



draft

TOWN OF OAKVILLE Parks, Recreation, Culture, and Library Master Plan

Cultural Facilities Analysis

February 2006

DRAFT / PRELIMINARY

PREAMBLE:

This report contains an analysis of cultural facility needs for the Town of Oakville. This report does not contain any final recommendations or priorities – these will be addressed in the Master Plan – but it does provide a number of strategic options to address the various issues.

The analysis includes a number of inputs, including the guiding principles, stakeholder consultation, public surveys, consultation with municipal representatives, internal and external trends and issues, demographic considerations, facility inventories, industry standards, etc.



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Note: Indoor and outdoor recreation facilities, library facilities, parks, open space, and trails are addressed in separate, but inter-related background documents.

1. INTRODUCTION

a) Context

Cultural activities and opportunities abound in Oakville, including numerous museums, heritage sites, art galleries, performing arts venues, festivals, and visual arts and crafts programs, to name a few. The Town has recognized the importance of arts and culture by making it core service within the Recreation and Culture Department. Other significant advancements include the establishment of an Arts Council and a Cultural Advisory Committee, as well as employing staff who are dedicated to the maintenance, promotion and presentation of the arts.

Oakville has a rich history of cultural depth. More than any other community the consultants have surveyed, Oakville has a strong appreciation for the importance of culture as an integral part of living and learning. Although there are economic benefits both to individuals and to the community as a whole, it is the local citizens’ cultural needs that are seen as needing the greatest attention through this assessment.

The need to support cultural activities and their role in improving quality of life, economic growth and innovation is key and central to this Master Plan’s Guiding Principles. A report by Richard Florida called "Competing on Creativity" suggests:

"To be successful in this emerging creative age, regions must develop, attract and retain talented and creative people ... The ability to attract creative people in arts and culture fields and to be open to diverse groups of people of different ethnic, racial and lifestyle groups provides distinct advantages to regions".

Arts and culture, however, are broad terms that can mean different things to different people. As such, planning for cultural facilities and services must consider a wide range of factors and is not so much a scientific or calculated exercise as it is a flexible and adaptive approach that utilizes a number of qualitative inputs.

b) Scope

For the purpose of the Town of Oakville Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan, the assessment will focus on the physical facilities and delivery system considerations associated with cultural pursuits such as performing arts, visual arts, heritage and general crafts. A further emphasis is placed on entry level, cost efficient programs that emphasize basic skill

development; in relation to arts and culture, this means that the Plan will focus on opportunities for local “amateur” artists and participants, rather than on accommodating or training professional artists. Lastly, while the Plan addresses the cultural needs of the local citizens in all life stages, a considerable emphasis is placed on the needs of young people.

The format of this report varies from other documents prepared for the Master Plan. It is more difficult to separate cultural activities by age category and there are no “minor arts associations”. In addition there is the added dimension to the arts as a source of “entertainment” – the benefits are not only accrued by the active participants, but also by the audience and spectators at performances, exhibits, and special events. Oakville Galleries, the Centre for the Performing Arts, and the Museum are already a part of the fabric of Oakville. However, just as the Town provides space opportunities for youth to participate in skating events, swimming, soccer, baseball and a host of other athletic endeavours, space and assistance in community development is needed in the area of the arts.

2. THE “CREATIVE CLASS” AND OTHER TRENDS

a) Creative Class & Cities

Cultural activities at both participatory and spectator levels are an essential element to the leisure pursuits demanded by citizens. Through the provision of physical space for cultural activities and staff to facilitate the activities, the cultural fabric of the community can prosper and grow. A strong cultural community can benefit tourism, the commercial arts, music and performing community, the multi-cultural community, and local business establishments (restaurants, hotels, music and arts stores, etc.).

Today municipalities refer to the “creative city” or the “creative economy”. These terms generally refer to both the economic forces and the quality of life that arts and cultural activities create, thereby increasing the community’s competitive edge or degree of desirability. The creative economy is generally seen as being composed of three key components:

1. The Creative Cluster – defined as those enterprises and individuals that directly and indirectly produce cultural products;
2. The Creative Workforce – defined as the thinkers and doers trained in specific cultural and artistic skills including not only artists, musicians and painters, but educators, architects, photographers, technicians, manufacturers, etc.
3. The Creative Community – defined as a geographic area with a concentration of creative workers, creative business and cultural organizations.

Our assessment indicates that Oakville is very much a “creative community” that highly values its creative workforce and opportunities.

Much of the current emphasis on the “creative class” comes from the work of Peter Hall and Richard Florida. The following points are adapted from Hall’s book, *Cities in Civilization* and Florida’s book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*; these points provide a framework within which to define a response to “cultural creatives” for the Town of Oakville.

- The creative class includes scientists and engineers, university professors, architects and designers, artists, writers, entertainers, actors, musicians, researchers, advertisers, media and knowledge-based professionals.

