



# City of Burlington 10-Year Cultural Strategy

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Prepared by Parks and Recreation

# CITY OF BURLINGTON 10-YEAR CULTURAL STRATEGY

## 1.0 Context and Overview

### 1.1 Context

“We currently see Burlington as quietly vibrant and alive with the arts – with growing interest and awareness.... Let’s make art and culture part of our city’s branding.”

Developed by one of the working groups at *Forging the Links*, January 2005.

There are lots of cultural resources in Burlington. Some are highly visible, while others thrive in a more subtle way – a quiet vibrancy, as described in the quote above. It is this condition that provides unique opportunities for cultural development over the next 10 years.

Citizens are very supportive of culture, and actively participate in a range of cultural activities. Festivals and Events are very visible, and extremely well-attended. The Burlington Art Centre, Burlington Museums (Joseph Brant Museum and Ireland House at Oakridge Farm), Burlington Public Library, and Royal Botanical Gardens – our best-known cultural facilities – are highly valued by the community. The City of Burlington (“COB”) has recently made investments in cultural infrastructure, and is poised to do so again with the proposed Performing Arts Centre. *Future Focus VI*, COB’s Strategic Plan 2004-2006, identifies culture as a key element in the development of a vibrant community.

Notwithstanding our progress, some members of the cultural sector say that there is still a lack of awareness and promotional channels for the many cultural activities that take place here. And some of Burlington’s own citizens describe it as a conservative city that is not yet accustomed to more diverse forms of cultural expression.

Most of the basic ingredients for cultural vibrancy are in place, and those that need to be developed would be easily acquired with some concentrated and strategic effort.

What would Burlington look like if it were more culturally vibrant?

- Culture would be a rich and enduring source of community pride for more citizens.
- Culture in Burlington would be active, progressive, accessible, and thriving.
- A majority of Burlington citizens would be involved in cultural activities, at a grassroots, semi-professional or professional level.
- Public celebrations of diverse cultures would be frequent and visible.
- There would be greater diversity of cultural expression.
- There would be an increase in professional cultural activities.
- Our local media would give more coverage to culture. It would be easier to find out what’s happening culturally in Burlington.

- Local artists and other cultural workers would feel that Burlington was a great place for them to live and work.
- There would be an increase in the number of indoor and outdoor places in which Burlington citizens would gather to enjoy a cultural experience.
- Public art would be found throughout the City.
- More cultural businesses would locate in Burlington because of the networking opportunities and synergies.
- The economic impact that Burlington realizes from cultural industries would be increased.
- More citizens would be able to make a living from cultural activities.
- Burlington would be recognized as a cultural destination, and would attract more visitors from outside Burlington.
- Strong leadership for cultural development would exist within both the cultural community and COB.
- Additional funding for cultural groups would be available from a range of government sources.
- COB staff and politicians would consider cultural impacts and implications in municipal decision-making.
- Culture would become a defining characteristic of Burlington’s evolving identity and a part of the City’s branding.

These are just a few of the possible outcomes of an effort to increase cultural vibrancy in Burlington. This COB 10-Year Cultural Strategy (“Strategy”) provides recommendations that can make these and other possibilities a reality.

## 1.2 Overview

“Here, in Burlington, we understand that the City has a key role to play, in partnership with the cultural community, to develop strategic approaches that support and fortify culture in Burlington. Our current strategic plan envisions a city where Burlington will be known for its excellent visual and performing arts. In fact, this has been a strong thread in strategic planning for a number of years. ... I know that civic leadership is key.”

City of Burlington Mayor Rob Maclsaac, quoted in the *Creative City News*, Special Edition 2, 2005, excerpted from his opening address at *Forging the Links*, January 2005

This Strategy recommends, based on existing COB strategic directions, that increased cultural vibrancy is a desired outcome for our community. It then considers how we achieve that. Since it is intended to inform the decisions and actions of COB only, the Strategy focuses on the role of COB as an agent of cultural growth and development, and provides specific recommendations for what COB can do to foster cultural vibrancy in Burlington.

Specifically, COB would need to view culture as both a defining characteristic and a strategic tool for community growth and development. Informed by this view of culture,

COB would play an enhanced role in a two-phased approach to cultural development over a 10-year period.

- **Phase 1, 2006-2010** – COB plays an enhanced role in cultural development and community partnerships.
- **Phase 2, 2011-2015** – COB and the cultural community work as partners in cultural development.

During Phase 1, this enhanced role would include:

- Providing leadership for cultural development
- Building capacity within the cultural sector
- Delivering benefits to the community

