

# Biddeford Cultural Plan

Community Conversation, Municipality

March 4, 2021

## What is wonderful about this community?

- Architecture, mill building dense concentration of built environment
- Drawn by ocean, river, geography, headed west is farmlands, downtown mill buildings
- 52% of landmass is in the farm zone, that concentrated cultural events in downtown surrounded by ecologically rich
- Blue collar history, diversity in socio economic class, non-homogenous, diversity adds a richness
- Easy to meet people here, friendly, strong relationships, good size community
- Fascinating history, Wabanaki, mills, immigrants, immigrants today
- Tremendous pride in community, quite resilient
- Great place to grow up and raise families
- Attracts new people through its history
- Lagoon history
- Whether you are college or elderly so many things offered here
- Can park and walk street and get everything you need downtown

## What needs to improve?

- Significant social issues
- Community has suffered from inability to invest in infrastructure
- Opportunity to reinvest in Riverwalk and sidewalks, improve how community looks at culture, be more directive in resources
- Coastal community has changed its minds about the downtown
- Partnering with UNE and School Department and cultural organizations, opportunity to leverage the work being done in these silos, collaborate more
- Access and communication. A lot of good stuff going on but organizations not communicating with each other and not enough outreach to public
- Assess, what are people's schedules, are we timing it right? Who needs and wants services and what time, capacity to figure this stuff out?
- Inclusivity and cross pollination
- Growing offerings for entertainment and socialization for 18 and 21 +. Youth don't have a lot of options
- Youth are more into tik tok and Instagram and snap fat. They are not on Facebook and zoom
- Youth like to thrift shop, they are creative in style and economizing
- Communication, integration, inclusion is important, Biddeford has a story that not everyone knows. Tell the story better
- Education on why it is important, the story and cultural programs
- Young people struggling to find outlets to creativity, theaters and arcades are gone. Availability of WIFI, expand WIFI accessibility
- Transportation is an issue especially to after school

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

- Young people would embrace cultural activities, they are looking for things to do



- Engine could help, bring things into the downtown that kids are comfortable with. Art could play an important part of that
- Use music events to get engagements and have young people help create them
- Rich history in downtown and find creative ways to educate youth,
- Get all school kids into the city theater at some point in their school years, rich history there
- Slam poetry, rap, music, is engaging for youth, 12-18 year old's
- Better job incorporating the diversity by using arts and culture to build bridges share history of Biddeford and share history of immigrants
- Mill tour, in Pepperell pointe to flags, represented all the immigrant groups at the time of the century, mill industry helped make the transitions for immigrants, provided services. Keep that part of history and make it available. It was a melting pot. Mosque, synagogue, Muslim burial ground, speaks to Biddeford ability to absorb people of all kinds
- Buildings are in midst of redevelopment, need to create a virtual tour before that to document the spaces as they were

### What events and programs are available in the region?

- Construction of new park and Riverwalk, Laconia plaza to the eastern trail. Big opportunity to get people out and engage, how to get people to feel comfortable and safe to walk into community and get back home
- Wealth of knowledge of people who have been farming here. Food system is interesting and would like to know more about what is being grown here, as we create more culture around the food and fiber being grown here, how we bring that into the downtown more. It is a resource, but people don't know that it is there
- Natural resource space is similar to Brunswick, large river and coast, connecting east with west, farms and coastal
- Arts and culture can tell that story if the east and west and corridors that exist around the downtown
- Going across the river to Saco needs to be married at some point, a second bridge is 5 years away
- Tying recreation more into arts and culture, engine had a cool exhibition put together by surfers in Biddeford, photos, art based on that. celebrating Biddeford through art
- Local businesses offer hands on experiences, engine had a weekend two-hour workshop
- Trillium did an art tour... something about jewelry?
- Elements had events, hands on experiences
- Getting good press right now
- Mural in the works
- Bacon street festival (family fun festival)

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

- Ethnic festival would be a great addition, food based would be great
- A sense of design that makes its connection from the upper neighborhoods into the downtown
- A community that is healthy, the design should make people proud, connectivity that needs to build the story
- Arts are accessible to multiple age groups and socio-economic status
- A bowling alley in the mills that also draws into other communities, like Westbrook skating rink, something that gathers people, low barriers
- Roller rink would be perfect
- Neighborhood events, block parties, get to know communities, neighborhood building, concentrated events
- Afterschool jazz program
- Dop in teen center downtown
- Community gardens help string connections together, neighborhood beatification
- Building sense of identity
- Kayak rental on river would be great.

