

ATTACHMENT A



Proposal to City of Nanaimo // Fall 2019

Sustaining and growing a key community asset: Increased investment at Nanaimo Art Gallery

Executive Summary

Building on the City's legacy as the Cultural Capital of Canada in 2018, culture as a pillar of sustainability, and inline with our phased plan for development, Nanaimo Art Gallery requests that the City increase their annual investment in our operations. This is an opportunity to strengthen the Gallery's capacity and vibrant presence, which resonates not only in the heart of downtown Nanaimo, but across the province and nationally. Investment from the City is a much-needed boost that will enable our organization to strength its position as an attraction and accessible cultural resource, and better meet the needs of the diverse communities we serve everyday.

Background

In line with a vision developed in 2008 and plans endorsed by the community and by the City in 2013, Nanaimo Art Gallery has moved forward with strategic shifts in operations, expansion of our programs and services, and transformations of our spaces to make the Gallery a creative hub in the heart of downtown Nanaimo and a destination. The Gallery has re-framed our relationships to artists and diverse audiences, and enhanced our capacity to present innovative, relevant and impactful exhibitions and programs that create new knowledge through art, build community, and contribute to the positive national and international profile of Nanaimo. In 2012, the Gallery was primarily used by local artists. Now, the Gallery is an asset that serves very broad audiences in meaningful, life-changing ways, creating accessible entry points for people to engage with art and ideas, and fostering dialogue about the most pressing issues of our time through art.

Because of the calibre of our work, we have successfully accessed increased public investment from outside Nanaimo, from streams including BC Arts Council, The Province of BC, and Canada Council for the Arts. At the same time, we have thoughtfully reallocated existing resources, invented new ways to generate earned revenue, and attracted enthusiastic sponsors and donors from our region and beyond. Now, with momentum and fresh expectations on the part of engaged new audiences, our goal is to sustain our current high level of activity and continue to maximize the potential of the Arts Centre at 150 Commercial, which requires increased core funding from the City of Nanaimo.

Progress Report: 3 Phase Plan for Facility Development

Nanaimo Art Gallery has completed two out of three phases of the facility development plan originally conceptualized in 2013 and supported by the City. As an adaptive, responsive organization committed to learning, we have made appropriate adjustments to our plan along the way, informed by data, stakeholder feedback, and as new opportunities have been identified. Now, our spaces at 150 Commercial Street are increasingly professional, beautiful and flexible. The Gallery and the Arts Centre we co-manage with the City, is a bustling hub of activity, welcoming diverse audiences every day for a variety of activities.

Until May 2015, the Gallery operated two locations: the purpose-built space on campus at Vancouver Island University where the society had operated since 1976, and a satellite location (opened in 1999) in the City-owned building at 150 Commercial Street downtown. In 2008, with community input, our organization developed a vision for a new Nanaimo Art Gallery. In 2012/13, we developed a plan for facility development at 150 Commercial Street, the City-owned building where the Gallery leased space. This was supported by the community and endorsed by Mayor and Council. In 2014, the Gallery and the City entered into a 10-year Co-Management Agreement for the operation of the entire building at 150 Commercial Street, which included increased financial investment in the Gallery by the City. That year, we undertook Phase 1 renovations to improve our exhibition space (which was built as a bank in the 1960s), and expand our footprint in the building to create Art Lab. We entered into multi-year agreements with tenants on the lower floor of the building including other professional arts organizations: Vancouver Island Symphony, Nanaimo Archives, Crimson Coast Dance, and TheatreOne. This arrangement has fuelled new collaboration, partnerships and sharing.

As part of Phase 2, we shifted our relationship with Vancouver Island University and left the campus building to amalgamate services and staff downtown, and established our first, full-time curatorial position. With support from the Province of BC, Canadian Heritage, and BC Arts Council, we undertook renovations that included the removal of bulkheads and installation of new LED lighting in our exhibition space, construction of storage for the collection, and renewal of a flexible kitchen space in the building shared by the Gallery and the other arts groups who reside here.

In 2018, we leveraged support from the City to secure investment from Canadian Heritage, and we undertook fundraising in the community, to enhance the Gallery's presence on Commercial Street and to make our place more iconic, welcoming and accessible. A specially commissioned artwork by Joel and William Good was created and installed above the Gallery's public entranceway as the centre-piece of a pride-of-place project.

Phase 3 involves an expansion on site and we are focused on building organizational capacity, strengthening community connections and undertaking active research towards that future goal, by closely following the development of other public art museums across Canada. We have been particularly interested in projects that involve collaboration with public and private partners, such as at the Ottawa Art Gallery. We have also been learning about how projects in other cities have catalysed downtown renewal, such as at The Polygon in North Vancouver.

Why More Support Now?

