



Burlington & West Burlington

Arts and Culture Plan

2025

Acknowledgements

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This collaborative initiative, led by University of Iowa Urban & Regional Planning (URP) and Sustainable Development (SD) graduate students as part of their capstone course, uses arts and culture strategies to creatively tackle economic and social challenges in Burlington and West Burlington, Iowa.

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Introduction

Art is a powerful tool for communication, personal expression, and cultural preservation. For individuals, art can help make meaning of the world around them. Experiencing and participating in art provides a way to connect with others on a deeper level, building empathy and fostering meaningful relationships. On a community level, public art and cultural attractions build a unique sense of place.

Burlington and West Burlington, located in southeastern Iowa along the Mississippi River, have recently seen significant revitalization efforts. In the last few years, Burlington's downtown has welcomed new local businesses, including restaurants, boutique shops, and bars, increasing opportunities for both residents and visitors. The City of Burlington recently won an All-Star Community Award from the Iowa League of Cities for their efforts on their riverfront, making changes to address issues such as flooding and economic decline. These achievements, combined with existing cultural assets—such as the Art Center of Burlington, Fourth of July celebration in West Burlington, the annual Snake Alley Art Fair—provide a solid foundation for a vibrant arts and culture landscape.

However, like many communities across the Midwest, the greater Burlington area faces challenges such as population decline, poverty, and economic stagnation, contributing to lower levels of community pride and social cohesion.

Arts, culture, and placemaking can be powerful tools to capitalize on local assets and to address community challenges, fostering a sense of connection, revitalizing local pride, and attracting new residents and visitors. Burlington and West Burlington's recent successes and strong community leadership, combined with a growing list of arts and culture assets, make this an ideal time to introduce an arts and culture plan that builds on existing momentum.

This Plan serves as a comprehensive framework to leverage arts and culture for building a more resilient and vibrant community. It is a guide to inform a wide range of community members—from residents to business owners to government leaders—about how they can actively work to grow the arts and culture landscape within Burlington and West Burlington. By doing so, the community can benefit from a stable population, increased economic activity, greater social cohesion, enhanced community pride, and an improved quality of life.

Why make an Arts & Culture Plan now?



Significant investments and improvements in recent years contribute to the sense of a “renaissance” underway.



Leaders in Burlington and West Burlington increasingly seek opportunities to collaborate for the benefit of broader community.



Some major challenges persist, such as declining population, brain drain, and low civic engagement.



Arts and culture offer unique opportunities to build on recent successes and address local challenges.

Our Vision

Two cities, one community, working together to improve the quality of life of its residents by fostering a vibrant, inclusive arts and culture ecosystem.

Principles to Shape the Future

This plan is anchored by a set of guiding principles designed to ensure that the plan is both inclusive and reflective of the community's values while also addressing the diverse needs of residents. These principles guided the development of the planning process and should continue to inform the plan's implementation.



Cultural Sustainability, Authenticity, and Local History: Integrating historical components of the community such as connections to the Mississippi River, Aldo Leopold's legacy, Ed Stone's Voyager missions, and local Native American history into arts and cultural activities helps ensure the plan resonates with the community's rich history and makes Burlington and West Burlington distinct from other communities.



Economic Resilience: Investments in the creative sector serve as an economic asset to the community, providing new streams of income, supporting the livelihoods of local artists, and generating activity for local businesses.



Inclusion and Opportunity: Engaging diverse stakeholders in planning and implementation bolsters quality of life for all residents. Arts and culture benefits should be accessible, regardless of socioeconomic status, and be equitable across both the Burlington and West Burlington communities.



Collaboration: Cross sector collaboration among public and private community organizations, residents, and artists leads to innovation, creative problem-solving, and greater visibility for the role of arts and culture in the community. Public-private partnerships accelerate growth and yield greater returns on arts and culture investments.

Why **Invest** in Arts & Culture?

Across the country, communities are leveraging the benefits of arts and culture to address economic and social problems. Arts and culture can help Burlington and West Burlington tackle challenges like population decline and reduced community pride by strengthening connections between residents, celebrating the community's identity, stimulating economic growth, and improving overall well-being. By embracing the transformative power of creativity, these cities can create lasting benefits for all residents and attract future visitors.

Research shows a link between arts and culture development and economic growth. Traditional economic development relies on attracting businesses, which creates a multiplier effect, where money spent in a community generates further investments and wealth. Similarly, strategically investing in the arts can stimulate the local economy and build resilience through a more diverse economic base. The arts can also strengthen the local workforce. For example, experiences with art allows young people to perform better academically, fosters creativity, and helps anchor them to their hometowns.

Arts and culture can enhance quality of life for all residents in the community, given that the benefits resulting from art-based activities transcend gender, age, race, cultural origin, religion, income level, and political affiliation. Research has also shown that art can produce significant positive health impacts for individuals, from improving brain function to addressing mental health and even improving physical health.

Welcome to Burlington, Iowa mural
Source: Adopting Life's Journey





Rendering illustrating how Toledo, Ohio seeks to use art to strengthen the community's cultural identity.
Source: Midstory

Community Impact of Arts and Culture

Strengthens Community Pride and Retention

- A national study by Americans for the Arts found that 89% of survey participants agreed that community art and cultural events were a source of pride for the community.
- In a survey of 43,000 citizens from forty-three cities in the U.S., “the ‘aesthetics of a place’ – its art, parks, and green spaces ranked higher than education, safety, and the local economy as a ‘driver of attachment’”.¹

Increases Social Engagement

- Art can increase the political participation of low socioeconomic groups, which can allow for more advocacy and community-informed policies.²
- “Engagement equals empowerment, and feeling empowered gives you options.”³
- The National Endowment for the Arts found that children with access to arts education were more likely to read newspapers, volunteer, and vote.

Connects Residents

- Arts can connect us to our humanity by cultivating empathy and bridging divides. As “an expression of the human experience,” art’s value lies in its ability to bring people together and foster mutual understanding.⁴
- Artists play a pivotal role as agents of transformation, using community-led arts to create connection among individuals with diverse backgrounds and perspectives.⁵
- Experience or creating art can change thoughts, emotions, and actions making individuals more open to hearing other perspectives. This knowledge elevates the arts to a superpower in its potential for healing and empowerment.⁶

Economic Impact of Arts & Culture

Attracts Tourists to the Community

- Local arts agencies contribute to placemaking, tourism, and cultural district establishment, boosting economic development.
- Art centers strengthen communities and create a robust arts ecosystem, indirectly driving economic growth.⁷

Recirculates Money within the Community

- An Americans for the Arts survey found that the typical arts attendee spends \$24.60 beyond the cost of admission to an event.
- Investments in historic preservation and arts initiatives can significantly boost local property values, employment rates, tourism dollars, and tax revenue.⁸

Enhances Workforce Development

- Rural communities benefit more significantly from arts employment, as it boosts overall employment rates in these areas.⁹
- Byron Sanders, CEO of Big Thought, emphasizes that arts cultivate critical skills such as channeling creativity into productivity and building complex human relationships.¹⁰
- Sanders' non-profit combats summer learning loss in low-income students through arts-based activities, which have been shown to improve GPAs. These interventions reduce achievement gaps and break cycles of poverty, building a diverse and economically strong workforce.¹¹

Bolsters Local Economy Resilience and Recovery

- A balanced mixture of performing, visual, media, design arts, publishing, and related industries provides other avenues of revenue for communities. This diversity of goods and services can improve the health of the economy even during turmoil.¹²
- The arts and culture sector has consistently contributed 4.2%–4.7% to the United States' gross domestic product since 2001, reflecting its stability during economic downturns.¹³
- Arts and culture additions to local communities led to permanent changes in per capita GDP growth. Traditional economic development focuses, such as the multiplier effect, can be achieved through arts and culture development in communities.¹⁴
- Cities with larger arts sectors recover faster from economic downturns. For example, states with diverse arts economies saw greater growth post-recession.¹⁵
- Investments in arts and historic preservation yield higher returns than new construction, as seen in Nebraska's economic revitalization efforts.¹⁶
- The "Live Work Create Toledo" initiative in Ohio spurred economic revitalization, creating jobs and revitalizing neglected properties, generating \$2.4 billion annually and supporting 33,000 jobs.¹⁷

Increases External Investment

- Economic development is a core focus of art policies in the US. Funding often targets cultural districts, creative places, and support for artists and art organizations.
- Recruitment and support for local artists can trigger private development and increase regional economic output, as seen in Toledo, Ohio.¹⁸

Health Impacts of Arts & Culture¹⁹

Improves Mental & Physical Health

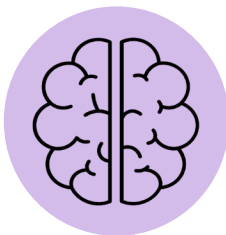
- Art-based approaches can help our brains work better and allow us to be happier. Neuroscience studies have proved that art-based interventions improve quality of life, increase mobility, alleviate physical pain, reduce mental health symptoms, restore speech after brain trauma, improve memory, and deepen learning for students. Furthermore, these potential treatments would be lower cost relative to expensive surgery or medical interventions.
- A medical study from the University of Florida showed that participants who experienced live music in trauma and emergency departments have better health outcomes, most notably reduced stress and pain levels, than patients who do not.
- Another program that uses art as a health-promoting intervention is Dance for PD, which is “designed to combat both physical and mental sides of [Parkinson’s disease] through movement, creativity, and social interaction.”
- Doctors in Montreal have begun to prescribe museum visits, allowing free entry to those with a prescription, as a treatment for chronic pain. Given that the neurological mood-promoting benefits of

viewing art are like those associated with exercise, doctors hope to target this intervention for those who are limited in their physical activity due to age or chronic illness.

- Creating art can help individuals process tough emotions by externalizing them through symbolic representations. For example, a project through the National Intrepid Center of Excellence found that by creating masks, veterans were able to release emotional burdens catalyzing their PTSD recovery. Creating a piece of art allows individuals to share their emotions in a less vulnerable way by increasing connections to others while validating real emotional responses.

Creates Learning Opportunities for Youth

- Using creative ways to combine art and the built environment creates unexpected learning opportunities for children. One program, Urban Thinkscape, redesigns city infrastructure and vacant lots to act as creative experiences for kids. For example, “designs of bus shelters include puzzles that stimulate spatial skills; movable bench parts become opportunities for exploring language, color, and numbers.”



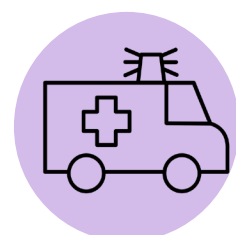
Improves



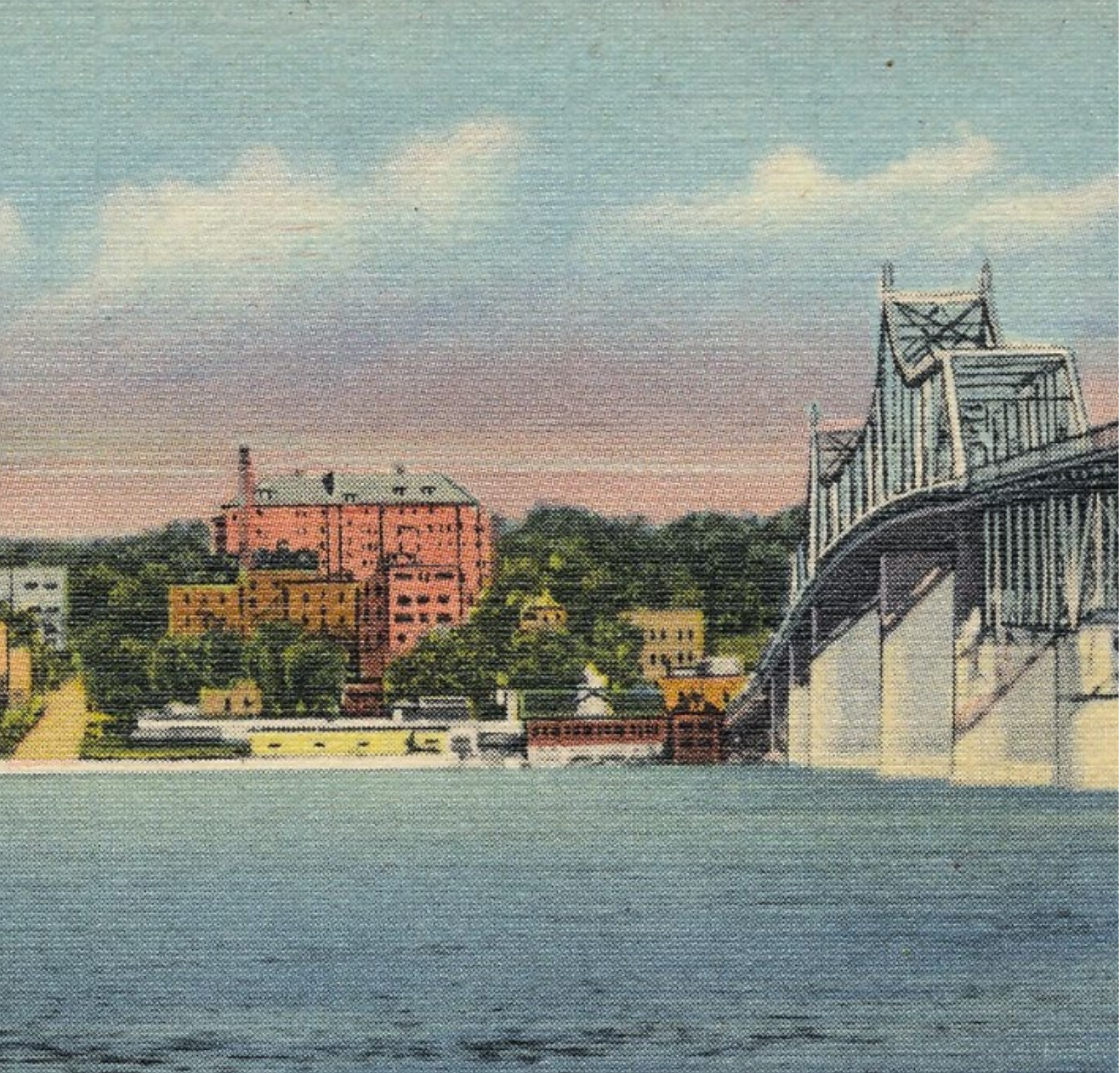
**Low-impact
Movement**



Processing



**Improves
Health
Outcomes**



Background

Community history, sociodemographics, existing conditions, and past planning efforts provide a foundation for developing arts and culture goals and strategies tailored to the challenges and opportunities unique to Burlington and West Burlington.

Community Snapshot

Population trends, racial and ethnic diversity, educational attainment, and economic indicators provide a snapshot of the Burlington and West Burlington communities to inform the planning process and strategy development. Additionally, spatial analysis illustrates neighborhood characteristics. This data helps tailor arts and culture strategies that reflect the unique identities and needs of the community.

Population

For much of the 20th century, both Burlington and West Burlington experienced significant population growth. Burlington's population grew by about 35% from 1920 to 1970, while West Burlington's population grew by 159%. Since peaking in the 1970's, Burlington's population has decreased significantly, declining by 26.1% from 1970 to 2020. West Burlington reached 3,000 residents in the 1970s, and has been stable since, with a 1.7% increase in population over the last 50 years.

Des Moines County's population decreased by 3.5% from 2010 to 2020. Burlington and West Burlington account for the largest and third largest share, respectively, of Des Moines County's total population, with the two encompassing 69.9% of all Des Moines County residents. Mediapolis and Middletown, two other small cities in Des Moines County, have, like West Burlington experienced population growth in the last decade. The population in unincorporated Des Moines County is about 22% of the total population.

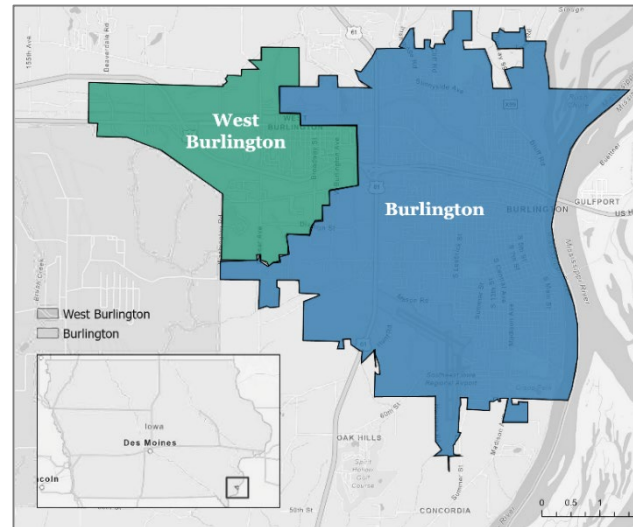


Figure 1. Burlington and West Burlington location in Iowa

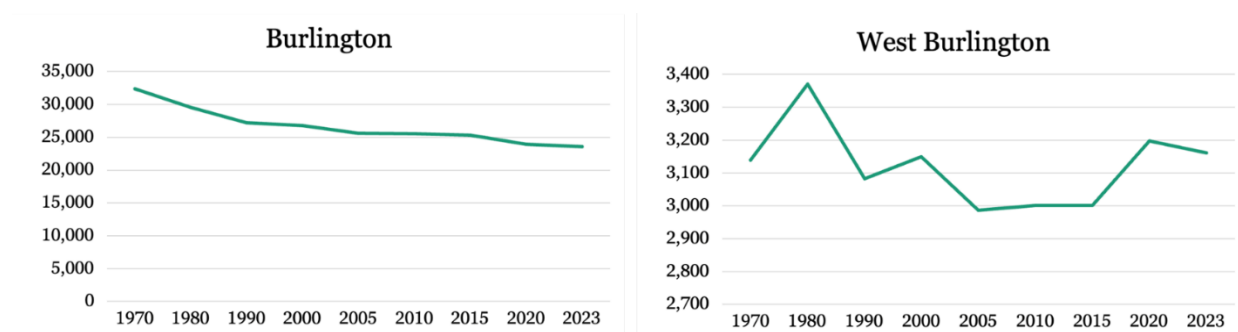


Figure 2. Burlington and West Burlington population trends
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Age

The median age in Burlington in 2023 was 42.8, up from the median age 39.8 in 2010, according to ACS 5-year estimates. West Burlington's median age in 2023 was 35.9, a drop from the 2010 median age of 39.8. By comparison, the 2023 median age in the state of Iowa was 39.1.

Figure 3 shows Burlington's population pyramids in 2010 and 2023, showing that younger age brackets are proportionally smaller in 2023 compared to 2010, and older age brackets are proportionally larger. In 2010, 6,647 residents were under the age of 20 and 4,257 were 65 or older. In 2023, the numbers changed to 5,588 under 20 and 5,277 aged 65 and older. In 2023, Burlington's largest age group was 65-69 years.

Figure 4 shows West Burlington's population pyramids in 2010 and 2023. Residents in West Burlington tend to be younger than in Burlington, potentially due to the community college and rental housing. In 2023, West Burlington's largest age group was 20-24 years at 9.4% of the total population.

Combining population data for both communities shows that the overall population in the area has trended older, and that the population of younger residents has decreased while the population of older residents has increased.

