



# Winona Arts and Culture Strategic Plan

## Executive Summary



# Winona Arts and Culture Strategic Plan

## City Council

Scott D. Sherman, Mayor  
Steve Young, 1st Ward  
Eileen Moeller, 2nd Ward  
Pamela Eyden, 3rd Ward  
George Borzyskowski, 4th Ward  
Michelle Alexander, At-Large  
Aaron Repinksi, At-Large

## Steering Committee

Margaret Shaw Johnson, Chair	Retired Judge, Playwright	
Michael Doyle	Commissioner	Winona Heritage Preservation Commission
Carrie Frederich	Chair, WinonaFine Arts Commission	Project Organizer & Painter, Pillbox Bats
Jean Mueller	Chair, Board of Directors	River Arts Alliance
Sarah Johnson	Creative Laureate	City of Winona
Carrie Johnson	Executive Director	Winona County Historical Society
Eileen Moeller	Councilperson, 2nd Ward	City of Winona
	Managing Director	Frozen River Film Festival
Greg Neidhart	Associate Professor	Winona State University
Christie Ransom	President and CEO	Winona Area Chamber of Commerce
Jovy Rocky	Owner / Artisan	Jovy Rocky Jewelry, ORNO Gift + Home
Luke Sims	Assistant City Planner	City of Winona
Rebecca Sims	TRIO Support Services	Winona State University
Jon Swanson	Curator of Collections & Exhibitions	Minnesota Marine Art Museum
Jennifer Weaver	Museum Educator	Winona County Historical Society

## Former Members

Vicki English	Chair, Board of Directors	River Arts Alliance
Theresa Remick	Managing Director	St. Mary’s University Performance Center
	Member	Winona Fine Arts Commission

## Staff

Chad Ubl, Interim City Manager  
Lee Gundersheimer, Arts & Culture Coordinator

## Consultants

David Plettner-Saunders, Cultural Planning Group  
Linda Flynn, Cultural Planning Group  
Brian Voerding, Engage Winona



# Welcome Letter

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# Welcome Letter

It is with great pride that we present this first-ever citywide plan for arts and culture in Winona! The plan recognizes the extraordinary vitality of arts and culture in our city going back more than 100 years. That energy and potential has only increased over time resulting in an ever-more vibrant and satisfying quality of life and an enhanced economy.

The Winona City Council commissioned this plan, to be based on our community's vision for the future. Over an approximate two-year period, our professional consultants at the nationally renowned Cultural Planning Group, with participation by a local steering committee, have solicited and analyzed input from our citizens in every ward of the city and from the community at large. More than 1,000 Winonans have contributed their input from inside and outside of the arts community. Interviews have been conducted with local businesses, government and community leaders, tourism and economic development officials, people working in the

factories and the professions and the health care industry, non-profits, educators, students and parents and all of our institutions of higher learning. We met with local restaurateurs, with artists of every discipline and their audience members, and also with people who haven't been regular consumers of the arts. We asked them what part they want arts and culture to play in Winona's future.

This proposed Arts & Culture plan details what we learned. It is clear that our community places a high value on arts and culture and sees a future brimming with new possibilities, including the increasing potential to grow our economy and attract new businesses and a talented and stable workforce.

We are the proud and confident presenters of this plan. But it is not our plan. This is the plan of our Winona citizens. It is a plan for all Winonans.



A stylized handwritten signature of Scott Sherman in black ink.

