

Arts and Culture

Introduction

Arts and culture are part of Seattle’s legacy and its future as a vital, thriving city. As in any dynamic urban area, arts and culture contribute to civic identity and to a sense of place. They also enrich lives, and inspire creativity and innovation.

Arts and culture extend to all aspects of civic life. Students can use the tools of art and culture to learn new skills—not only in the arts, but also in math, science and reading—that will help them be successful in school and in the workplace. They create jobs, attract visitors, customers, and highly skilled workers to the area. At the same time, arts and culture play an important social role by nurturing a welcoming and diverse urban community. Arts and culture can expand perspectives and encourage empathy about other experiences and backgrounds and help cultivate a greater appreciation and understanding of diverse cultures across Seattle.

The Arts and Culture Element outlines goals and policies related to the arts, culture and historic preservation, all of which encompass a broad range of people, activities, spaces and levels of involvement. The City is committed to supporting the arts and artists and to offering great experiences for art consumers and creators across Seattle. Making arts and culture accessible to all requires that the City take extra effort to promote inclusion, ensure everyone feels welcome and offer programs that reflect Seattle’s diversity.

Experiencing arts and culture should be fun, challenging and enjoyed regularly by all residents. Practiced by everyone from famous professional artists to amateurs, art encompasses a wide range of creations, from tangible, physical objects, books, and digital works to experiences, gatherings, performances, and oral histories. Cultural spaces may likewise include a wide range of types, ranging from traditional theaters, galleries and studios to schools, parks, and coffee shops.

Historic preservation recognizes and protects aspects of the culture in the built environment – buildings, districts, and designed landscapes that link to Seattle’s past. From the Native Americans who first established trading centers along the Duwamish, to waves of newcomers from around the world, all have left their mark. Over time, Seattle has acquired features that have become part of the city’s civic identity. Through the preservation of icons such as the Space Needle, the Olmsted network of parks and boulevards, or historic neighborhoods like Pioneer Square, the city can continue to celebrate its heritage and maintain its unique sense of place.

The benefits of historic preservation are not merely aesthetic. Preservation is integral to our economic development planning, and it enhances our city’s attraction as a center for tourism, an important source of local jobs. The preservation of historic buildings can help incubate small businesses, revitalize

commercial districts, and generate local jobs. Historic preservation promotes sustainability through the reuse, repair and upgrading of existing built resources.

Arts and culture can help revitalize historically underinvested communities of color while supporting cultural stability through periods of growth and change. Investments in arts and culture can help preserve the cultural traditions and artistic expressions of existing communities of color, as well as newly arrived immigrants and refugees.

Public Art

Discussion

Integrating art into diverse public settings has helped give rise to Seattle's reputation as a cultural center of innovation and creativity. Letting both visitors and locals alike encounter art in parks, libraries, and community centers, as well as on roadways, bridges and other public venues, both enrich peoples' daily lives and gives voice to artists. As of 2014, the city's public art collection includes more than 400 permanently sited and integrated works and 3,000 portable works. The collection will continue to grow through the city's 1 percent for art program, in which 1 percent of eligible capital improvement project funds are set aside for the commission, purchase and installation of artworks in a variety of settings. Public art is commissioned through an evaluation and panel process, made up of fellow artists and arts professionals, along with community and city representatives. All of the public art is cared for through an ongoing program of coordinated conservation activities, which include inspections, major restorative work and routine maintenance.

GOAL

ACG1 Strengthen the diversity of public art and expand the City's collection of public artworks.

POLICIES

- AC1.1 Continue to set aside funding for new public art as part of capital improvement projects.
- AC1.2 Encourage the inclusion of artists early in the design of capital improvement projects.
- AC1.3 Prioritize locations for new public art where it is desired by the community, can be accommodated safely, and will be enjoyed by many people in locations throughout the city.
- AC1.4 Enhance the diversity of panelists and community representatives that are included in the public art selection process.
- AC1.5 Strengthen the diversity of expression in public art to embrace a variety of artists, sites, disciplines and media.

AC1.6 Encourage public participation in the planning and implementation of public art projects.

Creative Economy

Discussion

Partnering with individual artists, as well as arts and cultural organizations, the City strives to offer all Seattleites a rich array of quality art opportunities while promoting a healthy and diverse cultural community. Encompassing a wide variety of arts and cultural businesses, ranging from nonprofit museums, symphonies, and theaters to for-profit film, architecture, and advertising companies, the creative economy also includes thousands of independent artists working in Seattle.

When supported, arts and culture can help drive the City's future economic growth. Arts companies and their employees stimulate innovation, playing an important role in building and sustaining economic vibrancy in Seattle. They employ a creative workforce, spend money locally, generate government revenue, and are a cornerstone of tourism. The arts are also an economic development tool, creating neighborhoods where businesses want to operate and employees want to live. The creative economy also contributes to Seattle's high quality of life, helping our city and region attract talent from across the globe. In other words, the impact of the arts reaches far beyond aesthetics.

GOAL

ACG2 Enhance support for artists, creative professionals and cultural organizations, allowing them to grow and mature.

POLICIES

AC2.1 Recognize and expand the economic impact of arts and culture.

