



# City of Asbury Park Arts & Culture Plan

July 2023







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Planning Consultation Provided By:



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**Christopher Avallone**

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# Introduction







# Introduction

The Asbury Park Arts & Culture Plan ('the Plan') articulates strategies to develop and promote Asbury Park's ('the City') cultural assets, foster community cohesion, attract visitors, and stimulate economic growth. When enacted, the Arts & Culture Plan will enhance the quality of life, foster an inclusive spirit, and position the City as a destination for cultural tourism by cementing its identity as a hub for creativity and innovation. The Plan is a road map for the City to:

- develop and promote its cultural assets
- support an inclusive cultural brand and community identity
- bolster tourism and attract visitors
- stimulate inclusive economic growth
- enhance the quality of life of its residents

## Why An Arts & Culture Plan ?

The planning effort was instigated by the Asbury Park Master Plan and Reexamination (2017) which called for the City create an Arts & Culture Plan. While this recommendation provided the impetus for the Plan, there are several accepted reasons for undertaking these efforts, including:

### Fostering Community Engagement & Civic Pride

Implementing an arts and culture plan can foster community engagement and a sense of civic pride by helping residents feel connected to and invested in their city and its cultural offerings. This engagement between residents leads to a stronger sense of community and contributes to quality of life by assuring facilities, programs and offerings are representative of the needs, interests, and cultural expressions of the residential population.

### Identifying Needs in a City's Cultural Landscape

An arts and culture plan identifies gaps and opportunities in a city's cultural landscape and provides a roadmap for addressing those needs. By facilitating partnerships and collaborations between artists, organizations, and stakeholders, it creates a more cohesive cultural ecosystem. A plan aids this process by establishing priorities, directing advocacy efforts, and guiding policies that support the local cultural ecosystem and creative economy.

### Arts as an Economic Development Strategy

A strong arts and culture scene attracts tourism, creates jobs, and increases property values. Cultural amenities are cited as important factors for businesses and individuals when choosing where to locate. It also attracts and retain residents, workers, and employers. By investing in arts and culture, cities can enhance competitiveness and be positioned for sustainable economic growth.

### Enhancing Quality of Life & Individual Creativity

An arts and culture plan can enhance quality of life and promote individual creativity. By investing in creative spaces, cultural events, and arts programs, individuals can engage in artistic expression and connect with others who share similar interests. This investment fosters a greater appreciation for diverse perspectives and promotes individual growth through artistic exploration. Overall, it creates a more vibrant and inclusive community where individuals flourish creatively and personally.

Figure 1-1 A film crew in Sunset Park (below, left); Jazz at Trinity Church (below, center); Siren Arts performance at the Asbury Park beach (below, right)



1 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

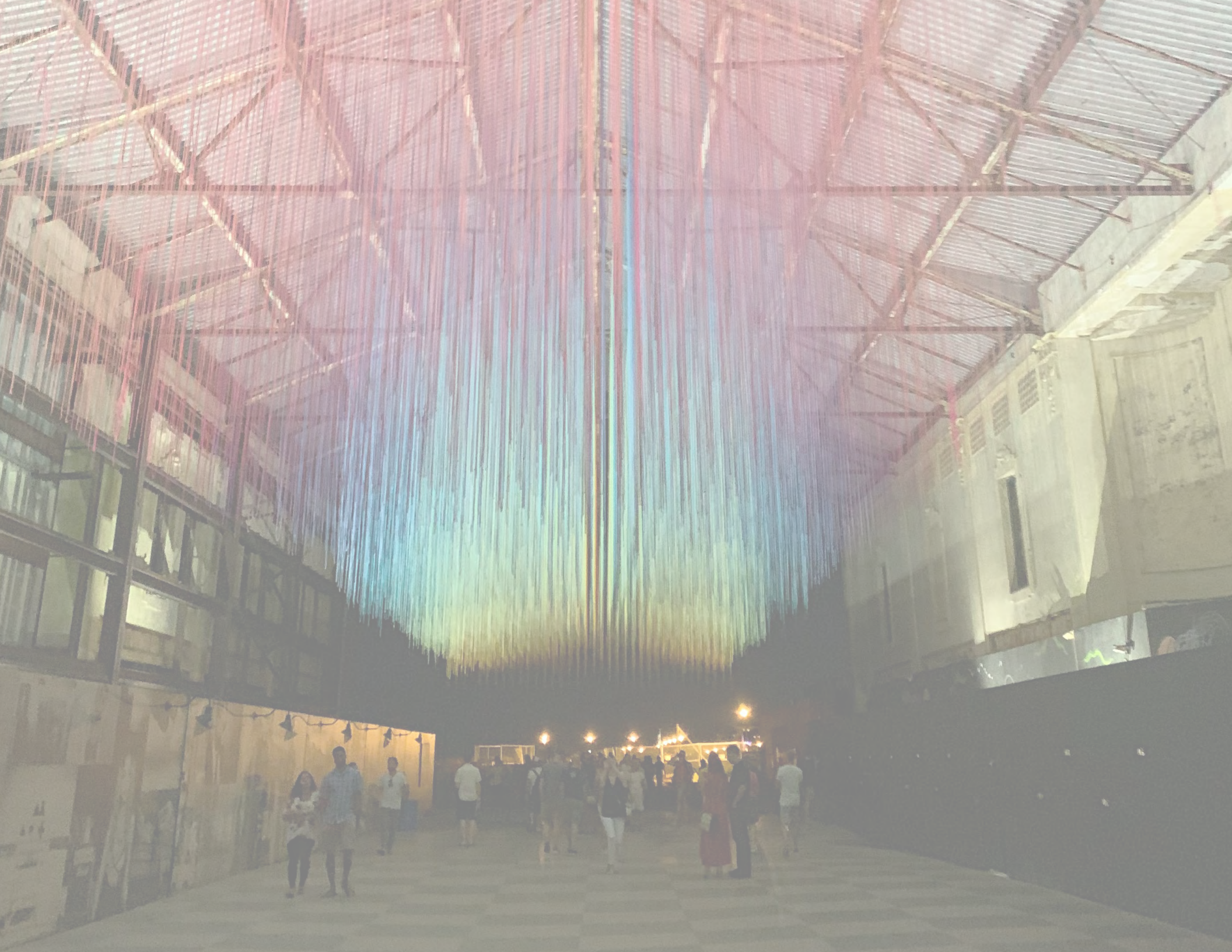






# Methodology & Process







# Methodology & Process

## Introduction

The process of creating the Arts & Culture Plan began in the summer of 2022 and was organized into four phases of work:

- Inventory and Information Gathering
- Analysis and Findings
- Goals and Strategies
- Recommendations

Each phase was underpinned by community engagement that provided 'ground truthing' and input from a cross-section of stakeholders and the public. Key parameters that governed the production of this Plan and descriptions of each phase are included herein.

## Study Area

The scope of the study included the entire City of Asbury Park in Monmouth County, New Jersey. The recommendations of this plan do not reach beyond the City's municipal boundaries, but information about regional cultural activity was gathered to situate the City in the context of the local market and cultural ecosystem. Models, precedents, and examples from around the state and country were referenced to provide context and aspirational examples of how other communities support their cultural ecosystems.

## Steering Committee & Municipal Oversight

The Arts & Culture Plan was guided by a Steering Committee that included representatives from the community, city administration, county, and state officials. The Steering Committee received updates and provided feedback, guidance, and direction at key points during the process. The input of the Steering Committee – and its ties to the community – were instrumental in identifying stakeholders and opportunities for community engagement. A full list of the Steering Committee members and their associations appears in [Figure 2 - 1](#).

## Process Summary

The Arts & Culture Plan process consisted of four phases that each included outreach and community engagement. A complete summary of engagement activities is provided in the *Inventory and Information Gathering* section of this report and descriptions of each phase are provided herein.

Figure 2 - 1 Members of the Arts & Culture Plan Steering Committee

### Arts & Culture Plan Steering Committee

**Michele Alonso**

Department of Planning and Redevelopment, Director

**Christopher Avallone**

Asbury Park Zoning Board of Adjustment, Chair

**Joe Barris**

Monmouth County Department of Planning, Director

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Asbury Park Planning Board, Vice Chair

**Michael Sodano**

Asbury Park Arts Council, Board President

**Jennifer Souder**

Asbury Park Planning Board / Asbury Park African-American Music Project

**Carrie Turner**

Asbury Park Arts Council, Executive Director







### Inventory & Information Gathering

The first phase involved completing an inventory of the City's art and cultural assets. Assets were broadly defined to include elements like

venues, places, community facilities, public art, sculpture, and others associated with formal and informal consumption, presentation, or production of creative content. Programmatic elements including recurring events, activities, performances, festivals, parades, markets, and other community-focused events were also cataloged. Finally, the inventory documented stakeholders, organizations, entities and individuals that contribute to the cultural landscape including creators, producers, presenters, programmers, and community organizations.

The inventory was augmented and updated throughout the planning process. As information was uncovered, the inventory was updated to ensure that new data were incorporated into the decision-making framework of the Plan. A summary of the inventory appears in the *Inventory and Information Gathering* section of this Plan, and the complete *Arts and Culture Inventory* can be found in the [Appendix](#) to this report.



### Analysis & Findings

Once there was sufficient data, it was synthesized information into assessments that revealed topical findings about the City's

cultural ecosystem. Findings clarified the strengths, weaknesses, gaps, and opportunities of the City's situation. Input from the Steering Committee, stakeholders, and the community provided 'ground truthing' of assessments and findings to form the subsequent *Goals and Strategies*. A summary of this information appears in the *Findings and Themes* section of this Plan.



### Goals & Strategies

Working from the analysis and findings of previous phases, the planning team and Steering Committee developed four goals that establish the vision of the Arts & Culture Plan. The goals prompted the development of strategies and recommendations necessary to achieve the Plan's goals. As with each phase, members of the public and creative community were invited to provide feedback in focus group and public open house settings. Each of these elements is detailed in the *Goals and Strategies* section of this report.



### Recommendations

The Plan culminates with recommendations for actions, initiatives, and projects to achieve the Plan's goals. Recommendations include physical, organizational, strategic, branding, and policy actions that address gaps in the City's cultural ecosystem. Each recommendation articulates an implementation framework that begins with incremental steps that enable larger actions at later stages. In this phase, the public provided feedback and input at a public open house event at the Asbury Park Public Library. The City Council were also briefed publicly on the recommendations of the Plan, and provided a resolution of referral to the Asbury Park Planning Board to consider adopting the Plan as a supporting element of the City's Master Plan. The initiatives and proposed implementation frameworks appear in the *Recommendations* section of this report.



Figure 2 - 2 The Giving Tree at the Grand Arcade of Convention Hall / Wooden Walls Project





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# Inventory & Information Gathering





# Inventory & Information Gathering

## Introduction

The information gathering process provided the existing conditions, inventory, and community context for informed decision making. Data from previous plans, observation, primary research, and aspirational precedents were augmented with input from community engagement. Together, they provide a profile of the City's existing arts and culture ecosystem and serves as a starting point to identify gaps in artistic and cultural services, facilities, and programs.

## Arts & Cultural Inventory

The sustainability of a cultural ecosystem relies on physical and organizational infrastructure that support events, public art, gatherings, learning, community activities, and other forms of artistic and cultural expression. The planning team employed observation, visual survey, primary research, and community engagement to develop an inventory of the City's artistic and cultural assets. Assets include organizations, open spaces, parks, schools, community facilities, performance venues, art galleries, arts related businesses, public arts installations, and other elements where creative or cultural activity was observed. [Figure 3 - 2 on page 21](#) shows a map of the assets identified in this study.

The inventory is a snapshot in time, and is not expected to capture *all* individuals, organizations and places that make up the City's cultural ecosystem. Instead, it is a starting point for further investigation and continual maintenance of a publicly accessible inventory of spaces, places, events, organizations, and creators that contribute to economic and community development through the visual arts, performing arts, recreation, and lifelong learning. Descriptions of the various types of assets appear below:

### Physical Assets

#### *Venues & Places*

Formal venues, businesses, or open spaces known to host cultural, community, and/or artistic events were included as assets. Some examples include local businesses that host live music, theaters, concert halls, flexible performance venues, parks, open spaces, churches, community organizations, and others. The inventory includes over 60 venues and places – a significant density when considering the relatively small 1.4 square mile area of the City. [Figure 3 - 2 on page 21](#) shows the locations and types of assets recorded, and a complete list is available in the [Appendix](#) of this report.

#### *Community Facilities*

A range of community facilities were identified and cataloged. Community facilities included publicly owned spaces with community-focused programs such as the Asbury Park Senior Center, the Asbury Park Public Library, and the Asbury Park Municipal Complex. The study also recorded public and private educational institutions, non-profits, charities, and faith-based organizations. [Figure 3 - 2 on page 21](#) shows a map of these community facilities.

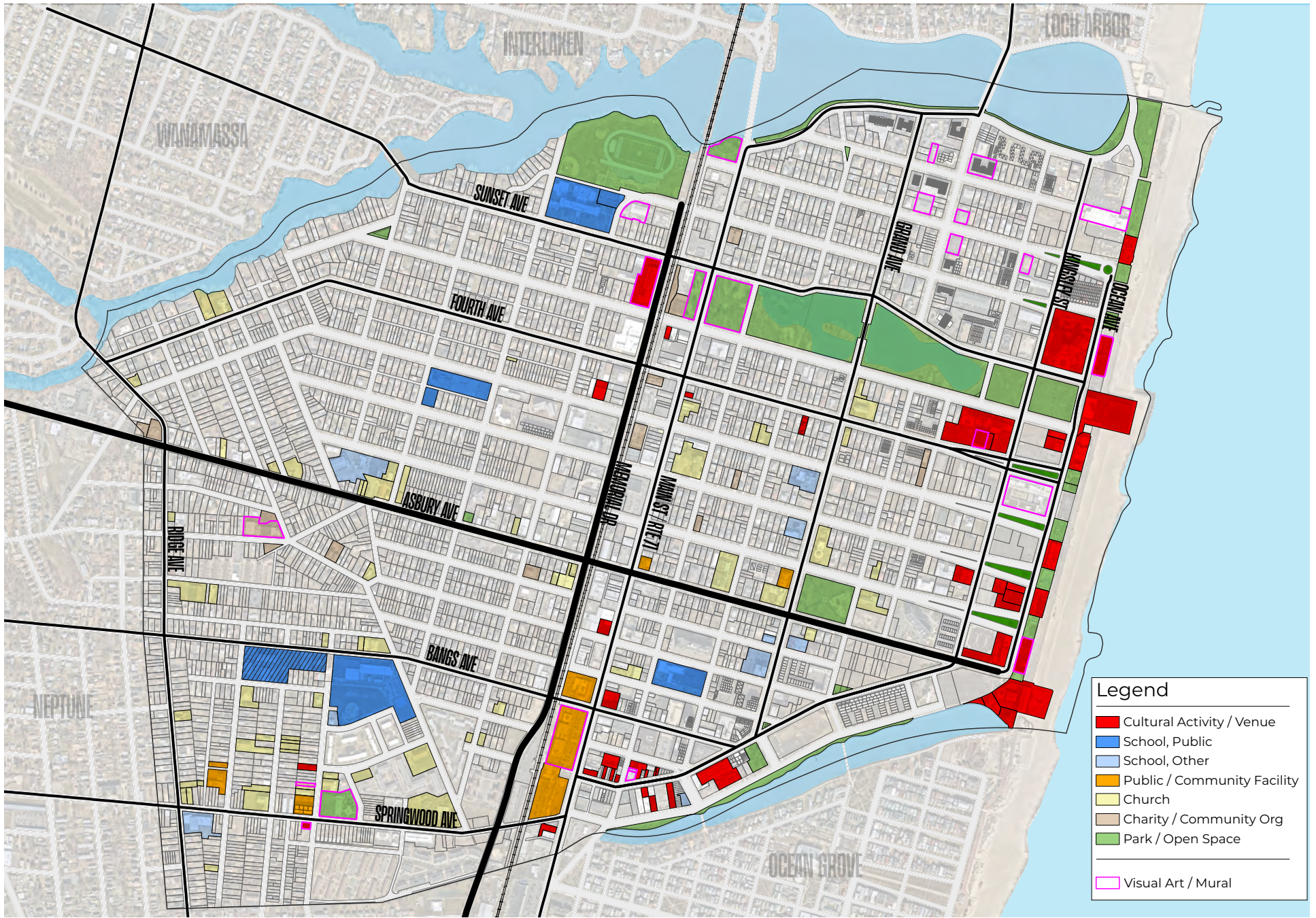
#### *Visual & Public Art*

Asbury Park's emerging brand as a destination for visual arts is the result of a significant number of murals, sculpture, and public art installations. A block-by-block inventory of public art and/or mural installations was conducted as part of this study. The locations of these artistic installations are indicated on the asset map in [Figure 3 - 2](#).

Figure 3 - 1 Asbury Park Community Festival at Springwood Park (above); Cookman Avenue open streets 2022 (below)









While they are important components – especially as they relate to history, interpretation, and preservation initiatives – this inventory *did not* catalogue monuments and/or memorials to specific people and historical events. These types of historical assets are typically cataloged as part of a comprehensive historic preservation or interpretation plan. To the extent that these elements are located within parks, open spaces, and public facilities, those elements are captured within the venues and places portion of the inventory.

### Creators, Organizations & Entities

Individuals and organizations that engage in artistic, cultural, and creative pursuits are at the heart of the cultural ecosystem. Whether for commercial consumption, private enterprise, individual enrichment, or community recreation, they are the reason Asbury Park is seen as a place where creativity and culture thrive. This study found at least 180 organizations, individuals, businesses, or groups that create, present, or host cultural activity – and it is likely there are many more. The density of creators speaks to Asbury Park’s creative brand, and the impact their programs, events and activities have on the economic and social environment. A list of entities cataloged as part of this planning effort can be found in the [APPENDIX](#) of this report

### Programming & Events

Recurring cultural events, gatherings and community activities are a primary indicator of arts and cultural activity. The presence and frequency of communal activities and events is relatively easy to measure, but is important to note that they represent the endpoint of the cultural production cycle. The frequency (or lack) of events and activities may indicate the availability of spaces for presentation, performance or gathering, however, it does not provide much information about the availability, cost, or presence

of facilities such as rehearsal space, storage, manufacturing, meeting, conference, and others that support the cultural production process.

A complete retail and land use inventory is beyond the scope of the Arts & Culture Plan, but information gained through community engagement yielded important findings about cultural production space in the City. The inventory included recurring events or gatherings such as concerts, theatrical productions, festivals, markets, parades, community events, and others. A complete list of events and activities can be found in the [APPENDIX](#) of this report.



Figure 3 - 2 Map of arts and culture assets in Asbury Park (Opposite)

Figure 3 - 3 Examples of art and cultural activities; yoga at Sunset Avenue beach (top); AP Music Foundation Music Mondays at Springwood Park (center); New Jersey Pride Festival (below)





## Community Outreach & Engagement

### Introduction

Extensive community engagement and public outreach was done to assure the Goals, Strategies and Recommendations of the Plan align with the experiences, aspirations and needs of residents. Responses from an on-line survey were augmented with stakeholder interviews, focus group discussions, multiple community engagement events, and two public open house events. A summary of the Plan was presented to the Asbury Park City Council, who provided a resolution of referral to the Asbury Park Planning Board. Each component of outreach and engagement activities is described herein.

### On-Line Survey

An on-line survey was distributed through public and private email lists, social media accounts, and community message boards. Business cards with a QR Code link were also handed out at public events and placed in businesses, community facilities, and organizations. When requested, printed copies of the survey were provided and combined with on-line responses. As of the writing of this report, there were 152 responses to the survey that provided information about attitudes toward art and culture and patterns of cultural consumption. Selected survey results are covered in the *Findings and Themes* section of this report, and the complete results are included in the [APPENDIX](#) of this report.

Figure 3 - 4 Stakeholder Interview Participants

NAME	AFFILIATION	TITLE / ROLE
Michele Alonso	City of Asbury Park	Director, Planning & Redevelopment
Chris Avallone	Asbury Park Zoning Board	Chairperson
Joe Barris	Monmouth County Division of Planning	Director
Eileen Chapman	City of Asbury Park	City Councilor
Yvonne Clayton	City of Asbury Park	City Councilor
Leesha Floyd	Asbury Park Recreation Committee	Director of Recreation
Mary Eileen Fouratt	New Jersey State Arts Council	Program Officer, Access, Community Arts
Stacie George	Live Nation	SVP of Booking
Joe Grillo	Asbury Park Board of Education	Board Member
Jenn Hampton	Public Art Commission / Parlor Gallery	Chairperson / Owner
Barbara Krzak	Asbury Park Planning Board	Chairperson
Rick Lambert	Asbury Park Planning Board	Vice Chairperson
Kathleen Melgar	Asbury Park Public Library	Director
Liza Minno	Asbury Park Book Cooperative	Co-Op Manager
Tiasia Newman	GotPicz / Vintage Brothel / Tiasia Newman	Owner / Creator
Tom Pivinski	Environmental Shade Tree Commission	Chairperson
Amy Quinn	City of Asbury Park	City Councilor
Michael Sodano	Arts Rule	Founder
Jennifer Souder	Asbury Park Planning Board	Commissioner
Lorraine Stone	Wisdomkeeper	Creator / Community Member
Charles Trott	Public Art Commission / DIA Project	Commissioner / Founder
Donna Vieiro	City of Asbury Park	City Manager
Paul Weinstein	Asbury Park Music Foundation	Treasurer
Edwin Ruiz	Asbury Park Board of Education	Director of Curriculum
Pat Schiavino	art629 Gallery; Sackman Realty	Owner / Realtor Associate
John Muly	Madison Marquette	Development Manager
Brian Cheripka	iStar	Development Manager
Paul McEvily	Interfaith Neighbors	Executive Director



## Stakeholder Interviews

The planning team and members of the Steering Committee conducted stakeholder interviews with representatives from city government, non-profit organizations, and creative community. These discussions were necessary to ascertain the state of the arts and cultural ecosystem, to understand challenges and needs of different community cohorts, and to identify key priorities as they relate to the implementation of the Plan. [Figure 3 - 4](#) shows a list of all stakeholder interview participants.

## Community Outreach & Engagement Events

### Community Outreach Events

As shown in [Figure 3 - 5](#), the planning team participated in six public events organized by the City, local business, and non-profit organizations. At these events, maps, graphics, and other visual aids were used to discuss the local arts and culture ecosystem with the public. Many individual conversations augmented the arts and culture inventory by revealing creators, organizations, and events throughout the City. They also provided context and 'ground truthing' of public perceptions about how to support the City's cultural ecosystem.

During these conversations, members of the public completed the open-ended statement "Art and

culture is...." by filling out a 3x5 inch card with colorful markers. Over the course of the study, hundreds of cards were completed by the public. The range of responses and content from these interactions paint a picture of art and culture as an essential component of a thriving and inclusive city. A selection of responses from the public is shown in [Figure 3 - 6](#).

