

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

ARTS &

A CREATIVE VISION FOR ST. LOUIS



REGIONAL ARTS COMMISSION OF ST. LOUIS





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Arts Education Forum |

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INTRODUCTION

DEAR FELLOW ST. LOUISANS,

In the 1980s, a movement to increase public support for the arts spread across the country. In St. Louis, the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District (ZMD) was already established to support the St. Louis Zoo and our large museums through a special tax. It was in this environment that new legislation was proposed to create an additional tax to extend support to more nonprofit arts groups in St. Louis.

That legislation passed in 1985, and with a citizen vote mandating a portion of hotel/motel taxes to support its work, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) was born.

For more than 30 years, RAC has fulfilled its mission to promote, encourage, and foster the arts, allocating more than \$100 million in public funds to individual artists, arts organizations, and other nonprofit groups. From established institutions to innovative new projects, the investment has helped promote St. Louis' economy and developed an art and culture scene, the envy of communities nationwide.

Since RAC's founding, the world is quite different. A new generation has grown up in an age of rapid change and new technologies that help people engage with the arts in ways unimagined 30 years ago. The handful of arts groups that shared funding in 1985 has grown—now numbering in the hundreds—and is outpacing the growth of private and public support.

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Today, a chorus of voices awakened by the events of Ferguson seeks to be heard, demanding our community address the inequities that led to the civil unrest and find lasting solutions. More than ever, we are a divided community in need of new bridges and connections to recognize our full potential. Every sector of our community needs to do more and respond differently than it did several years ago.

In 2015, RAC began to reexamine its role in this changed world to determine how the arts could become a more active participant in uniting, transforming, and inspiring change. By 2017, EVOKE was born—a year-long initiative designed to engage thousands of St. Louisans in dialogue around two primary questions:

What is the value of the arts in our lives?

How can the arts play a larger role in making St. Louis a better place to live?

The outcome of these conversations would be a new and shared vision to guide the cultural future of the region.

Key takeaways from EVOKE affirmed that the arts matter in St. Louis and that residents treasure their access to the world-class art and cultural programs the region provides. However, they also want more access for youth, greater support for local artists, and capacity building for small and mid-sized organizations to help them grow. Most importantly, we learned that St. Louisans want the

arts unleashed from its traditional and siloed roles and expanded in ways that are relevant to the lives of more people.

This document envisions a future where the arts are integrated into the work of enhancing St. Louis' quality of life. The title, **ARTS &: A CREATIVE VISION FOR ST. LOUIS**, is an invitation to imagine the many ways—arts & education, arts & health, arts & the economy, arts & faith, to name a few—that the arts can become a more powerful tool for social change when combined with the efforts of others.

This repositioning of the value of the arts as both a treasured community asset and a powerful tool for social change is at the center of how RAC will evolve in the aftermath of this process—as an organization, public funder, and leading cultural institution. This document will serve as a road map to develop RAC's strategic plan, which will usher in a new era of bold policies and programs in support of artists, nonprofit organizations, and the many people they serve. We hope that others will also find this document useful as we tackle the hard work of making St. Louis a more equitable and vibrant place to live through the arts.

We are thankful to everyone who participated in EVOKE and in the development of **ARTS &**, a process that spanned nearly two years. With this leg of the journey complete, our work—with your support—has just begun.

Sincerely,



Mont Levy
Chairman
Regional Arts Commission



Michael Scully
Past Chairman
Regional Arts Commission



Felicia W. Shaw
Executive Director
Regional Arts Commission





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DEAR ST. LOUIS,

As chief executives of the City and County of St. Louis, we congratulate the Regional Arts Commission on the release of **ARTS &: A CREATIVE VISION FOR ST. LOUIS**.

This document, which shares the hopes and dreams of hundreds of residents who participated in a year-long and comprehensive community engagement process, will inspire a new era of cultural development throughout the region.

ARTS & comes at a time when St. Louis is on the rise. From the completion of the Gateway Arch National Park and reopening of the Soldiers Memorial Military Museum to groundbreaking capital campaigns that expand and improve access to the arts, St. Louis remains grounded in history but in full embrace of a new chapter, inspired by creativity, innovation, and change.

Big ideas often start small and **ARTS &** is no exception. The community engagement process began by inviting residents to consider just two simple questions: "What is the value of the arts in your life, and how can the arts play a more impactful role in making St. Louis a better place to live?"

Over several months, St. Louisans from all walks of life responded with their thoughts and ideas, resulting in a set of shared community priorities documented within these pages. The priorities speak to the many ways that local artists, arts organizations, and some of our most venerable cultural institutions can play a bolder role in making St. Louis not just a great place to live, but also a great place to raise a family, connect with the outdoors, start a new business, receive an education, pursue a creative career, or simply to follow your dreams.

One consistent theme throughout the process confirms that St. Louisans love the arts and acknowledge the responsibility we have to leverage our abundant cultural resources to create a higher quality of life—not just for some, but for everyone. Now, **ARTS &** challenges the arts and culture community to join with other sectors—health, community development, and education, among others and participate in the work of remaking St. Louis into a place anyone would be proud to call home.

While strategies and tactics are forthcoming, we begin with a vision for how the arts community can continue to produce the high-quality programs we value and work with others to address some of the region's most intractable problems.

We encourage you to read this document, be inspired and get involved in turning this vision into a plan for action. **ARTS &** represents our vision, our community, and our future.

Respectfully,



Mayor Lyda Krewson



County Executive Steve Stenger

WHY ARTS &?

The arts are integral to the lives of people and to the civic life of the place where those people live.

When the arts are siloed off, when they are seen as something "extra," as something "nice to have," we lose out on the richness they can bring. But when the arts are interwoven into the fabric of our community, they create strength, potential, opportunity, serendipity, and joy in unexpected places.

We've titled this document **ARTS &** because what we heard from the people is that they do not want the arts to be siloed off—they want the arts to intersect with all the different aspects of their lives.

The **&** allows us to explore new ways of thinking about how the arts intersect with other sectors. We're all familiar with the pairing of arts & entertainment, and arts & culture. But what about arts & health, arts & economic development, arts & policy, arts & justice, arts & transportation, arts & the environment? Art makes connections and thrives at these intersections.

When we expand our horizons and invite St. Louisans to fill in the blank for themselves, we believe the possibilities will extend beyond what we can imagine.

So, **ARTS &** is an invitation—an encouragement for all St. Louisans to see all the different aspects of their lives as interconnected to the arts and to see the arts as interconnected to all of the different aspects of their lives.

In this document, we're going to outline how we plan to foster that **ARTS &** mindset in St. Louis and introduce you to people and organizations who embody this **ARTS &** spirit—who demonstrate what it looks like to reimagine the arts.





Marc Bamuthi Joseph
EVOKE
Public Media Commons

HOW WE GOT HERE

METHODOLOGY

The information presented in this document is the result of an in-depth process of community listening and investigation.

Over the course of 2017, we conducted dozens of individual interviews with community leaders and facilitated dozens of community discussions where we heard directly from citizens across the region. We gathered input from artists of all disciplines, leaders of arts and culture organizations, arts funders, community organizations, and everyday St. Louisans.

We gathered data through an open online community survey and through a statistically valid random phone survey of residents of St. Louis City and County and conducted an Audience Demand Study to determine who is and who is not being served by the arts in St. Louis.

To further ensure community voice in the development of this cultural vision, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) convened the Thought Leaders Forum (TLF), a group of leaders and representatives from diverse sectors from across the community. The TLF served as an independent advisory body to oversee the planning process; explore the issues, ideas, and data emerging from the research; and consider the implications of what was learned in the development of this vision and priorities.

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MEETINGS

- Community Listening Sessions
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Thought Leaders Forum
- Artists at Work Sessions
- Arts Organizations Workshops
- Arts Funders Roundtable
- Creative Cities Alliance Roundtable
- Artist Ideation Session

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STUDIES

- Arts and Economic Prosperity Study (AEP5)
- Audience Demand Analysis
- RAC Arts Organization Study



2,050

SURVEYS

- Statistically Valid Telephone Survey
St. Louis City and County
- Public Online Survey

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EVENTS

- EVOKE Launch Event
- Evocation Exhibition
- Evocation Evenings
- AEP5 Symposium
- Arts Education Forum

All of the information gathered throughout this process was reviewed, discussed, and analyzed to identify the key issues and concerns presented in this document, and to determine the priorities for the cultural vision.

