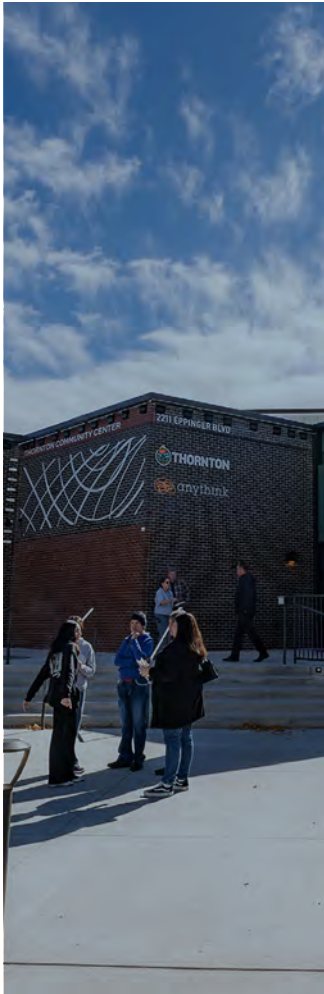




THORNTON ARTS AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN

2026

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RECOMMENDATIONS

CITY COUNCIL

Jan Kulmann, Mayor of Thornton
Justin Martinez, Ward 1
Cherish Salazar, Ward 1
John Alge, Ward 2
Roberta Ayala, Ward 2, Mayor Pro Tempore
David Acunto, Ward 3
Devin Byrd, Ward 3
Drew Morris, Ward 4
Chris Russell, Ward 4

CITY STAFF

Tansy Hayward, City Manager
Chris Steinke, Interim Parks Recreation and Community Programs Director
Alisa Zimmerman, Arts & Culture Manager
Kassandra Mestemaker, Arts & Culture Coordinator
Brenda Wiegert, Arts & Culture Support Specialist
Erica Schmitt, Public Art Coordinator

TASHCO BOARD

Joel Castenada-Duran
Gabriel Cervantes
Peter Duong
Stacey Flint
Andrea Lucero
Cheryn Miller-Crock
Jessie Myers
Stephanie Ortiz
Amanda Pedrianes
Amy Phillips
Shannon Price
Style Russell
Morganne Sparks
Lauren Turner

DESIGNING LOCAL

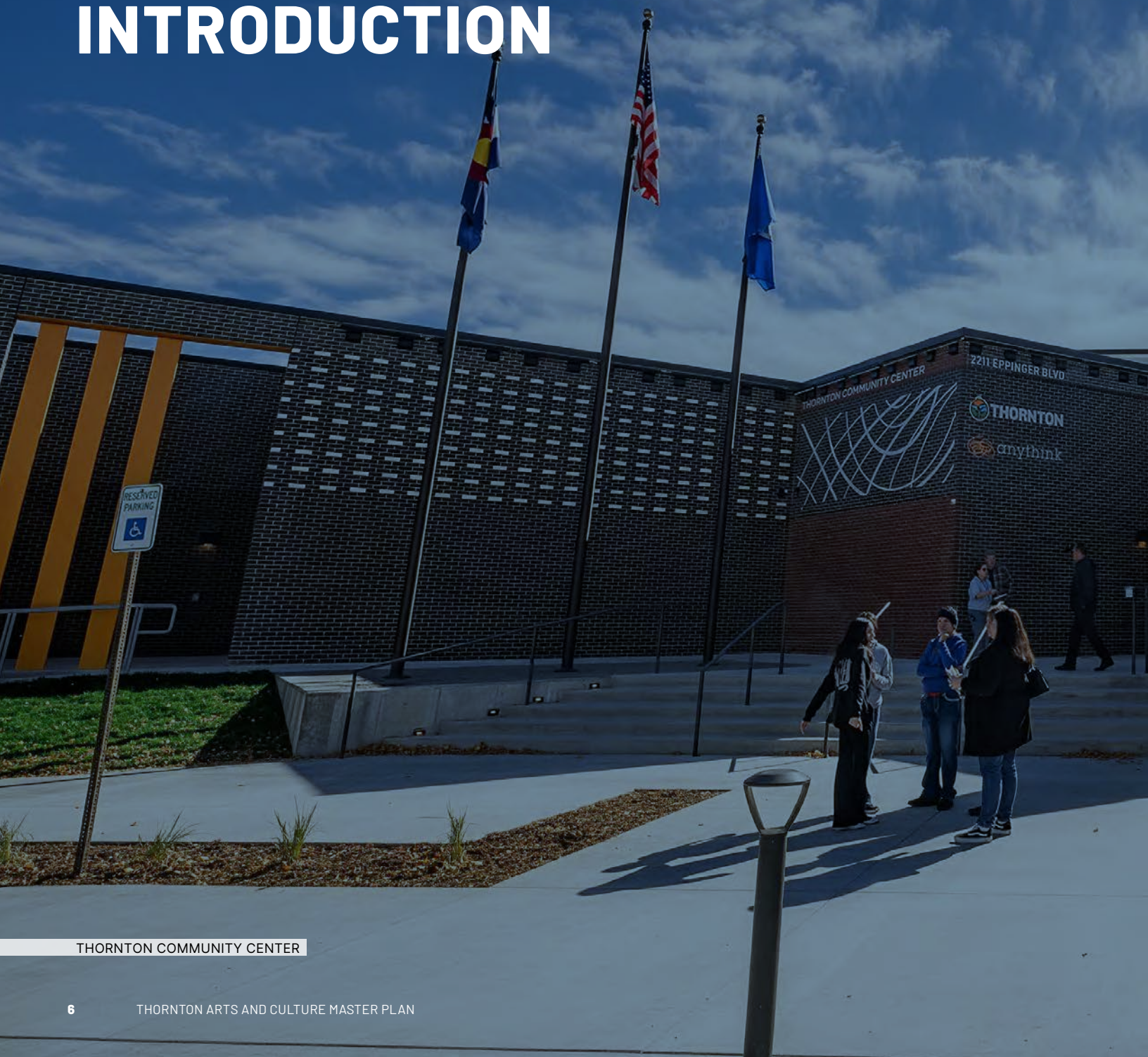
Josh Lapp, Principal & Co-Founder
Jasmine Metcalf, Project Manager
Andrew Eble, Urban Planner
Gabrielle Smith, Urban Planner



DIANNE COOPER, *COMMUNIS*, 2010

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION



THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTER



Why this plan?

Dear Thornton Community:

We are proud to present the 2026 Arts and Culture Master Plan. This document serves as a roadmap for both immediate action and long-term investment in the creative life of our community. It outlines strategies to strengthen existing exhibits, events, classes, concerts, and public art, while also introducing new initiatives that expand opportunities for local artists and cultural organizations to enrich our City's quality of life.

The Master Plan directly supports the City's Strategic Plan, with particular focus on two key priorities:

- **Vibrant and Purposeful Development** – Integrating arts and cultural amenities into public and private development projects to strengthen Thornton's identity and create distinctive, welcoming spaces.
- **Connected Communities** – Expanding meaningful, year-round experiences that engage the senses, foster creativity, and bring people together across neighborhoods and generations.

This plan reflects the collective vision of our community. It was developed through collaboration with Thornton residents, City Council and staff, the Thornton Arts, Sciences and Humanities Council, and numerous community stakeholders. Their insights, ideas, and passion have shaped a forward-looking strategy that honors our community's character while embracing new possibilities.

We extend our sincere appreciation to everyone who contributed to this process. And look forward to continuing this work together to position our City as a vibrant destination for arts and culture.

Sincerely,

Chris Steinke

Interim Parks Recreation and Community Programs Director
City of Thornton, Colorado



Letter from TASHCO

Letter from TASHCO to be added here upon completion

Executive Summary

The 2026 Thornton Arts and Culture Master Plan serves as both an immediate roadmap and a long-term investment strategy for the city's creative ecosystem. Rather than evaluating culture as an isolated luxury, this plan formally integrates creative amenities into the city's broader municipal framework to drive public well-being and economic development. Designed to directly align with the City's Strategic Plan, it targets two core development priorities: Vibrant and Purposeful Development—which integrates artistic accents into public and private infrastructure—and Connected Communities—which builds year-round, generational engagement across all local wards.

ENGAGEMENT BY THE NUMBERS

The goals and strategies outlined in this document are rooted in a multi-layered, resident-informed process that captured the distinct cultural aspirations of Thornton's community:

- **178 Complete Survey Responses:** Collected via the dedicated Master Plan online public survey from August to December 2025.
- **300+ Direct Touchpoints:** Logged via interactive community pop-ups and targeted goal-preference activities.
- **3 Major Event Activations:** Implemented directly at high-traffic gatherings, including Thornton WinterFest and the inaugural Dino Fest.
- **Focused Stakeholder Convenings:** Completed through comprehensive deep-dives with City Council members, department staff, and the Thornton Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Council (TASHCO)

SENTIMENT & PARTICIPATION BARRIERS

Data collection revealed established local enthusiasm for cultural programs, but highlighted significant gaps in visibility and structural access:

- **Primary Motivations:** Residents engage with local arts experiences primarily to have fun, gain knowledge, and experience relaxation.
- **The Visibility Barrier:** The single most pervasive hurdle to local participation is a fundamental lack of awareness. Thirty-seven percent (37%) of residents noted they simply do not know what cultural activities are actively being offered in their community.
- **Unmet Space Demands:** Thirty-four percent (34%) of household respondents reported that their localized needs for public art and art galleries are completely or partially unmet. Strong demands were also identified for expanded performing arts options, including live concert series and local theater productions.

CORE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Five foundational takeaways were identified by community stakeholders to establish a sustainable long-term creative environment:

- **Developing Dedicated Arts Infrastructure & Placemaking:** Resolving the current lack of a centralized downtown hub or designated arts spaces by constructing purposeful gathering areas.
- **Addressing Financial Infrastructure & Public Buy-in:** Securing transparent, permanent funding models (such as per-capita tax levies or developer contributions) to sustain operations.
- **Clarifying Roles, Capacity, & Communications:** Expanding staff resources within the Arts & Culture team and streamlining overlapping programming workflows between municipal divisions and external nonprofit partners.
- **Building a Unified Thornton Identity:** Deploying inclusive, cross-ward programming that purposefully reflects and celebrates the growing Latino and Asian communities inside the city.
- **Leveraging Public Art in the Built Environment:** Maximizing capital projects and new private residential expansions through visible, public-facing creative accents like park sculptures and utility box transformations.

OVERARCHING PROGRAM GOALS

To translate these needs into long-range civic impact, Thornton will orient its future cultural investments around four foundational markers:

- **Experience:** Foster authentic, recurring, culturally informed arts experiences for all ages.
- **Sustainability:** Build sustainable, leveraged funding tied directly to city growth, private development, and regional partnerships.
- **Identity:** Shape an authentic arts identity rooted in Thornton's people, youth, and places.
- **Visibility:** Expand municipal resources and cross-divisional support models to lift artistic visibility community-wide.

Master Plan Strategies & Actions

STRATEGY 1: EXPAND CAPACITY WITHIN THE CITY TO MEET GROWING DEMAND FOR THE ARTS.

- **Action 1.1:** Intentionally formalize and elevate Arts & Culture within the municipal structure, placing it on par with other core quality-of-life services like Parks and Recreation.
- **Action 1.2:** Apply a singular, universally recognizable branding identity to all city-provided public art programs, seasonal classes, and multicultural festivals.
- **Action 1.3:** Implement an integrated, cross-divisional operational model linking Arts & Culture, Parks & Recreation, and Communications to unify scheduling, permitting, and marketing.
- **Action 1.4:** Expand financial and operational resources to ensure staffing structures keep pace with upcoming population growth.
- **Action 1.5:** Build data-driven accountability by augmenting annual reporting with standardized post-event digital surveys, geofencing, and place-based intercept analytics.

STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE THE ECOSYSTEM OF LOCAL ARTISTS AND CREATIVES TO BOLSTER OPPORTUNITIES.

- **Action 2.1:** Establish a dedicated annual mini-grant and temporary artist-in-residency framework to fund public creative outputs across multiple disciplines.
- **Action 2.2:** Develop a centralized Artist and Arts Educator Directory to link local creators with upcoming regional commissions and instructional positions.
- **Action 2.3:** Coordinate a pre-qualified list of local cultural creators to revitalize and advance the city's former "Arts Ambassadors" community-outreach program.
- **Action 2.4:** Host reoccurring, industry-specific networking mixers and annual convenings to foster deeper peer-to-peer collaboration and track local workspace concerns.
- **Action 2.5:** Empower the citizen-led TASHCO board as the primary community leader for local arts advocacy, nonprofit partner integration, and grassroots planning input.

STRATEGY 3: ACTIVATE SPACES ACROSS THE COMMUNITY FOR BROAD CULTURAL ACCESS.

- **Action 3.1:** Launch a flexible neighborhood-scale activation program that drops dynamic pop-up art, poetry readings, and acoustic sets into non-traditional venues.
- **Action 3.2:** Mobilize the mobile Arts Trailer to bring specialized cultural materials, workshops, and instruction directly into underserved neighborhoods.
- **Action 3.3:** Secure tactical grant avenues to systematically expand the existing utility box wrap program and fund new public street murals.
- **Action 3.4:** Formulate a community-initiated art policy to construct sanctioned mural zones and street-art walls near public skate parks and open spaces.
- **Action 3.5:** Disperse public installations equitably across all geographic wards, utilizing collection mapping to resolve the gap in areas like Ward 4.

STRATEGY 4: SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN SIGNATURE COMMUNITY OFFERINGS.

- **Action 4.1:** Move toward a curatorial approach by appointing seasonal guest creators to construct distinct thematic umbrellas across the annual calendar.
- **Action 4.2:** Increase structural funding and operational support for beloved hallmark festivals, specifically Día de los Muertos, Dino Fest, Pride, and Juneteenth.
- **Action 4.3:** Collaborate directly with local cultural associations and specialized nonprofits to ensure festival lineups feature authentic, culturally responsive programming.
- **Action 4.4:** Build diverse visual, performing, and literary art showcases that reflect the growing demographics of emerging local populations.
- **Action 4.5:** Secure private corporate sponsorships to create self-sustaining annual revenue streams that shield marquee events from general budget fluctuations.

