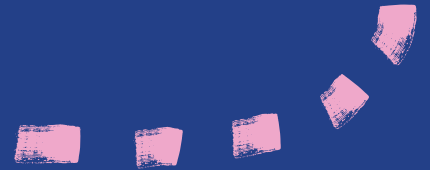
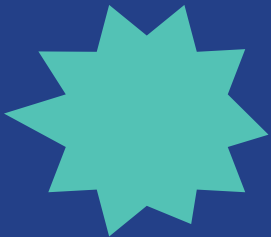


CULTURE BELONGS TO EVERYONE



**A BRIEF REGARDING CURRENT STATE OF
ARTS & CULTURE IN FAYETTEVILLE**



Prepared by Public Sphere Projects for _____ The City of Fayetteville, Arkansas
In advance of the launch of _____ The Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plans



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IT IS IN THIS ENVIRONMENT OF POSSIBILITY AND OPTIMISM THAT AN EFFORT IS UNFOLDING TO CREATE A NEW FAYETTEVILLE ARTS & CULTURE PLAN

This document is a snapshot of arts and culture in Northwest Arkansas. It is simultaneously more and less than a comprehensive, objective record. It gives voice to the passions and preoccupations of Fayetteville’s arts practitioners, civic leaders, and community advocates. It articulates the ambitions of a diverse group of people who are deeply enmeshed in the cultural life of the community. And it offers context — both as formal data and as informal conversations — for those ambitions.

It is intended as a foundational document, not a final one. We do not wish to presuppose the outcome of the hard work ahead: the productive conversations; the heartfelt engagement; the rigorous planning; the inevitably challenging choices. On the contrary, we wish to give fuel to that process.

When CACHE, the regional arts agency, formed in 2020, it brought to the fore ongoing conversations among private, institutional, and government stakeholders who all recognized the imperative for regional cultural planning. In initial meetings, some twenty leaders agreed that arts and culture were vital to the future of the region— and that municipal governments had a role to play by investing in the sector. They were clear-eyed both about the extraordinary creative assets of Northwest Arkansas, and about the threats that the region faced. Consequently, leaders from five cities — including Fayetteville — came together as a community of

practice with the goal of setting a coordinated regional agenda for cultural policy. Convening in earnest in late 2021 and throughout 2022, this community of practice came to be known as the Municipal Arts Alliance, or MAA.

In the context of MAA, municipal and cultural leaders shared ambitions and anxieties related to the future of the creative ecosystem in Northwest Arkansas. They exchanged ideas and best practices and welcomed dozens of knowledgeable peers from across the US, who brought national perspective to issues such as municipal finance, creative workforce development, artist housing, and more. Within this community of practice, leaders drafted and workshopped tactical tools such as ordinances and staffing plans. With the support of CACHE and consulting partners, and with funding from the Walmart and Walton Family foundations, the MAA cohort undertook significant, tangible cultural policy initiatives in the area. The results speak loudly: all five municipal governments now have staff positions dedicated to the advancement of arts and culture; three cities have formed, or are in the process of forming, independent arts advisory councils; and the first comprehensive cultural plan in the region has been completed.

It is in this environment of possibility and optimism that an effort is unfolding to create a new Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan. The case for the importance of arts and culture has been embraced by the City of Fayetteville, under the leadership of Mayor Lioneld Jordan. Chief of Staff Susan Norton and Director of Parks, Natural Resources and Cultural Affairs Alison Jumper, both MAA participants, enthusiastically supported a cultural plan and lent significant resources. Joanna Bell, inaugural Arts & Culture Director, provided strategic leadership for this work. Notably, the City convened a steering committee comprising a diverse cross-section of cultural and community advocates. It is to their credit that this brief contains a thoughtful beginning to citywide community engagement.

This report was prepared in consultation with CACHE public art and policy expert Lucas Cowan. It was lovingly designed by Northwest Arkansas-based graphic artist Millie Cooper. And it was prepared by Public Sphere Projects, a national urban planning and placemaking advisory.

On behalf of Public Sphere Projects, CACHE, and the City of Fayetteville, we invite you to read this brief as a provocation — a portal to what the city can become. And we are deeply grateful to everyone who lent time and talent that shines through the following pages.

