



CULTURAL PLANNING AT 40 - A Look at the Practice and Its Progress

Results from a 2017 Survey of Cultural Planning in the United States
Compared with Results from A 1994 Study

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Introduction

For local arts agencies and municipal governments, **cultural planning represents the most powerful tool for setting cultural policy on the municipal or county level.** Since the first formal cultural plan was presented in Los Angeles in 1979, the practice has helped establish local priorities relative to arts and culture. These have included public and private investments, development of cultural facilities, policies governing public art and festivals, uses of public spaces and artist live/work spaces, among other areas of concern to local governments and to cultural and creative communities.¹ In addition, and sometimes more importantly, **cultural planning has shown to build the capacities of a community's cultural sector to self-organize, advocate on its own behalf, and partner with other sectors to address a variety of civic concerns.**

This report details findings of a 2017 survey of local arts agencies that had completed a cultural plan within the prior decade and, where applicable, compares these findings with similar research completed in 1994 by Dr. Craig Dreeszen. The survey and comparison provide both a detailed snapshot of the more recent practice as well as a longitudinal look at changes in the practice since the 1980s. Specifically, **these data illuminate the purpose, process, and outcomes of cultural planning from the perspectives of local arts agencies.** This report establishes benchmarks to help better understand the value of cultural planning and for improving the practice.

Dreeszen's 1994 study reviewed 117 completed surveys from local arts agencies in cities of various sizes. Additionally, he analyzed 116 plan documents and interviewed other cultural planners to draw his conclusions. In his conclusions Dreeszen observed: The most significant effect of cultural planning was increased awareness of civic leaders and arts leaders of the potential of the arts to enhance community well being².

In 2017, working with Americans for the Arts and in consultation with Dreeszen, Dr. Tom Borrup surveyed the planning activities of a number of local arts agencies in the United States. Borrup targeted just over 200 agencies that indicated in a 2015 Americans for the Arts survey they had completed or updated a cultural plan over the last ten years. The online survey comprised 35 questions, many with a multitude of categories and options, including open-ended responses. A total of 50 surveys were completed by agencies in cities of various sizes, similar to the respondents of the Dreeszen study. **The 2017 survey included many of the same questions asked in 1994 with the intent to examine the cultural planning process, characteristics of plans, planning intentions, and subsequent community outcomes as reported by the agencies leading, or significantly involved in, these cultural plans.**

¹ It is widely acknowledged that urban planning scholar and practitioner, Harvey Perloff authored the first cultural plan for the City of Los Angeles in 1979, created through a National Endowment for the Arts grant championed by visionary staff member, Robert McNulty.

² Craig Dreeszen, "Reimagining Community: Community Arts and Cultural Planning in America," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Massachusetts at Amherst, 1994, vii.

Taken together, the 2017 data and comparisons with 1994 findings, represent an evolving field of local cultural policy development as well as an evolving cultural sector.

While the two research projects—23 years apart—are not identical, they reveal important changes in planning practices and topical concerns in some areas, with surprisingly little change in others. These include:

- The scope of issues addressed by cultural plans and the expectations community leaders had for planning versus the outcomes they experienced stand out as the most significant changes.
- Overall expectations of cultural planning have grown in relation to what they were in 1994 and, have grown to focus more outwardly on broader community needs rather than only internal sector needs.
- Cultural planning has grown somewhat more professionalized and helped cultural communities build capacities for collaboration and advocacy.
- Cultural planning fell short in two significant areas: integration of cultural plans with general city plans; and expanding inclusion of and resources for under-represented communities, meaning communities of color and immigrant communities.

This report is organized to begin with survey questions related to the characteristics of plans and the process used to generate them. The survey asked local arts agencies to describe how they defined *culture* in their cultural plan through their response to a list of types of cultural resources, organizations, and activities. Some plans or planners focused narrowly on the formal nonprofit arts sector while others chose an approach to include community-based practices, activities in the natural environment, foodways, and other activities.

The survey included questions designed to ascertain costs of planning and time involvement, use of outside consultants, as well as local oversight of the process. Additionally, **respondents described expectations they had for planning when entering the process, as well as results they saw after implementation of plans.**

To determine types of community development activities that cultural plans addressed and compare these to activities supported or implemented by local arts agencies the 2017 survey borrowed from categories of community development activities from the triennial Americans for the Arts local arts agency survey.

