

To: Economic and Development Services Committee

From: Anthony Ambra, P.Eng., Commissioner,
Economic and Development Services Department

Report Number: ED-24-103

Date of Report: September 4, 2024

Date of Meeting: September 9, 2024

Subject: Arts Resource Centre Cultural Hub Pilot

Ward: Ward 4

File: 12-03

1.0 Purpose

The purpose of this Report is to provide recommended parameters and costs for a Cultural Hub Pilot to take place at the Arts Resource Centre (“A.R.C.”).

Attachment 1 is the A.R.C. Feasibility Study by Nordicity and Giaimo. Owing to its size, a copy of the A.R.C. Feasibility Study is not attached to this Report but can be viewed at the following link:

<https://pub-oshawa.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=16157>

2.0 Recommendation

That the Economic and Development Services Committee recommend to City Council:

1. That, pursuant to Report ED-24-103 dated September 4, 2024, the parameters for an Arts Resource Centre Cultural Hub Pilot be endorsed; and,
2. That, pursuant to ED-24-103 dated September 4, 2024, the financial implications of \$81,100 (2025) and \$344,165 (2026), as outlined in Section 5.0 of this report, be recommended for consideration in the Mayor’s 2025/ 2026 budget.

3.0 Input From Other Sources

The following have been consulted in the preparation of this Report:

- Commissioner, Community and Operations Services Department
- Commissioner, Corporate and Finance Services Department

4.0 Analysis

4.1 Background

In its meeting on February 18, 2014, City Council approved CS-14-16, Culture Counts: Oshawa's Arts, Culture and Heritage Plan. One of the strategies of this plan is to "Increase Spaces and Facilities in which Cultural Activities Occur" within the strategic direction "Create Vibrant Places and Spaces". The completion of an A.R.C. Feasibility Study responded to the specific action item to "Conduct a feasibility study on converting the A.R.C. into a Cultural Hub".

At its meeting on January 25, 2019, City Council approved "Project Account 40-0031 – A.R.C. Cultural Hub Feasibility Study" for \$100,000, of which \$50,000 was allocated from the Civic Property Development Reserve.

At its meeting on March 18, 2019, City Council approved CS-19-27 which acknowledged that the results of a feasibility study would include recommendations on how to proceed with future use, program and facility needs for the A.R.C. and that these recommendations would directly impact future priorities and action related to Culture Counts. In 2019, the City applied and was successful with an application to the Canada Cultural Spaces Fund which resulted in a \$50,000 grant to support half of the costs associated with conducting a feasibility study.

On June 20, 2022, City Council approved Report DS-22-144, Plan 20Thirty – Action Plan for Continued Downtown Revitalization. This Plan includes the "Social Experience" pillar and reinforces the development and delivery of an A.R.C. Feasibility Study with the action item to "Support the outcomes of the A.R.C. Feasibility Study to effectively position the proposed Cultural hub as an asset in Downtown Oshawa."

On December 11, 2023, City Council approved Report ED-23-213, Oshawa Economic Development Strategy that includes "Cultural Vitality" as a strategic area of focus. Within this area of focus are action items that would be supported by the creation of a Cultural Hub, including developing partnerships, creating incubator programs, reducing barriers for community-run programming and increasing diversity of programs offered.

On June 24, 2024, City Council approved ED-24-76, A.R.C. Cultural Hub Feasibility Study, which outlined the vision, guiding principles, gaps, strengths, weaknesses and opportunities, programming and service considerations, architectural concepts, and governance and operations options for a future cultural hub located at the A.R.C. ED-24-76 also directed staff to develop the parameters for a Cultural Hub Pilot Project, as generally outlined in in Section 5.6 of Report ED-24-76.

On June 24, 2024, City Council approved CNCL-24-71, Oshawa Strategic Plan 2024-2027: Innovate. Belong. Care. Lead., that outlines the priority area of Vibrant Culture and Economy with a goal to "Attract and promote a vibrant artistic and cultural economy" with the action to "Explore the Cultural Hub Pilot Project at the Arts Resource Centre".

4.2 Vision, Guiding Principles and Purpose of a Cultural Hub Pilot

In order to effectively introduce new programs and services, build community partnerships and increase the usage of the A.R.C., staff are proposing a multi-year Cultural Hub Pilot for consideration.

