

Arts Strategy Cultural Roundtable, April 28, Anvil Centre

48 people in attendance

4 facilitators

1) What are the strengths and opportunities of the arts sector in New Westminister?

- Lively visual arts community
- New Westminister has an old city history and it is a well-defined city rather than urban sprawl
- Experience of the art groups : Royal City Arts Ballet, musical programs, NWSS band
- Cultural Facilities
- Willingness of Arts Council to encourage shows
- Space for artists in Anvil Centre
- City is easy to navigate
- Stable festivals
- Free or accessible economically affordable programs
- Willingness for partnerships
- Willingness to access outside organizations and groups
- ArtStarts workshops in River Market
- Punch above our weight
- Work across points of engagement, professional, educational, community
- One of the longest and active Arts Councils
- Proximity to Vancouver – Sky train
- Central to Lower Mainland
- Library is one of the nicest in Lower Mainland, good music, lots of cultural activities
- Willingness: open and willing reception to the arts
- City Council and Mayor's support the growth of the Arts in New Westminister
- Community support of Arts at all levels
- Existing community
- We are a small city
- Centrally located community on transit, well located regionally
- River oriented
- Active community , active people, people move around the community
- Diversity, many types: age/culture/economic
- Diversity of Arts offerings are encouraged and supported at all levels
- Diverse resources/ inspiration: multicultural, river, neighborhoods
- Diverse venues: Massey Theatre, Anvil Centre, Bernie Legge Theatre
- Multiple Arts and Cultural Hubs
- Different capacities
- Various churches
- Opportunities to show art: Anvil Centre, Plaskett Gallery, River Market, Library
- Right people, right location, we have a past and future

- Established arts community with new passionate young people
- Arts associations, NW Symphony, Arts Council
- New Westminster artists
- Public art
- Community: great location, people interested in arts and music, removed from Vancouver, can do things its own way
- Culturally diverse
- Young people
- Bringing the old and new together
- Braid Street Studios: accessible to public, fills a need where space is lent out to the public, need this space to continue to be available as an important collective of artists in a shared space (worried about its closing/relocation/reconfiguration)
- New Westminster is a small city, ripe for opportunity for artists, businesses support each other and artists
- Don't have to claw your way up as an artist
- Small locally owned retail shops breed/facilitate art culture (e.g. Old Crow)
- Growing diversity of city allows different ways of practicing art
- Empty store fronts offer opportunity

2) What are the threats and weaknesses facing the arts sector in New Westminster?

- Free or accessible programming
- Proximity to Vancouver, lost in larger region
- Threat of development – gentrification threat of affordable spaces
- Limited professional opportunities
- Small population limits business development
- Potential of inferiority complex because we are a small size, so we aren't significant enough
- Surrey's proximity
- Population that may have low income, may not be able to attend/participate
- Volunteer burnout – sustainability
- Lots of strong independent artists feel city is not listening to them, not be able to access to that they need. So, they can't produce the work they want
- Other people's agendas shutting down some other ideas
- Not enough funding budget and resources
- More accessible – affordable venues for groups
- Lack of art spaces studios/permanent affordable spaces for rehearsal/practice
- Through traffic route
- Too many great things going on
- Getting people out
- Engagement and miscommunication
- Maintaining staff and volunteers (wages and incentives)

- A lack of awareness and engagement/too much competition for people
- Not retaining historic buildings in down town core which lead to rich city heritage and culture
- Rising rent, gentrification and displacement
- Eagerness to create and renew displaces history/cultural identity
- Aging facilities
- City looking for tax income sacrificing culture
- Shortsighted development without structure, we are losing our wildlife
- Less heritage identity, increasing prices
- Anti-progressive views
- Systems and entry cost to the arts
- Social isolation
- Lack of social support for artists, barriers (costs)
- Clean up “coming in on sky train”
- Grayness and decaying buildings
- Queensborough
- Better connection between arts groups
- Competition for time-limited and time-resources
- Establishing our identity ; lived in Maple Ridge but didn’t realize that New Westminster was so unique
- Extend our reach, get the word out
- Need to develop it as “culture” for the arts
- Clean up the buildings, make them colourful
- Node: Lacks an arts centre, needs a node (Front/Columbia is the best example but needs more)
- Affordability: prices are rising too quickly for housing and living/working in the city is important. Our central location is a strength and weakness
- Perception/Promotion: need to do more to promote NW as a cultural/artist hub. We’re a small town, not usually multiple events on one day, so promotion should be easy.
- Need more cultural spaces that are smaller, unstructured, cheaper spaces (e.g. Café du Soleil) where artists can interact. Have spaces accessible for those not ready to jump all in/have \$ for larger spaces

3) What potential solutions are there to address the weaknesses and threats that you identified?

- Solution of over development zones for arts
- Have a stronger arts amenities program for public for art space and programs
- A way to connect with new residents to attend and join
- Look at organizational capacity and trying to strengthen it
- For city website trying to navigate website to find the arts sector and have connectivity and dialogue and even just find out what’s happening

- Build cultural map now, make it engaging
- Identify who the stake holders are with experience
- Find where youth can be introduced
- Community input
- More events aimed at community building over showcasing
- Increased communications
- A community bus shuttle service shared by city, community groups, parks and recreation
- Streamline communication and promotion
- Artist co-op housing space
- A focus on artist housing and studios, identifying, supporting, providing at affordable cost
- Contact and take advantage of funding groups like Artscape who use creative space making strategies
- Artist support services, agencies, networking, and co-ops
- Invest in young people and seniors
- A comprehensive chain order for art development grass roots to the top
- Provide services and programs to engage all ages/abilities to enter the arts
- An opportunity to reimagine the landscape and city scape for more organic arts spaces, OC preview
- Leverage developers to increase cultural amenity spaces
- Value existing heritage – stop demolition of many old homes
- Preserve trees
- Stop paving over gardens
- Planning process that saves heritage
- Support heritage/place-making and leverage development to provide spaces
- Better communication between “old” New Westminster and “new” New Westminster
- Signage when you approach New Westminster
- Paint the buildings, make it colourful
- See something “wow” “unique” coming in from Vancouver Skytrain
- Build the “energy and synergy” – add a little bit of at a time and it will grow, continue to grow
- Multitudes of building tops-mural on top of buildings that all together create a piece of art
- Murals on the walls like the walls of Brussels
- Animate the city with colourful lights
- Capitalize the Quay
- Have a leadership/mentor program
- City should look at encouraging arts incentives, providing subsidies/work with developers for spaces in buildings
- Use SkyTrain space for advertising, with a quick turn over

- Accessible point (arts/culture desk or hub) for people to contact City and make City more accessible to artists and businesses in the arts sector, help them navigate the system, connect with other businesses, the BIA, etc.