

SAMMAMISH ARTS strategic PLAN

2025

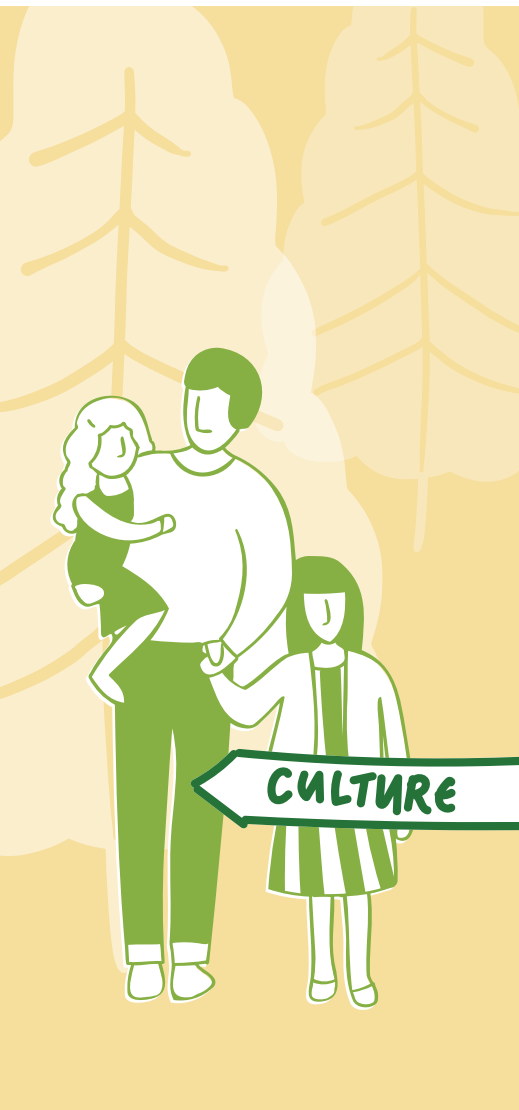


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Introduction

What’s Inside...

Welcome to Sammamish’s first Arts Strategic Plan. This plan is the product of not only a year of dedicated work, but several years of thought and effort on the part of the Sammamish Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation staff to initiate and define the goals of the planning process. Sammamish is a young city with a budding arts and culture scene that both Sammamish Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation are intent on nurturing and growing into the future. To that end, this plan is set up as a series of stepping stones. **Step 1** defines Sammamish’s existing arts and culture level of service including what programming the City offers, the role the City plays in providing that programming, and how that programming fits into the broader Eastside arts and culture scene. **Step 2** provides an overview of community arts and culture priorities garnered from community engagement activities completed in summer and fall 2024. **Step 3** lays out a series of goals and strategies that link community visioning priorities with community desired arts and culture actions while remaining consistent with the way the City currently administers arts and culture activities. The appendix at the end of the Plan includes expanded community engagement findings, a detailed public arts inventory, and arts administration best practice examples from several of Sammamish’s peer cities.

A primary intent of the planning process was to generate a series of supportive materials for the Sammamish Arts Commission and City staff to help with arts and culture program administration. These materials are located within a seperate Arts Strategic Plan toolkit produced simultaneously with this plan.



Dancing at the Silver Jubilee/ Summer 2024



Executive Summary

About the Arts Strategic Plan

This is Sammamish’s first Arts Strategic Plan. It is intended to help organize the City’s efforts to thoughtfully support arts and culture in ways that benefit the community and help achieve City goals. A young city, Sammamish celebrated its 25th anniversary during this project. Over those 25 years, Sammamish has grown from a population of some 34,000 in 2000 to over 68,000 residents, bringing together old and new residents from across the region and around the world. As Sammamish continues to grow and mature, strengthening arts and culture offers significant benefits to the community.

The Arts Commission has nine volunteer members appointed by City Council. The arts program is housed within the City’s Parks and Recreation Department, with the Recreation and Cultural Services Manager serving as a staff liaison to the Arts Commission. Through the Arts Commission, the City distributes grants, acquires public art, and

showcases artistic programming in accordance with their mission statement: “Integrating art and culture to create a sense of place, civic identity, and unique character.”

The City serves its residents using the model of a “contract city,” leveraging staff resources by partnering with local nonprofits, agencies, local businesses, and other organizations to provide many public services. This plan does not address changing this model or significantly adding resources at this time. Instead, it aims to maximize the effectiveness of the current model and set the City up for attracting and directing future resources. This plan focuses on maximizing the public benefit of City actions by clarifying roles, developing criteria for selecting projects and awarding grants, aligning efforts with community priorities, and creating a set of tools and processes based on best practices and lessons learned from peer cities.

Current Arts in Sammamish

The Arts Commission currently runs several programs that support the arts in Sammamish in a variety of ways. Over the years, twenty-seven pieces of public art have been added in locations throughout the City, and are described on the Arts Commission web page, including sculptures, wrapped utility boxes, and two-dimensional art displayed in City Hall. In addition, there is an ongoing rotating exhibit in City Hall curated by the Arts Commission. A well-loved program places artist-designed “fairy houses” in Big Rock Park South during summer months, and the Arts Commission’s Artist Spotlight program provides recognition to local artists on the City’s web page. Grants are given on an annual basis to artists and organizations.

As part of the broader Eastside and the Seattle region, Sammamish residents often take advantage of programs in Redmond, Issaquah, Bellevue, and Seattle. The Arts Strategic Plan supports partnerships between Sammamish and its neighboring jurisdictions to strengthen cultural offerings available to residents. It also considers what public art and cultural activities should be specific to the community in Sammamish.

City Roles

The plan explores the various roles the City currently plays and can further develop to support arts and cultural activities. Sammamish emphasizes its role as a *Partner*, but also plays a smaller role as an *Owner* of projects, such as commissioning public art. The City acts as a *Funder* through its grants, and as a *Host* for events that take place in City-owned locations, such as the Commons. The plan also considers how bringing people and organizations together in the role of a *Convener* could be an effective way of supporting artists and cultural activities.



Confluence, by Debbie Young, in Commons Plaza

Public Outreach & What We Heard

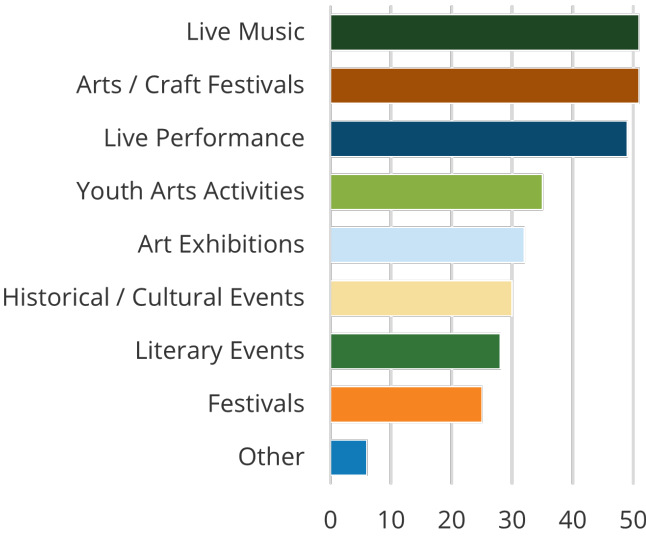
During the development of this Plan, the team reached out to the Sammamish community in a variety of ways through presence at events, input from a community survey, two focus groups, and discussions with the Arts Commission. Residents provided input on their visions for the role of arts and culture in Sammamish, on the kinds of art and activities they would like to see, and their preferred locations for art. The community responses were well aligned with the vision statements in the City’s plans, placing a high value on the natural environment, community connections, and civic identity.

At events, people of all ages were enthusiastic about arts activities, and provided input and interacted in various ways: discussions, mapping exercises, writing haiku on what they love about Sammamish, and rock painting. Appreciation for the natural environment was a constant theme, along with family-oriented activities and the desire to connect with others in the community.

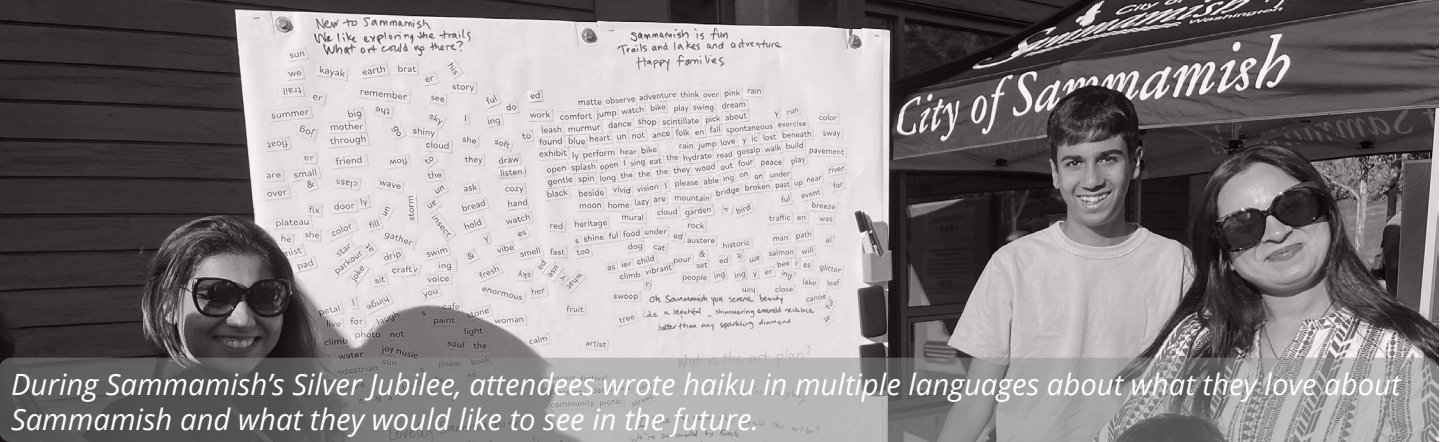
Survey responses showed strong support for concerts in the parks, festivals and performances, classes for all ages, public art that is functional and interactive, and representation of different cultures. This input will help prioritize City actions regarding arts and culture by determining a set of criteria for project selection.



This word cloud from survey results represents responses to the question of “what unique elements of Sammamish can arts and culture magnify?”



Survey results showed interest in a broad range of desired activities.



During Sammamish’s Silver Jubilee, attendees wrote haiku in multiple languages about what they love about Sammamish and what they would like to see in the future.

Learning from Peer Cities

Part of the process for the plan was looking at the arts and culture programs of other cities in the region for lessons that may be applicable. We drew primarily on programs in Bothell, Shoreline, Issaquah, and Maple Valley as peer cities. Each city is different in terms of its assets, resources, circumstances, and goals. Each city has their own attitude about the place of arts and culture in local government actions, but some of their successes may be valuable models for Sammamish in the future. Options that Sammamish may wish to consider include:

- 01. The power of the Contracting City role:** As a contracting city, Sammamish has the flexibility to bring in expertise as needed to strengthen the City's role in arts and culture. Issaquah is an example of how much an investment in arts leadership has paid off in terms of fruitful partnerships, attracting significant art (such as the troll), and in grant writing assistance for local artists and arts organizations, and connections to County, State, and Federal funding opportunities. Many King County cities and their arts organizations received significant funding because they took advantage of grant opportunities.
- 02. The power of partnerships and the Convenor role:** Maple Valley and Shoreline have benefited from a partnership with an active citywide arts nonprofit which can host events, connect with community, and advertise programs. Sammamish could consider convening local arts leaders to gauge interest in the idea of a private nonprofit focused on Sammamish.
- 03. Models for newer cities and looking ahead:** As Sammamish grows, it can look to regional models for incorporating art and culture into new development.

The Plan Foundation

Visions, Action Statement, and Goals

The Vision, Action Statement, and Goals in this plan come from three sources: the expressed visions already developed by the City in current plans, input from the community during the development of this plan, and the mission of the Arts Commission. Community input for this plan is highly consistent with the values and priorities of the City's vision statements and the Arts Commission's mission, forming a solid foundation for the Arts Strategic Plan.

Sammamish has laid out compelling visions in its Comprehensive Plan and in its Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Plan. This Arts Strategic Plan takes those visions as its own, assuming a charge of exploring best practices for arts and culture to contribute to bringing those visions to life.

There is much to draw on in these visions. Arts and creative activities can help connect people to nature, to play, and to each other. The arts help local businesses thrive, make lively public spaces, and are fundamental to an active cultural scene and a dynamic economy.

To maximize the impact of arts and culture in supporting the City's stated visions, this plan creates an Action Statement for Arts and Culture in Sammamish that harnesses the cultural sphere toward achieving City goals. The Action Statement and the Goals that follow also draw on the input specific to community desires for arts and culture activities that were gathered through surveys, presence at events, interviews, Arts Commission meetings, and demonstrated demand.

The City's visions and the Art Commission's mission statement have a strong relationship to the Arts Strategic Plan, in the diagram on the next page, relevant words and phrases are bolded.



Arts Strategic Plan



Taking Action

The Arts Strategic Plan Action Statement is derived from the vision and mission statements above. The action statement is intended to guide arts and culture actions at a high level, and is the basis for the goals, strategies, and implementation actions that follow.

Action Statement

The City of Sammamish will take purposeful actions to leverage arts and culture in bringing its community visions to life through public art and programming that:

- Fosters equity and accessibility for all residents of Sammamish
- Celebrates and highlights the community's cherished natural surroundings and adds vibrancy to the city's public spaces and trail connections
- Strengthens the local economy by offering cultural opportunities and supporting local and native artists.
- Builds civic identity, belonging, and a sense of place through collaboration and community partnerships.



Goals for Arts and Culture

The Arts Strategic Plan includes goals intended to further the referenced City Visions by setting a direction for public arts and culture offerings and capacity building opportunities. The goals fall into three categories: Public Art, Events, and Capacity Building.

Public Art: Add high-quality, interactive public art from a diversity of sources including the community members of all ages, native artists, and local artists, and place it in high-visibility locations to maximize impact. Use public art to call attention to the City’s natural beauty, history, and culture.

Events: Use community events and performances to celebrate Sammamish’s cultural diversity, connect residents across generations and cultural backgrounds, and spread events throughout the year.

Capacity Building: Grow the capacity of the City’s arts and culture program and its local artists and organizations to support desired offerings for all residents of Sammamish. Build local and regional partnerships that facilitate access to private and publically owned arts and culture spaces in Sammamish and in neighboring communities.



Strategies

Enacting the goals above requires City actors to use resources efficiently, in alignment with City priorities, and in a way that will grow City and community capacity and resources over time. There are three main strategies: Increasing arts administrative efficiency, aligning arts actions with community values and vision, and building arts community capacity.

Increase art program administration efficiency: Provide the Arts Commission and Parks and Recreation Staff project management tools that define roles and help them to set a feasible agenda that utilizes all their resources.

Align arts and culture activities with the City vision and community desires: Provide a set of criteria that helps the Arts Commission and staff select high-impact projects that further the action statement and the expressed desires of the community.

Identify opportunities to grow capacity: This plan provides a series of potential program options intended to nurture local arts and culture organizations, build community arts and culture leadership, and increase the visibility of public arts and culture offerings in the community.



Implementating the Plan

Organization, Processes, and Tools

To implement the first strategy, increasing art program administration efficiency, the City’s arts and culture program will have clear roles for City staff and Arts Commissioners. The plan sets out processes for the selection and implementation of projects based on best practices and creates a set of criteria for awarding grants and selecting projects. A toolkit for best practices includes:

Two-year Priority Setting Matrix

- Annual work plan
- Project implementation worksheet
- Resource budgeting tool
- Arts management best practice procedures, including instructions on commissioning, relocating, and decommissioning public art, a public art criteria selection tool, and a sample call for public art template
- Public art plaque template

** For an expanded description of the vision, goals, strategies, and implementation steps, please see chapter 3*

Criteria

A key need for successful decision-making is a set of criteria for choosing projects. Criteria should consider the “who, what, and where” of each project, and produce a set of projects that cover a variety of locations, types of arts and culture, and communities served. Project criteria can be found in this plan’s accompanying toolkit. A similar set of criteria is included for awarding artist grants, with the intent of best serving the goals of the plan and the public benefit.

- Project selection criteria
- Criteria for awarding grants

Setting up for the Future

The City of Sammamish has numerous options to strengthen and grow its arts and culture programs. Support for arts and culture varies widely between jurisdictions, and the direction that Sammamish takes for the future is absolutely a matter of choice, with no “right” or “wrong” answers. Sammamish residents can take advantage of many arts and culture offerings in neighboring cities and in the region, but the question remains as to what activities and public art are specific to Sammamish, and what best supports the desires of Sammamish residents and opportunities for arts and culture to help bring to life the City visions.

Action Statement

The City of Sammamish will take purposeful actions to leverage arts and culture in bringing its community visions to life through public art and programming that:

- Fosters equity and accessibility for all residents of Sammamish.
- Celebrates and highlights the community's cherished natural surroundings and adds vibrancy to the city's public spaces and trail connections.
- Strengthens the local economy by offering cultural opportunities and supporting local and native artists.
- Builds civic identity, belonging, and a sense of place through collaboration and community partnerships.



