



2025 State of Culture Report

In 2024, the Arts Council distilled the ten community-identified priorities and established the Four Pillars of the Rockford Region Cultural Plan. Four priorities were created with subsequent strategies and actions for implementation:

1. **Inclusivity & Intersectional Collaboration**
2. **Neighborhood & Space Development**
3. **Youth & Arts Education**
4. **Advocacy & Policy**

The **2025 State of Culture** is the annual update on the **Rockford Region Cultural Plan**, initially established in July of 2024. We reviewed the strengths, weaknesses, challenges, and opportunities identified by the community and heard from community partners about how they are using the Cultural Plan to integrate arts and culture into their agency's strategic plans. Additionally, we'll hear about how the Cultural Plan has been used to leverage funding and gain support for new initiatives, projects, and programs. **Speakers included:**

- Sarah Leys, City of Rockford
- Dane Johnson, RAMP
- Danielle Potter, Rockford Park District
- Dave Costello, Rockford IceHogs
- Vic Rivera, artist and influencer
- John Groh, GoRockford
 - *"From GoRockford's vantage point, the State of Culture reinforced what Thrive 2035, our region's destination development plan, elevates as a core destination strategy: arts and culture aren't a "nice to have," they're a primary reason people choose, experience, and remember Rockford. The event underscored how deeply our cultural assets shape visitor perception, fuel downtown and neighborhood vitality, and differentiate Rockford in a competitive tourism landscape."*

The State of Culture was more than a panel discussion, with questions and answers; it was an experience with arts and entertainment provided by local creatives:

- Charo Chaney - DJ
- Chroma Club - Digital Feedback light and sound experience

- Molly Carter and Clea Berryhill - Quilt-making
- Iga Puchalska and Jason Judd, and Auburn High School digital arts student - experiential space, booth, activity, and take-home

State of Culture Results:

The State of Culture event was a successful collaboration of six Rockford Region agencies/entities whose impact can be felt by all residents: City of Rockford, Rockford Park District, RAMP, GoRockford, IceHogs, and a local artist and influencer. The 2025 State of Culture, and its proximity to the leadership of our region, increased accessibility to planning and decision-making; those who attended were invited to ask questions, challenge current practices through suggestion, and network with those in leadership roles.

The audience heard from the six entities about how the Cultural Plan is being embedded in their respective strategic plans--both current projects/programs and initiatives planned for the future. The audience included individuals who have been involved from the beginnings of the development of the Cultural Plan, new additions through partnerships and collaborations, and new-to-the-scene residents just wanting to learn more. The Arts Council was intentional with its invitations to the 2025 State of Culture ensuring attendance from our Round Table members, arts and culture partners, and taxing bodies.

The Arts Council engaged its media partners and they reported accordingly:

- Steve Summers, 95.3 The Bull: Weekend and weekday interviews
- WIFR: State of Culture pre-coverage and on-site interview
- WTOV: On-site coverage and interview

Instagram and Facebook were utilized to spread the word about the event, its intention, and the post-event synopsis. In addition to this webpage report, the Arts Council utilized its established and diverse network of Cultural Plan partners to glean feedback about the 2025 State of Culture:

- PAC (Project Advisory Committee): The PAC is composed of diverse representatives from taxing bodies, non-profits, individual artists, and business owners.
- Round Tables: The Arts Council hosts six Round Tables, quarterly, that include arts & culture partner organizations, musicians, visual, performing, digital, and literary artists.