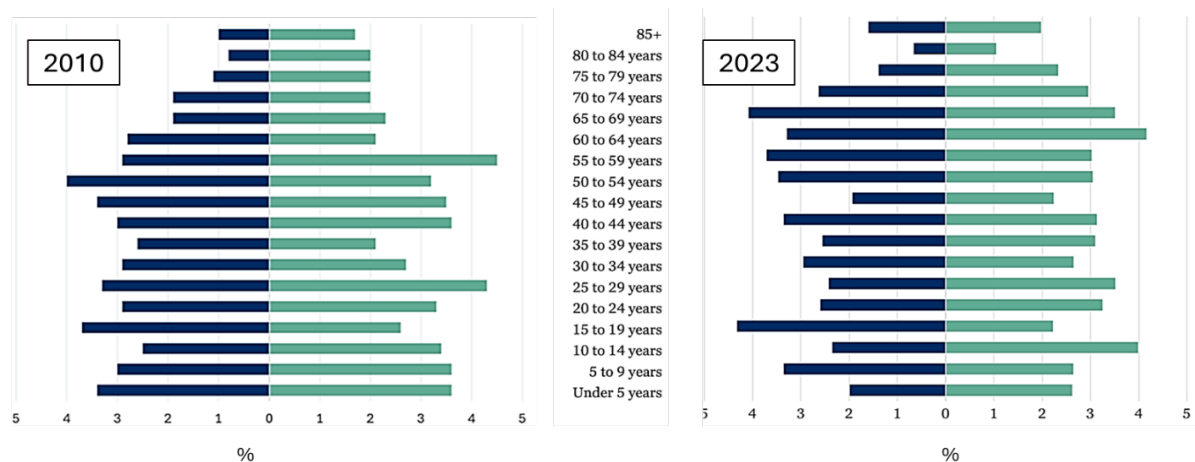


Figure 3. Burlington population pyramids 2010 and 2023
Source: US Census Bureau

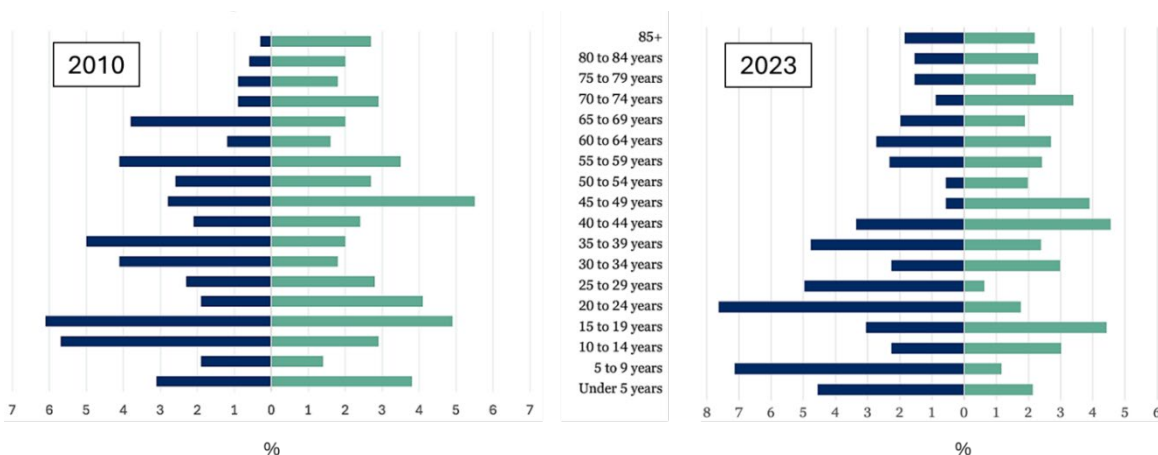


Figure 4. West Burlington population pyramids 2010 and 2023
Source: US Census Bureau

Race

Like the state of Iowa, Burlington and West Burlington have predominantly white populations. Burlington is slightly more racially diverse than West Burlington, with 83.3% of its population identifying as white, compared to 85.7% in West Burlington. Black residents comprise 5.7% of the population in Burlington and 6.2% in West Burlington. Additionally, 7.6% of West Burlington's population and 8.1% of Burlington's identify as two or more races. Burlington also has a small Asian population (1.4%). Figure 5 highlights percent of people in racial minority groups by census block group within Burlington and West Burlington. In both communities, about 4% of the population identifies as Hispanic, lower than the state of Iowa at 7.3%.

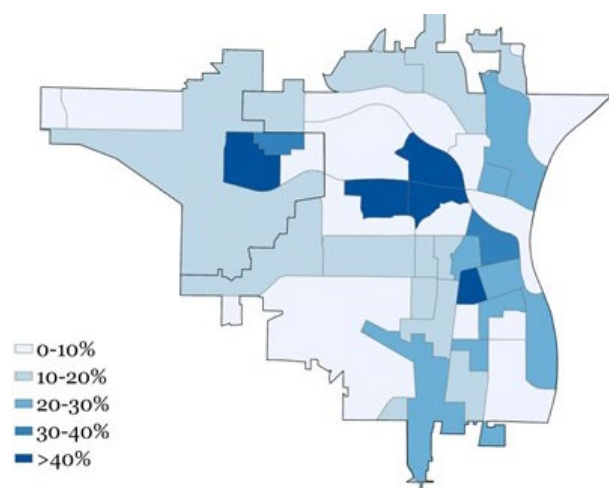


Figure 5. Percent of people in racial minority groups by census block group
Source: US Census Bureau

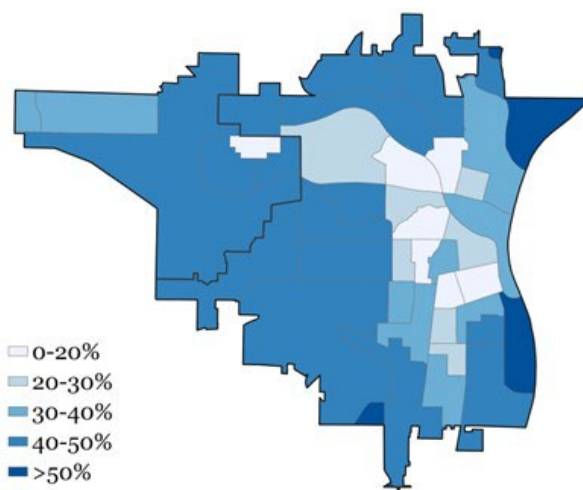


Figure 6. Educational attainment in Burlington and West Burlington by census block group
Source: US Census Bureau

Educational Attainment

Figure 6 highlights educational attainment among residents in Burlington and West Burlington. Educational attainment is correlated with economic growth and increased median income; both of which strengthen a community's economic resilience.

In Burlington, approximately 94% of residents over the age of 25 have obtained a high school diploma or higher and about 96% have that level of education in West Burlington. In Burlington, 23% of residents over 25 have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher, and about 22% in West Burlington. West Burlington is home to Southeastern Community College, which awarded 767 degrees in 2022. Figure 7 shows the percent of people in each census block group in Burlington and West Burlington who have obtained a bachelor's degree or higher.

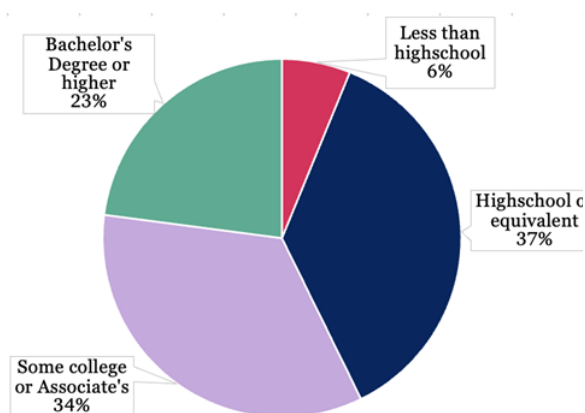


Figure 7. Educational attainment in Burlington and West Burlington combined
Source: US Census Bureau

Income & Poverty

The median household income in Burlington in 2023 was \$55,274, and in West Burlington \$48,289. Both cities have significantly lower median incomes than the state of Iowa, in which the 2023 median household income was \$73,147. Figure 8 highlights median household income per census block group in both cities.

Both Burlington and West Burlington have higher rates of poverty than the state of Iowa, which has a poverty rate of 11.0%. Burlington's 2023 poverty rate was 15.9% and child poverty rate was 21.6%, while West Burlington's poverty rate was 23.2% and child poverty rate was 37.5%. Figure 9 shows the percent of households in poverty by block group in both cities.

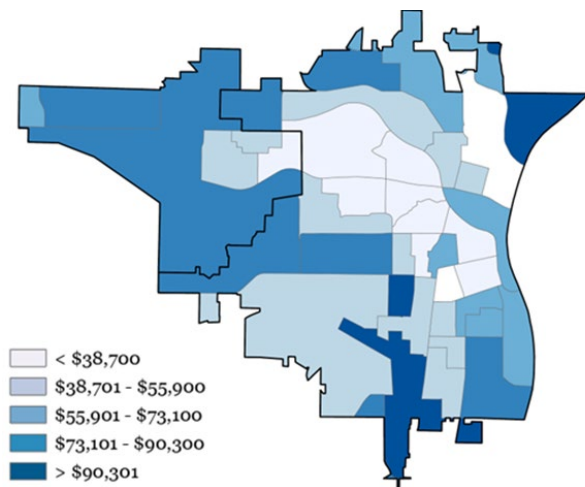


Figure 8. Median household income in Burlington and West Burlington by census block group
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

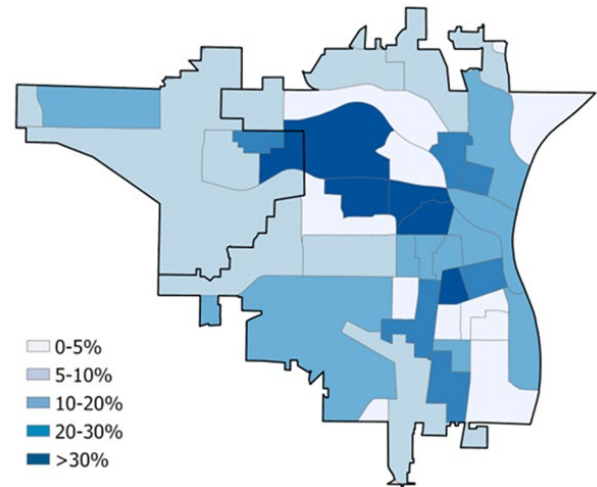


Figure 9. Percent of households in poverty in Burlington and West Burlington by census block group
Source: U.S. Census Bureau

Inflow/Outflow

Understanding where residents of both cities work and live provides valuable insights into community dynamics. Figures 10 and 11 show inflow and outflow commuting patterns for both cities- Burlington has balanced inflow and outflow of workers, with a substantial portion of Burlington residents also working within the community. West Burlington exhibits a different pattern, with 5,488 workers commuting in for work, 1,087 leaving, and 352 residents working within the community.

Employment

In Burlington, there are 14,304 workers in the community, which is 60.1% of the population 16 years and older. In West Burlington, there are 1,830 workers, which is 57.5% of the population 16 years and older.

The largest employment sectors for both cities are similar, with manufacturing and production occupations holding the largest share (2,416 employees), Health Care and Social Assistance (1,684 employees), Retail and Sales Related Occupations (1,707 employees). Other employment sectors include Educational Services, Accommodation and Food Services, Construction, and Transportation and Warehousing.

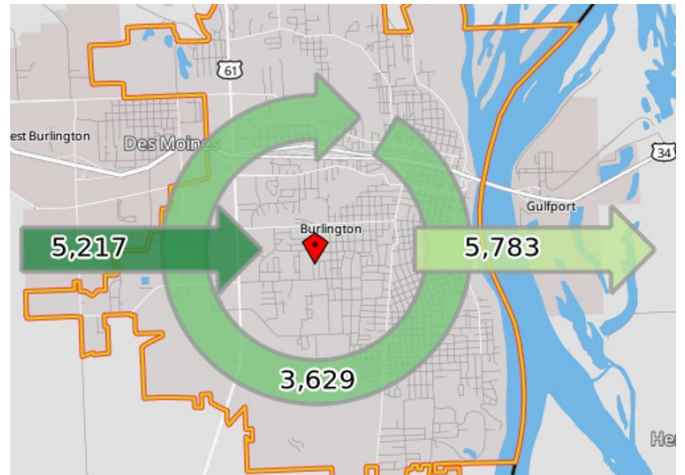


Figure 10. Burlington and West Burlington location in Iowa
Source: US Census On The Map

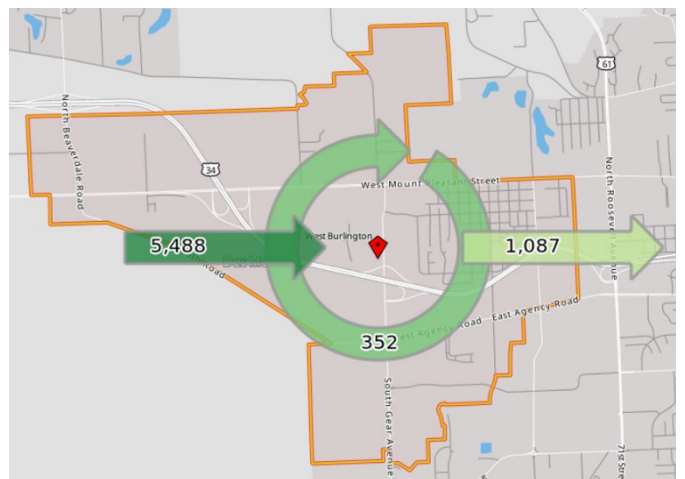
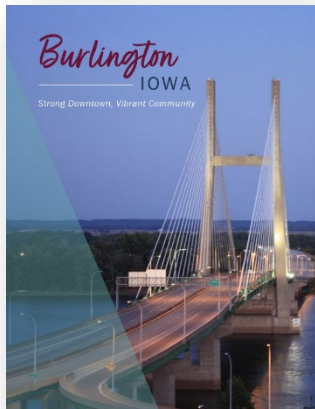


Figure 11. Burlington and West Burlington location in Iowa
Source: US Census On The Map

Past Planning Efforts

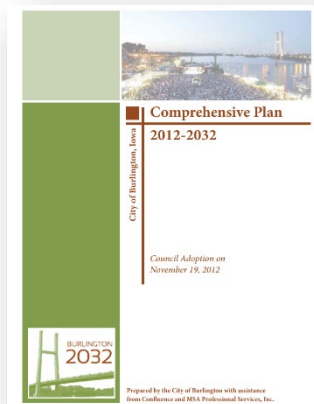


Placemaking Action Plan

Burlington's 2021 Placemaking Action Plan focused on continued development and improvement to the downtown area. The plan's five main priorities in the plan include: housing, public art initiatives, a downtown grocery store, a commercial space strategy, and a boutique hotel initiative.

The Public Art Initiative section in the plan states that communities need to have a strong arts and culture ecosystem to continue attracting and retaining talent, along with driving in visitors. This section calls for a multi-pronged public art strategy offering opportunities for public engagement. The primary areas of focus for this initiative included asphalt art, murals, alley activation, and street furniture.

The Additional Opportunities section outlines strategies to consider in the future, which include implementing an art residency program and various programming efforts guided by the Art Center of Burlington. Next steps for this portion included developing a dedicated committee, selection of artists for a mural and future murals, and establishing a public art fund.



Burlington Comprehensive Plan

The City of Burlington adopted their current comprehensive plan on November 19, 2012. This plan established a 20-year vision for the future of Burlington, focusing on heritage, recreation, health, the economy, and education for the community. Planners identified themes through community engagement, in which 4.2% of residents gave their feedback on the future of the community. This included increasing employment opportunities, decreasing the crime rate, decreasing taxes, improving road infrastructure, and improving K-12 education.

Through community engagement and research, the plan identified four primary issues: an inability to retain young professionals, loss of jobs combined with an aging workforce, lack of viability in the downtown areas, and a decrease in community pride and increase in negative attitudes of residents.

Of the goals in the plan, several identify connections to arts and culture. The plan suggests that collaboration with local educational institutions can help transition their workforce to more creative industries to help with the retainment of younger professionals, as well as help transition their economy to keep

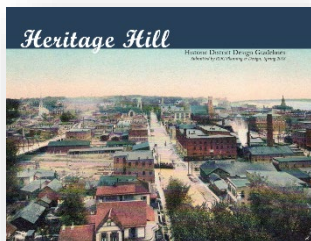
pace with nationwide trends. It also mentions strategies to attract and support local artists and to enhance local identity through public spaces and art.



West Burlington Comprehensive Plan

The City of West Burlington adopted a new comprehensive plan in 2025. West Burlington established 14 goals across several broad community focus areas. Goals relevant to arts and culture include 1) Strengthening Community Identity; 2) Enhance City Assets and Places; 3) Develop Stable Neighborhoods; 4) Improve Transportation Identity and Wayfinding; 5) Create an Environment to Attract and Retain Businesses; 6) Redevelop Existing Facilities; 7) Identify and Create Partnerships with Local Business Stakeholders; and 8) Maintain and Improve Trails and Parks.

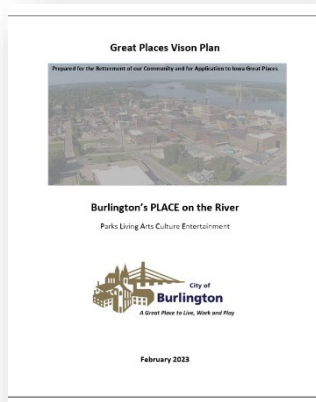
The plan identifies art interventions and improvements to help achieve key objectives related to placemaking, community identity, and values. Specific art-related actions steps include establishing connections with businesses to fund public art in high visibility areas, establishing rotating art displays at city hall, installing public art along trails, and hosting regular “music in the park” events.



Heritage Hill Historic District Design Guidelines

The Heritage Hill Plan, published in Spring of 2018, helped establish guidelines for the improvement of the Heritage Hill historic district in Burlington. This plan worked to provide property owners with standards for rehabilitation and upkeep of historic properties in the Heritage Hills neighborhood. This included information on acceptable architectural elements, such as foundations, streetscaping, and colors. It also provided guidelines on adaptive uses and new construction.

This plan helps to identify the ways in which the Arts and Culture Plan for Burlington and West Burlington can continue to build on a shared history and identity, especially for initiatives that surround or are within this historic neighborhood.

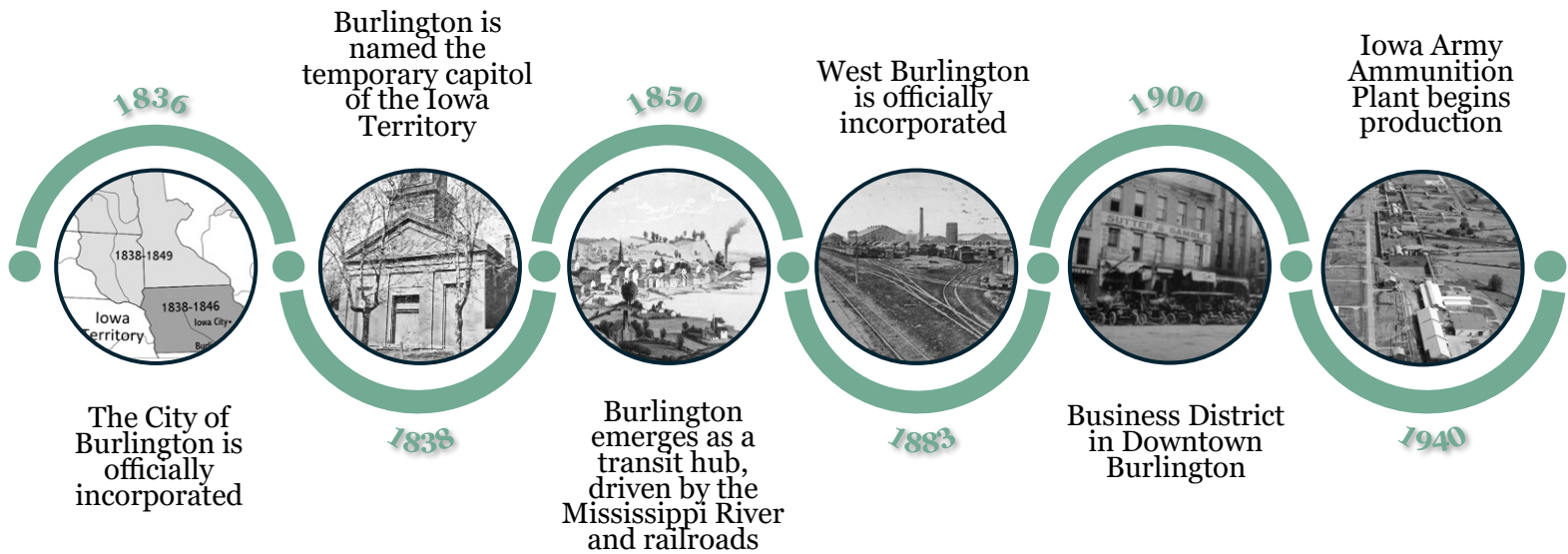


Great Places Vision Plan

The Great Places Vision Plan was completed in February of 2023 with the goal of establishing the downtown district of Burlington as a PLACE (park, living, arts, culture, entertainment). A steering committee was formed in May of 2022 in response to the focus on the TIGER grant on the riverfront in the hopes to widen the vision to the entire downtown district, establishing the riverfront as a gateway. This plan emphasizes the ways in which arts and culture are keys to economic development, social pride, and retaining young people and families.

The Great Places Vision Plan addresses many aspects of planning, including arts and culture, architecture, diversity, business development, historic preservation, and what is referred to as the “human spirit.” Themes in the vision plan align closely with concepts in the arts & culture planning process, including:

- Establishing a thriving district for arts, culture, and entertainment
- Respecting a sense of shared history and heritage
- Encouraging a quality appearance of the built environment that reflects the pride of the community
- Supporting economic development
- Creating and supporting unique attractions
- Implementing public art initiatives
- Establishing a boutique
- Integrating art into public infrastructure
- Establishing a greater sense of neighborhood identity through public art



Local History

Before settler colonialism around the turn of the 19th century, Burlington was known as Shoquoquon, meaning “Flint Hills,” by the Meskwaki Native Americans who inhabited the area for centuries prior. The name “Flint Hills” came from the abundance of flint in the nearby rocky hills and bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, which provided a valuable resource for crafting essential tools and weapons.

Burlington was founded in 1833, and in 1834, John Gray, who purchased a property and the naming rights, named the settlement after his hometown of Burlington, Vermont. The city was officially incorporated in 1836, marking its transition into a growing settlement and emerging hub for trade. By 1838, Burlington had become the capital of the Iowa Territory for a temporary period. Prior to this, it had also briefly served as the capital of the Wisconsin Territory, when under its jurisdiction. These designations brought recognition to Burlington early in its history and established its prominence in the region as the colonialism expanded westward.

