

## Washington County Cultural Plan Executive Summary

### **I. INTRODUCTION**

Arts, heritage and humanities organizations and activities are critical resources that contribute to the identity, quality of life and economic vitality of our communities and the County. This Plan outlines findings, a vision and strategies conceived during thousands of hours of input and dialogue by hundreds of Washington County residents from August, 2003 – May, 2004. The complete Plan, with more detailed descriptions of process, findings, strategies and implementation is available from the Westside Cultural Alliance at [www.westsideculturalalliance.org](http://www.westsideculturalalliance.org)

- The Washington County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee (WCCCPC)

*“Arts and cultural life should become richer in Washington County. We really need all the people who have an interest in creating a quality lifestyle to work on this together.”*  
Plan Participant

### **Plan Origins and Process:**

In 2002, every County and native Tribe in Oregon was asked to undertake cultural planning to identify cultural resources, priorities, strategies and a local leadership structure for stewardship of allocations from the Cultural Trust to implement the plans. The Washington County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee (WCCCPC) was nominated by the Board of Commissioners and approved by the Cultural Trust to oversee planning (members are listed in Appendix A).

The WCCCPC has taken an extremely active role in a comprehensive planning process that has included:

- Extensive review of past cultural planning efforts and other information and statistics about the County.
- October 2nd, 2003 Cultural Planning Kick Off Forum.
- Survey: almost 350 citizens responded with opinions on cultural strengths, issues and needs.
- Key Interviews conducted with over 30 key County leaders.
- Focus Groups conducted with the Washington County Convention and Visitors Bureau, WCA/Individual artists, scholars, historians; County School Superintendents; Economic Development Officers of various communities, Washington County History Roundtable; the Vision Action Network; WC Youth Advisory Council; and the Latino community, through Centro Cultural
- Cultural Inventory was expanded to encompass heritage and humanities.
- Cultural Summit: February 18, 2004 to review findings and flesh out strategies.
- Ongoing Cultural Coalition Planning Committee meetings to review findings, fine-tune the process and develop strategies.
- Final Cultural Plan completed in May, 2004.

## **II. FINDINGS OF THE PLANNING PROCESS:**

Planning for cultural development must occur within a broader context of key issues, leadership dynamics and public attitudes. The following were key findings from our interviews, focus groups and surveying.

### **Critical Issues in Washington County**

- Growth is impacting livability; there is a higher demand for urban services and amenities.
- Washington County is extremely diverse, geographically.
- The growing ethnic diversity is a special challenge and opportunity.
- Economic growth has stalled, with a loss of high tech jobs and increasing income disparity.
- There is growing concern over K-12 and higher education.
- There is a lack of community cohesion and identity.

*“We have to understand what our different cultures mean for all of us, because now we are all living in a place together where the demographics have changed drastically.”*

Focus Group Participant

### **Public Attitudes/Roles for Arts, Heritage and Humanities**

- Culture defines a common ground, creates community and identity.
- Strong arts and culture could be an asset for economic development.
- Cultural learning contributes to healthy youth development and creative thinking and problem solving needed for the 21<sup>st</sup> century economy.
- Many Washington County residents are cautious about contemporary cultural expressions.
- Greater public awareness of cultural activities is needed.
- We are not sufficiently valuing the ethnic diversity of the talent that is coming into the community.
- Schools are important nodes of community, but there is limited access to, awareness of their cultural activities in the broader community.
- Competition for time to participate in cultural activity is intense.
- A strong majority of those surveyed, and most likely to vote, believe government has an obligation to support arts and culture.

*“If you don’t have a strong culturally rooted community, then you don’t have a strong community.”* Interviewee

## **III. GOALS AND STRATEGIES**

Based on community input, the Washington County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee (WCCCP) synthesized and developed a vision, goals and strategies to guide cultural development over the next several years.

*“The final element of the social structure of creativity, and the one that has received the least attention, is a supportive social milieu that is open to all forms of creativity –*

*artistic and cultural as well as technological and economic. This milieu provides the underlying ecosystem of habit in which the multi-dimensional forms of creativity take root and flourish.”* Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class*, 2002

### **Vision for Arts, Heritage and Humanities**

In 2010, Washington County

- Will be known for a rich variety and quality of arts, heritage and humanities activities.
- Residents will place a high value on arts, heritage and humanities as integral to their lives.
- Arts, heritage and humanities will be truly accessible to residents and visitors.
- Cultural opportunities for youth will be available from an early age and extend life-long.
- Washington County residents will embrace and promote understanding of the county’s diverse cultures and celebrate them regularly.
- Governments will provide adequate funding, space and promotion of the arts, heritage and humanities.
- Heritage and cultural resources will be preserved and strengthened.
- Creativity will be seen as a vital resource for cultural, economic and civic improvement. The County will attract and nurture “creatives” of all types.
- Historians and scholars will be respected for their role and contributions.

