



**City of Kingston  
Report to Council  
Report Number 16-030**

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**To:** Mayor and Members of Council  
**From:** Cynthia Beach, Commissioner, Corporate & Strategic Initiatives  
**Resource Staff:** Colin Wiginton, Director, Cultural Services  
**Date of Meeting:** December 15, 2015  
**Subject:** Update, Implementation of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy

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**Executive Summary:**

The purpose of this report is to provide the Mayor and Council with an update regarding the implementation of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy for the City of Kingston, including the implementation of a Pilot Project as approved by Council in 2014.

The Pilot Project as proposed was intended to achieve a number of goals designed to 'Connect the Stakeholders' as the first of three top-line priorities identified within the Strategy. It was also intended to support much-needed research regarding the level of awareness that exists regarding Kingston's cultural offerings within surrounding markets, to identify best practices within the industry and to measure the potential impact of a promotional campaign for the new arts hub.

As part of this work, various partners and stakeholders from the Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP), Tourism Kingston, Queen's University and the Cultural Services Department came together in an effort to assess the current state of cultural tourism in Kingston through a combination of research and a look at practices related to cultural tourism in other communities as well as to recommend potential next steps in response to the recommendations identified as part of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy.

What has emerged was a series of collaborations that have produced important research findings along with a brand positioning statement for Kingston as well as the creation of a steering committee set-up under the banner of "One Voice" (1) to identify and action areas of spending overlap, (2) to determine where collaboration would strengthen the presence and (3) to provide better return on investment and increase overnight visitation. Council had the chance

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to see the results of this work on October 6, 2015 when Murray Matheson from KAP shared with Council the work that has been completed to date, involving various partners and stakeholders.

The results of this work so far have been extremely positive and have helped to propel the community forward in terms of achieving Council's Strategic Priority to prepare and implement a city-wide tourism strategy. That work is far from complete and, within that context, the Cultural Services Department will continue to build on this work in collaboration with various partners and stakeholders in support of Council's Strategic Priority will staying focused primarily on the development of cultural tourism products.

**Recommendations:**

**That** Council approve a one-time payment of \$30,500 to the Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP) for the work the organization led on behalf of Kingston's many tourism partners and stakeholders to be drawn from the 2015 Operating budget of the Cultural Services Department; and

**That** staff be directed to report back to Council on an annual basis with updates related to the implementation of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy, especially as it relates to product development.

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**Authorizing Signatures:**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY COMMISSIONER

**Cynthia Beach, Commissioner,  
Corporate & Strategic Initiatives**

ORIGINAL SIGNED BY CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

**Gerard Hunt, Chief Administrative Officer**

**Consultation with the following Commissioners:**

Lanie Hurdle, Community Services	Not required
Denis Leger, Transportation, Facilities & Emergency Services	Not required
Jim Keech, President and CEO, Utilities Kingston	Not required
Desiree Kennedy, Chief Financial Officer & City Treasurer	

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**Options/Discussion:**

The City of Kingston, through the Cultural Services Department, together with the Kingston Economic Development Corporation (KEDCO) partnered in 2013 to develop an Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy for the City of Kingston as recommended in the Kingston Culture Plan that was itself approved by Council in 2010.

The purpose of this integrated Strategy was two-fold:

1. To capitalize on the City's existing strengths in these two areas; and
2. To address potential gaps and/or weaknesses in its cultural heritage and cultural tourism offerings.

The Integrated Cultural Tourism and Cultural Heritage Strategy was also predicated on two important assumptions inspired by Kingston's location, history, resources and overall quality of life as well as its untapped potential:

1. Kingston's history and heritage provides a compelling resource; and
2. Cultural tourism represents a cost effective way to grow the tourism market in Kingston based on an existing strength.

As it was described, Kingston's position is enviable among Canadian communities as a result of the breadth of cultural heritage resources that exist that set it apart from other cities of similar size. However, it was also cited there exists a lack of a strategic commitment in the form of partnerships and resource sharing to ensure that the existing cultural heritage resources are accessible and meaningful to residents and attractive to visitors to the area. The need to develop quality experiences and products as well as the need to ensure they are market ready were two core priorities identified as part of the Strategy.

It was also noted at the time that the promotion of Kingston's history and heritage, combined with a strategic investment in cultural tourism, would support the desire to create a sustainable city both in terms of cultural vitality and economic health. Such endeavours aligned well with the Council Strategic Priorities at the time and still do so today, especially as it relates to preparing and implementing a city-wide tourism strategy as part of creating a smart economy and protecting heritage as part of planning a livable city.

