

FRACC

Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition



ONE SOUTH COAST
CHAMBER

ARTS & CULTURE CREATIVE ECONOMY PLAN

NOVEMBER 2021

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This effort was initiated and led by the Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition (FRACC). Formed in 2019, FRACC is a collaborative, open-source, member-based organization dedicated to advancing arts and culture in the city to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable creative economy. The group is comprised of committed individuals representing the City of Fall River, organizations, civic groups, arts, culture, and creativity in the City of Fall River. FRACC is a committee of One SouthCoast Chamber and meets monthly. See page 12 for further information on the diversity of the group.

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ARTS & CULTURE

EXECUTIVE

SUMMARY

VISION STATEMENT

Arts & Culture Plan believes that supporting and advancing arts and culture is a key driver to future economic prosperity. Our vibrant and diverse community of artists and creatives are a valuable resource to our community. In partnership with the Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition, we connect creatives with collaborative opportunities and weave them into cross-sector initiatives that apply the skills and resources of the creative community to increase impact and engagement.

WHY A CREATIVE ECONOMY PLAN?

Fall River is rich in history, culture, and diversity. This creative economy plan offers a vision for arts, culture, and creativity in the city that celebrates the past and builds on the present. Our goal? Making Fall River the best possible place to live, work, invest, play, and visit. We have the opportunity to infuse arts, culture, and creativity in everything we do – in attracting visitors, supporting economic development, programming parks, building infrastructure projects, and providing needed services and opportunities for residents. Why is this important? We know that arts, culture, and creativity are major contributors to the economy and quality of life. Looking at economic impacts in the last year prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, the U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis reports that the arts and cultural sector contributed \$25.5 billion to the Massachusetts economy in 2019. That number represents 4.3% of the state’s GDP.¹ Not having a coordinated arts, culture, and creative economy strategy for Fall River is leaving money on the table and allowing jobs and key services and opportunities to go elsewhere.

This Creative Economy Plan provides a roadmap for reaching goals and identifies cross-sector opportunities for addressing mutual interests and using resources wisely. This plan looks across interests and disciplines in Fall River to ensure that there is a cohesive approach to supporting and enhancing arts and culture that is integrated into overall City policies and initiatives.

A city that has an abundance of opportunities, spaces, and organizations and institutions infused with arts and culture is a vibrant city that invites people to gather, work, interact, and learn in celebration and recognition of the myriad traditions and cultural and creative practices that showcase and honor the diversity of our residents. This is the vision for the creative economy in Fall River.

¹ <https://www.bea.gov/research/papers/2014/arts-and-cultural-production-satellite-account-acpsa>

The importance of arts, culture, and tourism is clearly outlined in the City of Fall River Master Plan as well as the recent Urban Renewal Plans for the Downtown and Waterfront. These are just three of the myriad plans and initiatives that recognize how critical arts, culture, and tourism are to our city.

FRACC: OUR PLANNING AND ACTION PRINCIPLES

Viva Arts & Culture is Fall River's first creative economy plan. Known for its history as the center of textile manufacturing during the industrial revolution, present-day Fall River is emerging as a community of modern creativity and innovation. This plan recognizes and celebrates the culture, diversity, and active arts and creative enterprises in the city.

We are proud of the broad nature of support and input for this plan that began with the formation of the Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition (FRACC) in 2019 as the first big step in creating collaborative action in arts, culture, and the creative economy in a ten-year plan of focused effort in the city. FRACC was founded in early 2019 based on a commitment to sharing ideas and collective action and advocacy for arts, culture, and the creative economy. The original members felt that Fall River somehow was never able to leverage its "parts" for a greater whole, that somehow the cultural treasures of the city were hidden, that all of the volunteer time and efforts and struggles for funding weren't allowing everyone to move forward, to grow, to flourish.

During the planning process for this report, the twelve member FRACC Steering Committee met bi-weekly and the entire FRACC membership did the same. As of the writing of this report, FRACC has 93 members and is proud of its open-source commitment...inviting anyone and every organization to join who is committed to collaboration and improving the quality of life for Fall River residents by growing opportunities and support for the arts, culture, and creative economy of the city.

The sharing of knowledge and aligning of efforts of many different members of FRACC have yielded positive benefits and created an ethos of communication and partnerships that will serve the city in good stead for decades to come. Between FRACC's open-source structure and diverse membership and the collaborative work of the city's nonprofits and community organizations, there is a strong framework to move forward in arts, culture, and the creative economy. Success in arts, culture, cultural tourism, community development, and a host of other things depends on collaboration, cooperation, and mutual dependence to align efforts and resources, and create significant momentum, positive impacts, and high visibility.

