

Countywide Arts Plan Goals & Strategies

Share your thoughts!

When it comes to Arts & Culture, what's most important to you? Take this 5-minute survey to let leaders know what **you think and help shape the Arts & Culture Plan for your county. The plans (one for each county - Blackford, Jay, and Auglaize) will serve as a roadmap to strengthening arts & culture, local economies, and quality of life.**

Pass it along - we'd love to hear from as many folks as we can! But hurry. *We're on a timeline and need your input by Friday, March 7, 2025.*

To get started, answer two short questions so that we can send you to the right plan and quantify participation; then click "Next"!

Thank you!

Sara & Paige

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* About You

Email

Organization

City

* Which county are you in?

- ☐ Auglaize, OH
- ☐ Blackford, IN
- ☐ Jay, IN

Countywide Arts Plan Goals & Strategies

Auglaize County

Below are the goals and key strategies identified by your neighbors, colleagues, and leaders.

Your task is to help us prioritize them.

GOALS: Please arrange these 3 goals in priority order, top = most important to you.

☐

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN & THROUGH THE ARTS

Auglaize County's youth are thriving through the arts and civic participation.

☐

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS IN & THROUGH THE ARTS

Create a more connected county through arts & culture.

☐

SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION

Arts initiatives and programming are sustained through collaborative leadership and long-term funding.

STRATEGIES: Here are the strategies for **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**.

Again, place them in priority order, top = most important to you.

☐

Increase youth ACCESS to arts:

>> Strengthening communications by evaluating current practices and testing new ones
>> Coordinating marketing efforts to increase awareness of available opportunities
>> Developing key resources (e.g., arts educator inventory) to increase access to arts instruction

☐

Increase youth STAKE in arts and culture with formal avenues for youth to inform and engage in civic and arts planning (e.g., youth councils and surveys)

☐

Increase OPPORTUNITIES for youth arts engagement:

>> Actively and intentionally including youth in arts projects, especially downtown
>> Making it easy and meaningful for youth to participate, whatever the project
>> Planning activities and events at least a year out for schools/partners to meaningfully integrate them
>> Developing new partnerships that expand arts programming and collaboration opportunities

STRATEGIES: Repeat the process for **COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS**.



Cultivate leadership and cross-county collaboration for arts and culture:

- >> Establishing a regional arts networking council
- >> Forging intentional cross-county partnerships to increase communication and collaboration to address shared needs (e.g. cross promotion, event scheduling, educator identification etc.)



Lean into Auglaize County's history and identity:

- >> Tying local history themes and content into Downtown and youth projects
- >> Developing specific history programming and amenities (e.g. downtown historic walking tours)
- >> Strengthening signature festival traditions - leveraging them to bolster creative economy and tourism

STRATEGIES: Last one, repeat for **SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**.



Increase SUPPORT for arts and culture:

- >> Developing and hosting an annual "State of the Arts"
- >> Increasing beautification efforts and the presence of public art to increase local pride
- >> Integrating arts and culture into county/community promotional efforts
- >> Expanding the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers



Solidify long-term investment pathways for arts & culture, building public and private funding for initiatives:

- >> Making them affordable to both the providers and participants
- >> Cultivating a culture of philanthropy (private investment in the arts) across the county
- >> Adopting public funding strategies that demonstrate local government commitment to arts and culture while leveraging private in the same



Include arts elements and arts stakeholders in civic planing and when implementing existing strategies (e.g., Municipal, County, Tourism, and related Civic (Main Street, Chamber of Commerce) Planning Processes)

BONUS QUESTION: Other project counties also identified the following goal.

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN

Downtowns are thriving — revitalized through arts initiatives, beautification, and programming

Activate with public art, partnerships, events, and opportunities to create:

- >> Restoring and expanding murals and sculptures downtown and in parks
- >> Developing community events (e.g., 1st Friday, summer concerts, outdoor movies) in partnership with business, youth, and artists
- >> Expanding spaces (e.g. rehearsal space) and opportunities for the community to create (e.g., Arts in the Parks programming)

Beautify all of the “small” stuff for civic pride and engagement:

- >> Restoring and activating downtown facades (including windows)
- >> Developing sidewalk, streetscape, and beautification programs to create a safe, inviting and walkable environment for pedestrians and cars alike

Connect activities, places and people:

- >> Collaborating in order to leverage and cross promote activities, events and programs
- >> Extending trails, creating walking tours, and similar place-based initiatives that increase community engagement and tourism
- >> Developing messaging strategies to amplify and connect opportunities with local and regional audiences

Should it be included in the Auglaize County Plan

That's the end. Thank you!

