

LOWER LONSDALE CULTURAL FACILITIES STUDY



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PREFACE - i

Using This Report

- This Report is meant to be read and reproduced in colour. Many of the maps and diagrams cannot be fully understood in black and white. Black and white reproduction is not recommended.
- The reader will find some unavoidable duplication of information; the three main topics under study are dealt with as distinct “pieces” but have a great deal of overlap. They are reports within reports, in effect, each fitting into connected over-all implementation strategies.
- The Appendices offer information specific to the Presentation House Tenants, budget estimates, examples of cultural districts and listings of cultural assets that are pertinent to the Report. It is recommended that the appendices always be included with the main body of the Report when distributed.

The request from the North Vancouver Office of Cultural Affairs and the City of North Vancouver was to inquire into and provide recommendations for three broad areas of interest:

- Facility needs of the Presentation House tenants
- Presentation House Arts Centre building and site
- Lower Lonsdale's potential as a cultural neighbourhood

City / OCA Request for Proposal (RFP) document (**pg. 137**) may be seen in Appendices,

The work was to take place in the context of a broader cultural infrastructure and facility mapping exercise. This undertaking was headed by the Office of Cultural Affairs within the City of North Vancouver's ongoing Lower Lonsdale and Waterfront planning efforts. It was also intended to inform the City's next Official Community Plan.

Included in the broad spectrum of inquiry were:

- Assessing the needs for cultural infrastructure
- Adaptive reuse or upgrading plans
- Functional facility space
- Site assessments
- Fundraising assessments

In the exploration of the Lower Lonsdale, potential provisions for a major cultural attractor, possibly the National Maritime Museum, were considered.

In addition the study and planning team was to provide implementation plans and budgets for the three primary cultural organizations whose facility needs (program components) are broadly known. These include:

- A visual art gallery (Presentation House Gallery)
- A civic museum (North Vancouver Museum and Archive)
- Performing arts / drama facility (Presentation House Theatre)

A Three-Fold Challenge:

- To take a fresh look at the potential that exists both in Lower Lonsdale and at the Presentation House facility and site;
- To bring one or more cultural components together effectively, and where appropriate, on one or more development sites; and/or
- To assess, propose enhancement of, and maximise the effectiveness of an existing amenity.

The Opportunity

To provide the City and Office of Cultural Affairs with a vision and a practical plan, staged in a short-term to 20 year series of achievements, with which the City can receive the maximum public benefit and most positive impact from a significant investment of public funds.

Many visionary citizens of North Vancouver have a bold dream for a mixed use, economically sustainable neighbourhoods shot through with cultural points of light and pedestrian vitality that will make the Lonsdale Town Centre and the waterfront a regional attraction and a focus of community pride.



PUBLIC ART ON 1ST



PUBLIC ART ON 3RD

The Executive Summary is intended as the briefest possible highlighting of the key findings of this far-ranging report. For further articulation of policy, details of the findings, further articulation of policy and other background, the reader is requested to refer to the body of the report. In some, but not all, instances, the reader is directed to the section and page number of such detail for their convenience.

The Executive Summary covers three broad areas of inquiry:

- Facility Needs of the Presentation House Tenants
- Presentation House Site and Buildings
- Lower Lonsdale Potential as a cultural neighbourhood.

1. Facility Needs of the Current Users of the Presentation House

The City is committed to “operate, maintain, increase, improve and encourage the provision of cultural ... facilities” (OCP) and considers the three tenants to be leader organizations. It has also made a commitment to provide new facilities for them: “the city is working towards providing the following new or upgraded facilities: Museum, Media Art Gallery, Presentation House Theatre.”

The Presentation House Arts Centre does not allow these professional and well-run organizations to contribute fully to the City’s stated cultural and social goals. Their current spaces are too small and poorly equipped to serve the public or the programming well. Due to these shortcomings there is little opportunity for those wishing to have a professional arts and cultural experience

in North Vancouver to do so. The leaders, boards, commissioners and staffs of these three cultural organizations are fully committed to developing modern paradigms in museum, gallery and theatre programming in North Vancouver. They need facility-related resources to do so.

