

# Creating a Cultural Experience in Charleston

**Table of Contents**

**Letter of Greeting ..... 3**

**Executive Summary ..... 5**

**Introduction ..... 6**

*Where are we now?*

*What is the Charleston County Cultural Plan?*

*How was the Cultural Plan developed & What have we learned?*

*Has the public been involved with the creation of the Cultural Plan?*

*How is the Plan organized?*

**Implementation: Provide means support to implement the recommendations and ongoing efforts..... 22**

**GOALS**

**Identity & Marketing: Market the area as a cultural destination ..... 12**

**Education & Community Outreach: Engage the Cultural Community with the educational system ..... 14**

**Business & Economic Development: Engage business industry in the Cultural Community... 17**

**Physical Planning: Ensure and promote history in facilities and housing..... 20**

**CREDITS**

Summary.....25

April 1, 2009

Greetings!

We are pleased to present the *Creating a Cultural Experience: A Cultural Plan for the City of Charleston*. This plan was made possible by a grant from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation.

The plan which you are about to read is the result of two years of hard work by many interested people and organizations. We are grateful to everyone who served on the Cultural Plan Advisory Committee, participated in an interview, attended a focus group, served on a task force, or provided assistance in a variety of different areas. This plan would not have been possible without this help and support from throughout Kanawha County.

When you read the plan, we hope that you will understand that it is meant to be a “living document.” The plan was never intended to sit on a shelf, nor to serve as a concrete model for how cultural activities must be developed in Charleston. Rather, it is meant to be implemented, scrutinized, changed, and reworked. It should be the basis for growth, discussion, and debate. The plan will always be living because as portions of it are implemented; there will be additional items which need to be addressed. It is our hope that this plan is seen as a great first-step to an ongoing process of cultural evaluation and growth in Charleston.

This plan is intended to assist the citizens of Kanawha County – all citizens! It was meant to be inclusive of all the various backgrounds, cultures, and personalities that make Greater Charleston such a wonderful place to live and work. So, please do not think that the Cultural Plan was written for someone else’s eyes. If you are reading it, it was intended for you to do so. In that regard, please feel free to make notes, recommendations, criticisms, and the like. It’s your county, and your culture!

We hope that you enjoy reading the plan, and we further hope that you will decide to play a role in the implementation process. Whether this is through an organization, local government, or as an individual, your talents in implementing the plan will be helpful and welcome.

Thank you for taking time to read the plan, and thank you for helping us assist the City of Charleston!

Sincerely,

*Bill*

William E. Jeffries, III, MCP  
Project Manager

*Chad*

Chad N. Proudfoot, MA, MPA  
Project Coordinator

---

# **CREATING A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN CHARLESTON**

---

# CREATING A CULTURAL EXPERIENCE IN CHARLESTON

## VISION STATEMENT

"The City of Charleston is a vibrant growing community which celebrates its cultural diversity and multi-generational personality through the arts."

## IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

Provide the organizational means and the support to implement the recommendations of the Cultural Plan, and provide for ongoing efforts in the cultural community

## IDENTITY & MARKETING

Market the area as a cultural destination

## EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Engage the Cultural Community with the Educational System & Improve Communication

## BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Engage the business industry in Kanawha County with the Arts & Cultural Community

## PHYSICAL PLANNING

Ensure that facilities and housing in the area promote history and support the ongoing goals of the cultural plan

---

# INTRODUCTION

---

## **STATEMENT OF PURPOSE FROM THE GREATER KANAWHA VALLEY FOUNDATION**

"We have so many wonderful cultural opportunities in our community. A documented cultural plan will highlight and promote all aspects of the community's arts and culture."

### **WHERE ARE WE NOW?**

The Greater Charleston area is fortunate to have already established itself as a leader for culture and the arts in the region. Throughout the Kanawha Valley there is no shortage of cultural events, festivals, and organizations. The citizens of the area are supportive of the cultural community, and the arts are actively promoted through the school system to younger generations of area inhabitants. It is in this environment that the Charleston Cultural Plan was developed in order to assess that which is already occurring, make recommendations for continued development, and provoke discussion to encourage what is already good to become even better.

