



## Summary and Assessment of 2010-2020 Cultural Plan for the Pikes Peak Region

### Overview

The first Cultural Plan for the Pikes Peak region was drafted and made public in 2010. As this first plan sunsets and we embark on drafting our Arts Vision 2030, we take a look back at the successes and challenges of our prior plan so we can learn from the past as we plan for the future.

The 2010 Cultural Plan was a thoughtful, well-researched and inspired plan, featuring these five main goals:

1. Increase engagement, access and participation in the cultural life of the region
2. Integrate the arts into the social, economic and political fabric of the community
3. Strengthen and expand arts learning
4. Foster thriving arts organizations
5. Support creative individuals and advance arts leadership

There was great excitement surrounding the plan. For the first five years or so, the plan guided not only the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region (Cultural Office) initiatives, but also projects region-wide. The first goal to increase engagement, access and participation in the culture life of the region saw the most success, particularly around expanding community and neighborhood cultural development. The creation of Peak Radar greatly enhanced marketing efforts, and several organizations removed financial barriers for participation in their offerings.

New and expanded facilities over the last 10 years helped forward Goal 2 as did the redesign of the City of Colorado Springs Lodging & Automobile Rental Tax (LART) to include an annual contract for the Cultural Office. Many grassroots efforts increased and diversified cultural offerings in the region, meaning the arts are more integrated into the social fabric of the community today.

The most challenging goal was Goal 3, to “strengthen and expand arts learning.” While many schools and organizations have done amazing work to bring arts learning to students, the specific tactics outlined in the plan were mostly unmet. This could be due to the tactics being too specific and the community discovering new and innovative ways to strengthen K-12 curriculum and bring more art opportunities to adults. The fact that the region has 17 independent school districts also makes tracking accomplishments challenging. There is still progress to be made here, which will carry over to the new planning effort.

Under Goals 4, existing nonprofits are still seeking increased sustainability, but the Manitou Arts, Culture and Heritage (MACH) tax recently passed and is a beacon of hope that sustainable funding is possible. As for “supporting creative individuals and advancing arts leadership” (Goal 5), artists are finding recognition through Peak Radar and the Peak Art Prize program. Some parts of the region are struggling with leadership succession planning, while Southeast Colorado Springs is having an upswell of arts leadership coalescing the community around the arts.

Overall, the 2010 Cultural Plan saw many successes and challenges that help us grow and learn as we draft the new 10 year plan, Arts Vision 2030 plan.

---

## **Assessment of 2010 Cultural Plan Goals**

The following is an assessment of the 2010 Cultural Plan goals based on input from the Arts Vision 2030 Steering Committee and Focus Group participants who shared what they felt were highlights in the arts and cultural scene in the Pikes Peak Region over the last decade. They also shared those areas they feel are still a challenge today.

### **Goal 1: Increase engagement, access and participation in the cultural life of the region.**

*“There will never be an end to this goal. However, I think that the energy that we see around art and creativity in Knob Hill, the SE, and Downtown have exponentially increased.” (Survey Response)*

### **Objective 1: Expand community and neighborhood cultural development**

Observation: Some communities and neighborhoods have expanded their community and cultural development more than others. Downtown Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs continue to be hubs of cultural activity, where other areas still languish. There is evidence that city governments, tourism offices and other organizations are starting to make a case for encouraging cultural development in all areas of the region, but more work and cohesive effort is needed.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Region is home to two state-certified arts districts
- Knob Hill Urban Arts District organized as a 501c3
- PLANCOS included a chapter on “Renowned Culture” indicating arts and culture is considered at the highest planning levels at the City of Colorado Springs
- Panorama Park redevelopment will include public art and an area for performances
- Public Art Master Plan was adopted by the City of Colorado Springs
- Southeast Street Art Project founded
- ENT Center for the arts was constructed and provides a “home” for some key arts nonprofits
- Patty Jewett “Porchfest” was established
- “Strong collaboration and work in Sand Creek in southeast” (survey response)
- Expansion of Green Box Arts in Teller County
- Manitou Arts Center in Manitou and other “Maker Spaces” established by Pikes Peak Library District
- Poetry719 expanded as an event and community engagement group
- Excellence and growth for art galleries such as Kreuser and Cottonwood Arts
- Consistent, strong music festivals throughout the region
- Increase in locally-owned, unique restaurants, breweries and distilleries
- Growth of Pride Fest
- Expansion of Juneteenth Celebration
- First Fridays and introduction of Avenue Creative Circuit collaboration between Manitou Springs, Downtown COS Arts District, and Old Colorado City
- Military Arts Connection increased access in underserved community

