

ARTS, CULTURE, & CREATIVE PLACEMAKING STRATEGIC PLAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

JANUARY 2019



Atlanta Regional Commission

OVERVIEW

This *Arts, Culture, & Creative Placemaking Strategic Plan* builds on six years of arts and culture at the ARC, during which time the agency has explored and grown the inclusion of arts, culture, and creative placemaking in its regional planning work. In 2016, the newly-formed Community Partnership group made space to focus on clarifying and strengthening the role of arts and culture in the agency. In 2017, staff in this group formed the initial idea to develop a strategic plan to assess the agency's arts, culture, and creative placemaking efforts to-date and create a cohesive strategy to relate this work to the overall ARC mission and values and plot a path forward.

The official planning process began in August 2018 and included a 28-person Steering Committee – comprised of leaders from arts nonprofits, local municipalities, and educational institutions from throughout the region – that met three times throughout the fall. The goals in this plan prioritize and guide the arts, culture, and creative placemaking work of the ARC over the next five years and demonstrate how the rest of the agency intersects with these areas. More fundamentally, the plan clarifies the ARC's role in the region in supporting arts and culture and identifies ways in which the agency is uniquely positioned to be impactful in this work.

VISION

Metro Atlanta values arts and culture as essential for building a thriving, inclusive, and economically healthy region, and recognizes its transformative role in addressing broader civic issues.

The Atlanta Regional Commission supports this Vision via:



GOALS

- 1 The ARC will support the diverse cultural practices and traditions across the region and work to ensure arts and culture are key elements of the identity of the Atlanta region.
- 2 The ARC will advocate for artists, creatives, and arts and cultural organizations having a seat at the table in business, civic planning, and decision-making to enhance holistic thinking and improved outcomes for all.
- 3 The ARC will be the leader in promoting and using arts, culture, and creative placemaking as a critical part of planning across disciplines and municipalities in an integrated approach to improving quality of life and equity for the region.
- 4 ARC staff will incorporate arts and culture in the agency's work and day-to-day operations and contribute to a greater understanding of the regional impacts of arts and culture and the larger body of knowledge around arts, culture, and creative placemaking in regional and local planning.
- 5 The ARC will encourage a collaborative and inclusive ecosystem of arts, culture, and creative placemaking in the Atlanta region.

FRAMEWORK

THE PLAN

COMMUNITY INPUT

Community input and partnership was essential to this planning process given the agency's regional reach, numerous relationships, and emphasis on stakeholder engagement. Input was sought from a broad range of stakeholders through one-on-one interviews with key leaders, four public meetings (Lawrenceville/Gwinnett County, Atlanta/Fulton County, Jonesboro/Clayton County, and Marietta/Cobb County), three focus groups with public officials, nonprofit arts leaders, and ARC staff, and Civic Dinners. An ALMA alumni survey also provided useful information for the plan.

Consistent key themes emerged from outreach:

- The ARC is a valued neutral party and convener for the arts and culture community.
- The work of the ARC is highly regarded by arts and cultural stakeholders and the larger community.
- The arts and cultural planning and services provided by the ARC are critical to the ongoing health of the region.

Stakeholders have high expectations for the *Arts, Culture, and Creative Placemaking Strategic Plan* and want the ARC to:

1. Identify ways it can use its status as a convener to support arts and culture in the region.
2. Offer guidance, examples, and incentives to make it easier for regional governments to infuse arts and culture in all they do and move arts and culture "upstream" in planning and design.
3. Infuse arts and culture in its own internal planning processes as a demonstration of what can be done and to show positive impacts.
4. Adapt and revise its arts and cultural programs to reflect the current needs of the arts community and opportunities identified in the strategic planning process.

GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ARC will support the diverse cultural practices and traditions across the region and work to ensure arts and culture are key elements of the identity of the Atlanta region.

