

CATEGORY

SOCIAL PLANNING

PROJECT

City of Saskatoon Culture Plan

Canadian Institute of Planners
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DIALOG™

SUMMARY OF SUBMISSION SASKATOON MUNICIPAL CULTURE PLAN



Saskatoon's first municipal culture plan was adopted by Saskatoon City Council in September 2011. The purpose of the Culture Plan is to establish a shared vision for culture in Saskatoon and to provide a set of guiding principles, strategic directions, objectives and specific actions for implementation over the next five to ten years to ensure Saskatoon reaches its greatest potential as a culturally vibrant and creative city.

The Plan is significant in that it emphasises the value of cultural investment rather than the cost of culture. For Saskatoon, this means considering culture when planning for priorities ranging from urban design, youth engagement, recreation programming, economic development and neighbourhood and downtown revitalization projects. At an essential and strategic level, what the process embraced for the development of this

culture plan - which included both a community advisory committee and an internal, technical steering committee, was about no less than integrating culture as a key lens for considering economic development, sustainability, social inclusion and key cultural policy.

As adopted by City Council, the Plan lays out a 5-10 year vision for culture in Saskatoon and is built around six strategic directions:

1. Arts sector support
2. Heritage
3. Youth
4. Diversity
5. Neighbourhoods
6. City Centre

Rooted in a vision for culture that was generated through an extensive public forum, the Plan articulates the role that the City of Saskatoon will play in culture in the future, specifically as an enabler, convenor, broker and facilitator. In summary, the Culture Plan is about:

- Supporting economy including the creative sector;
- Attracting and retaining youth;
- Ensuring that we have a thriving and lively downtown;
- Our neighbourhoods maintaining their character and unique identity;
- Residents of all ages and income levels having access to arts and cultural opportunities; and
- Positioning the arts as a way to build bridges between cultures.

A key objective of the municipal cultural planning process was to ensure the integration of culture into the fabric of urban life, by making connections between every day municipal decision making and actions that serve to promote, elevate and accentuate the culture of the city. Doing so was about building upon the unique identity of the City of Saskatoon as a key place-making asset that the culture plan could serve to facilitate across a variety of disciplines.

The Saskatoon Culture Plan represents one of eight themes that were addressed in a broader

Community Visioning Initiative. From the Fall of 2010 to the Spring of 2011, Saskatoon residents were engaged to talk about what matters to them, what they liked and valued about Saskatoon, what they wanted to improve, and what they aspired to achieve as Saskatoon grows. The resulting Community Vision feeds into the City's Strategic Plan and guides the City's policy and decision making as we continue to grow and develop. Strategic Plan 2012-2022 is a roadmap that prepares the City and community for the challenges ahead for this growing city.

Culture is well placed within the Strategic Plan, being referenced in the Vision, Mission and Strategic Goals. Specifically:

Strategic Goal - Quality of Life states that “our neighbourhoods are complete communities that offer a range of housing options, employment opportunities, art, culture and recreational facilities and other amenities”. It also goes on to state that “culture thrives in Saskatoon where diverse traditions, religions and languages are respected and celebrated”. Implementing the Municipal Culture Plan is identified as one of the strategies to achieve this goal.

Strategic Goal - Sustainable Growth states that “our city centre is a vibrant hub for culture, commerce and civic life”, with an identified strategy of “establishing the city Centre as a cultural and entertainment district ...”

INNOVATION & CONTRIBUTION TO THE PROFESSION

Municipal culture planning has been defined as:

a municipally-led process for identifying and leveraging a community's cultural resources and integrating culture across all facets of municipal planning and decision making.

As such, it is emerging as an exciting and important tool for building capacity around the relationships between place, culture, sustainability and economy.

Whereas land use planners sometimes struggle to find a framework for placemaking that is broad enough to encompass all of the many pressures that have an impact on successful city building, the City of Saskatoon – in the context of its new Culture Plan – has embraced a framework for strategic planning within the municipality that links together various disciplines in a value-based framework that places the aspirations of the community at its center.

