



ROCKFORD REGION **CULTURAL** **PLAN**

State of Culture

We encourage you
to acknowledge the presence of
the people who came before,
wherever you are.

AGENDA

Welcome and State of Culture Goals

Process Overview

Comparable Cities & Trends

Key Findings and Survey Results

Emerging Opportunities

Breakout Groups

Report Backs

Next Steps

TONIGHT'S GOALS



Share the results of data gathering for this cultural plan



Discuss the key opportunities that have emerged



Hear your thoughts and prepare to vote on priorities for this plan

Emerging Opportunities



LORD COMPANY & TEAM

LORD CULTURAL RESOURCES

World's largest cultural planning practice
Global network of offices in Toronto, Los Angeles, New York, London, Madrid, Dubai, Mumbai and Beijing



8 OFFICES **2500+ PROJECTS** **57 COUNTRIES** **450+ CITIES**



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01

Process Overview

OUR **PLANNING** PROCESS

PHASE **1**

Opportunities
Assessment

February-July 2023

PHASE **2**

Public
Engagement

May-October 2023

PHASE **3**

Vision
Strategy
Implementation

October 2023- March 2024

FINAL
CULTURAL
PLAN

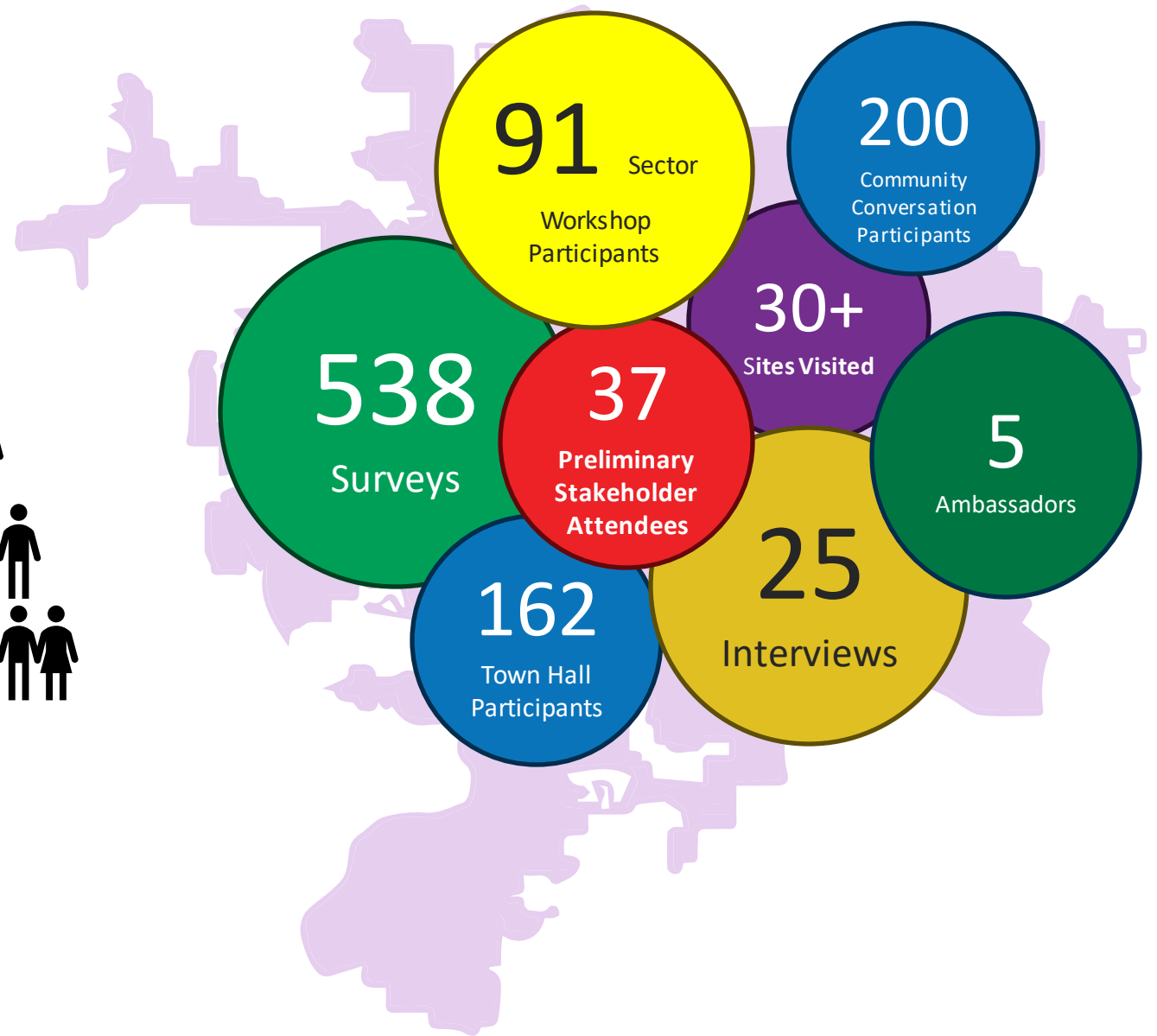
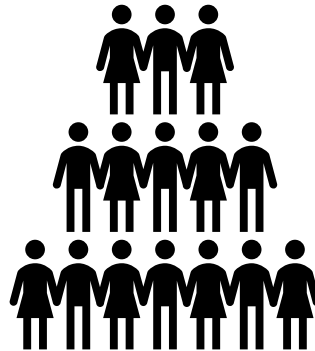
Early 2024

