

Tucson Citizen

Arts and culture called soul of city

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The public, arts administrators and City Councilman Steve Leal sat around tables Wednesday to hash through the draft Pima Cultural Plan. The plan analyzes the region's culture, nature and heritage and gives specific suggestions to improve the cultural economy, cultural facilities, public art and arts in schools. It also suggests changes in government policy and how to fund the cultural sector.

About 75 people turned out for the public unveiling of the draft plan and broke into small groups to discuss it.

Their input will be incorporated into the final plan, which is expected in October, said Bill Bulick, the plan's author and a cultural planner based in Portland, Ore.

"This is a fragile community and the resources are threatened," Bulick said of the cultural community.

The cultural plan follows on the heels of an economic blueprint prepared by Tucson Regional Economic Opportunities and the Tucson Regional Town Hall. The Pima Cultural Plan differs because it presents specific recommendations and assigns entities to carry them out.

"We have this unique, timely opportunity" because many players in the region are already working together, said Nancy Lutz, president of the Tucson Pima Arts Council, a co-sponsor of the Pima Cultural Plan along with the Nature Culture Heritage Alliance of Pima County.

"When you ask people about places they like to visit, one of the things they don't realize is that arts and culture are the soul of the place," Lutz said.

For Kim Eisele, a writer, teacher and dancer, the cultural plan is an important step in identifying Tucson's cultural assets.

"The implementation of it is really important," Eisele said. "It depends on the momentum of the people in this room. It depends on people's commitments."

A broad array of arts, nature and cultural groups played an integral role in shaping the cultural plan.

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