



A Creative Roadmap
for the Ozarks

This Place We Make

SPRINGFIELD REGIONAL
CULTURAL PLAN



Produced by:

The Cultural Planning Group

SRAC Staff support provided by:

Leslie Forrester and Sarah Abele

Cultural Plan Advisory Committee:

Bethany Bell, Jim Bultas, Erin Danastasio, Mark Hecquet, Kenny Kabak, Samuel Knox, Amanda Ohlensehlen, Geoff Steele, Nathan Sutton

Focus Group Facilitators:

Erica Harris and Sarah Jenkins

Special thanks to:

Springfield Regional Arts Council Board of Directors, City of Springfield, Commercial Street, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, CoxHealth, Downtown Springfield, Drury University, Evangel University, Fox Theatre, Gillioz Theatre, The Glo Center, High Tide Theatrical, Hispanic Networking Group, History Museum on the Square, KSMU, Mercy, Missouri Philharmonic, Missouri State University, Mosaic Arts Collective, Moxie Cinema, Neighborhood Associations, Ozarks Film Foundry, Ozarks Lyric Opera, Ozarks Tech, SATO48, Sculpture Walk Springfield, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, Springfield Art Museum, Springfield Ballet, Springfield-Greene County Library, Springfield Little Theatre, Springfield Public Schools Springfield Sister Cities Association, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Timmons Hall, and many wonderful and creative individuals.

Cover Art Pieces By:

Aaron Wolken, Dean Ertel, Penny Gordon Chumley, SGF Airport, Sarah Jones, Boys & Girls Club of Springfield

This document includes photos from artists and arts organizations from around the region.

Funded in Part By:



This Place We Make

A Creative Roadmap for the Ozarks



Table of Contents

Executive Summary	2
Introduction	4
A Regional Approach	7
Planning Process	8
Community Survey Findings	10
Key Themes & Findings	14
Arts For All	20
Community Vision & Priorities	22
Goals & Strategies	25
Funding Prospects	40
The Evolving Role of SRAC	43

This Place We Make: A Creative Roadmap for the Ozarks is a ten-year vision for strengthening the arts and culture community throughout Springfield and the surrounding region.

By recognizing that creativity is a critical asset for economic competitiveness, workforce retention, neighborhood vitality, and regional identity, this community development strategy positions the Ozarks to build a stronger future while preserving the character and originality that makes this region unique.

The planning process included extensive community surveys, focus groups representing diverse perspectives, stakeholder interviews, and a review of existing community plans and cultural assets. Developed by the Springfield Regional Arts Council, *This Place We Make* reflects input from more than 1,000 residents, artists, business leaders, educators, community organizations and municipal partners who shared a common belief: arts and culture art essential to the region’s future.

Participation in the planning process consistently identified arts and culture as powerful drivers of quality of life, economic vitality, talent attraction and retention, community identity, and regional pride.

The findings reveal a region rich in cultural assets and creative energy. Residents value theaters, museums, music venues, festivals, public art, neighborhood-based creativity,

and growing network of artists and cultural organizations. The community identified opportunities to improve communication about arts events, expand access to creative experiences, support local artists and creative businesses, celebrate the region’s cultural diversity, and create sustainable funding and infrastructure for the arts.

Guided by the vision that “Southwest Missouri’s creative energy draws people in and inspires them to stay,” the plan establishes three primary goals:

1. Broaden and deepen engagement in arts and culture by improving access, marketing, public art, arts education, festivals, and regional collaboration.
2. Cultivate and elevate the creative sector through increased investment in artists and organizations, professional development opportunities, affordable creative spaces, and stronger networks among cultural partners.
3. Develop sustainable infrastructure for arts and culture by creating diversified funding sources, strengthening the creative economy, supporting cultural districts, and improving transportation and accessibility.

The plan recognizes that arts and culture are not separate from community development; they are integral to community well-being. Successful implementation will require collaboration. Local governments, educational institutions, businesses, nonprofit organizations, philanthropic partners, artists, and residents will all have a stake in this endeavor.

These are not the goals of the SRAC alone. We facilitated these conversations, but we didn’t build this just for us. The work was deliberate to ensure voices across the community were heard. These collective observations, ideas, and dreams are woven throughout the plan, giving this document a flavor of what makes this region wonderfully unique and explores the possibilities for the future.

Arts and culture demonstrate what makes this region authentic, because it is made by us, celebrated by us, and preserved by us. The more we invest in and truly support creativity in our community, the more we demonstrate to visitors, prospective talent, and interested businesses who we authentically are. More importantly, we should do this for us. For our children and our children’s children. Our investments

As Springfield and the surrounding region continue to grow, strategic investment in arts and culture will help attract and retain talent, support local businesses, strengthen tourism, and create the sense of place that makes communities thrive.

