

# LATE DISTRIBUTION FOR COUNCIL - OCTOBER 31, 2006

# A18



CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Report Date: October 21, 2006  
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Meeting Date: October 31, 2006

TO: Vancouver City Council

FROM: Managing Director of Cultural Services in consultation with the Cultural Precinct Project Manager

SUBJECT: Planning Process for Development of Cultural Precinct

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT the cultural precinct site broadly encompass the Georgia Street ceremonial spine and include existing cultural sites (Queen Elizabeth Theatre Complex, Vancouver Public Library, CBC, UBC and Vancouver Art Gallery at Robson Square); sites currently in planning (the former bus depot site, Robson Square, Georgia and Thurlow Sculpture Garden, renovation of the QE and CBC Plazas), as well as future Georgia Street site options;
- B. THAT Council endorse the planning approach for the Cultural Precinct as outlined in this report and direct staff to report back with a long range plan;
- C. THAT Council direct staff to report back with a detailed proposal for the development of an initial phase to include at a minimum the redevelopment of the Vancouver Civic Theatres, an office tower and such other cultural uses as are viable on the adjacent City-owned site, as well, as an interim use, an Olympic Live Site, all as outlined in this report;
- D. THAT an Advisory Committee consisting of the Premier, Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts as well as the Mayor and a City Councillor be established to meet quarterly, receive progress reports and provide advice on the program to develop and evaluate Cultural Precinct proposals;
- E. THAT a Steering Committee comprised of senior City and Provincial staff be established to oversee the development and evaluation of Cultural Precinct proposals;

## Planning Process for Development of Cultural Precinct

- F. THAT the City invite the Province to co-host a workshop of museum and gallery professionals with a view to developing a better understanding of roles and niche, gaps in services and programs, and potential of collaborations, as well as exploring creative scenarios and solutions;
- G. THAT the City invite the Province to join in an invitation to the federal government to discuss ongoing investment in operational support for programming to animate the proposed cultural facilities in a cultural precinct; in particular to support ongoing inter- cultural and Asia Pacific commissions, programming, festivals, education and cultural exchanges;
- H. THAT the City invite Federal and Provincial governments to join with VANOC and the City for the coordinated planning of Vancouver Olympic Live Sites including the Bus Depot site and Robson Square;
- I. THAT Council authorise the City Manager to retain and execute the necessary agreements to secure temporary staff and consultants at a cost not to exceed \$650,000 for Cultural Precinct Phase One planning as outlined in this report; source of funds to be the Provincial contribution to the Cultural Precinct planning process held in the Cultural Precinct Reserve Fund; and
- J. THAT Council approve a grant of up to \$70,000 to the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations for Phase One of the development of an Aboriginal Art Gallery concept; and a further grant in the amount of \$180,000 towards Phase Two as outlined in this report and subject to the successful completion of Phase One; source of funds to be the Provincial contribution to the Cultural Precinct planning process held in the Cultural Precinct Reserve Fund.

### CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends Approval of A through J which will further the development of a Cultural Precinct in a systematic and comprehensive manner. While the long range plan will take some months to develop, consensus has grown over the past 6 months around a phased approach to planning and development, and specifically around initial opportunities for the development of the City-owned two-block parcel bound by Georgia, Dunsmuir, Hamilton and Beatty Streets (Queen Elizabeth Theatres Complex and the former Bus Depot lands) as Phase One of the Cultural Precinct.

An initial phase of the Cultural Precinct could commence as soon as funding is confirmed, be developed over time and include:

- Renovation of the Civic Theatres prior to 2010;
- Use of the combined City-owned sites as an Olympic Live Site with the opportunity to showcase sport, arts, culture, the City and the future cultural precinct as well as creating a permanent legacy plaza; and
- Post 2010, other cultural facilities as are, through the cultural precinct planning process outlined in this report, deemed both viable and desirable.

The timing of Phase One is critical. Renovation of the Civic Theatres must commence in April of 2007 and phased over the summers of 07, 08 and 09 in order to be completed prior to 2010.

Use of the combined sites as an Olympic Live Site provides numerous benefits - in location, size, proximity, legacies and accessibility.

