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# Cultural Spaces and Places

*Cultural tourism infrastructure in downtown Whitehorse*

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**Yukon Arts Centre Corporation  
Roundtable on the Cultural Economy  
Artspace North**

Prepared by:

Chris Dray  
Executive Director  
Yukon Arts Centre Corporation  
867-667-8577  
[cdray@yac.ca](mailto:cdray@yac.ca)

## Introduction

This paper has been written as a companion piece to the *Artspace North Survey Report* on the needs of the cultural community to create a cultural district in downtown Whitehorse. The Report identifies the needs of individual artists, arts organizations and businesses. This paper will provide a context for the Survey by:

- (1) Providing a rationale for the development of cultural infrastructure.
- (2) Identifying examples of cultural projects in North America and Europe,
- (3) Characterizing the cultural tourism market, and
- (4) Identifying the infrastructure needed to make a cultural district in Whitehorse.

### Cultural Economic Development:

Governments support economic development through regulatory regimes, financial incentives and infrastructure. Over the past 50 years, the territorial and federal governments have supported natural resource development in Yukon by building roads, bridges, port facilities, airports, electricity generation, transmission lines, and town-sites. With the decline of the resource economy, diversification has become a priority and other types of incentives and infrastructure are now required to support new economic sectors that can generate jobs and business opportunities.

The cultural industry and cultural tourism sectors in Yukon are expanding rapidly. With a labour-force of over 730 cultural workers and strong international markets for cultural tourism, there is good potential for continued growth. In the Department of Economic Development's recently released *A New Direction: Building a Sustainable and Competitive Yukon Economy* cultural tourism has been identified as a strategic sector.

The development of the Whitehorse waterfront is an extraordinary economic opportunity for the City and for the Yukon's economy. Some property developers and industry associations, including Artspace North and Main Street Yukon, have expressed concern that the current direction for waterfront planning will not produce economic benefits and may in fact harm other businesses in the downtown area. These stakeholders have offered a remedy to the redundancy of more office buildings, strip malls and chain stores. They propose the development of a neighbourhood or district on the waterfront that has a unique and unified character, supports tourism and offers new services to the community.

Culture has served as an engine of redevelopment all over North America and Europe. All communities face the challenge of regenerating derelict neighbourhoods, industrial areas, and public buildings. Entertainment, cultural products and tourism are, for example, the key business areas of Granville Island in Vancouver and Harbourfront in Toronto. The Artscape organization in Toronto is now developing the Distillery Historic District after 24 years of experience with the Gibraltar Point and Parkdale cultural

centres, the Toronto Island School and other re-development projects. Artspace in Minneapolis has successfully redeveloped derelict retail stores, schools and factories in 12 American cities to become studio spaces for artists to live and work. The Mass MoCA project in North Adams Massachusetts converted factory buildings into a cultural centre that now attracts over 135,000 visitors to the community each year. The Custard Factory Quarter in Birmingham England will, upon completion, be the largest single complex of artistic and creative activity in Europe.

Culture can contribute to economic development in Whitehorse as it has in other communities through cultural tourism, entertainment, retail outlets and art education programs. However, like other economic sectors, culture needs infrastructure to support commercial development.

## **Cultural Tourism Market**

In December 2004, the Whitehorse Chamber of Commerce, Tourism Industry Association of Yukon and Yukon Arts Centre sponsored a public discussion on cultural tourism lead by Stephen Burnett and Steven Thorne. The following information on the cultural tourism market is taken directly from the presentation by Burnet and Thorne:

### ***Cultural Tourism – A Yukon Opportunity***

- The growth of cultural tourism is being driven by a shift toward experiential, learning-based, enrichment travel. Increasingly, travellers are seeking to explore other peoples, other places, other cultures.
- In Canada, more trips by Canadians include cultural activities than include skiing, or golfing, or fishing, or hunting, or wildlife viewing, or cruising, or casino gambling. *(Source: Statistics Canada, Canadian Travel Survey, 2001.)*
- Domestic spending by Canadian cultural tourists exceeds \$3 billion. *(Source: Canadian Tourism Commission, 2002.)*
- Canada’s “Culture Enthusiasts” (i.e., travellers who are primarily motivated by culture), account for 15 percent of all Canadian travellers, for a market of about 2.6 million travellers annually. *(Source: Canadian Tourism Commission, Domestic Tourism Market Research Study, Canada: Main Report, 1996.)*
- In the U.S., two-thirds of all adult travellers (93 million people) participate in cultural tourism each year. Twenty-one percent of all domestic person trips taken by Americans include cultural tourism activities. *(Source: Travel Industry Association of America, Travelscope Survey, 2001.)*

