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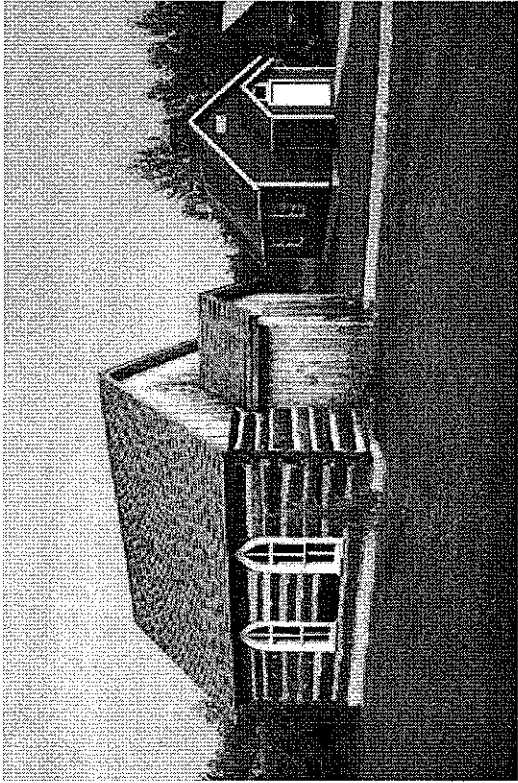
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MINDEN HILLS

MUNICIPAL CULTURAL PLAN

BACKGROUND REPORT #2

WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

July 6 2012

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INTRODUCTION

BACKGROUND

This is the second of three reports leading to the development of a Municipal Cultural Plan for the Township of Minden Hills.

The first report dated May 4 2011 provided a profile of the Township of Minden Hills today, its history and cultural narrative, relevant local and regional policy context and an inventory of its cultural assets.

This present document contains the results of a public consultation process including a draft Vision Statement for Culture in Minden Hills.

The final document will be an actionable five year Municipal Cultural Plan designed to support cultural development in Minden Hills and to support its efforts to become a sustainable community.

SUMMARY OF PART 2 REPORT

The report for Part 1 addressed the question: "Where Are We Now?"

The goal of this report was to address the question: "Where Do We Want to Go?"

Five Questions

The Visioning process addressed five questions related to determining the right course for the future of culture in Minden Hills:

- What do you value most about life in Minden Hills?
- What are our cultural challenges in Minden Hills?
- What kinds of activities and programs should we focus on developing in Minden Hills?
- What kinds of facilities do we need to support cultural

development in Minden Hills?

- What are the top five priorities for cultural development in Minden Hills?

Community Priorities

The discussions around these five questions produced the following (ranked) priorities:

- Marketing the community's assets
- Maintaining and developing the Cultural Centre
- Performing arts facility/multi-purpose centre
- Recreation/fitness centre
- A transportation plan
- Collective studio space/artist live-work
- County wide community calendar
- Affordable programming
- Affordable housing
- Youth business training

Themes from the Visioning Workshop

From the notes and discussions in the Visioning Workshop, the Consultants assembled some broad themes for further development:

- Protect the cultural assets we have
- Build on our existing base of cultural assets
- Market our culture to others

- Communicate better among ourselves
- Ensure inclusion and accessibility
- Maintain a balance between art and nature
- Make healthy living a cultural priority
- Make downtown Minden the cultural centre

Guiding Principles

The Consultants also identified some of the key principles which will be used to guide the development of the Cultural Plan:

- Fiscal responsibility
- People power
- Engagement and organization
- Timing and priorities
- Integration and acceptance
- Tracking the progress

Draft Vision Statement

The final product of the work to date is a draft Vision Statement on which the Steering Committee will provide comments prior to its finalization.

VISIONING WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP FORMAT

Participants

A Visioning Workshop was held in the Nesbitt Arena in Minden on June 27 2012. The workshop was attended by 44 residents of Minden Hills. (See Appendix for lists of attendees.)

