



CITY OF
Lethbridge

**DEVELOPMENT OF A
MUNICIPAL CULTURAL POLICY
DISCUSSION PAPER**

**LETHBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL
CULTURAL POLICY COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 2005**

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Background

This policy has been developed to respond to the needs and visions of Lethbridge in 2005. It is therefore important to be clear about the assumptions that underlie the policy itself. The policy should be formally reviewed within five years of its adoption.

The desire to create a “Civic Arts Policy” was first articulated in the 2001 City Council Strategic Directions for the Future document. A steering committee of City Council undertook a two year process of review, research, consultation and writing. No existing policy was in place but there was a desire to seek clarity on roles, communication structures, resource allocations/priority setting and accountability.

The committee concluded that there is an opportunity to recognize the contributions and realize the potential of an arts community that is innovative and entrepreneurial. Lethbridge is home to many renowned artists and has served as the training ground for many more. These accomplishments have occurred in part to the rich legacy of high quality institutions, organizations, and volunteers that serve the arts community in a multitude of capacities. This policy is designed to build on this foundation.

The arts play a significant role in a community’s development, including contributions to economic prosperity. However, despite being a highly valuable outcome, community development is generally not the motivation behind artistic expression. A core principle of this policy therefore, is to recognize the intrinsic value of artistic expression and the associated need to create an environment which values and fosters artistic innovation and growth. In such an environment, more artists will be doing more work, and the benefit of the activity will naturally flow to the community as a whole.

To take full advantage of the opportunity to build a more creative and adaptive community, the City of Lethbridge support for the arts requires renewed strategic leadership. In the current environment of growth and increasing diversity, it is difficult to manage the increased operational and capital demands of arts organizations. It is also difficult to create coordinated strategies for the arts as part of the broader agenda to improve quality of life in Lethbridge. The City is more likely to strike the right balance with a policy framework that links a clear vision and the specific tactical steps that the City can take to support the Arts.



Definitions

An overriding goal of this policy is to celebrate and build on the best of what we have, while creating the conditions to unlock the potential that already exists. It will not happen overnight, but with the continued dedication of the arts community, working in partnership with the private sector, other levels of government and other stakeholders, the vision articulated in this policy is achievable.

Arts: Includes all forms of creative expression, including formal and informal arts, as well as art made in for-profit and not-for-profit settings. This definition includes (without limitation):

- Visual arts
- Literary arts
- Performing arts
- Media arts
- Civic arts

Arts Activities: include (without limitation) concerts, shows, plays, book launches, readings, events, exhibitions, festivals and displays.

Public Art: Artistic creations or collaborations in any medium whether fixed or freestanding, permanent or temporary, within external or internal settings intended to be freely accessible to the general public.

The following principles are meant to serve together as a guide to practice and decision-making as the policy is implemented.

Guiding Principles

1. The Arts are recognized as an important part of a vibrant City of Lethbridge

The existence of a thriving arts sector is itself an indicator of a healthy and balanced city. The arts have the potential to increase social inclusion, improve mental and physical health, and give youth significant learning advantages.

2. The Arts play a leadership role in the future of Lethbridge

City Council recognizes and is committed to support the significant role arts and creativity will play in meeting the challenges of building a healthy, attractive and economically viable city.



**Guiding Principles
Cont'd**

3. The Arts are accessible and engage participation

Lethbridge residents should have the opportunity to participate in a variety of arts activities and should have access to performances, concerts and exhibitions. Participation in and appreciation of art enhances the lives of residents and contributes to the development of the community.

4. Artists are recognized for their excellence and their contribution to the community

A thriving arts scene requires working artists. A key indicator of success of this policy will be the extent to which artists see our city as a “place to be”. Artists will thrive where there are positive attitudes, energetic peers, a spirit of cooperation, enthusiastic audiences, the resources necessary to do their work and high profile support.

5. Stakeholder cooperation is essential to realize the full potential of the Arts

A cooperative approach to infrastructure investment initiatives and determining strategic priorities for the sector will assist in bringing the resources of supporters to Lethbridge’s arts related priorities.

6. Municipal investments in the arts leverage investments from other levels of government and other sectors.

Though comparisons are difficult due to data differences, other orders of government have historically spent proportionately less on arts and culture in Alberta than in other provinces. It is clear that if the City makes arts a priority, with a compelling vision and clear plans to benefit the citizens of Lethbridge, other supporters will come to the table as partners.

7. Accountability is maintained when making arts related investments.

Citizens of Lethbridge expect their leaders to make sound investments that will improve the quality of life in the community. All partners in this initiative will strive to maintain transparent processes, good governance, and the measurement and reporting on investment outcomes.



**Roles and
Responsibilities**

City Council

1. Promoter and advocate
2. Facilitate
 - Helping plan, maintain and develop the physical and organizational structure required to action this policy
3. Partner in the celebration of excellence
4. Designation of a single arms length organization to act as liaison with the arts community and to advise Council on strategies for action

Allied Arts Council

1. Act as a coordinating body for the arts organizations
2. Liaison and advisor to City Council on arts issues and strategies
3. Act as a central communication centre