

Downtown Olympia Creative District

Strategic Plan

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to the Downtown Olympia Creative District Advisory committee, who were generous with their time and talent.

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Introduction

BACKGROUND

The Downtown Olympia Creative District received its official designation from the Washington State Arts Commission in the summer of 2019. Originally, the designation was sought by the City of Olympia as an arm of its Arts, Culture and Heritage (ArCH) program and supported by strong data from multiple planning efforts previously completed by the City, including the 2017 Downtown Strategy, which began the work of identifying the Creative District.

After a year of unprecedented global pandemic restrictions and social unrest, the Olympia Downtown Alliance (Alliance) entered an Economic Recovery contract with the City of Olympia. The scope of the contract included development of a plan for the initial phases of the Creative District, including input from relevant stakeholders.

The Alliance began creative district research, convened an advisory committee, engaged in public process, facilitated monthly meetings, and conducted work sessions with focus on developing the Creative District strategic plan.





COMMUNITY BENEFITS

BENEFITS TO ARTISTS AND CREATIVES

The creative industry sectors of the community benefit from the formation of a Creative District by obtaining access to resources and designated professionals who understand the barriers artists and creatives face, and the specific and unique circumstances that prevent them from being able to take their work to the next level. A Creative District provides the opportunity for artists and creatives to network and work outside of a silo, generating an environment of collaboration and community. Additionally, benefits include the attractiveness a thriving creative district provides when engaging and potentially recruiting talent to Olympia. A Creative District works as an advocate to bridge gaps, develop relationships and provide pathways for systemic change.

DOWNTOWN OLYMPIA CREATIVE DISTRICT AS AN ECONOMIC DRIVER

The Creative District is a call to action for those committed to advancing Olympia as an arts destination. It brings together artists, creatives, neighborhood associations and businesses that encourage the enhancement of the Downtown Olympia Creative District as an appealing place to work, live and play. The creative district will attract visitors, patrons, and businesses who seek to thrive in a creative atmosphere that is cultivated to support, promote, and build community. Additionally, as an economic hub the creative district will further allow the unique artistic and cultural organizations, events and amenities derived to be showcased.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

This plan is the culminated work of the Downtown Olympia Creative District Advisory Committee, which is comprised of people who represent various artistic, business, and creative industry sectors. The framework built is grounded in the mission of the district and seeks to advance opportunity for artists and creatives while serving as a call to action for stewardship paired with outreach to marginalized communities. This plan will guide decision-making, short term work plans and long-term efforts of the Downtown Olympia Creative District.

Process

TIMELINE

The following represents the timeline followed by the Advisory committee. While a timeline was established, flexibility existed, and revisions were made as needed.

2022



FORMING THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE

The Downtown Olympia Creative District Advisory committee's (Advisory committee) initial development began with a series of one-on-one conversations. These conversations were to gauge interest and bandwidth of individuals to participate in a months long series of meetings and work sessions to develop the framework for the creative district.

Mindful thought and consideration to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, with additional focus toward local artists, creatives, and professionals in creative industry sectors that represent Olympia, informed the selection of potential committee members.

The first meeting of the to be formed Advisory committee was held in February 2022 with near perfect attendance, with people participating either in zoom or in person. The Advisory committee continued to meet semi-monthly throughout the year.

CREATIVE DISTRICT BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Olympia is among the first communities to become a certified Creative District in the state. According to a map of creative districts on the Washington State Arts Commission website, there are currently 11 fully certified districts, 3 districts in active-stage planning, 1 in pre-certification and 20 communities in early-stage planning.

Early research showed that creative districts in Washington and in states with comparable communities like Colorado, found success with a variety of projects. These projects range in size and capacity and are reflective of the uniqueness of each creative community. Examples include:

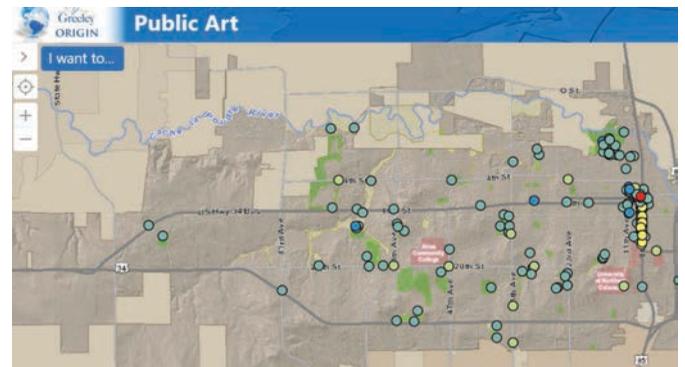


Left: Large steel art panels depicting the foundation and values of the community. The panels are meant to serve as connecting pieces of all the unique aspects of the community and encourage people to walk around and explore. (Twisp, WA)

Right: A multidisciplinary arts festival that invites visitors into the community and leads up to a second, larger music and arts festival, encouraging visitors to extend their stay, making Port Townsend a week-long travel destination. (Port Townsend, WA)



Right: With more than 100 pieces of art in public places, this arts in public spaces interactive map is designed to help the community identify art is outdoor, on loan or indoor. The map also provides additional information (name, and artist details). (Greeley, CO)



Below: The Commons at Space to Create Trinidad is a project that includes communal space, with emphasis on co-working, co-making, flex retail and kitchen amenities. This project aims to be a dynamic and ever-evolving place to gather, to share, to inspire and to create. (Trinidad, CO).

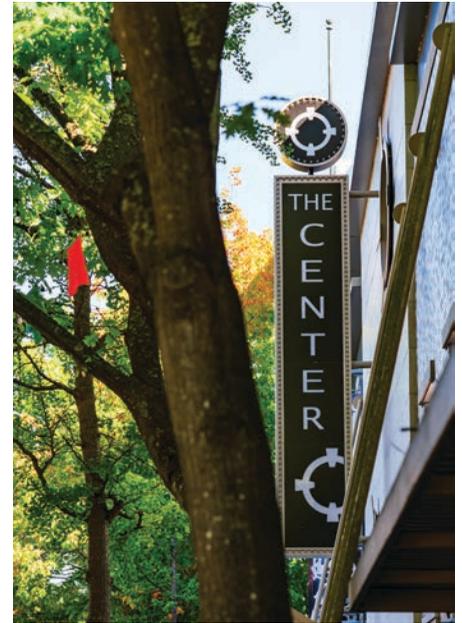


These projects, or projects of similar magnitude can easily be visualized in the Downtown Olympia Creative District, and are supported by the framework developed in the strategic plan.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

The Olympia Creative District Advisory Committee launched a public engagement process, aimed to gain insight from diverse stakeholders that represent a variety of creative industry sectors, artists, creatives, residents, and businesses.

Each part of the process was intended to build on one another to fully capture the voice of the stakeholder and provide data to the Advisory committee.

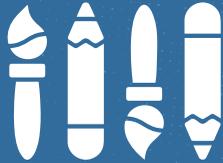


THIS PROCESS INCLUDED:

606 UNIQUE SURVEY RESPONSES 

10 ONE-HOUR LONG STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS WITH ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEMBERS 

7 LISTENING SESSIONS WITH 

40 PARTICIPANTS REPRESENTING A RANGE OF CREATIVE AND BUSINESS INDUSTRY SECTORS 

658 TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE ENGAGED 

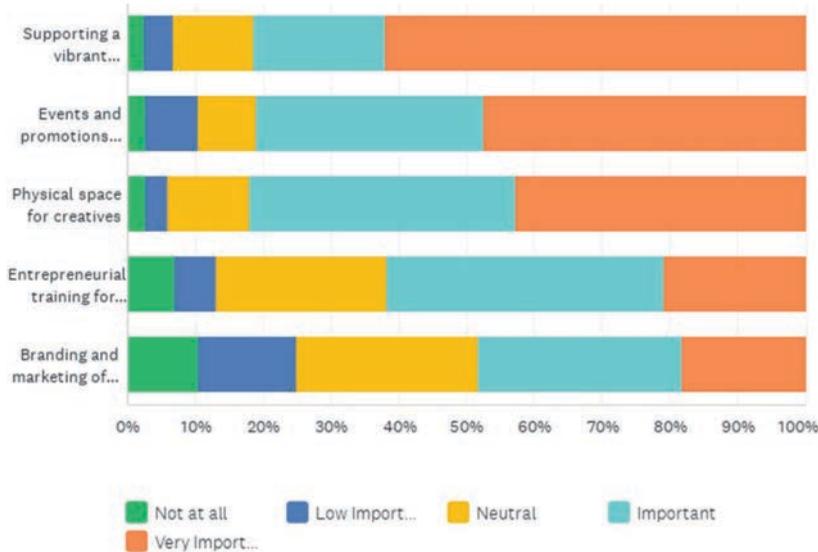
SURVEY

Information gathered from the survey helped inform the advisory committee of respondents' insights regarding Creative District vision, values, and ultimately goals; allowing the Advisory committee to further weave these concepts throughout each part of the process.

