Creative Cities: Principles and Practices

Nancy Duxbury

Background Paper F|47
Family Network

August 2004
Creative Cities: Principles and Practices

By
Nancy Duxbury

© 2004 Canadian Policy Research Networks
### Contents

1.0 Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1

2.0 Innovative Action in Cities and Communities: Principles and Practices .................. 3

3.0 Toward the Creative City: Different Frameworks ............................................................. 5
  3.1 Innovative Knowledge City ....................................................................................... 5
  3.2 Niche Economic Development ................................................................................. 5
  3.3 Local Community/Economic Development with a Cultural Component ............. 6
  3.4 The Creative City ...................................................................................................... 6

4.0 Successes and Challenges in Implementing a Creative City Approach ................. 7
  4.1 Vancouver ............................................................................................................... 7
  4.2 Toronto .................................................................................................................... 8
  4.3 Ottawa ..................................................................................................................... 10
  4.4 Halifax ...................................................................................................................... 12

5.0 Assessing Progress and Returns on Investment ......................................................... 14
  5.1 Toronto’s Culture Plan Measures ............................................................................. 14
  5.2 Ottawa’s Arts Plan Measures ................................................................................... 14
  5.3 Vancouver’s Cultural Development Measures ...................................................... 15

Endnotes ..................................................................................................................................... 17
Creativity is about new ideas, and the discipline of developing, sharing and applying them.... The seeds for the development of significant creative capacity are present.... In order to achieve substantial results, however, attention and resources must be focused on this area in a co-ordinated manner and with an integrated approach.

1.0 Introduction

In his background paper, Neil Bradford notes that while the features of the creative city are easy to describe – and the vision is captivating – much less is known about the conditions that foster creativity, and the mechanisms, processes, and resources that turn ideas into innovations. This paper begins to address this knowledge gap. From a municipal cultural planning perspective, it examines the state of some of these mechanisms, processes, and resources as they are practiced in cities and communities across Canada. The aim is to shed light on cultural development practices, and to propose a vision in which artists and cultural organizations are central to the building of creative cities.

In arguing for the centrality of cultural development in the building of creative cities, this paper takes its inspiration from some significant municipal cultural planning processes launched in Vancouver and Toronto in the early and mid-1990s. While much recent interest in creativity and innovation, especially in the United States and the United Kingdom, has been driven by economic competitiveness or regeneration concerns, the earlier visions of Vancouver and Toronto recognized the artistic and cultural dimensions more explicitly. The City of Vancouver’s 1993 report, *Toward the Creative City*, offered the following vision:

A city where: the arts are respected for their aesthetic importance and for their ability to foster understanding and communication; cultural diversity is embraced and the expression of creativity in all its forms is encouraged; people can enjoy creative activities in their everyday lives; the arts are viewed as an educational necessity and creativity is recognized as an invaluable skill in the Age of Information; the arts are valued for their important role in the economy as well as for their spiritual, intellectual and social benefits.

This vision of a creative city was the catalyst for the Vancouver Arts Initiative in the early 1990s, and it continues to resonate in the city’s planning processes. Similarly, the Metropolitan Toronto Council published a document during the mid-1990s expressing this holistic view of the creative city. Both cities’ major cultural documents today – the City of Vancouver’s cultural development profile *Creative City* and the City of Toronto’s *Culture Plan for the Creative City* – reflect this tradition. Many other cities, including Ottawa and Halifax, are also working to make...
their cities more creative through cultivating dynamic and inclusive artistic and cultural communities. As more Canadian cities and communities focus on designing and implementing creativity frameworks, it is necessary to remember their essential cultural foundations and the vital role of artists and other cultural resources in fostering broad-based individual creativity, economic vitality, and social innovation.