- The driving force behind the growth of the creative class is the rise of human creativity as the key factor in our economy and society. It combines artistic and intellectual creativity with technological innovation. Multimedia technology is the basic platform.
- The creative class supports lifestyle and cultural institutions such as a cutting-edge theatre or music community, or a progressive artistic community. These 'cultural creatives' need to live in places that offer stimulating, creative environments, abundant high-quality amenities and experiences, openness to diversity of all kinds and the opportunity to validate their identities as creative people.
- For the creative class, culture is 'street-level' and clusters along certain streets lined with a multitude of venues. It has to provide a diverse mix of creative people open to new ideas; with different skill sets and ideas; people who will generate new combinations and higher rates of innovation.
- The presence of a major research university is a basic infrastructure component of the Creative Economy. Creative Communities surrounding the university must be able to absorb and utilize it within a social structure of creativity.
- Quality of place is the key economic and social organizing unit. Open places with a unique buzz, and a special kind of energy, where difference is welcomed and creativity is encouraged provide the ecosystems that harness human creativity and often turn it into economic value. These places become urban tourist destinations.

From the points above, it can be concluded that cultural creativity needs:

- a creative and innovative environment;
- cutting-edge public institutions;
- a street-level creative cluster;
- the presence of post-secondary innovation (talent pool);
- a place for human exchange that will facilitate creativity by bringing together creative people who are open to new ideas, who possess different skill sets and ideas and who can generate new combinations of ideas that lead to higher rates of innovation; and
- an enhanced technological infrastructure with multimedia and virtualization as the base.

b) Other Considerations and Trends

- Studies have shown that performing arts audiences are relatively well off and well educated – two characteristics that are generally consistent with Oakville's population – suggesting that Oakville should and does have higher than average participation rates in the realm of arts and culture.
- There has also been growth in Ontario's arts and craft industry and input from local residents have indicated a continued demand in this area. Some research exists to support the claim that lifelong learning may generate greater interest in short-term courses and workshops.
- The overall "time crunch" being experienced by many Canadians impacts participation in all leisure pursuits, including arts and cultural activities. Not surprisingly, the 65+ age

group has the greatest amount of free time and those in the 25 to 44 age category have the least. This supports the notion that casual and unstructured activity programs for older adults (as well as festivals and special events) will offer the greatest opportunity for growth.

3. INVENTORY OF FACILITIES AND ORGANIZATIONS

Local community centres, schools, libraries and churches are used by many of the arts and cultural groups for programs, rehearsals and performances. In terms of municipally-owned cultural venues, the Town of Oakville provides the following:

- Centre for the Performing Arts
- Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square and in Gairloch Gardens
- Charles Sovereign House
- Erchless Estate Museum
- Town Hall (meeting rooms and exhibit space)

Unlike indoor or outdoor recreational facilities, however, requirements for physical cultural and heritage resources cannot be determined based on quantified per capita provision or distribution standards.

The Town also has an impressive list of community organizations (see Appendix 1).

The Oakville Arts Council (OAC) represents a significant number of groups and individuals with an interest in the arts, culture and heritage dimensions of Oakville. The OAC has four main functions: advisory, resource development, communication, and programming. The Council administers the distribution of an annual granting program for the Town of Oakville; last year OAC distributed \$78,000 to a variety of arts and cultural organizations and individuals.

The Oakville Arts Council recently folded and is currently in the process of re-defining itself and its mandate, although its focus is expected to remain on encouraging and facilitating the arts and culture in Oakville. **The community and Town should assist in clarifying the role and mandate of the OAC, including how the Council will serve its membership and how it will relate to the community and Town.**

On a related note, the Town recently formed a Cultural Advisory Committee. One of the many functions of this Committee is to advise Town Council on issues and policies pertaining to the development and promotion of community-wide arts and heritage initiatives. **In order to help the Cultural Advisory Committee fully achieve the objectives it has been assigned, additional support staff dedicated to the cultural resources of Oakville may be required.**

4. PUBLIC CONSULTATION

The Master Plan's public consultation program provided strong support for continued attention to the arts and cultural and historical dimension of recreation.

For example, the household telephone survey found a healthy involvement in cultural pursuits by Oakville residents. Almost half of Oakville households attended a theatre production last year and, while many attended events in Toronto, about half of the respondents attended productions in Oakville. In addition 34% of Oakville households have visited an art gallery in the past year with 42% of those attending having visited a gallery in Oakville. A similar number of households have visited a museum in the past year (35%) and, although 52% of those individuals visited a museum in Toronto, 22% did visit the Oakville museum. When asked what additional programs the Town should offer, programs/courses relating to the expression of creativity were the second most requested items.

At the Community Search Conference held in late 2004, Erchless Estate, the Centre for the Performing Arts, and the Waterfront Festival were identified amongst the top ten things that Oakville "does best". Og₂ (Oakville Galleries in Gairloch Gardens and at Centennial Square), Oakville Symphony Orchestra, the Jazz Festival and the Festival of Classics were in the top twenty items listed. Among the items identified as things Oakville needs to do better were the provision of an arts centre for music, visual arts, theatre and studios, more music and cultural programs for youth, and more funding for cultural groups.

