



Performing Arts Centre Task Force Final Report

January 2022

BACKGROUND

1. Cultural Capacity Building

A new performing arts centre in Barrie will build cultural capacity. Together facilities and healthy organizations are primary cultural economic generators. Maximizing the economic and creative potential of cultural places and spaces and the organizational capacity of our arts organizations is a vital combination for success.

Barrie’s Building a Creative Future - A Plan for Culture report directs a path to translating the opportunity the arts afford us into both a better life and a more prosperous downtown Barrie. The plan states that “organizations rich in capacity are those with strong connections to their communities, good governance and effective management systems. Organizations with these systems in place fulfill their missions and better serve their communities. We know that healthy organizations, rich in capacity, make Barrie a better place to live and to visit. We also know that a healthy and planned arts sector is good for our quality of life, our economy, for tourism, and for business.”

2. Vision for a Downtown Performing Arts Centre

A performing arts centre in the downtown would enable the vision of a “Creative Corridor” – a vision that includes a performing arts centre acting as a western anchor of the corridor, with the Five Points Theatre and Meridian Square in between, and the MacLaren Arts Centre as the cultural node on the eastern end of downtown. With the additions of the Sandbox Entrepreneurship Centre and Georgian College’s Digital Art and Design campus downtown, the cultural corridor concept has the necessary elements to be a strong economic driver in the future development of the downtown area.

The location of the former W.A. Fisher Auditorium in the western end of Dunlop Street for a new performing arts centre would represent a significant investment in cultural and tourism amenities contributing to the revitalization of that section of downtown which has been identified as a focus area for downtown revitalization efforts. This site also provides a convenient connection to the future Market Precinct being proposed for the downtown bus terminal location.

3. Why a New Performing Arts Centre

Community and Council Direction	Community engagement and needs indicate an opportunity to shift local cultural spending from outside the community back into the community. A new performing arts centre directly links to <u>Council’s Strategic Priorities for 2018-2022: Growing our Economy and Building Strong Neighbourhoods</u> .
Connection to Downtown Revitalization and Official Plan	A performing arts centre will provide major revitalization to Dunlop Street to the west of the Five Points. According to the <u>Official Plan</u> , the City is to create public spaces and provide services and infrastructure to enhance downtown Barrie and the public realm at both day and night, creating a city where culture thrives 24/7.

Theatre Demand (Demand for Enhanced Theatre Attractions and Condition and Availability of Current Venues)

There are limitations with existing local venues that support local programming but do not fully meet the needs of the performing arts community, along with a lack of other private options. The new venue would provide opportunity for the development of new local programming and the growth of cultural and performance groups.

4. History of Barrie’s Performing Arts

1896 – Barrie’s Grand Opera House opened, burned in 1926 (1,200 seats)

1962 – W.A. Fisher Auditorium opened, closed in 2016 (950-980 seats).

1973 – Georgian Theatre opened, closed in 2021 (680 seats)

2000 - Barlow Study recommended multi-use facility

2006 – Barrie’s Plan for Culture recommended (screening room, 3 performance spaces, multi-use space, plus other rooms)

2011 – Five Points Theatre opened, (110-200 seats)

2017-2019 – Fisher Auditorium review and reports

2020 – Novita Report, analysis of Fisher Auditorium project

2021 – Performing Arts Centre Task Force formed, updated needs analysis completed

5. The W.A. Fisher Auditorium

The W.A. Fisher Auditorium was located at 125 Dunlop St. West within the former Barrie Central Collegiate, the oldest school in Simcoe County built in 1843. The Simcoe County District School Board (SCDSB) deemed the school prohibitively expensive to refurbish and closed it at the end of the 2016/2017 academic year. The Fisher Auditorium closed following its final concert in May of 2016.

In 2017, HIP Developments purchased Barrie Central Collegiate from the SCDSB with plans for a residential development. There was great public interest in the City retaining the auditorium/theatre space as a key piece of the city’s history and as an opportunity to create a cultural space in the downtown. During the demolition of the old high school, the auditorium was retained for potential future redevelopment into a downtown cultural space and the City of Barrie officially acquired the auditorium from HIP Developments in early 2019.

From 2017 to 2020, there have been a number of studies undertaken to investigate the feasibility of constructing a theatre on the property while retaining the existing auditorium foundation as part of the design. In 2021 it was determined that retaining the existing foundation was restricting the development potential of the site and that the history of the Fisher

Auditorium could be honoured in other ways. This allowed for the project to be revisited without the development restrictions of previous design concepts and the Performing Arts Centre Task Force was formed to develop a plan for the development of a new performing arts centre.

