



Burlington & West Burlington

Arts and Culture Plan

2025

Acknowledgments

Art Center of Burlington



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IOWA

Initiative for Sustainable
Communities

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Thank you to all partners who are supporting and contributing to this project.



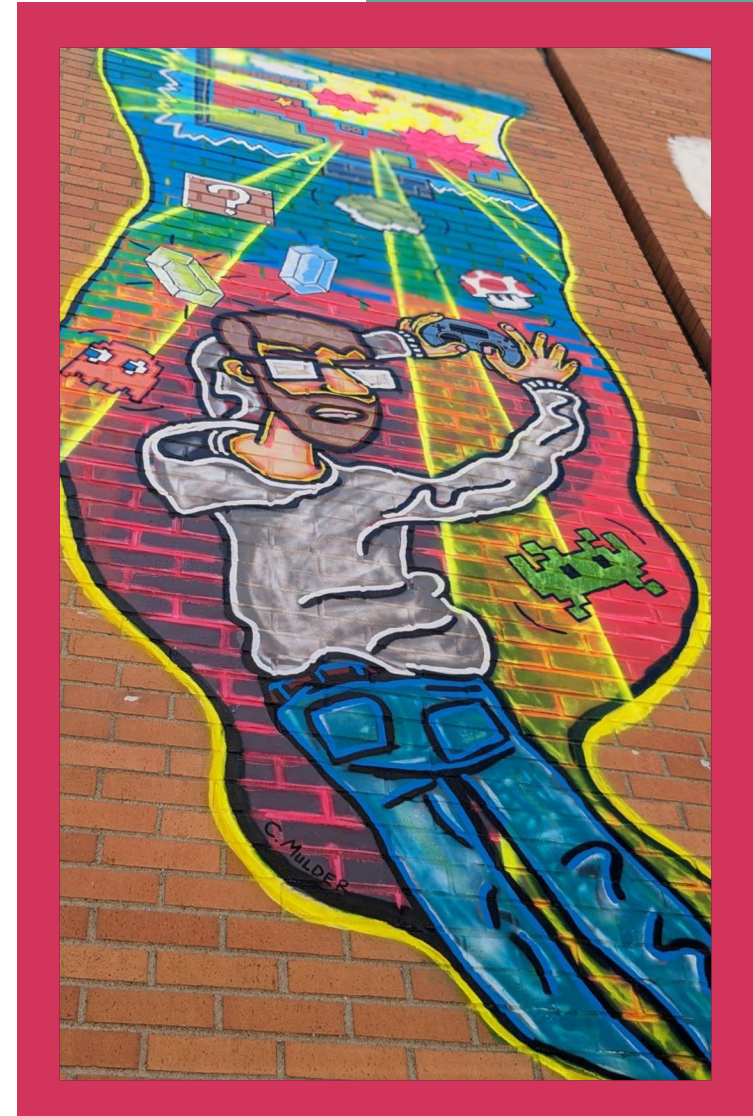
Introduction

What is Arts & Culture?

The Arts are a diverse range of **unique experiences** put on by many sectors of the population in both Burlington and West Burlington

Culture is a reflection of **shared history, values, and current influences.**

Arts and **Culture** work together to create a **sense of place, community identity, and collective pride** within Burlington and West Burlington



Why now?



An increase in investment of arts and cultural amenities has led to a renaissance in Burlington and West Burlington



Burlington and West Burlington continue to face challenges plaguing many Midwest communities



Arts and culture offer unique opportunities to build on recent investment and confront current challenges



Two Cities, One Community
working together to improve the
quality of life of its residents by
fostering a vibrant and inclusive
arts and culture ecosystem.

Justification for Arts & Culture

01

**Economic
Benefits**



02

**Health
Benefits**



03

**Community
Benefits**



Methodology

- Literature review
- Case study research
- Review of local planning documents
- Analysis of existing arts and cultural assets and events in Burlington and West Burlington
- Community engagement
 - Events
 - Survey
 - Interviews with community leaders
 - Artist roundtable discussion
 - Open house



Methodology

- Inventory of current publicly owned vacant parcels
- Analysis of funding streams and opportunities
- Review of local demographic information
- Review of local employment and income information
- Research on local planning and zoning laws and regulations





Community Engagement

Collecting Community Perspectives

Attending
pre-existing
events

Open
House

Collecting Community Perspectives

Survey

Artist
Town
Hall

Interviews

Attending Pre-existing Events

Witches Night Out Downtown Burlington



Surveyed
118
people

Walk to End Alzheimer's West Burlington Mall



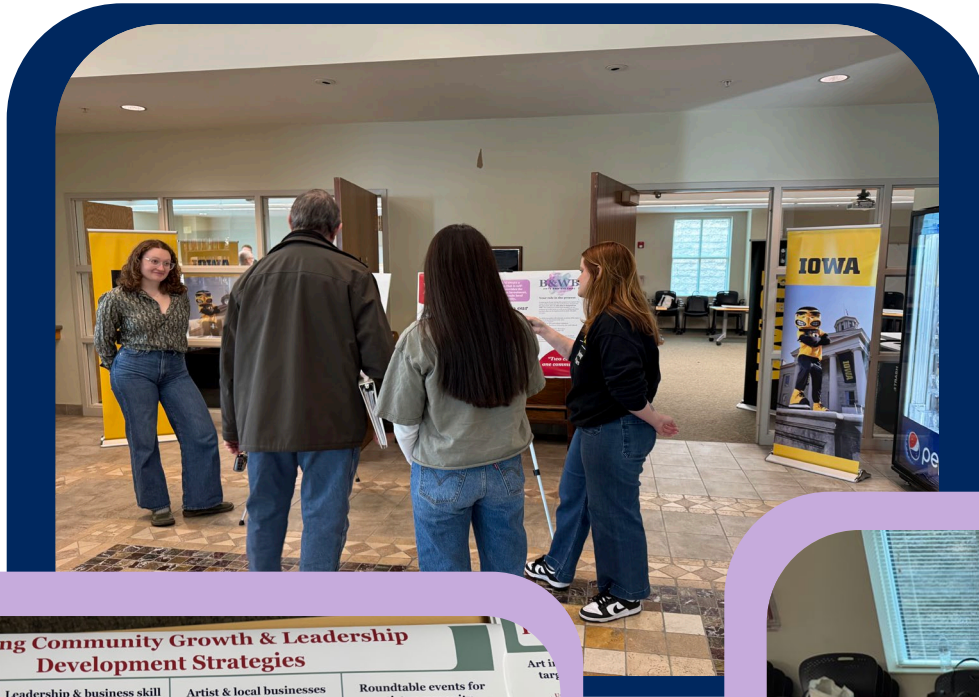
Surveyed
52 people



Survey Engagement Overview

- Available to the public for approximately 2 months
- Distributed through community partners, Port of Burlington Welcome Center, and Burlington Public Library
- 189 responses from community members