In doing so, it becomes possible to conjoin decision-making in real estate with engineering; in corporate services with social services – across

all sectors. By clarifying what is valued by the culture of the city, policy frameworks across departments have been aligned in unique and interesting ways, ensuring that the traditional silos of municipal bureaucracy are confronted anew. This approach to municipal decision-making has led to a heightened awareness of the impacts of culture on all aspects of quality of life.

These ideas are highly transferable to other context. In many ways, Culture Planning provides a framework for re-envisioning how municipal departments align their priorities to ensure shared objectives are transferable from one department to another.





Workshops in progress

1 Implementation Measures & Timing

Direction: YOUTH

Measures

- diversity of applicants - continuous financial support
- pilot program being launched in Saskatoon
- program costs - follow up w/ participants
- # applicants/adequate uptake of program
- # employed as result
- # available spaces within centre
- # successful incubated entrepreneurs
- # of requested spaces
- volume of interest/demand
- creative partnerships
- # youth displays
- # audience attraction
- enrollment level as result of
- school presentation
- # jobs related to youth

Voting Results

Social Media Buzz

MOVING FORWARD: Implementing Saskatchewan's Cultural Strategy
Wednesday, November 2, 2011 | Workshop 1

METHOD

The Saskatoon Plan was developed collaboratively by City staff, community arts and cultural stakeholders, and Saskatoon residents. Key to the Plan's success was the hiring of a consulting team led by Jennifer Keesmaat of the firm DIALOG (formerly Office for Urbanism), in partnership with cultural planning experts Greg Baeker of Authenticity, and Marian Donnelly of Inner Circle Management. Their work was divided into 3 phases and took place over a period of 23 months between October 2009 and September 2011:

Phase 1: Audit and analysis of existing policy approaches and cultural activities in Saskatoon.

Phase 2: Creation of a "Directions Document" that outlined suggestions for stimulating and supporting cultural initiatives.

Phase 3: Completion of the Culture Plan with detailed short-term and long-term recommendations.

Acquiring a first-hand account of the cultural landscape in Saskatoon was an important early step in the consultation process. On November 10 and 12, 2009, stakeholders from various arts disciplines and cultural perspectives were invited to meet with the consultants and Community Development Branch staff (Project Team) in the

Mendel Art Gallery Auditorium. Attendees included representatives of dance, theatre, visual arts, literary arts, music, heritage, Aboriginal, museums and galleries, as well as educational institutions, and tourism and business organizations. The interviews provided an opportunity for the consultants to undertake preliminary research on the opportunities and constraints associated with development of arts and culture in Saskatoon. On November 11, 2009, the Project Team took a day-long tour of cultural spaces, places, and facilities across Saskatoon.

In the period following these initial consultations, and as part of the audit and analysis phase, the Project Team identified nine "Drivers for Change" (Drivers) that influence culture in Saskatoon. These Drivers were tested at meetings on February 3, 2010, with the Steering Committee, the Advisory Committee, the Municipal Heritage Advisory Committee, and the Visual Arts Placement Jury. The Drivers were a key aspect of the culture planning work in that they helped the Project Team understand the internal and external forces that influence arts and culture in Saskatoon.

METHOD (cont'd)

The Drivers, outlined in more detail in the Culture Plan, were as follows:

1. Sustaining Partnerships;
2. Pursuing Policy Alignment;
3. Shifting Demographics;
4. Cultivating Connections with the University of Saskatchewan;
5. Capturing Tourism Potential;
6. Culture in Neighbourhood Planning;
7. Building on “Creative Hubs”;
8. Celebrating Many Cultures; and,
9. An Emerging and Strong Economy.

The nine Drivers kick-started Phase 2 of the project with a Cultural Stakeholders Planning Forum (Forum) held at TCU Place the evening of March 4 and all day March 5, 2010. The evening session was attended by 125 people, while the full-day workshop attracted 105. The Forum was an important step in the development of the Plan in that it provided stakeholders with an occasion to reflect on what culture means to our community and to discuss the possibilities that exist to advance cultural endeavours in Saskatoon. Further, through interactive panel sessions and

facilitated group work, participating stakeholders had the opportunity to help identify an early vision for culture by identifying values and then supporting principles.

