

RECR 4400
Major Research Paper Assignment

**How can arts centered initiatives help meet the City of Burnaby's
corporate strategic goal of becoming a healthy city?**

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“Arts is nourishment for the community. It is a gift for those who are struggling. Artists are the soul of a community, even though some people don’t know it”

- Eleanor Hannan

Executive Summary

This paper offers advice for how arts centred initiatives can help meet the City of Burnaby’s corporate strategic goal of becoming a healthy city. Unexpected moments of joy are experienced when residents are offered unique arts centred initiatives that act as a catalyst to bring people together, fostering a sense of trust and understanding among people from diverse backgrounds. This paper outlines how the act of engaging in creative expression facilitates opportunities for self development, personal growth, a deeper sense of belonging and a more purposeful life. It also outlines how arts based leisure can increase the health and wellness of Burnaby residents as art bridges gaps in knowledge, encourages conversations and develops opportunities for increased empathy and social trust. The author discusses the many ways that arts based community initiatives can contribute to improved mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health, and shows that local governments and community agencies can play an important role in the promotion of population health. The health benefits of engaging in arts based outdoor leisure is examined and analysed through a series of research strategies, and literature linking arts to health and wellness in the eudaimonic sense. Also, data supporting the connections between health and the arts is collected through a series of methodological approaches with various stakeholders, including interviews with municipal staff, local artists and instructors, observation of recreational park users and analysis of social media engagement levels by residents in relation to a video initiative. Final recommendations include the need to build on existing relationships with like-minded arts organizations while identifying potential for new community partnerships and collaborations. Ultimately, the city can work to become healthier through facilitating meaningful and collaborative arts initiatives that encourage the growth of social capital and placemaking. Engaging with each neighbourhood mindfully and offering arts initiatives that are unique to each community creates feelings of pride and a sense of belonging that also leads to a healthier, more diverse and resilient city.

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to provide the City of Burnaby with a thoughtful, thoroughly researched, well-developed plan for realistic and achievable strategies for leveraging arts based initiatives to achieve a healthier community for Burnaby residents. The majority of people have likely experienced those magnificent moments of unexpected joy in one's life that comes from engagement in an arts based leisure experience. Perhaps it was watching dancers at a local festival, reading a book by a favourite author, taking a class in Raku pottery or watching the sunset while listening to live music at an outdoor concert. Each of these are high quality leisure experiences that are centred on the arts and the work of artists. Art is all around us each day. It is essential that we place high value on the powerful impact that the arts can play in our lives. These creative moments are fostered and supported by arts centred initiatives that act as a catalyst that brings people together. The very act of engaging in creative expression creates opportunities for self development, personal growth, a sense of belonging and a purposeful life. This research paper will outline how arts based leisure can increase the health and wellness of Burnaby residents, in ways that can both be measured and in ways that are difficult to measure. Yet every experience, tangible and intangible, makes a difference to our ability to lead happier and healthier lives. Art bridges gaps in knowledge and understanding, encourages conversations and develops opportunities for increased empathy and social trust. It provides us with opportunities to see the world through other people's eyes. This paper is put forth to help answer the question, "How can arts centred initiatives help meet the city of Burnaby's corporate strategic goal of becoming a healthy city?"

The definition of 'health' in the context of this research will be considered in the *eudaimonic* (Brownnett and Evans, 2019; Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004) sense, that being, "...rather than the absence of disease...that [health] can be considered to be influenced by external factors, alongside personal beliefs and sense of being mentally well" (Brownnett & Evans, 2019, p.1). A eudaimonic view of health "addresses ideas of self development, personal growth and purposeful engagement" (Ryff, Singer, & Love, 2004,p.2). The concept of *placemaking* will be referred to in the context that "placemaking is about the active creation of a prosocial environment...that influences individuals and communities to behave cooperatively in ways that may benefit the health and well-being of others" (Brownnett & Evans, 2019, p.1). Placemaking will also be considered here as "[T]he process through which we work together to shape our public spaces. Rooted in community-based participation, Placemaking involves the planning, design, management and programming of shared use spaces. More than just designing spaces, Placemaking brings together diverse people...to improve a community's cultural, economic, social and ecological situation" (ReThink Urban, 2021, para.3). The concept of *social capital* will be discussed as

“The features of social organization such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit” (Pathways to Wellness, 2015, p.35) and as “a propensity for individuals to join together to address mutual needs and to pursue common interests” (Wilson, 1997, p.745). Features of social capital include a high level of community spirit, civic engagement, a sense of individual responsibility for the common good, a sense of being recognised and valued, and having a deep sense of belonging (Wilson, 1997).

In the context of this paper, *arts-based* is considered as recreation which is centred with the fine and performing arts, including music, song, painting, ceramics, poetry and dance (Bailey & Fernando, 2012). *Initiatives* are small-scale community events, programs and projects that exist for the purpose of developing social capital and addressing the unique needs of a target community. Therefore, community initiatives have different guiding principles and frameworks by which they operate compared to large scale festivals that commonly define success through economic and cultural tourism perspectives and subsequent measures of growth and expansion. The phrase *arts based recreation* will be used interchangeably with *arts based leisure*, *arts based engagement* and *arts based initiatives*. Also, the term *community* will be considered from the geographical Burnaby neighbourhood based perspective.

Reflecting on what the city of Burnaby has already done and focusing on what the municipality can do differently going forward is the key purpose of this paper. The theories and recommendations that shall be presented are based on intensive research on the health and wellness benefits of art centred therapies, initiatives, programs and events. This paper shall outline several research studies from high-level medical journals to grassroots community organizations that have measured and analyzed the tangible mental health and physical health benefits of engaging in art.

Background and Context

The City of Burnaby has a demonstrated history of caring about the health and welfare of its residents. This can be identified by reviewing a recent Healthier Community Partnership Initiative (City of Burnaby, 2021) and the Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy (City of Burnaby, 2021). Each of these initiatives centres on the understanding that “health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity (World Health Organization). It is recognized that many arts based initiatives that contribute to health are generated outside the formal healthcare system. Local governments and community agencies, through their service provision and community planning and development functions can play an important role in the promotion of

population health and the prevention of chronic disease” (City of Burnaby, 2021). Building on the framework that has already been established by the city, this research will explore the connection between the arts and arts based initiatives and holistic community wellness outcomes.

The purpose statement for the Burnaby Special Events Office is “To serve the Burnaby community through free or affordable programming that centers art and artists as it brings people together to celebrate with unexpected moments of joy” (City of Burnaby, 2021). Working with the City of Burnaby for six years in this office, the author of this paper has a recognized bias regarding the value and importance of including arts and arts based programming within the Parks, Recreation and Cultural Services sector. The author continues to advocate for cultural services initiatives to be funded and featured equally within the City’s recreation programming and community development strategies. Arts based recreation facilitates opportunities to inspire, connect, develop and engage people and these are all priorities that are featured within the city’s corporate strategic goal of a ‘Healthy City’ (City of Burnaby, 2021).

