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## Appendix BEST PRACTICES RESEARCH



# Advancing Arts and Culture Impact: Jackson County

**Best Practices Research** 

#### Introduction

Within its 2021 budget, Jackson County, Missouri allocated \$250,000 from its public health levy to craft the infrastructure necessary to support a vibrant arts community. So doing highlights the County's understanding of the connection between health and the arts.

Jackson County's goals for this work include collaborating with art organizations to achieve common goals; supporting the arts in all its forms in all areas of the county; ensuring diverse audiences participate in/have access to arts; building greater appreciation for arts and arts education; and identifying economic and social performance measures to highlight what arts/culture really means for Jackson County and the region.

As part of the environmental scan associated with the process, best practices from select cities from across the county have been researched. Best practices reflect procedures that through experience and research, are shown to produce optimal results and can be relied upon as examples that can be emulated by others. As Jackson County works to become a premiere arts and cultural destination within the United States, it can learn from other communities that are already known for their vibrant cultural experiences and for the robust and quality nature of their arts/culture programs.

This paper seeks to summarize best practices research that has been conducted on several successful arts and culture programs around the country. While it by no means reflects all of the successful community art initiatives within the country, it does provide a sample of robust programs that have been successful.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup>Merriam Webster. (2021). Definition of Best Practices. Retrieved from https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/best%20practice

#### **Executive Summary**

Within this paper, several examples of robust arts and culture programs from around the country are reviewed.

Communities highlighted are San Antonio, Texas; Atlanta, Georgia; Portland, Oregon; and Nashville/Davidson County, Tennessee. These four communities were chosen not only for their vibrancy and success in supporting arts and culture, but also for their alignment with the end goals that Jackson County has emphasized for this work (see introduction for goals). While they differ in how they are structured, how they are funded, and in what programs they are funding and developing, there are certainly a number of components all the programs possess that appear to make them successful.

- Each program appears to have an equity and accessibility principle built into the work that it
  performs. These principles appear to help guide how and where they dedicate funding, awards,
  and programmatic support. These principles appear to broaden the outreach and effect that these
  arts and culture programs have on the communities they serve and ensures that everyone, not
  just a select few, are being uplifted.
- 2. The programs appears to have a stable source of funding, a portion of which comes directly from the city or county they support. Common funding mechanisms include hotel occupancy taxes, general fund allocations, or another stable public funding source. That being said, each program highlighted is also financially supported through additional funding mechanisms including grants, private fundraising, and other means. Together, this combined funding provides stability and expands the ability of each program to affect positive change within their communities.
- 3. Each program appears to dedicate funding towards several key programs including grants for artists/non-profits, funding for public art, and different community programs associated with education and economic development. This suggests that successful arts and culture programs derive some of their success from funneling resources and funding to these key program areas.

#### **Best Practice Communities**

For each community reviewed, the following components will be highlighted:

- A brief background
- Vision, mission, value, and goal statements as they are available. Please note that some communities may only have some of these statements.
- Structure of the program
- How the program is funded
- Major areas that funding is focused on. A general break down of spending will be included for all communities where information was available.
- Recent outcomes (within the past year) that have been achieved (some communities do not have 2020 information available and instead will show 2019 outcomes)

### **City of San Antonio**

#### Background

San Antonio's Department of Arts and Culture believes that art serves as a means to bring people together. They strive to increase the quality of life for residents through investments in arts and culture. San Antonio, through their strategic plan (Cul-tu-Art Plan), espouses the following vision, guiding principles/goals, and values/equity statement to guide their work:

#### VISION

"San Antonio will be internationally celebrated as a confluence of living arts & authentic cultures. Our City will inspire local participation, inclusion & pride in all its arts, and create economic conditions where artists & the arts thrive.

#### Guiding Principles/Goals

- Preserve and promote the authentic culture of San Antonio.
- Enhance accessibility of the arts and cultural programs.
- Create a rich environment for sustainable arts and culture to thrive.
- Keep and attract artists to our community.
- Encourage innovation and collaboration by practicing inclusiveness.

#### Values/ Equity Statement

To support a full creative life for all, the San Antonio Arts Commission and Department of Arts & Culture commit to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable city"<sup>2</sup>

#### <u>Structure</u>

San Antonio's art/culture work is administered through the City's Department of Arts and Culture. The Department reports to the city manager in a council-manager form of government and works to enrich quality of life by exhibiting leadership in investing in San Antonio's arts and culture.

The City's Department of Arts and Culture works closely with the San Antonio Arts Commission, which comprises 15 members who are appointed by the mayor and city council. Ten arts commission members are recommended from council districts (one member from each district) and five members are recommended at large by the mayor. Members who are appointed, must be qualified individuals in the following art and culture areas: visual arts, performing arts, literary arts, public art and urban design, cultural festivals, art patronage, film and media production, and music.

The arts commission serves as an advisory committee and makes recommendations on arts related funding and public art within San Antonio, advises the City's Arts and Culture Department on its policies and procedures, and includes several sub-committees:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> San Antonio (2020). Cul-Tu-Art Plan. Retrieved from Retrieved from https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/Cul-TU-Art%20Plan%2012-17-20.pdf?ver=2020-12-17-230003-190

- Public Art
- Centro de Artes (local art gallery)
- Arts Funding
- Performing Arts, Film, and Music

The Department itself, has 15 FTEs and comprises four divisions: arts funding, cultural events and exhibits, public art, and marketing, film, and music. <sup>3</sup>

#### **Funding**

San Antonio's art and culture programing is funded through the City's Arts and Culture Fund. The fund is supported by the city's hotel occupancy tax (HOT) and receives 15% of net HOT allocations annually. Additionally, by city ordinance, public art is funded through 1% of eligible capital projects within the city. Eligible projects must be included within an annual public art plan and are determined by applying the following selection criteria:

- Coordination and collaboration with existing/planned infrastructure improvement projects, including partnership projects.
- Connectivity between neighborhoods, community facilities, cultural landmarks, and economic/development centers.
- Leverage existing improvements and funding, both public and private.
- Complete and/or sustain significance of previously established projects.
- Support transportation and/or pedestrian connectivity and areas of density.
- Support improvements within established boundaries, such as special districts or focal areas in need of revitalization and upgrade.
- Achieve an overall balance of public art projects throughout the City based upon planning recommendations.
- Improve value of public and private property and overall quality of life.
- Support identified needs or projects within adopted strategic plans.

Additionally, eligible projects must be designed in collaboration with an architect, landscape architect, or engineer. Eligible appropriations include any capital improvement project contained in a bond proposition approved by the voters or any non-bond program capital improvement project with a total cost of greater than \$500,000. Certain capital projects including real property acquisition, demolition, normal major maintenance, costs of repairing existing streets, sidewalks and drainage facilities, and below-grade water or wastewater improvements are not eligible. A portion of funds may be utilized for operating costs of the Public Art division and are not restricted to capital projects only. Lastly, San Antonio also received funding through the Texas Commission on Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> San Antonio (2020). Cul-Tu-Art Plan. Retrieved from Retrieved from <a href="https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/Cul-TU-Art%20Plan%2012-17-20.pdf?ver=2020-12-17-230003-19">https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/Cul-TU-Art%20Plan%2012-17-20.pdf?ver=2020-12-17-230003-19</a>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> City of San Antonio (2011). City Ordinance 2011-09-08-0743. Retrieved from https://webapp9.sanantonio.gov/ArchiveSearch/Viewer2.aspx?Id=%7B69B1685C-2ED4-4F5B-822E-C2C0C886FA73%7D&DocTitle=Ordinance%202011-09-08-0743&PageNo=&TotalPages=&MimeType=application/pdf&RelatedDocs=

#### Areas of Focus

The City of San Antonio's strategic plan (Cul-Tu-Art Plan identifies several priority areas to strategically address and support including film, Centro de Artes Gallery (local art gallery), art agency funding development, public art, music, cultural districts, performing arts and individual arts.

Each of these priorities include their own strategic plan and work towards meeting four key objectives: equity, economic development, accessibility, and innovation.

In working towards advancing equity, San Antonio utilizes an equity atlas, an interactive ranking index and set of maps that highlights demographics, disparities, and some infrastructure distribution within the city, to help guide prioritization of internal lists, projects, programs, and procedures. San Antonio also utilizes an internally developed set of questions, a budget equity tool, to guide them in assessing how budget requests benefit or burden low-income communities and communities of color. A short overview of each priority follows.

- Film The goal is to make San Antonio one of the best film production friendly communities in the United States by making sure that local and state film incentives are nationally competitive; developing, investing in, and maintaining, workforce and infrastructure needs; and enhancing marketing within the area.
- Centro De Artes The Department manages exhibits and programming within the Centro De Artes, a local art gallery, which focuses on the Latino experience within the South Texas and the United States as a whole.
- Arts Agency Funding The Department seeks to invest in arts and cultural programs that are authentic, excellent, innovative, and engage audiences in San Antonio experiences. The Department has designed a series of programs to help support arts and cultural organizations within the area. Programs include: supporting non-profit organizations in putting on festivals; artist regranting, which provides support to non-profit art organizations who work to fund local artist's professional advancement; capacity building, which assists local art organizations with administrative capacity issues so that they can perform efficiently and effectively; cultural specific support, which provides funding for organizations with a mission that is geared towards promoting, preserving, and enhancing the identity of specific cultural heritages or communities; and base operational support, which assists art/culture organizations with general operating expenses.
- Public Art The Department manages public art projects and programs that express the diversity
  and vibrancy of the San Antonio community. It should be noted that public art projects include
  any associated with the City's capital improvement programs. The Department works with other
  city departments to support local public art including artists, outside agencies, community groups,
  and partnership organizations. 5

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> San Antonio (2019). Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019. Retrieved from https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/AboutUs/Dept\_of\_Arts\_annual\_report-FY2019-web.pdf?ver=2019-11-19-105209-827

- Music The Department seeks to ensure that San Antonio has a thriving music economy that is based in its roots, while creating opportunities for new generations. Its goals are to incent music development, advance professionalism within the San Antonio music industry, and work to partner with local groups to tell San Antonio's music story.<sup>6</sup>
- Cultural Districts The Texas Commission on Arts (TCA) authorized the creation of cultural
  districts (zones designated to promote cultural resources and stimulate economic development
  as well as community revitalization). San Antonio is working to use these to promote cultural
  tourism and engage in economic development. The city currently has three such districts.
- Performing Arts The Department works to make San Antonio a place where performing arts thrive through the creation of a strong performing arts image within the city; by creating opportunities for affordable, accessible, and diverse venues; and, by increasing collaboration within performing arts in the area. <sup>7</sup>

San Antonio allocates funding in the following general manner (see Figure 1). Please note that 2019 figures are used due to the unavailability of 2020 figures.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 6}$  San Antionio (2016). San Antonio Music Strategic Plan. Retrieved from

https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/Music/Music%20Strategic%20Plan FINAL.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> San Antonio (2019). Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019. Retrieved from

https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/AboutUs/Dept\_of\_Arts\_annual\_report-FY2019-web.pdf?ver=2019-11-19-105209-827

Figure 1

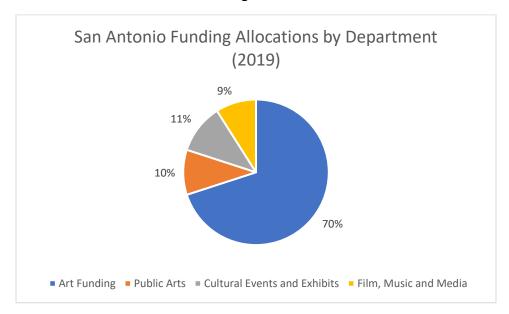


Figure 1. San Antonio Funding Allocations by Department 2019. Source. San Antonio Department of Arts and Culture Annual Report for 2019. (2019). Retrieved from https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/AboutUs/Dept\_of\_Arts\_annual\_report-FY2019-web.pdf?ver=2019-11-19-105209-827

#### Outcomes

A summary of San Antonio's' accomplishments from 2019 can be seen below (2020 unavailable):

#### Arts Funding

- 48 arts agency contracts were administered.
- Agencies funded by the city leveraged funding for an additional \$57 million from other funding sources.
- Six local art agencies were selected to be part of the cities Capacity Building, Consulting, and Coaching Program.

#### Film and Television

- 140 film permits were issued.
- Three film incentive projects were secured.
- Three film festivals were funded and four local filmmaker grants were awarded.

#### Public Art

- 13 San Antonio based artists worked on new public art projects.
- 12 new public art projects were installed.

#### Music:

25 musicians were featured during city council meetings.

- San Antonio launched a music database that included 319 musicians and music businesses.
- 15 musicians were booked for paid performances after they were discovered through San Antonio music programs.

Creative Economy Data (last study performed in 2018):

- Total economic impact in 2018 was equal to \$4,828,551,272.
- Total employment within the San Antonio creative economy equaled 26,684.
- From 2016 -2018, there was a 21.4% increase in the economic impact of the creative industry and 7.23% in employment within the creative industry.<sup>8</sup>

Creative economy data is obtained through an economic impact study that is performed every two years. This may be an area for future research to better understand the benchmarks that are utilized to obtain this data.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> San Antonio (2019). Annual Report Fiscal Year 2019. Retrieved from https://www.getcreativesanantonio.com/Portals/3/Files/AboutUs/Dept\_of\_Arts\_annual\_report-FY2019-web.pdf?ver=2019-11-19-105209-827

### **City of Atlanta**

#### Background

The City of Atlanta's arts/culture initiative resides within the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA). Atlanta's OCA was established in 1974 with the purpose of supporting and encouraging Atlanta's cultural resources. The OCA understands the vital role that arts play in the cultural vitality of a city and continues to work to make Atlanta a premier cultural destination. <sup>9</sup>Atlanta's OCA has the following mission, vision, and goals:

#### Mission

• "To create and promote rich and diverse cultural experiences in the city of Atlanta that enhance quality of life and expand the city's international reputation while preserving and protecting Atlanta's cultural heritage.

#### Vision

- Preserving and Promoting the Arts through artistic festivals, public art and cultural programming.
- Creating Access to Cultural Opportunities through gallery exhibitions, performances and art centers.
- Supporting the Professional Arts Community through the provision of grant funding and other resources for artists and not for profit organizations."<sup>10</sup>

#### Goals

- "Exhibit superb service while presenting diverse and thought-provoking programs and experiences.
- Gain international recognition of programs.
- Unify the city's cultural community through programs that serve the people of Atlanta.
- Support and create opportunities for local Cultural Development.
- Create cultural experiences that can serve as international model and enhance overall quality of life.
- Provide artistic and cultural needs to all citizens & visitors.
- Promote a rich and diverse cultural experience in the City of Atlanta.
- Nurture artists and arts organizations.
- Educate and inform citizens and visitors of the City's cultural offerings.
- Support the local arts community.
- Strengthen our impact through partnerships with other organizations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Atlanta OCA. (2021). About OCA. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Atlanta OCA (2021). Vision and Mission Statement. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/

- Build bridges into new communities and develop new audiences.
- Preserve and protect the existing cultural heritage of the City of Atlanta."11

#### Structure

Atlanta's OCA provides programing that substantially contributes to the city's quality of life and economy. The OCA's programing is largely executed in four key areas: arts and education services, contracts for arts services, performing art, and public art.

The OCA also manages several art galleries including Chastain Arts Center and Gallery 72.<sup>12</sup> It is supported by 25 staff in four key areas including: administration, public art services, art and education services, and cultural facilities.

#### **Funding**

Primarily, the Atlanta OCA is funded through the City's general fund. The primary revenues within the City's general fund are property taxes, licenses and permits, local options sales tax, and public utility, alcoholic beverage, and other taxes. This funding covers salaries and benefits, funding for operating costs, and service grant funding for the OCA's Contracts for Arts Services program.

The OCA is also eligible to receive 1.5% of eligible funding for construction projects within the city. Projects that are eligible include the construction or remodeling of buildings, commemorative structures or parking facilities; street improvements; and streetscape improvements. Eligible funds include non-restricted grant funds, general obligation bond proceeds, general funding made available for eligible projects, certain revenue bond proceeds, and any other funds budgeted for eligible projects. <sup>13</sup>

The OCA must prepare an annual Percent for Arts Plan for the city council that identifies capital construction projects eligible for funding, describes the public art fund projects for the year, and defines artist selection procedures. This plan is developed with input from a nine-member Public Art Advisory Committee, as well as an interdepartmental working group. It should be noted that funding may be utilized for temporary and permanent artworks (especially community-based projects), offsite public art projects, and program administration, special maintenance, and conservation of existing artwork. <sup>14</sup> Lastly, they also raise funding through two of their citywide programs including the Atlanta Jazz Festival and the ELEVATE public art festival. <sup>15</sup>

#### **Areas of Focus**

Arts and Education – Atlanta, through its Cultural Experience Project (CEP), partners with the
philanthropic arm of businesses to provide engaging cultural experiences to students. These

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Atlanta OCA (2021). Vision and Mission Statement. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Atlanta OCA. (2021). About OCA. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> City of Atlanta (2021). Code of Ordinances, Part II, Chapter 46, Article III. Retrieved from https://library.municode.com/ga/atlanta/codes/code\_of\_ordinances?nodeId=PTIICOORENOR\_CH46CICUAF#:~:tex t=Public%20art%20allocation%20shall%20mean,Hartsfield%2DJackson%20Atlanta%20International%20Airport.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Atlanta OCA. (2001). City of Atlanta Public Arts Master Plan. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/Atlantas-Public-Art-Master-Plan.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Love, C. (2021). Personal Communication.

cultural experiences compliment in-class instruction and provide exposure to a range of Atlanta's cultural programing and venues. <sup>16</sup>

Contracts for Art Services – Atlanta's OCA, through its Contract for Art Services (CAS) program, provide grant support to individual artists and non-profits for production, creation, presentation, exhibition and management of art/cultural services within the city. The CAS program awards grants in the following categories: major arts organizations, arts organizations, community cultural development, artist projects, and an emerging artist award.

The CAS program goals are to enhance neighborhood vitality/economic development through art; preserve artistic and cultural heritage; support education activities within the arts; ensure the arts reach all segments of Atlanta's population and are distributed broadly geographically; help develop and grow, artistic and cultural contributions from diverse communities; and help develop the arts in the city so that everyone can participate in the diverse cultural life of the city.<sup>17</sup>

- Power2give The OCA utilizes a crowdfunding platform, power2give/Atlanta, to support previous
  CAS grant recipients in obtaining additional financial support for their projects. For every dollar
  that is donated through the platform, the city in turn provides matching support of up to \$10,000
  per recipient.
- Festivals The OCA produces the Atlanta Jazz Festival which takes place every Memorial Day weekend and is free to the public. The event is regarded as one of the largest jazz festivals in the country and strives to connect younger generations with jazz. The Festival is funded through the support of corporate sponsorships, as well as through Atlanta Jazz Festival, Inc., a non-profit entity that is dedicated to preserving the festival. Prior to Memorial Day weekend, the OCA partners with local organizations to provide 31 Days of Jazz, which is a series of sponsored jazz performances that are spread throughout Atlanta. Atlanta, through their public art program, also produce an annual free public art festival called ELEVATE. The festival features local, national, and international artists.
- Public Art Program The OCA, through their public art program (PAP), oversees the management, acquisition, and conservation of Atlanta's public art collection/ public art. <sup>18</sup>
- Please note that there was not available information on general spending percentages for Atlanta's OCA at this time.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Atlanta OCA (2020). Annual Report. Retrieved from https://online.fliphtml5.com/bxtna/tesv/#p=13

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Atlanta OCA (2021). Contracts for Arts Service. Retrieved from https://www.ocaatlanta.com/?programs=contracts-for-arts-services

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Atlanta OCA (2020). Annual Report. Retrieved from <a href="https://online.fliphtml5.com/bxtna/tesv/#p=13">https://online.fliphtml5.com/bxtna/tesv/#p=13</a>

#### Outcomes

The following are a list of OCA outcomes achieved in 2020:

#### Arts and Education (CEP)

- Provided art and cultural experiences to 37,106 students.
- Partnered with 26 cultural venues to provide art and cultural experiences.
- Celebrated 15 years of success, serving 400,000 students.

#### Contract for Art Services

• Funded 73 arts organizations, 12 community and neighborhood organizations, 16 artist projects.

#### Power2give

- Raised more than \$400,000 and funded 33 arts and culture projects.
- Since inception, has generated \$2.6 million for Atlanta's art community and funded 330 projects.

