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Item No. 7

**Halifax Regional Council
October 20, 2009**

TO: Mayor Kelly and Members of Halifax Regional Council

SUBMITTED BY: 
Paul Dunphy, Director of Community Development

DATE: September 20, 2009

SUBJECT: Cultural Spaces & Places Survey

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

The Halifax Regional Municipality (HRM) *Cultural Plan, 2006*, and the *Cultural Operating Strategy, 2008*, identifies the development of cultural spaces and places as a priority for the Municipality. The first step in developing these assets is to survey existing cultural spaces and places located within HRM and to identify community needs.

BACKGROUND

The *Cultural Operating Strategy, 2008* states that: “*Cultural spaces and places provide a unique and dynamic realm for the expression of its [HRM’s] culture and identity. Venues, squares, streets, buildings and parks provide a public domain where art and cultural activities take place and people can participate and engage.[...] Such spaces are important for enhancing HRM’s overall vibrancy, and for providing incentive for people to live, work and visit HRM.*”

Other key objectives of this strategy highlight the need to provide a range in type and scale of cultural spaces and places, from multi-purpose rooms for community arts opportunities to purpose-built professional venues, and to develop a decision-making framework to guide future HRM cultural investments in cultural spaces and places.

Since amalgamation in 1996, there has not been a central inventory developed to capture existing cultural spaces, nor an assessment of community needs. As these are the first steps in preparing a decision-making framework, Staff proceeded to survey three types of data:

1. Existing cultural spaces and places (municipally-owned or otherwise, interior facilities only)
2. Immediate and future space needs of arts, culture and heritage organizations
3. Immediate and future space needs of artists, creative individuals and members of the cultural sector

Methodology

To bring direction to the research method, and to foster community engagement, Staff assembled a group of experts in the areas of community arts, dance, film, music, theatre, visual arts, and outdoor spaces. In total, 9 participants contributed to this focus group with representation from Music Nova Scotia, Film Nova Scotia, 4C’s Foundation, Dance Nova Scotia, Theatre Nova Scotia, Visual Arts Nova Scotia, and Shakespeare by the Sea.

The focus group recommended surveying 3 target groups: i) cultural space providers; ii) cultural organizations, and; iii) individuals. The focus group also suggested that surveys be tailored to each target group.

The survey was designed to develop a database of existing cultural spaces, to create a profile for each space, and to subsequently connect them with potential users. The survey also targeted organizations and individuals to create a profile of space currently being used, to identify challenges and needs, and to suggest a preliminary decision-making framework.

Surveys were distributed through existing cultural networks (i.e. e-mails, list-serves, newsletters, website postings, mailings, etc.) and was placed on HRM’s website. The survey was advertised in 3 publications of The Coast Magazine. The survey was available over a 3 month period, from December, 2008 to February, 2009.

Profile of Respondents

The majority of organizations and individuals responding to the surveys were located on the Halifax Peninsula (leasing or residing), where they also created and presented their works. While this may reflect the need to operate within an urban setting (i.e.: access to a broader audience, variety in presentation spaces, access to peers and suppliers, connectedness; etc.), more research targeting trends in rural areas is needed to confirm this observation.

Another fact to be noted is that the response rate was fairly low (15 respondents for space providers, 47 for organizations and 214 for individuals). There are a number of factors that could have influenced this, including running the survey over the Christmas holiday season; insufficient publicity, notification or follow-ups; the lack of one-on-one discussions or discipline-specific focus groups; and the lack of clarity on what the results would be used for. Again, further community engagement is required in order to obtain more representative data.

Finally, respondents were not required to identify the purpose of their operations, therefore the data presented in this research assembles all recreational, amateur, and professional cultural activities.

DISCUSSION

As noted, the intent of this research was to collect initial information on cultural spaces in HRM, and to create a preliminary profile of organizational and individual cultural space needs. These 2 objectives were attained. However, as anticipated, further investigation will be required to reach a broader audience and obtain a more representative assessment of spaces and needs.

It is important to note that for the purposes of this survey cultural spaces and places refer to interior venues that support cultural products and activities, and accommodate cultural industries.

The following highlights the key findings of the survey. The data collected offers a preliminary assessment of existing cultural spaces and the needs of cultural organizations and individuals.

Table 1: Survey Highlights

Target Groups	Survey Highlights
Existing Cultural Spaces	<p>See Attachment A: Space Providers Survey Results for further details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a variety of existing spaces, offering a wide range of services. • There are few purpose-built spaces for presenting or rehearsing, or studio spaces for individuals to create (including artist live/work spaces). • Cost for space rental greatly vary by type of use, audience size and location (from donated space, to \$50/hour for small studio space, to \$750/day for large presentation space). • Existing spaces are under-utilised (64% of respondents operate at half their capacity). However, this may not be due to a lack of demand, but rather to the availability of space during peak periods, type of use, location, and affordability.
Needs of Cultural Organizations & Individuals	<p>See Attachment B: Organizations and Individuals Needs Survey Results for further details.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Both organizations and individuals typically lease their space (55% and 43% of respondents respectively). The average monthly rental cost is less than \$1,000 for organizations (82%) and less than \$500 for individuals (67%). • Existing municipally-owned spaces do not meet or slightly meet the needs of organizations (47%) and individuals (73%). • Location, cost of space and availability are the three most important factors when selecting space for organizations (60%) and individuals (66%). • Lack of purpose-built and/or affordable spaces are the two main challenges for accessing space for organizations (68%) and individuals (58%). • The need for presentation space ranked first for organizations (41%), while the need for studio space ranked first for individuals (56%). • Grants/tax incentives and new spaces were identified by both groups (68%) as the suggested priority areas for future investments by HRM, although organizations emphasized purpose-built spaces while individuals requested multi-purpose spaces.

Findings Analysis

The results of this research suggest that further investigation is necessary to obtain a more complete inventory of existing cultural spaces and needs assessment. Access to centrally located, affordable and available space is a significant challenge for cultural organizations and individuals. The need for new multi-purpose and purpose-built space is also a priority for the respondents.

Over time, the Municipality could improve access to space by developing programs and services targeting these needs, such as: rental cost subsidies, grants and tax incentives, adapting existing facilities and/or supporting the construction of new facilities, and revising land-use regulations. These initiatives also require further investigation.

Next Steps

The second phase of this research will be to initiate a complete inventory of existing cultural spaces, and to survey the needs of organizations and individuals per discipline in all geographic areas. This will provide the data necessary to analyse gaps and propose a decision-making framework to guide future HRM cultural investments, including the development of new programs and services.

In the second phase of this project, Staff will undertake the following steps:

1. Inventory of Existing Spaces: Staff will complete the inventory of existing cultural spaces located within HRM. This data will be entered into a searchable database, which could be used for gap analysis by discipline and/or geographic area, to match existing venues with requests from the public, and to facilitate cultural mapping.
2. Needs Assessment: Staff will survey additional organizations and individuals through an improved community engagement strategy, with a focus on disciplines and geographic areas, to obtain more complete, representative and reliable data.
3. Decision-Making Framework: Staff will analyse the data collected and draft a decision-making framework to guide future HRM investments and priorities. This may propose new programs, services, partnerships, and capital investments.
4. Information Sharing: Staff will share the results of this research and the decision-making framework with all relevant municipal departments for consideration when planning their respective programs and services. This will help inform future grant programs, capital investments, facility development strategies, policies and by-laws.
5. Exterior Cultural Spaces & Places: Staff will assess the potential of surveying exterior cultural spaces and places not covered in the above inventory, such as parks, streets, courtyards, squares and plazas. Although these places are not officially operated as cultural facilities, they are important cultural assets for the region.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications associated with this report. Any items requiring additional funding will be brought forward as part of future business planning and operating budgets.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN


This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.

APPENDIXES

Attachment A: Space Providers Survey Results
Attachment B: Organizations and Individuals Needs Survey Results

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/council/agendasc/cagenda.html> then choose the appropriate meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.

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Attachment A: Space Providers Survey Results

Figure 1:
Description of Space
How respondents classify their type of space

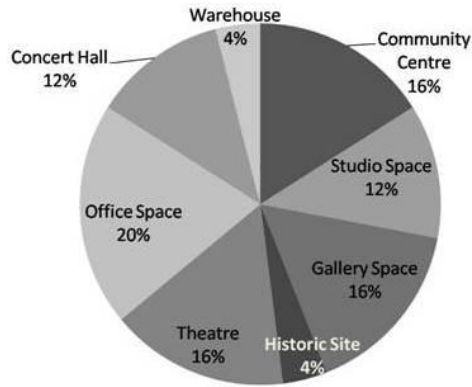


Figure 2:
Use of Space
What respondents identify their spaces as being used for

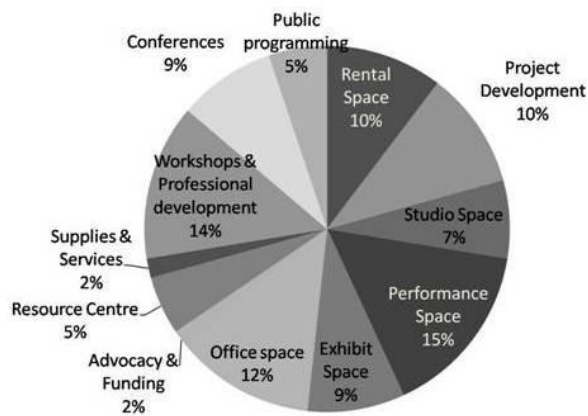
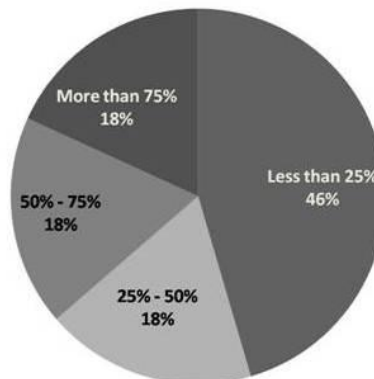


Figure 3:
Space Rental
How often respondents rent their spaces per month

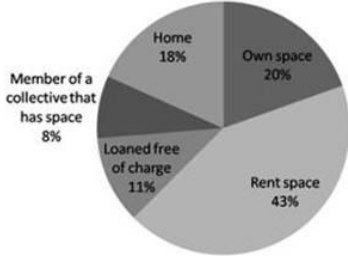
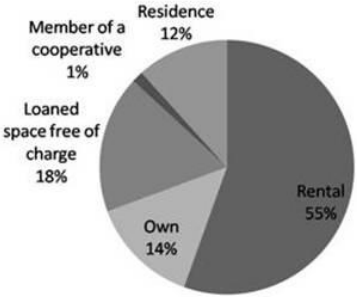


**Attachment B:
Organizations and Individuals Needs
Survey Results**

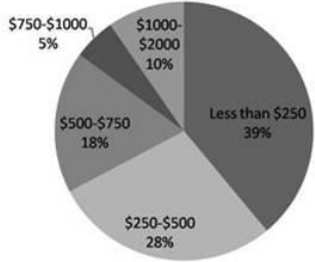
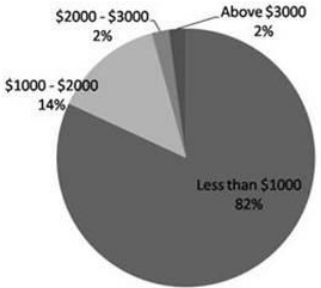
Organizations

Individuals

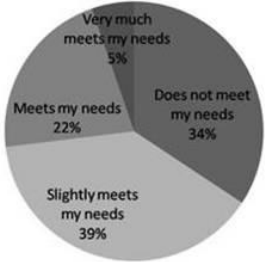
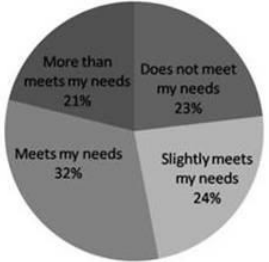
**Comparison 1:
Current Spaces**
How respondents access their current spaces



**Comparison 2:
Cost of Rental**
How much respondents expect to pay per month for their spaces



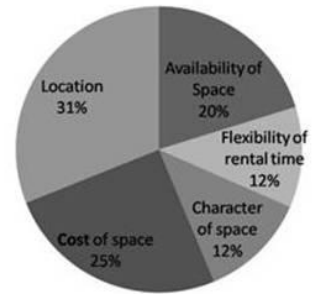
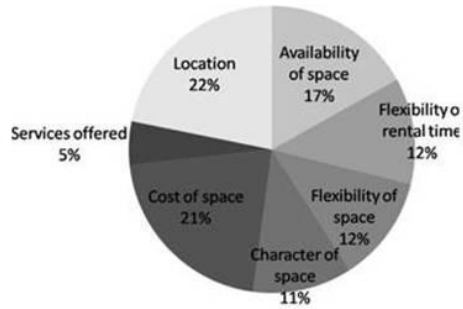
**Comparison 3:
Suitability of HRM Owned/Operated Spaces**
How suitable HRM facilities are to respondents needs



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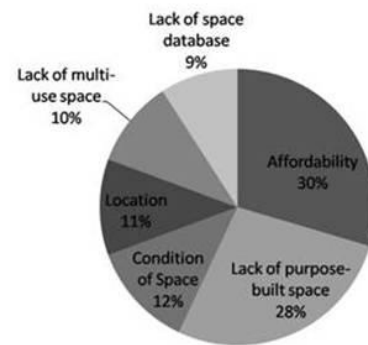
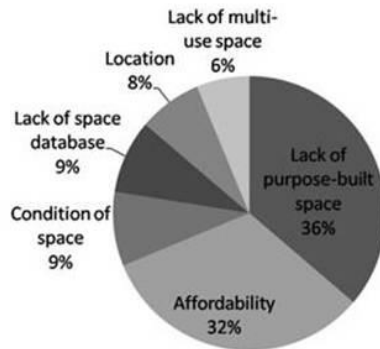
**Comparison 4:
Space Selection
Factors**

What factors
respondents
consider when
selecting their
space



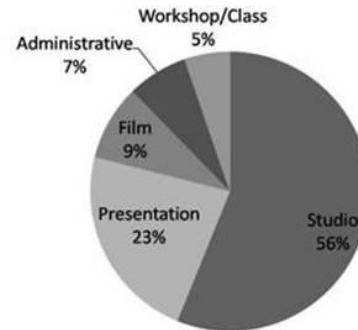
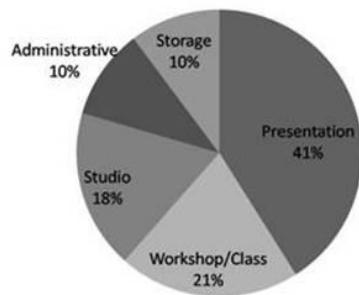
**Comparison 5:
Challenges to
Accessing
Spaces**

What barriers
respondents face in
accessing space



**Comparison 6:
Future Needs**

What type of
spaces
respondents will
need in the future



**Comparison 7:
Suggested
Actions for HRM**

How HRM could
assist respondents
with their space
challenges

