

2008+



# Red Deer Community Culture Vision & Outline for Action



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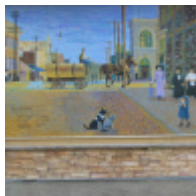


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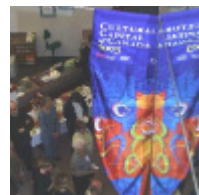
2008+5



reframing culture for our time and place



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2008+3

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2008

# Acknowledgments

The City of Red Deer acknowledges and sincerely thanks the Steering Committee members and the consultants for their commitment and hours of dedication that were contributed to the development of the Red Deer Community Culture Vision.

## Steering Committee Members

- o Lynda Adams
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## Consultants

- o Paul Harris
- o Donna Cardinal
- o Alan Taylor

The engagement of an appreciative inquiry approach for this vision and action steps involved a significant amount of participation from community members and organizations. To all these community members and organizations, we thank you for your input as it shaped the contents of this document and will provide direction for cultural development in Red Deer in the future.

**Thank you.**



To each and everyone of you who participated and worked so hard to get this document right for the community, we appreciate your thoughtfulness and dedication to this appreciative way of inquiring.

To the whole community for their engagement with us and passion about arts and heritage, thank you so much for expressing your ideas, values, and comments. To the staff of The City of Red Deer, thank you for your openness and willingness to explore a new way of public consultation. And, to the Steering Committee, many thanks for attending countless meetings and offering special insight into the nature of culture.

We extend a heart felt thank you to all involved in this exciting project as we wish Red Deer the very best future for Culture. It will be a real thrill to watch it become reality.

Sincerely,

Paul Harris, Alan Taylor, & Donna Cardinal

# The place where we live

## a future vision of Red Deer

### Future thinking

The following are thoughts voiced by the community; they are written as if this vision has already been achieved. As you read, think of yourself in the future. These are not statements about the present state of Red Deer in 2008, they represent what will be if the community is encouraged to work toward their ideal.



Red Deer is recognized as a Culture Capital destination, drawing visitors from Calgary and Edmonton and further afield.



A magnet for artists and creative professionals, Red Deer has successfully developed a unique identity with plenty of 'wow factor.' It is a prominent tourist destination, known for its successful modeling of sustainable, environmentally friendly urban development. Visitors know they will experience something new when they come to Red Deer, something surprising, which reflects the almost unlimited diversity of the city heritage, celebrated in year-round festivals that draw on the diverse gifts of its residents and artists.

Red Deer is known for its safe and vibrant downtown.

Downtown Red Deer has a thriving international district and a high population density. Thriving independent businesses provide a wide range of interesting shops, eateries, galleries and cultural spaces.



The City worked hard in the early years of the twenty-first century in partnership with businesses and non-profit organizations to ensure the development of a people-friendly, pedestrian-focussed, vibrant downtown neighbourhood with easy access to parks; it expanded its work to include the cultural nodes at Riverlands and Rotary Recreation Park. There are mid-street crossings, and an at-grade crossing at Taylor Drive to facilitate pedestrian access throughout the downtown core. Reworking of the downtown streetscape, including pedestrianization, now connects Barrett Park with Bower Ponds, through Rotary Recreation Park, the Downtown and Riverlands.

The downtown core is vibrant and funky, with a higher density of development, restaurants, art businesses, festivals; it is pedestrian-friendly and active, has stores/businesses open later, diverse cultural enterprises, and has available unobtrusive parking and modern streetcars.



Open air events are held throughout the year in City Hall Park and at the 'centre-stage' performing space marked by the arch above the intersection of Old Gaetz Avenue and Ross Street, which is now a scatter crossing with priority given to pedestrians. Festival green spaces play host to large out door events which attract people from around the province.



### Active links to neighbourhoods

It's easy for a diverse range of people to live, work and play in Red Deer. Art and culture are all around and cultural professionals find an environment here that supports their lifestyles and creativity. Both established and emerging artists find space to thrive: space that is near the downtown hub and accessible on foot or by bicycle. There's a good mix of affordable, standard and luxury housing.



The City has made good use of its natural location on the banks of the Red Deer River, and neighbourhoods are connected through the use of green space. Red Deer is envied for its identity as an aspen city. The trail system has effectively become a City-wide public art garden, now dramatically enhanced with public art. Similar to planting trees every year, public art is now an ongoing form of cultural development.

Red Deer has the social manners of a small centre; there's a code of cultured responsibility for the community - one where we are all accountable and take active responsibility. Diverse organizations and individuals work alongside one another and spontaneous interaction has led to a creative dynamism in the City.



Walking and riding on the trails in Red Deer is punctuated with public art and opportunities to gather and interact with one another.

### A cultural environment.

In Red Deer there are beautiful new spaces for interaction: venues where community groups are visible. Venues are accessible by all and the community is well represented in the design of our buildings and other structures. There are heritage buildings as well as innovative world class architecture.



A thriving cultural centre celebrates the history of Red Deer. The new Museum and Art Gallery were completed shortly before the opening of the Red Deer Concert Hall. Both won architectural awards, and are known for their effective interpretation of vernacular styles, flexible use of space, and celebration of Central Albertan history, art, cultures and roots. These outstanding facilities are located in spaces that are busy with street life, attached to green spaces, and have substantial gathering space around them for gathering and celebration.

In addition to our connection to the aspen parkland, we have a strong connection with our river. Water is important to our community and is well represented by Riverlands, a thriving cultural node that connects easily to the vibrant downtown international district. It's a more controlled environment, with a River's edge plaza, that includes activities for families and children; Riverlands' proximity and tight connection to the river and to Bower Ponds is powerful and has transformed our community. The new bridge has become both revenue generator and tourist attraction, and the indoor public





market, established in the old bus barns in 2009, is a cultural attraction and tourist destination all year round, in addition to the growing and cherished outdoor public market.

**Red Deer has a strong cultural infrastructure and identity.**

Red Deer City Council is known for its connection to the community and facilitates accessible opportunities for everyone, from exemplary arts programs in schools to innovative programming for seniors. There's resourceful networking and collaborative programming among all agencies.



Inclusive planning processes with skilled facilitators mean that planning arises through continuous accessible conversation involving all parts of the community.

Red Deer has cultural expressions that are relevant to our community and contribute to our uniqueness; a unique "Red Deer" community identity in all of its parts is incorporated in our planning and is marketed in an active and significant way, attracting people, visitors, workers and residents.



The Centennial Project is an intergenerational culture project spanning over 100 years and embodies our values: authenticity and diverse make-up, our connection to the land, and the wisdom of our community. It's a visual and identifiable link between where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.



Red Deer has become exactly the community that its citizens have envisioned and worked together to create. It attracts people from across the globe; at the same time is economically sustainable, culturally vibrant, environmentally responsible, and socially aware. It's a lovely place to live, one that elicits pride in everyone.



# Executive Summary

## Red Deer's definition of Culture:

Culture is all around us in our everyday lives and can be experienced through the formal and informal interaction of the many forms of creative expressions and exploration of our heritage as a community or as individuals.



In summer 2007, Paul Harris, Donna Cardinal and Alan Taylor were selected by the project Steering Committee established by The City of Red Deer, Culture Services. The team was commissioned to undertake research and dialogue with the Red Deer community that would update and build upon the original Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan, which was completed in 2001. A wide cross section of Red Deer citizens participated, from cultural providers, teachers and students, to business people and artists, to civic workers and elected officials.

This document should be viewed as more than an update; it revisits and builds on the work done in the previous seven years. This document is written for the primary readership of The City of Red Deer staff and elected officials, cultural organizations and providers. A concise pocket version is recommended for wider distribution to the Red Deer community, and both documents will be made available on The City's website.

For the purpose of this review, the steering committee updated the definition of culture; we used it as a basis for the work done over the past year. That definition is:

“Culture is all around us in our everyday lives and can be experienced through the formal and informal interaction of the many forms of creative expressions and exploration of our heritage as a community or as individuals.” Steering Committee (June 2007)

The new vision builds on this definition and on the successes of the previous plan, and integrates more prominently the experience of the community as cultural consumers and cultural workers. It identifies four main values and five major themes to guide cultural development. The values are: **authenticity** (distinctiveness), **diversity** (value for each other's differences), **connections** (place in the environment), and **rural roots leadership** (shared community action). The Red Deer community emphasizes that cultural development in Red Deer must reflect these values and suggests that development should be concentrated in five theme areas: diversity, green space, agora space (open space for gathering and activities), built space, and activities.

The first plan contained 27 recommendations in three categories: leadership, awareness and marketing, and spaces and places. City Council adopted the plan, which was intended to be updated every three years. It served as a guide to cultural development in Red Deer and was one of the first such plans in Canada.

In the updated vision, **leadership** continues to be a focus, although the new plan represents a substantial shift in how it is fostered. Shared community leadership is still valued; everyone works together and is active in creating and preserving culture. There is a distinct sense that our rural heritage - that of pioneers working together to create a community - is still alive and serving us well.



A community of people have the greatest power and potential to succeed when they hold a shared meaning and purpose, and are honoured and actively supported in their efforts by others.



Rapid cultural growth will occur through building cultural spaces located within busy public spaces that connect to the park system.



Rather than focusing on marketing and awareness, we suggest that more in-depth development of cultural values will underpin a more successful strategy for cultural development within Red Deer.

The 2001 focus on spaces and places continues to be central; the new vision develops the idea further by identifying three distinct types of spaces and places. It emphasizes changes that could be implemented immediately in order to create infrastructure that would attract community. As part of the 2001 plan, there was discussion about the naming of the section 'Spaces and Places' – no single word captured the idea of indoor and outdoor spaces dedicated to both formal and informal activities. The community desires indoor places in which to gather and participate in activities, and outdoor spaces that will accommodate informal gathering but also allow for the possibility of formal activities such as concerts and festivals.

Ideally, outdoor and indoor gathering spaces are connected through green arteries. With a closer look in 2008 at spaces and places, it has become clear that the community expects all three types of spaces to be connected; it's this connection between spaces and places that will enable culture – this idea is best captured in the word Agora.

Rapid cultural growth will occur through building cultural spaces located within busy public spaces that connect to the park system.

Agora space in this document refers to open spaces, such as the current public market (farmers' market), but containing built space such as: the proposed concert hall; the proposed museum and art gallery; the proposed major tourist attraction; and the proposed convention centre. Agora space is also intimately connected to our park system, which connects suburbs to vibrant and active spaces and places that are neither work nor home.

Action by The City of Red Deer and cultural organizations needs to address immediate, short term, medium term, and long term cultural development, with emphasis on supporting community initiatives through collaboration; we need to begin from a position of "Yes, it can be done! Now, let's figure out how to do it together!"

The community invites collaboration and wishes government to "blow gently on the embers" of cultural initiatives in Red Deer. To foster gently, plan, and be ready to respond to today's requests, and to anticipate future needs. The community continues to work in culture; this document is a reflection of the community voice and passion for this culture and its effect in all of our lives. It is a guide for both the community and The City of Red Deer.

This report summarizes the inquiry process used to gather data, explains why and how it has been useful and what happened during the inquiry. It describes what we, as consultants, did, what worked for the community, and how these processes can continue to effect change.

The process of using a positive inquiry approach to research, by





focusing on the best in the community and in Red Deer citizens, has revealed what an ideal cultural future looks like for Red Deer and how things can best be done by the community in partnership with one another and with The City. This research approach clearly demonstrated that the community will create the vision it talks about; therefore, if enhanced cultural opportunities are desired, it's important to actively talk about what those opportunities will look like when they exist.

Yes, it can be done! Now, let's figure out how to do it together!

This type of future imaging of culture and its role in cultural development should become a central component of all planning exercises undertaken by the community and The City.

The report divides the recommendations into six types:

- values and themes;
- planning;
- facilitation, collaboration, and action generation;
- infrastructure;
- experiments;
- funding



All recommendations encourage: an attitude shift in the way The City works; a shift in how The City responds and plans; a shift in the way cultural organizations work; and a shift in how they plan, collaborate, and make requests. The recommendations support working together for cultural development based on the community's values and themes. Facilitative experiments aim to promote collaboration, positive action and change in the direction that community has indicated.



#### Values and themes

This section of the recommendations suggests ways that the voice of the Red Deer community can help guide the work of both The City and of the community as cultural development continues into the next decade.



#### Planning

This section suggests that The City and the community find ways to include the community's cultural Values and Themes in all planning exercises. It suggests action to help bring culture into all planning processes.

#### Facilitation, collaboration, and action generation

These recommendations suggest a shift in the way the work gets done in the Red Deer community. They imply ongoing community dialogue to deepen shared understandings of culture and to strengthen cultural diversity and activity that contributes significantly to quality of life in Red Deer. The community suggests that The City start from the position of "Yes!", for ideas and requests that uphold the community's cultural values.

#### Infrastructure

This section recognizes the newly discovered knowledge that, in this era, the economy is driven by culture amenities and that





facilities and activities are a priority to attract and retain citizens and a skilled workforce.

#### Experiments

Experiments are time and task specific ideas, and should be tried, monitored and improved. Experiments move the work of this inquiry from the present into the future. They meet the immediate request of the community for action, and are opportunities for building culture while, at the same time, learning about what works best in the community.



#### Funding

Funding is required to support a young and developing cultural community. This section aims to support flexibility and assist with practices that will help organizations and programs to sustain themselves.



This inquiry into the future of culture in Red Deer has been surprising and intriguing. There exists great power and passion in this community to achieve this future vision. The City and the community have the ability to be successful partners as they focus on, and continue to have conversations about, the values and themes the community has voiced.

#### Overarching principles to healthy cultural development

- 1) The vision must be fostered and encouraged.
- 2) Additional resources must be allocated for the coordination of the vision.
- 3) Projects and opportunities have the greatest power when physically connected.



#### Recommendations

There are 12 recommendations of six distinct types. Underneath each of these is a series of opportunities for consideration and community dialogue.