In Section 4.4 of the A.R.C. Feasibility Study, it identifies the following Vision for a future cultural hub:

Oshawa's Cultural Hub aspires to be a vibrant, accessible place of creativity and connection for artists and community members. This hub will be a place where all are welcome to actively participate in, explore and innovate cultural and creative pursuits. This hub will enrich Oshawa's cultural landscape and opportunities for its cultural sector and broader community, including becoming a vital node amid the revitalization of the downtown core. Through a wide variety of programming, events, and services all residents are invited to interact with and collaborate in this welcoming space.

The Cultural Hub will support:

- Artists and creatives with meaningful opportunities, resources, and facilities to develop, incubate, showcase their works, connect with one another and thrive as part of Oshawa's growing arts/culture and creative economy.
- Members of the public, from children to seniors, newcomers, and students to participate in arts, culture and creative expression via programming, performances, events, workshops, and arts/cultural education.

At minimum, the future Cultural Hub will provide:

- Diverse programming and events related to the arts, culture, heritage, and the creative economy.
- Flexible rental space for performances, workshops, classes, meetings, studios etc., as well as space for artists to exhibit and reach audiences.
- Tools, resources and equipment for artists and makers to utilize to further their craft/work while at the Cultural Hub.

The following guiding principles are identified within the A.R.C. Feasibility Study to achieve the above stated Vision:

- **Accessibility and Affordability** – The Cultural Hub will offer activities, programs, events and services at affordable rates and with no physical or organizational barriers to all Oshawa residents and user groups.
- **Responsiveness to the Community** – The Cultural Hub will consider the needs of the wider Oshawa arts/culture and creative sector and stakeholders in its development and operations.

- **Accountability** – The Cultural Hub will be efficient and transparent in its operations and strive for excellence in the services it offers.
- **Elevation and Collaboration** – The Cultural Hub should act as a resource and partner that enriches the overall cultural ecosystem in the City.
- **Adaptability** – The Cultural Hub will be flexible as the demands and needs of the community change, and will aim to “future-proof” to ensure sustainability and wide appeal.
- **Engagement** – The Cultural Hub will market and promote itself to the best of its ability to ensure all potential users are aware of its offerings and can access them.
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Sense of Well-being** – The Cultural Hub will embed inclusivity in its governance and operations, and will strive to provide arts programming and services that appeal to and address the needs of equity-deserving groups

As an intermediary step between current operations and a future Cultural Hub, and to achieve the above stated Vision and Guiding Principles, a multi-year pilot project would allow staff to:

- Test programs, services, and options as outlined in the A.R.C. Feasibility Study;
- Operate the space to addresses community needs;
- Expand upon programming at the A.R.C. and incorporate more activities and events at the current site without undertaking significant renovations;
- Assist in developing a business case for further investment (e.g. increased programming, architectural and capital changes) into a Cultural Hub; and,
- Help determine a future governance and operating model.

4.3 Proposed Pilot Parameters: Programs and Services

In order to determine the appropriate programs and services for a Cultural Hub Pilot, that would not require significant capital and architectural changes to the existing A.R.C. facility, Recreation Services and Business and Economic Development Services staff reviewed the feedback provided by the public during the consultation for the A.R.C. Feasibility Study that occurred between March and April 2022. The most valuable contributions the A.R.C. makes to the community were identified by respondents as “affordable arts, culture and community programming”, providing “arts and culture programs for the public” and providing “support and resources for artists and arts organizations”.

Additionally, Recreation Services and Business and Economic Development Services staff conducted a review of the proposed programs and services identified in the A.R.C. Feasibility Study and identified the options that would address and best fit into the highest priority areas identified by the public.

Recreation Services and Business and Economic Development Services staff are recommending that the program and service priorities that should be piloted, and that best align with public feedback and the recommendations in the Feasibility Study, include:

- New educational and training opportunities for artists and arts organizations;
- The introduction of artist studios into the facility;
- Enhanced and improved access to the existing auditorium performance space; and,
- The continued delivery of existing recreation services-based arts and expanded programming.

Staff recognize that these program and service opportunities will address community feedback that was received and will support the professional development, capacity building and creative development of individual artists, creatives and associated organizations without significant alteration and/ or renovation to the existing building structure. By introducing new services that support the practice and career growth of artists at all levels (emerging, mid-career, established artists and creative workers), Oshawa is better positioned to retain and remain competitive to attract creative entrepreneurs and talent to the City.

Examples of new educational and training opportunities may include professional development workshops for artists and creative sector practitioners such as grant writing, fundraising and other sector specific courses. The introduction of affordable artist studios would allow for individual artists who do not have existing studio space at home, or at another location, to utilize the A.R.C. for creating art works. Examples of enhanced and improved access to the existing auditorium performance space may result in lecture series, youth performances and open-mic nights. Expanded programming may be offered and may include introductory courses on digital media and the intersection between arts and technology/science.

