

# **Cultural Plan Update of 2018**

## **A Living Action Plan**



**Presented by Creative Portland**  
**on behalf of the Portland arts & cultural community**  
**December 2018**

## Cultural Plan Update of 2018 - A Living Action Plan

### **SUMMARY**

In 2016, Creative Portland began the process of updating the cultural plan of 1998 - Celebrating Community: A Cultural Plan for Portland, Maine - to develop a vision and plan for the creative economy in Portland and the region.

**Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork** consisted of interviews with 50 community leaders and stakeholders, conducted by a Boston-based urban design consulting company, CivicMoxie. In addition, over a half dozen community meetings were convened by CivicMoxie and Creative Portland to address successes, concerns, and gaps that need attention in the arts & culture sector. Phase 1 established the goal for the Cultural Plan update:

*Make the collective arts, culture, and creative economy of Portland more visible and provide more support to arts organizations, individuals and creative businesses through collaborations and other means.*

**Phase 2: Getting Down to Action** involved workgroups convening individually to tackle priority initiatives, and an Arts & Culture Summit to present feedback on what was learned and shared to date.

**Phase 3: Putting it all Together** consists of this written report that provides a framework for the Cultural Plan's strategic priorities for ongoing conversation, as well as recommendations for tracking implementation of an action plan.

Some strategic goals, such as securing affordable public-supported spaces for artists' public use, exhibition and work space, were identified a decade earlier at the first Creative Economy Summit in Portland in 2008, and still remain a priority. One goal of the report is for the City to acknowledge and support the Action Plan recommendations, which highlight a community desire to convene an annual summit to address progress, measure success, and tackle issues and priorities.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES**

1. **Celebrate Portland as a creative city with Congress Street as the spine.** Elevate Congress Street as an arts destination with signage, maps, tours that connect to other "hot spots," etc. Envision Congress Street as the spiritual home of the creative economy and use that home to give visibility to the broader creative community and to provide a magnet for art buyers, audiences, and organizational members.

- 1a. **Focus on "experience design."** Ensure that the arts, culture, and creative economy of the city (and region) are visible and user-friendly to navigate, visit, and enjoy. This might include addressing parking and transportation, website

access and visitor information, signage, and on-the-ground experiences. The experience of enjoying music, dance, fine art, dining, and entertainment should be easy and joyful.

2. **Provide visibility and professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.** This could include: a website gallery of artists and entrepreneurs, a website of events, maps of art centers within the city and region, and professional supports including services to help performing and visual artists professionalize their craft and create a strong image of the city as a destination for buyers of art and audiences for performances and museums.
3. **Advocate for maintaining and growing affordable live, work, and performance space in Portland.** Explore incentives, policies, and zoning tools. Facilitate extended collaborations with the public, non-profit, and private sectors to create affordable space.

**ACTION PLAN PRIORITY RECOMMENDATIONS**

PLAN PRIORITY	OBJECTIVE	PROGRESS
<b>PRIORITY 1</b>  Celebrate Portland as a creative city with Congress Street as the spine.	Develop a plan for Congress Street enhancements	Creative Portland (CP) and Portland’s cultural anchors have started meeting to discuss street safety issues, Congress Street enhancement, and economic development activity
	Market & brand Portland’s artistic talents and cultural assets.	CP produced a one-minute sizzle reel to highlight the cultural life of Portland.
<b>PRIORITY 1A</b>  Focus on “experience design.”	Address and enhance the visitor’s cultural experience on Congress Street and throughout the City.	CP will work closely with City planners and other partners to coordinate and avoid overlap. In October 2018, Portland Development Corporation awarded CP a PEDPIP grant of \$15K to undertake this work by hiring an “experience design” consultant.
<b>PRIORITY 2</b>  Provide visibility and professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.	Host an annual summit focusing on internal planning strategies - a workshop environment to address strategic priorities with best practice consultants.	First summit was held in May 2018 with approximately 75 arts and cultural leaders, steering committee members, and stakeholders in attendance to hear cultural plan community feedback.
	<b>PRIORITY 2</b>  Provide visibility and	Create a multi-genre talent showcase opportunity to

