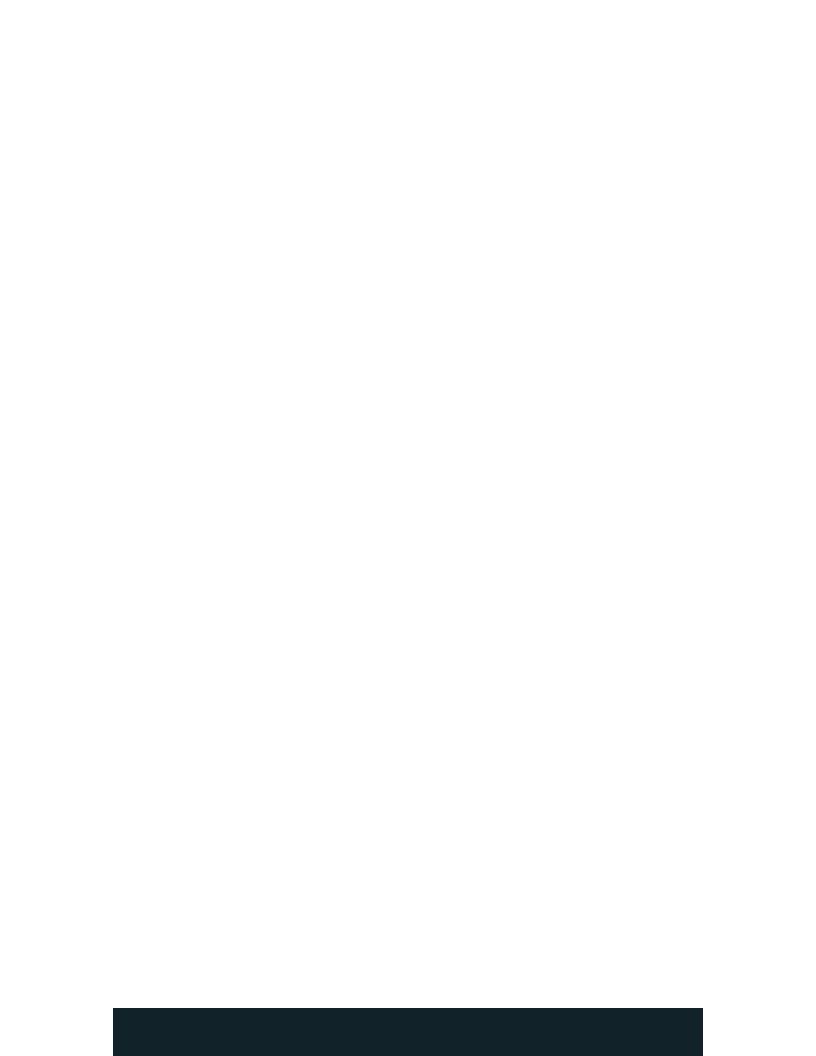


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# Smiths Falls Municipal Cultural Plan 2021-2025

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### **Background**

In 2013, the Town of Smiths Falls approved a Municipal Cultural Plan for a five-year span. The initial Cultural Plan was formulated following a series of focus group discussions, individual interviews and a commitment to invest in the Creative Economy (Smiths Falls Municipal Cultural Plan, 2013).

The initial document outlined strategic recommendations as well as a series of possible next steps for the Town, the Smiths Falls & District Arts and Culture Council as well as stakeholders. The Municipal Cultural Plan also included a Cultural Mapping Document to identify the tangible assets located within the municipality. The Town of Smiths Falls Council approved the Municipal Cultural Plan in 2013. The Plan provided a foundational element that still ties into today's current climate.

The five-year Municipal Cultural Plan expired in 2018.

This updated Municipal Cultural Plan will review the original version while also connecting with the current landscape within the arts and cultural community based on interviews, surveys and research. The findings formulate strategies for the Town to adopt and implement from 2021-2025.

#### Strategic Planning and its Cultural Landscape

In its current Strategic Plan, the Town of Smiths Falls Council has identified Quality of Life as a key area of focus. By understanding the Town's existing cultural landscape, we can determine how to best utilize or create tangible and intangible assets to ensure our residents have a Quality of Life that is inherently serving their lifestyle needs.