As the population grew, settlers began expanding into the surrounding hills. By 1850, Burlington had solidified its status as a key transit and trade hub, thanks to the strategic advantages of the Mississippi River and the railroad. The Mississippi River was vital for ferrying passengers, tools, and goods, enabling westward-bound settlers to disembark in Burlington and continue their journeys. The railroad, however, had an even greater impact. It created numerous local jobs and left a lasting influence on the Burlington community.

The Chicago, Burlington, and Quincy Railroad (CB&Q) played a particularly instrumental role in the city’s development. In the 1880s, the CB&Q established a maintenance depot in what is now

West Burlington. The influx of workers for the depot significantly helped both Burlington and West Burlington grow and become increasingly vital for rail-based trade and transportation.

By the early 1900s, Burlington had begun to develop a well-balanced manufacturing industry, producing machinery parts and farm equipment. This industrial growth experienced a significant uptick in the 1940s with the establishment of the Iowa Army Ammunition Plant, which contributed to the population growth and expansion for Burlington and West Burlington. At its peak, the ammunition plant employed 12,000 workers, generating further development in Burlington, West Burlington, and the surrounding smaller communities.

Burlington has been home to several notable historical figures, including Aldo Leopold, a renowned conservationist and author; Dr. Edward Stone, a leading NASA scientist and key contributor to the Voyager program; Arabella Mansfield, the first female lawyer in the United States; and Robert Noyce, co-founder of Intel and pioneer of the microchip.²⁰

Notable Figures



**Arabella Mansfield
(1846-1911)**

First female lawyer in the United States, breaking barriers in 1869 and advocating for women's rights and education reform.



**Aldo Leopold
(1887-1948)**

Ecologist and conservationist; revolutionized environmental thought with his concept of a "land ethic," emphasizing harmony between people and nature.



**Robert Noyce
(1927-1990)**

Co-founder of the microchip and Intel, he played a pivotal role in shaping modern computing.



**Edward Stone
(1936-2024)**

Physicist and chief scientist of NASA's Voyager missions, guiding humanity's first explorations of interstellar space.



Methodology

The Project Team employed numerous methods to gain a strong understanding of existing conditions around arts and culture in Burlington and West Burlington, learn about prevailing attitudes and perceptions, identify best practices, and test recommendations. This section outlines the steps of the planning process.

Literature Review

The Project Team conducted a literature review examining academic studies describing the impact of arts and cultural investments in communities. Focus areas included economic impacts, quality of life impacts, and impacts to personal well-being.

Tabling at Public Events

The Project Team attended two public events during the initial stages of the project, Witches Night Out in downtown Burlington and an Alzheimer's Walk at the Westland Mall in West Burlington, focused on gathering input about perceptions about arts and culture in the community and levels of participation. These efforts collectively gathered 210 responses.

The goal of the first public engagement event, Witches Night Out, was to learn about how residents in Burlington and West Burlington, as well as the surrounding communities, view arts and culture events and spaces in the community. The event centered on asking people to respond to the following prompt by placing a sticker next to the statement that most deeply resonated with them:

Arts & culture events 1) are easily accessible in my community; 2) connect me to my community and fellow residents; 3) offer common gathering spots that I enjoy using; 4) make me feel proud of my community.

The goal of the Alzheimer's Walk was to learn more about how often people are currently attending events, barriers to attending events, and where they would like to see more opportunities for interacting with unique spaces and arts and culture. Respondents provide input for the following survey questions:

- Do you feel there are enough cultural events in the Burlington and West Burlington Community?
- How often do you attend Burlington or West Burlington events (museums, theater, concerts) in a typical year?
- Have you participated in any of the following arts and culture experiences in Burlington or West Burlington?
- What prevents you from participating in more activities in Burlington or West Burlington?
- Where would you like to see more cultural or artistic displays or events?



Alexi Edmonds and Gabe Sturdevant at Witches Night Out (top) and Joseph Grabowski, Ryan Harrington and Ben DeTaeye at the Alzheimer's Walk (bottom).

Case Study Research

Case studies help illustrate the ways in which other communities have successfully implemented solutions to challenges they have faced. Case studies allow for communities to learn from one another when implementing similar strategies. For the Burlington and West Burlington Arts and Culture Plan, examples of local initiatives and successful economic growth associated with arts and culture investments were prioritized to identify potential best practices to inform this plan.

Interviews

Stakeholder interviews provided valuable insight into existing conditions and opportunities to expand arts and culture in Burlington and West Burlington. Interviewees included individuals from the education sector, nonprofit sector, local businesses, faith-based organizations, city government, existing participants in arts and culture, and other external partners.

To guide the interviews, the Project Team asked questions related to the identity of Burlington and West Burlington, strengths and challenges for the two communities, vision for the future of both communities, logistical questions regarding events, and specific questions for artists and local government individuals. The Project Team transcribed responses and analyzed them for common themes used to inform the planning process and to develop goals and strategies.

While interviews were open-ended and fluid around ideas shared by participants, the interviewers began with a common set of questions:

- To whom am I speaking?
- What is something interesting about you that people might not guess right away?
- Tell me a story that stands out to you when you think about living in Burlington and West Burlington.
- How would you describe Burlington's culture?
- What are your favorite "third spaces?"
- What do you think are cultural assets of Burlington and West Burlington?
- What is your hope for the future of Burlington and West Burlington?
- Is there anything else you want to share that I have not asked about?

Survey

Residents of Burlington and West Burlington shared their ideas, perspectives, and aspirations for the future of arts and culture initiatives through a survey titled, "Voice Your Vision." Respondents provided input about their view on the role arts and culture plays in community development, identity, and social cohesion.

The survey consisted of qualitative and quantitative questions regarding respondents' participation in arts and culture activities, perceived barriers to engaging in arts and culture initiatives, personal feelings about connection to community, perceptions on support for the arts, the cultural and economic impact of arts and culture, sources for event communications, current strengths of arts and culture in the two communities, and potential opportunities for



A downtown Burlington market event.
Source: A Very Vintage Market 2025 Facebook

improvements. The survey also included demographic questions for the purpose of analyzing responses across different groups within the community.

The survey was available in the three most common languages in the two cities: English, Spanish, and Hebrew. A press release announced the release of the survey. Project patterns helped distribute the survey link through social media, news sources, and flyers around Burlington and West Burlington. The Project Team analyzed responses to identify statistically significant results to inform the decision-making process.

Artists Roundtables

Over the course of two round table sessions held at the Arts Center of Burlington, artists from the community shared their opinions and thoughts about the current arts and culture environment, and how they could better support and be supported by a strengthened ecosystem. The Project Team generated themes based on the roundtable conversations.

Spatial Analysis and Asset Mapping

Using GIS and census block group data, the Project Team mapped demographic data such as poverty rates, distribution of racial groups, educational attainment, and median household income in order to understand spatial patterns across the community. In addition to demographic data, the analysis incorporated other physical characteristics and relevant data, including traffic patterns, public park locations, city owned properties, vacant land, major waterways, and key community resources such as schools and libraries.

By gathering data through public engagement, online research, observations, and other means, the Project Team also built and mapped an inventory of existing cultural assets, such as public art, performance spaces, cultural institutions and more. The assets were then assigned to one of the following categories:

- Public arts
- Performing arts
- Visual arts
- Education
- Historical site
- Music Venues
- Culinary Arts
- Entertainment
- Parks and Rec

An analysis of the cultural inventory and sociodemographic data showed areas of the town potentially underserved in terms of access to opportunities to experience arts & culture, access to “third spaces” and public gathering spaces, and indicators of neighborhood identity and cohesion.

The Project Team used the data to identify target locations for distributed arts & culture improvements, particularly using city-owned property in underserved areas with high concentrations of disadvantaged groups (i.e. block groups with high poverty rates). The selection of these locations involved a multi-step process:

1. Mapping city-owned lots obtained using assessor data and building footprints provided by Des Moines County.
2. Applying a half-mile buffer around existing cultural assets.
3. Narrowing the list of city-owned lots to underserved areas (i.e. outside of the buffers) and also in block groups with high poverty rates.
4. Using Google Street View to determine viability, based on physical characteristics like walkability, lot size, etc., for arts & culture improvements.
5. Cross-referencing target lots with community engagement feedback provided at the open house to align data analysis and public feedback.

Open House

During an open house at the Burlington Public Library on April 4th, 2025, approximately 40 residents provided feedback on initial plan ideas and recommendations at four stations with different topics areas. At the first station, participants selected three community betterment outcomes, out of a larger range of options, that they believed could be the most realistic and beneficial outcomes of arts and culture investments. At the second station, attendees voted for three sectors that they thought should be represented in an arts and culture coalition, one of the key recommendations in the report. At the third station, attendees reviewed draft recommendations and ranked them on a matrix according to importance and urgency. Lastly, at the fourth station, attendees marked different kinds of public art initiatives that they would like to see throughout the community on a map of Burlington and West Burlington.



Emma Knobloch and Veyda Matos at the Open House Entrance during the event.



Ryan Harrington, Joseph Grabowski, and Alexi Edmonds walking participants through the open house stations.



Community Engagement

Burlington and West Burlington have rich histories and distinct identities formed around the social and physical characteristics in each community. To ensure the arts and culture plan accurately reflects both the unique and shared qualities in each city, the Project Team prioritized the key role of community engagement in plan development. This process centered around gathering input from a diverse range of stakeholders, including residents, students, artists, cultural leaders, and underrepresented groups.



“We want to build a relationship with you, and we want you to be part of our community because you have gifts, and we want you to feel like you can use those gifts in our community.”

– Interviewee response on engaging artists.



Burlington High School Students Art Gallery in the Burlington Art Center
Source: Art Center of Burlington

Witches Night Out

Witches Night Out is an event in downtown Burlington where people pay for a witch's hat and then go to different local businesses downtown to collect and create different pins to put on the hat. The event is primarily attended by women (all but one of survey respondents were women) and comes with a cost, so the survey sample is not representative of the full community. During the event, 118 people provided input across a wide range of age groups, spanning less than 18 years old to over 55 years old. Most respondents, about 66%, reside in Burlington, while 5% reside in West Burlington, and the remainder reside in the surrounding region.

The top two statements that resonated most with respondents were 1) that arts and culture events provide gathering spots throughout the community and 2) arts and culture improves quality of life for residents. These responses and opinions about arts and culture directly informed portions of the broader community-wide survey.

Alzheimer's Walk

During this event, 52 respondents provided input about their engagement and participation with arts and culture in Burlington and West Burlington. Arts and culture events were defined as any visual art, performing art, literature, film/media, or city/block party that may have been attended within the last year. Attendance frequency was defined as weekly, a few times per month, occasionally, and never.

Most respondents (63%) live in Burlington, while just one respondent lives in West Burlington. The rest (35%) live elsewhere. The event drew people from all ages. For the public engagement, 35% of respondents were less than 18 years old, 8% were 18-29, 15% were 30-44, 35% were 45-64, and 7% 65 or older.

Regarding frequency, approximately twice as many respondents indicate they attend events "occasionally" or "never" compared to "weekly" and "monthly." The barriers cited most often include lack of time and lack of awareness about opportunities. Outcomes and conversations from this event also informed design of the community-wide survey.

Stakeholder Interviews

Ten virtual interviews with key stakeholders representing various groups within the community – educators, artists, cultural leaders, business owners, and members of underrepresented groups – provided deeper insights into perceptions and opportunities related to arts and culture in the community. Interviewees represent multiple sectors, including government, arts, local businesses, and social services and nonprofits. The insights from these interviews helped to inform recommendations made in this plan to ensure that the arts are seen as a smart investment for the community, that all residents— regardless of background or socioeconomic status—can enjoy.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ **Arts and culture should be viewed as assets and invested in the same way as something like a sports complex.**

Local sports investments seem to take precedent when it comes to government spending on cultural activities, yet the cultural assets of Burlington are a key reason that the community thrives. Arts and culture opportunities provide depth to a community that will lead to more pride and engagement. Arts organizations are well-linked in Burlington, and this contributes to their success. Downtown Burlington, especially Jefferson Street, is a primary hub, pulling in residents and visitors. The increase in events and opportunities in recent years has increased quality of life.

- ▶ **One large barrier is people feeling unwelcome at arts and culture events.**

A large “blue-collar” population pushes back against investment because of a perceived exclusivity around art activities. Minority groups, especially those who are socioeconomically disadvantaged, may feel less welcome at events.

- ▶ **The arts help to foster more inclusivity among people of varying backgrounds, but cost of events is another barrier keeping people from experiencing the arts and culture of Burlington and West Burlington.**

The community exhibits a culture of caring overall, but those who are disadvantaged experience a greater lack of opportunity to attend events. When those of lower socioeconomic status do attend arts and culture events, especially youth in poverty, it contributes to a more positive view of their community and themselves.

- ▶ **Many people have creative ideas for the activation of arts and culture amenities.**

Some people desire more variety in restaurants. The riverfront area is a great spot for the activation of cultural opportunities. In West Burlington, people would like to see the mall revitalized.

Artist Round Table Event

Local artists shared insights for the plan during two artist round table events held at the Art Center of Burlington. From these conversations, the Project Team identified several key themes.

Key Takeaways

- ▶ **The Arts Bubble:** Artists at the round table discussion generally agreed that there seems to be an “arts bubble” surrounding downtown Burlington, meaning that the arts and cultural events are largely focused in one area and attract relatively small group of “die hard supporters” (approximately 50 people), with much lower participation and awareness about events across the broader community. Participants suggested that a lack of cohesive marketing has contributed to the difficulty in getting information about arts events out to the public.
- ▶ **Uneven Distribution:** Building on “arts bubble,” participants described a lack of geographical diversification of arts and culture events and opportunities. Participants could identify only one item for West Burlington- the annual 4th of July Festival and that, outside of the downtown, many arts and cultural offerings occur through the school districts.
- ▶ **Government Support:** Respondents expressed concerns about the level of government support for the arts and culture in Burlington and West Burlington. While many feel that government leaders understand the benefits of investing in arts and culture, recent funding cuts to arts organizations convey a different story. They appreciated how local government highlights the area’s arts and cultural assets, such as featuring the Arts Center of Burlington on the most recent tourism magazine for Burlington.
- ▶ **Leadership Capabilities:** Participants generally agreed that artists have a lot of creative ideas that can support broader community goals, but they don’t feel that opportunities or invitations to participate in this capacity occur often. Many artists expressed a desire to increase collaboration with the local government and private sector to increase the visibility of arts in the community. They would enjoy opportunities to learn more about business, local government, and non-profits, as well as network and increase their visibility in the community.

“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.”

- Artist Roundtable participant on arts and education

Open House

During the open house event, approximately 40 residents provided feedback on initial plan ideas and recommendations at stations with different topics areas. One station asked about areas that could most benefit from arts & culture investments, respondents most often selected 1) boosting community pride; 2) connecting residents and building social cohesion; and 3) building economic resilience.

At another station, respondents provided feedback about the plan's initial proposed strategies. They evaluated the strategies based on level of importance and level of urgency. Responses generally aligned with the sentiments shared at the first station. Areas that a strong majority of participants (80%) deemed both urgent and important include:

- Community Pride
- Expand arts and cultural amenities beyond downtown
- Revitalize vacant buildings and lots
- Connection of Residents and Social Cohesion
- Expand arts and cultural amenities beyond downtown
- Revitalize vacant buildings and lots
- Economic Resilience
- Create an inventory of grants for public art
- Build public-private partnerships
- Revitalize vacant buildings and lots

At the final station, participants placed makers with specific arts and culture improvements on a map to indicate what they'd like to see and where. This information was combined with the spatial analysis to finalize priority locations for arts and culture improvements across Burlington and West Burlington.

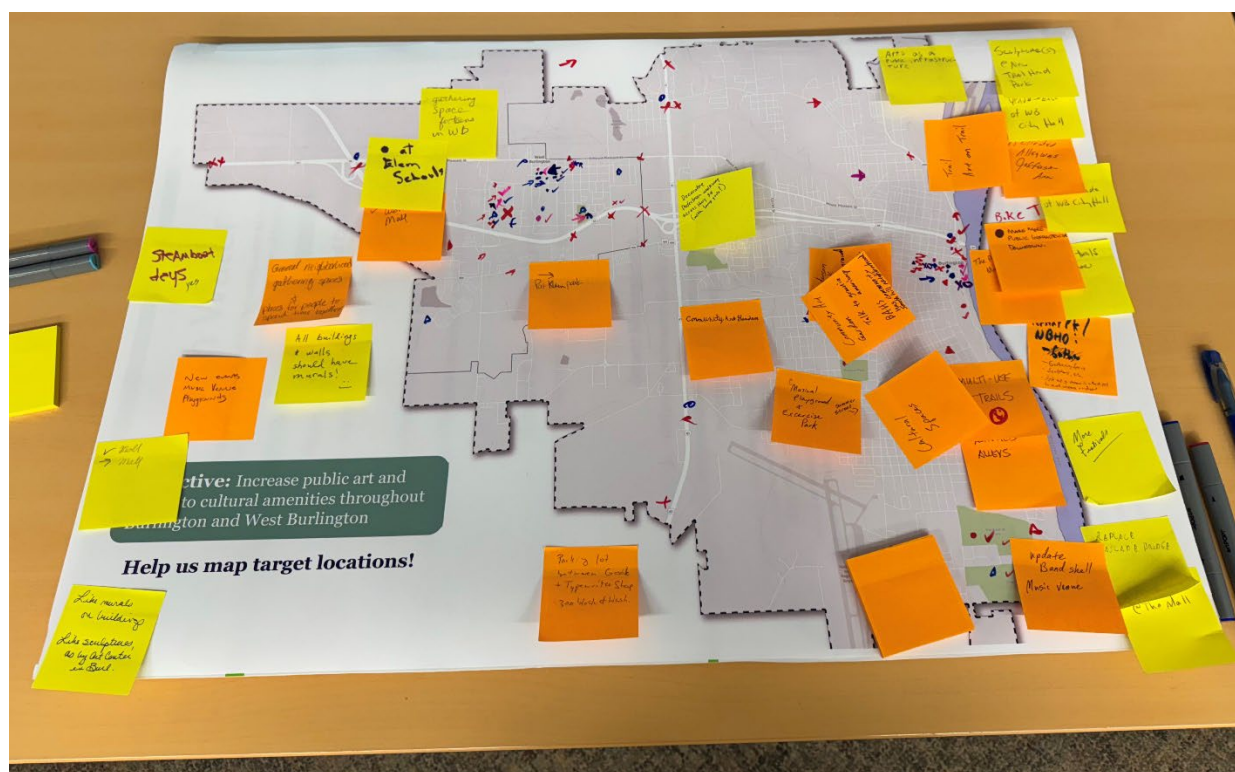


Figure 12: Art amenity target location responses from the open house event.

Survey

The Project team analyzed responses from the community-wide survey and tabling events to gauge public attitudes regarding benefits of arts and culture (Figure 13) and barriers of arts & culture (Figure 14) in Burlington and West Burlington.

Residents value the economic and quality of life benefits of arts and culture most highly, indicating strong alignment with the broader benefits found in research. Many interviewees emphasized that the recent increase in events and cultural opportunities has directly contributed to a higher quality of life in the community. Arts and cultural events are also seen as powerful tools for connection, offering shared, interactive experiences that bring people together.

This impact is especially significant for youth. At the artist town hall, one participant noted that the skills developed through creating art extend far beyond the final product, fostering growth, resilience, and confidence. These benefits are particularly meaningful for youth from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, who, when given access to arts and culture, often gain a more positive outlook on both their community and themselves.

From the survey, the top two barriers to participation in arts and culture events were timing and lack of awareness. However, interviews revealed a deeper, less visible barrier: the perception that the arts are reserved for the elite. This belief can leave many community members feeling unwelcome in artistic spaces. Compounding this is a common misconception that creativity is synonymous with exceptional talent, rather than something everyone possesses. As interviewees and town hall participants expressed, there is a growing desire to shift this narrative to emphasize that art belongs to everyone. Reducing barriers of timing and awareness is a key part of this effort, helping ensure the entire community feels included and empowered to participate in the arts.

