

WASHINGTON D.C. CULTURAL PLAN



1. Context and cultural characteristics

Founded in 1791, the capital of United States Washington, D.C., is located on the Potomac River bordering Maryland and Virginia with a total area of 68.34 square miles (177.0 km²), and it has a population of 702,455 inhabitants. The city's history has formed a uniquely rich local culture shaped by its role as one of the first places to abolish slavery; home to jazz, go-go and punk music; the civil rights movement; and the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Questioning (LGBTQ) movement. Named in honor of George Washington, is one of the most visited cities in the world, with more than 25 million tourists annually.

The city's community identity is inextricable from its distinction as the nation's capital. The District's locally-oriented cultural organizations reflect its complex history as a city of power, opportunity and oppression. Washington D.C. grew as a center of influence while serving as a refuge for the oppressed. The city's culture reflects the stories and traditions from generations of people who migrated from other states and countries.

District culture and Black culture are deeply intertwined. The culture of Black people in the District has left a lasting impact on the city, nation and world. Over the past twenty years, the District has been growing and changing. The city is more diverse but no longer majority Black. However, the city's leading role in national Black culture is evident.

Most recently the District's culture has undergone further evolution as the city experiences a new wave of population growth driven by residents seeking opportunities in the city's growing economy.

DC is a global city with more than two centuries of experience hosting the international community. Today, 170 nations are represented in Washington D.C. Over time, the culture has been infused with cultural traditions from nations around the world. These influences have helped the city become a more diverse and inclusive international community.

THROUGH AGENDA 21 FOR CULTURE, THE DISTRICT HAS BEEN INSPIRED TO INCORPORATE CULTURE AS THE FOURTH PILLAR JOINING SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY. _____

2. Precedent and challenges

Cultural space and identity have been fundamental parts of the city's resurgence. Beginning in the 1980s, cultural uses anchored revitalization of the downtown central employment area. The revitalization built on the area's long history as the city's economic and cultural epicenter by using storied venues such as Ford's Theatre, the Warner Theatre and National Theatre as anchors.

Cultural organizations were able to build on the area's central location, extensive transportation, large worker population and throngs of visitors to build one of the nation's leading theater and entertainment areas. Downtown's culturally anchored revitalization provided a strong base and template for subsequent efforts across the city.

The District's deeply layered and continually evolving cultural geography needs all of these types of cultural space. The shared experiences and traditions that form in communities are important and will continue to guide the District's cultural stakeholders as we move forward.

Through Agenda 21 for culture, the District has been inspired to incorporate culture as its fourth sustainability pillar joining social, economic, and environmental sustainability. This approach means the District will develop strategies that harness opportunities that align all four pillars to maximize the benefits and sustainability of economic development. Actively maintaining and growing the District's cultural fabric will help the city grow inclusively by creating new cultural opportunities while reinforcing connections to the city's heritage. Balancing cultural and economic needs is one of the most challenging issues of our time.

The Cultural Plan has been implemented by a multi-sector, interdisciplinary Steering Committee that will use the following eight principles to shape the investments, programs and initiatives recommended in this Plan:

1. AFFIRM that existing cultural practices, heritage and organizations are important to the District.
2. ALIGN and expand programs that support creators.
3. DEPLOY grant funding strategically to incubate creators.
4. CREATE programs that support innovation in cultural funding.
5. FORM stronger linkages between real estate development and cultural space production.
6. PROMOTE the District's cultural opportunities to local, regional, national and international audiences through partnerships.
7. BUILD partnerships with local and federal cultural organizations that increase cultural access for District residents.

8. INVEST time and resources collectively through shared stewardship with every resident and stakeholder to support and lift-up cultural expressions.

3. Beginnings and goals

For the District Act of 2015, the DC Council directed the Office of Planning (OP) to develop a comprehensive Cultural Plan for the District to better understand the city's cultural needs and guide cultural investments. The Council's legislation also called for a multi-sector implementation committee to develop partnerships and initiatives that build on this Plan's recommendations to achieve lasting results. The planning team analyzed the District's cultural resources, programs and economy. The team then hosted a series of community conversations called INTERMISSION DC where all District residents and cultural stakeholders were invited to take a break from cultural practice and share their experiences, concerns and perspectives.

Based on the research and input, the planning team developed three mutually reinforcing strategies for cultural creators, space and consumers that converge with a funding roadmap for both existing and potential programs.

These three interlocking strategies provide mutually reinforcing recommendations that are tied together by convergence recommendations. This approach increases outlets for cultural producers, entrepreneurs and organizations while creating more opportunities for cultural participation among residents and visitors.

