

steps

STRATFORD CULTURAL PATHWAYS: ENABLING CULTURAL OPPORTUNITY

**CITY OF STRATFORD
CULTURAL PLAN
2023 - 2028**



Avon River. Image by Little Big Creative.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We acknowledge that Stratford is positioned on the traditional territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples. As we gather, we are reminded that the City of Stratford is situated on treaty land that is steeped in rich Indigenous history and home to many First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples today. We acknowledge that Stratford is situated on land that was shared between the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe, and the Neutral (Attawandaron) peoples. We are grateful to have the opportunity to live, work, and play on this land.



Dutch Memorial. Image by Terry Manzo.

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The Stratford Municipal Cultural Plan was developed in partnership between the City of Stratford staff, a Steering Committee composed of diverse City and Destination Stratford staff and the consulting team from STEPS Public Art, in consultation with cultural organizations and residents from across Stratford.

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Ontario at Downie. Image by Big Little Creative.

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Veterans Drive Bandshell. Image by Terry Manzo.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Stratford Cultural Plan was initiated by the City of Stratford in partnership with Destination Stratford. It outlines priorities and defines a strategy to enable culture to thrive through actions that can be implemented in the next five years.

Stratford Cultural Pathways: Enabling Cultural Opportunity is the City of Stratford's Cultural Plan from 2023–2028. The Plan outlines a road map to strengthen Stratford's cultural resources. It presents a vision for what culture in Stratford could look like in the next five years, and a mission statement that describes how the vision will be achieved.

Vision: Stratford is a year-round cultural city cherished by residents and visitors alike, where cultural offerings celebrate diversity and inclusion and reflect the city's unique community values and heritage.

Mission: The Municipality will support cultural initiatives, assets, and opportunities that inclusively elevate the quality of life in Stratford for current and future generations.

Four Strategic Priorities, referred to as **Pathways**, have been identified as vital actions for realizing Stratford's vision for culture:

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.

The intended audience of the Cultural Plan is everyone in the Stratford community, including municipal officials and staff, organizations and businesses, and community members. The Cultural Plan’s success relies on dedicated collaboration from public, private, and non-profit sectors and community members. The vision, pathways, and goals listed in this Plan are to be worked towards collectively by everyone in Stratford, while recommendations and actions are directed at the Municipality, with the intention that they take a leadership role in identifying relevant partnerships to accomplish them.

Overview of Goals and Recommendations

In total, the Cultural Plan outlined 15 goals, 44 recommendations, and 128 potential actions to consider when looking to achieve the goals and pathways (see Appendix C on page 128 for the full Cultural Plan Matrix).

TABLE 1: OVERVIEW OF GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

PATHWAY 1: STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION	
GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Goal 1: Culture is considered and integrated into municipal processes and decision-making	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identify a governance structure to implement the Plan and arbitrate between different organizational options for the City’s cultural support 2. Promote the Cultural Plan and the importance of culture widely across City departments and externally 3. Integrate culture into future plans, strategies, and documents 4. Involve creatives in city-building processes
Goal 2: The cultural sector supports the livelihood of creatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Optimize local funding opportunities 2. Provide support to increase the amount of available funds for local cultural organizations and initiatives 3. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development
Goal 3: Collaboration is fostered amongst the cultural sector, related industries, and the Municipality	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships between private, public, and non-profit sectors 2. Support partnerships and communication amongst creatives and cultural organizations
Goal 4: Stratford aims to be a livable city that attracts and retains creatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building 2. Provide support for cultural businesses and organizations through capacity-building opportunities 3. Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events

PATHWAY 2: CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT INCLUSION

GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Goal 1: Relationships and support networks are fostered between equity-deserving groups	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Further relationships with equity-deserving groups and address barriers to cultural spaces and programming2. Provide opportunities for community members from equity-deserving communities to influence Council and local decision-making
Goal 2: Cultural experiences and spaces aim to reduce physical, social, and financial barriers	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces2. Model best practices for accessibility3. Promote accessibility-related initiatives4. Foster a city-wide commitment to creating a welcoming community that celebrates diversity5. Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events
Goal 3: Cultural initiatives reflect a diversity of communities' desires and needs	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture2. Identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures

PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY

GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Goal 1: Stratford’s definition of culture is recognized and celebrated by the community	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Share Stratford’s distinctive definition of culture widely to celebrate unique cultural initiatives 2. Support the development of events, festivals, and initiatives fitting Stratford’s definition of culture 3. Engage community members through increasing opportunities for residents to weigh in on key cultural projects, and on public art projects
Goal 2: Culture in Stratford strives to engage residents and visitors year-round	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round 2. Support opportunities that bring culture beyond the downtown core 3. Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford
Goal 3: Stratford’s history and heritage are honoured and recognized as the city evolves into the future	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Support the protection of Stratford’s built heritage 2. Promote Stratford’s history and heritage 3. Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art
Goal 4: Local talent and creatives of a wide variety of disciplines are recognized and celebrated	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city 2. Encourage events, festivals, businesses, and organizations to support local creatives
Goal 5: Cultural resources, events, and opportunities are well-known both within and beyond the city’s borders	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture 2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture 3. Increase wayfinding and encourage walkability and connectivity between cultural sites

PATHWAY 4: FURTHER TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

GOALS	RECOMMENDATIONS
Goal 1: Relationships are further developed with Indigenous communities, organizations, and people	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. 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 Stratford2. Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities3. Increase opportunities for Indigenous communities to be engaged in planning and decision-making processes
Goal 2: Local Indigenous culture is promoted and celebrated	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Share information about Indigenous creatives, organizations, and businesses2. Continue developing programming around Indigenous days of significance3. Increase the visibility of Indigenous peoples, culture, and traditions
Goal 3: Indigenous voices, histories, traditions, and cultures are well-known, respected, and integrated throughout the city	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history2. Support identifying and recognizing Indigenous places and stories3. Support opportunities for Indigenous communities to steward the land and support conservation

The Municipal Cultural Plan was developed with the aim of:

- **Fostering local pride** by creating a great sense of community, supporting community empowerment, and reducing social exclusion;
- **Growing the creative sector and facilitating economic development** by fostering cross-sectoral partnerships, supporting the livelihoods of cultural organizations and creatives, increasing awareness and visibility of local culture, and developing larger audiences;
- **Promoting social well-being** through supporting and improving cultural initiatives, programs and policies that meet the needs and desires of diverse community members; and
- **Committing to policy creation based on sound research and evidence** that helps support the benefits of culture so that these benefits are continuously felt throughout the community.

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.

Social benefits of culture include improving mental and physical well-being, such as relieving social isolation. Culture brings people together and builds social bonds, creating a sense of place and community pride, as well as fostering understanding and respect for other types of cultures.

The economic benefits of culture are well-recognized worldwide. In the Canadian context, the cultural sector generated \$57.1 billion, or around 2.7% of Canada's GDP, in 2019. When the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in significant job loss, event and business closures, and instability in creative industries, the Canadian government dedicated hundreds of thousands of dollars to support the sector's recovery and continued growth. The benefits of culture are also felt throughout Stratford's local context, specifically in terms of tourism activity. The tourism industry in Stratford attracts 1.7 million visitors each year, with cultural activities a key driver for visitors.¹ For example, the Stratford Festival annually draws nearly half a million visitors, generates more than \$140 million in economic activity for the community, and produces \$55 million in taxes to all three levels of government.

1 "Stratford Festival: How theatre transformed a community's economy and identity," Ontario Arts Council, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.arts.on.ca/artsaddvalue/stratford-festival/>

Supporting culture is also key in advancing 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 development of this Cultural Plan was thoughtfully created to ensure the benefits of culture mentioned above are sustained and increased throughout the community. To successfully achieve this, it is also important to consider the current cultural trends that will influence culture over the coming years and ensure the Culture Plan continues to support these trends.

Global trends in response to the COVID-19 pandemic that will shape the cultural sector include:

- **Enhanced emphasis on the culture sector's social value:** culture and its social worth will be further recognized as key to enhancing communities and promoting cultural rights for all;
- **Growing awareness of the importance of ensuring the livelihoods of arts and cultural professions:** the vulnerability of cultural workers is recognized and economic support mechanisms and social safety nets are developed to protect and support the social and economic sustainability of cultural workers. This includes safeguarding income, jobs, and social security of cultural workers;
- **Rise of collaboration and increased sectoral solidarity,** which emphasizes the importance of collaboration and partnerships to building cultural industries that are resilient and stimulate innovation;
- **Accelerated adoption of digital practices and techniques:** digital technologies were already changing the cultural landscape, but the COVID-19 pandemic exponentially accelerated the use of technology in culture. This trend will continue to lead to new ways of creation, production, distribution, and access to culture. However, barriers associated with digital literacy should be addressed; and
- **Adaptation of strategic operational and business models and practices across the value chain** to ensure that cultural industries are sustainable and resilient against impacts (such as COVID-19) by building systems that allow creatives and organizations to pivot in the face of challenges or change easily.

In addition to global trends, cultural trends on the local scale include:

- **Globalization**, which provides increasing opportunities for culture to cross regions, encouraging the co-creating and co-production of cultural products across cultures and places; and
- **Changing demographics**, which lead to increased cultural diversity and fuels creative economies. This creates competitive and innovative environments where creatives and cultural organizations want to live.

In addition to framing the Cultural Plan with a broad understanding of cultural benefits and trends, the Plan was shaped through a community-driven approach rooted in Stratford's unique definition of culture, current trends, planning and policy, and community insights.

The Plan's development was informed by research and community engagement conducted in the Discovery Phase of Stratford's cultural planning process from November 2022 to January 2023. During this period, over 300 conversations were held across six engagement activities, which included seven exploratory tour visits, 35 focus group attendees, 46 direct interview engagements, over 40 data gathering station participants, 31 youth data gathering engagements, and 143 survey respondents. Those engaged included internal City stakeholders, cultural resource managers, creatives, and other residents.

Through the Discovery Phase 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.

Keeping this definition in mind, the consultation included the identification and mapping of over 300 cultural resources. This brought to light the strengths, challenges, opportunities, and community desires for culture in Stratford.

In response to the engagements, the Cultural Plan outlines a road map to strengthen Stratford's cultural resources.

Key recommendations that should be implemented within the first year include:

1. **Identify a governance structure** to implement the Plan and arbitrate between different organizational options for the City’s cultural support (see “Determining Leadership for the Cultural Plan” below).
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.

Finally, although the Cultural Plan focuses primarily on a municipal strategy for culture, community-led actions are vital for the development and maintenance of culture. As such, the Cultural Plan highlights some of the valuable initiatives developed by community organizations and offers suggestions for how the community can support the vision.

Determining Leadership for the Cultural Plan

The first step in actioning the Cultural Plan will be to identify an appropriate governance structure for overseeing its implementation.

While the Cultural Plan will be implemented across departments and externally, **Designated Cultural Plan Leader(s)** should be selected to oversee this work. Leadership should arise within the Municipality, where the Cultural Plan can be governed by the Recreation Division within the Community Services Department. Within the Recreation Division, a Cultural Coordinator position should be developed. The key roles of the Cultural Coordinator include:

- Coordinate and oversee the implementation of and reporting on the Cultural Plan's recommendations and well as special projects that relate to culture.
- Educate municipal departments, external stakeholders, and community members on the Cultural Plan.
- Develop and maintain partnerships with external stakeholders to facilitate the Cultural Plan's implementation.
- Coordinate the creation of a communication strategy dedicated to the Cultural Plan and culture.
- Outline the annual budget for the Cultural Plan and cultural initiatives.
- Assist with the planning of cultural events and festivals, including networking events.
- Assist in the development of relevant policies and procedures relating to culture.

As the role of culture within the Municipality continues to develop, additional team members and structures may need to be considered.

The Cultural Coordinator will work closely with arm's length and key external organizations to design specific action plans that respond to and support implementing the Cultural Plan. This includes Municipal advisory Committees and boards, arm's length organizations including Destination Stratford, and key external partners.

The Cultural Coordinator should also determine the governance structure that will support the Cultural Plan's implementation. The following table includes examples of how responsibilities can be shared amongst different groups. Rather than selecting one of the following structures, a dynamic approach can be used to select and adapt the following options based on evaluating current needs.

TABLE 2: GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE TYPES FOR IMPLEMENTING THE CULTURAL PLAN

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Cultural Division / Department</p>	<p>Within a Cultural Division or Department, municipal staff advise on policy recommendations relating to culture, oversee the public funding of culture, liaise with Council and Municipal departments, oversee the delivery of cultural programs and projects, and track the progress of the Cultural Plan. Cultural Divisions range in size from a few employees to multi-levelled organizational structures. Cultural Divisions often work closely with external partners and service providers to fulfill their duties. Roles within Cultural Divisions typically include a Manager of Culture, Culture Coordinator, Public Art Officer, and other specialized roles depending on the services overseen.</p>	<p>Culture Department: City of Orillia Business Development, Culture, and Tourism Department</p> <p>This municipal department oversees business development, culture, and tourism services. Within the department, cultural staff develop municipal policies, programs, and plans that aim to support and strengthen the cultural sector. Cultural staff include the Director of Development, Culture, and Tourism, the Manager of Culture, the Museum Coordinator, and the Orillia Opera House General Manager.</p> <p>Cultural Services Division: City of St. Catharines Cultural Services</p> <p>The City of St. Catharines has a Community, Recreation and Cultural Services department that oversees cultural services alongside recreational and leisure programs, as well as parks and facility services. Within this Department, the Cultural Services office oversees the management of civic art, delivery of public art programs, delivery of cultural funding programs, City cultural awards, and plans and policies related to culture, as well as providing capacity-building initiatives for the cultural sector. The Cultural Services Team includes the Director of Community, Recreation and Culture Services, the Manager of Recreational Programs and Cultural Services, the Culture Supervisor, and Culture Coordinators.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Cultural Advisory Committee</p>	<p>Volunteer committees are created to advise the City Council and decision-makers on decisions affecting culture and assist with developing policy recommendations. Volunteer committees also play a role in advocating for the cultural sector.</p>	<p>Cultural Advisory Committee: City of Pickering Cultural Advisory Committee</p> <p>The City of Pickering Cultural Advisory Committee consists of ten members of the public who represent a broad range of experiences and interests in the cultural sector, along with City staff from the Community Services Department. Terms for members of the Committee are two years, and members meet monthly. The role of the Committee is to provide input on cultural services, including assisting and advising City staff on the implementation of the Cultural Strategic Plan, developing policies relating to culture, and evaluating cultural development. The Committee also builds relationships with key stakeholders, advocates and promotes the value and benefit of culture widely, reports to Council and provides consultation, research, and reporting to aid decision-making.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Arts Council or Organization</p>	<p>Arts councils and organizations can be founded internally within governments or exist as non-profit organizations that operate independently or as arm's length from a municipality. Their role is to promote and increase awareness of the cultural sector and its value, educate civic leaders in cultural policy, fund cultural projects, organize events, and provide skill-building and training workshops.</p>	<p>Municipally Created Arts Organization: Brampton Arts Organization incubated by the City of Brampton</p> <p>The Brampton Arts Organization (BAO) was incubated under the City of Brampton Cultural Services in 2021 to aid in implementing the City's Culture Master Plan along with achieving the City's 2040 Vision and Council Priorities. BAO is focused on growing, celebrating, and advocating for and connecting the cultural sector. They achieve this by delivering a wide range of programs, services, and resources. BAO's events provide networking or capacity-building opportunities, while initiatives aim to showcase local creatives. While BAO currently operates within the City, its goal is to transition into an arm's length arts organization.</p> <p>Arm's Length Arts Council operating in Partnership with the Municipality and Local Partners: Guelph Arts Council</p> <p>The Guelph Arts Council works with local partners to deliver cultural events and services. Examples include partnering with the City of Guelph to distribute micro-grants for artistic and community projects. Other programs include Art on the Street, a cultural street festival in partnership with the Downtown Guelph Business Association, Guelph Emerging Artist Mentorship Project in partnership with the University of Guelph School of Fine Art and Music, and the Artist in Residence Program, co-created with local organization 10C.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Arts Council or Organization</p>		<p>Arm’s Length Arts Council Working in Partnership with a municipality to Distribute Municipal Funds: Oakville Arts Council</p> <p>The Oakville Arts Council is a not-for-profit charitable organization that aims to foster community engagement in the arts and champion artistic development. This is achieved by hosting events, workshops, and raising awareness of arts and culture among the community and municipal leaders. The Oakville Arts Council also administers operating and project grants to not-for-profit cultural organizations on behalf of the Town of Oakville. Over the 33-year period of the arts council, 64 cultural organizations have benefited from receiving approximately \$2.3 million in support.</p> <p>Arm’s Length Arts Council Operating through Varied Funding Streams to Deliver Wide-Ranging Services and Programs: County Arts, Prince Edward County Arts Council</p> <p>County Arts enriches Prince Edward County’s community by developing events and programs that support creatives and community members through promotion, relationship building, and skill development to ensure the social and health benefits of art are felt throughout the community. Their role is to provide funding and professional development opportunities for artists while acting as an advocate on behalf of the arts sector. County Arts is funded through multiple streams, including local, provincial, and federal grants, as well as memberships, philanthropy, and grants from other foundations and funding sources. This allows County Arts to provide programs including their Artist Fund, Indigenous Voices Fund, Artist Residency program, County Arts Lab and other programs.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Third-Party Cultural Providers</p>	<p>The purpose of identifying third-party providers is to outsource certain activities, programs, and projects to experts (e.g., suppliers) for them to deliver the services on behalf of the municipality. Suppliers are selected based on the City’s Purchasing Policy through requests for proposals, tenders, quotations, and inquiries for goods and services.</p>	<p>Municipality Working with Third-Party Providers to Deliver Municipal Services and Programs: City of Toronto Economic Development and Culture Division Outsourcing Cultural Communications</p> <p>The City of Toronto conducted ArtworxTO: Toronto’s Year of Public Art 2021–2022. To promote the project, the City developed a targeted campaign; however, the City’s traditional social media platforms did not specifically share information specific to culture. To fulfill the communications strategy, the City of Toronto hired STEPS Public Art to deliver the promotional campaign using their social media platform and tools.</p> <p>Municipality Working with Third-Party Providers to Deliver Municipal Services and Programs: City of Toronto Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs)</p> <p>Local Arts Service Organizations (LASOs) are organizations that are funded in part by the City of Toronto to support the City’s Strong Neighbourhoods Strategy by providing inclusive and affordable cultural opportunities for local residents, artists, and arts organizations. LASOs work on behalf of the City of Toronto and focus on providing services and support to underserved children, youth, and other participants from a broad demographic spectrum. These organizations are seen as key tools for the City to build healthy and cohesive communities that imbed art and culture into daily life.</p>

IMPLEMENTATION MODEL	DESCRIPTION / ROLE	EXAMPLES
<p>Pre-selected Roster of Third-Party Cultural Providers</p>	<p>The purpose of identifying third-party cultural providers is to outsource certain activities, programs, and projects to experts (e.g., suppliers) for them to deliver the services on behalf of the municipality. While cultural providers can be obtained through standard procurement processes (e.g., a request for proposals), an alternative method is to develop a roster of qualified experts to help streamline and expedite the procurement process. A roster allows a municipality to select pre-qualified experts to deliver specific tasks. This procurement process can then go through an informal request for proposals process where the opportunity is shared with the roster or specific organizations on the roster to respond to indicate their interest. Alternatively, the municipality can select one supplier to fulfill the work if they feel their expertise suits the project's mandate.</p>	<p>The purpose of identifying third-party cultural providers is to outsource certain activities, programs, and projects to experts (e.g., suppliers) for them to deliver the services on behalf of the municipality. While cultural providers can be obtained through standard procurement processes (e.g., a request for proposals), an alternative method is to develop a roster of qualified experts to help streamline and expedite the procurement process. A roster allows a municipality to select pre-qualified experts to deliver specific tasks. This procurement process can then go through an informal request for proposals process where the opportunity is shared with the roster or specific organizations on the roster to respond to indicate their interest. Alternatively, the municipality can select one supplier to fulfill the work if they feel their expertise suits the project's mandate.</p>

SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT





Educators for Drama. Image by Terry Manzo.

INTRODUCTION— CULTURAL PLANNING

Defining Cultural Planning

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.² 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. These sections offer key directions for the Stratford community to work together to achieve the common vision.

² “Cultural Planning,” Government of Ontario, updated March 28, 2022, <https://www.ontario.ca/page/cultural-planning>

Definitions

Cultural Resources: *Places or things that reflect or produce culture. There are two types: intangible and tangible.*

Intangible Cultural Resource: *This includes traditions, rituals, and stories that help to define a community's unique identity and sense of place.*

Tangible Cultural Resources: *Physical spaces such as theatres, venues, gallery spaces, events, and places of worship.*

City or City of Stratford: *When the 'c' is capitalized, this refers to the municipal corporation of the City of Stratford, including the Mayor and all staff.*

city or city of Stratford: *When the 'c' is lowercase, this refers to the geographical region known as Stratford.*

GRAPHIC 1: COMPONENTS OF A CULTURAL PLAN

Vision Statement: The vision statement is a broad description of how Stratford aspires to see culture evolve 5–10 years from now. The vision involves everyone in Stratford working together to achieve it.

Mission Statement: The mission statement is from the point of view of the Municipality (i.e., the City of Stratford) and it broadly describes how the City will support achieving the vision for culture.

Guiding Principles: Guiding principles are values that establish a framework for guiding actions that support the defined vision.

Strategic Priorities (referred to as Pathways in this Cultural Plan): Pathways are areas of high importance for how culture can evolve and integrate into the city's fabric. The strategic priorities connect to and build upon each other, creating a holistic framework for Stratford to collectively work towards achieving its vision for culture.

Goals: Goals are measurable objectives included under each Pathway to monitor progress. The Municipality and private, public, and non-profit sectors, as well as the community, can collaboratively work towards goals.

Recommendations: Recommendations provide advice on options for how the Municipality can work towards each goal. The Municipality works together with community partners to implement actions, choosing specific actions presented in this plan that best align with evolving needs and resources available. Actions are further clarified through methods and tactics for consideration.

A cultural plan draws upon research as well as community consultation to identify existing challenges, barriers, and gaps in the local cultural sector as well as opportunities for how the City, community partners, and residents can work together to allow culture to flourish and meet the wider needs of the community. The **benefits** of creating and implementing a cultural plan include:

- Fostering Local Pride
 - » Building a greater sense of community through combating social exclusion
 - » Supporting community empowerment
 - » Collectively developing a sense of pride of place
- Growing the Creative Sector and Facilitating Economic Development
 - » Supporting a sustainable creative sector by creating partnerships and communication networks among arts and cultural groups
 - » Increasing awareness and access to cultural activities
 - » Developing cultural facilities
 - » Sustaining or increasing levels of public and private funding for culture
 - » Developing larger audiences to support artistic and economic development
 - » Improving the visibility of the arts and culture community. This in turn contributes to increasing the quality of life for residents and facilitates economic benefits for the region.
- Promoting Social Well-Being
 - » Developing strong local leadership and promoting social cohesion by creating a democratic cultural policy and initiatives that meet the needs and desires of the local community
 - » Improving programs and services that respond to community needs
- Committing to policy-making based on sound research and evidence

“Great cities are defined by their culture. They are defined by their history—through their local heritage, museums and archives, historic buildings, festivals, food, and local traditions. But a great city is also defined by its contemporary culture—its artists and arts venues, film and television, music and games, photography and crafts, fashion and design, and buzzing informal offerings from skate parks to restaurants, pubs, and night clubs.”³ –Greater London Authority

3 Unesco, “Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development” (2016), 161, http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-for-sustainable-urban-development/pdf-open/global-report_en.pdf

Stratford’s Cultural Planning Process

Stratford’s Cultural Plan will aim to create a community-wide strategy with identified goals and recommendations to be implemented over the next five years and beyond.

The cultural planning process adopted by Stratford was community-focused, inclusive, and dynamic. It was composed of the following three phases:

GRAPHIC 2: THE THREE PHASES OF DEVELOPING STRATFORD’S MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLAN



The goal of the cultural planning process was to identify the following:

- A governance and decision-making framework
- Challenges and opportunities for cross-department synergies
- Opportunities for internal and external partnerships
- An asset map of Stratford’s cultural resources
- A shared vision, mission, and guiding principles to guide and inform the future of culture in Stratford

This Cultural Plan will guide Stratford’s culture for the next five years and beyond. Throughout and after the 5-year time period, progress towards the goals and vision will be assessed to guide future decision-making. After the 5-year period, a full evaluation should be completed to determine the next 5–10 year cultural plan and address shifting priorities or changes to the community-led vision for culture.

OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The engagement process for the Cultural Plan was led by the consultant STEPS Public Art and was designed to understand what culture means to Stratford, both now and in the future.

The engagement goals were 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.

To guide this process, a Steering Committee was created, which included City Staff and Destination Stratford.