A phased approach to the Cultural Precinct also provides time to more fully develop long-term proposals, to develop organisational, operational and collaborative opportunities, and to review and fit the final phased plan into the City-wide Facilities Priorities Plan which will be developed as a component of the Creative City Task Force Strategic and Implementation Plans.

## COUNCIL POLICY

The City's Cultural Goals, adopted by Council in October 1987 are to ensure the existence of adequate facilities for the creation and presentation of the arts in Vancouver.

## PURPOSE AND SUMMARY

This report sets out a proposed process for establishing a development program for the City of Vancouver's Cultural Precinct, based on the co-ordinated planning partnership between the City and the Province of British Columbia to develop a multi-phased major downtown cultural precinct. The report seeks Council approval to develop both Phase One as well as longer-term strategy.

While initial thinking linked the development of many of the proposed cultural facilities to the 2010 Winter Olympics, a review of potential time frames suggested that development of new facilities prior to 2010 is impractical. Renovation of the Civic Theatres prior to 2010 however is both practical and necessary.

This report proposes the development of a phased approach to the development of a Cultural precinct as well as an initial Phase One proposal that would permit an application for federal and provincial funding in the fall of 2006 for consideration in the 2007/8 budgets, with design and tendering for renovation of the Civic Theatres commencing immediately and the construction of the balance of the project, once Council has considered the findings of the longer-term planning process and after the Olympics.

The use of the former bus depot site as an "Olympic Live Site" for cultural displays and performances, including a preview of the future development of the site, would provide an opportunity to establish an augmented cultural presence for the Olympics, and a vehicle for additional private sector fund raising for the cultural facilities.

The planning process outlined in this report also calls for the exploration of new organizational and operational models including partnerships and collaborations which will enhance clarity and synergies around future capital initiatives.

The Cultural Precinct is but one element of a larger Cultural Facilities Priorities Plan, a new 15+ year plan which will set out civic priorities for cultural facilities supporting the creation, exhibition and presentation of a wide range of artistic disciplines and scale and setting out a long range strategy to begin to address neighbourhood and City-wide cultural needs. The Cultural Facilities Priorities Plan will be developed through the Creative City Task Force public consultation and planning process and incorporate planning of the Cultural Precinct.

Finally, once proposals are identified much work will be required by the cultural institutions as well as City staff to ensure that projects planned meet the City's land use, urban design and planning objectives, are operationally sustainable, and are exemplary architectural and cultural landmark buildings.

## BACKGROUND

The City has recently identified the need to undertake a comprehensive review of its policies and priorities and the development of a new 15+ year Culture Plan. Council has struck a Task Force to:

- review the current programs and services;
- undertake an extensive community and stakeholder consultation process;
- report back on strategic goals, directions and priority objectives; and
- make recommendations to City Council on the City's role(s) in development of the arts, culture, community celebrations and special events.

A review of cultural infrastructure and the renewal of the City's Cultural Facilities Priorities Plan will be a key element of a new Cultural Strategic Plan. A new Cultural Facilities Priorities Plan will encompass a 15-year plan to address needs and opportunities on a disciplinary basis (i.e. theatre, new media, dance etc.), on a scale basis (i.e. major institutions as well as smaller and temporary installations), and on a geographic or neighbourhood basis (i.e. cultural clusters such as Downtown Eastside, Chinatown, Commercial Drive and/or Mount Pleasant as well as a downtown Cultural Precinct). However, while the Facilities Priorities Plan is in development, there are both immediate and long-standing needs and opportunities for the development of a downtown Cultural Precinct which builds on the major City-serving cultural institutions.

Council has approved in principle a major redevelopment of the Civic Theatres, the premiere performing arts venues in Vancouver. As well the City, as owner of the former Bus Depot site, has expressed interest in developing it, along with the Civic Theatres as part of a cultural precinct, together with construction of an office tower and other cultural uses.

In 2004 Council approved a grant to the Vancouver Art Gallery for the development of a Master Plan to address future capital needs of the growing gallery. In 2005 Council approved financial support for the development of planning concepts and the inclusion of the National Aboriginal Art Gallery and the Coal Harbour Arts Complex in the development of the City site subject to the societies confirming by spring 2006 the ability to raise the funds necessary to neither has met this condition.

