

**The Capitol Theatre and the Greater Creative Community:  
Toward the Development of a Renewable Resource**

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## Executive Summary

Since its beginnings in 1909, the Capitol Theatre has been a mainstay and a leader in local arts and culture, a centre for artistic development, an employer of creative people and a venue of entertainment and stimulation for patrons. As the Capitol developed, so has the downtown core, consisting of restaurants, a farmers' market which doubles as a performance venue, hotels, a waterfront park, and a number of new entrepreneurial enterprises.

Over the last two years, the Capitol has acquired nearly \$1 million in funding to renovate and improve its existing space, resulting in two functional performance spaces and a significant increase in rental activity. The Capitol has housed everything from improv workshops to weddings; rock concerts to business meetings. Our building is more than a valuable heritage property, it is an integral part of the region's arts, culture and economy.

The Theatre's scope of activities has grown to the point where more physical space is needed for it to continue to meet its mandate: to advance artistic development and provide entertainment within fiscally responsible boundaries; to offer a variety of high-calibre artistic events that will attract people to the theatre; to provide them with a positive artistic experience; to promote attachment and opportunity for innovation between the community and the theatre; and to participate in the social and economic vitality of the region.

Research has shown that arts and culture development in urban centres is an important factor in the area's economic development. The work of Richard Florida is a key component of this body of research. It demonstrates that members of the 'creative class' constitute the largest proportion of employed people. Members of this group are more likely to live in areas where their quality of life is considered, and large businesses are likely to locate in areas with ready access to these talented individuals. Arts and culture play an important role in attracting these individuals and businesses. The Capitol has a leadership/catalyst role to play in Greater Moncton's urban development.

To this end, the Capitol Theatre plans to develop an expanded Capitol complex by acquiring and renovating an adjacent building. The new space will house a year-round performing arts school, the offices of the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company and other artistic groups. This will provide a much-needed space needed for the development of creative clusters in the Greater Moncton area.

The projected results of this project include, but are not limited to: increased revenue; fostering of younger members of the creative class; enhancing Moncton's attractiveness to members of the creative class looking to relocate; new job opportunities; opportunities for cross-pollination of artistic talents, resulting in new works; and educational opportunities for youth.

Expansion of Capitol Theatre space and a broadening of its activities are integral not only to further development of local artistic groups, but also to the region's urban development and its role as a major player in the international arts and cultural scene. In this document, we outline our snowballing evolution in the arts and economic sectors since our re-opening in 1993 and our role in making Greater Moncton, New Brunswick, THE place to be.

## 2.0 An Overview of the Capitol's History and its Role in the Region's Cultural Development

Since its beginnings in 1909, the Capitol Theatre has been a leader in cultural development in the tri-community area of Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview. The Theatre's history is both colourful and noteworthy, while its evolution has been crucial to the development of the downtown area and the local arts and cultural scene. For a detailed look at the vibrant history of the Capitol Theatre and its contributions to community and cultural life, please refer to Appendix A.

The Capitol's history can be divided into three periods: variety and endurance, 1909 – 1990; new glory 1990 – 1993; and a decade of distinction 1993 – 2003. Originally the Davidson Theatre in 1909, it soon became the Empress Theatre, with the construction of the Capitol alongside in 1922. Over time, the Capitol has earned its stripes as a known survivor, having recovered with gusto from two fires, the great depression and having its decorative glory painted over in slate grey when live performance waned and the Theatre became a cinema.

The restoration, which took place from 1990 – 1993, particularly demonstrates the Theatre's capacity for resurgence and advancement. The restoration was a noteworthy catalyst in the downtown's cosmetic, economic and cultural revitalization. Though it now appears as it did in 1926, the theatre is a living testament to its history. It still boasts the exterior walls of the 1922 theatre while its interior offers the glory of the 1926 Capitol. Within its beautifully restored décor, the new Capitol offers the latest in technological advances to support the most professional and innovative acts.

Not only does the Capitol Theatre present world-renowned, professional entertainment; it also supportive of arts development, having participated in the creation of several new festivals and resources for new projects and shows featuring regional talent. These include variety/talk show *Late Night Live*, the *Songwriters' Circle* and the *Ligue d'improvisation acadienne*. The Capitol is Greater Moncton's host venue for a number of established performance groups, including *Symphony New Brunswick*, *Theatre New Brunswick* and *The Nutcracker*. The Theatre's summer drama camp will become a year-round performing arts school. In 2002, The Capitol hosted the premiere performance of the *Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company*, the region's only professional ballet company.

The Theatre has also taken strides to increase its financial self-sufficiency by establishing the Capitol Theatre Foundation and a Fundraising Committee. In this manner, it provides a portion of the venture capital required to develop and foster new ideas for artistic creation in the community.

The work and innovations of the Capitol Theatre have been most recently recognized through the Professional Presenters Award 2001 from Contact East and nominations in 2002, 2003 and 2004 for the East Coast Music Association Award for Venue of the Year. Thea Borlase, founding Board Member and long-time Volunteer Coordinator at the Capitol Theatre, was honoured with the 2001 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Volunteerism in the Performing Arts.

Each year, the Capitol Theatre revises and implements new ideas in order to fulfill its mandate: to advance artistic development and provide entertainment within fiscally responsible boundaries; to offer a variety of high-calibre artistic events that will attract people to the theatre; to provide them with a positive artistic experience; to promote attachment and opportunity for innovation between the community and the theatre; and to participate in the social and economic vitality of the region.

The Capitol Theatre has evolved as one of the most vibrant and dynamic cultural venues in Atlantic Canada, for both the Anglophone and Francophone communities. Year after year, international talent continues to line up next to local gems, providing a constant run of unforgettable experiences for patrons. As the demand for a variety of high quality entertainment grows, the Capitol Theatre is thrilled to keep pace and to continue serving the community through excellence in the arts. The Capitol Theatre's plans for further development of the arts in the region are described in this document.

### **3.0 The Capitol Theatre and the Greater Creative Community: Towards the Development of a Renewable Resource**

Already a centre for innovation in the creative and performing arts, the Capitol Theatre is redefining its role in the development of the cultural sector. The economic and cultural rationale for our plan of expansion is outlined below, as are the projects which we will develop over the next few years.

#### **3.1 The Creative Class – a Marriage of Creative Culture and a Flourishing Economy**

‘Access to talented and creative people is to modern business what access to coal and iron ore was to steelmaking.’

- Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 2002 (1)

There is a recent, yet already quite established, school of thought that the development of arts and culture in cities is essential to furthering their economic development in all areas. Much literature, along with many websites, forums and conferences, have sprung up in support of this position. The cornerstone of this movement is the work of Richard Florida, in his 2002 bestseller *The Rise of the Creative Class*. Mr. Florida proposes that creativity is the initial and driving force behind all change, including social, technological and artistic development. He makes a strong case for the positive impact of creativity on a region's economic development.