Why a Cultural Vision

The arts in any region are always evolving. This evolution can happen purely organically, or it can happen by design. Much of the evolution of the arts and culture in St. Louis has happened organically, and in many ways, this has produced great serendipity and wonderful results.

However, not having a shared vision for the arts has often meant missed opportunities for St. Louis. It has also meant that some communities have missed out on opportunities and benefits of the arts that other communities have enjoyed.

Our aim is to develop a shared vision for the arts and culture in St. Louis. This is important for us to make progress as a region. A shared vision will help us create the most opportunity and generate the most benefit for the most people in St. Louis. It will help us put the funds RAC is entrusted with to their highest and best use.

A shared vision is the first step toward shared effort.



WHAT IS EVOKE?

EVOKE was commissioned by the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) as a precursor to engaging in its own in-depth strategic planning process to guide its actions in the coming years. Through EVOKE, RAC sought to gain a clear and current understanding of what the citizens in St. Louis City and County, who are concerned about the arts, want from the arts.

While EVOKE was intended to inform RAC's strategic thinking, we went into the process expecting that it would naturally inform our entire community, because we are a regional organization. With this in mind, RAC invites, even implores, the community to read this document, and find ways to apply what we learned here to their own initiatives, to form collaborative partnerships around its goals and mandates, and to hold RAC accountable to fulfill the challenges and promise offered by EVOKE.

ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

This document recognizes our unique assets, challenges, history, and culture and aims to present ideas and priorities that are appropriate to this place at this moment in time.

Rather than being the end of a process, this document is meant to signal the beginning of one—and so is meant to catalyze action for RAC and for the many stakeholders we've identified. RAC will use this document as the foundation for its long-term strategic planning efforts and to guide our actions as an organization going forward.

Although we recognize that this document is more focused on a vision than on specific, actionable tasks, we hope presenting this vision will spark reflection, discussion, debate, and engagement.

We want people to be inspired and motivated to get together to talk about what they read here and to put their heads together to explore how they might join forces to bring some of this vision to life.

We hope this document challenges people to reimagine their own initiatives in a larger context and encourages them to forge collaborative partnerships around the ideas and principles articulated here.

We hope this document will reframe the way people think about the arts and their role in the arts.

WHO THIS DOCUMENT IS FOR

Many people might think that in a document produced by an arts organization, focused on the future of the arts, the stakeholders we are speaking to are simply those who are mission-driven to support the arts and those who work in the arts.

But we know that in addition to those organizations with a stated mission is to support the arts, there are many organizations that are established to support not the arts but rather to support St. Louis and St. Louisans—and who see tremendous value in the arts being a part of their work.

Of course, many individuals—artists, arts funders, policy makers and influencers, people who love the arts, and everyday St. Louisans—also have a stake in the future of arts and culture in St. Louis.

We want to make space for all of those stakeholders, not only in this document, but also in our thinking and our programming.

The arts are deservedly a source of tremendous pride for our community, and a treasure that must be nurtured and grown. To do this right, we can't limit our outreach to the existing arts community—realizing this vision will take all of us.

SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY

We are sharing this document widely, making it readily available to the public, and identifying all of the stakeholders we connected with as our audience for this document because we want to make clear who we've listened to and because we aim to be accountable to all of these audiences.

We want to be accountable to what we learned from all of those audiences. We want all of those audiences to see themselves as responsible for the future of arts and culture in St. Louis. We want each of those audiences to know that the others are paying attention and to hear each other's needs, ideas, and concerns, because we believe the responsibility for leading us to the stronger St. Louis we imagine does not rest with any single audience. Instead, we believe that a brighter future will happen only when all of these audiences work together toward a common vision.

Thus, we are sharing insights and perspectives from all audiences here so everyone can see and understand the wide variety of perspectives that belong in and are vital parts of this conversation.

Each of these audiences is deeply invested, has a distinct perspective, and holds great insight. We all went through this process together. Thus, all of these voices should be included in our efforts as we move forward together.



EVOKE Community
Listening Session
Old North St. Louis

WHY EQUITY MATTERS

EVOKE, the community engagement phase of the visioning process, was conceived as an inclusive and broad-based listening effort. The Thought Leaders Forum (TLF), serving as advisor to the process and representing diverse sectors of St. Louis, convened to explore the ideas residents shared for advancing the region through the arts.

The TLF began its work by acknowledging what it heard—that the region has a vibrant arts and culture sector which ensures a full and creative life for many residents but not nearly for all. Opportunities for creativity are markedly limited for people of color, particularly for those in historically under-resourced communities.

The first step to achieving a greater sharing of the region's cultural wealth is understanding that a real and complex web of inequities exist—from the lack of access to the arts to funding systems that disadvantage cultural organizations representing and serving those communities of color. In St. Louis, this demographic fares worse than their White counterparts across every age and income level when it comes to cultural and other societal outcomes.

When equity is achieved, all St. Louisans have an equal chance of being exposed to the arts, participating in the arts, and enjoying the benefits of the arts, regardless of the color of their skin, their gender, socio-economic status, or the zip code in which they live.

Equity matters—not just for the marginalized, but for all of St. Louis working to reestablish its standing as a world-class region. When residents see themselves included and supported, St. Louis can emerge as a place of contagious community pride. An equitable St. Louis becomes a place where more people want to live than leave, and it can easily attract the talent and resources it needs to grow and thrive.

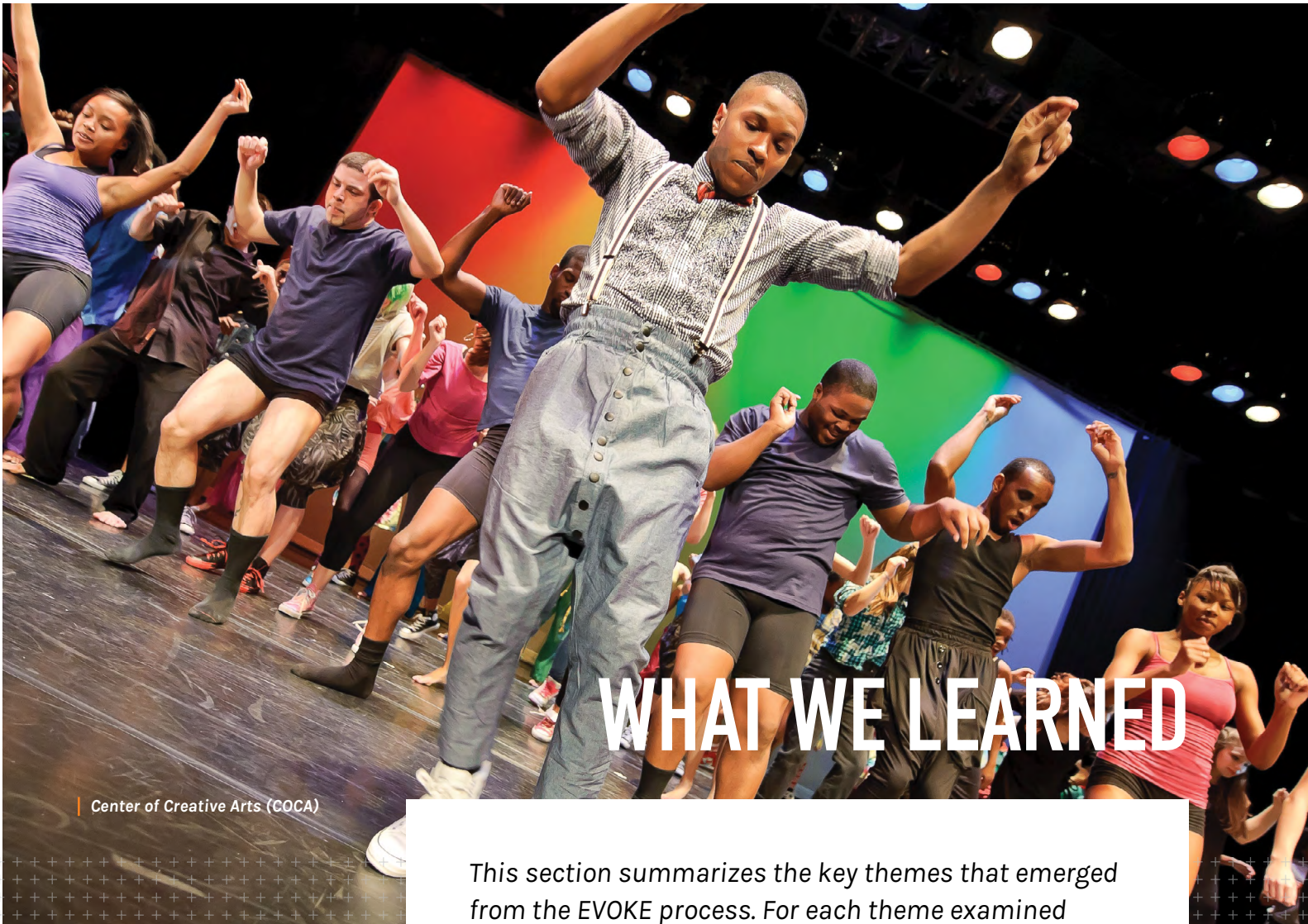
To envision a more ideal state, the TLF invested time in creating a shared definition of "equity," which for them was establishing conditions that enable every person to succeed—where a person's racial identity would not determine the possibility for a good life.

