in the Plan.

Indigenous Women's Sharing Society

The feedback from the Indigenous Women's Sharing Society (IWSS) emphasized the need for culturally safe, inclusive spaces that foster healing, education, and connection while supporting the revitalization and sharing of Indigenous knowledge. It was shared that advancing truth and reconciliation requires respectful storytelling, Indigenous-led planning, and implementing decolonization efforts (E.G. Canada Day), including renaming spaces such as the Native Sons Hall and supporting key commemorative events. Recommendations were provided regarding strengthening intergenerational programs, welcoming newcomers, and collaborating with diverse organizations to enhance community resilience. Support was indicated for accessible and affordable spaces, such as an Urban Indigenous Wellness Centre, as they are seen as essential to fostering safety and cultural inclusion. Feedback was provided that community arts should highlight Indigenous issues through murals, storytelling, and reduced barriers for performers. Finally, it was identified that the cultural sector should integrate Indigenous perspectives from the outset, prioritize cultural safety training, and support Indigenous tourism and economic development through strategic partnerships. Additional feedback included guidance for the City to focus on long-term relationship building with Indigenous serving organizations and community members which would require the City to invest the time and resources necessary to commit to relationship building as a goal in and of itself, as compared to more transactional, utilitarian approaches.

Wachiy Friendship Centre

The Wachiy Friendship Centre offers services, programs and resources to urban Indigenous, low-income individuals and families in the community at its owned facility. The organization was looking forward to the expansion of their existing space with an addition of community gathering space and commercial kitchen to allow for social gatherings and space for their patrons to connect, in addition to the adjacent 40-unit housing development which is close to completion. Discussion focused on staff learning from and listening to Wachiy staff regarding how they work in community and the services they provide, in addition to the value they place on connecting people to their respective cultures and the role cultural connection plays in health and well-being. Opportunities for working together were identified, including staff connecting them to the Recreation Access and Leisure for Everyone Accessibility Program referral initiative whereby Wachiy staff can make direct referrals for these programs to Courtenay Recreation.

Comox Valley Reconciliation Advisory Table

Key reoccurring themes expressed through conversations with Indigenous members of the community were also brought forth at the Comox Valley Reconciliation Advisory Table, as summarized below:

- The importance of building relationships with community members including Elders. This takes time and trust that can only be built over time.
- Opportunities to support truth and reconciliation by promoting opportunities for integrating arts and culture into community events, ceremonies and Indigenous programs supported by low barrier and culturally safe gathering spaces.
- When asking Indigenous individuals to share their knowledge or expertise or participate in City planning initiatives, advice was given that it is respectful to provide an honorarium for their work that considers the time, knowledge and experience being provided by the Indigenous individual. It was advised that

this should be done in a culturally sensitive way and based on policy that has been developed in consultation with Indigenous knowledge keepers.

- The importance of local governments considering employing Indigenous staff (i.e. as a liaison) to ensure interactions between the local government and Indigenous community members are connected through a direct lens of Indigenous cultural safety and lived experience.
- Recommendations to advance anti-racism policies to create awareness and support anti-racism and inclusion.

Revisions to the Strategic Cultural Plan

Based on the feedback received from engagement with Indigenous serving organizations, the following revisions have been made to the Strategic Cultural Plan:

1. Revision to the vision statement

- a. The original vision statement referenced “the culture and history of Indigenous peoples, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.” This original reference unintentionally excluded Metis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous community members. The vision statement has been amended to be inclusive of K’ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous community members, aligning with feedback received from the Indigenous engagement by removing the reference to “...who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.”

2. Distinctions based engagement

- a. Based on feedback received the Strategic Cultural Plan now includes clarity on how the distinction-based approach will be applied to the Plan, including an explanation that the distinctions-based approach is used to differentiate between rights that K’ómoks First Nation, Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous peoples individually hold and the land and title rights that K’ómoks First Nation solely holds for their unceded traditional territory.
- b. The Plan has been adjusted to ensure actions related to Objective 1.2, “Respectfully acknowledge the K’ómoks territory through arts and culture,” solely apply to the K’ómoks First Nation. Whereas actions that guide Objective 1.3, “Increase support and investment in Indigenous arts and culture” apply collectively to the K’ómoks First Nation, MIKI'SIW Métis, Inuit and Urban Indigenous Peoples in the community.