Literature Review

Arts Based Leisure - Benefits for the Individual

A considerable body of research has emerged in recent decades seeking to identify a connection between improved health and wellness and art based leisure. The concepts of placemaking and social capital continue to capture the imagination of recreation professionals, healthcare sectors, government leaders, teachers and grassroots organizations seeking to build healthier, more caring and connected communities. Arts centred initiatives, particularly those held outdoors in park environments, serve as unique leisure experiences which engage and bridge artists and community residents. The literature review which was conducted to support this paper offers a brief history of previous research linking art and wellness outcomes and shares the particular health outcomes that are detailed in these studies.

It is generally acknowledged among recreation professionals that when engaging in authentic leisure, individuals can experience moments of great personal meaning through improved social connections and an increased sense of belonging. Arts based leisure can also help people to have a lasting appreciation for the arts and a deeper respect for creative experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). In this way, arts based leisure can facilitate opportunities for unexpected moments of joy by encouraging positive emotions, improving self-esteem and engendering a lifelong passion for learning (Bailey & Fernando, 2012). Hegarty (2009) returns to ancient Greek philosophy of a more eudaimonic experience which defines arts based leisure as, “When one has the perception of freedom and the intrinsic desire, creates for the sake of

creating, and perceives this to be creative, this is creative leisure” (Hegarty, 2009, p.10). This author and others have shared their belief that, when individuals are provided with an opportunity to engage in creative leisure that is fuelled by an intrinsic desire to create and participate, it can offer deep meaning, value, happiness and flow to a person’s life (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999); (Hegarty, 2009). Davies, Knuiman & Rosenberg (2016) define arts engagement from a slightly different perspective, describing how such experiences can be active, for example by making something in a workshop or course, or receptive, as in attending a community event. It could reasonably be argued that each experience has its own inherent value. It is clear that arts experiences, if freely chosen and led by an internal desire to participate, can lead to significant personal health and wellness outcomes. The benefits have been described as spiritual growth, artistic appreciation, happiness, sense of self and enhanced life meaning (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999; Bailey & Fernando, 2012). In recent years, an increasing number of studies have emerged from the medical and healthcare sectors, offering further data driven evidence supporting a correlation between the arts and health (Putland, 2008; Stuckey & Nobel, 2010). According to Stuckey & Nobel (2010) and Davies, Knuiman & Rosenberg (2016) studies continue to emerge from the health sector with more clinical evidence regarding the therapeutic benefits of engaging with art. For example, using brain scans researchers have determined that music therapy and visual art can help to reduce pain levels in cancer patients and can help calm neural activity, thereby assisting with anxiety disorders and depression (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Bolwerk et al., 2014).

Importantly, there is an ever increasing amount of evidence that supports the idea that engaging in the arts as a form of therapy as well as in non-therapy contexts can be a way to maintain one’s overall positive mental and emotional well-being. In a 2013 two-year study of over 1000 stakeholders commissioned by the Canadian Association for the Performing Arts (CAPACOA), Canadians reported their belief that the performing arts equally benefits the individual who attends as well as the community as a whole (Petri, 2013). The study also reports that Canadians believe that there is a wide range of benefits that are associated with the performing arts, including improved health and well-being, increased energy and vitality in communities and that being involved in the presentation of the performing arts can lead to a more caring and cohesive society (Petri, 2013).

The power of engaging in artistic expression also continues to gain support in the field of education, with some cautions outlined by advocates. In a 2002 study conducted by Harvard's Project Zero (REAP: Reviewing Education and the Arts Project), “Teachers who value the arts...often integrate them with other subjects and teach through the ‘lens’ of the arts, a practice that can lead to overall academic improvement...The arts allow students to develop self-esteem, to be self-expressive, and to apply their

knowledge of other, more academic subjects in creative ways. Because the arts address multiple intelligences, they provide a gateway for certain students to enter academic areas that they may have otherwise found difficult or off-putting” (Blythe et. al (2000) as cited in Tilney., n.d. para.4). However, as scientific findings continue to be inconclusive, the Harvard study authors go on to warn educators and arts advocates that “it is dangerous to justify arts education by secondary, non-arts effects. Doing so puts the arts in a weakened and vulnerable position. Arts educators must build justifications based on what is inherently valuable about the arts themselves... Just as we do not (and could not) justify the teaching of history for its power to transfer to mathematics, we must not allow policy makers to justify (or reject) the arts based on their alleged power to transfer to academic subject matters...Let’s stop justifying the arts instrumentally. This is a dangerous (and peculiarly American) practice...The arts offer a way of thinking unavailable in other disciplines. The same might be said of athletics...whatever positive academic side effects baseball might or might not have, schools believe sports are inherently good for kids. We should make the same argument for the arts: the arts are good for our children, irrespective of any non-arts benefits that the arts may in some cases have” (Journal of Art Education, 2001, p.2-3).

Arts Based Leisure - Benefits for the Community

Research focussing on the health and wellness benefits of community based arts initiatives frequently point to the subsequent increase in social capital and the community development ideals related to creative placemaking. Creative placemaking is essential as it incorporates arts-based practices into park creation, land conservation and public health policy (Bailey & Fernando, 2012; Putland, 2008; Clarke, 2017). Dolesh outlines how the power of placemaking can be found more in the “making” and less in the final establishment of the “place” itself, and he describes how “The process of placemaking strengthens local leadership and engages communities in vital ways by creating the kind of public spaces that people value and want to use...[and] often involves a green component...[as]...an integral part of the placemaking process” (Dolesh, 2013, p.2). Examples of successful placemaking includes a project in Thorncliffe Park in Toronto (Playcore, 2021). Rather than implementing a top-down approach to park development, Toronto municipal leaders listened to locals to better understand why they were not recreating in their local park. They soon discovered that residents were not initially motivated by traditional western park features like a playground or wading pool, and they wanted a tandoor oven instead. This was subsequently installed with remarkably successful results, and the previously dilapidated green space was now a local hotspot. The addition of this one cultural element in response to community input created a space where residents felt a renewed sense of ownership and pride in ‘their’ space. In additional years, more traditional park features were added, but it took the city being sensitive and responsive to locals’ desires to revitalise a park space based on the unique character of the neighbourhood.

