

# Madison Cultural Plan 2011

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

 City of Madison  
Wisconsin



Sparking the Public Imagination



# Purpose

The Madison Cultural Plan 2011 is a five-year action plan to advance Madison's position as a center for creativity and innovation. The plan looks at the community's arts, science, and history resources and recommends practical steps to strengthen the sector itself, to connect creative work to broader civic issues, and to increase citizen access to creative experiences. It is about bolstering the interplay of artists, creative workers, arts and cultural institutions, and creative commercial enterprises with one another and with their consumers, donors, and investors.

*Centro Hispano  
lobby mural*







# Background

In 2003, hundreds of Madison residents gathered at an Arts Summit and called for the community to undertake a cultural plan. In 2008, the Madison Arts Commission took up that challenge and commissioned this cultural plan, the city's first. A Steering Committee was appointed to guide the work. Surveys, interviews, roundtables, and focus and discussion groups have allowed a wide variety of stakeholders to participate. From independent inventors to school children, from professional artists to creative sector CEOs, from neighborhood groups to colleges and universities, the planning process reached far and wide. These residents' ideas have been synthesized and prioritized to create a series of recommendations for the community.

Many of the plan's recommendations are directed at the City of Madison but others reach out into the broader community. Certainly, the city cannot accomplish this plan alone. The receptiveness of other community partners to the ideas in this plan will strongly influence its eventual impact.

*Barrymore Theatre  
and Gail Ambrosius  
Chocolates*







# Vision

As a way of grounding the planning process, the Madison Cultural Plan Steering Committee articulated a vision of Madison's future as a center for innovation and creativity in the arts, sciences, and history. That vision imagines a future in which Madison...

- **Is a community where everyone is welcome in the creative conversation and the free-flowing exchange of diverse voices creates a palpable validity and excitement;**
- **Takes pride in its unique place at the center of the heartland, embedded in rich farmland, and surrounded by stunningly beautiful, living lakes;**
- **Keeps its history close, embracing past experiences and caring for important places and artifacts as foundations for future ideas and innovation;**
- **Regards local ideas, expressions, inventions, and innovations as public treasures, and cares for these riches joyfully and wisely;**
- **Invests in creativity as a fundamental precondition for prosperity;**
- **Recognizes creative expression as a powerful force for human unification;**
- **Is a nationally recognized center for multi-cultural expression and cross-disciplinary creative invention;**
- **Is home to strong and connected communities of artists and creative workers and financially stable cultural institutions;**
- **Embeds art and cultural artifacts and programs in public spaces within every neighborhood;**
- **Values its vibrant downtown arts district and thriving entertainment industry;**
- **Links families, schools, cultural institutions, colleges, university, and neighborhood-based organizations together to create lifelong opportunities for cultural learning and creative expression;**

- Erases artificial distinctions that separate amateur and professional creative engagement, cultivating both;
- Likes a good debate, and embraces creative tension as a signature element of local character;
- Marries aesthetic and functional thinking in designing the built environment;
- Has a coherent, intentional process for continuously identifying and sustaining its diverse and ever-changing cultural resources; and
- Uses its authentic, quirky local identity as a starting point for creative exchanges both within the community and beyond its borders regionally, nationally, and internationally.

UW Art Lofts Glass Lab







# Status of Madison's Creative Sector

Madison's arts and cultural riches are legion. Among its many beloved resources, residents named Madison's festivals, fairs, nightlife, galleries, performing arts venues and companies, educational institutions, museums, public radio stations, neighborhood-based and youth programs, and the many free and affordable events in a variety of genres and settings. They are proud of local artists, both on the streets and in the studios, and take pride in the maturing public art program.

Madison's residents identify with the city's gorgeous shorelines and vistas as a fundamental source of beauty, inspiration, and activity. Within that natural landscape, invention and imagination move via many routes.

Those working within the creative sector count as treasurers the community's generosity, its openness to new ideas and experiences, the value it places on creative expression, the diversity of participants within the creative sector, and the abundance of program choices.

The community grasps the powerful role science and innovation play in the local economy and in the powerful mixing of creative ideas. Madison cherishes its neighborhood sensibilities, historic architecture and spaces, local libraries, and public gardens.

Still, as is often the case, what a community takes pride in it also aspires to improve. The promise of the creative sector in Madison is enormous, but its very abundance has outgrown the structures and systems through which that bounty must be sustained.