- In the U.S., among the 55-to-74 age cohort, attending cultural events is the 3rd most popular travel activity. Visiting museums and historic sites is the 2nd most popular travel activity. Only shopping eclipses them both. (*Source: Travel Industry Association of America, 2000.*)
- According to polling by the Lou Harris organization, commissioned by Travel and Leisure Magazine, frequent American travellers (i.e., well-heeled boomers) are increasingly seeking experiential vacations that feature cultural enrichment. In the decade from 1982 to 1992, an interest in “understanding culture” showed the most significant growth among 11 travel motivators tested by Lou Harris. An interest in “gaining a new perspective on life”, and “travelling off the beaten track”, ranked as number two and three. (*Source: Harris Interactive Inc*)
- In both Canada and the U.S., cultural tourists tend to belong to mature age cohorts (boomers and the 55-plus market), have higher education profiles, hold managerial or professional occupations, take longer trips, stay longer in the destinations they visit, and spend more per trip (about 50 percent more).
- By the year 2025, there will be an additional 35 million North Americans in the 55-to-74 age cohort – an increase of 75 percent. In total, by the year 2025, there will be 85 million North Americans in the 55-to-74 age cohort – the entire, retired, North American baby boom. (*Source: Canadian Tourism Commission. The American Tourism Market: Evolution to 2010.*)
- The aging of the North American population is being mirrored throughout the developed world. This year, 18.5 percent of the population of Italy surpassed the age of 65 – the same percentage as in Florida. Japan will reach this threshold in 2005, followed by Germany (2006), France and the U.K. (2016), Canada (2021), and the U.S. (2023).
- Retired boomers are anticipated to travel widely, and to consume cultural tourism experiences when they travel. The best-educated and salaried generation in history, boomers will be largely mortgage free, and will possess robust health into a far later stage of the life cycle than any previous generation. In North America, boomers are projected to inherit as much as \$10 trillion from their parents’ generation.
- According to William S. Norman, CEO of the Travel Industry Association of America, “The sheer volume of travellers interested in arts and history as well as their spending habits, their travel patterns and demographics leaves no doubt that history and culture are now a significant part of the U.S. travel experience.” (*Source: Travel Industry Association of America, 2002.*)

- According to the Canadian Tourism Commission, “Cultural heritage tourism presents an enormous opportunity for the tourism industry, for cultural and heritage organizations, and for Canada as a whole.” (*Source: Packaging the Potential, 1999.*)
- Approximately 100 U.S. convention and visitor bureaus now have cultural tourism initiatives, with dedicated cultural tourism staff. (*Source: Partners in Tourism, Culture and Commerce, 2003.*)
- U.S. cities with cultural tourism initiatives include Atlanta, Miami, Tallahassee, San Antonio, Los Angeles, San Diego, San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, Chicago, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, Pittsburgh, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Boston, and Washington, D.C.
- U.S. states with cultural tourism initiatives (regional or state-wide) include North Carolina, Florida, Louisiana, Kentucky, Indiana, Tennessee, Mississippi, Texas, Arizona, California, Virginia, Washington, Connecticut, New York, Vermont, and Maine.
- The post-911 environment has created a fast-growing market for continental travel by Americans. Moreover, research by the Canadian Tourism Commission consistently reveals a desire for authentic cultural experiences among U.S. travellers to Canada.
- The population of U.S. adults is 200.4 million. Of this figure, about 34.5 million (17 percent) are “Heritage Enthusiasts”. Of these, almost one in four report taking a leisure trip within Canada during the past two years or so. Thus, the U.S. market for Canada’s heritage segment is approximately 8.3 million adults. (*Source: Canadian Tourism Commission, Travel Activities and Motivation Survey, 2003.*)
- Of the 200.4 million U.S. adults, about 27.6 million (14 percent) are “Visual Arts Enthusiasts”. Of these, one-quarter report taking a leisure trip to Canada during the past two years or so. Thus, the U.S. market for Canada’s visual arts tourism products is approximately 7 million adults. (*Source: Canadian Tourism Commission, Travel Activities and Motivation Survey, 2003.*)
- Of the 200.4 million U.S. adults, about 15.6 million (8 percent) are “Performing Arts Enthusiasts”. Of these, one-quarter report taking a leisure trip to Canada during the past two years or so. Thus, the U.S. market for Canada’s performing arts events and festivals is approximately 3.8 million adults. (*Source: Canadian Tourism Commission, Travel Activities and Motivation Survey, 2003.*)
- No jurisdiction in Canada’s north has launched a cultural tourism initiative. Neither has Alaska. This leaves the Yukon positioned to capture the cultural tourism market for the "North Experience" in the Western Hemisphere.

## Necessary Cultural Places and Spaces

Most of the cultural spaces included in this paper have been identified by the community in past planning processes. In fact, many of the needs have existed since the Whitehorse recreation centre referendum in 1979 and have been inventoried repeatedly in subsequent planning processes including:

- Yukon 2000 (1986)
- Arts Canada North (1988 Nova Corporation Report)
- Downtown Community Centre Association (1992)
- Yukon Arts Policy (1993)
- Yukon Arts Centre (1996 Schick/Shiner Report)
- Yukon Unity Foundation (1996 Dray & Company Report)
- Yukon Cultural Industries Strategy (1996)
- City of Whitehorse Multiplex (1998)
- Yukon Francophone Centre (1999 Beaudoin Report)

## Theatre, Art Gallery and Museum

The public infrastructure cornerstones of a cultural district are theatres, galleries and museums.

### *Theatre:*

The Yukon Arts Centre is the main theatre venue for Whitehorse. The location of the Centre at Yukon College was a community issue in 1988 when the decision was made. After 12 years of operation, it is evident that the location away from the downtown core has not adversely affected the operation of the theatre which is in use over 200 days, offers over 100 nights of performing arts events and sells over 14,000 tickets annually. Despite the theatre's success, there is a significant opportunity cost to the community in not having the Centre as a cornerstone of a cultural district in the downtown area. The creation of a smaller 200 – 250 seat studio theatre (as described later in this paper) in the downtown area could remedy this situation and would not detract from the operation of the Centre which is a 424 seat formal theatre space that is not suited for all events. In fact, YAC would be interested in using its facility management capacity to operate an additional theatre venue on the waterfront.

### *Gallery:*

The location of Yukon Arts Centre Public Art Gallery at Yukon College has deeply affected its ability to function as a fully developed public gallery. Galleries function best when they are easily accessed by foot traffic. Visitors tend to drop-in, or make a gallery visit part of a social activity. In its current location, the gallery is inaccessible to drop-in traffic, is difficult for tourists to locate and is pretty much out-of-sight and out-of-mind

for the community. In addition, the lack of education studio space at the facility has limited the amount of animation programming that can be done in proximity to the gallery. The remote location has also made the development of a commercial outlet for arts products unviable. The majority of visitors to the gallery attend during exhibition openings and during theatre intermissions. The curatorial practice and exhibitions at the gallery are of national quality. In its current form, it is a beautiful exhibition space attached to a theatre. In another location, it could better serve the community and enhance cultural tourism.

The Yukon Arts Centre would support the concept of moving the gallery to a downtown location. In 2000, YAC held preliminary discussions with the City of Whitehorse to combine a new gallery with a parkade project on Steele Street. The cost estimates for the new gallery space was \$3 million. A downtown gallery would be more accessible to the community and to tourists. A suitable public gallery space would have the following attributes:

- Close proximity to other cultural institutions and activity
- 5,000 sq. ft. of exhibition space
- Art education studio space
- Exhibition preparation area
- Administration offices
- Art storage area
- Truck load-in access
- Visitor services including a foyer, ticket booth, washrooms, café and retail store
- Parking

### ***Museum:***

The MacBride Museum is ideally situated to be part of a waterfront development. The best opportunity for expanding the museum site is on the other side of First Avenue on the land bordering the Yukon River. The recent relocation of the Train Shed has reduced the availability of land in close proximity to the museum.

## **1500 Seat Performing Arts Venue**

The need for a large multi-purpose facility in downtown Whitehorse has been discussed for twenty years. There is currently no year-round venue in Yukon large enough to effectively host festivals, conventions, trade shows, and other large community events. Past needs assessments have described the proposed facility as a large empty heated space with a flat floor area of 20,000 square feet, equipment storage, concert lighting and sound systems, and lots of parking.

Plans for the Multiplex currently include the ability to convert an indoor soccer field into a performing arts venue. If the venue is properly equipped with a stage, load-in access and sound and lighting systems, and is readily available for use by arts organizations and cultural entrepreneurs, this may eliminate the need for a separate facility. The location of the Multiplex is however, a lost opportunity to use a large venue to create synergy with other businesses in the downtown core.

## **250 Seat Performing Arts Venue**

There is a need for a studio theatre in the downtown area. When the Guild Theatre opened in 1980, it was quickly evident that the 80 - 100 seat venue was too small for many events. There have been several attempts to develop a 200 - 250 seat theatre venue in Whitehorse. A studio theatre was included in the original plan for the Yukon Arts Centre and a multi-use performance space was considered as part of the Multiplex. Neither was built. Small lecture theatres were included in the Tourism Reception Centre and the Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre, but neither is suited for performances. A studio theatre seating 80 – 100 has been developed in the Porter Creek Secondary School, but like the neighbouring Guild Hall, location and size limit its usefulness. More recently, two heritage buildings, the Fire Hall and the Yukon Theatre, have been considered by local arts organizations as possible theatre venues.

The studio theatre should include the following attributes:

- Ability to seat 200 – 250 audience on a raked floor
- Minimum stage area 24 ft. deep by 36 ft. wide
- Minimum 8 ft. depth of stage wings
- Minimum height of 20 ft
- Lighting and sound systems permanently installed
- Broadcast links for television and radio
- Backstage dressing rooms and washrooms with showers
- Production area connected to the stage
- Equipment storage close to the stage
- Truck load-in doors connected to the stage
- Audience services including washrooms, lobby, box office and concession
- Administration office
- Parking

## **Outdoor Festival Venue**

A significant portion of the cost of outdoor events is the creation of a temporary venue. Tents, on-site power, portable stages, lighting and sound systems, seating, toilets and other physical structures must be brought in for each event. The fundraising and volunteer effort required to create temporary venues has decreased the availability of money and volunteer time for event and festival programming. Rotary Park and Main

Street have been used as venues for major festivals in past. Both locations are problematic due to lack of infrastructure, interference with access to local businesses and concern from local residents about parking and sound levels.

The new outdoor venue in Shipyards Park may serve for some summer events. There has been concern expressed that the venue is too small for major festivals. The usefulness of the venue will increase if the audience is enclosed to enable groups to hold ticketed events and if the stage is covered for protection from wind and rain and includes theatre lighting, sound systems, dressing rooms and public washrooms. The success of events in the park will also depend on future synergy with other cultural and commercial activities in close to the park.

## **Performance Venues in Public Buildings**

When public buildings are designed, there is an opportunity to include small venues for performing and visual art. In many cases, the additional cost is minimal if included as part of the design concept. Foyers, lounges, meeting spaces, food service areas, and exterior entrances and landscaping can all double as performance and exhibition space. Recent lost opportunities include the lecture theatres at the Tourism Reception Centre and Yukon Beringia Interpretive Centre and the reduction of multi-use space in the design of the Multiplex.

## **Broadcast Venues**

Radio and television can provide another type of venue for the performing arts. On a regional level, events can be broadcast throughout the territory as a way of ensuring that people in remote communities benefit from performances held in Whitehorse. On a national and international level, broadcast can provide a world stage for local artists that will help them market their products, support their touring aspirations, and promote Yukon and its culture as a tourism destination.

Broadcast facilities in Yukon are underdeveloped as is the capacity of local television and radio stations to produce quality broadcasts on location. In many cases, the venues themselves are poorly suited for location coverage. Design for any new public performance space should consider requirements for live performance recording such as acoustics, production rooms, and line feeds.

## **Arts and Crafts Market**

Visual artists and craft makers in Whitehorse have identified the need for a public art market space in the downtown area. The Yukon Craft Strategy includes a commitment to *Explore opportunities with the Municipality of Whitehorse for the development of an artists' area, artists' alley or studio cooperative within the Whitehorse waterfront*

*development plans.* Currently, some artists sell their products through commercial galleries, or through fairs or commercial exhibitions in public buildings. Artist studios, demonstration sites, and market areas are common features of cultural districts in communities with developed cultural tourism economies.

## **Studio Space**

The shortage of studio space for visual and performing arts has been identified in numerous studies. There is currently no art studio in public ownership in the city, yet the demand for visual art education for children and adults exceeds the current capacity of most programs offered by artists and arts organizations. Some visual artists and musicians have private studios. The Artists@Work Collective has recently created a studio complex in MacCrea. Two dance schools in Whitehorse have established private studios in Porter Creek and Riverdale, but programming for the 600 dance students in Whitehorse continues to be limited by the lack of space. Many artists, theatre companies, dance companies and music groups continue to have difficulty locating space in which to develop their art.

For the cultural community, studio space is the final frontier. There is a shortage of suitable buildings, condominium space, rental space and public use space. There are no derelict neighbourhoods or abandoned buildings for artists to occupy as there are in larger urban centres. This was not the case 25 years ago. In 1980, a group of young artists in Whitehorse purchased two former US Army H-hut structures in Porter Creek for one dollar and created the Guild Hall as the Yukon's first publicly owned theatre and gallery space. Artists today have fewer opportunities to find affordable work space.

The types of studio space needed are listed below. It is important to note that work spaces of different types placed in close proximity generate a creative synergy that encourages partnerships and new ideas. The work of Artspace in the USA and the Custard Factory in the UK is very much focused on the concept of providing affordable living and work space for artists. Their building coop models demonstrate the creativity, productivity and economic success that can result from this type of synergy.

### ***Visual art education studios:***

Programming is offered by City Recreation, Yukon Art Society, MacBride Museum, Guild Theatre, and Yukon Arts Centre. None of these organizations have a properly equipped art studio designated for visual art education. The Yukon Arts Centre is planning the development of a studios for classes and artists in residence. Studios in the downtown core would be well used by arts organizations and by teachers with art education businesses. Visual arts education studios require the following attributes:

Purpose:

- Children's art classes and activities in conjunction with school visits
- Life drawing classes and other community art classes
- Functional studios for professional artists in residence

Physical Characteristics:

- Education studios must be designed for children's use with fixtures and furniture scaled to children's size.
- High ceilings of 12 to 18 feet
- Natural light utilizing window which face north and window coverings to filter sunlight and provide privacy for life drawing
- Artificial light to national gallery/museum standards for studios. Adjustable studio lighting systems, with alternatives to florescent lights
- Wall coverings suited for hanging drawings
- Floor coverings such as rammed earth, wood, concrete or tile that can be washed
- Adequate electrical circuiting to power free-standing lights, power tools, sound equipment, paint dryers, and other equipment at the same time
- Minimum of 300 amp electrical service to the building, ideally 400 amp

Built-in and Free-standing Equipment:

- Storage for school tour materials, art supplies and unfinished art pieces
- Cloak room for children's coat, boots, knapsacks
- Lockers for instructors and artists in residence.
- Laundry tub sinks with easily accessible clean out traps and hazardous waste traps for paints, inks, and cleaners
- Black or white boards permanently installed
- Drying racks and storage cupboards, shelving and plinths
- Storage areas for studio furniture such as easels and tables

Specialized Studios:

- Specialized studios should be physical linked with a larger principal studio
- Kiln room for small pottery kiln with required minimum electrical service of 150 amps and venting
- Print room for small printing press with sufficient drying racks and ventilation.
- Spray room for fixing drawings with adequate ventilation

Utility Space:

- Resource room for supply catalogues as well as manuals for equipment
- Public washrooms for 60 -100 people
- Janitor station with sink and storage
- Tool area with workbench to store tools and facilitate minor repairs
- Close access to parking
- Ease of school bus access
- Truck load-in area
- Close proximity of outdoor dumpster placement

### ***Performing Arts Rehearsal Studios:***

Two large studio spaces of about 2,000 square feet each for performing arts rehearsal are required to meet current demands from theatre and dance companies in the community. Professional companies who require rehearsal space include Nakai Theatre, Women's Experimental Theatre and Link Dance. There are also a number of community based organizations.