THOUGHT LEADERS FORUM DEFINITION OF EQUITY

Equity is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that prevent the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the processes of institutions or systems and ensuring that resources intended for public benefit are distributed with an awareness of the root causes of outcome disparities within our society.

With equity defined, the TLF created a framework—a set of assumptions and guiding principles—to consider the priorities identified by the community but through an equity lens.

Achieving equity is complex work that no one entity can accomplish alone. The TLF challenged RAC as the initiator of the visioning process and most influential public arts funder in the region to first do the internal work needed to strengthen its own capacity to serve as an advocate for equity and then to lead the charge of galvanizing the community around an equity agenda for the arts.



Center of Creative Arts (COCA)

WHAT WE LEARNED

This section summarizes the key themes that emerged from the EVOKE process. For each theme examined below, we have included feedback on St. Louis' current strengths and challenges and a summary of what St. Louisans want to see in the future.

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To illustrate the passion, wisdom, and diversity of perspectives we heard throughout the process, we have included several direct quotations in this section. However, to encourage candor in our interviews, listening sessions, and group discussions, we promised everyone anonymity. Therefore, for most of the quotes included here, we have identified only the context in which the quote was spoken, and not who said it.

ST. LOUIS HAS A RICH CULTURAL HISTORY, AND ATTITUDES ABOUT ARTS PARTICIPATION ARE CHANGING

St. Louis has a rich cultural life. Through decades of sustained leadership, the region's arts and cultural world has evolved to include major cultural institutions, a strong and growing community of mid- and small-sized arts organizations, an expanding population of individual artists, and nationally recognized arts events.

Several long-standing and progressive policies, like those that established the Metropolitan Zoological Park and Museum District (ZMD) and that designated a percent of hotel/motel taxes to support the arts (administered by the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC)), provide stability to the arts sector.

“What is new [in St. Louis] is that if you want to be the creator—a program, an event—people aren’t asking for permission as much, they are just making it happen.”

— Community Leader Interview

St. Louis' arts and cultural resources also include arts and entertainment districts like Downtown, Grand Center, and Forest Park and emerging and established neighborhood arts and culture corridors like the Grove, Cherokee Street, South Grand, and 14th Street in Old North. These newer arts amenities support the vitality and energy of their respective neighborhoods, the region as a whole, and the regional economy.

“‘There’s so much to miss’ is an interesting way to think about it. There’s just so much out there to do, to see, to experience, and you don’t hear about it all.”

— Community Listening Session, West County



Thanks to this wide variety of access points, arts and culture happen everywhere in St. Louis, from the church to the concert hall and from the street to the museum to the many parks. St. Louis also has philanthropic support and leadership, both public and private, that other cities envy.

Yet even with this vibrant arts and culture scene, many St. Louisans feel the community suffers from an inferiority complex.

“St. Louis has a compelling fine arts scene, for a city of its size. Spectacular and hyper accessible. Like D.C., many things here are free. More people participate than in other cities I have lived in. But we beat ourselves up—we don’t appreciate what we have.”

— Community Leader Interview



The arts matter to St. Louisans

St. Louisans told us emphatically that they care about arts and culture and believe that it impacts their own lives and St. Louis as a region. More than 94% of all survey respondents said arts and culture are somewhat or very important to them, and 97% said they are somewhat or very important for St. Louis.

“When looking as a young adult for a place to settle, I looked at the arts as part of what I wanted. Having the arts as part of my life is important—having culture is how I stay connected—on a spiritual level, with other people.”

— Community Listening Session, North St. Louis

“St. Louis is still a great music city. And unlike New Orleans or Chicago, St. Louis has blues, ragtime, rock ‘n roll, many different musical forms. Musicians here have a lot of options for performing spaces or clubs. There are also great clubs that support local artists, including blues artists. There are more blues venues [here] than in Chicago.”

— Community Leader Interview

St. Louisans often speak about arts and culture in terms of heritage or place

“What are my cultural experiences in North St. Louis? It’s about feeling a connection to the place and to the land. Woven and grounded.”

— Community Listening Session, North St. Louis

Many people practice their personal arts interests informally on their own, such as playing their instrument or singing in a choir. In a society where there is inequitable access to traditional arts institutions, people now often pursue their cultural interests outside of the nonprofit arts and cultural world.

However, despite all of these points of access, some people are still alienated from “the arts” entirely.

“Some people in the community view art as an elitist undertaking and do not truly recognize how many items and experiences they need, use, and love throughout their days as being ‘art.’”

— Evocation Evening

ST. LOUISANS ARE ACTIVE IN THE ARTS



PARTICIPATED IN AN ARTS OR CULTURAL ACTIVITY WITHIN THE LAST 6 MONTHS

6/10



HAD READ A NOVEL, SHORT STORY, OR POEM WITHIN 6 MONTHS

94%



OF ST. LOUISANS SAID ARTS AND CULTURE ARE SOMEWHAT OR VERY IMPORTANT TO THEM

| EVOKE Online Survey Respondents

The way people participate in the arts is changing

But while so many St. Louisans said arts and culture are important, the way people participate in arts and culture is changing. Adult attendance at traditional events is declining, mirroring national trends. But more people are participating in the arts themselves, becoming makers and creators in some way—as photographers, quilters, writers, choristers, or members of the band.

“One of the challenges is that people think, ‘The artists are “over there.”’ People need to start thinking of themselves as creative.”

— Community Leader Interview

“What is new [in St. Louis] is that if you want to be the creator—a program, an event—people aren’t asking for permission as much, they are just making it happen.”

— Community Leader Interview

The arts and culture continue to be supported by private, public, and corporate philanthropy. But a large and growing artist community is now supported by the nonprofit arts sector and participating in the “gig” economy. While this offers less stability, it creates more opportunities for more artists to teach, operate their own businesses, and create work that advances their careers as artists.

Technology is giving artists access to wider audiences than ever before and exposing audiences to a wider range of artists and art forms. Technology is also changing people’s expectations about work, play, and how they can engage with the arts.

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

FREEDOM AND OPPORTUNITY TO CREATE AND ENJOY THE ARTS

St. Louisans envision a region where all residents have the freedom and ability to lead the creative life they imagine for themselves and their families. In this future, everyone—regardless of the background they come from or neighborhood where they live—shares in the region’s extraordinary cultural inheritance, and communities are strengthened, uplifted, and connected through arts and cultural experiences.

St. Louisans want arts and culture to be more a part of their everyday lives. They value the small and the local—experiences that are integrated into daily life and into their neighborhoods. And because St. Louis is so much a collection of neighborhoods, they want arts and culture to celebrate that community identity and history.

“Art on the streets and in the community seems like the biggest thing. Just decorate the heck out of St. Louis. Turn those abandoned buildings into pieces of art. The ones that are just walls, the old warehouses downtown, the ones that have those old advertisements. They are the history of their neighborhood, the heyday of St. Louis. Boosting them up, celebrating those things. Our city has had amazing times and celebrating that, the beauty behind it, the history behind it, that’s good.”

— Community Listening Session, Cherokee

In a shifting arts and culture landscape, many St. Louisans said they want to curate their own cultural experiences and engage with the arts on their own terms, when, where, and how it works for them. They want the arts to be freed from its constraints, so that it can be a part of their daily lives: on the street, on the walls, and in the neighborhood.

ARTS EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT, AND ST. LOUISANS WANT MORE OF IT

Again and again, through surveys, interviews, and group discussions, with residents, arts and cultural organizations, and artists, we heard a call for more arts education, especially for St. Louis children and youth, in school, after school, and in the community.