#### Public Art

- Manages 555 public artworks (permanent, mobile, temporary).
- Initiated 36 new public art projects.
- Performed 88 conservation treatments on existing public art works.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Atlanta OCA (2020). 2020 Annual Report. Retrieved from <a href="https://online.fliphtml5.com/bxtna/tesv/#p=13">https://online.fliphtml5.com/bxtna/tesv/#p=13</a>

# City of Portland (Regional Arts and Culture Council)

#### Background

The City of Portland utilizes more of a regional approach to its arts/ culture initiative. In 1995, the City of Portland, along with Metro, Multnomah, Clackamas, and Washington counties, entered into an intergovernmental contract with the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC) to be the designated arts and culture agency for the Portland region. RACC was previously known as the Metropolitan Arts Commission (part of the City of Portland), before transitioning into a non-profit organization in 1994.<sup>20</sup> RACC has the following mission, vision, values, and goals:

#### MISSION:

To enrich our communities through arts and culture.

#### **VISION:**

A thriving region, powered by creativity, with arts and culture in every neighborhood.

#### **VALUES:**

- Accessibility Inclusion, simplicity and ease
- Advocacy Visibility, resources, and impact
- Equity Racial justice and representation in services and investments
- Diversity Of art forms and artistic traditions
- Community For belonging, support, and connection
- Innovation Testing & adapting; finding new ways to deliver value."

#### Goals

- Build an equitable, innovative, and sustainable organization
- Increase Access
- Advocate for Arts & Culture
- Diversify & Increase Resources
- Drive Innovation & Partnership<sup>"21</sup>

#### Structure

RACC, a non-profit organization, serves as the designated arts and culture agency for the region. Contracts are renewed every five years and include the city of Portland, as well as Multnomah, Washington, Metro, and Clackamas counties. RACC is governed by a board of directors that is composed of 27 members. Seventeen members are nominated by the chief elected officials from the City of Portland and each of the member counties. The remaining members are selected at-large by the board. RACC has 34.5 FTEs, and

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> Caballero and Guy (2018). REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE COUNCIL: Clear City goals aligned with strong Arts Council strategy will improve arts and culture services

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> RACC (2019). 2019 RACC Year in Review. Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report/

has five different programs including: public art, community engagement and advocacy, operations, grants, and arts education. <sup>22</sup>

#### **Funding**

RACC is funded through three main mechanisms: public support (city of Portland, Multnomah County, Clackamas County, Washington County, Metro County, state of Oregon), private sector contributions, and earned income. It should be noted that public funding from the entities listed above is derived from the following mechanisms: Arts and Education Access fund (generated through an income tax of \$35 per resident), general funds, transient taxes, specific dedicated program funding for public arts, state cultural trusts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

The following graph illustrates a general breakdown of funding by percentage for 2019 (Figure 2). Please note that 2020 is not used for RAAC because of a lack of availability in outcome data.

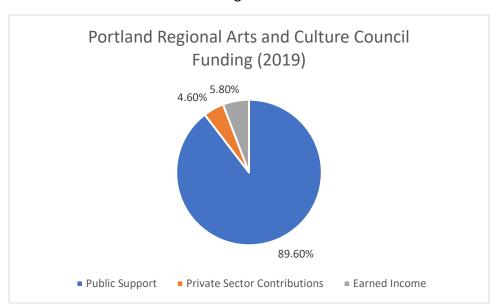


Figure 2

Figure 2. Portland Regional Arts and Culture Commission Funding 2019. Source. RACC Annual Report for 2019. (2019). Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report-2/

#### Areas of Focus

The Regional Arts and Culture Commission (RACC) has focused their resources on five select areas. These areas include:

 Advocacy – RACC, through different advocacy efforts, strives to actively grow support for building communities that are strong in arts and culture.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Caballero, M. and Guy, K. (2018). Regional Arts and Culture Council: Clear City goals aligned with strong Arts Council strategy will improve arts and culture services. Retrieved from https://www.portlandoregon.gov/auditservices/article/684866

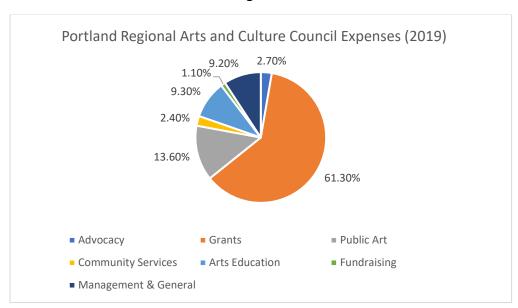
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> RACC.(2019). 2019 RACC Year in Review. Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report/

- Grants This constitutes the largest focus area in terms of funding for RACC. RACC provides
  financial support for individual artists, art organizations, art businesses, and other non-profits
  in their area. Funding is awarded through a competitive process and is evaluated by dozens
  of community volunteers who serve on peer panels. Six types of grants are offered including
  general operating support grants, project grants, capacity building for general operating
  support organizations grants, equity investments for general operating support organizations
  grants, and artist fellowship grants.<sup>24</sup>
- Public Art RACC acquires and cares for publicly owned art in the Portland area. Services include managing the City of Portland and Multnomah County's Percent for Art programs (permanent/portable artwork management along with an artist in-residence program) and maintaining public art collections. RACC also maintains database inventories, circulates portable art works within the area, works with private developers, and offers workshops to the general public, schools, and artists (among other things). RACC works to include art in public spaces within the community that are reflective of diverse viewpoints/disciplines.
- Community Services RACC provides a number of community support services for artists and art organizations within the Portland area including putting on workshops for artists, providing consulting services for organizations, and making available, online/printed information resources.
- Art Education RACC works to connect, advocate, and ensure equity of access to art education within K-12 schools throughout the region. <sup>25</sup>

A general breakdown of spending can be seen below (see Figure 3).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup>RACC. (2021). About Us: Grants. Retrieved from https://racc.org/grants/

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> RACC (2019). 2019 RACC Year in Review. Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report/



#### Figure 3

Figure 3. Portland Regional Arts and Culture Commission Expenses 2019. Source. RACC Annual Report for 2019. (2019). Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report-2/

#### Outcomes

A summary of the RACC accomplishments from 2019 can be seen below:

#### **Advocacy and Development**

- RACC represented community art organizations in over 40 workplace giving campaigns in the region.
- Developed Advocacy alerts for the National Endowment for Arts.

#### **Arts Education**

• RACC, through its Right Brain Initiative (in 12<sup>th</sup> year), brought arts integrated learning. experiences to 30,853 students in three counties and eight school districts.

#### **Community Engagement**

- Hosted six community conversations featuring artists of color. Themes included activating social change, restorative justice, centering the voices of black artists, and more.
- Hosted quarterly networking event (Art Spark) to celebrate Portland's creative community.
   Highlighted 17 community organizations and 21 artists.

#### Grants

- RACC awarded grants to 195 artists and 187 nonprofit organizations.
- RACC updated its general operating support program to address historical disparities in funding (benefited small to mid -sized groups).
- RACC capacity building program provided professional development opportunities for 10 art organizations serving under-represented populations (leadership had to reflect those communities)
- RACC created new streamlined category of project grants to reach applicants who never had received RACC funding. Provided enhanced support to administer grants as well.

#### Public Art

- RACC made 57 portable works purchases, commissioned one permanently sited artwork, utilized 37 artists for murals, and contracted with 18 other artists for commissioned works.
- Completed three artist-residence projects with the City of Portland Archives, Humboldt Neighborhood, and Cully Park in collaboration with Portland Parks and Recreation and the Bureau of Environmental Services.
- Produced a full-day workshop for 40 mural artists teaching them how to engage the community in the mural-making process. This project was completed in partnership with Mural Arts Philadelphia.
- Completed several sculptures and portraits at the Multnomah County Health Department and the Portland Building.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup>RACC. (2019). Annual Report. Retrieved from http://annualreports.racc.org/2019-annual-report-2/

## Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County

#### Background

The City of Nashville's arts and culture program serves the consolidated Metropolitan Government of Nashville and Davidson County, Tennessee (Metro Government), and is called the Metro Nashville Arts Commission (Metro Arts). The commission was established by charter in 1978 and has the following vision, mission, and values, and goals.

#### Vision

Every Nashvillian participates in a creative life

#### Mission

• Drive an equitable and vibrant community through the arts

#### Values

- Culture is rooted in community
- Arts are for everyone
- Artistic Excellence drives community excellence
- Collaboration creates shared value
- Strong Arts = strong community

#### Goals

- Increase resources in the creative ecosystem
- Drive equity and inclusion in the creative ecosystem
- Improve community creative infrastructure
- Lead by example<sup>27</sup>

#### Structure

Metro Arts functions as the office of Arts and Culture for the City of Nashville and Davidson County. Metro Arts was established in 1978 by charter and is governed by a board of commissioners. The board is composed of 15 members and are appointed by the mayor and approved by the Metro Council.<sup>28</sup>

Metro Arts also employs several committees including a grants and funding committee, public art committee, nominating committee, strategic planning and public funding committee, and an anti-racism/ equity committee. Metro Arts itself has 13 FTEs in the following functions: administration, strategic funding and initiatives, public art, and finance/operations.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Nashville Metro Arts Commission (2015) Crafting a Creative City Executive Summary. Retrieved from https://98d9df32-e9e5-49fb-b3f5-

<sup>811942</sup>ccac16.filesusr.com/ugd/cc4e3f 1809534ae4684fca8ee8f51d9f954604.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> Metro Government of Nashville and Davidson County (2021). Code of Ordinances Chapter 2.112 – Metropolitan Nashville Arts Commission. Retrieved from

 $https://library.municode.com/tn/metro\_government\_of\_nashville\_and\_davidson\_county/codes/code\_of\_ordinances?nodeld=CD\_TIT2AD\_DIVIVCO\_CH2.112MENAARCO$ 

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Nashville Metro Arts. (2021). Board and Committees. Retrieved from https://www.metroartsnashville.com/board

#### **Funding**

Metro Arts receives the vast majority of its operational budget through Metro Nashville's (combined government of the City of Nashville and Davidson County) general fund. Metro Nashville's general fund is primarily funded through property tax revenue (58%), grants and contributions (17%), and a local option sales tax (14%).

Metro Arts also receives 1% of the net proceeds of any general obligation bond issued for construction projects to fund public art. Construction projects include the building of any public building, structure, park, or parking facility. It also includes the reconstruction, replacement, extension, repair, or improvement to public buildings, structures, parks, or parking facilities where the cost of the improvement is greater than 50% of the value of the existing entity.

Bond proceeds generated for public art projects may be spent on the acquisition of art including artist related costs and project management costs. Non-bond funds may be spent on public relations, education, management of the public art collection, dedications, and special art projects. <sup>30</sup>

Metro Arts also receives funding through the Tennessee Arts Commission (TAC) for ABC grants and their THRIVE program, as well as other grant funding through the National Endowment for the Arts. There were not any sources of earned income or private funding reported for Metro Arts.<sup>31</sup>

#### **Areas of Focus**

The following are Metro Arts' areas of focus.

- Grants Metro Arts funds two different categories of grants. The first category is grant funding
  for non-profits that are engaged in work that contributes to Metro Art's stated community
  outcomes (stronger creative workforce, vibrant, creative neighborhoods, deeper cultural
  participation). The second category is Arts Build Communities (ABC) grants, which come from the
  Tennessee Arts Commission and are designed to provide support for projects that broaden access
  to art experiences, address community quality of life issues through arts, or enhance sustainability
  of asset-based cultural enterprises.
- Community Programs This category largely comprises THRIVE opportunities which fund artistled projects within neighborhoods that encourage cultural experiences, community investments, and neighborhood transformation. This category also includes a newly introduced initiative called Diversity in Arts Leadership (DIAL) which is being sponsored by Americans for the Arts. This initiative places undergraduate students from non-traditional backgrounds with art leaders in the city's art organizations.
- Public Art Metro Arts maintains a permanent collection of public artworks and administers temporary art exhibitions, artist training and development, community art projects, and collaborations with partner organizations.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> Nashville Metro Arts. (2015). Public Art Guidelines. Retrieved from https://98d9df32-e9e5-49fb-b3f5-811942ccac16.filesusr.com/ugd/cc4e3f 94eeba7fc830492a91413df6260dbcd8.pdf

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> Myers, Ian. (2021). Personal Communication.

- Opportunity Now This program provides Davison County youth with access to employment. The program partners youth with art professionals from local partner organizations to explore careers and creatives pathways in the arts while gaining workforce skills and experience.
- Restoring Hope This program partners court-involved youth with local partner non-profits to provide meaningful arts interventions that focus on resiliency and positive development.<sup>32</sup>

A general breakdown of Metro Art's funding can be seen in the following chart. (see Figure 4):

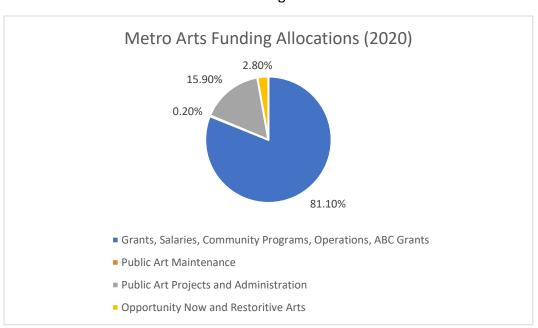


Figure 4

Figure 4. Metro Nashville Arts. Source. Metro Arts Annual Report for 2020. (2020). Retrieved from https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/65234634/metro-arts-fy20-annual-report

#### **Outcomes**

The following are a list of Metro Arts outcomes achieved in 2020:

#### Grants

- Supported 46 non-profits at 491 project locations.
- Supported 4,436 FTE jobs.
- Has an estimated \$429 million economic impact county-wide.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup>Nashville Metro Arts. (2020). Annual Report. Retrieved from. https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/65234634/metro-arts-fy20-annual-report

#### **Community Programs**

- Created 440 community arts events, exhibits, and performances.
- Reached 2143 in-person community participants.
- Reached 6168 online participants.
- Funded programs in 16 council districts and funded 121 artists.

#### Public Art

- Maintained 118 permanent public artworks county-wide.
- 85% of art collection was provided by local artists.

#### **Opportunity Now**

- Partnered with eight organizations to provide youth with work experience.
- Supported 134 youth participants.

#### **Restorative Arts**

- Partnered with six organizations to provide programming.
- Created 100 youth-mentor connections.<sup>33</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> Metro Arts. (2020). Annual Report. Retrieved from. https://www.yumpu.com/en/document/read/65234634/metro-arts-fy20-annual-report

#### **Conclusion**

While the foregoing communities are not a comprehensive compilation of successful arts and culture programs in the United States, they represent a diverse and digestible sample of successful programs. The following are common factors among the four programs that are best practices for Jackson County to consider as it completes its arts and culture strategic plan:

- 1. Incorporating equity and accessibility as foundational principles that shape strategic planning and guide/inform decisions made related to program delivery and funding.
- 2. Securing stable sources of funding from public sources within cities and counties.
- 3. Using stable public funding sources to leverage state, federal and private resources.
- 4. Programming should include public art and direct grants for artists/non-profits that promote accessibility, different cultures of communities, and that foster economic development within the local creative economy.
- 5. Programming should include community education programs that provide exposure to arts and culture.
- 6. Creating government oversight within an art and cultural organization's structure that either utilizes internal support staff or utilizes an arts non-profit organization. Consider including a citizen-led advisory committee to help provide direction for the arts and culture program.

## Appendix FOCUS GROUPS



To: Cultural Arts Advisory Committee

From: Patty Gentrup, KU Public Management Center

Subject: Focus Groups for Jackson County Strategic Planning Process

Date: July 19, 2021

As the CAAC is aware, four 90-minute focus groups are planned as part of the strategic planning process.

#### Schedule

The focus groups will be conducted at 10 a.m. and 3 p.m. on August 25 and 8 a.m. and 1 p.m. on August 26. The times have been set to accommodate varying schedules.

#### **Participation**

At the last meeting, the CAAC began identifying individuals and organizations who might be included in focus group discussions. Using that information as well as ArtsKC team insight, a list of about 40 people will be developed to invite to participate in the focus groups. They will receive an email with a link to a sign-up genius that will have 30 slots available (10 for each of three scheduled times) so that it's on a first come first served basis. Those who are not able to participate because of the group size limitations will be asked to share their personal story through Our Tomorrows and will also be made aware of the community meetings to be conducted in the fall.

A fourth time will be reserved for Jackson County city managers. We are coordinating with Jackson County Administrator Troy Schulte to extend the invitation with hopes of extensive participation.

In addition, we recommend that a member of the CAAC "open" the focus group and attend, although not actively participate. We feel this is important to reinforce this process is community based and also to give CAAC an opportunity to hear from diverse perspectives.

#### **Questions to Be Posed**

The following questions are recommended.

- 1. What makes you proud of arts and culture in Jackson County? What are we doing well?
- 2. What is underwhelming? Where are we missing the mark?
- 3. What is necessary for arts and culture to thrive in Jackson County?
- 4. What is missing in this environment?
- 5. Once a strategic plan is developed and implemented, what will success look like?
- 6. What can Jackson County government do to support arts and culture in the county?

#### **Action Requested**

Our team will be available to answer questions about this approach. In addition, we welcome insight regarding the makeup of the focus groups and suggestions regarding the questions to be asked.



Cultural Arts Advisory Committee – Focus Group Summary Report September 2021

#### **Introduction**

In order to help inform the work of Jackson County's Cultural Arts Advisory Committee (CAAC), four focus groups were convened to explore issues surrounding art and culture within Jackson County. Three of the focus groups were comprised of a diverse group of stakeholders identified by ArtsKC and the CAAC. The fourth group was made up of chief administrative officers (CAOs) of Jackson County cities or their designees. Each focus group was asked six different questions designed to gather feedback about the current state of art and culture in Jackson County, as well as what is needed to improve the art and culture landscape within Jackson County. A summary of responses to questions can be seen below.

Please note that a summary of Groups 1-3 responses are separate from Group 4 due to the difference in the question sets.

#### **Summary of Focus Group 1-3 Responses**

#### Question 1

What makes you proud of arts and culture in Jackson County? What are we doing well?

- The Jackson County community of artists is rich and of high quality.
- There is a number of great venues and attractions in Jackson County. These venues and attractions are well managed. There is quite a bit going on in the art scene compared to other Midwest communities.
- There is a proud history of architecture and art preservation. There is great degree of support within the community, including the business community, for arts and culture.

#### Question 2

What is underwhelming? Where are we missing the mark?

- We need to work on diversity and inclusion. There needs to be more diversity among leadershipand in art/culture opportunities (including types of opportunities).
- Art and culture resources are too concentrated in downtown Kansas City, and ADA accessibility
  to arts and culture is an issue. More funding and resources should be targeted at smaller
  artists, art organizations, art studios and venues to help them be more accessible.
- The arts and culture community is too siloed. There is a need for better networking, collaboration and communication within the arts and culture community. There is a need for connecting artists and organizations to resources (including at the national level).

#### **Question 3**

What is necessary for arts and culture to thrive in Jackson County?

- There is a need for a dedicated and stable funding, and a support stream for artists and art organizations (including for smaller organizations). Artists and art organizations need financial support, exposure and organizational support (legal help, business plan development, etc.).
- There is a need for better networking and connection in the art/culture community. Artists and
  arts organizations need more connection among themselves and to resources. There needs to
  be more collaboration.
- There is a need for public and elected official support. The arts and culture community, including individual artists, need more formal roles for involvement in decisions that affect arts and culture.
- There is a need for education and professional development opportunities for aspiring artists.

#### **Question 4**

What is missing in this environment?

- There needs to be a focus on mental health and the positive role that the arts and culture community can play in this arena.
- There needs to be better connectivity between tourism and arts and culture. Both ArtsKC and VisitKC are doing good work, but the division of labor is sometimes unclear. There is a need for better tourism support of different venues in different places within the County.
- There is a need for better transportation to art and culture venues.
- There is a need for tools that help build connections to individual artists (i.e. artist data base).
- There needs to be training and attention to diversity, equity and inclusion. There is a need to bemore welcoming to artists and art organizations. There is a need for different policies (art district zoning) and assistance (utility assistance) that supports and encourages artists to stay inJackson County.

#### **Question 5**

Once a strategic plan is developed and implemented, what will success look like?

- There will be equity, inclusion and accessibility to arts and culture within Jackson County.
- Current barriers will be broken down.
- Everyone will feel welcome
- Arts and culture will be spread throughout the County.
- Everyone will be able to afford to experience arts and culture in Jackson County at the same high-quality level.
- The arts and culture community will be thriving and community connections will be deepened.
- There will be enhanced cross communications within the community.
- There will be enhanced human interactions and experiences.
- Jackson County will be a cultural gathering place.

#### **Question 6**

What can Jackson County government do to support arts and culture in the county?

