Ocean County Cultural Plan

2011-2016

Adopted by the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission on: March 15, 2011

March 16, 2011

Prologue

Ocean County, New Jersey is defined by the natural beauty of the Pinelands, Barnegat Bay, and Atlantic Ocean, the rich heritage of once rural communities, and an increasingly deep sense of place shared by both recent and long term residents. Ocean County has maintained a level of timelessness, a value of the local and unique, and a commitment to community. People choose to live in Ocean County due to the affordable high quality of life. The residents value the county's varied culture and heritage. Ocean County is enriched by the creative contributions of an artistic community of painters, craftspeople, writers and others drawn to the Atlantic shore, Barnegat Bay and Pinelands. As one artist who participated in the cultural plan noted, "the beach and the Pinelands make it very hip, cool, and unique."

Ocean County cultural dynamics reflect the changing demographics. Those with deep historical roots are increasingly joined by newcomers with fresh insight and abilities. The number of households in Ocean County grew by 13% between 2000 and 2007, and the median age in this long-time retirement oriented county dropped from 39.99 to 37.11, bringing it below the median age for New Jersey - 37.31 - by 2007. (Source: US Census estimates.) While the population over age 55 remains significant at 175,978 and has grown by 8% since 2000, the population group in the age 25-44 has grown by 7% (just 1% less) in the same time period and stands at over 143,000.

The needs and priorities of the Ocean County cultural and heritage community have also changed over this time. These changes are reflected in both the organizations and the many professionals and volunteers that work to provide cultural and heritage services to Ocean County residents and visitors. Ten years ago, needs were for fundamental information, outreach, and training. Based on considerable work done to address those needs as well as on the changing population and economy, today's needs are more complex and challenging. Ocean County is ready to take the next steps in securing cultural vitality and involvement for all residents in the decade ahead.

Eleven years ago, Ocean County conducted the first cultural plan to learn how residents viewed their county's cultural life and what they sought in priority services. Not surprisingly, in a county defined by the Pinelands and by barrier islands, information and access were top requests. People felt isolated and saw distance and drive time as barriers to participation. Cultural groups sought assistance to get the word out.

- The County Cultural & Heritage Commission responded and established a quarterly publication, ***Out & About Ocean County,*** providing a depth of information about cultural events in every community. As a result of the planning effort and the later START effort, the commission worked with existing grant programs and technical assistance workshops to emphasize building audience participation, including an additional grant option in its regrant program (special outreach project grants).

The 2002-2007 plan called for the establishment of four regional arts and cultural heritage councils within Ocean County with diverse membership to tailor applications of the cultural plan to each region's specific needs.

- Today, the Northern Regional Cultural Council continues to evolve into a semi-autonomous and dynamic agent of cooperation and information sharing. The Southern Ocean County Non-Profit Forum has replaced the formally active Southern Regional Cultural Council. The Western Regional Cultural Council joined the commission's efforts to carry out a cultural participation study (START). Efforts continue to involve the arts and heritage communities from the western an central regions of Ocean County

The 2002-2007 plan encouraged community-based celebrations and collaboration with the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation.

- Today, the Cultural & Heritage Commission is a division of the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation, which has made possible significant collaboration, particularly in the area of historic preservation.

The 2002-2007 plan called for increased participation in arts and cultural heritage activities, by working to eliminate perceptual, attitudinal, and practical barriers. It called for more programming in places where people gather and for providing accessible and timely information about arts and cultural activities.

- Today, in direct response to the 2002-2007 plan's recommendation, the commission applied for and received a grant to study Building Cultural Participation in Ocean County as a result of the NJSCA/Wallace Foundation's START initiative. (note: Ocean was one of seven New Jersey counties awarded grant funding to participate in this process.) The project had concrete results: the creation of the publication ***Out & About Ocean County*** and a half-day technical assistance participatory workshop titled "Serving Our Seniors – Cultivating Cultural Participation" outlining

the study's findings on how to eliminate participation barriers for senior adults in the county. The commission has also increased its ADA training and assistance. The Department of Public Affairs and Tourism and the Ocean County Library System have also initiated significant information and outreach efforts.

The 2002-2007 plan called for strengthening the capacity of arts and cultural heritage organizations throughout Ocean County, encouraging organizations in planning, involving them in workshops, and encouraging planning in financial resource development through grant writing workshops. Organizations were also encouraged to respond to community and county needs by working with schools, the County Library, the County Office of Senior Services, and the Strand Theater in Lakewood.

- Today, the commission
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- provides Ocean County organizations with increased opportunities through technical assistance workshops that respond to the changing needs of the non-profit community on topics such as generational perceptions, intellectual property rights, and entrepreneurial skills for artists. As a result, groups share a closer network with each other and other sectors of the business and government communities.

The 2002-2007 plan called for strengthening the role of the individual artist in Ocean County.

- Today, artists are featured in the ***Out & About Ocean County*** publication and network together as recommended in the plan. The commission offers technical assistance workshops targeted specifically towards individual artists. The Northern Regional Cultural Council has set a model standard for supporting individual artists in their region.

The 2002-2007 plan called for strengthening life-long learning arts education opportunities: K-12, early childhood, youth participation beyond the schools, and senior citizen participation.