This paper is designed to inform emerging policy discussions about how to enable Canadian cities to cultivate their creativity and reap the benefits for all citizens. The discussion is organized in four parts. The paper begins with a brief overview of some key principles guiding community-based innovation and the factors involved in successfully moving new ideas into action. Second, the paper highlights several different “creative city” frameworks presently informing new visions and local initiatives. The third and largest part of the paper reports on recent experiences in implementing creative city approaches in four Canadian cities. Finally, the paper considers the attempts to assess creativity progress and returns on cultural investments in selected cities.
2.0 Innovative Action in Cities and Communities: Principles and Practices

What is innovative action in a community? Innovation is relative to its context; what is usual practice in one community may be an entirely new idea in another. Thus, in situ, innovative action is doing something out of the norm, something new to that situation or context.

The factors that motivate a city or community to innovate are complex. Most obviously, in today’s global environment, pressures for economic renewal drive innovation. Such renewal involves identifying a “niche” in the global new economy, based on distinctive local assets including location, geography, culture, skills and knowledge. Developing the niche typically requires a multi-faceted approach: retaining and attracting mobile citizens, investment, and jobs; improving the “quality of place” through investments in infrastructure and amenities often focused on particular neighbourhoods or areas of distress; and building local identity and pride through “branding” or place marketing.

While such economic-structural factors call for innovative action from communities, responses in any particular place depend largely on the initiative and vision of individuals and organizations. Leadership coalitions that seize opportunities to make a lasting difference for their communities are guided by certain “principles of practice.” For creativity and innovation, local planning processes must value the following principles:

- Each city and community is unique in its history, development, human and other assets, challenges, aspirations and opportunities.
- Implementation of ideas and strategies in a community is an art, based on thick knowledge of, and sensitivity to, the complexity of a community’s cultural ecosystem, and the broader contexts in which it operates.
- Faced with strong forces of homogeneous products and offerings, city development must be rooted in authenticity. Balance is key: for each standardized, mass-market introduction to a community, something should be done that emphasizes the uniqueness of the community, for example through public art.
- Durable innovation depends on “thick” community involvement and shared ownership of processes and outcomes. Horizontal networks must be nurtured and supported on an ongoing basis across the community. Such networks, even within the cultural sector, often do not exist, or are fragile.
- Small projects that are sustained over time can make a difference. Incremental change intelligently applied can lead to significant innovation.

Of course, the presence of motivators to act, new ideas about desirable change, and sound principles of practice are not sufficient for successful innovation. Still required are the will and capacity to act in new and different ways. Here, a number of resources must be available and adapted to the particular local context by community leaders, if the challenges are to be met with creativity and confidence. Among the enabling conditions and resources, the following are most important:
• **Collective Will** – Political and public will to mobilize resources, take risks, and stay the course.

• **Visionary Fit** – The community’s vision must resonate with its particular circumstances and possibilities, including local assets and constraints.

• **Strong Community Networks** – The existence of, and robust connections among, appropriate individuals and organizations are required to act on ideas.

• **Strategic Resources** – Resources for innovation are multi-dimensional, including: money; people with available time, expertise, skills, knowledge/information; and social relationships and spaces for networking.

• **Time** – This involves both the time required to make change, recognizing that plans unfold over long periods, and also the element of appropriate timing, which may mean speeding up processes as opportunities arise, or delaying to a more propitious moment.

• **Flexibility** – Implementing innovative ideas are, by their nature, experimental and require flexible approaches. In dynamic community situations, challenges and opportunities evolve. As such, visions, plans, and rules must be adaptable such that innovative projects can be implemented or tested-out.
3.0 Toward the Creative City: Different Frameworks

Many municipalities are now planning and acting to re-vision and re-position their community in the context of evolving economic and social trends. In general, there appear to be four scenarios or innovation approaches evident:

1. Innovative Knowledge City
2. Niche Economic Development
3. Local Community/Economic Development with a Cultural Component
4. The Creative City

In fact, only a subset of Canadian municipalities can be said to be explicitly taking a “creative city approach” to making their community more vibrant, more inclusive, and more supportive of cultural actors and new ideas. The other approaches, however, are not necessarily exclusive of creative city elements and also reveal some important lessons and points of intersection.

