Greater Phoenix Forward

Sustaining and Enhancing the Human-Services Infrastructure

Arts and Culture in Greater Phoenix

This section provided as an excerpt of the larger publication available at copp.asu.edu

A Project of the ASU College of Public Programs
Debra Friedman, Dean

Major funding provided by Valley of the Sun United Way and the City of Phoenix.
Additional support provided by Alcoa Foundation, SRP, APS and Downtown Phoenix Partnership.
The support of these entities is gratefully acknowledged.

©2008 by the Arizona Board of Regents for and on behalf of Arizona State University and its College of Public Programs.
Decades ago, when community leaders started the Phoenix Art Museum, Phoenix Symphony, Phoenix Public Library, Arizona Theater Company, and other institutions, they sought to develop the arts and culture resources they believed vital to a young metropolis in a growing state. Supported by national trends, metro residents over time have created resources to showcase artists, teach art forms, address social problems, preserve heritage, share cultures, and much more. Today, more than 300 formal nonprofit organizations, public libraries, and city agencies throughout Greater Phoenix offer or support a myriad of performances, visual arts, natural and community history classes, library services, festivals, lessons, and programs. Additional entities operate informally.

Millions of residents and visitors participate annually in arts and culture—thanks in part to cultural institutions’ roles as among the region’s major tourist attractions, including the Heard Museum.¹ The latest economic impact study in 2005 concluded that audiences for nonprofit arts and culture in Phoenix (an estimated 6.1 million people) spent approximately $361 million and supported more than 11,000 jobs across the region. East Valley (Chandler, Mesa, and Tempe) audience expenditures totaled $82 million during the same year.²

These significant numbers belie the complex environment for arts and culture today. “Fundamental shifts in demographics, lifestyles, technologies, mobility, and consumer behaviors”³ have touched all arts and culture entities in recent years. Aging audiences, competition for time, hit-or-miss arts education, financial ups and downs, and the “do-it-myself” approach to participation have made traditional approaches obsolete. At the same time, the Internet revolution, population growth, the knowledge economy, interest in community revitalization, acceptance of public art, new venues, and a period as one of the “it” issues of the 2000s have presented new opportunities.

### Table 1 | Five Types of Arts and Culture Participation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inventive Participation</th>
<th>Interpretive Participation</th>
<th>Curatorial Participation</th>
<th>Observational Participation</th>
<th>Ambient Participation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engages the mind, body, and spirit in creation, regardless of skill level.</td>
<td>A creative act of self-expression that adds value to existing works of art.</td>
<td>The act of selecting, organizing, and collecting artworks to the satisfaction of one’s own artistic sensibility.</td>
<td>Refers to arts experiences that an individual selects.</td>
<td>Involves experiencing art, consciously or unconsciously, that is not purposefully selected—art that “happens to you.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since the 1960s—in part because of the catalyst of the National Endowment for the Arts and the advent of state and local arts agencies—public-sector agencies have played important roles in arts and culture development. As a result, arts and culture throughout Greater Phoenix and the U.S. have evolved into a public-private enterprise with two related but divergent outlooks: 1) Arts and culture are intrinsically important and are hallmarks of quality places; and 2) Arts and culture offer unique “policy instruments” to achieve goals in areas as diverse as human services, livability, competitiveness, revitalization, and learning.

A Pyramid and a Network

In the Scottsdale Cultural Council’s 2007 community assessment, consultant Alan Brown described a healthy cultural community as one that provides three types of arts and culture opportunities:

- Arts education facilities and programs for children, including in-school classes, arts integration, after-school programs, and community programs
- Arts practice and learning opportunities for adults of all ages
- Professionally curated exhibitions and performances that inspire area residents and provide shared cultural experiences on a large scale

From a metro perspective, a broad range of public and private entities provides opportunities in these categories, although coverage and the mechanisms vary across the region. As in most places, Greater Phoenix’s arts and culture organizations form a pyramid. A few large entities are at the top with the more numerous medium-sized and then most prevalent small entities further down.

The pyramid, however, cannot reflect how arts and culture function day to day. This diverse set of entities operates as a dynamic network in which most participants play multiple roles. Partnerships and connections form and re-form to capitalize on opportunities and develop solutions to problems. Network members also compete with one another for connections, attention, and dollars even as they collaborate for the same reasons.

