



**A Cultural Plan**  
**for**  
**Lafayette and West Lafayette**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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# Executive Summary

## Introduction

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This community plan for arts and cultural development in Lafayette and West Lafayette is the culmination of a year-long process that began in January 2008. As part of the work for the plan, the consultants conducted:

- A **cultural assessment** through meetings and interviews that engaged about 50 individuals who are representative of various sectors of the community
- A **community process** that reached over 150 individuals, including on-going work with a community Steering Committee
- An **inventory** of cultural organizations and cultural facilities
- A web-based **survey** of the cultural participation interests and priorities of residents.<sup>1</sup>

This plan defines a “road map” for action for the next ten to fifteen years and reflects a vision for arts and cultural development in the community at large.

## Overview of Lafayette and West Lafayette

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- While the economy is facing difficult times, in general Greater Lafayette’s economic base has been strong and diverse with resilient industrial, agricultural, and academic components. Purdue University, the area’s largest employer, provides an extensive range of job opportunities.
- Many local businesses have been sold and are under out-of-town ownership and this has meant the loss of some corporate philanthropic support. That said, Greater Lafayette is an extraordinarily generous community. For example, the United Way has achieved its goal for more than thirty years.
- Lafayette and West Lafayette have a strong focus on the area’s heritage and the historic preservation of its built environment. Lafayette’s downtown is in

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<sup>1</sup> The consultants gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Purdue University’s STATCOM project and the Journal & Courier newspaper.



generally excellent condition, especially if it is compared to other communities of a comparable scale.

- The railroad relocation project, with its huge impact on the downtown, is emblematic of an emerging dynamic of cooperation among the cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette and Purdue University. The motto, “Two great cities, one great university” and the theme of “Hilltop to Hilltop” both point to increasingly strong view that cooperation has become more than simply rhetoric or marketing.

## **A Perspective on the Value of Arts and Culture**

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There is an increasingly impressive body of research that highlights the impact of arts, culture, and creativity on the quality of life of a community. For example:

- National data<sup>2</sup> highlight that the nonprofit cultural sector alone contributes over \$166 billion annually and includes 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs.
- Data show, for example, that the price of single family homes jumped 15 percent in a single year after an art museum opened in a depressed mill town in Massachusetts.<sup>3</sup>
- College Board research indicates that students who took four years of arts coursework outperformed their peers without that training by 58 points on the verbal portion and 38 points on the math portion of the SAT.<sup>4</sup>
- A recent initiative in the schools was designed “to improve student achievement by building connections between the arts and the core curriculum.” After only two years in operation, 2<sup>nd</sup> grade students scored significantly higher than their counterparts on all standardized tests.<sup>5</sup>

All of these examples point to ways in which arts and culture can add value in support of key *community* priorities in addition to its primary role of educating, enlightening, and entertaining us. It will be helpful to keep in mind the many facets of the cultural sector’s impact while reviewing the strategies in this Report.

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<sup>2</sup> Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity III, June, 2007 (<http://artsusa.org>)

<sup>3</sup> Opinion Journal, “What MassMOCA has Wrought” July 7, 2004.

<sup>4</sup> The College Board, “2005 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report” 2005

<sup>5</sup> Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force, “Vibrant Culture – Thriving Economy” 2004.



## Consultant Findings

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### General Impressions of the Cultural Community

- The Greater Lafayette area has a rich mix of arts and cultural activities, events, and organizations, as well as a diverse and talented pool of artists. Particularly noteworthy, there is a viable market for local art in Greater Lafayette, which is not to be taken for granted in communities of this scale.
- Arts activities and initiatives are not generally perceived to be well promoted and might be labeled as among Greater Lafayette’s “best kept secrets.” One problem appears to be the lack of a community-wide system to coordinate and disseminate information about cultural activities.
- There is a sense that younger adults in their 20s and 30s are not effectively integrated in Greater Lafayette’s larger cultural sector. In addition, there are few opportunities to experience arts and culture for people under 21 years of age.

