Culture, Parks, and Recreation Best Practices

OVERVIEW
The best practice case studies within this section highlight innovative programs and practices related to the integration of arts and economic development initiatives, local and regional arts and culture collaborations, and the formation of a park district. The culture, parks, and recreation best practice case studies are:

- **Arts and Economic Integration** – Austin, Texas
- **Arts Development** – Riverside, California
- **Regional Arts and Culture Coordination** – Portland, Oregon
- **Local Arts Collaborations** – Santa Fe, New Mexico
- **Park District Formation** – Aurora, Illinois

ADDITIONAL IDEAS
Additional research of other organizations and ideas may be helpful as the community discusses preferred directions and possible implementation actions. Some additional ideas for culture, parks, and recreation best practices and implementation strategies include:

**Organizations and Programs**

- Chattanooga, Tennessee’s arts community;
- Chesterfield County, Virginia’s partnership between local business and recreation programs;
- City of Omaha’s Art in Public Places Program;
- Community Foundation of Northern Colorado partnerships (possibly to develop long-term arts and culture funding options); and
- Mt. Vernon, Indiana chalk the walk program.

**Innovative Practices**

- Formation of a science and cultural facilities district around key arts and culture destinations (e.g., Denver, Colorado);
- Sponsoring and advertising in parks and recreation facilities (e.g., Larimer County, Colorado, Highland Park, Illinois, and Broward County, Florida);
- Regional recreation attractions to support park system operations and maintenance (e.g., Highland Hills Water World in Denver, Colorado);
- Partnerships between agencies for youth and senior recreational facilities and programming;
- Creation of thematic cultural districts or destinations (e.g., Asian, Middle Eastern themes); and
- Park and recreation facility rentals for events and festivals.
ARTS AND ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Innovative Community: Austin, Texas
Population: 757,688

Austin is the cultural and economic center of the Austin-Round Rock-San Marcos metropolitan area. Like Fort Collins, Austin values integration of arts, culture and creativity into all aspects of community life.

Innovative Practices

Arts and Economic Integration
The City of Austin recognizes the importance of arts and culture as an indispensable resource for civic vitality and prosperity. A recent study rated the impact of the cultural sector in Austin: $2.2 billion in annual economic activity, 44,000 jobs, and $48 million generated in City tax revenue.

The Cultural Arts Division (CAD) of the Economic Growth and Redevelopment Services Office provides leadership and management for the City’s cultural arts programs and for the development of arts and cultural industries as an economic development strategy on behalf of the City. The Cultural Arts Division is responsible for the Cultural Arts Funding Programs, Art in Public Places Program, community-based arts development, and programs to assist the development of music, film and creative industries in Austin, as well as initiatives designed to support and encourage the community’s unique cultural identity and vitality.

Background and Details

Leading by Example at City Hall
Austin City Hall was designed to promote public participation and interaction with local government as well as engaging in Austin’s diverse cultural arts. City Hall is always right in the middle of the action of Austin’s huge downtown cultural events like Art City Austin, and City Hall provides many avenues for artistic expression through art, music and performance activities day and night, including:

- Live music performance by a local musician or band in the Council Chambers at each City Council Meeting;
- Free “Live from the Plaza” concerts feature a local band every Friday at noon;
- An extensive art exhibition in the atrium and open areas of the first three floors; and
- Video screens in the lobby allow visitors to select short films which highlight Austin’s unique sense of place and diverse cultural identity and showcase the creative talent of Central Texas filmmakers.

Cultural Plan
In order to assure that Austin remains a hotbed of innovation, creativity, and entrepreneurial energy, the City initiated a community-wide dialogue about the future of the arts and cultural development (something that had not occurred since the early 90s). The dialogue was transformed into a concrete action plan for future cultural development to be implemented by the whole community over the next 5 to 10 years. The concrete action plan is called Create Austin, the City’s Cultural Plan. The cultural plan maps out Austin’s arts and cultural assets, needs, opportunities, resources, and priorities to help create strategies and action plans for the community to further develop the cultural sector.

Cultural Arts Funding and Support
Austin City government recognizes that music is one of the things that makes the community special, and it translates into millions of dollars annually. The City’s official slogan became “Live Music Capital of the World” by City Council resolution on Aug. 29, 1991. The City also has several programs to help musicians and promote their music, such as the Austin music television and live City Council performances.

The City of Austin’s Cultural Arts Division offers the Take it to the Next Level professional development
workshops to enhance the management capacity of nonprofit creative organizations and to grow jobs, wealth, and the economic impact of the creative economy. Workshop topics are identified by surveying previous participants to respond to the needs of the creative sector.

The City of Austin was the first municipality in Texas to make a commitment to include works of art in construction projects when it established the Art in Public Places program in 1985. By ordinance, 2% of budgets are allocated to commission or purchase art for public sites such as the airport, convention center, libraries, parks, police stations, recreation centers, and streetscapes.

Additionally, the City of Austin established a Creative Industries Loan Guarantee Program to help individuals, companies, and nonprofits involved in music, film, art, and technology.