Goals for arts & Culture

Public Art Invest in high impact public art.	Capacity Building Foster local organizations and develop partnerships to increase arts and culture opportunities in Sammamish.	Events Work to provide events and performances that span generations and cultures to build community and connection amongst Sammamish residents.
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Strategies

STRATEGY I Maximize the efficiency of current resources including funding for arts and culture, staff time, and Commissioner time.	STRATEGY II Align arts and culture actions and projects with City goals and maximizing public benefit.	STRATEGY III Set up the City of Sammamish for future arts and cultural actions and activities.
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Implementation

ORGANIZATION, TOOLS, AND PROCESSES The City's arts program, including its staff and its Arts Commission, will be organized to be effective in carrying out the goals of the City by establishing: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clear roles for staff and Commissioners• A set of processes for selecting and implementing projects• Criteria for awarding grants and selecting projects• A toolkit of best practices for commissioning and managing public art• An understanding of how to best leverage staff and Commission efforts in the model of a contracting city	CRITERIA FOR PROJECT SELECTION AND RESOURCE EXPENDITURES Projects undertaken by the City must adhere to budgetary constraints, meet established project parameters, and provide strong value for the investment. Collectively, the selection of projects or grant awards aims to ensure diversity in art forms, activities, geographic distribution within the city, and the communities served, guided by a defined set of criteria based on: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Who it serves• Where it is located• What kind of art or activity it is• Is it uniquely rooted in the people and place of Sammamish?	MODELS, OPPORTUNITY IDENTIFICATION, AND CAPACITY BUILDING The Arts Strategic Plan will set the City up for long-term success in leveraging arts and culture to support its vision. This will be accomplished by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Actively participating in the regional ecosystem of arts and cultural organizations, spaces, and activities• Consideration of best practices that have been successful for peer cities• Setting up Sammamish and its organizations to attract outside funding• Incorporating arts and culture into future decisions as Sammamish evolves
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In the near term, Sammamish can build on its current model with better organization and tools as outlined in the Arts Strategic Plan and rely on its contracting model to bring in targeted expertise as an investment in moving the City forward in its ability to build relationships within Sammamish and with regional art leaders. This targeted expertise can help the City and the Arts Commission apply for and attract grant funding and other resources.

Also in the near term, the City can strengthen its role as a partner with regional organizations. To be successful, a stronger partnering role will require additional time from staff and potentially from Arts Commissioners.

Because Sammamish is growing and evolving, there is great benefit in including the input of the Art Commission in changes and improvements to public spaces. This role dovetails with their mission to “integrate art and culture to create a sense of place, civic identity, and unique character,” and is best done during planning phases rather than as an afterthought.

Funding Opportunities

Puget Sound cities are using a variety of mechanisms to fund arts and culture. Some options are not likely to be available to Sammamish, such as admissions taxes or lodging tax funds. Shoreline successfully used a parks levy to generate funding that included arts and culture, and many jurisdictions use a form of “percent for art” funding, which Sammamish could consider in a way tailored to the nature of expected future development.

Funding is also available from sources outside of the city, and King County is currently able to take advantage of a recent tax increase that is earmarked for supporting arts, culture, heritage, and science. This funding was available not only to City Local Arts Agencies but also to nonprofits. Cities with active arts nonprofits are able to secure resources for their communities. Sammamish may wish to help strengthen its local nonprofits in various ways as a hub, convener, partner, or supporter.

← Plan framework

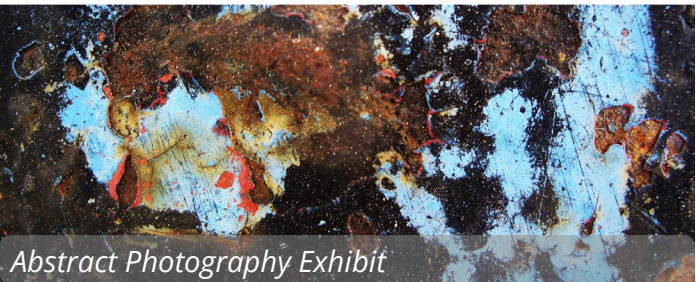
Potential Projects

Projects that will be considered for the bi-annual and annual Work Plans can come from Arts Commissioners or from residents with ideas for projects they would like to see in the community. The Arts Strategic Plan also includes suggestions that align with the public input and further City goals. These suggestions can be considered by the Arts Commission as project opportunities:

- Increased activity in the Commons
- Highly visible public art at entries and key locations
- Arts in the parks that highlight the natural setting
- Art on the trails
- Artist residencies
- Convening arts and culture leaders

Arts Inventories

In the Appendix, the plan includes an inventory of Sammamish's current public art pieces and gathers a list of local artists. These are intended to be living documents that grow over time.



01.

Understanding Arts in Sammamish



Current Level of Service & the Role of the City

Sammamish is a contract city, meaning that many arts and culture activities are initiated and implemented by organizations external to the City. The following sections look at the various roles the City plays to ensure Sammamish residents can access a breadth of arts and culture offerings.

Cities have many options for how they administer arts and culture. However, a thriving arts and culture ecosystem requires some basic building blocks. These include access to resources like places to perform, practice, exhibit, and gather, funding to pay for space, services, and materials, and most importantly, creative and engaged artists and cultural leaders. Cities get to choose which of these resources to prioritize and what role they play in facilitating access. For example, some options for improving access to performing arts space include: owning and operating a performing arts space, providing funding resources to a community organization with performance space,

or acting as a convenor to facilitate connections between performing arts groups and performing arts spaces such as school-owned performing arts facilities. In each case the goal is the same, but the City intervenes in a different way.

Arts and Culture level of service (LOS) refers to all of the existing facilities and programming currently provided by the City. In the next several pages, LOS is considered by City role.

The City of Sammamish currently plays four key roles:

1. **Partner:** City of Sammamish contracts with third party organizations to provide arts and culture programming.
2. **Funder:** The City of Sammamish provides funding for professional services and some direct funding to non-profit organizations, and the Arts Commission administers an artists grant.
3. **Owner & Host:** The City of Sammamish provides public facilities to host City and third-party events, festivals, art installations, and art objects.
4. **Information hub:** The City of Sammamish works to inform the community about arts and culture events, programming, and funding opportunities.

Partner

As a contract city, Sammamish works with community partners to provide arts and culture programming and events. Some of the City's many partners include the YMCA, King County Library, Rotary Club, Sammamish Chamber of Commerce, and the Boys & Girls Club. These partners host activities like art classes, performances, and specific cultural celebrations.

What it takes:

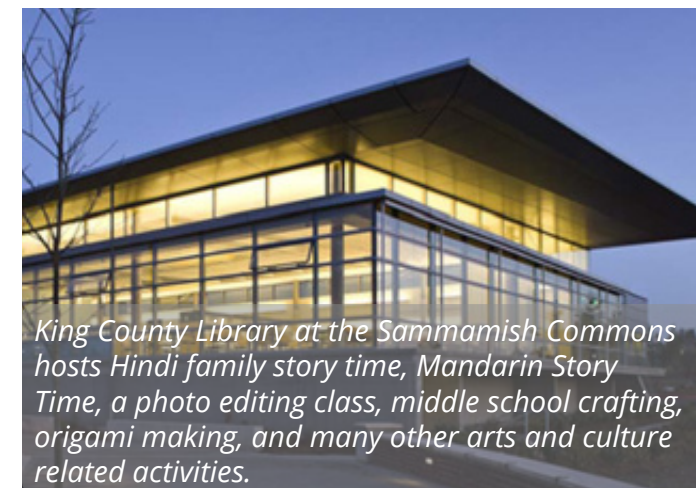
Staffing tasks:

Events: Logistical support, contracting with partners, and day-of staffing.

Arts & culture classes: Contracting with partners and identifying new partners.

Successes and opportunities:

Providing arts and culture programming primarily through partnerships allows the City to cater to a diverse group of ages and interests with a relatively limited amount of staff time. Some challenges include difficulty monitoring overall arts and culture offerings to understand demand, identifying program gaps, and seeking additional providers to fill gaps. Currently there are relatively few organizations within Sammamish that focus specifically on arts and culture programming for the City to partner with. However, several organizations, including the high schools, own performing arts space that the City could leverage through partnerships.



King County Library at the Sammamish Commons hosts Hindi family story time, Mandarin Story Time, a photo editing class, middle school crafting, origami making, and many other arts and culture related activities.

Funder:

The City of Sammamish provides funding for professional services and some direct funding to non-profit organizations. Currently, the City funds four different organizations through its culture fund. These include Friends of Issaquah Salmon Hatchery, Friends of Lake Sammamish, Sammamish Symphony, and Eastside Master Chorus. The Arts Commission administers an artist grant geared at projects that are community-facing and that benefit Sammamish residents.

What it takes:

Arts Commission tasks:

To administer the Arts Commission grant, the Arts Commission solicits grant applicants through their website, reviews submissions, selects successful candidates, and follows up on projects to understand success.

Arts Commission grants: approximately \$18,000, administered annually

Staffing tasks:

Contracting with grant recipients, sending out promotional materials, and reviewing candidate applications.

Successes and opportunities:

Grants are a wonderful way to start identifying, supporting, and building a strong network of arts and culture leaders.

Non-profit grants: The City has not established a process for selecting 501(c)(3)s. This makes it difficult to ensure that selected nonprofits are furthering the arts and culture desires of the community.

Artists grants: As with many young programs, the Arts Commission has struggled to attract high-quality grant applications. Many jurisdictions host grant workshops to help potential applicants navigate the grant-writing process, building their skills, and improving arts and culture outcomes in the process.

Host

The City hosts many community events, some of which are organized internally, and others are organized by community partners like the Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. These events utilize City facilities like the 120 228th Ave NE property, Sammamish Commons, and public parks.

What it takes:

Arts Commission:

The Arts Commission periodically organizes events. They are responsible for organizing vendors and helping with day-of staffing.

Staff:

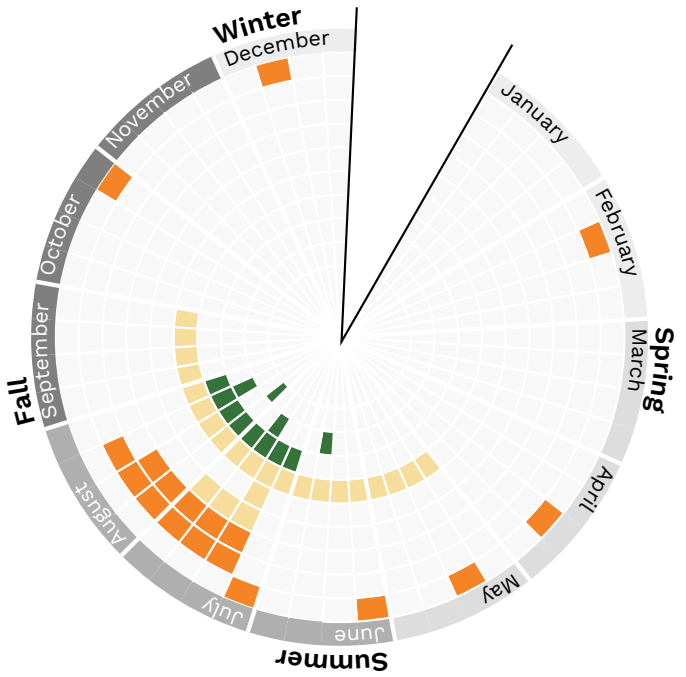
The City hosts a number of events that do not fall within the arts and culture budget, but that do contribute to arts and culture in the city. Parks and Recreation staff work with the City’s contracting team to hire artists and performers. Staff also organize vendors and provide set-up, take-down, and day-of staffing. Depending on location and the volume of visitors, the City often engages in post-event ecological restoration.

Successes and opportunities:

Sammamish residents love to come to the Commons and other Sammamish parks for events — turnout is consistently high, particularly for kids’ programming. Providing consistent programming throughout the year is a perennial challenge, but partners like the Chamber of Commerce help to provide regular programming, such as the Farmers Market.

Annual events calendar

The City has a robust events calendar put on by the Parks and Recreation Department with several wonderful arts and culture oriented events. The majority of events occur during the summer - particularly events done in partnership with other organizations. One of the takeaways from community engagement efforts is a desire for more continuous scheduling throughout the year, and struggles with finding indoor facilities to host events during the winter. In particular, community members wanted more live music, performances and events celebrating Sammamish’s multicultural community.



City-Run Events

- Frosty Fest
- Halloween Event
- Lunar New Year
- Earth Day
- Rig-a-palooza
- Sammamish Pride Celebration
- Fourth on the Plateau
- KidsFirst! Concert Series
- Concerts in the Park

City-Sponsored Events

- Farmers Market
- Shakespeare in the Park
- Drawing Workshop (funded by Arts Commission)

City Partner Events

- Mud Run
- Yoga at the lower commons
- Summer Camps

Owner

The City of Sammamish owns over 25 public art pieces including a large collection of paintings, photography, and other two-dimensional pieces hosted at City Hall, and various sculptures and murals interspersed throughout the community. Several pieces are installed at major intersections. Most of these pieces center diversity and inclusion, indigenous art, and northwest flora, fauna, landscapes, and materials. The City also showcases art from residents at City Hall through temporary art exhibits. Most recently, this included pieces from a high school art class — a wonderful opportunity to bring students into a civic space and celebrate their engagement. In addition to public art, the Sammamish Arts Commission puts together several beloved arts and culture projects each year. In 2024, these projects included producing a fairy house trail, hosting several live music events, and building a series of walls for interactive community art production.

What it takes:

Arts Commission:

The Arts Commission is responsible for providing proposals for new art installations, which are then approved by City Council. The Arts Commission also sets a theme and curates the rotating art exhibit in City Hall. Arts Commission projects require commissioners to organize, coordinate, and staff.

Staff:

City staff put out the call for artists, manage contracting, and coordinate installation between City departments.

Public Art Map

Most public art in Sammamish is hosted in three primary locations:

01. City Hall

The walls of the atrium in City Hall host a large collection of photography, carvings, mosaics, paintings, and other two-dimensional art. The City additionally hosts a rotating art exhibit in City Hall.

02. Major intersections

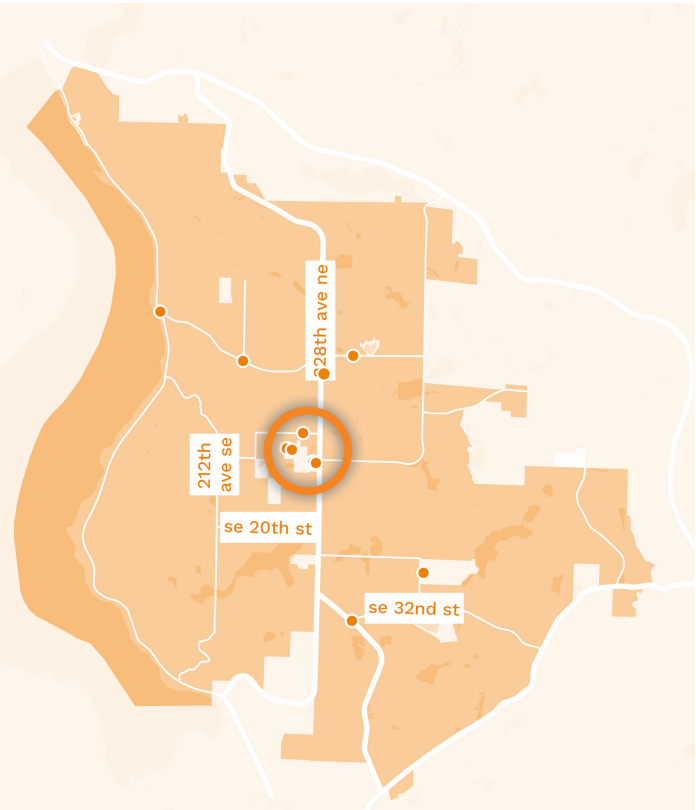
The majority of art in the public right of way is comprised of a series of sculptures installed in 2016 by the artist Al Zold.

03. Sammamish Commons.

Sammamish Commons has several art pieces, including a mural, a functional art gate for the community garden, and a series of sculptures.

Public engagement outreach indicated that the community wants more art along major roads, in the Sammamish Commons, and in other parks across the community.

Check out the appendix for a detailed inventory of public art.



Information hub:

The Parks and Recreation Department uses its social media accounts and newsletters, which have large subscriber numbers, to promote arts and culture activities. Additionally, the Sammamish Arts Commission hosts a monthly artists spotlight on social media to highlight the work of local artists.

Eastside Arts & Culture Ecosystem

Sammamish is part of a vibrant Eastside arts and culture community. This poses a key question for the City; what arts and culture events, partnerships, and facilities should be provided internally vs what should be accessed in adjoining municipalities? This information can help the City to prioritize arts and culture resources to most effectively serve the community.

What it takes:

Staffing tasks:

Gathering content and producing posts.

