



NAVIGATOR

Cultural Capitals: Lessons for the Future

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CREATIVE CITY BUILDING
IN SASKATOON
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BY: DR. GREG BAEKER

AUTHENTICITY
Center for Cultural Development & Innovation

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SUMMARY

AuthentiCity was retained by the City of Saskatoon to review the Cultural Capitals Program. A strong focus of the project was to identify lessons for advancing cultural development and creative city building in Saskatoon. The study process involved a review of reports and documentation, a short survey, follow up interviews with a small sample of individuals and a review of experience and best practices from other municipalities.

Cultural Capitals Projects

The City of Saskatoon was designated a Cultural Capitals of Canada in 2006 marking the city's centennial. The Cultural Capitals program had the following components.

- ***Right On Track*** - a six-week exhibit gala evening celebration event for citizens of Saskatoon to mark the city's 100th birthday.
- ***Celebrating Our People*** - a one-day event with three components: the Showcase, Theatre Show and Gala Banquet that converged as a dynamic celebration of the spirit of Saskatoon's citizens.
- ***Cultural Crescent*** - a joint cultural heritage tourism development initiative of Saskatoon's three city-centre business improvement districts (BIDs).
- ***Cultural Tourism Strategy*** - a strategic marketing initiative to promote culture within Saskatoon and in the broader tourism market.
- ***Artists in the Community*** - a project that made use of the arts to explore relationships between creativity and place, to broaden access to arts and culture and to foster civic pride and citizen engagement.
- ***Public Art*** – a process which brought together a diverse range of individuals and agencies with more than 20 artists to create, implement, and install new works of art.
- ***Creative Connections: Building Our Creative City*** – a creative-city building project with three components: cultural mapping; cultural governance; cultural networking; and community engagement; designed to increase the prosperity and creative capacity of Saskatoon.

Summary Themes and Conclusions

Additional detail on each of the following themes can be found in interview results set out in Appendix B. Overarching themes and conclusions are summarized here.

- ***Heightened profile*** – The Cultural Capitals projects contributed enormously to raising the profile of creativity and culture and its importance to Saskatoon's future. The high visibility of public art projects was repeatedly cited as especially important in raising profile.

- **Partnership building** - Activity drew together partners from government, business, community and university interests and raised the potential for extending these partnerships and future collaborations.
- **Implementation capacities** – The strategies developed for the *Cultural Crescent and Cultural Tourism* projects made many important recommendations for future action. The challenge is building the shared capacity to implement these recommendations – e.g., what action is to be taken by whom, with what partnerships and resources, etc. Both strategies themselves identified the challenge of inadequate partnership and governance models.
- **New Creative City ‘system’ capacities** – The underlying goal of the *Creative Connections* project was ‘to build the capacity and potential of Saskatoon as a creative city’ through cultural mapping, cultural governance, networking and engagement. The project lay the foundation to continue to build ‘system capacity’ despite limited resources and the competing parallel activity of the other large Cultural Capitals projects.
- **Toward a Creative City Strategy Forum** - this event held June 24, 2008 demonstrated the strong impact the Cultural Capitals project has had in building a shared vision and deeper understanding of the significance of creativity and culture. The opportunity exists to build on this momentum and move forward to next steps in creative city building in Saskatoon.
- **Strengthen cultural networks** – The Forum underscored the importance and support for better networking and collaboration across various cultural disciplines. It signalled the significance of continuing to develop a ‘whole system’ vision and approach to cultural activity, replacing more traditional and fragmented discipline-based perspectives.
- **Creative City Roundtable** – The Creative Connections project defined a vision and initial terms of reference for the Roundtable. Since then major progress has been made in implementing this vision and establishing the Roundtable. The Roundtable is an essential part of the next phase of creative city building.
- **Strengthen and clarify the City’s role** – It will be imperative that the City establish a clear vision and understanding of its role in cultural planning and cultural development to benefit from the potential of the Roundtable and resulting strategic partnerships. Like many municipalities, the City has experience in the area of managing cultural facilities and delivering cultural programs. What is needed now is to complement these strengths with a stronger strategic leadership role in planning and policy in collaboration with business and community leaders.
- **Culture as the ‘fourth pillar’ of sustainability** – The City Planning Branch has been examining the possibility of a new Community Plan built on the ‘four pillar’ model (social, economic, environmental and cultural) of sustainability. The City’s strong reputation as a leader in planning at the neighbourhood level also holds potential for the integration of culture in planning and community development.
- **Learning from other Canadian cities** – Many cities face similar challenges and opportunities to those in Saskatoon. There is an opportunity to learn from the experience of others. Some examples of good practices form part of this report.
- **Municipal cultural planning** – A particularly promising opportunity is to examine municipal cultural planning ideas and methods being developed in Ontario. SaskCulture has already expressed an interest in these ideas. Saskatoon can play a

