

The following Action Plan provide detailed strategies and specific actions, serving as a technical guide for implementing the recommendations of The Plan. These action plans are intended to be living documents, being revised and updated as Together North Jersey works with various partners on implementing recommendations in The Plan.



Focus Area 15: Revitalize and strengthen communities by arts and cultural opportunities.

What and why. Arts and culture enhance quality of life for residents in a variety of ways, from fostering community pride and identity to boosting local economies by creating jobs, attracting tourists and spurring business investment. Any community in North Jersey, whether a bustling business district or a rural hamlet, can draw on unique local culture, local talent and love of the arts to create great and distinct places, a process known as Creative Placemaking.

Communities can use the arts as a way to revive public spaces, strengthen community bonds, and attract investment. Artists of all types tend to be flexible in their use of space and resources. Vacant housing can be converted into artist housing, studios and galleries. A brick wall can serve as a canvas for a mural. A local restaurant can serve as a venue for an up-and-coming band. Towns and cities as diverse as Rahway, Somerville, Newark, Red Bank and others have successfully revived downtowns and Main Streets and empowered underprivileged neighborhoods by implementing Creative Placemaking strategies.

While the creative sector can play an important role in all North Jersey communities, artistic venues (museums, galleries, performing arts centers, art festivals and other venues) tend to thrive in centrally located, highly trafficked places with access to transit. They also frequently lend themselves to the reuse of vacant, abandoned, and underutilized properties. Creative Placemaking strategies will therefore support our region's goals of efficient land use and increasing use of and access to transit.

How. A four-pronged approach can help our region utilize the arts as a tool for community development and revalorization, with steps including: incentivizing artistic and cultural activities; encouraging public investment in arts organizations and artists; integrating cultural leaders and artists in all levels of planning; and strengthening arts education programs.




Strategy 15.1: Develop financing tools for arts and culture

What and why. Developing a wider variety of financial tools, such as enhanced tax increment financing, tax credits and cooperative purchasing programs can help creative and cultural sector organizations grow—especially in low-income areas. Our region should provide density bonuses that would allow developers to build extra floor space in excess of zoning restrictions in return for the inclusion of artistic and cultural amenities such a gallery, sculpture garden, or performance space. Municipalities should also include arts programming as an allowable expense to state agency grant opportunities in transportation, health, human services, community development and labor.

We can also increase funding by supporting proposed legislation that would restore funding for the arts. The proposed legislation would increase funding over a three year period to the minimum levels of dedicated support from the NJ Hotel/Motel Occupancy Fee to the level originally intended in the 2003 law.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Establish local purchasing programs to help creative and cultural sector organizations grow. Existing programs such as Sustainable Jersey's "buy local" program should be expanded to include local creative services.	Municipal, Purchasing Department, New Jersey Chamber of Commerce, Sustainable Jersey	Short term
2.	Increase funding for the State Council on the Arts from Hotel Occupancy Tax revenues.	Art Pride, State Legislature	Short term
3.	Fund Cultural Trust Fund as planned in the formation of the Cultural Trust partnership.	Art Pride, State Legislature	Short term
4.	Develop and promote incentives to attract the film industry to North Jersey.	Business Action Center, State Legislature	Short term
5.	Require developers to use 1-1.5% of their construction budget to fund a general arts fund, a related arts program, or a public sculpture for the building.	Local Planning Board, Municipal Planning and Zoning Department, MLUL	Short term
6.	Form County Cultural and Arts Trust Funds, such as was approved in November 2014 by voters in Middlesex County to "provide general support to projects and programs recognizing and preserving the history and heritage of Middlesex County."	Art Pride, County Cultural Heritage Offices, and Freeholders	Short term
7.	Eliminate the sales tax on local art if it is created/sold within an arts district by a registered artist.	Local arts district in conjunction with State Treasury	Short term
8.	Increase opportunities for corporate and foundation sponsorship of events at the local level by providing state tax credits for support.	Business Action Center, DCA, Association of Counties	Short term
9.	Provide density bonuses and other incentives to reduce the costs of building and operating arts and culture facilities.	Local Planning and Zoning Department	Short to medium term
10	Outline potential revenue stream for the arts and allocate money for arts and culture from new tax revenue streams.	State Legislature budget office	Medium term

11	Develop tax increment financing opportunities targeted towards arts and cultural organizations.	Municipalities in coordination with the state and county departments of taxation	Long term
12	Offset local investment costs that benefit a community through tax credits and expand the qualification criteria to include creative and cultural ventures.	Municipal budget and taxation office	Long term
13	Integrate arts and cultural elements in state grant guidelines such as those for community development, education, economic development, public safety, transportation, and public health projects.	Governor's office, NJ-DCA, State Council on the Arts, NJ-EDA, NJ-DOT, NJ-DOH	Medium and long term
14	Advocate to philanthropies that support economic and community development, education, and healthcare that the arts should be considered as part of the solution to New Jersey's challenges and eligible for grants.	State Council on the Arts, arts advocacy groups (ArtPride), philanthropic organizations, and nonprofits	Long term