Figure 3 - 5 Community and public engagement events attended by the planning team

<b>Wooden Walls Opening @ The Carousel House</b> September 16, 2022
<b>AP-AMP Presents JT Bowen &amp; Arlan Feiles @ The Turf Club</b> September 25, 2022
<b>Asbury Park Complete Streets Movie Night @ AP Public Library</b> October 4, 2022
<b>Asbury Park Fall Fun Day @ Sunset Park</b> October 8, 2022
<b>Asbury Park Community Festival @ Springwood Park</b> October 22, 2022
<b>APAC Fall Networking Event @ House of Independents</b> October 26, 2022

Figure 3 - 6 Selection of public responses gathered at engagement events to the open ended statement "Arts & Culture Is..." (below)





### Focus Groups

Once there was sufficient information to develop preliminary goals and strategies, the planning team conducted (5) focus groups that used presentation and facilitated discussions to:

- Review findings of the arts and culture inventory
- Discuss themes derived from stakeholder interviews and community engagement activities
- Elicit feedback on how the goals and objectives address gaps in the arts and cultural ecosystem

Feedback received in these focus groups was instrumental in testing assumptions, determining priorities, and developing recommendations. A list of participants in the focus groups is shown in [Figure 3 - 7](#).

### Open Houses & Public Presentations

Creating the Plan included two public open house events. The first was held in December 2022 at Blackbird Community Commons. This event drew approximately 50 attendees and was used to gather feedback on the goals and strategies of the Plan. The second was held in March 2023 at the Asbury Park Public Library and drew approximately 60 attendees. At this event, the planning team invited public comment and feedback about the recommendations of the Plan.

NAME	AFFILIATION / DISCIPLINE
Daisha Abrams	Creator / Dancer
Robert Angelini	Asbury Park Theater Company
Ryver Bey	Creator / Musician
Phillip-Mychael Bonds	Creator / Actor / Educator
Anthony D'Amato	Asbury Park Theater Company / Remember Jones
Tim Donnelly	Sea.Hear.Now
Conni Freestone	Creator / Photographer
Scott Hamm	Fun House AP
Teretha Jones	Creator / Community Member
Nick Kiefer	Creator / Photographer
Jeff Lundenberger	The ShowRoom Cinema AP
Renee Maskin	Creator / Musician
Paul McEvily	Interfaith Neighbors
Derek Minno-Bloom	Light Brigade Collective / Trinity Church
Tiasia Newman	GotPicz / Vintage Brothel / Tiasia Newman
Daria Parr	The ShowRoom Cinema AP
Jhailyn Puello	Caba Creatives
Victoria Reiss	Siren Arts / Transformer DC
Emma Smith	Producer / Ryver Bey
Bam Smith	Producer / Ryver Bey
Thomas Stevens	Hot Sand AP
Jason Stumpf	Creator / Artist
Lorraine Stone	Creator / Writer
Angie Sugrim	Wooden Walls / Fortune Web Marketing
Charles Trott	Creator / DIA Project / AP Public Art Commission
Semaj Vanzant Sr.	Inspire Life
James Vance	Creator / Artist
William Whitefield	Asbury Park Theater Company
Jim Yack	Hot Sand AP

Figure 3 - 7 Arts & Culture Plan focus group participants

Figure 3 - 8 Photographs from community engagement events, focus groups and open houses (opposite)









## Community Profile & Planning Context

The Arts & Culture Plan created a community profile of the City and its situation within the context of the regional cultural landscape. The planning team examined trends in population demographics, the perception of Asbury Park as a regional cultural destination, the potential for cultural activity to support economic development goals, and existing municipal plans and initiatives. A summary of that profile appears herein.

## Population Demographics

### *Population & Population Density*

According to the 2020 Census, the population of Asbury Park was approximately 15,200 (15,194) in a land area of approximately 1.4 square miles<sup>1</sup>. This equates to a population density of approximately 10,630 persons/sq. mile – making it one of the most densely populated municipalities in Monmouth County and in the top 5% of all municipalities in the state<sup>2</sup>. Despite the perception of rapid growth, Figure 3 - 9 shows that the census population has steadily declined over the past 30 years.

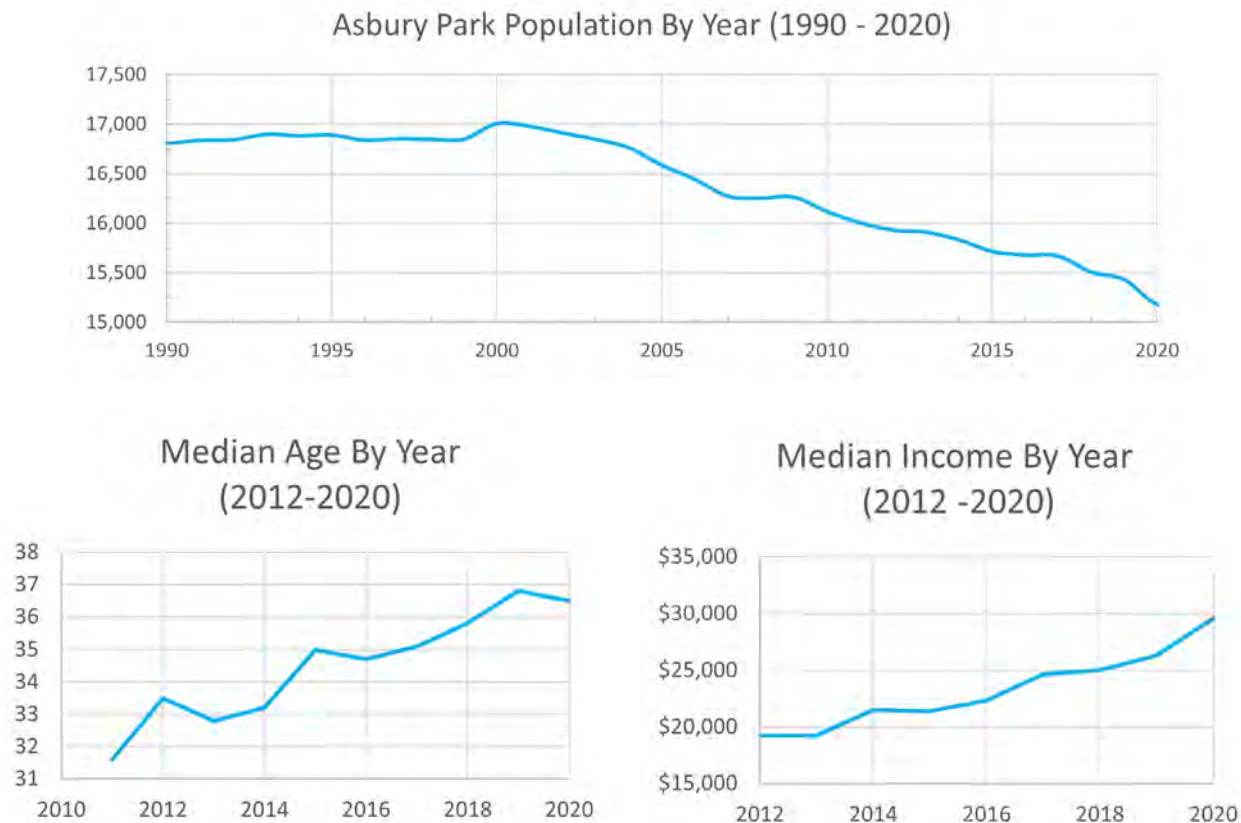
The difference between the perception of growth and a declining census population points to a rise in part-time and seasonal residents that are counted (for census purposes) in their primary place of residence rather than in Asbury Park's full-time residential population.

### *Community Demographic Profile*

According to the 2020 census, Asbury Park is a diverse community with approximately 43.4% White residents, 37.5% Black or African American residents, and 19.7% Hispanic or Latino resident. While the City is still mostly comprised of non-white residents, the percentage of white residents has been trending upward and the percentage of non-white residents has been trending downward in recent years. This trend is evident when looking at the 2010 census when the City had 26.4% White and 50.1% Black or African American residents with a relatively stable share that identify as Hispanic or Latino.

Several other key demographic factors displayed clear trends as well. As shown in Figure 3 - 9, The City has seen an increase in median income and median age over the past ten years. While many of these changes are consistent with trends in other urban areas, they are consistent with an understanding of Asbury Park as a gentrifying city where the population is becoming older, wealthier, and less diverse.

Figure 3 - 9 Asbury Park's census population 1990-2020 (source: [www.Census.gov](http://www.Census.gov)) ; Median Age, 2012-202 (source: <https://datacommons.org/>)



1 <http://www.Census.gov>

2 <http://www.usa.com/rank/new-jersey-state-population-density-city-rank.htm>

## Asbury Park as a Regional Historical, Creative and Cultural Hub

Asbury Park has a rich artistic and cultural history with a vibrant creative scene that – despite cyclical downturns – has drawn visitors, artists, and creators for more than a century. Asbury Park’s place in popular culture is strongly tied to the City’s vibrant music scene, which first gained national attention in the 1920s and has continued to this day. Legendary venues have hosted national and international acts including Count Basie, Fleetwood Mac, Dizzy Gillespie, Bruce Springsteen, Miles Davis, Led Zeppelin, and others. Asbury Park’s boardwalk and downtown district are lined with galleries, restaurants and shops that are a significant contributor to the City’s economy and identity as a tourist destination.

In recent years, Asbury Park has seen a resurgence in its artistic and cultural offerings – especially as it relates to cultural tourism and visitation – with new festivals, events, and activities throughout the City. For example, the ‘Sea.Hear.Now’ music festival has become a major event, drawing musicians, and fans from around the world. The City has also seen the emergence of new venues, such as House of Independents, which is a

popular spot for live music and comedy. The recent revitalization of the Turf Club – a well known historical music venue on Springwood Avenue – has sought to preserve and promote the contributions of the African American community to the City’s cultural and historical legacy. On the public art front, the Wooden Walls Project, launched in 2013, brings together local and international artists to create art and murals installations on buildings and in public spaces

Asbury Park’s cultural identity is also closely tied to community activism and social justice. Many local artists and organizations use their platforms to raise awareness about gentrification, racial justice, and LGBTQAI+ rights. Celebrating and documenting the contributions of the City’s African-American community to the town’s cultural identity is a focus of organizations like the Asbury Park African-American Music Project (AP-AMP) who are working to preserve and revitalize the historic Turf Club music venue on Springwood Avenue. Their efforts, along with others, seek to preserve the history of and revitalize the neighborhood as a hub of African American music, culture, and entrepreneurship.

Figure 3 - 10 An Asbury Park African-American Music Project (AP-AMP) event at the Turf Club (below, left); Asbury Park beach (below, center); The Circuit at Atlantic Square (below, right)





## The Economic Impact of Arts & Culture

The City's arts and culture scene make a significant contribution to the local economy. While there is no available data for the municipality or the county, the latest version of the Arts and Economic Prosperity Survey<sup>3</sup> produced by Americans for the Arts, provides state level data for cultural expenditures. According to the study, the average NJ resident spent \$27 (2015 dollars) in ancillary expenses including meals, souvenirs, transportation, and lodging when attending cultural events, while non-residents spent nearly \$51 in ancillary expenses. Considering the volume of private/paid events in Asbury Park it is likely that this type of touristic activity makes a significant contribution to local businesses through direct purchases and to city revenue through tax and parking revenues.

In general, the economic impact of arts and culture in the City can be seen in several ways:

### *Jobs & Employment*

The creative economy provides employment opportunities for many people in the state. According to the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, the

creative industry in New Jersey, which includes arts-related jobs accounted for more than 88,000 jobs and \$9 billion in economic activity in 2018<sup>4</sup>. This includes a range of jobs including artists and performers, designers, technicians, and others. Current employment data does not provide details for Monmouth County or Asbury Park, but it is assumed that the City's creative industries contribute to the local economy through employment and business opportunities.

### *Tourism*

Asbury Park's arts and culture scene is a significant draw for tourists. Visitors come to the City to visit the beach, waterfront, downtown commercial district, and to attend the concerts, festivals, markets, and private events. According to a report by the New Jersey Division of Travel and Tourism, tourism in Monmouth County generated over \$2.6 billion in 2019<sup>5</sup>. It is reasonable to expect that Asbury Park's status as a seasonal beach destination and regional cultural draw captures some of that economic activity.

### *Property values*

A report by the National Endowment for the Arts found that homes located within a half-mile of

cultural institutions have a higher property value than homes farther away<sup>6</sup>. This effect may be evidenced by the rapidly rising property values in Asbury Park. It is important to note that the increase in property values tends to be good for homeowners but may have a deleterious effect on renters, low-income individuals, and seniors with limited financial resources to respond to rising rents.

Figure 3 - 11 Asbury Park Historical Society Art on the Boardwalk (below, left); Photography shoot at the Carousel House and Casino



3 <https://www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/research-studies-publications/arts-economic-prosperity-5>

4 <https://www.nj.gov/state/njsca/pdf/research/CreativeIndustryReport2018.pdf>

5 <https://nj.gov/state/dos-ntt/2019-tourism-economic-impact-report.pdf>

6 <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Research-Art-Works-NEA.pdf>

## Municipal Plans & Initiatives

Numerous plans were completed prior to the Arts & Culture Plan. Recommendations from these plans were cataloged to understand how the Arts & Culture Plan could support the policies, recommendations, and community priorities established by relevant preexisting plans and initiatives, including:

### *Master Plan & Reexamination Report (2017)*

In 2017, Asbury Park updated its Master Plan and established a 10-year vision for the City:

*“The City’s vision for the year 2027 is of a safe and vibrant community with a balance of land uses, diverse housing options, a thriving arts community, a diversified and expanding year-round economy, modern and well-maintained infrastructure, expanded community facilities and an outstanding quality of life.” (page 35)*

The City’s Master Plan sets a clear framework for how an Arts and Culture Plan can support the community

goals of economic diversification, community facilities development, and an enhanced year round quality of life.

Furthermore, within the Land Use portion of the 2017 Master Plan Reexamination, there was also a specific recommendation that relates to the current planning effort:

### *Prepare An Arts & Culture Plan (page 57)*

The City should prepare an Arts and Culture Plan. This Plan should accomplish the following:

- Inventory the City’s arts and culture assets, identify shortfalls in the types of arts and culture uses present in the City,
- Identify the area(s) most appropriate for an arts and culture district, identify a siting process and criteria for public art (murals, sculpture, etc.); and
- Identify those uses (live/work housing, etc.), programming, and other actions necessary to support the City’s vibrant arts and culture community.

### *Expand Arts & Culture Uses In Central Business District & Waterfront (page 57)*

The City should consider additional arts and culture uses in the Central Business District and Waterfront districts and any arts and culture district that may be created. Such uses may include studio space (music, dance, paint, etc.), radio, video, and theater.

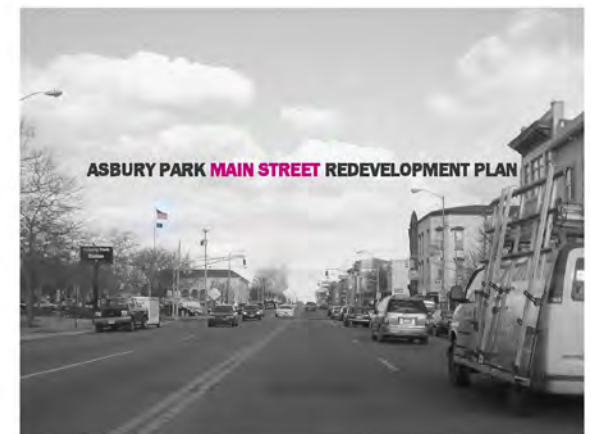
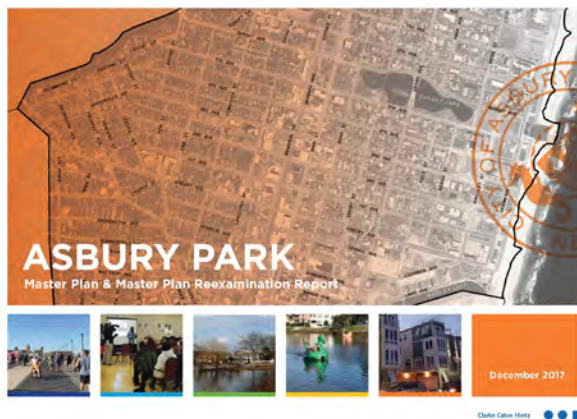
### *Create an Arts and Culture District (page 57)*

Based on the recommendations in the Arts and Culture Plan, create an arts and culture overlay zone district along Asbury Avenue from approximately Main Street to Comstock Street and/or other parts of the City which permits additional arts and culture uses and provides incentives for said uses and art installations.

### *Consider corridor and/or redevelopment planning for Asbury Avenue (page 57)*

This street serves important functions in the City, including but not limited to, one of the western gateways and a commercial district serving the neighborhoods that flank both sites. Notwithstanding, the corridor suffers from vacancies and underutilization. An improved Asbury Avenue can offer more services and

Figure 3 - 12 Selection of existing municipal plans with relevance to the Arts & Culture Plan





conveniences to area residents, a more appealing and safe experience through improved streetscape, lighting, and fewer vacancies, and new housing and business opportunities. Planning for this corridor should consider designation as an area in need of redevelopment or rehabilitation, or alternatively corridor planning without the use of such designations. This should be coordinated with the recommended Asbury Avenue Streetscape Plan, Asbury Avenue gateway and designation of an arts and culture district along Asbury Avenue. Notwithstanding the desired improvements for this corridor, any planning effort should be sensitive to and mitigate any loss of housing stock and displacement of residents.

### **Other Plans & Initiatives**

To situate the Arts & Culture Plan within the development and regulatory framework of the City, the following documents, plans, and initiatives were reviewed for relevance to the Arts & Culture Plan:

- Asbury Park Zoning Ordinance
- Asbury Park Plan for Walking and Biking (2018)
- Waterfront Redevelopment Plan and Amendments (2019)
- Springwood Avenue Redevelopment Plan (2020)
- Central Business District Redevelopment Plan (2020)
- Main Street Redevelopment Plan (2021)
- Monmouth County Master Plan
- Monmouth Arts Plan: Imagine, Envision, Create 2013-2017 (2012)
- Asbury Park Wayfinding Strategy

In general, the plans are compatible with the goals of supporting community, arts, culture, and recreation in the City. However, as the recommendations of the plan are implemented, some of these redevelopment plans and the City's zoning ordinance may need to be updated to allow or incentivize the desired outcomes of the Plan.









# Findings & Themes





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# Findings & Themes

## Introduction

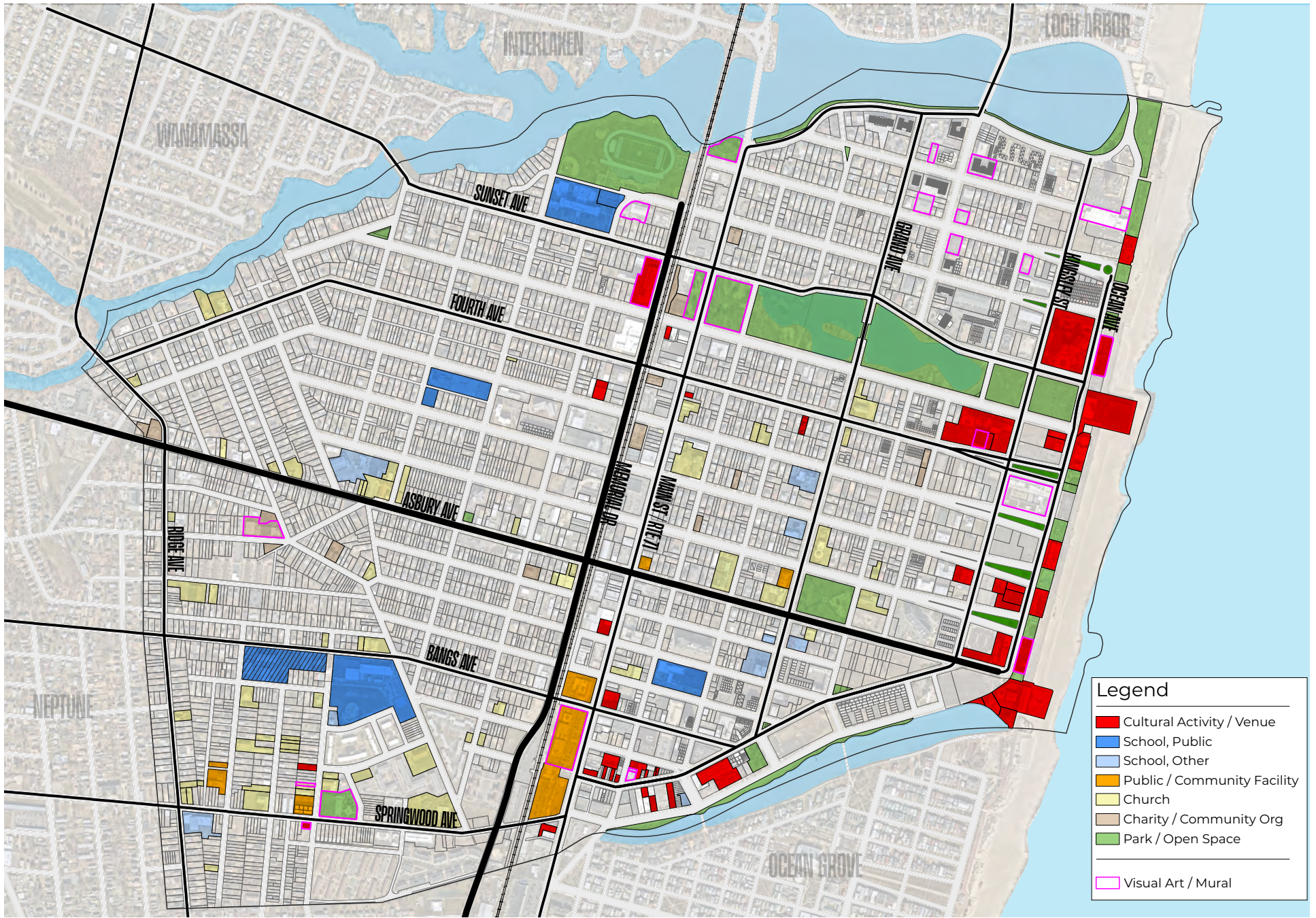
This section provides a summary of the data from research, inventory, and community engagement used to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities present in the City's art and cultural ecosystem. Findings are presented thematically and combine direct observations, research, and individual perspectives from community engagement. When taken together these data sources point to gaps in space, infrastructure, organizational capacity, and policies that should be addressed to support community arts, culture and recreation.