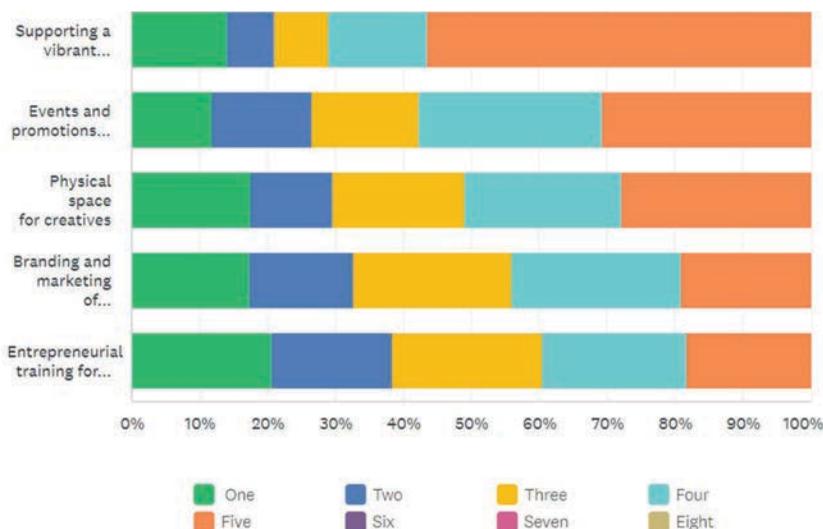
Respondent characteristics include those who responded to working in a creative industry sector at 30 %, with the remaining 70 % self-identifying as either as a Resident, Arts Advocate/Consumer, Employee, Student or Business Owner.

Other questions asked participants to rank prospective goals of the creative district. Responses brought forward three identified goals that would be elevated and inform the five goals of the creative district.

The goals "Supporting a vibrant downtown", "Events and promotions featuring creatives" and "Physical space for creatives" were the top three goals selected by survey participants.



Graph A shows the ranking of answers from those who identified as a "Creative" or someone who works in a creative industry.



Graph B shows the ranking of answers from those who identified as someone who does not work in a creative industry.

Apart from questions that were aimed to capture their unique characteristics, survey respondents who did not identify as working in creative industry, were asked the same questions around values, goals, vision, and programming as Creatives. We use the terms “Non – Creatives” or “noncreative” and “Creatives” to identify the survey track taken.

When asked to visualize a healthy and thriving Creative District we see that priorities for non-creatives (Word Cloud A) listed Downtown (19%), People (18%) and Art (14%) Creatives and (Word Cloud B) were Artists (36%), Downtown (33%) and Community (23%) among their top three.

Word Cloud A

enjoy marketing safe clean explore Clean streets visit go
 downtown feeling homeless people experience including op
 en children building Cleansafe displayed bring better affor
 dable come sense variety activities vibrant feelsafe sh
 opping welcoming resources parking free public th
 ink Affordable housing inclusion safe Opportunit
 ies businesses many support income homele
 ss everyone events safespaces Safety created ar
 tists ages people going downtown families
 art small business community allow spaces w
 ill make diversity creative small Olympia fun
 Clean cultures area without housing help city locala
 rtists work Providing live cars place even Cleandown
 town galleries creatives grow accessibility creativity str
 eets removal participate unique need crime ways sidewalks art
 events lot Affordable space one downtown
 area kids diverse Less

Word Cloud B

business
 art market will lowered Also instead events met keep products
 Public safety current Clean go Good sell affordab
 le creativedistrict business Affordablespace parking
 arts walk creative affordable space
 create housing safe Olympia build people a
 fford art downtown area downtown
 creative business artists sidewalks
 community public spaces Safety suppo
 rt real estate live basic needs Affordable
 housing galleries space need public transportation
 make parking lots work musicians thrive Opportunities C
 ity create shared destination rent place venues grants
 Inclusion customers creatives help homeless

To view full survey summary, see appendix.



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Commonalities continued to surface as Alliance staff and Advisory Committee Co-Chairs conducted 10 one-on-one interviews with stakeholders.

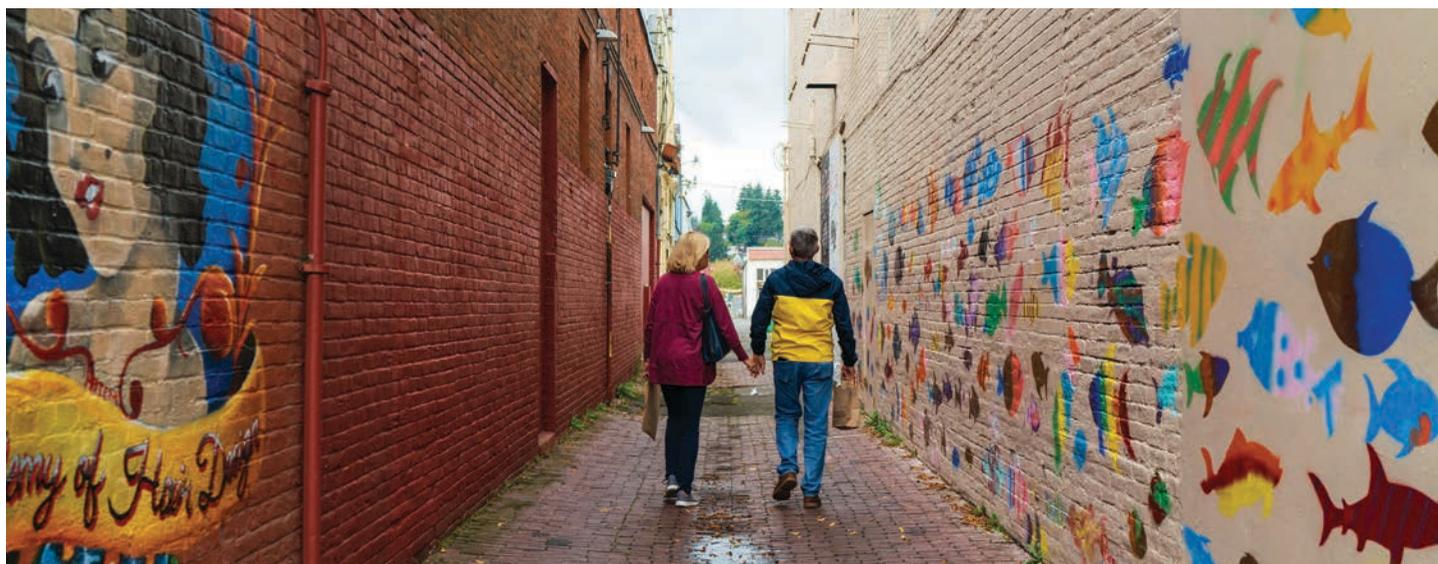
Repeatedly, the desired role of the Creative District was indicated to be as one of a connective hub of resources. A unifier of artists and arts organizations, that fosters collaboration and cross pollination of ideas and resources. The Creative District should be a support system for artists and creatives without forcing conformity, with key advocacy and oversight components. Including but not limited to the following:

- **Oversight at music venues so that musicians and performers are paid equitably**
- **Assistance in the development of artists as entrepreneurs**
- **Affordable housing and access to affordable creative workspace**

The Creative district should be proficient in developing awareness and excitement around the district with strategic marketing and PR that attracts an arts consumer that recognizes and values each piece of the district as well as the whole. Additionally, ways in which an arts consumer can take an active role in supporting local creatives included:

- **Purchasing local art**
- **Going to shows and concerts**
- **Being a tourist in your own town**

Our stakeholders strongly expressed that an inclusive Creative District should be an agent of racial and gender equity. It should include development of creative opportunities for people of all abilities, with deep consideration for low-income individuals and families, and those who are unhoused.