STRATEGY 5: IDENTIFY NEW AVENUES OF FUNDING AND RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN AND SUSTAIN ARTS AND CULTURE LOCALLY.

- **Action 5.1:** Maximize regional capital access by aggressively and strategically pursuing tier-level grant structures from the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD).
- **Action 5.2:** Explore a localized, long-range per-capita funding model or dedicated sales tax levy to anchor continuous municipal creative support.
- **Action 5.3:** Expand strategic intergovernmental alignments with Anythink Libraries, local school districts, and premier institutions like the Denver Art Museum.
- **Action 5.4:** Introduce a formal percent-for-art municipal policy requiring new public capital construction projects to dedicate a percentage of budgets to artistic assets.
- **Action 5.5:** Incentivize private developers to blend visible artistic interventions or neighborhood squares directly into massive multi-family and commercial builds.

STRATEGY 6: BRING RECOGNITION TO THE CREATIVE FABRIC OF THORNTON.

- **Action 6.1:** Formally designate and zone the borders of Original Thornton as an emerging creative place, laying out clear contiguous and walkable pathways.
- **Action 6.2:** Establish an underlying inventory of creative assets, micro-enterprises, and visual spaces within the district to prepare for formal state certification.
- **Action 6.3:** Implement unified district branding, custom neighborhood wayfinding systems, and dedicated capital investments for public gateway landmarks.
- **Action 6.4:** Repurpose or incentivize underutilized urban parcels into flexible workspace tools, including low-cost visual arts studios, creative labs, and live/work complexes.
- **Action 6.5:** Deliver on the community's top-supported priority by advancing a scaled approach to build a standalone, community-centered Cultural Arts Center featuring a flexible 300–500 seat auditorium, shared rehearsal rooms, and mixed-use gallery spaces.

EXISTING FUNDING



SKY PARK

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES DISTRICT (SCFD)

TASHCO secures annual SCFD grant funding for community programs and public art acquisitions. SCFD funds are distributed through a multi-tiered system, with most Adams County Cultural Council grantees being Tier III organizations. TASHCO received \$25,835 in SCFD grants in 2025.

**SCFD grants require grantees to secure funding from additional sources as a grant match. (class fees, ticket sales, fundraising campaigns)*



SALES AND USE TAX FOR PARKS AND OPEN SPACE (0.25%)

A 0.25% sales and use tax, approved by voters in 1997 and extended in 2013 to December 31, 2038, dedicates proceeds to parks and open space projects. Up to 20% of annual revenues from this tax can be used for maintenance costs. This tax generates approximately \$6,100,000 each year.

CURRENT OPERATIONS



THORNTON ARTS, SCIENCES, AND HUMANITIES COUNCIL (TASHCO)

TASHCO is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established by the City of Thornton to cultivate and promote arts and humanities in the community. Its vision is to “Capture the hearts and minds of all Thornton Citizens and enhance the quality of their lives through exposure and involvement in the arts, sciences and humanities”. The TASHCO Board of Directors is appointed by the Thornton City Council. TASHCO’s goals include championing Thornton as a strong arts community, sustaining itself as a recognizable part of the City’s artistic infrastructure, presenting diverse programs, including the community’s diverse nature in planning, establishing partnerships, and developing reliable funding sources.

SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL FACILITIES DISTRICT

The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) is a special regional tax district of the State of Colorado that provides funding for art, music, theater, dance, zoology, botany, natural history, and cultural history organizations in the Denver Metropolitan Area. In 1988, voters in the Denver region created the SCFD to provide a consistent source of unrestricted funding to scientific and cultural organizations. It is funded by a 0.1% sales and use tax amounting to one penny on every \$10 spent in the following seven counties: Adams, Arapahoe, Boulder, Broomfield, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson.



THORNTON ARTS AND CULTURE DIVISION

This is a division within the City's Parks, Recreation and Community Programs Department. It coordinates the programming and promotion of arts and humanities, art exhibits, classes, performances, and cultural events. Its goal is to identify and cultivate support, interest, and involvement in visual and performing arts, historical preservation, and volunteering. The division serves as the City liaison to TASHCO.

ADAMS COUNTY VISUAL ARTS COMMISSION (ACVAC)

ACVAC is responsible for the promotion of public art and cultural and scientific activities in Adams County. The Adams County Board of County Commissioners dedicates ½ of one percent of the total cost of construction on any new county-owned building to carry out the mission of the ACVAC and the Office of Cultural Affairs.

ADAMS COUNTY CULTURAL COUNCIL (ACCC)

ACCC is composed of volunteer appointees who manage the Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) Tier III grant application process for their respective counties.

COLORADO CREATIVE INDUSTRIES (CCI)

Colorado's Creative Industries Division, Colorado's state arts agency, is a division of the Colorado Office of Economic Development and International Trade. Established to capitalize on the immense potential for our creative sector to enhance economic growth in Colorado, the mission of Colorado Creative Industries is to promote, support and expand the creative industries to drive Colorado's economy, grow jobs and enhance our quality of life.



ADAMS COUNTY
COLORADO
PARKS, OPEN SPACE
& CULTURAL ARTS



FACILITIES & CAPITAL INVESTMENTS



THORNTON ARTS AND CULTURE CENTER (TACC)

Located at 9209 and 9211 Dorothy Boulevard, TACC is a central hub for performances, classes, workshops, and art exhibits in the Oz Gallery. It also houses the City's archives and flat art collections. Programming at TACC includes rotating art exhibits, classes, and concerts. TACC's gallery theater facility opened in 2011 and the adjacent Annex opened in 2021, significantly enhancing programming opportunities for the community.



Recent Plans & Studies

2015 SENIOR SERVICES MASTER PLAN

A master plan was completed in 2022, building on a 2015 version that led to the development and opening of the new Active Adult Center and the Active Adult Wing at the Trail Winds Recreation Center. The plan aims to expand access to recreation, holistic wellness, fitness, education, and enrichment for those over fifty-five in the Thornton Community and surrounding areas. As the 55+ population continues to grow, development of programs that serve an expansive variety of needs and interests is imperative to active adults being able to age in place successfully in our community. The division actively advocates for accessible housing options, transportation, and food access to support active adults most basic needs while providing a space that creates a second home and social support network.

2017 ARTFULLY ADAMS ARTS AND CULTURE MASTER PLAN

This plan is currently in effect, shaped by the Adams County Steering Committee and input from county residents. Its primary objectives are to foster engagement in arts and culture, connect artists and organizations, promote artistic endeavors throughout the county, and leverage parks and recreation assets for cultural experiences. For a concise overview of strategies relevant to arts and culture, see the “Strategies at a Glance” table on pages 17-20. Major proposals include attracting a top-tier Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) organization and hosting large-scale cultural events at the Adams County Regional Park and Fairgrounds.

2017 PARKS AND OPEN SPACE MASTER PLAN

This plan, adopted by the City Council in August 2017, represents the fifth update to the original master plan. It establishes a vision for an interconnected system of parks, recreation facilities, trails, and open space, with an emphasis on equitable distribution of resources and the preservation and promotion of the City’s unique environmental, cultural, and historical assets. The Trails Element (Chapter 6) and Appendix 12 outline the Heritage Trail System and Heritage Trail Linkage Plan, which aim to integrate cultural and historical experiences into the City’s trail network. The plan also identifies the continued expansion and enhancement of parks, recreation facilities, open space, and trail connections as a long-term priority, including future recreation facilities and system improvements to meet community needs.



DON MITCHELL, *THE CALLING*, 2010

2017 THORNTON ARTS SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES COUNCIL MASTER PLAN

This master plan has been completed. Its core objectives included championing Thornton as a vibrant arts community, solidifying TASHCO's role in the City's artistic infrastructure, offering a variety of inspiring programs, embracing the community's diverse nature in all planning efforts, and building strong partnerships and sponsorships. The work plan for "OBJ 1: Programming," detailed on pages 7-17, provided specific guidance on identifying and implementing arts and culture events. Furthermore, the plan's support for public art acquisitions and exhibitions continues to be highly relevant to a broader Arts and Culture Master Plan.

2018 THORNTON THEATER STUDY

This study, last revised in May 2018, serves as a reference document offering feasibility research for constructing a theater in Thornton. Its primary aims were to establish a vision and goals for a new cultural arts gathering space, and to assess different program sizes and potential locations for such a venue. The "Site Evaluations" provide detailed insights into various preliminary site options, complete with criteria, photographs, and rankings which would be crucial for any Arts and Culture Master Plan considering new facilities. The study also proposes various building budgets, ranging from \$8.1 million to \$12.2 million, depending on the chosen program size (low, medium, or high).

2019 ARTS, CULTURAL AND EVENT CENTER MARKETING STUDY

This study, completed in 2019 by Victus Advisors, functions as a reference document providing an independent market analysis for a new multi-use arts, cultural, and events center. The core purpose was to determine City Council's interest in such a center, including its desired size and function. The study specifically analyzes various cultural events center options, from a small 200-seat venue costing \$5-10 million to a large 1000-2000-seat facility estimated at \$50-70 million. Pages 18-19 offer a "Budget for 500-seat Center," detailing projected first-year revenues and expenses for an arts and culture venue, anticipating a net operating cost or subsidy of \$333,000.



SKUNK CONTROL, SKYWARDS, 2024

2020 CITY OF THORNTON COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

This plan, adopted by the City Council on July 15, 2020, is currently in effect. Its overarching goals are to guide public and private investments for the future development of the city to align with the community's vision and values, offering policy direction on various aspects of quality of life. Within the "Vision Theme: Providing Great Services and Amenities (GSA)" on pages 3.11-3.14, the plan discusses goals directly related to creating engaging community gathering places, ensuring inclusive amenities and recreation programs, and expanding the City's parks, recreation, open space, and trail system, all of which are pertinent to an Arts and Culture Master Plan. This document also highlights that pursuing the development of signature projects, such as a performing arts center, will enhance the quality of life and attract regional visitors.

2023 PERFORMING ARTS CENTER FEASIBILITY STUDY

This document functions as a comprehensive compilation of research and proposals concerning research and proposals from 2015-2024 concerning a Thornton Performing Arts Center. It provides summaries of previous studies and their recommendations regarding the scale, purpose, and location of a performing arts center in the City. Page 9, under "Additional Information," reveals a total investment of \$347,563 in these studies since 2015 and lists numerous facilities, including various arts and cultural venues, that City staff and consultants have researched.

2024 COMMUNITY INTEREST SURVEY

The 2024 Interest and Opinion Survey, administered by ETC Institute, provides statistically valid community input related to recreation, culture, and arts services in Thornton. The survey collected responses from 457 households, meeting the minimum sample size for a margin of error of ± 4.6 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. The survey identifies levels of interest, satisfaction, unmet needs, and investment priorities related to facilities and programs relevant to arts and culture, including public art and art galleries, visual and performing arts programs, festivals and special events, heritage and history programs, and performing arts facilities. Results also document levels of interest in, perceived need for, and willingness to support a performing arts center, as well as barriers to participation such as lack of awareness, scheduling, and cost. This survey provides a current, resident-informed baseline that helps contextualize demand, gaps, and priorities addressed in the Arts and Culture Master Plan.



KEY SURVEY TAKEAWAYS:

Arts and culture participation is established but not universal.

- 83% of respondents report visiting a City recreation or arts facility in a typical year, and 58% report participating in City programs or events.

Lack of awareness is the primary barrier to participation.

- The most frequently cited reason for not participating or participating more often is not knowing what programs are offered (37%).

Public art and art galleries represent a significant unmet need.

- An estimated 34% of households report their needs for public art and art galleries are only partly met or not met.

Interest in performing arts is evenly split across households.

- 50% of respondents report interest in the performing arts, while satisfaction with current opportunities is mixed, with nearly half (47%) expressing neutral satisfaction.

There is measurable support for a City-owned performing arts center with notable reservations.

- 46% of respondents say it is important or very important for Thornton to have its own performing arts center, and 60% believe the City should build and operate one; however, 33% believe City funds should be directed elsewhere or that private funding should be used.

Performing arts programming shows high unmet demand.

- Concerts, theater productions, and music/dance/theater performances rank among the highest unmet program needs and receive high Priority Investment Ratings.

Festivals and special events are a top arts-related priority.

- Festivals and special events rank high in participation interest, unmet need, and Priority Investment Rating, indicating broad community appeal.

Heritage and history programs are valued but lower priority.

- History museums and heritage programs show moderate unmet need and importance but rank below performing arts and events in overall investment priority.

Survey results indicate opportunity rather than dissatisfaction.

- Neutral satisfaction levels across several arts-related categories suggest openness to expanded or improved offerings rather than dissatisfaction with existing services.

Arts and Culture Program Core Offerings

Thornton's arts and culture programming is delivered through a combination of City-led offerings and partner-presented programs, coordinated through the City's Arts & Culture Division. These efforts are primarily centered at the Thornton Arts & Culture Center (TACC) and extend to other City facilities as appropriate. Together, they provide structured opportunities citywide for residents to engage in visual, performing, and media arts across multiple age groups.

THORNTON ARTS ACADEMY

The Thornton Arts Academy serves as the City's primary framework for year-round instructional arts programming. It encompasses seasonal classes, workshops, and camps for youth and adults, with offerings that rotate by session. Programs include youth art and drama exploration, youth pottery, adult watercolor, drawing, weaving, photography, and other medium-based classes. Registration is managed through the City's recreation registration system, and most classes are offered at affordable rates, thanks to annual grant and city funding.



OZ GALLERY AND EXHIBITION-BASED PROGRAMMING

Exhibitions and gallery-based programming are delivered through the OZ Gallery, located within the Thornton Arts & Culture Center. The gallery hosts rotating exhibitions by local and regional artists and is open to the public during posted hours at no cost. Exhibitions are supported by opening receptions and quarterly artist-led community classes, which provide opportunities for public engagement and interpretation. These events are promoted through City publicity channels.



SECOND SATURDAY COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

The City offers recurring public workshops through its Second Saturday Community Workshop series. Workshop formats vary and include instructor-led, hands-on art activities and open gallery hours associated with OZ Gallery exhibitions. Second Saturday workshops are typically free and designed to be accessible to a broad public audience, with select sessions open to all ages.