3. Language adjustments

- a. References to “Métis” were replaced with “MIKI'SIW Métis Association” as the MIKI'SIW Métis Association is authorized as a Métis Nation British Columbia chartered community to represent the Métis community in the region.
- b. Language throughout the Plan was adjusted to reflect the feedback and recommendations provided to focus more on relationship building. As such, words such as “partnership” have been replaced with “relationship” where the intent of the objective or action is to build ongoing, lasting relationships as opposed to developing more transactional partnerships focused on achieving specific actions.

Core Cultural Service Provider Workshop

The Sid Williams Theatre, Comox Valley Art Gallery, Comox Valley Community Art Council and Courtenay and District Museum and Palaeontology Centre are core cultural partners to the City and as such have been included in the development, refinement, and finalization of the Plan since the start of the project: from the development of the project scope to arts and culture roundtable discussions, one on one interviews and providing feedback on the draft Plan before it was released to the public. This is out of acknowledgement of

the exceptional knowledge and expertise this group brings to this project as experts in their respective arts, culture, and heritage fields.

As part of this ongoing engagement, staff and key representatives of the City's core cultural service providers met on December 9, 2024 to review the City's cultural planning process and discuss how the Strategic Cultural Plan can help address their emerging needs, including but not limited to declining grant streams, impacts rising inflation, and outstanding requests for facility expansion and upgrades. The meeting was also an opportunity for staff to introduce the up-coming Downtown Local Area Plan project and obtain feedback on the findings to date.

Through this engagement, the core cultural partners identified the following priorities and recommendations, providing their feedback on the draft Strategic Cultural Plan:

- To support cultural development in Courtenay, efforts should focus on resourcing a cultural planner / coordinator to act as a bridge between sector needs and the City. This would include support for capacity building in areas such as cultural services development, audience engagement, and destination marketing.
- Importance of prioritizing the completion of a detailed Cultural Spaces and Facilities Needs Assessment to support current and future facility planning needs. A needs assessment should precede facility planning, ensuring functional design programs align with each facility's role within a future cultural district.
- Support for a cultural district downtown, with a recommendation that the City and cultural partners should deepen their understanding the process and benefits of developing a cultural district.
- Request for regional partnerships and funding, with commitments for funding over five-year terms.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on space and facility needs, with a summary as follows:

- Agreement that the City and cultural partners should collaborate on securing funding from sources like the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund and BC Arts Infrastructure Fund to support completion of detailed facility need assessments.
- Climate Mitigation Plan should be conducted to protect cultural assets, alongside exploring off-site storage solutions.
- Optimization efforts for the Centre for the Arts and Comox Valley Art Gallery should address security, space planning, and public programming needs.
- Reviewing the Memorandum of Understanding between the City and museum regarding the property located at 247 4th Street where the parklet is currently located.
- Addressing critical gaps such as HVAC, accessibility, safety, and infrastructure upgrades at the Centre for the Arts, Sid Williams Theatre, and Museum, including storage expansion and essential equipment replacements.

Revisions to the Strategic Cultural Plan

The following changes have been made to the Strategic Cultural Plan - Cultural Facilities Options Working Document to incorporate the feedback received from the cultural partners:

Short term (1-3 Years):

- Addition of planning activities in order to support the development of the Downtown Cultural District.
- Addition of a Cultural Facilities Plan following the cultural facility needs assessment and feasibility studies are completed to guide the City's infrastructure investment over the next 10 years.

Medium Term (3-5 Years):

- Move the timing of the studio theatre and public plaza to the medium term from the longer term. This aligns with the investment requirements to support the downtown cultural district as well as activities as outlined in the phased implementation strategy.

Long Term

- Move the investment in a mobile stage to the long term. This recommendation will be reviewed after the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Planning process as it could be met through civic plaza space or facility studies, as well as a need to assess storage requirements. There may also be an opportunity to meet this need through organizations that specialize in outdoor performances.

Future Term (10+ years):

1. Adjust language for the Downtown Cultural District to reflect all the cultural planning work that is carried out in the short term and medium term will lead to the achievement of the downtown cultural district in this timeframe.
2. Adjust language for the Regional Performance Arts Centre to articulate that this is an aspirational goal for the region that should be considered in the future and assessed through business case analysis to determine the ability of the Comox Valley region to support such infrastructure from an economic, cultural, and community perspective.

