

2020-21 Organizational Planning toward the Strategic Plan of the Downriver Council for the Arts

Executive Summary

Something remarkable happens when you support creative people. New ideas are born and positive changes in our neighborhoods can happen. For over 40 years, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) has been advancing its mission to enrich the quality of life in the Downriver area by advocating and promoting art and artists and providing opportunities for involvement and participation in arts and cultural activities. Over the next year the DCA will continue our critical work with members, partners and stakeholders to increase the value of arts and culture in our neighborhoods. We invite you to be part of the future of the DCA. Cultivating art and ideas is necessary for achieving the best in our communities.

Current State of the Downriver Council for the Arts

Over the last 10 years, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) has undergone significant changes. These changes have included physical moves of the organization, changes of the Board of Directors membership, and changes of leadership including the Executive Director. Although the changes have been substantial, each have occurred with the constant and focused aim to stay true to our mission, our community and the culture of our Downriver Detroit residents.

The 2010 move to our current facility located in Wyandotte, MI which has made 19,000 square feet of space available to grow the organization to include a ballroom/theater, classrooms, artist studios, gift shop and exhibition/gallery space. Where the facility has become the perfect home for the Downriver Council for the Arts regarding space, existing facility, and central location within the downriver communities, it still required a considerable amount of renovation and overall facility attention. The original 2008 proposal outlined a large number of anticipated changes, facility upgrades, and programmatic enhancements to address, however, a clear and steady method to reach those expectations had not been outlined, therefore leaving the organization slightly short of its goals.

Over the last 3 years, under the direction of a new Executive Director, the DCA has established a renewed vision overseeing a large number of substantial changes for the organization including:

- Streamlined materials and management of facilities;
- Increased usability of the physical space of the DCA for fund raising programming and events;
- Increase in quantity and quality of the programming made available;
- Created collaborative opportunities with many local and regional non-profit and profitable institutions;
- Diversified the composition and scope of the programming to include a greater audience;
- Diversified revenue streams; and
- Increased energy, visibility and representation of the DCA in many of the surrounding communities we serve.

Future of the Downriver Council for the Arts

There are four needs which rise as priority to move the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) closer to completing our goals: manpower, money, time and connections. These needs were paramount in defining the short-term goals of the DCA. Our overall objectives to reaching the goals are outlined in this document.

Overview

Mission

To enrich the quality of life in the Downriver communities by advocating and promoting the arts and providing opportunities for involvement and participation in arts and cultural activities.

Vision

We accomplish our mission by providing opportunities for involvement and participation in the arts through lectures, workshops, adult and youth classes, summer youth art camps, gallery exhibits, cultural events, theater productions, literary events, music concerts and classes, an artist gift gallery, facility rentals and volunteer opportunities.

Values

We are committed to diversity through our staffing, supporting, programming and collaborating within and outside of our community.

Guiding Principles

Foster **inspiration** while increasing knowledge and understanding others through exposure to the arts.

Provide opportunities for **collaborations** to educate, communicate, build and innovate relevancy of the arts in the lives of the Downriver Detroit Area residents.

Actively **engage** our community in a manner which is inclusive of the broadest range of ideas, approaches and tools in the pursuit and creation of arts and culture.

Our Role

Our **role** is to make accessible and available opportunities for our Downriver community to engage in the inspirational growth, learning and development which emerges from the advocacy and promotion of the arts and cultural exchanges. We actively support local artists and performers through artistic outreach programs and special promotional opportunities. The DCA also creates regional partnerships with other cultural organizations, schools and service clubs to promote artistic, cultural and special events throughout Southeast Michigan. We hold these activities in our Arts Center and by operating in the various cities we serve. Through each program and event held at the DCA we seek to increase knowledge and understanding of art and ourselves, improve skills by participants, change one's attitude or values, give enjoyment, inspiration, and creativity. We welcome all people including youth of all ages, disabled people, underserved/minority populations, and social conscious groups.

Who We Are: Historical Perspective

In 1978, the Downriver Community Conference (DCC) was established in an effort to encourage and promote the economic growth of the Downriver communities. Just a few months later, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) was established. The motivation to form this arts council was to improve the quality of life and enhance the image of the 15 communities that belonged to the Downriver Community Conference. Because arts activities were recognized as an important factor in Downriver's quality of life and its economic development, the Downriver Council for the Arts began as a department of the Downriver Community Conference.

