LEVERAGING CREATIVITY

COOK COUNTY

Cultural Plan

Accelerating the development of Arts and Culture as a key prosperity driver contributing to the social and economic vitality of Cook County

- Arts, Craft and Creativity
- Land and Seascape
- Healthy Self-Reliance
- Culture and People
WELCOME

We can count ourselves among the most fortunate to live in a place that on a daily basis offers us the riches of a bountiful and beautiful landscape, a home in which to raise our families that offers healthy lifestyle choices and the lessons of self-reliance, a deeply ingrained culture of respect for the land and one another, and the creativity of the artists and the maker.

Artists bring much to our community – from tax dollars to creative problem-solving. This plan invites broad ownership of the roles that arts and culture play in building a strong future for this place we love and call home. The plan recognizes the centrality of arts and culture in regional sustainability, and calls for deep engagement in the work to promote the way of life that is our hallmark.

A team broadly representative of the public sector, the commercial sector, the nonprofit sector, and of course the arts and culture sector have met throughout 2016 developing this roadmap for accelerating the development of arts and culture as a key prosperity driver in securing the social and economic vitality of Cook County into the future. This team is listed in the Appendix of this document. The planning has grown out of previous and ongoing efforts, such as the excellent work of the Go Cook County process, enhancing that work with a particular emphasis on the key role of crafts and artistic creativity in preserving our way of life.

The plan recognizes that “Artists and craftspeople have chosen a life that is not easy. They are people who are going to figure out what they want, how to do what they are passionate about. They are creative and entrepreneurial,” says Jessa Frost. “That translates to addressing all kinds of needs in the community. If they are thriving, they can lend their skills and talents to the community as a whole. They can create and teach.”

As an elected official, Jan Sivertson sees new residents having an impact: many people move to Cook County from elsewhere, bringing ideas, education, experience, “All the great stuff from the outside is blending with local flavors, about to create something pretty stunning,” Sivertson says. “So many things are coming together at the moment. We have a lot of great creative energetic people in the right positions creating good change. All the spices in the stew are starting to be exposed and making good flavor. “

In the pages that follow you will find inspiration as the story of Cook County unfolds. You will find guidance regarding key initiatives identified through the planning process to maximize the contribution of arts and culture to our County’s future.

The goal of the Arts and Culture Planning Team is to stimulate your creative thinking, to invite your commitment, and provide a roadmap for securing our future.
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- Executive Summary of Go Cook County Analysis
- Grand Marais Arts Festival 2015 Economic Analysis
PART I: LEVERAGING CREATIVITY

COOK COUNTY CULTURAL PLAN

Accelerating the development of Arts and Culture as a key prosperity driver contributing to the social and economic vitality of Cook County

Cook County is revered as a uniquely special place within the Upper Midwest. It has powerful allure as a destination – to visit or, for an independently-minded few, to call home. Key ingredients create the weave of this unique fabric. These include an awe-inspiring landscape, an important history as home to ancient civilizations and more recently as a trade center, a rugged independence, a high value placed on health and wellbeing, and an abundance of artistic creativity.

LEVERAGING CREATIVITY AS A KEY ECONOMIC DRIVER

Traditionally logging, fishing, farming and manufacturing have been the foundation of the county. In the early part of the 20th century, 80% or more of the economy was fueled by these industries. Cook County documents that today the primary driver of the economy is tourism. Much has been written in recent years about the role of arts and culture in strengthening communities and enhancing economic vitality. The research emphasizes the effects that artists and cultural resources have on diversifying economic development—directly through bringing in new revenue sources, as well as indirectly in its significant draw through cultural tourism. [Cultural tourism is generally defined as travel that is planned around a region’s offerings that include historic, recreational, natural and artistic resources.]

The question really is, does the community as a whole believe that the crafts of the north, the artistic inspiration of the seascape—the idea that not only do we want to inspire the students who come here to learn, to do, to paint, to create, to relax and be inspired—is highly valued. Do we want these makers as our neighbors? Do we want this to not just be part of the inspiration of the place, but actually the fabric of the place? Do we want not just the people who have money, but those on the ground, in the dirt? — Greg Wright, Executive Director, North
Creative Economy research has identified a new role that arts and cultural organizations and institutions play within the larger economic context. As a result, the old paradigm of ‘advocacy’ for these groups seeking to maximize (mostly governmental) funding has shifted to one of ‘agency’ focused on the management of infrastructure and resources necessary for the arts and culture to flourish. While groups may continue to seek supplemental funding, they have earned their seat at the business table—they offer a commodity to be leveraged in the larger economy of private enterprise.

In addition to cultural tourism Cook County is a deeply desirable place to live. But this comes with its own challenges. As more and more people retire to the region, often fulfilling lifelong dreams, they bring wealth from outside Cook County. It can be a boon to the local economy, as well as a bane to anyone with fewer resources, often those who personify the rugged landscape. People starting or in the middle of their career are often at a disadvantage to retirees who arrive seeking to build their dream home and idyllic retirement in this community. That demand drives up the cost of land and the cost of building. This is why it sometimes takes decades to go from acquiring property to having a home on it. Some families start with a garage . . . or a yurt . . . in which they live while slowly building the house.

This plan recognizes the critical role that arts and culture plays in the growth and development of the Cook County, as a driver of the local culture, the economic life, as well as the tourism that brings the visitor into the region. The plan explores three key priorities for development to ensure a balanced and sustainable future for the county’s cultural tourism – securing vitality for the future while honoring the values that have made this place the one we love. These three priority areas include:

1. **TELLING OUR STORY**: Capture the essence of this place, capture the imagination of both residents and visitors, and further develop arts and culture as a key economic driver for Cook County and as well as to bring local arts, craft and cultural goods and products to markets beyond the County.

2. **WORKING TOGETHER**: Develop the capacity, synergy and teamwork across public, commercial, and arts and culture sectors to work collaboratively, to build support for the growth of arts and culture as a key economic driver for the county.

3. **PLACEMAKING**: Explore the spaces around us. Rally around pivotal projects, from small and immediate projects to beautify and welcome the visitor, to paramount major initiatives necessary to supporting arts and culture as an essential economic driver.

*Probably the biggest challenge we face is in large part due to our success. We are struggling to have enough housing that normal people can afford, as well as a livelihood to raise a family.*

   --Jan Sivertson, Cook County Commissioner
KEY ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY

VISION

We envision a quality of life for future generations that embraces our strong ties to the land, to the water, and to the rich cultural heritage of the peoples of diverse cultural origins that call this place home.

We will respond to the constant press of change by encouraging viable locally-based economic development, caring deeply for our natural resources, and honoring our artisans, artists, culture-keepers and historians that are recognized as essential elements of a balanced, sustainable community.

VALUES AND PRINCIPLES THAT GUIDE OUR DECISION MAKING

1. We value the role that arts, crafts and culture play in our lives, contributing to our physical, spiritual and emotional well-being.
2. We value arts and culture as critical to Cook County's quality of life and community vitality.
3. We value the importance of our quality of life to a healthy economy, recognizing our businesses, our homes and our public spaces as important to community sustainability.
4. We value our beautiful natural setting, ensuring that it is preserved, protected and restored for future generations.
5. We value communities with distinct identities, retaining their authenticity and rural character while responding to growth and change.
6. We value the role that diverse recreational opportunities play in our community well-being, balanced with our need to preserve and protect our natural setting.

JUSTIFICATION: WHY IS THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR A PRIORITY?

Arts, craft and culture are essential to a sustainable future for Cook County. They make our values visible, building on the region's natural beauty and cultural heritage. They offer opportunities to diversify the economy, bringing new dollars into the region.

Traditionally logging, fishing, farming and manufacturing were the foundation of the county. Today the primary driver is tourism, driven by the four key ingredients of a place of destination: a stunning natural beauty, a rich
history and culture, local foods and an authentic life, and a vibrant arts and culture scene. *Go Cook County Economic Analysis, 2013,* reports that “The County’s tourism economy is built on high quality public lands and Lake Superior, arts and North Shore culture.”

Artists bring the ability to create goods that can be sold over internet-connected distances, and to do it all year long, while the tourist economy ebbs and flows. Art and craft education is also proving it can bring students in all seasons, who come to learn from masters, seeking experiences of the authentic North, and to eat, sleep, and explore the community.