Review of the Principles of Cultural Planning

The workshop began with a review of the role and function of culture and its contribution as one of the “four pillars” of community sustainability which are:

- Social pillar
- Economic pillar
- Environmental pillar
- Cultural pillar

It was noted that Culture supports the Social pillar through:

- Contribution to social cohesion
- Opportunities for personal fulfillment
- Links to health and wellness
- Creating prospects for youth

Culture supports the Economic pillar through:

- Business attraction and retention
- Tourism attraction
- Urban and real estate development

Culture supports the Environmental pillar through:

- Retention of built heritage
- Retention of natural heritage

Five Questions

Participants were divided into five groups each with a facilitator and recorder for each and they were asked to address five questions:

- What do you value most about life in Minden Hills?
- What are our cultural challenges in Minden Hills?
- What kinds of activities and programs should we focus on developing in Minden Hills?
- What kinds of facilities do we need to support cultural development in Minden Hills?
- What are the top five priorities for cultural development in Minden Hills?

RESPONSE TO THE FIVE QUESTIONS

Most Valuable Community Assets

What do you value most about life in Minden Hills?

The natural setting of Minden Hills is a source of both community pride and identity.

The residents of Minden Hills have enviable access to healthy lakes and waterways and they live in an atmosphere that is beautiful and tranquil. There are many opportunities to engage in outdoor activities. In Minden, the Gull River and Riverwalk are symbols of the community’s commitment to the environment.

Minden Hills is a place with a strong sense of community where citizens are actively engaged. It is a place where people are friendly and cooperative and the pace of life is slow. Minden Hills is a good place for children; it is safe and the schools are small.

The Cultural Centre is a defining asset. The cultural hub formed by the Library, Museum, Art Gallery, R.D. Lawrence Place is not only a unique asset for a community of this size but also one which brings together the themes of art, nature and sustainable living.

Cultural Challenges for the Community

What are our cultural challenges in Minden Hills?

Minden Hills has a small year round population which is widely dispersed and is mostly comprised of people over 50 years of age.

While the population swells dramatically with the arrival of cottagers during the summer season, the survival of local businesses through the winter is a major issue for economic stability in the community. This condition is exacerbated by the lack of an industrial base.

The shortage of well paying, year round jobs has contributed to a high poverty level and there is a lack of jobs for youth in particular. The need for affordable housing is a related issue, as is transportation.

There is no community gathering place per se and there is a related need to build the critical mass of the existing artistic base. There is no adequate place for performing arts. The volunteer base is committed but small and aging.

There is a need to ensure a strong connection between Minden and the other historic villages that make up Minden Hills.

Programs and Activities

What kinds of activities and programs should we focus on developing in Minden Hills?

Minden Hills is well positioned to encourage and develop programs which promote understanding and respect for the environment. In addition to programs at R. D. Lawrence Place, there are opportunities for activities such as white water kayaking, rock climbing and zip lines.

Fitness and active lifestyle programs for seniors are a priority given the demographic profile in Minden Hills.

All programming should be organized by age bracket including children and families, youth, seniors, and intergenerational.

Programs which re-introduce art and artists into the schools are especially important and provide both education and access for all.

Facility Requirements

What kinds of facilities do we need to support cultural development in Minden Hills?

Minden's historic downtown is an important asset and a symbol of community values.

While the Riverwalk makes a clear statement of these values, there are opportunities for improvement of the public realm; for intensification of use; and for integration of artists and cultural industries into the historic core – all leading to an improved business environment.

Downtown revitalization would also be enhanced by the development of a community centre/gathering place which could also include studios and rentable spaces and, perhaps, an open kitchen.

The creation of live/work spaces for artists would contribute to

making a healthy and vibrant downtown.

A live performance theatre or multi-purpose entertainment centre would also make a significant contribution to downtown sustainability.

Sidewalks and pedestrian routes in the downtown (Riverwalk) could be connected to external paths and walking trails and bike paths. Expanded and improved signage and public washrooms would promote walking and active transportation.

A fitness centre, recreation centre and a pool would also be desirable to support an active lifestyle.

Community Priorities

What are the top five priorities for cultural development in Minden Hills?

The workshop was divided into 5 tables. Each table listed its 5 priorities. Six of the ten identified priorities appeared on more than one list.