**Scott Sherman**  
Mayor

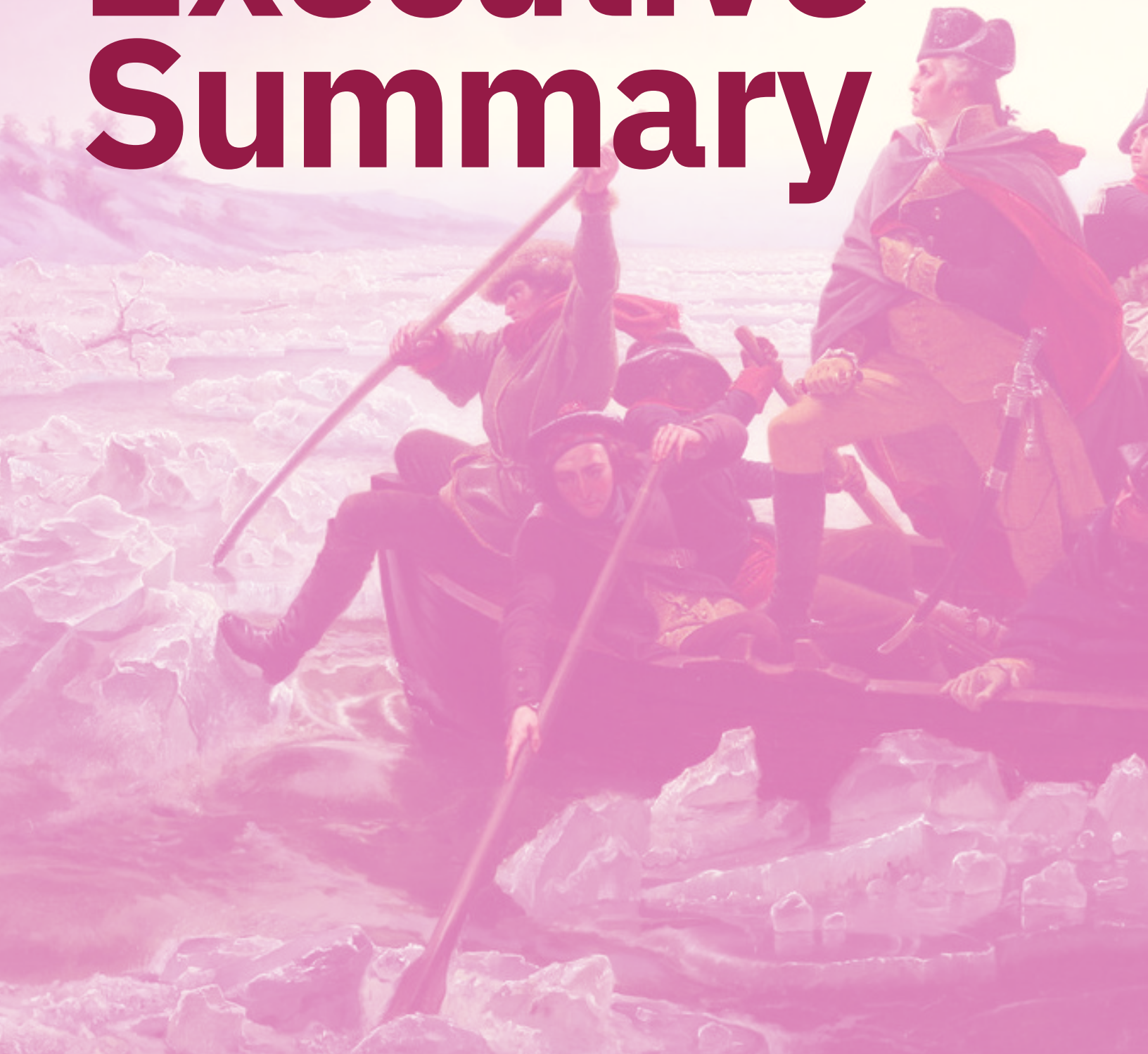


A handwritten signature of Margaret Shaw Johnson in black ink.

**Margaret Shaw Johnson**  
Steering Committee Chairperson

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# Executive Summary



# This plan is for all Winonans.



City Council commissioned a document that would advance the arts and culture leg of Winona's three-prong effort for growth:

- ① **entrepreneurism**
- ② **outdoor recreation**
- ③ **arts and culture**

This focus on creativity will grow the economy, attract and retain a talented workforce, and enhance the quality of life in Winona. The plan also defines a leadership role for City government, in partnership with the community. Its ideas reflect the vision of other city plans for downtown revitalization, economic development, parks, trails, and more.