Areas of Controversy

There is a need for further studies analyzing links between the various art forms and demonstrable health and wellness benefits (Stuckey & Nobel, 2010; Putland, 2008). Even as art has been a central part of our existence as humans since earliest times, the demands for more concrete data to support the connections between art and health continue. Additionally, the most ‘legitimate’ method for data collection and analysis remains a topic of debate. Reports coming from not-for-profit arts groups, municipal governing bodies and publicly funded arts organizations result from primarily a qualitative data collection approach, such as interviews, surveys and personal observation and case studies. This primary form of research has been described as more authentic and some authors call for even “more in depth qualitative methods” as the most efficient way to measure the personal and emotional impacts that arts and culture have on individuals (Mowlah et al. p.39). On the other hand, there has also been a growing body of research from the healthcare and medical fields emerging in recent years which has started to balance the qualitative case study model of research with more quantitative and scientifically based methodology (Putland, 2008).

There is even debate whether it can (or should) be quantified at all, and Putland asks the valid question “How do you start to measure pride, sense of identity, joy, spiritual fulfillment, outrage, enlightenment, vision, insight?” (2008, p.272) and Hegarty (2009, p.7) asks us, “Can creative leisure be quantified?” It is a significant question with no definitive answer; as perhaps there may never be one ideal method for measuring someone’s personal experience with an arts initiative. So perhaps these two bodies of research should be viewed as complementary, rather than oppositional. It is important to consider and synthesize the research coming from various fields examining the research area connecting ‘art’ and ‘health’ that Putland (2008, p.267) aptly describes as “an inter-sectoral alliance.” What is clear is that researchers on either end of the qualitative-quantitative spectrum are finding clear connections between involvement with the arts and positive health and wellness outcomes. The fact that these findings are being reported out from a multidisciplinary community of interest supports the need for ongoing arts initiatives playing a central role in each community’s recreational programming models.

Potential Barriers

There are numerous potential barriers to participation in outdoor park based programs and initiatives that could be encountered in community arts programming. Rushing, Needham, D’Antonio, & Metcalf (2019) outline how several categories of constraint have been evaluated as “intrapersonal, interpersonal, and structural factors that impede, limit, or alter recreation preferences and park visitation” (2019, p.2). These constraints could relate to mental health, personal family dynamics, a lack of knowledge about

program offerings, racial and cultural issues, socio-economic issues and perceptions of not having enough time for leisure (Rushing, Needham, D'Antonio, & Metcalf, 2019). The responsibility of recreation professionals is to seek to understand the unique barriers that may exist within each community. Strategies could include hiring a diverse staff team, encouraging volunteers and community representatives to bridge knowledge gaps and facilitate inclusion, and offering a broad range of responsive programming options. Placemaking and place identity is central to this work, and understanding this principle and working with a target community to encourage its growth is paramount. As Rushing, Needham, D'Antonio, & Metcalf outline, "*Place identity* is an emotional connection to a location when an area is perceived as an essential part of one's self...[It] often evolves from familiarity, which is influenced by assigned meanings, childhood memories, and affinity for a particular setting" (2019, p.2).

Culturally opposed values towards art and its relationship with us as creative human beings can also present barriers. In several academic papers considering the health benefits of art, it is often viewed as an outside-in process. That meaning, that art is something we must be encouraged to go out and engage with, in essence that it will act upon us by someone else to create health and wellness benefits ie. art therapy or artist led workshops. However, in reviewing literature outlining Indigenous teachings about the relationship between artful practice and living a full life, some differing cultural views become apparent. Indigenous teaching acknowledges how art can promote social capital and lead to improved physical and community wellness, yet respect for the power of creative expression flows from a deeper, more integrative perspective. As Muirhead & Leeuw explain, "In Indigenous cultures, the production of artistic works or participation in creative expression is woven into the fabric of everyday life...This contrasts with western conceptualizations of art, which generally limit the term to objects or expression with aesthetic appeal" (2012, p.5). As recreation professionals, the most meaningful way to ensure inclusive arts practices is to seek to understand and respect the values and traditions of individual communities and cultures.

In his bestselling book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000) Robert Putnam presents extensive data about how people in the United States have been increasingly disinclined to join service organizations, bowling leagues or volunteer groups and fraternity clubs. He shared his concern that this trend could lead to deteriorating social circumstances in the United States, and 21 years later he may have predicted this correctly. In a Stats Can survey released in June, 2020 discussing 2018 volunteering rates for Canadians, the news seems more positive as it states that "In 2018, almost 12.7 million people volunteered for charities, nonprofits and community organizations – accounting for 41% of

Canadians aged 15 and older. They devoted approximately 1.7 billion hours to their formal volunteer activities, a volume of work equivalent to more than 863,000 full-time year-round jobs” (Stats Can, 2020, Table 1. p.4). According to *The Value of Presenting: A Study of Performing Arts Presentation in Canada* the report outlines research that 92% of Canadians agree that the arts are an important part of a healthy community and that having arts based organizations and initiatives in the community contribute to a shared identity, and sense of pride (Petri, 2013) and that, “Canadians feel that their quality of life and sense of well-being are strengthened by having performing arts facilities and presentations in their community, whether or not they attend a particular event” (Petri, 2013, p.33).

However, we must be attentive to the potential for decline and remain vigilant. If social capital is the glue that holds us together, then a decline in this area may lead to an overall weaker, more disconnected and less democratic society. Therefore, recreation professionals must continue to advocate passionately for the arts, and for artists, as an important component of our community programming. There are many benefits that emerge from community arts projects and programs, not the least of which include addressing issues of common importance, solving problems, forming a shared sense of community, and celebrating a neighbourhood’s unique character and history. When residents are engaged, initiatives can be a one day event or a longer term artist in residency and they can all offer the potential for building social capital among residents (Burnham, 2011). Arts based community initiatives offer residents compelling reasons to gather, explore and share memories together intergenerationally and cross culturally in urban green spaces.

Gaps in Literature

There is a demonstrable lack of artist voices within current research and discourse in the recreation field. Participants' voices are extensively captured, analysed, discussed and re-evaluated, with recommendations created for future initiatives based on this ongoing data collection process. Yet the artists engaged in art based community projects as leaders, residencies, facilitators, instructors and mentors are dramatically under-represented in current research. It is apparent that learning from this group's wisdom and motivations and incorporating these unique perspectives is very important. Programs like the City of Vancouver’s current *Artists in Communities* and *Healthy Aging Through the Arts* initiatives (City of Vancouver, 2021) demonstrate the growing interest and municipal support for programs that encourage relationship building between artists, junior artists and community residents. The City of Burnaby would benefit from offering similar free, outdoor artist-lead programs that seek to enhance community connections and shared experience by making and sharing art together.

