

DATE OF MEETING February 19, 2020

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SUBJECT NEXT PHASE FOR NANAIMO ART GALLERY DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide Council with the history of the approved phased development of the Nanaimo Art Gallery at 150 Commercial Street and obtain direction from Council on proceeding to the next phase of implementation.

Recommendation

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:

1. Direct Staff to work with the Nanaimo Art Gallery on moving forward with the next phase of the Nanaimo Art Gallery development process and return with options that may include an updated co-management agreement; and,
2. Direct Staff to include funding options that address the next phase of Art Gallery Development and Operations for Council's consideration in the 2021-2025 budget deliberations.

BACKGROUND

At the regular open meeting of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission held on 2012-JUL-25, the Nanaimo Art Gallery (NAG) gave a presentation on a proposed feasibility study regarding 150 Commercial Street as a possible venue to achieve the Gallery's long-term vision.

At that meeting, the following motion was passed:

“That the Parks, Recreation and Culture Commission support the Nanaimo Art Gallery in proceeding with a Facility Review and Space Analysis of 150 Commercial Street (Centre of the Arts Nanaimo building) to explore opportunities of expanding and consolidating Nanaimo Art Gallery operations as well as possibilities of upgrading to a “Category A” facility.”

The above work was completed throughout 2012 and 2013, and at the regular meeting of Council held 2013-JUN-24, Council approved the following motion:

“That Council:

1. support in principle the phased development plan of the Nanaimo Art Gallery for 150 Commercial Street; and,
2. direct Staff to develop a draft Management Agreement including funding implications, for 150 Commercial Street between the City of Nanaimo and the Nanaimo Art Gallery for Council’s review and consideration.”

As per this direction from Council in 2013, a co-management agreement was developed and approved and the Art Gallery moved forward consolidating operations at 150 Commercial Street. Supporting the phased plan of the Nanaimo Art Gallery was also identified as a priority in the City’s “A Cultural Plan for a Creative Nanaimo” which was adopted by Council on 2014-MAR-10. Over the last seven years, the Art Gallery has successfully implemented the first two phases of the plan for development. The Gallery is now at a critical stage of capacity building towards implementation of Phase 3. |

DISCUSSION

The approved 2013 Phased Art Gallery Development/Implementation plan consisted of three phases that were expected to take many years to achieve, would be flexible and would be dependent on future funding availability.

Phase 1: (started in 2014)

This phase involved the transfer of management of 150 Commercial Street to the Nanaimo Art Gallery via a management agreement similar to those with the Port Theatre and the Nanaimo District Museum. Funding implications from the City of Nanaimo during Phase 1 were an additional \$30,000 in operating grant funds and \$50,000 for capital improvements for Phase 1.

Phase 2: (completed 2015/16)

The following milestones were achieved during Phase 2:

- The Art Gallery departed its first home on Vancouver Island University’s Nanaimo campus to amalgamate services at 150 Commercial Street and established its first full-time curator position.
- The five organizations in the Arts Centre collaborated and pooled resources to improve exterior signage at the Wharf Street entrance for increased visibility and to contribute to pride of place.
- The Art Gallery completed renovations which transformed its exhibition space with the installation of new environmentally sound LED lights, built space-saving storage for its permanent collection, and created a flexible, shared studio/kitchen meeting space on the lower floor. This project was funded by the BC Arts Council, the Province of BC, Canadian Heritage and individual donations.
- Multi-lingual welcome signage (a first for downtown Nanaimo) was installed at the entranceway in English, Hul’q’umi’num and French.

Phase 2.5: (completed 2018/19)

In Phase 2.5, the Art Gallery's public entrance way was transformed to be more visible, welcoming and iconic. Noted local carvers Joel and William Good created a new public artwork, *Supernatural Eagle Bringing the Sun Back to the World*, especially for the Art Gallery. The project was supported by the City of Nanaimo, Canadian Heritage and many community donors through a Gallery-led crowd-funding campaign.

The Art Gallery has achieved all aspects of Phase 1, 2, and 2.5 and is now looking towards the next phase.

Phase 3

The Art Gallery is currently in a research and capacity building phase while working towards this future goal. The Art Gallery is focused on enhancing organizational capacity and amplifying their impact on the communities they serve. Specific issues include:

1. Capital and operating issues facing the current building envelope (may require an update and changes to the existing Co-management agreement).
2. Extended hours of operations to meet expanding demand from the community for access to the Gallery.
3. Staffing issues to ensure the Gallery is keeping up with recruitment, training and compensation of an art gallery of this nature.
4. Communications and marketing requirements to reach out technically as well as strategically to a broader community.
5. Exploring the feasibility of expansion on site at 150 Commercial Street as per initial development plan objectives and as referenced in "A Cultural Plan for a Creative Nanaimo."

Background information from the Nanaimo Art Gallery is included with this report in the "Proposal to the City of Nanaimo – Fall 2019" (Attachment A) and "April 2019 Facility Tour – Summary Notes" (Attachment B). Nanaimo Art Gallery representatives also presented information to Council at the regular Council meeting held 2020-FEB-03 .

Staff support the Nanaimo Art Gallery's plans to explore these areas and, if approved by Council, would work with Gallery staff in developing options. Staff would return to Council with recommendations and options for consideration prior to the start of the 2021-2025 budget review.

OPTIONS

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council:
 1. direct Staff to work with the Nanaimo Art Gallery on moving forward with the next phase of the Nanaimo Art Gallery development process and return with options that may include an updated co-management agreement; and,
 2. direct Staff to include funding options that address the next phase of Art Gallery Development and Operations for Council's consideration in the 2021-2025 budget deliberations.
 - The advantages of this option: The City would honour its commitment to a plan established in 2012 to help the Nanaimo Art Gallery realize its long-term vision and support Council's strategic theme of Liveability by enabling improvements to a valued, downtown cultural facility.
 - The disadvantages of this option: Staff resources and funding would be required and final costs are not known at this time.
 - Financial Implications: Funding amounts would be considered for inclusion in the 2021-205 budget deliberations.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not proceed with the next phase of the Nanaimo Art Gallery development process at this time.
 - The advantages of this option: Staff resources and funding would not be required at this time.
 - The disadvantages of this option: The City would not fulfill a commitment to a plan established in 2012, and an opportunity to support a key community organization's long-term vision and improve a valued, cultural facility located downtown would be missed.
 - Financial Implications: None.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternative direction. |

SUMMARY POINTS

- A phased development plan for the Nanaimo Art Gallery was approved by City Council in 2013.
- Phases 1, 2 and 2.5 of the plan have been implemented as of 2019.
- The Art Gallery is requesting City support for research and capacity building while working towards implementation of Phase 3.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Nanaimo Art Gallery Proposal to the City of Nanaimo (Fall 2019)

ATTACHMENT B: Nanaimo Art Gallery April 2019 Facility Tour – Summary Notes

Submitted by:

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Concurrence by:

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