Linking the Plan to the Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan

The Downtown Vitalization Local Area Plan (DVLAP) process is currently under way. The Strategic Cultural Plan will provide guidance on how the DVLAP process can support arts and culture through initiatives, programs, and infrastructure investments as illustrated by the Municipal Plan Linkages diagram in Figure 4:

Figure 4: Municipal Plan Linkages¹



The feedback contained in the *What We Heard* report from the first phase of the Downtown Vitalization Local Area project feedback illustrates the importance of prioritizing investment in the downtown cultural district that is anchored by the City’s cultural facilities: The Centre for the Arts that houses the Comox Valley Art Gallery and Comox Valley Arts, the Courtenay and District Museum and Palaeontology Centre, and the Sid Williams Theatre.

Stakeholder interviews emphasized the significance of Courtenay’s Downtown Cultural District as a key hub and gateway to downtown, highlighting its role in arts, heritage, tourism, and economic development. Investments in event programming, transit accessibility, historic signage, public art, wayfinding, and improvements to public spaces will enhance downtown’s vibrancy, as well as tourism and economic activity. These findings are consistent with the findings of the Strategic Cultural Plan through its community engagement, research and social and economic impact analysis, and are reinforced by specific objectives actions outlined in the Plan.

The Strategic Cultural Plan has been updated to reflect how the alignment of municipal plans will ensure a sustainable strategy for moving forward the recommendations and actions of the Plan. Aligning efforts with existing city strategies will help ensure a cohesive and integrated planning approach. The Plan also highlights the importance of continuing to focus City planning efforts, including capital facility and infrastructure investment in the downtown cultural district to amplify the significant economic, social, and tourism development benefits for the City and that extend to the entire region.

Final Strategic Cultural Plan

With the conclusion of engagement on the draft Strategic Cultural Plan, staff are recommending the adoption of the final Strategic Cultural Plan and the accompanying Implementation Strategy, including the revisions made as described in this report. This recommendation is the culmination of almost two years of work

¹ Patricia Huntsman Culture & Communications.

alongside community and key partners and will set the priorities and path forward over the next ten years as the City continues to support the growth and sustainability of arts and culture in Courtenay.

While municipal cultural plans often share consistent themes around space, accessibility, diversity, and impact, they also aim to reflect and represent what makes arts and culture unique in the respective community. Throughout the cultural planning process consistent themes shone through for Courtenay's cultural plan regarding connection and community. Arts and culture were often described as the glue of the community's social fabric, as ways of bringing diverse people and ideas together in inclusive ways, and of facilitating not only joy and creativity, but also dialogue and understanding. As a staff reviewed these themes and reflected on public input, it was important to capture the essence of the Strategic Cultural Plan in a succinct and memorable way. As such, the Strategic Cultural Plan has been designed and built around the theme: Culture Connects Us (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Strategic Cultural Plan – Culture Connects Us Logo



This branding is proposed to be used to not only represent the Strategic Cultural Plan, but also to accompany materials and investments the City makes and provides in relation to arts and culture in Courtenay and in support of the Plan's implementation.

The final vision for the Strategic Cultural Plan is recommended as follows:

“ Courtenay is a thriving cultural hub of creative opportunities, dedicated to cultivating vibrant and inclusive arts and culture for residents and visitors alike. Culture and history of Indigenous peoples are interwoven into a diverse community where connection and resiliency are celebrated through artistic expression and cultural exchange. ”

The Strategic Cultural Plan has five goals, each with accompanying objectives and actions, summarized in Table 2. There is a total of 59 actions which can be found in the Strategic Cultural Plan in Attachment 1, as well as the Summary in Attachment 3.

Table 2: Strategic Cultural Plan Goals and Objectives

| Goal 1: Advance truth and reconciliation through arts and culture | Goal 2: Build community resilience through arts and culture | Goal 3: Develop more accessible and affordable cultural spaces | Goal 4: Bolster community arts | Goal 5: Support the strategic development of the sector |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recognize the role and rights of K’ómoks First Nation, MIKI’SIW Métis Association, Inuit, and Urban Indigenous peoples as it relates to arts and culture Respectfully acknowledge K’ómoks territory through arts and culture Increase support and investment in Indigenous arts and culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use arts and culture to support community belonging and inclusion, where differences and similarities are celebrated Leverage arts and culture as a medium to engage with community on complex social challenges and to support healing Develop cultural programming that appeals to a more diverse community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase the availability of accessible and affordable spaces for arts and culture Prioritize initiatives & upgrades that provide enhanced and additional space for arts and culture | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support the capacity building of community-led arts and culture organizations Break down silos and increase collaboration across the cultural sector Increase the awareness of community-led arts and culture event | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Build and sustain existing social and economic impact by strengthening Courtenay’s professional arts and culture sector Embed culture more firmly in tourism initiatives in Courtenay and the Comox Valley Create new and or updated policies to support the cultural sector Explore strategic ways to meet sector labour needs |