This updated Municipal Cultural Plan reviews the past seven years since the Municipal Cultural Plan first launched as well as identifies challenges, opportunities and action items that align with both the Town of Smiths Falls' Strategic Plan and Economic Development & Tourism Plan.

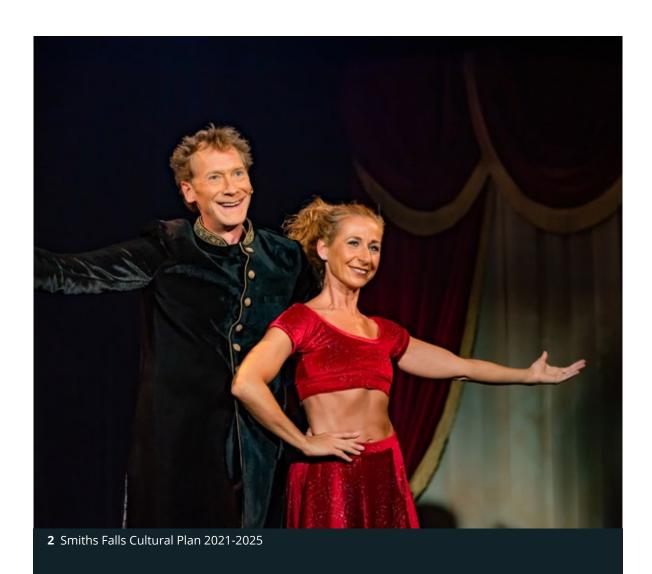
### What is a Municipal Cultural Plan?

A Municipal Cultural Plan is the strategic and integrated planning and use of cultural resources in urban and community development.

By integrating the Municipal Cultural Plan into strategic municipal planning - existing and future - and including initiatives and/or actions, we will leverage the community's cultural resources, contribute to our community's quality of life, encourage and attract newcomers and cultural tourism while growing the local economy and business.

The Cultural Plan is a positive step into the future for the Town of Smiths Falls. It is also consistent with current provincial, national and international thinking which recognizes the pillars of environmental sustainability, economic prosperity, social equity and cultural vitality.

There is undeniable proof that culture plays a significant role in the nation's fiscal well-being. Statistics Canada reported that culture contributes 7% of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) - or \$84 Billion - and more than one million jobs.



#### Smiths Falls' Cultural Plan Achievements:

#### An Assessment

The Town of Smiths Falls' Municipal Cultural Plan was first created and approved in 2013. The research, collaboration and creativity that went into this original document does a thorough job outlining the Cultural Plan's purpose and vision. The original plan provides foundational elements needed to understand the purpose behind crafting and living out a Cultural Plan for the Town of Smiths Falls.

#### **Initial Municipal Cultural Plan outcomes:**

Since it was first passed in 2013, the Smiths Falls' Cultural Plan has achieved the following items listed under Appendix 2 and Appendix 3:

- Developed a cultural experience for day trippers (walking tour)
- Developed a series of heritage workshops to introduce traditional and non-traditional skills (annual Heritage Symposium)
- Promoted the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Rideau Canal
- Explored signage to inform residents/ tourists that they have entered a special designated area of Town
- Told the story through the Municipal Heritage Committee-coordinated Heritage Pedestals
- "A Taste of Smiths Falls" festival with locally grown and made foods (Smiths Falls Market)

- Created a Walk of Fame (at the Smiths Falls Memorial Centre for sports and leisure)
- A railway car used as a diner (RMEO)
- Theatre programming at Station Theatre (consistent theatre opportunities)
- Used drama to tell community stories (through local theatre groups and shows)
- Encouraged clothing and accessories that are tied to our heritage/culture (promotional clothing sold at the Visitor Information Centre)
- Encouraged artist-based workshops and conferences to help draw in economic revenue (Art & Culture council events, Heritage Symposium)



### **Cultural Planning**

The Town's Municipal Cultural Plan implemented an exploration and support for the Creative Economy, including the four elements associated with a Cultural Plan.

The Smiths Falls' Municipal Cultural Plan outlined concepts and strategies that supported the creative sector at a pivotal time in its history. At that time, socioeconomic conditions and the current economic climate brought the community together to dream and discuss how to nurture its Creative Economy.

### **Cultural Plan Purpose:**

Smiths Falls is a caring community that provides citizens with a superior quality of life through effective and innovative services.

