

MEMORANDUM

August 6, 2013

TO: Mayor and Council

cc: Penny Ballem, City Manager
Sadhu Johnston, Deputy City Manager
Janice MacKenzie, City Clerk
Mike Magee, Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office
Kevin Quinlan, Director, Policy and Communication, Mayor's Office
Lynda Graves, Administrative Manager, City Manager's Office
Mairi Welman, Director, Communications
Patrice Impey, General Manager Financial Services Group, CFO
Bill Aujla, General Manager, Facilities Design and Management
Brian Jackson, General Manager Planning and Development Services
Richard Newirth, Managing Director Cultural Services

FROM: Brenda Prosken, General Manager, Community Services

SUBJECT: RTS 10142 - Rize Alliance Cultural Community Amenity Strategy

This memo outlines the strategy for the \$4.5 million Rize Alliance cultural community amenity contribution (CAC) in respect to supporting artist production space in Mount Pleasant.

Mount Pleasant

The Mount Pleasant neighbourhood is an artistic hub with one of the city's highest concentrations of artists and cultural workers, particularly visual artists and graphic designers (Statistics Canada, Census Data 2006). Over fifty cultural non-profits are located in Mount Pleasant and a recent City survey identified a minimum of thirteen artist studio spaces, six commercial performance/rehearsal venues, and seven galleries and media studios.

Many Vancouver neighbourhoods are challenged to accommodate new growth, and Mount Pleasant is facing significant real estate price increases (tripling over the past decade, Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver), increasing rents and older, more affordable, cultural and commercial spaces being sold for redevelopment.

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The impact on cultural organizations has been illustrated by several examples. A fire in 2009 destroyed several artist studios on Broadway near Kingsway and Main and the sites are now being redeveloped. Another example of community's transition is the development of the Great Northern Way Campus. As the campus develops, commercial galleries from more expensive Granville Street are moving to the site while existing artist production facilities such as the Great Northern Way Scene Shop, Vancouver Community Lab, and Vancouver Hackers are being simultaneously displaced. This spring VIVO Media Arts Centre received an eviction notice after 20 years at 1965 Main Street and will have to move by May 2014. Vancouver's oldest artist run centre, the Western Front, is working towards ensuring the building remains a cultural public asset by planning building upgrades with the ultimate goal of purchasing the building from the four founding members.

Background

Vancouver's Culture Plan aims to enhance, promote and support Vancouver's diverse and thriving cultural ecology. One of the key objectives of Vancouver's emerging five year Cultural Strategy is to invest in Vancouver's creative economy by working with community partners to retain, enhance and develop affordable, sustainable cultural spaces. In a city that is anxiously becoming one of the more expensive real estate markets in the world, supporting affordable secure artist production spaces has been a clear civic priority. City initiatives underway include:

- zoning amendments that make it easier to create artist studios in industrial areas;
- four new artist studios to add to the four existing City-owned awarded Artist Studios;
- 10,800 square feet of creative production space at 1265 Howe Street;
- 21,000 square feet of City owned facility at 281 Industrial Avenue, to be leased to Arts Factory for new studio space, shared production space and the Great Northern Way Scene Shop;
- 44,000 - 49,000 square foot cultural amenity space at 162 W 1st avenue in Southeast False Creek to be developed as a 250 seat theatre, four rehearsal halls, costume and prop shops and administrative offices.
- nine new artist residencies in Park Board field houses; and
- training, mentoring and supporting space development and planning.

On April 17, 2012, Council approved a rezoning for 228-246 East Broadway and 180 Kingsway from Commercial District (C-3A) to Mixed Use (CD-1) by Rize Alliance Properties. The proposal was considered in light of the Mount Pleasant Community Plan. A key component of the plan is to support a cultural district north of Broadway at Main Street with the objective to retain existing cultural spaces and add new spaces for the arts.

As part of the rezoning, the applicant offered a community amenity contribution of \$6.25 million in cash. Council allocated \$4.5 million toward a cultural use and asked staff to report back on a strategy for the use of the CAC "in the form of a capital contribution and/or operating endowment in order to bring on line community based artist production space in Mount Pleasant."

