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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.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arts Education Forum

This document maps out a creative vision for St. Louis. Our aim in presenting this document is to develop a shared vision for the arts and culture in St. Louis. We feel it's important for our community to have a shared cultural vision in order for us to be able to make progress as a region.

This vision is rooted in the deep listening process that the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) engaged in throughout 2017. This Executive Summary presents the highlights of what we learned about how St. Louisans value the arts and how they believe the arts can play a stronger role in making St. Louis a better place to live. It then outlines a cultural vision for St. Louis based on what was learned, establishing six key priorities where RAC plans to focus its efforts and attention in order to achieve that vision. Finally, it outlines RAC's Principles of Practice—a set of operating guidelines we are adopting that articulate how we plan to lead going forward.

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WHAT WE LEARNED

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.

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.

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.

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.



Missouri History
Museum



Culture Shift
Regional Arts Commission

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.

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.

The arts are a strong economic driver

A study of the economic impact of spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations and their audiences 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.

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.



The 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 hold back St. Louis affect the arts and culture too.

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.

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

Connection and collaboration within the arts and for 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.

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

The 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.

RAC'S VISION FOR THE 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.

With these as our guide, we have identified key priorities where RAC plans to focus its efforts and attention. These priorities will drive the development of a collective strategy for arts and culture in St. Louis:

- ❑ Establish arts education for all as a community-wide commitment
- ❑ Position the arts and culture sector as a leader in advancing equity
- ❑ Amplify arts and culture as an economic engine and contributor to St. Louis' high quality of life
- ❑ Invite all St. Louisans into creativity to advance active participation in the arts and encourage civic engagement
- ❑ Attract and retain a high-performing community of professional artists and creative entrepreneurs
- ❑ Use this vision to forge new partnerships, collaborations and alliances



RAC'S PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

A key theme we heard from people as they described the changes they want to see is that RAC should take a leadership role in advancing these changes. That's why if we are to make this vision a reality, we know we need to define not only where we want to go, but also how we need to conduct ourselves as an organization in order to get there.

Outlined here are RAC's Principles of Practice—a set of operating guidelines we are adopting as a result of what we learned from this process. These principles articulate how we plan to lead going forward.

Remain in Dialogue with Community Voice

We commit to 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.

Remain Flexible and Open to New Ideas

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 you, the citizens of St. Louis City and County, have entrusted us with. That means we must be flexible as an organization and open to new ideas—especially those that come to us through our regular engagement with community voice.

Emphasize Our Shared Humanity

Art reminds us of our shared humanity, of the universal joy and struggle of being human. 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 the 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 self. These factors affect the arts and culture just as they affect the region at large. We believe RAC is well-positioned to forge the kinds of new partnerships, collaborations, and alliances that we need to break through this fragmentation and segregation. We know that we must adopt a catalyst mindset and must constantly think about how to make connection and collaboration part of our daily practice.

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.



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.

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- 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

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.

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. For more detail on the methodology of this process, as well as additional data included in the analysis, please see the Additional Background Information section.

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.



Arts Education Forum |

WHY A CULTURAL VISION

A Shared 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.

Within a National Context

Around the country, many other regions have engaged in cultural planning processes with broad community impact in mind. A shared vision is the first step toward a cultural plan.

Our process and thinking have been informed by these efforts. We have been inspired by their ideas and mindful of the challenges they have faced, in planning and in implementation.

However, we know things are different here in St. Louis. That's why we do not want to copy other cities but rather learn from what they have learned, develop a vision, and ultimately create plans that enable us to isolate issues and go deeper.



EVOKE Community
Listening Session
St. Charles

A Lever for Community Change

The arts have the power to transform not only individuals, but also families, communities, and a region. The arts can change the way we see ourselves and the way we see each other. And the arts touch so many aspects of civic and community life, in ways seen and unseen, large and small.

That's why we believe that a shared cultural vision can benefit and elevate not only the arts and culture in St. Louis but also benefit and elevate St. Louis.



TELL US, STL

CAN ART MAKE OUR COMMUNITY A BETTER PLACE?

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.

Where Does the Name EVOKE Come From?

The exploration process we conducted was intended to look not just forward, but also backward, to hear from people the ways that art has touched their lives. We asked people to share memories of their creative lives and significant experiences with the arts, to tap into the emotions that art stirred in them.

We wanted to know what feelings art conjured or brought to mind—in other words, what emotions art evoked—because it's those feelings from their past that we want people to access and remember when they envision the future of the arts in St. Louis, a future where artists and arts organizations work together to increase the region's cultural vitality, equity, and prosperity.

This process was our way to evoke what is powerful and special about the arts in the minds of the people we spoke to, in hopes of creating even more of that, for more people, now and in the future. Through these intimate, often intense conversations, we sought to explore art's role in evoking change.



WHO THIS DOCUMENT IS FOR

The People of St. Louis

RAC exists today because, when asked more than 30 years ago if they saw a Regional Arts Commission as the right, effective way to support arts and culture, the people of St. Louis said yes, and voted RAC into existence.

We believe, then, that as an arts and culture institution that owes its existence to this public funding, we must be accountable to the public.

That's why in our process, we made it a priority to seek out the voices of everyday St. Louisans, those who are interested in and are the consumers of culture in our community. Some cultural planning documents focus their attention on speaking to and for the arts and culture sector. While artist and arts organizations were fully engaged in our process, this document is intended to speak specifically to the people of St. Louis and reflect their hopes and needs as we heard them. That's also why we are making this document publicly available and sharing it with everyone.

Arts Institutions

The established arts institutions in St. Louis are in many ways the rock-solid foundation of the arts community.

While this document imagines a new, innovative future for the arts and culture in St. Louis, we know that future is possible because it can build upon the strong foundation these arts institutions have established over generations. We appreciate all that these institutions have done and continue to do for St. Louis and see them as a vital part of our future.

We also want the leaders of these institutions to hear the voices of all the other stakeholders in this document—especially the voices of artists and everyday St. Louisans—so that they can be responsive to those voices—voices that are vital to the future of the arts and culture in St. Louis.

Artists

It should go without saying that the artists who live and work in our community are a vital part of the arts and culture in St. Louis—but it's important to say it anyway.

Speaking with so many of them as part of this process, we heard a lot of frustration with their place in the arts and culture infrastructure of St. Louis. Many artists feel unappreciated and unsupported, and that if the right supports and structures were in place, their work could be having a greater positive impact on the region.

This document aims to capture not only those frustrations, but also their ambitions, dreams, and ideas for the future of the arts and culture in St. Louis. We want artists to hear their voices reflected here, and we want other stakeholders in this document—especially arts institutions, funders, and the people of St. Louis—to hear those voices, so they can engage in an effort to better support and lift up artists as a means to strengthen the arts community.

Arts Funders

The vibrant arts and culture community in St. Louis would not be possible without the funders who support it.

This document speaks to these funders—individual donors, private foundations, corporate foundations—who have a history of generously supporting the arts here in St. Louis. We believe funders will find this document interesting because of the commitment they have made to support the arts and arts institutions, and we hope they are both inspired to grow their support and consider new ways of lending that support.



Policy Makers, Thought Leaders, and Influencers

There is an active community of people—within arts institutions, in the social service sector, in elected office, in the arts community—who are engaged in thinking about the future of arts and culture in St. Louis, and whose voices have the ability to influence policy and funding decisions that will impact that future.

We spoke to many of those people throughout the EVOKE process. This document aims to reflect their insights and ideas—and to speak to them. We hope that in hearing the full perspective of all of the stakeholders whose voices are represented here, these leaders can expand even further their vision of arts and culture in St. Louis, so that it is both more ambitious and more inclusive, and that they can lend their support and influence toward helping create that future together.

People Who Love the Arts

Included in all of the above groups are people who simply love the arts, whether they make art, appreciate it, find their lives enriched by it, or just can't imagine life without it. Though we know these folks fit in each of these categories, we want to call them out specifically here, because their support and passion for the arts in St. Louis—purchasing tickets, buying art, teaching art, donating to arts organizations, and more—is essential to the arts and culture scene that St. Louis enjoys today, and the even stronger, more vibrant arts and culture scene this document envisions for St. Louis in the future.

A Word About Stakeholders

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 whose stated mission is to support the arts, there are many organizations who are not established to support 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. From social service organizations to community-based groups, so many organizations make space for the arts in their thinking and in their programming. Therefore, we want to make space for them not only in this document but also in our thinking and our programming.

That's why we believe everyone we have mentioned here is a stakeholder in the arts in St. Louis. We know that all St. Louisans have a stake in the arts.

The arts are deservedly a source of tremendous pride for our community and are 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.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

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.

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.

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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.

“This city has so much to offer. Those outside don’t realize what is here. My friends from New York came to perform at the Muny, and they were amazed at what was here.”

— Community Leader Interview

St. Louis' arts and cultural resources also include arts and entertainment districts like Downtown, Grand Center Arts District, Gaslight Square, Delmar Loop, Webster Groves, the Central West, End, 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

“How do we market our incredible strengths to ourselves? How do we come to appreciate ourselves?”

— 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.

St. Louisans also actively participate in the arts. Nearly two-thirds of people surveyed had personally participated in an arts or cultural activity in the past six months. Six in ten had read a novel, short story, or poem in the same time period. About one in five plays a musical instrument or sings. The EVOKE audience study shows demand for arts and cultural experiences among residents of St. Louis City and County that is above the national average.

“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

People told us they participate in arts and culture in very different ways. They may visit a museum and they are just as likely to attend at a small neighborhood venue or library. Many people participate in the arts through commercial channels, like movie theaters and concert venues. For example, St. Louis has many active commercial music venues showcasing local and touring musicians.

“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 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



Humans of St. Louis Exhibit
Regional Arts Commission

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

"I grew up in an immigrant Korean Buddhist household. We had a ritual for those we honored who have passed away. They would prepare all this food for the table to be set. What impressed me the most was the fruit and how it was arranged. At the time fruits were scarce. So, we did it for my husband's family for the first time. There's artistry in the preparation of the food and passing that down to the family was wonderful. Arts and culture are part of our childhood and then it translates to our adult life."

— Community Listening Session, South County

"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

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.

All of this raises the question of how to provide better access to arts and culture for everyone. For the nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, this suggests investing in better audience development and new ways to connect to communities. It suggests building on the efforts of the abundance of individual artists and non-arts organizations already working in the community. It means looking beyond arts and cultural programming to the larger toolkit of creative placemaking in neighborhoods. These ideas all hold the promise of helping to share St. Louis’ cultural inheritance with all St. Louisans—celebrating the heritage and the future of St. Louis’ communities as an essential part of, and contributor to, revitalization.