Community Events

The City, in coordination with Thornton Arts, Sciences, and Humanities Council (TASHCO) and the Arts & Culture Division, supports arts and cultural programming within several established community events held annually in Thornton. These events integrate performances, visual art, cultural expression, and artist participation into broader City-hosted celebrations, providing highly visible and accessible entry points to arts and culture for residents.

Annual events such as Día de los Muertos, Juneteenth, Pride, and Dino Fest incorporate customized arts and cultural elements that reflect the identity, history, and diversity of the community.

Recent event data for these City-supported celebrations indicates attendance ranging from 1,990 for Juneteenth, Pride, and Dino Fest to over 2,100 for Día de los Muertos, with average length of stay of just over 30 minutes, suggesting sustained engagement rather than brief pass-through attendance. The majority of attendance is concentrated during afternoon and evening hours, consistent with the events' role as community gathering occasions.

Across these events, Arts & Culture and TASHCO provide support that includes artist coordination, cultural programming input, and integration of arts and cultural elements within the broader event framework and logistical planning. Collectively, these community events play an important role in expanding access to arts and culture, increasing visibility of creative activity, and engaging residents who may not regularly participate in facility-based programming.





PARTNERS IN PROGRAMMING

In addition to City-led programs, Thornton partners with regional and national arts organizations to deliver specialized arts programming. These partnerships have included music education programs presented by Inside the Orchestra, hands-on filmmaking experiences through SeriesFest's Mobile Cinema Lab, and youth theater instruction delivered by KidStage. Partner programs are typically offered as one-day workshops, short-term series, or camps and are promoted through City communication channels when hosted at City facilities.

SEASONAL YOUTH PROGRAMS

Seasonal arts camps expand access to creative learning opportunities, particularly during the summer months. Camp offerings include visual arts, pottery, jewelry-making, and theater-based programming for youth. Camps are delivered either directly by the City or through contracted partners and are registered through the City's recreation system. While specific camp topics and instructors vary by year, camps represent a recurring component of Thornton's arts and culture programming.



SUMMARY OF EXISTING PROGRAMMING

Together, these cultural events and arts programs reflect Thornton's current approach to arts and culture delivery: a mix of recurring structures and flexible, partner-supported offerings that respond to funding availability, facility capacity, and community interest. This plan builds from these existing conditions, with an emphasis on clarifying roles, strengthening coordination, and supporting sustainable program and resource development over time.

Chapter 2

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Engagement Overview

The foundation of the Thornton Arts and Culture Master Plan is built upon the voices, needs, and aspirations of the people who live and work here. Meaningful community engagement ensures that the City's cultural roadmap is not just a high-level vision, but a community-informed strategy that addresses real gaps in service and infrastructure. By prioritizing a collaborative process, this plan seeks to build a unique Thornton identity that authentically reflects its diverse population.

To gather the community-informed feedback necessary for this plan, the planning team implemented a multi-layered outreach strategy that expanded upon existing City data. This process included:

- **In-Person Event Activation:** The team conducted engagement at several high-traffic public events, including WinterFest, and Dino Fest.
- **Targeted Focus Groups:** Multiple focus groups and stakeholder conversations were held to capture deep-dive insights into specific community needs and organizational challenges.
- **Dedicated Plan Survey:** The Arts and Culture Master Plan survey was administered during this planning process and available online from August - December 2025 gathering 178 responses from residents to guide the plan's recommendations.
- **Visual and Goal Preference Surveys:** At in-person events, the team utilized visual and goal preference surveys to gauge resident reactions to different aesthetic styles and prioritize the overarching goals of the plan.

These efforts resulted in over 300 community touchpoints, ensuring the recommendations in this chapter are a direct reflection of resident desires.

BUILDING FROM A RESIDENT INFORMED BASELINE

The outreach conducted specifically for this plan was designed to build upon and contextualize the findings of the City's 2024 Community Interest and Opinion Survey. That statistically valid survey of 457 households provided the essential baseline of Thornton's current relationship with the arts which serves to provide additional community insights beyond the 178 participant non-statistically significant study completed during 2025 as part of this Arts and Culture Master Plan. The findings for the ETC survey can be found on page 17.

KEY ENGAGEMENT FIGURES

178

Survey Responses

OVER 200

People Engaged

3

Community Events

300+ TOUCHPOINTS

Across Community Events





Kwanzaa
Committees of
Denver/Colorado
Springs





DINO FEST

At the inaugural Thornton Dino Fest on August 9, 2025, the planning team engaged over 100 families to involve residents of all ages in providing their opinions on the Arts and Culture master planning process. Participants completed a comprehensive virtual survey and a visual preference exercise to identify desired styles, locations, and cultural experiences for future public art installations and cultural experiences.

WINTERFEST

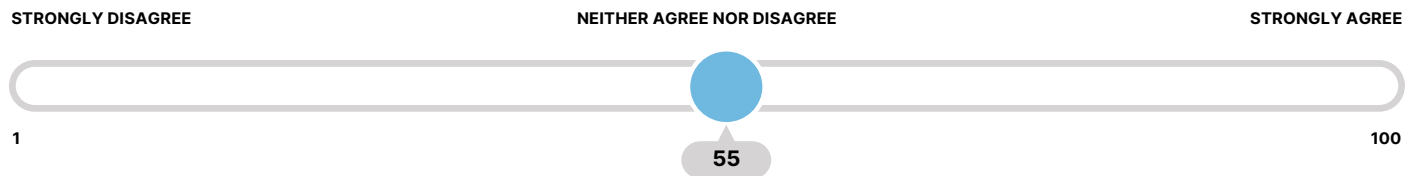
During the 2025 Thornton WinterFest, the planning team gathered feedback on the initial draft recommendations derived from earlier engagement. Attendees prioritized actions based on excitement, feasibility, and potential impact. Results indicated that expanding citywide arts capacity would yield the highest impact, while activating public spaces for broader cultural access was viewed as both highly achievable and exciting.

Arts and Culture Master Plan

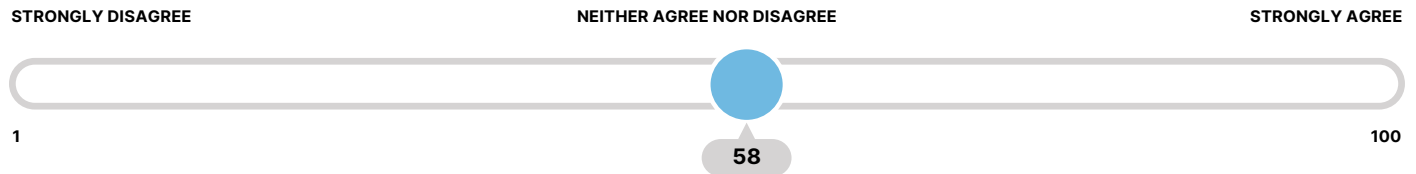
Survey Results

The Arts and Culture Plan survey was administered during this planning process and available online from August - December 2025 that gathered 178 responses from residents to guide the plan's recommendations.

I FEEL THE QUALITY OF ARTS AND CULTURE THROUGHOUT THORNTON IS THRIVING.



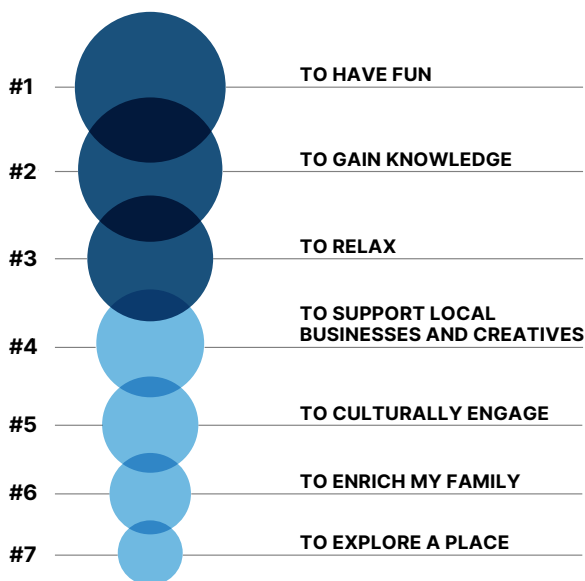
I FEEL THAT ARTS AND CULTURE THROUGHOUT THORNTON REFLECTS THE COMMUNITY THAT LIVES HERE.



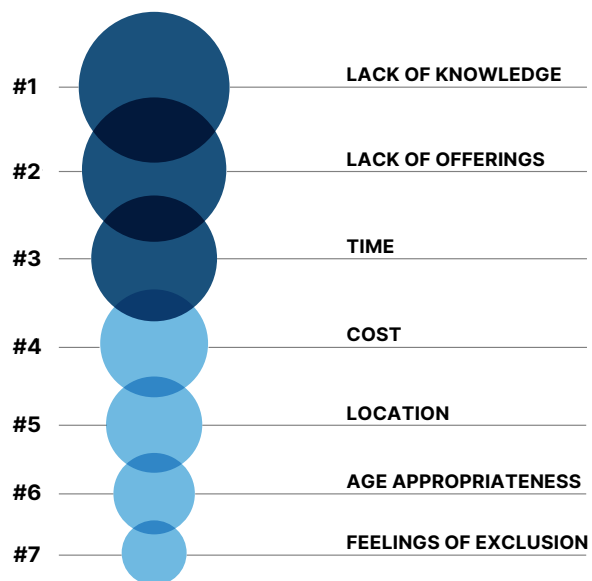
IF THERE WAS MORE SUPPORT FOR ARTS AND CULTURE, THORNTON WOULD BE A BETTER PLACE TO LIVE.



WHICH OF THESE MOTIVATIONS FOR EXPERIENCING THE ARTS DO YOU MOST STRONGLY ALIGN WITH?



WHAT BARRIERS PREVENT YOU FROM PARTICIPATING IN ARTS AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES WITHIN THORNTON?





TASHCO FOCUS GROUP

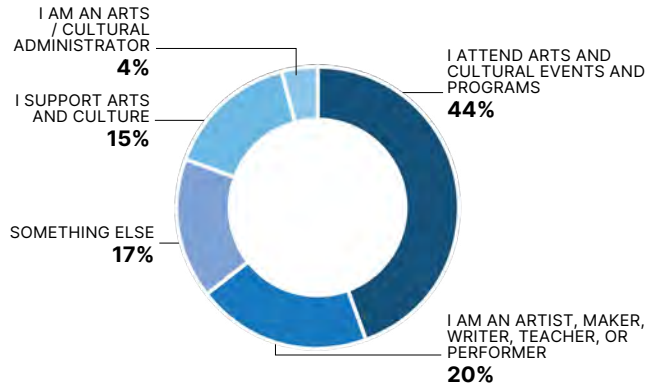
In August 2025, the planning team met with TASHCO members to evaluate the organization's strengths, current responsibilities, and future programming opportunities. The session highlighted TASHCO's vital role as a conduit for the community's voice and its capacity to deliver cultural programming that reflects Thornton's diverse identity.

CITY STAFF & COUNCIL CONVERSATIONS

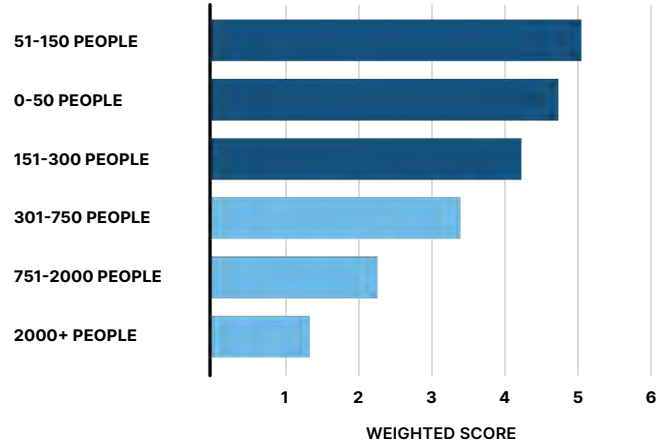
This series featured one-on-one discussions between the planning team, City staff, and council members. These conversations allowed the team to evaluate staff roles, programming responsibilities, and the current strengths of the City's arts and culture landscape. By identifying opportunities for expansion, the team was able to analyze gaps in existing programming, examine the partnership between the City and TASHCO, and incorporate community feedback gathered by council members within their respective wards.

Survey Results

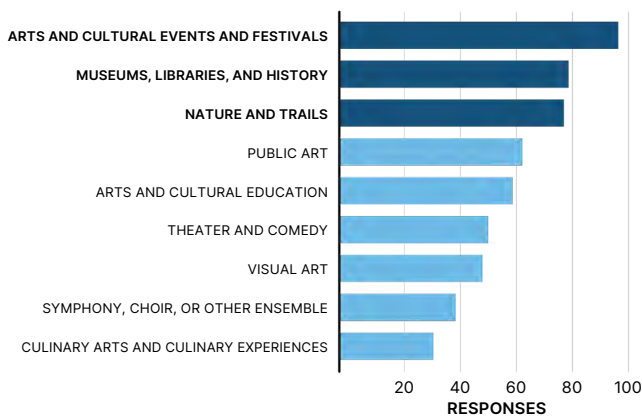
WHAT IS YOUR PRIMARY RELATIONSHIP WITH ARTS AND CULTURE IN THORNTON?



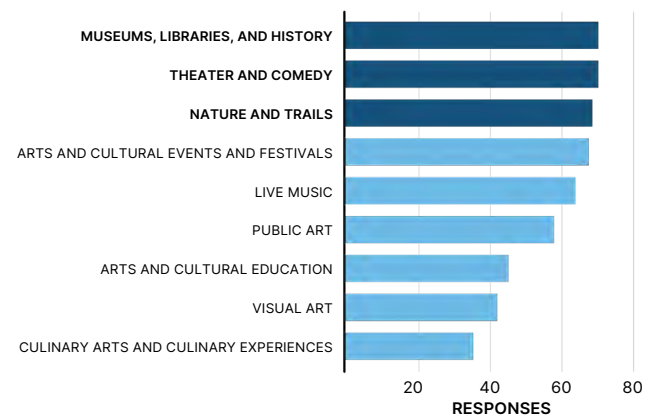
WHEN I SEEK OUT ARTS AND CULTURE PERFORMANCES, I PREFER EVENT SIZES OF:



WHICH COMMUNITY EVENT OFFERING IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU?