Stratford Cultural Plan Community Engagement In-person Focus Group, Cultural Resource Mapping Activity. Image by STEPS Public Art.

To gain a holistic understanding of the current cultural landscape and identify gaps and opportunities for how culture in Stratford can move forward, the following four key stakeholder groups were engaged:

- City staff, Councillors, and the Mayor, as well as former Councillors and Mayor whose terms ended in November 2022;
- Cultural Resource Managers (i.e., businesses, organizations, galleries and museums, educational institutions, events and festival organizers, and educators);
- Creatives (i.e., curators, artists, performers, musicians, producers); and
- Members of the public (i.e., residents, workforce members, students and visitors).

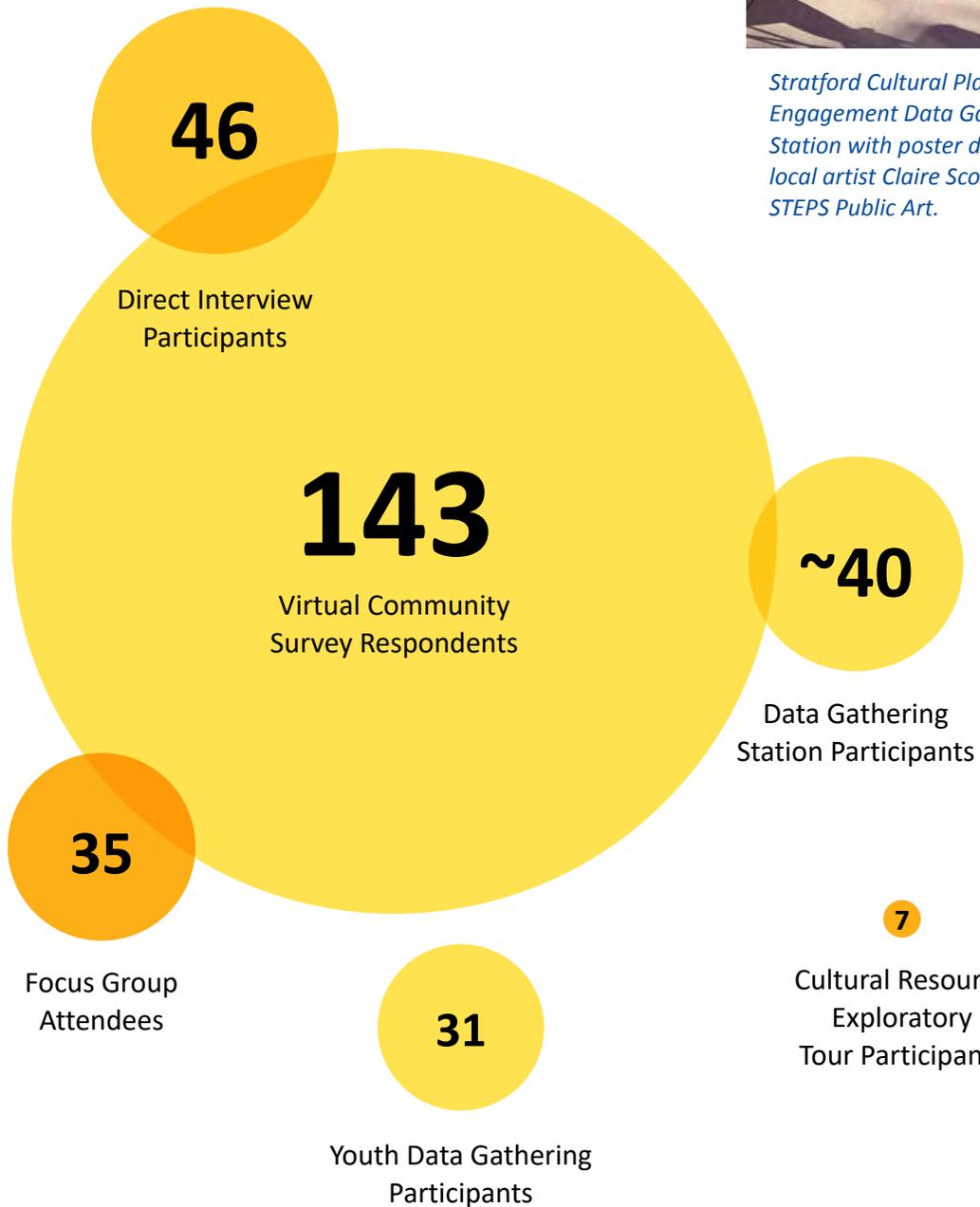
Stakeholder groups were engaged in various ways that involved formal and informal gatherings, both in-person and online. Opportunities for engagement and learning included:

- An exploratory tour of seven cultural resources;
- Two focus groups, one hosted online with municipal stakeholders, and one hosted in-person with external cultural resource managers and creatives;
- One-on-one interviews with both internal and external stakeholders;
- One pop-up data gathering station that asked community members to engage in a series of activities to learn more about their experiences with and desires for culture in Stratford (this activity, held at Stratford Market Square during Downtown Stratford BIA's Winter Wander-land event, met the community in a place where residents and visitors organically gathered and connected);
- One youth data gathering activity which asked Stratford youth to share a creative piece that reflected or provided insight into Stratford's current culture or to share a vision for how Stratford could be more culturally alive in the future; and
- One virtual community survey, which was published on engagestratford.ca.

Insights gathered from stakeholders were integrated into a new vision, guiding principles, and priorities for the Cultural Plan presented here.

GRAPHIC 3: SUMMARY OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

DEFINING CULTURE IN STRATFORD



Stratford Cultural Plan Community Engagement Data Gathering Station with poster designed by local artist Claire Scott. Image by STEPS Public Art.

Culture is challenging to define as it is based on a particular group of people and their behaviours, beliefs, and values. The idea of culture can change as it is influenced by factors such as time and place, perceptions, and experiences.

To help define what culture means in Stratford, we asked, “When thinking about Stratford and the word ‘culture,’ what immediately comes to mind?” While each person has a unique experience and understanding of culture in Stratford, key sentiments were shared about what culture means to the Stratford community.

When people were asked to think about culture and Stratford, what overwhelmingly came to mind was theatre and the Stratford Festival, a well-established institution. However, people also often emphasized that culture in Stratford is expressed in a much wider range of traditional and non-traditional forms beyond this flagship event. Culture in Stratford includes traditional creative industries such as music, visual and literary arts, dance, and film, as well as built heritage and Victorian-era architecture. There is also a strong culinary arts and dining industry, with various restaurants, breweries, and food markets. The community also emphasized the importance of recognizing the city’s heritage and foundations in industrial, manufacturing, and agriculture and how these industries continue to be significant contributors to Stratford’s culture today.

Other important references to Stratford’s culture included:

- The parks and trails system, including the Avon River, gardening, and horticulture
- The diversity and creativity of its people and community members
- Local businesses, organizations, and community groups
- Grassroots events, performances, and activations



Avon River. Image by Little Big Creative.

Who is Missing in Stratford’s Culture?

When defining Stratford’s culture, we asked, “what and who is missing.” Overwhelmingly, we heard that while Stratford is becoming an increasingly diverse community, Stratford’s cultural offerings lack diversity, and do not adequately include equity-deserving communities such as Indigenous, Black, and racialized people, newcomers, 2SLGBTQQIA+ community members, and youth. These groups do not have adequate cultural representation, support, and/or opportunities that align with their interests, needs, and desires. There was a strong request to establish diversity and inclusion as a key part of Stratford’s cultural strategy.

Definition

Equity-deserving communities and groups: “Equity-[deserving] groups are communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation, transgender status, etc. Equity-[deserving] groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities, and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.”⁴ —Canada Council for the Arts

4 Canada Council for the Arts, “equity-seeking groups.”
<https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups>



Large Bull Sculpture. Image by Terry Manzo.

CULTURE AS VITAL

“Culture is key to what makes cities attractive, creative, and sustainable. History shows that culture is at the heart of urban development, evidenced through cultural landmarks, heritage and traditions. Without culture, cities as vibrant life-spaces do not exist; they are merely concrete and steel constructions, prone to social degradation and fracture. It is culture that makes the difference.”⁵

—UNESCO

Culture is ever-present in our daily lives. It is ingrained into the fabric of our beings and our communities and embedded in the places in which we live, work, and play. This all stems from the innate human desire to create, as culture is expressed through storytelling, movement, food, and ways of being.

Since culture has always been with us, one might ask, “how does culture impact our lives today, and why should municipalities invest in, and provide support for, local culture?” One answer is that support for culture—carried out through a robust cultural plan—leads to creating and nurturing places that are environmentally, economically, socially, and culturally sustainable.

5 UNESCO, “Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development” (2016), 17
http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-for-sustainable-urban-development/pdf-open/global-Report_en.pdf

Social Benefits

Culture has wide-ranging social benefits for individuals and the places in which they live.

Engagement in creativity can improve mental and physical well-being through imaginative exploration, relieving isolation and promoting identity formation and deep understanding and respect for all cultures. This is especially important to those in society who experience social isolation, such as older populations. There are also benefits for children and youth, as engagement in culture can enhance educational outcomes and performance through developing creative and critical thinking skills and building self-esteem.⁶

Culture acts as a means to bring people together. Activities such as festivals, workshops, and performances can lead to forming social bonds and fostering social inclusion, community empowerment, and capacity-building, as well as enhancing confidence, civic pride, volunteerism, and tolerance. Creativity can help inform one's identity and the identity of places around them, fostering a community's sense of place. This sense of belonging inspires people to be more involved in decision-making processes to contribute to improving the places in which they live.⁷



*Falstaff Family Centre.
Image by Falstaff Family Centre.*

“Culture is both a key tool and a core aspect of the social fabric, promoting cohesion, conviviality, and citizenship.”⁸
—United Cities of Local Governments, 2016

- 6 Unesco, “Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development” (2016), 17, http://www.unesco.org/culture/culture-for-sustainable-urban-development/pdf-open/global-Report_en.pdf
- 7 Alice Muirhead and Sarah de Leeuw, “Art and wellness: The Importance of Art For Aboriginal Peoples’ Health and Healing” (2012), <https://www.ccsa-nccah.ca/docs/emerging/FS-ArtWellness-Muirhead-deLeeuw-EN.pdf>
- 8 Nancy Duxbury et al., “Why must culture be at the heart of sustainable urban development?” (Culture 21: Agenda 21 for Culture, 2016), https://www.agenda21culture.net/sites/default/files/files/documents/en/culture_sd_cities_web.pdf

Economic Benefits

The economic benefits of culture are recognized worldwide: creating and retaining jobs; enhancing competitiveness and attracting talent and businesses; and spurring tourism economies. Cities of all sizes around the world look towards supporting culture as a means of progressing sustainable development.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted the vulnerability of various industries and deeply affected the cultural sector, with approximately 10 million jobs lost in 2020 alone and estimated revenue losses of 20–40 percent worldwide.⁹ However, recovery is underway, with dedicated support from multiple levels of government. Since 2020, the Government of Canada has provided hundreds of millions of dollars to arts, culture, heritage, and sports. In 2022, the Government of Canada invested \$50 million to support Canadian arts, culture, and heritage organizations that experienced losses during the pandemic. This was part of a two-year, \$300 million Recovery Fund for the Arts, Culture, Heritage, and Sport Sectors and a \$200 million Reopening Fund from the 2021 Budget.¹⁰

“Canada’s cultural sector has shown incredible resilience in the face of COVID-19. We can’t wait for arts organizations and workers to stage more performances and events, welcome back audiences, and rebuild revenues. Our arts, culture, and heritage organizations contribute to our economy in important ways, especially in drawing tourists and creating jobs in communities big and small throughout the country. We will always be there to support the arts.”¹¹

—Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage

This recognition and support for culture is based on the positive outcomes cultural industries have on the Canadian economy and quality of life for Canadians. While the following statistics are pulled from reports in 2019, and cultural landscapes have significantly evolved since then, this information provides valuable insights into the impact of the cultural sector.

9 Unesco, “Culture in times of COVID-19: resilience, recovery and revival” (2022), <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000381524.locale=en>

10 Government of Canada, “Targeted recovery support for Canadian arts, culture and heritage organizations to help welcome back audiences and boost revenues,” June 27, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3Z8iOj0>

11 Government of Canada, “Targeted recovery support for Canadian arts, culture and heritage organizations to help welcome back audiences and boost revenues,” June 27, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3Zco8BR>



*Lights On Stratford City Hall Bus.
Image by Little Big Creative.*

In 2019, the cultural sector generated \$57.1 billion or around 2.7% of Canada’s GDP (whereas sports industries only made up 0.2% of Canada’s GDP in 2019).¹² Cultural sector industries were also an important source of economic growth, generating approximately 673,000 jobs in 2019.¹³

In 2019, the arts and culture sector in Ontario represented \$28.7 billion or 3.5% of the province’s GDP. It helped create 301,495 jobs in Ontario. Being the largest province in Canada by population, Ontario was responsible for 48% of the total GDP of Canada’s cultural products and 43% of Canada’s cultural jobs in 2019. Ontario’s cultural products also grew, with a 31% increase, between 2010 and 2019.¹⁴

Stratford is very familiar with the economic benefits that come from the cultural sector. The Stratford Festival attracts nearly half a million visitors each year, generating more than \$140 million in economic activity for the community annually and \$55 million in taxes to all three levels of government. While the Festival is a historic institution and has been in operation since 1953, newer festivals also contribute to the local economy. For example, Lights on Stratford launched in 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic, and attracted over 80,000 visitors in its second year, generating over \$5 million in economic benefits to the region.¹⁵ Overall, the tourism industry in Stratford now supports 1.7 million visitors each year,¹⁶ and the arts and culture sector currently represents 4000 jobs in the regional economy.¹⁷

12 Statistics Canada, “Provincial and Territorial Cultural Indicators, 2019,” May 27, 2021, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/daily-quotidien/210527/dq210527b-eng.htm>

13 Canadian Heritage, “Government of Canada Concludes Highly Successful Creative Industries Trade Mission to Europe,” May 20, 2022, <http://bit.ly/3kHjcG5>

14 Ontario Arts Council, “Economic Contribution of Arts and Culture in Ontario,” May 27, 2021, <http://bit.ly/3xZRml9>

15 See the Lights on Stratford website: <https://bit.ly/3SJheSf>

16 “Stratford Festival: How theatre transformed a community’s economy and identity,” Ontario Arts Council, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.arts.on.ca/artsaddvalue/stratford-festival/>

17 Perth County Government, “Perth County Investor Community Profile” (2014), <https://www.perthcounty.ca/en/doing-business/resources/files/County-Fact-Profile.pdf>



Culture and Reconciliation, Decolonization, and Indigenization

Reconciliation in Canada is the ongoing process of reaffirming and revitalizing relationships with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples. Reconciliation is the making of transformational change in the lives of Indigenous Peoples, and it involves recognition of rights, respect, cooperation, and partnership.¹⁸ Today, one of the key commitments guiding reconciliation is the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action report, which includes 94 actions for federal, provincial, and municipal governments, along with Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, to carry out as a commitment to reconciliation.

One of the ways municipalities can work towards reconciliation is through the development and implementation of a cultural plan.

For First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, culture is “simultaneously art, creative expression, religious practice, ritual models and markers of governance structures and territorial heritage, as well as maps of individual and community identity and lineage.”¹⁹ However, colonization and residential schools sought to destroy Indigenous culture and caused significant, ongoing harm to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities.

Cultural plans can further reconciliation through: building relationships; honouring treaties; acknowledging and respecting Indigenous rights and titles; furthering education on Indigenous history and the intergenerational impacts of colonization; respecting Indigenous beliefs, cultures, traditions, and worldviews; recognizing and supporting the deep connections between Indigenous Peoples and the land; supporting reclamation of identity, language, culture, and nationhood; assuming responsibility; and working towards a better future.²⁰

18 “The Importance of Culture,” Government of Ontario, updated June 2, 2022, <https://bit.ly/3J09aJu>

19 Government of Canada, “Principles respecting the Government of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous peoples” (September 1, 2021), <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/csj-sjc/principles-principes.html>

20 “What Reconciliation Is And What It Is Not,” Indigenous Corporate Training, Inc., August 16, 2018, <https://www.ictinc.ca/blog/what-reconciliation-is-and-what-it-is-not>

Cultural plans also support decolonization and indigenization, two actions that are intrinsically tied to reconciliation. Decolonization involves the removal of colonial structures to enable Indigenous Peoples to reclaim and restore their culture, land, language, relationships, and health, both independently and with the support of non-Indigenous people.²¹ Indigenization involves examining existing societal power dynamics in order to rebalance and return Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous ways of knowing and doing to be equal to Western methods.

Implementing cultural plans can aid in systemically reconstructing relationships, power dynamics, and conceptions of land, enabling Indigenous Peoples and cultures to thrive through the reclamation of identity, language, culture, and nationhood.

21 “What is Decolonization? What is Indigenization?,” Queen’s University Centre for Teaching and Learning, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.queensu.ca/ctl/resources/decolonizing-and-indigenizing/what-decolonization-what-indigenization>

Key Trends Moving Culture Forward

UNESCO points to five trends that will shape the cultural sector in response to the COVID-19 pandemic²²:

- 1. Enhanced emphasis on the cultural sector's social value** - Culture has a vital role in the lives of people and communities through supporting mental health and building social inclusion. During the pandemic, creatives and the cultural sector were able to provide human-centered responses during times of crisis and played the roles of both advocates and providers of social value. Moving forward, culture and its social worth should be recognized as key to enhancing communities and promoting cultural rights for all.
- 2. Growing awareness of the importance of ensuring the livelihoods of arts and culture professions** - Compared to other sectors, cultural sector workers tend to be self-employed. COVID-19 demonstrated the vulnerability of these workers, who often have limited economic support mechanisms and social safety nets. Increasing collective awareness of the importance of art and culture encourages governments and cultural industries to develop measures to safeguard the income, jobs, and social security of cultural workers. Examples include financial assistance and capacity-building opportunities (e.g., mentorships, residencies, skill-building programs, etc.). Continuous protection and support are needed to ensure the social and economic sustainability of cultural workers.
- 3. Rise of collaboration and increased sectoral solidarity** - Cultural sectors thrive through collaboration; while some collaborations are between cultural organizations, there is an increase in innovative cross-sectoral partnerships in both public and private sectors such as technology, sustainability, and science. These new partnerships build resilience and stimulate innovation within cultural industries, and they should continue to be fostered by incentivizing collaborations and networking.
- 4. Accelerated adoption of digital practices and techniques** - Digital technologies and trends had already been significantly impacting the cultural sector for many years before the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the pandemic exponentially accelerated the use of technology in culture, with many cultural institutions leaning on technology to offset the negative economic impacts that affected the sector, especially institutions that relied on in-person audiences. From libraries, theatres, galleries, and museums to individual artists and creatives, the cultural sector turned to technology to increase audience engagement and to preserve revenues. The digital transformation has led to new ways of creation, production, distribution, and access to culture, which are expected to continue to grow and be relied upon. However, digital illiteracy poses a barrier and should be addressed, and methods of protecting cultural expressions in digital environments should be sought.

22 UNESCO, "Culture in Times of COVID-19: Resilience, Recovery and Revival" (2022), 30, <https://unesdoc.unesco.org>

5. Adaptation of strategic operational and business models and practices across the value chain - The pandemic significantly threatened the viability of cultural organizations and impacted the ability of professionals to work in the cultural sector. Many organizations were not able to recover from pandemic losses, reducing the availability and access to cultural resources. While digital technologies aided in maintaining sustainability, it often required significant changes to strategies and operations. Another pivot made during the pandemic was to focus on supporting local creatives and engaging local audiences, with resulting benefits including broadening market potential and audience reach. While many creatives and organizations are still struggling in the post-pandemic context, innovation may be a path for recovery through investing in broadening skills and new models for businesses, infrastructure, and collaboration. While this may result in uncertainty and instability in the short to medium term, sustainable practices may prevail.

Other notable trends that affect culture in Ontario include²³:

- **Globalization:** The world is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent. Globalization provides opportunities for culture to cross regions, encouraging the co-creating and co-production of cultural products across cultures, supporting international promotion and exportation, and attracting foreign interest and investment.
- **Changing demographics:** Cultural diversity fuels creative economies, creating competitive and innovative environments where creatives and cultural organizations want to live. Ontario-wide demographic trends show that the provincial population is set to increase, particularly with regard to visible minorities, youth, seniors, and Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres.

This Cultural Plan will help inform how these cultural trends can transpire in the context of Stratford.

23 “Forces shaping the future of Ontario’s culture sector,” Government of Ontario, June 2, 2022, <https://bit.ly/41yFXwt>



Drone Photograph of Downtown Stratford. Image by Little Big Creative.

BACKGROUND ON STRATFORD

Demographics and Trends

The development of the Cultural Plan took into account Stratford's population. Key findings include²⁴:

- Stratford's population of 33,232, with a population density of 1,107 per square kilometre, resembles that of other similarly-sized Ontario cities (e.g., Orillia).
- Stratford saw a 5.6% population growth between 2016 and 2021, which is on par with the provincial and national average population growth.
- With a growing population, Stratford's visible minority rate increased from 6.0% in 2016 to 8.0% in 2021. However, the visible minority rates are still lower in Stratford than in Ontario and Canada. The provincial rate is 34.3%, and the national rate 26.5%. Of those who identify as a visible minority in Stratford, people who are South Asian, Black, and Latin American comprise the largest rates.
- In Stratford, 30 non-official languages are spoken by 2,500 residents or 7.5% of the population.
- Stratford's population is slightly older compared to Ontario and Canada. Where the province and country sit at an average age of 42, Stratford has an average age of 45.
- Compared to Ontario and Canada averages, Stratford has a higher senior population, at 23%, compared to 18.9% at the provincial level and 19.0% at the national level.
- The median income levels in Stratford are close to those of Ontario and Canada (Stratford: \$42,400; Ontario: \$41,200; Canada: \$41,200).

²⁴ "Census Profile, 2021 Census of Population," Statistics Canada, updated February 8, 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/dp-pd/prof/index.cfm?Lang=E>

Stratford's Unique Cultural Landscape

Stratford's economic roots lie in its manufacturing industries. However, the 1950s saw a period of decline in factories. In 1953, the Stratford Festival changed the economic direction of the town, introducing an arts and culture sector with an emphasis on tourism. The city now draws upwards of 1.7 million visitors annually.²⁵ The arts and culture sector is now an attraction that supports the growth of the city's cultural economy with diversified industries that expand into culinary arts, visual arts, music, literary arts, and film and cinema. During the Cultural Plan's Discovery Phase, stakeholders were asked to identify and map tangible and intangible cultural resources. This feedback, combined with research, highlighted 312 cultural resources within Stratford.

We also learned that the following elements are vital for Stratford's Culture:

- **Natural heritage and the parks system**, including the trails, the Avon River and riverfront, an abundance of green spaces and parks, and the presence and care of horticulture within parks. In Stratford, there are over 50 parks and recreation spaces, including approximately 115 acres of formal parklands, and 60 acres of natural areas.²⁶
- **Events and festivals** were mentioned as a positive defining character of Stratford and showcase a diversity of culture year-round. Some highlights include the Stratford Festival, Lights On Stratford, Art in the Park, Stratford Summer Music, SpringWorks Festival, Stratford Live Music & Food, and Kiwanis Festival of the Performing Arts.
- **Culinary arts and the dining, restaurant, and drink industry** were mentioned as adding value to Stratford's culture. The Stratford Chefs School was noted as a key cultural asset in driving culinary arts within the city. Additionally, some school programs foster an understanding and appreciation of culinary arts and the agricultural industry for youth.
- **Public cultural institutions such as Stratford Public Library, Stratford Perth Museum, and Gallery Stratford** provide extensive programming and services that aid in promoting culture and fostering community.
- **Community organizations and services** such as the Falstaff Family Centre, Stratford Pride Community Centre, Stratford-Perth Pride, and the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron were noted as key institutions in influencing culture by providing community services and organizing events and programming for equity-deserving groups, including, but not limited to, children and youth, Indigenous community members, newcomers and refugees, and the 2SLGBTQQA+ community.

25 "Stratford Festival: How theatre transformed a community's economy and identity," Ontario Arts Council, July 12, 2021, <https://www.arts.on.ca/artsaddvalue/stratford-festival/>

26 "Parks & Forestry," City of Stratford, accessed February 28, 2023, <https://www.stratford.ca/en/play-here/parksforestry.aspx>

- **Indigenous knowledge, practices, and events** were described as vital intangible cultural resources. Participants mentioned the importance of Indigenous events and programming that further Indigenous representation, placekeeping, reconciliation, and decolonization. There was mention that many Indigenous people, creatives, and knowledge keepers are connected to Stratford. Notable Indigenous programs and events included the Indigenous Talking Circle (which has over 100 members), previous National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events, and Stratford District Secondary School’s Culinary Dinner Club partnership with Indigenous chef Caitlin Noel-Drews.