The Oakville High School Survey showed a surprisingly high percentage of youth participating in dance, theatre and music. The skating and hockey participation rate was 38%, while participation in dance, theatre and music was 37% (swimming topped the list followed by cycling, basketball, soccer and fitness). When the youth were asked what additional programs they would like to see, performing arts was the number one response, followed closely by skateboarding.

The 2004 Citizen Survey also showed the high esteem the residents give to cultural venues and programs. Although parks and libraries were ranked higher, cultural venues such as the Museum and the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts were ranked fourth highest amongst other services in terms of satisfaction.

Furthermore, greater attention to cultural requirements was among the top eight items suggested by the numerous groups interviewed as part of the Master Plan process.

Lastly, in 2003, the Oakville Arts Council surveyed 32 arts group member organizations and found that their key issues were:

- (1) the need for affordable space to accommodate increasing membership for meetings, performances, storage, etc.;
- (2) continued promotion to increase visibility; and
- (3) sponsorship and partnership development support with other groups, business and educational institutions.

5. FACILITY PROVISION ISSUES & STRATEGIES

Based on public input, the greatest need in terms of cultural facilities appears to be space for local talent to rehearse, display, store and perform musical concerts in an acoustically designed space. Local artists and volunteers associated with local groups in all dimensions of the arts have expressed frustration at not being able to find affordable or suitable space. There is also a strong movement to bring a variety of cultural and artistic forms under one roof to help build on the synergies that each group can offer. A community centre with emphasis on the cultural needs of Oakville rather than the sports-oriented needs is a common request from the community.

Youth and artists need affordable space if they are to produce significant works and remain within Oakville. Artists need venues that are not commercial or curated museums or art galleries and the public needs to be able to see their work. To meet these needs, there should be something between the very professional and the very amateur level of art, whether visual or performing. The Town should ensure that cost-effective space is available and readily accessible to developing creative individuals and audiences within Oakville.

The challenge to the Town is how to provide cultural opportunities at a professional level for both the “gathering” benefit as well as the cultural enrichment while providing opportunities for the growth of local cultural groups and individuals. This Master Plan has as its priority the needs of the local community with emphasis on youth and entry level experiences. Although the viewing or spectator aspects of culture are important and are a significant component of the cultural experience, the higher order aspect of performing arts, galleries and museums will require topic specific feasibility studies to properly assess the corporate/community benefits.

The following analysis examines each facility type separately, however, the issues and potential strategies for addressing the issues are very much inter-related. To address this matter, the recommendations contained within each facility assessment are summarized at the end of the document.

a) Creative Arts Centre

A local citizen group has formed under the name of MASS (Music and Art Shared Space) to promote the development of a creative arts centre for community music, arts and crafts in Oakville. They would like a 40,000 square foot centre that suits the needs of local residents and provides space for meetings, conferences, workshops, classes, studios, rehearsals, storage, performances, and exhibitions. The focus will be on visual arts and music, not drama or dance. They would see the Centre being operated by a non-profit organization. Their preliminary concept includes 3 studios for the Oakville Arts Society, 1 large studio for fibre guilds, 1 large multi-purpose exhibit/performance hall (no fixed seating), dedicated music rooms, recording space, multi-purpose rooms, 3 small private lesson rooms, reference library, gallery and gift shop, café, outdoor garden/park, boardroom, administrative and office space.

The group is hopeful that they can obtain Federal Government support for \$1-2 million and have committed to a local fundraising campaign. They expect the centre to cost in the vicinity of \$10 million and are looking for the Town or Province to donate land and matching capital funds.

Although we are in agreement that there is a need for greater opportunities for arts and cultural activities, programs, rehearsals, storage, and studios, we do not concur that there is a need for

a stand-alone 40,000 square foot arts centre. Given the amount of community space already available in the community and the synergies created by co-locating such a facility with other recreation and culture spaces, it would be beneficial to consider a smaller venue that could be combined with other civic spaces.

In response to the needs identified by MASS and other groups and citizens in the community, **it is recommended that one or more of the following strategies be considered:**

- (1) Centennial Square could be redeveloped to create a “Creativity and Innovation Centre” at such time as space becomes available in the existing Central Library (due to new main library being developed) and Centre for the Performing Arts. The vacated portion of library space could be renovated and – together with creative use of the plaza, the parking lot and potentially Centennial Pool in the longer-term – would provide for an enhanced Centre for the Performing Arts (through redevelopment of the lower studio theatre), a single more suitable site for Oakville Galleries, and studios and rehearsal space for the arts and cultural community. Partnerships, a coordinated fundraising strategy, and a unique management and delivery model will all be required to make this project a success.
- (2) When a new community centre is developed to serve the recreational needs of the population growth in the north and northwest (potentially along the Trafalgar Road corridor, north of Dundas Street), the facility could be designed to accommodate cultural and art programming and activities as well as recreational programs.
- (3) Any redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth Park and former school site should give consideration to appropriate space for arts programming.
- (4) The Town of Oakville could pursue a partnership with MASS at any future Community Centre or major civic facility development. The partnership is recommended to be in a similar vein as the recently developed gymnastics facility at Glen Abbey Community Centre and should be consistent with the partnership framework established through this Master Plan process.