This plan builds on the strength of documented impacts from investment in arts and culture, striving to ensure a sustainable future for the sector as a key prosperity driver into the future. Cook County has the heritage, talent, institutional capacity and commitment to successfully grow this sector of the economy.

- Combined analysis with the University of MN, Arrowhead Regional Planning and Cook County sources conservatively estimate $10 million in overall economic impact from Arts and Culture.
- Data USA, along with Creative Minnesota, report 127 FTE jobs supported by arts and culture, with Arts/Entertainment/Recreation among the top 3 employers in Cook County as of 2014.
  - Creative Minnesota reported in fall, 2015 the following arts and culture impact in Cook County: $2.58 million in annual direct expenditures in Cook County from the arts and culture sector [this reflects nonprofit organization expenditures only, not individual artisans and not for-profit galleries]
  - $2 million in audience spending in Cook County related to attendees at arts and culture events as well as purchases and other spending. Analysis from the North House and the Grand Marais Art Colony report that at least 50% of these attendees come from outside of Cook County. They report that their trip was “specifically to attend this arts/cultural event,” bringing to the region dollars that would not have otherwise been spent here.

> Artists and craftspeople have chosen a life that is not easy. They are people who are going to figure out what they want . . . how to do what they are passionate about. They are creative and entrepreneurial. That translates to addressing all kinds of community. If they are thriving, they can lend their skills and talents to the community as a whole. They can create and teach. But they have to be thriving and surviving before they can have time to give back to the community.

--Jessa Frost, Program Director, North House Folk School
## Cook County Arts and Culture Strategic Framework

*Accelerating the development of Arts and Culture as a key prosperity driver contributing to the economic vitality of Cook County.*

<table>
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<tr>
<th>If we invest dollars &amp; effort here….</th>
<th>...and accomplish goals such as these….</th>
<th>...we will ultimately achieve measurable, long-term objectives.</th>
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| **TELLING OUR STORY:** Develop and market the identity and brand of Cook County as a regional, national and global arts and culture destination. | Goal 1: Create an authentic, unified story and brand that invites community ownership.  

Goal 2: Develop and fund an arts and culture marketing and public relations plan based on the authentic story and brand.  

Goal 3: Use technology, including online sales, to enhance markets for artists and arts & culture sector organizations, including a database of artists and their work. | ✓ **Narrative and Language:** Review of communications and marketing materials in place throughout the County reflect a unified narrative articulating our identity.  

✓ **Growth as an Arts Destination:** Data reflects increased visitorship to Cook County with documented engagement in arts and Culture.  

✓ **Enhanced Technology:** There is an online promotion and sales platform in place, broadly used by artists, and tracking demonstrates economic impact. |

| **WORKING TOGETHER:** Build and support public and private capacity and commitment to common goals to grow the arts and culture sector | Goal 1: Develop and formalize a community vision and commitment to support arts and culture initiatives in Cook County. (Community defined as township, city, tribal, county, state and fed. gov’t; commercial and nonprofits.)  

Goal 2: Support collaboration and organizational development of a vibrant and sustainable arts and culture sector.  

Goal 3: Support the business, economic and professional development of Cook County artists. | ✓ **Government Policy:** Emphasis on arts and culture is incorporated into key planning tools such as comprehensive plans and economic development documents, and planning bodies such as an arts commission.  

✓ **Cross Sector Partnership:** There is evidence of strengthened connection or alignment across organizations & sectors in support of the cultural economy.  

✓ **Professional Practice:** Resources are in place to support arts and culture workers in developing sustainable business models.  

✓ **Organizational Income:** There is documented growth in earned income for arts and culture sector organizations to sustain the arts and culture economy.  

✓ **Individual Artist Income:** There is documented growth of the arts and culture sector, including artists and arts businesses in Cook County. |

| **PLACEMAKING:** Inventory, identity, prioritize, fund and develop key physical building projects that expand the arts and culture sector. | Goal 1: Develop affordable workforce housing options for low- to mid-income permanent residents, incl. artists & new, younger residents.  

Goal 2: Develop affordable short-term housing for shorter stay guests such as temporary workforce, artists in residence, interns, instructors, students.  

Goal 3: Envision, plan, design and build the next generation of focal-point facilities, generating a shared sense of excitement and purpose while also supporting arts, culture & events in Cook Co.  

Goal 4: Assess the visual appearance of public places and streetscapes; fund opportunities for improved signage and public arts to reflect an arts and culture destination. | ✓ **Permanent Housing:** There are new affordable permanent workforce housing options available for County residents with low- to mid-income.  

✓ **Short-Term Housing:** There is affordable short-term workforce housing in place in adequate supply to respond to the growing demand from potential participants in arts and culture opportunities.  

✓ **Focal Point Arts and culture Facilities:** There will be in place a focal-point next generation facility supporting arts and culture.  

✓ **Public Spaces and Streetscape:** Cook County visually represents itself as a major arts and culture destination, filled with public art. |

| **GUIDING IMPLEMENTATION:** Creative Economy Collaborative, housed within the EDA, has been formally established. This group, representative of leadership key to the implementation of plan goals, is to be charged with oversight and strategy implementation. | ✓ **New Dollars:** There is increased as well a shift in funding from both within the county and outside sources in support of the cultural economy.  

✓ **Culture:** There is a visible shift in cultural norms toward support for arts and culture, as demonstrated in new partnerships and local support to artists & cultural work.  

✓ **There is overall evidence of accelerated economic vitality for Cook County.** |
CORE PRIORITY: TELLING OUR STORY
DEVELOP AND MARKET THE IDENTITY AND BRAND OF COOK COUNTY AS A REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND GLOBAL ARTS AND CULTURE DESTINATION.

Recognizing that about 80% of Cook County’s economy is based on tourism, and that arts and culture draw more than 80,000 people annually to the county, Telling Our Story is named as a core priority for investing dollars and effort. Developing the identity and brand of Cook County as a regional, national and global destination, highlighting that this is a region rich with arts and culture, and the importance of this rich creative heritage as a key to a sustainable future. This plan identifies three specific goals that must be addressed to effectively grow and sustain Cook County’s market for the arts as a key economic driver.

Overall Champions for the goals within the core priority Telling our Story:
- Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, Executive Director
- Visit Cook County, Linda Jurek, Executive Director

GOAL 1: CREATE AN AUTHENTIC, UNIFIED STORY AND BRAND THAT INVITES COMMUNITY OWNERSHIP.

Goal 1 focuses on broadening community ownership of arts and culture as a key driver for economic development. The goal seeks to infuse new language into the community about cultural vitality, sense of place, and the importance of creativity and cultural tourism to the future of Cook County. This goal focuses on the need to capture the essence of place and the social values that make the County the captivating and attractive place sought after by many as a home or a “home away from home.”

As we tell that story of Cook County’s “essence” or identity as a whole, rather than selling individual pieces, we capture a unique sense of identity, share not only “what” we have to offer but “why” we are unique. As articulated earlier, the interplay among four unique elements of identity – the land and seascape, the history, the authentic local lifestyle, and the vibrant arts and
culture scene, are the foundation of the Cook County story.

- **Strategic Action: Engage the community** in crafting an authentic story that creates a shared vision about arts and culture and generates momentum for Cook County becoming an arts and culture destination.

This area of strategic action highlights the importance of broad public involvement in crafting both their vision of and path to the future, a process already begun with the Chamber of Commerce and Visit Cook County Gala in November 2015, the Arts Impact Report and the “creatives” survey completed by the Art Colony, and the community “Idea Party” on May 11th 2016. Over the coming months, a series of opportunities to keep the public engaged must be developed.

- **Strategic Action: Broadly tell the story.** Ensure greater visibility of the story of arts and culture as core county resources in area marketing, communications and media outlets. Infuse the story throughout the County. Incorporate culture, arts and history into story and brand.

  *Champion for goal 1 are Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, Executive Director, and Visit Cook County, Linda Jurek, Executive Director*

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**GOAL 2: DEVELOP AND FUND AN ARTS AND CULTURE MARKETING AND PUBLIC RELATIONS PLAN BASED ON AN AUTHENTIC STORY AND BRAND.**

Goal 2 focuses on the importance of creating a solid, unified voice and effective communication strategies for sharing the vitality or the region’s unique fabric to key audiences both locally as well as beyond Cook County. The goal calls for the development of a marketing and public relations plan that includes specific mechanisms to address key audiences as well as mechanisms for measuring impact over time.