- Today, a number of Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations have programs directed toward youth. The Department of Parks and Recreation offers a wide range of courses and summer camps in the arts. The commission co-sponsors (funds) the annual Teen Arts Festival with Ocean County College. Art and heritage education is also strengthened through cooperation with the County Superintendent of Schools, Ocean County Vocational Technical School and the various public and private school systems. Often dedicating large portions of their budget and programming to seniors, Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations remain highly committed to reaching and serving the county's older population. The commission works with the McAuley Institute of Lifelong Learning at Georgian Court University, Ocean County College and other agencies to provide lifelong cultural learning opportunities such as the Ocean County Senior Art Show and the Ocean County Library Student Film Festival.

The 2002-2007 plan called for strengthening the Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission's regrant program.

- Today, the Cultural & Heritage Commission has a highly successful regrant program that includes an ongoing review and improvement in the professional management of the regranting process. Most recently, the peer panel evaluation system has been revised in response to a review of best practices from other New Jersey counties.

Looking Ahead

With these accomplishments now in place and accepted as standard operations, the 2011-2016 Ocean County Cultural Plan looks at present needs and priorities and ahead to the next five years and beyond.

- Following national trends, in the last five years government funding, foundation funding, corporate funding, and participation-based income to cultural and heritage organizations have decreased significantly in New Jersey. Today, the paramount concern is sustainability - the ability to keep Ocean County nonprofit organizations financially alive and functioning. From 2005 to 2009, Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations saw a 29% average drop in contributions, gifts, grants, and revenue from fundraisers.
- A significant generational shift has been witnessed in grass roots non-profits in Ocean County. Founders and long time leaders are aging. Many recounted through the 2011-2016 Cultural Plan process that finding and connecting with a new generation of volunteers has become a major challenge. The commission has already conducted two seminars on generational shift and plans to continue addressing this increasingly relevant issue.
- History has become a much more important element of the Cultural & Heritage Commission work than it was 10 years ago when it was barely mentioned in the 2002-2007 Cultural Plan. Heritage and history occupy a significant portion of the commission portfolio and staff attention, responding to shared responsibilities with the Department of Parks and Recreation and growing public interest in preserving historic sites countywide.
- Public media consumption patterns have changed, even in Ocean County where the sizable senior population has long led people to believe that print and direct mail materials remain essential in reaching elders. In fact, the public survey conducted for the 2011-2016 Cultural Plan found that 75% of respondents said they "currently use a computer, cell phone or other device to access information such as entertainment calendars, events listings, and leisure destinations." To further elaborate on the above statistical result, technology use breaks down in the following age brackets: 46% for those over 85, 61% for those 76-84, 77% for those 66-74, and 85% for those under 65. Clearly, use of technology by senior citizens is more common than generally thought and efforts to reach this audience need to include computers, cell phones, and electronic information sources.

- The county's Library System and the Ocean County College have both continuously enhanced their roles in the delivery of cultural and heritage information. The re-opening of the Main Stage at the Arts and Community Center of Ocean County College makes available at least four, large, quality venues for performing arts in Ocean County (The Strand Theater in Lakewood, Surflight Theatre in Beach Haven and the OceanFirst Theater at the Stafford Township Arts Center in Manahawkin). The Great Recession has taken a tremendous toll on all arts and heritage organizations in the county. Most organizational survey respondents feel that they need new operating models; should consider opportunities to share services and potentially merge or do joint programs; and need different types of technical assistance over and above what is now offered (see appendices). Groups know that they must find new ways to offset decreased contributions with new revenue streams and potentially higher admissions prices but worry about doing this given the large retiree demographic base.

As a result, this cultural plan comes at a critical time of transformation. As the cultural plan progressed through roundtables and open meetings, groups and individuals who work in the cultural and heritage field became increasingly open and honest about the tremendous challenges they face.

Cultural and Heritage Organizations

Today, cultural and heritage organizations in Ocean County have different priorities than indicated in the last plan. A decade ago, outstanding needs included overall organizational development, assistance in general marketing/calendar opportunities, and grant writing/access to information such as foundation directories.

Today:

- Eighty percent (80%) of the cultural and heritage organizations in this planning process stated that the biggest challenge their organization will face in the 2011-2016 period is finding new sources of revenue.
- Seventy-three percent (73%) stated they will need to find new ways to market.
- Sixty-six percent (66%) stated their organizations' budgets will either stay the same or decrease in the next five years.
- Sixty-three percent (63%) stated their biggest challenge will be the generational shift in volunteers.
- Forty-four percent (44%) stated they will need to find significant ways to save on operating costs.
- Forty-four percent (44%) stated they will need to build new partnerships with education K-12 and higher education within the next five years.

"The challenge of gifted cultural leaders is always going to be navigating that gap between what the future should look like and what you have now. Your value to your organization and to the field is your ability to see how what you have now might be reconfigured and redesigned, and to convince people to cross that gap with you – to help them find the stamina to make it." – Russell Willis Taylor, President and CEO of National Arts Strategies (NAS), September 2010 address at the University of Wisconsin School of Business.

- Thirty-seven percent (37%) worry that they may have to reduce programming or the number of days and hours they are open because of limits to their budgets.