- Marketing the community's assets (4/5)
- Maintaining and developing the Cultural Centre (4/5)
- Performing arts facility/multi-purpose centre (3/5)
- Recreation/fitness centre (3/5)
- A transportation plan (2/5)
- Collective studio space/artist live-work (2/5)
- County wide community calendar (1/5)
- Affordable programming (1/5)
- Affordable housing (1/5)
- Youth business training (1/5)

THEMES ARISING FROM THE VISIONING WORKSHOP

THE CULTURAL PLAN AND COMMUNITY NEED

The visioning process identified a number of needs that were cultural in the broad sense of being central to the values and aspirations of the community – needs such as a fitness facility and recreation centre.

While these types of needs have an influence and effect on the Municipal Cultural Plan, they fall beyond the scope of cultural planning as defined in the first report of this study (see page 17, Cultural Activities and Cultural Places.)

However, since “no plan is an island” (apologies to John Donne), the themes which emerged from the visioning workshop adopt a more holistic and integrated approach to community planning in which culture plays a key role.

THEMES FOR CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

The following themes have been developed by the Consultants to capture the broader sentiments of the participants in the visioning process and to provide an initial structure for the action items of the cultural plan.

Protect The Cultural Assets We Have

Minden Hills is rich in cultural assets as evident in the cultural inventory contained in the first report. First among these assets is the complex consisting of the Library, Museum, Art Gallery and R. D. Lawrence Place. Protection and maintenance of this cultural hub is a first order of business.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Ensure that these assets remain a high civic priority and that they are properly resourced to deliver maximum benefit to the community

- Ensure that other cultural assets are recognized and valued

Build on Our Base of Cultural Assets

If culture is already a strength of the community and, if it is to be truly one of the “four pillars” of community sustainability, Minden Hills needs to work towards completing a roster of facilities to complement the existing cultural hub.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Provide facilities for live performance
- Provide studio facilities for visual art and craft
- Encourage the development of live-work spaces for artists

Market our Culture to Others

Within a larger market context, Minden Hills is well known for its natural assets, but less so for its cultural assets. This is unfortunate because its cultural assets are significant (and presumably growing) and could easily be shared with visitors if they only knew about them.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Recognize and celebrate the cultural richness of Minden Hills
- Create a short statement describing Minden Hills’ cultural uniqueness
- Identify the targets for this message and the ways of reaching them

Communicate Better Among Ourselves

The cultural boundaries of Minden Hills are different from the political boundaries and Minden Hills shares much of its cultural identity, many of its audiences and volunteers with neighboring municipalities in Haliburton County. And within Minden Hills, there are many cultural organizers and events. There is a need for internal coordination of events and resources among the cultural interests of Haliburton County.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Create a county wide, interactive community calendar
- Also use this pro-actively for setting dates, booking venues, coordinating volunteers, etc

Ensure Inclusion and Accessibility

If culture is a set of values and aspirations shared by a community at a given place and time, exclusion of any members of the community weakens the culture. A cultural plan cannot address root issues of social exclusion (such as poverty) but it can make life richer and more meaningful. The best place to start is with the children

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Deliver programming through the schools wherever possible
- For programs outside the schools, create incentives - organize ride-sharing, provide snacks and light lunches
- Use children's programs as lever for adult involvement (e.g., organize "stitch and bitch" sessions for moms, etc)

Maintain a Balance of Art and Nature

Minden Hills is part of the iconic Canadian landscape that has inspired artists for more than a century. While never ceasing to be a source of awe, that landscape is now part of a much larger narrative of global sustainability. Art and nature have once again converged in Minden Hills.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Promote the art in nature and the nature in art
- Make respect for the environment a cultural principle
- Create a work of environmental public art

Make Healthy Living a Cultural Priority

Much like the issues of inclusion and access above, the cultural plan cannot be the driving force for healthy living, but it can support the underlying values of healthy living and it can reinforce the concept of "a healthy mind in a healthy body." If the natural world is our "outer environment," our bodies are our "inner environment."

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Develop programs that explore the relationship between art and sport
- Explore the idea that "making things" contributes to mental wellbeing

Make Downtown Minden the Cultural Centre

If the Highway 35 corridor is the commercial centre of Minden Hills, the historic downtown of Minden can be its cultural centre.