FOCUS GROUPS

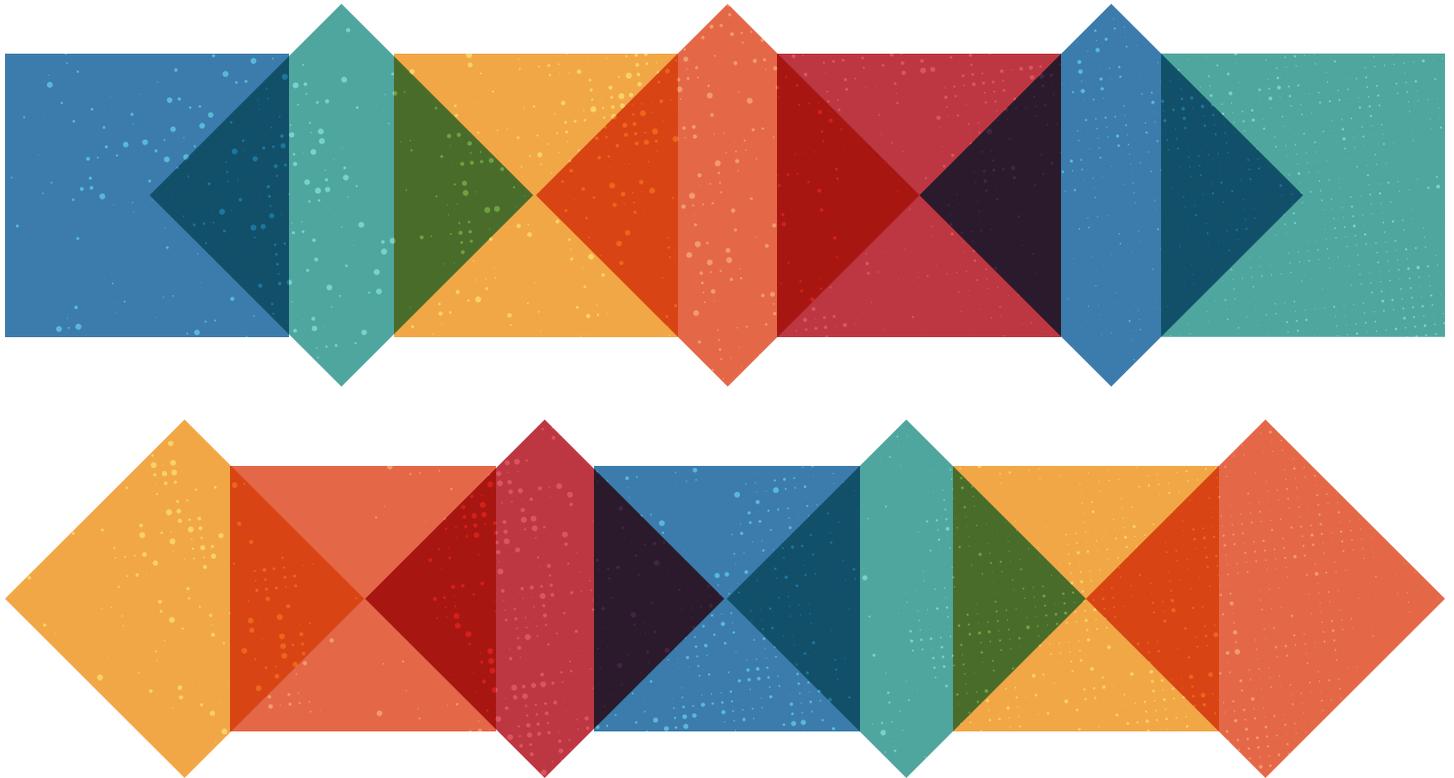
Committee members facilitated 7 Listening Sessions with 40 participants who self-opted in to participate.

We offered three separate opportunities for stakeholders to opt in to participate in a Creative District listening session. Two in person, one in the evening and one in the morning; with a third lunchtime session online, via Zoom. Facilitated by a committee member, each session consisted of 6 prompts to guide the conversation.

We asked groups to demonstrate what they would want to see in a Creative District, to visualize a thriving district, to talk about barriers in creative industry and to share thoughts on values for the district.

We routinely heard the importance of youth access, affordable living, affordable and accessible creative space, all ages music venues, regular events surrounding the arts and night markets, and the need for artists to be able to network and collaborate without pressure of conformity.

These sentiments were echoed in responses when asked to visualize a thriving Creative District and included arts education, a collective and diverse art space with heavy emphasis on artist being compensated appropriately and equitably for their work thereby assisting in attraction and retention of artists. Other terms used to describe the vision of the Creative District included: destination, synergy, networked,



abundantly generative, funky, unpredictable, historic, uniquely Olympia and cross pollination. Respondents provided the following information when asked about challenges and barriers to a successful District.

- **Lack of access to affordable housing.**
- **Affordable and all abilities accessible workspace.**
- **Inability to maintain a living by earning fair compensation for their creative product.**
- **Lack of support for youth in the arts including little to no all ages music venues/practice studios or arts education center available.**
- **Lack of incentives for building owners or landlords to rent to creatives.**
- **Lack in networking opportunities for artists results in an environment where artists and creatives are working in “silos”.**

When asked what the values of a Creative District should be, we heard words and terms such as low barrier, respect, eclectic, intentional, welcoming, locally sourced, legacy of creativity, common ground, mutual support, diversity, equity, safety, inclusion, arts first, and punk.

Additionally, through the exercise of refining the values outlined in the strategic plan beginning on page (21), the Advisory committee developed a racial equity statement. This statement further frames the importance for artists and creatives of all backgrounds to have low barrier opportunities and access to resources including but not limited to leadership opportunities, funding, and housing.

The complete Downtown Olympia Creative District racial equity statement can be found in its' entirety in the appendix (pg.28).



Strategic Plan

Derived from the data and insight gained from each piece of the public engagement process and through work sessions over several months, the Advisory Committee and Alliance staff have developed the Downtown Olympia Creative District Strategic Plan. This plan intends to establish the identity and purpose of the Downtown Olympia Creative District, and further serve as a framework of actionable long- and short-term goals for the administrator to implement. This plan is designed to be utilized as a roadmap as the Creative district develops and eventually evolves.

Vision Statement

The Olympia Creative District features rich and diverse artistic and sensory experiences, engaging community members to develop creative endeavors.

Mission Statement

We engage local artists and businesses in the development of a thriving creative economy an community that is antiracist and anti-bigoted.

Values

Innovation

Lead the effort to keep our artistic and creative edge

Risk-Taking

Operate without fear of failure, through an ethos of learning and growing.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Prioritize resources and access for people furthest from justice.

Autonomy

Aid in the ability of creatives to support themselves through their endeavors.

Community

Engage in culture that uplifts artists and creatives while developing cooperative and supportive relationships.

*Additionally, through the exercise of refining these values, the Advisory committee developed the Downtown Olympia Creative District Racial Equity Statement. This statement is located in appendix "A" (pg. 30).

Goals

Build Community

A web of people, organizations, businesses, and grassroots groups engaged in collaborative relationships rooted in mutual trust and respect.

Support

Provide educational, financial, and physical resources and advocacy to uplift and empower artists and creative businesses.

Promotions

To amplify the voice of artists while providing marketing tools and support for community visibility.

Space

Advocacy for artists and creatives who need specific, affordable space to create, practice or conduct business.

Access

Equitable accessibility for artists and the broad community to engage without barriers.

Goals Workplans

The Creative District Advisory Committee defined actionable workplans for each goal. These workplans feature initiatives that have been vetted by the committee, and determined to be of high priority, as well as an associated implementation guideline, potential leads, partners, and funding sources.





