

Whistler Arts Organizations and Facilities Review

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Submitted by: Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. (PERC)

Submitted to:

The Maurice Young Millennium Place Society
The Resort Municipality of Whistler
The Whistler Arts Council

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Introduction

In September of 2008 the Whistler Arts Council (WAC), with financial support from the Resort Municipality of Whistler (RMOW), and a grant from the 2010 Legacies Now Catalyst Program, retained the firm of Professional Environmental Recreation Consultants Ltd. (PERC) to undertake a Functional Review of Whistler Arts Organizations and Facilities. While the client/consultant relationship was nominally between PERC and the WAC, the deliverable was meant to be provided to three “clients” for consideration; namely the WAC, the Maurice Young Millennium Place Society (MYMPS) and the RMOW.

The goal of the project was to undertake a functional review of the MYMPS and WAC organizations to determine how they might co-exist within a shared community facility (Millennium Place) by building on synergies and sharing resources, thereby better serving the community’s cultural sector.

The intent of the project is to help build capacity within the cultural sector by strengthening organizational relationships and identifying ways to maximize use of an existing cultural facility. It is hoped it will also set the stage for developing a more comprehensive long-term cultural plan beyond 2010, to be funded as part of Whistler’s 2009 Cultural Capitals grant. Before proceeding with this longer-term post-Olympic/Paralympic cultural plan, it is important to determine the best long-term organizational model for operating the community’s major cultural facility.

The exploration of synergies to strengthen two separate community organizations with overlapping but distinct mandates is a matter lying outside the daily operations of WAC and MYMPS, both of which are busy attending to ongoing operations. WAC and MYMPS already collaborate in a number of areas, and have recently been moved into the same building, but there are opportunities to streamline operational costs and enhance functional areas within each organization, leading to a more efficient and effective arts sector.

Both WAC and MYMPS are committed to working together to advance the community’s long-term cultural vision as described in the ACH Strategy of Whistler2020. For WAC, it is crucial to continue having access to the community’s only performing arts theatre and public art gallery. For MYMPS, it is crucial to support the ACH Sector and provide affordable services and venues.

The detailed work plan for this project is provided in Appendix A. Generally the consultant reviewed a range of background information, interviewed about two dozen key stakeholders, and engaged in a workshop with the Boards of Directors and senior staff of the two principle organizations. From that information, the consultant drew a number of conclusions, analyzed some optional organizational models, and developed a series of recommendations into a draft report. The report was discussed by representatives of the major stake-holding organizations and was finalized in January of 2009. It is submitted herein for consideration and as a basis for decision making by all three of the principle clients to this initiative.

Background

Some background and context on the major cultural organizations, facilities, marketplace, and issues in Whistler is provided to underpin the current review. It should be noted that while the terms of reference for this review refer variously to the “arts” sector, and the “cultural” sector, they position the review within the slightly larger context of the “arts, culture and heritage sector” which is the broader purview of the Whistler2020 long range planning initiative of the community. Therefore, it is appropriate to start with this broader context.

Whistler2020

This comprehensive sustainability plan is currently recorded in three volumes which lay the basis for more work in specific areas. One of these is the Arts, Culture and Heritage (ACH) Strategy of Whistler2020 which is referred to in the Terms of Reference for the review.

The original Whistler2020 documents, to which both the WAC and the MYMPS were party, have several references to the fact that the Arts, Cultural and Heritage Sector are central to Whistler's future and essential to its growth as a community and as a resort. Some of those references, taken as abridged quotes from the first two documents, are summarized below.

- Among Whistler's Values are
 - "A sustainable community...where social and ecological systems are sustainable and supported.... by a healthy economy" (volume 1, page 17)
 - "a healthy community wheresocial interaction, recreation, culture... are accessible" (volume 1, page 17)
- Within Our Vision, Whistler offers "world class recreational and cultural opportunities" (volume 1, page 21)
- In Our Directions, Whistler is proud that "diverse and affordable opportunities for recreation, leisure, arts and culture exist" (Volume 1, page 29)
- In Our Priorities, Whistler celebrates that "art has truly become part of the resort community's identity" so that "arts culture and heritage opportunities... have become another economic engine for the resort" (volume 1, page 32)
- Also under Our Priorities, Whistler focuses on economic viability and notes that "the Whistler Public Library, Museum, MY Place and the First Nations Cultural Centre are key attractions. Whistler's arts and culture scene has developed to complement and enhance the resorts recreation and leisure focus, contributing to the health of the economy and the vibrancy of the resort community" (Volume 1, page 42)
- Also under Our Priorities, Whistler wants to "partner for success" and within that priority notes that "local non-profit organizations are critical to Whistler's success and are supported by an active and engaged volunteer population (with) financial support.. provided through the (RMOW)" (Volume 1, page 47)
- References to nine basic human needs including "creation" which can be satisfied by "art programs... writing, workshops and dance" (Volume 2, page 20)

Volume 2 then goes on to focus on an Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy that will support Whistler2020. It provides nine descriptors of success (page 46) and three specific indicators used to track success.

All the work done so far lays the groundwork for more specific actions and detailed plans, including this review (which must conform to the vision, priorities, directions and strategies approved so far) as well as a future long term Cultural Plan which is anticipated in 2009.

The Marketplace for Arts, Culture and Heritage Services in Whistler

There are essentially three market segments in Whistler with differing characteristics and driving forces. While this market segmentation applies broadly to many aspects of public and private services in the resort community, it is certainly applicable to an understanding of the audience for arts, culture and heritage services in Whistler.