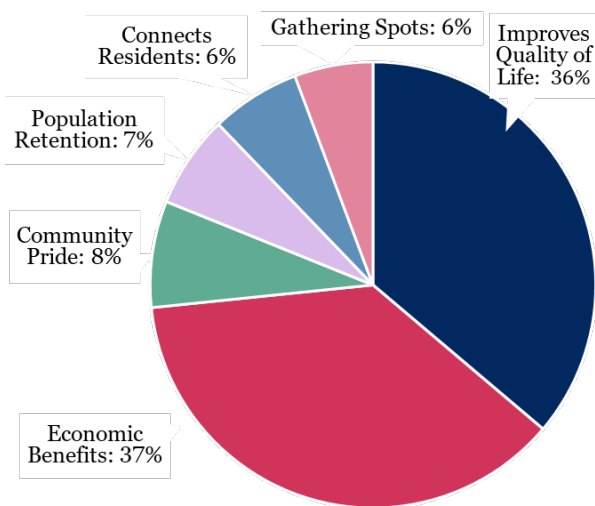


Figure 13. Art amenity target location responses from the open

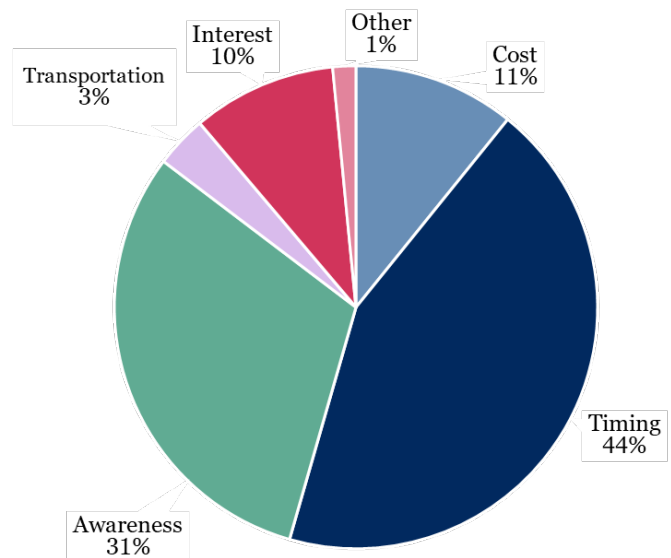


Figure 14. Art amenity target location responses from the open



Photo provided by Art Center of Burlington

1

Local Place-Based Initiatives

Activating the Environment with Gabi Torries in Clinton, Iowa:

Gabi Torres is an artist and co-founder of Paint it Back in Clinton, IA. Her vision is to “make the arts central to Clinton’s future.” She does this by utilizing creative placemaking to create unique and desirable areas and experiences throughout the community.

The first example of this was her use of creative placemaking within the natural environment. As a resident and someone who finds themselves better able to observe people and their habits, as many artists are, she chooses to focus on areas where people are already traversing and organically spending time. She has successfully implemented many public art installations throughout Clinton using the contributions of over one thousand residents to ensure that the art created is reflective of the community and its values.

She also puts on the Paint it Back event, which “celebrates the transformative power of public art” by activating a large warehouse building as a canvas for art and creation. It invites multiple artists to paint different murals, dance, and sing with the public to show the ways in which art can create something new out of something familiar.

Gabi works directly with the city, Clinton’s Hometown pride, and other sectors to bring more arts opportunities to the community. By bringing more artists to the table as leaders, it creates opportunities to foster creativity and increase the activation of forgotten areas.

Arts for Public Safety in Marshall County, Iowa

Amber Danielson is a community arts leader in Marshall County, IA. Her focus is on relationships, communication, and partnerships to foster cross- sector collaboration to expand arts and culture access as well as build resiliency throughout the community.

After the tragic loss of an 8-year-old in a traffic accident, Amber helped to commission a school sidewalk safety mural to encourage more traffic calming in areas where there are children commonly present. The murals are in both English and Spanish to ensure that as many community members as possible can benefit from the initiative. Using arts instead of more costly traditional traffic calming measures, the community benefits from a brighter and more aesthetically pleasing landscape, calmer traffic, and more awareness of pedestrian safety concerns. This is a clear example of the ways in which those in the arts sector may be well-equipped to address community concerns in creative and effective ways.

2

Tourism Impacts

In the early 2000s, Chattanooga, TN had been experiencing a declining population for about a decade. With most of its industry located along the Tennessee River, the river was far from a communal place of gathering. When Mayor Bob Corker was elected as Mayor in 2001, he was able to implement his Chattanooga 21st Century Waterfront Plan that he created in 2000, with hopes to increase tourism and generate population growth.

Some new features that resulted were rerouting a historically consuming 4-lane highway, music venues, museums, boat docks, and more. The 129-acre revitalization created a multi-use space that was intended to beautify Chattanooga.

Since the application of Chattanooga's billion-dollar investment, Chattanooga's population has increased by 11%.²¹ Around same time, in 2002, tourists visiting Chattanooga brought in about \$534 million dollars and today, that number has increased to \$893 million. The resulting tourism has increased jobs and 10% of Chattanooga's employment can be credited to the tourism industry. The return on investment has been put back into the community by being placed directly into schools and decreasing household tax bills.²²

Key Takeaways

While tourism investment in Chattanooga is at a much larger scale than Burlington and West Burlington, the strategies and outcomes are still relevant. Tourism in both communities will be used as a strategy for economic growth, population retention and attraction, and for expanding community pride as demonstrated in Chattanooga. In Burlington and West Burlington, tourism investment to address the above three strategies would look like enhancing pre-existing events, attractions, and infrastructure while reinvesting over time to create more opportunity in both communities and to do so, arts and culture will be the driving force.



Community event on Chattanooga's Riverfront
Source: Riverfront Nights Facebook



Interactive art installation on Chattanooga's Riverfront
Source: Nooga Today

3

Business Attraction Through Arts and Culture

Investing in arts and culture can help bolster a community's economy in a variety of ways, one of which is through attracting new businesses. One city that has reflected these practices is Paducah, Kentucky through their "Forward Paducah" economic development plan. The city of Paducah shares key demographic and geographic similarities to Burlington and West Burlington. Paducah is a river town with a population of about 27,000 people but has been experiencing a steady decline since the 1960's. The river was the driving factor for the city's economy which allowed for trade and manufacturing businesses to thrive. As those industries began to slow down and the population numbers reacted to it, Paducah prioritized arts and culture to revitalize alternative economic sources.

The city took advantage of its history and geographical attributes by using art to make them stand out. The historic riverfront was beautified through a program called "Wall to Wall" murals which covered the flood wall with art that reflected the character of the city. Through the art on the flood wall and the scenic Greenway Trail along the river, Paducah created a connection between its residents and their biggest geographic asset. These quality-of-life improvements were made due to the commitment established by the "Forward Paducah" plan. The overall goal of this adopted plan was to increase sustainable economic development while keeping arts and culture at the foreground in order to retain and attract talented individuals.²³ The plan notes that this is achieved by promoting a healthy lifestyle through recreational opportunities, such as parks and trails, and investing in educational/cultural resources.

Key Takeaways

Although "Forward Paducah" was adopted in 2017, the city kickstarted its cultural investment in 2013 when Paducah gained the designation of a UNESCO Creative City (UCCN), an international network guided by the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. The network as a whole works towards developing a strong connection between city development, culture, and creativity. The Creative City designation provided Paducah with an international platform for collaboration, an increased sense of pride for residents, and the ability to attract new businesses due to talent retention. The goals outlined by UNESCO requirements highlight what a connected community can look like, and even without an official designation, can assist in building up a community in a variety of ways.

Since the adoption of the "Forward Paducah" plan, the population of the city has been able to change its trend. Census data shows that between 2010 and 2020, the population increased by 8.4%. However, yearly estimates show that the largest increases did not begin until 2017, the year of adoption. The Greater Paducah Economic Development office attributes their ability to retain workers to the connection between education and creativity.²⁴

4

Arts and Culture Impacts on Property Values

Denver Dairy Block

The Dairy Block in Denver, Colorado, illustrates how incorporating art into real estate development can significantly enhance property values and overall economic activity. This mixed-use development repurposed historic structures while embedding art and creativity into its design. By collaborating with local artists, the project not only preserved regional heritage but also turned the Dairy Block into a vibrant cultural destination.



Denver's Dairy Block
Source: Dairy Block

Bakersville, North Carolina

Bakersville is a small town that successfully used arts and culture to stimulate economic and property growth. Through public and private investments, Bakersville leveraged its unique cultural identity to attract renovation projects and business development. The project resulted in 44 building renovations, the creation of 11 new businesses, and public art and greenway expansion.

Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival

The Bonnaroo Music and Arts Festival showcases how arts and cultural events can drive regional economic and property value growth. Held annually in Manchester, Tennessee, this large-scale festival transforms the town into a hub of economic activity. This festival has yielded over \$5 million in tax revenue, \$36 million in direct spending on food, hotels, and local services, and has created over 600 full-time equivalent jobs by indirect and induced spending.

Key Takeaways

These case studies provide concrete evidence of the role arts and culture play in boosting property values. Whether through integrating art into development projects, leveraging cultural events to drive tourism, or fostering public-private partnerships for community improvement, investing in arts and culture generates tangible economic benefits. For Burlington and West Burlington, adopting similar strategies could enhance local property markets while fostering a thriving cultural ecosystem.



Event in West Burlington, Iowa.

Case Studies Summary

The findings from these case studies reinforce:

- Outsiders are drawn to places where there is a strong sense of place and arts and culture presence, resulting in tourists spending more money at places like locally owned restaurants, stores, and hotels, resulting in the stimulation of the local economy through things such as job creation. It also increases city revenues, thereby strengthening the community's capacity to provide better and more efficient services that will improve quality of life for residents.
- Government investment in arts and culture has been proven to enable larger-scale impacts within an economy. When government increases funding for arts and culture programming, it results in more tourists, as well as more existing residents, spending money on arts and culture events and activities. This ultimately leads to the initial investment being multiplied, resulting in better economic outcomes for residents and the whole community.
- People used to follow businesses, but it has become clearer in recent years that businesses go where people are. Providing a community that has plentiful third spaces and the opportunity for unique experiences and connection will ultimately incline more people to move here, resulting in the attraction of more businesses.
- With the inclusion of arts and culture, and the ability for people to connect in third spaces, comes an increase in property value. Things such as aesthetic of neighborhoods, access to public spaces, and inclusion of walkable amenities all have a direct impact on property values, increasing property tax revenue for cities.

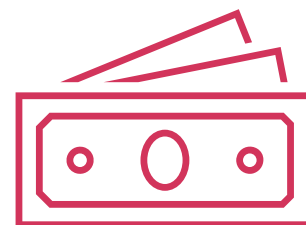
These case studies show that there are clear and measurable economic benefits to community investment in arts and culture. Looking at the barriers the communities of both Burlington and West Burlington are currently facing, including lack of social cohesion and community pride. By implementing government investment in the arts and culture scene, the community would be able to provide distinct opportunities for connection and unique experiences while simultaneously stimulating the local economy and improving quality of life for residents.



Goals, Objectives & Strategies

Two cities One community Four goals

- 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 place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.**



Goal One

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

Community support is the first step in accomplishing a more developed arts and culture scene for Burlington and West Burlington. It requires commitment from both the public and private sectors, as well as them working together to achieve the overall goals outlined throughout this plan. Furthermore, utilizing the current structure of assets and building upon them will bolster the cultural environment and work towards establishing the Burlington- West Burlington area as a hub for activity. The plan relies on local leadership to continue forward progression through sustainable forms of funding and responsibility.

Objective 1.1: Establish Burlington and West Burlington as a unified regional arts and culture hub.

With a strategic location along the Mississippi River, Burlington and West Burlington can bolster their status as a cultural hotspot for prospective residents and tourists. Taking advantage of the potential for increased tourism through a variety of developments will help further this reputation.

Strategy 1 – Utilize arts and artists to drive tourism.

By increasing the amount of art experiences throughout Burlington and West Burlington, we are striving towards creating a welcoming environment for tourists in the community. This will also generate additional methods of support for local artists.

Strategy 2 – Encourage hotel development to provide additional opportunities for prolonged visits.

Developing new locations catered towards serving overnight visits will help overcome an identified lack of options for visiting guests while encouraging more time to be spent interacting with community activities.

Objective 1.2: Increase collaboration in arts and culture by leveraging local leadership capacity.

Providing additional opportunities for the community to voice their opinions on local arts and culture topics can have a direct impact on the quality of events. By providing a platform for

leaders to hear the voices of the community, a well-rounded understanding of needs can be developed while promoting the use of local talent.

Strategy 1 – Form an Arts & Culture Coalition

As seen in comparable communities, Arts & Culture Coalitions are an efficient way of generating responsibility and leadership for projects throughout the community. Involving parties from both Burlington and West Burlington is vital to establishing a strong connection. Page 52 outlines a model Public Art Advisory coalition model.

Strategy 2 – Establish a program targeted towards developing leadership skills, business skills, and understanding of local government processes.

This form of incubation promotes the importance of knowledge of applicable skills to new or upcoming artists while creating a collaborative environment for learning. See Page 54 for further recommendations.

Strategy 3 – Create a match-making platform between businesses and artists to promote the hiring of local talent for creative purposes.

Supporting local artists is vital in retaining and growing talent in the area. By developing a platform that allows businesses to easily find creative people, this support can be increased.

Strategy 4 - Collaborate with social services to facilitate benefits that can be provided by arts and culture in different spaces.

This collaboration includes developing art programming at the hospital from patients and staff, facilitating opportunities for art therapists, and the hiring of additional social services workers.

Objective 1.3: Secure sustainable and reliable funding for arts and culture.

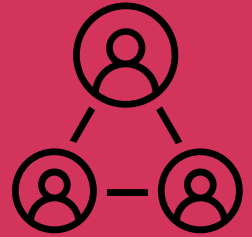
The prioritization of cost-effective techniques is inherent to the goals of this plan. However, funding is inevitable and finding a consistent basis to promote the projects, people, and plans of the community is vital to the success of the strategies. By utilizing a diverse set of funding tools, the Burlington and West Burlington community can sustain considerable investment towards arts and culture on an annual basis.

Strategy 1 – Obtain grants from the state, regional coalitions, federal opportunities, and private entities.

Grants are fundamental in generating outside investment for projects. Taking advantage of grant possibilities allows for new events to take place while not overburdening local government.

Strategy 2 – Consider local financing options to provide targeted funding for arts and culture.

Committing local revenue to arts and culture establishes a connection between government and community culture.



Goal Two

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

The Burlington and West Burlington area has an existing cultural framework that has the capacity to flourish through the expansion of art and unity. Current assets, heavily concentrated in the downtown Burlington district, contribute to expressing the unique character of a Southeastern Iowa river town. By taking advantage of established cultural keystones and building upon them, the Burlington and West Burlington area can become a community driven by its historical identity and commitment to increasing cultural opportunities.

Objective 2.1: Utilize creative and culturally responsive placemaking strategies.

Building a strong sense of place for residents and visitors will help connect Burlington and West Burlington into one unified community. By increasing the usage of placemaking strategies, the historical characteristics of the area will be able to shine. Ensuring that community members lead the charge in promoting these principles will foster a sense of responsibility and civic pride.

Strategy 1 – Develop a placemaking narrative to connect the existing cultures of Burlington and West Burlington.

A placemaking narrative is a story that connects a place to its people, history, and values. The narrative creates a place for the character of Burlington-West Burlington to be showcased, while spotlighting the work of local talent like artists and historians.

Strategy 2 – Establish neighborhood leadership groups to promote community action and responsibility.

Generating a platform for the people of the community to voice their opinions and desires will foster a sense of pride and responsibility at a grassroots level.

Strategy 3 – Increase the use of cultural wayfinding to enhance appreciation of historical significance of place.

The colorful history of the Burlington and West Burlington area has played a role in developing the current cultural landscape. By embracing this history through wayfinding techniques, a cultural experience can be created that will enhance an understanding of what the community stands for.

Objective 2.2: Increase public art throughout Burlington and West Burlington.

Publicly accessible art is an important factor that has been directly linked to increasing the quality of life for residents in a community. Implementing additional pieces throughout the community allows residents to enjoy visually appealing works while promoting and supporting local talent.

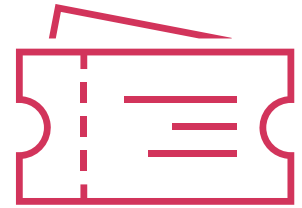
Strategy 1 – Implement art in target locations.

Vacant lots, community gateways, and heavily trafficked areas are prime locations for installments and provide community members with the opportunity to experience new works of art.

Strategy 2 – Expand arts and culture assets beyond the Burlington downtown district.

To improve the accessibility and abundance of assets, it is important to evaluate locations outside of the existing hotspots that would benefit from a more developed cultural scene.

Goal Three



Ensure equitable access to arts and cultural heritage.

Burlington and West Burlington offer residents and surrounding communities a rich variety of artistic and cultural experiences, from performances at the historic Capitol Theater to concerts by the Southeast Iowa Symphony Orchestra. Both residents and artists recognize the opportunity to expand these amenities and deepen their impact. To ensure future growth is equitable and sustainable, it is essential that arts and cultural offerings foster an inclusive environment, welcoming people of all backgrounds, identities, and life experiences. By doing so, the Burlington–West Burlington region can more fully engage its diverse talent and strengthen community cohesion.

Achieving this vision requires reducing barriers to participation, whether financial, social, or physical, and increasing the accessibility of cultural spaces throughout the community. These efforts can also help unlock new avenues of funding and partnership, reinforcing a vibrant and inclusive arts ecosystem.

Objective 3.1: Reduce financial barriers to access and participation in arts and culture experiences.

All residents should be able to have the opportunity to participate in arts and cultural experiences, but barriers like cost, transportation, accessibility, and representation can limit involvement for a wide range of residents. By reducing these obstacles, Burlington and West Burlington can foster greater inclusion and ensure that arts and culture are accessible and welcoming to all.

Strategy 1 – Reduce financial barriers by implementing alternative payment methods.

Cost can be a major barrier to participation in arts and culture. Offering alternative payment options, such as sliding scale pricing, installment plans, or pay-what-you-can models, can make events and programs, such as theater performances, or art shows more accessible to a wider range of residents.

Strategy 2 – Reduce social barriers by ensuring welcoming environments regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, or political affiliation.

Creating inclusive and respectful environments is essential to broad community participation. By fostering spaces where all individuals feel welcome and represented, arts and culture events can better reflect and serve the full diversity of Burlington and West Burlington.

Strategy 3 – Increase access to information of arts and culture events.

Many residents miss out on arts and culture events simply due to lack of information. By improving outreach and communication, through centralized listings, social media, and other forms of promotion, residents and visitors can better access all that the area has to offer.

Objective 3.2: Increase access to public spaces.

All residents should be able to have the opportunity to participate in arts and cultural experiences, but barriers like cost, transportation, accessibility, and representation can limit involvement for a wide range of residents. By reducing these obstacles, Burlington and West Burlington can foster greater inclusion and ensure that arts and culture are accessible and welcoming to all.

Strategy 1 – Utilize identified vacant lots as sites for community oriented cultural amenities.

Repurposing vacant lots for cultural use can activate underutilized or neglected spaces, bring art directly into neighborhoods, and increase access to creative or cultural experiences where people live. These sites can serve as gathering places that reflect community identity and foster local pride.

Strategy 2 – Develop pocket parks in underserved areas.

Pocket parks in underserved neighborhoods can provide accessible spaces for recreation, gathering, and cultural expression. These small-scale parks help promote equity by bringing green space and creative opportunities closer to where people live.



Goal Four

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

A strong sense of place is the heart of a thriving community. In Burlington and West Burlington, the unique character of local neighborhoods, and their historic landmarks, contribute to a shared identity that shapes how residents connect to their surroundings, as well as their neighbors. Through arts and culture, this identity can be celebrated, reimaged, and strengthened, offering new ways for residents and visitors to express themselves while engaging with the community at large.

Fostering this sense of belonging requires intentional investment in creative leadership, inclusive storytelling, and community-rooted initiatives that reflect the lived experiences of all residents. By elevating local artists as leaders, expanding access to arts education, and embedding artistic expression into everyday spaces, such as through wayfinding or public art, Burlington and West Burlington can promote collective wellbeing and civic pride. By uplifting voices that have historically been overlooked, these efforts strengthen the region's cultural fabric and ensure that every resident sees themselves reflected in the community's identity.

Objective 4.1: Enhance quality of life for all residents through artistic and cultural experiences that foster connection and a sense of civic responsibility.

The quality of life in a community is heavily dependent on the love that individuals have for one another as well as the city they live in. Artistic and cultural experiences can be a great tool to create opportunities for residents to informally discuss city-wide challenges with one another. Focusing these interactions on the shared community all individuals have in common can help facilitate feelings of togetherness and shared ownership to co-create the community everyone wants to live in.

Strategy 1 – Use local artists in leadership roles to drive social change through creative community development.

Artists, as creatives and as storytellers, have the capacity to reimagine the world around them and in turn expand the thinking of their audience. By leveraging these skills, artists can facilitate the process for others to tap into their own creativity to collectively address community problems. Artists in Burlington and West Burlington can bolster their own leadership skills through the Arts as Leaders Incubation Program.

Strategy 2 – Increase offerings of experiences that allow residents to create public art together and honor significant events in the collective history.

In Burlington and West Burlington, many residents already attend events such as the Snake Alley Art Fair. Through community engagement efforts, there was a resounding sentiment that residents would enjoy more events and experiences. By adding in the element of creating public art along with these events, residents can contribute towards preserving and creating community history through visual arts. It is recommended that these events are shared as a new tradition of the community.

Strategy 3 – Connect residents through distributing art throughout schools, public buildings, and Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center.

Art can connect individuals from different generations and backgrounds. By intentionally showcasing art that has been created by local residents and artists, Burlington and West Burlington can foster a deeper sense of belonging and pride. These art pieces can spark conversation and make common spaces more inviting.

Strategy 4 – Offer free museum visits in partnership with the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center for chronically injured and senior residents to have access to low-impact exercise and cultural amenities.

