

## COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION

### 2. Taking Action to Protect and Expand Arts and Culture Spaces

Submitted by: Councillor Boyle

#### WHEREAS

1. Arts and culture are important to Vancouver's vibrancy, identity, quality of life, economic prosperity, social cohesion, and sustainability;
2. The most critical challenge facing arts and culture is affordability of, and access to, space. New developments and rapidly rising industrial and commercial land values, coupled with many arts and culture spaces currently existing in older buildings within these zonings,<sup>1</sup> means Vancouver is facing an imminent loss of affordable places for artists to live, work, and share their work. Since 2010 more than 400 artist production spaces, music and performing arts venues, and art galleries in Vancouver have closed;<sup>2</sup>
3. The affordability crisis coupled with a complex regulatory environment can push arts and cultural activities underground or can make permitting and development of arts and culture spaces seem insurmountable for artists and non-profit organisations;
4. Arts and culture spaces sometimes require specific technical requirements (ie. high ceilings to hang lighting grids, sprung floors, accessible seating, adequate ventilation) that may make finding and modifying space more difficult for artists to navigate;<sup>3</sup>
5. In 2019, Vancouver City Council unanimously approved *Making Space for Arts and Culture: Vancouver Cultural Infrastructure Plan*, which "examines in depth the current state of Vancouver's arts and cultural spaces, and lays out the City's long term vision and commitment to address our acute space challenges."<sup>4</sup> However Vancouver continues to lose arts and culture spaces, and arts and culture organisations and artists continue to struggle to stay in Vancouver;
6. Within *Making Space for Arts and Culture*, goal three is focused on removing regulatory barriers. It recommends that the city, "Explore ways to help artists, nonprofits and event producers to navigate regulatory requirements in partnership with the Commercial Renovation Center, including support for

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<sup>1</sup> City of Vancouver. *Making Space for Arts and Culture*. 2019. Page 25.  
<https://vancouver.ca/files/cov/making-space-for-arts-and-culture.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Eastside Culture Crawl, 2019. [culturecrawl.ca/citywithoutart](http://culturecrawl.ca/citywithoutart)

<sup>3</sup> City of Vancouver. *Making Space for Arts and Culture*. 2019. Page 25.

<sup>4</sup> City of Vancouver. *Making Space for Arts and Culture*. 2019. Page 1.

independent professional advice such as building code consultants;”<sup>5</sup>

7. Other cities, including Seattle<sup>6</sup> and Austin<sup>7</sup>, have connected dedicated development and permitting staff directly to arts and culture projects in order to help artists and arts organisations navigate restrictive regulations and processes; and
8. *Making Space for Arts and Culture* also outlined the success of a Cultural Land Trust model in other cities including Oakland, San Francisco, and London, to support community-led projects to secure arts and cultural spaces in perpetuity.<sup>8</sup> 221A, an artist-run centre and cultural space provider based in Chinatown, has been working with local community partners to study and inform development of a Vancouver-based Cultural Land Trust.<sup>9</sup> More information is available at: <https://culturallandtrust.ca>.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council direct staff to report back by Q4 2024 with recommendations for fulfilling the action items outlined in the September 2019 report *Making Space for Arts and Culture: Vancouver Cultural Infrastructure Plan*, including:
  - a. Removing regulatory barriers and providing regulatory support for arts and culture groups navigating permitting, renovations and development of their spaces.
  - b. Consideration of creating or re-focusing specific City of Vancouver staff positions within Development, Buildings and Licensing, with the unique knowledge and skills needed to support arts and culture groups in navigating permitting, renovations and development.
  - c. Exploring community amenity or zoning reform tools in industrial and commercial zoning areas that would result in additional creation or retention of arts and culture spaces.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to form an interdepartmental working group and report back with recommendations for how the City of Vancouver can support the development of an independent, not for profit Cultural Land Trust, taking into consideration the learnings from 221A and other community partners, to

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<sup>5</sup> City of Vancouver. *Making Space for Arts and Culture*. 26.

<sup>6</sup> City of Seattle. *Cultural Space Report*. 2017. Page 10.

<https://www.seattle.gov/documents/departments/arts/downloads/space/cultural%20space%20report.pdf>

<sup>7</sup>“Music and Entertainment Division,” [austintexas.gov](http://austintexas.gov), City of Austin, accessed May 2024.

<https://www.austintexas.gov/department/music-entertainment-division>

<sup>8</sup> City of Vancouver. *Making Space for Arts and Culture*. 33

<sup>9</sup>“Cultural Land Trust,” 221A, accessed May 2024. <https://culturallandtrust.ca/>

protect and expand affordable arts and culture spaces in Vancouver in a financially and operationally sustainable way over the long term.

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