Open House



Surveyed
41 people

Collecting Community Perspectives

Events

Open
House

Survey

Artist
Town
Hall

Interviews

The diagram illustrates the integration of three data sources into a central Master Dataset. On the left, three purple circles represent the data sources: 'Events' at the top, 'Survey' in the middle, and 'Open House' at the bottom. Each purple circle is accompanied by a smaller white circle to its left, which contains the number of people associated with that source. The 'Events' source has 210 people, 'Survey' has 155 people, and 'Open House' has 41 people. To the right of these sources is a large, light blue rounded rectangle representing the 'Master Dataset'. The background is a solid dark blue.

Events

210
people

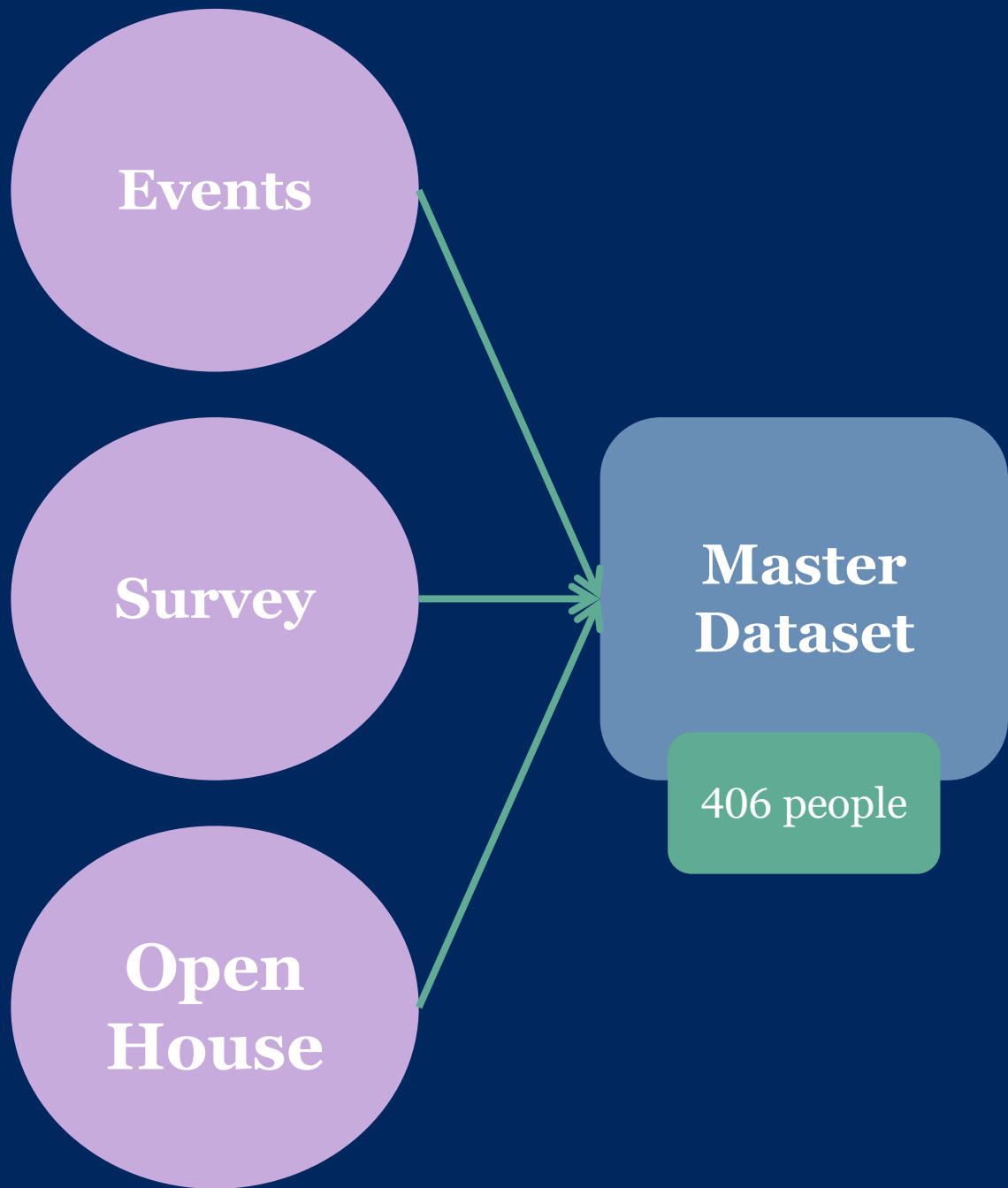
Survey

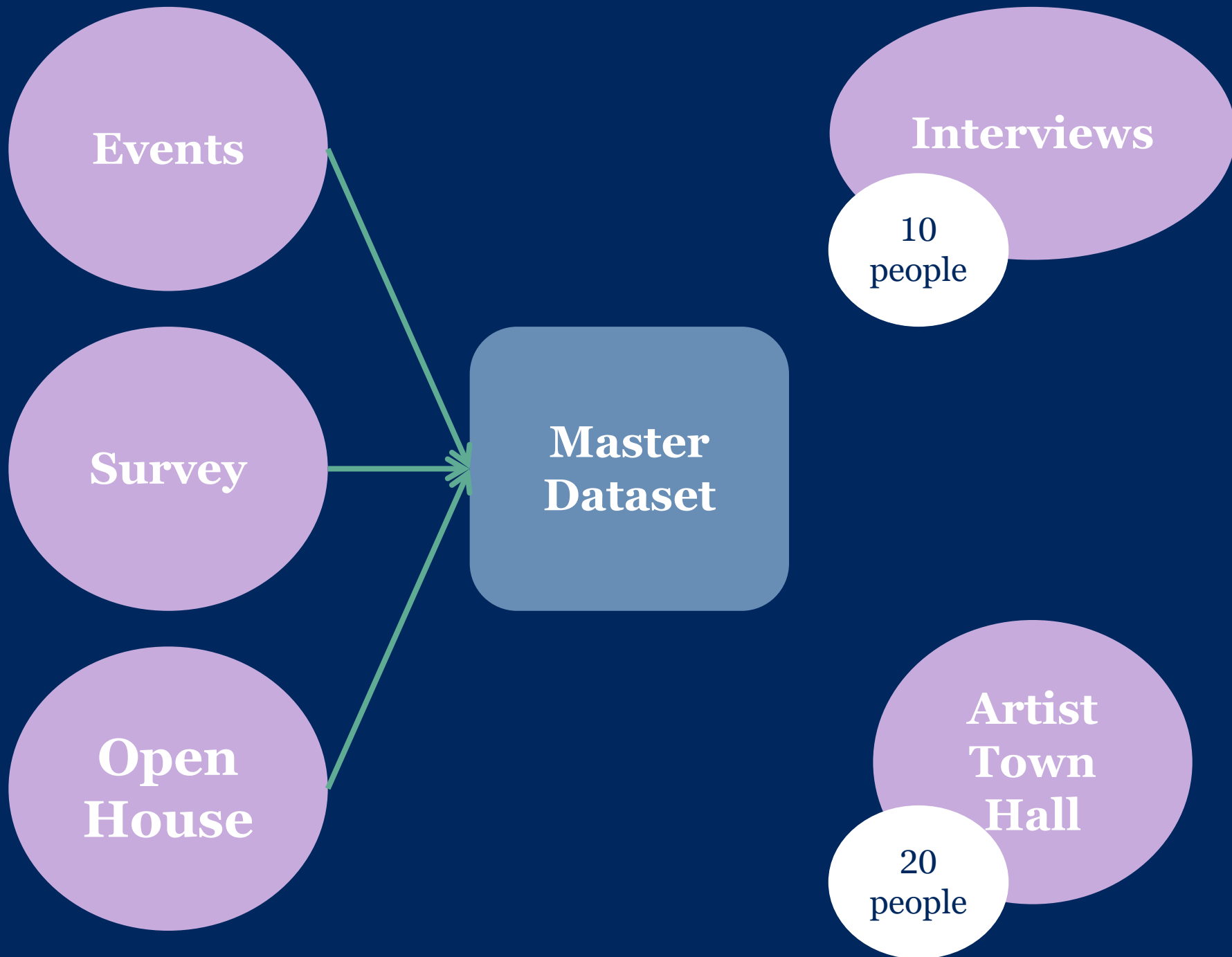
155
people

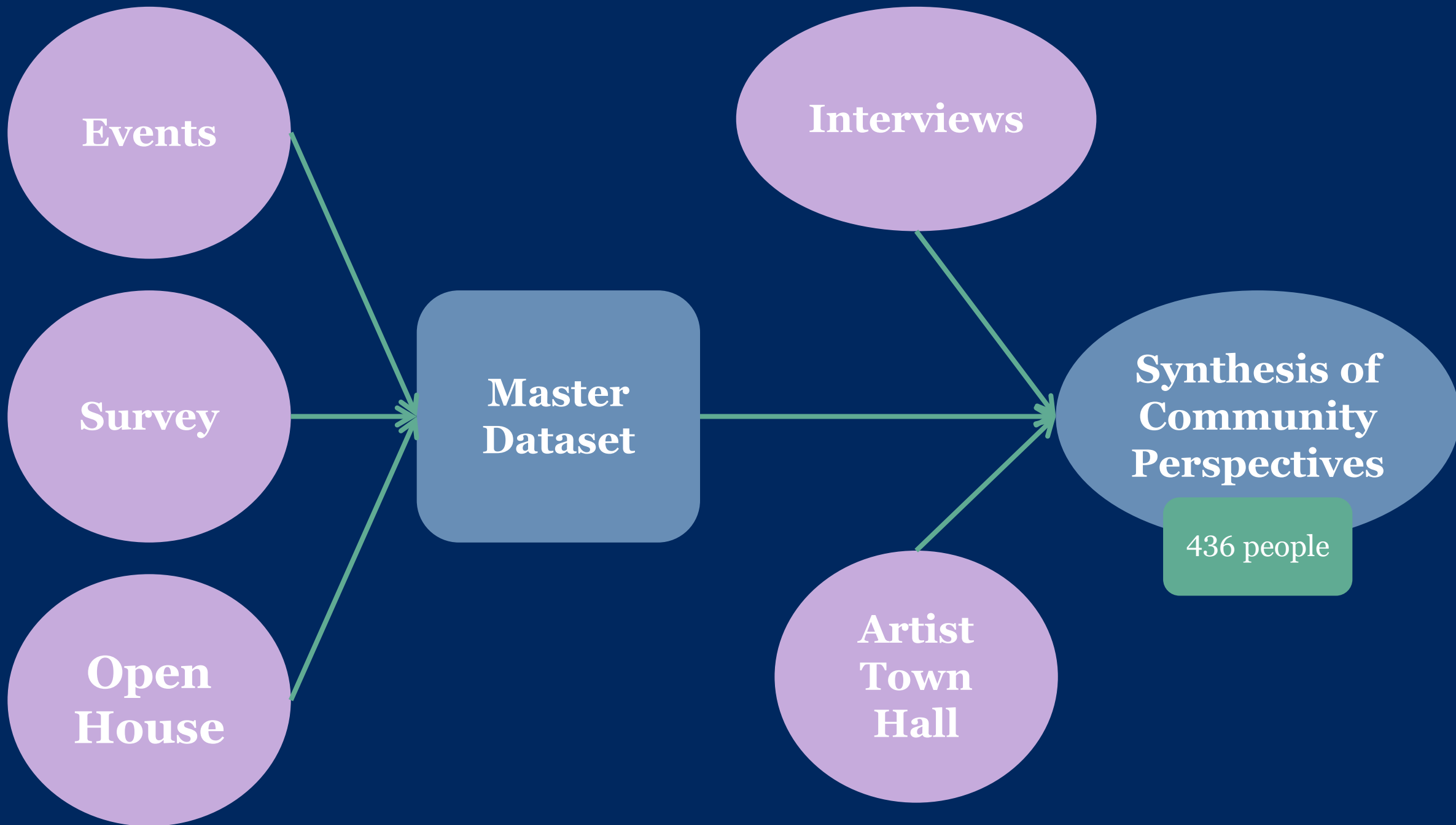
Open
House

41
people

Master
Dataset

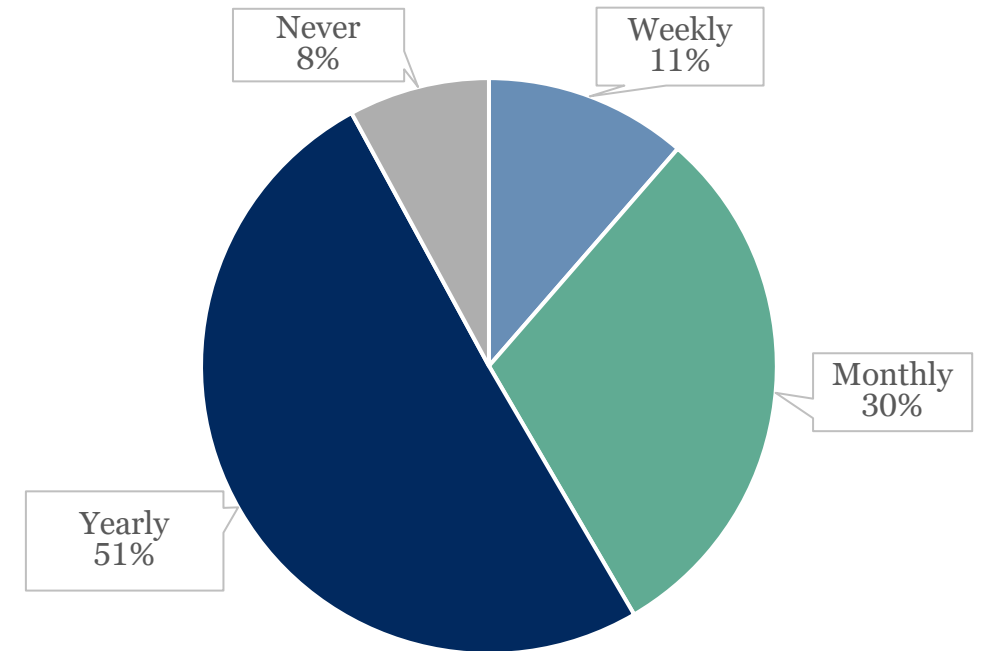
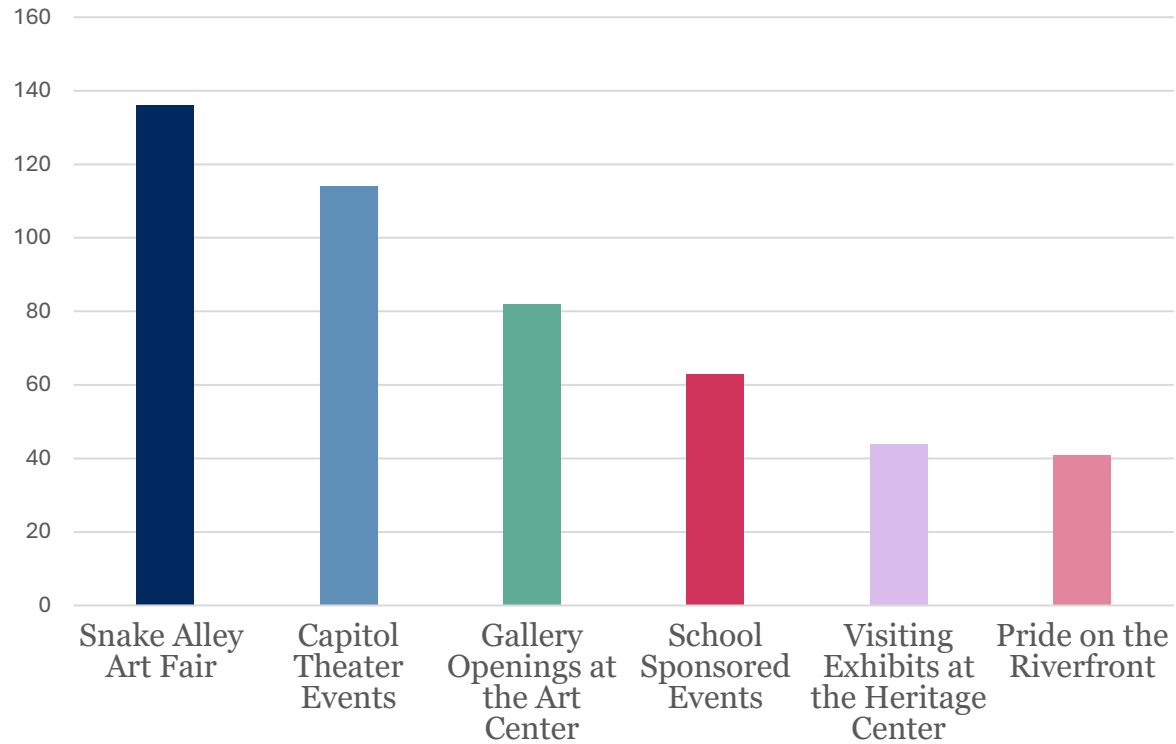






