

Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2005, The McKnight Foundation awarded a grant to the St. Cloud Arts Commission to match City funds for developing a ten-year community arts plan. The St. Cloud City Council approved its funding allocation and the endeavor to create a comprehensive cultural plan for the City of St. Cloud. WolfBrown was contracted in late 2006 to work on the project. It began in early 2007 with the convening of a Steering Committee of 21 residents that was appointed by the Mayor to serve as advisors to the process. As part of that process, the consultants have:

- Performed a **cultural assessment** through a series of over 40 telephone interviews with representatives of many sectors of the community.
- Conducted an on-going **public process** of community and small group meetings.
- Implemented a web-based **cultural census** that gathered information from about 1,000 area residents on their interests and priorities relative to arts and culture.
- Developed an **audience map**, using data from the users of the Paramount Theatre.
- Conducted **model program/community research**.

This plan defines a “road map” for the next decade that reflects a vision for arts and cultural development in the community at large. The goals and strategies of the plan build on and synthesize community priorities and opportunities for action without intending to be tactically prescriptive about how those priorities are implemented.

Overview of St. Cloud

St. Cloud, with a population of about 60,000 is the hub of a region of about 200,000 people. Recent population growth has slowed from the rates of the 1990s. Demographically, St. Cloud has become a more diverse community. New immigrant populations and communities of color have made St. Cloud their home. While the majority of St. Cloud residents are white, there has been a



concerted effort within the City to create a welcoming and inclusive environment for all citizens.

The process of revitalizing St. Cloud's downtown, a visible sign of the City's solid economy, is well under way. The main library building under construction, the new commercial building for INGDirect, and other developments are indicators of this resurgence.

One focus of the City's economic development priorities is to build a more varied commercial base that focuses on financial services, manufacturing, high tech, and bio-science. This is a response to, among other factors, the current and anticipated growth along the I-94 corridor north from the Twin Cities.

A Perspective on the Value of Arts and Culture

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. Cities large and small across the country are focusing on the ways in which arts and culture can enhance the quality of life. For example:

- National data¹ 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.²
- 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.³
- 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, 2nd grade students scored significantly higher than their counterparts on all standardized tests.⁴

¹ Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity III, June, 2007 (<http://artsusa.cog>)

² Opinion Journal, "What MassMOCA has Wrought" July 7, 2004.

³ The College Board, "2005 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report" 2005

⁴ Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force, "Vibrant Culture – Thriving Economy" 2004.



All of these examples point to ways in which arts and culture can add value in support of key *community* priorities. It will be helpful to keep in mind the many facets of cultural sector impact while reviewing the strategies in this Report.

Consultant Findings

Key Themes

This report synthesizes all aspects of the planning process. Several themes surfaced time and again during the process and are reflected in various sections of this report. They are:

- **Enhancing coordination and cooperation** among arts groups and between them and the larger community
- **Building the organizational capacity** of local arts groups
- **Strengthening the leadership of and support** for arts and culture.

Economic & Downtown Development

- St. Cloud's 2003 Comprehensive Plan recognizes the contribution arts and culture can make to a vibrant downtown and the City already has many of the necessary resources in place to foster cultural economic development, including a significant range of cultural assets.
- While an informal arts district in the vicinity of the Paramount Theatre contributes to a mix of cultural retail in the immediate area, there are few programmatic initiatives that tie together cultural offerings.
- St. Cloud's budding public art program provides an important cultural focus for the community, both downtown and throughout the City.

Cultural Facilities

- There is an impressive range of cultural facilities in and around St. Cloud, including the Paramount Theatre, Pioneer Place, Stearns History Museum, facilities at St. Cloud State University and the College of St. Benedict/St. John's University, as well as the Civic Center, the Regency Event Center, the new main library, as well as many churches and public schools throughout the community.
- The Paramount Theatre is an important venue for locally produced performances, although its cost and seating capacity limit its utility for some



groups and there are few alternative spaces that are small, flexible, and low-cost available.

Education & Life-long Learning

- There is very strong and consistent commitment to arts education among school board members and the administrative staff of District 742. However, according to interviewees, there is a general lack of understanding, among the general public, of the ways in which arts education can add value to students' learning in other subjects.
- St. Cloud State University (SCSU), with its 16,000 students, is a key provider of cultural experiences to its students and, to a degree, to the larger community. However, there is little coordination of College and University cultural programming and various community presenters and local arts groups.

Cultural Diversity

- While still having a predominantly Caucasian population, St. Cloud has become increasingly diverse over the past decade.
- There are few structured opportunities for recent immigrants and others to share their cultural heritage in St. Cloud. However, some connections have been made between St. Cloud's ethnically diverse communities and the cultural sector.

Cultural Organizations & Artists

- There is an interesting mix of arts groups and artists in St. Cloud that varies in discipline, longevity, and budget size, although most organizations can be categorized as having small budgets and many artists are part-time or avocational. This has made it more difficult for groups to collaborate and communicate with one another.
- There is a need for better access to administrative training and technical assistance to enhance the administrative and business skills of nonprofit arts groups.

Audiences & Participation

- Much of St. Cloud's cultural audience is regional with, according to one measure, about 40 percent residing outside of the city limits.



- Overall, the Cultural Census results are consistent with national trends that point to increased involvement and interest in active forms of arts participation – making art, talking about art, collecting and organizing art – as well as arts activities that fulfill social needs, especially among singles, for whom lack of social context is a major barrier.
- While anecdotal evidence suggests that St. Cloud arts groups lose significant audience to the Twin Cities, the Cultural Census indicates that while many high frequency attenders go to Minneapolis/St. Paul frequently for arts events, the vast majority of attenders do not.

Leadership & Resources

- Public and private sector leaders acknowledge an important role for arts and culture in downtown revitalization. Awareness among civic leaders and elected officials of the various other ways in which arts and culture can add value to the community is low but growing.
- Leadership and coordination within the cultural sector is divided among several organizations, each of which is responsible for a single component, with little coordination.
- The City is the major public sector funder of St. Cloud arts and culture in the region and neither other nearby communities nor the counties which contain St. Cloud contribute directly.
- Individual support for arts and culture has been the primary source of private sector funding; corporate funding has been limited to date, although some interviewees suggest that might change in the future.

A Vision for Arts and Culture in St. Cloud in 2017

The plan's Steering Committee has endorsed a vision statement that is summarized below. (A complete copy is available in the report starting on page 26):

In 2017, St. Cloud has diversified its economic base...and arts and cultural amenities play a key role in attracting businesses and retaining the highly skilled workers they require.



...St. Cloud is the regional “cultural hub” for Central Minnesota and residents... flock to its vibrant, exciting downtown with its flagship Paramount facility and a mix of smaller, low-cost, flexible performance and exhibition venues...

...An appealing range of public art and an exciting mix of neighborhood-oriented events and festivals add a welcome dimension to the City’s livability... St. Cloud State University and its cultural offerings, as well as those at the College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University, are available to regional residents.

Senior City officials, leaders of public and higher education, representatives of local and regional foundations, the business sector, and arts and culture work together to support St. Cloud’s cultural sector with leadership and financial support so that it can continue to enhance the City’s livability and foster the civic pride of its residents.

Goals and Strategies

The following goals and strategies are described in detail in Part IV of the report, starting on page 28 below.

Goal 1

Use arts and culture in support of the City’s economic development priorities.

Strategy 1.1

Convene senior City, corporate, and cultural leaders to address integrating arts and culture into economic development policy, especially in the downtown.

Strategy 1.2

Develop additional programming to enhance St. Cloud’s downtown arts district.

Strategy 1.3

Establish a City-wide public art program to provide visual and performing arts and/or art programs in key locations throughout the City.

Strategy 1.4

Consider options for increasing the number of small, flexible performance and exhibition venues as well as artist live/work spaces downtown.



Goal 2

Create more coordinated and accessible arts learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults.

Strategy 2.1

Establish an “Arts in Education Roundtable” to provide information to the general public and civic leaders about the value of arts learning.

Strategy 2.2

Better coordinate the range of arts learning experiences for children in primary and secondary schools.

Strategy 2.3

Coordinate a more inclusive range of arts and cultural experiences for teens and young adults.

Strategy 2.4

Coordinate a range of arts participation and learning opportunities for underserved populations in St. Cloud.

Strategy 2.5

Establish mechanisms to enhance communication and cooperation among higher education’s cultural offerings and the larger community.

Goal 3

Strengthen St. Cloud’s arts groups and artists and build their capacity to attract audiences.

Strategy 3.1

Coordinate better access to programs of capacity building and professional development for artists and cultural groups.

Strategy 3.2

Develop a cooperative, comprehensive web-based communications mechanism to highlight the range, diversity, and value of arts and cultural offerings in St. Cloud.

Strategy 3.3

Explore ways to increase participation in arts and culture with particular emphasis on finding new ways to engage current non-participants.



Strategy 3.4

Improve communication among arts organizations and clarify relationships within and among St. Cloud's arts service organizations.

Goal 4

Build stronger public and private sector leadership and funding for arts and culture.

Strategy 4.1

Mobilize community support for arts and culture through an awareness campaign that highlights the value and strength of arts and culture.

Strategy 4.2

Articulate a mission for the Paramount facility that addresses the priorities of this plan.

Strategy 4.3

Increase City funding for arts and culture.

Strategy 4.4

Provide for additional City staff to support arts and cultural initiatives and strengthen liaison with the City's planning and community development function.

Strategy 4.5

Establish formal communications with surrounding municipalities and the three counties to assess their interest in and need for arts and cultural activities and their ability to help cover their costs.

Strategy 4.6

Enhance arts groups' capacity to increase levels of earned and contributed income.

Strategy 4.7

Coordinate public and private sector funding for arts and culture.

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



	Description	Priority	Possible Partners	Approx. Cost
Goal 1				
Use arts and culture in support of the City's economic development priorities.				
1.1	Integrate arts & culture into economic development	1	City, arts leaders, SCSU, funders, business & professional organizations	minimal
1.2	Increase downtown arts programming	3	City, arts organizations, downtown businesses & associations, funders	\$5,000
1.3	City public art program	2	City, private developers, SCSU	Determined by CIP budget
1.4	Increase small performance, exhibition, live/work spaces	2	City, private developers, downtown businesses & associations, arts groups	\$200K to \$500K; private funds, tax incentives
Goal 2				
Create more coordinated and accessible arts learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults.				
2.1	Create an Arts Education Roundtable	1	Arts groups, area schools (public, private, parochial); Perpich Center for the Arts, Central Minnesota Community Foundation, local, regional, state funders; educators, civic and business leaders	\$3,000
2.2	Coordinate arts learning opportunities for K-12 grades	2	City, arts groups, areas universities, area school (public, private, & parochial)	Minimal
2.3	Coordinate arts experiences for teens and young adults	3	Social service organizations and other service providers, cultural groups, artists, City, SCSU, Central Minnesota Community Foundation	Minimal for coordination
2.4	Coordinate arts opportunities for under-served populations	3	City, social service organizations and other service providers, cultural groups, artists, area universities, funders	Minimal
2.5	Communication and cooperation between universities and community	1	City, universities, arts groups, funders, civic leaders	\$2,000 - \$3,000 annually.
Goal 3				
Strengthen St. Cloud's arts groups and artists and build their capacity to attract audiences.				
3.1	Capacity building for arts groups and artists	2	City; universities; arts groups; funders; local, regional, state, national arts resources	\$5,000 initially; on-going costs \$5,000- \$25,000 annually
3.2	Comprehensive web-based communications mechanism	1	Arts groups, St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, business community, universities, funders, local media outlets	Without pro bono services, set-up \$25,000-60,000 and on-going costs of \$5,000-\$10,000.



	Description	Priority	Possible Partners	Approx. Cost
3.3	Audience development	2	City, social service organizations, arts groups, funders	\$15,000-\$50,000 annually
3.4	Improve communication within/among arts groups	1	Arts groups, funders, City	Minimal
Goal 4 Build stronger public and private sector leadership and funding for arts and culture.				
4.1	Arts awareness campaign	1	City; arts, civic, & business organizations; St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau; business and civic leaders	Without pro bono services, costs could range from \$35,000 up.
4.2	Create a mission for Paramount facility	2	Arts groups, City, residents, funders, downtown organizations	Minimal
4.3	Increase City funding	1	City, arts groups, funders	\$100,000-\$150,000 annually
4.4	Additional City arts staff	1	City, Planning Department, Arts Commission	\$30,000-\$60,000 annually
4.5	Initiate dialogue about regional support for arts.	2	City, arts groups, civic and business leaders, regional representatives.	Minimal
4.6	Increase arts organizations' earned income	3	Arts groups, technical assistance providers	Minimal
4.7	Coordinate arts funding	3	Regional funders, arts organizations.	Minimal

Next Steps

The plan outlines a process by which the document has been reviewed and accepted by the Steering Committee. The Planning Commission, at its meeting on December 11, 2007, has voted to recommend the Cultural Plan to City administration for inclusion as an addendum to the larger City Comprehensive Plan. The Plan will be presented to the Mayor, City Council, and City Administration for approval and adoption at a meeting of the City Council in January, 2008.

Conclusion

This planning process has been quite inclusive and the strength of that inclusion has grown as the process moved forward. Planning is not an easy process; it requires attention to various viewpoints and overlapping perspectives. It often



puts existing systems and structures into the spotlight and that can be uncomfortable. But the willingness to experience this discomfort is the price of developing a road map that has the engagement and input of a broad section of the community.

