

**SUBJECT: Vanier Culture in Action Cultural Revitalization Plan**

**File Number ACS2024-RCF-GEN-0004**

**Report to Community Services Committee on 26 June 2024**

**and Council 10 July 2024**

**Submitted on June 13, 2024 by Caroline Barriere, Manager, Business and  
Technical Support Services**

**Contact Person: Nik Allison, Coordinator, Recreation, Cultural and Facility  
Services**

**+1(613)513-9369, nik.allison@ottawa.ca**

**Ward: RIDEAU-VANIER (12)**

**OBJET : Plan de revitalisation culturelle Vanier – Culture en action**

**Dossier : ACS2024-RCF-GEN-0004**

**Rapport au Comité des services communautaires**

**le 26 juin 2024**

**et au Conseil le 10 juillet 2024**

**Soumis le juin 13, 2024 par Caroline Barriere, Gestionnaire, Services de soutien  
technique et aux activités**

**Personne ressource : Nik Allison, Coordinatrice, Direction Générale des loisirs,  
de la culture et des installations**

**+1(613)513-9369, nik.allison@ottawa.ca**

**Quartier : RIDEAU-VANIER (12)**

#### **REPORT RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Community Services Committee recommend that Council approve the  
Vanier Culture in Action Plan.**

#### **RECOMMANDATION(S) DU RAPPORT**

**Que le Comité des services communautaire recommande au Conseil d'approuver  
le plan Vanier – Culture en action.**

#### **BACKGROUND**

During the development of the Council-approved Renewed Action Plan for Arts, Heritage and Culture in Ottawa, collaboration with local residents at all stages of cultural planning and policy development emerged as a top priority. One of the recommended

actions the Renewed Action Plan was to support the development of cultural and creative districts and clusters. Vanier was included as a potential site of such work, in recognition of the pre-existing concentration of artists and cultural organizations in the neighbourhood.

As the City worked to realize this action, Vanier was selected among economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods as an ideal pilot location thanks to its rich history and cultural vibrancy. Its selection was supported by substantial cultural mapping, research, and analysis.

Vanier's distinct demographic mix and role as a hub for francophone, urban Indigenous, and newcomer communities provided the strong community engagement and leadership needed to support this work. The neighbourhood also bears several similarities, such as commercial vacancy rates, to neighbourhoods like Saint-Roch in Quebec or SOHO in New York, that have successfully undergone community-led cultural revitalization in recent decades.

A key goal of this project was that the lessons learned through Vanier Culture in action could be used to help refine the City's approach to neighbourhood-level and community-led cultural planning across Ottawa.

At the time, Vanier was also the subject of increased City attention on a broader scale. In 2019 Council approved the Building Better Revitalized Neighbourhoods project. One objective was to support the life and work of artists in Vanier, revitalize the heritage, cultural and creative sector and establish Vanier as a cultural and creative district. This initiative focused on revitalization through new and existing program and service initiatives, infrastructure projects as well as redevelopment.

After Vanier was selected as the pilot site for this work in 2019, staff from Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services (RCFS), worked with community leadership, particularly the Vanier Community Association, to develop a community engagement process. This process helped scope the project, ensure involvement from a diverse range of community voices, and ensure that the outcomes of the work were actionable and would lead to tangible improvements in cultural access and wellbeing for residents. A municipal inter-departmental working group was convened to help support this work and ensure buy-in from a range of service areas engaged in supporting cultural life in the neighbourhood.

Extensive community collaboration and engagement, while slightly delayed by the pandemic, was carried out in 2021 and 2022. Following successful community forums organized in partnership with the Vanier Community Association in summer 2021, the Vanier Cultures steering committee was formed to ensure the ongoing involvement of cultural and community organizations with key roles to play in realizing community aspirations. The committee provided additional leadership, support, input and guidance

on top of community feedback resulting in the development of a draft cultural revitalization strategy for the neighbourhood which was shared with the City's internal working inter-departmental working group in late 2022.

