



Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of September 29, 2022

To: Committee of the Whole **Date:** September 9, 2022
From: Kerri Moore, Head of Business and Community Relations
Subject: Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan Progress Report

RECOMMENDATION

That Council:

1. Extends Create Victoria implementation to the end of 2027.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

It has been five years since the Create Victoria Master Plan was adopted by Council. Extensive public input informed the development of the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan, which aligns ideas, people, and resources around a shared vision and a set of goals, strategies and actions to realize Victoria's creative potential and guide investment over the next five years.

The plan includes four broad goals and strategic priorities, 18 objectives and 79 action items. In the first five years of implementation, staff have completed or partly completed 50 action items, primarily within current operational workplans and annual budget allocations.

Over the last two years COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted the arts community and staff's ability to fully realize the Create Victoria vision and action plan. New initiatives such as the Everyday Creativity Grant Program, Creative Spotlight Instagram series and reimagined programming to keep arts and culture activities going throughout the pandemic effected our ability to prioritize other initiatives such as the Cultural Space Roadmap.

Even though COVID-19 impacted progress, a tremendous amount has been accomplished. This includes:

- One new staff member dedicated to cultural space portfolio to ensure Strategic Priority One, Connecting People and Spaces is implemented.
- Completed Phase One of the Cultural Space Roadmap.
- Facilitated discussions and business plan development for an Arts Hub facility at 28 Bastion Square.
- Funded Theatre Skam's community-led Arts Hub project with \$40,000 one-time funding and \$20,000 operational funding for five years.
- New \$250,000 Cultural Infrastructure Grant Program, including an additional \$150,000 for accessibility improvements to cultural facilities in 2022.

- An additional \$125,000 annually to the Festival Investment Grant Program.
- Completion of the Victoria Music Strategy, including a first-year investment of \$75,000 to expand free music programming throughout the city, produce a Music Symposium and launch an Indigenous-led music series and youth-led programming.
- \$75,000 for ongoing funding to the Indigenous Artist in Resident Program.
- Updates to the public art policy, continuation of the Artist in Resident program, and expansion of pop-up temporary programming through the Commute bus shelter program, Commercial Alley and Storefronts Victoria.
- Development of a Mural Toolkit and Mural Roster to expand opportunities for mural making in the city and the successful completion of Concrete Canvas, 18 murals in Rock Bay.
- Increase placemaking opportunities, both citizen- and community-led, with the creation of the Placemaking Toolkit, Participatory Budgeting Placemaking projects, beautification projects integrated into Parks and Transportation Projects and dedicated Placemaking stream through My Great Neighborhoods Grant Program.

The Arts, Culture and Events Team works closely with other City departments to implement and realize the goals, objectives, and action items in Create Victoria. Alongside these departments, as well as community partners, Create Victoria has been embraced and supported by many people and many departments to implement the plan.

PURPOSE

To provide Council a progress report on the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan and seek Council's direction on extension of Create Victoria to 2027.

BACKGROUND

Annually, the City invests \$1.85 million in arts, culture and events including public art, festivals, special events, City of Victoria Butler Book Prize, Artist in Residence and Indigenous Artist in Residence and Poet Laureate programs. This includes providing over 208 free City organized concerts and programs, permitting 249 films and events in public space and commissioning 25 temporary public art projects this year.

Arts, Culture and Events Office aims to enhance neighbourhoods, foster arts and culture, and work to create a city that is a natural draw for festivals and events. The role of culture in creating healthy, dynamic communities is widely acknowledged and cultural activities such as festivals and public art are vital tools to engage a community and articulate its values. It is also a major economic driver. The total economic contribution of culture to the Greater Victoria's economy is \$429 million, employing 5,224 people in the cultural industries (2020, Cultural Satellite Account).

The Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan includes a vision, cultural policy and four key strategic priority areas with goals, objectives and action items attached to each key strategic area. The four strategic areas -- Connecting People and Spaces, Building Cultural Leadership, Telling Our Story, Being Future-Ready -- align with the City's cultural vision, values and guiding principles.

By focusing energy, resources and investment into these key focus areas, the City of Victoria can foster a thriving cultural ecosystem where creativity, innovation and artistic excellence can flourish, where all citizens and visitors can participate in the cultural life in the city and diversity is celebrated reflecting a shared authentic identity.

Cultural planning can be defined as a process of inclusive community consultation and decision making that helps local government identify cultural resources and think strategically about how these resources can help a community to achieve civic goals. It's a strategic approach that integrates the community's cultural resources into a wide range of municipal planning initiatives to fulfil strategic objectives including social cohesion and economic prosperity.

