

# How can a Cultural Improvement Corporation improve Bloomington?

For nearly 30 years, Bloomington has benefitted from accessible cultural spaces which provided exhibition and performance venues to a wide variety of artists and arts organizations.

- 1990 – City-owned former fire station and City Hall becomes the John Waldron Arts Center, under management by the Bloomington Area Arts Council
- 2001 – Buskirk-Chumley Theater, renovated by the Bloomington Area Arts Council, becomes property of the City, under management by BCT Management, Inc.
- 2010 – Ivy Tech Community College takes over ownership of the John Waldron Arts Center, continuing the commitment to public use of the building.
- 2020 – City of Bloomington resumes ownership of the John Waldron Arts Center

In all three iterations of ownership/management structure, the managing entities prioritized affordable rental access to their performance spaces, and/or curated visual art exhibition in their galleries with generous sales percentages to the artists.

Consequently, Bloomington’s arts community has flourished. Performers have had space to develop shows. Visual artists have had galleries in which to exhibit.

Providing the necessary tools for artists to thrive has paid off. As social-impact entrepreneurs, these individuals and organizations have used these stable facilities to create a sense of identity and connection within Bloomington.

Bloomington leaders who established and upheld these public-private partnerships had the foresight identified in a 2013 study by Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert of the University of Pennsylvania, which observed,

“Yet, in a world in which established cultural organizations have become an endangered species, the idea of one organization/one space no longer seems viable or even desirable. Increasingly, this suggests a separation of the tasks of developing and managing spaces and the withdrawal of most cultural organizations and projects from involvement in either.

Indeed, we may be witnessing an inversion of the one organization/one space model. Rather than each organization developing its own space as a way of demonstrating (hopefully) that it has become established and stable, the venues themselves may become the source of stability for the cultural world. Projects, individual artists, and smaller cultural groups may come and go (and come again), but the cultural facilities they use may provide the part of the system that remains relatively constant.”

Yet, as the Waldron Task Force Report put forward this spring,

“Bloomington’s commitment has been strong for the arts, but it can and should be stronger. We recognize that nurturing the arts is fundamental to our culture, our identity as a community, our local economy and ultimately the health and well-being of our citizens. In the end, the arts help define our community, and that definition has lacked a signature effort to lift it to a level truly worthy of its creative community and citizens.”

Now is the time to fully leverage the power of our creative citizens through the publicly owned tools which are the John Waldron Arts Center and the Buskirk-Chumley Theater.

## What is a Cultural Improvement Corporation?

Mayor John Hamilton, upon the recommendation of the Waldron Task Force, has vowed to create a Cultural Improvement Corporation which would hold both properties and oversee the management contracts thereof. In his May 21, 2021, remarks responding to the Task Force’s recommendations, he stated

“Next, I will work with City Council to consider the proposal of a new quasi-public corporate entity -- something like a Cultural Improvement Corporation or Capital Improvement Board -- to oversee and manage public properties like the Waldron, the Buskirk, and perhaps others.”

But what is a Cultural Improvement Corporation? Bottom line, it can be whatever we, the Mayor, and the City Council agree it will be. (Within some legal constraints.)

Key components:

- Most often a non-profit corporation 501(c)3 authorized by a government entity for specific purposes which serve the greater goals of government
- “Quasi-public” in that the articles of incorporation detail the appointment of board members by areas of government
- As the corporation often purchases, sells, or holds property on behalf of the government entity, it is often reported in audit as a “component unit of government”

## How can it improve culture?

A Cultural Improvement Corporation can have positive impact on the current and future arts community in the following ways:

- Bring the ownership of the BCT and JWAC into public visibility and accountability
  - The BCT has been held within the Parks and Recreation Department for the last 20 years, but maintenance on the property has only been minimally budgeted in the last two years.
    - \$8,000 in 2019
    - \$15,000 in 2020
  - Similarly, the JWAC’s maintenance budget was buried within the statewide Ivy Tech Community College budget.

- Upon receiving the JWAC back from Ivy Tech, over \$500,000 of deferred maintenance was discovered.
- A Cultural Improvement Corporation can receive funds from both government and private entities, better leveraging both possibilities for supporting the buildings' ongoing needs.
- A Cultural Improvement Corporation creates an opportunity to build in leadership by the arts community of these crucial community resources.