A final draft of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy was presented to Council and approved in 2014 along with a recommendation that staff work in collaboration with tourism partners and stakeholders from across the community using \$100,000 in funds allocated and approved as part of the 2014 Operating budget to pilot various tourism-related initiatives.

This funding was much needed at the time in order to bring together a number of different partners and stakeholders, to develop a shared vision of the work to be done and to identify more fully the investment of resources required to implement the Strategy as proposed. Up until that point, the tourism sector efforts were not always complementary. In terms of cultural heritage, some work was already in progress as a direct result of investments made by Council in support of the on-going implementation of the Kingston Culture Plan, including the following:

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- Implement Phase I of the Heritage Interpretive Plan (Recommendation #1);
- Cluster existing festivals (Recommendation #2);
- Institute the Heritage Fund Program (Recommendation #10); and
- Develop a comprehensive cultural database (Recommendation #18).

### Implementing the Pilot Project

Following the approval of the Strategy, the Pilot Project was intended to achieve a number of goals designed to 'Connect the Stakeholders' as the first of three top-line priorities identified within the Strategy. It was also intended to support much-needed research regarding the level of awareness that exists regarding Kingston's cultural offerings within surrounding markets, to identify best practices within the industry and to measure the potential impact of a promotional campaign for the new arts hub. The goals of the Pilot Project to be achieved at the outset included the following:

1. Promote the re-opening of the J.K. Tett Centre, together with the opening of the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, to make it known locally, regionally and nationally that Kingston is now home to a jointly created arts campus designed to benefit residents, students and visitors to the area;
2. Emphasize local history and the efforts being made to preserve and re-present it through initiatives designed to re-purpose Kingston's built heritage and animate it in ways that make it meaningful to contemporary users and audiences;
3. Celebrate Kingston as a place that values culture, fosters creativity and offers a wide range of cultural offerings that are accessible and interesting to a cross-section of people; and
4. Demonstrate the potential of cultural tourism through collaboration and identify performance measures/indicators that can be used to assess its benefits and impacts.

The Pilot Project was timely as it provided an opportunity to bring together an expanded group of partners and stakeholders representing both cultural heritage and cultural tourism interests to achieve a series of short-term outcomes. One of the main goals at this time was to be able to report back to Council in 2015 as to the work done to date with an eye to demonstrating the potential of cultural tourism as a means to strengthen local identity and foster economic development.

As part of the initial work, various partners and stakeholders from the Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP), Tourism Kingston, Queen's University and the Cultural Services Department came together to determine the current state of cultural tourism in Kingston through research and through an assessment of practices related to cultural tourism in other communities. The goal was also to have this group recommend potential next steps in response to the recommendations identified as part of the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy.

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### Deliverables Associated with the Pilot Project

In support of the Pilot Project, City of Kingston staff developed a framework to help guide the work needed based on a collective impact model. Typically, this kind of model is used to address social issues but its emphasis on collaboration and community-building seemed relevant in this situation as a way to strengthen connections between the various and varied tourism partners and stakeholders. Using a collective impact model, the deliverables initially defined in relation to the Pilot Project included the following:

1. **Devise a Common Agenda:** Includes identifying various partners and stakeholders and bringing them together with community members to develop a shared vision.
2. **Research, Recording and Measuring Results:** Includes establishing baselines in terms of best practices as well as establishing mutually agreed upon methods for data gathering, measuring and reporting results.
3. **Mutually Reinforcing Activities:** Includes fostering group work in which each participant is able to represent their area of interest and share their expertise.
4. **Continuous Communications:** Includes facilitating regular meetings and other forms of communication to share information, report on work completed and build trust.
5. **Leadership Development and Implementation Plan:** Includes defining roles and responsibilities, identifying resources and developing a shared implementation plan in the form of a Community Action Plan that jointly supports cultural heritage and cultural tourism.

These deliverables, as proposed, were shared among the participants in the Pilot Project as a way to start the conversation and a number of existing and anticipated initiatives were mapped against these deliverables in order to show how things might proceed.

### Research

In support of the Pilot Project, the partners and stakeholders agreed that research was critical in order to provide an understanding of how Kingston is perceived as a tourist destination. As part of this research phase, the partners and stakeholders agreed that baseline data was needed in order to understand with some certainty the profile of Kingston's cultural assets and experiences among both residents and visitors. This work was led by the Kingston Accommodation Partners (KAP) on behalf of the group as an essential first step upon which to based future efforts.