#### Gaps/Challenges:

- Public funding for the arts is limited to LART in COS and the Manitou MACH tax, passed in 2020
- Some areas still feel underdeveloped culturally. On the west side of town, “there has been no significant increase in community or neighborhood cultural development. Pioneer Days remains about as much as we have.” (survey response)
- The arts continue to need a seat at the table advocating for the inclusion of art in any of the new major developments that are happening around the region

#### **Objective 2: Improve marketing for cultural activities**

Observation: There has not been an overwhelming increase in the marketing for cultural activities outside of Peak Radar. For example, there is a tab for Arts and Culture on both the Visit COS and Manitou Springs visitors’ website but it is not a featured element. Both websites feature incomplete information. Perhaps these websites are not as useful for marketing cultural activities. Social media and Peak Radar seem to be the best marketing for artists and events.

#### Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- The Cultural Office’s Peak Radar continues to be the go-to website for marketing cultural businesses, events and locations in the region
- The Cultural Office, especially through Arts Month activities and First Fridays, has been the leader in increasing marketing and presence for arts organizations
- Many arts organizations were able to switch to digital platforms during the pandemic, to continue reaching audiences

#### Gaps/Challenges:

- “There is still a gap in marketing beyond what have become the standards: Peak Radar, KRCC and CS Indy.” (survey response)
- The traditions of public radio and the weekly paper do not necessarily reach inclusive audiences
- Some interviewees mentioned Peak Radar is cumbersome, and therefore they do not use it. One interviewee mentioned that Peak Radar also caters more to tourists rather than locals

#### **Objective 3: Eliminate barriers to access for all citizens**

Observation: The lofty goal of the “elimination” of barriers to provide access for all would be a challenge for any plan. Progress has been made to make participating in the arts more affordable and accessible, but there is still work to be done to increase participation in all areas of the region.

#### Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Free days and youth passports at the Fine Arts Center
- Military Arts Connection increased access in an underserved community
- There has been an “Increase in multilingual marketing and advertising in Spanish speaking neighborhoods.” (survey response)
- Programs such as City as a Venue and Curbside Culture will increase access to culture in more areas
- Colorado College has made a commitment to providing free or very low-cost programming to the public
- Consistent, strong music and summer festivals throughout the region are accessible and often free

- “Free programming downtown, including at America the Beautiful Park, increases access.” (survey response)
- “New businesses/venues promoting art have been transformational--Ivywild, Wild Goose, Lulus Downstairs, and others--are critical to continue access and growth in the music scene.” (survey response)

Gaps/Challenges:

- Transportation to and programming within FAC remain a challenge” (survey response)
- “Ticket prices for many events are cost-prohibitive for breaking down barriers.” (survey response)
- Public Art is concentrated in the Downtown area of COS and not available region-wide
- “Need more such opportunities throughout the year, and post pandemic, opportunities that take place indoors during the colder season.” (survey response)
- The region is still very siloed with cultural offerings highly concentrated in Colorado Springs and Manitou Springs
- “There remains a "barrier to entry" that has more to do with a general sense that the public is not welcome in some spaces.” (survey response)

**Objective 4: Measure and track public participation in cultural programs**

Observation: This is collected by many individual venues and businesses, but not compiled annually.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- The Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region participated in the Arts & Prosperity Study 5 that was published in 2017 through the Americans for the Arts

