Kentucky Arts Council

CREATIVE ASSETS INVENTORY GUIDE

MAKING A LIST

Creative districts recognize and encourage artistic expression as a way to engage residents and visitors. How can a location be considered a creative district? Creativity happens in every community, right? Yes, indeed! However, people in a creative district make a conscious, organized effort to promote their identity and build a vibrant sense of community based on their creative assets.

Every community has creative assets — places and characteristics that bring about meaningful, memorable experiences. Each asset represents a potential encounter with local culture, art, history, cuisine or architecture.

When a significant number of creative spaces are identified in close proximity, they can help define an area as a creative district. The first step a community should take to designate a creative district is to list and map its creative assets. The deliberate process of collecting tangible and intangible assets is a powerful way to motivate individuals and focus efforts on a common goal.

Creative asset inventories build a collective awareness of a community's unique characteristics. This awareness can be transformative in the way locals and visitors experience the district, describe it to others, and develop new creative assets.

IT'S A GROUP EFFORT

Creative asset inventories should reflect a variety of viewpoints and opinions from within and outside of the community. Convening an ad hoc committee is good way to collect new ideas and make sure many perspectives are included in your inventory. Convened groups should reflect community diversity, and approach community groups who represent and serve different audiences. Possible committee members might include artists, small business owners, and representatives from economic development, local government, social services, arts organizations, utilities, local historians, parents and civic organizations. Enlist these committee members to help with the following types of activities, which produce valuable data for your survey.

WINDSHIELD SURVEY

To collect the most obvious assets, take a glance at the cultural landscape. Some refer to this activity as an environmental scan or a windshield survey.

A windshield survey can be useful in listing the most visible assets. It can identify first-impression elements — sights, sounds and smells — that are associated with a district.

However, remember that these noticeable characteristics are just a part of what will be considered for a thorough inventory.

What are the first things you notice about the district? Maybe a brick street, statue, mural, clock tower, church bells, barbecue aroma, a colorful trolley or a theater marquee? Take note of these when drafting the inventory.

GO DEEP

Some of the best creative assets can be so familiar or ingrained in the daily lives of local residents that they are overlooked or forgotten. That is why it takes more than one person to make a creative asset inventory.

Everyone experiences locations in different ways, with many variables including cultural background, age, race, gender, disabilities and familiarity with the area. Making a creative asset inventory requires talking to lots of people.

Having meetings with different groups is a great way to start a dialog about creative assets. You can take advantage of existing community group's regular meetings. Look for their meeting schedules in the community section of the local paper or look up their leadership contacts online. Suggestions include book clubs, garden clubs, ecumenical councils, foundations, civic or social organizations like Lions, Shriners, Kiwanis and Rotary clubs. Call and ask for a brief time to ask a few questions at the end of their regularly scheduled meeting. Every affinity group has its own mission, values, goals and way of viewing their community that will be valuable to collecting assets.

INTERVIEW TIME

To collect deeper perspectives, nothing is better than conducting one-on-one interviews. Set up appointments to talk with community members face-to-face. Interviewees will appreciate being involved in this process that can benefit their home turf.

MAKE A LIST OF QUESTIONS TO ASK, SUCH AS:
- Who are some creative people or businesses in the district?
- What are some art forms and traditions this area is known for?
- What natural or architectural features do you associate with the area?
- What events or festivals happen here?
- Where and why do people gather?
- How is this community different from others?
- Who else should I talk to?

Decide whether to take notes or make an audio recording of the interview. Recording is the best option, because it frees up your hands and mind to listen attentively to the interviewee, and ask follow-up questions.

HERE ARE SOME TIPS:
- Listen carefully and maintain eye contact.
- Ask questions that aren't on your list.
- Don't change the subject too quickly.
- Long, silent pauses are good because they allow time to collect thoughts.
- Ask if there's anything you forgot to ask them.
- Thank them for their time.

Interviewing takes practice, but just about anyone can learn to do it. Enlist members of your committee to share ideas for people to interview and empower committee members to conduct interviews if they are willing. If you or those on your committee feel uncomfortable being an interviewer, seek help from folklorists or Community Scholars. Consider taking Community Scholar training as an individual or group to learn interview and documentation skills.

SHARE WITH EVERYONE

Make sure the final asset list reflects the local community, and diversity within the community. Share a draft and ask if it is a fair listing. Collect perspectives from outsiders and visitors to the community.