Participants said they want more arts education and enrichment opportunities for youth:

- ☐ To expose them to the arts, so they understand and appreciate all that is available to them in the arts in St. Louis
- ☐ To encourage interaction with diverse cultures, so they are more knowledgeable and appreciative of people from different backgrounds
- ☐ To provide equitable access to arts education and enrichment opportunities—after school and in neighborhoods
- ☐ To support and enhance the teaching of other school subjects

STAGES St. Louis



St. Louis already benefits from a large community of arts and non-arts organizations providing a broad range of arts education experiences for school-aged youth.

Yet while there are many arts organizations with education and enrichment programs of their own, these organizations acknowledge that they are disconnected and siloed from each other in ways that diminish their collective impact.

This disconnection impedes St. Louis' ability to deliver high quality arts education to all children. St. Louis also lacks development opportunities for teaching artists and administrators, as well as sustained funding sources for arts education, organizational capacity building, effective program evaluation and documentation of impact, and centralized information resources.

Arts education isn't happening in all schools

While St. Louis offers a wide range of the arts education opportunities outside the school setting, the arts education available to students in schools is wildly unequal.

Some schools provide arts-rich programming, while others have none. There are now generations of people who have come through the St. Louis Public Schools who have never had arts education—meaning not only are there kids in school now who have never had arts education, but also there are parents of kids in school now who never had arts education either. And there are teachers in classrooms today who have never taught students who were also getting arts education, meaning they can't even speak from experience to the benefits of including the arts in a classroom lesson.

"The education systems is troubling, many inequities. Lots of private this and that for more affluent kids."

— Arts Education Forum

This disparity has led to generations of people in St. Louis who have been deprived of an essential educational experience and the enrichment it brings to other academic learning and in many ways have been disconnected from a creative life.



Center of Creative Arts (COCA)

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

ALL CHILDREN TO HAVE OPPORTUNITIES AND ENCOURAGEMENT IN THE ARTS

St. Louisans envision a region where all children experience the arts and develop their own creative abilities. All children have quality arts learning at their school and in their neighborhood.

St. Louisans see arts education as an equity issue: Everyone should have access to it. They believe arts education builds understanding and teaches cultural competency from a young age.

"It's about the schools. Invest in getting arts back into the regular curriculum. Arts organizations are trying to fill the gaps but lots of kids are not getting any drama, music, or dance. We have to invest in our young people."

— Arts Organization Listening Session

Arts education stakeholders said they want RAC to play a leadership role in encouraging a system-level, collaborative approach to address these issues, and to build up the arts education infrastructure in St. Louis.

ARTISTS ARE A CULTURAL ASSET AND NEED MORE SUPPORT

St. Louis is home to talented artists who are passionate about St. Louis, choosing to live here for a variety of reasons. But many of these artists feel their opportunities to thrive here are limited and expressed the need for greater support.

Through surveys, discussion groups, and neighborhood listening sessions, local artists listed family connections, affordability, and the ease of Midwestern life as reasons they choose St. Louis. But the factors that make St. Louis a difficult place to live and work made for a longer list.

“People are having to do so much more than their specialty. They have to be their own PR people, artist, etc. There is burnout from performers who are doing four jobs in addition to being an artist.”

— Artist Listening Session

“People move because there isn’t a support system here, or they burn out ... [There is not only a] lack of support for emerging fields, but also a lack of community or connectivity to support [the talent].”

— Community Leader Interview

Many artists expressed frustrations that there are not enough affordable living and working spaces in St. Louis and that there is not really one cohesive artist community.

Among those who are aware of St. Louis’ rich arts community, many—including local critics, media, cultural institutions, and audiences—often diminish the value of local artists over artists from other places.

“The perception seems to be that out-of-town artists are more desirable.”

— Artist Listening Session

Yet despite these challenges, artists recognized that working in larger markets would make them “smaller fish in the bigger pond,” which would bring its own set of challenges.



Craft Alliance
Center of Art + Design

Equity is an issue for artists too

Many artists said that they see and experience the same disparities of race, gender, and ability that are pervasive in society in both the nonprofit and commercial arts sectors. Barriers raised by racism and segregation add to the challenges they already face as working artists, further hindering their careers.

“Would like to see an artist community where you can live and work regardless of who you know or what your background is.”

— Artist Listening Session

Artists commended RAC for its leadership in focusing on the well-being of artists, beginning with the commissioning of research to study the needs of artists living, and working in the region and continuing with the establishment of two funding programs specifically for artists. Both the Artist Support Grant Program and Artist Fellowships were praised as pivotal developments within the artist community that deserve to grow.

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

ARTISTS TO BE SUPPORTED AS THE CULTURAL ASSET THEY ARE

St. Louisans envision a region where artists receive the support they need to thrive and where connection and cross-pollination are defining characteristics of a thriving art scene in St. Louis.

For arts and culture to thrive in St. Louis, local artists must be nurtured, supported, and celebrated. St. Louis is capable of being seen as an arts destination—as a place where artists choose to go, not just a place where they come from—but if St. Louis is to become such a destination, we will need to invest in artists and the infrastructure they need to flourish.

Artists spoke of needing support and strategies to help them find and afford spaces where they can live and work, including places for performances, exhibitions and rehearsals, and continuing education.

Artists also expressed the need for more marketing and promotion support, and more opportunities to collaborate and network, to forge a stronger network of artists across the region. Many artists see themselves as creative entrepreneurs and want to be more connected to St. Louis' growing start-up scene.

“Capacity building grants for collaboration and festivals would be good for artists and institutions. [We also need] social marketing training for artists.”

— Artist Listening Session

Overall, artists see themselves as under-utilized and overlooked community assets. They want to make a bigger impact on the civic life of the community, to contribute more to the vibrancy and thriving of the region, and to meet people where they are—often outside of traditional arts and culture venues—to help them lead diverse, creative lives.

Beyond This Threshold Exhibit
Basil Kincaid and Audrey Simes
Regional Arts Commission

THE ARTS ARE A STRONG ECONOMIC DRIVER AND ARE ENHANCED BY PUBLIC ART

In 2016, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) participated in the Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 report, a national study of the economic impact of spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences. The research study, conducted by Americans for the Arts, was the fifth study over the past 20 years to measure the impact of arts spending on local jobs, income paid to local residents, and revenue generated to local and state governments.

The findings showed that the arts are a major economic engine in St. Louis.

The non-profit arts and culture sector is a \$591 million industry in the Greater St. Louis Area, supporting 19,129 full-time equivalent jobs and generating \$57.7 million in local (\$28.6 million) and state (\$29.1 million) government revenue.

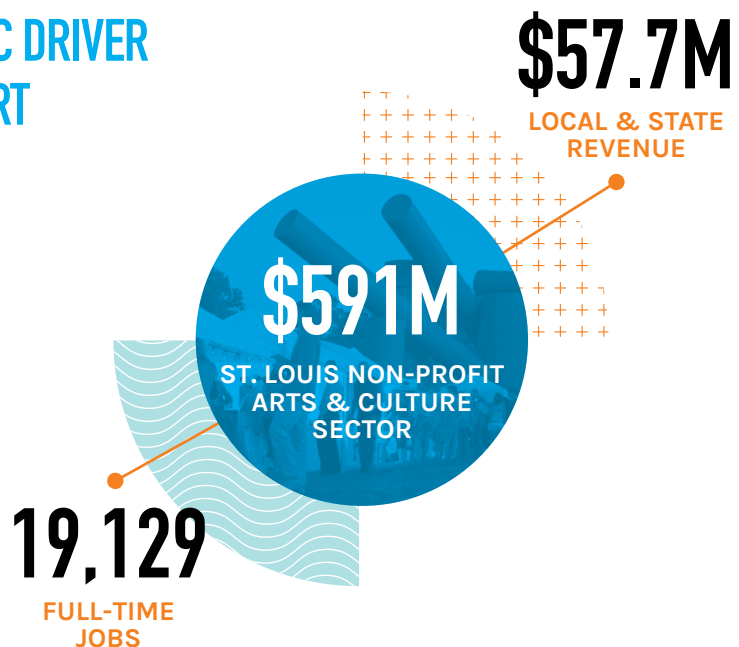
The industry also draws more than 11.7 million people to an arts event each year—more than twice the attendance at all St. Louis professional sporting events combined (4.7 million).

At a time when governments at all levels are faced with tough budget choices, the study shows that support for the arts does not come at the expense of economic development. Rather, it is a vital industry that supports jobs, generates revenue, and drives a creativity-based economy.

