



**Renfrew**  
INC • 1858  
Bridging Charm and Convenience

## Town of Renfrew

### Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan May 2024

Prepared by:

DCarr Community Solutions



Made possible thanks to grant funding from  
the Ontario Trillium Foundation.

Ontario  
Trillium  
Foundation



Fondation  
Trillium  
de l'Ontario

An agency of the Government of Ontario  
Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario

# Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

## Executive Summary:

The Town of Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan provides a long-term, inclusive road map to turn a community vision into reality: for Renfrew to develop a vibrant, diverse, accessible and well-resourced Arts, Culture and Heritage sector that provides welcoming, made-in-Renfrew experiences for residents and visitors alike.

The Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan responds to:

- Renfrew's community profile (demographics, geographical location, etc);
- its arts/culture/heritage attributes and assets in the built and natural environment;
- the capacity of its professional, organizational and municipal arts/culture/heritage human resources
- recent challenges faced by the municipality including fiscal, political and public relations
- economic data, trends and good practices demonstrated in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in Canada.

During the development of the Plan, the consultant team was aware of the strain on the Town's finances and public relations resulting from the MyFM Centre's construction project, and we applied this knowledge to help craft the scope of the Plan's recommendations. As a result, Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan offers a roadmap with realistic Goals, foundational Objectives and achievable Activities.

And, this Plan proposes opportunities for Arts, Culture and Heritage to help rebuild public trust, and invest in its community's development through transparent, inclusive processes and the application of creativity and innovation to help solve some of Renfrew's complex problems.

Engagement in Arts, Culture and Heritage activities earns a gold star when it comes to building relationships, creative problem solving, inspiring curiosity,

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

growing emotional intelligence and promoting a healthy, welcoming, enjoyable community in which to live, work and play in. These things contribute to the socio-economic well-being of a community, through retention and attraction of talent, services, businesses, tourism, education, and investment.

With this Plan, Renfrew will:

- establish a meaningful Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage to help strengthen the unique social fabric of its community, for residents and visitors alike;
- identify the Goals required for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to provide the programs, events and experiences that reflect the community's interests and desire to grow socially, culturally and economically, and the timeframe in which to achieve these Goals.
- facilitate clear Objectives with do-able, affordable Actions to: support and grow its community of professional, recreational, students and hobbyists of Arts, Culture and Heritage; stabilize and create new opportunities for existing Arts, Culture and Heritage partnerships, programs and assets; stimulate economic growth by meeting the demand for cultural tourism and providing supportive policies to assist community and businesses participation in this area of growth; and, ensuring a welcoming and inclusive environment for all.

Through research, public engagement and key stakeholder interviews, the Town of Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan was created while three other significant strategic community plans and initiatives were underway: the Parks and Recreation Master Plan, Waterfront Master Plan and a 3-year Community Support, Multiculturalism, and Anti-Racism Initiatives Project.

We recommend the Town of Renfrew assigns a dedicated staff to review all of these plans alongside this Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan with a holistic, big-picture lens to ensure timelines, activities, financial and human resources align to maximize efficiency and identify synergies and opportunities to 'do more with less' when it comes to the planning and implementation of these equally important and linked Plans.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

It was a pleasure to provide this service to the Town of Renfrew, its staff, residents, visitors, students, and its Arts, Culture and Heritage sector volunteers, patrons, professionals, recreationalists, students and contributors.

We wish you all an engaging, open, and fulfilling journey on your path to realizing your vision for a vibrant and prosperous, inclusive and diverse, Arts, Culture and Heritage landscape in Renfrew.

With gratitude,

D.Carr Community Solutions, Ottawa ON May 2024

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

This Master Plan is structured around three Goals and accompanying Objectives:

### **Goal A: Create a supportive foundation for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to grow from and blossom.**

Objective A1: Implement a Clear Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Town of Renfrew.

Objective A2: Arts, Culture and Heritage is elevated and visible in municipal governance.

Objective A3: The Town of Renfrew's Managed Arts, Culture and Heritage institutions play a clear role developing and fostering a welcoming, accessible and inclusive community.

### **Goal B: Identify the foundational structures required to support the Vision, stabilize and grow opportunities for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.**

Objective B1: There are visible symbols in the Town of Renfrew and online that demonstrate and reinforce a welcoming, accessible, inclusive community and support the Arts, Culture and Heritage Vision.

Objective B2: Streamline communications for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities with the community through accessible, engaging, and transparent methods and plans.

Objective B3: Support capacity in the community to revitalize volunteerism and grow engagement, skills and knowledge in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.