Increasing access to art is especially beneficial for those managing chronic conditions or age-related challenges. It is an opportunity to reduce isolation, improve mental health burdens, and promote physical wellness.

Objective 4.2: Increase opportunities for youth of all income levels to express their creativity and learn community building skills.

Engaging young people in the arts, particularly those who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, is essential to bolstering their quality of life and providing an outlet for emotional expression. By pairing arts education with community development, students will have the opportunity to apply their creativity to shaping their surroundings.

Strategy 1 – Partner with schools and local organizations to integrate arts education with community development initiatives.

By embedding community-focused art projects into school curriculum and youth programming, students can increase their sense of purpose and become more engaged citizens.

Strategy 2 – Create a local government level internship where a high school student or student(s) works with city council, city managers, and artists to expand community development.

This hands-on internship will immerse students in real-world creative problem-solving within local government. By giving young people a voice in shaping their communities, the program helps cultivate the next generation of innovative, civically engaged leaders.

Further Recommendations

Youth Engagement

Conversations with key stakeholders, government leaders, and community members demonstrated that the Burlington and West Burlington communities care deeply about the future of their cities. Many residents brought up the importance of encouraging artistic expression and the benefits that result from giving children the space to be creative and express themselves. The K- 12 education system in the community is a source of pride for many residents, and people in many sectors recognize the importance of retaining the young populations as they age into adulthood. One strategy to learn more about what the younger population is looking for in their community would be to specifically target the youth population via creative engagement activities to get feedback about what they enjoy, as well as opportunities for improvement.

By creating a 'My Community' booklet, planners and stakeholders in the area could get feedback from members of the K-12 community. This booklet could be distributed through the public and private school network in Burlington and West Burlington. It is a simple activity that could be completed in 15-30 minutes. There could also be the opportunity for kids' tables at community events to gain more responses from the community, and those who are in the age range that may participate in nontraditional forms of education, such as home schooling.

Members of the arts and culture coalition could then synthesize the information to create recommendations targeted towards these age groups, resulting in activities and a built environment that reflects the desires and needs of all age groups. Figure 15 shows examples of the booklet that could be conveniently distributed at schools, organizations that serve children, and different community events.

My Community,
Mini book

Write your name below:

This material is neither endorsed
nor sponsored by the Burlington
Community School District

My favorite place to go in my
community is:

Figure 15. 'My Community' booklet example.

Public Art Advisory Commission

Public Art Advisory Councils (PAACs), also known as public art advisory committees or commissions, are commonly established to help communities successfully implement master arts plans. Many cities, both large and small, have adopted these advisory bodies, often as a direct recommendation from their arts plans.

For example, Waukee, Iowa—located just west of Des Moines—proposed the creation of a public art advisory commission to help guide its broader public art program. Similarly, in 2011, West Des Moines established a public art advisory commission to assist the City Council in expanding public art within the built environment and public spaces. Just east of Des Moines, the City of Pleasant Hill also formed an arts advisory commission with the same goal: to guide the City Council in promoting and integrating both physical and performance art throughout the community.

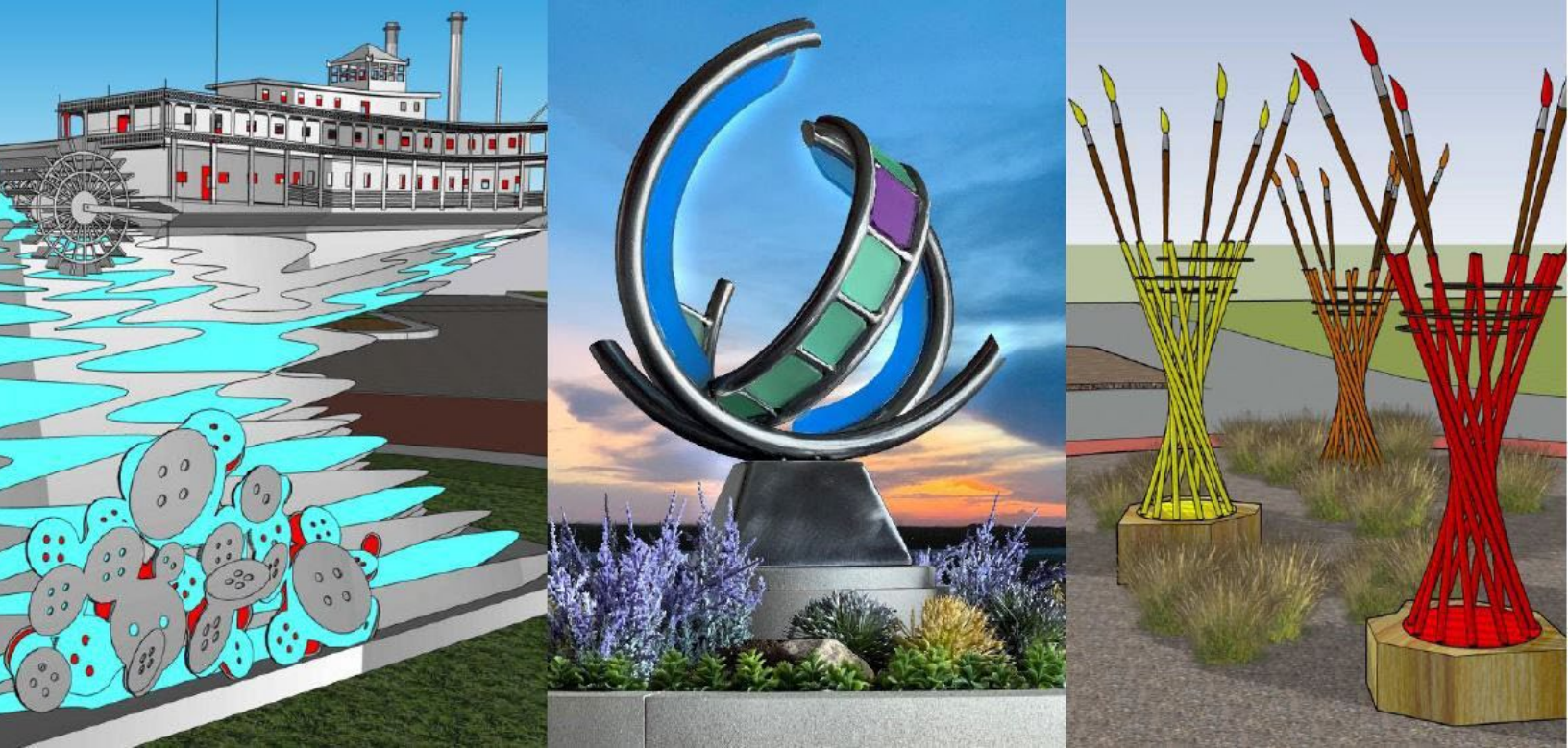
These PAACs typically have similar structures of other types of board or councils. They consist of an odd number of representatives, usually seven individuals from a variety of backgrounds, so that a diverse perspective can be utilized. In the case of Pleasant Hill, the members of their arts advisory council serve staggered terms of four years and are appointed by the Mayor and then confirmed by the City Council. When first created three members of the board served for only two years, while the other four members served a full four-year term. Additionally, Pleasant Hill deemed that at least five of the seven members would be required to be residents of Pleasant Hill. West Des Moines PAAC is organized in a similar manner to that of Pleasant Hills, having seven members that serve staggered terms. West Des Moines requires that all members of their PAAC be residents of the city and hold no elected positions in the city's government.

Both Pleasant Hill and West Des Moines do not require their PAAC members to have specific knowledge or detailed experience in the arts, mere interest is enough to be a member. However, Dubuque, requires that four members of their art advisory commission have and demonstrate significant knowledge in one or more areas of the arts. Which they list as music, dance, literature, visual, folk, or media arts, or art education. While two members are from the business or professional community, the final member does not need to be a part of any specific employment sector or possess any significant degree of knowledge surrounding the arts.

PAACs often help determine how to allocate public funding set aside for arts and cultural activities. For example, the City of Iowa City PPAC has an annual budget of \$25,000 that helps fund public art projects and other art-related activities.



Burlington Iowa Artists in front of the ACB mural
Source: Art Center of Burlington



Example of art designs by Muscatine, Iowa's PAAC that residents were able to vote on
Source: muscatineiowa.gov

From our community engagement at the open house event, we learned that the community is most interested in seeing artists (20%), business professionals (18%), non-profit leaders (17%), and local government officials (17%) on a PAAC that represents both Burlington and West Burlington.

Based on this feedback and research on other PAACs throughout Iowa, we recommend the community form a Public Art Advisory Commission, with a total of seven members. Of these seven members, two members should be from Burlington and two members from West Burlington. Both cities can contribute funds for projects in their respective cities, administered by the joint council.

To launch the PAAC, some members will start with 2-year terms and others will start with 4-year terms. After the first 2-year cycle, all positions will be 4-year terms.

Recommended representation from various community sectors is:

- Two individuals from the arts sector, one of which is themselves an artist.
- Two individuals from the private business sector
- One individual from the non-profit sector
- One individual who holds a non-elected position in local government
- One individual who does not need to represent any specific sector

Artists as Leaders

Putting artists in leadership positions can result in positive outcomes for society at large. It allows artists to learn about government processes, gain business skills, and provides opportunities for cross-sector networking and collaboration. One way in which Burlington and West Burlington could begin to work towards more artists with the knowledge to be put into leadership positions, as well as more public art and culture initiatives being realized, would be to implement an Artists as Leaders Incubator Program.

Incubator programs are used across the country in order to encourage higher visibility of artists and art initiatives in the community. Arts Bridge in Chicago gives artists management training, peer support, and help in developing business plans. The Tualatin Valley Arts and Culture Leadership Incubator in Washington County, Oregon works to educate more artists on community leadership and, at the end of the programming, gives artists the opportunity to receive a \$500 stipend to help advance their work. The Iowa Artist Career Development Accelerator allows artists to go on a career development retreat, offers both one-on-one mentoring and small group support, and the opportunity to receive up to \$3,000.

Since the Arts Coalition will already have a healthy mix of professionals from different sectors, as well as will be responsible for the approval and oversight of public art installations, we recommend that they oversee the creation and implementation of the Artists as Leaders Incubator Program. While specifics may vary, we recommend the incubator program have the following features:

- **Regular cycle.** This may be a once per year cycle in the first few years of implementation, with the possibility of two per year as capacity increases.
- **Learning opportunities.** This could be in the form of workshops or lectures. They should cover topics such as government processes, business and financial planning, and the basics of contracts and copyright. Ideally, this will also include the opportunity for artists to educate government leaders and business professionals without traditional ties to the arts.
- **Space for artist collaboration.** This may include collaborations to rent out storefronts that are currently sitting empty throughout the community. This would provide activation of a currently unused space as well.
- **Peer support and networking opportunities.** This may include something like an annual mixer for business professionals and past and present graduates to communicate about ideas and community needs.
- **Final showcase with funding opportunities.** This would include the opportunity for participants to pitch their ideas to community members and the arts coalition. Making funding available for the arts coalition to vote to fund 1-2 of these per year could help implement this plan, as well as contribute to the arts and culture ecosystem of the community.

Art & Culture Inventory

The Project Team created an inventory of arts & cultural spaces and assets in Burlington and West Burlington. An inventory can be useful for amplifying opportunities for residents and visitors to experience arts and culture in the community. Through an online platform called StoryMap, the team highlights the vast array of cultural assets and institutions that contribute to the area's unique character. An interactive map shows the locations of each asset. Mapping the inventory on GIS also allowed for analysis of where new investments might be appropriate. This step informed selection of priority areas described on the next page.

The online inventory can be accessed at the following URL:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/6c89bd1297db48f1ae8d56cbe3be274d>

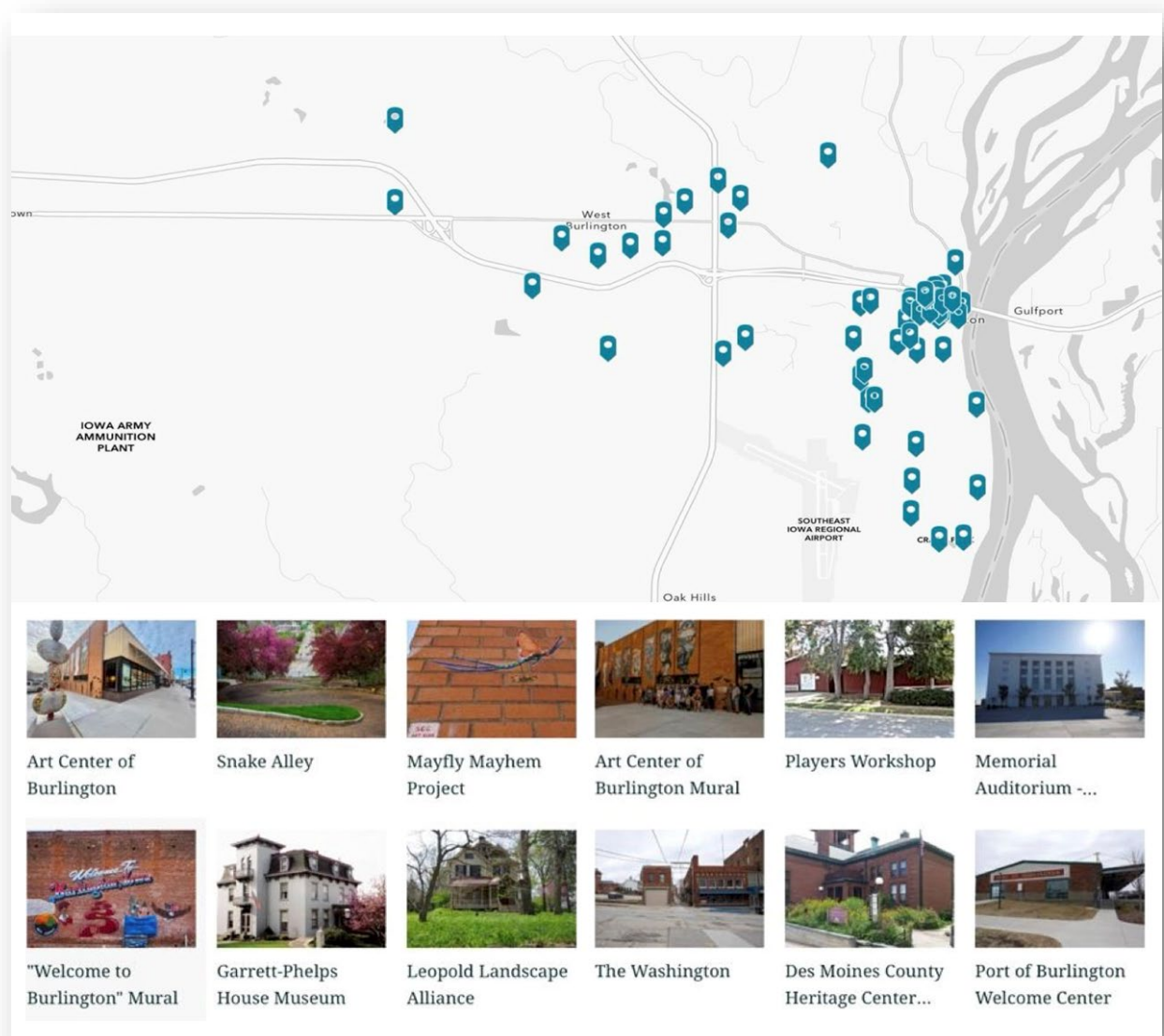


Figure 16 Screenshot of Cultural Inventory StoryMap

Priority Locations



Sculpture Garden
Source: Sightlines Magazine (Forth Worth, Texas)

Lure's Park

This is the location of a large existing greenspace located to the east of downtown West Burlington. This is an ideal location for additional cultural amenities in the city. Residents identified this park as a good candidate for a sculpture garden, visitor amenities such as shelters, a location for additional festivals, or an activated pathway leading into the park.



Musical Playground in Iowa City, IA.
Source: Cunningham Recreation (Iowa City, Iowa)

1207 Linden Street

This lot is at the intersection of Iowa and Brooks Street, with a sizeable plot of greenspace here. This location is an ideal candidate for the installation of a musical playground, or other cultural infrastructure for the neighborhood. This is supported by community input, in which a musical playground was requested in this vicinity.



Gateway Sculpture over Mt. Pleasant Street
Source: Gabe Sturdevant Photography and Photoshop

Mt. Pleasant Street

This is the location of West Burlington's Public Works Department, off Mount Pleasant Street, which leads into downtown West Burlington. Community members suggested having a gateway sculpture, a mural, or the incorporation of art as public infrastructure in this area.



Concert outside of artist-led contemporary art center
Source: Public Space One

306 Emmett Street

This is a Burlington owned property on the west side of Burlington, within a neighborhood. This site is a strong candidate for a cultural or artist house within the community, with an existing house present here.

- **Bluff Road and 8th Street:** This location is on a high traffic road on the northeast side of Burlington, leading into downtown. Two city owned properties are located here. Community members asked for a gateway sculpture in this area, and this location provides a good fit for this.
- **3356 E Agency Street:** This is the site of a Burlington water tower, on the border of the two cities. Community members identified this location as an ideal site for a gateway sculpture, and due to the location on the edge of both cities, it would be a good candidate for this.
- **2000 N Roosevelt Ave:** This site is located off of Highway 61 and is a heavily trafficked road leading into both cities. Due to the prime location, this would be a good target location for a potential “two cities, one community” gateway sculpture. Community members identified this site as a good candidate for a gateway sculpture as well.
- **Williams and Ironwood St:** This is the location of another Burlington water tower, located in a neighborhood in the west side of Burlington. Due to the existing greenspace here, this would be a good candidate for the development of a pocket park with cultural amenities for the surrounding neighborhood.
- **Iowa and Brooks Street:** This lot is at the intersection of Iowa and Brooks Street, with a sizeable plot of greenspace here. This location is an ideal candidate for the installation of a musical playground, or other cultural infrastructure for the neighborhood. This is supported by community input, in which a musical playground was requested in this vicinity.
- **1038 W Agency Rd:** This is the site of West Burlington’s water tower, along a highly utilized road. This site could be a good candidate for a gateway installation. Additionally, the community suggested the incorporation of art on trails in the vicinity of this site.
- **501 S Broadway:** The Rec Plex serves as an important, highly utilized area of West Burlington. With trails in the vicinity to this location, this would be an ideal spot for the addition of art to the trail system in this area, which is backed by community input.
- **Agency and Shields:** This is the location of a siren for Burlington, sitting on a vacant city-owned lot. This lot is in an area with a lack of other cultural amenities in the vicinity. This is an ideal candidate for the development of a neighborhood gathering place, such as a pocket park with amenities such as a park shelter, public art, or a playground, for example.

Additional Locations:

The following properties were identified in our analysis of vacant lots and may be considered if further amenities are necessary and additional funding become available:

- 1209 Stowe Street
- 1527 Osborne Street
- 1633 Oak Street
- 1751 Gnahn Street
- 1733 Sunnyside Street
- 911 Linden Street
- 2444 Mason Road

Local Financing Opportunities

While some grassroots initiatives can be done at a low or no-cost, funding will be crucial for a broad-based strategy to meaningfully expand arts and culture across the community. Identifying private funding, grants, and other external resources will be important. However, the local municipalities can also spur activity by dedicating public resources. Allocating funding through the general city budgets is one simple option, but other local government financing tools provide additional opportunities.

1% for the Arts

A 1% for the Arts program is used to allocate 1% of the budget of a capital improvement or renovation project to be spent directly on public art initiatives. This works to provide a direct financing option for arts initiatives, through new developments, or renovations within the community. This option is effective in providing arts with a steady stream of revenue without extra spending directly from the general budget. This program is commonly funded through new public projects, such as through infrastructure improvement projects, but can also be applied to private developments. A local ordinance that establishes this program can be written to provide incentives to private developers who opt-in to this program, such as through the provision of bonuses for a new development, but it can also be mandatory above a certain monetary threshold for a private development. This provides a flexible financing option, depending on the community's needs, but the implementation of this program guarantees funding for new public art within the community.²⁵

This type of program has been effective nationwide, with over 350 programs initiated throughout the country. An example of this program can be found in Des Moines, where in 2001, the Des Moines City Council established the City Public Arts Program which funds new arts programming through a 1.5% for the arts initiative. The revenue from this program is managed by the Greater Des Moines Public Art Foundation, which also serves as an advisory body to the Des Moines City Council.²⁶ With this noted, a 1% for the Arts program in Burlington and West Burlington would be effectively implemented in tangent with the creation of a Public Art Advisory Council.

Self-Sustained Municipal Improvement District (SSMID)

A SSMID district is a unique local financing option that is often used for beautification projects, along with arts and culture developments and programming. This financing option is a self-imposed tax levy on property owners within a district, in which at least 25% of the property owners in the proposed district have signed on to the additional tax, and in which the signatures represent at least 25% of the assessed property value in the area. If these qualifications are met, the additional tax imposed on property owners in the established district is used for improvement projects within that district. This provides a financing option that does not increase governmental budgetary spending but rather uses an additional tax that directly improves the area in which the tax revenue is coming from. SSMID districts can only be established in commercial, industrial, or historical district properties, which makes them commonly utilized in the downtown of a city.