Moreover, a vibrant arts community not only keeps residents and their discretionary spending closer to home, it also attracts visitors who spend money and help local businesses thrive and fosters a more competitive and innovative workforce for a variety of industries in the St. Louis area.

“Many people don’t think of nonprofit arts organizations as businesses, but this study makes clear that the arts are a formidable industry in our community—employing people locally, purchasing goods and services from local merchants, and helping to drive tourism and economic development.”

— Michael Scully, regional president, PNC Bank, and past chairman, Regional Arts Commission



WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

THE ARTS TO GROW AS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE

St. Louisans envision a region where the arts are a major economic driver, both among local residents who support arts and culture of all kinds and also as a draw for tourists who come to St. Louis specifically to experience great arts and culture.

While the arts are proven to be a significant economic driver, there is still room for growth—as much of the feedback in this document makes clear.

Addressing the challenges that respondents raised throughout this process will help boost the economic impact of the arts in St. Louis. The region can also benefit from bold initiatives that invest in the arts and bring potential for great return on investment.

One such effort is the Downtown Public Art Plan, which aims to transform the experience of downtown St. Louis’ streets, sidewalks, and public spaces; highlight the culture of downtown as a place for creativity and possibility; and reinforce the inclusive and welcoming nature of downtown.



Evocation Evening
Selection from The St. Louis Map Room
Regional Arts Commission

ARTS AND CULTURE ARE HELD BACK BY FRAGMENTATION AND SEGREGATION, JUST LIKE ST. LOUIS

An undercurrent that surfaced throughout the listening process was that the fragmentation and segregation that holds St. Louis back affects arts and culture too.

“St. Louis has a rich history of creators. Artists who have made work and developed institutions. Like the city itself though, the cultural community is very segregated and stratified by race and class. Though people talk about diversity, it’s all talk.”

— Community Leader Interview

The Audience Demand Study, which was conducted as part of the community engagement phase of EVOKE, reinforced concerns about fragmentation and segregation that we heard throughout the process.

Data from the study showed that many geographic areas of St. Louis are well-served by the arts and culture organizations while others

are not. It also suggested that demand for the arts is consistently strong in many areas of St. Louis, while it is exceptionally weak in others.

Some respondents felt that this disconnection and disjointedness also holds back efforts to achieve equity.

“There’s a lack of vision and pulling together. Some institutions have equity plans, but there isn’t a shared approach. What would happen if the large art museums in St. Louis came together to create a common pipeline for talent? ... Arts institutions operate in a decentralized manner. We need active incentives to get them to come together.”

— Community Leader Interview

The silos within the arts community—and the way the arts community too often operates within its own silo—were repeatedly cited as concerns that the arts community should work to address.

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

CONNECTION AND COLLABORATION WITHIN THE ARTS, AND THE ARTS TO LEAD COLLABORATION WITH OTHER SECTORS

St. Louisans envision a region where a broad diversity of artists and arts organizations work together and support each other and where the arts and culture sector is a leader in modeling regional-scale collaboration and cooperation.

The arts are already working at the intersection of health, community and economic development, transportation, tourism, faith, education, and other sectors. But what we heard from participants is that they want to see even more connections between the arts and other nonprofit and social sectors, because they see this as a key way that the arts can help advance positive social change.

“What would I like to see? Communication, transportation, collaboration ...”

— Community Listening Session, St. Charles

Non-arts social service organizations that offer arts programs, such as Beyond Housing and Better Family Life, also talked about the impact the arts have on their efforts to develop more livable neighborhoods. They also said they want more opportunities to partner with the arts sector.

We heard many ideas about what such partnerships and collaborations might produce, including new ways to support more high-quality after school programming, affordable live-work spaces for artists created by converting vacated properties in divested neighborhoods, and new rehearsal, performance, and creation spaces that could be created by connecting artists and arts organizations with churches that have under-utilized spaces.

Though many people felt that funding was a limiting factor in bringing these ideas to life, people agreed that working to clear that hurdle was worth the pursuit, because of the potential social benefits for artists, arts organizations, individuals, communities, and the region.

EVOKE Community
Listening Session
Chesterfield

RACIAL INEQUITY IS AN ISSUE IN THE ARTS TOO, AND EQUITY MUST BE CONSIDERED IN ANY VISION OF THE FUTURE

In the wake of the events of Ferguson, many people we spoke with acknowledged a sense of commitment and urgency to address the racial inequity that currently holds back the St. Louis region.

"I hope to see our community deal in an open, respectful way with the painful problem of racial injustice."

— Evocation Evening

The challenges to racial equity within the arts include:

- ☐ The impact of segregation on equitable access to arts and culture for people of color
- ☐ Historic inequities in funding to organizations of color
- ☐ Lack of career pathways into arts administration for young people of color

Political, geographic, and social fragmentation of the City and County, rooted in the history of racially segregated housing, a tradition of working in separate spheres, and the lack of and resistance to regional cooperation were all identified as reasons for these gaps. Issues of class were also raised in the equity conversation.



Arts learning for youth outside of school, in community venues, is just as important to St. Louisans as school-based arts education. Many youth, especially lower-income Black youth, are left behind by arts programming. St. Louis needs more ways to let youth "see themselves" in the arts.

"I want arts services in the neighborhood, coming to the children. I understand it must be organized, sequential, with rules. I want a social worker there as well—we see some unacceptable behaviors in the recreation centers. The kids are mostly but not all Black. They are hungry for programming and want it to be in a safe place. They mostly walk to the rec centers. Some are near public housing."

— Community Leader Interview

RAC ARTS ORGANIZATION STUDY



Although St. Louis often defines itself as a bi-racial, Black/White community, the population that does not fit into that binary is growing and must be considered and included in conversations about equity and in cultural planning efforts.

Participants voiced the need for organizational development for African-American cultural organizations, which tend to be small and neighborhood-based. Organizations representing African-American communities, and other communities of color, have less access to funding, board members, and other resources needed to fulfill their missions. These issues must be remedied for those organizations to fully serve their communities, and St. Louis.

“The ZMD is unique. But minority institutions are not part of the ZMD and have not benefited proportionately.”

— Community Leader Interview

Those institutions that benefit from traditional funding sources, meanwhile, tend to lack diversity in their leadership.

“Leadership of mainstream institutions here is homogeneous—all White. ... With the museums, decisions are made by White boards, and diversity and inclusion work is done in terms of outreach. They’re working hard to get people of diverse backgrounds involved, but it doesn’t change the decision-makers.”

— Community Leader Interview

The leadership in the larger arts institutions also expressed the need for capacity building to support equity. Of the 32 organizations surveyed, 66% have developed programs to broaden the diversity of their staff and/or board, and 80% have developed or participated in efforts focused on broadening the diversity of their audiences. In individual interviews, both volunteer and professional arts leaders expressed frustration in their efforts to diversify their boards and staffs and said they need help.

Participants discussed diversity broadly, including gender, sexuality, religion, disability, immigrant status, age, and class. But for a significant percent of those we heard from, the primary concern was addressing racial inequity, and the impact that the persistent Black/White divide has on the region’s quality of life.

ARTS AND CULTURE TO ADVANCE EQUITY

St. Louisans envision a region where arts and culture lead the way in pursuing and fostering racial and cultural equity, bridging communities and creating inclusive common ground for both shared experiences and for difficult but necessary conversations.

St. Louis may not have chosen to be at the leading edge of the national conversation on racial equity. But St. Louisans understand that we are there nevertheless and want St. Louis to appreciate the opportunity and responsibility that comes from being in that position and step up to be a national leader in making real progress on racial and cultural equity. We heard a strong sense of frustration with ongoing racial divisions and discord and with the uneven pace of implementation of the calls to action recommended in the Ferguson Commission report.

“Place matters—St. Louis is a city where the place you grow up in determines your future, your outcomes. St. Louis has addressed race many times. If we don’t make progress now, we will get pinged by the community. We can’t get tired yet.”

— Community Leader Interview

St. Louisans believe arts and culture can play a greater role in achieving equity. They want to see socially integrated, vibrant communities where all are reflected in arts and cultural offerings. They see arts and culture as a way to bridge communities, encouraging St. Louisans to experience different areas of the city.

“There is collaboration happening and intention around bringing the community in. Collaboration could play a really important part in moving forward, [making art] more visible and more a part of the community.”

— Artist Listening Session

In St. Louis, arts and culture have been and continue to be a powerful tool for social change. Artists were at the forefront of responding to the events in Ferguson and do impressive work tackling current racial and social justice issues. St. Louis is known nationally as an innovator in art-as-social-activism.

