



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# STAFF REPORT

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 7800-20

**From:** Director of Recreation, Culture, and Community Services

**Date:** September 25, 2024

**Subject:** Strategic Cultural Plan Update – Draft Report

**PURPOSE:** To provide Council with the draft Strategic Cultural Plan (Attachment 1) and to seek approval for the draft to be posted for public feedback.

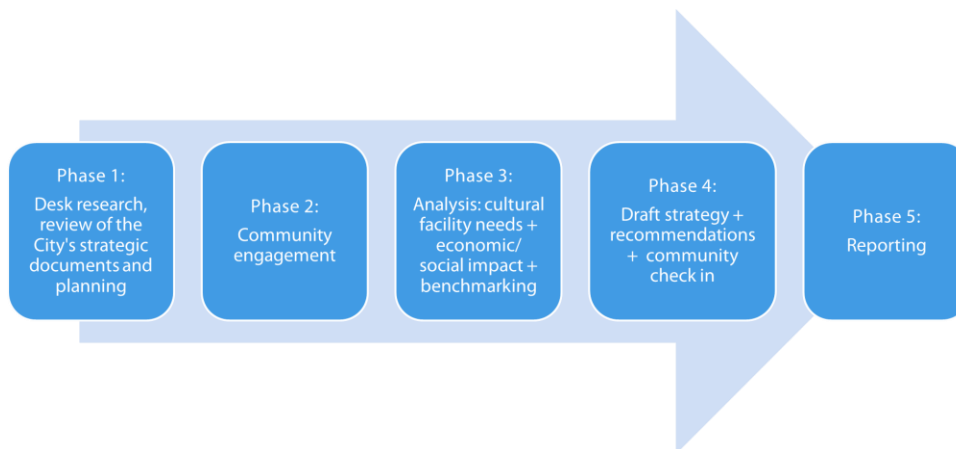
## BACKGROUND:

The Strategic Cultural Plan seeks to emphasize the importance of arts and cultural services, cultural awareness, and cultural activities in the City of Courtenay. It highlights the need to evaluate and benchmark the impact of arts and culture assets and provides a strong platform for supporting investment in arts and culture tourism and economic development. The plan identifies cultural service needs and assesses cultural facility space options in order to support the sector and ensure accessibility by both practitioners and the public. The Strategic Cultural Plan covers a ten-year horizon, setting the vision, goals, objectives and actions to guide the City of Courtenay towards a future where arts and culture is embedded in the fabric of community life.

Initiated in 2023, the Strategic Cultural Plan is a 2023-2026 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 (2022).

The Cultural Strategic Plan was developed through a five-phase process, as illustrated in Table 1 below.

*Table 1: Strategic Cultural Plan - Project Phases\**



\*Note: The deliverables for phase 3 were completed after the Phase 4 deliverables to ensure they were informed by the community check in (Phase 4).

**Community Engagement Summary:**

Phase two of the project included community engagement guided by the OCP’s cardinal directions. Historically under-represented groups and individuals were connected with through 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 the phase two engagement activities carried out are summarized in Table 1 below.

*Table 2: Phase 2 Engagement Activities*

<b>Engagement Activity</b>	<b>Number of People</b>
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	24 interviews & 54 participants
Group conversations with equity priority communities. Public drop in event.	28 participants
On-line community survey	~700 respondents

In addition to the community engagement process identified above, the engagement approach also recognized the need for long term commitments to relationship building with Indigenous communities, especially K’ómoks First Nation, on whose unceded territory Courtenay is located. This also includes a recognition that this project is a colonial process of timelines, project phases and goals for final documents. As such when it comes to meaningful engagement with Indigenous peoples in the community in relation to this plan, the Cultural Strategic Plan will remain a living document open to dialogue and adjustment over time and as the City’s relationship with Indigenous communities unfolds.

Staff presented a [What We Heard Report](#) to Council on September 13, 2023 where the report was received for information. The following community-identified priority needs were identified and are the foundations for the development of the Strategic Cultural Plan:

- Engaging K’ómoks First Nation, Metis, Inuit, and other Urban Indigenous Communities
- More cultural spaces / facilities, and better availability and affordability
- Developing more diverse and affordable cultural programming
- Further promotion of community partnerships and collaboration
- Increased municipal support – financial and in-kind, local, and regional
- Further development of cultural tourism
- Attraction and training of technical cultural workers
- Development of a Public Arts Policy

Following the September 13, 2023 council meeting, Staff and Nordicity co-led a community check-in event in November 2023, where the Cultural Strategic Plan initial draft vision and strategic directions were shared. To capture additional community input, a survey was also launched for a period of three weeks in

which the community check-in presentation slides, initial draft vision and emerging strategic directions were made available to survey participants along with a short questionnaire. The results of the community engagement and questionnaire informed alterations and edits to the initial vision and goals, and are summarized in Attachment 2. Overall the majority of the participants in the community check-in and questionnaire agreed with the draft vision and emerging directions with 71% or more of respondents in agreement or in strong agreement.