Winona has a uniquely rich and interconnected culture. It is shaped by its entrepreneurship and industries

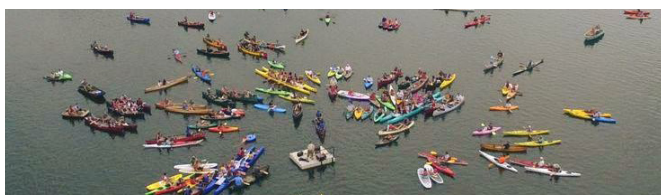
like manufacturing and composite materials. Winona is the birthplace of many successful companies, each one requiring creativity in its start-up and ongoing management. Moreover, Winona's creative people contribute necessary skills and ideas throughout the local economy. The City is committed to retaining the successful companies present in the community and attracting new ones, with a focus on maintaining the employment and prosperity provided by the City's surprisingly diverse business sectors. This plan supports that commitment by reinforcing the community's desirability so essential to a long-term workforce.

More than 1,000 Winonans participated in development of this plan, across all city wards, and it is based on their vision for the creative future of the community. Arts and culture must be for everyone.

# Economic Impact Of Nonprofit Arts And Culture

Winona's nonprofit arts and culture sector is a vital part of its creative economy and helps drive tourism:<sup>1</sup>

**\$4.7M**



Total economic impact in 2016 was \$4.7 million: \$3.3 million in direct expenditures by 16 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations, and an additional \$1.4 million from event-related spending by audiences.



**118,920**

Total audience was 118,920: 20% of attendees were visitors from outside the 11-county region and 84% said they came to Winona specifically for an arts event.

**40**

These figures are conservative: there are approximately 40 nonprofit arts and cultural organizations in Winona, but only 16 were included in the American for the Arts 2016 study referenced.



<sup>1</sup> "Impact on Economy and Employment (Winona)." Creative MN, 2016, <https://www.creativemn.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Winona1PgrComp.pdf>.

## Minnesota's nonprofit arts and culture sector is strong and growing:<sup>2</sup>

- Total economic impact in 2016 was \$2.167 billion, supporting 108,755 full-time jobs. Minnesota's arts economy is much larger than neighboring states and is growing.
- Public investment in arts and culture is a catalyst that increases government revenues. Minnesota's nonprofit arts and cultural sector generated \$158 million in total government revenues in 2016, including \$32.5 million in local government revenues and \$125.6 million in state government revenues. These amounts are growing.
- Artists contribute to their communities in multiple ways. In addition to their specific economic impact, artists are

entrepreneurial and provide creative work that fuels other economic sectors. Artists also build social capital, in part due to the dynamic social networks they create. Benefits to their communities include poverty reduction, population retention and growth, and increased civic participation. Artists are also often engaged outside the artistic realm on planning committees, within municipal government, and in other forms of community development.

- Artists volunteer their time much more often than other Minnesotans and other Americans.
- Only one-fourth of artists work on their art full-time: holding multiple jobs and "gigging" is a normal feature of an artistic career.

<sup>2</sup> Creative Minnesota (2019 & 2017), <https://www.creativemn.org>



*The recognition of a community's arts and culture assets (and the marketing of them) is an important element of economic development. Creatively acknowledging and marketing community assets can attract a strong workforce and successful firms, as well as help sustain a positive quality of life.*

- American Planning Association,  
Economic Vitality Briefing Paper (2021)

# What Defines Winona?

Residents told us that Winona is defined by...

100+ years of arts and culture	History	River community
Vibrant arts and culture scene	Individual artist community	Roots in traditional arts
The Bluffs	International communities	Sister cities (Japan and Poland)
Edgy, riverfront culture	Museums	Small town feel
Entrepreneurial spirit	Performing arts	Commitment to social justice
Faith community	Philanthropic community	Strong community relationships
Festivals and events	Pride in heritage	Supportive city government
Higher education institutions	Visual and literary arts	Technology & manufacturing industries



## Winona: The Place

**Winona is a unique community with a desirable quality of life**, punctuated by its outdoor recreation, natural environmental beauty, arts and culture scene, and diverse workforce industries.

**Winona's rich history** is unique—inclusive of the Dakota and other indigenous peoples' histories, plus historical and ongoing immigration of Polish, German, Bohemian, Hispanic, Hmong, and other peoples. The building of Winona as a city along the river helped it to grow and prosper and provided lasting opportunity for the community.