Capital Costs

We are at the 6 year mark in our 10 year Co-Management Agreement with the City. There are several

items outside the scope of our agreement including issues related to climate control, security, and accessibility that have become pressing, as well as items related to an aging facility that is actively used by the public. Faucets leak, hot water tanks fail, door handles and knobs need upgrading - these are small items in an aging facility that add up and can potentially de-stabilize the Gallery's inflexible budget. While grant funding is and can be accessed for capital items related to programs, finding funds to take care of routine repair and replacement, or funds to address issues with major building systems is beyond our capacity. Addressing issues related to building security, and accessibility are other facility issues that require assistance. In the last year, because of feedback from users, the Gallery installed two automated doors, but there is other work to improve physical access to our public building that needs to be undertaken.

Extended Hours to Animate Downtown

Visitors and business owners downtown have indicated that they want and expect the Gallery to be open, including on weekends and in the evenings. For the first time, in 2019 the Gallery will be open every Saturday and Sunday throughout the year, and on Thursday evenings until 9 PM during the Commercial Street Night Market. To meet audience expectations, sustaining these extended hours is an objective for the short-term, and keeping hours similar to the Harbourfront Library is a long-term goal.

Investing in our People

People are our most important asset. The Gallery needs to be able to invest in our professional staff so that members of our team are fairly compensated at levels which are on par with other like-size art museums and at other cultural organizations in Nanaimo. This is essential in order to retain talent at the Gallery and in Nanaimo.

Storytelling and Celebrating our Successes

Enhancing our ability to communicate with our audiences and share inspiring stories from this place is essential to our ongoing success and relevance. The Gallery is moving forward with a Digital Needs Assessment and Strategy. Looking ahead, establishing a communication and marketing position, and investing in online infrastructure are key projects.

Links to Plans & Priorities for a Vibrant City

Our work at the Gallery is informed by and aligns with articulated community priorities, and connects to the central themes of the City's new Strategic Plan 2019-2022 around livability and economic health. We contribute to making downtown a "desirable heart of our community," and engage locals, tourists, and newcomers to our area. As the only public art museum in our region, with a growing national and international reputation as a leader, the programs and services the Gallery offers are essential to "building a vibrant culture of innovation, stewardship and partnership" to contribute to a diverse and healthy economy. The Gallery is an ally in the City's desire to "be a city in which all people live, work, play, create and learn in a safe and connected community."

Access to excellent cultural infrastructure is essential to our quality of life, and was identified as a key priority in the City of Nanaimo's plan, *A Cultural Plan for a Creative Nanaimo 2014-2020*. Supporting the Gallery's plan for phased development, resulting in an expansion and 'Class A' designation is specifically noted in the plan. The 2014 report commissioned by Nanaimo Economic Development Corporation revealed that in 2012, our sector directly contributed \$94 million and 880 jobs, with a total economic impact of \$154 million annually, supporting 1,330 jobs in the community. The value of arts and culture

goes far beyond economics. The Gallery contributes directly to priorities related to education, social cohesion, health, reconciliation, civic identity, and pride of place.

Request for Increased Support

The City of Nanaimo’s current operating contribution equals 22% (\$165,289) of the Gallery’s total operating budget \$734,100 (board approved budget, current year). We request the following increases, over four years:

\$50,000 in 2020/21

\$50,000 in 2021/22

\$50,000 in 2022/23

\$50,000 in 2023/24

These increases will bring the Gallery into alignment with the levels of investment that peer organizations, both locally and provincially, receive from their municipality. Examples for comparison include Nanaimo Museum, as well as public art museums in like-size municipalities such as Two Rivers Gallery (Prince George), and Kamloops Art Gallery (Kamloops). The Gallery participates in national networks and has strong relationships with these organizations and others across the country. We are also in direct competition with peer organizations for provincial and federal funding, as well as funding from some private donors and foundations. Investment from the City will increase the Gallery’s competitive advantage, and demonstrate the City’s commitment to developing the kind of excellent cultural infrastructure that residents desire, and that newcomers and visitors expect.

Maximizing the Potential of 150 Commercial Street & Creating a Culture of Collaboration

Nanaimo Art Gallery is proud to manage the Arts Centre at 150 Commercial Street and works collaboratively with the four other professional, non-profit arts and culture organizations who have made this building their home base for 20 years: Crimson Coast Dance, Nanaimo Archives, TheatreOne, and Vancouver Island Symphony. The Gallery took over management of the building in 2014 and holds a 10-year agreement with the City. Our partners in the building then each hold three-year agreements with the Gallery.

Our organization has been a pro-active steward of the Arts Centre since 2014, spear-heading initiatives designed to improve our physical spaces, and also foster interdisciplinary collaboration, resource and skill-sharing, pride-of-place, and collegiality. In an aging building, with costs related to utilities and house-keeping are increasing, we have worked hard to keep rent low and affordable for smaller arts organizations, while undertaking necessary improvements.