VIVA ARTS & CULTURE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Commit to equity in arts and culture in the city.
 - Ensure all events are accessible and reflect the diversity of cultures and traditions found in Fall River (and beyond!) - in content, artists, and audience.
 - Ensure that the distribution of funding and arts and cultural support of all kinds is equitably distributed throughout the city, both geographically and demographically.
 - Commit to payment for all artists engaged in work for the Viva Arts & Culture Plan and FRACC.
2. Ensure that events and activities are ADA accessible for participants and that individuals with disabilities are offered the full spectrum of participation as artists. The [Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity](#) will be a guide for Viva Arts & Culture Plan actions.
3. Embrace collaboration and partnerships with local and regional arts, culture, and business organizations, community groups, and public officials.
4. Maintain the initiative's open-source framework to ensure transparency and access.

In essence, the Viva Arts & Culture Creative Economy Plan is about much more than arts and culture, it's about quality of life, opportunities for residents, and a nurturing environment for businesses. The plan sees arts, culture, and the creative economy as a part of larger economic development, community development, and tourism efforts in the city. The presence of creatives is a magnet that attracts customers for retail and dining, creates interest in living in the city, and entices visitors to explore the history, architecture, cultures, and environment of Fall River.

THE PLANNING PROCESS

The planning process was guided by FRACC and the FRACC Steering Committee which developed the Scope of Work and hired CivicMoxie, the planning consultant who facilitated the planning process. There were three phases to the project, which began in November 2020:

An inventory of existing assets was conducted with site visits, online searches, reading existing City documents, soliciting feedback on the project mapping website, and getting feedback from FRACC. Community outreach throughout the process offered opportunities to test assumptions, hear needs and desires of residents and business owners, and identify resources and potential partners. Case studies were researched to provide inspiration for Plan ideas and the goals, recommendations, and priorities for implementation were created through discussions about resources and desired impacts.

The Plan is a living document, providing a framework to move forward to achieve the vision for arts, culture, and the creative economy in Fall River in the next ten years.



Inventory

- Existing arts, cultural, civic, and creative economy assets
- Mapping of assets
- Understand past and current planning and projects

Analysis

- Strengths and opportunities, weaknesses and what's missing, challenges and barriers
- How have others addressed these things?
- Priorities

A Plan to Move Forward

- Vision
- Goals and strategies
- Roles and responsibilities
- Timeline
- Metrics to measure success

CONTEXT

FALL RIVER IS A MULTI-CULTURAL CITY KNOWN FOR ITS DIVERSITY, ITS FOOD, AND AS A TEXTILE MANUFACTURING CENTER DURING THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION. THIS PLAN JUST TOUCHES THE SURFACE IN TERMS OF HUMAN, PHYSICAL, AND CREATIVE ASSETS IN THE CITY.

THE PEOPLE OF FALL RIVER

ACCORDING TO THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SURVEY (2019),

89,534

PEOPLE CALL FALL RIVER HOME.

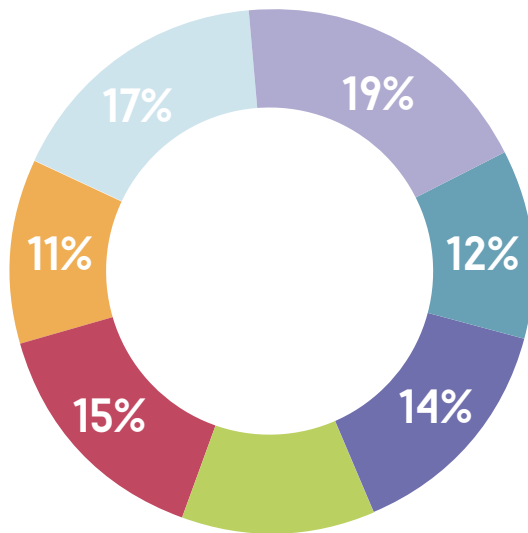
THE AVERAGE MEDIAN AGE

OF FALL RIVER RESIDENTS **39.2** YEARS

IS

YOUNG.

FALL RIVER RESIDENTS SPAN MANY GENERATIONS...