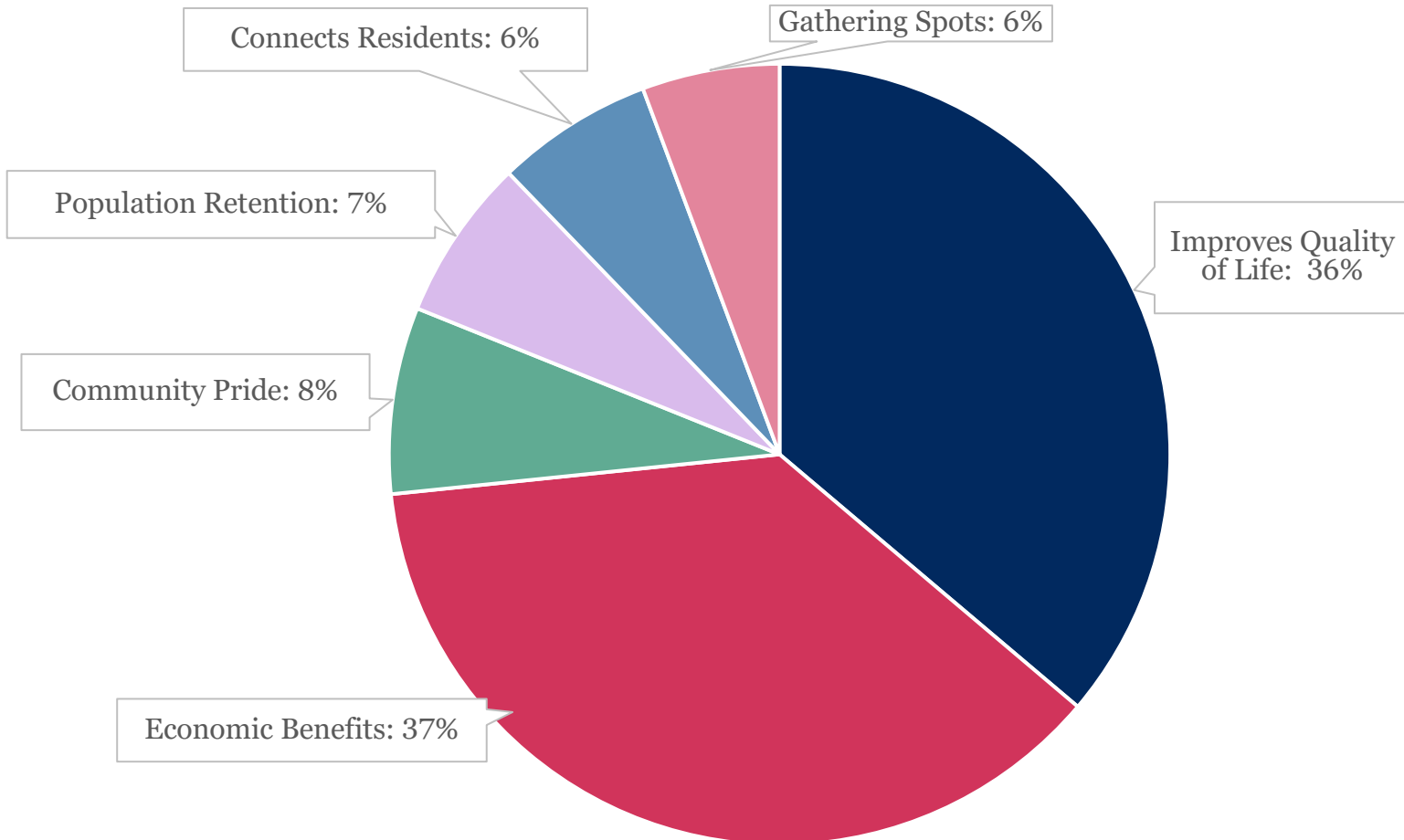
Current Arts & Culture Participation

Participation in Arts and Cultural Activities
Among Survey Respondents



Frequency of Attending Arts & Cultural Events

Benefits of Arts & Culture



Data collected from:

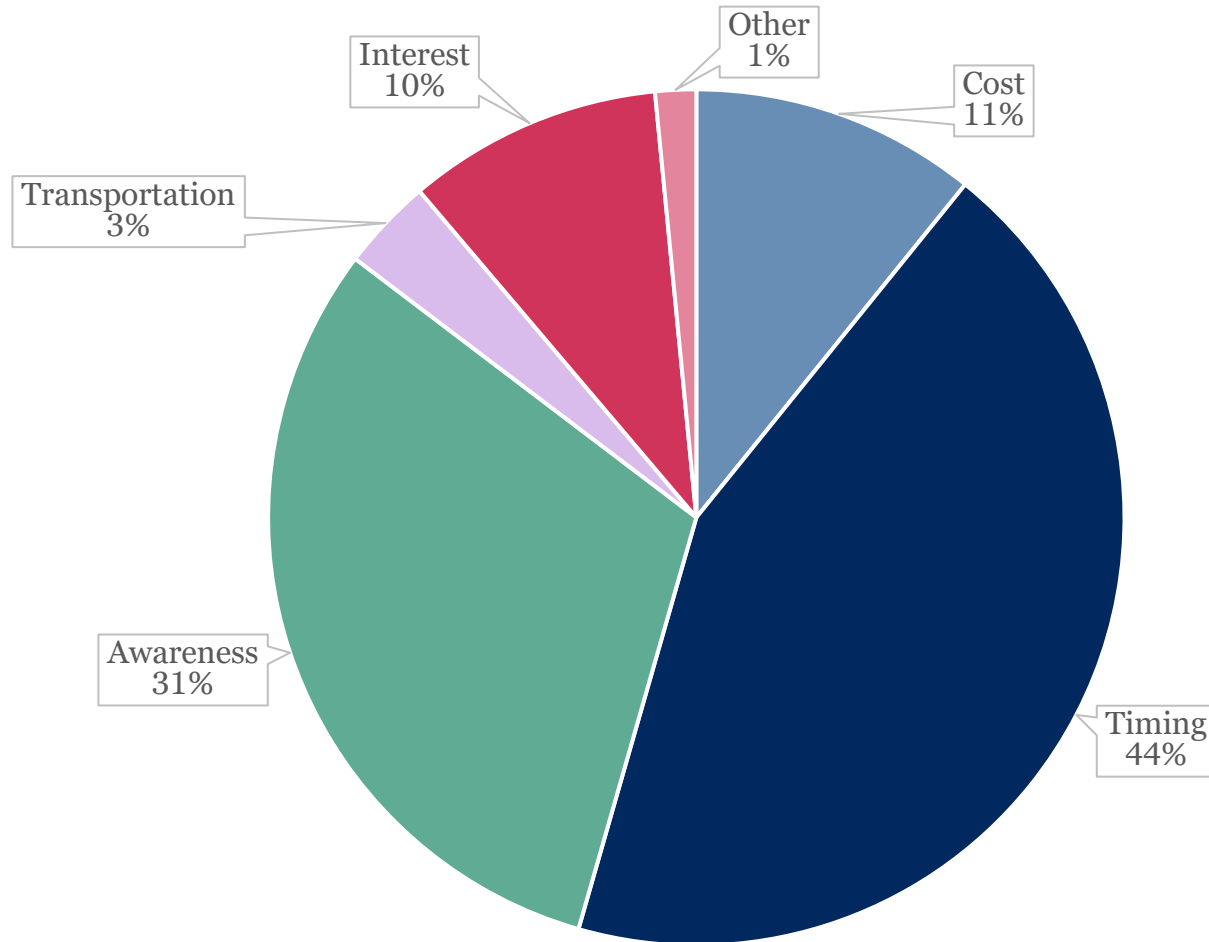
- Online survey
- Witches Night Out
- Open House

Total respondents:

- 314 individuals

**“You’re learning collaboration,
you’re learning empathy, you’re
expanding your mind . . . once
you’re involved in the arts, you have
that for your whole life.”**

Barriers for Participation in Arts & Cultural Events



Data collected from:

- Online survey
- Walk to End Alzheimer's

Total respondents:

- 207 individuals

Goals, Objectives, and Strategies

Goals of the Plan

1

Generate substantial public-private commitment towards arts and culture initiatives within the community.