6. Five Points Theatre

The City of Barrie invested in building a small theatre at the City's Five Points that opened its doors in 2011. The Five Points Theatre was designed to support a variety of entertainment and is now home to an impressive compliment of performance groups. It has allowed Barrie to scale up its artistic and cultural performance capacity in the downtown core, but it does have some limitations, particularly size with a maximum seating capacity of 200 people.

PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE TASK FORCE

7. Council Direction

On April 22, 2021, Council directed the creation of a Performing Arts Centre Task Force. The key mandate of the task force was to develop a plan to construct a modern performing arts facility in the city's core to replace the Georgian Theater and Fisher Auditorium. Councillor J. Harris was identified as Chair of this Task Force.

8. Task Force Membership

A Performing Arts Centre Task Force was organized comprised of members representing a variety of stakeholders in the arts and culture sector and includes representation from industry members, sector champions and influencers. Other organizations/stakeholders could be brought in on an ad-hoc basis as advisory stakeholder partners. In addition to Councillor J. Harris, Councillor Thomson and Councillor Riepma, the following list of people graciously agreed to volunteer their time and expertise to be regular members of the PAC Task Force.

- Councillor Jim Harris (Chair)
- Councillor Robert Thomson
- Councillor Clare Riepma
- Angela Baldwin
- Scott Boyer
- Chris Ferando
- Marshall Green
- Tania Gregoire
- Greg Groen
- Wayne Hay
- Graham Knight
- Josephine Martensson-Hemsted
- Barry Peacock
- Chuck Ruttan
- Julie Underhill

9. Task Force Mission/Purpose

The mission/purpose of the PAC Task Force was to serve as a working group to advance the planning required to construct a modern performing art facility in the city's downtown core to replace the Georgian Theater and Fisher Auditorium. The outcome of the Task Force's work was to be the development of a complete project plan, including appropriate key milestones, necessary to execute the project including validation of the site location and key needs for the centre necessary to inform its design; establish a budget and overall fundraising target. It was anticipated that the mission/purpose would be fulfilled by the end of 2021 and that members would remain on the Task Force until the report was delivered to Council.

10. Working Groups

To streamline the planning work, three Working Groups were created. Working Groups reported regularly back to the larger PAC Task Force on their progress.

Working Group 1: Main User Groups/Programming/Technical requirements/Scope development.

The purpose of Working Group 1 was to develop a scope of work for an architect based on the input of all user groups and the needs of a growing city.

Planned Tasks included:

1. Collecting information - obtaining a list of user group needs and desires and prioritize options identifying those that are critical versus nice to have. Determining user group size and space requirements, financial capabilities, and reviewing previous designs for limitations and information from other municipal theatres for best practices.
2. Analyzing information – assembling and reviewing information received and identify any gaps and any other opportunities, including public and secondary user information from Group 2.
3. Conclusions and recommendations – develop a detailed list of building requirements to review with user groups and amend as necessary to develop final building scope.

Working Group 2: Community Engagement/Communications/Marketing.

The purpose of Working Group 2 was to garner community feedback and develop marketing and communications messaging to help obtain community support for the Performing Arts Centre. This was to include a public input presence on the city website and by phone as per Council direction.

Planned Tasks included:

1. Information collection - identifying who had been previously engaged and identifying others that needed to be engaged. Determining what questions to ask to determine community needs and arranging surveys and focus groups to collect information. This included secondary users and general public/audiences.
2. Developing messaging – develop messaging that will engage the community and become the basis for future fundraising efforts.
3. Collaborate with Working Group 1 – work with Group 1 to ensure public and secondary user group feedback is incorporated into design scope development, and work with Group 3 to develop messaging for fundraising campaign.

Working Group 3: Fundraising

Planned Tasks included:

1. Grants/Funding Proposals - filtering and prioritizing available grant/funding opportunities as identified by staff and developing an advocacy plan for government support.
2. Naming/sponsorship opportunities – developing a list of potential naming/sponsorship opportunities associated with the Performing Arts Centre, including what could be salvaged from the existing Fisher Theatre to honour the W.A. Fisher legacy.
3. Fundraising consultant – determining the need for a fundraising consultant to provide expertise/consultancy before initiating a capital campaign and support staff in scope development.
4. Capital Campaign support - identifying potential capital campaign fundraising champion(s) and identify potential capital campaign corporate/personal giving donors.