Not everyone will agree with everything in this document, but most participants will find some reflection of the comments that they made at various stages in the process. That is what makes the plan powerful – its organic growth from the comments of many individuals. The consultant believes that the result of the discussions about this draft will be a stronger document that can serve as the first steps on a journey to an even more vibrant and exciting cultural community in St. Cloud.

Part I

Introduction

Background

Interest in developing a community plan for arts and culture in St. Cloud has grown in the past few years. In response to this interest, the St. Cloud Arts Commission requested and received \$25,000 from The McKnight Foundation to develop a community cultural plan. The St. Cloud City Council matched funding from McKnight to advance this community-based planning project focusing on the development of cultural resources. In November of 2006, the City of St. Cloud contracted WolfBrown to lead the process. Work on the cultural plan got under way early in 2007 with the appointment of a 21-member Steering Committee, made up of representatives of all sectors of the St. Cloud community. (A complete list of Steering Committee members, as well as all other participants in this planning process and members of the St. Cloud Arts Commission, is included in Appendix A of this report.)

As part of the cultural planning process, consultants from WolfBrown, a national consulting firm based in Cambridge, Massachusetts, led by Marc Goldring, Associate Principal, have completed the following components:

- Conducted a **cultural assessment** through a series of confidential in-person and telephone interviews with over 40 representatives of many sectors of the community, including cultural organizations and artists, City officials, corporate leaders, representatives of social service organizations, educators, and representatives of downtown businesses.
- Designed and conducted an on-going **public process** of community meetings, including small group meetings with arts administrators, educators, and representatives of Create Community.
- Designed and implemented a “**Cultural Census**,” a web-based and hard-copy survey of St. Cloud and area residents’ interests in and priorities for arts and cultural activities that was completed by about 1,000 individuals.
- Conducted an **audience mapping exercise** using household-level ticket sales data from the Paramount and its user groups, representing a total of over 12,000 households, to assess the geographic location of the cultural audience.



- Conducted **model program/community research** to explore how other communities have addressed specific issues.
- Worked closely with a twenty-one member **Steering Committee**, appointed by the Mayor to provide oversight and feedback to the consultant at key points in the project.

This plan defines a “road map” for action for the next decade that reflects a vision for arts and cultural development in the community at large. The plan’s goals and strategies build on and synthesize community priorities and opportunities for action without intending to be tactically prescriptive about how those priorities are implemented.

The consultant wants to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Steering Committee for their on-going engagement in this process. In particular, the co-chairs, Carolyn Garven and Jim Davis, have served ably. And without the assistance of Jennifer Penzkofer, the City’s coordinator of the St. Cloud Arts Commission, the project would have been impossible to complete.

Funding for this project has been provided by the City of St. Cloud through the St. Cloud Arts Commission budget and matched by a grant from The McKnight Foundation.

What’s in this Report?

This preliminary report documents the research, findings, vision, goals, and strategies of St. Cloud’s cultural plan. It includes five sections:

- **Part I, Introduction**, provides important background and context information about the planning process and an overview of the community and its cultural sector.
- **Part II, Consultant Findings**, describes the consultant’s findings, based on all the research conducted for this project, as well as his experience in other communities.
- **Part III, A Vision for Arts and Culture in St. Cloud**, offers a vision of what St. Cloud and its cultural sector will look like in ten years if the initiatives of this plan are implemented.
- **Part IV, Goals and Strategies**, details four goals and related strategies for the on-going development of St. Cloud’s arts and cultural sector.
- **Part V, Next Steps**, provides a series of recommended actions for the initial phase of implementation of the goals of this cultural plan.



Finally, the report has several appendices, including:

- **Appendix A** provides a complete list of individuals who participated in the process.
- **Appendix B** includes the protocol for and a discussion of the findings from the St. Cloud Cultural Census survey.
- **Appendix C** provides background and details on the best practices research, including the complete list of communities considered as part of the process.
- **Appendix D** includes a copy of the audience distribution maps of ticket buyers of the users of the Paramount facility.
- **Appendix E** provides details about issues that should be considered for a public art ordinance for St. Cloud (cf., strategy 1.3 on page 21).

About the Cultural Census

The St. Cloud Cultural Census was a web-based survey conducted in April, 2007 as part of the research for this project. The purpose of the research was to gain a clearer sense of how St. Cloud residents participate in and feel about the arts. Full details of the survey instrument and the research findings are included in Appendix B of this report.

All adult (age 18+) residents of the St. Cloud area were eligible to participate in the survey. The primary method of data collection was through an online survey instrument; paper copies of the survey were also available for those without Internet access.

Recruitment methods to encourage response included broadcast emails and distribution of paper surveys at key locations throughout the City. The data set includes 576 residents of the City of St. Cloud (59%) and 402 residents of the surrounding area (41%) for a total of 978 valid responses.

This approach to data collection did not involve random sampling, and the results are not designed to be representative of the general population of St. Cloud residents. Instead, respondents “self-selected” into the study, and the goal was to obtain as many responses as possible from a cross-section of adults whose responses might reliably be compared with one another. Analysis groups were designed based on “low,” “moderate,” and “high” frequency of participation in cultural events. In addition, to offset the bias from self-selection, the sample was weighted to adjust the levels of educational attainment in the survey data to reflect actual levels in the base population.



Overview of St. Cloud

St. Cloud is a community of about 60,000 people, although the population within a 25 mile radius is over 200,000. While the population of the area grew by 18 percent⁵ between 1990 and 2000, the City's population has been considerably more stable, growing by only 5 percent in the same period. Indeed, several interviewees commented that there is a shift of population from the City to the surrounding communities, especially among wealthier residents.

Some additional observations about the demographics of St. Cloud and the immediate surrounding area include:

- While there has been an increase in people of color in St. Cloud, almost 92 percent of the population remains white, and over 96 percent of the population in a 25 mile radius is white.
- Income levels are lower in the City than in a 25 mile radius with 2000 median household income of \$37,534 for the City and \$45,611 for the 25 mile radius.

It is important to keep in mind, however, that, even though demographic shifts are small percentage-wise, they are having an impact on the community, especially the increase in the number of people of different ethnicities. There is a strong sense among many of those interviewed that St. Cloud is considerably more diverse than it was 10 or 15 years ago.

Public and private sector development, particularly in and around St. Cloud's downtown, is a visible sign of the City's solid economy. Among the notable developments are the new Great River Regional Library main branch being built on edge of downtown, the new commercial building for INGDirect, and the law enforcement center on the western edge of downtown.

According to interviewees, one of the City's economic development priorities is to foster greater economic diversity, building a more varied commercial base that includes financial services, manufacturing, high tech, and bio-science. This priority is fostered by the pattern of growth along I-94 north from the Twin Cities as well as the likely advent of enhanced commuter rail access between St. Cloud and Minneapolis/St. Paul. Clearly the proximity of this major metropolitan center has a profound impact on life in St. Cloud and social, economic, and cultural development all occur with an awareness of, and at times in reaction to, developments there.

⁵ Demographic data is provided by Claritas MarketPlace which is derived from U. S. Census Bureau data.



A Perspective on the Value of Arts and Culture

There is an increasingly impressive body of national research that highlights the impact of arts, culture, and creativity on the quality of life of a community. Support for arts and culture can be seen as furthering a significant *community* agenda, in addition to the intrinsic value of various arts disciplines. A recent national research project indicates that the nonprofit cultural sector alone contributes over \$166 *billion* to the national economy annually and includes 5.7 million full-time equivalent jobs.⁶

Cities large and small across the country are focusing on the impact of the **creative class** on communities. The creative class of “knowledge workers” is composed of scientists and engineers, health professionals, graphic designers and artists, university professors, poets and architects, among many others. Creativity is becoming more valued in today’s global society. Employers look at creativity as providing valuable, work-related problem-solving skills, as well as a channel for self expression and job satisfaction in their employees. According to some researchers, as much as 30 percent of the American workforce self-identify as part of the creative class. This number has increased more than 10 percent in the past twenty years.

The concept of a creative class of independent knowledge workers is having a profound impact on how communities understand – and undertake – economic development. Paying attention to the amenities that attract workers rather than focusing only on attracting specific industries is a major shift and puts the emphasis more firmly on quality of life considerations. Being an appealing community for mid- and high-level creative workers, who have great flexibility in where they live and work, is increasingly important, and arts and culture represents one key tool to attract such workers.

Beyond its role in attracting and retaining key employees, arts and culture can have a direct impact on the **economic development** of a community, shifting how a community is perceived in ways that build real value. For example, in North Adams, a small, economically depressed community in Western Massachusetts, the opening of a museum of contemporary art in an old mill complex has led to revitalization in a range of sectors. Data show, for example, that the price of single family homes jumped 15 percent in a single year after the museum opened.⁷

Closer to home, the McKnight Foundation has produced an excellent study of the impact arts and culture can have on economic development, called *Bright Stars: Charting the Impact of the Arts in Rural Minnesota*. It chronicles the role of arts and culture in eight Minnesota towns and demonstrates how the arts can be an important factor in a

⁶ Americans for the Arts, Arts & Economic Prosperity III, June, 2007 (<http://artsusa.org>)

⁷ Opinion Journal, “What MassMOCA has Wrought” July 7, 2004.



community's ability to survive challenging social and economic changes and how they can even play a critical role in revitalizing communities.⁸

A recent study by the National Endowment for the Arts documented the relationship between arts participation and **civic engagement**. Its findings point to the power of arts and culture to engage residents in many aspects of civic life. One key finding indicates that Americans involved in the arts are more likely to partake in a wealth of civic and social activities.⁹

Arts and culture can play a significant role in **education** as well. The relationship, for example, between arts learning and the SAT is well established. 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.¹⁰ In addition, longitudinal data on 25,000 students over many years demonstrate that involvement in the arts is linked to lower dropout rates, among other benefits.¹¹

The value of **integrating the arts into the full K-12 curriculum** is profound. For example, in Tucson, a public/private 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, 2nd grade students scored significantly higher than their counterparts on all standardized tests.¹² According to a study cited in a U. S. Department of Education publication, “...students who were consistently involved in after-school music and theatre programs show significantly higher levels of mathematics proficiency by grade 12...”¹³ In addition, there is strong anecdotal data suggesting that youth arts programs are effective in engaging otherwise disengaged youth, resulting in improved self-esteem, increased skills, and improved school or work behavior.

All of these examples point to ways in which arts and culture can add value in support of key *community* priorities. It will be helpful to keep in mind the many facets of cultural sector impact while reviewing the strategies in this Report.

⁸ A copy of the report is available at the following web link:

http://www.mcknight.org/stream_document.aspx?rRID=3169&pRID=3168

⁹ National Endowment for the Arts, Arts and Civic Engagement, 2005, available as a PDF at

<http://www.calawyersforthearts.org/ncacivic.pdf>

¹⁰ The College Board, “2005 College-Bound Seniors: Total Group Profile Report” 2005

¹¹ Americans for the Arts, “Impact of the Arts,” citing Catterall, Graduate School of Education and Information Students, UCLA (<http://artsusa.org>).

¹² Maricopa Regional Arts and Culture Task Force, “Vibrant Culture – Thriving Economy” 2004.

¹³ U. S. Department of Education and National Endowment for the Arts, “How the Arts Can Enhance After-School Programs” (<http://www.nea.gov>)



Part II

Consultant Findings

In this section of the Report, the consultant details the key findings that have emerged from his on-site interviews and meetings as well as the research conducted for this project.

Key Themes

This report is a synthesis of the consultant’s research as well as the very informative interviews and small group meetings held over the course of the past months. During that time, certain themes kept coming up in discussions about St. Cloud’s cultural sector. The reader will note that these themes appear time and again in sections of this report. They include:

- **Enhancing coordination and cooperation** among cultural organizations and between the cultural sector and other sectors (business, government, public schools, higher education, etc.).
- **Building the organizational capacity** of the local arts groups to help them become even more proficient in their operation so that they build their administrative expertise to match their artistic capability.
- **Strengthening leadership and support** for arts and culture to embed it even more deeply in the fabric of St. Cloud, in its neighborhoods as well as the downtown.

While there are nuances that expand upon these themes, it will be useful to keep them in mind while reviewing the report. Many of the goals and strategies articulated in Part IV of this report relate directly or indirectly to one or more of these.

Economic & Downtown Development

- **St. Cloud’s 2003 Comprehensive Plan recognizes the contributions arts and culture can make to a vibrant downtown.** The vision for downtown articulated in Chapter 8 of the City’s current Comprehensive Plan includes reference to the arts as one of the “focal points” of the downtown and cites the downtown as the “center of cultural opportunity” in the City. There is a recognition that the



Paramount Theatre is a key “architectural... landmark” in the community. In addition, the Plan outlines a variety of objectives that involve employing arts and culture, among other things, to “attract local customers, tourists, and tenants to the downtown area.”