Artists, Arts and Cultural Educators, Historic Preservationists and Other Practitioners

- Eighty-four percent (84%) of individual artists and practitioners stated that Ocean County needs to grow in its visibility and reputation as a cultural center to further their work, and 74% stated they need more visibility for the work they do in Ocean County.
- Eighty-three percent (83%) stated they need an increased audience for the work they do in Ocean County.
- Seventy-percent (70%) stated that the organizations they are affiliated with – who draw on their services as educators, preservationists and artists – need access to more grant funds.
- Fifty-eight percent (58%) stated they need more opportunities to work with the county schools (K-12) to provide arts and cultural learning opportunities.

The Public

> "We must keep our organizations alive through these economic times. They are absolutely essential!" - Ocean County resident.

Fifty-eight percent (58%) of the public that responded to this study stated that free festivals and free events that are equally appealing to tourists and residents are very important to them. Fifty-one percent (51%) stated that Ocean County's many heritage and history sites are important to them. Sixty-one (61%) of residents stated they attended free festivals and events at least once last year and 66% visited a historic site or museum in the county, while only 49% of respondents said they attended a paid arts event or performance by a local organization, and only 38% attended an event featuring a touring performer or artist. These same respondents were more inclined to attend paid performances outside of Ocean County than in the county (55% to 49%). The fact that Ocean County has professional *arts* organizations is only important to 39% of the respondents.

- These participation and attitude statistics are of particular concern to Ocean County arts organizations and artists that have worked hard to build professionalism and attract interested patrons to stay within Ocean County for their arts entertainment.

More Ocean County residents (62%) stated they attended a gallery or arts exhibit outside of Ocean County in the last year than said they visited a gallery or art exhibit in the county (55%).

- Some Ocean County artists may be better known outside of the county than inside the county. These patterns are concerning to Ocean County artists who seek to live and work in the county, selling their work to residents as well as visitors.

Sixty-percent (60%) of Ocean County residents stated that historic preservation in the county is very important to them. Fifty-four percent (54%) stated that cultural programs by and through the Library

system is personally very important to them, but only 41% stated they are highly proud of what there is in culture and heritage in Ocean County.

Forty-six percent (46%) are worried that nonprofit cultural and heritage groups in Ocean County will have difficulty surviving the economic recession. But only thirty-three percent (33%) stated they strongly agree with the statement "I care a lot about supporting the nonprofit cultural and heritage groups in Ocean County."

- Many organizations that seek to build a larger and broader donor base and to engage a new generation of volunteers should be concerned about the findings: limited pride, worries over financial capacity of Ocean County groups, and a weak level of personal support for Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations.

Four areas are ranked as extremely important by the majority (more than 50%) of the respondents, and only **one item** is ranked as extremely important by more than 60% of the respondents:

Services Ranked as Extremely Important by Respondents

72%	Having the county preserve historic properties and sites.
59%	Having free events such as outdoor concerts in area parks and communities.
55%	Getting information through ***Out & About Ocean County***.
54%	Having arts and heritage programming offered through the library system.

Additional Assessment Findings as a Foundation for the 2011-2016 Cultural Plan

1. ***New Models, New Savings. This is a top priority for the majority of Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations.*** Eighty-percent (80%) of Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations believe that finding new revenue sources is their key challenge in the next five years. Given the twenty-nine percent (29%) drop in contributions and grants since 2005 and the generally low percentage of earned income derived from admission and participation, the groups know the current financial model is not functional. Organizations have increasingly tapped into or borrowed against their assets, have little working capital, and very little room for any type of programmatic risk taking. Many have or are considering cutting back hours and programs, which has negative repercussions in lack of visibility and service; thirty-six percent (36%) report this is a serious option on the table with their boards.

   Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations have acknowledged these challenges as a group. Overall, forty-three percent (43%) of Ocean County cultural and heritage groups are looking for new ways to save and reduce expenses; thirty-eight percent (38%) say their organizations may either close or merge with another organization to stay in business. Ocean County is a virtual mirror of these national findings. Earlier this year, the Nonprofit Finance Fund found that 36% of nonprofits have reduced services or are considering mergers, while 35% have ended programs and implemented layoffs.

   > "It will be crucial for us as a community to come together and tear down all of the territorial silos (walls) that have been built." – Cultural organization representative.

2. ***Networking:*** This concept has taken a new lease on life as Ocean County cultural and heritage organizations seek to break out of isolation and work together to learn. Fifty-three percent (53%) of the county's nonprofit cultural and heritage organizations said networking would be the **best service the commission could provide**, but with a twist. As one participant said, "Let's call it strategic networking. Not just get together, but work together, learn together. Learn best practices. See what others are doing to solve problems. Get information and resources." Networking does not have to be in-person. Participants are interested in exploring the use of web conferencing and web-based meetings so they can get together more often with greater efficiency.

3. ***New Volunteers and Governance:*** When sixty-three percent (63%) of the county's cultural and heritage organizations state that finding new volunteers is a top challenge, they are going beyond talking about typical volunteer roles of interpreters, docents, publicity help, or ushers. Instead, they are talking about the lifeblood of their organizations, many of which are operated exclusively or almost exclusively by volunteers who take on both the board and operational management roles. The many years that these volunteers have led their groups makes it hard for them to evolve into different operating approaches, and just as hard for the younger generation of supporters to approach the groups and get involved.

4. ***Educational Partnerships:*** This topic was explored consistently throughout the planning process with education administrators and leaders working side by side with artists, historians, and cultural organization representatives. Mutually, they believe that students should learn about and from Ocean County's rich culture and history and that teachers can benefit from having working historic preservationists and historians, musicians, actors, writers – artists of all disciplines – visit their classrooms and work side by side with teachers.