### **WHAT IS THE CHARLESTON CULTURAL PLAN?**

The Cultural Plan for the City of Charleston is the result of two years worth of work on behalf of many stakeholders. The plan is intended to provide a framework and attainable goals through which Charleston can strengthen its cultural community, and serve to reach new heights for the next three-to-five years.

The plan is not (and was never intended to be) a "be all, end all" document for the progress of culture in the Charleston area. Nor is the plan intended to be so ridged that any modifications to it would be seen as a failure. Instead, the Cultural Plan is a living and working document. It is understood that alterations will be made, new programs will develop, and a host of other factors may influence the implementation of these recommendations. However, it is hoped that this plan will serve as a general guide and that, by implementing the recommendations contained herein, Charleston will be an even stronger cultural center for the state and region than when the process began.

### **HOW WAS THE CULTURAL PLAN DEVELOPED?**

The funding for the Cultural Plan was made possible by a grant from the Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation to the Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia, Inc. In September

---

2007, the Clay Center contracted with the Cultural Resource Management Program at West Virginia University to provide support for the research and administration of the project.

In October 2007, an Advisory Committee was formed to help guide the project. The goal of this formation was to try and have members representing many different sectors of the public in the Kanawha County area. This committee was made up of artists, local leaders, educators, government officials, and other interested parties. The committee played a very active role in every part of the process for developing the Cultural Plan.

An early, and very important, decision by the advisory committee centered around what form the Cultural Plan should take. The committee reviewed plans from several different areas, and finally centered on a model used by Portsmouth, New Hampshire. This model was not extensive in length and used general goals with specific recommendations for implementation. Because Greater Charleston had never before gone through a process of cultural planning such as this, the advisory committee felt that this model offered the best hope for both creation and implementation.

All of the stakeholders participating in the development of the plan had maintained a keen interest in ensuring that input from the public was been considered during every portion of the plan's development. Great care has been taken throughout the entire process to be as inclusive as possible. Every effort was made to include individuals, organizations, and populations at each phase, and any feedback that was provided has been weighed as an important part of the development of the plan.

Data gathering interviews were conducted with a wide variety of stakeholders in the community. Many of these had direct connection to the arts such as educators, philanthropists, and individual artists. However, there were others who did not have a significant involvement in the arts, including some interviews conducted with representatives of minority and underserved populations.

Focus groups including an open forum sponsored by the Charleston Area Alliance, Generation Charleston, a group representing many cultures, and a group of artists and representatives of arts organizations,

The interviewees and focus groups were asked to respond to questions regarding the area's cultural assets, weaknesses, reputation, threats, and needs for change.

Once the advisory committee reviewed the responses to these questions, it set up task



forces to address the issues which had come to the fore.

#### WHAT DID WE LEARN?

Through the interviews, public forum and focus groups, the committee found a number of strengths in the cultural community:

- the variety of programming,
- quality of events,
- good reputation within the region
- good accessibility,
- venues are in safe areas
- art walk,
- FestivALL,
- the Clay Center,
- Mountain Stage,
- Vandalia gathering
- the West Virginia Symphony
- the large number of cultural organizations,
- outdoor dining,
- the perception that there are many opportunities for cultural involvement for a city our size.” and
- lots of interest in the arts

Areas of concern included:

- lack of a shared vision and coordinated plan.
  - arts groups do not work together,
  - lack of collaboration of the different cultural communities,
  - Lack of communication between arts groups,
  - Lack of coordination in scheduling activities
  - Lack of an identity as a cultural center
  - lack of centralized marketing and awareness for all arts programs,
  - lack of a centralized website dealing with the arts,
  - no coordinated calendar of events,
  - inequality of exposure among all groups,
  - low participation by people from outside the area.
  - the negative effect of No Child Left Behind legislation on arts education,
  - lack of diversity / variety in the arts,
  - exclusivity of cultural events/programming (perceived or real)
  - aging demographic coupled with low participation in the arts of the younger generation,
  - “People with all the money make all the decisions,”
-

- lack of a vibrant downtown
- lack of affordable housing,
- the area is too “vehicle dependent,
- Limited financial resources
- not reaching out to national foundations,
- focus on old ways of doing things.

