

4. PRIORITIES AND STRATEGIES

Dubuque is home to a small but active creative community that is passionate about contributing to Dubuque's unique appeal. However, their value is not widely understood nor supported as fully as possible by the broader community, and internal gaps in skills and capacity mean that the sector is not functioning at its best. Furthermore, Dubuque at large stands to benefit from the connectivity and understanding that arts and culture is uniquely suited to facilitate.

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:

- E. Promote and Support Arts and Culture as Dubuque's Competitive Edge**
- F. Boost Capacity for Arts and Culture to Thrive**
- G. Foster Engagement at All Levels**
- H. 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 pages present each of the above priorities, along with recommendations and strategies to achieve the priorities. Recommendations for implementation, relating to phasing, resources and partners, are included in Chapter 5.

PRIORITY A:

PROMOTE AND SUPPORT ARTS AND CULTURE AS DUBUQUE'S COMPETITIVE EDGE

For Dubuque to fully leverage its arts and cultural sector as an economic driver and differentiator, a concerted, multi-pronged effort is necessary by all community sectors—the City, business, tourism, education, philanthropy, and the arts and cultural sector itself.

Arts and culture organizations in Dubuque rely heavily on local philanthropy, which draws from a small number of sources. Donor fatigue and a small donor base are challenges to growth and long-term success. Traditional philanthropic support is appreciated but limited in availability and scope. Funding sources will need to be broadened, and the level of investment increased in the short- and long terms, to see the benefits necessary for arts and culture to contribute to Dubuque long term success.

Investment can and should take multiple forms, from financial, to professional development, to regulatory support, to promotion and diligent implementation and evaluation. A range of strategies are recommended to achieve near-immediate as well as incremental returns.

A. Promote and Support Arts and Culture as Dubuque's Competitive Edge

a	<p>Establish multiple funding streams to support arts and cultural activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Increase municipal investment through dedicated staffing and budget, grants, and other initiatives.ii. Amplify private and corporate philanthropy within the community.iii. Seek philanthropic support from sources outside Dubuque (at state and federal levels).iv. Identify and create earned revenue streams.v. Leverage public-private partnerships.vi. Establish a Percent for Art mechanism in support of public art and/or of grant funding or other arts and culture initiatives.vii. Create a funding source for individual artists or informal groups who could apply for a grant through a fiscal sponsor (as an alternative to creating a non-profit that has to be sustained).
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b	<p>Develop, attract and retain creative talent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Create forums for artists to show and sell their work.ii. Provide, facilitate or support professional development for artists and creative professionals.iii. Foster community building among the creative community that strengthens the local support network for artists and creatives.iv. Provide information and guidance on how to develop competitive applications for funding.v. Recruit creative leaders from other communities to settle in Dubuque.vi. Incentivize artists and creative professionals to settle in Dubuque and start their businesses or careers here.
c	<p>Develop a regulatory or business incentive framework that promotes and protects Dubuque's arts and cultural assets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Develop regulations and incentives friendly to freelancers and creative businesses.ii. Ensure new development agreements are geared toward retaining arts, culture and local character inherent in the neighborhood in which the new development will occur.
d	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Conduct a market study of perceptions of Dubuque's arts and culture scene.ii. Hire a professional branding and communications specialist to develop and implement a campaign.iii. Evaluate the results of the campaign following implementation.

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Implement, evaluate and celebrate successes of this Master Plan.

- i. Create an implementation task force of 10-12 members—comprising City staff, members of the Advisory Commission and other key community stakeholders across sectors—to oversee implementation of this Master Plan over the next 10 years.
- ii. Establish a mechanism for real-time, self reporting by Dubuque residents, organizations and businesses on progress against elements of the plan.
- iii. Create and carry out a process for regular, periodic (quarterly, annual) evaluation and adjustment.
- iv. Launch the plan and celebrate its successes in meaningful, visible ways involving the entire community.