> "Most important are cultural programs for children and youth. Work with schools to bring arts in education programs into the schools and to incorporate more local history in the primary school history curriculum. This may include providing opportunities for assisting teachers in learning about Ocean County's history as well as class visits to historical sites and museums in the county." – Resident, Ocean County

There is new awareness on the part of cultural organizations of the importance of getting into classrooms and being resources for student learning. Whereas ten years ago cultural and heritage organizations in Ocean County put outreach to seniors and general marketing paramount, today they have listed facilitating partnerships with education as their second highest priority.

5. ***Marketing:*** Thanks in large measure to the investment of time and resources the commission has made in producing its ***Out & About Ocean County***, cultural nonprofits and artists alike are ready and eager for the next steps in marketing services. As the county's young adult population increases and its senior population expands their use of computers in looking for entertainment and arts, cultural groups will want to expand their presence on-line.

A single on-line portal could lead to a more effective marketing partnership among the three key information purveyors in the county: the Cultural & Heritage Commission, Public Affairs & Tourism Department, and the Library System.

Experience working with ***Out & About Ocean County*** has led to interest by the cultural and heritage community in building a consolidated database that all can utilize in building and reaching audiences. Arts, cultural & heritage

> "We need help in volunteer training. Really, the whole element of volunteer program development. Also: we need board leadership development training, vision, and focus."

commissions and councils in communities large and small have found that their constituents build effective partnerships and mutually develop audiences when they are able to understand the uniqueness and crossover of their audiences and how to most efficiently reach them.

> "They can't find us if they don't know where we are."

6. ***Signage and Way-finding*** is a critical piece of marketing for all destination locations in Ocean County. This is again an item where cultural organizations can play an important leadership and brokering role. Locating consistent way-finding signs at major intersections and along key traffic corridors could offer tremendous boosts in potential attendance and revenue for many of the county's cultural organizations.

> "The ability of nonprofits and grantmakers to be effective – to have impact in the communities they care about – is paramount. General Operating Support (GOS) is fundament to enhancing grantee impact; it provides organizations with the flexible funding they need to achieve their missions effectively. Multi-year funding is also crucial for the health and effectiveness of nonprofits. This allows grantees to respond to crises and opportunities, maintain staff continuity and organizational leadership, overcome unforeseeable challenges and improve planning."
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> --- Benchmarks to Assess and Enhance Grantmaker Impact, Published by the National Committee for Responsive Philanthropy. 2009

7. ***Funding:*** Ocean County non-profit cultural and heritage organizations identified stable budget planning as their most important financial need – knowing the base budget far in advance. Organizational leaders were asked to prioritize which type of opportunity would be most important: the chance for more frequent (though smaller) grants, the chance for larger but less frequent grants, and the chance for multi-year operational funding. Larger but less frequent grants outpaced small grants among respondent answers. But then - two to one over the other options – organizations asked for multi-year grants. Ocean County cultural organizations seek stability, the ability to plan, the knowledge that they can predict key services so as to win matching funds and raise additional contributions.

   As observed through the planning process, the conventional wisdom is not true that organizations apply for Cultural & Heritage Commission funding early in their lifecycle or while still small and then abandon county support when they qualify for state grants. Organizations that have routinely received state support may return to the county to apply, especially as state funding has become variable.

   Even more important than grants from the county, cultural groups seek training, guidance, workshops, networking and resource listings in how to identify and apply for new funding sources.

   Sixty-five percent (65%) of the county's cultural groups want the commission to take a leadership role in working with businesses and foundations to facilitate dialogue. Nearly all would like to see

the commission bring together representatives of the municipalities in Ocean County to identify ways they can mutually support cultural and historical organizations.

8. ***Shared services, space, collections:*** Buying pools (co-operatives) might include the purchase of archival supplies that are costly if purchased in small volume. Another example might be to share the cost of leasing a very expensive piece of digital imaging equipment that could benefit numerous organizations that could share time of use and thereby reduce overall cost. Many other examples hold hope of savings and benefit. Other shared services include those in marketing and in more technical areas such as development and hosting of web sites. A simple but profoundly important shared service: storage. So many groups need storage for collections: a single shared storage facility that could accommodate a number of small groups would be of great value.

> "Issue grants to organizations that are not readily associated with the arts at present to make use of their public accessible space as a place to put art. When people become accustomed to seeing art all around them, they may decide to make it a permanent part of the landscape -- and may give funding toward public art projects." – Artist, Ocean County

A shared service that would have significant meaning to the artists of Ocean County is the establishment of a county art collection that could eventually lead to the creation of a public art program. This, in turn, would bring greater visibility to Ocean County visual arts and provide greater marketing exposure for its artists.

There are many options to consider here including so-called "purchase awards" to individual artists to create public art. Other grants could be made to organizations, including non-cultural organizations, to make their spaces available for well-publicized exhibits of local work. Eventually, Ocean County artists would like to see a museum of regional art emerge as a showcase of both historical and current Ocean County related work. Until then, they recognize that they can begin building the value of their work through small scale, shared initiatives.