3.1 Innovative Knowledge City

Montreal is the leading example of this approach at the moment. It involves developing internationally recognized research and education centres which generate leading-edge ideas and knowledge, and develop new industries for the future. However, as Lise Bissonnette pointed out in her recent presentation at the Federation of Canadian Municipalities conference, there is a disturbing absence of culture in recent publications outlining new visions for Montreal as a “City of Innovation” or a “Knowledge City.” Cultural activities, and the innovative energies they embody and develop, are not incorporated into these visions and plans. In general, it appears that cultural and heritage activities and resources are recognized and valued insofar as they attract the scientists, and other knowledge workers the city is recruiting. However, cultural activities are not seen as part of the knowledge and innovation milieu itself.

3.2 Niche Economic Development

In his background paper, Neil Bradford mentions Saskatoon’s development of its canola-based biotechnology cluster as central to establishing a niche in the global economy. Similarly, St. John’s is actively developing economic and research strengths in ocean and ice-related research and ship testing, which build on its traditional strengths and geographical location. This approach resembles the Innovative Knowledge City approach but focuses on developing an international reputation for leading-edge research and industry in a few core industries. Community attractors such as cultural activities, natural environment, short commute times, and so forth, are part of the “context package” used to recruit leading individuals for these industries, but are not necessarily perceived as a core component of the city’s economic development. In the case of St. John’s, however, the city has also been actively nurturing the city’s distinct cultural resources, consciously and carefully developing and promoting its strengths as a unique cultural and heritage tourism destination. The result is another niche for the city.
3.3 Local Community/Economic Development with a Cultural Component

Most commonly, municipal efforts are simply focused on building better communities and local economies. Viewed from a cultural planning perspective, the priority is to get the arts, culture and heritage fully recognized at decision-making tables and city planning processes. This means that they will be incorporated into the community’s vision and “official” mindset, and reflected in effective support structures and initiatives to nurture and build the vibrancy and strength of the arts and cultural sector. On this basis, the sector will be able to serve the community’s overall development goals, enabling more participation in creative work, and cross-sectoral involvement with the arts and culture. The uniqueness of each community’s situation means that such cultural plans must be tailored to the conditions prevailing in each municipality. A growing expression of community cultural development is cultural tourism, a strategy leading many municipalities to encourage creative activity in order to build their tourism industry. In some communities, priorities for cultural activities and community vibrancy are located within larger economic development plans emphasizing tourism. A clear incentive is in place for municipalities to increase their support for arts and heritage development.

3.4 The Creative City

Conscious efforts to become a creative city are often led by municipal cultural staff and the cultural community in that municipality. This approach is most visible in cities such as Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax. The creative city approach differs from the Innovative Knowledge City or the Niche Economic Development approaches mainly in its explicit inclusion of arts, culture, and heritage in the future plans and general visions for the city. It is important to note, however, that while efforts are inspired and guided by an ambitious vision of the creative city, actions proceed on a step-by-step basis. The point is to build strategically on opportunities arising, while addressing medium-term challenges. These cities’ various situations and approaches are explained in some detail in the next section of the paper.
4.0 Successes and Challenges in Implementing a Creative City Approach

Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax are each trying, in different ways, to envision, plan, and nurture a creative city. These examples demonstrate municipal leadership in collaboration with community partners and, in some cases, with other levels of government. The approaches and key challenges in Vancouver, Toronto, and Ottawa are presented here, followed by a brief synopsis of the situation in Halifax. These profiles are meant to be illustrative, not exhaustive.

4.1 Vancouver

The City of Vancouver is recognized for its long-standing support for culture as an important element of the city’s development. The city’s commitment to cultural planning originated in the 1960s within a social planning context, which remains a key philosophical basis for its cultural development efforts.

