

iSOMOS UNO!

A Cultural Heritage Strategy for Tucson



Nutcracker, Dancing in The Streets. Image Credit: Anna & Scott Griessel Creatista. Photo courtesy of Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona.



Josefina Lizarraaga, Tucson Meet Yourself, 2011

YOEME, Salvador Saluaqui, TRHIVE in the 05 Mural Unveiling Event.

STATE of CULTURE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
August 2024

Lord Cultural Resources is a global professional practice dedicated to making the world a better place through culture.

We assist people, communities and organizations to realize and enhance cultural meaning and expression.

We distinguish ourselves through a comprehensive and integrated full-service offering built on a foundation of key competencies: visioning, planning and implementation.

We value and believe in cultural expression as essential for all people. We conduct ourselves with respect for collaboration, local adaptation and cultural diversity, embodying the highest standards of integrity, ethics and professional practice.

We help clients clarify their goals; we provide them with the tools to achieve those goals; and we leave a legacy as a result of training and collaboration.

Our New York office is located on the traditional lands of the Lenape peoples. Our Long Beach office is located on the land of the Tongva/Gabrieleño and the Acjachemen/Juaneño Nations, who have lived and continue to live here. Our Toronto office is located within the traditional territory of many nations, including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples.

We encourage you to acknowledge the presence of the people who came before, wherever you are.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The planning team would like to acknowledge and thank the many individuals and community partners whose insight, time, expertise, ideas, generosity and dedication helped shape this State of Culture report.

We are deeply grateful to **Mayor Regina Romero** for her vision and leadership in advancing this planning initiative, *iSomos Uno! A Cultural Heritage Strategy for Tucson*, which has been led by a core working group comprised of the following individuals on behalf of the City of Tucson:

- **Genesis Cubillas**, *Policy Advisor, Office of the Mayor*
- **Charlene Mendoza**, *Chief of Staff, Office of the Mayor*
- **Lane Mandle**, *Chief of Staff, Office of the City Manager*
- **Kelly Wiehe**, *Project Manager, iSomos Uno! A Cultural Heritage Strategy for Tucson, Office of the City Manager*
- **Adriana Gallego**, *CEO, Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona*

We would also like to thank the various City of Tucson departments and their respective staff and public officials, as well as others who participated in stakeholder interviews and generously provided data/information in support of this report, including:

- **City of Tucson Office of Economic Initiatives**
- **City of Tucson Historic Preservation staff**
- **City of Tucson Office of the City Manager**
- **Staff of Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona**

We also want to express appreciation to the dedicated group of cultural heritage sector leaders who make up this initiative's steering committee. They have provided invaluable input, feedback and guidance throughout the project. A special thank you to committee member, Alejandra Trujillo, who designed a participatory mural and accompanying takeaway coloring pages for the project's public launch at *Tucson Meet Yourself* in October 2023.

iSomos Uno! Steering Committee

- **Raul Aguirre**, *President and Owner, REA Media Group*
- **James Christopher**, *Historian and Black Memorabilia Museum Owner and Curator*
- **Demion Clinco**, *CEO, Tucson Historic Preservation Foundation*
- **Felipe Garcia**, *President and CEO, Visit Tucson*
- **Lara Hamwey**, *Director, Tucson Parks and Recreation*
- **Amy Hartmann-Gordon**, *Executive Director, Presidio San Agustín del Tucson Museum*
- **Chad Herzog**, *Associate Vice President, Arizona Arts, University of Arizona; Executive and Artistic Director, Arizona Arts Live*



- **Jose Jimenez**, *Small Business Owner, Petroglyphs, and Board Member, Tucson International Mariachi Conference*
- **Milta Ortiz**, *Associate Artistic Director, Borderlands Theater*
- **Marc David Pinate**, *Producing Artistic Director, Borderlands Theater*
- **Corky Poster**, *Architect and Principal Planner, Poster Mitro McDonald (PMM)*
- **Nelda Ruiz**, *Program Manager and Educator, Southwest Folklife Alliance*
- **Richard Fe Tom, AIA**, *Board Member, Friends of Tucson's Birthplace and Founder of the Architecture Company*
- **Alejandra Trujillo**, *Independent Artist*
- **Brandon Varela**, *Director, Old Pascua Museum and Yaqui Culture Center*

