

# Executive Summary

This Regional Arts Strategic Plan has been prepared to provide the Capital Regional District with a policy and action framework for the arts function adopted in 2001. It is the first time in this region that a Plan has been prepared that is:

- Regional in scope.
- Focused on all aspects of the arts.
- Strategic in approach, looking at the long term future of the arts.

The Regional Arts Strategic Plan is comprised of:

- Part 1 - which focuses on organization and policy frameworks for the arts, except facilities,
- Part 2 - which focuses in more detail on facility planning issues, and,
- Part 3 - which is an implementation strategy for the Plan

The arts are a wellspring of creativity and innovation. They foster economic development, as well as community development and identity. They provide leisure and recreation opportunities.

It is important to recognize that the arts are an ecology: they range from the beginner and/or hobbyist to the established professional; the student to teacher to emeritus; small local facilities to larger regional ones.

## The Vision

*A HEALTHY ARTS COMMUNITY PLAYS A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN MAKING THE REGION A VIBRANT AND CREATIVE PLACE TO LIVE, WORK AND PLAY.*

THE CAPITAL REGIONAL DISTRICT WILL PLAY A PART IN RECOGNIZING THE ROLE OF THE ARTS, MAINTAINING THE HEALTH OF THE ARTS, AND RECOGNIZING THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ARTS

The key messages that should form the communication strategy as this Plan moves forward are:

- The arts have an important role to play in the community, and are a vital part of the lives of everyone wherever they live in the region.
- While the arts in the region are healthy, efforts must be made to keep them healthy; visual, performing, literary, at the community level and at the highest levels of professional performance. The region has the potential to grow the arts beyond their present level, given commitment, leadership and resources.
- The arts contribute to the economy, they create a vibrant community, and they create a sense of who we are. The arts are recognized as a key to the future prosperity of the region.

The roles the Capital Regional District should play are:

- Speaking for the region - advocating for the greater benefits that can only be achieved if action is coordinated at the regional level.
- Providing a policy framework for the region.
- Delivering those arts services that can best be provided at the regional scale.
- Supporting and resourcing the region's arts organizations - through the provision of capital, operating and project funding, and through the development and maintenance of facilities.

The Capital Regional District should foster local government involvement in the arts, and advocate for a more consistent policy and funding framework across the region. It must ensure that arts organizations, whether not-for-profit or commercial, are empowered and encouraged to grow both artistically and in size.

The goals of the Plan are:

- Develop the Framework - adopt the vision, develop a communication strategy, find 'champions' and move forward.
- Audience Development - assist arts organizations to know and develop their markets and participants.

- Build Partnerships - both between arts organizations, with other public sector agencies, and with the not-for-profit and private sectors.
- Build Capacity - strengthen the Community Arts Councils and improve service delivery through the Capital Regional District website and other services.
- Manage the Human Resource Component - work with colleges and the University of Victoria and with other agencies such as Human Resource Development Canada and Volunteer Victoria to ensure that professional and volunteer resources are available for arts organizations.
- Ensure funding is available to arts organizations - continue the planned increases in Core Operating Grants, ensure that the total available for Project Grants is equal to 10% of the Operating Grants fund, work with local governments to fund Community Arts Councils, and seek additional funding sources.
- Increase the visibility of the arts in the community - promote public art programs and policies, and ensure that the arts are considered in all planning and public policy development.
- Increase the contribution of the arts to economic development - develop arts

tourism, arts education and training, arts exports, new media and other digital technologies, and creative services.

- Maintain the present system of governance with arts as a shared responsibility of municipalities and the regional district - ensure the Arts Development Office is adequately staffed to perform the functions laid out in the Regional Arts Strategic Plan, strengthen the Arts Advisory Council, and form one Capital Regional District committee to oversee the arts, with responsibilities for Arts Policy and Arts Facilities, including the Royal McPherson Theatre Society.

The present governance structure should be evaluated in 2007 to determine whether it has met the goals laid out in the Plan.

### Arts Facilities Planning

Part 2 of the Regional Arts Strategic Plan focuses on Arts Facility Planning in the Region, which has been characterized over the last ten years by:

- Many studies, mostly concerning the future of the Royal Theatre.
- Many successes, such as the construction of ArtSpring on Saltspring Island, the Mary Winspear Centre at Sanscha, new dance studios in

several recreation centres, the relocation of the Victoria Conservatory of Music, the renovation of the Belfry and most of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria's galleries, and the addition of several school theatres.

- Some failures, such as the loss of several small downtown theatres, such as Kaleidoscope and Planet Theatre.
- Many potential projects, from the promotion of a new Harbour Centre for the Performing Arts, a relocation and expansion for Open Space Gallery, a new downtown gallery for the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.....and many more, all with varying degrees of merit and potential for long term success.

The report identifies several major issues that impact the planning for arts facilities:

- The lack of a consistent process for facility planning and funding.
- The likely impact of the new Multiplex, which will include a stage with seating for 3,000 people.
- The need for a major performing arts venue.
- The future of the McPherson Playhouse, and concerns regarding its role, affordability, and suitability for community and professional theatre.
- The need for an expansion of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria.

- The need to make better use of existing facilities, some of which are suffering from provincial fiscal restraint, and a general shortage of funds for facility upgrading.
- The need for both indoor and outdoor spaces for summer festivals, so their contribution to community life and to tourism, can be maximized.
- The potential for partnering with the University as it plans for facility upgrading and new construction
- The need to focus on 'means' as well as 'ends' - to develop strategies such as partnering and 'amenity bonusing' to get projects built.
- The need to ensure that arts facilities support economic growth, especially tourism.
- Developing a process for identifying and evaluating facility needs, so that funds from the Regional Capital Fund can be allocated through a clear and open process, and arts groups have a firm basis on which to plan.
- Starting the planning for a major performing arts centre, by building on work undertaken over the last two years, establishing a organization that will steward the project, evaluating the potential for the centre to be developed as a public-private partnership, and finding the most appropriate site in the region.
- Working with the Board of the Art Gallery of Greater Victoria to complete the planning and financing of a new downtown gallery
- Identifying a new role for the McPherson Theatre that assists community groups, while starting the planning for the regeneration of the McPherson as a facility for professional theatre.

Strategic initiatives are proposed for:

- Developing a process for capital funding, especially a Regional Capital Fund available on a consistent, annual basis. This will allow arts projects to leverage provincial and federal funds.
- The development of arts tourism visions for the downtown and for the region.