- ***Increase ALMA outreach to geographic areas and professional sectors with low participation. (A&CP)***
- ***Continue the Public Art Program and support the creation of a powerful regional arts and culture brand. (A&CP)***
- ***Integrate arts and culture reporting and ethos in the State of the Region Breakfast and other similar convenings. (INFL)***

The ARC will advocate for artists, creatives, and arts and cultural organizations having a seat at the table in business, civic planning, and decision-making to enhance holistic thinking and improved outcomes for all.

- ***Develop an ALMA alumni program with learning and engagement opportunities. (A&CP)***
- ***Revise and update ALMA curriculum to address arts and cultural community needs. (A&CP)***
- ***Provide support, information, and advocacy to artists, arts and cultural leaders, and advocates on serving on non-arts boards and participating in civic initiatives. (INFL)***
- ***Advocate for the inclusion of arts and culture in regional leadership and training programs, and on nonprofit and business boards. (INFL)***
- ***Create a mini-module for the Community Planning Academy. (INFL)***
- ***Develop and nurture a network of arts spokespersons and champions from other fields. (INFL)***
- ***Create a community design and innovation center in the Harry West Conference Room area of the ARC headquarters in Atlanta. (INFL)***



The ARC will be the leader in promoting and using arts, culture, and creative placemaking as a critical part of planning across disciplines and municipalities in an integrated approach to improving quality of life and equity for the region.

- **Conduct ARC internal training sessions on arts, culture and creative placemaking. (IP&PS)**
- **Enhance the Cultural Forums to bring professionals together across silos. (A&CP)**
- **Create a “Community of the Arts” initiative. (IP&PS)**
- **Integrate arts and cultural planning and advocacy into existing ARC meetings and the overall organizational structure. (IP&PS)**
- **Increase the capacity of the ARC to provide arts, cultural, and creative placemaking services. (IP&PS)**
- **Infuse an arts and cultural lens across all engagement activities. (IP&PS)**
- **Include considerations for art, culture, and creative placemaking in the regional plan. (IP&PS)**
- **Support cultural master plans that integrate other disciplines and seek innovative positive impacts beyond arts and culture. (IP&PS)**
- **Offer and encourage the inclusion of arts and cultural planning in the menu of comprehensive planning and Transit-Oriented Development planning services offered by the ARC’s Community Development Group. (IP&PS)**
- **Incorporate arts and culture into ARC transportation planning. (IP&PS)**
- **Utilize arts and culture to achieve Mobility program goals. (IP&PS)**
- **Infuse arts and culture throughout ARC’s Aging and Health work. (IP&PS)**
- **Integrate arts and culture into the ARC’s Workforce and Economy work plan. (IP&PS)**
- **Initiate an arts and culture in planning pilot program. (IP&PS)**
- **Provide increased support for technical assistance and implementation of creative placemaking projects. (IP&PS)**
- **Initiate an ARC Innovator- or Creative-in-Residence Program. (IP&PS)**
- **Utilize the ALMA alumni network to inform and engage arts and culture in the ARC’s and other planning work. (A&CP)**
- **Engage an artist to facilitate a full day of ALMA. (A&CP)**



ARC staff will incorporate arts and culture in the agency’s work and day-to-day operations and the ARC will contribute to a greater understanding of the regional impacts of arts and culture and the larger body of knowledge around arts, culture, and creative placemaking in regional and local planning.

- **Use the ARC’s communications and messaging powers to advocate for arts and culture. (INFL)**
- **Develop a case study catalog of arts, culture, and creative placemaking success stories and best practices. (INFL)**