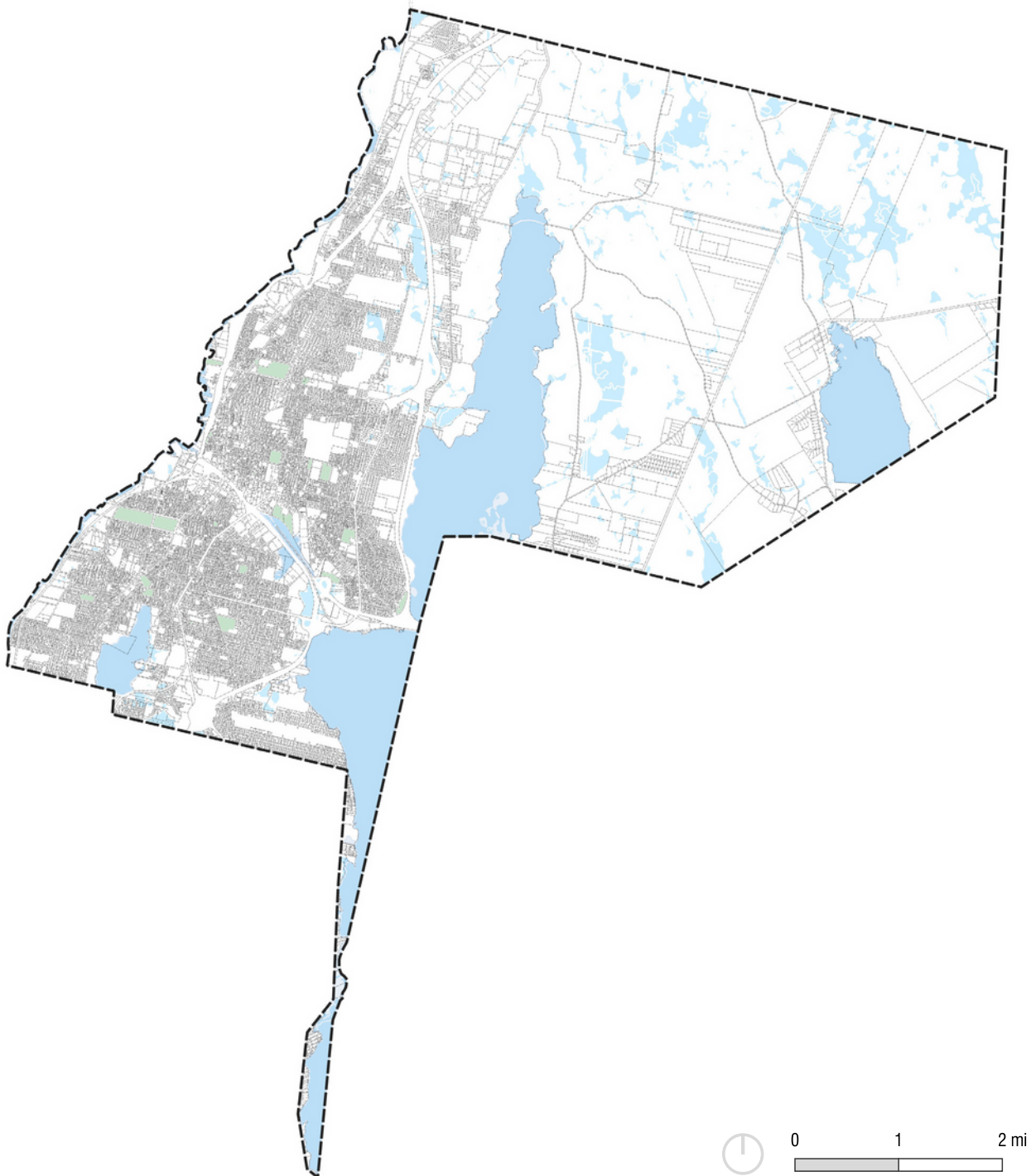


AGES:

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- 25 - 34
- 35 - 44
- 45 - 54
- 55 - 64

THE PLACE

Fall River's location, its splendid views across the water, its hills, and its proximity to Boston are all things mentioned many times during this planning process. A little-known fact to people outside of the city is that 41% of the land area of Fall River is permanently protected open space. The forests and protected lands of the city offer another image of this 19th century textile city and one that is in total alignment with efforts to infuse arts and culture throughout the neighborhoods, trails, waterfront, and downtown of Fall River.



ARTS, CULTURAL, AND CREATIVE ECONOMY ASSETS

Arts, Cultural, and Creative Economy Assets

The city has a wealth of cultural, historic, and organizational assets and visitor destinations; mapping these assets will continue to be a work in progress.

Historical

Fall River has 291 properties listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). We have mapped some significant historical properties, which include numerous mill buildings as well as historic districts, including the Downtown Fall River Historic District, which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Dining and Food

An often-heard comment during planning was "Fall River's restaurants and food are under-valued." A example of this is that there is no restaurant map showing the numerous opportunities to enjoy a diverse selection of food and drink in the city. There are over a hundred restaurants in the city with significant clusters of eateries downtown.

