

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. Stakeholders also include taxpayers and residents; government leaders, civic institutions and non-profits; public and private developers, large and small property owners, and small business owners; investors; corporate and foundation funders; 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.

- Utilize and/or participate in existing surveys and studies – e.g., those undertaken by tourism promoters, the Star/Ledger CEO, the Department of Community Affairs/Main Street NJ, and various commissions and educational institutions.
- Compile relevant impact assessments, studies, models that include community arts and best practices, policies that legislate land use, and findings that others have published.
- Utilize GIS technology to map cultural activity and audiences.
- Track master plans, local redevelopment plans and TIFs – tax increment-financing plans.

- Engage the State Chamber of Commerce, the Business & Industry Association, the Economic Development Authority (which could help create an RFP), the Office of Smart Growth, Main Street NJ, the Department of Community Affairs, the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planning Association, NJ Planning Officials, Regional Plan Association, NJ Future, the Developers Council, the New Jersey Association of Office Parks, the NJ Builders' Association, the NJ State League of Municipalities, NJ DOT/Transit Village, the Bloustein School, the higher education community, and Gannett as potential partners (urging the latter to sponsor discussions on the arts and community and economic development).

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.

- Identify spokespersons and advocates who can speak with authority in the “localities” community.
- Develop a clear step-by-step how-to guide, for use by citizens and government entities, on employing the arts and artists in economic and community development.
- Develop leaders who can work effectively with representatives of other sectors in community cultural planning, cultural districting, and the like.
- Engage the NJ Conference of Mayors, the League of Municipalities, the NJ Mayors' Institute on Community Design, the American Institute of Architects, Main Street NJ, Downtown New Jersey, the Office of Smart Growth, New Jersey Planning Officials, and the Regional Plan Association as partners.
- Gather resources for this work from Americans for the Arts (how-to guides); Partnership for New Jersey; the EDA (mayors' financing options); and the Municipal Land Use Center at the College of New Jersey.

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.

- Build relations with real estate brokers.

- Identify sample zoning language on mixed-use environments, as well as existing models from the Cultural Development Corporation/CDC, HANDS/East Orange, the BAM Development Corp in Brooklyn, WALDO in Jersey City, and Ducktown-CRDA in Atlantic City.
- Get involved in existing initiatives such as Einstein Alley, the State Plan, and Summit at the Shore.
- Find a pathway to bring art into public places.
- Create a new Cultural Centers Bond Issue program.
- Engage state agencies, the CRDA, Smart Growth, Community Affairs, the EDA/Fund for Community & Economic Development, local development authorities, and the Housing & Development Network/Community Development Corps (Isles, NJ Community Corporation) as partners in cultivating arts-friendly environments.
- Solicit the involvement of New Jersey’s colleges and universities, especially their presidents.
- Identify low-cost housing models, such as that of the Actor’s Fund.
- Advocate for inclusion of cultural elements into state, county and local master planning documents.
- Deploy TIFs as a method for financing the arts and culture through redevelopment.

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.

- Advocate full funding for the NJ Cultural Trust.
- Identify existing models of such strategies, like office leasing as a revenue generator, and others developed by SJCA Cultural Tourism, the New York State Link Deposit program, and the Federal Home Loan/EDGE program in Atlanta.
- Utilize existing programs, including UEZ funds (to advance arts projects), Commerce matching grants (to promote them), and the Historic Property Reinvestment Act, considering opportunities present in property tax reform discussions and constitutional conventions, as well.
- Develop a “brain trust” to identify possible funding avenues and strategies.
- Identify leaders who can have an active voice in state planning activities.
- Initiate and expand a “cultural training” agenda.
- Engage financial institutions, private banks, and other private sector potential partners as sources of revenue.

