

## **Q & A – Municipal Cultural Planning (MCP)**

Prepared by: Gwen Kurz, Municipal Cultural Planner

Date: June, 2010

### **How do you define 'culture'?**

'Culture' is notoriously difficult to define. The Harcourt commission of 2006 - *Building a Stronger future for all Canadians* offers the following: "It is a set of objects (art, music, theatre, buildings) and a set of processes; it is not just pictures and books it includes beliefs, behaviors and how communities develop and express themselves. It is this process of development that is most important for creativity and sustainability."

Culture is the soul of our community; our identity. What is unique about how we live, and interact with one another? How do we express ourselves creatively and connect with our environment? These are thought provoking questions, and it is the process of discovering the answers that we learn about our heritage, our neighbours, and what we collectively value.

We are very proud of our 'quality of life' in the Dryden area. Identification, analysis, and planning of the cultural resources that nurture and support our lifestyle is a valuable social and economic development tool that will help us not simple survive, but thrive in the super competitive global economy.

### **What is Municipal Cultural Planning?**

The Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership Incorporated's definition is "The strategic and integrated planning and use of cultural resources for economic and community development". It involves two separate but related processes; the establishment of a 'plan', and the ongoing integration of culture into planning and decision making.

There are 5 defining features of MCP:

- Cultural Resources; tangible (facilities and events), and intangible (unique stories)
- Cultural Mapping – identification and analysis of cultural resources
- Municipal Roles – integration into municipal policies in all departments to increase understanding and collaboration with cultural groups
- Cross-sectoral Strategies – effective community collaboration
- Networks and Engagements – planning and decision making in all aspects of community development should systematically incorporate MCP

([www.ontariomcp.ca](http://www.ontariomcp.ca))

The idea of cultural planning emerged in the mid-to late 1980's and early 1990's in several countries including the U.S., Great Britain, Australia, Western Europe, and Canada. While Canadian governments have been supportive of cultural development since the 1940's, culture as a planning tool was firmly established in Policy in 2006. The final report of the Harcourt Commission (The External Advisory Committee on Cities and Communities) recommended the inclusion of Cultural Vitality as the fourth pillar of sustainability for planning along with Economic Prosperity, Environmental Sustainability, and Social Equity.

There are many, many cities and communities across Canada using Municipal Cultural Planning as an economic development tool. Dr. Greg Baeker explains the additional low risk benefits and opportunities;

*"As an emerging practice, cultural planning projects are themselves tremendous social learning and network-building exercises. Creating partnerships, engaging citizens, sharing place stories, mapping cultural assets, imagining creative new possibilities"*

(Baeker; 2010)

### **Why would the City spend money on this?**

This actually requires a two part answer:

- ❖ This stage of our MCP process is being funded by the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture through the Creative Communities Prosperity Fund. The project is a partnership between the City of Dryden and the Dryden Development Corporation. The objective of the project is to implement the recommendations of the Municipal Cultural Strategy adopted by Council in June 2009 by hiring a Cultural Planner to focus on establishing the Cultural Roundtable, and developing a Cultural Policy for the City of Dryden. Other recommendations include the ongoing mapping of Cultural resources and identifying new opportunities for the development of Cultural resources or assets. The City and DDC are contributing to the project through managerial, marketing and technical support, as well as covering expenses related to public consultation, and travel in the region.

It is important to note that the process of MCP in Dryden actually started in 2006. Much of the early ground work was accomplished by dedicated volunteers from the community- the Dryden Area Cultural Partnership. Their advocacy skills ensured; that the development of a Cultural Policy was included in the City's 2007-2010 Strategic Plan, that seed funding was budgeted for to support the ongoing planning efforts, and that the Strategy was completed and presented to Council for adoption. The adoption of the Cultural Strategy last year confirmed the City's commitment to the planning process. This new funding opportunity enables the City to take a significant step forwards in this exciting process of community economic development.