This plan outlines opportunities for better collaboration between arts, cultural, and dining venues in the city to benefit all; creating inventories of eateries and reaching out to restauranteurs will be an important part of moving this plan forward

Publicly Accessible Art

Public Art is often used as a catch-all term to describe murals, street art, statues, lighting art, etc., in the public realm. In fact, all of those things are better described as "publicly accessible art" because in the most cities, art efforts that are funded privately and often on private buildings or spaces, make up some of the most exciting of creative endeavors that everyone can enjoy. Public art technically refers to that art which is owned, controlled, and maintained by the City. The fact that Fall River doesn't have a public art plan or commission should not be a worry at this point in time. Creating and funding a plan takes time and if the City can incentivize the creation of publicly accessible art, what could be better?

Organizations, Education Institutions, Groups, Initiatives

This plan embraces all the organizations, groups, educational institutions, initiatives, and efforts of the city that align with the goals of growing a robust economy and improving quality of life for residents through arts, culture, and creative endeavors. It's hard to think of why a list of collaborators wouldn't include every single organization and group in the city....and in fact the wide range of members of FRACC are testament to how powerful we can be when we collaborate. A summary of the assets of the city:

Arts and Cultural Organizations and Groups

- 29 education institutions, from Bristol Community College to local elementary schools
- Over 40 arts and cultural organizations or groups, from the Children's Museum of Greater Fall river to the Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art, to The Greater Fall River Symphony, to name just a few!
- Over 50 community organizations and institutions including the YMCA Southcoast, United Neighbors of Fall River, to the Boys and Girls Club and many others.
- 8 media outlets
- ...and countless other informal groups and initiatives.

Artists and Creatives

While we collected information on artists and creatives during this planning process, this information is not listed here because of privacy issues. The plan recommends creating a self-populating online public database of these resources or other visible way to celebrate the creatives who live and/or work in the city.

PLANNING INITIATIVES

This Plan supports the goals for Fall River outlined in a number of City initiatives of the past decade.

- The Fall River Waterfront Cultural District
- MassDevelopment TDI Downtown District (transitioning to Viva Fall River)
- Downtown and Waterfront Urban Renewal Plans
- City of Fall River Master Plan 2009 – 2030

The City's Master Plan goals include arts and culture and this creative economy plan directly supports the Master Plan.