2

Bolster a rich arts and culture ecosystem between Burlington and West Burlington through inclusive community-driven art initiatives

3

Ensure equitable access to arts and cultural heritage.

4

Prioritize a strong sense of belonging and civic pride to uplift collective wellbeing.

Implementation Guide Overview

Purpose:

Outline rational and practical actions to help grow the local arts and culture ecosystem.

- Offer **guidance** on timing, costs, and ways to measure success.
- Ensures and tracks accountability and adaptability over the plan's lifetime.
- Transforms big ideas into visible, local successes.



Goal #1:

Generate substantial public-private commitment towards arts and culture initiatives within the community.

Objective 1.2

Increase
collaboration in arts
and culture by
leveraging local
leadership capacity.

Goal #1:

Generate substantial public-private commitment towards arts and culture initiatives within the community.

Strategy to achieve:

Form joint public arts and culture coalition

>65% agree urgent & important

Goal #1:

Generate substantial public-private commitment towards arts and culture initiatives within the community.

This may look like...

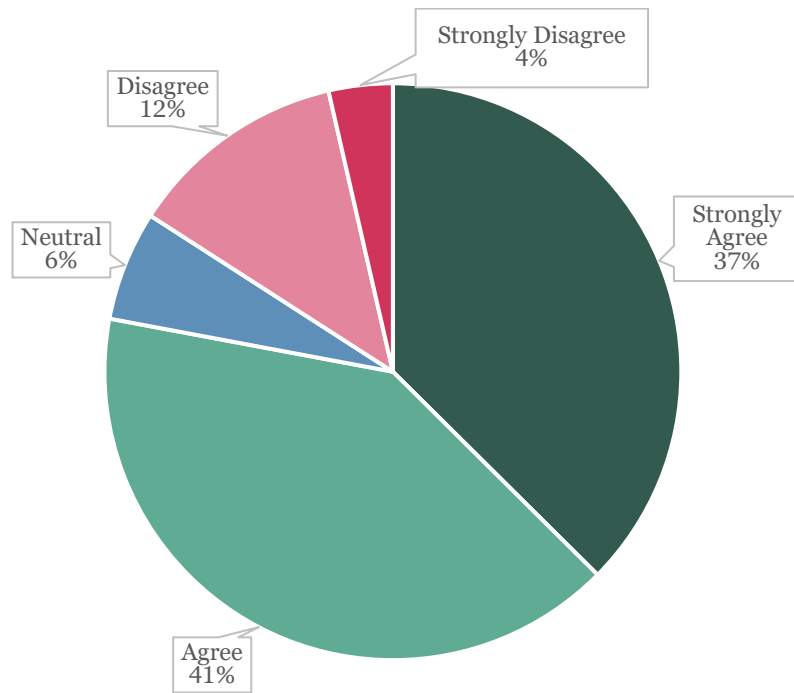
A Public Art Advisory Commission that has a total of 7 members

Guiding and promoting places to expand public art and cultural events

Making recommendations to both Burlington and West Burlington City Council to ensure alignment with this Arts and Culture Plan

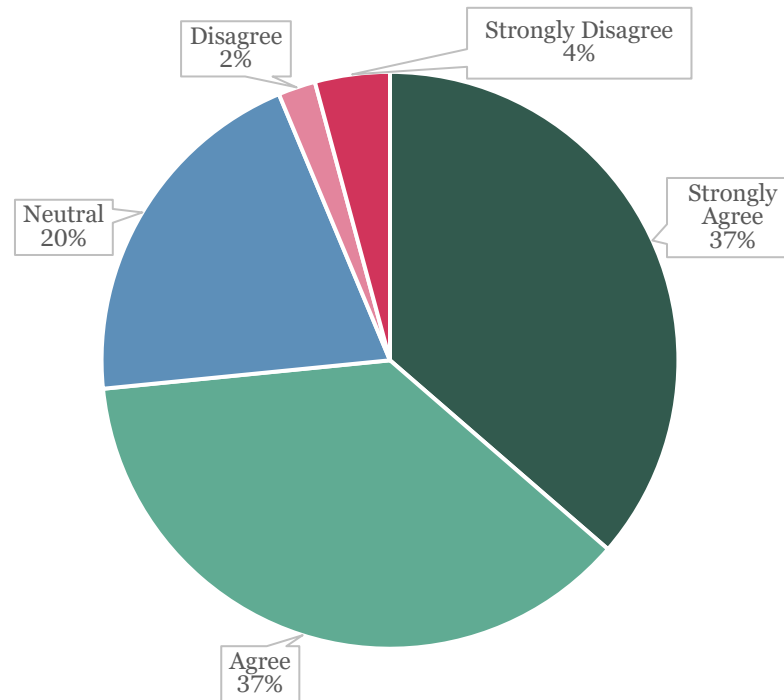
Investing in Arts & Cultural Initiatives

“I would like to see more arts and cultural events in my community”



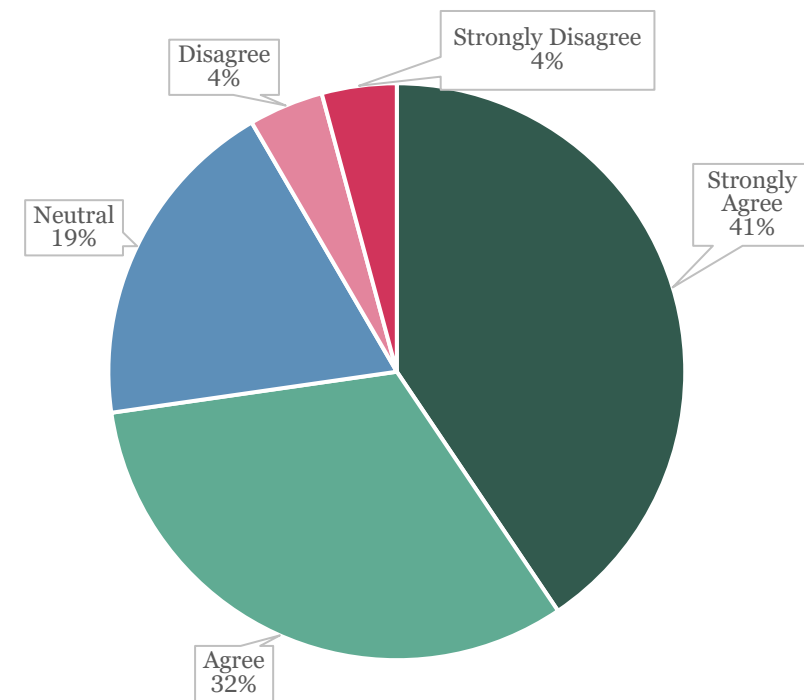
78% in agreement

“I believe there should be more public support for artists in residence in my community”



74% in agreement

“I believe there should be more public investment in public art in my community”



73% in agreement

Goal #2:

Bolster a rich arts and culture ecosystem between Burlington and West Burlington through inclusive community-driven art initiatives.

