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The Regional Municipality of Durham Report

To: Community Growth and Economic Development Committee
From: Commissioner of Community Growth and Economic Development
Report: #2025-EDT-4
Date: February 4, 2025

Subject:

2024 Convergence Music, Arts, and Culture Festival

Recommendation:

That the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee recommends:

That this report be received for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary to the Community Growth and Economic Development Committee and Regional Council of the second annual Convergence Music, Arts, and Culture Festival, a festival held in downtown Oshawa between Friday September 20 and Saturday September 21st, 2024, including outcomes and metrics for the event.

2. Background

2.1 Convergence Music, Arts and Culture Festival (Convergence) is an initiative of Oshawa Tourism, which is a division of the Greater Oshawa Chamber of Commerce. Supported by the City of Oshawa, the Regional Municipality of Durham Economic Development and Tourism, and other partners, the event was first held in 2023.

2.2 Convergence promoted local music, arts, and culture and offered a creative and welcoming environment for all ages in downtown Oshawa. There were activities at various locations through the weekend, with the main festival happening on Saturday September 21st, 2024.

3. Previous Reports and Decisions

3.1 [#2023-INFO-106](#) – 2023 Convergence Music, Arts, and Culture Festival.

4. Events Overview

4.1 Convergence is a two-day festival. Ticketed or associated events were held at venues including the Robert McLaughlin Gallery, the Atria, and the Biltmore Theatre. The event includes live music, immersive art experiences, cultural demonstrations and more.

4.2 The 2024 festival grew in scale and space, including additional street closures, partners, and an additional stage area, making this event a larger and more significant undertaking for partners and collaborators.

4.3 During the main event on Saturday September 21st, between 11:30 A.M. and 10:00 P.M. there were a wide range of activities to explore on downtown Oshawa streets which were closed for the event:

- a. Live pro-wrestling
- b. Live music across three stages
- c. Contemporary circus performers
- d. The Punk Rock Flea Market Oshawa (a collective of alternative arts vendors)
- e. The Nerd Alley (a collective of comics, arts and music vendors)
- f. Art installation and activation area “The Art Block” presented by the City of Oshawa and the Robert McLaughlin Gallery in and around the former downtown Oshawa bus terminal, which included local and emerging Canadian contemporary artists
- g. Live music across three stages
- h. International street food area
- i. Tech Deck skateboard competition
- j. Live pro-wrestling
- k. Pop up and staged dance performances
- l. Durham Region Roller Derby demonstration area

- m. Family zone, which included art making with Living Room Community Art Studio, the Durham Black Arts Collective, Durham Shoestring Performers, Reptilia, Oshawa Museum, Canadian Automotive Museum, and others.
- 4.4 Contemporary artists presenting works at the event included Geordie Lishman, Christina Leslie, LeuWebb Projects, Malik McKoy, Brigitte Sampogna, and Andil Gosine.
- 4.5 Musicians performing at this event included a diverse line up of locally and internationally recognized acts including: Cassie Noble, Equal, SRE, Daphne, the Holy Gamblers, R.I.S.E. Edutainment, Aaron Ridge, Rachael Rose, Azalyne, Nicolina, Kubla, Tyler Lorette, The Anti-Queens, Contour, Sasha L Henry and the Dope Band, I, the Mountain, Excuses Excuses, Dizzy and TALK.
- 4.6 Economic Development and Tourism staff also hosted an on-site activation at the event. The activation included a custom photo booth experience, passing out hundreds of promotional materials such as the Durham Tourism Discovery Guide, the Durham Farm Fresh Guide, promotional pins, as well as hundreds of guest interactions to promote various great places to discover across Durham Region.

5. Event Metrics of Success

- 5.1 Convergence was a great success. Visitor data was collected for Convergence on the main event day Saturday September 21st, within a defined geographic area in downtown Oshawa for event reporting purposes. Metrics include:
- a. 15,300 households attended the event (Source: Environics);
 - b. Estimated visible minority presence of 37.5%, with 27.2% of attendees born outside of Canada (Source: Environics);
 - c. 23,955 total attendees (Source: GroundLevel Insights data), with 33.2% of visitors (7,636) traveling from more than 40km away. The average visitor travelled 56km;
 - d. Primary language of attendees included English, French, Mandarin, Arabic, and Hindi (Source: GroundLevel Insights data from mobile devices present);
 - e. \$1.16M was the estimated lift in revenue by local businesses during the event and for the following 30 days by event attendees (Source: GroundLevel Insights Real Economic Impact model).

- 5.2 The Ontario Ministry of Tourism, Culture and Sports “TREIM” modelling calculator can provide an estimated economic impact of visitors from 40km away for tourism events. Using the above metrics from GroundLevel insights data, this tool estimates the Saturday event at Convergence Oshawa 2024 had a total local economic impact of over \$2.7 million to Durham Region.
- 5.3 Comparing the 2024 Convergence event to the year prior, the 2024 event realized:
- a. An increase of 85% in overall attendance;
 - b. An increase of 40% in visible minority presence;
 - c. An increase of 153% from attendees traveling from more than 40kms away;
 - d. An increase of 210% to estimated economic impact following the TREIM model.

6. Budget Implications

- 6.1 Durham Region Economic Development and Tourism was a primary sponsor of the event for the purposes of promoting the Durham Tourism brand, building quality of place and tourism capacity, and reaching new audiences for the purposes of attracting continued tourism spending to the Region overall. Sponsorship of \$25,000 was committed from the approved 2024 Economic Development and Tourism Division budget.

7. Relationship to Strategic Plan

- 7.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham region Strategic Plan:
- a. Goal 2 – Community Vitality
 - Priority 2.2 Enhance community safety and well-being.
 - Priority 2.5 Build a healthy, inclusive, age-friendly community where everyone feels a sense of belonging.
 - b. Goal 3 – Economic Prosperity
 - Priority 3.1 Position Durham Region as the location of choice for business
 - Priority 3.2 Leverage Durham’s prime geography, social infrastructure, and strong partnerships to foster economic growth
 - Priority 3.4 Capitalize on Durham’s strengths in key economic sectors to attract high-quality jobs

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 Convergence Music, Arts, and Culture Festival 2024 was highly successful in its second year, seeing attendance increase by 85%, and it plays a significant role in enhancing and driving tourism spending in Durham Region.
- 8.2 Convergence supports Durham Tourism's brand messaging that Durham Region offers urban excitement and country charm, by contributing to Durham's reputation for urban excitement.
- 8.3 Convergence has generated significant economic impact locally and shows how Durham Region is a welcoming and inclusive community. It is expected that Convergence will continue to grow and offer experiences that bring people together through music, arts, and culture.

9. Attachments

Attachment #1: Photos of Convergence 2024

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Brian Bridgeman, MCIP, RPP, PLE
Commissioner of Community Growth and
Economic Development

Recommended for Presentation to Committee

Original signed by

Elaine C. Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer



Durham Tourism booth at Convergence



Durham Tourism photo booth sample



Convergence Main Stage



Convergence Main Stage



Live Pro Wrestling



Nerd Alley



Convergence Main Stage



Art Block (above)
Community participants (left)