The Province has expressed interest in the development of an Aboriginal Art Gallery and a centre for Asia-Pacific Trade and Culture and funded the development of initial concepts to advance these proposals.

The interest expressed by the City and Province has resulted in strong interest from a number of community groups supporting the development of specific cultural facilities in Vancouver. As desirable as many of the projects are to their supporters, there are many more projects than could reasonably be accommodated on any one site, at one time.

To begin to address these initiatives City Council endorsed a co-ordinated planning partnership between the City and the Province of British Columbia to develop a multi-phased major downtown cultural precinct and in March of 2006 accepted a contribution of \$5 million from the Province of British Columbia to be matched from City funds, to explore the planning and conceptual development for a Cultural Precinct.

Since that time, the project team has met with cultural and governmental stakeholders and developed a planning process for the Cultural Precinct. Initial consultations focused on information sharing, an initial assessment of viability and identification of those projects which:

- Have a demonstrated need and clear niche;
- Are operationally viable with strong leadership and financial support;
- Are achievable in the near, mid or long term timeframe;
- Bring significant community capital and operating support; and
- Create sustainable legacies for future generations.

## DISCUSSION

While more detailed analysis will be undertaken through the Cultural Precinct planning process outlined in this report, initial discussions have raised both opportunities and questions.

### *The Bill Reid Proposal:*

In 2005 Council approved funding to the Bill Reid Foundation to undertake feasibility studies for the development of an aboriginal art gallery concept. The report calls for the creation of a national collecting institution of a significant scale and scope and while the concept outlined is inspiring and the building program well developed, the proposal is based on significant assumptions. While the initial planning work was undertaken by the Bill Reid Foundation, that society does not envision itself in an ongoing role. An appropriate aboriginal organization must be established early to lead the planning and fund raising program as well as the governance and operations of this facility.

While the Bill Reid Foundation has not secured capital or operating funding, a condition set out in the June 2005 Council report in order to secure access to the City-owned site at Georgia and Cambie, there remains a strong interest by the Province in developing an aboriginal cultural institution in Vancouver. The Province, through the Ministry of Tourism, Sport and the Arts has at the City's request indicated its willingness to lead the planning for an Aboriginal Art Gallery with a view to building on the consultant studies completed to date and the development of a First Nations advisory group to initiate and oversee the development of the gallery concept.

Further, the Province is proposing to advance interim programming options in advance of 2010. Consultations with an aboriginal leader identified by the Province have lead to a proposal to provide a grant of up to \$250,000 to the British Columbia Assembly of First Nations (Recommendation J). Once this development work is complete, site options for temporary, interim and/or permanent facilities can be incorporated into the long range Cultural Precinct plans as they develop.

### *The Coal Harbour Arts Complex Society Proposal:*

In 2005 Council approved funding to the Coal Harbour Arts Complex Society to undertake feasibility studies for the development of a multi-theatre complex. While their consultant report supports the demand for a 450-seat as well as an 1800-seat theatre, questions remain regarding the demand for and size of the larger venue as well as the economic impact on the Civic Theatres and civic support budgets.

While the Arts Complex Society has not met the funding conditions set out in the June 2005 Council report to secure access to the City-owned site at Georgia and Cambie, there is little question that a 450-seat theatre with excellent natural acoustics would be an invaluable contribution to the theatre ecology at this time. The project team notes that the demand for a mid-sized music venue remains an issue for a number of mid-sized music organizations however there appears a limited demand at this time. The project team notes that this demand may develop as the community continues to grow and as existing venues maximize utilisation.

*The Vancouver Art Gallery Proposal:*

In 2004 Council approved funding to the Vancouver Art Gallery to complete a master planning study to address the Gallery's future facility needs. This study included a full examination of current and alternate site options and the Gallery Board has now concluded that it needs to develop a much larger, new, architecturally-significant art gallery. The Art Gallery Master plan calls for a doubling of the existing area including exhibition, public programming, art storage, and revenue-generation spaces.

The Art Gallery Board of Trustees has indicated a commitment to undertake a significant capital and endowment campaign in support of a major new gallery and the desire to move forward with their plans in their 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. While the Gallery's initial planning is detailed and has laid the groundwork with their Master Plan, further work will be necessary to confirm program, capital budget and operating plans.