*“The arts and culture represent perhaps the most significant underutilized forum for rebuilding community in America.”* Robert Putnam

### **Overarching Goals:**

The WCCPC identified the following, critical, overarching principles which apply across all goal areas:

1. Celebrate diversity and promote multi-cultural understanding in all of our work.
2. Preserve and support the cultural resources we already have and build upon them, rather than create new infrastructure.
3. Encourage further collaborations among cultural organizations and with County-wide organizations such as the Vision Action Network, Westside Economic Alliance and Westside Transportation Alliance.
4. Develop existing and new leadership.

### **Action Goals and Strategies**

The principal goals, strategies and next steps are presented in this Executive Summary. The complete Plan includes tactics, resources for implementation and measures of success. The Washington County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee understands that this Plan is ambitious, detailed and can only be fully addressed over the long term and with broad based participation and support.

1. **Public Awareness and Participation:** Develop a County-wide communications plan to build awareness of the roles and value of arts, heritage and humanities and increase public participation.

*“Art needs to be like local libraries or parks – it’s gotta be there nearby, so you can touch it, feel it, see it regularly, and miss it if it’s gone.”* Interviewee

- 1.1. Update the inventory of cultural organizations , individuals, activities and facilities; create a unified, web accessible data base; and promote its use for cultural marketing.
  - 1.2. Enhance marketing and communications through consistent, effective and professional promotions, to residents and visitors.
  - 1.3. Encourage festivals and gatherings that promote access to arts, heritage and humanities:
  - 1.4. Work with the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Washington County and chambers of commerce to promote cultural tourism:
  - 1.5. Improve County and cities’ policies to better reflect the importance of the county’s diversity.
2. **Cultural Learning:** Promote youth access to the arts, heritage and humanities to enhance learning and healthy human development.

*“We need to figure out how to get music and art back in our schools if we expect the next generation of people to want to go to performances, museums and support the arts.”*  
Plan Participant

- 2.1. Strengthen in-school cultural learning programs from pre-school through K-12 and university.
  - 2.2. Enhance cultural learning programs initiated by cultural organizations, which may include those at libraries and community centers, as well as artists in residence, public art projects, etc.
  - 2.3. Enhance and strengthen cultural education initiatives of community based organizations such as churches, neighborhood centers, social service organizations and youth development agencies. Link these entities with cultural organizations.
  - 2.4. Enhance family involvement in cultural activities.
  - 2.5. Enhance awareness of cultural learning opportunities through improved communication and PR.
  - 2.6. Encourage businesses to provide scholarships and/or grants to talented young people.
3. **Public Art:** Integrate public art – including heritage projects – into public spaces and places throughout the County.

*“I have seen people transformed as they discover creative expression.”* Interviewee

- 3.1. Encourage all jurisdictions to adopt policies and ordinances to set aside 1-2% of public construction budgets for public art and to assure adequate maintenance.
- 3.2. Encourage creation of incentives to integrate public art into private sector development.
- 3.3. Encourage revolving exhibits of public and private collections in public spaces, businesses, malls, hospitals and other locations.
- 3.4. Create community chronicles (like the visual chronicle) of two-dimensional, archival artworks or literary works which depict places, people and activities that can be exhibited as a way or telling community stories.

3.5. Encourage temporary public art projects that invite citizen participation, such as the Forest Grove Chalk Art event and library events.

3.6. Create a regional catalog/brochure detailing locations and descriptions of public art

4. **Facilities:** Assure there are accessible, suitable and affordable spaces for cultural activities in Washington County.

*“It’s hard to create a sense of community if you don’t have places for community members to interact with each other.”* Focus Group Participant

4.1. Update listings of existing facilities and capacity; assess the need for new facilities; make the information available in database and integrate into “calendars of events.”

4.2. Encourage development of a large, visible, accessible performance venue to serve the whole County. It could be a multi-purpose facility with meeting spaces (conventions, conferences) and cultural venues.

4.3. Identify and/or encourage the development of adequate, accessible and affordable cultural facilities to meet the needs of local communities.

4.4. Better utilize the Fairplex as a cultural venue.

4.5. Encourage private developers to create cultural spaces (performance, exhibition, studios, live/work spaces, offices) in their projects.

5. **Cultural and Economic Development:** Integrate cultural development strategies and policies with economic development policies.

*“Culture is the best vehicle to get our workforce to think differently in terms of what is possible, how things get done and what the constraints are; how they can create new opportunities for themselves and the community.”* Interviewee

5.1. Create one repository for all information about cultural activities in Washington County (see Public Awareness strategies, above).

5.2. Build awareness of the impact of arts, heritage and humanities on the county’s economy, quality of life, sense of place, community identity, social capital and sustainability.

5.3. Link cultural and social service programs such as early childhood, youth development and mental health programs. Demonstrate the economic benefit of investment in prevention strategies.

5.4. Connect with the Westside Economic Alliance and chambers of commerce to communicate with corporations and employees to get the word out about cultural opportunities (a “Culture Close to Home” campaign).