In solidarity,

Philip Barash
Public Sphere Projects

Dillon Goodson
Public Sphere Projects

Lucas Cowan
CACHE

PART 1: STATE OF THE REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE ECOSYSTEM IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS

OVERVIEW

Between 2015 and 2022, multiple studies attended to the state of the arts and culture ecosystem in Northwest Arkansas. The first of these, entitled “Strengthening the Cultural Infrastructure of Northwest Arkansas,” was commissioned by the Walton Family Foundation and completed in early 2015. The study, prepared by Wolf-Brown, described the need for a regional approach to cultural placekeeping and investment at all levels of the creative ecosystem. That report led to the establishment of a regional arts agency, eventually incorporated as the nonprofit CACHE, the Creative Arkansas Cultural Hub and Exchange.

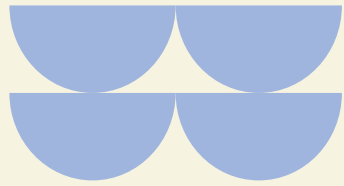
Subsequent studies examined multiple aspects of the arts and culture ecology in the region. Below, we summarize three key studies that address (1) music ecosystems in the region, (2) needs and opportunities related to artist housing and real estate, and (3) a recent bird’s eye view of the creative economy overall. Additionally, in the appendix, we have included several other pertinent reports.

In aggregate, these studies describe an energetic, growing sector coming to terms with an ongoing transformation from a collection of small cities to a dynamic metropolis. Northwest Arkansas is among the top five fastest-growing regions in the U.S.; its population growth is correlated with the expansion of a skilled workforce, increasingly diverse ethnic and racial composition, and the development of a cosmopolitan character of place. In turn, the arts ecosystem is abundant with well-resourced cultural institutions, philanthropic and corporate patrons, and creative opportunities. It is no surprise, then, that the creative economy in the State of Arkansas is the third largest employer statewide, after logistics and perishable and processed foods (attributable to the dominance of Walmart, Tyson, and J.B. Hunt in the local economy.)²

ECOSYSTEM ASSETS AND CHALLENGES AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM CACHE CANVAS SURVEY

In Northwest Arkansas, residents not only have access to world-class cultural institutions, but embrace them. In the first ten years of its operations, for example, Crystal Bridges welcomed more than 5.6 million visitors through its doors; nearly as many more visitors enjoyed access to public art on its grounds.³ Alongside blockbuster museums and attractions, a strikingly diverse creative scene is burgeoning. Some 22% of arts and culture organizations in the region identify as BIPOC-led and 55% report a majority of women-identifying staff.⁴ Art forms and disciplines are likewise varied, with visual arts, culture, and music accounting for roughly two-thirds of the regional ecosystem, with the rest distributed among theater, public arts, dance, literary arts, and multidisciplinary work.⁵

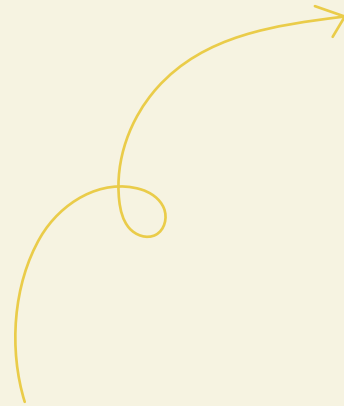
Yet there are growing pains: among them is a sense of cultural displacement, competition for funding, and lack of technical assistance, venues, and housing for artists and culture bearers. Additionally, artists surveyed by CACHE in 2021 report that they cannot sustain themselves as full-time practitioners; only a quarter of their income comes from creative practice. These structural and individual needs are reflected in Fayetteville, as elaborated in the following section. (see page 11 of this brief.)



arts, cultural,
and recreational
offerings are
comparable to
that of a major
city or metro area

PROPOSED AND ONGOING INVESTMENTS INTO THE CREATIVE ECOSYSTEM AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM HEARTLAND FORWARD REPORT

A consensus regarding support for the creative industries and the cultural ecosystem is emerging among municipal leaders, cultural agents, and economic development experts. This position is summarized in a set of recommendations delivered by Heartland Forward.⁶ Heartland acknowledges that Northwest Arkansas’ “arts, cultural, and recreational offerings are comparable to that of a major city or metro area,” but suggests increasing investment — financial and otherwise — into the system. It gives special importance to supporting “local and regionally sourced culture” ranging from music, to craft, to culinary arts. Such investment is necessary not only to cultivate and retain local talent, but to ensure well-balanced regional growth across all economic sectors.