Successes and opportunities:

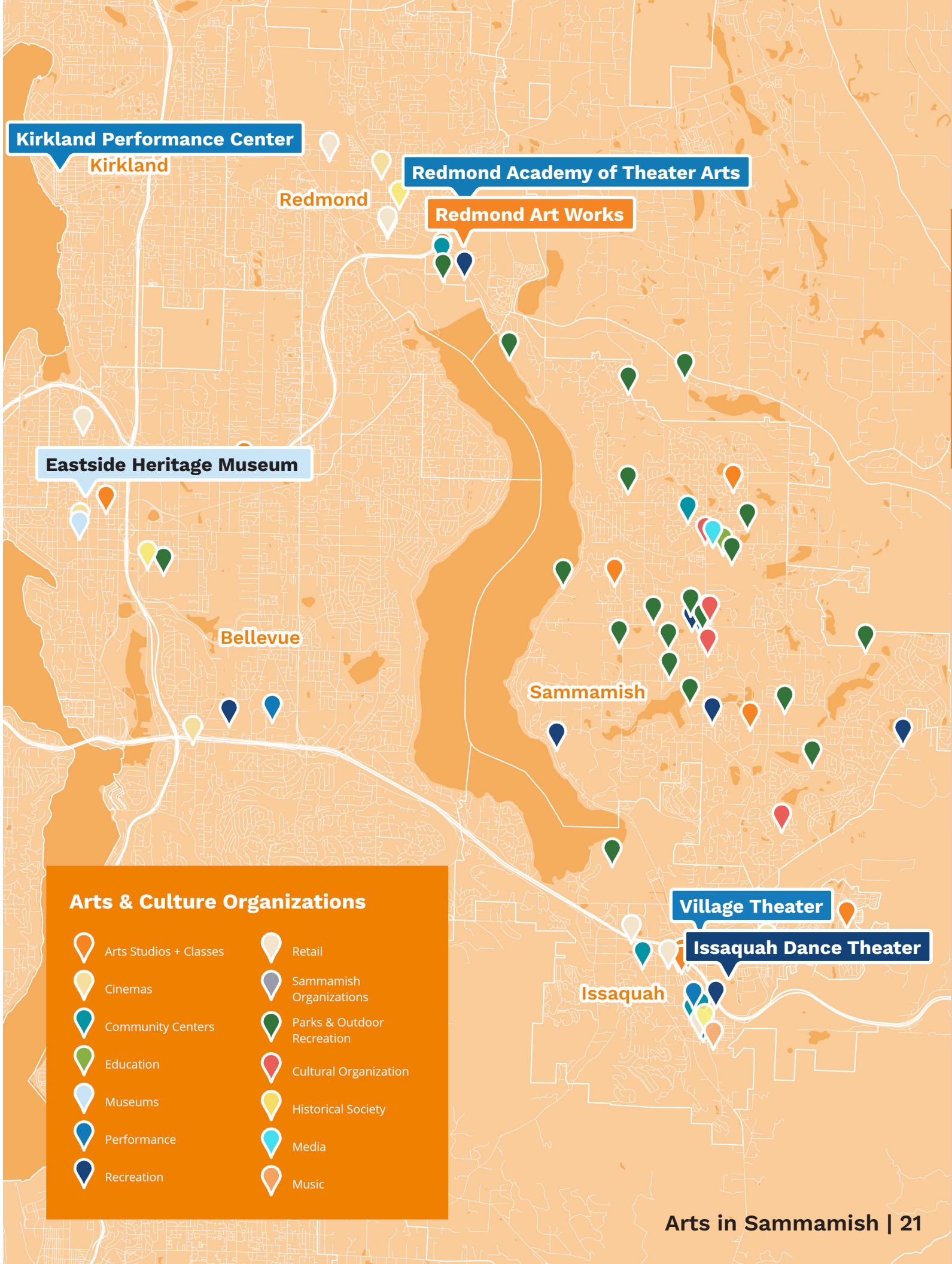
The artists spotlight has helped to identify local artists, many of whom are not on regional registries. This is helpful for building out the City's artist roster. During public engagement, non-profit partners suggested that the City could play a bigger role in promoting community-hosted arts and culture opportunities.

The map on the next page shows many key Eastside arts and culture organizations and businesses like the Village Theater in Issaquah. 4Culture, King County's primary arts and culture funding agency, financially supports arts and culture nonprofits across the Eastside, often favoring more established organizations with the staffing capacity to apply for grants. This is a handy barometer to quickly measure the distribution of higher-capacity Eastside cultural institutions. In 2025, organizations in Issaquah, Redmond, and Kirkland received significant funding. Key institutions included Village Theater, Issaquah History Museum, Issaquah Philharmonic Orchestra, Redmond Academy of Theater Arts, Redmond Historical Society, Kirkland Arts Center, and Kirkland Center for Performing Arts. Sammamish Symphony Orchestra applied and received \$15,000.

Classical music, performing arts spaces, and history museums are well represented. Accessible spaces for making art, such as Kirkland's Arts Center, may represent a potential programming gap for Sammamish. However, some of this programming is accomplished by for-profit studios and schools.

During community engagement efforts, respondents indicated that accessing performing arts spaces is desired but difficult for many members of the community. Sammamish's neighboring cities have a significant number of such spaces — highlighting the importance of accessible transportation and increased coordination with neighbors as possible strategies for reducing barriers.

Check out the appendix for a detailed inventory of arts and culture organizations.



02.



Community Priorities

Community Feedback on Arts & Culture



2 Focus groups



Community arts survey



Outreach at 3 Community Events

During summer 2024 the project team gathered insights from community members to shape plan priorities.

Sammamish comes alive in the summer, particularly at Sammamish Commons. At our table at the Farmer's Market and the Silver Jubilee, Sammamish's 25th anniversary, the project team spoke with families, wrote haiku about how arts and culture can contribute to Sammamish, painted rocks with kids (and adults!) to place along Sammamish's many trails, and learned what Sammamish residents love about living in the city. Not only public feedback, but the atmosphere of the Farmer's Market itself, highlighted the degree to which Sammamish residents are excited to show up and participate in cultural and community activities.

Community engagement activities included a community arts survey administered during the summer and early fall, tabling at community events, and two focus groups conducted in summer 2024. These different types of engagement captured residents who would love to avail themselves of more arts and culture in Sammamish, several of the City's existing partners who provide arts and culture programming, and arts practitioners across several disciplines. These different perspectives clarified several key challenges and opportunities for arts in Sammamish. A big opportunity, as alluded to above, is residents' desire to show up to events and be involved. There is a significant appetite for new events that showcase arts and culture. Sammamish has hosted such events in the past, some of which lost momentum during the COVID-19 pandemic. Community partners also expressed challenges with rebuilding programming in the wake of the pandemic.

In many municipalities, residents can rely on a historic downtown as a hub for arts and culture, where business and arts and culture institutions, like the Village Theater in Issaquah, can fill some of the gaps in events and programming not directly sponsored by the City. Community feedback highlighted Sammamish's gap in a central arts and culture hub, although many mentioned the potential of the Sammamish Commons to take on more of that role. The masterplan for the future Town Center, sited in close proximity to the Commons, is also slated to have significant community gathering space, public art, and a supportive mixture of retail and high-density housing that can build on the activity in the Commons.

In particular, respondents want more year-round activities and access to performing arts spaces, both as audience members and for practice and performance. Making recommendations for future community facilities is beyond the scope of this plan, however, the goals found in the next chapter identify ways that the City can expand access to these types of facilities through partnerships and capacity building.

In addition to programming, public engagement highlighted an interest in building off of Sammamish's excellent parks and trail system by using art to highlight these assets and enhance engagement with them. Art that foregrounds the value of nature and conservation and promotes environmentally sustainable outcomes, like more active mobility, were key themes.

The complete public engagement report is located in the appendix.

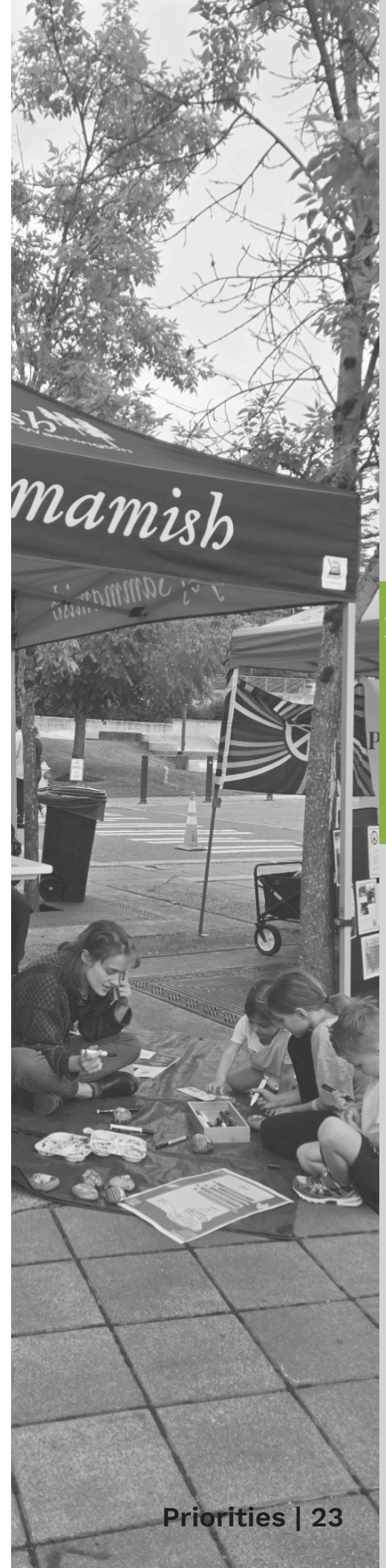
Highlights:

Public art:

- Community members want functional and interactive public art. Sculptures are also popular.
- Many community members would like to see more Native artwork located in the city.
- Community members cited the Sammamish Commons, public parks, and some intersections as good places for public art.
- Nature and Sammamish's history are key themes residents would like highlighted through public art.

Arts and culture programming:

- Community members want more music in the city, including live performances, classes for kids, and events.
- Community members want access to more performing arts space.
- Community members want intercultural exchange, whether through events, performances, or art that celebrates the community's diversity.

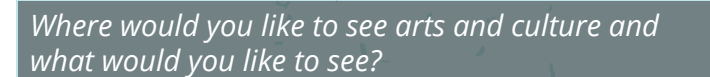


- Sammamish Commons
- Public right-of-ways
- Public parks

- Functional art
- High-visibility art
- Showcasing native, local professional artists, and community-produced art

- Nature
- City history
- Diversity of city residents

- Improved access to performance venues
- Intercultural programming that brings the community together



When it comes to public art, respondents would like to see more functional art, that is, art that serves a primary function other than as an art object. Ideas included water fountains and play structures. Increasing the amount of functional art can be challenging because it often involves significant coordination during capital facilities projects. Many of Sammamish's peer cities, such as Redmond, use a "1 percent for arts" ordinance to pay for art associated with City capital projects. Respondents also highlight the importance of visibility for public art, both in terms of geographic location and the art itself. Murals and sculptures were both popular mediums for public art. The idea of "scavenger hunt" art was also very popular — respondents suggested that a consistent subject could be chosen for multiple pieces placed throughout the city to encourage visitors and residents to explore new locations. Respondents would like to see art from many different sources including community-produced art, art from neighboring tribal nations, and statement pieces from well-known artists.

Setting the Stage

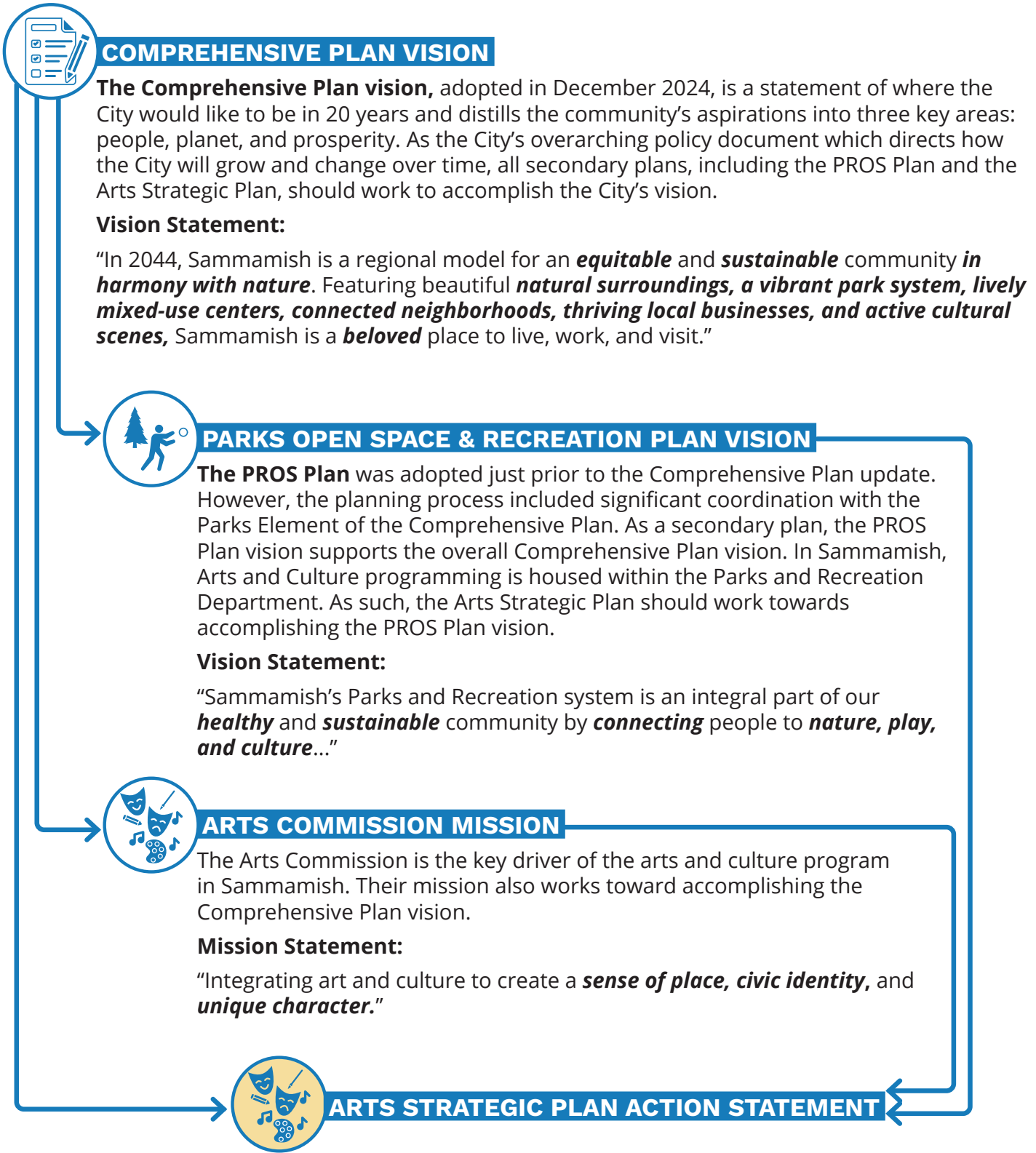
To that end, the vision, action statement, goals, and strategies articulated in this chapter come from three sources: the expressed visions already developed by the City in current plans, input from the community during the development of this plan, and the mission of the Arts Commission. Community input for this plan is highly consistent with the values and priorities of the City's vision statements and the Arts Commission's mission, forming a solid foundation for the Arts Strategic Plan.

To maximize the impact of arts and culture in supporting the City's stated visions, this plan puts forward an action statement for arts and culture in Sammamish that harnesses arts and culture programming to achieve City goals. The action statement and the goals that follow also draw on the input specific to community desires for arts and culture activities that were gathered through surveys, presence at events, interviews, Arts Commission meetings, and demonstrated demand. Finally, the strategies that flow from the action statement and goals provide pragmatic steps for the City, Parks Department, and Arts Commission to efficiently use City resources to maximize public benefit through investment in arts and culture programming.



Plan Foundation

The City of Sammamish has several vision statements that form the basis of this plan. Each of these visions contribute to the Arts Strategic Plan Action Statement and Goals found on the next page.



Arts Strategic Plan
Action Statement

The Arts Strategic Plan Action Statement is derived from the vision and mission statements on the last page. The intent of the action statement is to direct the high-level intent for City actions for arts and culture in keeping with those statements. The Action Statement is the basis for the goals, strategies, and implementation actions that follow.



Goals for Arts & Culture

The goals flow from the action statement and are ways for the City to use arts and culture to further its vision. The goals work within the existing structure of the City, building off of its model of partnering with nonprofits and other municipalities to provide arts and culture programming, while addressing many of the desires voiced during public engagement. The goals directly inform the project selection criteria found in the arts and culture toolkit.

Public Art

01. Invest in high-impact public art.

- 1.1 Prioritize sculptures and art pieces that invite community engagement and playfulness.
- 1.2 Develop a plan to incorporate functional art into future capital facilities projects.
- 1.3 Consistently activate high-activity locations such as the Sammamish Commons with high-quality public art.
- 1.4 Prioritize art in places that facilitate community connection such as parks, trails, and major right-of-ways such as 228th.
- 1.5 Provide opportunities for artists across skill levels, ages, and cultural backgrounds to showcase their art by expanding City art requests to include calls for temporary art and art exhibitions.
- 1.6 Solicit art that honors and centers Sammamish’s natural heritage, history, diversity, and indigenous cultures.

Events

02. Work to provide events and performances that span generations and cultures to build community and connection amongst Sammamish residents.

- 2.1 Prioritize year-round arts and culture events in indoor City facilities, and partner with community organizations to access additional indoor venues.
- 2.2 Provide opportunities for community partner organizations to host intercultural events.
- 2.3 Use City communication tools to help community partner organizations publicize their events.

Capacity Building

03. Grow the capacity of the City’s arts and culture program and its local artists and organizations to support desired offerings for the residents of Sammamish.

- 3.1 Collaborate with neighboring cities and regional organizations to host theater productions, live music, and cultural performances.
- 3.2 Develop joint programming initiatives that celebrate regional diversity and create opportunities for intercultural exchange.
- 3.3 Cultivate partnerships with community organizations to produce a balanced events and programming calendar serving all members of the community.
- 3.4 Reduce transportation barriers for low-mobility populations wishing to access arts and culture programming.

Strategies

The goals flow from the action statement and offer ways for the City to use arts and culture to further its vision. The goals work within the existing structure of the City, building off of its model of partnering with nonprofits and other municipalities to provide arts and culture programming. The goals directly inform the criteria found in the arts and culture toolkit.