5.5. Create and implement a cultural tourism development plan, working with the Convention and Visitors Bureau of Washington County. (see Cultural Tourism strategies, above, 1.3)

5.6. Encourage corporate sponsorships of cultural events and activities.

6. **Heritage:** Preserve, strengthen and promote local heritage organizations, sites, landscapes, collections, exhibits, folklore, research and education programs for sustaining ongoing preservation and interpretation of local history and integrate the County’s historical roots and modern ethnic diversity to promote social connections and understanding.

*“We need a new public perception of the value of historic resources to the business community.” Plan Participant*

- 6.1. Build advocacy and leadership efforts, county-wide, to preserve remaining heritage sites.
- 6.2. Update the cultural resource inventory for the whole County.
- 6.3. Seek further support from entities that support heritage preservation, such as the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).
- 6.4. Encourage more traveling exhibits of Washington County history.
- 6.5. Develop, and continually update, school heritage curriculum.
- 6.6. Promote training for developers and owners of historic sites about historic preservation rationales and methods (example: Aspen, Colorado).
- 6.7. Promote broader awareness of and access to Washington County heritage resources, including travelling exhibits.
- 6.8. Integrate the arts more fully into heritage activities through exhibits and performances.
- 6.9. Develop further funding to support heritage preservation.

7. **Identify and support existing cultural organizations, scholars, artists, historians and cultural facilities.**

*“The greatest need is really finding out what would work in helping communicate to our community the necessity of supporting arts and culture - not that it would be nice, but that it is essential.” Interviewee*

- 7.1. Enhance opportunities for funding, professional development and capacity building.
- 7.2. Make corporations more aware of possible in-kind help they could provide, such as space, printing, used equipment, etc.
- 7.3. Encourage linkages between the arts, heritage and humanities and social service, juvenile justice, corrections, senior programs and mental health programs.
- 7.4. Encourage networking opportunities for individual artists.
- 7.5. Encourage the development of inexpensive venues for showing work, including “moveable” public markets and indoor facilities.
- 7.6. Consider creation of an Open Studio tour event as a showcase for local artists.
- 7.7. Encourage development of affordable studio and live/work spaces for artists (see Facilities, also).
- 7.8. Encourage each community to create structures for supporting individual artists, with the Westside Cultural Alliance acting as an umbrella organization to promote county-wide collaborations.

**Funding**

1. Future Oregon Cultural Trust allocations will be directed towards projects and organizations that address the goals of this Plan with measurable outcomes. It will be the principal mechanism and incentive for sparking community based implementation efforts and tracking results.
2. Additional public and private funding from local, County and regional sources is needed to support the goals of this Plan.

## **Next Steps**

1. Publicize and disseminate the findings and recommendations of the Plan via presentations, web sites (WCA and the County) and the media.
2. Recruit and recommend the appointment of a permanent Washington County Cultural Coalition - representative of the arts, heritage and humanities and broader Washington County leadership - to steward implementation of the Plan. A more detailed description of structure and roles is available in the complete Plan.

*“The opportunities are endless with the talent and resources of the community. The obstacles are funding and the task of educating the public about how vital these projects are to the livability of our community.”* Plan Participant

## **Washington County Cultural Coalition Planning Committee (WCCCPC) members:**

Pam Baker, Chair WCCCPC, Cultural Arts Center Consultant  
Joyce Ashmanskas, Arts Advocate  
Dan Bronleewe, Elite Granite  
Eva Calcagno, Washington County Library System  
Jan Baker-Carlson, Baker Rock  
Ron Flores, Ron Flores Events  
Joyce Lovro Gabriel, Pacific University  
Mark Granlund, Washington County Historical Society and Museum  
Barbara Hanson, Hillsboro Community Arts  
Larry Harvey, Communication Strategies Inc.  
Marci Hosier, Tualatin Valley Television  
Maihwa Frances Li, Artist  
Stephanie Lind, Cornelius Public Library  
Sharon Maroney, Broadway Rose Theater Company  
Sean Morgan, Cultural Arts Manager, City of Hillsboro  
William Nothstine, Writer, Editor

Althea Pratt-Broome, Willowbrook Arts Camp  
Jayanthi Raman, RASIKA India Arts & Cultural Association  
Sabino Sardineta, Centro Cultural  
Jayne Scott, Beaverton Arts Commission  
Samuel Shogren, Museum Consultant  
Carla Ueki, Beaverton Art Literacy Program

### **Ad hoc WCCCPC members**

Rocio Espinoza, Cornelius Public Library  
Trilce Navarrete, Centro Cultural  
Jodi Nielson, Washington County Cooperative Library Services

### **Staff:**

Bill Bulick, Creative Planning: Design and Facilitation of Planning; Lead Writer  
Anne Avery, Westside Cultural Alliance Coordinator  
David Hudson, Executive Director, Regional Arts and Culture Council; liaison to WCCCPC