WHY THIS MATTERS

Arts and culture are more than amenities. They are essential drivers of economic vitality, talent attraction, tourism, education, and quality of life. Community feedback for this plan revealed:

- 91%** believe arts learning opportunities are essential to the community
- 83%** want more creative career opportunities for young people
- 81%** want more arts and cultural events representing the diversity of our region
- 80%** support increased public investment in arts and culture
- 71%** identified support for local creative businesses as a top long-term priority

now in creativity and culture alongside basic necessities will build an environment rich in pride, opportunity, and success. This place is what we make of it, and there is a seat at the table for everyone to be a part of it.

Arts and culture define communities. They shape how residents experience their city, how visitors perceive a place, and how young people decide where to build their futures.

Springfield and the surrounding Ozarks region possess remarkable cultural assets, historic theaters, museums, emerging arts districts, vibrant music scenes, and passionate creative communities. Forward SGF, the City of Springfield's comprehensive plan, identifies arts and culture as a key theme running throughout the city's vision for its future, and this Regional Cultural Plan supports that vision. By creating a formal arts and culture element that complements the comprehensive plan, Springfield positions cultural development as integral to, not separate from, the community's overall growth strategy.

Developed through extensive community engagement in 2025, this plan reflects the voices of more than 1,000 community members who participated in surveys and focus groups, sharing their vision for a region where arts and culture thrive, where creative talent chooses to stay and grow, and where cultural vitality drives both quality of life and economic opportunity.





A Regional Approach

This plan deliberately takes a regional rather than solely municipal approach.

While Springfield serves as the cultural center—85% of area residents primarily attend arts events in the city—the region's cultural ecosystem extends well beyond city limits. Artists live and work throughout the region. Springfield also has multiple areas and neighborhoods, each with its own unique cultural character and activity, including Downtown, Commercial Street, Southside, and Moon City. Audiences travel across city lines to attend performances and exhibitions.

Economic impact from cultural tourism benefits businesses in all communities. The halo cities of Republic, Ozark, Nixa, Rogersville, and Willard are integral partners in the region's cultural future, each contributing unique assets while also engaging with Springfield's institutions and programming.

Regional partners consistently spoke about the need to build the region together rather than separately to expand the hub to a regional arts destination.

By taking a regional approach, this plan creates the framework for coordination, resource sharing, and collective marketing. It positions the Springfield region, not just the city, as a cultural destination with the depth and diversity to compete with peer regions across the country.



Planning Process

Overview

The Springfield Regional Arts Council (SRAC) conducted comprehensive community engagement in 2025 to inform development of a regional cultural plan for Springfield and its surrounding communities. The planning process included an extensive community survey receiving 819 responses and eight focus group sessions engaging diverse stakeholders across the region.

The Springfield region demonstrates remarkable cultural depth through established institutions, grassroots neighborhood arts activity, and regional

cultural assets. The results reveal a highly engaged, creative community with strong support for arts and culture, but facing challenges around communication, coordination, and equitable access.

Key priorities identified include better marketing and communication about arts events; support for local creative businesses and artists; enhanced cultural representation; improved connectivity between neighborhoods and arts districts; and dedicated, sustainable arts funding.

Assessment *LATE WINTER 2025*

- Document and data review including Forward SGF comprehensive plan, Arts Council reports, and regional cultural asset inventory
- Regional tour of cultural venues and districts
- Leadership interviews with City staff, community leaders, and arts leaders

Community Engagement *SPRING-SUMMER 2025*

- Community-wide survey: 819 responses with 77.4% completion rate
- Group sessions and engagement with diverse stakeholders including:
 - Black community leaders
 - Commercial Street artists and merchants
 - Downtown business and arts organizations
 - Healthcare Providers
 - Hispanic Networking Group
 - Local musicians
 - Neighborhood leaders
 - Pride Festival attendee
 - Professional creative community
 - Regional municipal partners from surrounding communities
 - Other community initiatives

Plan Development *FALL 2025-SPRING 2026*

- Analysis of survey and engagement findings
- Stakeholder review and refinement
- Draft plan and final plan development

Community Survey Findings

The community survey received 819 responses with a 77.4% completion rate, providing robust quantitative data about community demographics, arts participation patterns, barriers, and priorities.

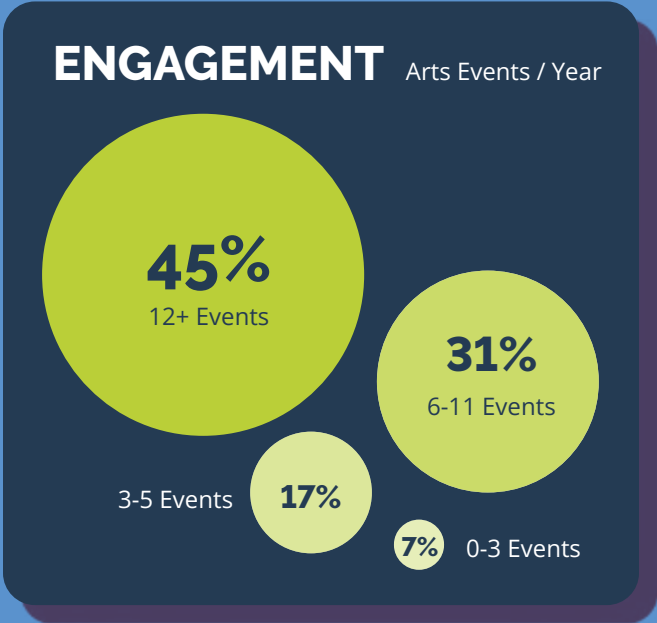
Demographics and Community Profile

Geographic Distribution: 80% full-time Springfield residents, 18% live outside Springfield, with strong representation across multiple zip codes