Vancouver has an extensive set of cultural policies and plans, guided by Council-approved Cultural Objectives. These objectives are: “To ensure our future as a creative city, open and accessible to artists, to the broadest range of cultural expression, and to the widest participation.” The city’s Cultural Goals, adopted by City Council in 1987, have also guided the city’s overall development of cultural policy:

- To promote a high level of creativity and excellence in the cultural life of Vancouver;
- To promote diversity in the artistic life of the community, including both the professional and non-professional, the traditional and the innovative, the established and the aspiring;
- To encourage financial and managerial efficiency in the operation of Vancouver’s cultural organizations;
- To ensure the existence of adequate facilities for the creation and presentation of the arts in Vancouver; and
- To ensure that all Vancouver residents and visitors, including senior citizens, youth, low-income people, members of ethnic minorities and other distinct groups have opportunities to enjoy and participate in cultural activities.

To achieve these goals, the city has pursued a comprehensive but incremental approach to cultural development and planning. This enables it to proceed on a number of fronts at once, taking advantage of opportunities and responding to challenges in innovative ways, using every tool available. The mechanisms employed are varied and build upon one another, resulting in a series of interconnected policies, plans, programs, and established practices. In this approach, Vancouver has adopted two underlying principles: to integrate cultural planning interests in all planning processes of the city; and to partner with non-profit cultural organizations to deliver diverse and excellent arts and cultural services and activities throughout the city.

Vancouver provides a comprehensive range of supports and opportunities to engage the creativity of its citizens and to strengthen the cultural community’s ability to provide cultural services to residents and visitors. The multi-faceted support of arts and culture is reflected in the
many channels through which it is offered. This includes the program, policy, and planning work of the Office of Cultural Affairs as well as services, coordination, policies, and programs offered through a range of other departments and committees. Cultural Affairs staff participate in all of the city’s planning processes to ensure that the cultural and social needs of current and new residents are met, and to enhance the livability of the city. In major new neighbourhood developments, the city works to integrate culture in all plans from the outset, and to secure neighbourhood cultural amenities in whatever form is most appropriate.

Complementing these activities and initiatives is a high interest in quality urban design. City planners, architects, developers, and the broader public all share this interest, and it is informing the new high-density neighbourhoods in the downtown core, and contributing to attractive streetscapes throughout the city.

**Key Challenges**

- Staff and financial resources are limited for a growing community with diverse needs.

- City linkages with the business community and educational sector could be developed further. Linkages between the culture and high-technology sectors could also be strengthened.

- Regional government has very limited interest or involvement in cultural development. The Greater Vancouver region consists of 21 municipalities, one electoral district, and a regional municipal partnership (the Greater Vancouver Regional District). Although individual municipalities in the region are active in cultural development (in varying degrees), the lack of a formal regional agency has limited region-wide collaborations and planning. An inter-municipal staff committee meets regularly, helping keep participants informed of developments in the region’s municipalities and enabling some inter-municipal projects.

- A traditionally low level of support for culture from other orders of government in British Columbia has meant that while the quality of the creative organizations in the city is remarkable, the organizations are under-resourced and the organizational infrastructure is thin and vulnerable.

- Rising real estate costs make affordability and cost of living a growing issue, along with the availability of studio space at an affordable rate. This makes it more difficult to attract and retain artists and other creative talent in the city.

### 4.2 Toronto

The former City of Toronto and many of its area municipalities had long involvement in cultural development, with varying approaches, strategies, tools, and programs. In February 2000, following the amalgamation, Toronto City Council directed the new Culture Division to develop a Culture Plan to help guide the city’s cultural development over the next 10 years. Council set out two key goals for the Culture Plan: to position Toronto as an international cultural capital; and to define culture’s role at the centre of the economic and social development of the city.
In April 2001, the preliminary working document, *The Creative City: A Workprint*, was presented to Council as a discussion framework, calling upon Toronto to use its arts, culture, and heritage assets to position itself as a creative city that would be a global cultural capital. A period of extensive community consultation followed. In November 2002, Council adopted a new official plan for the next 30 years which made it clear that arts, culture and heritage would help the city “attract the educated, mobile newcomers we want, keep our best and brightest at home and make our economy among the strongest anywhere. Arts, culture and heritage will be the future Toronto’s heart and soul.” In June 2003, *Culture Plan for the Creative City* was completed and approved.

