



FALL RIVER, MA
ARTS &
CULTURE
CREATIVE
ECONOMY
PLAN

NOVEMBER 2023

FRACC

Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition

THE FRACC VISION

The Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition (FRACC) envisions a Fall River where justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion are at the core of our thriving creative economy. We believe that supporting and advancing arts and culture is not only a key driver of future economic prosperity but also a catalyst for building a more just and inclusive community. Our commitment to justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion is reflected in partnerships with coalition members, ensuring that creatives from all backgrounds have equal access to collaborative opportunities, fostering cross-sector initiatives that amplify diverse voices, skills, and resources, ultimately increasing impact and engagement.

FRACC Executive Director
Ashley Occhino

Fiscal Sponsor

One SouthCoast Chamber Foundation



ONE SOUTH COAST
CHAMBER

2020-2021 Plan Consultant

CivicMoxie, LLC

CivicMoxie
experts in place

Planning Initiatives

This Plan supports the goals for Fall River outlined in a number of City initiatives:

- The Fall River Waterfront Cultural District
- MassDevelopment TDI Fall River
- Downtown and Waterfront Urban Renewal Plans
- City of Fall River Master Plan 2009 – 2030, The City's Master Plan goals include arts and culture and this creative economy plan directly supports the Master Plan.
- South Coast Rail Commuter Service to Fall River

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Fall River Arts & Culture Coalition (FRACC) is a collaboration of stakeholders working to develop and implement an arts, cultural & creative economy plan for Fall River to enhance the quality of life for all. FRACC brings together people, neighborhoods, businesses, and organizations from across the city to work in partnership to amplify the power and reach of the city's creatives, its cultural offerings, and the creative economy that produces them. It elevates Fall River into an even more exciting place to live, work, and visit.

This effort was initiated and led by the FRACC. Formed in 2019, FRACC is a collaborative, open-source, member-based organization dedicated to advancing arts and culture in the city to create a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable creative economy. The group is comprised of committed individuals representing the City of Fall River, organizations, civic groups, arts, culture, and creativity in the City of Fall River. FRACC is a committee of One SouthCoast Chamber and meets monthly.

FRACC Executive Committee

Walter Frazee, Jr, Esq., Attorney at Law
Julie Ramos Gagliardi, SouthCoast Community Foundation
Patrick Norton, The Narrows Center for the Arts
Michael O'Sullivan, One SouthCoast Chamber
Patti Rego, Viva Fall River

Supporting Partners



WHAT IS THE FRACC?



Fall River, a vibrant multicultural city renowned for its diversity, culinary delights, and historic significance as a textile manufacturing center during the industrial revolution, possesses a rich tapestry of human, physical, and creative assets.

The People of Fall River

According to the 2019 American Community Survey, 89,534 individuals proudly call Fall River home, with an average median age of 39.2 years. The city boasts a diverse population spanning multiple generations.

The Place

Fall River's strategic location, scenic waterfront views, rolling hills, and proximity to Boston have been recurrent themes throughout this planning process. A lesser-known fact to outsiders is that 41% of Fall River's land area is permanently protected open space. The city's forests and preserved lands present a captivating image of this 19th-century textile hub, perfectly aligned with ongoing efforts to infuse arts and culture into neighborhoods, trails, waterfront areas, and downtown Fall River.

Arts, Cultural, and Creative Economy Assets

The city is adorned with a wealth of cultural, historical, and organizational assets, with the ongoing task of mapping these treasures as a continual work in progress.

Historical

Fall River proudly boasts 291 properties listed in the Massachusetts Historical Commission's Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System (MACRIS). Noteworthy among them are numerous mill buildings and historic districts, including the Downtown Fall River Historic District, added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1983.

Publicly Accessible Art

Beyond the traditional definition of public art, Fall River embraces "publicly accessible art," encompassing murals, street art, statues, lighting installations, and more. Although the city currently lacks a public art plan or commission, the potential to incentivize the creation of publicly accessible art remains promising.

Organizations, Education Institutions, Groups, Initiatives

This plan warmly embraces the collective efforts of all organizations, educational institutions, groups, and initiatives aligned with the shared goal of cultivating a robust economy and enhancing the quality of life for residents through arts, culture, and creative endeavors. The extensive list of FRACC members demonstrates the power of collaboration across the city.