Thank you to our team of community ambassadors who convened community members and facilitated focused dialogues on Tucson's cultural heritage strengths, opportunities and challenges:

- **Fabiola Bedoya**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Flor Burruel**, *Community Ambassador and Engagement Facilitator*
- **Joanna Goldberg**, *Community Engagement Coordinator*
- **Ashley La Russa**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Gertie Lopez**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Christina Negrete**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Adrian Perez**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Carly Quinn**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Rikki Rojas**, *Community Ambassador*
- **Kathleen Vance**, *Community Ambassador*

Thank you to the generous and welcoming hosts who opened their spaces for community members and the consultant team to participate in steering committee meetings and sector workshops:

- **Staff and team of Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona**
- **Carlotta Flores**, *Chef-Owner, Flores Concepts*
- **Staff and team of Tucson Museum of Art**
- **Staff and team of Arizona Arts Live**, *The University of Arizona*
- **Amy Draper**, *The Armory Park Inn*

Finally, a resounding note of gratitude for all constituents, stakeholders and communities who participated in interviews and workshops, completed the survey, attended office hours and shared insights, concerns and ideas.



Introduction

Tucson is Arizona's second-largest city and a regional destination for its many historic sites, archaeological projects and vibrant arts and culture scene. The city's cultural identity has been shaped by its vibrant murals and public art, musical sounds and film and theater productions by local art and culture bearers, as well as the numerous and diverse cultural offerings by many small, grassroots arts organizations. The city is also internationally recognized for its multicultural food traditions and became the first UNESCO City of Gastronomy designation in the U.S. in 2015.

Despite the rich cultural heritage traditions in Tucson, the city has never undertaken a focused planning effort to evaluate what is at stake — what are the historical and cultural heritage assets why are they critical to quality of life and what actions can the city take to ensure they are managed, maintained and can continue to thrive? Under the leadership of Mayor Regina Romero, the City of Tucson launched an ambitious endeavor in 2023 to develop a comprehensive history, heritage, art and cultural strategy. Referred to as *iSomos Uno! A Cultural Heritage Strategy for Tucson*, this effort presents an incredible opportunity for the city to effectively preserve its cultural assets and amplify its creative resources. Bringing together Tucson's communities to acknowledge, preserve and evolve the city's cultural heritage sector and assets will seed new opportunities for growth that connect to a range of other priorities, from health and safety to climate resiliency to economic development initiatives.

This State of Culture Report marks the first major milestone of ***iSomos Uno!*** and helps establish a broad understanding of the current cultural ecosystem in Tucson, including a comprehensive evaluation of its strengths, challenges, and opportunities.

The purpose of this report is not to draw final conclusions or offer concrete recommendations, but to present consolidated findings and emerging insights from the research and public engagement conducted in Phases 1 and 2 of this initiative.





The planning process

A note on terms:

iSomos Uno! is led by the Office of Mayor Regina Romero and Office of the City Manager, in collaboration with the Arts Foundation of Tucson and Southern Arizona (the region’s local arts agency), with professional support from consulting firm Lord Cultural Resources and a steering committee of arts, culture and history sector leaders. The process kicked off in May 2023 and is comprised of the following phases:

It was important for the planning team to establish a descriptive term at the outset of this initiative that could signal a generous and expansive understanding of what arts and culture encompasses in Tucson, and the vital role that history, heritage and food traditions play in the city’s unique cultural ecosystem. For this reason, within the State of Culture report the phrase “history, heritage, arts and culture” is employed as a collective term to refer to Tucson’s complex and diverse cultural ecosystem and is used interchangeably with “cultural heritage.” Both phrases are meant to provide a shared context of the scope of this report and the broader initiative.