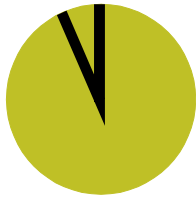


The recommendations are essential elements to secure cultural development in Red Deer in alignment with The City's Strategic Plan. It grounds the "cultural pillar" of the Strategic Plan in achievable action. These recommendations recognize that culture is an investment in the community and will promote economic development.

Opportunities have been identified throughout the consultation process and reflect the community's thinking. They are suggestions and options to be explored further with an ongoing process of dialogue and community engagement.



We've starred a number of opportunities that have the potential to transform cultural life in Red Deer. The consultation process has identified these as essential and powerful elements of the future culture vision. Each of these has different implications for planning and realization and all need to be further explored with the community.



As all opportunities were considered, it became clear that several of them should be considered for implementation as soon as possible. These we have identified with a symbol.

Listed here are the 12 recommendations:

- 1) That the Red Deer community is invited to actively embrace the Community Culture Vision (2008) to guide them in community work, and acknowledges it as the voice of the community for Red Deer's cultural future.
- 2) That Red Deer City Council adopt and actively embrace the four values and five themes as the voice and direction of the community as contained in the Community Culture Vision (2008). Use the five themes as areas of focus with which to gauge community and cultural development when considering recommendations from City staff, and in supporting recommendations from the community.
- 3) The City create methods and processes in all of its planning activities that include culture values and themes.
- 4) The City of Red Deer adopt and actively embrace the Community Culture Vision (2008) as a planning tool that will guide The City in fulfilling its mandate for the "cultural pillar" related to sustainability, as outlined in The City's Strategic Plan.
- 5) City Council commit resources as necessary for future visioning and planning, to encourage and foster the continuation of the community dialogue that leads to cultural development.
- 6) The City adopt methods of working with the community that generate positive action and facilitate community and cultural development.
- 7) The City of Red Deer provide new resources for a period of three years for the coordination and implementation of the Community Culture Vision (2008); to work specifically with the recommendations and actions in this document. The resources will be used to: coordinate cultural infrastructure with all City departments and the community; convene organizations around the themes, values, and ideas voiced by the community; facilitate the implementation of this plan; coordinate the shared aspects of the Greater Downtown Action Plan, and champion the voice of the culture community within the The City. The City Council annually commit the resources necessary to encourage and foster the continuation of the dialogue that leads to cultural development.
- 8) Building on the civic pride of the Cultural Capital of Canada award, The City should commit to work as communicator and advocate for the development of arts and cultural excellence.
- 9) City Council adopt the philosophy that cultural facilities are a priority to attract and retain our citizens and a skilled workforce, and maintain a growing economy.
- 10) Recommit to undertaking the initiatives that need further fostering from the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001), while applying the values and themes from the new Vision (2008).
- 11) In response to the community's vision, The City encourage and support the following or similar experiments; assess results; and use results to revise these experiments, to shape new experiments, and to create permanent changes or programs.
- 12) The City revise the grant programs to embody a high level of flexibility and responsiveness in support of cultural and community development.

# Introduction



The Community Culture Vision (2008) has been developed in dialogue with the community and is a continuation of Red Deer's Community Culture Master Plan, which was first written in 2001. The first plan was adopted by City Council and served as a guide for cultural development in Red Deer. Much progress has been made since that time with many significant advancements, including Red Deer being designated one of Canada's first Cultural Capitals (2003).

The Community Culture Vision (2008) is a timely update integrating with the Municipal Development Plan, Strategic Plan, The Greater Downtown Action Plan, Waskasoo Park Gathering Places study, and the Trails Master Plan.

## What's the context for this update?

Red Deer is located in the Calgary - Edmonton Corridor. It has recently been identified by the TD Bank as a City that has a high standard of living, with an economic future second in the world only to Luxembourg.



In 2008, Red Deer's boom economy continues to be strong; some would describe it as overheated. In the 2006 federal census the five dominant industries are: retail trade; mining, oil and gas extraction; healthcare and social assistance; construction and manufacturing; accommodation and food services. Agriculture has declined in recent years. The creative sector of Red Deer is growing quickly in response to demand by newcomers and the business sector.



Red Deer is the commercial service centre for 350,000 people living in Central Alberta; the Queen Elizabeth II highway links Red Deer to Calgary and Edmonton, and to major highways East and West. The proposed high speed rail linking Calgary, Red Deer, and Edmonton in the Alberta economic and cultural corridor will bring people to Red Deer and allow citizens to travel more readily to the bigger centres for cultural activities. The growing airport is a further opportunity for travel to and from Red Deer. Although it was not the focus for this project it is imperative that future planning and implementation considers the regional context and explores regional funding partnerships.

The City of Red Deer is the third largest city in Alberta, and one of eight mid-sized urban centers in Canada with growth rates twice higher than the national average. Red Deer was also recently named the best city in Alberta.



The city's population has increased from 67,707 in 2001 to 82,772 in 2006 – an increase of 22%. Since then, the rate of population growth has slowed – in 2008 our population grew to 87,816, which is a 2.46% increase from 2007, compared to 3.3% between 2006 and 2007. Even at this more modest growth rate, the city's population will near 100,000 before the end of 2011.



28.9% of the city's population is the result of migration between 2001-2006. Since 2001, Red Deer's immigrants have arrived from Asia and the

Businesses recognize that, without a strong cultural fabric, the chances of attracting and retaining skilled workers is difficult.



Middle East (37.1%) - predominantly the Philippines, India and the Peoples Republic of China; South and Central America (22.5%); Africa (16.6%); Europe (15.7%); United States (7.6%); and Other (0.5%).

Seniors constitute 9.9% of total population and children 14 years and under constituted 18.1% in 2006.

The growth rate in the Aboriginal population has been faster than the total Red Deer population. The aboriginal identity in Red Deer increased from 2,675 in 2001 to 3,600 in 2006 - a 34.6% increase, representing 4.4% of the total population.

Property values have climbed steadily over the past several years, and are now levelling off. Property values based on cost of dwelling collected by Statistics Canada show that property values have gone up. The average cost of a dwelling in 2001 was \$119,710 and went up by 62% to \$244,254 in 2006. Rental vacancy rates in 2002 were 3.9%, and in 2006 were 0.5%. They dipped below zero when accommodation was not available and people were still moving to Red Deer. They have started to climb again; vacancy rates moved up to 2.6% in 2007.

The average household income in Red Deer (2006) was \$77,761. In the same year, average individual income for males was \$50,911 compared to \$28,045 for females. The median income for males was \$39,609 while that of females was \$21,395 in 2006. Although household incomes have climbed over the past four years, there is a growing divide between the rich and the poor with a decreasing middle class. Disparity between incomes for men and women continues; median income for men is now over \$50,000 and for women it is just under \$36,000.

Male and female population is nearly balanced, however the average age of the population is younger, with the faster growing segment between the ages of 20-29. This trend could be because of the perceived prospects of good employment in Alberta, and from the growing enrolment in the region's colleges.

Educational opportunities are good in Red Deer, with public, separate, and private schools. There are French immersion programs and French schools (Ecole LaPrairie). There are three colleges in the region: Red Deer College, Olds College, and Canadian University College.

### Why an update?

The Community Culture Master Plan (2001) was the first attempt to understand and influence cultural development in Red Deer. It was primarily focused on the establishment of a community leadership organization to implement the plan, marketing and awareness of arts and culture, and the development of spaces and places for arts and culture.

It was recognized at the time of its writing that the plan would need to be updated and revisited every three years. Many of the 27 goals and objectives have been achieved or are underway, which makes an update more imperative.



As the community explored its vision for culture... four values appeared front and centre;

- Authenticity,
- Diversity,
- Connection, and
- Rural Roots Leadership

The adoption and implementation of the original plan has been an opportunity for learning in the arts and culture community and The City. The opportunity to apply this learning may be the most valuable reason to revisit the original document and create a new vision that continues to be relevant and useful in 2008 as culture is increasingly important to Red Deer.

Businesses recognize that, without a strong cultural fabric, the chances of attracting and retaining skilled workers is difficult. The possibility for a better quality of life pulls potential employees to places far from Red Deer. In this hot economy, Red Deer is performing on the world stage and needs every advantage, which includes world class cultural amenities. However, much-needed cultural amenities are missing. The community continues to voice the need to improve and introduce facilities that would add to the cultural mix of Red Deer.

Red Deer has been driven by rapid population growth, and consequentially rapid economic and social development. People come to visit, and come to stay. This has created diversity by bringing different perspectives from other parts of the world through immigration and migration.



An update of the community's vision for culture was needed to maintain the quality of life in Red Deer that holds many people here and attracts new citizens.

Change and urbanization have occurred because Red Deer is no longer isolated economically or socially; it is now a central part of the economic corridor in Alberta, one of a few in Canada. Red Deer has changed significantly over the past seven years and there is every indication that the pace of change will continue into the foreseeable future.

New research confirms that quality of life is largely based on cultural amenities and shows that – in the most desired communities in the world – culture drives the economy. There is no longer a question as to whether culture is important to the well-being of Red Deer. This is recognized and supported by The City's Strategic Plan, which names culture specifically as one of the five pillars that will sustain the city as it grows. The Strategic Plan further emphasizes the value of community-voiced documents such as this Community Culture Vision (2008).



Upcoming changes such as the high speed rail linking Calgary, Red Deer and Edmonton in the Alberta economic and cultural corridor will bring people to Red Deer and allow citizens to travel more readily to the larger centres for cultural activities. This infrastructure will be either a significant opportunity or a significant challenge depending on how The City plans for its eventuality.



The past seven years have been a time of local as well as global change. The world has become more integrated and interconnected; it has taken on a faster pace. The need for efficiency permeates every industry, from agriculture, agriculture processing and construction to education. Innovations in the communication industry connect everyone regardless of location. Society today may, indeed, be over-connected to the world and losing touch with the important elements that help local communities



New research confirms that quality of life is largely based on cultural amenities and shows that – in the most desired communities in the world – culture drives the economy. There is no longer a question as to whether culture is important to the well-being of Red Deer.



work together in ways that sustain one another.

As big industry grows there is pressure from beyond Red Deer to fit a mould that appeals to the American mass market. The community views this as a negative trend that detracts from the authenticity of Red Deer. Big box development has led to drive-through services from coffee to banking, mega malls and other vehicle-centric ways of living. Red Deer is increasingly becoming homogenized, looking more and more like middle America. A stranger to the city could stand in many parts of Red Deer and be unable to identify where he or she is -- this is unacceptable to Red Deer citizens, who value our distinct culture.

Another consideration that came to light in this review is the changes in the global and local natural environment. It is believed that the global food supply is endangered by climate change and the depletion of land for sustainable agriculture. As the community considered its value of connection to the environment, the discussion went beyond beautiful trail systems to the impact the community is having on the earth itself.

In this context, as the community explored its vision for culture and the changes it would like to make, it is not surprising that the four values: Authenticity; Diversity; Connection (to the environment); and Rural Roots Leadership (shared community action) appeared front and centre. Red Deer citizens today need an understanding of Red Deer as their home and its meaning as a community in today's world.

This community perspective is a response to the rapid change around us; the attitudes and priorities of each generation change with the times. The priorities of those born in the 30s and 40s differ dramatically from those born in the 80s and 90s as the world faces much different, but no less relevant, challenges.

The Red Deer community increasingly values working together to create futures, to meet difficult challenges. Even though attitudes change with each generation, the four values expressed by the community for culture are common to all ages, incomes, and backgrounds. This update is important because it opens common ground on which the whole community can agree.

### What does this document contain?

At the start of the review process it became clear that individual community members, the business community and those working in the cultural sector and for the municipality often struggled to communicate with one another about culture in Red Deer. An early task, therefore, was to develop shared understandings; we also propose that continuous revisiting of this discussion is essential.

This document contains the community's common language developed through the project, and its shared understanding of what Cultural Development in Red Deer should look like. It's a container that distills the findings from numerous formal and informal discussions, many planning documents, and ongoing inquiry. It contains recommendations, experiments and thoughts that will guide cultural development until the next review.

# Our vision elements

## Values

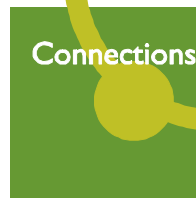
Through community dialogue and exploration these four values emerged. They help describe the foundation for the cultural future that Red Deer citizens desire. Reflecting on these values help determine the most appropriate path as we plan and action to realize our dreams.

Shared community action. We still hold the pioneer spirit close to our hearts. We believe that community knows best what it needs and knows how to do it – that the wisdom we need is within us.



Authenticity is personality, that which makes our community distinct. It's the sense that what we build reflects our collective nature as the people who dwell here during this time, a sense of place.

Connections is about our place on earth in the way we belong in the environment. It relates to how our built spaces connect to one another and to the environment itself.



Value of difference. We are welcoming and respect difference; we try hard to be inclusive in our activities, organizations, and planning.

These four core values helped uncover five main themes for cultural development in Red Deer. These themes, like the values they are based on, are intimately connected and must be considered as a collection, particularly green space, agora space, and built space.

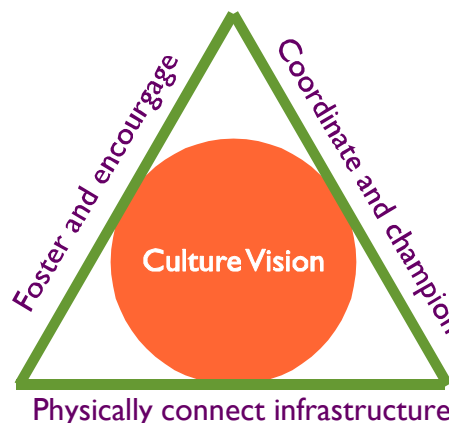
## Themes



Three overarching principles to healthy cultural development are:

- 1) The vision must be fostered and encouraged.
- 2) The work must be coordinated by someone whose primary purpose is the implementation of this vision.
- 3) Projects and opportunities have the greatest power when physically connected.