Altogether, the network includes:

- artists and teaching artists
- formal and informal nonprofit and public visual, literary, and performing-arts organizations
- science and historical museums and parks
- historic sites, landscapes, and trails and related public and private organizations
- organizations that extend arts and culture learning into after-school hours
- public libraries
- zoological and botanical organizations
- regional and community arts centers and performance venues

Hybrid Support Systems for a Hybrid Sector

Greater Phoenix’s support system for arts and culture is nearly as multi-faceted as the sector itself. It includes state and municipal agencies as well as private organizations and individuals. Municipal support agencies work generally within their city limits with policies and programs split among arts-specific, parks and recreation, and library entities. In contrast, private and nonprofit organizations, consumers, and artists span boundaries to serve the region.

Among municipal arts agencies, three basic models are prevalent in Greater Phoenix:

- City agency with an advisory commission, as in Phoenix
- City agency as a full-service department—presenter, museum operator, and educator, as in Mesa
- Municipal contract with a private, nonprofit organization, as in Scottsdale or the West Valley

Private support vehicles include:

- Nonprofit regional development organization, such as the Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture (MPAC)
- Nonprofit capacity-building, professional development, and advocacy entities, such as the Arizona Arts and Business Council, Arizona Citizens for the Arts, and Arizona Alliance for Arts Education
- Initiatives from foundations and corporations
Regardless of their structures, public-sector arts and culture agencies—as well as many private entities—share common purposes, including to

- Provide access for all residents;
- Honor local diversity;
- Identify and serve community needs;
- Support artistic development;
- Increase economic, tourism, and educational development;
- Foster a sense of place.

The question of how much is spent on arts and culture by the public sector is harder to answer. Differences in how cities define arts and culture, operate venues, assign subsidies for city-owned but nonprofit-operated facilities, build public facilities, fund public art, and integrate programs make a precise accounting difficult. Dollars tend to come from the general fund for grants to community organizations and operations of ongoing programs, while voter-approved bonds and dedicated funding sources are usually used to build and renovate facilities or create parks and preserve open spaces. For example, Phoenix used bond funds to build the Burton Barr Central Library and to contribute to the renovation of the George Washington Carver Museum and Cultural Center, Children’s Museum of Phoenix, and Steele Park Memorial Hall, among numerous other projects over many years. The cultural portion of the Phoenix bond program in 2006 totaled nearly $35 million with an additional $29 million in library projects.

Phoenix also devotes millions to operate such venues as the Orpheum Theatre and to provide building supports to the Phoenix Art Museum, Arizona Science Center, and other private, nonprofit organizations. In contrast, Phoenix allocates approximately $1 million annually to its arts and culture grant program from its general fund. These competitive funds, as with most arts and culture grants, require a substantial match, usually dollar for dollar. Public art dollars tend to be drawn from “percent for art” ordinances, which are generally based on capital budgets or voluntary percentages of private development. The current Phoenix public art plan totals approximately $10 million.

In May 2008, Phoenix voters approved the Phoenix Parks and Preserve Initiative, which would renew the sales tax first approved in 1999. However, Phoenix is not the only city to support arts and culture in a variety of ways or to ask for voters’ support. For example, in addition to city departments, Mesa and Tempe dedicated a portion of sales tax revenues to develop new performing arts facilities, which opened in 2006 and 2007, respectively. Scottsdale also has tapped special sales taxes for mountain preserves.

City priorities and the economy often affect arts and culture expenditures. For example, ongoing financial crises in Mesa led to a substantial portion of community classes being transferred to Mesa Community College to save them from being eliminated. The variety in the region also stems from different stages of development. Cities tend to turn attention to arts and culture venues and programs after the rush of rapid development. Some observers have called arts and culture a “coming of age” indicator for municipalities as they look for a unique identity and seek to serve new residents.

Despite a history of some public support, arts and culture frequently have had to fight the stereotype of being a community “frill” instead of a “public good,” even though arts and culture organizations function as tools to achieve public goals. The public-private nature of the sector can work against arts and culture as much as for it. Thus, while tax dollars play a role in private organizations, the nonprofit sector receives less in Greater Phoenix than in other comparable metro regions. This on-again, off-again support is a reason why nonprofit arts and culture in Greater Phoenix have been described as “commitment rich but resource poor.” A comparison of Greater Phoenix’s arts and culture dollars with nine benchmark cities’ showed that local nonprofit organizations as a whole cope with less funding per capita, lower endowments, less diversity of revenue, and less public sector revenue.

