



Report to: General Committee

Date Report Authored: March 30, 2014

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**SUBJECT:** Strategic Planning for Varley Art Gallery - Update  
**PREPARED BY:** Moe Hosseini-Ara, Director of Culture, ext 3596

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1) THAT the report entitled Strategic Planning for Varley Art Gallery be received; and
- 2) THAT the Strategic Imperatives and Strategic Initiatives developed through the strategic planning process be endorsed, and
- 3) THAT Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to General Committee on the status of the Varley Art Gallery's strategic planning process, and to request endorsement of the five high level strategic imperatives and associated strategic initiatives that were developed through the strategic planning process.

**BACKGROUND:**

The impetus for the construction of the Frederick Varley Art Gallery was as a result of a generous \$1.2 million donation by the late Kathleen McKay in 1988. The donation also included 67 works of art, many of which were those produced by Frederick Varley. The donation was made under the stipulation that a suitable facility be built to house the collection. The City of Markham purchased the plot of land at the corner of Carlton and Main Street Unionville in 1990 for the purpose of constructing the gallery. In 1992, the Varley-McKay Art Foundation of Markham was created to accept and manage the Kathleen McKay endowment. The Frederick Horseman Varley Art Gallery of Markham opened its doors to the public on May 31, 1997 and operated under the governance of both an Advisory Board and the Board of the Varley-McKay Foundation of Markham. It was determined that operating under two Boards was somewhat challenging hence City Council passed a resolution that the two boards be merged. On March 21, 2006, City Council passed A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formalizing the merger and outlining the governance structure of the Varley Gallery. As stated in the MOU, the purpose of the MOU is:

*"...to set out the roles and responsibilities of the Town, including the Gallery and the Foundation, including the Board, with respect to the administration of the Gallery, the acquisition, deaccession and management of the Art Collection, the management of the McKay Endowment Fund and the use of Gallery facilities."*

The MOU is the foundation for the existence and operation of the Gallery. It has been heavily referenced and incorporated into the strategic planning process which was recently undertaken.

In 2010, the City commenced work to complete a strategic plan for the Varley Art Gallery. The process was not completed at that time and was abandoned. Upon approval from General Committee on September 23, 2013, the Department of Culture reinitiated the strategic planning process to develop a shared vision and agreed to direction through the creation of a joint strategic plan. Knightsbridge Leadership Solutions was contracted to assist with the development of the strategic plan through a series of interviews and meetings. Various stakeholders including Council, senior staff, the Foundation Board, former Board members and Gallery staff were engaged in the process. The process resulted in the creation of a vision for the Gallery and five high level strategic imperatives which are outlined below.

#### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

Through the strategic planning process participants developed a new shared vision for the gallery and five strategic imperatives with associated high level strategic initiatives. The remaining work to action the strategic plan includes the development of an annual and long-term work plan including detailed action items and related outcomes to guide business planning and to track success. To ensure that the incoming Gallery Manager is aligned and part of the strategic planning process, the annual and long-term workplan will be more fully developed once the permanent manager has been hired. In the meantime, the interim gallery manager and staff have been working to align 2014 business plan activities with the high level initiatives.

#### **PROCESS**

The development of the strategic plan consisted of the following five key steps, the first four steps have been completed, step five will be completed once the permanent gallery manager has been hired.

##### **1. Formation of Steering Committee and Steering Committee Alignment**

##### **2. Data Collection/Research**

- Confidential one-on-one interviews (60 minutes in length), with 25+ key stakeholders, including existing and former board members, staff, community members and others as determined by the steering committee.
- Secondary research consisting of collection and review of relevant organizational data in order to achieve a better understanding of the current state.
- Aggregate report and meeting with the steering committee to discuss key findings.

### **3. Workshops**

- Two day long workshop sessions involving members of the Board, gallery staff and key stakeholders to work through the process of creating the actual strategic plan.

### **4. Finalize Strategic Imperatives**

- Development of five strategic imperatives with associated strategic initiatives.

### **5. Development of multi-year Work plan/Business plan**

- To be completed once permanent gallery manager is hired.

## **VISION**

*Our vision is to be a cultural hub of national significance in the City of Markham to:*

- *Share and celebrate the life and work of F. H. Varley and other Canadian artists*
- *Inspire local and national audiences to engage with art, both historical and contemporary*

## **STRATEGIC IMPERATIVES AND STRATEGIC INITIATIVES**

Through the strategic planning process the following five strategic imperatives were developed along with associated strategic initiatives.

### **1. Build/ Expand Permanent Collection**

- Build/develop the permanent collection through donation, acquisition and long term loan;
- Maintain and exhibit an on-going rotation of the permanent collection;
- Review the Varley collections policy and associated documents to ensure they are congruent with the MOU to develop and conserve the permanent collection and preserve Canadian art;
- Nurture relationships within private art community and private galleries/dealers to position gallery for potential future donations (Donation acquisition strategy).

### **2. Enhance Relationship with the Foundation Board**

- Strengthen engagement of Foundation, its Board & Committee members and staff;
- Clarify and define the advisory role of foundation;
- Develop initiatives for Fundraising, Sponsorship, Donations;
- Improve communication strategy between Board and staff;
- Develop recruitment strategy for Board members.

### **3. Optimize Organizational Excellence**

- Develop robust recruitment strategy to select new Gallery Director;
- Review roles, responsibilities & authorities;

- Review/develop management systems;
- Develop appropriate processes, procedures & protocols;
- Strengthen financial/budget management;
- Improve communications and develop relationships (internal & external).

**4. Develop Exhibition & Programming Strategy**

- Review existing practices and develop exhibition strategy;
- Ensure alignment with MOU;
- Gather feedback on programming ;
- Formulate criteria for submission process for funding exhibitions.

**5. Support the Creation of a Cultural Hub**

- Develop outreach & education plan;
- Develop relationships and partnerships within National and Local Arts community;
- Create synergies with other cultural organizations/agencies;
- Develop greater presence within Markham/community;
- Actively participate in the Unionville Mainstreet Revitalization project.

**Next Steps**

Action Items	Responsible	Timelines
Hire Gallery Manager	Director, Culture	Q2 2014
Finalize and communicate strategic plan	Director, Culture	Q2 2014
Align 2014 business plan activities with strategic plan direction	Interim Manager, Varley	Q1-Q2 2014
Development of multi-year work plan, including detailed action items and related outcomes to guide business planning and to track success	Permanent Manager, Varley	Q3-Q4 2014

**FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

Not applicable.

**HUMAN RESOURCES CONSIDERATIONS**

Not applicable.

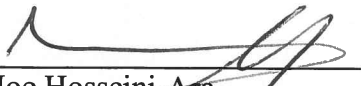
**ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:**

Creation of the strategic plan supports the Council approved Culture Plan which provides the roadmap for enhancing and celebrating arts and culture as an integral part of the overall quality of life in the City of Markham.

**BUSINESS UNITS CONSULTED AND AFFECTED:**

Not Applicable.

**RECOMMENDED BY:**

  
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Moe Hosseini-Ara  
Director of Culture

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Brenda Librecz  
Commissioner of Community  
& Fire Services

*Attachments: Memorandum of Understanding – Between: Corporation of the Town of Markham and Varley-McKay Art Foundation of Markham – Dated March 27, 2006*