Methodology

In order to most effectively answer the question of how arts centered initiatives can help meet the City's goal to become a healthy city, it was essential to research and consider this question from the perspective of various city stakeholders, including interdepartmental colleagues, Mayor and Council, Burnaby residents, program participants, neighbourhoods, community partners and local artists. People, places and partnerships are all components of developing and maintaining a healthier city strategy. Therefore, the selected methods of primary research utilised for this paper included telephone interviews, data analysis and observation. These methods allowed for in-depth analysis of how and why key stakeholders engaged with arts based initiatives. Using this data would help outline how Burnaby stakeholders could effectively work together to accomplish significant health and wellness outcomes using arts-centered approaches to the development of social capital, placemaking and community engagement goals.

Primary research activities for this paper included:

- In-depth telephone interviews (30-45 minutes in duration) with 14 artists residing within the Lower Mainland who had been previously involved in City of Burnaby Festivals and Event Department initiatives. These artists represented a wide range of arts genres, including dance, shadow puppetry, visual arts, Indigenous storytelling, and music. Artist interview responses were analysed and results were reported out using charts and graphs (See Appendices A-B).
- Interviews with municipal colleagues, captured in interview data and Feedback via Email (See Appendices G & I)
- Data analysis of a recent arts based video outreach initiative called *Celebrate the Season*, a combination of in park signage (users scanned a QR code to access free digital artist talks and performances) and an online component featuring these same videos on private YouTube channels which could be viewed by clicking on a direct link (See Appendices C-E).
- Data analysis of a January 2021 e-survey sent out to Burnaby Arts Services email subscribers to obtain feedback regarding the Celebrate the Season initiative as well as residents' interest in a variety of arts based programming going forward. Responses from 38 people were obtained, and responses analysed (See Appendix F).
- Observational study of how and with whom Burnaby residents engaged with Celebrate the Season signage, measuring levels of engagement and interest based on whether people stopped to read the signs, scan the codes and/or viewed the Celebrate the Season artist videos (See Appendix H).

Explanation of Methodology

Interviews

Interviews offer prime opportunities for meaningful discourse resulting in significant qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate and make more informed decisions. Interviewees included 14 artists, puppeteers, storytellers, drag performers, poets and musicians (henceforth to all be referred to inclusively as ‘artists’) who had recently been featured in a virtual arts centred video initiative called *Celebrate the Season*. The primary goal was to complete each of these 30-45 minute conversations within a very short time span, so that patterns in language, expressions, and artist recommendations for best practices could be identified. Eleven questions were carefully developed to better understand the perspectives of the city’s artist stakeholders - many of whom are also Burnaby residents (see Appendix A). Some of the responses from artists were expected; artists reported wanting to join the project due to its creativity, uniqueness and sense of fun. They also reported feeling happier, more connected with others in the community, and reported feeling grateful and excited to have been a part of the project. Some artists reported experiencing a more depressed mood and pessimistic outlook due to how devastating COVID-19 restrictions have been to the arts community.

Many artists used the metaphor of how their performances are a way of sharing their stories and how sharing their personal stories through art facilitates greater connection with others. As one artist stated, “As a musician it is crucial for me to have a conversation with my music” (Peterson, 2021), and another artist stated, “Of course we need to keep doing creative projects like this. Art takes you out of yourself...these artists are people in your community. Sharing the creative endeavour with their own community. You are the audience. We care about you! That is the relationship between artists and the community...This project was the bringing together of people and that creates community” (Hannan, 2021). Arts based initiatives not only help improve the lives of the audiences and communities they serve, but rather they also have profound impacts on the health and well-being of the artists themselves who create, curate and share the artistic content for the well-being of the broader community.

To better inform my research on the benefits of the arts and learn from the perspectives of a municipal colleague and program participants, the Fine Arts Programmer at Shadbolt Centre, Marianne Otterstrom, was interviewed to determine her views about the connection between arts-centred initiatives and individual and community health. She shared how she “has witnessed the healing ability of an arts class for participants...There was a lovely lady who was recovering from breast cancer surgery...her involvement in our adult watercolour painting class was an intentional part of her healing process.”

(Otterstrom, 2021). The Fine Arts Programmer shared that participants often report feeling better supported and encouraged to keep painting when they belong to a group of artists that meet regularly, for example in Shadbolt Centre's weekly drop in Open Artists Studio. She shared her opinion that creating art with others in a supportive and inclusive space gives some program participants the strength to push through their personal challenges and gain confidence and strength by expressing themselves creatively. Marianne also shared how "participants often bond over conversations at a pottery wheel or in front of a canvas as they sketch outdoors in a natural environment...there is something about being in nature and creating art with others that is inherently and unquestionably healing" (Otterstrom, 2021). These perspectives are valuable as they include participants' perspectives and it illustrates how people may register for an arts class in the same way others might book a massage or physiotherapy appointment, as a key part of a long term health and wellness regime. As life-long Burnaby resident and visual artist Miles Van Yperen shared, "To me, the value [of art] is in the creative experience, not the end product necessarily" (Van Yperen, 2021).

Content Analysis

For the content analysis portion of this research paper, documents were identified that would confirm how Burnaby defines itself as a healthy city. During this research process, two documents were retrieved that lay out the city's mission towards creating a healthy and thriving city for its residents. In 2014, the City entered into a partnership with Fraser Health and the Burnaby School District called the *Healthy Community Partnership* or HCP (City of Burnaby, 2015). In an update report to Council in September 2018, the Healthy Community Partnerships defines its purpose by citing the World Health Organization's definition of health, "The HCP initiative is rooted in the global healthy community movement which recognizes that health is 'a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity' (World Health Organization, 2010). It is recognized that many activities/initiatives that contribute to health are generated outside the formal health care system" (City of Burnaby, 2018, p. 3).

This report goes on to outline how the City of Burnaby believes that by engaging in meaningful partnerships with local governments, schools and community agencies, that these services and initiatives can "play an important role in the promotion of population health and prevention of chronic disease" (City of Burnaby, 2018, p.3). The HCP initiated a strategic plan in 2017 with the goal that "Overall, the plan creates direction for the [members of the partnership] to work collectively to promote health and healthy communities for all who live, work, learn and play in Burnaby...The Burnaby HCP's vision is now: *Burnaby: Where the healthy choice is the easy choice*" (City of Burnaby, p.4). This document

outlines how the partnership places high value on the role that municipal governments and community partners have on creating a healthy environment for its residents. Emphasis is placed on “promot[ing] a collective vision” and agreeing on the “shared societal responsibility” to “collectively champion the creation of supportive environments to enable healthy communities” (City of Burnaby, 2018, p.4). The focus is on leveraging partnerships and mobilizing broader external stakeholder groups to support the city’s vision for a healthier Burnaby.