- South Coast Rail Commuter Service to Fall River

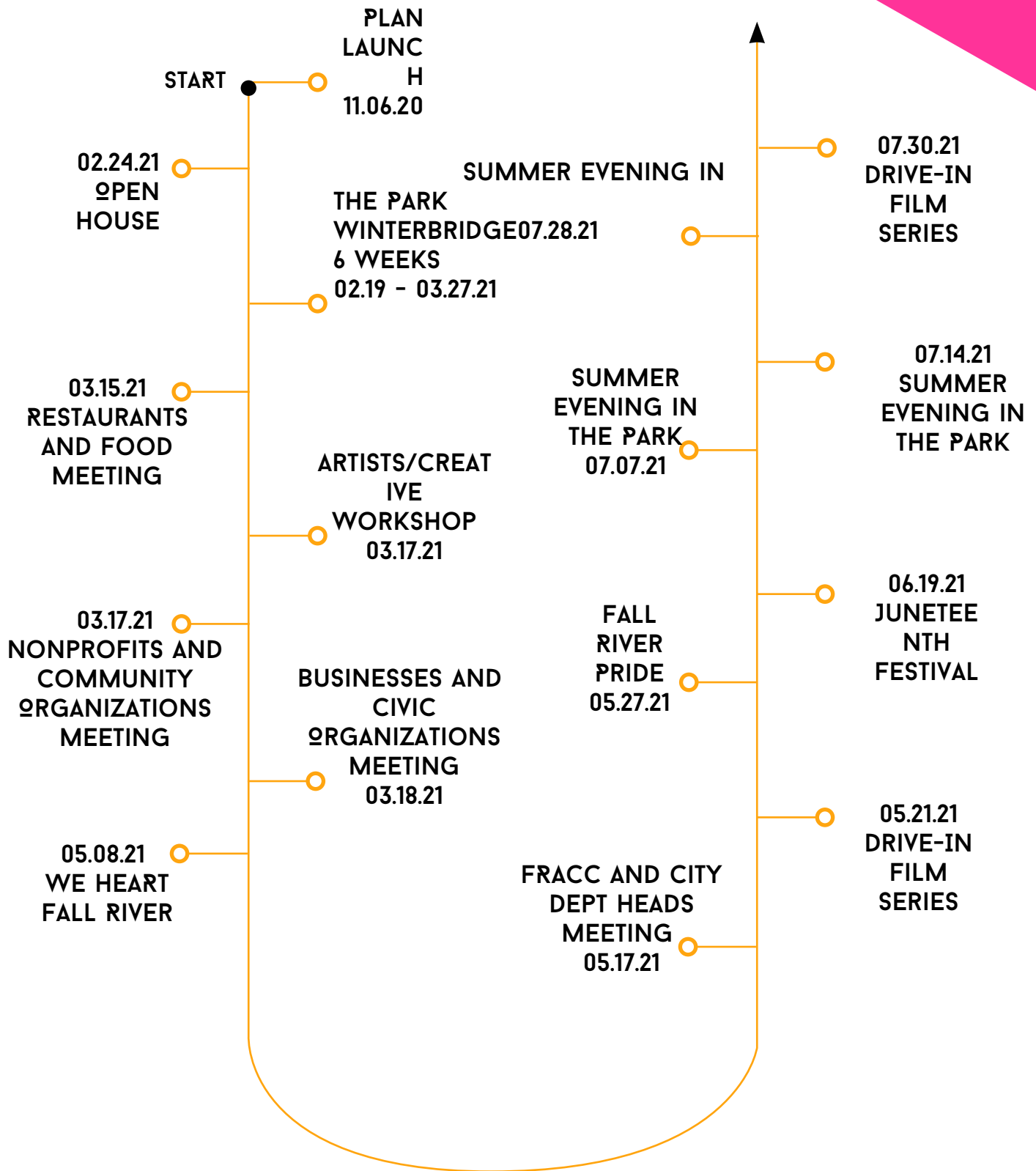
WHAT WE HEARD

The Viva Arts & Culture Plan began in the Fall of 2020 with the engagement of a consultant to advise on, and facilitate the planning process for FRACC. With over 90 members, FRACC formed the core of outreach and had monthly meetings throughout the planning process where plan updates were given, ideas tested, and input received from members on how to include residents and ensure this plan has a positive impact on quality of life while also supporting a robust Fall River economy and businesses.

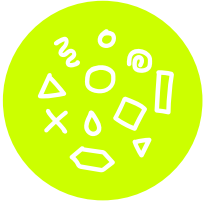
Our outreach efforts

- We created a website and online mapping tool in late 2020 that offers information on the planning process and invites everyone to input favorite gathering places, arts and culture resources, public art locations, and community organizations and groups.
- Initially the Viva Fall River Facebook Page and @VivaFallRiver Instagram account helped publicize outreach events and community activities and began efforts to build a brand around arts, culture, tourism, and the creative economy.
- Multiple meetings, focus groups, interviews, and workshops were held from early 2021 through the summer and FRACC developed a team of volunteers and members to conduct intercept surveys at city events.

The following graphic illustrates the range of outreach efforts undertaken by this plan.



ASSETS



Diversity



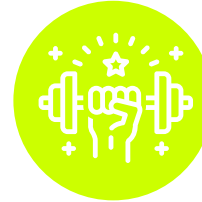
Food



Location/
Waterfront



Braga
Bridge View



Strong City
Leadership

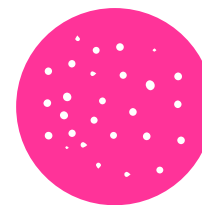
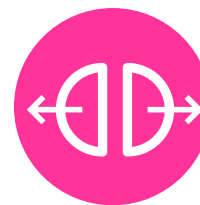
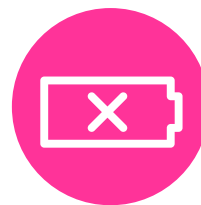


Parks

Other:

- Arts
- History
- People
- The Narrows
- Children's Museum
- Fall River Symphony
- Little Theatre
- Portugalia Marketplace
- FRACC
- Grimshaw-Gudewicz Gallery at BCC
- Durfee HS Auditorium
- Festivals and Feasts
- Social Clubs and Bands
- Cambodian Temple
- Spindle City Ballet
- Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art
- ...and more!