- Town of Smiths Falls Strategic Plan

#### **Guiding Principles**

We will achieve this through the following guiding principles, as identified by the 2013 Municipal Cultural Plan.

Cultivating community connections

existing natural

Encouraging inclusivity

**Empowering** artistic endeavours

#### Vision

We see a community that embraces its heritage, proactively nurtures community demonstrates inclusivity pride, recognizes its existing natural landscape's value. These elements all contribute to our Quality of Life, ultimately creating and facilitating opportunities to build collaborations, tackle challenges and celebrate our character and identity.

#### **Relevant Studies and Plans**

Many existing studies and planning reports speak to culture and its relationship to a range of community development issues within the Town of Smiths Falls. These include:

- The Downtown Revitalization Plan
- The Community Improvement Plan
- The Strategic Plan 2019-2022
- The Economic Development and Tourism Plan
- Waterfront Visioning Session, 2018



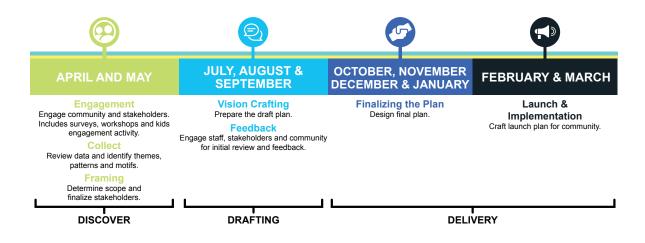
#### The Cultural Plan Process:

The Cultural Plan Revision Engagement strategy included outreach to Councillors, staff, stakeholders and residents. Individuals were initially contacted via email while the community engagement platform was conducted via social media. A stakeholders' survey was launched as was a public survey via the Speak Up Smiths Falls platform. As well, personalized emails were sent to stakeholders for a request to either complete the stakeholders' survey or have a phone or video conference call. Members from the Smiths Falls & District Arts & Culture Council were approached for interviews.

A public survey was launched for a onemonth timeline through the Speak Up Smiths Falls public engagement platform.

Overall, more than 50 interviews and surveys were completed to help garner insight and feedback on the existing cultural plan and visions for the future.

The engagement stage occurred from May-July, 2020.



### **Cultural Plan Strategies**

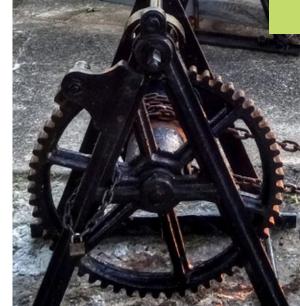
**Cultivate Connection & Build Community Pride** 

**Ignite Inclusivity** 

**Support Our Local Creative Sector** 

Honour Our Heritage & Learn From Our Past

**Optimize Existing** 



### **STRATEGY #1:**

### Cultivate Connection & Build Community Pride:

With 200 years of history tied to its name, Smiths Falls has identified itself as an industrial town that prides itself on hard work, resiliency and play. This shared identity was a common theme uncovered in the Municipal Cultural Plan's exploration and research phase.

Currently, the Town of Smiths Falls uses a variety of communication platforms available to connect with its residents and visitors, including its website, social media, the Speak Up Smiths Falls public engagement platform, the Annual Visitor Guide, and more.

While the Town of Smiths Falls provides consistent communication to its audience using a variety of platforms and tools, the community feedback about creating connections has a three-fold theme:

- a direct connection/contact with Town Hall;
- to ignite hometown pride; and
- to learn about activities, events, and opportunities that could improve Quality of Life.



### How will we achieve this strategy?

#### Create internal capacity to build community connections

In an effort to continue to connect with the community, the Town of Smiths Falls will build upon its staffing model to provide communications and event coordination.

This individual will be responsible for making efforts and executing a communications strategy that connects residents together and demonstrates the good news stories happening within the region.

The additional staff will provide supportive measures for implementing further strategic communications external tactics that continues to build community connection.

The Town will assign an individual to facilitate community engagement both online and in person. This individual will be responsible for addressing public feedback. This approach will help facilitate and bridge together any perceived or existing gaps occurring within the community.