In addition, the city has also outlined its commitment to health in the development of a *Social Sustainability Plan*. This plan was developed in 2011 together with then Mayor Derek Corrigan, and 24 residents including four members of city council. It was founded on the city’s belief that “Social sustainability is about people - individuals and the community working together to meet their needs, realize their potential, and prosper in a healthy environment” (City of Burnaby, 2015, p.1). Strategic Priority 2 of this plan was “Celebrating Diversity and Culture” and initiatives included initiating a free live music concert series at Civic Square, offering Indigenous programming at the Burnaby Village Museum and supporting local festivals through the Festival Burnaby’s grant program (City of Burnaby, 2015, p.6). Additionally, the Burnaby Social Sustainability Strategy promoted local artists via 70 exhibitions at the Burnaby Art Gallery, as well as providing long term funding to community partners including the Deer Lake Gallery and the Burnaby Artists Guild (City of Burnaby, 2015, p.6). The city defines its approach to health in Strategic Goal 3 of the Sustainability Strategy, ‘Getting Involved.’ Here, the city defines a healthy community as an ‘involved community’ and uses the example of civic and community engagement and business support for local neighbourhood initiatives as a key pillar of a healthier community. In this way, Burnaby demonstrates its commitment to the development of social capital by encouraging and supporting local programs and events that can facilitate a healthier and overall more connected community (City of Burnaby, 2015, p.8).

To better understand how arts based initiatives are currently received by residents, a social media analytics final report was reviewed based on data collected by the city’s Marketing and Communications Department. The data captured outlined the levels of public engagement with the Celebrate the Season arts initiative. According to analytics from December 7-January 31, 2021 (a 5.5 week campaign) across the various social media platforms, the level of engagement with the video campaign was very high. Average views per artist video was 154 people, with people accessing this content by scanning the QR code on the signs with their cell phones. Across the City Facebook, Twitter and Instagram platforms, there were close to 6000 total impressions - meaning this number of people had either clicked on a link to

the video, paused for more than a few seconds on a post or tweet about the videos or shared the link and/or video with people in their social network (See Appendices C-F).

Content Analysis Summary

1. Final Analytics Report - Social Media reach for *Celebrate the Season* QR Code Arts Based Video Project, December 7-January 31, 2021 (For full reports see Appendices C-E).

Key Findings

Total social media impressions and views across platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) with an approximate reach of 5500-6000 people. Artists who leveraged their personal and professional networks (i.e. shared via social media and on their professional website) had a much higher overall video time watched for their videos. (i.e. many viewers watched the entire video, instead of losing interest after a few minutes and disengaging from the video before it ended) When interdepartmental colleagues supported a festivals office initiative (i.e. sharing the artists' link with their professional network of artists/instructors) average view time for visual artists increased dramatically, as did the total number of views per video. The success of various social media platforms varied by the extent to which artists utilised and engaged with the platforms. For example, those artists who regularly posted to Instagram and had a larger following saw a higher number of views of his/her videos via click throughs from Instagram. Those artists with larger Facebook followers had most success using that platform for notifying people about their involvement with the Celebrate the Season initiative. Due to the length of most videos (being over 5 minutes) social media platforms including Instagram and Twitter saw lower average engagement with the videos. During the second leg of the installation at Deer Lake Park Jan.18-31, 2021, the city's Marketing Communications Department was asked to start 'tagging' posts, thereby letting artists know when their videos would be shared across platforms. This additional action enabled artists to then leverage the City of Burnaby's posts across their own personal and/or professional social media platforms resulting in a broader reach and subsequent increase in 'likes' and 'shares' overall.

2. Final Analytics Report - Unique QR Code Scans in parks, Dec.7, 2020-Jan.31, 2021 (For full report please see Appendix D)

Key Findings

High traffic greenways and inter-urban trails (Byrne Creek Ravine, Central Park) was a correlative factor for higher engagement with physical signage as indicated by the highest unique QR code scans per sign.

The physical signs in Burnaby's major parks, including Barnet Marine, and Fraser Foreshore also saw very high reporting of unique QR code scans. During the second leg of the pilot project when all signs were installed around Deer Lake Park, marketing was asked to add the additional instructions 'open your camera app' and scan QR codes on signs. This additional information appears to correlate with subsequently higher QR code scans during the Deer Lake Park installation period. The duration of video watch dropped dramatically in week 2 at Deer Lake Park, and overall average viewing times were down from when they were installed throughout various Burnaby Parks.

3. Final Analytics Report - E-survey to Arts Services subscribers, survey open Jan.27-Feb.10 2021 (For full report please see Appendix F)

Key Findings: Public E-Survey

Top 5 Most Frequently Visited Burnaby Parks in 2020: 1.) Deer Lake 2.) Confederation
3.) Burnaby Lake 4.) Central Park/Burnaby Conservation Area (*tie*) 5.) Fraser Foreshore.

For those who had watched the Celebrate the Season videos, the main ways residents accessed the content was reported as 1.) Saw a poster in a park and scanned the QR code to watch (75%) and 2.) Saw a social media post featuring an artist and watched it (67%). For those who watched the videos and were asked to report their levels of satisfaction: 75% Were Very Satisfied with the performance experience and 67% Were Very Satisfied with the content; 83% Were Very Satisfied with the quality of audio and 83% Were Very Satisfied with the quality of the video. The remaining responses indicated being Satisfied with the Performance Experience, Content, Quality of audio and Quality of video. More than half the respondents (58%) rated the Celebrate the Season digital initiative as Much better or Better in comparison to other digital art experiences they had experienced in 2020.