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.

For more than 30 years, Center of Creative Arts (COCA) has activated the power of arts education in St. Louis through its programming and recently found sufficient support to launch a bold \$40 million campaign to expand its University City facility to include a 450-seat theatre, an 8,000 square-foot new studio space, and more. Stages St. Louis has purchased a \$2.8 million building in Chesterfield, Missouri, which will house their growing community outreach and musical theatre education programs, including JumpStart, a new nationally funded program for middle school students. Metro Theater Company, Springboard, and the Children's Choir are just a few of several established and mission-driven arts education organizations already serving the arts education and enrichment needs of young people throughout the region.

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,



| Center of Creative Arts (COCA)

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

“We do a lot of stuff... with kids from the magnet schools that are arts focused. It's the schools where kids have hidden talent but [that our programs don't reach] that are the issue.”

— Community Leader interview

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.

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 Education Forum

Many, if not most, St. Louis arts and cultural organizations believe in arts education and offer educational programs. An EVOKE workshop for about 80 of these providers showed a strong consensus for the region to improve arts education systemically in school and out. This suggests the opportunity to develop a new, collaborative approach to arts education across the region. A collaboration can build on the collective efforts of these organizations, teaching artists, and partners outside the arts.

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

“There is so much talent. ... Things are cyclical ... people get excited by emerging movements but [the excitement eventually] fades away. 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.

Most artists we heard from, regardless of their artistic discipline or the stage of their career, perceived a general lack of awareness by the public of the depth and breadth of artistic talent and achievement that exists in St. Louis.

“There are some incredible artists here, and we need to find a way to celebrate that.”

— Community Listening Session, Ferguson

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.

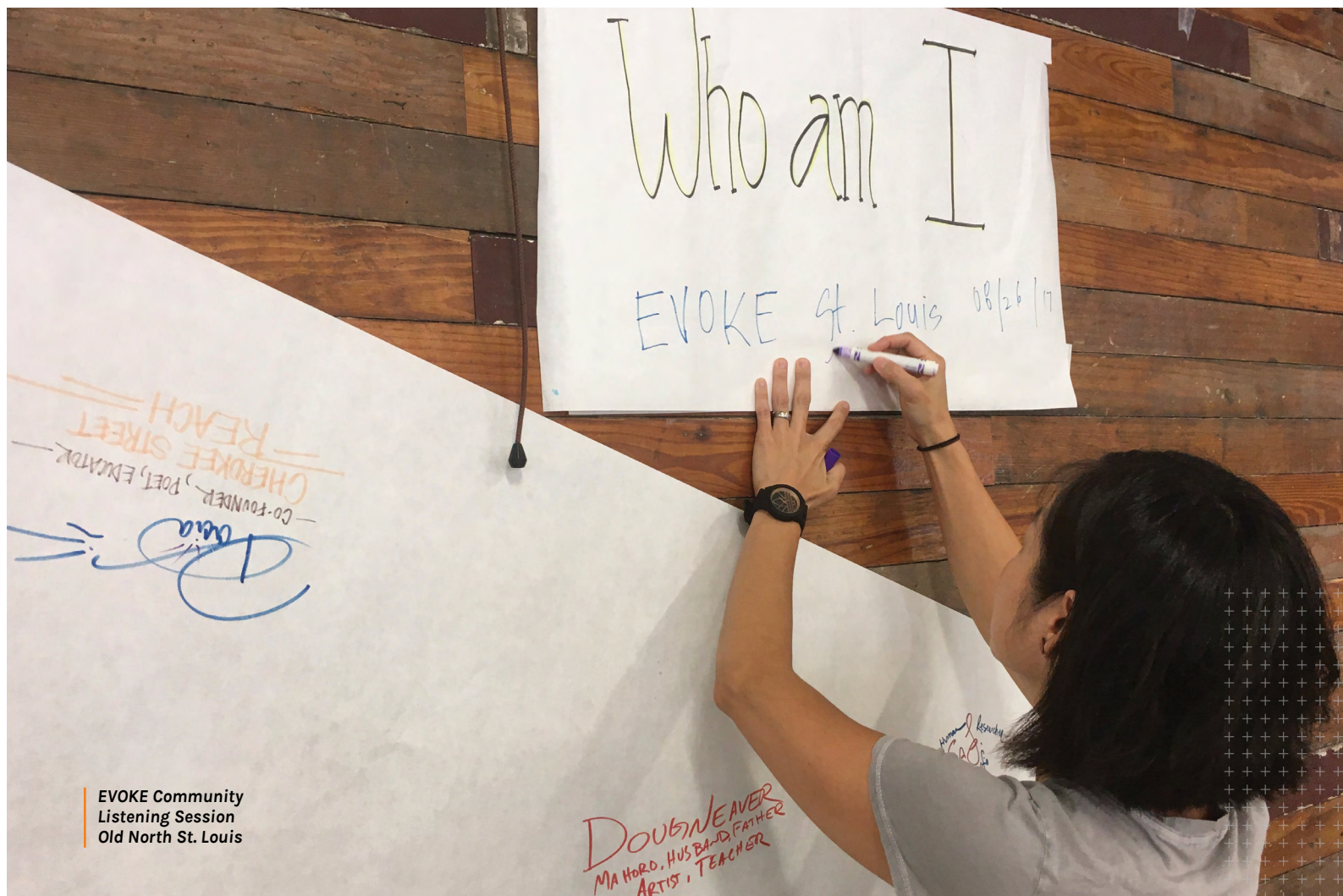
“The perception seems to be that out-of-town artists are more desirable.”

— 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

Yet rather than passively complain about these issues, several artists who spoke with us said they want to play a bigger role in promoting racial equity, increasing opportunities for youth to engage with the arts, and advancing solutions

to social problems like health disparities, urban blight, or juvenile justice, through the arts.

We heard from alumni of the Community Arts Training Institute (CAT) who actively continue their social practice art and stay networked with other alumni who are doing the same.

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.

A high concentration of artists often makes an area hip and desirable, which in turn raises rents to a level where they no longer are affordable to the very artists who contributed to their rise. Artists want and need protection against displacement from these areas.

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

“Some art events ... don't make it past the first time. Only a small group show up the first time, and if that is considered a failure, then it never gets a chance to grow into something bigger. Not everything can just be huge from the very beginning. So, if it's not huge from the very start, and it's just small, it's easy for the city or others to say, 'I'm not going to support it.'”

— Community Listening Session, West County

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.

For the survey, RAC collected detailed financial data about local nonprofit arts and culture organizations such as our theater and dance companies, museums, festivals, and arts education organizations. It also collected surveys from attendees at arts events using a short, anonymous questionnaire that asked how much money they spent on items such as meals, parking and transportation, and retail shopping specifically as a result of attending the event.

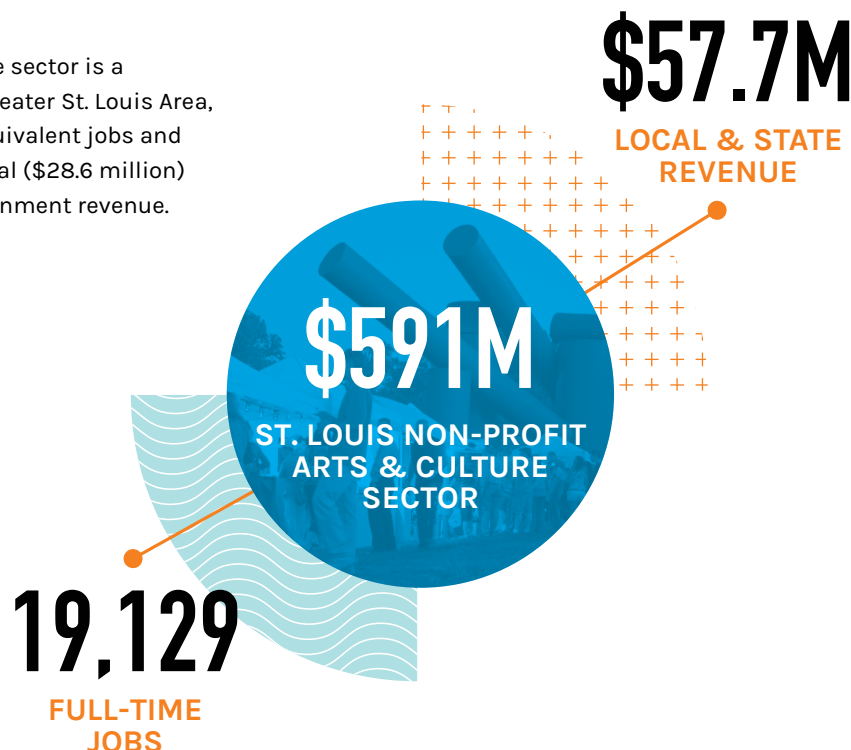
The findings showed that the arts are a major economic engine in St. Louis.

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.

These figures represent growth since the last iteration of this study in 2010. While total economic impact grew modestly, from \$582 million in 2010 to \$591 million in 2015, total jobs in the sector increased significantly, from 10,046 in 2010 to 19,129 in 2015.

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

“Our Arts & Economic Prosperity series demonstrates that the arts are an economic and employment powerhouse both locally and across the nation. Leaders who care about community and economic vitality can feel good about choosing to invest in the arts. Nationally as well as locally, the arts mean business.”

— Robert L. Lynch, president and CEO, Americans for the Arts

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. Learn more about the Downtown Public Art Plan in the Additional Background Information section.



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

“There is a divide in the literary community. The children’s book authors don’t relate to other writers. ... That should be a first step. We are disjointed as a literary community.”

— Artist Listening Session

“Each corner of this region has its own identity from a cultural standpoint. What is unique is how it intersects—yet segregates. For example, you have the Black performing arts and the White performing arts. They intersect [occasionally], but basically serve their own constituency. Those intersections are limited and far and few between.”

— 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.

The study analyzed information from 38 participating organizations who engage with nearly 157,000 households across St. Louis City and County. Participants included visual and performing arts groups with varying budget sizes and years of operating history.

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

While much of the fragmentation in St. Louis is rooted by the municipal structure, fragmentation also extends well beyond that structure.

“St. Louis is almost defined by its divisions. ... We have 91 municipalities and 13,000 nonprofits. It’s difficult to get people around a common table.”

— Community Leader Interview

“Sometimes we forget that we can achieve more if we collaborate. Protecting ourselves can be done while still collaborating.”