*Culture Plan for the Creative City* describes the general features of a creative city, outlines the multi-dimensional challenges faced at this time, and points to the city’s competitive position via-à-vis other (Canadian and international) cities, all competing for highly mobile knowledge workers who insist on a high quality of life where they choose to live. The plan outlines Toronto’s strengths and weaknesses and proposes measures to enhance its assets and reverse its difficulties. Emphasis is placed on higher levels of investment. Key components of the city’s current involvement in cultural development are described, and a wide array of recommendations for additional actions, both small and large, are set out. These build on current practices, address emerging planning and community needs, and introduce new ideas.

The plan focuses on the arts, culture, and heritage dimensions of the city, in the wider context of the cultural diversity of the city, rather than more broadly defined areas of “creativity.” It notes that any plan must “first support and enhance the working lives of the creative individuals who are the heart of Toronto’s cultural experience.” The plan recognizes the many connections between non-profit and commercial arts in the cultural ecology of the city, and the continuous two-way transfers of talent between the two. The city’s primary focus in this plan is on the non-profit sector and its ability to serve the broader community.

The Culture Plan complements the recently launched large capital projects to expand and upgrade Toronto’s major cultural institutions, and the branding of the city’s arts and culture district. Cultural tourism is viewed as the key source for greater resources to operate these institutions, and raise the level of resources available to the wider cultural community. A good deal of effort will be directed to raising their profile and marketing Toronto’s cultural resources, new and old, at local, regional, and broader scales.

Throughout the plan, the development of partnerships among the cultural sector, business, and local community organizations are emphasized to implement the recommendations. At the same time, the focused attention and the significant resources directed to the large capital projects is worrisome to some in the city’s cultural community who question the use of scarce resources in this manner, given the different priorities and challenges across the full community.
Key Challenges

- Cutbacks at all levels of government over the 1990s have resulted in diminished levels of support, with organizations struggling to develop to serve growing communities. Accumulated deficits and a severe shortage of working capital have resulted, and cultural organizations of all sizes show vulnerability.

- Inability to raise enough money to keep internationally recognized cultural institutions afloat, requiring more resources to support their expanded operations.

- Very limited resources for maintenance of physical cultural and heritage assets. City-owned facilities and those it has invested in are generally in poor physical condition. Non-profit facilities supported by the city, either directly or indirectly, also have a huge backlog of deferred maintenance.

- Competitor cities in Europe and the United States, and their upper levels of government, are actively investing in cultural assets.

- A May 2002 study found that Toronto is the only major city in North America to experience a decline in tourism since 1996, and that Toronto’s cultural offerings are seen by many as “stale and tired.”

- Introducing and integrating diverse communities into “mainstream” cultural institutions remains a challenge involving capacity building, volunteer recruitment, and weaving immigrants into the community.

- Limited resources for city museums to develop or acquire exhibits and programs reflecting Toronto’s cultural richness and diverse communities.

- Accessibility – admission costs – to cultural venues and activities.

- Availability of affordable venues for community arts organizations.

4.3 Ottawa

The old City of Ottawa had a long background in cultural development, as did some of its neighbouring municipalities. Its unique situation as home to national institutions both enriches and challenges its development of local artists and cultural organizations. Their accomplishments are frequently overshadowed by the offerings of the national institutions.

Amalgamation offered an opportunity to re-vision the city’s future and its planning priorities. The new city’s first official plan (Ottawa 20/20) was based on a goal of sustainable development, where social, environmental, cultural and economic issues would be kept in balance. Arts and heritage were positioned as a pillar of the new City of Ottawa, and core to its future development. One of the principles of the 20/20 plan states that Ottawa is a “creative city, rich in heritage, unique in identity.”