Using the information gleaned from interviews and focus groups, this plan was developed to address some of the shortcomings while maintaining the community’s strengths. Specifically this plan focuses on:

- Developing a structure to coordinate efforts and implement the plan
- Developing and marketing a cultural identity
- Expanding education and outreach into the community
- Engaging the business community and developing a reliable funding stream
- Planning for adaptive reuse, affordable housing and studio space

#### **HOW IS THE CULTURAL PLAN ORGANIZED?**

This plan makes recommendations for attacking each focus area. Although each section addresses specific areas to develop, these were not exclusive of each other. Therefore, some recommendations blend into other areas. Also, during implementation, one may find that certain objectives work well with others in ways that were not seen during the planning process. This is all part of the Cultural Plan serving as a “living document.” There are not necessarily right or wrong ways to set about making the plan happen.

For the people involved in producing the Cultural Plan, the most important part has been the process of bringing individuals and groups together for such an exercise. The words on the pages are important, but these cannot compare with the impact created by open communication, transparency, and moving forward with a shared vision. These are real and extremely significant aspects of the Cultural Plan, although they may not be reflected as words on the page.

---

## The Vision:

"The City of Charleston is a vibrant growing community which celebrates its cultural diversity and multi-generational personality through the arts."

---

# IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

---

**PROVIDE THE ORGANIZATIONAL MEANS AND THE SUPPORT TO IMPLEMENT THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE CULTURAL PLAN, AND PROVIDE FOR ONGOING EFFORTS IN THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY**

**Establish a Kanawha County Arts Council**

- Establish a county arts council as a non-profit organization with support from the Kanawha County Commission, the City of Charleston. This could be achieved by a pre-existing organization taking on this function and makeup.
- Provide governmental representation on the council to ensure communication with local officials.
- Encourage membership from all areas of the community (all ages, multicultural representation, etc). Membership should also be representative of the Convention & Visitors' Bureau, Kanawha County Schools, the Charleston Area Alliance, Fund for the Arts, arts groups, business, and artists.
- Seek clear and adequate annual funding for the operations of the council.
- Advocate for a portion of the council funding from the hotel-motel tax (as is authorized under state law).
- Establish committees on education, business & economic development / finance, and other needs as directed.
- Engage the younger generation in arts planning and programming.

**Empower the arts council to implement and revise the Cultural Plan, with such coordination and partners as is appropriate.**

**Support the arts council as a major vehicle for cultural growth and development.**

---

### **Establish communication processes maintained by the arts council**

- A website should be the heart of the organization and all of its services because of the ease of communication.
  - The website should feature a comprehensive inventory of all arts organizations in the county with links to all current websites.
  - There should be a blog for discussion groups.
  - The community arts calendar should be a central fixture of the website, and should be updated on a regular basis.
  - The website should provide “success stories” of implementation of the cultural plan and of the arts council’s activities, as well as concrete examples of projects stemming from the Cultural Plan.
-

# IDENTITY & MARKETING

---

## MARKET THE AREA AS A CULTURAL DESTINATION

In order for the cultural richness of Greater Charleston to be preserved, it must first be recognized as an area of cultural activity. This requires the promotion of cultural opportunity, which requires a commitment in both time and money. This commitment will only be made with a collaborative effort and acknowledgment of the area as a cultural region. These are the first steps necessary for active involvement.