— 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

RAC, especially through its Community Arts Training Institute (CAT), is considered a strong resource and leader in this work. The CAT Institute, founded in 1997, is a five-month training program that forges partnerships between artists of all disciplines, social workers, educators, community and social activists, and policy-makers. Its goal is to create relevant, impactful arts programs, particularly in under-resourced community settings, like neighborhood organizations, social service agencies, development initiatives, and after-school programs. More than 300 people have graduated from CAT, and these alumni stay connected to each other and utilize their training for the good of the community. Many of these CAT alumni said they saw the potential to strengthen the role of artists and cultural organizations as leaders and partners in civic engagement and social change.

“Would like to see the arts be a leader in getting people together in new ways. It’s hard to do, hard work. But if you work with the community, and it’s genuine, then it will work.”

— Community Leader Interview

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. All these ideas focused on bridging divides to connect different sectors to the arts, and all emphasized the potential for mutual benefit.

“[I] find it odd that there is not more collaboration between corporations and individual artists. Artists should be embedded. If a corporation has empty offices, why not make them available to artists and writers? In trade, they could open up their studio, invite people to do brainstorming. Corporations would benefit in ways they don’t understand yet.”

— Community Leader Interview

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.

“One of our greatest strengths is a REGIONAL arts commission, so we want to work on connections.”

— Community Listening Session, Cherokee

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.

"What do Black youth need? Self-esteem, self-confidence ... it is important for them to have Afrocentric images, to have positive images and messages in art so they feel like they are part of the same society."

— Community Leader Interview

"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

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.



RAC ARTS ORGANIZATION STUDY



There was wide agreement that although St. Louis has an abundance of cultural assets; there are significant differences in audience demand and participation for some populations; and a corresponding perception that fewer opportunities and less access to cultural assets exist in St. Louis for communities of color, especially for African Americans.

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.

“There is an overwhelming need to have a different paradigm when it comes to funding African-American organizations and the arts.”

— Community Leader Interview

“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. ... Local activists make flashpoints about art and artists. But the deeper problems are the structural racism in the art world and museums. St. Louis is a microcosm of this, and it is heightened because race is such an important topic in STL now.”

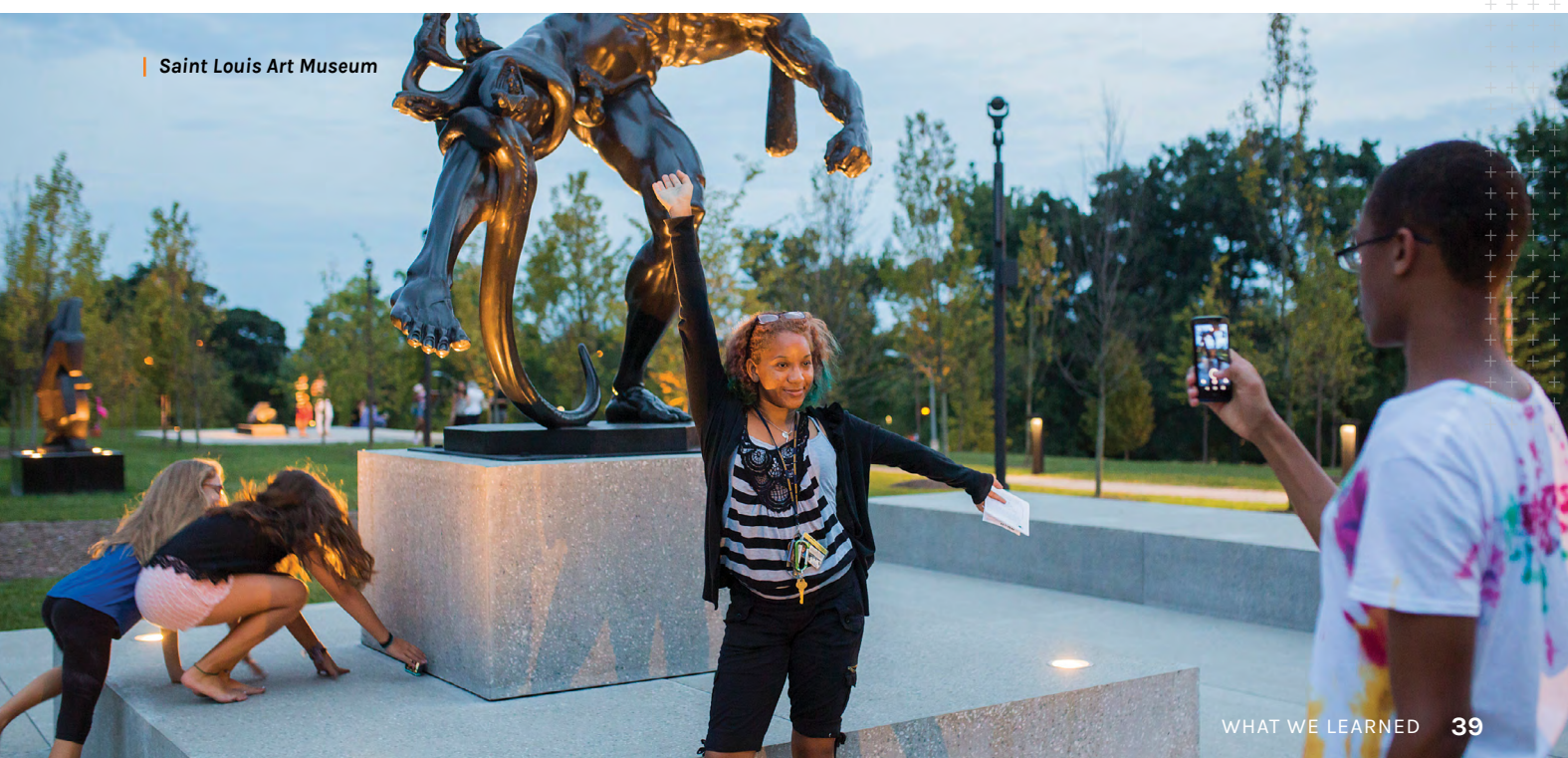
— Community Leader Interview

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.

The community listening sessions called for the arts sector to do more work to bridge St. Louis’ fractured community and help people connect to each other and their cultures. There remains a sense that some places in the region are not welcoming to all. The community is seeking solutions to help reach across social, cultural, and racial boundaries.

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.

While still in its early stages, the region-wide discussion around racial equity is gaining momentum, and many arts organizations are actively looking for ways they can help address the issue. While some of the organizations surveyed have adopted equity plans, there is no collective approach to change amongst all groups. These organizations, especially the larger arts institutions, would benefit from shared support to help them build capacity and address equity.



Saint Louis Art Museum

WHAT ST. LOUISANS WANT

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 a lack of cross-pollination. Neighbors may care about each other, but you don’t see race mixing. How can art be a bridge to that?”

— Community Listening Session, Old North

“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 role artists played in healing after Ferguson was profound. Artists integrated art to cover up the boarded-up buildings.”

— Community Leader Interview

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

There is a strong, shared desire to create more access to arts and cultural opportunities and to consider access broadly—in terms of cost and affordability, transportation and geography, and environments that are welcoming and offer connection to all.

St. Louis arts and cultural organizations are actively expanding their audiences, and there are many examples of their programs making a difference in neighborhoods. These organizations expressed a need for better tools and support to serve more of the community.

“St. Louis has a lot of arts organizations and there is a ton of programming. As artists and an arts community, there has been a stamp that the arts are valuable in St. Louis. The question is, how do you reach even more people, to give them access to inspiration and confidence or insight that comes with it?”

— Arts Organization Listening Session

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
Public Media Commons



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

EVOKE Community
Listening Session
St. Charles

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



Union Avenue Opera



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

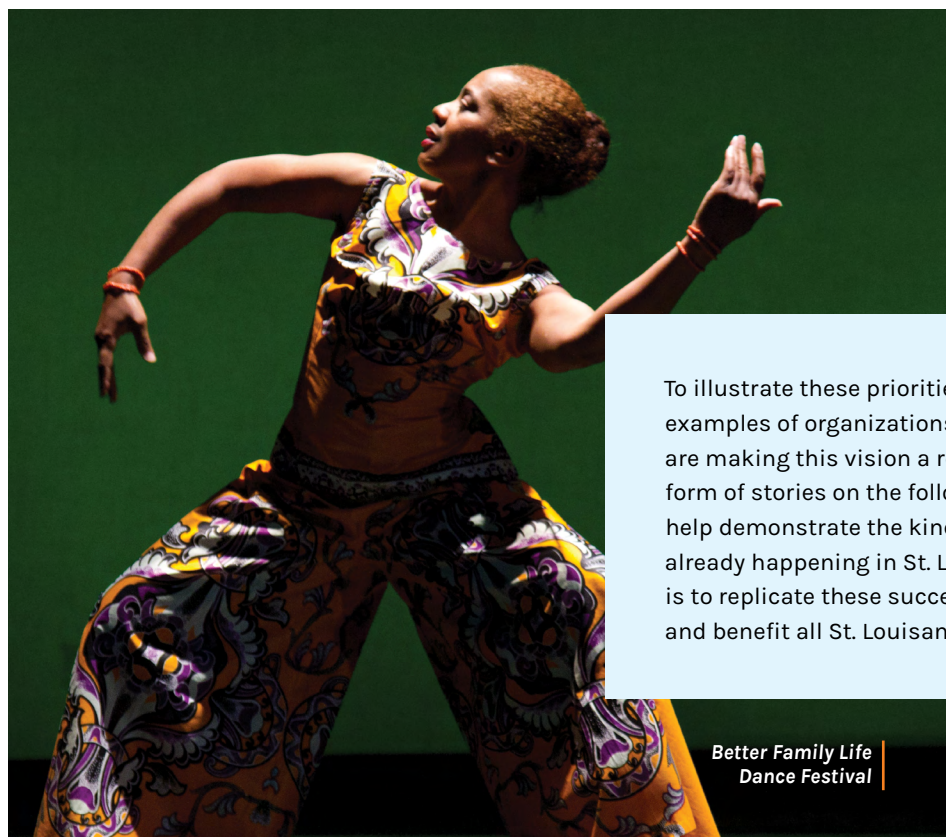
- Increase support to individual artists through fellowships, residencies, and training
- Partner with developers and other foundations to reclaim vacated properties as habitable live/work spaces for artists in revitalizing neighborhoods
- Support the development of teaching artists, including training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



To illustrate these priorities, we have also identified examples of organizations or programs in St. Louis that are making this vision a reality and shared them in the form of stories on the following pages. These stories help demonstrate the kind of success we envision is already happening in St. Louis—and that our challenge is to replicate these successes so they reach, impact, and benefit all St. Louisans.