The first three options described above are explored in more detail in the following text.

b) Creativity & Innovation Centre

As mentioned earlier, the Town of Oakville has a very active and committed cultural community and a vibrant downtown area which comes very close to matching the description of a “culturally creative area” as defined by Richard Florida. The public buildings and services located along Navy Street, Lakeshore Road and Water Street (including the Public Library, Oakville Galleries the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts, and Erchless Estates) are a natural extension of the vibrant downtown area. This area combines historic buildings, significant museums and galleries, and charming residential and commercial districts.

In order to support cultural creativity, **it is recommended that the Town of Oakville consider further development of community space with an arts, culture, innovation and information focus along Navy Street, building on the strengths of the existing infrastructure.** For the purposes of this document, the facility concept for this area is referred to as the “Creativity and Innovation Centre”.

If developed in conjunction with a down-scaling of the size of the existing Central Library to a branch library and creative architectural, renovations involving the interconnection of the various buildings at Centennial Square, this area could be transformed into a “community centre campus” with an arts and cultural focus. Furthermore, the potential future re-purposing of Centennial Pool offers an additional opportunity for expanding the arts and cultural focus of this site.

The Creativity and Innovation Centre would be an excellent place/space with the potential to facilitate human creativity and innovation. The Public Library is an extension of the vibrant downtown area and is a poster child for a street-level creative cluster. The entire Centennial Square site is well positioned to serve as a place that will combine cultural and intellectual creativity with technological innovation.

Developing a “Creativity and Innovation Centre” would be in line with the suggestions from the Community Search Conference and other consultation events undertaken for the Master Plan. The Search Conference concluded that Oakville “needs an arts centre for music, visual arts, theatre, studios, etc.” Although the creative and innovative area would not replace the need for an arts centre, it would complement such a centre.

To serve the creative class, the facility needs to be ‘hip’ and a place to ‘hang-out’. This could be accomplished by establishing the Centre as the “hub’ that facilitates the development of a critical mass of intellectual exchange in Oakville by providing a ‘multitude of small physical and virtual venues’ where people can interact with others unlike themselves. The venues could be developed on a phased and modular basis so that they can be morphed into specific purpose spaces as required. By providing more creativity space there could be a more unified partnership for the institutions that inhabit the area around the plaza. Technology could be used to tie the centre to the streetscape through the use of screens that would broadcast what was happening on the street to the plaza and vice-versa. Renovations should also take into account the waterside of this complex and the interface with the public parkland.

The Creativity and Innovation Centre could be tied in to the general cultural and technological environment in Oakville. The Centre should be developed in partnership with the institutions already located in the area, including:

- Oakville Public Library;
- Oakville Galleries and Erchless Estates (Exhibit space - Art, craft and new media space, art installations);
- Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (Performance and Studio Space); and
- Oakville Museum.

Space could also be available for other cultural and educational agencies such as:

- Sheridan College;
- Oakville Arts Council;
- Oakville Historical Society;
- Bronte Historical Society;
- Tourism Oakville; etc.

Some of the many services and spaces that could potentially be developed at the Creativity and Innovation Centre include, but should be limited to:

- collaborative work areas and idea incubation space
- multi-media space / media centre (for viewing, production, broadcasting, etc.)
- technology centre
- interactive kiosks
- expanded performing arts studio space
- traditional and non-traditional library programming (e.g., virtual book clubs, children's storytime, author readings)
- community café
- local history discovery centre
- creative collections (books, videos, DVDs, CDs, etc.)

Extensive storage is not appropriate for this location due to the premium placed on land/space, however, the proposed uses will require appropriate work space.

It also bears mentioning that, while the Town of Oakville and Oakville Public Library are already advanced in the use of technology, patrons also value the human element that comes with interaction with others and well as various mediums. The vision for the Creativity and Innovation Centre should accommodate new technologies as well as the hands-on experience that comes with artistic and cultural endeavours. A wide range of experiences could be offered in various areas of the site, with each experience complementing, but not defeating, the other.

If the concept of a Creativity and Innovation Centre is to be considered, the Town and its Cultural Advisory Committee should undertake a comprehensive investigation of the ideal combination of facilities, partnerships, and space allocation.

Partnerships for construction and operation should be encouraged and pursued. Due to the diverse nature of governance structures and cultural functionality, partnerships and co-operation are essential.

In the area of fundraising, the Town should establish a corporate approach to ensure non-duplication of efforts and to maximize potential returns; a co-ordinated fundraising strategy should be implemented as there will likely be no funding available for this facility through Development Charges.