For each Presentation House tenant, the following has been prepared and can be found in the Appendices (Section 6):

- Pro-forma Operating Budget estimate (**pg. 121**)
- Estimated Personnel Type and Number (**pg. 128**)
- Fundraising Preparedness opinion (**pg. 129**)
- Infrastructure and Equipment list (**pg. 131**)
- Class D Cost estimate (**pg. 135**)
- Capital Cost estimate (**pg. 136**)

Relocation of the current tenants is considered in terms of 4 areas of activity identified in Lower & Central Lonsdale. (**pg. 15**)

The North Vancouver Museum and Archive intends to be community serving and oriented to active participation. It does not wish to be in a converted heritage building. It prefers and needs strong partners in close proximity. These could be in Civic Area 3 (Library, City Hall, Multicultural Society, Neighbourhood House) or Recreation Area 4 (Harry Jerome, Centennial Theatre, Artists for Kids Gallery). As a fall-back position it could be one of the two partners that remain on the Presentation House site. However, it is one of the key recommendations of this report, that the museum facility can best

serve the public in one of two places: on the redeveloped “Safeway” site or in the Harry Jerome redevelopment. Appropriate artefact care and storage can be addressed in a separate facility off these sites.

The Presentation House Gallery and its exhibitions are region-serving and bring visitors to the City; it would be best sited in the busy commercial district of Area 1. This public gallery can be the entry cultural institution to greet regional visitors arriving by SeaBus and can herald a cultural neighbourhood if provided a facility near the waterfront. The best options include a Cates Tugs building conversion, and to a lesser degree within a developer project on site 8. However, if these are not available in the near term, a new building at Presentation House site, in Area 2, would also serve well. This latter option, in tandem with the new theatre on the Presentation House site, while not being best for neighbourhood creation, would make the best use of the existing Presentation House site. This is considered a desirable back-up location by the gallery. (see section 03, **pg. 68 - pg. 74** for a full analysis of the Presentation House Site.)

The Presentation House Theatre and its productions are considered region-serving. It is a destination draw rather than an impulse visit. It is also an incubation space for many North Vancouver drama producers and therefore needs shops and rehearsal space. It is best served at the current site in a new purpose built facility. It would be the North-west boundary destination of the cultural neighbourhood (Area 2). It is recommended that the rehearsal space being considered for the Harry Jerome site be included in the Presentation House Theatre facility.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED...

The Presentation House Site should be preserved for cultural use. Given the space requirements of the three tenant organizations, two of them could coexist in new buildings on the site. There is not enough room for all three.

The square meter minimums and maximums needed by the three tenant organizations in new or converted facilities are shown on **pg. 41**.

Recommended timelines for the provision of facilities are shown on **pg. 109, pg. 110, pg. 111, pg. 112, pg. 113**.

Timing and site recommendations are as follows:

- The Gallery be accommodated and moved out of the PH Centre in the near term
- A 200 seat Theatre be built on Presentation House site in the medium term
- The Museum be included in one of the two redevelopment options noted in the mid-to-long term
- The Presentation House Centre be maintained for the appropriate use of all tenant organizations until they are accommodated in new facilities.
- The Presentation House Centre should be rehabilitated to its “City Hall” footprint and historical appearance. It should be re-purposed as a mixed use arts centre with specialty studios, meeting rooms, a large rehearsal hall and shop space.

Please refer to **Chapter 05** for implementation details.

2. Presentation House Site and Buildings

Presentation House Site

The site consists of lots 12 to 21 and covers 5,755 square meters (61,946 square feet); it is owned by the City of North Vancouver. Most of the site was granted to the city by the Province in 1975 and it has an encumbrance that dedicates it to community cultural purposes and no profit-making commercial activity.

The property, at 333 Chesterfield, has a considerable grade difference from 3rd to 4th street and offers potential views of the water. It also holds approximately 836 square meters of dedicated park space and more green space that is undeveloped. An internal lane and parking lot are also on the site.

A density transfer bank was established in 2003 with the intention to raise funds to restore the existing buildings. These funds may also be used to contribute to new buildings on the site.