Better Family Life
Dance Festival



STORIES HIGHLIGHTING THE INTERSECTIONS OF ARTS &

*Humans of St. Louis (HOSTL), a nonprofit that shares first-person stories and photographic portraits showing the diversity of people and perspectives that make up the St. Louis region, captured these stories and photos of **artists, educators, musicians, and changemakers** working to enhance*

St. Louis' quality of life through arts and culture. These stories evoke collective compassion and uncover commonalities while respectfully shining a spotlight on differences.

See more stories at vision.racstl.org and humansofstl.org.

LAMAR HARRIS



“SHAKESPEARE IN THE STREETS

Shakespeare in the Streets is priceless because there are so many talented people in St. Louis with so many wonderful stories and histories that are forgotten. The first time I got involved was in Old North. They interviewed different people in the neighborhood and incorporated their stories inside this Shakespearean tale. When we performed *King Lear* on the steps of the public library, we had a 60-piece choir from Central Baptist Church, a big band called the Genesis Jazz Project with 25 people and a 20-person step group called the Gentleman of Visions out of Riverview Gardens. With the other 12 or 15 actors, this was the biggest and most diverse Shakespeare in the Streets we ever had.

**“PEOPLE NEED TO SEE
PEOPLE WHO LOOK
LIKE THEM BEING
CREATIVE.”**

I like that they introduce people to theatre that have never acted before. Its like, "I've always wanted to be an actor." "Well, hey. We're in your community. Come and join in." Or, if your kid wants to act—you never know how that experience could shape his or her life. When you see your neighbor up on stage, it's like, man, they're going to be talking about that for years.

There's not a lot of diversity in more traditional theater settings. You don't see African Americans in the orchestra pits or playing roles other than the slave woman or midwife. People need to see people who look like them being creative. Anytime I get an opportunity, I'm trying to bring people on to help open up some doors for others.

RA'GEEN WASHINGTON & ANDREA JARRETT



“ST. LOUIS SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA — EXTRA CREDIT PROGRAM

Andrea Jarrett

Ra’Geen said, and I agree, that when it comes to music, learning is never done. The music we performed together for Extra Credit was challenging. It wasn’t like, “Okay, I’m just going to look at this once, and we’re good.” You had to work at it—the educators and the musicians. And, it was cool that we took the time and we prepared for it. The idea of art is to make it look effortless. And I love that we get to do that. Then when people ask, “How do you do that?,” Well, now I have an in to show you my world. I get to show you this is a career—a daily process. I’m building on what I took from yesterday to create something that will motivate someone else, be shared with someone else, or simply educate someone else.

Ra’Geen Washington

The cool thing about music is that it allows me to collaborate with others, which is why I applied to the St. Louis Symphony’s Extra Credit program. It provides teachers a chance to earn a little overtime by playing with the symphony musicians. Andrea and I hadn’t met until then, but we got a chance to collaborate and create work that attracted a really good crowd from the community and perhaps the next generation of musicians. I hope that Extra Credit continues to be a community partnership. It was really special.

**“I’M BUILDING ON WHAT I
TOOK FROM YESTERDAY TO
CREATE SOMETHING THAT
WILL MOTIVATE SOMEONE
ELSE, BE SHARED WITH
SOMEONE ELSE, OR SIMPLY
EDUCATE SOMEONE ELSE.”**

KATH
LEVERENZ



“CONTINUITY STL

When I was seven, my brother was diagnosed with schizophrenia. It was a very severe untreatable form, and there weren't any medications that really worked for him. He's this amazing artist; and before he got sick, he could draw photorealistically and would tell these beautiful stories in metaphor that were so powerful. I always aspired to be like him in so many ways. He still creates, but not like he used to. When he got sick, my way of trying to connect with him was to create a lot.

Art therapy is what opened me up to get in touch with who I am; so I could be present for other people. In school, I was making videos and working with the camera and I would point it at my face, talk to it, and make these really intimate videos exploring family and myself.

I got into Continuity STL, and I just couldn't stop doing video work. Continuity STL's whole mission is

**“ART THERAPY IS WHAT
OPENED ME UP TO GET IN
TOUCH WITH WHO I AM
SO I COULD BE PRESENT
FOR OTHER PEOPLE.”**

to expand diversity in media, not just through the content being produced but through the content creators. There are not a lot of queer non-binary

people like me telling stories or wanting to tell other people's stories and fight for social justice. Continuity gave me more language, more skills, and more community.

As a non-binary queer person, it's really important to focus on other issues. I want to be as intersectional as possible and fight for every social justice issue.

That's what I want to learn — how to do it through video, and I wanted to do it in a responsible way, which is why I'm glad I have the background in art therapy because it helps me take this reflexive position behind the camera and think, What is the story the subject wants to say?

I want people's stories to be told the way that they want them to be told.

KARIN HAGAMAN



“GRAND CENTER ARTS DISTRICT

I was recently approached by some great regional partners—the Urban League, Mission: St. Louis, and the Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club—about a workforce initiative called The Grand Project and how Grand Center as an arts district can help prepare people who live in this area for good jobs and long-term employment. I was so excited to talk about an arts district in a different way—as a labor market and place of opportunity, because there is a whole economy that makes a place like Grand Center work.

So, The Grand Project leaders are working with individuals looking for good jobs and helping them get prepared. And then Grand Center can connect the talents with the

needs of the employers in our area. There are more than 60 arts organizations in this district right now that have the potential to provide jobs that pay the bills and bring people joy.

“I AM PASSIONATE ABOUT THE IDEA THAT ART AND CULTURE MAKES A HUGE AND MEASURABLE IMPACT ON OUR LIVES AS INDIVIDUALS AND ON OUR ECONOMY.”

Some of the jobs—box office and gallery attendant jobs—really require an interest in art. To do a good job, you need to be passionate about what the arts organizations are promoting. Grand Center is also focused on hospitality. There’s a huge need for food and beverage service and other support fields. It’s a wonderful and exciting new way to think of the arts. I am passionate about the idea that

art and culture makes a huge and measurable impact on our lives as individuals and on our economy.

ISMAEL "MILES" DELA CRUZ



GREENWAY PROJECT ARTISTS OF COLOR COUNCIL, CHOUTEAU GREENWAY PROJECT

I'm a street artist. I primarily do graffiti. When I heard that Great Rivers Greenway was planning a greenway that would stretch from Forest Park to the Arch and have public art along the way, I was like, "Awesome! Let me get some graffiti artists in there. We'll do a huge graffiti wall." In my mind, I saw this great growing flower that the people from the community could go and plant and love on so that whenever they're going down the freeway, they can say, "I did that," and take pride in what they created for their neighborhood. We're bridging and lifting up communities through art.

The Chouteau Greenway Project will connect people everywhere like a bloodline. As a member of the Greenway Project Artists of Color Council my job is to

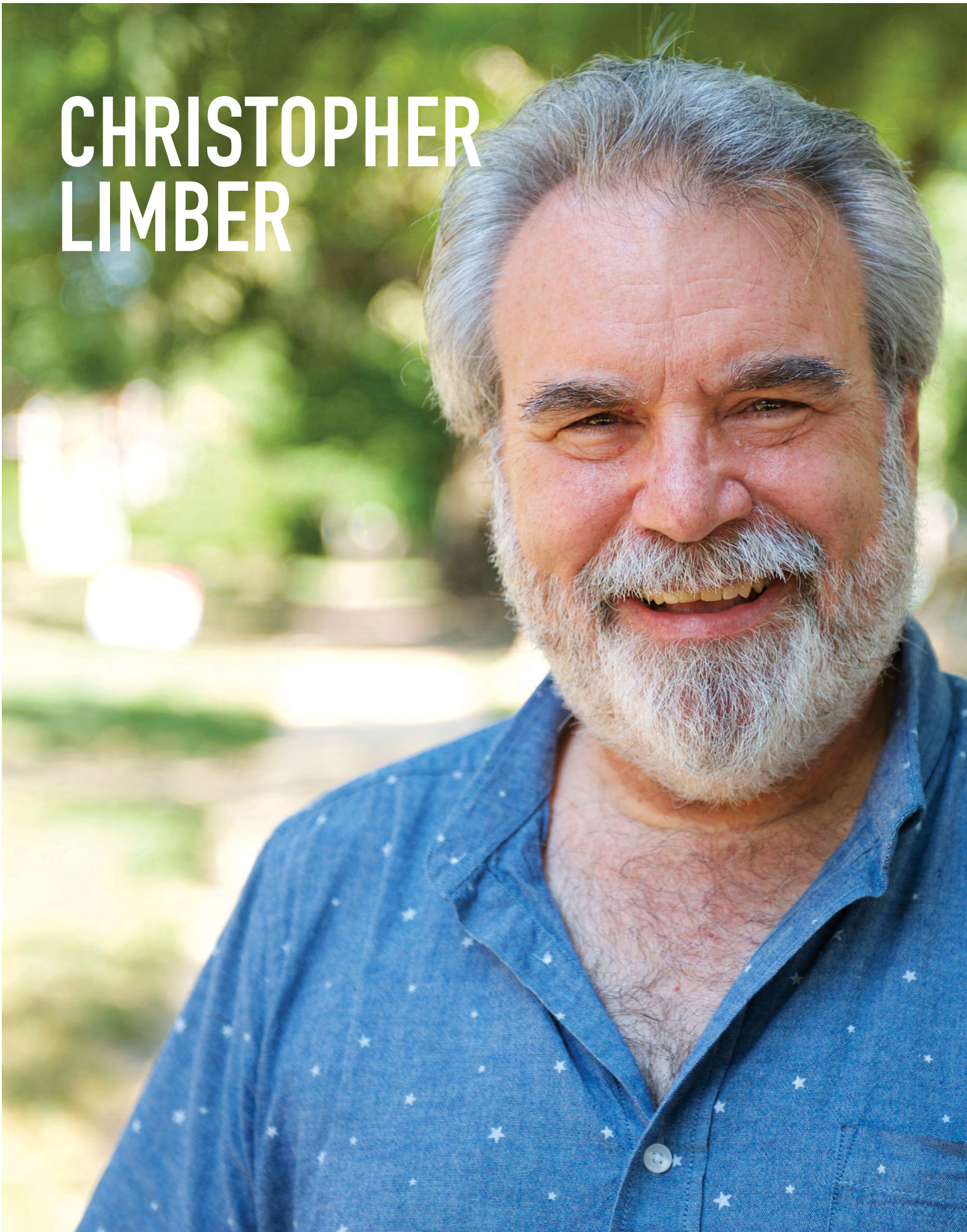
make sure that we're intentional about reaching out to people from every community and inviting them to take part.