For More information
City of Austin Website: http://www.ci.austin.tx.us/redevelopment/cad.htm

Related Sections
- Economic Health
- Community and Neighborhood Livability
- High Performing Community
ARTS DEVELOPMENT

Innovative Community: Riverside, CA
Population: 300,430

Named for its location beside the Santa Ana River, Riverside is the largest city in the Riverside-San Bernardino-Ontario metropolitan areas of Southern California – also known as the “Inland Empire,” it is located approximately 60 miles east of Los Angeles. The University of California, Riverside is located in the northeastern part of the City. The City’s official slogan is “City of Arts and Innovation.”

Innovative Practices

Arts Development

In 2006, the City Council formed the new Arts & Cultural Affairs Division (ACAD) within the City’s Development Department for the purpose of advancing the Mayor and City Council’s vision to make Riverside the identified center for arts, culture, education and entertainment in the Inland Empire. This designation has become the City’s focus primarily due to innovative decision making and branding, since Riverside does not have a long-standing history of art or innovation.

Background and Details

ACAD provides support and creates local, regional and national partnerships with the many Riverside arts and cultural institutions, including the Smithsonian Institution among others.

Key Objectives and Responsibilities

ACAD is guided by its mission, which is to champion and advance Riverside as the “City of Arts & Innovation” in the broadest economic and social context possible. The department motto is “Together we all work to provide access to the diversity of art and culture in Riverside!” Key objectives and responsibilities of the ACDC are:

- Enhancing the quality of life for residents of and visitors to the City of Riverside;
- Helping to build a strong local economy through arts and culture;
- Planning, developing, and overseeing City of Riverside arts programs and cultural activities;
- Developing and managing the City’s arts policy, grants, and sponsorships;
- Serving as the City’s arts and cultural affairs representative with local, county, and state arts agencies, local arts ad-hoc coalitions, corporations civic groups, and artists;
- Providing guidance to community partner organizations to promote a cohesive and sophisticated artistic and cultural environment;
- Promoting the City’s participation in arts and cultural affairs programs locally, regionally, statewide, nationally and internationally;
- Producing or assisting with City-wide special events;
- Coordinating City-wide Special Event permits;
- Negotiating and managing contracts for the City’s arts and cultural facilities, including the Fox Performing Arts Center, the Municipal Auditorium, the Visitors Center, and the Riverside Convention Center; and
- Overseeing City-wide filming rights, productions, and revenue-generation.

For More information

City of Riverside Development Department – Arts and Cultural Affairs website:
http://www.riversideca.gov/arts/

Related Sections

- Economic Health
- High Performing Community
REGIONAL ARTS AND CULTURE COORDINATION

Innovative Community: Portland, Oregon
Population: 582,130

Portland has a strong arts and culture program, recognized nationally for its highly supported public/private arts programs and facilities. Like Fort Collins, Portland faces challenges with continued resourcing and funding of arts and culture objectives – specifically funding for arts and music education and for large public performance facilities.

Innovative Practices

Regional Arts & Culture Council
Through vision, leadership, and service, the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC) works to integrate arts and culture in all aspects of community life. RACC is the steward of several public and private investments in arts and culture, and works to create an environment in which the arts and culture of the region can flourish and prosper.

Background and Details

Funding
RACC has served the Portland tri-county area since its inception in 1995, when the city’s Metropolitan Arts Commission transitioned into a separate not-for-profit organization based upon the recommendation of ArtsPlan 2000+. RACC is funded by local, regional, state and federal governments to provide grants to artists and operating support to art organizations in the tri-county region. Funders include the City of Portland, Metro, and Multnomah, Clackamas and Washington Counties, the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Cultural Trust and the National Endowment for the Arts.

Key Service Areas
RACC provides service in five key areas:

- The nationally-acclaimed public art program integrates a wide range of art in public places. RACC manages Percent for Art programs for the City of Portland and Multnomah County.
- RACC provides other community services, including workshops for artists, organizational consulting, and a variety of printed and electronic resources.
- RACC supports arts education by directly funding artist’s residencies in schools and is working on a comprehensive solution to provide integrated Arts Education learning for every student in the region.

Other programs include public art walking tours, public art murals program, and permanent and temporary public art displays. RACC is the designated regional partner in the Oregon Arts Commission (OAC) Regional Arts Education Network which provides arts education services and information throughout the state.

Coordination with Other Efforts
Act for Art is the Creative Action Plan for the Portland Metropolitan region. RACC was integral to the Act for Art effort, in conjunction with the Creative Advocacy Network (CAN – a broad coalition of arts organizations, businesses, government and individuals). Goals of the Act for Art Plan include:

- Strengthening cultural infrastructure by improving public funding, increasing private donations to help art spaces flourish;
- Improving access to the arts and arts education; and
- Investing in creative talent through direct support for artists, establishing networks, and promoting “buy local” initiatives.