Revenue vs Expenses for Building Operations (source: Nanaimo Art Gallery working budget, 2019/20)

Income from building (rentals + service fees)	\$57,009	
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Cost of services (hydro, water, janitorial + waste removal, internet, photocopying)	\$55,300	*this excludes any fees, wages or hours for building manager or Gallery Staff coordinator
Surplus (2019/20)	\$1,709	

Leveraging City Investment and Building a Thriving Non-Profit

The City of Nanaimo provides 22% of the Gallery’s operating revenues. Other major public investment includes funding from BC Arts Council, The Province of British Columbia via Community Gaming Grants, and Canada Council for the Arts. Vancouver Island University, TD, and Vancouver Foundation are other significant contributors.

Strategic shifts in our operations have generated new streams of earned revenue. In the past two years, the Gallery has exceeded it’s targets for Art Lab program registrations and at The Gallery Store. At the same time, we are building capacity in fundraising. Nanaimo Art Gallery is not a public art museum with an endowment fund, money in reserves, or a robust donor database. Last year we experimented with several tactics around fundraising and garnered an enthusiastic response; an online crowd-funding campaign generated nearly \$25,000 (our goal was \$10,000). Also, because of our growing reputation as a leader, private donors committed to supporting contemporary art activity have sought us out. We have received \$75,000 in investment from donors outside Nanaimo, in order to support our innovative programs for teens. This is a positive endorsement of our work, and a significant gift to young people in our area.

The Gallery is committed to continuing to develop diverse streams of revenue and will continue to attract funds from outside our community to support our work.

About the Gallery

Nanaimo Art Gallery is located in the heart of downtown Nanaimo on the traditional territory of the Snuneymuxw First Nation. Founded in 1976, the Gallery enhances the cultural, social and economic environment of Vancouver Island, serving a regional population base of approximately 225,000, through exhibitions, education, and outreach that encourages active public involvement with the visual arts. Our audience includes those working in resource-based industries and small business, a large retirement community, diverse Indigenous communities, a university with regional and international students, the arts community, engaged teens, and families.

In 2017, the Gallery celebrated 40 years of service. We marked this milestone by launching a new long-term programming initiative that takes an inquiry-based approach. In 2017, we explored the question: what does it mean to live on an island? In 2018, our exhibitions and activities respond to the question: how can we speak differently? This year, our inquiry is: what are generations? This innovative approach has resonated locally and further afield—our work here has taken on life outside the Gallery’s program. In Nanaimo, teachers and students at McGirr Elementary brought the Gallery’s inquiry into school activities. Likewise, at Chartwell Malaspina Care Residence, residents and staff are taking on our inquiry to guide their own internal professional development. Our staff have been invited to present on our unique

approach to programming at the Canadian Museums Association National Conference and via other professional networks.

At Nanaimo Art Gallery, ambitious contemporary exhibitions and dynamic public programs explore ideas inside our walls and at sites across the region. Exhibitions are deeply connected to our local context and to issues and practices that resonate globally; artists from our region are presented in dialogue with diverse Canadian and International artists. The Gallery is open six days a week and admission is free.

Art Lab, our dedicated space for learning, offers a year-round program of innovative workshops, talks, and hands-on activities for children, teens and adults including Dazzle Camouflage, Code Switching, Saturday Studio and Open Session.

The Gallery maintains and activates a growing collection of art and holds works by significant artists from British Columbia. Recent acquisitions include works by Brendan Tang, Carole Itter, Michael Morris, Krista Belle Stewart, Jin-me Yoon, Marianne Nicolson, Wayne Ngan, Sean Alward, Lari Robson, Jerry Pethick and others. In the most recent year, 50 artworks were donated to the Gallery's permanent collection, and the Gallery acquired artwork by purchase: *Supernatural Eagle Bringing the Sun Back to the World*, by Snuneymuxw father and son team, Joel and William Good. The Gallery's project around the commissioning of *Supernatural Eagle* has been nominated for a 2019 Award for Outstanding Achievement by the British Columbia Museum's Association.

Annually, children in three school districts participate in our TD Artists in the Schools program which ignites creativity, develops technical skills, and fosters a life-long love of art. Last year, over 14,000 kids participated! We operate The Gallery Store, which contributes to the livelihood of regional artists.

Since 2012, the Gallery has undertaken a process of transformation to re-position itself in the communities we serve and enhance our capacity. We have completed two phases of renovations at our facility, expanded our staff team, re-imagined and enriched our integrated exhibition and education programs and created new, innovative opportunities for artists and audiences.

The Gallery's vision is 'inspiring and challenging our community through art' and our trajectory is guided by our Impact 2021 Strategic Plan, which was designed collaboratively by our team and available online. The Gallery is a registered non-profit society and charity, governed by a 10 member Board of Directors who contribute various skills and expertise. Led by Executive Director Julie Bevan with Curator Jesse Birch, our staff team is group of knowledgeable, passionate, professionals who make the Gallery a welcoming, friendly, accessible public space for meaningful engagement with art, ideas, and with each other.