MUSIC ECOSYSTEM IN NORTHWEST ARKANSAS AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE SOUND DIPLOMACY REPORT

Entitled the “Northwest Arkansas Music Ecosystem Strategy and Action Plan” and delivered in 2019 by the London-based Sound Diplomacy, this document proposes a strategy to invest in, network, and promote the music ecosystem in the region. It is based on multiple stakeholder interviews and surveys, review of comparable markets, asset mapping, and economic impact analysis. Like other reports, its articulated goals include creating a strong regional ecosystem, progressive regulation, music education at all levels, talent development, and tourism attraction. Key findings include:

- Overall economic impact of the music sector is \$389 million in total output (appx 1.5% of regional economy)
- Music and related economic activity generates 1.81% of regional employment, lower than Austin (2.55%), Nashville (2.74%), and Asheville (2.7%)
- Direct output grew at a slower rate (10.4%) than the regional economy (116.8%) between 2002 and 2016
- Asset map suggests a high concentration of music education (including 50 schools and 94 choirs). The overall number of music venues is high, but only 5 are purpose-built whereas others are occasional or multi-purpose (e.g., bars, nightclubs.)
- Regulations in the region suggest a lack of municipal grantmaking, dedicated music staff, or tourism strategy; entertainment districts hospitable to music (aside from Fayetteville); and accessible workspaces / hubs (aside from Fayetteville.)

The report identifies top opportunities for the music industry in a diverse talent pool and an inflow of audiences. On the other hand, threats include housing affordability and lack of “test and fail,” or low-risk, venues for emerging artists. It also notes that respondents named funding support, technical and administrative support, and public transit to music venues as persistent threats to the vibrancy of the region. Top recommendations included:

- Governance: scene is disconnected and siloed. Requires a common strategy and dedicated music office to serve as champion.
- Regulations: favorable permitting for events and liquor, lack of entertainment districts, uneven zoning and nuisance regulation. Requires an agent of change principle, in which the latest building has the responsibility for adequate soundproofing.
- Grantmaking: no dedicated grants or business incentives currently exist in the region. Only 18% of respondents have accessed grant funding.
- Artist development: 82% of artists don’t have any artist support (marketing, management, etc.). Few opportunities for paid performances. Shortage of development pipeline, promotions, music technology. Requires fairer remuneration for artists.
- Audience: Gaps in music venue ladder, uneven competition between local and national artists, lack of coverage and promotion.
- Tourism: Music should be positioned as an asset in tourism attraction strategies. A broader regional scope (incl Huntsville or Chattanooga) may offer new partnership opportunities.



A NOTE ON CONTRADICTIONS

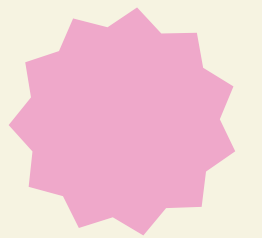
The studies cited above supply useful background on a dynamic, rapidly changing region. However, it should be noted that some of the information is, at this point, out of date. For instance, in the years since the publication of the Sound Diplomacy report, a number of venues have been shuttered in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. And, according to feedback from Fayetteville cultural leaders, many of the artists surveyed by Sound Diplomacy have relocated from the region. It is likewise notable that the findings of these reports demonstrate inconsistencies. Consider one contradiction: while the “Arts & The Economy” brief produced by the NGA celebrates the creative economy as the third-largest economic sector, ArtSpace points out that the overwhelming majority of self-identified creatives are unable to make a living from their practice, and have incomes low enough to qualify for HUD assistance. Finally, the data represented in this section does not always reflect the lived experience of working artists, makers, and culture-bearers in the region. Conversations with cultural leaders and other stakeholders revealed other crucial points of debate. Among them were: the suggested number of housing and work-live units for artists, which was perceived as undercounted; the scale of the creative economy, which was perceived to be exaggerated; and the representative size of surveyed respondents, which was perceived as narrow and limited. The contradictions and flaws evident across this body of literature are crucial data points for a cultural planning effort.

ARTS SPACES AND REAL ESTATE DEVELOPMENT AND HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE ARTSPACE REPORT

An arts market study was conducted as a follow-up to an earlier assessment, in November 2018, by Artspace. Artspace surveyed artists and creatives from Fayetteville, Bentonville, Rogers, and Springdale and focused specifically on demand for artist space — residential, live/work, and shared — in the context of community development. The study’s purpose was threefold: determine demand, inform planning and design, and energize the community around the project. Some 811 people responded to the survey. The following findings are salient:

- New artist space creation, including 80 affordable live/work units can be created to meet demand, as well as 37 private studios. Additionally, shared or flexible spaces for art and culture practitioners can be incorporated into new real estate development. Notably, Fayetteville was selected as the highest priority for artist relocation, followed by Bentonville.
- Financing can be sourced from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) financing tools are available to make live/work space affordable, with 84 artists self-identified as meeting the income threshold of up to 60% Area Median Income (AMI). HUD financing offers an attractive subsidy to practicing artists in Northwest Arkansas, given that it is currently common for income-qualified artists to rent space, and to pay higher rent than the amount determined by HUD.