Gaps/Challenges:

- Data is collected by individual venues and businesses, but there is no central data collector that is tracking/compiling this information for the region as a whole on an annual or regular basis

**Goal 2: Integrate the arts into the social, economic and political fabric of the community.**

*“I think that Cultural Office's work with the Chamber, EDC, and Downtown Partnership have been fortified. I think we still need to work on Objective 1 and 2....” (survey response)*

Observation: Some strides have been made to integrate arts and culture into the “...social, economic and political fabric of the community, but there is much work to do. There is a tacit acceptance that the arts community is “making it” on its own, with little advocacy for funding or support in the political realm.” (survey response)

**Objective 1: Develop affordable and accessible venues and facilities**

Observation: Lack of affordable venues for larger audiences/performances is still a large issue for the region. Strides are being made, with the opening of the ENT Center, the potential redevelopment of the City Auditorium, and Lulu’s Downtown. However, more venues for all sizes of audiences are needed.

#### Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Ent Center was built seating 750+
- “The establishment of the Olympic Museum and the CC Arena; these hold huge potential for expanded creative opportunities. Time will tell if that becomes the case.” (survey response)
- Millibo and Green Box have both expanded
- “Increase in free programming opportunities at FAC help integrate the arts more into the fabric of the community, as well as businesses like Lady Finger, Ivywild, etc” (survey response)
- Establishment of the Pikes Peaks Children’s Museum
- The partnership between the FAC and Colorado College has allowed for increased affordability and access
- Planning is underway for the redevelopment of the City Auditorium which could provide a variety of spaces including studios and performance
- Discussions are underway for a potential outdoor amphitheater
- A performance space/stage is part of the planned redevelopment of Panorama Park
- The Boot Barn Hall opened as an entertainment venue, with seating up to 1,700 seated indoor and outdoor auditorium-style

#### Gaps/Challenges:

- There is still a lack of spaces throughout the region, such as an outdoor music venue, black box theatres, and mid-size (500-900) performance/music venues.

### **Objective 2: Define the arts and cultural sector as an economic driver and grow creative industries**

Observation: It is apparent that generally people are beginning to understand and believe that the arts are a significant contributor to the region’s economic growth. However, there is a gap between this understanding and more active advocacy for and investment in this area, either from local governments or from the business sector.

#### Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Increased LART funding, including some support for the Cultural Office
- Passage of the MACH initiative in Manitou Springs in 2020
- The Cultural Office along with the Chamber hosts a yearly Business + Arts lunch.
- Visit COS and the Chamber of Commerce include arts destinations on their tours for businesses.
- There is a “Greater appreciation for the importance of the arts in the economic vitality of the City (mayor, city council, city leadership).” (survey response)
- “The seemingly most visible measure of growth has been in our investment in facilities and venues. The Ent Center for the arts; the Olympic Museum; the CC Arena; these all hold huge potential for expanded creative opportunities. Time will tell if that becomes the case.” (survey response)
- “Unique opportunity for institutions of Higher ED to really partner with arts to demonstrate how academia and art can work together to provide broad access for students and community alike to experience exceptional artistic programs and experiences.” (survey response)

#### Gaps/Challenges

- Additional increases in the LART funding is needed; it is unclear whether there is a strong collaborative effort to lobby for an increase

- There is still a hope for stronger support for valuing the arts “similar to how we value natural resources/outdoor opportunities and sports industry.” (survey response)
- “The financial support from the community is not what it should be as artists' income in Colorado Springs is below the national average...” (survey response)
- Lack of regional cohesiveness (development is happening in certain spots but not region wide)
- There is a need to better understand how the yearly Business + Arts Luncheon increases business funding for the arts

