

Reference Committee Staff Report



To	Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee
Subject	Report Back – Culture Plan Update
Date	November 19, 2025
Ward	All
From	S. Schlichter, Director of Economic and Creative Development K. Datema, Director of Recreation and Culture Services
Executive Member Approval	B. Araniyasundaran, P.ENG, PMP, General Manager, Infrastructure and Growth Management J. Schmidt, General Manager of Community and Corporate Services
CAO Approval	M. Prowse, Chief Administrative Officer

Recommendation(s):

1. That the City of Barrie Culture Plan Update attached as Appendix A to the Report to the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee dated November 19, 2025, concerning the Report Back – Culture Plan Update, be received and approved in principle to guide the future planning and development of the cultural sector.
2. That the overall 65 recommendations identified in this Report Back - Culture Plan Update be used to guide the development of the 2026 – 2035 Cultural Development operating budgets and future Capital Plans for Council consideration as part of the Business Plan approval process.
3. That the following implementation items be included as part of the 2026 Budget, with a net-zero impact on tax base:
 - a) Allocate unspent funds from Capital Project EC1000 Culture Plan and Public Art Master Plan in the amount of \$50,000 to create a new capital project to update the Arts and Culture Investment Program to align with the new Culture Plan and Performing Arts Centre, including exploring alternate funding models to grow the program.
 - b) Re-allocate summer student salaries in the amount of \$32,000 within the Economic and Creative Development budget to provide additional resource capacity within the Small Business Centre in the form of programming, and/or conversion of a part-time resource, to temporary full-time, to deliver consultation services, professional development programs to support culture organizations' in building capacity in preparation for a new Performing Arts Centre.

4. That an intake form be included in the 2027 Budget for the development of an In-Kind Tourism and Culture Event Grant Program to offset hard costs for municipal provided services (i.e. transit shuttles, waste removal, etc.) for significant tourism-driving and culture supportive events with cost recovery to be supported by the Tourism Reserve of up to \$100,000, and with the following program goals:
 - a) Boost Tourism: Support events that attract visitors, generating economic activity for local businesses (e.g., accommodations, restaurants, retail).
 - b) Enhance Cultural Vibrancy: Encourage the development of tourism-focused events that develop the profile of local artists and art forms and promote the City of Barrie as a cultural destination.
 - c) Increase Capacity: Provide resources to local non-profits delivering arts and culture events with a tourism impact, reducing their event infrastructure expenses and allowing them to focus funds on programming.
 - d) Promote Civic Pride: Utilize municipal assets to strengthen community connection and celebration.
 5. That staff in the Recreation and Culture Services Department in consultation with Economic and Creative Development Department report back to General Committee on the progress of the plan's implementation as part of the Department's Performance and Budget Reporting.
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Executive Summary:

The purpose of this Staff Report is to follow up on Council Motion 25-G-124 regarding the Culture Plan Update and the associated direction that referred the item back to staff in the Economic and Creative Development Department to review the recommendations in context of a future operational plan for the Performing Arts Centre (PAC).

Since the referral of the report back to staff, there have been two initiatives that provide additional context and considerations for this updated report back.

Effective January 1st, 2026, the Culture Development Portfolio will be repositioned within the municipal organizational structure under the Recreation & Culture Services Department, aligning the portfolio to the department that is already delivering related services and is best positioned to deliver on the strategic directions established within the Culture Plan Update. Further, moving the portfolio and Culture Development Officer resource to Recreation and Culture will build on the programming, events and grant programs that the Department is already delivering to engage the culture community including the City's cultural venues and new Performing Arts Centre.

Further, the findings from consultation report for the Kempenfest Festival as directed through Council Motion 24-G-098 have been completed and considered as part of the updated, prioritized staff recommendations of the Culture Plan Update.

The Culture Plan Update is designed to build upon the foundational work of the 2006 Culture Plan, “Building A Creative Future, a plan for Culture” and provides a ten-year plan for the development of the cultural sector as Barrie enters its next phase of growth. A Public Art Strategy was developed in conjunction with the Culture Plan Update and was subsequently approved.

As part of the 2023 Capital Budget planning process, a Culture Plan Update and corresponding Public Art Strategy development were approved. In August 2023, City staff issued Request for Proposal FIN2023-190P to develop a comprehensive ten-year Culture Plan Update and accompanying Public Art Strategy. In December of 2023, the project was awarded to the consulting firm of Agence MASSIVart (MASSIVart), a creative placemaking & public art strategy firm.

The recommended actions of the plan have been distilled by staff into a proposed implementation program with the updated context of a future operational plan for the Performing Arts Centre (PAC). Considerations include:

- **Expansion of programs** or procedures that are already in place and have been identified by staff as actionable items that may be continued, expanded or developed in 2025 and beyond.
- **New recommended action areas that staff believe are achievable in the short term (one to three years)** and will build a foundation for future actions.
- **Future actions to be explored** and considered in four to ten years once the short-term actions have been achieved, with additional resourcing, and in context with the Barrie market.