Internal procedures to efficiently use resources

01. The first strategy is to set up the Arts Commission for best practices in initiating and stewarding public art and cultural activities. The strategy to accomplish this goal is the creation of a set of procedures and tools that will make its work efficient and effective. The procedures include a two-year outlook with an annual workplan, and tools for resource budgeting and project implementation. Best practice tools include a sample call for soliciting artists, project implementation, and public art attribution.

Criteria to align vision with arts & culture actions

02. The second strategy is to align the activities of the City with the vision and community desires by creating a set of criteria to select projects and activities. The strategy to accomplish this goal is through a set of criteria that involve the “who,” “what,” and “where” questions that ensure a diversity of arts and a connection to enacting the visions.

Opportunities for building capacity

03. The third strategy looks toward the future, setting up Sammamish as a culturally rich community as it grows and evolves. To this end, the Plan sets out options that Sammamish may wish to pursue regarding nurturing capacity for local cultural organizations, attracting grant funding, and incorporating arts and culture in future development and infrastructure improvements.

Implementation Tools & Actions

Each strategy included on the previous page has supporting implementation tools and actions that help to bring the goals to life. They focus on creating a nexus between the goals and project management.

Organization, tools, & processes

01. The City’s arts program, including its staff and its Arts Commission, will be organized to be effective in carrying out the goals of the City through:

- Clear roles for staff and Commissioners.
- A set of processes for selecting and implementing projects.
- Criteria for awarding grants and selecting projects.
- A toolkit of best practices for commissioning and managing the full life cycle of public art.
- An understanding of how to best leverage staff and Commission efforts in the model of a contracting city.

Criteria for project selection & resource expenditures

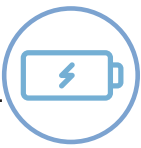
02. Projects undertaken by the City must reflect existing resources, meet established project parameters, and provide strong value for the investment. Collectively, the selection of projects or grant awards aims to ensure diversity in art forms, activities, geographic distribution within the City, and the communities served, guided by a defined set of criteria based on:

- Who it serves.
- Where it is located.
- What kind of art or activity it is.
- Is it uniquely rooted in the people and place of Sammamish?

Models, opportunity identification, & capacity building

03. The Arts Strategic Plan will set the City up for long-term success in leveraging arts and culture to support its vision. This will be accomplished by:

- Actively participating in the regional ecosystem of arts and cultural organizations, spaces, and activities.
- Consideration of best practices that have been successful for peer cities.
- Setting up Sammamish and its organizations to attract outside funding.
- Incorporating arts and culture into future decisions as Sammamish evolves.



Organization, Tools, & Processes

Ensuring that the City and Arts Commission can deliver high-quality arts and culture offerings relies on having strong procedures that help all parties understand responsibilities, resources, and alignment with the action statement. Doing so includes the following components: Clear roles, programming and activity selection, and project criteria.

The next two pages outline a new project administration protocol for the Arts Commission to align outcomes with the Action Statement.

Clear roles

Sammamish shares responsibilities between City staff and the Arts Commission to accomplish the City’s arts and culture goals. The procedures that follow are designed to help each body understand responsibilities and expectations to maximize the impact of their efforts.

The Sammamish Arts Commission (SAC) is a working commission, meaning that in addition to providing guidance and recommendations on arts and culture programming to City Council, the Commission organizes and hosts a number of community activities each year, administers an arts grant, and highlights local artists through its artist’s spotlight. Because the SAC plays so many roles, understanding how tasks are apportioned between the Arts Commission and City staff is particularly important, as is setting up a high-impact program at the beginning of each year that reflects staff capacity, Arts Commission skills and capacity, and overall budget. Additionally, because the SAC is asked to take on significant responsibility, internal cohesion and skill building become paramount. The enacting procedures that follow include an annual retreat, which provides an opportunity to decide on a program, as well as to build community among the Arts Commission.

Programming & activity selection

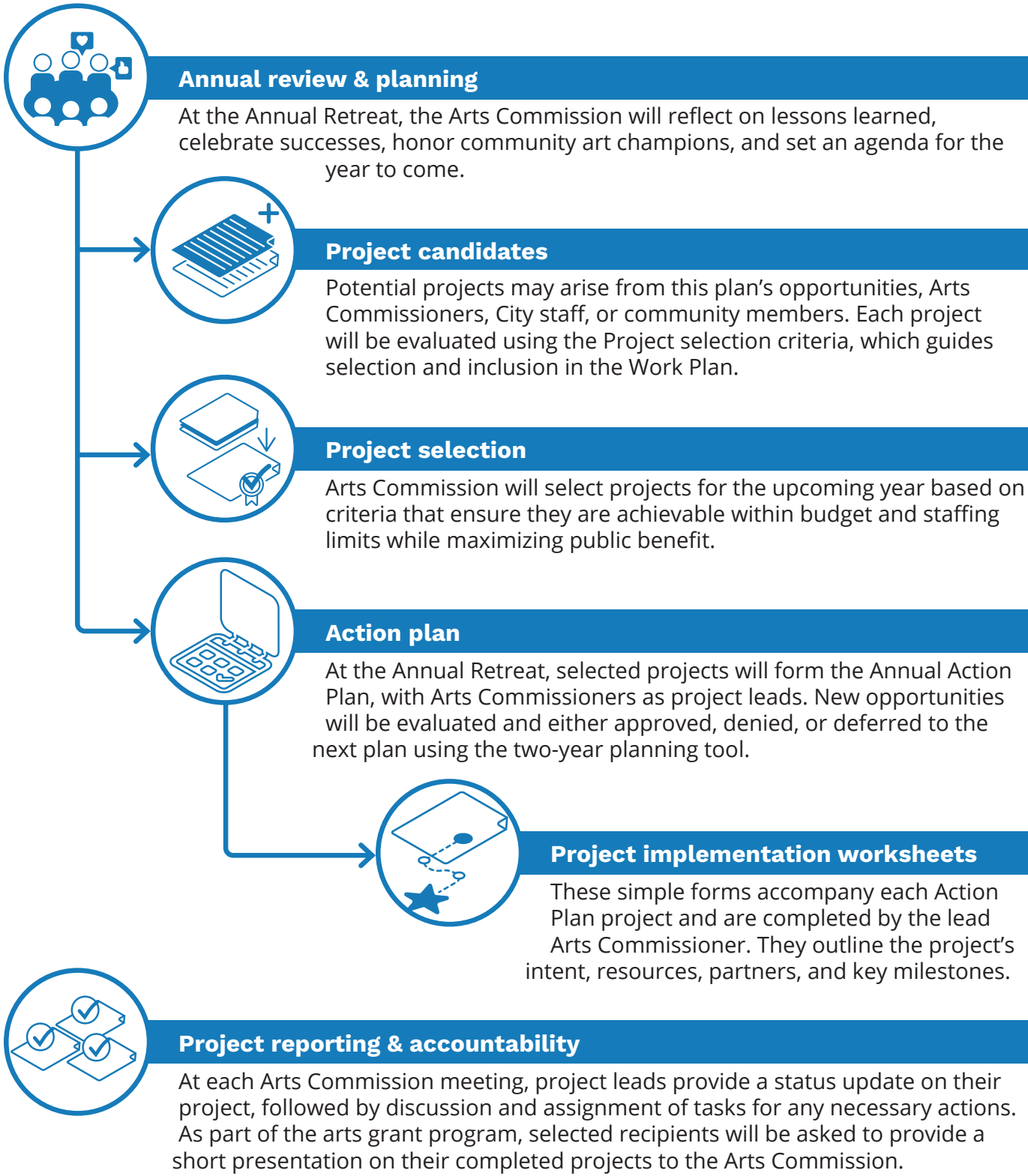
The primary task of the Arts Commission is to create a balanced program that reflects the existing capacity of staff, the Arts Commission, and the arts and culture budget while maximizing public benefit and alignment with the action statement. Relatively speaking, the Sammamish arts program is quite young. In the short term, the Arts Commission can choose to focus on smaller, impactful programming and public art investments. Over time, as resources and capacity expand, the program can become more ambitious.

Project criteria

Creating a well-balanced program requires strong selection criteria. The project criteria, which can be found in the Arts Strategic Plan Toolkit, focuses on activating priority locations, maximizing visibility and public interaction, and strengthening city identity, while working within City resources and procedures.

Arts Commission Project Step-by-Step

Building up Sammamish’s arts and culture scene begins with establishing procedures. The following set of procedures, which are further enumerated in the plan’s accompanying toolkit, aim to guide project selection to align the arts program with the City vision.



Building on Sammamish’s Arts & Culture Foundation

Partnerships

As a contract city, partnerships are an important component of delivering arts and cultural activities in Sammamish. The City already works in partnership with a number of organizations, including the library, the YMCA, and schools.

Ways to be a partner

The City plays a number of roles as a partner. It should continue to play and expand all of these partnering roles. As an owner of indoor and outdoor space, the City can work with organizations and artists to use public space for a variety of activities. In the partnership with the Chamber of Commerce, the City hosts the Farmers Market in the Commons, along with performances by local groups. The City partners with the schools to bring student art into City Hall’s display area. The City serves as a funder, awarding grants to local artists and organizations. The City also acts as an information provider, using its ability to communicate with residents to highlight artists and advertise events.

Partnerships require staff time

While people refer to “the City” as a partner, it really means a staff member with time available to support needed tasks. Some partnership roles take more staff time than others, but in partnership models it is important to understand roles, responsibilities, and liabilities. Some partnership roles may require a process beyond staff time; for example, if the City’s role is as a funder, it will trigger a decision-making process that might include an Arts Commission selection process. As in all City efforts, its role as a partner should be strategic, thoughtful, and based on City goals.

A missing piece: an arts-related nonprofit

One of the most fruitful partnerships for cities is collaboration with a local private nonprofit dedicated to arts and culture. This type of partnership allows cities to do the things that they do best, while drawing on nonprofits for what they do best, with connections to community and funding sources. Shoreline and Issaquah provide two excellent examples of this kind of partnership. Because no such organization currently exists in Sammamish, it may be a worthwhile investment of time to bring people together to see if there is the potential to develop leadership for forming new local cultural organizations and future partnerships.



Funding

A vibrant arts and culture ecosystem, like any ecosystem, needs resources to thrive. Recognizing the limited resources of the City, one of the questions addressed in the budget allocation guidelines found in this plan’s accompanying toolkit is how to efficiently use City resources to seed arts and culture leadership beyond what the City provides in-house. However, whether applying for grant funding from 4Culture or fostering a nascent arts nonprofit, accessing external resources in the future takes an initial investment of staff and Arts Commission time and budget.

Arts and culture is only one component of the much larger demands on the City of Sammamish’s budget. Like many Washington cities, Sammamish is grappling with how to deliver the public services residents want and need while adequately balancing the City’s expenses and revenues. This strain is characterized by the City as a “structural imbalance [where] the City is currently using ending fund balances (the City’s savings account) to fund ongoing services,” and is evident citywide as well as by department. In response to these challenges, the City has reduced the 2025-26 Biennial Operating budget (by \$8.9 million); City Council has adopted a 6% utility tax on all Sammamish utilities, and authorized staff to explore the option of a Metropolitan Parks District, which would require voter approval through a future ballot measure.

These actions represent significant steps toward realigning the City’s finances to improve fiscal sustainability. However, even with these measures, the structural deficit is expected to persist without additional voter-approved revenue sources. In this climate, City programs—including the Arts Program—must focus on delivering services as effectively as possible within existing resources. This may entail difficult choices about reducing services, pursuing more efficient service delivery models, and/or identifying new community-based partners to help carry out arts programming and infrastructure. Public art is not a required municipal service. However, it remains a highly valued service in the eyes of Sammamish residents and policy makers, who consistently express support for public art and cultural programming as vital elements of community identity and quality of life.

Delivering Arts & Culture Services and Infrastructure

Despite financial constraints, there are meaningful opportunities to maintain and even grow arts and culture in Sammamish by leveraging partnerships, fostering local leadership, and accessing external funding. Three potential strategies are recommended for further exploration:

1. **Build Capacity Among Community-Based Arts Organizations**

Sammamish can increase the sustainability of local arts by supporting community-based organizations that serve Sammamish residents. These organizations may be better positioned than the City to pursue competitive grants, philanthropic contributions, and other funding sources. While current City staff capacity is limited, investing in the capacity of partner organizations—such as by offering technical assistance or convening peer learning opportunities—can strengthen the local arts ecosystem and expand community offerings over time.



2. **Support Arts Commission Grant Readiness**
- The City will encourage and train the Arts Commission to research and apply for grant opportunities to help supplement arts funding in Sammamish. By building the Commission’s capacity to identify and pursue external funding—from foundations, government agencies, and private philanthropy—the City can expand available resources for public art, events, and cultural programming without relying solely on general fund support.
3. **Foster the Development of a Community-Based Arts Nonprofit**
- Sammamish can expand its arts and culture capacity by supporting the creation of a dedicated private non-profit organization focused on the arts. Such an organization could complement the City’s efforts to enhance arts services and infrastructure and potentially partner with the City to deliver programming or public art projects. Many communities have fostered the formation of private local arts foundations or partnered with existing nonprofits to increase access to funding and community engagement. A Sammamish-focused private arts nonprofit would open opportunities for residents and businesses to contribute tax-deductible donations and help shape cultural offerings in the City. In some cities, like Kenmore, these nonprofits are even recognized as official Local Arts Agencies, taking the lead on arts efforts in collaboration with or in place of City departments.
- Looking ahead, the financial limitations facing the Arts Program reflect broader budget decisions made across all City departments. While structural imbalances play a role, the level of funding for arts and culture is ultimately a policy choice—made in balance with other non-mandated but highly valued City services. Public art, while not functionally required, is consistently valued by residents and policy makers and seen as contributing meaningfully to Sammamish’s sense of place and civic identity. As the City continues to evaluate long-term solutions to its funding challenges, including the possible establishment of a Metropolitan Parks District, there may be opportunities to support a wider range of community priorities, including arts and culture.



Arts & Culture Project & Capacity Building Opportunities

Potential Projects

Moving forward, Sammamish can efficiently use its arts and culture resources to build its arts and culture ecosystem and work towards the community’s vision. Doing so will require that City staff and the Arts Commission choose projects and roles that maximize public benefit and that balance high-impact projects with capacity building to grow the efficacy of their local arts and culture community.

The following pages are dedicated to several project opportunities that align with this plan’s Action Statement and the themes articulated during the community outreach process. An animating principal reflected in the selected projects is to build off of Sammamish’s existing assets. Chief among these assets is the Sammamish Commons, which is currently the most significant community hub in Sammamish with City Hall, the Sammamish Community and Aquatic Center, and the King County Library as anchoring institutions. Projects in high-traffic locations, like the Commons, are a good way to build excitement and momentum for future projects across the community.

Opportunities also build off of Sammamish’s amazing parks and trails system to enhance user experience, community wellbeing, and foreground the city’s natural amenities.

Finally, Sammamish’s cultural diversity is a significant asset. People from all over the world live in Sammamish. The opportunities that follow look to celebrate the City’s diversity and help to build cohesion and a greater sense of collective identity.

Highlighting the Commons

Sammamish Commons is a signature gathering space, surrounded by civic uses including City Hall, the library, and the YMCA. Because of the drop in topography, the Commons and the uses are not easy to see from people traveling along 228th. A signature art piece to highlight the civic presence of these civic anchors is a key opportunity for art that could strengthen the identity of Sammamish and magnify the presence of the Commons. Art at the skatepark wall below could also be included.

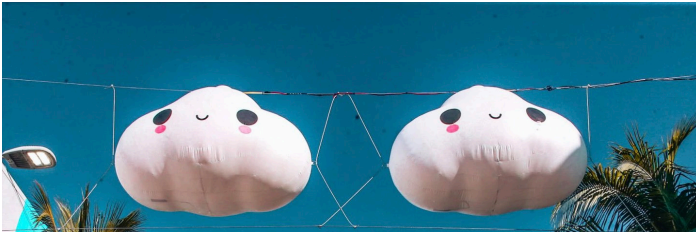


The Commons, below 228th Street, is not visible from the arterial. Temporary or permanent art here could highlight the presence of this key civic space.

A number of approaches could be taken to art in this location, possibly starting with temporary installations. The light poles may be usable for supporting hanging, changeable art, such as *FriendsWithYou*, below, where Miami Beach changes out pieces by different artists over a street. *Bamboo Clouds* is an example of temporary art by Singapore artists in an urban park in New York. In our region, Haddid Drugan’s *Clouds* shimmers over the Angle Lake light rail station.



Bamboo Clouds, by Illab, was a temporary woven installation in New York City.



FriendsWithYou, a temporary art work in Miami Beach, Florida, was created by Samuel Borkson and Arturo Sandoval III intended to bring more joy, kindness, and love to the world. Changing art is hung over the street.



Clouds, by artist Haddid Drugan, is a permanent piece at the Angle Lake Sound Transit station in SeaTac.

Art in Parks

Input from Sammamish residents showed a great love of their parks, and one of the Art Commission’s projects, the fairy houses, is already enjoyed by many in the parks. There are many options for art in Sammamish’s parks that can enrich the variety of experiences in nature. An example, shown below, is one of a set of artist-designed benches commissioned by Woodland Township in Texas. In the outreach for this plan, people also expressed a priority for functional art, and benches are a good match for art.

Parks can be locations for a signature art piece that fits into their context, and brings delight. The recently placed giant trolls by Danish artist Thomas Dambo are such an example. Another is the Mud Maiden in the Lost Gardens of Helligan in Cornwall, UK.

Art combines well with play in parks. The dragon sculpture in Mercer Island’s wooded Dean’s Children’s Park has been loved by generations of children. Artist Kenton Pies sculpted the original dragon in 1966, and rebuilt it in 2013.