The first market segment is the roughly 10,000 local residents (who would call Whistler their current “home”). The second is the roughly 20,000 recreational property owners (who visit on average about 60 days per year, and would call Whistler their “home away from home”). The third is the roughly two million tourists who will hopefully return, but will enjoy the community for a few days or weeks at a time each year, and will not have a connection to the community as their home.

It is important, when developing arts, culture or heritage services and products in Whistler, to segment the markets in order to be clear which segment or segments each is intended to meet. Arts, culture and heritage product planning in Whistler has generally been good at segmenting the markets, recognizing the differences, and strategizing how to serve each. However, a great deal more sophisticated research has been applied to the much larger tourist segment, which is the reason the resort community exists in the first place. Various organizations are generally clear on where their focus lies, and how the various segments can intersect at times. The WAC is focussed on the local and weekend markets. Tourism Whistler is focussed on the tourist market, and most remaining players (e.g. the RMOW and MYMPS) have a “foot” in all three camps.

There are many examples where cultural products or services positioned to serve the largest of the three segments (i.e. the tourist segment) also serves the other two smaller segments. For example, large special events, with mostly professional artistic performers, are clearly positioned to serve the tourist market, but are similarly enjoyed by the weekend and local resident markets. There are currently fewer examples where services or products focussed on the local resident market segment also show appeal to the broader tourist market. For example, a year end recital of the local dance school, or a school performance of music, drama, or visual art, caters to the local market, but has much less appeal to the tourist market.

Whistler Arts Council (WAC)

WAC is a registered charity established in 1982 with a mandate to “build and integrate arts into the Whistler community”. It produces a number of festivals, events and programs throughout the year including a Performance Series, Out of Bounds, Whistler Celebration 2010, the Children’s Art Festival, ArtWalk, Summer Art Workshops on the Lake, ARTrageous, and Bizarre Bazaar. As the community’s “umbrella” arts organization, WAC advocates for the arts, local artists and the local community in Whistler and throughout the Sea to Sky Corridor. It provides the community with access to the arts, and gives regional artists opportunities to present their work to local and visitor audiences. It provides resources and information to the community, outside organizations and local artists by acting as a referral service, co-programmer and information network. WAC is the “lead agent” for implementing arts strategies within Whistler’s 2010 strategic framework, as well as for fulfilling the Arts, Culture & Heritage (ACH) Strategy within the Whistler2020 Comprehensive Sustainability Plan.

WAC’s operating budget in 2008 was \$999,674. About \$480,000 of this total came from the RMOW in the form of grants and fee for service agreements. It has a full-time staff of 5, plus several part-time contractors. It is currently based at Millennium Place.

The Maurice Young Millennium Place Society (MYMPS)

MYMPS was incorporated under the Society Act in 2000 and received charitable status in 2003. It operates with a mandate to “enhance the quality of life of our residents and visitors by encouraging, supporting, building and operating innovative programs that challenge, engage and

stimulate our community to develop their creative, inspirational and intellectual awareness.” Its vision states that “By 2012, the MYMPS will be a leading centre of excellence for cultural programs in British Columbia” and its two-part mission is as “a catalyst to enrich community life and enhance the resort experience through strategic partnerships, community engagement and arts programming” and as the operator of Millennium Place “as Whistler’s centre for Arts, Culture and Inspiration.”

The facility which MYMPS operates, called Millennium Place, but often referred to as MY Place, currently includes a 250-seat presentation theatre, a theatre foyer (which serves as a public art gallery), a daycare, a youth centre, two multipurpose rental rooms, a office for a local radio station and several offices which are used by MYMPS as well as community groups. The facility has about 12,500 square feet of usable spaces as outlined in *Figure One*.

Figure One
Summary of Spaces in My Place

MAURICE YOUNG MILLENNIUM PLACE		
Room	Sq.Ft.	% of Tot
Casual Rental and Common Areas		
Wilhelmsen Hall	3,714	29%
Scotia Creek Gallery	1,076	8%
Foyer (entrance area)	1,000	8%
Multipurpose Room	885	7%
Boardroom A	487	4%
Kitchen (lower level)	150	1%
Meditation Room	113	1%
Subtotal	7,425	57%
Tenant Rental and Admin		
Youth Centre	1,880	14%
TB Daycare (+ 1900 outdoor)	1,509	12%
WAC Offices	746	6%
MYMPS Admin Offices	595	5%
Rogers/Mountain FM	378	3%
Village Host Offices	165	1%
WIS Office	101	1%
Community Consultant	100	1%
Village Animation Office	85	1%
Subtotal	5,559	43%
TOTAL Usable Space	12,984	100%
<i>Above information compiled January 2009.</i>		
<i>MYMP is described as 22,500 sq.ft facility.</i>		
<i>(including common areas, storage and mech rooms)</i>		

Bookings have grown by 67% over the past three years. During 2007, MY Place had 361 days of operation with 45,000 guests passing through the doors to participate in various events and programs. The theatre was used for 60-ticketed events, averaging 63% capacity, including its own “Real Canadian” performance series and that of WAC. Fifty community organizations and businesses make use of the facility in one form or another. Over \$100,000 in subsidies was provided to local community groups in the form of discounted rental space or through other support as “value in kind”.

For its fiscal year ending May 2008, MYMPS reported revenues of about \$985,000 comprised of about \$338,500 in room rentals and event production, \$240,000 in municipal grants for operations, \$175,000 in daycare grants and fees, \$157,000 in municipal grants to cover mortgage interest, \$41,000 in other grants and donations, and \$33,500 in office services and commission income. It currently has a full-time staff of 4, plus 5 part-time and casual workers.