- **St. Cloud’s downtown has many of the necessary resources to foster cultural economic development.** Within the past decade, there has been a significant resurgence downtown, not the least of which was the renovation of the Paramount Theatre. While there is still more work to be done, there is clearly a positive transition under way. Many downtown buildings have been renovated or restored and occupancy is more stable than it has been in the past. Equally important, revitalizing downtown is becoming a priority action item for public *and* private sector interests.
- **Downtown already has a range of cultural assets.** Aside from the Paramount, with its performing and visual arts offerings, and Pioneer Place, which provides an intimate space for performance downtown, there are other cultural amenities in the area. These include commercial galleries, boutiques, coffee shops, and restaurants as well as the soon-to-open new library building, an expanded Civic Center (currently in the planning stages), the Regency Event Center, and substantial renovations to the Lake George Eastman Park. This mix of community spaces and commercial enterprises contributes a range of activities that can stimulate pedestrian traffic and provide the necessary “critical mass” of people and activities to build a vibrant downtown. However, many of these enterprises are new and thus fragile and may require support to ensure their success.
- **While an informal arts district in the vicinity of the Paramount Theatre contributes to a mix of cultural retail in the immediate area, there are few programmatic initiatives that tie together cultural offerings.** According to the 2003 Comprehensive Plan, the 1993 Downtown Plan “recognized the area surrounding the renovated Paramount Theatre as an evolving Arts District” and supports this as one way to encourage foot traffic in the area. A vibrant arts district would require a broad, diverse, and appealing range of cultural activities. While there are a number of activities and events that already occur in the area (including the Arts Crawl and the Holiday Nights and Lights Parade), they are few and are not coordinated especially in terms of their promotion or the audiences they intend to attract. This means that it is harder to contribute to the critical mass of foot traffic in the downtown and thus the benefits of having these offerings within a compact geographic area is not being fully realized.
- **St. Cloud’s budding public art program provides an important cultural focus for the community, both downtown and throughout the City.** There are numerous outdoor sculptures throughout the City that were commissioned by private benefactors for public display. In the past few years, important new



initiatives have been undertaken. The City's first neighborhood-initiated public art project was Colonial Gardens Park, a response to damaged infrastructure. Since then, the City has allocated one-half of one percent of the capital construction budget toward incorporating structural public artwork into the new library. It should be noted that much of the public artwork within the City of St. Cloud is located on the campus of SCSU through funding from the Minnesota Arts Board through Minnesota's percent for art program.

- **Cultural activities occur in many other parts of the City.** There are a range of art, ethnic, and cultural activities that occur in parks, churches, community centers, and other venues in neighborhoods around the City. While these activities are generally of a smaller scale than those downtown, they are an important component of the overall mix of offerings. Their combined impact – mostly in terms of their ability to foster community-building and further the City's livability goals – is an important component of the overall cultural ecology of St. Cloud.

Cultural Facilities

- **There is an impressive range of cultural facilities in and around St. Cloud,** most notably including:
 - The **Paramount Theatre** has a 700-seat performance hall, as well as a gallery and classrooms for the visual arts. It also includes administrative and meeting spaces for arts organizations.
 - **Pioneer Place**, originally built as an Elks Hall, has been renovated for use as a 176-seat performance venue for popular music and theatre and is used as a commercial video production studio as well.
 - **St. Cloud State University** has a **Performing Arts Center** in the middle of its campus with a 450-seat theatre, a studio theatre that seats 300, rehearsal space, as well as classrooms, practice rooms, and offices. Also of note is the **Ritsche Auditorium**, which seats 1,000 and the **Kiehle Gallery**.
 - While not located in St. Cloud, the nearby **College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University's** Fine Arts Series is housed at the College in **Petters Auditorium**, a well-equipped 1,100-seat performance space that is part of the **Benedicta Arts Center**. There are several other components to the Arts Center, including smaller theatres, instructional spaces, Target Gallery, and the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library.



- There are also a range of facilities that are occasionally but not exclusively dedicated to arts and cultural uses, including the **Civic Center**, the **Regency Event Center**, and the **Black Box** theatre space on St. Germain Street.
- **The Paramount Theatre is an important venue for locally produced performances.** There is some concern among facility users that the costs of using the facility are prohibitive. Many users feel the venue should be made available to local users at an even more discounted rate (compared to commercial users) than is presently the case. On the other hand, the facility, which is privately managed through a contractual arrangement with the City, has a budget of about \$1.25 million, of which about \$750,000 must be earned or raised from contributed sources. Management has attempted to balance the needs of arts groups with its own economic realities. However, there appears to be a conflict between the informal *mission* of the facility to serve the community and its arts groups, and the City's *mandate* that the Paramount Arts Resource Trust (PART) focus on facility management and approach a break-even operating budget.
- **There are few small, flexible, and low-cost performance spaces available to local groups, especially in the downtown.** The facilities at St. Cloud State University and the College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University are designed to serve the needs of students. They present events to the public although they are not generally available for use by local arts groups. While there are some spaces available to these groups, notably church venues (and the downtown "Black Box" space which presents a limited number of performances each year), there is a shortage of small (from 50 to 200 seats), flexible spaces. This limits the ability of arts groups to tailor performances to the likely audience they will attract.

Education & Life-long Learning

- **There is a very strong and consistent commitment to arts education among school board members and the administrative staff of District 742.** There are art and music specialists in all schools and a range of offerings for all K-12 students. Visual arts, dance, and theater are also represented in the offerings. The District is seen as providing among the strongest mix of arts education offerings in Central Minnesota. That is not to say that the program has not faced difficulties, given the time constraints that result from a focus on testing and a state-wide basic skills emphasis that generally does not include art and music. Nevertheless, cut-backs to arts education have been limited in the past decade and the program is stable at current levels of support.
- According to interviewees, **there is a general lack of understanding – especially among the general public but also among some educators – of the value of arts learning** as a creative and expressive skill and as a way to enhance learning in



- all curricular areas for K-12 students. Because teachers have not been trained in how to integrate the arts more fully into the general curriculum, “integrative arts learning” opportunities are not as prevalent as they might be in the District, although this generally the case in the region and throughout the state.
- Furthermore, **arts advocates have not been effective in articulating the educational outcomes of learning about and participating in the arts in ways that highlight important community educational priorities.** The research is available but it has not been consistently disseminated to either parents or District decision-makers. In addition, there is no City- or District-wide mechanism to focus support for arts training or to educate parents and teachers about its value for all young people and enlist their advocacy.
 - **Many local arts groups provide school-based programs, both during the school day and after school.** This is an important service that provides a significant “value-added” for local residents. However, there is little coordination of effort among the groups, and the School District provides little, if any, coordination on its own. What is provided is generally done on the individual school level. This means that much of what is available, beyond the art and music offered by teachers, is dependent on the particular interest or knowledge of specific teachers or administrators. Some after-school offerings are provided by local arts groups, service organizations, public schools, Community Education, and the City’s Recreation Department. However, the arts-related offerings of the non-arts groups are generally limited and once again, coordination among them is problematic.
 - **St. Cloud State University (SCSU), with its 16,000 students, is a key provider of cultural experiences to its students and, to a degree, to the larger community.** Its College of Fine Arts and Humanities offers degrees in such areas as visual art, music, theatre, film studies, and dance, among others. The new president of St. Cloud State University (SCSU) has expressed a commitment to integrating the University more effectively into the St. Cloud community. In addition, the **College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University**, located in nearby St. Joseph, has a student body of almost 4,000. Both institutions have arts programming and facilities, as described above. The College of Saint Benedict and Saint John's University is not physically in St. Cloud and ties to St. Cloud are weaker, although it draws significant audience from the City.
 - **There is little coordination of College and University cultural programming and various community presenters and local arts groups.** Indeed, residents indicate that sorting out what is available – and appropriate – for them to attend on SCSU’s campus can be difficult. Since scheduling is not coordinated, it is possible to have events scheduled against one another. In addition, simply learning about what is available is not easy for those without some knowledge of the University campus. The fine arts programming at the Benedicta Arts Center at the College of Saint



Benedict and Saint John's University is quite visible and serves the St. Cloud audience, although there is also only limited coordination with other arts presenters.

Cultural Diversity

- **While still having a predominantly Caucasian population, St. Cloud has become increasingly diverse over the past decade.** The Vietnamese immigrants who settled in St. Cloud in the 1970 have, for the most part, been integrated into the community. In the past ten years, there have been large numbers of new Latino and Somali immigrants. In general, the needs of these new residents are being addressed through a mix of private sector social service agencies, churches, and the City.
- **There are few opportunities for recent immigrants and others to share their cultural heritage in St. Cloud.** With the exception of a few local events, including one at the Civic Center sponsored by, among others, the Human Rights Commission and some activities at St. Cloud State University, as well as programming at the Stearns History Museum, there are few events that showcase the arts, crafts, cuisine, culture, and history of the various ethnic groups in St. Cloud. It is also the case that there are few events that celebrate the arts, history, and heritage of the European settlers of the region. And while the City's Whitney Senior Center provides extensive programming for Somali, Vietnamese, and other immigrant groups, its focus is primarily on fitness and English language skills.
- **Some connections have been made between St. Cloud's ethnically diverse communities and the cultural sector.** Most important among these is through "Create Community," which grew out of a racial harmony initiative in 1998 and established a formal structure in 2002. Among the priorities of Create Community is a focus on supporting arts and diversity initiatives, although thus far these have generally been special events rather than on-going activities.

Cultural Organizations & Artists

- **There is an interesting mix of arts groups and artists in St. Cloud that varies in discipline, longevity, and budget size,** although most organizations can be categorized as having small budgets (generally less than \$250,000 annually), with a few mid-sized groups, and many artists are part-time or avocational. Under-capitalization is a common characteristic of the arts groups, even those that are somewhat larger. This means that financial resources are often not available to provide the research and development, training, and collective action required of a growing industry. While this dynamic is often endemic to nonprofit organizations in general and arts organizations in particular, it is more pronounced in St. Cloud.



- **While some of St. Cloud’s cultural organizations have full- or part-time paid staff, many of them are operated by volunteers.** Most groups have boards of directors that are made up primarily of working volunteers, rather than a mix of individuals that includes high visibility civic and community leaders who take an active role in fund raising. This means that these boards are focused on tactical, day-to-day issues and have little if any time for strategic planning to make sure that the mission of the organization is being effectively served by its programs. Fund raising for some groups is conducted by United Arts, a united arts fund-raising organization in St. Cloud. While the united campaign assists those organizations it funds, it is not clear whether it limits the number of private sector dollars donated to other groups.

- **There is an expressed concern among arts groups and artists about the costs of using facilities in downtown St. Cloud.** As mentioned in the section above on downtown and economic development, arts groups find it difficult to use the Paramount facility because of its cost. Nonprofit arts groups pay only one-third the commercial rental rate. However, this still represents a significant budget outlay for many of these groups. Furthermore, with 700 seats, it presents a challenge for those groups that do not aim to attract an audience of that scale. Smaller venues – often in churches – are available but they are generally outside the downtown area.

- **There is a need for better access to administrative training and technical assistance to enhance the administrative skills of nonprofit arts groups.** Given the dynamic of under-capitalized groups, it is of little surprise that there is a need for additional training for board and staff of arts nonprofits. The key areas for training include:
 - Marketing and promotion
 - Board development
 - Information systems, including use of new media

Artists also expressed interest in access to training and technical assistance to build their business skills in such areas as portfolio assembly, grant-writing, financial management, and entrepreneurship, as well as advanced training in their specific arts discipline.

Paramount Arts Resource Trust (PART) has a complex program and interacts with many different constituencies in various roles, which has led to confusion and poor communication. PART was established as a 501(c)3 nonprofit corporation to raise money for the completion of the renovation of the Paramount facility and is now under contract with the City to manage it, which includes responsibility for booking, scheduling, and ticketing of the theatre and other spaces, among other tasks. However, PART plays additional roles in the arts community. It is a presenter, a visual arts programmer within the building, and a



collaborator on programs with community organizations. These distinct roles all fill important needs, which are also being addressed by other local arts groups. But since they each suggest different relationships – with arts groups, City staff, social service organizations, and funders – the lack of clarity about or awareness of these roles contribute to miscommunication. That PART has a contractual relationship with the City for some services is another factor that complicates the situation.

Audiences & Participation

- **Much of St. Cloud’s cultural audience is regional.** Based on an analysis of the ticket sales of the Paramount and its user groups, as well as the findings of the St. Cloud Cultural Census, a significant proportion – perhaps as much as 40 percent – of St. Cloud’s cultural attendees live *outside* of the St. Cloud city limits (41 percent of the respondents to the Cultural Census lived outside of St. Cloud). The good news in this situation is that arts and culture is bringing many people into St. Cloud who then patronize various other, non-arts establishments, contributing to the health of the local economy. The bad news is that these cultural participants are enjoying the benefit of St. Cloud’s municipally subsidized cultural venues and organizations without making any financial contribution – beyond their ticket purchase – to them.
- **Communication about the arts is fragmented.** While there is some coverage in some print media, and some organizations have effective communication with targeted audiences, there is no central source for sharing information about current and future arts and cultural programming throughout the City. On-line methods of cultural marketing and information sharing are only very slowly being adopted by cultural groups and are not yet fully developed to national standards.
- **Overall, the Cultural Census results are consistent with national trends** that point to increased involvement and interest in active forms of arts participation – making art, talking about art, collecting and organizing art – as well as arts activities that fulfill social needs, especially among singles, for whom lack of social context is a major barrier. Specifically the Census indicates that:
 - **High-frequency attendees** tend to be older, less likely to have children living at home, and have much higher levels of educational attainment.
 - **There is a close correlation between personal participation and attendance.** For instance, 27 percent of higher-frequency attendees say that they earn at least a portion of their income making art, compared to only 5 percent of lower-frequency attendees.
 - **Informal venues – such as the home – play an important role as a setting for arts and cultural activities, especially among lower-frequency attendees.** They are proportionately more likely than high-frequency attendees



to use the home as a setting for such activity, illustrating a major challenge for arts organizations: being relevant to constituents in a range of settings.