Objective 2.1

Utilize creative and culturally responsive placemaking strategies

Goal #2:

Bolster a rich arts and culture ecosystem between Burlington and West Burlington through inclusive community-driven art initiatives.

Strategy to achieve:

Establish neighborhood leadership groups to promote community action and responsibility

90% agree important

Goal #2:

Bolster a rich arts and culture ecosystem between Burlington and West Burlington through inclusive community-driven art initiatives.

This may look like...

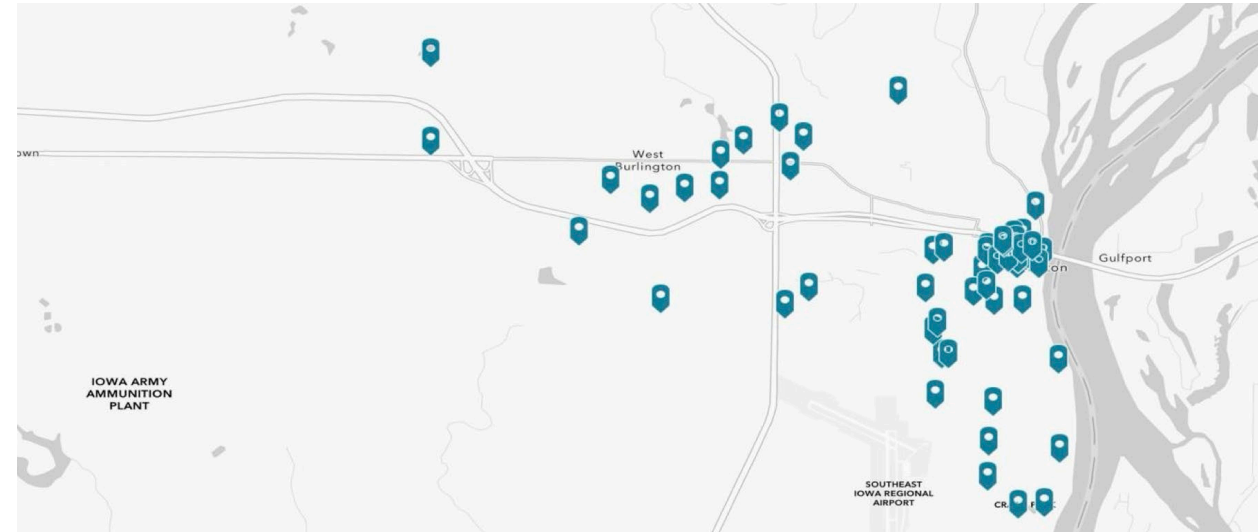
The liaison between communities and the Arts and Culture Coalition

Act as an advocacy group for projects in their own neighborhoods

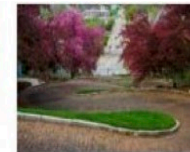
Create ownership in specific areas

Cultural Assets

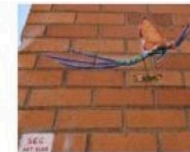
- Showcases creative talent in Burlington and West Burlington.
- Ongoing directory of artists, cultural organizations, and creative activities in Burlington and West Burlington.
- Community members can request to be added to the list of local artists and creatives.
- Connect with local artists, performers, and businesses directly through the site.



Art Center of
Burlington



Snake Alley



Mayfly Mayhem
Project



Art Center of
Burlington Mural



Players Workshop



Memorial
Auditorium -...



"Welcome to
Burlington" Mural



Garrett-Phelps
House Museum



Leopold Landscape
Alliance



The Washington



Des Moines County
Heritage Center...



Port of Burlington
Welcome Center

Goal #3:

Ensure equitable access to
arts and cultural heritage

Objective 3.2

Increase access to
public spaces

Goal #3:

Ensure equitable access to arts and cultural heritage

Strategy to achieve

Utilize identified vacant lots as sites for community oriented cultural amenities

88% agree urgent & important

Goal #3:

Ensure equitable access to arts and cultural heritage

This may look like...



Example of a potential public art installment for Luers Park- West Burlington



Example of a potential musical playground installment for a site off of Mason Rd.- Burlington

Goal #4:

Prioritize a strong sense of place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.

Objective 4.2

Increase opportunities for youth of all income levels to express their creativity and learn community building skills.

Goal #4:

Prioritize a strong sense of place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.

Strategy to achieve:

Partner with schools and local organizations to integrate arts education with community development initiatives.

65% agree important & urgent


Goal #4:

Prioritize a strong sense of place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.

Elementary and Middle School

Students' Task:

- Create a photo book showing where they like to go in Burlington and West Burlington and to envision something they want in their community
- Write an explanation of their illustration

<p data-bbox="1103 982 1556 1158">My Community, <i>Mini book</i></p>  <p data-bbox="1072 1236 1225 1249">Write your name below:</p> <hr/> <hr/>	<p data-bbox="1709 982 2193 1068">My favorite place to go in my community is:</p> <hr/> <hr/>
---	---

Goal #4:

Prioritize a strong sense of place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.

High School

Students' Task:

- Photograph or draw a favorite “hidden gem” in either city
- Write a short description about why this is their favorite spot, emphasizing community pride or community building





Thank you!

