



CITY OF WILLIAMS LAKE

DATE &
ITEM NO.

March 4 2025-E1

RES #

RES #81/25

SUBJECT

Central Cariboo Arts Centre re City Endorsement to Pursue a Feasibility Study to Explore an Increase in the Building's Footprint and Capacity

Moved and Seconded

That pursuant to Committee of Whole Council Report #06-2025, the City of Williams Lake endorse and support a feasibility study exploring a substantive expansion and enhancement of the existing Central Cariboo Arts Centre, including an increase in the building's footprint, size and capacity; and further, that Council direct staff to investigate options for nearby parking lots to accommodate community access to support this facility.

CARRIED

RECORD OF VOTE (UPON REQUEST)

YEAS _____

NAYS _____



**CITY OF WILLIAMS LAKE
COMMITTEE OF WHOLE COUNCIL
REPORT #06-2025**

PRESENTED: Regular Meeting of Council – March 4, 2025 **DATE:** February 27, 2025
FROM: Committee of Whole Council **FILE:** 0230-33
SUBJECT: Central Cariboo Arts Centre re City Endorsement to Pursue a Feasibility Study
to Explore an Increase in the Building's Footprint and Capacity

The Committee of Whole Council met on February 25, 2025 to consider the above matter and makes the following recommendation to Council:

RECOMMENDATION:

“That the City of Williams Lake endorse and support a feasibility study exploring a substantive expansion and enhancement of the existing Central Cariboo Arts Centre, including an increase in the building's footprint, size and capacity; and further, that Council direct staff to investigate options for nearby parking lots to accommodate community access to support this facility.”

Respectfully submitted,

Ross Coupé
Corporate Officer

Rationale for Conducting a Feasibility Study to Expand the Central Cariboo Arts Centre
For the City of Williams Lake, Committee of the Whole Committee
25 February 2025

Introduction

The Central Cariboo Arts and Culture Society (CCACS) is dedicated to fostering a vibrant, creative, and resilient community through the support of arts and culture in the region. As the demand for arts programming and accessible community spaces continues to grow, the strain on existing facilities, including the Arts Centre, has become increasingly evident. The Central Cariboo Arts Centre saw a 7% increase in general rental space usage in 2023 compared to 2022, followed by an additional 5% increase in 2024 from 2023. Currently, all tenant spaces are fully occupied, with a 0% vacancy rate. With growing demand and limited space, the Arts Centre faces challenges in fully meeting the diverse needs of residents, artists, and organizations—especially as space availability and accessibility continue to decline in our community. The *City of Williams Lake’s 2022–2026 Strategic Plan* emphasizes enhancing livability, fostering a positive atmosphere for attraction and retention, and creating a more vibrant downtown. Expanding the Arts Centre could directly align with these goals, providing a vital opportunity to host diverse cultural events, attract visitors, and strengthen the community’s social and economic fabric. By addressing these gaps, CCACS aims to enhance the cultural, social, and economic well-being of the Central Cariboo region while contributing to the city’s broader mission of creating a thriving and welcoming community.

Project History and Path Forward

For the past five years, the Central Cariboo Arts and Culture Society has been exploring the feasibility of expanding the Arts Centre. While initial budget funding has been secured, additional grant funding is needed to support a comprehensive feasibility study that outlines meaningful opportunities for community impact. Securing these funds will require additional staff time and resources to complete the necessary applications, should this project proceed. CCACS plans to engage a professional consultant to conduct a feasibility study of this scale and scope.

The Central Cariboo Arts and Culture Society seeks the City of Williams Lake's endorsement to pursue a feasibility study exploring a substantive expansion and enhancement of the Central Cariboo Arts Centre, including an increase in the building's footprint and capacity.

Our Reasons to explore a Feasibility Study Now

1 - Addressing Growing Community Demands

The arts and culture sector plays a vital role in fostering community engagement, creativity, and economic growth. In recent years, there has been a notable increase in demand for arts and culture programming, as well as a significant strain on available community spaces for public events, meetings, and other offerings. The existing arts centre, while central to the community’s cultural fabric, is currently operating at or near capacity. This limits its ability to adequately serve the needs of residents, artists, and organizations. Expanding the facility could provide opportunities to:

- Host larger and more diverse cultural events, workshops, and performances.
- Support local artists with studio, rehearsal, and workshop spaces.
- Better and additional support for arts and culture group activities and education.
- Accommodate community groups for meetings, educational programs, and collaborations.
- Better accommodate a variety of non-arts meetings, sessions, and offerings.
- Close to key community services such as libraries, recreation centers, healthcare facilities, food services and catering, and shopping areas, creating a hub of activity.

2 - Responding to the Loss of Community Spaces

The community has recently experienced a marked decline in accessible public spaces due to various factors, including redevelopment, rising insurance costs, and shifting organizational operational policies. This reduction has left many groups and individuals without adequate venues for events and gatherings. Expanding the arts centre could address this gap by:

- Providing a multipurpose facility that serves a broad range of cultural, social, and educational functions.
- Ensuring equitable access to affordable space for non-profits, grassroots organizations, and underserved populations.
- Creating a hub for community resilience and connection, especially during times of crisis or displacement.
- Enhancement of current space that is centrally located, accessible, and in good proximity to other services and convenient businesses.

3 - Supporting Economic and Cultural Resilience

Investing in arts infrastructure has proven long-term benefits for both the local economy and social well-being. An expanded arts centre could have the potential to:

- Generate revenue through increased programming and rentals.
- Stimulate local businesses, such as restaurants, accommodations, and retail, by attracting visitors for enhanced events and offerings.
- Enhance the community's reputation as a cultural destination, attracting new residents and investments.
- Lead to retention and recruitment of professionals and residents in our community through programming and offerings.
- Provide expanded opportunities for lifelong learning, creative expression, and social engagement – contributing to mental and physical well-being through participation in arts and cultural activities for all ages.
- Enhance cultural tourism by linking arts programming with nearby attractions and amenities.

Why would we not explore a feasibility study for the Arts Centre at this time?

- X - The property owner prefers to preserve the building's current footprint and style without pursuing expansion.
- X - The property owner does not have the capacity to assume the additional costs of expanding the facility or other factors that would negate the results of any potential study.
- X - The community feels that the timing of the feasibility study results would not align with any potential action on the findings.

- X - The community feels that the region does not have the capacity to support such an expansion at this time.
- X - The property owner is aware that the building cannot be expanded due to a previous assessment of this possibility.

Alternative or Additional Opportunities and Considerations

Evaluating and Assessment of Space

Additionally, complementary reviews or studies about community space could provide deeper insights into the current space inventory, the specific space needs of the community, and the extent of space loss. One approach could be an **Arts and Culture Space Assessment Tool**, which systematically evaluates the availability, use, and loss of creative spaces over time. This type of study could:

- Evaluate how existing facilities are being used and identify gaps in availability, affordability, and accessibility.
- Quantify the demand for different types of spaces, such as performance venues, meeting rooms, and multipurpose areas.
- Document the historical and ongoing loss of community spaces, using mapping, surveys, and stakeholder interviews to track trends and challenges.
- Assess the threats to existing spaces, such as redevelopment pressures or funding constraints, providing data for advocacy and municipal planning.

By conducting these additional studies in tandem with—or even in place of—a potential building expansion feasibility study, the community would gain a clearer understanding of its spatial needs and opportunities, leading to well-informed decisions supported by comprehensive data.