If you have any ideas not included above, feel free to share them here. We'd also love to hear your reactions to (or questions about this work). It will help us as we present it to your County Commissioners later this spring.

Want to know more?

This is a project to develop Arts & Culture Plans for Auglaize, Blackford, and Jay Counties. What does that mean? It means using arts and culture to enhance quality of life and strengthen local economies. [Find out more](#). To date, we have: 1) reviewed existing plans in each county, 2) identified each county's [cultural assets](#), 3) Facilitated in person community input sessions, 4) Convened both in person and virtual focus groups, and 5) Interviewed key arts and civic leaders. This project began with an NEA Our Town grant to Arts Place in Portland, Indiana. The results will be presented to County Commissioners for each community. The Jay and Blackford plans will also be used as part of the READI 2.0 Lilly Endowment Arts Initiative. [More about that here](#).

Thanks to the NEA for funding this project as a part of the [Our Town Program](#). Our Town is the NEA's creative placemaking grants program. Through project-based funding, the program supports activities that integrate arts, culture, and design into local efforts that strengthen communities over the long term. Our Town projects engage a wide range of local stakeholders in efforts to advance local economic, physical, and/or social outcomes in communities. Competitive projects are responsive to unique local conditions, develop meaningful and substantive engagement in communities, center equity, advance artful lives, and lay the groundwork for long-term systems change.

Thanks also to the community leaders who provided funding and/or letters of support for this work.

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The Board of Commissioners of Blackford County

The Board of Commissioners of Jay County

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Cheri Brown, Director, Hartford City (formerly Purdue Extension Blackford County)

The Portland Foundation

St. Marys Community Foundation

Mike Medler, President, Arts Place Corporate Board

Countywide Arts Plan Goals & Strategies

Blackford County

Below are the goals and key strategies identified by your neighbors, colleagues, and leaders. Your task is to help us prioritize them.

GOALS: Please arrange these 3 goals in priority order, top = most important to you.

- ☐ **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN**
Downtowns are thriving — revitalized through arts initiatives, beautification, and programming
- ☐ **CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE**
Blackford County's identity has been strengthened through the arts, history, and community engagement
- ☐ **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN & THROUGH THE ARTS**
Blackford County's youth are thriving through the arts and civic participation.
- ☐ **SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**
Arts initiatives and programming are sustained through collaborative leadership and long-term funding

STRATEGIES: Here are the strategies for **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN**.
Again, place them in priority order, top = most important to you.

- ☐ **Activate with public art, partnerships, events, and opportunities to create:**
 - >> Restoring and expanding murals and sculptures downtown and in parks
 - >> Developing community events (e.g., 1st Friday, summer concerts, outdoor movies) in partnership with business, youth, and artists
 - >> Expanding spaces (e.g. rehearsal space) and opportunities for the community to create (e.g., Arts in the Parks programming)
- ☐ **Beautify all of the "small" stuff for civic pride and engagement:**
 - >> Restoring and activating downtown facades (including windows)
 - >> Developing sidewalk, streetscape, and beautification programs to create a safe, inviting and walkable environment for pedestrians and cars alike
- ☐ **Connect activities, places and people:**
 - >> Collaborating in order to leverage and cross promote activities, events and programs
 - >> Extending trails, creating walking tours, and similar place-based initiatives that increase community engagement and tourism
 - >> Developing messaging strategies to amplify and connect opportunities with local and regional audiences

STRATEGIES: Repeat the process for **CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE**.



Lean into Blackford County's history and heritage:

- >> Tying local history themes and content into Downtown and youth projects
- >> Developing specific history programming and amenities (e.g. downtown historic walking tours)



Reimagine and strengthen signature festival traditions - engaging the community to:

- >> Leverage signature festival traditions to bolster creative economy and tourism
- >> Develop creative solutions to sustain key events/activities
- >> Transition to new volunteers, partners, and approaches

STRATEGIES: Repeat again for **YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**.



Increase youth ACCESS to arts:

- >> Strengthening communications by evaluating current practices and testing new ones
- >> Coordinating marketing efforts to increase awareness of available opportunities
- >> Developing key resources (e.g., arts educator inventory) to increase access to arts instruction



Increase youth STAKE in arts and culture with formal avenues for youth to inform and engage in civic and arts planning (e.g., youth councils and surveys)



Increase OPPORTUNITIES for youth arts engagement:

- >> Actively and intentionally including youth in arts projects, especially downtown
- >> Making it easy and meaningful for youth to participate, whatever the project
- >> Planning activities and events at least a year out for schools/partners to meaningfully integrate them
- >> Developing new partnerships that expand arts programming and collaboration opportunities

STRATEGIES: Last one, repeat for **SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**.