- Jackson County needs to coordinate marketing assistance for artists and art organizations (especially smaller ones). There is a real need for help with marketing promotions, social media, graphics and other marketing related work.
- Jackson County needs to provide ongoing funding through dependable mechanisms. They
  need to share economic risk for any new programs created and provide opportunities for
  access to everyone.
- Jackson County needs to dedicate personnel to arts and culture related work. They should consider creating an arts and culture commission.
- Jackson County needs to provide access to county-owned resources like buildings and parks as spaces for the arts. They should ensure that these spaces are safe to access.
- Jackson County should make sure that artists are represented on different committees and that community engagement is diverse (including geographically).
- Jackson County should create forums, strategies and tools for enhancing networking and connections.

#### **Summary of Focus Group 4 - City Managers Responses**

#### Question 1

What makes you proud of arts and culture in your community?

- Proud of regional assets outside of Kansas City, MO.
- Public art installations and programs; much has been accomplished without dedicated funding streams through development and volunteer partnerships.
- All cities have volunteer support through a community arts council or arts commission.

#### **Question 2**

What is underwhelming and what is missing?

- There is a lack of funding and facilities available for arts and culture. Arts and culture needs to be made a priority.
- There is a need for clear definitions around arts and culture. There is a need to expand what is considered art (i.e. food/culinary arts).
- There is a lack of formal structure and programming within city government dedicated to fostering, coordinating and liaising with the arts. Cities with dedicated staff are doing things right.

#### **Question 3**

How do you currently partner with Jackson County or regional arts initiatives?

- The group indicated that there was great coordination with administering the COVID-19 vaccinethat could be a model for future initiatives including the arts.
- The group indicated that cities generally do not know how to partner with Jackson County. Theydo not know what resources are available.
- The group expressed interest in finding ways to partner with the County to showcase and utilizetheir local talent and resources.

#### **Question 4**

Where are there opportunities for more partnerships and collaboration?

- Potential for a regional art festival
- Traveling exhibits and performances that could be featured in municipal facilities in multiple communities.
- Potential for shared staff support across jurisdictional boundaries to reduce costs to a single community.
- There is an opportunity for collaboration and/ or partnerships on events such as a regional art festival.
- Facilitating cross-jurisdictional information sharing awareness of programs, venues, etc.
- There was a desire to produce an arts and culture summit in Eastern Jackson County to gather different art groups together to collect their input on points of collaboration/partnership.

#### **Question 5**

Once a strategic plan is developed and implemented, what will success look like?

- Success will come in the form of results that are measurable. Managers indicated that they
  needto be able to show their communities tangible data regarding the positive impact of the
  arts.
- Success will come from successful collaboration with Jackson County. Cities and the county should ensure they do not duplicate existing efforts.
- There is a need for help with messaging surrounding the arts and its connection to economic development. Success can be demonstrated by jobs created and economic impact from the arts.

# **Question 6**

What can Jackson County government do to support arts and culture in the county? In your community?

- Asset mapping to identify all arts and culture venues/resources in the county
- Designate staff support for messaging and communication.
- Financial support
- Convening and facilitation support for cross-jurisdictional conversations
- Create a Jackson County arts entity that could interact with city arts councils and commissions.
- Collaboration on a tourism strategy and on creating an inventory of public art pieces.

 More information sharing and coordination of youth programming and community centers programming.

In making a few closing remarks, Focus Group 4 emphasized that the following things must be captured in the Jackson County Arts and Culture Strategic Plan in order for it to be successful. They included:

- Ensuring that the strategic plan is attainable and not overly aspirational.
- Integrating arts and culture into the rest of our work (not set apart).
- People need to experience art in their everyday lives.
- Publicize and maintain the arts and culture asset mapping at the end of the process.
- We're starting at zero anything is progress. We must demonstrate incremental success and grow from there.

#### **Potential Action Items**

Each focus group indicated that there was a need for dedicated arts and culture funding. However, each group also provided a number of specific ideas related to arts and culture that require little to no additional resources. These ideas have been included below as a list of potential action items that the Jackson County Cultural Arts Advisory Committee (CAAC) should consider. Potential action items include:

- Facilitate cross-jurisdictional information sharing by creating awareness of programs, venues, etc
- Create a database(s) of artists that can be used to enhance engagement with artists at the
  individual level, and that can be used as a matchmaking strategy between venues that need
  programming and artists looking for opportunities.
- Involve individual artists in conversations about what is needed for arts and culture to thrive in Jackson County. Individual artists are working between organizations and can lend a lot to the conversation.
- Be intentional about recruiting diverse artists to participate in boards and commissions (not justarts commissions). Embed their voices in various public decision-making processes.
- Revitalize the leadership group that existed when Joan Israelite was at ArtsKC as a way to createopportunities for connection. These meetings were very informative to artists.
- Create an arts and culture summit that has multiple sessions based on interests/common themes to help build/foster artist connections.
- Coordinate a marketing campaign to support art organizations with limited marketing budgets.
- Create shared services such as Spanish translation for basic press releases and marketing pieces.
- Execute a strategic plan centering on the function of art.
- Find ways to provide education on art and culture. Start early with children to grow their knowledge of arts education and art in the KC area.
- Support arts and culture by providing access to resources like buildings.
- Support arts and culture by acknowledging and not shying away from history.
- Partner with different tourism departments in cities.
- Help smaller organizations with promotional materials.

- Work to make artists feel welcomed and free to express creativity by cutting down on red tape and bureaucratic obstacles.
- Provide utility assistances for art organizations. Don't make them go through larger organizations who may pick and choose on different criteria and who they support/assist. Find ways to eliminate red tape tied to assistance.
- Utilize parks/ public spaces more intentionally for art.
- Identify both social and economic metrics to measure success after the strategic plan is created.
- Establish an inventory of public art pieces on the Jackson County website

# **Appendix A**

The following is a listing of each focus group, the dates and times that they were held, as well as their attendees and their corresponding affiliations.

# Jackson Co. Arts & Culture Strategic Planning ProcessFocus Group #1 Wed., Aug. 25 – 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.

Facilitator: Patty GentrupSupport: Lauren Palmer

#### Attendees:

- 1. Richard Baker, President of Starlight Theatre
- 2. Chris Dahlquist, visual artist/photography
- 3. Aengus Finnan, Executive Director, Folk Alliance International
- 4. George Guastello, CEO of Union Station
- 5. Cescily Phillips, Inspired Aesthetics (performing arts after school program)
- 6. Clint Velazquez, Base Academy of Music
- 7. Randy Wisthoff, KC Zoo Director

# Jackson Co. Arts & Culture Strategic Planning Process Focus Group #2 Wed., Aug. 25 – 3:00 – 4:00 p.m.

Facilitator: Patty Gentrup Support: Carmellya Anderson

#### Attendees:

- 1. Ben Martin, former E.D. MO Alliance for Arts Education, Founding member of Summit Theater Group
- 2. Amy Kligman, Charlottes Street Foundation
- 3. Glenn North, E.D. of Bruce R Watkins
- 4. Kathy Vest, Engelwood Arts District

# Jackson Co. Arts & Culture Strategic Planning Process Focus Group #3 Thurs Aug. 26 – 1:00 – 2:30 a.m.

Facilitator: Lauren Palmer Support: Jacob Worth

#### Attendees:

- 1. Linda Williams, KC Melting Pot Theatre Elieen Weir, Independence, Missouri Teresa Cosgrove, Englewood Arts
- 2. Kelly Grooms, Melting Pot Theatre/ The Whole Person Anthony Trakas, The Whole Person

# Jackson Co. Arts & Culture Strategic Planning Process Focus Group #4 – City Managers Tues., Aug. 31 – 2:00 – 3:30 p.m.

Facilitator: Lauren Palmer

#### Attendees:

- 1. Blue Springs Eric T. Johnson
- 2. Independence Zachary Walker
- 3. Jackson Co. Troy Schulte

- 4. Raytown Damon Hodges
- 5. Oak Grove Matt Randall
- 6. Grandview Valarie Poindexter (PIO)
- 7. Lee's Summit Christal Weber (ACM)
- 8. KCMO Melissa, Kozakiewicz (ACM)

# Observing:

- 1. Dana Knapp
- 2. Branden Haralson

# Appendix OUR TOMORROWS

# Our Tomorrows: Experiences About Arts and Culture in Jackson County

# Overview

Using Sensemaker technology, the Our Tomorrows outreach process mapped the role that arts and culture play in overcoming social issues and help build community in Jackson County.

The perspectives of Jackson County residents that benefit from arts and culture when going out with their families, creating in their own homes, or planning events to make their communities more vibrant provided a bottom-up view of the state of the arts that complemented the focus groups, asset mapping and town hall activities conducted during the strategic planning process.

The diverse experiences that were shared demonstrated how vital arts and culture are to thriving communities.



Figure 1: Types of arts culture included in Our Tomorrows experiences

# Methodology

Our Tomorrows followed a four-stage process to ensure that the stories that were collected would aid the strategic planning process. The four stages were: co-design of the SenseMaker framework (the story collection tool), story collection, analysis, and community sensemaking.

# Co-Design:

During the design phase, the goal was to create questions that accurately captured the reality of arts and culture in Jackson County. In May, the Our Tomorrows team prepared a rudimentary draft of the SenseMaker framework. To inform the design, the Our Tomorrows team researched evidence-based frameworks for the arts and public health like the Creating Healthy Communities: Arts + Public Health in America initiative and ArtPlace.

The SenseMaker design contains prompts that elicit a broad range of experiences, a set of triangle questions about relevant practical and theoretical issues, a canvas question that can be used to evaluate resources or perspectives, and multiple-choice questions that categorize the types of experiences that were shared or the demographics of the respondent.

In June 2021, the Our Tomorrows team met with Arts KC and members of the Cultural Arts Advisory Committee to discuss which issues and themes would be important to ask about. Members of the CAAC were provided a draft framework and asked to identify any revisions, comments, concerns, or issues. At that meeting, CAAC members were interested in exploring community and social issues, the role of local government in supporting the arts, the social and economic impact of the arts, sources of leadership in the arts community, contributions by the arts to quality of life, equity and inclusion, and satisfaction with the arts infrastructure. Project partners were interested in learning about the arts and culture beyond the scope of the 'usual suspects' and wanted to hear from residents about unexpected arts and culture resources that could be strengthened through the strategic plan.

# Summary of the SenseMaker Design:

Respondents to the Our Tomorrows SenseMaker were asked to share an experience in response to one of three prompts:

- 1. Think of a recent experience where arts and culture in Jackson County/ Kansas City impacted or changed your life. What happened?
- 2. Think of a recent experience where arts and culture in Jackson County/ Kansas City changed your perspective. What happened?
- 3. Think of a creative experience, place, event, or tradition that you've had that has had a positive impact on you or your community. Tell us about the experience. What happened? What was the impact?

After sharing their experience, respondents interpreted it on a series of triangles that covered themes like who was supporting arts and culture, community connections, impact on health and wellbeing, who benefitted from the arts, new possibilities for public life, and meaning or purpose. Two slider questions asked about feelings of connection and isolation and the impact of the experience. Two canvas questions were included about accessibility and evaluating arts and culture. For the accessibility canvas, respondents could place four icons- Activities, Classes, Local Business, and Spaces- along two axes- high quality-low quality and easy to access-hard to access. For the evaluating arts and culture canvas, respondents could place four icons- Inclusivity, Ease of Access, price, and Quality- along two axes- high-low and no improvement needed- needs lots of improvement. The design was translated into Spanish.

# Story Collection

During the story collection phase, Arts KC, the CAAC, and the Public Management Center gathered 118 experiences from Jackson County residents. The process was not always easy due to COVID-19 restrictions and difficulties connecting with people in-person. At the start of the project, members of the CAAC were asked to gather stories from at least ten of their constituents to serve as a baseline sample. The Arts KC team recruited additional community partners including artists, members of the local government, and other arts organizations to participate in story collection and coordinated their efforts with the CAAC. As requested, the Our Tomorrows team created customized URLs for project partners so that participating organizations could receive the stories they helped collect at the end of the process. To onboard story collection partners, the Our Tomorrows team offered three Story Collection Training Sessions for potential story collectors. Topics included:

- Best practice for story collection
- Using the SenseMaker mobile application and online survey tool
- Brainstorming sites for collection
- Ethical considerations and confidentiality
- Advertising and promoting story collection
- How to integrate story collection into other organizational activities

Story collection strategies included: collecting stories with iPads at community meetings and arts events, sharing the story collection link via email to the ArtsKC listserv, crafting asks over social media, hiring a graduate student as a "citizen journalist," and collecting stories from stakeholders during scheduled CAAC meetings.

To monitor story collection and the success of these strategies, the Our Tomorrows team created a customized dashboard in the SenseMaker platform that was used to update project partners weekly on the number of stories that had been collected as well as the emerging patterns in the ways that respondents interpreted their stories. After story collection events, email blasts, or social media pushes, the Our Tomorrows team shared how many stories had been collected and then helped brainstorm strategies to increase the sample size. This adaptive story collection strategy ensured that a representative sample of Jackson County residents was able to contribute their experience to the strategic planning process.

# **Analysis**

Beginning in September when the threshold for identifying patterns in the stories was surpassed, the Our Tomorrows team conducted analysis to prepare for sensemaking within CAAC advisory meeting and a Sensemaking workshop.

# Sensemaking

On October 19, 2021, the Our Tomorrows team conducted a sensemaking exercise to interpret the stories that had been shared in relation to visioning. The participants split into two breakout groups, and each group made sense of three zones of either the Meaning or Wellbeing Triad and identified patterns in the stories. Then, breakout groups were asked to discuss three questions to focus on how the stories might be used to improve visioning. The questions were:

- How are the stories in your zone similar? How are they different?
- Given how the respondent interpreted their own story, were there any that surprised you?
- If the project was successful, how would it create more stories and patterns like the ones you'd like to see more of?

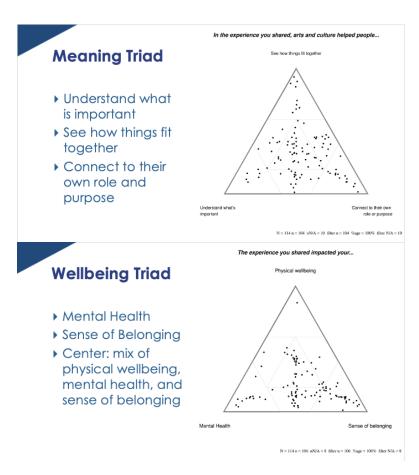


Figure 2: The Meaning and Wellbeing triads used for sensemaking and visioning

A second sensemaking workshop was held virtually on December 8, 2021. The Our Tomorrows team prepared "story packs," collections of stories that were selected from patterns within a triad question, to be shared with the group from the "Support for the Arts" and "Increased Possibilities Triads." The participants split into four breakout groups, and each group made sense of three zones of one triad question. Inside the breakout group, pairs of participants read the stories from one zone of the triad (for example, the "local government" corner of the support for the arts triad) and identified patterns in the stories. Then, breakout groups were asked to discuss three questions to focus on how the stories might be used to improve the strategic plan:

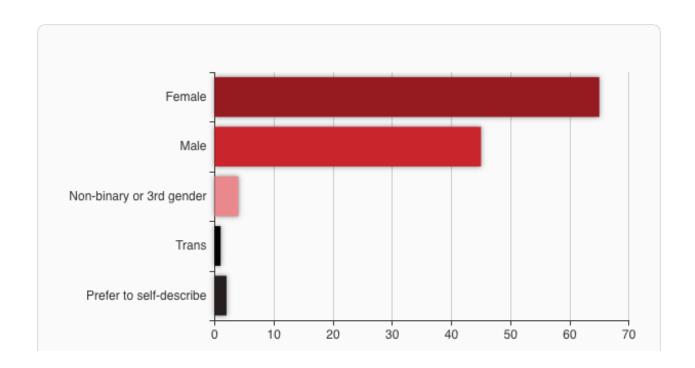
- Key Performance Areas: How do the stories help answer the question: "If our strategic plan is successful, which stories would I see more of?"
- Telling the Strategic Story: How will the stories communicate to the public and the County how the arts contribute to the health and wellbeing of residents and economic improvement?
- Surprise Inspiration: What are surprising stories that might represent trends that you could uncover through ongoing testing and action?

All participants were then asked to share out the discussions in their groups and propose which aspects should be brought considered in the further strategic planning process managed by the Public Management Center.

# Demographics

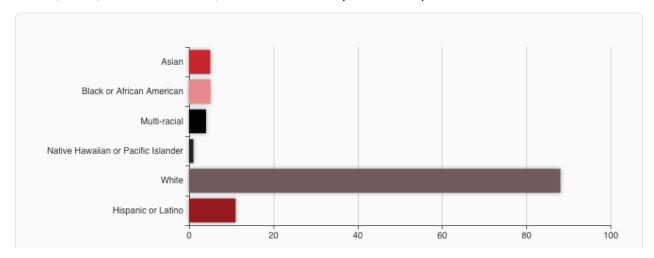
## Gender

- Out of the stories that were collected, respondents were:
- 55% female
- 39% male
- 3% nonbinary
- 2% trans
- 2% chose to describe themselves



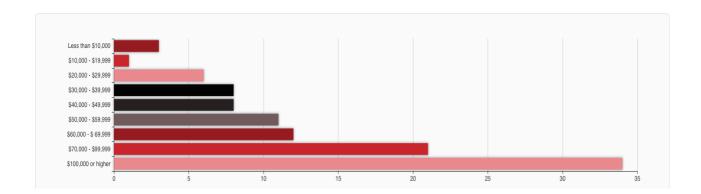
# Race

The sample was predominantly white (77%). Latinos represented 10% of respondents, while Asians, black/African American, and multi-race respondents represented around 5% each.



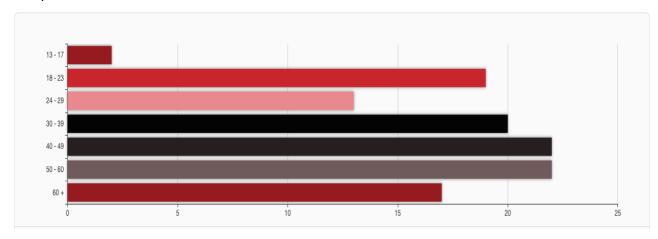
#### Income

The sample included respondents of diverse economic backgrounds. People making under \$40,000 comprised 18% of the sample, people making between \$40,000-59,000 comprised 19%, \$60,000-\$99,999 comprised 32%, and over \$100,000 comprised 33%.



# Age

The sample included a diversity of age groups, with most categories representing around 20% of the sample. However, 13–17-year-olds were underrepresented and only made up 2% of the sample.



# **Triangle Questions**

The triangle questions were how respondents interpreted the experience that they shared with Arts and Culture in Jackson County.

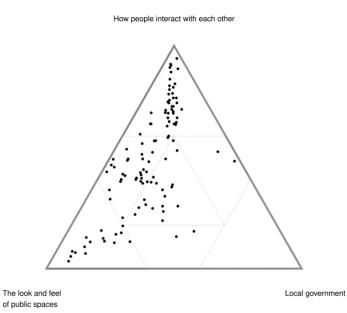
# Impact for Local Government

Two of the triangle questions were meant to gauge the relationships between the county government and arts and culture - the "New Possibilities" and "Support for the Arts." In the New Possibilities triangle, the lack of responses near the "local government" corner demonstrates that the respondents did not see a political connection between the arts and culture. Most responses were near "how people interact with each other" or "the look and feel of public spaces." This shows that arts and culture are not currently being used for political messaging or creating

movement toward desirable public policy. This could be an area of future investigation and possible intervention.

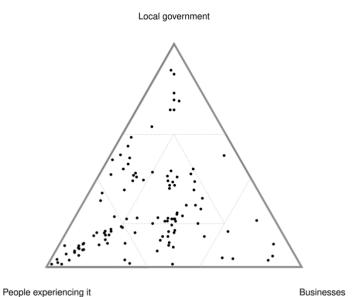
In the "Support for the Arts" triangle, there is a significant cluster in the middle of the triangle where people's experience with arts and culture were supported by local government, businesses, and the people experiencing it. These stories should be examples of a functioning arts and culture ecosystem where the arts are supported by multiple actors in partnership. Two questions arise from this triangle: Does the lack of responses near local government mean that residents of Jackson County don't always see the involvement of the government, or does the government act primarily through partnerships? How could artists and residents taking their own initiative be further supported?

In the experience you shared, arts and culture created new possibilities for...



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In the experience you shared, arts and culture were supported by...