Council has made strides towards several of the future actions of the plan, including progressing plans to build a Performing Arts Centre (PAC) in downtown Barrie. The Culture Plan Update puts a focus on professional development for artists and arts organizations that will be critical to the successful implementation and activation of a PAC in the city. **The actions included in this report are focused on building capacity and strategically leveraging the City’s investments.**

Economic and Creative Development retains a role in supporting professional development for the cultural community. Through the ongoing support of the Small Business Centre, a partnership between the City and the Province of Ontario that serves to deliver entrepreneurship supports to the community, there is an opportunity for the Centre to support professional development opportunities and workshops for creatives and arts organizations.

The proposed implementation plan focuses on innovative approaches to addressing some of the priority goals in 2026 and supports the transition of the portfolio to Recreation and Culture Services and the future of the Performing Arts Centre.

Key Findings:

Project Scope

The Culture Plan Update, informed by data-driven analysis, community values, best practices, and stakeholder input, will guide the City's cultural and public art initiatives for the next 10 years.

The methodology for the Culture Plan Update and Public Art Strategy was broken out into four phases:

Phase 1: Context Analysis - Background review of City policies, plans, programs, and existing frameworks, discussions with City staff and advisory groups, and benchmarking amongst comparable municipalities to establish an initial foundation of knowledge of the current culture and public art landscape in Barrie.

Phase 2: Community Engagement - Community and cultural collaborator engagement to ensure that City-wide strategies and policies reflect and respond to the needs and desires of those who live, work, play, learn, and visit Barrie. In total, the project team engaged with over 725 people across pop-up events, online surveys, focus groups, and interviews.

Phases 3 and 4: Report and Recommendations - An initial draft of the Culture Plan Update and Public Art Strategy was developed for review by City staff, with report-back opportunities with those engaged in previous phases to ensure alignment.

The Culture Plan Update is shaped by existing City of Barrie plans and policies. Aligning with these frameworks ensures that Barrie's cultural development is integrated with broader city initiatives, fostering a cohesive approach to growth and ensuring that culture continues to be a vital part of Barrie's strategic vision. To inform the Culture Plan Update and Public Art Strategy, in Phase 1, MASSIVart reviewed and considered recommendations and priorities from:

- The City of Barrie Official Plan 2051
- The City of Barrie Strategic Plan 2022–2026
- The City of Barrie Tourism Master Plan (2020)
- The Barrie Waterfront Strategic Plan Update (2023), and
- "Building a Creative Future" (2006), the City of Barrie's original plan for culture

Phase one also included benchmarking amongst comparable municipalities to understand sector-wide trends. The municipalities that were benchmarked are Guelph, Whitby, Kingston, Saskatoon, and Victoria.

One crucial question raised during the Phase 2 engagement process was, "What should the City of Barrie's role be in supporting this vision?" To ensure the cultural sector not only survives but thrives, Barrie's role moving forward will focus on creating pathways for a self-sustaining cultural community.

Primary Roles:

- **Champion:** Actively celebrate, promote, and showcase Barrie's creatives and arts and cultural opportunities to strengthen Barrie's identity as a cultural city, attract and retain talent, and fuel cultural tourism. This involves utilizing platforms such as social media, newsletters, and community event calendars.
- **Connector:** Facilitate networking and collaboration among artists, cultural organizations, businesses, community members, and other sectors to foster partnerships, broaden audiences, and support resource-sharing.
- **Capacity Builder:** Deliver programming that develops the skills and capacities of local creatives, cultural professionals, and organizations—boosting career opportunities and driving economic growth within the culture sector.

Secondary Roles:

- **Access Enhancer:** Improve accessibility by addressing barriers and educating cultural providers to ensure opportunities are accessible—physically, financially, and socially.
- **Funder:** Offer financial assistance through grants and funding programs, such as the Arts and Culture Investment Program, to support both operational and project-based cultural initiatives, driving innovation.
- **Space Provider:** Provide affordable, accessible venues and spaces for creatives to create, perform, and showcase their work.

Report and Recommendations

In Q1 2025, MASSIVart delivered the final draft of the Culture Plan Update, which includes a vision for arts and culture in Barrie, six strategic priorities for the plan, goals to achieve the vision, and 65 recommended actions to support the development of the culture sector. These actions included 20 ongoing, 27 immediate (short-term), and 18 future actions. Many of the actions recommended, particularly in the short term, require human resourcing to execute. The ongoing actions will require additional investment to keep pace with the growth of the community.

The vision for arts and culture in Barrie

Barrie will be a celebrated beacon of cultural richness and a year-round destination. Rooted in diversity and inclusivity, culture will reflect and welcome everyone in Barrie's growing population, flourishing throughout the city.

The six key strategic priorities in achieving the Culture Plan Update's vision for arts and culture in Barrie between 2025 and 2035 are:

1. Fostering a **resilient and thriving** creative community
2. **Supporting spaces** for culture to thrive
3. Making **culture accessible** to all
4. Celebrating Barrie's **cultural diversity**
5. Furthering **reconciliation and Indigenous** futures
6. Becoming a **culture-friendly** municipality

The recommendations were reviewed in the context of a future operational plan for the Performing Arts Centre (PAC).

The strategic priorities identified in the Culture Plan Update contain goals and actions that support the new Performing Arts Centre. Priority 2, 'supporting spaces for culture to thrive' being the most direct. The following goals have been identified under this priority:

Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 2.1: Appropriate, accessible, and affordable cultural spaces attract and retain artists, businesses, and community members in Barrie.
	Goal 2.2: Public spaces and the waterfront serve as active venues for public art and culture year-round, strengthening community connections and participation.
	Goal 2.3: Barrie's downtown is recognized as a Cultural District, concentrating cultural activities, events, and spaces to enhance its role as a cultural hub.

