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CITY OF VANCOUVER

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

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TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: Managing Director, Cultural Services
SUBJECT: Tourism Vancouver Cultural Partnership

RECOMMENDATION

THAT Council authorise staff to enter into a four-year strategic partnership with Tourism Vancouver as generally outlined in this report as a way to increase awareness among residents and visitors of the arts and cultural activities in the City of Vancouver.

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager recommends approval.

COUNCIL POLICY

In 1987 City Council approved a series of goals for cultural development.

Since 1991 the City's stated policy objective has been "to ensure our future as a creative city, open and accessible to artists, to the broadest range of artistic expression, and to the widest participation."

PURPOSE

This report seeks Council approval to enter into a four-year partnership with Tourism Vancouver to raise awareness of the array of arts and cultural activities taking place in the City of Vancouver through a series of strategic initiatives as outlined in this report.

BACKGROUND

Vancouver's broad range of cultural activities provides a vigorous expression of people and place. Throughout the city, performances and exhibitions celebrate the diversity of those who live within our constantly evolving urban environment and give our art its unique identity. Art animates the city and brings citizens and visitors together in a shared experience. The diversity, depth and breadth of the arts and cultural activity enlivens the whole City and contributes to quality of life in Vancouver and to visitors' experience and perception of Vancouver as a preferred travel destination.

The City through the Office of Cultural Affairs supports a broad array of non-profit arts and cultural organizations through grants and other support programs. While there is a high level of activity in the City, and arts and cultural organizations work hard to retain and attract audiences, there is an ongoing public perception that some of the work remains unknown to many citizens and visitors.

The City has traditionally offered few services aimed at raising the overall awareness of the level of arts and culture activity in the City and instead, has focused resources on grants programs to the non-profit community and in securing such in-kind services as access to transit shelter advertising.

Tourism Vancouver is a destination marketing organization with a focus on positioning Vancouver as a preferred travel destination. While much of Tourism Vancouver's work to date has focused on the natural and economic attributes of the City, there is a growing awareness worldwide of the importance of arts and cultural experiences to visitors - in their decisions to visit as well as the length of stay, and related spending on culture. To that end, Tourism Vancouver has in recent years launched a number of initiatives supporting access to and awareness of their members' arts and cultural events. Tourism Vancouver has an arts representative on its Board of Directors. As well, Tourism Vancouver sits as an active member of the Creative City Task Force.

Staff of Cultural Services and Tourism Vancouver have identified opportunities to work collaboratively on a series of strategic initiatives which will leverage the existing work of each partner, potentially expand the relationship between the tourism and cultural sectors, and develop a more cohesive approach to promoting and providing access to a full range of cultural experiences to Vancouver residents and visitors.

The objectives of the proposed partnership are:

- Develop community access to and maximize participation in the arts,
- Raise awareness of and promote artistic and cultural contributions,
- Create a cultural environment and promote Vancouver as a cultural city.

DISCUSSION

While the goal of this partnership is a long-term relationship and it is understood that new opportunities may afford the chance to work together on additional programs, the following strategic initiatives are proposed for the initial four-year partnership:

Tickets Tonight

Tourism Vancouver currently operates the Tickets Tonight community box office outlet in its Info Centre downtown. Tickets Tonight encourages consumers to attend entertainment shows they may not have otherwise and reintroduce lapsed patrons back to attending the arts. In addition to being Vancouver's only day-of half-price outlet, it is also a full box office offering advance tickets to a broad range of performing arts and entertainment productions, including those from independent producers. Since its inception in 2002, \$2 million in tickets have been sold.

Ticket Tonight was originally established as a partnership between Tourism Vancouver and the Alliance for Arts and Culture. In 2005, the Alliance withdrew from the partnership for financial reasons. In a new partnership between the City and Tourism Vancouver, the City will profile Tickets Tonight on its web site on a non-exclusive basis.

Granville Street Video Screens

The City has secured access to air time on two large video screens located at the corner of Granville and Robson Streets to provide access for non profit arts organizations for cultural advertising and artistic activities. Tourism Vancouver has access to destination footage and video production services.