In addition, a unique integrated delivery model will need to be designed to ensure efficient management and effective coordination of the complex housing multiple functions and shareholders; the facility needs to function as a cohesive space regardless of past silos of responsibilities.

c) Dedicated and Multi-Purpose Community Centre Space

The new growth in Oakville is occurring in the northern portion of the Town. With this new growth will come the need for a new community centre (as discussed in other sections of the Parks, Recreation, Culture and Library Master Plan). Community centres can be more than arenas, pools and gymnasias; they can also include space that is capable of being programmed

for the visual and performing arts. Making multi-purpose space truly multi-purpose – even by simple design considerations as adding sinks, improving acoustics, or installing sprung floors – could result in a space that can also serve as an arts and cultural centre.

Although the community centres to date have not been a hub for the visual or performing arts, cultural and arts programs have been offered by the Town and space is available to any group wishing to use the facilities. What is lacking is a community centre with a more sympathetic design to the special needs of the cultural community. **It is recommended that the Town consider space capable of accommodating rehearsals, art classes, dance classes, pottery, performances and possibly storage when designing future community centres in Queen Elizabeth Park and North Oakville.**

d) **Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts**

Almost thirty years ago, Oakville developed a Centre for the Performing Arts in the downtown. The facility serves the community well at the present time. There has been considerable concern raised throughout the planning process of the Master Plan, however, that more space and functionality is needed to allow the cultural community to move forward with both their individual plans as well as the collective cultural growth of Oakville.

The level of activity at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts has greatly increased in recent years (from 180 performances in 1998 to 254 in 2001). This facility provides a showcase for the local talents of community performing arts groups and individuals, as well as a wide variety of touring musical, dance and performing arts events.

As it stands, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts is not likely to attract many more touring shows/events unless it expands. The notion of expansion has been proposed in the past and many local performing drama groups have expressed concerns. For example, their current sponsorships can fill the existing facility and they can barely afford the space as it is. The groups feel that an expanded Centre for the Performing Arts could result in a more expensive facility and greater difficulty filling the seats. They also fear being displaced by non-local professional performers.

The present size allows the centre to accommodate both local and professional performers for what have been identified as the needs of the community during the time period of this Master Plan. Any enlargement or reduction in seating capacity at this time would likely marginalize one of these types of performers and disrupt the current balance.

Deciding whether or not the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts should or should not be expanded requires an assessment and analysis of not only the needs of the local youth and amateur arts and cultural participants, but also the professional and corporate imaging elements of a theatre space. This is beyond the scope of this Master Plan. Expansion to accommodate the ultimate population requirements or the corporate image / tourism / economic development would require further study. With this being the case and until such time as a detailed feasibility study has been prepared for the Centre, **it is recommended that the Centre for the Performing Arts continue to maintain a balance between local community groups and touring groups.**

Some short-term improvements, however, are recommended. First is redesigning the front portion of the building as part of a recommendation to interconnect the various uses of the

Centennial Square site (as part of the Creativity and Innovation Centre concept). The improvements to the lobby and street-front appearance of the Centre for the Performing Arts should be undertaken in harmony with the recommendations relating to the Central Library, Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square and the Centennial Pool and should occur as part of an overall feasibility study and business plan. Second, consideration should also be given to expanding the studio theatre space on the lower level. A larger studio theatre would benefit local groups in particular by providing more space for rehearsals, performances and associated activities.

e) Oakville Galleries

The Oakville Galleries, ranked sixth in the nation, present a mixture of work by both travelling and local artists in thematically linked exhibitions and provide a number of related educational programs. Oakville Galleries operates facilities at two locations, Gairloch Gardens and Centennial Square.

Operating multiple locations is not the ideal arrangement from an administrative, economic or public awareness perspective and there has been discussion within the community about establishing one suitably located gallery site. Both Oakville Galleries venues are undersized and neither location is suitable for the material that is being displayed as both facilities are not HVAC controlled. Furthermore, the Gairloch Gardens site is located in a fairly isolated residential area in a renovated house, while the Centennial Square site is a relatively small space that is perceived to be an extension of the Central Library. One properly functioning, prominently located gallery would be the ideal.

The Galleries Board has indicated in the past that one location would be preferred, however, more discussion is required with the Oakville Galleries and the Town of Oakville in order to determine under what conditions a consolidation on one site could be considered. With the potential downsizing of the existing Central Library and the development of a “Creativity and Innovation Centre”, the Oakville Galleries has an excellent opportunity at Centennial Square. Part of the discussion should include the need for a balance between the desire to promote professional art and the needs of the local community to display their work. Should Centennial Square be redesigned and re-focussed on meeting the information and cultural creativity needs of the community, **it is recommended that the Town and the Oakville Galleries Board consider consolidating the functions of the two locations at the Centennial Square site.**

In addition, a request was received by local citizens to develop a community gallery (either through expansion, redevelopment or new development). The current technique of displaying local art in Town Hall and libraries should be expanded to include other municipal spaces, where appropriate. **Should the Town develop one or more community centres containing multi-purpose, arts and cultural space, consideration should be given to accommodating local art displays.**

f) Museum – Erchless Estate

The Town of Oakville’s museum is located at the Erchless Estate. The dwelling, carriage house and gardens occupy a breathtaking location on the banks of Lake Ontario just south of the lawn bowling club, Central Library and the downtown.