Build Community

Definition: A web of people, organizations, businesses, and grassroots groups engaged in collaborative relationships rooted in mutual trust and respect.

Initiative: Community Showcase

Description: An event(s) intended to create opportunities and provide visibility for artists and creatives, while encouraging and inviting the broader community to participate in events. Examples include:

- Rotating tours and open houses between partner arts organizations and businesses.
- Utilizing vacant storefront, galleries, and businesses to showcase an art exhibition, installation or live performance.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, City of Olympia, Enterprise for Equity

Partners: Olympia Downtown Alliance, City of Olympia -Armory, Arts nonprofits: Olympia Lamplighters, Olympia Artspace Alliance, Harlequin, Olympia Film Society, Olympia Family Theatre, South Sound Studio Tours, Arbutus Folk School, Washington Center for the Performing Arts

Potential funding sources: May not require additional funding – intended as an extension of other priorities.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Gather and confirm interest from partners and arts community organizations to gauge interest in event series.
- Develop framework for events in order for them to be turnkey for interested parties.
- Organize and manage information into a working calendar.
- Schedule events and publish to calendar visible to the community
- Promote events through associated social media and public relations efforts, and other community calendars
- Act as liaison at events, supporting artists and arts organizations and promoting creative district activities, and sharing information.

Build Community

Initiative: Creative Community Directory

Description: An online accessible database of artists, creatives, and arts-related businesses in the Creative District. Potential professional information to be included could be:

- Artist contact information
- Organizational details and contact information
- Links to other projects or creative work
- Fee range

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Experience Olympia & Beyond, Olympia Downtown Alliance, City of Olympia, PBI, Enterprise for Equity

Partners: Community organizations (4 the Love Foundation, etc.), arts non-profits, venues (music and performing arts), galleries, City of Olympia – Armory/ArCH, ArtsWA

Potential funding sources: Grants, City of Olympia support, potential revenue from advertising.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Develop tool to gather information
- Gather information from artists, creatives arts nonprofits and other community agencies.
- Develop database to include all relevant information.
- Input data and maintain database.
- Publish information to relevant website.
- Promote directory through associated social media and public relations efforts

Initiative: Community Creative Events Calendar

Description: An online accessible calendar that informs the public about arts events and alerts artists and creatives about upcoming opportunities. This initiative would include information about the “Community Showcase” initiative.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Experience Olympia & Beyond, Enterprise for Equity

Partners: Community partners, arts non-profits, venues (music and performing arts), flyers and other social media hubs for artists and creatives, radio stations, media outlets.

Potential funding sources: Grants, sponsorships.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Gather information from community partners and event organizers.
- Organize and manage information in working calendar.
- Publish relevant information to calendar.
- Promote calendar through associated social media and public relations efforts. Consider promoting to visitors outside of Thurston County.

Support

Definition: Provide educational, financial, and physical resources and advocacy to uplift and empower artists and creative businesses.

Initiative: Entrepreneurial Development

Description: Provide ongoing educational opportunities for artists and creatives to learn technical skills to maintain or achieve financial solvency. Examples of opportunities could include financial and business management, marketing, branding, and grant application.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Enterprise for Equity, Thurston Economic Development Council

Partners: Entrepreneurs, artists, subject matter experts, suppliers, makers market organizers.

Potential funding sources: Cultural Access Program, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), Grants for Arts Projects, business sponsorships, grants, in-kind donations.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with artists and creatives, to identify and address gaps in available resources.
- Develop partnerships and relationships with educational partners/resources to understand existing and grow potential learning opportunities.
- Package existing community training and educational resources (and potential new opportunities) into one comprehensive source of information.
- Coordinate availability of resources.
- Serve as liaison to connect artists and creatives to resources.



Support

Initiative: Funding for the Arts

Description: Maintain relationships with State and local agencies that advocate and allocate funding for arts programming, serve as a clearinghouse of information regarding funding cycles and criteria, and advise artists and creatives on potential matches.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Enterprise for Equity, Thurston Economic Development Council

Partners: Cultural Access Program, City of Olympia, ArtsWA, student work study programs through South Puget Sound Community College, The Evergreen State College – student interns, Creative District community, Arbutus Folk School – Artist in residence program.

Potential funding sources: Grants, in-kind donations, business sponsorships, arts and entrepreneurial organizations. National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Grants for Arts Projects, ArtsWA Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead): Research and actively seek out existing grant opportunities.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with various agencies to build relationships and develop proposals for funding opportunities.
- Communicate opportunities to creative and artistic community

Initiative: Advocate for affordable housing for creatives

Description: Monitor changes to municipal code that may impact housing affordability and advocate at State and local level for affordable living space for artists and creatives.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Olympia Artspace Alliance, City of Olympia, AmeriCorps NCCC

Partners: Developers, building owners and property managers, low-income housing developers, Interfaith Works, City of Olympia, unhoused artists and creatives, housing trust funds.

Potential funding sources: City of Olympia Housing Trust Fund, State and Federal housing programs, National Endowment for the Arts – Our Town, other incentives.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with stakeholders to develop policy position regarding housing affordability for creatives
- Monitor changes to Olympia Municipal code and upcoming local and State budgets and legislation
- Advocate using framework of adopted policy position





Promotions

Definition: Amplify the voice of artists while providing marketing tools and support for community visibility and patronage.

Initiative: Wayfinding Signage within the Creative District boundaries

Description: Visual aid that clearly identifies the area as part of the Creative District and provides details on district related events and activities. Examples include:

- Digital Kiosks
- Decorative Street Signage
- Sidewalk Decals
- Crosswalk Art

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, City of Olympia

Partners: City of Olympia, InterCity Transit, Olympia Downtown Alliance, community stakeholders: restaurants, artists, venues, event organizers.

Potential funding sources: Department of Transportation, Thurston County, ArtsWA, InterCity Transit, Cultural Access Program

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Research and identify best effort for wayfinding.
 - Kiosks, sidewalk decals, crosswalk art, street signage, augmented reality map
- Develop criteria for information on signage.
- Strategize best geographic areas within creative district for signage.
- Design and install signage downtown identifying Creative District.

Promotions

Initiative: Branding and marketing for artists and creatives

Description: Working with artists and creatives to assist in development of their brand and identifying and executing a marketing strategy. This initiative works in tandem with the initiatives identified with the “Build Community” and “Support” goals.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Porcupine Media, Mosaic Marketing Studio, Ideal GFX

Partners: Local printers, creative/marketing firms, web developers, graphic designers

Potential funding sources: City of Olympia, Olympia Downtown Alliance, Thurston County, Grants, Inspire! Olympia, ArtsWA, private donations, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) Grants for Arts Projects.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Develop inventory of local professionals in the marketing and branding disciplines
- Understand services that individual stakeholders are interested in receiving
- Connect artists and creatives with local professionals based on the services and type of assistance required

Initiative: Comprehensive marketing campaign for creatives within Creative District

Description: Hold designated space in the overall marketing strategy of the Creative District to provide no cost marketing to artists and creatives. This initiative works in tandem with initiatives within the “Build Community” goal. Examples include:

- Event listing on calendar
- Professional listing in Directory
- Sharing content across social media platforms
- Original content in newsletter, social media, website (artist of the month), billboards, video

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, ArtsWA, City of Olympia.

Partners: Media outlets, arts non-profits, City of Olympia – Armory, Cultural Access Program, Olympia Downtown Alliance

Potential funding sources: ArtsWA grant opportunities, City of Olympia, Cultural Access Program, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants for arts projects.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with stakeholders to develop an overarching marketing strategy for the Creative District, focusing attention on exposure for District artists, creatives, and events.
- Execute marketing strategy.

Space

Definition: Advocacy for artists and creatives who need specific, affordable space to create, practice, or conduct business.

Initiative: Add music venue capacity

Description: Inventory and advocate for additional music venue capacity in the district, with emphasis on all-ages music and performance spaces. This includes developing relationships with venues and connecting local artists with those venues.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Olympia Artspace Alliance, music venues, non-profit arts organizations.

