

MANAGEMENT REPORT

Date: June 26, 2023
To: Mayor Ritsma and City Council
From: Brad Hernden, Manager of Recreation & Marketing on behalf of
Municipal Cultural Plan Working Group
Report#: COU23-080
Attachments: Municipal Cultural Plan, 2023-2028

Title: Municipal Cultural Plan

Objective: To provide the final report and Municipal Cultural Plan for the City of Stratford.

Background: At the March 8, 2021 meeting of Council, the following resolution was adopted: **THAT the investigation and development of a Municipal Cultural Plan ("MCP") be referred to the 2022 budget.**

In that same budget year, Council approved an expansion request by staff to create a Municipal Cultural Plan, citing alignment with the City of Stratford's ("City") strategic priorities being, "Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships", "Developing our Resources", and Widening our Economic Opportunities.

The Province of Ontario defines cultural planning as "place-based," meaning the approach to planning and development involves identifying and mapping a community's cultural resources and requires the creation of a process and plan on how municipalities can strengthen the management of those resources to achieve community goals.

This process is expected to be led by municipalities with support from cultural stakeholders and community members.

A cultural plan is a strategic document that identifies a city-wide vision for culture to evolve into the future, including a mission statement on how the municipality will support the vision as well as guidelines for achieving the vision.

Following a Council resolution to develop the MCP, \$65,000 was approved in the 2022 operating budget to hire a consultant. Shortly thereafter, the City secured an additional \$65,000 from the FedDev of Southern Ontario through the Regional Tourism Organization #4 (RTO4) to also support development the plan. The FedDev grant

permitted the City to carry over the first \$65,000 approved in the 2022 operating budget, to help fund and support activities of the MCP's first-year implementation.

With funding confirmed, an internal project working group including Destination Stratford and staff from the City was formed. A call for proposals was released, and Steps Public Art was awarded the consultant contract to complete the MCP.

The Municipal Cultural Plan intends to strengthen Stratford's appeal as a cultural destination and maximize the benefits of the local tourism economy. It will assess the full scope of local cultural assets and enhance opportunities to use them to full advantage while building cohesion between community partners.

A project scope was created by the internal working committee, and the main objectives and deliverables of the MCP included:

- Engage Council, staff, and the community in a conversation to build a shared cultural vision;
- Connect for-profit and not-for-profit cultural initiatives and activities;
- Identify and inventory tangible and intangible cultural assets;
- Identify human resources required to successfully implement, support, manage and grow the MCP in year one and beyond;
- Identify all other non-human resources required to manage and maintain cultural assets
- Identify cultural asset development projects that maximize impact for the destination over time.

The outcomes of the MCP intend to support:

- Strengthened creative economy, collaboration and creativity;
- Collaboration between various cultural sectors, including heritage, culture, and creative economy;
- Improved access to cultural and recreational amenities;
- Strengthened off-season economy and business sustainability;
- Mobilized business and community partnerships;
- Improved year-round cultural tourism.
- Improve cohesion and collaboration between cultural assets;
- Improved Asset Management and planning integration;
- Strengthened Creative Economy;
- Integration of cultural planning into Municipal planning and budgeting, including economic development, land use planning, urban design, downtown regeneration, neighborhood renewal, growth plans, population retention strategies (etc).

The MCP will guide Stratford's cultural scene for the next five years (2023 – 2028) and beyond.

The cultural planning process, led by Steps Public Art, was community-focused, inclusive, and dynamic. It included three phases (stages) being:

- Discovery Stage: November 2022 – January 2023
- Design Stage: January – February 2023
- Delivery Stage: February – April 2023

The engagement process for the MCP, (“Discovery Stage”), was designed to understand what culture means to Stratford, both now and in the future, and the goals of the engagement was to identify:

- The current governance and decision-making framework around culture;
- A shared vision for Stratford’s culture to be supported in the future;
- A cultural resource map and an understanding of strengths, challenges, and opportunities for cultural resources; and
- Challenges and opportunities for cultural development, through internal and external partnerships.

During the discovery stage, over 300 conversations were held, and 312 cultural resources were identified and mapped. Stakeholder groups were invited to participate in formal and informal ways, both in-person and online. Learning opportunities included:

- An exploratory tour of seven cultural resources
- Two focus groups
- One-on-one interviews
- A pop-up data gathering station in Market Square
- A youth data gathering activity
- A virtual community survey

Engagement activities included 46 direct interviews, 143 virtual community survey respondents, 40 data gathering station participants, 35 focus group attendees, and 31 youth data gathering participants.

Out of the discovery stage, the following components of the MCP were created, being:

- Vision Statement
- Mission Statement
- Guiding Principles
- Strategic Priorities (referred to as Pathways)
- Goals
- Recommendations

The 4 Pathways (strategic priorities) identified are:

1. Strive for Creativity and Innovation
2. Celebrate Diversity and Support Inclusion

3. Instill Community Pride through the Promotion of a Shared, Authentic Identity
4. Further Truth and Reconciliation

Goals are included under each Pathway to provide measurable objectives and monitor progress. For each goal, a set of recommendations and potential actions has been identified.

In total, the MCP outlines 15 goals, 44 recommendations, and 128 potential actions to consider when looking to achieve the goals and pathways.

When culture is supported through strategic policies and programs directed by cultural plans, the benefits can be wide-ranging. Municipalities, businesses, and communities realize wide-reaching social and economic benefits by supporting culture.

Also, supporting culture advances the decolonization process for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Cultural plans are one of the many tools that municipalities can use to carry out commitments presented in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action report. Actions guiding decolonization are listed in this Cultural Plan in Pathway 4: Further Truth and Reconciliation and outline how the City of Stratford can build relationships, honour treaties, acknowledge and respect Indigenous rights and titles, further education on Indigenous history and the intergenerational impacts of colonization, respect Indigenous beliefs, cultures, traditions, and worldviews, recognize and support the deep connections between Indigenous Peoples and the land, support reclamation of identity, language, culture, and nationhood, assume responsibility, and work towards a better future.