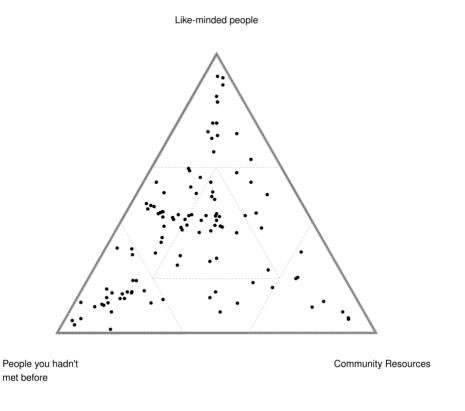


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# Connection Triangle

Arts and culture were seen as a vital community connector that brought together like-minded people as well as people that otherwise would not normally meet. The cluster between those two corners of the triangle shows that oftentimes arts and culture events were an opportunity for residents to socialize and get to know each other. As with the New Possibilities triangle, the lack of responses in the Community Resources corner shows that there might be opportunities to incorporate arts and culture into social services and other programming to increase participation and connect residents with material resources.

In the experience you shared, arts and culture helped you connect to...



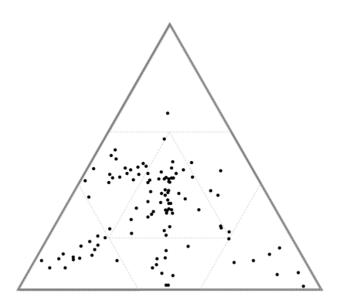
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# Benefits Triangle

The benefits triangle demonstrates that arts and culture events were seen as common connector points between long-time residents, new residents, and visitors and tourists. These open events were beneficial to everyone.

# In the experience you shared, arts and culture benefitted...

# **New Residents**



Long-time Residents

Visitors and tourists

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# **New Possibilities**

Each list of stories comes from the area of the triangle question mentioned in the title. This story pack includes stories from the "New Possibilities" triad question and the corners "How people interact with each other" and "The look and feel of public spaces."



"I had the opportunity to participate in the Black Lives Matter mural project. I joined the Troost & 31st Team led by Michael Toombs to help with the outline and painting of the portion of the image that was VOTE. I was teamed with 4 individuals that I did not know before that day. The experience was transformative! We were called upon to work together to figure a small part of a larger masterpiece. The street was full of people working toward a cause greater than themselves while demonstrating through creative expression the power of solidarity in support of important and deeply valued individuals in our community. "

"The Liberty Summer Band has been a community mainstay for a half a century. It brings together musicians of all ages for four June performances on Liberty's historic square. Not only was the June 2 concert the first of its 50th year, but it was a celebration of being able to gather again as we emerge from the pandemic. We were TOGETHER, building community. "

"After many months of being indoors, my family and I recently went for a long walk in a park in Kansas city. Usually when we had visited this park in the past, we would go directly to the kids playground so the kids could play around. But this time, during the visit to this park, we took a long slow walk through most of the park. There were many parts of the park I did not know about, and the evening sunset made the view very soothing. It was very refreshing experience and the view left me with a nostalgic feeling of how simple life could be if you were deliberate about it. The moment was a time of reflection and made me want to visit the park more often."

"The first time I moved to Kansas City, we experience the First Friday, which took me back to when I lived in Barcelona. It was this vibrant event, people out on the streets, art, and music everywhere! It is an amazing event and is the first time I saw the city alive."

"I went to a local art show and realized just how personal the art experience really is. Growing up, I always thought I was alone in my cultural experiences until I came to this art show and realized a lot of the experiences this artist drew from were similar to mine. It was a unique reckoning that brought me close to a stranger I had never met before, nor spoken to. Art did that."

"Though not recent, prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, my spouse purchased tickets for my birthday for me, my daughter, my daughter-in-law, and oldest grand daughter to all attend the Kansas City Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker. It was so inspiring to witness the joy my grand-daughter had as she experienced this event first-hand. She had read the book but the look on her face and her excitement was so wonderful to see. This was a wonderful evening of connecting with family and sharing how transformational art can be for all generations. The dance and the music both touched our souls. "

"In the wake of the Social Justice movement, I rely on the arts more than ever to awaken my empathy and perspective of my fellow citizens. The most immediate impact for me comes through the performing arts and more specifically, Theatre. There I can be a quiet observer to a fellow human or family as they navigate an extraordinary conflict brought on by outside forces."

"Prior to the completion of the amphitheater in Legacy Park, the City of Lee's Summit and the Lee's Summit Parks and Recreation Department, conducted four live concert events on Green

Street, on the large public plaza/space in front of City Hall. With purpose, distinctive music genres were selected to broaden the audience interest. As an observer who attended several of these events, I saw the "community-building magic" that can happen through a shared cultural art experience. The free events allowed a cross-section of residents and visitors to spend time celebrating music and sharing the message of the artists through voice and melody. I met people who would not typically be a part of my work or personal life...and enjoyed the experience of finding a new neighbor. "

"I first heard about the Unicorn Theatre when I was in high school. I was always intrigued by the cutting-edge, contemporary, Off-Broadway style shows that they brought to the Kansas City entertainment scene. When I was in college, I started to attend the Unicorn and was blown away by exceptional performances of rarely performed works and how these spoke to the contemporaneous situations and politics of American life. As a gay student, their work was particularly instrumental in helping me shape my knowledge of myself and understand the larger culture beyond my own experience. Now, as a college teacher myself, I bring my students to the Unicorn as often as I can to show them the range of theatre outside of their limited experience and inspire them to think creatively and bravely as they create the next generation of theatre artists and audiences. "

"We often expose our children to a variety of arts experiences but recently, my 6-year-old daughter saw her first concert at Starlight Theater - a genre-bending, contemporary violinist and dancer. From this experience, she's begun to understand how modern/contemporary dance can be a medium for individual expression, and she's very excited about it. We're now looking to enroll at City in Motion so she can continue this exploration."

"The Blue Springs City Theatre has probably been the most impactful community experience in my life and that of my daughter. Nine years ago, I took my daughter to a play presented by Blue Springs City Theatre because we had friends who were in the performance. At 7 years old, she was immediately taken with it and wanted to audition for the next performance available to children. She earned her first part with that audition and hasn't stopped performing since. I started getting involved, as well, by making costumes, helping with sets, and working backstage while watching my daughter blossom into a very outgoing and confident young lady. She has gone on to perform in school plays and participating in Forensics in High School."

"I moved to Jackson County in 2008 to attend the UMKC Conservatory. Coming from a small town in rural MO, it was like I had moved to a great metropolis, I was absolutely taken aback by the size and diversity of the area. Combined with my work at the Conservatory, the dual experience of pursuing my art and living in such a culturally rich area enriched my life beyond measure. It's one of the main reasons I returned to this area after graduate school, and why I hope to make my home here permanently."

"Every time I go to an arts/cultural event in the region, it reminds of what makes this city a great place to live."

"Seeing the exhibits of a local artist but did not realize what extensive work he had done. He was in his 80's when he started and inspired me to pursue art creation in my own life."

"1. During Cobit-19 an artist was doing paintings on her Facebook page that was very satisfying specially because everyone was looking for something to do. This artist has done many paintings in a community center in the West side 2. Day of the Death is a Hispanic tradition very deep in the Mexican culture. Mattie Rhodes in the west side does a big celebration for the community."

"When I was in middle school, we had a field trip to the Maddie Rhodes center. While there I learned that some of the Dios de Los Muertos traditions actually came from Celtic traditions, because Spain was attempting to conquer Ireland as well as Mexico. I went to a school that was majority Hispanic, so this information gave me (an Irish descendant) something in common with my classmates. This experience was a catalyst that led to my love of other cultures and a degree in International Relations."

"3rd Friday Art Walks in Englewood neighborhood in Independence. While these have been going on for a while, I attended my first art walk recently and found the spirit of the neighborhood and the friendliness of the neighborhood residents and the creative things sold in the artist booths to be interesting, uplifting and fun. Parking is easy and good food options available from the fabulous Vivilore Restaurant to the food trucks."

"On my boyfriend's birthday we finally went and saw Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Pulse Topology. It was stunning in its simplicity. Interacting with your heartbeat through touch-less sensors was so touching, especially on one's birthday!"

"For the first time, I attended a show that I had vended at for some years prior. The event pulls a very large amount of attendees, and on the flip side a large amount of vendors, artists, and makers of all kinds. I had the opportunity to watch and interact as a customer, and it was a very eye-opening experience that played in contrast to my usual standard, selling from the other side of a table. I was privy to many overheard conversations about the amount of misunderstanding and misinformation that permeates the mindsets of the greater masses that attended the show, that orbited the ideologies of lack of understanding how shows charge creators for tables, how expensive it is to be an artist, how there is no real support in promotional aspects. Truthfully, prior to the early 90s, few art shows charged much, if anything for artists to be part of an event. This goes for pop culture themed conventions, to street art shows. Mix into the fact that shows of all kinds are vastly more prolific, and far more expensive to participate in, and a lack of understanding how impactful not only the rise of online shopping (consistently on the rise for the last 10 years, versus in person purchasing), but also how powerful and impactful regular and planned usage of social media can bring about a sustainable support for the artists/creators to benefit from. I left the show with a much more aware and impactful ideology on how to progress forward, in lieu of what challenges exist with the maligned thought process that so many people believe that Kansas City is a "city of the arts". It is not, it is like a lot of other communities, one that wants the artistic experience as a tourist trope to sell, but no real cemented aspect to listen to the needs and true desires of the vast majority of creators in the community. Building community through the arts is just a saying that makes people feel better. It has no factual bearing on bringing about education or understanding on why the liberal arts need more involvement and there needs to be an understanding that art prices aren't supposed to be "affordable", they should be reflective of

our skill sets and output, and is very much a measure of the self-worth we place upon the time in our life spent CREATING our art."

"as an artist I have been given some unique opportunities to use art as an instrument of change, a device needed to provide access to those how may have lost their way, a tool to reveal truths to those who have a problems trusting, I've seen time and time again the transformation art can facilitate with in a person and feel that we are missing the train on this highly effective resource, I've seen what it can do and it's directed my life!"

"Plaza Art Fair, Westport Art Fair"

"I was involved in a Drag variety show that raises funds to support the Queer community of Independence, Mo. It's such a wonderful experience of people coming together to let a certain sect of the community that they are valued and visible!"

"My mother and I attended the Dialogue in the Dark at Union Station, and it was incredible to be able to experience total darkness and not be afraid. One of the best exhibits ever brought to Union Station, please bring it back."

"My family has always been involved in the arts, particularly the performing arts. Several years ago, our daughter was cast in A Christmas Carol, and it changed our holiday tradition for a few years. We had family come in to visit and see the show and just relished the magic of the holidays with a beautiful live show."

"Coming together to share a story onstage -- the synergy between actors and audience-- is always a very impactful experience for me. Summer 2021 I went to Southmoreland Park and gathered with a live audience, outdoors, for a free, socially distanced performance. Being part of a group of 100+ people in a city park and receiving a story felt like a return to COMMUNITY. The palpable anticipation and joy from being together, sharing laughter and listening as a group was exhilarating! It made me feel connected anew."

"I am new to KCMO, from out of state, and just finding my way around to all the city has to offer in the arts. Having discovered so many events in a short period of time, I have noticed the vibe is always one of inclusion and diversity, across age, race, and economic background. As a native New Yorker, it changed my perspective in that big-city mindset where a smaller city or Midwest town doesn't have much to offer in the way of quality content. I happily admit to being proven wrong in this regard."

"A recent collection by The African American Artists Collective really prompted some deep reflection for me and my family. We talked about systemic racism and how the arts can help us process difficult issues. Jackson County would benefit from more social justice-oriented art."

"Yoga at the Nelson....it honestly changed my life for the better"

"The Plaza art fair is a huge tradition for me. The amount of people from different backgrounds that come together to display their art and what it means to them is such an important and productive thing to attend to. The plaza art fair is an amazing event that brings the community together while feeding the cultural heritage of all the people that come."

"I met with a group of people who get together and did art for video games. That was three years ago, and sense then, it's really been driving my interest not only in game art, but all other art forms! I especially what the artists in the crossroads have been doing and have used that to build my own skills as well!"

"Music acts coming to KC have given me a profound exposure to culture and the need for creative expression in the Midwest."

"Seeing all the murals in the city have been a wonderful Inspiration to me. I really loved the Black Lives Matter murals that have popped up around the city and on our streets. It is super empowering."

"Recently I went to the Nelson Atkins. I took a friend that had never been. As a result, her and I discuss art and have grown in our friendship. We just went to an art festival together!"

"I attended the Plaza Arts Fair which sparked my interest in sewing and crafting again"

"I grew up in a rural area outside of Kansas and Missouri. When I decided to move, I made a list of the top three items my new city would need to have. At the top of the list was a vibrant arts community. That is why I choose to make Kansas City my home."

"I've been to both first Fridays and then art fairs in areas like Brookside. However, I think the vendors in first Fridays are much more diverse and younger. While art is for all age groups, I would like to see events stress more diversity and affordability. Moreover, there could be an emphasis for art as activism."

"I experience shows through the Charlotte Street Foundation because my brother is a resident there. It's really helped my family experience my brother's art and watch him express himself. I would say it's also opened my eyes to the world of new music."

"Seeing plays and musicals at the KC Rep opened my eyes to the experiences of people different than me."

"When I was young my mother brought many Italian artifacts to my school to explain to the students how she grew up. She grew up very poor however these items brought me and my family confidence in our life."

"A summer student performance of Spamalot at Kansas City Young Audiences."

"My pre-school experience in the 1960's was in a music school, where the educators used puppets to represent classical composers. We listened to the puppets tell stories about the lives of the composers, including their country of origin. Then we played small instruments and danced and drew pictures while listening to some of the compositions, finishing with graham crackers and milk. These are my earliest memories and I believe they completely shaped who I am. After the music school, I started participating in creative dramatics classes for children offered at UMKC in the 70's, then music and theatre in high school and college. I found the arts as a way to connect to other people and cultures. As an adult I have participated in church and community choral groups and have provided as many opportunities as I could for my own children. I continue to participate as a music, theatre, and arts enthusiast. I am not a wealthy

person, but I donate annually to several local arts organizations, and attend plays and concerts when I can, because I want similar experiences to be available to other children now, and in the future."

"As the owner of a small improv theater (Lighten Up Improv Playhouse) in the 1990s, I started a high school improv "league." Any metro area high school could enter a team (official or unofficially affiliated with the school), we'd provide coaches and put on shows, and 20% of the ticket sales went to the school. Participants included students from Shawnee Mission North, Park Hill, Rockhurst, Center, Winnetonka and Liberty High Schools. My business partner and I split a few years later, the theater closed, but the troupe (now performing as Funny Outfit) and the high school program continued for a few more year. When Liberty's faculty sponsor moved on to get a PhD in theater, he turned the troupe over to me—just to keep it going until the seniors graduated—and I volunteered as the Exit 16 coach for 18 years. The few years those high school league coaches and students worked together had a lasting impact on me—and more importantly, helped create what was (right up until the pandemic shut everything down) a thriving, growing, collaborative improv community in Kansas City. Here's how that went. MORE WOMEN IN IMPROV. Every year, Exit 16 held auditions for the few spots left in the 10-12-member group by graduating seniors. Following a precedent set by Mick Napier at Chicago's Second City, I insisted on equal numbers of boys and girls. Year by year, more girls auditioned, and many of them later joined the KC Improv Company and Comedy City, as well as performing on independent teams. MORE IMPROVISERS: Members of the first Exit 16 troupe founded the non-profit City 3 Project, with the aspirational goal of putting KC in the top three cities for improvisers to study and perform. C3P revived the KC improv festival Lighten Up and Funny Outfit produced for seven years. They created a message board that brought local improvisers together off stage. And when former Lighten Up members—and an original high school league technical improviser/DJ and coach—started the long-running Improv Thunderdome, the C3P boards helped fuel its takeoff. A CONTINUING TRADITION. Now 24 years old, Liberty High School's Exit 16 has played monthly for thousands of students. Annual ticket sales raised enough money—\$5 at a time—to take the troupe to Chicago every year to see professional shows and take workshops from some of the best-know instructors in the country. Alumni returns every December for a show that sometimes features dozens of performers; more recently, the 21-and-older performers have split off into their own shows at Comedy City and the Buffalo Room. Since I "retired," Exit 16 has been coached by former members, as has the newer Liberty North High School team. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE: An Exit 16 alum and two local performers re-booted the high school improv league as Operation: Show! (produced by a new non-profit, Seriously Playful). Currently coming back from a pandemic-driven pause, Operation: Show! invites once again invites local high school students to study and perform improv comedy, coached by adult players from local troupes. Managed by a board of volunteers that has include Exit 16 alums and a member of the original Lighten Up high school improv league, Seriously Playful continues to evolve to reflect and support the KC improv scene. OH, AND THERE'S ME. I've improvised a lot in the thirty years between attending a ComedySportz workshop and playing with my current all-women troupe, Ham Kitty. But nothing has changed me more than improvising with high school students. Improv is, at its heart, about play. And when you play, you become more open to listening, collaborating,

learning, and growing. All those silly games we practice sneakily build teamwork skills, leadership abilities and confidence. I've gotten to watch as shy kids found their voices, bossy kids learned to listen, and tough kids learned to be vulnerable. I've seen them grow up and take leadership roles in Kansas City theater, start troupes in other cities, perform in other disciplines, make art, make news, find love, start families, try new things, follow their passions, and discover what makes them happy."

"Recently I saw Ghost Light via Kc rep. It provided a variety of cultural stories and art forms that I don't feel that I'm normally exposed to."

"At the Juneteenth event seeing the difference from white art programs and black art programs and how much fewer resources and support the black art programs have but they still produce amazing work changed my perspective"

"I'm a musician and a performer so the arts are very important to me. Any live music is super impactful, especially after covid impacted performing. I'm also friends with a lot of local artists in KC, and seeing them succeed and have exhibits is an amazing thing that shows me how art is growing in KC."

"The plaza art fair had a positive impact in on me and I think as well as the community. Though it occurs every year it was especially special since we came together from COVID. The arts are important and key in learning about history and expressing ourselves."

"I attended a mindfulness program at a branch of Mid-Continent Public Library that was transformative in my life. I appreciate that MCPL hosts an annual Access Art event on a variety of topics from painting to writing and more. Some of my favorite MCPL programs are live author events with Q&A and a chance to meet the authors. Another favorite activity is walking in parks and on nature trails; Burr Oaks Woods, Old Mill Park in Blue Springs, Little Blue Trace, and the Hartman Memorial Park in Lee's Summit."

# The Look and Feel of Public Spaces

"The creation of BLM visuals/arts around the city was a good start to framing the tough, and for some, uncomfortable conversations around systemic racism and injustice in our city infrastructure and services."

"ran up on a traffic light years ago. A young man was seated there with his traveling pack. He noticed me looking at him and asked if he could read me a poem. I said yes and he grabbed his pad opened it and read a quick poem. He was panhandling but the gift of the poem was worth the five dollars I gave him. Did not expect poetry at a stop light that is notorious for being long."

"At six years old, my family took me to my first free outdoor theater. They did Midsummer Night's Dream, and the bright colors and music and MAGIC still vividly live in my memory. Through their education program I learned about art and history as well as gained skills in teamwork, communication, and creativity. These experiences propelled me to becoming a teacher myself. I've found a passion for using theatre as a tool not just in the classroom, but as a vessel for social

change and awareness. Getting to see professional free theatre is not only a joy, but has taught me that art is for everyone, and should be accessible to everyone."

"I really enjoy First Friday's in the Crossroads. It is a great mixture of the arts and humanity. It shows urbanism at its best, with people from all backgrounds coming together to enjoy art, food, and drinks."

"A new gallery space in the Historic Northeast held space for local talent that was truly heartwarming as a local artist. I held a special thought during a personal breathing moment from an open house at the gallery 'Sala de Arte'. The idea was that immigrants, people of color, whomever is on the margins, do not have to wait to create their own space. We are our own space when we get together."

"CSL recently hosted an inaugural community art exhibition July-Aug in Eastern Jackson County at BlendWell Cafe that brought the experience of showcasing artwork directly into the community - it was a smashing success!"

"Live music always touches the soul."

"The various local festivals are fantastic. I attend the Westport, Brookside, Juneteenth and"

"As a seller of my handmade art, it has allowed me to stay home and not work outside the home."

"Loved that many museums and galleries started offering or improved their online offerings during the pandemic and there are more opportunities for local artists to display their work"

"My family owned the Italian gardens restaurant in kc. Worked there for many years. Met many great people"

"The buildings captivate me. I like how architecture changes my perspective on the economic progress humanity has made."

"As a child I was on a field trip with my school. as we went through the city all the murals I had seen for the first time had me in awe. It was the first time I had seen a mural in real life, and it made me realize how much I liked art. growing up I began to take all the art classes I could and worked hard because I wanted to be as good as an artist as the ones whose murals I had seen as a child."