The original mission of the DCA was to encourage the development of an aesthetically satisfying environment among the cities and townships that comprise the Downriver Community Conference area.

In 1989, the DCA left the DCC to become an independent 501(c)3 non-profit organization. This major change in status greatly enhanced the independence of DCA's decision making and provided many new opportunities for funding. For two years, the DCA was located in Southgate. From 1992 to 2000, the DCA leased an attractive second floor renovated space of the Historic Marx Home, an "annex" of the Wyandotte Historical Society.

In 2000, moved from the Marx Home to a freshly remodeled and reconstructed old farmhouse on the property of Wayne County Community College Downriver Campus in Taylor, Michigan. The move afforded the organization ample room for giving Downriver arts organizations space for meetings, as well as provided room for art exhibitions and an arts library.

The year 2010, brought the official grand opening of the DCA in its current location. The DCA now operates out of the James R. DeSana Center for Arts and Culture (the Arts Center), a three-story, nearly 20,000 SF historic building located at 81 Chestnut Street in downtown Wyandotte. The architecture of the building, constructed in 1911, represents the splendor of a different era: a time when Wyandotte exemplified our region's entrance into America's industrial boom. The structure was built by the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, an internationally recognized fraternal service organization. In 1943, the building was bought by the Fraternal Order of Free and Accepted Masons. The Masons remained in the building for over 50 years, continuing the Odd Fellows' tradition of community service and good fellowship. The building was purchased by the City of Wyandotte in 2008 under the tenure of then Mayor James R. DeSana (now serving on the DCA Board of Directors). The intention was to preserve its rich history and redevelop it as a cultural facility. The Center became the home of the DCA in 2010 through a partnership with the City and the DDA. In late 2019, the City of Wyandotte and DDA extended our lease for a 10-year commitment. We feel this partnership helped solidify our place and home as a regional arts and cultural center.

Our goal for the James R. DeSana Center for Arts and Culture is to be a multi-use, multi-generational, and multi-cultural destination arts facility that contributes to the expansion of the area's economic development initiatives and provides educational opportunities for the communities into the future. The Center serves the community in three ways – it creates opportunities for community artists to showcase their skills, it serves as a cultural resource for the community, and it serves as an educational facility. A significant goal in this strategic plan is to relate the arts and design programming of the Center to regional economic development, not only through the creation of a destination attraction, but also by acting as a magnet for career and educational opportunities by building partnerships with educational institutions and corporations.

Today, the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) is a regional non-profit 501(c)(3) arts and cultural organization that proudly serves nearly 400,000 residents in 21 Downriver communities. Downriver is the area in Michigan comprised of cities south of Detroit. The Downriver area is generally known to consist of communities that rest along the Detroit River south and west of Detroit and including communities as far west as those surrounding the Detroit metropolitan airport and south to Monroe County. In historic times, these cities were accessible by traveling down the Detroit River. Downriver overall is known as a suburban Detroit region with working-class residential neighborhoods. These cities were mainly populated with workers who were employed by the dozens of auto factories, manufacturing suppliers, ship builders, steel mills and chemical plants in the area. Recreational opportunities are often centered around the waterways. The low cost of living, down to earth mentality and good work ethic in the communities make for a good place for artists to call home. The Downriver area also provides a cheaper cost of living alternative to the immensely growing Downtown Detroit.

The Downriver area generally consists of the following cities: Allen Park, Belleville, Brownstown, Ecorse, Flat Rock, Gibraltar, Grosse Ile, Huron, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, River Rouge, Riverview, Rockwood, Romulus, Southgate, Sumpter Twp, Taylor, Trenton, Van Buren, Woodhaven and Wyandotte.

Key Stakeholders

Only by working together with others in our geographic region will we positively change or affect the growth in the arts. While our scope of engagement is broad, it points to the creative collaborations and boundless appreciation for the arts and culture sector that this region holds as being highly valued. It is due to this fact, which we find the work in the Downriver Detroit area so important and the potential for the impact great. Included below is a listing of those constituents who we believe to be highly valued and integral to the thriving of fulfilling our mission.

