



## VMC Sub-committee Report

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**DATE:** Wednesday, December 04, 2019

**WARD(S):** 4

**TITLE: FEASIBILITY STUDY FOR A CULTURAL ARTS CENTRE IN THE VAUGHAN METROPOLITAN CENTRE**

**FROM:**

Tim Simmonds, Interim City Manager

Jason Schmidt-Shoukri, Deputy City Manager, Planning and Growth Management

**ACTION:** DECISION

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**Purpose**

To present the salient findings of the Cultural Arts Centre Feasibility Study, and to provide recommendations on moving this project to the next stage of implementation for a future civic development in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre (VMC).

## **Report Highlights**

- Cultural hubs are amenities that create community, social and economic benefits including city building and placemaking; investment attraction; job creation; tourism attraction; academic and social innovations; and civic pride.
- The Feasibility Study concluded that market demand and community need is evident to support a cultural hub in Vaughan's downtown given the critical mass of high-order transit and highway infrastructure, open spaces, and ongoing population, business and employment growth in the VMC.
- Further, the Study suggested that two paths have typically led to new facility development: a desire for positive economic development impacts, and a commitment to generating specific community benefits.
- Partnership is key to the successful development of this space. Collaboration may engage universities, City agencies, private developers, and area not-for-profits each with unique skills and capacity to drive the development process.
- The Study advises that cultural capital funding comes from every level of government, and there is a trend toward increased private sector contributions. On operating funding, the Study indicates that support comes from a mix of public and private sources, with public subsidy complemented by earned revenue and private sector support.
- In order to continue the momentum, City staff are recommending that the Cultural Arts Centre project moves forward to implementation phases focused on site selection within the VMC Secondary Plan Area, planning and urban design matters, senior government funding, and detailed business planning (i.e., governance, management operations, programming, capital and operating budget).

## **Recommendations**

1. That, the presentation and reports titled, "Feasibility Study for a Cultural Arts Centre in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre" (Attachments 1-3) prepared by the firms Hariri Pontarini Architects, AMS Planning and Research and FDA, be received;
2. That, the VMC Project Team in consultation with Mayor and Members of Council, and industry stakeholders, be authorized to include a site-specific Cultural Arts Centre designation in the forthcoming VMC Secondary Plan Update scope of work to ensure land-use planning, site selection, urban design, cultural and economic planning policy and other matters are determined for a future development;

3. That, \$100,000 be allocated to this project from Capital Project DP-9555-17 VMC - Consultation Services to support the implementation of key findings and decision-making framework from the Cultural Arts Centre Feasibility Study; and
4. That, City staff be authorized to apply for funding programs offered by Senior Government and other private and public organizations, for the purpose of advancing the Cultural Arts Centre project in the VMC, at the appropriate time.

## **Background**

In 2018, the City of Vaughan commissioned the firms of Hariri Pontarini Architects, AMS Planning and Research, and FDA to conduct a Feasibility Study for a Cultural Arts Centre in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre. The study assessed market demand, community need supported by extensive engagement, best-practices, development concepts, management and operating models, and financial analysis.

The Study has its roots in the objectives established under the VMC Secondary Plan. It articulates, in order to reinforce the VMC and the City's identity, the Secondary Plan anticipates one or more major civic facilities, including a landmark cultural facility.

As per Section 7.4.2 of the Secondary Plan, cultural facilities to be considered shall include, but are not limited to: a performing arts centre; a visual art centre / museum; a civic heritage museum; an outdoor amphitheater; sculpture garden and/or a fine arts school. A specific cultural facility site was not pre-determined in the VMC Secondary Plan.

Moreover, the 2018-2022 Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan articulates key objectives related to City Building and Economic Prosperity, Investment and Social Capital. A feasibility study examining potential models for a cultural facility aligns with Council priorities, and forms part of the 2020-2023 Strategic Business Plan for the Economic and Cultural Development department.

This Feasibility Study has concluded, and this staff report provides a series of recommendations to continue the momentum of this project to an implementation phase adopting the decision-making framework proposed by AMS Planning and Research.