The Sammamish Arts Commission currently has a popular art program for temporary Fairy Houses in the parks.



Mud Maiden is a living sculpture by Sue and Pete Hill in the Lost Gardens of Heligan in Cornwall, UK.



Woodland Township, Texas, hosted a project for artists to create benches; *Resolute* by Paul Reimer, is shown above.



The dragon at Mercer Island’s Dean’s Children’s Park, by Kenton Pies.

Art at City Entries

With the geography of Sammamish’s boundaries, it is hard to know where the entries to the city are. The “Welcome to Sammamish” signs could be joined by artist-designed markers that become a signature of Sammamish.

Some examples place art on either side of the roadway to create a gateway effect, such as the entry sign art in Twisp, Washington, by local artists Perri and Craig Howard.

In many of Sammamish’s entry locations, there is little room for art, and markers would need to be vertical. There are many examples of art that draw on and contribute to local character, such as the Luminaria by Barbara Grygutis in Greeley, Colorado, and the cut steel with indigenous motifs in Cairns, Australia. The City of Olympia commissioned pairs of art at entries to its neighborhoods, with art rooted in the unique character of each community.



Current entry signs into Sammamish.



Luminaria, by Barbara Grygutis, and Migration North by indigenous artist Brian Johnson.



The town of Twisp placed art at their entries by artists Craig and Perri Howard.



Andrea Wilbur-Sigo’s *Water People* and McJunkin and Milo White’s *Guardian: Fighter*

Art on the Trails

One of the ways that art can encourage walkability and connection with nature is to add art to trails. Like art in parks, functional art can add to comfort and wayfinding.

Entries to Sammamish’s trails are not all easy to find, and could benefit by an enticing gateway. Cornelia Konrad has created entries that draw on natural materials and fit beautifully into a wooded context. More permanent examples may be built of stone or other durable materials.



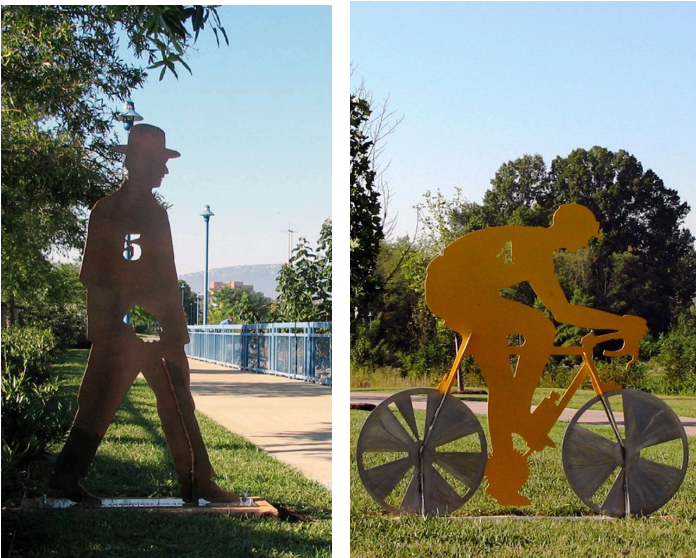
Sammamish trails are well loved (Evans Creek Preserve).



Cornelia Konrad’s *Passage* was installed as part of the Chaumont sur Loire’s annual international festival of art in their gardens.

In addition to entries, another approach to functional art is artist-created wayfinding. This could take the form of directional markers where trails connect or other ways of understanding location. For example, Jim Collins created a series of cut steel mile markers along the Chattanooga River.

Trails are well suited for sequential art, with examples such as the Story Trails that Sno-Isle Libraries manage in parks to encourage reading and connection to nature.



Mile marker art pieces line the river in Chattanooga, Tennessee.



Sno-Isle Libraries have installed Story Trails in parks, and change them out regularly.

More Events

Sammamish Commons is well-suited to events and performances during warmer seasons. The Farmers Market and special events draw crowds, and more informal uses, such as yoga classes, take place there. Regular events would make good use of the park, offer consistency for community members, and make marketing easier. For example, if there are always events on Friday nights, people will know that there is always something going on. The Chamber of Commerce partners with local performers for entertainment at the Farmers Markets, and this could be expanded to other times.



The Farmers Market brings community members together for good food, crafts, and arts.



Dancing at the City’s 25th Anniversary Celebration.

There are also other venues that could become known for regular events, especially the CWU building and the lovely facilities at Beaver Lake Lodge.

While managing and marketing events requires staffing, it is an excellent opportunity to grow partnerships and to cultivate the performing artists in the community.



Dancers at the Sammamish Farmers Market.



Performers of all ages can share their talents with the community (Photo Courtesy of Framework).

Signature Event

Many communities have a major annual event that is rooted in local interests, but draws regional participants and is part of their community identity. Sammamish's neighbors host major annual festivals—Salmon Days in Issaquah, Redmond Lights, and the Bellevue Arts Fair. Although Sammamish hosts several large events each year, including the Fourth on the Plateau, it does not currently host an event uniquely about Sammamish as a city and community. A signature event for Sammamish could be a source of identity and pride.

An event rooted in the unique characteristics of Sammamish raises the question of defining those characteristics. Discussion with the Arts Commission and through community input about those characteristics that “say Sammamish.” It needs to be acknowledged that a major event would require commensurate time and effort, so this is likely to be a longer-term opportunity that would come from nearer-term steps of capacity building.

Convening & Capacity Building

A helpful role that the City can play in strengthening local arts and culture is to bring people together to explore common interests and opportunities. This report has compiled a list of local artists and cultural organizations, and this could be used to start a convening and discussion with people that may be interested in moving arts and culture forward in Sammamish. How can individuals and existing groups work together to fill needs in the arts and culture ecosystem in Sammamish? Is there a way to make

their presence better known in the community through working together on marketing, events, or projects? How can they find other community members involved in arts and culture? Are there people interested in providing leadership for a Sammamish-based nonprofit that could serve as a partner to the City? Can they work together to secure County or State grant funding? The City can, at a minimum, serve as a host for an initial meeting, and if there is interest, bring people together on a more regular basis.

What says “Sammamish”?

The idea of identity and placemaking comes up often in considering the role of arts and culture. Underlying that discussion is the question of the nature of the identity of Sammamish, both currently and ideally. Several themes recur in the City’s vision statements and from community input:

- Sammamish highly values its natural setting
- Sammamish focuses on its families, including all generations
- Sammamish values its multi-cultural community

Some input noted that many Sammamish residents work in digital and tech industries, which might be an opportunity to highlight the connection of the arts with new technologies.

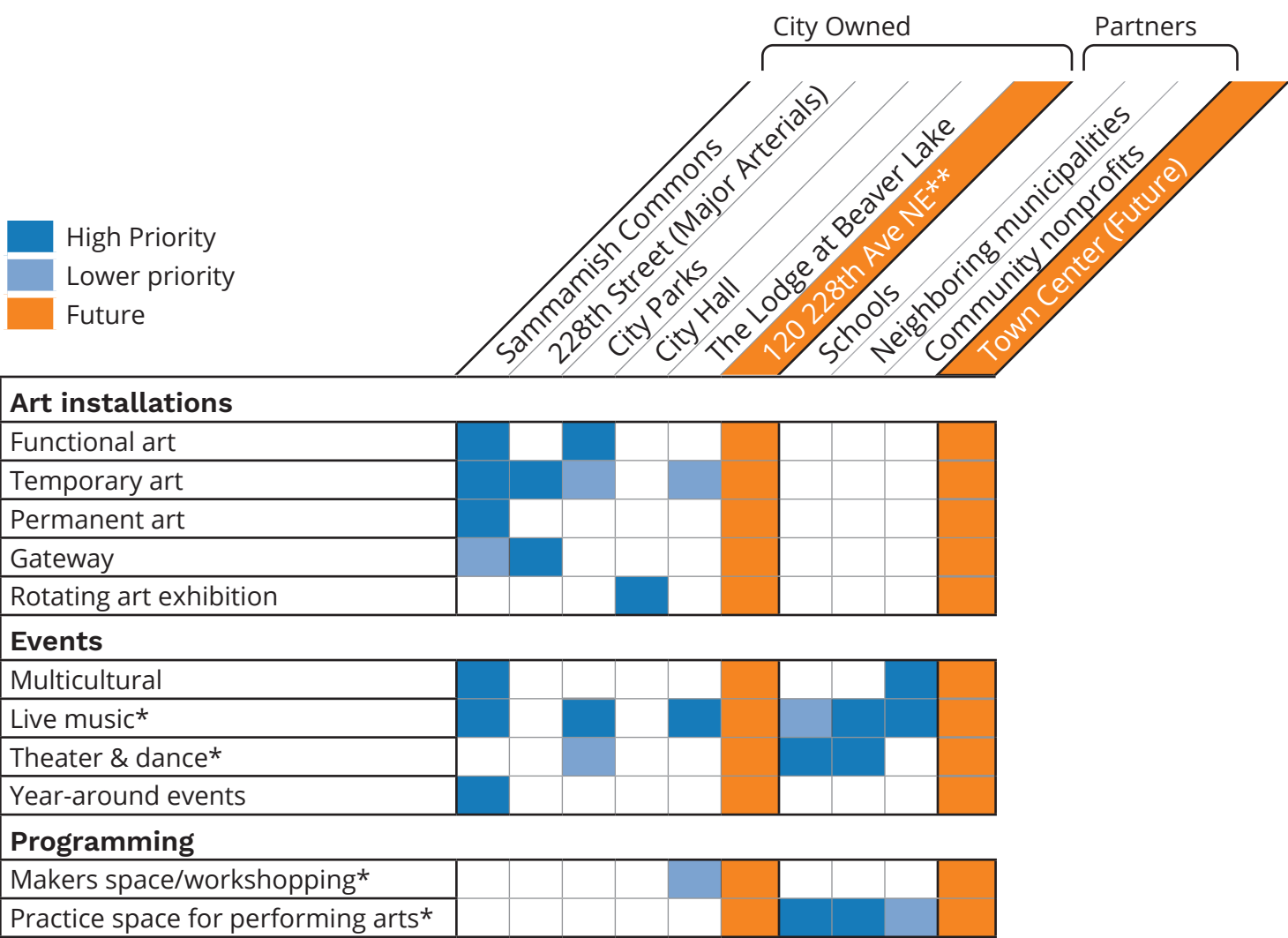


Vancouver, Washington, celebrates its unique Hawaiian heritage with 4 Days of Aloha, held in its signature Esther Short Park in their downtown.



For 25 years, the town of Langley has held what they bill as North America’s premier Gypsy Jazz festival. Djangofest attracts participants and audiences locally and around the world.

Project Priority Matrix



*Per goal 3: Foster local organizations and develop partnerships to increase arts and culture opportunities in Sammamish: the City will work towards partnerships that expand access to non-City owned facilities.

** Subject to future lease agreements and building improvements. Many of these activities would require significant retrofits to the existing building. The property does not currently have space suitable for performances, although it is possible it could be used as practice space.





Plan Appendices

Peer City Review & Analysis

In the process of developing this plan, the project team interviewed multiple peer cities to understand how these cities administer arts and culture, and what strategies they use to gather and allocate resources. As Sammamish develops its arts program further in the future, the City can consider implementing some of these strategies.

While each city has its own characteristics, there are lessons to draw from neighboring and peer cities. Four cities were studied in depth as part of this plan, including interviewing their arts staff. We also refer to programs from other cities that offer useful best practices.

A Contracting City

Sammamish’s contract-based model is flexible, and allows the City to bring in any kind of expertise that can support City staff and the Arts Commission. A broader consideration of contracting could be a powerful way to accomplish the mission of arts in Sammamish. For example, the idea of contracting an Arts Advisor could help Sammamish make a leap forward on building capacity without adding staff resources. An investment in an advisor could help Sammamish successfully apply for grants and assist the Arts Commission in enacting the toolkit that is part of the Art Strategic Plan to use grant funding well. The funding that other cities received in King County’s Doors Open grants, shown in the adjacent sidebar, indicates the value of investing in grant writing. A two-year contract would give an advisor time to formulate and implement a set of key projects and guide the Arts Commission with new tools.

An artist-in-residency (AiR) program is another good way to help define and amplify community interests. The City of Tukwila used this approach when they initiated their municipal “percent for art” program, hiring two artists to develop programs and build relationships in the community for a strong start to engage residents and craft future actions. Pairing the AiR with an arts advisor would be a powerful combination for positive actions and visibility for arts and culture in Sammamish and improve the ability to be an effective partner with arts organizations.

Doors Open Funding for Local Arts Agencies

The Sammamish Arts Commission is one of King County’s 26 Local Arts Agencies (LAAs). These organizations were eligible for sustained support through the Doors Open funding, which is expected to distribute some \$700 million in King County through 2031. Many Arts Commissions in peer cities received significant funding in the first round of this funding in 2025. In addition, non-profit organizations related to arts, heritage, and science brought funding to communities throughout the County through Doors Open. Sammamish did not apply for funding, in part because City staff do not currently have time allocated for grant writing activities or for project management if grants are awarded. Only one organization (Sammamish Symphony) was awarded sustained funding. For comparison, Doors Open 2025 funding was awarded to 19 LAAs, including:

- Shoreline \$105,000
- Issaquah \$52,000
- Bothell \$26,000

A Partnering City

Cities such as Shoreline and Maple Valley have strong arts-oriented nonprofits that partner with local government. There are a number of advantages to working with a strong nonprofit. Nonprofits can receive grants and philanthropic funding; they can attract volunteers and serve as a community-based face of the arts; they are often better suited to implementing programming; and they make it easier for the associated city to fund community-desired activities. Nonprofits typically start with leaders within the community who are inspired to accomplish desired actions or fill needs. It is likely that potential arts leaders are involved in organizations outside of Sammamish, and there is a question about whether relying on neighboring jurisdictions is sufficient, or whether it would be beneficial to Sammamish to have an arts and cultural non-profit partner that focused specifically on Sammamish. A possible role for the City of Sammamish could be acting as a convener to gather potential arts leaders to have a discussion about forming an organization and gauge interest in the creation of an arts and culture nonprofit to partner with the City.

A New City

As a newer jurisdiction, Sammamish does not have the advantage of a historic downtown. Shoreline, a comparable peer city of similar size, was able to focus on its most visible locations such as parks and its City Hall. Shoreline has had several years of artist residencies, using the Cottage at Richmond Beach Saltwater Park. Shoreline works closely with a non-profit partner, ShoreLake Arts, which has brought grant revenue into the jurisdiction. They have also used a voter approved parks bond that helps bring public art to their parks. Sammamish’s focus on the Commons, the future Town Center, its parks, and most visible streets and entries would be a similar approach.

Looking Ahead

There is power in connecting arts and culture with the development of mixed-use hubs for the future, and Sammamish has included this in its Comprehensive Plan vision statement. Woodinville is an interesting example of emphasizing a theme by drawing on its wine industry. Woodinville’s new developments include a “wine alley” and a number of small businesses that benefit from attracting regional visitors. While this may be more than Sammamish wants to do in terms of having a strong theme, it is worth considering what is specific to Sammamish that can be emphasized and celebrated as the Town Center develops. Woodinville is also interesting in that they have a Public Space Commission that oversees not only art, but placemaking in parks and streetscape.

There are a number of regional examples of new, large-scale, mixed-use projects that have done an excellent job of incorporating public art into common public spaces, such as Yesler Terrace in Seattle and Greenbridge in the White Center area. These examples can offer inspiration for the possibilities for new development in Sammamish.

Shoreline

The City of Shoreline works closely with ShoreLake Arts - a nonprofit serving Shoreline and Lake Forest Park to provide arts and culture programming. ShoreLake Arts is additionally eligible for grant funding unavailable to the City. Most of the City's internal efforts are focused on acquiring public art for parks including a robust functional and temporary art program.

Staffing:

- A strong public arts coordinator manages all things public art and acts as an advocate to other departments. The coordinator role is funded at a full FTE.

Host Role:

- Shoreline hosts four artists residencies a year at the Art Cottage at Saltwater Park. The residency requires that the artist dedicate 40 hours during their 6 week residency to interface with the community.

Owner Role

- In 2022, Shoreline voters approved a parks bond which included \$1,000,000 for public art in eight City owned parks. The City is prioritizing functional art including art benches and fences as well as highly visible sculptures.

Information Hub Role:

- Residents can sign up to receive text alerts about arts and culture events in the community, which has driven high turnout.

Key City Roles:

- Partner:** City works with ShoreLake Arts to provide arts classes and programming
- Owner:** Public art, art residency building (funded by 4Culture)
- Host:** Artists in residency program x 4 annually
- Promoter/Information Hub:** Social media, eNews, and alerts for arts events to drive turnout

Staffing:

- 0.5 FTEs to support Public Arts Fund
- 1.0 FTE for cultural services
- Public arts coordinator position

Budget (2025):

- Public arts fund:** \$124,932 for public art projects
- Cultural services:** \$395,751

Funding sources:

- One Percent for Arts from construction for capital projects. Anticipated \$510,801 revenue in 2025
- New parks bond around \$1,000,000 for public art in parks
- ShoreLake Arts received \$80,000 from 4Culture Doors Open facilities grant, and \$105,000 from an Arts Sustained Support Grant
- .5 FTE funded through the Public Art Fund
- .5 FTE funded through the General Fund

Planning for arts & culture:

- The City explicitly includes arts in their Parks, Recreation, Open Space, and Arts (PROSA) Plan (2024)
- Public Art and Cultural Services Plan (2017)

Issaquah

Issaquah has a robust public arts program supported by a dedicated full-time staff member. The City has helped to cultivate strong arts and culture organizations through sustained funding including support for performances and events.