- *Residents* of cities of the Downriver Detroit communities including Allen Park, Belleville, Brownstown, Ecorse, Flat Rock, Gibraltar, Grosse Ile, Huron, Lincoln Park, Melvindale, River Rouge, Riverview, Rockwood, Romulus, Southgate, Sumpter Twp., Taylor, Trenton, Van Buren, Woodhaven and Wyandotte
- *Cultural Partners*: Acanthus Art Society; American Indian Services Agency; An Amazing Woman Foundation; ARC Downriver; Creative Arts Society; Downriver Poets & Playwrights; Downriver Youth Performing Arts Center (DYPAC); East River Folk Society; Grosse Ile Alliance for the Arts; Ignite Men's Group; Open Book Theatre; Seaway Chorale & Orchestra; Southern Wayne County Regional Chamber; Swords into Plowshares Peace Center & Gallery; WCCCD-Heinz C. Prechter Education & Performing Arts Center; World Heritage Foundation; Wyandotte Historical Society
- *Business Partners*: Art & About/MonArt School; Bovitz Accounting, CPA; Caruso Leadership; C. Creations; DanceSport Academy of Michigan; Dearborn Novelty Art; Granader Family Restaurants; Henry Ford Wyandotte Hospital; Jackson Snider Parker Dentistry; Veteran's Cleaning
- *Regional and local practicing artists*: actors, artists, craftsmen, dancers, musicians, poets, and other visual and performance-based individuals
- *Private-sector leaders*: local and regional businesses and foundations
- For-profit arts and creative sector industries
- *Educational leaders*:
 - Regional public and private universities, colleges and community colleges with departments focusing on the arts;
 - Downriver public schools - superintendents of schools, school boards and teachers;
 - Downriver private school - superintendents of schools and teachers;
 - Homeschooling co-ops and families
- *Public-sector leaders/elected officials*: Downriver Detroit Mayors, senators, Representatives, city/county managers, and many others at the state, regional, county and local levels
- *Public government departments and agencies*: Wayne County and Downriver Community Parks and Recreation Departments; Metro Parks System; Downriver community libraries and historical societies

Our Goals

Goal 1: Strengthen Our Assets

Assess, evaluate and create an expanded infrastructure in the following areas: Development, Facilities, Financials, Gallery, Marketing, Membership, Programming and Volunteer Efforts.

Develop solid policies, procedures and plans in the aforementioned areas which capitalize on the leadership of the Executive Director and a cross-trained core of active Board of Directors, resident artists and volunteers.

Grow facility usage opportunities through renovation and creation.

Strategically activate volunteer levels to match the need to allow the DCA to grow.

Goal 2: Take Action

Stabilize financially.

Goal 3: Tell Others

Increase Visibility, Identity, Recognizability and Presence throughout our service area and beyond.

Goal 4: Reach Out

Broaden accessibility and exposure of the arts to more populations in the Downriver Detroit area.

Increase opportunities for collaboration and establish renewed connections with business partners, community partners and other institutions and systems which may hold mutually sustainable or symbiotic relationships to benefit the Downriver community.

Planning Process

Over the course of 5 months a small group of members from the Downriver Council for the Arts (DCA) Board of Directors and the Executive Director collaborated to assess our existing assets and deficits; determine needs and wants; and create a general outline to best position the organization to not simply exist and survive, but to thrive for the Downriver Detroit communities. These actions included the following:

- a. Gathered existing resources
- b. Develop a schedule of reviewing all policies and procedures and any missing components which might slow or inhibit the ability for the organization to move forward
- c. Reviewed all relevant organizational documents including the DCA Bylaws, Mission, Facilities Policies and Procedures, current data, budgets and demographics
- d. Developed and launched an online DCA Membership Questionnaire to gather relevant data
- e. Conducted individual and focus group interviews of stakeholders
- f. SWOT analysis
- g. Identified goals, objectives and tactics to reach the identified goals.

Organizational Planning Outline: Current/Completed/Planned

Spring 2019 – Revaluation and update of DCA Bylaws.

Fall 2019 – Form a Volunteer Committee; Launch initial assignments to begin the strategic planning process.

Winter 2019 – Organizational Planning Outline begins; Forming of a Board of Directors Fundraising Committee; Forming of a Strategic Planning Committee; Implement identified Organizational Planning goals immediately.

Spring 2020 – Launch Official 2020-21 Strategic Planning process including the gathering of data through questionnaires, event attendance and stakeholder focus groups.

Summer 2020 – Combine Strategic Planning information with existing knowable and measurable variables through the development of this Organizational Plan to write, design and disseminate the new the 2020-21 Strategic Plan to all stakeholders.