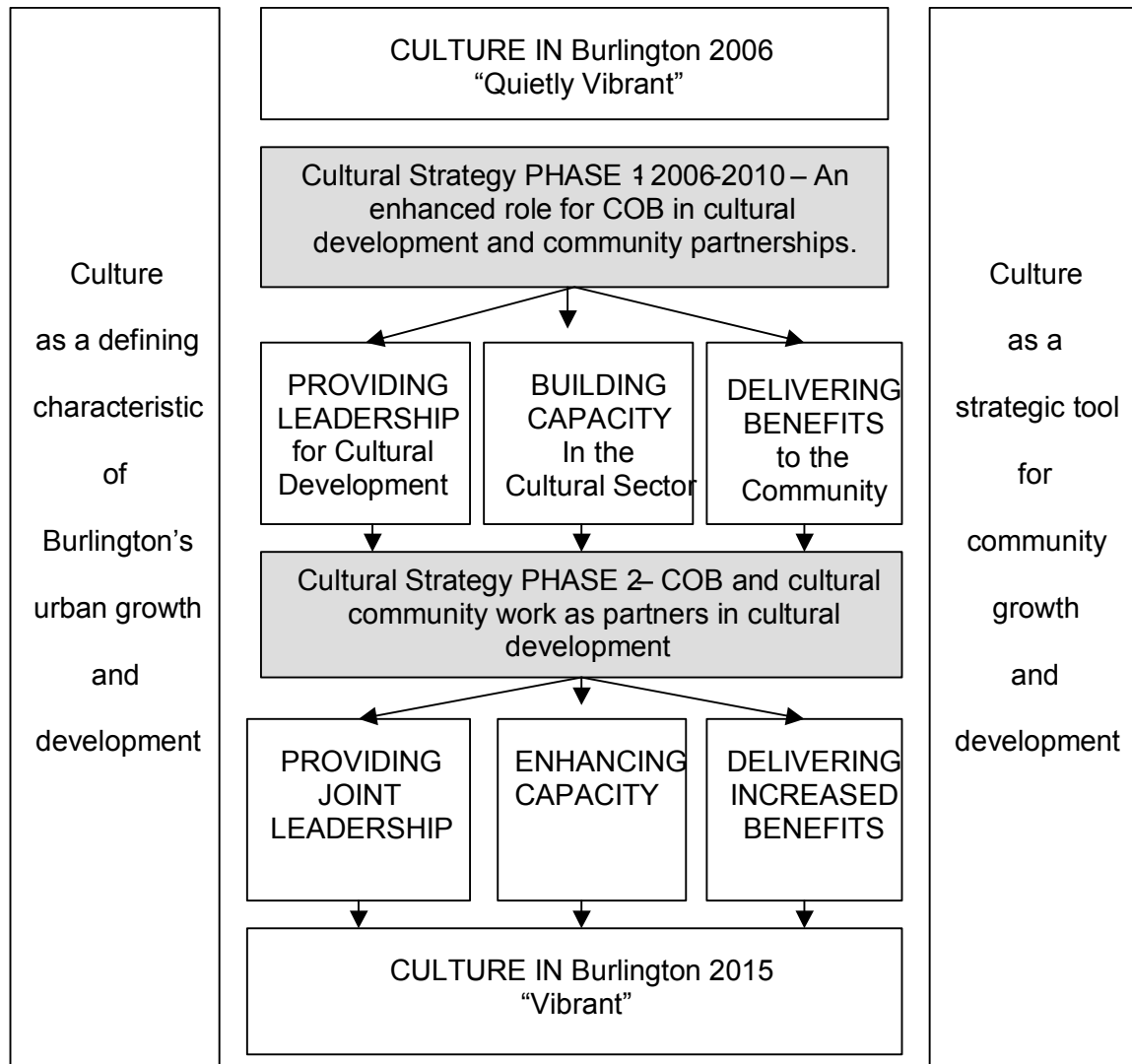
In order to graduate from Phase 1 to Phase 2 of the Strategy, COB will need to play a key role in developing capacity and leadership potential within the cultural community. This development work can best be formalized through the creation of a Cultural Plan for Burlington that will engage the cultural community in developing specific cultural goals, and assuming shared ownership of the Plan. This work will lead directly to Phase 2, in which COB and the cultural community work in tandem to ensure Burlington's cultural development. In this Phase, the COB role includes:

- Providing joint leadership for cultural development with the cultural community
- Enhancing capacity in the cultural sector
- Delivering increased benefits to the community.

An Implementation Plan for Phase 1 has been developed that will guide COB staff workplans related to culture, and will set priorities for budget development. The Implementation Plan has been aligned within the context of the Council-approved Parks and Recreation Business Strategy and Organizational Design 2006-2010. The development of a Cultural Plan for Burlington would provide an opportunity to revisit and redevelop the specific actions needed to carry Burlington forward to increased cultural vibrancy ten years from now.

The ultimate beneficiaries of increased cultural vibrancy will be the citizens of Burlington. On a personal level, they will benefit from increased or enhanced access to cultural resources and the opportunities for personal development that they offer. On a community level, they will benefit from increased quality of life, positive economic impact resulting from additional capacity to attract creative and innovative people and businesses to Burlington, and enhanced community pride and identity both within Burlington and beyond.

**Figure 1** provides a visual overview of the recommended Strategy.



### 1.3 Defining Culture

“Culture is who we were, who we are, and who we aspire to be; it is our evolving creative expression.”

Developed by one of the working groups at *Forging the Links*, January 2005.

There are many definitions of culture currently in use. Most are quite broad. Generally, culture is understood to include both:

- material culture, in the form of objects with artistic and/or heritage value, structures, sites and landscapes, natural and built heritage and infrastructure, and

- living or expressive culture as evidenced in forms such as visual arts, crafts, performing arts, literary arts, oral tradition, heritage interpretation, and language.

For the purposes of this Strategy, culture includes the arts, heritage, festivals and events, and cultural industries and services. This latter category includes those businesses and services that produce cultural products (such as publications or television shows) or directly support the production of cultural products (such as printing and marketing services). Multi-ethnic forms of expression that fit within all of these categories are also included.

Perhaps the most salient feature of these definitions of culture is their inclusivity. Whereas culture was once defined in terms of those things that appealed to the wealthy or the educated only, now culture is defined to comprise activities or objects that speak to the imaginative spirit of all people. It includes, rather than excludes. This is the spirit in which this Strategy has been developed.

Appendix A provides a glossary of terms used within this document.

#### **1.4 Culture in COB's Strategic Plan 2004-2006**

*Future Focus VI*, COB's current Strategic Plan, articulates two long-term cultural goals for the development of Burlington as a vibrant city:

- Burlington will enhance its arts and cultural opportunities and experiences, and
- Burlington will promote and protect its local history and conserve its built and natural heritage through community-based leadership.

In total, *Future Focus VI* contains 14 strategies that pertain directly to culture. The recommendations contained within this Strategy will make it possible for COB to attain its cultural goals in a strategic and coordinated way.