"The Lee's Summit Arts Council installed the sculpture walk in downtown Lee's Summit. I have enjoyed walking around seeing the sculptures and get excited to when a new one comes in. It has created a wonderful atmosphere and gives people another reason to visit downtown."

"Just over 10 years ago, I was going through a divorce. Every part of my life was chaotic and uncertain. One day while on a walk around the plaza area, I ventured into the Nelson Atkins. With no specific destination I wondered around until I walked into the Chinese Temple Gallery. The moment I entered the temple exhibit my entire body and mind calmed. I had never experienced anything like that before. My mind that had been running "what if" scenarios for months was quiet for the first time in a long time. My fear and anger vanished. I was at peace. It wasn't just the beautiful wooden statue "Guanyin of the Southern Sea", it was everything together, the

detail on the painted walls, the carvings of the ceilings, the smell of the room. I visited that room a dozen times over the next few months. And even now, 11 years later; I stop by the temple, and it still has the same effect."

"I work near the intersection of 31st and main. About 4 or 5 years ago, there was art competition where some artists painted several very large beautiful colorful murals on some of the buildings around that area. This brightened a somewhat dreary intersection and has changed my outlook on art, the different types and what they can do to your spirit every day when you arrive to work."

"I recently was at St. Mary's hospital and enjoyed several very nice pieces of art from local artists in the hallway. This is a great way to allow art to be displayed, but to a very limited audience to those who just happens to be at the hospital. People don't go to a hospital intentionally to view art!!"

"When I first moved to Kansas City 6 years ago, I poured myself into my new job and for a while avoided the discomfort of finding my place in an unfamiliar community. Though Kansas City had several large-scale events happening throughout my first year here like sporting events, food & beverage festivals, and a variety of specialized conventions, it was the Plaza Art Fair that most inspired me to step out of my routine as an individual and embrace the greater community landscape as a resident. I came to Kansas City as a lover of the arts, and the scale and investment the city seemed to make in this event imparted a feeling in me of being seen and valued by the larger community. By providing a communal space to celebrate the outward expression and diversity of thoughts, perceptions, and individual backgrounds, the city empowered me to become more involved and connect with others who were drawn to the event. Six years later, now an employee of an organization who hosted a booth at the 2021 Plaza Art Fair, I met a stranger who had just moved here from Las Vegas for their career. He was alone, walking the tent lines with interest, and he stopped as I was volunteering to ask me more about my organization. We chatted about our upcoming events and other points of interest he should check out in the city, and the conversation ended with him excitedly looking forward to possibly meeting again at similar arts events later in the year. That whole experience reminded me of my own journey to find a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar place, and it was a clear reminder that having the arts in Kansas City not only serves to spark the curiosity of new visitors but also inspires them to stay, become part of a community, and invest in a brighter future for the city as a whole. It really feels as if keeping Kansas City alive means keeping the arts alive, and vice versa, and I think many residents have felt motivated by that relationship."

"One time I donated to KKFI 90.1 AM and also djay a session at KKFI 90.1 AM I played a lot of Kansas City, Missouri artist including my cousin Uno Bounce and also received a certificate. It helped with my family bond with Uno Bounce he was happy and then a little after more and more Kansas City, Missouri djays started playing Kansas City; Missouri Artist, so it definitely impacted the music industry and put a smile on my face. Artist: Joker "

"The sprayseemo event exposed my family to the connection between graffiti arts and graphic design opportunities"

"Great"

"I'm new to Kansas City-only been here about a year. It's been with hard during the pandemic to explore the city. The pop-up events around sequence and cafe ca phe have helped my husband and I to learn about local businesses and artists to support. We consistently try to come every Saturday and absolutely love these events. We tell all our friends about them and different local artists to support and they have started to join us in attending!"

"Plaza art fairs is a yearly tradition for my family. I look forward to the environment and seeing the art every year."

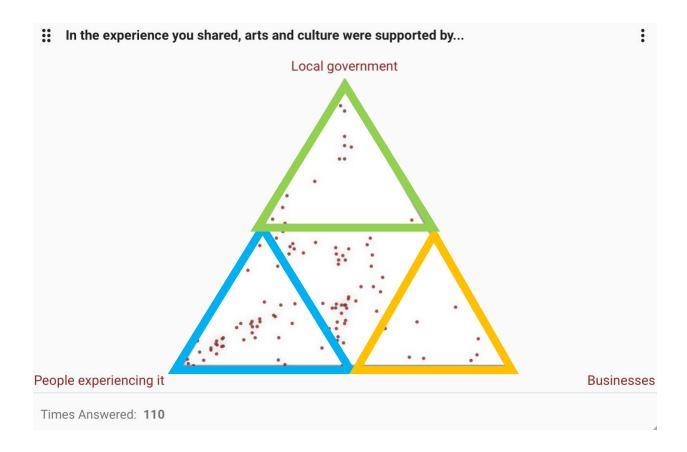
"Outdoor dance performances by local performers\ dance companies created an intimate experience where we could enjoy the performance outside with our own food and drink. Outdoor art installations in swope park were very memorable"

"In my hometown there is a fall festival every fall. It was a super small town, so it really brought the community together. They would involve grade schoolers' painted pumpkins. All kinds of super small businesses would come and sell their goods. It was truly the biggest event that happened each year. There was always a bunch of free things for small kids. Which I think is the best way to also attract parents/adults. Lyndon, Kansas"

"I went to the Atkins to observe Monet's waterlilies in different lighting, and it was so cool. The way the picture change with the changing of the light."

# Support for the Arts

Each list of stories comes from the area of the triangle question mentioned in the title. This story pack includes stories from the "Support for the Arts" triad question and the "Local Government," "Business," and "People experiencing it" corners.



# **Local Government Support**

"The first time I moved to Kansas City, we experience the First Friday, which took me back to when I lived in Barcelona. It was this vibrant event, people out on the streets, art, and music everywhere! It is an amazing event and is the first time I saw the city alive."

"My experience is, unfortunately, the lack of cultural experiences lacking in Jackson County. Living in the Kansas City Area made me lament for what I appreciated and missed about all of the other places I've lived or visited. So many other major metro areas have iconic experiences or venues that bring people back time and time again. San Antonio has the Riverwalk. San Francisco has the Wharf. Seattle has the Pike Market, Freemont Troll, the Underground and Space Needle. Santa Fe has the Plaza and Meow Wolf. Denver has Red Rocks and the Arts and Venues District.

"Louisiana has the French Quarter. There are all major tourist destinations. We have Union Station and the War Memorial. Places where you see them once and you're done."

"as an artist I have been given some unique opportunities to use art as an instrument of change, a device needed to provide access to those how may have lost their way, a tool to reveal truths to those who have a problems trusting, I've seen time and time again the transformation art can facilitate with in a person and feel that we are missing the train on this highly effective resource, I've seen what it can do and it's directed my life!"

"Live music always touches the soul."

"The Lee's Summit Arts Council installed the sculpture walk in downtown Lee's Summit. I have enjoyed walking around seeing the sculptures and get excited to when a new one comes in. It has created a wonderful atmosphere and gives people another reason to visit downtown."

"Just over 10 years ago, I was going through a divorce. Every part of my life was chaotic and uncertain. One day while on a walk around the plaza area, I ventured into the Nelson Atkins. With no specific destination I wondered around until I walked into the Chinese Temple Gallery. The moment I entered the temple exhibit my entire body and mind calmed. I had never experienced anything like that before. My mind that had been running "what if" scenarios for months was quiet for the first time in a long time. My fear and anger vanished. I was at peace. It wasn't just the beautiful wooden statue "Guanyin of the Southern Sea", it was everything together, the detail on the painted walls, the carvings of the ceilings, the smell of the room. I visited that room a dozen times over the next few months. And even now, 11 years later; I stop by the temple, and it still has the same effect."

"One time I donated to KKFI 90.1 AM and also djay a session at KKFI 90.1 AM I played a lot of Kansas City, Missouri artist including my cousin Uno Bounce and also received a certificate. It helped with my family bond with Uno Bounce he was happy and then a little after more and more Kansas City, Missouri djays started playing Kansas City; Missouri Artist, so it definitely impacted the music industry and put a smile on my face. Artist: Joker "

"Super Bowl parade .... Great togetherness"

# **Business**

"Trades and small owned businesses crafting their own goods are often an overlooked aspect of the arts. Kansas City is home to a plethora of minority and immigrant owned businesses who have brought their art and culture to the area. They are not often recognized for their unique culinary abilities, artistic talents when it comes to doing nails or hair, or their precision in craftsmanship. Minority and immigrant communities within the area have always been the richest in fun and new experiences. They are my go-to when introducing people to the area. The communities have impacted my life by providing some sense of belonging and an upmost appreciation for their presence."

"A visiting university symphonic wind ensemble visited as part of a larger, regional chorus and symphony performance. Our youngest son was a graduate student playing with the group at the Kauffman Center in Helzberg Hall. BLUF: The venue is second to none. As a musician for most of my 64 years of life, I was in awe at the acoustics of the hall and the pipe organ in the hall. This venue is world class. I've listened in concert halls throughout Europe, throughout the U.S. and all around the world. From Helzberg Hall sitting in Level 7, I could have heard a pin drop at the conductor's podium. The acoustics are second to none. I spent years sitting in the stone cathedral of the Cadet Chapel at the United States Military Academy listening to the pipe organ while singing in the choir, in some of the great cathedrals in Europe, in Carnegie Hall, and in other great venues of musical history. Helzberg Hall and hearing our son perform in the symphony brought tears to my eyes at the purity and grandiose crescendo of art and music in such a "perfect" symphonic hall. To the designers, craftsmen, benefactors, and performers who made this possible, thank you and much appreciation for your gifts and hard work. This venue is truly worthy of worldly acclaim. Thank you."

# "PLAZA ART FAIR"

"As a seller of my handmade art, it has allowed me to stay home and not work outside the home."

"Loved that many museums and galleries started offering or improved their online offerings during the pandemic and there are more opportunities for local artists to display their work"

"The buildings captivate me. I like how architecture changes my perspective on the economic progress humanity has made."

"The Plaza art fair is a huge tradition for me. The amount of people from different backgrounds that come together to display their art and what it means to them is such an important and productive thing to attend to. The plaza art fair is an amazing event that brings the community together while feeding the cultural heritage of all the people that come."

"I'm new to KCMO. Having access to public events such as Plaza Art Fair, Waldo Festival, Troostapalooza, etc. is really helping me get to know local artists so that I can follow them through the year and feel like I belong!"

"I recently was at St. Mary's hospital and enjoyed several very nice pieces of art from local artists in the hallway. This is a great way to allow art to be displayed, but to a very limited audience to those who just happens to be at the hospital. People don't go to a hospital intentionally to view art!!"

"When I first moved to Kansas City 6 years ago, I poured myself into my new job and for a while avoided the discomfort of finding my place in an unfamiliar community. Though Kansas City had several large-scale events happening throughout my first year here like sporting events, food & beverage festivals, and a variety of specialized conventions, it was the Plaza Art Fair that most inspired me to step out of my routine as an individual and embrace the greater community landscape as a resident. I came to Kansas City as a lover of the arts, and the scale and investment the city seemed to make in this event imparted a feeling in me of being seen and valued by the larger community. By providing a communal space to celebrate the outward expression and

diversity of thoughts, perceptions, and individual backgrounds, the city empowered me to become more involved and connect with others who were drawn to the event. Six years later, now an employee of an organization who hosted a booth at the 2021 Plaza Art Fair, I met a stranger who had just moved here from Las Vegas for their career. He was alone, walking the tent lines with interest, and he stopped as I was volunteering to ask me more about my organization. We chatted about our upcoming events and other points of interest he should check out in the city, and the conversation ended with him excitedly looking forward to possibly meeting again at similar arts events later in the year. That whole experience reminded me of my own journey to find a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar place, and it was a clear reminder that having the arts in Kansas City not only serves to spark the curiosity of new visitors but also inspires them to stay, become part of a community, and invest in a brighter future for the city as a whole. It really feels as if keeping Kansas City alive means keeping the arts alive, and vice versa, and I think many residents have felt motivated by that relationship."

"Recently I saw Ghost Light via Kc rep. It provided a variety of cultural stories and art forms that I don't feel that I'm normally exposed to."

"The sprayseemo event exposed my family to the connection between graffiti arts and graphic design opportunities"

"I'm a musician and a performer so the arts are very important to me. Any live music is super impactful, especially after covid impacted performing. I'm also friends with a lot of local artists in KC, and seeing them succeed and have exhibits is an amazing thing that shows me how art is growing in KC."

"Plaza art fairs is a yearly tradition for my family. I look forward to the environment and seeing the art every year."

"Went to first Fridays and saw that art doesn't have be perfect to be meaningful. It gave me hope and inspiration to start creating art myself without feeling discouraged by the result when it doesn't match my vision."

"In my hometown there is a fall festival every fall. It was a super small town, so it really brought the community together. They would involve grade schoolers' painted pumpkins. All kinds of super small businesses would come and sell their goods. It was truly the biggest event that happened each year. There was always a bunch of free things for small kids. Which I think is the best way to also attract parents/adults. Lyndon, Kansas"

# People Experiencing It

"I went to a local art show and realized just how personal the art experience really is. Growing up, I always thought I was alone in my cultural experiences until I came to this art show and realized a lot of the experiences this artist drew from were similar to mine. It was a unique reckoning that brought me close to a stranger I had never met before, nor spoken to. Art did that."

"The creation of BLM visuals/arts around the city was a good start to framing the tough, and for some, uncomfortable conversations around systemic racism and injustice in our city infrastructure and services."

"Though not recent, prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, my spouse purchased tickets for my birthday for me, my daughter, my daughter-in-law, and oldest granddaughter to all attend the Kansas City Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker. It was so inspiring to witness the joy my granddaughter had as she experienced this event first-hand. She had read the book but the look on her face and her excitement was so wonderful to see. This was a wonderful evening of connecting with family and sharing how transformational art can be for all generations. The dance and the music both touched our souls."

"ran up on a traffic light years ago. A young man was seated there with his traveling pack. He noticed me looking at him and asked if he could read me a poem. I said yes and he grabbed his pad opened it and read a quick poem. He was panhandling but the gift of the poem was worth the five dollars I gave him. Did not expect poetry at a stop light that is notorious for being long."

"saw a photography studio soft opening in the crossroads where the majority of participants were of color and young in their early 20's. This was a change from the early years of the crossroads and represents an audience and community that is evolving out of social media, relationships and is vibrant."

"I first heard about the Unicorn Theatre when I was in high school. I was always intrigued by the cutting-edge, contemporary, Off-Broadway style shows that they brought to the Kansas City entertainment scene. When I was in college, I started to attend the Unicorn and was blown away by exceptional performances of rarely performed works and how these spoke to the contemporaneous situations and politics of American life. As a gay student, their work was particularly instrumental in helping me shape my knowledge of myself and understand the larger culture beyond my own experience. Now, as a college teacher myself, I bring my students to the Unicorn as often as I can to show them the range of theatre outside of their limited experience and inspire them to think creatively and bravely as they create the next generation of theatre artists and audiences."

"Seeing the exhibits of a local artist but did not realize what extensive work he had done. He was in his 80's when he started and inspired me to pursue art creation in my own life"

"A new gallery space in the Historic Northeast held space for local talent that was truly heartwarming as a local artist. I held a special thought during a personal breathing moment from an open house at the gallery 'Sala de Arte'. The idea was that immigrants, people of color, whomever is on the margins, do not have to wait to create their own space. We are our own space when we get together."

"1. During Cobit-19 an artist was doing paintings on her Facebook page that was very satisfying specially because everyone was looking for something to do. This artist has done many paintings in a community center in the West side 2. Day of the Death is a Hispanic tradition very deep in the Mexican culture. Mattie Rhodes in the west side does a big celebration for the community."

"When I was in middle school, we had a field trip to the Maddie Rhodes center. While there I learned that some of the Dios de Los Muertos traditions actually came from Celtic traditions, because Spain was attempting to conquer Ireland as well as Mexico. I went to a school that was majority Hispanic, so this information gave me (an Irish descendant) something in common with my classmates. This experience was a catalyst that led to my love of other cultures and a degree in International Relations."

"3rd Friday Art Walks in Englewood neighborhood in Independence. While these have been going on for a while, I attended my first art walk recently and found the spirit of the neighborhood and the friendliness of the neighborhood residents and the creative things sold in the artist booths to be interesting, uplifting and fun. Parking is easy and good food options available from the fabulous Vivilore Restaurant to the food trucks."

"On my boyfriend's birthday we finally went and saw Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Pulse Topology. It was stunning in its simplicity. Interacting with your heartbeat through touch-less sensors was so touching, especially on one's birthday!"

"For the first time, I attended a show that I had vended at for some years prior. The event pulls a very large number of attendees, and on the flip side a large amount of vendors, artists, and makers of all kinds. I had the opportunity to watch and interact as a customer, and it was a very eye-opening experience that played in contrast to my usual standard, selling from the other side of a table. I was privy to many overheard conversations about the amount of misunderstanding and misinformation that permeates the mindsets of the greater masses that attended the show, that orbited the ideologies of lack of understanding how shows charge creators for tables, how expensive it is to be an artist, how there is no real support in promotional aspects. Truthfully, prior to the early 90s, few art shows charged much, if anything for artists to be part of an event. This goes for pop culture themed conventions, to street art shows. Mix into the fact that shows of all kinds are vastly more prolific, and far more expensive to participate in, and a lack of understanding how impactful not only the rise of online shopping (consistently on the rise for the last 10 years, versus in person purchasing), but also how powerful and impactful regular and planned usage of social media can bring about a sustainable support for the artists/creators to benefit from. I left the show with a much more aware and impactful ideology on how to progress forward, in lieu of what challenges exist with the maligned thought process that so many people believe that Kansas City is a "city of the arts". It is not, it is like a lot of other communities, one that wants the artistic experience as a tourist trope to sell, but no real cemented aspect to listen to the needs and true desires of the vast majority of creators in the community. Building community through the arts is just a saying that makes people feel better. It has no factual bearing on bringing about education or understanding on why the liberal arts need more involvement and there needs to be an understanding that art prices aren't supposed to be "affordable", they should be reflective of our skill sets and output, and is very much a measure of the self-worth we place upon the time in our life spent CREATING our art."

"CSL recently hosted an inaugural community art exhibition July-Aug in Eastern Jackson County at BlendWell Cafe that brought the experience of showcasing artwork directly into the community - it was a smashing success!"

"My family has always been involved in the arts, particularly the performing arts. Several years ago, our daughter was cast in A Christmas Carol, and it changed our holiday tradition for a few years. We had family come in to visit and see the show and just relished the magic of the holidays with a beautiful live show."

"Coming together to share a story onstage -- the synergy between actors and audience-- is always a very impactful experience for me. Summer 2021 I went to Southmoreland Park and gathered with a live audience, outdoors, for a free, socially distanced performance. Being part of a group of 100+ people in a city park and receiving a story felt like a return to COMMUNITY. The palpable anticipation and joy from being together, sharing laughter and listening as a group was exhilarating! It made me feel connected anew."

"I took my mom's historic postcards of downtown Kansas City and used them as the basis of a guided bicycle tour. History, art, architecture, people and the dynamic of moving around the city under one's power. it was fun, rewarding and, I think impactful for all who participated."

"I am new to KCMO, from out of state, and just finding my way around to all the city has to offer in the arts. Having discovered so many events in a short period of time, I have noticed the vibe is always one of inclusion and diversity, across age, race, and economic background. As a native New Yorker, it changed my perspective in that big-city mindset where a smaller city or Midwest town doesn't have much to offer in the way of quality content. I happily admit to being proven wrong in this regard."

"The various local festivals are fantastic. I attend the Westport, Brookside, Juneteenth and"

"Yoga at the Nelson....it honestly changed my life for the better"

"This awesome artist has made some super cool art and I have been super inspired by her! She has always loved art but has never had a chance to pursue it until recent years! She is inspiring."

"Seeing all the murals in the city have been a wonderful Inspiration to me. I really loved the Black Lives Matter murals that have popped up around the city and on our streets. It is super empowering."

"As a child I was on a field trip with my school. as we went through the city all the murals, I had seen for the first time had me in awe. It was the first time I had seen a mural in real life, and it made me realize how much I liked art. growing up I began to take all the art classes I could and worked hard because I wanted to be as good as an artist as the ones whose murals I had seen as a child."

"I grew up in a rural area outside of Kansas and Missouri. When I decided to move, I made a list of the top three items my new city would need to have. At the top of the list was a vibrant arts community. That is why I choose to make Kansas City my home."