### Operations of Cultural Organizations

- In general, most arts, cultural, history, and heritage groups are volunteer-driven with few full-time, paid, professionally-trained staff members. These groups generally work with small budgets and accomplish a great deal within the limitations of their resources.
- As a result of their under-capitalization, arts groups often have difficulty working jointly, either on administrative or programmatic initiatives, and thus there are sometimes duplications of effort. That said, there have been some interesting, innovative, and important examples of collaborations among arts groups.
- Arts and cultural groups work with a minimum of appropriately equipped facilities, and space remains a difficult question. There are several older cultural spaces in the downtown and an eclectic mix of commercial venues. Representatives of the smaller budget arts groups commented on a shortage of small, affordable spaces available for rental.

### Community Perceptions of the Cultural Sector

- Many civic leaders see the value of arts and culture to the community’s economic development and Lafayette’s Downtown Action Plan of 2002 highlights its importance. In addition, the Wabash River Enhancement Project’s



initial public session highlighted the role arts and culture might play in that initiative.

- However, there is concern among civic leaders that arts groups are fragmented and functioning in a “hand to mouth” fashion. One response to this, especially in the business community, is to suggest that arts groups consolidate and develop “economies of scale.” There is interest among arts groups in administrative collaborations as long as they do not impact program.
- There is also some interest in building a new cultural facility with high quality performance, exhibition, and classroom spaces. These plans are in the very early stages and no demand studies or operating plans have yet been undertaken. Initiatives to build new facilities are very expensive, both in terms of capital and on-going operating costs, and thus careful research and planning is always wise.

### **Community Participation in Arts and Culture**

- A web-based survey provided a perspective on participation in arts and cultural activities in Tippecanoe County among 1,336 participants. While a survey of this nature does not allow for generalizations about the community at large, it does provide an interesting snapshot of the respondents, especially when comparing low and high participants in the dataset.
- Almost twice as many respondents are “satisfied” as are “dissatisfied” with the variety of cultural activities available in the County. While that is a positive situation, it is important to note that a majority of respondents – slightly less than 60 percent – indicated that they are only “somewhat satisfied.”
- Over 8 in 10 respondents report that they travel outside of Tippecanoe County to participate in cultural experiences. This is quite a high number, compared to other communities. And when the respondents are categorized by their level of participation, those respondents who participate in arts and culture most frequently are also the most frequent travelers.

### **Education and Higher Education**

- All three of Greater Lafayette’s school corporations (as well as parochial schools) are strong and the arts are an important part of that. Among the schools with the strongest arts programming is Lafayette’s Jefferson High School, although elementary and middle school programs are also strong.
- Purdue, with its strong mix of performing and visual arts offerings, plays an important role in the range of offerings available in the community and has



several important cultural attractions for residents and visitors alike. Purdue's focus on the liberal arts appears to be increasing, given its new President's interest in that area.

- As Ivy Tech continues to flesh out its liberal arts component, it is considering plans to add majors in several aspects of theatre and graphic arts. In addition, it has an interest in building a stronger presence in the downtown as a location to offer classes.

### **Leadership of Cultural Organizations**

- Even though the arts are valued by civic leaders and government officials, there is no formal mechanism that consistently brings representatives of arts and culture into important community discussions and planning sessions.
- The Tippecanoe Arts Federation (TAF) was created to serve, among other things, as an “umbrella” organization that represents, advocates, and speaks for Greater Lafayette's cultural community. However, TAF has not been perceived as fulfilling this role. While it is clearly part of TAF's mission, budgetary constraints have limited its ability to perform in this way.
- There is a shortage of experienced staff leaders in arts organizations, whether paid or volunteer, and there is a great deal of turnover among staff directors. Executive leadership is hard to attract and retain and arts groups have done an exceptional job under difficult circumstances.

### **Funding for Arts and Culture**

- The current economic downturn presents a challenging dynamic for fund raising for nonprofit cultural organizations. It has never been an easy job to raise funds for such groups and the present climate makes that situation even more complex.
- There is a sense that the future of cultural funding in Greater Lafayette is through individual support. While the community is philanthropically generous, support for arts and culture is described as having been “very small...” for the size of the community. This may be a function of the lack of professional fund raising among arts groups and suggests the importance of training in this area.
- There have been on-going discussions to define a public sector revenue stream to support arts and culture. While the current economic climate makes consideration of a new tax challenging, the longer-term prospects are more



positive. Certainly there is a strong case for public investment in arts and culture, based on its role in economic development and education.