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

over

10000

TOTAL ENGAGED

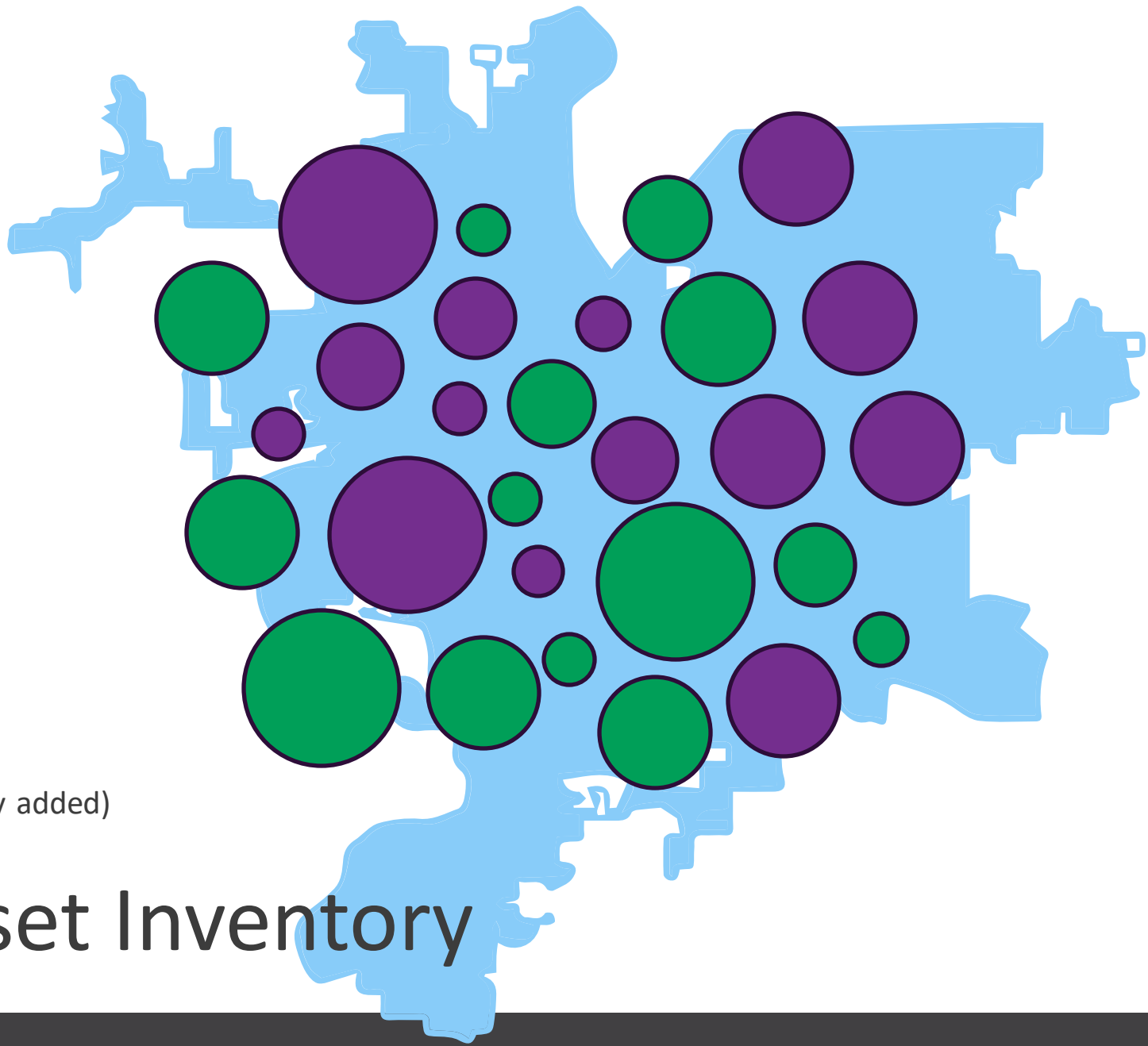


PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

“Having more community-focused, transparent discussions around arts and culture like this process is hosting will be important to create a more diverse and better-connected arts and culture community in Rockford.” **Community Survey**

“The process was very well thought out and was specifically planned to reach people in the places they are most comfortable. It takes time and care to put together such a thoughtful process with a focus on capturing all voices. It was a pleasure to work with such a visionary team.”
Ambassador

“I appreciate the inclusion of senior community members; we are excited to be further utilized as ambassadors for events and included in arts and culture going-ons in Rockford.” **Sector Workshop**



14 types
of Spaces

14 types
of activities

298 (currently added)

Cultural Asset Inventory

Cultural Asset Inventory

Cultural Asset Inventory for the Rockford Region could be used to:

- Create a map that allows users to explore the region's cultural assets by type of activity, type of space, and by location;
- Develop educational materials for schools and community groups;
- Integrate into a cultural tourism marketing campaign;
- Inform decisions about how to allocate public funding for arts and culture;
- And identify opportunities for collaboration and networking among arts and cultural organizations.

Cultural assets can include a wide range of things, such as historic sites, museums, performing arts venues, cultural festivals, traditional arts and crafts, and cultural landscapes.

The mapping of cultural assets for the Rockford Region will be organized by 14 categories of activities and 14 types of arts and culture spaces.

WHY CREATE A CULTURAL PLAN? ARTS & CULTURE BENEFITS

- Post-COVID: Arts & Culture will be even more important
- Data shows impact in multiple sectors:
 - Workforce development
 - Social cohesion
 - Health: mental and physical
 - Public safety
 - And many more benefits...