Using the ideas and input gathered at the Forum, the consultants proposed six strategic directions for the Plan. These directions were discussed, tested, and refined through a series of workshops held in April 2010 with the Steering Committee, the Advisory Committee, and a selection of City staff from various departments.

Phase 2 also provided the Administration with an opportunity to align the development of the Plan with the *Saskatoon Speaks, Shape Our Future* community visioning initiative. The Saskatoon Speaks City Summit provided a unique opportunity to link culture into the broader discussion of community values and aspirations for the city as it grows to a population of 500,000 over the next 50 years. References to culture were found and discussed in many of the focused themes at the Visioning Summit: Economy, Shaping Growth, Social Well Being, Environment, City Centre, Moving Around, and Recreation and Culture.

With the input from the fall 2010 Saskatoon Speaks sessions, the Project Team was able to refine all of the input, gathered to that point, into

CLARITY OF GOALS

a draft framework for the Plan. This framework, which included a draft vision, guiding principles, and strategic directions, was presented to City Council in November 2010.

Phase 3 of the project kicked off with over 200 residents attending an Open House on December 2, 2010, as part of the Saskatoon Speaks Open House and Focused Visioning Workshops series, where interactive panel displays were used. The public had an opportunity to review, discuss, and comment on the draft directions and strategies being proposed for the Plan. Following review of the comments and suggestions received from the December Open House, a revised vision for culture in Saskatoon, along with suggested action items, was made available for public review and comment at the Saskatoon Speaks “What You Said Forum,” held March 16, 2011.

After further refinement, the Plan was adopted by City Council and presented on September 12, 2011, and funding was identified to proceed with an Implementation Workshop to initiate the first actions identified in the Plan.

CLARITY OF GOALS & OBJECTIVES

This can be assessed through a review of the document, wherein the goals are clearly stated and strategies are subsequently outlined to respond to these goals and objectives.

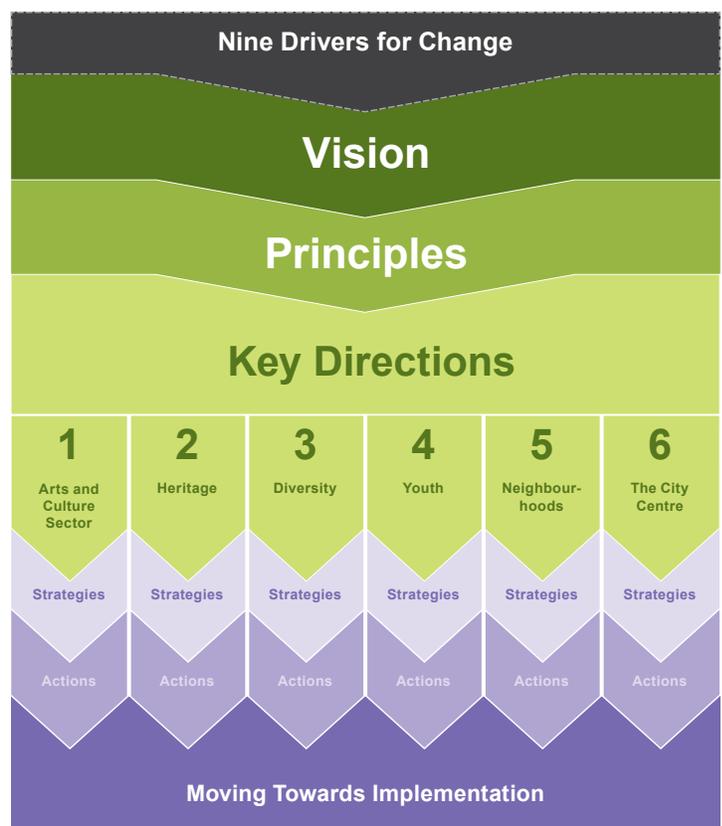


Figure 2. Framework of the Culture Plan

IMPLEMENTATION

IMPLEMENTATION

The development and subsequent adoption by City Council of the Saskatoon Culture Plan was only a first step. To move beyond this stage and toward implementation it was deemed important to generate positive support both inside the municipality with staff and City council, and across the community. To this end, a Culture Plan Implementation Forum was held on November 2, 2011 to:

- Provide an overview of Saskatoon Culture Plan including six signature actions;
- Discuss the steps to implementation - Where we all fit in: City's role and the community's responsibility; and
- Identify indicators of success - how we measure the Culture Plan's effectiveness.