Overall, the culture in Stratford is strengthened by:

- **A unique mix of rural and urban characteristics.** Participants shared their appreciation and pride for the rural, agricultural, and industrial assets in Stratford. The community described being well-involved in agriculture, either as professionals or as attendees for cultural initiatives like farmers’ markets, fairs, and events at the Burnside Agriplex. They noted that the combination of these cherished rural assets with the artistic activity in the downtown centre makes Stratford a “creative island” amongst neighbouring communities. Stratford’s downtown, boasting a high concentration of heritage buildings, cultural organizations and experiences, was described as a walkable “hub for culture.”
- **The robust and diverse creative community.** Stratford’s relatively high concentration of creatives that live, work, and produce in the city was described by participants as “infusing the city with creativity” and a key attraction for talented and creative people to continue to move to, and live in, the city. Participants described that while it is a city, Stratford still has a “small-town feel” that—tied to a high concentration of creatives — fosters an environment for spontaneous connections and collaborations between like-minded individuals and groups. This has led to most cultural initiatives and events being community-led and driven.
- **Tourism as a cultural driver.** The Festival is noted as a starting point for driving Stratford’s culture and tourism industry. Drawing thousands of visitors annually, the Festival continues to drive cultural industries such as dining, entertainment, and others.

Supporting Municipal and Provincial Policies and Strategies

The Cultural Plan aligns with and supports the following local, regional, and provincial policies and strategies:

TABLE 1: THE MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES THAT SUPPORT AND ALIGN WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN

LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	SUPPORTING PLAN, POLICY, OR STRATEGY
Provincial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990) • Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 • Ontario Heritage Act (R.S.O. 1990)
Regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Safety and Well Being Plan, 2021–2024
Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • City of Stratford Official Plan, 2015 • City of Stratford Strategic Priorities, 2019 • City of Stratford: Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines, 2014 • City of Stratford: Heritage Conservation District Standards • Stratford’s Transportation Master Plan • Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Report • Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2021 • City of Stratford: Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities Report • Grand Trunk Master Plan, 2018 • Stratford Sport Tourism Strategy, 2023 • Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan, 2023 • Welcoming Community Statement, 2023

See Appendix B: Policy Alignment for an overview of how the Cultural Plan supports the above frameworks.

Current Governance of Culture

To implement the Cultural Plan, municipal departments and advisory committees must work together along with external organizations and community members to accomplish Stratford's cultural vision.

Stratford is governed by an elected city council composed of a Mayor and 10 councillors. The City has a Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) who is responsible to council for the effective administration of the entire City. There are then several Departments, as well as specific divisions within those departments, including:

CAO and Mayor's Office

Community Services

- Cemetery
- Facilities
- Parks and Forestry
- Recreation Programs
- Transit and Parallel Transit

Corporate Services Department

- Clerks
- Finance
- Revenues and Taxation
- Information Technology

Infrastructure & Development Services

- Development Services
 - » Building
 - » Planning
 - » Municipal By-law Enforcement
- Engineering
- Public Works
- Environmental Services
 - » Water
 - » Wastewater

Fire Department

Human Services

Social Services Department

At this time of the report, there are 16 volunteer City advisory boards and committees that support the City's planning and decision-making:

- Ad-Hoc Citizen's Committee on Council Remuneration
- Accessibility Advisory Committee
- Active Transportation Advisory Committee
- Board of Park Management
- Committee of Adjustment
- Communities in Bloom Committee
- Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) Board of Management
- Energy and Environment Committee
- Heritage Stratford Committee
- Sports Wall of Fame Committee
- Spruce Lodge Non-Profit Housing Corporation
- Stratford Police Services Board
- Stratford Public Library Board
- Stratford Town and Gown Advisory Committee
- Stratfords of the World (Ontario) Committee
- Upper Thames River Conservation Authority

The City also has two arm's length organizations that operate both independently and in partnership with the City.

- **Destination Stratford** has been Stratford's official destination marketing organization since 2007. Destination Stratford's goal is to strengthen the local economy and enrich the quality of life in Stratford through regenerative tourism.
- **investStratford** was funded by the City of Stratford and established as a stand-alone entity focusing on Stratford's economic future. The organization's purpose is to offer support services and business-focused development events to keep, grow, and attract businesses.

The above departments, boards, committees, and organizations must work collaboratively to carry out the Cultural Plan. Appropriate actions should be taken by each party to integrate culture as a priority during decision-making processes, and all parties will work towards the cultural vision.



Memorial Gardens. Image by Little Big Creative.

SECTION 2

STRATFORD'S MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLAN 2023 - 2028



Affinity interactive light display, presented on Tom Patterson Island during Lights On Stratford. Image by The Write Joel.



Tom Patterson Island Bridge. Image by Mike Beitz.

VISION, MISSION, AND GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Vision

“Stratford is a year-round cultural city cherished by residents and visitors alike, where cultural offerings celebrate diversity and inclusion and reflect the city’s unique community values and heritage.”

This vision statement was created out of a substantial engagement process and reflects how Stratford’s community would like to see culture evolve in the city moving forward. The vision statement describes how Stratford aspires to evolve over the next five years. The vision will be achieved through collaborative efforts across public, private, and non-profit sectors, as well as the engagement of community members.

This vision creates a pathway for Stratford to expand its cultural identity and support community desires of having a vibrant, welcoming, accessible, collaborative, and sustainable cultural sector.

Mission

“The Municipality will support cultural initiatives, assets, and opportunities that inclusively elevate the quality of life in Stratford for current and future generations.”

This mission statement describes how the City will support achieving the community-developed vision for culture articulated above.

While the City will assume a significant role in implementing the Cultural Plan, success will ultimately be achieved through intentional collaborations between municipal departments, cultural providers, and the community.

Guiding Principles

The Cultural Plan for Stratford will be guided by the following seven guiding principles. These guiding principles helped shape the Cultural Plan and identify appropriate actions for achieving the Cultural Plan's vision. These guiding principles are embedded in the following sections and should be used as guidance for external organizations and community members when looking to advance culture in their communities.

Inclusive - Residents and visitors feel welcome, safe, and know that they can participate in diverse cultural offerings that reflect their interests, needs, and desires.

Accessible and Equitable - Culture supports physical, financial, and social accessibility.

Collaborative - City departments, the cultural sector, and community members partner together to achieve common goals.

Engaged - Community is at the heart of the planning and decision-making process.

Committed to Reconciliation and Decolonization - Mutually respectful relationships are developed with Indigenous and non-Indigenous community members.

Cultural Excellence - Local organizations, industries, and talent receive support to be showcased and celebrated beyond the city's borders.

Sustainable and Resilient - Frameworks and policies support an adaptable cultural sector that is environmentally, socially, and economically vital.



Pride Parade. Image by Little Big Creative.

PRIORITIES, GOALS, AND ACTIONS

How to Read the Following Section

To embed flexibility and adaptability into implementing the Cultural Plan, the following section outlines various pathways for the City, cultural organizations, creatives, and the community to work together to achieve the vision.

Guiding this work are four strategic priorities, which will be referred to as Pathways, that are vital for realizing Stratford's vision for culture. Arising from community engagement, these Pathways indicate areas of high importance, demonstrating how culture can evolve and be more effectively integrated into the city. Pathways connect to and build upon each other, creating a holistic framework for Stratford to collectively work towards achieving its vision for culture.

Each Pathway includes a brief overview of what the community said during Phase 1: Discovery, as well as how the outcomes of that Pathway will aid in addressing community needs and desires (see Phase 1: Discovery Interim Report for an in-depth summary of engagement findings). To go along with each Pathway, examples are included of work that has already been done by the City or community to achieve that Pathway, as well as some starting points for the community to consider when looking to support actioning the Cultural Plan.

Goals are included under each Pathway to monitor progress. Goals are measurable objectives that municipalities; stakeholders in private, public, and non-profit sectors; and community members can collaboratively work towards. Each goal has multiple

recommendations to be considered by the Municipality. These recommendations are high-level and not intended to describe commitments made by the Municipality. Rather, the recommendations, actions, and steps are provided to accommodate flexibility and reflect that appropriate actions and collaboration will evolve over time depending on future needs and capacity. Additionally, recommendations, actions, and steps can utilize current programs or infrastructures that are already in place both internally and externally.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANAGING THE CULTURAL PLAN?

The Cultural Plan's success relies on dedicated collaboration from public, private, and non-profit sectors and community members. The priorities and goals listed in the following section are to be carried out collaboratively by the community of Stratford. Recommendations are directed at the Municipality with the intention that they will seek relevant partnerships to accomplish the recommendations and actions.

A key next step is for the Municipality to decide on an appropriate leader (or leaders) who can determine how actions should be implemented; foster relationships and gather support; and monitor the progress and success of these actions towards the vision. A variety of governance options are provided on [pages 17–23](#) of this document.

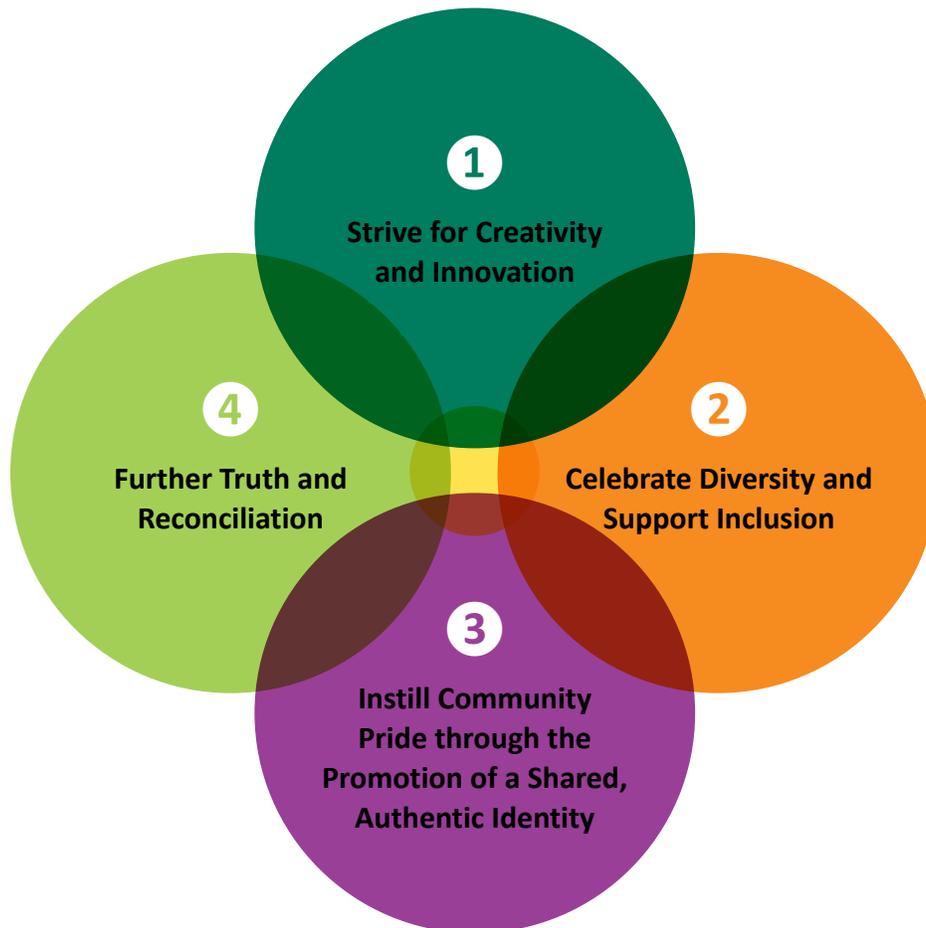


THE POOL, artwork by artist Jen Lewin, displayed in Market Square at Lights On Stratford. Image by Trailblazing Family.

Strategic Priorities (Pathways)

The Cultural Plan includes four strategic priorities (i.e., Pathways) to support the holistic vision of culture in Stratford:

GRAPHIC 4: STRATFORD'S CULTURAL PLAN PATHWAYS



In following the Pathways, culture in Stratford aims to be:

- Celebratory of its unique, multifaceted cultural industries and creative talent;
- Building upon existing cultural resources and accomplishments;
- Inclusive, equitable, accessible, welcoming, and safe for all;
- Responsive to community desires by engaging residents in future planning;
- Sustainable and supportive of current and future generations' needs;
- Collaborative and cross-sectoral;
- Adaptable and dynamic, evolving with community values and needs;
- Multicultural and reflective of diverse communities and interests; and
- A vessel for storytelling and expressiveness for the past, present, and future.

PATHWAY 1

**STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY
AND INNOVATION**



The MusicBarge, a floating stage on the Avon River. Image by Little Big Creative.

Overview of Pathway 1: Strive for Creativity and Innovation

Creatives and cultural organizations are drivers of innovation in communities. However, supportive frameworks must be in place to enable an environment that fosters new ideas and allows them to be implemented. This Pathway focuses on how innovation and creativity can be brought to the forefront in Stratford by building relationships, support networks, and processes that allow culture and creatives to prosper.

OUTCOMES OF ACHIEVING PATHWAY 1

- The needs of the cultural sector are valued across municipal departments, with greater integration of creatives in future city building and decision-making initiatives.
- City processes reduce permitting barriers and implementation hurdles, allowing cultural events, festivals, and programs to flourish.
- Creatives and cultural organizations thrive and have opportunities to collaborate with others and showcase their talents.
- Creatives feel encouraged to remain in the city while new talent is attracted.
- Public, private, and non-profit sectors work together to achieve city-wide projects and common goals.
- Appropriate and affordable spaces and venues exist to showcase various talents.
- The community understands the value of culture and widely supports its growth and development.

Overview of Pathway 1 Goals

There are four goals guiding Pathway 1, with 12 recommendations and 30 potential actions.

- **Goal 1:** Culture is considered and integrated into municipal processes and decision-making.
- **Goal 2:** The cultural sector supports the livelihood of creatives.
- **Goal 3:** Collaboration is fostered amongst the cultural sector, related industries and the Municipality.
- **Goal 4:** Stratford aims to be a livable city that attracts and retains creatives.

What did we hear from the community?

Support Creatives and the Cultural Sector

During the community engagement process, Stratford was described as boasting a high concentration of creative people who live, work, and produce culture in Stratford, which “infuses the city with creativity.” When participants compared Stratford to surrounding areas, they described it as a “creative island.” However, while there are a vast variety of cultural initiatives and organizations, much of this work is community-led, and participants expressed a desire for prioritization of culture at the municipal level and greater involvement of cultural stakeholders in city processes and decision-making. Additionally, participants expressed that more support is needed to develop a sustainable cultural sector, including: increasing funding access; improving (and reducing barriers to) City processes (e.g., participants described that the requirements and processing times for applications to use public spaces, like Market Square, are preventing events from taking place); fostering affordable places to live, work, and produce (i.e., affordable venues and performance spaces that meet size and technical requirements); and investing in capacity-building for cultural organizations and creatives. Developments in these areas will enable the cultural sector to flourish to its fullest potential.

Encourage Collaboration and Partnerships

Another benefit of a smaller population with a high concentration of creative energy is the possibility of fostering an environment of spontaneous connections and collaborations between like-minded individuals and groups. While this method is successful for some, many creatives and organizations mentioned that lack of awareness and individuals and organizations working in silos are some current barriers. Participants want to overcome these barriers to realize synergies and foster partnerships.

What work has already been accomplished?

The City of Stratford has enabled opportunities for community members and independent organizations to advise on city processes and decision-making through their advisory committees, with some specific committees already working towards advancing culture in the City, such as the Stratford Public Library Board, the Board of Park Management, and the Heritage Stratford Committee.

The City's Community Grants Program offers eligible community-based organizations annual or multi-year grants to support initiatives that improve community well-being across the city, diversify the number of activities available, and enhance the quality of life.

The City is also committed to supporting the development of affordable housing, which is referenced in both the City's Official Plan and Strategic Priorities and further outlined in the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan, along with the Stratford Housing Project.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Cross-sector partnerships across Stratford have already demonstrated great success when organizations partner together to achieve common goals that benefit both the organizations and wider community. The following are a few examples that highlight the potential of what can be achieved when groups work together:

- The Stratford Perth Museum has a long-standing partnership with the Stratford Festival and meets regularly with the Festival to discuss upcoming programs. The Museum then aims to align its exhibits to complement the Festival with the goal of increasing awareness of both attractions and circulating visitors to both places.
- A private restaurant combines a live-performance venue space with unique culinary experiences. Additionally, this business has an ongoing partnership with Stratford Summer Music, bringing the venue and music festival together annually.

How the community can support Pathway 1: Strive for Creativity and Innovation

The following is not a complete list of ways in which the wider community can support creativity and innovation, but rather some opportunities for consideration.

Get involved and advocate

Join City committees and boards to ensure that diverse perspectives are represented in decision-making and to advocate for the needs of your community. It is also important to stay engaged with the City to learn about opportunities for providing feedback to aid in developing plans or projects that address community interests. Attending public meetings is a great way to be involved and contribute to the evolution of the city.

Tip: Frequently check the Engage Stratford website (<https://engagestratford.ca>) and subscribe to projects you would like to be involved in.

Connect with each other

Community members, creatives, and cultural organizations can continue to work together, sharing resources, aligning programming, or providing cross-promotion. Partnerships can also be sought with privately owned spaces or different industry partners to showcase creative talents temporarily or permanently. Creatives can also look towards cross-regional partnerships as a means of building relationships with organizations and initiatives that may be outside of Stratford proper, but are focused on building up the capacity, connections, and opportunities for creatives within the region. Creatives can build capacity amongst themselves through knowledge and skill sharing, as well as mentorships.

Support local creatives

When looking to add entertainment to your restaurant, colour to your home, movement to your event, or storytelling in the classroom, you can often find the creative talent you are looking for locally. When hiring creatives, industry pay standards such as CARFAC rates²⁷ should serve as a starting point. Hiring local creatives helps to support their livelihoods in Stratford while also supporting a creatively animated city culture. Cultural organizations can also consider developing small grants, residencies, mentorships, or other capacity-building opportunities to help expand the careers of local and emerging creatives. Is there underutilized space in your organization or business? Consider offering affordable space to cultural organizations and creatives to create, practice, or showcase talent.

27 See <https://carfac-raav.ca/> for more information.

Recommendations for how the Municipality can work towards the goals of Pathway 1: Strive for Creativity and Innovation

The following section details recommendations, potential actions, and steps for the Municipality to consider while working towards the goals of Pathway 1. Recommendations, actions, and steps should be selected and adapted as necessary.

GOAL 1: CULTURE IS CONSIDERED AND INTEGRATED INTO MUNICIPAL PROCESSES AND DECISION-MAKING

1

- ▶ **Recommendation 1: Identify a governance structure to implement the Cultural Plan and arbitrate between different organizational options for the City's cultural support.**

A) Potential action: Explore internal resources, arm's length organizations, and external partners to be Designated Cultural Plan Leader(s) that collaborate with the City to aid in coordinating the implementation of actions, identifying appropriate partners and collaborations, tracking progress, and providing support to the cultural sector. See [pages 22-27](#) for governance options to be selected and adapted to suit Stratford's needs.

- ▶ **Recommendation 2: Promote the Cultural Plan and the importance of culture widely across City departments and externally.**

A) Potential action: Develop a communication strategy for the Cultural Plan and share regular updates on progress and achievements.

Steps for consideration:

- » Once approved by Council, celebrate the launch of the Cultural Plan with internal and external stakeholders and the public at large.
- » Educate arm's length organizations on the Plan to ensure priorities and goals are integrated into their decision-making processes.
- » Share Cultural Plan progress and celebrate updates both internally and externally (e.g., events, blog posts, e-newsletters).

B) Potential action: Develop an annual reporting structure for culture and tourism. The annual report will help develop support for the cultural sector by highlighting achievements and demonstrating the economic benefits of culture. Example: [Kelowna's Cultural Report Card](#) highlights progress on the implementation of the City of Kelowna Cultural Plan over a three-year period.

Steps for consideration:

- » Collect and share information on key updates in the cultural sector.
- » As a secondary step, determine key metrics and data to collect, and build relationships with external culture partners to request annual reporting metrics on economic impact, as well as identify achievements and challenges. This will aid the City in developing relevant response mechanisms.

► **Recommendation 3: Integrate culture into future plans, strategies, and documents.**

A) Potential action: Prioritize the development of culture in the Stratford Official Plan, Strategic Priorities, and other municipal plans and strategies.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consult cultural stakeholders and creatives when reviewing or updating the Official Plan and City Strategic Priorities to integrate cultural sector needs and desires.
- » Continue embedding directions and actions that support partnerships and integrate cultural priorities across municipal initiatives. Example: the Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Report, which identified ways to connect transportation routes with natural heritage, community culture, and agriculture.

B) Potential action: Join networking and knowledge sharing events and forums to learn about best practices in cultural development.

Steps for consideration:

- » Become a member of the [Creative City Network of Canada](#) and attend their programming and events to learn how Canadian municipalities and cultural organizations act as cultural leaders.
- » Join the [World Cities Culture Forum](#) to learn from world leaders in the fields of culture and cultural policy and help promote Stratford as a world-class cultural destination.
- » Attend the [Park People Conference](#) to learn how community park group leaders, non-profit organizations, government staff, and park professionals are animating their park spaces through the integration of cultural programming.

► **Recommendation 4: Involve creatives in city-building processes.**

A) Potential action: Explore arts-based participatory engagement processes when conducting community consultation.

Steps for consideration:

- » Seek opportunities to hire local creatives to aid in developing and executing participatory engagement workshops that can increase stakeholder participation and support reaching diverse audiences.

B) Potential action: Create opportunities for co-creation and consultation with creatives when making decisions on built, social, and natural environments, inviting innovative ideas and supporting the creative sector as the city evolves.

Steps for consideration:

- » Identify creatives and cultural organizations as key stakeholders who should be involved at the beginning of planning processes.
- » Encourage different departments to consider how cultural investments can add to wayfinding, information sharing, as well as placemaking and placekeeping initiatives. Example: [City of Toronto's StART Concrete Barrier Art Program](#).



investStratford's "Year in Review & Annual General Meeting". Image by investStratford.

GOAL 2: THE CULTURAL SECTOR SUPPORTS THE LIVELIHOOD OF CREATIVES

2

► **Recommendation 1: Optimize local funding opportunities**

A) Potential action: Increase response to local funding opportunities by reducing barriers associated with accessing municipal funding (e.g., lengthy applications, lack of awareness, and demanding reporting requirements).

Steps for consideration:

- » Evaluate opportunities to simplify the grant application for Stratford's Community Grant Program (e.g., remove jargon, reduce the length of applications, simplify reporting requirements).
- » Outline guidelines for successful grant applications. Example: [Surrey Cultural Grant's Toolkit](#).
- » Host information sessions for applicants to ask questions about the grant processes. Example: [City of Barrie Information Session: Arts & Culture Investment Program](#).

B) Potential action: Conduct a review of the Community Grant Program and develop targets for funds to be disbursed to creatives and cultural organizations.

Steps for consideration:

- » Assess the feasibility of increasing the Community Grant Program to address the needs of the community.
- » Assess the equitability of current funding distribution and assess opportunities for improvements or optimization.

C) Potential action: Further expand opportunities for the City to partner with arm's length organizations to distribute federal, provincial, or municipal funding sources within the cultural sector. Example: [The City's Economic Support and Recovery Task Force partnered with investStratford](#) and successfully obtained funds from a federal grant program, which were redistributed to community organizations.

Steps for consideration:

- » Actively monitor and pursue external funding opportunities that benefit the cultural sector, community development, and economic growth.
- » Designate arm's length organizations or partnerships with individual organizations to distribute funds to the cultural sector (e.g., investStratford, Stratford Arts Council, or Stratford Arts and Culture Collective).

D) Potential action: Conduct a feasibility study to determine if a distinct arts, culture, and heritage grant program could be developed to provide operating funds on single-year and multi-year agreements. A distinct funding stream would make funding available to businesses and individuals that may not qualify for the Community Grants Program but still contribute to achieving the vision of the Cultural Plan and/or benefit the community.

Steps for consideration:

- » Create targeted grants or funding streams for key areas identified as needing support (operational costs, capital repairs for designated heritage buildings occupied by cultural organizations, production and presentation of art and creative work, capacity-building for professionals, improving accessibility).

Recommendation 2: Increase the amount of available funds for local cultural organizations and initiatives.

A) Potential action: Provide support to creatives and organizations to aid them in successfully obtaining funding from external resources that align with the Cultural Plan or community benefits.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share relevant and available funding opportunities with cultural organizations and creatives. Example: [Business / Arts](#) is a national charitable organization that encourages partnerships between business and arts organizations and provides mentorship and professional development support for the arts and culture sector.
- » Implement a process for creatives and cultural organizations to gain municipal support, endorsement, or sponsorship when seeking external funding opportunities for projects that align with the Cultural Plan or provide community benefits.
- » Consider creating grant and proposal writing services and supports. Example: [Brampton Arts Organization](#), an arm's length cultural organization to the City of Brampton, provides capacity-building support such as grant-writing workshops.