To date, programming of the facility has been accomplished by MYMPS and through a mix of external producers, including WAC, which recently moved into MY Place and has offices in that facility.

The Role of the RMOW

The RMOW provides annual funding support to both WAC and MYMPS. Fiscal realities have forced the RMOW to reduce its 2008 funding of both WAC and MYMPS by 30%, resulting in significant financial challenges for both organizations, and a commitment by their respective Boards to explore ways to share administration and functional use of MY Place, thereby making it more of a dedicated community cultural centre.

At the same time, preparing for the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games is raising the bar of what is required of the community in delivering cultural programming. Combined, these two situations provide an opportunity to explore new ways of structuring the cultural sector to enhance its capacity to fulfill both 2010 cultural opportunities and its longer-term Whistler2020 vision.

WAC's most pressing challenge in the fall of 2008 was to find a new administrative home. While a move into Millennium Place early in December resolved this immediate issue, its strength lies in programming, not facility management, and it is concerned about being encumbered by issues not related to its core competencies.

For MYMPS, the most pressing challenge is to maximize the "highest and best" use of the facility and strengthen its core competencies by:

1. Working more collaboratively with cultural sector partners to deliver programs and services
2. Serving as a physical home for Whistler's broader arts, culture & heritage community.

Conclusions

A number of conclusions arose out of the analysis of the information gathered for this review. They are summarized in point form under two headings, not in priority order.

Facilities Review

1. Millennium Place is a high quality, eight year old building well located on a high profile, easily accessed lot in the community.
2. The quality of the facility is at risk. While little has been invested in the facility during its first years of operation, it will be important to invest more in future years in lifecycle maintenance to protect the initial high level of quality built into the facility.

3. Millennium Place represents a disparate mix of spaces that have no synergy and no focus. Spaces appear to be originally included more because they could anchor fund raising efforts, than because they fit together into a cohesive whole with a positive impact on each other. Space has more recently been allocated more on the basis of generating revenue than on conforming to a clear, focussed mandate. Some uses of the building are currently housed at Millennium Place because there is no other place to easily house them (e.g. some office uses for groups like the Village Host Program) rather than because they fit within the mandate of the facility. A mix of arts spaces, office rental space, a youth centre, multipurpose activity space, and a day care may be seen by some as the appropriate elements of a Community Centre, but one gets the impression that little thought has been given to how the spaces support each other; and in fact they don't. To realize the potential of the building, a review of what is included and how it is used needs to be done with a focus on a unifying theme. While the operator, the MYMPS, has a mission and mandate to be "Whistler's Centre for Arts, Culture, and Inspiration," it is difficult to connect many of the prominent uses of the building to that mission statement.
4. There is also some degree of confusion about Millennium Place. Some people see it as a multipurpose "Community Centre". Others see it as a Centre for the Arts, and others aren't sure what it is. Various stories exist about how it was conceived and developed, how it is currently used, and who controls its use. Confusion represents lost potential. It needs to be cleared up.
5. There is some negative emotional "baggage" connected with Millennium Place. Anecdotal evidence suggests some local residents won't use Millennium Place because of negative perceptions. Such perceptions exist about the way it was originally conceived, about how it is currently used, about current issues around its ownership, and about "past sins" with respect to its operation. Whether valid or not, perception, in this case, is reality. This "baggage" is affecting use and support for the facility at least to some degree. These perceptions need to be reversed.
6. Millennium Place includes many spaces that are not currently used to full capacity. There are various degrees of excess capacity in the Day Care, the Theatre, the Theatre Lobby, the Meditation Room, and all the spaces located on the lowest level. Some of these spaces are used intensively for a few hours each day or each week. Others are used variously week to week or use varies by season. While the theatre is nominally used to a reasonably high percentage of capacity relative to other theatres in BC, some of the recorded use is for recorded uses that don't require a theatre (e.g. a meeting on the stage) so there is really more excess capacity in that space than the current figures show (if such uses are diverted to other spaces which are also underutilized, like a multipurpose space). More use could and should be made of the underutilized spaces.

The only spaces used to full capacity at present are the main floor spaces allocated to office and administration.

7. In order to ensure optimum use of any community arts, culture or heritage facility, and to ensure that it realizes as much "public good" as possible to the community it serves, its uses must be proactively managed. Adopting a posture of simply "renting space to groups that need it" will not suffice. Simply trying to find uses that pay the most to use the building could even be counter productive. Space must be proactively programmed and competing uses managed against a filter of a clear public good mandate, rather than a "how much net revenue will it deliver" goal. All cost/benefit operating decisions must include non monetary public benefits within the analysis. While renting space may be

- appropriate in some circumstances, it should not be the only goal or the central theme of the mandate. For further information on this “public good” approach to cost/benefit analysis, readers are referred to Appendix A.
8. Because Whistler has only one purpose-built performing arts space, it must be “all things to all people”. This is challenging. While it is ideally sized and configured for some uses, it is too small for many and not suitable for others. While there is lots of need for theatre space in Whistler, the theatre at Millennium Place does not meet all this need and yet is underutilized. Very little can be done within the scope of this review to improve this situation.
 9. The RMOW will assume ownership of Maurice Young Millennium Place and the roughly \$3.2 million in existing mortgage debt on the property. In that transition there will be a commitment to continue to use the facility as a chapel. Because the municipality will want to protect its asset, it will be involved in its overall lifecycle maintenance. Because it will want the asset to be operated as efficiently as possible, it will also ensure economies of scale in many of the building’s operating systems (e.g. phone system, energy conservation systems, communications servers). However, it will prefer not to deal with the uses and users of the facility. Instead, it will want another body that better understands those users and uses (and how they can be accommodated within the building in a way that maximizes public good) to take responsibility for operating and programming of the facility. There will be some aspects of operation and maintenance that still need to be worked out and those will need to be covered in recommendations in this project.
 10. Few other spaces in Whistler are purpose built as arts spaces. The spaces built for multipurpose use or for another specific use, and currently used at least in part as arts space, include the Alta Lake Station House, Spruce Grove Field House, Conference Centre, hotel ballrooms, bars, retail spaces and the Museum and Archives building. The only spaces purpose built for an arts, culture or heritage use are the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre, the new Library, the Rainbow Theatre and the Cineplex. New spaces which will be purpose built, at least in part, for the arts include Celebration Plaza.