- **Strategic Action: Develop a Marketing and Public Relations Plan** that celebrates arts and the arts and culture community; that promotes the appreciation of, participation in, and purchase of art and experiential art and cultural activities throughout the County.

- **Strategic Action: Advocate for greater visibility of arts and culture in area marketing materials**—articles, radio and TV stories, as well as greater prominence to arts and culture on city, county, visitor’s bureau and other websites as a key element of the Marketing and Public Relations Plan.

  *Champion for goal 2 are Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, Executive Director and Visit Cook County, Linda Jurek, Executive Director*
GOAL 3: USE TECHNOLOGY, INCLUDING ONLINE SALES, TO ENHANCE MARKETS FOR ARTISTS AND ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS, INCLUDING A DATABASE OF ARTISTS AND THEIR WORK.

In 2013, the Cook County Chamber of Commerce started a conversation about an arts and crafts based economy. With little manufacturing or resource extraction and a limited workforce and limited private land, the arts and crafts were obvious. Many people see a promising future in marketing through online vehicles.

Not only have artists and craftspeople proven well-suited for life in the North, but they also bring the ability to create goods that can be sold over long, internet-connected distances, and to do it all year long. Selling directly also opens the door to every maker who is interested.

Art and craft education is also proving all-season. It can and does bring students and visitors, who come to learn from masters, and eat and sleep and explore in the community. “We are busier in February than August now,” says Jessa Frost of North House Folk School. I’m very optimistic. This is a beautiful place to be year round, and there are going to be people who want to visit.”

Goal 3 recognizes the critical importance of leveling out the economic structure and income sources for entrepreneurs, today so reliant on the peak summer months for realizing income to sustain throughout the long winter months. This goal recognizes opportunity in today’s marketplace for building an online sales platform.

- **Strategic Action: Create an online sales strategy and presence** representing multiple artists. Develop a registry of artists and an online Gallery to promote artists, facilitate the sale of their work, and enhance the area’s brand.
- **Strategic Action: Create a database of local artists and organizations** to promote collaboration and communication, including literary arts, health arts, culinary arts as well as performing arts, visual arts, music and artisans/makers.
- **Strategic Action: Aggregate a list of art buyers and develop social media strategies** to reach out to these buyers.

*Champion for Goal 3 is Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux, Mayor City of Grand Marais with the support of Amy Demmer, Grand Marais Art Colony*
KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS FOR PRIORITY AREA TELLING OUR STORY:

IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN BUILDING A UNIFIED BRAND, MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS APPROACHES, WE WILL SEE RESULTS IN TERMS OF

✓ **Narrative and Language:** Review of communications and marketing materials in place throughout the County and beyond will reflect a unified narrative regarding the key elements of our identity.

✓ **New tourism dollars:** Data reflects increased visitorship to Cook County with documented engagement in arts and Culture.

✓ **Online Sales:** There is an online sales platform in place, broadly used by artists, and tracking demonstrates economic impact.

CORE PRIORITY: WORKING TOGETHER

BUILD AND SUPPORT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT TO COMMON GOALS TO GROW THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR.

The region has positioned itself well to build its presence through previous planning and development efforts: the Go Cook County process, the work of the Economic Development Authority, the Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Visit Cook County, as well as the integrated efforts of City and County government. This plan builds on that work, further encouraging the value of working together across sectors and toward embracing common solutions to enhancing the quality of life across Cook County.

*Overall Champions for the goals within the core priority Working Together:*

✓ City of Grand Marais, Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux, Mayor

✓ Cook County, Jeff Cadwell, Administrator

✓ Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director

GOAL 1: DEVELOP AND FORMALIZE A COMMUNITY VISION AND COMMITMENT TO SUPPORT ARTS AND CULTURE INITIATIVES IN COOK COUNTY. [COMMUNITY DEFINED AS LOCAL TOWNSHIP, CITY, TRIBAL, COUNTY, STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT; BUSINESS AND NONPROFITS.]

• **Strategic Action: Develop a leadership vision** that embraces the region’s unique history, environment, and arts and culture heritage, and formalize local city and county government commitment.
- **Strategic Action:** Create a Cook County and/or Grand Marais Arts Commission or Arts Council to advocate, coordinate, and fund arts and culture initiatives identified as critical to a sustainable and successful economic future.

  Champions for goal 1 are the City of Grand Marais, Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux, Mayor and Cook County, Jeff Cadwell, Administrator

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**GOAL 2: SUPPORT THE ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF A VIBRANT AND SUSTAINABLE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR.**

- **Strategic Action:** Build strong collaborations to promote shared goals, implement common projects, and support and celebrate each other’s success.
- **Strategic Action:** Create a long term residency and fellowship program to attract artists.

  Champions for goal 2 are the Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director and North House Folk School, Greg Wright, Executive Director

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**GOAL 3: SUPPORT THE BUSINESS, ECONOMIC AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF COOK COUNTY ARTISTS.**

- **Strategic Action:** Provide incentives to support the growth of arts and culture businesses; ensure young families can participate.
- **Strategic Action:** Provide awareness and action to funding and financing: bank loans, micro-loans, crowdsourcing, grants, etc.
- **Strategic Action:** Provide affordable business and professional develop training to artists to help them develop viable business models and transitions.
- **Strategic Action:** Mobilize network of Human Resource professionals to assist trailing spouses to find jobs.
- **Strategic Action:** Provide peer coaching and artist-to-artist support.
- **Strategic Action:** Create cooperative structure for purchasing, sharing resources, and marketing and distribution.
- **Strategic Action:** Support the next generation of local artists by advocating for and developing STEAM.
- **Strategic Action:** Encourage policies and practices that make it easier for businesses to hire artists.

  Champions for goal 3 are the Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director; Cook County Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director; and Small Business Development Center, Pat Campanaro, Business Consultant
KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS FOR PRIORITY AREA WORKING TOGETHER:

IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN BUILDING AND SUPPORTING PUBLIC AND PRIVATE CAPACITY AND COMMITMENT TO COMMON GOALS TO GROW THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR, WE WILL SEE RESULTS IN TERMS OF

✓ **Government Policy:** Evidence of support for arts and culture is demonstrated by incorporation into key planning documents such as comprehensive plans, and planning bodies such as an arts commission.

✓ **Cross Sector Partnership:** Evidence of strengthened connection or alignment across organizations & sectors in support of the cultural economy.

✓ **Professional Practice:** Resources are in place to support arts and culture workers in developing sustainable business models.

✓ **Organizational Income:** There is documented growth in earned income for arts and culture sector organizations to sustain the arts and culture economy.

✓ **Individual Artist Income:** There is documented growth in earned income for artists and makers in Cook County.

CORE PRIORITY: PLACEMAKING

INVENTORY, IDENTIFY, PRIORITIZE, FUND AND DEVELOP KEY PHYSICAL BUILDING PROJECTS THAT EXPAND THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR.

This priority area recognizes the critical importance of affordable workforce housing as a top priority for the county. As one artist and community leader, Jessa Frost, has noted “The people who stay are the people who figure out how to buy or build a house.” The shortage of quality, affordable housing is a major obstacle to securing the future for the county. While the majority of this need is for permanent residents, especially young families, it continues to also be an issue for visitors seeking to engage in the offerings of the County’s premiere arts organizations. Affordable housing is needed for the instructor, resident artists, or visitor coming to participate in the learning activities of local programs such as the Grand Marais Art Colony or North House Folk School. Finally, this goal also recognizes the importance of a strong sense of identification of the place for the
visit—beauty, arts, signage, etc., as well as potentially a downtown anchor home for the arts—a multi-disciplinary community center/arts center.

