



## MEMORANDUM

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**TO:** Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

**FROM:** Catherine McLeod, Manager of Culture and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

**DATE:** March 29, 2023

**MEMO NO.:** BEC-2023-002

**SUBJECT:** Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019 - 2021

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### **PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:**

The purpose of this Memorandum is to present Council with the “Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019-2021” report, appended to this Memorandum. This report covers the period from 2019-2021. It highlights the community value of culture, gives an overview of the Cultural Services division and provides insight into how COVID-19 impacted the arts and culture sector. The latter includes an overview of the sector prior to COVID-19, how the sector was impacted by the pandemic, how it adapted, and the new ways of working that artists and cultural organizations incorporated in order to work in the “new normal”, allowing them to be responsive to changing contexts while continuing to engage audiences. This shift demonstrates the resiliency of the artists, creators and organizations that make up Halton Hills’ vibrant arts and culture sector.

### **BACKGROUND:**

Halton Hills’ arts and culture sector plays an important role in building communities, enhancing quality of life, and contributing to local economic development by attracting investment, cultural tourism and supporting COVID-19 recovery. The Town’s commitment to cultural vibrancy is demonstrated through the delivery of programs and initiatives that support a thriving cultural sector, one that was especially hard hit by the pandemic.

A division of the Business, Environment and Culture Department, Cultural Services implements programs that position Halton Hills as a culturally vibrant, welcoming, diverse and connected community. Cultural Services programs are highly impactful, positively benefiting residents, businesses and visitors, including their well-being and engagement within the community. Culture makes the community more

livable, contributing to economic development by making Halton Hills a preferred location to live, work, create and invest. Quality of Life is a key factor to attracting businesses to locate in a community.

The Cultral Services division supports a thriving arts and culture sector, presents varied cultural programming, collaborates and supports a wide range of cultural community organizations, and leads the Town's Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, and Truth and Reconciliation portfolios. Core services include:

- Support and deliver diverse cultural programing for the community;
- Provide professional development and support to the cultural sector;
- Provide funding, commissioning, presenting, and art sales opportunities;
- Engage and collaborate with cultural leaders and stakeholders;
- Implement the Public Art Program, including temporary and permanent works;
- Operate the Helson Gallery, including delivery of programs and exhibitions;
- Care and maintenance of the Helson, Town and Library art collections;
- Provide community engagement and volunteer opportunities; and
- Collect, analyze and report on key cultural data, indicators, trends and best practices.

Cultural Services' work is supported and directed by the [Community Sustainability Strategy](#), [Cultural Master Plan](#), [Public Art Policy](#), [Public Art Master Plan](#) and the [Economic Development and Tourism Strategy](#).

The current edition of the "Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019-2021" is the next in a series, with prior editions published in 2018 and 2019. The three-year time period covered by this report provides a fulsome perspective of the arts and culture sector and its response to and the impacts of the pandemic.

## **COMMENTS:**

### **1. Value of Culture**

Creative placemaking builds a thriving cultural scene that supports a high quality of life and contributes to economic development by attracting investment. Quality of life has consistently been one of the top 5 factors listed as a reason to invest in the region as ranked by businesses in Halton Region's annual Business Conditions Surveys.

In its first Cultural Strategy released in 2016, the Province of Ontario noted that:

"Engagement in arts and culture is a catalyst for creative thinking and innovation, and communities where arts and culture thrive attract creative, talented and skilled

people to live and work there. These are essential qualities in the knowledge economy and vital to Ontario's future growth and prosperity.”

As noted in the Town's Cultural Master Plan: "...changing economies and customs have shifted the way we live and function. With the decline in traditional manufacturing industries, the development of our communities has transitioned into one that is less anchored to infrastructure. Now many industries, large and small, can choose to locate anywhere and are focusing less on proximity to transportation and natural resources and more on quality of life and community attractiveness. As a result, being a vibrant and culturally thriving place where people want to live is now an essential component of community planning” and the business investment decision-making process.

Culture has long been understood to be inherently valuable. Over the last 30 years, a compelling body of quantitative and qualitative research has been developed to illustrate the importance of arts and culture in a host of areas including, but not limited to, economic development and investment attraction and retention, cultural tourism, community identity and belonging, and health and wellbeing.

Statistics demonstrating the positive impacts of arts and culture in Ontario include:

- Ontario's culture sector directly contributes \$27.5 Billion to the provincial economy annually.<sup>1</sup>
- About 255,000 people are employed in the cultural sector.<sup>1</sup>
- 65% of Ontario business leaders and skilled workers agree that a thriving arts and culture scene is a driving factor when considering relocation.<sup>2,3</sup>
- The average Ontario arts/culture tourist spends twice as much per trip compared to a typical tourist and stays at least one night longer.<sup>4</sup>
- 90% of Ontarians agree that an active local arts scene helps make a community a better place to live.<sup>5</sup>
- 92% of Ontarians agree that exposure to arts and culture is important to individual well-being.<sup>6</sup>
- 86% of Ontarians attend a live arts event or performances at least once a year.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Provincial and Territorial Culture Indicators, 2020, Statistics Canada

<sup>2</sup> Businesses' thoughts on attracting employees through the arts and culture, by Nanos Research for Business for the Arts, May 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Skilled workers' impressions of the arts, by Nanos Research for Business for the Arts, April 2016.