"ONE OF THE BIGGEST TAKEAWAYS FOR ME FROM BEING PART OF THE COUNCIL IS MAKING SURE PEOPLE ARE HEARD, SEEN, AND ALLOWED TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING BIG LIKE THIS."

One of the really special things about this mural that's for the Greenway Project is that we wanted to represent how there are many pieces coming together to create something beautiful. We tied in the Great Rivers Greenway logo with the leaves, the little wind flow right in the middle, and the sun. And the whole community is involved in creating it. One of the biggest takeaways for me from being part of the Council is making

sure people are heard, seen, and allowed to be a part of something big like this.

CHRISTOPHER LIMBER



PRISON PERFORMING ARTS

Agnes Wilcox, the founder of Prison Performing Arts, did a final project called Hip-Hop Hamlet with the men in the Northeast Correctional Center in Bowling Green, right before she retired.

She created this hilarious rap version of Shakespeare's *Hamlet*.

It's so good that I kept saying, "We should do it again." And the women at Vandalia prison said, "Well, yes, WE should." So, there are 27 women in this incredible hip-hop piece inspired by their sense of humor and invention.

Agnes recently passed away, and it is an awesome responsibility to carry on PPA's legacy.

Besides teaching literacy, the arts teach problem-solving, conflict negotiation, and the discipline the incarcerated need to re-enter society. Doing a play, you have to learn how to work with people different from yourself and create a

community. This work changes the culture in each prison by giving individuals a chance to create together and share with others.

"BESIDES TEACHING LITERACY, THE ARTS TEACH PROBLEM-SOLVING, CONFLICT NEGOTIATION, AND THE DISCIPLINE THE INCARCERATED NEED TO RE-ENTER SOCIETY."

Working as an ensemble also creates new experiences of racial harmony: Black, White, Native American, Asian—everybody works together so preconceptions of race are broken down. The individuals I work with say, "I've gained friends on the yard that I would never have spoken to."

At the end of a show, we take time to celebrate. People talk and share their accomplishments in ways that prisons don't usually allow. There's lots of benefits

from allowing people to share a joyous experience. There's nothing more wonderful than doing a show.

APRIL
PARVIZ



“INTERSECT STL

A coin toss between the Twin Cities and St. Louis landed me here, married and with a baby on the way. I'll probably never move. I love St. Louis. I've been to a lot of different cities, and I don't understand why more people don't understand how awesome St. Louis is.

We got married at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, became members, and I eventually left my job at a copy center and started working for them as a graphic designer. It was my husband's idea: "It's surprisingly a very art-centered church, and you're an artist. This would probably be a good place for us."

The church's connections to the arts makes it work. When Sarah Bernhardt, the pastor's wife started Intersect Arts Center, her art

studio was in the building across the street, which Holy Cross owns. One day, she heard some glass break and found out a few kids had thrown a brick through a window. She found the kids who did it and made them come inside and do some art with her. They even cleaned up the glass and used it to make art. And she took that and started an after-school program and started opening studios over there too.

I have a great job at the church, and I am an artist now. I'm not a go-getter, and I'm not really a planner. If I had thought of a dream job before this, I think I have it.

**"I'M STILL SHOCKED
THAT THEY TRUST ME
AND RESPECT MY
PROFESSIONAL OPINION
BECAUSE I CAN'T
BELIEVE HOW I GOT HERE.
I HAVE A STUDIO, AND I
AM AN ARTIST NOW."**



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. In these conversations, people were passionate about the arts. They were animated about their frustrations but also inspired by the exchange of new ideas and excited by the possibility of the arts contributing to a more vibrant, more united St. Louis.

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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CAT INSTITUTE ALUMNI NETWORK

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 to learn ways of using the arts as a tool for social change for more than 20 years. RAC hosts, sponsors and convenes educational conferences, provides technical assistance and training to grantees and other charitable organizations, supports the service of RAC staff on advisory boards of other charities or public commissions. RAC publishes and commissions research to inform the field of new developments, provides free and low-cost space for community gatherings through the RAC Cultural Resource Center, and maintains a website and online calendar of local events that are go-to resources for residents and visitors.

The opportunity for RAC is now 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.



Opera Theatre of
St. Louis

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
North City

ADDITIONAL BACKGROUND INFORMATION

This section includes additional information about the EVOKE process, some of which is referenced in the main document.

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METHODOLOGY

The following information describes what the Regional Arts Commission prioritized in the EVOKE process and how we set about to get it.

PRIORITIES

At the outset of the process, the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis (RAC) leadership and staff identified an overarching question to frame the work: "How do artists and arts organizations work at the center of civic life and increase St. Louis' cultural vitality, equity, and prosperity?"



Driven by this question, RAC's priorities for the process were to:

- ☐ Engage with a broad cross-section of community members and stakeholders in all of St. Louis' communities
- ☐ Bring together multiple points of view to inform the visioning process;
- ☐ Create legitimacy and a sense of shared responsibility for the cultural vision;
- ☐ Identify creative assets within communities;
- ☐ Cultivate new partners/allies and collaborations; and
- ☐ Stimulate broad awareness and momentum for the visioning process and cultural vision.

PROCESS

With these priorities in mind, we took a mixed-method research approach to the information-gathering and investigation process, using both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. The approach was designed to create and build on public engagement at every stage to harness regional leadership and design a process that was transparent and inclusive.

The process included the following elements:

Cultural Planning Committee

With oversight provided by key members of the RAC staff and board, the ad hoc Cultural Planning Committee was charged with developing the early strategy for the visioning process, including recommending the project budget and timeline, selecting consultants, and identifying early stakeholders to ensure buy-in from all levels of St. Louis' leadership community.

Thought Leaders Forum

The Thought Leaders Forum (TLF) brought together representatives from diverse sectors of the community to help guide the process, examine the results, and consider the implications of what was being learned. Please read more about the group in the Thought Leaders Forum section that follows.

Economic Impact Study

RAC also participated in the Americans for the Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity 5, a national study of the economic impact of the arts. Please read more about this study later in this section.

Data Analysis

The qualitative data from listening sessions, discussion groups, and interviews was compiled by all planning team members and RAC staff and submitted to the consultants. The data included the lists and notes from all meetings conducted in the community. The consultant team identified the main themes across all data sets. For the online survey and the statistically valid survey, the results were analyzed with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS 23.0) and were based on the responses received for each question. Significant differences are noted where applicable in the statistically valid survey summary. The research summary presented here is a synthesis of qualitative and quantitative research, based on the opinions and perceptions the participants, and cannot be generalized to the wider population, with the exception of the individual results of the statistically valid survey.

Audience Demand Analysis

Arts and culture organizations known to RAC were invited to submit audience database lists to the consulting team for mapping and analysis using geodemographic research tools. Thirty-eight organizations (including performing arts, visual arts/crafts, mixed arts centers, museums, and other types of cultural groups) supplied 156,097 unique household records within the plan's study area. These records were mapped and analyzed using U.S. Census information, ESRI market potential data, and Experian's Mosaic™

lifestyle information and were cross-referenced by organization and artistic discipline. The overall goal for this audience demand analysis is to understand who is being served and who is not being served by arts and culture organizations within the study area. This type of analysis assists organizations with marketing and audience development efforts.

Asset Mapping

An extensive list of known cultural assets in St. Louis City and County, were mapped in relation to the Audience Demand Study. Objectives in developing an asset inventory were to understand the breadth of arts and cultural organizations and opportunities in St. Louis City and St. Louis County. The assets inventory primarily represents nonprofit organizations whose mission is focused on artistic, cultural, or creative endeavors as well as non-arts organizations or businesses that have cultural or creative endeavors as well as non-arts organizations or businesses that have cultural programming. The inventory was drawn primarily from the database or recent applicants and grantees of RAC. Additional data was obtained from the municipalities on libraries and recreation centers in both the city and county, and from InfoUSA on local commercial performance venues.

Community and Stakeholder Engagement

The community engagement process provided multiple entry points for all residents, communities, and sectors of St. Louis to participate in the process. The bulk of community engagement was achieved through roundtable discussions, individual interviews, and neighborhood "listening sessions" facilitated by artists, RAC staff, and consultants. Other community and stakeholder engagement opportunities included:

Evocation Evenings

RAC hosted four Evocation Evenings, held between September 15, 2017, and November 2, 2017, which fostered creative dialogues facilitated by local artists. The social events were open to the public and were designed to spark conversations about arts and culture and the needs of the St. Louis community through participation in a variety of immersive, creative exercise activities.

Phone Survey

Between the dates of September 12, 2017, and September 18, 2017, independent consultants conducted a statistically valid, random telephone survey of St. Louis residents to assess attitudes and perceptions regarding arts and culture in the community. The overall goal of this community survey was to understand how St. Louisans participate in and connect with arts, culture, and creative activities; what is important to residents; what barriers to participation residents experience; and what they envision for the future of St. Louis.

Online Community Survey

An open online survey was made available through the EVOKE website (<https://evoke.racstl.org>) for all residents to provide their thoughts about arts and culture in St. Louis. The survey was promoted by RAC through multiple communication channels to raise awareness and encourage participation.

The table below provides an overview of the engagement activities. For the purposes of this planning process, stakeholders are defined as those individuals, organizations, and businesses that have an interest in plan outcomes. Community is defined as the whole of the St. Louis City and County residents, including St. Charles County and the metro east.



COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

Group Description	Engagement Activity	Timeframe	Overview
Stakeholder and Community Convener Interviews	Individual interviews and group discussions (22 meetings)	March 2017	Meetings with individuals and community organizations who are experienced with engaging the community on city- and county- focused topics
Stakeholder Engagement	Individual interviews and group discussions (21 meetings)	June 2017	Meetings with arts funders, city groups, RAC staff, RAC Commissioners, CAT Café group meeting
Stakeholder and Community Engagement	Group meetings and booth at Festival of Nations	June 2017	Audience demand presentation, Downtown Public Art Plan Advisory Committee meeting, Festival of Nations booth
Stakeholder Engagement	Individual interviews, group discussions and Thought Leaders Forum (9 meetings)	July 2017	Meetings with arts funders, city and county organizations, foundations, and arts and cultural institutions, Thought Leaders Forum orientation meeting
Additional Stakeholder Engagement	Individual interviews (18 individuals)	July 2017 – September 2017	Downtown Public Art Plan stakeholder interviews
Community and Stakeholder Engagement	Individual interviews, group discussions and Downtown Public Art Plan Roundtable (24 meetings)	August 2017 – September 2017	Meetings with arts and cultural institutions and organizations; discussion groups with arts communities by discipline; initial community listening session; Downtown Public Art Plan Advisory Committee meeting and residents' roundtable
St. Louis City and County Residents	Open source online survey (1,550 completed surveys)	August 2017 – November 2017	Open to all in St. Louis

Group Description	Engagement Activity	Timeframe	Overview
St. Louis City and County Residents	Statistically valid survey of St. Louis City and County (500 completed surveys)	August 2017 – November 2017	A statistically valid survey inclusive of city and county
Artists at Work Sessions and Other Stakeholder Engagement	RAC-hosted discussion groups, consultant interviews, Thought Leaders Forum (21 meetings)	October 2017	Sessions led by RAC staff and consultants with musicians, literary artists, behind the scenes, visual artists; dancers; actors and performers; visual artists; Thought Leaders Forum meeting
Community Listening Sessions and Other Stakeholder Engagement	Artist-led community discussions, Thought Leaders Forum and Downtown Public Art Plan meetings (11 meetings)	October/ December 2017	Locations included South St. Louis County, North St. Louis County, West County, South St. Louis City, East St. Louis, North St. Louis City, St. Charles; Thought Leaders Forum meetings; Downtown Public Art Plan residents' roundtable and Imagine Art Here! public workshop
Evocation Evenings	RAC-hosted social events (4 events)	October/ November 2017	Included HOSTL Movement, A Talk with the Artists, and The Spoken Word.
Audience Demand Analysis	Market reach and audience analysis (38 participating arts organizations)	Various months	Secondary data review to determine who is being served and who is not being served
Arts and Culture Organizations	Discussion of audience demand study results (47 arts organizations)	November 2017	Discussion of strategies for strengthening, broadening and diversifying audiences

In total, more than 3,000 St. Louisans, from all corners of the city and county as well as St. Charles County and the metro east, participated in the engagement over an eight-month period. While the planning process was comprehensive, as with any community planning initiative, it did not reach everyone. Specific efforts were made to engage the diversity of St. Louis' population and communities, but there are gaps. RAC will continue to engage additional people and groups.



THOUGHT LEADERS FORUM

Background

From the beginning, EVOKE was conceived to include a broad base of community leadership voices, both in oversight of the process and in development of the cultural vision. RAC convened the Thought Leaders Forum (TLF) to serve as an independent advisory body to oversee the process, to explore the issues, ideas, and data emerging from the research, and to consider the implications of what was learned in the development of the vision and these priorities. The TLF brought together representatives from diverse sectors of the community—faith, health and human services, state and municipal government, arts and heritage, as well as others.

Their work began in July 2017 shortly after the formal launch of EVOKE in the community, and they met regularly throughout the process.

A Framework for Equity in Arts and Culture

The TLF began with the premise that our region has a strong and impactful arts and cultural environment that should be nurtured and developed. At the same time, our current state falls well short of ensuring a full and creative life for every St. Louisan.

Key to achieving this outcome is an understanding and acknowledgment of the real and complex web of inequities that currently exist in the region—racism, sexism, and homophobia among them. These and other forms of discrimination are powerful drivers of negative outcomes that, if not intentionally addressed, will weaken the positive impact of the cultural vision. They present RAC with a unique challenge to ensure that opportunities to increase racial and cultural equity are considered in every aspect of its work.

With this in mind, the TLF sought to embed an equity framework, or lens, in the EVOKE process, in order to address issues of inequity that they anticipated would emerge through the

process. The Cultural and Racial Equity Purpose Statement, definitions, and assumptions that follow helped to guide the TLF's deliberations on questions of equity and the role of art and culture in making St. Louis a better place to live.

Cultural and Racial Equity Purpose Statement

To support a full creative life for all, the Thought Leaders Forum will recommend policies and practices that promote diversity and inclusion in our communities and result in the achievement of cultural and racial equity in the arts and beyond. The Thought Leaders Forum believes that the arts are an important catalyst for advancing social cohesion and recognizes that improving cultural and racial equity can have meaningful positive impacts on economic development for our region.

Definitions

The following definitions were adapted from several sources, including Grantmakers in the Arts, the Ferguson Commission report, D5 Coalition, the Racial Equity Tools Glossary, and UC Berkeley.

- **Diversity** includes all the ways in which people differ, encompassing the different characteristics that make one individual or group different from another. While diversity is often used to reference race, ethnicity, and gender, we embrace a broader definition of diversity that also includes age, national origin, religion, disability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. Our definition also includes diversity of thought: ideas, perspectives, and values. In addition, we recognize that individuals affiliate with multiple identities.
- **Inclusion** is the act of creating environments in which any individual or group can be and feel welcomed, respected, supported, and valued to fully participate. An inclusive and welcoming climate embraces differences and offers respect in words and actions for all people.

- **Equity** is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people, while at the same time striving to identify and eliminate barriers that have prevented the full participation of some groups. Improving equity involves increasing justice and fairness within the procedures and processes of institutions or systems and ensuring that resources intended for public benefit are distributed with an awareness of the root causes of outcomes disparities within our society.
- **Cultural Equity** embodies the values, policies and practices that ensure all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are appropriately included in the development of arts plans, programs and policies; the support of artists; nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for creative expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.
- **Racial Equity** is the condition achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicts how one fares. Racial equity means that race cannot be used to predict success, and we have successful systems and structure that work for all.

Assumptions

- Every person deserves equitable access to a full, vibrant, and creative life, which is essential to a healthy and democratic society.
- All people, their culture, and their art contribute to the meaning and understanding of our humanity and should be honored and celebrated.
- Cultural equity is critical to the long-term viability of the arts sector as it will improve our collective success and ensure that the arts are truly accessible to all.

- We have an obligation to understand and address the ways in which institutions have played, or still play a role in creating and maintaining racial inequities through systems of power that grant privilege and access unequally, such that inequity and injustice resulted.
- Among their many benefits, art, artists, their art, their process, and their organizations all play a unique role in witnessing, demonstrating, and providing inspiration to resolve societal inequity and injustice.

Guiding Principles

To provide informed, authentic leadership for the achievement of cultural and racial equity in the arts, the cultural vision, and any recommendations it makes for policies, processes, and programs, should be transformative, urgent, and unflinching, and should serve to:

- Increase access to the arts and a fuller creative life for all people
- Increase racial and cultural equity
- Promote a greater awareness of the history and current realities of race, racism, opportunity gaps and/or culture
- Increase service to geographic areas where people who have been historically excluded live, work, or play
- Promote workforce equity by reflecting the diversity of St. Louis City and County residents
- Positively impact sectors beyond the arts, such as health, education, community development, environment, criminal justice, housing, jobs, etc.
- Expand more diverse leadership within the boards, staff, and advisory bodies of RAC and/or grantee organizations
- Improve the cultural leadership pipeline by creating and supporting programs and policies that foster leadership and reflect the full breadth of St. Louis' regional culture



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND RESEARCH SUMMARY

The engagement activities described earlier in this section provided a broad spectrum of community opinions and perspectives. The engagement process revealed consistent visions, aspirations, and themes, painting a picture of the current perceived state of St. Louis' arts and culture and the desired future for arts and culture. The analysis of the feedback from the engagement activities and supplemental research is included in the What We Learned section of this document and informs RAC's Vision for Arts and Culture in St. Louis, as well as RAC's Principles of Practice.

This section includes data that was not included in the main document.

Equity

There is wide agreement that St. Louis has rich cultural experiences available, and the amenities of a large metropolitan area, with a small city feel. However, as noted above, there are significant differences in audience demand and participation for some populations, and there is a corresponding perception that fewer opportunities and less access to cultural assets exist in St. Louis for communities of color, especially for African Americans. The statistically valid survey reveals that barriers to arts and cultural participation are: family and work commitments (42%), cost (32%), inconvenient schedule or locations (31%), and health reasons (20%).

Specifically, for the cultural plan, some participants voiced the need for better pathways for organizational development for African American groups, organizations of color, and other small arts and cultural organizations. The inequities in funding and the challenges in recruiting and retaining leadership for organizations threaten the existence of many smaller organizations. The leadership in the larger institutions is primarily homogeneous. Some organizations have equity plans in place, yet there does not seem to be a shared approach to addressing the issue. Out of 32 arts organizations surveyed, 66% have developed programs to broaden the diversity of staff and/or board, and 80% have developed or participated in efforts focused on broadening the diversity of audiences. In individual interviews, both volunteer and professional arts leadership voiced frustrations in their efforts to diversify their boards and staffs, and they would welcome broader community initiatives and efforts to assist them. The opportunity exists for organizations to come together around diversity and inclusion, since this issue has been addressed on an individual basis by many.



| Saint Louis Art Museum

Arts Education

One thing all participants in the process agree on is prioritizing arts exposure and arts education for children and youth. Arts education rose to the top of the list as a priority in both the statistically valid survey (89%) and the community-wide open survey (63%) and in many listening sessions and discussions.

The need for more formal and informal arts education for young people evoked a variety of responses: increase exposure to the arts for young people to reveal what is available to them in St. Louis, provide youth with more opportunities to interact with people of diverse cultural backgrounds to promote cultural competency, broaden access to the arts in under-resourced neighborhoods and communities, and ensure standards-based arts instruction in schools. Art education stakeholders envision RAC taking a stronger leadership role in developing a systemic, collaborative approach to providing arts education in and out of school. The community listening sessions, surveys, and stakeholder interviews all cited specific gaps to be filled, including more professional development opportunities for teaching artists, funding for programs and evaluation, and centralized sources of information for parents.

The engagement process also included a survey of 26 local nonprofit arts and culture and youth service organizations that contained a set of questions focused specifically on arts education. Like many St. Louis families, these groups expressed the need for more quality arts education programming for youth.

While 92% of responders provided arts learning services or programs for school-aged youth under the age of 18, only half (48%) have a full-time person dedicated to this work, leaving the majority of programming to part-time or volunteer help.

Although 65% of programs are offered after school, these organizations agree with parents that transportation is a major barrier to participation for both in-school and out-of-school programs. Funding is needed to support neighborhood-based programs that are close to home.