### **Goal C: Develop the infrastructure required to enact the Vision.**

Objective C1: Establish an independent mechanism to focus solely on community leadership and initiatives in Arts, Culture and Heritage in Renfrew with the creation of the Renfrew Arts Council.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

Objective C2: Capitalize on existing community spaces for cultural and historic activities that are meaningful to Town residents.

Objective C3: Establish Signature Events for Renfrew to be supported in-kind by the Town and with grant funding, but managed & produced by the Renfrew Arts Council with support from community organizers.

Under each of these three Goals and Objectives, a number of Actions/Pathways are described to help achieve the Goal. A table at the end of the document summarizes the timeline and priority for each of the objectives and actions, and whether a budget is required. Budgets will be determined by Town staff working on the Master Plan.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

### **The Town of Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan 2024 Goals, Objectives, and Actions/Pathways:**

Goal A: Create a supportive foundation for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to grow from and blossom.

#### **What we learned:**

- Individual citizens, not-for-profit organizations and ad-hoc groups have been the primary drivers of Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage activities.
- Support for Arts, Culture and Heritage within the Town of Renfrew is limited with stretched capacity, no designated infrastructure nor sufficient resources to support the community's diverse and somewhat complex needs.
- It is challenging for individuals, businesses, and community groups to access the support they need for uncomplicated success in their Arts, Culture, and Heritage initiatives, citing unclear communication and processes. This has led to some frustration and costly mistakes.
- The Community Services position responsible for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the department of Community Services and Programs is new since May 2023. It is not clearly communicated to the public how Arts, Culture and Heritage is looked after by the Town and locating a point person within the Town's organizational chart is difficult.
- The community recognizes champions of Arts, Culture and Heritage within the Town including: the Library, Town staff, and a unique resident population of individuals who are founders of its well-regarded Arts, Culture and Heritage guilds, festivals and events (past and present).

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

### Objective A1: Implement a Clear Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Town of Renfrew.

#### Actions/Pathways:

1. Adopt and use a Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage:

#### Proposed Vision:

“Renfrew has a vibrant Arts, Culture and Heritage community that celebrates diversity, fosters unity and enriches the lives of residents and visitors alike. Our Arts, Culture and Heritage sector thrives with professional expertise, inclusive learning for all-ages, and recreational enjoyment. Our Arts, Culture and Heritage programs and activities promote healing, prosperity and community pride.”

2. Clearly identify the roles and responsibilities tied to the Vision within the Town’s organizational structure and ensure this information is visible and accessible to the public
3. Align Town planning documents with the Vision for Arts Culture and Heritage: (Supportive Policy examples are provided in Appendix 3 of the final report).
  - a. Review and update the Town’s Official Plan to reflect the Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage with the importance of its role to the community’s social well being and economic development clearly stated and supported through policies.
  - b. Development and land use policies make provision for community Art and Culture spaces and opportunities and recognizes the important role of Heritage in the community.
  - c. Heritage policies describe objectives for heritage conservation and locations of heritage value are identified in the community. See Heritage Policies in Perth Official Plan and Heritage Conservation District ([Perth Heritage Conservation District](#)).
  - d. Economic Development and Tourism plans demonstrate a commitment to the inclusion of Art, Culture and Heritage valuing its contribution to the social and economic vibrancy of the Town.



## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

- e. The Town's planning documents will identify strategic priorities to support the Vision with Art, Culture and Heritage development opportunities.
  - f. Update the Grants to Community Partners and the Tourism and Events Support Policies to support Arts, Culture and Heritage objectives and accept requests for annualized operating grants to make it easier for organizations to budget and plan.
4. Explore the Welcoming Communities<sup>1</sup> approach as a researched-based supported strategy that Renfrew can model for a sustainable, inclusive, accessible and diverse town that welcomes newcomers and visitors alike, and strives towards equity and care of all its citizens.
- a. Identify the linkages between the Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in Renfrew and the Welcoming Community outcomes and create opportunities where synergies align.

**Objective A2: Arts, Culture and Heritage is elevated and visible in municipal governance.**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. Dedicate funding for implementing the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan.
2. Provide regular progress reporting on the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan 2024 to Council using a monitoring, evaluation and learning lens.  
Regular updates using this approach will provide transparency and feedback on the Plan's activities, and create dialogue, knowledge and awareness of the Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Town of Renfrew for its staff, Council, residents, businesses, partners and organizations.
3. Create Terms of Reference and dedicate resources to establish an Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee to guide and support the implementation of the Master Plan.

