

CREATIVE PROVIDENCE

A CULTURAL PLAN FOR THE CREATIVE SECTOR

Executive Summary | June 2009

PROVIDENCE THE CREATIVE CAPITAL

David N. Cicilline, Mayor

Dear Friends,

It is my great pleasure to share the Executive Summary of *Creative Providence: a Cultural Plan for the Creative Sector* with you. *Creative Providence* arose from a comprehensive process that engaged thousands of Providence citizens in opinion research and hundreds of community activists, individual artists, arts administrators, and business leaders in cultural planning. *Creative Providence* honors the voices of a tremendous community of participants who generously shared their time, expertise, and experiences to help map, analyze, and collectively think about the evolution – and future direction – of our city’s creative ecosystem.

This blueprint for Providence’s arts, culture, and creativity reflects significant public participation and we can proudly, and authentically, proclaim community-wide stewardship of *Creative Providence*. The cultural plan outlines strategies for cultivating a more sustainable creative sector and the high intentions it describes are already achieving results. *Creative Providence* is partly prescriptive, outlining long-range goals and some bold outcomes that may take decades to realize or that will require new resources and improved economic conditions. This plan also calls out and endorses new initiatives, partnerships, and plans already well underway. Planning conversations have already enabled new partnerships and initiatives among funders, arts education advocates and researchers, neighborhood services, providers of management assistance and information, and those branding and marketing the city’s rich cultural assets.

Our city’s cultural life is a cornerstone of Providence’s economy and unique sense of place. The response to our cultural planning efforts signals a shared sophistication and deep appreciation of the public value of Providence’s creative sector. In the coming months, the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism will lead the City’s efforts to implement the cultural plan’s strategies. I invite you to visit <http://providenceri.com/ArtCultureTourism> to download a full version of *Creative Providence: a Cultural Plan for the Creative Sector*.

Sincerely,



David N. Cicilline, Mayor
City of Providence, Rhode Island

ON THE COVER: WATERFIRE, TRINITY REP, PPAC, FESTIVAL BALLET PROVIDENCE
BELOW, LEFT TO RIGHT: KENNEDY PLAZA, FIRSTWORKS KIDS



A VISION FOR CREATIVE PROVIDENCE

Providence is a place built upon innovation and creativity. For centuries, creative businesses, cultural institutions, artists, designers, writers, and scholars have shaped the city's economic development, social progress, and quality of life. This legacy has inspired, and at times challenged, successive generations of Providence residents to define the city by its art, scholarship, and creative entrepreneurship. The city's artists in particular have made Providence the region's creative capital. Providence artists and institutions are widely recognized for their commercial and critical success – an impressive marker of creativity for a city of our size.

In 2007, a national survey conducted by Americans for the Arts demonstrated that Providence's non-profit arts and cultural organizations generated over \$111.8 million annually and supported almost 3,000 jobs in Rhode Island. As astounding as these figures are, they do not even fully calculate the creative sector's economic impact. Hundreds of small, creative businesses, including individual artists, also drive the state's economy – generating new ideas, designing original products, and creating innovative solutions to difficult problems. In addition, it would be virtually impossible to quantify the wide variety of people who cultivate an individual creative practice.

Our economic well-being is only one part of developing a healthy, strong, and creative Providence. The local creative sector also nurtures society's young leaders, transforms some of our most troubled youth, and is a critical component of fostering creative problem-solvers in our schools. Across the city, theaters, libraries, public media, and humanities programs require and allow citizens to ask provocative questions about the human condition and support rigorous civic dialogue.

Today, cities are leaders in the shaping of a global society. As the first decade of the 21st century approaches its end, the world is in a historic state of transition. The U.S. is faced with difficult questions and is searching for thoughtful, fresh answers. We are all being asked to redefine our values, to develop sustainable ecological practices, to build an equitable and rigorous education system, and to rediscover the principles our forebears outlined for us in our country's founding documents.

In these challenging times, it is appropriate for the City of Providence to design a blueprint for the continued evolution of our city. In the past, citizen-led efforts to generate new ideas about Providence's future prosperity have offered the city rich opportunities to redefine itself – to move rivers, to revitalize the downtown, and to invest in healthy neighborhoods. Downtown's renewal was anchored in the belief that our high quality arts organizations would drive economic activity and provoke the public to re-imagine the city's center.