Partners: City of Olympia, schools, arts non profits (CatMA, Capitol Theater, Hummingbird Studios, Washington Center for the Performing Arts), galleries, downtown businesses, Enterprise for Equity, Porcupine Media, Fire Marshall.

Potential funding sources: Grants – City, State, and National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) – Our

Town placemaking grant, Cultural Access Program, business sponsorships, in-kind.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Audit of all existing music venues in the Creative district and consider non-traditional venues that may be new opportunities for live music such as restaurants and retailers. Identify and catalog gaps in existing venues. For example:
 - All ages venues/events.
 - Venues that offer residencies.
 - Venues open to new partnerships/ experimentation with space
- Develop relationships with existing venue owners to understand opportunities to allow for all-ages events.
- Development strategy to retain existing venues, recruit new venues, prioritize all-ages opportunities.

Initiative: Art Making Spaces – Practice Studios

Description: Provide assistance locating affordable space that can be used for creating or practicing art.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Olympia Artspace Alliance

Partners: Property owners with existing spaces, Olympia Artspace Alliance, Enterprise 4 Equity, Oly Mega Makers, Olympia Lamplighters, Oly Knitting Mills, City of Olympia – Armory, Hummingbird Studios, Arbutus Folk School, Olympia Downtown Alliance.

Potential funding sources: Cultural Access Program, Olympia Artspace Alliance

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Develop and share inventory of affordable art making space
- Develop and maintain relationships with property owners and managers.
- Act as a liaison between property owners/ managers and artists.



Initiative: Assist in transition of existing underutilized and affordable real estate to working arts space.

Description: Advocate for change in building codes and develop assistance programs to help alleviate the financial barrier in adaptive reuse of space for the arts community.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District

Partners: City of Olympia, Fire Marshall, Olympia Downtown Alliance

Potential funding sources: Urban revitalization grant, capital campaigns, Cultural Access Program, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants for arts projects.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Identify properties with opportunity to be converted into arts space.
- Identify potential incentives to assist with redevelopment.
- Work with City to understand code requirements.
- Advocate for changes to code requirements as necessary. Assist in process to convert to arts space as needed.

Initiative: Installations/Pop-Up Galleries

Description: Utilize vacant space and storefronts for public display, artist exposure, and potential sales.

Examples could include:

- Art in empty storefronts
- Pop-up galleries and other creative temporary installations including murals.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Olympia Downtown Alliance, Olympia Artspace Alliance

Partners: Building owners with empty storefronts, City of Olympia – Armory, Hummingbird Studios, Olympia Downtown Alliance.

Potential funding sources: Trade/Free/No cost to artists – pairing with property managers and owners.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Inventory vacant spaces within the District
- Build and maintain relationships with property owners of vacant spaces
- Work with artists and property owners to develop agreeable framework to use the vacant space
- Connect artists with property owners



Access

Definition: Equitable accessibility for artists and the broad community to engage without barriers.

Initiative: Advocacy for accessibility in public spaces.

Description: The Creative District should play a role in supporting accessible public spaces for the public to engage with. Examples include:

- Ensure measure exist to support access for individuals with disabilities.
- Ensure conditions exist that support those with respiratory challenges.
- Database of service professionals complete with contact information and fee for services (Example: Visual and hearing interpreters, etc.)
- Community education about certified service animals.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, City of Olympia (City leads in enforcement of accessibility issues in terms of retrofit to buildings, etc.)

Partners: Entities, activities and venues that host events related to the Creative District.

Potential funding sources: City of Olympia, Grants: State (Department of Commerce, Department of Social and Health Services), National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) – Our Town placemaking grant, Private foundations that provide funding for accessibility upgrades.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Identify/review publicly accessible spaces for ADA+
 - Include individuals who will use accommodations as part of this process.
- Develop and maintain relationships with property owners and managers to identify upgrade and retrofitting priorities.
- Participate in an ongoing effort to receive, review and address barriers or issues of access. Include an opportunity for people who use accommodations to request changes, and to record problems.

Access

Initiative: Economic Access

Description: Ensure equitable access to training, resources and opportunities for artists and creatives. Examples include:

- Free or sliding scale fee scale for training sessions and professional services.
- Scholarship opportunities.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, individual event organizers.

Partners: Enterprise for Equity, Individual event organizers.

Potential funding sources: Patrons who opt to pay one forward, private donors, Cultural Access Program, City of Olympia, National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) grants for arts projects.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with community partners to identify opportunities for free resources, scholarships and calculate sliding fee scale.
- Develop criteria for scholarship opportunities.
- Communicate opportunities to artists and creatives and assist when needed, in applying for services.

Initiative: Equitable and Accessible Gatherings

Description: Advocacy for venues with easy points of access for all abilities and all ages policies. Develop relationships within the community to bridge gaps in representation and belonging.

Potential Lead(s): Creative District, Olympia Downtown Alliance.

Partners: South Sound Seniors, cultural and social organizations, educational institutions.

Potential funding sources: Creative District. Cultural Access Program, grants, and partnerships between multiple organizations.

Implementation guidelines (to be deployed by project lead):

- Work with communities to build trust and identify gaps in access and outreach in the Creative District.
- Work with property owners and managers to identify and address gaps in ADA+ access.
- Ensure promotions pre/post event are reaching intended communities.
- Communicate with local cultural organizations to promote and inform about district programs and opportunities.



Administration of Creative District



This strategic plan document intends to serve as a road map to support a thriving Downtown Olympia Creative District. Implementation of this strategy is contingent on partners in the community.

The preferred alternative for execution of this strategy is for one community organization to take responsibility for comprehensive coordination and administration of the strategy. While this alternative would retain the flexibility to allow multiple community partners to manage individual initiatives, it would allow the administering organization to execute the strategy in a coordinated and aligned manner, thereby increasing the probability of an impactful Creative District. It should be noted that in any of the below outlined scenarios, it will be necessary for the City of Olympia to provide funding, whether to provide seed funding to ensure the Creative District administration has a solid foundation, or long-term funding to sustain the district.

MANAGED BY AN EXISTING ART NON-PROFIT

The most optimal approach to administering the Creative District is for it to be managed by a non-profit arts organization. Preferably an existing arts non-profit whose organizational structure is aligned with the Creative District values, goals, and framework as outlined in this plan. This model would require funding to provide the existing non-profit the resources needed to hire appropriate staff to oversee the day-to-day administrative functions of the Creative District, develop relationships, and implement initiatives.

Potential Administrators could include: Olympia Artspace Alliance

Potential Funding Sources: Cultural Access Program, City of Olympia

Examples: Whidbey Island for the Arts (Langley)

Pros

- Best opportunity for seamless transition into an active program.
- Established credibility of existing non-profit will immediately raise visibility of Creative District.
- Provides existing organization additional capacity.
- Elevates the organizations' ability to further develop existing programs.

Challenges

- Requires immediate funding
- Implementation of Creative District initiatives may require the formation of additional committees.

FORMATION OF A CREATIVE DISTRICT NON-PROFIT

This approach would include formation of a new non-profit “Downtown Olympia Creative District” organization. This organization would include a Board of Directors comprised of stakeholders similar to that of the above referenced Advisory Committee. This Board of Directors would serve in a voluntary capacity and could, as a Board, work directly as volunteers on the implementation (and expansion) of this strategy.

Alternatively, the Board of Directors could hire and manage an Executive Director tasked with overall administrative responsibilities for the organization, development of organizational capacity, and execution of the strategy. This scenario would necessitate funding sources to staff the position.

Yet another scenario could include the non-profit Creative District organization contracting for service with an existing community partner to provide administrative support and execute the strategic plan. This scenario would necessitate funding sources to staff the position.

Potential Administrators could include: Lamplighters, Olympia Artspace Alliance, Olympia Downtown Alliance, Thurston Economic Development Council

Potential Funding Sources include: Cultural Access Program, City of Olympia

Examples: Port Townsend – Main Street program is the fiscal administrator

Pros

- Opportunity to build cohesive identity and community building for creatives.
- Opportunity to amplify the voice and influence of creatives coming together.
- In the hiring or contracting scenario, the entity would have staffing resources that they would directly manage and hold accountable.