WHAT ARTS AND CULTURE ACTIVITIES DO YOU WANT MORE OF IN THORNTON?



WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE ARTS AND CULTURAL EXPERIENCES IN THORNTON?





Chapter 3

EXISTING CONDITIONS

JIM SALAZAR, *THE WATCHERS*, 2020

Facility Studies

The City of Thornton has extensively explored the development of a cultural events center through multiple studies and proposals since 2015. The overarching vision for such a facility is to create an inclusive Arts & Culture gathering space with affordable programs that boost the visibility of cultural arts in Thornton. Its core functions involve presenting music, dance, and theater programs year-round while supporting local arts groups with larger stages. Additionally, it will offer art classes, provide exhibits for residents of all ages and abilities, and host special events and large community gatherings. The justification for this endeavor includes providing access to popular entertainment, enhancing regional exposure to the arts, increasing community pride, expanding school partnerships, and the potential to spark additional arts and culture development projects.

Studies include:

- 2015-2017 Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture Study (Trail Winds Recreation Center Addition)
- 2018 Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture Study (Thornton Theater Study)
- 2019 Victus Advisors Market Study (Arts, Cultural & Event Center)
- 2019 Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture Study (Hobby Lobby Conversion)
- 2019 Pinnacle Feasibility Study by Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture
- 2023 Theatre Projects and Keen Independent Research Study (Post-COVID Market Demand)
- 2024 Architectural Workshop Study (McAllister Church Building Renovation)

DIFFERENT SCALES AND FUNCTIONS HAVE BEEN ENVISIONED FOR A CULTURAL EVENTS CENTER:



LARGE EVENTS CENTER

A large cultural events center would aim to showcase national touring artists, featuring a 1000-2000-seat theater with extensive high-tech amenities on over 6 acres in a high-traffic, densely populated area. While the City would design, build, and own it, operation would be contracted to a third party like AEG, meaning no community use would be provided. The estimated build cost for such a center ranges from \$50 million to \$70 million at the time of this study, with an annual net operating cost (City subsidy) of \$1 million to \$1.5 million. Examples cited include the Lincoln Center in Fort Collins and the Union Colony Center in Greeley, both with significant seating capacities and operating costs subsidized by their respective cities.

MEDIUM EVENTS CENTER

A medium cultural events center would focus on showcasing regional and local artists, featuring a 500-seat theater with enhanced indoor amenities and flexible spaces on approximately 4 acres in a developed, accessible area. This type of center would be designed, built, and owned by the City, and also operated by a City department, allowing for events and facility rentals. The estimated build cost for a medium center is between \$35 million and \$45 million at the time of this study, with an annual net operating cost (City subsidy) ranging from \$1 million to \$2 million. The Lone Tree Arts Center and the Parker Arts, Culture & Events Center are provided as comparable examples, with their seating capacities, square footage, and City subsidies detailed.



SMALL EVENTS CENTER

Lastly, a small cultural events center would primarily showcase local artists and groups, featuring a 200-seat black box theater with basic amenities and fixed or movable seats on at least 1 acre in a central area. This center would also be designed, built, and owned by the City, and operated by a City department or a non-profit organization for programming and rentals. The estimated build cost is between \$5 million and \$10 million at the time of this study, with an annual net operating cost (City subsidy) of \$300,000 to \$400,000. The Arts Hub in Lafayette is mentioned as an example, with its seating capacity, size, and City subsidy noted.



Previous Studies

Several feasibility studies have shaped the understanding of a performing arts center in Thornton over the years. While these studies may no longer reflect the existing site and market conditions or site qualities, they do serve to inform the picture of the analysis and study that has been conducted to date regarding the potential performing arts center.

2015-2017 BARKER RINKER SEACAT STUDY

From 2015 to 2017, Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture explored adding a performing arts theater to the new Trail Winds Recreation Center. The estimated project cost for a 12,275 square foot facility with 300 fixed seats, based on the Lone Tree Performing Arts Center, was \$7.85 million.

This study identified that key program spaces contributed to costs not typically found in high school theaters.

This study provided three size and amenity levels:

- a low program (300 seats) at 18,368 square feet with a total building budget of \$8,191,100,
- a medium program (400 seats) at 25,882 square feet with a total building budget of \$11,057,480, and
- a high program (500 seats) at 31,346 square feet with a total building budget of \$12,203,830.

The study evaluated and ranked four preliminary site locations, two of which are still available for use. The findings for the available sites are provided in the ranked order as found by the study:

Site 5, the Shopping Center at 88th & Washington Street, was evaluated as the most promising due to its central location in an established commercial area, good transportation access, proximity to restaurants, existing utilities, and minimal site preparation costs, assuming soil contamination and land acquisition were handled by others. Total costs for this site ranged from \$13.5 million for a small program to \$20.0 million for

a large program. The site is a large, flat, 15.8-acre existing shopping center with multiple access drives.

Demolition and environmental remediation would be required. Proposed utility connections would utilize existing sanitary, water, gas, and electric lines, with recommendations for new connections or burial of overhead lines.

An Urban architectural character study was developed for this site, featuring modern forms, flat roofs, asymmetrical organization, and modern materials, with a modern glass lobby.

Site 4, the Community Center, was ranked second for its location and minimal site development costs, but was deemed the least desirable by the Staff advisory group due to compromises as a legitimate theater facility.

The conversion budget for a 300-seat theater was \$4,182,000, with a total project cost of \$7,052,555. The building was not ADA accessible or sprinklered, but has adequate parking. Renovations would involve repurposing interior spaces like the gymnasium for seating, and adding an access drive and elevator. **At the time of this Arts and Culture Master Plan this site is no longer available.*

Site 3, at Colorado & Riverdale Road, was evaluated as the third best choice, mainly due to its remoteness from Thornton's center and high initial utility costs. However, its large size of almost 19 acres offers potential for cost-sharing with other developments. Total costs for this site ranged from \$13.9 million for a small program to \$20.3 million for a large program.

The site is undeveloped, mostly flat, sloping southeast, and would require new access roads off Riverdale Road and Colorado Boulevard, potentially needing road widening. Utility connections would require significant extensions for sanitary, water, gas, and electric services. A Prairie architectural character study was developed for this site, featuring a low-slung structure, pitched roof forms, large overhangs, and materials like stone, warm-tone masonry, and wood-simulated cement board siding. **At the time of this Arts and Culture Master Plan this site is no longer available.*

Site 1, on Grant Street near Brittany Hill, ranked last due to its challenging sloping site and limited space for larger theater options, which would significantly increase development costs due to required retaining wall structures. While it might be a top contender for a low-level program, it could be cost-prohibitive for a high-level program as development costs rise disproportionately with facility size.

Total costs for this site ranged from \$13.5 million for a small program to \$21.2 million for a large program. The 5.39-acre undeveloped site slopes about 5% to the north and would require two access points from Grant Street. Utilities would connect to existing sanitary, water, gas, and electric lines on or near Grant Street.

A Hilltop architectural character study was developed for this site, featuring traditional forms, stone, modern metal, and glass materials to create an impressive double-height entry with a sloping roof.

Each site evaluation in the 2018 study included a solar evaluation, assuming a budget of \$250,000 for each site. These solar arrays were estimated to offset building energy consumption by about 14% and save approximately \$10,000 in utility costs per year, with a payback period of 20-25 years.

2019 VICTUS ADVISORS MARKET STUDY

In 2019, Victus Advisors conducted an independent market study for a new multi-use arts, cultural, and events center. This study's estimated project costs ranged widely from \$13.1 million to \$67.7 million. It assessed local and regional market demand, analyzed the differences between a community venue (around 500 seats) and a revenue-focused theater (around 1500 seats) concerning access, and recommended building types, programs, usage, projected financial operations, and funding options. The study also analyzed potential economic impacts.

Also in 2019, Barker Rinker Seacat Architecture assessed the feasibility of converting the former Hobby Lobby retail space at Thornton Parkway and Washington Street into a small programmed theater space. The estimated project cost was \$9.2 million. While the location, highway access, and parking ranked highest for this option, the study noted a high cost of retrofitting the structure compared to new construction identified in the 2018 study. Other challenges included fly height limitations for the stage, ongoing lease payments, and adjacent tenants. A 302-seat theater would require 16,687 square feet out of the 70,704 square feet available.

2023 THEATRE PROJECT MARKET STUDY

A post-COVID-19 feasibility study conducted in 2023 by Theatre Projects and Keen Independent Research re-analyzed market demand for a performing arts center.

This study notably recommended a flexible multipurpose space for various performances, social events, and visual arts programs, rather than a traditional performing arts center, due to existing competition in the Denver Metro Area. It suggested a main hall with 750 seats (theater style) or 450 seats (banquet style), a black box theater with 100-seat capacity for events and rehearsals, and the inclusion of community gathering spaces such as

artist studios, classrooms, and a gallery. The facility should be affordable and accessible to support local arts organizations. This study came amidst the 2023 announcement by The Candlelight Theater of their plans to build a large, in-the-round commercial theater and concert venue in north Thornton near Larkridge Center. During the completion of this study, Candlelight canceled these plans.

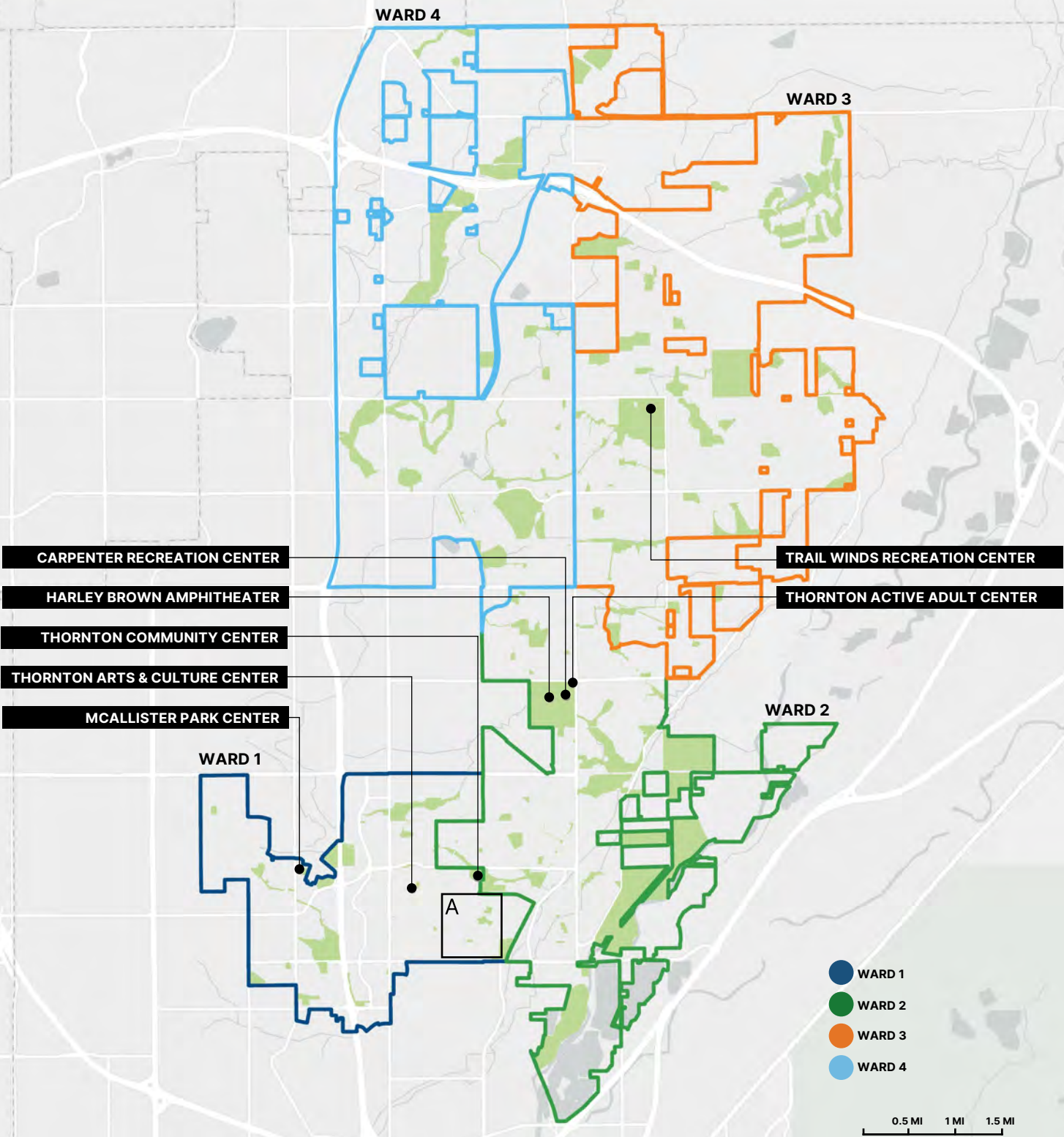
Most recently, in 2024, Architectural Workshop completed an architectural feasibility study for renovating the McAllister Church Building in west Thornton. The estimated project cost for this renovation was \$7.8 million. The recommendations included utilizing the existing church building with the addition of a 316-seat performance space and a connecting lobby. The performance space seating would be configurable for dining, cabaret, and theater-style events. It would also feature a 40×30' modular stage with adjacent green room, kitchen, and dressing rooms in the basement, alongside a 50×30' lobby with a main entrance, patio access, box office, and gallery. The former church building itself would provide rehearsal space, a meeting room, storage, and an elevator to art studios and classrooms in the basement.

The total investment in these studies since 2015 has amounted to \$347,563. City staff and consultants have conducted extensive research, visiting 22 facilities, including 12 in the Front Range, 2 in the mountains, and 8 out of state, to gather insights and inspiration.