Implementation Strategy:

With the finalization of the Strategic Cultural Plan in place, staff looked to develop an Implementation Strategy (see Attachment 2) to ensure the vision, goals, objectives and actions of the plan are able to move forward with adequate support and resources. The execution of Courtenay’s Strategic Cultural Plan follows a phased implementation approach, ensuring that initiatives are systematically prioritized and carried out. The strategy follows a three-phase implementation approach where goals progress at different rates based on priorities and available resources, rather than being restricted to fixed timelines. Each action is thoughtfully structured across the three phases to align with the City’s strategic priorities. This method promotes measured progress, flexibility, and lasting sustainability. Each phase is guided by a vision for the key milestones to be achieved in that phase as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Phased Implementation Approach and Key Milestones of Each Phase

| <p>PHASE 1</p> <p>Building Foundations</p> <p>Focuses on establishing the necessary frameworks, policies, relationships, and resources to support long-term cultural development.</p> | <p>PHASE 2</p> <p>Enhancing Access and Visibility</p> <p>Expands cultural programming, strengthens partnerships and relationships, and increases public engagement, ensuring greater accessibility and representation across the community.</p> | <p>PHASE 3</p> <p>Thriving as a Cultural Hub</p> <p>Integrates arts and culture into City and regional planning, economic and tourism development, solidifying Courtenay’s identity as a vibrant and sustainable cultural hub.</p> |
|---|---|--|
|---|---|--|

These phases are then expanded upon to identify milestones for each goal within each phase, followed by the specific objectives and actions attached to achieving these milestones. This approach enables all objectives and actions to be strategically aligned to the foundational elements identified in the Strategic Cultural Plan required to build the foundation upon which the rest of the Plan can be implemented, as well as phased according to what the necessary precursors are for each objective and action. The priorities for each goal and phase ensure alignment with strategic vision, capacity, and sustainability with every goal advancing by building on initial efforts, enhancing access, and reinforcing long-term cultural impact.

The Implementation Strategy provides an overview of the goals and related priorities for each phase, the related objectives, and detailed tables identifying the actions for each phase. Table 4 provides an overview of the implementation priorities identified for each goal and phase.

Table 4: Goals and Implementation Priorities

| GOAL | PHASE 1 | PHASE 2 | PHASE 3 |
|--|--|---|---|
| Advance Truth and Reconciliation Through Arts and Culture | Strengthen reconciliation as a core value by integrating Indigenous perspectives into cultural planning and policies and investing in relationship building. | Support Indigenous arts and culture to enhance visibility and capacity through programming, public art, and civic engagement in festivals and events. | Deepen reconciliation efforts through long term relationships and embedding of Indigenous knowledge into cultural planning and integration with tourism and economic development. |
| Build Community Resilience Through Arts and Culture | Strengthen arts and culture support by establishing key roles, policies, and inclusive programming structures. | Expand partnerships with equity-priority groups, schools, and businesses to increase and diversify participation and representation. | Ensure arts and culture remain a core part of community life by fostering long-term collaboration and public involvement. |
| Develop More Accessible and Affordable Cultural Spaces | Assess cultural infrastructure needs and establish policy frameworks for future space development. | Implement facility policies, secure funding, and initiate infrastructure improvements. | Integrate cultural spaces into city planning, improve accessibility, and strengthen long-term sustainability models. |
| Bolster Community Arts | Establish funding structures and leadership to enable arts and culture sustainability and growth. | Expand collaboration among artists, organizations, and businesses to increase cultural reach. | Strengthen cultural visibility through reporting, public engagement, and long-term partnerships. |
| Support the Strategic Development of the Cultural Sector | Enhance and develop sustainable funding strategies and City policies and work towards the downtown as a cultural district. | Strengthen regional collaboration and integration of culture into tourism and economic development. | Position the City as a recognized cultural leader through regional partnerships, marketing, and workforce development. |