Summary of City Assets

Arts and Cultural Organizations and Groups:

- 29 educational institutions, from Bristol Community College to local elementary schools.
- Over 40 arts and cultural organizations or groups, including the Children's Museum of Greater Fall River, the Fall River Museum of Contemporary Art, and The Greater Fall River Symphony, among others.
- Over 50 community organizations and institutions, such as the YMCA Southcoast, United Neighbors of Fall River, and the Boys and Girls Club, among many others.
- 8 media outlets.
- Countless other informal groups and initiatives.

Artists and Creatives

While information on artists and creatives collected during this planning process is not disclosed here due to privacy concerns, the plan recommends establishing a self-populating online public database or another visible platform to celebrate the creative individuals shaping the cultural landscape of Fall River.

CONTEXT



Fall River is a multi-cultural city known for its diversity, its food, and as a textile manufacturing center during the industrial revolution. This plan just touches the surface in terms of human, physical, and creative assets in the city.

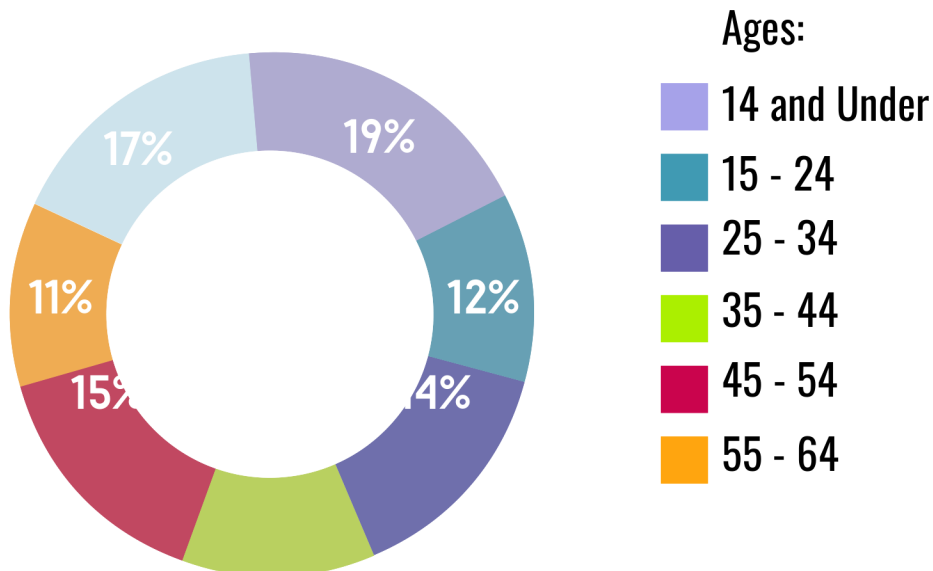
The People of Fall River

According to the American Community Survey (2019),

89,534 people call Fall River home.