The goals of this strategy were used by the Vanier Cultures committee and City staff to filter through the 193 action ideas received from the community. The resulting 39 prioritized actions were assigned a lead partner, City or community, who would be responsible for reporting on implementation and plotted over the short, medium and long term. The result of this exercise is the Vanier Culture in Action Plan.

## **DISCUSSION**

The Action Plan is the result of five years of deep collaboration with the Vanier community, including more than 250 residents and ten leading community and cultural organizations. The Vanier Culture in Action planning process was the first time that the City has engaged in such intensive neighbourhood-based cultural planning and provides many insights for future efforts to support the cultural, community and social wellbeing of Ottawa's priority neighbourhoods.

Document 1, attached to this report, is the Vanier Culture in Action Plan which contains 39 actions designed to support the cultural revitalization of Vanier through increasing access to and availability of culture for all neighbourhood residents and visitors. The full list of actions are available in Matrix 1 (pages 11-19) and Matrix 2 (20-24), explored according to goals or implementation plan respectively.

It is recommended that the implementation of the plan be overseen by a Vanier Culture in Action working group organized by Recreation, Cultural and Facility Services, the departmental lead on the project. Continuing the collaborative approach, this working group will bring together City and community partners identified as having an important role to play in carrying out the actions. Community members of the working group will reflect the rich cultural diversity of the Vanier neighbourhood, including its role as a key hub for franco-Ontarians, urban Indigenous and newcomers to Ottawa.

It will also serve as a forum for monitoring implementation progress and tracking the connection between action completion and realization of broad project goals. By bringing City and community partners together in a single forum, the working group will also support the coordination of efforts and increased decision-making transparency.

The nine goals guiding the action plan, first identified in the Draft Strategy for the Revitalization of the Cultural Life of Vanier Residents developed for the Vanier Cultures Steering Committee are:

1. Oversee initiatives that enhance Vanier's cultural life
2. Enhance cultural life on traditional main streets
3. Enhance cultural life in public spaces and plazas

4. Celebrate diversity and welcome newcomers through cultural programming and initiatives
5. Revitalize Vanier's image as a thriving cultural hub
6. Acknowledge and collaborate with Indigenous residents and Indigenous cultural organizations in Vanier
7. Include cultural aspects and requirements into a Vanier Secondary Plan that is consistent with the Montreal Road Secondary Plan
8. Revitalize Richelieu-Vanier Community Centre by offering and encouraging more cultural and artistic programming
9. Promote the Muséoparc Vanier as a tourist destination.

Actions are identified as being short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3-5 years) and long-term (5-10 years) priorities. The Action Plan contains 18 short-term, 16 medium term and 5 long term actions. 8 short term, 3 medium term and 2 long term actions are underway, and 2 actions are complete.

There has already been substantial progress without official support. More than 25% of identified actions are underway and one is complete. This reflects the strong initiative and investment in the Action Plan's success on the part of community and City staff.

Responsibility for leading and reporting implementation is shared across six City departments and seven community organizations.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

No immediate financial implications. Any future funding requests will be brought forward through the budget process.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no legal impediments in approving the recommendations in this report.

### **COMMENTS BY THE WARD COUNCILLOR(S)**

The Vanier Culture in Action Cultural Revitalization Plan appears to be a good start to developing a Cultural Plan for Vanier with significant community investment and endorsement. There is no question that culture is one of the foundations of the identity, dynamism and distinctiveness of Vanier. I want to personally thank the Chair, Diane and all the community partners who came together to advocate for this. I especially want to thank City staff who see the potential of Vanier as a reconciliation, arts and culture incubator – a place where everyone can create and be their authentic selves.

Culture is more than support for artists and cultural organizations. It also encompasses the cultural industries: music, publishing, audiovisual, visual arts, traditional crafts, digital creativity and entertainment. Fostering an inclusive community through

contributions from artists, craft artists, creators, workers, companies, organizations and cultural industries is what Vanier does best and Vanier is definitely the place to make this happen. But I hesitate to endorse a report that I do worry it will be another ‘follow up Olympics’ as it lacks any budgetary commitment, nor any determination of the budget required for its implementation, holus-bolus or in phases – and no real deadlines for it being undertaken or completed, other than vague commitments to short, medium and long term actions, without an actual start date, nor listing who if any city department or unit is responsible.