**Overall Champions for the goals within the core priority The Spaces Around Us:**
- Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director
- City and County Government

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**GOAL 1: DEVELOP AFFORDABLE WORKFORCE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR LOW- TO MID-INCOME PERMANENT RESIDENTS, INCLUDING ARTISTS AND NEW, YOUNGER RESIDENTS.**

Previous economic studies in Cook County, most recently the Go...Cook County work, has highlighted workforce housing as a key obstacle to sustainable prosperity for all. That work reports as a value guiding County prosperity priorities: “Housing needs to be available and affordable to all permanent residents, with special consideration given to the elderly and young people just entering the housing market, as well as those working in important service capacities.” That plan adds “Affordable, safe and livable housing is a cornerstone of personal, family, and community stability.” This plan again highlights this as an imperative for the county.

- **Strategic Action:** Work to provide arts and culture sector support to EDA’s efforts to create affordable workforce housing.

The implementation strategies are well articulated in the Go...Cook County Prosperity Priorities:

- Implement a variety of programs that address the needs of young people entering the workforce, families, seasonal workers and the elderly. This means having options for rentals, starter homes, retirement living and seasonal dwellings.
- Creatively employ land use, infrastructure, construction, financing, redevelopment and legal tools to bring down the cost of housing and leverage private interest and investment.
- Ensure the character of the community is preserved in addressing affordable housing challenges.

**Champion for goal 1 is the Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director**

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**GOAL 2: DEVELOP AFFORDABLE HOUSING OPTIONS FOR SHORTER STAY GUESTS SUCH AS TEMPORARY WORKFORCE, ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE, INTERNS, INSTRUCTORS, STUDENTS, ETC.**

Similarly, the Go...Cook County work highlighted the need for affordable options for student workers, visiting artists, instructors, interns and other temporary residents that warrant special consideration need to have livable, affordable housing options. Affordable housing that fits the character of the community.

**Strategic Action:** Develop a multi-year plan to create a housing strategy to support the acceleration of the arts

*Are you going to be in a yurt forever? Maybe a few are fine with that, but other housing options are expensive and hard to find.* --Greg Wright, Executive Director, North House Folk School
and culture economy.

*Champion for goal 2 is the Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director*

**GOAL 3: ENVISION, PLAN, DESIGN AND BUILD THE NEXT GENERATION OF FOCAL-POINT FACILITIES, GENERATING A SHARED SENSE OF EXCITEMENT AND PURPOSE WHILE ALSO SUPPORTING ARTS, CULTURE AND EVENTS IN COOK COUNTY.**

- **Strategic Action:** Create a facilities master plan that includes a strategic, visionary path to building our the arts and culture sector, as well as a needs assessment, analysis of options, preliminary design concepts and cost estimates.

Champions for Goal 3 are North House Folk School, Greg Wright, Executive Director and Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director

**GOAL 4: ASSESS THE VISUAL APPEARANCE OF PUBLIC PLACES AND STREETSCAPES; FUND OPPORTUNITIES FOR IMPROVED SIGNAGE AND PUBLIC ART TO REFLECT AN ARTS AND CULTURE DESTINATION.**

- **Strategic Action:** Enhance the highway 61 corridor to create a corridor to offer a streetscape that aligns with our positioning as an arts and culture destination, as well as a pedestrian and visitor safe point of welcome.

- **Strategic Action:** Identify art and arts and culture heritage that is publicly visible. Create a guide to increase awareness among residents and visitors.

- **Strategic Action:** Ensure that design and aesthetic issues are addressed through education and voluntary efforts.

Champions for goal 4 are the Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Executive Director, Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, and city and county government.

**KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS: IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN DEVELOPING KEY PHYSICAL BUILDING PROJECTS THAT EXPAND THE ARTS AND CULTURE SECTOR, WE WILL SEE RESULTS IN TERMS OF**

- **Permanent Residential Housing:** There will be new, affordable workforce housing options available for permanent County residents, including young families.

- **Short-Term Housing:** There will be new housing options available for short term residents—guests such as artists in residence, interns, instructors, students, for example—at low- and middle income price points.

- **Streetscapes:** There will be in place improved streetscapes and visual appearance of public spaces, as well as signage to increase awareness of Cook County as a cultural tourism destination.
CORE PRIORITY: GUIDING IMPLEMENTATION

Develop an Ad Hoc Steering Committee for Arts and Culture Plan Implementation, housed within the EDA. This group, representative of leadership key to the implementation of plan goals, is to be charged with oversight and strategy implementation.

Representation to include
1. Cook County Chamber of Commerce
2. Cook County Government
3. Tribal Government
4. City of Grand Marais Government
5. Cook County Economic Development Authority
6. Visit Cook county
7. Grand Marais Art Colony
8. North House Folk School
9. WTIP
10. Artist/Entrepreneur
11. Resort Owner
12. Wellness, Healing Arts
13. Small Business Development
14. National Park Service or Dept. of Natural Resources or Forest Service

KEY MEASURES OF SUCCESS: IF WE ARE SUCCESSFUL IN IMPLEMENTATION OF THIS PLAN, WE WILL SEE RESULTS BEYOND SPECIFIC GOAL IMPLEMENTATION IN TERMS OF

✓ **New Dollars:** There will be both an increase in funding as well as a shift in funding from both County as well as outside sources in support of the cultural economy.

✓ **Economic Sustainability:** There will be overall evidence of an accelerated economic vitality for Cook County.
## Telling Our Story
Develop and market the identity and brand of Cook County as a regional, national and global arts and culture destination.

### Goal 1: Create an authentic, unified story and brand that invites community ownership.
Overall champion for Goal 1: Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd; Visit Cook County, Linda Jurek

### Measurable Objective—Narrative and Language.
Review of communications and marketing materials in place throughout Cook County will reflect a unified narrative articulating our identity.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Engage the community in crafting an authentic story that creates a shared vision about arts and culture and generates momentum for Cook County becoming an arts and culture destination.</td>
<td>Story writing team will provide input into finalizing of story for various uses and audiences. Team includes Tom Christiansen, Jim Boyd, Betsy Bowen, Kristofer Bowman. Hire a professional writer to interview and to craft a story for incorporation into this plan.</td>
<td>Adopted before 10.25.16</td>
<td>Story team: TChristiansen, JBoyd, BBowen, KBowman, KVick</td>
<td>Entire Planning Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure greater visibility for the story of arts and culture in area marketing, communications and media outlets. Infuse the story throughout the County. Incorporate culture, arts and history into story and brand.</td>
<td>Create “shared meaning &amp; language” with community stakeholders Promote Cook County as a place to experience arts &amp; culture - learning, making, watching artists in action, live music every day, etc. 1. WTIP regular features 2. Development of Cook Co. Wikipedia page 3. Incorporate into history and culture story 4. Create list of major media highlights that recognize Cook County as national Arts Destination. Find an appropriate place to post (VCC?) 5. Develop strategies for garnering more national media attention.</td>
<td>May 2017, Ongoing, Immediate push, followed by regular placement through-out 2017</td>
<td>Linda Jurek, Bill Hansen, Jim Boyd, Mary Somnis Linda Jurek, Jim Boyd, Bill Hansen and Mary Somnis Debbie Benedict Story Team; Carrie McHugh Linda Jurek VCC, Linda Jurek</td>
<td>Art Colony, VCC, Siverson Gallery, WTIP, Histor. Soc., Band</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Financing, Private Investments, Grants
Develop List and Schedule to inform key stakeholders and influencers to seek funding.
## Telling Our Story
Develop and market the identity and brand of Cook County as a regional, national and global arts and culture destination.

### Goal 2: Develop and fund an art and culture marketing and communications plan, based on the articulated authentic story and brand.
Overall champions for Goal 2: Cook County Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, and Visit Cook County, Linda Jurek.

### Measurable Objective—Growth as an Arts Destination.
Data reflects increased visitorship to Cook county with documented engagement in arts and culture.

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<tr>
<td>Develop a Marketing and Public Relations plan that celebrates arts and the art community and promotes the appreciation of, participation in, and purchase of art and authentic experiential art and cultural activities in Cook County.</td>
<td>Strengthen cross sector ties and cross promotion among businesses and communities toward the execution of a unified and strong Arts and Culture marketing and communications plan honoring all members of our community.</td>
<td>Ongoing</td>
<td>Chamber, Jim Boyd, and VCC, Linda Jurek; Mary Somnis, Bill Hansen, CEC</td>
<td>WTIP, CC News H., EDA, Joan Farnam, Northern Wilds, Bill Hansen, city and County and lead arts orgs. and individual artists</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Implementation</td>
<td>Ongoing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advocate for greater visibility of the arts and culture in area marketing materials: articles, radio and TV stories, arts featured on city, county, visitor’s bureau and other websites.</td>
<td>Convene partners as part of creating a marketing plan.</td>
<td>Immed. Push, followed by regular placement throughout 2017</td>
<td>Chamber, Jim Boyd, and VCC, Linda Jurek, Mary Somnis</td>
<td>WTIP, regional tourism bds, city, county, lead arts orgs.. CEC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financing, Private Investments, Grants</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## Telling Our Story
Develop and market the identity and brand of Cook County as a regional, national and global arts and culture destination.