---

<sup>1</sup> See the Municipality of Chatham Kent's public facing strategy to inform how the 19 Characteristics of a Welcoming Community are tied to the strategic plan:  
<https://www.chatham-kent.ca/livingck/communityconnections/cklip/Pages/17-Characteristics-of-a-Welcoming-Community.aspx>

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

- a. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee is composed of Town designate responsible for the implementation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan, individuals and key community partners with expertise in Arts, Culture and Heritage, and is committed to the Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in Renfrew.
- b. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee has member representation of diverse, “first voice” experience by individuals who identify as members of under-represented and target populations for equity and inclusion: LGBTQ2+, people with disabilities, black, indigenous, and other people of color (BIPOC), and women from the community.
- c. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee is responsive to the Town of Renfrew’s actions implementing the Plan, providing feedback and strategic insight to help report on its monitoring, evaluation and learnings.
- d. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee may form ad-hoc working groups as needed to support the Plan’s actions.

**Objective A3: The Town of Renfrew’s Managed Arts, Culture and Heritage institutions play a clear role developing and fostering a welcoming, accessible and inclusive community.**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. The mission statements, mandates and/or strategic plans of the Town of Renfrew’s cultural institutions to be reviewed and updated to reflect the Vision and speak to an active role fostering an inclusive community with a diverse history.
  - a. For example, the Mission for the Town of Perth’s Museum states: Perth Museum is a gathering place housed in the Matheson house, a National Historic Site, which interprets and preserves inclusive and accessible stories through objects, photographs and archival materials pertaining to thousands of years of history in the Perth area from multiple viewpoints. And its Vision: Perth Museum is a cultural hub and tourist destination embedded in the Perth community, fostering connection with local history.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

- b. Accessibility, Diversity, Equity Inclusion (DEI) and Welcoming Community activities link closely to the work of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan. There are opportunities to support Accessibility and DEI education and training for community, business, staff and Council through the alignment and the work of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Master Plan, and vice versa.
2. The Library as a recognized community leader providing cultural literacy, diverse programming and a welcoming, inclusive space, may, with dedicated additional resources increase its role in supporting Arts, Culture and Heritage activities:
  - a. Increase its role in cultural literacy efforts and diverse relationship building to support a welcoming, connected, creative and engaged community leading to innovation in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.
  - b. Support Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations by co-ordinating programming for professional development, education and training opportunities to increase capacity in the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector.
  - c. Partners such as the County of Renfrew may be able to provide, for example, Strategic Planning and Business Development support for the Arts Culture and Heritage sector organizations, businesses and professional artists through the Library's learning programs.
  - d. The Library can access [many grant funding programs](#) to support cultural community development activities. For example, the [Resilient Communities Fund](#) and the Ontario Arts Council [Artists in Communities and Schools Program](#) provide funding to engage the community and build capacity in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.
  - e. The Library to formalize a partnership with the Bonnechere First Nations to coordinate Community Talking Circles in the Medicine Wheel Room at the Bonnechere Cultural Centre.
    - i. Talking Circles bring together many diverse voices to hear from those not always included or who have felt not heard. For reference see: [Sharing Circles - Pass The Feather](#).

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

- ii. These sharing and learning gatherings are opportunities to foster inclusive, transparent and accountable decision making, strengthen relationships, and heal the wounded ones. This activity is essential to Reconciliation in Renfrew between Indigenous and settler populations, and creates space for welcoming newcomers, culturally diverse and First-Voice identified community members into the conversations.
  - iii. Community Talking Circles are scheduled to support the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan activity, providing opportunities for feedback on initiatives and creating the space to develop new knowledge for the stories to be told through Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector, in alignment with the Master Plan's Vision and actions.
3. McDougall Mill Museum as managed by the Town will play a lead role in the development of the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector aligned with the Vision.
  - a. The Museum plays a significant role crafting a new narrative that predates European settlement and supports equity, diversity, inclusion goals, and can co-develop reconciliation practices and programs with the Bonnechere and Pikwiganikan First Nations. There are [numerous provincial and federal grants](#) available to incrementally build the capacity and infrastructure of the Museum to fulfill this role. [Funding to support Indigenous and Culturally Diverse Curatorial Projects](#) is available through the Ontario Arts Council and would provide curatorial support to invest in this process.
  - b. Through the provision of diverse and inclusive heritage programming, the Museum grows a collective historical knowledge with multiple perspectives and attracts new audiences and visitors.
  - c. With its key location and site and nearby assets (Swinging Bridge, the Art Factory), the Museum can become an anchor destination for Arts, Culture and Heritage in Renfrew with incremental and strategic development.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

Goal B: Identify the foundational structures required to support the Vision, stabilize and grow opportunities for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage sector.