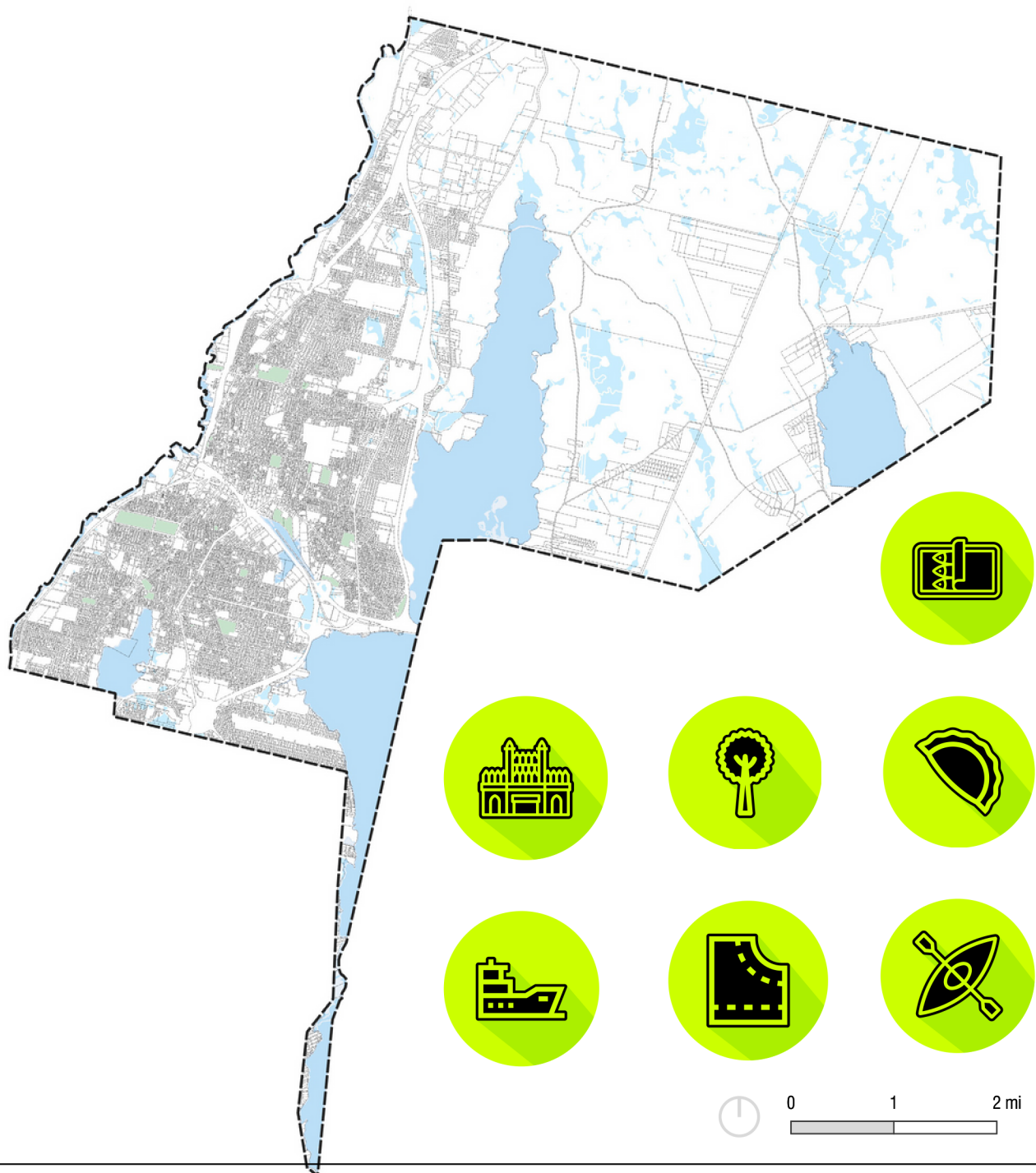
The average median age of Fall River residents is **39.2** years young.

Fall River residents span many generations...



THE PLACE

Fall River's location, its splendid views across the water, its hills, and its proximity to Boston are all things mentioned many times during this planning process. A little-known fact to people outside of the city is that 41% of the land area of Fall River is permanently protected open space. The forests and protected lands of the city offer another image of this 19th century textile city and one that is in total alignment with efforts to infuse arts and culture throughout the neighborhoods, trails, waterfront, and downtown of Fall River.



WHAT WE HEARD



The FRACC embarked on its journey in the Fall of 2020, engaging a consultant to guide and facilitate the planning process. With a robust membership exceeding 90 individuals, FRACC served as the driving force behind outreach efforts, conducting monthly meetings throughout the planning stages. These sessions provided a platform for plan updates, idea exploration, and valuable input from members, ensuring inclusivity, and promoting a positive impact on residents' quality of life while fortifying Fall River's economy and businesses.

Our Outreach Efforts

In late 2020, we unveiled our website, a comprehensive resource on the planning process. Leveraging asset research and mapping tools, we created interactive digital and downloadable maps for events like Open Studios, public art, and cultural organizations. Our presence on the FRACC Facebook Page and Instagram played a pivotal role in publicizing outreach events and community activities, establishing a cohesive brand around arts, culture, tourism, and the creative economy. Regular meetings, focus groups, interviews, and workshops, starting from 2021, have been instrumental in diverse projects, including the collaborative Business of Art Feasibility Study with New Bedford Creative in 2022-2023. FRACC has assembled a team of coalition members to conduct intercept surveys at city events, such as Summer Evenings in the Park.