## Guiding Principles





# Our cultural future

## Values

As outlined earlier, the process revealed four core values and five themes that inspire a vibrant future for cultural development in Red Deer. We now discuss each in detail.

### Four core values

Through dialogue with community members four core values were voiced, which underpin the community's vision for Culture:

- Authenticity
- Diversity
- Connections
- Rural Roots Leadership

Authenticity is personality, that which makes our community distinct and real.



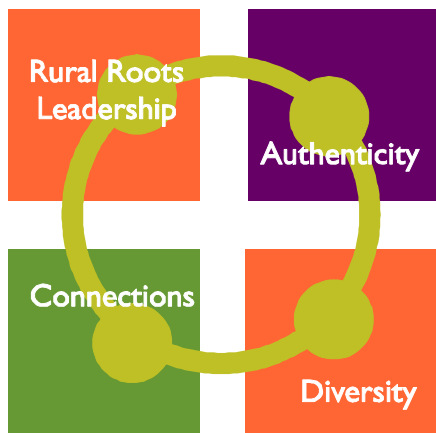
These values define who we collectively are and how we think of ourselves in terms of our culture. Each value has been summarized using statements, ideas and concepts generated by the community through the inquiry process.

#### Authenticity – sense of place.

Authenticity is personality, that which makes our community distinct and real. There is a sense that what we build reflects our collective nature as the people who dwell in this particular part of the earth at this particular time. The same is true of our festivals and celebrations. We strive as a community to be true to our uniqueness of place. Authenticity raises questions for us about our architecture, the way we organize ourselves to get things done, our connection to the aspen parkland, and the diverse make-up of our community, which includes our First Nations people, those who immigrated in Red Deer's early years, and those who continue to come to Red Deer from across Canada and other parts of the globe. With a lens of authenticity, we question everything that develops in the context of how it connects our past with our future. We choose to strive for realness. It's important for us as a community that Red Deer is visually distinct from other communities. It has its own cultural identity and we wish to develop it further.

Authenticity does not mean that we don't look outside ourselves for inspiration. We import good ideas and ways of being, but authenticity calls us to make them our own, to adapt them for our own community, climate and place on the globe. Ideas that migrate with us to this community become distinct and fully ours when they reflect our place and people, our climate and lifestyle.

We define ourselves as strongly connected to the parkland of the rolling foothills with the Red Deer river running through it. We live in a community with a clear sense of its authentic and unique nature. We need our city to be a visible manifestation of that authenticity and its context within the natural environment.



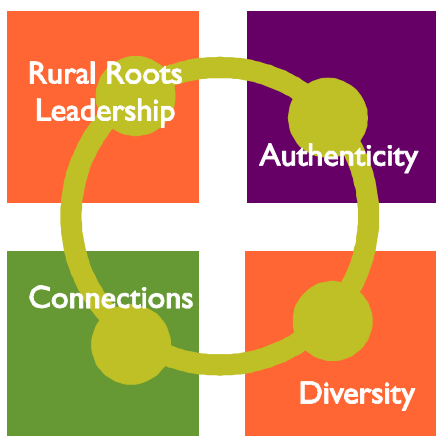
## Values



We are welcoming and respect difference; we try hard to be inclusive in our activities, organizations, and planning.



Connections, as a value, relates to the way we connect to the environment, to built spaces, and to one another. It also relates to how our built spaces connect with the environment itself. We have strong agrarian roots; agricultural heritage and earth stewardship.



### Diversity – value of difference.

Our community values diversity. We are welcoming and respect difference; we try hard to be inclusive in our activities, organizations, and planning. At the same time we understand that there is a place for specialized facilities and groups; sub-communities and cultures exist to help people form connections and enjoy like-minded people. The primary conversations were about ethnic diversity, although there was also discussion about valuing people regardless of sexual orientation, religion, income, age and ability.

Red Deer is a community of people with diverse backgrounds that go beyond ethnicities. First Nations people are a growing part of our community identity. At the same time, Red Deer is home to people who migrated from Europe, Asia, Africa, South and Central America and the Middle East. There is enthusiasm in the community for the visible and invisible diversity that exists among us. We want to celebrate one another and learn from one another. We have a sense that there exists, within our community, the wisdom to solve future challenges and to develop our cultural identity.

### Connections – our place on earth.

At first glance, connections may seem to be about interpersonal relationships and it is true that we value relationships across difference, as reflected in the emphasis on diversity. As a value however, connections relates to the way we connect to the environment, to built spaces, and to one another. It also relates to how our built spaces connect with the environment itself. Red Deer sits at the base of the Rocky Mountains in the aspen parkland, with prairies on one side and rolling foothills on the other. We have strong agrarian roots; agricultural heritage and earth stewardship. Our wish is that this connection be reflected in our built environment. The park systems and the way in which we move around Red Deer should be a reflection of the space we inhabit as a community.

The lens we wish to use as we develop our built environment is this: everything we do should suggest that we are working together peacefully to honour this place. We are not here to tame the land but to be with it.

We believe that all neighbourhoods and cultural venues should be connected via parkland arteries, which allow for healthy circulation by walking and biking. In a similar way, connections across generations and between diverse communities allow for healthy exchange among cultures.

In Japanese landscaping practice, the streams and gardens appear as if they have been there for hundreds of years. The built structures around the landscape appear to have been built

# Values



Our community leadership is an extension of our prairie heritage. The community draws on its longstanding tradition of sharing responsibility for one another to make powerful things happen.

afterward to take advantage of the views and beauty that exist. It's our collective desire that our built environment reflect this type of thinking and planning.

### Rural Roots Leadership – shared community action

The Red Deer community still holds the pioneer spirit close to our hearts, which is why we chose the term Rural Roots Leadership to exemplify shared community responsibility for leadership. This type of leadership is strongly valued; by working together we will be able to accomplish anything we set our minds to. There is a sense that the community knows best what the community needs and also knows how to do it – that the wisdom we need is within us. The community feels that cultural development is best accomplished by effective leadership within and alongside community organizations, and that government at all levels should be willing to enable, support and encourage community cultural development.

In response to the complex times we live in, there is a shift occurring globally as well as in the community away from linear thinking and by-the-rule-book planning to a self-organizing, fluid evolution of programs and services. Ideas and programs that made sense a few years ago may seem redundant and out of date today. The community is clear about its distinctiveness; ideals and ways of planning, being adopted from other communities, should be cautiously considered and always adapted to fit the Red Deer experience, particularly those being imported from the USA. The community has a strong sense of being Canadian and draws its sense of identity from Europe, Asia, Africa and other parts of the world more so than from the United States.



Our community leadership is an extension of our prairie heritage. The community draws on its longstanding tradition of sharing responsibility for one another to make powerful things happen.



# Our cultural future

## Themes

### Future thinking.

The following statements are written by the community as if this work has already been done. As you read, think of yourself in the future. These are not statements about the present state of Red Deer; they represent what will be if the community is encouraged to work toward their ideal.

### Five major themes.

Five strong themes became evident in all of the conversations we facilitated, they are; Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, and Activities. They are listed in priority order. Again, it is important to note that they are written in future present tense. We are describing the future as if it exists now. The subthemes are examples of how culture exists in our future sometime before we reach a population of 300,000. They are a representation and realization of how our values as a community define what we hope to be.

The first of the five themes, **Diversity**, is also one of the values the community identified. Its appearance as both a value and a theme is a powerful manifestation of the community's belief that differences in our citizens are important. Empirical research on the most vibrant and growing communities in the world indicates that valuing visible and invisible minorities is central to economic success. The economies of communities that do not celebrate and cherish their people as individuals of difference struggle and diminish. These communities are unable to attract and retain creativity and build culture. Our community continues to attract newcomers from around the world and across Canada. The fastest growing population is young people between 20-29.

#### Diversity in the Ideal Future (stated as if it has already been created)

Red Deer is a visibly diverse community celebrating the talents and supporting the quality of life of all its residents. It is known as an open-hearted community, welcoming visitors and newcomers. Red Deer has a multi-cultural perspective, cultivated through links to individuals and communities across the world.

- The downtown of Red Deer has a variety of spaces that actively support diversity and multi-cultural activities.
- The community of Red Deer welcomes migrants and immigrants flexible support is available at a community-led resource centre on Old Gaetz Avenue.
- Minorities, visible and invisible, are included and supported through active well-funded programs.
- Many established cultural groups have their own self-led facilities, e.g. the Chinese Cultural Centre.
- Walking and diversity are strongly connected. Many citizens recount stories of discovering diversity in places that they visited by leaving the car and walking. Many newcomers to Red Deer



Five strong themes became evident in all of the conversations we facilitated, they are:

- Diversity
- Green Space
- Agora Space
- Built Space
- Activities



## Themes



Empirical research on happiness indicates that sense of place ranks as one of the three most important contributors to personal and community well-being. It is not surprising that the Red Deer community determined that a sense of place would be manifest in three of the five themes determining cultural health. In communities where people are happy, crime rates drop and economic growth is steady.



come from a culture of walking and expect to make connections by meeting others in open community spaces (agora space).

- Pedestrianization and further street scene development supports the continuing growth of the international district on Old Gaetz Avenue.
- Walking and cycling between galleries and cultural spaces, shops, restaurants, housing and recreational space promotes interaction among different people and encourages visibility of all parts of the community.
- Residents and visitors walk between vibrant and ever-changing cultural spaces that facilitate connections and interactions among people of all ages and characteristics.
- The diverse histories of Red Deer's citizens and the community's rooted history in the land are celebrated through thoughtful urban design.
- The community has built on the rich travel experiences and backgrounds of residents to establish twinning and other links with communities across the globe.

The next three themes, **Green Space**, **Agora Space** and **Built Space**, all relate to the space that we inhabit and how we use it. Spaces and Places was a major theme for the community in the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001). However, outside of the work on Alexander Way the development of cultural infrastructure has not gained momentum since 2001; planning efforts have been evident but action has not been realized on major facilities requested by the community. The list of needs continues to grow. Renovations have been undertaken at the Recreation Centre and Dawe Centre, which have helped to add an arts and culture component to these public places.

Recent studies undertaken by Simon Fraser University indicate that cultural infrastructure is deteriorating in Western Canada. It is arguable whether this is the case in Red Deer, although community references to decline or stagnation in some of our cultural facilities may indicate some deterioration. Immediate, short term, medium term and long term action need to be taken and continually focused on, along with sustainable planning, to avoid creating a deficit in one venue while focusing on another.

Empirical research on happiness indicates that sense of place ranks as one of the three most important contributors to personal and community well-being. It is not surprising that the Red Deer community determined that a sense of place would be manifest in three of the five themes determining cultural health. In communities where people are happy, crime rates drop and economic growth is steady.

Space planning through the lens of happiness and well-being is paramount. A healthy community is a result of happy people, not happy infrastructure. Later recommendations help guide planning

## Themes



Red Deer is characterized by sustainable and world-class urban design; it is integrated with, and celebrates, the local environment. The park system is seen as an integral component of the cultural life of the city with easily navigable trails linking cultural spaces, “town spaces” and all neighbourhoods together in the warm months and in the winter. It connects our communities to each other in ways that do not include powered vehicles.



activities around cultural spaces and encourage decision makers to base recommendations on community values rather than on bylaws.

### Green Space (stated as if it has already been created)

Red Deer is characterized by sustainable and world-class urban design; it is integrated with, and celebrates, the local environment. The park system is seen as an integral component of the cultural life of the city with easily navigable trails linking cultural spaces, “town spaces” and all neighbourhoods together in the warm months and in the winter. It connects our communities to each other in ways that do not include powered vehicles.

Green spaces are an extension of our place in the aspen parkland. We feel strongly that the land exists first and the built environment second. We believe that we should exist with nature rather than tame and subdue it. There is a seamless transition from the countryside to the cityscape.

- Integrated park systems connect every cultural district and facility through public art in a 'walking gallery' that creates culture around every corner.
- Parkland arteries connect every neighbourhood and district to one another.
- Green spaces, both connected to the River and otherwise, are part of Red Deer's authenticity and provide a context for future growth.
- Narrowing of streets and prioritization for pedestrians allow the streets downtown to become part of the green arteries. Mid-street crossing facilitates the interaction and flow of pedestrians in the downtown.
- Extensive planting of trees, shrubs and flowers provides visual and experiential links to the green trails and pathways and the prairies beyond.
- The community has adopted many parks and gardens and maintains them.
- The centre of Red Deer is as much a part of the Alberta landscape as the park system. There are clear design criteria, planning and bylaws that reinforce the value of green space as a unique characteristic of Red Deer.
- Engineering services of all governments relating to roads and highways fully support and adopt the community's Cultural Vision with its connection to the rolling foothills and parkland arteries.

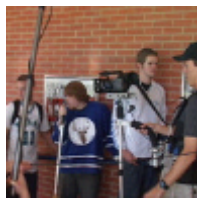
### Agora Space (stated as if it has already been created)

Agora spaces are busy, public, informal and unstructured gathering places for the culture that is all around us in our everyday lives; these spaces are centres for social interaction. They underpin Red Deer's authentic nature and personality by providing visitors and citizens with the richness and diversity of urban living. Real opportunities exist to interact, dine, relax, listen to music, read,

## Themes



Red Deer is the home of world class arts and heritage facilities that showcase our authenticity. They invite exploration of an emerging urban parkland culture and its connections in the world.



breathe, meditate, converse, and grow as a community.

- In Red Deer residents and visitors live, work and play in agora spaces that help them to make connections and experience culture daily.

- An intercity high-speed rail system brings visitors to Red Deer from Edmonton and Calgary for cultural tourism.

- An environmentally friendly transit system links neighbourhoods to the high-speed rail through the downtown arts districts.

- The transit systems integrate with trails and bicycle routes, ensuring that walking becomes a favoured and easy means of access to these agora spaces.

- The Riverlands farmers' market is a vibrant diverse year-round expression of the cultural life of Red Deer.

- The size and quality of Red Deer's public art collection, located along bike paths, streets, and in the agora spaces, has established Red Deer as a cultural tourist destination.