- **Provide “How-To” Kits for arts, cultural, and creative placemaking planning and initiatives. (INFL)**
- **Incorporate arts, culture, and placemaking on LINK trips. (INFL)**
- **Identify arts and culture metrics and indicators of success for inclusion in comprehensive and Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) planning and incorporate these into projects. (IP&PS)**
- **Embed an arts and culture ethos in the Livable Cities Initiative (LCI). (IP&PS)**
- **Expand the use of data to make the case for arts and culture and to assist organizations and advocates in helping arts and culture thrive. (INFL)**
- **Integrate arts and culture into ARC’s public education efforts. (INFL)**
- **Create and facilitate a regional LINK-type day trip. (INFL)**
- **Provide transportation planners and policy makers with best practices in integrating arts and cultural planning into projects. (INFL)**
- **Launch a grant program that funds creative placemaking demonstration projects. (A&CP)**
- **Engage in, and support, ongoing research into the impacts of the ARC’s strategic plan strategies. (INFL)**



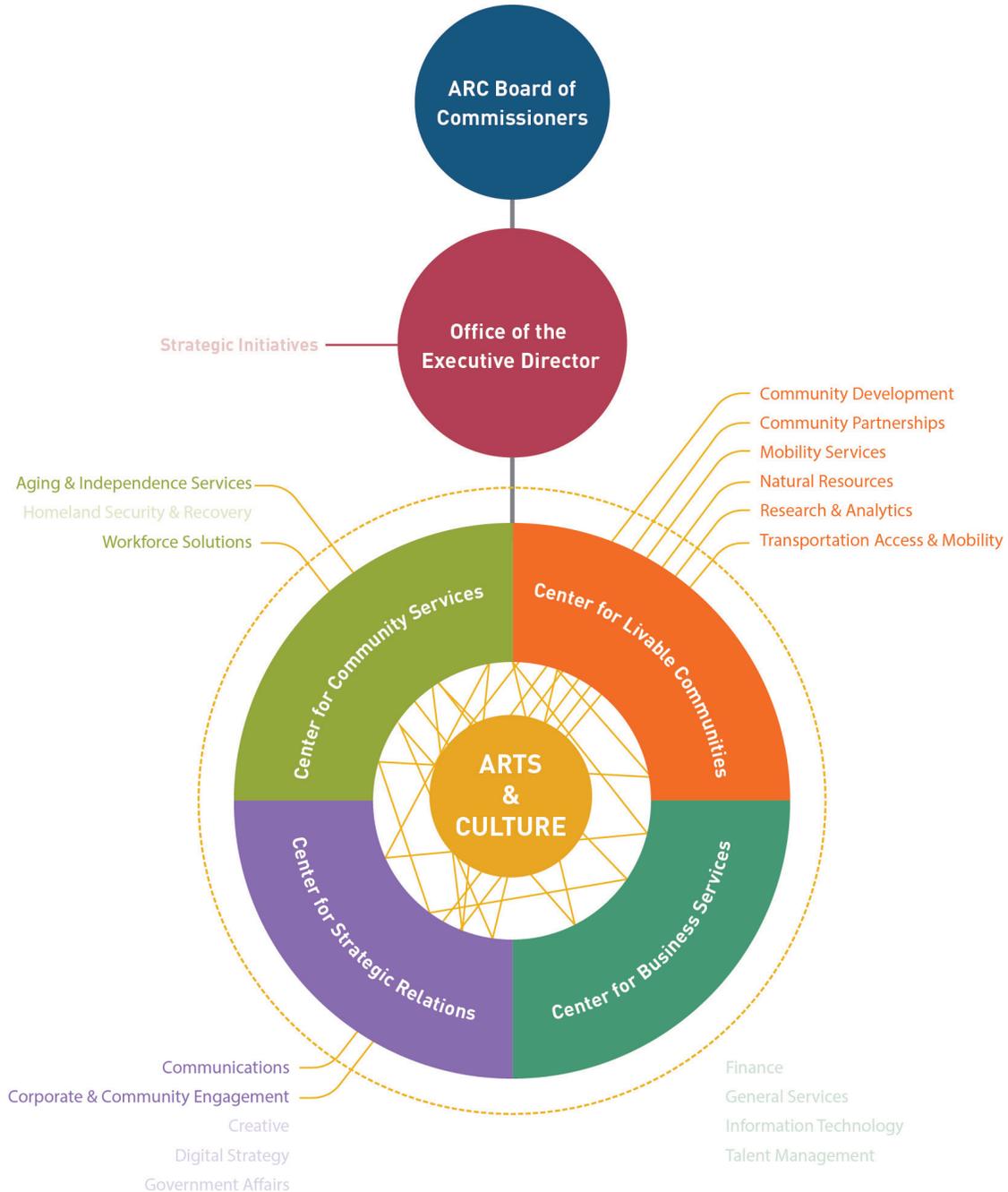
The ARC will encourage a collaborative and inclusive ecosystem of arts, culture, and creative placemaking in the Atlanta region.