Recurring Themes

Several overarching themes have emerged from our outreach efforts, guiding the formulation of goals and strategies:

1. A Broad Understanding of Arts, Culture, and Creativity:

Arts, culture, and creativity are intrinsic to every facet of life in Fall River, encompassing local traditions, culinary arts, crafts, contemporary art, street art, theater, music, and innovative entrepreneurial ventures. The aim is to celebrate and promote this rich tapestry.

2. Focus:

The effort must maintain focus over time, transcending political shifts and initiatives outside our collaborative framework. Consistency is key to achieving success in our goals, growing resources, and leveraging investments for maximum returns.

3. Sustainability:

Long-term success requires funding for professional staff overseeing plan implementation. Dependence on volunteer efforts alone is insufficient; sustainable initiatives demand dedicated resources.

4. Collaboration and Cooperation:

The power lies in aligning goals and interests across organizations, businesses, groups, and individuals. Silos hinder our full potential, emphasizing the need for collaboration.

5. Residents and Community:

Tangible benefits for residents, neighborhoods, and businesses are paramount. The efforts must contribute to an enhanced quality of life and economic vitality for all.

6. Artists and Creatives:

Visibility is crucial for arts, culture, and creative endeavors. From local ethnic traditions to contemporary and street art, there is a need to amplify their presence in the city.

7. Seize the Moment:

Gentrification concerns prompt action to protect affordability and expand the inventory of available spaces within the abundance of relatively affordable older industrial buildings.

8. Events and Festivals:

A resounding desire for more events, strategically designed to support local businesses and ensure neighborhood inclusivity.

9. Role of the City of Fall River:

Alignment with City goals and interests is crucial for success. The City must be a major partner, providing input and a seat at the table.

10. Measuring Our Progress:

The plan establishes clear goals and a major timetable for the next decade. Accountability is paramount, with reflections presented annually by the FRACC Executive Director through public events and accessible platforms such as Fall River Community Media, serving as benchmarks to assess achievements and plan the way forward.

Conclusion

The valuable insights gathered from our community have intricately woven into the fabric of the goals and strategies articulated in the upcoming chapter. Despite the community candidly identifying potential challenges, there is a prevailing sense of optimism and enthusiasm propelling us forward. The collaborative spirit displayed by numerous organizations, individuals, and civic groups has set a commendable standard for communication and cooperation, a spirit that resonates within the framework and composition.

As we reflect on over five years of collective effort and dialogue, there is a unanimous readiness to sustain the open-source essence of this initiative and transition into action. The community's eagerness to embrace the challenges ahead and implement the outlined strategies demonstrates a shared commitment to realizing the vision of a vibrant, inclusive, and sustainable creative economy in Fall River.



A PLAN BASED IN THE COMMUNITY



Fall River, with its rich history, culture, and diversity, has the potential to become a model for a justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion-focused creative economy. This plan charts a course that celebrates the past, embraces the present, and envisions a future where every resident feels represented and valued. By embedding justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in our creative endeavors, we aim to make Fall River not just a desirable place to live, work, invest, play, and visit, but a place where everyone, regardless of background, finds belonging and opportunity.

By integrating a justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion lens into our strategy, we acknowledge that arts, culture, and creativity are powerful drivers not only for economic growth but also for social cohesion and individual well-being. The plan recognizes that a coordinated, inclusive approach ensures that the benefits of our creative economy are accessible to all, leaving no one behind. As we move forward, this Creative Economy Plan commits to actively dismantling barriers and fostering an environment where every voice, story, and tradition contributes to the vibrant tapestry of Fall River's cultural identity.

FRACC believes that supporting and advancing arts and culture is a key driver to future economic prosperity. Our vibrant and diverse community of artists and creatives are a valuable resource to our community. In partnership with Viva Fall River, we connect creatives with collaborative opportunities and weave them into cross-sector initiatives that apply the skills and resources of the creative community to increase impact and engagement.

Why a Creative Economy Plan?

Fall River, with its rich history, culture, and diversity, serves as a canvas for a vibrant creative economy. This plan not only envisions the celebration of our past but also strives to build a future that embraces the collective creativity of our entire community.

Our overarching goal? Transforming Fall River into the best possible place to live, work, invest, play, and visit.

We recognize the immense potential to infuse arts, culture, and creativity into every facet of our city's identity – from attracting visitors and fostering economic development to programming parks, constructing infrastructure projects, and delivering essential services and opportunities for residents.