- ❖ MCP is an investment in the social and economic development of Dryden. It is a complimentary approach to the ongoing investment of resources to retain and grow existing businesses and industry, as well as attract outside investment and jobs. MCP is primarily focused on the retention and attraction of the creative economy and the bright young minds that are attracted to communities that are culturally diverse, progressive, active, and interesting places to live and work. The demographics of Dryden are changing, as they are across Canada and most other developed countries. Our workforce is aging and most new jobs require different skills. Communities across Canada are competing for skilled workers in all fields. How can we help our businesses, institutions, agencies, and industries compete? Developing plans and policies that ensure culture is considered in decisions processes one of several tools available to municipal governments.

Another important economic development function of MCP is marketing and tourism development through cultural mapping, a defining feature of MCP. It involves the systematic identification and analysis of cultural resources within a community to promote cultural awareness, engage the community, and develop a strong understanding of the current reality. Tourists are looking for easy to use, up to date information on cultural activities and events. They are seeking authentic experiences in their travels and are looking to technology to help them find it.

### **When will we see results?**

We are already seeing the benefits of cultural planning in Dryden through the Cultural fairs and advocacy work done by volunteers to date. Municipal Cultural Planning requires an ongoing commitment from the community to maintain resource inventories, participate in policy development and planning, and support local cultural initiatives and industries. Immediate positive outcomes include community awareness and recognition of local cultural resources, increased civic engagement and pride in community, and identification of opportunities for social and economic development.

This MCP project or stage of the local planning process will be completed by March 31, 2011. The two interrelated priorities of the project are; to establish a Cultural Roundtable, and develop a Cultural Policy for the City of Dryden.

The mandate of the Roundtable is stated in the Cultural Strategy: *The Cultural Roundtable is responsible for acting as a catalyst to strengthen cultural development by supporting collaboration across community, business and municipal departments and interest groups. The Cultural Roundtable will serve the community of Dryden by using the collective diversity and wisdom of its*

*members to support the evolution of the Municipal Cultural Policy to fulfill the Municipal Cultural Strategy. The long range broad goal of the Cultural Roundtable is to carry out its Terms of Reference.*

(Municipal Cultural Strategy, 2009)

The recruitment of members of the public to the Roundtable is a crucial first step. With Council approval, appointees will be sought from Aboriginal organizations/communities, cultural entrepreneurs, educators, business sector, and youth. Individuals and organizations who are prepared to share their knowledge of the community, expand their understanding of MCP, and advocate for this planning process will be welcomed.

The principle task assigned to the Roundtable is guidance in the development of a Cultural Policy for the City of Dryden. This Policy, unique to our community, will be a formal policy developed through consultation with the public, cultural community, municipal managers, and elected officials. Another important source of information will be the continued mapping and analysis of cultural resources to identify strengths, and weaknesses that can be addressed in policy and future planning. The terms of reference for the Roundtable will be a vital component of the Policy; ensuring the sustainability of both the committee and the planning process. The Policy may also include sections/statements regarding ongoing municipal resources for MCP, cultural mapping, Public Art, Art inventories, heritage and archeological sites, green space development, Official plans and zoning amendments. These topics are not uncommon in policy; however, the Roundtable will develop the final framework and document for recommendation to the Council. The adoption of the Cultural Policy by the Municipal Council will complete this stage of the planning process and lay the ground work for how this community will look and feel for many years.

### **Where can I get more information?**

Please contact Jennifer Francis at 223-1428, or [jfrancis@dryden.ca](mailto:jfrancis@dryden.ca). She would be pleased to direct you to additional resources, answer questions, and receive feedback.

### Resources:

- ❖ Municipal Cultural Planning Partnership Inc website  
<http://www.ontariomcp.ca>
- ❖ *Cultural Planning for Creative Communities* by Gord Hume; ISBN 978-0-919779-89-1
- ❖ *Rediscovering the Wealth of Places* by Greg Baeker, ISBN:978-0-919779-91-4; published by Municipal World Inc. 2010
- ❖ Municipal Cultural Strategy for the City of Dryden- June 2009; City of Dryden  
[www.dryden.ca](http://www.dryden.ca)