



Strategic Cultural Plan Grand Junction, Colorado

5 YEARS: 2017–2021

Making art and culture part of everyday life in our community

ADOPTED BY:
GRAND JUNCTION COMMISSION ON ARTS AND CULTURE
JANUARY 25, 2017

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Cultural Plan Overview



Executive Summary

Aspirations for the Grand Junction community are multi-faceted—one that provides an exemplary quality of life, offers a diverse and vibrant business environment, functions as a regional center for economic vitality, supports educational opportunities, has a broad reputation as a cultural destination, and is a magnet for new residents. The arts and culture of this community are integral to success in supporting these aspirations and play a significant role in the economic health of the city and the surrounding area. Grand Junction's history inextricably links art and culture with the community's aspirations, accomplishments, resilience and its very character:

The Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan embraces a creative culture that:

- respects cultural heritage while valuing and supporting the arts, artistic individuals and institutions
- offers greater public access and deeper engagement in arts and culture
- advances arts education opportunities that inspire strong conceptual and problem-solving skills and cultivate creative leaders and collaborations
- seeks a vibrant community strengthened by artists, arts entrepreneurs and activities
- supports a healthy economy that arises from a diverse and creative workforce

The content and recommendations resulting from public input and broad visioning underpin the Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan. It was developed and prioritized by goals within six key areas—Arts Education, Creative Districts/Creative Industry, Economic Impact, Historic Preservation/Science/History, Public Art, and Urban Design/Cultural Facilities. The plan strengthens and supports an important network of people—arts professionals, educators, policymakers, civic leaders, and families.

Several of the strategies and action items expressed in this plan are in process and will happen. Others require commitment and momentum to accomplish. This is where real collaboration begins. This is where the shared vision provided through the Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan will support partnerships that help drive our local economy and stimulate our imaginations to help foster a creative culture and the quality of life to which the community aspires.

The Grand Junction Commission on Arts & Culture hopes to participate with the community in continuing the conversation that began with this process and to engage in bringing energy to the city's cultural plan going forward!

Participants

The completion of the Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan is due to the investment of people in the community who were thoughtfully engaged, took time to support the process, and consult on the content of this document. The Grand Junction Commission on Arts & Culture appreciates our strategic partners who participated in the kickoff event in January, 2016 and those that carried on the process by collaborating as committee contributors.

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Additional Acknowledgements

STRATEGIC PARTNERS – ORGANIZATIONS, AFFILIATIONS AND DESIGNATIONS REPRESENTED

All Metals Welding	Historical Board
Avalon Foundation	Horizon Drive Business Improvement District
Bank of Colorado	Hoskin, Farina & Kampf, P.C.
Business Incubator Center	Interiors, Etc.
City of Grand Junction	John McConnell Math & Science Center
Colorado Archeological Society—	KAFM—Grand Valley Public Radio
Grand Junction Chapter	Legends of the Grand Valley
Colorado Canyons Gallery	LGHtv
Colorado Mesa University	Loki
Community Concerts of the Grand Valley	Mesa County Public Library
Creative Avenues / Revolution Dance	Moonscapes 3D
Dance Works	Museum of Western Colorado
Downtown Development Authority	School District 51
Former Arts & Culture Commissioners	Super Rad Art Jam
Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce	Veterans Art Center
Grand Junction Economic Partnership	Western Colorado Botanical Gardens
Grand Junction Historical Preservation	Western Colorado Center for the Arts
Grand Junction Symphony Orchestra	Western Colorado Writers Forum
Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau	

Additional Acknowledgements

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Introduction

The role of the creative community is evolving with a belief that arts and culture should be included in discussions about how to make our community more innovative and vibrant, and our business environment stronger and more diverse.

The Grand Junction Strategic Cultural Plan embraces the reality that arts and culture are interconnected. Culture includes the heritage, artistic diversity, and natural beauty that make Grand Junction unique. The arts have the power to transform lives and communities through the celebration of culture as a way to appreciate the civic environment more deeply.

In the development of the cultural plan that follows, strategic partners expressed their thoughts and desires for more places to gather, more concerts and events, and for arts and culture's importance to making a community that is more attractive and desirable. They also emphasized the importance of building upon creativity that already exists through further development of the community's cultural vitality, creative identity, and dynamic environments. This necessitates 1) providing an innovative mix of cultural, economic, and social activities that improve the life of residents and visitors to Grand Junction, 2) fostering conditions where everyone who visits or moves to our community is inspired and engaged by the community as a unique and dynamic cultural destination, and 3) thoughtfully designing public spaces, a mix of events and destinations, and encounters with a broad range of arts opportunities and experiences.