THE CONTRADICTIONS AND FLAWS EVIDENT ACROSS THIS BODY OF LITERATURE ARE CRUCIAL DATA POINTS FOR A CULTURAL PLANNING EFFORT.



CURRENT AND ONGOING CONDITIONS AND OUTCOMES

Across the region, change has been catalyzed as a result of these reports. However, progress is uneven. Some priorities — such as clearing pathways for emerging musicians — have secured funding and are gaining momentum. Others have become more urgent, such as the creation of affordable housing. Yet others have fallen by the wayside, due to shifting market demands and grantmaker guidelines. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic created a major disruption, notably shutting down performing venues and making the livelihoods of practicing artists more precarious.

Despite these challenges, since the publication of the WolfBrown, Heartland Forward, Sound Diplomacy, Artspace, and other related studies, significant milestones have already been accomplished in Northwest Arkansas. These include:

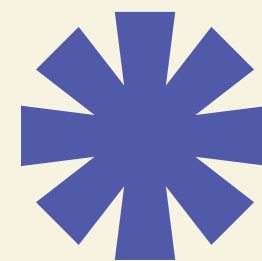
- Incorporation of the Creative Arkansas Community Hub and Exchange as a regional arts advocacy and support agency
- The first comprehensive cultural plan for the City of Rogers, completed by WXY⁷

- Dedicated cultural staff positions in the municipal governments in the City of Rogers and the City of Fayetteville
- Additional municipal staff capacity in Siloam Springs, Springdale, and Bentonville
- Establishment of the Municipal Arts Alliance, a regional community of practice focused on art and culture⁸
- Philanthropic priorities at the Walton Family Foundation and Tyson foundation shifting in support of smaller-scale creative practices

These are promising vectors for the state of arts and culture in Northwest Arkansas. As the City of Fayetteville inaugurates the cultural planning process, this body of support and knowledge will serve as a foundation for greater understanding and engagement across the creative ecosystem.

PART 2: COALITION BUILDING AND ENGAGEMENT TOWARD A CULTURAL PLAN FOR FAYETTEVILLE, ARKANSAS

Over a period of approximately six months, from February through July 2023, the planning team developed actionable, measurable objectives for the engagement process...



In advance of launching a comprehensive cultural planning effort, the City of Fayetteville engaged CACHE to support a pre-planning process. This support enabled CACHE to retain Public Sphere Projects, on behalf of the City of Fayetteville, to structure an inclusive, citywide community engagement process intended to create a strong network of constituents, allies, and partners who will contribute to the subsequent cultural planning effort.

Over a period of approximately six months, from February through July 2023, the planning team developed actionable, measurable objectives for the engagement process, identified community organizations, civic leaders, and culture-bearers to serve as ambassadors for the engagement process, convened a broad-based steering committee, inclusive of community members, artists, and city representatives, and mapped constituent segments in order to focus engagement on traditionally underrepresented audiences. The following pages of this document summarize this work.

There are two aspects of the pre-planning process that will be of particular relevance to the forthcoming cultural planning effort. First, in consultation with the steering committee, the planning team developed a comprehensive engagement framework, specifying key audiences and suggesting engagement modalities that can be utilized to reach these audiences (see page 15 of this brief). Next, the planning team conducted a series of interviews with several of these stakeholders, including members of the steering committee, which revealed high-level observations about arts and culture in Northwest Arkansas as well as goals and ambitions for the Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan (see page 23 of this brief).

Taken together, this preliminary research and engagement can serve as the foundation for the cultural planning process, facilitating a preliminary understanding of the state of arts and culture in Northwest Arkansas and offering key insights to ground the selected consultant's work. While this work has been thorough, it is not exhaustive. The cultural planning process will undoubtedly uncover additional insights that will ultimately inform how they approach the cultural planning process. Therefore, there must be flexibility within the framework that we have created — and a shared commitment to evolve and adapt the planning process as additional insights are revealed.