Changing this situation is a priority for the Maricopa Partnership for Arts and Culture. During deliberations in 2004, the Maricopa Regional Task Force for Arts and Culture (MPAC) —an economic-development-oriented group of public and private leaders which several Arizona foundations brought together—concluded that a strong arts and culture sector was a necessity for competitiveness in the knowledge economy. The task force determined that an additional $30-50 million per year is needed for the arts and culture sector in Greater Phoenix to reach its potential and be on par with competitor
regions. The task force’s work led to the creation of MPAC and an expectation that a dedicated funding source would be developed. MPAC is now targeting 2010 to gain voter approval for a public funding source. Early plans call for a small portion of a county-wide sales tax.

Tools for Quality of Place and Quality of Life

As Greater Phoenix expands in size and diversity, the expectations of its 21st century residents rise as well. Arts and culture have been recognized as important for quality of place and quality of life, whether one thinks in terms of human services, livability, competitiveness, revitalization, learning, or some combination of these. Existing examples of arts and culture in relation to these quality of life factors are presented below, as are samples of items “in the works.”

Arts and Culture for Human Services

Arts and Culture for Livability

The Arizona Commission on the Arts is just one of many arts and culture entities to take up the livability theme in recent years. The state agency, which is also a critical metropolis mechanism, continued the emphasis in its 2006-2010 plan, focusing on “healthy, vibrant communities through the arts” and “public policy that recognizes and supports the pivotal role of the arts in society…and decisions in areas including education, economic development, community development, aging, health, transportation, tourism, justice and safety.” The commission included the “education community, community development sectors, parents, and social service organizations” among its partners for achieving its goals.

Livability Examples

- **Teen Central** Youth helped to design and develop Teen Central, a space at the Burton Barr Central Library in Phoenix. Teen Central is a model for libraries locally and throughout the U.S. Similarly, the Will Bruder building is one of many nationwide that showcases public libraries as symbols of renewed interest in civic architecture and public spaces.

- **ARTability** Arts and culture organizations created this statewide organization to bridge the gaps between arts and culture activities and individuals with disabilities. It serves nearly 300,000 individuals and 640 arts organizations annually.
### Tempe Community Chorus
This nonprofit singing opportunity is open to adults throughout the metro area. Performing throughout the year, the chorus offers nearly everyone the chance to follow music as an avocation.

### In the Works
Phoenix has been a leader nationally in the integration of public art and civic infrastructure. Cities throughout Arizona and the U.S. have followed Phoenix’s lead in designs for freeways, fire stations, and airports. As downtown Phoenix redevelops, public art is expected to enhance its sense of place. The Civic Space as part of the ASU Downtown Phoenix campus is anticipated to be a destination, particularly with artist Janet Echelman’s public artwork as the centerpiece.

### Arts and Culture for Competitiveness
Richard Florida’s 2002 book, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, highlighted arts and culture as a fundamental ingredient in knowledge economy competitiveness. The book, among others, helped to create a window of opportunity for arts development in many places, including Greater Phoenix. In its 2004 report *Vibrant Culture Thriving Economy*, the Maricopa Regional Task Force on Arts and Culture concluded arts and culture are key to:

1. Economic value
2. Creative people
3. Metro identity
4. Sense of community
5. Urban appeal

But research in 2005 highlighted areas of weakness in the sector, which could impact the region’s competitiveness. As noted in *Perceptions Matter*: “Talented young professionals in the region not only want those arts and cultural amenities currently available but also want even more choices and opportunities. Current perceptions point to a high demand for and low supply of cultural offerings.”

### Competitiveness Examples
- **In 2006**, MPAC’s report on “creative occupations” was the first time metro creative jobs were analyzed across industries. More than 106,000 people were employed in 150 occupations in arts, design, and culture, plus cross-disciplinary areas in science, engineering, and business. These jobs accounted for 6.1% of employment and 10% of total wages in the region. Greater Phoenix’s percentage, however, was the least among western competitors Portland, Denver, Dallas, San Diego, Austin, and Seattle.

### In the Works
Congress is being asked to make the U.S. Bureau of Land Management’s **National Landscape Conservation System** a permanent designation similar to the national parks and national forests. This designation would affect 3.3 million acres in Arizona and ensure that prized recreational and wilderness spaces will remain so as the metro region and state grow.

