

# INTRODUCTION

## WE ARE WE ARE

a booming region  
spanning mountains,  
cities, towns, and plains.

a collaborative and  
increasingly diverse  
community.

Creativity and self-expression are intrinsic  
to our history and identity.

**T**he Pikes Peak region includes Colorado's El Paso and Teller counties, surrounding the majestic "fourteener" Pikes Peak. The urban center of Colorado Springs spreads out at the foot of Pikes Peak, radiating out into mountain towns, panoramic natural vistas, and rural communities. As the second largest population center in Colorado, the Pikes Peak region is home to more than 750,000 people and rapidly growing in number and diversity. Along with the population, remarkable growth is anticipated for the local economy, jobs, and tourism.

Our arts, culture and creative community is also growing and flourishing. Creativity and self-expression are intrinsic to the history of this area from the time of its earliest human inhabitants. Indigenous cultures have lived in this region for 5,000 years, leaving behind petroglyphs, Ute prayer trees, and other signs of historic creativity. The first permanent settlement was established in what is now Old Colorado City in 1859. Colorado Springs was established in 1871 to take advantage of the extraordinary scenic beauty of its surroundings to develop a "Little London" in the American West, and the mountain towns of Teller County followed in the 1890s. This remarkable setting continues to attract travelers, artists and entrepreneurs.

For much of the region's history, artistic practice hummed in pockets of vibrancy, supported by volunteer-led organizations. Now, more than 400 arts and cultural groups and organizations enliven the Pikes Peak region. The 2017 Arts & Economic Prosperity Study with Americans for the Arts defined the annual economic impact of the local nonprofit creative sector at \$153.3 million.

The creative sector's regional, collective identity began galvanizing over the past 20 years. In 2001, the Bee Vradenburg Foundation became the first local foundation dedicated to investing in regional arts. The Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak region (Cultural Office) was founded in 2006 as our first professionally-staffed local arts agency. Efforts by these organizations and so many others ushered in a new era of cooperation, collaboration, and vision that resulted in the community's first Cultural Plan in 2010.

The regional 2010 Cultural Plan sunset in 2020. Now, after years of planning and months of public input, research and reflection, we, the creative community of the Pike Peak region, are proud to announce the publication of our new 2020-2030 cultural plan—Arts Vision 2030.

*Cultural planning is a best practice for guiding communities through long term growth and development. Along the way, the process of planning builds unity and perspective by accessing new ideas from varied voices. Planning also aligns stakeholders and creates a shared vision for the future.*

# THE STORY OF ARTS VISION 2030

**W**orking together, the Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak Region and the Bee Vradenburg Foundation convened a diverse steering committee of local creative leaders in 2018, and initiated the process to develop Arts Vision 2030 as the next cultural plan for the Pikes Peak region from 2020-2030.

Arts Vision 2030 builds upon the regional 2010 Cultural Plan starting with an evaluation of our progress and cultural growth over the past decade. To create a vision for the next decade of arts and culture development, key stakeholders were engaged and input gathered directly from our broad community. The result is this living document to galvanize, guide and inspire the arts and creative community towards common goals.

Arts Vision 2030 received funding from El Paso County, the Bee Vradenburg Foundation, Cultural Office of the Pikes Peak region, National Endowment for the Arts, Kirkpatrick Family Fund, Tiemens Foundation, and Colorado Educational and Cultural Facilities Authority. The Cultural Office and Bee Vradenburg Foundation guided the process, amplifying the leadership of the 24-member Steering Committee of local creatives.

The Arts Vision 2030 Steering Committee established values for the Arts Vision 2030 process for a plan that would be of, for, and by the community.

## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Pikes Peak region is situated on the ancestral homeland of the Ute Peoples, who are the Southern Ute, Ute Mountain Ute, and Northern Ute. Other tribes who lived and hunted on this land include the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Comanche, and Apache. Even through forced relocation and land dispossession, we recognize that the land still holds Ute traditions, language, stories, and history. Today, Indigenous people from many Native nations reside here and continue to make significant contributions to our community.

# PLANNING VALUES

In 2018, the Arts Vision 2030 Steering Committee set forth the following values to guide the cultural planning process:

- ✦ **Inclusion** of the full creative community, across boundaries of discipline, geography, and demographics
- ✦ **Ambition** to seize the opportunities of a coming decade of population growth
- ✦ Belief in local **artistic quality**, with support for its further enrichment
- ✦ **Professionalism** based on national best practices, with distinctly regional voice and relevance
- ✦ **Boldness** about the creative sector's contribution to our region's vitality across sector

## CULTURAL EQUITY STATEMENT

*Adapted with permission from Americans for the Arts (AFTA)*

**"To support a full creative life for all, our arts and creative community commits to championing policies and practices of cultural equity that empower a just, inclusive, equitable nation."**

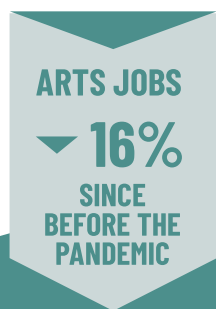
### DEFINITION OF CULTURAL EQUITY

*Cultural equity embodies the values, policies, and practices that ensure that all people—including but not limited to those who have been historically underrepresented based on race/ethnicity, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, socioeconomic status, geography, citizenship status, or religion—are represented in the development of arts policy; the support of artists; the nurturing of accessible, thriving venues for expression; and the fair distribution of programmatic, financial, and informational resources.*

# IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

**I**n March 2020, the world was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Quarantines and social distancing requirements have had an enormous impact on this region, and in particular our creative community. While we still struggle to see the end of the pandemic, the lasting outcomes and consequences for the creative sector are still coming into focus.