As noted in the Museum's proposed site plan, there is a need to improve the signage both to the facility and at the facility. Parking issues have also been identified; the existing parking lot occupies prime tableland and is not very attractive. Parking might be better located off of King Street. Fences also need to be addressed to help improve the visual appearance of portions of the site and to define space. Gardens and landscaping improvements have also been recommended as well as the need to either renovate or remove the Oakville Heritage Society building. In order to strengthen the role of this facility in the community as the flagship for historical preservation, **it is recommended that the improvements set out in the proposed site plan be implemented and that the museum work to expand its outreach services through cooperative efforts with other like-minded delivery agents in the Town.**

6. SERVICE DELIVERY ISSUES & STRATEGIES

The following are a series of inter-related issues and potential strategies affecting the delivery of cultural services and programs, such as staffing, marketing, funding, etc. The purpose of this section is to address the most pressing matters facing the cultural community (as we understand them), rather than being a full review of services, policies and procedures affecting this component of leisure. For some additional direction, please refer to [Appendix 2](#), which contains a number of strategies for achieving a stronger more inclusive cultural community as derived from a report entitled *Creative Manitoba: An Economic Development Strategy for the Cultural Sector*.

a) Dedicated Staff

As the cultural community grows, some organizations are concerned that the needs of the arts, culture and heritage community are not receiving the same proportion of attention that is assigned to physical sports. Suggestions have been received during the course of this Master Plan that consideration be given for a structure within the Recreation and Culture Department that would coordinate all cultural activities of the Town (e.g., those planned and delivered by the Centre for the Performing Arts, Oakville Galleries, Oakville Museum, Library, local groups, Arts Council, etc.). We concur that there is a need for additional municipal staff resources to be allocated toward facilitating the cultural community in Oakville and the Town should consider ways to provide an enhanced level of service in this regard.

It is recommended that additional dedicated staff are needed to act as a catalyst, promote, assist and help to develop arts and cultural activities while ensuring that the interest is community-initiated. Staff should have skills in production or organization, marketing, fundraising, and volunteer management. Staff could be responsible for grant applications, subsidy evaluations and ongoing monitoring of the status of Oakville relative to other municipalities in the area of art and culture. Monitoring of the economic impact of culture and tourism on the community could be shared with the Economic Development Corporation. Updating of a tracking calendar of arts and cultural activities would also be within their area of responsibility.

b) Special Events

The Town of Oakville has established a solid relationship with the residents and has promoted community involvement and community development in all aspects of recreation, including arts and cultural programs and activities and the preservation and promotion of heritage. Volunteer

groups, however, continue to request additional support and training. While we agree that there is a need for dedicated staff to the cultural community there are concerns that special events are putting added burdens on staff without appropriate compensation. Some special events programs, such as the Waterfront Festival, have paid staff, other special events and tournaments are run by volunteers, and other special events are run by organizations that are not locally-based. All festivals, tournaments and special events are an asset to the Town and are enjoyed by the residents. The aging population trend suggests that even more special events would do well in Oakville.

Large cultural events that are affiliated with the Town require Town staff support. **It is recommended that special events continue to be run by the community organizations and volunteers with more appropriate use of staff time.**

A more formal arrangement of the hours required of Town staff to assist in the setting up and breaking down of special events should be developed and appropriate fees set to ensure equity between groups and the demands placed on staff. **It is recommended that the Recreation and Culture Department develop consistent criteria regarding the commitment / responsibility of Town employees regarding the organization of special events.** The criteria needs to clearly identify both the appropriate level of staff time and the appropriate level of financing to be provided to special events, tournaments and festivals. The cost of providing a service to festivals, special events and tournaments needs to be tracked to provide more reasoned criteria.

c) Marketing

The consultation program has yielded suggestions for improved coordination between the cultural/artistic, tourism, economic development and recreation communities. Oakville has a very vibrant arts, culture and heritage minded community; this is a resource that needs to be nurtured. Visitors and residents alike need to be informed of the variety of recreational and entertainment opportunities that exist. In addition, economic and tourism efforts should include the promotion of and assistance to the various arts, heritage and cultural activities of Oakville. This direction is being partially addressed through the creation of the Cultural Advisory Committee and would be further satisfied through the establishment of dedicated staff and an appropriate management model.

It is recommended that the Town and its partners establish a coordinated arts marketing infrastructure and strategy. By better informing the public of events there is the potential to have higher attendance levels and greater revenue generation. This strategy should also aim at creating a recognizable and coherent image of Creative Oakville.

