

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

BACKGROUND

The City of Dubuque is planning carefully for the community's long-term sustainability and regional competitiveness. Its *Sustainable Dubuque* strategy entails a three-pronged approach:

- Environmental and Ecological Integrity
- Economic Prosperity
- Social and Cultural Vibrancy

While all three are critical to the city's future, Economic Prosperity and Social and Cultural Vibrancy relate directly to arts and culture.

Dubuque is home to a wide variety of arts and cultural events and attractions. From the outstanding Arboretum and Botanical Gardens to *Art on the River*, to the city's active theater scene, to *Voices in the Mill District*, there is no shortage of artistic creativity in the city and the region. Dubuque residents benefit from all of this activity—in terms of quality of life and economic impact estimated at \$47 million annually¹.

As part of its *Sustainable Dubuque* approach, the City recognized the need for an Arts and Culture Master Plan to assist it and community stakeholders in managing and maximizing Dubuque's many cultural resources. In the spring of 2015, through a national, competitive selection process, the City of Dubuque engaged Lord Cultural Resources to facilitate a community planning process to develop an Arts and Culture Master Plan—an overarching strategy to cultivate arts and culture in the community. **This document is the resulting plan.**

¹ Americans for the Arts, *Arts and Economic Prosperity*, Vol. IV, 2012

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan is the culmination of an extensive research and public engagement process, assessment of existing cultural assets, and input gathered from Dubuque's arts and cultural, business, education, tourism and social service sectors as well as the broader community.

The plan aims to:

- Guide the City on how to direct resources.
- Reflect the community's desire to utilize arts and culture to enhance the sense of community.
- Contribute to economic vitality.
- Create and support an environment where art and culture thrive; and
- Enrich the community culturally, aesthetically, educationally and economically.

The plan **articulates a long-range vision** for arts and culture in Dubuque that reflects the input of Dubuquers across the community. The final plan will **serve as a practical handbook** for the City, its partners, and any organization or individual to use over the next 10 years to ensure arts and culture is an integral part of Dubuque's future growth and success.

METHODOLOGY

The Arts and Culture Master Plan was developed in three phases designed to incorporate input from the full spectrum of the Dubuque community:

- **Phase 1: State of Arts and Culture in Dubuque:** A review of background information and initial meetings with the City and local arts organizations resulted in a set of key issues and priorities that guided the work in subsequent phases;
- **Phase 2: Public Engagement:** An extensive public engagement process collecting input from over 400 Dubuque residents to ensure that a broad range of perspectives is represented in the plan. Input was gathered from variety of constituencies through:
 - Workshops with members of various sectors of the community—arts and culture, education, businesses, service organizations, City departments and agencies
 - Interviews with cultural providers and other local stakeholders
 - An online survey of the general public regarding their participation and interest in arts and cultural activities.

This input indicated key needs and opportunities that informed the strategy development in Phase 3.

- **Phase 3: Draft and Final Arts and Culture Master Plan:** Development of a Draft and Final Plan, with a detailed implementation guide, which sets out the strategy for the City of Dubuque and its partners based on the preceding research and public engagement.

VISION AND GOALS

The following Vision and Goals are proposed for arts and culture in Dubuque.

VISION

A vision statement is an aspirational statement – an articulation of what Dubuque is or would like to become with reference to arts and culture. It communicates impact and ambition and how Dubuque would like to be seen from inside and outside.

Dubuque is a dynamic, creative community in the heart of the Midwest. Dubuquers and visitors find art everywhere they turn. They are enriched and connected through creative experiences. Arts and culture flourishes here, integral to the life and prosperity of the city and its people.

GOALS

Complementing this Vision for arts and culture are several Goals that emerge from a set of core values developed and articulated through the course of this study. These are:

- **Economic Development:** Encouragement and support of arts and culture are not only a quality of life issue, but also a serious economic development strategy. The contributions of the arts and artists are supported and leveraged for economic development, boosting the city's brand and aiding talent attraction and retention.
- **Inclusivity:** Arts and culture in Dubuque promote inclusivity, diversity, harmony and understanding.
- **Integration of Arts and Cultural Community into City Leadership:** The arts and cultural community – artists, performers, administrators, and so on – are fully integrated into the city's decision making conversations. They are incorporated into economic development, planning, commercial, educational strategies. Leaders in these sectors communicate well with the arts community and vice-versa. In addition, the contributions of the arts and of artists to the city's prosperity are recognized.
- **Opportunity and Accessibility:** Dubuque is a city with participatory cultural opportunities in all corners of the community. Barriers to participation, whether

physical, intellectual, economic or other, are minimized or removed to encourage equitable opportunities for cultural engagement.