The cultural plan that follows aspires to make this community an outstanding place to be creative. It supports an environment where inspiration attracts and is improved by the people that call Grand Junction home. In this way, the cultural plan is a statement of what we seek to become and as a call to action for cultural involvement.

Darcy Johnson, Chair
Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture

Community Profile

HISTORY AND POPULATION:

Grand Junction was founded in the fall of 1881, incorporated in June, 1882, and became the county seat of the newly formed Mesa County in 1883. By late 1883 Grand Junction had a population of 600 people, with 50 businesses, three canal projects, two coal mines, numerous cattle ranches, and the regional office of the Denver & Rio Grande Railroad.

The city experienced major growth in the 1950s due to a uranium mining and processing boom, which brought more prospectors to Colorado than the gold and silver rush almost a century earlier. By 1960 the population of Mesa County reached 50,700. But the mid-1960s and early 1970s were a time of economic downturn in the Grand Valley. The late-70s and early 80s were again a boom period because of oil shale mining, but an end to oil shale exploration brought another economic downturn in the mid to late 1980s. Grand Junction's population increased from 41,968 in 2000 to 61,847 in 2016. At the same time the population of Mesa County increased from 116,255 in 2001 to 148,348 in 2016. Grand Junction is the largest city and the only metropolitan area in Western Colorado. It is the regional trade, service, education, and transportation center for the area.

BUSINESS, EMPLOYMENT, AND EDUCATION:

Almost 60% of Mesa County's jobs are in the retail, trade, and service sectors. Over 17% of local jobs are in government/education. The unemployment rate is currently at 5.9%, and has been falling steadily since 2010. Major local employers include:

Mesa County School District #51 – 2,675 employees	StarTek, Inc. - 675 employees
St. Mary's Hospital – 1,500 employees	City Market - 648 employees
State of Colorado – 1,004 employees	City of Grand Junction - 641 employees
Mesa County - 978 employees	Colorado Mesa University – 622 employees
Community Hospital - 797 employees	

Colorado Mesa University's enrollment has grown from 5,000 in 2001 to 10,662 in 2015. Enrollment in School District #51 has increased from 17,122 in 1990 to 21,742 in 2015 in 43 different schools.

ARTS AND CULTURE:

There are approximately 110 arts and cultural clubs, organizations, and agencies active in the city of Grand Junction. Major local arts and cultural organizations include: Mesa County Public Library District, the Museum of Western Colorado, the Western Colorado Center for the Arts, the Grand Junction Musical Arts Association, the Western Colorado Botanical Garden, Art on the Corner, the Avalon Theatre, and KAFM public radio station. Colorado Mesa University and the Downtown Development Authority also provide many cultural events and activities. During the past decade the City and the Downtown Development Authority purchased and renovated the Avalon Theater into a community performing arts center; in addition to theaters/auditoriums at Grand Junction High School, Colorado Mesa University, and the Western Colorado Center for the Arts. Las Colonias Park and the lower downtown/riverfront are currently in the process of development with plans for an amphitheater underway.



Planning for Culture

WHY IS IT NECESSARY?

PLANNING FOR CULTURE is fundamental to envisioning and realizing the character and spirit of a place. It is a community effort which requires participation, collaboration, and coordination in order to identify, organize, and implement a holistic model of cultural objectives.

Effective cultural planning recognizes that the evolution of a place is both intentional and organic. Some objectives require significant and focused effort while others germinate and grow almost spontaneously. Taken as a whole, they have the potential to create a vibrant and desirable environment where culture generates success.

Inclusivity and engagement foster cohesion and ownership within the community. Cultural planning provides a way to re-affirm the importance of culture in everyday life by gathering a diverse range of stakeholders under a common purpose. The process reinforces networks with the energy and resources to implement the plan.

Cultural planning also recognizes that culture is not a standalone component within the broader scope of the city. A city is an indivisible entity where every layer of life is pervaded by culture. As such, culture should be integrated into achieving broader civic goals and benefits at multiple levels.

Across a wider context of communities who are leveraging culture to stimulate economic growth, culture is competitive. Culture is acknowledged and embraced as critical to the strength of a city's business strategy. Cultural planning is an essential tool for making informed decisions about how to invest in culture as a competitive endeavor.