For example, by utilizing the skills of the Oakville Arts Council, the Cultural Advisory Committee, staff, and possibly the Economic Development Corporation, brochures and promotional material can be developed to complement a wider variety of programs. Like the three theatre groups, joint subscription packages could be developed and improved mapping on locations for both performances and programming developed. One consistent voice to the media could also evolve from this marketing strategy. A coordinated tracking calendar tracks all events to reduce conflicts and to promote a fuller range of events could be developed and posted on the web.

d) School Board Connections / Programming

The High School Survey indicated a strong preference for more arts programming. The Town should continue to nurture its partnership with school boards and the private sector to ensure that the artistic community of Oakville continues to have a wide range of opportunities for both programming and performing. The various cultural facilities and responsibilities need to be coordinated, supported, developed, and encouraged.

Although beyond the scope of this Master Plan to alter the education curriculum, communications with the school boards on methods of increasing the opportunities for students of all ages to experience and participate in the visual and performing arts should be pursued. The existing Town Youth Committee could be asked to assist in identifying what programs should be offered, how to reduce costs and increase accessibility. Through this and similar initiatives, existing arts and cultural organizations could be encouraged to provide more programs for youth. **It is recommended that existing and potential arts and cultural opportunities at local schools be one of the areas of focus for the proposed Community Cultural Plan.**

e) Cultural Grants

Several local cultural organizations felt that the level of funding available to them was less than adequate, particularly considering the larger amounts that are available to sports and recreation groups through the Town grant process. To address this issue, some municipalities are considering the creation of a cultural trust or foundation to raise endowment funds in partnership with all cultural organizations.

Within reason, what one does with one's leisure time pursuits should not be excessively influenced by cost. The level of subsidy for participation in baseball, hockey, soccer, dance, music, or drama (for example) should be based on the age of the user (particularly youth) and the magnitude of participants and not simply on tradition. **It is recommended that affordable access to arts and cultural opportunities for youth be a priority; this will likely require greater equity between the municipal grants allotted to recreation and culture.** This will require additional information on the age groups that affiliated organizations serve to ensure that the grant is appropriately applied.

In order to provide a more equitable distribution of funding to the youth arts programs, the current funding formulae and subsidy procedures will need to be reassessed. In setting appropriate grants and subsidies, staff should consider annual municipal per capita investment in other comparable "creative cities". In addition, the economic indicators such as jobs created in the arts, tourism opportunities and overall ranking on the Creativity Index should be considered as well. The development of grants and other incentives could also lead to increased levels of public support and more income potential for local organizations.

f) Community Cultural Plan

The Town move in a phased and systematic manner in addressing arts, culture and heritage priorities. Many needs can be met through one coordinated effort by aligning projects (e.g., developing a new library → re-utilizing the vacated space for a cultural centre → expanding the

lobby at the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts → considering one consolidated art gallery), all the while retaining a focal point for cultural activity within the downtown core area.

Furthermore, by being more sensitive to the needs of the cultural community in the design of the next community centre, the space limitations for the arts community should be improved. The Town also needs to increase or re-emphasize the importance of public art and use municipal buildings as leading examples of utilizing public space for art display. A continued emphasis on the preservation of landmark buildings, heritage structures and heritage neighbourhoods and the celebration of the Town's cultural roots is another logical step.

To achieve this, it is recommended that the Town develop a Community Cultural Plan that will provide the framework for the future planning of arts and cultural facilities and services for the varied stakeholder groups in the community. The Plan should establish a vision, goals and strategic actions that will address facility, service and activity needs.

As mentioned above, the Community Cultural Plan should examine ways of improving arts and cultural opportunities at local schools. An inventory of existing and potential space for exhibitions, performances, rehearsals, studios, instruction and storage needs to be developed as part of the Community Cultural Plan; this could also involve the school boards and local churches. As a first step, there is a need to integrate more arts and cultural programs into existing public facilities.

7. SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED STRATEGIES

It is recommended that:

1. In order to accommodate the needs of local artisans the following options be considered:
 - a) Centennial Square could be redeveloped to create a "Creativity and Innovation Centre" at such time as space becomes available in the existing Central Library (due to new main library being developed) and Centre for the Performing Arts. The vacated portion of library space could be renovated and – together with creative use of the plaza, the parking lot and potentially Centennial Pool in the longer-term – would provide for an enhanced Centre for the Performing Arts (through redevelopment of the lower studio theatre), a single more suitable site for Oakville Galleries, and studios and rehearsal space for the arts and cultural community. Partnerships, coordinated fundraising, and a unique management and delivery model will all be required to make this project a success.
 - b) When a new community centre is developed to serve the recreational needs of the population growth in the north and northwest (potentially along the Trafalgar Road corridor, north of Dundas Street), the facility could be designed to accommodate cultural and art programming, displays and activities as well as recreational programs.
 - c) Any redevelopment of Queen Elizabeth Park and former school site should give consideration to appropriate space for arts programming and displays.
 - d) The Town of Oakville could pursue a partnership with MASS at any future Community Centre or major civic facility development. The partnership is recommended to be in a similar vein as the recently developed gymnastics

facility at Glen Abbey Community Centre and should be consistent with the partnership framework established through this Master Plan process.