#### **1.5 Strategy Scope and Development Process**

This Strategy is consistent with the following 2003 Council direction to staff:

- To develop a 10 year strategy for the development of arts, heritage and culture in the City of Burlington including Vision, Guiding Principles, Strategy, and Implementation Plan
- To engage arts, heritage and culture stakeholders in an interactive community dialogue that will shape the Strategy
- To confirm the roles and responsibilities of the City in promoting arts, heritage and culture in the community
- To identify staffing and financial resources needed to successfully implement a 10-year Strategy

An inter-departmental Cultural Strategy Team ("Team") was struck in 2004. This Team put together a highly consultative process that included the following major elements. A process timeline can be found in Appendix B.

## **A. Research and Consultation**

The Cultural Strategy project was publicly launched in January 2005 at a meeting about culture in Burlington called *Forging the Links*. This gathering of Burlington's cultural community brought over 60 people together from a range of cultural disciplines, and included members of the general public with no specific cultural affiliations. Most of the day was devoted to discussion about the current state of Burlington's cultural community and possible directions for the future. More information about the content and outcomes of *Forging the Links* can be found at <http://cms.burlington.ca/English/page-1-2011-1.html>.

*Forging the Links* was extremely well received, with a strong majority of participants indicating a desire to engage in similar meetings and discussions in the future. It set a consultative tone early on in the Strategy development process that has been maintained throughout.

The Team undertook extensive research into the cultural sector both in Burlington and beyond, including interviews with representatives from government, cultural institutions, and other cultural experts.

A Cultural Inventory and Mapping project, completed by Carrie Brooks-Joiner and Associates, provided a solid base of information about cultural assets and resources in Burlington today. Section 2.2.1.2 provides more information about this project.

Further discussion about culture with the general public occurred as part of the consultations regarding Burlington's changing downtown. At a series of six town hall meetings chaired by Mayor Maclsaac during summer 2005, culture was a highlighted topic area. It was also one of five discussion topics at the Mayor's Downtown Summit, held in October 2005.

Following the tabling of a draft version of the Strategy by Council in November 2005, a second *Forging the Links* meeting was held to solicit public input on the draft. More information about the format and outcomes of this meeting can be found at <http://cms.burlington.ca/English/page-1-2537-1.html>. In addition, further one-on-one consultation was held with key stakeholders. Overall, public reception of the draft Strategy was very positive.

Appendix C contains a comprehensive list of individuals who were consulted as part of the Strategy development process.

## **B. Strategy Development – From Draft to Final**

In preparation for the draft Strategy, two strategy development workshops were held with members of the cultural community who either have significant knowledge of that community, or who expressed an interest in further participation at *Forging the Links*. This group will be called the Community Resource Group throughout this document.

Two additional strategy development workshops for the Team and senior COB staff were facilitated by Fred Galloway of F.J. Galloway Associates Inc., leading to the creation of the Draft Strategy.

The draft Strategy was tabled by the Community and Corporate Services Committee of City Council, in November 2005. It has been revised to reflect the consultation outcomes, and is being presented to Council for approval in March/April 2006.

## **2.0 Research and Consultation Findings**

### **2.1 Culture and Municipalities – Current Trends and Practices**

#### **2.1.1 The Creative City**

Culture at the municipal level today has been significantly influenced by Richard Florida's work about the Creative City. Florida's book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*<sup>1</sup>, showed that the most successful North American cities today in terms of community vitality and economic strength are those that have been able to attract and retain talented and creative workforces. These workforces – the “creative class” – are drawn to places that are authentic, are culturally vibrant, and tolerate diversity. By tying quality of life directly to economic prosperity, Florida has been able to make a strong case for culture as a strategic focus for municipal planning.

Perhaps what is most notable about Florida's theories is their rapid rise in popularity and widespread adoption by municipalities across North America. Florida has provided a solid economic rationale for municipal investments in culture, at a time when the importance of cities as the drivers of our provincial and national economies has been re-established in public policy. The Creative City has clearly risen to the top of the government agenda.

While the Creative City concept is most easily applied to larger urban centers with name recognition and a sizable population, its basic principles are applicable to a range of municipal types. In smaller to mid-size communities like Burlington, the most effective “creative city” model is one that emphasizes cultural vibrancy through local community and economic development over deliberate external branding as a Creative City.<sup>2</sup>

#### **2.1.2 Municipal Cultural Planning**

In Ontario, as in many other provincial and/or federal jurisdictions, municipalities have legislated authority over culture. There are some exceptions to this, as in the provincial Public Libraries Act and the Ontario Heritage Act. But overall, municipalities are at liberty to make their own decisions about how to manage cultural resources within their jurisdictions.

A clear best practice has emerged over the last decade in Canada and abroad, called Municipal Cultural Planning. This term describes an integrated and strategic approach to the planning and management of cultural resources in a community. By approaching

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<sup>1</sup> Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, New York: Basic Books, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Nancy Duxbury, “Creative Cities: Principles and Practices”, Background Paper F|47, Family Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks, August 2004.

culture in this way, a municipality can: maximize its investments in culture; strengthen its cultural sector; and use culture as an effective tool to achieve other municipal goals, including economic development and community building. These outcomes are consistent with the Creative City concept.

There is no single way to undertake municipal cultural planning. Rather, there are guiding principles that inform it. Municipal cultural planning is:

- *Horizontal* – cutting across silos of arts, heritage, libraries and cultural industries; for-profit and not-for-profit; professional and amateur
- *Integrated* – integrated in term of incorporating all of the above, and integrative – bringing cultural considerations (a ‘cultural lens’) across all municipal planning
- *Inclusive* – embracing a broad definition of a community’s cultural resources and engaging the community directly in planning and decision-making
- *Ongoing* – less about developing plans and more about ongoing planning and capacity building.<sup>3</sup>

Because these principles have to do with ways of thinking about and working with culture, and are highly collaborative in nature, the investments required to adopt them are primarily related to staff who can act as stewards of culture and agents of change.

In Ontario, the provincial government encourages municipalities to adopt this approach to cultural planning, and has recently sponsored a number of forums across the province on the topic. Federal funding programs support municipal cultural planning initiatives.