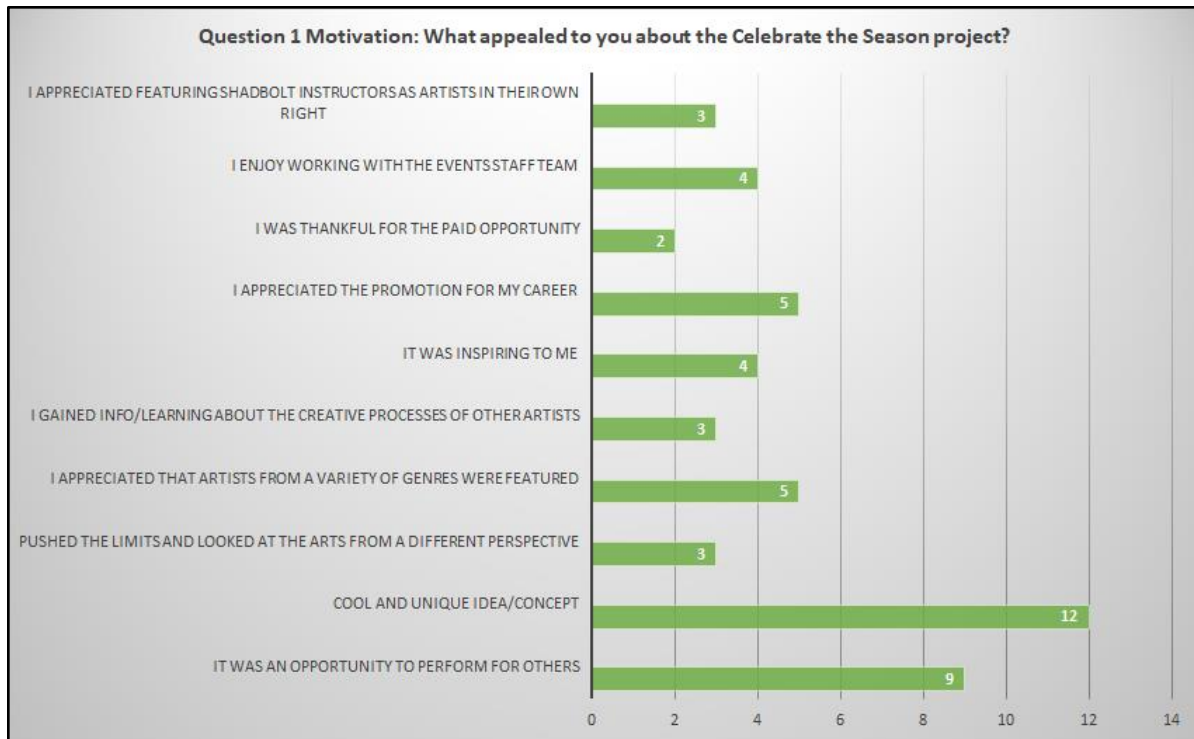
4. Artist Interview Summary - Key Trends and Commonalities related to Engagement and Motivation with Arts-Based Initiatives (For full interview transcripts please see Appendix B)

Interviews conducted between Feb.8-12, 2021

Key Findings

Interviews with artist stakeholders indicated that the vast majority were motivated to engage with the Celebrate the Season initiative because they thought it was a unique concept and creative idea. Other common responses included that it was an opportunity to perform for others and that they received a lot of

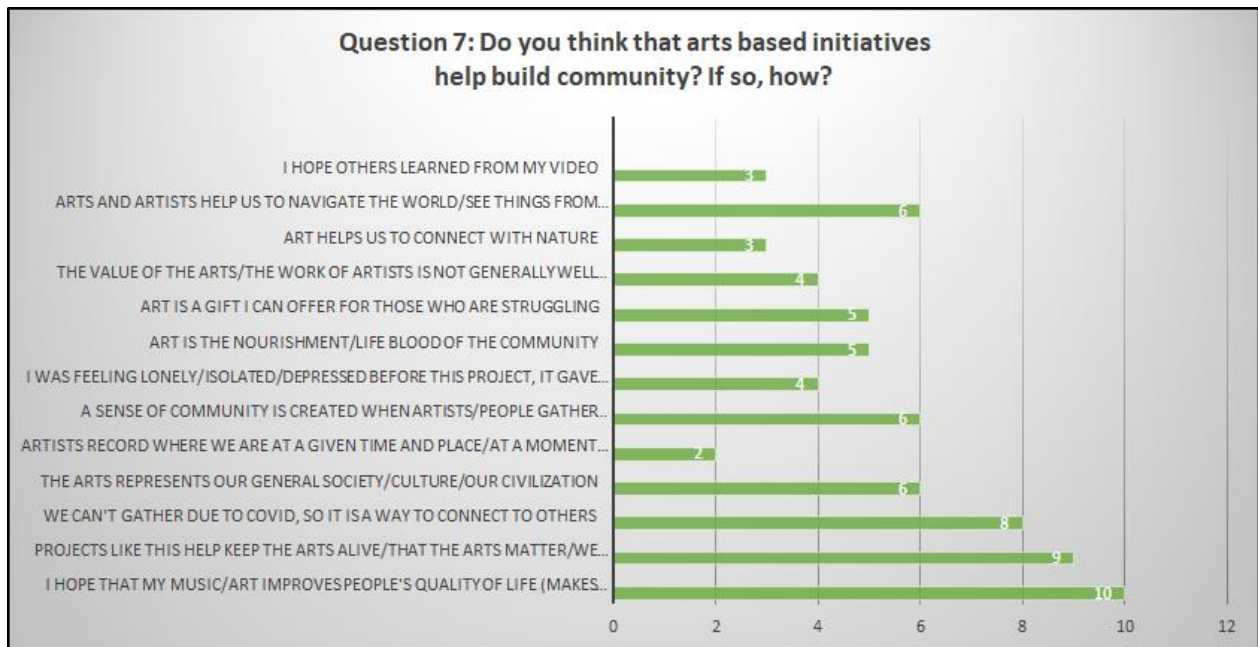
joy from performing with such a diverse group of artists and that they enjoyed learning and experiencing other forms of artistic expression.



Graph 1: Identifying Motivation Among Artists

Several artists expressed sincere thanks to the city for engaging them in the project, because they learned a lot, felt encouraged that the arts were being supported during the pandemic, that they enjoyed being a part of a talented roster, and they were highly impressed with the quality of the video and sound production of the videos.

Additional key findings include artists sharing how they hoped that their music/art improve people's quality of life, they felt that projects like this were important because the arts matter, and that the arts and artists help people to share their stories and see things from new perspectives, thus creating an environment for greater understanding, empathy and connection as a community. All of these outcomes contribute to making the City of Burnaby a healthier city, in creating opportunities for bridging differences, creating a sense of connection and compassion which leads to overall happier and more positive citizens.



Graph 7: Identifying How Arts based Initiatives can build a healthier community.

Observation

Observational methodology was utilised to record how park goers engaged with the Celebrate the Season signs when located in park spaces. Objectives were to identify how many people walked by without engaging with the signs, how many people stopped and how many people scanned the QR codes and watched the artist’s video (or portions of the video) and what were the experiences/responses of those who did engage with the videos in parks. During the course of an hour conducting this research at both Fraser Foreshore and Deer Lake parks, it was clear that most people walked by without engaging. Of the approximately 50 people who walked by at Fraser Foreshore, 15 stopped. Family groups, those with dogs, and slow walkers were far more likely to stop than runners or joggers. However, for those who stopped to scan the code, joyful, excited reactions could be heard indicating feelings of surprise and curiosity. One couple asked each other whether there were other signs up ahead and they craned their necks in anticipation. One mother-daughter couple walking a dog happily exclaimed “Oh, wow this is a new one!” while out on a walk in Deer Lake Park. Another walking group of older men at Fraser Foreshore Park helped each other to figure out how to scan the QR code on the sign using a cell phone. They took their time and showed curiosity and support for each other’s learning, laughing together while they figured the problem out together collectively. Another park goer walking her dog scanned the sign and as she listened to the poetry she gazed out at the water at Fraser Foreshore Park. It appeared that for her, a high quality leisure experience was had by the ability to experience the poetry of Cicely Belle Blain (the artist featured

at this location) while conversing with nature. It appears that for those who engaged with the videos in parks, they were provided with a higher quality leisure (HQL) experience.