CHALLENGES



Cynicism Political Turnover Lacking Capacity Disjointed Efforts Sporadic Destinations/

Missing an arts, culture and tourism coordinator

No City

Other: Cohesion

- Lacking history of cultural institutions and investment
- Many plans in the past have petered out
- We don't even know what we have. Everything is disjointed.
- There is no common calendar that is the "go-to" place
- Missed opportunity – city as foodie destination
- Many working artists in the city are under radar

MISSING



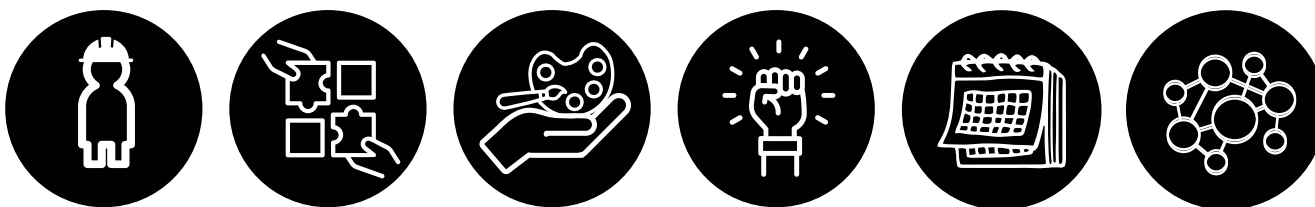
One Source Funding Affordable Waterfront Tourism and Youth Events Calendar Artist Spaces Performances Marketing Involvement

Direction

Other things missing in Fall River:

- Unifying force (in the past) to pull it together (FRACC here now...have hopes)
- Visible presence and density of contemporary artists
- A signature initiative
- Large gathering space
- No bigger vision...just plodding along in our silos
- Connections between people, organizations, ideas, places

HOPE



Cultural/Tourism Encourage Supportive Resident One Source Initiatives That
Coordinator Collaboration Environment Ownership Events Cross Spectrum
for Artists Calendar

Other:

- Long-term political and financial sustainability
- Tell a cohesive and compelling story of the city
- Focus on connections: arts, culture, tourism, restaurants, waterfront, history, trails, farmers' markets, transportation, public works, active living

RECURRING THEMES

The overarching themes that emerged from our outreach efforts have helped shape our goals and strategies. These themes and focus areas include:



A Broad Understanding of Arts, culture, and creativity: Arts, culture, and creativity permeate every part of life in Fall River and we must celebrate and advertise this! This effort is inclusive of local community traditions, food, and craft as well as more formal efforts to support contemporary art, street art, theater and music, and entrepreneurs who are making new things in new ways in the city.



Focus: this effort must stay focused over time, transcending politics and efforts to move outside our strong collaborative framework. Shifting to new priorities and new initiatives constantly does not help us achieve success in our goals. We must stay focused on growing resources and leveraging investments (time, money, political capital) for multiplying returns.



Sustainability: Funding is needed for long-term paid professional staff to oversee plan implementation. We cannot depend on volunteer efforts to keep this initiative going. Everyone is already doing as much as they can.



Collaboration and Cooperation: There is power in aligning goals and interests across organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals. When everyone is in silos we can't achieve our full potential.



Residents and Community: At the end of the day, if what we do doesn't benefit residents, our neighborhoods, and businesses in tangible ways, we will not be successful. Our efforts must support enhanced quality of life and economy vitality for all.



Artists and Creatives: arts, culture, and creative endeavors and businesses need more visibility in the city and need a critical mass. This includes everything from local ethnic traditions to creative making/craft industries to contemporary and street art.



Seize the Moment: There is a concern for gentrification and the impacts on housing and affordable arts and creative spaces. With an abundance of relatively affordable larger older industrial buildings, we must act now to explore ways to protect affordability and grow the inventory of available spaces.



Events and Festivals: Almost everyone talked about events...wanting more of them, ensuring neighborhoods have events, and designing them so that they support local businesses.



Role of the City of Fall River: This plan is in alignment with City goals and interests including a more vibrant economy, enhanced quality of life, and increased tourism. The City must be a major partner in this effort for us to achieve success and its input and place at the table must continue.



Measuring our Progress: This plan sets out goals and a major timetable for the next ten years. We must be accountable for our work and measure our progress against the metrics for success outlined in the plan, including yearly report cards and a community summit to assess what we have achieved and how to move forward.

CONCLUSION

What we heard has directly shaped the goals and strategies outlined in the next chapter. While the community clearly outlined potential challenges, there is great optimism and enthusiasm for moving forward. The collaboration of so many organizations, individuals, and civic groups during the Covid-19 Pandemic set a new standard for communication and cooperation that is exemplified in the work and composition of FRACC. After almost two years of working and talking together, everyone is ready to maintain the open-source nature of this effort and get to work!