For More information
Regional Arts & Culture Council website: www.racc.org
Creative Advocacy Network website: www.theartscan.org

Related Sections
- Economic Health
- High Performing Community
The City of Santa Fe is the capital of the state of New Mexico and is the seat of Santa Fe County. Like Fort Collins, Santa Fe has earned a reputation as one of the best cities to live within the United States, ranking number two on the list in 2004. Santa Fe is well-known for using arts and culture as an economic catalyst – it is home to the nation’s second largest arts market with a $1.6 billion annual arts economy.

**Innovative Practices**

**Local Arts Collaborations**
Santa Fe is internationally known for its arts and culture programs, and is considered one of the most important art centers in the United States. Continued support for and coordination among the local arts community is important in order for the City to maintain its strong arts reputation. Successful promotional campaigns for the city and tourism organizations also depend on strong coordination among the local arts community.

The Santa Fe arts community stretches beyond the stereotypical image of Southwestern landscape painters and fine traditional Native American craftspeople and includes a broad group of nationally and internationally recognized artists including visual, performing, literary, culinary, Hispanic, and Native American artists. The arts community is supported and connected through a wide range of organizations – two of the larger local arts organizations are described in the next section.

**Background and Details**

**Santa Fe Gallery Association**
The Santa Fe Gallery Association is a professional organization of 103 galleries, dealers, museums and other members of the art community who form a vital contributing part of the social and economic life of Santa Fe. Members actively promote its diverse community and advance the business, artistic and educational interests of its members.

**Santa Fe Art Institute**
The Santa Fe Art Institute (SFAI) was founded in 1985 by Pony Ault and the noted architect and artist William Lumpkins, both of whom sought to provide a unique opportunity for emerging artists to pursue a brief, intense period of study with critically acclaimed visiting artists. Today, the SFAI remains an independent, educational, nonprofit organization. SFAI has developed a wide range of programs aimed at serving artists at various stages of their careers and diverse audiences, including:

- Artists Lecture and Workshop Series – concept-based, multidisciplinary programs that run for eight months each year and include lectures, studio workshops, and exhibitions.
- Artist and writer residencies of one to three months duration, as well as emergency residency programs such as the New York City Emergency Artists Relief Program, which provided respite for 130 artists displaced by the tragic events of September 11.
- Ongoing education and outreach programs that bring the arts and arts education to underserved audiences in the greater Santa Fe area.
- Collaborations with institutions and organizations such as the Palace of the Governors, Museum of International Folk Art, PhotoArts Santa Fe, New Mexico School for the Deaf, and SITE Santa Fe, as well as with individuals representing a wide range of disciplines, further enhance programming and provide opportunities to engage the arts from a variety of perspectives.

**For More Information**
Santa Fe Gallery Association website: [www.santafegalleryassociation.org](http://www.santafegalleryassociation.org)

Santa Fe Art Institute Website: [www.sfai.org](http://www.sfai.org)

**Related Sections**
- Economic Health
PARKS DISTRICT FORMATION

Innovative Community: Aurora, Illinois
Population: 200,000 people

Park districts are common throughout the state of Illinois to fund parks and recreation maintenance, improvements, and expansions. The City of Aurora, Illinois was one of the later communities in the state to establish a park district. This is one unique way to commit to long-term funding for parks and recreation amenities and services.

Innovative Practice

The Fox Valley Park District in Aurora, Illinois was created in 1950 and is responsible for 2,500 acres of open space, 22 miles of river shoreline, 145 parks, 54 baseball fields, 36 soccer fields, 25 miles of trails, 81 playgrounds, 60 basketball courts, 29 tennis courts, 500,000 square feet of indoor recreation space, and one golf course. Fox Valley is the largest park district outside of Chicago in Illinois.

The District also has a “Fox Valley Park Foundation Inc.” that has the mission to aid the District in the acquisition, conservation, preservation and development of land and open space and to provide funds for youth enrichment recreation programs.

Background and Details

The Park District was created in 1947, due to the fact that no specific taxing entity existed for the improvement and expansion of recreational opportunities in Aurora before that time. The City owned several park properties, but ongoing maintenance and expansion was not possible until creation of the District. The Foundation was established in 1981 as a not-for-profit corporation to help benefit the District. The Foundation is an IRS 501(c)(3) organization.

The District is funded by 5% of the overall county property tax. The homeowner with a fair market value home of $200,000 will pay an estimated $257 to the District. While assessed valuations may periodically change, overall the District’s tax rate is expected to be stable.

In 2006, the District conducted public opinion research to determine public sentiments toward the District, parkland and facility needs assessment, and potential methods of funding and willingness to pay. The survey confirmed a high level of confidence and belief in the District’s ability to perform in fulfilling its mission. A six-year Open Space, Park and Recreation Investment Plan was developed that included a referendum funding of $44,850,000. On February 5, 2008, the District’s 2008 Referendum passed with 65% voter approval.

For More information

Fox Valley Park District website: http://www.foxvalleyparkdistrict.org

Related Sections

- Economic Health
- Safety and Wellness
- High Performing Community