B) Potential action: Continue providing support to the Downtown Stratford BIA to foster projects and initiatives that support the creative sector.



BAO Senior Program Lead Michael Vickers speaking to local creatives at a Community Town Hall. Photo credit: Herman Custodio / City of Brampton.

► **Recommendation 3: Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development**

A) Potential action: Review permitting and approval processes to identify opportunities for optimization, improving accessibility, and providing additional support to encourage an increase in the number of cultural activities taking place throughout the city.

Steps for consideration:

- » Investigate current barriers in the permitting and approval processes (e.g., lack of awareness of the process, application length and jargon, deadlines for submitting applications, timeline for approvals) to increase the use of public spaces (e.g., Market Square).
- » Explore options to provide support for non-profit organizations or community groups to obtain required documentation (e.g., waiving insurance, providing support for architectural studies), especially for events that support community development and/or serve equity-deserving groups.
- » Explore quarterly event planning ‘office hours’ where organizations and individuals planning to develop events can speak with the City and receive advice on their event planning and relevant applications.
- » Develop and publish guidelines to help organizations navigate permit applications.

B) Potential action: Explore amending the Business License By-law to encourage innovative business models.

C) Potential action: Explore amending the Noise Control By-law to allow events to take place at various times throughout the week in both public and private spaces. Currently, this by-law restricts noise at events and gatherings taking place in residential and commercial zones during certain time periods. Amending this by-law would remove the requirement for applicants to submit a letter of request for an exception to the bylaw. This would remove barriers to hosting events on private and public property and encourage more activities that involve singing, musical instruments, auditory signalling devices, etc., at events throughout the week and during reasonable hours in the evening.

GOAL 3: COLLABORATION IS FOSTERED AMONGST THE CULTURAL SECTOR, RELATED INDUSTRIES, AND THE MUNICIPALITY

3

► **Recommendation 1: Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships between private, public, and non-profit sectors**

A) Potential action: Convene regular meetings between local cultural organizations and private sector representatives to discuss cross-sector issues and promote collaborations.

Steps for consideration:

- » Organize cross-sectoral networking meetings around targeted issues (e.g., how to activate winter months by mobilizing cultural organizations and local businesses). Meetings can feature discussions and presentations by organizations about their projects, learnings, and challenges, thereby encouraging partnership building.

B) Potential action: Increase promotion of cultural initiatives with investment potential.

Steps for consideration:

- » Support philanthropy and encourage private-sector partnerships for the cultural sector by advertising the social and economic benefits of cultural initiatives. Example: showcasing and encouraging participation in the [Business / Arts sponsorship awards program](#).
- » Support opportunities for resource sharing (e.g., businesses providing affordable space for small-scale performances).

► **Recommendation 2: Support partnerships and communication amongst creatives and cultural organizations**

A) Potential action: Host regular networking events that include a diverse representation of cultural and community organizations to foster connections and relationship building amongst the cultural sector. Example: [Creative Rural Minds](#) in Prince Edward County is a quarterly networking event funded by the County, designed to stimulate collaboration.

- » Organize and record presentations in which various organizations describe their initiatives, best practices, and challenges (e.g., improving accessibility; developing events in an environmentally conscious way; marketing and customer relationship management for cultural events) and share these video recordings on a platform open to local cultural businesses.

B) Potential action: Encourage events and programs to co-advertise or align programming to enable audience sharing and encourage residents and visitors to explore a variety of events and places.

Steps for consideration:

- » Develop information signs that visually link events and programs that occur at similar times, happen near one another, or align with each other programmatically.

GOAL 4: STRATFORD AIMS TO BE A LIVABLE CITY THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS CREATIVES

4

► **Recommendation 1: Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.**

A) Potential action: Explore the possibility of developing affordable housing options for creatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Develop communication towards creatives on existing affordable housing programs, such as the Britannia Street Affordable Housing Project.
- » Educate developers, property owners, and residents on the value of including cultural venues and/or affordable housing in residential and mixed-use developments. Example: [Artscape Distillery Studios](#).

B) Potential action: Advocate for fair pay for creatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share recommendations on fair artist fees and model best practices through City programs. Example: The Canadian Artists' Representation / Le Front des artistes canadiens (CARFAC) [Minimum Recommended Fee Schedule](#).

C) Potential action: Support the development of programs that provide mentorship and skill development to emerging and equity-deserving creatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Encourage and support non-profit organizations in developing residency programs.
- » Explore partnerships with organizations that facilitate artist residencies. Example: [STEPS Public Art's CreateSpace Public Art Residency](#) partners with municipalities, businesses, arts organizations, festivals, agencies, and landowners across Canada to support emerging Black, Indigenous, and racialized artists to create unique and inspiring public artwork in their respective communities.

D) Potential action: Continue to foster partnerships and mentorships between creatives and educational institutions (high schools and post-secondary institutions) to further develop skills and networks to encourage emerging artists to remain in Stratford to hone their skills.

► **Recommendation 2: Provide support for cultural businesses and organizations through capacity-building opportunities**

A) Potential action: Support capacity-building for small enterprises in the cultural sector through sector-specific training.

Steps for consideration:

» Assess existing supports for cultural organizations that are available through municipal and arm's length organizations dedicated to serving Stratford businesses (e.g., investStratford, Stratford Perth Centre for Business) and develop sector-specific educational offerings on key skills for cultural organizations, such as: fundraising strategies; grant application writing; audience development; and digital literacy. Example: [City of Cockburn's Community Project Support Program](#) dedicates staff time for up to six months to support organizations in project planning and management, stakeholder engagement, and securing funding, as well as support for activities including incorporation, hosting a community event, and creating a placemaking activation.

B) Potential action: Formalize a list of benefits offered to not-for-profit community groups providing arts, culture, and heritage programs.

Steps for consideration:

» Explore benefits that the Municipality could provide as incentives to support community and cultural priorities (e.g., discounts to rent space at City facilities; discounts on City-owned parking during events; priority booking for City facilities and parks; discounted rates for special events vendor licences; permission to place promotional signs in specific City-owned spaces or next to specific City roads; offering liability insurance through the City's affiliate insurance program). Example: [City of Mississauga Community Group Registry Program](#) offers various services for not-for-profit and volunteer-based community groups, organizations, and clubs.

C) Potential action: Explore opportunities to incentivize cultural organizations and industries to remain or settle in Stratford.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consider providing rent subsidies in City-owned properties and property tax exemptions in order to support current cultural organizations and attract new cultural organizations (e.g., adapted rents in City-owned business parks). Example: [City of Toronto Community Space Tenancy Program](#) offers Below Market Rent through short-term agreements to eligible non-profit organizations that serve community needs. Example: [Calgary Property Tax Exemption](#) is provided to organizations that provide community benefits.
- » Consider developing a streamlined permitting process to encourage film crews to shoot films in public spaces around Stratford (e.g., streets, sidewalks, parking lots, facilities, and greenspaces). Stratford has an abundance of entertainment industry experts (e.g., directors, producers, actors, costume and set designers) who can be leveraged to support a local film industry. Example: The [City of Toronto](#) has developed a webpage to provide guidance on using Toronto for film shoots (e.g., information about the permitting process, a code of conduct) that articulates specific reasons why companies should film in Toronto.

► **Recommendation 3: Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events.**

A) Potential action: Work with Stratford’s Planning Services department to support the development of purpose-built spaces for the creative sector.

Steps for consideration:

- » Encourage arts and cultural spaces to be included in major development projects (e.g., Grand Trunk Community Hub). Example: [Imagine Pleyel Project](#) in Paris, France. For the future Saint-Denis Pleyel subway station (a part of the Greater Paris initiative), developers were invited to present projects for a 5,000 sq. meter space that would take place over four floors inside the subway station. Projects were required to include a cultural and social innovation space with a robust business model that addressed specific local needs. Project winner Art Explora will offer immersive exhibitions developed with local organizations, as well as develop an incubator for creatives. The space will also feature businesses and restaurants, thereby supporting an overall economic model.

B) Potential action: Explore options for addressing facility needs, particularly to serve performing arts organizations and creatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Seek opportunities to provide partnership and support for organizations that aim to provide affordable and flexible venue space (e.g., Copperlight, Factory 163).
- » Encourage partnerships between recreational and cultural groups for facility-sharing to address venue needs of both sectors.
- » Assess needs and investigate options for the development of multi-purpose facilities to address the lack of adapted and affordable venues, which was highlighted during the consultation as a barrier for smaller companies and community groups to present events or showcase creative work.

C) Potential action: Continue supporting the development of incubators and experimental spaces (e.g., Gallery Stratford's Streeibox Art Lab).

PATHWAY 2

**CELEBRATE DIVERSITY
AND SUPPORT
INCLUSION**



Adirondack Chairs in Market Square. Image by Little Big Creative.

Overview of Pathway 2: Celebrate Diversity and Support Inclusion

Ensuring that everyone can feel safe and welcome and see themselves reflected in their community bolsters the vibrancy and creativity of a city. Art and culture are powerful forces that encourage communities to embrace and celebrate cultural differences, thereby creating dynamic and diverse cities that are attractive places to live and visit. A pathway for advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion within cities is through cultural equity, where values, policies, and practices ensure that all people—regardless of their age, race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, socioeconomic status, or religion—are represented and reflected in cultural policy and can access culturally appropriate initiatives.²⁸ Cultural equity is advanced when accountability is taken, inequities are acknowledged and challenged, and partnerships are fostered. This leads to diverse, distinct, and interconnected communities where unique cultures are accessible and widely celebrated.

“Scientific study of cultures, notably of their languages and their musics, shows that all are equally expressive and equally communicative. They are also equally valuable; first, because they enrich the lives of the people who use them, people whose very morale is threatened when they are destroyed or impoverished; second, because each communicative system (whether verbal, visual, musical, or even culinary) holds important discoveries about the natural and human environment; and third, because each is a treasure of unknown potential, a collective creation in which some branch of the human species invested its genius across the centuries.”

—Alan Lomax, 1972²⁹

28 For more information, see

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/our-statement-on-cultural-equity>

29 The Program of the Festival of American Folklife, ed. Thomas Vennum, Jr. (Smithsonian Institution, 1985).

OUTCOMES OF ACHIEVING PATHWAY 2

- Cultural programs and activities reflect the unique needs and desires of diverse groups and community members.
- Diverse cultures and experiences are embraced and celebrated widely.
- Community members feel safe, welcome, and free to participate in cultural activities.
- Community members can access programming that suits their cultural and/or creative desires.
- There are diverse representations of many cultures showcased through a variety of activities across the city.
- Cultural activities and spaces are physically, socially, and economically accessible.

Overview of Goals, Recommendations, and Actions

There are three goals in Pathway 2, 9 recommendations and 22 potential actions.

- **Goal 1:** Relationships and support networks are fostered between equity-deserving groups
- **Goal 2:** Cultural experiences and spaces aim to reduce physical, social, and financial barriers
- **Goal 3:** Cultural initiatives reflect a diversity of communities' desires and needs

What did we hear from the community?

Embed equity, diversity, and inclusion as core values across the cultural sector

Participants in the community engagement process expressed a desire for more cultural offerings adapted to an increasingly diverse community. To allow community members to feel welcomed across cultural offerings, participants recommended establishing a standard for equity, diversity, and inclusion across the cultural sector. They also wished for more support for community organizations offering programming that serves the needs of equity-deserving groups.

Strive to address barriers to cultural participation

Costs of cultural offerings were noted as a key obstacle to cultural participation, which limits access for those who do not have the means to spend additional resources on cultural activities, especially equity-deserving groups, families, and youth. Cultural organizations expressed a wish for budgetary support, which would allow them to offer more free programming. Participants also suggested developing publicly accessible spaces and events, particularly by increasing programming in existing public spaces, such as local parks (further utilizing the parks system). Another key challenge mentioned by community members and organizations was the limited public transportation

options between venues. Participants wished for an increase in transportation options, particularly active transportation networks throughout the city with connections to cultural resources.

What work has already been accomplished?

Municipal commitment to accessibility

The City of Stratford Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2018–2022) outlines the ongoing commitment to creating an accessible city that continues to remove and prevent barriers for people with Disabilities and details how the City will meet or exceed the requirements set by the Province of Ontario in the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act \(AODA\)](#). The City’s commitment to accessibility is expressed in the following accessibility policy statement: “We are committed to providing equal treatment to people with disabilities with respect to the use and benefit of services, programs, goods, and facilities in a manner that respects their dignity, independence, and integration, and is equitable in relation to the broader public. This commitment extends to residents, employees, visitors, and other stakeholders with visible and non-visible disabilities.” An Accessibility Advisory Committee has been established to help City Council identify and remove barriers to access.

Municipal actions include:

- **Facilities building standards:** the new Facility Accessibility Design Manual adopted by City Council in 2021 addresses accessibility requirements for the design and construction of new facilities, as well as retrofit, alteration, or additions to existing facilities owned, leased, or operated by the City of Stratford. Although these standards only apply to City facilities, the Municipality is committed to promoting the Manual and educating on the benefits of meeting these standards to encourage their adoption by private developers.
- **Transportation:** [City of Stratford Transit](#) and [Parallel Transit](#) offer accessible transit options within and beyond the City of Stratford. An annual public information session involving persons with disabilities ensures that residents with disabilities have an opportunity to participate in a review of the accessibility plan. In addition, the City of Stratford has adopted an Accessible Parking Permit Policy which allows persons holding a valid accessible parking permit to park for free in a legal parking space in the City.

- **Website and documents:** The City of Stratford's goal is to provide a website that is accessible for all and is WCAG 2.0 Level AA compliant and meets Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) requirements. Documents accessible on the website must also meet WCAG 2.0 Level AA standards.
- **Training:** City contractors and volunteers are required to read the [City of Stratford Accessible Customer Service Training brochure](#) and [Working Together: The Human Rights Code and the AODA](#).
- **Promotion of accessibility initiatives:** Each year, the Stratford Accessibility Advisory Committee recognizes individuals, businesses, and organizations in the City of Stratford who demonstrate a commitment to accessibility and inclusion of people with disabilities through the Accessibility Awards program. Stratford Festival received the award in 2012.

Diversity, Equity, Inclusion

The City of Stratford's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division is working towards implementing equity, inclusion, and reconciliation initiatives through the City's Strategic Plan.

Current initiatives include:

- **Welcoming Community Program:** Several partners in Stratford (including City of Stratford, Stratford Festival, Downtown Stratford BIA, Stratford Public Library, investStratford, United Way Perth-Huron, Stratford & District Chamber of Commerce, Stratford-Perth Pride, and Destination Stratford) are working with Mending the Chasm, an organization dedicated to helping create anti-racist and equitable cultures. An engagement process, including an online survey and four virtual community conversations engaging with different equity-deserving groups, helped explore ideas and methods for developing a truly welcoming community.
- **The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion web page** identifies community partners providing services to equity-deserving communities (e.g., Multicultural Association of Perth Huron, Stratford Perth Pride) and provides links to a collection of resources around different topics (e.g., Accessibility, Anti-Racism and Equity, Indigenous Reconciliation). These include lists created by the Stratford Public Library.
- **Programs supporting residents' access to affordable housing**, provided by the City's Social Services Department.
- **Participation in the Coalition of Inclusive Municipalities**, a network that brings together municipalities that want to improve their policies against racism, discrimination, exclusion, and intolerance. As a member, the City is committed to developing an action plan outlining initiatives to eliminate forms of discrimination and to build an open and inclusive community. As part of this process, public consultation will be undertaken to seek feedback.

Transportation

In 2023, Stratford Transit partnered with Destination Stratford to showcase key locations of the Lights On Stratford festival through a dedicated bus route. This program offers an example of how the City can partner with cultural organizations to increase the accessibility of local programming.

Development of new free, accessible events

Lights On Stratford, created by the arm's length organization Destination Stratford with support from the City of Stratford, was noted by community members as a free, outdoor event which reinforces the accessibility of cultural programming.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

Actions by cultural organizations and community members, alongside work at the City level, are essential to achieve diversity and inclusion goals. Several initiatives have been developed that contribute to increased inclusion and accessibility in cultural offerings, which include:

- **The work done by community organizations to provide services and cultural offerings by equity-deserving groups**, which was underlined by engagement participants. Organizations mentioned included the Falstaff Family Centre, Stratford Pride Community Centre, Stratford-Perth Pride, and the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron.
- **Stratford Festival has conducted notable work on accessibility.** Services provided include audio-described performances and magnifying sheets; wireless radio-frequency hearing-assistance receivers and, on specific dates, ASL interpretation and open captioning; relaxed performances; complimentary access for support persons; and accessible and mobility seating. The Festival also engaged an Equity, Diversity and Inclusion consultant in 2019 and formed an Anti-Racism Committee in 2020. The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Update: Report on Anti-Racism Initiatives, published in 2021, outlines the organization's action plan.³⁰ Additionally, the Festival provides various pay scales for tickets, including reduced prices for seniors, students, and children, as well as a pay-what-you-wish program that allows audience members to pay what is within their means, starting at \$10.³¹
- The **Culture Cab** initiative, supported by government funding and spearheaded by the Stratford Perth Museum in partnership with the Stratford Festival, Stratford Summer Music, Destination Stratford, and Stratford's four taxi companies, was a successful program offering free transportation to five cultural venues in the summer of 2022. The program returned for Lights On Stratford 2022–23.

30 Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Update Report," Stratford Festival (July 2021).
<https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/landingpages/anti-racism>

31 For more information see
<https://www.stratfordfestival.ca/WhatsOn/DiscountsAndDeals/Deals/Pay-What-You-Wish>

How the community can support Pathway 2: Celebrate Diversity and Support Inclusion

The following is not a complete list of ways in which the wider community can support diversity, equity, and inclusion, but rather some opportunities for consideration.

Educate yourself

As a first step, individuals can support diverse peoples, cultures, and practices by learning more about them to foster understanding and acceptance. Additionally topics include understanding oppression, discrimination, privilege, and other social issues. Some ways to start this work include following local and non-local role models and leaders, reading, and taking training courses. Perusing the external resources listed on the [City of Stratford's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion webpage](#) is a good starting point.

Prioritize diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility

Cultural organizations can work towards equity, diversity, and inclusion by creating inclusive work policies, developing equitable hiring processes, and providing diversity, equity, and inclusion training to staff and those in leadership positions.

They can support accessibility by providing accessibility accommodations for their events (including, but not limited to, audio-description, ASL, captioning, relaxed performances, accessible and mobility seating), ensuring information on their programming is accessible (e.g., creating access guides for events, following the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) recommendations, following formatting recommendations to make text more readable for people with dyslexia and learning differences), and improving the physical accessibility of their spaces.

Advocate for social change

To mobilize positive change in the community, it is vital to speak up about local issues, supporting specific policy changes and encouraging decision-makers to influence positive outcomes. To achieve this, community members can begin by signing petitions, donating to causes or organizations, and joining protests, rallies, and other public actions.

Community members can also support, donate to, or volunteer at local organizations that provide accessible programming and foster inclusion for equity-deserving groups.

▶ Recommendations for how the Municipality can work towards the goals of Pathway 2: Celebrate Diversity and Support Inclusion

The following section details recommendations, potential actions, and steps for the Municipality to consider while working towards the goals of Pathway 2. Recommendations, actions, and steps should be selected and adapted as necessary.

GOAL 1: RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORKS

1

▶ **Recommendation 1: Relationships and support networks are fostered between equity-deserving groups.**

A) Potential action: Further consult with equity-deserving communities to identify barriers to accessing cultural spaces and participating in cultural programming, then determine and share potential improvements with external partners.

Steps for consideration:

- » Work with organizations such as the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron and Stratford-Perth Pride to identify current barriers faced by equity-deserving communities accessing cultural spaces and programming, and identify opportunities for the City to support the development of appropriate cultural spaces and programming.

▶ **Recommendation 2: Provide opportunities for community members from equity-deserving communities to influence Council and local decision-making.**

A) Potential action: Develop inclusive representation of all demographic groups in decision-making through committees or working groups that represent diverse needs and can provide advice to Council and decision-makers.

Steps for consideration:

- » Create a working group of cultural workers with professional and lived experiences of equity-focused programs to advise on accessibility-related issues and guide the development of accessibility and equity-focused initiatives. Example: [Newmarket's Dismantling Anti-Black Racism Task Force](#) that works in partnership with the Town to amplify voices from the Black community within Council and its decision-making processes.
- » Ensure that Municipal committees, working groups, and task forces reflect the diverse demographics needed to adequately and equitably respond to community needs.

- » Continue providing and expanding opportunities for youth to join City committees (e.g., by developing a youth position on each committee or creating a youth council).

B) Potential action: Continuously engage with community members to identify barriers, assess levels of accessibility, and pinpoint actionable solutions.

Steps for consideration:

- » Create regular forums on topics related to arts, culture, and heritage where creatives and cultural workers can express current accessibility challenges and desires with Council and decision-makers.

GOAL 2: CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND SPACES AIM TO REDUCE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND FINANCIAL BARRIERS

2

► **Recommendation 1: Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces**

A) Potential action: Share public-facing guidelines and resources on increasing the accessibility of culture.

Steps for consideration:

- » Include resources on Stratford's accessibility webpage to share guidelines for the creation of accessible cultural events.
- » Share available provincial and federal grants that further the accessibility of events and places. Examples: [Enabling Accessibility Fund](#) and [Canada Cultural Spaces Fund](#).

B) Potential action: Encourage accessible design through the increased inclusion of accessibility requirements for organizations that receive municipal funding.

C) Potential action: Work with Heritage Stratford to assess existing barriers and potential solutions for heritage building owners to increase the accessibility of their properties.

D) Potential action: Increase support for subsidized, low-cost, or free programming.

Steps for consideration:

- » Explore opportunities in the Community Grant Program to support organizations that aim to offer subsidized, low-cost, or free programming, especially to equity-deserving groups.

- » Expand free pass options, with partnerships between the Stratford Public Library and community partners. Example: The [Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum Culture Pass](#) was developed through a partnership between the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library and the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum and Community Centre to provide free entry to the Museum and Community Centre.
- » Support initiatives that activate public space and are free of charge (e.g., community events, performances, public art).

EXAMPLES OF RESOURCES

- List of local service providers for accessibility supports (e.g., ASL interpretation, audio-description, captioning), which could be collated by the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion division
- [Accessibility in Creative Spaces: A Toolkit for Ontario Arts Organizations](#): This toolkit, created by ArtsBuild Ontario, provides guidelines for the creation of accessible spaces, understood both as built spaces and as experiential environments. It includes basic resources about accessibility legislation in Ontario, including the AODA and Design of Public Spaces Standards, Ontario Building Code and Human Rights Code.
- [Tangled Art + Disability Accessibility Toolkit](#): A guide to making art spaces accessible, created by Humber College in partnership with Tangled Art + Disability. It offers an introduction to, and recommendations for, incorporating accessibility features into aspects of exhibition design.
- [Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility's Guide to Accessible Public Engagement and Guide to Conducting Accessible Meetings](#): Developed in partnership with the Ontario Ministry for Seniors and Accessibility, these resources are designed to support public sector, non-profit, and private sector organizations in conducting accessible community engagement.

► **Recommendation 2: Model best practices for accessibility**

- A) Potential action:** Organize diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion training for all City Staff.
- B) Potential action:** Model best practices in accessibility through events organized by the City and arm's length organizations.

Steps for consideration:

- » Continue the work outlined in the City's Accessibility Plans.
- » Implement tools supporting accessibility for City events.

- » Expand programs for newcomers, including ASL speakers and other equity-deserving communities, at the City and through cultural organizations benefitting from municipal support.

C) Potential action: Collect regular feedback from community members on the accessibility of City-organized events to ensure continuous learning.

► **Recommendation 3: Promote accessibility-related initiatives**

A) Potential action: Facilitate knowledge-sharing regarding best practices for designing accessible events.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consider creating events featuring presentations by recipients of Stratford's Accessibility Awards and by cultural organizations that have demonstrated excellence in accessibility.
- » Include spotlights on inspiring initiatives both locally and non-locally in City communications and promotions (e.g., website, social media platforms, etc.).

B) Potential action: Clearly identify the accessibility supports that will be provided for cultural events shared in the City's cultural calendar.

► **Recommendation 4: Foster a city-wide commitment to creating a welcoming community that celebrates diversity**

A) Potential action: Continue to model a city-wide standard for equity, diversity, and inclusion that is implemented across all programs and facilities and encourage community partners to hold the same standards.

Steps for consideration:

- » Continue supporting programs such as the Welcoming Community Statement.
- » Develop an equity and inclusion charter that brings together the City, cultural organizations, and public services to commit to creating inclusive, equitable, and safe environments and communities. Example: [York Region's Inclusion Charter](#) was endorsed by 20 local organizations with a common commitment to fostering welcoming and inclusive communities.