leadership role in modeling municipal cultural planning practice in the Province. These new perspectives and approaches could be examined in the context of the Government of Saskatchewan's interest in a provincial cultural policy.

Recommendations

1. Strike a cross-departmental staff working group to review this report and examine implications for cross-departmental planning and policy.
2. Develop Terms of Reference for a municipal cultural plan to build on the progress and momentum built through Cultural Capitals.
3. Support and help advance the work of the Cultural Roundtable.
4. Reconvene the Cultural Mapping Working Group to continue the mapping work to support cultural planning and cultural development.
5. Explore opportunities to link a municipal cultural plan for Saskatoon with a larger provincial municipal cultural planning agenda.

The achievements of Cultural Capitals established a strong foundation for creative city building in Saskatoon. The opportunity is now to build on these achievements and move to the next phase of cultural planning and cultural development.

DOCUMENT REVIEW

The study process began with a review of relevant reports and documents of two kinds: reports related directly to Cultural Capitals projects, other City plans related to the larger planning context.

The study was not intended to serve as a comprehensive evaluation of Cultural Capitals projects and project documentation. Rather it was to draw broad lessons and implications for future action.

In reviewing the Cultural Capitals reports, several general observations can be made. The reports collectively document a huge body of achievement for the City through Cultural Capitals projects. A consistent theme is the role all projects played in raising the profile of cultural activity in Saskatoon. Reports describe activity specific to individual projects but do point to the potential of these activities as part of a larger cultural agenda.

It is possible to sort the projects into three ‘baskets’ of activity and focus: *an arts focus* (Artists in the Community and Public Art); *a heritage focus* (Right on Track and Celebrating Our People) and a broader vision of *creativity and culture* (Cultural Crescent, Cultural Tourism, Creative Connections). The last category were projects that were from the start envisioned as ‘legacy’ projects related to building the capacity of the City to support cultural development.

The study also involved a scan of a range of City of Saskatoon plans and policies.

- Corporate Business Plan 2007-2009
- City of Saskatoon Strategic Plan (2004)
- Immigration Policy (2006)
- Placemaking Program (2007)
- Cultural Diversity and Race Relations Policy (2004)
- Community Services Department Business Plan (2007)
- Building Saskatoon to Become a Global City: A Framework for an Immigration Action Plan (2006)
- Visual Arts Placement Policy (1990)
- River Landing Tree Grates: Urban Design Awards; National Awards Program (2008)

The *Civic Arts Policy* (CAP) has many strong features. Its scope is specific to the arts (defined to include the literary, performing and visual arts) rather than the larger cultural field or cultural resources. The roles it defines for the city include *coordination*, *awareness*, *support*, *programming* and the city as *owner of arts assets*. What is missing in the CAP from the standpoint of the larger vision of creativity and culture raised through the Cultural Capitals program are two things: a broader definition of culture and cultural resources and; a larger strategic planning and policy role for the city in integrating the arts as a dimension of larger planning issues.

What is striking about the range of other plans reviewed is how infrequently cultural issues are referenced. For example, the Corporate Business Plan makes no mention of culture or cultural resources. Mention of heritage or cultural heritage is made in the context of land use planning and development.

There is reference to culture at a very high level several times such as in the Mission Statement in the 2004 Strategic Plan: “We will facilitate effective and efficient delivery of public services and nurture the economic, environmental, social and cultural well-being of the community, now and in the future.” This statement does position ‘culture’ as one of the ‘four pillars’ of sustainability. It also makes reference to the City’s commitment to engage ‘arts and cultural groups’ as partners.