Consultation

On March 14, 2013, consultants (HB Lanarc/Golder) along with City staff facilitated a focus group workshop with over twenty-five local artists and representatives from arts organizations, the Mount Pleasant Implementation Committee and the Arts and Culture Policy Council. The workshop provided background materials and explored options and ideas for allocating the CAC to achieve artist production space. The workshop results are available online <http://vancouver.ca/parks-recreation-culture/artist-spaces-in-mount-pleasant.aspx>

Following the workshop, over two hundred individuals responded to an online survey conducted from May 30 to June 12, 2013. One hundred and twenty-one respondents completed the full survey, the results of which have been provided as a pdf with this memo and will be posted online.

96% of the survey respondents live in Vancouver; of these 37% were from Mount Pleasant and another 27% live in adjacent neighbourhoods. Almost all of the respondents are from Vancouver's cultural sector. Most (72%) identified more than one artistic discipline with the majority (56%) of respondents representing visual arts, media arts (40%) and a strong representation from those involved in music, festivals, multi-disciplinary, community arts and literary arts.

The consultation process explored innovative ways to utilise the CAC monies to best support artist production space in Mount Pleasant. Options that were discussed included: the City purchasing and developing a new property; expanding the artist production space at City-owned warehouse at 281 Industrial Avenue (the Arts Factory initiative); and developing a process to support community-led proposals to purchase, secure, enhance and expand artist production space in Mount Pleasant.

The community expressed strong interest in supporting more than one option to ensure a broader community impact balanced by concerns that the potential impact of the funds not be diluted through supporting too many projects.

Focusing on supporting long standing non-profits and artist run centres in owning, enhancing and expanding their artist production space - although not to the exclusion of supporting new and emerging institutions and artists - was identified as the top priority. In addition, given the available funds, support in the community was strong for a non-profit, rather than the City, buying a new property as the non-profit would be able to leverage additional funds.

In respect to expanding the City-owned spaces at 281 Industrial Avenue, where approximately 10,000 additional square feet have become available, the community was supportive but stressed that the lease would need to be a minimum of 20 years long to ensure long term sustainability.

Overall, the following five key concepts emerged from the community consultation in respect to how the funds should be used:

1. Artist production space should be secured for at least twenty years to ensure long-term sustainability (75% of respondents stated this was very important).

2. Ownership of spaces by local non-profit groups and artist run centres should be supported (71% of respondents stated this was very important).
3. Retaining, expanding and enhancing existing space for local long-standing artists and arts organizations should have priority (57% of respondents stated this was very important).
4. Collaboration and partnerships to strengthen proposals, leverage funds and maximize the impact should be encouraged (38% of respondents stated this was very important).
5. Several different initiatives to broaden the community impact should be supported (34% of respondents stated this was very important and 37% stated that it was somewhat important).

Process

Given this feedback, staff will now move forward with a process that seeks to use the funds to provide innovative capital contributions for locally-led proposals to retain and enhance existing space or develop new space for artist production in or serving Mount Pleasant. Guided by the community feedback, this option can include possible approaches ranging from capital contributions or leveraged loans to support purchasing a property that would be run by a non-profit and secured in the public trust as artist production space in perpetuity to enhancing or expanding infrastructure that supports artist production space. This could also include proposals by the Arts Factory or another local non-profit to expand the production space at 281 Industrial Avenue.

As part of a new strategy for supporting cultural spaces, staff will develop a hybrid phased approach that builds on the current CAC and cultural infrastructure processes. The initial phase would allow for quick identification of eligible potential projects that best fit the evaluation criteria. A second phase would support shortlisted projects to develop detailed, robust and sustainable capital infrastructure development proposals.

In consultation with Supply Management, staff will proceed with an open call for expressions of interest from local non-profits arts and cultural organizations interested in major development projects that will secure, enhance, expand and develop artist production facilities. To be eligible projects must be in line with the City's CAC policy objectives, which include:

- operational sustainability,
- located in or serve Mount Pleasant,
- operated by a non-profit(s), and
- secured long term as a public asset.

Selection will be done by a committee comprising staff, experts, peer and community representatives. Several eligible projects would be shortlisted based on the key concepts identified by the community and the following evaluation criteria:

- best meet the need for artist production space;
- demonstrate support/demand from the community that projects intend to serve;
- demonstrate capacity and experience; and

- have realistic plans and sustainable budgets including the ability to leverage required capital

Based on the results of the open call for expressions of interest recommended projects and, if necessary further planning processes, will be brought forward to Council in the fall of 2013 for final approval.

If you have any questions, please contact me or Alix Sales, Cultural Planner, at 604-871-6038. Thank you.

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