This report synthesizes an array of qualitative and quantitative data gathered through the first and second phases, over the course of 11 months from May 2023 to April 2024:

Analysis	Engagement	Cultural Assets	Peer City Analysis	Economic Impact	Current Funding
Analysis of existing data and plans pertaining to the Tucson heritage, history, arts and culture sector.	Learnings from robust areawide community engagement	A cultural assets inventory and map	An examination of funding and governance in comparable communities across the nation	Arts, Culture & Creative Sector economic impact analysis	Assessment of funding mechanisms and models



Community engagement

A variety of engagement methods were used to listen and connect with stakeholders — including meeting community members where they are through pop-up engagement at events, fostering dialogue through community conversations and workshops, gathering nuanced input through one-on-one stakeholder interviews and informal touchpoints through virtual drop-in office hours. Overall, the engagement process reached and gathered input from over 2,000 individual participants in Tucson.

Engagement by the numbers *From October 2023 to April 2024*



Key findings from the engagement process:

- The public highly values Tucson’s rich arts and cultural presence and how it is tied so deeply to the history, heritage and environment of the city and its people.
- Tucson’s history, heritage, arts and culture community are dedicated and organized, but need more support.
- There is broad public support and a stated need for more public funding and new revenue streams to support cultural heritage organizations and programming.
- There is a desire for more initiatives, activities and centers or spaces that bring people together, highlight the city’s diverse cultural heritage and increase feelings of connection and belonging.
- Tucson residents and visitors are excited and invested in the city’s cultural heritage offerings, but the gap in centralized communication and information about events hinders public awareness and participation.
- History, heritage, arts and culture offerings can be made more accessible by supporting those in diverse neighborhoods across the city and increasing affordable transit and parking options.



Peer city research

Several comparable or peer cities across the country are investing in improving and uplifting arts and culture, and finding new ways to support independent artists, culture bearers and cultural producers. The planning team studied the overall operational framework, governance, policies, funding mechanisms and general cultural heritage and arts infrastructure makeup of seven U.S. cities: Albuquerque, NM; Chicago, IL; Dallas, TX; Denver, CO; Oakland, CA; Santa Fe, NM and San Antonio, TX.

- All seven U.S. cities have a dedicated municipal department/division for arts and culture in addition to a Local Arts Agency (LAA).
- In some cases, municipal arts and culture programs heavily prioritize tourism and marketing of cultural facilities or events, often evident in the department titles such as Denver's Arts & Venue Department or Chicago's Office of Cultural Affairs & Special Events.
- Some municipal arts and culture programs are housed within economic development divisions to enhance strategies for growth, like in Oakland.

Out of these cities, **Chicago, San Antonio and Albuquerque** were identified for a deeper analysis to gain a better understanding of best practices and lessons learned that might be applied in Tucson.

Key findings from a deeper dive into three peer cities:



All three cities feature a fully staffed municipal office to manage cultural heritage and arts programming.



All three have municipal arts and culture offices that house permitting.



All three cities have city-run and programmed galleries and facilities.



All three cities have a close and collaborative relationship with the city's tourism agency.



Like Tucson, two out of three of the cities studied (San Antonio and Chicago), utilize a transient occupancy or hotel-motel tax to fund arts and culture. However, unlike Tucson, a much larger percentage is earmarked. Albuquerque has an unusually large budget (over \$50 million) because it directly manages and staffs several major cultural facilities as well as a system of 19 libraries for the county.



Municipal infrastructure

Part of the research and discovery included taking a closer look at the core organizations or entities responsible for administering history, heritage, arts and culture programs on behalf of the City of Tucson through formal agreements or partnerships. It is important to note that this intentionally narrow focus is meant to provide a deeper understanding of the primary mechanisms, operating procedures and relationships in place at the municipal level.

The history, scope and role of Tucson's cultural ecosystem were examined through a study of the following five pillars: Arts Foundation for Tucson and Southern Arizona, Rio Nuevo Tax Increment Finance District, Tucson City of Gastronomy, Visit Tucson and City of Tucson's Office of Historic Preservation.