### **What we learned:**

- The Town of Renfrew offers a diverse, interesting and ample range of recreational arts, cultural and community based programming.
- Access to the information and programs with fees may be barriers to participation.
- Covid was a disrupter to Renfrew's many long-standing and well-attended community driven events and activities, and with a limited and aging volunteer pool, many have not restarted or grown.
- Many of Renfrew's community based Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations do not have strategic plans or defined visions for their future.
- Renfrew attracts retired people to town from Ottawa and urban areas, by offering a small-town, affordable lifestyle.
- While newcomers bring new skill sets and time, many find it difficult to meet people and make connections in Renfrew.
- The Golden Age Activity Centre and the Library play a central role providing welcoming and inclusive spaces with diverse and supportive programs and activities.
- Although the Town of Renfrew Census 2021 reports just over 1000 children and youth, a total student population fills the three area schools from the Town of Renfrew and the County with upwards of 14,000 children and youth.
- Children and youth report enthusiasm for their own creative and recreational interests but few opportunities to participate in a diverse variety of these activities with others in their peer groups in Renfrew.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

- Youth engagement in classes and events held at the Art Factory is high, with participants coming from within the Town and from the County to attend. classes and events comes from both in Renfrew and County
- Youth reported the Santa Claus Parade, the Library and MyFM Centre activities as their favourite Town attractions.
- The County of Renfrew is an engaged partner with resources and capacity to support Renfrew’s Arts, Culture and Heritage sector’s business development and can help with, for example:
  - additional partnership development with Bonnechere and Bonnechere and Pikwiganikan First Nations
  - destination marketing support for tourism and special events
  - youth engagement in volunteerism
  - sector skills development.
- Access to public transportation is critical to access programs and events.
- Arts, Culture and Heritage and its programs and services in the Town of Renfrew are not easily found by searching the Town’s 2023/24 website.

**Objective B1: There are visible symbols in the Town of Renfrew and online that demonstrate and reinforce a welcoming, accessible, inclusive community and support the Arts, Culture and Heritage Vision.**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. Act on Council direction to rebrand the Visitor’s Centre as the Welcome Centre to provide a central knowledge base for newcomers and visitors alike, make connections and build relationships.
  - a. The Welcome Centre is key to developing the customer service brand and training for a consistent visitor experience that reflects the Vision.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

2. The McDougall Mill Museum curator to work with NHL/NHA museum and other providers of heritage programs and services, to identify Town-owned spaces, strategic locations and digital communications to tell the diverse stories and histories of Renfrew.
  - a. These stories create a cohesive public story about the history and prehistory of settled Renfrew that can be used for modeling wayfinding and interpretive panels and explored on the Town's websites and social media channels.
  - b. The Town's histories of the RCAF, hockey, lumber, rail, innovation and industry (such as the foundry, hydro-electric dam and the mill) can be connected geographically by weaving multiple stories together through wayfinding and interpretive panels.
  - c. These stories help define and contribute to the Town's aesthetic and help influence design and beautification projects.
  - d. These stories can be integrated into self-guided walking tours, for example, through apps such as [Driftscape](#), as well as with historical panels, murals and other interpretive approaches.
3. Work with the arts community to explore ways in which the Town's rich and layered history can be expressed. For example, the Quilters Guild could acquire funding to design quilts to this effect.
  - a. These stories can also be expressed through art installations on trails, for example see [Art on the Trail - Municipality of the District of Lunenburg](#)
4. Build relationships with the Bonnechere and Pikwiganikan First Nations through ["Creative, Knowing and Sharing" cultural activities](#):
  - a. Use the development of the Waterfront Plan as a vehicle for relationship building. It provides a unique opportunity for Indigenous cultural interpretation and programmatic development in tandem with recreational opportunities.
  - b. Support the Indigenous cultural education programming and events at the Bonnechere Cultural Centre. Work in partnership with the Bonnechere First Nations to develop community relationship building opportunities in

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

the community through activities of cultural exchange as per the [Canada Council of the Arts Priority](#) and funding allocations.

- i. Ensure that the narratives from these activities are reflected in the Town's efforts to tell its stories through Arts, Culture and Heritage.
  - ii. Co-creation of cultural programming and tourism development in partnership with Renfrew County, the McDougall Mill Museum.
5. Establish a Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage "Founders Award" to recognize efforts of those who have founded local arts culture and heritage organizations (Quilters guild, Art Guild).

**Objective B2: Streamline communications for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities with the community through accessible, engaging, and transparent methods and plans.**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. Review the use and success of the Town's community engagement platform ZenCity.
  - a. Compare ZenCity to [Bang the Table/Granicus](#) for transparency, accessibility, cost, citizen input and interaction, relationship building, community capacity building and information sharing
  - b. Train staff responsible for the implementation of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan on the tools and resources in the engagement platform to maximize citizen input and feedback on the Plan's activities. This requires a dedicated human resource and strategy to generate useful data through engagement. See <https://wolfvilleblooms.ca/> or for examples of successful citizen engagement strategy using a digital platform.
2. Revamp the Town of Renfrew's website to separate pages of *Visit Renfrew* and *Festivals and Events* from the Town's site. Relocate these items to a new website *Discover Renfrew* that will be developed and maintained by the Renfrew Arts Council with Tourism funding support from the County. See [Tourism Revelstoke](#)



## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

[Town of Perth Tourism](#) and [Destination Stratford](#) for inspiration and [Arts Revelstoke](#) as an example as to how to integrate the Arts Council aspects into the tourism/visitation components of the website.

- a. Invest in an app such as [Driftscape](#) to promote tourism, heritage, storytelling and business visitation.
3. Centralize community access for the Community Use of Schools within the Town Parks and Recreation Department and/or Community Services Department
  - a. Allows for better communication to residents about what activities are going on and when as the Town will have all activities in one place.
  - b. Gives the schools peace of mind for the care and clean-up of school spaces.

**Objective B3: Support capacity in the community to revitalize volunteerism and grow engagement, skills and knowledge in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector:**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. The Welcome Centre provides excellence in a welcoming, informed customer service experience that promotes the Vision. It plays a key role in supporting volunteerism, and delivering a model for customer service branding so that tourism, business and community organizations share the same stories and information to visitors.
  - a. The Welcome Centre mural project can be a starting point to build new relationships by involving the schools, the Art Factory, and others in the project.
2. Host an annual Volunteer Fair with Renfrew County and community partners that engages youth, newcomers, and diverse members of the community. Merge and prioritize this item with the Town's 2024 Corporate Workplan Action item to develop a volunteer program (training, recognition, recruitment) to reinvigorate volunteerism.
  - a. Partners could include: the schools, library, Chamber and BIA, and the Golden Years Centre.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

- b. Students are required to have 40 hours of community service so this is an opportunity to build capacity within the youth sector, specific to Arts, Culture and Heritage producing special events, being involved in Town activities, etc.
3. Increase youth engagement in Town with activities specific to Arts, Culture and Heritage.
  - a. Establish a Youth Programming Committee housed at the Library to integrate youth cultural and community capacity building needs into Town activities and build capacity to meet the social and cultural needs of youth in the community.
  - b. Pursue ways to make youth voices visible at Council [The Youth Council Coalition of Canada](#); [Youth Council Toolkit | Federation of Canadian Municipalities](#)
  - c. Develop a relationship with the School Principals for direct contacts for engaging youth in telling Renfrew's stories (e.g. through History, Art, Drama and English classes).
  - d. Increase capacity of Arts, Culture and Heritage and the Welcome Centre to secure Canada Summer Jobs grants to hire youth, as well as identify opportunities with post-secondary institutions for co-op placements, particularly around archives, collections management, digitization, and research.
4. Succession planning for Renfrew is essential to the sustainability and prosperity of Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations.
  - a. In particular NHA/NHL Museum, Heritage Renfrew, and the Arts Guild where there is aging leadership and an expressed need for new energy, time and ideas to enable these organizations to survive, grow and thrive.
  - b. There are people in the community with new ideas and energy who could help re-invigorate organizations with aging leadership and entrenched thinking. Council has a seat on the board of some local organizations and can use that role to help promote forward thinking and succession planning to advance the Arts, Culture and Heritage Vision.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

- c. Succession planning can be done with the new Renfrew Arts Council and community Economic Development and Tourism support through the County.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

Goal C: Develop the infrastructure required to enact the Vision.

### What we learned:

- The waterfront, river, trail systems and gateway to northern parks and outdoor adventures are natural recreational assets with synergies to Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage.
- The Town of Renfrew, in partnership with the Bonnechere First Nations and County of Renfrew Economic Development and Tourism are poised to support the development of new, authentic opportunities for the Experiential Tourism market. These are visitors who seek meaningful and active engagement in a community through a combination of outdoors nature based activity and cultural learning.
- People of all ages expressed a strong desire for more Indigenous led events, Pride events, and opportunities to learn more about the diversity of culture.
- There is a strong desire for connection with others, through in-person activities and opportunities to change the way of doing things and being as a community.
- Concerns highlighting gendered violence against women and the isolation of women in Renfrew were identified. Safe spaces for women are seen as necessary.
- Food security and engagement in community gardens were raised.
- The Library, McDougall Mill Museum, Caboose, The Art Factory, myFM Centre and the Swinging Bridge are all regarded by people of all ages as key Arts, Culture and Heritage providers, destinations and assets in Renfrew with great potential to further develop.
- Community members working, volunteering and participating in the sector identified the need for a centralized, independent organization to help stabilize and grow the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector in Renfrew.
  - Specifically, a Renfrew Arts Council was consistently identified as a need to coordinate capacity building initiatives in the sector, and to support festivals, events and programs.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

**Objective C1: Establish a Renfrew Arts Council that is independent and can focus solely on community leadership and initiatives in Arts, Culture and Heritage.**

### **Actions/Pathways:**

1. Strike a working group under the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee to develop, build support for and implement a Renfrew Arts Council.
  - a. Mandate for the Renfrew Arts Council to include Arts, Culture and Heritage, a centralized service for program delivery and support to organizations and individuals to increase community capacity.
  - b. Objectives should include promotion of reconciliation, diversity, accessibility and inclusion and a welcoming community.
  - c. Identify composition of founding Renfrew Arts Council Board of Directors as composed of cultural stakeholders that represent the diversity in the community, including a youth designated seat.
  - d. Build Renfrew Arts Council membership and membership capacity through organizational Strategic Planning and Funding/Grant Proposal development workshops.
  - e. Establish terms of reference which includes activities such as:
    - i. Make recommendations for the Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Awards.
    - ii. Work with community stakeholders (Town, County, Schools, community groups) to develop engaged volunteerism, and succession planning for cultural institutions.
    - iii. Produce Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage special events in partnership with the Town, County (for Tourism) and community stakeholders/ membership. See <https://racc.org/> for a well explained example of a local arts council framework.
2. Secure Funding for the Renfrew Arts Council:
  - a. [Long-Term Projects | Canada Council for the Arts](#) would support hiring an Executive Director and have program start-up capacity to do the work outlined above.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

- i. The Renfrew Arts Council may be the organization to provide the home base for [First Nations cultural carriers/arts professionals](#) to work collaboratively with the Museums and develop authentic experiences in partnership with Indigenous community members for everyone to learn, share and experience from.
  - ii. Allocate 1% of the Town of Renfrew Operating Budget for an Arts Council and ask Renfrew County Tourism for matching funds.
  - iii. Once established, the Council is eligible to apply for an Ontario Arts Council grant [Arts Service Organizations: Operating](#) in 2025 for a 3-year operating fund.
3. Provide Town owned office and programming space for the Renfrew Arts Council:
  - a. In the medium term, locate the Renfrew Arts Council at Town Hall or in the myFM Centre. For example, the BIA and Chamber may be better situated in the downtown business district for service to its members and this space on the main floor of Town Hall could be used for Arts, Culture and Heritage priorities.
  - b. Once the Renfrew Arts Council is in place for two years they can apply for grant funding to conduct a feasibility study to find a permanent space [Canada Cultural Spaces Fund](#) and Canada Council for the Arts may support a feasibility study through their Strategic Innovation Fund which support equity driven initiatives in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector: [Strategic Innovation Fund | Canada Council for the Arts](#)

### **Objective C2: Capitalize on existing community spaces for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities that are meaningful to Town residents.**

1. Plan a capital project that redesigns and helps to animate Low Square, where opportunities for youth programming, outdoor theatre and improv, small festivities and music events can occur. This could include an amphitheater and public accessible washrooms.

## **Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan**

2. Town Hall and Low Square are geographically and symbolically the heart of the Town. Given its proximity to the McDougall Mill Museum, Swinging Bridge, Art Factory, Historic Downtown, Algonquin Trail, Library, Golden Age Centre and the Wing, Low Square could host a Downtown satellite Welcome Centre and a Farmer's Market. Make connections to Algonquin Trail, Swinging Bridge and O'Brien Park. Tie this project into the Waterfront Plan.
  - a. Create wheelchair height community gardens in Low Square and make connections to the seed saving programs.
3. Rebrand the myFM Centre Community Room as the Cultural Activity Room with priority given for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities. This gives Arts, Culture and Heritage a home until the Renfrew Arts Council is established and other spaces are secured/developed to meet the community's needs.
  - a. The Community Room is currently rented with a bar to raise funds for the rink: equitably raise funds for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities in the community through this space.
  - b. In order to ensure the venue is a safe and welcoming space for all, display the alcohol menu only during events where alcohol is served and create additional menu offerings to help raise funds.
  - c. Increase the size of the stage for live performance, with a ramped entry for accessibility.
  - d. Actively promote this room for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities in the community and provide a one-stop, public facing schedule of events for these activities.
  - e. Start the Makers Space in this Room to get the program underway. Currently, the program is planned for the Library's expansion.
  - f. This would allow the Library to set up the Makers Space, acquire the technology and equipment for the Makers Space activities and form an early-win working partnership for programming with the Renfrew Arts Council. The Makers Space program therefore would not be delayed due to lack of space at the Library.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

