

Arts for everyone's sake goal of Pima Cultural Plan

Local groups starting to collaborate on the resources available

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The arts community is talking collaboration just as recent times have seen the economic development and transportation sectors in the Tucson region putting down the gloves and talking of the common good.

All of it ties together, said Bill Bulick, a cultural planner from Portland, Ore., who is assembling a Pima Cultural Plan. This plan - a draft is expected by early July - will describe how to make the most of Tucson's cultural, natural and heritage assets.

"The key message is, it is integral to livability, economic vitality, downtown revitalization and the education and development of our youth," Bulick said.

Bulick mentioned that culture plays a key role in two of the five thrust areas outlined in the Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities' Economic Blueprint in March. And it was "not just the arts folks" speaking passionately about culture at the Tucson Regional Town Hall earlier this month.

Bulick sat in on a City Council study session last week that took a first look at how to set goals and criteria for city support of the arts.

"Honestly, it was more positive than I thought (it would be)," Bulick said. "I think the City Council is going to do some things."

Bulick has worked since October with all the major arts and culture organizations in Tucson, as well as smaller arts entities, business people and elected officials to determine how to make culture a priority.

"It seems apparent in a number of ways that the system is fragile and under-resourced," Bulick said. "On both the private and public side, the financial support is low in comparison (to other places). Right after how important (culture) is to livability is how important it is to sustain it. You've got to show the value (of culture)."

Bulick said Tucson has a remarkable natural landscape, a rich mix of cultures and vibrant arts offerings. But the region suffers from a cultural isolationism.

"People in the cultural community say they're not connected to each other," Bulick said. "A lot say they vie with each other for limited resources. People are wanting sharing of resources and collaboration. We really are talking with each other and aiming for a big-picture solution."

Bulick found Tucson's urban landscape doesn't reflect the human talent.

"There are a lot of talented people here," Bulick said. "The trouble is, you walk 10 feet and you're in a surface parking lot or a brutalist piece of architecture."

Bulick is in the task force phase now, addressing issues raised with the local Cultural Plan Leadership Coalition and the Nature, Culture and Heritage Alliance of Pima County. A draft plan is expected by early July, and the final plan should be out in August.

"It will speak as explicitly as it can on who will implement (the recommendations)," Bulick said.

The Pima Cultural Plan is funded by a \$50,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the city and Pima County each supplied \$30,000. The Tucson Pima Arts Council is shepherding the planning process.

"Please start thinking about cultural space like you think of green space," Bulick said. "The community has to wrestle with whether they want artists in their midst."