14
The Arts and Heritage Plan was developed as one of five growth management plans, which complement each other and work toward common goals. Staff undertook an extensive community consultation process in developing the plans, which were approved unanimously by City Council in April 2003. Each plan defines a 20-year vision and identifies strategies, policy statements and actions for implementation over the next five years.

In early 2004, facing a huge operating deficit, the city took a draft budget to the community for consultation that, if approved, would have decimated the city’s involvement in arts and heritage as well as a wide array of other social and health services. However, strong community action helped to avert a disastrous situation for the future of a “creative city” and, in the end, the budgets for arts and heritage were largely left restored. Still, the situation illustrated how fragile official “commitments” to the arts and culture can be, even when developed through wide consultation with the community and approved by City Council.

The Ottawa 20/20 Arts Plan focuses on Ottawa’s cultural development. It explicitly aims to build Ottawa as a creative city, and notes that a creative city “must be able to sustain a concentration of artists, creative people, cultural organizations and creative industries within its boundaries.” It outlines an arts continuum, from leisure/recreational art, to amateur arts, to emerging arts, to professional not-for-profit arts, and to the arts industry. The professional, not-for-profit piece is identified as the key driver across the continuum.

The plan outlines five strategic directions, representing 20-year goals:

1. Broaden public access to the local arts;
2. Keep Ottawa’s artists here and attract others to join them;
3. Build creative capacity;
4. Revitalize public places and natural spaces through the arts; and
5. Realize economic potential of local cultural sector.

These directions are supported by ten policy strategy statements. Three are pivotal for unlocking “Ottawa’s development as a creative city,” allowing for delivery in the remaining seven strategies and policy statements.

1. Invest and spark investment in the local arts.
2. Increase access for artist, audience and community to new and improved space and place.
3. Get the word out.

The five-year action plan consists of 25 actions. Five of these are deemed to require immediate implementation. They address the pressing issues of increasing base funding levels, the development of appropriate cultural spaces, and greater public awareness. Implementation of these strategic directions and actions is presented as a partnership among the city, community partners, artists of all disciplines, other levels of government, and the private sector.
Key Challenges

- **New and improved spaces.** The Arts Plan identified a critical need for more spaces for local artists to work and present their work: “local arts facilities are woefully inadequate and crammed to the rafters.” Also: “Spaces traditionally available in schools are being priced out of reach for amateur groups; professional spaces don’t meet evolving industry standards for attracting revenue generating audience numbers.” The Heritage Plan highlights the critical position for the City of Ottawa Archives, which is in jeopardy without a permanent home, as well as restoration requirements for built heritage and collections stored in inadequate facilities.

- **Resources.** The City of Ottawa, the Arts Plan notes, is at the bottom of the list of major Canadian cities in providing funding to its cultural community.

- **Public awareness.** In both the arts and heritage areas, the need to get the word out was seen as crucial. In large part, this is a function of working in the shadows of the national institutions.

4.4 Halifax

Halifax’s evolution toward a creative city is occurring in a more organic and less planned manner than the above examples. Following what can be described as an incremental approach towards innovation, the Halifax dynamic is characterized by many small steps (programs, awards, and other initiatives) and by the seeding and growth of multiple networks, mostly informal, within the municipal government and throughout the community. These networks are being nurtured and supported in numerous ways: regular information sharing, scheduled formal and informal meetings and gatherings, personal conversations and contacts, encouragements to the cultural community to become more involved in municipal planning processes, and public presentation of renowned “creativity” speakers including, this year, Dr. Richard Florida, former City of Winnipeg Mayor Glen Murray, and Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University President Paul Greenhalgh (collaboratively presented by a coalition of government agencies and business associations).