## **A Vision for Arts and Culture in Lafayette and West Lafayette**

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The plan’s Steering Committee has reviewed and revised this vision statement, summarized below. (A complete copy is available starting on page 17.)

*In 2024...using its rich mix of arts and cultural amenities, Greater Lafayette has become a regional “cultural hot spot.” The cultural sector is a source of community pride and its impact is understood to be central to the livability and economic vitality of the community...*

*... Residents of surrounding communities – those near and some further – flock to the vibrant, exciting downtown with its reinvigorated Long Center and its inventory of other well-maintained, heavily used historic buildings...As plans for the development of the Wabash Riverfront have matured, many options to integrate cultural amenities, including cultural venues... are moving forward ...*

*... Young people are engaged in arts and cultural activities – school children can spend time in school and after-school pursuing arts learning; community cultural offerings are easily accessible to college and university students; and downtown’s lively entertainment scene offers options for young people, both with and without alcohol...*

*... None of this could have been possible without the support of business leaders, educators, foundation representatives, and elected officials. Working together with a reinvigorated Tippecanoe Arts Federation, support for arts and culture has thrived and several new streams of revenue – both public and private sector – have contributed valuable resources to cultural groups.*

## **Goals and Strategies**

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The following goals and strategies are described in detail in Part IV of the report, starting on page 19.

### **GOAL 1**

**Integrate arts and culture more fully into Lafayette’s and West Lafayette’s approaches to community economic development.**



**Strategy 1.1**

Establish a downtown cultural district to promote nonprofit and commercial arts, cultural, and entertainment venues and foster additional activity.

**Strategy 1.2**

Develop a cultural facilities master plan.

**Strategy 1.3**

Assess the market for and operational viability of a new, multi-purpose exhibition and performance venue.

**Strategy 1.4**

Formalize a joint, cooperative Lafayette-West Lafayette public art program and ultimately establish a “percent-for-art” ordinance.

**Strategy 1.5**

Support initiatives to provide cultural experiences in Lafayette’s and West Lafayette’s neighborhoods.

**GOAL 2**

**Engage children, teens, and young adults more fully in the cultural life of the Lafayette/West Lafayette community.**

**Strategy 2.1**

Better coordinate the cultural experiences available to children in primary and secondary schools.

**Strategy 2.2**

Provide a more inclusive range of informal arts and cultural experiences for children, teens, and young adults.

**Strategy 2.3**

Establish a stronger connection between institutions of higher education and Greater Lafayette.

**GOAL 3**

**Build a broader and deeper County-wide audience for arts and culture of all kinds.**





**Strategy 3.1**

Develop an effective and comprehensive web-based communications mechanism.

**Strategy 3.2**

Improve community awareness of and access to cultural offerings.

**Strategy 3.3**

Explore ways to increase participation in arts and culture.

**Strategy 3.4**

Develop inclusive programs that serve diverse ethnicities and ages.

**GOAL 4**

**Strengthen the leadership and resources in support of arts and culture.**

**Strategy 4.1**

Consider consolidating selected administrative functions of cultural groups.

**Strategy 4.2**

Strengthen programs of professional development for artists and cultural groups.

**Strategy 4.3**

Build the capacity and strengthen the leadership of the Tippecanoe Arts Federation.

**Strategy 4.4**

Build more effective partnerships between the cultural sector and the business community and local government.

**Strategy 4.5**

Increase public sector support – both financial and in-kind – for arts and culture.

The chart on the following pages provides additional information about these strategies.