<https://ww2.americansforthearts.org/explorer>



Source: Americans for the Arts

CULTURAL PLAN BENEFITS

Kingston, NY

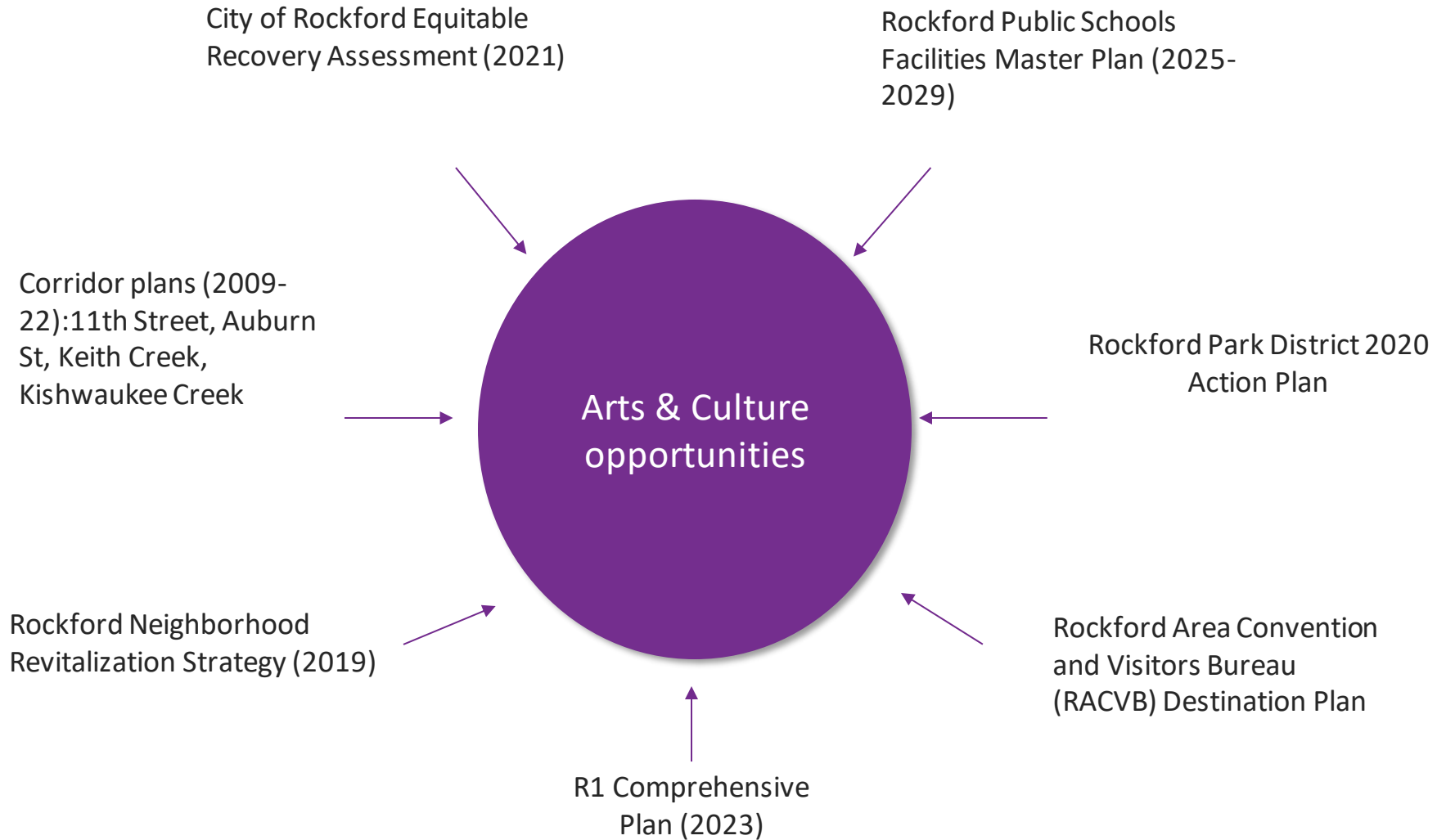
- Cultural plan completed early 2022
- Early 2023: Center for Photography Woodstock (CPW) buys 40,000 former factory
- Conversion planned to major regional art center
- Over \$1.8 million initial public investment
- Cultural plan cited as key factor in the purchase
- Over 65 local jobs will be supported/created
- CPW fits into key cultural plan goal