- People demand to live, work and experience cultural diversity in and near agora spaces, which sustains cultural tourism, economic growth, safety, environmental and personal wellness.

- The shift in emphasis from vehicle-based transport to pedestrian-focused planning has led to a flourishing street-scene and a thriving downtown from early morning through to the evening.

### Built Space (stated as if it has already been created)

Red Deer is the home of world class arts and heritage facilities that showcase our authenticity. They invite exploration of an emerging urban parkland culture and its connections in the world. The quality and relevance of our built space is evident in the public and private architecture that exists throughout Red Deer.

- Our remarkable facilities for music, theatre and visual arts invite and attract international and touring exhibitions and performers who are valued, honoured, respected, and paid accordingly.

- The architecture and urban design throughout our community are demonstrable examples of our unique heritage in a context relevant to our place in the world and our time in history.

- Building practices are environmentally sustainable and supported by industry partners and governments.

- The City maintains high architectural standards that provide sustainable creative space for all citizens and lead to architecture of world-class significance.

- Arts and heritage facilities are located in thriving agora spaces that root and sustain them by providing a natural and unexpected audience.

- Any built space is surrounded by agora space, which creates diverse opportunities for cultural involvement and creates a natural transition between facilities and neighbourhoods.

- Agora and built spaces are inseparably linked and readily

## Themes



The advantage of shifting the focus of discussion away from the strictly visual toward the values promoted by buildings is that we become able to handle talk about the appearance of works of architecture rather as we do wider debates about people, ideas, and political agendas. The notion of buildings that speak helps us to place at the very centre of our architectural conundrums the question of values we want to live by -- rather than merely of how we want things to look. – Alain de Botton



accessible on foot.

- The Riverlands has been developed as an agora space with minimal environmental impact and internationally renowned design, which attracts cultural tourism.
- The Riverlands Cultural District is the busiest winter agora space in the city.
- Red Deer College and The City work closely together on integrated projects including formal performance and gallery space.

The last of the five themes, **Activities**, is about how the community uses green, agora and built spaces for programming. It's not a surprise that the community wants to use the space to celebrate its diversity, craft a sense of place, make art, showcase culture, and expand our ways of thinking about ourselves and the outside world. This theme is specifically about what people do when they are not at home and not at work. Red Deer has the spaces; in them the community wants to engage in activities that are sometimes fun, sometimes educational and sometimes enlightening.

### Activities and Programming (stated as if it has already been created)

Red Deer is the cultural capital for Alberta and attracts visitors from across Canada and internationally. An array of festivals includes film, music, winter and theatre, as well as specific celebrations of cultural significance such as Chinese New Year, Canada Day, Carnival, Diwali, Eid, and First Night.

- Festivals happen all year round, reflecting the cultural diversity of the community and offering many opportunities for local artists and performers to deliver programs, as well as attracting artists and performers from further afield.
- Red Deer College has developed a full arts degree program with an international reputation for expertise in community arts.
- The City has developed a process for promoting and evaluating programs that makes them inclusive and available to everyone.
- The community is accepting and excited about The City investing in culture, recognizing that there is a positive social and economic benefit from cultural development.
- Creative spaces throughout Red Deer are used by the College and community arts organizations, including gallery space within City Hall and other government buildings, where occasional visiting exhibitions are also hosted.
- Powerful programs exist that preserve and interpret our heritage and make it relevant to challenges and future growth.
- Programs pair young and old to create a spark of appreciation for each other and the community they live in.
- The community offers a rich and diverse intellectual life that manifests itself in a broad range of publications, media and all of the arts. It is internationally recognized.
- Our history, diverse cultures, and roots are interpreted through innovation, and made relevant to us in a Culture Centre of award winning stature.



# Accomplishments

## Leadership in review

One major success of the 2001-2008 period was the designation of Red Deer as one of Canada's first Cultural Capitals. This program of the federal government, established in 2003, is designed to support a community's intentions toward cultural development with an infusion of federal funding over a one-year period. Participation in the program required matching funds from the municipal government and strong collaboration between the municipal government and the broader community in planning and action-taking.

The designation and the funding enabled the community to bring a powerful focus to cultural development, gaining the attention of decision makers, community leaders, and citizens. All of the benefits achieved by Red Deer through participation in the Cultural Capitals Program enabled Red Deer to make great strides in its cultural development between the first Community Culture Master Plan in 2001 and the present. Red Deer's first cultural development plan centred on three main components: Leadership Development, Awareness and Marketing, and Spaces and Places.

### Leadership in review.

Since the completion of the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001) there has been a significant shift in thinking on cultural development, both in Red Deer and in the wider context.

Investment in cultural development has become a central element of planning for sustainable communities in Canada but municipalities range in their approaches to cultural leadership. For example, Vancouver has kept control of cultural planning and development within The City administration, whereas Edmonton relies on the Edmonton Arts Council, a voluntary body, for cultural development. As a result of its first Community Culture Master Plan, Red Deer adopted a middle-way approach between these two extremes. The City and the "Leadership Vehicle" proposed in the 2001 Plan and later constituted as Culture Link, planned to take a balanced approach to this work.

Culture Link was established in 2001 and The City worked closely with the organization, providing funding for its main mandates of cultural development and fund development as outlined in the recommendations. Within a year of this partnership came the successful application to the Federal Government of Canada for the designation as Cultural Capital of Canada (2003), which came with a half million dollar grant to accomplish the recommendations of the Culture Master Plan.

The partnership set out to fulfill the obligations of the grant; Culture Link had responsibility for the implementation in the community, while The City acted as support and grant administrator. Ambitious targets for cultural development in 2003 were agreed upon; both The City and Culture Link struggled to achieve them. Several project extensions were granted and some repurposing of the funds was agreed upon,



Community-driven organizations cannot be created from the outside. Only the community itself has the power to create a community-driven organization.



## Leadership in review

while still keeping within the Community Culture Master Plan.

Culture Link found it difficult to balance the demands of the cultural community and The City. Their capacity was limited in staff and volunteers, and insufficient financial support for their mandate and the Cultural Capital of Canada work was available from City, regional and provincial governments. Capacity of municipalities and not-for-profit organizations in cultural development is a perennial issue. Project funding is always more readily available than resources for ongoing maintenance of supporting infrastructure. This is a challenge that exists nationally across the not-for-profit sector working in culture. Core funding for worthwhile service organizations must be addressed. In Red Deer, the Fee for Service program with allocations of \$147,000 for all culture groups combined is not enough to sustain even the smallest when divided up among them.



The original strategy for Culture Link to build two permanent endowment funds, held at the Red Deer and District Community Foundation, wasn't easily achievable without a visible presence in Red Deer that residents could understand, touch and see. The Cultural Community Facility Needs Assessment had underscored the Culture Master Plan's original findings that there was strong community interest in a small theatre space and the newer finding that a community-run arts building would be supported. Culture Link therefore purchased an historic building in downtown Red Deer, the Scott Block, as a way to generate income, provide space to the community and raise endowment funds for the long term.

Culture Link was awarded provincial and federal government grants to assist with the project and since 2004 the organization has focused its attention and energy on repurposing the Scott Block. In this time, however, the cost of building and renovating in Alberta skyrocketed and qualified trades for this type of work were hard to find. As a result, timelines have slipped and plans have been curtailed. The project has not been completed and Culture Link now does not have the planned investment to provide sustainable funding as a leadership organization. Nor were they able to undertake the necessary fundraising to eliminate the debt on the project, which was an important part of the strategy for success. It is unclear whether Culture Link will survive as an independent organization.

The decision to adopt a "middle-way" may also have disrupted cultural development in Red Deer. In 2003 The City set up the "Culture Advisory Board" made up of community representatives to advise and comment on City cultural policy. The authority and mandate of the board was not clear to the community, and there appeared to be overlap with the work that Culture Link was mandated to do. The Board was disbanded in 2005, along with all advisory boards of The City. The City restructured its Recreation, Parks and Culture department in 2005 and continued to run a facility, manage cultural programming, and support community arts and heritage organizations.



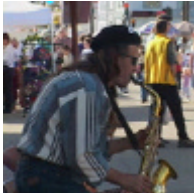
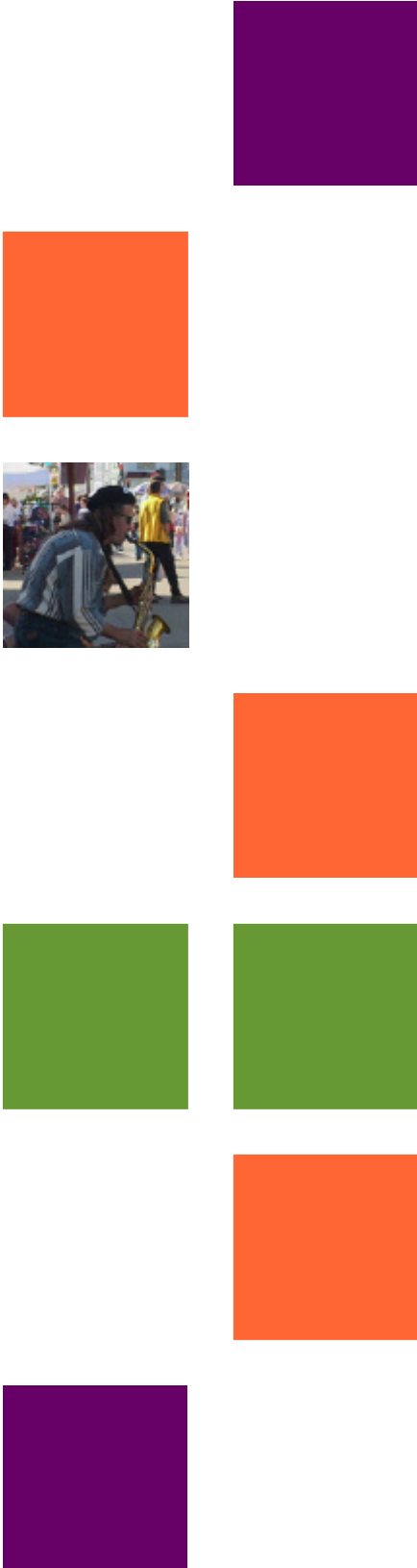
Investment in cultural development has become a central element of planning for sustainable communities in Canada but municipalities range in their approaches to cultural leadership.



New ideas require old buildings – Jane Jacobs



## Leadership in review



Although much has been achieved by Culture Link, it has been unable to develop endowment funds or fulfill its function as a leadership vehicle. The partnership between The City and Culture Link has proven to be unsustainable in the current economic climate as The City has limited resources available to fully support the organization to its original mandate. If establishing a middle-way approach is really the intent, serious effort and funding is required by The City over the long term. Our inquiry into Red Deer's culture vision took place within a context of some uncertainty as to leadership in cultural development within The City and the community.

We concluded that The City attempted to 'jump start' the process by establishing an artificial organization when they established Culture Link. This organization is currently reinventing itself and may emerge as a community-led organization that finds its own way of doing cultural development. They have recently received funding from the provincial Alberta Foundation for the Arts funding to assist them with their focus on arts advocacy. They should be applauded and supported in their efforts.

Community cultural leadership is still a priority for the community. Our inquiry indicates that there is a role for government in supporting and fostering community leadership; arm's length work is still important. The underlying principle is that culture needs to be guided by the community for the community. A later section of this report outlines the process of inquiry used to discover new ways of expanding on the work that was done in 2001. This report includes recommendations regarding strategic leadership.

As a vision of Rural Roots Leadership (shared community action) emerges from the 2008 inquiry, it is possible to see the contours of a new configuration wherein leadership is shared among many players, including an important role for The City and Culture Services.

In this model, there is a multiplicity of leadership points, multiple leaders, roles for multiple organizations, and multiple initiatives. Community consultation revealed overriding messages that the role of The City is to "blow gently on the embers" of initiatives arising from within the community and to move in the directions indicated by The City's close observations of the community's aspirations.

# Accomplishments

## Awareness & marketing in review

### Awareness and Marketing in review.

**Cultural Capital Designation.** As mentioned above, Red Deer's designation as a Cultural Capital in 2003 was a significant accomplishment that enabled progress toward many of the goals of the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001). Red Deer was one of the first five cities in Canada to receive this designation; it was awarded because of the community approach to future planning and types of projects being proposed. It came with \$500,000 to assist in the work. The City matched the award, which allowed for \$1,000,000 for culture development in the community.

One of the projects that was especially successful was the awareness-raising project undertaken by Culture Link, "culture around every corner." Identifying culture in everyday life as a goal resulted in community commitment toward its realization. The shift is evident in the definition of culture adopted by the steering committee during the inquiry for this culture vision. The impact on the community has been profound; the community now sees itself as cultural. In 2003 citizens acted as if it were a joke when they heard Red Deer was a Cultural Capital, now it is part of the community's identity. The community's value of diversity further demonstrates the shift in core values.

**Cultural Benefits Study.** The marketing and awareness project was preceded by a study of the economic and social benefits of culture (also an activity of the Cultural Capital program). The development of a multiplier factor was outside the scope of the project, but the study yielded convincing local data of the impact of culture economically and socially. Culture is accepted as both a part of everyday life and as having economic, social and intrinsic benefits. These shifts are perceptible, if hard to measure, and have happened concurrently with the same shifts in wider society. The Creative City Network's work across Canada researches the impact of culture in communities; it has helped the nation recognize that culture is the economic driver of any great city. Many cities, of which Red Deer is one, have embedded culture in their strategic plans as a pillar for sustainability. The City, and some members of the culture community, participate with the network regularly.

**Inventory of Cultural Activity.** As part of the Cultural Capital programming, an inventory was taken of artists, groups, and media in Red Deer and an web-based system called the "web tool" was attempted as a one-stop shop for the cultural community to use in connecting and in marketing. A web-based events calendar was also created to be used by patrons and visitors interested in the arts. Neither tool is as fully realized as was hoped but both may still be useful as marketing strategies. The community asked that the web tool and the community calendar be completed/augmented; however it is not a high priority. It seems as if the new connectivity being envisioned is a people- and place-based connectivity: spontaneous multiple connections among people in agora space as the means by which information is communicated and discovered. These marketing



## Awareness & marketing in review

methods will be most successful when combined, perhaps by offering the contents of the calendar and webtool on an electronic billboard from an agora space or other busy public spaces.