	Description	Priority	Possible Partners	Estimate of Cost
<b>Goal 1</b> <b>Integrate arts and culture more fully into Lafayette’s and West Lafayette’s approaches to community economic development.</b>				
1.1	Establish downtown cultural district.	1	Arts, entertainment, history, and heritage organizations, City of Lafayette; downtown businesses; Greater Lafayette Commerce; Downtown Development Council, TAF	Initially, part of existing budgets; on-going costs from \$15-50K
1.2	Develop cultural facilities master plan.	1	TAF, Downtown Development Council, Greater Lafayette Commerce, City of Lafayette, cultural organizations (w/facilities)	Database minimal; master plan between \$25-\$50K w/o pro bono assistance
1.3	Assess market for, operations of new cultural venue	2	Lafayette and West Lafayette; Tippecanoe County; Purdue; Ivy Tech; cultural organizations; TAF; downtown business interests; Wabash River Enhancement Project; funders	\$40-75K for feasibility study
1.4	Joint Lafayette/ West Lafayette public art program	3	Lafayette and West Lafayette; cultural organizations and individual artists; Purdue University; Tippecanoe County	Minimal to establish; on-going from CIP
1.5	Neighborhood cultural activities	3	West Lafayette and Lafayette; cultural groups; neighborhood groups	Minimal
<b>Goal 2</b> <b>Engage children, teens, and young adults more fully in the cultural life of the Lafayette/West Lafayette community.</b>				
2.1	Coordinate K-12 cultural experiences	2	Cultural groups; Lafayette, West Lafayette, and Tippecanoe School Corporation; TAF; Purdue and Ivy Tech; arts educators.	Minimal, assuming pro bono aid
2.2	Informal arts experiences for children, teens, young adults	1	Community and social service organizations; arts and cultural groups; artists; cities’ recreation departments; commercial venues; libraries; funders.	Minimal to coordinate; on-going within existing budgets



	<b>Description</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Possible Partners</b>	<b>Estimate of Cost</b>
2.3	Stronger connections between Greater Lafayette and institutions of higher learning	3	Purdue; Ivy Tech; cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette; cultural groups; TAF	\$1-3K
<b>Goal 3</b> <b>Build a broader and deeper County-wide audience for arts and culture of all kinds.</b>				
3.1	Web-based communication mechanism	1	Cultural groups; TAF; media organizations; Purdue; Ivy Tech; Greater Lafayette Commerce; Lafayette-West Lafayette CVB; Lafayette and West Lafayette.	\$5-15K for startup; \$4-8K ongoing; pro bono possible
3.2	Build community awareness	2	Cultural organizations; Greater Lafayette Commerce; CVB; TAF; civic organizations; print and electronic media; civic and business leaders; Lafayette and West Lafayette; Purdue; Ivy Tech.	Without pro bono services, admin costs of \$5-10K
3.3	Increase participation in arts and culture	2	Local, regional cultural organizations; TAF; local businesses; civic groups; Lafayette and West Lafayette.	\$15-35K annually; sponsorships possible
3.4	Inclusive cultural programming	2	Cultural organizations; TAF; Diversity Roundtable; businesses	\$2-5K
<b>Goal 4</b> <b>Strengthen the leadership and resources in support of arts and culture.</b>				
4.1	Consolidate some administrative functions	1	TAF; cultural groups; civic and business leaders; funders	Depending on options, \$10-50K for startup; \$10-25K on-going
4.2	Professional development for cultural groups	2	TAF; cultural groups; artists; Purdue; technical assistance providers; funders	\$2-5K to inventory need; \$5-25K on-going
4.3	Build capacity, leadership of TAF	1	TAF and all cultural groups; city and County government; civic and business leaders; funders; Purdue; Ivy Tech	\$5-15K initially; \$25-50K on-going.



	<b>Description</b>	<b>Priority</b>	<b>Possible Partners</b>	<b>Estimate of Cost</b>
4.4	Business/cultural sector partnerships	2	TAF; cultural groups; Lafayette and West Lafayette; institutions of higher learning; funders; Greater Lafayette Commerce.	Minimal
4.5	Increase public sector support	1	Cities of Lafayette and West Lafayette; Tippecanoe County; civic leaders; arts and cultural supporters; cultural organizations; TAF.	Minimal for in-kind assistance

## **Next Steps**

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This plan has been reviewed by the Steering Committee , revised based on its comments. It will be presented to the community in mid-January 2009. The leaders of the cultural planning initiative and TAF have jointly assembled a “transition committee” to oversee the shift from planning to implementation. This body will begin the process of setting priorities among strategies and moving the process forward in the coming year.