B) Potential action: Empower citizens and organizations to further equity, diversity, and inclusion within their communities.

Steps for consideration:

- » Work with arm's length organizations to provide public education and training workshops on the topics of cultural competency, diversity, and inclusion.

- » Require organizations seeking municipal funding to provide Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion statements.
- » Provide resources for improving the diversity within arts and cultural organizations at staff, board, and audience levels.

► **Recommendation 5: Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events.**

A) Potential action: Continue supporting and developing the Culture Cab program.

B) Potential action: Continue seeking opportunities for City transportation services to partner with cultural programs, events, and festivals (e.g., Lights On Stratford).

Steps for consideration:

- » Develop transportation routes and increase free shuttle services during cultural events and festivals.

C) Potential action: Evaluate current public transportation as it relates to accessing cultural sites and explore the possibility of developing new routes.

D) Potential action: Continue to support infrastructure for active transportation that connects cultural destinations.

Steps for consideration:

- » Explore opportunities to provide temporary road closures, expand cultural opportunities in the public realm, and increase walkability and active transportation, considering areas with a high concentration of cultural organizations, venues, and events, or those with access to natural heritage. Example: During [Pedestrian Sundays](#) in Kensington Market, Toronto, the City closes the streets once a month to provide a community festival that centers around celebrating local cultures and businesses while giving the streets back to the people. Example: [Open Streets Hamilton](#) temporarily opens streets to people for active transportation and casual, family-friendly gatherings, turning a local street into a 4 km Temporary Urban Linear Park.

GOAL 3: CULTURAL INITIATIVES REFLECT A DIVERSITY OF COMMUNITIES' DESIRES AND NEEDS

3

► **Recommendation 1: Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture.**

- A) **Potential action:** Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy to identify priorities and actions for ensuring youth feel engaged and supported throughout Stratford.
- B) **Potential action:** Participate in knowledge-sharing with youth to understand current challenges and identify cultural activities and programs they would like to see developed and made available in Stratford.
- C) **Potential action:** Develop a communication strategy to increase engagement with youth.

Steps for consideration:

- » Create a webpage to share events and opportunities for youth to engage with Stratford. Example: [Guelph Youth](#) is a web page that shares news and opportunities for local youth.
- » Explore opportunities to enhance the City's presence on social media, especially using a varied approach to platform engagement to reach different audiences. Example: Minneapolis [using TikTok to share public health information](#) or [Élections Québec using TikTok to encourage young people's involvement in government elections](#).

► **Recommendation 2: Identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures**

- A) **Potential action:** Support the development of events and festivals that celebrate multiculturalism and diversity.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consider providing support to organizations developing programs that celebrate diverse cultures. Example: [DiversCity Festival](#) on Prince Edward Island celebrates diversity and multiculturalism and is supported by all levels of government as well as private sector funders and community partners.
- » Undertake a needs assessment to determine if multicultural groups need dedicated community space, or other support, to host events, programs, and festivals.
- » Acknowledge and celebrate a variety of religious and cultural holidays.

PATHWAY 2

- B) Potential action:** Continue supporting partnerships between cultural organizations and educational institutions to facilitate educational programming that celebrates and teaches diverse traditions, practices, celebrations, and cultures (e.g., dance, music, art, storytelling, cuisine).

PATHWAY 3

**INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE
THROUGH THE PROMOTION
OF A SHARED
AUTHENTIC
IDENTITY**



Overview of Pathway 3: Instill Community Pride through the Promotion of a Shared Authentic Identity

When culture is allowed to flourish, its benefits are wide-reaching, from supporting community-building and developing a strong sense of place to growing a thriving local economy. To improve the culture in Stratford, efforts should be made to activate the city year-round, especially over the winter. To aid in this, the diverse cultural fields present in Stratford should be promoted and widely recognized, including the city's unique history, natural features, culinary experiences, and agricultural industry, as well as various forms of arts and culture such as film, visual arts, music, and performance arts. Activities offered should appeal to residents' interests while also attracting visitors.

OUTCOMES OF ACHIEVING PATHWAY 3

- A broad definition of culture in Stratford is embedded throughout the city and reflected in the diverse cultural activities available.
- Cultural resources and opportunities are well-known and it is easy to find organizations and activities that appeal to a broad range of interests and needs.
- Stratford is recognized as a year-round cultural destination that appeals to both residents and visitors.
- The heritage character of the city continues to shine with appreciated, protected, and well-maintained heritage sites.
- Residents can see themselves reflected in cultural opportunities that span across the city.
- The talents of Stratford's vibrant communities are showcased through diverse cultural opportunities taking place in both private and public spaces.
- Cultural attractions garner national and international attention

Overview of Pathway 3 Goals

There are five goals guiding Pathway 3, with 14 recommendations and 39 potential actions.

- **Goal 1:** Stratford's definition of culture is recognized and celebrated by the community.
- **Goal 2:** Culture in Stratford strives to engage residents and visitors year-round.
- **Goal 3:** Stratford's history and heritage are honoured and recognized as the city evolves into the future.
- **Goal 4:** Local talent and creatives of a wide variety of disciplines are recognized and celebrated.
- **Goal 5:** Cultural resources, events, and opportunities are well-known both within and beyond the city's borders.

What did we hear from the community?

Increase awareness of cultural resources

During community engagement, participants described a lack of awareness as one of the main barriers to accessing culture. Many community members were unsure where to learn about cultural resources or activities available in Stratford that meet their interests and needs. Community members voiced a desire for a consolidated approach to sharing cultural information, news, and events that can reach both visitors and residents.

Meet residents' needs and desires

While community engagement indicated that there are currently high participation and satisfaction levels across a variety of cultural offerings in Stratford, there was a desire for more. Emphasis was on furthering activities that appeal to residents' interests—particularly children, youth, and equity-deserving groups—as well as strengthening support for, and leveraging of, Stratford's unique cultural attractions (e.g., visual arts, film, literary arts, culinary arts, agriculture, and manufacturing). Participants shared feelings that there is an overemphasis on cultural offerings in Stratford that tailor to tourism and less support for opportunities that attract and appeal to the interests of residents. Additionally, participants described a “cultural divide” where diverse interests of culture are not being recognized. For example, some community members enjoy performing arts, visual arts, and literary arts, while others are more embedded in the rural and agricultural culture. There are also some community members who are not engaged with any cultural activities in Stratford.

Create year-round cultural activations

Stratford's cultural programming is historically focused on the summer months, with a high concentration of events, festivals, and programs across the city including the Stratford Festival, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors. However, too high of a concentration of activities increases the risk for competition between different cultural events. In comparison, there are significantly fewer activations in the off-season of the Stratford Festival (November–March) despite the community voicing interest in having more cultural experiences during these months. Colder weather does come with its own challenges; located in the Snow Belt region, Stratford is susceptible to unpredictable high amounts of snowfall, resulting in higher cancellation (or poor turnout) risks for events. However, by leveraging Stratford's cultural resources and building on the success of recent cultural programs and festivals that take place in the winter season, Stratford could become a year-round cultural hub attracting both residents and visitors.

Support for heritage maintenance, conservation, and renovation

Stratford boasts a high number of heritage sites and properties, especially in the downtown area, with key landmarks such as City Hall and beautifully conserved storefronts and houses. These create a pride of place cherished by many community members. Additionally, several heritage buildings have been repurposed and are now occupied by cultural and community organizations, such as Gallery Stratford, Stratford Perth Museum, Stratford Public Library, Copperlight, and Falstaff Family Centre. However, many of these buildings need capital repairs or renovations, but cultural organizations cannot undertake this work on their own as they have limited budgets for capital improvements and devote most of their funding to their programming. Additionally, participants noted that memorial sites lack a maintenance plan and dedicated funding, leading to City departments often relying on one-time external grants for upkeep.

What work has already been accomplished?

The City of Stratford honours the excellence of individuals and organizations that make significant contributions to their communities through the City's awards and recognition programs. There are seventeen awards offered through this program that cross various disciplines.

The City has successfully utilized Ontario planning mechanisms to protect and enhance unique built heritage by developing a Heritage Conservation District, creating a register of designated heritage sites, and allowing citizens to advise and assist Council on decisions around the Heritage Conservation District, individual properties, and other heritage matters through the Heritage Stratford Advisory Committee. The City also offers financial support through the Heritage Conservation District Loan and Grants Programs that provide financial assistance for building improvements and repairs within the Heritage Conservation District.

Destination Stratford, a government-funded and arm's length organization, aims to promote tourism to strengthen the local economy and enrich the quality of life in the City of Stratford. Destination Stratford seeks to raise awareness about upcoming events and activities in Stratford. Destination Stratford also develops its own events, such as Lights On Stratford, and is a key partner in other cultural events and activations.

Downtown Stratford Business Improvement Area (BIA) works in partnership with the City of Stratford to create a thriving, competitive, and safe business area that attracts shoppers, diners, tourists, and new businesses. The BIA has several initiatives that aim to further culture in the downtown, such as aiding in preserving historic architecture, enhancing the public realm, promoting and supporting local cultural initiatives, and developing cultural events and programs. More recently, the BIA has formalized its commitment to enhancing public art by developing the Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan (2023). Among other recent accomplishments is a new large-scale mural by local artist Kellen Hatanaka.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHT

Winter in Stratford was transformed when Lights On Stratford was first initiated in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, through the help of local funding via the COVID-19 Economic Support and Recovery Task Force. The Festival animated Stratford's heritage downtown core and parks system with luminous and interactive art installations. In 2021, Lights On Stratford saw over 80,000 visitors, and in its more recent 2023 installment, there were over 83,000 patrons across the main exhibits. Lights On Stratford also demonstrated the benefits of local partnerships where various community members and organizations unite to strengthen an initiative and support culture throughout the city. To increase accessibility and transportation, Lights On Stratford partnered with the City of Stratford to provide a free shuttle bus, and with the Stratford Perth Museum, the festival restarted the summer's Culture Cab program, offering free cab rides to light displays. To add to the Lights On Stratford programming, World in a Weekend—a partnership between Stratford Summer Music and Springworks Puppet Festival—returned for a two-day winter exhibition featuring lit puppet performances in Market Square; a concert at the Avondale; and a dance workshop and puppet show at Factory 163. This brought typical summer programming into the winter months, demonstrating the possibilities of Stratford's culture extending into colder weather. The private sector was also engaged when Lights On Stratford connected with over 60 businesses to extend their weekend hours later into the evening to complement the Festival's programming. A 2022 economic impact analysis by PwC shows an overall yearly impact of the festival of over \$5 million. A post-festival public survey completed by 192 people indicated that 83.3% of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the festival. Similarly, the Downtown Stratford BIA surveyed their membership, and responses from 32 businesses indicated that 87% were satisfied or very satisfied. Overall, Lights On Stratford is exemplary in demonstrating how winter months can feature successful municipal activations when private, public, and non-profit partners collaborate and create attractions that appeal to a wide range of interests, drawing both residents and visitors.

How the community can support Pathway 3: Instill Community Pride through the Promotion of a Shared Authentic Identity

The following is not a complete list of ways in which the wider community can support furthering community pride and identity, but rather some opportunities for consideration.

Enhance year-round programming

Explore opportunities for successful summer programming to continue into fall, winter, and spring to increase opportunities year-round. Continue to advocate for increases in

winter programming from public, private, and non-profit partners. Explore options for temporary activations, pop-ups, and public realm enhancements such as tactile urbanism, placemaking, and placekeeping initiatives.

Advance community interests

Cultural organizations can work with various creatives, cultural workers, and organizations to expand Stratford's cultural offerings. This may involve developing projects and initiatives that bring together various cultural providers, such as public art and agriculture, dining and music, heritage and storytelling. Additionally, cultural programming should appeal to various ages and demographics.

Expand culture beyond the downtown

Cultural organizations, private businesses, and property owners can consider experimenting with cultural initiatives in unconventional environments, such as parking lots, strip malls, farms, and manufacturing or industrial areas. Unique attractions can demonstrate out-of-the-box thinking and celebrate Stratford's rural and urban characteristics and creatives while engaging with residents across a variety of demographics and interests. Additionally, expanding culture outside of the downtown can help draw visitors to new areas and spur economic development, such as agri-tourism.

Recommendations to Support the Goals

GOAL 1: STRATFORD'S DEFINITION OF CULTURE IS RECOGNIZED AND CELEBRATED BY THE COMMUNITY

1

The following section details recommendations, potential actions, and steps for the Municipality to consider while working towards the goals of Pathway 3. Recommendations, actions, and steps should be selected and adapted as necessary.

Recommendation 1: Share Stratford's distinctive definition of culture widely to celebrate unique cultural initiatives

A) Potential action: Promote the local definition of culture identified through community engagement, both internally and externally.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share the list of cultural resources identified in the Cultural Plan (see longlist of cultural resources in the Interim Report).
- » Continue creating guides that celebrate local culture, such as: a public art guide; a live music guide; a food and dining guide celebrating local chefs, breweries, and

restaurants (example: [Brampton Food Guide](#)); or an agricultural guide indicating farm activities (e.g., berry picking, fresh eggs).

- B) Potential action:** Communicate Stratford’s cultural resources in the different disciplines identified as key to Stratford’s cultural definition.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share the list of cultural resources identified in the Cultural Plan.
- » Continue creating guides that celebrate local culture; for instance, a public art guide; a live music guide; a food and dining guide celebrating local chefs, breweries, and restaurants (example: [Brampton Food Guide](#)); and/or an agricultural guide indicating farm activities (e.g., berry picking, fresh eggs, etc.).

► **Recommendation 2: Support the development of events, festivals, and initiatives fitting Stratford’s definition of culture**

- A) Potential action:** Continue to recognize and celebrate the intangible culture that makes Stratford unique.

Steps for consideration:

- » Continue supporting events that celebrate Stratford’s intangible cultural heritage (e.g., neighbourhood street festivals, walking tours, storytelling events). Example: [Myseum Toronto](#) runs public programming showcasing Toronto’s history, spaces, culture(s), architecture, and people. Example: [Art in the Open, Charlottetown](#) highlights the vibrant local art scene, green spaces, exhibition venues, and diverse cultural traditions.
- » Capitalize on Stratford’s unique horticulture through celebrations, events, and festivals.

- B) Potential action:** Consider providing support for organizations developing cultural initiatives that align with Stratford’s definition of culture, specifically for programs aimed to engage young people, seniors, and equity-deserving groups.

Steps for consideration:

- » Seek opportunities to provide partnership, sponsorship, or endorsement for programs, events, and festivals that align with Stratford’s definition of culture.
- » Share available federal and provincial funding dedicated to supporting celebrations of local cultures. Example: [Local Festivals – Building Communities Through Arts and Heritage Funding](#).

► **Recommendation 3: Engage community members by increasing opportunities for residents to weigh in on key cultural and public art projects**

- A) Potential action:** Ensure community desires are reflected in City activities through regular consultations on public art, placemaking, and placekeeping projects
- B) Potential action:** Integrate community votes as a decision criterion for select public art projects.

EXAMPLE - PARTICIPATIVE BUDGET

Several French municipalities have funds reserved for “participative budget” projects. These funds support projects created by local businesses and creatives, which are then selected by residents. To meet eligibility requirements, projects need to: be installed in a public space or on a city-owned property; represent a general interest; be compatible with urban development plans; and contribute to improving the quality of life. City services analyze submitted projects to confirm their eligibility before presenting them to residents, who can vote online for their favourite project.

GOAL 2: CULTURE IN STRATFORD STRIVES TO ENGAGE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS YEAR-ROUND

2

► **Recommendation 1: Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round.**

- A) Potential action:** Highlight Stratford’s cultural strengths by supporting current and new year-round initiatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Continue supporting current and new initiatives that highlight Stratford’s unique culture in the colder months. Example: [Kingstonlicious](#) showcases over forty restaurants offering prix fixe menus in the winter months, as well as accommodation packages.
- » Partner with nearby municipalities and regions to cross-promote cultural events and attractions to aid tourism during the shoulder season and winter months.
- » Continue supporting activities that animate street life in the colder months (e.g., exploring winter/shoulder season outdoor patios/cafés, street festivals, events in Market Square).
- » Work with the Downtown Stratford BIA to identify opportunities to activate public and private spaces year-round in the downtown core (see Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan for examples of pilot projects).
- » Explore developing a Winter Strategy to guide winter culture and tourism. Example: [Saskatoon’s Winter Strategy](#), which aims to celebrate winter living and make Saskatoon a vibrant and prosperous city year-round through a community-defined vision as well as strategic goals and actions.

B) Potential action: Work with organizations that serve equity-deserving groups to identify current barriers and opportunities to engage residents in the shoulder season.

Steps for consideration:

- » Work with the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron to understand how newcomers and immigrants can feel engaged and supported in the shoulder season/winter months, especially those who may be less familiar with colder weather.
- » Work with organizations and associations engaged with Stratford's older adult and senior populations to identify how seniors can be further engaged and supported in the shoulder season (e.g., Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association [55+]).

C) Potential action: Encourage the development of winter programming through sharing resources and knowledge.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share federal and provincial funding available for winter placemaking and placekeeping initiatives.
- » Promote programs that can aid organizations in developing winter activities. Example: [STEPS I HeART Main Street](#) Winter Cohort provides support to BIAs to animate winter months through placemaking.

D) Potential action: Further develop shoulder season micro-grants to encourage community groups in developing placemaking, placekeeping, and community events from fall to spring. Example: [Milton Small Grant Program](#), which diverted \$20,000 from the Milton Community Fund to provide grants of up to \$400 for residents and non-profit organizations to develop initiatives and events that improve and celebrate community life.

► **Recommendation 2: Support opportunities that bring culture beyond the downtown core.**

- A) Potential action:** Encourage individuals and organizations to explore innovative tactile urbanism, placemaking, and placekeeping projects that take place in areas where community members gather outside of downtown. Example: [PlazaPOPS](#) is a community-led, high impact, and low cost project that transforms parking lots into free and accessible gathering places.
- B) Potential action:** Continue supporting linkages between Stratford’s natural heritage and culture (e.g., Art in the Park, Stratford Perth Museum Historic Walk, Gallery Stratford outdoor programming, the Stratford Public Library’s Park Literacy Program).
- C) Potential action:** Encourage the development of cultural activities to take place in residential or rural areas (e.g., neighbourhood fairs, multicultural festivals, pop-up or temporary public art or performance events).

Steps for consideration:

- » Support initiatives that celebrate and engage Stratford’s agriculture and manufacturing communities, particular activities that advance agri-tourism.
- » Work with Perth County and nearby municipalities to continue supporting and growing the agri-tourism sector.
- » Share the benefits of agri-tourism and culture with rural-based community members and organizations to support and develop cultural and agri-tourism attractions (e.g., self-guided tours or discovery trails, crop harvesting, farm skills workshops, education on local farming techniques, and practices and celebrations that exhibit local agricultural and manufacturing products).
- » Encourage partnerships between agricultural/manufacturing organizations and art, music, and performing arts organizations and creatives to develop events that highlight the multifaceted elements of Stratford culture.
- » Continue protecting and expanding Stratford’s trails and parks system.

EXAMPLES OF CULTURE IN RURAL SETTINGS

[Popsilos](#) is a mural program in Prescott-Russell, Ontario, that aims to combine art and agri-food tourism through murals on farm silos, encouraging opportunities for visitors to discover local produce and products as well as local artists. This project was supported through federal funding and local private-sector partnerships.

[4th Line Theatre](#) hosts plays that aim to preserve and promote Canadian cultural heritage set in a 5th-generation farm in Millbrook, Ontario.

[Wild Rose Farm](#), in Mulmur, Ontario offers an artist residency program that welcomes artists across disciplines and includes accommodation and studio space.

[AgArts Farm-to-Art Residencies](#) places artists on farms across the United States of America for one to four weeks, where they are encouraged to build relationships with the farmers and learn about the issues they face, which they then create a creative piece about.

[Beetbox Farm](#), located in West Ottawa, developed the Under the Stars Concert Series, which brings live music and community members together after farming hours.

[No.9 Gardens](#) is a hands-on teaching facility and conservation area focused on building resilient and respectful communities, utilizing the Nine Pillars of Sustainable Design developed by No.9.

► **Recommendation 3: Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford**

A) Potential action: Endorse and approve the Downtown Stratford BIA's Public Art Plan 2023.

Steps for consideration:

- » Support the implementation of the vision, guiding principles, actions, and pilot projects included in the Downtown Stratford Public Art Plan.

B) Potential action: Assess developing a city-wide public art policy to guide a cohesive vision for public art in Stratford with an outlined governance and decision-making process for approving public art, and for evaluating, conserving, and deaccessioning current and future public art projects.

C) Potential action: Explore opportunities for public art to be featured on City facilities or property.

Steps for consideration:

- » Work with Public Works, Planning, and Engineering divisions to identify further opportunities to display public art on city infrastructure or buildings (e.g., bus shelters, utility boxes, street furniture). Example: [City of Richmond Urban Infrastructure Art Program](#).

GOAL 3: STRATFORD'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE ARE HONOURED AND RECOGNIZED AS THE CITY EVOLVES INTO THE FUTURE

3

► **Recommendation 1: Support the protection of Stratford's built heritage.**

A) Potential action: Develop a long-term maintenance plan for key built heritage sites.

Steps for consideration:

- » Conduct a feasibility study on how to provide long-term maintenance to City-owned heritage buildings and memorial sites.

B) Potential action: Evaluate current access to funding for owners of heritage property.

Steps for consideration:

- » Conduct a needs assessment to determine if the current Heritage Conservation District Loan and Grant Program meets current community needs.
- » Promote external funding opportunities that are available to heritage building owners.
- » Explore the feasibility of expanding the Building Code Upgrade Loan and Façade Improvement Loan to designated buildings outside of the Heritage Conservation District.

► **Recommendation 2: Promote Stratford's history and heritage.**

A) Potential action: Continue identifying local heritage buildings through the publicly accessible Part IV Designated Properties registry.

B) Potential action: Increase communication on Stratford's unique heritage.

Steps for consideration:

- » Continue working with Heritage Stratford to create a heritage guide and related signage, and organize guided tours.
- » Explore the possibility of developing programs showcasing local heritage through dedicated content (e.g., digital technology such as audio walks, augmented reality projects, and public art).
- » Collaborate with the Parks and Forestry department to create communication on Stratford's natural heritage and history.

► **Recommendation 3: Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art.**

A) Potential action: Develop guidelines for supporting public art within the Heritage Conservation District (HCD) and on or near Designated Heritage Buildings.

Steps for consideration:

- » Share the Downtown Public Art Plan commissioned by the Downtown Stratford BIA internally and with close partners and refer to it when defining guidelines for supporting public art.
- » Outline guidelines and approval processes for supporting the development of permanent and temporary public art in the HCD. The guidelines should be flexible to encourage innovative ideas and contemporary works that can complement and enhance heritage buildings, heritage landscapes, and storytelling. Example: [Toronto History Museums virtual Awakenings program](#).
- » Survey and identify areas in the HCD that can be prioritized for public art (e.g., Market Square, public spaces, City infrastructure, non-Part IV Designated Buildings, concrete façades).

B) Potential action: Support public artwork that has limited or no impact on heritage sites. Examples include: digital technology (e.g., AR, VR, projections, light- and sound-based work); temporary activations in public spaces; and semi-permanent work affixed to the exterior of buildings that does not damage the façade.

Steps for consideration:

- » Explore the use of digital technology to animate heritage-protected areas or buildings and memorial sites (e.g. AR, VR, Projections, Lights, Sounds).
- » Encourage temporary activations in public spaces within the HCD, especially Market Square and the parkette behind Tír na nÓg (Land of Youth) art installation leading to the Erie St. Parking Lot.
- » Explore options for artwork to be semi-permanently affixed to the exterior of buildings without causing significant damage to the façades.
- » Explore how contemporary artwork can complement and enhance heritage buildings, heritage landscapes, and storytelling.

C) Potential action: Advocate for public art to be incorporated into private buildings and spaces.

Steps for consideration:

- » Educate and build partnerships with property owners and the private sector to encourage buy-in for supporting public art.

HIGHLIGHTS: USING TECHNOLOGY AS A MEANS OF PROMOTING URBAN HERITAGE

[murmur]³²

[murmur] is an audio storytelling and archival project, using first-person narratives to share location-specific stories, delivered by mobile phone and on the web.

In three neighbourhoods in Canada's three largest cities—Toronto, Vancouver, and Montréal—green [murmur] signs (featuring a telephone number and unique code) indicate the availability of stories. By dialing the number with your mobile phone and entering the code, you can hear one or more short stories about the place where you're standing. The stories are heard in the storyteller's own voice and are personal and anecdotal in nature, highlighting the 'hidden' stories of the city. These stories serve as another cultural layer, complementing the 'official' history of the city and its neighbourhoods.

