

Support for investment in arts, culture and creativity.

Creative Waikato have engaged our community of supporters, leaders and advocates to share their insights into the role of civic investment in the creative ecosystem.

This is presented as support to our LTP submission.

Arts, culture, creativity and ngā toi Māori are vital parts of the communities and identity of the Waikato. They make valuable contributions to social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing by connecting people to place, shaping community identity, and building social cohesion. As Supreme Court Justice Sir Joe Williams said at Creative New Zealand's national arts sector conference Nui te Kōrero in 2021, "No meaningful social change occurs without some filmmaker, some songwriter, some artist, some poet, triggering the possibility long before anyone realises what the triggering was." It is important that councils recognise the essential role of the creative sectors in the wellbeing and resilience of your residents as you make decisions for the future in the LTP.

- David Pannett, Senior Manager, Strategy & Engagement - Creative New Zealand

Arts, culture and creativity are vital in enhancing wellbeing and vibrancy in communities. The arts provide a medium for connection that transcends space, time, and language.

We have seen first hand how projects such as Kotahitanga: United Through Creativity contribute to social cohesion, inspiring conversation in hard times and making sense of difficult concepts. A Huber Social report on subjective wellbeing relating to arts, culture and creativity in the Waikato region found that engagement with and access to the arts correlates with higher overall wellbeing. Whilst there are hard choices to be made, the wellbeing of our communities into the future need to be at the forefront of decisions today.

- Dennis Turton, CEO - Trust Waikato

Arts, culture and creativity are important because they are central to the expression of our values and identities as communities. Whenever we visit a new place and want to understand something of what makes it special and different to other places, we invariably look to its creative expressions to get a sense of that identity. Places that do this well are memorable, and draw people back again, whether that's to visit repeatedly, or to live in, because they have a clear sense of identity and vibrancy.

Sam Cunnane, Kaiwhakahaere Rōpū Matua – Group Director, Te Pūkenga|Wintec

Beauty is an important part of life and community. At Fosters we work hard to retain beauty in the built environment we create, and we recognise the important role that Arts and Culture plays in placing beauty in our community. We believe this enough to allocate funding each year to local creative organisations to ensure they can continue to create beauty in our community, and stretch and challenge our thinking as a society. Hamilton, for example, would be a much poorer, and less beautiful, place without the significant contribution of BOON through the street art. Art creates stories and connections that reflect and enhance our community. Core infrastructure is important at a functional level, but without an investment into arts and culture in the city, the city is lifeless and barren. We need continued investment in economic good times and bad into arts and culture if we want to maintain and grow the wellbeing of our city.

Leonard Gardner, Director – FOSTER CONSTRUCTION GROUP LIMITED

The creation and promotion of events has become a critical component of urban development strategies across the globe. Cities have become stages for continuous streams of events resulting in places actively hanging their identities on the events that they provide. Two great examples of this are Melbourne who now labels itself as “the worlds event city” and Seoul who claims to be “one of the most eventful cities in the world”. The continuous theme of cities promoting themselves by utilising an event component shows the crucial need for events and activations to be factored into daily life in a modern city.

The thriving arts scene and cultural diversity that makes up Hamilton city, opens the door for a number of activities that contribute to this scene. The interest created with these activities builds on the fantastic organisations that already draw visitors to the central city including Creative Waikato, Waikato Museum, Clarence Street Theatre, The Meteor, the soon to be completed Waikato Regional Theatre and the many local entertainment offerings as well as the multitude of cultural festivals that have become a mainstay on the event calendar.

Vanessa Williams, General Manager – Hamilton Central Business Association

Britain’s war-time leader Winston Churchill was once asked if arts funding should be cut in favour of the war effort. His retort was: “Then what are we fighting for?” Art in communities is as vital as sports parks, libraries, marae, business parks, roads and poo pipes. Churchill’s comment was an astute recognition that art, in its many forms reminds us of our history, allows us to escape the current and reimagine a future. The recent inclusion of art works into infrastructure such as bridge overpasses, even our city’s latest wastewater treatment station provide a sense of place, tell a story, create a reason to stop and contemplate or simply be a place for attraction and congregation. Over centuries, arts has told us of history and stories, heroes and heroines, conflicts and successes, and have been used to mark places of importance to people, our community and our country.

Kelvyn Eglinton
General Manager – Craigs Investment Partners
(Previous CEO of Momentum Foundation Waikato)

Investing in toi Māori is a commitment to safeguard and elevate our pūrākau, our tūpuna, our mātauranga. It gives voice to the silenced echoes of our landscape – not the dominant rhetoric that perpetuates our systems and institutions. The arts? We're the pulse of a thriving society, a stage where we boldly test limits, defy norms, and forge grounding alliances. It's about venturing beyond the ordinary, where we embrace our rangatiratanga in the avant-garde of innovation. Because, really, who doesn't crave that cutting-edge?

Waimihi Hotere, Kaihautū Festival Director – Matariki Ki Waikato

Arts, culture, and creativity are who we are, how we express ourselves and what we do. When you watch a Marvel movie or a netflix show – that's art. When you listen to the Cure or Roddy Ricch – that's art. When you put on clothes – that's culture, when you go to a comedy show and laugh at your everyday experiences being reflected back at you – that's creativity. Like it or not, everything you do is a result of art, culture or creativity. After all, you've gotta be pretty creative to come up with the idea of a car when all you've seen are horses.

Cities that embrace art, culture and creativity for their own sake are great places to live, and great places to live are thriving places. You can't expect a city to continue to grow without growing the number of reasons people want to live there. Hamilton is a great place to live, good playgrounds, good amenities, conveniently located etc etc but the time is coming where these reasons aren't enough to attract new people to Hamilton, either as residents or manuhiri.