Mr. Florida has demonstrated that, since the 1950s, technological advances and artistic development, both professional and personal, have evolved exponentially and in parallel. Creativity being the root of all change, Florida advocates the emergence of what he dubs the Creative Class, a new socio-economic class comprised of people in science, engineering, architecture and design, education, arts, music and entertainment, whose economic function is to nurture new ideas, new technologies and/or new creative content. Many authors support this or promote very similar definitions of this group (see Sources and Resources section). Florida's definition is inclusive of a broader group of professionals practicing creativity in finance, business, law, health care and related fields. Within the creative class, creativity applies to technology, culture and the economy, rendering them interlinked and inseparable. Statistically, the Creative Class represents 38 million Americans or 30% of all employed people, in proportion to the 25% working class and 45% service class. Economically, members of the Creative Class earn nearly twice as much on average as members of the other two classes.

Geographically, the Creative Class (and its economic spinoffs) has demonstrated of consistent traits. Members of this class tend to move to larger centres characterized by diversity in its people, activities and variety in economic opportunities. The educational level of the general population tends to be above average in these centres (2). Members of the Creative Class also tend to gravitate to regions where artistic and cultural development are prolific and fostered, seeking quality and variety of general lifestyle as important variables determining a place to live. Quality of life has become as important to one's identity as one's means of employment (1). A University of Philadelphia study found that regions with strong arts and culture centres were economically and ethnically diverse (3). Large businesses will tend to gravitate to cities where the Creative Class is alive and well, considering creativity and innovation to be assets to their business. It therefore stands to reason that investment in arts and cultural development in a municipality will have a positive impact on business and the economy, making itself more attractive to large companies and to the individuals who work for them.

### 3.2 The Importance and Impact of Cultural Development in Our Region

'People who create in our companies – whether they be scientists, marketing experts or business strategists – benefit from exposure to the arts. People cannot create when they work and live in a culturally sterile environment.'

- John D. Ong, Chairman Emeritus of the B.F. Goodrich Company (1)

As a society, we are placing more and more importance on the quality of life we experience beyond our jobs. People are more inclined than ever to move to places that are stimulating on several levels. Technology now permits us to communicate and to acquire what we need from nearly any geographic location. As a result, people are not only more mobile, but more selective about where they live. Richard Florida describes four factors that determine quality of place for one to live: lifestyle, environmental quality, a vibrant music and arts scene, and natural and outdoor amenities. As an example, it is reported that Ford Motor's marketing director has nearly single-handedly kept Detroit's opera company solvent, noting that the presence of such an institution makes it easier to recruit white collar employees (4).

The idiosyncracies of a place also contribute to the quality of life, as they play an inherent role in establishing a community's sense of identity. Today, people are more likely than before to define themselves according to a variety of factors, only one of which is employment. While arts and culture remain a draw for members of the creative class, they no longer serve only a 'privileged elite', neither consumers nor artists. Rather, arts and culture are intrinsic to communities and individuals at many levels (4).

Communities across Europe, the United States and Canada are becoming increasingly aware of the role of creativity as a crucial economic variable, and are adjusting their investments accordingly. A few examples are cited below. The United States being such a strong leader in this new awareness, examples of investment and return in creative fields are more readily available.

- Austin, Texas has witnessed a parallel growth of their arts and technology industries. Over the past decade, Austin redefined their revenue instruments and launched several cultural centres, theatres, museums and festivals. High-tech employment in the region has increased by 88% during the same period. In the state of Texas overall, commercial and not-for-profit arts and cultural activities together generate \$63.7 billion a year in expenditures and create 600 000 jobs. (5)
- Toronto's Artscape's total revenue has increased to \$2.3 million from \$987 650 over a six-year period to the end of 2002 (16).
- Also in 2002, the City of Winnipeg doubled its allocation for arts funding (27) and has recently launched a program called 'The New Deal', where funds received from a 2% tax shift are re-directed to the city's infrastructure development (8).
- In 2000, the arts generated \$849 million in revenue for Virginia business, provided 18 850 full-time jobs and produced \$307 million in value-added income for Virginia's workforce and entrepreneurs (5).
- Every dollar Michigan invests in the state's Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs results in \$10 of in-state direct spending (5).
- Oregon is home to 441 not-for-profit arts and cultural institutions that injected \$100.2 million of direct spending in the state's economy in fiscal 2000. Oregon's not-for-profit arts sector employed 3 623 individuals (5).
- In New England, the arts industry is growing faster than the rest of the economy, by a rate of 14% compared to 8% overall. (5, 9)

In acknowledgement of this trend, many leading US urban centres have taken a proactive stance with cultural development in their economic landscape and have produced well-researched, concrete plans to support and boost their arts and cultural enterprises (10, 11). A leader in this field, and a close neighbor to New Brunswick, is the New England Foundation for the Arts. This group built their 2001 strategic document in parallel with a number of hands-on, successful infrastructure renovation projects for the arts throughout the early 1990's (12).

Initial studies done with Canadian cities indicate that our major urban centres also possess the key characteristics of US cities boasting strong creative and economic development. These include the Talent (educational) Index, Bohemian (artistry) Index and Mosaic (cultural diversity) Index. Canadian and US centres are comparable on these variables, with Canada reporting a slight edge on the Bohemian Index and a slight disadvantage on the other two. According to a 2002 study by Gertler, Florida, Gates, and Vinodrai, many of Ontario's urban economies in particular have a powerful base on which to build (2).

Halifax has begun research into what is needed for urban growth within the context of its own centre, as well as within the context of the Atlantic Canadian urban scene, which is of obvious relevance to Moncton. A recent document supporting strategic urban planning suggests strongly that, given the large proportion of people living in rural areas close to urban centres in our part of the country, urban-rural linkages must be fostered, and more cooperation is needed between Atlantic Canada's urban centres and adjacent communities. A change in focus from 'sustaining' growth to 'generating' growth, in terms of funding and policy, will be an important factor in assuring urban development in Atlantic Canada in the years to come. The report also suggests that although urban centres in Atlantic Canada are smaller, this provides them with opportunities for unique arts and culture development strategies incorporating the talents and assets of the surrounding areas (13).

Moncton and its neighboring communities of Dieppe and Riverview could greatly benefit as a mid-sized urban centre from investigating possibilities that have been pioneered by our US and Atlantic Canadian neighbors. The growing importance of creativity in economic expansion poses a new challenge for economic growth and urban development in Moncton. Speed, responsiveness and flexibility are key requirements of contemporary business practice. The challenge lies in reforming local institutions and processes that may be too slow and rigid to take advantage of new economy opportunities (14).

### **3.3 Why the Tri-Community Area is Promising**

'Cities are the most important tools (that) nations have to build quality, success and prosperity in this century.'

- Glen Murray, Mayor of Winnipeg (7)

*'What's good for the arts is good for the economy. The mayors of cities with strong economies tell us that the arts have helped their communities thrive. Federal support for our nation's cultural organizations is sound public policy.'*

- Representative Louise M. Slaughter, United States House of Representatives, and Chair, Congressional Arts Caucus, 2002 (15)

Moncton and the surrounding municipalities of Riverview and Dieppe have a number of assets that make it an interesting place to live and work. In terms of Richard Florida's quality of life indicators, our region provides a good foundation on which to build. It has demonstrated an openness to ethnic and linguistic lifestyle. It is considered a microcosm of Canada. Strengthened by being Canada's only officially bilingual city, Moncton is known for the diversity of its economy and the harmony of its cultures. Moncton

was chosen three consecutive years by the Globe & Mail as one of Canada's Top Five cities in which to live and do business (16).