**City as Program Provider.** Through the many activities made possible by the Cultural Capital program, a high level of visibility and interconnectivity has been maintained over the past few years, especially with the public art installations, “culture around every corner” and similar programs. Concurrently Culture Services has had a more than 400% increase in demand for its programming over the past 10 years. They have improved their support of and relationships with arts organizations. The primary communications and marketing vehicle, The City of Red Deer Community Services Activity Guide, has improved substantially.

The 2008 inquiry does not envision The City increasing its role as direct provider of programs but rather calls for Culture Services to play a supportive role in response to initiatives emerging from the cultural community. Culture Services has made gains in refocusing their activity to this end over the past two years. The community indicated that this is the right direction and encourages The City to continue to foster and facilitate the development of activities and programming as they arise in the community.



# Accomplishments Spaces & places in review

## Spaces and Places in Review

Spaces and Places is the third of three main objective areas in the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001). The recommendations were primarily focused on the development of three connected cultural hubs, called Agora Spaces in the current vision. The eastern hub is Rotary Recreation Park on the east side of the downtown, home of the Golden Circle, Red Deer and District Museum and Archives, the Recreation Centre and Heritage Square. The second hub is the downtown, home of independent business, retailers, restaurants and City Hall park. The third hub is the Riverlands district west of the downtown, envisioned as a major cultural district on the river's edge. Each of these three hubs was envisioned to be connected by 48th Street as the cultural corridor. It was designed to give pedestrians priority over vehicle traffic and to connect to other parts of the community through the park system - Barrett Park on the east and by a new bridge over the river to Bower Ponds on the west. 48th Street is now called Alexander Way.

Other cultural Spaces and Places, such as the Memorial Centre and Red Deer College, were to be connected to the main cultural corridor by the park system.

The vision of hubs or agora spaces connected to the park system is still relevant and important in 2008. The new learning brings clearer understanding of the relationship among Spaces and Places and that Green Space, Agora Space, and Built Space must exist together – none should be considered in isolation of the others.

## Culture Hubs

### Rotary Recreation Park

Rotary Recreation Park is an important part of the cultural corridor, containing the Museum and Art Gallery (MAG), the Archives, the Recreation Centre, the Golden Circle and Heritage Square. During the past few years there has been work on the much-needed expansion of the museum. Staff and community have worked together to create a vision of what a new facility could be for the community, and how it will be relevant for this time in history. Interim work on storage and critical upgrades just maintain the MAG; a new facility is needed more than ever.



The recreation centre has undergone a complete renovation that has added to the cultural programming space downtown. The addition of public art, in keeping with the public art policy, has greatly improved the facility and made it more inviting to the public. Use of the space has increased since the renovation was completed.

### Downtown

Scott Block. The Scott Block, a heritage building on Gaetz Avenue that had been underused for several years, is a dedicated cultural

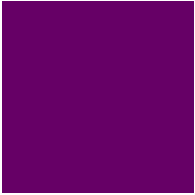



## Spaces & places in review




space created with the help of City resources during the period 2001– 2008. The need for a small multi-purpose performance space was identified in the 2001 master plan and again in a facility needs assessment undertaken by Culture Link as part of the Cultural Capital programming. The City's \$250,000 contribution for the Scott Block resulted in Culture Link undertaking approximately \$1.2 million in renovations through matching grant programs and gifts in kind. Although the space is not yet fully functional, it is beginning to be used by arts organizations. In turn, it is starting to contribute to public safety in that area of the downtown by increasing the number of pedestrians on the street. Repurposing a vacant building to meet a culture need has advantages; however the public perception of the streets in the downtown being unsafe has worked against the project and made it more difficult to rent and program in.


There is an accepted offer on the Scott Block which will result in the sale of the building to an active arts supporter who would maintain the original purpose and intent of the project. The City and Culture Link have worked collaboratively to foster this change, which will be a win for everyone in the community, and for the organizations who worked so hard to bring this project to life.



The Downtown Business Association has moved its offices into the Scott Block and this is helping to improve the occupancy of the building. Treehouse Youth Theatre has reached a tentative agreement to be the primary tenant of the theatre space.




The City has created a fenceless and welcoming environment around City Hall Park through the installation of picnic benches, upgrading of walkways, and installation of decorative lighting in the branches of downtown trees. Further, in what The City calls the public realm, street furniture, light standards, trees, planters and the conservation of the public art are all important to the development of the downtown as one hub in the cultural corridor identified in the 2001 plan. Several murals have also been installed in the downtown.



Recently the installation of the Red Deer clock tower also added to the overall ambience of the downtown. Each of these small items adds up to substantial investment by the community and The City and the cumulative effect is now being noticed and becoming powerful.

### Riverlands



Riverlands is a district directly west of the downtown, separated from the downtown by Taylor drive on the east and from Bower Ponds by the Red Deer River on the west. The City has taken seriously the community's vision, contained in the Community Culture Master Plan (2001), of the Riverlands as a culture district;

## Spaces & places in review

they are relocating The City yards to free up the space for proposed Riverlands development. Considerable momentum was initiated in the business community through the Chamber of Commerce's Tourism Development Subcommittee for this project. The Riverlands concept is being developed further as a significant component of the Greater Downtown Action Plan. The partnership with The City in the early stages of envisioning is an excellent example of fostering cultural development to enact a community vision.


If there were a City commitment to invest as much in Riverlands as has been invested in moving and establishing the new City yards, significant progress would be made in achieving the vision the community has for this very important tourist and cultural destination.

The Matchbox Theatre, privately owned and operated, also opened near the Vat on the edge of the downtown. The theatre provides one more venue for the performing arts and is in high demand. The Vat is known as a music venue. An emerging arts space is developing around those venues and it will gather momentum as the Riverlands is developed and the physical connections are made to the downtown core.

### Cultural Corridor

Through significant community consultation during the writing of the first Greater Downtown Action Plan a promenade was envisioned that is now called Alexander Way. It was intended to be a visible and important connection between Barrett Park and Bower Ponds. In the first culture plan the concept was further refined to link all three cultural hubs. It was intended to create a critical mass of cultural infrastructure that would offer activities and opportunities for social interaction and cultural engagement. Although much of the original vision remains incomplete, significant progress has been evident: several substantial installations of public art enhance the street, a well designed park with a fountain and wading pool is a popular area in summer, and the addition of trees and street furniture makes Alexander Way visually more attractive to all users. New businesses have appeared.

However, the observation of Red Deer citizens is that implementation falls short of the original vision of a pedestrian and bike friendly corridor. The community's belief and observation is that traffic calming measures such as roundabouts (traffic circles), bike lanes, angled parking and treed meridians have not yet been achieved or have been set aside in the planning. Vehicular traffic still has overwhelming priority, albeit on a substantially improved streetscape. Currently no pedestrians or bikes are permitted crossing at Taylor Drive and Alexander Way, one of the links on which the vision hinges. Pedestrian access to the



Narrower streets are quieter  
streets are safer streets. –  
Michael Geller



## Spaces & places in review



Riverlands is cut off by a recently installed fence. The concept of traffic circles explored in the planning of Alexander Way has been lost all along the corridor. Respondents stated that Alexander Way feels the same as any other busy downtown street or intersection.

In discussions, the community particularly cited the contradiction in purpose at the intersection beside the wading pool and park. It's easily observed by standing on the corner near the fountain, watching the traffic going in and out of the adjacent commercial developments; because vehicular traffic remains the priority the street does not have the feel of a cultural corridor and it, sadly, remains invisible to the community in spite of the expense to date. The City remains committed to the Alexander Way project, which is still in its infancy with more to be accomplished in years to come.

Commitment and follow-through is needed to complete the vision of the original plan for Alexander Way. The focus needs to be on the visible manifestation of the concept in order to create the critical mass needed to attract people.

While The City was directing financial and other resources to cultural infrastructure on Alexander Way and its upgrades, the energy and momentum of the business community crystallized in the downtown along both Gaetz Avenue and Ross Streets. This focus on the long term plans of Alexander Way was viewed as a loss for short term opportunities, on Gaetz Avenue and on Ross Street, that may have produced quicker results and had immediate and lasting impact.

It is important to note that projects are often driven by funding sources rather than immediate opportunities. Funding for major projects like Alexander Way come in large part from higher levels of government, primarily the provincial government. Although the community welcomes enhancements like Alexander Way, it is not clear to citizens how these projects are funded and why they take priority over enhancements that seem more obvious. Ongoing dialogue is necessary to ensure the community understands how concepts and priorities fit together as development unfolds.

### Bower Ponds

Bower Ponds, stage and bridge. For 15 years, the community has called for a roof on the stage at Bower Ponds. It is now scheduled in The City's capital budget expenditure allocation. A complete new structure with roof and stage will make the facility more usable and less weather dependent. The bridge to Bower Ponds, also long identified as a key piece of the cultural infrastructure in Red Deer, is scheduled for 2016 in The City's capital expenditures planning. The community indicates this timeframe is too distant, and has clearly stated a desire for completion of the bridge, so that the park system and the festival activity can be linked directly to downtown and the culture corridor. It is important that the development of the bridge link commences with the construction of Riverlands.

## Spaces & places in review

### Trail Systems

The City has brought resources to bear on developing Red Deer as a bicycle-friendly city for active transportation and for recreation. A Red Deer Trails Master Plan was undertaken and adopted in 2005 and the resulting trails have been helpful in connecting some residential neighbourhoods plus the three cultural hubs. Paving the link from Alexander Way to Barrett Park has assisted with the flow of bike traffic.

### Other spaces.

Great strides have been made in creating public spaces and places for citizens and for culture. The City's contributions have been most effective in removing obstacles to public gathering spaces and in connecting cultural locales with green space. Both of these ideas are emphasized again in the findings of the 2008 community inquiry. The City's initiative has been less evident in realizing purpose-built cultural facilities such as a concert hall, 300 seat theatre, public gallery, and museum. A facilities inventory, conducted as part of the Cultural Capitals program, helped to identify potential programming spaces throughout the city. Renovations scheduled for some public buildings do take cultural opportunities into consideration as part of the projects. The public art policy has been a strong influence in identifying opportunities for public art in any civic funded project.


Renovations to the Memorial Centre created new space for arts programming. The Recreation Centre, Cultural Services Centre, and Dawe Centre have all received upgrades that add to the available programming space.

The literary arts are thriving in Red Deer. A number of local authors have achieved national and international recognition through awards, and more are being professionally published all the time. Culture Services now offers expanded writing-related programs that are proving their popularity through their enrollment numbers. The public and college libraries host regular literary readings, as do several downtown businesses including art galleries, and the college has extended their playwrighting program recently to include the community. While writers don't require a public space in which to create their art, they do require, and are offered, public spaces in which to connect with their audiences. The writing community in Red Deer is diverse and growing. Like all cultural forms, however, it requires further nurturing through increased support of events and venues that allow local writers to increase their audience, connect with the community and other writers, and support emerging talent.


The Costume Cutting and Construction (CCC) program at Red Deer College was cancelled due to fluctuating enrolment and the high cost attributed to running the program. While this released



## Spaces & places in review



new funding to other College initiatives the loss of this program at Red Deer College has an impact on the Motion Picture Arts and Theatre programs. They must continue to strive to present high quality production values with a new costume delivery plan that cannot rely on the national profile and artistic success that the CCC program provided. Red Deer College was one of very few institutions in Canada to offer such a program and it was a mark of the innovation in the arts for which the college has been known. Administration of Red Deer College may underestimate the reputation of their arts program nationally and internationally. The cancellation of this program comes at a time when there is an increasing call for Red Deer College to expand their Fine Arts programs to create a bachelor's degree.




In the meantime, community initiatives have resulted in significant additions of cultural space to the downtown. Six private galleries have appeared in the period from 2001– 2008 and a few new ethnic restaurants.




Red Deer College will soon have new fine arts facilities under development that will add gallery space to the available facilities. The College has already added a new library which is available to the general public through its partnership with Red Deer Public Library. Catalogues for Red Deer Public Library, the Hospital, Red Deer College, and the Museum and Archives are now connected for public use.


### Public Art.



A significant achievement during the 2001–2008 period is the appearance of public art installations in the city. On Alexander Way there are five installations, several metal silhouettes of the railman Alexander and the Cultural Capital of Canada billboard. Elsewhere in the community three other works of art have been installed along city trails with provisions for five more. Foundations were put in place - literally! - for eight more pieces with the installation of concrete pads for public art through our trail system. Two new pieces are in the process of being commissioned. Public art has been installed in each of the civic buildings that have been renovated.



Looking back, an enormous amount of work has been done by The City, the community and Red Deer College, resulting in tremendous gains for Red Deer. However, there remains a significant cultural infrastructure deficit that urgently needs to be addressed. The 2008 inquiry repeats the calls, not just from the culture community but from Red Deer as a whole, for a concert hall, museum and public gallery, performing and rehearsal space, small private arts studios and more theatre space.



# Guiding principles

One of the main purposes of the 2008 review of the Red Deer Culture Master Plan (2001) was to invite a clearer picture of the cultural future envisioned by the community. The inquiry has resulted in a vision future with possible roles for everyone in our community to embrace including The City, local cultural organizations, community groups and individuals.

The report contains many recommendations and opportunities that will help the community move in the direction it has defined. Three overarching principles will breathe life into the recommendations; working within these principles will ensure a base of strength as the community moves into the cultural future it desires.