Also included in the Implementation Strategy is the approach to capital planning for cultural facility improvement and development projects. The Strategic Cultural Plan includes a Cultural Facility Options Analysis that identifies facility needs and gaps and proposes options for the City to consider in meeting these gaps either through repurposing of existing space, improvements to current facilities, or the development of new cultural facilities. As recommended in the Plan the first step before proceeding with facility improvements or developments is to complete facility needs assessments and or feasibility studies, followed by the development of a Cultural Facility Capital Plan. Once these key pieces of work are complete, the recommendations coming forward will be integrated into the appropriate phases of the Implementation Strategy, pending Council's direction. As such, it is recommended that the facility assessments and studies, followed by the Cultural Facilities Capital Plan, be completed in phase 1 with likely improvements to existing facilities occurring in phase 2 and expansions or facility developments to occur in phase 3.

Next Steps

Should Council adopt the Strategic Cultural Plan and accompanying Implementation Strategy, staff will proceed with initiating the work necessary to begin implementation activities for Phase 1, including facility planning which was identified as an urgent priority by the core cultural partners. The approval of the 2025-2029 Financial Plan by Council on February 26, 2025 enables staff to proceed with the recruitment and hiring of a Culture and Events Coordinator, a position that is critical to the advancement of key City and Council priorities related to regional funding strategies, special events and hosting, cultural planning and policy development, and implementation of the Strategic Cultural plan.

POLICY ANALYSIS:

The development and completion of a Strategic Cultural Plan and the implementation of the Strategic Cultural Plan through the Implementation Strategy is identified in the Cultural Service Review (2019), Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019), and the OCP (2022).

Official Community Plan (OCP), 2022:

Cardinal Direction – Reconciliation: The City commits to incorporating Indigenous perspectives into its work and decision-making process, and to providing equitable and inclusive services that benefit Indigenous peoples. The City will seek guidance from Indigenous partners in how to make this commitment a reality.

Arts, Culture, and Heritage Objectives:

- Residents and visitors know they are in K'ómoks First Nation territory by the prominent tangible and intangible celebration of their culture and heritage
- Local art, culture and heritage, including natural heritage, are showcased throughout Courtenay
- Courtenay has a reputation as the regional centre for arts and culture
- Community cultural and heritage assets are identified, preserved, and celebrated
- Identities expressed in the public realm and cultural programming are representative of Courtenay and the region
- Community access and participation in arts and culture is strong and widespread

Arts, Culture and Heritage Policy Actions:

- ACH Action 3: "Work towards the downtown Public Commons public plaza concept identified in the Downtown Courtenay Playbook."
- ACH Action 6: "Create a Courtenay Cultural Plan, including consideration of a dedicated community arts and culture space."

- ACH Action 7: "Continue to support the downtown as the region's arts, culture, and heritage hub by ensuring key cultural partners such as the Comox Valley Art Gallery, the Courtenay and District Museum, the Sid Williams Civic Theatre, and the Comox Valley Community Arts Council continue to be located downtown, and promoting and investing in public art and cultural opportunities downtown."
- ACH Action 11: "Consider the establishment of a dedicated community arts and culture space."

Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019)

- Collaborate with the other valley jurisdictions, including K'ómoks First Nation, on a Regional Cultural Plan.

Cultural Service Review (2019)

- Carrying out a cultural plan is an essential next step through the Inter Municipal Working Group, to help guide investment and decision making over the next ten years

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

The financial implications of the Strategic Cultural Plan are summarized on page 13 of the Implementation Strategy. Staff have endeavoured to provide estimated known budget costs for all phases. More detailed budgets will be developed as the City progresses to each phase. Any net new or one-time costs will be brought forward in the annual and five-year operating and capital budgets for Council's consideration.

For capital implications, further analysis is required. The cultural facilities needs assessment and cultural facilities plan are recommended to be carried out in phase 1 to determine the scope and magnitude of upgrades or improvements required to meet the needs and gaps identified by the Plan. The resulting Cultural Facilities Capital Plan will be brought to Council for consideration.