Post the inventory on a website, blog, or social media, and invite comments. Think of factors that might limit access to the inventory such as language barriers or disabilities. Make your inventory available in many formats. Many times, a community member reading your results will raise a concern that hasn't yet been considered, or add a new idea no one has thought of.

MAP THE ASSETS

Mapping assets is an essential part of defining the district. A map displays physical proximity and groupings of assets. It is very useful in defining boundaries and identifying barriers or challenges to overcome. Furthermore, the mapping process often reveals assets not yet considered.

There is no need to hire a cartographer. A paper map with sticky notes and thumbtacks works fine. Better yet, Google Maps is an excellent, free online tool to input, save and share a custom electronic map of creative assets in any location.

A DYNAMIC DOCUMENT

Just as cultures and landscapes change, so does a creative asset inventory. Consider the inventory a living document that requires updates, perhaps annually. Share it generously and ask for input continuously.

SAMPLE CULTURAL ASSETS INVENTORY

ANYTOWN, KENTUCKY

The following is an extensive, but not all-inclusive, list of the types of assets found in many Kentucky communities. While some assets like theaters and museums may have obvious artistic significance, others may be latent creative resources just waiting to be tapped by a group of innovative and motivated organizers. For example: did you know many Kentucky communities with successful barn quilt programs partnered with their local energy cooperative to borrow the necessary equipment to hang the quilt squares? When surveying, interviewing or convening groups, look for some of the following categories and items, but don't forget about those resources that make the community unique.

BUILDINGS/SITES

- ☐ Visitor information centers
- ☐ Artisan studios/shops
- ☐ Art/craft galleries
- ☐ Art supply shops
- ☐ Framing shops
- ☐ Related retail shops
- ☐ Theaters
- ☐ School and university auditoriums
- ☐ Place of worship performance venues
- ☐ Other performance venues
- ☐ Community centers
- ☐ Amphitheaters
- ☐ Outdoor performance areas
- ☐ Outdoor classrooms
- ☐ Audio/video equipment suppliers
- ☐ Woodworking shops
- ☐ Museums
- ☐ Antiques and collectibles shops
- ☐ Historic buildings
- ☐ Public art
- ☐ Public sculpture
- ☐ Outdoor murals
- ☐ Quilt barns/squares
- ☐ Libraries
- ☐ Bookstores
- ☐ Collections and archives
- ☐ Folk/oral history archives
- ☐ Genealogy centers
- ☐ Native American sites
- ☐ Historical markers
- ☐ Historic highways
- ☐ Cemeteries

BUSINESS AND CRITICAL INDUSTRY

- ☐ Agriculture
- ☐ Health care
- ☐ Manufacturing
- ☐ Hi-tech/digital
- ☐ Retail
- ☐ Finance
- ☐ Mining
- ☐ Forestry
- ☐ Construction
- ☐ Processing
- ☐ Utility infrastructure/rural co-ops

CREATIVE INDUSTRY

- ☐ Architectural firms
- ☐ Advertising agencies
- ☐ Web/online firms
- ☐ Communications and media groups
- ☐ Graphic design agencies
- ☐ Landscape architect/design
- ☐ Interior design
- ☐ Newspapers
- ☐ Magazines
- ☐ Radio stations
- ☐ Online publications and newsletters
- ☐ Cable access

ARTISANS

- ☐ Ceramics/pottery
- ☐ Fiber
- ☐ Glass
- ☐ Metal
- ☐ Painting
- ☐ Photography
- ☐ Quilts
- ☐ Wood

PERFORMING GROUPS

- ☐ Symphonies
- ☐ Chamber ensembles
- ☐ Choral groups
- ☐ Opera

- ☐ Theater troupes or companies
- ☐ Children's theater
- ☐ Ballet
- ☐ Folk dance
- ☐ Other dance
- ☐ Other professional music (jazz, bluegrass, country, rock, etc.)
- ☐ School or university groups

ARTISAN/REGIONAL FOODS
- ☐ Farmers' market
- ☐ Stock/subscription farms
- ☐ Kentucky Proud vendors
- ☐ Agritourism farms
- ☐ Microbreweries
- ☐ Vineyards
- ☐ Bakery
- ☐ CSA
- ☐ Distilleries
- ☐ Locally owned restaurants
- ☐ Food/drink festivals