### **Objective 3: Affirm culture, identity and heritage**

Observation: Despite the lack of public funding, there are many grassroots efforts to increase and diversify cultural offerings in the region. There seems to be a collaborative, inclusive community for artists and creatives of all kinds, and new arts leaders are stepping out to make the region welcoming for a more diverse community.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- “The programming of groups like the FAC and Poetry 719 all work hard to diversify their programs and what/who they highlight.” (survey response)
- Onebody Ent/K-Land’s Juneteenth celebration
- “With the growth and addition of KHUAD I think urban arts and street arts are also bridging inwards towards the contemporary arts community, which is a great point of growth but could, of course, be pushed even harder!” (survey response)
- “The affirmation of culture, identity, and heritage has definitely increased in meaningful and visible ways. Murals around town are one of the most obvious examples.” (survey response)
- Southeast Street Art Project
- “Significant changes in the amount of inclusion/representation at the Pioneer’s Museum is another.” (survey response)
- CSPM staff unveiled Una Familia Grande: The Conejos Neighborhood Project Public art master plan was adopted in 2020 and an online list of the public art around the COS was published.

Gaps/Challenges

- “The Springs still comes across, however, as a non-diverse (artistic) community. We know this is not true, but we have not yet made it clear either within our community or beyond it.” (survey response)
- Even though the arts communities are thriving and strong in the region, they lack confidence and a sense that they are a key part of the community.
- No public funding for public art to date.

### **Goal 3: Strengthen and expand arts learning**

*“The Ent Center for the Arts at UCCS and the alliance between CC and the Fine Arts Center have made wonderful new opportunities for higher-education in the region. Pikes Peak Community College has also increased its arts offerings and engagement opportunities for both students and community members.” Survey response*

## **Objective 1: Strengthen K-12 arts curriculum**

Observation: Many non-profits offer terrific arts education programs for K-12 children. D11 school district has specifically identified the arts as part of what it wants to be known for. Because of the large number of districts in the region (17) it is difficult to discern how many schools in the region have increased or strengthened their arts education programs.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- “Schools doing well, some exceptionally, with few resources...” (survey response)
- PPLD provides no-cost arts education and tools for its communities
- Artists in Residency at West Middle School was a first pilot
- D11 is redesigning its K-5 schedule to integrate the “essentials wheel” which integrates all 4 areas of state arts curriculum in music, theatre, arts and dance
- Special projects: Kennedy Center partnership has grown; Pikes Peak Arts Integration Collaborative with three districts; professional development to teachers, YDA, tapping into arts partnerships
- Lucky to have so many potential partnerships between schools and nonprofits, like Children’s Choral, Youth Symphony, Philharmonic and others

Gaps/Challenges

- Tracking art education opportunities and participation both in schools and through arts organizations is still a challenge
- There are still opportunities for increased partnerships between nonprofits arts organizations, artists and schools to increase arts education
- “Need for increase funding/value for the art in K-12 curriculum (perhaps importance of the arts for mental health as well as de-escalation of the importance of standardized tests might provide window of opportunity to value arts in K-12.)” (survey response)

## **Objective 2: Enhance higher education and adult education opportunities**

Observations: Several programs for adult art education were established and strengthened during the 2010-2020 period.

Accomplishments and Highlights 2010-2020:

- “The expansion of Bemis School of Art and their virtual school are a great point of success for arts education.” (survey response)
- The Ent Center for the Arts at UCCS and the alliance between CC and the Fine Arts Center have made great new opportunities for higher education in the region
- “Pikes Peak Community College increased its arts offerings and engagement opportunities for both students and community members. Collaborations benefit both traditional and adult learners as well as the community, results in cost sharing and attracts wider audiences.” (survey response)
- “Since 2010 friends like Jana Bussanich of Yellow Couch Studios and Alvarez Gallery Art School have developed art curricula for artists of all levels. (survey response)
- Military Arts Connection has been critical in bridging gaps in arts education to military community
- Manitou Springs has Arts14 and Connect14--huge programs for kids
- Green Box offers visual and culinary arts classes, artist in residency program and collaborates with Arts14 in Manitou for K-12 arts education opportunities



Gaps/challenges:

- “I would love to see Bemis arts education reaching further out communities and less just downtown.” (survey response)
- Room for growth in ensuring seniors have greater access to arts activities.