### Arts and Culture to Revitalize
“While the arts are commerce, they revitalize cities not through their bottom-line but through their social role. The arts build ties that bind—neighbor to neighbor and community to community. It is these social networks that translate cultural vitality into economic dynamism.” These words from researchers Mark Stern and Susan Seifert reflect why Greater Phoenix is seeing and courting this phenomenon, although experience shows there is no foolproof formula for success.

### Revitalization Examples
- **Roosevelt Row** Roosevelt Street used to be the down-at-the-heels dividing line between a desolate downtown and a patchwork of neighborhoods. Now it is an increasingly vibrant connector between areas on an upward path. Brought about chiefly by artists and residents, the area, now known as Roosevelt Row, is a homegrown model for revitalization.

- **Amenity Landmarks** Combining heritage, arts, and open space can create amenities out of under-utilized places. Historic Arizona Falls at 56th Street and Indian School Road along the Arizona Canal now showcases artist-designed structures, canal-bank trails, and a neighborhood oasis, and is a model for city infrastructure, “green” power, and public art. Glendale’s Sahauro Ranch Park, Tempe Town Lake, and Rio Salado are other examples.

- **In the Works** The **Arizona Indicators Project** is expected to include a local version of a “cultural vitality index” so that the contributions to the
revitalization and health of major portions of the arts and culture sector can be monitored over time.

**Arts and Culture for Learning at All Ages**

Arizona has K-12 learning standards in music, dance, visual arts, and theater. Students must have an arts credit (although career/technical education also counts) to graduate high school. Yet statewide studies over more than a decade have shown that district-supported arts education ranges from weak to strong. At the same time, artist residencies and partnerships with arts organizations for everything from special performances to interdisciplinary projects to after-school programs have become commonplace in many places. Learning in and through the arts is not just for the young. Local experiences also reveal a continuum of adult learners. For any age, classes and events through municipal parks and recreation departments, community colleges and universities, and arts and culture organizations are sources of new knowledge and experiences.

**Learning Examples**

- **Rosie’s House** This tuition-free nonprofit music academy works to ensure that every child has the opportunity to master an instrument. Quality music education in a safe supportive place is the core of the program, which requires students to maintain good grades in school as well as to practice daily.

- **21st Century Learning Partners** Ten major arts institutions, including the Phoenix Art Museum, formed the Phoenix Arts Collaborative to work with nine central Phoenix under-performing schools on academic achievement and after-school learning through the arts. Administered by the Phoenix Office of Arts and Culture over five years, teachers were trained to integrate the arts and other subjects and local artists worked with students and teachers. A formal evaluation showed that the activities enhanced student achievement.

- **Herberger College at Large** ASU’s Herberger College of the Arts offers a wide variety of classes and private instruction for adults, as well as for children and their parents. Faculty and graduate students teach the programs.

- **In the Works** The Musical Instruments Museum broke ground early in 2008 in north Phoenix and will open early in 2010. The institution will exhibit instruments from throughout the world and provide a unique learning opportunity for residents and visitors of all ages.

**The Future**

The “American West, for many, has been about becoming, not about being.” This is certainly the case in Greater Phoenix. And if current trends continue, the near-term future will bring more of the same. By 2012, Maricopa County could gain 600,000 more residents. New institutions and venues may well have moved from plan to reality in all parts of the region. MPAC could be distributing millions of new dollars to arts and culture organizations, allowing movement in overall quality as well as innovations in using arts and culture to achieve bigger, broader public purposes. What will these many pieces of “becoming” add up to?

The answer may turn on two changes—one in perception and one in deed. The perceptual change is whether the dual public-private approach will finally find acceptance. Acceptance of arts and culture as part of both the public and private sectors would not only prevent arguments about value and resources, but would also put all types of arts and culture on a level playing field. With fewer differences among the players in arts and culture, more effort can be put toward a vibrant arts and culture community that can deliver on quality of place and quality of life for all residents. The change in deed should come with this realization. As the lines of public and private fade, institutions should develop new ways of working that honor the transparency and inclusiveness of the public institution and the flexibility and drive of the private. With this combination, “creative Phoenix” may well be the region’s new brand.

Nancy Welch is Associate Director of the Morrison Institute for Public Policy. Her experience in policy analysis and research spans more than 20 years and has included work in many areas, such as arts and culture, social issues, and the workforce.

**NOTES**

7. Maricopa Regional Task Force for Arts and Culture, Battelle Technology Partnership Practice, Summary of Strengths and Weaknesses Facing Arts and Culture in the Maricopa Region, December 2003.