Montréal en histoires³³

Montréal en histoires uses immersive technologies to guide visitors through the city's rich history. Several programs have been developed, including:

- Circuits: digital tours available through a mobile application, which gives access to interviews, photos, videos, podcasts, and augmented reality.
- Cite Memoire: a video projection circuit including 25 artworks projected throughout Old Montreal, Old Port of Montréal, and downtown Montréal, illuminating a range of milestones in the city's history.

32 For more information see:

<https://publicart.ie/main/directory/directory/view/murmur/aa28f37881c994226da0a78ab741dec7/>

33 For more information see: <https://www.montrealenhistoires.com/>

► **Recommendation 1: Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city.**

A) Potential action: Continue developing Stratford awards that aim to showcase cultural businesses and creators.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consider developing a Poet Laureate and Storytelling Program. Example: The [City of Windsor](#) developed a Poet Laureate & Storytellers Program celebrating literary arts through four appointed positions: Poet Laureate, Youth Poet Laureate, Indigenous Storyteller, and Multicultural Community Storyteller.

B) Potential action: Develop a communications strategy to celebrate local creatives and cultural accomplishments.

Steps for consideration:

- » Profile local creatives and cultural projects on websites and social media and municipal campaigns. Example: City of Brampton and Brampton Arts Organization worked with a local artist to develop [promotional signage for their municipal election in 2022](#).

C) Potential action: Support education around creatives and culture in Stratford.

Steps for consideration:

- » Seek partnerships with local cultural organizations to provide educational workshops on various arts and cultural topics for community members.
- » Continue to support educational institutions collaborating with local creatives, producers, and cultural organizations to deliver knowledge-sharing and skill-building programs (e.g., Stratford District Secondary School's Culinary Dinner Club, which partners with local food producers and chefs to produce collaborative meals that highlight local cuisine for community members).

D) Potential action: Continue supporting events that showcase a wide range of local creatives (e.g., Art in the Park).

E) Potential action: Seek opportunities to hire and showcase local creatives at City events (e.g., City-organized events and festivals, community meetings, Council meetings). Example: [Port Moody Regular Council meeting performances](#) showcase local creative talents for the public and City Council and share cultural projects taking place throughout the city.

► **Recommendation 2: Encourage events, festivals, businesses, and organizations to support local creatives.**

A) Potential action: Develop a directory of local creatives and cultural producers that are available for hire to encourage the hiring of local artists by businesses and organizations in Stratford. Example: [Mississauga Arts Council Arts for Business Directory](#) showcases a roster of professional performers, musicians, visual artists, instructors, photographers, and other artists available for hire.

B) Potential action: Advocate for events and community gatherings to feature local creatives (e.g., dancers, musicians, actors, artists, chefs).

C) Potential action: Continue supporting organizations that showcase local creatives.

GOAL 5: CULTURAL RESOURCES, EVENTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE WELL-KNOWN BOTH WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CITY'S BORDERS

5

► **Recommendation 1: Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture.**

A) Potential action: Centralize information on cultural organizations, events, and community updates. Example: The City of Thunder Bay has a [detailed community calendar](#) with categories and filters to organize information. In addition to this, Thunder Bay has developed [thetrunk.org](#), a new online directory for arts, culture, and heritage events, places, and organizations to promote themselves to other creatives and the public.

Steps for consideration:

- » Select an organization to host information about culture (e.g., City website, Destination Stratford, or other third party / arm's length organization). If other sites host public calendars or information about culture, there should be a clear link to the designated webpage for culture. For example, while Destination Stratford does have a calendar with cultural events, many residents noted they were not aware of its existence. To increase awareness of, and drive traffic to, the designated cultural calendar, the City's calendar webpage could host information and a webpage link leading to Destination Stratford's calendar. If another cultural calendar arises in the community, similar efforts should be made in order to raise awareness of local events.
- » Establish a streamlined process for community members and organizations to share upcoming events or cultural information.

B) Potential action: Increase social media presence to reach both residents and visitors.

Steps for consideration:

- » Develop a designated social media account to share information about local cultural events, opportunities, updates, and to showcase local creatives and initiatives involving residents, creatives, and visitors. Example: [Sauga Culture](#). This account could use the City’s platforms or be developed through partnership with a local organization.
- » Explore using targeted sponsored ads to share information and opportunities regarding culture directly with residents.

C) Potential action: Share and continue to develop the Cultural Resource Map.

Steps for consideration:

- » Integrate the Cultural Resource Map into the City of Stratford Interactive Map or create a new map specific to culture.
- » Develop a process for new cultural resources to be added to the map
- » Audit the map frequently to ensure that it reflects current opportunities and places.

► **Recommendation 2: Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture.**

A) Potential action: Continue to develop partnerships with Destination Ontario and Regional Tourism Organization 4.

B) Potential action: Continue working with Destination Stratford to raise awareness regarding cultural events and initiatives.

C) Potential action: Support cultural and placemaking initiatives that are touring through municipalities across the province, country, or world by hosting them in Stratford. Example: [AFFINITY](#), an Australia-developed public art installation that tours internationally and was a featured exhibit at Lights On Stratford 2022–2023).

D) Potential action: Encourage local organizations to support both local and non-local creatives to further position Stratford as a unique cultural destination that features world-class creatives.

E) Potential action: Explore defining high-concentration areas of cultural resources as cultural districts (e.g., the downtown area and HCD) to aid in further promoting Stratford as a cultural destination.

» Example: Building on recommendations in the 2019–2029 Culture Master Plan, the [City of Mississauga identified six neighborhoods to be developed as cultural districts](#). These were identified based on several criteria: the presence of “cultural assets to build on, increased development activity and government supported revitalization efforts, an established and engaged community, dedicated partners such as local Business Improvement Associations (BIAs), strong political support, and a budding arts and culture scene that attracts the community and spurs local tourism.”³⁴ The City is working on developing these districts through a range of activities (e.g., event planning, marketing, wayfinding, and temporary public art).

► **Recommendation 3: Increase wayfinding and encourage walkability and connectivity between cultural sites.**

A) Potential action: Enhance creative wayfinding signage to increase navigation around Stratford and visually link cultural resources.

Steps for consideration:

» Explore engaging local creatives to develop creative wayfinding solutions.

³⁴ “Cultural Districts,” City of Mississauga, updated January 31, 2023, <https://yoursay.mississauga.ca/cultural-districts>

PATHWAY 4

FURTHER TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION



Medicine Wheel at Falstaff Family Centre. Image by Falstaff Family Centre.

Overview of Pathway 4: Further Truth and Reconciliation

This Pathway aims to support the continuous process of reconciliation and decolonization, as well as respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action. While the following are general recommendations, it is important that Indigenous communities are engaged and provided leadership opportunities with respect to Indigenous Protocols to identify appropriate actions to further support Indigenous Peoples and culture in Stratford.

OUTCOMES OF ACHIEVING PATHWAY 4

- Relationships are furthered with Indigenous communities and nearby First Nations.
- Indigenous people are appropriately engaged through methods that understand and respect their traditional knowledge and practices.
- Barriers currently blocking Indigenous people from accessing or producing culture are well understood, and the City actively works towards reducing these barriers.
- The City's processes continue to work towards reconciliation and decolonization and facilitate opportunities for Indigenous voices, values, culture, and needs to inform city-building and decision-making.
- Non-Indigenous community members have deep knowledge and understanding regarding the detrimental impacts of colonialism, as well as practicable actions towards reconciliation and decolonization.
- Indigenous culture, traditions, and heritage are widely known, celebrated, and visibly integrated throughout Stratford.

Overview of Goals, Recommendations, and Actions

- There are three goals guiding Pathway 4, with 9 recommendations and 21 potential actions.
- **Goal 1:** Relationships are further developed with Indigenous communities, organizations, and people.
- **Goal 2:** Local Indigenous culture is promoted and celebrated.
- **Goal 3:** Indigenous voices, histories, traditions, and cultures are well-known, respected, and integrated throughout the city.

What did we hear from the community?

Increase recognition of, and support for, Indigenous history, culture, and community members

During community engagement, there was mention that a vast number of Indigenous people, creatives, and knowledge keepers are connected to Stratford. Notable programs and events included the Indigenous Talking Circle with over 100 members, previous National Day for Truth and Reconciliation events, and Stratford District Secondary School's Culinary Dinner Club partnership with Indigenous chef Caitlin Noel-Drews.

Stakeholders expressed a desire to further support and develop Indigenous cultural practices, programming, creatives, and organizations through funding, relationship development, and promotion. They also hoped to see partnerships between Indigenous community members and organizations, as well as partnerships between Indigenous community members and non-Indigenous community members. In addition, community members noted a need for further education on Indigenous values, practices, traditions, cultures, and heritage.

What work has already been accomplished?

The City of Stratford is committed to working towards reconciliation through Indigenous-led learning opportunities and authentic relationship building. The City's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division conducts work focused on achieving reconciliation goals. Education on Indigenous values, practices, traditions, and relationship building is integrated in the different initiatives presented in the "what work has already been accomplished?" section of Pathway 2.

In February 2023, Council approved a Land Acknowledgement that reflects upon and acknowledges the land in which Stratford residents live, work, and play.

The City also acknowledges days of significance for Indigenous communities, such as National Indigenous Peoples Day, National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, The National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People, Girls, and 2SLGBTQQIA+ people, Indigenous Disability Awareness Month, Treaties Recognition Week, and National Aboriginal Veterans Day.

COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

The Talking Circle is an Indigenous-led program with over 100 members. The organization has partnered with the Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron and Falstaff Family Centre to host regular meetings as well as Indigenous events, such as National Day for Truth and Reconciliation. The Talking Circle has also worked with Falstaff Family Centre to create a medicine wheel garden.

How the community can support Pathway 4: Further Truth and Reconciliation

The following is not a complete list of ways in which the wider community can support Truth and Reconciliation, but rather some opportunities for consideration.

Educate yourself

Learn about the detrimental effects of colonization on Indigenous Peoples and land, through resources available online and at local libraries and bookstores. You can read the [Truth and Reconciliation Commission reports online](#) and listen to Indigenous Peoples and leaders directly and learn about their culture, traditions, and heritage. Each Indigenous community is unique and presents significant learning opportunities regarding the diverse worldviews, perspectives, cultures, and traditions of Indigenous Peoples. Expand on your learning by reading and purchasing books by Indigenous authors, as well as watching documentaries and films by Indigenous creatives. When non-Indigenous community members are welcome, attend Indigenous events, celebrations, and ceremonies.

Support Indigenous peoples

Indigenous Peoples and communities across Canada continue to face human rights violations, discrimination, and inequities. To provide support and solidarity, speak up to government officials and decision-makers, encouraging them to enact positive social change. You can also volunteer your time with Indigenous organizations and charities. If you have the means, you can donate to Indigenous organizations and people or purchase creative work from Indigenous creatives.

Cultural organizations can support Indigenous Peoples by reducing social and financial barriers to their programs and events. They can seek opportunities to form partnerships with Indigenous creatives and community members. It is also important that organizations educate staff members, especially those in leadership or customer service positions, on Indigenous history and protocols. Organizations can also provide educational opportunities to the wider public.

Celebrate Indigenous Peoples and culture

The celebration of Indigenous Peoples should be continuous and year-round, not just highlighted on days of significance. Cultural organizations should seek opportunities to work with Indigenous Peoples to host events that celebrate Indigenous joy, culture, and heritage. There should be support for cultural activities that respect and encourage Indigenous self-determination and vitality. Indigenous perspectives, stories, and traditions should be showcased and celebrated.

► Recommendations for how the Municipality can work towards the goals of Pathway 4: Further Truth and Reconciliation

The following section details recommendations, potential actions, and steps for the Municipality to consider while working towards the goals of Pathway 1. Recommendations, actions, and steps should be selected and adapted as necessary. Please note that the following recommendations and actions were not developed through fulsome engagement with Indigenous communities and nearby First Nations, and appropriate actions should be decided through respectful consultation with Indigenous Peoples, communities, and nearby First Nations.

GOAL 1: RELATIONSHIPS ARE FURTHER DEVELOPED WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PEOPLE

1

- **Recommendation 1: 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**
 - A) Potential action:** Continue developing relationships with nearby First Nations, including Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee-Delaware Nation, Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point, Mississaugas of the Credit, Six Nations of the Grand River - Seneca, Upper Cayuga, Onondaga Clear Sky, Oneida, Walker Mohawk, and Tuscarora.
 - B) Potential action:** Host roundtable discussions on how Indigenous communities can be further supported in cultural planning and city-building.
 - C) Potential action:** Determine opportunities for sharing municipal resources in consultation with Indigenous communities and First Nations (e.g., physical spaces, knowledge, expertise).

- **Recommendation 2: Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities**
 - A) Potential action:** Adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.
 - B) Potential action:** Educate all levels of government on Indigenous protocols, history, and human rights.
 - C) Potential action:** Respect Indigenous protocols when engaging with Indigenous individuals or communities with the understanding that protocols will be unique to each community as Indigenous Peoples have diverse worldviews, perspectives, and traditions.

D) Potential action: Investigate creating policies that protect the rights of Indigenous people to practice their traditions at municipal facilities, properties, and functions (e.g., events, programs). Example: The City of Toronto, in collaboration with Indigenous community members and leaders, identified areas in three City Parks as [Designated Sacred Fire sites](#).

► **Recommendation 3: Increase opportunities for Indigenous communities to be engaged in planning and decision-making processes**

A) Potential action: Facilitate opportunities for Indigenous community members and nearby First Nations to inform planning and decision-making across City departments to embed Indigenous values, traditions, practices, and history throughout the Municipality.

Steps for consideration:

» Ensure that Indigenous communities are engaged at the beginning of projects and plans to identify opportunities for the City to provide, adjust, or optimize programs and processes to support Indigenous Peoples and align with traditional knowledge and practices.

B) Potential action: Develop an Indigenous Advisory Committee to provide advice and participate in the development of policies and programs to ensure that Indigenous needs are being met.

GOAL 2: LOCAL INDIGENOUS CULTURE IS PROMOTED AND CELEBRATED

2

► **Recommendation 1: Share information about Indigenous creatives, organizations, and businesses.**

A) Potential action: Develop a register of Indigenous organizations, businesses, and creatives that can be shared to foster awareness and encourage partnerships between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities.

B) Potential action: Promote Indigenous-led organizations, events, programs, and initiatives.

► **Recommendation 2: Continue developing programming around Indigenous days of significance.**

A) Potential action: Work with Indigenous communities to identify appropriate opportunities for commemorating or celebrating days of significance for Indigenous Peoples (e.g., Treaties Recognition Week, National Indigenous People’s Day, The National Day of Awareness for Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Two-Spirit People).

► **Recommendation 3: Increase visibility of Indigenous Peoples, culture, and traditions.**

A) Potential action: Showcase Indigenous culture and traditions through events, programming, and initiatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Seek opportunities to partner with Indigenous cultural producers, educators, and elders to speak or present at public events.
- » Encourage organizations hosting cultural events in both public and private spaces to engage Indigenous Peoples in the planning of the event and provide opportunities for Indigenous Peoples to share their culture and traditions at the event.
- » Explore opportunities to develop (or support the development of) events and festivals that showcase and celebrate Indigenous Peoples’ culture and heritage.

B) Potential action: Seek opportunities to commission Indigenous creatives to develop public art and cultural initiatives.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consult with Indigenous communities to identify opportunities (e.g., places, artists, mediums) for Indigenous culture to be shared through public art. Example: [Manidoo Ogitigan](#) a “Spirit Garden” created by the City of Kingston in partnership with Alderville First Nation at Lake Ontario Park, speaks to the treaty rights and historical occupation of Alderville First Nation’s territory in Katarokwi/Kingston. Example: [ᐃᑭᑦᑎᑦ \(ÎNÎW\) River Lot 11](#), Edmonton’s Indigenous Art Park, features six artworks by Canadian Indigenous artists that “tell the story of this place.” This Art Park was made in partnership with the City of Edmonton, Confederacy of Treaty Six First Nations, Métis Nation of Alberta, Edmonton Arts Council, and Indigenous artists and community members.

GOAL 3: INDIGENOUS VOICES, HISTORIES, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURES ARE WELL-KNOWN, RESPECTED, AND INTEGRATED THROUGHOUT THE CITY

3

► **Recommendation 1: Further education on Indigenous culture and history.**

- A) Potential action:** Develop educational campaigns surrounding days of significance for Indigenous reconciliation.
- B) Potential action:** Develop publicly accessible information regarding Indigenous history and culture.
- C) Potential action:** Host publicly accessible training or workshops on Indigenous protocols, culture, and history.
- D) Potential action:** Continue supporting partnerships between Indigenous organizations/individuals and educational institutions.
- E) Potential action:** Continue sharing knowledge regarding Indigenous history and culture at all meetings, events, and programs.

► **Recommendation 2: Support identifying and recognizing Indigenous places and stories.**

- A) Potential action:** Facilitate knowledge sharing through in-depth consultation in respect to Indigenous protocols to identify sites, stories, and traditions of cultural significance to increase their visibility throughout Stratford.

Steps for consideration:

- » With leadership from Indigenous communities, identify and map Indigenous sites of cultural significance within Stratford.
- » Explore if there are appropriate spaces for Indigenous naming to be incorporated into sites and places.

► **Recommendation 3: Support opportunities for Indigenous communities to steward the land and support conservation.**

- A) Potential action:** Seek opportunities to engage Indigenous Peoples and organizations in land stewardship opportunities.

Steps for consideration:

- » Consult with Indigenous communities to determine opportunities for land stewardship within Stratford (e.g., conservation of land, water, and ways of life).
- » Investigate the suitability of federal and provincial stewardship programs in Stratford (e.g., explore developing an [Indigenous Guardians](#) initiative).



SpringWorks at Factory 163. Image by credit Terry Manzo.

ACHIEVING THE CULTURAL PLAN

Implementing the Cultural Plan, and working towards achieving its goals, will rely upon dedicated support from the Municipality and strong community partnerships.

Funding and Supporting Culture

There are various options available for implementing the different actions articulated in this Cultural Plan. While most actions will require new funding streams, others can be achieved by adapting current processes and policies. While each recommendation and action should be assessed to determine the appropriate funding source, the following are various funding options that could be utilized.

OPERATING BUDGET

The City's operating budget can be used to dedicate staff time towards supporting the cultural sector and implementing the Cultural Plan, and it could also be tapped to increase culture funding through the Community Grants Program (and/or other funding streams, if they become available). However, the operating budget should not be overly relied upon; a diversity of funding opportunities should be considered.

CAPITAL INVESTMENT AND RESERVE FUND

These funds can be used for capital projects, such as developing a multi-purpose arts facility. While this will not be the main source of funding culture in Stratford, it will be a helpful source for funding large projects with benefits spanning across sectors.

INDIRECT INVESTMENTS

Emphasizing and embedding culture throughout policies, plans, and decision-making can lead to increased local support for cultural activities. Not all improvements need to be financially driven, and some can arise from indirect cultural investments such as below-market or nominal rent for community members and cultural organizations occupying City-owned spaces; property tax exemptions for community and cultural organizations; and free or below-market rates for cultural organizations to advertise on City structures (e.g., bus shelters, buildings). Indirect cultural investments can also include continuing to provide in-kind services for festivals and events (e.g., permits, transit, fire, police, EMS, waste management) and offering heritage conservation incentives (e.g., designating buildings, providing financial assistance).

PARTNERSHIPS

Stratford has already demonstrated that great partnerships lead to cultural success, and encouraging collaborations within and between sectors should continue. City departments can work together with advisory committees, boards, and arm's length organizations to achieve actions. Partnerships with external organizations and community groups may also be sought. Collaborations can increase the number of resources available, such as physical spaces, creatives, volunteers, expertise, etc. The City can also encourage community-led initiatives that align with the Cultural Plan by providing endorsement, financial aid, and non-financial support (e.g., advice, promotional aid, in-kind services).

FEDERAL AND PROVINCIAL GRANTS

The Federal and Provincial governments identify culture, heritage, and tourism as key elements for sustainable community development and provide financial support through various grants and funding streams. Funding is often for project-based initiatives and can be utilized to implement cultural initiatives. Additionally, to encourage community-led initiatives, the Municipality should promote available funding opportunities and provide support through grant writing assistance and endorsement of the project when it aligns with the Cultural Plan.

PHILANTHROPY AND CROWDFUNDING

Ensuring that the benefits of culture are widely recognized, the City can aid in increasing instances of philanthropy and donations towards cultural projects. To support fundraising efforts, the Municipality can explore utilizing crowdfunding for projects that have community benefit and align with the Cultural Plan. This would allow community members to provide small financial contributions to local projects that will benefit the community. This method is most successful for small projects, such as public art and placemaking initiatives, wayfinding signage, community gardens, and the like. Crowdfunding can either be Municipality-led or led by community organizations with the Municipality's support. The benefit of crowdfunding is that it builds a sense of ownership within the community and reinforces the importance of culture.

TAX AND DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

Recognizing that culture and the tourism industry within Stratford are inherently connected and vital for the city's prosperity, it would be worthwhile to explore how funds received from the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) can support cultural initiatives that align with tourism.

Additionally, it is worth considering how bonus provisions for developments—permitted increases in the height and/or density of local projects due to significant community benefit—can be applied to support culture in Stratford, including public realm improvements, public art contributions, heritage conservation, affordable housing, etc.

Implementing Recommendations

Testing, piloting, and experimenting are the appropriate approaches to help build flexibility and adaptability in determining what actions will work best for Stratford. While the recommendations and actions in this Cultural Plan are founded in research and draw inspiration from the success stories of other municipalities, success is not guaranteed in all contexts. This is the benefit of piloting actions to determine what approaches work well, what approaches need to be further adapted and refined, or whether other methods are required.

Tracking Progress

To implement the Cultural Plan effectively, it is imperative to measure progress towards its goals and vision. This requires developing mechanisms and partnerships to track the economic and social benefits of culture and progress towards the vision. Monitoring should be done frequently, and progress should be publicized.



Lights On Stratford. Image by Little Big Creative.

APPENDIX

A. Definitions

Agri-tourism: Refers to the offering of tourism activities in farms or other agricultural operations. These can include produce sales, hospitality (overnight stays), recreation, and entertainment. Visitors might assist with agricultural work as part of their experience.

Arm’s length Organization: Refers to organizations that operate both independently of, and in close partnership with, the City. The City of Stratford has two arm’s length organizations:

- [Destination Stratford](#) has been Stratford’s official destination marketing organization since 2007. Destination Stratford’s goal is to strengthen the local economy and enrich the quality of life in Stratford through regenerative tourism.
- [investStratford](#) was funded by the City of Stratford and established as a stand-alone entity with a mission to focus singularly on Stratford’s economic future. The organization’s purpose is to offer support services and business-focused development events to keep, grow, and attract businesses.

Below Market Rent: Rents which are set below the amount prevailing in the surrounding area or region.

Colonization: Wilfrid Laurier University’s [resource on Truth, Reconciliation & Colonialism](#)³⁵ defines colonization as “the action or process of settling and establishing control over the Indigenous people of an area disconnecting them from the land, their history, their identity and their rights so that others benefit.”

35 Wilfrid Laurier University - Truth, Reconciliation & Colonialism, Reconciliation & Colonialism
<https://library.wlu.ca/research/resources/truthrec>

City or City of Stratford: When the ‘c’ is capitalized, it refers to the municipal corporation of the City of Stratford, including the Mayor and all staff.

city or city of Stratford: When the ‘c’ is lowercase, it refers to the geographical region known as Stratford.

Crowdfunding: A method of funding that involves raising donations from a large number of individuals, typically in small amounts. Crowdfunding can be conducted through Internet platforms (e.g., [Kickstarter](#)).

Cultural Equity: Americans for the Arts defines cultural equity as, “embody[ing] the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.”³⁶

Cultural Plan: Cultural plans outline the vision, roles, partnerships, and actions that will be undertaken by local governing authority to strengthen cultural resource management. The cultural planning process that results in the creation of a cultural plan includes the identification and mapping of cultural resources and the development of an action plan for how local governing authorities can manage these resources to achieve community goals.

Cultural Resource: Cultural Resources are places or things that reflect or produce culture.

Creatives: Professionals working in creative industries (e.g., artists, curators, designers).

Decolonization: Decolonization is a long-term process focused on dismantling the oppression and subjugation of colonized peoples and unlearning colonial ways of thinking and being.