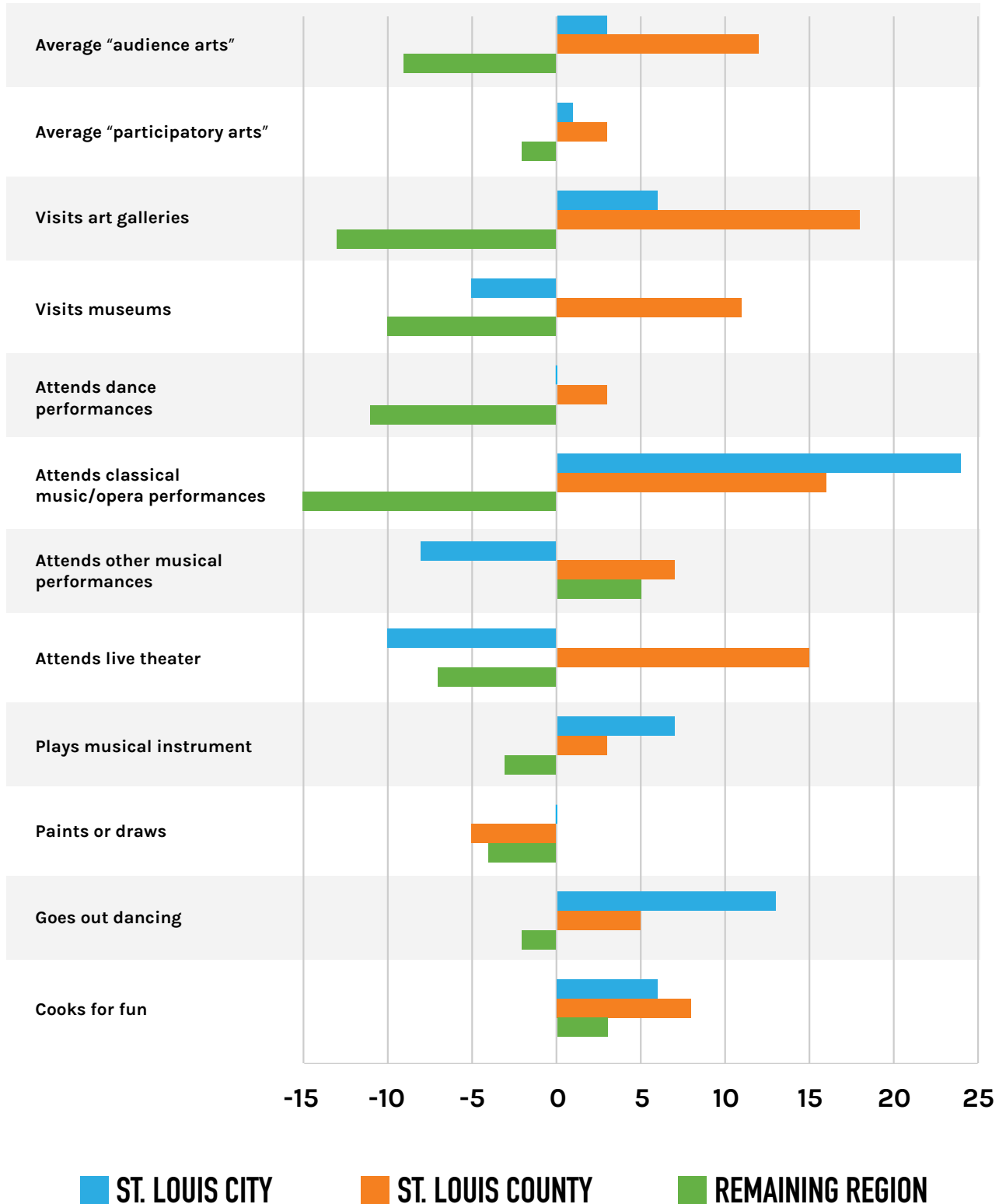
Market Potential Indexes

Analysis of the overall market demand for arts and culture shows that residents in the City and County of St. Louis are above national averages for most arts and cultural experiences. Residents in the broader region, St. Charles County and the metro east area, show demand that is primarily below average.



Missouri History Museum

2016 CONSUMER DEMAND INDEX DATA



ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY 5 REPORT

In 2016, 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 study documented the economic contributions of the arts in 341 diverse communities and regions across the country, representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Americans for the Arts partnered with 250 local, regional, and statewide organizations that represent the 341 study regions (30 partners included multiple study regions as part of their participation). To complete this customized analysis for the Greater St. Louis Area, RAC joined the study as one of the 250 partners. The Greater St. Louis Area is defined as the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County.

For the survey, RAC collected detailed financial data about local nonprofit arts and culture organizations such as our theater and dance companies, museums, festivals, and arts education organizations. It also collected surveys from attendees at arts events using a short, anonymous questionnaire that asked how much money they spent on items such as meals, parking and transportation, and retail shopping specifically as a result of attending the event.

Americans for the Arts' Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 study is supported by The Ruth Lilly Fund of Americans for the Arts. In addition, Americans for the Arts' local and statewide study partners contributed both time and a cost-sharing fee support to the study.

Robert L. Lynch
Americans for the Arts
AEP5 Symposium





The following table presents a summary of the total economic impact and a breakdown of that impact.

The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in THE GREATER ST. LOUIS AREA (FY 2015)

DIRECT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY	ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS	+	ARTS AND CULTURAL AUDIENCES	=	TOTAL INDUSTRY EXPENDITURES
Total Industry Expenditures	\$363,745,576		227,188,613		\$590,934,189

Economic Impact of Spending by Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF EXPENDITURES	ECONOMIC IMPACT OF ORGANIZATIONS	+	ECONOMIC IMPACT OF AUDIENCES	=	TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT
Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Jobs Supported	11,737		7,392		19,129
Household Income Paid to Residents	\$332,089,000		\$144,137,000		\$476,226,000
Revenue Generated to <u>Local</u> Government	\$12,376,000		\$16,210,000		\$28,586,000
Revenue Generated to <u>State</u> Government	\$16,362,000		\$12,748,000		\$29,110,000

Event-Related Spending by Arts and Cultural Audiences Totaled \$227.2 million (excluding the cost of admission)¹

ATTENDANCE TO ARTS AND CULTURE EVENTS	RESIDENT ² ATTENDEES	+	NONRESIDENT ² ATTENDEES	=	ALL CULTURAL AUDIENCES
Total Attendance to Arts and Culture Events	9,376,304		2,402,973		11,779,277
Percentage of Total Attendance	79.6%		20.4%		100.0%
Average Event-Related Spending Per Person	\$15.54		\$34.21		\$19.35
Total Event-Related Expenditures	\$146,799,906		\$80,388,707		\$227,188,613

Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Event Attendees Spend an Average of \$19.35 Per Person (excluding the cost of admission)

CATEGORY OF EVENT-RELATED EXPENDITURE	RESIDENT ² ATTENDEES	+	NONRESIDENT ² ATTENDEES	=	ALL CULTURAL AUDIENCES
Meals and Refreshments	\$11.58		\$19.97		\$13.29
Souvenirs and Gifts	\$1.96		\$2.50		\$2.07
Ground Transportation	\$1.02		\$3.40		\$1.50
Overnight Lodging (one night only)	\$0.00		\$5.47		\$1.12
Other/Miscellaneous	\$0.98		\$2.87		\$1.37
Average Event-Related Spending Per Person	\$15.54		\$34.21		\$19.35

Source: *Arts & Economic Prosperity 5: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the Greater St. Louis Area*. For more information about this study or about other cultural initiatives in the Greater St. Louis Area, visit the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission's web site at www.racstl.org. Copyright 2017 by Americans for the Arts (www.AmericansForTheArts.org).

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 study was conducted by Americans for the Arts to document the economic impact of the nonprofit arts and culture industry in 341 communities and regions (113 cities, 115 counties, 81 multicounty or multicity regions, 10 states, and 12 individual arts districts)—representing all 50 U.S. states and the District of Columbia. The diverse communities range in population (1,500 to more than 4 million) and type (small rural to large urban). Project economists from the Georgia Institute of Technology customized an input-output analysis model for each participating region to provide specific and localized data on four measures of economic impact: full-time equivalent jobs, household income, and local and state government revenue. These localized models allow for the uniqueness of each local economy to be reflected in the findings.

Americans for the Arts partnered with 250 local, regional, and statewide organizations that represent the 341 study regions (30 partners included multiple study regions as part of their participation). **To complete this customized analysis for the Greater St. Louis Area, the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission joined the study as one of the 250 partners.** The Greater St. Louis Area is defined as the City of St. Louis and St. Louis County.

SURVEYS OF NONPROFIT ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

Each of the 250 partner organizations identified the universe of nonprofit arts and cultural organizations that are located in its region(s) using the Urban Institute's National Taxonomy of Exempt Entity (NTEE) coding system, a definitive classification system for nonprofit organizations recognized as tax exempt by the Internal Revenue Code. In addition, the study partners were encouraged to include other types of eligible organizations if they play a substantial role in the cultural life of the community or if their primary purpose is to promote participation in, appreciation for, and understanding of the visual, performing, folk, and literary and media arts. These include government-owned or government-operated cultural facilities and institutions; municipal arts agencies and councils; private community arts organizations; unincorporated arts groups; living collections (such as zoos, aquariums, and botanical gardens); university presenters, programs, and facilities; and arts programs that are embedded under the umbrella of a nonarts organization or facility (such as a hospital or church). In short, if it displays the characteristics of a nonprofit arts and cultural organization, it is included. **For-profit businesses (e.g., Broadway, motion picture theaters) and individual artists were excluded from this study.**

Nationally, data was collected from a total of 14,439 organizations for this study. Response rates among all eligible organizations located in the 341 study regions was 54.0 percent, and ranged from 9.5 percent to 100 percent. Responding organizations had budgets ranging from \$0 to \$785 million (Smithsonian Institution). It is important to note that each study region's results are based solely on the actual survey data collected. There are no estimates made to account for nonresponding organizations. Therefore, the less-than-100 percent response rates suggest an understatement of the economic impact findings in most of the individual study regions.

In the Greater St. Louis Area, 163 of the 285 eligible nonprofit arts and cultural organizations participated in this study—an overall participation rate of 57.2 percent. A list of the participating organizations can be obtained from the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission.

SURVEYS OF NONPROFIT ARTS AND CULTURAL AUDIENCES

Audience-intercept surveying, a common and accepted research method, was completed in all 341 study regions to capture information about spending by audiences at nonprofit arts and culture events. Patrons were selected randomly and asked to complete a short survey while attending an event. A total of 212,691 attendees completed the survey. The respondents provided itemized travel party expenditure data on attendance-related activities such as meals, souvenirs, transportation, and lodging. Data was collected throughout the year to guard against seasonal spikes or drop-offs in attendance, and at a broad range of events (because a night at the opera will typically yield more spending than a Saturday children's theater production). Using total attendance data for 2015 (collected from the participating organizations), standard statistical methods were then used to derive a reliable estimate of total arts event-related expenditures by attendees in each study region.