BIMMER TORRES, *RESILIENCE IN BLOOM*, 2024, PECOS PARK

Cultural Asset Mapping



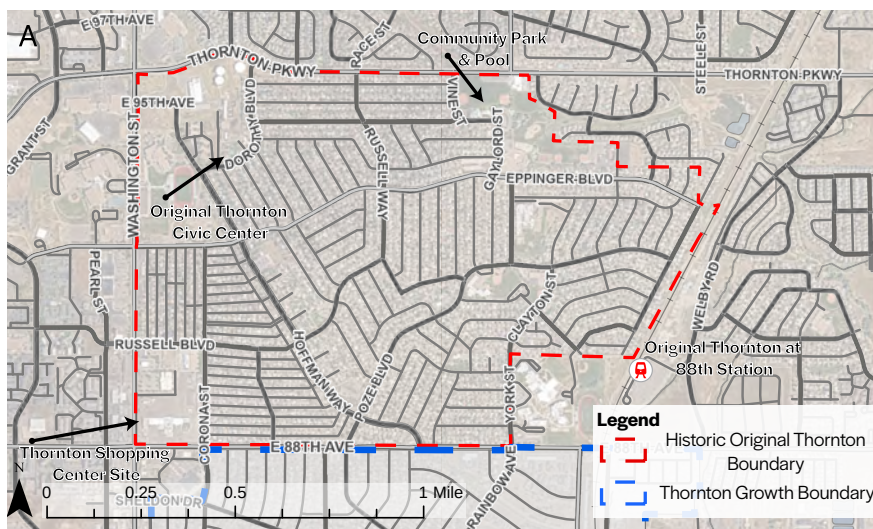
The City of Thornton benefits from being part of a culturally-rich region, while there are only minimal City-owned cultural amenities within the City's boundary. Thornton's cultural assets are mostly encapsulated by their Recreation Centers, particularly:

- Carpenter Recreation Center
- Harley Brown Amphitheater;
- Thornton Active Adult Center;
- Thornton Arts & Culture Center;
- Thornton Community Center;
- Trail Winds Recreation Center.

These centers are home to many cultural programs and rentable spaces that residents and community groups can take advantage of.

Additionally, Thornton has an arts and cultural center, amphitheater, and outdoor fields location for festivals that round out cultural offerings, programs and facilities in the City.

ORIGINAL THORNTON



Original Thornton was identified by community stakeholders during this process as a potential emerging creative place; its boundaries are shown on the map above.

Trail Winds Recreation Center

13495 HOLLY ST AT TRAIL WINDS PARK

The Trail Winds Recreation Center offers a wide range of programming for the entire Thornton community. And a wide range of amenities, including a full aquatics center, climbing wall, elevated track, and fitness spaces.

- **Cultural Amenities:** Meeting Room, Multipurpose Rooms, Arts & Crafts Room, Banquet & Reception Hall
- **Signature Events/Programs:** Barrel & Beer Festival
- **Renting:** Local rates are \$55 an hour per room with multiple rooms available to rent simultaneously, and non residents are \$70 an hour, with a \$275 rental deposit that is applied to the total fee. Priority is given to Thornton residents and local nonprofits. Base price includes set up for tables and chairs, with more services available for additional costs, including alcohol permits and audio and visual equipment.

Thornton Arts & Culture Center

9209-9211 DOROTHY BLVD AT LU MURRAY PARK

Thornton Arts & Culture Center (TACC) is a key component of arts and culture in Thornton. As a prime location for local gallery exhibits, art classes, and music performances, TACC serves as a hub for citywide arts and culture programs and opportunities.

- **Cultural Amenities:** Theater, Gallery, Multipurpose Room, Classrooms
- **Theater Capacity:** 100
- **Renting:** Local rates are \$50 an hour or less, and non residents are \$60 an hour, with a 2-hour minimum and a \$50 rental deposit that is applied to the total fee. Priority is given to Thornton residents and local nonprofits. More services available for additional costs, including alcohol permits and audio and visual equipment.

Harley Brown Amphitheater

CARPENTER PARK

Also located at Carpenter Park, the Harley Brown Amphitheater is the City's main performance venue and houses the outdoor concert, film, and other performances.

- **Amphitheater Capacity:** 500
- **Signature Events/Programs:** Summer Concert Series, Juneteenth, Pride, Dance Program
- **Renting:** Reservations are taken over the phone starting at \$40 an hour



Thornton Community Center

2211 EPPINGER BLVD AT COMMUNITY PARK

The Thornton Community Center (TCC) contains many meeting and fitness amenities for community use. Community Park is also home to signature seasonal festivals. With several rentable multipurpose rooms at varying sizes, TCC is a key facility for culture in Thornton.

- **Cultural Amenities:** Classrooms, Dance Studio, Meeting Room, Multipurpose Rooms
- **Signature Events/Programs:** After School Youth/Teen Activities, Anythink Library Book Club, Friday Night In, Thornton Boxing Club Thornton Youth Council
- **Renting:** Rates for Thornton residents are \$25 per hour or less per room, while non-resident rates range from \$20 to \$50 per hour. A \$150 deposit is required at the time of booking and will be applied toward the total fee. Each room accommodates 40–50 people, and multiple rooms may be reserved simultaneously. Priority is given to local residents and nonprofits. The base price includes the setup of tables and chairs; additional services, such as alcohol permits and audio/visual equipment, are available for an extra fee.

Thornton Active Adult Center

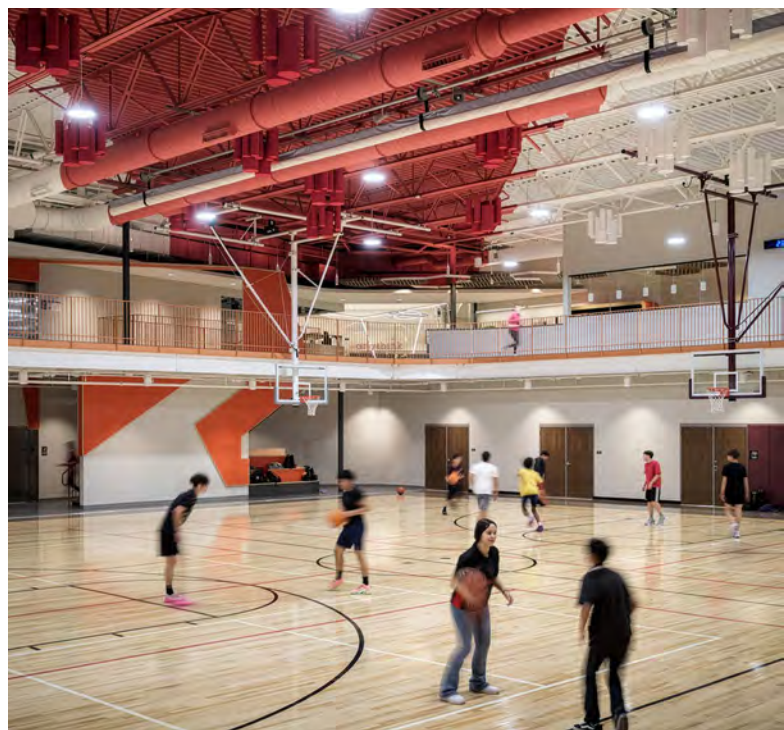
11181 COLORADO BLVD.

The Thornton Active Adult Center (AAC) is one of the City facilities at Carpenter Park. Thornton AAC is dedicated to empowering the community to find purpose, meaning, connection and overall wellness as they age. The AAC provides activities and amenities for older adults in the community to utilize including classes, creative spaces, fitness and meal programs, and community-building opportunities.

- **Cultural Amenities:** Classrooms, Demonstration Kitchen, Multipurpose Rooms, Fitness Center, Woodworking Shop, Arts & Crafts Room, Banquet & Reception Hall
- **Signature Events/Programs:** Breakfast with Santa, HarvestFest Burrito & Doughnut Breakfast, Lunch Program
- **Renting:** Resident rates are \$75 per hour or less for event rooms and \$50 per hour or less for classrooms. Non-resident rates range from \$60 to \$85 per hour. A \$150 rental deposit is required and will be applied toward the total fee. All rentals require a two-hour minimum, with priority given to Thornton residents and local nonprofits. The base price includes the setup of tables and chairs; additional services, such as alcohol permits and audio/visual equipment, are available for an extra fee.



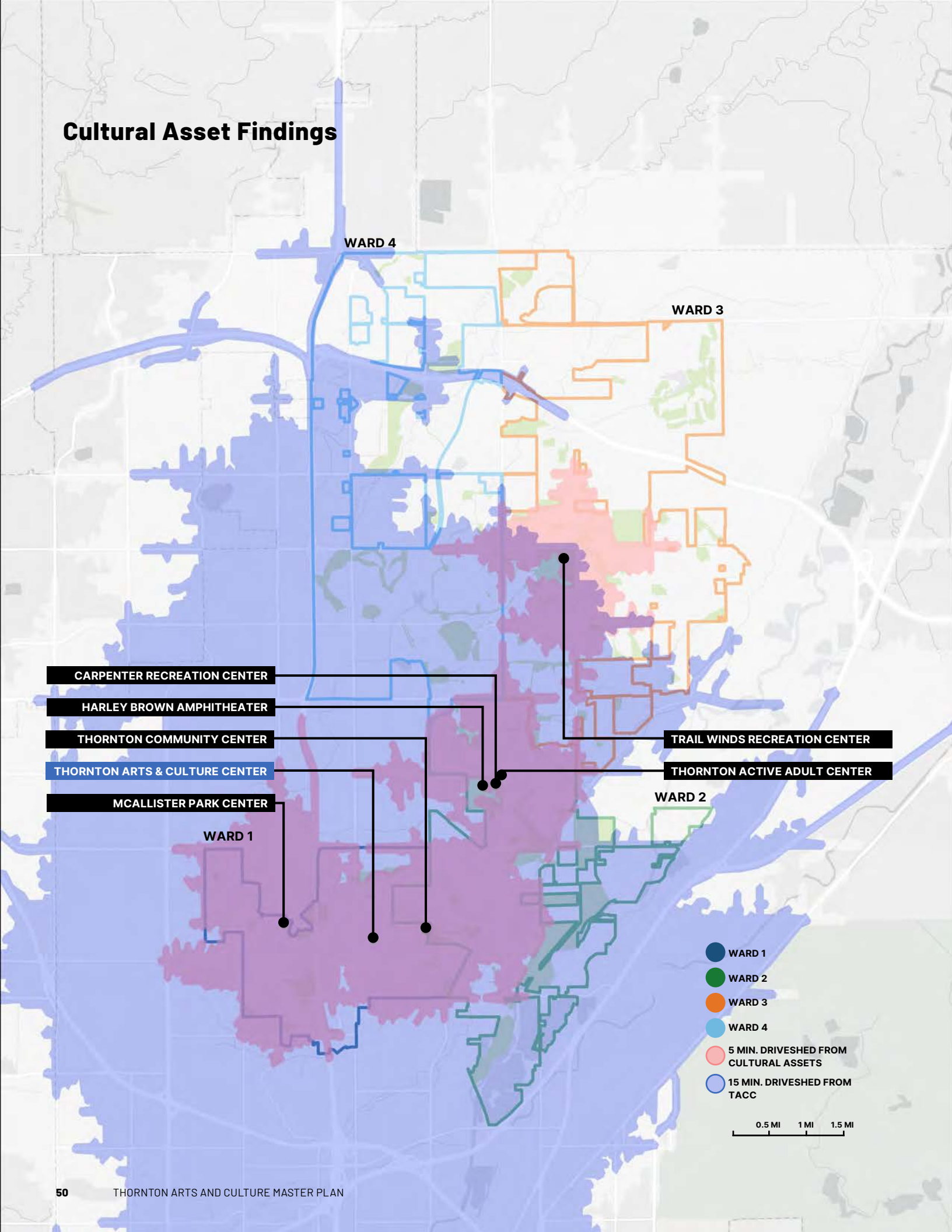
THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTER



THORNTON ACTIVE ADULT CENTER



Cultural Asset Findings



CARPENTER RECREATION CENTER

HARLEY BROWN AMPHITHEATER

THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTER

THORNTON ARTS & CULTURE CENTER

MCALLISTER PARK CENTER

TRAIL WINDS RECREATION CENTER

THORNTON ACTIVE ADULT CENTER

WARD 1

WARD 2

WARD 3

WARD 4

5 MIN. DRIVESHED FROM CULTURAL ASSETS

15 MIN. DRIVESHED FROM TACC

0.5 MI 1 MI 1.5 MI

ANALYSIS

The map displays a driveshed analysis for the identified cultural assets. A 5-minute drive time (pink) is shown for all facilities except the Thornton Arts & Culture Center, which features a 15-minute drive time (blue).

STRENGTHS

While cultural amenities and programming in Thornton are concentrated in central Thornton, a majority of the population has access to one or more facilities within a 15 minute drive (see left). Included in this access network of City amenities are:

- An Amphitheater;
- Arts and Crafts Rooms;
- Banquet & Reception Halls;
- Classrooms;
- Dance Studios;
- Galleries;
- Meeting Rooms;
- Multipurpose Rooms; and
- A Small Theater;

OPPORTUNITIES

Currently, City Council Ward 4 has no City-owned amenities for cultural programming. While they still have easy access to other facilities, this leaves a geographical gap in the northwestern quadrant of the City.

Performing arts facilities inside the City are limited to a 100-capacity theater and a 500-capacity amphitheater. This can limit the types of performances that are available at City facilities.

LIMITATIONS

While the asset mapping process sought to capture the full range of arts and cultural resources across the City of Thornton, it may not reflect every existing or emerging creative space. Some activities —particularly informal, home-based, or seasonal — operate outside official datasets or are difficult to document through standard sources.

Cultural Asset Findings

ARMORY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

NORTHGLENN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

ARVADA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

● THORNTON BOUNDARY

● 15 MIN. DRIVESHED FROM ARVADA CENTER FOR THE ARTS

● 15 MIN. DRIVESHED FROM THE ARMORY

● 15 MIN. DRIVESHED FROM NORTHGLENN

0.5 MI 1 MI 1.5 MI

There are many regional performing arts centers with easy access to Thornton residents. Centers commonly referenced during this process were:

- Armory Performing Arts Center;
- Arvada Center for the Arts and Humanities; and
- Northglenn Performing Arts Center.

These facilities offer performance experiences that the Thornton community benefits from and that create a more comprehensive arts landscape for the entire region.

ARMORY PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Located in Brighton, Colorado, the Armory is a local venue that hosts theater productions, concerts, and events. Originally a state armory, it was reopened as a performing arts center in 2009 and offers a wide range of performing arts services. The Armory is managed by the City of Brighton. (brightonarmory.org) The Armory is one part of the city's programming and heavily subsidized 92%* (see page 48)

- **Venue Capacity:** 450 (main auditorium)
- **Renting:** The main auditorium available for rent for \$125 per hour, with cheaper (\$100/hr) fees for non-profits. The venue also has an available community room (40-capacity). There are no different fees for out-of-City rental inquiries however, rental inventory is limited with current Armory Performing Arts Center programming.

