

**TO:** MAYOR & COUNCILLORS  
**FROM:** GENERAL MANAGER PARKS, RECREATION AND CULTURE  
**SUBJECT:** **CULTURE SPECIAL EVENTS PROGRAM REVIEW**  
**PURPOSE:** To seek approval for changes to the Culture Special Events Program and funding re-allocation.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** the Culture Special Events Program Review (Attachment 1) be received for information;

**THAT** a reduction of \$95,000 to the Burnaby Blooms and Free Summer Community Events One Time Funding as described in this report titled “Culture Special Events Program Review” dated February 26, 2024 be approved;

**THAT** this reduction of \$95,000 be approved for reallocation to other ongoing Culture programs, specifically the 2024 theatre season at the Shadbolt Centre of the Arts; and

**THAT** funding allocated to the Burnaby Blues & Roots Festival in the 2024 Operating Plan be re-allocated to a new music festival at Deer Lake Park, as described in this report, and with further details to be announced in spring of 2024.

## **1.0 POLICY SECTION**

The recommendations within this report align with the *Corporate Strategic Plan*, supporting diverse, accessible cultural experiences that enhance vibrancy within Burnaby.

## **2.0 BACKGROUND**

The City of Burnaby delivers a wide array of cultural programming, ranging from support for artist development and creation of new work, programming of theatre, music and dance performances, production of large-scale special events, and research and education on the community’s diverse ethno-cultural heritage. Much of the Parks, Recreation and Culture (PRC) Department’s cultural programming relies on annual allocation from reserves. These reserves have come under increasing pressure in recent years, and staff have looked for opportunities to adjust service levels and

programming accordingly. The Culture Special Events Program Review has been an important step in understanding how the City's Special Events enhance community vibrancy and support residents in celebrating culture in the City's parks and open spaces. The Review has identified opportunities to strengthen long-term planning, as well as stabilize financial and human resources after several years of change due to the pandemic and increased demand from the community.

On February 13, 2024, staff received feedback from the PRC Committee on the Review and that feedback is presented later in this report.

### **3.0 GENERAL INFORMATION**

The Special Events Program Review, detailed in Attachment 1, has identified several areas of focus for the Program. First is the creation of an evaluation framework to support efficient planning and continuous improvement. A draft vision and objectives are in place to support initial changes to the Program. Feedback will be gathered from stakeholders over the coming year.

#### **Vision**

Burnaby consistently delivers accessible, safe and diverse special events that:

- reflect community's cultural aspirations;
- contribute to vibrant parks, streets and neighbourhoods; and
- create memorable experiences for residents and visitors.

#### **Objectives**

- Special events allow residents to participate in shared cultural experiences, improving community cohesion.
- Residents and visitors have access to diverse, high quality artistic and cultural performance and other forms of expression.
- Equity deserving artists have support to create new work, perform, develop audiences and build awareness of their work in Burnaby.
- Host Nation artists and forms of cultural expression are visible and supported.
- Public spaces are welcoming, safe and activated for all ages and demographics.

Next, specific adjustments in event delivery in 2024 have been identified to support stability after several years of major change, in particular focused on balancing costs and staff capacity while working towards sustained multiyear funding commitments to support this exceptional programming. Proposed adjustments to the Burnaby Blooms and Free Summer Community Events programs, as outlined in the attached review, will result in a total reduction in approved one-time funding of \$95,000. It is further recommended that this funding be re-allocated to other ongoing program areas within the Culture Division, including programming for the 2024 theatre season at the Shadbolt Centre for the Arts. This will enhance diverse theatre, music and dance performance offerings, in addition to research and engagement with ethno-cultural communities

supporting collection of oral histories, exhibits at the Burnaby Village Museum, and publications.

The retirement of the Burnaby Blues & Roots Festival format and name, and transition to a new event is driven in part by the removal of admission fees, a transformative change approved by Council in 2023 which greatly enhances public access. This change resulted in a reworking of the overall budget to reflect reduced revenues from ticket sales and removed the requirement for a high-profile headliner to drive ticket sales. The new festival, which is currently in development with details to be announced in spring of 2024, will be an opportunity for a more flexible program of diverse artists and genres. The Culture Division anticipates that the broad appeal of the new event will build audiences of similar size to those seen during the Classical Weekend and will support efforts to retain and grow grant and sponsorship funding.

Looking ahead, the review highlighted the need for investments in event site infrastructure and servicing enhancements to parks and facilities to increase the efficiency of event production, beginning with the Central Park Master Plan. These investments will support both City events and those produced by community-based organizations. Those community event producers are to be further supported through efforts to improve the Festivals Burnaby grant program and internal process improvements to enhance booking, permitting and on-site support.

Finally, the review identified several areas that require additional study, including fully costing the City's resource allocation, ensuring infrastructure for events is planned for as the city grows, and further exploration of the economic impact of cultural activity and cultural industries in Burnaby, and development of strategies to leverage this strength.

The recommendations within this report are focused on moving ahead with opportunities that require adjustment and re-allocation of the approved 2024 Budget.

On February 13, 2024, staff presented the Review and proposed changes to the PRC Committee and received important feedback. There was general agreement from the Committee that the Special Events Program is an important core service for residents. There was support for efforts to continue to diversify programming and ensure that community-based organizations and local artists have opportunity to participate. Committee members were interested in the transition to a new Festival and there was a general understanding of the need to be creative and remain relevant. There was also discussion on the need to provide more opportunities for young people and to better leverage the links between culture and economic development in the City.

#### **4.0 COMMUNICATION AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Culture Division will work with Marketing and Communications to adjust marketing plans accordingly for the changes to the existing Burnaby Blooms and summer events. In addition, a full marketing plan will be developed to inform the community about the transitioning of the Burnaby Blues & Roots Festival and to encourage attendance at a new summer event at Deer Lake Park.

## **5.0 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Funding discussed in this report is included in the 2024-2028 Financial Plan under Parks, Recreation & Culture Department. To accommodate the adjustments proposed in this report, a re-allocation of \$95,000 is requested from the Burnaby Blooms and Free Summer Community Events to other Cultural programs.

Reserves that fund annual programming in the Culture Division are under increasing pressure in the 2024- 2028 Financial Plan. Recommendations in this report represent small initial steps to adjust program scope and funding requirements. The Culture Division will bring forward additional strategies to support sustainable program delivery through the 2025 Budget process.

Respectfully submitted,

Mary Morrison-Clark, General Manager Parks, Recreation and Culture

## **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment 1 – Culture Special Events Program Review

## **REPORT CONTRIBUTORS**

This report was prepared by Emmaline Hill, Director Culture.