Other factors making the tri-community area an interesting place to live and work include:

- l'Université de Moncton, which draws an international student body;
- a tri-community recycling and garbage sorting program;
- 'Friends of the Petitcodiac', a pro-environmental group supported by Robert Kennedy;
- aside from its traditionally kept arenas, ballparks and soccer fields, the city also boasts a new sportsplex, featuring new arenas and sports fields with a state-of-the art central building;
- the Moncton Wildcats, a major junior hockey league team, is an exciting winter attraction;
- small and large municipal parks are located throughout the city, with two national parks located an hour's drive from the city centre and world-renowned beaches only 20 minutes away;
- Moncton is home to a number of small art galleries and a cultural centre, as well as a number of award-winning musicians;
- several film and television productions companies and a strong cluster of communications agencies are based in Moncton.

In the past fifteen years, the tri-community area has experienced significant cultural, industrial and economic expansion. The Capitol Theatre's level of activity, as outlined above, is generally indicative of the growth of arts and culture in the region, e.g. the creation of new theatrical pieces, a ballet company, a theatre school, etc. The development of entertainment and arts festivals in Moncton has broadened the city's cultural recognition across North America. Businesses such as AOL, ALC, ICT, and UPS have chosen Moncton as the location for their North American call centres, promoting Moncton's economic development in parallel. Most of the creative activity, in both arts and business, takes place downtown and particularly on Main Street in Moncton. The demographics of the creative cluster already exist in our region. By creating a critical mass of people and enterprises in the downtown area, we can increase the power of our creative clusters.

Statistics are available to describe Moncton's growth and demographics over the past few years:

- the city's population rose 9.6% between 1991 and 2001, which places it 44th in growth among the 133 metropolitan regions studied by Statistics Canada;
- job creation increased at an above-average rate in Moncton during the same period, landing at 16.3% versus the national average of 9.7%. Increases were noted mostly in the areas of IT, manufacturing and call centres;
- Moncton is the 6th largest Canadian employer of IT professionals at 27%;
- employment in the arts and cultural sector in our region is on the rise, increasing by 55% between 1991 -2001, while the number of sculptors and performing artists increased by 89% during the same period (17).

Moncton's bilingualism is considered to be a strong asset on a national scale. However, Greater Moncton's Economic Strategy Document revealed that certain variables that are linked to creative and economic development are currently below the national average in Moncton. Identified as requiring further attention are: self-employment; increase in familial revenue; cultural mosaic and immigration; Talent (education) and Bohemian (artistry) Indices. Similar findings with regard to these last two variables are found on an Atlantic Canadian level (13) and on a national level (2, 18) with regard to the Talent Index.

Although our region has a variety of assets in these and other economic areas, it remains a smaller city. As the 'Hub City', Moncton has always been a place of passage as much or moreso than a place of destination. Its central location, however, can easily serve to its advantage, as it has easy access to its two neighboring Maritime provinces, as well as to Newfoundland, Quebec and Maine. We believe that Moncton has strong potential for further development, to the point of becoming a major player in arts and culture.

We recommend that the tri-community area should take a proactive stand in keeping pace with other municipalities and with global economic trends that affect our place in the regional, national and international cultural and business economies. We further recommend that the Capitol Theatre should assume a leadership-partnership role in this regard.

A number of variables are required for artistic and cultural development within an urban centre. These include 1) *place*; 2) *people*; 3) *funding and planning*; and 4) *networking within the greater creative community*. An overview of these variables is provided here, with the details of the Capitol Theatre's plan of involvement provided in a later section of this document.

**3.3.1 Place: Infrastructure and real estate.** As with any professional enterprise, physical space is essential to artists as a place to congregate and develop new creations. Commercial real estate is very costly, especially in a downtown core, and that economic reality serves to exclude many of our most creative professional artists from locating there.

Physical space not only provides a place for arts and culture to flourish, the buildings and spaces themselves that house artistic activities provide aesthetic identity to a city. They are, in themselves, pieces of art because of their architecture or decor. Examples include Montreal's Place des arts, Hull's Museum of Civilization, Ottawa's National Arts Centre, and Moncton's Capitol Theatre. Artistic space is a critical component of a cultural scene or landscape. Renovating existing space can be a great catalyst for both downtown rejuvenation and heritage preservation, both of which go hand-in-hand with a vibrant arts and culture scene. This contributes to making communities more attractive, while increasing tourism and real estate values (4). Renovation of space in locations desired by creative services (i.e. downtown/creative cluster locations) is essential to attracting their business (11).

Physical space may also house a variety of artistic, cultural or even industrial groups, living in 'creative clusters' (9, 13), which allows for even more creative communication and collaboration among these groups. A number of examples of this exist in New York, where theatre groups cohabitate (and often collaborate) with visual and handicraft artists, technological manufacturing companies, fashion designers, and even graffiti artists (19). Apartment-studios are popular in these spaces, as they are in a number of similar spaces managed by Toronto's Artscape (10).

**3.3.2 People: Cultivating members of the Creative Class from within, attracting them from without.** If infrastructure is the canvas, the artist is the paint, providing the space with its *raison d'être*. Artists will travel, often worldwide, to cities with working programs and spaces that are relevant to their artistic genre. Providing a solid infrastructure would attract artists and their followers from other regions while being an incentive for artists native to the region to remain and work at home. This creates jobs for industry, support and technical staff – those working in parallel to the artists in their own creative and specialized way. Both physical space and ideas work together as a part of the overall arts 'scene', where artists of the same or a different medium dialogue and share each others' ideas and inspiration. Not only does their presence promote and develop the creative class in the area, it also attracts new creators, presenters and consumers. An excellent example of this type of innovation is the proposed Capitol Theatre School of Performing Arts, which would provide year-round theatre training.

The establishment of training centres or arts schools within artistic spaces also caters to what could be considered the ultimate renewable resource: youth. Youth involvement in the arts and culture scene is shown to have positive social ramifications. These children are significantly more likely to report feeling satisfied with themselves, to win an award for academic achievement and to say that they plan to continue education after high school (4). As the creative class develops, its younger members would be more likely to remain in our region, where improved infrastructure would exist for them to continue to create and produce work as adults. A parallel effect would be noted for the technical and support staff that would be hired by the school. A child with an interest in the technical aspects of production may eventually become a professional, contributing part of

the creative class as a lighting designer, wardrobe, make-up artist, production manager, musician, etc.

It is noteworthy that many of the artistic groups housed in New York and Toronto arts spaces provide technical training, marketing assistance and space dedicated uniquely to the development of new products. Several reports support this position (3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 19). In California, state legislation is pending to add visual and performing arts as requirements for high school graduation (11). Moncton is currently below the national average for youth aged 15 – 24 enrolled in all types of educational programs (17).