### 2.1.3 Economic Impact of Cultural Investments

Ontario's arts and culture sector spurs the growth of a creative economy. It strengthens our competitive advantage and promotes innovation and discovery. Our quality of life is enriched through lifelong learning, respect for heritage and creative expression in all its diversity.

Vision Statement, Ontario Ministry of Culture, 2005

The business of culture is substantial in Ontario. In 1994/95, the direct economic contribution of the cultural industries to Ontario's GDP was \$6.6 billion or 2.5% of the total. The direct and indirect contribution was \$10.1 billion or 3.9%. Ontario's cultural industries directly employ 123,344 people, which represents 2.4% of all jobs in the province. Directly and indirectly, Ontario's cultural industries employ 190,062 or 3.9% of all provincial jobs.<sup>4</sup>

Over the last decade, culture’s share of GDP has grown steadily on an international level, and along with that growth has come increasing recognition that culture is a wise

<sup>3</sup> Guiding principles quoted from the “Final Report on the Municipal Cultural Planning Forums” by Greg Baeker, Vice President – Cultural Planning, the Corporate Research Group, July 2005

<sup>4</sup> Quoted from the website of the Ministry of Culture, Province of Ontario, February 2006.

investment for municipalities to make. The experience of communities that have made cultural investments has shown that positive economic benefit is derived in a number of ways, including:

- **Cultural tourism** – Cultural tourists are amongst the highest spending tourist groups, choosing to make their visit to a community an overall cultural experience including events, institutions, food, and frequently overnight stays. The Festivals and Events Strategy for the Downtown Waterfront recommends an arts and culture focus for new festival growth.
- **Leveraging investments from other funders** – Municipal support and investments in culture are often able to leverage additional financial support that enables the development of infrastructure and the growth of organizations. Also, there are federal granting programs that support municipal cultural planning. Wherever possible, staff will seek opportunities to solicit funding support for their cultural work.
- **Growth in cultural industries** – Overall, culture is one of the fastest growing economic sectors of the national and international economies. According to a report released by Hill Strategies Research for the Arts, based on Statistics Canada data, consumer spending on cultural goods and services grew by 36% between 1997 and 2003, a rate much higher than inflation (14%) and population growth (6%).<sup>5</sup> By fostering growth in the local cultural industries sector, Burlington can help to ensure that the explosive economic growth that the cultural sector is experiencing will be felt in Burlington.
- **Employment growth** – Employment growth is a key outcome of cultural sector growth, with national levels of growth in the cultural sector regularly outpacing overall workforce growth.<sup>6</sup>
- **Leveraging growth in private sector support of the cultural community** – Through donations and sponsorships, the private sector provides direct support for culture. In a municipality that provides strong symbolic leadership for culture, the private sector is encouraged to direct its funds towards cultural institutions.
- **Overall economic impact of cultural investment** – A 1995-96 economic impact study of culture in the Okanagan Valley used a conservative multiplier of 1.8 to estimate the total economic impact of culture. This means that, for every \$1 of direct spending on goods and services used in the production of cultural goods and services, an additional \$0.80 of ripple-effect, or indirect, spending is generated, for a total economic impact of \$1.80.

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<sup>5</sup> Hill Strategies Research Inc., *Fact Sheet: Key stats on the arts in Canada*, May 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Statistics Canada, *Focus on Culture*, Vol. 14, No. 3).

## 2.1.4

### Local Trends

“My ministry recognizes that arts and culture are essential for building prosperous communities across Ontario. We are encouraging municipalities to integrate cultural planning into their daily business, and emphasize local arts, culture and heritage as they plan the future of their communities.”

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur, Ontario Minister of Culture, 2003

The provincial Ministry of Culture recently commissioned an inventory of cultural plans in Ontario municipalities.<sup>7</sup> Out of 445 Ontario municipalities, 149 responded to a survey seeking information about the types of cultural plans or policies they have in place. 105 reported having some type of cultural plan or policy. Of those, 34 municipalities (23%) reported having integrated cultural plans in place.

The inventory project found that there are six key success factors for cultural planning in Ontario municipalities:

- Customized local solutions
- Champions at senior staff and council levels
- Commitment of resources
- Buy-in from local cultural community
- Access to information from other municipalities
- Time to utilize multiple techniques for broad citizen engagement.

Some of the municipalities that have either adopted new cultural plans within the last 2-3 years, or are about to start developing them, include: Toronto, Ottawa, London, Kingston, Mississauga, Hamilton, Kitchener, the Region of Waterloo, St. Catharines, and Strathroy-Caradoc. Without exception, these plans follow the principles of municipal cultural planning and make reference to the Creative City concept.

Kitchener is recognized as a leader in their management of cultural resources, and their integration of culture into broader municipal planning processes. Their cultural sector is vibrant and diverse, and has just been extensively involved in the development of *Culture Plan II*, a Council-approved document that is intended to establish Kitchener as a Creative City over the next five years.

Peterborough is also recognized as a particularly good example of a municipality that is culturally vibrant, and has gained significant dividends from its investments in its own cultural development. Ken Doherty, Director of Community Services for the City of Peterborough, and former Manager of the Culture and Heritage Division, was the keynote speaker at the January *Forging the Links* meeting, and has played an advisory role to the Team throughout the Strategy development process.

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<sup>7</sup> Final Report for the Ontario Municipal Cultural Plans Inventory Project by Carrie Brooks-Joiner & Associates and Victoria Stasiuk Associates, September 2004.

## 2.2 Culture in Burlington

### 2.2.1 The Cultural Community

#### 2.2.1.1 How the local cultural community describes itself

“Diverse and strong cultural community ... but it requires increased information, communication, as well as coordination and capacity building....”

Developed by working groups at *Forging the Links*, January 2005

At *Forging the Links*, participants discussed the current state of culture in Burlington. There were a few common messages that emerged:

- Burlington is rich in cultural activities and products.
- The profile of culture in Burlington is low, in light of how much activity exists.
- There is a lack of public awareness about cultural activities and products, and a lack of media outlets for promotion.
- The cultural community lacks strategic, coordinated leadership.
- COB is perceived to be supportive of culture, but should be playing a greater leadership role.
- There is a shortage of cultural opportunities north of the QEW.