Research Findings

Secondary Research

Finding 1: Outdoor neighbourhood arts centred initiatives are an important component of a solid recreation strategy as they engage community residents and local stakeholders (businesses, not for profits, fellow arts organizations, galleries, informal art spaces) at a grassroots level. Leverage existing partnerships and connections, create new ones, keep meeting and communicating, sharing information to identify gaps, similarities and opportunities for new collaborations. These initiatives welcome and respond to micro-communities' unique needs, life experiences, cultures, history, preferences and interests into the conversation, offering neighbourhoods the opportunity to be a part of the planning and development process. Outdoor greenspace programming and municipal initiatives empowers residents and encourages diversity and inclusion. To date, the City of Burnaby has worked hard to develop a framework for a social sustainability strategy that centres on celebrating diversity and supporting opportunities for neighbourhood development and placemaking. In a truly effective placemaking approach, partnerships are essential and can include stakeholders from public, private, not for profit and community sectors. By listening to residents, Burnaby can develop a unique healthier community based plan for programming and park features that are responsive to the unique character and history of the neighbourhood and its residents.

Finding 2: There is a severe underrepresentation of artists' voices and perspectives in much of the current research and case studies on community arts centered initiatives. In many studies, the health benefits derived from art based initiatives are all considered from the attendees perspectives (i.e. Improved mood, sense of self, increased familial bonding, development of a lifelong appreciation for art). However, artists find great personal meaning and value in engagement with municipal initiatives like the recent Celebrate the Season arts based video pilot project. As one artist shared, "Art is the lifeblood of a community. It showcases the heart of a city" (Chimes, 2021). The effects of such arts initiatives are not usually considered from the perspectives of the artist contributors, instructors and/or facilitators themselves. As Tanya Rankin, Fine Arts Coordinator with the City of Burnaby commented "[This research paper] has identified a gap in current research that there is a lack of artists' perspectives being collected in evaluations of community based arts initiatives. Learning about this missing information has encouraged

me to re-think who the Shadbolt Centre is formally collecting data from and why...I feel that it is safe to assume that we are not receiving the depth of information that could properly inform future decisions. Because of this, I am inspired to develop a more formal evaluation process targeted to instructors and arts specialists, with the goal of identifying factors relevant to their experience. This will allow them to provide us with feedback reflecting their experience as an artist engaging with their art, outside of their expertise as an instructor or presenter. I believe this will help us to better honour initiatives that are truly artist led” (Rankin, 2020, See Appendix I). Therefore, it would be beneficial to continue to include the perspectives, feedback and wisdom of artists into any ongoing considerations and development of art centered initiatives going forward within a healthier city mandate.

Finding 3: Research has emerged in recent decades outlining the valid connections between improved health and wellness and art based leisure experiences. The related concepts of placemaking and social capital continue to inspire recreation professionals, healthcare sectors, government leaders, teachers and grassroots organizations seeking to build healthier, more caring and connected communities. Arts centred initiatives, particularly those held outdoors in park environments, must continue to be supported as unique leisure experiences that engage and bridge artists, community arts organizations, municipal employees and local residents. The literature review outlined in this paper supports research linking art and health and wellness outcomes for residents, artists and communities as a whole as it relates to placemaking and the development of social capital. Leisure professionals must continue to value the moments of great personal meaning that can occur through improved social connections and an increased sense of belonging that is developed through creative experiences (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). We must acknowledge that arts based engagement can facilitate opportunities for unexpected moments of joy by encouraging positive emotions, improving self-esteem and engendering a lifelong passion and curiosity for learning (Bailey & Fernando, 2012). In the words of one local artist, “We miss playing in the parks because there is always time for conversations with people...I miss the in the person magic and connection that comes from stopping for a brief conversation...Hopefully we can get back to doing this in the near future” (Peterson, 2021).

Primary Research

Finding 1: Artists hold similar values and motivations for collaborating with the city as residents do. They are motivated by a need to connect to others, to feel like they are helping people to feel better, to share their stories and to advocate for the arts. This way of considering how local events can help to build healthier communities reflects recent learning obtained following several interviews with 14 artists.

Together, this group formed a unique multi-disciplinary virtual showcase of creative, caring, intelligent, expressive, hard-working, and resilient people. In recent telephone interviews, one of the questions asked was whether they had viewed other videos, and if so, how the experiences made them feel as a result. The artists who watched all, or several, of these videos described feeling higher levels of connection to fellow artists, overall support for the initiative and improved mood. The people who viewed none of their fellow artists' videos reported feeling no increase in feelings of connectedness or support and no change in mood. Therefore, artists are no different than average citizens, in that when they engage in the creative work of others, they are likely to experience some form of health and wellbeing through improved mood, sense of purpose, and connection with others. When they do not engage with fellow artists, they experience no increase or improvement in the generally accepted ideas of eudaimonic health benefits.

Finding 2: Results from recent surveys have made it clear that Burnaby residents look forward to a return to live arts based initiatives in their park spaces. The top three ranked arts activities that Burnaby residents indicated they want more of include Outdoor Concerts (74%), Pop up music in parks (61%) and Outdoor Movies (56%). However, following a detailed analysis of recent -e-survey results in addition to the analytics from a recent virtual arts initiative has also shown that Burnaby residents also want to see virtual arts offerings from the city in addition to live in person arts programming, with 77% of residents requesting more digital events and experiences in the future (See Appendix F).

Finding 3: The demonstrated high level of user engagement during the Celebrate the Season videos at parks throughout the city indicates that residents enjoy being presented with free experiences featuring music, song, dance, poetry and performance (See Appendices C-E). It is important that Burnaby continue to fund similar arts centered community initiatives. The fact that most park goers who scanned the QR codes watched a total of over 60 hours of video content demonstrates a keen interest in learning more about the arts and engaging in meaningful artistic experiences (See Appendix C). With this knowledge, it shows the need for longer term opportunities and similar virtual and in person arts based experiences for Burnaby residents. Such creative experiences foster connection and understanding through creative storytelling, drama, music and artist talks. Additionally, digital arts experiences that reflect the unique character, culture and history of a micro-community can encourage feelings of local pride and placemaking. These increased feelings of connection and belonging to a physical place increases the social capital of a community, encouraging people to take care of each other and green spaces in which they live and recreate.