ARVADA CENTER FOR THE ARTS & HUMANITIES

For 50 years, the Arvada Center in Arvada, Colorado has been an artistic home for local theatre, Colorado artists, arts education, concerts, and community. The venue houses live theater, art classes, and three galleries. The Arvada Center is a non profit organization that receives approximately 35% of its annual funding from the City of Arvada. (arvadacenter.org)

- **Cultural Amenities:** Classrooms, Gallery Space, Dance Studio, Theatre, Black Box
- **Programs:** Theatre; Dance Classes; Galleries and Exhibitions; Classes, Camps, and Workshops; Field Trips and Outreach
- **Venue Capacity:** 500 (main theater)
- **Renting:** No longer available for private rentals as of June 30, 2025.

NORTHGLENN PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Located in Northglenn, the Performing Arts Center is home to Parsons Theater and dedicated to providing affordable access to the arts. Local programs such as Northglenn Arts Presents, Northglenn Youth Theatre, and the Summer Concert Series are hosted here. The center also has a variety of community and activity rooms that are available for rent. The center is managed by Northglenn Arts, the cultural services division of the City of Northglenn with additional funding from the nonprofit Northglenn Arts and Humanities Foundation. Northglenn Performing Arts Center is a non profit organization that receives approximately 38% of its annual funding from the City of Northglenn. (northglennarts.org)

- **Cultural Amenities:** Parsons Theater, Community Rooms, Activity Room
- **Venue Capacity:** 335 (Parsons)
- **Renting:** Community Rooms & Activity Room: with 60-80 person capacities, these spaces are available at \$48+ per hour for Northglenn residents and \$58+ per hour for non residents.
- **Parsons Theater:** Non-profits pay \$91+ per hour, while the standard rate is \$121+ per hour. Fees are the same for non-resident rental requests. Additional costs can occur for dance flooring, stage platforms, and other additional equipment or labor. Theatre rentals have a 5-hour minimum and a 12-hour daily maximum. Rental inventory is limited with current Northglenn Arts programming.

**81% in funded through BURA (Brighton Urban Renewal Authority) created utilizing Tax Incremental Financing, which was approved via the ballot measure by tenants and residents in 2002.*

STRENGTHS

While not within Thornton, the regional venues/centers are within 15 minutes for many Thornton residents. All of Thornton is covered by access to one or more of these facilities.

The range of centers, both in size and programming, means that Thornton residents have a variety of opportunities for arts experiences across the three facilities.

OPPORTUNITIES

All centers have their own programming, and not all offer rentals. This limits space and times that facilities can be available for rent.

Additionally, centers have higher rental fees for non-residents, which can price out smaller organizations in Thornton.

OVERALL GAPS

The City of Thornton has a wealth of cultural amenities, but there are some key sectors that could benefit from additional facilities.

Creation Spaces

These are spaces where artists and creatives can work on their craft, either in groups or individually. Such as makerspaces, studios, and rehearsal spaces for artists cross-sector. There is currently a lack of spaces, outside of one's home, where local artists and organizations can work. Inclusion/creation of new facilities that focus on artist livability and workflow would fill this gap and generate new opportunities for engagement with artists at the City-level. It could also increase opportunities for arts education and other enrichment activities for the community.

Large-Scale Meeting Spaces

Events like conferences do not have space to be hosted at any existing City-owned facilities in Thornton. With the ability to combine multi-purpose rooms at Thornton's rec centers, there are still no spaces that can host more than 200 people. A conference center or similar space would fill this gap and allow for more education and idea-sharing in the City.

Performance Spaces

Including the regional facilities, Thornton residents have many opportunities to see theater, live music, dance, and other performances locally. There is a gap, however, in affordable spaces to create live performances. Given higher costs of regional facilities and that within Thornton, performances are limited to a small indoor stage or the amphitheater, accessible performance spaces are needed, particularly in the 200-500 seat range. This could look like multiple additional single-stage facilities or a center with varying uses and venue sizes.



JODIE BLISS, MUSE OF WATER, 2022

Chapter 4

RECOMMENDATIONS



RAMIRO DAVARO-COMAS, *FUN TIMES*, 2022, THORNTON COMMUNITY CENTER

Needs Assessment

Based on stakeholder conversations, here are the five biggest takeaways and identified needs for Arts & Culture in Thornton

NEED 1: DEVELOPING DEDICATED ARTS INFRASTRUCTURE AND PLACEMAKING

A major theme is the lack of a central downtown or dedicated arts and culture infrastructure in Thornton. This limits capacity and visibility for the arts.

Identified Needs:

- Creating a “true downtown” or dedicated gathering spaces for art to redefine the City’s identity
- Establishing community spaces (theaters, classrooms, studios, practice and performance spaces) that are diverse and reflect the community, avoiding competition with regional performing arts centers
- Building a larger centralized facility that is purpose-built/designed to support arts programs and performances
- Placemaking and the designation of special districts (historic and arts) in Thornton to build a stronger sense of identity and community ownership.

NEED 2: ADDRESSING FINANCIAL/FUNDING INFRASTRUCTURE AND PUBLIC BUY-IN

There is a clear need for a more stable and supported financial infrastructure for arts and culture, and greater transparency to secure public support.

Identified Needs:

- Securing public buy-in for the expenditure of arts funds (utilized by TASHCO) to ensure that investment is aligned with community desires
- Implementing a dedicated funding mechanism for arts and culture, like Northglenn’s \$1 per capita investment or a permanent sales tax levy (similar to the Adams County Parks and Open Space tax)
- Ensuring long-term operational capacity and sustainability for any new initiatives to ensure the longevity of arts and culture programming (subsidizing Thornton parks and recreation amenities)

NEED 3: CLARIFYING ROLES, CAPACITY, AND COMMUNICATIONS

The current City structure leads to confusion and strains capacity, particularly between the Arts & Culture (A&C) team, TASHCO, and Parks & Recreation (P&R) as some programming and related publicity remains disparate.

Identified Needs:

- Increase staffing and administrative support for the Arts & Culture team to manage and expand programs
- Clarify roles and encourage P&R to collaborate or transfer management of arts-related programming to the A&C team
- Dedicate marketing and outreach resources to make existing arts and culture opportunities visible, as events and the TASHCO organization itself are currently invisible to much of the community

NEED 4: BUILDING A UNIFIED THORNTON IDENTITY

Stakeholders emphasized that arts and culture should play a role in unifying the community and building a unique Thornton identity.

Identified Needs:

- Using the arts to establish a unique identity for Thornton, moving past its status as a “bedroom community” for Denver
- Intentional programming and inclusion that reflects the growing Latino and Asian populations and addresses the desires of all wards, particularly Ward 1 (South Thornton), to help mitigate local socioeconomic tensions
- Uplifting and featuring local artists in City galleries, venues, and public programs

NEED 5: LEVERAGING PUBLIC ART AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT FOR ARTS INTEGRATION

There is strong support for integrating art into public spaces and new development projects as a valuable investment.

Identified Needs:

- Integrating art into new development (like the northeast expansion and multifamily housing) and infrastructure projects to contribute to community character in newer areas of the City
- Prioritizing visible, public-facing art (e.g., utility box wraps, sculptures in parks) as these are generally well-received and seen as “worthwhile investments” by residents
- Adopting models from other cities (like Aurora’s 1% for public art) to leverage capital budgets for public art in the built environment



ARTS & CULTURE PROGRAM GOALS

1. CULTIVATE CULTURAL APPRECIATION

Foster authentic, recurring, culturally informed arts experiences for all ages.

2. SECURE TARGETED INVESTMENT

Build sustainable, leveraged funding tied to growth, development, and partnerships.

3. NURTURE A DISTINCT ARTS IDENTITY

Shape an authentic arts identity rooted in Thornton's people, youth, and places.

4. GROW THE CULTURAL ECONOMY

Support creative industries and performance enterprises, with the ultimate goal of making Thornton a community of choice for artists to live and create.

5. STRENGTHEN COMMUNICATIONS & COLLABORATION

Expand resources and cross-divisional support to elevate arts visibility and engagement community-wide.



PNEUHAUS STUDIOS, *PERIODIC REFLECTION*, 2024, SKY PARK

WHAT WILL MOVE THE NEEDLE TO IMPLEMENTING THE ARTS & CULTURE MASTER PLAN?

CASE STUDIES OF COLORADO CREATIVE COMMUNITIES

Thornton is not building its arts and culture identity from scratch, and it is not building it alone. Communities across Colorado have grappled with the same questions Thornton faces: how to grow a creative sector without a legacy cultural institution, how to divide responsibility across city departments and nonprofit partners without duplication or competition, and how to build public investment and community trust incrementally before a major facility or designation is ever within reach.

Four Colorado communities were examined as part of this planning process, each chosen because they reflect a dimension of Thornton's own context and aspirations.

Lakewood demonstrates what sustained municipal commitment, layered across departments, a business improvement district, neighborhood associations, and a mission-driven nonprofit, can produce when each partner owns a defined role and the City treats creative district development as a core infrastructure investment rather than a cultural amenity.

Englewood illustrates the value of deliberate role division between a city commission and an independent nonprofit, allowing each to go deep in its lane and achieve programming outcomes neither could sustain alone.

Silverthorne shows that major cultural facilities are earned over time, built on decades of demonstrated community value, donor relationships, and phased growth before a capital campaign becomes viable.

Centennial offers a model for communities that are earlier in the process: building creative presence through accessible, participatory, low-barrier activations that meet residents where they already are, without waiting for a large budget or permanent facility.

Through the lens of three interconnected topics- funding, resource management, and creative development- these case studies helped identify opportunities for Thornton to strengthen its arts and culture sector in ways that are practical, phased, and grounded in what has worked for comparable Colorado communities.



LAKEWOOD, COLORADO

Lakewood's creative district succeeds because of a layered partnership in which multiple entities each own a clear role, backed by sustained municipal investment and city-enabled infrastructure. The Lakewood Arts Council handles grassroots artist support and community programming. The City-managed Lakewood Cultural Center provides a civic anchor with a 320-seat theater, galleries, and studios. The West Colfax Business Improvement District channels commercial corridor investment and business development. 40 West Arts, a geographically-focused nonprofit, drives placemaking and creative economy activation along West Colfax Avenue. This partnership model, sustained by significant City of Lakewood funding, staff capacity, and interdepartmental coordination, produced the 40 West Artline, a 4-mile public art experience with over 70 installations, which secured a major NEA grant and earned state Colorado Creative District certification. The lesson for communities considering a similar path is that the nonprofit is the visible face of the district, but municipal commitment is the backbone.



SILVERTHORNE, COLORADO

Silverthorne's Performing Arts Center began as a small foundation that merged with a community theater, spending decades building donor relationships and demonstrating community value, before partnering with the Town on a major capital campaign. The resulting center was designed for broad use, and includes a flexible 200-seat black box theater, a second smaller venue, exhibition areas, and a full bar allow it to host multiple events simultaneously. Monthly programs have made it the center of a broader cultural district rather than a standalone venue.



CENTENNIAL, COLORADO

The Centennial Arts and Cultural Foundation (CACF) is a citizen-led nonprofit that works alongside the City, private sector partners, and other nonprofits to bring art into public spaces. Rather than waiting for a major facility or large budget, CACF built presence through accessible, participatory programs: traffic box wraps, mural walks, temporary park installations, and hands-on art-making at community festivals. The approach directly addresses the most common barrier to arts participation: awareness and accessibility, by meeting residents where they already are.



ENGLEWOOD, COLORADO

Englewood divided arts responsibilities deliberately. The City Arts Commission owns public art policy and civic beautification such as murals, artistic crosswalks and creative placemaking. Englewood Arts, a separate nonprofit, owns performance programming and educational outreach. That division of labor allows each entity to go deep rather than broad. The result includes in-school music education delivered by Colorado Symphony Orchestra musicians to at-risk students in Title 1 schools, the kind of high-impact, relationship-driven programming a City division alone could not sustain. Two purpose-built facilities- the City Center Amphitheater and the 192-seat Hampden Hall which give cultural creators the physical infrastructure to deliver on their respective missions.

FUNDING

Thornton cannot grow its arts and culture sector on goodwill and vision alone. The most immediate opportunity is to maximize what already exists (SCFD and other grant funding) while exploring more dedicated funding mechanisms that can be implemented locally.

Looking forward, the City should explore a dedicated per-capita arts funding mechanism, similar to Northglenn's model, or a permanent sales tax levy modeled on the existing Adams County Parks and Open Space tax.

Lakewood's 40 West Arts District demonstrates what diversified funding can unlock: by layering grants and foundations, events and fundraisers, community donations and sponsorships, and new City policies setting creative design requirements for development within the District, they were able to build a 4-mile public art experience significant enough to secure a major National Endowment for the Arts grant.

Specific opportunities include:

- Continue to pursue SCFD Tier III funding aggressively and strategically
- Explore a dedicated per-capita arts funding mechanism, modeled on Northglenn's approach, or a permanent sales tax levy structured similarly to Adams County existing 0.25% Parks and Open Space tax, which currently generates approximately \$6.1 million annually and enjoys strong voter support
- Formalize a percent-for-art requirement for both public and private development to support community-driven programming, and create a structured staff support program to guide developers through the process — ensuring the creative sector grows alongside Thornton's rapid physical expansion rather than chasing it
- Develop a private sponsorship and corporate partnership program tied to signature events like Día de los Muertos, Dino Fest, Pride, and Juneteenth, to build an annual contributed revenue stream outside of city staff and government appropriations

RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

Even the best strategies stall without the people and systems to carry them out. Right now, Arts & Culture is stretched thin, roles between Arts & Culture, TASHCO, and Parks & Recreation remain unclear, and much of what Thornton already offers goes unnoticed, relative to the arts, because marketing and outreach capacity is limited.

Englewood's symbiotic governance model offers a useful blueprint: by clearly dividing responsibility with the commission overseeing public art policy and civic beautification while Englewood Arts focuses on performance programming and educational outreach, allowing each entity to excel in its lane without duplicating efforts or competing for the same resources.