## **DISCUSSION:**

The results of the community engagement activities, as well as completion of the facility options analysis, benchmarking and comparative review, and social and economic impact analysis, have all been considered and incorporated into the development of the draft Strategic Cultural Plan being presented today including the draft vision statement, objectives, goals and actions.

The 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. The draft vision, goals, and objectives are outlined in this report, while the detailed actions are shared within the Strategic Cultural Plan itself. The Strategic Cultural Plan also includes research findings from the facility options analysis, benchmarking and comparative review, and social and economic impact analysis – all of which combined with the community engagement findings to form the draft Strategic Cultural Plan.

## **Draft Strategic Cultural Plan**

### *Draft Vision Statement*

“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, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial, are interwoven into a diverse community where connection and resiliency are celebrated through artistic expression and cultural exchange.”

### *Draft Goals and Objectives*

The updated Courtenay Strategic Cultural Plan Goals and Objectives are summarized below. Each objective includes key actions and can be found in the Draft Strategic Cultural Plan.

#### Goal 1: Advance truth and reconciliation through arts and culture

- Objective 1.1: Recognize the role and rights of K’ómoks First Nation and other Indigenous peoples as it relates to arts and culture
- Objective 1.2: Respectfully acknowledge K’ómoks territory through arts and culture
- Objective 1.3: Increase support and investment in Indigenous arts and culture

#### Goal 2. Build community resilience through arts and culture

- Objective 2.1: Use arts and culture to support community belonging and inclusion, where differences and similarities are celebrated
- Objective 2.2: Leverage arts and culture as a medium to engage with the community on complex social challenges and to support healing

- Objective 2.3: Develop cultural programming that appeals to a more diverse community

### Goal 3: Develop more accessible and affordable cultural spaces

- Objective 3.1: Increase the availability of accessible and affordable spaces for arts and culture
- Objective 3.2: Prioritize initiatives/upgrades that provide enhanced and additional space for arts and culture

### Goal 4: Bolster community arts

- Objective 4.1: Support the capacity building of community-led arts and culture organizations
- Objective 4.2: Break down silos and increase collaboration across the cultural sector
- Objective 4.3: Increase the awareness of community-led arts and culture events

### Goal 5: Support the strategic development of the cultural sector

- Objective 5.1: Build and sustain existing social and economic impact by strengthening Courtenay's professional arts and culture sector
- Objective 5.2: Embed culture more firmly in tourism initiatives in Courtenay and the Comox Valley
- Objective 5.3: Create new/updated policies to support the cultural sector
- Objective 5.4: Explore strategic ways to meet sector labour needs

### *Foundational Elements of the Strategic Cultural Plan*

Courtenay's vision for its cultural landscape paves the way for a vibrant and inclusive future where arts and culture are central to the community's identity and resilience. To turn this vision into concrete goals, there are foundational elements that the City must consider in order to steer the City's efforts in meeting the objectives, actions, and goals of the strategic plan. These elements highlight the key priorities that need to be embedded in all cultural initiatives, ensuring a well-rounded and sustainable approach to our strategy. These are the "big moves" for Courtenay to proceed with the recommendations contained in the report.

#### ➤ **Advance Reconciliation Across All Initiatives**

A core priority for Courtenay is embedding the principles of truth and reconciliation into every cultural initiative. This means not just acknowledging, but actively celebrating the history, culture, and contributions of the K'ómoks First Nation and other Indigenous communities citywide. Reconciliation should shape every action, policy, and community interaction, becoming a fundamental part of Courtenay's cultural identity.

#### ➤ **Build the Team to Drive Cultural Change**

To lead Courtenay's cultural transformation, the city must prioritize creating a strong, committed team. This requires assessing the results of the benchmarking analysis and defining the approach for developing the resources necessary to advance this ambitious cultural agenda. New resources, whether sourced internally, externally, or a combination of both, will be essential. With the right team in place, Courtenay can successfully fulfill its cultural goals, ensuring that arts and culture are accessible and flourishing for everyone.