Finding 4: Based on data from the observational analysis, a key piece of learning is that while online views comprised the majority of views for this initiative, the in park viewing experiences likely offered a higher quality leisure experience due to the outdoor natural environment (See Appendix H). People are more at peace, relaxed and contemplative in an outdoor space as all its elements encourage people to relax and be receptive to the beauty of the natural world. The ability to experience the videos with family and friends while recreating in an outdoor park space likely adds extra value to the experience, as in the case of the engaged and laughing senior men’s walking group, the curious mother and daughter and the solo dog walker who looked out at the water immersed in the poetry of local poet Cicely Belle Blain. As outlined earlier in this paper, the City of Burnaby’s *Healthy Community Partnerships*’ accepted definition of health is as ‘a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity...It is recognized that many activities/initiatives that contribute to health are generated outside the formal health care system” (City of Burnaby, 2018, p. 3). Thus, due to the demonstrated high quality leisure experiences that can be offered to residents, Burnaby should consider ways to encourage residents to engage with video based initiatives in outdoor park settings to support Burnaby’s mandate of developing a healthy community for all.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Based on findings to date, important research should be conducted by the city regarding new community partners in Burnaby. Creating a database of current and potential community partners would be an invaluable resource for Burnaby as it strives to become a healthier, better connected city. As the reports to Council indicated, it is important to build relationships with like-minded organizations and identify potential for new partnerships and collaborations going forward. This would also help us to identify current gaps in our current festivals, events, activities and arts programming initiatives within the Arts Services Department in Burnaby. The goal would be to tap into individual competencies to increase community capacity and support the development of new arts based opportunities that could serve a broader base of people and needs. New partners could include Burnaby elementary and secondary schools, colleagues and universities, theatres, galleries and not for profits. Identifying and developing relationships with like-minded organizations is essential to the city accomplishing its goal of being a healthier city. The development of effective partnerships is important because many of the determinants of health are outside the realm of health services. Partnerships are about capitalising on each other’s unique strengths and working together to achieve shared goals.

Recommendation 2: The development of meaningful partnerships with grassroots organizations that cultivate and nurture Burnaby’s micro-communities could be improved. The city must invest the time to build partnerships and develop trust between organizations to reach more people and engage the community at various levels. Art has the ability to communicate and ‘share our stories’ across linguistic and cultural divides. The city must continue to offer arts based initiatives that bring people together by sharing personal stories and embracing differences. It is important that art reflect the unique character and history of a given community, and this can be accomplished by encouraging diversity in staff and artist hiring practices and by engaging with the members of each unique community. When Burnaby residents see themselves represented in both municipal staff teams and the performers they will feel that their values and cultures are reflected and respected.

Recommendation 3: The City of Burnaby should consider offering a variety of new arts based initiatives to residents that includes both in person live and virtually streamed content to ensure inclusive approaches to arts initiatives. Once they can be safely managed residents have reported that they want the city to offer more outdoor concerts, outdoor movies and pop up music throughout local parks going forward (See Appendix F). It is also important to continue alternate delivery models post COVID-19 to reach audiences that do not attend in person events, theatre performances and other performing arts offerings in the City.

Recommendation 4: Artists and residents report similar motivation for engaging in arts based initiatives that include enjoying a unique and fun arts experience, gaining knowledge, learning new skills and feeling an increased sense of connection with others. These kinds of relationships, if encouraged within the city, will continue to guide Burnaby’s development as a vibrant, inclusive community that demonstrates a deep commitment to improving the life of all its citizens. This will meet the city’s Social Sustainability strategy that outlines how “Social sustainability is about people - individuals and the community working together to meet their needs, realize their potential, and prosper in a healthy environment” (City of Burnaby, 2015). Referring to programs like the City of Vancouver’s current *Artists in Communities* and *Healthy Aging Through the Arts* initiatives (City of Vancouver, 2021) that are municipal programs that encourage and support relationship building between artists, junior artists and community residents, it is recommended that the city offer similar free, outdoor artist-lead programs that seek to enhance community connections and shared experience by making and sharing art together.

Recommendation 5: Initiate a process whereby municipal colleagues working in various departments in the city collaborate and meet regularly in working groups in order to better understand what arts based programs and initiatives are currently being offered internally and externally (via local not for profits,

galleries and cultural organizations) and where there are opportunities for an expansion of current city arts programming and initiatives. Areas of potential interest include arts learning for community members and local artists, new and expanded festivals and events, artist engagement (residencies/workshops/symposia/lectures/events) and offering more live outdoor performances, concerts and theatre options to residents all of which are elements that will lead to improved health and wellness outcomes for the city. Suggested first steps of expansion could include building relationships with like-minded organizations, identifying potential for partnerships and collaborations and identifying gaps in festivals, events, activities and programming. This can most effectively be achieved by identifying new opportunities with like-minded organizations, as well as local school, post-secondary institutions, ethno-cultural groups, community service providers, the Burnaby school district and the local business community. Goals for creating a more robust strategy involves more targeted community outreach and engagement initiatives, and increasing internal communication interdepartmentally and tapping into individual competencies to increase community capacity and reach.

Conclusion

This paper has presented a framework for moving forward to ensure that the City of Burnaby engages in meaningful initiatives that build relationships, develops and nurtures partnerships, engages communities and leverages strengths by working cooperatively and collaboratively with Parks, Recreation and Culture colleagues. Arts centred initiatives, particularly those held outdoors in park environments, must continue to be supported as unique leisure experiences that engage and bridge artists, community arts organizations, municipal employees and local residents, benefitting the health and wellness of communities as a whole. Engaging with local neighbourhoods in the creation and development of shared multi-purpose gathering places and safe neighbourhoods is a key goal. Such spaces can be created through the development of arts centred neighbourhood ‘hubs’ which will further the goal of creating a healthier city. To ensure that arts-based initiatives continue to build and support community engaged partnerships going forward, this paper has outlined best practices for collaborating with artists in a fair, engaged and responsive manner. Recreational professionals with the City of Burnaby must continue to provide beneficial opportunities for grassroots capacity building while supporting community engagement strategies that include research, iteration and repetition of these inclusive best practices moving forward.

In summary, this report has presented a well-researched and tenable plan for ensuring that the City of Burnaby can meet its corporate strategic goal of ensuring that Burnaby is a healthier city by engaging in and supporting future arts centred initiatives.

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Appendices