

# Arts and Cultural Economy Strategy

Commissioner-led Workshop

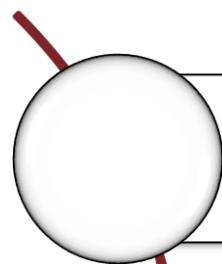


June 25, 2024

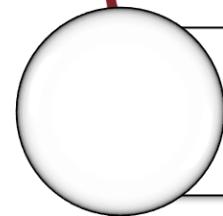
# Agenda

- Overview of Ramsey County Arts and Cultural Economy and Assets, provided as a Commissioner-led Workshop.
- Share possible benefits of a strategic plan for arts and culture in Ramsey County.
- Outline a proposal for next steps in developing an Inclusive Arts and Cultural Economic Strategy in Ramsey County.
- Discuss proposal and provide staff direction for next steps.

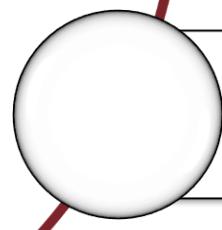
# Goals for the Day



Better understand the state of Ramsey County's arts and cultural economy.



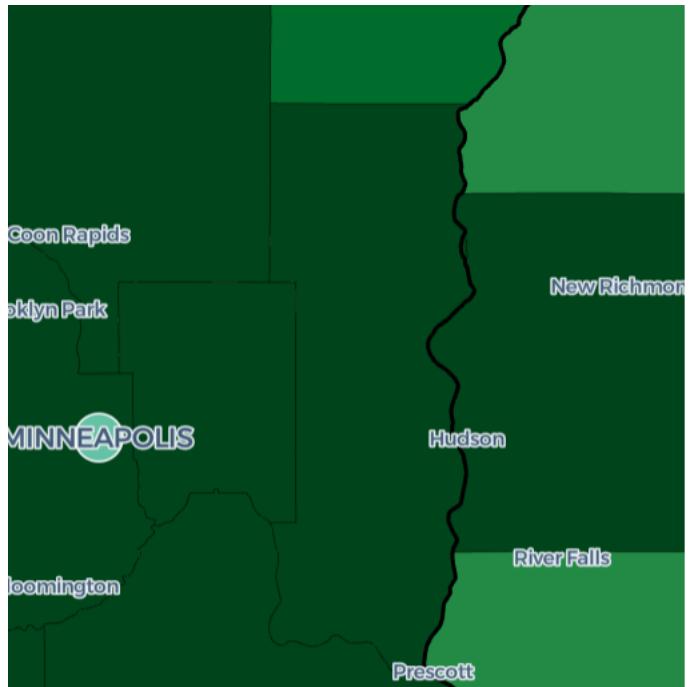
Develop a board consensus around whether and how Ramsey County should be investing in the arts and cultural economy.



Provide staff feedback and direction on moving forward with initiatives discussed in workshop.

# Ramsey County Arts and Cultural Economy Overview





These index scores show how a county performs relative to other counties on a 0-100% scale. For example, a county scoring 85 would be performing better than 85% of other counties, while a county scoring 15 would be performing worse than 85% of other counties.

### Ramsey County, MN

Arts Providers Index	99
Arts Dollars Index	99
Public Support Index	97
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Socioeconomic Index	93
% Employment	96
% Bachelor's Degree	95
% of Households > \$150K	91

## Ramsey County has a flourishing arts economy with great depth and diversity.

- Ramsey County's vision is a vibrant community where all are valued and thrive. Our mission is a county of excellence working with you to enhance our quality of life. Ramsey County currently has an outstanding arts and cultural economy. Ramsey County's robust arts and cultural scene is both an indicator of a vibrant, thriving community and a necessary factor in enhancing our quality of life. **A documented, county-wide strategy will help maintain and grow this important sector.**