Increase SUPPORT for arts and culture:

- >> Establishing (or reestablishing) local arts councils
- >> Integrating arts and culture into county/community promotional efforts
- >> Cultivate leadership and intentional cross-county collaboration to address shared needs (e.g. cross promotion, event scheduling)
- >> Expanding the pool of community champions, leaders, and volunteers (e.g., using the momentum of visible progress to engage a new cohort of business and community leaders)



Solidify long-term investment pathways for arts & culture, building public and private funding for initiatives:

- >> Making them affordable to both the providers and participants
- >> Cultivating a culture of philanthropy (private investment in the arts) across the county
- >> Adopting public funding strategies that demonstrate local government commitment to arts and culture while leveraging private in the same



Include arts elements and arts stakeholders in civic planing and when implementing existing strategies (e.g., Municipal, County, Tourism, and related Civic (Main Street, Chamber of Commerce) Planning Processes)

BONUS QUESTION: Other project counties also identified the following goal.

CREATIVE ECONOMY & ENTREPRENEURS

All benefit from a thriving creative economy with increasing numbers of successful creative entrepreneurs and groups

Build support SYSTEMS & TRAINING opportunities by developing:

- >> A creative entrepreneur collective to cross boundaries, forge innovation and partnerships, and identify and address training needs
- >> Intentional partnerships to meet creative entrepreneurs' education, skill-building, and infrastructure needs
- >> Creative entrepreneurs and businesses across the county through increased participation in key networks and opportunities (e.g. Chamber of Commerce)

Create SPACES for creatives by supporting and expanding:

- >> Physical spaces for creatives to work (studios) and build their businesses (storefronts) individually and in groups
- >> Opportunities for creatives to engage directly with the community, share their work, and expand the reach of their businesses

Should it be included in the Blackford County Plan

That's the end. Thank you!

If you have any ideas not included above, feel free to share them here. We'd also love to hear your reactions to (or questions about this work). It will help us as we present it to your County Commissioners later this spring.

Want to know more?

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Countywide Arts Plan Goals & Strategies

Jay County

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GOALS: Please arrange these 3 goals in priority order, top = most important to you.

- ☐ **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN**
Downtowns are thriving — revitalized through arts initiatives, beautification, and programming
- ☐ **CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE**
Jay County's identity has been strengthened through the arts, history, and community engagement
- ☐ **CREATIVE ECONOMY & ENTREPRENEURS**
All benefit from a thriving creative economy with increasing numbers of successful creative entrepreneurs and groups
- ☐ **SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION**
Arts initiatives and programming are sustained through collaborative leadership and long-term funding

STRATEGIES: Here are the strategies for **CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DOWNTOWN**. Again, place them in priority order, top = most important to you.

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 - >> Extending trails, creating walking tours, and similar place-based initiatives that increase community engagement and tourism
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STRATEGIES: Repeat for **CULTURAL IDENTITY & HERITAGE.**



Lean into Jay County's history and heritage:

- >> Tying local history themes and content into Downtown and youth projects
- >> Developing specific history programming and amenities (e.g. downtown historic walking tours)



Reimagine and strengthen signature festival traditions - engaging the community to:

- >> Leverage signature festival traditions to bolster creative economy and tourism
- >> Develop creative solutions to sustain key events/activities
- >> Transition to new volunteers, partners, and approaches

STRATEGIES: Repeat for **CREATIVE ECONOMY & ENTREPRENEURS.**



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STRATEGIES: Last one, repeat for **SUSTAINED COMMITMENT & IMPLEMENTATION.**



Increase SUPPORT for arts and culture:

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BONUS QUESTION: Other project counties also identified the following goal.

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT IN & THROUGH THE ARTS

County youth are thriving through the arts and civic participation.

Increase youth ACCESS to arts:

- >> Strengthening communications by evaluating current practices and testing new ones
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Increase OPPORTUNITIES for youth arts engagement though:

- >> Actively and intentionally including youth in arts projects, especially downtown
- >> Making it easy and meaningful for youth to participate, whatever the project
- >> Planning activities and events at least a year out for schools/partners to meaningfully integrate them
- >> Developing new partnerships that expand arts programming and collaboration opportunities

Should it be included in the Jay County Plan

That's the end. Thank you!

If you have any ideas not included above, feel free to share them here. We'd also love to hear your reactions to (or questions about this work). It will help us as we present it to your County Commissioners later this spring.

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