"When I was young my mother brought many Italian artifacts to my school to explain to the students how she grew up. She grew up very poor however these items brought me and my family confidence in our life."

"I work near the intersection of 31st and main. About 4 or 5 years ago, there was art competition where some artists painted several very large beautiful colorful murals on some of the buildings around that area. This brightened a somewhat dreary intersection and has changed my outlook on art, the different types and what they can do to your spirit every day when you arrive to work."

"My art teacher gave us a project for our final, in collaboration with a local business. Aligning with some prompts, we had total freedom elsewise. When we had finished our projects, spitballing ideas off each other the whole time, we shared them with the group who my teacher was in contact with. We were invited to a gathering to celebrate and be thanked for our work and got the opportunity to meet many other local artists and experts. Since I realized just how many people are so invested in art, work with it for a living, it has inspired me to keep up with my artistic love and works, hoping to make my fellow art-lovers proud and giving me reason to stay in touch. As someone who's always loved art, it warms my heart to let it grow to such an important extent, expanding my artistic horizon into the sky. After all, everything is art. That which you'd see in a museum, music, TV shows and movies, games, and everything in the universe that surrounds us is something beautiful that we can admire, together."

"I have attended concerts by super famous classical musicians, and I was so amazed that I can do this in Kansas City, which is such a livable and relatively easy place. There are famous musicians from around the world that perform here!"

"As a theatre artist, I make my living here in Kansas City, working with quite a few different arts organizations which help to tell stories and enrich the fabric of Kansas City life with new and exciting stories from around the country and the world. without these organizations I would never have moved to Kansas City, I would never have been able to reside here for over a decade, buy a house here, make this city my home. Kansas City is richer, more diverse, more thoughtful and more compassionate because of the great art that is created in this city by incredible artists. What would our city be without art and artists? Quantifying the value is nearly impossible because the richness that art and culture bring to our lives in Kansas City is vast and reaches every corner of our lives. this city needs to fund the arts in the same way that we fund essential services-without art this city would be a pretty sorry place."

"As the owner of a small improv theater (Lighten Up Improv Playhouse) in the 1990s, I started a high school improv "league." Any metro area high school could enter a team (official or unofficially affiliated with the school), we'd provide coaches and put on shows, and 20% of the ticket sales went to the school. Participants included students from Shawnee Mission North, Park Hill, Rockhurst, Center, Winnetonka and Liberty High Schools. My business partner and I split a few years later, the theater closed, but the troupe (now performing as Funny Outfit) and the high school program continued for a few more year. When Liberty's faculty sponsor moved on to get a PhD in theater, he turned the troupe over to me—just to keep it going until the seniors graduated—and I volunteered as the Exit 16 coach for 18 years. The few years those high school league coaches and students worked together had a lasting impact on me—and more importantly, helped create what was (right up until the pandemic shut everything down) a thriving, growing, collaborative improv community in Kansas City. Here's how that went. MORE WOMEN IN IMPROV. Every year, Exit 16 held auditions for the few spots left in the 10–12-member group by graduating seniors. Following a precedent set by Mick Napier at Chicago's

Second City, I insisted on equal numbers of boys and girls. Year by year, more girls auditioned, and many of them later joined the KC Improv Company and Comedy City, as well as performing on independent teams. MORE IMPROVISERS: Members of the first Exit 16 troupe founded the non-profit City 3 Project, with the aspirational goal of putting KC in the top three cities for improvisers to study and perform. C3P revived the KC improv festival Lighten Up and Funny Outfit produced for seven years. They created a message board that brought local improvisers together off stage. And when former Lighten Up members—and an original high school league technical improviser/DJ and coach—started the long-running Improv Thunderdome, the C3P boards helped fuel its takeoff. A CONTINUING TRADITION. Now 24 years old, Liberty High School's Exit 16 has played monthly for thousands of students. Annual ticket sales raised enough money—\$5 at a time—to take the troupe to Chicago every year to see professional shows and take workshops from some of the best-know instructors in the country. Alumni returns every December for a show that sometimes features dozens of performers; more recently, the 21-andolder performers have split off into their own shows at Comedy City and the Buffalo Room. Since I "retired," Exit 16 has been coached by former members, as has the newer Liberty North High School team. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE: An Exit 16 alum and two local performers rebooted the high school improv league as Operation: Show! (Produced by a new non-profit, Seriously Playful). Currently coming back from a pandemic-driven pause, Operation: Show! invites once again invites local high school students to study and perform improv comedy, coached by adult players from local troupes. Managed by a board of volunteers that has include Exit 16 alums and a member of the original Lighten Up high school improv league, Seriously Playful continues to evolve to reflect and support the KC improv scene. OH, AND THERE'S ME. I've improvised a lot in the thirty years between attending a ComedySportz workshop and playing with my current allwomen troupe, Ham Kitty. But nothing has changed me more than improvising with high school students. Improv is, at its heart, about play. And when you play, you become more open to listening, collaborating, learning, and growing. All those silly games we practice sneakily build teamwork skills, leadership abilities and confidence. I've gotten to watch as shy kids found their voices, bossy kids learned to listen, and tough kids learned to be vulnerable. I've seen them grow up and take leadership roles in Kansas City theater, start troupes in other cities, perform in other disciplines, make art, make news, find love, start families, try new things, follow their passions, and discover what makes them happy."

"This relates to Starlight Theatre. I began attending Starlight as a child in the late 1950s when my parents, fans of Broadway musicals, took our family there several times each summer. I had never seen live theater before and was intrigued by the sets, costumes, music, and everything else. As the years went on, I learned more and more and became interested in theater. Although I didn't go into the theater profession, I have continued to love theater of all kinds. And, many years later, my wife and I got our own season tickets to Starlight and took our own children there as they grew up. Now we are taking the grandchildren there. It has been an important part of our lives."

"At the Juneteenth event seeing the difference from white art programs and black art programs and how much fewer resources and support the black art programs have but they still produce amazing work changed my perspective"

"I think first Fridays in the crossroads are an incredible an opportunity to experience art and the community in downtown. It really inspires me to see so many independent artists showing off their work."

"During the week of October 2nd, I participated in the women's March and knew about it via the art and organizing of local creators. It was really fun to see everyone's take on what they thought represented their feelings through their posters and signs."

"I went to the Atkins to observe Monet's waterlilies in different lighting, and it was so cool. The way the picture change with the changing of the light."

## Our Tomorrows Sensemaker Tool

Jackson County, in collaboration with ArtsKC, is embarking on a process designed to develop an arts and culture strategic plan that ultimately will guide how the county supports arts in all its forms, ensures that diverse audiences participate in and have access to arts, and identifies economic and social performance measures that illustrate what arts and culture really mean for Jackson County and our region.

You are invited to help determine what the plan encompasses by sharing with us how you experience arts and culture in Jackson County by participating in this anonymous survey. The results of this survey, as well as feedback through focus groups and community meetings that will occur later this fall, will be used to craft the plan.

Thanks for participating in this exciting endeavor!

In partnership with





We want to hear your stories about the arts and culture in Jackson County.

#### What do we mean by arts and culture?

Arts and culture goes beyond public art, arts performances, exhibits, or classes. We also want to hear about times when you or people in your community were making, learning, playing, and engaging in various creative or cultural activities. Culture can also be about cooking, spiritual practice, traditional crafts, and celebrations of local history, places, and holidays.

In other words, think big! We are interested in any aspects of arts and culture that have made a difference in your life and what it's like to live in Jackson County.

Choose one of the prompt options below to think about an experience that matters to you. You'll be interpreting this experience as you continue through the survey.

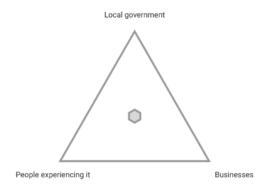
- Think of a recent experience where arts and culture in Jackson County/ Kansas City impacted or changed your life. What happened?
- Think of a recent experience where arts and culture in Jackson County/ Kansas City changed your perspective. What happened?
- o Think of a creative experience, place, event or tradition that you've had that has had a positive impact on you or your community. Tell us about the experience. What happened? What was the impact?

| Type your experience below. Your story could be as public as a social media post. To protect the confidentiality of others, don't use names or identifying information of yourself or anyone involved in the text of your story. |
|--|
|  |
| Give your experience a title:  |
|  |
| What arts or cultural event was your experience about?   |
|  |
| Share a photo related to your experience (optional)  |
|  |
|  |

#### How to Answer Triangle Questions

The next section is an opportunity to tell us what your experience means to you in a new way. Click on the marker and then drag it to the spot that best fits the experience you shared. You can choose one specific corner if that's what fits, between two corners, or in the middle if it is a bit of all three. If the labels don't seem to make sense for the experience that you shared, click N/A.

In the experience you shared, arts and culture were supported by...



o N/A

In the experience you shared, arts and culture helped you connect to...



o N/A

## The experience you shared impacted your...



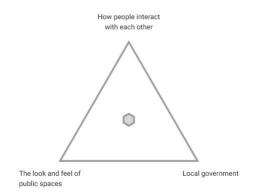
o N/A

In the experience you shared, arts and culture benefitted...



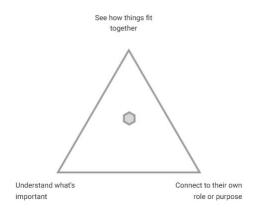
o N/A

In the experience you shared, arts and culture created new possibilities for...



o N/A

In the experience you shared, arts and culture helped people...



o N/A

During my experience I felt...

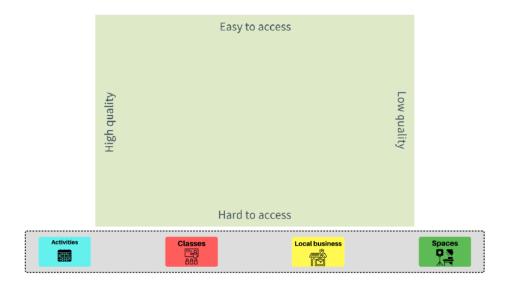


The experience impacted me...



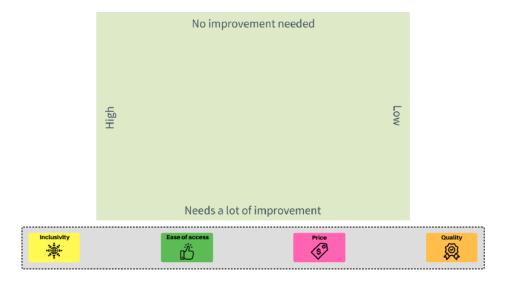
#### Accessibility:

Drag the icons onto the canvas where they best fit your general experience with the arts in Jackson County. The icons are: "Opportunities to experience arts and culture activities", "Opportunities to take arts and culture classes", "Opportunities to buy or sell art in local business" and "Spaces to create arts and culture."



#### **Evaluating Arts and Culture:**

Drag the icons onto the canvas where they best fit the experience you shared. If an icon doesn't apply to the experience, you may leave it where it is. The icons are "Inclusivity", "Ease of Access", "Price", and "Quality"



## Questions about your experience

#### What was the purpose of arts or culture in your experience?

- Self-expression
- o Build community
- o Change peoples' minds
- o Represent a culture or a community
- To sell it business
- o Improve the environment
- o Something else (type below)
- N/A

#### Overall, the experience you shared was:

- o Very Positive
- o Positive
- o Neutral
- o Negative
- Very Negative

What was the most important kind of art or cultural expression was in your experience?

- Writing
- o Poetry
- o Dance
- o Acting
- o Film
- MusicSculpture
- Photography
- Illustration
- o Architecture
- o Painting
- o Crafts
- o Fashion
- Culinary
- o Public art or sculptures/street murals
- N/A

Who could access the arts and culture in the experience you shared?

- o Everyone it was public
- o The local community
- o Just you
- o People who paid for it
- o Friends and family
- N/A

#### Where did you go to experience arts or culture in your experience?

- o I didn't go anywhere it was within me or in my home
- Within walking distance
- In the city but beyond walking distance
- Outside the city
- o N/A

Our Tomorrows looks in stories about what is already working that can inspire local organizations, local government, and community members to take action. We call these stories Bright Spots.

#### What was the biggest Bright Spot in the experience you shared?

- o Community members supported each other
- o Arts and culture improved my wellbeing
- Services worked well
- Government policy made things better
- There was a different Bright Spot (type below)
- o There was no Bright Spot in the experience I shared
- o N/A

#### Questions about You

#### Select how you identify below:

- Female
- o Male
- o Non-binary or 3rd gender
- o Trans
- o Prefer to self-describe
- o Prefer not to share

#### Please choose the race that best describes you:

- o American Indian or Alaskan Native
- o Asian
- Black or African American
- Multi-racial
- o Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- White
- Hispanic or Latino
- o Prefer to self-describe
- o Prefer not to share

## What is your family's current yearly income?

- o Less than \$10,000
- o \$10,000 \$19,999
- o \$20,000 \$29,999
- o \$30,000 \$39,999
- o \$40,000 \$49,999
- o \$50,000 \$59,999
- o \$60,000 \$69,999
- o \$70,000 \$99,999
- o \$100,000 or higher
- o Prefer not to share

#### What is your age?

- 0 13 17
- o 18 23
- 0 24 29
- 0 30 39
- 0 40 49
- o 50 60
- 0 60+
- o Prefer not to share

### Are you a resident of Jackson County?

- Yes
- o No

#### How long have you been a resident in Jackson County?

- Less than a year
- o 1-3 years
- o 3-5 years
- o 5-10 years
- o 10-20 years
- o 20-30 years
- o 30-40 years
- o More than 40 years
- o I'm not a resident of Jackson County
- o Prefer not to share

#### Which Jackson County City do you live in? (Jackson County Residents)

- o Blue Springs
- Buckner
- Grain Valley
- o Grandview
- Greenwood
- o Independence
- o Kansas City
- o Lake Lotawana
- Lake Tapawingo
- o Lee's Summit
- Levasy
- o Lone Jack
- o Oak Grove
- Raytown
- o Sugar Creek
- o I'm not a resident of Jackson County

#### What is your ZIP Code?

Before you save, is there anything else you would like to share about what should happen with the arts and culture in Jackson County? (Optional)

I don't have anything else to share

## Consent to Sharing and Save

Your story will be used to make positive changes in the community and make decisions to further fund arts and culture in Jackson County.

Our team will do its best to keep your story anonymous by occasionally removing identifiable information that we see in your story. However, please confirm that you have not included any names, birthdays, addresses, or other details in your story that could be used to identify you or someone else. Double-check your story below:

#### (Story Content)

Select the option below to confirm that your story has no identifiable information and that you understand how your experience and responses will be used.

I have double checked that there is no information that could be used to identify people in the experience I shared.

- There is no identifying information in what I shared.
- o I'm unsure and want someone to review my story before making it public.

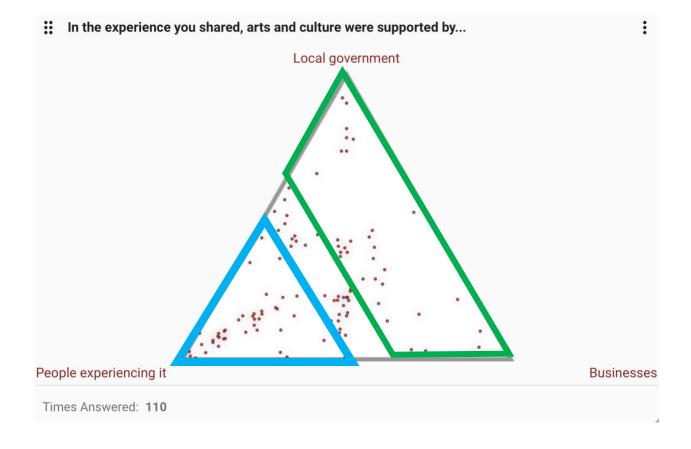
I consent to sharing my story and responses publicly and give the project team permission to use my story for analysis of community needs, sensemaking, decision-making, reports, research articles, and community engagement.

#### o I consent.

Thanks for sharing your experience with us and contributing to vibrant arts and culture in Jackson County! After you click save below, you will be redirected to a website where you can learn more about the project and how your story is being used.

# Support for the Arts Story Pack

Each list of stories comes from the area of the triangle question mentioned in the title. You will be working with a partner to read the stories in one zone of the triangle. You will look for interesting patterns in the stories in your corner, and then will discuss the similarities and differences with other zones in the larger breakout group.



## Local Government Support

"The first time I moved to Kansas City, we experience the First Friday, which took me back to when I lived in Barcelona. It was this vibrant event, people out on the streets, art, and music everywhere! It is an amazing event and is the first time I saw the city alive."

"My experience is, unfortunately, the lack of cultural experiences lacking in Jackson County. Living in the Kansas City Area made me lament for what I appreciated and missed about all of the other places I've lived or visited. So many other major metro areas have iconic experiences or venues that bring people back time and time again. San Antonio has the Rivewalk. San Francisco has the Wharf. Seattle has the Pike Market, Freemont Troll, the Underground and Space Needle. Santa Fe has the Plaza and Meow Wolf. Denver has Red Rocks and the Arts and Venues District. Louisiana has the French Quarter. There are all major tourist destinations. We have Union Station and the War Memorial. Places where you see them once and you're done."

"as an artist I have been given some unique opportunities to use art as an instrument of change, a device needed to provide access to those how may have lost their way, a tool to reveal truths to those who have a problems trusting, I've seen time and time again the transformation art can facilitate with in a person and feel that we are missing the train on this highly effective resource, I've seen what it can do and it's directed my life!"

"Live music always touches the soul."

"The Lee's Summit Arts Council installed the sculpture walk in downtown Lee's Summit. I have enjoyed walking around seeing the sculptures and get excited to when a new one comes in. It has created a wonderful atmosphere and gives people another reason to visit downtown."

"Just over 10 years ago, I was going through a divorce. Every part of my life was chaotic and uncertain. One day while on a walk around the plaza area, I ventured into the Nelson Atkins. With no specific destination I wondered around until I walked into the Chinese Temple Gallery. The moment I entered the temple exhibit my entire body and mind calmed. I had never experienced anything like that before. My mind that had been running "what if" scenarios for months was quiet for the first time in a long time. My fear and anger vanished. I was at peace. It wasn't just the beautiful wooden statue "Guanyin of the Southern Sea", it was everything together, the detail on the painted walls, the carvings of the ceilings, the smell of the room. I visited that room a dozen times over the next few months. And even now, 11 years later; I stop by the temple and it still has the same effect.""

One time I donated to KKFI 90.1 AM and also djay a session at KKFI 90.1 AM I played a lot of Kansas City, Missouri artist including my cousin Uno Bounce and also received a certificate. It helped with my family bond with Uno Bounce he was happy and then a little after more and more Kansas City, Missouri djays started playing Kansas City; Missouri Artist, so it definitely impacted the music industry and put a smile on my face. Artist: Joker "

"Super Bowl parade .... Great togetherness"

#### Business

"Trades and small owned businesses crafting their own goods are often an overlooked aspect of the arts. Kansas City is home to a plethora of minority and immigrant owned businesses who have brought their art and culture to the area. They are not often recognized for their unique culinary abilities, artistic talents when it comes to doing nails or hair, or their precision in craftsmanship. Minority and immigrant communities within the area have always been the richest in fun and new experiences. They are my go-to when introducing people to the area. The communities have impacted my life by providing some sense of belonging and an upmost appreciation for their presence."

"A visiting university symphonic wind ensemble visited as part of a larger, regional chorus and symphony performance. Our youngest son was a graduate student playing with the group at the Kauffman Center in Helzberg Hall. BLUF: The venue is second to none. As a musician for most of my 64 years of life, I was in awe at the acoustics of the hall and the pipe organ in the hall. This venue is world class. I've listened in concert halls throughout Europe, throughout the U.S. and all around the world. From Helzberg Hall sitting in Level 7, I could have heard a pin drop at the conductor's podium. The acoustics are second to none. I spent years sitting in the stone cathedral of the Cadet Chapel at the United States Military Academy listening to the pipe organ while singing in the choir, in some of the great cathedrals in Europe, in Carnegie Hall, and in other great venues of musical history. Helzberg Hall and hearing our son perform in the symphony brought tears to my eyes at the purity and grandiose crescendo of art and music in such a "perfect" symphonic hall. To the designers, craftsmen, benefactors, and performers who made this possible, thank you and much appreciation for your gifts and hard work. This venue is truly worthy of worldly acclaim. Thank you."

#### "PLAZA ART FAIR"

"As a seller of my handmade art, it has allowed me to stay home and not work outside the home."

"Loved that many museums and galleries started offering or improved their on line offerings during the pandemic and there are more opportunities for local artists to display their work"

The buildings captivate me. I like how architecture changes my perspective on the economic progress humanity has made."