➤ ***Transform and Expand Cultural Spaces***

Courtenay's cultural spaces are central to community life, and enhancing them is a vital step in achieving the vision of the Cultural Strategic Plan. Whether through upgrading current venues, developing new multi-functional spaces, or improving accessibility, these investments will ensure the City's cultural infrastructure serves its expanding and diverse population. Strengthening these spaces is key to fostering a strong sense of place and ensuring that all residents and visitors can fully engage in the city's cultural activities.

➤ ***Elevate Investment in Arts and Culture***

A key step for Courtenay is increasing its financial commitment to arts and culture. By prioritizing funding, the city will support the growth and innovation of its cultural sector, allowing it to continue generating significant social, economic, and tourism benefits. This isn't just about funding individual projects—it's about creating a sustainable framework where investments can be maximized, enabling arts and culture to reach their full potential.

➤ ***Lead Regional Cultural Advocacy***

Courtenay should assume a leadership role in promoting arts and culture throughout the Comox Valley. By fostering regional collaboration and investment, and positioning itself as a cultural leader, the City can attract new opportunities, boost tourism, and strengthen its cultural sector. This effort will involve building strong partnerships and advocating for policies and investments that benefit the entire region, highlighting the broader impact of Courtenay's cultural assets.

### **Next Steps**

Following the adoption of the Draft Strategic Cultural Plan, staff recommend that it be posted online along with a report summary (Attachment 3) and a short questionnaire seeking feedback from the public on the level of support for the vision statement, objectives, goals, and actions. In addition, the questionnaire will have an open-ended question seeking general feedback on the draft plan. The public will be able to access the draft Cultural Strategic Plan, report summary, and questionnaire for a period of one month.

Staff have also sought out further engagement with K'ómoks First Nation (KFN) Elected Chief and Council, and other Indigenous groups and community members. Although the project did include initial feedback from K'ómoks First Nation Elected Chief and Council and other Indigenous peoples in the community, with Goal 1 of the draft Strategic Plan being to "Advance truth and reconciliation through arts and culture", it is important to re-engage KFN and other Indigenous groups on the proposed draft goals and actions to ensure these recommendations reflect the priorities and values of the Indigenous community. Staff will continue to engage and seek feedback from KFN and the Indigenous community on the strategic cultural plan in our commitment to build relationships and keep the Strategic Cultural Plan as living document, beyond the finalization of draft.

After the final phase of engagement is completed, staff will return to council with a final report that will include a high-level implementation plan and financial implications.

### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

The development and completion of a Strategic Cultural Plan is identified in the Cultural Service Review (2019), Parks and Recreation Master Plan (2019) and Council's Strategic Priorities 2023-2024.

### **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."

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The financial implications of the draft Strategic Plan will be included in the implementation plan and presented to Council at a future date.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

The completion of the Strategic Cultural Plan is part of the 2023/2024 Recreation, Culture, and Community Services Department work plan.

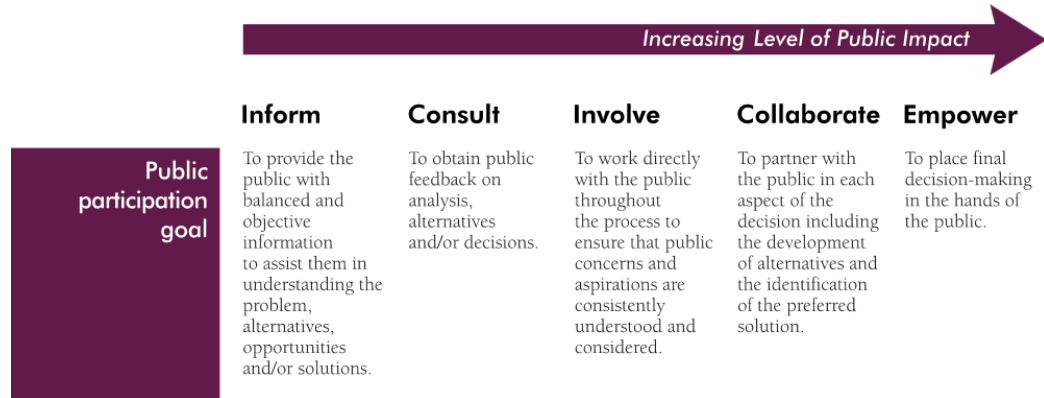
### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

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 the public based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



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**OPTIONS:**

1. 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.
2. THAT Council provide alternative direction to staff.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Attachment 1: Draft Strategic Cultural Plan
2. Attachment 2: Qualitative Feedback Summary – Phase 4 Community Check-In and Questionnaire
3. Attachment 3: Draft Strategic Cultural Plan Summary

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