SSMID districts are used throughout the country, and in the state of Iowa, there are around 30 in use today, including downtown Burlington. Along with the SSMID in downtown Burlington,

West Burlington and Burlington can explore opportunities to use this tool in other strategic locations. In 2014, IISC collaborated with local and state leaders to create a SSMID toolkit, which can be accessed on the Iowa Economic Development Authority [website](#).²⁷

Hotel/Motel Tax

Iowa Chapter 423A, allows municipalities to impose a hotel/motel tax at a rate not to exceed 7 percent after a successful election of a simple majority vote within the city. The code states that a city that has lawfully established a hotel/motel tax must spend at least 50 percent of related revenues for “the acquisition of sites for, or constructing, improving, enlarging, equipping, repairing, operating, or maintaining of recreation, convention, cultural, or entertainment facilities including but not limited to memorial buildings, halls and monuments, civic center convention buildings, auditoriums, coliseums, and parking areas or facilities...or for the promotion and encouragement of tourist and convention business in the city or county and surrounding areas.” Any remaining revenues may be spent by the city for any other lawful city purpose.²⁸

Both Burlington and West Burlington currently have hotel/motel tax at the highest rate of 7%. Allocation of these funds for arts & culture initiatives can be carefully considered by local leaders, community organizations, and other stakeholders as appropriate.



Implementation

The Implementation Guide outlines the specific actions that the Burlington and West Burlington community can take to grow and strengthen the local arts and culture ecosystem. It also provides clear guidance on the timeframes, costs, and measures of success associated with each strategy in the plan. By organizing these strategies into a structured and accessible format, the guide serves as a practical tool for turning vision into action and ensuring long-term accountability.

Implementation of this plan will require coordination between local governments, non-profit organizations, artists, elected leaders, and residents. The components outlined below are intended to provide a flexible framework that can guide progress over time, while remaining adaptable to changes in funding, priorities, or community needs.

Time Estimates

Each strategy includes an estimated timeframe for completion, categorized as Short (1–3 years), Medium (4–7 years), or Long (8 or more years). These categories provide a broad sense of when strategies might realistically be initiated and completed. Time estimates reflect the total duration needed to carry out the strategy from beginning to end and are meant to assist in setting priorities and sequencing actions across the life of the plan.

Cost Estimates

Each strategy is assigned a general cost range using a dollar sign system (\$–\$\$\$), With \$ being a range from \$0-5,000, \$\$ being \$5,001-20,000, and \$\$\$ being greater than \$20,000. This visual shorthand offers a quick and accessible way to understand the relative financial scale of each strategy, supporting decision-making around resource allocation. These estimates are not exact figures but serve to communicate approximate levels of investment and help identify opportunities for grants, partnerships, or phased implementation.

Action Steps

Each strategy is accompanied by a set of initial action steps intended to serve as starting points for implementation. These steps are designed to help policymakers, city staff, and community partners begin the work in a focused and achievable way. They are not exhaustive but rather offer a flexible foundation that can be built upon or adjusted as capacity and context evolve. The goal is to make the process of implementation more manageable and actionable.

Local Partners

The responsible part and recommendation type follow each action step and provide context for how each step will be achieved. These are intended to provide clarity as to what type of recommendation each is, either a private, public, or public-private partnership step. Then, based on the type of recommendation, the responsible party portion provides guidance as to who is best equipped to see through that specific recommendation.

Goal 1: Generate substantial public-private commitment towards arts and culture initiatives within the community

Objective 1.1: Establish Burlington and West Burlington as regional arts and culture hubs.

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Utilize arts and artists to drive tourism.</i>	Showcase local artists' work in the port of Burlington.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, Downtown Partners, Greater Burlington Partnership, Art Center of Burlington
<i>Work towards achieving cultural designations in downtown West Burlington.</i>	Increase arts and cultural amenities in downtown West Burlington.	Long-term	\$\$\$	City of West Burlington, Greater Burlington Partnership
<i>Encourage hotel development to provide additional opportunities for prolonged visits.</i>	Leverage TIF to secure public/private partnership to revitalize vacant buildings in downtown Burlington for boutique hotels.	Medium-term	\$\$\$	City of Burlington, Downtown Partners, Greater Burlington Partnership

Objective 1.2: Increase collaboration in arts and culture by leveraging local leadership capacity.

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Form a joint Public Art Advisory Commission (PAAC).</i>	Include stakeholders from both Burlington and West Burlington, forming a multi-disciplinary coalition.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington
<i>Establish a program targeted towards developing leadership skills, business skills, and understanding of local government processes.</i>	Develop curriculum, identify locations for meetings (possibly hybrid for accessibility). Identify teachers to participate.	Medium-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC, School districts, SCC
<i>Create a match-making platform between businesses and artists to promote the hiring of local talent for creative purposes.</i>	Utilize artist registry website, add call to artist page where businesses can list opportunities.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC, Art Center of Burlington

Objective 1.3: Secure sustainable and reliable funding for arts and culture.

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Obtain grants from the state, regional coalitions, federal opportunities, and private entities.</i>	Leverage entertainment and cultural district designation for grant support.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Art Center of Burlington, Downtown Partners Inc., Greater Burlington Partnership
<i>Consider local financing options to provide targeted funding for arts and culture.</i>	Explore and implement specific funding mechanism, such as SSMIDs and 1% for the arts.	Medium-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington
<i>Collaborate with social services to facilitate benefits that can be provided by arts and culture in different spaces.</i>	Identify public spaces that have capacity for art classes. Utilize Art Coalition to partner with non-profits in the area. Embed artists into social service organizations.	Medium-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC

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

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Develop a placemaking narrative to connect the existing cultures of Burlington and West Burlington.</i>	Identify locations of historical significance to develop a self-guided tour. Hire local artists or historians to tell the story of the Burlington and West Burlington area.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, Downtown Partners, Greater Burlington Partnership, Art Center of Burlington
<i>Establish neighborhood leadership groups to promote community action and responsibility.</i>	Identify neighborhood boundaries and interested stakeholders. Promote public participation by creating a forum for conversation and a platform for suggesting new ideas.	Short-term	\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Neighborhood Leaders
<i>Increase the use of cultural wayfinding to enhance appreciation of historical significance of place.</i>	Promote historical landmarks through increased signage and events.	Medium-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC

OBJECTIVE 2.2 Increase public art throughout Burlington and West Burlington

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Implement art in target locations</i>	Utilizing vacant lots and existing open spaces for new installations and projects. Select local talent for art propositions. Apply for grants to help fund projects.	Short-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC
<i>Expand arts and culture assets beyond the Burlington downtown district.</i>	Emphasize the importance of cultural expansion beyond the downtown districts.	Long-term	\$\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, PAAC

Goal 3: Ensure equitable access to arts and cultural heritage

Objective 3.1 Reduce barriers to access and participation in arts and culture experiences

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Reduce financial barriers by implementing alternative payment methods.</i>	Determine populations that have high degrees of financial burden that prevents them from attending events. Partner with local non-profits or financial institutions to help alleviate costs for financially burdened groups.	Short-term	\$	United Way, Community Foundation of Des Moines County, Burlington Arts Center
<i>Reduce social barriers by ensuring welcoming environments regardless of gender, race/ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, age, or political affiliation.</i>	Increase programs that work to highlight or amplify marginalized groups. Increase amount of inclusive language or displays at locations or events. Encourage or educate more about foreign artists, mediums, or traditions that may be less familiar in the region.	Long-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Downtown Partners Inc, Greater Burlington Partnership, Art Center of Burlington, Art Coalition
<i>Increase access to information of arts and culture events.</i>	Develop a centralized arts and culture event calendar. Partner with local media and community organizations. Increase signage regarding events in high traffic areas. Place materials at local businesses, places of worship, schools. Partner with school districts and local youth groups/programs. Incentivize event sharing (e.g. sharing of event win a raffle). Track data about attendance and participation.	Short-term	\$	Art Center of Burlington, Downtown Partners Inc., Greater Burlington Partnership, Local school districts, places of worship, local newspapers, radio stations, local businesses

OBJECTIVE 3.2 Increase access to public spaces

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Utilize identified vacant lots as sites for community oriented cultural amenities.</i>	Determine site suitability, to establish ideal locations in terms of engineering requirements/restrictions. Identify sites that could serve the largest share of underserved residents. Design sites that celebrate local community identity. Establish community programs to be held at sites so they are utilized by the public	Medium-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Des Moines County, Local neighborhood associations, PAAC, Art Center of Burlington, Local artists, School districts, SCC
<i>Develop pocket parks in underserved areas.</i>	Connect with residents to assess park opportunities within neighborhoods. Collaborate with local artists to help design art to be utilized in/around parks. Track number of residents who utilize these parks to support later initiatives and better inform future projects. Involve neighborhood associations in development of parks.	Short-term	\$\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Des Moines County, Local neighborhood associations, PAAC, Art Center of Burlington

Goal 4: Prioritize a strong sense of place and community identity to uplift collective wellbeing.

OBJECTIVE 4.1 Enhance quality of life for all residents through artistic and cultural experiences that foster connection and a sense of civic responsibility.

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Use local artists in leadership roles to drive social change through creative community development.</i>	Host a conference for artists to learn leadership skills and workshop ideas together. Find funding to support artists. Utilize local artists to lead community engagement initiatives.	Long-term	\$\$	PAAC, City of Burlington, City of West Burlington
<i>Increase offerings of experiences that allow residents to create public art together and honor significant events in the collective history.</i>	Create opportunities for residents to participate in public arts and culture activities. Increase opportunities within neighborhoods.	Short-term	\$	Burlington Arts Center
<i>Connect residents through distributing art throughout schools, public buildings, and Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center.</i>	Have dedicated channels of distribution for art created at community events to be dispersed to those in the hospital, non-profits, and faith-based organizations.	Short-term	\$	PAAC, Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center, City Hope Foundation Community Action of Southeast Iowa, Special Needs Foundation of Des Moines County, School Districts
<i>Offer free museum visits in partnership with the Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center for chronically injured and senior residents to have access to low-impact exercise and cultural amenities.</i>	Select low-attendance hours or days to offer free admission to seniors and those with chronic injuries. Utilize Facebook and newsletters to spread awareness of this offering.	Short-term	\$	Southeast Iowa Regional Medical Center, Garrett-Phelps House Museum. Des Moines County Heritage Center Museum. Burlington Fire Department Museum

OBJECTIVE 4.2 Increase opportunities for youth of all income levels to express their creativity and learn community building skills.

Strategy	Actions	Timeline	Cost	Local Partners
<i>Partner with schools and local organizations to integrate arts education with community development initiatives.</i>	Organize field trips especially for low-income, underserved youth to participate in art and cultural experiences. Create yearly “Art as Community Development Workshop” for art teachers and local artists. Include students in local art classes in Downtown Partners initiatives.	Medium-term	\$\$	School Districts. SCC, Art Center of Burlington, Local artists, Downtown Partners Inc.
<i>Create a local government level internship where a high school student or student(s) works with city council, city managers, and artists to expand community development.</i>	Identify mentors for intern(s). Locate funding for youth to become involved in public leadership, Determine internship objectives,	Short-term	\$\$	City of Burlington, City of West Burlington, Des Moines County, PAAC, Local Artists

Funding Resources

Public Funding Sources

Iowa Community Cultural Grant

Funding Opportunity: Up to \$20,000 for festivals, music, drama, cultural programs, and tourism projects promoting heritage and creating jobs

Eligible Parties: Non-profit or local government entity

Grant Cycle: Application due April 22; Notification in June; Funding period July 1 – June 30

Relevant Objectives: Cultural heritage programming, public value, job creation, 1:1 match

Strategies: 2.1.1, 4.1.3, 4.2.1

Iowa Foundation for Parks & Rec – Mini Grant Program

Funding Opportunity: Small grants supporting parks and recreation programming

Eligible Parties: Parks and recreation departments or similar local bodies

Grant Cycle: Applications accepted October 15 – January 31

Relevant Objectives: Community placemaking and accessibility

Strategies: 3.2.1, 4.2.1

Iowa Living Roadways Trust Fund (LRTF)

Funding Opportunity: Grants for roadside vegetation management and education

Eligible Parties: Local governments and partners

Grant Cycle: Application due June 1

Relevant Objectives: Ecological placemaking, cultural landscapes

Strategies: 2.1.3, 3.2.2

Iowa State Recreational Trails Grant (SRT)

Funding Opportunity: Trail development for public enjoyment

Eligible Parties: State/local governments, non-profits

Grant Cycle: Application due July 1

Relevant Objectives: Public health, access, trail-based art

Strategies: 3.1.1, 4.2.1

Destination Iowa Grant

Funding Opportunity: Infrastructure grants for tourism and cultural destinations

Eligible Parties: Cities, counties, non-profits

Grant Cycle: January 15, 2025 & July 15, 2025

Relevant Objectives: Community revitalization, tourism, vertical infrastructure

Strategies: 1.1.1, 2.2.2, 4.1.3

IEDA Art Project Grants

Funding Opportunity: High-quality cultural engagement projects

Eligible Parties: Iowa artists and organizations

Grant Cycle: Application due April 22

Relevant Objectives: Public engagement and equity in the arts

Strategies: 4.1.3, 4.2.1, 2.1.1

Historical Resource Development Program

Funding Opportunity: Supports museums, historic preservation, documentary projects

Eligible Parties: Local governments, museums, nonprofits

Grant Cycle: Application due May 1

Relevant Objectives: Interpretation and preservation of cultural history

Strategies: 4.1.3, 2.1.3

Iowa Derelict Building Grant

Funding Opportunity: Deconstruction, reuse, and renovation of abandoned buildings

Eligible Parties: Communities under 5,000 residents

Grant Cycle: Application due February 23

Relevant Objectives: Creative reuse of space

Strategies: 2.2.1, 3.2.1

Public-Private Funding Sources

Grants for Arts Projects (GAP)

Funding Opportunity: Up to \$100,000 for public arts engagement and capacity-building

Eligible Parties: Non-profits, local/state governments

Grant Cycle: February 1 and July 10 deadlines

Relevant Objectives: Specific and measurable arts projects, 1:1 match

Strategies: 1.3.3, 4.1.3, 4.1.4, 4.2.1

Greater Burlington Public-Private Incentives

Funding Opportunity: Tax incentives and infrastructure deals to encourage development

Eligible Parties: Private developers and public agencies

Grant Cycle: Ongoing, project-based

Relevant Objectives: Cultural hubs, placemaking development

Strategies: 1.3.1, 2.2.2, 3.2.1

Our Town Grant

Funding Opportunity: Creative placemaking through art, culture, and design

Eligible Parties: Non-profits and government agencies

Grant Cycle: Opens May 2025

Relevant Objectives: Social and physical revitalization via arts

Strategies: 1.1.1, 2.1.1, 3.1.1

Private Funding Sources

GIG Fund – Arts Midwest

Funding Opportunity: Funds to bring professional artists/events to local communities

Eligible Parties: Non-profits

Grant Cycle: Yearly; currently closed

Relevant Objectives: Artist access and cultural programming

Strategies: 2.2.1, 4.1.3

Mellon Foundation: Arts & Culture Grant

Funding Opportunity: Large-scale support for equity in arts and cultural access

Eligible Parties: Artists, curators, scholars, nonprofits

Grant Cycle: Yearly

Relevant Objectives: Inclusive cultural ecosystems and major arts programming

Strategies: 1.3.3, 4.1.4, 4.2.1

Humanities Iowa

Funding Opportunity: Micro- and full-scale grants for community humanities access

Eligible Parties: Non-profits with scholar-led projects

Grant Cycle: Yearly

Relevant Objectives: Education-based cultural programs, adult focus

Strategies: 2.1.1, 3.1.2

Kresge Foundation – American Cities

Funding Opportunity: Creative placemaking grants in urban areas (when open)

Eligible Parties: Cities, nonprofits

Grant Cycle: Currently closed

Relevant Objectives: Equitable urban arts development

Strategies: 1.2.2, 4.1.3, 4.2.2

HAVlife Tri-States Grants

Funding Opportunity: Grants to support youth in music, arts, and athletics

Eligible Parties: 501(c)(3) organizations

Grant Cycle: Due April & July

Relevant Objectives: Youth engagement in the arts

Strategies: 4.2.1, 3.2.2

Knight Foundation – Arts Grants

Funding Opportunity: Supports art's role in civic engagement and tech integration

Eligible Parties: Artists, orgs, and communities

Grant Cycle: Open calls year-round

Relevant Objectives: Access, tech, and public value in arts

Strategies: 4.1.3, 1.3.3

US Bank – Community Possible Grant Program

Funding Opportunity: Grant program focused on work, home, and play, including arts access

Eligible Parties: Community nonprofits

Grant Cycle: Rolling, requires letter of interest

Relevant Objectives: Arts and play as components of neighborhood revitalization

Strategies: 4.1.3, 4.2.1

Midwest One Foundation

Funding Opportunity: Supports cultural and educational well-being in local communities

Eligible Parties: Non-profits, schools

Grant Cycle: Deadline June 1

Relevant Objectives: Education and cultural enrichment

Strategies: 4.2.1, 3.2.2

Walmart Spark Good Local Grants

Funding Opportunity: Small grants to support local community benefit

Eligible Parties: Local nonprofits and organizations

Grant Cycle: Mar. 10 – Apr. 15; May 1 – Jul. 15; Aug. 1 – Oct. 15; Nov. 3 – Dec. 31

Relevant Objectives: Local arts, inclusion, and cultural enrichment

Strategies: 4.1.3, 3.1.1

Build with Bags Grant

Funding Opportunity: Funds for recycled plastic benches, tables, and playgrounds

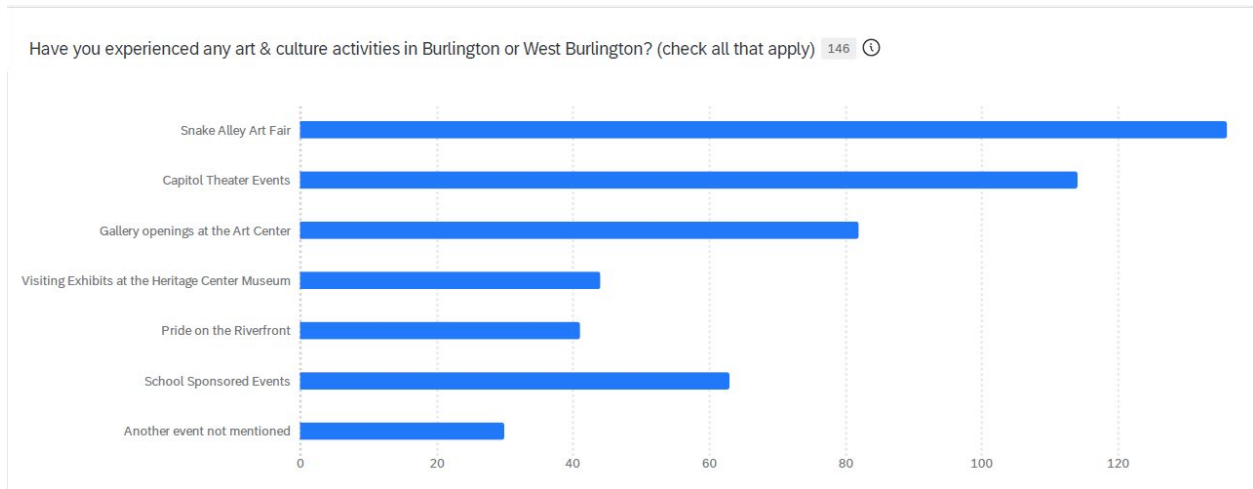
Eligible Parties: Public bodies, schools, nonprofits

Grant Cycle: Application due May 2

Relevant Objectives: Beautification and public access infrastructure

Strategies: 3.2.1, 3.2.2

Appendix A – Survey Results

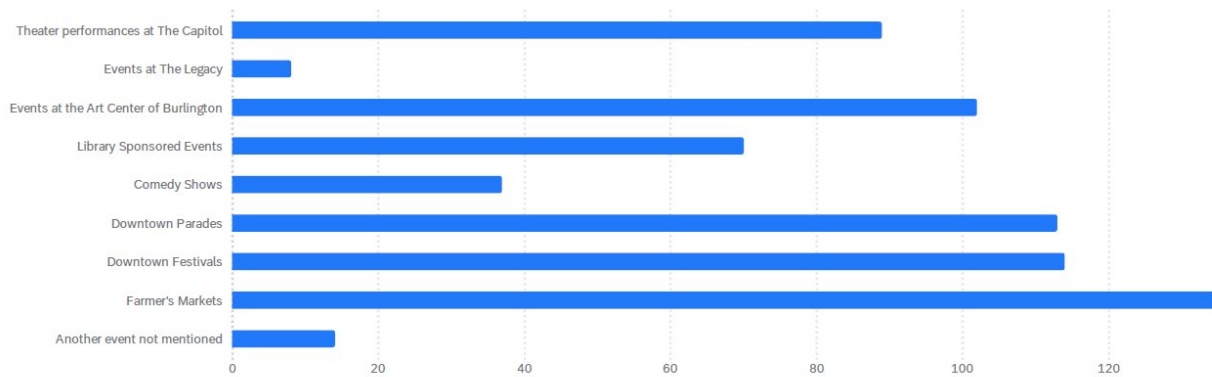


Have you experienced any art & culture activities in Burlington or West Burlington? (check all that apply) - Another event not mentioned – Text