The city's artists have driven redevelopment in neighborhoods and city streets. They have breathed life into our aging industrial infrastructure and been the catalysts for civic engagement. *Creative Providence* has been a broadly inclusive, community-wide effort that capitalizes on the energy of a 21st-century local art and culture movement gaining momentum in cities across the globe.

Our cultural plan calls upon leadership from our creative sector – artists, arts organizations, poets and scholars, designers and creators, the entertainment and tourism industries – to ask hard questions and solve difficult problems alongside government and business leaders. The plan charts out an ecosystem of interdependencies and opportunities for collaboration. *Creative Providence* lays the groundwork for Providence to strengthen and realize its next generation of potential as a creative center while recognizing there are incredible, unprecedented challenges ahead – challenges that require bold, imaginative thinking.

The future will not be a replication of the past. Creativity is one way to claim our city's future.



– Lynne McCormack, Director
Department of Art, Culture + Tourism

PURPOSE

Mayor David N. Cicilline and the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism launched *Creative Providence: a Cultural Plan for the Creative Sector* to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the capital city's creative community. The community-wide cultural planning effort will better position the city to realize its full potential as a creative center and deliver on its promise of innovation and change. *Creative Providence* will become a guide to public policy, private initiative, and investment.

The creative sector is a key part of Providence's economy. At the core of this economy is the creative sector with its three main domains:

1. The arts, humanities, and cultural heritage;
2. The media, tourism, and entertainment industries; and
3. Creative business-to-business services and design-based business.

LEFT TO RIGHT: SOUND SESSION, RISD MUSEUM OF ART, CREATIVE PROVIDENCE FORUM



CREATIVE PROVIDENCE

TIMELINE AND PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

September 2007 – September 2008

Preliminary Planning: Early related discussions about art, culture, and creativity in Providence

- Creative Conversation with Emerging Arts Leaders
- Providence Tomorrow charrettes
- Arts Investment Taskforce
- Relationship-building

January 2009 – June 2009

Cultural Planning: Plan community-wide actions and secure necessary resources to respond

- Senator Claiborne Pell Lecture on Arts & Humanities: 200+ attendees
- 6 planning studios: 200 participants
- Evaluation and feedback: Steering Committee

September 2008 – December 2008

Cultural Assessment: Identify cultural resources, critical needs, and opportunities for the creative sector in Providence

- 2 community forums: 150 participants
- Interviews with 20 community leaders
- Online survey (RISCA collaboration): 2,000+ respondents
- 25 focus group discussions: 275 participants
- Evaluation and feedback from Steering Committee and Working Group: 50 participants

June 2009 & Beyond

Implementation: Act on prioritized strategies

- Launch cultural plan at public event
- Publish Mayor's Action Plan for Creative Providence
- Create implementation plan
- Continue relationship-building
- Evaluation and feedback

For more information visit
providenceri.com/ArtCultureTourism and
creativeprovidence.com



GOAL: Mobilize the creative sector by positioning the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism as a leader in creative economic development

Catalyze Providence's creativity to leverage economic, social, and cultural capital.

- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism reorganizes to focus on economic development initiatives set forth by Providence's mayor for the creative sector in collaboration with the Department of Planning and Development and to lead implementation of this cultural plan.
- The City integrates the cultural plan's recommendations for the creative sector into its policies and planning to cultivate creative responses to complex urban issues such as sustainability, social mobility, and equity issues.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, in collaboration with the Providence Economic Development Partnership, continues to encourage creative entrepreneurship in the City of Providence.
- A Downtown Cultural Authority strengthens, centralizes, and effectively markets current downtown creative activity and public space.
- The City integrates branding as the *Creative Capital* into messaging and overall marketing of Providence and assures that support to the creative sector matches the message.
- The creative sector develops stronger relationships across sectors to encourage new ideas and innovation.
- A mix of private, government, and philanthropic investment in creativity strategically stimulates employment and economic opportunity.
- Design, film, and digital media are nurtured as specific industries with high potential for economic development in Providence.
- The City continues to work with the Mayor's Institute on City Design to set high standards for design excellence in the construction and renovation of all City buildings and buildings that receive financial incentives from the city, to review the city's public bidding process, and to explore new ways of nurturing emerging creative businesses through collaboration.
- The City supports further development of small and mid-sized venues for galleries, music, performances, and visual arts exhibitions downtown, in nearby areas, and, where appropriate, in neighborhood commercial corridors to serve local artists and attract creative workers, innovators, and entrepreneurs to develop sustainable business in the City.