**GALVANIZING SUPPORT FOR ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CULTURE**

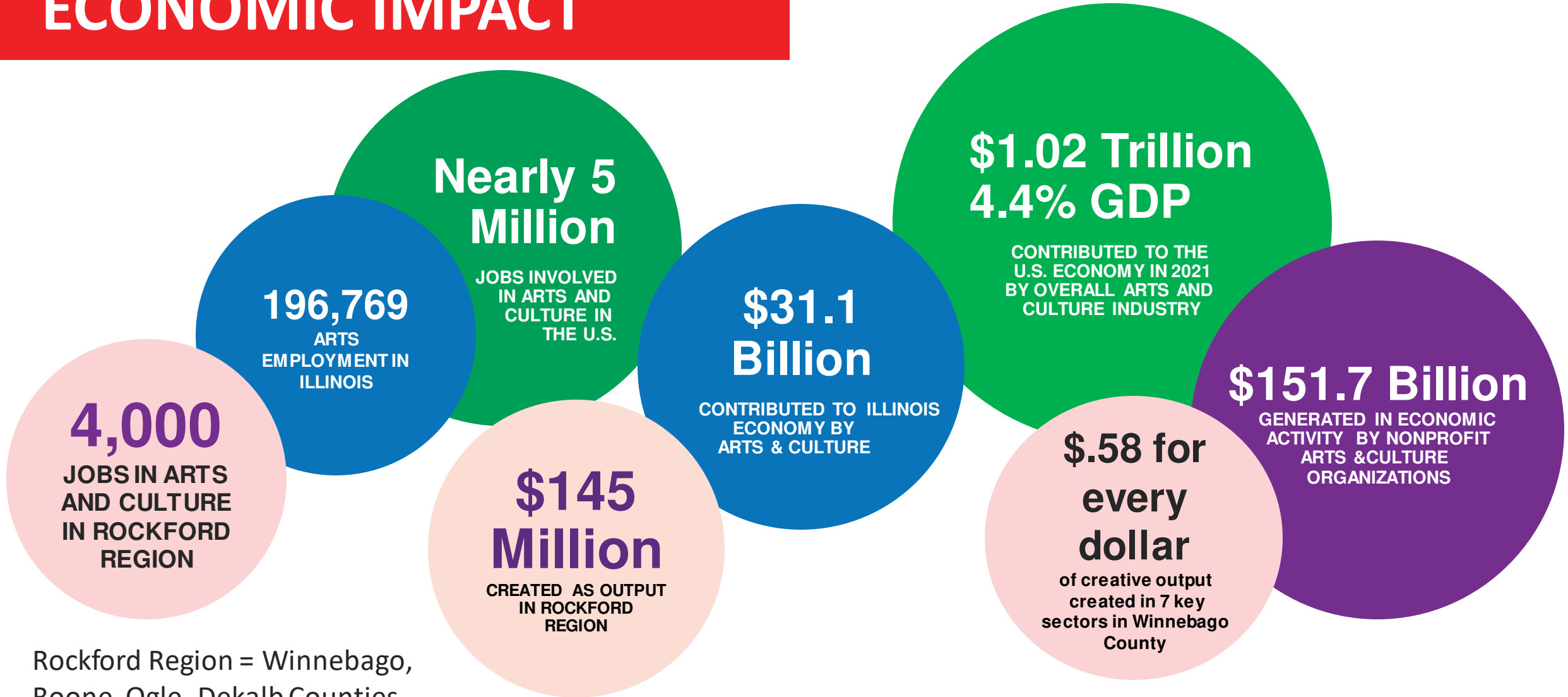


In February, the Center for Photography at Woodstock purchased the former Van Slyke & Horton cigar factory, which it will renovate to be its new headquarters.
Phillip Pantuso / Times Union

Connecting to Rockford Region Plans



ECONOMIC IMPACT



Rockford Region = Winnebago, Boone, Ogle, Dekalb Counties

POST 2020: COVID IMPACT & RACIAL EQUITY

REPORTS & STUDIES

- Chicago Arts & Culture Financial and Operating Trends
- American Alliance of Museums Data Stories
- Culture and Community in a Time of Crisis
- Centering the Picture: The Role of Race & Ethnicity in Cultural Engagement in the US
- The Intersection of Funding, Marketing, and Audience Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

TAKEAWAYS

- In person arts audiences still not 100% pre-pandemic, rising costs, donations not keeping up with inflation
- But in person attendance steadily growing
- Greater flexibility i.e. pop-ups, meeting people where they are
- BIPOC organizations experienced growth in individual contributions
- Larger organizations benefit by working with smaller organizations
- Outdoor activities more popular
- Digital engagement reaches more people
- Audiences want new, more diverse voices

02

Comparable Cities & Trends



Comparable Cities

- Akron, Ohio
- Erie, Pennsylvania
- Des Moines, Iowa
- Fort Wayne, Indiana
- Grand Rapids, Michigan