<p>professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>expand audience reach, to attract arts patrons, to solicit opportunities from foundations, and to bring private investors and stakeholders to the table.</p>	<p>cultural organizations in an arts fair format at Hadlock Field. Participants integrated and addressed a large audience of 5000 stadium fans who don't necessarily go to the theater, museum, or art galleries.</p> <p>A local performing arts talent showcase, HEAR, HERE! is in development for February 2019 at Merrill Auditorium. These events attract new audiences and private investors.</p>
	<p>Provide a clearinghouse of information and a space for FREE 'community arts exhibitions, pop-up exhibitions and professional development workshops.</p>	<p><b>Public space to showcase art exhibitions -</b> In January 2017, CP opened a vibrant new office space and street presence, allowing for community exhibitions and performances at 84 Free Street. CP has increased its volunteer base with a volunteer curatorial team to oversee bi-annual in-house art exhibitions as well as curate for other organizations.</p> <p><b>Professional Development Workshops -</b> CP presented five community professional development workshops in 2018. All were free and open to the public and presented to a full house of over two dozen participants.</p> <p><b>Artist Meetups -</b> In May 2017, CP started convening groups of artists by genre. These gatherings have provided artists a time and space to come together, discuss areas of concern, and share opportunities with others in their industry.</p> <p><b>Creative Portland Website -</b> A Resource page is in development on CP's website. The social media impact on cross-promoting and re-posting existing events throughout the cultural sector has driven traffic and increased engagement at community cultural events. Increased visibility of CP has led to broader vision conversations with other arts administrators and leaders in the state of Maine, to collectively pool resources to brand Maine as an arts hub.</p>

<p><b>PRIORITY 2</b></p> <p>Provide visibility and professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Provide a public forum inviting public comment, focused on the arts sector with an opportunity for Q &amp; A and to share ideas to promote the creative economy through the arts.</p>	<p>An opportunity for public comment will be incorporated as part of the planning process for an annual arts and cultural summit.</p>
	<p>Provide public opportunities to utilize City structures, facilities, and/or parks to develop opportunities to showcase talent representing multiple arts sectors and to attract private investors and engage new audiences.</p>	<p>CP is working with the City to utilize Merrill Auditorium for a cross-discipline talent showcase in February 2019. The City also provides space and time for artists to showcase in the Arts in the Chamber program at the beginning of City Council meetings, and discussions for curated spaces during First Friday Art Walk are underway.</p>
	<p>Build arts engagement and tourism synergy</p>	
<p><b>PRIORITY 3</b></p> <p>Advocate for maintaining and growing affordable live, work, and performance space in Portland.</p>	<p>Creative Portland provides fiscal sponsorship opportunities for independent initiatives in alignment with our mission, including live, work, and performance space creation.</p>	<p>Indigo Arts Alliance, an artist development space for artists of color in East Bayside, is supported by a CP fiscal sponsorship and has received startup funding from the Maine Community Foundation.</p>

**ROLE OF CREATIVE PORTLAND**

Creative Portland will facilitate the establishment of a work group structure to focus on strategic priorities and to report on existing initiatives. CP will assume the role as leader in convening arts & cultural stakeholders on an annual basis, in a format to be determined each year, inspired by work group progress and depending on available budget to address internal and external planning initiatives, advocacy, arts patronage, and audience expansion and engagement.

If this Cultural Plan update is approved by the city council, Creative Portland will:

- Distribute and share cultural plan report and recommendations directly with arts & culture stakeholders and via social media channels.
- Apply for a cultural plan implementation grant, administered by Maine Arts Commission, with a focus on one initiative that has been identified in the cultural plan update.

Refer to Appendix A for information on how the cultural planning process has shaped Creative Portland’s role and priorities.

## **BACKGROUND ON CULTURAL PLANNING PROCESS**

### **GOAL**

Our cultural planning goal was to assess where we are today and to take advantage of alignments of missions, goals, and interests of arts and cultural organizations, city agencies, and stakeholders to make the best use of community assets and achieve ambitious goals for the community.

### **FINANCIAL SUPPORT**

A \$10,000 planning grant from the Maine Arts Commission led to a \$15,000 grant from the City of Portland and an additional \$5,000 from local businesses. The impetus for applying for cultural planning funding was Creative Portland's desire to mark the ten-year anniversary of the City of Portland's Creative Economy Summit of 2008 by making an assessment of what has been accomplished and what new endeavors should be undertaken. In addition, the City's most recent cultural plan, *Celebrating Community: A Cultural Plan for Portland, Maine*, was almost 20 years old and required updating to keep pace with new goals and changing circumstances in the city.