Cultural planning looks at the benefits these cultural resources could bring to a community if planned for strategically. By looking at the community through a cultural lens it can provide fresh perspective in finding ways to:

- Combat social exclusion.
- Provide community-driven design opportunities to develop pride of place and civic identity.
- Support community empowerment through involvement and ownership of community initiatives.
- Review, assess and improve current programs and services and develop new initiatives in response to identified community needs.
- Improve communication and cooperation among stakeholders.
- Integrate culture into a larger policy and planning documents to meet strategic objectives.
- Improve visibility of artists, cultural workers and organizations.
- Improve access and participation in Victoria's arts community.
- Improve cultural facilities.
- Review, assess and improve funding models to meet the needs of the community.

The Implementation Framework accompanies the Master Plan to ensure the plan is action-oriented and provides a roadmap for future investment, resource allocation and priorities for the City of Victoria, stakeholders and the community.

Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan won the 2018 Award of Excellence - Cultural Planning Award from the Creative City Network of Canada. The Awards of Excellence Program recognizes and celebrates the outstanding achievements of Canadian municipalities and encourages excellence in the development and delivery of cultural policy, planning and practice.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

The Plan includes four goals and strategic priorities, 18 objectives and 79 action items. Since adoption in 2017, staff have implemented or partly implemented 50 action items. A number of action items are directly aligned with other Council priorities, including Indigenous relations, economic development and prosperity, health and wellness as well as diversity, equity and inclusion.

For further details on actions implemented to date, please refer to Appendix A Infographic and Progress Report.

Council has approved the following new investments to achieve Create Victoria action items:

- An increase of \$125,000 in the annual Festival Investment Grant program.
- \$75,000 to continue the Indigenous Artist in Resident program to ensure Indigenous voices and stories are shared and that we continue to support Indigenous artist roles and opportunities at the City.
- Additional \$1,000 in project funding annually for the poet laureate and youth poet laureate positions.

- \$5,000 ongoing support to the City of Victoria Children's Book Prize.
- New staff position dedicated to the cultural space portfolio.
- \$250,000 ongoing support for Cultural Space Roadmap and one-time \$150,000 Accessibility Funding Stream
- \$125,000 one-time funding for Everyday Creativity grant program to support pandemic relief efforts, provide arts, and culture programming to citizens.
- \$75,000 to implement the first year of the Victoria Music Strategy which included increased music programming throughout the City, hosting a Victoria Music Symposium, funding an Indigenous led as well as a youth led music series this summer.
- Emergency funding support due to pandemic related expenses for Arts on View and Victoria Event Centre
- \$40,000 one-time and \$20,000 five-year annual funding to Theatre Skam's Art Hub facility development.

As well as new investment stated above, staff have created operational efficiencies to complete a number of action items within current operational workplans and annual budget allocations.

This includes:

- Mural toolkit and mural roster to assist with facilitating requests and projects as well as connecting artists with wall spaces on private buildings.
- Creating simplified processes and streamlined approaches for community requests, including fillable PDF for grant programs, special events and online submissions for public art calls.
- Keeping 'culture is at the table' operating at a strategic level and integrating creativity into projects such as embedding artists on project teams.
- Incorporating outdoor art projects and programs in parks and open spaces through the existing Artist in Resident program. An example includes Luke Ramsey collaborating with artists on three murals located on parks washrooms, Germaine Koh's interactive light sculptures at the new Topaz Park Skate and Bike Park, and Dylan Thomas's canoe seat wall design and house posts at the new Songhees Park.
- Updating the public art policy and establishing a public art maintenance reserve fund.
- Additional pop up and temporary exhibition opportunities for artists, including *Commute* bus shelter program and vacant storefronts program, *Storefront Victoria*.
- Facilitating community conversations and business planning to re-envision the transformation of 28 Bastion Square into a creative hub.
- Joining the Social Purpose Real Estate Collaborative and the Rent/Lease/Own Study to understand the real estate challenges affecting the not-for-profit sector.
- Increased inventory within our festival equipment program for cable mats and wheelchair ramps to improve accessibility at outdoor events.
- More diverse, free family-friendly programming at Canada Day, Centennial Square and Cameron Bandshell.
- Hosted community conversations and gatherings, including Indigenous roundtables and the annual art symposium, philanthropic arts funding roundtables, artist talk and mixers, two grant workshops and several information sessions on our artist in residence programs and vacant storefront programs.
- Creating inclusive platforms to facilitate social inclusion including working with youth in Centennial Square and hosting community meetings with social service agencies to support vulnerable youth in the community.
- Completion of the Victoria Music Strategy including appointment of the Music Advisory

Committee, securing a consultant and engaging the music community and audiences via focus groups and survey.