**3.3.3 Funding and planning.** Funding is a constant challenge for the arts. However, large urban centres with a strong arts and culture scene recognize the importance of this aspect of city life. Through creative planning and innovation, they have nurtured artistic development. Richard Florida highlights the importance of 'venture capital' to both technological and artistic projects, stating that new ideas and new products, which are vital to economic growth, cannot be developed without it. He cites numerous examples of mammoth technological companies who have become so because they ensured a place for venture capital in their budgets (1). Just a few of the many examples of investment in the arts, as well as the positive measure of their returns, are found in section 3.2 of this document.

Venture investment is inherently financial in origin, but need not be uniquely so. With regards to arts and cultural development, planning is an essential form of parallel investment in order to assure innovation and longevity in the venture investment. Another key principle in arts funding is partnerships among a variety of sources. As more sectors become involved, so do more tools, more solutions and different ways of thinking. This allows for a proactive approach to arts and culture management that can grow and change with new economic demands, and is less dependent on a singular source of funding. Florida, among others (3, 5, 9, 14, 19, 21, 22) advocates partnerships between private, not-for-profit and all levels of government. New England's *Building Better Communities through Culture* project features a wide variety of partners including visual artists, musicians, arts producers, social activists, city planners, and a Chamber of Commerce Chair (12). The Capitol Theatre already has a track record of partnerships with government on all levels, as well as partnerships with the private sector. The Capitol's plan for expansion of the arts and cultural scene described in this document favours renewed involvement with municipal, provincial and federal levels of government, with financial aid agencies, and with existing arts and cultural groups in the region. An overall strategy incorporating cultural, urban and economic development is needed for the three neighboring municipalities, one that involves Centreville Downtown Moncton Incorporated, the Chamber of Commerce, and Enterprise Moncton.

Our short-term plan is to expand into space adjacent to the Capitol Theatre, but the Theatre envisions its involvement in urban and economic development on a long-term basis. Greater Moncton has yet to establish a 'cultural district' or even a Centre for the Arts, which would house a number of different artistic groups. An interesting adjunct to this is the '24-hour' downtown, which caters to the varied lifestyles and work hours that have become typical of the workforce, especially those of the creative class. It allows for people to live, work and play according to their own schedules. A '24-hour' downtown is shown to be a core element in a vibrant and artistically-oriented urban centre (22), allowing for chance meetings for exchange of ideas as well as programs designed to support this exchange in a more structured setting. The '24-hour' downtown compliments the creative spirit, which does not always manifest itself from 9 to 5.

The Capitol Theatre has already demonstrated leadership with regard to the '24-hour' downtown, opening the theatre for midnight shows as early as the 1930s. The Capitol's latest plans for expansion will be part of an overall downtown transformation featuring more entertainment, more glitter and lights on the exterior of several downtown buildings, the acquisition and revitalization of older buildings, and the flourishing of a dynamic nightlife.

It is worthy of note that New England and New York, leaders in arts and cultural development in the United States, stress the importance of self-renewing funding, diversity in financial partnerships and contingency plans for continued arts development. Already considered one of the world's artistic capitals, the New York City policy research report referenced in this document is devoted entirely to the creative and economic development of the five boroughs surrounding the city, including the already vibrant Manhattan.

**3.3.4 Networking with the broader creative community.** Networking within the broader creative community brings forth innovative and practical ideas for funding, planning and the sustaining of this valuable resource. It includes consultation with the developers of infrastructure development groups and with local arts and culture groups.

Developers of infrastructure have participated in the growth of the arts and culture industry in most major urban centres. Artscape is a Toronto-based non-profit space and service provider that develops and manages properties, builds partnerships, engages in research and planning, and delivers programs that serve artists while strengthening the broader community. Artscape's property development activities focus on the creation of multi-tenant centres that serve artists, not-for-profit arts groups and local communities. This specialized area of practice involves forging a common vision from diverse interests, building community partnerships, raising funds, as well as all of the technical aspects of capital project planning and construction. Studios under Artscape management include artist work and live/work spaces, designer/maker retail studios, offices, production, performance and exhibition facilities for not-for-profit arts organizations, and complimentary ancillary uses (20). Artscape offers planning and consulting services on a fee-for-service basis to support capital project planning and development in the not-for-profit sector. This agency is particularly interested in supporting arts-driven, community-based development projects and helping Canadian cities create arts-focused, not-for-profit real estate development organizations. Similar groups exist throughout the world, including The Fifth Avenue Committee in New York (19); Acme Studios Housing (23) and Space Studios (24) in London, England; Wasps Artist Studios in Scotland (25); and Artspace Projects in Minnesota (26).

Another large-scale, not-for-profit agency is Partners for Livable Communities, based in Washington, DC (22). The group's mission is to enhance the overall 'livability' of communities, 'livability' bearing strong similarities to quality of place variables (and their corresponding economic benefits) described by Richard Florida. Partners also provides a high-profile website, hosting city sites where community development and livability improvements are in action – an easily-accessible resource for those surfing the web looking for a place to re-locate. Partners has been successful (culturally and economically) in Kansas City, Chattanooga, Indianapolis, and Richmond (22).

A number of cities boast Special Events Offices as an integral part of their municipality, which coordinates events, marketing strategies and funding in order to maximize efforts and costs in the cultural sector. These Offices also serve to develop promotional initiatives, which can benefit a variety of sectors (private, not-for-profit, cultural). A good example of this is 'Destination Halifax', a multi-year plan designed to market Halifax as a location for international business and cultural tourists (16). Enterprise Greater Moncton recently launched its 'Building on our Success' campaign, which targets Moncton's economic growth through entrepreneurial and media partnerships (27). Exploring both of these initiatives would yield interesting information and partnership possibilities.

Research into cultural and economic development supports the development of talent indigenous to one's region. Examples include the strong theatre tradition in New York (19); country music in Kentucky (5); cowboy poetry in Elko, Nevada (5); and jazz in Kansas City (22). The tri-community area of Moncton-Dieppe-Riverview has an active theatre and music scene, strong visual artists and writers, several dance schools, and a community of potters and artisans in the surrounding rural areas. These artistic groups, although rich in talent, often do not realize their full artistic and economic potential.

A further example of partnering with a wider artistic community would be twinning our region with a city abroad in order to create a cultural exchange program, and/or festival based on indigenous talents, thus boosting cultural and artistic diversity in two areas simultaneously.

A 2001 Arts Forum held in Moncton concluded that a Greater Moncton Arts Council, representing all artistic groups, would be highly beneficial as a networking and promotional agency for local artists themselves and would facilitate access to new export markets (28).