Organizational Review

11. The Arts scene in Whistler has expanded over the past decade and continues to expand significantly. The range, number and quality of special events have all increased over the past decade. The amount of local talent and skill in a wide range of artistic efforts has increased with about 300 local artists on the Arts Council database. The number of spaces in which performing and visual arts are created and showcased has increased (see point nine above for a list of spaces) over the past ten years, including the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre, the new Library, and Millennium Place. The sophistication of many local organizations is enhanced and so has their credibility (although it is dangerous to include examples, the Whistler Arts Council, the Whistler Film Festival, the Writers Group, and the B Grade Film Festival are offered as evidence of such progress). All this growth has been recognized in the designation by the Government of Canada of Whistler as a Cultural Capital of Canada, the success of many local events (e.g. Telus World Ski and Snowboard Festival, Crankworx, Cornucopia, Whistler Music Festival, Whistler Film Festival,) and in the increased corporate sponsorship of arts in general in the community. Generally speaking, there has been significant increase in arts, culture and heritage product offering for all three market segments.

12. There is a need to further expand the “Arts and Culture Product” in Whistler; to increase the quantity, quality and range of arts activity. This has a number of driving forces, but includes the fact that tourists want to view the richness of thriving local arts community and participate in it in a way that enriches their visits. They are also attracted in increasing numbers to major special events. Another driving force is the need by local residents for more opportunities to develop local arts talent, showcase it and celebrate the uniqueness of Whistler’s culture. Whistler is in the middle of the Cultural Olympiad. There is a particular need for more arts and crafts studio space, more public exhibition space, and a new museum and archives space. There is also a need for more outdoor assembly space (hopefully satisfied by the development of Celebration Plaza) and more indoor performance spaces of various sizes.
13. Because the three separate market segments in Whistler have differing “abilities to pay” for service, and because of the many different agencies set up to each focus on specific segments, there are many examples of widely differing pricing policies in Whistler’s Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector. For example, WAC is charged for activities it sponsors in the Conference Centre. The Whistler Film Festival is allowed to use that facility at no cost. Some local non profit arts organizations have expressed concern that they cannot afford to use the facilities at Millennium Place. But corporate entities have no trouble paying market rates when they use the spaces for training sessions or management seminars. More effort is required to rationalize existing pricing systems, and to provide more variable pricing systems to respond to the differing ability to pay for space and service.
14. There are many agencies involved in the hosting of special events in Whistler, but there are also coordinating mechanisms (e.g. Events Whistler) that allow the various agencies to co-exist in a way that minimizes overlaps, duplication of effort or counterproductive activity.
15. The timing of the Olympics creates opportunity and constraint. The opportunity exists to expand local arts and cultural capacity and leave a stronger sector as a legacy. The constraint is that the RMOW has had to focus on its Olympic commitments at the expense of funding the operation of some services and products that focus on more localized needs. Funding for Millennium Place has been constrained and funding for a new museum and archives is not available.
16. In the longer term, there will be sufficient resources available to realize the expansion of the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector. These resources include corporate support, user fees, tourism revenue sharing funding and ongoing municipal tax funding. There will be more resources available for responding to the tourist market segment than to the other smaller segments, but the challenge will be to leverage the resources focussed on the former to also meet the needs of the latter.
17. There is significant overlap in the mandates for the Whistler Arts Council and the MYMPS organizations. The mandate of the former is to “build and integrate arts into the fabric of the Whistler community”. The latter operates a facility that is dedicated to being “Whistler’s Centre for Arts, Culture and Inspiration”. Both act as catalysts and facilitators. Both do some arts programming. Both work with many local arts organizations (who sometimes complain that they have to work with two organizations which increase their efforts).
18. There are also some differences in the two organizations. The MYMP Board acts as a facility operator and a landlord. The Arts Council programs many spaces, but doesn’t spend much time operating any of them.

19. Interviewees were generally supportive of some form of closer collaboration between the WAC and MYMP Society; with most suggesting some form of amalgamation. Reasons generally centred on linking responsibility for operating and maintaining the major arts related facility in Whistler with the responsibility for dealing with uses and users. Others saw significant economies resulting in amalgamation of competencies, resources, equipment and information. Those interviewed often cited that the two organizations were in much of the same business, with shared mandates. They also indicated it would be easier for users to deal with one organization for support and information.
20. If the two were somehow more closely aligned in some sort of new organization, there are other opportunities to add to this more broadly based organization. Candidates include responsibility for operating and/or programming other spaces like Celebration Plaza and the Alta Lake Station House. Some also mentioned the Museum and Archives. A few mentioned the Library (however, it is clear that it operates under provincial statutes, instead of locally controlled structures). Some also indicated that responsibility for some major special events could also be added to the purview of the new organization.