As is often the case in municipalities there is reference to culture as an important dimension of community well-being at a conceptual level. The challenge for all cities is to translate a commitment through vision statements to actionable steps and strategies.

The need to better connect vision to practice is also a challenge for creative cities and creative city building. While there is a great deal of talk about these issues in Canadian cities (by people like Richard Florida and others) there is considerably less attention paid to how these goals are operationalized in meaningful ways in planning and community development. Municipal cultural planning is a comprehensive approach used by many municipalities in addressing this challenge (below).

SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS

City staff identified a small sample of individuals to contact for interviews (Appendix A). The majority were drawn from inside the City due to the desire to focus a good deal of attention on these internal issues and opportunities. The list also included several acknowledged leaders in the external community.

The survey and subsequent follow up interviews were built around 6 questions.

1. What was the most important achievement or outcome of the Cultural Capitals project?
2. What did not happen that perhaps you wish had happened?
3. What was the most significant barrier or obstacle to it achieving more?
4. What does the City already do well in its support of creativity and culture in Saskatoon? (i.e., what strengths can it build on?)
5. What new actions or roles would strengthen the City’s capacity to support cultural development?
6. What is the most significant barrier or obstacle to strengthening its role?

Major themes emerging from the interviews are set out in the Summary of this report. A fuller account of themes and issues that emerged from the survey and interviews are found in Appendix A.

WHAT IS MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLANNING?

“If creative cities are the end, cultural planning is the means.”¹

Saskatoon joins a growing number of municipalities in Canada seeking a broader more integrated set of assumptions to guide planning and policy in cultural development. Many are turning to a set of ideas and methods known collectively as *municipal cultural planning (MCP)*. One frequently cited definition of cultural planning is:

The strategic and integrated planning and use of cultural resources in urban and community development².

Cultural planning shifts the focus from discipline-based to *place-based* planning. This means that planning starts not from the perspective of cultural disciplines (e.g., visual arts, museums, libraries, film) to the circumstances and needs of a specific place and community. The focus is on how cultural assets can contribute to addressing essential local planning issues and needs: economic development, land use and urban design, cultural diversity and inclusion, youth engagement, and more.

Place-based planning embraces a *whole system* perspective of cultural development. In part this reflects an integration of discipline-based based planning approaches. But it is more than that. A 'whole systems' approach ensures that plans involve myriad local stakeholders and address the interrelationships among different facets of local culture. The term *cultural ecology* is often invoked to indicate the interdependencies of cultural resources and cultural planning.

The choice of *municipal* cultural planning (MCP) rather than simply cultural planning is deliberate. Cultural planning's roots lie traditions of asset-based community development and engagement. The result is that the dominant perspective has been a community-based one – i.e., community cultural planning.³ While community perspectives and engagement of course remain essential to MCP the focus is first and foremost on integrating culture with formal policies, plans and investments of local government.

The following are defining characteristics of municipal cultural planning (MCP).

- i. *Cultural resources* – MCP embraces a broad definition of cultural resources which includes not only arts and heritage resources but cultural agencies, institutions and traditions of our increasingly diverse communities.
- ii. *Cultural mapping* – MCP is built on cultural mapping which is a systematic approach to identifying and recording a community's cultural resources.
- iii. *New municipal roles* – MCP requires municipalities to play a stronger leadership role in planning and policy within the municipality and a broader facilitation and partnership role with the community.

¹ Jan Verwijnen and Panu Lehouvori (ed's) (2002). *Creative Cities: Cultural Industries, Urban Development and the Information Society*. Helsinki: University of Art and Design.

² Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership

³ Grogan, David; Mercer, Colin; Engwicht, David. (1995). *Cultural Planning Handbook*. Allen & Unwin.

- iv. *Cross-sectoral leadership and governance* – MCP relies on effective collaboration and partnerships between the municipality and its community and business partners.
- v. *Networks and engagement* – MCP depends on systematic approaches to networking and engagement across the community.

