

Qualitative Feedback - Community Check-In

Feedback received on the vision statement:

Vision	Feedback
<p>"Courtenay is a thriving cultural hub; rich with artistic collaboration, creativity, and celebrated talent. Accessible to all, Courtenay builds community resilience through arts and culture. Thousands of years of Indigenous culture and heritage, plus vibrant festivals, shows, and exhibitions, offer diverse perspectives and new experiences for visitors and locals alike."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Overarching feedback is that it is too long - there should be one sentence. ▪ There is a need to ensure that the vision statement is inspirational and exciting. ▪ There was a suggestion for the vision statement to also be communicated via non-traditional ways such as 'spoken word' or 'video recording'.

The following feedback was received from community members regarding the preliminary directions for the Strategic Cultural Plan for the City of Courtenay:

Strategic Directions	Feedback
<p>Advance truth and reconciliation through arts and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Work with K'ómoks First Nation and other Indigenous partners to develop collaborative cultural planning protocols through decolonized practices ▪ Establish ongoing relationships with K'ómoks First Nation, Métis, Inuit, and Urban Indigenous communities ▪ Respectfully acknowledge K'ómoks territory through art and culture ▪ Increase support and investment in Indigenous Arts and Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respondents expressed that collaborations and inclusions are key, particularly in supporting and integrating Indigenous arts and culture as desired by Indigenous people. ▪ Some participants felt that these objectives are the bare minimum and desire to see more actions towards advancing truth and reconciliation. ▪ There is also a desire for this goal to be linked with the TRC's 94 Calls to Action. ▪ A participant noted that they would like to see a clear definition of what decolonized practices are, as well as what 'urban Indigenous' means (citing that urban related to geography) ▪ Respondents want arts and cultural initiatives span the diverse cultures in the community, including but not limited to Indigenous culture. ▪ Respondents are also interested in initiatives that include the general public in Indigenous gatherings to help in learning and understanding Indigenous cultures.

Strategic Directions	Feedback
<p>Build community resilience by strengthening arts and culture's innate value.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Help create a community where everybody feels welcomed and included, and where differences are celebrated ▪ Tackle complex social challenges, inspiring consideration of important issues and supporting healing – to encourage new creative solutions ▪ Develop more diverse cultural programming, e.g., in partnership with local community organizations, especially those working with equity priority groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was further noted that diversity and inclusion should be integrated into all the other strategic goals. ▪ Respondents expressed that there should be more opportunities for youth and children in arts and music, citing that there is currently limited arts programming in schools. ▪ It was noted that a partnership with SD71 for tangible community school projects can also support the inclusion of youth and children. ▪ Respondents see arts and culture as being the heart of Courtenay's identity in the future given the appropriate investment. ▪ Some participants would like to see more and more regular neighborhood-scale culture events and community-based art projects (supported by small grant opportunities). ▪ Some participants queried whether arts and culture should/can solve complex social issues, while others believe arts and culture can play a role in healing complex social challenges (Walk With Me is a case in point). ▪ There is a desire for a community events board hosted on a website with subscription options and a link to event calendars of local art groups. ▪ There was concern about celebrating not only differences but also what the community has in common. (This concern comes from potentially focusing on specific community needs, however, the goal here is the inclusion of distinct groups rather than further siloing or exclusion of these groups).
<p>Develop more accessible and affordable cultural spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Increase the availability of physically accessible, affordable spaces for arts and culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respondents noted a need for a bigger/larger and acoustically equipped performance venue (for dance, music, and other types of performances), with rehearsal space and storage for larger equipment (i.e., a 1000+ seat arts centre

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prioritize initiatives/upgrades that provide more space for live performances, community arts programming, rehearsals, and artistic creation 	<p>with space for a 70-member symphony orchestra to perform).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific space needs mentioned by participants include black box theatre, smaller and medium-sized spaces, and multi-purpose and flexible spaces that can be adapted to meet various needs. ▪ It was noted that the community has outgrown the Sid Williams Theatre and Filberg Centre and therefore needs a new arts and cultural facility. ▪ Some participants felt existing spaces should be upgraded and made more visible through signage and painting. These spaces can also be more efficiently used to meet some community needs through upgrades. It was also noted there is a need for facility guidelines on using existing spaces in creative ways (e.g., virtual venues set up within existing spaces). ▪ Participants also expressed a need for accessible cultural spaces that support programming for families, mental and emotional wellbeing, ▪ It was noted that cost and affordability is a current challenge for community arts groups. ▪ It was also mentioned there is limited availability of rental spaces and tools needed by artists to offer art classes and workshops. ▪ The cost of some ticketed shows and limited booking slots (due to the small size of venues) were noted as a barrier for some families. ▪ There was a suggestion to take back the airspace for an amphitheater or a gathering space.
<p>Bolster community arts</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build the capacity of community-led arts and culture organizations (e.g., through training, in-kind support, access to funding) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Some participants expressed the need for financial support in the form of grants and other incentives to support local arts and culture organizations deliver their mandate.