PLANNING FOR CULTURE is not optional. To sustain a positive, vibrant, and relevant place – communities must understand, enhance, and project a captivating and durable cultural identity.

Planning for Culture

THE PROCESS:

On January, 28 2016, the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture conducted a public kick-off meeting to formally initiate the revision of the previous community cultural plan adopted in 2001. The revision process encompassed five steps over the course of eighteen months.

STEP 1:

A cultural plan sub-committee consisting of volunteer members of the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture was formed to review the previous plan, assess the content and status of previous initiatives, and outline format adjustments for the revised plan.

STEP 2:

A public kick-off meeting facilitated by Ilene Roggensack, with Third Sector, was held to engage the broader community, initiate the planning process, and recruit public committee members to participate in updating the plan. Sub-group committees were organized under each of the primary cultural plan categories.

STEP 3:

Sub-group committees met independently over several months to review and update goals, strategies, and action items for each cultural plan category. Draft content was prepared and submitted back to the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture cultural plan sub-committee.

STEP 4:

The Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture cultural plan sub-committee reconvened to refine and incorporate new content into a draft revised cultural plan document. The draft was submitted back to the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture for comment and approval. A final draft was prepared.

STEP 5:

The plan was presented to City Council and a public follow-up meeting was held to present the final plan to the community and participants. The plan was placed on the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture website for public access.

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

ARTS EDUCATION

Goal:

Build and enhance the value of arts education.

STRATEGY 1:

Establish a volunteer organization consisting of parents, arts educators, and community leaders to articulate and communicate the importance of arts education.

ACTION 1:

Assemble a community wide volunteer leadership body.

ACTION 2:

Utilize existing resources such as Americans for the Arts, Community Visions, to help define a structure for the organization. (*Volunteer Leadership*)

STRATEGY 2:

Promote the value of arts education across a broad spectrum.

ACTION 1:

Organize committees to address families, the community at large, school administration, school board members, and local government and business leadership. (*Volunteer Leadership*)

ACTION 2:

Develop a formal public relations campaign to promote the importance of arts education. (*Public Relations Committee*)

ACTION 3:

Organize groups under each arts discipline including visual arts, music, performance, literature, etc., to identify and foster partnerships between parents and volunteers to maximize arts education opportunities. (*Volunteer Leadership*)

STRATEGY 3:

Increase funding resources for arts education.

ACTION 1:

Organize a funding committee to research, apply for, and secure grant funding for arts education. (*Arts Education Funding Committee*)

ACTION 2:

Identify and develop sponsorship opportunities between businesses and arts education efforts. (*Arts Education Funding Committee*)

ACTION 3:

Work with local school district to adjust funding allocations toward arts education. (*Arts Education Funding Committee*)

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

CREATIVE DISTRICTS & CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

Goal:

Maintain an effective, positive image of the role of the arts and creatives in the community; attract, retain, and support local creatives by fostering professionalism, cooperation, and recognition of the arts as a powerful industry and a valuable community development tool.

STRATEGY 1:

Organize a grand valley creative alliance.

ACTION 1:

Form a task force to create a creative alliance of diverse membership.

ACTION 2:

Mobilize the creative community and the business community.

ACTION 3:

Create, improve, and expand festivals.

ACTION 4:

Facilitate networking opportunities.

STRATEGY 2:

Achieve status as a Colorado Creative Industries Creative District.

ACTION 1:

Establish a task force from the creative alliance to spearhead the process.

ACTION 2:

Map the Creative District in Grand Junction.

ACTION 3:

Apply for Colorado Creative Industries Creative District status.

STRATEGY 3:

Pass a tax initiative.

ACTION 1:

Create a task force.

ACTION 2:

Identify and recruit the allies needed.

ACTION 3:

Study other similar tax initiatives.

ACTION 4:

Educate the general public and the business community about the initiative.

ACTION 5:

Get tax initiative on the ballot.

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

ECONOMIC IMPACT

Goal:

Establish a consistent, significant funding commitment for Mesa County communities.

STRATEGY 1:

Complete an economic impact study.

ACTION 1:

Collect survey information at 2016 art and cultural events.

ACTION 2:

Analyze and publicize the results of the study.

STRATEGY 2:

Complete a literature survey of the impact of arts on the quality of life.