MCP refers to two distinct but inter-related things

- i. *MCP as a Distinctive Approach to Developing a Cultural Plan* – understood as a specific process and initiative to establish an underlying vision and framework to guide ongoing efforts in any municipality.
- ii. *MCP as Ongoing Planning* – understood as the ongoing integration of culture in planning and decision-making across all areas of municipal responsibility.

A strong indication of the growing support for MCP has been the establishment of the Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership (MCP) in Ontario. MCP is a broad coalition of seven provincial ministries, municipalities, cultural and business groups working together to promote municipal cultural planning across the province.

There have been some preliminary discussions between SaskCulture and MCP about the opportunities to bring MCP resources and ideas to Saskatchewan.

PLANNING FOR CULTURE IN CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

Cultural issues and resources have of course long been a focus of municipal policies and plans: in built heritage conservation as an essential element of land use planning; in funding and program support for cultural programs and activity; in owning and managing cultural facilities (museums, performing arts centres, libraries, etc.).

Over the past decade more and more municipalities across Canada have moved to develop overarching cultural policies or plans. The Creative City Network of Canada (CCNC) has been a strong advocate and supporter of this trend toward integrated cultural plans. However, the ideas and methods of MCP set out above differ in significant ways from these previous approaches.

MCP for many municipalities’ means rethinking what they do and how they support cultural development. In public administration a difference is noted between the ‘steering’ and ‘rowing’ roles of government. All governments must do both. However, MCP calls for a balancing of these roles. Municipalities have a long tradition of managing cultural facilities and delivering cultural programs and events (‘rowing’). They are now being asked to take on stronger strategic leadership roles (‘steering’) involving the following functions:

- Integrating culture into policies and plans across all departments (applying the cultural lens);
- Increasing cross-department communication and collaboration;
- Working to support and strengthen cross-sectoral partnerships and collaboration with business and community partners;

- Building collective capacity across a wide range of cultural activity and organizations

ORGANIZING FOR CULTURE IN CANADIAN MUNICIPALITIES

The challenge is to better coordinate and align categories of cultural activity to support collaboration and build collective capacity. Over the past decade more municipalities in Canada have been moving to establish integrated Culture Offices. Cities such as Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, Ottawa, Quebec City, Trois Rivieres, Montreal, and Halifax have had culture departments for some time.

There is no standard, accepted structure or administrative arrangement for culture in Canadian municipalities.

- **Vancouver** – The Office of Cultural Affairs falls under Cultural Services within the Community Services Department and is responsible for cultural planning, facilities and grants. The Arts and Culture Office of the Vancouver Board of Parks and Recreation is responsible for community arts and heritage consultation, programming and projects.
- **Calgary** – Arts and Culture form part of a Recreation Division. Some municipal planning responsibilities are delivered through the Calgary Arts Development, an arms length development agency (see best practice)
- **Winnipeg** – a Film and Cultural Affairs Office forms part of a Secretariat in the office of the Chief Administrative Officer.
- **Toronto** – Culture here forms part of an integrated Culture, Tourism and Economic Development department reporting directly to the City Manager.
- **Kingston** – the Division of Cultural Services includes Parks and Recreation Divisions and reports to the Department of Community Services.
- **Sudbury** – this is an amalgamated municipality with some similarities and challenges as Chatham-Kent. Recently a new Tourism, Culture and Marketing Department have been formed reporting to a Division of Growth and Development.
- **Prince Edward County** – Culture is located under Community Services with strong links to the Economic Development Department
- **Orillia** – the Department of Culture and Heritage is a stand-alone department reporting to the City Manager
- **Peterborough** – the Department of Arts, Culture and Heritage forms part of the Community Services Department. The Department includes the Peterborough Public Library.
- **Halifax** – Halifax is a regional municipality with a Culture and Heritage Department that forms part of the larger Recreation, Tourism and Culture Division.

Whatever organizational structure is chosen, a key to success is establishing mechanisms to support cross-departmental planning and decision-making. Several examples of such mechanisms are described in best practices in this report.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations

1. Strike a cross-departmental staff working group to review this report and examine implications for cross-departmental planning and policy.
2. Develop Terms of Reference for a municipal cultural plan to build on the progress and momentum built through Cultural Capitals.
3. Support and help advance the work of the Cultural Roundtable.
4. Reconvene the Cultural Mapping Working Group to continue the mapping work to support cultural planning and cultural development.
5. Discuss with SaskCulture opportunities to link a municipal cultural plan for Saskatoon with a larger provincial municipal cultural planning agenda.