- **Involvement and Participation:** Residents of Dubuque actively participate in arts and culture. Arts and cultural entities and other sectors enable greater involvement and participation among Dubuque's citizens and visitors.
- **Clear Policies and Strong Management:** Clear policies, guidelines and procedures enable governance of the city's arts and cultural sector and the municipality's involvement in it.

PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

Research and community engagement with the general public, stakeholders in arts and culture, business, tourism, education, philanthropy, social service and municipal agencies revealed several areas of improvement. These have been synthesized into the following **four priorities** for this Arts and Culture Master Plan:

- A. Promote and Support Arts and Culture as Dubuque's Competitive Edge
- B. Boost Capacity for Arts and Culture to Thrive
- C. Foster Engagement at All Levels
- D. Cultivate Connections

These priorities and recommended strategies to achieve them have been developed from the community input, research into Dubuque's arts and culture environment and broader context, and best practices from around the country. This framework is meant to provide specific guidance for the City and any organization, individual or company in Dubuque to use to participate in propelling arts and culture—and the city—forward while still remaining flexible and adaptable for changing conditions as time goes on.

The following is a summary of the Priorities and Recommendations:

- A. Promote and Support Arts and Culture as Dubuque's Competitive Edge
 - a. Establish multiple funding streams to support arts and cultural activity.
 - b. Develop, attract and retain creative talent.
 - c. Develop a regulatory or business incentive framework that promotes and protects Dubuque's arts and cultural assets.
 - d. Undertake a strategic branding, marketing and communications campaign promoting awareness of Dubuque's arts and cultural community at home and in other markets and attracting participants from outside Dubuque.
 - e. Implement, evaluate and celebrate successes of this Master Plan.

- B. Boost Capacity for Arts and Culture to Thrive
 - a. Designate and empower an individual or entity to lead development of the cultural sector.
 - b. Clarify roles, responsibilities and guidelines for the Arts and Cultural Affairs Advisory Commission to best leverage their energy and knowledge to the benefit of arts and culture in Dubuque.
 - c. Establish a public policy framework conducive to arts and cultural activity.
 - d. Facilitate communication and coordination among the arts and cultural sector.
 - e. Rightsize facilities to meet capacity needs for rehearsal, exhibition/performance, education and administration.
 - f. Develop organizational and professional capacity.
- C. Foster Engagement at All Levels
 - a. Deepen appreciation for arts and culture among the general public.
 - b. Provide arts education opportunities to people of all ages, skill levels and income levels.
 - c. Increase availability and accessibility of arts and cultural offerings.
 - d. Nurture individual artists, from student to amateur to professional.
 - e. Stimulate volunteerism.
 - f. Inspire and diversify leadership.
- D. Cultivate Connections
 - a. Ensure arts and culture in Dubuque is inclusive and welcoming of people of all backgrounds and interests.
 - b. Develop ties among the arts and the broader community, increasing visibility and relevance of arts and culture.
 - c. Integrate leadership of the arts and cultural sector with leaders in other sectors in Dubuque by forging new relationships and strengthening existing ones between the arts and cultural sector and the business, public, non-profit and educational sectors.

The full framework of Priorities with Recommendations—along with detailed Strategies—is available in Chapter 4. Chapter 5 presents an Implementation Guide with recommendations for approaches to successful implementation upon adoption of this plan, including:

1. Appointing a dedicated City staffer to oversee the plan's implementation.
2. Holding an Implementation Workshop.
3. Developing a detailed Implementation Plan using the decisions from the workshop.
4. Forming a task force of partners to spearhead various components of the plan.
5. Monitoring progress periodically and adjusting course as appropriate.