ADAPTIVE REUSE



Temporary Installations – Liverpool England



Campuses – Steel Stacks Bethlehem PA



Single Structures - 555Arts Detroit MI

CULTURE BEYOND THE WALLS



NPS Artist-in-Residence Program



DIA Inside | Out



Montgomery Jubilee Pops Concert

Photo: Code for America

Photo: IdeasXLaab

Photo: CIVITA

CREATING CONNECTIONS TO OTHER SECTORS



Code for America



IDEAS xLab



Reimagining the East River Waterfront



LOCAL HISTORY CREATIVE PLACEMAKING



Black Chicago Heritage Initiative



Chicago Monuments Project



Kingston NY Sojourner Truth Pop-Up Trail

FUNDING



Quad Cities Cultural Trust



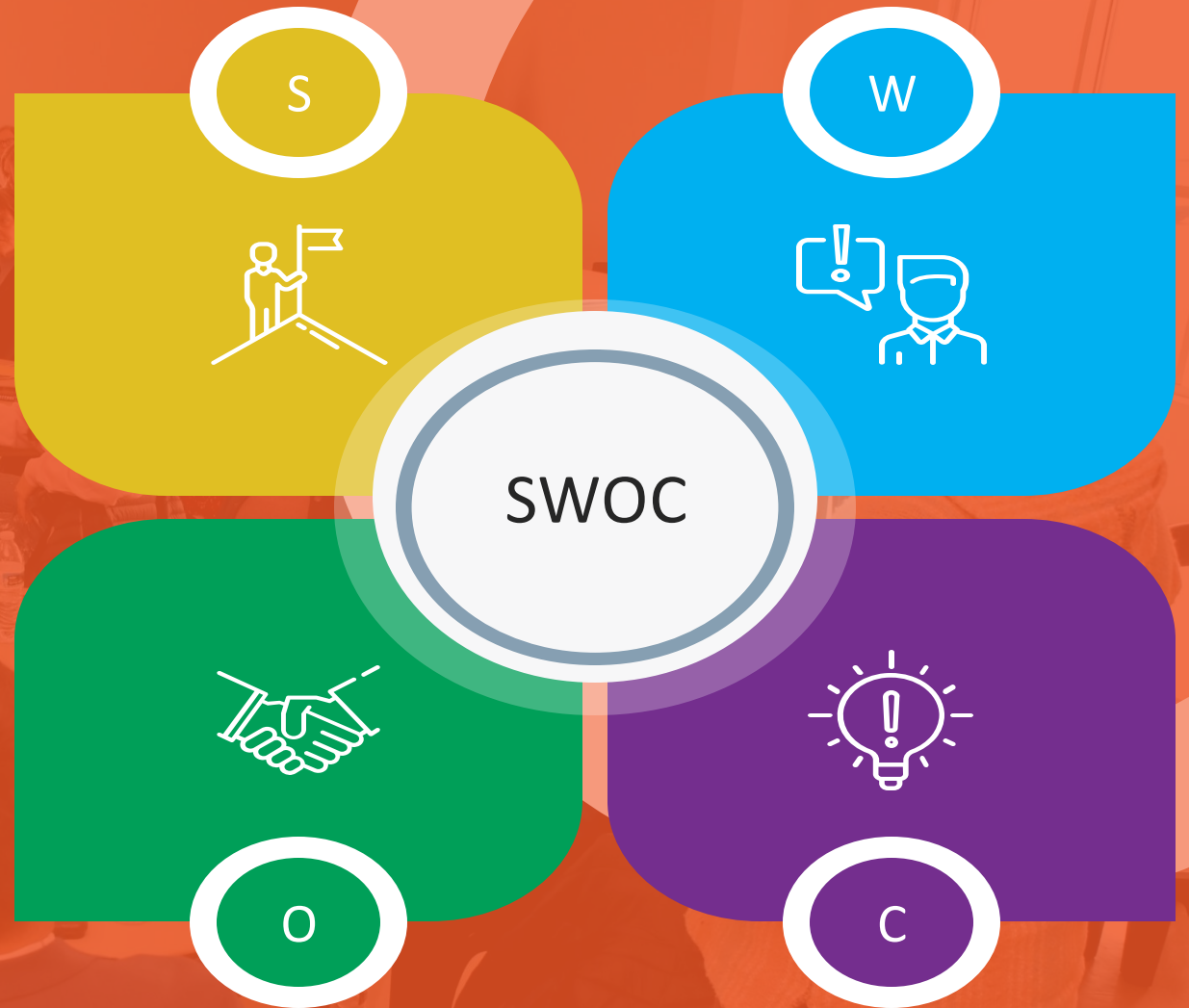
BRAVO Greater Des Moines



Seattle Office of Arts and Culture

04

Key Findings



STRENGTHS

- Diversity of offerings and population with growing equity in representation
- Music and Cultural Festivals
- Nature and parks
- Location and access
- Rich cultural assets
- Public art – murals, sculptures, utility box wraps, art along the bike path
- Growth in the arts and connections “beyond the art world”
- Quality of life/boomerang residents
- Rich history
- Entrepreneurial spirit
- Architecture
- Momentum to build upon



SURVEY RESULTS

Majority of Respondents said that the **arts and culture experience in the Rockford Region is good** and they are looking forward to expanding the arts and culture excellence that the area has to offer.