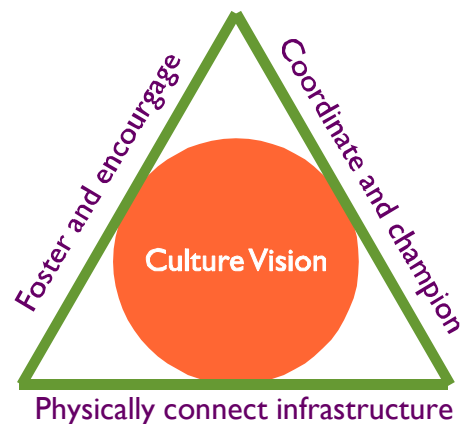


## 1) The vision must be fostered and encouraged.

The inquiry has uncovered and stimulated natural growth of cultural activities in Red Deer; the community has been clear in defining the ways that the community and The City, as the primary actors, can sponsor and support this exciting cultural shift. It is essential that City Council, generally, and Culture Services, specifically, respond in ways that facilitate and generate the movement and ideas that will enable the initiatives proposed below – in effect, "blowing on the embers" of a vibrant yet relatively young cultural sector.

This is a Community Culture Vision; as such, it is important that the culture community and the larger Red Deer community actively embrace this work by including the values and themes in their planning. As all stakeholders work together with this shared vision, positive and real development will be realized. The community will move together in the direction it visions.

The conversation is led by the community; it has grown, and positive movement is afoot. Now it must be kept alive by the whole community in a dialogue of discovery and innovation.





## 2) Additional resources must be allocated for the coordination of the vision.

In order for this vision to grow roots within organizations and The City, it needs coordination and resources to nurture the work. The City has learned through experience that part of the challenge with implementation of the first Greater Downtown Action Plan was the lack of a dedicated individual to champion the recommendations and keep them front and centre in planning and development.



Similarly, the Mayor's Task Force to End Homelessness recognized the need for an individual to champion the work and created a position that would oversee its implementation. The Red Deer Community Culture Vision (2008) is complex and interwoven into the work of the community and all City departments. As with the previous two examples, the work outlined in the recommendations needs to be spearheaded by its own champion.

Respondents have proposed a number of ideas that reflect community values; rather than undertaking exhaustive discussions about whether something should or should not be done, it is recommended that The City undertake a number of experiments with the support of the community in many instances, and that the community themselves undertake other experiments.

The community adoption of such activities should be gauged; the successful experiments should then be expanded and enhanced, or adapted in response. Undertaking specific experiments will be cost-effective and produce immediate, tangible results that will meet the needs of the community.

However, someone must coordinate all of this work.



Much like Alexander Way is a route connecting the culture hubs in Red Deer's growing culture corridor, a culture vision coordinator is an ambassador from the arts and heritage community that provides a direct route for the community to guide The City with cultural development. Coordination helps The City by assisting the arts and heritage community to realize their goals. Coordination will facilitate dialogue by connecting The City's work with that of the community, which enables communication and helps everyone to stay on track in developing the vision of the community as we approach our desired future.



### 3) Projects and opportunities have the greatest power when physically connected.

All development and planning activities related to spaces and places must be designed to fit together. Think of a three-legged stool. The legs are: Green Space, Built Space, and Agora Space. The seat of the stool is the critical mass - it is the key to unlocking the changes that are visioned. Throughout the consultation process, the community message has been clear: do not develop these spaces in isolation from the others; do not sacrifice immediate opportunities for long-term projects. An urban designer working with cultural infrastructure would greatly increase the speed that the community's vision becomes reality.



The inquiry has resulted in the following recommendations; they are achievable actions to further promote the growth of cultural activities in Red Deer and will underpin the continuing economic and broader health of the community.

We've categorized the recommendations into four timeframes as below. In addition we've grouped a set of early implementation recommendations that will help set the groundwork for exploration of all the opportunities and recommendations cited by the community.

Timeframe	
Immediate	0-12 months
Short Term	12-24 months
Medium Term	3-5 years
Long Term	6-10 years.



# Recommendations

There are 12 recommendations of six distinct types. Underneath each of these is a series of opportunities for consideration and community dialogue.

The recommendations are essential elements to secure cultural development in Red Deer in alignment with The City's Strategic Plan. It grounds the "cultural pillar" of the Strategic Plan in achievable action. These recommendations recognize that culture is an investment in the community and will promote economic development.

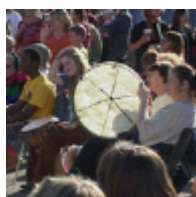
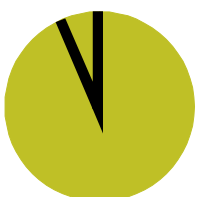
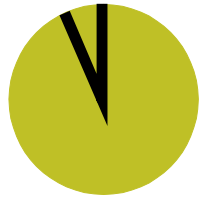
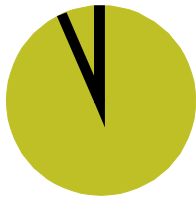
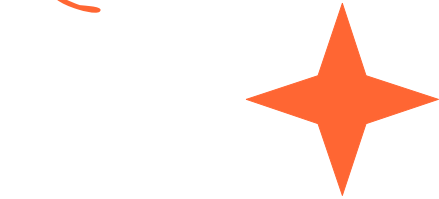
Opportunities have been identified throughout the consultation process and reflect the community's thinking. They are suggestions and options to be explored further with an ongoing process of dialogue and community engagement.

We've starred a number of opportunities that have the potential to transform cultural life in Red Deer. The consultation process has identified these as essential and powerful elements of the future culture vision. Each of these has different implications for planning and realization and all need to be further explored with the community.

As all opportunities were considered, it became clear that several of them should be considered for implementation as soon as possible. These we have also identified with a symbol.

 = Transformative Projects

 = Early Implementation Steps



# Recommendations

## Values & Themes



**1) That the Red Deer community is invited to actively embrace the Community Culture Vision (2008) to guide them in community work, and acknowledge it as the voice of the community for Red Deer's cultural future.**

Broad community recognition and discussion of the community's voice, contained within the Community Culture Vision 2008, will move the community as a whole toward the cultural future Red Deer citizens desire.

Opportunities related to recommendation 1	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Each community organization, community association, cultural or otherwise, pass a board resolution that acknowledges and adopts the Community Culture Vision 2008 as the voice of the community.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Organizations involved with culture as broadly defined	Short
b) Each community organization explore the connection between the four values and five themes voiced by the community and their programs and services, and consider aligning their offerings to reflect these values.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Organizations involved with culture as broadly defined	Short
c) Each community organization consider, in the development of public space or facilities, the four values and five themes and ensure that they are reflected in the development of green, gathering or built space.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Organizations involved with culture as broadly defined	Short
d) Develop a downtown charter	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Downtown Business Association, Cultural Organizations, Ethnic Canadian Associations, First Nations Associations	Short





# Recommendations

## Values & themes



**2) That Red Deer City Council adopt and actively embrace the four values and five themes as the voice and direction of the community as contained in the Community Culture Vision (2008). Use the five themes as areas of focus with which to gauge community and cultural development when considering recommendations from City staff, and in supporting recommendations from the community.**

By adopting the Community Culture Vision (2008), including the collective values and themes, The City acknowledges the work as the voice of the community for Red Deer's cultural future. This recognition will promote discussion and signal The City's support of culture within the community, resulting in community movement toward the cultural future that Red Deer citizens desire. Community values and the framing of cultural development should be central to all development plans.

This gives City Council a tool to assist them in making decisions that affect the economic and social wellness of the community, and to help them evaluate requests with the lens of community values.

Opportunities related to recommendation 2	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Focus on diversity as an important consideration in all discussions with City staff related to the work that they undertake.	Diversity	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing
b) Focus on green space in all development, to create a seamless transition between the countryside and the cityscape. Transport planning should privilege – in priority order from active to passive – walking, cycling, public transportation, multi-person vehicles, and single person vehicles within Red Deer.	Green Space	City Staff, City Council, Community	Short & Ongoing
c) Consider synergy in planning, by ensuring that gathering (agora) places are connected to both cultural built space and green arteries in order to create the most informal cultural activity.	Agora Space	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing
d) Ensure that planning reflects authenticity and aesthetic considerations in urban design that support the community desire for world class architecture.	Built Space	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing
e) Start from a position of “Yes!”, work with the community in a way that is facilitative, encourages ideas, and generates possibilities that encourage growth in programs and community activities.	Activities	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing
f) Encourage all community organizations and individuals to consider the themes and values outlined in the Community Culture Vision 2008 when making requests of The City or of City Council.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing
g) Recognize that a professional arts community exists in Red Deer and foster its continued growth and development.	Diversity, Activities	City Staff, City Council, Community	Ongoing

# Recommendations

## Planning

**3) The City create methods and processes in all of its planning activities that include culture values and themes.**

**4) The City of Red Deer adopt and actively embrace the Community Culture Vision (2008) as a planning tool that will guide The City in fulfilling its mandate for the "cultural pillar" related to sustainability, as outlined in The City's Strategic Plan.**

**5) City Council commit resources as necessary for future visioning and planning, to encourage and foster the continuation of the community dialogue that leads to cultural development.**






As The City is active with many planning processes, culture and arts remain essential to the implementation of successful community growth. Creating methods and process to include culture supports the "culture pillar" of The City's Strategic Plan.

Linking communities to cultural spaces through green arteries and public transit is of high importance to Red Deer citizens. A tram system along Gaetz Avenue would allow visitors and citizens to connect to the cultural spaces and places of Red Deer, encouraging their growth and sustaining their development. The community reports that, as fuel prices continue to rise, public transportation around the community and to the larger centres will become increasingly in demand. There is a shift occurring in the size and number of vehicles on the road. The community expressed demand for a rail or subway system (ie: tram) within the community as well as a link to the major centres.

Opportunities related to recommendations 3, 4 & 5	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Use the Community Culture Vision (2008) as an overarching document for community planning.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Immediate & Ongoing
b) Encourage City staff to use and cite the Community Culture Vision 2008 in formulating recommendations to Municipal Planning Commission and to City Council.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Immediate & Ongoing
c) The community has cited the Waskasoo Park system as hugely successful both in its planning and its execution. Look at the process that was used for this very important green space and replicate it for Riverlands redevelopment.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Immediate & Ongoing

# Recommendations

## Planning

Opportunities related to recommendations 3, 4 & 5	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
 d) Integrate the Community Culture Vision 2008 into the Greater Downtown Action Plan and other research and development activities currently underway.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Immediate
e) Offer tax incentives to any business or building owner who comes forward with a proposal that supports the establishment of an international district in a certain area, as identified by a cultural mapping exercise.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City, Downtown Business Association	Short
f) As the city expands, choose a new district and determine how to create a green space/white belt, not along roadways, that connects it to the city centre. Increase the density of the district and build only for pedestrians in the interior of the district; eliminate interior vehicle access.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Long
g) Undertake a planning process to link the city centre cultural districts identified in the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001) to the proposed high speed rail system.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Medium
  h) Design a bridge link to Bower Ponds that would fit with the overall plan for the Riverlands. Consider what it would look like if it were to generate revenue to offset its maintenance.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Medium
i) Make provisions in planning now for future modern streetcars that could connect districts to the cultural districts and the downtown.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Immediate
j) Design and build a subway or light rail transit (tram) station to connect the downtown to the new high-speed link to Edmonton and Calgary.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space	The City	Long Term
 k) As planning is done for land use, facilities, programs and services, complete a culture impact assessment that is similar to the eco-space assessment related to environment. Consider sustainability commitments, and adopt this vision support as a sustainability commitment to the cultural pillar.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Short & Ongoing
 l) Continue community dialogue to discover and prioritize the most powerful transformative projects.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City, Community	Short & Ongoing

# Recommendations

## Facilitation, Collaboration and Action Generation

**6) The City adopt methods of working with the community that generate positive action and facilitate community and cultural development.**



**7) The City of Red Deer provide new resources for a period of three years for the coordination and implementation of the Community Culture Vision (2008); to work specifically with the recommendations and actions in this document. The resources will be used to: coordinate cultural infrastructure with all City departments and the community; convene organizations around the themes, values, and ideas voiced by the community; facilitate the implementation of this plan; coordinate the shared aspects of the Greater Downtown Action Plan; and champion the voice of the culture community within The City.**



**8) Building on the civic pride of the Cultural Capital of Canada award, The City should commit to work as communicator and advocate for the development of arts and cultural excellence.**



The community wants to bridge the divide between The City as an organization and the cultural community -- creating a partnership where both start from a position of "Yes, it can be done," and work together on how. The community has the volunteers and many great ideas, and it often understands what is needed; The City can see the broader picture of how and where these ideas could fit. With this broad vision for culture in the community, ideas can and should be developed and tested in the form of shared experiments. This must be accomplished in a coordinated way, through the employment of a coordinator; in consultation with a dedicated urban planner.



Sustainability must include a long term approach to shield against the forces of homogenization and big box commercial, as gentrification is occurring. The approach must be able to attract the artists and keep them from being forced out as the market prices climb.