Challenges

- Requires unknown community members willing and able to stand up a new non-profit agency.
- In the scenario in which a volunteer board executes the work plan, capacity to accomplish the work could prove to be a challenge.



CITY CONTRACT FOR SERVICES

Another possible scenario would be the City of Olympia contracting directly with an existing community partner to coordinate execution of the Creative District strategy. This scenario would not include an independent Creative District organization, although it could serve as a bridge to creation of an independent organization as part of any scope of work.

Examples: Vancouver Creative District – Vancouver Downtown Association in partnership with the City of Vancouver.

Pros

- In the absence of a separate non-profit, this assigns responsibility and maintains momentum; could be a bridge to creation of an independent district.
- City management of a contract for services would lend to public transparency and accountability.

Challenges

- Buy-in from the creative community could be challenge, resulting a less effective effort overall.
- Some stakeholders may not approve of the City ultimately choosing who administers the district.
- City processes and procedures may lengthen timelines to enter into the contract and possibly impact decision making timelines.

CITY OVERSIGHT

The City of Olympia could oversee and manage all aspects of the Creative District and execution of the strategic plan. This scenario would call for City staffing resources dedicated to the endeavor.

Examples: City of Edmonds (Creative District) and City of Issaquah (Creative District) each through their respective Economic Development and Arts & Culture departments.

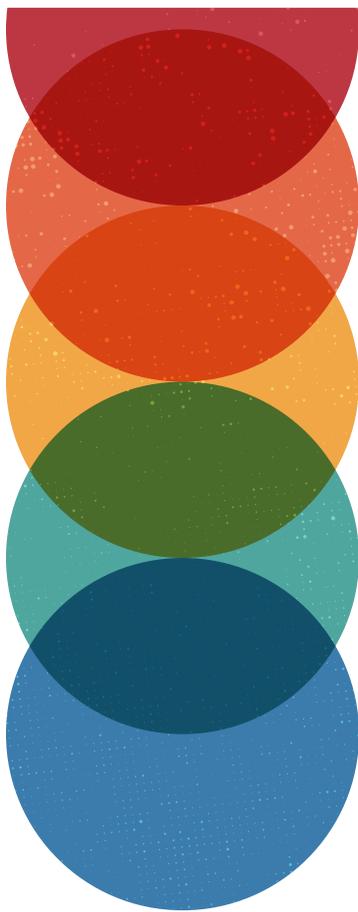
Pros

- Some oversight and cohesion in the absence of another managing entity.
- Potential access to significant City resources.
- Clear and well defined roles allow partnership to be mutually productive and beneficial.

Challenges

- Typically results in slower and more expensive implementation
- Efforts could be put on hold for other priorities
- Some stakeholders may not approve of the City of Olympia managing the district





INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES MANAGED BY DIFFERENT ENTITIES

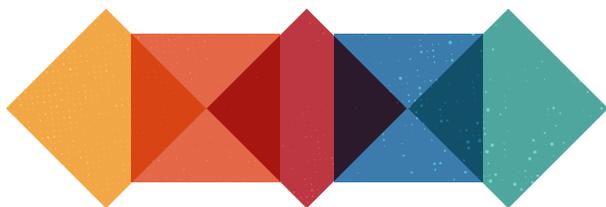
Should an overarching administrator for the Creative District not be used, existing organizations and community partners could work collaboratively to implement individual initiatives called out in the strategy. Interested entities could apply through a request for proposal process, managed by the City. Potential leads, partners, and funding sources are identified above.

Pros

- The strategy provides some guidance to organizations about Creative District priorities of the creative community and community-at-large.
- Smaller, creative entities, groups, and organizations could organize around areas of passion identified in the plan.
- Funding bolsters organizations already doing the work.

Challenges

- Somewhat disjointed approach unlikely to yield cohesive identify, least amount of creative community building opportunity.
- Approach could lead to multiple entities vying to administer the same initiatives within the work plan. There would be no clear guidance as to how this would be resolved.
- Given a lack of fiduciary responsibility if individual entities are taking on individual projects, grant funding could be a challenge.
- Unsustainable in the long term and could lend to periods of stalled momentum.



CREATIVE DISTRICT BOUNDARIES





Appendix

RACIAL EQUITY STATEMENT

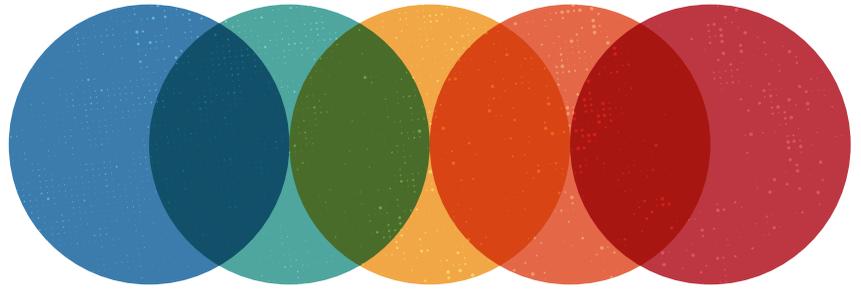
The Downtown Olympia Creative District is committed to being affirming for artists of all disciplines, across all backgrounds and identities. We recognize the harms of the past and acknowledge the sustained harm of many societal, environmental, and economic policies designed to perpetuate continued discrimination of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and other marginalized communities.

The Downtown Olympia Creative District will work to build trust and relationships with community partners as well as supporting artists within an anti-racist and anti-bigoted framework. We believe to have a thriving creative district we must ensure that people of all backgrounds are part of the decision-making processes, including race, gender, sexuality, ability, age, citizenship, economic status. This in conjunction with ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Access (DEI&A) work to further understand the needs of historically excluded communities, while embedding best practices and guiding principles into the fabric of the Creative District and its' policies and procedures.

Additionally, the Creative District recognizes systemic barriers in successfully accessing opportunities for leadership, funding, housing, and other mutually beneficial resources for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). Through thoughtful partnership we will work to remove those barriers and lay the foundation for a world of equity and human decency where a person's success, health and overall safety is not predetermined by their race, gender, economic status, age, ability, or sexuality.

Racial Equity Commitments

DRAFT



- Ongoing Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Access (DEI&A) training for staff and community members in partnership with local artists and businesses.
- Embed equity best practices and guiding principles into the fabric of the Creative District. Research and apply an appropriate anti-racist and anti-bigotry framework to Creative District policies and procedures.
- Research and properly acknowledge that we are on Native Land at the start of all our events. The Downtown Olympia Creative District is on Squaxin Tribal Land.
- Prioritize partnerships with BIPOC organizations in our programming.
- Increase the number local events that center conversations about racial equity.
- Produce and host a series of public events and workshops designed to offer opportunities for audiences to deepen their own anti-racism education.
- Prioritize and pay more BIPOC creators to produce creative programs, and amplify the work of BIPOC communities.
- Create more opportunities for affordable housing and rentals for BIPOC creators.
- Uphold an equitable “code of conduct” within our organization.
- Work with racial equity facilitators to inform our ongoing equity work.
- Complete an annual organization-wide equity audit.
- Align efforts to complement Washington State Office of Equity PEAR Plan and PESB Cultural Competency, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Standards.
- Provide ongoing staff engagement and training with compensation for that work.
- Report annually on our racial equity work through an equity update, blog, or newsletter.
- Improve methods for receiving and responding to feedback from our partners and community members.
- Diversify our membership base - more BIPOC participants in our programs and services.
- Spotlight the work of our BIPOC partners to members and funders.
- Expand our network of vendor relationships and promote the work of BIPOC vendor partners.

Racial equity commitments were created by a subcommittee and were drafted to be strongly considered by the administrator of the Creative District as an accompanying piece to the racial equity statement.



SURVEY SUMMARY

Characteristics of survey respondents include 57% who identified as a woman, 24% as a man, 7% as non-binary, 1% as transgender (equal between transgender man and transgender woman) and 11% who preferred not to answer. The age range of those who responded were 16% between 18-34, 28% between 35-49, 24% between 50-64 and 9% who preferred not to answer. An overwhelming percentage of survey respondents were white (non-Hispanic) at 81%, with 12% indicating other and the remaining 7% identifying as Hispanic or Latino/a (3%), American Indian or Alaska native (2%) and less than 1% as Asian/Pacific Islander, and less than 1% as Black or African American.