#### **Goal 4: Foster thriving arts organizations**

*“Manitou has recently increased its support of the arts community through a tax increase, MACH. I think we need more of this. I love that the money goes directly to the nonprofits and artists. We are just beginning to launch the MACH programs now. Good stuff.” (survey response)*

Observation: Because of the pandemic, thriving has been reduced to just surviving. However, the Cultural Office has been doing a good job of marketing arts organizations and giving them access to the tools they need to flourish. Smaller arts organizations that do not follow the non-profit models still struggle, and more assistance with business management might be needed.

#### **Objective 1: Enhance the sustainability of existing cultural organizations**

Observation: Of the 400+ arts organizations in the region, many are volunteer run and lack professional staff, training and resources to be more sustainable. The pandemic has exacerbated this situation and burnout is also becoming a factor.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- “Increased LART funding has helped enhance sustainability, but from my perspective only certain groups receive such resources.” (survey response)
- PEAK Radar has been a resource for arts businesses to market themselves and events
- Expand networking opportunities for arts providers to encourage collaborations. (2010 Plan recommendation, and it seems that this has been a goal of the Cultural Office but need more concrete evidence from Angela, et al)
- At a grassroots level, many existing arts organizations are welcoming, collaborating and “holding the door open” for newcomers. (survey response)

Gaps/Challenges

- “Conduct training and workshops for effective management” (survey response)

#### **Objective 2: Create sustainable funding for cultural organizations**

Observation: Small incremental steps are being made, particularly with the LART, but the arts in the region are nearly completely reliant upon grants, foundation funding and earned income for its existence.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Manitou increased its support of the arts community through a tax increase (MACH) in 2020.
- Leadership and investment of Bee Vradenberg dollars is essential
- “The CC/FAC alliance has ensured the sustainability of the FAC for the long term. Millions of dollars have been invested already and a recently announced gift of \$33.5 million (the biggest in CC history) ensures that the FAC will continue to grow and flourish as it becomes more inclusive and accessible in the process. Now we (speaking as a CC/FAC representative) are looking at ways to help sustain smaller organizations and individuals through our partnerships



and programming. The upcoming "City as a Venue" initiative is one such example." (survey response)

- "Growth of donor circles and subscribers critical to the Philharmonic and other performance institutions. Some success with corporate sponsorship (ie. Hospitals)." (survey response)
- Two Creative Districts have been established in the region, fulfilling the goal to develop cultural districts

#### Gaps/Challenges

- Need greater collaboration/partnership with business community
- "Need to take advantage of regional/ national funding opportunities. Perhaps pursue some larger strategic grants that hit across multiple arts organizations." (survey response)
- Growing financial support for individual artists continues to be a challenge in the region. A United Arts Fund was attempted to encourage workplace giving and corporate philanthropy but was unsuccessful due to economic downturn and decline of the United Way funding model
- Advocating for municipal funding of cultural service providers is an on-going challenge, except in Manitou Springs

### **Goal 5: Support creative individuals and advance arts leadership**

*"By building up leaders in the arts, we've created a system where people really feel like they have a job and say in what happens here. Success I've noticed is boards accepting diverse representation and attempting to work with up-and-coming arts leaders as opposed to just folks that have been settled in the community for a long time."* (survey response)

Observation: It seems that this is an area that has seen success, especially in the Colorado Springs/Manitou Springs area. In other areas of Teller and Northern El Paso County, arts leaders are struggling with volunteer staff, dwindling funding and declining attendance at meetings, some events, etc. Southeast Colorado Springs has an upswelling of arts leadership coalescing the community around the arts but also struggles for sustainability.