Summary of Conclusions

One important element in the community's effort to grow the Arts, Culture and Heritage Sector in Whistler is to bring the WAC and the MYMP Board closer together to reduce overlap and duplication, effect efficiencies and economies of scale, eliminate confusion over what the two organizations do, make better use of Millennium Place, take advantage of each other's competencies, and serve the community better. The real question is how much closer do they have to be and how to effect this "bringing together" in way that benefits each organization, and more importantly, the community.

Possible New Structures

Options for consideration can be portrayed along a continuum with "status quo" at one end and "completely combined" at the other. Three options are sketched out below.

Option A – Status Quo

In this option the WAC and MYMPS continue to exist as two completely independent organizations, co-located in one facility, and no other responsibilities or mandates are added to either one. The increased collaboration would be entirely according to the will of the two Boards and staffs to cooperate and work together toward common ends. There would be no arbitrating body to legally or structurally ensure that cooperation, but it could still happen. Once the ownership of Millennium Place has been transferred to the RMOW, it would assume responsibility for servicing the debt, and for at least some lifecycle maintenance. The remaining roles that MYMPS currently plays would continue to be played by the same organization. WAC would continue to do what it has always done, but from a base of operations within Millennium Place. It would use Millennium Place and other venues on an "as required" basis.

Advantages of this option include:

- Little chance of losing good staff members,
- No stress involved in restructuring,

- WAC based in Millennium Place allows for some synergies and economies of scale without forcing them to happen,
- WAC free to program where it makes most sense without being obligated to Millennium Place.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Conflict between two Boards and staff are still possible,
- Economies of scale and synergies are not maximized.

Option B – Partial Integration of the two Organizations

If change is contemplated, the least amount of change that should be considered would be the least amount of structure that would ensure some degree of cooperation and collaboration on areas of mutual interest and concern. That means that the RMOW would take some responsibilities for Millennium Place as above. Beyond that, a number of sub options could be designed as follows:

- a) a coordinating body/committee could be created as an interim or permanent entity with representatives from both Societies; whose job it would be to examine and dictate areas of cooperation, economies of scale, and joint initiative, but the two societies would continue to exist,
- b) The two societies could collapse into one new entity, but keep two staff complements. There could be two senior staff people, each reporting to the Board. One would be responsible for everything the WAC has been doing in the past (i.e. developing local arts and cultural capacity) and one would be responsible for day to day operation and maintenance of Millennium Place.

Advantages of this option include:

- Synergies and economies of scale at least at the Board level, if not the staff level,
- Some economies of scale,
- A unified front to present to the public.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- Some synergies may not be realized.

Option C – Full Integration of the two Organizations

If change is contemplated, the maximum amount of change that can be considered is complete collapsing of the two organizations into one new organization and the addition of other responsibilities currently not part of either. The results would be one legal entity, one Board, one staff complement that does all of what the two organizations currently do as well as some additional roles. The resulting entity would have one senior staff person and all others would report to her/him. It would be responsible for all uses and users of the facility, and day to day operation and maintenance. It would also be responsible for dealing with arts and cultural groups, individuals, programs and services, and any contracts for service the RMOW negotiates with it from time to time (e.g. Village Animation, cultural planning beyond 2010). In addition to the roles and responsibilities that the two organizations have been undertaking in the past, a number of new roles would be added, including operation, day to day maintenance and

programming of other assets that are primarily used for arts, culture or heritage services like the Alta Lake Station House and Celebration Plaza. In the short term, the Spruce Grove Fieldhouse could also be added to the list. In the longer term, a museum and archives could also be added to the list.

Advantages of this option include:

- Synergies and economies of scale are maximized,
- The entity responsible for delivering programs and services also has responsibility for the spaces in which most of the programs and services are provided,
- Clarity to the community in one entity doing it all,
- No more overlap or duplication of mandates.

Disadvantages of this option include:

- If funding for operating Millennium Place is insufficient, it can divert attention away from the program/service providers,
- Stress that comes with restructuring may negatively impact the new organization, including potential loss of some good staff.

Recommendations

A total of 15 recommendations are provided and organized under three headings.

Facility Recommendations

The mandate of Millennium Place should be narrowed to become the “cultural centre of the community.” Uses of the facility and allocation of spaces within it should be reviewed and refined accordingly, and the facility should be renovated over time to focus on the new mandate. As there is more need for arts, culture and heritage spaces and services than space available to meet the need, virtually all of Millennium Place will eventually be used as arts, cultural and heritage spaces.

The building should continue to be used also as a spiritual centre, and accommodate religious ceremony; not because that fits with the mandate, but because of the original impetus for the building itself, and the fact that such spiritual uses won't jeopardize the building's ability to focus on its primary mandate of arts, culture and heritage benefits. The facility can easily be used as a place of worship without unduly jeopardizing its focus and use as an arts centre.

It is assumed that the RMOW will complete its acquisition of Millennium Place and the site on which it sits sometime in 2009. When that happens, the RMOW will retain responsibility for and directly pay for such things as all lifecycle maintenance, all major repairs, and the cost of utilities including telephone and internet access. It will also add the building to its energy management systems. However, it will contract the day to day operation to a local not for profit entity (see specific recommendations) on a fee for service basis so that the management of the uses and users of the facility will render the maximum public good (i.e. indirect benefit to all Whistler citizens) as a result of the highest and best use of the space.

The following specific changes are recommended.