## Proposed Cultural Improvement Corporation Structure

- Funding
  - Cultural Improvement Corporation funded by the City of Bloomington
- Responsibilities
  - Be a model landlord
    - Transparent interaction with facility managers
    - Follow LEED Existing Building Owner's Manual Standards (EBOM)
      - Scheduled maintenance of the HVAC, plumbing, electric, and fire safety systems
      - Scheduled upgrade/replacement of system elements and building envelope components at the end of their manufacturer-recommended lifespans
        - Roof
        - Windows, doors
        - Exterior walls
        - HVAC
        - Plumbing
        - Electric
        - Fire Safety Systems
  - Fund the execution of the above responsibilities
  - Hire and evaluate the facility management organizations based on their ability to effectively use the facilities to contribute to the city-generated goals related to cultural improvement.
  - Assist the facility management organizations in keeping apprised of various department/commission plans and goals.
  - Develop and execute plans for assessing current facilities' effectiveness
  - Develop and execute plans for purchase or sale of property related to the city's cultural improvement plans and goals.
- Led by a seven-member volunteer board
  - Two members appointed by Arts Forward
  - Two members appointed by City Council
  - One member appointed by Bloomington Arts Commission
  - One member appointed by Bloomington Urban Enterprise Association
  - One member appointed by Mayor's Office of Economic and Sustainable Development

- Members will serve three (3) year terms, renewable twice, for a total of nine years
- Public reporting by Cultural Improvement Corporation (CIC)
  - Contracts with management entities are publicly available
  - Annual reporting on spending and maintenance accomplished on the buildings
- Contracts with management entities require public reporting
  - Management entities are held accountable for contributing to the accomplishment of city cultural, economic, and sustainability goals.

## How to structure Arts Forward to facilitate this involvement with the CIC

- Membership requirements
  - Name
  - Email
  - Phone number
  - Address
  - Confirm that member lives or works in the greater Bloomington area
  - Commitment by signature to the pledge:
    - I agree to uphold the following values in all aspects of my participation in Arts Forward:
      - Respect for others
        - Listening
        - Valuing opinions different from my own
        - Valuing all members' right to participate in the process
      - Focus on the greater good
        - Bringing information and opinion from your unique perspective while striving to identify solutions which benefit all
- Activities
  - Seek to overcome challenges and leverage opportunities amongst ourselves as an arts community
  - Speak as a single voice to government when needed
  - Four quarterly meetings
    - Steering Committee and/or task force prepared information
    - Discussion of prepared topic
    - Open discussion of potential future topics
    - When needed, formation of task force to prepare information for future presentation and/or to take action based on previous discussion
  - Nominate members who wish to be appointed to the CIC Board
  - Conduct election
  - Appoint two members to the CIC Board

## Artists/government partnership for “cultural improvement”

When it comes to culture, the government develops plans which rely on the work of the community to accomplish. The city most often plans to “facilitate” cultural work. They prioritize this cultural work with an eye towards reducing citizen alienation and crime, increasing quality of life, attracting and keeping workforce talent, and increasing innovation. Artists and cultural organizations do the work of meeting those goals.

As cited above, the most effective model for arts venues is stable facility ownership which allows for the most flexibility of use by artists. The Buskirk-Chumley Theater and the John Waldron Arts Center have already provided that base for literally thousands of artists.

Yet, both venues have suffered from a lack of funding and prioritization for their ongoing capital needs. What more could these artists accomplish – not just for art’s sake, but for the benefit of the community as a whole – if their biggest tools were fully activated through accountable, responsible ownership by a Cultural Improvement Corporation?

In return, the arts community must be an accountable, responsible partner. Our visions for community development most often mirror the plans of our progressive government leaders. Our missions sometimes go further in working towards an inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible community. But we don’t deliberately align our public reporting with these common goals.

The formation of a Cultural Improvement Corporation provides a moment to cement the intrinsic partnership between artists and the city’s community development goals. We need to make it visible to general community. We need to shift our language from asking government to “support” the work of artists to seeking payment for the work we do for the government. We need to be prepared to report out on our contribution to these goals.

## Next Steps For Arts Forward

1. Membership Drive
  - a. Current members sign pledge and provide contact info
  - b. Outreach
2. Final version of Cultural Improvement Corporation Proposal submitted to Mayor’s Office
  - a. Incorporation of feedback from meeting
  - b. Incorporation of feedback by digital form following meeting
3. Steering Committee and/or task force continues on communication
  - a. Meeting with new Assistant Director for the Arts
4. Member arts organizations work together to identify and aggregate information regarding their contribution to city goals

## Identify your contribution

The City’s goals are identifiable through various public plans. How is your organization already contributing to the accomplishment of these goals? How might your future strategic plans

incorporate these goals? How can your grant applications reference the ways in which you are or plan to help the city meet these goals?