PLANNING TEAM

NAME	AFFILIATION	CATEGORY
Joanna Sheehan Bell	Arts and Culture Director, City of Fayetteville	Staff
Alison Jumper	Director of Parks, Natural Resources, and Cultural Affairs, City of Fayetteville	Staff
Susan Norton	Chief of Staff, City of Fayetteville	Staff
Philip Barash	Co-founder, Public Sphere Projects	Consultant
Dillon Goodson	Co-founder, Public Sphere Projects	Consultant
Lucas Cowan	Director of Cultural Policy, CACHE	Partner
Lisa Marie Evans	Director of Creative Development, CACHE	Partner

STEERING COMMITTEE

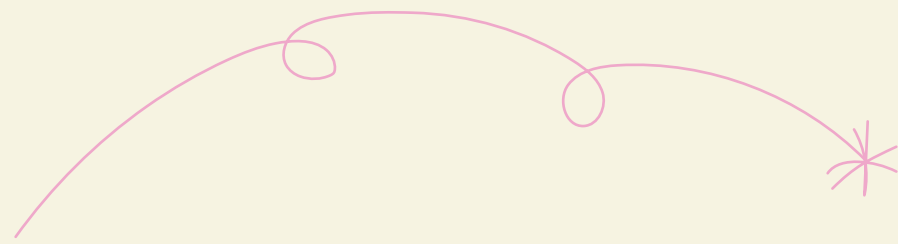
Britin Bostick	City of Fayetteville	Civic
Bryce Brisco	Community Creative Center	Art
Jessica DeBari	Fayetteville Arts Council	Community
Lakeisha Edwards	Art Ventures	Art
Heather Elzey	City of Fayetteville	Civic
Jeremy Hudson	Specialized Real Estate Group	Community
Milcah Hulen-Posnak	Student	Community
Sarah King	Experience Fayetteville	Civic
Jasper Logan	KUAF	Art
Steve Sheeley	City of Fayetteville, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board	Community
Olivia Trimble	Sleet City Signs & Murals	Art
Lia Uribe	Department of Music, University of Arkansas	Art
Nate Walls	Second Helping NWA	Community





KEY STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

The stakeholder groups identified in this section were crowd-sourced from multiple steering committee conversations, including a stakeholder mapping exercise conducted in our inaugural meeting and subsequent interviews with members. Like the rest of the research contained in this report, this list is not exhaustive. Instead, it reflects the committee’s best effort to identify demographic and psychographic profiles of stakeholder groups that represent a diverse cross-section of Fayetteville. Therefore, it can serve as a starting point for further exploration and deeper engagement with key audiences.



ARTIST COMMUNITIES

The artist community in Fayetteville is a dynamic and diverse hub of creativity that spans various disciplines, including the visual and performing arts. Fueled by a collaborative spirit, the art scene thrives in eclectic galleries, local festivals, and intimate performance venues. Educational institutions like the University of Arkansas inject creative energy and resources into the community, while the city’s 150 public art installations enhance the city’s visual landscape.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Leverage the wide reach of local arts organizations, including the Walton Arts Center, TheatreSquared, Fenix Arts, and the University of Arkansas School of Art, to disseminate information about the cultural planning process and gather feedback from artists and patrons.

COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITY STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Located in Fayetteville, the University of Arkansas is the state’s largest university, with 30,936 students enrolled in undergraduate and graduate programs. It is also one of the region’s largest companies, employing 1,490 faculty and 3,350 staff.⁹ Other colleges and universities in the region include NorthWest Arkansas Community College in Bentonville and John Brown University in Siloam Springs, whose enrollments collectively exceed 6,000 students.¹⁰

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Host public meetings on college campuses, tapping into student clubs and organizations (e.g. Art school, Greek life, etc.).
- Explore digital solutions as an effective alternative to in-person engagement.
- Steering committee member Lia Uribe mentioned she could make a connection to the University of Arkansas to offer space for a listening session.

FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS

Arkansas ranks among the top five most religious states in the country, according to the Pew Research Center, with 2 in 5 residents attending religious services at least once per week.¹¹ The greater Fayetteville metro area, encompassing the cities of Fayetteville, Bentonville, Rogers, and Springdale, is home to 470 religious organizations and churches. Together, these institutions employ 268 individuals and generate annual revenue exceeding \$31 million.¹²

Suggested outreach modalities:

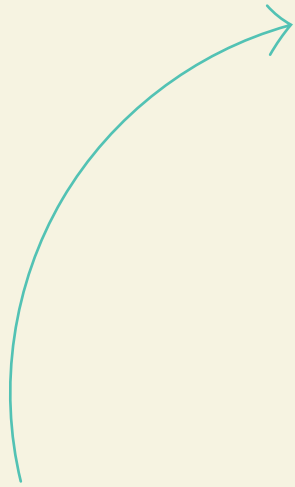
- Advertise community surveys in religious institution newsletters. Identify an in-person engagement method that reaches multiple congregations.
- Steering committee members Jasper Logan and Steve Sheeley offered to facilitate introductions to local religious institutions.