In reviewing and prioritizing implementation actions in context of the new PAC, staff focused on a review of short-term actions as the longer-term operating model is still under development. The Culture Plan Update is intended to be a living document, and as such, actions and recommendations are to be reviewed and prioritized in context with the current environment.

Implementation Plan

Looking at existing resources and the current economic climate, staff have built an implementation plan that's realistic and fiscally responsible, while still allowing for development of the sector and supporting plans for a PAC.

In 2026, staff will focus on innovative, resourceful solutions, including redeploying current fiscal resources to achieve early outcomes of priority immediate recommendations while recognizing the City investment in a PAC, budget direction, and the portfolio transition and integration with Recreation and Culture Services.

The following actions will be the focus of the 2026 implementation plan:

- **Pilot Additional Professional Development Workshops and Support for Creatives, Organizations and Businesses.** The plan emphasized the need to build sectoral capacity to support the development and operations of the Performing Arts Centre. There's an opportunity to lever the Small Business Centre to support facilitation, sectoral promotion and provide bespoke support and consultation to the sector.

Action	Priority Addressed	Cost/ Resource	Funding Source	Detail
Provide Customized Support for Creatives and	1	Staff Time - Small Business Centre	Re-allocate existing operating funds within Economic &	Offer bespoke support to the sector through the Small

Creative Enterprises			Creative Development	Business Centre, including specialized advice, training, and resources designed to foster growth and success
Develop a “one-stop-shop” Approach to Centralizing Information and Resources for Creatives, Cultural Organizations, and Community Members	1	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Appoint a current City staff member as a “Cultural Liaison” to serve as an advocate for the creative community and act as a primary point of contact for all cultural inquiries
Leverage Resources Amongst City Cultural Providers	1	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Connect with City partners like the MacLaren Art Centre, the Small Business Centre, Barrie Public Library, and others to support capacity-building initiatives
Deepen Engagement with Equity-Deserving Groups	4	Staff Time	Existing Operating	When developing cultural development programs, engage and build relationships with multicultural groups, youth, seniors,

				2SLGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, etc. to understand needs.
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- **Develop an In-Kind Tourism & Culture Event Grant** to be contemplated as part of the 2027 Business Plan Process that addresses gaps in eligibility for events that drive both tourism and culture benefits to community and are funded ad-hoc. Currently, these types of events do not have a formal funding support mechanism and yet several requests are received annually that include requests for funds that cover fees for the provision of municipal services (shuttles, garbage collection, event spaces, etc.). The Culture Plan Update recommends that a fund be established to ensure cultural diversity of community events, reflective of our growing population and increasing cultural activations downtown, including Meridian Place. This recommendation has been considered in context with other recommendations of the Culture Plan Update related to positioning the downtown as a cultural hub and supporting capacity building and development of local artists and arts and culture organizations. The recommendation also reflects the recent completion of a consultants report back on Kempenfest and strategic recommendations for festival evolution and sustainability.

Developing a municipal in-kind grant program is a financially sound mechanism for supporting tourism and culture events that levers existing municipal assets and expertise into economic stimulus and cultural enrichment with the following strategic benefits:

- In-kind grants ensure city investment remains focused on tangible, operational support, directly contributing to the event's feasibility and visitor experience
- Higher Leverage: A \$10,000 cash grant may only pay for one vendor, but \$10,000 worth of in-kind services (e.g. waste removal, transit operations) frees up the organization's \$10,000 cash to be spent directly on programming, marketing, or capacity building.
- Capacity Building: Providing in-kind expertise (e.g., planning staff, technical mentorship) increases competency, resiliency in the non-profit arts and culture sector, increasing tourism and community participation.
- Alignment with the principles of the MAT, which is to support tourism development.

Action	Strategic Priority	Cost/Resource	Funding Source	Detail
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Develop a Fund to support Cultural and Community Celebrations	4	Staff time	Tourism Reserve	To be developed
Support Programming That Highlight's Barrie's Cultural Advantages	1	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Encourage and support programming that highlights Barrie's diversity and unique cultural advantages in music, theatre, public art, and culinary arts.

- Cultural Education, Awareness and Marketing of the Creative Sector were key themes that emerged from the recommended actions and represent an important foundational opportunity to pursue in 2026 to set the stage for growth of the sector.** The objective is to provide cultural education both internally within the organization and externally as well as provide regular updates to Council and the community. An opportunity exists to leverage the Barrie Arts Advisory Committee to address marketing and awareness recommendations and explore how city and community resources can align to promote culture in the city. Identifying opportunities for Economic and Creative Development to support the work of Recreation and Culture Services in positioning Barrie as a cultural hub will also support this activity.