9. ***Change the Image of Ocean County Culture:*** This priority could well be listed first or last – first as a desired outcome, but last as an outcome that requires the above steps be completed before it will happen. Over a quarter of the cultural plan's general public survey respondents said they are more likely to equate destinations such as Philadelphia or New York with "culture." Only forty percent (40%) of the respondents said they had strong feelings of pride for what exists culturally in Ocean County.

> "Do what contributes to a positive image of growth for Ocean County."

> "SMALL TOWN AMERICA is right here. We need to capitalize on these assets."

Representatives of the field and general public respondents alike joined in their request for better marketing, branding, imaging of culture and heritage in Ocean County. They want people to make better use of and

give better recognition to the county's excellent library system as a center for cultural activities. They want visitors to be able to readily see that Ocean County is culturally vibrant.

Summary of Assessment Findings

There are both challenges and opportunities ahead. Many of the opportunities have come because of good work done over the last decade: organizations and audiences alike are ready for the next generation of marketing; the artistic and creative community is ready for Ocean County to build a strong arts image; groups are more willing to network and work together having come together to implement planning initiatives from the last cultural plan; groups are `ready for more training and workshops based on what they have already learned. Others come from the challenges of the economy, of changes in funding, and a generational transformation in organizations. Both can and will be addressed by the next five years of focused work to implement the 2011-2016 Cultural Plan.

THE 2011-2016 CULTURAL PLAN FOR OCEAN COUNTY:

RESPONDING TO THE ASSESSMENT FINDINGS

A cultural plan is a broad policy document that provides direction and a framework of priorities for work undertaken by many entities. This plan may be thought of as a compass rather than a road map to meeting the needs and aspirations of the Ocean County cultural community. The Ocean County Cultural and Heritage agency plan has been developed in response to this cultural plan rather than the cultural plan develop out of the agency plan.

Many entities of Ocean County government already make significant, positive impact on the Ocean County cultural community. The vision of this plan is that these efforts become more coordinated and focused. The Ocean County Department of Planning can assist in building partnerships between cultural organizations and their communities to enhance economic development. The Ocean County Department of Public Information and Tourism can work to enhance the public image of Ocean County as a cultural center. The Ocean County Library system can provide links between individual artists and the buying public through art exhibits.

Even tasks that might typically fall to just one entity may become more productive if coordinated and shared. The Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission may want to set up inter-agency task forces or other joint programs that help it address the needs of cultural and heritage organizations.

This plan, then, is a broad overview of goals and strategies for the next five years. The plan does not specifically assign responsibility to any particular entity, but looks ahead to strong partnerships among the many Ocean County agencies that serve the Ocean County culture and heritage community.

The Ocean County Cultural & Heritage Commission will develop a more detailed set of benchmarks should be developed over the next year for the assessment and implementation of this cultural plan.

Vision, Purpose, Outcome

Vision Statement

The vision for Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector is one of healthy, stable cultural and heritage nonprofits that are widely recognized as vital to quality of life and known for fostering continued economic growth, while also contributing to quality education.

The **vision** for Ocean County's cultural development is one of strength and stability, where organizations and destinations have the **resources to grow** and evolve through dramatically changing times:

building a **strong image of culture and heritage in** Ocean County;

investing in strategic networking and partnerships, **where walls of self-interest disappear and teamwork advances the field**;

enhancing a greater community benefit from culture and heritage seen through **education partnerships**, greater involvement by municipalities, and heightened, centralized marketing.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the Ocean County Cultural Plan is to provide a unified vision for the county's cultural future and to articulate goals and strategies that will be jointly addressed by the numerous Ocean County departments and agencies that are stakeholders in providing a vibrant cultural quality of life.

Outcome Statement

The outcome of Ocean County's Cultural Plan will be evidenced through the commitment by each stakeholder to meet the plan's goals and follow through with individual agency or organizational strategic plans and actions that work together to further arts and cultural development in Ocean County.

Cultural Plan Goals are designed to work toward the vision, ensuring that the plan can be attained while being flexible and open to new opportunities that emerge over the next five to ten years.

THE GOALS

1. SUSTAINABILITY - SURVIVE AND THRIVE

Build capacity within Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector.

2. FINANCES - STRENGTHEN AND BUILD OPPORTUNITIES

Strengthen and build revenue opportunities for Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector.

3. PARTNERSHIPS - CONNECT ACROSS SECTORS

Forge sustainable partnerships between the cultural and heritage sector, education, economic development, and municipalities.

4. BRAND IDENTITY - UNIFY MARKETING

Build and utilize a brand identity for Ocean County culture and heritage to effectively market cultural assets and events through a unified system.

5. RECOGNITION - HONOR COUNTY CULTURE & HERITAGE

Expand Ocean County's overall commitment to culture and heritage.

ACTION PLAN

Goal 1. Build sustainability and capacity within Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector.

This is the most important priority for the cultural plan. In the words of one participant, "we must survive, sustain, and then gain success." This goal includes action steps in sharing best practices for sustainability; networking; learning and adopting new business models; and shared services.