The site has considerable heritage significance as the location of the first school in North Vancouver and later as City Hall. It currently holds the Anne MacDonald Hall and the building known as Presentation House Arts Centre as well as storage garages that are in poor condition. **(pg. 68)**

The Presentation House Buildings

Presentation House Centre (PHC) and Anne Macdonald Hall are both on the City’s heritage register but neither is legally protected. PHC “... is one of the few public buildings over a century old on the

North Shore.” (Presentation House Historic Assessment Report)

Anne MacDonald Hall began as the oldest church in North Vancouver and had one addition to its original form. It was moved to this site in 1973. It is currently heavily used as a very small rehearsal hall and, since it is currently in reasonably good condition, can be preserved. It can be easily relocated on the existing site to connect appropriately to one of the cultural building options that exist for the site.

The core and oldest part of PHC was built in 1902 as a school. There are no photos or drawings of the 1902 configuration. The school was added to in 1907 and 1911. In 1915 it became City Hall and saw additions made and features removed in 1930. In 1975 it was converted to cultural use; renovations included remediation for damage caused by a serious fire. All of these changes have obscured the original form of the building **(pg. 68)**.

A Facility Assessment Report for PHC, done in 2006, identified problems of deferred maintenance, code non-compliance and urgently needed repairs including asbestos remediation. PHC does not comply with barrier-free design guidelines. **(pg. 68)**

This study concurs with the findings of many other studies that Anne MacDonald Hall is too small to act as a rehearsal space for most North Vancouver needs and that PHC is not well suited to its current uses.

It is recommended that Presentation House be conserved as an important heritage and cultural building in the community. A Conservation Plan should be implemented to identify a strategy for its rehabilitation. This is defined as “making possible a continuing or compatible contemporary use of a historic place or component, through repair and alterations while protecting its heritage value.” It is also recommended that efforts be made to reveal, recover or represent the Presentation House Centre as it appeared at a particular period in its history. In order to do this, a structural assessment of the buildings is necessary. This process should include a qualified Heritage Consultant to collaborate with engineering assessments (pg. 76)

Pared down to its simple, iconic, early 20th century form, the building can represent early North Vancouver history and be used for purposes more closely related to those of the original building: cultural administration offices, shops, studios, a rehearsal room, teaching and meeting spaces. This will free more site area for purpose-built cultural facilities. Functional components of new cultural facilities can also be housed in the rehabilitated Presentation House building where appropriate.

Best use of the site would be:

- Relocate required park space
- Turn the lane
- Build a new studio theatre
- Renovate the existing structure for offices, shops, and rehearsal space
- Possibly include a facility for the gallery on site.

As mentioned earlier, while having the gallery on this site represents the best use of the site, it is not best for the cultural neighbourhood, which needs a waterfront entry point connection, nor for the gallery.

“Arts and culture is either important or very important to me personally”

81% of respondents in North Vancouver said YES

3. Lower Lonsdale’s Potential as a Cultural Neighbourhood

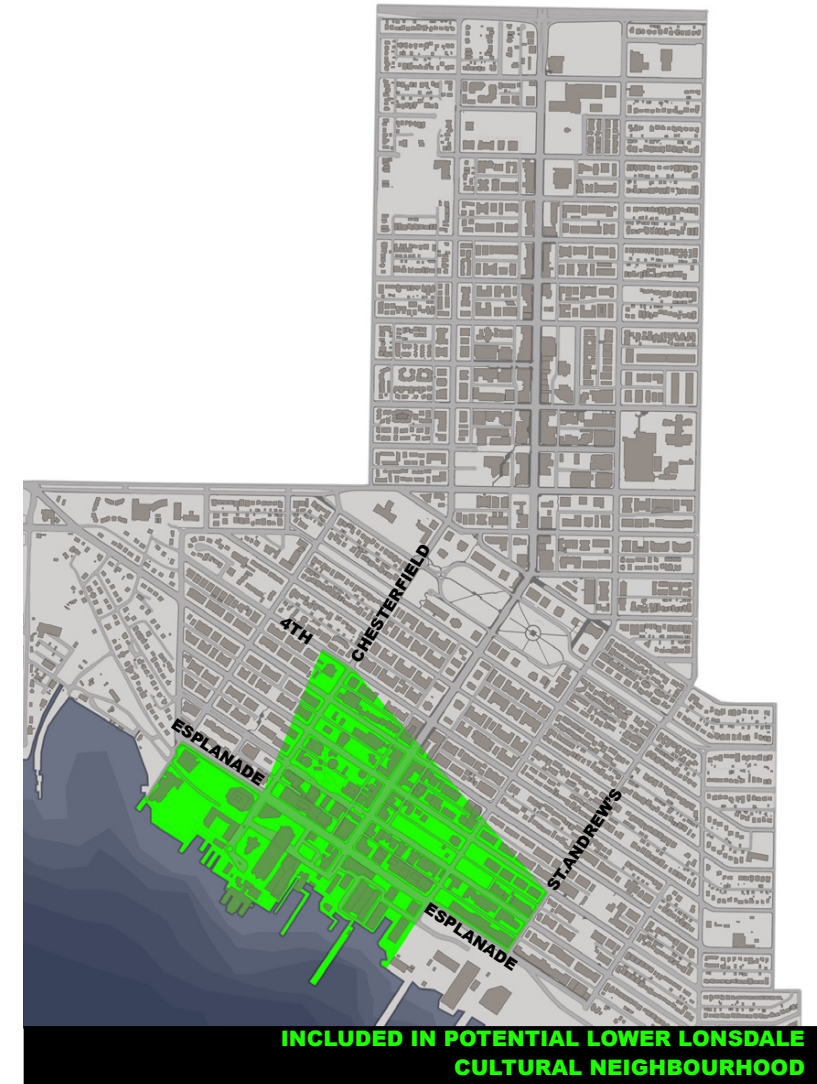
A cultural neighbourhood should answer a local need and attract cultural visitors. The study considered whether the City and Lower Lonsdale could meet both requirements. We discovered that the local need was for:

- High level instruction and learning.
- Purpose-built and specialized facilities and services for professional and emerging artists.
- Appropriate facilities for a professionally curated Museum, Theatre and Gallery organization that already operate in the area.

These results fit well with the desire to attract cultural visitors because such visitors look for high quality events, artefacts, exhibits, artistic products and full service buildings in which to see and experience them. (pg. 81)

We found that there were already many visitors attracted to Lower Lonsdale from Downtown Vancouver and the region via the Burrard

Potential Cultural Neighbourhood Boundaries



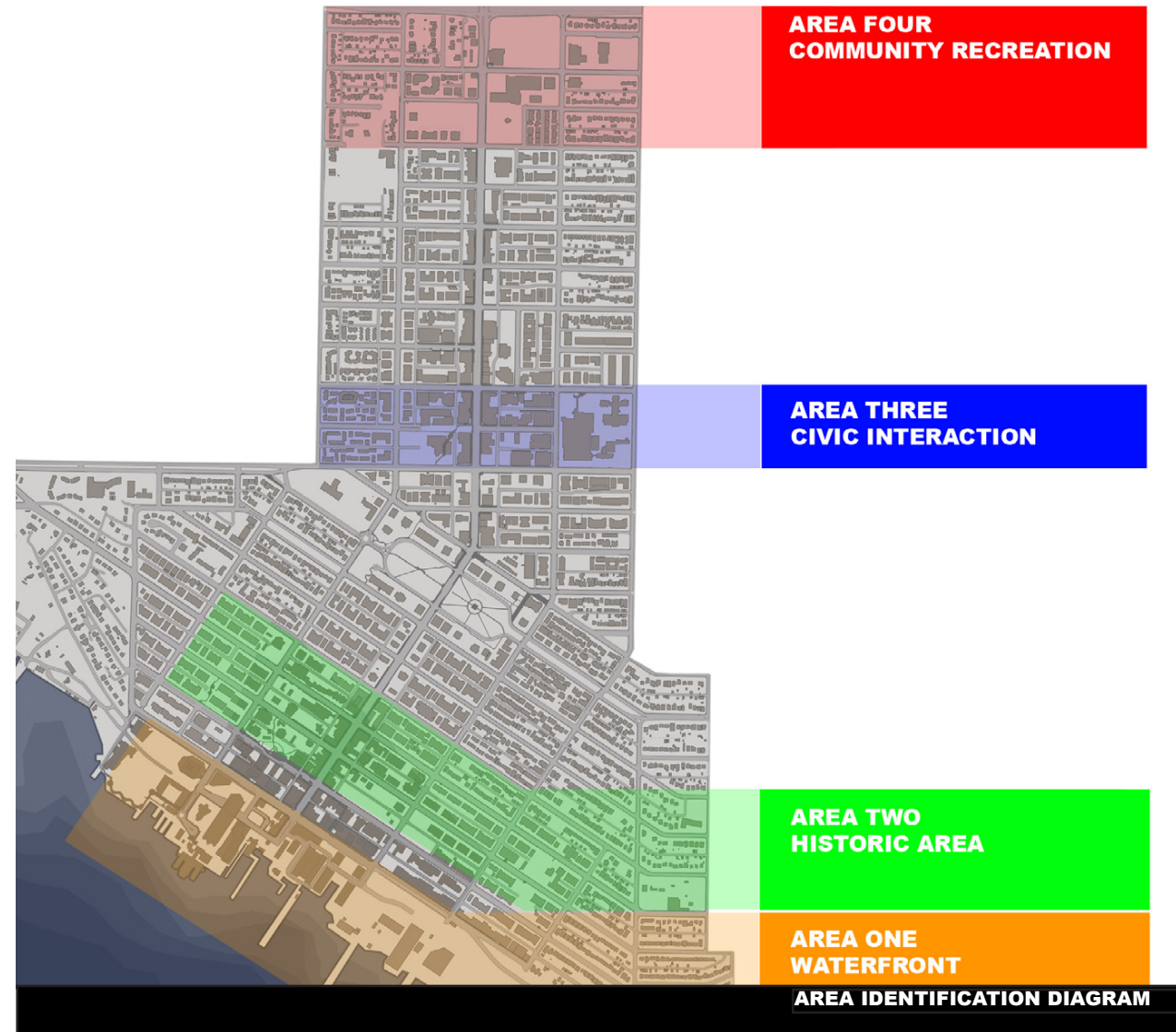
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED...

Inlet SeaBus service. Many local residents also use the corridor to travel to and from work. Other transportation corridors including Lonsdale Avenue are well used and easy to access. However, wayfinding cues, connectivity and visitor welcoming devices such as signage, maps and lighting are needed. These initiatives and the branding of the neighbourhood with a cohesive cultural focus should be undertaken. **(pg. 97)**

Demographics and geography favour the establishment of a cultural neighbourhood. The City of North Vancouver and its citizens support the initiative. **(pg. 09** for OCP, Economic Plan and Cultural Plan statements) The City can, however, think of itself as serving a population of 130,000 people in regard to the neighbourhood and its cultural infrastructure needs. It is very urban in nature and it serves and attracts the whole population of North Vancouver, not merely those within the city boundaries. It also plays an important role as a Regional Town Centre for the entire North Shore. **(pg. 03)**

The goals, strategies and policies of the Official Community Plan, Economic Development Plan and Cultural Plan align with the creation of a cultural neighbourhood and the provision of purpose-built facilities for the City's core cultural agencies. In particular, City policy speaks for a balance between visitor attraction and service to residents for economic and social prosperity. **(pg. 09)**

The waterfront and historic neighbourhood, identified in this report as Areas 1 and 2, make up the proposed cultural neighbourhood.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED...

Lower Lonsdale has, in the past, been described as a tight six block area. Neighbourhood boundaries should be expanded to include the Presentation House site to the north-west and the light industrial area to the east where artist's studios can be encouraged. **(pg. 87)**

One core cultural facility should be located near the waterfront to create a cultural entry point into the neighbourhood since the National Maritime Center is likely not to move forward in the near future, if at all. The Gallery can fulfill this role. From there, strong connections can be created using public art and other devices to draw people into historic Lonsdale and to the studio district and Presentation House. Several proposed developments throughout the area are recommended as sites for cultural amenity spaces.