**Goal 3:** Use technology, including online sales, to enhance markets for artists and arts & culture sector organizations, including a database of artists and their work.  
*Overall champion for Goal 3: Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director*

**Measurable Objective--Enhanced Technology.** There is an online promotion and sales presence in place, broadly used by artists, and tracking demonstrates economic impact.

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create technology vehicles to promote the arts economy.</td>
<td>Create an on-line sales strategy and presence representing multiple artists. Develop a registry of artists and an online Gallery to promote artists, facilitate the sale of their work, and enhance the area’s brand, including musicians, literary arts, health arts, culinary. Develop an Interactive Arts &amp; Culture App that highlights local/hand-made /art products and Arts &amp; Culture Attractions (sort of like a mix btwn Tinder &amp; PokemonGo)</td>
<td>1-2 years to develop. Dec. 2018</td>
<td>Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer with Kjersti Vick and Kristofer Bowman</td>
<td>Entrepreneur Fund; SBDC; Private Businesses; or Co-op; Lloyd Johnson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a database of local artists and organizations to promote collaboration and communication, including literary arts, health arts, culinary arts as well as performing arts, visual arts, music and artisans/makers.</td>
<td>Develop one comprehensive, easy to use, digital location for all Arts &amp; Culture Activities. Comprehensive list of Cook County Artist Services (like the local contractors list at Sawtooth Lumber or the CCCF Guide to Giving for Nonprofits). Establish a virtual location for artists to connect with one another, a “hangout.”</td>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer with Tom Christiansen</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce; North House; Local galleries; GM Music, NHFS, VCC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aggregate a list of art buyers and develop social media strategies to reach out to these buyers.</td>
<td>Convene working group of gallery owners to help develop list and strategies.</td>
<td>1-2 years to develop. Dec. 2018</td>
<td>Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer and Kristofer Bowman</td>
<td>Local galleries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Financing, Private Investments, Grants**
## Working Together

Build and support public and private capacity and commitment to common goals to grow the arts and culture sector.

### Goal 1: Develop and formalize a community vision and commitment to support arts and culture initiatives in Cook County. (Community defined as local township, city, tribal, county, state and federal government; business and nonprofits.)

Overall Champion for Goal 1: City of Grand Marais, Jay Arrowsmith-DeCoux, Mayor; Cook County, Jeff Cadwell, Admin., and Economic Develop. Auth., Mary Somnis, Director.

#### Measurable Objective—Government Policy. Emphasis on arts and culture is incorporated into key planning tools such as comprehensive plans and economic development documents, and planning bodies such as an arts commission.

#### Measurable Objective—Cross Sector Partnership. There is evidence of strengthened connection or alignment across organizations & sectors in support of the cultural economy.

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<tr>
<td>Develop a leadership vision that embraces the region’s unique history, environment, and arts and culture heritage, and formalize local city and government commitment.</td>
<td>Learn from best practices in other communities that are arts and culture destinations. (Nelson, BC; Mineral Point, WI)</td>
<td>2017 2nd quarter</td>
<td>Jim Boyd</td>
<td>City, county, EDA, clinic, VCC; Grand Portage Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address arts and culture in county and city comprehensive plans. Embed a representative from the arts and culture sector on Comprehensive Plan Committees.</td>
<td>City and County timetables</td>
<td>Jay Arrowsmith DeCoux, GM City Council; Jeff Cadwell, County arts and history, Mike Roth, Tim Nelson, P&amp;Z; GP Band</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identify opportunities for cross sector collaboration, especially between businesses and the arts and culture community.</td>
<td>2017 2nd quarter</td>
<td>Jim Boyd, Jan Sivertson,</td>
<td>SBDA, EDA</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Showcasing models of businesses that uplifted the arts to enhance their businesses.</td>
<td>Launch by end of 3rd qtr. 2017</td>
<td>JBoyd, MSomnis,</td>
<td>SMDC, PCampanaro</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocate for businesses to hire local artists as part of construction and design work – remove mental block that art is a separate line item “Made Local”</td>
<td>Begin 1st qtr. 2017</td>
<td>Jim Boyd, Cook County Chamber of Commerce</td>
<td>Steer.Comm., esp. GMAC &amp; NHFS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create and develop a compelling shared vision that will attract national funding.</td>
<td>By Oct. 25, 2016</td>
<td>Chamber, JBoyd; GMAC, NHFS</td>
<td>Steer.Comm., esp. GMAC &amp; NHFS</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secure commitments for dedicated local funding streams to support arts and culture initiatives.</td>
<td>As opportunities arise in 2017</td>
<td>Creative Economy Collaborative</td>
<td>City, County, EDA, IRRRB; GP Band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish a Cook County and/or Grand Marais arts council or arts commission to advocate, coordinate, and fund arts and culture initiatives.</td>
<td>Develop and gain approval for the council or commission.</td>
<td>ASAP – 2016 if possible</td>
<td>Jay Arrowsmith DeCoux, GM City Council; Jeff Cadwell, County; Jan Sivertson</td>
<td>EDA, Arts Orgs, GP Band</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that this council or commission is adequately funded to provide staffing as a focal point for leadership to enable implementation of ideas imbedded within this plan.</td>
<td>ASAP – 2016 if possible [per city/county timetables]</td>
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</table>

Financing, Private Investments, Grants
**Working Together**

Build and support public and private capacity and commitment to common goals to grow the arts and culture sector.

**Goal 2:** Support collaboration and organizational development of a vibrant and sustainable arts and culture sector.

Overall Champion for Goal 2: Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director; and North House Folk School, Greg Wright, Executive Director

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### Measurable Objective—Professional Practice.

Resources are in place to support arts and culture workers in developing sustainable business models.

### Measurable Objective—Organizational Income.

There is documented growth in earned income for arts and culture sector organizations to sustain the arts and culture economy.

<table>
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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Build strong collaborations to promote shared goals, implement common projects, and support and celebrate each other’s success.</td>
<td>1. Convene arts partners; reinvigorate sense of partnership</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; qtr. 2017</td>
<td>Art Colony and North House leadership</td>
<td>NSMA, Playhouse, WTIP, CCHS, Marcia Hyatt, Tom Christiansen, Pat Campanaro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Convene the gallery gang.</td>
<td>1&lt;sup&gt;st&lt;/sup&gt; qtr. 2017</td>
<td>Marcia Hyatt</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Convene artist meet-ups</td>
<td>2&lt;sup&gt;nd&lt;/sup&gt; qtr. 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Create an Arts and Culture sector gathering</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; qtr. 2017</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Encourage each organization to focus on and successfully implement its mission.</td>
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<td>Community volunteers, donors, all arts organizations</td>
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<td></td>
<td>5. Explore and encourage opportunities for resource sharing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>6. Enhance the organizational and business capacity of arts and cultural organizations through leadership development, peer coaching, training, and networking.</td>
<td>4&lt;sup&gt;th&lt;/sup&gt; qtr. 2017 launch</td>
<td>Marcia Hyatt Lori Rothstein SBDC</td>
<td>NSMA, NHFS, EMAC, Playhouse, WTIP, CCHS, GMAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1. Investigate other programs. Complete a needs assessment.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Art Colony and North House leadership</td>
<td>Fish Museum, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Develop program model.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. Seek Funding</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td></td>
<td>4. Implement.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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Financing, Private Investments, Grants
### Working Together

Build and support public and private capacity and commitment to common goals to grow the arts and culture sector.