Equality and Equity: the Ontario Human Rights Commission differentiates equality and equity: “Equality generally means treating people the same way, to give everyone equal access to opportunities and benefits in society. Equity includes treating some people differently, to take into consideration some people’s particular needs and situations. For example, requiring public buildings to have wheelchair accessible entrances to accommodate persons with disabilities (rather than deciding that everyone can climb stairs or open doors themselves).”³⁷

36 For more information, see

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/about-americans-for-the-arts/our-statement-on-cultural-equity>

37 Ontario Human Rights Commission, “Appendix B: Glossary.” <http://bit.ly/3Z6cWGU>

Equity-deserving Communities: According to the Canada Council for the Arts, “Equity-[deserving] groups are communities that face significant collective challenges in participating in society. This marginalization could be created by attitudinal, historic, social and environmental barriers based on age, ethnicity, disability, economic status, gender, nationality, race, sexual orientation and transgender status, etc. Equity-seeking groups are those that identify barriers to equal access, opportunities and resources due to disadvantage and discrimination and actively seek social justice and reparation.”³⁸

Intangible Cultural Resources: This Includes traditions, rituals, and stories that help to define a community’s unique identity and sense of place.

Placekeeping: Placekeeping is defined as “the active care and maintenance of a place and its social fabric by the people who live and work there. It is not just preserving buildings but keeping the cultural memories associated with a locale alive while supporting the ability of local people to maintain their way of life as they choose.”³⁹ Placekeeping approaches stress the importance of learning and understanding who is already using and inhabiting a space when considering ways to design and activate public space.

Reconciliation: The Canadian government defines reconciliation as “an ongoing process through which Indigenous Peoples and the Crown work cooperatively to establish and maintain a mutually respectful framework for living together, with a view to fostering strong, healthy, and sustainable Indigenous nations within a strong Canada.”⁴⁰ Reconciliation requires recognition of rights, the acknowledgement of historical wrongs, and work supporting the implementation of Indigenous rights.

Tactile Urbanism: Short-term, low-cost, and scalable interventions in the built environment that influence long term changes. Often these changes are community-driven to combat current challenges. Actions are often pop-ups or prototypes.

Tangible Cultural Resources: Physical spaces such as theatres, venues, gallery spaces, events, and places of worship.

Wayfinding: Wayfinding is signage that helps visitors and occupants navigate a space. Wayfinding signage can rely on the use of colors, shapes, symbols, or short texts.

38 Canada Council for the Arts, “equity-seeking groups.” <https://canadacouncil.ca/glossary/equity-seeking-groups>.

39 “Creative Placemaking, Placekeeping, and Cultural Strategies to Resist Displacement,” The U.S. Department of Arts and Culture, March 8, 2016, <http://bit.ly/41x4hPk>

40 “Principles respecting the Government of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous Peoples,” Government of Canada, updated September 1, 2021, <http://bit.ly/3ZqB2vY>

B. Policy Alignment

TABLE 2: DETAILED SUMMARY OF MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES THAT THE CULTURAL PLAN SUPPORTS AND ALIGNS WITH - PROVINCIAL AND REGIONAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
The Planning Act (R.S.O. 1990) ⁴¹	The Planning Act is provincial legislation that outlines all land use planning rules and regulations in Ontario. The Act outlines the roles and responsibilities of the province and municipalities.	<p>The Planning Act outlines the overarching protection of cultural interests. The Planning Act has identified various cultural assets to be protected across the province of Ontario through provincial and municipal legislation.</p> <p>These cultural assets include, but are not limited to, agricultural resources, architectural significance, archaeological significance, scientific interest, and the development of safe and healthy communities.</p>	The Cultural Plan supports the protection and enhancement of cultural assets including, but not limited to, agricultural resources, architectural significance, archaeological significance, scientific interest, and the development of safe and healthy communities.
Provincial Policy Statement, 2020 ⁴²	The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) outlines policy direction focusing on provincial interests, with a specific focus on the provincial policies related to land use and development.	<p>The Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) encourages municipalities to protect their culture by developing planning documents. These documents include cultural plans, archeological management plans, and heritage plans.</p> <p>During planning processes, authorities must engage with Indigenous communities to identify and protect cultural heritage. This process allows municipalities to preserve and enhance Indigenous culture and heritage.</p>	The Cultural Plan supports the protection and enhancement of cultural heritage by identifying and supporting historical, cultural, and natural assets. The Cultural Plan also outlines guidelines for engaging with Indigenous communities to identify and protect Indigenous culture and heritage.

41 Province of Ontario, The Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990 P.13, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90p13>.

42 Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, "Provincial Policy Statement" (2020), <https://files.ontario.ca/mmah-provincial-policy-statement-2020-accessible-final-en-2020-02-14.pdf>.

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
Ontario Heritage Act (R.S.O. 1990)⁴³	<p>The Ontario Heritage Act provides a set of heritage standards and guidelines for the province of Ontario.</p>	<p>The Ontario Heritage Act highlights the importance of supporting, encouraging, and facilitating the conservation, preservation, and protection of heritage across the province.</p> <p>This includes the preservation, maintenance, reconstruction, and management of properties with historical, architectural, archeological, recreational, and aesthetic interests.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports the continuous preservation, maintenance, reconstruction, and management of properties with historical, architectural, archeological, recreational, and aesthetic interests.</p>
Community Safety and Well-being Plan, 2021–2024⁴⁴	<p>The Community Safety and Well-being Plan has established a set of key priorities regarding the safety and well-being of the City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, and Township of Perth South.</p> <p>These six municipalities have created a joint plan, which will help them respond to the unique needs of their communities. Through this partnership, the municipalities will work together to support a more inclusive, connected, and coordinated approach to safety and well-being.</p>	<p>The Community Safety and Well-being Plan identifies the importance of ensuring that all individuals and families can meet their needs for education, health care, food, housing, income, and social and cultural expression. (p. 2)</p> <p>The joint Community Safety and Well-Being Plan identified a set of nine key priorities through the stakeholder engagement. These priorities have been created to ensure that all residents feel safe and supported in their community. The following are the nine key priorities (p. 12):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate, affordable, and attainable housing; 2. Mental health and addiction supports; 3. Poverty; 4. Systems planning and integration; 5. Access to health, social/community, and recreational services; 6. Affordable and accessible transportation; 7. Social isolation; 8. Community belonging; and 9. Community safety. 	<p>The Cultural Plan supports the following priorities mentioned in the Community Safety and Well-being Plan:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Adequate, affordable, and attainable housing; 2. Systems planning and integration; 3. Access to health, social/community, and recreational services; 4. Affordable and accessible transportation; 5. Social isolation; 6. Community belonging; and 7. Community safety.

43 Province of Ontario, Ontario Heritage Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. O.18, <https://www.ontario.ca/laws/statute/90o18>.

44 City of Stratford, Town of St. Marys, Municipality of North Perth, Municipality of West Perth, Township of Perth East, Township of Perth South, “Community Safety and Well-being Plan” (2021), <https://www.stratford.ca/en/live-here/resources/Equity-Diversion-and-Inclusion/CSWB-Plan-FINAL.ACC.pdf>.

TABLE 3: DETAILED SUMMARY OF MUNICIPAL AND PROVINCIAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES THAT THE CULTURAL PLAN SUPPORTS AND ALIGNS WITH - LOCAL POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
<p>City of Stratford Official Plan, 2015⁴⁵</p>	<p>The City of Stratford Official Plan establishes goals, objectives, and policies related to land use, development, and growth across the city of Stratford.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford Official Plan recognizes the importance of preserving and enhancing the city's natural and cultural heritage for current and future generations. By identifying this as an overarching goal, the Official Plan prioritizes creating communities that are complete communities, have environmental protection, heritage conservation, public participation, etc. By doing so, the city will have the ability to foster economic and cultural stability throughout its communities.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports and furthers the Official Plan's Vision (2.2) and Guiding Principles (2.3), including: Community Excellence, Complete Community, Economic Development, Environmental Protection, Sustainable Development, Heritage Conservation, Community Improvement, Transportation System for all users, Infrastructure and Community Services, Public Participation, and Preservation of Agriculture.</p>

45 City of Stratford, "City of Stratford Official Plan" (2015), <https://bit.ly/41rNHR7>

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
<p>City of Stratford Strategic Priorities, 2019⁴⁶</p>	<p>The City of Stratford Strategic Priorities Report is a set of four priorities for the 2018–2022 term of Stratford City Council.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford Strategic Priorities Report has identified strengthening the City’s plans, strategies, & partnerships as one of the four priorities. This priority will focus on enhancing the city’s culture by identifying areas for partnership regarding culture, heritage priorities, and collective art. (p. 5)</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan aligns with the mission and vision statement of the City’s Strategic priorities. The Mission: to provide services to support a sustainable, caring community with exceptional quality of life. The Vision: a vibrant city, leading the way in community-driven excellence.</p> <p>The Cultural Plan aims to advance the City of Stratford’s values, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrity, by supporting fair and transparent decision-making; • Caring, by caring for the interest and well-being of everyone in the community; • Progress, by supporting innovation and proactive thinking; and • Collaboration, by enhancing relationships with and between community partners. <p>The Cultural Plan also advances the four priorities through the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mobility, Accessibility, and Design Excellence: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supporting an active transportation network that brings people to cultural resources; » Continuing building partnerships between public, private, and non-profit sectors to advance a sustainable transit program and network; » Continuing to advance the transportation system and services throughout Stratford; and » Improving accessibility of transportation overall

46 City of Stratford, Overlap Associates Inc., “City of Stratford Strategic Priorities” (2019), <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/resources/Strategic-Priorities/2018-2022-Strategic-Priorities---FINAL.pdf>

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
<p>City of Stratford Strategic Priorities, 2019</p>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening our Plans, Strategies, and Partnerships: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supporting partnerships with and between public, private, non-profit sectors as well as with community members to advance arts, culture, and heritage; » Increasing communication around plans, activities, and decision-making both internally within the City and externally; and » Supporting the activation of public spaces year-round as well as an abundance of events, festivals, and cultural programs. • Developing Our Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Optimizing Stratford’s physical assets for year-round activation; » Utilizing digital technologies; » Supporting environmental sustainability; » Advocating for and supporting the development of affordable spaces to live, work, produce, and showcase; and » Supporting public, private, and non-profit partnerships in new developments to address community needs (e.g., Grand Trunk Community Hub). • Widening Our Economic Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> » Supporting and broadening tourism attractions; » Attracting and retaining creatives and creative organizations; and » Continuing to partner and work with private sector developers and businesses.

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
<p>City of Stratford: Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines, 2014⁴⁷</p>	<p>The City of Stratford: Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines speak to the guidelines of designing Stratford’s urban fabric.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford: Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines outline the importance of high living standards for the community to encourage creativity and excellence in design. These Guidelines focus on fostering a healthy and active lifestyle for Stratford residents by creating accessible public and recreational spaces across the city. Such public spaces are intended to encourage a healthy lifestyle for residents, as well as provide opportunities for community connection and socialization.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports the following guidelines:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3.2—Open Space System by strengthening the connection, enhancement, and protection of the natural heritage and parks system. • 3.5.3.3—Public Art by supporting the development of public art on both private and public properties. • 3.5.4—Universal Design by furthering accessibility and universal design throughout Stratford. • 4.4.5—Heritage Buildings by enhancing and protecting structures and places of heritage significance.

47 Brook McIlroy, “City of Stratford Urban Design and Landscape Guidelines” (2014), <https://bit.ly/3mfsGsl>

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
City of Stratford: Heritage Conservation District Standards⁴⁸	<p>The City of Stratford: Heritage Conservation District Standards speak to heritage preservation in the aspects of the architecture of buildings, streets, open spaces, and landscaping.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford: Heritage Conservation District Standards outline the importance of using modern techniques and materials to preserve the City of Stratford’s heritage buildings. This includes altering and renovating buildings or public spaces within the Heritage Conservation District (HCD) as well as the construction of new buildings. A key guideline is that improvements or conservation must acknowledge the original or predominant streetscape and character of the downtown core in order to maintain the character of the neighbourhood. (Section 2.2.3)</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports the preservation and conservation of heritage throughout Stratford as well as supporting appropriate cultural activities to take place on or near designated heritage sites.</p>
Stratford’s Transportation Master Plan⁴⁹	<p>The Transportation Master Plan is a document which will guide the City’s transportation systems for all modes of travel.</p>	<p>The Stratford Transportation Master Plan has placed a focus on encouraging the community to use alternative forms of transportation, such as active transportation, to reduce automobile travel.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports enhancing public and active transportation networks and their connections to cultural resources.</p>

48 City of Stratford, “City of Stratford Heritage Conservation District Standards” (n.d.), https://www.stratford.ca/en/live-here/resources/Heritage_Stratford/Heritage-Conservation-District-Standards.pdf

49 City of Stratford, Paradigm, GSP Group, “Master Transportation Plan” (2010), https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/resources/ReportsAndPublications/master_transportation_plan_aug_2010.pdf

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Report ⁵⁰	The Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Report has provided the City of Stratford with an implementation plan for a biking and pedestrian network across the city. This plan will provide residents and visitors with a network of active transportation infrastructure that will connect to neighbourhoods and key destinations throughout the city as well as the surrounding municipalities.	The Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan Report mentions opportunities for creating partnerships with the cultural sector. The Plan clearly identifies that there is an opportunity to connect routes with natural heritage, community culture, and agriculture. This would include scenic areas, views, vistas, key community destinations (e.g., community centers, libraries, etc.), and the downtown core. (Section 3.1.3)	The Cultural Plan supports creating partnerships with the cultural sector to advance bike and pedestrian networks and create connections with natural heritage, community culture, and agriculture.
Multi-Year Accessibility Plan, 2021 ⁵¹	The City of Stratford Multi-Year Accessibility Plan outlines the ongoing commitment to creating an accessible city that continues to remove and prevent barriers for people with disabilities. This multi-year plan will meet the obligations of the City of Stratford under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA).	The City of Stratford Multi-Year Accessibility Plan is working towards meeting the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 (AODA) goals of making the Province of Ontario accessible by 2025. Through this plan, the City of Stratford has consulted its Accessibility Advisory Committee to identify a variety of accessibility standards and regulations that need to be addressed. Many of these factors affect residents' ability to access public spaces, thus impacting access to culture throughout the city.	The Cultural Plan aims to advance accessibility within processes, standards, and regulations, as well as improve access to physical spaces and places throughout the city.

50 City of Stratford, MMM Group, "City of Stratford Bike and Pedestrian Master Plan" (2014), https://www.stratford.ca/en/play-here/resources/Recreational_Programs/Stratford_Bike_and_Pedestrian_Master_Plan_Report_web.pdf.

51 City of Stratford, "City of Stratford Multi-Year Accessibility Plan (2018-2022)" (2018), <https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/resources/Accessibility/City-of-Stratford-2018-22-Accessibility-Plan.pdf>.

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
City of Stratford: Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities Report ⁵²	<p>The City of Stratford: Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities Report outlines the need to update the City of Stratford’s Master Plan for Leisure and Facilities. The Report outlines that the City of Stratford’s Leisure and Facilities Master Plan does not reflect the current needs and demographics of the city of Stratford.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford: Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities Report has identified that the City of Stratford needs to acknowledge some of the outdated policies regarding leisure services and facilities.</p> <p>This Plan will guide the City of Stratford’s approach to leisure services and facilities, encouraging a balanced array of accessible and participation-based leisure opportunities for residents and tourists. (Section 3.3)</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan supports leisure by advancing accessible and participation-based leisure opportunities for residents and tourists.</p>
Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan, 2018 ⁵³	<p>The Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan will identify the use of the Grand Trunk Railway site.</p>	<p>The Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan has identified the importance of highlighting Stratford’s cultural heritage and cultural significance. Recommendations include the adaptive reuse of the existing building, as well as ideas for integrating cultural programming and activities throughout the community hub.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan recognizes the opportunity for the cultural sector to play a role in the Grand Trunk Community Hub.</p>

52 City of Stratford, CCL, IBI Group, “City of Stratford: Strategic Master Plan to Provide for Leisure Services and Facilities Report” (December 2005), https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/resources/ReportsAndPublications/Recreation_Master_Plan_-_Dec_05.pdf

53 Urban Strategies Inc., “Grand Trunk Community Hub Master Plan - Draft” (2017), https://www.stratford.ca/en/inside-city-hall/resources/Cooper-Block/R_20171108Grand-Trunk-Community-Hub-Master-Plan.pdf

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
Stratford Sport Tourism Strategy, 2023⁵⁴	<p>The City of Stratford’s Sport Tourism Strategy was developed in partnership with investStratford and Destination Stratford to strengthen Stratford’s appeal as a sport hosting destination and maximize the benefits of sports tourism for the local economy.</p>	<p>The City of Stratford’s Sport Tourism Strategy will determine the economic impact and scope of existing sport tourism opportunities and determine the potential to expand them, while also identifying new areas for growth. This document also provides an inventory of relevant infrastructure and human assets (e.g., volunteer groups, local sports associations). Sports and recreation are a subcategory of culture in Stratford, and the findings and directions arising from this document will be applied to the reflexive Cultural Plan.</p>	<p>The Cultural Plan understands tourism as a key source for economic development and explores how recreation and cultural sectors can partner together to advance common priorities.</p>

54 City of Stratford, Destination Stratford, InvestStratford “Sport Tourism Strategy (2023 - 2027)” (December 21, 2022), <https://visitstratford.ca/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/Stratford-Sport-Tourism-Strategy-Public.pdf>

REPORT	OVERVIEW	IMPORTANCE TO CULTURE	ALIGNMENT WITH THE CULTURAL PLAN
Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan	The Downtown Stratford BIA has developed its first public art plan to provide strategic guidance and oversight to developing public art in the downtown area.	The Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan was developed through a community-led planning process. The Plan identifies current strengths, challenges, and opportunities for public art while setting aesthetic and thematic guidelines. The document also provides a framework for community engagement, guidelines for project management, detailed processes for how to acquire public art and engage artists, as well as methods for funding public art projects. It was developed to help foster a culture of vibrant and effective public art.	The Cultural Plan supports the implementation of the Downtown Stratford BIA Public Art Plan in partnership with the Downtown Stratford BIA.

C. Cultural Plan Matrix

The matrix below contains information on the potential cost, timeline, and responsibilities for the potential actions listed in the Cultural Plan. These are general estimates and can be further defined depending on the steps the City decides to activate.

IMPLEMENTATION MATRIXES FOR PATHWAYS AND GOALS

Timeline

Ongoing: an action the City of Stratford has already started implementing

Short term: 0–2 years

Medium term: 2–5 years

Long term: 5–10 years

Cost

\$ - Under \$10,000

\$\$ - Under \$25,000

\$\$\$ - Under \$50,000

\$\$\$\$ - Over \$50,000

ST - Staff time

Roles / Responsibilities

This section offers guidance of primary stakeholders at the City level, as well as on external partners who will contribute to the implementation of each action

The following tables outline roles and responsibilities, cost, and timeline for the various pathways and goals.

TABLE 4: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 1: STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND GOAL 1: CULTURE IS CONSIDERED AND INTEGRATED INTO MUNICIPAL PROCESSES AND DECISION-MAKING.

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Promote the Cultural Plan and the importance of culture widely across City departments and externally	Develop a communication strategy for the Cultural Plan and share regular updates on progress and achievements.	City of Stratford: Community services, in collaboration with other City departments, Communication Department; Partners: Arm's length organizations	\$-\$	Short term
1. Promote the Cultural Plan and the importance of culture widely across City departments and externally	Develop an annual reporting structure for culture and tourism.	City of Stratford: Community services, in collaboration with other City departments, Communication Department Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Destination Stratford, the Downtown Stratford BIA	\$-\$	Short term
2. Identify a governance structure to implement the Plan and arbitrate between different organizational options for the City's cultural support	Identify arm's length organizations or bodies which can collaborate with the City to aid in implementing actions, tracking progress, and providing support to the cultural sector.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: Destination Stratford, Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	\$/ST	Short term
3. Integrate culture into future plans, strategies, and documents	Prioritize the development of culture in the Stratford Official Plan and Strategic Priorities.	City of Stratford: all departments Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable	\$/ST	Short term / ongoing

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
3. Integrate culture into future plans, strategies, and documents	Encourage departments across the City to involve the creative sector and advance cultural priorities.	City of Stratford: all departments Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable	\$/ST	Short term / ongoing
3. Integrate culture into future plans, strategies, and documents	Join networking and knowledge sharing events and forums to learn about best practices in cultural development.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Destination Stratford, Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	\$/ST	Short term / ongoing
4. Involve creatives in city-building processes	Explore arts-based participatory engagement processes when conducting community consultation.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts Council	\$	Short term
4. Involve creatives in city-building processes	Seek opportunities for co-creation and consultation with creatives when making decisions on built, social, and natural environments. Consider innovative ideas and support the creative sector as the city evolves.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Services, Recreation Division Partners: Private companies, Downtown Stratford BIA	\$\$	Short / medium term

TABLE 5: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 1: STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND GOAL 2: THE CULTURAL SECTOR HAS A WIDE NETWORK OF SUPPORT AND IS SUSTAINABLE.

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Optimize local funding opportunities	Reduce barriers associated with accessing municipal funding.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable	\$/ST	Short term
1. Optimize local funding opportunities	Conduct a review of the Community Grant Program and develop targets for funds to be disbursed to creatives and cultural organizations.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable	\$/ST	Short term
1. Optimize local funding opportunities	Further expand opportunities for the City to partner with arm's length organizations to distribute federal, provincial, or municipal funding sources with the cultural sector.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, investStratford	ST	Medium term
1. Optimize local funding opportunities	Conduct a feasibility study to determine if a distinct arts, culture, and heritage grant program can be developed to provide operating funds on single-year and multi-year agreements.	City of Stratford: Community Services	\$\$	Medium term
2. Provide support to increase the amount of available funds for local cultural organizations and initiatives	Provide support to creatives and organizations to aid them in successfully obtaining funding from external resources that align with the Cultural Plan and/or benefit the community.	City of Stratford: Community Services	ST	Short term
2. Provide support to increase the amount of available funds for local cultural organizations and initiatives	Widely share the economic value of arts and culture to encourage private sponsorship, partnerships, and philanthropy	City of Stratford: Community Services, Communication	ST	Short term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Provide support to increase the amount of available funds for local cultural organizations and initiatives	Continue providing support to the Downtown Stratford BIA to foster projects and initiatives that support the creative sector.	Destination Stratford, Clerks Department, Building and Planning, Community Services	\$-\$-\$	Ongoing
3. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development	Review permitting and approval processes to identify opportunities for optimization and increasing accessibility	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Services, Recreation Division, Community Services	ST	Short / medium term
3. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development	Provide support for individuals and organizations to obtain permits, licences, and approvals successfully	City of Stratford: Municipal By-law Enforcement, Infrastructure and Development Services, Recreation Division, Community Services	ST	Ongoing / short term
3. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development	Explore amending the Business License By-law to encourage innovative business models.	City of Stratford: Clerks Department, Municipal By-law Enforcement	ST	Medium term
3. Streamline permitting and approval processes to increase cultural development	Explore amending the Noise Control By-law	City of Stratford: Event coordination, Clerks Department	ST	Short term

TABLE 6: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 1: STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND GOAL 3: COLLABORATION IS FOSTERED AMONGST THE CULTURAL SECTOR (AND RELATED INDUSTRIES) AND THE CITY

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships between private, public, and non-profit sectors	Convene regular meetings between local cultural organizations and private sector representatives to discuss cross-sector issues and promote collaborations.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, investStratford, Destination Stratford, Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council, Downtown Stratford BIA	ST/\$	Short term
1. Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships between private, public, and non-profit sectors	Increase promotion of cultural initiatives presenting investment potential through investStratford.	investStratford	ST	Short / medium term
1. Encourage cross-sectoral partnerships between private, public, and non-profit sectors	Explore feasibility of providing grants or micro-grants that support cross-sectoral partnerships to develop initiatives that align with the Cultural Plan.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable	\$\$	Medium term
2. Support partnerships and communication amongst creatives and cultural organizations	Dedicate a group or organization to foster relationship building, provide support for the cultural sector, and support actioning the Cultural Plan.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	ST/\$\$	Short term
2. Support partnerships and communication amongst creatives and cultural organizations	Host regular networking events that include a diverse representation of cultural and community organizations to foster connections and relationship building amongst the cultural sector.	City of Stratford: Community/Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	\$-\$	Short term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Support partnerships and communication amongst creatives and cultural organizations	Encourage events and programs to co-advertise or align programming to enable audience sharing and encourage residents and visitors to explore multiple events and places.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	ST	Short term

TABLE 7: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 1: STRIVE FOR CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION AND GOAL 4: STRATFORD AIMS TO BE A LIVABLE CITY THAT ATTRACTS AND RETAINS CREATIVES