AC2.2 Encourage collaboration across the spectrum of traditional and creative economy businesses, especially businesses that rely on innovation and design to be competitive.

AC2.3 Encourage access to affordable workspaces for artists, arts, and cultural organizations.

AC2.4 Improve technical and financial assistance programs to better target and serve both artists and arts organizations of various sizes and at various stages of growth, representing a broad range of cultures.

AC2.5 Enhance equitable access to technical and financial assistance for all artists and organizations.

Youth Development

Discussion

All students in all schools should be given the chance to learn through the arts. The arts are a core component of basic education, uniquely suited to develop 21st century skills such as creative and critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and perseverance — skills directly linked to student success in school, career, and life.

Partnerships, both in and outside of City government, are needed to bring back equitable access to arts education for all K-12 students. These collaborations will also help support after-school arts programs in diverse neighborhoods throughout the city. Through these in-school and after-school programs, experienced teaching artists, community groups and cultural organizations can introduce children to all types of art, including visual arts, theater, dance, and film. Such programs give young people a chance to shine, to express themselves, and to develop positive goals for the future. Providing arts programs in schools with high numbers of low-income students is especially important as many schools provide arts programs with additional funding from parents. This may not be possible in some schools.

GOAL

ACG3 Improve access to arts education in all schools and outside the school setting so that students are prepared to be successful in school and life.

POLICIES

- AC3.1 Encourage schools to offer culturally relevant K-12 arts curricula that emphasize development and assessment of 21st-century skills.
- AC3.2 Encourage schools to provide professional development in the arts for teachers and community arts partners.
- AC3.3 Expand partnerships with educational institutions, arts institutions, youth service agencies, foundations, business, and arts and cultural organizations to increase participation in arts and culture programs, creative learning opportunities and creative economy careers.
- AC 3.4 Enhance access to a variety of arts and cultural institutions and programs for the following groups: at-risk youth, non-English-speaking residents, seniors, the visually and hearing impaired, and people with other disabilities.
- AC3.5 Prioritize arts and culture opportunities for youth and communities with limited or no access to the arts.

Cultural Space and Placemaking

Discussion

Every successful neighborhood includes cultural spaces, which not only house a range of cultural activity, but also help define the very social character and identity of neighborhoods. These spaces include traditional spots such as theaters, galleries, art-house cinemas, and museums, as well as non-traditional areas such as music clubs, coffeehouses and bars that hang art and bookstores, along with behind-the-scenes places such as artists' studios, rehearsal rooms, and offices. Creative placemaking uses arts and culture to increase the vibrancy of neighborhoods, cities and regions. Instead of a single arts center or a cluster of large arts and cultural institutions, placemaking enriches public and private spaces, structures and streetscapes to enhance quality of life and strengthen neighborhood identity. Creatively attracting people to places that need revitalization, are vacant or underutilized can also improve local business and public safety while bringing diverse people together.

GOAL

ACG4 Support affordable cultural spaces in all neighborhoods, especially urban centers and villages where they are accessible to a broad range of people and where they can help activate the public realm.

POLICIES

- AC4.1 Create and maintain an inventory of both public and private cultural spaces.
- AC4.2 Create incentives to preserve or expand space for artists, arts organizations and other cultural uses.
- AC4.3 Consider making surplus city-owned property available to both artists and arts and cultural organizations.
- AC4.4 Consider public-private partnerships as a way to provide affordable space to both artists and arts and cultural organizations.
- AC4.5 Encourage using public and institutional spaces, such as parks, community centers, hospitals, schools, universities, and City-owned places for arts and culture.
- AC4.6 Encourage the designation of existing clusters of cultural spaces as cultural districts.
- AC4.7 Encourage partnerships with the public, private and nonprofit sectors to engage in creative placemaking projects.

- AC4.8 Share a toolkit of ways communities can make their own art and culture, created in partnership with city departments and community interests.
- AC4.9 Establish creative placemaking as part of local area planning.
- AC4.10 Encourage the creation of cultural spaces for informal gathering and recreation, especially in more densely populated urban centers and villages.

Historic Preservation

Discussion

With little undeveloped land, Seattle must grow by reusing existing sites and buildings. Distinctive buildings, landscapes, boulevards, and districts all contribute to Seattle's historic identity, and by protecting important parts of the city, links to the past are sustained. Seattle's most iconic places, such as the Space Needle, require much care and protection, while other areas around Seattle need more flexibility in carefully helping the old and new evolve together.

GOAL

- ACG5 Preserve assets of historic, architectural, archeological or social significance.

POLICIES

- AC5.1 Establish historic districts and landmarks to protect significant historic and cultural resources.
- AC5.2 Consider the use of conservation districts to recognize and sustain the character of unique residential or commercial districts.
- AC5.3 Work with neighborhoods to identify additional historic and cultural resources that should be considered for protection.
- AC5.4 Improve incentives for property owners to adapt historic buildings for new uses.
- AC5.5 Create and promote interpretative educational programs and activities about historic and cultural resources through city and nonprofit partnerships.
- AC5.6 Establish a high standard for the care of City-owned historic and cultural resources, and encourage private owners of historic and cultural resources to do the same.