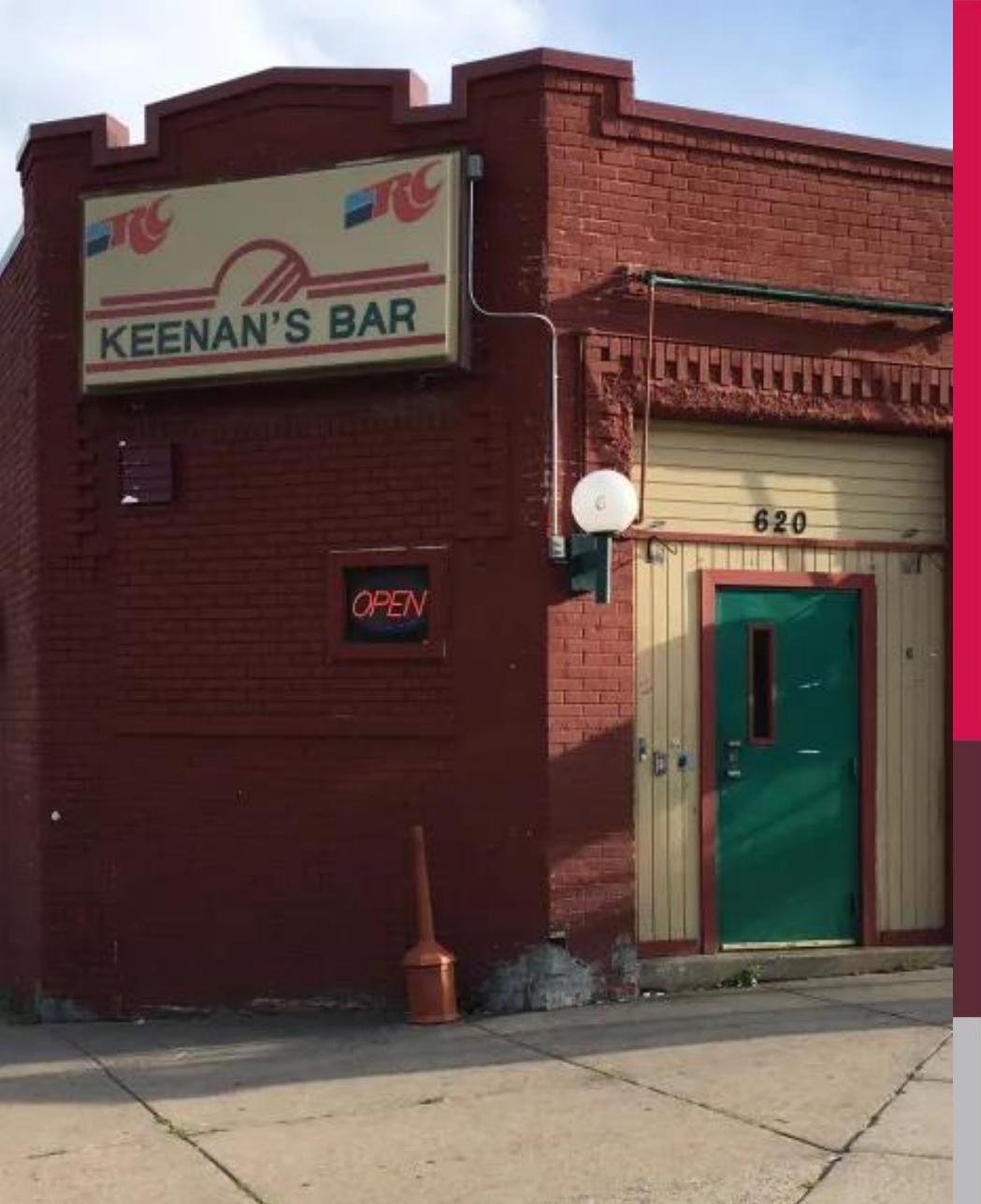


## Theater

World class professional and community theater companies including:

- Penumbra Theater
- Theater Mu
- Park Square Theater
- Lakeshore Players Theatre
- Gremlin Theater
- Ordway Performing Arts Center

*Theater Mu Production shot, “Blended 和(Harmony): The Kim Loo Sisters”*



## Film, TV, and Media Production

Ramsey County has a long history of hosting film production due to the former Energy Park Studios. Recent statewide changes are likely to result in more film production in Minnesota – with Ramsey County standing to benefit with excellent partners like:

- FilmNorth
- SPNN
- Asian Media Access (AMA)

"Unholy Communion" features a largely local cast and crew who shot at Keenan's Bar and Grill on West 7th Street in February 2024. Filming took about four weeks in and around St. Paul. (Jess Fleming / Pioneer Press file)



## Music

Ramsey County is the host to many music venues from large to small including the Turf Club, the Amsterdam, the Palace Theater, Roy Wilkins Auditorium, and the Xcel Energy Center.

Ramsey County is the home or the origin place of local and national music performers including artists like Maria Isa, Hippo Campus, Haley Bonar, The Sounds of Blackness, Dua Saleh, Hüsker Dü.

Ramsey County also is host to the Saint Paul Chamber Orchestra, the Selby Jazz Festival, and more musical groups and celebrations.

Musician María Isa Pérez-Vega dropped her hip hop album “Capitolio” the same day she was sworn in as a state legislator in 2023.