Figure 4 - 1 Day of the Dead display on Emory Street (above, left); Sea. Hear. Now Music Festival (above, right); AP Music Foundation Music Mondays at Springwood Park (center, left); Asbury Park Complete Streets Coalition Slow Roll (center, right); Asbury Park Easter Pageant (below, left); Remember Jones at Porchapalooza (below, right)











## Venues & Places

As illustrated in [Figure 4 - 2](#), nearly 70 venues and places were identified including formal performance venues, open spaces, parks, schools, private businesses, and community organizations. This is an impressive number of places for cultural activity in a small city. Analysis of the data found that most active formal and indoor venues are privately owned and focused on commercial cultural activity. When considering publicly owned spaces like parks and public schools, many perceive they are not available for community-produced programs. The work of this study confirmed that Board of Education makes their facilities available for rental, but administrative and cost barriers deter the public from considering them as viable options relative to privately-owned venues.

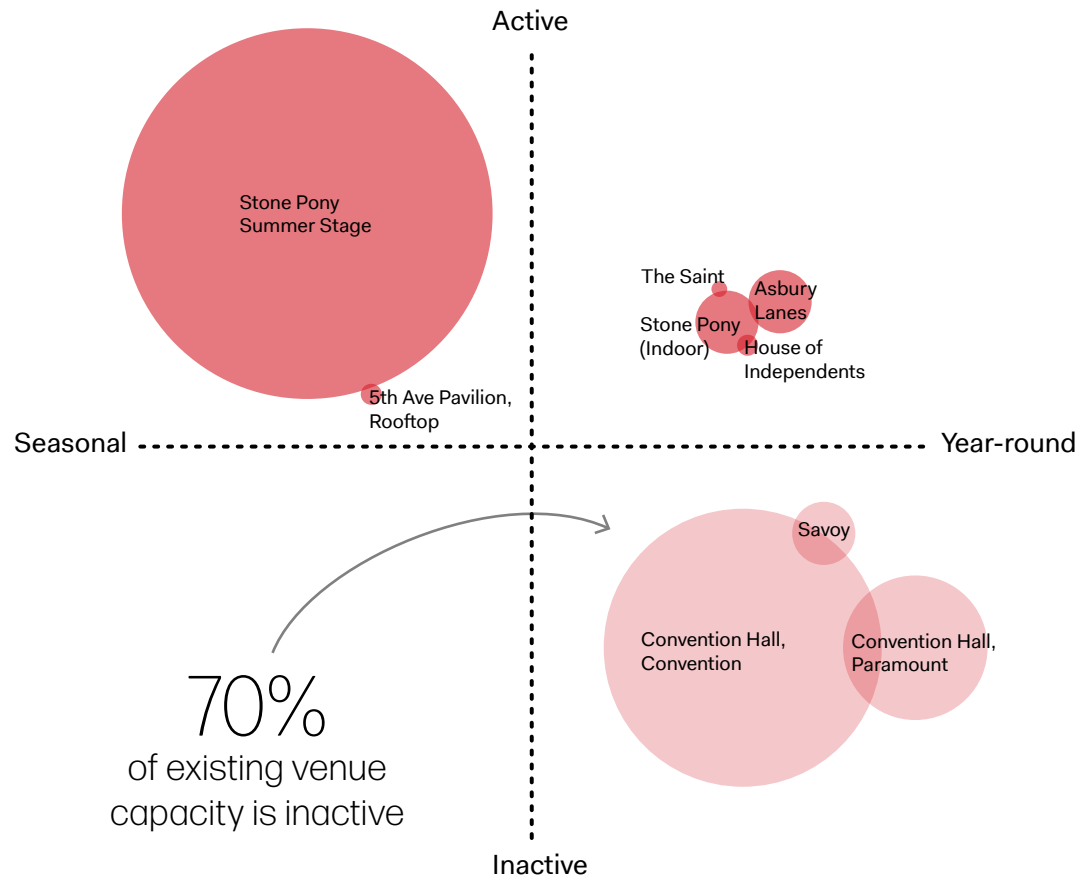
Despite the impressive density of formal fixed-seat venues in the City, a significant proportion of venues were inactive at the time of this study. In fact, when considering formal indoor performance venues, Paramount Theater, Convention Hall, and Savoy Theater were all dormant. This represents approximately 70% of the existing indoor venue capacity in the City ([Figure 4 - 3](#)). The inactivity of these venues puts Asbury Park at an economic disadvantage for attracting local and touring productions relative to other municipalities that have high quality performance venues and presenting organizations like the Count Basie Center for the Arts in Red Bank, The Axelrod Performing Arts Center in Deal, Monmouth University in West Long Branch, and many others ([See Figure 4 - 15 on page 50](#)).

Figure 4 - 2 Map of arts and culture assets in Asbury Park (Opposite)

Figure 4 - 3 Relative Size and operational status of seasonal and year-round formal venues in Asbury Park (Right)

## Summary Of Findings

- There are many privately owned and formal venues, but most are focused on commercial cultural activity
- There is a lack of indoor space and formal venues controlled by the City for free, community-based, and recreational programs
- Public schools with space, facilities and venues that could support community-based programs are not perceived as accessible to the public
- 70% of formal venue capacity in the City is currently inactive, leaving a significant gap in the market





## Programming & Events

The study documented more than 60 recurring events and programs that took place during 2021 with a complete list of the events appearing in the [appendix](#) to this report. Analysis of event frequency showed consistency with the understanding of Asbury Park as a seasonal destination where frequency of programming was significantly higher in the tourist season/warmer months of the year. [Figure 4 - 4](#) illustrates this trend with the highest program frequency during the summer months and a significant decrease in event frequency from October to April.

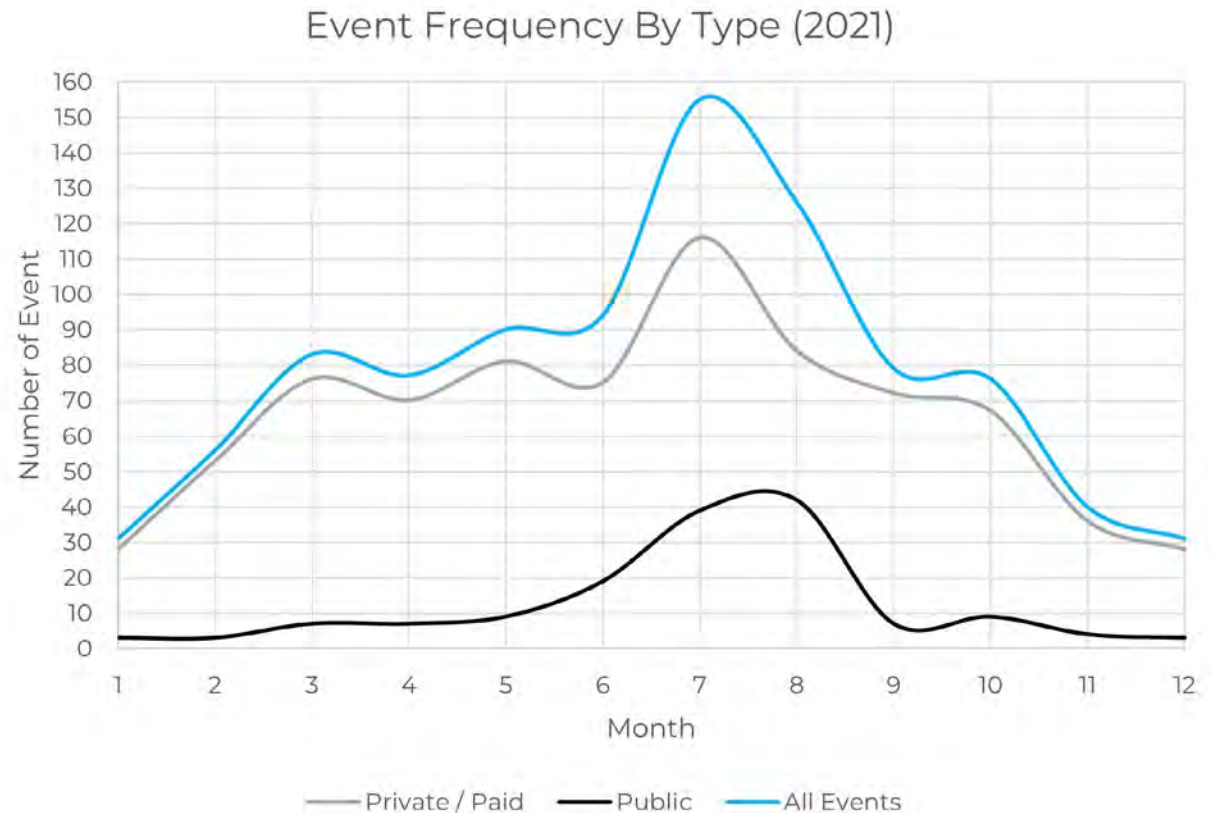
As part of the study, events were classified into private/paid events or public events that were free for the general public. Graphing the frequency by event type confirmed a similar seasonal pattern exists for both paid and private events. [Figure 4 - 4](#) shows that despite a seasonal peak, private/paid events are happening at a much higher rate than public events regardless of the time of year. Furthermore, the data showed that despite significant activity in the warmer months, public events were nearly non-existent outside of the tourist season.

Overall, this data may indicate that there is a sufficient number and variety of venues - both indoor and outdoor - to accommodate the City's current level of commercial activity. However, the lack of free/public events outside the tourist season may point to a lack of adequate indoor facilities and venues for public events rather than a fundamental lack of demand for community-based programming in the off-season.

## Summary Of Findings

- Both commercial and community-based programming is impacted by Asbury Parks' seasonal nature
- Most recurring events and programs are privately produced and commercially focused
- There are few recurring free/public programs outside the tourist season
- There is a shortage of indoor space for hosting free/public events

Figure 4 - 4 Frequency of recurring events and programs in Asbury Park (2021)







## Community Facilities, Schools & Organizations

The presence of community facilities is an indicator of a city's ability to produce cultural and recreational activities. The spaces in community facilities vary from place to place, but often include components like meeting rooms, auditoria, maker spaces, libraries, classrooms, creative studios, video/sound production, and flexible event space. When properly managed, community facilities provide residents with the spaces and programs that support community building, collective assembly, lifelong learning, and individual creativity.

In the case of Asbury Park, this study found a near complete lack of indoor facilities for community-based or community-produced programs. Except for the Asbury Park Public Library - which is subject to the oversight of an independent board - there are few examples of indoor space for events generated by community members in the pursuit of individual creativity, community building, or cultural expression.

The same is true of large community events, which are well served by parks and open space, but have few indoor options for events of any size or complexity.

Many schools, churches, and community organizations contain production and presentation facilities like meeting space, rehearsal facilities, assembly rooms, auditoria, and performance space. In Asbury Park, public school facilities are controlled by the Board of Education. As a result, the municipal government controls very little indoor space for community-based or community-produced programs. This study documented the location and capacity of some of these spaces ([Figure 4 - 2 on page 37](#)), but community engagement revealed limited awareness of where spaces (public or private) are located or how to secure these spaces for community-based activity.

Both the Asbury Park Senior Center and the Asbury Park Public Library are exceptions to the general lack of indoor community facilities. While both institutions have indoor facilities and robust programming that provide critical services to the community, each must satisfy their own operational and programmatic

## Summary Of Findings

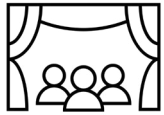
- Space within schools, churches and community organizations lack visibility or are perceived as inaccessible to the public
- Indoor facilities for community-based programs are in extremely short supply
- There are many parks and open spaces but most lack basic infrastructure to support community-based programs

mandates before accommodating community generated programs and activities. Furthermore, the lack of visibility and information about similar facilities in private schools, churches and community organizations adds to the perception of a shortage of space for community-based art, culture, and recreational activity.

Unlike indoor facilities, the City has a broad profile of open spaces and parks that can (and do) host community-based events and programming. In fact, 95% of all survey respondents indicated that they had participated in activities in streets, parks, or open spaces, while a much lower proportion indicated they have participated in activities hosted in indoor community facilities. Despite their availability, this study noted that parks lack a uniform standard of infrastructure like seating, shading, electricity, and rest rooms to support community activities. Recent investments in public infrastructure like a performance shell and restrooms in Springwood Park are an exception to this rule - making it a commonly used space for free programming by the City and non-profit partners like the Asbury Park Music Foundation. Furthermore, some community members expressed frustration with the process for securing permits, insurance, and usage fees for City-owned open spaces, especially for entities with nascent fiscal and organizational resources.

Figure 4 - 5 Examples of existing community facilities in Asbury Park. Asbury Park Public Library (below, left) and Asbury Park Senior Center (below, right)





## People & Audiences

An important concept that arose from the planning process is that there are different cohorts who consume or participate in cultural activity in the City. Furthermore, these cohorts have different perspectives about how to support the City's cultural ecosystem. The most direct way to evaluate the competing interests is to divide audiences into the broad categories of full-time residents, part-time residents, and visitors.

### Full-Time Residents

As discussed in the *Community Profile* (See page 26), the full-time residential population of Asbury Park has been in decline over the past three decades. Additionally, there have been noted changes in the racial, age and economic composition of the population, and the City is trending toward being older, wealthier, and less diverse. Many full-time residents spoke with pride, excitement, and interest about privately produced cultural offerings like live music, restaurants, festivals, and outdoor community events. However, others - especially those encountered at community-based events - expressed concern that historical, geographical, and racial divisions have been exacerbated by the cost of events and lack of inclusiveness in cultural programming. In fact, many minority residents stated that the genres and forms of cultural expression they are interested in are not represented in the City's commercial programming. In general, it was found that most full-time residents did have an appetite for more private programming but preferred that City resources be devoted to developing facilities and events for youth engagement, community produced programming, and improving year-round quality of life.

### Part-Time Residents

There is no way to know the number of part-time residents of the City. However, the demographic trends and experiential evidence of residents suggests that the

## Summary Of Findings

- Residents and visitors are well served by commercial cultural activity
- Full-time residents - especially those of modest economic means - do not have access to free programs and recreational community facilities associated with an outstanding quality of life that is consistent with the City's Master Plan vision
- Commercial activity in some districts may be crowding out opportunities for residents to engage in community-based activities

number of part-timers is increasing as a proportion of total population. When considering part-time residents, it is reasonable to assume at least part of their attraction to Asbury Park is related to recreational and cultural offerings. Also, part-time residents are considered to have higher disposable incomes, and are likely to consume more services and cultural activities than their full-time counterparts. In fact, many part-time residents may be well served by commercial cultural offerings, but their perspective may not be heavily invested in things

like the profile of educational and community facilities or the frequency of year-round programming for the community. Finally, there was also a sentiment that part-time residents may consider converting to full-time residency if year-round quality of life was improved to offer them a full suite of services and facilities for engaging with and participating in cultural activities.

### Visitors

Visitation and tourism are major drivers of the local economy - especially in the tourist season. The recreational opportunities of the beach and many commercial cultural offerings define Asbury Park's status as a regional tourist destination. The strength of the private market for recreation and tourism, however, is not a good indicator of the quality of the year-round residential experience. Community engagement activities revealed pervasive attitudes that while tourism is necessary for the economic wellbeing of the City, does not translate into a sense of fulfillment for many full-time residents. Furthermore, residents of all kinds expressed concern that more resources are devoted to developing and executing commercial and tourism focused events than providing community facilities, programs, and services that the year-round community.

Figure 4 - 6 Theoretical characteristics and concerns of different audience cohorts

	FULL-TIME RESIDENTS	PART-TIME RESIDENTS	VISITORS
SIZE	~15,500	UNKNOWN	A LOT
CHARACTERISTICS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Homes</li> <li>Median Income: \$29,600</li> <li>23% Below Poverty Line</li> <li>Median Age: 36.5</li> <li>43% African American / 17% Latino</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Second Home / Seasonal</li> <li>Likely Wealthier</li> <li>Likely Older</li> <li>Likely Less Diverse Than Full-Time Population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Day Visits / Short Stays</li> <li>County, State or Regional Origin</li> <li>Economic Drivers</li> </ul>
ISSUES & CONCERNS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of Life</li> <li>Schools &amp; Local Services</li> <li>Affordability</li> <li>Attachment to Place</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Convenience &amp; Accessibility</li> <li>Commerce &amp; Services</li> <li>Events &amp; Activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activities</li> <li>Events</li> <li>Recreation</li> <li>Ease of Access</li> </ul>





## Community & Inclusion

The issue of inclusion was possibly the most recurrent theme that arose from community engagement activities. In fact, nearly all engagement participants, community residents, and stakeholders – regardless of race or ethnicity – expressed the importance of inclusion as a component of improving residential quality of life. It is nearly impossible to develop statistics to ascertain how inclusive (or not) a city is, but the overwhelming sentiment conveyed through engagement activities was that more must be done to engage residents from all areas, ethnicities, and cultural cohorts. The on-line survey conducted as part of this study also suggested that youth engagement and equity were among the respondents top priorities.

Based on the engagement performed, concerns about inclusion have several different roots. The first relates to opportunities for community members to engage in and consume cultural activity that is relevant to their experiences and forms of cultural expression. Many stakeholders and community members suggested that the genres and styles of commercial cultural offerings are heavily skewed toward visitors that have a different demographic profile than the year-round residential community. While many organizations are working

### Summary Of Findings

- Quality of life, youth engagement, economic advancement and equity are top priorities
- Many communities experience barriers to participation for individual or collective cultural expression
- The local creative community is largely left out of commercially focused cultural offerings produced in the City's public spaces

to provide relevant community programming, there may be opportunities for the City to develop specific programs aimed at multicultural exchange that include exposing the general population to a broader range of cultural traditions like the music, food, or customs of the residential population. In fact, many cities have multi-cultural music and food festivals as a centerpiece of their efforts to bring people of different backgrounds together through community-based programs.

A second root of concerns about inclusion stemmed from the idea that little is being done to include the local creative community – regardless of ethnicity – in the commercially focused events, programs, and festivals in the City's publicly owned spaces. Community members repeatedly expressed that there is a wealth of local talent in the City, but many found that commercial programs in public space exclude local artists and creators. Even small-scale programs like busking and informal public performance are limited by the lack of a clear curating process, or understanding by performers of the necessary regulations and permits. A targeted effort to cultivate these types of performances, with a clearly defined selection and approval process is an opportunity to support a robust lineup of content providers from the local community – especially those at the beginning of their creative journeys. Even more concerning were accounts from minority members of the local creative community who relayed experiences where they felt local programmers and venues required them to provide additional security, insurance, or deposits as a precondition for hosting their events.

Finally, many community members pointed to a lack of access to facilities for community members to engage in individual and collective creative pursuits, as another dimension of the lack of inclusion. This includes the perception that the public school system provides little in the way of cultural literacy, creative educational

programming, or spaces to support community programming. Community members astutely pointed out that the Public Library and Senior Center – while valuable to the community – do not provide the profile of spaces needed to engage residents in recreational activities or the learning, making, and doing that enables individual creativity or collective cultural expression. The bottom line is that the lack of a clear 'community center' has led to a fractured sense of equity around what is provided for commercial cultural consumption and what is available to the community for the most basic types of gathering or cultural exchange.



Figure 4 - 7 Inspire Life Fine Arts and Technology Camp







## Funding

Communities with healthy cultural ecosystems typically have a sustainable funding stream that supports community arts, culture, and recreation. In many cases, this funding is essential for the activities, events, performances, festivals, public art, programs, and facilities that support individual creativity, lifelong learning, and collective cultural expression. Sustainable funding for the arts is critical for leveraging arts and culture as a generator of economic development. Funding that supports local creators, cultural resource partners, and non-profit arts organizations can improve coordination, information sharing, and increase the visibility of local creators seeking to participate in commercial creative activity.

The research conducted for this study found that the City provides indirect funding for community recreation and cultural programs through staff positions - most notably the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Director and the Director of Recreation. CDBG funding also supported recreational programs, improvements to open space infrastructure, and operations at the Asbury Park Senior Center. While this funding is critical for sustaining these types of activities, it also represents indirect funding. Furthermore, the CDBG is renewed on an annual basis, and does not represent a predictable funding source for community arts and culture. It is important to mention that funding for the Board of Education and the Asbury Park Public Library are provided through general property tax assessments. This is also indirect funding that does not result from a budgetary process directly supporting community arts, culture, or recreation.

In terms of direct funding, the planning team was not able to identify a stable source of municipal funding for arts and culture. The only exception to this are the annual discretionary allocations provided by individual members of the City Council. In many cases, this

## Summary Of Findings

- There is little direct arts and culture funding by the City except discretionary allocations from the City Council
- Indirect funding is provided for staff positions for the Director of Recreation and Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Director
- The Asbury Park Public Library and Board of Education are funded by property tax assessments and also represent indirect funding
- Indirect funding for recreational programming and facilities comes from the CDBG, but there is no mandate to direct it toward community arts and culture
- Many non-profit organizations seek and provide funding for cultural activity through grants and fundraising

funding has supported projects and programs with significant artistic, creative, or cultural components (Figure 4 - 8). However, the discretionary nature of

this funding means it is not guaranteed from year to year and does not represent a stable or sustainable direct funding source for arts and culture in the City.

Figure 4 - 8 Beach lockers at the Asbury Park Beach created through indirect funding for community youth recreation programs (below, right); Mural project on the Asbury Park Sewer Treatment Plant supported by discretionary funding





## Coordination & Capacity

Coordination between the private sector, public sector, and the community is crucial for healthy art and cultural ecosystems. Since

resources for event production and space are limited in most places, it is important that cities approach programming and development of community facilities in a way that holistically addresses the needs of residents and the ancillary ability of the arts to stimulate economic development. As such, coordination and capacity building for cultural activity generally happens in several ways.

First, city employees responsible for recreational programs and community facilities coordinate community activities and public events. In some cases, cities foster collaborations between organizations to produce events for specific audiences or population cohorts – especially as they relate to aspirational city goals like inclusion, diversity, and multi-cultural exchange. In addition, city employees responsible for economic development or cultural affairs often coordinate permitting and logistics for special events and commercial activity in public spaces. This study identified multiple positions within the City’s administration that were responsible for such activities including the Director of Recreation and the CDBG Manager. However, based on community engagement activities and an assessment of event frequency, it

did not appear that there were adequate resources available to produce a year-round profile of community-based programming for residents. In fact, it may be that the growing roster and complexity of privately produced special events coordinated by the City is limiting the City’s capacity to address the programmatic needs of full-time residents. This may be evidenced in the lack of year-round community programming when compared to a relatively high baseline of commercially focused cultural programming throughout the year (See [Figure 4 - 4 on page 38](#)).

The second level of coordination generally happens within the non-profit sector. In many places, secondary non-profit organizations advocate for and provide resources to the local creative community. This often takes the form of connecting local creators with the information, space, logistical support, and funding to produce cultural and artistic content. In some places this also takes the form of consulting or incubating creative enterprises through business planning, intellectual property consulting, start-up space, or shared business resources. Some examples of these types of organizations include Monmouth Arts, the Jersey City Arts Council, and the Marion Cultural Alliance (Ocala, FL). In general, these organizations work as a link between the local creative community and governments looking to harness the economic and social power of the arts. It is common that these non-profit organizations enter formal partnerships where local governments provide funding to cultural resource

partners in exchange for services like grant assistance, special project execution, and public programming.