Action	Strategic Priority	Cost/ Resource	Funding Source	Detail
Strengthen Collaboration and Resource Sharing Amongst City Partners	1	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Expand collaborations between the City of Barrie and its cultural partners
Share Regular Updates on the Culture Plan Process	6	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Share key milestones, upcoming initiatives, and opportunities for public input
Support Knowledge Building with City staff and Council on the Value of Culture in City Building	6	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Develop and circulate an annual Culture report card
Clearly Define Roles and Responsibilities between Recreation and Culture departments Economic and Creative Development	6	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Host quarterly meetings to identify opportunities to collaborate to champion and position Barrie as a cultural hub, building audience engagement in the arts.
Showcase Barrie's Culture and Creatives	1	Staff Time	Existing Operating	Promote local creatives, organizations, and events across existing municipal

				communication channels and services.
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- **Repurpose the unutilized portion of the capital cost allocated to the Culture Plan Update and Public Art Strategy project to explore aligning the Arts and Culture Investment Program (ACIP) with the Culture Plan Update and Performing Arts Centre.** In 2021, the ACIP program was reviewed for governance modernization. The program needs to be further modernized in context with an updated Culture Plan by reviewing its funding and reporting frameworks and how it addresses, measures and supports achievement. The objective would be to understand how the program can be improved to better serve the community, build capacity for arts organizations, and position the program for future success, including alternative models for funding the program.

Action	Priority Addressed	Cost/ Resource	Funding Source	Detail
Develop a Strategy for the Arts and Culture Investment Program	1	\$50,000	Reallocated Capital Budget funds from EC1000 from Culture Plan and Public Art Strategy	Conduct a study of ACIP to determine its goals and outcomes, and identify priority funding areas to strengthen the program. A consultant will be required to complete this work.

Financial Implications:

MASSIVart calculated the City of Barrie's 2024 per capita investment in culture, based on the Planning Department's population analysis for the year (159,521 people), at \$11.43. This is based on the City's estimated 2024 cultural spending of \$1.8 million dollars. Costs considered in this calculation include the City's investment in theatre operations, MacLaren Art Centre, grant programs and culture portfolio. For comparison, Barrie's per capita investment in culture in 2006 was \$1.36 per year.

2051 Budget Scenario: To illustrate the potential budget implications of expected population growth, assuming a consistent per capita investment rate of \$11.43 (2024 level), a total cultural budget of \$3,406,140* would be required by 2051.

**These figures are provided as a frame of reference and assume status quo program delivery scaled to the projected population figures and do not account for inflation and buying power in 2051.*

The report and associated actions do not provide a fully costed implementation program, due to several factors including:

- Further investigation is required into some of the action items to assess the feasibility to implement, including cost validation.

- The plan is projected over a 10-year time horizon – the costing of initiatives in the longer-term are more variable.
- The plan is intended to be a living document that is reviewed annually to assess progress, identify and respond to needs of the community, economic and other factors (such as a new Performing Arts Centre) to determine which actions to advance on an annual basis, new opportunities to be considered and prioritized, and associated cost estimate validations for budget consideration.

The consultant's report does, however, provide cost-estimates in the form of an estimated dollar range across several of the action items. Further, some of the actions are identified as being delivered within the existing resource complement. It is recognized that program delivery will need to expand with the growth of the community along with capacity to deliver and support implementation of some of the actions that are identified as 'existing complement'.

Funding investments have been prioritized based on those that will have the greatest impact in the short-term, acknowledging Council's substantial commitment to the development of a new Performing Arts Centre. Funding recommendations are proposed to be included as part of the annual budgeting process. Staff will also continue to seek opportunities to leverage funding programs/opportunities outside of the City, where appropriate.

2026 Budget Implications

For 2026, staff are recommending the use of existing budgets and resources to accomplish some of the short-term recommendations outlined in the Culture Plan Update.

The core rationale for dedicating a portion of Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) revenue to fund an In-kind Tourism and Culture Events Grant program is the principle of "tourism pays for tourism" as the MAT is paid exclusively by overnight visitors, the very demographic the grant program seeks to attract.

Utilizing the fund to off-set hard costs the City would incur to provide in-kind services such as transit shuttles, dedicated staff time for event logistics, waste removal, etc. directly supports event organizers in focusing their funds on programming, including the engagement of local artists.

2027 and 2028 Potential Actions – Immediate Term Implementation

Anticipated actions for 2027 and 2028 have been removed for this report given the departmental changes and the PAC program and operational elements that are still being developed.

Executing on the Culture Plan Update recommendations will require additional resourcing over time and will be subject to budget approval as part of the City's budget approval process.

Leveraging the City's current investment in cultural development, strategically partnering to build capacity, and preparing for additional incremental investment for delivering the Culture

Plan Update and Performing Arts Centre will continue to build a foundation for culture in the City of Barrie.

Alternatives

The following alternatives are available for consideration by the Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee:

Alternative #1 – The Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose not to endorse the Culture Plan Update in principle. This alternative is not recommended as culture is recognized as a key element of a thriving community, one of Council’s Strategic Priorities for 2022-2026. The recommendation for in principle enables staff to explore opportunities to collaborate and find new revenue and efficiencies in how the City supports the arts and culture sector. Any requests for investment will come forward through the annual budgeting process for Council consideration where and when appropriate.

Alternative #2 - The Infrastructure and Community Investment Committee could choose to not support all or some of the 2026 recommended actions.

Although this alternative is available, it would result in a diminished impact and weaker foundation being built in year one of the implementation of the 10-year plan.