### **3.4 The Plan for Greater Moncton: Main Street today, Downtown tomorrow**

*'Cultural activities attract tourists and spur the creation of ancillary facilities such as restaurants, hotels, and the services needed to support them. Cultural facilities and events enhance property values, tax resources, and overall profitability for communities. In doing so, the arts become a direct contributor to urban and rural revitalization.'*

- National Governors Association, 'The Role of the Arts in Economic Development' (5)

The tri-community area is home to a variety of enterprises, both cultural and entrepreneurial. In April 2004, Enterprise Greater Moncton launched a strategic plan for Moncton's continued economic success. This plan is largely based on private sector and government partnership. Their vision is for this region 'to be a leader among mid-sized cities for economic growth; the creation of high quality employment; educational attainment in the workforce; and quality of life' (27). Enterprise Greater Moncton has acknowledged the relevance of arts and cultural development to a city's overall economic development.

Many of the region's enterprises are located in the downtown core. This area boasts a growing number of places to work and to meet and greet outside of working hours, including restaurants and outdoor performance spaces. Centreville Downtown Moncton Inc. (CDMI) has played a crucial role in the downtown's revitalization by uniting area businesses in improving both promotional efforts and esthetics. Pedestrian traffic has increased significantly, as has restaurant patio business along Main Street and the immediate side streets. Downtown has become a vibrant and colourful place to socialize, do business or both.

Well aware of the ramifications of a flourishing downtown area on the local economy, CDMI is working with City and Provincial officials to implement a 4-year Tax Abatement Program, targeting vacant and under-utilized heritage buildings in the downtown area. There would be 100% tax forgiveness in the first year, 75% forgiveness in the second, 50% in the third and 25% in the fourth. The incentive has been approved by City Council and is currently before the Provincial Government. Through its Downtown Property Assistance Design Program, CDMI offers assistance to property owners in order to achieve the fullest potential of their property by offsetting the cost of conceptual designs, feasibility studies, historic renderings, and site signage (29).

Several projects are in the works to make the Greater Moncton area a more dynamic urban centre over the next ten years. Its downtown core is specifically targeted for intense growth in the business and cultural sectors simultaneously. Planned developments include a new convention centre and hotel space connected by pedways and tunnels; a soundstage for film and television; an aquatic/fitness centre; a new justice facility; and a new arena, to name a few. The scope of activities taking place within these new structures is both interesting and diverse, encompassing business, arts and leisure activities, with the capacity and infrastructure to host or produce professional, world-class events. This will enhance Moncton's attractiveness as a destination for cultural tourism. According to the World Tourism Organization, 37% of all international trips have a cultural component and this sector is growing by 15% each year. Tourists no longer choose a destination; they select an activity (16). This proposed new

infrastructure is highly conducive to the development of an entertainment sector or cultural district in Moncton's downtown core – a place where cultural activity will enhance the city's overall image and attractiveness. These changes are designed to give new life to existing structures esthetically, culturally and economically. Further plans include lighting up the night in the downtown core by re-vamping the exterior appearance of the Assumption Building and the NB Tel Tower with lights.

A leader in arts and culture since its inception a hundred years ago, the Capitol Theatre is a natural springboard for this next step in the region's cultural and economic expansion. The following section outlines the Theatre's plan for initiating the development of an artistic and cultural district in downtown Moncton.

#### **4.0 A Course of Action: The Plan for the Capitol Theatre**

The Capitol Theatre's plan for its contribution to arts and cultural evolution in Greater Moncton is based on the purchase of an adjacent building for professional artistic and cultural activities. Our plan is outlined according to four key components for artistic and cultural development within an urban centre: 1) *place*; 2) *people*; 3) *funding and planning*; and 4) *networking within the greater creative community*.

##### **4.1 Place: Infrastructure Expansion through the Purchase of an Adjacent Building**

The Capitol Theatre intends to expand its infrastructure by acquiring and renovating an adjacent building. Its renovation would be both structural and cosmetic. The main goal in acquiring this space is to operate a year-round performing arts school. A secondary goal is the expansion of the theatre's educational, presentational and rental activity.

Interior renovations to the building will include space for wardrobe, prop construction and storage; a seamstress; a digital room for a multimedia/technical studio; an editing room; wireless communication and mechanical space; and class rooms/studios. Other space will be allocated for the Capitol Foundation Office, a Board Room, and office space for administration and rental.

In acquiring an adjacent space, we would be contributing to CDMI's vision for downtown rejuvenation by converting another heritage building in the downtown core to active, multi-functional use. A further advantage is the renovation of space in a location desired by creative services (i.e. a downtown/ creative cluster location). This is essential to attracting their business (11).

The creation of a physical space for artistic and cultural use is a crucial step toward the development of a cultural district in the downtown core. Potential tenants for the newly renovated space, above and beyond the performing arts school include a multi-functional studio (dance, music), a book store, a specialty record and visual media shop, an art gallery, a café/restaurant, office space for cultural groups, and a members' lounge. (30, 31).

The Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company has expressed a strong interest in sharing a new space with the Capitol Theatre. The Company is a prime example of a professional artistic group with whom networking and sharing of resources can be mutually beneficial. In just three years since its inception in 2001, the Atlantic Ballet Theatre of Canada has earned a place among Canada's leading professional ballet companies. The Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company engages professional and emerging artists from all four Atlantic Provinces and intends to tour across the country and beyond. The Company's instructors are recruited from around the world and it features dynamic young dancers from Canada, Ukraine, Russia, Argentina and Japan. An example of cross-disciplinary collaboration among artists is the Company's production of Igor Dobrovolsky's interpretation of Jacques Savoie's 'Les Portes tournantes'.

The Company is developing at a rapid pace and would benefit from renting space within the expanded Capitol complex. This space would house the Company's head office, dance studios, professional summer school, and post-secondary mentorship program. The Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company's profile would enhance the reputation of the Capitol Theatre as an institution for the arts. It would also give credibility to its performing arts school, which has taken some inaugural steps, but is still untested in a year-round format. There is great potential in this partnership for cross-pollination of creative talents and generated revenue, providing students of both ballet and drama with opportunities to meet and grow in innumerable ways. This interest of the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company clearly demonstrates the need for better infrastructure for growing professional artistic groups in the Moncton area and it illustrates the potential benefits to artists and to the cultural development of the city.

A feasibility study should be conducted to determine further needs for creative space in the downtown core. This will demonstrate the pertinence of this project by examining the needs of the Capitol Theatre as an expanding arts centre. The study will explore the needs of the arts and downtown business communities; the particular demographics of our region's arts community. It will also allow us to compare our proposed building renovation plan with renovated, functional artistic spaces already established in similar mid-sized urban areas.

#### **4.2 People: A Year-Round Performing Arts School**

The success of the Capitol Theatre's summer drama program inspired plans for a year-round performing arts school. An Action Plan for the Capitol Theatre School of Performing Arts was prepared for the Board of Directors of the Capitol Theatre in November 2003 (28). This report states that the heavy utilization of the Capitol Theatre and Empress Room as a performing venue imposes an important constraint on conducting a theatre school. The acquisition of an adjacent building would allow the school to operate feasibly.

The advantages of operating such a school are many: employment opportunities for instructors and support staff; educational and creative opportunities for youth; development and presentation of new artistic works; increased family involvement in the arts; fostering of the next generation of the Creative Class, whose members are much sought and valued by large enterprise; enhanced attractiveness of the tri-community area's quality of life to those who are looking to re-locate their families. The importance of an educational component to an artistic enterprise cannot be ignored or overstated (3, 4, 5, 9, 11, 17, 19).