Research and community engagement activities found that the level of coordination by the City and the local creative community could be greatly improved. While there are many community organizations producing art and cultural content, they have little awareness of each other’s core missions and activities. Additionally, this study found that there are many media outlets that individually raise awareness about event-based activity, but there is an acute need for a one-stop resource that aggregates information about commercial and community programming throughout the City. Finally, many members of the creative community expressed dire concern about the availability of funding, informational resources, and production space. While there are policy elements that are needed to address some of these issues, the presence of third-party providers that coordinate policy and development activities between the City and its creative community could be highly beneficial.

### Summary of Findings

- More coordination is needed between the City’s administration, non-profit groups, and for-profit creators
- Collective marketing and promotion lack coordination
- Local creators need better methods of finding each other and being connected to resources like funding and production space





## Districts & Activity Clusters

This study found three primary clusters of artistic and cultural activity in the City. More than 2/3 of respondents

to the on-line survey indicated the Waterfront (93%), Downtown (90%), and Springwood Avenue (67%) as the top three areas of the City associated with art and cultural activity. Figure 4 - 9 shows the general location and types of assets within each of these districts. While the boundaries are mutable, characterizing these districts is based on analysis of the physical qualities, programming frequency, prevalence of venues, and input from engagement activities. Brief summaries of the qualities and characteristics of each district is included below:

### *Waterfront Tourism & Entertainment District*



The waterfront is the primary driver of tourism and visitation in the City. In the warm months, the beach draws visitors from around the state and region. The presence of indoor and outdoor venues including the Stone Pony/Summer Stage, Tim McCloone's Supper Club, Wonder Bar, and Asbury Lanes lend to the perception of the district as a center for live music. Additionally, visitation and tourism are

## Summary Of Findings

- There are 3 primary nodes of cultural and artistic activity (Downtown, Waterfront, Springwood Ave)
- Commercial activity is good for the City's economy but may be crowding out community-based programming – especially in the Waterfront and Downtown
- Springwood Park has emerged as a major center for community-based art and cultural activity
- There are many concerns about inclusion, gentrification, and lack of access to facilities for community-based programming – especially as they relate to younger residents

broadly supported by food vendors, cafes, bars, and restaurants. In recent years, the tactical interventions of the Wooden Walls Project have given rise to a nascent identity of the district as a center for public art, murals, and sculptural installations.

While the beach is recognized as a singular and unique asset that drives the City's economy, community engagement activities revealed perceptions that the commercial focus of activities in the waterfront is not inclusive or representative of the year-round residential population. This perception was expressed repeatedly regarding the cost of accessing the beach in the summer season, the lack of low-cost food options, and the lack of free community-based programming. By way of example, in 2022, a family of 4 (two adults and two children 12+ years) would need to spend \$36 in beach fees before considering the cost of parking, food or ancillary activities. The perceived lack of inclusion also extended to community members who expressed that the genres, styles, and forms of cultural expression in the waterfront do not represent the interests of the year-

round residential community and do not incorporate local performers or creators in meaningful ways.

### *Downtown Arts & Commerce District*



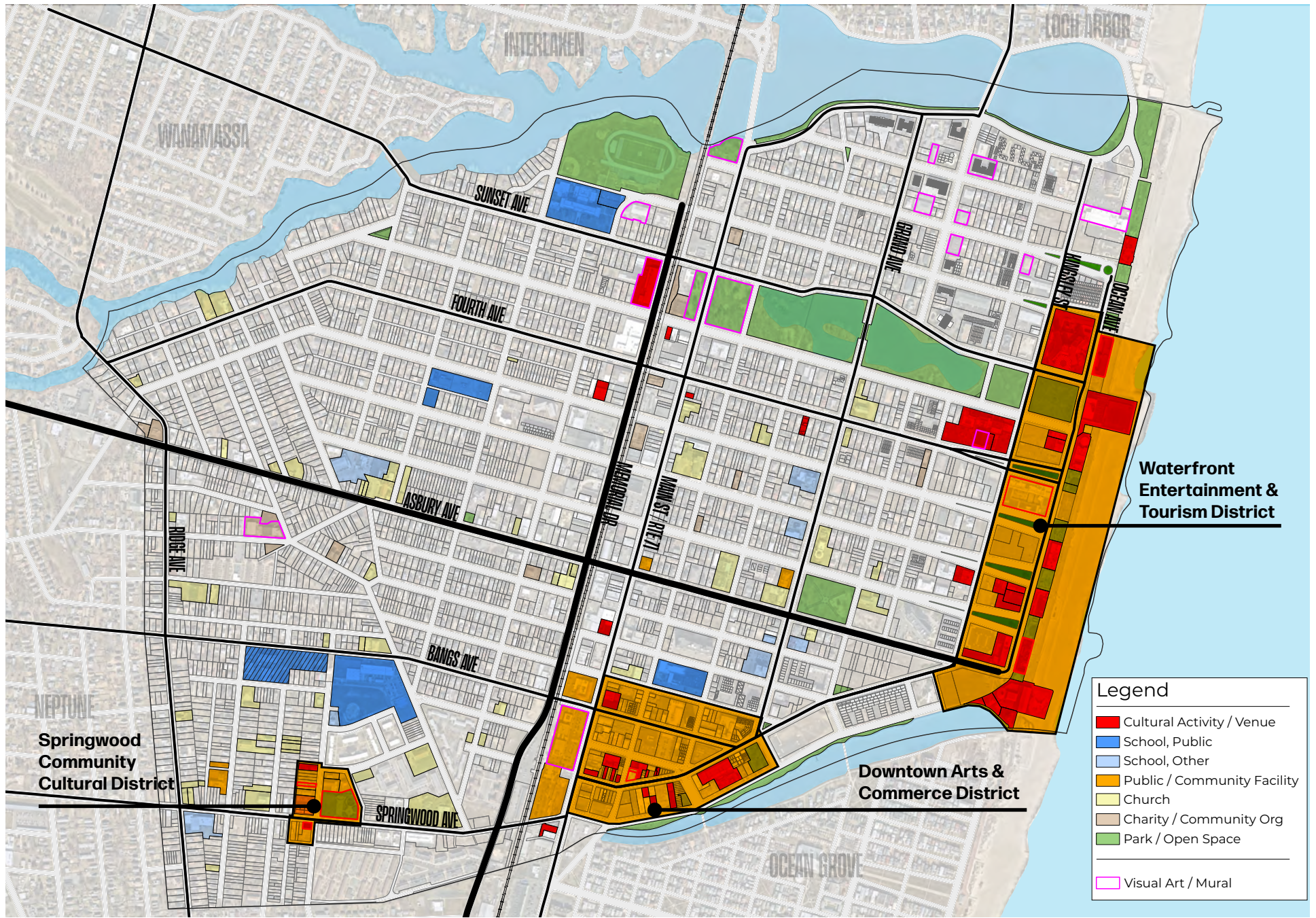
The downtown district, centered on Cookman Avenue, is a significant driver of commercially focused artistic and cultural activity. A significant number of galleries, restaurants, bars with live music, and formal venues have established the district as a year-round activity center. The small scale of the streets, transit access, historic buildings, and traditional downtown format have been important factors in the redevelopment and revitalization of the district. Indoor venues and restaurants that host live music and smaller-scale events year-round also lends to a sense of consistent activity.

Engagement activities, however, revealed concerns about the ability of the district to sustain and thrive over the long term. Many residents and business owners expressed that the district has become exorbitantly expensive, and no longer includes the spaces necessary for cultural production like meetings, rehearsals, and workshops. Many members

Figure 4 - 9 Map showing the primary nodes of artistic and cultural activity in Asbury Park









of the creative community relayed stories of being ‘priced out’ of the market in favor of businesses that cater to visitors. Furthermore, many minority residents suggested the commercial and free cultural programming is too commercially focused and does not reflect the composition or interests of the year-round residential community. Multiple business owners lamented the lack of coordinated programming by the City or other entities including gallery openings, art tours, and other events that could amplify the contributions of local creators and economically support businesses outside the tourist season.

#### *Springwood Community Cultural District*



In recent years, the West Side neighborhood along Springwood Avenue has re-emerged as a center of community-based programs including festivals, concerts, and other forms of cultural expression. Schools, churches, community organizations and social service providers also have a significant footprint in the neighborhood and contribute to cultural and recreational programs. These include the Asbury Park Senior Center, The Turf Club/ African American Music Project, Kula Farm, and the Boys and Girls Club of Monmouth County, among others. The renovation of Springwood Park has

also provided a ‘center of gravity’ for community-based and free programming by the City and other organizations – especially in the warmer months.

While there are many educational, churches and non-profit organizations in the district, community members expressed concern over the lack of access to indoor spaces and programming for youth to engage in individual and collective creative pursuits. Furthermore, many expressed concerns about gentrification leading to displacement of existing residents. Still others pointed to lack of inclusion as being exemplified by the nearly complete absence of African American and other minorities in the historical narratives of the City. While there are community-based organizations working to preserve and protect these cultural legacies, residents expressed skepticism that an arts and culture plan could address the community needs of youth engagement, inter-generational learning, and inclusive economic opportunity. Still, many community members spoke hopefully about the transformative possibility of a true ‘community center’ to address some of these needs. Many residents offered their perspective that this could be achieved through adaptive reuse of existing facilities like the former West Side Community Center or Barak Obama Middle School.





## Brand & Visual Identity

A city's brand and visual identity are important when considering how residents and visitors perceive the City and the vibrancy its art and cultural ecosystem. In recent years, many cities have undertaken comprehensive branding efforts to harmonize the visual appearance of their cities, and craft identities that speaks to authentic community values. This can include how streets, public spaces, and buildings

are designed to incorporate community values like creativity, resilience, or sustainability. In addition, assets associated with branding, such as logos, color scheme, design motifs, and typography are important methods of expressing a city's brand. A comprehensive approach to these elements is crucial for external marketing, economic development, or tourism campaigns that attract investment and development.

With branding, it is helpful to review aspirational examples from other places to demonstrate how

## Summary Of Findings

- Asbury Park's cultural ecosystem is multi-dimensional but at different stages of development.
- The City's visual identity lacks cohesion
- Many opportunities exist to build creativity into the public infrastructure investment process

Figure 4 - 10 Examples of various elements of Asbury Park's current visual brand and identity

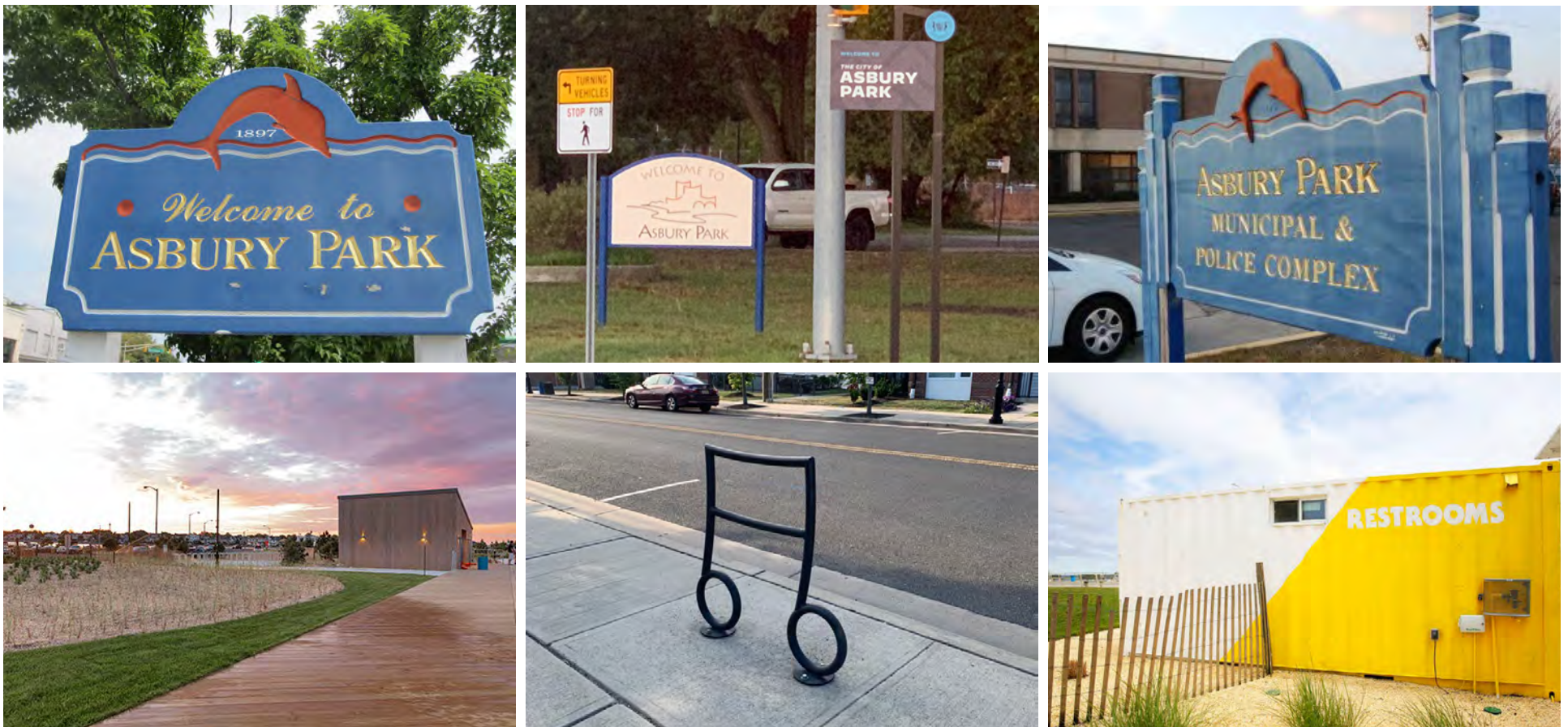






Figure 4 - 11 Asbury Park's recent wayfinding signage initiative

a cohesive visual brand is deployed through public infrastructure like signage, gateway markers, street furnishings, wayfinding, and other design elements. Figure 4 - 14 shows a range of public infrastructure elements in Miami Beach, FL that use art, creativity, and historical design motifs to support an image of Miami Beach as a creative and vibrant city. Most importantly, the motifs, colors and typography feel authentic and use the city's connection to mid-century and art deco design to harmonize visual elements without prescribing they are all the same.

#### Asbury Park's Visual Brand

The visual investigation conducted for this study found many different visual styles, motifs, and themes represented in Asbury Park's public infrastructure. Despite recent investments in gateway and wayfinding signage (Figure 4 - 11), the visual appearance of the City does not present a cohesive picture. Design standards and styles are applied unevenly and could speak more

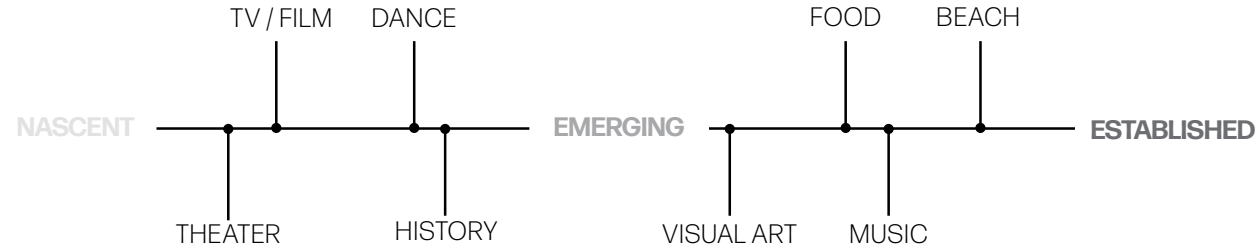


Figure 4 - 12 Theoretical continuum of elements of Asbury Park's programmatic brands

directly to cultural history, community values, and Asbury Park's future as a creative city. While tactical interventions like temporary murals and public art are widely viewed as successful, many opportunities for integrating creativity and artistic expression in the infrastructure renewal process are missed. The recent painting of the sewer treatment plans demonstrates some movement in the correct direction (Figure 4 - 13), but more forethought is needed to assure that elements like benches, lifeguard stands, beach huts, public buildings, light posts, and other capital investments leverage opportunities to support a visual brand of Asbury Park that is based on creativity and community values. Furthermore, to assure these are authentic efforts every attempt should be made to engage the local creative community in creating the content and form of these expressions of the City's brand.

#### Programmatic Brand

The profile of activities, events, and programming factor into the understanding of a city's brand. There is broad awareness of Asbury Park as a destination for activities like the beach, live music, and food. However, other elements of the City's brand like public art, film/TV, and performing arts are either emerging or nascent elements of the attractive forces of the City. Figure 4 - 12 shows a theoretical continuum of the City's programmatic brand, which is derived from data about the frequency of event types and community engagement activities. This is an important concept as the City decides which forms of cultural expression it

prioritize, incentivize or support. Also, if the City intends to market itself externally, having clear strategic intent in the visual and programmatic elements of its brand is critical to attracting employers, residents, and visitors.

Figure 4 - 13 Murals on the Asbury Park Sewer Treatment Plant (below)

Figure 4 - 14 Examples of creative branding and a cohesive visual identity in Miami Beach (opposite)











## Regional Competition & Local Markets

Asbury Park's geographic location between Philadelphia and New York City can be a double-edged sword when it comes to the competitive cultural market. Proximity to these population centers has been a general driver of economic development and tourism over the past decade. However, the size of the cultural markets in these cities means that smaller cities, like Asbury Park, must compete with larger cities that have well-formed cultural districts and nearly unlimited cultural offerings. In addition, Monmouth County has a many cities with their own profile of events, venues, and cultural offerings for residents and regional visitors that create a highly competitive landscape in which Asbury Park and its programming partners operate.

An economic impact study, or similar economic analysis, that estimates cultural market saturation is beyond the scope of this study. However, this study examined the inventory of formal performance venues within a 20-mile radius of Asbury Park. As mentioned elsewhere in this report, there is a gap in the City's ability to host large-scale events in formal indoor venues because facilities like Convention Hall, Paramount Theater, and Savoy Theater are all currently dormant. When looked at in isolation, the economic and cultural impact of

### Summary Of Findings

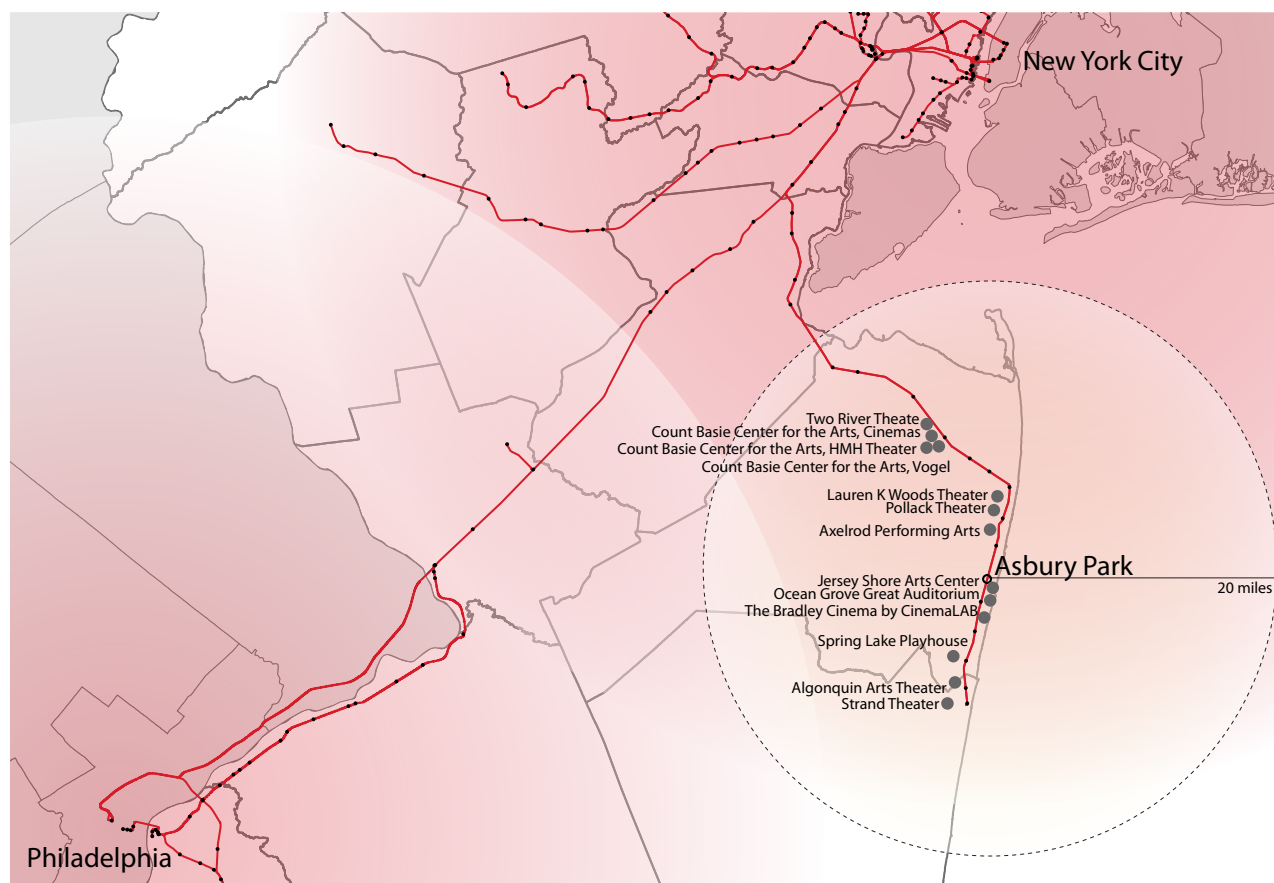
- The regional marketplace for cultural events is highly competitive
- Inactive and underutilized venues put the City at a competitive disadvantage in the region
- Incentives and investment in venues and cultural production space should be tied to economic and market analysis

this inactivity may not be obvious. However, [Figure 4 - 15](#) shows a partial accounting of similar venues and performing arts centers in the area. While there may be others, the significant number of those identified near Asbury Park speaks to the highly competitive market for such facilities to attract local and touring acts. As formal venues in Asbury Park remain inactive, the City is losing economic and commercial cultural activity to other cities with the facilities and institutions capable of hosting full-scale productions.

Finally, it is not only the presence of venues that

matters. It is also important that the right profile of venues is available. That is to say that a small flexible performance space (e.g., a black box theater) may do more to advance the competitive position of the City as a creative center with multiple venue typologies and capabilities. Ultimately, any city should study their local market to determine the correct profile of venues that best satisfies market demand rather than investing in venues that may be common elements of the regional marketplace.

Figure 4 - 15 Regional map showing select venues and performing arts centers in the regional cultural market









# Goals & Strategies





# Goals & Strategies

## Introduction

Collectively, the goals and strategies set the vision and methods for supporting the local creative and cultural ecosystem of the City. First, the goals articulate desired outcomes with respect to community needs identified through the research, assessment and community engagement activities. Second, the strategies provide the framework for tactical initiatives and actions that will be necessary to address gaps by supporting individual creativity, collective assembly, and commercial cultural activity. The goals and strategies are summarized briefly below, and described in greater detail herein.