- **There is contradictory evidence about the impact of the Twin Cities on local cultural attendance.** Anecdotal evidence gathered through interviews suggests that the Cities are a significant draw for St. Cloud cultural attendees. In fact, this viewpoint was little challenged during the interview component of this project. However, the Cultural Census provides a different perspective. While about one-third of high frequency attendees go to the Twin Cities six or more times a year for cultural activities, fully two-thirds do not. And 86 percent of moderate frequency attendees (and 95 percent of low-frequency attendees) go to the Twin Cities for cultural activities 5 times or fewer a year. This suggests that one should not assume Minneapolis/St. Paul is drawing off significant numbers of local cultural attendees.

Leadership & Resources

- **Public and private sector leaders acknowledge an important role for arts and culture in downtown revitalization.** This long-standing awareness is evident in the renovation of the Paramount as a component of downtown redevelopment. As the City has focused more on attracting businesses in the “new economy” – including life sciences, bio-technology, information technology, and others – the importance of “quality of life” considerations, including arts, culture, and entertainment, is even greater.
- **There is a low, but growing, level of awareness among civic leaders and elected officials of the various ways, other than downtown development, in which arts and culture can add value to the community.** It is true that there is a strong sense among many people that the arts play a role in downtown revitalization. In general, however, there is less understanding of the broader role the arts can play in helping children learn, attracting high tech and bio-science businesses that might consider relocating to St. Cloud, or providing creative business-oriented, problem solving skills to local businesses.
- **The leadership and coordinating role within the cultural sector is divided among many organizations.** While many arts groups have components that serve the entire sector, several stand out as playing a sector-wide role in providing coordination or leadership in St. Cloud. These include:
 - **United Arts of Central Minnesota**, which conducts fund-raising campaigns to provide support for “the area’s leading arts organizations.”
 - **St. Cloud Arts Commission**, which regrants City dollars to arts groups, provides programming, and advises City Council on arts and culture matters.



- **PART**, which manages the City-owned Paramount Theatre, and additionally provides programming within the facility and in collaboration with other agencies.
- **Central Minnesota Arts Board (CMAB)**, which regrants state and McKnight Foundation funds, provides services to artists and arts groups, and undertakes advocacy for the sector.

While it is good that so many groups are providing such a range of services, the lack of coordination among them is problematic. Furthermore, missions are not always clear and, in some cases, have not been recently re-evaluated. Thus the possibility of mismatched expectations and poor communication is of concern.

- **The City is the major public sector funder of St. Cloud arts and culture in the region** (although CMAB also funds locally). The bulk of City funding is indirect, in the form of over \$300,000 in subsidy and management support for the Paramount Theatre. In addition, the City's Arts Commission oversees a small grants program of direct support to arts groups that, in 2006, awarded about \$47,000 to local organizations. No other municipality, including those in closest proximity to St. Cloud and whose citizens use the cultural amenities of St. Cloud, formally supports St. Cloud's arts groups or artists. Nor do any of the three counties in which St. Cloud is situated. The only other public sector funding comes from the Central Minnesota Arts Board, which regrants state arts funding by providing small grants to local arts groups, and at times, directly from the Minnesota State Arts Board.
- **Corporate funding for arts and culture has been limited to date.** However, according to interviewees, that is as much a result of the limited fund-raising capacity of arts groups as it is indicative of the level of interest in and support of arts and culture from the corporate sector. Indeed, there appears to be greater interest in supporting arts and culture than has been assumed, especially as the role of arts and culture in addressing social, educational, and economic development issues becomes better understood.
- **Individual support for arts and culture has been the primary source of private sector funding.** Individual support has often come through the Central Minnesota Community Foundation, which has several "field of interest" funds that support the arts. Other regional foundations, including both McKnight and Jerome, support arts and culture in St. Cloud from time to time. In addition, individual fund raising for St. Cloud arts groups has been conducted by United Arts for over twenty years. While the amounts raised – including about \$100,000 annually from charitable gambling – fluctuate from year to year, the past three years have seen a significant increase, with the net fund raised income for 2006 of \$66,000 being more than double that of 2004.



Part III

A Vision for Arts and Culture in St. Cloud

In this section of the Report, the consultant offers a vision statement that articulates the cultural aspirations of the community. It provides a sense of what St. Cloud will look like if the goals and strategies of this document are implemented. It is based on the work of several groups including the Steering Committee, an *ad hoc* group of arts administrators, as well as the consultant's interviews and other fact-finding.

What St. Cloud's Cultural Sector Will Look Like in 2017

In 2017, St. Cloud has diversified its economic base that includes high tech, bio-science, and other knowledge-based businesses and arts and cultural amenities play a key role in attracting those businesses and retaining the highly skilled workers they require. More conventions and conferences than ever are coming to St. Cloud because of the arts and entertainment options it offers. The cultural sector has become a source of community pride and its impact is central to the livability and economic vitality of the City.

More than ever, St. Cloud is the regional "cultural hub" for Central Minnesota and residents of surrounding communities – and farther – flock to its vibrant, exciting downtown with its flagship Paramount facility and a mix of smaller, low-cost, flexible performance and exhibition venues used by both established and "start-up" arts groups from St. Cloud and the region. Downtown visitors can plan their cultural activities using an up-to-date and informative web-based calendar.

An appealing range of public art and an exciting mix of neighborhood-oriented events and festivals add a welcome dimension to the City's livability. The City uses arts and cultural events and programs to highlight its increased diversity. Ethnic festivals – from Somali to German – showcase residents' cultural differences (and similarities) in positive and affirmative ways.

All District 742 schools consistently use the arts effectively for their expressive value and as a powerful tool in teaching and learning. Arts learning is a lifelong pursuit through programs for all ages and residents are engaged as much in their neighborhoods as downtown.



St. Cloud State University and its cultural offerings, as well as those at the College of St. Benedict/ St. John's University, are available to regional residents. The University's role in providing technical assistance and support for local arts and cultural groups has provided the sector with an important resource. Programming and administrative partnerships that include community and University groups are commonplace and the arts serve as a bridge between "town" and "gown."

Senior City officials, leaders of public and higher education, representatives of local and regional foundations, the business sector, and arts and culture work together to support St. Cloud's cultural sector with leadership and financial support so that it can continue to enhance the City's livability and foster the civic pride of its residents.



Part IV

Goals and Strategies

In this section of the report, the consultant describes four goals and related strategies that have emerged from this cultural planning process. Each goal is introduced with a discussion of its rationale. The strategy sections for each goal include a description of the strategy and suggested approaches based on the consultant’s experience and informed by the input of the Steering Committee and local arts administrators.

It is important to keep in mind that the *goals* and *strategies* described below are consensus *recommendations* while the *tactics* embodied in the discussions following each strategy are *suggestions*. In other words, the goals and strategies describe where the plan proposes the cultural sector and the community would end up at the completion of the ten-year planning period; the tactics reflect a road map of possible options for how to get there.

The priority of each strategy – based on the consultants’ assessment – is provided, using a 1 to 4 ranking scale, with 1 being the highest priority. Possible community partners are listed for each and an order-of-magnitude estimate of costs is provided. The specific costs are likely to vary significantly depending on the chosen approach, schedule, and scope selected for implementation. This figure is provided as a point of departure for implementation planning.

Goal 1

Use arts and culture in support of the City’s economic development priorities.

St. Cloud is already using arts and culture to foster the community’s economic development, especially in the downtown where a wide range of cultural amenities already exist. But while several cultural assets are present in the downtown, they are not being deployed as effectively as they might be.

In cities across the nation, a strong identity for arts and culture is a cornerstone of a vibrant downtown. That is certainly the case in St. Cloud, and that is generally recognized by civic leaders. Most notably, the Paramount Theatre and Pioneer Place already draw audiences to downtown, as do the art galleries in the area. With the opening of the new main library in the spring of 2008, an additional and important cultural asset will be available to the community. Leaders in St. Cloud know that arts and entertainment events bring people downtown and contribute to the City’s economic



vitality; such events help support local restaurants and culturally-oriented businesses like book stores, galleries, boutiques, and coffee shops.

St. Cloud's cultural sector can make a more significant contribution to the economic vitality in the downtown and throughout the City. But to do that, additional support is necessary to sustain and enhance arts, cultural, and entertainment initiatives and organizations that serve the community. That will require engagement. Representatives of the City's key sectors – business leaders (including representatives of the Chamber of Commerce and the Downtown Council), elected officials, senior representatives of SCSU, and cultural leaders – must be more deeply and consistently engaged. In addition, the infrastructure in the downtown requires attention, both to improve existing venues and to add to the inventory of available performance and exhibition spaces.

While building arts and culture in the downtown is a priority, arts and culture can also contribute to community development by making the City's neighborhoods more livable. This may involve additional programming outside of the downtown, in parks, playgrounds, and community centers; it might also include a focus on neighborhood streetscape enhancements. One component of this – both in neighborhoods and downtown – is a strong public art program, one that provides opportunities to engage residents in exploring a range of art forms and experiences in a positive way.

Strategy 1.1

Convene senior City, corporate, and cultural leaders to address integrating arts and culture into economic development policy, especially in the downtown.

In an attempt to broaden the community's economic base, St. Cloud's recent economic development focus has begun to aim at attracting such "new economy" industries as high technology, bio-science, and information technology. These industries, and the highly skilled "knowledge workers" that they require, tend to locate in areas that have a high "quality of life" that includes such amenities as parks and access to the outdoors, recreational facilities, excellent schools, and cultural activities.

Arts and culture can play an important supporting role in this approach to economic development. But for the sector to be most effective, it will require better coordination and communication among the various parties, including City officials, University representatives, community and business leaders, along with representatives of arts groups. An excellent first step might be to establish an on-going committee of senior representatives of those sectors. This group would initially focus on the downtown to sort out strategies to build the level of activity there, with a focus on arts, culture, and entertainment.

The members of this committee, a group of senior leaders from many civic sectors, would not likely be involved in implementing programs. Rather, such a committee would provide an on-going forum for ensuring that efforts in the downtown are



coordinated and that all the key players are aware of one another's initiatives. These individuals can delegate to others on their staff to oversee and coordinate aspects of implementation. Once established, quarterly meetings would be sufficient to continue the process.

<i>Priority</i> ¹⁴	1
<i>Possible Partners</i> ¹⁵	City, arts leaders, SCSU, funders, business & professional organizations
<i>Estimate of Cost</i>	Minimal

Strategy 1.2

Develop additional programming to enhance St. Cloud's downtown arts district.

The 1993 Downtown Plan described an evolving arts district in the vicinity of the Paramount Theatre. The presence of the renovated theatre has fostered the growth of this arts district and clearly aided in building a market for cultural retail (galleries, book stores, boutiques, etc.). Still, the promise of a downtown arts district is more fully realized when there are a range of culturally-oriented activities available to attract pedestrian traffic. The most effective arts districts are those that have on-going programming above and beyond that provided by the venues located in the district.

This is already being done to a degree in St. Cloud. For example, the Art Crawl and the Downtown Council's Holiday Nights and Lights have important arts components that enliven the downtown. And while the Paramount presently offers a number of community-oriented activities, it will be important to move beyond the confines of any single venue. Having even more activities outdoors and throughout the downtown will add to the sense of bustle and activity that is vital to establishing a critical mass of activities and thus enticing more people downtown and providing a positive image to the area.

Among the types of activities that might be considered are:

- Performing art showcases highlighting local artists
- Demonstrations and participatory visual arts activities geared to both children and adults
- Themed parades, celebrations, and festivals oriented toward families

¹⁴ The following scale is used to describe priority: 1 = very high; 2 = high; 3 = moderate; 4 = low. Note, however, that this designation is based on the consultant's assessment of the relative importance of each strategy and does not necessarily weigh such factors as ease of implementation, which might suggest implementing a lower priority option because there is, for example, a ready source of funding.

¹⁵ Please note that for each strategy, we list *possible* partners in implementation. These are provided as suggestions only; they have generally not been discussed with the entities listed and the lists may not be complete.



- After-work social and networking events with an arts “sampler” component.

In addition to programming, coordination and communication is important. Programmers can meet quarterly to set schedules and conduct joint marketing and advertising if appropriate. Consideration should be given to placing kiosks at key locations downtown to provide visitors with current information about up-coming activities.

Priority	3
Possible Partners	City, arts organizations, downtown businesses & associations, funders
Estimate of Cost	A starting budget of \$5,000 would be sufficient since many costs could be covered by in-kind contributions.

Strategy 1.3

Establish a City-wide public art program to provide visual and performing arts and/or art programs in key locations throughout the City.

The City of St. Cloud has authorized several public art projects, most recently as part of the new main library in the downtown. Public art programs, which use a small percentage of public capital construction budgets to add visual or performing art components, are a way to add public amenities to enhance the streetscape and improve the quality of life. They are generally most effective when they are formalized through City ordinance rather than the current *ad hoc* arrangement. Such an ordinance would enhance the effectiveness of the program and should be given serious consideration..