<sup>4</sup> Ontario Arts and Culture Tourism Profile, by Research Resolutions & Consulting Ltd. for the Ontario Arts Council, November 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Impressions of the Impact of the Arts on Quality of Life and Well-Being in Ontario: Ontario Arts Council Survey Findings, by Nanos Research for the Ontario Arts Council, March 2017.

<sup>6</sup> Arts and Heritage Access and Availability Survey 2016-2017, Environics Research Group, March 2017.

## 2. Cultural Sector in Halton Hills

Halton Hills has a thriving arts and cultural sector that is appreciated by residents and attracts visitors.

- The direct economic impact of culture in Halton Hills in 2020 was \$44.7 Million.<sup>7</sup>
- Visual and Applied Arts, Audio Visual and Interactive Media and Written and Published Works are the top contributors to the cultural GDP.<sup>7</sup>
- 90% of Culture Days participants said that the event had a positive impact on their physical and/or mental health, and 87% on their overall well-being.
- 96% agree that arts and culture helps to build strong communities and fosters meaningful community engagement.<sup>8</sup>
- 96% agree that arts and culture improves quality of life.
- 96% agree that arts and culture fosters cultural awareness.
- 71% agree that arts and culture are very important to them, compared to 59% nationally.<sup>8</sup>

## 3. Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019 – 2021

The Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019-2021 report covers the following topics:

- **Value of Culture**  
Summary of select research findings demonstrating the positive impacts of arts and culture in Ontario.
- **Arts & Culture in Halton Hills**  
Summary of select data specifically on the arts and culture sector in Halton Hills.
- **Overview of the Cultural Services Division**  
Outline of the Cultural Services Division, including its mission, core services, key Town policies and plans, a timeline of its first 5 years, staffing and cross-departmental coordination.
- **COVID-19 Impacts, Support and Recovery**  
An overview of the impacts of COVID-19 on the local arts and culture sector, impacts on residents, and recovery and support programs provided by Cultural Services.

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<sup>7</sup> Cultural Statistics Strategy Consortium, Halton Hills report. Partnership of Department of Canadian Heritage, Statistics Canada, Provincial and Territorial Ministries of Culture, Creative Cities Network of Canada and over 30 municipalities (including Halton Hills).

<sup>8</sup> Halton Hills Culture Days Survey, 2021

- **An overview of key Cultural Service Programs**  
Program descriptions and impact statistics for key Cultural Services portfolios including:
  - The Artist Next Door
  - Culture Days
  - The Helson Gallery
  - Professional Development Program
  - Public Art Program
  
- **Snapshot of Collaborative Programs**  
Synopsis of impacts on the cultural sector and Cultural Services' role in the following collaborative programs:
  - Digital Main Street
  - Discover the Hills
  - John Elliott Theatre
  
- **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Truth and Reconciliation**  
Brief overview of Town's commitment and approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Truth Reconciliation with a focus on community cultural programming. These initiatives will be addressed more fully in upcoming reports. The most recent previous report on these initiatives is from [2021](#).
  
- **Marketing & Communications**  
Key statistics on marketing and communications materials created by Cultural Services and their impacts.

Among many others, successes highlighted in the Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2019 – 2021 report, which includes more detail, include:

- 1.2 million Cultral Services impressions and engagements on the Town's social media platforms.
- Increased accessibility to cultural programming through French language and digital offerings.
- Delivery of critical support programs to assist artists, and arts organizations and businesses (e.g. The Artist Next Door, Digital Main Street tools).
- Provision of valuable professional development opportunities to the local arts and culture sector (e.g. Artrepreneur).
- Expanded use and enjoyment of key municipal cultural assets, in particular the Helson Gallery – which welcomed about 10,000 visitors and program participants and was supported by over 1700 volunteer hours.

- Showcasing Halton Hills' rich and diverse arts, cultural, heritage and natural assets (e.g. Discover the Hills).
- Enhancements to the streetscape and public realm through public art projects (e.g. After Nature public art banner installation, Under Wraps).
- Offered more diverse cultural programming opportunities to the public (e.g. Black History Month, Emancipation Day Art Exhibit and Programming, Try Dance Week, #hopeandhealingCanada public art installation, Moccasin Identifier Project).
- Strong community engagement and appreciation of the value of culture and art to the well-being and quality of life of Halton Hills.
- Engagement, support and close collaboration with arts and culture organizations, enabling them to raise their profiles and thrive.
- Achieving Helson Collection certification as Cultural Property by the Canadian Department of Heritage in 2021 - recognizing its outstanding significance.

## **CONCLUSION:**

The arts and culture sector plays an important role in economic development, investment attraction and retention, tourism, community identity and belonging, and health and well-being. It is recognized and valued by Halton Hills residents, visitors and businesses.

Artists, creators and cultural businesses and organizations adapted to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and were able to serve as an important outlet, support and resource to the public during lockdowns. The cultural sector incorporated lessons learned into their products and services allowing them to continue to reach new audiences.

Create Halton Hills contributes to building a diverse, welcoming, connected and vibrant community, providing valuable programs, supports and services to the cultural sector and public. Cultural Services staff continues to work collaboratively with community partners to strengthen and raise the profile of the sector, contribute to a high quality of life and make Halton Hills a preferred location to live, work, create and invest.

Reviewed and approved by,

Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Business, Environment & Culture

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer