Creating Cultural Connections

Barrie Arts & Culture Strategic Marketing Plan 2012

Executive Summary

The Resource Management Consulting Group Dec 2011
Need for a Strategic Arts and Culture Marketing Plan

The Barrie Arts and Culture Strategic Marketing Plan has been prepared as an overall framework for marketing Barrie's arts and culture products, a need identified in Barrie's Culture Plan, Building a Creative Future (2006). Although Barrie's arts sector contributes significantly to the city's economy and quality of life, marketing this sector has been largely the responsibility of individual artists and organizations. The marketing plan addresses this need.

In 2010, the Department of Culture (DOC) completed a market study of the audience for arts and culture in Barrie and its surrounding region (based on 1,400 interviews of Barrie and regional residents). Created in Barrie: Understanding Barrie's Arts and Culture Markets documents arts participation and behavior for Barrie and regional residents and identifies opportunities to grow the markets for Barrie's arts and culture products.

This Strategic Marketing Plan, Creating Cultural Connections, builds on the understanding gained through the research and identifies market opportunities and suggests actions for Barrie's arts and cultural sector. Implementing the plan will benefit:

1. Barrie's Residents through increased participation in Barrie's arts and cultural offerings, cultural enrichment and increased community pride,
2. Barrie's Arts and Culture Community by increasing audiences and support, developing a more cohesive community and providing new opportunities for more offerings, and
3. The City of Barrie by creating a cultural community identity, enhancing the overall quality of life in the community and recognizing the role of culture as an economic driver.

Some of the recommendations will be adopted by the DOC as part of its Business Plan; others may be assumed by the Barrie Arts and Cultural Council or by other arts organizations and individuals of the community. The DOC has taken on the role of a leader and facilitator, but ultimately the success of the plan will depend on the desire and collaborative actions of the City, stakeholders and individuals to build and market the creative city envisioned in the 2006 Plan for Culture.

Strategic Vision for Arts and Culture in Barrie

In 10 Years...

✓ Barrie will be recognized as the regional hub for arts & culture, including visual, performing and culinary arts, literature and heritage.

✓ Barrie's artists & organizations will be sustainable, know each other, know their local and regional audiences & align their offerings.

✓ Barrie's arts and culture scene will be integrated with the sports, recreation & leisure activities of Barrie and the region.

✓ Arts and culture will have a central concentration in Barrie's downtown and waterfront, but art will be everywhere in Barrie - public spaces, arenas, libraries, schools, shopping centres. We will see it... hear it... read it... taste it! It will enrich our lives!!!!

✓ Arts and culture will be a key contributor to the quality of life of Barrie and regional residents.

✓ Barrie will be a vibrant community that attracts more artists, more residents, more visitors and more businesses... Arts and culture will be an economic driver for the city.
Objectives of the Plan

This Strategic Marketing Plan sets out to maximize the regional market potential of Barrie’s visual, performing, culinary and heritage offerings by:

• Complementing the existing strategic directions of arts and culture organizations, as well as stakeholders such as the Economic Development Department, City of Barrie, Georgian College, Tourism Barrie and Downtown Barrie,

• Developing recommendations and actions for penetrating the local market over a three-year time period,

• Identifying criteria for measuring outcomes, and

• Recognizing that ultimately, success results from the combined marketing efforts of the City of Barrie, stakeholders, arts and culture organizations and individual artists.

Time Frame for the Plan

The implementation time for this Strategic Marketing Plan is 3 years. Major infrastructure changes have occurred previously and some are anticipated during this time period that will affect Barrie’s cultural product offerings: the Mady Centre for the Performing Arts was opened in the fall of 2011, Downtown Barrie BIA will raise its profile as its Master Plan and Marketing Plan unfold and changes to public, outdoor performing spaces as articulated in the Waterfront Master Plan and are implemented. Over the next 3 years, the Barrie Arts and Cultural Council will grow and solidify its role in Barrie’s arts community, existing organizations will grow and experience change and new artists and organizations will emerge. As it is impossible to anticipate in an exact manner, how these changes will unfold, this plan focuses on marketing Barrie’s current assets, preparing to market future cultural products and has been prepared in a format meant to facilitate annual updating.
Strategic Opportunities Identified through the Planning Process

The analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats undertaken while preparing the plan, combined with the consultation process, market analysis and product assessment revealed that there is a gap in the ability of Barrie's arts sector to market to Barrie and regional residents. Individual arts organizations and artists have very small marketing and advertising budgets, most have limited business training and few are able to track the effectiveness of their marketing efforts. Barrie's arts and culture sector is beginning to work collectively, however, it does not have an effective umbrella marketing organization with a unified consistent message and as of now, a central source for arts information is in the embryonic stage.

Four Strategic Marketing Opportunities Have Been Identified:

• Enable More Effective Marketing By Barrie’s Artists And Arts Organizations
  Artists are rarely trained in the business of the arts. With the exception of several organizations representing professional artists, most do not have marketing plans that define participation, articulate their niche in the market place and explore ways to reach audiences. Barrie's individual arts organizations and artists have responded positively to short courses offered by DOC, and there are more opportunities to build on this initiative.

• Build Collaborative Marketing Capacity Within Barrie’s Diverse Arts Sector
  Barrie has over 80 organizations representing performing, visual, literary and culinary arts and heritage, plus a myriad of independent artists. Collaborative marketing initiatives are beginning to emerge, and these can be encouraged. By building shared marketing tools, promoting the strongest market-ready products and celebrating achievements, the arts sector could enhance individual organization's marketing capacity, stretch limited advertising budgets and achieve a higher profile in Barrie and the region.

• Engage Barrie & Regional Residents As Active Participants Within Barrie’s Arts Sector
  The Barrie and region market research determined that residents do not find it easy to access information about participating in Barrie's arts and culture scene. This is particularly true for new residents and regional residents. Increased exposure to Barrie's arts opportunities in traditional and innovative ways, will increase participation and build a stronger arts sector.

• Focus Arts Sector Marketing On Downtown Barrie And The Waterfront
  The City of Barrie and the Downtown BIA are laying the foundation for Downtown Barrie to be Barrie's arts and culture centre. Existing offerings in the artistic, entertainment and cultural districts designated in the Downtown Master Plan, combined with the new Downtown Theatre and redevelopment of waterfront parks to accommodate outdoor theatre and gathering places will solidify the Downtown's role. Raising awareness of arts and cultural opportunities and consistent marketing by all stakeholders is essential to grow markets and grow offerings.
Fifteen recommendations were developed to address these four strategic opportunities. Each recommendation includes the description and rational, implementation actions for the upcoming three years, as well as identification of the organization that would logically be responsible for implementing the actions.

Enable More Effective Marketing By Artists & Organizations

1. Build Marketing Capacity:  
   **Continue to Offer Marketing Short-Courses for Artists/Organizations**
   During the past two years, DOC has offered 10 short-courses for artists and organizations covering marketing and marketing-related topics. The uptake for the courses has been strong, with between 20 and 40 individuals participating in each course. Clearly, the arts community is looking for support, and this could be developed into a more regular series of courses. The DOC will explore additional opportunities such as the creation of a marketing think thank made up of local marketing professionals who are willing to provide a forum for support of arts organizations and individuals as they carry out the recommendations of this plan.

2. Share Marketing Resources:  
   **Develop a Digital Marketing Resource Centre**
   Marketing resources should be available online to support the marketing short courses for artists and organizations. Aided by Communications, the DOC will create an online library and resources centre to ensure sector participants and supporters access to marketing tools and helpful information.

3. Know Your Audiences:  
   **Facilitate Ongoing Audience Research**
   Collaborative audience research, using a standardized questionnaire, would help organizations better understand their markets. The research could build on the ongoing audience research being led by DOC at festivals and events. There are opportunities to build on partnerships with Tourism Barrie, the Barrie Arts and Cultural Council and others who are vested in ongoing measurement and analysis of audience and attendance trends.
   The DOC has already taken a leadership role in audience research but will continue to work with professionals, institutions and culture sector participants to maximize the returns from investments made in audience research. All culture sector participants will be encouraged to engage in on-going audience research and to find ways to share data and analyses for the benefit of the sector as a whole.
Build Collaborative Marketing Capacity Within Barrie’s Diverse Arts Sector

4  Brand for Visibility:  
*Develop and Implement Barrie Arts and Culture Brands*  
The DOC should have a word mark and communication strategy that builds on the strength of the City of Barrie brand. It will be used to brand the city’s cultural initiatives and its support for other organization’s cultural initiatives. The BACC brand should be used to brand the activities of their organization as an umbrella group representing the artists and organizations of Barrie’s arts and culture community. Key sector leaders like the MacLaren Art Centre must lead the way in the strengthening and marketing of Barrie’s leading arts and culture brands. New and less established brands will benefit greatly from this.

5  Connect the Artists:  
*Create and Launch the Barrie Arts & Culture Portal for Artists*  
The BACC is developing a Barrie arts and culture web portal with non-financial support from the DOC. The DOC will support the BACC by encouraging artists and organizations to register with the portal and participate in the initiative. The part of the portal for the artists is scheduled to be launched in 2011. Initially, it will be used to create a comprehensive data base of Barrie’s arts and culture community. In order to become the primary communication link for the cultural community, the artists and organizations must perceive value in registering with the portal, keeping their own information up-to-date and using it to communicate with others.

6  Celebrate:  
*Recognize Cultural Achievements Often*  
The achievements of Barrie’s cultural community should continue to be celebrated annually through the Barrie Arts Awards. Raising the profile of this event will also raise awareness of Barrie’s arts and culture offerings and their importance to Barrie residents. In 2011 the Arts Awards had TD Bank as its lead sponsor, CTV as its television sponsor and was covered extensively by the local channel in their evening and morning news coverage. The Arts Awards should eventually be grown into a televised event with strong private sector support and involvement.

7  Market the Strongest:  
*Strengthen and Promote Barrie’s Marketing-Ready Products*  
Marketing should focus on the four arts and culture disciplines ready to be marketed as arts and culture products: Visual Arts, Music Performance, Theatre and Signature Festivals. This will help Barrie develop a cultural identity, based on its recognized strengths.

8  Uniquely Barrie:  
*Develop a New Distinctive Barrie Arts and Culture Product*  
Barrie needs a uniquely Barrie arts and culture initiative that will bring artists together while exciting and engaging a broader audience. It should be strong enough and authentic enough to ignite interest in Barrie as the regional hub for arts and culture. The initiative could begin with a few strong offerings, but should ultimately capture the interest and participation of all arts and culture disciplines.
Use City Media Connections:
Take Full Advantage of Existing City of Barrie Marketing Opportunities
As a corporation, the City of Barrie communicates with residents through a variety of media including its website/newsletter, City Page, press releases and Recreation Guide. DOC, in partnership with the Communications Department, should evaluate and determine how each of these can be used to raise the profile of Barrie's arts and culture products and work with City Departments to ensure that these products gain prominence. Our ongoing media efforts have met some success and there is much strength to build on. The Communications Department has created an on-line newsletter and DOC needs to maximize the benefits to be derived from its effective use.

Use City Buildings:
Increase Presence of Arts & Culture in/on Barrie Public Buildings
Barrie's public buildings present opportunities to cross-market Barrie's cultural opportunities and expose more people to Barrie's cultural pursuits. Initiatives should include culture marketing displays as well as permanent and changing art. Presentation systems must be flexible enough to be effective in a variety of settings, and all information should be reviewed and approved in keeping with the City of Barrie's existing protocols and standards.

Position Festivals:
Develop a Barrie Events Strategy that Nurtures Arts and Culture
Barrie has over 20 waterfront/downtown festivals and events between April and Thanksgiving. Sixteen of these incorporate arts and culture. An overall strategy is needed to co-ordinate the events, capitalize on opportunities for arts and culture and better utilize event venues.

Engage Barrie & regional residents as active participants within Barrie’s arts sector

9 Reach Out Virtually:
Create and Launch the Barrie Arts & Culture Portal for Residents and Visitors
As part of the City of Barrie's website, this portal would be the "go to" source for residents and visitors for current up-to-date information about Barrie's arts and cultural offerings. This portal must be easy to use, attractive and always up-to-date in order to be perceived as offering value to residents, visitors and other organizations. Links with Tourism Barrie, hotels, resorts, and recreational and cultural destinations will be important component of the arts and culture portal.

10 Reach Out through Traditional Media:
Work towards a Barrie Arts & Culture Guide (print)
Building on the Arts Portal, Barrie should work towards eventually producing a full colours arts and culture guide to build local and regional awareness of Barrie's arts and culture scene. First steps include optimizing the positioning of Barrie's marketing-ready cultural products in regional magazines and the Visitor Guide. Opportunities exist to maximize penetration of arts and culture messaging to residents who research revealed, still consume traditional media.
Align Marketing & Messages: 
*Co-ordinate Promotion by Downtown Stakeholders*

Three stakeholders (DOC, Downtown Barrie and Tourism Barrie) promote Downtown Barrie and its cultural opportunities to Barrie residents and visitors. They must collaborate to invest in clear, consistent messaging that is strong enough to entice people to the downtown, year round and to promote the waterfront culture opportunities as they are created.

More Public Art: 
*Use Public Art to Raise Awareness of Arts & Culture in Barrie*

DOC should guide the Public Arts Policy through City Council and in collaboration with Downtown Barrie, the MacLaren, Georgian College and City Departments, work towards developing the arts and entertainment districts identified in the Downtown Barrie Master Plan. Public art installations will raise awareness, recognition and identification of Downtown Barrie as a creative place. Business and property owners should be encouraged to enhance their buildings and streetscapes by displaying public art.
Measuring Success

Based on these recommendations, the following measurable objectives are set to measure the success of implementation of the strategic marketing plan over the next three years:

**By The End of 2012**
- Artist web portal launched with over 100 members registered
- Department of Culture word mark & communication strategy incorporated in all DOC communication
- Audience research implemented at key signature festivals and shared with arts community
- Arts Award Celebration with over 200 attendees
- Coordinated Barrie arts and culture product promotion with at least 2 other partners (Tourism Barrie and media partner)
- Two new marketing courses delivered to artists and arts organizations with at least 20 participants
- Public Arts Policy adopted by City Council
- A&C presence in two Barrie community facilities/venues

**By The End of 2013**
- Branded A&C presence in Barrie Recreation and Culture Guide
- Artist web portal launched with over 200 members registered
- Resident web portal launched with site visit tracking in place
- Barrie Events e-Calendar officially launched for winter 2012 with site visit tracking in place
- Barrie Festival Strategy completed and implemented
- Two more new marketing courses for artists and organizations with at least 20 participants
- Digital Marketing Resource Centre launched with over 30 resources and tracking over 200 downloads annually
- Host two facilitated meetings for brainstorming a new Uniquely Barrie A&C product
- Audience research at 3 offerings
By The End of 2014

- Launch of a uniquely Barrie A&C product & track success
- Commissioned public art under new Public Arts policy
- A&C presence in all Barrie community facilities
- Measurable changes in awareness and participation
  tracked by replicating 2009 study

Conclusion

Creating Cultural Connections, Barrie's Arts and Culture Strategic Marketing Plan provides a framework to guide and facilitate marketing of Barrie's arts and culture sector. The Marketing Plan will be implemented by the Culture Department in conjunction with Barrie's arts and culture organizations. Together we will achieve a strong culture sector that will enrich the lives of all residents and add to the economic prosperity of the community.