Tourism Vancouver and the City of Vancouver are proposing to collaborate on the delivery of some of the non-profit advertising content. Subject to further determination of need, the following services will be provided:

1. Tourism Vancouver will provide design and production services; for the dual purposes of setting up a jointly branded screen in which the cultural advertising segments will be packaged and; for the purposes of exploring additional promotional opportunities for the arts and culture sector.
2. Tourism Vancouver will develop a video production tool kit for eligible non-profit users to assist in making promotional material exhibition ready for the video screens.

The City, through its agreement with the Video Screen owners, will make air time available for the promotion of Tickets Tonight as part of its non-profit advertising time.

Tourism Vancouver Television

Tourism Vancouver Television is broadcast directly into the hotel rooms of a network of downtown Vancouver hotels. TVTV provides information on events and activities available to enhance the visitors' experience in and around Vancouver. TVTV is also broadcast into the Tourism Vancouver Touristinfo Centre downtown, at the Peace Arch border crossing Visitor Info Centre and Canada Place cruise info centre.

Tourism Vancouver will make available airtime in all of these existing broadcast avenues to exhibit the packaged cultural advertising segments shown on the Granville Street Video Screens. It is understood that content may be reworked and edited as necessary to fit the parameters of the channel. In exchange for this, the City will make available a portion of its allocated non-profit airtime on the Granville Video Screens to allow Tourism Vancouver to promote Tickets Tonight.

Calendar of Events

Access to current online information about upcoming arts and cultural activities is expected by the public. This is a common service provided by other City's arts and cultural offices. However, maintaining an up-to-date service is highly labour intensive. Tourism Vancouver and the Alliance for Arts and Culture have already developed a joint online Calendar of Events offered at the ticketstonight.ca web site and on tourismvancouver.com with a link from the Alliance web site. The Civic Theatres also maintains a listing of upcoming events at the three theatres. We will work together to explore the most effective delivery of event information, in the most accessible manner, that will not duplicate efforts.

The proposed partnership will hyper-link sites rather than duplicate efforts, and through the other advertising vehicles described in the strategic partnership, will advertise the joint web site as "the place to go" for information on what's happening in order to facilitate access to more information about Vancouver's arts and entertainment events and encourage participation.

Arts and Cultural Tourism Promotion in Vancouver

Tourism Vancouver has agreed to use its best efforts to promote the vitality of Vancouver's cultural scene in its various marketing and communication channels such as:

- the tourismvancouver.com website;
- ticketstonight.ca website;
- annual publications such as the Official Visitors' Guide; and
- media relations activities.

Tourism Vancouver is also interested in determining opportunities to develop and stage an annual arts promotion building upon the success of its Dine Out Vancouver™ restaurant event. Through this strategic partnership over the coming four years, the City and Tourism Vancouver will consult with the community and jointly explore promotional models and opportunities to work together to create such a program, in order to shine a spotlight on the arts and cultural sector, garner media and promotional exposure, as well as encourage participation in the arts.

Finally, while many of the larger arts and cultural organizations are members of Tourism Vancouver, it is unclear if the many small arts organizations that may also benefit from this membership have the financial means to join. The two organizations will work in partnership to explore opportunities in which the broader community can gain awareness of and access to the many benefits provided through the development of cultural tourism.

In summary, the intent of these strategic initiatives is to maximise benefits and raise awareness and access to arts and cultural activities in Vancouver, and at the same time

minimize administration and duplication of services. Like most partnerships, staff anticipate that over the four years and through the upcoming Creative City Task Force public consultation, many new ideas and opportunities will arise. The partnership is intended to be flexible enough to respond to new ideas subject to available resources. This report seeks Council authorisation to launch the partnership as outlined in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no financial implications for these initiatives as the City and Tourism Vancouver are trading and leveraging each others' existing services and resources.

CONCLUSION

The arts and cultural sector are of growing interest to both residents and visitors alike. As we move towards 2010, the opportunity to raise awareness and increase participation is even more important. The City, working on behalf of and together with the non profit arts and cultural community in partnership with Tourism Vancouver can, leverage awareness through the strategic initiatives outlined in this report.

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