The Municipal Cultural Plan, presented before Council, highlights some of the valuable initiatives developed by community organizations and offers suggestions for how the community can support the vision.

Analysis: Through the discovery stage consultations, a localized definition of culture arose. This emphasized the City's unique industries and community makeup. Culture in Stratford was described as wide-ranging and diverse, and includes:

- Traditional creative industries such as theatre, music, visual and literary arts, dance, and film;
- The built and natural environment, including the many heritage and Victorian-era architecture and the extensive parks and trail systems;
- The culinary arts and dining industry, with various restaurants, breweries, and food markets;
- Both the historic and continuing industries in industrial, manufacturing, and agriculture;
- The diversity and creativity of its people;
- Unique businesses, organization, community groups; and
- Grassroots events, performances, and activations.

In response to the community engagements, the MCP outlines a road map to strengthen Stratford's cultural resources. Key recommendations to be implemented in the immediate term (1-2 years) includes:

1. Identify a governance structure to implement the Plan and collaborate between different organizational options for the City's cultural support (see "Determining Leadership for the Cultural Plan" in the final report).
2. Promote the Cultural Plan and the importance of culture widely across City departments and externally.
3. Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture.
4. Share Stratford's distinctive definition of culture widely to celebrate unique cultural initiatives.
5. Further relationships with equity-deserving groups and address barriers to cultural spaces and programming.
6. Continue to engage nearby First Nations and local Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals to understand barriers to cultural development and identify actions to further opportunities for Indigenous people and culture in Stratford.
7. Establish best practices for municipal departments to engage Indigenous communities.
8. Optimize local funding opportunities.
9. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development.
10. Foster a city-wide commitment to creating a welcoming and safe community that celebrates diversity.

The first step in actioning the MCP is the most important. It asks to identify an appropriate governance structure for overseeing its implementation. It is the recommendation of the steering committee, along with the consulting group Steps Public Art that leadership to the MCP belongs to the Municipality, where the plan would be governed and coordinated. The final report provides several examples of how responsibilities can be shared amongst different groups, both within the City and externally, and municipalities across Ontario have driven MCP's in several different ways.

The MCP is expected to be actioned across City departments and externally, and a **Designated Cultural Plan Leader** is required to oversee this work. The success of the plan's implementation is critically dependent upon sufficient resources being allocated, and current staffing levels may not be sufficient or may require additional analysis. It is recommended that a consultant be hired on a short-term to lead the first year priorities and actions of the Municipal Cultural Plan, and to propose a the most appropriate governance structure.

There will be future operating budget impacts and the MCP contains a matrix (Appendix C, Cultural Plan Matrix) of potential costs and timelines, contingent on the recommendations activated and where responsibilities are ultimately assigned.

In 2022, a one-time \$65,000 expense was added to the budget, to support the first initiatives of the MCP. As the City secured all external funds to support the development of the MCP, through Regional Tourism Organization #4 (RTO4), the \$65,000 available in the 2023 budget could be re-allocated to support the first priorities and initiatives of the plan, with no impact to the tax levy this year.

As the MCP outlines 15 goals, 44 recommendations, and 128 potential actions, the steering committee recommends using the \$65,000 to recruit a consultant, hired in the short-term, to lead the MCP's initial implementation to focus actions, organize a governance structure, recruit stakeholders, identify new funding sources, and provide key recommendations (listed above), to be considered and activated within the first year.

Financial Implications:

Financial impact to current year operating budget:

The City secured funding from the FedDev of Southern Ontario through the Regional Tourism Organization #4 (RTO4) to assist in the hiring of a consultant to complete the MCP. The grant covered 100% of this expense, and the project is within budget.

In 2023, \$65,000 has been budgeted for the MCP implementation.

Financial impact on future year operating budget:

Currently unknown. Future costs will require a detailed analysis from the Lead of the MCP to determine which recommendations to move ahead with from one year to the next.

Link to asset management plan and strategy:

There are none recommended in the near term beyond those captured in the 10 year forecast. Any future development of new venues or the improvements to existing facilities will be conditional on the recommendations from the MCP to be actioned, and a link to asset management plans and strategies will therefore be established.

Alignment with Strategic Priorities:

Mobility, Accessibility and Design Excellence

Improving ways to get around, to and from Stratford by public transit, active transportation, and private vehicle.

Strengthening our Plans, Strategies and Partnerships

Partnering with the community to make plans for our collective priorities in arts, culture, heritage and more. Communicating clearly with the public around our plans and activities.

Developing our Resources

Optimizing Stratford's physical assets and digital resources. Planning a sustainable future for Stratford's resources and environment.

Widening our Economic Opportunities

Strengthening Stratford's economy by developing, attracting, and retaining a diversity of businesses and talent.

Alignment with One Planet Principles:**Health and Happiness**

Encouraging active, social, meaningful lives to promote good health and wellbeing.

Equity and Local Economy

Creating safe, equitable places to live and work which support local prosperity and international fair trade.

Culture and Community

Nurturing local identity and heritage, empowering communities, and promoting a culture of sustainable living.

Staff Recommendation: THAT the Municipal Cultural Plan be received;

THAT the \$65,000 available in the 2023 budget be re-allocated to hire a consultant on a short-term to lead the first year priorities and actions of the Municipal Cultural Plan;

AND THAT the consultant and staff explore funding opportunities and partnerships to create an organizational structure and funding model for inclusion in the City of Stratford 2024 budget.

Prepared by:

Recommended by:

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