A public art ordinance can define a clear mission for the program and provide importance guidance about what sorts of projects should be encouraged. In this way, a coherent collection of public art pieces can be built, one that serves to enhance the livability of St. Cloud’s neighborhoods and its downtown.

Public art ordinances vary substantially in their structure and content. Before such an ordinance could be drafted and presented to City Council, considerable additional research would be required. It would be important to review a sampling of ordinances from other communities in order to establish the parameters of an ordinance for St. Cloud. As part of this planning initiative, City arts staff and Steering Committee members have compiled a list of questions that must be addressed prior to drafting. It is included in this report as Appendix E.

A public art ordinance for St. Cloud ought to be a flexible document and it would be important to make sure that it is designed carefully and with significant input from community members who do not have a strong connection to the arts. Some key points that might be considered when establishing the program include the following:



- The program should have a broad vision that encompasses the entire community and that offers a range of opportunities for projects.
- To that end, the ordinance might stipulate that, along with visual art projects, funds be expended for on-going costs associated with cultural facilities and/or appropriate site-related performing arts events.
- The percentage allocation for art ought to be sufficient to cover costs for maintenance and conservation of visual art.
- Approval of public art projects ought to be made by a committee that includes arts specialists *and* representatives of the general public.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City, private developers, SCSU
Estimate of Cost	Initial costs will be minimal; on-going costs defined by CIP budget with administrative costs coming from the Public Art program budget.

Strategy 1.4

Consider options for increasing the number of small, flexible performance and exhibition venues as well as artist live/work spaces downtown.

If arts and culture is to fulfill its potential in revitalizing St. Cloud’s downtown, issues relating to the availability of appropriately scaled cultural venues must be addressed. Currently there are insufficient appropriately sized spaces available to arts groups in the downtown. The Paramount and Pioneer Place, both in the downtown core, are generally fully booked. The Black Box, also located in downtown, is available for use, but is a privately held venue.

According to representatives of arts groups, there is a real need for smaller performance spaces that are flexible and are less expensive to use. Such so-called “black box” spaces are generally relatively inexpensive to build, outfit, and manage. They allow for flexible seating and staging which means greater flexibility in programming possibilities. Aside from theatrical uses (including dinner theatre), they can also be used for cabaret and presenting small musical ensembles as well as spoken word performances and lectures.

The likeliest option for creating at least one and ideally two black box spaces in the downtown might be through a renovation of an existing building or as a component in new commercial construction. In some communities (notably Seattle), developers are given incentives for providing cultural amenities. In some cases, additional square footage is allowed; in others, potential variances are considered favorably or property tax payments are abated for a period of time for adding a cultural amenity or contributing to a fund in support of such amenities. One of these approaches might prove effective in St. Cloud.



It is likely that the most effective way to develop these cultural venues would be a partnership with the developer covering the capital costs of renovation and outfitting of the space, as well as needed on-going maintenance and the City taking responsibility for administrative aspects of operating the spaces. The City’s tasks could likely be undertaken with existing City staff or outsourcing a contract for services with a private organization.

Another need expressed by artists was for live/work space and downtown could be an ideal setting for this. This might be done through incentives to developers or property owners. A Minneapolis-based nonprofit called Artspace is a national leader in creating, fostering, and preserving affordable space for artists and arts organizations. Consultation with this organization would be an important initial step to assess the potential.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City, private developers, downtown businesses & associations, arts groups
Estimate of Cost	Depending on the scale of the necessary renovation and the degree and type of outfitting, costs could range from \$100,000 to \$500,000, although this might be structured as a private sector initiative with the public sector providing zoning or tax incentives and administrative support to developers rather than allocating City dollars. On-going administrative costs could be covered by existing City staff or added to existing City contracts.

Goal 2
Create more coordinated and accessible arts learning opportunities for children, youth, and adults.

The presence of formal and informal opportunities for children and adults to learn about and experience arts and culture is an important indicator of a strong cultural sector. Indeed, arts skills are valuable tools in building problem-solving skills, which have become critically important to workers in the creative economy and contribute to accomplishing priority educational goals. In addition, individuals who have experienced arts learning – either through the creation of art or through increased knowledge and appreciation – are considerably more likely to be consistent arts attenders.

The leadership of District 742 has a commitment to arts education and there are arts learning opportunities at all grade levels. Arts groups have also added a range of programming within schools and in after-school settings. That said, there are some problem areas. Coordination, for example, is spotty and the richness of offerings often depends on the specific interest and knowledge of particular teachers or administrators.



For St. Cloud's cultural audiences to grow and the sector as a whole to thrive, the availability of arts and cultural learning must be enhanced. That means supporting increased opportunities for arts learning in a variety of settings, including enhancing coordination among public school cultural providers and building stronger connections between higher education and the community.

This plan is explicitly designed to address municipal priorities and it is beyond its scope to recommend specific strategies to District 742 or to private or parochial schools. However, recognizing the importance of strong, effective, and consistent arts education in public schools, the following strategies are offered within that context to strengthen arts learning for all St. Cloud residents.

Strategy 2.1

Establish an "Arts in Education Roundtable" to provide information to the general public and civic leaders about the value of arts learning.

While support for arts education at the administrative level is strong, the general public and some educators are less aware of the value of arts learning as an expressive and creative skill. The body of research, mentioned briefly at the beginning of this report, suggests the role that arts learning can play in developing critical thinking skills as well as supporting creative problem solving in general.

To help clarify the importance of investing in arts learning, those individuals who are most committed to it might play a more active role. To support that, an "Arts in Education Roundtable" could be established. It might include representatives of other school districts and from private and parochial schools. This informal body would meet quarterly and provide programs that highlighted the ways in which arts learning can contribute to the academic proficiency of students at all grade levels. Speakers from District 742 and other parts of the region could speak to important new research findings and might review the Minnesota State Standards in Arts Education. The resources available through the Perpich Center for Arts Education might be explored as well.

These meetings should be structured so that they will attract a wide range of participants, including educators, parents, school administrators and policy makers, as well as representatives of arts groups. Business leaders, who are increasingly concerned about attracting and retaining the creative and knowledge workers that the new economic thrives on, should also be invited to participate.

Such a roundtable can be a critical tool in building awareness and support for arts in education. It is an important initial step in addressing the other strategies, described below. This advocacy function may take the form of a simple public relations campaign in partnership with the awareness campaign described in Strategy 4.1 of this report (cf., page 38). One goal of such a campaign could be to increase the financial support



available for arts learning from District 742. While it is true that the budgets of schools are under considerable pressure, it is also true that arts learning is a key component of K-12 education and the District should be encouraged to invest more in this area.

Initial coordination of the roundtable could be provided by the staff of the Arts Commission, although much of its work will ultimately undertaken by volunteers. It will be helpful to have a small budget to cover honoraria for out-of-town speakers and to cover the minor costs of meetings.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	Arts groups, area schools (public, private, parochial); Perpich Center for the Arts, Central Minnesota Community Foundation, local, regional, state funders; educators, civic and business leaders
Estimate of Cost	Less than \$3,000 annually for the roundtable (although costs for the awareness campaign are factored in under Strategy 4.1).

Strategy 2.2

Better coordinate the range of arts learning experiences for children in primary and secondary schools.

At the present time, there is access to arts learning in St. Cloud’s public schools with variation from school to school. Many arts groups have programs that supplement schools’ arts experiences, although there is insufficient awareness of, and coordination among, the providers of these opportunities and the schools. This limits their use by educators and increases the risk of duplication of effort among arts groups. While a few arts groups have well established relationships with specific schools, better coordination would likely provide more opportunities in more schools.

There is a need to establish an informal clearinghouse and “matchmaker” for those seeking in-school and after-school arts learning opportunities and connecting teachers and parents to those arts groups that provide them. This might take the form of a database that lists programmatic opportunities offered by arts groups and specific needs and interests required by educators. To be most effective, it would need to be simple and non-bureaucratic and would require the active involvement of arts groups as well as representatives of the schools. In addition, the clearinghouse might include examples of “best practices” programs and examples of current research-based instructional strategies.

Such a system could be developed through the Arts Commission, in concert with Strategy 2.1 above. Assistance might be available from institutions of higher learning (either in setting up or maintaining the database). It would require some initial research to ensure that all information about available programs and the interests and needs of educators is complete, accurate, and up-to-date. Once that initial work is complete, the



updating function might be undertaken by volunteers under the supervision of Arts Commission staff. It will be critical to ensure that one individual has the overall responsibility for coordination since inaccurate or out-of-date information will limit the clearinghouse’s utility.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City, arts groups, areas universities, area school (public, private, & parochial)
Estimate of Cost	Minimal, assuming that there are in-kind donations of staff time and computer hardware and software, if required.

Strategy 2.3

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

Much of the discussion about arts learning focuses on reaching young people in public school settings. However, this represents only part of the picture. It is important to acknowledge the role that informal education sites can play as a way to reach young people. Such venues as churches, community centers, libraries, parks, recreation centers, and others can augment the training and exposure provided in schools. They can provide comfortable and familiar settings for people of all ages to experience arts and culture.

There are a number of providers of youth-oriented programming including:

- The City’s Recreation Department offers programs at community centers.
- The new main branch of the Great River Regional Library will offer a range of activities, which can include arts and culture.
- Arts organizations such as PART, GREAT, the St. Cloud Symphony Orchestra, and the Chamber Music Society have offered a variety of after-school and artist-in-residence programs geared toward students from pre-K through high school.
- Social service organizations, such as the Boys & Girls Clubs or Big Brothers/Big Sisters, offer some arts programs among a mix of youth activities
- Some religious institutions offer arts and cultural activities as part of their ministries.

While some of these programs have arts components, arts represent a small fraction of what is available. The primary emphases are on youth athletics and remedial tutoring. There are ways to integrate arts and culture into these activities (for example, dance training can be invaluable to athletes and arts disciplines can support, motivate, and extend academic learning), but there is also room for more programming devoted specifically to arts and culture. This is a powerful way to engage teens and young adults who may have difficulty relating to sports.



After-school programs that are designed to assist in integrating arts learning into the classroom might also be explored. For example, in 2004 the Greater Columbus (Ohio) Arts Council's Children of the Future program joined with the Columbus Public Schools to offer after-school programming at public school sites throughout the city. Five artists divided their time between nine Columbus Public elementary and middle schools to plan and conduct activities in creative writing, music, theatre, and visual arts. Along with the enhancement of math, science, social science, and literary skills that the arts based programming offered, it also emphasized the daily development of constructive communication and conflict resolution skills as tools for coping with social pressures and temptations.¹⁶

Bringing this stronger focus on arts and culture to after-school and out-of-school programming will require initiatives that bring together representatives of arts groups, artists, and educators who may be able to provide these services, as well as representatives of these underserved groups. A meeting, convened by the City and coordinated by the Arts Commission, and including key representatives of the various groups mentioned, should address the following questions:

- What are the identified needs and where is the market?
- How might programs fit within existing schedules and structures?
- What are potential sources of funding?

The consultant understands that there may be significant budgetary constraints to developing major new programmatic initiatives. However, he believes that there are ways within existing structures to enhance significantly what is offered.

Priority: 3
Partners: Social service organizations and other service providers, cultural groups, artists, City, SCSU, Central Minnesota Community Foundation
Cost: Minimal annual sum to bring together key constituents; programmatic costs will vary and will likely be borne by the provider organizations (with some offsetting revenue).

Strategy 2.4

Provide a range of arts participation and learning opportunities for under-served populations in St. Cloud.

¹⁶ For more information about this program, as well as a host of others designed to provide arts-related programming to enhance cultural diversity and to operate within social service settings, please review Appendix C of this report, beginning on Appendix page C.8.



Opportunities to participate in and learn about the arts must be available to all residents no matter what their economic status, ethnicity, or age. This is a value that is shared by most if not all arts groups in St. Cloud and there are opportunities available.

It is important that this plan focus on the needs of underserved segments of the population, including ethnic populations of Somali, Vietnamese, and others.¹⁷ A stronger focus on the diverse cultural traditions of the new immigrant populations can serve as an important tool to build a stronger, better integrated community. The Stearns History Museum provides a solid set of programs in this area, although since its focus is historical, it tends to address the original European settlers.

Programs that address the various cultural and ethnic traditions of St. Cloud’s newly diverse population should be considered as part of this mix. Using respected elders from various ethnic communities can bring together people of different backgrounds and ages in positive ways. In addition, a focus on the sorts of activities that young people enjoy is important. Such activities as a “date night at the Paramount” or programs in music “mixing” would appeal to young people of all ethnicities and provide important and positive experiences for them to come together at the same time.

Another important audience is seniors, a population that is likely to grow in the coming years. The Whitney Senior Center offers a range of activities including performances at various locations. Additional collaborations between the Center and arts groups would be a valuable way to provide even more opportunities for seniors.

Priority:	3
Partners:	City, social service organizations and other service providers, cultural groups, artists, area universities, funders
Cost:	Minimal annual sum to bring together key constituents; programmatic costs will vary and will likely be borne by the provider organizations (with some offsetting revenue)

Strategy 2.5

Establish mechanisms to enhance communication and cooperation among higher education’s cultural offerings and the larger community.