Strategic Plan Alignment:

Affordable Place to Live	X	The Culture Plan Update recommends enhancing affordability by increasing support for subsidized, low-cost, and free programming.
Community Safety	X	Public art is documented to increase community and pedestrian safety.
Thriving Community	X	The Culture Plan Update champions equity, diversity, and inclusion, supports community wellness, fosters growth in arts and culture, and contributes to a vibrant downtown.
Infrastructure Investments	X	Public art is documented to support active transportation and public transit use.
Responsible Governance	X	The Culture Plan Update fosters accountability and transparency, finds efficiency and champions innovation.

Additional Background Information and Analysis:

The Definition of Culture

While culture often refers to the collective experiences and traditions of communities, for the purposes of Barrie’s Culture Plan Update, it is defined as creative activities. This encompasses various forms of artistic expression, including visual art, performance art, literary art, culinary art, as well as physical spaces like galleries, museums, studios, theatres, restaurants, and other intangible sources of culture such as artists, creatives, and community organizations.

In addition to engaging with Barrie's community and researching Barrie's current cultural sector, the Culture Plan Update is also underpinned and informed by **sector-wide trends that the City can respond to and capitalize on:**

- **Cultural tourism** is rapidly growing in Ontario and is a key economic driver.
- The cultural sector thrives through **collaboration**, with an increasing number of partnerships forming between cultural organizations and other industries such as technology, sustainability, and science.
- Many cultural organizations are exploring new and **sustainable ways to govern** themselves including exploring co-leadership models and more lateral, as opposed to hierarchical, structures.
- **Prioritizing reconciliation** by ensuring that Indigenous voices, traditions, and heritage are not only preserved but also represented in public life.
- As Ontario's population continues to grow and diversify, particularly with increasing numbers of visible minorities, youth, and older adults, there exists a unique opportunity to reflect this **demographic shift** through cultural offerings.
- The **digital transformation** accelerated by COVID-19 has opened new avenues for the creation, production, and distribution of cultural content, which will continue to grow.

Strategic Priorities, Associated Goals and Recommended Actions:

The following tables outline the six strategic priorities, the associated goals of each, and the 65 recommended actions to accomplish those goals.

Priority 1: Fostering a Resilient and Thriving Creative Community	
By cultivating a dynamic creative sector, Barrie positions itself as an attractive destination for cultural organizations, businesses, and artists, enhancing Barrie's identity as a cultural hub and attracting visitors.	
Why this is important	Investing in culture supports the overall growth and sustainability of the sector, along with the following benefits: • Economic Growth • Cultural Identity and Pride • Talent Attraction and Retention • Skill Development • Innovation and Collaboration • Social Inclusion
What the City has already achieved	• Aligning Cultural Development with Economic Growth • Building Skills and Capacity • Investing in Arts and Culture • Showcasing and Promoting Culture • Fostering Connections in the Creative Sector • Expanding Cultural Engagement • Providing Support for Artists and Creatives • Supporting Creative Businesses

What we heard from the community	• Support cultural growth through investment and support • Increase cultural awareness through promotion to the community and visitors • Foster collaboration and innovation through networking, idea-sharing and collaborative events • Champion local talent by offering capacity-building opportunities, a platform for showcasing local creatives and increased funding
Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 1.1: Barrie's local talent and unique cultural advantages are celebrated and showcased, solidifying Barrie's cultural identity and attracting visitors. Goal 1.2: A unified and collaborative creative sector in Barrie drives the sustained growth and vitality of the city's cultural landscape. Goal 1.3: Cultural career incubation provides opportunities for creatives and organizations to develop and thrive. Goal 1.4: Strategic investment in the creative sector supports the growth and sustainability of cultural initiatives.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Promote local creatives, organizations, and events across municipal communication channels and services. • Support programming that highlights Barrie's cultural advantages in music, theatre, public art and culinary arts. • Organize regular networking events that unite the creative sector and facilitate relationship building. • Build on and expand Barrie's Cultural Development programs through ongoing skill development, mentorship, and showcases for all career stages. • Support continuous improvement and transparency of the Arts & Culture Investment Program (ACIP).
Recommended Short – term Actions (1-3 years)	• Strengthen partnerships with tourism organizations to increase cultural tourism. • Develop a promotional campaign to position Barrie as a vibrant hub for music, theatre, public art, and culinary arts. • Expand collaborations between the City of Barrie and its cultural partners (e.g., Barrie Public Library, MacLaren Art Centre, Georgian College, Downtown Barrie BIA, and Tourism Barrie) by organizing annual or bi-annual meetings. • Appoint a current City staff member as a "Cultural Liaison" to serve as an advocate for the

	creative community and act as a primary point of contact for all cultural inquiries. • Offer bespoke support to cultural businesses, organizations, and individual creatives through the Small Business Centre. • Leverage resources amongst city cultural providers including the MacLaren Art Centre, Barrie Public Library, and other community partners to support capacity-building initiatives. • Explore allocating a percentage of Municipal recreation registration fees, user fees, film permit fees and/or tickets from Municipal facilities to ACIP and/or implementing an additional charge to such fees as an investment in the ACIP.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Create a directory or another type of resource that promotes and facilitates the hiring of local creatives. • As ACIP revenue streams become more diversified, expand the program's funding categories to include individual artists/ collectives and multi-year funding. • Explore partnerships and sponsorships with private and/or philanthropic organizations to create pilot or temporary funding programs to encourage creativity and innovation.