The acquisition of this space would provide an additional rehearsal and performance space that could house or be made available to other artistic groups. This multi-disciplinary approach encourages the growth of creative clusters – a proven breeding ground for new ideas and products. Creativity being defiant of time, the presence of the year-round (after-school and evening) performing arts school, as well as the presence of artistic groups within the building itself, will contribute to Moncton's extended-hour, downtown vibrancy and variety.

#### **4.3 Funding and Planning**

The Capitol Theatre has demonstrated flexibility and growth in funding and planning. We still rely on municipal government funding at 40% of our operating budget, although this has decreased from 70% several years ago. The Capitol has taken great strides toward insuring a reasonable degree of financial self-sufficiency, although it is not likely that the Capitol Theatre will ever be able to operate without municipal funding. A number of programs and projects have been developed with this in mind. These include the Capitol Theatre Foundation, which will provide some of the funding for the day-to-day operations of the year-round theatre school; and the Capitol's development strategy, 'Building the Capitol's Future' (33), for which a Director of Development was recently hired to create and implement fundraising strategies for the Capitol Theatre.

For the current property acquisition project, the Capitol has created a budget which follows the guidelines outlined by Richard Florida (1), among others (3, 5, 9, 14, 19, 21, 22), suggesting that arts development projects should partner with private, not-for-profit organizations and all levels of government. As outlined in our project budget, funds for the acquisition and renovation of an adjacent building come from municipal, provincial and federal governments; from ACOA; Heritage Canada; the Capitol Theatre Foundation; the Capitol Theatre Improvement Fund; and revenues generated by rental of the new space. The Capitol is aware of the importance of generating and re-investing its own 'venture capital'. We have begun to study our clientele in more detail by commissioning in-house studies in order to provide better service and to increase our financial viability (34).

Greater Moncton political and economic development agencies acknowledge the role of arts and culture in economic development (27), while arts and culture groups have been promoting the idea of a downtown arts centre since 1973 (30, 31). During the next ten years, the Capitol Theatre will become more active in promoting cultural and economic development among political, private and not-for-profit organizations. By acquiring space for a performing arts school which can be also house other artists and arts groups, Metro Moncton will join Canadian centres such as Toronto and Winnipeg in recongizing the social and economic benefits of arts and culture.

#### **4.4 Networking with the Broader Creative Community**

In developing plans for the renovation of an adjacent building, the Capitol Theatre will consult with infrastructure development firms with experience, such as Artscape and Partners for Liveable Communities. Artscape in particular offers a 'Creative Clusters Development Program', which consists of workshops for organizations seeking to develop a multi-tenant arts facility. This program will be launched in February 2005 and continue over the next five years (20). Given Halifax's success in renovating downtown warehouse and historical spaces for artistic purposes, and their interest in urban development in Atlantic Canada, it would be worthwhile to meet with the people behind that movement. These partnerships will allow us to renovate our building with competence and style, and they will also open a dialogue with companies that have national or international experience.

Networking with local groups will also be beneficial in determining the needs of the artistic community and in promoting the cohesion of the varied artistic groups, a necessity highlighted by local artistic groups (28). Consultation with the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company has already yielded a potential rental tenant and an artistic group with whom to share both space and talents. This is a perfect example of the 'win-win' situation described by Richard Florida regarding the sharing of creative energies (1). The right combination of infrastructure, consultation and promotion will allow the Capitol Theatre to develop a year-round performing arts school that will be an important piece of the cultural landscape in a downtown 'cultural district'. The Capitol Theatre has a leadership/catalyst role in making Moncton shine on the creative world map.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

This document outlines the Capitol Theatre's proposal for developing an expanded Capitol complex. Plans include the acquisition and renovation of an adjacent building. The new space will house a year-round performing arts school, the offices and studios of the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company, and other artistic groups. This will provide much-needed space for the development of creative clusters in the Greater Moncton area. As we have shown in this document, creative clusters are essential to the cultural and economic development of urban centres. The new space will contribute to downtown development overall.

The projected results of this project include, but are not limited to:

- increased revenue from the performing arts school, the Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company and commercial rental;
- increased revenue through more shows, more production activities, rental of a portion of the new space;
- fostering of the younger members of the creative class, who will come to create and produce new works;
- enhancing Greater Moncton's attractiveness to members of the creative class looking to relocate;
- creation of new jobs in the arts and cultural sector;
- opportunities for artists of various medium to work together, providing for further artistic and economic growth;
- social benefits to youth and families, such as improved self-confidence and diversification of interests, which has been shown to contribute to the educational level and overall well-being of youth. (4)

The Capitol Theatre has been a mainstay and a leader in local arts and culture, a centre for artistic development, an employer of creative people and a place of entertainment and stimulation for patrons. Over the past one hundred years, the Theatre has taken a leadership/catalyst role in the development of the downtown core and in development of the creative class in the Greater Moncton area. The growth of the Capitol Theatre is synonymous with the growth of our region, artistically and economically. This documents demonstrates the pertinence of the Capitol Theatre's expansion to the future of the tri-community area.

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## APPENDIX A

### **The History of the Capitol Theatre and its Role in Moncton's Cultural Development: Evolution at its Finest**

Since its beginnings in 1909, the Capitol Theatre has been a leader in cultural development in the tri-community area of Moncton, Dieppe and Riverview. The Theatre's history is both colourful and noteworthy, while its evolution has been crucial to the development of the downtown area and the local arts and cultural scene.

The Capitol's history can be divided into three periods: variety and endurance, 1909 – 1990; new glory 1990 – 1993; and a decade of distinction 1993 – 2003. The Capitol is a known survivor, having recovered with fervour from two fires and transformation from decorative glory to slate grey when live performance dimmed and the Theatre became a cinema. It is also a known centre for arts development, having participated in the creation of several new festivals and provided support for new projects and shows, featuring regional talent.

#### **Variety and Endurance : 1909 - 1990**

Since its walls were first constructed in 1909, the Capitol Theatre has undergone significant changes to its structure, to its entertainment line-up and to its name. The earliest theatre built on the land occupied by the Capitol Theatre (and probably built on the same foundation) was the Davidson Theatre, constructed in 1908-09. In 1911, Eastern Amusements Company Limited, owned by Monctonians Frederick W. Winter and Alexander R. Torrie, acquired the theatre and renamed it the Empress.

In 1922, the Capitol was built abutting the Empress on one side. Though it was meant to be primarily a cinema, the Capitol's generous stage was able to accommodate any road attraction. Canadian architect and Moncton resident René-Arthur Fréchet designed the Capitol and Empress theatres.

