

Biddeford Cultural Plan

Community Conversation, Artists and Makers

February 25, 2021

What is wonderful about this community?

- Community values art, not viewed as an oddity
- Wide variety of artists
- Enthusiasm for arts; events to bring artists together
- Love is there for arts; there's a vision – hope for the future
- Lots of energy; vision
- Comradery between businesses and the community; everybody wants to work together and support one another
- Positive energy; welcoming and open
- Mills, businesses, Engine, Heart of Biddeford
- Saco River and the River Walk; geographically unique
- Affordable; beautiful; great downtown; lots of assets; affordable housing
- Downtown is a desirable place to visit and for businesses to locate
- The community values mixed socioeconomics. The homeless population is engaged and treated as part of the community
- Biddeford recently identified as top place to live/see?
- Something special about new businesses moving in; everybody recognizes what a special place Biddeford is and feels great pride to be here... sense of comradery; excited to be a part of community
- Affordability; moved from Steamboat Springs Colorado because of affordability
- Matthew Lagarde, musician and music educator grew up in Biddeford, recently moved back, don't know artist and maker community, but feel great energy and am excited to be here. Love going downtown and seeing what's going on... places are thriving, despite Covid. Downtown business owners say they've received great support from community. Constantly hearing about new enterprises, new things going on. Excited for possibilities and proud to be part of it.
- Resiliency... especially among the business community
- Music production and agriculture
- Great energy; sense of community
- Thriving downtowns
- Growth in community gardens

What needs to improve?

- Cultural development involving community, sharing, and health that engages youth
- Comprehensive marketing of Mills
- Mills are still difficult to navigate; could use a directory, better marketing, etc.
- More art that brings the community together and provides a beneficial service; teaching functional crafts, maintaining skills that are being lost
- Directory of artists, artist space, resources, etc.
- Art Walks hard to navigate in the past; there's potential for more comprehensive offerings
- Preserving affordable housing and space for artists and others
- Directory and promotion highlighting the diversity of businesses and services
- How to work with homeless population as an asset, an opportunity
- More agriculture, including textile's, food, etc., downtown
- Exploration of the role of arts as we think about food



- Promoting community health by connecting art and food in the downtown (example: Joyful Harvest program that was available downtown for youth)
- Engaging youth in arts; having a consistent, safe location for youth
- Connecting food and art through folk festivals; Biddeford has River Jam and other seasonal festivals, would love to see more folk arts and utilitarian craft celebrated and shared
- More opportunities for dance
- Biddeford as a hub that expands beyond city bounds... looking to serve and draw from a larger region
- Exploration of potential spaces around the city for arts opportunities
- Connecting students with arts opportunities, especially those in Mill; connect students to specific craft, like an apprenticeship; could the Mill provide a community space for youth?
- More festivals
- Break down barriers to arts being part of municipal development initiatives; establishing ways for artists to be involved in community design and public spaces
- Funding opportunities/micro-grants would help to motivate artists involvement in
- Lack of opportunities to view and engage with film, through theater, festivals, etc.

What role, if any, do you think arts and culture could play in addressing the needs identified above?

- Using art to activate community spaces
- Including public art projects in community design, beautification, and planning
- Arts and culture bring people of all ages, ethnicities, etc. together; there a way to connect diverse populations
- There's opportunity in the lack of film in Biddeford – create ways to engage with film
- Establish a place for performance art that is consistent and accessible
- Expand access to public transportation to connect surrounding communities and to ensure lower income residents have access
- Biddeford Historical Society – Old Meeting House is a great venue but not fully utilized

What events and programs are available in the region?

- Local food, local places
- Apex Youth Connection
- Elements – great space for writers
- Flourish – before covid had open mic 2x a month, had dance, movement, etc.... seems to be a disconnect because people from Biddeford weren't attending these offerings
- Engine did studio tours, but getting the word out was hard
- Community gardens – growing, establishing new spaces in various parts of Biddeford
- Children's garden

What do you hope to see 5 years down the road?

- More public art
- Artists in empty storefronts
- Functional arts
- Involving people – people don't want to just walk by and look, they want to be involved
- Youth Art Month, month to focus on music education, incorporating students and schools into downtown and showcasing youth art
- Expanding Biddeford's comedy scene



- STEM for economic development, scalable career paths for youth... empower youth and education system behind meaningful careers... career paths that relate to creative pursuits... conversation around what is technology, what is textile arts, how do these become a scalable arts career?
- Redesign of Biddeford's flag... something that represents and is emblematic of the city
- Live/workspace.... Easier, more affordable rental opportunities
- Expanded museum in the streets program... using this as opportunity for reconciliation