The significance lies in the understanding that arts, culture, and creativity contribute substantially to both the economy and the quality of life. According to the U.S Bureau of Economic Analysis, the arts and cultural sector contributed \$25.5 billion to the Massachusetts economy in 2019, representing 4.3% of the state's GDP. Without a coordinated strategy for arts, culture, and the creative economy, Fall River risks missing out on economic opportunities and allowing jobs and vital services to relocate elsewhere.

This Creative Economy Plan serves as a strategic roadmap, outlining goals and identifying cross-sector opportunities to address shared interests and utilize resources efficiently. By taking a holistic view across various interests and disciplines in Fall River, the plan ensures a cohesive approach to supporting and enhancing arts and culture, seamlessly integrating them into overall city policies and initiatives.

A city that offers abundant opportunities, spaces, and organizations infused with arts and culture is a vibrant city. It beckons people to gather, work, interact, and learn, celebrating and recognizing the diverse traditions, cultural practices, and creative expressions that define our residents. This vision encapsulates the essence of the creative economy in Fall River.



PLANNING AND ACTION PRINCIPLES



Our Arts & Culture is Fall River's inaugural creative economy plan, reflecting the city's transformation from an industrial center to a hub of modern creativity and innovation. This plan celebrates the rich culture, diversity, and dynamic arts and creative enterprises in present-day Fall River.

Proudly rooted in the history of the city's industrial prowess, the FRACC took its first significant stride in 2019, forming as a catalyst for collaborative action in a decade-long effort to shape the arts, culture, and creative economy in the city.

Founded on the principles of shared ideas and collective action, FRACC emerged from the conviction that Fall River's cultural treasures deserved a spotlight. The founding members recognized that collaboration was the key to leveraging the city's cultural assets for a greater whole. In the planning process leading to this report, the Executive, along with the broader membership of 250 individuals and organizations, maintained a commitment to open-source collaboration—welcoming all who share the dedication to enhancing the quality of life for Fall River residents through the arts, culture, and creative economy.

The inclusive structure of FRACC, coupled with the collaborative spirit fostered through monthly meetings, has cultivated a vibrant community that transcends traditional boundaries. FRACC acknowledges the positive impact of aligning diverse efforts, fostering communication, and establishing partnerships. The open-source commitment and diverse membership create a robust framework for advancing arts, culture, and the creative economy in Fall River.

ARTS & CULTURE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- Pledge to foster equity in all aspects of arts and culture throughout the city, ensuring fairness and representation.
- Ensure all events are accessible and celebrate the rich diversity of cultures and traditions in Fall River and beyond, encompassing diverse content, artists, and audiences.
- Ensure equitable distribution of funding and support for arts and culture, addressing geographical and demographic diversity across the city.
- Commit to compensating all artists contributing to the Arts & Culture Plan and FRACC, recognizing the value of their creative contributions.
- Ensure that events and activities are ADA accessible for participants and that individuals with disabilities are offered the full spectrum of participation as artists. The Americans for the Arts Statement on Cultural Equity will be a guide for the Arts & Culture Plan actions.
- Embrace collaboration and partnerships with local and regional arts, culture, business organizations, community groups, and public officials to enhance inclusivity.
- Sustain the initiative's open-source framework, prioritizing transparency and access for all stakeholders.

In essence, the Arts & Culture Creative Economy Plan extends beyond the realms of arts and culture. It's a comprehensive approach to enhancing the quality of life, creating opportunities for residents, and fostering a supportive environment for businesses. Viewing arts, culture, and the creative economy as integral components of larger economic and community development, as well as tourism efforts, the plan recognizes the magnetic pull of creatives—drawing customers to retail and dining, generating interest in city living, and enticing visitors to explore Fall River's history, architecture, cultures, and environment. The Plan is a living document, providing a framework to move forward to achieve the vision for arts, culture, and the creative economy in Fall River in the next ten years.

GOALS + STRATEGIES



Goal #1: Foster a Thriving Creative Economy

Focus: Creative Economy - Artists, Businesses/Entrepreneurs, and Organizations

1. Establish a Cross-Sector Working Group:

Develop a collaborative body to attract and retain artists, makers, and creatives, supporting economic development and tourism while identifying spaces and opportunities for their growth in the city.