The Maritime Centre proposal was caught in a volatile political and economic climate. Even if this project does not go ahead, it is expected that the City will hold the property and look for another major public attraction for the site.

The cultural neighbourhood should make it possible for local artists and cultural workers to locate their studios and workspaces in the City and contribute to the neighbourhood. The City has a high proportion of cultural workers and artists. Many currently work in Vancouver due to lack of facilities nearer home. **(pg. 03)**

Civic Policy should be tailored to support all efforts and strategies that attract artists and cultural workers to relocate to or stay in the City. **(pg. 09)**

SITES OF INTEREST IN LONSDALE TOWN CENTRE



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY CONTINUED...

An existing or new agency should be formed and / or actively tasked to facilitate, plan, coordinate and market performances and activity in the neighbourhood. The area should eventually be busy commercially and culturally seven days a week, at all seasons of the year and at all times of the day and evening. **(pg. 91)**

The City has the financial capacity to help provide key cultural facilities (for statements on finance policy, reserves and sales of land holdings to support capital projects in Lower Lonsdale, see OCP page 64) and to plan for and support the creation of a cultural neighbourhood. The OCP (page 52) defines the neighbourhood as “stretching from the waterfront north to 3rd Street. It is the city’s recreational and entertainment district.” The OCP (page 52), restates the vision and guiding principles of the Cultural Plan, making the City’s desire for a strong and identifiable centre along Lonsdale part of the Community Vision, visibly linked to a natural and cultural past, with a unique sense of place. “This includes,” it says, “the local environment and culture. There should be vibrant public spaces that allow people to gather, interact and share experiences.” The goal desired? People will “enjoy living, working and visiting here.”

In order to achieve its stated vision and goals, the municipality should lead through forward thinking, pro-cultural policy implementation, zoning, and most importantly, through significant investment in strategically inserted cultural buildings. The City, through the OCP (page 17, Institutional Land Use 5.5) makes a

very strong commitment: “The City is working towards providing the following new or upgraded facilities: Lower Lonsdale Community Centre, Museum, Media Art Gallery, Presentation House Theatre and City Library.” The commitments to the Library and Community Centre have been fulfilled, and attention can now be focused on the remaining cultural facilities and on enhancement of “vibrant public spaces that allow people to gather interact and share experiences”. Concerted Civic focus and action is required over the immediate term and out to at least 20 years. **(pg. 86)**

It is recommended that the City should, over time, ramp up its provision of resources to core cultural organizations and operators. The *Executive Summary of the Joint Review: Municipal Arts & Cultural Services Delivery and Funding (March 2006)* emphasized that

- Capital planning requires immediate attention
- Staffing structures and human resources are inadequate to deliver program expectations
- Opportunities for cultural tourism are being missed
- Seizing opportunities / addressing gaps is important to cultural delivery in North Vancouver

In 2010, core cultural organizations are still severely understaffed and need capacity building in order to deliver cultural services in North Vancouver and to fulfil the OCP’s objective 7.3.9: “to support and enhance the arts, cultural and heritage sector as a vital component of City life.” (OCP page 36) Their professional

contribution will also be necessary to make a cultural neighbourhood successful. This pairs well with OCP objective 5.13.4 for the provision in Lower Lonsdale of “...A broader range of land uses which include more emphasis on art, commercial uses and potentially live - work studios...” (OCP page 27)

“Public Investment should take the lead in order to make an area flourish commercially.” (Case Study Brisbane pg. 85)

Vision 2030

We will create a thriving and vibrant cultural neighbourhood in the Lonsdale Town Centre that engages residents and visitors alike and contributes to the economic vitality of the City.

Strategy

- **Invest in the following new or upgraded facilities: Art Gallery, Presentation House Theatre, Museum**
- **Invest in and facilitate the development of the cultural neighbourhood**
- **Facilitate the successful operation of the neighbourhood through policy, licensing, zoning and other means**