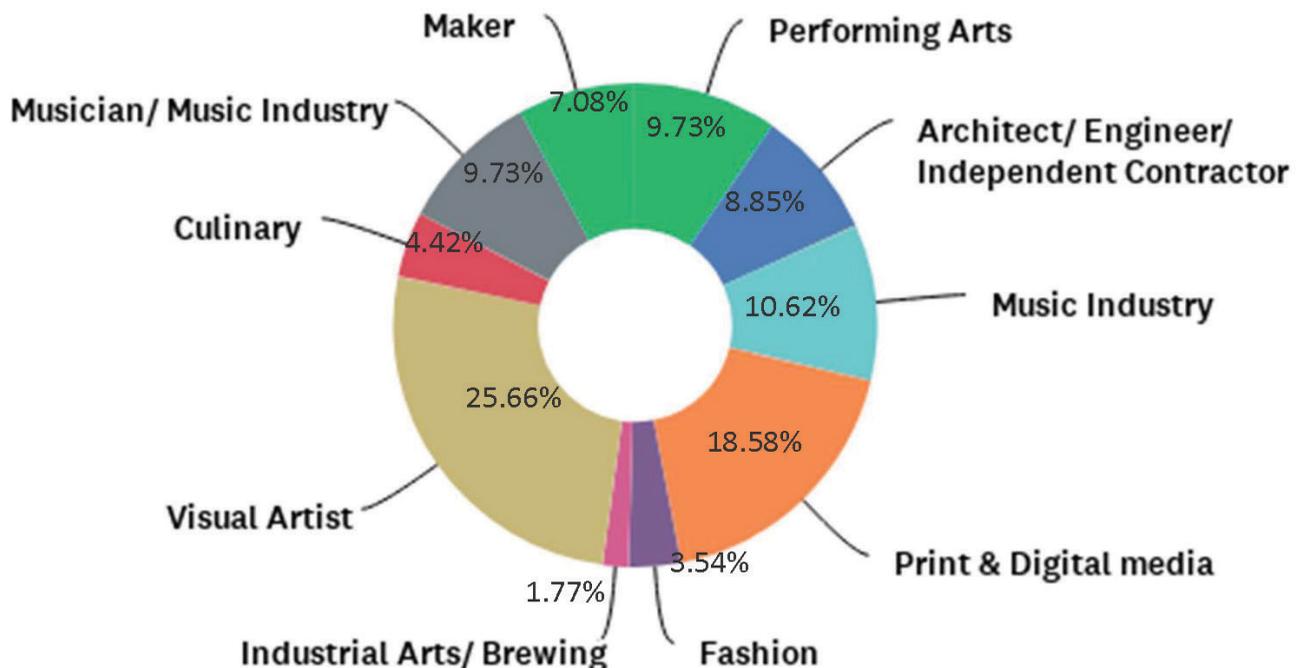
Additional respondent characteristics include those who responded to working in a creative industry sector at 30%, with the remaining 70% self-identifying as either as a Resident, Arts Advocate/Consumer, Employee, Student or Business Owner.

Creatives

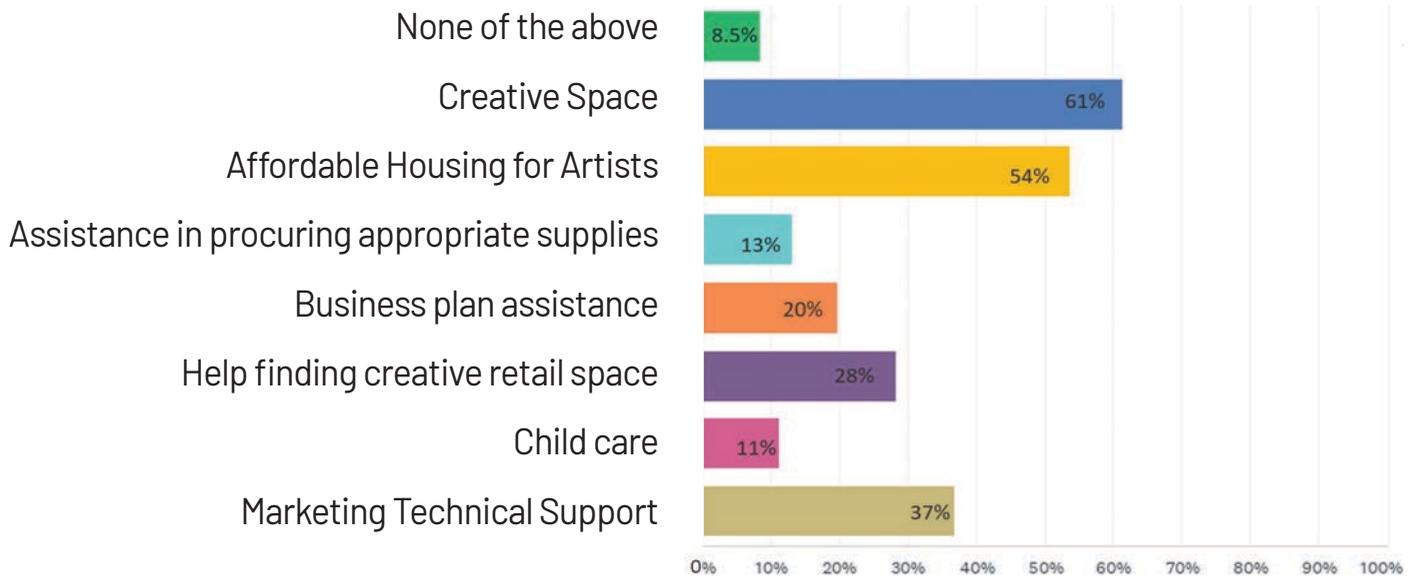
Of the broad base of creative industry sectors to choose from, the top three represented were Visual Artists at 26% of respondents, seconded by Print & Digital media artists at 19% and Music Industry professionals at 11%.

Which of the following best describes your industry sector?

Those who identified as working in a creative industry sector not specified in the graph are included in the appendix.



The survey was structured to provide questions that were specific to respondents who answered “Yes” to working in a creative industry. These questions included asking if Creatives were able to support themselves solely with their creative product. Interestingly, 38% said “No”, 31% said “Yes” while another 31% responded “Partially”. To identify roadblocks of success for Creatives, we asked how the Creative District could help. The top three categories were Creative Space (61%), Affordable Housing for Artists (54%), and Marketing/Technical Support (37%).



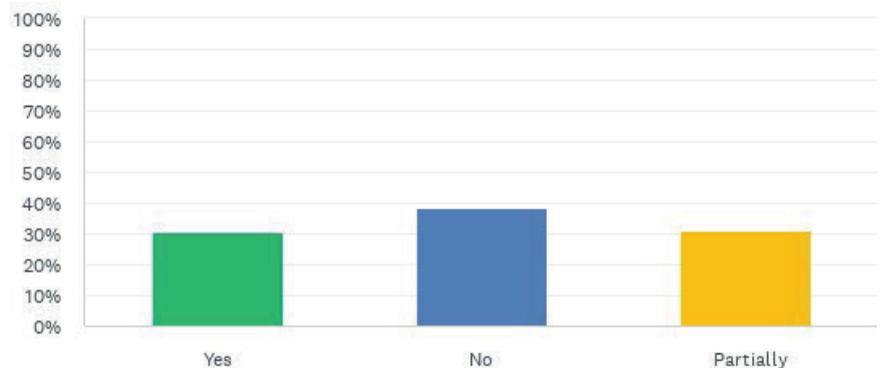
Additional comments not included in the graph are included in appendix

Creatives were asked if they had interest in buying or leasing creative space in Olympia, 40% said “Yes” and 60% said “No”. Though when asked if they were interested in sharing a creative space in Olympia the response was 65% at “Yes” and 35% at “No”. The response to potential use of creative space was close in percentage, the top three being “Makerspace” at 27%, “Workspace” at 24%, and “Other” at 24%.