Strategies

1.A. **Identify an agency to take the lead in building sustainability**. If a single agency or entity cannot take this on in full, this may be done by convening a working **Sustainability Task Force** of Ocean County cultural organization representatives and other advisors (i.e. financial community, economic development, Small Business Administration, others TBD). With support from the Cultural & Heritage Commission and staff, assign the Task Force responsibility for the following,:

i. Establish regular (quarterly, annual) strategic networking opportunities to explore key topics and elements of sustainability and capacity, including:
1) operational capacity and fiscal strength best practices (i.e. examples drawn from Charity Navigator, NAS, Urban Institute, Philanthropy Roundtable and other groups that have researched best practices for stabilization;
2) new revenue stream development best practices;
3) volunteer program development;
4) governance strengthening;
5) new models for joint ventures, mergers, and long term partnerships.

ii. Add additional topics over time. Within a focus of responding to cultural and heritage group needs, work to test and adopt concepts. As appropriate and possible, seek in-kind and/or grant support to bring in speakers or send group members to attend various forums and conferences on sustainability, fiscal capacity, new revenue streams, organizational change, new business models, governance and volunteer program development.

1.B. **Identify resources.** Develop an Ocean County **Interagency Working Group on Culture and Heritage** focused on leveraging and targeting resources to strengthen and sustain culture and heritage in Ocean County through shared services and eliminating redundancy. Develop shared understanding of the roles and responsibilities, funding and promoting capacities and priorities of each agency, and work to eliminate duplication and maximize impact on the field.

1.C. **Identify cost saving/revenue-enhancing shared services** that make it possible for groups and individuals to reduce overhead.

i. Evaluate how to implement the shared services through mechanisms that may range from informal agreements to cooperatives.

ii. Lead entities taking on responsibility with the support and buy-in of a group of interested parties.

1.D. **Build volunteer capacity**. Identify, evaluate, test, and implement standing programs in volunteer and board development, drawing from best practice models from around the country that may be implemented and offered through the county Library or Cultural & Heritage Commission, or through other county departments or agencies.	
1.E. **Advocate for the importance of culture and heritage** in Ocean County through presentations at civic organizations, business groups, higher education, faith-based groups, municipalities, and to the public. Work to build understanding of the economic, quality of life, educational, tourism, and civic infrastructure role of culture and heritage in Ocean County	
i.	Address shared storage space needs and workable sub-lease mechanisms.
ii.	Identify ways to focus on the shared services needs of individual practitioners, such as artist studio space, joint exhibits, etc.

Goal 2. Strengthen and build revenue opportunities for Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector.

This goal addresses building earned and contributed income among nonprofit groups, assisting individual practitioners in building entrepreneurial cultural businesses, and building bequests and endowments.

Strategies

2.A. Develop and disseminate an **on-line resource directory on funding sources** for cultural and heritage nonprofits, including funding opportunities they may have in working with other sectors such as human services, hospitals/wellness, and others.

2.B. Convene **"Showcase of Ocean County" conference(s)** that invites Ocean County cultural and heritage groups and individuals to perform (in showcase format) and have sales materials/booths for invited municipalities, event and wedding planners, hospitality industry, gated communities, business improvement districts, and others. Facilitate the contracting of Ocean County cultural and heritage groups and individuals for events, performances, programs. Through the showcase build the reputation and spotlight the excellence of Ocean County resources.

i. Study models of effective showcases. Encourage cultural and heritage organizations to develop and appropriately price portfolios of programs and services ranging from facility rentals for events to lectures or performances. Provide them with access to on-line resources in best practices marketing materials. Provide networking opportunity for training through the Sustainability Task Force or other mechanism.

ii. Build interest and coalitions within the event, hospitality, BID and other groups throughout the county and in neighboring areas.

2.C. **Host roundtables on funding and fund development for the cultural and heritage sector**, including panels such as trust officers and CPAs on planned giving strategies, foundation officers on trends in their programs, and area businesses on business support and partnerships. Include idea swap sessions on fundraising events and methods and provide informational resources that groups can use in building new revenue plans.

2.D. **Evaluate all possible dedicated public revenue options** for strengthening and stabilizing culture and heritage in Ocean County. As appropriate, conduct research and evaluation studies to test the viability of approaches and mechanisms.

2.E. **Consider development of an Entrepreneurial Support Program for individual practitioners** seeking to build businesses and practices in the cultural and heritage field.

i. Identify ways to develop a sustainable partnership with the Small Business Administration (SBA) and others that offer business development planning and training.

ii. Investigate small business/business start up loan programs and other support to assist in the start-up and strengthening of Ocean County cultural and heritage entrepreneurial businesses.

Goal 3. Forge mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships among the cultural and heritage sector, education, economic development, and municipalities.

This goal addresses establishing lasting and effective partnerships that assist in strengthening cultural education for students in the county's schools, and assists in community revitalization and economic development.

Strategies

3.A. **Consider forming a standing Cultural Education Task Force** comprised of educators working within cultural nonprofits, the Library system, elementary and secondary schools, higher education, and faith-based education institutions to study and recommend the most effective ways to build beneficial partnerships among the wide range of county cultural nonprofits and centers of learning. The group may recommend a range of approaches to evaluate professional development or classroom partnership, or other mechanisms they believe make best use of the county's cultural resources.

i. **Identify funding for pilot projects** and related evaluation.

ii. **Identify sustainable funding stream** or methods for the most workable partnerships that offer the highest outcomes for learning through culture and heritage.

3. B. **Maintain the county's commitment to the New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival**, broadening public awareness of the Festival within Ocean County.

3.C. **Expand public awareness of school-based arts and cultural programming**, including student performances. Encourage residents of all ages to attend student performances.