ACTION 1:

Work with Colorado Mesa University marketing students to survey literature identifying “quality of life” impacts/issues on business location and recruiting decisions.

STRATEGY 3:

Create an independent entity to promote arts and culture to recruit an economic development liaison.

ACTION 1:

Explore a possible evolution or reorganization of Grand Valley Creative Alliance.

STRATEGY 4:

Encourage mutually beneficial economic partnerships with existing local governmental boards and organizations.

ACTION 1:

Look for representation opportunities from the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture on local governmental boards and organizations.

ACTION 2:

Encourage local governmental boards and organizations to seek representation on the Grand Junction Commission on Arts and Culture.

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

HISTORY, SCIENCE & CULTURE

Goal:

Promote an appreciation for the unique diversity and variety of Mesa County's rich history and heritages, scientific endeavors, and enriching cultural experiences in order to engage residents and attract visitors.

STRATEGY 1: Focus on Culture

Support heritage or other organizations' efforts to provide education, creative experiences and entertainment that increases residents' and visitors' awareness of the variety of cultures and ethnicities present in Mesa County. Celebrate cultural groups by highlighting their contributions to history in the area to foster a connected and understanding community.

ACTION 1:

The committee envisions a large annual cultural festival, in which several countries are represented and invited to share food, customs, performances, and information. Possible locations include downtown Grand Junction, or the amphitheater at Las Colonias, pending its opening.

STRATEGY 2: Focus on History

Promote the importance of historic preservation by updating the existing brochure and video to create a new visual presentation of the current progress of historic preservation in Grand Junction.

ACTION 1:

Use the signage at historical sites as well as informational brochures to produce opportunities for group or self-led historical walking tour maps of several areas in the County.

ACTION 2:

Update online resources, including all of the above published materials, and offer electronic options for residents and visitors to find and experience places of historical significance.

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Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

HISTORY, SCIENCE & CULTURE cont.

STRATEGY 3: Focus on History

Promote awareness of areas of historical significance in Mesa County by implementing consistent and durable identification for buildings, sites and structures, including educational signage along notable historical trails. Use signage and published materials to illustrate where designated historic properties are concentrated as well as the connection between historic sites and other community features, such as downtown and the riverfront.

ACTION 1:

Lead walking tours of prominent historical areas, and include experiential programming.

ACTION 2:

The committee strongly supports the Museum of Western Colorado's efforts to maintain a location in Grand Junction, ideally in downtown Grand Junction.

The committee advises the Museum of Western Colorado board to explore all options, including combining venues with other institutions, to maintain a facility in Grand Junction.

STRATEGY 4: Focus on Science

Support community efforts to provide educational and recreational experiences for lifelong learning that engage residents and visitors with the sciences. Utilize the Grand Valley's diverse scientific communities, including those engaged with agriculture, water, energy, health & medicine, environment & biodiversity, engineering & manufacturing, etc. to educate and inform the public regarding their methods, purpose, and opportunities for further involvement.

ACTION 1:

The committee envisions that science fair events/experiences could be held that intend to engage all ages/audiences. This would be an opportunity for multiple organizations and industries to share their contributions to the residents and visitors of Mesa County.

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

PUBLIC ART

Goal:

Build awareness of the Grand Valley as an Arts Destination through the placement of works of art in key public locations.

STRATEGY 1:

Identify culturally-significant locations for art placement.

ACTION 1:

Distribute comprehensive online and written surveys via community arts organizations.

STRATEGY 2:

Raise funds.

ACTION 1:

Collaborate with the community. Recommended collaborators include Colorado Mesa University, local businesses, neighborhood organizations, and arts organizations.

ACTION 2:

Inter-city art sharing.

ACTION 3:

Hold public arts events.

STRATEGY 3:

Maintain and repair existing pieces.

ACTION 1:

Create professional Public Arts Advocate position through collaboration between Downtown Development Authority, Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, North Avenue Owners Association, Horizon Drive Business Improvement District, Grand Junction Parks & Recreation, Colorado Mesa University, Grand Junction Commission on Arts & Culture, and others to be funded through existing budgets, grants, and fundraising.

ACTION 2:

Encourage collaboration between artists and consult artists on maintenance and repair.

ACTION 3:

Involve Colorado Mesa University students through art class projects.

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Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

PUBLIC ART cont.

STRATEGY 4:

Create educational programs and guided tours featuring public art and local artisans.