## Dance

Ramsey County is home to many dance schools and studios as well as professional dance companies and nonprofits, including:

- TU Dance
- Saint Paul Ballet
- Out on a Limb Dance Company
- Ananya Dance Theatre
- Collide Theatrical Dance Company
- Keane Sense of Rhythm
- CAAM Chinese Dance Theater

*Photo credit: Canaan Mattson. TU Dance artists performing "THREAT" by Yusha-Marie Sorzano.*  
TU Dance is known for its diverse artistic performances tackling important questions around gender, race, social justice, history, human resilience and more.



## Visual Arts

The Minnesota Museum of Art in Saint Paul is Minnesota's oldest art museum. Ramsey County is the host to many visual arts organizations, collectives, festivals, galleries and artists, including:

- Argyle Zebra Community Gallery
- Gallery 96
- Cafesijan Art Trust Museum
- White Bear Center for the Arts
- Ta-coumba T. Aiken, visual artist
- Mary Jo Hoffman, visual artist

*"No Words" by Ta-coumba T. Aiken, St. Paul visual artist, Acquisition of Walker Art Center.*

# Benefits of an Arts and Cultural Economic Strategy





## Why Arts and Culture?

- Arts and culture are not luxury goods. They are essential to a vibrant and thriving community.
- A community's arts and cultural economy **improves** - does not merely reflect - the broader economic health.
- Even small investments in arts and culture can yield substantial rewards.



## Why now?

- Arts, entertainment, and recreation industries lost the highest percentage of jobs in recent years.
- Opportunity to capitalize on statewide investments in film production and Ramsey County success in arts and cultural placemaking initiatives.
- Moving forward now provides opportunity to incorporate efforts into next 2-year budget and Economic Inclusion 2.0.
- Join national efforts on a Cultural Week of Action on Race and Democracy.



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**How does Arts and Culture fit  
with other county priorities  
and needs?**

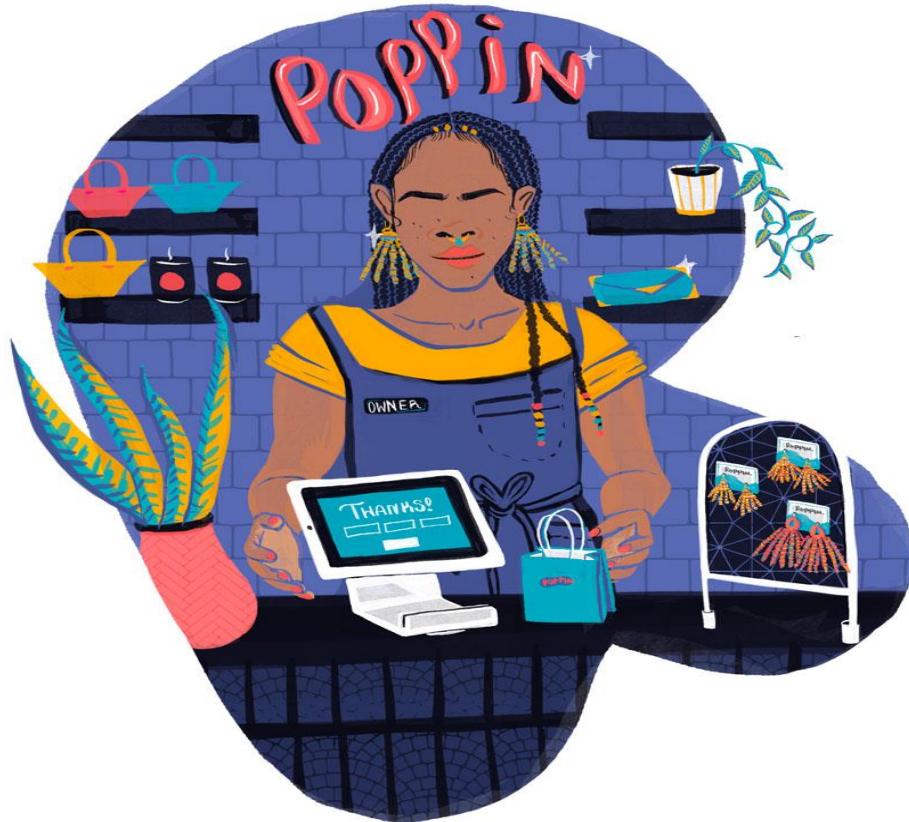
## Economic Inclusion



Artist: Khou Vue, [www.koovoo.me](http://www.koovoo.me)

Ramsey County prioritizes **Intergenerational Prosperity for Racial & Economic Inclusion**. The secret to Ramsey County's growth is the thing that makes its economy unique, it is a place **as rich in cultural vitality as it is rich in economic opportunity**.

