

# For Immediate Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: April 28, 2023

**Contact: Mary McNamara Bernsten**

Title: Executive Director, Rockford Area Arts Council

Phone: 815.543.6071

Email: mary@artsforeveryone.com



## THIS IS BIG NEWS

### Rockford Launches First-Ever Rockford Region Cultural Plan

*The Rockford Region Cultural Plan will provide a road map for how arts, culture, and the creative economy can strengthen and celebrate the uniqueness of Rockford's people, places, and unique character.*

**Rockford, IL** – This month, the Rockford Area Arts Council (RAAC), with a robust group of regional partners, is launching a year-long process to create the Rockford Region Cultural Plan, for all who live, work, visit, and play in the Rockford Region. The Rockford Region Cultural Plan will feature an overall vision for Rockford's arts and culture, including neighborhood asset mapping, a public art strategy, and an access strategy for increased engagement in arts and culture events, programs, and initiatives – The Rockford Region Cultural Plan will help lay the foundation to develop priorities that support arts and culture in Rockford, while creating a sense of community among all who participate.

The impetus for creating a cultural plan for Rockford –is driven by compelling data on the benefits of arts and culture, as demonstrated by Americans for the Arts Social Impact Explorer. Cultural plans help foster a stronger arts & culture sector, and better connect arts and culture to other sectors and needs – including education, community development, health, wellness, workforce development, and more.

Cultural plans can thus improve communities in the following ways:

- **Accessibility:** Underserved, marginalized, and BIPOC populations are uniquely served through increased access to arts and culture opportunities.
- **Culture:** Art is a distinguishing part of Rockford's public history and a reflection of our rich and diverse cultures; a cultural plan recognizes and celebrates our rich diversity.
- **Workforce Development:** The arts create well-rounded workers who drive innovation, foster participation, and excel at communicating; additionally, a cultural plan provides critical insights to support the recruitment and retention of a skilled workforce and professionals.
- **Serving the Underserved:** Access to arts and culture particularly empower the underserved— seniors, rural populations, BIPOC, women and children; the arts create vibrancy by providing physical and mental stimulation, entertainment, and avenues for social interaction and connection.
- **Economic Development:** Art = \$--Art is an economic driver; for every \$1.00 produced in Winnebago County's creative sector, an additional \$.58 is created in eight other industries including real estate, hotel/motel, food/beverage, construction, healthcare, local and state government, and education

**Through a variety of community events and public engagement opportunities, residents of Rockford are invited to contribute to the plan's development.** “The Arts Council is committed to representation of all faces and voices in this important initiative” said Mary McNamara Bernsten, Executive Director of the Rockford Area Arts Council. “There is compelling and consistent data that illustrates the dramatic, and positive, impact of a healthy arts and culture community on its residents.”

#### **The project will kick-off its community engagement with a public launch**

- **Wednesday, May 10, 2023 at 6:00- 8 p.m.** at the Riverfront Museum Park 711 N. Main St, home to the Discovery Center, Rockford Art Museum, and Rockford Dance Company. To RSVP for this event, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/rockford-region-cultural-plan-kick-off-tickets-608698813537>
- More public events will be announced at <https://www.artsforeveryone.com/culturalplan>. Additionally, the planning team will be working with a Project Advisory Committee (PAC) consisting of a variety of community leaders in Rockford, and will also be collaborating with community ambassadors, to ensure deep engagement throughout Rockford.

“We are so honored to be working with the unique and inspiring community of Rockford and look forward to hearing what Rockford needs and wants from this cultural plan. We invite all in Rockford to share your thoughts on ways that arts and culture are part of your life and help shape a creative and equitable vision for Rockford,” said Eve Moros Ortega, Director of the U.S. office of Lord Cultural Resources, who will lead the planning effort.

#### **Current Funding Partners for the Rockford Region Cultural Plan include:**

- Community Foundation of Northern Illinois
- Rockford Area Convention and Visitors Bureau (RACVB)
- Rockford Area Arts Council
- City of Rockford

#### **Additional Community Partners include:**

- Winnebago County
- Transform Rockford
- Region 1 Planning Council
- Rockford Park District
- Northern Illinois Center for Nonprofit Excellence
- Local legislators: Senator Stadelman, Representative Vella, and Representative West

The list of partners continues to grow! If you, or someone you know, would like to support the development of this important plan, please contact Mary McNamara Bernsten, at [mary@artsforeveryone.com](mailto:mary@artsforeveryone.com).

Visit <https://www.artsforeveryone.com/culturalplan> to RSVP for the public launch, sign up for updates, get the latest information about the plan, and share feedback throughout the year.

#### **About Rockford Area Arts Council**

**The Rockford Area Arts Council supports, promotes, and develops access to the arts, for everyone.** The Arts Council is the collective voice of individual artists and regional arts organizations; We believe in the transformative power of the arts and their ability to set the tone for a region’s creative and cultural infrastructure. As the Rockford Region Cultural Plan facilitator, our mission is to ensure that all voices are heard, and all faces are represented in the development of this important regional guide.

#### **About Lord Cultural Resources**

Lord Cultural Resources is the global practice leader in cultural sector planning. Since 1981, Lord has helped to create, plan, and operate cultural spaces and places in more than 460 cities, in 57 countries and six continents.

Lord employs a human-centric approach to all projects to ensure that visitor and user needs and expectations are first and foremost, in an ever-evolving and competitive market. Lord's team of planners, market and financial specialists, and experienced creators apply their expertise to a wide spectrum of cultural projects, offering a broad range of integrated services.