In all of the above examples, City staff will work with existing and new partners to determine the most appropriate delivery method for these new services. Additionally, changes or alterations to existing City policies, agreements, fees, and/ or arrangements with existing user groups will be brought forward to Council for consideration and amended as appropriate. For example, the introduction of artist studios will require a different type of access to the facility and the creation of a studio membership program that currently does not exist within the City service delivery model. The introduction of such a service would be subject to inclusion into the General Fees and Charges By-Law if, and where, appropriate and presented at Council at a later date for approval.

In order to be as responsive as possible to the community, and implement the Vision and Guiding Principles of a Cultural Hub, staff are recommending that as part of the development and operation of the pilot activities that extensive community engagement and consultation occurs in order to continuously address trends, needs and changes in the cultural sector so that the Cultural Hub Pilot can be of utmost benefit to the community. As such, some program and service recommendations identified above may require

adjustment in order for the offerings and services to be as responsive to the community as possible.

4.4 Proposed Pilot Key Performance Indicators

In Section 8.3 of the A.R.C. Feasibility Study, suggested Key Performance Indicators (“K.P.I.s”) have been outlined.

In order to evaluate the effectiveness of a Cultural Hub Pilot, Recreation Services and Business and Economic Development Services staff have reviewed the K.P.I.s in the A.R.C. Feasibility Study. Generally in accordance to and based on the proposed program and services identified above in Section 4.2 of this Report, Table 1.0 below includes examples of K.P.I.s that could be monitored throughout the delivery of the pilot.

Table 1: Selected Key Performance Indicators for a Cultural Hub Pilot

Category	K.P.I.s
Usage	Utilization - bookings
	Program registrants
	Rental users
	Diversity of rental users
	City administration space usage
	Diversity of programming offerings
Marketing and Outreach	Participant perception of communications and marketing
	Social media engagement and awareness
	Website engagement
	Partnerships and variety of partnerships
Quality and Satisfaction	User/Visitor Satisfaction with quality level events, programs, and services
	User/Visitor interests and trends
Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Demographics of users/visitors
	Programming for equity-deserving groups
Financial	Operating surplus/deficit meeting expectation
	Growth
Operations/Governance	Achievement of strategic goals and actions

Table 1 outlines the Key Performance Indicators including the category, and the individual indicator. These K.P.I.s would track the overall performance of the Cultural Hub Pilot, record community and attendee feedback and usage of the facility, as well as identify the growth areas, achievements and areas of improvement that should be addressed in the future.

Tracking these indicators from the onset of a Cultural Hub Pilot will better position, and determine the business case for further investment into, the A.R.C. Cultural Hub once the pilot project is completed. Staff will report back to Council at the end of the Cultural Hub Pilot outlining progress, K.P.I.s and recommended next steps.

4.5 Proposed Pilot: Timeline, Delivery and Costs

The Cultural Hub Pilot day to day programming, services and facility operations would be governed and managed by a cross-departmental team consisting of staff from Recreation Services, Business and Economic Development Services and Facility Operations and Maintenance Services and led by the proposed new full time temporary staff position. Until a future governance model is investigated (as outlined in the A.R.C. Feasibility Study Section 8), a cross-collaborative approach would allow for the greatest level of efficiency, customer service and customer service continuity, as well as the integration of knowledge, key skill sets and responsibilities from across the Corporation into the Cultural Hub Pilot operations.

A new dedicated full time temporary staff position would lead the implementation of all new initiatives and services, conduct research and project coordination, and conduct all associated community consultation and stakeholder relation activities.

Staff are proposing a multi-year Cultural Hub Pilot for consideration. This multi-year pilot would take place over the course of 4 years. The initial year would be a partial year predominantly dedicated to hiring the full time temporary staff position and to begin preliminary planning and consultation activities. The years 2 to 4 of the pilot would consist of new program and service delivery, iteration and correction as needed, evaluation, monitoring and reporting.

With this staff resource, community needs and changing trends will be addressed in a timely fashion and support to new services and programs will be focused and sustainable.