Priority 2: Supporting Spaces for Culture to Thrive

A commitment to enhancing physical and social environments, including venues, public spaces, and creative infrastructure, enables arts and culture to flourish throughout Barrie.

Why this is important	Prioritizing cultural spaces supports: • Economic Development • Community Engagement • Sustainability • Place-Making and Identity • Safety and Inclusion
What the City has already achieved	• Cultural Venues and Infrastructure Investment • Collaborative Programming and Partnerships • Integrating Culture into Public Spaces • Growing Public Art Opportunities • Community-Engaged Public Art • Enhancing Seasonal Cultural Experiences
What we heard from the community	• Plan and invest in cultural spaces for rehearsing, showcasing, and creating culture • Champion culture in public spaces through programming of Meridian Place and City parks • Prioritize Downtown as the Cultural Heart of the City

Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 2.1: Appropriate, accessible, and affordable cultural spaces attract and retain artists, businesses, and community members in Barrie. Goal 2.2: Public spaces and the waterfront serve as active venues for public art and culture year-round, strengthening community connections and participation. Goal 2.3: Barrie's downtown is recognized as a Cultural District, concentrating cultural activities, events, and spaces to enhance its role as a cultural hub.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Explore opportunities for City-owned spaces to accommodate various cultural needs. • Partner with Parks Planning to design or retrofit parks and public spaces for cultural activities. • Encourage public art initiatives led by residents, community groups, and the private sector. • Advance winter cultural activities and promote through Tourism Barrie's Winter Fun campaigns.
Recommended Short – term Actions (1-3 year)	• Improve access to City-owned facilities and public spaces during underutilized times by establishing a Community Group Registry. • Educate the private sector on the needs of the cultural sector and encourage them to offer non-traditional spaces for cultural use. • Review and streamline policies that affect events and performances in public spaces and explore opportunities for the City to have a more active role in programming Meridian Place. • Collaborate with the Development Services Department, Downtown Barrie BIA, Tourism Barrie, as well as local institutions, businesses, creatives, and community members to establish and brand downtown as a Cultural District. • Develop a multipurpose, multidisciplinary performing arts or cultural hub to host medium-to large-scale events, exhibitions, film screenings, performances, celebrations, and festivals.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Explore incentives to encourage partnerships between property owners and cultural organizations, such as subsidies, fee matching, and property tax reductions. • Encourage the development of new public spaces adjacent to commercial and mixed-use areas that can create gathering spaces for residents and offer opportunities for creatives to perform or showcase their practices.

	• Establish micro-grants to support community-driven events and placemaking initiatives that activate public spaces and neighbourhoods. • Explore Municipal incentives to support the growth of the Cultural District through co-location of cultural infrastructure and attractions and creating an artful public realm. • Develop a Nighttime Economy Strategy aimed at generating jobs, attracting tourists and talent, fostering a sense of community, and enhancing safety in the downtown area.
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Priority 3: Making Culture Accessible to All

Prioritizing accessibility, the City of Barrie strives to ensure that arts and culture are inclusive and available to all residents and visitors, regardless of age, background, or ability.

Why this is important	Prioritizing access to culture supports: • Inclusivity and Equity • Community Well-Being • Economic Impact
What the City has already achieved	• Promoting Cultural Opportunities • Inclusive Communications • Accessible Transportation for Events • Ensuring Event Accessibility • Celebrating Diverse Talent
What we heard from the community	• Enhance awareness of culture in Barrie through improved and increased promotion • Prioritize inclusive events by ensuring equity-deserving groups are engaged • Enhance affordability by supporting low-cost and free events • Increase physical accessibility of venues and events • Enhance mobility and connections to culture via improved access
Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 3.1: Clear and accessible communication ensures that community members and visitors can easily discover cultural opportunities, reaffirming Barrie's identity and fostering pride and belonging. Goal 3.2: Cultural opportunities are inclusive, accessible, and affordable, ensuring that all individuals—including equity-deserving groups such as youth, seniors, and newcomers—are included.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Reach out to the local community by leveraging the Creative Barrie channels, along with newsletters, mailings, radio spots, and information sessions to raise awareness about cultural opportunities and initiatives.

	• Implement multilingual materials to ensure cultural opportunities are accessible to all community members. • Develop and support free City-led events and explore community partnerships to expand affordable and accessible cultural activities. • Collaborate cross-departmentally to enhance public transportation and active transportation services that connect cultural venues and events.
Recommended Short – term Actions (1-3 year)	• Designate a current platform or develop a new one that serves as a comprehensive online hub where residents and visitors can easily find and upload information on cultural events, programs, initiatives, and organizations. • Explore opportunities for City facilities and partners (e.g., Barrie Public Library, MacLaren Art Centre) to offer dedicated times and spaces for youth for unstructured and self-directed cultural activities and expression. • Establish a centralized resource hub that provides guidelines, education, funding resources, and case studies for making cultural spaces and events more accessible.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Enhance awareness and access to cultural opportunities by developing programs that build digital knowledge, skills, and capacity.

Priority 4: Celebrating Barrie's Cultural Diversity

Promoting a community that is welcoming, inclusive, and representative of all members, Barrie fosters a rich cultural environment that honours and showcases the diverse cultures and heritage that shape the city's identity.