## Goals

### **AUGMENT...**

year-round quality of life

### **EXPAND...**

the cultural production ecosystem

### **FOSTER...**

inclusion, community cohesion, wellbeing, and lifelong learning

### **SUPPORT...**

tourism, cultural enterprises and the creative economy

---

## Strategies

### **PROVIDE...**

resources, facilities and inclusive programs for individual creativity, recreation, and lifelong learning

### **COORDINATE...**

development, land use, funding and policies to support tourism and the homegrown creative economy

### **LEVERAGE...**

Asbury Park's brand as an inclusive and diverse city where creativity thrives

### **TRANSFORM...**

streets and public spaces to support next-level artistic and cultural activity





# Goals Of The Arts & Culture Plan

Asbury Park can remain a thriving cultural hub that balances residential quality of life with its status as a regional touristic and economic powerhouse. To achieve this vision, the Arts & Culture Plan identified four goals that are the result of research, information gathering, and community engagement. How each of these goals contributes to the social, economic and community dimensions of the City's cultural identity is described in detail below:

## Augment...

### year-round quality of life

A good year-round quality of life is crucial for attracting and retaining full-time residents to lead fulfilling and thriving lives within the City's boundaries. Beyond just the basics of education and employment opportunities, this encompasses the physical, emotional, and social well-being of individuals. By promoting year-round community activities, cultural events, and recreational opportunities, cities can support the well-being and quality of life of their residents. Cultural activities, like music performances, art exhibitions, and other productions provide entertainment and encourage personal growth and engagement; community events like festivals, parades, and street fairs bring people together, create a sense of belonging, and foster social connection; and Recreational activities that include sports, outdoor activities, and fitness classes, promote physical health, and provide an outlet for stress relief. By prioritizing these programs and activities, cities can support vibrant and livable communities that benefit residents, attract visitors and support businesses. Overall, promoting year-round cultural activity, community events, and recreation is essential for building a healthy, vibrant, and thriving community that supports the well-being and happiness of its residents.



# Expand...

## the cultural production ecosystem

Expanding the cultural production ecosystem is essential to promoting cultural diversity and innovation. This ecosystem encompasses individuals, organizations, and institutions involved in creating, promoting, and distributing the products of creative pursuits like music, literature, visual arts, and film. By expanding this ecosystem, more opportunities are created for artists and cultural entrepreneurs to showcase their talents and connect with diverse audiences. This may lead to new forms of cultural expression and revive traditional practices. Moreover, it tends to support economic growth, job creation, and cultural tourism that benefit local communities. Investing in and supporting this ecosystem is crucial to creating a vibrant and diverse cultural landscape that promotes creativity, innovation, and cross-cultural understanding.

Aside from performance and exhibition spaces, production and rehearsal spaces are crucial to expanding the cultural production ecosystem. Production spaces like recording studios, art studios, film studios, maker spaces, workshops, rehearsal studios, and dance studios are the spaces where artists create, produce, and refine their work. Access to these spaces - for both professionals and community pursuits - is critical to supporting the creative process and enabling nascent creators to develop their craft. Hence, expanding the cultural production ecosystem requires investing in and supporting the infrastructure and resources to ideate, produce, refine, and rehearse creative pursuits.

# Foster...

## inclusion, community cohesion, wellbeing & lifelong learning

Fostering inclusion, community cohesion, wellbeing, and lifelong learning is crucial for building stronger and more resilient communities. Creating opportunities for people from diverse backgrounds to connect, learn, and grow together, cities can support united communities that are better equipped to face challenges together. Asbury Park's cultural history and diverse population make it an ideal generator of community and cultural events that showcase different ethnic and cultural traditions. By promoting inclusive events and inviting broad participation from the community, Asbury Park can promote inclusion, community cohesion, and wellbeing among its residents.

Moreover, community and cultural events can provide opportunities for individual development, well-being, and an improved quality of life. By creating a supportive environment that encourages personal growth and cultural exchange, the City can foster a sense of cohesion and belonging that is critical to promoting wellbeing, resilience, and lifelong learning.

# Support...

## tourism, cultural enterprises & the creative economy

Supporting tourism, cultural enterprises, and the creative economy is crucial to driving economic growth and development. By investing in and promoting creative industries, the City can create new jobs, generate revenue, and attract visitors. Additionally, these industries play an important role in preserving and promoting local cultural heritage, supporting the arts, and promoting cross-cultural understanding. As a result, supporting tourism, cultural enterprises, and the creative economy can have a positive impact on the social and cultural fabric of a community.

To support these industries, it is important to create an environment that encourages innovation and entrepreneurship. This can involve providing resources such as funding, training, and mentoring for local businesses and individuals. It can also involve promoting the development of cultural infrastructure such as performance spaces, art galleries, and cultural institutions. By supporting the growth and development of tourism, cultural enterprises, and the creative economy, the City can create a more vibrant and diverse community that can thrive in the 21st century.





# Strategies Of The Arts & Culture Plan

The Plan recommends four different strategies needed to achieve the previously detailed goals. Each strategy encompass organizational, policy, physical, or strategic actions carried out by the City, its partners, or community members. When taken together, the strategies are the starting point for holistically addressing the goals of the Arts & Culture Plan.

## Provide...

resources, facilities & inclusive programs for individual creativity, recreation, & lifelong learning

A sustainable cultural ecosystem is the result of strategic investment in the people, facilities, and programs that support individual and collective creative expression. A community, its residents, and its commercial creators all require access to information, space, and activities that may be facilitated through actions like:

- Increasing City Staff to coordinate commercial and community cultural activities
- Developing indoor community facilities and open spaces that support cultural and recreational programs
- Supporting more multi-cultural programs and events throughout the City
- Coordinating information, resources and collaboration between the government, private enterprises, and non-profit partners
- Working with programing partners to develop year-round participatory activities for residents



# Coordinate...

development, land use, funding & policies to support tourism & the homegrown creative economy

Residential quality of life and the cultural economy rely on a framework to support, encourage, and incentivize cultural uses and creative activities. Whether for personal enrichment, economic development, or commercial production, all cities should develop the regulations and policies that address the strategic needs of their residents and creative economy. This may include policy and regulatory actions like:

- Updating zoning codes and redevelopment plans to incentivize artistic and cultural uses
- Promoting mixed-use development that includes flexible workspace, light industrial, artisanal production, and live-work housing
- Developing cultural production space, business incubators, and “step out” space to support creative enterprises and the cultural production cycle
- Prioritizing direct funding for community, arts, culture and recreation

# Leverage...

Asbury Park’s brand as an inclusive & diverse city where creativity thrives

A city’s brand is best expressed through the values and authentic cultural expressions of its communities. Asbury Park’s perception as a welcoming cultural destination in the region is an opportunity to engage the diverse perspectives and experiences of its residents in the social, cultural and economic vitality that attracts people to the City by:

- Giving visibility to local creators, especially those from historically underrepresented communities
- Inclusive involvement of the local creative community in tourism, placemaking, and economic development initiatives
- Harmonizing the graphic and visual brand of the city to reflect authentic and inclusive community values, history and culture
- Building opportunities for creativity, cultural and artistic expression from the local community into the infrastructure renewal process

# Transform...

streets & public spaces to support next-level artistic & cultural activity

Streets, parks and public spaces are essential to providing residents and visitors with opportunities for individual expression and communal activity. Programming and operation of these spaces requires strategic investment in the policies, physical design and organizational infrastructure to properly manage them, including:

- Developing community focal points for inclusive community-based and commercial programs
- Supporting and curating small-scale performance and busking in public spaces throughout the city
- Providing infrastructure to support community produced events and activities in public spaces
- Transforming streets to incorporate values such as sustainability, environmental justice and resiliency
- Incorporating opportunities for public art and other forms of creative expression in the design process for capital and redevelopment projects
- Improving mobility, pedestrian and bike infrastructure to connect different components of the City’s cultural ecosystem







# Recommendations





# Recommendations

## Introduction

When implemented, the recommendations of the Arts & Culture Plan will guide the City, its residents, and the local creative community in using the strategies to achieve the goals of the Plan:

## Arts & Culture Plan Goals

**AUGMENT** year-round quality of life

**EXPAND** the cultural production ecosystem

**FOSTER** inclusion, community cohesion, wellbeing and lifelong learning

**SUPPORT** tourism, cultural enterprises and the creative economy

## Arts & Culture Plan Strategies

**PROVIDE** resources, facilities and inclusive programs for individual creativity, recreation, and lifelong learning

**COORDINATE** development, land use, funding and policies to support tourism and the homegrown creative economy

**LEVERAGE** Asbury Park's brand as an inclusive and diverse city where creativity thrives

**TRANSFORM** streets and public spaces to support next-level artistic and cultural activity

## Summary of Recommendations

The Plan's recommendations are derived from research, analysis, and community engagement activities. However, the recommendations are not 'all-or-nothing' solutions. Instead, each recommendation has incremental steps that build momentum for more significant actions, policies, and projects over time. As a summary, the major recommendations of the Plan are:



**ESTABLISH** a funding stream for community arts, culture and recreation



**EXPAND** city resources to manage public programs, community facilities and cultural affairs



**ENGAGE** cultural resource partners



**CENTER** the City's visual brand on creativity and community values



**DEVELOP** a community culture center



**SUPPORT & CONNECT** cultural nodes and community gateways

Together these recommendations combine physical, organizational, policy and funding actions to support, expand, and sustain the City's cultural ecosystem. Each recommendation and its related implementation framework are described herein.

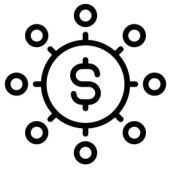






Establish a  
Funding Stream  
For Community  
Arts, Culture &  
Recreation





# Establish a Funding Stream For Community Arts, Culture & Recreation

## Overview

The findings of this study suggest that funding community art, culture and recreation will positively impact the year-round residential quality of life by prioritizing spending on community facilities, community programming and other expressions of community arts and culture. The sources of this funding requires further study and budgetary coordination that is beyond the scope of this Plan. However, when enacted, such funding could be used for capital and programmatic initiatives including (but not limited to):

- Community and Participatory Programs
- Community Facilities and Resources
- Public Art, Sculpture and Installations
- Public Infrastructure Upgrades and Maintenance
- Staffing and Administrative Positions
- Coordination and Community Resources
- Grants and Community Partnerships

With an understanding that municipal budgets are highly constrained, it is likely that contributions from multiple sources will be needed for the priorities established by the statutory and regulatory authority of the governing body. Examples of some funding sources that may be directed to community arts, culture and recreation are briefly described further:

### Public & Municipal Funding Sources

Public and municipal funding sources include line-item budget appropriations, development impact fees, or an 'Art Trust Fund' supported by revenues from a tax levy. [Figure 6 - 1](#) shows a list of funding sources that should be evaluated to understand the individual and cumulative impact on providing consistent public funding for the arts. While this is not an exhaustive or prescriptive list, some potential sources of funding are described further herein.

## Potential Sources of Funding For Community Arts, Culture & Recreation

- Municipal Budget Line Item Funding
- Municipal Bonding and Percent for Arts Funding
- Art Trust Fund
- Permits, Fees and Surcharges
- Liquor and Cannabis Licenses and Fees
- Revenue Generating Uses In Public Space
- Excess Revenues and Municipal Utilities
- Hotel Occupancy and Tourism Taxes
- Impact Fees for Redevelopment Projects
- Federal, State and County Programs
- Private Grants, Foundation and Donations
- Urban Enterprise Zone (UEZ) Funding

Figure 6 - 1 Examples of potential funding sources for community arts, culture and recreation.

### *Municipal Bonding & 'Percent for Arts' Funding*

Several municipalities in New Jersey and nationally have developed programs where municipal bonds include an appropriation to support various community needs and priorities. For example, in 2018, the Mayor of Hoboken issued an executive order mandating all municipal bonds include a 1% appropriation to fund public art and sculpture initiatives as part of its capital projects ([Figure 6 - 2](#)). Similar actions could be taken by Asbury Park to assure that municipal spending on capital projects includes modest funding for priorities like indoor community facility space or public art and sculpture.

### *Art Trust Fund*

In 2020, the voters of Jersey City approved a ballot referendum for a tax levy to support local arts and culture. The initiative directly funds art and cultural initiatives by allowing a property tax levy of up to two cents for every \$100 of property value. The amount of the actual levy can be set lower than two cents



Figure 6 - 2 An example of public art mural on a municipal parking garage funded through a municipal bond 'percent for art' allocation (Hoboken, NJ)

per \$100 of property value and adjusted periodically by the governing body. Similar funding mechanisms could be explored in Asbury Park, with an appropriate funding level that may be lower (or higher) than what has been enacted in other municipalities. In 2022, the approximate total property valuation for the City was \$2.48B<sup>1</sup>. As an example, a universal 'half penny' levy on property value would net approximately \$125,000 to support community art, culture, and recreation annually. With an average home valuation

of approximately \$540,000<sup>2</sup>, at the 'half-penny' rate the average homeowner would contribute \$27 annually to fund community art, culture, and recreation.

#### *Permits, Fees & Surcharges*

The City issues many permits for art and cultural activities including TV, photography, film, and special event permits. Revenues from permits could include a surcharge to fund infrastructure maintenance, recreational programming, or

other priorities that create opportunities for the community to consume, participate in or produce cultural, artistic and community programs.

#### *Liquor & Cannabis Licenses & Fees*

Generating revenue from licenses for legal substances like alcohol and cannabis could provide another source of funding for local arts and culture. With bars and restaurants as a significant draw for tourists and visitors, fees generated from licenses and fees could support community programs including artistic, educational, and recreational programs – perhaps specifically aimed at youth and teens. Asbury Park does not currently allow the sale of medical or adult-use cannabis, but could examine the potential for revenues from such activity to support community arts, culture, and recreation.

#### *Revenue Generating Uses in Public Spaces*

Commercial concessions in parks and public spaces have been used in many places to support a range of physical and programmatic priorities. In fact, the original Shake Shack in Madison Square Park in Manhattan (Figure 6 - 3 on page 68) contributes to the Madison Square Partnership based on sales receipts in exchange for the license to operate a food and beverage concession in the park. The contributions from this concession have had a transformative impact on the park by funding operations, maintenance, capital improvements, public art, sculpture, and free public programs. Similar strategies in publicly owned open spaces in Asbury Park (e.g., Sunset Park, Wesley Lake, Press Plaza, Kennedy Park, etc.) could have a similar impact. Especially if such concessions prioritized incubating locally owned businesses and directed concession revenues to

1 State of New Jersey 2023 one third mill funding spreadsheet; [https://www.njstatelib.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2023\\_Minimum\\_Amount\\_Needed\\_to\\_Qualify\\_for\\_1\\_25\\_Per\\_Capita\\_One\\_Third\\_Mill.xls](https://www.njstatelib.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/2023_Minimum_Amount_Needed_to_Qualify_for_1_25_Per_Capita_One_Third_Mill.xls)

2 <https://www.zillow.com/home-values/3455/asbury-park-nj/>





Figure 6 - 3 Example of a revenue generating use in a public park (New York City, NY)

maintenance, operations, public infrastructure, and community activities or public programming.

*Excess Revenues & Municipal Utilities*

Excess revenue from the sewer, parking and beach utilities has significant potential to advance art and cultural initiatives in ways that are consistent with the

regulatory restrictions on such funds. For example, a modest component of excess revenues from the beach utility (~1.26M in 2021)<sup>3</sup> could be used for public art and/or other creative expressions as part of the infrastructure renewal process including beach badge huts, public restrooms, lifeguard stands, or other elements that support seasonal beach operations. Similarly, a modest portion of revenues from the Parking Utility (~\$2.3M in 2021)<sup>3</sup> could improve vehicular and pedestrian infrastructure like crosswalks, intersections and parking areas in ways by incorporating public art and sculpture.

**Other Private & Grant Funding Sources**

In addition to municipal sources of funding, there may be significant opportunities through county, state, and federal programs. While identifying and applying for these funds requires significant effort from the municipality or non-profit partners, the existence of an arts and culture plan can be an advocacy tool for approaching potential funders. Similarly, the initiatives of the Plan provide private funders like foundations, organizations, and individuals an understanding of

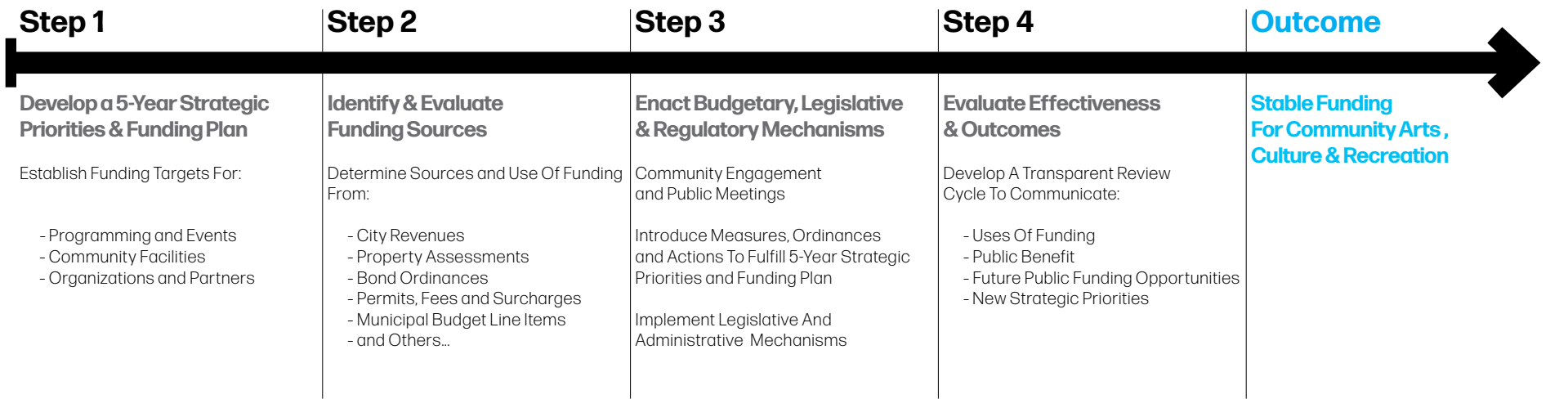
the vision for arts and culture within the City, and a powerful method of advocating for grants, partnership, sponsorships, and individual contributions.

**Implementation Framework**

Establishing a funding stream for community arts, culture and recreation depends on near-term strategic planning and investigative actions that build over time to establish priorities, craft policy, identify sources of funding, and develop legislative mechanisms. Figure 6 - 4 describes the necessary actions to establish a stable funding stream for arts, culture and recreation.

3 City of Asbury Park Annual Report (2021); <https://www.cityofasburypark.com/DocumentCenter/View/3760/2021-City-of-Asbury-Park-Annual-Report-?bidId=>

Figure 6 - 4 Implementation framework to establish a funding stream for community arts, culture and recreation











Expand City  
Resources to Manage  
Public Programs,  
Community Facilities &  
Cultural Affairs





# Expand City Resources to Manage Public Programs, Community Facilities & Cultural Affairs

## Overview

Many cities have staff resources that interface with the community, individual creators, and commercial presenters to manage cultural affairs, community facilities and recreational programs. Factors including population, program frequency, and the profile of available community facilities may influence the organizational form and responsibilities of these staff resources. The Arts & Culture Plan recommends creating distinct City staff positions to manage community and cultural affairs. The first position – a *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* – is responsible for producing and differentially managing community-facing, free and recreational programs produced by the City, community members, and non-profit partners. The second position – a *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* – focuses on programming, permitting and logistics associated with special events and cultural affairs that are privately produced or commercially focused.

In similar fashion, many municipalities with the open space resources and cultural activity of Asbury Park, have Departments of Parks and Recreation that operate, maintain, and program parks, public spaces, and community facilities. Currently, the Department of Public Works (DPW) maintains the City's parks, open spaces, and beaches. However, DPW has no mandate to articulate a strategic plan for developing new community facilities or participatory programs. In the short term, this Plan recommends creating a unit within DPW that is responsible for maintaining parks and open spaces throughout the City. Over the longer-term, this Plan recommends creating a *Department of Parks and Recreation* and a comprehensive *Parks, Open Space and Recreation Plan*. Together, these elements represent the components of a comprehensive management framework to operate, maintain and program the City's recreational assets including parks, open spaces, and community facilities.

The strategic reorganization of existing staff positions, departments, responsibilities within the City's management infrastructure requires time, cooperation, coordination, and funding. However, there are near-term actions to maximize the use, visibility, and awareness of spatial and programmatic resources available to the community in facilities belong to educational, faith-based, non-profit, and community organizations.

Each tactic is described in below:

### **Maximize Use of Schools, Non-Profit, Faith-Based & Community Organizations**

In addition to strategic reorganizations within city government, there should be a concerted effort to maximize the use, awareness, and visibility of the programmatic and spatial resources available to the community through schools, faith-based, non-profit and community organizations. Programs and spaces offered by community partners are critical components of the City's cultural landscape.

Figure 6 - 5 Asbury Park Public Library



Greater visibility and coordinated promotion is crucial to a comprehensive strategy for inclusive participation and amplification of the diverse cultural opportunities produced by organizations and the local creative community. Near term actions that should be undertaken by the City include:

- Create a searchable community space and organizations database
- Develop programming partnerships for recurring community-based events
- Digitize/automate the submission process for promotion and advertising of community events and activities through city outlets (e.g., Social media, email blasts, APTV, etc.)
- Maintain or fund the creation a city-wide on-line events calendar

### **Create a Public Programs & Community Facilities Coordinator**

The production of recreational and free cultural programs like concerts, movies, sports tournaments, art exhibitions, and educational classes require effort and coordination by City staff. The findings of this study indicated the need for the City to increase its capacity to organize, coordinate and produce participatory and community-focused programs – especially outside of the tourist season. The Arts & Culture Plan recommends the City create a *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* responsible for maintaining a robust profile of year-round community programming and the strategic development and management of community facilities.

This staff person is a go-to resource for individuals and community-based organizations producing events in City-owned spaces and facilities. Working

in collaboration with the *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* (see below), they assist community members and organizations with permitting and approvals and connect them to resources for advertisement and promotion (e.g., newsletters, email blast, digital signage, APTV, etc.). Furthermore, they are the go-to resource for connecting producers, creators, and organizations with information about production, assembly, and presentation spaces available in privately owned, faith-based, community, non-profit, and educational organizations throughout the City.

In many municipalities, similar positions are housed within Departments of Parks and Recreation or Community Affairs. In the near-term, this position – which should focus on community programming rather than new community facilities – could operate in coordination with others who are responsible for cultural affairs, special events and community facilities. Over time, it may make sense to include this position in a comprehensive *Department of Parks and Recreation* (see below) that programs, operates and maintains parks, open spaces, and community facilities.