## **Previous Reports/Authority**

[VMC Culture and Public Art Framework, Final Report](#)

## **Analysis and Options**

***To continue the momentum related to this creative placemaking and cultural hub development opportunity in the VMC, this report recommends that a coordinated implementation plan be focused on the following decision-making framework:***

The Feasibility Study goals are to:

- **Vision:** Gather people to a creative hub location in the VMC
- **Programming:** Offer a mix of high-quality local and more distant content
- **Partnerships and users:** Select local partners and market-rate users
- **Design:** Appeal to many users with a quality, flexible space/set of spaces
- **Capital funding:** Secure funding through public-private collaboration
- **Operating finances:** Engage public and private subsidy, with earned revenue offsetting program costs
- **Governance:** Not-for-profit (existing or new entity)

***Cultural centre development is grounded in projections of economic growth and community vitality***

This project can stimulate more than \$100 million in economic activity related to one-time construction, and on an annual basis has the potential to inject over \$2.5 million directly in the local and regional economy. Indirect and induced impacts, such as spending in the supply chain, hospitality sector and retail trades represents additional benefits for businesses, jobs and households in the VMC, Citywide, and in the Greater Toronto Area.

The development of a cultural hub in Vaughan supports the community Vision, Key Priorities and Themes outlined in the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan, creating a cultural legacy for Vaughan and serving as a driver for economic growth, city building and creating an active, safe and diverse community.

The City of Vaughan is building a downtown – an intense, dynamic community that will continue to grow as the heart of the City, economically, socially, physically and culturally.

Successful contemporary city centres share basic traits:

- They have great density of buildings and people in the city;
- They contain a range of uses and activities, providing diverse opportunities for living and working;
- They are centres of learning, shopping, recreation and culture;
- They are highly accessible by all modes of urban transportation, including public transit, bicycle, and on-foot; and

- Their public realms are rich and generous; built to a high standard, and comprised of a variety of spaces and institutions, including places for civic gatherings and celebrations.

In this context, the development of the VMC as a creative and cultural hub is reflected in policies, master plans, strategic and business plans, including: the VMC Secondary Plan; VMC Culture and Public Art Framework; the Economic Development and Employment Sectors Study, and at the macro level, the Term of Council Service Excellence Strategic Plan 2018-2022.

Arts and cultural institutions contribute to an enriched and diverse community; and serve as a driver of economic growth attracting talent, business investment and social capital to the City's downtown and the broader region. At once, a magnet for creativity, social and cultural innovations, these institutions also need to be supported with the appropriate level of leadership, vision and sustained investment from the private and public sector. They need to be authentic to the community. Their mission, values and programming must resonate with residents, businesses and visitors, where an 'one-size fits all' philosophy cannot apply.

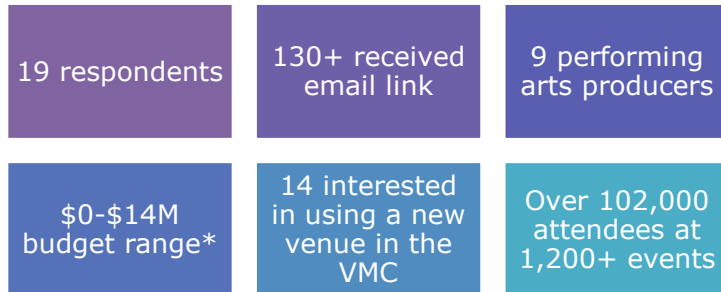
In the development context of the VMC, burgeoning residential, retail commercial and office development projects, urban parks and open spaces, an emerging recreation, hospitality and entertainment sector, anchored by a public transit network that spans the Greater Toronto Area (GTA), will see the downtown evolve over a period of decades, with progressively richer and deeper amenities. The governance and operating model for today's arts and cultural hub may be transitory, its capacity morphing to accommodate the needs of users and audiences as the VMC matures becoming a regional destination.

***City representatives and creative economy stakeholders expressed enthusiasm for a new cultural facility to serve as an anchor institution in the VMC***

Through a series of engagement activities with potential venue users, the following messages were clearly conveyed to the Consulting team.

- "A reasonably priced rental opportunity so that artists could contribute to the cultural experience"
- "This space needs to keep in mind the cultural diversity in Vaughan"
- "What we need... is affordable, long term rentals in well-designed spaces that are flexible"

## Potential Venue Users – Profile of 100+ Respondents



### ***Vaughan is a lively and growing marketplace***

The study concluded that Vaughan is a marketplace primed for growth and experimentation due to the following factors:

- Growing, active families
- Multi-cultural with no single, dominant group
- Rapid in-migration from other metros and countries suggests programming diversity will be essential
- Education and affluence tend to correlate with arts participation
- Higher incomes suggest capacity to purchase upscale tickets and packages
- Sensitivity to brand and aesthetics presents opportunities for membership programs and private donor engagement

### ***A strong planning context and framework exists to support the development of a Cultural Arts Centre in the Vaughan Metropolitan Centre***

The vision for a rich culture base in the VMC is well articulated in planning, policy and placemaking documents, recognizing that civic and cultural facilities, and other destinations, will attract people from across the city and region, and generate economic impacts for businesses in the VMC, city-wide and across the Greater Toronto Area.