The Homestead 1839 plein air auction
Southeastern Community College Art Gallery events
Southeast Iowa Symphony
Snake Alley Festival of Film
SEICO, CONCERT IN THE PARK (COMMUNITY BAND)
Players Workshop plays, Symphonic Blasts at Crapo
Players Workshop musicals and plays
Players Workshop (local theater)
Players Workshop
Mystical Market, Metaphysical Fair, Pagan Fest
Music in Busted Cup, minigolf, Civic music
Local Plays
Living Windows and the Holiday Parade
Live music at The Washington, Cheryl's school of Dance, Burlington public library.
Little theater, local music venues like The Washington, civic music, symphony, and municipal band.
Holiday parade
Fridayfest
Fine arts league
Farmers market
Downtown Cruise Night
Concerts
Community choir, Chamber music one Wednesday a month, Symphony, Community band concerts

Civic Music
 Civic Music, Fridayfest
 Burlington Riverfront Entertainment events
 Burlington Public Library Historical Programs. Events.
 Burlington Bees baseball
 Art center classes
 Art Center camps/events for kids

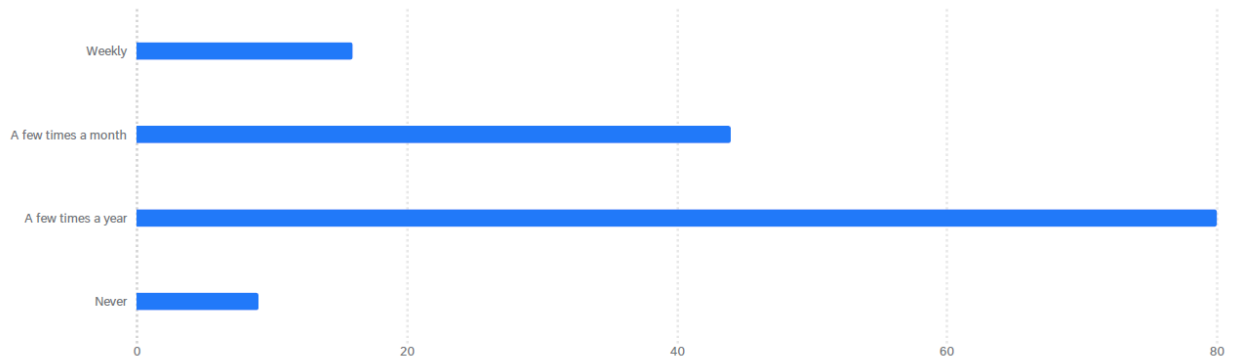
What events in Downtown Burlington have you attended? (check all that apply) 148 ⓘ



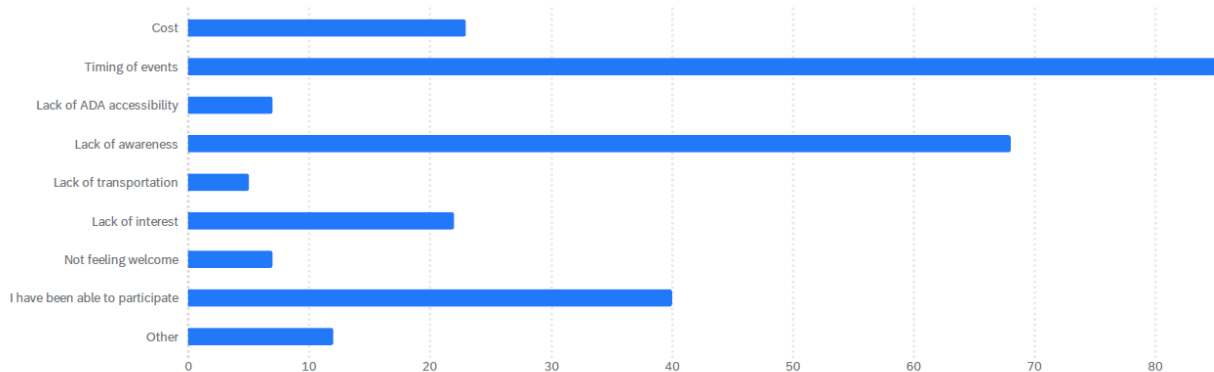
What events in Downtown Burlington have you attended? (check all that apply) - Another event not mentioned – Text

The Legacy is not in Burlington
 Steam Boat Days, Coach Music Festival
 Old couch fest
 Musical Acts at The Burlington Memorial Auditorium
 Lunchtime Chamber Music Series
 Living Windows, Ragbrai
 Little theatre
 Jazz at the NightCap Speakeasy
 Events at the Memorial Auditorium
 Downtown Cruise Nights
 Comedy at the Auditorium
 Civic Music Events
 Civic Music and The Night Cap

How often do you attend Burlington or West Burlington cultural experiences (e.g. theatrical plays, concerts, book readings) or visit cultural spaces (e.g. museums, historical sites, art studios) in a typical year? 149 ⓘ



Have you been unable to participate in activities related to arts and culture for the following reasons? (select all that apply) 141 ⓘ



Have you been unable to participate in activities related to arts and culture for the following reasons? (select all that apply) - Other – Text

up&out=needs more detail=1 or 2 phrases; being single=hard to attend

Time/Schedule

Other obligations

Most "arts" and "culture" aren't interesting or even good and more and more often are just a vehicle to promote ideas and life ways which are antithetical to my own.

Lack of convenient downtown parking

Lack of childcare

Lack of childcare

Kids at home

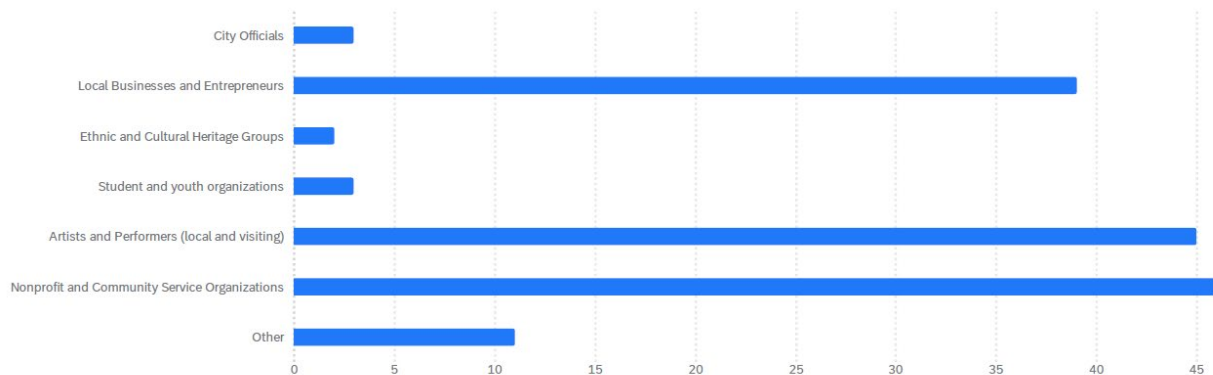
I aim for the dog friendly ones mostly

Event time

Been out of town

A lack of available parking in downtown Burlington during larger events makes it near impossible for elderly people to attend many events. many are physically unable to walk several blocks in order to enjoy the festivities,

Who do you perceive to be the strongest advocate for arts and culture in Burlington & West Burlington? 149 ⓘ



Who do you perceive to be the strongest advocate for arts and culture in Burlington & West Burlington? - Other – Text

Why are we focusing on this when we are losing jobs and population and we are 8 police officers short and soon to be 11.

Venue employees

The Greater Burlington Partnership

The Art Center of Burlington. More specifically, Elizabeth Pappas

The Art Center

The Art Center

The Art Center

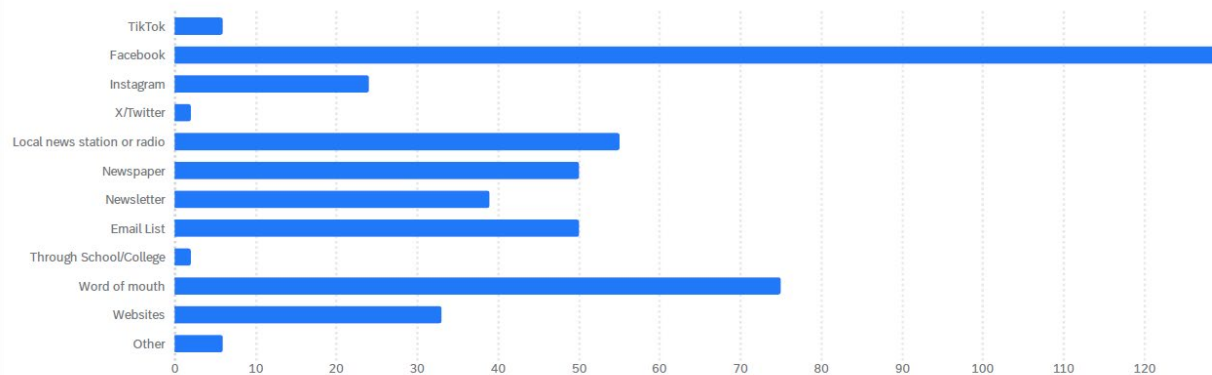
Nobody

If I'm honest recently it's mostly just been local community organizers, but not specifically Community Service just people doing what they can to make things work.

Greater Burlington Partnership

Art Center, Greater Burlington Partnership, Downtown Burlington

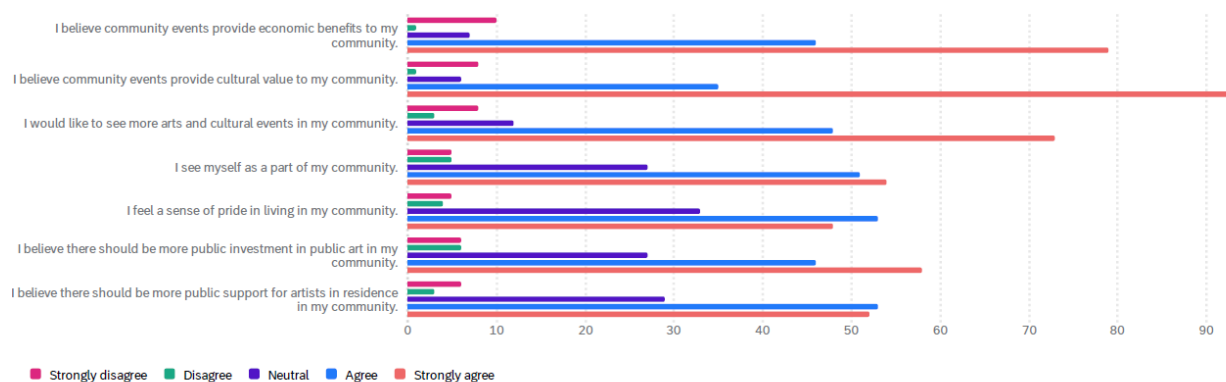
Which of the following do you use to learn about Burlington or West Burlington news or events? (select all that apply) 149 ⓘ



Which of the following do you use to learn about Burlington or West Burlington news or events? (select all that apply) - Other – Text

WIUM-FM
 Newsletter or mailed flyer/postcard
 Mailings
 Local Radio
 GBP Friday Facts
 GBP

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 144



What are the biggest strengths and opportunities within your community?

Year round employment with sustainable salaries and benefits. Permanent population.
 We have a wonderful community of local artists in all mediums!

We have a very vibrant arts and culture scene in the downtown area. We not have an opportunity to support it further into our community, and to other segments and populations within both cities.

We have a thriving art center!

We have a dynamic symphony, Municipal Band and Civic music opportunities

We are an open community

We are a close knit community so word can travel fast

Volunteer opportunities for groups like The Little Theater on Grove St., Silver Singers Choir, Belcanto community choir.

Visionary leaders & strong network of supporters

Variety and frequency of events.

Unsure about opportunities, not involved enough to know. However I do know events like Snake Alley give local artists a great opportunity to promote their businesses.

togetherness, welcome to newcomers, and local historical events

To cut off taxpayer dollars for losers who call themselves artists and social activists who undermine Traditional Western Civilization and its Good, Beautiful and True Art with their ugly evil inverted version.

There is a diverse choice of activities for all ages.

There are so many things happening in Burlington! I just wish more people knew & attended!

There are always events happening allowing for local artists and creative minds to attend and contribute!

There are a lot of passionate people

The revitalization of downtown is a strength. There are limited opportunities.

The people who organize and participate

The people are our biggest strength. Entrepreneurs (local businesses) are second.

The opportunity to participate in such an eclectic array of arts is unique.

The library and music are the biggest strengths. There are a number of pipe organs in our area that could host a pipe organ festival.

The fact that they have anything

The community is heavily gentrified if I'm honest, and while I think the arts need to be supported I think the mass majority are unable to support themselves let alone others.

The Burlington/West Burlington community is fortunate to have musical performing groups such as the Burlington Municipal Band, the Bel Canto Chorale and the Southeast Iowa Symphony that provide quality performance opportunities for area musicians. The Players Workshop provides the theatrical community opportunities for participation.

The Capitol Theater and its adjacent Nightcap Lounge are wonderful venues for cinematic and jazz performances. The Art Center provides exhibit space for the visual arts and the Des Moines County Historical Society's Heritage Museum is a tremendous asset. The newly organized Southeast Iowa Arts Collective is helpful in publicizing arts events in our community and the surrounding region.

The Art Center

Terrific collaboration among art/theater/music organizations and collaboration among Jefferson Street merchants.

TAMMY McCOY: LIBRARY: JEFFERSON STREET: BURLINGTON BY THE BOOK: CAPITOL: CEC MOVIE: THE LOFT: SPLASH PAD; OUTDOOR CONCERTS: SEIRMC: SCC: WAKE+BAKE ! friendly + hawkeye sports + city management +

Support for the wide variety of events .

Strong downtown community

Strengths: the growing cooperation among local businesses and non-profits.

Opportunities: striving to work against the negativity of so many who live here and their perceptions.

Strength-City Leadership...focus on the future Opportunity-Get the word out that Burlington is the place to live and work!

Smaller size city and accessible.

Small town community

Size, community care, opportunities

Public art as in statues need installed. Like the Papajohn Sculpture Park in Des Moines. All other avenues like the Art Center offer far to many events of art no one is interested in when we need actual installations of art to drive tourism.

Private ownership of businesses and buildings Downtown

People want to make Burlington a destination. The drive and want is a huge strength and opportunity.

People and venues

Outdoor art, commingling of recreation with art and cultural events

Our city council believes its is more taxes on a declining population. We have less opportunities because of the closing of factories.

Opportunity to participate in the arts

None

Multiple art venues and places for live performances

More public art in public spaces and on exterior of buildings

Lots of jobs available. Lots of food pantries. Harmony Bible Church.

Local, public art displays - interactive as well. Selfie mural.

I've mention in every community survey that there are over 20 canvass on blank walls downtown Burlington that could have murals of pictures of Burlington's past. Such as Chief Blackhawk, another with several paintings of different years of engines.

Underground history, Riverfront and steamboats and murals of famous Burlingtonians etc..

It's on the smaller side

I think the kids and retirees are being reached when it comes to strengths. I assume they're involved in the shows, etc. I think it's the generations between that are hard to reach and get involved. I've found its usually the timing of things.

I sell my art online because at the farmers market you just get comments about how they can make it themselves rather than buy it from you

Historic river town that is revitalizing and procuring grants to make the riverfront inviting and usable.

Historic landmarks/buildings

Growing arts & culture environment thanks to places like ACB, Capitol Theater, Library.

Grow the downtown, fill empty spaces

Greater Burlington Partnership has provided opportunities for Arts & culture.

Friendliness of locals

For the size of our community, we have a great variety of opportunities, good local support from our government and nonprofit organizations.

Downtown has come a far way in the past few years. The Art Center hosts a wide variety of activities throughout the year and promote them. They work with the local schools too.

Downtown Burlington is so beautiful and becoming more and more vibrant. So many opportunities and spaces to keep growing and adding to the uniqueness. Would love to see more murals.

Downtown Burlington events

Art classes, although there could be more, and by more/different instructors, music by local and visiting artist, players workshop for those in the area to perform in both plays and musicals

Art Center, Civic Music, BRE, Capitol/Nightcap, Restaurants, Library, Player's Workshop

Always a lot of opportunities

Additional Education outside of schools

A wonderful sense of community

A long history of artists, musicians, and authors; a wealth of pipe organs -- we should have a festival featuring them (more than the Organ Crawl).

If you had friends or family visit Burlington or West Burlington, where would you take them?

Water front

Tour of historic homes, waterfront, parks, Snake Alley, Phelps house, any shows available at the Capitol,

To the Drake and Corked

To the Burlington downtown area

The splash pad, Snake Alley, the indoor Putt-Putt golf place, Crapo Park

The riverfront/downtown

The river

The Capito, Night Cap, Art Center, the library, The Washington, Snake Alley, downtown and also Crapo and Dankwardt parks.

The Art Center, The Welcome Center, a few restaurants, the library, the parks

The Art Center & Market Place, The Washington, The Auditorium/Riverfront

Starr's Cave

Sporting events & restaurants

Snake Ally, the River, 34 Raceway

Snake Alley. Riverfront

Snake Alley, riverfront, Jefferson St., Crapo and Dankwardt

Snake Alley, parks

Snake Alley, one of our great restaurants.

Snake alley, mosquito park, crapo park, downtown, riverfront

Snake Alley, Lips to Go, Fun City, Geode, Stars Cave

Snake Alley, Jefferson St, Crapo Park, and Geode Park

Snake Alley, Downtown/Riverfront

Snake Alley, downtown, Art Center, Capital Theater

Snake Alley, Des Moines County Heritage Center Museum, Port of Burlington.

Snake Alley, crapo park, riverfront, art center
 Snake Alley, by the riverfront, downtown shopping and restaurants
 snake alley, art center
 Snake Alley, any of the parks, downtown
 Snake alley and Jefferson st
 Snake Alley and downtown
 Snake alley
 Snake alley
 Snake Alley
 Shopping on Jefferson
 Riverfront, Snake Alley (but just once), museums, home tours, Art Fair, Film Festival, garden tours . . .
 Riverfront, Fun City, Martinis
 Riverfront, Downtown, Disk Golf, Movies, Homestead 1839, Trails
 Riverfront and Snake Alley. Unfortunately the downtown businesses have a strangle hold and force things like the farmers market to be there instead of more suited areas like Crapo Park.
 River front
 Restaurants or local businesses that have something fun to do, like Burlington Black Water's mini golf course.
 Press Paws (Cat Cafe), The Capitol, The Drake, The Riverfront, Crapo Park
 Preservation Station, Burlington by the Book, Burlington Public Library
 Parks. Jefferson St, Burlington Port
 Parks and downtown shopping , library
 Parks
 parades festivals music
 Out to eat, downtown shopping, to the art center or another place then to the farmers market or a capital event.
 North gorge trail, starrrs cave and other parks
 Night Cap
 Nature's Corner
 Napoli's, Snake Alley, events at The Capital or Art Center, Crapo Park
 Mostly the restaurants in downtown.
 Mississippi River, Snake Alley, Downtown businesses
 Martini's, The Drake, Busted Cup, Downtown shopping.
 Martinis, downtown, our parks. Snake Alley
 Martinis the parks
 Martinis grille, the som, snake alley, shopping downtown, Marshalls, napolis, corked 101
 Martini's, HawaiIowan, Heritage Center, Crapo Park, Starr's Cave
 Library, Snake Alley, Starr's Cave, Riverfront
 Library and Dankeart park
 La Tavola, Riverfront, Korner Creamery, Downtown Burlington.

Just did! We drove downtown and had lunch, toured the riverfront and drove down Snake Alley. We hiked at Starr's Cave to enjoy the beautiful November day. Drove through Spirit Hollow and Crapo Park.

Jefferson Street, the riverfront

Jefferson Street

Jefferson St.

Hunts woods or la boheme

Harmony Bible Church, The Farmer's Market, Downtown; the Capitol Theatre, Burlington Vintage & Co, The Som, The Washington, Weird Harold's, The Rusty Dog, Uppers, The Drake (for the service, location, ambience, love the live music outside in the Summer!)

FUN CITY, FAMILY BUFFET, MOVIES, LAKE FRONT, DES MOINES COUNTY FAIR, TRI-STATES RODEO, MONEY-SHOT CONCERT

Fun City, downtown bars and restaurants, auditorium, movies

Fun city

Flint River Trail

Farmers Market, Art Center, Capitol Theater

Downtown; Jefferson st

Downtown, Snake Alley, Fun City, local restaurants

Downtown, Fun City

Downtown! Snake Alley & Parks

Downtown! Art Center of Burlington, Night Cap, River Front, downtown restaurants, the library.