It was quickly determined that the Fundraising Group required a completed scope of work for the project before it would be possible to commence many of their tasks, therefore, Working Group 2 (Community Engagement) and Working Group 3 (Fundraising) were combined for the remainder of the work to date.

11. Task Force Completed Tasks

Councillor Riepma led Working Group 1 through an exercise to develop a preliminary list of requirements for a performing art centre. Extensive consultation with the Performing Art Centre Task Force members who represent major user groups within the city took place to develop a thorough list of requirements.

During the month of September site visits to four theatres/performing art centres that the Task Force felt were in similar sized communities, may be similar size to what would be needed in Barrie, or were considered well designed/functional. These visits helped to solidify and refine the list of requirements.

1. Burlington Centre for Performing Arts
2. Richmond Hill Centre for Performing Arts
3. The Rose Theatre Brampton
4. First Ontario Performing Arts Centre St. Catharines

The list of requirements was then presented to the larger Performing Arts Centre Task Force for feedback and a list of final recommendations were developed.

Working Group 2/3, with the support of the City's Communications Department, developed a web page for the project, as well as a community engagement survey.

TASK FORCE FINDINGS

The work presented in the findings and recommendations sections is a summary of the work completed by the Performing Arts Centre Task Force related to their mission. City staff have participated as a resource to the Performing Arts Centre Task Force and provided extensive information on work completed prior to the formation of the Task Force, however, their participation does not imply staff endorsement of the new recommendations.

12. Participation in the Arts (Data collected from survey of 18 Barrie Arts Organizations)

- *Information Barrie* data lists approximately 100 arts groups in the city
- Engagement is multi-generational
- Strong educational programming throughout
- Volunteers in behind-the-scenes roles (ushers, production teams, sewing, construction, etc.)

Community Volunteerism in the Arts

- Over 50 organizations and public/private events
- Represents 1000s of volunteer hours a year

13. Audience Numbers

- Barrie Arts Alliance (BAA) plus other community groups already have combined audiences of over 55,000 annually
- The Barrie Film Festival's 2019 season alone saw over 16,000 in audiences
- Demographics – number of people 50 & over will double in Barrie in the next 25 years. Audience members – currently large percentage are over 55 (this is their pastime, hobby)
- Arts programming provides both recreation and engagement for families to experience together

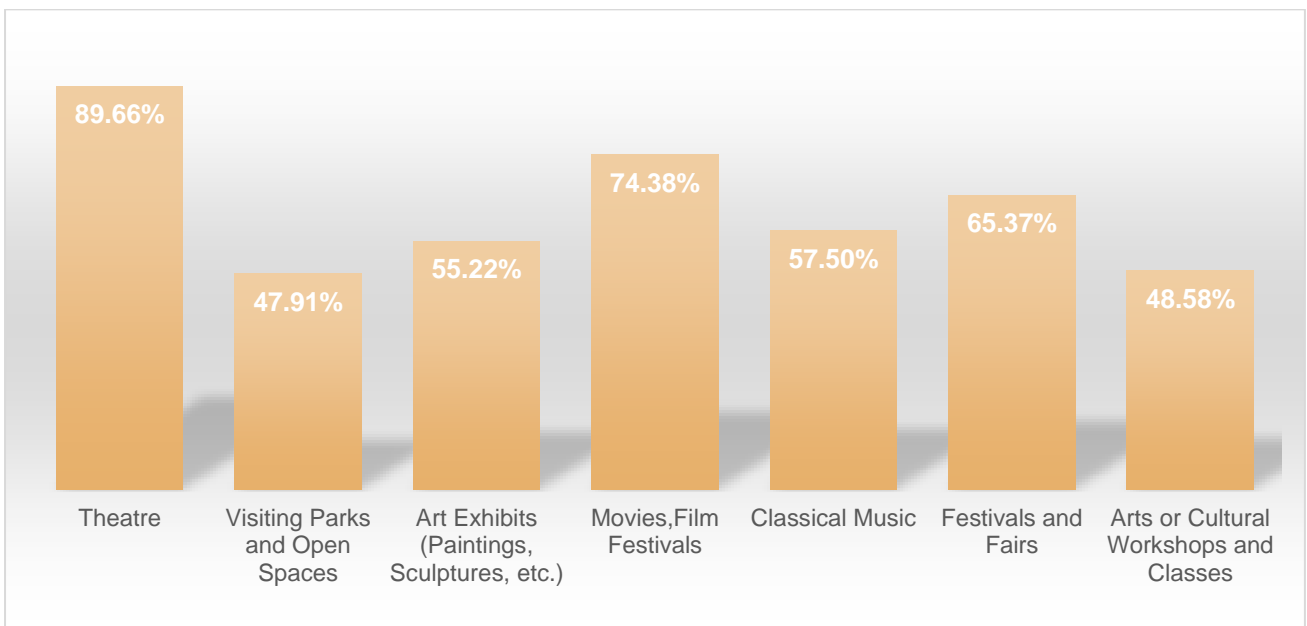
14. Repatriation of Residents' Spend (reference: Task Force Community Survey)