1. There is a need in Whistler for at least five types of visual arts studio spaces, including a) digital arts of animation, film and video skills, b) two dimensional art – painting and drawing, c) dance, d) music and e) ceramic and pottery skills. As many as possible of these five types of visual arts should be added to the uses of the Millennium Place facility, with studios being used for drop in use, workshops, regular programs, and for demonstration of skill for those that wish to come and see how it is done. Over time at least three and possibly four of these types of studios can and should be accommodated within Millennium Place. However, they should be phased in as the priority and opportunity becomes clearer over time. They can be accommodated within spaces which are currently used for offices, for rental to a local radio station, for a Board room, and for a Youth Centre.
2. While the Youth Centre would be phased out at this location, youth programming and involvement at Millennium Place should actually be increased, albeit not within a space dedicated only for youth. Youth would be involved to a much greater degree in the arts, culture and heritage interpretation of the community and would be involved in many of the spaces and programs within the facility.
3. Permanent offices for agencies not central to the delivery of arts, culture and heritage should be phased out over time in favour of use of those spaces to realize the primary mandate. Office spaces for such agencies as the Whistler 2020 planning staff, LUNA, Whistler Village Host Program staff and any private sector rentals should be reallocated over time to be presentation, exhibition or studio spaces.
4. Private or not for profit groups focussing on the arts should not be allowed office space in Millennium Place. While such groups may wish to be based in Millennium Place, there simply isn't enough space to fulfill these wishes in Whistler's Cultural Centre. A higher and better use would be program and activity space instead of administrative and office space which can be found in other facilities in Whistler.
5. The Day Care should also be relocated over time if and when the current review of child care need and spaces to meet the need shows that other appropriate spaces can be provided to meet all need. Even if other spaces can be demonstrated to provide all service that is required for Day Care, it may take time to shift this use to a new space. However, from the point of view of a unified mandate, with sufficient critical mass of space to achieve significant public good, the highest and best use of the existing Day Care within Millennium Place is as an exhibition centre. Such exhibitions could and should interpret the history of Whistler (ie. Museum exhibits) as well as the local artistic talent (visual arts and film/video). Exhibits should be of a more fixed, long term variety, but not necessarily permanent, and they should be in addition to exhibition of art in other spaces in Millennium Place including the Scotia Creek Gallery, corridors, and foyer.
6. All the above shifts might not occur until after the Olympic and Paralympic Games, as there may be games related uses of the facility which could require dedicated time and possibly even renovations.
7. A four year transition program and capital budget should be created in 2009 and the changes planned for the four years beginning in mid 2010. However, some of the changes could be made earlier if they are consistent with Olympic and Paralympic showcasing. For example, if an exhibit of the history of the Olympics were to be packaged in a way that would be appropriate for the Day Care area, and found to be desirable to be showcased during the Games period, the shift of Day Care to a different location could be advanced for that purpose with the caveats noted in recommendation number five above.

Organizational Recommendations

The following changes are recommended to the way arts, culture and heritage services are organized for delivery in Whistler. The changes would be planned and initiated in 2009 and fully in place by year end.

1. The WAC and MYMPS should be collapsed into one society, with one unified staff complement. The new organization should be called the WAC, and the building should continue to be Maurice Young Millennium Place or MY Place for short. It would be operated by the WAC. The reason the consultants believe that the Arts Council needs to be the legal entity is that there is a strong expectation in all BC communities that an arts council exist as an umbrella organization responsible for representing and developing the arts and cultural services and products in the community. If the new organization were not called an arts council, there would be ongoing pressure to form a new one, and that would be counterproductive. Arts councils are the community organizations which the provincial government and provincial organizations see as the logical vehicle to fund community arts development. Whistler needs one. Also, some community arts councils in BC operate arts centres. Examples include Maple Ridge and Chilliwack. These models have worked and serve the community well and are often seen as “best practices” in the community arts development industry.
2. The new organization would have one Executive Director with two Managers; one responsible for program and the other for physical spaces. Under program there would be program and service delivery responsibilities as well as marketing and communications. Under physical spaces would be day to day operation and technical services for the facilities that this new organization is responsible for operating under contract; including initially, Millennium Place and the performances and special events within Celebration Plaza. Arts uses of the Alta Lake Station House would also fall under the responsibility of the new organization. While there will be economies of scale in the new organization, there is a great deal of work to be done. Therefore, there will be no reduction of total staff positions. All savings due to economies of scale and reduced overlap and duplication will be allocated to enhancing the uses of Millennium Place, Celebration Plaza and the Alta Lake Station House and to enhancing the level of overall ACH service.
3. A fee for service agreement would be negotiated with the RMOW whereby the new organization would plan for, provide and report on the evolution of the arts, culture and heritage sector and “own” the ACH Strategy within Whistler2020 Sustainability Plan. Where some municipalities have their own ACH staff and delivery systems, the RMOW would contract this expertise and service from/to the new organization. The new organization would articulate with community providers, and coordinate services. The fee for service agreement would include the operation of Millennium Place and would identify the public goods that the new organization would be accountable for delivering (see Appendix B). While the forms of support for Millennium Place, the WAC and the implementation of the ACH Strategy will change and be repackaged, the total financial contribution from RMOW for these purposes will likely remain about the same, and will likely increase in future as the new organization is seen to be successful in delivering on the indicators within the ACH Strategy.
4. The Board of Directors of the new organization would be selected on the basis of a specific list of skills and abilities as opposed to composition by representative segments of the arts community. Whistler is too small for each ACH group to have representatives on the new organization. Community minded people chosen for their high level organizational and strategic thinking skills can represent all the various stakeholders in the ACH sector in Whistler. The Board will stay focussed on long range strategic planning and priority setting,

a solid policy framework, and systems for measuring and ensuring accountability. It will rely on a professional staff for all day to day operation of services and spaces.