When asked if they would benefit as someone who works in a creative industry because Olympia is a certified Creative District, creative respondents were a little hesitant, but not completely without hope. The choice of “Maybe a little bit” resulted in 47% of the response, with “Yes! Very much” at 37% and “Not at all” at 16%. Additionally, when asked if they were interested in a mentoring program helping other creatives in the industry, 67% said “Yes”, while 33% said “No”.

Are you able to support yourself with your creative product?

Answered: 125 Skipped: 518



When talking about barriers to being able to support oneself solely with their creative product, “Lack of affordable housing” was a frontrunner at 42%, followed by the “need to work outside of their creative passion” at 36%, and “Lack of viable customers” at 31% with “Financing” closely following at 30%. Additional obstacles included knowledge of how to operate a business (16%), government regulations (12%) and the inability to maintain adequate supplies to create (9%). Remaining 12% of respondents selected N/A.

All Respondents

Apart from questions that were aimed to capture their unique characteristics, survey respondents who did not identify as working in creative industry, were asked the same questions around values, goals, vision, and programming as Creatives. We use the terms “Non – Creatives” or “noncreative” and “Creatives” to identify the survey track respondents took.

When asked to share a word that should be a value of the Creative District you see that there is commonality in both sets of respondents in the desire for community, diversity, and inclusion.

Creative Word Cloud



Non-Creative Word Cloud



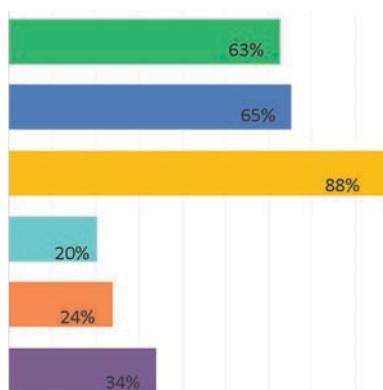
Number of mentions



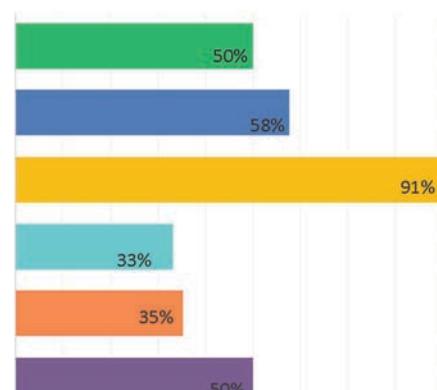
A trend in commonality continues when asked about potential programming in the Creative District. Respondents were able to choose all projects that apply. Graph A represents noncreative respondents and Graph B represents creative respondents.

Interestingly, the top three among both sets of respondents follow the same pattern; with a clear frontrunner in both being “Arts Markets/ Bazaars/Festival” (88% /91%), followed by “Arts in public spaces” (65%, 58%) and rounding out with “Self guided public art” (63%, 50%).

Graph A



Graph B

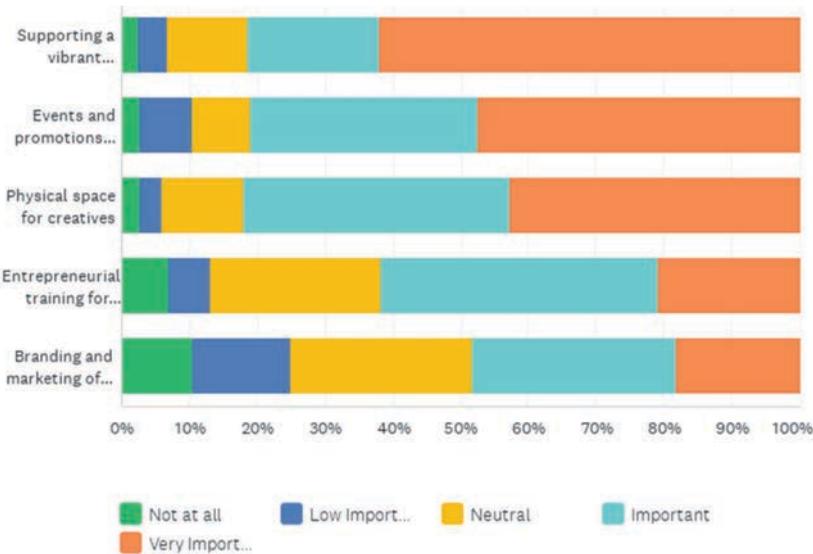


- Self-guided public art
- Arts in public spaces
- Arts Markets/Bazaars/Festivals
- Listening Club
- Writing Workshop
- Curated Arts Auction

When asked to rank the prospective goals of the Creative District we again see a correlation in importance in responses. "Supporting a vibrant downtown" ranked most important, "Events and promotions featuring creatives." ranked second most important, and "Physical space for creatives." ranked third. We do see a shift, as "Branding and marketing the district" ranked fourth most important for Creatives and "Entrepreneurial training for creatives" as fifth most while ranking came in vice versa for non-creatives.

When asked to visualize a healthy and thriving Creative District we see that priorities for non-creatives (Word Cloud A) listed Downtown (19%), People (18%) and Art (14%) Creatives and (Word Cloud B) were Artists (36%), Downtown (33%) and Community (23%) among their top three.

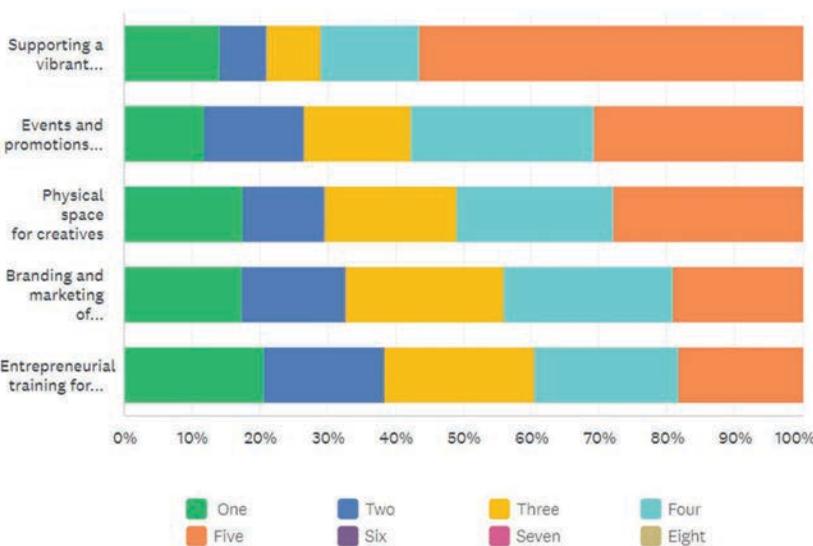
CREATIVES RESPONSES



Word Cloud A

enjoy marketing safe clean explore Clean streets visit go
downtown feeling homeless people experience including
on children building Cleansafe displayed bring better afford
dable come sense variety activities vibrant feelsafe sh
opping welcoming resources parking free public th
ink Affordable housing inclusion safe Opportunit
ies businesses many support income homele
SS everyone events safespaces Safety created ar
tists ages people going downtown families
art small business community allow spaces w
ill make diversity creative small Olympia fun
Clean cultures area without housing help city local
artists work Providing live cars place even Cleandown
town galleries creatives grow accessibility creativity str
eets removal participate unique need crime ways sidewalks art
events let Affordable space one downtown
area kids diverse Less

NON-CREATIVES RESPONSES



Word Cloud B

business
art market will lowered Also instead events met keep products
Public safety current Clean go Good sell affordab
le creativedistrict business Affordablespace parking
arts walk creative affordable space
create housing safe Olympia build people a
fford art downtown area downtown
creative business artists sidewalks
community public spaces Safety suppo
rt real estate live basic needs Affordable
housing galleries space need public transportation
make parking lots work musicians thrive Opportunities C
ity create shared destination rent place venues grants
Inclusion customers creatives help homeless



Downtown Olympia Creative District
Strategic Plan