Why this is important	Embracing cultural diversity fosters: • Cultural Representation • Reflecting a Growing and Diverse Population • Cultural Tourism
What the City has already achieved	• Celebrating Cultural Diversity • Inclusive Public Art and Adjudication • Supporting Black History Month
What we heard from the community	• Celebrate cultural diversity through more partnerships and collaboration with organizations representing newcomers and diverse groups • Support diverse artists through showcase and professional development opportunities • Celebrate Barrie's heritage and history through knowledge-sharing initiatives, exhibits, and events
Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 4.1: Barrie's cultural diversity is actively celebrated through events, programs, and initiatives that promote cross-cultural dialogue, empathy, and foster a sense of unity within the community.

	Goal 4.2: Equitable representation in Barrie's cultural sector ensures that the traditions, histories, and stories of all communities, including Indigenous peoples and newcomers, are prominently featured and celebrated.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Encourage both City-led and community-led events that highlight Barrie's diverse cultures and heritage. • Ensure that artists hired for City programming and public art reflect Barrie's cultural diversity. • Engage and build relationships with multicultural groups, youth, seniors, 2SLGBTQIA+ community, Indigenous Peoples, newcomers, etc. to understand and address needs and desires.
Recommended Short-term Actions (1-3 years)	• Collaborate with multicultural groups to conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that explores opportunities and obstacles in cultural programming and development, including areas like funding, space, and awareness. • Ensure arts and culture advisory groups, like the Barrie Arts Advisory Committee and Barrie Public Art Committee reflect the diversity of Barrie's community.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Investigate opportunities to provide funding or grants for events and programs that emphasize multiculturalism and inclusivity.

Priority 5: Furthering Reconciliation and Supporting Indigenous Futures

In response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action, Barrie is committed to building authentic and reciprocal relationships with First Nations and Indigenous Peoples, collaboratively supporting Indigenous culture and heritage.

Why this is important	Prioritizing Indigenous art and culture supports: • Dedication to Reconciliation • Cultural Representation and Visibility • Reciprocal Relationships • Cultural Revitalization
What the City has already achieved	• Relationship Building with Indigenous Communities • Indigenous Awareness Training • Supporting Sacred Traditions
What we heard from the community	• Increase visibility of Indigenous cultures through events, education, and showcases • Expand education on Indigenous heritage and culture through public art, events, celebrations, and storytelling • Improve collaboration and leadership with Indigenous Peoples by ensuring that they actively lead and participate in decision-making processes that shape city planning and public spaces • Ensure authentic representation of Indigenous Peoples in programs

Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 5.1: Strengthened and deepened relationships are established with Indigenous communities, organizations, and individuals, fostering mutual respect and collaboration.
	Goal 5.2: Barrie actively showcases and honours Indigenous cultures, traditions, and histories, ensuring they are visible, respected, and celebrated across the city.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Build relationships with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities, organizations, and individuals to understand barriers to cultural development, and identify actions to further opportunities for Indigenous Peoples and representation in Barrie. • Collaborate with and support Indigenous Rights Holders to identify locations and opportunities for Indigenous art, culture, and living heritage to be featured across Barrie.
Recommended Short – term Actions (1-3 year)	• Adopt and implement the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples as a framework for reconciliation. • Ensure that engagement and communication with Indigenous Peoples and communities respects Indigenous protocols and worldviews. • Explore policies that protect the rights of Indigenous Peoples to practice their traditions and ceremonial practices at Municipal facilities, properties, and functions, including events and programs.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Explore developing an Indigenous Advisory Circle for City-wide initiatives with Council and City Clerks to ensure decision-making involves Indigenous Peoples. • Work with and support Indigenous Rights Holders to identify and recognize sites of Indigenous cultural significance, traditions, and stories in Barrie. • Collaborate with Indigenous communities to explore opportunities for land stewardship in City public spaces, parks, buildings, and facilities.

Priority 6: Becoming a Culture-Friendly Municipality

Building a foundation for success, the City of Barrie champions culture across all Municipal departments, to support and leverage opportunities that enable culture to thrive.

Why this is important	Being a culture-friendly municipality means: • Interdepartmental Synergy • Municipal Excellence • Community Trust
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What the City has already achieved	• Cross-departmental Collaboration • Cross-Departmental Partnerships for Public Art
What we heard from the community	• Build on Barrie's cultural foundation to become a regional hub for culture • Be a community partner by building awareness within the corporation about the sector's needs and potential • Connect the delivery of cultural services between Economic and Creative Development and Recreation and Culture Services • Implement an integrated approach to culture to ensure culture is woven into daily life in Barrie
Goals (2025-2035)	Goal 6.1: Fostering collaboration and knowledge-sharing to strengthen the understanding of culture's intrinsic value. Goal 6.2: Harnessing creativity to address municipal challenges and priorities. Goal 6.3: Encouraging ongoing engagement to ensure decision-making and cultural initiatives reflect the needs and interests of all residents.
Actions to Continue keeping pace with growth of community	Continue to: • Support knowledge building with City staff and Council on the value of culture in City Building. • Embed art and culture in Municipal policies and strategies.
Recommended Short – term Actions (1-3 year)	• Create an interdepartmental City committee for Public Art and Culture. • Clearly define roles and responsibilities between Economic and Creative Development and Recreation and Culture Services, and host quarterly meetings to improve collaboration and share ideas, identify challenges, and explore opportunities for supporting the cultural sector. • Develop and support arts-based participatory engagement processes where stakeholders and residents are encouraged to collaborate on City projects and express their ideas with the support of artists and using artistic mediums. • Ensure that culture related data is consistently tracked and maintained and that protocols are created to share such data appropriately to provide an accurate picture of the sector and to inform decision-making. • Share Regular Updates on the Culture Plan Process.
Recommended Future Actions (4-10 years)	• Strengthen data transparency and foster collaboration with external partners, such as Tourism Barrie, Barrie Public Library, and other cultural and civic organizations, to share insights and data related

