



Arts & Culture Plan

2025 – 2035

We Grow from Deep Roots | Executive Summary

**TRANSFORMING
COMMUNITIES** • ART
through the power of arts and culture

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We Grow from Deep Roots

Cultivating big opportunities with small town charm

Introduction

This plan is part of Indiana's READI Arts & Culture Initiative as funded by the Lilly Endowment Inc. But it is so much more. **The purpose of this plan is to enhance quality of life, strengthen the local economy, and provide an important – often missing – piece to community planning: arts and culture.** It is one of 15 such plans that lay the groundwork for a decade of activity – a road map for cities, counties, and regions to use regardless of funding source, leadership, or what else the future might hold. It provides a long-term strategy with details and resources to strengthen local identity, foster economic growth, and attract and retain residents.

The Region

Comprised of Dearborn, Franklin, Ohio, Ripley, Switzerland, and Union Counties, the region is home to **1.84% of the state's population**. While it may have some challenging economic and demographic numbers, the region's deeply rooted music and craft traditions, visible history, connection to the Ohio River, rich natural assets, and proximity to Cincinnati provide tremendous opportunity.

You will find a variety of shopping, dining, sports, nature, and entertainment. Children play safely outside and attend schools focused on their education and wellbeing. Recreational opportunities abound, including water sports on the Ohio River, fishing, hunting, camping, hiking, swimming, bicycling, motorcycle riding, and golf. We call ourselves the affordable Cincinnati address, as our region has a small town feel with big city amenities.



Arts & Culture in Southeast Indiana

In the course of planning, we identified and inventoried the region's Cultural Assets including:

- **300** Artists, arts organizations, groups, businesses, and program sites
- **153** Pieces of Public Art including murals, sculptures, window art, and more
- **114** Related Civic Assets (parks, trails, schools, universities, and centers)
- **92** History and heritage organizations, sites, districts, and attractions
- **84** Events & Traditions (annual festivals, recurring series, and markets)
- **63** Support Organizations (boosters, Main Streets, Chambers, tourism, funders)
- **36** Misc. Amenities (community attractions, craft product producers, etc.)

Southeast Indiana is rich in cultural assets and activity. A strong base for building a plan upon.

Vision for Success

From that base, leaders and residents from all sectors and all corners of the region produced an ambitious vision – a collective aspiration – for the future in which:

The Arts are a Thriving, Vital Force that:

- Spark Community & Economic Vitality,
- Amplify Natural Assets & Regional Tourism,
- Foster Regional Collaboration through Local Leadership,
- Are Central to Engaging & Empowering the Next Generation, and where
- Creative Placemaking & Design have Solidified Vibrant Cultural Districts, because...

We Grow from Deep Roots –

Cultivating Big Opportunities with Small Town Charm

Goals & Strategies

The region will achieve that vision through six goals and strategies for each. Pairing goals within three overarching regional priorities, provides a balanced framework that addresses the core needs of every focus area.

230+

Southeast Hoosiers
Participated through

- Visioning Sessions
- Groups
- Regional Leader Discussions
- Interviews
- A Public Survey

Not to mention dozens of online submissions, inquiries, and hundreds more website visitors.

What is "Arts & Culture"?

The plan values **the full creative ecosystem** –

Not only arts organizations, but the fabricators, makers, artisans, musicians, writers, crafters, podcasters, performers, designers, architects, libraries, and history organizations (and everyone within them).

Together they form the cultural fabric of the region and remind us that we each have a personal connection to the arts, whether through the high school band, having a favorite author, art teacher, or song, writing poetry, learning to play guitar, draw, crochet, dance...

Or simply loving to create the best music playlist ever.



The circled star highlights the goal collectively identified by the region as the top priority in plan.

executive summary

Priorities	Goals	Strategies
priority PLACE & IDENTITY	<p>1. ACTIVATE THE REGION</p>  <p>Revitalize and activate main streets, waterfronts, byways, and hidden gems through arts and culture. Filled with surprises, public art, entertainment, and food they thrive as <i>Cultural Districts</i> – living history hubs blended with creative energy, and small town charm to attract residents and explorers.</p> <p>2. CONNECT COMMUNITIES</p> <p>Knit the region's <i>Natural & Cultural Assets</i> together (e.g., public art trails, regional program initiatives, and wayfinding design) to amplify and increase access to both, build relationships, and promote place-based discovery, wellness, and tourism.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Enhancement and reuse projects (<i>signage, façade programs, landscaping and historic buildings, open spaces</i>) — Activate with public art and programs — Amplify and activate nature in combination with cultural assets (<i>thematic trails, creative programs, signs</i>) — Build regional tourism through relationships, collective strategies, and efforts
priority ATTACHMENT & OPPORTUNITY	<p>3. CULTIVATE NEXT GENERATION ROOTS</p> <p>Invest in initiatives with and for the next generation – expanding access to arts programming and education, increasing participation, and opening paths to creative careers. Deeply engaging the next generation in a vibrant <i>Cultural Life</i> will feed talent pipelines while increasing resident retention regionwide.</p> <p>4. GENERATE CREATIVE OPPORTUNITY</p> <p>Focus on the <i>Art, Artists, & Creation</i> – and opportunities to create – to position the creative sector for success. Generate opportunities with, by, and for artists, creative entrepreneurs, and nonprofits through training, program development, and material supports needed to grow authentically.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Empower youth engagement and volunteerism — Expand arts opportunities for all ages – <i>co-designed with target audiences</i> — Build creative career pathways (<i>internships, programs</i>) — Empower creative capacity (<i>connect to resources, training, micro-grants</i>) — Expand access to space for creatives (<i>affordable spaces, retail opportunities</i>) — Grow teaching and learning (<i>support paid gigs, knowledge and roster sharing programs</i>)
priority LEADERSHIP & COLLABORATION	<p>5. MOBILIZE, COLLABORATE & COMMUNICATE</p> <p>Collaborate to advance <i>Cultural Development & Regionalism</i>. Systemize collaboration and communication among leaders to align planning, build networks, share resources, and create joint programs to strengthen the region's collective capacity for long-term cultural growth.</p> <p>6. FORMALIZE SUSTAINABLE COMMITMENTS</p> <p><i>Hardwire Arts & Culture Strategy</i> into governance, economic development, funding, and civic frameworks. Embedding arts and culture into plans and policies will ensure their sustainable visibility, investment, and impact.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Mobilize county-level and regional networks – <i>creative and cross-sector</i> — Expand implementation capacity (volunteer recruitment, training) — Catalyze a regionwide movement (<i>cross sector, annual convening</i>) — Build support — Build policy infrastructure (<i>% for art, streamline policies, etc.</i>) — Secure sustainable funding

