

# The Creative Economy

## Leveraging the Arts, Culture and Creative Community for a Stronger Columbus A Report to the Columbus City Council From the Creative Columbus Steering Committee

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

#### Process

Nearly thirty years have passed since the Greater Columbus Arts Council was created and became the City's primary agent for administering arts and cultural funding. In May 2006, when City Council was starting to rethink its arts and cultural policies, it appointed the Creative Columbus Policy Steering Committee.

The Steering Committee was asked to undertake research and make policy recommendations about Columbus's creative economy. The overriding question was how to foster a cooperative approach to community arts and cultural support, one that would both promote the viability of long-established, community-embraced organizations and encourage the future growth of the local arts and cultural community in the new economy.

In effect, City Council was seeking to advance what other civic leadership organizations in Columbus have come to recognize: that the arts and culture are poised to become a key engine for community development, city image building, educational improvement, and regional economic development.

The Steering Committee had specific three objectives:

1. **Re-examine** the effectiveness of the City's current arts and cultural policy to determine how it might best advance the community's creative and economic interests
2. **Understand** what is necessary if the creative sector is to manage its triple bottom line of maintaining creative vitality, attaining financial sustainability, and providing public value
3. **Develop** a policy vision that will leverage the City's many creative assets to improve and strengthen our creative ecology for years to come

The Policy Steering Committee undertook a multi-pronged information gathering and learning process to reach these objectives:

1. It surveyed milestones in the evolution of the Columbus creative ecology over the past 40 years.
2. It examined and discussed a series of research reports, issues, and initiatives concerning the arts and culture in Columbus that constitute building blocks for the vision embodied in this report.
3. It gathered information about creative industry development initiatives undertaken by other communities, re-assessed our community's creative assets, and explored the perspectives of key civic drivers of cultural policy in Columbus.

# An Updated Culture Policy

The basic dimensions of an updated cultural policy emerged from the Steering Committee's research and deliberations:

## Policy Outcome

Integrate the creative sector into city development strategies designed to spur a thriving creative economy in Columbus.

## Policy Goal

Cultivate a creative profile for Columbus that will emphasize the mix, range, and diversity of talent, places, organizations, activities, and infrastructure that comprise the creative ecology of Columbus.

## Key Policy Strategies

- Capitalize on and strengthen the existing creative capital in the community
- Improve leadership and coordination to achieve synergy among the separate parts of the creative sector
- Strategically invest in the provision and use of financial resources across the creative sector
- Strengthen, expand, and coordinate public, private, and cultural leadership capacity in order to pursue multiple strategies simultaneously
- Clarify the creative brand image of Columbus and market it more effectively both inside and outside the community

## Next Steps

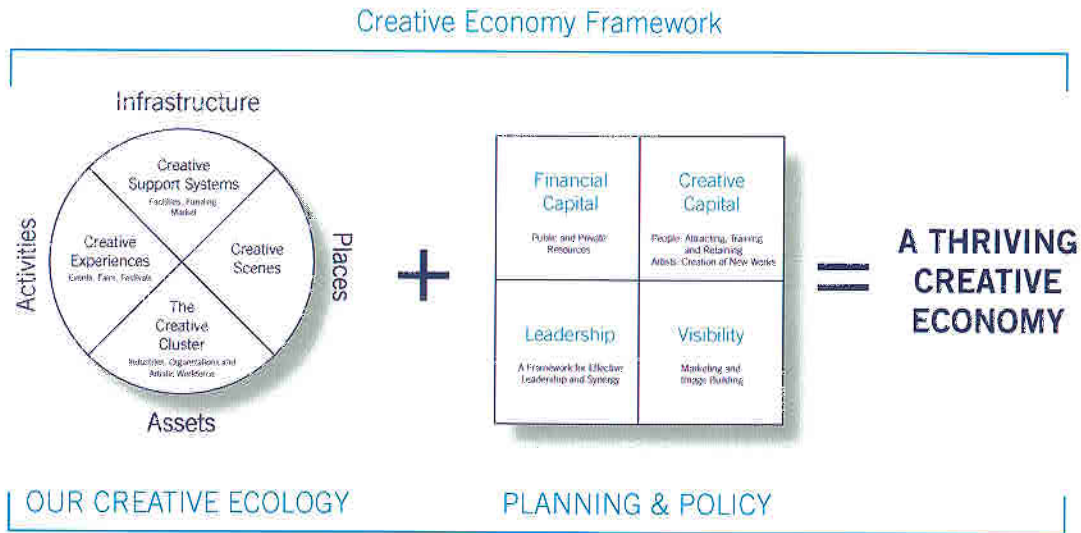
If the arts and culture are to be an effective engine for the achievement of this goal, three conditions must be met:

1. The creative sector itself must be strong, healthy, and capable of managing its triple bottom line of financial sustainability, creative vitality, and evident public benefit.
2. The full range of resources that comprise the creative sector must be part of the strategic planning equation.
3. Longstanding assumptions that have anchored community cultural policy for decades must be changed. For example, as noted in the report's Key Insights for Progress:
  - The arts and culture are **key economic and image assets** for the City rather than "charity cases."
  - Efforts to build a thriving creative economy involve the **full range of the community's creative assets** rather than focusing on only a few organizations and activities.
  - Effectively capitalizing on these creative assets requires **leadership that cultivates synergy among projects** instead of scattering effort and resources.
  - Effective cooperation requires a **public/private partnership with the arts and culture community** rather than a public/private partnership for the arts and culture.

# A New Way of Thinking

The Steering Committee Report presents a new way of thinking about the role of arts and culture in the advancing the City's development agenda while also responding to the significant changes in the economic, social, and cultural environment.

This new Cultural Policy Vision begins with the Creative Economy Framework. This framework asserts that a dynamic and productive creative ecology is composed of four elements: creative scenes, creative experiences, the creative cluster, and creative support systems. Each of these elements can be influenced by a quartet of planning and policy strategies that provide leadership, financial capital, creative capital, and visibility. Together a healthy ecology and effective policy strategies result in a thriving creative economy.



A scorecard comprised of six indicators for each of the eight elements identified in the Framework is used to assess the current situation to identify strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and opportunities. The score for each element can range from a low of one to a high of twelve.

SCORE:                      LOW 1                      ←                      →                      HIGH 12

I. Creative Scene (6 of 12)	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
II. Creative Experiences (5 of 12)	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
III. Creative Assets (6 of 12)	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○
IV. Financial Capital (3 of 12)	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
V. Leadership (3 of 12)	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
VI. Visibility (5 of 12)	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
VII. Facilities (7 of 12)	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○
VIII. Other Infrastructure (4 of 12)	●	●	●	●	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

The Assessment Summary indicates that Columbus has a solid foundation of creative capital in the form of scenes, experiences, talented workforce, facilities, and organizational assets. On the one hand, these assets present many opportunities for synergy and for further development. On the other hand, much could be done to develop and strengthen these capital assets. Visibility strategies are approaching a solid foundation but are not yet a strength. The Assessment Summary also reveals that leadership, financial capital, and infrastructure components other than facilities display significant weaknesses and gaps that require improvement if the creative ecology as a whole is to be healthy enough to serve as a productive engine of local economic development.

# Recommendations

Using the Framework and the Assessment Scorecard, the Steering Committee has identified 70 recommendations designed to improve the condition of the creative ecology in Columbus and to advance the role of the arts and culture in the City's development plans.

Recommendations are presented in two ways:

## Policy Strategies

- Leadership – 30 recommendations
- Financial Capital – 17 recommendations
- Creative Capital – 12 recommendations
- Visibility – 11 recommendations

Within each strategy, recommendations are sorted into short-, mid- and long-term actions designed to achieve progress.

Many of the 30 **Leadership** recommendations focus on building the framework for synergy:

- making collaborations work effectively
- strengthening the structure of representation in policy-making processes
- expanding participation in community planning initiatives

The 17 recommendations in the **Financial Capital** strategy deal with the following:

- addressing the trade-offs and interactions between the financial bottom line and the creative and public benefit bottom lines that must be balanced for a healthy creative ecology
- suggesting initiatives that could better capitalize local arts and culture assets
- identifying services, cost sharing, and collaborative and philanthropic initiatives that could improve the financial condition of interests in the creative ecology

The 12 recommendations in the **Creative Capital** section recognize that talented human capital is the key component of the creative ecology:

- attracting and training artists and other members of the creative class, especially in the higher education community
- making expanded efforts to retain creative workers and to facilitate their entrepreneurial activities
- encouraging new work and a reputation for artistic innovation and creativity

Many of the 11 recommendations in the **Visibility** strategy concern these issues:

- developing better and clearer information about local creative assets and opportunities for external markets
- improving information on audiences, markets, and the inventory of creative assets for use in local organizational, business, and policy planning
- improving communication and coordination among the various parties involved in marketing, image-building, and product development in the creative sector

## Action Agendas

Recommendations are also grouped under six key sets of stakeholders, indicating how each stakeholder can move the new vision forward and toward accomplishment of the desired policy outcome:

- Local and regional government
- Civic drivers
- Arts community
- Philanthropic community
- Greater Columbus Arts Council
- Cultural Planning Committee\*

\*This new committee is called for by the Steering Committee to help drive a comprehensive strategic planning process and to encourage other community stakeholders to take action on recommendations suggested in this report.