In fact, the preeminent finding of the Madison Cultural Plan 2011 is this:

***Madison is a community rich with creative characteristics, energy, and activity of nearly every sort, but it is bereft of an infrastructure to sustain and grow those riches and to capture their value.***

As a result, the focus of this plan is to create a local infrastructure through which Madison can sustain and grow the creative sector and make full use of its potential for community-building.

## Thinking Regionally

Madison recognizes that its creative context is regional, rather than municipal. Madison Cultural Plan 2011, commissioned by the Madison Arts Commission, is, of necessity, focused on the city itself. However, participants in Madison's creative sector are aware of their dependence on regional markets. Moreover, in comments gathered contemporaneously with this plan, residents of the wider region expressed needs and aspirations parallel to those discovered within Madison. Therefore, Madison's cultural plan must shape a starting point that positions the community to take its place in a larger, regional creative commons to come.

## The Infrastructure Deficit

Madison's creative sector lacks connective tissue. Neither the city, the community, the University, nor the county has a structure that takes a leadership role in promoting comprehensive, public/private/creative sector development.

As a result, artists and creative workers have no ongoing, interdisciplinary gathering place where collaborative ideas and invention are free to grow. Similarly, there is no place for cultural institutions to come together for common purposes such as marketing, special event scheduling, equipment and space sharing, or development of community-wide programs. The business and philanthropic sectors have no ongoing, structured opportunities for education, recruitment, or joint planning around specific matters of creative sector investment.

*Mural, Villager  
Mall Atrium*



The sector lacks a comprehensive information sharing system. No entity concerns itself with broad issues such as promoting access, disseminating best practices, cultivating a wider donor/investor base, increasing earned income opportunities, providing training and technical assistance or sector-specific leadership development. In short, Madison has no local arts and cultural agency focused on uniting and developing the overall creative sector and broadening public participation in its activities. Filling this void is the most urgently voiced need in local creative sector development.

Hence, the primary recommendations in this plan are structural. Most of the plan's other recommendations rely on these structural changes for implementation. Three structural changes are recommended.

*First, the Madison Arts Commission's scope, purpose, and membership are reshaped. Recommended changes position the Arts Commission to take a lead role in coordinating municipal policy and investment in creative sector affairs. For example, the redefined Arts Commission is charged with coordinating and evaluating all municipal cultural investments.*

*It is also charged with undertaking a review of the city's fair, festival, and special event policies and practices and making recommendations to strengthen the city's role as a partner in sustaining those activities.*

*Second, within municipal government, a Creative Initiatives Staff Team is created. It is an inter-departmental work group comprising staff responsible for a wide range of municipal functions that affect the creative sector. The team's job is to enhance practice and strengthen in-house tools to support creative sector development. For example, the team is charged with systematically recommending the inclusion of artists' live/work spaces in affordable housing and community development plans and initiatives and for reviewing leases for parks and public facilities to insure consideration of creative uses. It is also charged with planning a community cultural center in South Madison.*

*Third, a local public/private/creative sector partnership is created. The Partnership serves as a proactive nexus for creative sector development, first locally and eventually regionally. It links together a wide range of creative sector interests and individuals; advances access to creative participation; builds skills to strengthen practice, leadership, philanthropy,*

and investment; and gives voice to the sector. For example, the partnership is charged with leading a community effort to create a comprehensive, online information sharing system for the creative sector and its consumers and patrons. It is also responsible for creating a donors' forum where philanthropists can strengthen their collaborative approach to creative sector investment and for fostering engagement, outreach and education collaborations among cultural institutions to broaden public access and diversify participation in creative activities.





# Aspirations and Goals

Madison aspires to forge better connections within its creative sector and to link that sector with its consumers more effectively; to cultivate a strong voice and champions for the field; to create a community identity that acknowledges Madison's historic and present reliance on creative invention; to preserve and enhance the unique and powerful aspects of place in terms of history and the natural and built environments; and to forge sustainable conditions for creative work, conditions that nurture human capital, provide adequate facilities, protect the natural environment and are supported by a coherent funding system.

In pursuit of these aspirations, the Madison Cultural Plan 2011 is focused around six broad strategic goals:

- **POSITION MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT FOR LEADERSHIP IN THE CREATIVE SECTOR**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include strengthening the Madison Arts Commission and broadening its duties; developing a municipal, in-house, inter-departmental Creative Initiatives Staff Team to advance city practice regarding creative sector issues; and refining the city's financial monitoring of cultural expenditures.