### **THE PROCESS**

Creative Portland received early feedback that the community was exhausted from multiple surveys and community meetings, and that there was real concern about launching an ambitious planning process. People wanted top priorities and action, much more than widely inclusive planning and public discussion. A secondary concern was confidence in the community's ability to follow through. Creative Portland was reminded several times of the lack of action following the 1998 cultural plan, as well as several other well-meaning initiatives that ended up on the shelf. Below, we outline the three phases of the cultural planning process.

#### **Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork**

In early 2017, Creative Portland contracted Susan Silberberg of CivicMoxie to develop a snapshot of the needs and concerns of the arts, cultural, and creative economy organizations, businesses, and individuals in the City of Portland. Phase 1 included an in-depth review of past cultural plans as well as all of Portland's major arts organizations' current strategic plans, the city's comprehensive plan, and other relevant documents. This analysis was augmented with targeted individual interviews and several small focus groups spanning the arts and culture community, including representatives from large arts/cultural organizations, creative businesses and entrepreneurs, small/informal arts/cultural organizations, city hall, and individual artists. The first task was assessing response, interest, and commitment, and we were pleased with the unanticipated agreement and cohesion that was apparent.

50 key stakeholders were interviewed and 100% of the data feedback reinforced the conviction that the arts and cultural industry is a pivotal economic engine and the core of the creative economy. Interviews delved into the role and perception of the Cultural Planning process as well

as of Creative Portland itself so that the organization could assess how to lead creative economy efforts forward (Refer to Appendix A).

These interviews reinforced a universal recognition that Portland's arts and culture assets (and the marketing of them) is an important element of economic development, can attract a strong workforce and successful firms, and help sustain a positive quality of life. Although recent data<sup>1</sup> indicate growth and economic impact (\$75 million in expenditures for nonprofit arts in 2015), CivicMoxie interviews indicated that visibility and recognition of the impact of the arts and cultural community has not increased city budget allocated to the arts. In fact, some said that, in part because of economic growth, there are new pressures on the sustainability of the arts and cultural core of the creative economy.

One concern that was expressed in the interviews was whether or not Portland is leveraging the momentum of the growth in the arts sector at a time where many US cities are seeing a resurgence in residence and interest in "moving back to the city" for the benefits brought by walkable neighborhoods and the proximity of arts, culture, dining, and entertainment. The city's major arts and cultural institutions are doing well, but we have little quantitative data on smaller arts organizations and venues, for-profit organizations, and individual artists. Through interviews conducted by CivicMoxie, as well as Creative Portland Executive Director Dinah Minot's conversations with constituents, we know that many individuals cannot find affordable housing and studio space, there are limited venues for exhibiting work, and there is growing pressure amongst multiple organizations competing for a slice of the funding pie.

The good news is that there is a pervasive feeling that action is required now to celebrate the rich creative culture of Greater Portland and to take advantage of the abundant opportunities that exist. The arts and culture sector, which includes creative entrepreneurs and creative industries, is an economic driver deeply embedded in the economy and in need of constant reinforcement and validation through educational programs, lectures and initiatives to spread awareness on the value and necessity of the makers economy.

Phase 1 resulted in the development of five strategic priorities which became the focus of the cultural planning effort going forward:

- 1. Celebrate Congress Street and the Arts District.**
- 2. Provide visibility and professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.**
- 3. Focus on cultural tourism and coordinated marketing efforts.**
- 4. Focus on "experience design."**
- 5. Advocate for maintaining and growing affordable live, work, and performance space.**

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<sup>1</sup> Americans for the Arts (2017). *Arts & Economic Prosperity V in the City of Portland, ME*. PDF available - please email your request to [info@creativeportland.com](mailto:info@creativeportland.com).

## **Phase 2: Getting Down to Action**

Goals for Phase 2:

1. Reach agreement among the various constituent groups on key issues brought up in Phase 1: Laying the Groundwork, and to arrive at a draft working agenda to share with a broader group for input and buy-in.
2. Engage steering committee members to assess data, highlight community progress addressing strategic priorities, and incorporate feedback from workgroup leaders in a living Action Plan with recommendations for tackling those strategies.