WEAKNESSES

- Awareness is low
- Not taking credit for successes/negative self-perception
- Economic challenges for artists and arts organizations
- Not enough affordable spaces for artists and arts activities
- Segregated cultural offerings
- Gaps in arts education and youth opportunities
- Fragmentation and a sense of cliquishness
- Need for more nightlife options
- Professional skills (fundraising, marketing, permitting, etc.)
- Lack of centralized information hub for arts and culture events and offerings

SURVEY RESULTS

Respondents reported that the **top barriers** for participating in arts and culture in the Rockford Region are **Schedules (47%)** activities do not fit in their schedules or there are events happening at the same time, and **Information (37%)** people are unaware of what is happening and when.



CHALLENGES

- Geographic, class, and racial divides
- Lack of equitable representation
- Trauma and mental illness
- Low income/educational attainment
- Cost barriers
- Transportation
- Shortage of housing and communal spaces
- Difficulty recruiting talent
- Covid impact
- Lack of trust
- Population loss
- Language barriers to participate and share diverse cultural offerings

SURVEY RESULTS

When prompted with **what is currently missing** from the Rockford Region that could help arts and culture thrive, the top responses from respondents highlighted **inclusivity, sustainable financial support for artists, and greater advertising of events.**



04

Emerging Opportunities

OPPORTUNITIES

1. Tell Rockford's story better, highlighting Rockford's rich and diverse history
2. Provide more inclusive representation of artists and cultural offerings and welcoming environments
3. Increase creative opportunities for youth and arts education
4. Foster collaboration and connection within the cultural sector and with other sectors
5. Leverage and develop underutilized spaces for cultural uses
6. Strengthen funding/revenue mechanisms and policy for arts and culture
7. Improve advocacy and data capture around arts and culture
8. Strengthen awareness of arts and culture in Rockford
9. Foster brave conversations through arts and culture
10. Further neighborhood development with arts and culture

1

Tell Rockford's story better, highlighting Rockford's rich and diverse history



- Leverage ambassadors among creative celebrities from Rockford
- Creative placemaking along key Rockford corridors: integrating art into infrastructure and signage outdoors
- Celebrate Black history (founders' statue) and other under told stories about Rockford's rich multi-ethnic history
- Partner with arts and cultural organizations on storytelling initiatives
- Marketing/branding campaign coordinated with RACVB to highlight Rockford as an arts & culture destination

2

Provide more inclusive cultural offerings and welcoming environments



- Local arts institutions should be encouraged and supported to diversity their offerings i.e. perhaps with a grant dedicated to fostering diverse and inclusive programming and/or funding diverse artists
- Music at city events and venues like BMO can be varied to ensure different cultures are represented
- Rockford audiences don't want to have to go Chicago to have diverse cultural experiences
- Build on the Healing Illinois work to foster more inclusive and welcoming environments in cultural spaces
- Meet people where they are: encourage arts and culture programming that goes to where diverse audience are i.e. pop-ups to build relationships and welcome
- Provide greater variety of nightlife options and festivals

3 Increase opportunities for youth and arts education



- Expand and strengthen CAPA program
- Ensure arts education is a priority in RPS
- Create a creative incubator for youth
- Provide more spaces for youth to experience the arts affordably
- Connect to the RPS 2025-2029 facilities master plan to ensure arts and arts education are key aspects of plan
- Provide more exposure to the arts in early grades

4

Foster collaboration and connection within the cultural sector and with other sectors



- Encourage collaborative grants, programming and festivals among Rockford's arts organization
- Larger arts organizations to work with smaller ones
- Expand Art Scene to include music (underway)
- Build on existing collaborations with parks and outdoor venues
- Foster increased professional development for artists (Think Big)
- Leverage Rockford's higher education assets to elevate local artists
- Develop/deepen collaborative strategies to connect the arts to: public safety (violence interrupters), real estate (promoting arts to potential residents), health care (art therapies), workforce development (Colman Yards and other employers), sports (Ice Hogs, Beyer Stadium and other facilities), business community (Chambers of Commerce), faith community, social services, elected officials, collar communities.