- Engage state agencies as potential partners, including Commerce (its UEZ and Promotion grants); Community Affairs (through its Office of Smart Growth, Main Street NJ and Historic Trust programs); the EDA (through Financial Assistance Programs).
- 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.**
- Maintain and expand the Discover Jersey Arts campaign and the Commerce matching grant program.
 - Utilize the planned expansion of the NJ Radio network.
 - Capitalize on the growth of satellite radio and such technology as blogs – thinking about niche marketing opportunities.
 - Identify mentors for professional development and technical assistance.
 - Engage New Jersey and New York media, the cable networks, the Port Authorities and New Jersey Transit, Commerce, and such special interest groups as AARP as potential partners.

A Summary of General Strategies

In summing up their approach, the ECD Working Group articulated half a dozen strategies that address their objectives:

1. Form partnerships with local businesses, foundations, corporations, community and civic groups, and all others whose strategic interests include increasing productivity, strengthening the economy, revitalizing communities, improving the quality of life of communities, and building inter-cultural respect, among others.
2. Aggressively cultivate and/or expand reciprocal, multifaceted partnerships with government agencies – Commerce, EDA, Community Affairs, etc.
3. Maintain and advocate for continued permanent sources of annual support for the arts and culture that will augment all current sources and establish a significantly higher level of funding – one sufficient to stabilize arts and cultural organizations. Seek out and promote the emergence and development of new sources that will give the public access to high quality venues, and in

general allow artists and cultural organizations to achieve their greatest potential.

4. Invest in the construction, improvement, and adaptive re-use of structures and spaces (and their operations) in order to provide more convenient access to high quality arts experiences.
5. Strengthen and expand the partnership with New Jersey's travel and tourism industry, promoting consistent communication.
6. Continue and expand the multidimensional *Discover Jersey Arts Marketing Campaign* to stimulate greater participation in New Jersey arts and cultural activities.

Readiness to Address Objectives

The ECD Working Group went on to counsel members of the arts community to see beyond their own confines – to learn what developers, trade associations, and community developers are planning, for example, and what the arts might contribute to their projects. They suggested seeking every means possible to learn what others are doing to solve community challenges, and finding ways to collaborate and partner with them.

This may entail becoming more active as citizens – serving on town councils, school and planning boards or recreation committees, participating on planning and development committees and the like to increase awareness of the value of the arts and culture in economic and community development. It will mean developing new relationships with public officials, getting on the agendas they oversee, staying up to date on master plans and redevelopment initiatives to ensure that cultural components are included, learning about financing programs that exist, and how community cultural development happens. It also means actively engaging with the local business community. And it will mean embracing entrepreneurial ideas and actions, recognizing that making money is not antithetical to artistic missions.

Preparing to implement Arts Plan NJ also means amassing the tools that will be necessary to achieve a range of ambitious objectives: research and information, manpower, technology, models and best practices, advocates, guides, handbooks, and expert help.

Promoting the Plan

In promoting the new Arts Plan, the ECD Working Group urges the arts community to be confident. It must curb its tendency to feel defensive, shy, and apologetic: **the arts have value, and advocates should be confident in making that case.** In so doing, the arts community must also recognize that others may not comprehend the value that the arts add to economic and community well being and growth. It will need to communicate in ways others can understand. And so as not to seem exclusive or elitist, the arts community must also discuss the broadest possible range of creative activity. The message must also be consistent, so consensus must be developed on what roles artists can play in communities.

There is much to tout about the role of the arts and artists in economic and community development – how they help explore and articulate a sense of place and identity; how they address sprawl by revitalizing existing structures; and how in enhancing community revitalization, they 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 treated as such.

This value can be measured, and that should be pointed out, as well. Among indicators: decreases in sprawl, walkable cities, new investments in infrastructure and transportation (like the Red Bank Education Initiative and its involvement from many sectors), increased job opportunities and workforce development, reduced traffic, and increases in the places where people gather, to name a few.

The message? 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. Encourage not only business, civic and religious leaders to speak out, but also an engaged citizenry as well!