For example,

Explore how to better utilize Gamman House and restore its public garden	Community Arts + Social Engagement (RCFS) Cultural and Heritage Programs and Spaces (RCFS)	Medium	Underway
--	---	--------	----------

Utilizing Gamman house and restoring the public gardens will cost funds. Some department will need to take the lead. Other than enumerating it, the report does not provide any estimate of associated costs, nor any explanation of what is underway, nor a lead department. However, we know from the report to council that there are “No immediate financial implications”.

Providing optimal conditions for an environment that is conducive to creation without that information being included in the report, it is difficult in good faith, to support this report. We have seen time and time again that Vanier deserves the city’s status as a cultural hub and culture has proven it is one of the pillars of a sustainable and responsible vision of downtown revitalization. I would encourage the city, with the support of all our partners, to go even further with funding, established deadlines and dedicated staff to cement Vanier’s cultural and creative legacy.

**ADVISORY COMMITTEE(S) COMMENTS**

Project developments were presented twice at the now retired Arts, Culture and Recreation Committee. Preliminary research was presented in 2019 and the results of the community forums were presented in 2022.

**CONSULTATION**

The Vanier Culture in Action Plan was developed in close collaboration with Vanier residents, cultural organizations and community groups. All actions were identified by residents and vetted by the Vanier Cultures Community Steering Committee for priority, feasibility and connection to the plan's goals, which were also determined by community.

Engagement included:

- Two bilingual community-led Citizen's Forums held in May and June of 2021 and attended by over 200 residents in partnership with the Vanier Community Association
- One francophone artist focus group organized by Voix Visuelle and attended by 20 local francophone artists
- 10 Vanier Cultures Community Steering Committee meetings featuring representatives of 8 key cultural and community organizations.
- 10 steering Committee and staff-led focus groups and 1:1 interviews with over 30 residents to fill identified gaps in feedback from urban First Nation, Métis, youth, 2SLGBTQIA+ and racialized residents
- 14 interdepartmental Working Group meetings for City of Ottawa staff from 7 service areas

In total, more than 250 residents directly contributed to the Vanier Culture in Action Plan across 15 engagement opportunities.

Engage Ottawa was leveraged, as part of the larger Vision Vanier project, as a tool for residents to share their thoughts about culture in Vanier. However, the 40 visits to the page did not yield additional input.

### **ACCESSIBILITY IMPACTS**

For implementation of the Action Plan to be successful, the availability of, and access to, cultural life for persons with disabilities in Vanier must improve. The City's Corporate Accessibility Office will be consulted to ensure persons with disabilities in Vanier do not experience barriers to participating in these initiatives. In Q1 of 2025, staff and the Vanier Culture in Action Departmental led working group commit to consulting with the Accessibility Advisory Committee, the Accessibility Office and community organizations which support people with disabilities, including Independent Living and Neil Square. As the Vanier Culture in Action Departmental Led working group identifies priority actions, and throughout each stage of implementation, the impacts on persons with disabilities resulting from changes, modifications, or new program offerings led by City of Ottawa community partners must be considered to ensure equity and that barriers are not created.

Where led by the City, the Action Plan will also ensure adherence to all relevant legislation, including the *Ontario Human Rights Code*, the *Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act*, (2005) and its *Integrated Accessibility Standards Regulation*, the City's Accessibility Policy and the City of Ottawa Accessibility Design Standards.

## **INDIGENOUS GENDER AND EQUITY IMPLICATIONS**

### **Indigenous Policy Considerations**

Vanier is a critical hub for Indigenous cultural life in Ottawa. With 6% of neighbourhood residents identifying as Indigenous, Vanier is home to one of the highest urban concentrations of urban Indigenous peoples in the city. It is also home to a high concentration of Indigenous cultural and social services.

Throughout the community collaboration process, the importance of foregrounding and celebrating Vanier's role as an Indigenous hub was a major theme.