HISTORICAL SOCIETIES

Northwest Arkansas is home to several historical societies that play a vital role in preserving, promoting, and educating the public about the region’s history. Organizations like the Washington County Historical Society and the Ozark Society have a pronounced presence in Fayetteville, hosting regular events such as lectures, workshops, and tours to engage the community and share knowledge about significant events, influential figures, and cultural heritage.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Present at a regular meeting of Fayetteville’s local historical societies. Steering committee members Heather Elzey and Britin Bostick offered to help identify and prioritize speaking opportunities.



MARSHALLESE COMMUNITY

More than 15,000 Marshallese live in northwest Arkansas, with the largest contingent living in Springdale. They migrated seeking education and better opportunities — and as a result of the U.S. government’s use of the Marshall Islands to conduct nuclear testing in the 1940s and 1950s. The Marshallese community is close-knit, with strong cultural and religious practices. They work in various industries, particularly poultry (an estimated 30% of Tyson Foods’ workforce in Springdale is Marshallese).¹³

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Partner with the Arkansas Coalition of Marshallese to conduct interviews and focus groups with members of the Marshallese community.
- Located in Fayetteville, the congregation of the Good Shepherd Lutheran Church has many Marshallese members. Steering committee member Olivia Trimble mentioned she would be able to facilitate an introduction to the church.

NATIVE AMERICAN COMMUNITY

Northwest Arkansas is home to several Native American tribes with rich cultural and historical significance. Among the prominent tribes are the Osage, Quapaw, and Caddo, as well as the Cherokee, who traveled through the region on the Trail of Tears. These tribes leave behind a legacy of vibrant traditions, intricate craftsmanship, and a deep connection to the land. Today, their cultural heritage continues to be celebrated and honored by both tribal communities and the wider population.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Establish connections to various tribal organizations that are present throughout Northwest Arkansas, including student organizations at the University of Arkansas.
- Planning team and steering committee members Alison Jumper, Joanna Sheehan Bell, and Jessica DiBari indicated they have connections to Native American tribes within Northwest Arkansas. Additionally, members suggested reaching out to Summer Wilkie, who serves as youth programs coordinator for the Indigenous Food & Agriculture Initiative

AMONG THE PROMINENT TRIBES ARE THE OSAGE, QUAPAW, AND CADDO, AS WELL AS THE CHEROKEE, WHO TRAVELED THROUGH THE REGION ON THE TRAIL OF TEARS.

NEIGHBORHOOD ORGANIZATIONS AND APARTMENT

Fayetteville is home to many different neighborhood organizations that serve residents in established and new communities. These organizations often organize community events, facilitate communication with local leaders, and work towards improving the quality of life within their neighborhoods. Similarly, there are a number of apartment communities located within rental buildings throughout Fayetteville, which are often home to younger and more diverse audiences that can be overlooked in traditional planning processes.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Conduct outreach at neighborhood association meetings and events.
- Reach apartment dwellers by contacting apartment building management. Steering committee member Jeremy Hudson offered to help identify building management and facilitate introductions.

OLDER ADULTS

Fayetteville is home to approximately 9,000 residents who are aged 65 years and over, making up about 9% of the city’s population. This proportion is roughly half of the national average for the United States, as reported by the U.S. Census Bureau, meaning that Fayetteville is a young city by statistical standards.¹⁴ Still, engaging older persons in community engagement is essential for harnessing their unique perspectives, ensuring inclusive decision-making processes, and fostering intergenerational connections for a more vibrant and creative community.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Conduct outreach and host community meetings at places where older adults gather, including the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), the Fayetteville Newcomer’s Club, pickleball clubs, volunteer communities (e.g., Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, Walton Arts Center, etc.), and senior centers.
- Offer accessible transportation to enable older adults to attend offsite community meetings and workshops.





FAYETTEVILLE IS HOME TO APPROXIMATELY 9,000 RESIDENTS WHO ARE AGED 65 YEARS AND OVER, MAKING UP ABOUT 9% OF THE CITY'S POPULATION.

OTHER MINORITY COMMUNITIES

Approximately 79% of Fayetteville’s residents identify as white alone, slightly higher than the national share. Among the racial minorities present in Fayetteville, the largest share (7.7%) identify by two or more races, 7.5% identify as Hispanic or Latino, and 5.9% identify as Black or African American alone. Meanwhile, 2.8% identify as Asian alone.¹⁵ The Vietnamese community is especially pronounced in Northwest Arkansas; the state was one of four national entry points for the resettlement of refugees who were provided a safe haven after assisting American military forces during the Vietnam War.¹⁶

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Conduct listening sessions to gather feedback and build trust with minority communities. Steering committee member Jasper Logan offered to help build a community engagement strategy toward this objective.
- Leverage news media (e.g., KDIV 98.7 FM, the ‘Voice Of Diversity’) and faith-based communities (e.g. Temple Shalom) to reach racial and religious minorities.