PRIORITY B:**BOOST CAPACITY FOR ARTS AND CULTURE TO THRIVE**

Key to creating a vibrant arts city is the creation of conditions in which arts and cultural activity can thrive. This means enabling a mix of both formal, planned initiatives as well as organic and spontaneous creative endeavors. A critical component for such an environment—and a clear need in Dubuque—is for an individual or entity to spearhead such efforts and serve as a coordinator or convener of other parties. This individual or entity should be qualified in expertise and adequately funded and staffed.

At this time, Dubuque has a governance structure in which the City leads governance with the advise of a the Arts and Cultural Advisory Commission; this structure is sufficient, yet severely underequipped. The plan recommends bolstering the structure to fully empower it to support the arts and culture sector it serves. With this key element in place, several of the other strategies critical to building capacity in the sector will become feasible. Meanwhile, some strategies recommended here are able to be implemented relatively quickly and with limited investment to achieve early gains.

B. Boost Capacity for Arts and Culture to Thrive

a	<p>Designate and empower an individual or entity to lead development of the cultural sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Retain professional staff dedicated full time to arts and cultural development. ii. Allocate a budget for this department/arts and cultural activity. iii. Create regular touchpoints between this individual or entity with City departments, agencies, leaders to avoid siloization and encourage coordination.
b	<p>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.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop and follow bylaws and role descriptions that focus the Commission's role on advisory activities as opposed to implementation. ii. Establish and follow guidelines and procedures in accordance with best practice, eliminating potential conflicts of interest.
c	<p>Establish a public policy framework conducive to arts and cultural activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Develop a public art policy and implement public art program funded by a "percent for art" mechanism. (See Appendix A: Draft Public Art Policy) ii. Clarify policies around existing City-managed or sponsored art activities and collections. iii. Establish equitable and transparent City funding mechanisms and processes to support a range of arts and cultural activity. iv. Create and revise policies and procedures to encourage arts and cultural activity. v. Create a City department- and agency-wide approach to infuse arts and culture throughout municipal activities as appropriate/possible.
d	<p>Facilitate communication and coordination among the arts and cultural sector.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Create and manage a comprehensive, shared <i>planning</i> calendar. ii. Create and manage a comprehensive calendar of arts and cultural offerings for public use. iii. Facilitate networking, communication and collaboration among artists, arts organizations and creative businesses.

e	<p>Rightsize facilities to meet capacity needs for rehearsal, exhibition/performance, education and administration.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Facilitate low-cost or subsidized use of existing, underutilized facilities. ii. Match existing facilities with appropriate users to ensure arts and cultural participants have adequate spaces to use. iii. Study potential repurposing of current spaces that are not meeting the needs of their users or the community.
f	<p>Develop organizational and professional capacity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Provide and coordinate technical training to organizations and artists ii. Connect organizations and artists to professionals, advisors, volunteers or resources who have the expertise they seek

PRIORITY C: FOSTER ENGAGEMENT AT ALL LEVELS

Dubuque has a dedicated core community of residents making, consuming and supporting arts and culture, which was confirmed by survey data. However, participation among the general population appears to be weaker and arts groups observe a small set of committed donors and volunteers who are greatly appreciated, but who constitute a limited segment of the population. Greater participation at all levels—beginner, amateur, professional; artist, volunteer, audience member—will result in a robust arts and cultural scene and a mutually beneficial dynamic in which arts and culture benefits even more Dubuquers, and the community further appreciates, desires and supports arts and culture.

C. Foster Engagement at All Levels

a	<p>Deepen appreciation for arts and culture among the general public.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Offer free arts participation opportunities to large number of Dubuquers at easily accessible location and events. ii. Design and implement a campaign to make Dubuquers aware of the value of arts and culture to quality of life. iii. Provide accessible, relatable information and interpretation with arts and cultural offerings to cultivate deeper understanding and connection to the work, the artist, the community.
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b	<p>Provide arts education opportunities to people of all ages, skill levels and income levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Establish early childhood arts education offerings.ii. Strengthen in-school arts education for K-12 students.iii. Enhance out-of-school arts free and paid arts education opportunities for students of all ages.iv. Promote college arts degrees and majors, and facilitate a stronger pipeline for young artists to enter these programs in college.v. Increase formal and informal learning opportunities for Dubuquers of all ages.
c	<p>Increase availability and accessibility of arts and cultural offerings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Offer activities at various times of day, geographic locations, and price points (including free).ii. Make arts and cultural resources and activities available in every neighborhood in the city and county.iii. Diversify genres, artistic disciplines, activities (experiences, classes, events) to better match the interests of Dubuque residents.iv. Offer passes or tickets to encourage repeat visitation or visitation to multiple events and organizations.
d	<p>Nurture individual artists, from student to amateur to professional.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Establish professional development and training opportunities for artists to develop their skills.ii. Create artists-in-residence programs to promote local artists' creative development.iii. Establish artist exchange or visiting artist programs to bring leading professional artists to Dubuque from elsewhere, to promote creative exchange and dialogue with local artists.

