

A CULTURAL STRATEGY FOR WACO

Why a cultural strategy?

We define success for our city in many ways. Vibrant arts and culture strengthen them all. Cities that invest strategically in their cultural life show growth in tourism, success in attracting and retaining talent and jobs, success in community resilience and revitalization, better educational outcomes, reduced unemployment, greater sense of community pride and social cohesion, and even a reduction in crime ⁱ.

By pooling our common goals for Waco into a consistent Cultural Strategy, we can make sure that we do an effective job of setting targets and measuring success together. We aim to develop our cultural assets to make our city a great place to live, work and play.

An integrated approach

This Cultural Strategy draws from a rigorous, ongoing process of community-wide visioning and public consultation. It shares common goals and objectives between our civic and cultural organizations and draws input from planning and urban development professionals ⁱⁱ. This approach to strategic planning acknowledges that when we work together, we do a better job of reaching our goals.

Goal 1: Grow and support successful, sustainable arts organizations in Waco by

- Investing in infrastructure and facilities
- Building new audiences and consumers for the arts from Waco and beyond
- Encouraging public/private partnerships to develop creative initiatives, cultural programming and infrastructure
- Preserving and promoting Waco's places of historical and cultural significance
- Providing opportunities for networking, professional support, and organizational development.
- Fostering new or emerging arts initiatives.

Goal 2: Develop a hub of cultural activity in downtown Waco to attract residents, businesses and tourists by

- Seeking designation of downtown Waco as a Texas Commission on the Arts recognized Cultural District
- Growing activities in the cultural District through co-ordinated programming and marketing.
- Encouraging development of restaurants, shops, other businesses and initiatives that enhance Waco's destination status.
- Marketing Waco as an attractive cultural destination for visitors.
- Developing unifying themes and other visual design concepts for streetscape treatment and wayfinding

- Enhancing the greater downtown area through programming (such as “First Fridays”, walking museums, street vending, creative reuse of vacant structures and enhancement of open spaces for public assemblies and functions)
- Supporting and encouraging existing and new arts organizations to cluster facilities, activities, and initiatives
- Supporting and preserving public art.
- Collecting data on the cultural sector.

Goal 3: Engage the creative sector in revitalization, entrepreneurship and economic development by

- Attracting and retaining artists, creative entrepreneurs and cultural enterprises in Waco
- Integrating cultural planning into community wide strategic initiatives
- Supporting the role of the arts in all stages of education.
- Encouraging and supporting creative entrepreneurship

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“Rise of the Creative Class Revisited”, Richard Florida (2014); “Measuring the outcomes of creative placemaking”, Mark J. Stern, Kenneth L.M. Pray, University of Pennsylvania, May 2014; “Arts & The Economy”, Chris Hayter and Stephanie Casey Pierce, National Governors Association (2009). There’s also [great research from Waco’s own Ray Perryman](#) and, more recently, the [Texas Cultural Trust](#), that explores the impact of the arts on economic and other metrics such as educational attainment. In addition, Americans for the Arts has conducted four nationwide surveys into “Arts & Economic Prosperity”.

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Organizations engaged in developing and executing Waco’s Cultural Strategy (to date)

- Baylor University
- Creative Waco
- McLennan Community College
- Museum Association of Waco
- Waco Arts Alliance
- Waco City Council
- Waco Community Development Corporation
- Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce
- Waco Business Resource Center (DDC)
- Waco Business League
- Waco Mainstreet Program
- Waco Public Improvement District

Other Waco Plans in which these Cultural goals are included

- City of Waco Comprehensive Plan
- Cultural Arts of Waco Strategic Plan
- Waco Convention and Visitor Bureau marketing and communications plan
- Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce Economic Development strategy
- Imagine Waco Plan
- Branding the Brazos
- Waco Main Street Plan
- Near Northside Neighborhood Strategy
- Central Texas Artists Collective
- Public Improvement District Action Plan
- Waco Civic Theatre
- Art Center Waco