Through these networks and gatherings, individuals are meeting and discovering common interests and objectives. This is occurring within the municipal government structure, the cultural community, and across the city’s educational, business, cultural, and other sectors. Within the municipality, individuals from various departments are being brought together to discover, for example, that they play an important role in the stewardship of heritage spaces used by a good proportion of the city’s cultural organizations. The potential for community collaborations are also strong: The city’s provision of a digital map to the visual arts community a few years ago led to the community’s development of the Halifax Art Map, currently in its third edition and expanded to cover the entire regional area (not only the urban core).
The business community is supportive of the role that heritage and cultural activities can play in building a vibrant, creative downtown core. Recognition is growing of the connections between an attractive quality of life and strong economic development. The presence of the Nova Scotia College of Art and Design University in the downtown core reinforces this. The diverse research and teaching activities of Halifax’s universities and the large population of students – including young artists – add to the potential for sustained cultural and economic vibrancy.

In Halifax, the various elements of the creative city are in play. The key challenges are familiar: limited staff and budget resources within the municipality for cultural activities and for developing appropriate spaces for arts and cultural organizations; uncertainty about the provincial government’s support for cultural investment; and ongoing tensions across the Halifax Regional Municipality between urban and rural needs and resources.
5.0 Assessing Progress and Returns on Investment

A key policy issue for governments at all levels is evaluation of the return on public investments. In the case of creative cities, the challenge is to develop meaningful indicators for success and frameworks to benchmark progress. Along these lines, the City of Ottawa and the City of Toronto’s plans include a limited set of measures to be reported regularly (annually in Ottawa, every two years in Toronto) to indicate progress. The indicators within the two plans generally focus on outcomes that are measurable and most will be measured as part of civic administrative processes (or inter-municipal initiatives, in the case of per capita comparisons). Both indicator sets reflect the priorities of the respective cities and city plans, and the realities of available data. They remain works in progress for both cities.

5.1 Toronto’s Culture Plan Measures

- Financial investment level (compared to other cities) and returns (funds leveraged by increases in city investments).

- Economic impacts (number of cultural sector jobs created and the impact of the culture sector in Toronto on GDP).

- Ranking on Richard Florida’s Creativity Index.

- Attendance and activity levels for city-funded cultural events and for city-funded programs for youth.

- Level of film and television productions (number of location permits issued).

- Number of new arts organizations funded.

- Number of visitors to Toronto.

- Heritage assets (the number of designated and listed heritage properties).

5.2 Ottawa’s Arts Plan Measures

Ottawa identified three broad areas of creativity measurement.

1. State of the City – measuring investments in the arts (for example, municipal arts grants per capita; arts facility service ratio per capita);

2. State of the Citizen – charting progress within the realm of public education and awareness (survey questions on perception of accessibility/affordability of the arts and awareness of local arts events; number of hours devoted to arts instruction in schools);

3. State of Activity – monitoring the accessibility, opportunity and end products related to both citizen and artist activity (for example, number of offerings involving local artists, number of local arts organizations and collectives), and tracking participation, partnerships and audience rates.
Ottawa also included the city’s ranking on Richard Florida’s Bohemian Index. In general, its suggested measures focus on opportunity levels and citizen participation, activities and partnerships. It did not include financial measures beyond city investment levels.

5.3 Vancouver’s Cultural Development Measures

Over the last 5 years, the City of Vancouver’s Office of Cultural Affairs developed an annual reporting strategy. While not framed as an “evaluating process” or “assessing returns on investment,” the process reports on key achievements and initiatives during the year, the city’s investments (the activities of the projects and organizations in which the city invested), and the current state of the non-profit cultural community.

In the annual review for the Office of Cultural Affairs, the City of Vancouver reports returns on cultural investments in both quantitative and qualitative ways. Primarily, the “returns” are presented in the form of a detailed listing of activities and organizational accomplishments in which the city had invested. Combined organizational revenues for each city dollar invested are also reported. This is accompanied by a “state of the arts” profile that includes statistics on audiences (by artistic discipline), revenues (total overall and from key sources), employment (permanent full-time, part-time and seasonal), volunteers, volunteer hours, and activity levels (number of productions, performances by artistic disciplines). Each year, the most recent three years’ statistics from a core group of about 100 non-profit organizations are examined for any observable trends.

