



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Lawlor and Members of Council

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

DATE: April 15, 2024

MEMO NO.: BEC-2024-004

SUBJECT: Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022 – 2023 Report

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to present Council with the Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022-2023 report, appended to this Memorandum.

BACKGROUND:

In order to provide a fulsome overview of the work of the Cultural Services Division, Halton Hills' arts and culture sector, the community benefits and projects which can span multiple years, this edition of State of Culture covers 2022 and 2023. It continues from the previous edition which covered up to 2021. Regular updates through media releases, Council announcements, reports and memorandums, the Town's social media and websites and the Create Halton Hills e-newsletter supplement the comprehensive status update and impacts outlined in this edition of State of Culture.

State of Culture 2022-2023 articulates the value of culture, the strong community support for cultural programs and opportunities, the resilience of local artists, creators and organizations that continue to recover from the lasting impacts of COVID-19, and the unique and engaging opportunities that the local creative sector offers to residents and visitors. It provides an overview of the Cultural Services division and its programs to strengthen the creative sector by providing professional development, funding supports and new opportunities for programming and public engagement.

The arts and culture sector plays an important role in supporting a Thriving Economy (a Strategic Plan priority) through investment attraction and retention, cultural tourism including festivals and events, and raising the quality of life. The creative sector also

supports community identity, a sense of belonging, and health and wellbeing that is recognized and valued by residents, visitors, and businesses in Halton Hills.

Cultural Services contributes to building a diverse, connected, vibrant and Safe and Welcoming community (a Strategic Plan priority), providing valuable programs and services to the cultural sector and public. Cultural Services staff works collaboratively with artists, organizations, businesses and community partners to strengthen the creative economy, raise the profile of the sector, and contribute to a high quality of life, and make Halton Hills a preferred location to live, work, play, create and invest.

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 been one of the key factors identified as a reason to invest in a community, including in Halton Region.

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

- Ontario's culture sector directly contributes \$28.7 billion annually to the provincial economy.
- Over 270,000 people work in the cultural sector in Ontario.
- The average arts and culture trip has nearly triple the economic impact of other trips.
- 92% of Ontarians agree that art activities enrich the quality of our lives.
- 82% of Ontarians believe that an active local arts scene helps communities attract business.
- 78% of Ontarians believe that helping make the arts available to people in Ontario is an important government investment.

2. Cultural Sector in Halton Hills

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

- The direct economic impact of culture in Halton Hills in 2021 was \$44.9 million.
- Nearly a quarter of Culture Days participants were tourists (travelled over 40 km).
- 85% of Culture Days participants agreed that attending the events had a positive impact on their pride for their community.
- 79% agree that attending Culture Days had a positive impact on their physical or mental health
- 72% of Culture Days participants agree that arts and culture improves quality of life.

3. Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022 – 2023

The Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022-2023 report covers the following topics:

- **Value of Culture** - Summary of research findings demonstrating the positive impacts of arts and culture in Ontario.
- **Arts & Culture in Halton Hills** - Summary of 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, staffing and partners and collaborators.
- **An overview of key Cultural Service Programs and their impacts** - Program descriptions and impact statistics for key Cultural Services core services including: The Artist Next Door, Culture Days, The Helson Gallery, Professional Development Program, Public Art Program, and OnScreen at the JET.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion and Truth and Reconciliation - Brief overview of the Town's commitment and approach to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion and Truth Reconciliation with a focus on community cultural programming.

Marketing & Communications: Key statistics on marketing and communications materials and campaigns created by Cultural Services, including the Create Halton Hills Newsletter, and their impacts.

4. Successes, Impacts & Benefits to the Community

Select successes highlighted in the Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022 – 2023 report, which includes more detail, include:

- Halton Hills' Culture Days ranked 3rd nationwide amongst communities of all sizes in terms of the number of events presented demonstrating the local arts and culture sector's interest in engaging the community.
- 100% of Culture Days participants were satisfied with the activities they participated in demonstrating the strength of Halton Hills' exceptional local arts and culture sector, the high quality of the programming, and public interest in arts and culture programming.
- The Create Halton Hills newsletter which launched in 2023, had an average open rate of 84% and an average click rate 7.5 times higher than the industry standard which speaks to public interest in arts and culture and the quality and relevance of the information shared.
- Nearly 13,000 visits to Cultural Services pages on the Town and Visit Halton Hills websites illustrating the interest of residents and visitors in the offerings of the cultural sector.

- Enhancements to the streetscape and public realm through public art projects including the popular Under Wraps Program and Bell Box Mural Project, resulting in 23 artworks displayed on utility cabinets across Halton Hills.
- Successfully delivered Art Around Acton in partnership with the Downtown Acton BIA, securing a \$100,000 grant for its implementation. This program provided residents and visitors with 7 temporary and permanent public art activations in downtown Acton.
- Provision of valuable professional development opportunities and support programs to the local arts and culture sector including The Artist Next Door and Artpreneur.
- Expanded use and enjoyment of key municipal cultural assets, in particular the Helson Gallery – which welcomed about 8,500 visitors and program participants and was supported by over 1000 volunteer hours.
- Facilitated 170 art sales for local artists through the Helson Gallery
- Offered diverse cultural programming opportunities to the public in partnership with community organizations.
- Engagement, support and collaboration with over 420 artists, arts and culture organizations, groups and businesses increasing their capacity to raise their profiles and thrive.

CONCLUSION:

The Create Halton Hills: State of Culture 2022 – 2023 report demonstrates the value of culture to residents, visitors and businesses. It provides a snapshot of the significant benefits and impacts of arts and culture, and the public programs and supports provided to the arts and culture sector through the Cultural Services division.

The arts and culture sector plays a role in supporting Council's Strategic Plan priority of a Thriving Economy through investment attraction and retention, cultural tourism, and raising the quality of life. The creative economy contributes about \$45 million directly to the municipal GDP. The creative sector also supports community identity, a sense of belonging, and health and wellbeing.

Cultural Services contributes to Council's Strategic Plan Priority of a Safe and Welcoming community through building a diverse, connected, and vibrant community, providing valuable programs and services to the cultural sector and public. Cultural Services staff works collaboratively with over 420 artists, organizations, businesses and 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, play, create and invest.

Reviewed and approved by,
 Damian Szybalski, Commissioner of Business, Environment & Culture
 Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer