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**To:** "Direct to Mayor and Council - DL"  
**Date:** 4/25/2023 3:33:36 PM  
**Subject:** Vancouver Music Strategy Update  
**Attachments:** ACCS - GM - Memo (Council) - Vancouver Music Strategy Update (2023-04-25).pdf

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Dear Mayor and Council,

The attached memo from Sandra Singh, GM of Arts, Culture and Community Services, provides the background to, and an update on the implementation of the Vancouver Music Strategy.

Key Points:

- In the fall of 2019, City Council unanimously approved the *Vancouver Music Strategy* (VMS), a comprehensive plan to develop, foster, and support the music sector in Vancouver, based on extensive research and engagement with key music industry and community stakeholders.
- The VMS outlines a collaborative approach to music sector development with two significant sets of recommendations: 12 recommendations to be led by the City; and 5 to be led by the music industry.
- Despite COVID-19 related disruptions, progress to date includes: the establishment of the Music Officer position, a regularized staff resource in Cultural Services to implement the VMS; increased funding for the music community via the Vancouver Music Fund; and early work to develop the Music Task Force in partnership with Music BC and the sector at large.
- In addition to implementation of VMS recommendations, there are currently several key pieces of ongoing work that intersect with the recommendations in the VMS, namely: Making it easier to host festivals and special events; Granville area planning; Arts Events License review; Noise Bylaw Review; and industry-led work to develop the Nighttime Economy.

Should you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact Sandra Singh directly at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca), and she will ensure responses are provided through the weekly Council Q&A.

Best,  
Paul

**Paul Mochrie** (he/him)  
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The City of Vancouver acknowledges that it is situated on the unceded traditional territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səliłwətał (Tseil-Waututh) Nations.

## MEMORANDUM

April 25, 2023

TO: Mayor & Council

CC: Paul Mochrie, City Manager  
Armin Amrolia, Deputy City Manager  
Karen Levitt, Deputy City Manager  
Rosemary Hagiwara, Acting City Clerk  
Maria Pontikis, Chief Communications Officer, CEC  
Teresa Jong, Administration Services Manager, City Manager's Office  
Mellisa Morphy, Acting Chief of Staff, Mayor's Office  
Trevor Ford, Director of Operations, Mayor's Office  
Lon LaClaire, General Manager, Engineering Services  
Andrea Law, General Manager, Development, Buildings and Licensing  
Theresa O'Donnell, General Manager, Planning, Urban Design, and Sustainability

FROM: Sandra Singh, General Manager, Arts, Culture and Community Services

SUBJECT: Vancouver Music Strategy

RTS #: N/A

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### PURPOSE

This memo provides the background for the *Vancouver Music Strategy* (VMS) and an update on ongoing staff work to advance its implementation.

### BACKGROUND

Vancouver has a proud history of developing, creating, and exporting music. It is home to world-class ensembles and recording facilities, celebrated live music, globally recognized recording artists, music festivals, and award-winning music companies. Whether in public spaces, community venues, clubs or large stadiums, Vancouver residents embrace the power of music to build community, shape the sound, bridge cultural and social divides, to transform, and to inspire.

Beyond its immense social and cultural significance, music is a substantial contributor to the local economy. Vancouver is the third largest music market, and the second largest live music market in Canada. The economic impact of music in Vancouver, including employment and additional revenue, is calculated at over \$690M, generating almost 14,500 jobs.

Despite the pronounced economic and cultural footprint of music in Vancouver, the sector continues to face challenges that include municipal barriers, a lack of affordable housing and music spaces, siloing and fragmentation within the sector, artist remuneration, gaps in industry infrastructure, and a lack of mentorship opportunities to incubate the next generation of artists and industry professionals.

To address these challenges, the City and local music industry leaders embarked on a process to create a comprehensive Music Strategy in 2016 that coincided with development of plans to host the Juno Awards in Vancouver. This move reflected an emergent movement in urban planning and a growing awareness that music supports urban and community development, diversity and cultural identity, tourism, infrastructure, job creation, and investment.

In parallel to discussions leading to the creation of a Music Strategy, City staff and local business leaders began exploring the impacts of the nighttime economy. Hospitality Vancouver Association (HVA) hosted Amsterdam's "Night Mayor," Mirik Milan, for three days to visit Vancouver's Downtown and speak to local business leaders and Council. Following Milan's visit, the City commissioned a research report, conducted by the public policy department at Simon Fraser University, to assess the city's nighttime economy and explore the city's unique needs and opportunities.

From summer 2016 to 2019, the Vancouver Music Strategy Steering Committee, with input from the Vancouver Music Advisory Committee, and through public engagement with music industry stakeholders and participants, examined the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps that exist within the music ecosystem. This work informed the [Vancouver Music Ecosystem Study \(2018\)](#) and the province-wide report, [Here, the Beat: The Economic Impact of Live Music in BC \(2018\)](#).

The Vancouver Music Ecosystem study, a key component of developing the *Vancouver Music Strategy*, engaged more than 120 local stakeholders through in-person interviews and roundtables from key areas in Vancouver's music sector, including education, music technology, artists and professionals, underground scenes, and City Hall. An online survey was also conducted that engaged 862 respondents.

Building on the momentum of this work, a Vancouver Music Cities Forum was held during JUNO Week in 2018 that featured 150 delegates from Vancouver, across Canada and the U.S., participating in a full day of panels, presentations and collaborative roundtable discussions on Vancouver's emerging music strategy and best practices in integrating music into city policy and planning.

The City conducted an additional series of public community engagement events and roundtable discussions, reaching more than 500 music industry and community members. These activities included focused conversations with a wide cross-section of Vancouver's music sector, including engagement with members of Vancouver's Black, Indigenous, LGBTQ+, people of colour, Hip-Hop, improvised, and experimental music, DIY venues and spaces, and youth communities.

On September 10, 2019, Council approved [The Vancouver Music Strategy](#) as part of *Culture|Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture*, Vancouver's transformative 10-year culture plan framework with strategic directions and actions to align and increase support for arts and culture.

In adopting the *Vancouver Music Strategy*, Vancouver joined a global movement of cities—from Toronto, Ottawa, London, and New York to Austin, Los Angeles, Berlin, and Melbourne—that see the value of music as a key driver of the local economy, a significant contributor to a thriving arts sector, and an integral part of making city life vibrant and fun.

Shortly after receiving Council approval, the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted the implementation of the *Vancouver Music Strategy*. The pandemic exposed massive vulnerabilities in Vancouver’s music sector and created significant challenges for the music community. City staff pivoted to provide the most critical supports for response and recovery, but much of the work outlined in the VMS was put on hold. Discussions related to the nighttime economy were likewise paused during and post-Covid-19 pandemic.

## DISCUSSION

*The Vancouver Music Strategy* builds on more than a decade of work at the City of Vancouver in planning and policy to support music, arts and culture across Vancouver. It provides a foundational framework to strengthen and grow the local music industry and to ensure its resilience and long-term viability.

The VMS is built on a model of public-private and cross-sectoral collaboration to support the city’s vibrant local music industry. By optimizing City policies, tools, programs, and investment priorities, in partnership with music industry and sector leadership, *The Vancouver Music Strategy* establishes a solid foundation for future growth and a framework for action.

The strategy is shaped by extensive research, community engagement, analysis of the music ecosystem, and best practices from other municipal music strategies. It is the cumulative result of partnerships and collaborations between the City, the music industry, and community to provide support to local musicians and the Vancouver music sector. It makes two significant sets of recommendations:

- 12 recommendations to be led by the City; and
- 5 recommendations to be led by the music industry.

These aim to achieve several key outcomes: to expand municipal support for music at the City of Vancouver; to catalyze sectoral growth and development across the industry; and to address and prioritize the unique needs of the music sector, which include a wide spectrum of commercial, non-profit, community, and DIY activities.

The recommendations to be led by the city include two priority actions:

- 1) Create a City staff position to implement the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and advance its recommendations
- 2) Endorse the creation of a Music Task Force, co-led by the City and Industry, composed of key industry and community stakeholders

as well as ten general recommendations:

- 3) Streamline Permits and Licenses for music activity
- 4) Increase access to city-owned spaces/Create more spaces for music across Vancouver
- 5) Increase access, availability, and use of venues; Protect existing music venues and infrastructure

- 6) Develop and Support Music in outdoor spaces
- 7) Support increased community ownership of music spaces
- 8) Increase housing options for Vancouver musicians
- 9) Expand the City's music granting activities
- 10) Engage with and develop music audiences
- 11) Increase Transit options to access music
- 12) Develop inter-city collaborations across Metro Vancouver

These recommendations, combined with the recommendations to be led by industry, are framed around three key directions:

- 1) **Municipal Support:** To expand the City's support for music and advance music policy, infrastructure, and investment that strengthens the local music sector
- 2) **Spaces and Places:** To preserve and increase affordable, safe, and accessible music spaces and venues across the city
- 3) **Music Ecology:** To support artist growth, sector development, music education and tourism that ensures a thriving and resilient Vancouver music ecosystem

### Progress to Date

Despite the tremendous challenges posed by the pandemic, staff in Cultural Services have initiated work addressing several of the VMS recommendations.

#### *Music Planner Position*

The Music Planner position was regularized and provides support for industry and community relations. This dedicated staff resource has been critical in the creation and delivery of the Vancouver Music Fund, pandemic-related responses on venue guidelines, advancing the preservation and expansion of music-related spaces, and addressing regulatory changes.

As part of the Strategic Priorities team in Cultural Services, the Music planner works across city departments to ensure that the interests of the music community are represented in municipal matters that have a bearing on music.

#### *Vancouver Music Fund*

In collaboration with Creative BC, the City launched the Vancouver Music Fund (VMF) to support work by new and emerging Indigenous and underrepresented artists within the City of Vancouver and the unceded traditional homelands of the xʷməθkʷəy̓ əm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish) and səlilwətał (Tseilil-Waututh) Nations. The Vancouver Music Fund, initially approved by Council in January 2019, provided support for three distinct programs:

- 1) Demo Program – mentorships with emerging artists and BC producers to create demo recordings.
- 2) Music Video Program - the creation of music videos to build audiences.
- 3) Industry Catalyst Program - projects that build the capacity of underrepresented groups.

To date, the Vancouver Music Fund has granted \$600,000 through two cycles of funding, supporting 106 projects by artists who typically face barriers accessing industry grants. A further

\$300,000 is committed to 49 projects for the 2022-23 cycle. The second and third grant cycles were funded by repurposing funds from the Civic Theatre Rentals Grants in light of decreased demand due to pandemic related closures. Due to current funding constraints, the Vancouver Music Fund has not been renewed for 2023 and beyond.

The Vancouver Music Fund was the first music-specific investment of its kind in North America - and the first civic or municipal grant in Canada - directly dedicated to supporting Indigenous peoples and a variety of underrepresented groups. In the brief time since its inception, the fund has stimulated the local music industry; created employment, networking and mentorship pathways; cultivated wider audiences; and sparked new business opportunities for Vancouver artists facing systemic barriers to participation.

In addition to the economic stimulus and intangible cultural benefits spurred by the VMF, the fund has also elevated the profile of many Vancouver musicians. One recent example is 2022 Music Video grant recipient, Amanda Sum, whose music video “Different than Before,” was nominated for a Juno and won the Music Video Award at SXSW earlier this year.

The immediate success and ingenuity of the Vancouver Music Fund inspired the Province to expand the program with matching funds starting in 2021. In addition, other municipalities are looking to build on the model developed by the City of Vancouver. Notably, municipal cultural staff in Surrey and Victoria are in early conversations with CreativeBC to partner in the delivery of municipal music funds. Although the City of Vancouver was not able continue funding this grant stream, the Province will continue its support for the near future.

### *Music Task Force*

After the challenges of the pandemic and the long tail of recovery, staff in Cultural Services are now finalizing the creation of the Council endorsed Music Task Force, comprised of key industry and community stakeholders, to oversee implementation of the VMS and advise the City on music industry and community priorities, objectives and needs. Building on the extensive research and engagement that informed the VMS, the Task Force will work to:

- Strengthen robust communication pathways between music community, industry and City, enabling the City to respond to music community and industry needs more effectively, and supporting industry to realize VMS priorities.
- Regularize opportunities for direct input for the music community and industry to inform City music-related policy and projects
- Deepen relationships with individuals, organizations, and community-building efforts, and better support for equity-deserving communities in the Vancouver music industry
- Align priorities and values across the sector
- Establish a Metro Vancouver Music Development Office
- Advance key VMS priorities on funding, governance, staffing, and resources to support sector growth and resiliency, live venue retention, and policy
- Enable clear, streamlined permitting processes for festivals and events that reduce blockages and red tape that currently prevent them from operating in the city.
- Ensure actionable measures are in place to combat the loss of critical music production and performance spaces.



The establishment of a Music Task Force presents an important opportunity to increase collaboration among the City, community and the music industry. This supports the City's ongoing work to remove red tape, reduce barriers to live performance and grow the music ecosystem in Vancouver. This crucial step in implementing the *Vancouver Music Strategy* is well aligned with Council's priorities to support a fun, thriving city for artists, audiences, and businesses.

### Strategic Considerations

In addition to the ongoing work being led by Cultural Services to implement the VMS, there is a meaningful opportunity to advance the VMS and its recommendations in several key pieces of interdepartmental work currently led by other City departments, as well as external efforts to bolster the nighttime economy:

#### *Special Events Motion*

Staff in the City's Engineering department are leading work to make it easier to host outdoor festivals and events as per a Council motion from July 19, 2022. The music community is particularly vulnerable to the challenges facing the broader festival and event industry. Staff in Cultural Services are supporting the work by engaging with local music community stakeholders to ensure the needs of the music sector are adequately communicated, and that musical activities of all scales will benefit from more streamlined processes and better internal communication.

#### *Granville Area Plan*

On January 31, 2023, Council approved the Granville Street Planning Program with amendments that specifically speak to the importance of live music. This work, led by Planning, requires substantial engagement with the music community to help shape a bold vision for the Granville Entertainment District and inform bylaw changes to facilitate more live performance in the planning area. This planning process presents a considerable opportunity to support the development of new music venues, and performance spaces. Staff in Cultural Services are working closely with staff in PDS to formulate public engagement activities that will inform the new area plan and meaningfully integrate the needs of the music community.

#### *Noise Bylaw Review*

The noise bylaw is named in the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and *Making Space for Arts and Culture* as a barrier to a thriving music ecosystem. Staff in Development, Buildings and Licensing are currently in phase 1 of reviewing the Noise Bylaw. Phase 2 of the noise bylaw review will explore regulatory changes to various subcategories of sound/noise within the bylaw that have an impact on music events, venues, studios, and rehearsal spaces.

#### *Arts Events Licence Review*

Council directed staff to undertake a short-term review of the Arts Events Licence and explore the potential options to expand the policy. Increasing the frequency of monthly events eligible for the Arts Events Licence is strategically aligned with the *Vancouver Music Strategy* and represents a key step to expanding access to space for the music community. Staff in Cultural Services are working with other departments to advance this important initiative.

#### *Nighttime Economy*

In addition to these City-led projects, Cultural Services staff are aware of, and in communication with the leads of the industry-led work on developing the nighttime economy. With support from

DowntownVan and Destination Vancouver, Hospitality Vancouver Association has contracted Prism X Strategy to do research, broad public engagement and develop recommendations to support nightlife and the nighttime economy in Vancouver. There is significant overlap between this work and the *Vancouver Music Strategy*, and staff in Cultural Services are closely monitoring the work and offering support to industry partners on how to best collaborate on shared priorities.

## NEXT STEPS

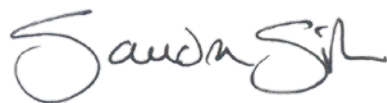
- Finalize Music Task Force Terms of Reference with MusicBC (Q2 '23)
- Prepare Music Task Force communication plan, supporting materials and post call for participants (Q2 '23)
- Convene first Music Task Force meeting, set year 1 priorities (Q3 '23)
- Launch Granville Area Plan stakeholder engagement (Q2 '23)
- Report back to Council on potential bylaw changes pursuant to VMS that support Granville Area Plan (Q3 '23)
- Participate in Special Events Internal Leadership Group (ongoing), and music community stakeholder engagement (Q2 '23)

## FINAL REMARKS

The *Vancouver Music Strategy* is poised to deliver significant benefits to the city. The recommendations in the VMS support economic growth and cultural vibrancy, as well as opportunities to increase Vancouver's global recognition as a music destination. It is guided by community needs and values, and reflects an ongoing commitment to ensuring that the many voices that comprise the city's diverse music ecosystem are heard. While the COVID-19 Pandemic compounded many of the challenges facing the music sector, recovery is well underway, and the community is eager to see this work move forward.

Further efforts are necessary to advance the implementation of the *Vancouver Music Strategy*, and to realize the full potential of Vancouver's music sector.

If Council requires further information, please feel free to contact me directly at [sandra.singh@vancouver.ca](mailto:sandra.singh@vancouver.ca) and we will provide response through the weekly Council Q&A.



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