In other reports, returns on investment for particular projects and initiatives are commonly reported as narratives, based on staff knowledge, organization reports, and other communications. The narrative approach may be the clearest manner to explain the purposes and impacts of cultural investments. This is because it allows for reporting intangibles such as personal impact stories from participants, observations of impact and change in a neighbourhood, heightened community identity and pride, recognition outside the city including events and tours that raise the profile through the achievements of its art community, and awards and distinctions achieved by funded organizations.

In sum, it is evident that some progress is now being made in developing indicator templates and benchmarking measures for investments in culture, creativity and innovation. However, more needs to be done to ensure that effective and efficient policies and programs – carefully designed and implemented with sensitivity to the opportunities, challenges, and other dimensions of particular community situations – are in place to help cities and communities realize their full creative potential.
Endnotes

1 The opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Creative City Network.


3 The Vancouver Arts Initiative (VAI) was formed by the Vancouver City Council in 1992 with a mandate to ensure that the city’s continued investment in the arts responds appropriately to the changing social and economic conditions. The VAI consulted with people from diverse cultural communities and artistic disciplines, and collected hundreds of ideas for improving the city’s support for the arts.


5 These principles and practices are based on the author’s experiences working at the City of Vancouver and at the Creative City Network, which has included communicating with municipal cultural development staff in communities across Canada.

6 Kirk Watson, former mayor of Austin, Texas, speaking at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver, March 4, 2004.


8 Observation from presentations at the Challenging Cities in Canada conference, McGill University, February 2004, especially that of David Colman, scientific researcher lured to Montreal from New York City.


10 A growing number of examples of cultural/creative projects making a difference in the economic and social lives of communities (of all sizes) are available on the Creative City Network website (www.creativecity.ca).

11 For details, see Creative City, a profile of the City of Vancouver’s approach to cultural development, and Annual Review 2003. Both are available on the Office of Cultural Affairs Web site: www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/oca.


14 Further defined as: “being proud of what we have and who we are both as the nation’s capital and as a city with a particular history; a vibrant downtown, local arts and heritage; community vitality, creativity and innovation; culture that is present in all the city’s communities; a distinct rural countryside.”

15 The other plans are: economic strategy, environmental strategy, human services plan (focuses on the provision of a range of community services: health, recreation, social services, libraries, arts and heritage, housing, and emergency protection), and official plan (managing physical development).

16 A brief note on the Heritage Plan: The City of Ottawa’s heritage facilities and resources include four city-owned museums, a City Archives, six city-funded, non-profit museums and archives, 88 city-owned heritage resources such as buildings, bridges and gates, archeological sites, several heritage locations, and many rural and urban heritage events. The Heritage Plan defines three strategic directions for Ottawa’s heritage initiatives: (1) identify, collect and preserve; (2) research, interpret and promote; and (3) build capacity. It assigns the city a major responsibility for heritage stewardship, and articulates the community’s expectation that “the City will lead as well as work in partnership with other levels of government, community organizations and the private sector” (p. iii).


18 Collect, protect and showcase Ottawa’s artistic treasures; foster the creation, development and presentation of local artistic work; foster diverse, creative community action; strengthen local arts education and training programs; nurture public art in Ottawa’s neighbourhoods, public spaces and natural places; establish a vibrant
focus for arts and culture in community cores; and support the integration of Ottawa artists with the arts industry.

19 Develop and sustain adequate municipal arts grants investment; develop and sustain new municipal spaces for the local arts; develop and sustain a cultural capital funding program aimed at improving local arts space; establish a municipal, cultural capital reserve fund for new arts facility development; and mount a local, arts marketing campaign.