The achievements of Cultural Capitals established a strong foundation for creative city building in Saskatoon. The opportunity is now to build on these achievements and move to the next phase of cultural planning and cultural development

APPENDIC A: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW CONTACTS

Insert list

APPENDIX B: SURVEY AND INTERVIEW RESULTS

1. Most Important Achievement

Heightened Awareness

- The various projects raised the profile of cultural activity and resources across a wide cross section of the community
- The Public Art projects were cited most often as the Cultural Capitals project that brought tremendous visibility and constituted the most ‘concrete’ legacy in terms of increased profile and attention.
- Projects brought people together from a wide range of interests, experiences and perspectives and promoted a larger vision of culture in the community.

Public Art

- The new public art installations received significant level of media and community attention
- The City was able to leverage Cultural Capitals funding to purchase and invest in public art that is a tremendous legacy of the year
- The City was already active in sculpture and public art but the year resulted in a significant expansion of this activity and a more sophisticated discussion of the importance of public art in terms of city planning and enhancing the public realm

Artists in Communities

- These projects revealed the enormous potential of the arts and culture as powerful community development resources for Saskatoon
- The true impacts and the richness of these programs has not been fully described; the story of these projects has not yet been properly or fully told.

Cultural Crescent and Cultural Tourism Strategy

- Both these projects stand as models of the more strategic and integrated approaches needed across the entire cultural agenda
- They pointed to the power of cross-sectoral partnership collaboration; they didn’t achieve everything they might of but they point the way forward to the kinds of integrated approaches needed.
- Both point to the importance of finding strategies that aggregate activity and create critical mass

Creative Connections

- The cultural mapping and cultural governance components of the project were important to the new ‘system capacities’ needed; neither achieved everything that was hoped but both point the way forward
- The networking and engagement part of Creative Connections was also important but did not move ahead as far as the other two or as far as was needed

2. What Didn't Happen That You Wish Had

More Involvement of Arts and Heritage Communities

- The heritage community did not feel sufficiently involved – the City has a rich heritage community and heritage assets (historic sites, museums and heritage institutions, national historic sites, city archives, etc.) that could have been more engaged.
- The arts community did not feel sufficiently engaged in the *Creative Connections* project
- The lack of progress on better networking the cultural community was a disappointment
- Greater participation could have been achieved across the board with First Nations and Metis communities

City Leadership

- A challenge for Cultural Capitals is that there was no one clear champion for the overall project; the City could have stepped up to play a stronger role here.
- Council and senior management could have become more involved and informed about the project.
- More understanding is still needed at Council about the economic and civic importance of culture

Stronger University Leadership

- There was a great deal of discussion about the University playing a strong leadership role in Cultural Capitals; this did not get acted on to the degree that was hoped
- There are obvious issues of capacity and resources but somehow these must be either addressed/confronted or the promise of a greater leadership role rethought or scaled back

Unrealized Potential of Cultural Mapping

- The cultural mapping component of *Creative Connection* had enormous potential and importance but was not fully realized.
- There was a loss of momentum at the end of the project that was unfortunate; it is essential that this work be taken up and advanced

3. Most Significant Barrier to Success

Leadership and Vision

- Stronger leadership and vision is critical if Saskatoon is to move to the next level of awareness and achievement
- The City must step up and play a strong leadership role guided by a coherent vision of the importance of creativity and culture to Saskatoon's future

Greater Investment

- Funding for the arts and culture is still not a priority for the City or for any of the major players/partners – e.g., the University, the business community, etc.
- Greater investment is inseparable from the still limited (through changing) vision of creativity and culture and its importance to Saskatoon
- Greater parity in investment in culture and in recreation is needed in Saskatoon; culture needs to have the same kind of legitimacy in the eyes of Council and staff

4. What Does the City Already Do Well?

Delivering Programs and Services

- The City is doing a fairly strong job of delivering programs in areas such as public art, providing grants, owning and maintaining heritage buildings, supporting festivals, etc.
- Investment in River Landing and ongoing support for the Mendel are tremendously important contributions as is support for live theatre (i.e., Shakespeare and Persephone)
- One problem is that the City does not communicate well enough what it is *already* doing (which is more than people think)