Organic growth can't be paused, it either continues or it stops. Arts, entertainment and culture are organic, and they are growing in Hamilton! If we take away the sun and the rain the plant doesn't just wait in the same state, it withers. If council withdraws support, the arts aren't going to be patiently waiting to resume when support returns – you'll have to rebuild everything from the ground up.

Moreover, Hamilton is a proudly diverse city – cultural activities provide platforms for diverse voices to be heard, promoting inclusivity and understanding. What are we saying to our minority groups if we withdraw support for their cultural activities, but the Christmas parade still goes ahead?

Arts and culture investment is not just an investment in the present; it's an investment in the long-term vitality and resilience of our communities, and not just something fun around the edges.

Gus Sharp, General Manager – Waikato Regional Theatre

Arts, Culture and Creativity are important for all of our communities. They enhance our lives in a way that builds our individual and collective health and wellbeing. The joy and connection created through participation with arts, culture and creativity, in any way, is enormous.

They are a critical way that the diversity of who we are as a community can be shown, and for many, is a place where individuals are enhanced because they see themselves in what is represented on walls, in public spaces or on stages.

It is often the creative elements of our city that inspire us as a family to connect with friends. They are also the things that we share with visitors to our city. They are the things that we connect with and are proud of. The investment in arts, culture and creativity is a valuable one. It is an investment in all our people and overall community wellbeing.

Andy Mannering, Community Engagement and Partnerships Manager – Kainga Ora (Waikato)

Art, culture and creativity are an intrinsic part of our local and regional tourism offering and competitiveness as a visitor destination. These sectors are essential vehicles for the realisation of our stated vision “Taakiri tuu te koorero ki te ao” (Sharing our stories with the world). Art, culture and creativity are also invaluable platforms for enhancing social, cultural and economic well-being and these sectors should therefore be funded as a core function and obligation of Councils to their respective communities and to the making of communities.

Craig Muntz, Secretariat, Tainui Waka Tourism Inc.

Arts and culture provide vibrancy and inspiration to a community. A lack of this expression reduces creativity, connection and perspective. Nods to diversity and story-telling build a sense of belonging, empathy and pride of place. Councils need to invest in arts and culture to empower the community to innovate, be inquisitive and to problem solve. Surely a community becomes richer in soul and more desirable with a strong arts and culture offering?

Steve Mills, Head of Client Services – DesignWell

It’s hard to argue with the fact that creative participation nurtures a sense of togetherness, so as we approach this period of Long-Term Plan (LTP) development for our region’s local authorities, communities and elected members can’t simply consider arts, culture and creativity as “nice to haves”.

At the heart of Council responsibilities is the commitment and call to foster ‘community wellbeing’... there is no better way to ensure this through investment (attention, time, resources and funding) in creative projects that broaden collective experiences, harness opportunities for expression and encourage the expansion of ideas and innovation.

In turn, Councils must consider the role of supporting infrastructure (and associated maintenance) to sustain and grow the creative sector as well. After all, these are the assets that drive “community-building”, connection and cohesion, creating value far beyond their ‘bricks and mortar’ status.

A community that can access art and culture is a community that is healthy, aligned and unified, a society that recognises the value of diversity while cultivating empathy and understanding... what more could we want for our region!?!

Amanda Hema, CEO – South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT)

Funding through grants and sponsorships is our lifeblood. Without these, our work ceases, and our community will be the poorer for it. There will be less stimulus for our mental well-being, less fun things to do, and creatives will not be able to thrive and will sadly forsake our city for better opportunities elsewhere. Other cities in NZ see the merit of art and are investing strongly in it, yet Hamilton seems hellbent on going backward through its proposed cuts in funding to the Arts and other community groups.

Nancy Caiger, Arts Advocate

The Waikato Society of Arts has been providing and nurturing opportunities in visual arts for 90 years in Kirikiriroa, with art classes, workshops, studio space for artists and community groups, continual free public art exhibitions, artist talks, mentorship, and national art awards. It is these long-term programmes that provide stability for people, well-being, constant purpose, connectivity and dialogue, pride in what they can achieve, confidence to become a valuable member of the wider community and a gateway to higher aspirations in visual art. Recognising the quieter work done by groups like the WSA is important to the role they play in the fabric and culture of our community. Without the support through funding and sponsorship, costs rise to participate in art for all ages, we lose artists who are also employed as art teachers and arts groups who nurture, educate, support, and enrich our environment over a long time. They create the social capital everyone else thrives from, including Council. The artists that pass through our doors are the storytellers of our history, present ideas, dreams, politics, diversity, youth, wisdom, and growth within the Waikato region and Aotearoa, captured for everyone to enjoy and come together with no barriers. Valuing art and those that bring it into the community is what makes a city healthy, vibrant and a place people want to visit and live in.

Julie Johnstone
Operations Manager – Waikato Society of Arts

At Seed Waikato, we listen to and amplify the voices of our young people. We continue to hear how Arts, Culture and Creativity are critical to their growth, development and wellbeing. They share how having access to spaces and places that are safe for them to be courageous in expressing themselves in creative ways has reminded them of their mana and individual gifts. Their confidence then ripples out into the world, giving them the hope that it's worth making this world a better place.

When creativity is shared, it creates the conditions for collective healing, which is critical to our young people believing that everyone's a changemaker. We tautoko the mahi of Creative Waikato as the advocates and navigators of cultural wellbeing in our region, and are honoured to work alongside them in creating a thriving Waikato.

- Tania Pointon, CEO - Seed Waikato

As we move forward it's important to continue to share about the things we care about and celebrate the joy that engagement with arts, culture and creativity brings. And at a time of community consultation it is vital that we use our voices to speak about the things we value.

This is a time to do that.