EVENTS
- ☐ Guild craft fair
- ☐ Art market
- ☐ Signature local festivals or events
- ☐ Concert series
- ☐ Concerts in the park
- ☐ Holiday activities (Christmas parade, Fourth of July, Halloween, etc.)
- ☐ Poetry readings/poetry slams
- ☐ Author signings/readings
- ☐ Other literary events
- ☐ Workshops

RECREATIONAL ACTIVITIES
- ☐ Walking trails
- ☐ Hiking trails
- ☐ Horse trails
- ☐ Nature trails
- ☐ ATV trails
- ☐ Bike paths
- ☐ City parks
- ☐ State parks
- ☐ Zoo
- ☐ Wildlife refuge

- ☐ Birding and wildflowers
- ☐ Fishing
- ☐ Boating
- ☐ Canoeing/kayaking
- ☐ Pools
- ☐ Tennis courts
- ☐ Skate parks
- ☐ Running tracks
- ☐ Commercial recreation/fitness centers
- ☐ Greenspace
- ☐ Community garden
- ☐ Driving/walking tours
- ☐ Trail Town
- ☐ Blueways
- ☐ Outdoor outfitters

CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS

- ☐ Arts council or commission
- ☐ Art guilds
- ☐ Watercolor society
- ☐ Photography clubs
- ☐ Movie clubs
- ☐ Quilt society
- ☐ Knitting groups
- ☐ Book clubs
- ☐ Writers' groups
- ☐ Music associations

CIVIC AND PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

- ☐ Rotary Club
- ☐ Lion's Club
- ☐ Kiwanis Club
- ☐ Women's Club
- ☐ League of Women Voters
- ☐ Senior Citizens
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce
- ☐ Convention and Visitors Bureau
- ☐ Main Street Program
- ☐ Community development and citizens groups
- ☐ Political clubs
- ☐ Cooperatives
- ☐ Community Foundations
- ☐ Chamber of Commerce
- ☐ Other professional organizations

MEETING/SMALL EVENT/WORKSHOP SPACES

- ☐ Convention center
- ☐ Hotels
- ☐ Restaurants
- ☐ Arts council
- ☐ City Hall
- ☐ Courthouse
- ☐ Churches
- ☐ Schools

EXTENSION OFFICE

- ☐ Community college
- ☐ Library

LODGING

- ☐ Hotels
- ☐ Motels
- ☐ Cabins
- ☐ Bed & Breakfasts
- ☐ Rentals
- ☐ Campgrounds and RV parks

RESTAURANTS

- ☐ Local flavor
- ☐ National chains
- ☐ Ice cream shops
- ☐ Coffee shops
- ☐ Pubs
- ☐ Food trucks
- ☐ Street vendors
- ☐ Cafeteria
- ☐ Bakery
- ☐ Vegetarian/vegan

TRANSPORTATION AND PARKING

- ☐ Buses
- ☐ Rail
- ☐ Airport
- ☐ Ferry/riverboat
- ☐ Cabs
- ☐ Parking structures

- ☐ Free parking lots
- ☐ Park & Ride
- ☐ Shuttles
- ☐ Bridges
- ☐ Waterways
- ☐ Sidewalks/walkable community

ACCESSIBILITY
- ☐ Curb cutouts
- ☐ Signage
- ☐ Interpreter services
- ☐ Translation services
- ☐ Non-English printed resources
- ☐ ESL classes
- ☐ ADA compliant facilities

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
- ☐ Preschools/Head Start programs
- ☐ Elementary schools
- ☐ Middle and high schools
- ☐ Magnet programs
- ☐ Private schools
- ☐ Vocational schools and programs
- ☐ Trade schools and programs
- ☐ Community college
- ☐ College/university
- ☐ Makerspaces
- ☐ Business accelerators
- ☐ Business incubators
- ☐ Community workforce development initiatives

OFFICIAL DESIGNATIONS
- ☐ Environmental
- ☐ Workforce Development
- ☐ Transportation
- ☐ Health Care
- ☐ Arts and Culture
- ☐ Tourism
- ☐ Industrial
- ☐ Education
- ☐ Economic Development
- ☐ Other

K E N T U C K Y

Arts

C O U N C I L