**Goal 3:** Support the business, economic and professional development of Cook County Artists.

*Overall Champion for Goal 3:* Grand Marais Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Executive Director; Pat Campanaro, SMDC; and Mary Somnis, EDA

**Measurable Objective—Individual Artist Income.** There is documented growth of arts and culture sector, including Cook Co. artists and arts businesses

<table>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1. Provide incentives to support the growth of arts and culture businesses; ensure young families can participate</td>
<td>Cost of living support: daycare subsidies, gas cards, grocery vouchers, Subsidies for attracting art business, loans, tax credits for being an artist or having an art business etc. Encourage policies that lead to regulation that 1% of construction projects must go to purchasing art</td>
<td>Pat Campanaro (SBDA); Mary Somnis (EDA); Linda Jurek VCC</td>
<td>GMAC, Higher Ed, Chamber of Commerce (Jim Boyd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Provide awareness and access to funding and financing: bank loans, micro-loans, crowdsourcing, grants, etc.</td>
<td>Bring NE Entrepreneur Fund Creative Core Training Prog. Develop case manager to help guide artists</td>
<td>Pat Campanaro (SBDA); Mary Somnis (EDA)</td>
<td>AEOA; Steve Surbaugh, NE Entrepre.Fund Creative leader., higher ed</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Provide affordable business and professional development training to artists to help develop viable business models and transitions.</td>
<td>SBDA provides periodic trainings.</td>
<td>Pat Campanaro (SBDA); Mary Somnis (EDA); Linda Jurek VCC</td>
<td>GMAC, Higher Ed, Chamber of Commerce (Jim Boyd)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Mobilize network of HR professionals to assist trailing spouses to find jobs.</td>
<td>Work with SBDA to establish process. Include a database of creative workers.</td>
<td>2007 Jay, Jeff</td>
<td>Pat Campanaro (SBDA); Mary Somnis (EDA)</td>
<td>Clinic, Hospital, USFS, County, EDA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Provide peer coaching and artist-to-artist support.</td>
<td>Offer retreats for artists. Experiment using the Banff Social Entrepreneurship model to develop a Creative Leadership Institute.</td>
<td>Funded June 2017; Delivery fall 2017</td>
<td>Marcia Hyatt, Lori Rothstein</td>
<td>GMAC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Create cooperative structure for purchasing, sharing resources, and marketing and distributing.</td>
<td>See Goal 3 “Telling our Story”</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Support the next generation of local artists by advocating for and developing STEAM</td>
<td>Meet with school admin. and educators to develop plan for collaboration.</td>
<td>Feb. 2017</td>
<td>Jessa Frost and art partners</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>8. Encourage policies and practices that lead making it easy to hire artists.</td>
<td>For example, VCC pay half of fee for artists to demo, give lectures, on-site performances, etc.</td>
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Financing, Private Investments, Grants
**Placemaking**

Inventory, identify, prioritize, fund and develop key physical building projects that expand the arts and culture sector.

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**Goal 1:** Develop affordable workforce housing options for permanent residents, including artists and new, younger residents.

Overall Champion for Goal 1: Cook County Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Director

**Measurable Objective—Permanent Housing.** There are new affordable permanent workforce housing options available for Cook County.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work to provide arts and culture sector support to EDA’s efforts to create affordable workforce housing.</td>
<td>Consider potential role with ArtSpace or other consulting firm to quantify needs for Arts and Culture.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mary Somnis, EDA</td>
<td>City, County, chamber</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financing, Private Investments, Grants

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**Goal 2:** Develop affordable housing for shorter stay guests such as temporary workforce, artists in residence, interns, instructors, students.

Overall Champion for Goal 2: Cook County Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Director

**Measurable Objective—Short-Term Housing.** There is affordable housing in place in adequate supply to respond to the growing demand from potential participants in arts and culture opportunities.

<table>
<thead>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Develop a multi-year plan to create a housing strategy to support the acceleration of the arts and culture economy.</td>
<td>Creative Economy Collaborative become familiar with Cook County Workforce Housing Study and other recommendations, including 2016 community dialogues. Work closely with EDA and other projects throughout the county to ensure synergy. Explore a co-housing project or other identified approaches to housing development. Explore funding to purchase strategic properties as they become available on the market.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Mary Somnis, EDA</td>
<td>City, County, chamber; North House, Art Colony, Grand Portage Band</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Financing, Private Investments, Grants
**Placemaking**

Inventory, identify, prioritize fund and develop key physical building projects that expand the arts and culture sector.

**Goal 3:** Envision, plan, design and build the next generation of focal point facilities, generating a shared sense of excitement and purpose while also supporting arts, culture and events in Cook County.

Overall Champion for Goal 3: Cook County Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Director

**Measurable Objective—Focal Point Arts and Culture facility(ies).** There is in place one or more focal point next generation facility(ies) supporting arts and culture.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Create a facilities master plan that includes a needs assessment, analysis of options, preliminary design concepts and cost estimates.</td>
<td>1. Establish a facilities taskforce to be developed as a part of the Creative Economy Collaborative. Ensure strong relationship with city to push ideas forward.</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>Mary Somnis, EDA</td>
<td>North House, Greg Wright; Art Colony, Amy Demmer, Arts Organizations, City and County, Chamber</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. Inventory existing and proposed public and private spaces to support the enhancement of the arts and culture sector of the economy.</td>
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<td>3. Develop design charrette process to develop an exciting vision for the future, and as a process for engaging the public.</td>
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<td>4. Identify design parameters for future space needs.</td>
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<td>5. Identify potential sites for assessment.</td>
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<td>6. Seek funding for masterplan process.</td>
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<td>7. Develop RFP to retain a professional to assist with developing and analyzing options, creating design concepts and preliminary cost estimates.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>8. Retain professional to guide masterplan process.</td>
<td>2017-2018</td>
<td>North House, Greg Wright; Art Colony, Amy Demmer</td>
<td>EDA, Arts Organizations, City and County, Chamber, Grand Portage Band</td>
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<td>9. Explore funding options, including cooperative organizational structure, public sources and private fundraising approaches.</td>
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<td>10. Select preferred option from the master planning process. Identify organizations that will take lead responsibility.</td>
<td>2018</td>
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<td>11. Begin construction of new facilities to support arts and culture in Cook County.</td>
<td>2019</td>
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</table>

Financing, Private Investments, Grants
### Placemaking

Inventory, identify, prioritize, fund and develop key bricks and mortar projects that expand the arts and culture sector’s presence in Cook County.

**Goal 4:** Assess the visual appearance of public places and streetscapes; fund opportunities for improved signage, public arts, to reflect an arts and culture destination.

**Overall Champion for Goal 4:** Cook County Economic Development Authority, Mary Somnis, Director; Cook Co. Chamber of Commerce, Jim Boyd, Executive Director

**Measurable Objective—Public Spaces and Streetscape.** Cook County visually represents itself as a major arts and culture destination, filled with public art.

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<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Timeframe &amp; Complet. Date</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enhance the highway 61 County-wide corridor to create a corridor to offer a streetscape that aligns with our positioning as an arts and culture destination, as well as a pedestrian and visitor safe point of welcome.</td>
<td>Work with Moving Matters project</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td>Mike Roth, Jeff Cadwell, Jim Boyd, Grand Portage Band</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Explore Our Town design funding application</td>
<td>Sept. 12, 2016 – or Sept. 2017?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highway 61 improvements made – Grand Marais project</td>
<td>2019</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strengthen relationship with City of Grand Marais toward implementation of comprehensive planning process.</td>
<td>Embed a representative from the arts and culture sector on Comprehensive Plan Committees.</td>
<td>2016</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identify art and arts and culture heritage that is publicly visible. Create a guide to increase awareness among residents and visitors.</td>
<td>Inventory assets</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Historical Society, Art Around Town Group</td>
<td>Arts and Culture Planning Committee as a whole</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create walking and/or driving tours. Set up for print, audio or on-line tours.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Visit Cook County</td>
<td>HOCP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Publicize. Create a “welcome mat” for visitors arriving in the county thru signage, etc.</td>
<td>2018</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Create a sustainable process of updating and publicizing.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ensure that design and aesthetic issues are addressed, through education and voluntary efforts.</td>
<td>Address any zoning issues.</td>
<td>2017</td>
<td>Chamber, City, County, Visit Cook County, GP Band</td>
<td>Garden Club</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Financing, Private Investments, Grants**
**Guiding Implementation**

**Goal:** The Cook County Arts and Culture Strategic Framework is implemented according to plan.

**Measurable Objective**—There is increased as well as shift in funding from both within the county and outside sources in support of the cultural economy.