Key findings of municipal infrastructure assessment:

- Community-driven and grass-roots initiatives plus deep history have cultivated a robust ecosystem, including the City of Gastronomy UNESCO designation.
- There is strong mayoral leadership and support for cultural advancement.
- The Historic Preservation Office is understaffed for the number of projects and properties.
- Prop 207 has led to the reduction of new designations — only two new local districts have been designated in the state since 2006.
- There are mixed opinions on the future role of municipal government to advance and support history, heritage, arts and cultural services.
- Arts Foundation and Tucson City of Gastronomy are successful platforms and existing partnerships that offer a major opportunity for deepened collaboration to expand

Funding

An analysis of the existing funding for cultural heritage activities in Tucson set out to assess how well it is serving current and future needs. The city's key revenue source for cultural heritage is the **Transient Occupancy Tax (TOT)**, which is redistributed via its contractual relationship with the **Arts Foundation** in the form of grants, programming and advocacy. **Visit Tucson**, the city's official tourism partner, is a large 501(c)(6) membership-based nonprofit that also receives a portion of revenue from the TOT, and which sponsors and supports several cultural heritage events.

Key findings of funding analysis:

- Municipal funding is unstable and decentralized, making long-term planning and visioning difficult.
- Limited funding sources in the region for grants and revenue result in a scarcity mentality for arts and culture organizations and independent artists.



Economic and fiscal impact of Tucson’s cultural ecosystem

To enhance understanding of the relationship between Tucson’s cultural heritage sector and its larger economy, Jon Stover & Associates, an economic development consulting firm, was enlisted to conduct a comprehensive economic and fiscal impact analysis of the city’s creative sector, including its direct and indirect impact on jobs, salaries, tax revenue and cultural tourism. This research also includes a cultural asset inventory and map of the arts and culture industry, including businesses and nonprofits within Tucson’s arts, culture and creative sector.

Key findings of economic and fiscal impact analysis:

Collectively, Tucson’s arts and culture and creative economy industries contribute

52,184 jobs

generating

\$2.8 billion

in salaries and wages and

\$8.4 billion

in business revenue.

Tucson’s arts and cultural economy directly generates

\$49.5 million

in annual tax revenue for the City of Tucson.

Tucson’s core arts and cultural industries annually contribute

\$4.1 billion

to the City’s economy.

This accounts for

7.3%

of Tucson’s overall economy.

Cultural tourism generates approximately

\$431 million

in annual out-of-town visitor spending and

\$20 million

in annual tax revenue for the City of Tucson.



What it all means: Emerging insights

The planning process uncovered eight emerging insights about the state of culture in Tucson. These insights are synthesized from the inputs of each phase of the planning process, including background research, an analysis of peer cities, public engagement, funding and municipal structure analysis, as well as cultural asset mapping and an economic impact study. Collectively, these insights provide a comprehensive understanding of the sector's current strengths, challenges and opportunities, and will inform the development of a new cultural heritage strategy for Tucson.

Guiding Principles

Three guiding principles surfaced through the research and engagement processes as essential values that should guide the approach, design and implementation of a successful cultural heritage strategy, now and in the future.