“Art has often been a response to so many different times in history when people were going through difficult times and has been a way of healing. I think that is true with the art coming out of St. Louis, in response to how everyone is feeling and engaging around social and political issues.”

— Artist Listening Session

The EVOKE Thought Leaders Forum developed an equity framework to guide efforts to drive significant change in the arts and cultural community. The framework acknowledges that race—Black and White—must remain a focus, as it is in *Forward Through Ferguson*. It also acknowledges that cultural equity is important, including for Hispanics/Latinx peoples, Bosnians, other immigrants, LGBTQ+ people, women, people with disabilities, and many others.

“We need to be nurturing leadership outside of the closed circle. The next group may not come from the same place they have come from before.”

— Community Leader Interview

St. Louis, as a region, is at the forefront of grappling with racial and social injustice. The arts and culture sector, with its extraordinary assets and broad reach, have a responsibility to work to address inequity, starting within its own organizations and funding structures, and also by being at the table with other organizations to work toward a more unified, equitable community.



EVOKE Community
Listening Session
St. Charles

RAC'S VISION FOR ARTS AND CULTURE IN ST. LOUIS

As we listened to the diverse voices of the different audiences who have been a part of this process, several key themes, challenges, needs, resources, and opportunities emerged, as described in the What We Learned section.

With these as our guide, we have identified key priorities where the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) plans to focus its efforts and attention. These priorities, outlined below, will drive the development of a collective strategy for arts and culture in St. Louis. For each priority, we have also identified potential strategies to support this work.

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PRIORITY

ESTABLISH ARTS EDUCATION FOR ALL AS A COMMUNITY-WIDE COMMITMENT

Strategies

- Assess the St. Louis City and County arts education ecosystem to determine strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities for growth
- Organize a locally-based coalition of arts education advocates and key stakeholders to enact systemic change
- Develop an online, searchable clearinghouse of arts education program opportunities for parents and teachers
- Conduct research to develop baseline standards of excellence for arts education and logic models to determine paths to success

PRIORITY

POSITION THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR AS A LEADER IN ADVANCING EQUITY

Strategies

- Build organizational capacity of nonprofit arts and culture organizations of color through funding opportunities and technical assistance
- Prioritize support for low-income communities where the demand for the arts is high and access to the arts is low
- Enable increased diversity and inclusion in the cultural workforce
- Provide ongoing anti-bias/anti-racism training for nonprofit arts organization board and staff members as well as local funders
- Align racial equity efforts with *Forward through Ferguson* and other local and national efforts that are actively invested in doing this work

PRIORITY

AMPLIFY ARTS AND CULTURE AS AN ECONOMIC ENGINE AND CONTRIBUTOR TO ST. LOUIS' HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE

Strategies

- Increase promotion of St. Louis as a cultural tourism destination competitive with other like-sized cities
- Launch an initiative to advance the development of cultural districts in St. Louis City and County
- Increase visibility of local arts organizations and artists through regional marketing and branding campaigns
- Better integrate public art into city and county infrastructure through planning for parks, transportation, and housing developments
- Support and promote art at its highest level of achievement
- Leverage partnerships with our most successful institutions to help achieve the priorities set forth in this cultural vision



PRIORITY

INVITE ALL ST. LOUISANS INTO CREATIVITY TO ADVANCE ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN THE ARTS AND ENCOURAGE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT

Strategies

- ☐ Support the growth and development of a network of cultural councils throughout St. Louis City and County to increase access and funding for the arts
- ☐ Increase support to parks and libraries in low-income neighborhoods that currently have the least access to the arts
- ☐ Develop partnerships with diverse organizations to transform underutilized spaces into gathering places for creative and community use
- ☐ Increase opportunities for more people to actively participate in the arts



PRIORITY

ATTRACT AND RETAIN A HIGH-PERFORMING COMMUNITY OF PROFESSIONAL ARTISTS AND CREATIVE ENTREPRENEURS

Strategies

- ☐ Increase support to individual artists through fellowships, residencies, and training
- ☐ Partner with developers and other foundations to reclaim vacated properties as habitable live/work spaces for artists in revitalizing neighborhoods
- ☐ Support the development of teaching artists, including training and employment opportunities

PRIORITY

USE THIS VISION TO FORGE NEW PARTNERSHIPS, COLLABORATIONS, AND ALLIANCES

Strategies

- ☐ Actively seek opportunities to connect with, listen to, and support artists and arts organizations that RAC has not previously worked with
- ☐ Facilitate and support new connections between artists, arts organizations, and other organizations through the region
- ☐ Create opportunities and space for artists, arts organizations, and leaders and organizations from other sectors to convene, network, and share ideas



Thought Leaders Forum
Regional Arts Commission

RAC'S PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

To make the vision described in the previous section a reality, we know we need to do more than just map out the path; we need to define how the path will be traveled.

Put another way, we need to define not just where we want to go, but how we need to conduct ourselves as an organization in order to get there.

Another key theme we heard from residents is that the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) should take a leadership role in advancing the vision and identified priorities.

In listening to the community and hearing their wants and needs, it became clear that people understand and appreciate the role of the arts in St. Louis—and that there is a shared desire to make the arts stronger and more relevant to people's lives.

Those conversations also made clear the need for an organization to step forward and serve as the catalyst for this work, to convene, challenge, and lead other organizations and institutions—and that this catalyst should be RAC.

As a publicly funded agency with a broad mandate to support the arts, RAC holds a unique role in the cultural landscape of St. Louis but has too often been seen primarily as a grantmaker.

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This process made clear that the time is right for RAC to expand its capacities beyond its role as grantmaker and consider ways to fulfill a bolder mission—by leveraging its resources and influence, facilitating partnerships, and serving as St. Louis’ leading voice for the arts.

Fortunately, RAC has already demonstrated success in this broader role. The Community Arts Training (CAT) Institute, a RAC initiative, has supported people seeking new ways of using the arts as a tool for social change for more than 20 years. The CAT Institute has more than 300 alumni who can support this work.

The opportunity is now for RAC to go further to meet the needs of the community by taking a clearer leadership role in advancing the priorities identified throughout this process.

Below, then, are RAC’s Principles of Practice—a set of operating guidelines adopted as a result of what was learned from this process that articulate how we plan to lead going forward.



REMAIN IN DIALOGUE WITH COMMUNITY VOICE

We have learned so much from this experience of engaging with community voice throughout this process. That said, we also know that we didn’t hear from everybody.

For both of those reasons, we want to keep listening.

We commit to making community listening one of our principles of practice. That means regularly creating opportunities to engage in dialogue with members of the community—especially those who have traditionally been left out of the arts and culture conversation in St. Louis—so that we can include and incorporate their voices into our decisions and our work. That also means asking difficult questions and embracing honest feedback, even when it is difficult to hear.

REMAIN FLEXIBLE AND OPEN TO NEW IDEAS

We don’t know what technology is coming next that will change everything. We don’t know what will change politically, socially, or culturally in St. Louis, the nation, or the world.

The only thing we can predict with confidence is that there will be change.

Because change is constant, we know that RAC must be a dynamic, evolving organization if it is to best foster and support the arts in St. Louis and ensure the best and highest use of the funds that the citizens of St. Louis City and County have entrusted us with—even as the landscape changes in unimaginable ways. That means we must be flexible, adaptable and open to new ideas—especially those shared through our regular engagement with the community.

EMPHASIZE OUR SHARED HUMANITY

Art reminds us of our shared humanity, of the universal joy and struggle of being human.

When we make art, we convey our unique point of view, we share our human experience, and we express our deepest emotions.

When we experience art, we see beauty, we feel love, we experience emotions—and we understand a piece of a human experience outside of our own in a way that speaks to us across space and time.

Art, whether we make it or experience it, transforms us and transports us.

We all want this opportunity for transformation for ourselves and for our loved ones. This common desire means we intrinsically understand that all of us are deserving of the power of art in our lives. Because art is not just democratizing—it is life affirming and humanizing. Thus, emphasizing our shared humanity and advocating for all of us to share in the arts equally reminds us of the call to pursue equity, not only in arts and culture, but also in every sphere of civic life.

BE A CONSTANT CATALYST FOR CONNECTION, COLLABORATION, AND CHANGE

Fragmentation and segregation were identified as key factors dividing our region and holding St. Louis back from being its best. These factors affect arts and culture just as they affect the larger region.