### **Create a Cultural Affairs & Special Events Coordinator**

It is hard to understate the contribution that tourism, commercial programming, and special events make to the City's economy. The City's competitiveness in the regional cultural market could be increased by a *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* that executes a comprehensive strategy for supporting year-round commercial art and cultural activity. In the short-term, this position could report to the City Manager, but it may eventually make sense to gather this (and other economic development positions) into a *Division of Economic Development and/or Cultural Affairs* that is responsible for managing commercial cultural programming and other city-wide economic development initiatives.

In coordination with the *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* (see above), the *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* would manage the permitting, approvals, and logistics of privately produced events in public spaces like street festivals, markets, ticketed performances, and public art installations (temporary or permanent). Furthermore, this staff position would be a single point of contact for coordinating film, television, and photography shoots city-wide. They may also serve other coordinating functions like working with local businesses to produce placemaking events like gallery openings, restaurant tours, meetups, and temporary public art installations that are more closely associated with tourism promotion and economic development initiatives.

This position also has a role to play in expanding inclusive access for residents and the local creative community to commercial cultural events. Ideally, the *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* would be in regular dialogue with venue owners, producers, and programmers and connect them to the rich network of performers and creators working in the local market. The coordinator would also work with venue owners to expand access to private events by local audiences through ticket grants distributed to *Cultural Resource Partners* like non-profits, churches, and community organizations.

### **Create a Comprehensive Management Framework for Parks, Open Space, Community Facilities & Recreation**

This study identified the need to develop a coordinated management framework for parks, open spaces, community facilities and recreation. Adopting this framework would begin to address the City's lack of a specific strategic plan to develop or provide access to recreational facilities that are associated with year-round quality of life. Meeting rooms, flexible teaching space, maker space, information commons, sports facilities, and others are basic elements



associated with individual creativity, community assembly and participatory programs. This study acknowledges that many of these spaces exist in public schools and educational facilities, but there is no current plan for improving public access to these spaces. Regardless, this study recommends developing a comprehensive management framework that centralizes responsibility for the development, management, operation and programming of the City's parks, open spaces, and community facilities.

In the near term, this Plan recommends creating a *Division of Parks, Open Space and Community Facilities* within the Department of Public Works (DPW). This specialized operational unit is responsible for maintaining city-owned parks, open space, and (to the extent that they exist) community facilities. The work of this division of DPW is coordinated with a strategic operations plan that establishes maintenance schedules, operational budgets, and an infrastructure improvement plan for all parks and community facilities.

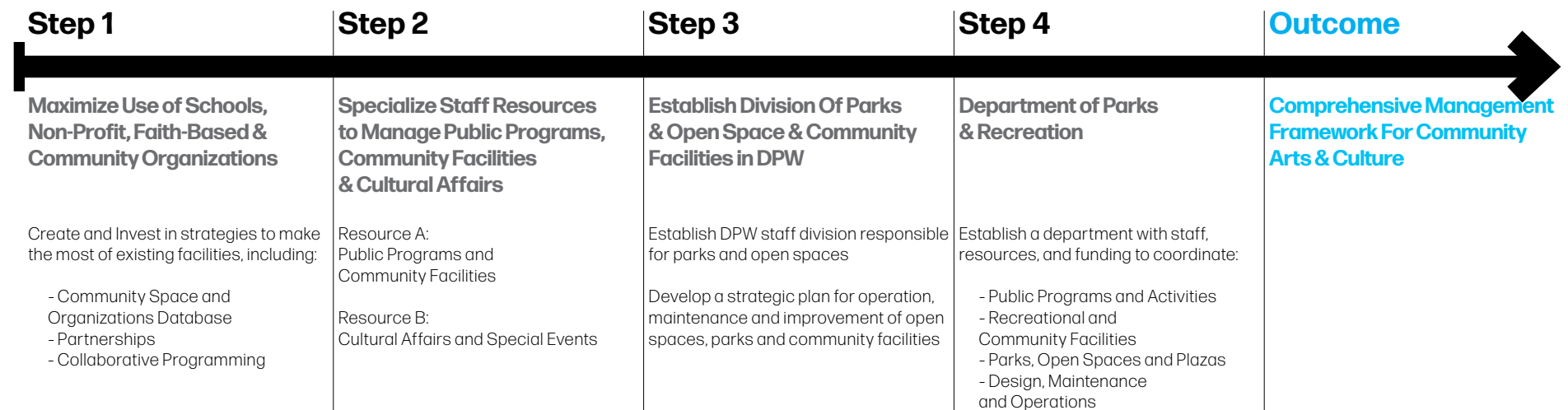
The City should undertake the creation of a *Parks, Open Space and Recreation Plan* that establishes programmatic and spatial priorities associated with developing, programming, and operating the City's parks, community, and recreational facilities.

As the work of the *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* (see above) becomes more established, this position could be merged with the *Division of Parks, Open Space and Community Facilities* within DPW. Under this framework a *Department of Parks and Recreation* is created to manage, operate, and program all parks, open spaces, and community facilities. This is a typical arrangement in many municipalities in the county, state, and country, and establishes a comprehensive framework for developing and managing the spaces and programs necessary to support individual enrichment, lifelong learning, and communal programs.

## Implementation Framework

Expanding resources within the City to manage public programs, community facilities, and cultural affairs depends on near-term actions that build over time to culminate in a comprehensive management framework for parks, community facilities and recreation. [Figure 6 - 6](#) describes a set of steps necessary to create that framework.

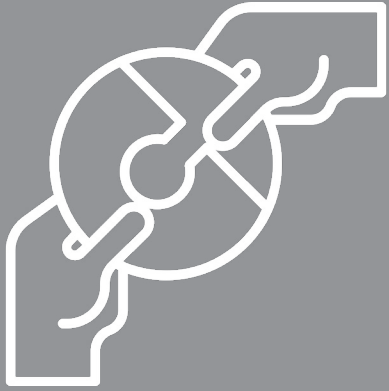
Figure 6 - 6 Implementation framework to expand city resources for managing public programs, community facilities and cultural affairs





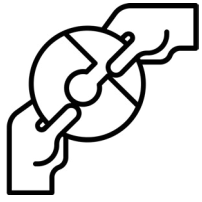






Engage  
Cultural  
Resource  
Partners





# Engage Cultural Resource Partners

## Overview

The planning process identified the need for more coordination between the City and the local creative community. Whether related to space, networking, permitting, approvals, business incubation, or event promotion there is a gap with assisting the local community in accessing resources and information. To address this gap, the Plan recommends the City engage *Cultural Resource Partners* to provide coordination

Figure 6 - 8 Examples of some services provided by cultural resource partners

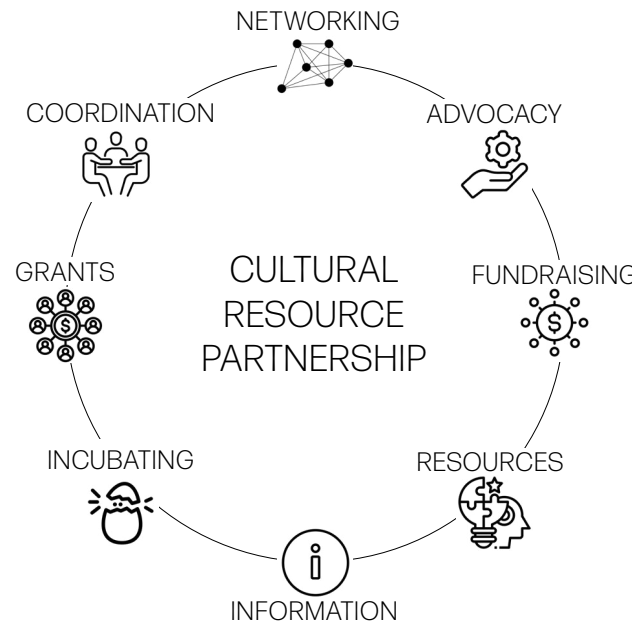
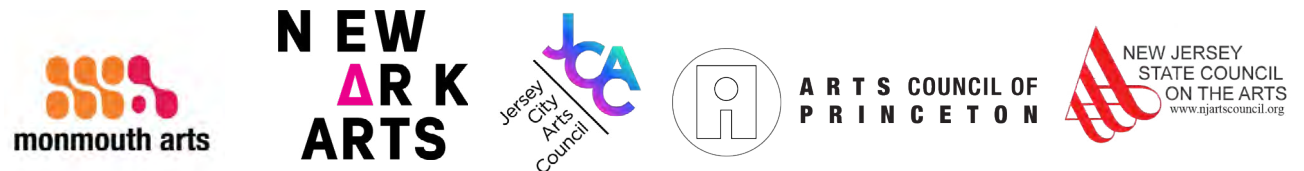


Figure 6 - 7 Examples of non-profit and government cultural resource partners in New Jersey



and services including creative businesses planning assistance, grant assistance, funding, promotion, advertising, and inclusive programming that is more representative of the City's residential population.

## Cultural Resource Partners

The obvious contribution that arts and culture make to Asbury Park's economy argues that there is sufficient activity for the City to engage non-profit and community partners to support the City's local cultural ecosystem. These partners serve the local creative community through policy advocacy, grant assistance, networking, marketing, and other resources. Furthermore, such partnerships will build capacity within the City's creative community for planning and executing special artistic and cultural initiatives like public art (permanent or temporary), community focused cultural events, legislative policy, or planning assistance. These types of partnerships are common in cities looking to support economic development by promoting local creative businesses and cultural tourism. Monmouth Arts - a nonprofit arts organization that was a financial underwriter of this study - provides coordination, advocacy, and promotion of cultural activity at the county level. Other examples of organizations that provide such services to cities in New Jersey include the Arts Council of Princeton, Newark Arts, and the Jersey City Arts Council. (Figure 6 - 7).

Figure 6 - 8 shows some examples of the responsibilities and services provided by a cultural resource partner including:

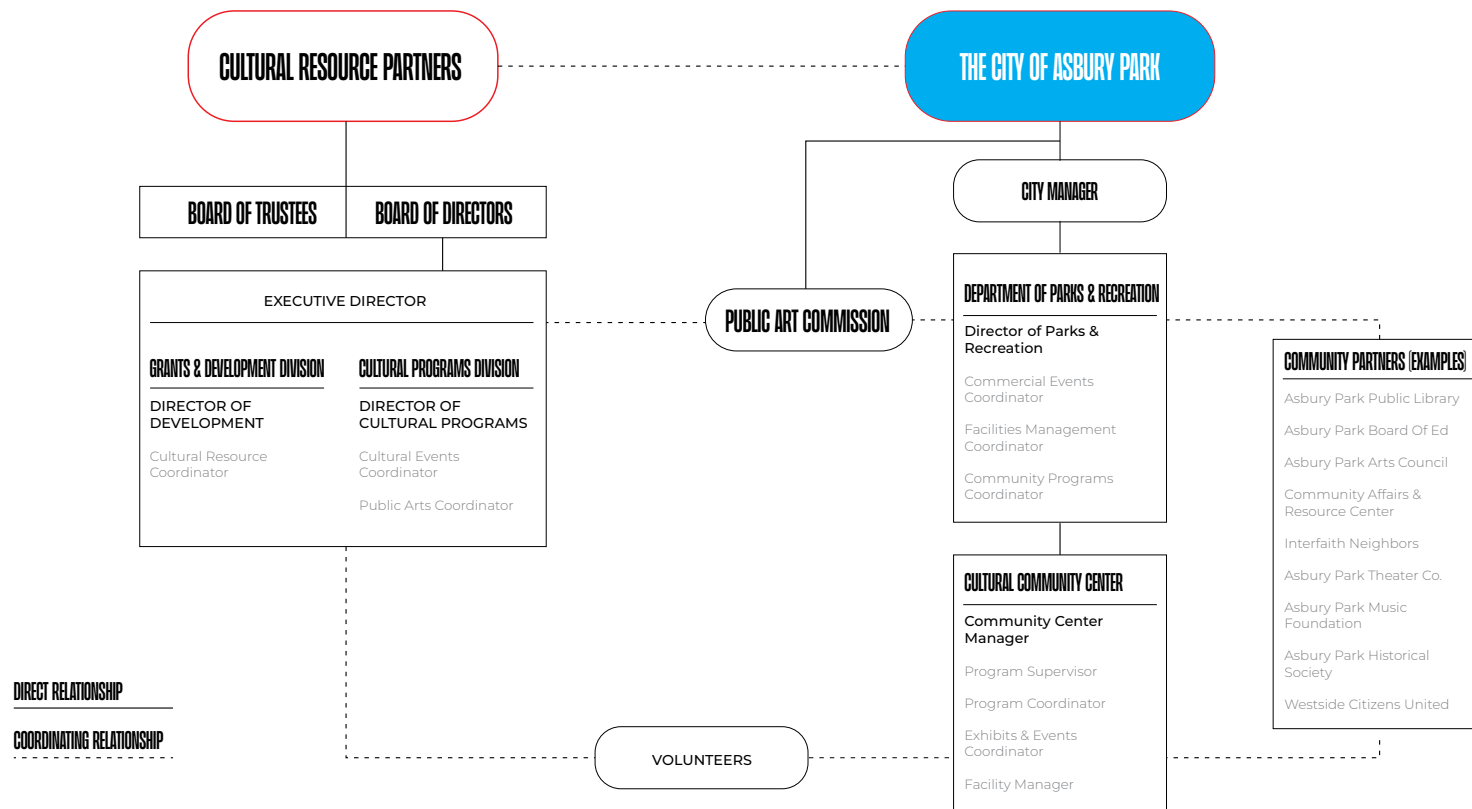
- Maintaining a searchable on-line cultural events and activities calendar
- Maintaining a creators and creative business database

- Grant writing and funding assistance
- Creative enterprise incubation and business inception support
- Intellectual property and copyright consultation
- Production and commercialization support
- Special projects collaborations and curation

- Request for proposal (RFP) management
- Policy and legislative advocacy assistance

Determining the specific responsibilities of the *Cultural Resource Partners* is beyond the scope of this Plan, but this initiative relies on identifying non-profit and community organizations with the credibility and capacity to inclusively engage the local creative community. However, the planning process

Figure 6 - 9 Theoretical organizational chart with potential relationships and responsibilities of a cultural resource partners

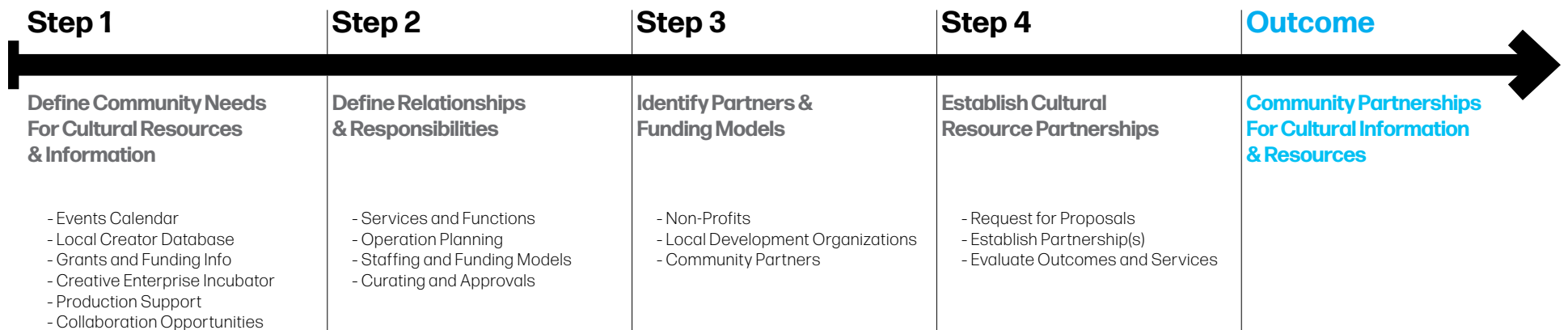


did reveal some parameters that are important aspects of the types of services and resources that the City may want to look for in a viable and effective partnership. [Figure 6 - 9 on page 79](#) shows a theoretical organizational chart that articulates some of the positions, organizational structure and relationships that may be starting points for identifying and forming *Cultural Resource Partnerships*.

## Implementation Framework

This recommendation depends on near-term actions that build over time to larger actions that result in an identifiable organization - or network of organizations - that is a community hub for artistic and cultural resources and information. [Figure 6 - 10](#) describes a set of actions to establish community need, identify partners, and develop a funding model to formalize partnerships between the City and cultural resource partners.

Figure 6 - 10 Implementation framework for engaging cultural resource partners











Center the City's  
Visual Brand on  
Creativity &  
Community Values





# Center the City's Visual Brand on Creativity & Community Values

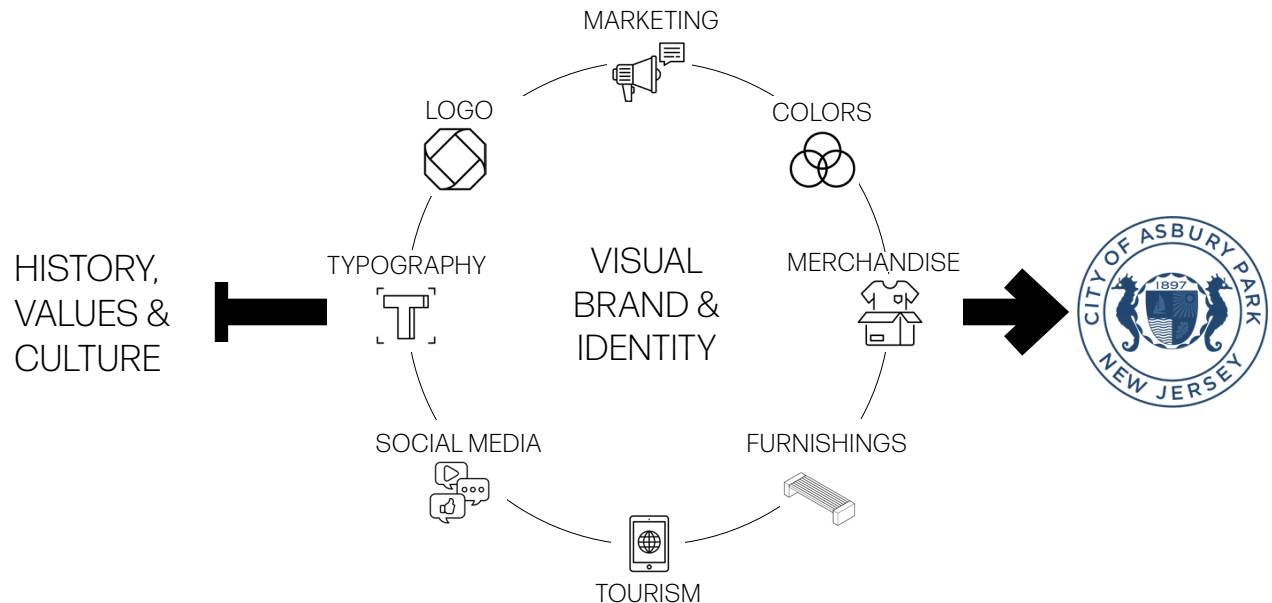
## Overview

Asbury Park has made progress over the past decade to improve its visual appearance, including upgraded streetscapes, public infrastructure, and wayfinding systems. The City has also used tactical interventions like public art, murals, parklets and street cafes to telegraph the vibrancy of our local creative community. Despite these efforts, the visual brand of the City can be improved through a more consistent application across public infrastructure and streetscape elements like signage, benches, bike racks, public restrooms, trash cans, and lighting. The Arts & Culture Plan recommends the City undertake a comprehensive harmonization of the elements of the City's visual brand and identity.

## Elements of a City Brand

Various physical, print, and digital components make up a city's brand and visual identity. At its most basic level, logos, typography, tag lines, mottoes, color schemes, and iconography form the backbone of a system for expressing a city's brand. These elements and branding assets are then applied physical and digital contexts to establish a cohesive brand on city websites, social media, merchandise, public infrastructure, furnishings, city gateways, and in marketing campaigns. Accomplishing a comprehensive re-brand requires the City to engage a professional marketing and/or graphic design firm to examine existing city marketing, branding and identity standards and study how those elements work together to express the outward brand and visual identity of the City.

Figure 6 - 11 Selected elements and assets that may be part of a citywide visual brand and identity



## A Brand That Expresses Creativity, Authenticity, and Community Values

Beyond the specific assets of a brand (e.g., typography, logos, colors, etc.), the City should consider the themes, motifs, and values that a renewed brand expresses. In the creation of the Arts & Culture Plan, many people noted that the current profile of the City's branding assets does little to advance an identity of Asbury Park as a creative or inclusive city. While specific design recommendations are beyond the scope of this Plan, engagement with the community revealed important themes that a purposeful brand for the City may engage, including:

- Creativity and Artistry
- Cultural Offerings Beyond Live Music
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Year-Round Community
- Environment and Innovation
- Sustainability and Resiliency

## Public Infrastructure & the City Brand

The use of public infrastructure is one of the most recognizable ways a city can express a cohesive visual identity. The selection of furnishings like bike racks, benches, trash cans, lighting and others should be made with an understanding of how they relate to the City's desired visual identity. Incorporating creativity and branding considerations into the general process of renewing the City's infrastructure would ensure that over time the desired brand of the City is expressed through the appearance of streetscapes and public spaces that are the primary connective and communal infrastructure of the City.

## Branding and the Local Creative Community

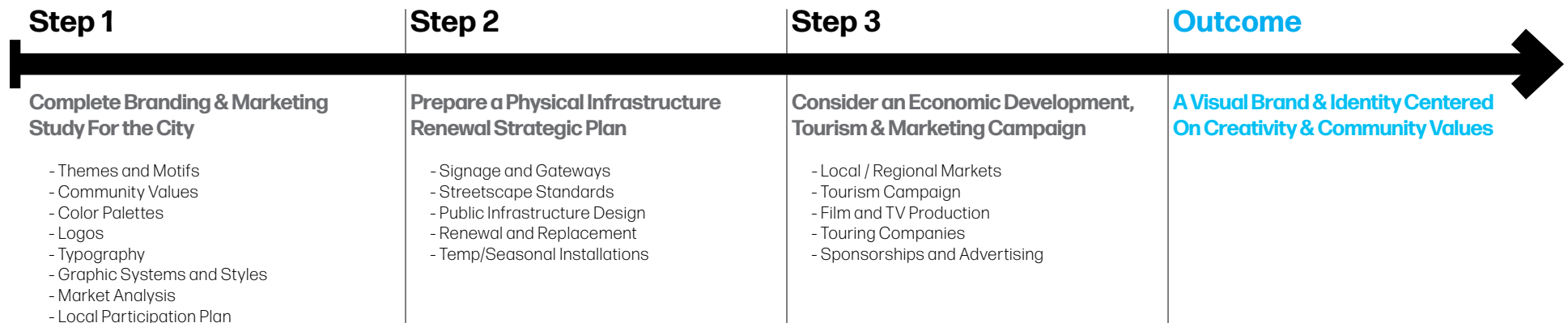
As the City considers how to express a brand rooted in values like creativity and inclusion, the use of public infrastructure may be a highly effective method of engaging and promoting the vibrancy of the *local creative community*. Things like sculpture, mural arts, and banner programs engage local creators in transforming the physical environment in low-cost

and high impact ways. To the extent that these efforts are coordinated by the City, every attempt should be made to assure that the content of elements like banners and murals are reflective of the composition of the residential community and carefully consider the multiple ethnic and cultural communities that make up Asbury Park's year-round community.