2. Until such time as a Performing Arts Cultural Study or detailed feasibility study has been undertaken, the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts should:
 - a) not be expanded; and
 - b) continue to maintain a balance between local community groups and touring groups.
3. In the short-term, improvements should be undertaken to the Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts. First is redesigning the front portion of the building as part of a recommendation to interconnect the various uses of the Centennial Square site (as part of the Creativity and Innovation Centre concept). The improvements to the lobby and street-front appearance of the Centre for the Performing Arts should be undertaken in harmony with the recommendations relating to the Central Library, Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square and the Centennial Pool and should occur as part of an overall feasibility study and business plan. Second, consideration should also be given to expanding the studio theatre space on the lower level.
4. The Town and the Oakville Galleries Board consider consolidating the functions of the two art galleries at one site with appropriate space available for the display of local artists. Consideration should be given to the Centennial Square site, should it be redesigned.
5. The improvements set out in the Museum's proposed site plan be implemented and that the museum work to expand its outreach services through cooperative efforts with other like-minded delivery agents in the Town.
6. Dedicated staff is needed to act as a catalyst, promote, assist and help develop arts and cultural opportunity while ensuring that the interest is community initiated. Staff should also be responsible for determining the costing and level of assistance to be provided for special events and festivals.
7. Special events continue to be run by the community organizations and volunteers with more appropriate use of staff time. Furthermore, the Recreation and Culture Department should develop consistent criteria regarding the commitment / responsibility of Town employees regarding the organization of special events.
8. The Town and its partners establish a coordinated arts marketing infrastructure and strategy.
9. Affordable access to arts and cultural opportunities for youth be made a priority; this will likely require greater equity between the municipal grants allotted to recreation and culture.
10. Develop a Community Cultural Plan that will provide the framework for the future planning of arts and cultural facilities and services for the varied stakeholder groups in the community. The Plan should establish a vision, goals and strategic actions that will address facility, service and activity needs.

Appendix 1**Cultural Organizations in the Town of Oakville** (Note: this is not intended to be a definitive list)

ORGANIZATION	ASSOCIATED MUNICIPALLY OWNED SPACE (if applicable)
Bronte Historical Society	Charles Sovereign House
Burloak Theatre	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)
Canadian Caribbean Association of Halton	
Canadian Federation of Poets	
Canadian Music Competitions	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)
Carvers and Sculptors Guild	
Circle of Harmony Singers	
Festival of Classics	Coronation Park (for performances)
Fiber Guild	
Halton Youth Symphony	
Inkwell Writers Group	
Music and Arts Shared Space	
Oakville Arts Council	Central Library
Oakville Arts Society	
Oakville Chamber Orchestra	
Oakville Children's Choir	
Oakville's Children's Music Theatre	
Oakville Choral Society	
Oakville Entertainers	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)
Oakville Galleries	Oakville Galleries at Centennial Square and in Gairloch Gardens
Oakville Handweavers and Spinners Guild	
Oakville Historical Society	Erchless Estate Museum site
Oakville Players	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)
Oakville Quilters Guild	
Oakville Ring of Tatters	
Oakville Stitchery Guild	
Oakville Suzuki	
Oakville Symphony	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)
Oakville Wind Orchestra	
Scottish Dancers Guild	
South West Ontario Poets	
Tempus Choral Society	
West End Studio	Oakville Centre for the Performing Arts (for performances)

Appendix 2

A report entitled *Creative Manitoba: An Economic Development Strategy for the Cultural Sector* identified nine broad strategies essential to achieving a stronger more inclusive cultural community. These categories are applicable in some form or another to Oakville and include the following:

- 1) Organization - Develop the infrastructure and organization of the cultural sector.
- 2) Education - Develop a workforce of qualified, adaptable workers who continually upgrade their skill sets.
- 3) Inclusion - Support the access and involvement in cultural sector activities of all cultural workers, stakeholders and audiences in the community, both existing and potential.
- 4) Promotion - Promote a greater valuing of, support for and demand for the community's cultural offerings.
- 5) Collaboration - Encourage the creation of relationships and networks within and outside the sector, and the coordination of efforts and resources of cultural sector stakeholders.
- 6) Information - Research, collect, review and make available, on an ongoing basis, information of critical decision-making value to the cultural sector.
- 7) Integration - Develop a comprehensive cyber-strategy to create linkages and information exchange between all sector stakeholders, and to assist with marketing and promoting the sector.
- 8) Preservation - Support the sustainable economic development of the community's cultural sector so that it may fully contribute to the community's economic competitiveness and quality of life.
- 9) Retention - Promote a healthier human resource environment across the cultural sector to make the sector more attractive for current and prospective cultural workers.