2. Amplify Support for Artists and Creatives:

Strengthen support structures for artists, creatives, and arts/cultural organizations, enhancing their visibility within the community.

3. Forge Stronger Ties Between Business and Arts/Cultural Communities:

Encourage and facilitate meaningful collaborations and partnerships between the business and arts/cultural sectors.

4. Advocate for Arts-Friendly City Policies:

Support and promote city policies that foster the integration of arts and maker uses in vacant storefronts, contributing to the overall vibrancy.

5. Optimize State-Designated Cultural District Impact:

Explore strategies to maximize benefits and impact from the State-designated Cultural District on the waterfront.



Goal #2: Cultivate Culture and Creativity Across the City

Focus: Residents and Neighbors

1. Support After School Mentoring Programs:

Foster the creation and growth of after-school mentoring programs in art, music, and other creative endeavors for youth and teens.

2. Promote Makerspace or Shared Tool and Equipment Library:

Encourage and support the establishment of a major makerspace or a shared tool and equipment library.

3. Facilitate Learning Opportunities in Public Spaces:

Encourage programs and initiatives offering learning opportunities in City Parks and other public spaces related to various subjects, using art and environmental art.

4. Foster Farmers' Markets/Arts Collaborations:

Support collaborations between farmers' markets and arts, enriching the city with diverse cultural offerings.

5. Establish a Community Arts Fund:

Create a fund providing small grants to neighborhood organizations and community groups for hosting hyper-local arts and cultural events.



Goal #3: Champion a Variety of Events Across the City

Focus: Events

1. Foster Recurring Dining, Culture, and Shopping Events:

Create and support recurring events combining dining, culture, and shopping to enhance local experiences.

2. Host Annual International Cultural Festival:

Initiate or support the growth of an annual international cultural festival, fostering diversity and community engagement.



Goal #4: Enhance Spaces for Arts, Culture, and Creativity

Focus: Spaces

1. Establish and Maintain Inventory of Usable Spaces:

Create and maintain an inventory of private and public spaces available for arts, cultural, and civic use.

2. Implement Strategies for Affordable Spaces:

Identify and implement strategies to protect and expand affordable spaces for arts, cultural, and creative uses.

3. Support Outdoor Dining Ordinance:

Advocate for a permanent outdoor dining ordinance in the city, enhancing the vibrancy of public spaces.

4. Streamline Permitting and Licensing Processes:

Support efforts to simplify permitting and licensing for public events, temporary space use, and arts and cultural activities.

5. Advocate for Enhanced Infrastructure in Public Spaces:

Advocate for the provision of electrical, lighting, and data hookups in public spaces and parks, ensuring versatile usage.



Goal #5: Promote Publicly Accessible Art Across the City **Focus: Publicly Accessible Art**

1. Develop a Publicly Accessible Art Map:

Create a map highlighting publicly accessible art locations across the city.

2. Encourage City Functional Art Program:

Encourage the development of a City of Fall River functional art program, integrating art into the city's functional elements.



Goal #6: Establish Long-Term Support and Infrastructure **Focus: Capacity/Leadership**

1. Initiate New Initiatives for Support and Growth:

Launch new initiatives to enhance support, collaboration, and growth for arts, culture, and civic life in Fall River.

2. Diversify Funding Approaches:

Adopt a multi-pronged approach to funding creative economy initiatives in Fall River, ensuring sustainability.

3. Recruit Professional Staff:

Recruit and hire professional staff to provide leadership and expertise in implementing the plan effectively.

4. Promote Creative Economy Through Marketing:

Provide professional marketing and promotion for all aspects of the creative economy, increasing visibility and engagement.

5. Maintain Open-Source Structure:

Sustain the open-source structure of FRACC, fostering transparency, collaboration, and accessibility.

6. Commit to Accountability and Continuity:

Emphasize commitment to accountability and continuity, ensuring the plan's long-term success.

7. Convene Annual City-Wide Cultural Summit:

Initiate and convene an annual city-wide cultural summit to foster collaboration, share achievements, and plan for the future.