	to cultural activities, visitor engagement, and community needs. • Encourage artist residencies within City departments to infuse creative perspectives into municipal projects, addressing urban challenges through innovative solutions. • Connect City staff with artists, art organizations, and community members to understand complex challenges facing Barrie and develop creative, experimental, and transformative solutions. • Create structured and ongoing channels for community feedback on culture, including surveys, forums, and public meetings.
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Consultation and Engagement:

Community engagement was essential to ensuring that the Culture Plan Update and Public Art Strategy reflect and respond to the needs and aspirations of those who live, work, play, learn, and visit the city. For Barrie’s Culture Plan Update, engagement was carried out in the several phases of the Culture Plan Update process.

Engagement tactics were designed to gather a broad spectrum of input and feedback by centering diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through multiple barrier-free engagement opportunities, travelling across the city to engage different audiences, and utilizing both digital and in-person techniques.

Target audiences were categorized into the following groups:

- **Municipal Stakeholders:** City staff and City advisory groups.
- **Community Members:** Barrie residents who live, work, learn, and play in the city, including youth, older adults, newcomers, 2SLGBTQIA+, etc.
- **Cultural Collaborators:** Key individuals and groups who have experience with or who are actively involved in art and culture in Barrie.

In total, 725+ people were engaged:

- **370 community pop-up participants:** Seven community engagement “drop-in” events were held at various community spaces and events across Barrie in May and June 2024. These locations and events were strategically selected to ensure a diversity in geographies and demographics of potential participants.
- **181 community survey respondents**
- **74 cultural collaborator survey respondents**
- **60+ cultural collaborators attended Culture Night Out**
- **29 cultural collaborator interview participants**
- **11 City staff focus group participants**

Phase 1 Engagement

Engagement in this phase involved discussions with Municipal staff and advisory groups, including the Barrie Arts Advisory Committee and the Barrie Public Art Committee. The goal was to assess the City's current role in the cultural sector and identify key challenges and opportunities in cultural development, public art, and cultural facility management. These conversations led to initial findings which helped to inform the engagement strategy for the next phase.

Phase 2 Community Engagement

Through in-depth research of Barrie's culture and economic sectors in Phase 1, and engagement with multidisciplinary organizations, creatives, and community members in Phase 2, **several key insights emerged** to inform the Culture Plan Update:

- **Unique Cultural Features:** Barrie boasts a vibrant culture with its waterfront, numerous festivals, the MacLaren Art Centre, a growing public art scene, and diverse populations.
- **Appeal and Challenges:** Beyond its cultural attractions, Barrie offers post-secondary programs, RVH, affordability compared to major urban centers, and connectivity to other cultural hubs. However, the city faces challenges such as the need for affordable and accessible venues, financial difficulties for artists and organizations, and ensuring accessibility, inclusivity, and awareness of cultural events.
- **Future Aspirations:** Barrie aims to expand its cultural sector by increasing cultural venues and performance spaces, fostering collaboration within the creative community, enhancing visibility of Indigenous Peoples, celebrating multiculturalism and diversity, and spreading culture throughout the city.

Phase 3 Engagement

Engagement during this phase included a community open house where staff presented the Guiding Principles, Strategic Priorities, and Goals for the Culture Plan Update. Members of the Barrie Arts Advisory Committee were provided the presentation in advance and encouraged to attend and provide their feedback on the work that had been done to date.

Phase 4 Engagement

Upon receipt of the final draft report of the Culture Plan Update, staff presented the plan, all recommended actions and proposed implementation plan for accomplishing the proposed 2026 recommendations to the Barrie Arts Advisory Committee and the Barrie Public Art Committee. Both committees expressed support for the plan and for the phased approach to implementation considering existing resourcing. Key feedback from the committees included:

- Ensuring that budget forecasting for future growth considers inflation to provide a true presentation of value.
- The idea of exploring the possibility of hiring an Indigenous Relations individual to support the work needed to support First Nations communities corporation wide.

- Considering when and how the City staff and elected officials speak about arts and culture to increase awareness amongst residents and the cultural education opportunity that exists both internally and externally.
- Focusing on engaging and supporting youth in cultural opportunities and activities to set future generations up for success.
- While prioritizing short-term actions, keeping in mind and planning for future initiatives so the City is prepared with a robust creative sector for when these initiatives break ground.

Environmental and Climate Change Impact Matters:

There are no environmental and/or climate change impact matters related to the recommendation.

Appendix:

Appendix A – City of Barrie Culture Plan Update

***NOTE: Public Art Strategy has been removed from this update**

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File #:

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Pending: Not Applicable