5

Leverage development and underutilized spaces



- Leverage blighted and city-owned vacant properties for arts & culture uses with adaptive reuse
- Develop cultural community space
- Connect with houses of worship for cultural use of their spaces
- Activate vacant storefronts with artists/art projects
- Connect underused sports facilities with cultural stakeholders i.e. parks district volleyball & basketball courts
- Work with Colman Yards on integrating art and artists into their space & programming
- Prioritize and strategize buildings to connect with developers i.e. Armory, News Tower, Midway Theater, etc.

6

Strategize funding/revenue mechanisms and policy for arts and culture



- Adopt Percent for Art ordinance
- Consider amusement tax as revenue source for arts & culture
- Explore arts and culture collaborative trust
- Secure public funding from other sectors/departments with proven benefits from arts & culture i.e. public safety
- Leverage financing tools such as tax incentives, TIFs, New Market tax credits, providing risk capital for cultural projects
- Hard Rock Casino funds can support arts & culture in a variety of ways i.e. an art collection
- Deepen relationship with top philanthropies and the corporate sector
- Foster creative business opportunities for creatives i.e. Markets for Makers
- Membership models for creative businesses

7

Improve advocacy and data capture around arts and culture



- Foster professional development opportunities for artists (many do not have EIN#s)
- Structure grant opportunities in ways that allow data capture to track progress over time
- Consider working with SMU DataArts and/or Americans for the Arts on their next Arts and Prosperity Study
- Deepen relationships with other regional, state, and federal arts advocacy organizations to uplift the Rockford Region

8

Strengthen awareness of arts and culture in Rockford



- Develop a centralized hub for cultural information
- Tap into employers' HR departments
- Celebrate success stories
- Tap real estate networks such as Northwest Illinois Alliance of Realtors to promote Rockford's culture to prospective residents and attract remote workers
- Advocate for arts and culture to have a seat at the table in other sectors i.e. health, public safety, and economic development
- Support and strengthen local media
- Develop collaborative marketing campaigns to promote arts and culture offerings
- Ensure marketing campaigns extend a sense of welcome with diverse and inclusive messaging

9 Foster brave conversations through arts and culture



- Partner artists and arts organizations with organizations in Rockford working on anti-racism i.e. Eliminate Racism
- Connect artists with the faith community to tap into communities seeking to make change
- Adapt national and international strategies to Rockford such as The Human Library, the Cultural Equity Learning Community, or the Creative Equity Toolkit
- Deepen work begun in the Heal Illinois initiative

10

Increase neighborhood development with arts and culture



- Build on successes with downtown revitalization to further grow density
- Grow public art program further
- Deploy placemaking strategies per Rockford Corridor plans and 2019 Neighborhood Revitalization Study
- Maximize riverfront
- Develop neighborhood identities with arts & culture
- Deploy the Arts Overlay in Rockford's Zoning Code
- Pursue Illinois State Cultural District designation (in progress)

February-May 2022

05

Breakout Groups

- Background review
- Site Tour: March 30-31st
- Preliminary Stakeholder Workshop: March 31st
- Outreach Strategy
- Asset Mapping Planning
- Market Overview
- Cultural Trends, Benchmarking & Comparables Assessment

BREAK OUT

1. Is anything missing?
2. Which opportunities are most important to you? Would you adjust anything?
3. Who should be involved? Which opportunity would YOU help with?

06

Report Back



07

Next Steps



Take the
Survey Monkey
poll
by November 30



WHAT'S NEXT

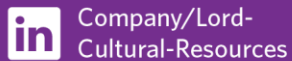
1. Vote on priorities via Survey Monkey
2. Finalize Priority Task Forces
3. Implementation Planning
4. Draft Rockford Region Cultural Plan
5. Present final Plan to public
6. Follow Rockford Area Arts Council for updates:
<https://www.artsforeveryone.com/cultural-plan/>

THANK YOU.

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