Thornton should seek to clarify priorities across departments, ensuring that the breadth of program lives where organizational capacity and cross-divisional collaboration intersect to create the most impactful outcomes.

Specific opportunities include:

- Add dedicated Arts & Culture staffing and resources to reach residents where they already gather (festivals, concerts, events), to address the most cited barriers to awareness, and access and to mobilize the Arts Trailer
- Adopt a clear division of roles between Arts & Culture, TASHCO, and Parks & Recreation, with TASHCO empowered as the primary convener for community arts advocacy, programming input, and gateway to nonprofit partnerships
- Establish a cross-divisional support model formally linking Arts & Culture, Parks & Recreation, and Communications to streamline permitting, logistics, and promotion for events and activations
- Create a standardized post-event survey and explore place-based data tools such as geofencing to track foot traffic and engagement at public art installations and signature events, building the data infrastructure needed to make the case for sustained investment

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Ultimately, what will define Thornton's creative future is whether the City builds the infrastructure-physical, relational, and visible- to anchor a genuine arts identity and become a community where artists choose to live, work, and create.

Lakewood's model can serve as inspiration, since their success is built not on a single entity but on three complementary partners working in concert: the Lakewood Arts Council providing grassroots community support, the Lakewood Cultural Center serving as a civic anchor, and 40 West Arts District's fiscal and operational support through their partners. These include the City of Lakewood Planning, Community Resources, and Public Works departments, the Lakewood-West Colfax Business Improvement District, multiple Neighborhood and Community Associations, Metro West Housing Solutions, the Rocky Mountain College of Art + Design, and other foundation, nonprofit, commercial, and individual partnerships that help drive economic vitality and placemaking.

Silverthorne's Performing Arts Center further illustrates that facility development need not happen all at once, growing from a small foundation that merged with a community theatre built upon decades of donor relationships while demonstrating community value, and bookended by a major capital campaign in partnership with the town. Thornton should draw inspiration from is the phased approach toward a community-centered Cultural Arts Center.

Thornton has building blocks in TASHCO, the TACC, and the vision for Original Thornton. Opportunity remains to formalize and align them in a similar way, including pursuing state certification as a Colorado Creative District to unlock technical assistance and new funding eligibility.

Specific opportunities include:

- Pursue state certification as a Colorado Creative District for Original Thornton, formalizing boundaries, developing unified district branding, and completing the inventory of arts activities, galleries, studios, and creative enterprises required for the application
- Launch a mini-grant and artist-in-residency program, establishing Thornton as a place that actively invests in local creative talent rather than importing it
- Develop an Artist and Arts Educator Directory with a pre-qualified list of local and regional creators available for public commissions, education programs, and community activations
- Formalize and expand regional partnerships with Anythink Libraries, Mapleton Public Schools/ Adams County 1, 12, and 14 school districts, SCFD-funded organizations, and institutions such as the Denver Art Museum and Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art

NURTURING EMERGING CREATIVE PLACES

INVESTING IN EMERGING CREATIVE PLACES

Investing in the qualities that define a creative district, including concentrated arts and cultural activity, affordable space for creative enterprise, programming that reflects local identity, and physical environments that welcome gathering and expression, generates measurable community benefit regardless of formal designation status. These investments strengthen local economic vitality by attracting and retaining creative-sector workers and businesses, build social cohesion by giving residents shared cultural experiences and civic pride, and lay the physical and organizational groundwork that positions a community for formal certification when the time is right.

Colorado Creative Industries recognizes this through the Call Yourself Creative program, which supports communities at every stage of creative district development, not just those pursuing certification. Building toward a creative district is a long-range strategy, one that accumulates momentum with each public art installation, each affordable studio filled, and each community event that deepens a place's cultural identity. Not every community will pursue formal certification, but every community that makes these investments moves closer to the vitality that certification reflects.

PHASE 1: NURTURING A CREATIVE PLACE

Grow cultural spaces through targeted policy, programming, and investment without pursuing formal District Designation. These early actions build genuine creative vitality that benefits the community whether or not certification is ever sought.

Zoning and Policy

- Review zoning codes to allow live/work studios, maker spaces, galleries, and performance venues in target areas.
- Create mixed-use overlay districts or form-based codes that encourage ground-floor creative and retail activations.
- Reduce barriers for short-term or pop-up uses that let artists and cultural entrepreneurs test spaces affordably.

Placemaking and Physical Identity

- Invest in public art, murals, and wayfinding that reinforce a distinct cultural identity for the district.
- Improve walkability, lighting, and streetscape to make the district legible and inviting for residents and visitors.
- Activate underused parcels with temporary installations, pop-up markets, or outdoor gathering spaces.

Cultivating Creative Talent

- Partner with local arts organizations, schools, and community colleges to incubate emerging artists and creative entrepreneurs.
- Host workshops, mentorship programs, and affordable studio residencies that retain local creative talent.
- Prioritize equity and inclusion by engaging historically underrepresented artists and cultural groups from the start.
- Document the creative economy: map existing artists, cultural businesses, and anchor institutions within the district.

Programming and Events

- Host regular arts and cultural events, markets, and performances that build community identity and foot traffic.
- Develop a consistent event calendar that includes authentic, place-specific offerings, not just one-off festivals.
- Track attendance, economic data (sales tax, visitor counts), and demographic reach to build your evidence base.

PHASE 2: THE CALL YOURSELF CREATIVE PREREQUISITE

Before applying for certification, communities must complete the Call Yourself Creative (CYC) program, a free, self-paced online curriculum managed by CCI and offered through callyourselfcreative.org. CYC guides communities through three stages:

Align (build shared vision and community consensus)

- Convene artists, cultural organizations, business owners, and residents to develop a shared vision for the district's creative identity and economic potential.
- Conduct an asset inventory that maps existing creative enterprises, cultural institutions, public art, and underutilized spaces within the target area.
- Identify gaps in leadership, funding, and organizational capacity that will need to be addressed before moving toward formal certification.

Connect (organize stakeholders and establish governance)

- Establish a governing or advisory structure that brings together diverse community stakeholders, including representation from artists, local government, and the business community.
- Build partnerships with anchor institutions, local government agencies, and funders who can provide sustained support for district development.

- Engage residents and community members whose demographics reflect the broader community, ensuring the district's identity is rooted in authentic local culture rather than a narrow constituency.

Activate (develop programming, funding, and a strategic plan).

- Launch programming, events, and activations that demonstrate the district's creative vitality and begin building a public identity and track record.
- Develop a three to five year strategic plan with clear goals, measurable outcomes, and an explicit commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Establish a sustainable operating budget with diversified funding sources, including municipal support, earned revenue, and philanthropic investment, to demonstrate the financial readiness that certification requires.

Completing CYC is not just a checkbox: it is the scaffolding for nearly every formal eligibility requirement.

PHASE 3: FORMAL ELIGIBILITY AND APPLICATION

CCI opens certification rounds periodically (no FY26 round is open; monitor the CCI newsletter for FY27 timing). Applications are by invitation after completing the CYC prerequisite:

Core Eligibility Requirements

- Contiguous, walkable, mixed-use geography with a documented concentration of artists and creative-sector workers.
- Physical, artistic, and cultural resources that distinguish the area and create a sense of place.
- A structured governing entity: municipal government, 501(c)(3), downtown authority, or similar.
- An advisory or governing board with broad community representation.
- Dedicated paid staff (can be a percentage of a position).
- A strategic plan covering 3-5 years with equity, diversity, and inclusion goals.
- A minimum \$10,000 cash operating budget with sustainable, diversified funding sources.

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE

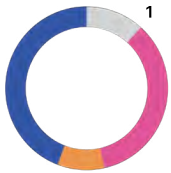


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 1: EXPAND CAPACITY WITHIN THE CITY TO MEET GROWING DEMAND FOR THE ARTS



ACTION 1: ELEVATE ARTS & CULTURE WITHIN CITY FUNCTIONS

ACTION RANKED #2/20 FROM COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

To ensure its integration into the City's growth, arts and culture should be intentionally formalized within the municipal structure of Thornton. By fostering meaningful collaborations with schools, libraries, neighborhood associations, and other municipal departments, the City can co-create authentic celebrations that reflect Thornton's heritage. This integration treats cultural engagement as an essential pillar of public well-being and a vital component of everyday life.

- Place Arts & Culture on par with Parks, Recreation, Active Adults, and other quality of life services, underscoring the value of Arts & Culture to the community's well-being
- Apply a universal identity to all City-provided cultural programs, including but not limited to the Thornton public art program, arts education offerings, participatory arts programs, community signature events, and City-sponsored multicultural celebrations
- Establish a cross-divisional support model linking Arts & Culture, Active Adults, Parks & Recreation, and Communications: to encourage collaboration. This model will streamline permitting, logistics, and communications, while deepening collaboration with schools, libraries, and community organizations to co-create community celebrations and activations
- Collaborate with neighborhood/cultural associations, recreation centers, civic groups, schools, and libraries to co-host festivals and celebrations that showcase Thornton's diverse culture

PARTNERS

City Manager's Office, Parks and Recreation, Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Immediate

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 2: CREATE A COMMUNITY FEEDBACK LOOP

Action ranked #12/20 from community feedback

A trusted arts and culture sector relies on clear, consistent, and transparent communication. All decisions should be data-driven and demonstrate an understanding of the impact that current efforts are having on the community. This approach builds confidence and ensures accountability to stakeholders and the public. Transparency in operations and outcomes is essential for maintaining this necessary trust from the community.

- Continue providing annual reporting on event impacts and funding. Augment with a standardized post-event survey and potential developing technology including geofencing and place-based data tracking and analysis.
- Emphasize signature festivals and experiences for all community members.
- Assess the effectiveness and community satisfaction of arts programs and events through intercept surveys available in digital or print during events to guide future programming and funding decisions
- Actively seek ways to enhance and support diverse community and cultural celebrations, including events like Día de los Muertos
- Study the impact of public art installations using place-based data, including tracking the year-over-year (YOY) increase in foot traffic counts following the installation to measure visibility and activity. This data should be supplemented with community surveys to gather sentiment regarding the installations
- Develop additions to annual Arts Advocacy & Facility Reports demonstrating demand, economic benefits, community use, and equity outcomes for arts and cultural programs. This report could borrow from the structure and methods utilized in the CBCA regional report <https://cbca.org/economic-activity-study/>

PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Communications,
Economic Development (Public
Art Coordinator)

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

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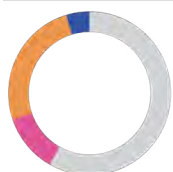
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



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PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Communications,
Economic Development (Public
Art Coordinator)

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term



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MOST ACHIEVABLE

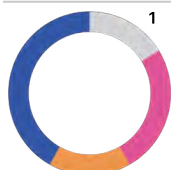


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 2: ENHANCE THE ECOSYSTEM OF LOCAL ARTISTS AND CREATIVES TO BOLSTER OPPORTUNITIES



ACTION 1: DEVELOP A DEDICATED MINI GRANT AND/OR ARTIST-IN-RESIDENCY PROGRAM

Action ranked #4/20 from community feedback

Mini-grant and artist-in-residency opportunities offer creatives in all disciplines—art, music, dance, and beyond—an array of resources to expand their practice through a funded, temporary research experience. The structure of these short-term programs can range based on desired outcomes, funding streams, and thematic focus but ultimately result in a new body of work, artistic experience, or creative finding. The opportunities are ideal creative outlets for practicing artists and creatives and yield exciting outcomes for the City.

- Establish an annual grant or artist-in-residency program to engage artists in creating arts experiences for the Thornton community in public spaces in addition to using City facilities
- Develop a specific mini-grant that allows artists and creators to execute arts and cultural experiences with the community. This program should allow for multidisciplinary artists and creators to leverage the opportunity for community benefit

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Parks and Recreation,
Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Mid-Term

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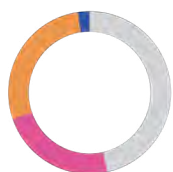
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 2: DEVELOP AN ARTIST AND ARTS EDUCATOR DIRECTORY

Action ranked #8/20 from community feedback

Arts education is a vital component of engaging with the arts at the community level. Developing an artist and arts education directory for the City of Thornton is crucial for ensuring the community has access to high-quality arts experiences. This directory also provides local artists with opportunities to work within their own community.

- Establish a directory to connect local and regional artists, makers, and arts organizations with relevant opportunities in Thornton
- As part of the directory, create a pre-qualified list of cultural creators available to offer community-based arts experiences for Thornton residents, potentially evolving from the former Arts Ambassadors program
 - » *Arts Ambassadors are Thornton community members dedicated to promoting local arts and culture. They collaborate with artists and City staff to raise awareness, install exhibitions, and support community festivals and programs.*

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Arts & Culture,
Communications

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

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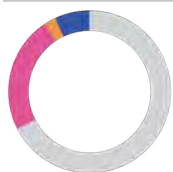
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 3: CONVENE THE CREATIVE COMMUNITY TO MAXIMIZE COLLABORATION

Action ranked #16/20 from community feedback

Thornton is home to many arts and cultural organizations across all sectors. With limited resources for arts and culture, these organizations do not always have the capacity to collaborate. The City should therefore host regular gatherings for all arts organizations in Thornton and surrounding areas. Exchanging ideas and deepening relationships will allow creative businesses and organizations to work together for greater community impact.

- Host reoccurring artist/creative meet-ups with local creative talent and TASHCO board members to strengthen collaboration and create social cachet within the creative community
- Consider industry or affinity-specific yearly convenings, such as for arts educators or musicians, to promote continued collaboration and to understand their concerns
- Utilize convening as an opportunity to promote opportunities to artists and expand the Artist and Arts Educator Directory

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term



ACTION 4: EMPOWER TASHCO AS THE COMMUNITY VOICE

Action ranked #19/20 from community feedback

TASHCO is uniquely positioned to be the primary convener for arts advocacy as stated in their bylaws. Empowering TASHCO is an important step towards building cultural capacity and strengthening the community's voice in arts and culture locally.

- Formalize TASHCO as the convener for arts advocacy and community interests.
- Encourage participation and representation from local arts groups, schools, artists, and creatives during TASHCO sessions.
- Ensure the TASHCO board meetings are seen as an open door for community participation and engagement.