*The Pacific Exchange Proposal:*

A proposal for "a cultural Granville Island" was developed by Bing Thom Architects with a mix of cultural agencies, the Asia-Pacific Foundation and related functions. The involved agencies in this proposal include:

- Coal Harbour Arts Complex - 450 and 1800 seat theatres (150-200,000 sq feet)
- Centre A Centre for Contemporary Asian Art (20,000 sq feet)
- Emily Carr Institute of Art & Design (100,000 sq feet)
- Aboriginal Art Gallery (100,000 sq feet)
- Asia-Pacific Foundation (30,000 sq feet)
- Vancouver Art Gallery (315,000 sq ft)
- Vancouver Community College food services (10,000 square feet)

This proposal envisaged utilizing the Bus Depot site plus the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza although it did not include the office building sought by the City. With the inclusion of the office space, the total development proposed exceeds the capacity of the two sites.

Through initial consultation, some cultural organizations expressed considerable support for the Pacific Exchange concept while others were uncertain about how the multiple cultural agencies would inter-relate, how the site would be managed, and how fund raising and financial issues would be managed. The "Pacific Exchange" concept presented a combination

of potential cultural uses. It did not attempt to address any capital or operational feasibility aspects.

*Development of Viable Programs:*

The programs and proposals outlined above vary substantially in the degree of detail and the extent to which they consider an integrated site, or assume an independent site and operations. There are a host of complex operational and development considerations and some significant outstanding questions associated with an integrated initiative:

- How would collaborative or concurrent competing capital fund raising work? Is capital and operating funding raised collectively or independently?
- How does a single site complex operate? Is it a "cultural strata", with common property managed by a council or separate body, with individual buildings or building areas managed by individual cultural agencies?
- How can the aspirations of some organizations for "presence" be reconciled with the expressed idea of "a cultural Granville Island"?
- VAG wants iconic design, and an architectural competition; others are seeking integrated facilities designed from the inside out.
- The aboriginal community wants ownership and independence while generally interested in linkage with others although no governance structure has been formed;
- Some of the synergy objectives require that organizations take a coordinated rather than independent view, which may be difficult to maintain over time.

In combination, the proposals collectively present a very significant fund raising challenge including significant government capital funding. While much work is required to establish the capital and operating viability of proposals, with additional analysis of operating costs/revenues, fund raising potential, and more in depth analysis of the potential operating synergy and potential economic issues, there appears to be a growing consensus that a phased approach to planning is essential. There is also a growing recognition that development prior to 2010 is neither possible nor beneficial.

*A Phased Approach:*

As an alternative to the Pacific Exchange concept, and in response to the urgent need to achieve some of the limited immediate needs and opportunities, it seems desirable to "unpack" the many proposals concentrated on the two sites into a series of phased stand alone or limited partnership projects rather than one integrated project. To that end the project team is recommending both a broader geographic definition of the Cultural Precinct as well as a phased approach to development.

Based on a 6 month review of the various proposed projects, the project team recommends that Council direct staff to develop and report back with a phase one grouping to include at a minimum:

- Immediate renovation of the Queen Elizabeth Theatre and the Orpheum, both long-standing City priorities such that the work can be completed with minimal disruption to the users and prior to 2010;
- An office tower on a portion of the bus depot site;
- Use of the combined City-owned sites (QET Complex and bus depot sites) as a Live Site with the opportunity to showcase the future cultural precinct as well as create a permanent legacy plaza on a portion of the current underutilised QET Plaza; and
- Post 2010, other cultural facilities such as a 450 seat theatre on the bus depot site.

These components, together with the unique opportunities presented by the 2010 Olympics and the Live Site, provide the basis for the development of a unique proposal, separate from but complementary to the Games. The excitement of the Games and Live Site and the excitement generated by the new two block cultural centre will each enhance the other. These elements can be advanced as a package for implementation in a timely way, provide an attractive vehicle to raise the funds necessary to complete these first projects within the Cultural Precinct, and will create a dynamic legacy from the Olympics and the arts in the heart of the City.

### *Additional Potential Site(s) for future phases:*

While Phase One focuses on the former Bus Depot site and the Queen Elizabeth Complex site and activity over the next three to five years, a phased view of development suggests that it is useful to identify a series of current and future sites that could provide some of the required space over several years. These additional potential sites in and around the Georgia Street corridor should be explored for long term opportunities.