Village Theater// City of Issaquah

Arts & Culture Staffing

- Issaquah's arts and culture program is held by one strong advocate who acts as a point person to create a cohesive arts and culture program, giving Issaquah a visible presence in the local and regional community.

Funder Role

- With a downtown association and multiple local arts organizations, Issaquah spends most of its arts budget supporting local organizations as a funder rather than a host.

Facilitator Role

- With an active downtown association, tourism organization, and a major arts organization in the Village Theatre, Issaquah has a healthy array of partners to bring to their role as facilitator.
- Issaquah is responding to the reduction in admissions tax by focusing on Doors Open grant funding from King County. Issaquah is evolving its supporting role from funder to facilitator and plans to work with community nonprofits to secure additional grant funding.

Key City Roles:

- Funder:** Arts and culture grants and scholarships
- Host:** Chalk Festival
- Facilitator:** Helping local orgs. apply for grant funding
- Owner:** Public art

Staffing:

- 40 hours/week
- Staff time grew from 10 hrs/week to 15 hrs/week to full FTE
- Arts administration background

Budget (2025)

- Salaries + Benefits:** \$163,808 (1 FTE)
- Scholarships + Grants:** \$135,750
- Art installations:** \$120,000

Funding sources:

- Admissions tax (est. 1989) generates around \$190,000/year ('25-26 Biennial budget)
- 1/2% for the arts ordinance on capital facilities projects (utilities exempted)
- Established creative district: provides access to some grant funding
- \$52,000 from Doors Open grant to Arts Commission

Planning for arts & culture:

- 2016 Strategic Arts Plan
- 2019 planning associated with establishing creative district



Arts Cottage// City of Shoreline

Maple Valley

The City of Maple Valley works closely with the Maple Valley Creative Arts Council (MVCAC). MVCAC is a community nonprofit with its own space and significant community leadership. Although the City does have an Arts Commission, the majority of arts and culture programming occurs through the arts council. The arts council itself was able to raise funding to build a facility to host workshops and events. Some of their revenue comes from facility rentals.



Creative Arts Center// Maple Valley Creative Arts Council

Partner Role

- The City of Maple Valley depends on its strong partnership with the non-profit Maple Valley Creative Arts Council. The City supports the Arts Council in securing grant funding that the City cannot access.

Owner Role

- Maple Valley percent for arts ordinance is set up to provide \$0.25 per capita funding or up to 1% set aside funding for public art coming from City-funded capital projects.
- Maple Valley's municipal arts fund, established by ordinance, provides financial resources for public art and sets up policies for maintenance.

Key City Roles:

Funder: Economic/Community Event grants - \$12,700 to Maple Valley Creative Arts Council

Owner: Public art

Host: Arts and Culture events and classes

Staffing:

- Parks and rec dept. liason to Arts Commission (\$5,000 for professional services)
- Additional staffing for community events

Budget (2025):

- Arts Commission:** approx. \$7,230
- Economic/Community Event grants:** \$117,350
- Art Program Fund (capital projects):** \$39,700

Funding sources:

- Arts and culture funding comes from the General Fund; revenue sources include taxes on: property, sales, utilities, housing, gambling, criminal justice
- One Percent for the art ordinance from City-funded capital projects for public art

Planning for arts & culture:

- The City explicitly includes arts in their Parks, Recreation, Arts, Open Space (PRAOS) Plan.
- Public Arts Masterplan (2020) includes MVCAC as partner

Bothell

Bothell’s arts and culture program falls under its tourism department (which is housed within Parks and Recreation), and is partially funded through the City’s lodging tax. This organizational structure aligns arts and culture activities with Bothell’s economic goals.



Bothell's Creative Arts Grants encourage both visual arts as well as performances // City of Bothell

Funder Role

- Bothell’s Creative Arts Grant Program includes clear evaluation criteria focusing on how the art will contribute to fostering creativity and civic participation. The City additionally hosts a workshop to support applicants, and provides resources for community members who aren’t artists, but would like to collaborate with an artist to make a project happen.

Key City Roles:

Funder: Artist grants program

Host: Rotating art exhibit at City Hall, Community events

Facilitator: Helping local orgs. apply for grant funding

Owner: Public art

Staffing:

- 0.2 FTE to arts and working with the Arts Commission
- 0.8 FTE to tourism, this role advocates for the arts

Budget (2025)

- \$25,000 from general fund for artists grants program

Funding sources:

- % of hotel/motel tax goes to Arts
- 1% ordinance from above ground projects
- \$26,000 from 4Culture Arts Sustained Support grant

Planning for arts & culture:

- Strategic Cultural Plan 2020

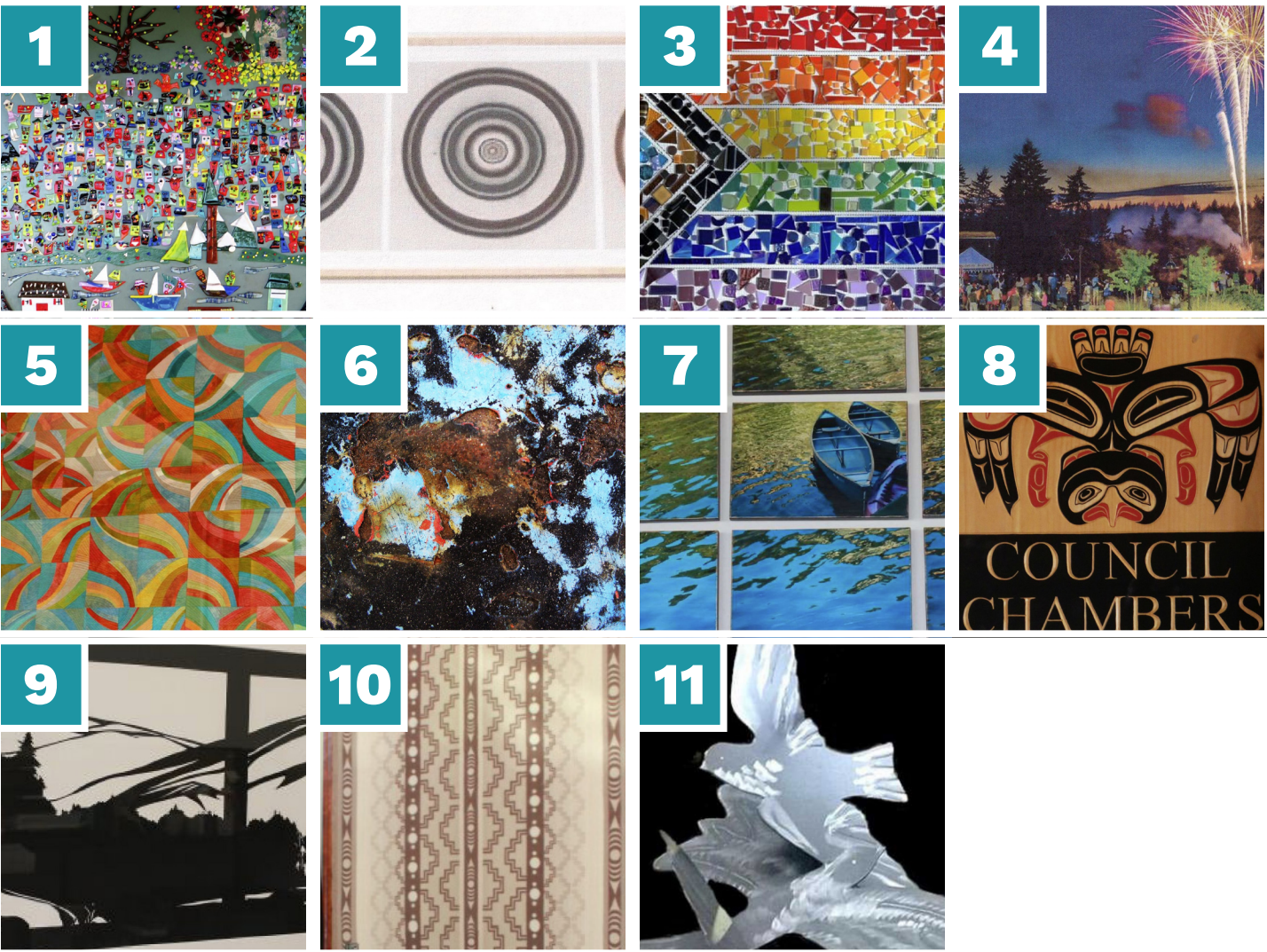
Public Arts Inventory

Sammamish’s public spaces are alive with a vibrant collection of art, featuring over 25 original public artworks. From steel, stone, and glass to wood, murals, and mosaics, these artworks invite curiosity and engagement and create a sense of place. The palette of Sammamish’s existing art pieces is grounded in natural materials and many pieces center Pacific Northwest landscapes and themes. Connection to the natural environment is an essential component of Sammamish’s identity, and the pieces the City has acquired to date reflect that commitment.



For an interactive art inventory, check out the story map here.

Art at City Hall



Art at the Sammamish Commons



Art in the Right-of-Way



Art in Parks



Art at City Hall

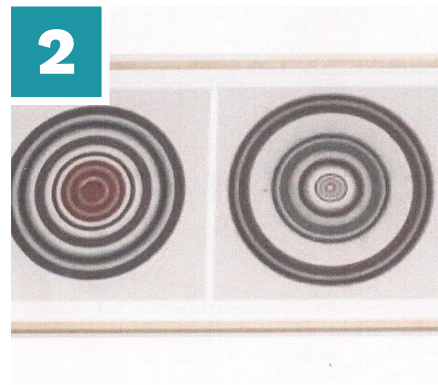
City Hall exhibits a large number of two dimensional pieces as well as a rotating art exhibit that displays community art pieces.



Four Seasons Mosaic

Connie Walsworth (2004)

This project was born several years ago when Walsworth and others were talking about trying to bring kids together from both ends of the Plateau to work on a project. “I went to venues where kids would be going — concerts, schools, events ... we worked on it for about six months,” Walsworth said. She then took all the pieces and scenes that kids and community members had created, and compiled them into one work that shows a scene of what Sammamish residents do during the four seasons of the year.



Magnetic Drawing

Nola Avienne (2008)

This piece was a result of the 2008 exhibit of new works purchase by King County Public Art Collection under the direction of Greg Bell, the curator of the collection. The Sammamish Art Commission was not able to display this particular piece in the exhibit, but of course chose to purchase similar pieces in the same series by Nola Avienne through her gallery. The work is iron embedded in paper. Art Commission funds were used to purchase the work.



Progress Flag

Cheryl Smith (2022)

Pride month kicked off at the Sammamish Farmers Market with Cheryl Smith Mosaics creating the Sammamish Community Progress Flag. 400+ people laid colored pieces of recycled glass and tile in this fantastic design.



Fireworks

Harshwinder Singh (2017)

Singh donated his piece to the City from an exhibit in the summer of 2017. Titled “Summer Postcards,” it hangs in the City Manager’s conference room.

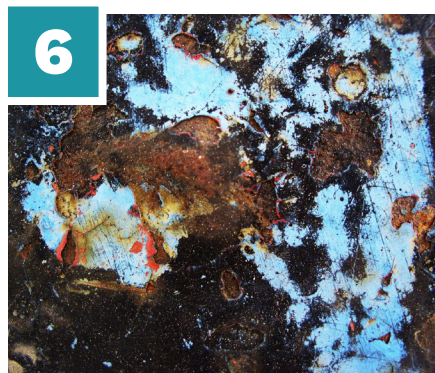


5

Late Summer Quilt

Ellen Larimer (2010)

Artist Statement: "I explore the relationships between lines and shapes and their color while combining and direct piecing fabrics. Color is especially exciting to me. I dye my own cotton fabric, continually searching for better color and texture. It is an ongoing experiment yielding frequent surprises. I am particularly pleased when viewers feel drawn into the work."



6

Abstract Photography Exhibit

Margaret Rosenow (2019)

Margaret (Margreeth) Rosenow has taken thousands and thousands of photographs, starting at a young age. Her interest in people and places brought her to many countries all over the world, which gave her unique opportunities for photography. As a volunteer she was the unofficial photographer of various non-profit organizations.

Her collection of 15 pieces is displayed on the second floor of City Hall.



7

Two Canoes

Kathy Hastings (2011)

Hastings started experimenting with images in Photoshop and was fascinated with the possibilities of combining traditional painting techniques with digital imagery.



8

Wood Carving

Joe McConnell (2006)

Joe McConnell has been carving Northwest Native-style relief and 3-dimensional pieces since 1988. McConnell is not a local, native artist. His carvings include Mask, Bowls, Rattles, Warrior Helmets, Paddles and Totem Poles. Since January 2001, he has been teaching this form of woodcarving seven times a week at his studio in Sammamish. Students start with little, if any, carving experience and range in age from teens to seniors. When not teaching, Joe works on commission pieces for both corporate and private collectors.



9

Shadows Fall

Hannah Viano (2012)

Artist Statement: "I have tried hard to learn the lessons of how to catch a memory, and save it for another day and another friend to see. To distill these impressions down I use an exacto knife and pieces of black paper. The act of carving out the pictures is a delicious and delicate process that gives itself perfectly to the flowing shapes of wood and water, the way faring a hull feels right in the hands, or a sweetly blossoming bowl on the potter's wheel."



10

Connections

Eight Generation, two Snoqualmie Tribe members (2023)

A new, permanent art piece was unveiled at Sammamish City Hall on March 14, 2023 at a gathering to recognize the generosity of the Snoqualmie Tribe. The art piece, a blanket titled "Connections," was gifted to the City of Sammamish to symbolize the collaborative effort to establish a mass-vaccination site at Lake Sammamish State Park.



11

The One who Reached the Stars

Michele Van Slyke (2015)

Michele Van Slyke began soldering metal into sculptures as a college student, stepping out of traditional gender bounds. Born and raised in France, Michele studied at the Sorbonne in Paris and the University of Heidelberg in Germany.

Art in the Sammamish Commons

The Sammamish Commons’ public garden includes a beautiful fence that is an example of functional art, as well as a public mural by a local girl scout troop.



“You do You” Mural
Girl Scout Troop #45370 (2021)
The Sammamish Girl Scout Troop, made up of 11 5th grade girls from Mead and Blackwell Elementary Schools, proposed to paint a mural at the Upper Sammamish Commons play structure in an effort to complete their Bronze Award.



Rooster
Unknown
This metal “weather vane” sculpture was originally created as an icon sited at the front of the Vinje (Frederick T. Vinje) and Berg (Walter Martin Berg) Grocery Store (V&B Supermarket in the Shoprite Group) in downtown Redmond where the present Value Village is now located. With the sale of the store, Faye Turner Sween (1916-2012), married to William Harold Sween (1913-2000), requested that this metal sculpture be given to the Sween Family who would place this icon on the end of the driveway of their personal Sammamish residence located near the Lower Sammamish Commons Park.



Garden Gate
Garth Edwards (2015)
The Sammamish Art Commission asked local artist, Garth Edwards, to design three gates for the community garden in the Lower Commons. This functional art is made of aluminum, which reflects the light from different angles.



Confluence
Deb Young (2007)
In this piece, concentric ellipses radiate out from the bronze base suggesting water ripples.
The natural reference for the “Confluence” is water, ice, and the upward movement of wind. The elements of earth and fire are found in the glass as it responds to the changing color of sunlight and moonlight. Colors ranging from cool green/blue to warm yellow/orange reflect in the glass. Its highly textured surface treatment echoes organic patterns found in nature.

Art in the Public Right-of-Way

Sammamish has several prominent sculptures in the public right-of-way. Four of them (Steps, Forms in Flight, Circle the Roundabout, and Positive and Negative) were commissioned in 2016 from sculptor Al Zold.



11 Steps; Ladder 83
Al Zold (2016)
“11 Steps; Ladder 83”, so named to honor Sammamish firefighters. Station #83 is adjacent to this roundabout. This sculpture intentionally utilized the weathered red barn wood for the fire station ladder. A Sammamish artist, Al Zold, is a retired Boeing employee whose interest has been artistic woodworking.



Utility Wraps
Claradell Shed (2018)
Why not utilize the location of the Sammamish utility boxes to artistically portray what had historically occurred at that precise physical geographic Sammamish location?” With this goal propelling the pursuit and many hours of visits to research archival files and photos, as well as conversations with long-time Sammamish residents or their descendants, material was amassed. As of January, 2022, 29 boxes at 11 Sammamish locations have been researched, designed, and installed.



Forms in Flight
Al Zold (2016)
The weathered wooden sculpture “Forms in Flight”, so named to honor those in Sammamish community who have been and are presently active in the Aerospace Industry.



Synergy Rising
Lin Garretson (2020)
Inspired by the wisdom and rhythms of Nature, the sculpture is constructed with natural stone slabs and steel elements. Like many of us residing in Sammamish, the stone is not indigenous to the area, but originated from different points around the world. Each stone has its own unique composition and character, history, and heritage. Having now ben shaped and textured and bonded together with others and combined with the strength of steel, it is at home in a new place with a new purpose and meaning.

20



Circle the Roundabout

Al Zold (2016)

The weathered wooden sculpture "Circle the roundabout", is so named because of all the merging roads.

21



Positive and Negative

Al Zold (2016)

This piece was placed in honor of officer Stan Chapin who was approaching 40 years in the King County Sheriff's Office.