4. Develop the concept of a Tourism Hub or starting point for gathering (a "Renfrew Rendezvous" point that could be branded as such) at the McDougall Mill Museum, O'Brien Park and Swinging Bridge OR Low Square as per recommendation A. The Museum and Bridge are key landmarks and a social gathering spot for the community with historic and Indigenous cultural significance to be explored and celebrated.
  - a. Add a new outdoor Amphitheater at the Tourism Hub site with accessible public washrooms. This asset will allow for increased special event capacity in Town. For example, for a Festival seeking two or three sites to schedule events into, a stage site at Low Square and one at the Museum allows for increased attendance while ensuring key areas of Town are active with visitation.
  - b. Development of this 'Hub' can be dovetailed with the Waterfront Plan redevelopment.
  - c. Connect the Caboose to Renfrew's heritage and history. At the moment the Caboose sits on the edge of Town only seen by those in cars passing through or stopping at the Visitor's Centre when open. The Caboose should be available as a more accessible asset and integrated into a Heritage Walk to Downtown, or connected to the old rail/now a multi-use trail.
5. Develop visual and cultural interpretation to make Veterans Memorial Boulevard come alive.
  - a. This could be linked with RCAF heritage in connection with the Wing, McDougall Mill Museum, Heritage Renfrew and youth through history class projects, and art projects.



## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

**Objective C3: Establish Signature Events for Renfrew to be supported in-kind by the Town and with grant funding, but managed & produced by the Renfrew Arts Council in partnership with community organizers.**

1. Review existing Signature Events to understand:
  - a. How they fit with the Town's Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage
  - b. How they respond/demonstrate diversity and inclusion. For example alcohol free options, family friendly, women safe spaces, accessible, welcoming.
  - c. How they maximize/leverage community partnerships.
  - d. Costs and benefits in terms of Town staff & resources for community benefit.
2. Identify and develop a new idea that grabs the imagination of the community. For example the community could start with one of these ideas:
  - a. The Lumber Baron Festival Returns: partner with [Great Canadian lumberjacks](#) to program and produce a reinvigorated Lumber Baron Festival, with nods to its heritage, but with a modern take on events and in partnership with the Bonnechere First Nations.
    - i. The focus of these activities being wood and water. The Great Canadian Lumberjacks produce the demonstration and competition shows, with the Renfrew Arts Council producing the cultural experiences for the Festival in partnership with the community Arts, Culture and Heritage sector for heritage displays, costuming, traditional wood crafting workshops and wood/iron/traditional craft fair (curated) and canoe racing.
    - ii. Food, in partnership with the BIA and restaurateurs, hold Bar-B-Q competitions and Lumberjack Community Breakfast at one long, large community table.
    - iii. Live music throughout.
  - b. Just A Frew Laughs: Improv & Comedy in the Square: youth driven event in partnership with CBC's Just for Laughs: [Corporate & Charity events](#) to establish a summer comedy festival with outdoor events, workshops for

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

comedy writing/improv/performance and a *Just Kidding Around* youth comedy film competition. These activities take place on the stage in Arts, Culture and Heritage Community Room at the myFM Centre until the stage at Low Square is developed.

- i. Hosting an event like this central downtown provides visibility and encourages youth engagement in the sector.
- c. Art in the Park: re-boot this festival with the Arts Guild and in partnership with the Art Factory, but bring it Downtown to the 'Renfrew Rendezvous' location with a teaser sister site at Low Square.
  - i. Host workshop events in addition to the show and sale, such as en plein air painting. [Stratford Art In The Park](#) for example.
- d. Work with the NHA/NHL Museum, the County of Renfrew Tourism and the Renfrew Arts Council and community to strategize on a new festival experience capitalizing on the hockey history of the town. This is a huge opportunity for the community, tourism and the sustainability of the NHA/NHL Museum.
  - i. The Talking Circle may be used as a process to engage the community in this visioning activity.