The fragmentation and segregation that are hallmarks of present-day St. Louis evolved over generations, accelerated by big policy decisions, and reinforced by thousands of institutional and personal choices. We know, then, that the transformation we seek will not come easily or quickly, but through consistent and intentional work. As stated in *Forward Through Ferguson*, "If change is to happen, we first have to have a culture of trying."

RAC has an opportunity and a responsibility to be a leader and a change-maker. We know that we are well-positioned to forge the kinds of new partnerships, collaborations, and alliances needed to break through this fragmentation and segregation. We must adopt a catalyst mindset and think, constantly, about how to make connection and collaboration part of a daily practice.

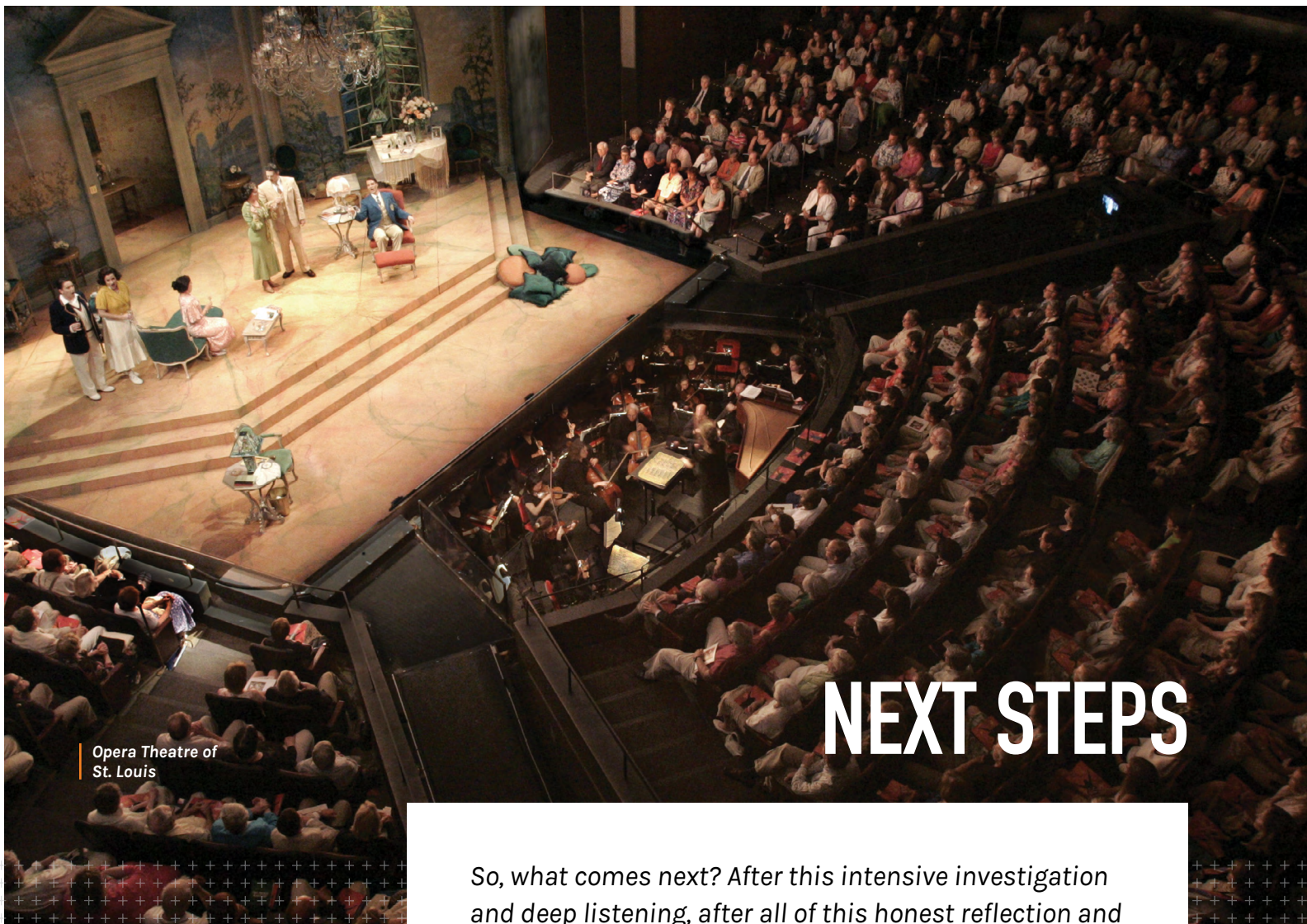
We also know that neither RAC, nor even the arts community, can create the change we need alone—we must work in partnership with others. Knowing when to lead, when to follow, or when to simply show up when voices need to be heard is part of the work of learning what works best for a better St. Louis.

We commit to these principles as we pursue the priorities outlined in this document—in our strategy development, in each initiative we undertake, and in our daily activities.

We ask everyone to hold us accountable to these principles and to help us move forward a new agenda for the arts.



Humans of St. Louis Exhibit
Regional Arts Commission



NEXT STEPS

So, what comes next? After this intensive investigation and deep listening, after all of this honest reflection and acknowledgment of hard truths, what happens now?

It would be great to announce something major—some major new initiative, some earth-shattering new grant, some headline-making partnership. And, there may be many such announcements along the way. But the next steps for the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) are to ask ourselves and our stakeholders the tough questions about how we shift from who we have been to the organization we have described in this document, and how we evolve from doing things the way we have done them in the past to doing things the way we have mapped out here.


This sort of work isn't glamorous, but it can't be skipped. Those day-by-day steps we need to take are necessary to take the theory we've presented in this document and turn it into practice.

With that in mind, here's what we can tell you are our immediate next steps for RAC—and some steps that you as a reader of this document and member of the community can take, right now:

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WHAT RAC WILL DO RIGHT NOW

- ☐ Continue the deep public involvement that was at the heart of the visioning process
- ☐ Launch an organizational strategic planning process to closely align our work with the vision and priorities outlined in this document
- ☐ Continue anti-bias/anti-racism training process
- ☐ Identify and form partnerships with community groups aligned with the priorities

WHAT ARTISTS AND ARTS AND CULTURE ORGANIZATIONS CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- ☐ Read this vision document and encourage others to do so—and discuss it with them
- ☐ Choose a priority that aligns with your values and make it your own
- ☐ Seek out and engage in anti-bias/anti-racism training
- ☐ Participate in the cultural activities of others
- ☐ Encourage new and diverse audiences to participate in your programs

WHAT EVERY ST. LOUISAN CAN DO RIGHT NOW

- ☐ Read this vision document and encourage others to do so—and discuss it with them
- ☐ Stay connected to **ARTS &** by signing up for email announcements at vision.racstl.org
- ☐ Choose a priority that aligns with your values and make it your own
- ☐ Seek out and engage in anti-bias/anti-racism training
- ☐ Explore a neighborhood you have never visited and participate in a cultural activity
- ☐ Demand more arts in your local school
- ☐ Sign yourself or your children up for art classes
- ☐ Share your house of worship, or other facility you have access to, with local artists who need affordable space
- ☐ Purchase the work of a local artist
- ☐ Tell your elected officials that you want more art in your neighborhood
- ☐ Join a committee or board of a community arts organization
- ☐ Get creative—sing in a choir, play an instrument, write poetry, dance
- ☐ Attend community planning meetings and advocate for public art in your neighborhood

To access the full **ARTS &** report, go to vision.racstl.org.



EVOKE Community
Listening Session
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St. Louis Public Radio

Joe Edwards

Founder and Chair,
St. Louis Walk of Fame

Phyllis Ellison

Director of Entrepreneur Services
and Institutional/Corporate Partnerships, Cortex

Paul Evensen

Senior Vice President for Strategic Initiatives, Wyman Center

Bridget Flood

Executive Director,
Incarnate Word Foundation

Robert Freund, Jr.

Chief Executive Officer,
Regional Health Commission

Jack Galmiche

President and CEO,
Nine Network of Public Media

David Gerth

Executive Director,
Metropolitan Congregations United

Sue Greenberg

Executive Director, Volunteer Lawyers
and Accountants for the Arts (VLAA)

Karin Hagaman

President and CEO, Grand Center, Inc.