Art in Parks

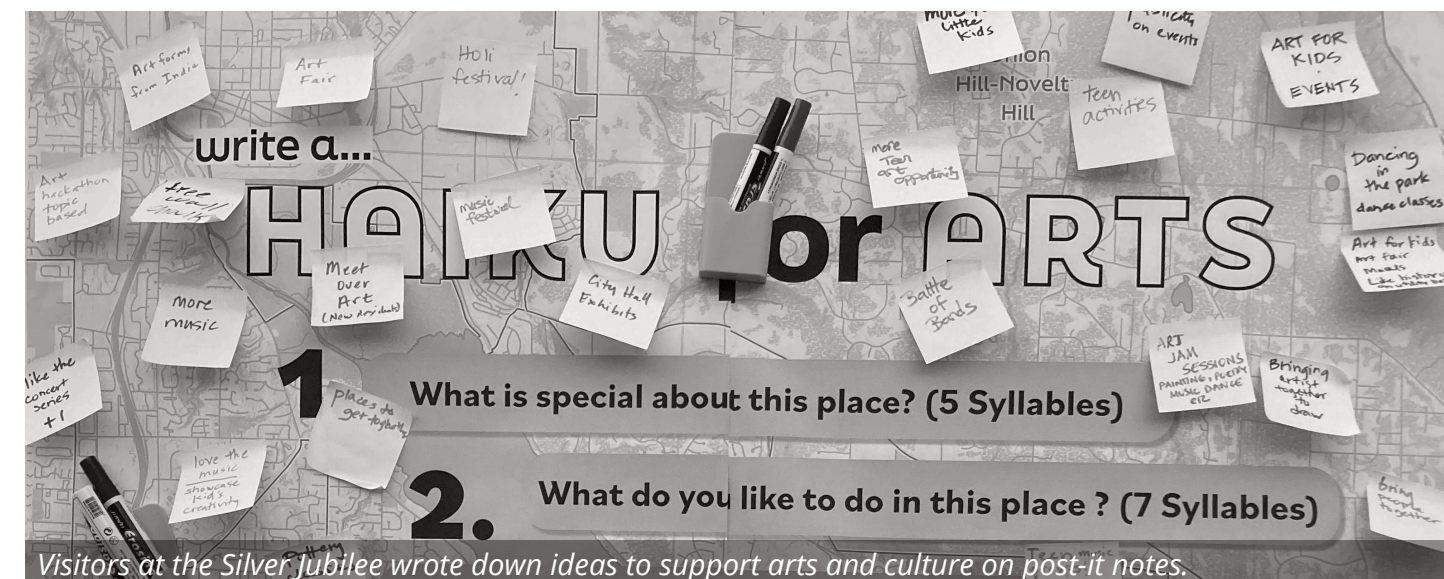
22



Totem Pole

David Boxley (1991/1992)

Tsimshian Carver and Performer David Boxley is a Tsimshian carver from Metlakatla, Alaska. Born in 1952, he was raised by his grandparents. From them he learned many Tsimshian traditions including the language. After high school he attended Seattle Pacific University where he received a Bachelor of Science degree in 1974. He became a teacher and basketball coach to 11th and 12th grade students in Alaska and Washington. While teaching in Metlakatla in 1979 he began devoting considerable time to the study of traditional Tsimshian carving. Through researching ethnographic material and carvings from museum collections, Boxley has learned the traditional carving methods of his grandfather's people.



Community Engagement Report

During the development of this plan, the project team solicited a wide range of feedback to inform priorities and to shape the plan strategy. Public engagement included a community arts and culture survey with several open-ended questions focusing on the nexus between respondents' vision for the community, and how arts and culture activities could contribute to accomplishing that vision. Consistent with the Comprehensive Plan vision and the PROS Plan vision, respondents brought up Sammamish's natural setting as a community attribute that arts and culture activities can magnify. Both through the community survey and through conversations while tabling at the Sammamish Silver Jubilee and various farmer's markets, the importance of connection, community, and family rose to the fore.

These themes presented in multiple ways; when asked for an idea for arts and culture programming, several respondents indicated the importance of community authorship of public art and art programming. They highlighted the ways that community-produced art can foster investment and a sense of belonging. In addition to community-produced public artwork, many brought up the impact of having places for members of the community to display art, something that the City currently hosts at

City Hall. Other respondents brought up the diversity of the Sammamish community, and the potential for community building through more intergenerational and intercultural events. As one respondent put it,

"Sammamish has evolved into a very culturally diverse community. Offer programming in dance, theater, spoken word, music that highlights all of this, and offers an opportunity for ALL the communities to come together and learn about each other."

Prior to initiating public engagement activities, preliminary conversations with the Sammamish Arts Commission indicated that a challenge for Sammamish is a lack of a central and defined community arts and culture hub, a gap that is not surprising given the age of the City, current lack of a “downtown,” and the strong arts and culture offerings of Sammamish’s neighbors. Many survey respondents identified this gap during community engagement activities, although there was no question directly asking about community facilities. Households without school-aged kids felt this lack more, because they have less access to the facilities, programming, and community offerings made available by Sammamish’s schools. In particular, challenges accessing performing arts space for practice and live performances emerged, as well as challenges with accessing indoor

gathering spaces generally. The arts strategic plan goals, found in chapter three, suggest potential avenues for the City to address access to arts and culture amenities, including through partnerships with nonprofits both within and without Sammamish, and through investment in community leadership and capacity building. Additionally, this finding points to the importance of building on Sammamish’s existing assets which include the Sammamish Commons. Although there was a potential bias, because most survey responses were gathered at the Commons, community members repeatedly brought up the Commons as a place that is easy to access, already has significant programming through the YMCA and King County Library, and would make a strategic place for arts and culture investments year-round. In keeping with this takeaway, respondents prioritized high visibility and easy access for both public art and arts and culture programming generally. Concerts in the park and the City’s permanent art (much of which inhabits high-visibility roundabouts within City right-of-way), are Sammamish’s most popular arts and culture programming. Sammamish residents would like the City to prioritize more highly visible art including more functional art, murals, and sculptures at the Sammamish Commons, along 228th and in the City’s many wonderful public parks.

Key Findings

Public art:

- 1. Community members want functional and interactive public art. Sculptures are also popular.
- 2. Many community members would like to see more Native artwork located in the city.
- 3. Community members cited the Sammamish Commons, public parks, and some intersections as good place for public art.
- 4. Nature and Sammamish’s history are key themes residents would like highlighted through public art.

Arts and culture programming:

- 5. Community members want more music in the city, including live performances, classes for kids, and events.
- 6. Community members want access to more performing arts space.
- 7. Community members want intercultural exchange whether through events, performances, or art that celebrates the community’s diversity.

Community Tabling

The project team attended three community events during summer and fall of 2024. These events included a Farmers Market, Sammamish’s 25th Anniversary Celebration, and the Chamber of Commerce’s Family Fun Fest at the 120 228th Ave NE property.

Haiku for Sammamish

At our table, community members wrote haiku for arts in Sammamish. The importance of nature, family friendliness, and community diversity quickly emerged as community assets. Community members also provided ideas for arts programming and public art. Some of those ideas are highlighted below. A key takeaway was a desire for places where the community can meet and be creative together.

Public Arts Survey

The project team administered a community arts survey from August through mid October 2024. The survey included three parts: 1) a vision for Sammamish, 2) arts and culture programming, and public art preferences, and 3) demographic data. The intent of the survey framing was to ask respondents to think about how their vision for the city could be furthered through arts and culture activities and installations.

Survey Takeaways:

- 1. **Vision:** Use art to create a more connected, environmentally sustainable, vibrant, and inclusive community.
- 2. **Geography:** Focus art in community hubs like the Sammamish Commons, city parks, and along major roads. Fewer respondents spoke about neighborhood art.
- 3. **Public Art:** Produce highly visible art such as murals and sculptures. Incorporate more functional art into city facilities. Use art to magnify the city’s natural attributes, culture, and heritage.
- 4. **Arts & Culture Programming:** Focus on arts workshops, providing places for members of the community and local artists to exhibit their artwork, improving access to performing arts space, and especially prioritize live music.

1. **Existing Condition:** Respondents describe the city as family oriented, diverse, safe, and green.
2. **Vision:** respondents would like the city to become more sustainable, lively or vibrant, walkable, and community focused.
3. **Role of Arts:** Respondents believe that arts and culture offerings can magnify the City's natural attributes, cultural diversity, history, and native heritage. It can also serve to build community and togetherness. These themes cohere closely with the 2024 Comprehensive Plan vision.

[illegible][illegible]

1. **Existing Level of Service priorities (Figure 4):** Respondents love Concerts in the Park and the City's permanent art. Figure 4 may indicate not only what activities are most popular, but which ones have the best advertisement.
2. **Arts & Culture Activities (Figure 5):** Respondents want more live music, arts and craft festivals, and live performances. Literary, historical, and cultural events are less popular. However, live music and performance can still prioritize these themes.
3. **Public Art (Figure 7):** Respondents want the City to prioritize investments in functional art - that is, art whose primary function is not as an art object. Common site features like benches and bike racks are opportunities for functional art (Figure 8). Respondents preferred highly visible types of art such as murals and sculptures over mosaics, banners, and digital art.

Event	Number of People
Concerts in the Park	33
Permanent Art	18
Art Class in the Park	13
Other	7
Rotating Exhibits at City Hall	5
Shakespeare in the Park	5
Lunar New Year	3
Temporary Art	3
Artist Spotlight	2

A horizontal bar chart with the x-axis representing percentages from 0 to 60 in increments of 10. The y-axis lists nine categories of cultural activities. Each category has a corresponding colored bar. The bars are ordered from highest to lowest percentage.

Activity	Percentage
Live Music	51
Arts / Craft Festivals	51
Live Performance	49
Youth Arts Activities	35
Art Exhibitions	32
Historical / Cultural Events	30
Literary Events	28
Festivals	25
Other	6

Source	Percentage
Social Media	75%
Websites	45%
Word of Mouth	40%
Activity Guides	22%
Other	8%

1. **Accessibility (Figure 8):** Activities for seniors were ranked least accessible, followed by teen arts and culture activities. This finding could point both to a lack of existing programming, as well as challenges physically accessing opportunities due to the more limited mobility of these two demographics. This finding is born out by conversations during focus groups which particularly cited a lack of bus drivers to transport seniors to events and activities.
2. **Communication (Figure 6):** Most people hear about events happening in Sammamish online, highlighting the importance of building out virtual communications strategies.

Figure 7. What types of public art would you like to see more of in Sammamish?

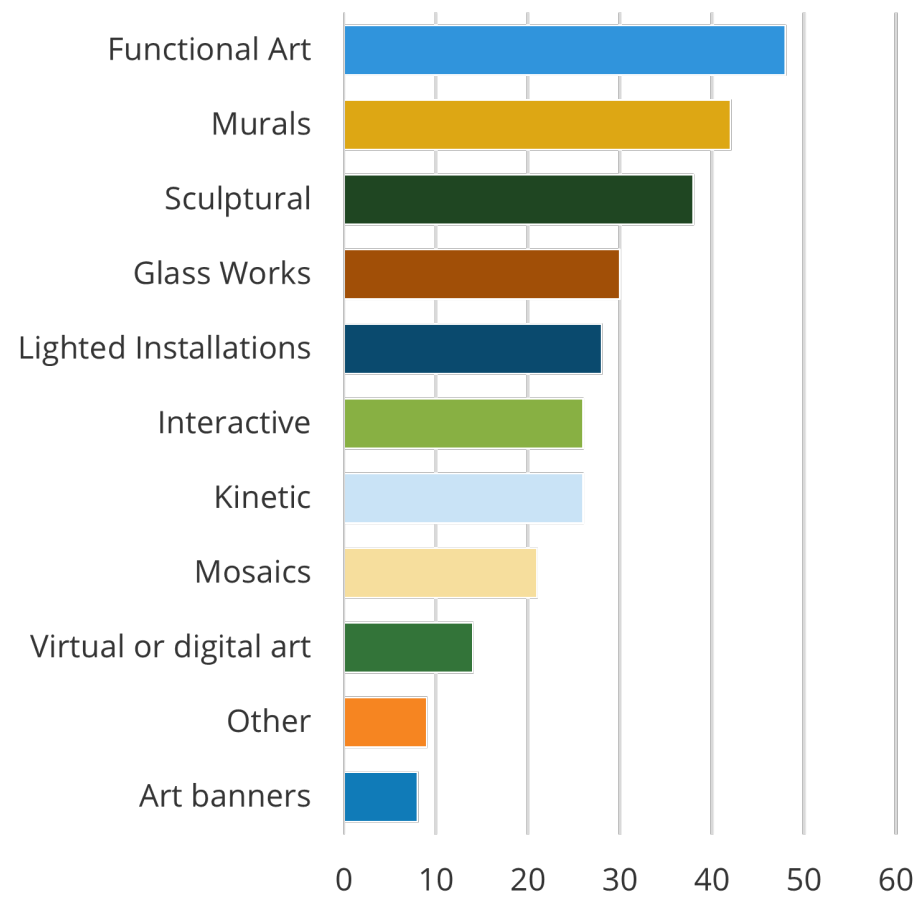
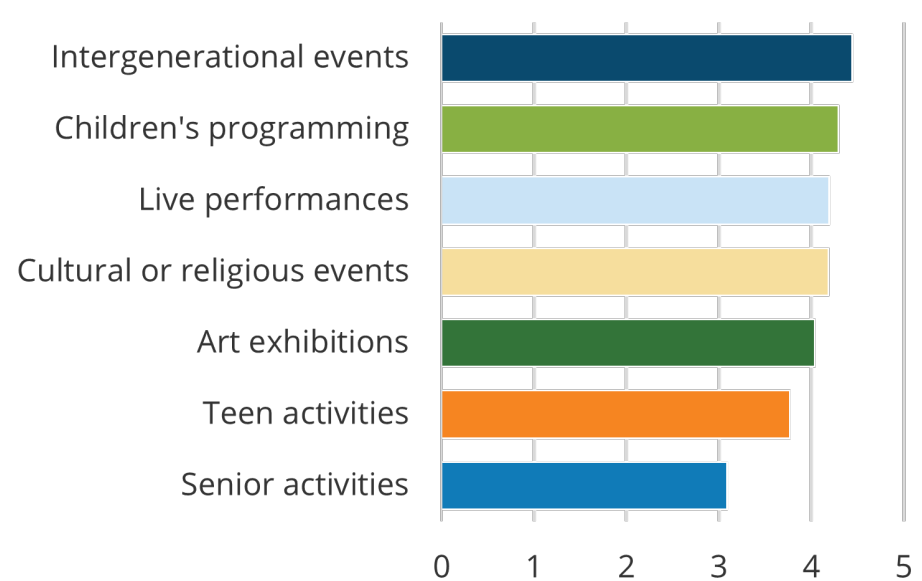


Figure 8. What arts activities are most accessible to you?



Idea for art or arts programming

We asked respondents to provide us with one idea to shape arts or arts programming in Sammamish. We divided those ideas into seven types of interventions.

1. **public art** (20 ideas):
Keywords - nature, native art, technology, interactive, neighborhoods, heritage, mural
2. **music/theater performances** (8 ideas):
Keywords - concerts, interactive, intercultural, spoken word
3. **art exhibitions** (8 ideas):
Keywords - display, sell, art show, inclusive, rotating, pop-up
4. **arts and culture facilities** (8 ideas):
Keywords - indoor, year-round, community, theater, venues, classes, makerspaces
5. **art classes/workshops** (6 ideas):
Keywords - art, consistent, kids, seniors
6. **communicating about art opportunities** (4 ideas):
Keywords - social media, arts calls, local artists

We need facilities that can host events year around!

Sammamish has evolved into a very culturally diverse community. Offering programing in dance, theater, spoken word, music that highlights all of this and offers an opportunity for ALL the communities to come together and learn about each other.

More live musical performances and more opportunities for local performers to perform. More interactive performances where audiences are engaged and called on to join in.

There is so much musical and performance-oriented talent here. A community theatre would be a very popular fixture for performers and audiences alike.

Montana State has painted buffalo scattered throughout the state, I'd like to see something similar in Sammamish on a smaller scale. There would be a template animal (voted on by the public) that would be designed and painted by a local artist.

Would love a culturally relevant lighted display located centrally in Sammamish to get us through the dark winter nights. Something uplifting.

Fountains: Sammamish has lots of water and fountains/water fountains with potable water for drinking are a beautiful way to incorporate art, nature, and practical needs for people enjoying the outdoors in the city.

Would love to see some type of art piece that provided information/photos/sculpture, etc. about the history of Sammamish over past decades (e.g., about the people who lived here, early businesses in the area, how and why the area/city evolved, etc.

A dedicated performing arts center which houses everything from art classes (both scheduled and drop-in studio) to theater/music performances to public speakers/lecture series to a maker space. A space such as this would lead to a more vibrant community.

Where should art go?

We asked respondents to tell us where they would like the City to prioritize arts and culture investment.

- 1. Sammamish Commons
- 2. Public Parks
- 3. City Hall

“This is one of the busiest and most boring intersections in Sammamish, but also one the best places for rotating art to be displayed at the center of our community.”

“Utilize the CWU campus for festivals.”

“YMCA/Commons because it is easy to access for everyone.”

“Sammamish Commons - concerts, food trucks, wine tasting, breweries, “taste of” events .”

“Sammamish Lower Commons Park: I’d like to see art integrated with outdoor exercise equipment and bicycle lockers or racks, as I’ve seen in Redmond & Vancouver, WA.”

“I placed at Big Rock Central, but I would love to see more at several parks.”



Figure 9. Where would you like to see arts and culture and what would you like to see?

About our respondents:

100 people took this survey. Survey responses were gathered primarily at community events and through personal network requests by City staff, City Council and the Arts Commission. Many respondents indicated they were farmer’s market and event people - this finding points in part to a potential bias in survey results because we gathered survey responses at a Farmers Market, Sammamish’s 25th anniversary celebration, and the Rotary Club’s Family Fun Fest in addition to email solicitation.