### Cultural Planning

- Bloomington Arts Commission (BAC) Strategic Plan 2020-2025  
[BAC Strategic Plan](#)
- Bloomington Entertainment and Arts District (BEAD) Strategic Plan 2019-2021  
[BEAD Strategic Plan 2019-2021](#)
- Climate Action Plan 2020  
[Climate Action Plan](#)
- Recover Forward Plan 2020  
[Recover Forward Plan](#)

## Bloomington Arts Commission Plan

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Bloomington Arts Commission (BAC) is structured to support and enact arts and cultural initiatives for the City of Bloomington, IN. The BAC's audience includes the general public, elected officials, local arts organizations, local artists, and national and international artists. The key areas of activity the BAC focuses efforts on include management of the 1% for the Arts Program, public art within city limits, the Grants for the Arts Program, and arts advocacy, guidance, and engagement opportunities for artists, arts organizations, and citizens at large. Through community volunteers, City of Bloomington staff hours, partnerships, and private support, the BAC creates a strong foundation for the arts and cultural sector to thrive in Bloomington, IN.

### OUR CORE OBJECTIVES: CONNECT. GUIDE. ENABLE.

In its most fundamental form, the BAC seeks to connect, guide, and enable the arts whilst working with the City of Bloomington, IN, artists, arts organizations, and citizens at large.

### OUTREACH

→ Guide and oversee cultural efforts for the good of the city, as undertaken by other groups [Arts Forward Bloomington, Arts Alliance of Greater Bloomington, etc.]

→ Engage and collaborate with local arts institutions

### OBJECTIVES INTRODUCED IN 2020

→ Work more closely with the City of Bloomington to align our objectives with City goals

→ Maintain a strong social media presence and update resources via the BAC website to create a more transparent and interactive user experience

→ Increase engagement and collaboration with local arts organizations

◆ Hold quarterly meetings, in-person or via Zoom, with group leaders and BAC chair to align goals, support each other, and keep everyone accountable for promises and efforts

◆ Host a series of sessions in which artists and arts organizations can discuss the various challenges and needs of their professions

◆ Encourage and promote inter-organizational cooperation and resource sharing in the arts

→ Explore ways to connect with and support new and emerging artists, including youth

→ Identify, encourage, and support artists of color and artists from other unrepresented and

underrepresented groups

→ Solicit, enable, and present a community voice for pending as well as unforeseen changes that may occur in the next few years [such as COVID, the Waldron, Bloomington Hospital site, Convention Center, etc.] in all matters of the arts

→ Become a resource for local art advocacy that citizens, arts organizations, and others can refer to in order to advocate for increased local arts funding, arts representation in new City initiatives and urban planning projects, and regional advocacy to support IAC efforts.

#### SUPPORT

→ Encourage collaboration and support among local arts organizations

→ Provide recognition for a job well done (high quality, community engagement, IDEA, board of Directors' awareness, etc.)

→ Maintain an index of individual artists and local fabricators that can collaborate with one another on various projects and proposals

### **BEAD Strategic Plan**

1. Promote and support district-wide cultural planning and identity efforts. The BEAD is committed to planning and implementing diverse policies and programs that enhance and promote an equitable, culture-enriched community.

1.1. Identify and support key place-based initiatives for the District, and other existing clusters of cultural spaces and surrounding neighborhoods.

1.2. Support efforts to build street energy through events, festivals, programming, and place-based opportunities.

The outcome of Goal No.1 is that the physical location of the BEAD is a practical/function, yet builds and maintains a creative aesthetic and environment for Bloomington artists, residents, businesses, and arts organizations.

2. Amplify and support the development of sustainable services, processes, and collaborations that increase community engagement and promote growth in and around the BEAD.

2.2 Amplify strong recognition of arts and cultural activities through the promotion of these projects/activities within the cultural district to local, regional, and national media outlets.

2.3 Assist partners in their communication strategies of events, attractions, and services within the BEAD through social media outreach.

2.5 Consider partnerships between arts and cultural activities between the BEAD, Trades District, Monroe County Convention Center, Switchyard Park, and other naturally occurring cultural districts/nodes/clusters.

2.9 Assure equity, inclusion, and accessibility to arts and cultural programming.

The outcomes of Goal No.2 are to increase resident participation in BEAD initiatives and programs. By 2021, BEAD should see more resident participation in RFQ'S place-based art programs and activation of spaces in Bloomington. By 2021, The BEAD will also have eliminated any barriers within their grants, programming efforts, and initiatives.