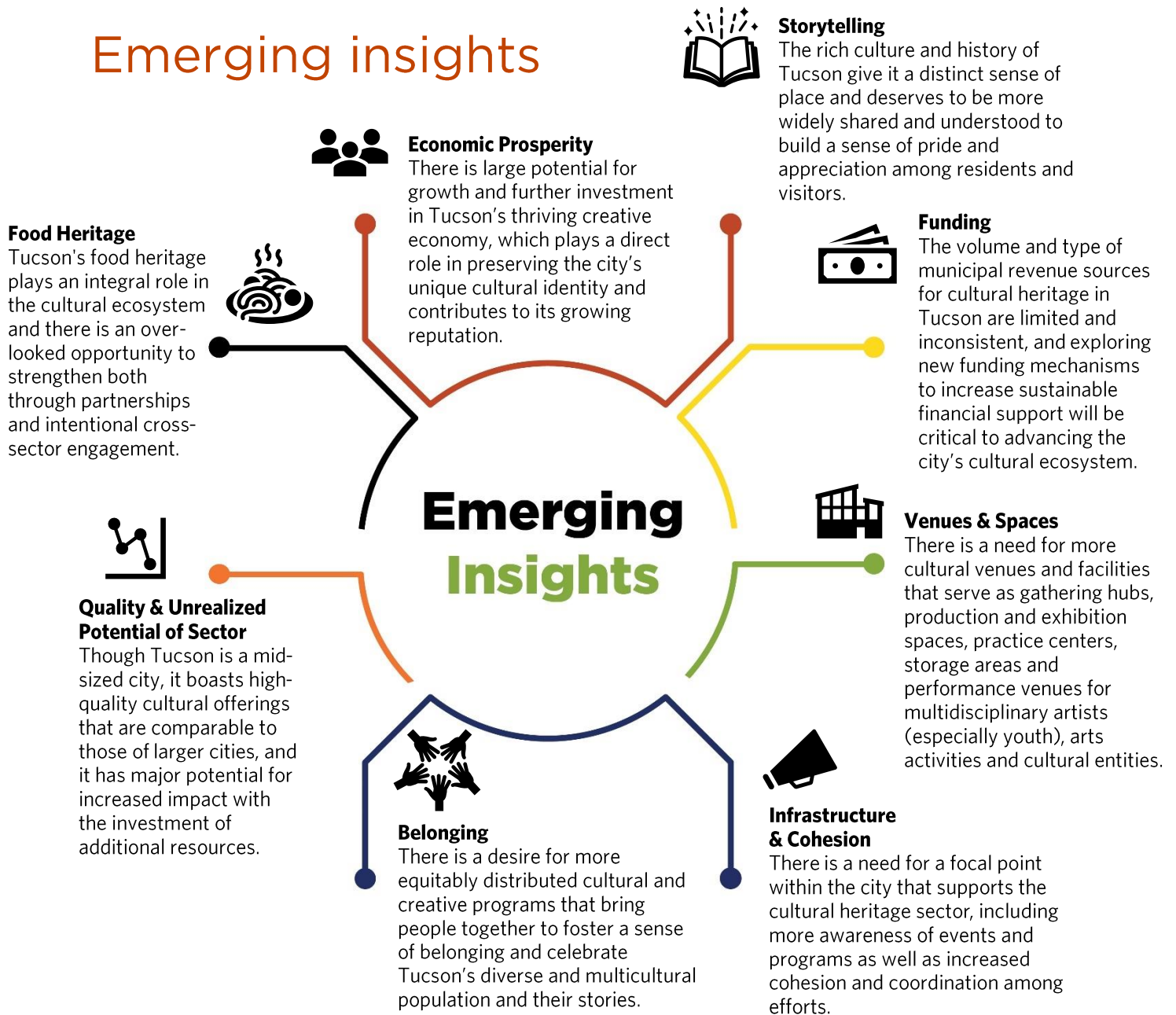
Embrace belonging by fostering a culture of equitable and inclusive co-creation that empowers those most affected by systems of oppression. Celebrate and value the multicultural, multifaceted identities that make up Tucson's cultural identity.

Recognize, respect and honor the history, deep connection to the land and cultural heritage and legacy of the Indigenous peoples who have stewarded the land for many generations, including the Tohono O'odham Nation and Pascua Yaqui Tribe.

Prioritize and uphold building trust as a key and foundational component of authentic engagement, partnership and co-creation. Seek to acknowledge and address the ways historically marginalized communities have been excluded or harmed in the past.



Emerging insights



Where do we go from here?

The State of Culture report represents the conclusion of the research and public engagement phases of work. Following this, the planning team will work with the steering committee to develop these insights into priorities that will form the foundation of a new cultural heritage strategy for Tucson that establishes a vision and roadmap for the future of its history, heritage, arts and culture sector.

THANK YOU.

**For more information, visit the project
webpage:**

<https://somosuno.tucsonaz.gov>

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