- 1. Most survey respondents indicated that they were nature people, highlighting the self-identification of Sammamish residents as outdoors lovers. This finding resonates with the nature and sustainability focus of Sammamish’s Comprehensive Plan update vision.
- 2. Most respondents said they were hobbyists regarding the activities above. This might have led to responses and ideas that focus more on arts and culture participation than arts production.

Figure 10. What type of art person are you? I am a _____.

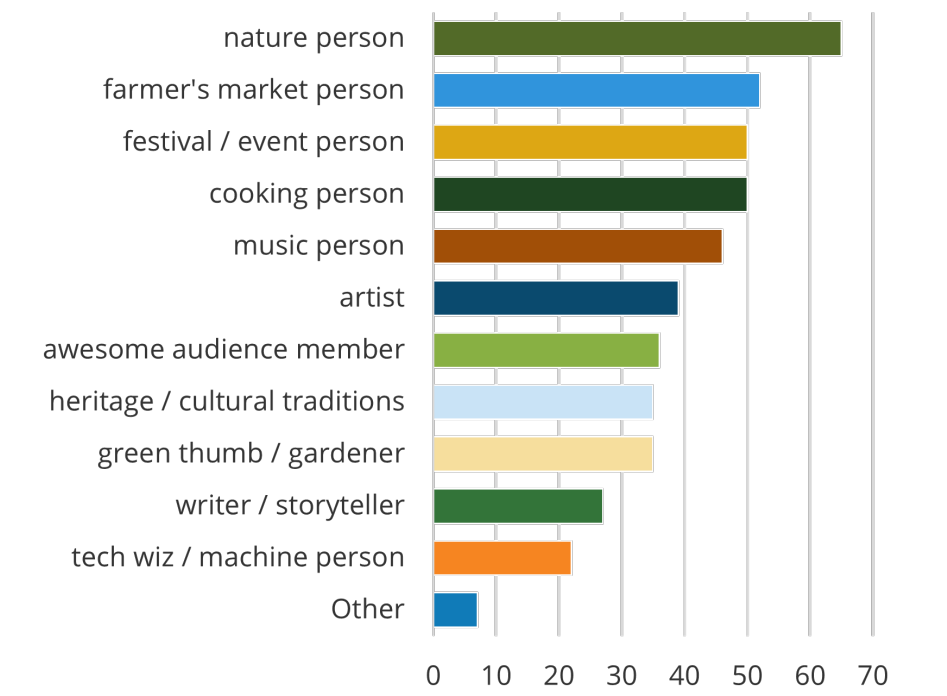


Figure 11. Based on your answer(s) above, what is your level of involvement?

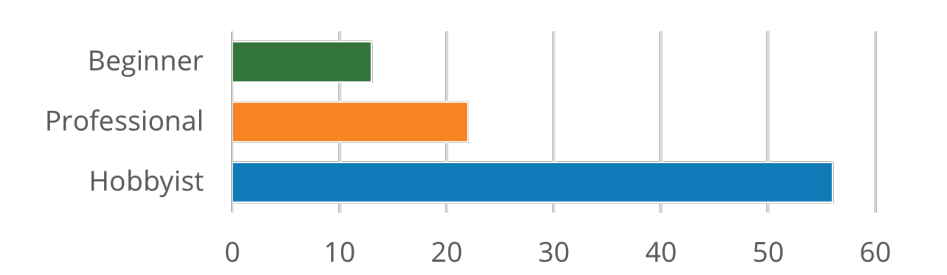
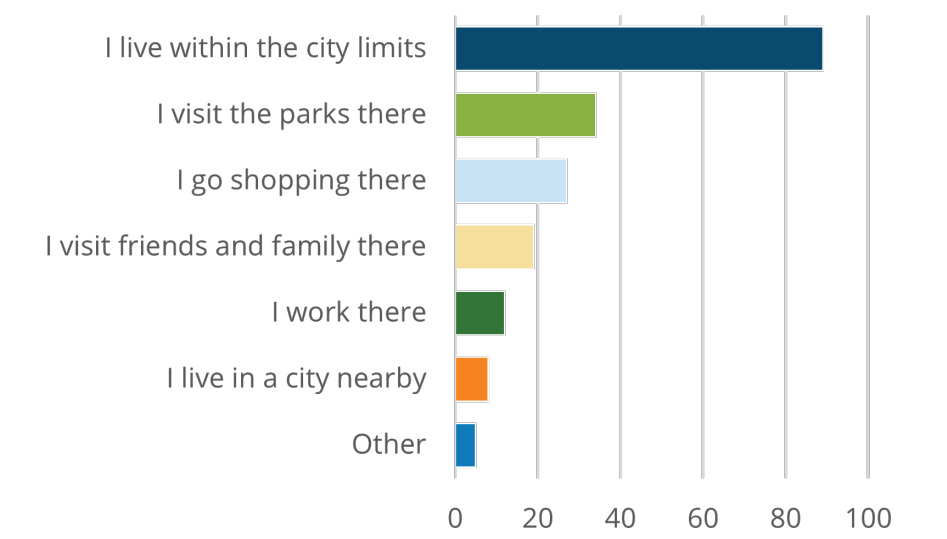


Figure 12. How do you connect to Sammamish?



- 3. Most respondents are members of the Sammamish community. Many of those residents visit parks, shop, and visit friends and family within the city. Fewer work within the city. The majority have kids living with them, although the survey also captured some seniors and students. Similar to the demographics of Sammamish, very few young adults responded.
- 4. Respondents indicated that they were primarily white and/or of Asian heritage.

Figure 13.Which best describes you?

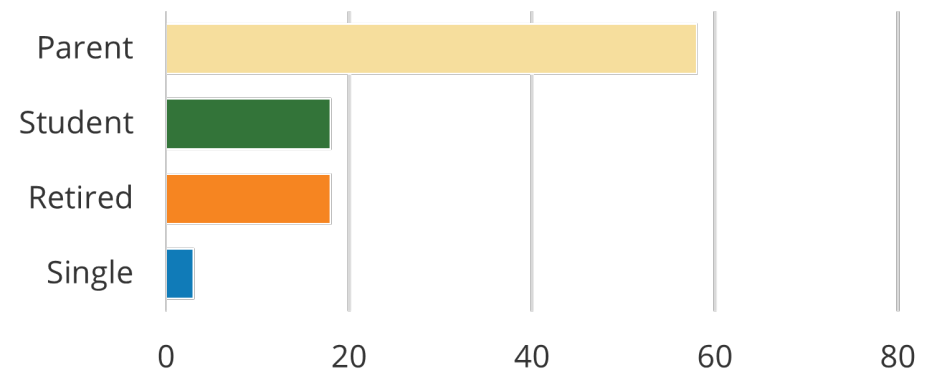
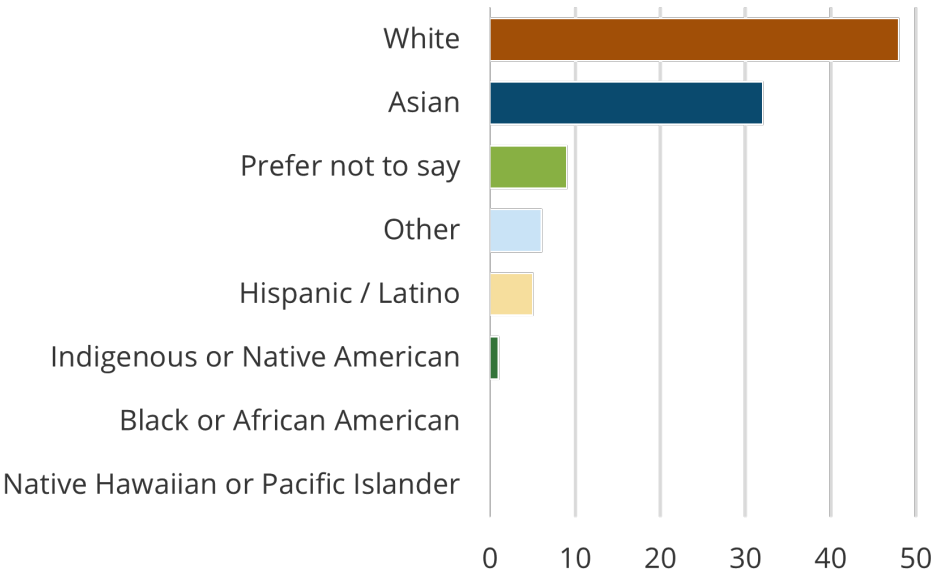


Figure 14.What is your ethnicity?



Focus groups

The project team convened two focus groups with community members involved in key organizations such as the YMCA and Rotary Club. Together, we discussed the life of arts and culture programming in the city, including programs and events that ended with the COVID-19 pandemic and new opportunities hosted by the Aquatics Center and King County Library.

Challenges:

1. Information sharing is a big challenge both because of the generally fractured state of communications infrastructure (diffuse social media presence, lack of a newspaper that everyone reads), and physical locations like a defined town center where people can gather information.
2. Accessing spaces for performing arts: focus group members discussed the lack of a City-owned performing arts space. Local groups work with churches and school districts to access facilities, but sometimes struggle with access and practice space particularly since the pandemic.
3. Lack of transit options poses a challenge for seniors to access community arts and culture activities. Since the pandemic, both the YMCA and senior housing providers have struggled to find bus drivers.

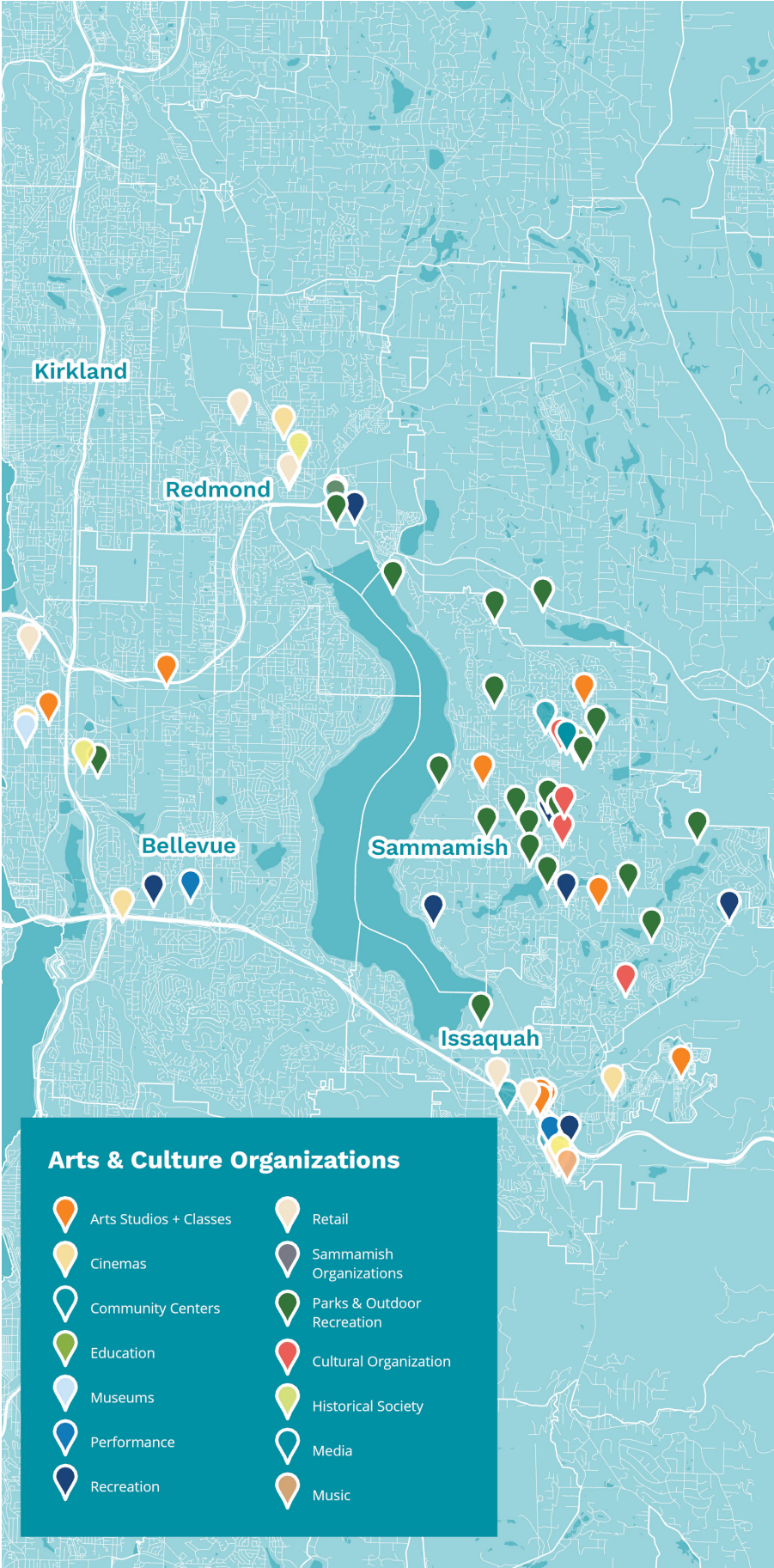
Opportunities:

1. Participants cited the wonderful work of the City in helping clubs such as Rotary pull off events in City owned parks including after-the-fact restoration efforts for high-volume events, as well as helping to construct a course for the annual kids’ Mud Run.
2. The YMCA is already hosting many arts and cultural events on a small scale including a Ramadan breakfast and a community “write-in.”
3. The CWU campus is an incredible resource for indoor community events and activities.
4. There are many engaged and active cultural groups in the community who could organize events if given a process and facilities to do so.

Eastside Arts & Culture Ecosystem

Arts & Culture Map

The map on the right shows a significant cluster of arts and culture offerings in Issaquah and Redmond. The organizations shown were chosen because they serve a more regional audience; this is not an exhaustive list of organizations. As the map shows, Sammamish's arts and culture strength resides in its large number of parks. Most of the City's performance spaces are on school premises or places of worship, presenting challenges for community organizations seeking places to perform and practice. To that end, the goals and policies put forward in chapter three, express the City's commitment to forming partnerships that reduce barriers to accessing regional and local performing arts spaces.



Arts Studios + Classes	
Arts and Logic	Sammamish
Black Horse Art School and Studio	Sammamish
Redmond Art Works	Redmond
Bellevue Library Makerspace	Bellevue
Redmond STEM Center	Bellevue
Mudhouse Pottery Painting	Issaquah
MUSEO Art Academy	Issaquah
The Nifty Knitter	Issaquah
Squak Art Studio LLC	Issaquah
Epic Art	Issaquah
Art by Fire	Issaquah
Cinemas	
AMC Factoria 8	Bellevue
Cinemark Lincoln Square Cinemas and IMAX	Bellevue
IPIC Theaters	Redmond
Regal Bella Bottega	Redmond
Regal Issaquah Highlands	Issaquah
Community Centers	
King County Library System Service Center	Issaquah
Issaquah Library	Issaquah
Issaquah Community Center	Issaquah
Issaquah Senior Center	Issaquah
Muslim Association of Puget Sound (MAPS)	Redmond
Sammamish Library	Sammamish
Angelic Care Senior Care Sammamish	Sammamish
Eastside Friends of Seniors	Sammamish
Education	
Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning	Sammamish
Museums	
Bellevue Arts Museum	Bellevue
Recreation	
Backstage Dance Studio	Bellevue
Issaquah Dance Theatre	Issaquah
Gotta Dance	Redmond
Columbia Athletic Clubs, Pine Lake	Sammamish
Glass House Dance	Sammamish
Sammamish Community YMCA	Sammamish
Xiang-He Dance Theatre	Sammamish
Parks & Outdoor Recreation	
Bellevue Botanical Garden	Bellevue
Lake Sammamish State Park	Issaquah
Marymoor Park	Redmond

Big Rock Park Central	Sammamish
The Lower Commons	Sammamish
Sammamish Skatepark	Sammamish
Beaver Lake Park	Sammamish
Beaver Lake Preserve	Sammamish
Big Rock Park North	Sammamish
Big Rock Park South	Sammamish
Eastlake Community Fields	Sammamish
East Lake Sammamish Trail	Sammamish
East Sammamish Park	Sammamish
Ebright Creek Park	Sammamish
Illahee Trail Park	Sammamish
Klahanie Park	Sammamish
Northeast Sammamish Park	Sammamish
Pine Lake Park	Sammamish
Sammamish Landing Park	Sammamish
Evans Creek Preserve	Union Hill
Performance	
Carlson & StopGap Theatres	Bellevue
Miller's Music and Event Venue	Carnation
Village Theatre	Issaquah
Spotlight Repertory NW	Sammamish
Retail	
Silver Platters	Bellevue
Walls of Books	Issaquah
Hammond Ashley Violins	Issaquah
Brick & Mortar Books	Redmond
The Mighty Quinn Brass and Winds	Redmond
Other + Sammamish Orgs.	
Small Hands on Art	Sammamish
The Garage - Teen cafe	Issaquah
Music	
Issaquah Philharmonic Orchestra	Issaquah
Media	
Titre Avval	Sammamish
Historical Society	
Tolt Historical Society Museum	Carnation
Eastside Heritage Center	Bellevue
Issaquah Historical Society	Issaquah
Redmond Historical Society	Redmond
Cultural Organization	
Slovenska miza	Sammamish
Sadhana	Sammamish
Sammamish Heritage Society	Sammamish
Sammamish Chinese School	Sammamish
Iskcon Vedic Cultural Center	Sammamish