The Capitol's early schedule of entertainment was a program mainly devoted to movies, sometimes accompanied by the Capitol's resident 10-piece orchestra. It was 1923 before the first live performers set foot on the Capitol stage. As it was one of the newest theatres in Moncton, the Capitol soon became the venue of choice for live touring performers. By 1926, it was importing shows from London and New York. A distinguished classical idol of that day was Sir John Martin Harvey, one of the great British actor-managers, who visited Moncton on tour with his company and played in the Capitol to great acclaim. Over the next thirty years, a variety of live performances would grace the Capitol's stage, including: revues, circuses, plays, Charleston contests, pantomimes, minstrel shows, mystics, musicals and community sing-songs broadcast on local radio stations.

On March 26, 1926, a fire devastated both the Capitol and the adjoining Empress. The Empress was demolished and the Capitol lost its roof and stage. This tragic event also claimed the life of Alexander H. "Sandy" Lindsay, a volunteer firefighter. He is the only firefighter to have been killed while on active duty with the City of Moncton's fire department. His picture presently hangs in the lobby of the Capitol, and Al's friendly presence is said to watch over the theatre to this day.

Only the outer walls of the theatre remained after the fire, but in just over six months both interiors had been rebuilt on the old foundations using bricks from the original structure. The Capitol reopened October 18, 1926, with significant improvements. The seating in the new Capitol was reduced from 1400 to 800, and its new décor was more striking, ornate and flamboyant. The stenciling, done in 1926, was the work of Emmanuel Briffa, considered at the time to be one of the foremost theatre designers in the world. Seven extra dressing rooms were added under the newly built stage and the size of the auditorium was reduced to permit more stage depth.

After 1926, the Capitol's programming continued to be based on movie exhibition, with some vaudeville acts providing variety. Unique for the period, it was not allied with any vaudeville chains nor part of a theatre circuit, though it did host some well-known performing troupes. The years 1927 and 1928 could be called the golden years in the history of live performance at the Capitol, as live acts filled the stage for 34 of the 52 weeks each year while the Empress became the Eastern Amusements Company's motion picture flagship.

On June 13, 1929, talking movies first came to Moncton with "The Donovan Affair," and movies again almost completely edged out live entertainment in popularity. The Capitol was an independent theatre, one of the few in Canada where Famous Players did not occupy an exclusive or dominant position. It offered a wide range of films by different production companies that were changed frequently, as well as French-language films. For a time, a Francophone film festival was held for a week each October.

Talking films were not the only factor in the decline of live shows. The Wall Street stock market crash had bankrupted many of the touring plays and vaudeville units. Through the Great Depression, though many people were out of work and there was little money to spare, residents still seemed to find a little money for entertainment. At the Capitol, the accent was on local acts and community shows.

The year 1936 saw the first of a series of stage shows that started one minute after midnight on Sundays. New Brunswick laws still kept theatres closed on the holy day and the midnight shows were a way around the ban.

The performance era of 1923 – 1940 is reflective of its historic era and features the legacies of a number of major performers and/or historical figures who graced the Capitol's stage. These include Dame Clara Butt, who gave an impromptu performance in 1922 for her own benefit, thinking she was alone in the theatre - while the theatre's manager was standing there unbeknownst to her at the time; Jack Leon Lamonte, who tightrope-walked not only across the Capitol stage, but also across downtown Main St. in 1923; magician Rajah Raboid, who, between Capitol performances, drove the Mayor's car around the city while blindfolded in 1927; Colonel Norman H. Schwarzkopf (father of the famous general of the same name) in 1932 as he gave a speech pleading for information pertaining to the kidnapping of Charles Lindbergh's baby; Ethel Barrymore and Alan Hale Jr., the latter to become the 'Skipper' on famed TV show Gilligan's Island; and Gracie Fields, who, recognized by the audience when she attempted to see a show at the Capitol Theatre incognito, gave an impromptu musical performance and was rewarded later that evening with a lobster supper hosted by the theatre's manager Fred Winter – directly on the Capitol's stage.

Despite the many colourful moments in the Capitol's history up to the 1940s, it became that only local performers and locally produced shows were seen on the Capitol stage. In 1950, the opera boxes were taken out, the orchestra pit remained but was boarded over and the classic murals and decorations were painted over with a uniform grey. The original brass chandeliers were one of the few remaining reminders of the theatre's once-opulent interior. The last live show to play upon the Capitol stage was in 1958. While the Capitol continued to show films until 1990, the Empress stopped showing movies in the 60s. It became a nightclub, then a teen club, and then was used as nothing more than a storage facility.

### **The Restoration: New Glory 1990 - 1993**

In the 1980s, there was a growing movement to establish a centre for live entertainment for the three communities of Moncton, Riverview and Dieppe. When Empire Theatres announced that they planned to close the Capitol as a movie house in 1990, attention turned to the Capitol. Could this diamond in the rough be the new performing arts centre?

As public support grew, all three municipal councils agreed they would like to be part of any restoration project. The federal and provincial governments also contributed funding, and the municipalities agreed to contribute towards the annual operating costs of the soon-to-be-revived theatre.

This happened during a period in Moncton's history in which it was trying to overcome the "dying downtown" syndrome. The restored Capitol would become the catalyst for new traffic, new restaurant and bar patrons and new economic spin-offs. Restoration of this stately piece of Moncton's heritage began in February 1992.

David and Patty Hannivan of Toronto, experts in theatre history and restoration, were brought in to assess the theatre. What they found under four or five coats of paint was Emmanuel Briffa's lavish Victorian scroll stenciling throughout the auditorium, making up about 90% of the wall and ceiling finished surfaces. David Hannivan commented, "This is surely the most elaborately stenciled theatre I have ever seen." Samples of the paints used in 1926, photographs and notes made it possible for the Hannivans to recreate the stencil patterns and exactly match the original color schemes. Seven local artists were engaged to complete the new stenciling, and repaint with silver and gold where the original artist's work was unrecoverable.

Other structural restorations followed suit. Eight opera boxes were rebuilt from old photographs. Local carpenter Ray Cormier completed the opera boxes using the same style as the original builder. The old orchestra pit was reopened. Three murals were uncovered above the proscenium arch in the theatre. All the excess paint over these murals, representing the muses of music, drama and comedy, was removed and the paintings restored. The false floor, put in place during the Capitol's movie era, was removed and the original hardwood stage was found intact beneath. Another surprise find was the theatre's old fire curtain, once thought lost. Bread dough was used to clean and lift years of grime off the beautifully painted curtain. New seating was ordered in, including special seats that could be removed to accommodate wheelchair users.

Originally, the Capitol Theatre ended at the back wall of the stage. The empty Empress Theatre, which backed on to the Capitol, was converted into dressing rooms, a green room, a loading dock and eventually, a second performance space. The antiquated wooden fly rails above the stage were removed and a brand-new steel counter-weight grid was installed.

Technology enhanced the theatre's services for clientele and performers alike. An elevator was installed, as well as an infrared sound system for patrons with hearing disabilities. Sound equipment, specially designed to complement the Capitol's exceptional natural acoustics, was installed, along with new electrical wiring throughout the building. The plumbing was also replaced and all systems modernized.