"The Plaza art fair is a huge tradition for me. The amount of people from different backgrounds that come together to display their art and what it means to them is such an important and productive thing to attend to. The plaza art fair is an amazing event that brings the community together while feeding the cultural heritage of all the people that come."

"I'm new to KCMO. Having access to public events such as Plaza Art Fair, Walso Festival, Troostapalooza, etc is really helping me get to know local artists so that I can follow them throught the year and feel like I belong!"

"I recently was at At Mary's hospital and enjoyed several very nice pieces of art from local artists in the hallway. This is a great way to allow art to be displayed, but to a very limited audience to those who just happens to be at the hospital. People don't go to a hospital intentionally to view art!!"

"When I first moved to Kansas City 6 years ago, I poured myself into my new job and for awhile avoided the discomfort of finding my place in an unfamiliar community. Though Kansas City had several large-scale events happening throughout my first year here like sporting events, food & beverage festivals, and a variety of specialized conventions, it was the Plaza Art Fair that most inspired me to step out of my routine as an individual and embrace the greater community landscape as a resident. I came to Kansas City as a lover of the arts, and the scale and investment the city seemed to make in this event imparted a feeling in me of being seen and valued by the larger community. By providing a communal space to celebrate the outward expression and diversity of thoughts, perceptions, and individual backgrounds, the city empowered me to become more involved and connect with others who were drawn to the event. Six years later, now an employee of an organization who hosted a booth at the 2021 Plaza Art Fair, I met a stranger who had just moved here from Las Vegas for their career. He was alone, walking the tent lines with interest, and he stopped as I was volunteering to ask me more about my organization. We chatted about our upcoming events and other points of interest he should check out in the city, and the conversation ended with him excitedly looking forward to possibly meeting again at similar arts events later in the year. That whole experience reminded me of my own journey to find a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar place, and it was a clear reminder that having the arts in Kansas City not only serves to spark the curiosity of new visitors but also inspires them to stay, become part of a community, and invest in a brighter future for the city as a whole. It really feels as if keeping Kansas City alive means keeping the arts alive, and vice versa, and I think many residents have felt motivated by that relationship."

"Recently I saw Ghost Light via Kc rep. It provided a variety of cultural stories and art forms that I don't feel that I'm normally exposed to."

"The sprayseemo event exposed my family to the connection between graffiti arts and graphic design opportunities"

"I'm a musician and a performer so the arts are very important to me. Any live music is super impactful, especially after covid impacted performing. I'm also friends with a lot of local artists in KC, and seeing them succeed and have exhibits is an amazing thing that shows me how art is growing in KC."

"Plaza art fairs is a yearly traditions for my family. I look forward to the environment and seeing the art every year."

"Went to first Fridays and saw that art doesn't have be perfect to be meaningful. It gave me hope and inspiration to start creating art myself without feeling discouraged by the result when it doesn't match my vision."

"In my hometown there is a fall festival every fall. It was a super small town so it really brought the community together. They would involve grade schoolers' painted pumpkins. All kinds of super small businesses would come and sell their goods. It was truly the biggest event that happened each year. There was always a bunch of free things for small kids. Which I think is the best way to also attract parents/adults. Lyndon, Kansas"

## People Experiencing It

"I went to a local art show and realized just how personal the art experience really is. Growing up, I always thought I was alone in my cultural experiences until I came to this art show and realized a lot of the experiences this artist drew from were similar to mine. It was a unique reckoning that brought me close to a stranger I had never met before, nor spoken to. Art did that."

"The creation of BLM visuals/arts around the city was a good start to framing the tough, and for some, uncomfortable conversations around systemic racism and injustice in our city infrastructure and services."

"Though not recent, prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, my spouse purchased tickets for my birthday for me, my daughter, my daughter-in-law and oldest grand-daughter to all attend the Kansas City Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker. It was so inspiring to witness the joy my grand-daughter had as she experienced this event first-hand. She had read the book but the look on her face and her excitement was so wonderful to see. This was a wonderful evening of connecting with family and sharing how transformational art can be for all generations. The dance and the music both touched our souls."

"ran up on a traffic light years ago. A young man was seated there with his traveling pack. He noticed me looking at him and asked if he could read me a poem. I said yes and he grabbed his pad opened it and read a quick poem. He was panhandling but the gift of the poem was worth the five dollars I gave him. Did not expect poetry at a stop light that is notorious for being long."

"saw a photography studio soft opening in the crossroads where the majority of participants were of color and young in their early 20's. This was a change from the early years of the crossroads and represents an audience and community that is evolving out of social media, relationships and is vibrant."

"I first heard about the Unicorn Theatre when I was in high school. I was always intrigued by the cutting-edge, contemporary, Off-Broadway style shows that they brought to the Kansas City entertainment scene. When I was in college, I started to attend the Unicorn and was blown away by exceptional performances of rarely performed works and how these spoke to the contemporaneous situations and politics of American life. As a gay student, their work was particularly instrumental in helping me shape my knowledge of myself and understand the larger culture beyond my own experience. Now, as a college teacher myself, I bring my students to the Unicorn as often as I can to show them the range of theatre outside of their limited experience and inspire them to think creatively and bravely as they create the next generation of theatre artists and audiences."

"Seeing the exhibits of a local artist but did not realize what extensive work he had done. He was in his 80's when he started and inspired me to pursue art creation in my own life"

"A new gallery space in the Historic Northeast held space for local talent that was truly heartwarming as a local artist. I held a special thought during a personal breathing moment from an open house at the gallery 'Sala de Arte'. The idea was that immigrants, people of color, whomever is on the margins, do not have to wait to create their own space. We are our own space when we get together."

"1. During Cobit-19 an artist was doing paintings on her Facebook page that was very satisfying specially because every one was looking for something to do. This artist has done many paintings in a community center in the West side 2. Day of the Death is a Hispanic tradition very deep in the Mexican culture. Mattie Rhodes in the west side does a big celebration for the community."

"When I was in middle school, we had a field trip to the Maddie Rhodes center. While there I learned that some of the Dios de Los Muertos traditions actually came from Celtic traditions, because Spain was attempting to conquer Ireland as well as Mexico. I went to a school that was majority hispanic, so this information gave me (an Irish descendant) something in common with my classmates. This experience was a catalyst that led to my love of other cultures and a degree in International Relations."

"3rd Friday Art Walks in Englewood neighborhood in Independence. While these have been going on for awhile, I attended my first art walk recently and found the spirit of the neighborhood and the friendliness of the neighborhood residents and the creative things sold in the artist booths to be interesting, uplifting and fun. Parking is easy and good food options available from the fabulous Vivilore Restaurant to the food trucks."

"On my boyfriend's birthday we finally went and saw Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Pulse Topology. It was stunning in its simplicity. Interacting with your heartbeat through touch-less sensors was so touching, especially on one's birthday!"

"For the first time, I attended a show that I had vended at for some years prior. The event pulls a very large amount of attendees, and on the flip side a large amount of vendors, artists, and makers of all kinds. I had the opportunity to watch and interact as a customer, and it was a very eye opening experience that played in contrast to my usual standard, selling from the other side of a table. I was privy to many overheard conversations about the amount of misunderstanding and misinformation that permeates the mindsets of the greater masses that attended the show, that orbited the ideologies of lack of understanding how shows charge creators for tables, how expensive it is to be an artist, how there is no real support in promotional aspects. Truthfully, prior to the early 90s, few art shows charged much, if anything for artists to be part of an event. This goes for pop culture themed conventions, to street art shows. Mix into the fact that shows of all kinds are vastly more prolific, and far more expensive to participate in, and a lack of understanding how impactful not only the rise of online shopping (consistently on the rise for the last 10 years, versus in person purchasing), but also how powerful and impactful regular and planned usage of social media can bring about a sustainable support for the artists/creators to benefit from. I left the show with a much more aware and impactful ideology on how to progress forward, in lieu of what challenges exist with the maligned thought process that so many people believe that Kansas City is a "city of the arts". It

is not, it is like a lot of other communities, one that wants the artistic experience as a tourist trope to sell, but no real cemented aspect to listen to the needs and true desires of the vast majority of creators in the community. Building community through the arts is just a saying that makes people feel better. It has no factual bearing on bringing about education or understanding on why the liberal arts need more involvement and there needs to be an understanding that art prices aren't supposed to be "affordable", they should be reflective of our skill sets and output, and is very much a measure of the self worth we place upon the time in our life spent CREATING our art."

"CSL recently hosted an inaugural community art exhibition July-Aug in Eastern Jackson County at BlendWell Cafe that brought the experience of showcasing artwork directly into the community - it was a smashing success!"

"My family has always been involved in the arts, particularly the performing arts. Several years ago, our daughter was cast in A Christmas Carol and it changed our holiday tradition for a few years. We had family come in to visit and see the show and just relished the magic of the holidays with a beautiful live show."

"Coming together to share a story onstage -- the synergy between actors and audience-- is always a very impactful experience for me. Summer 2021 I went to Southmoreland Park and gathered with a live audience, outdoors, for a free, socially distanced performance. Being part of a group of 100+ people in a city park and receiving a story felt like a return to COMMUNITY. The palpable anticipation and joy from being together, sharing laughter and listening as a group was exhilarating! It made me feel connected anew."

"I took my mom's historic postcards of downtown kansas city and used them as the basis of a guided bicycle tour. History, art, architecture, people and the dynamic of moving around the city under one's power. it was fun, rewarding and, I think impactful for all who participated."

"I am new to KCMO, from out of state, and just finding my way around to all the city has to offer in the arts. Having discovered so many events in a short period of time, I have noticed the vibe is always one of inclusion and diversity, across age, race, and economic background. As a native New Yorker, it changed my perspective in that big-city mindset where a smaller city or midwest town doesn't have much to offer in the way of quality content. I happily admit to being proven wrong in this regard."

"The various local festivals are fantastic. I attend the Westport, Brookside, Juneteeth and"

"Yoga at the Nelson....it honestly changed my life for the better"

"This awesome artist has made some super cool art and I have been super inspired by her! She has always loved art but has never had a chance to pursue it until recent years! She is inspiring."

"Seeing all the murals in the city have been a wonderful Inspiration to me. I really loved the Black Lives Matter murals that have popped up around the city and on our streets. It is super empowering."

"As a child i was on a field trip with my school. as we went through the city all the murals i had seen for the first time had me in awe. It was the first time i had seen a mural in real life and it made me realize how much i liked art. growing up i began to take all the art classes i could and worked hard because i wanted to be as good as an artist as the ones whose murals i had seen as a child.

"I grew up in a rural area outside of Kansas and Missouri. When I decided to move, I made a list of the top three items my new city would need to have. At the top of the list was a vibrant arts community. That is why I choose to make Kansas City my home."

"When I was young my mother brought many Italian artifacts to my school to explain to the students how she grew up. She grew up very poor however these items brought me and my family confidence in our life."

"I work near the intersection of 31st and main. About 4 or 5 years ago, there was art competition where some artists painted several very large beautiful colorful murals on some of the buildings around that area. This brightened a somewhat dreary intersection and has changed my outlook on art, the different types and what they can do to your spirit every day when you arrive to work."

"My art teacher gave us a project for our final, in collaboration with a local business. Aligning with some prompts, we had total freedom elsewise. When we had finished our projects, spitballing ideas off each other the whole time, we shared them with the group who my teacher was in contact with. We were invited to a gathering to celebrate and be thanked for our work, and got the opportunity to meet many other local artists and experts. Since I realized just how many people are so invested in art, work with it for a living, it has inspired me to keep up with my artistic love and works, hoping to make my fellow art-lovers proud and giving me reason to stay in touch. As someone who's always loved art, it warms my heart to let it grow to such an important extent, expanding my artistic horizon into the sky. After all, everything is art. That which you'd see in a museum, music, TV shoes and movies, games, and everything in the universe that surrounds us is something beautiful that we can admire, together."

"I have attended concerts by super famous classical musicians, and I was so amazed that I can do this in Kansas City, which is such a livable and relatively easy place. There are famous musicians from around the world that perform here!"

"As a theatre artist, I make my living here in Kansas City, working with quite a few different arts organizations which help to tell stories and enrich the fabric of Kansas City life with new and exciting stories from around the country and the world. without these organizations I would never have moved to Kansas City, I would never have been able to reside here for over a decade, buy a house here, make this city my home. Kansas City is richer, more diverse, more thoughtful and more compassionate because of the great art that is created in this city by incredible artists. What would our city be without art and artists? Quantifying the value is nearly impossible because the richness that art and culture bring to our lives in Kansas City is vast and reaches every corner of our lives. this city needs to fund the arts in the same way that we fund essential services- without art this city would be a pretty sorry place."

"As the owner of a small improv theater (Lighten Up Improv Playhouse) in the 1990s, I started a high school improv "league." Any metro area high school could enter a team (official or unofficially affiliated with the school), we'd provide coaches and put on shows, and 20% of the ticket sales went to the school. Participants included students from Shawnee Mission North, Park Hill, Rockhurst, Center, Winnetonka and Liberty High Schools. My business partner and I split a few years later, the theater closed, but the troupe (now performing as Funny Outfit) and the high school program continued for a few more year. When Liberty's faculty sponsor moved on to get a PhD in theater, he turned the troupe over to me—just to keep it going until the seniors graduated—and I volunteered as the Exit 16 coach for 18 years. The few years those high school league coaches and students worked together had a lasting impact on me—and more importantly, helped create what was (right up until the pandemic shut everything down) a thriving, growing, collaborative improv community in Kansas City. Here's how that went. MORE WOMEN IN IMPROV. Every year, Exit 16 held auditions for the few spots left in the 10-12 member group by graduating seniors. Following a precedent set by Mick Napier at Chicago's Second City, I insisted on equal numbers of boys and girls. Year by year, more girls auditioned, and may of them later joined the KC Improv Company and ComedyCity, as well as performing on independent teams. MORE IMPROVISERS: Members of the first Exit 16 troupe founded the non-profit City 3 Project, with the aspirational goal of putting KC in the top three cities for improvisers to study and perform. C3P revived the KC improv festival Lighten Up and Funny Outfit produced for seven years. They created a message board that brought local improvisers together off stage. And when former Lighten Up members—and an original high school league technical improviser/DJ and coach—started the long-running Improv Thunderdome, the C3P boards helped fuel its takeoff. A CONTINUING TRADITION. Now 24 years old, Liberty High School's Exit 16 has played monthly for thousands of students. Annual ticket sales raised enough money—\$5 at a time—to take the troupe to Chicago every year to see professional shows and take workshops from some of the best-know instructors in the country. Alumni returns every December for a show that sometimes features dozens of performers; more recently, the 21-and-older performers have split off into their own shows at ComedyCity and the Buffalo Room. Since I "retired," Exit 16 has been coached by former members, as has the newer Liberty North High School team. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE: An Exit 16 alum and two local performers re-booted the high school improv league as Operation: Show! (produced by a new non-profit, Seriously Playful). Currently coming back from a pandemic-driven pause, Operation:Show! invites once again invites local high school students to study and perform improv comedy, coached by adult players from local troupes. Managed by a board of volunteers that has include Exit 16 alums and a member of the original Lighten Up high school improv league, Seriously Playful continues to evolve to reflect and support the KC improv scene. OH, AND THERE'S ME. I've improvised a lot in the thirty years between attending a ComedySportz workshop and playing with my current all-women troupe, Ham Kitty. But nothing has changed me more than improvising with high school students. Improv is, at its heart, about play. And when you play, you become more open to listening, collaborating, learning and growing. All those silly games we practice sneakily build teamwork skills, leadership abilities and confidence. I've gotten to watch as shy kids found their voices, bossy kids learned to listen, and tough kids learned to be vulnerable. I've seen them grow up and take leadership roles in Kansas City theater, start troupes in other cities, perform in other disciplines,

make art, make news, find love, start families, try new things, follow their passions, and discover what makes them happy."

"This relates to Starlight Theatre. I began attending Starlight as a child in the late 1950s when my parents, fans of Broadway musicals, took our family there several times each summer. I had never seen live theater before and was intrigued by the sets, costumes, music and everything else. As the years went on I learned more and more and became interested in theater. Although I didn't go into the theater profession, I have continued to love theater of all kinds. And, many years later, my wife and I got our own season tickets to Starlight and took our own children there as they grew up. Now we are taking the grandchildren there. It has been an important part of our lives."

"At the juneteenth event seeing the difference from white art programs and black art programs and how much fewer resources and support the black art programs have but they still produce amazing work changed my perspective"

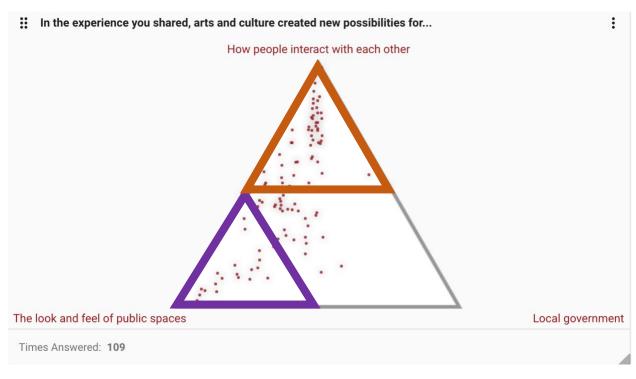
"I think first fridays In the crossroads are an incredible a opportunity to experience art and the community in downtown. It really inspires me to see so many independent artists showing off their work."

"During the week of October 2nd I participated in the women's March and knew about it via the art and organizing of local creators. It was really fun to see everyone's take on what they thought represented their feelings through their posters and signs."

"I went to the Atkins to observe Monet's waterlilies in different lighting and it was so cool. The way the picture change with the changing of the light."

## New Possibilities Story Pack

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### How People Interacted

"I had the opportunity to participate in the Black Lives Matter mural project. I joined the Troost & 31st Team led by Michael Toombs to help with the outline and painting of the portion of the image that was VOTE. I was teamed with 4 individuals that I did not know before that day. The experience was transformative! We were called upon to work together to figure a small part of a larger master piece. The street was full of people working toward a cause greater than themselves while demonstrating through creative expression the power of solidarity in support of important and deeply valued individuals in our community."

"The Liberty Summer Band has been a community mainstay for a half a century. It brings together musicians of all ages for four June performances on Liberty's historic square. Not only was the June 2 concert the first of i's 50th year, but it was a celebration of being able to gather again as we emerge from the pandemic. We were TOGETHER, building community."

"After many months of being indoors, my family and I recently went for a long walk in a park in Kansas city. Usually when we had visited this park in the past, we would go directly to the kids play ground so the kids could play around. But this time, during the visit to this park, we took a long slow walk through most of the park. There were many parts of the park I did not know about, and the evening sunset made the view very soothing. It was very refreshing experience and the view left me with a nostalgic feeling of how simple life could be if you were deliberate about it. The moment was a time of reflection and made me want to visit the park more often."

"The first time I moved to Kansas City, we experience the First Friday, which took me back to when I lived in Barcelona. It was this vibrant event, people out on the streets, art, and music everywhere! It is an amazing event and is the first time I saw the city alive."

"I went to a local art show and realized just how personal the art experience really is. Growing up, I always thought I was alone in my cultural experiences until I came to this art show and realized a lot of the experiences this artist drew from were similar to mine. It was a unique reckoning that brought me close to a stranger I had never met before, nor spoken to. Art did that."

"Though not recent, prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic, my spouse purchased tickets for my birthday for me, my daughter, my daughter-in-law and oldest grand-daughter to all attend the Kansas City Ballet's performance of the Nutcracker. It was so inspiring to witness the joy my grand-daughter had as she experienced this event first-hand. She had read the book but the look on her face and her excitement was so wonderful to see. This was a wonderful evening of connecting with family and sharing how transformational art can be for all generations. The dance and the music both touched our souls."

"In the wake of the Social Justice movement, I rely on the arts more than ever to awaken my empathy and perspective of my fellow citizens. The most immediate impact for me comes through the performing arts and more specifically, Theatre. There I can be a quiet observer to a fellow human or family as they navigate an extraordinary conflict brought on by outside forces."

"Prior to the completion of the amphitheater in Legacy Park, the City of Lee's Summit and the Lee's Summit Parks and Recreation Department, conducted four live concert events on Green Street, on the large public plaza/space in front of City Hall. With purpose, distinctive music genres were selected to broaden the audience interest. As an observer who attended several of these events, I saw the "community-building magic" that can happen through a shared cultural art experience. The free events allowed a cross-section of residents and visitors to spend time celebrating music and sharing the message of the artists through voice and melody. I met people who would not typically be a part of my work or personal life...and enjoyed the experience of finding a new neighbor."

