

Background: The County of Brant Arts Culture Heritage Strategy is intended to support, guide and boost the County of Brant's cultural identity. Culture plays a critical role in social-wellbeing, physical and mental health, and a sense of connection and community inclusion. Cultural programming, industries, sites and activities are more important than ever in reviving community networks, welcoming new residents, remembering shared histories, and reconnecting with each other.

Strategy: In May 2023, ERA Architects were engaged to lead in the development of the Strategy. The primary objective of the Strategy was to create an informed alignment of Council, County staff and stakeholders, for the most effective strategy to support arts, culture and heritage to prosper and support healthy local economy.

Part one (1) of the Strategy reviews existing conditions, providing an economic and demographic snapshot of the County, mapping cultural assets, and summarizing public engagement feedback.

Part two (2) sets out the vision, objectives and actions of the Strategy which includes:

- Support Truth and Reconciliation through arts, culture and heritage initiatives, in connection with broader municipal Reconciliation programs.
- Provide an infrastructure of support for individuals, institutions, businesses, and organizations undertaking cultural initiatives.
- Facilitate a spoke-and-wheel model to support and promote the diverse, vibrant cultural activities occurring both within a central cultural hub and county-wide throughout Brant.
- Foster a broadly inclusive cultural sector that supports residents and reflects their diverse experiences, perspectives, and cultural traditions.
- Conserve and celebrate Brant's unique buildings, landscapes, and stories as cultural heritage assets.
- Standardize municipal heritage planning practice with the Ontario Heritage Act and with municipal best practices across Ontario.

Part three (3) outlines considerations for implementation, including a timeline for the actions. The timeline prioritizes foundational changes and phases larger projects that may require the allocation of staff and financial resources in the future.

The Strategy presents an analysis of local culture conditions including the challenges and opportunities and takes a pro-active approach to guide the County of Brant's efforts to conserve, support and promote local arts, culture and heritage over the next ten (10) years.

The Strategy is designed to be a practical working document with realistic and achievable goals that utilize the advantage of the skills and organizational structures already in place.