#### **Objective 1: Recognize and support creative individuals**

Observation: Through its social media, marketing and programs, the Cultural Office does a good job highlighting artists and events in the area. The Peak Radar Prize was established as a means of recognizing artists and accomplishments. More work can be done to foster broader recognition around the region. The pandemic has hampered the efforts of the Pikes Peak Artists Collective in their support of individual creatives.

#### Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- "Increased attention for creative individuals in local media over the last several years, but focus remains on certain organizations and artists." (survey response)
- PEAK Radar continues to be a conduit to the public about artists and creative programs
- Peak Arts Prize recognizes artist accomplishments
- "The best asset artists have is the artist community itself, which is the best support I have enjoyed and benefited from rather than the outside community." (survey response)

#### Gaps/Challenges

- Training and marketing opportunities for individual artists continues to be a need.
- Increased inclusiveness around the recognition and support of creative individuals still needs to receive more attention and efforts

- Recognition beyond the region is still a challenge
- Some artists are not aware of what is available to them, such as Peak Radar, and some of these platforms are not user-friendly
- Many artists are struggling to find meaningful support and recognition, especially young artists
- “Need work in this area. I don’t think we do a good job honoring our creatives and valuing them across sectors.” (survey response)

## **Objective 2: Advance leadership in the arts**

Observation: The region continues to offer traditional leadership development opportunities such as Pikes Peak Leadership Signature program and El Pomar’s Emerging Leaders Development and Nonprofit Executive Leadership programs. However, these are not well-known throughout the region’s arts community and are limited in the number of people who can attend. There remains a void in building an articulated pathway for diverse arts leadership and advocacy in the region.

Accomplishments and Highlights from 2010-2020:

- Arts Month has become the focus of advancing exposure of the arts in the community and connecting artists and creatives to each other.

Gaps/Challenges

- “It seems that most of our arts leaders are imported; that is, they come from elsewhere and then depart for other places. We need more mentorship and opportunities for residents of our region to become leaders in the arts.” (survey response)
- Though some leaders have a place at the table, many do not. (survey response)
- The region needs programs and networks to support emerging arts leaders; greater effort to engage artists and creatives in existing leadership programs; recruiting and training efforts to encourage artists and creatives to serve on community, city and county boards, and increased involvement in civic and political affairs.

## **SHOUT-OUTS – From Surveys and Interviews**

- Colorado College / Fine Arts Center Alliance
- “City for Champions initiative; Not sure how/if Olympic museum will help promote arts, though potential exists”
- Redevelopment of downtown
- “whatever has caused us to have an abundance of coffee houses, brew pubs & food trucks...”
- First Friday Shuttle/First Fridays
- “City as a Venue looks promising to engage new audiences”
- Theatreworks free Shakespeare program
- Lulu’s Downstairs
- “growth in culinary/ brewery/ distillery sector helps feed the arts- pun intended”
- “Growth in nonprofits serving kids- Millibo, ACT, Conservatory, Youth Symphony, FAC programming.”
- “Fingers crossed- ArtSpace - to provide critical affordable housing in ever increasingly difficult housing environment.”
- “Manitou Springs is now a certified Creative District, MACH, Creative Circuit, Arts14/Connect14, Concrete Coyote, all of the neighborhood, PPLD's makerspaces, Arts Month, Green Box, Cottonwood's Programs, and so much more.”

## **MISSED OPPORTUNITIES – From Surveys and Interviews**

- “We need a mid-sized rock-concert style venue. Something in the 700-1000 seat range.”
- “Education in self-support in the fields of business and marketing would be very beneficial to the artists. Empowering artists to become more of a community force rather than a commodity, would be beneficial to both the artists and the community.”
- Need to increase arts funding through overall LART increase
- “Missed opportunity to collaborate meaningfully across organizations (some success, but needs to benefit multiple organizations with broader themes of consequence).”
- “How are we inviting the arts to the table to address mental health issues?”
- “Anytime that we can connect to state-wide promotions--we do some of this, but we often create our own.”