ACTION 1:

Create brochures containing maps for self-guided tours, biographies of artists, contact information, and economic benefits data.

ACTION 2:

Hold arts and sculpture festivals in public locations in collaboration with such organizations as Colorado Mesa University, Western Colorado Center for the Arts, Downtown Development Authority, Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, Grand Junction Chamber of Commerce, and Horizon Drive Business Improvement District.

Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

URBAN PLANNING & CULTURAL FACILITIES

Goal 1:

Maximize the event potential of current and new cultural facilities located in the downtown corridor and riverfront areas (1st Street to 9th Street; Grand Avenue to the Colorado River.)

STRATEGY 1:

Find the best solution for the potential relocation of the Museum of the West.

ACTION 1:

Museum of the West board is currently considering various options and funding sources.

STRATEGY 2:

Find the best solution for a new Western Colorado Center for the Arts with committee recommending a downtown location.

ACTION 1:

Western Colorado Center for the Arts board is currently considering various options and conducting a space evaluation to identify needs.

STRATEGY 3:

Complete Phase I of the Avalon, which includes upgrading the new multi-purpose room to a movie theater.

ACTION 1:

Support the Avalon Foundation in continuing efforts to work on private funding resources.

STRATEGY 4:

Complete current plan for Las Colonias Park and Amphitheater.

STRATEGY 5:

Optimize utilization and operation of all cultural venues to increase awareness of, and visitation to all venues.

ACTION 1:

Recommend organizations to market the valley as a whole rather than three separate towns.

ACTION 2:

Create a central listing/calendar of venues available for various sized events. (*Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, Grand Junction Commission on Art and Culture*)

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Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

URBAN PLANNING & CULTURAL FACILITIES cont.

Goal 2:

Improve existing or create new infrastructure and access between major cultural facilities across Grand Junction.

STRATEGY 1:

Advocate for and support the previously adopted Grand Junction South Downtown Plan which contains suggestions on development of the greater downtown area.

ACTION 1:

Encourage businesses to locate to lower downtown through printed communication and/or web page, which shares the plan and why it is important to the development of our city. (*Grand Junction Economic Partnership, Business Improvement District*)

STRATEGY 2:

Further develop the Riverfront Trail bike path east to Palisade and north to Patterson Road, Cross Orchards, and Matchett Park.

ACTION 1:

Coordinate a grassroots effort between cycling groups to advocate for completion of connecting trails between cities and areas of town. (*Urban Trails Committee*)

ACTION 2:

Support completion of Matchett Park project including a community/recreation center.

STRATEGY 3:

Create safe bike and pedestrian paths from the current downtown area to Las Colonias Park.

ACTION 1:

Apply for specialized grants.

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Strategic Cultural Plan: Goals, Strategies, Actions

URBAN PLANNING & CULTURAL FACILITIES cont.

STRATEGY 4:

Increase bike traffic on trails by adding more outdoor art, interpretive signage, and sculpture gardens to draw visitors toward Cross Orchards.

ACTION 1:

Expand Art on the Corner sculptures along the Riverfront Trail between Botanical Gardens, Las Colonias Amphitheater, the riverfront, and downtown. (*Downtown Development Authority*)

ACTION 2:

Create interpretive signage about Las Colonias area along the bike path. (*Museum of the West*)

ACTION 3:

Create an interactive map with QR codes on sculpture that links to more information. (*Downtown Development Authority, Mesa County Public Library*)

ACTION 4:

Support efforts for Art on the Riverfront Trail. (*aRT*)

STRATEGY 5

Improve communication, signage, and wayfinding between the overall cultural facilities network.

ACTION 1:

Create a new cultural facilities map, or enhance the current Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau map to include all Grand Junction cultural facilities. Place map on Grand Junction Commission on Art and Culture website. (*Grand Junction Visitor and Convention Bureau, Grand Junction Commission on Art and Culture*)

ACTION 2:

Update and complete the Downtown Development Authority's way finding plan. (*Downtown Development Authority*)

ACTION 3:

Hold twice yearly cultural facilities round tables so that regular brainstorming, networking, and information sharing can take place. (*Grand Junction Commission on Art and Culture*)

STRATEGY 6:

Improve linkages between Colorado Mesa University's cultural resources and downtown area.

ACTION 1:

Maintain Colorado Mesa University's art gallery presence and improve gallery management to expand Colorado Mesa University's presence in the heart of the arts community. (*Colorado Mesa University*)