**Winona is a community of entrepreneurs**, beginning with companies such as Fastenal, Watkins Spice, CodaBow, Pillbox Bat, Wenonah Canoe, Associated Crafts/Willet Hauser Stained Glass Studio, composite industries, and breweries. Today, the entrepreneurial spirit lives on in new small businesses, creatives, and artists.

**Winona's arts and culture sector highlights a vibrant performing arts scene**, especially known for its festivals, theatre, and music performances. There is a large community of individual artists.

## Winona's Creative Vision

Here is how Winonans define success for their arts and cultural future.

### **A wish for all Winonans to experience a rich cultural life.**

Whether they participate, attend, watch, or interact in another way, the opportunities will be broad, engaging, and inclusive. Winona exemplifies a community of inclusiveness, where all are welcome and diversity of the arts flourishes.

**Winona is enriched with a variety of arts and creative activities engaging residents in their daily lives and enhancing the experience of visitors.** Public art creates vibrant spaces and elevates the value of creativity for residents, while artists are part of the fabric of downtown and work with and in City government to celebrate the past and plan for a vibrant future.

**Arts and cultural opportunities enhance and celebrate Winona's character.** From revitalizing downtown to attracting and retaining residents and workers, investment in the creative economy will raise the profile of Winona in the region and the nation. Artist studios and live/workspaces bring creative vibrancy to the City. Crossover marketing opportunities between the arts and other sectors are a draw for visitors and a benefit for residents.

**Distinct connections between organizations, sectors, and communities exist and promote success from within Winona.** Collaborations, shared resources, community-wide information on happenings, and networking create a strong community.

**Arts learning opportunities abound.** Arts education benefits all youth equitably in the community and builds the next generation of artists and arts consumers for Winona.



# The Plan

The Arts and Culture Strategic Plan sets four goals and associated strategies for achieving the community's vision. The plan emphasizes the role of arts and culture in Winona's economic development, as well as their contribution to quality of life. The City's role is defined as supporting the community's efforts.



**Enhance City support systems  
for Winona's creative life.**

- 1.1 Refocus the City's leadership role from direct programming to service, support, and leadership of the community's efforts.
- 1.2 Rebuild the Fine Arts Commission as the Creative Winona Commission with updated mission, qualifications, role and membership.
- 1.3 Establish an inaugural citywide Public Art Program.
- 1.4 Develop a long-term public art master plan.
- 1.5 Create an equitable, transparent arts grants program open to all Winona nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and artists.
- 1.6 Expand the Creative Laureate program to have one or more artists work within City departments on collaborative projects.
- 1.7 Refocus the City Arts Office as the Office of Arts, Culture and Creative Economy.
- 1.8 Provide staff support for implementation of this plan.



**Promote and grow Winona's creative economy.**

- 2.1** Increase Winona's capacity to attract and retain creative talent.
- 2.2** Develop an arts and culture strategy to position Winona to attract all age groups, from college students to retirees, to Winona.
- 2.3** Support growth in Winona's culinary sector.
- 2.4** Continue to promote arts and culture as an important asset for Winona.
- 2.5** Expand arts education and lifelong learning opportunities.
- 2.6** Provide accountability in implementation of this plan through regular community reports and convenings.



**Support inclusive creativity for all residents and visitors.**

- 3.1** Invite the creative community to develop inclusive new activities for all Winonans.
- 3.2** Develop year-round arts and cultural programming.
- 3.3** Develop a community-wide cultural equity and inclusion initiative.
- 3.4** Incentivize crossover activities for creative and outdoor recreation (see 2.4 above).
- 3.5** Enhance community-wide marketing and promotion, as well as information services, for the creative sector.



**Expand access to creative sector facilities and spaces.**

- 4.1** Complete the former Masonic Temple project as a multidisciplinary performing and visual arts center.
- 4.2** Inventory and make available existing public spaces for creative activities.
- 4.3** Develop live/workspaces for artists and creatives, including mixed use projects.
- 4.4** Develop a Creative Space Program to incentivize new facilities, spaces, and places.