The ways to advance this theme might include:

- Continue to improve the public realm in downtown Minden with a focus on the pedestrian environment
- Establish new cultural activities/facilities in downtown
- Recruit artists and cultural businesses to downtown
- Intensify residential uses in downtown precinct
- Connect downtown to external paths and trails

A VISION FOR CULTURE IN MINDEN HILLS

(DRAFT) VISION STATEMENT

Based on the research and discussions to date, a Vision for Culture in Minden Hills might include the following statements:

- Culture in Minden Hills will continue to be deeply rooted in natural heritage, in the experience of land and water throughout the seasons.
- Culture in Minden Hills will also uphold and maintain the legacy of the social heritage which has produced a cooperative, caring and self-reliant community.
- While honoring the past, Minden Hills will continue to encourage and support all forms of cultural expression and celebration as a core community value and as a way of life.
- Minden Hills will be a destination where many forms of cultural expression can be experienced and where works of art are produced.
- Cultural experience in Minden Hills will be open and accessible to all and will contribute to a higher quality of life.
- Cultural vibrancy will make Minden Hills a better place to do business and it will make a direct contribution to the local economy.
- Culture in Minden Hills will continue to explore the unique relationship between art and nature.

NEXT STEPS IN THE PLANNING PROCESS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The development of an effective and workable Plan will be guided by a number of underlying principles including:

Fiscal Responsibility

The Plan will bear in mind that the Township of Minden Hills is a small municipality with limited resources operating in a time of restraint at the senior government level.

People Power

There are many activities currently occurring in Minden Hills and a finite number of people to organize and to attend. The Plan should focus on incremental change which allows new ventures to be initiated without adverse effects on the existing workforce – paid or volunteer.

Engagement and Organization

The Plan will not be self-propelled. It will require a designated group to provide oversight and stewardship.

Timing and Priorities

The Plan will recognize that some tasks which are high priorities may take longer to achieve than some lesser priorities and that a practical balance needs to be struck between what gets done and when it gets done.

Integration and Acceptance

The Plan will benefit the whole community and it will need to be connected to other community interests – local business and economic development; tourism and visitor services; community services; education and leisure, etc.

Tracking the Progress

Those who are charged with implementing the Plan will need to review what has been achieved (at least annually), to assess their progress towards the goals of the Plan, to report to Council on what has been achieved and to make any necessary adjustments.

PART 3: IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Part 1 of this project posed the question: “Where Are We Now?”

Part 2 of this project posed the question: “Where Do We Want to Go?”

Part 3 of this project will address the question: “How Do We Get There?”

Following a review of the results of Visioning process by the Steering Committee, the work on the Municipal Cultural Plan will move into its third and final phase which will include:

- Finalization of the Vision Statement
- Goals for the Cultural Plan
- Strategies for Achieving the Goals
- Action Plan including timing and resources
- Communications related to the Plan
- Monitoring the Progress of the Plan

APPENDIX A: RESULTS OF ON-LINE SURVEY

(The results of the survey will be included when they are available.)

APPENDIX B: ATTENDEES AT VISIONING WORKSHOP

June 27 2012	Pauline Johnson	Kathy Sweeney
Jean Anthon	Kathy Jurgens	Laura Trach
Don Benson	Erin Kernahan	Jane Wilson
Ruth Benson	Nancy Wright Laking	Rickie Woods
Jim Blake	Sharon Laurence	Margot Ziorjen
Jack Brezing	Daryn Levstek	
Hillary Brown	Marci Mandel	
Diana Burns	Mariuon Mandel	
Laurie Carinount	Heather May	
Alan Clark	Kathleen Millard	
Larry Clarke	Jean Neville	
Harold Clayton	Joanna Penfold	
Rick Cox	Ken Redpath	
George Farrell	Barb Reid	
Stan Fisher	Melody Sedgewick	
Irene Fisher	Leo Sepa	
Brigitte Gall	Carol Simmons	
Kate Hall	Fred J Simmons	
Shelly Houser	George Simmons	
Bob Johnson	Steve Skidmore	