The creation of a cultural precinct broadly encompassing the Georgia Street ceremonial spine could link the City's cultural institutions, link the Creek and Stanley Park, and help support a more vibrant walking street.

### *Further Opportunities:*

Through discussion with various proponents and cultural agencies there appear to be opportunities to explore other ways to collaborate and expand their reach beyond facilities - this includes a more extensive exploration and discussion among the various art galleries and museums regarding their niche and relative roles and the exploration of collaborative initiatives. This could take the form of programming, marketing and/or a joint or shared facilities for collection storage and collection management systems which would both reduce costs to all users through avoidance of duplication and provide enhanced capacity for effective programming.

Further, the vision put forward in the Pacific Exchange proposal for cultural animation, exploration and intercultural exchange resonates with all proponent agencies and organizations. However while infrastructure is necessary, facilities alone will not ensure these positive benefits. It is in the ongoing activities - the programming with exhibitions, festivals, and performances; through the creation of new art work through commissions, and cultural exchanges; and through education that these buildings will deliver the promise of a creative cluster. It is therefore recommended that concurrent with discussions with senior governments regarding cultural capital investment that a dialogue to explore additional operational support be activated.

Therefore, in addition to the exploration and development of Cultural Precinct site studies and facility proposals, the planning team proposes to:

- Co-host with the Province a workshop of art gallery, art museum, and museum professionals with a view to developing a better understanding of roles and niche, gaps in services and programs, and potential of collaborations, as well as exploring creative scenarios and solutions; and
- Invite the Province to join in an invitation to the federal government to discuss ongoing investment in operational support for programming to animate the proposed cultural facilities in a cultural precinct; in particular to support ongoing inter-cultural



and Asia Pacific commissions, programming, festivals, education and cultural exchanges.

*Work Plan:*

As outlined above, there are a number of issues that must be addressed in a relatively short space of time. The following work plan is intended to address those issues and advance the project:

- Establish an Advisory Committee consisting of the Premier, Minister of Tourism, Sports and the Arts, Mayor, and a Councillor, to meet quarterly, receive progress reports and advise on the program to develop and evaluate proposals.
- Establish a Steering Committee comprised of senior City and Provincial staff to oversee the development and evaluation of proposals.
- Liaise with Provincial representatives to support the establishment of a First Nations advisory group/organization mandated to oversee the development of an Aboriginal Art Gallery. An initial step in this process would be to provide a phased \$250,000 grant to the BC Assembly of First Nations for organizational development and preliminary consideration of structure, concept, and programming; source of funds to be the Cultural Precinct Capital Reserve.
- Initiate a series of consulting studies in order to develop the following information:
  - Market/demographics/utilization projections to identify the need and operational viability in order to prioritize for the various proposals, considering their impact across the broader cultural sector;
  - An improved understanding of fund raising capacity and ongoing sustainability, working with agencies and key private sector fund raisers; and
  - An assessment of the potential cultural and financial benefits that could be created through collaborative initiatives such as programming, marketing and/or shared facility use
- Co-host with the Province a workshop of museum and gallery professionals as outlined above. While this session would reach independent conclusions and may impact future operations more than facility planning, it would be most useful during the consulting study, to inform that work.
- Review the availability and potential of current and future sites (City, provincial, and federal governments).
- Using priorities and detailed program information from the Cultural Precinct work establish a long term program for the development of the cultural facilities (Cultural Facilities Priority Plan) and consider the allocation of facilities to sites.
- Finalize alternative programs and site plans and develop preliminary costing.
- Establish a working relationship with federal officials and cultural agencies to evaluate options and reach a preferred conclusion.
- Determine capital and operating costs for preferred option(s).

## Planning Process for Development of Cultural Precinct

- Review funding mechanisms including consideration of city bonus zoning.
- Apply to senior governments for funding for the preferred option.

The steps above would be undertaken with continuing consultation with individual cultural agencies, and as appropriate, with joint discussions on specific topics.

