

INGERSOLL

Ingersoll (2006 population: 11,760) is a town between Woodstock and London in south-western Ontario; it lies in Oxford County, on the Thames River. Well-known in the past for its cheese production, heavy manufacturing has since become Ingersoll's largest industry. The Town, in concert with interested citizens and organizations, has over several years shown an active desire to improve the social, economic, physical, and emotional health of the people of Ingersoll, by initiating and implementing several strategies. Every year the town hosts several festivals, including the Harvest Festival and Canterbury Folk Festival. Among the amenities available to the public include the Ingersoll Memorial Arena, Ingersoll Public Library, Ingersoll Cheese Museum, to name just a few.

Town of Ingersoll Cultural Strategy: Towards Ingersoll's Healthy Heart and Soul
Ingersoll's Cultural Strategy was motivated in particular by the degree of public participation in two community-based planning processes and their resulting documents: the Community Strategic Plan and the Downtown Revitalization Strategy. The interest and involvement shown by citizens and organizations in both of these processes revealed the high regard held by the town's citizenry for local culture.

The municipality identified four **key ingredients to its strategy**:

- Making good use of the momentum of currently involved citizens.
- An early focus on small-scale, accomplishable improvements that strengthen existing cultural resources and have recognizable results.
- Embracing and including the spirit and results of recent grass-roots community development strategies and fruitful projects.
- Connection with the youth of Ingersoll.

Among **steps were undertaken** in creating Ingersoll's cultural strategic plan were:

1. Prepared terms of reference
2. Held an introductory workshop to educate the public and to determine interest
3. Formed an ad hoc Cultural Strategy Committee from representatives of the cultural and community organizations
4. Prepared a current assessment.
5. Through individual interviews and surveys, reviewed and assessed linkages of cultural resources within the Community Strategic Plan and Downtown Strategy
6. Researched and conducted overall SWOT assessment (of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) as to cultural resources

Guiding principles with respect to Ingersoll's culture resources acknowledge that:

- These local cultural resources are deemed to be important to the citizens of Ingersoll.
- Cultural resources play an important economic role by bringing in new visitors.
- Cultural vitality is essential to Ingersoll's health and sustainability as a community.
- Cultural resources provide Ingersoll with a competitive edge in attracting visitors, residents and businesses.
- Creative people and organizations are welcomed, fostered and encouraged in Ingersoll.
- The community has a responsibility to introduce culture to its youth to encourage well-rounded learning and development.
- All cultural organizations need to share and cooperate with each other to ensure the full unfolding of the cultural sector.
- All levels of government are encouraged to invest in Ingersoll's cultural resources.
- These cultural resources are supported and promoted as an overall destination initiative.

In Ingersoll's **cultural planning method**:

- All citizens and organizations are encouraged to involve themselves in planning and implementation.
- The municipality plays a leadership but not a controlling role.
- The prime financial role of the municipality is not to be a large direct contributor but to help organizations secure funding from other sources.
- Both tangible and intangible cultural resources are addressed.
- Plans are to be results-driven and focus on do-able initiatives.
- An operational culture of accountability is emphasized, with monitoring and evaluation.
- Links to existing municipal strategies, e.g. the Community Strategic Plan and the Downtown Revitalization Strategy, are reinforced.
- Existing cultural resources and activities will be enhanced before new initiatives are taken on.
- A collaborative approach is fostered, but with a more businesslike operating environment to leverage resources (both internally and externally) for heightened economic and community benefit.

As a result of these processes, a Vision Statement and seven Impact Statements for long-term results were produced. Specific goals and objectives were formulated with a rough provisional timeline for each Statement.

Vision Statement

Ingersoll residents and visitors alike enjoy Ingersoll's rich, diverse and well-presented cultural resources. Residents of all ages are heavily engaged in a healthy and a balanced lifestyle of lifelong learning, community pride, heritage/artistic appreciation, and respect for the environment.

Impact Statements (long-term desired results)

Core area: Activities and programming

1. High enrolment levels of both local residents and out-of-town visitors involved in arts and culture training based in Ingersoll.
2. Well recognized as a major youth training centre for arts and culture.
3. Increased number of out-of-town visitors enjoys Ingersoll because of its informative and entertaining presentations of local history and culture.

Core area: Place

4. Well known by visitors as a place that is easy to find and once there, is easy to access by vehicle, by foot or by bike.
5. Vibrant and attractive downtown area staging a broad range of activities.

Core area: Oversight and capacity-building

6. Increased benefits for residents due to additional investment into the local cultural resources, both from external and internal financial contributors.
7. Well-managed Ingersoll cultural organizations effectively working together.

The specific goals and objectives that have been outlined for each Statement are accompanied in the Town's strategy by at least the initial steps needed to achieve the Statement result in the longer term. These were distilled into 11 key overall recommendations that Council could plan to implement during the following (2007/08) fiscal year, with input and assistance from volunteers, task forces, cultural groups, business associations, and community groups. The Arts & Cultural Strategy includes long-term desired changes in Ingersoll's resources; directional shifts in the resources' function, core activities and target market groups; and shifts in their physical space, scale of operations and "feel".