3.D. **Work to convene on-going series of discussions about arts, culture, and community vitality in the communities of Ocean County**. Showcase models of arts districts and events such as First Friday Gallery Walk and economic development approaches such as art studio incubators. Develop dialogue and shared consensus on items such as infrastructure (sidewalks, signage) that provide mutual benefit.

Goal 4. Build and utilize a clearly formed identity for Ocean County culture and heritage, and effectively market cultural assets and events through a unified marketing system.

This goal includes shared marketing services, promotional events such as festivals and fairs, and the creation and utilization of a brand identity for the Ocean County cultural and heritage community. Implement a consistent, strong, multi-year image development effort that builds awareness, enthusiasm, and knowledge of all Ocean County cultural resources, destinations, and offerings.

Strategies

4.A. **Evaluate how to streamline and eliminate redundancy among all calendars and guides, both print and on-line.**

i. Evaluate the existing on-line calendars and print publications such as ***Out & About Ocean County*** considering their shared and unique target audiences and resources used for the production of each. Evaluate products available to license and use that may stream line and focus all calendars, such as Artsopolis.

ii. As necessary and appropriate, invite the participation of other arts and cultural councils and consortia around the country that have moved to this type of shared platform.

iii Evaluate all considerations and make an Interagency Working Group recommendation for overall cultural, entertainment, heritage, and destination calendar and information for Ocean County.

4.B. **Evaluate marketing approaches and training that can best benefit Ocean County cultural and heritage groups**.

i. These may include building shared databases and overall database management capacity, training and shared use of web site/web page software, e-newsletter and blogs, and other tools that can be used by the sector or by individual groups.

ii. Make recommendations as appropriate to the Shared Services Task Force to lead further exploration on this topic.

4.C. **Provide workshops that explore new marketing practices**, including pricing and packaging strategies, use of GPS mobile "heritage tours," and other innovations that can assist the field.

4.D. **Develop a plan and phased approach for uniform cultural and heritage way finding, directional and interpretive signage** for cultural and heritage locations throughout the county.

4.E. **Conduct an image development initiative** to establish a common identity for Ocean County's cultural destinations, agencies, and organizations to use in building resident and visitor awareness of Ocean County's unique and varied cultural landscape.

i. Ensure that all grantees and partners adopt the use of the brand/logo and extend its visibility through their constituents.

4.F. **Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of central information "hubs"** and make recommendations to the applicable agencies.

Goal 5. Expand Ocean County's overall commitment to honoring culture and heritage.

This goal speaks to civic pride in local culture and heritage and the value placed on culture and heritage by government in both tangible agency actions and support as well as intangible but highly valued recognition and awareness.

Strategies

5.A. **Evaluate and implement annual honors and awards** that draw recognition to culture and heritage and practitioners in Ocean County.

i. Consider an annual recognition/purchase award to an artist, as a pathway toward establishing a quality collection of Ocean County artwork that can become the foundation for a permanent museum.

ii. Create a volunteer recognition program or other ways to draw attention to both professional and amateur organizations.

iii. Consider adding local oriented "honorary/award" festivals such as a senior art festival or an Ocean County authors festival to bring recognition to artists working in the county as well as an "arts in our schools" week or day.

5.B. **Work to expand the Cultural and Heritage Grant Programs**, evaluating the size and requirements for the grants to maximize their impact on Ocean County organizations.

5.C. **Encourage each county agency to maximize its focus on and promotion of culture and heritage in the county**.

i. Establish tourism promotion campaigns featuring heritage tourism.

ii. Create tourism maps of all galleries and artist studios and draw increased attention to the full range of cultural programming that focuses on Ocean County groups and artists through the Library, and more.

5.D**. Facilitate dialogue with municipalities to explore ideas** such as joint municipal/county applications for additional funding for culture and heritage to state or federal agencies.

i. **Submit applications for additional support** to achieve objectives of this plan to federal agencies, statewide funders and foundations. Seek corporate sponsorship for marketing – i.e. sponsors for Artsopolis as have been won by other commissions.

ii. Work with municipalities to gain their interest and support for **interpretive signage and local cultural marketing materials.**

iii. **Seek technical assistance investment and support from outside organizations such as Main Street New Jersey** to provide sustained technical assistance to cultural development in the county's municipalities.

iv. **Explore the establishment of an Ocean County Film Commission** to market the breadth of the county's culture, heritage and natural resource opportunities to the industry.

5.E. **Provide county-wide public educational programs on the value of public art. W**ork toward the development of a public art master plan for Ocean County that can guide public art placement and procurement policies as well as provide policies for preservation of public art and heritage monuments

and markers.
5.F. **Evaluate needs for and as appropriate undertake feasibility studies for potentially significant county cultural facilities** including: i. a county gallery/museum; ii. a county arts and cultural education center, potentially linked to or operated jointly with the Ocean County Parks and Recreation Department or Ocean County ; iii. a major performing arts/convention center.

Addenda

The audience at the public unveiling of the cultural plan was provided "dots" to rank which items from the plan were most important to them. Each of the seventy three (73) participants was issued two dots and asked to place them on any of the categories or actionable items they believe were high priorities. The resulting matrix has been transposed here along with a brief summary of each item, associated totals, and percentages.

