

Economic and Community Development

The following assumes the continuation and expansion of evolving working partnerships between the arts community and the broader cultural community as represented by

New Jersey's Historical Commission, Historic Trust and Cultural Trust. In its work, the Economic and Community Development Working Group envisioned a wide array of stakeholders beyond the natural constituencies of educators, students, audiences and artists, including taxpayers and residents; government leaders; public and private developers, large and small property owners, and small business owners; civic institutions and nonprofits; investors; corporate and foundation funders; and tourists and commuters. With this framework in mind, the Working Group articulated five primary objectives. When provided with adequate resources, partners, and tools, these efforts will further integrate the arts and culture into economic and community development.

The Goal: *To ensure that the creative capital of the arts and artists is recognized and invested in economic and community development throughout New Jersey.*

The Top Five Objectives

1. Develop and effectively employ the fullest possible range of information and data regarding the capacity of the arts and culture to attract and retain business, create jobs, prepare a well-educated citizenry, enhance tourism, beautify the environment, and enrich and revitalize our communities. Invest in programs and services that demonstrate these points.
2. Encourage localities to use the arts and culture to greatest advantage by promoting community cultural planning, cultural districting, quality design, public art commissioning, recognition of artists and arts resources, and civic activities that include the arts.
3. Cultivate environments that will attract and retain artists and cultural organizations – environments with adequate living and work space; access to and sharing of materials, technologies, and information; as well as ample performance, exhibition, publishing, professional development, and other work opportunities.
4. Through policies and the allocation of resources, encourage the development of new and innovative earned and contributed income

strategies that can provide a higher degree of self-sufficiency and capitalization for arts and cultural organizations.

5. Market the arts and culture statewide vigorously, strategically, and on an ongoing basis to increase awareness of the availability, excellence, diversity, accessibility, and affordability of the New Jersey arts, and to boost audience participation in them, personal association with them, and individual valuation of them

Achieving These Objectives

The Economic and Community Development Working Group counsels members of the arts community to see beyond their own confines as a first step in addressing these objectives – learning what developers, trade associations, and community developers are planning , for example, and what the arts might contribute to their projects, generally seeking every means possible to learn what others are doing to solve community challenges, and finding ways to partner with them. They noted that this may entail becoming more active as citizens – serving on town councils, school boards, recreation committees, planning and development committees, and the like to increase awareness of the value of the arts and culture in economic and community development.

The Working Group also urge the arts community to be confident in promoting the new Arts Plan New Jersey. People must curb the tendency to feel defensive or apologetic: the arts have value, and advocates should be confident in making the case. Still, they must also recognize that others may not comprehend the value that the arts add to economic and community well-being and growth, so they will need to communicate in ways others can understand. So as not to seem exclusive or elitist, they must also discuss the broadest possible range of creative and artistic activity. The message must be consistent, as well; consensus must be developed on what role artists and cultural organizations can play in communities.

There is much to tout about the role of artists and cultural organizations in economic and community development – how they help explore and articulate a sense of place and identity; how in enhancing community revitalization, they also help attract new business and stimulate property values, job creation, residential living, higher hotel occupancy, reduced crime, and better public health, especially for seniors and others who can benefit from arts-in-healing programs. These contributions constitute alternative currencies that have real value in the marketplace and should be considered as such.

In other words, the arts can be part of the solution. Getting many people to offer their own personal testimonials – whether at formal meetings or whenever they

chance upon “an audience” – should be the goal. It is not only business, civic and religious leaders who should be encouraged to speak out, but also an engaged citizenry!