Strategic Directions	Feedback
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Facilitate increased collaboration to break down silos (e.g., via networking events) ▪ Explore ways to increase promotion and awareness of community-led arts and culture events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respondents noted the need for the sector to build relationships with NIC, as well as SD71, to support getting kids and youth involved and educated about art. ▪ It was noted that the sector could connect with local faith-based organizations to examine and promote culture and arts programs and teachings within those organizations. ▪ It was noted that community arts projects are a good way to promote and raise awareness of the arts – suggestion to paint electric boxes and electric posts as a project by local artists or students (referencing the cat pots in Victoria as an example)
<p>Support the strategic development of the cultural sector</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Build on existing social and economic impact by strengthening Courtenay’s professional arts and culture sector (e.g., via closer alignment with local and regional economic development initiatives, reviewing funding, and new collaborations) ▪ Embed culture more firmly in tourism initiatives ▪ Create new/updated policies to support the sector, e.g., public arts policy, special events policy ▪ Explore strategic ways to meet sector labour needs (e.g., training of more technical workers). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was noted that the term “culture” needs to be defined in the plan. ▪ Respondents reported that the City needs a line item in their budget that will allow them to support arts and presenter groups with real funding outside of the buildings they own. ▪ Some respondents noted that there is a need to foster closer alignment with local, regional, and national economic development initiatives that relate to arts and culture. ▪ One person noted that regional and national “<i>collaboration could include entities like the Canada Council. Integrating partnerships with educational institutions such as Hallo Strings to promote arts education and indigenous arts collaboration</i>”; “<i>Review and enhance existing funding structures by actively collaborating with established entities like Comox Valley Arts, Comox Valley Community Foundation, and CYMC to ensure optimal support for a broad spectrum of artistic endeavors: and “Cultivate diverse collaborations with stakeholders, including educational systems, private studios like Long and McQuade, individual music, dance, and art teachers, to create a robust network amplifying the sector’s influence”.</i>

Strategic Directions	Feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It was further noted that a regional approach including collaboration with Comox Valley communities can support several goals including accessible transit, housing, and protecting build heritage that are all associated with arts and culture. ▪ Other feedback was that policy development for sector support should “prioritize the integration of local music by proposing initiatives like playing records of local musicians in public and private locations. Giving precedence to the music sector, followed by other arts, recognizing its significant impact”. ▪ Participants were glad to see plan to ‘build’ on existing resources, however they suggest a plan to rather ‘sustain’ existing resources (noting that ‘building’ suggest something anew rather than supporting existing organizations). ▪ In addressing sector labour needs, it was suggested to “focus on elevating the excellence of the arts, creating a foundation that generates demand and addresses technical needs organically. Prioritize building education programs and supporting infrastructure to foster a thriving arts community”. ▪ Another recommendation was to “consider initiatives to build housing for artists, drawing inspiration from successful models like Montreal and Vancouver, where affordable housing contributes to vibrant artistic communities”. ▪ Some participants further suggested collaborating with North Island College and Excel Career College to develop and fast-track technical courses related to arts and culture (to address labour needs). ▪ There is desire for collaboration with community groups including the Immigrant Welcome Centre to support the growth of the sector.

Strategic Directions	Feedback
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="883 281 1370 401">▪ Some participants expressed the need to make arts and culture one of the core tenets of tourism experience in the city and region.<li data-bbox="883 422 1370 640">▪ Specifically, a participant suggested integrating culture into tourism Initiatives by “Emphasizing quality in cultural offerings, understanding that word of mouth can be a powerful promotion tool. Ensure that the intrinsic value of the arts attracts visitors organically”.