PRIMARY AND SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Every day, Fayetteville Public Schools caters to the educational needs of approximately 10,500 students. This includes one high school, two junior high schools, two middle schools, one combined middle and elementary school, eight elementary schools, one virtual academy, and one alternative learning environment.¹⁷ Meanwhile, 7 private schools accommodate 1,546 students, meaning that approximately 13% of all K-12 students in Fayetteville receive education in private schools. This is significantly higher than the average for the state of Arkansas, which stands at 6%.¹⁸

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Host informal engagement events where youth congregate, such as school clubs and organizations (e.g., Scouts, sports programs, arts clubs, etc.). Engage students outside of an academic environment to encourage genuine responses.
- Explore digital solutions as an effective alternative to in-person engagement.

UNHOUSED PEOPLE COMMUNITIES

Establishing trust and building relationships with unhoused people during the cultural planning process will shed light on how a stakeholder group that is traditionally overlooked by planning processes interacts with — and perceives — the arts in Fayetteville. According to a recent count, there were 343 individuals experiencing homelessness in Northwest Arkansas in 2022. Among them, Washington County accounted for 198, Benton County had 81, Carroll County had 23. For 41 individuals, the county data was unavailable. Out of the total count, 100 individuals were unsheltered, while 165 found refuge in emergency shelters, and 78 were accommodated in transitional housing.¹⁹

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Connect with local homeless service providers, shelters, and advocacy organizations to identify individuals who may be interested in participating in community planning discussions.

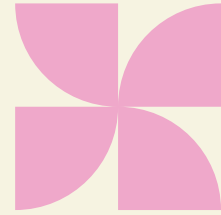
VETERANS

There are approximately 4,000 veterans living in Fayetteville, according to the U.S. Census Bureau.²⁰ Local veterans’ service organizations include the VFW, American Legion, and a federally-run Vet Center, which offers confidential help for veterans, service members, and their families, including counseling for needs such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and the psychological effects of military sexual trauma.

Suggested outreach modalities:

- Establish relationships with local veterans’ service organizations. Host community meetings at VFW and American Legion halls.

KEY INSIGHTS FROM PRELIMINARY OUTREACH



HIGH-LEVEL OBSERVATIONS

In June, Public Sphere Projects conducted a series of interviews with key stakeholders, including members of the steering committee, to collect perspectives on the current arts and culture landscape in Fayetteville. These conversations also revealed early insights about community members' goals and aspirations for the Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan. These conversations are summarized below.

As Fayetteville grows, many artists find themselves priced out of the real estate market. That's a threat not only to creative practitioners, but the identity of the city as a funky, intersectional, irreverent place.

Mount Sequoyah is part of the creative geography of the city. Its future is connected to the rest of the ecosystem — working artists, academic institutions, the tourism sector. These connections ought to be strengthened, both programmatically and physically.

Key to Mount Sequoyah's work — and to sustaining an ecosystem — is facilitating intergenerational contact between older practitioners, who carry hippie and back-to-land ethics, and emerging artists drawn by the university.

Jessica DeBari

Historic preservation is lopsided, by definition. It is challenged to honor the cultural identities of people who historically lacked access to resources. A cultural plan can help to fill the gaps of the historic preservation plan.

Change is inevitable and is reflected in the city's built fabric. Residents of Fayetteville may resist change, but they are beginning to understand the necessity of managing it. An action-based plan may help to mitigate losses of arts and culture.

The Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan ought to identify areas where the private sector can invest — and those where it cannot. A plan has to be greater than a list of goals, and amount to a truly shared vision.

Britin Bostick

THE FAYETTEVILLE ARTS & CULTURE PLAN OUGHT TO IDENTIFY AREAS WHERE THE PRIVATE SECTOR CAN INVEST — AND THOSE WHERE IT CANNOT.

— *JESSICA DEBARI*

Fayetteville has plenty of young talent and energy — particularly among high school and college students. There is also a significant audience. But they have limited opportunities to perform, connect, and grow in Fayetteville. More accessible venues, equipment, and other resources are required.

Young artists are often not taken seriously enough; this can lead to talent leaving the region.

An entire network of informal venues, producers, events, festivals, etc. already serves the under-21 scene. It is mostly underground — sometimes hidden from view on purpose. Nevertheless, this network needs more visibility and investment.