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term



¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE

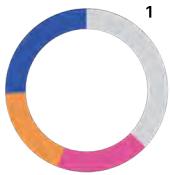


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 3: ACTIVATE SPACES ACROSS THE COMMUNITY FOR BROAD CULTURAL ACCESS



ACTION 1: DEVELOP AN ART ACTIVATIONS PROGRAM

Action ranked #6/20 from community feedback

To increase the visibility and accessibility of the arts, the City should implement a flexible activation strategy that brings creative experiences directly into public spaces and neighborhoods. These activations would shift cultural programming from traditional, fixed venues to dynamic, “pop-up” locations that ensure a wider array of programs in new and exciting locations. This strategy ensures that art and culture are woven into the daily life of the community, fostering spontaneous engagement and reaching a broader, more diverse audience throughout Thornton.

- Develop an activation program, which may be staff-led or created in partnership with guest collaborators or, artists in residence or local arts organizations
- Expand activations to additional community locations such as parks, recreation centers, and new developments. Potential pop-up events in recreation centers, parks, and libraries could include poetry readings, intimate music performances, and community art creation

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Parks and Recreation,
Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Mid-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 1: PROVIDE MORE TACTICAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC ART

Action ranked #7/20 from community feedback

Public art serves as a powerful instrument for integrating artistic expression into the everyday experiences of residents, thereby promoting greater equity in access to art. This can encompass traditional forms such as murals and statues, broader initiatives like art trails, or general efforts to enhance the aesthetic appeal of public spaces, particularly City-owned in downtown areas. To maximize its impact, public art must be implemented strategically, with the deliberate goal of reaching new audiences and expanding community-wide access.

- Investigate grant opportunities to
 - » support new murals;
 - » expand the existing utility box art program; and
 - » continue to explore opportunities for other site-specific interventions
- Develop a sanctioned program to provide a dedicated space for community and youth expression through public art. This program could establish a community-initiated mural or street art wall that provides a central, easily accessible location, such as near a community park or skate park, for activation. This concept can be incorporated into the department's future community initiated art policy.

PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Economic Development (Public Art Coordinator), Parks and Recreation

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 3: EXPAND GEOGRAPHIC ACCESS TO THE ARTS

Action ranked #11/20 from community feedback

Access to arts and culture is often limited by geography. This barrier can be minimized, and new audiences reached, by broadening the locations where programs are offered. Similarly, public art access should be enhanced by continuing to implement projects across all geographic wards. This allows more of the Thornton community to experience the arts in their daily lives.

- Seek to disperse arts programming opportunities across all neighborhoods and City wards to expand and equalize access for community members
- Leverage the art trailer to bring pop-up programming to new communities
- Ensure all wards are considered for public art installations and cultural offerings, and provide culturally contextual assets to respective wards.

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Parks and Recreation,
Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Mid-Term



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MOST ACHIEVABLE

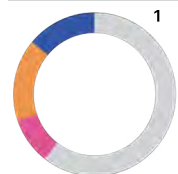


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 4: SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN SIGNATURE COMMUNITY OFFERINGS



ACTION 1: LEAN INTO A CURATORIAL APPROACH TO COMMUNITY PROGRAMMING

Action ranked #13/20 from community feedback

Ensuring that the community's programming is well thought out, comprehensive, and effective is essential to creating a strong Arts & Culture operation. Programming should be integrated throughout City initiatives in an intentional and thoughtful manner in order to create a recognizable brand, reach broader audiences, and generate arts funding.

- Integrate City-led, partner-led, and neighborhood-scale events into the seasonal programming calendar. Arts & Culture currently supports local talent and culture bearers through a quarterly exhibit program. To expand this, staff should consider appointing a seasonal guest creator (artist, curator, or cultural partner) to develop a thematic focus, thereby strengthening community identity and broadening participation
- Integrate opportunities with existing programs. This can assist SCFD-funded organizations in meeting funding requirements by providing a consistent community interaction venue.
- Utilize the Third Fridays music series and similar programs to support community engagement experiences

PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Parks and Recreation,
TASHCO

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

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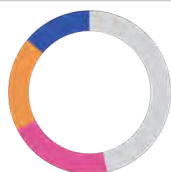
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 2: EXPAND RESOURCES FOR WELL-LOVED SIGNATURE EVENTS

Action ranked #9/20 from community feedback

There are many successful and beloved signature events in the City of Thornton. These events are well attended by the community and draw in participation from around the region. Dedicating ample resources for these festivals ensures they continue to flourish and provides opportunities for new and expanded cultural community gatherings.

- Increase funding and resources for existing and well-loved signature events such as Día de los Muertos, Dino Fest, Pride, and Juneteenth
- Ensure adequate resources and facilities are allocated for signature events to strengthen these cherished community gatherings
- Work within local communities and with aligned nonprofits to develop culturally responsive programming for multicultural events and activities
- Identify sponsorship opportunities and avenues to solicit private funding, where appropriate, for these events

PARTNERS

City Council, City Manager's Office, TASHCO, Parks and Recreation, Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

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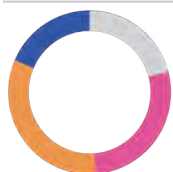
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 3: SHOW THAT REPRESENTATION MATTERS

Action ranked #5/20 from community feedback

Thornton is a diverse community with residents who seek artistic experiences that are reflective of themselves and their cultures. This can be highlighted through cross-sector arts programming utilizing local talent. Intentional investment in representative cultural opportunities demonstrates responsiveness to the community and interest in uplifting the local community.

- Showcase underrepresented and emerging artists through visual, performing, and literary arts showcases
- Expand cultural programming to reflect the increasingly diverse population and expand cultural offerings to highlight emerging and historically underrepresented artists reflective of Thornton's demographics
- Explore opportunities to invest in significant cultural events and programming that are reflective of emerging populations and identities as Thornton continues to diversify
- Through the proposed artist-in-residency program, solicit artists and cultural creators capable of developing programming that provides authentic experiences for cultural exchange within the community

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Parks and Recreation,
Arts & Culture, Economic
Development (Public Art
Coordinator)

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term



¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE

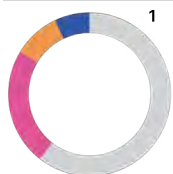


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 5: IDENTIFY NEW AVENUES OF FUNDING AND RESOURCES TO STRENGTHEN AND SUSTAIN ARTS AND CULTURE LOCALLY



ACTION 1: BUILD PARTNERSHIPS WITH INVESTED COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS AND ANCHORS

Action ranked #14/20 from community feedback

Across communities in the U.S., outside private and nonprofit organizations play a vital role in supporting the availability of arts and culture experiences locally. Building a network of supportive organizations can help bolster arts access throughout the City of Thornton by filling gaps in offerings, and providing opportunities for varying levels of impact and support within the arts and culture community. Collaboration between the City and outside organizations could include resource sharing, joint promotion, or utilizing contracts for cultural services to expand programming offerings through partners.

- Develop new opportunities for private and non-profit forces to fill gaps in Arts & Culture offerings
- Consider leveraging private contributions and integrating corporate sponsorships into events and public art offerings
- Expand partnerships with community service organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to leverage available resources and strengthen promotion and impact for the community

PARTNERS

TASHCO, BTAC, Arts & Culture, Economic Development, Thornton Area Chamber of Commerce

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



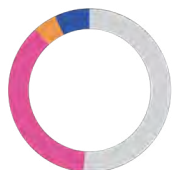
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 2: COLLABORATE WITH REGIONAL PARTNERS TO EXPAND THORNTON'S ARTS PRESENCE

Action ranked #10/20 from community feedback

Thornton is uniquely positioned to leverage its strategic geographical location to cultivate mutually beneficial relationships with the robust arts and culture ecosystem in its surrounding region. Formalizing regional partnerships will significantly enhance the scope and quality of Thornton's local cultural offerings through co-creation of dynamic experiences. These collaborations can take various forms, including co-programming, resource sharing, artist exchange, and joint grant applications. Ultimately, this regional partnership approach is a vital strategy for accelerating the development of Thornton's arts and culture programs, creating a more vibrant and sustainable cultural landscape for the entire community.

- Expand partnerships with the Anythink Library and local school districts to support the creation of cultural experiences
- Explore other regional partners to enhance offerings, including the Denver Art Museum, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art, SCFD-funded organizations, and the Adams County Cultural Arts Office

PARTNERS

TASHCO, Arts & Culture, SCFD,
Anythink Libraries, Adams
County

PRIORITY



TIMING

Near-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 3: WORK WITH THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO INCORPORATE PUBLIC ART INTO NEW DEVELOPMENTS TO ENSURE VIBRANT DEVELOPMENT AND PURPOSEFUL PLACES

Action ranked #17/20 from community feedback

The City currently manages and implements public art; however, incorporating Art In Private Development offers exciting avenues to significantly increase public art throughout Thornton. By leveraging a percent-for-art in private development projects, incentives can be created to encourage the placement of public art in private Thornton spaces that the City is otherwise unable to develop.

- Explore adaptations to Special Revenues funding and implementing a percent-for-art mechanism in private development (avoiding cash-in-lieu options)
- Formalize the staff support program for public art in private development, including a structured process for guidance on navigating permitting, identifying artists, and curating works of art. As part of this effort, evaluate staff resources to ensure adequate capacity
- Explore development incentives that encourage the incorporation of public art or cultural amenities in new construction. This could take the form of a dedicated Percent for Art in Private Development program or a voluntary inclusionary zoning program providing incentives for cultural amenities

PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Economic Development (Public Art Coordinator)

PRIORITY



TIMING

Mid-Term



BECKY HAWLEY, COLORADO WILDFLOWERS, 2020

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE

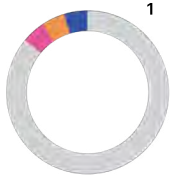


BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING

STRATEGY 6: BRING RECOGNITION TO THE CREATIVE FABRIC OF THORNTON



ACTION 1: DISTINGUISH ORIGINAL THORNTON AS AN EMERGING CREATIVE PLACE

See page 62 regarding steps

Action ranked #20/20 from community feedback

- Formalize the district with a defined boundary or zoning overlay to ensure it is contiguous and walkable
- Develop a distinct identity for the district, including unified branding and messaging
- Develop an inventory of arts activities, including galleries, performance venues, studios, and artists/creative enterprises
- Evaluate zoning to actively encourage arts activities and creative enterprises
- Support the development of complementary uses/amenities, such as retail, restaurants, and lodging
- Consider a small-area or strategic plan to guide the district's growth and development, including recommendations for staff allocation, dedicated leadership, government support, funding sources, and governance structure

PARTNERS

Colorado Creative Industries,
City Council, TASHCO,
Arts & Culture, SCFD, Economic
Development

PRIORITY



TIMING

Long-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 2: DEVELOP CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND PUBLIC ART INITIATIVES FOR A CREATIVE DISTRICT

Action ranked #15/20 from community feedback

Prioritizing placemaking initiatives creates exciting and useful public spaces within the community. The proposed Creative District should be a key focus for these efforts, as they will help establish a unique, pedestrian-oriented identity for the area. To fulfill the district's vision of being walkable, artistic, and cohesive, strategies like public art, placemaking, and other programs that encourage exploration must be made a high priority.

- Develop a wayfinding system using district branding to identify the district and underscore its presence and boundaries
- Earmark funds for further district investment to include Public Art gateways, adequate street lighting, pedestrian enhancements, and spaces that support creative enterprises

PARTNERS

Colorado Creative Industries,
TASHCO, Arts & Culture,
Economic Development, SCFD

PRIORITY



TIMING

Long-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



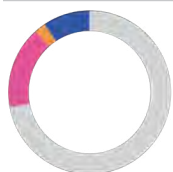
MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 3: ENCOURAGE ARTISTS TO LIVE AND WORK IN THE COMMUNITY THROUGH TARGETED DEVELOPMENT & PROGRAMS

Action ranked #18/20 from community feedback

Artists offer vital social and economic benefits to their places of residence, enhancing communities by creating public art and local programming that defines neighborhoods and improves public spaces. Integrating artists supports the creative economy, drawing visitors and fostering small business growth. Thornton can increase its appeal to working artists by exploring initiatives that improve livability for them, utilizing existing spaces, and developing new programs to draw more artists to the area.

- Consider developing underutilized lots and spaces into low-cost, flexible creative spaces, such as live/work units, artist studios, galleries, and makerspaces
- Promote the creation of live/work spaces or an artist residency program within the creative district
- Seek opportunities to include dedicated housing for artists within broader workforce housing developments
- Actively promote live/work spaces in both new developments and with repurposed or underutilized properties

PARTNERS

Arts & Culture, Economic Development, Colorado Creative Industries, SCFD

PRIORITY



TIMING

Long-Term

¹ These gauges reflect community feedback on the impact, feasibility, and excitement of the actions presented.



MOST ACHIEVABLE



BIGGEST IMPACT



MOST EXCITING



ACTION 4: SUPPORT THE DEVELOPMENT OF A CULTURAL ARTS CENTER

#1 most supported overall action from community feedback

Examining local and regional facilities, there is a demonstrated gap in performing arts spaces that local organizations are able to use, especially for performances and rehearsals. Thornton could benefit from a stand alone Cultural Arts Center capable of accommodating a wide range of programs and artistic expressions. This center should be accessible to the community and provide a variety of opportunities for presenting, creating, and educating people about the arts.

- Advance a scaled approach to facility development to create a centrally-located cultural space that meets the needs of the community and is designed specifically to support the arts
- Launch an outreach campaign framing the facility as a community asset, not a tourism destination alone
- Advance a community-centered venue (300–500 seats) with flexible seating, rehearsal rooms, teaching studios, a gallery space, and event rental flexibility
- Initiate a public/private funding structure with:
 - » public subsidy (annual operating support);
 - » revenue recapture from adjacent development or food/entertainment draw; and
 - » philanthropic and corporate sponsorship panels.
- Consider the repurposing of the existing Arts Center into a use that is aligned with Cultural District activities, such as an arts incubator so it continues supporting the expanding venues and programs of the Cultural District.

PARTNERS

City Council, TASHCO,
Arts & Culture

PRIORITY



TIMING

Long-Term



J. AARON ALDERMAN, *ENDURE*, 2024