

# STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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**DATE:** September 24, 2020

**TO:** MAYOR AND COUNCIL

**NAME AND TITLE:** Dave Dyer, General Manager of Infrastructure and Public Works

**SUBJECT:** Grant Application for Downtown Creative Arts Hub – 1310 3rd Avenue

**ATTACHMENTS:** None

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council:

1. APPROVES the Community Arts Council 1310 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue Building project to be added to the 2020 – 2024 Financial Plan for a total project cost of \$5.62 million with funding sources of \$4.12 million of third party funding and \$1.5 million from the Northern Capital Planning Reserve Fund;
2. APPROVES the City of Prince George submitting a grant funding application for the Prince George Downtown Creative Arts Hub through the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure Sub-stream;
3. AUTHORIZES the City of Prince George Financial Officer and Acting City Manager to sign grant application documents and any resulting contract documents should grant approval be received.

## PURPOSE:

Administration requests Council's authorization to apply for grant funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) – Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure sub-stream for the Downtown Creative Arts Hub project at 1310 3rd Avenue. Administration also seeks Council's authorization to commit \$1.5M from City reserves towards the project.

## BACKGROUND:

The Community Arts Council (CAC) of Prince George & District currently leases two buildings at 2820 & 2880 15<sup>th</sup> Avenue, collectively referred to as Studio 2880. An alternative location and facility must address several emerging needs for both the tenants and city investment needs. The two buildings at Studio 2880 are 78 years old and require significant investment to maintain the buildings in a usable state. The Council approved the 2019 Civic Facilities Renewal Strategy identifies the total renewal over the next 10 years is \$470K. In addition, the buildings and location of Studio 2880 present several challenges to support quality access to community arts, given the limitations for universal access, public programming, service delivery, and proximity to compatible uses.

The City of Prince George has been working with the CAC to assess alternative locations to Studio 2880 and have identified a preferred new location at 1310 3rd Avenue in the Downtown. The City-

owned building at 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Quebec Street is available for a new CAC facility. The building's front end is currently in use as a temporary location for the Prince George Farmers Market. City staff are temporarily using the remainder of the building and are to relocate back to the 18<sup>th</sup> Avenue Works Yard once the renovation project is complete as part of the financial plan.

The CAC recently pursued a feasibility study partially funded by the City for the relocation and redevelopment of 1310 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue as a Downtown Creative Arts Hub in Prince George. The study confirmed that both the size and location of the building would be suitable. However, the building would require renovations to provide universal access and open floor plans that support the function of a common, shared, and flexible space for a collaborative public centre of the arts. The study also included reviewing the building condition assessment for 1310 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue with an identified reinvestment cost of approximately \$1.5M to replace ageing assets.

#### **DISCUSSION:**

The second intake of the federal Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program (ICIP) - Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure sub-stream is now available. The proposed Downtown Creative Arts Hub project at 1310 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue directly aligns with the required outcome identified in the ICIP grant program guide for "improved access to and/or increased quality of cultural, recreational and/or community infrastructure for Canadians, including Indigenous peoples and vulnerable populations".

The CAC feasibility study includes the required level of conceptual planning, cost estimates, and consultation to meet the grant program requirements and provide timely completion of the grant application package. Projects must also begin in 2021 with full project completion by March 31, 2026. ICIP grant funding announcements are expected in the summer of 2021. A successful announcement of grant funding for the City would allow design work to begin in the second half of 2021 with construction following in 2022 and 2023.

The City's maximum contribution to the project is \$1.5 million, equivalent to the cost of required remediation work at 1130 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, as identified in the 2019 Civic Facilities Strategy. The total ICIP funding envelope is cost-shared with contributions of up to 33.33% of the full project cost from the Province of BC and up to 40% from Canada's Government. In comparison, the City's contribution represents the remaining 26.67%.

Several favourable outcomes for both the community and regional arts and culture will be achieved with the proposed Downtown Creative Arts Hub, including:

- Improved access and quality to the creative arts in a centralized downtown location that serves a diverse range of user groups;
- Flexible, common, and shared space for regional artists to connect, collaborate, increase their professional development;
- A community attraction with visitor access to demonstrations, programming, art therapy, and events,
- Promotion of arts with a central community information hub;
- Support for indigenous artists and younger artists in the community;
- Improved energy efficiency and universal accessibility of the building; and,
- Revitalization of the downtown core with increased street presence, beautification, and both indoor and outdoor activity.

The City and the CAC have worked collaboratively to complete the ICIP grant application process.

Letters of support that have been provided for the project by various organizations and user groups indicate that the proposed new location and Downtown Creative Arts Hub facility would meet a very diverse range of community needs.

The ICIP grant program requires a Resolution of Council to complete the grant application process.

**STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

The proposal supports the Council Focus Areas:

- *“Pursue operations and activities that ... consider environmental sustainability”;*
- *“Enhance Prince George’s attractiveness to visitors...”;*
- *“Collaborate with local organizations and partners to enhance quality of life, cultural vitality, local heritage, and inter-cultural understanding”;*
- *“make Prince George accessible and enjoyable for everyone, regardless of their age or ability”; and,*
- *“Maintain fiscal sustainability and balance service levels with affordability of City services, facilities, and operations.”*

2020 Workplan priority: *“begin the implementation of the City of Prince George 2020-2025 Economic Development Strategy and Action Plan with a focus on tactics and initiatives that will accelerate COVID-related response and recovery.”*

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

The total estimated cost for the Prince George Downtown Community Arts Hub project is \$5.62 million. Under the ICIP program, senior governments fund up to 73.33% with the remaining 26.67% funded by the applicant. The federal contribution is up to 40% of eligible project costs and the provincial contribution is up to 33.33%, for a total grant contribution of \$4.12 million. The City’s portion of the project cost is \$1.5 million.

**SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:**

The Community Arts Council (CAC) of Prince George & District has developed a roadmap to relocate their facility at Studio 2880 to a new location and centre for the arts downtown at 1310 3rd Avenue. The CAC relocation feasibility study and the City’s 2019 Civic Facilities Strategy have identified the requirements and costs to upgrade the existing building at 1310 3rd Avenue and establish a new Downtown Creative Arts Hub. The new facility would provide improved quality and access for artists in the Prince George region and create place-making downtown with a community cultural destination.

City administration is requesting Council’s authorization to apply for grant funding under the Investing in Canada Infrastructure Program – Community, Culture and Recreation Infrastructure sub-stream along with a commitment to utilizing internal reserves to fund the City’s \$1.5M contribution for the project, an amount equivalent to the cost of required remediation and reinvestment work. A successful application would net provincial and federal funding of close to three quarters (\$4.12 M) of the total project costs and be followed by design work in 2021 and construction in subsequent years.

**RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:**

Dave Dyer, General Manager of Infrastructure and Public Works

PREPARED BY: Laurie-Ann Kosec, Strategic Planner

**APPROVED:**

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: 2020/10/05