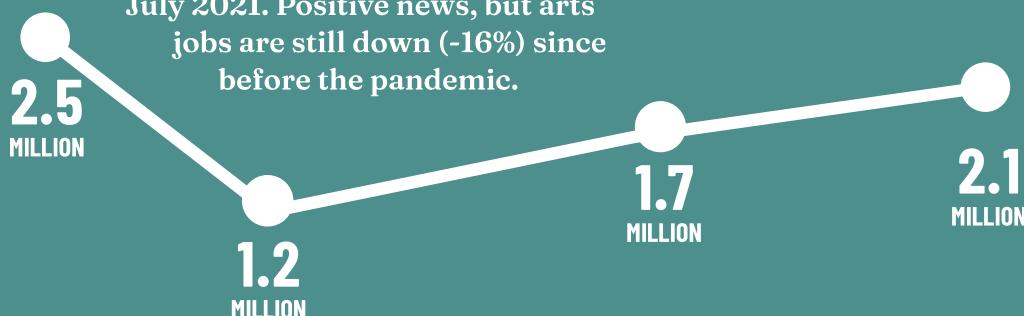
The pandemic shuttered much of the creative sector for varying lengths of time, and portions of the sector may never fully recover. Nationally, we know that creative employment is beginning to pick up, but there is increasing evidence that the creative sector is coming back more slowly than other sectors of the nation's economy.



Artists/creatives were, and remain, among the most severely affected segment of the nation's workforce. 95% lost creative income during the pandemic. At the height of the pandemic in 2020, 63% experienced unemployment.

**95% OF ARTISTS & CREATIVES LOST INCOME DURING THE PANDEMIC**

The US Bureau of Labor Statistics reported in August 2021 that "Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation" jobs dropped from 2.5 million to 1.2 million between February and April 2020 (-53%). By January 2021, jobs rebounded to 1.7 million and are up to 2.1 million as of July 2021. Positive news, but arts jobs are still down (-16%) since before the pandemic.



	BIPOC ARTISTS	WHITE ARTISTS
UNEMPLOYMENT	69%	60%
% INCOME LOST	61%	56%

BIPOC artists had even higher rates of unemployment than white artists in 2020 due to the pandemic (69% vs. 60%) and lost a larger percentage of their creative income (61% vs. 56%).



As of July 2021, 39% of organizations with in-person programming remain closed to the public. The vast majority, however, expect to return to in-person activities by the end of 2021.

**39% REMAIN CLOSED TO THE PUBLIC**

The arts have endured and continue to serve community needs. An earlier 2020 survey\* stated that 65% of the over 19,000 organizations participating said that they have been "delivering artistic content to raise community spirits and morale."

Anecdotal evidence suggests the Pikes Peak region was impacted less severely than other parts of the country. Tourism has continued to flourish despite the pandemic, as many of our tourist destinations are outdoors. Many arts organizations pivoted to online and outdoor arts delivery. During the summer of 2021, many arts and culture activities and events returned, with the Meadowgrass Music Festival and Colorado Springs Juneteenth Festival kicking off the season.

While more data and time is needed to better understand the permanent and lasting effects of the pandemic, especially on smaller businesses, organizations and individual artists, our regional arts and creative community seem poised to rebound and continue to thrive and grow.

## IMPACT OF RACIAL RECKONING

**F**ollowing the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, MN on May 25, 2020, protests against police brutality erupted nationwide, and the Pikes Peak region was no exception. Starting May 30, Black Lives Matter protesters demonstrated in downtown Colorado Springs every day for more than two weeks. Music, theater, poetry and visual arts were incorporated, and a “Black Lives Create Fest” was held to support local BIPOC artists. Equity, inclusion and racial justice grounded the first conversations of the Arts Vision 2030 Steering Committee and the plan’s strategic design throughout. George Floyd’s murder elevated critical conversations about race in the Pikes Peak region, and Arts Vision 2030 is a stronger and more equitable plan as a result of this historic context.

## PLANNING IN CONTEXT

**I**n early 2020, ThereSquared LLC, a consulting team from Denver, was selected to facilitate the Art Vision 2030 process and began working with the Steering Committee and planning for public engagement. When the pandemic began, all project activity was put on hold.

The leadership team decided to relaunch cultural planning one year into the pandemic with the belief that the project would support the creative sector’s recovery and resilience and lay groundwork for post-pandemic success.

Arts Vision 2030 restarted in early 2021 with a redesign of community engagement to be completely virtual. Stakeholder interviews and focus groups were conducted over Zoom. An interactive website with engagement tools like surveys, mapping, forums, and idea boards was launched at [ArtsVision2030.com](https://ArtsVision2030.com), and social media accounts engaged the public on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

***The plan proceeded through five phases:***





Our pent-up creative community responded with thousands of people engaging over five months. In fact, 4,500 people were touched by the process and 664 made direct contributions to the plan.

The planning process engaged hundreds of people throughout the community. Many were asked to share three words they felt represented their vision of the future.

***Here's what they said:***

