

## **COUNCIL MEMBERS' MOTION**

*For consideration at the Standing Committee meeting of City Council on May 7 , 2025*

### **3. Opportunity for a Cultural Precinct in the Heart of Downtown Vancouver**

Submitted by: Councillor Kirby-Yung and Councillor Zhou

#### **WHEREAS**

1. The Vancouver Concert Hall and Theatre Society (VCHTS), through its Executive Committee, has formed the Cultural Precinct Planning Committee currently composed of 26 Performing Arts Organizations, with others anticipated to join:
  - a. Ballet BC
  - b. Chor Leoni
  - c. City Opera Vancouver
  - d. Coastal Jazz and Blues Society
  - e. DanceHouse
  - f. Dancers of Damelahamid
  - g. Early Music Vancouver
  - h. Elektra
  - i. Friends of Chamber Music
  - j. Music on Main
  - k. Phoenix Chamber Choir
  - l. Turning Point Ensemble
  - m. Vancouver Academy of Music
  - n. Vancouver Bach Family of Choirs
  - o. Vancouver Cantata Singers
  - p. Vancouver Chamber Choir
  - q. Vancouver Chopin Society
  - r. Vancouver Inter-Cultural Orchestra
  - s. Vancouver Men's Chorus
  - t. Vancouver Metropolitan Orchestra
  - u. Vancouver Opera
  - v. Vancouver Recital Society
  - w. Vancouver Symphony Orchestra
  - x. Vancouver Youth Choir
  - y. Vancouver Youth Symphony Orchestra
  - z. Vetta Chamber Music Society;
  
2. Individual music and performing arts organization space needs in Vancouver are currently unmet and are difficult to achieve. But the power of the collective vision transcends individual needs, and has the opportunity to create a lasting cultural and economic legacy that will:
  - a. Revitalise the City and Downtown supporting a vibrant Vancouver with the proposed Cultural Precinct;
  - b. Boost the economy by attracting talent, business and tourism;

- c. Make Vancouver a performing arts destination;
  - d. Provide incredible experiences for residents supporting a fun and liveable City;
3. The VCHTS has recently completed Phase I of its Cultural Precinct Feasibility Study, which studied the needs of the Cultural Precinct Planning Committee member organizations and determined that:
  - a. Vancouver has about half the number of performing arts seats of comparable cities;
  - b. New and renovated facilities are needed, including a new 1800-2000 seat hall and a new 450 seat flexible space hall;
4. Phase I considered three locations where the new hall might be built: Robson Square, the Queen Elizabeth Theatre Plaza/ ʒxʷłexən Xwtl'a7shn, and in cooperation with the Vancouver Art Gallery, at the proposed Larwill Park site;
5. Phase II (about 12 months) will analyse these locations; consider renovation possibilities for existing halls; and identify the optimal site for the project to be built and a projected timeline;
6. In 2013, Council approved the City entering into a Memorandum of Understanding with the Vancouver Art Gallery Association (VAGA), committing in principle to a 99-year nominal lease for approximately two-thirds of the City-owned Larwill Park site to support the development of a new Vancouver Art Gallery, subject to specific conditions. This MOU was reaffirmed by Council multiple times including as recently as 2024;
7. The City-owned Larwill Park site slated to be the home of the new Vancouver Art Gallery has unique potential to co-locate music and performing arts organizations, assure a long-term future for the VCHTS member organizations, and collectively provide a City building opportunity to create a Cultural Precinct destination in the heart of Downtown Vancouver;
8. Music and arts organizations contribute to the quality and vibrancy of life in Vancouver, are a platform to celebrate our shared and diverse cultures, and to support our local economy;
9. Mixed use developments also contribute to a vibrant and healthy Downtown. Consideration of housing on the Larwill Park site, in addition to commercial uses currently enabled and required under area "C1" of the DDODP, could be a positive component of a vibrant new mixed-use Cultural Precinct. Any cultural spaces floor area stemming from a new Concert Hall and related cultural uses would contribute to fulfilling the non-residential FSR requirement outlined in current policy as would the inclusion of new hotels, while also supporting addressing the hotel supply gap and complement cultural uses.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED

- A. THAT Council acknowledge the engagement of City staff to date in assisting the Vancouver Concert Hall and Theatre Society (VCHTS), direct staff to review VCHTS' Phase I Feasibility Report on receipt, and to continue working with the Society on scoping and development of the Phase II of the Cultural Precinct Feasibility Study, noting considerations such as but not necessarily limited to alignment with City priorities, broad cultural infrastructure needs, high-level costing and funding feasibility, and a functional programming plan.
- B. THAT Council direct staff to work with Vancouver Concert Hall and Theatre Society to explore the potential to locate a Cultural Precinct and two new concert halls (as identified in Phase I of the Cultural Precinct Feasibility) on the City-owned site at Larwill Park that would complement the envisioned new Vancouver Art Gallery.
- C. THAT Council encourages Vancouver Concert Hall and Theatre Society to share the vision and work and engage with key stakeholders including the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations and the Vancouver Art Gallery Association to enable contribution to shaping the broader Cultural Precinct vision for the Larwill Park site.

\* \* \* \* \*