### *Next Steps Planning Budget*

Costs for the initial planning phase are estimated at:

Funding for the development of the Aboriginal group to develop a supporting organization and Aboriginal Art Gallery concept - \$70,000 for Phase One - Provincial workshops and a further \$180,000 towards Phase 2 - National workshops; and

Consulting and temporary staff to undertake the workplan outlined in this report including the assessment of the viability of proposals/potential synergies for short, medium and long-term strategies as described above - \$650,000.

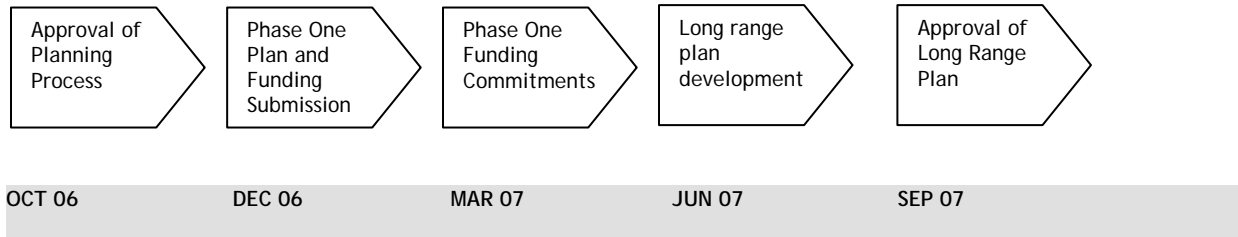
Project Mgmt. & Project Support	
Museums/Gallery workshops & strategy	
Collaborative Programming workshops & study	
Demand/Market Study	
Live Sites Planning	
Facilities Priority Plan	
Phase One Planning	
Conceptual materials	
Site Studies	
Capital Cost Estimates	
Capital /Operating Financial Feasibility	_____
Total	\$ 650,000

Following these initial steps, a more detailed development budget for the realisation of the cultural precinct will be developed based on the conclusions of this work.

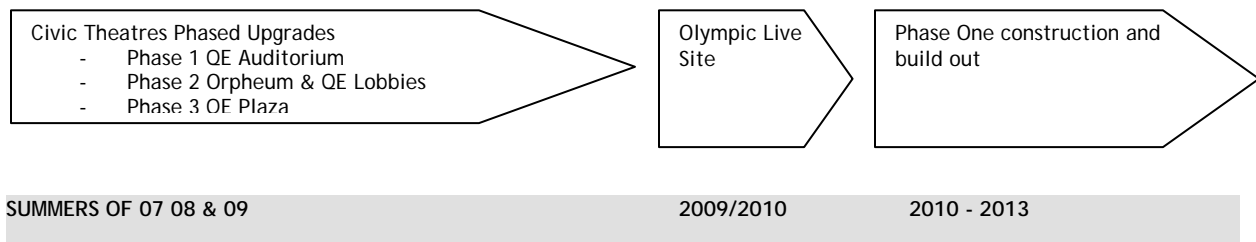
### *Timing:*

A single funding submission to governments for an initial phase of development for the cultural precinct seems essential for success in this large and complex proposal. For the longer term, a fully developed, comprehensive and prioritized proposal will be necessary, suggesting that the additional analysis outlined in this preliminary report must be completed. The planning program proposed in this report envisages the following planning timelines:

## Planning Process for Development of Cultural Precinct



Subject to funding approvals, site development and construction envisages the following Phase One timetable:



## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

On March 21, 2006 Council endorsed a co-ordinated planning partnership between the City and the Province of British Columbia to develop a multi-phased major downtown cultural precinct and accepted a contribution of \$5 million from the Province of British Columbia to be held in a interest bearing reserve account and matched by Civic capital funds, towards the planning and development of the cultural precinct and which would be the source of funds for the planning process outlined in this report.

## CONCLUSION

The creation of a cultural precinct in the downtown centred on Georgia Street will create a dynamic and exciting addition to the City; Phase One puts forward a viable grouping of cultural facilities which balances the need to revitalize of our existing civic cultural institutions as well as the creation of new infrastructure which will serve generations to come.

Finally, the recommended phased approach to the Cultural Precinct also provides time to more fully develop long-term proposals, to develop organisational, operational and collaborative opportunities, and to review and fit the final phased plan into the City-wide Facilities Priorities Plan which will be developed as a component of the Creative City Task Force Strategic and Implementation Plans.