- Completion of Phase One of the Cultural Spaces Roadmap.

These operational efficiencies were found by looking strategically at the role and function of culture within the City. For example, transferring the Arts Victoria website from a City function to a community function provided a more grassroots approach to connecting artists, arts organizations and audiences to the cultural life of the city. Staff time and resources could then be refocused on new priorities, such as cultural spaces. As well, using social capital and social media assets, rather than paid promotional expenses, provides cost savings to maximize cultural investment in the best and most strategic way.

The single greatest impact to implementing Create Victoria has been the COVID -9 pandemic. In 2020 and 2021, staff and community priorities shifted to navigate new territory in the arts and culture sector. The City listened and responded to the arts community and found new ways to provide arts and culture programming to ensure the public had a creative outlet during the pandemic and providing meaningful employment opportunities to artists and musicians. New initiatives such as the Everyday Creativity Grant program, Creative Spotlight 'locals supporting locals' Instagram series, Build Back Victoria music program and temporary pop-up public art programs such as the Storefronts Victoria and Artwork in Kiosks and creating a COVID-19 resource page for events consumed staff priorities over 2020 and 2021.

As energy and resources shifted, many of the Create Victoria priorities needed to be put on hold to manage new priorities brought on by the pandemic. In 2022, the impacts of COVID are still being felt by labour shortages, shift in audience behaviour and attendance patterns. 2023 will continue to be a year of adaptation and a slow "turning on the lights" to a back to normal event, festival, and programming season.

Affordability remains the greatest barrier to a thriving art scene in Victoria. Statistics gathered through the Cultural Satellite Account Statistics Canada, indicate declining job numbers since 2016. This may be linked to global trends in the labour market as well as issues with finding affordable housing and art spaces in a competitive real estate market. Further analysis is required for fully understand the declining labour statistics for Greater Victoria.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

1. Extend Create Victoria another five years to 2027. (Recommended)

The remaining action items to be implemented in Create Victoria are still relevant and achievable. A focus on affordable and accessible spaces is the highest priority for the arts sector and completion of the Cultural Spaces Roadmap will be a major deliverable over the next five years. In addition, opportunities to implement Strategic Priority 4, Being Future Ready through the realization of the Arts and Innovation District is another major deliverable and opportunity for implementation.

2. Conclude Create Victoria and provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff time to conduct another planning document would take consider time in addition to the financial resources required to hire a consultant. Not having any planning document to guide Council and staff direction and investment does not lead to effective use of City resources to support arts and culture services to the community.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The Master Plan contains a number of directions that will make public spaces and cultural facilities more accessible to people of all abilities and is detailed under Objective 1.4 in the Plan “Facilitate social inclusion, promote diversity, community wellness and accessibility in cultural spaces”. Accessibility of cultural facilities will be within scope of the Cultural Spaces Roadmap and funding through the Cultural Infrastructure Grant specifically supports accessibility upgrades for cultural spaces.

2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

Implementation of Create Victoria helps the City achieve the following strategic objectives:

- #4 Prosperity and Economic Inclusion
- #5 Health, Well-being and a Welcoming City

Impacts to Financial Plan

There are no impacts to the 2022 Financial Plan.

Official Community Plan Consistency Statement

The proposed Arts and Culture Master Plan is consistent with the direction in OCP Chapter 16 Arts and Culture.

16.9 Provide direction for cultural planning through the development and regular update of a Cultural Plan, that:

- 16.9.1 Establishes a vision and action plan for arts and culture in Victoria;
- 16.9.2 Seeks opportunities for partnership with the public, private and non-profit sectors;
- 16.9.3 Maintains, develops and enhances the delivery of City arts and culture programs;
- 16.9.4 Enhances support to local, non-profit groups engaged in arts or culture programs;
- 16.9.5 Sets targets for future cultural spaces, including new or upgraded civic, institutional and private facilities; and,
- 16.9.6 Identifies tools to secure new cultural spaces, including senior government funding; land donations; developer contributions, private donations; and changes to regulations.
- 16.10 Maintain and regularly update an inventory of cultural resources.

CONCLUSIONS

Five years on the Create Victoria Arts and Culture Master Plan has delivered strong action tied to Council's Strategic Plan and action items within Create Victoria. It is through the support, commitment and enthusiasm of the entire City organization and community support that we have been able to realize well over half of the action items since it was adopted five years ago. With continued support and investment, an extension of Create Victoria for another five years will ensure the success and progress made to date will continue.

Respectfully submitted,

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Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager.

List of Attachments

Appendix A: 2018-2022 Create Victoria Progress Report.