Engagement Levels: 45% attend/participate frequently (12+ times yearly); 31% occasionally (6-11 times yearly); 17% once in a while (3-5 times yearly); 7% not often or not at all (less than 3 times annually)

Creative Community: 28% work for, are contracted by, or serve on boards of arts organizations; 39% are hobby/amateur artists; 17% are professional artists earning income from their work

Race/Ethnicity: 85.2% European-American/White (517 respondents); 14.8% all other groups combined (90 respondents), including Hispanic/Latinx (3.6%), Native American/Alaska Native (3.6%), African American/Black (3.5%), East Asian (1.6%), and other groups



Current Arts Participation

Regional context: 85% primarily attend arts events in Springfield; 13% attend events outside Greene County. Many travel to Kansas City, St. Louis, or other cities for certain performances.

Most attended events in Springfield:

- 65% Performing arts events
- 50% Music/arts events at small venues
- 54% Visual arts fairs/festivals
- 42% Music festivals (indie/hip-hop/blues/country)
- 39% Food/wine/craft beer events

Common creative activities (personal/family):

- 62% Visual arts
- 59% Literary activities
- 51% Music
- 48% Crafts
- 41% Culinary arts

Barriers to Greater Arts Participation

Top barriers preventing more participation:

- 48% Don't hear about events/opportunities
- 31% Inconvenient scheduling/locations
- 24% Satisfied with current level
- 23% Cost
- 17% Lack of interest in current offerings

Artist priorities – top needs for local artists:

1. Exhibition, performance, and sales opportunities
2. Networking and connection opportunities
3. Professional development assistance
4. Affordable work/live-work space
5. Community leadership opportunities

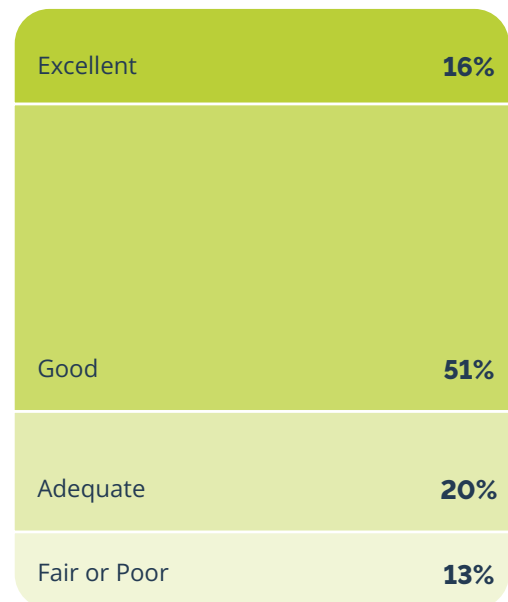
MOST NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS

By Respondents



RATING

Springfield's Art Scene



ART IS ESSENTIAL:

91% of respondents believe arts learning opportunities are **essential** to their **community**.

Community Priorities and Needs

Most needed improvements per respondents:

- 87%** Information about arts events
- 83%** Creative career opportunities for young residents
- 81%** Arts/creative events representing all cultures
- 79%** Arts and cultural venues/facilities
- 76%** Artistic spaces—studios, retail, live-work
- 72%** Public art

Top 4 long-term cultural plan priorities:

- 71%** Supporting local creative businesses
- 59%** Providing dedicated arts funding
- 56%** Supporting local artists to stay in the area
- 56%** Enhancing/diversifying events and opportunities

Assessment of Current Arts and Cultural Scene

Overall Rating of Springfield's Arts Scene:

- 16%** Excellent
- 51%** Good
- 20%** Adequate/Neutral
- 13%** Fair or Poor

Essential Value: 91% believe arts learning opportunities are essential to their community.

Funding and Support

Strong community support for increased public arts funding:

- 66%** Strongly favor
- 14%** Somewhat favor
- 11%** Need more information
- 9%** Oppose increased funding

Key Themes & Findings

The engagement process revealed a community with significant cultural assets and strong grassroots arts activity, but facing challenges around coordination, communication, and access.

There is clear enthusiasm for expanded arts programming and infrastructure, with particular emphasis on better connecting different areas of the city and ensuring the Springfield Regional Arts Council (SRAC) serves all community members effectively.