Additional recommendations address streamlining the city's arts grants and public art program.

- **CREATE A NEXUS FOR SUSTAINABLE LOCAL AND REGIONAL CREATIVE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include creating a public/private/creative sector partnership and building a comprehensive creative sector information sharing system. The Partnership is planned and seeded via a municipal contract for services. The structure of The Partnership will be determined by the community during the implementation period.

- **STRENGTHEN PROGRAMS THAT SERVE THE BROADEST POSSIBLE AUDIENCE**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include reshaping the city's approach to fairs and festivals, developing a community cultural center in South Madison, expanding creative programs on the North Side, strengthening community capacity around outreach and education programming, and supporting the public schools' arts education efforts.

Additional recommendations address monitoring changing resource levels for community recreation programs; examining municipal regulations that affect live music venues, convening a joint city-county committee to study neighborhood centers, developing a live music audience, and updating and streamlining the public art program.

- **ENGAGE CREATIVE SECTOR RESOURCES IN DEFINING PLACE AND IDENTITY**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include preserving and enhancing public access to lakeshores; developing standards for the participation of artists and landscape architects in municipal capital projects; strengthening the Landmarks Commission and its tools; developing a brand identity for Madison; and creating capital contracting approaches that incent bids from local design teams.

Additional recommendations address aesthetic and historic issues in implementing Madison's Sustainability Plan; green architectural features; private sector participation in public art; surveying for historic assets; and boosting public access to information regarding urban design, historic preservation, and sustainability.

*University Research  
Park's Metro  
Innovation Center*



- **STRENGTHEN POLICY AND PRACTICE AROUND CREATIVE SECTOR FACILITIES UTILIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include renovating Breese Stevens Field for concert uses; including live/work spaces in affordable housing and community development plans; expanding municipal financing tools in support of creative space development; and regularly assessing historic and newly developed neighborhood-based facilities for creative sector uses.

Additional recommendations address review of city lease negotiations for arts and cultural event accommodation; inclusion of music promoters in Central Park planning; engaging transportation planners in support of arts and cultural sites and events; exploring transportation options to reduce intoxicated driving associated with live music events; and encouraging the use of vacant commercial properties as temporary exhibition spaces.

- **CREATE A COHERENT FUNDING SYSTEM FOR CREATIVE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT**

Key recommendations associated with this goal include creating a municipal mechanism for capital investment in critical nonprofit creative sector facilities; growing the Madison Arts Commission's arts grants allocation based on a goal of \$1 per resident; formalizing a 1% for art program; and seeding the creation of a public/private/creative sector partnership.

Additional recommendations address increasing staff strength within the Madison Arts Commission, ending the municipal practice awarding non-competitive line item support to select organizations, funding a community branding process, building a diverse funding base for the South Madison Community Arts Facility, and working to focus private sector donors on high-need activities through both grants and micro loans.







# Measuring Success

Madison residents value creative work that supports education, connects people and institutions to one another, drives the new economy, contributes to human understanding, and speaks to who Madison is as a community. Among those who work in the creative sector there is broad agreement about the opportunities that abound and the work that must be done to capture those opportunities.

In a general sense, the success of this plan can be measured by movement toward the vision articulated by the Steering Committee. In practice, the work of evaluating accomplishments under this plan will be shared by many individuals and organizations. The principles on which evaluation should stand were addressed throughout the planning process by its many participants.

The Madison Cultural Plan 2011's intended outcomes should form the basis of subsequent evaluation. Those outcomes are

- Stronger connections and increased interplay within the creative sector and between the sector and the broader community;
- Greater reliance on creative sector resources in addressing the broad civic, social, and economic agenda;
- Wider diversity within the creative sector;
- More robust public access to creative experiences;
- Increasingly fertile, capable, flexible, and sustainable creative sector businesses, artists and creative workers, and institutions;
- More depth in, and numbers of, significant partnerships;
- A growing community of deeply engaged philanthropists and investors in the arts, science, and history;
- A local culture of building of creative sector activities around strong, clearly articulated social, civic, and/or creative purposes; and
- Increasingly powerful energy, voice, inspiration, and transformation in the creative sector's work.





# Further Information


## ONLINE

The full plan is online at [www.cityofmadison.com/MAC/culturalPlan](http://www.cityofmadison.com/MAC/culturalPlan)

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