**Measurable Objective**—There is visible shift in cultural norms toward support for arts and culture, as demonstrated by new partnerships and local support to artists and cultural work.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Tactics</th>
<th>Timeframe &amp; Comple. Date</th>
<th>Lead Person</th>
<th>Partners</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Creative Economy Collaborative will provide leadership and guide the implementation of the Leveraging Creativity - Cook County Cultural Plan.</td>
<td>Creative Economy Collaborative has been established.</td>
<td>September 2016</td>
<td>Mary Somnis &amp; Amy Demmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Economy Collaborative meets monthly to document progress against plan.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mary Somnis &amp; Amy Demmer</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative Economy Collaborative makes decision regarding long term structure to support long term implementation of the Strategic Framework.</td>
<td>Before December 2019</td>
<td>Mary Somnis &amp; Amy Demmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
COOK COUNTY ARTS ECONOMY PLANNING TEAM

Jay Arrowsmith DeCoux
Mayor, City of Grand Marais
ejay.a.decoux@gmail.com
(218) 370-1625

Debbie Benedict, Executive Director
WTIP North Shore Community Radio
radiodiva@boreal.org
(218) 387-1070

Kristofer Bowman
Owner, Upstate MN
kristoferbowman@yahoo.com
(317) 513-7802

Jeff Cadwell, Administrator
Cook County
jeff.cadwell@co.cook.mn.us
(218) 387-3687

Pat Campanaro, Business Consultant
Small Business Devel. Ctr. and Cook Co. EDA; Board of Dir., Arrowhead Regional Devel. Comm.
pcampanaro@gmail.com
(651) 336-2964

Bill Hansen, Owner
Sawbill Canoe Outfitters
bill@sawbill.com

Marcia Hyatt, Leadership Consultant
Co-owner Last Chance Gallery
marcia@marciahyatt.com
(218) 387-9239

Linda Jurek, Executive Director
Visit Cook County MN
linda@visitcookcounty.com
(218) 387-2788

Peggy Lucas, Partner, Brighton Development
ArtSpace Board of Dir., UMN Board of Regents
Seasonal resident, Schroeder, MN
peggyelucas@gmail.com
(612) 414-9161

April McCormick, Manager
Grand Portage Roads and Realty
aprilmm@grandportage.com
(218) 475-2023

Carrie McHugh, Executive Director
Cook County Historical Society
history@boreal.org
218-387-2883

Richard Olson
Designer, Owner of EnvironDesign
ricson@boreal.org
(218) 370-2011

Lori Rothstein
Associate Extension Professor
Leadership and Civic Engagement
University of Minnesota Extension
218-726-6476
roths040@umn.edu

Mary Somnis, Executive Director
Cook County/Grand Marais EDA
somnismary@gmail.com
218-387-3112

Sheila Smith, Executive Director
Minnesota Citizens for the Arts
ARTS ADVISORY COMMITTEE:

Betsy Bowen, Printmaker
Betsy Bowen Gallery & Studios
betsy@woodcut.com
(218) 370-8077

Jim Boyd, Executive Director
Cook County Chamber of Commerce
cccchamber@boreal.org
(218) 387-2079

Tom Christiansen, Sculptor
Last Chance Fabricating LLC
(218) 663-7008
tom@lastchancefab.com

Amy Demmer, Executive Director
Grand Marais Art Colony
director@grandmaraisartcolony.org
(218) 387-2737

Jessa Frost, Program Director
North House Folk School
jfrost@northhouse.org
(218) 387-9762

Jan Sivertson, Cook County Commissioner
Sivertson Gallery, MSAB board member
jan@sivertson.com; (218) 387-2491

FACILITATORS:

Mike Anderson, President
Ignite for Good
mike.w.anderson1084@gmail.com
(651) 270-4740

Janna King, President
Economic Development Services
jking@econdevelop.com
(612) 925-2013

Jeff Heegaard
Independent Consultant
jeffheegaard@me.com
(651) 491-9293

STAFF:

Sharon Rodning Bash, Senior Program Director, ArtsLab
Arts Midwest
Sharon@artsmidwest.org
(612) 388-2765
artslab.artsmidwest.org
www.artsmidwest.org
“GREAT WORDS” THAT DESCRIBE COOK COUNTY

This word cloud represents the composite of brainstorming at the initial retreat of the Planning Team.
CREATING LIVES FROM THE LAND

By Greg Seitz, Writer
gregseitz.com

The horizon is never far from view on Minnesota’s North Shore. Seen across Lake Superior, it is impossibly big and flat and straight. Birney Quick, the founder of the Grand Marais Art Colony, said it straightens out crooked thoughts.

Between the edge of the world and the edge of the lake are miles of cold, deep water that wear a different mood every day. If you stand on Artist’s Point when the wind is blowing and waves are roaring and snow is flying, the North Pole doesn’t feel far away, says Greg Wright, executive director of the North House Folk School.

Inland, the vast lake is also present, seemingly just over every hill to the south. Its pull is felt on lakes big and small, in trackless woods, remote bogs, lonely trails, and along roaring rivers. Deep and silent wilderness pulls back.

In slivers of human civilization throughout this tip of the north, people create lives from the landscape. They paint paintings and make snowshoes, sculpt stone and build boats, haul nets and grow gardens during fleeting golden summers. There are potters, painters, fiber artists, glass-workers, sculptors, basket-makers, woodcrafters, folklorists and storytellers, poets, and book-makers.

They teach their skills to each other and to students who come from far away to learn. They talk about notable sunrises with their neighbors.

Sometimes they work three jobs. Sometimes they spend their whole life building their homestead. Sometimes the struggle is too much to live in such a magical place – warm houses few and far between, a living wage elusive, the brief summer simply not enough.

Sometimes, it seems cursed with beauty and blessed with hard work.

The people who are at home here – who seek the aesthetic of this land, the bounty of its biota, the expertise of uncounted generations, the necessary self-reliance when you’re a long ways from any city – live by natural laws.

Summer is a time to make a living, hectic and glorious. The people of Cook County work and gather – rocks, twigs, images, conversations, thoughts. “You store them away,” says Amy Demmer, executive director of the Grand Marais Art Colony. “In the winter it is quiet and introspective and you peel that stuff out and make your work.”
THE POETRY OF COLUMNAR CLIFFS

A billion years ago, where the middle of Canada and a slice of northern Minnesota are today, magma spilled out of molten furnaces below the surface of the Earth, and cooled and hardened into nearly indestructible basalt. Since then it has been carved by every natural force imaginable. Glaciers were the most recent sculptors, scraping soil from bedrock and digging deep lakes as they pushed south, leaving boulders and meltwater behind as they melted north ten thousand years ago.

A whole ecosystem must develop in the wake of a glacier. Between long and cold winters, there are brief bursts of growth, and pine forests and peatlands now cover shallow soil over the sheet of basalt. Lake Superior’s waves beat against the stone, freezing and thawing and freezing, breaking down some of Earth’s oldest rock.

The rugged landscape of angular outcrops and scraggly spruce and spare white pine looks chiseled and drawn, shaped over harsh eons not by hands, hammers, and brushes but wind, water, and the cold climate. There are lots of thick dark lines and sharp corners, and it’s so big that people are barely there at all. In art, it is often represented relatively realistically, in distinctive and innovative style.

“I’m really excited about art-making that draws on the materials and the composition that we see in the landscape,” Amy Demmer says of the “poetry” of straight and jagged lines and the possible combinations of shapes, colors, and local materials.

Cook County art frequently carries not only the lines and shapes and colors but the feeling of the land. Sheer cliff faces jutting out of water and forest is a striking scene, a fishing boat on a stormy Superior is a speck on huge swells. The land and the water are powerful and indifferent. The horizon, the forested hills and lonely lakes, stony shores and pine-studded points, edges between land and water and sky – it controls your attention in Cook County. The natural world is awesome and fearsome; to engage with it deeply is profound. Creativity is necessary to share this experience.

Artists and artisans tell the story of Cook County, says Jessa Frost of North House Folk School. “Many people are doing work deeply rooted in this place, inspired by the lake, the woods, using materials they are harvesting here.”