\$100 & UNDER ART MARKET

A Community Rich in Cultural Assets

The engagement sessions revealed a community with remarkable cultural depth that often goes unrecognized, even by residents themselves. Springfield's cultural landscape is anchored by established institutions like the Historic Gillioz Theatre, Springfield Little Theatre, Fox Theatre, and Hammons Hall for the Performing Arts, which together form what Downtown stakeholders proudly call the "Theatre District." The Gillioz Theatre alone draws 70% of its audience from outside Greene County, demonstrating the regional appeal of Springfield's cultural offerings. There are additional arts organizations and venues throughout the city, including the Springfield Art Museum, Springfield Symphony Orchestra, Sculpture Walk Springfield, Mosaic Arts Collective, Moxie Cinema, Ozarks Lyric Opera, and many others.

Beyond these formal venues, the community enjoys grassroots creativity. The Commercial

Street corridor has evolved into an authentic arts enclave where individual artists and merchants create what participants described as a "gritty and diverse" cultural ecosystem. Here, upscale international dining sits alongside artist studios, and the monthly farmer's market serves as an informal gathering space with untapped potential for creative programming. Similarly, the Woodland Heights neighborhood has become a hub of DIY arts activity, hosting everything from Porch Pickin music performances on resident porches to Silent Nights where neighbors watch old movies projected in driveways. Springfield's music scene is diverse and vibrant, there is a growing community of individual artists, and the city has an increased collection of murals and other public art guided by Sculpture Walk Springfield.

The regional scope of Springfield's cultural influence extends well beyond city limits.

For example, The Aetos Center for the Performing Arts in nearby Nixa has attracted visitors from 41 states, while smaller communities like Mt. Vernon are launching their first art camps for children. This regional network represents both an asset and an opportunity, as participants consistently spoke about the need to "build the region together rather than separately to expand the hub and create an arts destination."

As the survey illustrates, the region's public participation in arts and culture is strong. This is expressed in terms of attendance at a broad range of performances, concerts, exhibits, festivals, events and the like. It is also expressed in the prevalence of residents' hobbyist or amateur arts expression – playing a musical instrument, singing in a choir, crafting, cooking creatively, preserving cultural traditions, and many more. Arts demand is projected to increase steadily in the coming decades,

as Springfield's population grows. By 2060, assuming current participation patterns persist, demand will grow for arts activities across-the-board, ranging from 36% to 50% (source: Springfield Art Museum Market Analysis, 2024, Keen Independent Research).

Springfield is also home to a concentration of universities and colleges. The presence of Missouri State University, Drury University, Evangel University, Ozarks Technical Community College, Cox College, Southwest Baptist University, all enrich the cultural environment through their educational and public programming, faculty, staff and students.

Stakeholders often observe the arts sector's willingness to collaborate as a strength for the region and an opportunity for future development. This is linked to the Arts Council's leadership role providing coordination, funding, and services.

Valuing Cultural Assets and Creative Economy Assets

Throughout the engagement sessions, a theme emerged between recognition of Springfield's cultural assets and the broader community's understanding of their economic and social value. Creative professionals spoke about the challenge of demonstrating to clients and potential employees that Springfield has cultural amenities worthy of a modern city. As one participant put it, they want clients to think, "This is Springfield. This is cool. It's not just a flyover city." Residents travel to Kansas City, St. Louis, or Lawrence for shows that could be in Springfield. This represents an opportunity to keep entertainment dollars in the region. Downtown stakeholders recognized that cultural vitality, noting that "the arts drive talent retention." However, this understanding hasn't yet translated into systematic support for the arts from the business sector, with participants calling for more "buy-in from the business community".

The Communication Challenge

A consistent theme across all engagement sessions is the challenge of communication and coordination. At the most basic level, residents and even active cultural participants struggle to find information about arts events and opportunities. This is a challenge that is not unique to Springfield as people engage and access many different communication channels, making the challenge of marketing to potential attendees more complex. Solutions include connecting existing channels and understanding where residents prefer to get their information about local events and activities.



Arts for All

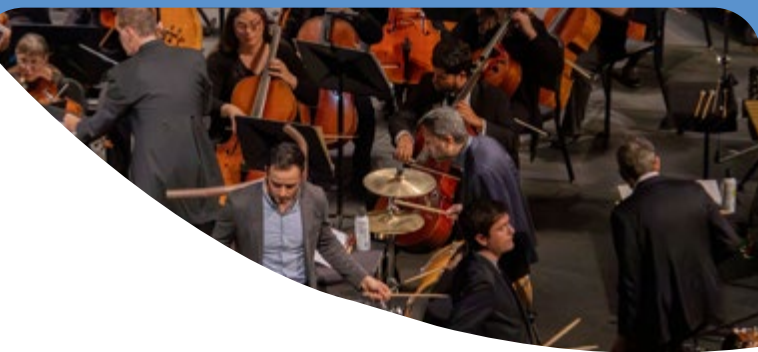
Participants want to see arts programming expanded beyond downtown. Springfield's arts and cultural scene is unique, and better connectivity can provide more access across the region. The downtown core, where many formal cultural institutions are located, feels disconnected from emerging arts areas like Commercial Street and established neighborhoods. Participants consistently called for better "connectivity" - both literal transportation solutions like trolleys or shuttles, and more metaphorical connections that would link different parts of the cultural ecosystem.