The Town can move forward with this hiring plan for a 2022 implementation.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Create Internal Capacity	Assess internal staffing needs to align roles and responsibilities for culture, community, and tourism moving forward
	Create internal capacity to execute communication strategy for cultural planning
	Hire summer students to do hands-on work in cultural development
	Present a "face" for community engagement in Smiths Falls

#### **Tell more stories**

There is no shortage of pride existing within the Town of Smiths Falls. It's imperative to share the stories that have made the town what it is today. By integrating a storytelling method into our content marketing plan, we will connect community members together and celebrate the Town's history, people and community efforts.

This approach pulls away from the corporate entity of a municipality. What it will do, however, is share stories about regular community members from all walks of life (think: Humans of New York). This approach will bring a positive spin to the community and ignite civic pride.

Inthe end, these efforts will bring faces to the community – no matter their background. This feature can build a name and brand itself and include exceptional photography that captures the individual's essence. The feature can be called something that honours our resilient, hard-working and welcoming community identity.

#### Story samples could include:

- the canal lockmaster;
- an Indigenous student at SFDCI;
- the police constable reviewing his/her first year with the Service;
- a parent who drives into Ottawa every day for work and why his or her family moved to Smiths Falls

This approach will also demonstrate inclusivity that remains such an important core value of Smiths Falls. They can be short and consumable pieces for sharing in a blog format as well as posting directly on social media.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Tell More Stories	Brainstorm for relevant stories in the community
	Develop a wish list and calendar for story development to keep on track
	Coordinate stories with digital media assets
	Create digital infrastructure on website to house story platforms (Visit Smiths Falls)
	Develop branded marketing for campaign
	Launch campaign on social media and in community

#### **Promote Volunteer Opportunities**

Community members have stated they want to give back, but don't necessarily want to invest in a long-term volunteer opportunity. As well, stakeholders have highlighted the diminishing volunteer pool available to help with continued plans within each community group.

The Town of Smiths Falls will help support community groups and stakeholders to promote artistic and cultural opportunities by sharing volunteer needs. Whether through collaborating with community partners (e.g. Smiths Falls & District Chamber of Commerce, OnTrac), posting to an online format, or releasing an annual needs-based list, the Town can explore opportunities to promote volunteerism to help support local stakeholders and community groups.



ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Promote Volunteerism	Host forum to bring together stakeholders to discuss volunteer needs
	Host semi-annual or annual volunteer fair to connect stakeholders with volunteers
	Post volunteer opportunities on the Town's website and keep current
	Create volunteer posting board at Welcome Centre
	Support service clubs by assisting them to source volunteers

#### **Performance Measures**

- Increased website visitors
- Increased sharing of good news pieces
- Increased volunteer pool
- Increased residential sense of belonging

#### **Community Engagement**

- Stakeholders can develop a volunteer drive
- Residents can do their research on volunteer opportunities
- Community members can share the stories through online platforms
- Community members can engage with the STOP approach (Stop, Take a breathe, Observe, Proceed) when posting to digital platforms



### Strategy #2:

### Ignite Inclusivity

Smiths Falls residents pride themselves as a welcoming, engaging community that showcases the small-town feel, particularly with visitors and new residents. Since it's a value that's been consistently tied to the community's identity, it's key to remain vigilant to foster that commitment to be an inclusive community. Currently, there are a number of events that celebrate culture and inclusivity including the Spirit of the Drum PowWow.

On June 15, 2020, the Town of Smiths Falls made a Racism and Discrimination proclamation that acknowledges commitment remaining diligent to on fighting racism and discrimination within the community. It's now time to demonstrate that commitment.

To move forward, the municipality and community members need to meet to understand how to engage and continue to celebrate our differences.



### How will we achieve this strategy?

## Foster Relationships with Indigenous peoples

The Town of Smiths Falls is located in the vast area of Greater Ottawa and the surrounding area, and sits on Unceded Algonquin Anishinaabe Traditional Territory, where the Omamiwinini (Algonquin) lived and still live today. As such, it's vital to connect with and ignite conversation as well as honour and share the culture of Indigenous peoples.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Connections made with the local Indigenous community
- Increased Indigenous representation within the community
- Creation of an anti-racism and anti-discrimination plan



**ACTIONS** INITIATIVES

Foster Relationships with Indigenous Peoples

Connect with leaders of Indigenous groups in Smiths Falls

Encourage Indigenous participation in cultural opportunities and activities

Use connections with Indigenous groups to communicate with and encourage Indigenous representation on municipal committees

#### Create a municipal anti-racism and anti-discrimination plan

The Town's racism and discrimination proclamation can be realized by creating municipal anti-racism and discrimination plan. A committee will be formed with representation from a variety of cultures and backgrounds. The plan will highlight how the municipality and the residents can do the work to fight racism and discrimination.