GOALS + STRATEGIES

Goal #1: Support and grow a vibrant creative economy.

Focus on: Creative Economy - Artists, Businesses/Entrepreneurs, Organizations

Make Fall River a magnet for creativity by supporting, attracting, and retaining artists and creatives, including creative businesses, entrepreneurs, and organizations for living and working in the city.

1. Develop a cross-sector Working Group designed to recruit creatives, makers, and artists to the city, support economic development and tourism, and identify spaces and opportunities to support same.
2. Support artists, creatives, and arts and cultural organizations in their work and visibility in the community.
3. Create and strengthen ties between the business and arts/cultural communities.
4. Support City policies that encourage arts and maker uses in vacant storefronts.
5. Explore how to maximize benefits and impact from the State-designated Cultural District on the waterfront.

Goal #2: Support culture and creativity across the city and create real and measurable positive impacts for residents and neighborhoods.

Focus on: Residents and Neighbors

Cultivate a distribution of arts, cultural, and civic opportunities across Fall River geographies, interests, and communities by supporting and maintaining attractive, active, and accessible spaces that can host events, gatherings, activities, and public art of varied types.

1. Support the creation/growth of afterschool mentoring programs in art, music, and other creative endeavors for youth and teens in the city.
2. Encourage and support the creation of a major makerspace or a shared tool and equipment library.
3. Encourage programs and initiatives that offer learning opportunities in City Parks and other public spaces related to city history, ecology, climate change, art, eco-art, etc. using art and environmental art.
4. Support farmers' markets/arts collaborations throughout the city.
5. Create a community arts fund that provides small grants to neighborhood organizations and community groups to host hyper-local arts and cultural events.

Goal #3: Support a wide-range series of events at varied scales for neighborhoods, downtown, and visitor destinations.

Focus on: Events

Support a variety of existing and new events at different scales and for different audiences...from local neighborhood happenings to large-scale events that draw visitors, increase the city's visibility, and support local businesses.

1. Create and support recurring events that combine dining, culture, and shopping.
2. Host an annual international cultural festival (or support the growth of an existing initiative, such as FABRIC, to a greater scale).

Goal #4: Identify and support opportunities for sustainable affordable arts and creative business spaces and expanded use of public spaces for arts and culture

Focus on: Spaces

Encourage the use of older buildings, public spaces, and natural areas to further support arts, culture, and the creative economy and act now to protect affordability in the future.

1. Create and maintain an inventory of private and public spaces available for arts, cultural, and civic use.
2. Identify and implement strategies to protect and grow affordable spaces for arts, cultural and creative uses in the city.
3. Support a permanent outdoor dining ordinance in the city.
4. Support efforts to streamline permitting and licensing for public events, temporary space use, and arts and cultural activities.
5. Advocate for the provision of electrical and lighting, and data hookups in public spaces and parks.

Goal #5: Support the creation of publicly accessible art across the

Focus on: Publicly Accessible Art

Encourage all efforts to produce publicly accessible art and encourages opportunities to tie in these efforts with artist professional development opportunities, including mentorship of teen artists.

1. Create a publicly accessible art map.
2. Encourage publicly accessible art throughout the city.
3. Create a City of Fall River functional art program.

Goal #6: Create long-term, sustainable support and infrastructure for arts, culture, and the visitor economy.

Focus on: Capacity/Leadership

Create and sustain the capacity and leadership necessary to implement the plan.