PEOPLE WITH PURPOSE

“Some days it feels like it’s probably not any harder to live on the moon than it is to live here,” printmaker Betsy Bowen says.

Those who live in Cook County are here because they want to be here, have stayed because they can, are rooted to its people and places and stories. They live here with a great deal of intention.

“The thing I like most is that so many people live in this place called the North – in this community, in this landscape – on purpose,” Greg Wright says. “Many of us want to have a relationship with the landscape.”

That connection to the land restores the human spirit. And it attracts unique people.

Yet, for a bunch of free-thinkers, backwoods homesteaders, wilderness explorers, forest foragers, artists, makers, anglers, hunters, crafters, carvers, woodworkers, and un categorizable Cook Countians, the land pulls people together more often than you might expect.

“We all come here with our own view of what this life is all about, but when a forest fire roars through and there’s one thread of a connection called Highway 61 that connects you to the big world, and we’re all out here alone, you
appreciate how when the rubber hits the road, there’s nothing like other people,” Greg Wright says. “You have to depend on other people.”

The collaborative spirit is seen in kids and adults “painting by numbers” a new mural in downtown Grand Marais, the mosaic on the grocery story that was drawn by elementary school kids, designed by an artist, created by everyone. It is seen in the community performances, the strong nonprofits, the citizens engaging with their government. Neighbors pulling neighbors out of the ditch.

With everyone seeming to have some unique skill, trading goods and services is common. A lot of people barter for what they need, exchanging a timeless currency. It is an economy based on trust and personal relationships, and it stitches the community together.

The foods, the tools, the shelters, the boats, the survival strategies that often work best in the boreal forest and on Lake Superior are those of the Ojibwe people, who have been here longer than anyone. When European immigrants arrived, finding the same materials, foods, and weather as the native people, they learned from thousands of years of knowledge about what works best for each survival need. Many of the settlers were Scandinavian, and brought their own experience of fishing, farming, and living in northern latitudes.

Ash trees are good for snowshoe frames, moose hide makes warm moccasins. Birch bark makes a perfect canoe for filling with rice, for portaging from lake to lake. The nutritious grain is collected by the boatload and eaten during the long winters. Willow thickets are found along every stream, and easily woven into useful and beautiful baskets. Game is hunted, filling fall caches and larders. Fish are pulled from the lakes and streams. At the right time of summer, the people are found in the forest, bent over double, filling buckets with blueberries.

The fish from Lake Superior have fed people forever. Grand Portage band members help feed their community from the waters. The Dockside Fish Market in Grand Marais still sells local bluefin herring, lake trout, and whitefish.

“When you get fish and chips at the Dockside, it’s the real thing,” says Greg Wright. Eating fresh-caught fish is a pure connection between life and the land.

Art has also long connected humanity to its habitat. In the decade after World War Two, Twin Cities-based painters Birney Quick and Byron Bradley developed an artistic outpost in Grand Marais. Painters worked in front of easels on Artist’s Point in Grand Marais, beholding a ballerina en pointe on the rocks. It continues today, the oldest art colony in the state of Minnesota.

The colony was first located here because of the land and water, the inspiration and the recreation. Quick was a prolific painter and also an avid fly fisherman. The colony has brought world-class jazz and other musicians to the community, presented speakers on art, offer courses and residencies – and has always offered Saturday classes for kids. The colony offers teaching and practice, seclusion and community, inspiration and support.

Because the visiting artists liked it so much, many moved to Cook County. Their spirit has been woven into the fabric ever since. In the past twenty years, North House Folk School has grown out of the creative culture, offering courses in traditional crafts, bringing students and masters to the campus – located next to the harbor and the fish market.

Cook County, with its striking natural beauty serving as the perfect subject matter, also offers opportunities to work, to sell, to learn, and to experience north woods life.

“It’s about a real authentic experience of working with your hands,” says Jan Sivertson, a Cook County commissioner and owner of a popular gallery in Grand Marais. “People here have always worked with their hands, it gives meaning to life.”
CRAFT AND CREATIVITY

Creativity is not limited to artists; it is anyone who makes something. In Cook County that includes nearly everybody.

“People with a second home up here, they have a sauna, and what’s the handle on the door? Some cool driftwood they found. You use what’s on hand, and is beautiful and meaningful to you – that drives the craft that comes out of this place,” says Jessa Frost.

Inspired by the landscape and wishing to deepen their connection to it, people craft useful and beautiful products made from its materials, says Greg Wright. “It’s about making things that echo the beauty of the landscape, about utility, a sense of purpose and connection to the land and sea.”

George Morrison, landscape painter and sculptor, a Chippewa of the Grand Portage Band, is the region’s most internationally recognized artist. His work, modern and representational, is grounded in the seascape of his homeland.

Not everybody builds their own house, chops their own wood, and harvests their own food, of course. There are co-ops and grocery stores and, recently, a craft brewery.

Art and craft stitch life together in Cook County, connecting people to their home, their history, their neighbors. Twice a year, at the extremes of summer and winter, the solstice puppet pageants celebrate the cycle of the seasons. It has been Betsy Bowen’s passion project and is produced by the Good Harbor Hill Players.

In the summer, there are 600 people at North House to see the show, boats bobbing in the harbor in the background. The performance is joyous and bold, with stilt-walkers and boats and jokes about the town’s one stoplight or local radio station WTIP. In winter, there are shadow puppets, a smaller audience, and the quiet introspection found in those cold dark days.

The power of this ritual was felt profoundly in 2007. That was the year the Ham Lake Fire burned 118 square miles in the Gunflint Trail area of Cook County and across the border in Ontario.

That year, the fire was portrayed in the summer puppet performance, before a huge crowd of locals and visitors, a cathartic reckoning with tragedy and loss. “At the end of the show, kids on stilts as tiny tree seedlings came out,” Jessa Frost, of North House, recalls. “Everybody was in tears.”

That performance was how many people in the community processed the pain of the wildfire, and it brought everybody together – from evacuees to tourists. “That’s what great art is supposed to do: share an experience,” Frost says.

LEAVING LIGHT FOOTPRINTS

The land is in the people and the people are of the land. It’s habitat – offering the necessary conditions and resources for survival of a hardy sub-species of Homo sapiens. It’s natural that preserving this increasingly rare kind of place is a priority for its residents.

“There are rich resources: water, fish, wild game, berries, wild rice, fuel for heat and cooking,” says Betsy Bowen. “It’s a pretty lush landscape. Now we are looking at what other food sources can we eat, without being dependent on food that comes in by fossil fuel from somewhere, on a truck or a ship from Argentina.”

The Grand Portage Band is also working to return to its original independence by producing as much food for its people as possible, a goal called food sovereignty. Between fish from the lake, innovative agriculture, and the bounty of northern summers, the people at this rocky reservation on the Canadian border can sustain themselves.
Natural resources are essential to the type of life people in Cook County want, and they are available for anyone who can find them. Ninety-five percent of the county is publicly-owned, most of it by the U.S. Forest Service. Responsibility for their long-term protection is also shared.

“Because the Boundary Waters and our lakes are so important to our culture, our lifestyle and our tourist economy, we have to preserve those,” says Amy Demmer. “It dovetails with authentic living; people try to limit their footprint.”

If the old Leave No Trace saying is “take only photographs and leave only footprints,” many Cook Countians are even trying to shrink their boot size. It means eating as much food as possible that was grown locally. It means biomass heating systems, solar arrays, and smart architecture.

Preserving the environment is also woven in with how people try to live: resilient and rooted, able to adapt to change, connected to traditions and to the land and sea.

“The arts and culture economy is not extractive, not resource based, so it is inherently sustainable,” says Jessa Frost. “We’re not relying on dwindling resources; we’re relying on human creativity and initiative.”

Creativity, self-reliance, and interdependence means the people here can make almost everything they need, from bread to birchbark canoes. And now they must make two essential elements: Space to live and places to work, says Jim Boyd, director of the Cook County Chamber of Commerce. They must help make an economy that lasts all year. They have the skills to solve any community problem – but first they must make a living.
For more information please contact
Sharon Rodning Bash, Senior Program Director, ArtsLab
Arts Midwest
Sharon@artsmidwest.org
(612) 388-2765
artslab.artsmidwest.org
www.artsmidwest.org

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