



Ohio Arts Council

Statewide *Listening Tour* Findings Headlines

The purpose of the Ohio Arts Council's (OAC) Listening Tours is to find out what Ohioans value about the arts, creativity and their communities. Through a series of three meetings in each city, the *Listening Tours* aim to bring together diverse groups of citizens including elected officials, city planners, community leaders, members of the arts community, educators, college students and senior citizens.

The findings from the seven communities visited this fall helped illuminate the impressive accomplishments, driving aspirations and daily struggles of communities around the state. The meetings also provided an opportunity for Ohioans to share the vital role they believe the arts and creativity play in their community as they pursue a wide range of economic development strategies to retain and attract existing and new business, especially knowledge-based industries. These findings will assist the OAC Board and staff in developing the agency's 2010-2013 Strategic Plan and the *State of the Arts Report II*.

Heritage and Culture

In each community the people are seen as essential resources—as part of the unique fabric of that community, as storytellers, as volunteers. They are respected and acknowledged for their giving natures, their spirit of cooperation and sharing their pride in their community

Each community has a tremendous amount of pride of place—there is recognition of the distinctive nature within each community, whether through history, architecture, or the other unique community assets—particularly through arts and cultural institutions, which are seen as essential aspects of how the community views itself.

The majority of cities visited this fall were smaller cities and towns—citizens in each had respect and pride for small-town life and the benefits it has to offer for individuals and the community as a whole.

Creativity and Innovation

The presence of universities, colleges and branch campuses within communities is seen as an important contributor to the culture of the area.

Many knowledge-based business incubators have been successfully implemented and have brought many benefits to the community including a broader tax base and the contributions of the people that make up the knowledge-based and creative workforces.

Education

Universities and branch campuses are seen as key community assets—both for adult education opportunities and for the presence of their educators within the community.

There is an overwhelming belief that parents need to be better educated about the essential role that arts education plays in the development of young people's minds, and their ability to be creative thinkers and competitive participants in the 21st century workforce.

Parents want their children to have well-rounded educations and hope that their children can live and work in Ohio.

Public Policy and Planning

Each community recognizes the importance of support and leadership from elected officials—those who implement broad-based community planning, recognize the contributions of different sectors to the success of the community and involve voices from all areas are seen as particularly effective.

Where partnerships with convention and visitors bureaus, chambers of commerce, parks and recreation departments, and between arts organizations are present the collaborations are seen as extremely beneficial. The communities without these partnerships aspire to develop and nurture such relationships.

There is a strong desire for continued OAC presence—in terms of grant dollars and other resources, such as workshops and advice on a variety of subjects such as marketing and promotion and cultural planning. The OAC is also seen as a vital facilitator to the continued collaborations within communities.

Community Revitalization and Stabilization

Downtown revitalization efforts, even those in the planning stages, are seen as essential to community pride and the impression the community makes on visitors.

Public art is respected for what it contributes to the overall fabric of the community and more is desired. Several communities mentioned specifically a hope for more interactive projects, especially those involving young people in the creation of the art.

Loss of jobs and young people a primary concern everywhere—opportunities for creativity are believed to be particularly effective potential counteragents to these concerns.