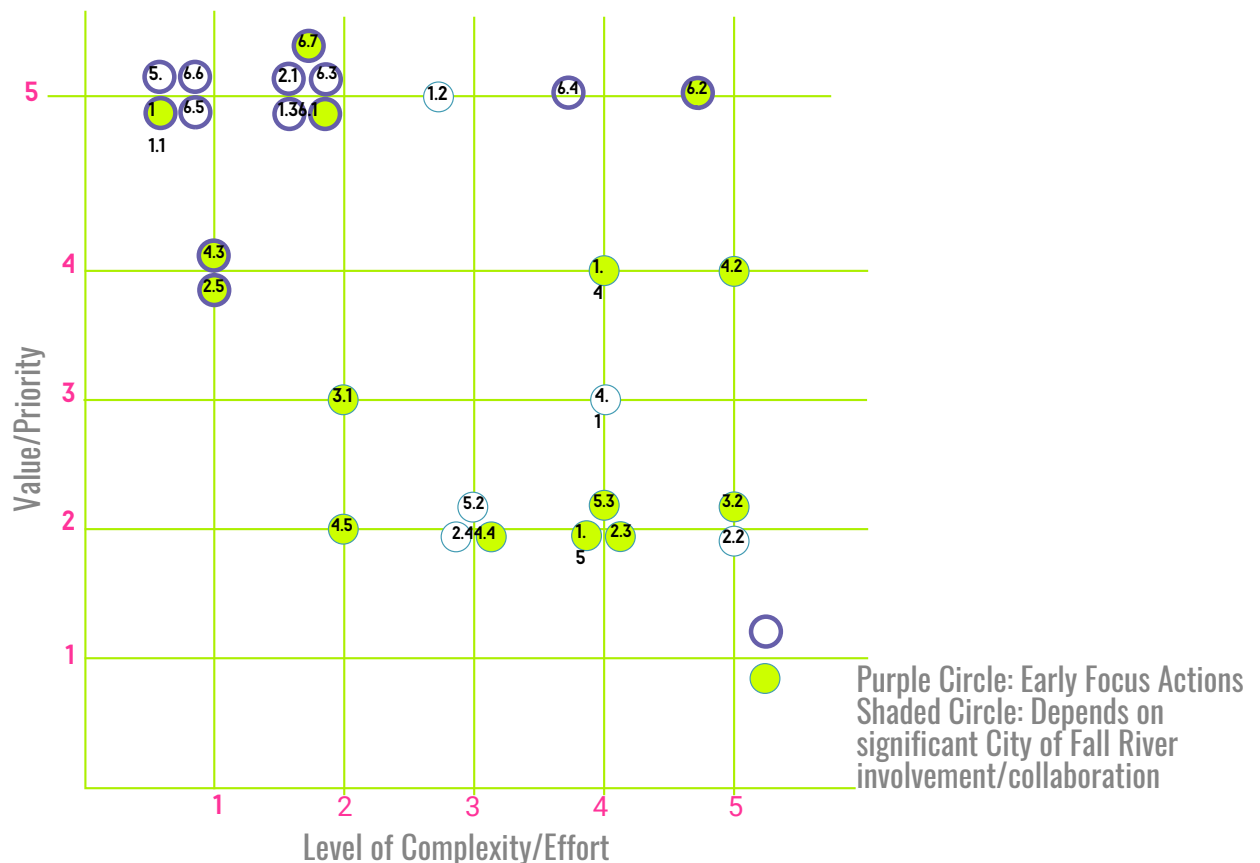
1. Launch a new initiative, Viva Arts & Culture, to maximize support, collaboration, and growth for arts, culture, and civic life in Fall River.
2. Adopt a multi-pronged approach to funding creative economy initiatives in Fall River.
3. Recruit and hire professional staff.
4. Provide professional marketing and promotion for all aspects of the creative economy.
5. Maintain the open-source structure of Viva Arts & Culture.
6. Commit to accountability and continuity.
7. Initiate and convene an annual city-wide cultural summit.

IMPLEMENTATION

This plan is meant for action and prioritizes the strategies that support the six goals for Fall River’s creative economy so that FRACC and other partners can move forward on priority areas quickly. No creative economy plan can be implemented by one entity; a diverse range of stakeholders and advocates, including the City, nonprofits, residents, businesses, and others must work together to ensure success.

PRIORITIES

The graphic below indicates the strategies shown above, organized by priority and effort. The goals above vary in the number of strategies offered and this is directly aligned with the overall priorities. It is no surprise that Goal #6, which is about the capacity and long-term sustainability of this entire effort, has seven strategies. These must be the first focus for FRACC, regardless of level of effort, because these actions create the foundation for all other work in this plan. In addition, the efforts in the top left quadrant have the highest value with the lowest effort and should also be the early focus. These early focus areas are all circled on the grid.



Priority/Value = 5 (high) – 1 (low): the scoring represents the value or priority of this action. How much will this address the top priorities for arts, culture, tourism and the creative economy? How urgent is this? Important to do sooner, rather than later? How many people or organizations will this effect?

Complexity/Effort = 1 (low) – 5 (high): the scoring represents the level of effort needed to move forward. How difficult is this politically? How many different stakeholders are needed to accomplish this? How much risk is involved? Time needed?

CONCLUSION

There are six goals and 27 strategies in this Plan, with one third of these being highest priority for action. Many of these high priority strategies are medium to high level complexity and will require significant collaboration as well as a sustainable funding stream for professional staff. FRACC is in a good position to launch Viva Arts & Culture as a new initiative, under the auspices of One SouthCoast Chamber and Viva Fall River, and continue its collaborative and exciting efforts.

LET THE WORK BEGIN!