The BIG Ideas

These ideas supersize plan goals, reimagining them as bold opportunities to elevate and expand the region and its vision. They are ***"What if?" opportunities for long-term, whole-region advancement*** rather than short-term project recommendations. Since great change requires enthusiasm and commitment, these ideas are offered for exploration and consideration.

1. ALL-IN MARKETING:

Art Connected to Nature

What would it look like to go "All-In" – to ***showcase incredible natural assets*** like the Ohio River Way, Versailles State Park, and Monarch Preserve ***alongside a treasure trove of cultural attractions and sites***? Imagine a collectively curated web platform weaving in stories, showcasing artisans, highlighting events and opportunities, and connecting residents and visitors to the people and places that define the region. Then think bigger. Imagine a ***shared regional marketing strategy across multiple platforms that creates a clear "brand" or sense of united identity centered on art and nature.***

2. FROM EVERY CORNER OF THE REGION:

Indiana's Music Corridor

Celebrating ***southeastern Indiana's deep musical roots*** – from Richmond, birthplace of recorded jazz to Madison's "music city" – this corridor would showcase both the region's incredible musical legacy and today's vibrant culture. The bookends are strong but make no sense without the region in-between. ***Music is in Southeast Indiana's DNA.*** Musicians celebrate, support, share, and mentor one another, and there's no shortage of venues for folks to play – from backyards and bars to senior centers and event centers.

3. DEEP TRADITIONS & PRACTICE:

The Region as Folk School

Rooted in its legacy of music, craft, and making, Southeast Indiana has ***the ingredients to become a nationally recognized center for folks arts learning.*** By establishing a folk school or a network of creative learning centers, the region can foster creative careers and lifelong learners while strengthening local businesses.

“ It's hard to express how important our READI work is across so many communities and so many sectors. Right now we have all 15 regions, the entire state, working on Arts & Culture Strategic Plans that align with their READI plans.

The scale and breadth of this work in this sector has never been done before. Even beyond the awards we'll be able to make in the next year,

the impact of having this many people focused specifically on Arts & Culture has the chance to fundamentally impact generations of Hoosiers.

– Jim Rawlinson

Director of READI, Indiana Economic Development Corporation
[Posted to LinkedIn](#), October 2025



Art in the Park, Versailles State Park

executive summary



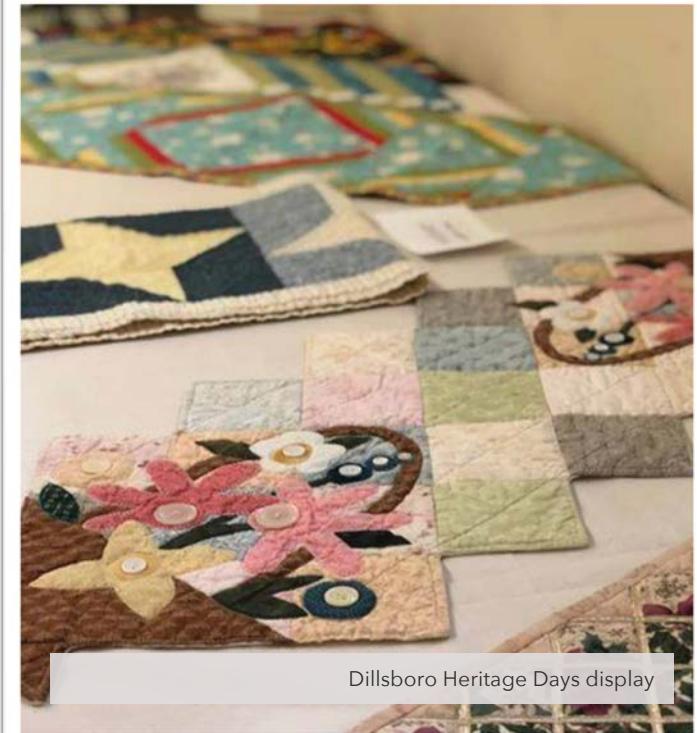
Lucy Yatso, Chalkfest 2025, Osgood

Contact

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The Rest of the Plan. The full document includes detailed goals, strategies, and tactics along with:

- **County Profiles** as a start for local leaders to use in adapting the plan to their needs.
- **A Toolkit** of ideas, inspiration, resources, and a glossary.
- **Recommended Tools** scattered throughout the plan.
- **An Appendix** with the methodology and detailed data tables
- There is more on the [Project Website](#) that will gradually be available directly from [SEI READI](#).



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