#### 2.2.1.2 Burlington’s cultural resources

Communities are often defined culturally by their larger public institutions. However, these institutions are usually just the tip of the iceberg. It is not uncommon to find that there are many other cultural resources in a community that may be less widely known, but make invaluable contributions to cultural vitality and community health.

In Burlington, the “tip of the iceberg” is comprised of 5 cultural facilities: the Burlington Art Centre, the Burlington Public Library, the Burlington Museums – Joseph Brant Museum and Ireland House at Oakridge Farm, and the Royal Botanical Gardens. These organizations are primarily or substantially engaged in culture, and have significant public profiles and audiences.

In order to understand the “base of the iceberg” in Burlington, COB commissioned Carrie Brooks-Joiner and Associates to develop a Cultural Inventory and Map – the first systematic attempt to quantify the extent and location of all cultural resources in Burlington. A detailed report was provided by the consultant.

Overall, the Inventory confirmed that Burlington is rich in cultural resources. It lists 519 records for businesses, associations, groups, and individuals with a direct connection to culture. However, Brooks-Joiner and Associates estimates that there are at least another 1,000 – 2,000 individual artists, musicians, etc., who are not represented in the Inventory (because they are not listed in the public information sources that informed it). The Inventory also does not include cultural audiences or volunteers.

The Inventory project did not evaluate the scope or effectiveness of the cultural services or activities offered. For example, the Burlington Art Centre, despite its extensive cultural programming, is listed as one record in the Inventory. The Inventory includes legislated cultural services (e.g. public schools) as well as those that arose to meet community need. Future iterations of the Inventory would seek to provide additional layers of analysis, leading to an enhanced understanding of culture in Burlington.

There are 292 businesses in Burlington that are directly involved in aspects of culture, including graphic design and marketing firms, web and television content producers, publishers, talent agencies, and many more types of businesses. This number is much higher than anticipated. Although an estimate of the economic impact of these businesses is beyond the scope of this Strategy, it seems reasonable to assume that it is considerable.

The Inventory captures 18 ethnocultural records, including organizations whose activities focus on preservation of language and ethno-specific cultures, translation businesses, festivals, dance groups, and one publication. The Inventory report states that “As the cultural diversity of Burlington residents continues to change, growth in ethnocultural artistic expression is anticipated.”<sup>8</sup>

The distribution of cultural resources is unexpectedly consistent throughout all areas of Burlington south of Highway 407, with the exception of a higher than average concentration in the downtown. Contrary to the opinions stated at *Forging the Links*, there are considerable cultural resources north of the QEW. However, these resources tend to be focused on private cultural activity; the more visible and public cultural resources tend to be located in the south, with downtown as a natural focal point. Appendix D provides a map of all the cultural resources in Burlington.

### **2.2.2 The Broader Community and Culture**

Overall, Burlington residents are supportive of culture. A recent public survey regarding the proposed Performing Arts Centre (“PAC”) found that 83% of respondents considered themselves generally supportive of the arts, with 27% being very supportive. 78% of respondents indicated that the proposed PAC, as described, was an excellent or good idea, with 39% indicating it to be an excellent idea, on a top of mind basis.

Further indications of community interest in culture have come from recent public consultations regarding Burlington’s changing downtown. At a series of six town hall meetings chaired by Mayor Maclsaac during summer 2005, culture emerged as an area of high interest for participants. This level of interest was confirmed in the Downtown Burlington Attitudes Survey which found that approximately 70% of respondents went downtown at least once in the past year to attend a festival or event, and that 40% went at least once to attend a cultural facility. This survey also found that there is a high level of support for an increase in festival and event activity and in more cultural and entertainment facilities in the downtown area - the highest level of support next to that for increased tourism.

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<sup>8</sup> Carrie Brooks-Joiner and Associates, *Cultural Inventory and Mapping Project Report*, July 2005, p. 22.

In October 2005, the Mayor's Downtown Summit featured culture as one of five discussion topics for the day's agenda. The experts who participated on the panel that started off the Summit all agreed that culture has a significant role to play in making Burlington's downtown a great downtown. Meeting participants were then asked to review guiding principles for the five discussion areas. For culture, the guiding principles and values contained within a number of City planning documents, including those articulated in the draft Strategy, were presented to approximately 30 participants for review and discussion. Overall, their comments confirmed the appropriateness of the draft Strategy values. They expressed a particular interest in the accessibility and affordability of culture; this has been incorporated into the *Values for the Strategy* section of this document (Section 3.3). Their comments are summarized in the Summary Report on the Mayor's Downtown Summit, which can be found at [http://cms.burlington.ca/userfiles/page\\_attachments/Library/1/3051254\\_MayorsDowntownSummitreport\\_121405.pdf](http://cms.burlington.ca/userfiles/page_attachments/Library/1/3051254_MayorsDowntownSummitreport_121405.pdf).

Public awareness of ethnocultural expression and events is relatively low in Burlington, but public consultations have shown that there is growing awareness of the fact that cultural diversity is an essential building block of cultural vibrancy. COB's Mundialization Committee has provided a great deal of public exposure to specific cultures through its international twinning programs. Both Conservation Halton and Joseph Brant Museum have built awareness of Burlington's native heritage. And as the cultural diversity of Burlington's population continues to grow, public awareness is expected to increase. COB has a role to play in facilitating this growth.

## **2.2.3 COB and Culture**

In 1993, COB created a Cultural Policy for the City of Burlington in partnership with the cultural community. Although several aspects of the Policy were not implemented, it nonetheless provided a foundation for COB to increase its commitment to culture. In fact, over the past 10 years, COB has made significant contributions to culture through both its operational and capital programs.