Downtown!

Downtown shops, Dankwardt park

Downtown shopping, restaurants, is all there really is.

Downtown restaurants and shopping, BRE concerts, Snake Alley

Downtown Jefferson Street, Crapo Park

Downtown for the wide variety of shopping, eating areas and The Burlington Public Library.

Downtown first. We'd get a bite and shop along Jefferson St.

Downtown Burlington, Snake Alley, some of the local parks

Downtown Burlington, Snake Alley, Crapo/Dankwardt Park

downtown Burlington mostly

Downtown Burlington

Downtown Burlington

Downtown and the latest play at the Players Workshop

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Definitely our parks, specifically Crapo park and Starrs cave
 Crapo/Dankwardt Park, Snake Alley, Shopping downtown, Mosquito Park overlook, out
 on the Mississippi River, Night Cap Listening Lounge, Burlington Bees Baseball
 Crapo/Dankwardt parks
 Crapo park. Snake alley
 Crapo park. Library. Fine dining establishments. Arts, theater and classical concerts.
 Crapo park, downtown Burlington, to the riverside park by the auditorium, heritage hill
 Crapo Park, Dankwardt Park, Heritage Center, downtown Burlington
 Crapo park and Jefferson street and snack alley and Bracwell stadium.
 Community Theater
 Carpool Park
 Burlington River Front
 Burlington Public Library, Snake Alley, Heritage Center Museum, tour around the
 communities, downtown Burlington shops
 Burlington
 Bars downtown
 Band concerts in the park, the Heritage Museum, the Art Center, the Welcome Center.
 Art Center. Heritage museum
 Art Center, Snake Alley, river front, Leopold houses, Crapo and Mosquito parks, Starr's
 Cave
 Art Center, Port of Burlington, Crapo Park, eat downtown, Heritage Museum, Witte
 Observatory Complex at Big Hollow,
 Art Center of Burlington and any local business downtown Burlington
 Art Center of Burlington
 Art Center of Burlington
 Art Center classes, shopping on Jefferson ,farmers market, local restaurants
 Art Center
 Area museums and attractions. Free community celebrations, family-friendly activities
 and hometown events.

Describe one place in Burlington or West Burlington would you like to see more cultural or arts displays or events.

Westland Mall needs a lot of help!!!
 Westland mall
 Westland Mall
 Westland Mall
 West Burlington needs a little help with that
 West Burlington in general
 We need more live music opportunities like Jazz. But in a bigger venue than the art
 center but still an intimate venue.
 We don't need more designed events other than what develops naturally.
 Washington - parks
 Through out city

Though it doesn't exist yet, the Burlington Community School District has committed to enlarging and improving the auditorium at Aldo Leopold Middle School, making it a 700 seat performing arts center. This holds great potential for our community!

There needs to be a place that shows downtown Burlington during the time of cable cars or trolleys. Including photos and maps.

The Theatre

The riverfront area downtown.

The riverfront

The river walk!

The public library

The parks

The parks

The Memorial Auditorium

The city parks

The Capital Theater

The Bees field could host larger music events. We need beautification of our Hwy 61 (Roosevelt) corridor

Southeastern Community College

Skate park

Schools

SCC

SCC

SCC

Roosevelt or Agency. My previous city used to do sculptures along the highway and in the center of roundabouts. I think even stuff like holiday themed advertisement for art programs would be neat, too.

Roosevelt Corridor

Riverfront.

Riverfront

Riverfront

Riverfront

Public art installations & murals in lower-income neighborhoods. Beautifying those areas could have positive impacts.

Public art displays outside of Jefferson St & downtown

Port of Burlington

Parks

Parks

Parks

Parks

not sure

N/A

Mosquito Park. Lots of people walking in that area. Could be a great spot for local musicians, chess tables, story time, etc.

More public art in downtown (both communities)

More kid-friendly events at any location

More dancing

Memorial Auditorium? It's not earning its way now. White elephant.

Memorial Auditorium, The Capital. Downtown outdoor concerts

Memorial Auditorium

Memorial Auditorium

Mall

mall

Main street

Library and/or riverfront

Library

Library

Library

Jefferson Street downtown Burlington

Jefferson st

In the parks we have. Crapo or Dankwardt

In the parks

In the parks

I would really love it if the Capitol Theater would play movies on a more consistent basis. I am not aware of any art events/activities in West Burlington.

I would rather see more of them on South side rather than just in downtown, I know it's hard to host in Crapo but it was nice having Pride in the Park in Crapo.

I would like to see art on our riverfront area. I would love to see more art (temporary or permanent) in West Burlington. More community centered music events other than the college in West Burlington, trailways in West Burlington that connect the two cities better.

I wish there was a Saturday morning Farmer Market at Crapo Park. We need more events at Crapo/Dankwardt

I love our downtown and seeing it grow! With the growth I've seen more culture and art come through! I'd like to see more vents downtown but that can help bring young adults down.

I don't want ir need more displays. We need sculptures and murals installed. We are overran with events no one cares about except that artist and their tiny group of friends.

I don't feel West Burlington has any so I'd start there.

Hospital

Hospital

Heritage Center

Fun City, mall

EXCELLENT CULTURE + EVENTS AT LIBRARY ... BUT FEW ATTEND = **NEED MORE PEOPLE** = BRITTANY JACOBS IS OUTSTANDING AND EXCELLENT AND WE ARE BLESSED TO HAVE HER !!

Everywhere. Both communities only include certain types of art/artists. That needs to change.

Downtown Burlington has a lot of this going on. Not sure West Burlington really ever has anything other than 4th of July event.

Downtown Burlington

Downtown Burlington

Downtown

Downtown

Downtown

Depends on how those terms are defined. Most modern "art" needs to be displayed in appropriately sized dumpsters

Dankwardt and Crapo Parks.

Crapo Park is beautiful and I love going there for events

Crapo

Could the near empty Westland Mall be used?

Core of downtown (Valley to Washington, Central to Riverfront) and riverfront area

Capital Theatre

Capital Theater, would love more interactive events

Burlington River Front

Better use of former mall space as parking and weather would not be problematic.

Auditorium

At our schools

Art center of Burlington

Art center

Art Center

Around the Mall

Anywhere in WB. Not much happens in WB.

Memorial Auditorium

Is there anything else you would like us to know about arts and culture in West Burlington or Burlington?

We have a Thriving art community. Lost past by local representatives are hindering funding, especially at the library

We had a wonderful Burlington Fine Arts League for 50 years. But when older member went inactive it was hard to get the younger set interested and step up to continue the organization

We are getting lots of murals

Was quite pleasantly surprised at the vibrancy of the arts community when I returned to Burlington.

Too much has been spent on entertainment/arts while our town withers. Not long ago our town had to borrow money to make city payroll. Now they are looking at adding more taxes to an aging and declining population.

There needs to be more ADA access. It's difficult to shop, get through doors & shopping isles

There is a lot more available now than ten years ago. Driven by the art center, capital theater and other venues downtown

The cost per entry for artists is often too high. I have more luck selling my art online, as well as my novels through drop shipping due to the cost for print sometimes. It's really depressing because I feel like it would be nice to be more out there with my peers, but it doesn't seem possible.

The City should stop competing with private businesses by subsidizing some venues with taxpayer dollars.

Target audience of current programming skews older - events & attractions for younger professionals may increase turnout & general support across the community.

Support all artists

stop defacing buildings with graffiti(art)

Several area churches host cultural events. In particular, the First United Methodist Church in downtown Burlington is the scene of numerous concerts and recitals. This historic building was rebuilt after a fire in 2007 and its sanctuary has excellent acoustics for musical performance. The Burlington Lunchtime Chamber Music Series and the Bel Canto Choral perform there.

Saturday morning Farmer Market at Crapo Park!!!

Nope

No

No

Needs more diversity in every sense of the word

Need to redo old murals before they disappear

N/A

N/A

More theme markets downtown

More classical concerts, opera, play house theater productions. Less musical noise and bars and less river this and that.

More activities for older adults during the day.

Local the art community comes off as a bunch of elitist assholes telling the rest of us how to feel and think.

Lady in charge of the Art Center is doing super awesome. I went to one of their events and she seemed very passionate and in love with what she does.

It should always remain neutral politically

It seems to cater mostly to an elite demographic. I think that's how most of them have survived. I would like to see more diversity.

It seems our communities stress sports more than anything else.

Is the history of Burlington considered art or culture? There needs to be a place that shows the different cultures that have co-existed all during the towns history.

In or around the parks

In general it sucks. Real art and artists don't need surveys or tax dollars.

Important to the value of the community

I would love to see more festivals with artist vendors or bands happening in town, give people big reasons to gather several times a year.

I would like more continuing art classes at the Art Center... not just one-off classes. Watercolor, pastel, Zentangle, Right side of the Brain classes, etc.

I was hoping we could get a science center

I think people overestimate the interest in sports and sporting events.

I think it's really flourishing and will continue too! I'd love to see it reach more young adults too not just 40+

I think Burlington is a very unique town with a lot of arts and culture.

I keep tuned in through Facebook and the two newspapers

I feel that many events are unwelcoming to those that aren't part of a certain group, mostly Art Center members.

I don't think the community cares about art they never supported me and artist at the farmers market

I appreciate the effort the Art Center and the Capitol Theater management put into providing entertainment for all ages.

Get rid of Pride events

Elizabeth Pappas and Tammy McCoy are amazing directors!

downtown Burlington is an amazing place to live, work and play!

Better synergy between Burlington public schools and arts

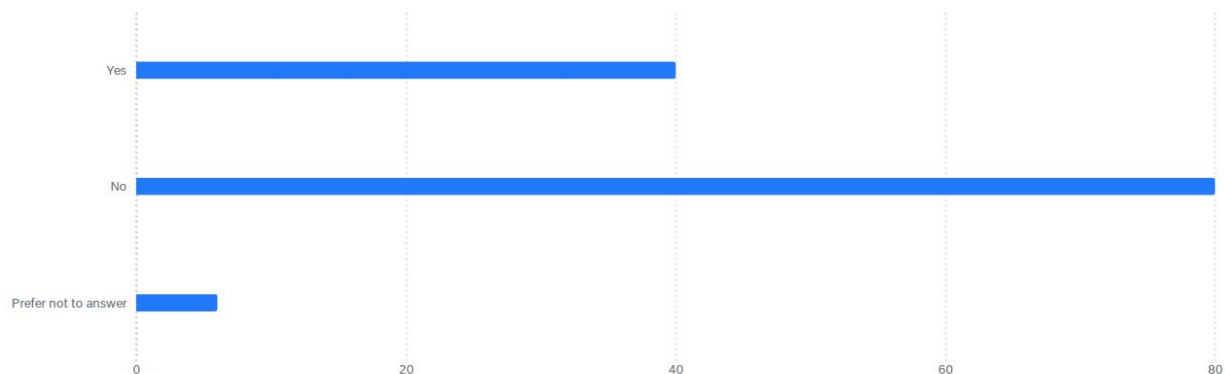
As much as the arts and culture are important. There are times when those limited city and state financial resources are needed for more important things in the community such as infrastructure and safety improvement. Especially in downtown Burlington where limited parking makes it nearly impossible for older people and those with disabilities access many of the Art and Cultural events. When those people find that they have to walk several blocks if they can find parking at all. They tend to skip the event simple because it has become to difficult to attend.

Arts and culture not only provide social connections and community quality of life, but also economic support and employment.

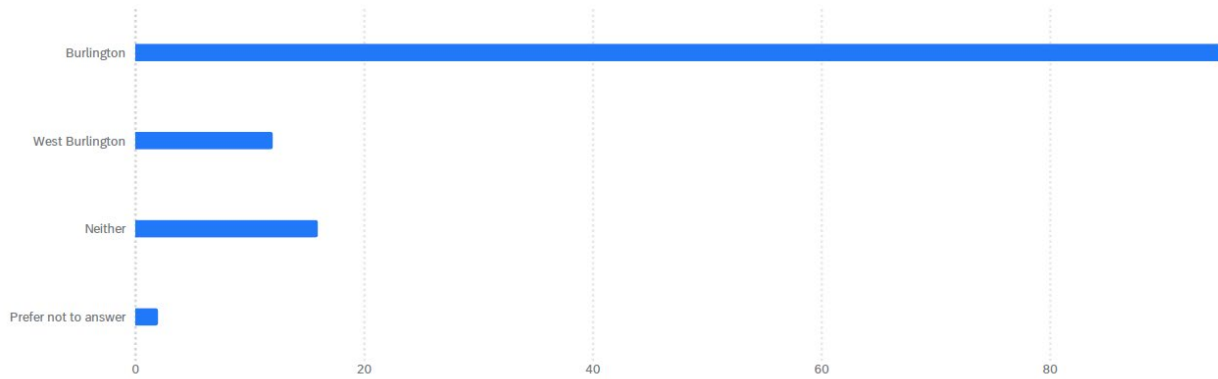
ACB, Capitol Theater and the Library have strong partnerships with Burlington School District, including Afterschool programs. It is an incredible service to our students, giving them opportunities they may not otherwise have.

\$\$ MOST PEOPLE HAVE LIMITED DISPOSABLE INCOME \$\$ = NEED TRANSPORT
= HAVE FREE EVENTS THAT "INTEREST" DIFFERENT GROUPS

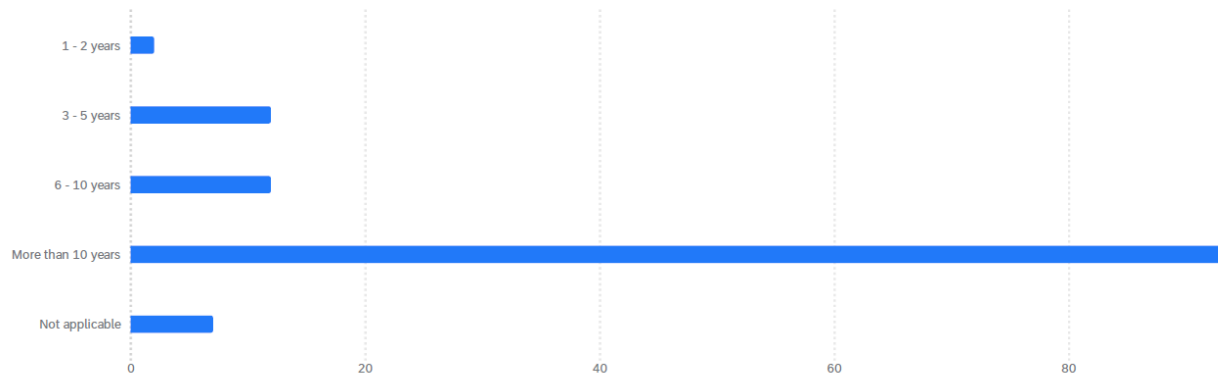
Do you identify as an artist? 126 ⓘ



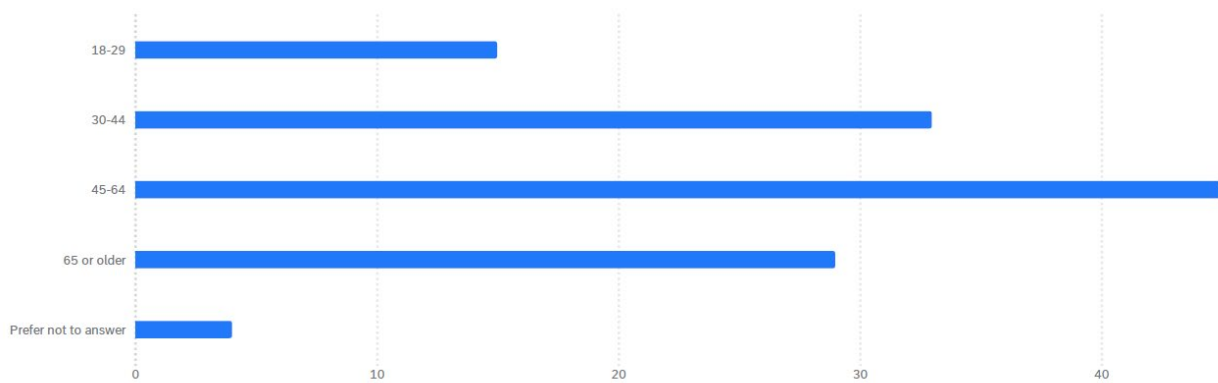
Do you live in Burlington or West Burlington? 125 ⓘ



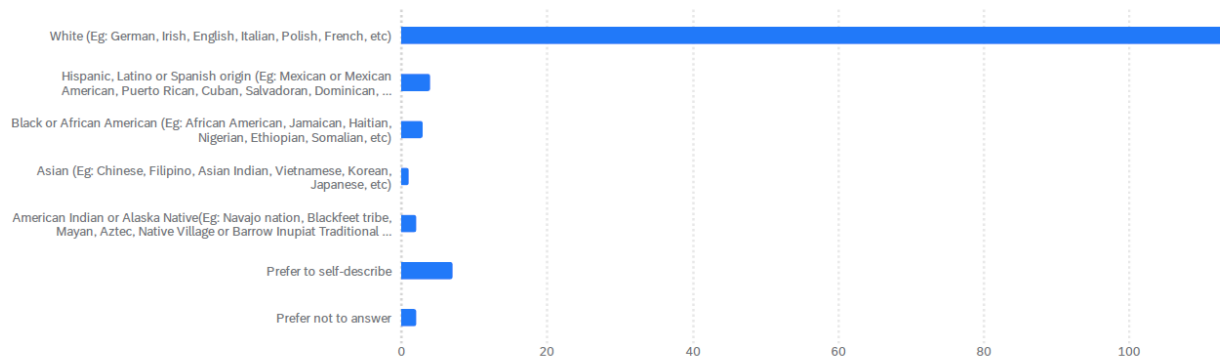
How long have you lived in the Burlington or West Burlington area? 126 ⓘ



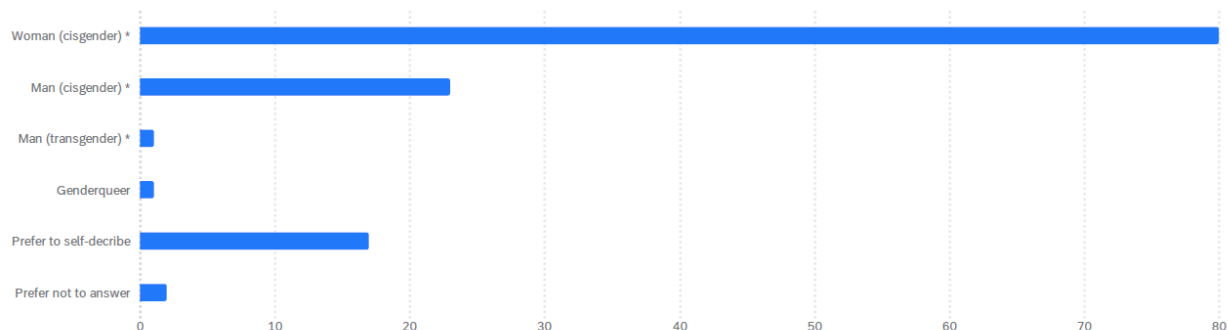
What is your age range? 126 ⓘ



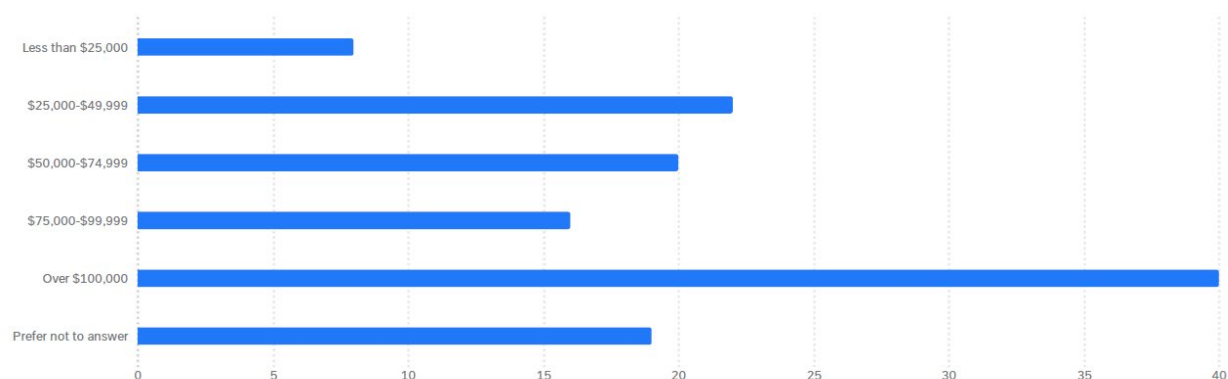
How would you describe your background or cultural identity? (Select all that apply, or feel free to specify in your own words. You may also skip this question if preferred.) 124 ⓘ



How do you describe yourself? (Select all that apply, or feel free to specify in your own words. You may also skip this question if preferred.) **Cisgender" (or "cis") refers to people whose gender identity matches the sex they were assigned at birth. "Transgender" (or "trans") refers to people whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth. 123 ⓘ



What was your household income during the past 12 months? 125 ⓘ



Endnotes

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