Opportunities related to recommendations 6, 7 & 8	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Consider a different name for Recreation, Parks and Culture, such as Enrichment Services, to put Arts and Culture on equal footing with other infrastructure programs.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Short
b) Ensure that there is cross pollination between Culture Services and other departments and sections within The City (ie: Engineering, Planning, Parks, Social Planning, Municipal Inclusion, etc.), with the intention to facilitate departments working together to address and champion cultural infrastructure in a balanced approach to other community needs.	Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space.	The City	Ongoing



# Recommendations

## Facilitation, Collaboration and Action Generation

Opportunities related to recommendations 6, 7 & 8	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
 <p>c) Produce a pocket-sized, accessible version of the 2008 Culture Vision for wide distribution throughout the community and within the City. Focus on future narratives that tell the stories of life in Red Deer as work substantially evolves. We have a number of inspiring writers and visual artists in this community who could help make this vision come alive with text and art.</p>	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City, cultural community	Immediate
 <p>d) Determine where cultural activity is occurring by undertaking a cultural mapping exercise. Where is culture around every corner? Highlight this activity and support its development. Do not develop in new areas and neglect the areas that are emerging.</p>	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Culture Services, cultural community	Short
e) Map every cultural and agora space in the city. Use mapping data to balance new investments in culture with existing activities. Don't abandon existing and emerging activities for new projects. Don't abandon new investment in support of existing and emerging activities.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Culture Services, cultural community	Short
f) Examine where people currently "hang out" during the summer and the winter and temporarily add new components to those spaces, such as busker stations, coffee stands, public art, information kiosks, public bicycles, food vendors. Monitor what happens and build on successes.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Culture Services, cultural community	Short
g) Ensure that a position within Culture Services works specifically with our visible and invisible minorities and organizations to assist them in developing their organizations and the connections between them.	Diversity	Culture Services, diverse community organizations	Ongoing
h) Gather those organizations whose mandates are specific to diversity and discuss how The City might help them achieve a broader reach in the community. Discuss what an enhanced Diversity Week might look like. Support ideas that emerge from the discussions.	Diversity	Central Alberta Diversity Association, Culture Services	Short
i) Convene a forum with several of the ethnic Canadian associations in Red Deer and ask them how The City can help them achieve their visions. Respond to the needs and aspirations articulated.	Diversity, Activities	Culture Services, ethnic Canadian associations	Short
j) Work with the Red Deer and District Chinese Community Society towards the creation of a Chinese Cultural Centre connected to an agora space.	Diversity, Agora Space, Built Space	Cultural Services, Red Deer and District Chinese Community Society	Short



# Recommendations

## Facilitation, Collaboration and Action Generation

Opportunities relate to recommendations 6, 7 & 8	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
k) Use the lens of the cultural values in addition to bylaws when making decisions within City departments and at City Council; look for opportunities to adapt. Emphasize that bylaws are not our values, but should reflect our values; recommend changes to the bylaws and policies when they are in contradiction with our community cultural values. (immediate)	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Ongoing
l) Choose the most active public trails and advertise the opportunities for public art along these to service clubs within our community, including the existing pads. Partner with them to assist in developing the public art collection in an enhanced trail and park system.	Green Space, Activities	The City, service clubs	Short
m) Work with the business community, interested citizens, and associations, to create a fully envisioned agora space in the Riverlands Culture District that work with the concepts put forward in the Riverwalk concept. Focus on sustainable practices, high density housing, tourism, and the arts community.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, The City, Alberta Provincial Government, cultural organizations, independent businesses,	Immediate to Long Term
n) Ensure that specific attention be given to the preservation of unique, local solutions provided by independent businesses and community organizations, to balance the drive to homogenization and standardization of leisure and retail outlets as best illustrated by box stores that result in a deterioration of community authenticity.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City, cultural organization, Downtown Business Association.	Immediate & Ongoing
o) Work with the business community, interested citizens and associations, to create fully envisioned agora spaces throughout the Greater Downtown Focus on sustainable practices, high density housing, tourism, and the arts community.	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	Chamber of Commerce, Downtown Business Association, The City, Alberta Provincial Government, cultural organizations, independent businesses,	Immediate to Long Term
p) Assist City staff to think in less linear, more creative ways, by engaging the services of artists to represent material visually, musically, or in other artistic way. Other possibilities include the hiring of a graphic facilitator,	Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities	The City	Medium



# Recommendations

## Facilitation, Collaboration and Action Generation

Opportunities related to recommendations 6, 7 & 8	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
q) <i>Develop an ongoing relationship with all levels of government for the purposes of cultural funding. Insist on a partnership meeting between levels of government where matching funds for culture are involved.</i>	<i>Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities</i>	<i>The City, culture organizations</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>
r) <i>Work with the Red Deer and District Community Foundation and the business community to establish an annual cash prize for cultural excellence. Make it substantial enough to support the artistic endeavours of individuals in the community or the work of not-for-profit organizations.</i>	<i>Diversity, Green Space, Agora Space, Built Space, Activities</i>	<i>The City, Red Deer and District Community Foundation, business community.</i>	<i>Short</i>



# Recommendations

## Infrastructure



Engineers are smart people. They deal with complex challenges to meet community needs. If cultural infrastructure needs special focus, call on the engineers to find a great solution.

**9) City Council adopt the philosophy that cultural facilities are a priority to attract and retain our citizens and a skilled workforce, and maintain a growing economy.**

Cultural Infrastructure is pertinent and fits perfectly with the economic health and wellness of Red Deer. Current studies clearly indicate that culture is not a luxury and must be considered on par with, or - where there are infrastructure deficit cases - of greater priority than roads, sewers, and policing. Infrastructure projects will increase safety and well being, and the economic health of the community.

**10) Recommit to undertaking the initiatives that need further fostering from the Red Deer Community Culture Master Plan (2001), while applying the values and themes from the new Vision (2008).**

A number of recommendations from 2001 remain partly completed or have yet to be realized, although most appear in planning documents and have been looked at in some way. Incomplete recommendations are still valid and important to the community and have been voiced again throughout this inquiry.

Cultural infrastructure must be physically connected. Green space, Agora Space, and Built Space cannot exist in isolation and are necessary for cultural sustainability.

Building a facility may be a difficult thing to do but perhaps the most important part of cultural development. Projects need to be built to last the long term, and sustainability needs to be endowed.



Opportunities related to recommendations 9 & 10	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Find ways to share resources for facilities, without forcing them to be multi-use spaces necessarily.	Diversity, Activities, Built Space	The City, cultural organizations	Medium
b) Rebuild and cover the stage at Bower Ponds.	Green Space, Diversity	The City	Immediate
c) Initiate discussions and agree on timescales for a new concert facility in the heart of an agora space. Work with all agencies and levels of government, interested in developing a dedicated concert facility.	Built Space, Agora Space	The City, cultural community, business partners	Medium/Long
d) Build the bridge link from Riverlands to Bower Ponds	Diversity, Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space, Activities	The City	Medium





# Recommendations

## Infrastructure

Opportunities related to recommendations 9 & 10	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
 <p>e) Continue with the Alexander Way project in order to create the desired pedestrian and bike link through the three named cultural hubs, from Barrett Park, through Rotary Park, the downtown, across Taylor Drive at grade, and through Riverlands, then across to Bower Ponds.</p>	Diversity, Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space, Activities	The City	Ongoing
<p>f) Continue to foster space for artists' studios for all types of arts, including rehearsal space for musicians. Look for opportunities to assist the private sector to provide these spaces.</p>	Built Space	Red Deer College, Individual Artists, Allied Arts Council, The City, Culture Link, Independent Business, Building Owners, Downtown Business Association	Immediate
<p>g) Continue with traffic calming measures along Alexander Way that lead to increased programming opportunities and walkability.</p>	Agora Space	The City	Short
<p>i) Continue to work with community organizations and citizens working toward establishing more theatre space within the culture hubs identified in 2001.</p>	Built Space	Culture Services	Ongoing
 <p>j) Work with Community organizations, all levels of government, and citizens toward establishing a museum and art gallery in which our history, art, cultures, and roots are interpreted through innovation. This building should be architecturally significant.</p>	Built Space	Red Deer Museum + Art Gallery, The City, Community Organizations	Medium



# Recommendations

## Experiments



**11) In response to the community's vision, The City encourage and support the following or similar experiments; assess results; and use results to revise these experiments, to shape new experiments, and to create permanent changes or programs.**





Many experiments could be conceived by the community that fit with the themes and values of this vision for culture. A process of continuous exploration of new opportunities is important. What is listed here are SOME opportunities that should be tried but there are many more out there; community groups have great ideas and will be happy to be asked for both input and action to see experiments through.

Opportunities related to recommendation 11	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Find ways to encourage the private sector to develop and undertake the important major facility development within agora spaces. Encourage partnerships. Build as City-owned projects as necessary.	Built Space	Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce, business, The City, Provincial & Federal governments,	Short
b) Consider other incentive programs to promote cultural development in the hubs.	Diversity, Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space, Activities	The City, Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce	Medium
c) Focus on cultural infrastructure located within the Cultural Corridor and attached Agora Space through pedestrian-friendly green connectors.	Diversity, Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space, Activities	The City	Long
d) Develop endowed and reserved funds for any cultural facility or public art piece that needs to be maintained.	Built Space	The City, Red Deer and District Community Foundation, Agencies which own facilities	Long
e) Make a commitment to new public art yearly. Similar to planting trees every year, public art must be an ongoing form of cultural development.	Green Space, Diversity	The City	Short
f) Strengthen the public art policy to encourage private development. Such work needs to be integrated into the development permit processes, through education but not limited to education solely.	Built Space, Agora Space, Diversity, Activities	The City	Short



# Recommendations

## Experiments

Opportunities related to recommendation 11	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
 <p>g) Vision and undertake an intergenerational culture project that would span over 100 years and would embody our values: authenticity and diverse make-up, our connection to the land, and the wisdom of our community. Create a visual and identifiable link between where we have come from, where we are now, and where we are going.</p>	Diversity, Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space, Activities	The City, cultural community	Short - Long Term, Ongoing
<p>h) Introduce amenity bonusing (see glossary) as a way to foster the development of Cultural Facilities, Green Space and Agora Space, and Programming.</p>	Built Space, Green Space, Agora Space	The City, Downtown Business Association, Chamber of Commerce	Short Term
<p>i) Begin a discussion with the business community about what an incentive program would look like that would encourage public art, building restoration, new construction, housing, small business, and international restaurants in the downtown and other emerging agora spaces. Implement some of the suggestions and monitor the success, adapt them and offer an upgrade to the successful programs.</p>	Built space, Agora Space, Green Space, Activities, Diversity	Downtown Business Association, Independent businesses, land owners especially those with under utilized properties, The City.	Short
  <p>j) As soon as possible for a period of three years, utilize the old bus barns as an indoor public market year-round. This may or may not be done in conjunction with current market.</p>	Built space, Agora Space, Green Space, Activities, Diversity	The City, Arts organizations, individual artists, Red Deer College, independent business,	Immediate
 <p>k) Celebrate the opening of the indoor year-round public market in the former bus barns.</p>	Activities Agora Space	The City, culture organizations, individual artists, Red Deer College, independent business	Short
<p>l) Fund an international fair as part of summer celebration, within an emerging agora space.</p>	Agora Space, Activities, and Diversity	The City, ethnic associations, restaurants.	Medium



# Recommendations

## Experiments

Opportunities related to recommendation 11	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
m) Design a support and mentoring program to assist interested citizens in establishing a cultural business in Red Deer. Remember to focus on the diversity within our community, including newcomers. Pilot it for three years.	Diversity, Agora Space, Activities	The City, Downtown Business Association, independent business	Medium
n) Bring together the Downtown Business Association, the building owners and business owners along Old Gaetz Avenue, and the ethno-cultural organizations and world food restaurants. Have a discussion about how the association, The City and the community could support the development of an international district. What would it look like and how do they see it developing? What would lead to its success?	Built space, Agora Space, Green Space, Activities, Diversity	The City, Downtown Business Association, building owners, business owners, ethno-cultural organizations	Short
o) For three years create an at-grade street crossing that links Alexander way to the Riverlands Arts District. Mark it with an arch or street crossing banner to clearly market to passing vehicular traffic that it is the crossing that links the downtown to the arts district. Give the vehicles the reasons that they need to stop or slow down and encourage them to check out the spaces. Our road systems need to be used to bring people into the downtown and the cultural corridors and to market their strengths. Monitor and build on its success to make it more interesting each year. Make it as park-like as possible.	Agora Space	The City	Short
p) Ask every citizen, with municipal workers leading the way, to walk, bike, run or ride public transport for the period of one month. Hold a workshop at the end in which everyone can suggest ways their lives could have been enhanced by our built environment if it were different. Take this input seriously and begin to make significant changes within one month.	Green space	The City, environmental organizations, cultural organizations	Medium
q) On the busiest pedestrian streets in the downtown create mid-street crossings for community safety, cultural dynamism and for increased economic activity.	Agora Space	The City, Downtown Business Association.	Short
r) Create a four-sided arch structure at the intersection of Old Gaetz and Ross to mark the downtown's centre and to convert into a "centre stage" performing venue during street festivals and other community celebrations. Make the crossing into a "scatter crossing" the rest of the year to mark its significance to the heart of Red Deer.	Agora Space, Activities, Built Space	The City, Downtown Business Association, Cultural Organizations	Medium.



# Recommendations

## Funding



### 12) The City revise the grant programs to embody a high level of flexibility and responsiveness in support of cultural and community development.



The level of core funding in the Fee-for-service Program is inadequate for the growing community. Disparity exists between the community values and where current budget dollars are allocated. Although roads, and sewers are important, some balance needs to be achieved that would allow cultural organizations, opportunities, and events to flourish. Infrastructure for culture is equal in importance to other community infrastructure.

Opportunities related to recommendation 12	Themes	Roles	Timeframe
a) Open a new fee-for-service program, possibly through a disciplined-based Arts Council, that is not based on competition and has clear guidelines established; some qualified organizations would receive sustainable funding as long as they continue to provide proper simple reporting. Organizations doing valuable community work need long-term sustainable funding that can be budgeted. It is not appropriate for agencies to have to wait for funding within the same fiscal year. Funding needs to be sustainable and long term for these organizations to be able to provide community service. Operational funding needs to be planned for three years in advance, ie: funding requests in year one allow for planning in year four.	Diversity, Activities	The City, cultural organizations	Short
b) Fund umbrella organizations that work with several other organizations to foster opportunities for networking and partnerships. Put special emphasis on facilities that are shared among several tenants. Diversity is important to programs; artists and organizations must feel ownership and control over their spaces.	Diversity, Activities	The City, cultural organizations	Short
c) Provide capacity-building funds to create a business plan for sustainability of organizations, including umbrella arts organizations, program providers, and facility providers.	Built Space, Activities, Diversity	The City, cultural organizations	Medium
d) Offer a budget to any community group that would like to produce a first night festival in the city centre.	Activities	The City, cultural organizations	Short
e) Services and programs that The City have learned are needed in the community can be offered to the cultural community for their delivery by way of a Request For Proposal.	Activities	The City	Short
f) Encourage the growth of the community culture endowment fund that can help serve the needs of the growing culture community.	Activities	The City, The Red Deer and District Community Foundation	Ongoing

# The philosophy of this inquiry

We were commissioned to undertake the project utilizing a modified Appreciative Inquiry methodology. In this, we draw upon a substantial body of research that illuminates how communities move in the directions into which they inquire. Appreciative Inquiry focuses on strengths. By so doing we develop community and individual capacity and can support the community to realize positive visions of the future.