LEFT TO RIGHT: GARY GLASSMAN/PROVIDENCE PICTURES, PROVIDENCE ART CLUB





LEFT TO RIGHT: CELEBRATE PROVIDENCE, CARLOS DE LEON

GOAL: Build community and foster neighborhood vitality through increased access and diversified cultural participation

Invest in neighborhood art, culture, and creativity to sustain social diversity and engage communities.

- The presence of arts, culture, and creativity in each neighborhood serves as a lifelong creative learning and community-building strategy.
- Public policies and private programs empower people to express their own creativity and explore their individual cultural curiosity.
- Cultural life attracts people to – and links – Providence’s neighborhoods.
- The City strengthens neighborhood vitality by increasing public access to arts, culture, and creativity and by working collaboratively to identify, convene, and cultivate a network of community and cultural leaders.
- The City collaborates to identify, develop, and establish neighborhood cultural centers utilizing existing civic structures: libraries, recreation centers, schools, parks, and community centers.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism works with partners to encourage and preserve cultural organizations that collect, present, produce, or give voice to ethnic communities.
- Investments in the city’s public art, programs, events, and infrastructure increase neighborhood-based creativity and encourage the proliferation and preservation of free and accessible public cultural programs.
- The City revisits and enforces the 1980 Art in City Life ordinance which requires one percent of total project costs for the construction or remodeling of any building, decorative or commemorative structure, park, street, sidewalk, parking facility, or utility paid for in whole or in part by the City to be expended on works of art.
- The City develops policies governing decisions about the construction, renovation, or restoration of commemorative art, architecture, and landscape architecture in public spaces and directs investment for the preservation of existing public monuments.
- Cultural program sponsors will make all people welcome – socially, physically, economically, and intellectually – with opportunities to participate in cultural offerings that represent and reinforce the many cultures and wide range of creative practices present throughout the city.
- Increased lifelong learning partnerships foster creativity in Providence residents.

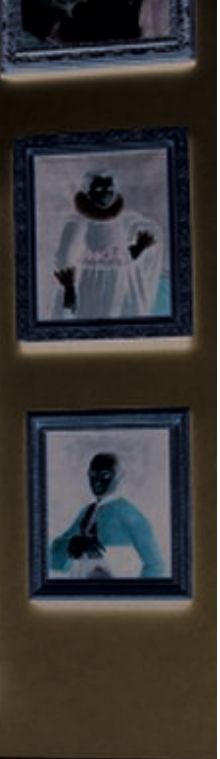


LEFT TO RIGHT: KENNEDY PLAZA, RISD MUSEUM OF ART, FESTIVAL BALLET PROVIDENCE

GOAL: Educate and inspire the next generation of creative thinkers

Develop creative practice in youth for 21st century global citizenship.

- The Pathways to Creative Learning Partnership, made up of the Department of Art, Culture + Tourism, Providence Schools, Brown University, the Providence After School Alliance, The Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, and the Rhode Island Arts Learning Network, continues to work collaboratively to create stronger pathways between neighborhoods, schools, cultural organizations, and creative professionals in K-12 through extended day learning.
- Policy and program recommendations outline strategies for rebuilding and strengthening arts learning pathways in Providence in coordination with complementary efforts already underway to analyze the supply of, and demand for, the creative learning needs of elementary school students and their families.
- Providence sustains its national reputation as a place where teaching is understood to be a core part of creative practice for many artists because of the excellent community-based arts organizations that work with artists and students.
- Providence becomes nationally recognized for its leadership in cultivating and sustaining a cadre of teaching artists.
- The City encourages community-wide stewardship and responsibility for providing youth with substantial opportunities to access cultural activity across the city. The community recognizes and sustains the significant contributions of Providence's after school service providers and high-quality arts organizations.
- A creative presence in neighborhood schools strengthens communities and provides opportunities for the creative sector.