St. Cloud is a much richer community because of the wealth of cultural activities that are offered on the campuses of St. Cloud State University and the nearby College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University. However, interaction between students and faculty on the one hand and arts groups and cultural venues on the other are not as effective as they might be. For example, many interviewees commented on the difficulty in finding out about events that are scheduled on SCSU’s campus.

¹⁷ Please also note the discussion of under-served audiences in strategy 3.3 on page x.



The newly installed president of SCSU has articulated a vision for the University that suggests a new “front door” for the campus, one that – among other things – makes its cultural life more accessible to the community. Such an initiative would be most welcome. Not only would it provide a stronger presence for the University, it could tie together existing cultural assets in the downtown and link them, virtually if not physically, with SCSU’s cultural venues. In addition, coordination of cultural programming – and promotion that coordinated with local arts groups – would be an important way to reach a larger audience.

One way to begin this process of weaving the University’s and the College’s cultural life into the fabric of St. Cloud is to convene an *ad hoc* committee with senior, policy-level representatives of St. Cloud State University, College of St. Benedict/St. John’s University, the City, and local arts groups. The initial session could be convened either by the City or the University.

The focus of this group, at least initially, would be to improve communication among all key players, so that greater coordination of arts programming is possible. This might take the form of scheduling and program planning reviews to identify conflicts and potential collaborations, establishing mechanisms to connect specific classes to arts and cultural activities, or fostering internship opportunities with arts groups. It is important to note that the University in particular has substantial capacity that might be provided to assist arts groups in coordinated marketing (suggested in Strategy 4.1 on page 38). Such a collaborative role would provide important support for cultural groups while bringing the University more fully into community life.

In the longer term, a stronger and more effective physical connection between campus and downtown might also be considered. This might involve more ambitious initiatives, including locating University programs or facilities in St. Cloud’s downtown.

It is also important to find ways to harness the energy of SCSU’s student population in ways that build community. Many students feel that they don’t know about what is available in St. Cloud and thus their activities in the community are relatively limited. There are a number of ways to better engage students, including more orientation, access to calendar information about downtown offerings, shuttle buses routes, and special open houses or “cultural mixers” for students at various cultural venues.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	City, universities, arts groups, funders, civic leaders
Estimate of Cost	Convening and operating this <i>ad hoc</i> committee will cost between \$2,000 and \$3,000 annually, although this might be absorbed as in-kind donations by one or more of the partners.



Goal 3

Strengthen St. Cloud's arts groups and artists and build their capacity to attract audiences.

St. Cloud's cultural groups and artists are the foundation of its cultural sector. Their health and productivity – creatively, financially, and administratively – is central to the growth and success of arts and culture in the City. St. Cloud must foster a healthy cultural “*ecology*,” a fully developed, interdependent system that includes arts and cultural groups of various budget sizes and stages of development, with an active mix of amateur and professional visual, literary, and performing artists.

Artists in St. Cloud point to significant challenges in developing and sustaining a professional career in the region. Cultural groups face significant challenges as well on several fronts. First, it is difficult for many of St. Cloud's arts groups to build their capacity to address such areas as board development, marketing, fund raising, or information management. Second, cultural organizations are being pressed programmatically by dramatic changes in consumer behavior and new leisure-time options.

Healthy cultural groups will have strong audiences. Stronger audiences for their events and activities will enhance the impact of arts and culture on the entire community and will bring important additional earned income to these groups. The key obstacles to building participation tend to be technical in nature. For example, residents and visitors do not have access to necessary information about arts and cultural offerings. The strategies discussed below are designed to strengthen arts groups and to build cultural participation. They should be seen as distinct but interconnecting initiatives since the components of each will augment those of the others.

Strategy 3.1

Coordinate better access to programs of capacity building and professional development for artists and cultural groups.

The need for professional development and capacity building for both artists and arts groups has been articulated clearly throughout this process. For arts groups, training of particular relevance at this time includes effective board development, the design and management of new streams of earned income, and techniques to obtain higher levels of contributed giving. Priorities for capacity building for artists include career planning, grant writing, financial recordkeeping, entrepreneurship and earned income generation, portfolio or resume development, communication, promotion, and artists' legal concerns. In addition, artists are interested in access to advanced training in their arts discipline.



There is great variation in the type of training that is needed, depending on the size, age, and sophistication of the organization or artist. For example, smaller budget and younger organizations and younger artists may need assistance in establishing basic financial accounting systems while larger and more established organizations and artists more advanced in their career might be focused on more sophisticated financial analyses or the development of an effective board committee structure. A program of professional development for cultural organizations and artists must provide basic and advanced levels of training.

There are a wealth of existing professional development resources in Minnesota to address the needs of both artists and arts groups. In addition to those offered locally and regionally (which are generally geared more generically to nonprofits, rather than being specifically arts-focused). Important resources include:

- The McKnight Foundation's *Nonprofit Management Toolkit* (the web address for this is <http://www.mcknight.org/resources/toolkit.aspx>) which provides listings of online resources for professional development.
- Springboard for the Arts, a St. Paul-based artist service organization that provides training opportunities for artists.
- Map for Nonprofits (<http://www.mapfornonprofits.org/index.asp>), also based in St. Paul, provides fee-based technical assistance service to nonprofits.
- The Minnesota Council of Nonprofits (<http://www.mncn.org>) is a membership organization that provides information services to nonprofits.

Since so many programs already exist, the first step in strengthening such a program can be to compile a **centralized source of information** on existing short- and long-term training programs, including local, regional, and national opportunities. This might become the responsibility of the St. Cloud Arts Commission. Initiatives such as the national and regional programs sponsored by Americans for the Arts and other national service organizations can provide some initial opportunities for St. Cloud arts groups. Training opportunities connected to the University should also be considered since there may be local expertise that can be harnessed in support of this initiative. Once information on existing sources of professional development is available, an assessment could be made of whether developing programs specifically for local consumption is likely to be cost-effective.

Another important aspect of this program might be to bring nationally and regionally noted artists to St. Cloud to conduct discipline-based workshops and residencies. Access to accomplished artists and their vision can be a critical aspect of professional development for early- and mid-career local artists. It is likely that costs for such programs would require coordination with the public schools, institutions of higher learning, or other communities to spread the expense more broadly. Nevertheless, even if these programs occurred only once or twice a year, they would be of great value to the artists served.



While coordinating and centralizing information about available resources is important, it is also critical to address barriers to participation in these programs. Keep in mind that program cost is a significant barrier to participation, especially for artists and small, emerging, and informally-structured cultural groups. Thus it will be important for this program to include a system to provide full or, at least partial **subsidy for potential participants** who can document their need.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City; universities; arts groups; funders; local, regional, state, national arts resources
Estimate of Cost	Initial City investment of about \$5,000 to assemble the database of available offerings, as well as convening and coordination; thereafter costs could range from \$5,000 to \$25,000 annually, depending on the mix of programs and the subsidy provided to attendees.

Strategy 3.2

Develop a cooperative, comprehensive web-based communications mechanism to highlight the range, diversity, and value of arts and cultural offerings in St. Cloud.

It is difficult for residents and visitors to get information on the complete range of St. Cloud’s arts and cultural activities. For instance, about 20 percent of respondents to the Cultural Census – including fully 22 percent of high frequency attendees – indicated that they were not aware of what was being offered in St. Cloud. Clearly, knowing what is available in St. Cloud is the first step in getting local and regional residents to participate more frequently in cultural activities. At the present time, information about cultural opportunities is fragmented and the burden is on the individual to find out what his or her attendance options are.

The Internet is increasingly a key access point for such information and communication can be addressed through a comprehensive web-based calendar and information system. Many communities have found that is an important investment in building new audiences and strengthening existing ones.¹⁸ To be effective, such a system must be complete *and* up-to-date. That will require aggressive and on-going outreach to cultural program providers to ensure timely submission and consistent updating of events and

¹⁸ Two excellent examples of web-based calendaring and information systems for arts and culture include the “Philly Fun Guide” sponsored by the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (<http://www.phillyfunguide.com/>) and “Artsopolis” jointly operated by the Arts Council of Silicon Valley and the San Jose Convention and Visitors Bureau (<http://www.artsopolis.com>). Note that this latter system is available for license and is presently in use in almost a dozen communities nationally (<http://artsopolis.net>).



opportunities. One component of the awareness campaign (described in Strategy 4.1 below) should focus on highlighting the availability and value of this resource.

Such a system would serve the interested public (including local and regional residents and visitors) by providing useful and interesting information on up-coming cultural programs. It would include the schedules of the groups presenting at the Paramount and Pioneer Place as well as the activities of other arts organizations, community generated visual, performing, film, literary, or heritage events, as well as commercial events. This will help to grow audiences, and, by designing the system to track dates several years into the future, the system could serve program providers as a conflict calendar for use when scheduling future programs and fund-raising events.

Beyond the basic functions, the system might eventually provide tie-ins to social networking sites for planning group attendance, sign-up mechanisms for e-mail messages from specific arts groups, or web logs to provide opinion, background, or context on specific up-coming cultural events.

Such a system is challenging to design and maintain and a partnership arrangement is best suited to implementation. The consultant is aware of web-based calendaring systems housed within convention and visitors bureaus, city departments of economic development, and at institutions of higher education. In St. Cloud, SCSU might serve as an important player in developing and hosting this community service, as might the *St. Cloud Times*, which already has arts listings in both print and electronic form. The City should convene civic, business, and University leadership to explore this and other options for implementation. Since there are already several entities that provide arts and entertainment-oriented calendar information, representatives of these groups should be invited to participate in this session.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	Arts groups, St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, business community, universities, funders, local media outlets
Estimate of Costs	Depending on how much database design work is required, system start-up could cost between \$25,000 and \$60,000. Pro bono services could mitigate these costs. On-going operation will require between \$5,000 and \$10,000 annually (unless provided <i>pro bono</i>), assuming that cultural groups are diligent in providing data to the system.

Strategy 3.3

Explore ways to increase participation in arts and culture with particular emphasis on finding new ways to engage current non-participants.

Existing audience members. St. Cloud already has an audience for cultural offerings, although there is need for growth. Only 24 percent of respondents to the Cultural



Census were “high frequency attendees,” which is low considering that the sample is self-selecting and would likely favor high attendees. The good news, however, is that 40 percent of respondents were moderate frequency attendees and numerous national studies have shown that individuals who are occasional cultural attendees can be successfully recruited to attend more often because they are already predisposed to participate.

It is important for arts groups to focus on activities to build participation among these existing audience members. Increasingly, organizations are offering lectures or other events in advance of a performance or an opening of an exhibition. They also provide hands-on experiences associated with the event or activity. These are ways that individual cultural groups can increase engagement with people who already have an interest in their programming and current national research indicates strong interest in such activities.

It might be possible to develop group sales mechanisms, providing discounted tickets to existing subscribers when they invite groups of two or more people to accompany them to presentations. In addition, audience members who live in outlying communities can be assisted to schedule larger group attendance through discounted tickets, assistance with arranging bus transportation, or a tie-in with a local St. Cloud restaurant. These are ways that cultural groups can use their existing, loyal audience members to partner with them to build new audiences.

Beyond these initiatives, cultural groups can design joint initiatives with one another to develop complementary programs around a theme or to target programming to a specific genre. They might collaborate with local businesses to develop cross-promotions, ticket incentives, or discounts as mentioned above.

New audiences. For those individuals who currently do not participate in cultural activities, there are more challenging barriers. The common barriers cited in the Cultural Census, notably “too expensive” and “too busy,” mirror national findings. There are several ways to address these barriers and among the most effective are the following:

- Develop joint advertising and promotions to increase attendance at **festivals and outdoor events**. Such activities present a lower barrier for individuals because they are frequently free or low cost and do not require a focused time commitment. Since they often have activities that appeal to various ages and interests, they allow for family attendance, which eases the concern about time constraints.
- There also may be merit in establishing **new neighborhood festivals** that are arts and culturally oriented or developing arts components for existing events. These neighborhood activities would culminate in a larger program in the downtown so that these local festivals could become a “gateway experience” and thus encourage and build more frequent cultural participation.



- Create a **discounted or free “generic” ticket or “arts passport”** for St. Cloud residents to be redeemed at a specially-designated series of arts and cultural events. An “arts passport” can be an important tool to get people to try something new and might be a component of the awareness campaign discussed in Strategy 4.1 below. This initiative would require significant underwriting but it might have appeal to local businesses as a sponsorship opportunity since there is potential for a strong identity component for the sponsor.
- Promote and highlight the **social aspect of cultural participation** through special initiatives. This approach is supported by the findings of the St. Cloud Cultural Census. Some approaches that have been successful in other communities include: discounted tickets for families or special “grandparents day” promotions; promotional packages combining a cultural event with dining or overnight accommodations; mixers in advance of performing or visual arts events; book clubs connecting to cultural programs; or dedicated pages on arts organizations’ web sites to foster dialogue or create virtual communities.