Fall 2020 – Begin implementation phase of the 2020-21 Strategic Plan.

Implementation - Actions, Tactics and Assignments

Assess, evaluate, prioritize, activate and report.

KEY PRIORITIES

- Increase funds
- Increase manpower
- Increase communications
- Activate initiatives over a short timeframe

METRICS FOR FUTURE ASSESSMENT

- Membership figures
- Secured grant funded dollars
- Volunteer hours tracked and contributed
- Attendance and participation at exhibitions receptions, performances, workshops, classes
- Students in courses
- Collaboration with more external institutions

Goal 1: Strengthen Our Assets

Assess, evaluate and create an expanded infrastructure in the following areas: Development, Facilities, Financials, Gallery, Marketing, Membership, Programming and Volunteer Efforts.

DEVELOPMENT

- Develop an event and program sponsorship plan.
- Create a grant writing schedule.
- Submit more grant proposals and sponsorship requests.

FACILITIES

- Work with Wyandotte DDA to acquire grants to continue the facility's historical rehabilitation and renovation.
- Institute a master plan to update historical building features/repairs in the theater.
- Complete renovation and safety protocols of the auditorium balcony.
- Increase rentable storage for members, instructors and students.
- Update policies and procedures manual development from 2008/10.

FINANCIALS

- Strengthen fundraising efforts at the board level.
- Reevaluate budget development and allocation to allow for growth.

GALLERY

- Write a gallery committee and space guide for exhibition standards, outlining relevant DCA policies, procedures and expectations. Include copies of checklists, sample loan agreements and contracts which will be used.

MARKETING

- Develop a marketing plan to engage our constituents/stakeholders at all levels in order to effectively communicate the established goals, objectives and strategy employed to reach them.

MEMBERSHIP

- Increase general membership.
- Increase amenities and benefits of membership including rentable storage, access to a “clean” station, advanced notice of specially held previews and openings, as well as VIP status or admission to selected events.

PROGRAMMING

- Expand summer camp offerings.
- Create a “Preparing for College in the Arts” program to encourage and engage young adults ages 16-26 years of age.

VOLUNTEER EFFORTS

- Plan and launch a volunteer recruitment event to roll out the program, and to engage and recruit volunteers of all ages.
- Form a system, committee and network for utilizing volunteer services.
- Reenergize those established relationships which currently exist with our relevant stakeholders through a mutually beneficial Volunteer Services Committee.
- Conduct a full evaluation of needs for a full Volunteer program, its value, identify volunteer leadership, and secure volunteer program funding.

Develop solid policies, procedures and plans in the aforementioned areas which capitalize on the leadership of the Executive Director and a cross-trained core of active Board of Directors, resident artists and volunteers.

Grow facility usage opportunities through renovation and creation.

Strategically activate volunteer levels to match the need to allow the DCA to grow.

Goal 2: Take Action

Stabilize financially.

- Diversify the monetary stream.
- Increase the amount of secured grants and donations.
- Develop a revenue stream for keeping teachers/members/artists/etc.
- Develop a short-term strategy to begin a multi-year capital campaign.

Goal 3: Tell Others

Increase Visibility, Identity, Recognizability, and Presence

- Create a unified and easily recognizable brand reflecting the guiding principles of our organization.
- Engage with regional media and governing bodies to bolster effective communication with external influencers.
- Participate in local parades, farmer’s markets, community festivals and other highly-visible public functions.

Goal 4: Reach Out

Broaden accessibility and exposure of the arts to more populations in the Downriver Detroit area.

- Add more satellite art gallery locations.
- Create direct relationships with local city rec/parks departments, educational institutions/districts, and other local community organizations.
- Create more opportunities for engaging resident artists and DCA members.
- Offer arts-based merit badge opportunities for Great Lakes Region Scouts of America youth and other similar service groups annually.

Increase opportunities for collaboration and establish renewed connections with business partners, community partners and other institutions and systems which may hold mutually sustainable or symbiotic relationships to benefit the Downriver community.

- Participate in more art and cultural exchanges with other regional arts organizations.
- Reenergize those established relationships which currently exist with our relevant stakeholders through a mutually beneficial Volunteer Services Committee.

Board of Directors

President

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Ayana King

Member-at-large

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Robert Bovitz, Scott Galeski, Anthony Harrison, Michele Porter, Waltraud Prechter, Travis Reiff, Steve Wildern