- **Create a robust online ALMA alumni database. (A&CP)**
- **Create an ALMA alumni mentorship program. (A&CP)**
- **Use convenings to raise the level of awareness and connectedness of arts and culture in the region. (CONV)**
- **Identify the arts and cultural staff person/contact/advocate in each city in the ARC region. (CONV)**
- **Encourage ARC staff to sit on the boards of arts and cultural organizations in the region. (INFL)**
- **Facilitate the connection of people, businesses, and organizations related to arts and creative industries in the region. (CONV)**
- **Support an arts and cultural asset inventory of the region. (INFL)**

IMPLEMENTATION

The recommendations outlined in this plan cut across work areas at the ARC and require collaboration within the agency and with partners and others throughout the region. In essence, this strategic plan acknowledges arts and culture’s power as connectors – making connections

across disciplines, breaking down walls of practice silos, and promoting collaborative and innovative solutions to challenges new and old. The diagram below illustrates the work areas within the ARC with programmatic and planning recommendations in the plan.



Arts, culture, and creative placemaking should be recognized as “connectors” that are not limited to one planning area or group, rather that bridge various ARC initiatives and strengthen them through collaboration. The above graphic depicts the various working groups that arts, culture, and creative placemaking will interact with based on the recommendations in this plan. It is an annotated version of that which appears on [Page 24](#).

What is clear from the feedback from the Steering Committee and other stakeholders is that the power of the ARC's leadership, including Executive Director, should not be underestimated when setting priorities and aspiring to the more complex actions of this plan. The ARC's dedication to putting arts and culture forward and integrating it throughout the agency's work is a powerful message that will have its own positive impacts on the region.

To assist with implementation, the ARC should also consider two implementation working groups: an internal group composed of group heads (the "Kitchen Cabinet") and a larger working group consisting of the Kitchen Cabinet and external stakeholders and collaborators that would meet monthly or quarterly. This group would function similarly to the Strategic Plan Steering Committee. The ARC's collaborations are exciting and powerful and this group can offer feedback, help the agency chart progress, and identify partners and funding.

There are 47 recommendations in this strategic plan. Many of the smaller tasks might be taken on individually by the sole arts and culture staff person at the ARC. However, taken together, these tasks would require additional staff capacity. While it is difficult to accurately predict how many additional staff will be needed to implement this plan, the previous estimates indicate that, at the very minimum, two additional staff positions will be needed in arts and culture. Additional staff capacity will also be needed in other work areas of the agency, such as a staff person with arts and culture expertise in community development. A Creative-in-Residence may be able to fill in some of the rolls needed depending on the work load and what else is going on at the agency. Clearly, a high priority for the implementation of this strategic plan will be to identify funding to support additional staff capacity.

This strategic plan represents the cutting edge of work in the efforts to move arts and culture upstream in planning for the benefit of communities and all stakeholders. The ARC is in an excellent position to commission research and seek national funding for its efforts. In the next five years, the work of the agency will put it at the forefront of infusing arts, culture, and creative placemaking across work efforts and the lessons learned and best practices from these efforts speak to needs and desires across the country, if not the world. The innovative quality of this work has the potential to attract support from national sources and the ARC should position itself to take full advantage of wide-spread interest to support the plan.



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