A core value of Appreciative Inquiry is that the community is full of creative possibilities rather than a problem to be solved. It is rarely possible in cultural development to predetermine outcomes; indeed, in any strategic planning process it is impossible to predict the future. However, we can work with the present to ensure that healthy and sustainable future visions are realized through the recruitment of community strengths and energies.

A good example of how an appreciative approach can create positive change, even with a complex issue, is the work undertaken by the Mayor's Task Force to End Homelessness. By working together with an ideal, this past winter everyone was housed for the winter for the first time in the history of Red Deer. The plan, titled "EveryOne's Home," created movement and understanding that is leading to the eradication of homelessness.

Similarly, the framing of the inquiry into culture is as important as the topic itself. Consider these two statements, the first narrow and negative and the second inspiring and visionary, and imagine where each could lead the community:

"Arts and culture are luxuries to be developed and funded after pipes, policing, and potholes."

"Arts and culture activities and industries are drivers of a creative economy; they result in outstanding quality of life, prosperity and safety, and are capable of transforming our community."

The second statement inspires us to think about what can and should be. The process of creating a shared culture vision is one of discovery through dialogue. Culture exists and grows organically as people in the community share experiences. People are most passionate and connected when they feel they belong, and when they are inspired by others. This inquiry process has engaged individuals to share their stories, dreams, and inspiration.

Powerful change is created when conversations become alive and then expand by drawing in people who have never been involved before. These conversations have led to exciting new plans and community action.



Arts and culture activities and industries are drivers of a creative economy; they result in outstanding quality of life, prosperity and safety, and are capable of transforming our community.





## First – initial conversations: framing the inquiry

The first stage of the review of the Red Deer Culture Master Plan began in early 2007. Culture Services assembled a Steering Committee composed of several community members who have a particular interest in the advancement of culture.



The Steering Committee discussed the definition of culture at early meetings. It was found that understandings of culture and cultural development had evolved considerably since 2001. The Steering Committee's 2007 definition reframes culture in a much broader way so that it is more easily understood by the entire community. The enhanced definition places culture centrally in our everyday lives and is not limited to cultural expression within specific areas of interest.



Here are the two definitions for comparison:

Seven years ago:

Culture includes visual arts, performing arts, as well as heritage, including explorations of our history as a community or as individuals. It relates to the interaction of society with the arts in formal and informal settings." RDCCMP( 2001)

Current:

Culture is all around us in our everyday lives and can be experienced through the formal and informal interaction of the many forms of creative expressions and exploration of our heritage as a community or as individuals." Steering Committee (June 2007)



The request for proposals for the work to update the 2001 Culture Master Plan was published in spring 2007. Paul Harris, Donna Cardinal and Alan Taylor submitted a proposal which utilized strength-based methods to inquire into the culture vision of the community. After further discussions with the Steering Committee, a modified plan was agreed to for the review of the Culture Master Plan, now called Red Deer Culture Vision and Outline for Action (2008).



In the late summer of 2007 Donna and Paul led a half-day participative workshop with the Steering Committee; the workshop further explained and enriched the inquiry process that we proposed to use throughout the community consultation. The Steering Committee was enthusiastic about the potential of such a process and worked with the project team to develop an increasingly radical and appreciative project design.



In the workshop the Steering Committee developed these themes to start the inquiry process:

- Red Deer is a thriving cultural experience where ideas, creativity and heritage are valued and supported, where each person is welcome to contribute and benefit.
- Pairing young and old to create a spark of appreciation for each





Some projects were initiated by people who attended, such as volunteers from the Central Alberta Film Experience, an emerging media and film festival dedicated to providing a venue to showcase independent film and contribute to Alberta's cultural vitality.

- other and the community they live in.
- Cultural life in Red Deer overflows with the abundant interplay of diverse people and ideas.
- Traditional industry and creative industry are ideal partners and make our community magnetic and sticky.
- People come to Red Deer and stay because of its thriving cultural activities, safety and natural environment.
- The community offers a rich and diverse intellectual life that manifests itself in a broad range of publications, media and all of the arts. It is internationally recognized.

The inquiry was thus firmly located within an inclusive and empowering view of community engagement; the emerging themes opened up possibilities for a wide review of cultural development in Red Deer rather than just an update of the 2001 Master Plan.

The design of the process was also explicitly part of the inquiry, and shared understandings developed within the Steering Committee that the consultation and engagement process itself could model the future for cultural development in Red Deer.



Having experienced the passion and vision generated by a strengths-based envisioning process, it was agreed to convene a larger conversation with a broader group to recruit as wide a cross-section of the community as possible into the inquiry process. Members of the Steering Committee became champions for the inquiry, and committed themselves to interviewing community members, finding others to undertake appreciative interviews with colleagues, and explicitly engaging with minority communities within Red Deer.



### Second – the summit on culture, developing a common language

A “Summit on Culture” in October brought together a diverse number of community members to talk about the best experiences they have had in their cultural lives. There were young and old, artists and business people, city workers and private citizens. A rich, complex and nuanced conversation developed broadly shared understandings of the directions in which the inquiry was likely to lead.



Using the participants' best cultural experiences led to an understanding of the essential components needed, such as place, facilities, present skills and other factors. By understanding what was present for participants in their best experiences, we were able to inquire into a future vision for Red Deer that elaborated on these factors.



The day-long summit first outlined the context of the inquiry, the nature of community life in Red Deer; the growth of the city, and its flourishing diversity. Discussion included significant economic and





infrastructural changes such as the plans for high-speed rail connections to Calgary and Edmonton, and the impact of economic growth.

As a large group, summit participants discussed the ways appreciative inquiry and positive psychology affect change; they were then paired with people they didn't know. Every participant was given the opportunity to interview another participant and to experience being interviewed about their own positive image of a cultural future in Red Deer.

During the summit, people explored with one another their best experiences with culture as they define it. People learned from one another the language that they use to describe their ideal future. The diverse participants discovered that they had much in common, including common values about the community and about culture. Interviews were followed by group work to vision what a shared future will look like and how the community might get there.

The summit inquiries began to move the community in the direction of cultural change they most desired, prefiguring some of the recommendations. Connections were made across diversity, shared understandings of desired futures were strengthened, people were empowered to take action toward those futures, and common language around cultural development was built. The cultural vision for Red Deer was not just discussed, and written into a plan, but the first steps towards that future were taken.

### Third – the expanded interviews: an iterative analysis through feedback

After the summit, the community was ready to formally engage in broader conversations. The same interview process was formalized into a simple semi-structured interview (see Appendix). The interview was used by the consultants, Steering Committee members and many summit participants in interviews with a broad range of Red Deer citizens during the remainder of 2007 and until February 2008.

In the months that followed, this extensive interview process with Red Deer citizens invited participation from everyone in voicing their vision for culture in Red Deer. Over 200 one-to-one interviews were conducted in English, Spanish, and Tagalog, the three main languages spoken as the first language in the home of Red Deer citizens.

The data from these interviews, from the first inquiry with the Steering Committee, together with the results of the Summit, were collated and analyzed to identify recurring themes as well as one-off ideas and proposals.

The themes were then played back to the Steering Committee, groups and individuals; they were further refined by participants to deepen the shared understanding of the important values underpinning a



vibrant cultural future for Red Deer. As an illustration of the potential for such a process, the most frequent finding – that people valued the Farmers' Market as a cultural focus – was developed into a more readily understandable component of a vibrant cultural future.



The Public Market, commonly known as the "Farmers' Market," came up as the single most prominent topic during the interviews. A strict count would suggest an expansion of the market. As we looked closely at the conversations about the Public Market, however, we quickly discovered that people don't just go to the market for the sole purpose of buying carrots; they are interested in the social life, the culture, and the experience. We discussed with later interviewees and groups their mention of the Public Market in more detail, feeding back to them what previous interviewees had said. It became increasingly obvious that the attraction of the Public Market is as much about friendship and sunshine as it is about finding tasty vegetables. Interviewees experience the Public Market as a vibrant cultural forum: an opportunity to meet friends and neighbours, to experience diversity, to encounter culture spontaneously, informally and unexpectedly. The Public Market seems to be an exemplar of our community values and of an informal, almost chaotic container for cultural activities in Red Deer.



#### Fourth – the open house: further discoveries

After the interviews were finished and the analysis completed, we designed a series of 12 posters that reflected the essence of the findings gleaned from mid-summer 2007 through to February 2008. These posters contained an explanation of the four values that the community identified and the five themes in priority order. They also listed the subthemes and ideas that had come forward from the community. We presented these posters to the community over three days at the beginning of March in an exhibition at the Scott Block in downtown Red Deer.



An invitation was extended to the entire community to visit the exhibition. We contacted all who had participated in the process and also extended invitations through an article in the Red Deer Advocate. Over 150 people attended. Attendees were invited to interact with and mark up the posters, add comments, star, highlight, contest, or contribute their thinking in any way they could. Green spots were available for people to highlight the points they strongly agreed with, red spots for those they disagreed with or had some problems with and yellow spots for the points they were unsure about.



The work was presented as the future positive vision of culture in Red Deer. Statements on the posters represented the ideal future for the community, and were described in the present tense. In some cases this led to a little confusion as people could not always believe that Red Deer is as forward thinking a community as we were describing, but there was no doubt that everyone attending the exhibition was





enthusied by the possibilities and was hopeful that The City and the community would attend to the findings and adopt a radical approach to cultural development within Red Deer.



The four values and five themes mentioned above were strongly affirmed and people began to work on the connections between them and imagine ways that these future visions could be realized. The community reaffirmed the need for activity in some key areas, such as diversity and community leadership.

The last day of the open house was devoted to workshops. We invited people to participate in crafting the recommendations that the inquiry would make to The City and the community of Red Deer. After the findings were presented, working groups were asked to explore the connection between themes and/or values. For example, one group chose to connect Green Space and Diversity, and ask themselves what we learn when we connect these two themes: the group explored how cultural diversity is supported in our built green spaces through celebrations and suggested ways to improve the space and thus give greater voice to diversity. These discussions led to possible experiments that The City or the community may undertake; these form a portion of the recommendations from this inquiry.



### Fifth – presentation: discussion of findings with Red Deer

Presentations were subsequently made to diverse groups around Red Deer in order to continue the dialogue, create a common understanding about the future vision of culture in Red Deer, and begin to gather concrete recommendations from the inquiry. We met with: the Civic Affairs Committee and the Tourism Development Subcommittee of the Chamber of Commerce; the Downtown Business Association; Rotary clubs; Steering Committee for the Greater Downtown Action Plan; the Board of the Red Deer and District Community Foundation; Cultural Charter Partners; Culture Link; board members from the Red Deer Symphony Orchestra, and other organizations. We also had the opportunity to work with Simon Fraser University on Cultural Infrastructure in the Prairies.



The presentations of our findings to Red Deer community organizations were met with great enthusiasm; this work resonates through all of the sectors of our community.

Throughout the above process we were developing our understanding of the future shared vision of a vibrant cultural future in Red Deer. By recounting and replaying the stories we had received to more individuals and groups in the community, we were able to identify resonant actions that would energize and further embed cultural activity in Red Deer.



We have endeavoured to maintain a certain openness, and to reinforce the value of ongoing inquiry and conversation in the further development of a vibrant cultural city that will continue to play a leading role as a Cultural Capital in Alberta.

# Glossary of Terms

**Agrarian Roots** – means that we have our origins in the lands of central Alberta. Settlers first came here to farm, working together to create Red Deer. This term relates to both agricultural heritage, earth stewardship, and our nature of building community together.

**Amenity bonusing** – municipalities can adopt an amenity bonus scheme to create incentives for developers to provide amenities in exchange for variations in zoning requirements. Such amenities include: cultural venues, public art, landscaping, plazas, preservation of a site's unique environmental attributes, or maintenance of street trees. Usually a developer is allowed a bonus to build more floor area when they opt to provide an amenity. The benefit of this approach is that the developer receives a relaxation of what is not normally allowed under existing zoning while the municipality receives a desired amenity that furthers public policy goals.

**Appreciative inquiry** – is a new way of facilitating which stresses the positive and the strengths of people, groups, communities, and situations.

**Collaboration** – happens when different people or different groups work together, successfully, rather than in conflict!

**Empirical research** – is research that is based on measurement.

**Facilitation** – originally meant to make something easy, but it has now come to mean the process of supporting groups to explore questions or practices, improve their communication, reach decisions, or create action.

**Gentrification** – describes a change in a neighbourhood when it transforms from being run down to vibrant. Often it is followed by the moving in of chain stores and other corporate business which drives out the funky, bohemian, or artistic – the very elements that transformed it.

**Infrastructure** – is the word used to describe all the things that are in place to support a City. Cultural infrastructure relates to physical needs of culture for activities and programming, art making, rehearsing, performing etc. It can also mean management or organizational structures.

**Iterative** – means going through a process several times in order to benefit from the deepening of shared insight or intention.

**Request for proposal** – is the formal document issued, when an organization, government or otherwise, is looking for contractors to do a piece of work. The document usually describes what result is expected, and sometimes even the way the work is to be done.

**Scatter crossing** – a pedestrian crossing where all vehicular traffic stops at an intersection, allowing pedestrians to cross in any direction, including on the diagonal.

**Tagalog** – is the language most spoken in the Philippines, and the third most common language spoken in Red Deer

**Transformative** – describes something which provokes significant change in something else. It transforms one thing into another.

**White belt/green belt** – green corridors in the winter are covered with snow, and yet are still used for all sort of activities; we refer to these as white belts.