Seven of the 39 actions included in the Action Plan address key concerns relating to access to culture for Indigenous residents. Examples include working with Anishinabe Algonquin knowledge keepers to build awareness of indigenous plants and foraging activities within the urban forest; supporting transportation to Indigenous events; and providing information sessions at Wabano's successful Culture Night to ensure Indigenous artists, creators and entrepreneurs are aware of the supports available.

The Vanier Culture in Action Plan also recognizes the particular significance of Vanier to urban Inuit. Together with neighbouring Overbrook, Vanier is home to a quarter of all Inuit residents of Ottawa. The Action Plan directs City staff to explore ways to support for non-ice related sports including Inuit games such as the high kick and knuckle hop.

The Terms of Reference for the Vanier Culture in Action require active membership and involvement from the Anishinabe Algonquin Nation, urban Indigenous and urban Inuit communities. This reflects the extent to which access and availability of Indigenous cultural programs and events is a priority within the policy as well as the need for Indigenous oversight of the implementation of initiatives intended to serve Indigenous communities.

## **RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS**

There are no risk implications associated with the report recommendations.

## **RURAL IMPLICATIONS**

These recommendations carry no anticipated rural implications. These recommendations pertain exclusively to Vanier, an urban neighbourhood.

However, lessons learned from the approach taken in relation to the Vanier Culture in Action project, including the need for broad community involvement and leadership at early-stage process design can and will be applied in future cultural planning and policy making. This is particularly important in a rural context where community involvement and leadership is a great strength, particularly in historic villages.

## **TERM OF COUNCIL PRIORITIES**

The first priority identified by this Council for its 2023-2026 Term of Council Priorities is

“A City that has affordable housing and is more liveable for all.” The Vanier Culture in Action PLAN is designed to improve the liveability for neighbourhood residents and speaks to two of the objectives identified under this priority:

(8) Make recreation and culture programs available to more residents.

(9) Align parks, recreation and cultural facility new development and renewal of existing assets with population growth and with consideration for prioritizing the needs of economically disadvantaged neighbourhoods.

Of the 39 actions identified in the Vanier Culture in Action Plan, more than 40% directly concern increasing the number of and access to cultural programs, events and activities in the neighbourhood. They address ways to make it easier for artists, cultural organisations and community events to find space and host events. They also look to take on some of the barriers to access including local information gaps and transportation.

The Vanier Culture in Action Plan highlights that when it comes to increasing the availability of recreation and culture, residents want to see greater coordination between the City and community.

A further 20% of identified actions highlight ways to ensure that, within this priority neighbourhood, park and facility development take into consideration current gaps and the existing and future cultural landscape of the neighbourhood. Park and facility development should take into consideration the high concentration of urban Indigenous and Inuit residents in Vanier by making sure there is space for culture, ceremony and traditional sports & games.

## **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION**

Document 1: Vanier Culture in Action Plan

Document 2: Terms of Reference for the Vanier Culture in Action Working Group

## **DISPOSITION**

This Action Plan is to be led by Recreation, Cultural and Facilities Services but will require cooperation across six City departments:

- Recreation, Cultural and Facilities Services Department (RCFS)
- Strategic Initiatives (SI)
- Planning, Development and Building Services (PDBS)
- Emergency and Protective Services Department (EPS)
- Transit Services Department (TSD)
- Office of the City Clerk

- Public Works Department (PWD)

Within these seven departments, 17 work areas are identified as having a role to play as outlined in Document 1: Vanier Culture in Action Plan pages 20-24.

The content and intent of the Action Plan and goals of the departmental-led working group have been shared with all implicated service areas.

A by-law or by-law amendment is not required to implement the decision in this case.

Pursuant to the Delegation of Authority By-law (By-law No. 2024-265), Schedule "C", Section 8, the City Clerk has authorized the clerical correction to Document 2, the Terms of Reference for the Vanier Culture in Action Working Group. In the section "V. Composition," the bullet "Un représentant du Comité directeur communautaire Vanier – Culture en ACTION" has been corrected to "**Représentants** du Comité directeur communautaire Vanier **Cultures**." The corrected Document 2 was distributed and published on June 25, 2024.