5. The new organization will be conceived and all the components of success will be put in place in 2009 as soon as the title for Millennium Place is secured by the RMOW. It will be accountable for success using the Descriptions for Success and Related Indicators within the Whistler2020 Plan.
6. The new organization will work with the RMOW to ensure maximum synergies, efficiencies and systems for accountability. The RMOW will invest in the new organization to the extent necessary to ensure implementation of the Whistler2020 ACH Strategy. So long as the RMOW believes that it will be cost effective to contract the new organization to deliver on Whistler2020's ACH Strategy, rather than to undertake it within the municipal structure, it will work with the new organization and invest in it. This effectiveness goal, where the new organization must always show that it can deliver on the ACH Strategy and operate the Millennium Place more cost effectively than the RMOW could do it within a municipal structure, forms a natural system of "checks and balances". Regardless of the level of service the RMOW wishes to deliver and fund, or is able to fund, it will continue to fund the new organization as the delivery agent so long as it is cost effective to do so.

Other Recommendations

1. Pricing of all uses and users of Millennium Place should be reviewed with respect to segregating the market segments and charging less for local residents (through, for example, the Whistler Card identification program, off season or mid week rental rates, and local rental rates for productions that would focus on the local resident market) while charging more for uses and users that focus on the tourist market. Making the facility more accessible for local residents and amateur productions while balancing the revenues by charging more for tourists will appropriately serve all three market segments while at the same time maintaining revenue levels.
2. Marketing all activities and opportunities within Millennium Place to tourists should be enhanced. Every visitor to Whistler should know what is happening at the facility on each day they are in Whistler. Incentives to bring them into the building to view visual and performing art, or to participate in workshops, art interpretation programs, and interpretive artefacts and displays of historic significance that tell the story of Whistler, should be part of each visitor's experience.

Next Steps

The following next steps represent an optimum approach for implementing the above noted recommendations.

1. The final report will be officially received (note: not adopted) by the three primary audiences for the recommendations; that being the RMOW, the WAC and the MYMPS. That makes the final report public and begins a final public review of the report before any final adoption of the recommendations or commitment to proceed.
2. The project Steering Committee should continue to act in a coordinating and steering capacity at least until, and hopefully after, the three parties eventually adopt the recommendations. It would start by embarking on some public discussion of the final report to obtain feedback and reaction to the recommendations. All feedback and comment should be transparent. In other

words, all comment should be collected by the Steering Committee and provided to all three bodies that will need to embrace this new direction.

3. As soon as the title to Millennium Place is transferred to the RMOW, the Steering Committee should request formal endorsement of the report and the recommendations contained herein from the three primary parties that need to embrace the new direction. Formal adoption of and commitment to the new direction should be accomplished within the two to three months of the transfer of title.
4. Once endorsed, the three parties should reconstitute the Steering Committee as a Task Force to shepherd the initial structural changes and the changes to the funding for Millennium Place. The two organizations will continue to focus on their respective mandates and not be diverted from them. But the new Implementation Task Force will work in parallel to collapse the two organizations into one new single organization. They will deal with the fine details, the legal issues and the staffing of the new organization so that the transition to the new organization can be accomplished with a minimum of stress on the two organizations. The new organization should be in place prior to the end of 2009 so that it exists in its new format before the 2010 Olympic and Paralympic Games.
5. In parallel with the creation of the new organization, the Task Force should be working with the RMOW to negotiate the new fee for service agreement which will be the framework for the relationship between RMOW and the new organization. A long term agreement is required which will allow continuity and certainty for at least a three to five year horizon.
6. Also in 2009, a comprehensive high level plan should be developed to show how the ACH Strategy within the Whistler2020 Plan is implemented. This long term plan will show how community arts, culture and heritage services, assets and products will evolve over the next ten years to meet the goals of the Whistler2020 Plan and the needs of all three segments of the Whistler community.
7. As soon as the new organization is in place, it should embark on the creation of a long term plan for facility retrofit and reallocation of space.

Summary

Whistler is too small a community to have agencies with overlapping mandates and unfocused efforts. Resources are too scarce to waste volunteer efforts in such duplication. A compact, robust local agency is required with professional staff and our most capable volunteers, focused on clear deliverables aligned with a common Whistler2020 Plan. That agency is a new Whistler Arts Council. It will focus community efforts within the Arts, Culture and Heritage sector to ensure maximum utilization of all public resources as efficiently as possible. It will be most cost effective in realizing the maximum amount of public good at the least cost to local residents.

There is much to be gained by focussing Millennium Place on a clear, narrow and realistic mandate and challenging it to play a more productive role in moving the ACH agenda forward and becoming a hub of arts, culture and heritage activity in Whistler. To do this, a renewed Whistler Arts Council must be created to reduce duplication of effort, eliminate overlapping mandates and take advantage of the economies of scale that exist to utilize Millennium Place as a critical base for moving the ACH Strategy forward. These recommendations create a critical mass of effort and physical resource to make better use of limited available existing public resources.