- Growing jobs in the arts **grows other jobs**.
- Ramsey County has identified a need to do more to support entrepreneurs and grow small businesses.
- Opportunities for careers in art are in high demand from youth and young adult workers.
- Arts and culture help build the workforce of the future.



Artist: Leeya Jackson, Illustration: [www.leeyamakesnoise.com](http://www.leeyamakesnoise.com),  
Design: [www.noisemakerdesign.com](http://www.noisemakerdesign.com)

## Racial Equity

Ramsey County prioritizes **advancing racial and health equity and shared community power**.

- Recall Ramsey County's 2024 Proclamation of Black History Month.
- The arts can preserve racial and ethnic diversity, lower rates of social distress, and reduce rates of ethnic and racial harassment.
- Women and people of color are underrepresented at influential levels across arts sectors.
- Arts-based community engagement can provide more authentic collaboration between government and communities.

# Public Safety

Ramsey County prioritizes **putting well-being and community at the center of Justice System Transformation and advancing a holistic approach to strengthen individuals and families.**

- More resilient communities are safer communities.
- Youth opportunity and empowerment.
- Presence of arts and culture increase perceptions of community safety.



Artist: Mayumi Park, [www.mayumpark.com](http://www.mayumpark.com)

Instagram: [@mayumpark](https://www.instagram.com/@mayumpark)

# Background and Initial Research and Engagement





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## Commissioner Frethem

- Background in this work
  - Undergraduate degree in theatre.
  - Work in community and small professional theatre, on camera industrial and commercial, and mostly unintentional modeling.
  - Personal investment and experience in arts and culture (but no longer actively involved!)
- What motivated this work over the last year?
  - NACo Arts and Culture Commission.
  - Changes in board membership.
  - St. Louis County Film incentives.
- How I tried to do the work
  - Due diligence and research.
  - On-going conversation with community.
  - Being open to a plan that didn't match my initial ideas.



## Process

Research

1:1 meetings and outreach

November 2023 – Community Roundtable

March 2024 draft plan shared with community and staff

Today – proposal and board conversation



## What I heard

Strategy must be equitable and inclusive.

Focus on economic investment and workforce development.

Need for professional development and business supports.

Direct film incentives not necessary – invest in infrastructure and people.

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# Draft Proposal



# Proposed Arts and Cultural Economic Strategy





## Local Arts Governance

Any strategic initiative requires an appropriate governance structure, with community expertise and input, to ensure that it is targeted for the specific needs of the community and connected to existing infrastructure.

**GOAL: Establish an Arts and Culture Advisory Commission to ensure community input and oversight that equitably coordinates investments, identifies needs and opportunities, and provides strategic direction.**



## Marketing and Promotion

As Ramsey County develops its community and economic development identity, we must consider how certain industries view themselves differently from others and ensure that we are promoting the breadth of economic opportunity available in Ramsey County.

**GOAL: Develop marketing infrastructure that promotes Ramsey County's arts and cultural assets and benefits, coordinating with efforts to promote tourism, business development, and related investments.**



## Artist Business Coaching

Ramsey County artists are entrepreneurs and contribute to our economy, however they don't always see themselves as such, and have unique business development needs and outreach that recognizes their engage artists on their terms.

**GOAL: Ensure that efforts to support entrepreneurs include specific outreach and supports for independent artists.**



## Film-Friendly County

The 2023 Minnesota Legislature passed a substantial increase in state-wide tax credits that incentivize filmmaking in Minnesota and established a state film board in 2024. Ramsey County is well-positioned to capitalize on this state investment, without a direct additional incentive, by strategic collaboration and coordination.

**GOAL:** Leverage existing infrastructure to target film production through “film-friendly” resources and promotion, in partnership and collaboration with other organizations.



## Workforce Development

Media production is a growing industry and the skills developed by artists in their craft are valuable in a wide range of industries. Artists can create sustainable, family-supporting careers when they are able to leverage their skills in a community that provides opportunities for economic and artistic fulfillment.

**GOAL: Evaluate and identify workforce gaps and needs. Partner with organizations to develop career pathways, particularly for youth who seek to find careers that support their creative pursuits.**



## Business Partnership

Many non-arts and cultural businesses benefit substantially from arts and cultural organizations, directly and indirectly. Providing resources and technical assistance to those businesses can help them be better engaged partners, boosting both their own economic outcomes, and those of local artists.

**GOAL: Develop resources and technical assistance for businesses to help them better market their services towards arts and cultural organizations and find partnership opportunities.**

# Moving Forward: Timeline and Next Steps



## **Discussion and Direction for Staff**