Brian Hall

Chief Marketing Officer,
Explore St. Louis

Amos Harris

Developer, Founder,
St. Louis Blues Museum

Rebecca J. (Becky) Hatter

Executive Director,
Big Brothers Big Sisters

Rhonda Hamm-Niebruegge

Director, St. Louis Lambert
International Airport

Leslie Heberlie

Co -Executive Director, Interfaith
Partnership of Greater St. Louis

Lesley Hoffarth

President and Executive Director,
Forest Park Forever Foundation

Amy Hunter

Manager, Diversity & Inclusion,
St. Louis Children’s Hospital

Dan Isom

Retired Chief of Police,
City of St. Louis

Marius Johnson-Malone

Deputy Director, Better Together

Matthew Kerns

Director of Community Engagement
& Programming, St Lou Fringe

Nancy Kranzberg
Philanthropist,
Kranzberg Arts Foundation

Chris Krehmeyer
President/CEO, Beyond Housing

Jack Lane
Executive Producer, STAGES St. Louis

Helen Lee
Founding Principal,
TAO + Lee Associates, Inc.

Carolyn W. Losos
Community Volunteer

Sal Martinez
Executive Director,
North Newstead Association

Tyler Mathews
Executive Director,
Venture Café St. Louis

Jill McGuire
Community Volunteer

Waller McGuire
Executive Director,
St. Louis Public Library

Kevin McKinney
Executive Director,
St. Louis Association of Community
Organizations (SLACO)

Michael McMillan
President & CEO, Urban League of
Metropolitan St. Louis

Eric Moraczewski
Executive Director,
Gateway Arch Park Foundation

Stacey Morse
Executive Director Art Unleashed

John Nations
President/CEO, Bi-State Development

John Posey
Director of Research Services,
East-West Council of Governments

Robert A. Powell
Founder and Executive Director,
Portfolio Gallery & Educational Center

Adolphus Pruitt, II
President, St. Louis City NAACP

Emily Rauh Pulitzer
Chair, Pulitzer Foundation for the Arts

Joe Reagan
President, St. Louis Regional Chamber

Nancy E. Rice
Executive Director, Better Together

Evelyn Rice-Peebles
Commissioner of Recreation,
City of St. Louis

Guillermo A. Rodriguez
President, GAR Consulting

Amy Rome
Principal, The Rome Group

Travis Sheridan
President, CIC Venture Cafe Global
Institute, Inc.

Susan Sherman
Chair, Saint Louis Fashion Fund

Anneliese Stoeber
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St. Louis Area Agency on Aging

Donald Suggs
Publisher & Executive Editor,
The St. Louis American

Todd Swanstrom
Director, Community Builders Network

Gloria Taylor
Founder/CEO, Community Women
Against Hardship

Pam Trapp
Community Volunteer

Bert Vescolani
President and CEO,
St. Louis Science Center

Dwaun Warmack
President,
Harris Stowe State University

Henry Webber
Executive Vice Chancellor for
Administration,
Washington University

Catherine Werner
Sustainability Director, City of
St. Louis – St. Louis City Hall
Office of the Mayor

Otis Williams
Executive Director, St. Louis
Development Corporation (SLDC)

Kathy Winters
Community Volunteer

Arts Funders Roundtable

Austin Skinner
Director of Development,
Missouri Humanities Council

Amy Basore Murphy
Director of Scholarships and Donor
Services, St. Louis Community
Foundation

Vanessa Cooksey
Senior Vice President,
Community Relations, Wells Fargo

Christy E. Gray
Executive Director,
Whitaker Foundation

Chris Hansen
Executive Director,
Kranzberg Arts Foundation

Amber Hersh
Community Investor-Global
Corporate Citizenship, Boeing

Wendy Jaffe
Executive Director,
Trio Foundation of St. Louis



Deborah Marshall

Senior Vice President, Director of
Client and Community Relations, PNC

Kathy Osborn

President and CEO,
Regional Business Council

Cynthia Prost

President and CEO,
Arts and Education Council

Guest Speakers

Michael Castro

First Poet Laureate of St. Louis

Marc Bamuthi Joseph

Chief of Program and Pedagogy

Creative City Alliance

Jason Baucom

Supervisor, Arts and Entertainment,
Chesterfield

Eileen Collins

Director, Parks, Recreation, and the
Arts, Manchester

Kat Douglas

Recreation and Arts Specialist,
Manchester

William Frank

Commissioner of Kirkwood Arts,
Kirkwood

Lan Gao

Intern, VLAA

Anges Garino

Chair, Kirkwood Arts

Darren Granaas

Cultural Arts Coordinator, O'Fallon

Michelle Keesal

Volunteer, Chesterfield Parks

Matthew Kerns

Manager of Programs, Grants,
Arts & Education Council

Sukanya Mani

Arts Administrator, Chesterfield

Tom McCarthy

Director, Parks, Recreation, and Arts,
Chesterfield

Scott Miller

Attorney, VLAA

Larry Perney

City Administrator, Manchester

Jason Vasser

Program Specialist,
Missouri Arts Council

Jeane Vogel

Executive Director, Webster Arts,
Webster Groves

Lynn Wright

Alderman, Town and Country

**Festival of Nations
Street Team**

Alexi Atkinson

Abraham Mera

AEP5 Symposium

Eliot Frick

Founder & CEO, Bigwidesky

Robert L. Lynch

President & CEO,
Americans for the Arts

Karin Hagaman

President and CEO, Grand Center Inc.

Kitty Ratcliffe

President, Explore St. Louis

Wally Siewert, Ph.D.

Director, Civic Engagement,
FOCUS St. Louis

**Community Artist
Facilitators**

Pacia Anderson

Poet, Writer, Visual Artist

Kathryn Bentley

Director, Actor, Teaching Artist

Elaine Cha

Storyteller/Journalist,
Engagement Producer

Sarah Paulsen

Artist, Animator

Freeman Word

Poet, Mentor, Teacher

**Evocation Evening Artist
Facilitators**

Amber Johnson, Ph.D.

Associate Professor of Communication,
St. Louis University, and Founder,
The Justice Fleet

S. Jewell S. McGhee

Visual Artist

MK Stallings

Founder and Executive Director,
UrbArts

Zachary Lesmeister

2017 St. Louis Youth Poet Laureate

De Nichols

Creator, FoodSpark

Sophie Lipman

Co-Organizer, FoodSpark

Maria Kveton

Co-Organizer, FoodSpark

Alisha Fisher

Volunteer, FoodSpark

Alice Bloch

Dancer/Choreographer and Teacher

Emily Cathedral

Facilitator, St. Louis Map Room

Lindy Drew

Co-Founder and Lead Storyteller,
Humans of St. Louis

Ideation Session

Thank you to the artists who gave
their time and brought creativity to
our Ideation Session.

Evocation Exhibition Installation Artists

Amber Johnson, Ph.D.
of The Justice League
Forgiveness Quilt
Diversity Ball Pit

**S. Jewell S. McGhee and
Erin McGrath Rieke**
both of Divinemoira Studio
Waterfall of St. Louis Stories

Center of Creative Arts (COCA)
Selection from The St. Louis Map Room

Gallery Installation Volunteers

Britt Baker

Jessica Ball

Karen Downey

Alison Headley

Liam Charles Janski

Linda Ortiz

John Reskusich

April Silverman

Regina Sykes

Featured Stories

Miles Dela Cruz
Great Rivers Greenway,
Chouteau Greenway

Karin M. Hagaman
Grand Center Arts District

Lamar Harris
Shakespeare Festival,
Shakespeare in the Streets

Christopher Limber
Prison Performing Arts

April Parviz
Intersect STL

**Ra'Geen Washington
Andrea Jarrett**
Saint Louis Symphony, Extra Credit

Kath Vandenberg
Continuity STL

Meeting and Event Locations

Special thanks to the following
organizations for hosting events:

4220 Duncan Building at Cortex

Central Print in Old North St. Louis

City of Chesterfield (City Hall)

City of East St. Louis (City Hall)

Better Family Life

Ferguson Public Library

Foundry Art Centre, St. Charles

Grant's View Library

International Institute

Manchester Police Department

Marquette Recreation Center

Natural Bridge Library

St. Louis ArtWorks

St. Louis Community Foundation

St. Louis Mosaic Project

Tandy Recreation Center

The Griot Museum

Consultants

Bigwidesky
Eliot Frick, Founder & CEO

The Cultural Planning Group
David Plettner-Saunders,
Managing Partner

Humans of St. Louis
Lindy Drew, Co-Founder

Sara Wilson Photography
Sara Wilson, Owner

Story First
Eric Ratinoff, Editor

VIA Partnership
Meridith McKinley, Founder-Owner

Corporate Partners

PNC Financial Services Group, Inc.

Wells Fargo Advisors

St. Louis Community

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To access the full **ARTS &** report,
go to **vision.racstl.org**



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