The workgroups in Phase 2 embraced three community-driven initiatives, a combination of the five strategic priorities identified in Phase 1, with the greatest support and momentum towards implementation:

1. **Celebrate Portland as a creative city with Congress Street as the spine.**
  - 1a. **Focus on “experience design.”**
2. **Provide visibility and professional development/support for artists and creative entrepreneurs.**
3. **Advocate for maintaining and growing affordable live, work, and performance space in Portland.**

The steps and progress taken to date are included in the Action Plan Priority Recommendations Chart above.

At the end of Phase 2, Creative Portland convened the city’s arts and cultural stakeholders at a summit in May 2018 to present cultural planning process results to date. A recap of the Arts & Culture Summit can be found in Appendix B.

## **Phase 3: Putting it all Together**

Phase 3, completed in December 2018, is this finalized report and action plan recommendations. Throughout the planning process, groups built on momentum and/or splintered off with separate interests and initiatives, even though specific priorities remain the same. Identifying indicators for measuring success and taking responsibility for each action will lead to a more sustainable working group structure. An annual check-in is recommended to review the progress of smaller groups and to revisit plan implementation. The challenge will lie in community engagement, as cultural leaders and stakeholders turn their immediate focus back on their own organizations, which can result in waning participation.

## **CLOSING STATEMENT**

The goal of the 2018 cultural planning process was to update the cultural plan of 1998, call attention to the arts community, and to make the collective arts, culture, and creative economy of Portland more visible by providing more support to arts organizations, individuals, and creative businesses through collaborations and shared resources. The process inspired increased community collaboration and conversations on a regular basis, a desire within the arts and cultural community to cross-promote and partner with each other on programming and improvement initiatives, and a recognition that arts and cultural organizations are extremely active.

The action plan recommendations presented in this report represent concrete objectives in line with community priorities to make the collective arts, culture, and creative economy of Portland more visible and provide more support to arts organizations, individuals and creative businesses.

This completed report compliments aspirations defined in the City's newly adopted comprehensive plan, *Portland's Plan 2030*, and will be adopted as an update to the cultural plan of 1998, *Celebrating Community: A Cultural Plan for Portland, Maine*.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Informing Creative Portland's Role & Priorities**

Creative Portland served as the facilitator of Portland's cultural planning process. Creative Portland was the lead organization for the Maine Arts Commission (MAC) *Creative Communities = Economic Development (CCED) Phase I: Cultural Plan* grant application and administration and will also take the lead on the *Phase II: Implementation* grant application.

From the Phase 1 interviews and assessment of existing strategic plans of the cultural organizations, Creative Portland determined it would focus on continuing to attract and connect creatives while also strategically addressing some of the unintended consequences of growth. With the increased number of arts organizations, we also wanted to work together and think strategically about Portland's economic growth and creative sustainability.

Specifically, Creative Portland's role that emerged during the 2018 planning process is as a community convener, a promoter of cultural activity including the hosting of art exhibitions and pop-up performances, and as a clearinghouse of shared information. Embracing this role as collaborator and connector, Creative Portland convened an Arts & Culture summit in May 2018, marking the tenth anniversary of the first creative economy steering committee report of 2008.

As part of this altered strategic direction, Creative Portland reworded its mission statement:

*Creative Portland's mission is to support the creative economy through the arts by providing essential resources, by fostering partnerships, and by promoting Portland's artistic talents and cultural assets. As the official nonprofit arts agency, we support economic development efforts by strengthening and stimulating our workforce, creative industries, and enterprises.*

The three strategic priorities as defined in Phase 2 and presented in this report are ongoing pursuits and have informed the direction of Creative Portland's work plan, including outreach efforts for networking and connectivity, while also providing immediate response to community needs by hosting an assortment of popular professional development workshops, made possible in large part by the new street presence.

On the verge of engaging in co-promotion and branding initiatives with the City, Creative Portland is making headway toward the goals of 2006, where the city planners and mayor at that time identified three goals, including recognition of Portland as an international creative center, developing increased communication and collaboration in the form of establishing an arts czar (Creative Portland), and securing affordable public space for artists. The challenge of securing public investment of a public space for artists, including performance space, studio space, housing and exhibition space, still remains a unified goal and desire within the arts community, yet lacks a unified vision and leadership commitment within the community to build momentum for this pursuit.