- Barrie's residents go elsewhere for over 40% of their performance events
Where:
 - a. #1 GTA
 - b. #2 OrilliaWhy:
 - a. #1 Quality of Arts and Culture Facilities
 - b. #2 Unaware of Events
 - c. #3 Content
- If audiences spend \$65+ per ticket and \$62+ on food, retail, other expenditures this is equivalent to \$5M leaving Barrie annually
- Repatriating 50% of this would equal a return to Barrie of \$2.5M

15. Community Survey Results

Over 1000 respondents to the Proposed Performing Arts Centre Survey with overwhelming support demonstrated by the comments. 337 respondents included follow up contact information and 137 respondents expressed interest in supporting future fundraising.

People interested in participating or attending as an audience member (Task Force Community Survey, 2021)



16. Key Points

1

PAC is a significant economic lever for Barrie and Simcoe County. Repatriation of audience spend is worth ensuring.

2

Economic benefit will grow over the life of the PAC, driven by demographics and increasing variety of usage.

3

The PAC has a strong community audience as a starting base, driving usage, attendance and downtown patronage.

4

Secondary catchment area will further add to economic impact.

17. Theatre Comparison

The chart below represents building cost comparatives from the theatres visited by the Performing Arts Centre Task Force, at the time of their construction.

	St. Catharines	Burlington	Brampton	Richmond Hill	Barrie (HPA)
Cost*	\$60m in 2013	\$36.2m in 2009**	\$55m in 2006	\$30m in 2007	\$53.1m in 2020
Sq. Ft.	95,000	62,000	64,000	43,000	66,500
\$/Sq . Ft 2021	800	832	1280	1,002	798
Cost 2021	\$76m	\$52m	\$82m	\$43m	\$53.1m

* Total project cost, based on available public records

** Includes prior years funding

Note: the HPA cost estimate of \$53 million is based on previous design concepts that included a conference centre and does not include the new recommendations from the Task Force, recent market/COVID increases and premiums. It is important to note that due to these escalations the actual cost to construct any of these facilities noted above would be considerably higher today.

The Performing Arts Centre Task Force also completed a comparison of the key attributes of the theatres visited.

	St. Catharines	Burlington	Brampton	Richmond Hill	Barrie PAC Task Force (WG1 Recommended)
Population at Construction	132,000	175,000	400,000	170,000	150,000 +
Cost	\$60m in 2013	\$36.2m in 2009	\$55m in 2006	\$30m in 2009	
Main performance hall	770 seats (166 in Balcony)	718 seats (466 in orchestra)	868 seats	631 seats (422 in orchestra)	800 to 900 seats (600 in orchestra)
Second theatre	304 seats	150 seats, 138 seats (Separate Sites)	400 seats (Separate Site)		350 seats Sprung floor
Third theatre	199 seats	(2 additional Separate Sites)	180 seats (Separate Site)		110 - 200 Seats (5-Points Theatre)
Multi-purpose room (all flexible seating)	105 – 300+ seats 80 ft x 58 ft (4,640 sq. ft.) Sprung Floor	174 seats plus 40 in mezzanine 58 ft x 41 ft (2400 sq. ft) Sprung floor	120 seats 50 ft x 35 ft (1750 sq. ft.)	271 seats (1,700 sq ft)	50 ft x 100 ft (5,000 sq. ft.) Sprung floor
Second room / (Marshalling area)	28 ft x 30 ft	28 ft x 64 ft Sprung floor	Cross-over/marshalling hall		required