The Cultural Plan lays out a series of strategies and tools to achieve twelve goals. These aspirational goals are the leverage points that the Plan will change to make DC culture more sustainable, inclusive and equitable.

THE PLANNING TEAM DEVELOPED THREE MUTUALLY REINFORCING STRATEGIES FOR CULTURAL CREATORS, SPACE AND CONSUMERS THAT CONVERGE WITH A FUNDING FOR BOTH EXISTING AND POTENTIAL PROGRAMS.

CULTURAL CREATORS

- Cultural Creators will develop their practice with the support of aligned educational and technical assistance resources.
- Cultural Creators will have increased access to affordable housing.
- Cultural Creators will have increased access to affordable production space.
- Cultural Creators will be empowered to build careers as creators.

CULTURAL SPACES

- Cultural Space in the public realm and in public facilities will be platforms for expression.
- Cultural Space will be more accessible.
- Cultural Space will be increased and maintained as community anchors.
- Cultural Space creation will be linked to the city's growth.

CULTURAL CONSUMERS

- Cultural Consumers will have more information about cultural events in the city.

- Cultural Consumers will have access to a broader and more diverse range of cultural practices.
- Cultural Consumers will have inclusive access to cultural spaces and practices.
- Cultural Consumers will experience culture in every community.

4. Impact

DC Cultural Plan lays out a vision on how the government and its partners can build upon, strengthen, and invest in the creators, spaces, and consumers that support and create culture within the city. The Plan's recommendations are designed to promote shared stewardship of culture, organizational innovation, and leveraged funding to sustain the city's cultural core and create new opportunities for historically under-represented creators and communities.

The District leverage new partnerships to create opportunities for more cultural space in communities across the city. Leveraging new funding sources will enable the District to dedicate more of its cultural funding for programming, which will increase support for diverse cultural practices unique to the city.

With Social Impact Investment, the plan wants to invest in organizations and funds to generate measurable and beneficial social impact alongside a financial return. This is a funding model that offers scalable financial resources to nonprofit and for-profit companies that produce measurable social impact while utilizing high standards of financial planning and management.

This plan establishes a framework for growing District culture to be equitable and sustainable by partnering and increasing the efficiency of the District's investments.

The plan allows for the expansion of Washington DC's cultural sector by empowering creators while introducing innovative approaches to cultural space and advancing equitable opportunities for cultural consumers. The Plan strengthens arts, humanities, culture and heritage in all communities across the city by increasing cultural participation, supporting creators, stimulating cultural production and informing decision-making.

THE CULTURAL PLAN LAYS OUT A SERIES OF STRATEGIES AND TOOLS TO ACHIEVE 12 ASPIRATIONAL GOALS WHICH ARE LEVERAGE POINTS AIMING AT MAKING DC CULTURE MORE SUSTAINABLE, INCLUSIVE AND EQUITABLE.

RECOMMENDED INVESTMENTS

- Expand capacity building grants through partnerships
- Create a Cultural Innovation and Entrepreneurship Revolving Loan Fund
- Create a Cultural Facilities Fund
- Institute a Cultural Space Tax Credit Program
- Create a Cultural Navigator Position for the Center for Cultural Opportunity
 - Create an online storefront through the Made in DC Brand
 - Create a web-based Center for Cultural Opportunity platform
- Create a Community Event Security Fund
- Expand The Labs at DC Public Library
- Invest in marketing

The DC Cultural Plan is a roadmap for sustainable and inclusive culture in the District that harnesses the forces changing the city. This Plan help the District to infuse the city with culture everywhere and it is representative of Washington, DC's residents and the city's heritage by creating accessible opportunities for cultural creators, spaces and consumers.

PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

- DC Inclusive Innovation Fund: <https://dmped.dc.gov/page/about-dc-inclusive-innovation-fund>
- Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) Program: <https://dhcd.dc.gov/page/low-income-housing-tax-credit-lihtc-program>
- Made in DC Brand: <http://thisismadeindc.com/>

5. D.C. Plan and the Agenda 21 for culture

To build on the experiences from peer cities, the District has joined the United Cities and Local Governments Culture 21 initiative. By joining Agenda 21 for culture, the District is tapping into a wealth of experience from cities around the world. By partnering with international peers that help advance cultural policies that support sustainable economic development, the District refines its own cultural policies.

Washington DC has already deployed a cultural audit tool developed by Agenda 21 for Culture. It participates in peer learning exchanges with government leaders from cities around the world to learn about techniques to strengthen culture and preserve heritage while sustaining growth.

Align with Agenda 21 for Culture helps to identify the ways culture can be embedded across government functions, institutionalizing culture and ensuring that public sector actions are serving multiple objectives, including uplifting the cultural sector.

6. Further information

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