5. What New Actions or Roles Are Needed?

Integrated Planning and Policy – Culture as the Fourth Pillar

- The discussion about integrating culture as the ‘fourth pillar’ of sustainability in a new community plan is an important opportunity that cannot be missed
- The City must see culture as essential to planning for economic development
- It must integrate culture better as part of land use planning – e.g., creation of artist’s spaces and studios in areas where development is desired
- Given the broad representation on the Cultural Roundtable from across the ‘four pillars’ it may be possible for the Cultural Roundtable to play a leadership role in helping to establish the four pillar community plan, a role in implementing the plan, and a role in monitoring progress against the plan through comprehensively defined cultural indicators
- There is a need and opportunity to examine opportunities for establishing research partnerships that could support more integrated cultural planning and cultural development – e.g., connecting Regional Health Authority research capacity with that of the University and others to build the capacity to support evidence-based planning and decision-making in culture

Neighbourhood Plans

- The City is widely recognized for its pioneering leadership in integrated neighbourhood planning
- There is the potential to take these plans to the next level through a fuller integration of culture

Stronger Administrative Structures and Arrangements

- While culture is a cross-departmental planning and policy issue there is still a need for a dedicated lead department - ‘a general on the file’
- The City needs a structure that would provide a consolidated point of leadership to provide ‘continuity and consistency on the cultural file’
- There is a need for strategies and mechanisms to support cross-departmental collaboration and coordination
- A senior position is needed to play a leadership role; this position must be filled by a person with strong knowledge of culture; their responsibilities to include providing advice, overseeing programs, developing partnerships and relationships with external partners, strengthening collaboration and networks within the cultural community, etc.

New Roles - Communicator, Convenor, Enabler

- There is a need for a broader vision of the City’s role – as steward, leader, enabler, funder, operator, partner
- The City can make better use of its own communications capacity to tell the story of culture

Strategic Approach to Funding and Investments

- Greater investment overall is needed but there must also be a more systematic approach to defining priorities for investments in programs and facilities/ infrastructure

Specific Actions

- Establish a ‘Creative Centre’ as a major institution and tourism destination that would explore and celebrate creativity in its many forms
- Establish a 1% for public art program.
- Move the Mendel to River Landing
- Implement the Cultural Tourism recommendations
- Convene an annual Cultural Forum/Summit
- Develop one organization that speaks as one voice for the arts and cultural community.

6. What Is The Most Significant Barriers to a Stronger Role?

A Stronger Shared Vision of the Importance of Culture

- There is still a lack of appreciation across the City of the importance and value of culture; the perception is that creative activities is less important than basic infrastructure needs and core municipal services
- The lack of funding and resources is tied to this limited understanding.

More Creative Processes

- The most significant barrier is that we are stuck with traditional structures and processes that don't work – we need to bring creativity to reinventing planning and policy processes
- The processes have to be more fun if we're to keep people engaged and motivated; we sometimes have too serious a perspective or attitude which is a barrier to broader and sustained engagement

Coordinated Leadership

- Stronger leadership is needed inside the City but there is a need for a strong mechanism (i.e., the Roundtable) that is at arm's length from the City and can link all the players – City, University, culture, business, etc.
- There is a need to strike the right balance of leadership from inside City while still supporting and strengthening grassroots ('leading from behind')
- An integrated vision is needed that connects grassroots community cultural activity to non-profit cultural groups to creative industries and businesses; we need to see the continuum with leadership required all the way along

Knowledge and Capacity

- There is still an uneven level of knowledge and understanding within the administration and Council about the importance of creative activities
- The City must understand cultural production as well as cultural consumption (i.e., the needs of creators and the creative process as well as consumers/tourists, etc.)

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NAVIGATOR LIMITED BRITISH COLONIAL BUILDING, THIRD FLOOR, EIGHT WELLINGTON ST. E., TORONTO, CANADA M5E1C5
main 416-642-6440 *fax* 416-642-6435 *web* www.navltd.com