While about two-thirds of residents believe their culture is well or very well

represented in Springfield, one-third do not, showing the opportunity to improve relevancy. 81% would like to see more events representing all residents' cultures.

The need for more affordable, accessible artist workspace emerged as a priority. Commercial Street artists expressed "strong desire for creating studio spaces for artists to work and collaborate," while musicians identified the need for "rehearsal/gig space with a PA system." This space shortage reflects broader economic pressures that make it difficult for artists to afford both living and working space in areas where they can connect with other creatives.





Community Vision & Priorities

VISION STATEMENT

Southwest Missouri's creative energy draws people in and inspires them to stay. This is where artistic innovation meets community, where cultural vitality fuels the economy, and where the arts create the unmistakable sense that this is exactly where you're meant to be.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Regional Collaboration:

Leveraging our collective strengths

Regional Character:

Building on our unique local character

Sustainability:

Creating lasting systems and support

Innovation:

Embracing new approaches and partnerships

Economic Development:

Cultivating impact of the creative sector (non-profit, for-profit and sole proprietor)



Goals & Strategies

INTRODUCTION

The cultural plan is organized into three overarching goals which are the desired results of implementing the plan and fulfilling the community's vision for arts and culture. The goals are the "what" we want to achieve. The goals form a framework or blueprint and are unlikely to change during the plan's approximately ten-year lifetime.

Goal 1: Broaden and deepen Springfield's engagement in arts and culture.

Goal 2: Cultivate and elevate Springfield's creative sector.

Goal 3: Develop sustainable infrastructure for Springfield's arts and culture.

Each goal is accompanied by strategies and actions providing more specific direction on the "how." Strategies and actions are intended to be more flexible and may well shift during implementation of the plan in response to changed circumstances and new opportunities. The key is whether the strategy or action serves the goal, the desired result.

Unlike most strategic plans, a cultural plan is a region-wide effort and by necessity invokes multiple partners and more than one lead agency. Development of this cultural plan was led by Springfield Regional Arts Council and offers recommendations for its lead role. In addition, each action identifies lead and partner agencies, including other organizations involved in planning. The City of Springfield, other municipalities, Visit Springfield, artists, arts and cultural organizations, businesses, higher education – all have important roles to play in implementation.

Strategy: 1.1

Elevate marketing and promotion of Springfield’s arts and cultural opportunities.

1.1.1 Create a comprehensive, accessible, culturally relevant marketing program to promote arts events and activities, and raise the visibility of the arts in Springfield and across the region to residents and visitors. Combine digital, media, print and other communications channels.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Visit Springfield, local media, other marketing programs/channels

1.1.2 Convene existing marketing organizations and identify ways to build on current marketing efforts.

Lead: SRAC as convenor

1.1.3 Integrate and boost Springfield arts marketing within Visit Springfield’s tourism promotion. Identify and package events and venues for the visitor. Provide technical assistance to better equip arts organizations, events, and venues to serve visitors.

Lead: Visit Springfield & SRAC

1.1.4 Develop a long-term effort to promote public understanding of the depth and impact of Springfield’s creative life. Create narratives about the economic impact of the arts, artistic quality and breadth, community creativity, impact on youth development and education, and other community benefits of the arts.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Visit Springfield, 417 Magazine, Springfield Daily Citizen, KSMU, Springfield Business Journal, Springfield News-Leader

1.1.5 Create a cultural asset inventory of the arts and culture venues, organizations, artists, musicians, and creatives.

Lead: SRAC

Strategy: 1.2

Expand and diversify the community’s access to arts and cultural opportunities.

1.2.1 Develop a “Community Arts Access” program providing free or low-cost access to arts organizations, events, and arts learning opportunities across the community for targeted populations. Build on existing free access opportunities and consider a partnership with the Springfield-Greene County Library District or Springfield Public Schools. Engender a sense of belonging for users. Sample programs are: Louisville KY Fund for the Arts Cultural Pass and Clackamas County Library (Portland OR) Culture Pass Express.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Springfield Public Schools, libraries, arts and cultural organizations and venues

1.2.2 Support expanded access to arts learning in the schools: Explore ways to expand/develop SRAC’s Any Given Child and Growing Up in the Arts programs. Consider other arts education program investments for children and youth. Consider engaging the Arts Education Roundtable recommended in 2.4.1.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Springfield Public Schools

1.2.3 Celebrate and promote arts learning and amateur participation opportunities in the community for all residents in the region: Catalogue and promote arts learning opportunities. Support and promote public performances and exhibitions of student and community arts.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Arts and culture organizations, arts venues.

1.2.4 Increase investments in library and recreation arts programming: Partner with the Springfield - Greene County Park Board and Library Board to expand arts and cultural learning opportunities for all ages.

Lead: SRAC
Partners: Park Board, Library Board

1.2.5 Create a project grant category for neighborhood and community groups.

Lead: SRAC

Goal 1

Broaden and deepen Springfield’s engagement in arts and culture.



Strategy: 1.3

Develop community-wide programs to showcase Springfield's creative sector and engage the community in compelling ideas.