Community's Feedback on Recommendations

High Priorities

- Expand art and cultural amenities beyond downtown
- Inventory of grants for public art
- Build public-private partnerships
- Revitalize vacant lots and buildings

>85% agree urgent & important

Medium Priorities

- Pocket parks in underserved areas
- Form an Arts and Culture coalition
- Artist & local business matchmaking program
- Provide low-cost art classes in public spaces

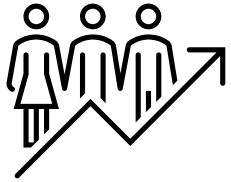
>65% agree urgent & important

Lower Priorities

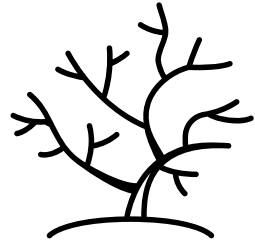
- Art installations in target locations
- Increase cultural and historical wayfinding
- 1% for the arts
- Leadership and business skill development for artists

>50% agree urgent & important

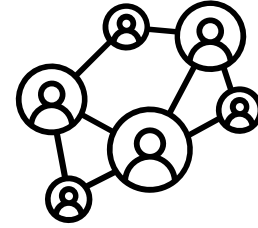
Guiding Principles



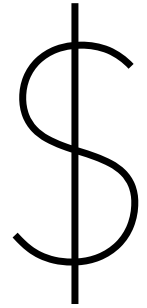
Inclusion &
Equity



Cultural
Sustainability,
Authenticity,
& Local
History



Collaboration

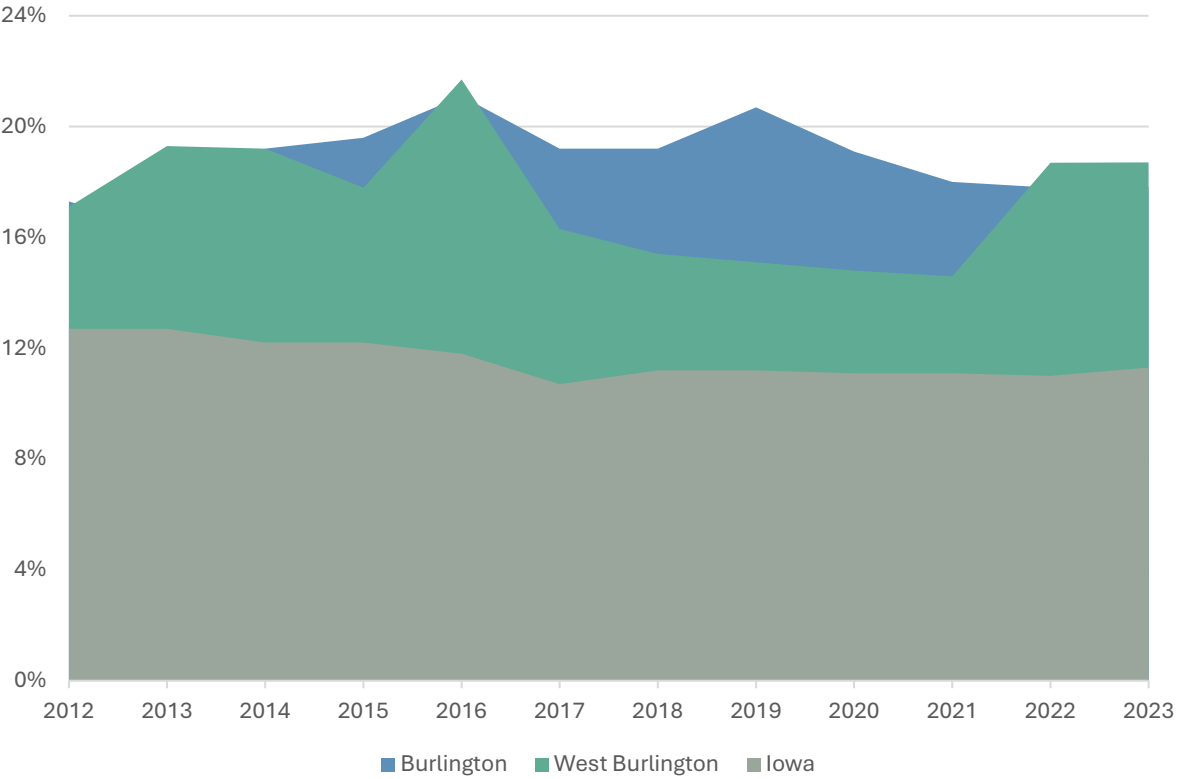


Economic
Resiliency

Demographics

	Burlington	West Burlington	Des Moines County	Iowa
White and non-Hispanic	83.30%	73.60%	85.4%	88.3%
Black and non-Hispanic	5.74%	16.40%	6.6%	6.6%
Two or more races and non-Hispanic	4.69%	7.60%	3.2%	3.2%
White Hispanic	3.09%	1.82%		
Asian	1.52%	0.56%	1.4%	1.4%
Hispanic and Latino	3.6%	3.6%	3.8%	3.8%

Poverty Rate



Why Spend Money on Arts & Culture?

01

Quality of Life

Arts and culture investment provides opportunities to address community problems in creative and holistic ways.

02

Economy

Arts and culture investment leads to a healthier and more resilient economy—and improves economic outcomes for youth experiencing poverty

Funding Arts & Culture

TIF and SSMID

01

Percent to the Arts

02

Grants

03

Collaboration

04

Funding

01

TIF and SSMID

Tax incremental financing (TIF) is a financing option that can help subsidize different community development projects. A Self-Sustaining Municipal Improvement District is a financing option that communities can use to fund community improvement efforts.

Examples of this in Burlington and West Burlington could include :

- Revitalization of vacant buildings to encourage the development of and investment in more hotel space
- More public art opportunities throughout a certain district

02

Percent to the Arts

03

Grants

04

Collaboration

Percent to the Arts

Percent to the Arts is a strategy that requires any major development or infrastructure plans by the city to include 1% of the total investment set aside for arts and culture initiatives. In Burlington and West Burlington, this may look like:

- Implementation of benches that have additional uses, such as benches that also allow for spatial skill development for youth

Funding

TIF and SSMID

01

Percent to the Arts

02

Grants

There are many different grants available through the state and federal government for arts and culture initiatives. An example of this in Burlington and West Burlington could be:

- An Art Project Grant through the State of Iowa that helps support a summer music academy for underserved teens

03

Collaboration

04

Funding

TIF and SSMID

01

Percent to the Arts

02

Grants

03

Collaboration

Increasing cross-sector collaboration can also lead to more arts and culture opportunities with little to no public funding. In Burlington and West Burlington, this may look like:

- Creating a matchmaking program between artists and businesses looking to hire for art initiatives
- Establishing neighborhood leadership groups to promote community action and responsibility

04