On site parking	0	340	860	240	Approx. 200 onsite and adjacent lot
Parking 5 Minutes	1000	many	240	many	500+
Orchestra pit	none	yes Hydraulic	yes Hydraulic	Yes Hydraulic	Yes Hydraulic
Fly tower	none	52 bars	48 bars 80 ft high Motorized	58 bars (becoming motorized)	50 bars Motorized
Total area	95,000 Sq. Ft.	62,000 Sq. Ft.	64,000 sq. ft.	43,000 sq. ft.	est. 66,500 sq. ft.
Stage	82 ft x 64 ft (includes 2 x 15 ft wings) Sprung floor	80 ft wide x 40 ft. deep Sprung floor	97 ft x 59 ft Sprung floor	80 ft. x 40 ft.	100 ft x 50 ft (includes 2 x 15 ft. wings) Sprung floor
	7 people 14 ft x 20 ft.	yes	10 people	15 people 18 ft x 20 ft.	Required
	2 for star/VIP performers 4 for 6 people each	2 for 16 people 4 for 6 people	2 for star/VIP performers 4 for 8 people each 2 for 20 people each	2 for 6 people 2 for 20 people 1 for 25 people	3 for star/VIP performers Rooms for 3 to 8 people 2 for 20 people each

Note: the third theatre referenced in the Barrie PAC Task Force Recommended is referring to the already existing Five Points Theatre.

TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the work of the Performing Arts Centre Task force the following are the recommendation for theatre amenities and next steps.

18. Main Theatre

Main theatre of 800 to 900 seats with 60 to 70% of seats at the orchestra level.

- The BAA supports the recommendation
- Improves financial stability
- Closing the balcony accommodates a 600-seat audience

Main Theatre Requirements

- Great patron experience, comfortable seating, excellent sight lines and acoustics, sufficient washrooms, bars, etc
- Stage 50 x 100 feet (includes wings)
- 50 bar fly gallery motorized
- Hydraulic orchestra pit
- Sprung floor stage
- Sufficient storage for instruments, equipment and supplies

Rationale

- 2019 community consultation recommended 850-900 seats
- Partially replace the current 680 + 980 = 1,660 seats available at Georgian and Fisher
- City expected to double in population and performing arts needs in next 30 years
- Technical requirement list meets the needs of a variety of community organizations & will entice commercial renters

19. Secondary Performance Space

Second performance space 350 seats

- Provides the intermediate space needed by many smaller performing groups as they grow and mature
- Provides an appropriate audience experience of smaller productions
- Fills the gap in the performing arts continuum between Five points and the 600-seat main theatre orchestra level.

Multi-purpose space

- Approximately the same size as the stage
- Acoustically suitable for rehearsals and performances

Other

- Suitable marshalling, green room and dressing rooms
- Sufficient storage, office space and volunteer accommodation
- Inviting lobby that could be used for other purposes
- Outdoor gathering / performing space

Rationale

- Fills the needs and number of booking requests identified in data collection as anticipated by the BAA
- Good use of equipment and amenities in one location
- Increase community engagement and participation
- Fulfils a "downtown" home for the Barrie Film Festival (BFF) (bringing the community into the facility)

Sampling of 18 user groups generated the following data for a single year as collected by the BAA:

- 158 requests for Main Space, 146 for Second Space, 155 for multi-purpose space
- 195 days of bookings, with 129 days of 2 or more requests
- Potential audience counts estimated over 45,000

20. Additional Task Force Recommendations

The Five Points Theatre

Support Cobalt and Novita recommendations for design and fitment be reviewed to improve its performance capability.

Rationale

Facility serves a need for current resident performing groups and can be an incubator performance space.

Fundraising

Recommend retaining professional assistance in fund raising effort.

Rationale

Need building design to proceed with fundraising.

Design

Procure an architect experienced in design of professional performing arts spaces, with access to an acoustic engineer.

Rationale

Assure success in meeting presentation needs and audience overall experience

Funding

Begin application process for Capital Infrastructure Grants from Provincial and Federal sources.

Rationale

Need building design to proceed with grant applications (30/30/30 – funding model)

NEXT STEPS

21. Validate the Recommendations & Finalize Scope

There is a delta that exists between the original scope for this project and what the Performing Arts Centre Task Force is recommending. Investigations prior to the formation of the Performing Arts Centre Task Force have been based on a smaller 650 seat theatre as per previous recommendations and limitations in size/configuration impacting the site, and no second theatre space. An analysis of a larger 800-900 seat performance space and suggested second 350 seat performance space as per the Task Force's recommendations, will need to be undertaken to understand the impact to operational models, revenues and expenditures, fundraising and design, and ultimately overall project feasibility as previous validation was based on a smaller scoped project.