**Phase 1:** The first phase of research included a telephone survey administered by capR Advisory on behalf of Alphabet Creative based in Ottawa. A total of 1,200 interviews (300 in each of Ottawa, Montreal, Toronto, and Kingston) were completed in November and December of 2014 with a particular focus on determining people's awareness of emerging cultural tourism assets. A summary of the findings of the telephone survey included the following:

- Leisure travel is high across the three target cities and Kingston.
- Kingston is not top of mind for future travel, especially during the winter months.
- Many people have short getaway trips planned in Ontario in next 2 years, which provides some opportunity for Kingston.

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- Interest in heritage buildings and sites along with beautiful scenery presents an opportunity to promote Kingston as a destination that includes “arts hubs”.
- Awareness of Agnes Etherington Art Centre, Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, and Tett Centre is fairly low in Ottawa, Montreal, and Toronto but high in Kingston.
- Interest in visiting “arts hub” is fairly high among Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal travellers.
- Likelihood of visiting “arts hub” among Kingston residents is high.

**Phase 2:** While the first phase of research offered the partners and stakeholders with a better sense of the marketing challenges related to attracting visitors to Kingston, the next step was intended to evaluate the quality of the cultural products in Kingston and their appeal to an outside audience. To determine the level of appeal it was agreed that a familiarization (or “FAM”) tour would be organized and it was also agreed that the FAM tour should include “social media influencers” rather than representatives of traditional media outlets. Again, this work was led by KAP who worked with a specialist in organizing familiarization tours among this demographic who brought together a group of arts and culture enthusiasts from Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa with significant followers on You Tube, Twitter, Instagram and/or blogs.

This group of social media influencers was invited to visit Kingston between January 30 and February 1, 2015 to coincide with the opening of the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning and to experience a variety of Kingston’s cultural offerings, including the Isabel Bader Centre for the Performing Arts, Agnes Etherington Arts Centre, ReelOut Queer Film + Video Festival and the Grand Theatre Presents program, to name a few. The combined digital footprint of the participants at the time of their visit totalled 115,852 followers and a focus group at the end of their visit was facilitated by staff from Queen’s University on behalf of the tourism partners and stakeholders. The reactions of the group were overwhelmingly positive. Kingston surprised and delighted many members of the group who thought they were coming to visit a place known almost exclusively as a prison and university town but discovered a city that actively supported the arts and heritage and in a very progressive way.

In addition to the feedback received from the focus group, the level of digital engagement that resulted from the visit was also significant. Using the #visitkingston hashtag across multiple platforms, 4 blog posts were created with thousands of impressions and 65 Instagram photos generated 10,987 likes and 1,041 comments. The participants described Kingston as charming, historic, photogenic, scenic, vibrant, and close-knit. While Kingston is known for being historic, the group explained that it is “tangible”, “accessible” and “visible” and stimulated a high-level of curiosity regarding the history of Kingston and the area. The participants also indicated they felt connected to the history and it left them wanting to know more about the city’s past.

Some of the key conclusions drawn from this phase of research include the following:

- The opening of the Tett Centre for Creativity and Learning and the Isabel Centre for the Performing Arts has enhanced Kingston’s appeal as a destination for cultural tourism.
- The combination of the Tett Centre, Isabel Centre for the Performing Arts and the Agnes Etherington Art Centre are anchors to any effort to attract cultural tourists to Kingston.
- Visitors discover so much more than they imagined. The incidentals are unique depending on interests.

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- Despite the appeal of these facilities, they will not be enough to compete with the offerings of other major centres, particularly if traditional channels of communication are applied.
- Kingston needs to be experienced first-hand in order to be appreciated and therein lays the challenge of any marketing effort.

**Phase 3:** Kingston Accommodation Partners identified consultant Greg Klassen, one of the most respected and experienced voices in the Canadian tourism industry, to help local tourism leaders navigate the next two decades, to create a unique competitive position for Kingston and to develop a strategic blueprint to leverage strategy and technology for competitive advantage. KAP subsequently engaged Klassen to conduct a series of meeting and interviews with various partners and stakeholders in April 2015 and provided in May 2015 a situational analysis and recommendation for a brand positioning statement for the future. At the heart of this brand positioning statement was the recommendation that Kingston actively pursue a marketing campaign that reflects the creative energy of the city and that connects with a younger “millennial” demographic whose activities and interests are also of interest to an older “boomer” generation.

As part of the brand positioning statement, it has also been recommended that Kingston specifically target what are being referred to as ‘curators and creators’ as the city already provides the kind of authentic, creative and vibrant scene the younger demographic is seeking. No other destination in Canada is targeting this market at this time and Kingston can significantly reduce the size of its competitive field. An initial presentation of the brand positioning statement was shared at the KAP Annual General Meeting in May 2015. The response was overwhelmingly in favour of pursuing such a strategy that is also designed to unify the various tourism partners and stakeholders. Subsequent to that meeting, Murray Matheson from KAP also shared a summary of these findings with Council on October 6, 2015.