It is also important to note that not all actions will be directly delivered by the City. Some of the actions in the Plan can be achieved through community capacity and partnerships:

1. Actions currently being carried out by the core cultural service providers with existing funding,
2. Actions may be achieved through the core cultural service providers or other community collaborations, but may require additional funding, and or
3. Actions can be carried out through grant funds sought by core cultural service providers or other community organizations leveraged by the city's financial grants or in-kind support.

Should additional funding be required, staff would return to council for approval through the annual budget process.

Table 5 provides a summary of the estimated financial impacts of the Strategic Cultural Plan.

Table 5: Implementation Strategy – Estimate Financial Impacts

| Phase | Funding Type | Estimated Funding Required |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Phase 1: Building Foundations | Net-New Operating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Medium: Estimated \$160,000 ▶ Cultural Coordinator, Indigenous engagement & investments, and Arts & Culture Grant Program |
| | One-Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Medium: Estimated \$300,000 ▶ Renaming NSH, Special Events, Facilities Studies and Public Art Policy |
| Phase 2: Enhancing Access and Visibility | Net-New Operating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Low: Estimated \$60,000 ▶ Program partnerships, events, and cultural asset mapping. |
| | One-Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Medium: Estimated \$250,000 ▶ Supporting Indigenous public art, marketing strategy, and capacity building |
| Phase 3: Thriving as a Cultural Hub | Net-New Operating | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Low: Estimated \$10,000 ▶ Project partnerships, and committee development |
| | One-Time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Medium: Estimated \$100,000 ▶ Public art |
| Total | Net-New Operating | Estimated \$230,000 |
| | One-Time | Estimated \$650,000 |

Funding types are classified as:

- Net New Operating: Ongoing funding required to sustain new or expanded initiatives, programs, or staffing
- One-Time: Funding allocated for capital projects or time-limited initiatives that do not require ongoing financial commitment

Funding is categorized as:

- Low: Under \$100,000
- Medium: \$100,000 - \$500,000
- High: Over \$500,000

Funding estimates also assume all actions are funded according to recommendations; any change in funding in one area may affect required funding in another area due to capacity or resource implications.

ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:

The completion of the Strategic Cultural Plan is part of the 2024/2025 Recreation, Culture, and Community Services Department work plan.

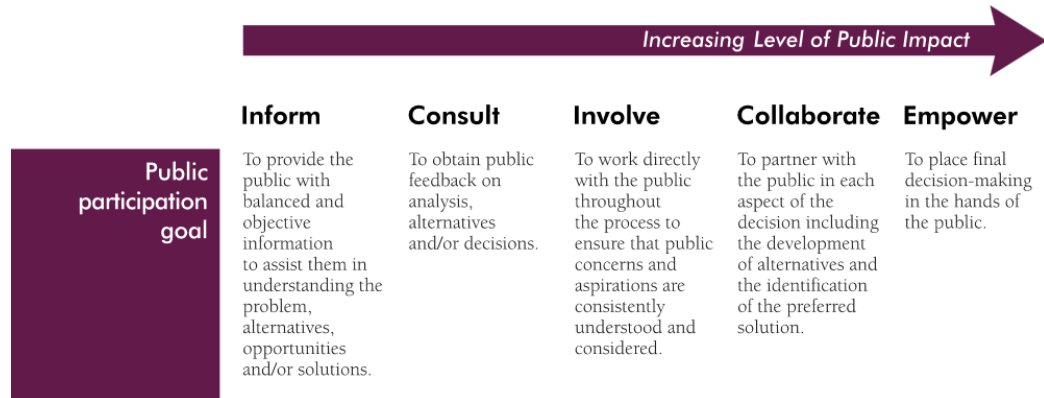
STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:

This initiative will help address the following strategic priorities:

- Arts, Culture, and Heritage - Complete Strategic Cultural Plan
- Arts, Culture, and Heritage - Implement Strategic Cultural Plan

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:

Staff consulted and involved the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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OPTIONS:

1. THAT based on the March 12, 2025 staff report “Strategic Cultural Plan and Implementation Strategy Adoption,” Council approve the final draft of the Strategic Cultural Plan (Attachment 1) and Implementation Strategy (Attachment 2) as presented.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Attachment 1: Strategic Cultural Plan
2. Attachment 2: Strategic Cultural Plan Implementation Strategy
3. Attachment 3: Strategic Cultural Plan Summary
4. Attachment 4: MIKI'SIW Métis Association Letter – February 10, 2025

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