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

### Time Frames and Priority for Recommendations:

Goals and Objectives	Short (12 months) Medium (2 years) Long 3-5 years	Priority	Budget Required
<b>Goal A: Create a supportive foundation for Renfrew’s Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to grow from and blossom.</b>			
<b>Objective A1: Adopt a Clear Vision for Arts, Culture and Heritage in the Town of Renfrew</b>			
1. Adopt and use Vision (proposed)	Short	High	No
2. Roles and responsibilities are clear	Short	High	No
3. Align planning documents with Vision	Medium	High	No
4. Explore the ‘Welcoming Communities’ approach	Short (Long term commitment)	High	No
<b>Objective A2: Arts, Culture and Heritage is elevated and visible in municipal governance.</b>			
1. Dedicated funding for Arts Culture and Heritage	Short/Medium	High	Yes
2. Provide regular progress reporting to Council on the Art, Culture and Heritage Master Plan	Short	High	No
3. Create a Terms of Reference and resource to support the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory committee	Short	High	Yes
<b>Objective A3: The Town of Renfrew’s Managed Arts, Culture and Heritage institutions play a clear role developing and fostering a welcoming, accessible and inclusive community</b>			
1. Review and update missions and mandates of Cultural	Medium	High	No

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

Institutions/Organizations to align with Vision			
2. Increase and resource the role of the Library in supporting Arts, Culture and Heritage activities	Short	High	Yes
3. Municipally managed McDougall Mill Museum to play a lead role in development of the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector aligned with Vision.	Medium/Long	High	Yes
<b>Goal B: Identify the foundational structures required to support the Vision, stabilize and grow opportunities for Renfrew’s Arts, Culture and Heritage sector</b>			
<b>Objective B1: There are visible symbols in the Town of Renfrew and online that demonstrate and reinforce a welcoming, accessible, inclusive community and support the Arts, Culture and Heritage Vision.</b>			
1. Rebrand the Visitor's Centre as the Welcome Centre	Medium	Medium	Yes
2. McDougall Mill Museum curator to work with others to identify ways and places to tell the diverse histories and stories of Renfrew	Short/Medium	High	Yes
3. Work with arts community to explore ways to express Renfrew’s stories	Short	High	Yes
4. Build relationships with the Bonnechere and Pikwiganikan First Nations through <a href="#">“Creative, Knowing and Sharing” cultural activities</a>	Short/Medium	High	Yes
5. Establish a Founder's Award to recognize efforts of those who have founded local arts culture and heritage organizations	Short	Medium	Yes
<b>Objective B2: Streamline communications for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities with the community through accessible, engaging, and transparent methods and plans</b>			

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

1. Review the use and success of the Town's community engagement platform ZenCity.	Short	Medium	No
2. Revamp the Town of Renfrew's website to separate pages of <i>Visit Renfrew</i> and <i>Festivals and Events</i> from the Town's site.	Short	High	Yes
3. Centralize community access for the Community Use of Schools within the Town Parks and Recreation Department and/or Community Services Department	Short	Medium	No
<b>Objective B3: Support capacity in the community to revitalize volunteerism and grow engagement, skills and knowledge in the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector:</b>			
1. The Welcome Centre provides excellence in a welcoming, informed customer service experience that promotes the Vision	Medium	Medium	Yes
2. Host an annual Volunteer Fair with Renfrew County and community partners	Short	High	Yes
3. Increase youth engagement in Town with activities specific to Arts, Culture and Heritage	Short/Medium	High	No
4. Succession Planning for Renfrew's Arts, Culture and Heritage organizations	Short	Medium	Yes
<b>Goal C: Develop the infrastructure required to enact the Vision</b>			
<b>Objective C1: Establish a Renfrew Arts Council that is independent and can focus solely on community leadership and initiatives in Arts, Culture and Heritage.</b>			
1. Strike a working group under the Arts, Culture and Heritage Advisory Committee to build the Renfrew Arts Council	Medium	High	Yes

## Renfrew Arts, Culture and Heritage Master Plan

2. Secure funding for the Renfrew Arts Council	Medium/Long	High	Yes
3. Provide Town-owned office and programming space for the Renfrew Arts Council	Medium/Long	High	Yes
<b>Objective C2: Capitalize on existing community spaces for Arts, Culture and Heritage activities that are meaningful to Town residents.</b>			
1. Plan a capital project that redesigns and helps to animate Low Square	Medium	High	Yes
2. Low Square could host a downtown satellite Welcome Centre and Farmer's Market.	Medium/Long	Medium	Yes
3. Rebrand the myFM Centre Community room as the Cultural Activity room with priority for Arts Culture and Heritage activities	Short	High	Yes
4. Develop the concept of a Tourism 'Hub' or "Renfrew Rendezvous" at at the McDougall Mill Museum/ O'Brien Park	Medium/Long	Medium	Yes
5. Develop visual and cultural interpretation to make Veterans Memorial Boulevard come alive	Medium	Medium	Yes
<b>Objective C3: Establish Signature Events for Renfrew to be supported in-kind by the Town and with grant funding, but managed &amp; produced by the Renfrew Arts Council in partnership with community organizers.</b>			
1. Review existing Signature Events to understand alignment with Vision	Short	High	No
2. Identify and develop a new idea that grabs the imagination of the community	Medium/Long	Medium	Yes