Creative Portland sees opportunities to accomplish the above, in part, by:

- Collaborating and building connections among and between arts and cultural organizations to support artists and creative organizations.

- Looking at regional collaborations that build on the already expanding geographical region that supports the arts and culture in Portland.

Although most of the priority strategies for celebrating the arts and promoting the creative economy are similar today to those identified ten years ago, progress has been made with the establishment of a city commitment to support a nonprofit organization that has the ability to leverage the city's investment in the pursuit of grants and private sponsorships. After two years since the initiation of the cultural planning process, Creative Portland is an organization that is building capacity to become a clearinghouse of information for the arts community and a catalyst for forging partnerships and marketing opportunities to cross-promote the artistic talents and cultural assets of Portland.

## **APPENDIX B**

### **Recap & Summary of 2018 Arts & Culture Summit**

#### **Creative Economy Summit of 2006**

The first creative economy summit was organized by the City in 2006. Mayor Jim Cohen and representatives from city planning and development convened approximately 200 stakeholders from the creative economy in the Merrill Auditorium Rehearsal Hall. After introductory remarks, the participants divided into three groups: creative individuals, creative organizations, and creative enterprises. Each group worked to develop three action steps for enhancing Portland's creative economy; and at the end of the Summit, this list of nine steps was reduced by the full group to three final recommendations.

These three recommendations focused on the following strategies to support and grow the creative economy:

1. Build Portland's identity as an international creative center.
2. Develop publicly supported and/or affordable public space for artists, including performance space, office space, studio space, housing, exhibition space.
3. Increase collaboration, coordination, and communication (Establish Arts Czar or Office of Arts & Cultural Affairs).

#### **2018 Arts & Culture Summit**

Creative Portland convened approximately 75 arts and cultural leaders, steering committee members, and stakeholders at One Longfellow Square on May 30, 2018 to celebrate the American for the Arts Economic Impact Survey 2017 (AEP5) data on the arts & culture sector and to present cultural plan feedback to participants.

A brief synopsis of the history of Portland's arts district and the formation of Creative Portland began opening remarks, followed by an explanation on how the current cultural planning

initiative will update the city's 1998 Cultural Plan. Creative Portland debuted a one-minute "sizzle reel" highlighting Portland's cultural life beyond lobsters and lighthouses.

Program Director of Research & Creative Economy at the New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA), spoke about NEFA's report *The Jobs in New England's Creative Economy and Why They Matter*, including what constitutes the Creative Economy, a recap of Americans for the Arts *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5* study results for Portland compared to similar study regions, and the Creative Economy in Maine.

A senior planner at the City of Portland presented on *Portland's Plan 2030*, the recently adopted comprehensive plan for the City of Portland. She shared the process that the planning department had enacted to collect feedback, provided a quick breakdown of top concerns, and highlighted where the arts & culture sector was represented within the plan, including emphasizing that link between arts and culture and Portland's economy.

Creative Portland presented the Cultural Planning process to date, recapping the seven priorities that were part of the 1998 plan, and describing Phases 1 & 2 of the update process.

Seven Priorities from the 1998 Plan:

1. Promote appreciation for our diverse cultures within the City
2. Develop and enhance opportunities for students
3. Build audiences & arts patronage
4. Encourage and safeguard artists' presence in the community
5. Improve civic support of arts and culture throughout the City
6. Apply arts and cultural solutions to the community's social issues
7. Strengthen neighborhood identity through cultural programming & connections between neighborhoods and the Arts District

A hired facilitator introduced the three initiatives that emerged out of the identified strategies mentioned above and leaders for the workgroups in progress,

A Q&A followed the three presentations, which was then followed by a call to action, asking attendees to sign up to take part in one (or more) of the three initiatives, as well as to fill out two ballots: 1) desire for an annual arts & culture summit and interest in participating on the steering committee to organize a summit, and 2) a brief assessment of Creative Portland's programs.

**Summit ballot response recap:**

1. Desire for developing an annual summit with workgroups and possible "best practice" presentations was unanimous among respondents, yet fewer were willing to commit to a steering committee.
2. On average, Creative Portland programs that were most highly valued by the community were First Friday Art Walk and Professional Development Workshops, closely followed

by Monday Morning Drop By and providing community showcases for marketing & branding Portland's cultural life.