1.3.1 Research and develop a festival concept that spans a longer timeframe than a weekend and involves multiple venues and art forms: Identify themes or ideas with resonance in Springfield as an organizing principle. Consider the connection of arts and other sectors or issues. Examples: Fulcrum Festival (Los Angeles region, arts and science). Chicago Dance Month (dance and cultural diversity). Bike Summer Pedalpalooza (Portland Oregon DIY culture and the environment).

Lead: SRAC
Partners: potential contract for services with festival producer

1.3.2 Collaborate with Visit Springfield to develop the themed festival into a valuable tourism asset generating hotel stays and visitor spending.

Lead: Visit Springfield
Partners: SRAC

1.3.3 Evolve First Friday Art Walk into a more robust and visible community-wide celebration of Springfield's arts. Consider new activities, partners, marketing, and ways to boost community participation.

Lead: SRAC, potential contract for services with producer
Partners: Existing and new participants in Art Walk

Strategy: 1.4

Establish a comprehensive public art program for Springfield based on national best practices.

1.4.1 Partner with the City of Springfield to create a robust governance structure for public art, including an independent Public Art Commission with diverse representation from artists, arts professionals, design experts, and community members. Establish clear roles and responsibilities among the City, SRAC, and Sculpture Walk Springfield.

Lead: City of Springfield
Partners: Sculpture Walk Springfield, SRAC

1.4.2 Develop a citywide public art master plan that defines vision, goals, and implementation strategies for public art throughout Springfield. The plan should address artwork selection and commissioning, geographic distribution and equity, diverse art forms and mediums, community engagement processes, and integration with Forward SGF and other city planning initiatives.

Lead: City of Springfield
Partners: Sculpture Walk Springfield, SRAC

1.4.3 Establish sustainable funding mechanisms for public art, including research and adoption of a percent for art policy for public and private development projects, annual budget allocations, and provisions for artwork maintenance and conservation.

Lead: City of Springfield
Partners: Sculpture Walk Springfield, SRAC

1.4.4 Build program infrastructure and capacity through development of professional policies and procedures, creation of a comprehensive inventory and asset management system, and establishment of artist selection processes that prioritize quality, diversity, and community engagement.

Lead: City of Springfield
Partners: Sculpture Walk Springfield, SRAC

1.4.5 Expand public art beyond traditional models to include temporary installations, community-created works, digital and interactive projects, neighborhood-based initiatives, and integration of art into infrastructure and public spaces throughout all areas of the city.

Lead: City of Springfield
Partners: Sculpture Walk Springfield, SRAC

Strategy: 1.5

Leverage arts and culture as a tool for business attraction and retention.

1.5.1 Utilize Strategy 1.1 Marketing and promotion of Springfield's arts and culture as an integral part of the region's economic development efforts to promote Springfield for business recruitment and retention. Develop a cultural ambassadors program to represent and promote Springfield's creative sector to current and prospective employers.

Lead: City of Springfield

Partners: Small Business Development Center, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, SRAC, Visit Springfield, major employers

1.5.2 Develop internship opportunities in area arts and cultural nonprofits and creative businesses. Create paid internship positions designed to provide career exposure and training in the creative sector for high school and college-age young people. Explore partnerships with area arts and cultural organizations, colleges and universities, economic development agencies, and the philanthropic community.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses, colleges and universities, etc.

1.5.3 Develop a network for young creative professionals: Convene area creatives – artists, arts administrators, designer professionals, etc. – to engender a sense of community, develop productive relationships, and serve as a voice of the creative sector for the community.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, The Network, Leadership Springfield



Strategy: 1.6

Promote regional cultural development and cooperation.

1.6.1 Convene a regional network of cities and towns in the SRAC's service area for the purpose of resource sharing and assistance in promoting arts development in local communities.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Missouri Association for Community Arts Agencies

1.6.2 Explore development of toolkits and/or technical assistance to help cities, towns and neighborhoods in the region to develop their own public art projects, grants programs, cultural events, etc.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Missouri Association for Community Arts Agencies, Sculpture Walk Springfield

1.6.3 Utilize the marketing and promotion program recommended in 1.1.1 as a tool to increase regional awareness and visibility for arts and culture.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Visit Springfield, local media, other marketing programs/channels

1.6.4 Consider regional components and collaborations for festivals, events and other community-wide programs recommended in Strategy 1.3 (Develop community-wide programs to showcase Springfield's creative sector and engage the community in compelling ideas).

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Visit Springfield, other producing and marketing partners



ARTS & CULTURE GRANT RECIPIENTS



Strategy: 2.1

Increase funding for arts and cultural nonprofits and individual artists.

2.1.1 Increase operating support for nonprofit arts and cultural organizations.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, other foundations and philanthropists

2.1.2 Provide funding specifically designed for individual artists, artists' collectives, and unincorporated community groups working outside the nonprofit structure.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, other foundations and philanthropists

2.1.3 Create a capital grants program providing matching funds for cultural facility/space projects. Provide planning and technical assistance funding for these projects.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, other foundations and philanthropists

Strategy: 2.2

Encourage community leadership and participation in Springfield's arts sector.