## Implementation Framework

Figure 6 - 12 describes a set of actions to establish the branding assets of a cohesive visual identity for the City. Furthermore, it envisions policy actions that build considerations for creative expression by the local creative community into the infrastructure renewal process.

Figure 6 - 12 Implementation framework for centering the City's visual brand on creativity and community values









Develop A  
Community  
Culture Center



# Develop A Community Culture Center

## Overview

One of the most important findings of this study is the lack of access to high-quality indoor community facilities that support individual creativity, collective assembly, and community-based cultural activity. While the City has many parks and open spaces, there is a nearly complete lack of City-owned indoor spaces that are accessible for creative production, making, meeting, rehearsing, learning, and doing. To that end, this Plan recommends the City plan and develop a *Community Culture Center* ('CCC').

This study acknowledges the presence of the *Asbury Park Public Library* ('the Library'), the *Asbury Park Senior Center* ('Senior Center'), and the many facilities controlled by the *Asbury Park Board of Education*, encourages the City and its partners to improve access to these facilities. However, even in the best of cases, those actions may not supplant the need to invest in a *Community Culture Center* that has a comprehensive spatial profile to support community arts, culture, and recreation.

While this study recommends developing a *Community Culture Center*, there are several questions beyond the scope of this Plan, including the building program, location, and operating structure of the CCC. In order to settle these parameters, the City should commission a *Feasibility and Conceptual Design Study* as the first step in developing a CCC. In this early study, the City should engage the community and potential partners to explore options for the location, programming, funding, construction, and operation of the CCC. The research, community engagement and stakeholder outreach of the Plan yielded some information and parameters to consider when assessing its feasibility. Some of those questions and parameters are described below:

Figure 6 - 13 Examples of existing community facilities in Asbury Park. Asbury Park Public Library (below, left) and Asbury Park Senior Center (Below, right)



## What is in a Community Culture Center?

Identifying the components of a *Community Culture Center* is beyond the scope of this planning effort. However, as shown in [Figure 6 - 14](#), typical models of similar community facilities suggest it may include many (or all) of the following types of space:

- Classrooms and Teaching Spaces
- Information and Resource Center
- Library Branch and Information Commons
- Meeting and Convening Space
- Rehearsal and Workshop Space
- Performance and Presentation Space
- Historical Interpretation and Museum
- Sports, Physical Culture and Recreation Facilities
- Video, Audio and Film Production Spaces
- Maker Space
- Art, Sculpture and Drawing Studios
- Gallery and Exhibition Space
- And, Others...

Ultimately, the subject of the building and spatial program of the CCC should be based on a *Feasibility and Conceptual Design Study* to determine the profile of spaces that meet the operational and programmatic needs of the community. The list above is only a starting point for further study that provides a comprehensive profile of spaces that support community, arts and culture. [Figure 6 - 15 on page 91](#) shows a conceptual rendering of some of the spaces and needs that may be included in the development of the CCC. It is important to note that this rendering only shows a conceptual approach, and is not a prescriptive design proposal. The implementation of this recommendation should result from of a comprehensive study that incorporates public input, architectural design, and engineering.

Figure 6 - 14 Selected potential programmatic and spatial components of a Community Culture Center



## Where Is the Community Culture Center?

Recommending a specific location for the CCC is beyond the scope of this study. However, the research and community engagement of the Arts & Culture Plan revealed some potential existing facilities that could be considered in the development of a plan for the CCC. Most importantly, the CCC should be strategically located to assure it is accessible to the community, with special attention to school aged children, seniors, and other likely users of the CCC. This suggests that the CCC should be located close to an area of higher population density, near public transportation, and close to other community assets like public schools, recreational facilities, and parks.

Furthermore, many suggestions were made for existing facilities that could be renovated and/or adaptively reused (at least in part) for the CCC. As mentioned previously, defining the exact location of the CCC is beyond the scope of this study. However, it should be acknowledged that the development of the CCC could result from using or adapting an existing facility. To that end, several community assets and sites were noted as having potential for reuse, renovation, or adaptation as the CCC, including:

- The West Side Community Center (115 DeWitt Ave)
- Barak Obama Middle School (1300 Bangs Ave)
- Asbury Park Fire House (800 Main St)
- Asbury Park Municipal Complex (1 Municipal Plz)

There are also other buildings, sites and spaces within the City that could be adaptively reused for the CCC, the evaluation and selection of these sites should be (at least in part) the subject of a *Feasibility and Conceptual Design Study* funded by the City in the early stages of developing the CCC.





Figure 6 - 15 Conceptual rendering of a Community Culture Center that includes components such as maker space, movement studios, classrooms, video/audio production, performance space, information commons, and community resource space as examples.

### Who Builds, Operates and Maintains the CCC?

There are different models for the operation of the *Community Culture Center*. Typically, such community and recreational facilities are operated, managed, and programmed by municipal entities like Departments of Parks and Recreation or a Department of Community Affairs. Since this study also recommends the creation of a *Department of Parks and Recreation*, that may be a logical outcome for Asbury Park.

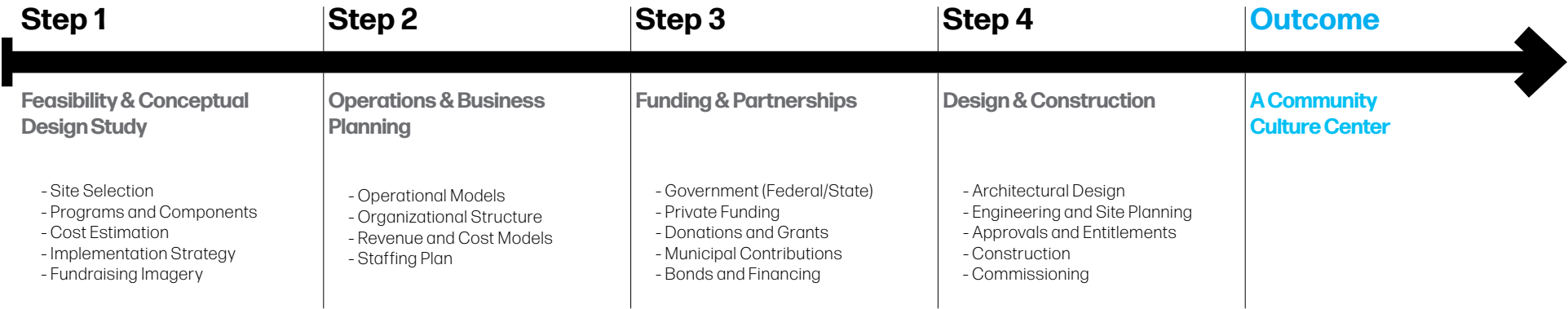
Still, other municipalities engage a third-party non-profit operator or developer to provide similar services (for a fee). This may be a possible outcome if the City identifies an appropriate partner with the capacity to provide such services. Regardless, once the City establishes the feasibility, site and building program for the CCC, further study is needed to establish the *Operations*

and *Business Plan* and *Funding and Partnerships Plan* that supports sustainable maintenance, staffing, operation, and funding of the CCC.

### Implementation Framework

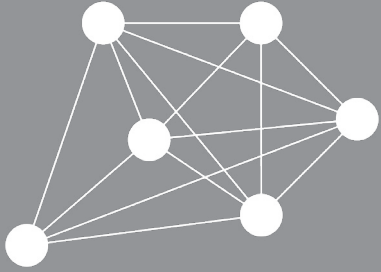
Figure 6 - 16 describes the actions required to achieve the goal of developing a *Community Culture Center*. The near-term actions involve setting the programmatic, locational, and cost parameters for the CCC. Once these parameters are established the City can develop the operational, funding, and partnership planning necessary to operate a facility that meets the cultural and recreational needs of the population. Finally, the City would undertake the capital planning that includes design and construction of the CCC – whether in an existing building, as part of another project, or as a stand-alone facility.

Figure 6 - 16 Implementation framework for developing a Community Culture Center

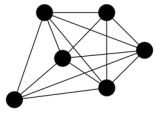








Support & Connect  
Cultural Nodes &  
Community Gateways



# Support & Connect Cultural Nodes & Community Gateways

## Overview

The planning process revealed high levels of commercial, community and individual creative activity throughout the City. As shown in [Figure 6 - 18](#), the Plan identifies three distinct clusters with particularly high concentrations of cultural activity:

- The Springwood Community Cultural District
- The Downtown (CBD) Arts and Commerce District
- The Waterfront Entertainment and Tourism District

The Arts & Culture Plan recommends the City and its partners take actions to address the different programmatic and physical needs of each district. Furthermore, the Plan also recommends for the City incentivize development and retention of cultural production space and live-work housing.

In addition, the Plan recommends the City undertake various streetscape and corridor planning initiatives. The first creates the *Asbury Park Community Gateway* (See [page 114](#)) on Asbury Avenue through creative streetscaping and zoning changes that incentivize cultural production space like light industrial and live-work housing. The second creates of the *West Side to Waterfront Art and Cultural Heritage Trail* (See [page 112](#)) which uses public art, public space programming, and creative streetscaping to connect the Waterfront, Downtown and Springwood Avenue Cultural Districts.

The general recommendations for the City and specific recommendations within each district are described herein.

Figure 6 - 17 Springwood Community Cultural District (Top); Downtown Arts and Commerce District (Center); Waterfront Entertainment and Tourism District (Bottom)

Figure 6 - 18 Aerial diagram showing Asbury Park's three existing cultural districts (Opposite)









## General Recommendations

There are three strategies designed to encourage the continuation of creative activity and to incentivize the development of new programs, cultural uses, and artistic expression throughout the City:



### *Establish Community Focal Points & Gateways*

Opportunities exist throughout the City to transform streets and open spaces to convey the creative brand of Asbury Park and to provide infrastructure for participatory programming and inclusive placemaking events. The findings of the Plan indicate the need for a city-wide *Urban Design, Corridor and Gateway Study* that identifies entry points, focal points, and gateways to support placemaking and the City's visual brand. With respect to art and cultural programming, this Plan identifies focal points and gateways within the Waterfront, Downtown and Springwood Avenue districts. The Plan also identified the opportunity to establish the *Asbury Avenue Community Gateway* as a signature avenue that welcomes visitors to the City and supports development of cultural production space within the area. Regardless of the locations, the streetscapes of the City represent an opportunity to implement complete streets, sustainable design, and creative projects in ways that support the community identity and progressive brand of Asbury Park. The details of those recommendations are covered in subsequent portions of this section.



### *Expand Inclusive Programming & Placemaking Events*

Public and participatory programming is an important pillar of creative communities. The City's existing reputation as a

destination for live music, markets, and festivals means there is a viable brand that serves as a foundation for more frequent and diverse cultural activities in streets and public spaces. These activities may include public art (permanent or temporary), multicultural festivals, film/cinema, and many others. Ultimately, the City should work with the local creative community, commercial presenters, cultural resource partners, and the non-profit sector to maximize the use of streets, plazas, open spaces and parks for commercial and free cultural activities.

Regardless of the types of activities, a paramount consideration is assuring the inclusion of genres, event typologies, and forms of cultural expression that are representative of the year-round population of the City. Furthermore, the City should develop policies and initiatives for increasing participation from the local creative community in commercial and community-focused events – especially those hosted in city-owned spaces. This means working with commercial presenters to include a broader range of musical genres in music festivals, or engaging local acts, talent, and creators as part of the line-up in presentations, exhibitions, and events of all kinds. Finally, reviewing the City's *Busking and Public Performance Regulations* with an eye towards curation and coordination could be a powerful method of engaging local artists in the programming of public spaces and streets – especially those at the beginning of their creative journeys.



### *Incentivize Uses That Support the Local Creative Community*

During this study many members of the local creative community expressed frustration with the cost and availability of production, rehearsal, and storage spaces to support the cultural production cycle. To

expand the cultural production ecosystem, it is important to retain and incentivize the development of spaces that support the entire artistic and cultural production cycle. Spaces like galleries, performance venues, and community facilities may address the presentational needs of the creative community, but there is a need to assure that production, manufacturing, storage, and living spaces are available and affordable to creators within the local market.

This may mean incentivizing the creation of new retail, production, light industrial, and live/work units in the City. As such, the City should update and modernize permitted uses and district boundaries in the zoning code to maximize the production of these spaces through as-of-right development. Additionally, the City should investigate the profile of incentives offered to business owners, property owners and developers to include mixed-use development, light industrial for artisanal uses, and live-working housing spaces. These incentives may include low-cost construction loans (e.g. Urban Enterprise Zone, etc.), tax abatements, operations grants, density bonuses, or bulk/height variances to facilitate the living and production space needed by the creative community in a rapidly gentrifying city.



### *Complete A City-wide Public Art & Sculpture Plan*

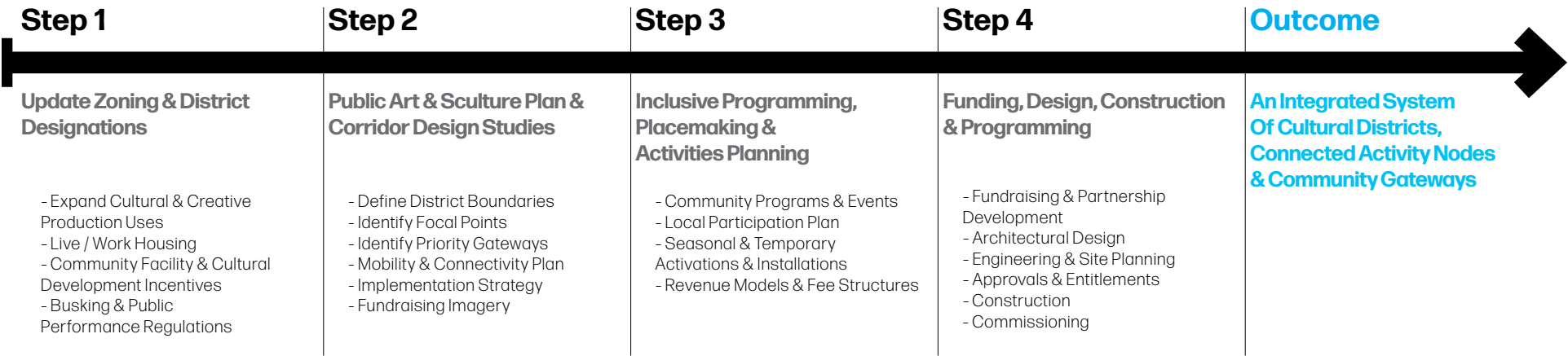
While this plan sets the framework for managing and promoting community arts and culture, further work is required to provide a comprehensive structure to invest in and manage the City's collection of public art and sculpture. *Public Art and Sculpture Plans* generally provide a detailed road map for a comprehensive Public Art Program that includes funding mechanisms, management frameworks, approvals processes, themes/motifs, siting recommendations, conservation guidelines, and artist selection criteria. A Public Art Plan for

Asbury Park would serve as a companion to the Arts & Culture Plan, and would provide clarity for the City, private landowners, community organizations, and the Public Art Commission in the implementation and creation of public art throughout the City.

## Implementation Framework

Figure 6 - 19 describes a series of actions to support and connect the various cultural districts within the City. As with other recommendations, the near term policy, regulatory and planning actions provide the basis for strategic investments in capital projects that unfold over time. The physical nature of these interventions are meant to support an interconnected system of districts, activity nodes, and community gateways.

Figure 6 - 19 Implementation framework for developing a Community Culture Center



## District Recommendations

Beyond the general recommendations listed above, the Plan examined specific opportunities to support each of the three cultural districts in the City. While the general recommendations apply to all districts, the Plan provides recommendations for specific locations, sites, or actions that may relate to the programmatic and/or physical context of each district. Recommendations for each district are described herein.



Figure 6 - 20 Aerial diagram showing Asbury Park's three existing cultural districts (Opposite)



# Springwood Community Cultural District

## Overview

The *Springwood Community Cultural District* is a hub of community-based activity within the City. Unlike other areas, most cultural events in the district are free or community based, including popular events like:

- Music Mondays (AP Music Foundation)
- AP Community Festival (Quality-of-Life Committee)
- Tuesdays at the Turf (AP-AMP)
- Asbury Park and Neptune Juneteenth Parade and Festival

As [Figure 6 - 22 on page 100](#) shows, the district is home to several non-profit, community, schools and open spaces including Springwood Park, The Asbury Park Senior Center, Asbury Park Middle School, and Blackbird Community Commons. Barak Obama Middle School (owned by the AP Board of Education) and the West Side Community Center are inactive but have been the subject of re-use/revitalization proposals that would enhance the profile of cultural spaces and recreational services available to the community.

## Summary of Recommendations

- Establish a *community focal point* at the intersection of Atkins Avenue and Springwood Avenue
- Revise zoning and redevelopment plans to incentivize small scale commercial and creative production space
- Expand community facilities and consider development of the *Community Cultural Center*

Figure 6 - 21 Asbury Park Music Foundation Music Mondays at Springwood Park (left); Turf Club exterior at the intersection of Atkins Ave and Springwood Ave



## Recommendations



### **Establish A Community Focal Point at the Intersection of Atkins Avenue & Springwood Avenue**

Building from community facilities, cultural institutions, and open space assets, the Plan recommends developing a signature community focal point near the intersection of Atkins and Springwood Avenues. This proposed gateway would augment recent streetscape and open space improvements in the area. Additional upgrades with an eye toward multicultural expression and creativity would further establish this emergent cultural node as a community gateway that communicates the brand of Asbury Park as a creative and inclusive city.

This initiative is an opportunity to further reveal and amplify the historical and cultural contributions of the African-American and minority communities to the City's cultural legacy. It can also incorporate recent initiatives to catalogue the commercial, historical, and artistic legacy of the area through interpretive displays, mural arts, bannerings, and other creative streetscaping elements that prioritize and amplify historical and contemporary expressions from underrepresented creators within the local community. Ultimately, the form and expression of this gateway should be decided through a collaborative design process that engages the local community to determine how to express the past, present and future of the neighborhood as a vital community node.



### **Update Zoning & Redevelopment Plans to Incentivize Small Scale Commercial & Creative Production Space**

The development of small scale commercial and "step-out" space throughout the neighborhood is critical to revitalizing the commercial and creative production ecosystem within the district. The City should examine both the underlying zoning and Springwood Avenue Redevelopment Plan to assure regulations incentivize uses and design guidelines that support the inception, incubation, and growth needs of local creative enterprises - especially those with ties to historical West Side communities.



### **Expand Community Facilities & Consider Development of the Community Cultural Center**

High population density, a significant school aged population, and proximity to public transit nodes make the West Side an ideal location for the development of new community facilities. The presence of multiple existing churches, community organizations and facilities including the Boys and Girls Club, Springwood Park, and the Asbury Park Senior Center also offer opportunities for programmatic collaborations and shared service delivery. The former West Side Community Center and Barak Obama Middle School offer two significant opportunities for adaptive reuse of existing facilities as a *Community Culture Center* ([see page 88](#)). Also, the significant profile of undeveloped land in the area may offer the opportunity for a non-profit or public-private partnership that includes the development of a *Community Culture Center*.

Figure 6 - 22 Aerial diagram of Springwood Community Cultural District (opposite)









# Downtown Arts & Commerce District

## Overview

The Downtown Art and Commerce District is a primary driver of cultural economic activity with creative businesses like art galleries, performance venues and restaurants drawing people from within the City and the region. [Figure 6 - 23](#) shows the district, centered on Cookman Avenue from approximately Main Street to Grand Avenue. It includes several open space assets like Kennedy Park, Library Square Park, Press Plaza, and the Wesley Lake waterfront. Pedestrian traffic through the area can be heavy – especially during the warmer months – as visitors arriving via NJ Transit make their way through the district to the beach and waterfront.

## Summary of Recommendations

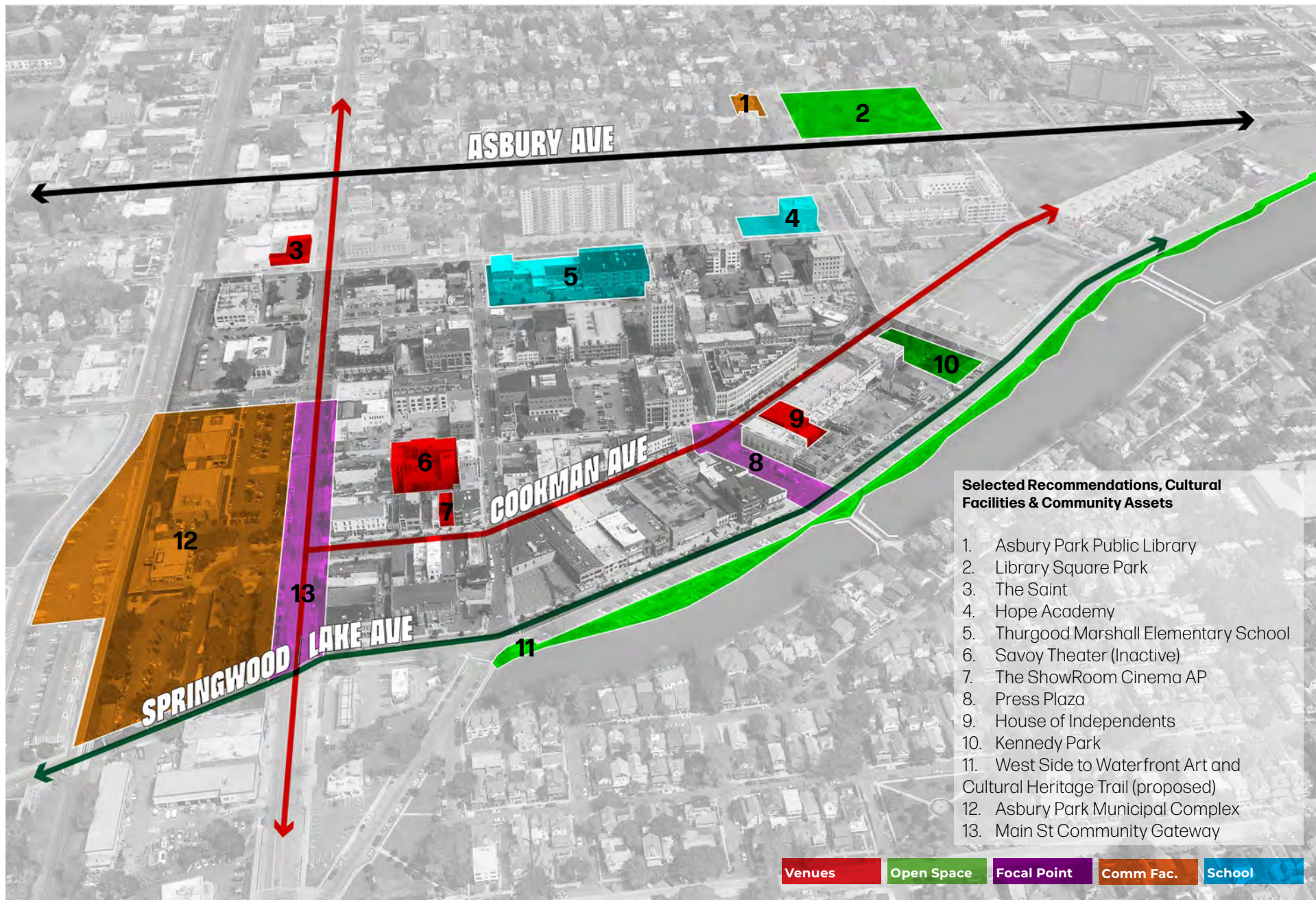
- Redesign Press Plaza to support inclusive placemaking and events
- Establish a creative streetscape and community gateway on main street
- Update zoning and redevelopment plans to incentivize creative enterprise, cultural production space, and adaptive reuse of historic venues and buildings
- Facilitate year-round placemaking and inclusive cultural programming

Figure 6 - 23 Aerial diagram of Downtown Arts and Commerce District (Opposite)

Figure 6 - 24 Examples of assets and activities in the Downtown Arts and Commerce District







## Recommendations



### Redesign Press Plaza to Support Inclusive Placemaking & Events

Despite the presence of Kennedy Park, the Central Business District lacks a permanent plaza space for placemaking events or cultural programs. This Plan recommends a comprehensive streetscape design and upgrade to Press Plaza that allows the street to be selectively closed for public programs and placemaking events like markets, street fairs, public performances, and public art. [Figure 6 - 25](#) shows a conceptual rendering of Press Plaza looking north from Lake Avenue. This image contemplates a pedestrian focused space framed by public art with improved pedestrian infrastructure that can be used year-round to expand the commercial or community-based activities within the Central Business District. It is important to note that this rendering only shows a conceptual approach, and is not a prescriptive design proposal. The implementation of this recommendation should result from a comprehensive study that incorporates public input, architectural design, and engineering.