The VMC Secondary Plan recognizes that “successful downtowns have a strong identity, sense of place and civic attractions. To these ends, it is an objective of this plan to establish civic uses and spaces in the VMC that serve residents from across the city and to realize a high quality of development and public realm initiatives. To reinforce the VMC’s and the city’s identity, the plan anticipates one or more major civic facilities, including a landmark cultural facility”.

The Plan further notes that cultural facilities may be developed as a catalyst for broader development and to establish an identity and civic role for the VMC.

The VMC Culture and Public Art Framework builds on the Secondary Plan policy structure, envisioning the VMC as a top destination for cultural entertainment in the GTA where state-of-the-art facilities and spaces provide a vast range of experiences for all users. Strategic Direction 1 of the Framework focuses on the Design and Build Great Public and Private Space, with Objective 2 identifying tactics to establish rich cultural resources. Central to this Objective is Recommendation 2 - invest in major cultural facility(ies) as anchors for creative and cultural developments in the VMC. This Recommendation include the following actions which have been explored through this report and related Attachment 1:

- Examine precedents in multi-purpose cultural facilities (e.g. performing arts centre) as models for future cultural facilities in the VMC (including privately-operated cultural facilities).
- Conduct a feasibility assessment for building, operating and maintaining a multi-purpose cultural facility.

This report, accompanied by Attachment 1, delivers part of VMC Secondary Plan Policy 7.4.1 which committed the City to undertake a Cultural Arts Centre Feasibility Study Plan for the VMC to identify appropriate and feasible cultural facilities for the VMC. An update to the VMC Secondary Plan is being planned to start in Q1 2020, pending budget approval. Staff will include a provision to study the inclusion of a site-specific Cultural Arts Centre designation, one that does not exist today, as part of the scope of work. Completion of the Secondary Plan update is anticipated to occur within 24 months.

Recommendation 3 of this report will deliver on the balance of Policy 7.4.1 by developing an implementation strategy for Council-approved priority cultural facilities.

## **Financial Impact**

A budget for the development and operation of a new cultural facility, including funding for an operating subsidy identified in the Feasibility Study, does not currently exist in the City of Vaughan Budget. Moreover, the development of this project is currently not included in the 10-year capital budget forecast.

This report is recommending that \$100,000 be allocated from an existing Capital Project (DP-9555-17 VMC Consultation Services) to continue the next phase of work related to this project. Moreover, this report recommends that the City of Vaughan pursues funding from senior levels of government, and other private and public sector organizations.

The Feasibility Study advises that the City carefully considers and plans the management of a long-term operating subsidy, including appropriate governance and funding models. This is a principle that will guide the next phase of work on this project.

### **Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations**

The potential development of a cultural hub may have implications for York Region's Centres and Corridors and its Economic Development Action Plan. Copies of this report and subsequent work plans will be communicated to York Region Planning and Economic Strategy, the Vaughan Chamber of Commerce, York Region Arts Council, VMC stakeholders and landowners.

### **Conclusion**

Over the years, Vaughan has employed community and civic spaces to foster, incubate and host creative and cultural activities. Community centres, libraries, heritage properties and the City Hall have supplemented as venues for cultural incubation, innovation, program delivery and demonstration, including exhibitions, studio and performance spaces. Cultural uses have competed, and at times, conflicted with recreation and local community uses for limited space.

As the downtown matures with a growing population and employment base, and to leverage public transit and infrastructure investments made by various levels of government and the private sector, the time has come for a concerted and dedicated effort to establish a creative hub.

**For more information**, please contact: Mirella Tersigni, Creative and Cultural Officer, ext. 8459

### **Attachments**

1. Feasibility Study for a Cultural Arts Centre in the VMC – Phase 1: Needs Assessment Report, April 2019.
2. Feasibility Study for a Cultural Arts Centre in the VMC – Phase 2: Final Report, November 18, 2019.
3. Presentation: VMC Cultural Centre, a Creative Hub, December 4, 2019.

### **Prepared by**

Mirella Tersigni, Creative and Cultural Officer, ext. 8459

Shirley Kam, Manager of Special Projects and Economic Development, ext. 8874



Amy Roots, Senior Manager of Development Planning (VMC), ext. 8035  
Christina Bruce, Director, VMC Program, ext. 8231  
Dennis Cutajar, Director, Economic and Cultural Development, ext. 8274