2.2.1 Provide project grants to illuminate and celebrate Springfield's diversity and heritage – "Who We Are" grants. Consider storytelling or oral history projects for underrepresented communities.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Springfield Public Schools, colleges and universities

2.2.2 Provide training to arts and cultural organizations to promote inclusion and belonging for attendees/participants. Consult with community leadership to ground training in community needs.

Lead: SRAC

2.2.3 Develop policy to support cross-cultural outreach and initiatives: Engage leadership from underrepresented communities to advise/explore how SRAC and the City can reflect Springfield's diversity.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Cultural Arts Leaders

Goal 2

**Cultivate and elevate
Springfield's creative sector.**

Strategy: 2.3

Build the capacity of artists and organizations for their work.

2.3.1 Provide access to technical assistance in nonprofit arts management and the business of art for artists. Identify capacity building needs in the arts community and identify relevant existing information and training resources. Fill gaps as needed.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Drury University, Community Foundation of the Ozarks, efactory

2.3.2 Create a technical assistance grants category for arts organizations and artists. Consider an expedited and year-round application process.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, other foundations and philanthropists

2.3.3 Develop a board training and placement program for arts organizations to improve governance and build arts leadership in the community, including for SRAC. Consider collaborating with Leadership Springfield.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Leadership Springfield

2.3.4 Convene arts and culture organizations to assess interest, needs, and feasibility of a shared services model focused on accounting, marketing, development, and/or administrative support, and develop a phased implementation plan.

Lead: SRAC

Strategy: 2.4

Strengthen and enable stakeholder networks.

2.4.1 Create an Arts Education Roundtable (Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical College, Drury University, Evangel University, Springfield Public Schools, arts education providers, SRAC) to explore collaborative programs and initiatives arising from this cultural plan.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Missouri State University, Ozarks Technical Community College, Drury University, Evangel University, Springfield Public Schools, arts education providers

2.4.2 Continue and evolve the arts executive's roundtable around specific objectives arising from this cultural plan.

Lead: SRAC

Strategy: 2.5

Ensure Springfield's creative sector has access to affordable spaces - performance, exhibition, rehearsal, studio, production, administration, storage, living, etc.

2.5.1 Create a regional directory of available arts spaces.

Lead: SRAC

2.5.2 Create a rental subsidy program to address cost issues.

Lead: SRAC

2.5.3 Acknowledge and support the continued availability of existing affordable spaces, e.g., The Third Floor at the Gillioz, The Creamery Arts Center, New Moon Studios, Forming Studios, Hatch Foundation, and others.

Lead: SRAC

2.5.4 Conduct a facilities and space needs assessment and identify specific facility/space opportunities. Consider ways to improve existing facilities, increase access to current venues, create new facilities/spaces, and develop artists live/work projects. Consider partnerships with developers motivated to address affordable arts space needs.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Developers, Downtown Springfield Association, Downtown and Commercial Street CIDs

2.5.5 Create a cultural space grants program to assist organizations in planning and developing capital projects. Provide matching grants for capital projects, and technical assistance for organizations to assess feasibility and develop capital project plans.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks

2.5.6 Support an expanded or new facility for the SRAC (Creamery 2.0) to support implementation of the cultural plan and meeting the cultural needs of the region.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, Developers, Downtown Springfield Association, Downtown and Commercial Street CIDs



Strategy: 3.1

Create diversified funding streams for arts organizations, individual artists, and cultural projects.

3.1.1 Develop a United Arts and Culture Fund pooling annual contributions from the City, private foundations, individual donors, and corporations in a grant fund for the Springfield arts sector. Build on SRAC's current operating support program.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Community Foundation of the Ozarks, other foundations and philanthropists, corporations, City of Springfield

3.1.2 Create a community-wide reserve fund to supplement available arts dollars in the event of a natural disaster, economic downturn, public health emergency, or unforeseen circumstance. Having a reserve can fill in funding gaps and reduce the disruption caused by decreases in arts grants. It could also be used for one-time, larger-scale cultural investments with broad community impact beyond the capacity of a single organization. It will also enhance resiliency in the arts sector and preserve its capacity to support tourism.

Lead: Community Foundation of the Ozarks

Partners: Other foundations and philanthropists, corporations, City of Springfield

Strategy: 3.2

Support development of Springfield's creative economy.

3.2.1 Provide access to small business supports adapted for the needs of creative entrepreneurs/businesses. Identify available resources, assess their suitability for the creative sector, improve access to those resources, and fill gaps in needed services.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: efactory

3.2.2 Create an incubator for creative businesses. Encourage and support creative sector start-ups and entrepreneurship.

Lead: Workforce & Economic Vitality (City of Springfield)

Partners: efactory, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce

3.2.3 Conduct a regulatory review and streamline permitting and other processes and costs to better enable arts events and activities. Consider a one-stop permit desk to facilitate permissions for arts applicants.