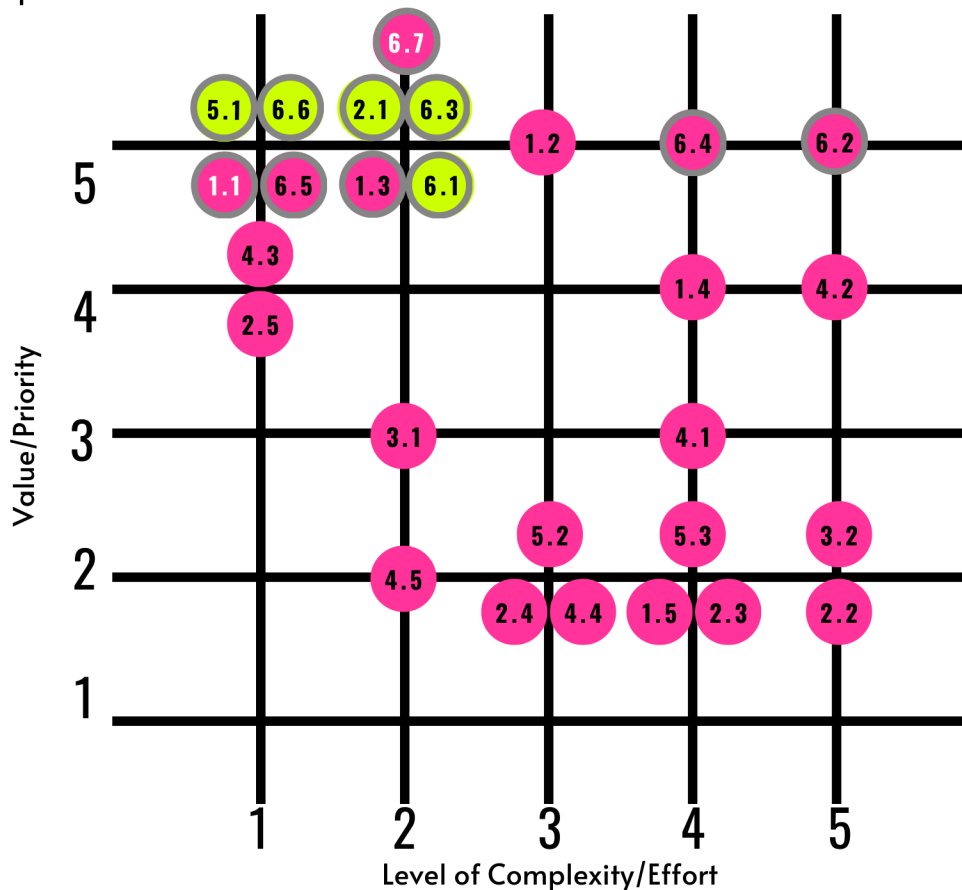
IMPLEMENTATION

Priorities and Action Focus

This implementation plan is designed for immediate action, emphasizing strategies aligned with the six goals for Fall River's creative economy. Successful execution requires a collaborative effort, involving diverse stakeholders such as the City, nonprofits, residents, businesses, and other partners.

Strategic Priorities

The graphic below illustrates the strategies organized by priority and effort, offering a roadmap for FRACC and its partners to swiftly address key areas. Notably, Goal #6, emphasizing the capacity and long-term sustainability of the initiative, holds seven strategies and must take precedence as they lay the groundwork for the entire plan. Additionally, the top left quadrant represents efforts with the highest value and the lowest required effort, making them ideal early focal points.



CONCLUSION AND CALL TO ACTION

With six goals and 27 strategies, a third of which are identified as high-priority actions, the plan is poised for impactful implementation. Many of these high-priority strategies, while of medium to high complexity, demand substantial collaboration and sustained funding for professional staff. As FRACC launches the Arts & Culture Plan under the One SouthCoast Chamber, the organization stands ready to continue its collaborative and dynamic efforts.

Let the journey continue, building a vibrant and inclusive creative economy for Fall River!



Cover Photograph: Travis Fauvelle

Additional photos provided by: FRACC Members, Fall River Arts Project, Tost Films, Trevor Santana, Lee Francois, MassCreative, Patti Rego, and Michelle Borges

“The importance of arts, culture, and tourism is clearly outlined in the City of Fall River Master Plan as well as the recent Urban Renewal Plans for the Downtown and Waterfront. These are just three of the myriad plans and initiatives that recognize how critical arts, culture, and tourism are to our city.”



FRACC encourages you to become involved by
contacting fracc@onesouthcoast.com