#### **Community Engagement**

- Make efforts to understand racism, discrimination and cultural ties
- Support Indigenous artists
- Attend events and workshops connected with cultural experiences
- Join the Anti-Racism and Discrimination Committee

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Create a Municipal Anti-Racism and Anti- Discrimination Strategy and Plan	Create a working committee for anti-racism and discrimination (in progress)
	Connect with minority groups in the community for feedback on current status
	Develop an anti-racism and discrimination strategy and plan
	Launch educational campaigns within the community to foster inclusion

### Strategy #3:

### Support Our local Creative Sector

The artists, writers, musicians, actors, and creators keep the fabric of our community alive through the five senses. It's imperative to remain committed to the contributions of our arts and cultural sector.

### How will we achieve this strategy?

## Continue to support the On the Roll program.

In 2020, the On the Roll grant program provided \$23,000 to 18 different arts and culture initiatives in Smiths Falls. The On The Roll grant is an initiative that allows community groups and private businesses to access funding to promote arts and culture within the community. This initiative is a positive way to provide support to the musicians, artists and creators in order to bring forward new ideas to the public.



#### **Support the Smiths Falls & District Arts and Culture Council:**

For nearly a decade, the Smiths Falls & District Arts & Culture Council has been in operation. To demonstrate support and to honour the local arts and culture scene, the Town of Smiths Falls will set aside funding for bursary programs that will foster arts and culture leadership.

#### Promote local events and workshops:

As a way to demonstrate consistent support to the local organizations, community groups and specific companies pertaining to arts and culture, the Town of Smiths Falls will promote upcoming events and workshops. By promoting local events, the municipality provides residents and visitors with access to a one-stop location.

Promotional efforts will include posting these events and workshops to the municipal events' calendar, promoting through social media channels, as well as including any known upcoming events in marketing collateral, such as the Visitor Guide.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES	
Support the Smiths Falls & District Arts & Culture Council (SFDACC)	Identify roles and responsibilities for cultural development from the municipality to the SFDACC Connect with the SFDACC to discuss relationship moving forward  Sponsor or support bursary programs for arts and culture eadership in Smiths Falls	
	Introduce an arts display in the front foyer at Town Hall	
	Provide a suitable meeting space for the SFDACC	
Promote Local Events and Workshops	Connect and build relationships with event leaders to discuss needs and how the Town can offer support	
	Promote community events through social media and on the municipal website (streamline that process)	
	Include events in the annual Visitor Guide	

### Strategy #4:

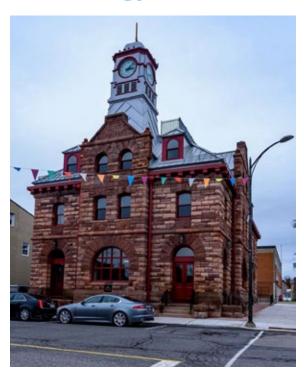
### Honour our Heritage + Learn from our Past

In an effort to preserve the Town's history while also injecting pride, inclusivity and education for all residents, the Town of Smiths Falls should continue to support initiatives that preserve and honour its heritage in a variety of ways.

### How will we achieve this strategy?

#### Continue with the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) funding initiative to restore historic buildings.

Thanks to funding by a Regional Economic Development grant, the Town of Smiths Falls will ignite a restoration approach for the downtown core. With the Beckwith Street Revitalization Project, this CIP funding announcement comes at a good time. The funding allows for the opportunity to hire an architect to design mock-up blueprints for exterior buildings within the downtown core. Then, when a business wants to access CIP funding and complete the exterior upgrades, they already have access to free designs to use for their storefront. From an historic perspective, this approach allows the downtown core businesses to access opportunities to upgrade its exterior and restore the 200-year-old history that lines the downtown streets.



ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Support the Preservation of Historic Buildings	Evaluate CIP program and increase funds based on demand
	Enroll 20 businesses to take advantage of accessing free designs
	Actively promote the CIP program to businesses and property owners

## Support and invest in our community buildings:

The Town of Smiths Falls aligns Economic Development and Tourism budget line items with Cultural Planning initiatives, including the Smiths Falls Heritage Museum.

The Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario also benefits from grant funding. The Heritage House Museum continues to honour our history while hosting workshops, events and history lessons. The building is an important heritage site for the municipality. By continuing to invest in the Heritage House Museum as well as the Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario, the Town of Smiths Falls is keeping its history alive through physical space and programming.



ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Support and Invest in Historic Storytelling	Support RMEO in the development of a strategic plan to ensure longterm sustainability
	Support tourism storytelling for RMEO's assets and experiences
	Establish a dialogue with the Station Theatre to work in partnership and to offer support
	Work with outdoor theatre group(s) to develop programming at key municipal assets
	Support community partners to encourage the development of a sustainable farmers' market
	Continue offering the community grant to support community organizations.

#### Create experiences that tell the Town's history and story:

In an effort to share its story, the Town of Smiths Falls launched a historic walking tour in 2020. This tour highlighted buildings, architecture and the people who helped build the Town as well as movers and shakers throughout its history. As well, the Rideau Roundtable launched paddle tours. The Town of Smiths Falls will continue to invest and offer historic walking tours and build on the tours in a variety of themes: industrial history, food and culture, and sports history. As well, the Town can research opportunities with possible partners or private companies on hosting culinary tours and water-based experiences. These first-hand storytelling experiences allows residents and tourists to experience Smiths Falls in a personable way while demonstrating efforts to connect one another to the stories, people and events that make Smiths Falls what it is today.



#### **ACTIONS INITIATIVES**

#### **Create Experiences that Relay Our Story**

Foster relationships with community leaders and stakeholders to encourage development of cultural experiences (ie. Walking tours, events)

Develop a plan for mural creation in key locations featuring historic storytelling themes

Develop and implement cycle tourism strategy and plan as it relates to tourism

Promote tours as a tourism cultural attraction

### Strategy #5:

### Optimize Existing Landscape and Spaces

Smiths Falls is home to museums, theatres, heritage buildings, community buildings, park space, waterfront and more. By utilizing these spaces to enhance availability and accessibility to our residents and visitors, we're ensuring these spaces are used to their highest potential.

The Rideau Canal, which runs through the community at its mid-point between Ottawa and Kingston, was designated in 2007 by UNESCO as Ontario's only World Heritage Site. It offers an attractive scenic backdrop for creativity and includes the Rideau Canal Visitor Information Centre. Smiths Falls is well positioned to meet the needs of the creative population in surroundings that provide limitless opportunities for all ages in a safe and secure setting.

In addition to using available spaces to their best potential, it's also necessary to commit to the establishment of new cultural spaces.

### How will we achieve this strategy?

#### Increase Usage of the Rideau Canal for tourism/cultural services:

With the Rideau Canal streaming through Smiths Falls, it remains a staple – and a common point of reference for the Town's top identifier. In an effort to increase Quality of Life and explore opportunities for utilizing the existing waterfront, it's recommended to increase the usage of the Rideau Canal for tourism/cultural services.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Increase usage of the Rideau Canal for tourism/cultural services	Target tourism marketing to relay the wealth of experiences on the canal
	Encourage the development of experiences and events that centre on canal experiences
	Explore partnerships to create experiences or events that centre on the canal le. Animation of the decommissioned lock
	Seek out proposals from community leaders and businesses to facilitate canoe/kayak/Stand Up Paddleboard rentals at the canal
	Explore the addition of cultural elements at central canal locations such as informational plaques, public art, or interactive displays that relay the story of the canal in Smiths Falls
	Install covered kiosks at central canal locations with information on upcoming events or experiences in Smiths Falls
	Work with and encourage Parks Canada to expand the Rideau Canal museum

## Develop a program plan for the Town Square:

With the redevelopment of the Town Hall underway, the outdoor Town Square will soon act as an opportunity for community members to connect, visit and explore. It can be a meeting hub within the town and offer the opportunity to celebrate arts and culture within Smiths Falls.