Strategy 15.2: Support cultural programs and activities

What and why. Arts and culture-related activities are also important economic engines, attracting jobs, innovation and community redevelopment. To realize these benefits, communities must lay the groundwork by identifying public spaces suitable for arts and cultural events, developing cultural districts and creating regional promotional campaigns. To connect municipalities to the economic and community development benefits of the arts, local officials should create a creative team (or arts council), an assets inventory or a creative placemaking plan. Municipalities and counties should also invest in local arts activities through already existing budgets, including economic development, libraries, recreation, transportation, schools, etc.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Develop an inventory of public spaces suitable as venues for events, festivals, and fairs in the community at the local level, to combine with a region wide database.	State Council for the Arts, municipalities County Arts, Heritage and Tourism Offices	Short term

2.	Provide incentives (tax credits, technical assistance, cooperative buying programs, etc.) to promote purchase of locally-created goods and performances.	Municipal Finance and Purchasing Departments	Short term
3.	Develop creative and cultural districts that attract and support arts businesses and cultural entrepreneurs.	Municipalities, Local economic development organizations, Creative Teams	Short term
4.	Include creative fields and businesses in economic development plans and strategies.	County, Municipal, Choose NJ, Business Action Center	Short term
5.	Identify the specific needs of creative businesses and sectors to locate and thrive in a municipality and region	Choose NJ/Business Action Center, Municipalities	Short term

	<h3>Strategy 15.3: Integrate arts and culture into local, county, regional and statewide planning efforts</h3>
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What and why. For North Jersey communities to reap the benefits of the arts, cultural leaders and artists must be invited to the planning tables when developing economic development plans, municipal master plans, redevelopment plans, special improvement district plans and regional and statewide plans. Therefore, our region should work to amend the Municipal Land Use Law to include an arts element in master planning. We also need land use policies that can help provide housing options affordable to artists and we should consider redeveloping vacant and underutilized properties for arts-related activities, such as studios and theaters.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Develop and execute training for artists and arts advocates about how and why to get involved in local planning efforts and projects.	APA-NJ, ArtPride, Together North Jersey	Short term
2.	Provide incentives for developers to build affordable artist housing with live/work spaces, art space, exhibition, and performance spaces.	Municipalities, NJ-DCA	Short to medium term

3.	Promote creative placemaking plans as elements within municipal master plans.	Together North Jersey, arts nonprofits, NJ State Council on the Arts	Short to medium term
4.	Require regional collaboration in municipal master plans and county cultural plans.	Municipal, regional governments	Medium to long term
5.	Incorporate arts elements as a mandatory set aside (1-1.5 percent) in all public and private capital improvement plans such as the Arts in Transit Program at NJ Transit.	NJTPA, NJ TRANSIT, NJDOT	Long term



Strategy 15.4: Fund arts education for all New Jersey students

What and Why. New Jersey has a unique mandate to provide all students with sequential arts instruction by qualified teachers in all four art forms through K-12 education. Despite this mandate, arts education is not being adequately funded, and therefore not properly provided in all schools in the state. Various studies have identified links between involvement in the visual and performing arts and improved attendance, school engagement, increased academic performance, decreased drop out and discipline rates, as well as higher levels of college attendance. Creative education prepares students with the kind of skills needed for innovative work, including advanced problem solving skills, collaboration, communication and leadership skills. We should fully fund the visual arts, dance, theater and music in our region’s schools. Local arts organizations can also support arts education by providing field trip opportunities and on-campus engagement.

	<u>Actions:</u>	<u>Suggested Responsibility:</u>	<u>Timeframe:</u>
1.	Include robust arts curriculum in all New Jersey schools (K-12) with dedicated funding for arts teachers.	Department of Education, local school districts	Short term
2.	Develop an “Adopt a School” Program to provide programming and engagement locally for students with field trips and on campus engagement.	NJ Partnership for Arts Education, school districts, Department of Education,	Short term

3.	Advocate for adequate funding to support teachers and administrators in four dedicated arts disciplines in schools- visual, dance, theater, and music.	NJ Partnership for Arts Education, school districts, State Legislature and Budget office	Short term
4.	Increase the visibility of arts in schools through scheduling flexibility, spaces for exhibition, performance, and creative learning.	School Districts, Department of Education	Short term