### Establish an “identity” for Greater Charleston

- Acknowledge that the area is already overloaded with symbols. Do not attempt to create something new to overlay on what is already there. Use symbols and systems that work now, and develop them into Charleston’s identifying marks.
- Promote inclusiveness, pride, and spirit.
- Utilize non-mainstream ideas and methods.
- Work to change any negative perceptions of the area.
- Adopt a slogan or promise statement to be the arch over all arts related activities, and even for the community as a whole (such as “A Community Becomes a Work of Art”)
- Develop a specific logotype (which may have different versions for use in various situations), and provide strict usage guidelines.

### Utilize the strengths of the area to develop marketing plans

- Promote the beautiful setting of the Kanawha Valley.
  - Support cultural and heritage development along the Elk River.
  - Promote the fact that Charleston is emerging into a great city.
  - Acknowledge that families and togetherness are important aspects of the whole area and the state.
  - Promote diversity wherever possible.
  - Utilize artists and cultural organizations to assist with marketing plans.
  - Establish a calendar of cultural events to be maintained on the Arts Council website
-

# **EDUCATION & COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

---

## **ENGAGE THE CULTURAL COMMUNITY WITH THE EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM & IMPROVE COMMUNICATION**

The children of Kanawha County deserve the opportunity for continuous exposure to the many positive benefits of the arts. They need to feel invested in the cultural community and its available resources. To make this vision a reality, a collaborative effort must be made by the cultural community, parents, and schools—each party must believe the arts are a fundamental necessity in a child’s education and growth.

### **Integrate Charleston’s cultural life with the needs of the regional (Kanawha County and surrounding areas) education system (pre-K, K-12, and higher education).**

- Increase collaboration between arts and the school systems, such as working with specialists at the Kanawha County Board of Education.
- Involve the cultural community in ways to wrap arts into the curriculum for 21<sup>st</sup> Century Learning.
- Work with the educational system to address the need for the inclusion of “non-traditional arts” (such as media arts) into the life of the school system.
- Where possible, assist educators in developing lesson plans, activities, etc. which integrate cultural activities into the classroom.
- Help content area teachers find connections between their subject matter and the arts.
- Increase service-learning opportunities for all students (such as working in non-profit arts organizations).
- Encourage the use of ethnography (oral history, creative writing) with the younger generation.

### **Improve communication among stakeholders in the community.**

- Focus on outreach to other constituencies, such as conducting sessions to educate governmental officials (especially local boards of education) that arts and culture are not frivolous, and to work with parent-teacher organizations in a proactive way.
- Support organizations that provide in-service training for teachers, and professional development opportunities whenever possible.
- Work with school systems to see that each school has a designated person to gather and disseminate information and serve as a liaison with the cultural community.
- Encourage more programming which travels to schools, in an effort to reduce costs to the school system.
- Make use of a website in order to let community stakeholders know about cultural goals and objectives, as well as provide an easy method for getting information to schools.
- Foster more collaboration among arts groups (such as joint performances or projects).

### **Improve communication among stakeholders in the community. (cont.)**

- Encourage business leaders to “buy in” to the creative economy (creative enterprises, which may include for-profit and non-profit organizations, and individuals that provide a significant contribution to local economies by creating and distributing cultural goods and services).
  - Promote the fact that the arts arena is the central focus of the Creative Economy, which is the economy of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.
  - Encourage broad participation, innovations, and newness with organizations and activities.
-

# **BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

---

## ENGAGE THE BUSINESS INDUSTRY IN KANAWHA COUNTY WITH THE ARTS & CULTURAL COMMUNITY

As the economy fluctuates, it is important to create partnerships with cultural organizations and businesses. These partnerships promote the value of arts and culture in the community and promote cultural opportunity, diversity, and the fact that the community is a rich place to work and live. Ultimately, the benefits of business industry investment in the arts will make Charleston an attractive place to be.

### **Find opportunities to enhance the involvement of the business sector with the cultural community.**

- Promote communication and awareness of the need for the business and cultural communities to work together.
- Provide a compendium of all arts and cultural activities for businesses to use with marketing, recruitment, etc. (like an “Arts & Culture” calendar and website).
- Define business incentives and help educate businesses about involvement in the arts. This could be achieved through the use of a website that could feature, among many other items, “success stories” of this nature.