Comparing the COB approach to culture to the municipal cultural planning approach detailed in Section 2.1.2, there are some clear differences. Generally, COB cultural investments are not always positioned to leverage broader sectoral growth, development, and integration. Moving towards a municipal cultural planning model will optimize these opportunities.

## **2.3 Envisioning the Future**

### **2.3.1 A Vision for Burlington**

*Future Focus VI* includes the following vision for Burlington:

"Burlington is recognized as a progressive, Great Lake City located along the Niagara Escarpment. The city is known for its leadership and commitment to maintaining its unique natural heritage, community values and vibrant urban and rural lifestyles. It is indeed a place to belong!"

It also identifies a shift from suburban to urban as a key defining feature of Burlington today. Specifically, it states:

“The city is making a transition from a suburban municipality to an urban municipality. The challenge is to balance the amount and pace of growth in Burlington while ensuring the preservation and protection of not only the city’s natural features, but its community values and principles as well.”

Cultural vibrancy is one of the hallmarks of a mature urban community. It is no surprise, therefore, that *Future Focus VI* contains 14 strategies that pertain to culture, and that two of the six long-term goals intended to make Burlington a vibrant community are specifically cultural in nature. Culture has a key role to play as both a defining characteristic and a strategic tool for Burlington’s development as a progressive, vibrant community.

### **2.3.2 A Vision for Culture in Burlington**

The Community Resource Group articulated a vision for Burlington’s cultural development that supports the *Future Focus* vision. This vision supports growth in cultural vibrancy, while building upon the existing cultural values and strengths of the community. It was built upon existing public policies and plans as well as the feedback from *Forging the Links*, and a review of the research undertaken by the Team. Specifically:

- Culture needs to be better integrated into the fabric of the community.
- Culture should be accessible to all, regardless of economic or geographic status.
- Cultural development should support Burlington’s “live, work, play, and grow” identity.
- Grassroots cultural activity should be an important focus for cultural development.
- Professionalization within the cultural sector should be supported as it naturally occurs.
- Leadership needs to come from COB, working in collaboration with the cultural community.

## **3.0 10-Year Cultural Strategy – Vision, Guiding Principles and Values**

### **3.1 A Vision for the Strategy**

The Team has articulated a vision for Burlington’s cultural development that is best articulated as “increased cultural vibrancy for Burlington”. The Team believes that increased cultural vibrancy is a timely, reasonable and desirable vision to pursue over the next ten years for a number of reasons:

- It is consistent with COB strategic goals, policies, and plans, and will especially support Burlington’s shift from a suburban to an urban community.
- It is consistent with current best practices and approaches to culture at the municipal level.
- It fits with the preferred directions for culture articulated by the cultural and broader communities, and was supported by participants during public consultations about the draft Strategy.
- It builds on an existing foundation of community-based cultural organizations and activities.
- It will enable COB to maximize the impact of its considerable investments (both recent and planned) in cultural infrastructure.

The other possible outcome of cultural development in Burlington would be a continuation of Burlington’s “quiet vibrancy”, with incremental increases in cultural opportunities over time but no significant evolution in the cultural identity of the community. However, the investment required at this time to make the vision a reality are, in the opinion of the Team, small relative to the value that can be derived from them.

### 3.2 Guiding Principles for the Strategy

#### *i) Culture as a defining characteristic of urban growth and development*

This principle pertains to public understanding and acknowledgement of culture as a key part of Burlington’s identity as an urban community. This relates directly to the urban vision and cultural goals that are articulated in *Future Focus VI*, and builds on the supportive climate for culture that already exists in Burlington. Other communities in Ontario and beyond have successfully made culture a defining element of their community identity. Cultural leadership plays an essential role. If culture becomes a defining characteristic of Burlington’s self-identity, it will come to be appreciated as an indispensable aspect of community life, symbolically and tangibly.

#### *ii) Culture as a strategic tool for community growth and development*

This principle pertains to the deliberate and strategic use of culture by COB as a planning tool, in keeping with the principles of Municipal Cultural Planning, as articulated in Section 2.1.2 – horizontal, integrated, inclusive, and ongoing.

The realization of the vision of increased cultural vibrancy will require new ways of thinking about culture and the role it can play in municipal planning. This will involve COB building its capacity to maximize the benefits it gains from its existing investments in culture, to wisely choose new investments, and to proactively support the cultural sector in delivering service to the community.

### 3.3 Values for the Strategy

The following values respond to the input received from community consultation, from best practices research, and also complement the COB corporate values articulated in

*Future Focus VI.* They inform the Strategy's long-term goals and the specific actions recommended to achieve them.

***Inclusive and Accessible***

Culture is a broad concept, including a wide range of creative expression and lived experience. While not every type of cultural activity will be accessible to everyone, overall there should be a sufficient range of cultural activities in Burlington that all citizens feel that culture is accessible to them. In this regard, accessibility refers to how cultural information is shared, how cultural activities are made physically accessible, how they are priced, and how they are made relevant to a diverse population. Special attention needs to be paid to the ongoing geographic accessibility and affordability of cultural activities in Burlington.

***Community Driven with Municipal Leadership***

Culture cannot be created through a top-down approach. Culture is, by its nature, grassroots and organic. Even the evolution of grassroots cultural groups into professional organizations happens because of the needs of its participants. The appropriate role of government is to create a climate in which culture can flourish by providing symbolic leadership and practical incentives that can foster cultural development.

***Progressive and Diverse***

Being progressive means embracing the new while respecting the past. In order to be vibrant and relevant, culture needs to expand people's perspectives in a manner that recognizes and respects the diversity of ideas, attitudes, and experience that exist within a community.

***Integrated and Visible***

Culture should not exist in isolation of the community, but should be a full participant in it. It can connect a multitude of ideas, expressions, perspectives, individuals and groups, breaking down silos in the process. It does this best when culture is visible and its visibility is valued.