Lead: City of Springfield

Partners: City of Springfield Public Information Office, Springfield Area Chamber of Commerce, SRAC

3.2.4 Support development of a vibrant nighttime arts economy, e.g., music, dancing and/or comedy scene. Develop a nighttime economy plan and incentivize its development with regulatory reform, venue incentives, shared marketing, and other business supports.

Lead: Downtown Springfield Association

Partners: Downtown CID, Workforce and Economic Vitality, and Downtown Council of Champions, SRAC

Goal 3

Develop sustainable infrastructure for Springfield's arts and culture.

Strategy: 3.3

Develop one or more designated cultural districts.

3.3.1 Create a cohesive, walkable arts district connecting downtown Springfield, Commercial Street, and Moon City. Alternatively, create a smaller district as a starting point and demonstration project for additional districts, beginning with a feasibility study and business plan.

Lead: Workforce and Economic Vitality (City of Springfield)

Partners: Downtown Springfield Association, Downtown and Commercial Street CIDs, Downtown Council of Champions, SRAC

3.3.2 Use the arts district(s) to address the perception of parking and safety barriers in areas of the city.

Lead: Downtown Springfield Association

Partners: Downtown and Commercial Street CIDs

3.3.3 Consider creation of cultural districts in nearby cities and towns in the region, and outside of downtown Springfield, acknowledging the naturally occurring places having concentrations of creative assets and activity. Consider partnerships with city/town government, neighborhood association, or merchants' association to provide organizational infrastructure.

Lead: SRAC

Partners: Leadership Springfield

Strategy: 3.4

Address transportation and accessibility challenges to improve access to Springfield cultural venues and events.

3.4.1 Promote and make transportation information more available for all arts events and activities.

Lead: Workforce & Economic Vitality (City of Springfield)

Partners: City Utilities, MSU Bear Line, Ozark Greenways

3.4.2 Participate in transportation planning to assure arts needs contribute to policy development.

Lead: Ozarks Transportation Organization

Partners: Workforce & Economic Vitality (City of Springfield), City Utilities, Ozark Greenways



SPRINGFIELD BALLET



Funding Prospects

Every cultural plan raises expectations in the community as well as questions of how to fund implementation. There are multiple options for funding and resources to support this plan.

United Arts and Culture Fund: As recommended in 3.1.1, SRAC can develop an expanded, combined annual funding campaign as one source of funding for the cultural plan. It could take the form of a United Way-style, regional appeal to public and private donors to fund SRAC and tied to implementation of this plan. Donors could include philanthropic foundations, corporations, individual donors, businesses, and other funding partners.

Continued allocation of existing arts funding: Allocate sales tax, property tax, other City revenues, and/or hotel/motel tax revenues to fund arts priorities identified in this cultural plan. Restricted funds, such as capital improvement, transportation, property taxes, etc. may be considered for arts uses in alignment with their restrictions, e.g., public art in a park or in a transit system.

Increased allocation of Springfield Regional Arts Council funding: Increase annual allocations to sustain and boost the capacity of SRAC and fund its facility expansion plans.

Hotel/motel tax fund expansion: If the hotel/motel tax expansion is approved by the voters in the future, consider allocations of those expanded revenues

for capital and/or operational funding to support implementation of this plan.

Percent for art: The City of Springfield can explore enactment of a percent for art ordinance on capital projects and/or private development projects to support public art and/or other arts uses as part of implementation of Forward SGF.

Private funding collaboration: Convene private arts funders to identify and coordinate giving around compelling community priorities identified in the cultural plan. Private funders include philanthropic foundations as well as individual donors, corporations, and businesses. Collaboration or coordination can offer funders greater community impact and shared responsibility for their investments.

Grants: SRAC and other agencies can apply for federal, state and private grants for specific purposes related to this plan. Federal and state grant funding in the current environment is diminished and less predictable. However, during the lifespan of this plan, this may improve.

Earned revenues: SRAC and other agencies can generate earned revenues from certain kinds of activities recommended in this plan, such as program revenues and sales.



The Evolving Role of Springfield Regional Arts Council

The role of Springfield Regional Arts Council will need to evolve to implement this plan. As lead agency in its development, SRAC will hold the community's vision and coordinate implementation of the plan.

It remains the region's local arts agency, managing arts funding and support services. It will also coordinate regional collaborations, such as the network in recommendation 2.4.3 Regional Municipal Network.

SRAC can also consider an expansion of its role beyond arts leadership to become a cross-sector community development corporation that integrates arts and culture in with other functions, such as real estate development and economic and workforce development, in partnership with other agencies. Useful models for this

expansion include the Cincinnati Center City Development Corporation (3CDC) and 4Culture in Seattle/King County Washington.

SRAC should convene a community advisory group to oversee implementation of the cultural plan and provide reporting and accountability to the community. The community advisory group should be composed of community leaders from diverse sectors who can prioritize community interest over parochial interests and support the collaborations and partnerships necessary to implementation of the plan.





The mission of the
Springfield Regional
Arts Council is to
transform lives and
enrich the community
through the arts.

springfieldarts.org