It has been a challenging time for our artists and the arts during the past 18 months. The arts community can only do so much to engage with the public during a pandemic, so it has been difficult when in-person shows, and events drive most of their revenue. Even Burning Man has been canceled for two years in a row, although the Renegade Burn was a temporary substitute for some "burners." The Nevada Museum of Art visitor traffic is down by 2/3rds. Artown, used COVID-approved seating pod sections painted on the grass, distanced by six feet, at Rancho San Rafael Park to succeed, despite the pandemic. While we are "managing" through this crisis, there is no doubt that our arts community is still struggling. The arts and the arts community are a crucial part of the Reno-Sparks economy, and they need our help.

**The arts and culture of a community add value in so many ways.** The arts add creative and innovative jobs like those at the Generator, where Burning Man art is created and assembled, or the Philharmonic where the musicians are employed full time. The arts can drive tourism, like a full-scale Burning Man or visitors to the Nevada Museum of Art. Art also sparks creativity and innovation; some of the top skills employers seek when hiring. Communities that embrace the arts have higher civic engagement, lower crime rates, and lower poverty rates, according to the University of Pennsylvania research.

**It is just good business to support the arts.** According to American for the Arts, “89% of executives agree that creativity is a top skill for today’s workforce, 76% of companies that invest in creativity have happier employees," and "53% of companies say that the arts stimulate creative thinking and problem-solving.” The Arts are also significant for economic development. The U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis reports arts and creative production contributed $10.6 B and 53,000 jobs to the Nevada economy annually.

**So how can we, especially the business community, support the arts?** Make more art happen! Actively encourage employee support for and engagement in the arts. Rather than always offering tickets for a sporting event, consider arts and culture performances. Purchase and display art in and around your workplace or even outside your building, especially art from local artists. (Check out the Midtown Mural Map, which highlights Midtown’s street art.) Consider sponsoring art events or providing in-kind or pro-bono services to support the arts. By fostering an exciting and welcoming work environment, businesses are encouraging innovation and increasing employee retention.

**Employers....believe in the Arts.** As a business leader, you tell others what is important to you by what you do and what you support. Your company culture will be increasingly important in the coming years as you fight to attract and retain quality employees that will lead your company to success. Your involvement in the arts will send a message to your employees and to your customers and clients - Believe in the arts!

**Arts and culture are more important than ever.** Name one great city that does not have exceptional arts and culture? The “new” Reno-Sparks is happening, and while we already have a strong foundation of arts and culture, we can build upon our success. Let’s seize this opportunity to embrace the arts as an expression of “who we are” and support the arts as something we value. It’s time for our business community to step up to engage, invest and believe in the Arts.