### Update Zoning & Redevelopment Plans To Incentivize Creative Enterprise, Cultural Production Space, And Adaptive Reuse Of Historic Venues And Buildings

Existing zoning designations and the Central Business District Redevelopment Plan should be revised to facilitate and incentivize creative enterprises and cultural production space. This study revealed a lack of available spaces within the City for locating new retail-based creative enterprises and basic facilities to support the cultural production process

including rehearsal, workshop, and meeting space for creators. Regulatory frameworks should be revised to provide a broader range of acceptable uses related to artistic activity and cultural production. Furthermore, the presence of significant inactive historic venues may argue that specific incentives and/or design exceptions are needed to facilitate adaptive reuse of historic buildings and venues.



### Develop A Year-Round Placemaking & Inclusive Cultural Programming Plan

The Plan recommends the City develop an *Inclusive Placemaking and Cultural Programming Plan* for the district. Working with local businesses, the Chamber of Commerce, or established *Cultural Resources Partners* (See [page 78](#)) the City can develop a strategy for year-round programming and placemaking. Determining the exact profile of events is beyond the scope of this plan, but some examples include:

- Murals, Sculpture or Public Art (Temporary or Permanent)
- Markets and Bazaars
- Festivals and Street Fairs
- Concerts and Performances
- Yoga, Movement or Wellness Events
- Gallery Tours / Art Openings
- Restaurant and Food Festivals
- Multicultural Festivals
- Participatory Arts

In creating the *Inclusive Placemaking and Cultural Programming Plan*, significant effort should go to including local creators, producers, and participants in activities and events. This includes expanding genres, event typologies, and forms of cultural

expression that are represented within the district.

This effort that could be advanced by the *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* and *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* (See [page 72](#)) the City may create as part of other portions of this plan. Furthermore, programming, logistics and funding assistance for such activities may also come from collaborations through the *Cultural Resources Partners* also recommended by this Plan (See [page 78](#)).

Figure 6 - 25 Conceptual Rendering of a redesigned Press Plaza and West Side to Waterfront Art and Cultural Heritage Trail Along Wesley Lake







# Waterfront Tourism & Entertainment District

## Overview

The Waterfront District is the most visible and recognizable symbol of Asbury Park's enduring power as a regional beach and cultural destination. The famed boardwalk is dotted with restaurants, shops, public spaces, and performance venues that host events and activities - largely centered around live music and other types of performance. The historical nostalgia of the boardwalk and architecture of the waterfront are significant drivers of activity and continue to draw people to the City.

This is a significant revenue generator for the City through retail receipts and revenues from the operation of the beach and Beach and Parking Utilities. According to Asbury Park's 2021 Annual Report<sup>4</sup> the Parking and Beach Utilities - generated nearly \$3.5M in combined excess revenue in 2021 - the latest year for which such data was available. While the City may have many priorities for using these funds, they speak to the scale of the economic asset that visitation and tourism represent for the City.

## Summary of Recommendations

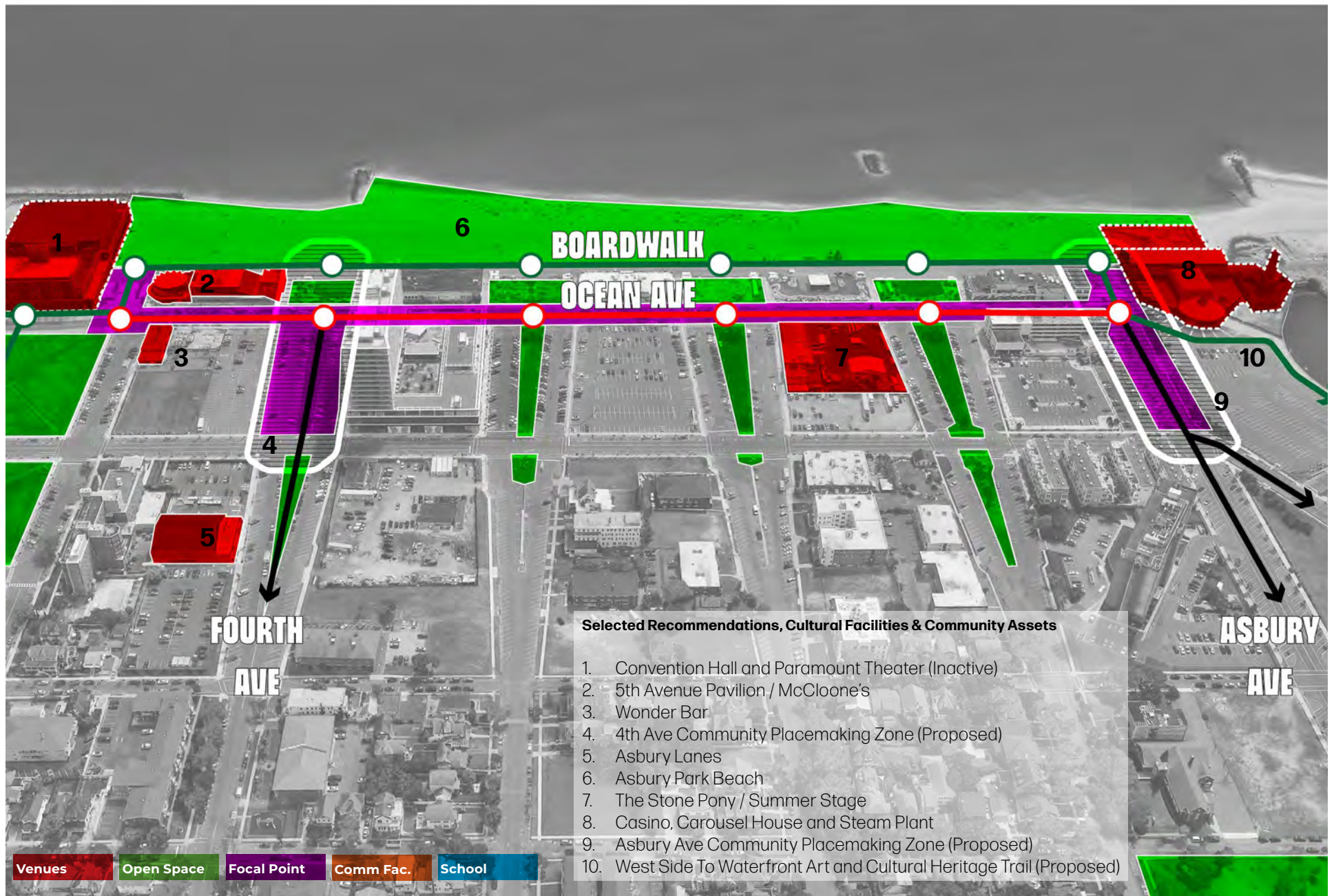
- Diversify forms of cultural expression and develop a placemaking plan inclusive of local creators
- Develop community focal points and placemaking zones in streets and open spaces
- Incentivize development of new cultural production space and encourage redevelopment of existing venues
- Expand permanent public art and sculpture opportunities

4 - City of Asbury Park Annual Report (2021);  
<https://www.cityofasburypark.com/DocumentCenter/View/3760/2021-City-of-Asbury-Park-Annual-Report-?bidId=>

Figure 6 - 26 Aerial diagram of the Waterfront Tourism and Entertainment District (Opposite)

Figure 6 - 27 Asbury Park Boardwalk (below, left); Stone Pony Summer Stage (below, right)







## Recommendations



### **Diversify Forms of Cultural Expression & Develop a Placemaking Plan Inclusive of Local Creators**

The waterfront serves the economic vitality of the City through recreational tourism and visitation focused on cultural consumption like outdoor recreation, live music, public art and festivals. Like other parts of the City, the level of visitation is influenced by the seasonal nature of the beach and boardwalk, but there is a consistent level of year-round programming in various indoor venues, restaurants, and creative businesses. Regardless, the waterfront is broadly recognized as the center of commercially focused cultural activity within the City that many residents enjoy and benefit from. However, engagement activities revealed common perceptions that the spaces, programs and activities in the waterfront are not inclusive of the year-round residential population.

Many residents expressed concerns about the cost of using the beach, attending performances, or participating in events as a significant deterrent in participation. Furthermore, others suggested that the genres and profile of cultural offerings are geared entirely toward attracting out-of-town residents rather than prioritizing the collective assembly and participatory needs of the year-round residential community. This includes the idea that the genres, styles, and forms of cultural expression do not represent the diversity of year-round residents. Finally, many local creators expressed that the existing programming of public space and private venues is not broadly inclusive of local creators, artists, and audiences. The lack of coordinated programming for busking and other forms of informal performance have had a deleterious effect on amplifying, showcasing, and encouraging local creators to participate in the vital economic and cultural landscape of the waterfront.

Determining the exact profile, frequency, and structure of programming is beyond the scope of the Arts & Culture Plan. However, the Plan recommends the City develop an *Inclusive Placemaking and Programming Plan* that prioritizes free programming that is inclusive of local creators; and representative of the genres, styles and forms of cultural expression of the diverse year-round population. Furthermore, the City must coordinate the use and improvement of streets and public spaces to support community-focused activity that invites participation from the local residential community.

These efforts will require open discussion and collaboration between the City, developers, venue owners, and programmers. This is an effort that could be advanced by the *Cultural Affairs and Special Events Coordinator* and *Public Programs and Community Facilities Coordinator* positions recommended by this plan (see page 72). Furthermore, programming, logistics and funding assistance for such activities may come through collaborations with *Cultural Resources Partners* this plan recommends the City establish (See page 78).



### **Develop Community Focal Points & Placemaking Zones in Streets & Open Spaces**

Many open spaces in the waterfront support commercial and community-focused activity. The beach, boardwalk open spaces, Bradley Square, Atlantic Square, and the medians of the east-west streets should all be considered for expanded placemaking and community-focused activities. Regardless of location, the City should engage waterfront developers and the community to increase the frequency and typological profile of free/community activities in these spaces. At the most basic level, beyond the boardwalk there is relatively little public infrastructure like seating, shading, or

defined areas where community members might host programs, gather, or recreate without spending money or participating in commercial activities.

Specific design recommendations are beyond the scope of this Plan. However, [Figure 6 - 28](#) shows a conceptual rendering of how spaces, streets, and medians in the waterfront could be adapted for public art, gathering and placemaking programs. Without being prescriptive, the Plan recommends the City create *Placemaking Zones* on 4th Ave. and Asbury Ave. as first investments in a comprehensive strategy to use open space and public infrastructure to support community focused programs in the waterfront. It is important to note that this rendering only shows a conceptual approach, and is not a prescriptive design proposal. The implementation of this recommendation should result from of a comprehensive study that incorporates public input, architectural design, and engineering.

Activation of public and open space with free and community-based activity is another method of ensuring that programming in the waterfront is inclusive of residents and the local creative community and should be (at least partially) the subject of the *Inclusive Placemaking and Programming Plan* recommended above. These activities may include public performances, festivals, community gatherings that are produced by local individuals and organizations. However, the strategies should look holistically at the opportunity that public art, sculpture, and participatory events might offer for extending the activity of the beach and boardwalk further into the waterfront zone. Higher levels of pedestrian activity in these places may also have other secondary economic benefit such as increasing foot traffic on secondary retail corridors like Ocean Avenue and Kingsley Avenue, as well as greater exposure for local artists engaged in public programs.

Figure 6 - 28 Conceptual rendering of a Community Focal Point and Placemaking Zone on Ocean Avenue and 4th Avenue







### Incentivize Development of New Cultural Production Space & Encourage Redevelopment of Existing Venues

While the pace of redevelopment in the waterfront has been steady, the development of new commercial space has lagged behind the development of new residential units. This is true even as most available retail spaces are occupied and active – especially during the tourist season. This study revealed a critical lack of available space within the City for new retail-based creative enterprises and facilities to support the cultural production process including rehearsal, workshop, and meeting space for creators. Furthermore, the current inactivity of historic venues like Paramount Theater, Convention Hall, and Carousel House argues that specific incentives and/or design exceptions are necessary to facilitate adaptive reuse of historic buildings and venues in ways that contribute to cultural or community landscape of the City.

With an understanding that development in the waterfront is governed by the *Waterfront Redevelopment Plan*, there may be opportunities for the City and its *Cultural Resources Partners* (See [page 78](#)) to incentivize development of commercial space for creative enterprises, participatory arts businesses and production space needed by the local creative community. Regulatory frameworks could be revised to provide a broader range of uses related to artistic activity and cultural production. Similarly, negotiations between developers and the local redevelopment authority could include general retail and creative production space as a pre-condition for approving development projects. In short, residential-only development in the waterfront is counter-productive to producing the range of commercial spaces needed to start and grow creative businesses within the district.



### Expand Permanent Public Art & Sculpture Opportunities

Largely due to the success of the Wooden Walls Project, public art and sculpture have had a transformative effect on the visual appeal, brand, and perception of the waterfront. In fact, the presence of public art has made significant artistic, aesthetic, and cultural contributions to the district, while masking the lack of re-development of historic properties, buildings, and venues. There is no doubt that the presence of these creative expressions on buildings like the Carousel House, Casino, Steam Plant, Sewer Treatment Plant, and Sunset Avenue Pavilion ([Figure 6 - 29](#)) has facilitated Asbury Park's nascent brand as a city known for public art. However, many of these murals and installations are temporary or tactical works that will be removed as part of future redevelopment efforts.

To that end, this Plan recommends that the City coordinate with the *Public Art Commission* to provide clear guidance to its development partners to prioritize permanent public art, sculpture, and creativity in their design efforts. Furthermore, the City should explore how permanent public art and sculpture can be used to activate and transform the open spaces, public spaces, and *Community Focal Points and Placemaking Zones* recommended above. This is also an opportunity to work with the City's *Cultural Resources Partners* (See [page 78](#)) on special projects that look to the non-profit and community to execute, fund and curate special projects that showcase the work and creative contributions of all members of the local creative community.

Figure 6 - 29 Wooden Walls Project / Murals on the Sunset Avenue Pavilion





# Corridor & Streetscape Recommendations

## Overview

Over the past decade improvements have been made to pedestrian infrastructure and streetscapes throughout the City. Springwood Avenue, Main Street, Cookman Avenue, and large portions of the Waterfront have all seen investment in the quality, character, and design of streetscape and public realm. While these investments have made aesthetic and operational improvements, there is still opportunity to integrate creativity into public space design in ways that *Center the City's Visual Brand on Creativity & Community Values* (See [page 84](#)).

The planning process identified two priority opportunities to establish a creative brand for the City and to connect clusters of artistic and cultural activity. Namely, the Plan recommends the creation of the *Asbury Avenue Community Gateway* and the *West Side to Waterfront Art & Cultural Heritage Trail* which are described herein.



# West Side to Waterfront Art & Cultural Heritage Trail

The Arts & Culture Plan identified three cultural nodes within the City: the Waterfront Entertainment and Tourism District, the Downtown Art and Commerce District, and the Springwood Community Cultural District. Specific recommendations for each of these districts are covered in other portions of this Plan, but it is important to think holistically about the connections and interdependencies between them. To that end, the Arts & Culture Plan recommends the City undertake a comprehensive corridor planning effort to develop a *West Side to Waterfront Art and Cultural Heritage Trail*. When complete, this trail connects and integrates the three cultural nodes of the City using streetscaping, programmatic activation, and cultural heritage interpretation.

The scope of the Arts & Culture Plan does not determine the exact design or specific alignment of this connective pathway. The design of the trail should be the result of an engaged public process done in coordination with the appropriate boards and regulatory bodies. However, this recommendation builds from a similar concept in the *Asbury Park Plan for Walking and Biking* (2018) that recognized the

need for pedestrian and bike infrastructure to connect activity nodes throughout the City. This plan recommends expanding that concept to include public art, sculpture, and cultural interpretation markers along the trail.

A recent creative project that painted the bases of light fixtures along Lake Avenue hinted at the possibility for how these types of interventions might be applied more broadly along the entire trail (Figure 6 - 31). Concepts should also incorporate historical interpretation and cultural heritage initiatives that expand narratives to include the contributions of the City's minority communities. Examples of this include recent initiatives by the Springwood Avenue Rising Committee/Interfaith Neighbors, West Side Citizens United and the Asbury Park African American Music Project (AP-AMP) all on Springwood Avenue.

Figure 6 - 30 shows a conceptual framework for a trail beginning on Springwood Avenue that links the *Springwood Community Cultural District* to the *Downtown Art and Commerce District*. The trail then continues east on Lake Avenue, recognizing pedestrian bridge crossings into Ocean Grove and a revitalized *Press Plaza*. As the trail continues toward the waterfront, it is punctuated by public art, sculpture, and spaces for community-based programming. Once the trail reaches the *Waterfront Entertainment and Tourism District*, it connects to the pedestrian and commercial corridors of Ocean Avenue and the Boardwalk. This section of the trail engages the *Community Placemaking Zones*, open spaces, and other cultural elements of the waterfront zone. When taken together the trail represents a comprehensive connection between the three most vital clusters of cultural activity in the City.



Figure 6 - 30 Aerial diagram showing the Asbury Avenue Community Gateway and the West Side to Waterfront Art and Culture Heritage Trail (opposite)

Figure 6 - 31 Example of a tactical public art on Lake Avenue along the West Side to Waterfront Art and Cultural Heritage Trail







# Asbury Avenue Community Gateway

Asbury Avenue is an important corridor and community gateway for the City. As the primary vehicular connection to the highway system, Asbury Avenue is a common pathway into the City's cultural, recreational, and commercial nodes. The Asbury Park Master Plan Reexamination (2017) recommended the City undertake corridor planning initiatives along Asbury Avenue that improve the aesthetic appearance and profile of uses within the area. The Arts and Culture Plan builds from these recommendations to propose the implementation of a creative streetscape along Asbury Avenue beginning (approximately) at Comstock Street and extending to Main Street.

With significant redevelopment potential, this area offers an opportunity to create a city gateway that incorporates creative expressions into streetscape improvements. Pedestrian infrastructure like bump-outs, seating, lighting, and banner programs are combined with public art and sculpture to establish the brand of Asbury Park as a city where creativity thrives. The City can work with land owners, developers and the Public Art Commission to prioritize and curate artistic commissions from the local creative community. This would ensure that the implementation of the community gateway is authentic to the creative forms, motifs, and styles are authentic expressions from

the community. [Figure 6 - 32](#) shows a conceptual rendering of a creative streetscape in this area of Asbury Avenue. It is important to note that this rendering only shows a conceptual approach, and is not a prescriptive design proposal. The implementation of this recommendation should result from a comprehensive study that incorporates public input, architectural design, and engineering.

Beyond creative streetscaping and visual branding, there is an opportunity to prioritize and incentivize development of spaces needed to support new creative enterprises, cultural production, and retention of residents that identify as creators. To that end the City should update underlying zoning and redevelopment plans to assure the profile of uses in the several blocks north and south of Asbury Avenue and permit and encourage uses like small format retail, light industrial/artisanal production space, and live/work housing.

Figure 6 - 32 Conceptual rendering of a creative streetscape at the Asbury Avenue Community Gateway (opposite)

Figure 6 - 33 Examples of creative streetscapes; Saint Petersburg, FL (below, right); Pembroke Pines, FL (below, left)









Epilogue:

Planning &  
Urban Design  
Initiatives  
Related to  
Arts & Culture

# Planning & Urban Design Initiatives Related to Arts & Culture

Ultimately, an Arts & Culture Plan cannot address all aspects of the community's planning needs. The recommendations of the Arts & Culture Plan are the result of a research and inventory process that incorporated input from the community. Accordingly, the scope of the Plan's recommendations are the product of that process.

However, throughout the process, certain topics and issues arose that have direct relationships and overlaps with arts and culture. In fact, implementing the recommendations of the Arts & Culture Plan requires physical, organizational and policy actions by the City, its partners, and the community. The Plan does not make comprehensive recommendations about historic preservation, transportation, urban design, or sustainability, but these dimensions are (at least partially) related to supporting the City's cultural ecosystem.

To that end, the Arts & Culture Plan identifies several areas to consider for additional municipal planning efforts. Detailed study and strategic planning in any of these areas should build on planning efforts like this one, and articulate further policy, organizational and physical strategies to realize the vision of the Arts & Culture Plan and City Master Plan. These efforts may include strategic planning and design guidelines including:

- Historic Preservation Plan
- Parks, Recreation & Open Space Plan
- Public Art & Sculpture Plan
- Urban Design & Streetscape Design Guidelines
- Sustainability & Resiliency Plan
- And others...



ASBURY  
LANES  
Snack Bar

26 THE BETHS  
OCT 8 COMMODORES



PERMIT  
PARKING  
ALLOWED  
ALL TIMES - 7 DAYS  
**ZONE 3**  
VALID PARKING PERMITS  
MUST BE DISPLAYED  
ALL OTHER POSTED REGULATIONS APPLY





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