

CHARLES COUNTY
**Public Arts
& Cultural
Master Plan**

2025



GOLOB ART
ART IS EVERYWHERE IS ART



SITE DESIGN





WHY A MASTER PLAN

FIRST-IN-COUNTY FRAMEWORK First-ever comprehensive County Government Framework for arts and culture

COMMUNITY-DRIVEN Responds to community demands for coordination, space, and investment

SMARTER GROWTH Aligns county growth with supporting economic development, education, tourism, and quality of life.

COUNTY OVERVIEW

POPULATION Rapid growth - 41% increase since 2000.

DEMOGRAPHICS Shifts in demographics, now the “wealthiest Black-majority county in the U.S.”, with 64% of residents commuting to DC + surrounding suburbs.

NATURE AND NATURE LOSS

3rd most tree cover in Maryland, 13th most farming acreage in state, by population - but 20 percent decrease in farmland between 2007 and 2021.



CHARLES COUNTY STATS

643 Square miles

Fast-growing population

Population in 2000

121,000

Population in 2025

172,000

Median household income

\$120,592

U.S. household income

\$82,690

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Inclusive Planning Process

- Countywide survey - 101 survey responses
- 3 Public Meetings - La Plata, Waldorf, and Indian Head
- 3 sector conversations - 36 participants across arts, education, business, and government
- 11 one-on-one interviews
- 6 site visits across the county
- Comparative study of all 24 Maryland county arts councils



WHAT WE HEARD

COMMUNITY + COUNTY NEEDS



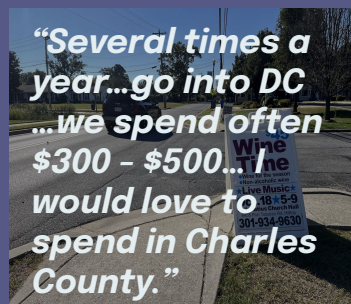
Lack of arts spaces and a central arts venue

Only 8% of respondents say there are enough arts spaces



Underfunded and under supported arts ecosystem

Charles County ranks 2nd to the bottom statewide in arts investment per capita (\$1.27 vs. MD median \$4.12) – and creative sector lacks coordination.



Residents travel outside of County for arts and culture events

Respondents attend arts and cultural events in Charles County less often than events outside of Charles County. This is a *highly* unusual dynamic for a county.



Desire for placemaking

Residents frequently expressed desire for walkable communities with greater sense of place and character through the arts.

IMPACT OF THE ARTS – GENERAL

NATIONWIDE

Non-profit arts and culture organizations generated **\$151.7 Billion** (NEA, 2025)

Per-person event-related spending is \$38.44 (Americans for the Arts, 2023)



MARYLAND

- Supports 86,000 jobs
- Arts sector contributes **\$13.7 Billion** to economy (MD State Arts Council, 2025)
- **Every dollar** spent by MD State Arts Council grantees **generates \$1.86** in economic value
- **\$7.6 Billion** towards art workers' compensation
- **5.3 million in-person** attendance, 3.9 million virtual attendance



IMPACT OF THE ARTS - DETAILS

- Arts and culture organizations, even small and medium ones, can act as neighborhood **economic anchors** (Kresge Study, 2019)
- Arts events even every few months can **decrease health care system costs** \$1,000 per person (U.College of London, 2023)
- Regions with strong creative sectors **increased business innovation** - with a greater number of patents filed - not just in creative industries (S.Yum, 2020)

Neighborhoods with arts clusters showed (UPenn, 2017):

14%

decrease in child
abuse and neglect

18%

decrease in
serious crime

5%

decrease in
obesity

18%

increase in kids scoring in top
tier in English and math exams

RECOMMENDATIONS

FOUR PILLARS OF ACTION

BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Integrate arts into the built environment - including development and infrastructure.

CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Connect art, nature, and heritage through place-based projects.

COMMUNITY AND WORKFORCE

Build creative capacity and career pathways.

GOVERNANCE AND FINANCING

Establish clear structures, funding, and accountability.

BUILT ENVIRONMENT INITIATIVES

PUBLIC ART AND MICRO-GRANT PROGRAM

- Rolling small grants and larger scale public art commissions.

CENTRAL ARTS VENUE

- Feasibility study for a county arts center - priority siting in La Plata Town Center or Waldorf 301 Corridor.

ZONING INCENTIVES AND DENSITY BONUSES

- Encourage developers to include arts spaces and walkable neighborhoods via flexible codes and incentives.

PERCENT FOR ART

- Dedicate 1% of county capital budgets for public art and pool funds for larger impact.



CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE INITIATIVES

MULTI-USE TRAIL NETWORK

- Connect towns, historic sites, and parks through arts, signage, and experiences.

AGRITOURISM AND RURAL ARTS HUBS

- Combine farming, heritage, nature, and arts through agri-arts trails and rural arts hubs.

WATERFRONT ACTIVATION

- Make 183 miles of County waters a cultural destination for with artful access points, programming, and light-touch amenitization.



COMMUNITY & WORKFORCE INITIATIVES

CREATIVE WORKFORCE TRAINING GRANTS

- Support arts workers in business and technical skills.

SOUTHERN MARYLAND ARTS LEADERSHIP FELLOWSHIP

- Cross-county professional development for emerging arts leaders.

YOUTH MENTORSHIP AND MICRO-GRANTS

- Paid internships, visiting artists, youth-led projects.

MONTHLY ARTS CONVENINGS

- Regular meetups to build creative networks and collaboration.



GOVERNMENT AND FINANCING INITIATIVES

TRANSITION ARTS ALLIANCE TO ARTS COUNCIL

- County-appointed nonprofit partner for transparency and growth.

DEDICATED ARTS STAFF

- Dedicated staff within RPT for grants, coordination, and policy oversight - also supporting review of parklets and public art.

ESTABLISH ARTS CAPITAL GRANTS PROGRAM

- Annual fund to support arts space capital investments.

ENTERTAINMENT, RECREATION, AND ARTS (ERA) DISTRICTS

- La Plata (ready for MD A&E District) and Waldorf (ERA District).

DEDICATED ARTS FUNDING

- Fund county arts policies, programs, and grants from current \$1.27 per capita to between state median (\$4.12) and top third (\$7.00+).



IMPLEMENTATION

YEARS 1-2

LAY THE FOUNDATION

- Hire arts staff and establish County Arts Council
- Launch microgrant and temporary public art pilots
- Begin feasibility study for Central Arts Venue
- Adopt Percent for Art ordinance
- Update zoning incentives and policies
- Secure State A&E designation for La Plata

YEARS 3-5

BUILD MOMENTUM

- Roll out countywide public art program and capital grants
- Finance and construct central arts venue
- Expand trail, waterfront, and agri-arts projects
- Launch Arts Leadership Fellowship and youth microgrant
- Develop ERA Districts in Waldorf

YEARS 6-10

SUSTAIN AND GROW

- Conduct five-year plan review and refresh
- Deepen private sector partnerships and donor support
- Position Charles County as a regional leader in the arts
- Expand ERA District program