Underserved audiences. Communities of color, which represent a small but growing population in St. Cloud, are underrepresented in cultural audiences, according to anecdotal data. This group appears not to be strongly engaged, especially by the nonprofit cultural sector. There is value in making sure that voices from this constituency are part of future planning and audience development efforts. One way to address this is to build involvement and engagement with cultural groups. This can be through **greater representation on boards of directors** or other, *ad hoc* committees. Additionally, a special **advisory body** can be established to provide cultural groups with information about the programming interests of this potential audience segment. These approaches, however, must be more than a one-time effort. Such relationships are most successful when they are part of committed and sustained efforts. It is also important to establish effective evaluation guidelines to better understand the effectiveness of particular initiatives.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City, social service organizations, arts groups, funders, with Arts Commission as coordinator.
Estimate of Costs	Depending on the specific mix of program initiatives and whether in-kind contributions are found, costs could range from \$15,000 to \$50,000 annually for collaborative initiatives. Sponsorships can offset some costs and specific cultural organizations may initiate programs within the context of their own budget planning.



Strategy 3.4

Improve communication among arts organizations and clarify relationships within and among St. Cloud's arts service organizations.

In a community like St. Cloud, where arts supporters tend to wear many hats and have many roles that are often not clearly articulated, it is not surprising that communication problems can crop up. Systems to minimize the miscommunication can be simple techniques to smooth the working relationships among individuals. The Arts Administrators Roundtable, a group of staff and volunteers from arts groups that meets periodically, is an excellent first step. **Formalizing this group** with set meeting dates and incorporating it into the Arts Commission, perhaps as a sub-committee, might be a useful way to maximize the body's effectiveness. Alternatively, e-mail lists or printed monthly news sheets might serve as vehicles to share important information.

Beyond this general mechanism, consideration should also be given to establishing a **formal advisory relationship between local user groups and PART** since it is particularly important – and in everyone's best interest – for all cultural organizations to work together synergistically. In order to make this group even more effective, it might be useful to have appropriate representation of high-level City staff participating. This body might be folded into the group described above or kept separate.

There is an additional component to this issue. In St. Cloud, no single organization speaks for, coordinates the cultural sector as a whole, or represents its interests in community-based planning sessions. Indeed, four different organizations undertake some responsibility for some tasks, as detailed on page 15 of this report.

In some ways, the current arrangement is good in that these tasks are distributed among many organizations, thus spreading the burden. The problem, however, is that while certain specific tasks or initiatives are undertaken, many other functions are not. Most importantly, there is no individual or group that has served as a convener or facilitator to conduct on-going conversations among cultural interests to devise a unified strategy on issues of common concern.

For the cultural sector to continue to grow, this leadership issue must be addressed. One way to do that is to **establish a coordinating committee made up of senior representatives of the four groups**. Since the Arts Commission is identified as taking the lead role in plan implementation (cf., discussion in Part V of this report on page 48), it would be the logical convener of this committee. The purpose of this committee would be to clarify the community-serving roles of each group and to define an approach to providing appropriate cultural leadership in the community.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	Arts groups, funders, City
Estimate of Cost	Minimal



Goal 4

Build stronger public and private sector leadership and funding for arts and culture.

St. Cloud’s cultural sector already serves as Central Minnesota’s cultural “hub.” With the mix of creative people and activities in St. Cloud and the mix of cultural offerings in the downtown, it is surprising, then, that arts and culture is not integrated more effectively into the fabric of the community. The problem lies, in large part, from the difficulty of consistently engaging civic and business leadership in sustaining and fostering cultural development throughout the City. It is complicated by some instances of poor communication and organizational structure among arts groups.

In cities with strong, vibrant cultural sectors – including such different cities as San Jose, California; Salina, Kansas; Birmingham, Alabama; and Milwaukee, Wisconsin – there is always a powerful leadership link between the cultural sector and the business community, government, foundations, and other key civic sectors. This connection is usually managed and facilitated by a local organization, a “local arts agency,” that establishes connections among and between these sectors to bring arts and culture more fully into the life of the community. In St. Cloud, many of these functions are divided among several organizations and the risk of duplication – and of important priorities slipping through the cracks – is high.

The City has been generous in its support of the arts in general and of the Paramount venue in particular. The importance of the City’s investment cannot be overstated. However, if the cultural sector is to provide the highest possible level of value-added in economic development and education, greater support is needed. In the public sector, the City must do more, but so must other municipalities and the counties. It is equally important for the private sector to carry a larger share of the responsibility for sustaining this critical community asset. This goal addresses all of these resource and leadership issues.

Strategy 4.1

Mobilize community support for arts and culture through an awareness campaign that highlights the value and strength of arts and culture.

Building the community’s – and the region’s – awareness of the value of arts and cultural offerings in St. Cloud is an important pre-condition for building audiences and increasing support, especially from businesses and individuals. Many residents are not aware of the ways in which the cultural sector plays a key role in St. Cloud’s economy and quality of life today, and there is a need to raise awareness of the cultural sector’s potential to help shape the future of the community.



A comprehensive campaign to heighten awareness of St. Cloud's cultural sector for residents should focus on a few key messages that highlight the value of arts. This might include portraying the ways in which arts and culture build community pride, revitalize downtowns, aid children in learning, create economic vitality, enhance creativity in work, provide social and learning opportunities, and provide positive activities for youth. In many ways, this component resembles an advocacy campaign in that it is making the case for the importance of the arts. Such an emphasis is appropriate and addresses how arts and culture benefit the full community.

Aside from public service announcements and advertising, there are campaign tools that can assist in reaching individuals through work, social, educational, and religious affiliations. Effective techniques, employed in other communities, have included:

- A series of “**business round-table**” breakfast sessions devoted to addressing key trends in cultural participation and how those impact businesses and the economy.
- A coordinated effort among cultural providers to present brief “**cultural sampler**” programs at meetings of civic and religious organizations to highlight cultural activities.
- A **lecture series** that uses nationally- and regionally-renowned visiting artists and academics to discuss their work and to engage in dialogue about creativity and the creative process.
- A program of **loaned visual art** that would be exhibited in local businesses and available for sale.
- An “**arts summit**” that engages key community and cultural leaders in a day-long conversation about the ways in which arts and culture can enrich the community, using the large body of national research, and focusing especially on the role of arts and culture in economic development to make the benefits clear.
- A **speakers bureau** of St. Cloud arts leaders and experts who share their passion for and knowledge about the arts with civic and community groups such as Rotary, garden clubs, faith-based groups, etc. This could also include artists who do simple workshops or demonstrations at lunch hour in local business establishments and offices.

It will be important to work to gain the support of key local media (electronic, online, and print) services to make sure that as full coverage as possible is achieved. Initial facilitation of this campaign might be undertaken by the City, although other key partners will include the cultural organizations, the University, the St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau, the St. Cloud Area Chamber of Commerce, and others. This campaign should also provide abundant connections to the information about cultural offerings and ways to link to the proposed communication mechanism detailed in Strategy 3.2, above.



It is important to note that, while some of these initiatives may require professional assistance and financial support, other components can be accomplished as a “grass-roots” effort. Indeed, it will be important to move forward quickly with these activities in order to make the case for the value of implementation of the strategies of this report. St. Cloud’s cultural sector needs to identify and mobilize champions – respected individuals in the community who will publicly advocate for the value of the sector.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	City; arts, civic, & business organizations; St. Cloud Area Convention and Visitors Bureau; business and civic leaders
Estimate of Costs	Depending on the specific components and reach of the campaign, costs can range from approximately \$35,000 and up. However, the possibility of pro bono contributions by professionals and media outlets may mitigate the cost substantially. City marketing capacity might be employed initially at an estimated cost of \$20,000 as part of the larger campaign.

Strategy 4.2

Articulate a mission for the Paramount facility that addresses the priorities of this plan.

The Paramount Theatre is the City’s largest and most visible investment in the arts. It is the anchor of an informal arts district and a symbol of the revitalization of downtown. Equally important, it plays a critical role in the cultural sector by providing a high-quality venue for local and visiting arts groups. Nothing can be more important than preserving and protecting this legacy for future generations.

The current focus of concern for the City relative to the Paramount has been managing the facility and ensuring accountability in its operations while minimizing City involvement in its day-to-day operations. Such a focus is understandable. However, there are other roles that the facility currently fills that go beyond facility management and those are not clearly understood or adequately supported by the City. These roles include targeted programming, conducted by several arts groups, that address educational and social priorities as well as entertainment. They contribute in significant ways to the level of activity at the Paramount and thus help to maximize the facility’s economic and social impact on downtown and the City in general. With the increased attention to cultural economic development and the growth of the importance of the creative economy, such considerations take on additional weight.

Community-based cultural venues in other communities often define a mission that encompasses these additional components. Their missions go beyond simply ensuring that the halls are used responsibly and aim to enhance the venue’s role in addressing the educational and social priorities of the community. If the City were to place greater emphasis on these roles, which are already being addressed by programming at the



Paramount, it would create additional opportunities to maximize the impact of the facility.

To develop a mission statement for the facility, the City should convene a committee consisting of representatives from the City and the general public, PART, resident arts organizations, and the funding community to write a mission statement for the Paramount Theatre. Alternatively, this might be accomplished through the efforts of appropriate City staff that would subsequently be reviewed by stakeholders.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	Arts groups, City, residents, funders, downtown organizations
Estimate of Costs	Minimal

Strategy 4.3

Increase City funding for arts and culture.

This report outlines a number of initiatives that will enhance the quality of life of residents and contribute to economic development in St. Cloud. While the costs are generally not high – and many initiatives can be implemented with little cost – it will require additional investment to realize the gains. Such investments might be considered as problematic in the current environment but, since this is a ten-year plan, they ought to be considered for implementation in the future as resources allow.

While there are an array of areas that require additional funding described in this plan, it will be important to address one in particular – increased support for the Paramount to assist the full range of arts groups to cover the costs of using the space. It is important to note that the focus on operating at as close as possible to break-even level puts substantial pressure on PART to earn as much income as it can, which means that rental rates and ancillary usage fees are kept high relative to the budgets of most arts groups.

To address these concerns, consideration should be given to **increasing the municipal contribution** in support of the initiatives of this plan. Particular attention should be paid using these additional dollars used to support local arts groups’ use of the Paramount venue.

There are a range of options that can be considered for new revenue streams for funding arts and culture. Municipalities are becoming increasingly creative in identifying them, and while some options may not be feasible in Minnesota, those listed below are among the most worthy of consideration:

- A 30 cent per pack tax on cigarettes in Cleveland, Ohio
- A 0.01 percent retail sales tax to fund “cultural and scientific facilities” in the Denver Metro region



- A 0.01 percent county sales tax to fund cultural organizations, the zoo, and recreation facilities in Salt Lake County, Utah
- A 0.5 mill¹⁹ property tax levy to support cultural facilities in St. Louis, Missouri
- A ½ of 1 percent sales tax on admissions, CDs, tapes, and video rentals in Broward County (Fort Lauderdale), Florida
- Many communities in Virginia levy a tax of between two and four percent on prepared meals and in some cases, arts programming or facilities benefit from some of the revenues
- A one dollar surcharge on all greens fees at city golf courses in Tucson, Arizona, is set for youth programs, of which one-eighth goes to arts and culture
- A ½ of 1 percent real estate transfer tax to support visual and performing arts groups and renovate a cultural facility in Aspen, Colorado raised over \$5 million in 2006.

It should be noted that local public sector arts funding comes almost exclusively from the City of St. Cloud. Strategy 4.5, on page 43, describes some initiatives to increase public sector funding from other local governmental entities. Such contributions are justifiable since residents of these communities are frequent participants in St. Cloud’s cultural scene (cf., Appendix B, Cultural Census report, page 4 and Appendix D, Audience Distribution Maps, page 2, both in the Technical Volume).

Finally, there are some organizations (including, for example, the St. Cloud Municipal Band and the St. Cloud All-City High School Marching Band) that receive City funds annually with no review. While there may be some logic to providing this support, it would be appropriate if it were folded into existing City granting programs through the Arts Commission so that review and oversight is consistent with other City funding allocations.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	City, arts groups, funders
Estimate of Costs	Increased municipal contribution to arts and culture of between \$100,000 and \$150,000 annually.

Strategy 4.4

Provide for additional City staff to support arts and cultural initiatives and strengthen liaison with the City’s planning and community development function.

There is no question that the City has made a strong and consistent commitment to arts and culture over many years. Without minimizing the importance of its contribution, it is also true that with the exception of some granting to arts groups, the City’s support

¹⁹ A mill equals one-tenth of a penny.



for arts and culture has been effectively limited to its support of the Paramount. This support is necessary and must continue and increase.

But the cultural sector needs even more from the City if it is to reach its potential for improving the City’s quality of life. The additional responsibilities suggested in various strategies of this report emphasize the need for additional staff capacity. The consultant believes that it is critical to increase the staffing level for arts and culture, moving the existing part-time position to full time and adding at least another half-time position, although it might be possible to create it through reassignment of existing City staff positions. The consultant envisions both the expanded full-time position and the proposed new half-time position focusing on facilitating, coordinating, and convening of various groups and individuals in support of the initiatives of this cultural plan.

Since so many of the responsibilities of this position will involve planning, it is important that there be effective liaison between this position within the recreation department and those who work in the planning and community development area. Such an arrangement would ensure that considerations of arts and culture are brought into key planning discussions early enough so that incorporation of cultural amenities will be more organic. This might be accomplished in a variety of ways:

- The simplest and most effective solution would be to move City arts staff to the Planning Office.
- Alternatively, a formal liaison might be established between the Arts Commission and the Planning Commission, with some members sitting on both bodies.
- Or, an annual or semi-annual joint meeting of the Arts and Planning commissions might be held to review issues of common concern.