***Flexible and Responsive***

Cultural activities need to be flexible in how they are developed and delivered in order to be responsive to the range of resident interests and needs that exist across the community. Flexibility and responsiveness are key success factors of a vibrant and contributing cultural sector.

***Achievable and Sustainable***

Cultural activities need to be achievable and delivered in a fiscally responsible manner, in order to garner resident support, and to be sustainable as valued community resources.

## **4.0 10-Year Cultural Strategy – Strategic Approach, Long-Term Goals and Specific Actions**

### **4.1 A Strategic Approach for COB**

In order to be realized, the vision will require effective cultural leadership, visible in the cultural and broader communities and within COB itself. During consultations and research, we have heard that the local cultural community lacks strategic, coordinated leadership. The Cultural Inventory has shown that the various sectors of the cultural community tend to work in isolation, and that while some are strong, there is not one united voice for culture in Burlington. The cultural community has voiced its support for a stronger COB leadership role.

Based on the current cultural environment and the proposed Vision, the Strategy recommends a two-phased approach. This approach is consistent with existing corporate working methods and is also consistent with the working methods of other municipalities that have embraced municipal cultural planning. It is a realistic approach that allows for incremental growth over time and builds on recent successes and experience.

- **Phase 1, 2006-2010** – COB provides the leadership necessary to make culture a more effective and visible part of our community, while at the same time working to build the cultural community’s capacity to provide visible and effective leadership.
- **Phase 2, 2011-2015** – COB provides leadership jointly with the cultural community to increase Burlington’s cultural vibrancy.

The pursuit of 3 long-term goals during Phase 1 will facilitate the transition to Phase 2, as detailed below.

### **4.2 LONG-TERM GOAL #1– Provide Leadership for Cultural Development**

COB leadership for cultural development needs to be both symbolic and tangible. Symbolic leadership involves communicating and reiterating the importance of culture to our community, and ensuring that culture is included meaningfully in a broad range of municipal initiatives.

Tangible municipal leadership is about working with the community to build and maintain momentum for cultural growth and development. In order to do so, COB can engage in cultural activities best suited to a municipal cultural agent (e.g. building a performing arts centre) and/or provide temporary leadership in areas where the cultural sector lacks the capacity to provide leadership itself, such as the development of the Cultural Inventory as a publicly-accessible database. In both cases, it is important that COB operate in a manner that builds ownership and capacity with the cultural sector. In fact, in the context of this Strategy, tangible leadership is integrally connected to the second long-term goal of building capacity in the cultural sector.

In order to provide leadership for cultural development, COB will need to increase its capacity for cultural leadership and stewardship. This will include a number of preparatory actions, such as internal education throughout the corporation about culture and its impact on community life. A key element of building internal leadership is securing high-level and broad accountability for cultural results.

#### **4.3 LONG-TERM GOAL #2 – Build Capacity in the Cultural Sector**

According to the feedback received, Burlington's cultural community is active, but lacks strategic, coordinated leadership and has a low public profile. This state of affairs is not unique to Burlington; in fact, it is fairly common in other communities. There is a natural tendency for specific sectors within the cultural community to work independently and to concentrate on their own needs versus broader initiatives. Consequently, the cultural community has not traditionally had a strong unified voice.

Municipal governments frequently step in to provide leadership on an interim basis, while working with the cultural community to develop leadership from within. This work can take place both at a broad community level and through organizational development work with specific organizations. In the process, disparate elements of the community are encouraged to communicate and to develop the ability to speak as one, both politically and publicly. This is a significant and expected outcome of a municipal cultural planning approach.

Once this fundamental capacity has been developed, longer-term initiatives such as the establishment of cultural planning districts would facilitate an accelerated pace of cultural development. Particularly central to this Strategy is the creation of a Cultural Plan for Burlington that would involve the cultural community as full partners, not just as stakeholders or beneficiaries. This work will formalize the capacity building that has taken place until that time, and will be specifically structured to build the leadership capability of the cultural sector for Phase 2 of the Strategy.

#### **4.4 LONG-TERM GOAL #3 – Deliver benefits to the Community**

The success of this goal depends on tangible and sustainable actions that will benefit the citizens of Burlington over time. Building upon existing and creating new partnerships with local agencies in other sectors, such as education, business and tourism, will be key in maximizing community benefit from culture – especially economic benefit.

The establishment of a McMaster University campus in Burlington with curriculum streams including business administration and arts/technology presents a particularly exciting opportunity to establish an economic cluster for culture in Burlington, building on the existing cultural sector. Another opportunity exists to maximize the economic impact of the almost 300 businesses that deal directly with culture in Burlington. Research has shown that they do not think of themselves as members of the cultural industry sector, and with a few exceptions, they do not draw attention to their presence in Burlington. They are a hidden, and yet significant, resource.

On a community level, the citizens of Burlington have indicated a desire for more cultural opportunities and *Future Focus VI* supports this. In keeping with COB's Leisure

Services Policy, this increase should be realized primarily by community-based providers of cultural services. COB should provide supports to cultural service providers to help them strengthen their ability to increase cultural opportunities for all citizens.

## **5.0 Implementation**

### **5.1 Implementation Overview**

An Implementation Plan for Phase 1 of the Strategy has been developed that groups proposed cultural initiatives chronologically into the following nine categories:

- Implementing the cultural strategy
- Building leadership capacity for cultural development in COB
- Building capacity in the cultural community
- Planning for cultural development
- Developing partnerships
- Developing economic benefits of culture
- Building public awareness of culture
- Cultural programming
- Cultural infrastructure

Amongst the most significant of the proposed implementation initiatives are:

- The development of appropriate performance measures and reporting mechanisms for cultural development.
- The development of a Cultural Plan for Burlington in full partnership with cultural stakeholders. This Plan would provide an opportunity to revisit and redevelop, as needed, the specific actions required to carry Burlington forward to increased cultural vibrancy ten years from now.
- Working with stakeholders, the development and implementation of an appropriate leadership and coordination model for the cultural community.
- Liaison with key community institutions (e.g. Burlington Public Library, Burlington Art Centre, and Burlington Museums – Joseph Brant Museum and Ireland House at Oakridge Farm, the Halton District School Board and Halton Catholic District School Board) to determine and develop opportunities for broader cultural growth in the community.