A nonprofit organization, institution, corporation, or other entity is established for a social purpose rather than making a profit.

GOAL: Foster sustainable cultural organizations

Nurture agile, healthy, resilient organizations able to anticipate and meet all forms of new challenges.

- Cultural organizations receive assistance to adapt and thrive in fundamentally changing conditions over the long-term through information, training, assistance, and convening.
- The landscape of cultural organizations, including their staff, board, volunteers, donors, and audiences, becomes appropriately diverse, reflecting the full socioeconomic, racial, educational, and cultural diversity of Providence.
- The creative sector helps preserve critical nonprofit cultural organizations and jobs through the current economic recession and recovery.
- Increased funding from public sources and retained private-sector contributions infuses cultural organizations with cash critical to their survival.
- The City leads initiatives with other funders to identify and create new funding sources and post links online to information about alternative sources of income for cultural organizations online.
- Collaborations and restructuring among cultural organizations achieve increased effectiveness and creativity in programs, marketing, services, and facilities.
- Funders adopt a common grant proposal form, as being considered by Grant Makers Council of Rhode Island.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism becomes a central hub of information about training, assistance, and opportunities for collaboration by upgrading its website and e-newsletter, complementing current promotion of cultural events.

GOAL: Create conditions for creative workers to thrive in Providence

Support a vibrant community of individual artists, scholars, writers, designers, and entertainers to sustain the creative city.

- Individual artists have access to a robust infrastructure for technical assistance and support, allowing them to generate adequate revenues and working capital, and to reduce costs.
- Providence becomes a dynamic, regional arts market and center for creativity. The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism helps artists connect with buyers, audiences, collectors, contracts, and capital, and leads efforts to encourage funders to retain and enhance grants for individual artists and to develop new substantial funds.
- City initiatives, private galleries, and artist-driven ventures continue to encourage the development of a diverse mix of educational and nonprofit institutional venues to show and sell artists' work, providing opportunities for artists to engage audiences at multiple levels.
- Artists have access to multiple options for creative workspaces, living spaces, and presentation venues.
- Providence artists and creators receive recognition as community leaders who make significant contributions to the social and creative capital of the city.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism facilitates connections among creative workers and across other sectors to stimulate the development of a more formal artist network by creating additional social networking opportunities online and face-to-face. The City will showcase and incorporate the work of local artists into the fabric of its activities, including the built environment, the natural environment, and special events.
- The creative sector advocates for, and practices, public policies and attitudes that value and respect creative workers as professionals. The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism continues to advocate that artists are individual workers and must be compensated fairly for their services.

“Artist” is broadly defined and inclusive of visual and performing artists, craftspeople, writers and editors, designers, entertainers, and more.

LEFT TO RIGHT: THE STEEL YARD, AS220 FAB LAB





WATERPLACE PARK

GOAL: Raise public awareness of the creative sector

Strengthen marketing, advocacy, and tourism to increase participation and engagement.

- Consistent messaging of *Providence, the Creative Capital* effectively markets cultural attractions and helps promote creative sector resources to visitors and residents.
- People easily locate the city's arts, culture, and creativity through the creation of an information portal with coordinated information, calendars, ticketing, and links to events and opportunities. Artists and presenters may readily post information on this central online data portal.
- Strong partnerships among tourism, the hospitality industry, cultural organizations and event staff develop more robust cross-marketing and encourage collaborations including the bundling of events and services.
- Rhode Island Citizens for the Arts coordinates statewide advocacy to enhance appreciation of the value of arts and culture.
- Funders and service organizations help strengthen artists' and arts organizations' ability to fulfill their missions.
- The creative sector is recognized as central to Providence's quality of life, attractiveness to business and investment, and returning prosperity.
- The Department of Art, Culture + Tourism works with elected officials, advocacy organizations, foundations, and individual cultural organizations to cultivate sustained public and private sources of funding and cultural organizations' capacity to raise operating and programming funds.

Cultural participation includes creating, preserving, and supporting artistic and cultural expression.

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Jose Torrealba, Providence Latin American Film Festival
Joan Wyand, RIOTS
Jason Yoon, New Urban Arts
Berge Ara Zobian, Gallery Z



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David N. Cicilline, Mayor

<http://providenceri.com/ArtCultureTourism>