#### Studio Requirements:

- 1,000 square feet or greater in each studio
- Headroom of 14 – 16 feet
- Sprung hardwood floor
- Natural light through clear-story windows with black-out curtains
- Full spectrum area lighting
- Directional lighting and dimmer controls for studio performances
- Sound system for playback only
- Access to dressing rooms with full shower facilities
- Storage space connected to each studio

### ***Dance studios:***

A dance studio can draw 200 students into a neighbourhood every day along with parents who want to shop or take a break while their kids are in class. The Northern Lights School of Dance is looking for ways to expand its facility in Porter Creek or move to a new location. It needs 6,000 sq. ft. of studios and change rooms. Leaping Feats Creative Dance Works currently has sufficient studio space in Riverdale, but has plans for expanded programming. Some dance artists are now considering opening a commercial studio for adult dance classes, pilates, yoga and martial arts.

### ***Music rehearsal studios:***

Many music teachers, musicians, and recording producers have developed private studios in their homes or in commercial buildings. There are no teaching or rehearsal studios for music in public ownership in the city. In planning for a cultural district, the presence and participation of the music community will make an important contribution to the creative and economic synergy of the area.

### ***Commercial production studios:***

Artists, artisans and entrepreneurs need work space to produce cultural products. Designers need garment manufacturing space. Potters, print makers, and other product producers all need production space. In some cultural districts, production space is developed as a cultural tourism resource. People want to see artists and artisans at work. There are also opportunities to link art education and internships to artist work space.

***Live-work studios:***

Many artists work where they live. The creation process is an integral part of their daily lives. They have studios in their homes, garages and outbuildings. During the Artspace survey, a number of artists expressed interest in purchasing condominium space in a cultural district in the downtown area. There would likely be a demand for artist lofts in the \$100,000 - \$150,000 range with the following attributes:

- Proximity to cultural activity
- Large open spaces of 1,000 – 2,000 sq ft
- High ceilings of 10 – 16 ft
- Natural light
- Extra sound separation
- Access to plumbing, electrical and heat
- Ability to adapt space to meet individual interests

**Public Art**

Public art is a common feature of cultural districts in communities with developed cultural tourism economies. The installation of public art in Whitehorse has increased in recent years. Public buildings such as Yukon College, Andrew A. Philipsen Law Centre, and the Yukon Arts Centre include permanent installations of statuary, murals and other visual art. The City of Whitehorse Arts Policy sets a goal of dedicating 1% of future capital budgets for new public facilities to the installation of visual art. The inclusion of public art in the Multiplex is currently a matter of great interests to the arts community.

Visual art collections are also an important type of cultural infrastructure. The value of galleries and museums to tourism development depends largely on the location of the building, the attributes of the facilities, and the quality of their collections. The Yukon has two major public art collections owned by Yukon Government and the Yukon Arts Centre. An exhibition of the combined collection in a downtown location in Whitehorse would be a significant tourism asset. Gallery and museum exhibitions of regional art are a common feature in communities with developed cultural tourism economies.

**Conclusion**

Whitehorse has an opportunity to create a neighbourhood on the waterfront that reflects the unique character of our northern culture. A shared vision for the waterfront is emerging from the community as project proponents, local business owners and industry associations recognize the benefits of working together. The creative and economic synergy that has inspired other redevelopment projects in North America and Europe can take place here on the banks of the Yukon River. The community is now looking to government for leadership in the planning process and a commitment to the development of cultural spaces and places that can make the waterfront a centre of entertainment, recreation and activity for tourists and Yukoners alike.