Goal 1. Build sustainability and capacity within Ocean County's cultural and heritage sector	4 Dots, 4.15%
1.A. Identify an agency to take the lead in building sustainability	21 Dots, 9.68%
1.B. Develop an Ocean County Interagency Working Group on Culture and Heritage	0 Dots, 0.00%
1.C. Identify cost saving/revenue to enhance shared services and reduce overhead	2 Dots, 0.92%
1.D. Build volunteer capacity by Identifying, evaluating, and testing standing programs	2 Dots, 0.92%
1.E. Advocate for the importance of culture and heritage in Ocean County	8 Dots, 3.69%
Goal 1 Subtotal:	42 Dots,19.35%
Goal 2. Strengthen and build revenue opportunities for Ocean County's cultural sector	32 Dots,14.75%
2.A. Develop and disseminate an on-line resource directory on funding sources	7 Dots, 3.23%
2.B. Convene "Showcase of Ocean County" conference for groups and individuals to perform	12 Dots, 5.53%
2.C. Host roundtables on funding and fund development for the cultural and heritage sector	4 Dots, 1.84%
2.D. Evaluate all possible dedicated public revenue options stabilizing culture in Ocean County	2 Dots, 0.92%
2.E. Consider development of an Entrepreneurial Support Program for individual practitioners	4 Dots, 1.84%
Goal 2 Subtotal:	61 Dots,28.11%
Goal 3. Forge mutually beneficial and sustainable partnerships among the cultural sector	17 Dots, 7.83%
3.A. Consider forming a standing Cultural Education Task Force	7 Dots, 3.23%
3. B. Maintain the county's commitment to the New Jersey State Teen Arts Festival	2 Dots, 0.92%
3.C. Expand public awareness of school-based arts and cultural programming	3 Dots, 1.38%
3.D. Work to convene on-going discussions about arts, culture, and community vitality	22 Dots,10.14%
Goal 3 Subtotal:	51 Dots,23.50%
Goal 4. Build and utilize a clearly formed identity through a unified marketing system	11 Dots, 5.07%
4.A. Evaluate how to streamline and eliminate redundancy among all calendars and guides	10 Dots, 4.61%
4.B. Evaluate marketing approaches that can best benefit Ocean County cultural groups	3 Dots, 1.38%
4.C. Provide workshops that explore new marketing practices	0 Dots, 0.00%
4.D. Develop a plan and phased approach for uniform cultural and heritage way finding	0 Dots, 0.00%
4.E. Conduct an image development initiative to establish a common identity	3 Dots, 1.38%
4.F. Evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of central information "hubs"	3 Dots, 1.38%
Goal 4 Subtotal:	30 Dots, 13.82%
Goal 5. Expand Ocean County's overall commitment to honoring culture and heritage	15 Dots, 6.91%
5.A. Evaluate and implement annual honors and awards that recognize to culture in the County	3 Dots, 1.38%
5.B. Work to expand the Cultural and Heritage Grant Programs	7 Dots, 3.23%
5.C. Encourage each county agency to maximize its focus on and promotion in the county	0 Dots, 0.00%
5.D. Facilitate dialogue with municipalities to explore joint cultural grant-seeking	2 Dots, 0.92%
5.E. Provide county-wide public educational programs on the value of public art	0 Dots, 0.00%
5.F. Evaluate need and undertake feasibility studies for county cultural facilities	6 Dots, 2.76%
Goal 5 Subtotal:	33 Dots,15.21%

Grant Total: 217 Dots, 100%

Cultural and Heritage Commision - Division of the Ocean County Department of Parks and Recreation

Library System and Environmental

Jackson
Plumsted
Joint Base - McGuire Dix Lakehurst
Lakehurst
Manchester
Lakewood
Point Pleasant
Pt. Pleasant Beach
Bay Head
Brick
Mantoloking
Toms River
Lavallette
Seaside Heights
Seaside Park
South Toms River
Pine Beach
Island Heights
Beachwood
Ocean Gate
Berkeley
Lacey
Ocean
Barnegat
Barnegat Light
Long Beach
Stafford
Harvey Cedars
Little Egg Harbor
Long Beach
Surf City
Eagleswood
Ship Bottom
Tuckerton
Long Beach
Beach Haven
Long Beach

Legend

- Library Branches
- County Parks -Barnegat Branch Trail (BBT)
- County Parks
- State of New Jersey
- United States of America
- New Jersey Pinelands Region

0 2 4
Miles

1 in = 2 miles

N

PROJECTION - NEW JERSEY STATE PLANE NAD 1983
MEASUREMENT- FEET

PREPARED BY - THE COUNTY OF OCEAN PLANNING DEPARTMENT

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Map of Ocean County

Jackson
Plumsted
Lakewood
Point Pleasant
Pt. Pleasant Beach
Bay Head
Brick
Mantoloking
Lakehurst
Toms River
Manchester
Lavallette
Seaside Heights
South Toms River
Pine Beach
Island Heights
Beachwood
Ocean Gate
Seaside Park
Berkeley
Lacey
Ocean
Barnegat
Barnegat Light
Stafford
Long Beach
Harvey Cedars
Little Egg Harbor
Long Beach
Surf City
Eagleswood
Ship Bottom
Tuckerton
Long Beach
Beach Haven
Long Beach

Legend

- Arts Regrant Organizations
- Performing/Visual Arts Centers
- Organizations Directly Funded by NJSCA
- Adult Communities
- Area of Concentrated Population Density

0 2 4
Miles

1 in = 2 miles

N

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