While not all strategies or actions as identified in the Culture Plan are the sole responsibility of the City, the City does have a role to play as an enabler, convenor, broker and facilitator. This approach reflects the cross-cutting nature of cultural planning and development, as well as its connection to sustainable city-building. In short, ensuring cultural vitality is the responsibility of many players in the community and within the Corporation of the City of Saskatoon, a sentiment that was validated at the Forum. A copy of the "Moving Toward Implementation: Workshop Summary" is included in this application.

From here, the City is planning an annual Community Forum that brings all interested arts and cultural stakeholders together for a Culture Plan "check-in" (or progress report) and to discuss arts and cultural issues of the day. Future Forum themes will be directly linked to the Strategic Directions outlined in the Culture Plan, including promoting cultural diversity, enhancing heritage preservation, attracting and retaining youth, and enabling the creative economy.



OVERALL PRESENTATION & PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

OVERALL PRESENTATION

Copies of the Saskatoon Culture Plan are included in this application.

The intent was to create a document that:

- Could be easily copied and distributed;
- Is broad enough to be compelling to diverse audiences;
- Is short and specific enough to hold the attention of City councillors;
- Contains a clear rationale for positioning culture as an investment as opposed to an expense; and
- Serves as a tool to guide implementation.

The document has been widely distributed by the City of Saskatoon, both electronically and in hard copy. All attendees at the Implementation Forum were given a hard copy, and the plan was used as a tool throughout the workshop. In addition, an Implementation Handbook was prepared as an outcome of the workshop, summarizing key actions and measures. This too has been widely distributed, and has been reprinted several times due to the large interest and demand.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Plan was the result of extensive community engagement. At the outset, two committees were struck to act as review and advisory teams throughout the project. A Steering Committee was established as an “internal reality check” and was comprised of City staff from key departments and branches to provide guidance throughout the planning process. An Advisory Committee of community leaders in Saskatoon’s arts and cultural sector was also struck, serving as the “external reality check” providing sector insight to the Project Team. In addition, the draft Plan was widely circulated and an extensive set of comments were reviewed and collated, dramatically enhancing the specificity of the final Culture Plan.

Over the course of two years, a number of public engagement tools were used to elicit ideas, seek feedback and to test drafts of the Plan. They included a dedicated webpage, newsletters (included as part of this application), stakeholder interviews, workshops and interactive public forums. Using these tools, the project team heard from:

- a wide range of City Departments and Branches,
- not-for-profit arts, heritage and cultural organizations,

SUSTAINABILITY

- individual artists ranging from writers to sculptors to actors,
- business leaders including those from creative industry: digital animators and designers,
- students, faculty and administration from the University of Saskatchewan,
- local school boards,
- community associations, and
- hundreds of residents through the Saskatoon Speaks – City Visioning community conversations.

While it is imperative to stress the value of the public engagement process, given that this is a municipally driven Culture Plan, it was essential to collaborate with a variety of departments internally. As such, internal meetings were held, and comments were received from across the corporation. This also served to ensure broad understanding and buy-in to the Plan.

SUSTAINABILITY

A fundamental driver of this Culture Plan was the need to recognize the integration between social, cultural and economic health as fundamental to both the quality of life offered in the city, and the long-term sustainable future of Saskatoon. Given substantial new growth in the City, the affordability of housing for artists was at stake; given a lack of opportunity for the 25–35 cohort, the retention of talent was at stake; given continual and substantive funding cutbacks, neighbourhood based production and consumption of art and culture was at stake. The Culture Plan, as identified in the nine Drivers for Change, sought to identify all of the key sustainability issues and then develop mitigating strategic actions.