"I first heard about the Unicorn Theatre when I was in high school. I was always intrigued by the cutting-edge, contemporary, Off-Broadway style shows that they brought to the Kansas City entertainment scene. When I was in college, I started to attend the Unicorn and was blown away by exceptional performances of rarely performed works and how these spoke to the contemporaneous situations and politics of American life. As a gay student, their work was particularly instrumental in helping me shape my knowledge of myself and understand the larger culture beyond my own experience. Now, as a college teacher myself, I bring my students to the Unicorn as often as I can to show them the range of theatre outside of their limited experience and inspire them to think creatively and bravely as they create the next generation of theatre artists and audiences."

"We often expose our children to a variety of arts experiences but recently, my 6-year-old daugher saw her first concert at Starlight Theater - a genre-bending, contemporary violinist and dancer. From this experience, she's begun to understand how modern/contemporary dance can be a medium for individual expression, and she's very excited about it. We're now looking to enroll at City in Motion so she can continue this exploration."

"The Blue Springs City Theatre has probably been the most impactful community experience in my life and that of my daughter. Nine years ago, I took my daughter to a play presented by Blue Springs City Theatre because we had friends who were in the performance. At 7 years old, she was immediately taken with it and wanted to audition for the next performance available to children. She earned her first part with that audition and hasn't stopped performing since. I started getting involved, as well, by making costumes, helping with sets, and working backstage while watching my daughter blossom into a very outgoing and confident young lady. She has gone on to perform in school plays and participating in Forensics in High School."

"I moved to Jackson County in 2008 to attend the UMKC Conservatory. Coming from a small town in rural MO, it was like I had moved to a great metropolis, I was absolutely taken aback by the size and diversity of the area. Combined with my work at the Conservatory, the dual experience of pursuing my art and living in such a culturally rich area enriched my life beyond measure. It's one of the main reasons I returned to this area after graduate school, and why I hope to make my home here permanently."

"Every time I go to an arts/cultural event in the region, it reminds of what makes this city a great place to live."

"Seeing the exhibits of a local artist but did not realize what extensive work he had done. He was in his 80's when he started and inspired me to pursue art creation in my own life"

"1. During Cobit-19 an artist was doing paintings on her Facebook page that was very satisfying specially because every one was looking for something to do. This artist has done many paintings in a community center in the West side 2. Day of the Death is a Hispanic tradition very deep in the Mexican culture. Mattie Rhodes in the west side does a big celebration for the community."

"When I was in middle school, we had a field trip to the Maddie Rhodes center. While there I learned that some of the Dios de Los Muertos traditions actually came from Celtic traditions, because Spain was attempting to conquer Ireland as well as Mexico. I went to a school that was majority hispanic, so this information gave me (an Irish descendant) something in common with my classmates. This experience was a catalyst that led to my love of other cultures and a degree in International Relations."

"3rd Friday Art Walks in Englewood neighborhood in Independence. While these have been going on for awhile, I attended my first art walk recently and found the spirit of the neighborhood and the friendliness of the neighborhood residents and the creative things sold in the artist booths to be interesting, uplifting and fun. Parking is easy and good food options available from the fabulous Vivilore Restaurant to the food trucks."

"On my boyfriend's birthday we finally went and saw Rafael Lozano-Hemmer's Pulse Topology. It was stunning in its simplicity. Interacting with your heartbeat through touch-less sensors was so touching, especially on one's birthday!"

"For the first time, I attended a show that I had vended at for some years prior. The event pulls a very large amount of attendees, and on the flip side a large amount of vendors, artists, and makers of all kinds. I had the opportunity to watch and interact as a customer, and it was a very eye opening experience that played in contrast to my usual standard, selling from the other side of a table. I was privy to many overheard conversations about the amount of misunderstanding and misinformation that permeates the mindsets of the greater masses that attended the show, that orbited the ideologies of lack of understanding how shows charge creators for tables, how expensive it is to be an artist, how there is no real support in promotional aspects. Truthfully, prior to the early 90s, few art shows charged much, if anything for artists to be part of an event. This goes for pop culture themed conventions, to street art shows. Mix into the fact that shows of all kinds are vastly more prolific, and far more expensive to participate in, and a lack of understanding how impactful not only the rise of online shopping (consistently on the rise for the last 10 years, versus in person purchasing), but also how powerful and impactful regular and planned usage of social media can bring about a sustainable support for the artists/creators to benefit from. I left the show with a much more aware and impactful ideology on how to progress forward, in lieu of what challenges exist with the maligned thought process that so many people believe that Kansas City is a "city of the arts". It is not, it is like a lot of other communities, one that wants the artistic experience as a tourist trope to sell, but no real cemented aspect to listen to the needs and true desires of the vast majority of creators in the community. Building community through the arts is just a saying that makes people feel better. It has no factual bearing on bringing about education or understanding on why the liberal arts need more involvement and there needs to be an understanding that art prices aren't supposed to be "affordable", they should be reflective of our skill sets and output, and is very much a measure of the self worth we place upon the time in our life spent CREATING our art."

"as an artist I have been given some unique opportunities to use art as an instrument of change, a device needed to provide access to those how may have lost their way, a tool to reveal truths to those who have a problems trusting, I've seen time and time again the transformation art can facilitate with in a person and feel that we are missing the train on this highly effective resource, I've seen what it can do and it's directed my life!"

"Plaza Art Fair, Westport Art Fair"

"I was involved in a Drag variety show that raises funds to support the Queer community of Independence, Mo. It's such a wonderful experience of people coming together to let a certain sect of the community that they are valued and visible!"

"HarshadiTestCAAC"

"My mother and I attended the Dialogue in the Dark at Union Station and it was incredible to be able to experience total darkness and not be afraid. One of the best exhibits ever brought to Union Station, please bring it back."

"My family has always been involved in the arts, particularly the performing arts. Several years ago, our daughter was cast in A Christmas Carol and it changed our holiday tradition for a few years. We had family come in to visit and see the show and just relished the magic of the holidays with a beautiful live show."

"Coming together to share a story onstage -- the synergy between actors and audience-- is always a very impactful experience for me. Summer 2021 I went to Southmoreland Park and gathered with a live audience, outdoors, for a free, socially distanced performance. Being part of a group of 100+ people in a city park and receiving a story felt like a return to COMMUNITY. The palpable anticipation and joy from being together, sharing laughter and listening as a group was exhilarating! It made me feel connected anew."

"I am new to KCMO, from out of state, and just finding my way around to all the city has to offer in the arts. Having discovered so many events in a short period of time, I have noticed the vibe is always one of inclusion and diversity, across age, race, and economic background. As a native New Yorker, it changed my perspective in that big-city mindset where a smaller city or midwest town doesn't have much to offer in the way of quality content. I happily admit to being proven wrong in this regard."

"A recent collection by The African American Artists Collective really prompted some deep reflection for me and my family. We talked about systemic racism and how the arts can help us process difficult issues. Jackson County would benefit from more social justice oriented art."

"Yoga at the Nelson....it honestly changed my life for the better"

"The Plaza art fair is a huge tradition for me. The amount of people from different backgrounds that come together to display their art and what it means to them is such an important and productive thing to attend to. The plaza art fair is an amazing event that brings the community together while feeding the cultural heritage of all the people that come."

"I met with a group of people who get together and did art for video games. That was three years ago, and sense then, it's really been driving my interest not only in game art, but all other art forms! I especially what the artists in the crossroads have been doing, and have used that to build my own skills as well!"

"Music acts coming to KC have given me a profound exposure to culture and the need for creative expression in the Midwest."

"Seeing all the murals in the city have been a wonderful Inspiration to me. I really loved the Black Lives Matter murals that have popped up around the city and on our streets. It is super empowering."

"Recently I went to the Nelson Atkins. I took a friend that had never been. As a result her and I discuss art and have grown in our friendship. We just went to an art festival together!"

"I attended the Plaza Arts Fair which sparked my interest in sewing and crafting again"

"I grew up in a rural area outside of Kansas and Missouri. When I decided to move, I made a list of the top three items my new city would need to have. At the top of the list was a vibrant arts community. That is why I choose to make Kansas City my home."

"I've been to both first Fridays and then art fairs in areas like Brookside. However, I think the vendors in first Fridays are much more diverse and young. While art is for all age groups, I would like to see events stress more diversity and affordability. Moreover, there could be an emphasis for art as activism."

"I experience shows through the Charlotte Street Foundation because my brother is a resident there. It's really helped my family experience my brother's art and watch him express himself. I would say it's also opened my eyes to the world of new music."

"Seeing plays and musicals at the KC Rep opened my eyes to the experiences of people different than me."

"When I was young my mother brought many Italian artifacts to my school to explain to the students how she grew up. She grew up very poor however these items brought me and my family confidence in our life."

"A summer student performance of Spamalot at Kansas City Young Audiences."

"My pre-school experience in the 1960's was in a music school, where the educators used puppets to represent classical composers. We listened to the puppets tell stories about the lives of the composers, including their country of origin. Then we played small instruments, and danced and drew pictures while listening to some of the compositions, finishing with graham crackers and milk. These are my earliest memories and I believe they completely shaped who I

am. After the music school, I started participating in creative dramatics classes for children offered at UMKC in the 70's, then music and theatre in high school and college. I found the arts as a way to connect to other people and cultures. As an adult I have participated in church and community choral groups, and have provided as many opportunities as I could for my own children. I continue to participate as a music, theatre and arts enthusiast. I am not a wealthy person, but I donate annually to several local arts organizations, and attend plays and concerts when I can, because I want similar experiences to be available to other children now, and in the future."

"As the owner of a small improv theater (Lighten Up Improv Playhouse) in the 1990s, I started a high school improv "league." Any metro area high school could enter a team (official or unofficially affiliated with the school), we'd provide coaches and put on shows, and 20% of the ticket sales went to the school. Participants included students from Shawnee Mission North, Park Hill, Rockhurst, Center, Winnetonka and Liberty High Schools. My business partner and I split a few years later, the theater closed, but the troupe (now performing as Funny Outfit) and the high school program continued for a few more year. When Liberty's faculty sponsor moved on to get a PhD in theater, he turned the troupe over to me—just to keep it going until the seniors graduated—and I volunteered as the Exit 16 coach for 18 years. The few years those high school league coaches and students worked together had a lasting impact on me—and more importantly, helped create what was (right up until the pandemic shut everything down) a thriving, growing, collaborative improv community in Kansas City. Here's how that went. MORE WOMEN IN IMPROV. Every year, Exit 16 held auditions for the few spots left in the 10-12 member group by graduating seniors. Following a precedent set by Mick Napier at Chicago's Second City, I insisted on equal numbers of boys and girls. Year by year, more girls auditioned, and may of them later joined the KC Improv Company and ComedyCity, as well as performing on independent teams. MORE IMPROVISERS: Members of the first Exit 16 troupe founded the non-profit City 3 Project, with the aspirational goal of putting KC in the top three cities for improvisers to study and perform. C3P revived the KC improv festival Lighten Up and Funny Outfit produced for seven years. They created a message board that brought local improvisers together off stage. And when former Lighten Up members—and an original high school league technical improviser/DJ and coach—started the long-running Improv Thunderdome, the C3P boards helped fuel its takeoff. A CONTINUING TRADITION. Now 24 years old, Liberty High School's Exit 16 has played monthly for thousands of students. Annual ticket sales raised enough money—\$5 at a time—to take the troupe to Chicago every year to see professional shows and take workshops from some of the best-know instructors in the country. Alumni returns every December for a show that sometimes features dozens of performers; more recently, the 21-and-older performers have split off into their own shows at ComedyCity and the Buffalo Room. Since I "retired," Exit 16 has been coached by former members, as has the newer Liberty North High School team. ANOTHER HIGH SCHOOL LEAGUE: An Exit 16 alum and two local performers re-booted the high school improv league as Operation: Show! (produced by a new non-profit, Seriously Playful). Currently coming back from a pandemic-driven pause, Operation:Show! invites once again invites local high school students to study and perform improv comedy, coached by adult players from local troupes. Managed by a board of volunteers that has include Exit 16 alums and a member of the original Lighten Up high school

improv league, Seriously Playful continues to evolve to reflect and support the KC improv scene. OH, AND THERE'S ME. I've improvised a lot in the thirty years between attending a ComedySportz workshop and playing with my current all-women troupe, Ham Kitty. But nothing has changed me more than improvising with high school students. Improv is, at its heart, about play. And when you play, you become more open to listening, collaborating, learning and growing. All those silly games we practice sneakily build teamwork skills, leadership abilities and confidence. I've gotten to watch as shy kids found their voices, bossy kids learned to listen, and tough kids learned to be vulnerable. I've seen them grow up and take leadership roles in Kansas City theater, start troupes in other cities, perform in other disciplines, make art, make news, find love, start families, try new things, follow their passions, and discover what makes them happy."

"Recently I saw Ghost Light via Kc rep. It provided a variety of cultural stories and art forms that I don't feel that I'm normally exposed to."

"At the juneteenth event seeing the difference from white art programs and black art programs and how much fewer resources and support the black art programs have but they still produce amazing work changed my perspective"

"I'm a musician and a performer so the arts are very important to me. Any live music is super impactful, especially after covid impacted performing. I'm also friends with a lot of local artists in KC, and seeing them succeed and have exhibits is an amazing thing that shows me how art is growing in KC."

"The plaza art fair had a positive impact in on me and I think as well as the community. Though it occurs every year it was especially special since we came together from COVID. The arts is important and key in learning about history and expressing ourselves."

"I attended a mindfulness program at a branch of Mid-Continent Public Library that was transformative in my life. I appreciate that MCPL hosts an annual Access Art event on a variety of topics from painting to writing and more. Some of my favorite MCPL programs are live author events with Q&A and a chance to meet the authors. Another favorite activity is walking in parks and on nature trails; Burr Oaks Woods, Old Mill Park in Blue Springs, Little Blue Trace, and the Hartman Memorial Park in Lee's Summit."

## The Look and Feel of Public Spaces

"The creation of BLM visuals/arts around the city was a good start to framing the tough, and for some, uncomfortable conversations around systemic racism and injustice in our city infrastructure and services."

"ran up on a traffic light years ago. A young man was seated there with his traveling pack. He noticed me looking at him and asked if he could read me a poem. I said yes and he grabbed his pad opened it and read a quick poem. He was panhandling but the gift of the poem was worth the five dollars I gave him. Did not expect poetry at a stop light that is notorious for being long."

"At six years old, my family took my to my first free outdoor theater. They did Midsummer Night's Dream, and the bright colors and music and MAGIC still vividly live in my memory. Through their education program I learned about art and history as well as gained skills in team work, communication, and creativity. These experiences propelled me to becoming a teacher myself. I've found a passion for using theatre as a tool not just in the classroom, but as a vessel for social change and awareness. Getting to see professional free theatre is not only a joy, but has taught me that art is for everyone, and should be accessible to everyone."

"I really enjoy First Friday's in the Crossroads. It is a great mixture of the arts and humanity. It shows urbanism at its best, with people from all backgrounds coming together to enjoy art, food and drinks."

"A new gallery space in the Historic Northeast held space for local talent that was truly heartwarming as a local artist. I held a special thought during a personal breathing moment from an open house at the gallery 'Sala de Arte'. The idea was that immigrants, people of color, whomever is on the margins, do not have to wait to create their own space. We are our own space when we get together."

"CSL recently hosted an inaugural community art exhibition July-Aug in Eastern Jackson County at BlendWell Cafe that brought the experience of showcasing artwork directly into the community - it was a smashing success!"

"HarshadiTest"

"Live music always touches the soul."

"The various local festivals are fantastic. I attend the Westport, Brookside, Juneteeth and"

"As a seller of my handmade art, it has allowed me to stay home and not work outside the home."

"Loved that many museums and galleries started offering or improved their on line offerings during the pandemic and there are more opportunities for local artists to display their work"

"My family owned the Italian gardens restaurant in kc. Worked there for ma ny years. Met many great people"

"The buildings captivate me. I like how architecture changes my perspective on the economic progress humanity has made."

"As a child i was on a field trip with my school. as we went through the city all the murals i had seen for the first time had me in awe. It was the first time i had seen a mural in real life and it made me realize how much i liked art. growing up i began to take all the art classes i could and worked hard because i wanted to be as good as an artist as the ones whose murals i had seen as a child."

"The Lee's Summit Arts Council installed the sculpture walk in downtown Lee's Summit. I have enjoyed walking around seeing the sculptures and get excited to when a new one comes in. It has created a wonderful atmosphere and gives people another reason to visit downtown."

"Just over 10 years ago, I was going through a divorce. Every part of my life was chaotic and uncertain. One day while on a walk around the plaza area, I ventured into the Nelson Atkins. With no specific destination I wondered around until I walked into the Chinese Temple Gallery. The moment I entered the temple exhibit my entire body and mind calmed. I had never experienced anything like that before. My mind that had been running "what if" scenarios for months was quiet for the first time in a long time. My fear and anger vanished. I was at peace. It wasn't just the beautiful wooden statue "Guanyin of the Southern Sea", it was everything together, the detail on the painted walls, the carvings of the ceilings, the smell of the room. I visited that room a dozen times over the next few months. And even now, 11 years later; I stop by the temple and it still has the same effect."

"I work near the intersection of 31st and main. About 4 or 5 years ago, there was art competition where some artists painted several very large beautiful colorful murals on some of the buildings around that area. This brightened a somewhat dreary intersection and has changed my outlook on art, the different types and what they can do to your spirit every day when you arrive to work."

"I recently was at At Mary's hospital and enjoyed several very nice pieces of art from local artists in the hallway. This is a great way to allow art to be displayed,, but to a very limited audience to those who just happens to be at the hospital. People don't go to a hospital intentionally to view art!!"

"When I first moved to Kansas City 6 years ago, I poured myself into my new job and for awhile avoided the discomfort of finding my place in an unfamiliar community. Though Kansas City had several large-scale events happening throughout my first year here like sporting events, food & beverage festivals, and a variety of specialized conventions, it was the Plaza Art Fair that most inspired me to step out of my routine as an individual and embrace the greater community landscape as a resident. I came to Kansas City as a lover of the arts, and the scale and investment the city seemed to make in this event imparted a feeling in me of being seen and valued by the larger community. By providing a communal space to celebrate the outward expression and diversity of thoughts, perceptions, and individual backgrounds, the city empowered me to become more involved and connect with others who were drawn to the event. Six years later, now an employee of an organization who hosted a booth at the 2021

Plaza Art Fair, I met a stranger who had just moved here from Las Vegas for their career. He was alone, walking the tent lines with interest, and he stopped as I was volunteering to ask me more about my organization. We chatted about our upcoming events and other points of interest he should check out in the city, and the conversation ended with him excitedly looking forward to possibly meeting again at similar arts events later in the year. That whole experience reminded me of my own journey to find a sense of belonging in a new and unfamiliar place, and it was a clear reminder that having the arts in Kansas City not only serves to spark the curiosity of new visitors but also inspires them to stay, become part of a community, and invest in a brighter future for the city as a whole. It really feels as if keeping Kansas City alive means keeping the arts alive, and vice versa, and I think many residents have felt motivated by that relationship."

"One time I donated to KKFI 90.1 AM and also djay a session at KKFI 90.1 AM I played a lot of Kansas City, Missouri artist including my cousin Uno Bounce and also received a certificate. It helped with my family bond with Uno Bounce he was happy and then a little after more and more Kansas City, Missouri djays started playing Kansas City; Missouri Artist, so it definitely impacted the music industry and put a smile on my face. Artist: Joker Name: Jerrod T."

"The sprayseemo event exposed my family to the connection between graffiti arts and graphic design opportunities"

"Great"

"I'm new to Kansas City-only been here about a year. It's been with hard during the pandemic to explore the city. The pop up events around sequence and cafe ca phe have helped my husband and I to learn about local businesses and artists to support. We consistently try to come every Saturday and absolutely love these events. We tell all our friends about them and different local artists to support and they have started to join us in attending!"

"Plaza art fairs is a yearly traditions for my family. I look forward to the environment and seeing the art every year."

"Outdoor dance performances by local performers\ dance companies created an intimate experience where we could enjoy the performance outside with our own food and drink. Outdoor art installations in swope park was very memorable"

"In my hometown there is a fall festival every fall. It was a super small town so it really brought the community together. They would involve grade schoolers' painted pumpkins. All kinds of super small businesses would come and sell their goods. It was truly the biggest event that happened each year. There was always a bunch of free things for small kids. Which I think is the best way to also attract parents/adults. Lyndon, Kansas"

"I went to the Atkins to observe Monet's waterlilies in different lighting and it was so cool. The way the picture change with the changing of the light."