e	<p>Stimulate volunteerism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Recruit and encourage new volunteers to get involved with organizations they care about.ii. Leverage existing volunteer development programs to serve arts and cultural organizations.iii. Offer class credit for high school and college students to volunteer.iv. Partner organizations with student volunteers to compete projects for college coursework or with non-student volunteers seeking volunteer opportunities.
f	<p>Inspire and diversify leadership.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Expand boards and staff of non-profit organizations to reflect the range of backgrounds of Dubuque residents.ii. Create and follow guidelines by which boards can refresh, letting existing members roll off with honor for their service and recruiting and orienting new board members to begin service.iii. Train new and inexperienced board members regarding board roles and responsibilities, non-profit governance and best practices.iv. Establish junior boards or advisory committees to bring in new perspectives into organizational management and to serve as a training/vetting ground for potential board members.v. Create pipelines through corporate service programs to educate company employees about service opportunities and recruit new board members.vi. Train non-profit arts and cultural organizations on board development and best practices.

PRIORITY D: CULTIVATE CONNECTIONS

Dubuque is a multifaceted, multicultural community. Yet many populations and sectors are siloed, which hampers efforts toward mutual understanding and community bonding. Some efforts, such as Inclusive Dubuque, are underway to bridge these gaps, but research indicated that more can be done.

Sustainable Dubuque initiative articulates that the City will strive to:

Promote mutual understanding, knowledge and acceptance of others to become an inclusive community in which all feel welcome and included. Residents are involved in their neighborhoods and have numerous opportunities to experience art and culture. Public health provides equitable and fair services focusing on prevention and wellness. Positive cultural values foster respectful relations between diverse cultures and races.

Arts and culture provide a special avenue for people, organizations and communities to connect. Even within the arts and cultural community, greater crossover and collaboration would help to elevate the entire sector so that all boats rise together. Building relationships and nurturing inclusiveness will strengthen the entire Dubuque community.

D. Cultivate Connections

a	<p>Ensure arts and culture in Dubuque is inclusive and welcoming of people of all backgrounds and interests.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Invite people of all backgrounds to arts and cultural venues and activities.ii. Staff venues and activities with diverse employees and staff who represent Dubuque's subpopulations.iii. Train staff and volunteers in the provision of excellent customer service.iv. Ensure safety and security for families, single people, all ages of patrons; consider context for audiences of various racial and ethnic backgrounds.
b	<p>Develop ties among the arts and the broader community, increasing visibility and relevance of arts and culture.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Make art more visible in all aspects of daily life in Dubuque, whether through physical presence (public art or aesthetically pleasing functional structures) or through highlighting arts and culture through promotional efforts or everyday conversation.ii. Facilitate the presence and participation of arts and culture at non-cultural activities and venues (such as sporting events/venues, civic events, retail and dining establishments, hospitality environments, public spaces, places of worship, and City Hall).iii. Deploy arts and culture in service of special needs and populations (such as veterans, hospital patients, etc.)

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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.

- i. Facilitate monthly or quarterly presentations by arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses, or artists in large, mid- and small businesses throughout Dubuque.
- ii. Create channels for volunteerism, advisory and board roles for company employees in arts and cultural organizations and at events.
- iii. Establish donation drives benefiting an arts and cultural organization or artist each month.
- iv. Create exchange programs teaming artists and creatives with company employees to solve problems creatively together.