The validation of the additional needs identified by the Task Force will require the assistance of a third-party expert to inform a scope to complete new concept drawings. Based on 2022 and 2023 capital approvals existing funding should be adequate to complete this work.

It is recommended that staff in Corporate Facilities, Economic and Creative Development, and Recreation and Culture Departments complete a review of the recommendations of the Performing Arts Task Force through the contracted services of a professional firm with expertise in municipal theatre projects. Staff can then report back with the timelines, resource requests and project scope in accordance with proceeding with a concept plan for a Performing Arts Centre.

22. Concept Plan and Class D' Cost Estimates

It is anticipated that the required budget for this project will be significantly larger than the previously estimated budget. Even if the project scope is not increased to include a larger seating capacity or second theatre it is still anticipated that the budget will need to be larger than previously estimated due to increased construction costs. A full Class 'D' cost estimate will need to be completed to provide a valid estimate.

It is recommended that following the validation of the project scope, staff in Corporate Facilities, and Economic and Creative Development, and Recreation and Culture Departments contract the services of an architectural firm to complete a concept plan and Class 'D' cost estimate for a performing arts centre based on the validated recommendations of the Performing Arts Centre Task force.

Staff in Corporate Facilities, Economic and Creative Development, and Recreation and Culture Departments could then report back to General Committee with the concept design plans, associated budget and implementation plan that addresses:

- a) Timeline for construction with capital budget implications
- b) Recommendations for a fundraising program, and associated resourcing and timeline
- c) Preliminary operating plan that identifies resource requirements and annual operating budget costing

23. Funding/Fundraising

Fundraising

In 2020, the City engaged Interkom Inc. to conduct a Capital Project Fundraising Capacity Study. This assessment was a cursory review of key City of Barrie assets, the proposed project at the time, and current fundraising activities and market to assist the City in preliminary assessment of its fundraising capacity. The following information was provided by Interkom.

Given that the City achieved naming rights for the Five Points Theatre, Meridian Place (through the Downtown BIA), the Sadlon Arena and most recently the Holly/Peggy Hill centre, plus the initial list of prospects identified, Interkom recommended undertaking a full Fundraising Feasibility Study to mitigate any doubts and establish whether there is suitable support for a capital campaign that could raise upwards of 10% of the projected project costs, to assist and offset the investment required by the municipality.

A Fundraising Feasibility Study is designed to help assess the fundraising capacity in the community and evaluate Capital Campaign readiness. A full feasibility study cannot be completed until the scope of the project is confirmed to be able to define the set of assets for which to conduct the Study.

Municipal Fundraising Campaign

Depending on the availability of various funding mechanisms, typically a three-way public funding model could be pursued by the City, as has been undertaken by some municipalities that completed similar investments in Ontario. According to Interkom, with three levels of government participating in project funding (30/30/30), approx. 10% will have to be raised from the community.

Provincial and Federal programs could be considered but cannot be pursued until there is an approved plan as that information is required to complete applications. Preliminary discussions with members of parliament could take place in the meantime to garner some preemptive support for the project.

Fundraising Timelines & the Cost to Fundraising

Fundraising Campaign Planning takes 3-6 months, and the implementation approximately 3 years. This timing can run parallel to the construction schedule and even run after opening until fundraising goals are met.

The Cost to Fundraise

There is a cost to fundraising with Capital Campaign implementation often costing 8-10% of the gross fundraising goal* plus fundraising expenses. The fundraising cost should normally be included in the overall project cost. The City will need to hire an experienced Fundraising Consultant to conduct the Capital Campaign.

24. COVID-19 and New Technology or Space Requirements

COVID-19 has devastated the arts in terms of the ability to deliver live performances to full in person audiences at times during the pandemic. Although there will be a time when full live audiences will be considered safe and we anticipate a full recovery to in person events, there may still be the need for technologies to allow for online and hybrid performance options. The pandemic has changed the way that performances *can* take place and this needs to be

incorporated into any new facility. A review of technology best practices and new options will need to take place before finalizing the requirements for a new performing arts centre. Any added space requirements for these types of performances will also need to be considered.