### **Promote investment in Charleston’s cultural community as a tool for continued economic development.**

- Emphasize that cultural events and activities are for the benefit of the community as a whole (a website featuring these events can promote success stories and encourage dialogue).
- Seek financial support and “buy-in” from local governmental entities (not just to provide project specific funding).
- Continue broad communication through the continued use of task forces, think tanks, etc.
- Find ways to show businesses the benefits of having a true interest in cultural organizations. The use of a website will assist in this area.
- Provide an assessment of the economic impact of the area’s cultural entities.
- Support the establishment of “Arts Zones,” (similar to efforts in Maryland) and promote tax incentives, such as the historic tax credits and the Neighborhood Investment Tax Credit Program.

**Find creative ways to promote profit-making ventures, and creative funding mechanisms for private development in the area of culture and arts.**

- Provide information to show that the return on a cultural investment may not be judged in standard monetary terms, but may provide programs for the greater good or opportunities for civic engagement.
- Strive to legitimize artists as an integral part of the mainstream business community.

**Seek ways in which the cultural community can assist with various needs in the business community.**

- Encourage businesses to utilize the cultural community in various ways (like having key arts stakeholders play a role in business/employee recruitment efforts, etc).
  - Utilize a website to informative items in this area. This could involve such information as interviews with artists who live here and speak about the assets in the community that keep them in the area.
  - Link websites to the Charleston Area Alliance and the Convention & Visitors' Bureau.
-

# PHYSICAL PLANNING

## **ENSURE THAT FACILITIES AND HOUSING IN THE AREA SUPPORT THE ONGOING GOALS OF THE CULTURAL PLAN.**

### **Acknowledge preservation, physical revitalization, and adaptive reuse issues.**

- Help develop a comprehensive “tool kit” for use by individuals and organizations addressing planning and resource needs.
- Assist in the facilitation of programs to encourage revitalization, adaptive reuse, and preservation, and find ways to make these programs available to the general public. These programs can include venture capital programs, revolving loan funds, incentives for property improvements, etc.
- Encourage entities to promote the use of zoning, overlay districts, etc.

### **Focus on physical planning and cultural issues.**

- Maintain a commitment to preserve the area’s cultural physical assets.
  - Encourage communication among interested stakeholders to develop partnerships, etc.
  - Support links and coordinated transportation to cultural facilities and programs (such as by collaborating with KRT, the school system, private transportation, etc).
-

## CREDITS

### CULTURAL PLAN FOR THE CITY OF CHARLESTON:

#### A COMMUNITY BECOMES A WORK OF ART

*This plan was made possible with support from*

The Greater Kanawha Valley Foundation

The Clay Center for the Arts & Sciences of West Virginia, Inc.

***William E. Jeffries, III, MCP***  
Project Manager

***Chad N. Proudfoot, MA, MPA***  
Project Coordinator

***Rachel E. Waybright***  
Graduate Assistant

***Lakin R. Cook***  
Project Administration

***Kate McComas***  
Project Administration

#### ***Greater Charleston Cultural Plan Advisory Committee***

Joan Bayless  
Lakin R. Cook  
Larry Groce  
Debbie Haught  
Paul Helfrich  
Mel Hoover  
Ron Huiatt  
William E. Jeffries, III  
Margaret Lieberman  
Kate McComas

Kim Pauley  
L. Christopher Plein  
Chad N. Proudfoot  
Randall Reid-Smith  
Susie Salisbury  
Rachel E. Waybright  
Judy Wellington  
Chris Williams  
Joe Woellenberger  
David Wohl

The Kanawha County Cultural Plan Advisory Committee wishes to thank all interviewees, focus group attendees, task force participants, and the citizens of Kanawha County. This planning

process would not have been possible were it not for the generous support received from all areas of the community.

---