#### **Performance Measures**

- Increased usage on and along the Rideau Canal
- Experiential Tours run at capacity
- A completed Program Plan for Town Square
- Increased online visits to the Town Website
- Increased usage of cultural spaces
- Increased tourism dollars spent within Town of Smiths Falls
- Increased trail usage

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Develop Program Plan for Town Square (pending completion)	Identify desired results for programming at Town Square
	Identify responsibilities for programming and who will take ownership
	Transform Town square into a location that celebrates arts and culture
	Encourage public participation in planning from stakeholders
	Include the addition of public art at Town Square and seek RFPs for its addition
	Develop rental programming options for event organizers
	Ensure program plan includes a detailed action plan for moving forward
	Seek council approval for plan and post final draft prominently on website

## Create directory for available cultural spaces:

By outlining to the public the available cultural spaces available for one-time or ongoing rental use, the Town is connecting with the artistic and cultural community to explore opportunities to showcase their work and connect with a larger audience. As well, this tactic provides a more thorough understanding of the cultural spaces available to both long-time and new residents moving to the area.

This can include park space for rent, event rental space, workshop spaces, private spaces for rent (Station Theatre, Railway Museum, service club locations) and available municipal building spaces. This directory wouldn't be collected in order for the municipality to manage; rather, it's a database with a contact detail for each outlined space.

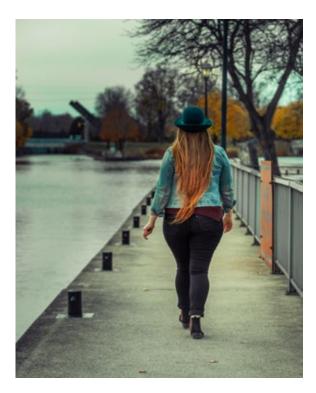
#### **Community Engagement**

- Stakeholders can notify the municipality of available spaces for rent/use
- Residents can rent public spaces for events/workshops
- Community members can promote and refer these spaces.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
	Integrate cultural manning to municipal website to
Create Directory for Cultural Spaces	Integrate cultural mapping to municipal website to identify key cultural spaces
	Identify any gaps or missing infrastructure in existing cultural spaces that limits appeal or use
	Provide easy to find information needed for stakeholders to rent or use cultural spaces
	Circulate information to relevant stakeholders and community leaders

#### **Finalize the Trail Hub System:**

With four trail systems coming through Smiths Falls, it's a natural stopping and connection point for trail users and enthusiasts. By developing a trail hub, it aligns with the Town's Economic Development and Tourism Strategy as well as the Town's Strategic Plan, focused on improving Quality of Life. The municipality can launch a trail hub in a physical sense while also developing a trail use marketing and promotions strategy. It's also important to connect and nurture relationships with the local trail communities, including the Rideau Trail Association and the Friends of the Cataraqui Trail.



ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Finalize Trail Hub System	Foster relationships with trail organizations that intersect in Smiths Falls (Rideau Trail, Cataraqui Trail)
	Build up locations where trails intersect in Smiths Falls and install kiosks with mapping and visitor information
	Create comprehensive mapping of existing trails in Smiths Falls and post in prominent tourism locations as signage (ie. At one of the kiosks identified in the action plan)
	Promote trail systems in Smiths Falls as one component of tourism marketing and promotion
	Promote use of trail system to citizens to foster community pride
	Integrate cycle tourism strategy and plan into trail hub system

## Launch a public art advisory committee:

A good way to have public art created for the community is to host a competition for a design and build (separate RFPs) for public art. Launching a public art advisory committee will bring a group of individuals together to discuss, explore and research opportunities for public art experiences throughout the community.

ACTIONS	INITIATIVES
Launch a Public Art Advisory Committee	Develop and identify the vision for public art creation in Smiths Falls
	Create project plan that identifies timelines and budgets for each piece of public art. Consider implementing a 1% budget contribution for this purpose
	Include ongoing maintenance costs in any budgeting related to public art
	Create an RFP for the creation of public art and distribute/promote
	Determine the lead for a public art advisory committee
	ldentify advisory committee plan, objectives, and timelines
	Conduct outreach for members
	Launch Public Art Advisory Committee simultaneously with launch of first RFP



### **Thank You**

The Town of Smiths Falls wishes to give thanks and recognize the contribution of the following community groups and businesses.

Town of Smiths Falls Council
Smiths Falls Downtown Business Association
Smiths Falls Business Community
Heritage House Museum
Railway Museum of Eastern Ontario
Smiths Falls & District Arts and Culture Council
Smiths Falls Station Theatre
Smiths Falls Community Food Bank
Associated Stakeholders and Organizations
All Who Contributed to this Plan