Appendix A - Methodology

The workplan for this project included the following steps:

1. Initial meeting with the Steering Committee
2. Initial meeting with representatives of the MYMPS Board
3. Initial meeting with representatives of WAC Board
4. Review of all background materials including but not restricted to:
 - a. 2001 Whistler Arts Plan
 - b. 2005 Review of Millennium Place report
 - c. Annual reports by WAC and MYMPS
 - d. Strategic Plans by WAC and MYMPS
 - e. Whistler2020's Arts, Culture and Heritage Strategy
 - f. Budgets for Millennium Place
 - g. Organization charts for WAC and MYMPS
5. Tour of existence facilities
6. Interviews with 23 key stakeholders including:
 - a. Diana Lyons Millennium Place Board and Tourism Whistler
 - b. Tim Wake Councillor assigned to arts and culture
 - c. Scott McPhee Rocky Mountain Production Services Ltd.
 - d. Stella Harvey Whistler Writers Group
 - e. Jodi Westbury WAC Board, Tourism Whistler
 - f. Dave Brownlie IntraWest, Whistler Blackcomb Foundation
 - g. Fiona Famulak Millennium Place Board, The Whistler Chamber
 - h. Bill Barratt RMOW
 - i. Keith Bennett RMOW
 - j. Shauna Hardy Mishaw Whistler Film Festival
 - k. Doti Niedermayer WAC staff
 - l. Anne Popma WAC staff
 - m. Dennis Marriott MYMPS staff
 - n. John McCormick Consultant, Whistler Community Partners
 - o. Angie Nolan Local artist
 - p. Chili Thom Local artist
 - q. Joan Richoz WAC Board
 - r. Alex Kleinman Whistler Museum and Archives
 - s. Deborah Smythe WAC Board rep on MYMPS Board
 - t. Helga Ruiterman MYMPS Board
 - u. Barrett Fisher Tourism Whistler
 - v. Christian Kessner Special event organizer
 - w. Peter Shrimpton Whistler Interfaith Society
7. Workshop with WAC and MYMPS Boards and senior staff
8. Progress report to Steering Committee
9. Analyze all input and background information
10. Prepare and submit draft report
11. Discuss draft report with Steering Committee
12. Revise and submit final report

Appendix B – A Rationale for Public Decision Making for Cultural Services

In the private sector **Demand** is defined as the amount of a good or service that is purchased at a particular price. Demand is always a function of price. In the private sector, the incentive is always to find the point where as much revenue as possible can be derived by understanding the trade off between raising prices and corresponding falling demand.

In publicly supported services like arts, culture and heritage services, agencies sometimes ignore the price side of the definition and simply ask people what they want and then give them what they want because they say they want it; independent of price or what “the market will bear”.

There is growing understanding that demand is not an appropriate basis for making decisions about publicly supported leisure services. Demand essentially focuses on direct benefits to users of a service and the value those users place on those benefits.

Need is always a subset of demand. In order for there to be a need in a community, there must first be some demand for a service. But in order for that service to also be a need, there must be some form of indirect benefit to all citizens, from which they cannot escape. In fact, that is a classic definition of a “public good”; indirect benefit to all citizens which is not separable.

The private sector is always demand driven. If there is enough demand for something, and it is legal, the private sector will respond and provide services consistent with the demand. The public sector is always needs driven. In order for it to become involved, the service must also have some benefit to the entire community. There must be a public good that results.

In Whistler, the operator of a publicly supported facility, acts as an agent of the municipality, and should be needs driven. It should focus less on the direct benefits to users of services and more on the indirect benefits to all citizens of the community. The most fundamental question for the operation of a publicly owned and supported facility like Millennium Place should be “how much will this use benefit the entire community (not just those that use it) in relation to the cost of providing that use?” This is different than a private sector approach to operating the facility, which would generally favour all uses which generate more revenue than they incur costs. In a public sector approach to the facility, the benefits would be measured in units of public good to the entire community. Examples of such benefits could be:

- Attracting visitors to Whistler and/or extending their stay – this “more heads in beds” benefit would generally make the entire resort community more viable and would therefore benefit all stakeholders in the community;
- Fostering a sense of community identity, spirit and pride – this “connecting people to the community” benefit would make Whistler a better place to live, work, play and visit for everyone, not just those who used the facility most;
- Fostering creativity and uniqueness of the mountain resort – Whistler has always attempted to be true to its roots as a mountain resort, and provide “real” instead of artificial experiences – local creative talent can support and advance this effort (e.g. Mountain Film Festival)
- Celebrating our past – Helping local residents and visitors to understand the heritage of the community, its roots, and how it evolved can translate into an increased sense of understanding of and connection to the community, thereby making it a better place to live and visit,

Example:

Assume there are two possible uses for a small space on the main floor of Millennium Place. One is as a full time office for a local agency or company. The other is as a small gallery exhibiting the best of Whistler photographic talent.

There are at least two ways of approaching the decision. One is essentially a “demand” driven approach. The private sector approach will measure all costs and benefits along with business risks. In that approach, the office space will be chosen. The revenue is high and consistent, and the costs are relatively low. An operating surplus would be created. In fact, in the classic private sector approach, if there were more demand than supply for office spaces, the “rent” would be increased to the point where supply would equal demand, and at that point, net operating surplus would be maximized.

The second is a “needs” based approach. In the public sector approach, it might be determined that there is little spinoff benefit to the entire community from using the space as a private office. In fact, the public doesn’t benefit at all from its investment in the facility. If public good is the filter through which benefit is considered, it could easily be concluded that a gallery in the space would result in a net financial loss, but a total cost/benefit gain to the community. The arguments could be that the operating loss (subsidy) is less than the public good that results from local resident increase in community spirit and pride from seeing local talent displayed, and that visitors are more likely to drop into the facility to gain a more authentic experience of local art and culture, and that could result in a higher quality visitor experience which translates into longer terms benefits for the entire community.

So, in summary, public investments in arts, culture and heritage services are justified only on the basis that there is some form of collective good (i.e. called public good) that is measured as indirect benefit to all, rather than simply responding to whatever citizens want to do in their leisure time (which is best left to the private sector to respond to) or whatever results in the most revenue.