In the Greater St. Louis Area, a total of 1,523 valid audience-intercept surveys were collected from attendees to nonprofit arts and cultural performances, events, and exhibitions during 2016.

STUDYING ECONOMIC IMPACT USING INPUT-OUTPUT ANALYSIS

To derive the most reliable economic impact data, input-output analysis was used to measure the impact of expenditures by nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences. This highly-regarded type of economic analysis has been the basis for two Nobel Prizes in economics. The models are systems of mathematical equations that combine statistical methods and economic theory in an area of study called econometrics. The analysis traces how many times a dollar is respent within the local economy before it leaves the community, and it quantifies the economic impact of each of those rounds of spending. Project economists customized an input-output model for each of the 341 participating study regions based on the local dollar flow among 533 finely detailed industries within its economy. This was accomplished by using detailed data on employment, incomes, and government revenues provided by the U.S. Department of Commerce (County Business Patterns, the Regional Economic Information System, and the Survey of State and Local Finance), state and local tax data (e.g., sales taxes, lodging tax, property taxes, income tax, and miscellaneous local option taxes), and the survey data collected from the responding arts and cultural organizations and their audiences.

¹ To calculate the total estimated audience expenditures in the Greater St. Louis Area, first the audience expenditure findings for any individual participating study regions that are located within the Greater St. Louis Area were summed. Next, the residency percentages and the average per person arts-related expenditure for residents and nonresidents were applied to any additional attendance data collected from organizations located within the Greater St. Louis Area but outside of the individual participating study region(s). Finally, the results were added to the aggregate of the individual participating region(s). Therefore, the total audience expenditures for the Greater St. Louis Area do not equal the average per person event-related expenditure for residents multiplied by the total estimated attendance by residents plus the average per person event-related expenditure for nonresidents multiplied by the total estimated attendance by nonresidents.

² For the purpose of this study, residents are attendees who live within St. Louis City and St. Louis County; nonresidents live elsewhere.

A comprehensive description of the methodology used to complete the national study is available at www.AmericansForTheArts.org/EconomicImpact.

DOWNTOWN PUBLIC ART PLAN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017, the Regional Arts Commission (RAC), Downtown St. Louis, Inc. (DSI), and Explore St. Louis started a conversation about how public art can be a critical tool in the ongoing transformation and resurgence of Downtown St. Louis.

The past fifteen years have seen enormous changes Downtown: It has gone from a district with more than 150 empty buildings to less than two dozen and is now the city's most rapidly growing neighborhood. New investments are being made to public spaces and infrastructure, cultural destinations are growing and attracting increasing numbers of visitors, businesses are choosing to locate Downtown, and private developers are renovating historic buildings and embarking on new ventures. Public art can support all of these investments, spur continued revitalization and help knit Downtown's growing, changing spaces together into a vibrant, thriving core at the heart of the entire St. Louis region.

As a first step to bringing more public art to Downtown, RAC, DSI, and Explore St. Louis realized they needed a plan—a shared vision, set of priorities for public art and practical strategies for how to get things done. They also realized that it was essential to gather the creative ideas and observations of Downtown residents, workers, visitors, civic organizations, cultural and arts organizations, developers, and businesses to help inform this plan. Thus, a nine-month planning process began that engaged broad groups of stakeholders in building the Downtown STL Public Art Plan.

Public Art that Impacts the Experience of Downtown

The Downtown STL Public Art Plan advances the vision that **public art will support building a dense, inclusive and culturally vibrant downtown that is a vital anchor to the entire region.**

This will be accomplished by:

- Encouraging walking and exploration of Downtown's streets and public spaces
- Highlighting the culture of Downtown as a place for creativity and possibility
- Reinforcing the *identity* of Downtown as the heart of a diverse and multifaceted region
- Welcoming people Downtown and demonstrating that they have arrived at a unique, vibrant and creative place, rich with history, where people from all over the region, country, and world are encouraged to gather



Manolo Valdes
Butterflies



Thoughtbarn
Chromatic Confluence

A New Partnership to Lead the Charge: The Downtown STL Public Art Initiative

Perhaps most significantly, the Downtown STL Public Art Plan recommends the creation of a Downtown STL Public Art Initiative, helmed by multiple partners, to make ideas a reality. This Initiative will:

- Provide the vision, leadership and capacity necessary to develop and lead public art projects
- Partner with other Downtown stakeholders to launch and manage projects
- Act as a resource for developers, property owners, arts and community organizations and artists wishing to initiate their own public art projects

A dedicated staff person, hired, paid and overseen by the Regional Arts Commission and housed at Downtown St. Louis, Inc., will oversee day to day management of the Initiative. A Downtown Public Art Advisory Committee (DPAAC), comprised of regional visual arts professionals and Downtown stakeholders, will provide guidance and oversight.

The Initiative will not work alone or in isolation, but will seek partnerships and encourage and support developers, arts and culture organizations, artists, and others to participate and take leadership, as well. Depending on the project, the Initiative's role may be to lead, partner, advise, or advocate.

Focusing Resources to Make an Impact

There is no single, dedicated source of funding for public art Downtown, but the Initiative can strategically deploy a variety of tools at its disposal to develop a broad, diversified funding pool to make its vision a reality. This will include leveraging support from RAC, making the most of the City's Percent for Art Ordinance, seeking grants, sponsorships and support from partners, cultivating donors, and encouraging developers to include public art in their projects or contribute to public art projects Downtown.



A New Generation of Public Art in Downtown

The Downtown STL Public Art Plan also lays out a series of public art opportunities designed to help make Downtown into a dense, culturally-rich neighborhood that anchors the entire region and invites everyone to explore its streets. These projects will encourage walking and exploration, highlight the culture of Downtown as a place full of possibility, reflect Downtown's identity as the heart of a diverse region, and welcome people to this vibrant, unique place.

Exploration

Vibrant, visually-stimulating temporary and permanent pedestrian-oriented projects will make the experience of walking in Downtown more culturally rich, encouraging exploration and building on the distinction of being the most walkable neighborhood in the region.

North-South Connectors — Pedestrian-oriented works for art that enliven major streets

Streetscape Infrastructure Projects — Vibrant, attractive projects integrated into streetscape re-designs or renovations

Crossing Tucker Boulevard — Projects that help soften the edges of Tucker Boulevard and improve the crossing experience

Washington Avenue East/View Corridor — Smaller-scale interventions that enliven the pedestrian experience and a large-scale, iconic work of art that takes advantage of the view to the river

Highway Underpasses — Innovative, surprising visual experiences in these otherwise difficult pedestrian spaces

Elevated Walkways — Vibrant projects that enhance the public's views of elevated walkways

Choteau Greenway — A robust public art program that engages people in this new piece of public infrastructure

The Gateway Mall — Public art that invigorates the Gateway Mall's public green spaces and connects them to the rest of the city

North-South MetroLink Extension — Artworks that activate the stations and improve pedestrians' experience of connecting to them

Possibility

Bold, innovative new public art will show that Downtown embraces creativity, experimentation and the exploration of new ideas.

Artist-initiated Projects — An annual "Ideas Competition" inviting regional artists to propose their best ideas for temporary projects at sites of their own choosing

Platforms for Projections — Rotating new media work projected onto buildings to activate Downtown evenings and nights

Arts Festival — An interactive public art or multidisciplinary event

Identity

Public art will become a marker of Downtown's overall identity by creating an enhanced and authentic sense of place that reflects the richness and diversity of the entire community. Compelling and complex artworks will let you know that you are in the heart of a diverse and multifaceted region.

St. Louis Stories — Temporary and permanent projects that address the story of the St. Louis community in an honest, open way that illuminates St. Louisans' shared experiences and looks to the future together

History — Projects that examine Downtown's rich, diverse history and make it come alive for the public

Riverfront Art — Projects that engage people with the powerful and unique Mississippi River and its changing water levels

Welcome

Diverse, excellent public art will create a special sense of arrival and a welcoming environment, signaling to people of all backgrounds that they are in a place that is well cared for and where design and creativity are valued.

America's Center Signature Project — An iconic work that can come to represent the convention center, Downtown and St. Louis

America's Center Collection — A collection of "portable" two- and three-dimensional work that highlights the talent and excellence of the region, as well as prominent exterior and interior site-specific installations

Major Gateways — Public art that, along with good urban design, marks the arrival to the city and makes it a notable experience

Priority Mural Sites — Projects that visually improve prominent parking garages and blank walls and use them to convey a sense of welcome

Supporting Public Art from all Sides

In addition to its role in developing new public art projects, the Initiative should lead programs that engage people with public art, provide support to others developing public art projects, and support the growth of artists.

Getting the Word Out

The Initiative should work with its partners to promote public art Downtown to hometown audiences and travelers. Tools to use include an online catalog; print materials for convention-goers, hotel guests, and others; tours; and a variety of local and national media outlets from art media to social media to mass media. Images of public art will be used in marketing by Explore St. Louis to national audiences and by DSI and RAC to regional audiences.

Bringing the Art to Life

Downtown's public art and the Initiative's ongoing work can provide creative and interactive ways to engage people in looking at, learning about and discussing public art. The Initiative should work with its partners to develop programs that reach out to people and draw them into all that art and the process of artmaking has to offer. Countless possibilities include "Meet the Artist" events, talks or gatherings; an artist residency program that embeds artists into Downtown organizations, institutions, or corporations and infuses the arts into everyday work in Downtown, a special focus on commissioning artists whose practice includes an interactive component, and using the existing public art as a platform for interaction via a curriculum guide or other teaching tool.

Tools and Resources

The Initiative should work with RAC and other relevant partners to develop resources geared toward artists, property owners, and arts and community organizations to help them develop and promote their own projects.

Downtown's Future, Step by Step

Together the recommendations and opportunities laid out in this plan provide a roadmap that can help Downtown navigate the next steps in its transformation and harness the power of public art to make Downtown a dense, culturally rich neighborhood where there is always something new to do, see, and be a part of.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

EVOKE Community
Listening Session
St. Charles

INTRODUCTION

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HOW WE GOT HERE

WHAT WE LEARNED

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

STORIES HIGHLIGHTING THE INTERSECTION OF ARTS &

RAC'S PRINCIPLES OF PRACTICE

NEXT STEPS

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Thank you to the artists who gave
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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

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Manchester Police Department

Marquette Recreation Center

Natural Bridge Library

St. Louis ArtWorks

St. Louis Community Foundation

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