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.	Work with the City of Stratford Social Services Department to offer affordable housing options to creatives.	City of Stratford: Social Services Department	\$\$\$\$	Medium / long term
1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.	Work with the City of Stratford Planning Department to advocate for affordable housing or live-work units in new residential and mixed-use developments.	City of Stratford: Planning Department Partners: Private companies	ST	Short / medium term
1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.	Advocate for fair pay for creatives.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	ST	Short term
1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.	Continue to foster partnerships and mentorships between creatives and educational institutions (high schools and post-secondary institutions) to support new artists developing their skills and networks locally and encourage emerging artists to remain in Stratford to hone their skills.	City of Stratford: Community/Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	ST-\$\$	Medium term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Help retain emerging artists and creatives by supporting their livelihoods through affordable housing and workspaces, fair pay, and capacity building.	Continue to foster partnerships and mentorships between creatives and educational institutions (high schools and post-secondary institutions) to support new artists developing their skills and networks locally and encourage emerging artists to remain in Stratford to hone their skills.	City of Stratford: Community/Services Partners: educational institutions, new cultural committee/roundtable, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Stratford Arts Council	ST	Ongoing
2. Provide support for cultural businesses and organizations through capacity-building opportunities	Support capacity-building for small enterprises in the cultural sector through sector-specific training.	Partners: Stratford Perth Centre for Business, investStratford	\$\$– \$\$\$	Medium term
2. Provide support for cultural businesses and organizations through capacity-building opportunities	Formalize a list of benefits offered to not-for-profit Community Groups providing arts, culture, or heritage programs.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: new cultural committee/roundtable	\$\$	Medium term
2. Provide support for cultural businesses and organizations through capacity-building opportunities	Explore opportunities to incentivize cultural organizations and industries to remain or settle in Stratford.	Partners: Stratford Perth Centre for Business, investStratford	\$\$– \$\$\$	Medium / long term
3. Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events	Work with Planning to support the development of purpose-built spaces for the creative sector.	City of Stratford: Planning Department	\$\$\$\$	Long term
3. Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events	Explore options for addressing facility needs, particularly to serve performing arts organizations and creatives.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Community and cultural organizations	\$\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Medium / Long term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
3. Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events	Encourage public space be used for community events and showcasing creative works (e.g., Market Square, parks system, etc.).	City of Stratford: Municipal By-law Enforcement, Event division, Recreation division Partners: Downtown Stratford BIA, Communities in Bloom Committee	ST	Ongoing / Short term
3. Develop and enhance the infrastructure for cultural events	Continue supporting the development of incubators and experimental spaces (e.g., Gallery Stratford's Steelbox Art Lab).	City of Stratford: Community Services	\$-\$	Ongoing

Implementation Matrix for Pathway 2: Celebrate Diversity and Support Inclusion

TABLE 8: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 2: CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT INCLUSION AND GOAL 1: RELATIONSHIPS AND SUPPORT NETWORKS ARE FOSTERED BETWEEN EQUITY-DESERVING GROUPS

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Further relationships with equity-deserving groups and address barriers to cultural spaces and programming	Further consult with equity-deserving communities to identify barriers to accessing cultural spaces and participating in cultural programming, then determine and share with external partners potential improvements.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Stratford-Perth Pride, United Way Perth-Huron, Destination Stratford	ST/ \$-\$\$\$	Ongoing
2. Provide opportunities for community members from equity-deserving communities to influence Council and local decision-making	Develop committees or working groups that address community needs to advise Council and decision-makers.	City of Stratford: Council, Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Stratford-Perth Pride, Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST/ \$-\$\$	Short / medium term
2. Provide opportunities for community members from equity-deserving communities to influence Council and local decision-making	Continuously engage with community members to identify barriers, assess levels of accessibility, and pinpoint actionable solutions.	City of Stratford: Council Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Stratford-Perth Pride, Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST/ \$-\$\$	Ongoing
2. Provide opportunities for community members from equity-deserving communities to influence Council and local decision-making	Develop inclusive representation of all demographic groups in decision-making.	City of Stratford: Council, all departments, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion division	ST	Ongoing

TABLE 9: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 2: CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT INCLUSION AND GOAL 2: CULTURAL EXPERIENCES AND SPACES AIM TO REDUCE PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND FINANCIAL BARRIERS

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces	Share public-facing guidelines and resources on increasing the accessibility of culture.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST	Ongoing
1. Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces	Encourage accessible design through the increased inclusion of accessibility requirements for grant recipients.	City of Stratford: Community Services	ST	Short term
1. Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces	Work with Heritage Stratford to assess existing barriers and potential solutions for heritage building owners to increase the accessibility of their properties.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Partners: Heritage Stratford	ST	Medium term
1. Encourage and facilitate the creation of accessible cultural events and spaces	Increase support for subsidized, low cost, or free programming.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Community and cultural organizations	\$-\$\$\$	Short / medium term
2. Model best practices for accessibility	Organize diversity, equity, accessibility, and inclusion training for all City Staff.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST/ \$-\$	Ongoing
2. Model best practices for accessibility	Model best practices in accessibility through events organized by the City and arms-length organizations.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, in collaboration with all departments Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee, Destination Stratford, Stratford Public Library	\$\$	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Model best practices for accessibility	Collect regular feedback from community members on the accessibility of City-organized events to ensure continuous learning	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, Community Services Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST	Short term
3. Promote accessibility-related initiatives	Facilitate knowledge-sharing regarding best practices for designing accessible events.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee, Stratford Festival	ST/ \$-\$	Short term
3. Promote accessibility-related initiatives	Clearly identify the accessibility supports that will be provided for cultural events shared in the designated cultural calendar.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, Community Services, Communication Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee	ST	Short term
4. Foster a city-wide commitment to creating a welcoming and safe community that celebrates diversity	Model a city-wide standard for diversity, equity, and inclusion that is implemented across all programs and facilities and encourage community partners to hold the same standards.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, in collaboration with all departments Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee, Community Partners	\$\$- \$\$\$	Medium term
4. Foster a city-wide commitment to creating a welcoming and safe community that celebrates diversity	Empower citizens and organizations to further Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion within their communities.	City of Stratford: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, in collaboration with all departments Partners: Accessibility Advisory Committee, Community Partners	ST/\$	Short term
5. Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events	Continue supporting and developing the Culture Cab program.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Stratford Transit, Stratford Parallel Transit Partners: Provincial funders, Stratford Perth Museum, Community and cultural organizations	\$\$\$	Short / medium term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
5. Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events	Continue seeking opportunities for City transportation services to partner with cultural programs, events, and festivals (e.g., Lights on Stratford).	City of Stratford: Transit and Parallel Transit	\$\$– \$\$\$	Ongoing
5. Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events	Evaluate current public transportation as relates to access to cultural sites and explore the possibility of developing new routes.	City of Stratford: Transit and Parallel Transit	\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Medium term
5. Continue expanding public transportation to facilitate access to cultural venues and events	Continue to support infrastructure for active transportation that connects cultural destinations.	City of Stratford: Transit and Parallel Transit, Public Works Partners: Active Transportation Advisory Committee	\$\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Ongoing

TABLE 10: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 2: CELEBRATE DIVERSITY AND SUPPORT INCLUSION AND GOAL 3: CULTURAL INITIATIVES REFLECT A DIVERSITY OF COMMUNITIES' DESIRES AND NEEDS

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture	Develop a Youth Engagement Strategy to identify priorities and actions for ensuring youth feel engaged and supported throughout Stratford.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Community and Cultural Organizations, United Way Perth-Huron, school boards, private schools	ST	Medium term
1. Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture	Participate in knowledge-sharing with youth to understand current challenges and identify cultural activities and programs they would like to see developed and made available in Stratford.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: future cultural committee/roundtable, community partners, school boards, private schools	ST	Medium term
1. Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture	Support and advocate intergenerational programs and initiatives.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Community and Cultural Organizations, United Way Perth-Huron, school boards, private schools, retirement residences, Lakeside Active Adults	ST/ \$-\$	Ongoing
1. Increase opportunities for children and youth to engage with culture	Develop a communication strategy to increase engagement with youth.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Communication Partners: School boards, private schools	ST/ \$\$- \$\$\$	Ongoing
2. Further engage with equity-deserving groups to identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures	Explore how the City can support the development of events and festivals that celebrate multiculturalism and diversity.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Community Partners, Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Stratford-Perth Pride, United Way Perth-Huron, Indigenous knowledge keepers	\$-\$\$\$	Medium term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Further engage with equity-deserving groups to identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures	Undertake a needs assessment to determine if multicultural groups need dedicated community space, or other support, to host events, programs, and festivals.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Community partners, Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Indigenous knowledge keepers	\$-\$\$\$	Medium term
2. Further engage with equity-deserving groups to identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures	Acknowledge and celebrate a variety of religious and cultural holidays.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Community partners and cultural organizations, Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, Stratford-Perth Pride, Stratford Public Library, United Way Perth-Huron, Indigenous knowledge keepers	\$-\$\$	Short term
2. Further engage with equity-deserving groups to identify opportunities for showcasing diverse cultures	Continue supporting partnerships between cultural organizations and educational institutions to develop educational programming that celebrates and teaches diverse traditions, practices, celebrations, and cultures.	City of Stratford: Community Services, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Educational institutions, cultural organizations, Indigenous knowledge keepers	\$-\$\$	Ongoing

Implementation Matrix for Pathway 3: Instill Community Pride through the Promotion of a Shared Authentic Identity

TABLE 11: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AND GOAL 1: STRATFORD'S DEFINITION OF CULTURE IS RECOGNIZED AND CELEBRATED BY THE COMMUNITY

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Share Stratford's distinctive definition of culture widely to celebrate unique cultural initiatives	Promote the local definition of culture identified through community engagement, both internally and externally.	City of Stratford: Community services, in collaboration with other City departments, Communication Partners: arm's length organizations	\$-\$\$\$	Short term
1. Share Stratford's distinctive definition of culture widely to celebrate unique cultural initiatives	Communicate Stratford's cultural resources in the different disciplines identified as key to Stratford's cultural definition.	City of Stratford: Community services, in collaboration with other City departments, Communication Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, arm's length organizations	\$-\$\$\$	Short term
2. Support the development of events, festivals, and initiatives fitting Stratford's definition of culture	Continue to recognize and celebrate the intangible culture that makes Stratford unique.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: Heritage Stratford, Destination Stratford, community organizations	\$-\$\$	Ongoing
2. Support the development of events, festivals, and initiatives fitting Stratford's definition of culture	Consider providing support for organizations developing cultural initiatives that align with Stratford's definition of culture, specifically for programs aimed to engage young people, seniors, and equity-deserving groups.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: new cultural committee/ roundtable, Heritage Stratford, Destination Stratford, community organizations	\$-\$\$	Short / medium term
3. Engage community members through increasing opportunities for residents to weigh in on key cultural projects, and on public art projects	Ensure community desires are reflected in City activities through regular consultations on public art, placemaking, and placekeeping projects.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: Communities in Bloom Committee, Destination Stratford, United Way Perth-Huron, community organizations, Downtown Stratford BIA	ST/ \$-\$\$	Ongoing / short term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
3. Engage community members through increasing opportunities for residents to weigh in on key cultural projects, and on public art projects	Integrate community votes as a decision criterion for select public art projects.	City of Stratford: Community services Partners: Downtown Stratford BIA, Destination Stratford, Stratford Arts Council	ST	Short / medium term

TABLE 12: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AND GOAL 2: CULTURE IN STRATFORD STRIVES TO ENGAGE RESIDENTS AND VISITORS YEAR-ROUND

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Highlight Stratford’s cultural strengths by supporting current and new year-round initiatives through sponsorship, endorsement, or promotion.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Destination Stratford, investStratford	ST/ \$\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Ongoing
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Continue supporting cultural programming in the shoulder season by community members, businesses, and cultural organizations.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Destination Stratford, investStratford, Downtown Stratford BIA	ST/ \$–\$\$	Ongoing
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Work with organizations that serve equity-deserving groups to identify current barriers and opportunities to engage residents in the shoulder season.	City of Stratford: Social services, Community Services, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Division Partners: Multicultural Association of Perth-Huron, United Way Perth-Huron, Stratford Lakeside Active Adults Association, and other community organizations	ST/\$	Short term
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Encourage the development of winter programming through sharing resources and knowledge.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, Destination Stratford, Stratford Arts Council, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, cultural organizations	ST/\$	Short term
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Further develop shoulder season micro-grants to encourage community groups in developing placemaking, placekeeping, and community events from fall to spring.	City of Stratford: Community Services	\$–\$\$	Medium term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Encourage cultural initiatives to take place year-round	Become a member of the Winter Cities Institute to learn about how cities are taking advantage of colder months to improve city life.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Destination Stratford, Communities in Bloom Committee, Downtown Stratford BIA	ST	Medium term
2. Support opportunities that bring culture beyond the downtown core	Encourage individuals and organizations to explore innovative tactile urbanism, placemaking and placekeeping projects that take place outside of the downtown where community members gather.	City of Stratford: Community Services	ST/ \$-\$	Medium term
2. Support opportunities that bring culture beyond the downtown core	Continue supporting linkages between Stratford's natural heritage and culture.	City of Stratford: Community Services (Parks and Forestry, Recreation) Partners: Destination Stratford, Board of Park Management, Communities in Bloom Committee, Art in the Park, Stratford Public Library, Stratford Perth Museum, Gallery Stratford, and other cultural organizations	ST/ \$-\$	Ongoing
2. Support opportunities that bring culture beyond the downtown core	Encourage the development of cultural activities to take place in residential or rural areas.	Partners: Destination Stratford, investStratford, Stratford & District Agricultural Society	ST/ \$-\$	Medium term
3. Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford	Endorse and approve the Downtown Stratford BIA's Public Art Plan 2023.	City of Stratford: Planning Services, Public Works Division, Board or Parks and Forestry Department, Community Services (Parks and Forestry, Recreation), Building Department Partners: Downtown Stratford BIA, Heritage Stratford	ST	Ongoing / short term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
3. Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford	Assess developing a city-wide public art policy to guide a cohesive vision for public art in Stratford with an outlined governance and decision-making process for approving public art.	City of Stratford: Planning Services, Public Works Division, Board or Parks and Forestry Department, Community Services (Parks and Forestry, Recreation), Building Department Partners: Downtown Stratford BIA, Heritage Stratford, Destination Stratford, Stratford Arts Council	\$\$	Medium term
3. Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford	Explore opportunities for public art to be featured on City facilities or property.	City of Stratford: Public Works, Planning, and Engineering divisions	\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Medium term
3. Encourage the development of public art throughout Stratford	Continue to build partnerships with municipalities, artists, and arts organizations to explore options for public art sharing to continue and expand opportunities to host touring public art installations in Stratford.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Destination Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA, Heritage Stratford, cultural organizations	ST/ \$\$– \$\$\$	Ongoing

TABLE 13: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AND GOAL 3: STRATFORD'S HISTORY AND HERITAGE ARE HONOURED AND RECOGNIZED AS THE CITY EVOLVES INTO THE FUTURE

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Support the protection of Stratford's built heritage	Develop a long-term maintenance plan for key built heritage sites.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Partners: Heritage Stratford	\$\$	Medium term
1. Support the protection of Stratford's built heritage	Evaluate current access to funding for owners of heritage property.	Heritage Stratford	ST	Short term
2. Promote Stratford's history and heritage	Continue identifying local heritage buildings through the publicly accessible Part IV Designated Properties registry.	Heritage Stratford	ST	Ongoing
2. Promote Stratford's history and heritage	Increase communication on Stratford's unique heritage.	City of Stratford: Community Services (Parks and Forestry) Partners: Heritage Stratford, Destination Stratford	ST	Ongoing
3. Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art	Develop guidelines for supporting public art within the Heritage Conservation District and on or near Designated Heritage Buildings.	Partners: Heritage Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA	ST	Medium term
3. Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art	Support public artwork that has limited or no impact on heritage sites.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Heritage Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA, Destination Stratford	\$\$– \$\$\$\$	Medium term
3. Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art	Advocate for public art to be incorporated into private buildings and spaces.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Partners: Private developers	ST	Short term
3. Explore opportunities to enhance the Heritage Conservation District with public art	Survey and identify areas in the HCD that can be prioritized for public art	Heritage Stratford	ST	Short term

TABLE 14: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AND GOAL 4: LOCAL TALENT AND CREATIVES OF A WIDE VARIETY OF DISCIPLINES ARE RECOGNIZED AND CELEBRATED

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city	Continue developing Stratford awards that aim to showcase cultural businesses and creators.	City of Stratford: Stratford City Council	\$\$	Ongoing
1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city	Develop a communications strategy to celebrate local creatives and cultural accomplishments	City of Stratford: Stratford City Communications	ST	Short term
1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city	Support education around creatives and culture in Stratford.	City of Stratford: Stratford City Council, Community Services	ST	Short term
1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city	Continue supporting events that showcase a wide range of local creatives (e.g., Art in the Park).	City of Stratford: Stratford City Council, Community Services	ST/ \$-\$	Ongoing
1. Promote local creatives and cultural producers throughout the city	Seek opportunities to hire and showcase local creatives at City events.	City of Stratford: Stratford City Council, City departments	\$-\$	Short term
2. Encourage events, festivals, businesses, and organizations to support local creatives	Develop a directory of local creatives and cultural producers that are available for hire to encourage the hiring of local artists by businesses and organizations in Stratford.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Stratford Arts Council, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective	ST	Medium term
2. Encourage events, festivals, businesses, and organizations to support local creatives	Advocate for events and community gatherings to feature local creatives (e.g., dancers, musicians, actors, artists, chefs).	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: Stratford Arts Council, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective	ST	Short term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Encourage events, festivals, businesses, and organizations to support local creatives	Continue supporting organizations that showcase local creatives.	City of Stratford: Community Services/Partners: Stratford Arts Council, Stratford Arts and Culture Collective, Downtown Stratford BIA, community organizations	ST/ \$-\$	Short term

TABLE 15: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 3: INSTILL COMMUNITY PRIDE THROUGH THE PROMOTION OF A SHARED AUTHENTIC IDENTITY AND GOAL 5: CULTURAL RESOURCES, EVENTS, AND OPPORTUNITIES ARE WELL-KNOWN BOTH WITHIN AND BEYOND THE CITY'S BORDERS

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture	Dedicate a webpage to host all information on cultural organizations, events, and community updates.	City of Stratford: Communication IT Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Destination Stratford	ST	Short term
1. Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture	Increase social media presence to reach both residents and visitors.	City of Stratford: Community Services, City Communications Partners: New cultural committee/roundtable, Destination Stratford	ST/\$	Short term
1. Develop marketing strategies and a communication plan for culture	Share and continue to develop the Cultural Resource Map.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, Destination Stratford	ST	Ongoing
2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture	Continue partnerships with Destination Ontario and Regional Tourism Organization 4.	Partners: Destination Ontario, Regional Tourism Organization 9 for South Eastern Ontario, Destination Stratford	ST	Ongoing
2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture	Continue working with Destination Stratford to raise awareness regarding cultural events and initiatives.	City of Stratford: City Council, various departments Partner: Destination Stratford	ST	Ongoing
2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture	Support cultural and placemaking initiatives that are touring through municipalities across the province, country, or world by hosting them in Stratford (e.g., Lights On Stratford).	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, Destination Stratford	ST/ \$\$– \$\$\$	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture	Encourage local organizations to support both local and non-local creatives to develop Stratford into a cultural destination that features world-class creatives.	City of Stratford: Community Services Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, Destination Stratford, cultural organizations	ST	Ongoing
2. Enhance opportunities to support cultural tourism and Stratford as a destination for culture	Explore defining high concentration areas of cultural resources as cultural districts (e.g., the downtown area and HCD) to aid in further promoting Stratford as a cultural destination.	City of Stratford: City Council Partners: New cultural committee/ roundtable, Destination Stratford, Downtown Stratford BIA, cultural organizations	ST/ \$\$- \$\$\$	Long term
3. Increase Wayfinding and Encourage Walkability and Connectivity Between Cultural Sites	Enhance creative wayfinding signage to increase navigation around Stratford and visually link cultural resources.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Services Partners: Heritage Stratford	\$\$- \$\$\$\$	Short / medium term

Implementation Matrix for Pathway 4: Further Truth and Reconciliation

TABLE 16: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 4: FURTHER TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND GOAL 1: RELATIONSHIPS ARE FURTHER DEVELOPED WITH INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES, ORGANIZATIONS, AND PEOPLE

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. 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	Continue developing relationships with nearby First Nations, including Oneida Nation of the Thames, Chippewas of the Thames First Nation, Munsee Delaware Nation, Chippewas of Kettle and Stony Point, Mississaugas of the Credit, Six Nations of the Grand River - Seneca, Upper Cayuga, Onondaga Clear Sky, Oneida, Water Mohawk, Tuscarora.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Ongoing
1. 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.	Host roundtable discussions on how Indigenous communities can be further supported in cultural planning and city-building.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	\$-\$	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. 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.	Determine opportunities for sharing Municipal resources in consultation with Indigenous communities and First Nations (i.e., physical spaces, knowledge, expertise).	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST/ \$-\$	Short / medium term
2. Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities.	Adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation.	City of Stratford: City Council	ST	Short term / ongoing
2. Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities.	Educate all levels of government on Indigenous protocols, history, and human rights.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Short / medium term
2. Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities.	Respect Indigenous protocols when engaging with Indigenous individuals or communities with the understanding that protocols will be unique to each community as Indigenous Peoples have diverse worldviews, perspectives, and traditions.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Ongoing / short term
2. Establish best practices for departments to engage Indigenous communities.	Investigate creating policies that protect the rights of Indigenous people to practice their traditions at municipal facilities, properties, and functions.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Medium term

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
3. Increase opportunities for Indigenous communities to be engaged in planning and decision-making processes	Facilitate opportunities for Indigenous community members and nearby First Nations to inform planning and decision-making across City departments to embed Indigenous values, traditions, practices, and history throughout the Municipality.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST/ \$-\$-\$	Ongoing
3. Increase opportunities for Indigenous communities to be engaged in planning and decision-making processes	Develop an Indigenous Advisory Committee to provide advice and participate in the development of policies and programs to ensure that Indigenous needs are being met.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST/ \$-\$-\$	Short / medium term

TABLE 17: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 4: FURTHER TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND GOAL 2: LOCAL INDIGENOUS CULTURE IS PROMOTED AND CELEBRATED

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Share information about Indigenous creatives, organizations, and businesses	Develop a register of Indigenous organizations, businesses, and creatives that can be shared to foster awareness and encourage partnerships between Indigenous communities and non-Indigenous communities.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Long term
1. Share information about Indigenous creatives, organizations, and businesses	Promote Indigenous-led organizations, events, programs, and initiatives.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Ongoing / short term
2. Continue developing programming around Indigenous days of significance	Work with Indigenous communities to identify appropriate opportunities for commemorating or celebrating days of significance for Indigenous Peoples.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST	Ongoing / short term
3. Increase visibility of Indigenous peoples, culture, and traditions	Showcase Indigenous culture and traditions through events, programming, and initiatives.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, Infrastructure and Development, Community Services Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST/ \$-\$	Ongoing / short term
3. Increase visibility of Indigenous peoples, culture, and traditions	Seek opportunities to commission Indigenous creatives to develop public art and cultural initiatives.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division, Community Services Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities, Downtown Stratford BIA, Destination Stratford, cultural organizations, property owners	ST/ \$-\$ \$\$\$\$	Ongoing / short term

TABLE 18: IMPLEMENTATION MATRIX FOR PATHWAY 4: FURTHER TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION AND GOAL 3: INDIGENOUS VOICES, HISTORIES, TRADITIONS, AND CULTURE ARE WELL-KNOWN, RESPECTED, AND INTEGRATED THROUGHOUT THE CITY

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history	Develop educational campaigns surrounding days of significance for Indigenous reconciliation.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities, educational institutions, Destination Stratford, cultural organizations	ST	Short / medium term
1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history	Develop publicly accessible information regarding Indigenous history and culture.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities, educational institutions, Destination Stratford, cultural organizations	ST	Short / medium term
1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history	Host publicly accessible training or workshops on Indigenous protocols, culture, and history.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: The Talking Circle, Indigenous communities	ST/ \$-\$	Short / medium term
1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history	Continue supporting partnerships between Indigenous organizations/ individuals and educational institutions.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Indigenous organizations	ST	Ongoing
1. Further education on Indigenous culture and history	Continue sharing knowledge regarding Indigenous history and culture at all meetings, events, and programs.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Indigenous organizations	ST	Ongoing

RECOMMENDATION	ACTION	ROLES/RESPONSIBILITIES	COST	TIMELINE
2. Support Identifying and recognizing Indigenous places and stories	Facilitate knowledge sharing through in-depth consultation in respect to Indigenous protocols to identify sites, stories, and traditions of cultural significance to increase their visibility throughout Stratford.	City of Stratford: City Council, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion division Partners: Indigenous organizations, Talking Circle	ST/ \$\$– \$\$\$	Medium / long term
3. Support opportunities for Indigenous communities to steward the land and support conservation	Seek opportunities to engage Indigenous Peoples and organizations in land stewardship opportunities.	City of Stratford: Infrastructure and Development Services Partners: Indigenous organizations	ST	Ongoing



Love Wins Mural. Photo by With Wonder and Whimsy.

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Light installation in Shakespeare Gardens as part of Lights On Stratford. Image by Little Big Creative.