Milcah Hulén-Posnak

Fayetteville is unique in the region for being culturally diverse, open-minded, and generally accepting of new ideas. More than any one style of art or venue, this attitude is at the core of the city's cultural character.

Beyond downtown and university districts, much of Fayetteville lacks cultural infrastructure. New developments especially are disconnected from culture. Development patterns should be centered on "third spaces" such as libraries, small venues, coffee shops, and the like.

With multiple new cultural spaces and venues coming online in downtown Fayetteville, there's an apparent need for a dedicated organization to manage, maintain, program, and market this growing collection of civic assets.

Jeremy Hudson



GOALS FOR THE CULTURAL PLAN

Following a series of stakeholder interviews in June, the planning team facilitated a workshop inviting steering committee members to express their individual goals for the Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan. As part of this discussion, the committee also co-created a unified goals statement, which is listed last, below.



Britin Bostick

“A cultural plan will craft a shared vision for the City of Fayetteville’s investment in arts & cultural expression by elevating artists’ voices, setting funding priorities, identifying partners in this work, clarifying the support structures needed to achieve the plan goals and the City’s role in creating or maintaining those structures, and providing opportunities for artistic expression and cultural representation in the public realm.”

Jessica DeBari

“A cultural plan will support and strengthen an inclusive creative community for creators, storytellers, and audiences by preserving and expanding our creative ecosystem through increased municipal and cultural investment in opportunities for creative spaces and resources that connect us with each other, audiences, and patrons to build a bright future grown from the vitality a thriving arts ecosystem provides.

Lakeisha Edwards

“A cultural plan will embrace and integrate both new residents and locals, ensuring everyone feels seen and heard in our community by actively involving them in cultural initiatives, providing platforms for their voices to be heard, and fostering a sense of belonging through inclusive arts and cultural programs. This plan aims to create a vibrant and inclusive cultural ecosystem that benefits and unites all members of the community.”

Heather Ellzey

“A cultural plan will inspire and engage artists, residents, and young people by developing and cultivating a connection and interest in local art and artists.”

**This plan aims
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inclusive
→ cultural
ecosystem
that benefits
and unites
all members of
the community.**

Dr. Lia Uribe

“A cultural plan will identify cultural resources and develop a case for the arts as a vehicle for social impact for local artists and communities by measuring and collecting data.”

Co-created statement

“A cultural plan will encompass the full breadth of what art can be. It will expand the definition of artists, cultural practitioners, and self-identified creatives. It will embrace people who are not traditional art and culture consumers, extending an invitation to participate in the arts to all Fayetteville residents. It will strengthen the identity of the community, make a case for the work of administrators and organizers, and build capacity among volunteers and supporters.”

CONCLUSION

...PROVIDE A ROADMAP TO POLICYMAKERS AND CITY AGENCIES FOR OPERATIONALIZING THE PLAN

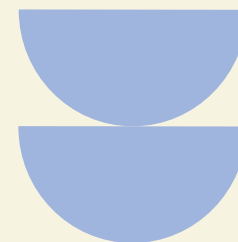
In 2028, Fayetteville will mark the 200th anniversary of when George McGarrah settled with his family at the modern-day corner of Spring and Willow in a move that gave birth to the city we know today. This will be an occasion not for looking back — but for looking ahead — to a future that is more innovative and inclusive.

In the same spirit, the Fayetteville Arts & Culture Plan will be more forward-looking and aspirational. Through engagement with a steering committee of a dozen Fayettevilleians who came together because they reflect a cross-section of the city's arts and culture ecosystem, five commitments for the planning process have been articulated. These should serve as north stars in Fayetteville's efforts to develop a cultural plan, circulated as broadly as possible, to ensure that everyone involved in developing the plan is doing so with the same collective vision and shared commitment.

An effective cultural plan must...

- ...build the broadest possible coalition of stakeholders
- ...create multiple entry points for people regardless of language, ability, etc.
- ...acknowledge the growth and evolution of this dynamic region
- ...honor the past, but be future-focused
- ...focus on Fayetteville, but recognize its place within the region
- ...provide a roadmap to policymakers and City agencies for operationalizing the plan

As the city's legacy converges with the anticipation of a dynamic future, Fayetteville's forthcoming cultural plan invokes a profound sense of continuity and evolution. Its conception, informed by the voices of a diverse ensemble of local artists and cultural contributors, fuels an environment of shared ambition. These commitments, acting as guiding constellations, illuminate the collective trajectory toward a cultural blueprint that resonates across the community.



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