Table 2: Pilot Program Phases with Dedicated Staff Resource

Phase	Example of Tasks and Activities	Timing
Phase 1: Planning	New administration requirements addressed (e.g. facility schedules, fees, procedures), program/service planning, community consultation/engagement (including the Cultural Leadership Council, Diversity Equity and Inclusion Committee and others). Development of community partnership and K.P.I. methodology.	Year 1
Phase 2: Pilot Implementation	Develop marketing and communications material, deliver new program and services, continue community	Year 2 – 4

Phase	Example of Tasks and Activities	Timing
	consultation and partnership development.	
Phase 3: Research and Final Reporting	Explore governance models and architectural concepts, final Cultural Hub conclusions/K.P.I.s and reporting to Council.	Year 4

Table 2 outlines the delivery of the Cultural Hub Pilot through the introduction of a new staff position that would lead and implement all aspects of the Cultural Hub Pilot generally over a 4 year period. This position would allow for existing staff to continue with ongoing projects, services and programs that support strategic priorities without impact to current or planned deliverables, while also accelerating the pilot and allowing it to be more flexible and responsive to community needs due to the staff resource that can quickly address those opportunities, trends and pressures.

5.0 Financial Implications

Efficiencies have been analyzed and integrated in order to maximize the existing A.R.C. operating budget while also addressing increased services and program offerings, hours of access and maintenance costs to implement the Cultural Hub Pilot. The Budget and Financial Implications in Table 3 below represent new operating expenses in order to deliver on new pilot programs and services out of the facility.

The costs of implementing the Cultural Hub Pilot include the increased expenses associated with new and increased personnel, marketing and advertising, program supplies, custodial services, and maintenance costs due to the introduction of new programs and services within an increased hours of operating framework.

Table 3: New Costs, Budget and Financial Implications

Budget/Financial Implications	2025	2026
Personnel Costs	\$62,500	\$197,365
Program and Office Supplies	\$2,600	\$7,500
Contracted Services	\$6,000	\$62,200
Maintenance, Repairs and Custodial Services	0	\$77,100
Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment	\$10,000	0
Total New Expenses	\$81,100	\$344,165

Table 3 outlines the new operating expenses that would be required in order to implement a Cultural Hub Pilot at the A.R.C.

The personnel costs represents costs associated to the new temporary full time position as well as additional part-time staff needed to ensure that the building is open to the public for the extended hours and new services.

These costs are based on the assumption that the Cultural Hub Pilot will operate approximately 7 days/week, 50 weeks per year and be open for 12 hours each day (allowing for artists to have access to studio spaces on a regular basis and to accommodate for increased hours for new programs and services offerings outside of current hours of operation).

The A.R.C. is currently open when City programs are running and/or when the facility is booked for rentals. During the fall, winter and spring program sessions, these hours are:

- Monday to Thursday 5 p.m. to 9 p.m.
- Saturday 9 a.m. to 12 p.m.
- The summer session sees the facility open for weekday day time hours due to camp programming:
 - Monday, Wednesday and Friday: 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.
 - Tuesday and Thursday: 8:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

Under these current hours of operation, the total hours the A.R.C. is open is approximately 1,265 annually. With increased services, programs and offerings through a Cultural Hub Pilot, this would result in approximately 4,200 open hours over the course of a year.

The new maintenance, repairs, and custodial costs associated are also related to the expansion of public hours of access which will result in increased facility operations to ensure the building is maintained.

The contracted services costs represent costs associated to hiring artists, musicians, speakers, creative entrepreneurs, cultural industry experts, collectives and organizations to deliver the new program and services.

The furniture, fixtures and equipment costs associated are the estimated material costs to create artists' studios in one of the existing studio spaces in the A.R.C.

In 2024, the existing A.R.C. budget is approximately \$296,000 to operate the facility at its current hours of operation, rate of service and program delivery.

Implementing the Cultural Hub Pilot programs and services outlined in Section 4.2 in this Report would result in an increase to the overall A.R.C. operating budget of \$81,100 in Year 1 (2025) and \$344,165 in Year 2 (2026) and continuing with this operating budget for Year 3 and 4.

It is anticipated that there will be revenues associated to the new programs and services associated to the Cultural Hub Pilot. However, part of the initial pilot planning phase is to determine the new fee structure and associated fees and staff will submit these fees,

structures and projected revenues through the General Fees and Charges By-Law and/or via a Council report as appropriate.

6.0 Relationship to the Oshawa Strategic Plan

This Report responds to the Oshawa Strategic Plan Priority Area:

“Innovate: Vibrant Culture and Economy” with the goal to attract and promote a vibrant artistic and cultural economy.



Hailey Wright, BA Hons, Director,
Business and Economic Development Services



Anthony Ambra, P.Eng., Commissioner,
Economic and Development Services Department