Priority	1
Possible Partners	City, Planning Department, Arts Commission
Estimate of Costs	\$30,000 to \$60,000 annually in City funds, although the new position might be established through reassigning existing staff and thus this cost might be reduced.

Strategy 4.5

Establish formal communications with surrounding municipalities and the three counties to assess their interest in and need for arts and cultural activities and their ability to help cover costs.

As mentioned earlier in this report, St. Cloud is a regional cultural hub for Central Minnesota and more specifically for the surrounding municipalities. The ZIP distribution maps included in Appendix D show graphically how much of the audience for Paramount users comes from outside St. Cloud’s city limits. The Cultural Census echoes this finding, with fully 41 percent of respondents living outside the City.



The good news is that these attendees from outside the City contribute to the economic vitality of St. Cloud by spending money in local businesses who pay taxes and fees to the City. The less good news is that those individuals are not contributing to the cost of operating cultural venues and organizations. Such a situation is not uncommon for hub cities and in general the benefits far outweigh the disadvantages. However, as part of a plan to increase participation in – and financial support for – local cultural groups, it will be important to explore options for better engaging the surrounding municipalities.

Such an effort must begin by learning what these communities are interested in and sorting out ways to address those needs more effectively. Some possible mechanisms might include:

- Special performances that are geared residents of specific cities with either targeted programming for them or blocks of discounted seats (for example, a “Sartell Night at the Paramount”).
- Co-promotions that tie participation in St. Cloud events to activities or events in the other community (for example a tie-in of a local restaurant meal and a ticket to a St. Cloud event).
- Local programming that culminates in an exhibition or performance at a St. Cloud venue (for example, a children’s celebration that ends with a performance in St. Cloud).

What is most important in this approach is that it begins by sorting out what St. Cloud can do to address the needs and interests of residents of these municipalities. It may be the case that such programming initiatives already exist. In any case, once this strand of the relationship is solid, it will be quite appropriate to enter into discussions in these communities to assess their willingness to contribute to the financial well-being of St. Cloud’s cultural groups since they are benefiting directly from arts groups’ programming.

This approach is intentionally collaborative and will take a while to bring to fruition. An easier alternative would be to add a surcharge to ticket prices for non-St. Cloud residents. While such an approach has the benefit of simplicity, it has the unfortunate effect of creating an adversarial atmosphere. While it might increase support in the short term, it is not likely to build audiences as effectively in the longer term.

In addition, it is important to begin discussions with representatives of three counties that contain parts of St. Cloud to explore options for support for St. Cloud’s cultural assets. Market research for this plan documents the role St. Cloud’s downtown cultural venues plan for County residents. Further, there is a precedent for county support of City infrastructure. St. Cloud’s Downtown Council, which is funded primarily by the City, presently receives funding from Stearns County, which is a recognition of the



importance of a healthy downtown to the County as a whole. Such a rationale would also serve to justify support for St. Cloud’s arts and cultural assets.

Priority	2
Possible Partners	City, arts groups, civic and business leaders, regional representatives
Estimate of Costs	Minimal

Strategy 4.6

Enhance arts groups’ capacity to increase levels of earned and contributed income.

Arts groups are quite adept at using every dollar they have to maximum effect. They are frugal and careful with resources. The ability of these groups to save money in their operating budgets is limited because they are already quite “lean” and indeed many would best be described as fragile.

That said, it is important to acknowledge that support for arts and culture must rest on a three-legged foundation, including support from the public sector, support from the private sector (including individuals, businesses, and foundations), *and* from revenues earned by and contributed to the nonprofit arts groups themselves.

This is a tall order, as the situation with the Paramount and its user groups exemplifies: under-capitalized groups are hard pressed to earn income by charging higher fees to other under-capitalized groups. One important way that groups can increase their earned income is to build larger audiences and Strategy 3.3 on page 35 details some alternatives for how to accomplish that. But that is not the only approach. The content of the professional development program, described in Strategy 3.1 on page 32, can focus on techniques to build earned income through improved administrative operations and enhanced marketing.

While the consultant acknowledges that growth in earned income will be difficult, it is still an important component of this approach. It will allow arts groups to gain greater control over their future and will bring home the point to residents that the arts function as well-run businesses.

Priority	3
Possible Partners	Arts groups, technical assistance providers
Estimate of Cost	Costs are subsumed in other strategies.

Strategy 4.7

Coordinate public and private sector funding for arts and culture.

There are a surprising number of local and regional funding mechanisms that support arts and culture in St. Cloud. They include the following:



- The City of St. Cloud's **Arts Commission**, which has a small pool of money to support cultural groups
- The **Central Minnesota Community Foundation**, which administers several funds that grant money to arts and culture
- The **Central Minnesota Arts Board**, which regrants state arts funding
- **United Arts**, which raises money through charitable gambling and individual fund-raising to support a selected group of mostly St. Cloud-based arts groups
- **Local and regional foundations**, including corporate, family, and community foundations..

While it is positive that these various pools of funding are available, it is an unfortunate problem that funders are not aware of one another's funding priorities and have no mechanism to share what they are learning from their funding of particular initiatives or groups. Once again, better communication among these funders – perhaps in the form of regularly scheduled bi-annual or quarterly meetings – could alleviate this problem. An initial convening might be hosted by the Central Minnesota Community Foundation.

Such on-going sessions might lead to improved coordination of granting activities. At the present time, arts groups must complete a variety of applications, meet various deadlines, and understand different sets of guidelines. Since each funder has different priorities and must fulfill different sets of requirements, it is not likely that they would be able to pool their funds available for arts-related giving. However, it might be possible for funders to develop a common application form and procedures that, at the very least, gather all the required information in a single document. And, if, for example, a common set of budget figures could be used by all funders, that data could be gathered once and made available to all funders. Such an approach (which might well be applicable to other components of the grant application process) would simplify the work of applicants *and* funders. In addition, funders might work together to develop a format for multi-year grants or joint grants that grew out of common or coordinated funding priorities.

An additional concern is the availability of funding for new and emerging arts groups. While some funders may support such groups on a case-by-case, *ad hoc* basis, there is no consistent, on-going funding available to them. Established groups, on the other hand, are supported on an annual basis by the fund-raising efforts of United Arts, which distributed over \$100,000 in 2006.

It is important to support established arts groups. It is also important to ensure that new groups get the encouragement and financial support they need to survive the early years, often the most difficult. And while it is true that resources are somewhat limited overall, it is also the case that new and emerging groups will not require large sums of money to accomplish their initial goals.



With improved communication among existing funders, this situation might well be resolved. Several funders might agree to provide project support for new and emerging groups on a cooperative basis. Alternatively, one funder might make this a priority. Not only would such an initiative spread the funding more equitably throughout the cultural sector, but it might also provide an important impetus for an increase in donor support for arts and culture.

Priority	3
Possible Partners	Regional funders, arts organizations
Estimate of Cost	Cost of joint application are minimal and likely absorbed by funders since they will likely save staff time and money through this; costs for United Arts to shift its function dependent on the nature of the change.



Part V

Next Steps

In this section of the report, the initial next steps of implementation of the cultural plan are described. This important period represents the transition from *planning* to *implementation*. The steps reflect a general approach to the necessary tasks and are likely to be modified as opportunities arise. Indeed, since the original draft of this section was submitted for review, several tasks outlined below have already been accomplished. This framework provides a useful overview of the tasks of the next few months in moving forward on the implementation of this ten-year cultural plan for St. Cloud.

V.1

The Steering Committee should review, revise, and approve this draft of the cultural plan.

This document represents the culmination of a comprehensive arts and cultural planning process in St. Cloud that has engaged many sectors of the community and dozens of people. The list of participants included as Appendix A of this report provides proof of the inclusive nature of the process.

While the goals and many of the strategies grow almost directly out of the many meetings and interviews conducted by the consultant, as well as the research, it is important that the goals and strategies detailed in this report are consistent with the views of the members of the Steering Committee. In order to make sure this is the case, a meeting of the Steering Committee was scheduled for late November, 2007. All members of the Steering Committee received a copy of the draft report well in advance of that session.

Steering Committee members also received a “consent calendar” on which were listed all the goals and strategies. In advance of the Steering Committee session, the members reviewed the report. For each goal and strategy, members indicated on the consent calendar form whether they “agreed” with, felt “tentative” about, or wished to “discuss” each one. Those goals and strategies that received a two-thirds majority of “agrees” were listed on the consent calendar. Those that *did not* receive that level of support were listed on the agenda for discussion during the session. This approach allowed the Steering Committee meeting to be structured so that the greatest time was devoted to those issues where there was the least consensus.



Once the discussion at the Steering Committee meeting was complete, the body voted to *accept* the planning document, subject to any revisions that were agreed to during the meeting. The Steering Committee co-chairs have reviewed and approved all revisions in this final version .

It is important to note that acceptance in this case meant that the report, as it has been revised, accurately reflects the priorities as understood by Steering Committee members. It does *not* mean that everyone agrees with every single strategy; rather it suggests that this revised document will serve as the road map for planning the future of cultural development in St. Cloud.

V.2

A small sub-committee of the Steering Committee will address the initial details of plan implementation.

Now that the Steering Committee review is complete and a revised document is in hand, the emphasis of the process shifts from planning to implementation. While the bulk of the work assigned to the Steering Committee will have been completed, it would be wise to retain a small sub-committee, including the co-chairs, to assist in the remaining tasks. There are several tasks that relate to sharing the contents of the cultural plan:

- Officially presenting the plan to the City Council
- Describing relevant aspects of the plan to the range of potential partners suggested in the document
- Sharing the plan’s vision, goals, and strategies with all those individuals who have been involved in the process, including representatives of the cultural sector, civic and business leaders, educators, and others.

To address these tasks, a small sub-committee (made up of about six individuals most but not all of whom are members of the Steering Committee) should be assembled by the Steering Committee Co-chairs. It should be convened as soon as possible in order to assist in refining the details of the City Council presentation and beginning informal meetings on plan highlights with key constituencies and opinion leaders. While the Arts Commission will spearhead implementation (as described in V.3 below), this body will serve to “jump start” that process so that the initial enthusiasm of completing the plan is not dissipated.

The committee might also begin the task of deciding what additional materials will be most useful in making the case for the cultural plan among key sectors of the community. Civic leaders will want to know what the plan says about cultural economic development; educators will want to know what the plan suggests for arts education;



and residents in general will want to know what the “payback” on public investment is likely to be. While it is never wise to write such materials by committee, this body can certainly set some guidelines for the sorts of questions that should be addressed and the priority constituencies to approach.

Serious consideration should be given to the meeting formats that should be used for the “unveiling” of the plan after the City Council presentation. In some communities, this has been done as part of a community foundation or chamber of commerce session; in others, it has been conceived as a community celebration. The Steering Committee co-chairs or the sub-committee might consider options for this series of presentations.

Generally speaking, most people will not take the time to review the entire plan. It will be important to develop some short, easily scannable and visually appealing pamphlets or booklets that summarize the highlights of the cultural plan. An interesting and entertaining piece can make the difference in the level of understanding and support for the plan. It can also serve as a “calling card” to the many people and institutions that must be brought more fully into this process of implementation.

V.3

The St. Cloud Arts Commission should oversee and coordinate implementation of the cultural plan.

Many of this plan’s initiatives begin by convening various groups of people in order to enhance communication and begin work on collaborative efforts. The City, through its Arts Commission, is ideally suited to undertake this responsibility. Once the document has been reviewed and accepted by City Council, the task should fall to the Arts Commission to work out specific approaches to implementation.

This is not to suggest that the Arts Commission will implement the plan. While its role is articulated throughout this document, it tends to be more as a convener and a facilitator than a programmer or implementer. The importance of this cannot be overstated, however. Many plans in the consultant’s experience have foundered for lack of an effective group serving in that role.

The sub-committee of the Steering Committee proposed in V.2 on page 49 can serve as the nucleus of a sub-committee of the Arts Commission, although when it is fully configured, it will be considerably larger than the six members suggested for the initial body. In many communities, this group, chaired by a member of the Arts Commission, meets quarterly to review progress toward implementation. Since its members are generally representative of the various groups that have a role in implementation, these meetings can serve effectively to coordinate implementation and to set priorities for future programming.



V.4

The Plan should be presented to the Planning Commission for adoption.

This plan builds on the City's 2003 Comprehensive Plan and provides important support and additional detail relevant to the implementation of some of the goals and strategies in that document. As such, it would be wise to make sure that it becomes part of the City's official record of planning. Leadership of the Steering Committee, in particular City staff and the co-chairs of the Steering Committee, should meet with the appropriate City planning staff and representatives of the Planning Commission to determine the most effective way to bring this document to the Commission for review.

Conclusion

This planning process has been quite inclusive and the strength of that inclusion has grown as the process moved forward. Planning is not an easy process; it requires attention to various viewpoints and overlapping perspectives. It often puts existing systems and structures into the spotlight and that can be uncomfortable. But the willingness to experience this discomfort is the price of developing a road map that has the engagement and input of a broad section of the community.

Not everyone will agree with everything in this document, but most participants will find some reflection of the comments that they made at various stages in the process. That is what makes the plan powerful – its organic growth from the comments of many individuals. The consultant believes that the result of the discussions about this draft will be a stronger document that can serve as the first steps on a journey to an even more vibrant and exciting cultural community in St. Cloud.