And then: the people who make it all happen. A team of more than 200 volunteers was gathered to be the face of the Capitol: ushering, taking tickets, running the coat check and handing out programs were all tasks assigned to this devoted team. A vibrant, talented and dynamic staff was hired to manage and run daily operations.

The Capitol Theatre is one of only six theatres in Canada that has been authentically and historically restored. Though it now appears as it did in 1926, the theatre is a living testament to its history. The decoration and design of the Capitol is typical of the 1910s and earlier. The theatre is more sculptural and the painted decoration of elements is more elaborate than was usually seen by the late 1920s. The new Capitol of 1993 still boasts the exterior walls of the 1922 theatre while its interior offers the glory of the 1926 Capitol.

The early 1990s witnessed artistic development at a rampant pace in the tri-community area. In just over 18 months, an aging movie house was transformed into an elaborate performing arts centre, heralding a new era in the region's cultural life. As the curtain rose on its first performance in 1993, the Capitol Theatre was well on its way to fulfilling its mandate: to advance artistic development and provide entertainment within fiscally responsible boundaries; to offer a variety of high-calibre artistic events that will attract people to the theatre; to provide them with a positive artistic experience; to promote attachment and opportunity for innovation between the community and the theatre; and to participate in the social and economic vitality of the region.

## **A Decade of Distinction and Development : 1993 - 2003**

Although a young and untested theatre, the enthusiasm about this beautiful and acoustically sound space spread quickly and contagiously throughout the entertainment industry. Though most traveling shows are booked many months in advance, and despite the Capitol rising from the ashes in a matter of months, it still attracted many quality shows in its first year of operation.

*Symphony New Brunswick* called the Capitol “home” and *Theatre New Brunswick* was also pleased to make the Capitol their performance space in Moncton. In 1993, *DancEast* and Friends’ *The Nutcracker* debuted. This holiday favourite, featuring international dance stars and local dance students alike, was to become a fixture at the Capitol that celebrated their own ten-year anniversary in 2002. In November 1993, the Capitol was officially recognized as a historic property by Heritage Moncton.

It was a prestigious year for the Capitol Theatre in 1995, chosen as one of six locations across Canada (and the only one in the Atlantic region) to celebrate *du Maurier’s 25th Anniversary Sponsoring the Arts*. This gala was taped for future broadcast on television and radio. Also in 1995, the Capitol began the move from being merely a rental house to presenting its own programming, as well. The theatre’s first subscription series was launched in August. A donor wall installed in the outer foyer and guided theatre tours began that summer. Talks also began with the Moncton Museum to develop displays of theatre history and artifacts.

In 1996, for the first time in the theatre’s history, the Capitol expanded its subscription series to include a French theatre series by the Théâtre Populaire d’Acadie, providing a wonderful compliment to Theatre New Brunswick’s series. Another innovation that same year was the art gallery in the lobby. Open during the day as well as on show nights, the lobby walls were adorned with the work of local artists. The exhibitions are changed approximately every two months.

A number of changes occurred during this period to improve the delivery of services to and the fostering of creative growth within the community. Officials from the three municipalities became more involved with the administration and financial accounting of theatre’s operations, and to this day each municipality still appoints elected and community representatives to the Board of Directors. In 1997, a detailed three-year business plan for the Capitol was completed. This year marked the theatre’s first time operating with a balanced budget since it opened. In addition to a new marquee, improvements in 1997 included adjustments to the lobby and balcony lounge areas so that they could be rented separately or in conjunction with the main auditorium. As well, upgrades continued on the Empress, which is increasingly utilized as the years go on.

A number of activities were also launched to strengthen the bond between the Capitol and the community, also creating opportunities for artistic and economic development. These included the first year of drama camp, held in conjunction with Camp Centennial, and a drama workshop for seniors. The Drama Camp will eventually be upgraded to create a performing arts school. Another popular outreach program was comprised of workshops with, and student matinees for, the public schools.

As a major commitment from the duMaurier Foundation ended in 1999, the Capitol Theatre Foundation, as well as a Fundraising Committee, were established in 1998. While the Board of Directors takes care of the day-to-day operations of the theatre, the Foundation ensures its continued success on several levels. While insuring a funding base for the theatre’s operations, it also contributes a portion of the venture capital required to develop and foster new ideas for artistic creation in the community.

Also in 1998, *Late Night Live*, a variety/talk show of local talent filmed before a live audience for TVNB, debuted in the Empress. The zany cast of characters developed through this show would become legendary in the Moncton comedy scene. Other shows featuring local artistic creation followed over the next few years, including the *Songwriters’ Circle* and the *Ligue d’improvisation acadienne*, both of which are televised. While the Capitol continues to play a key role in the creation and production of the

successful HubCap Comedy Festival, it also launched three in-house music festivals, which feature classical, world trad and blues.

Capital improvement projects that were completed in 1999 included construction of a wheelchair ramp, a new elevator to the Empress Theatre, an improved loading dock, the addition of above-stage catwalks in the fly area and complete decoration of the Balcony Lounge.

A new kind of show came to the Capitol in 2000 with the romantic union of true hearts; several couples chose to be married and hold their receptions in the Theatre. Construction of third floor offices and a mezzanine area to house sound and light systems was carried out in the Empress. The year 2000 also carried the momentum of the Capitol Theatre Foundation, which had a busy year raising funds through the “Encore: Spotlight on the Future” campaign, successfully reaching the goal of \$1.5 million.

Public and industry kudos highlighted the work and innovations of the Capitol Theatre when it received the Professional Presenters Award 2001 from Contact East, in recognition of excellence and achievement in a professional capacity to present touring performances. Thea Borlase, founding Board Member and long-time Volunteer Coordinator at the Capitol Theatre, was honoured with the 2001 Ramon John Hnatyshyn Award for Voluntarism in the Arts. The Capitol Theatre received nominations in 2002, 2003 and 2004 for the East Coast Music Association Award in the category of Venue of the Year.

With more than \$1 million invested in capital projects, the Capitol proceeded with improvements to the theatre in the three year period from 2001 through 2003. These included expanding the sound and lighting inventories, improving the system for the hearing impaired and soundproofing that allows both events to run concurrently on the main stage and in the Empress. A new natural gas boiler was installed as part of an overall improvement and upgrading of heating and cooling systems. A partnership was formed with the Hotel Delta Beauséjour for bar services and catering at the Theatre. A new ticket price structure was established in 2002 and the Capitol created a website to better serve patrons: [www.capitol.nb.ca](http://www.capitol.nb.ca)

Audiences enjoyed a treat in 2002 when the Capitol was host to the premiere performance of the *Atlantic Ballet Theatre Company*, Atlantic Canada’s only professional ballet company. The Capitol continues to support the development of this company with technical and infrastructure resources.

In a decade, the Capitol Theatre evolved from an abandoned movie theatre to one of the most vibrant and dynamic cultural venues in Atlantic Canada, where both the Anglophone and Francophone communities feel at home. International talent lines up next to local artists, providing unforgettable experiences for theatre-goers. As the demand for a variety of high quality entertainment grows, the Capitol Theatre is thrilled to keep pace and to continue serving the community through excellence in the arts.