

Staff Report



To	Committee of the Whole
Service Area	Public Services
Date	Tuesday, October 3, 2023
Subject	Culture Plan 2030

Recommendation

1. That Culture Plan 2030 be approved.
2. That costs associated with the implementation of Culture Plan 2030 be referred to the 2024-2027 multi-year budget process.

Executive Summary

Purpose of Report

This report presents Guelph’s Culture Plan 2030 to Council included as Attachment-1.

Key Findings

For this report, culture is defined as the experiences, engagements and expressions that foster belonging, contribute to collective identity, spark inspiration, and cultivate connection. Culture is the cornerstone of a vibrant, healthy, and safe community. It is essential in the development and growth of an innovative workforce and industry. Culture creates engaging and welcoming destinations that attract visitors and generate tourism revenue and positive impressions.

Guelph has long enjoyed a reputation as a cultural hub; a community rich in heritage, the arts, and creative industry. This celebrated local culture scene is at risk, however, as Guelph’s creative community struggles with lack of affordable studio, rehearsal, exhibition, and performance space; limited representation and opportunity for equity-deserving community members; barriers to attracting community support and audiences; and low income and inflated cost of living.

Culture Plan 2030 articulates a long-term municipal and community strategy to stabilize and advance arts, heritage, and creative industry in Guelph. The plan identifies conditions and opportunities for the local culture sector to thrive as we nurture a community ecosystem that ensures culture is present everywhere, every day, for everyone.

Strategic Plan Alignment

Culture Plan 2030 aligns with the City Building priority to grow and care for our community spaces and places; the People and Economy priorities to grow Guelph’s economy, make downtown a vibrant place for everyone, and support community well-being; and the Foundation priority to provide excellent service.

Financial Implications

The costs to implement Culture Plan 2030 have been referred to the multi-year budget process. The Plan recommends initial funding for capital strategy work to conduct an in-depth cost analysis to realize the full scope to implement the 7-year plan.

Report

Guelph has long enjoyed a reputation as a cultural hub; a community rich in arts, heritage, and creative industry; a community that has nurtured aspiring and world-class musicians, painters, writers, dancers, storytellers, filmmakers, actors, and creators in all disciplines. Indeed, arts and culture are deeply woven into Guelph's identity.

Guelph has invested significantly in cultural facilities, public art, cultural programming, and grant funding for artists and arts organizations. In turn, the City has benefited from a return on this investment through citizen satisfaction, tourism, talent attraction, creative industry development, profile, and reputation.

While there is a solid foundation for culture in Guelph, challenges that existed pre-pandemic were exacerbated during the pandemic as event cancellations, closures, isolation, and lockdowns had an oversized impact on the culture community. The cultural economy was the first to close due to emergency measures and the last to reopen after the state of emergency lifted. Members of the creative community have expressed concerns about the lack of opportunity for cultural work locally; a shortage of affordable studio, rehearsal, exhibition, and performance space; difficulty attracting community support and audiences; and low income and inflated cost of living.

In the face of these challenges, there remains hope amongst the culture community, and a resolve to work together and with the City to strengthen the sector and to support community vitality, equity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in and through culture.

Culture Plan 2030

Vision

Guelph Culture: Everywhere. Everyday. Everyone.

Mission

Working together — with a collective vision and collaborative efforts — to support community vitality, equity and inclusion, environmental responsibility, and economic prosperity in and through Culture.

Strategic Themes and Objectives

Cultivate

The community is looking to the City to cultivate capacity and a firm foundation upon which culture contributors can build, create, survive, and thrive. This requires:

- Investments in culture
- Affordable access to culture spaces and equipment throughout Guelph

- Action to uphold Truth and Reconciliation and relationship-building with Indigenous nations and community members
- Prioritization of equity-deserving artists and audiences
- Model and support for environmentally sustainable practices in culture programming
- Culture-friendly bylaws, policies, and practices
- Elimination of barriers to participation in culture activities
- Affordable housing and poverty reduction strategies to enable artists and culture workers to remain in Guelph.

Connect

There is a need to build connections between culture contributors, the City, and the community. To this end, the City can contribute by:

- Facilitating improved communication between the City and the Culture sector, amongst the culture sector, and between the culture sector and community
- Inviting and nurturing collaboration
- Engaging growing and diverse audiences
- Fostering collaboration between the culture sector and adjacent sectors

Champion

The culture sector would benefit from initiatives that champion and celebrate local artists and culture workers. The City can support and encourage culture contributors by:

- Developing a comprehensive recognition strategy
- Working with the community to identify and support opportunities to seek designations for key cultural industries.
- Identifying and supporting the attraction of culture-focused conferences, meetings, and events.
- Using Guelph's bicentennial in 2027 to commemorate local heritage and inspire collective community aspirations.

Implementation of Culture Plan 2030

Once approved by Council, staff will incorporate the Plan's objectives and initiatives into departmental work plans. Key performance indicators and evaluation strategies will be identified, and will form the basis for reporting in 2024, 2027, and 2030.

Financial Implications

The costs to implement Culture Plan 2030 have been referred to the multi-year budget process. The Plan recommends initial funding for capital strategy work of \$75,000 in the initial three years to conduct an in-depth cost analysis to realize the full scope to implement the 7-year plan. The Culture Plan 2030 will be considered with other recently completed plans and will be viewed with a corporate lens to incorporate the City's strategic goals. Additional funding and prioritization would be referred to future budgets. Recommendations in the plan for programming and advocacy will be supported within existing projected operating budgets. The timing and pace of this plan is subject to change.

Consultations

Culture Plan 2030 has been informed by multiple engagements with the culture community, as well as the broader community, including Culture Pulse Check Community Meeting (2019); Community Plan: Arts and Culture Sector Workshop (2019); Create. Play. Stay: Culture and Sport Tourism Strategy report by MGA (2023); Culture Plan 2030 Have Your Say survey, conversation cafes, and an Indigenous sharing circle; and consultation with culture leaders, the Public Art Advisory Committee, and the Guelph Museums Advisory committee.

Attachments

Attachment-1 Culture Plan 2030

Attachment-2 Culture Plan 2030 Community Engagement and Research Report

Departmental Approval

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