# Climate Action Plan

## Transportation and Land Use

**Goal TL 1:** Decrease vehicle miles traveled (VMT) by 8% of 2018 values by 2030

- A. Reduce single occupancy automobile use by 8% of 2018 values
- B. Increase bicycle/pedestrian commuting from 17% to 18% by creating infrastructure to better encourage alternatives to vehicles
- C. Increase transit utilization by 10% over 2018 passenger miles by 2030 through infrastructure and frequency investments
- D. Increase shared mobility (carpooling) utilization by 3% of work commute trips
- H. Reduce commercial/industrial vehicle use by 8% of 2018 values

**Goal TL 2:** Support and encourage electric vehicle adoption, achieve 30% of vehicles sold and 15% of VMT community-wide by 2030

TL 2 Strategies A. Transition City fleet to electric vehicle and alternative fuels (hybrid/ hybrid electric, plug in hybrid electric) B. Support and encourage electric vehicle and alternative fuel (hybrid/ hybrid electric, plug in hybrid electric) vehicle adoption citywide

## Energy and Built Environment

**Goal EB 1:** Increase distributed renewable energy to 250,000 MWH of total generation annually by 2030

- A. Increase solar on City facilities 20% by 2030
- B. Support and accelerate installation of on site solar PV to 250,000 MWH of total generation citywide annually by 2030

## Waste

**Goal WM 1:** Increase landfill solid waste diversion by 30% of 2018 values (26,500 tons of waste reduction)

WM 1 Strategies A. Increase organics diversion by 40% of 2018 values (from 33,900 tons 38.4% of community mixed waste based on private hauler data to 20,300) B. Increase recyclables diversion by 35% of 2018 values (from 28,000 tons 31.7% of community mixed waste based on private hauler data to 18,200) C. Increase diversion of potential recoverables by 33% of 2018 values (from 8,000 tons 9% of community mixed waste based on private hauler data to 5,280)

**Goal WM 2:** Educate, motivate, and empower the public to achieve waste reduction and diversion

WM 2 Strategies A. Create, implement, and promote public awareness and education campaigns

## Water

**Goal W 1:** Decrease potable water consumption by 3% of 2018 values

W 1 Strategies A. Promote increased water conservation citywide.

**Goal W 2:** Maintain source and drinking water quality through climate related challenges

WM 2 Strategies A. Improve water quality protections and awareness

## Local Food & Agriculture

**Goal FA 2:** Increase local agricultural resilience to climate shocks

FA 2 Strategies. A. Provide information and promote climate responsive agriculture practices



**Goal FA 3:** Increase and stabilize local food market  
FA 3 Strategies B. Strengthen demand for local foods

#### Health & Safety

**Goal HS 1:** Educate, engage, and empower the public for climate health and safety  
HS 1 Strategies A. Improve training to address risks exacerbated by climate change B. Establish and expand public health communication campaigns.

#### Climate Economy

**Goal CE 1:** Build marketplace climate resilience

##### CE 1 Strategies

- B. Accelerate the transition to a carbon free local economy

## Recover Forward Plan

#### Racial Equity

3. Strengthen outreach and public engagement for communities of color
  - 3.1. Heritage Month Celebrations
    - 3.1.1. Black History Month
    - 3.1.2. Hispanic Heritage Month
    - 3.1.3. Asian-Pacific Islander Heritage Month
    - 3.1.4. Juneteenth Celebration
  - 3.2. Partnership with the Bloomington Chamber of Commerce, Indiana University, and the Indiana Historical Bureau to install a commemorative marker in People's Park recognizing site of the Black Market and its firebombing in 1968
  - 3.3. Form Racial Equity Task Force tasked with researching, evaluating and recommending actions to be taken by city government to promote racial equity and social justice. The actions recommended by the task force will be advanced using the convening power of the city for discussions among members of our community and with leaders of organizations, the delivery of resources that acknowledge address issues of inequity, diversity and inclusion in city government and beyond.

## Further information on venue management, art, and community development

- [Transforming Community Development Through Arts and Culture](#)
- [Community Arts Facilities: When Users Run the Show](#)
- [How Cultural Facilities Can Support Creators](#)
- [What Cultural Facilities Forget: Nuyorican Rules](#)

## Further Information on Cultural Improvement Corporations

- [Ohio's Statewide Community Improvement Program](#)

- [Vigo County IN Capital Improvement Board](#)
- [Indianapolis Capital Improvement Board of Managers](#)
- [Ft. Wayne Allen County Capital Improvement Board](#)