

PLANNING INSTITUTE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

PLANNING WEST

SPRING 2019

*FORWARD THINKING
SHAPING COMMUNITIES*

PLANNING IN THE NORTH

PM41854519

In Tune with the Local Scene — Smithers District Music Strategy

> **Liliana Dragowska** MCIP, RPP

The Town of Smithers is located in Northern British Columbia along Highway 16 half way between Prince George and Prince Rupert, in the heart of the Witsuwit'en Nation and located on Gitdumden (Wolf) Clan unceded territory.

The Town covers a land area of 15.27 square kilometers and is home to 5,401 residents (2016). Smithers has a dynamic community, with established businesses who have grown and opened offices in other places but choose to keep their head offices here. It is Northern BC's cultural capital, with an unparalleled variety of artistic activities reflecting its diverse population.

Towns and cities like Smithers are increasingly recognizing the potential of music beyond its long-acknowledged cultural and social benefits. Music has enormous potential as an economic, job creation and cultural driver. As identified in Music Canada's *The Mastering of a Music City*, "a thriving music scene generates a wide array of benefits for cities, from economic impacts to cultural development. Key benefits include:

- Economic impact
- Music tourism
- City brand building
- Cultural development and artistic growth
- Attracting/retaining talent and investment in the area
- Strengthening the social fabric
- Validating music as a respected and legitimate industry"

On May 30, 2018, Music Canada Live, Canada's national live music industry association, launched *Here, The Beat: The Economic Impact of Live Music in BC*. This assessment of BC's live music sector identifies a number of challenges, opportunities, and insights to the live music industry. A key highlight of the study was that live music contributed 6,950 full-time employment, \$619.3 million in labour income, and \$815.8 million in GDP to the BC economy in 2017.

Studies have shown that the most successful music cities have certain elements in common, elements which are all found here in Smithers.

In recognition of the role that music plays in the culture and economy of the Bulkley Valley, the Smithers District Chamber of Commerce secured funding to create a Music Strategy to support and grow this economic sector. The project was part of the Music City Toolkit initiative, which was developed by Music Canada and

distributed by the Canadian Chamber of Commerce. Together with the Chamber's leadership, a partnership with the Bulkley Valley Arts Council, and funding from the Province of British Columbia through Creative BC's Industry Initiatives Program, the Smithers District Music Strategy project was initiated.

In order to advance the music sector of Smithers and align with provincial initiatives, this project had three goals:

1. Assemble an inventory of the Smithers music sector, including identifying key element and how they contribute to the sector
2. Gather preliminary economic information that will help define a baseline assessment of how the music sector is structured
3. Develop a set of recommendations to help grow the music sector in our region



Infographic from the Smithers District Music Strategy



Mark Perry, Local Smithers Musician

“The recent trend in creative cities has anchored the arts and culture as key industries in municipal economic development, cultural industries create job growth, turn ordinary cities into “destination cities,” create interconnections between arts and business, revitalize urban areas, attract skilled workers, and create spin-off businesses.”
(Culture as an economic driver, 2005.)

Preliminary economic information was gathered through a survey sent out 160 individuals, businesses, and organizations in the Smithers music sector. The survey received 65 responses and was augmented with 36 interviews with community members and businesses. Some key highlights from the survey and interviews are:

- There are 36 known private music teachers, 33 identified venues, 5 radio stations, and over 83 performers and groups currently in the Smithers Area
- Live music was reported as a main source of revenue for Artists; yet 50% of these artists reported less than \$1,000 in annual income from music. Artists are performing out of passion rather than income
- The four major music festivals had an economic impact of \$1.1M in 2017 and have the highest number of recorded volunteer hours than any other music-focused activity. This in-kind work supports substantial economic activity in the Smithers area

The Music Strategy identifies 19 recommendations which were reviewed with performers, businesses and those involved in developing of the strategy. These recommendations are divided into three categories of action and responsibility:

1. Municipal regulatory changes that could foster and encourage the growth of the music sector in the Smithers area and, more broadly, the whole arts and culture sector
2. Recommendations that focus on advocacy, attraction, promotion, communication and integration of the music sector by the Smithers District Chamber of Commerce through an “all things music” website funded by Northern Development Initiatives Trust – smithersmusic.com
3. Music sector recommendations that focus on continuing collaboration to strengthen the sector from within

In addition to direct economic benefits, a vibrant music scene forms part of a city’s culture, identity and livability, factors that contribute to people’s decisions when choosing a place to live. Jason Azmier, Senior Policy Analyst from the Canada West Foundation and author of Culture and Economic Competitiveness explains, “It is a city’s urban culture and ‘livability’ aspects that determine where someone decides to hang up their shingle and lay down roots.”

Implementation of the Smithers District Music Strategy is ongoing and will require collaborative efforts by the local municipalities, regional district, the Smithers District



Instrument Maker Micheal Nelligan
Photo Credit Camus Photography

Chamber of Commerce and organizations, businesses and individuals involved in the music sector. The hope is that the work started locally, paired with provincial and national music sector initiatives, will instigate further collaboration and momentum in raising the profile of music and its importance to every community.

To view the Smithers District Music Strategy please visit www.smithersmusic.com/about. ■

Liliana Dragowska is an independent planning and community engagement consultant working out of Smithers BC partnering with other professionals on small to medium size community planning projects. If you have any questions or want to talk about the project please feel free to contact the author at lilianadragowska@gmail.com.

Heather Gallagher

From: Lilka Dragowska <lilka.dragowska@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 28, 2019 4:28 PM
To: Heather Gallagher
Subject: Fwd: Planning West
Attachments: PlanningWest-v61-No2-Spring2019.pdf; Untitled attachment 00053.txt

Heather,

I wanted to share with you and the Chamber Board an article that I wrote and was published in my provincial professional association magazine regarding the Music Strategy. I have received some great feedback from colleagues thanking me for sharing what is happening in Smithers.

It was a great project,

Thanks for your leadership,

Liliana