#### Brand Positioning Statement

Kingston Accommodation Partners and Tourism Kingston have used the brand positioning statement as an opportunity to change the way they work together and also to re-consider how Kingston markets itself outside of the city. In support of this work, a cross-sector steering committee has been formed to develop an integrated go-to-market plan designed to benefit as many tourism partners and stakeholders as possible. This steering committee has been set-up under the banner of “One Voice” (1) to identify and action areas of spending overlap, (2) to determine where collaboration would strengthen the presence and (3) to provide better return on investment and increase overnight visitation.

The steering committee has also been actively engaged in identifying the next steps, which includes the translation of the brand positioning statement into a set of guidelines. A draft brand guidebook and content marketing playbook have also been developed and are being circulated for feedback to assist both organizations and individuals with specific aspects of the initiative, including a vision statement, guiding principles and design elements that can be used to ensure consistent messaging across the sector.

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**Next Steps, Cultural Services Department**

The tourism sector in Kingston involves a number of partners and stakeholders who connect in different ways. At one level, there exists a focus on marketing as with the Kingston Accommodation Partners that facilitates a destination marketing fund and Tourism Kingston that functions as a destination marketing organization. Their primary purpose is to promote Kingston to visitors through a wide array of marketing-related initiatives and their involvement in product development is limited. The Cultural Services Department, on the other hand, has a central role to play in terms of product development and in support of implementing the brand positioning statement by participating in the steering committee and working to align product development to the target markets.

Cultural experiences, assets, places, and people are at the heart of the brand positioning statement for Kingston, and it is the role of the Cultural Services Department to support the development of product as follows:

- Grants through the City of Kingston Arts Fund and City of Kingston Heritage Fund;
- Interpreting the civic collection and showcasing Kingston City Hall National Historic Site;
- Programming the MacLachlan Woodworking Museum and Pump House Steam Museum;
- Using digital tools to highlight Kingston's history and culture through such tools as the website ['history and innovation'](#) as well as a range of mobile walking tours;
- Administering service level agreements with the Kingston Arts Council and Kingston Association of Museums, Art Galleries and Historic Sites;
- Co-ordinating the Grand Theatre Presents program;
- Animating the Grand Theatre in the summer through The Kick & Push Festival;
- Marketing and communications support;
- Participating in the steering committee; and
- Providing human, financial and in-kind support as needed.

At this juncture, staff is seeking approval from Council to contribute \$30,500 in funding to support KAP and the research work it led on behalf of all the tourism partners and stakeholders. This work resulted from the efforts of the Cultural Services Department to 'Connect the Stakeholders' as recommended in the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy that, in turn, led to the development of the brand positioning statement and the establishment of the steering committee as well as the articulation of the "One Voice" approach.

As outlined in this report, there has been much positive change within the tourism sector over the past two years that has created the conditions needed for increased collaboration and success among the many different partners and stakeholders. It also means the original goal of the Pilot Project as proposed has been achieved. This represents the best possible outcome but also means the Cultural Services Department needs to re-visit the plan it intended to bring back to Council in 2015 given the changes that have been made and the momentum that has been built. Now is not the time to pull back but to continue to participate in the "One Voice" steering committee while pursuing product development as the main focus of its efforts,

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especially as it relates to cultural heritage as outlined in the Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy.

**Existing Policy/By Law:**

The Integrated Cultural Heritage and Cultural Tourism Strategy as approved in 2014 was created in response to a series of linked recommendations in the Kingston Culture Plan, including but not limited to Recommendation #3, 11, 18, 43, 53, 58 and 59. The Strategy and its implementation through the Pilot Project also supports the delivery of Council's Strategic Priorities including the preparation and implementation of a city-wide tourism strategy as part of creating a smart economy and facilitating the implementation of the Kingston Culture Plan as part of planning a liveable city.

**Notice Provisions:**

Not applicable

**Accessibility Considerations:**

Not applicable

**Financial Considerations:**

The budget required to support the Pilot Project as originally proposed was included as part of the Cultural Services Department's 2014 Operating budget and accrued over into the 2015 Operating budget as the time needed to complete the work has taken longer than anticipated. Should Council approval the expenditure of \$30,500 to be paid to the Kingston accommodation Partners, the balance remaining will enable staff to continue to work with various partners and stakeholders to pursue the actions, priorities and recommendations contained in the Integrated Cultural Tourism and Cultural Heritage Strategy.

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**Exhibits Attached:**

Not applicable.