The implementation Plan is aligned with the Council-approved Business Strategy and Organizational Design for Parks & Recreation 2006-2010 and the budget process. The Community Development Planner – Culture in the new Business and Community Development Services Section will be responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Strategy in consultation with other relevant departments. The Implementation Plan will guide the development of staff workplans related to culture, and will set priorities for budget development. All new initiatives will be submitted for Council's consideration during annual budget deliberations.

## 5.2 Success Factors for Municipal Cultural Planning

In order for cultural planning to be implemented successfully, there are six success factors that must be in place, according to the Ontario Municipal Cultural Plans Inventory Project (discussed in Section 2.1.4). They are listed below, and discussed in terms of the implementation of this Strategy. They may form a basis for the development of more specific performance measures for cultural development.

### **Customized local solutions**

The Strategy and its recommendations are a customized local solution to an expressed desire on the part of the community for increased cultural opportunities and a richer cultural experience. Although the Strategy recommends following best practices from other communities – municipal cultural planning – it does not attempt to overlay specific actions or sequences of actions from other communities onto Burlington. Rather, the Implementation Plan has been developed based on current Burlington working methods and values. Future cultural development work needs to continue to respond to the specific characteristics of the Burlington community. This requires ongoing knowledge of and communication with the community.

### **Champions at senior staff and council levels**

Currently, there are champions for culture at Council and amongst senior COB staff. However, championship for culture is not embedded within the COB decision-making structure in a way that makes it sustainable over time. During public consultation, concerns about the stability of municipal support for culture during times of political change were expressed.

The Implementation Plan sequences specific actions in a manner that allows for steady growth in formal internal commitment to culture. The way that environmental stewardship has been made a fundamental part of COB decision-making provides an excellent model to follow for culture.

### **Commitment of resources**

There is an overall investment required to operationalize the Implementation Plan over the next five years, and details will be submitted for Council's consideration during annual budget deliberations. Key areas requiring additional resources include:

- \$80,000 - \$100,000 to complete implementation of the Art in Public Spaces Policy, including costs related to general program development, collection management, public education, and temporary exhibition programs.
- \$75,000 - \$100,000 in capital costs for consulting services to complete the proposed Cultural Plan, a Cultural Districts Study, and an Economic Impact Study. Staff will pursue government funding opportunities that support cultural planning to assist in this work.
- initiatives to strengthen and build the capacity of the cultural community to contribute to increased cultural vibrancy in Burlington.

It has not been possible to quantify the current or potential future economic impact of municipal spending on culture in Burlington at this time. However, the experience of other communities that have made investments in their cultural sector has shown that positive economic benefit is derived in a number of ways, as detailed in Section 2.1.3.

The Implementation Plan includes actions that will both measure and facilitate growth in the economic impact of culture in Burlington, including the undertaking of an economic impact study in Year 2 of the Strategy.

#### **Buy-in from local cultural community**

Clearly, COB has buy-in from the local cultural community for the recommended Strategy. It responds to feedback received from members of that community, and has been supported by the Community Resource Group, which participated in Strategy development workshops with the Team. One of the key items of feedback that was received from the cultural community was the desire to have COB play a stronger leadership role. So long as COB maintains a consultative approach to its work in the cultural community, it should be able to fulfill this role. COB will continue to work closely with the cultural community to maintain the momentum of the Strategy over time.

#### **Access to information from other municipalities**

COB is a member of the Creative City Network, an association of municipal cultural staff that maintains a website with cultural resources posted by its members, and hosts an email forum. In addition, COB staff are in contact with cultural staff in local municipalities.

#### **Time to utilize multiple techniques for broad citizen engagement**

Although the Cultural Strategy development process was consultative, broad citizen engagement for future cultural planning work will occur, especially during the development of a Cultural Plan for Burlington.

## **6.0 Conclusion**

“Great cities must offer much more than clean, safe streets and good transit. To thrive, cities must be dynamic and rich in culture to attract creative and innovative people. That means we must find funds to improve our cities' education, recreation, sports, culture, arts and innovation capacity -- the institutions and amenities that drive our quality of life.”

Glen Murray, former Mayor of Winnipeg, currently Research Associate for the Centre for Urban and Community Studies and a Visiting Scholar & Urban Policy Coordinator at the University of Toronto, quoted in *The Globe and Mail*, September 26, 2003.

The process of developing a Cultural Strategy has yielded a clear vision for cultural development in Burlington and has established an appropriate role for COB in bringing that vision to fruition. The Strategy presents a plan for building cultural vibrancy incrementally over a 10-year period, in a way that builds on Burlington's strong foundation of cultural activity and patronage, and encourages community ownership and pride. Support for culture has been evident throughout the Strategy development process, and can be expected to grow as the citizens of Burlington reap the benefits of Burlington's enhanced cultural vibrancy.



## **CULTURE**

Culture is understood to include both:

- material culture, in the form of objects with artistic and/or heritage value, structures, sites and landscapes, natural and built heritage and infrastructure, and
- living or expressive culture as evidenced in forms such as visual arts, crafts, performing arts, literary arts, oral tradition, heritage interpretation, and language.

For the purposes of this Strategy, culture includes the arts, heritage, festivals and events, and cultural industries and services. This latter category includes those businesses and services that produce cultural products (such as publications or television shows) or directly support the production of cultural products (such as printing and marketing services). Multi-ethnic forms of expression that fit within all of these categories are also included.

## **CULTURAL VIBRANCY**

Bursting with cultural energy or activity. Vigorous, lively, vital and visible cultural scene.

## **CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Sustainable progress made in furthering the role that culture plays within a society.

## **MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLANNING**

An integrated and strategic approach to the planning and management of cultural resources in a community.