Planning provides an opportunity to formulate and express shared aspirations—not all of which come to pass. In his 1994 study, Dreeszen found that, “cultural planning appears to provoke the local arts agency leaders to see a larger sense of community.”³ This new study set out to ascertain whether this came to pass along with other ways cultural planning has evolved.

³ Ibid., 178.

Background: Cultural Planning and Research Rationale

The formal practice of cultural planning in the United States dates to the late 1970s, led most often by local arts agencies, some of which are part of local governments. While state governments generally mandate local governments to have a comprehensive, general, or master plan, the same is not true of cultural plans as they are not required of any local government in the United States. Despite this, a great number of large- and medium-sized cities, and even many smaller cities and towns, have completed one or more cultural plans over the past four decades.

Cultural planning involves formulating strategies and policies between cultural nonprofits, municipal agencies, and other civic partners to advance their collective and individual interests and expand the funding potential for their work from public and private sources. Strategies and actions often address arts marketing and audience development, sector advocacy, tourism promotion, cultural facility development, and instituting public art programs or joint education programs, among others. **The number of cultural plans grew during the 1980s and '90s, as they helped provide a vehicle for local arts agencies and nonprofit cultural communities to strengthen their capacities and resources and to expand their influence within the cultural sector and wider community.** Grounded in the arts and culture sector, research showed that cultural planning increasingly included wider participation of community stakeholders, and, in some cases, helped address local community concerns beyond bolstering cultural resources, activities, and participation (from community identity and economic development to use of public space and social equity).

While developing a cultural plan provides benefits to local arts agencies as well as the greater community, there are costs associated with the practice. The true costs attributed to cultural planning are difficult to assess. While many cultural agencies turn to external consultants to develop a plan with contracts ranging in value from \$15,000 in very small communities to \$200,000 and up in larger cities, additional and significant costs in staff time and site expenses are borne internally by arts agencies, city planning departments, local foundations, and others. These plans may guide exponentially larger public and private resources for a decade or more, along with other important municipal policy choices. Given the significant value of these plans, there has been virtually no attention paid in the United States to developing an infrastructure for the practice of cultural planning or to assess what successful planning looks like. Considerable research has looked at the role of the arts in economic development and social and human development, as well as at institutional support systems and other aspects of cultural policy on the national and international level, but cultural policy-setting on the local level has drawn little attention.

In contrast, cultural planning is well-developed and required in a number of locations outside the United States, which has also spurred academic attention to the topic. For example, scholars in Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom have conducted significant research on and academic inquiry into cultural planning. The first in-depth academic research on the topic in the United States was by planning practitioner Craig Dreeszen while he was with the University of Massachusetts's Arts Extension Service.

In his 1994 doctoral dissertation Dreeszen traces the origins of cultural planning from the late 1970s and provides a comprehensive overview of the topic using surveys, extensive text analysis, and interviews.

Among his findings, Dreeszen observed that the cultural planning *process* tends to produce a transition within local arts agencies:

The larger-than-the-arts community involvement in cultural planning accelerates what would otherwise be a gradual shift in emphasis from arts development to also embrace community development. Planning sometimes helps achieve a better balance between these dual objectives. It may be during cultural planning that the potential for reciprocity may be understood and the arts and larger communities appreciate what each may do for the other.⁴

While Dreeszen saw that as a positive trend, he also found that,

Most cultural planning centers upon the interests of arts organizations, arts audiences, and artists. Some plans focus on the arts and assert no pretensions to transform communities. Others purport to plan for the entire community, but are concerned with that community mostly for its potential support of the arts.⁵

He cited plans in four cities—Denver, CO, Roanoke, VA, Rapid City, SD, and Shreveport, LA—as outliers that he felt addressed wider community concerns, unusual at the time. They were, “not typical of cultural planning documented in this study.” He went on to speculate that, “they may, however, represent the next generation of the practice.”⁶

According to Dreeszen, such local agencies that exemplified this *next generation* “find themselves to be facilitators, conveners, partnership brokers, problem-solvers, information centers, and advocates of the community and the arts.”⁷

Were Dreeszen’s conclusions correct? Did community cultural planning accelerate a shift from arts development to participation in wider community development? In consultation with Dreeszen in development of the 2017 survey, the current study takes up his assertions and asks: Has this "next generation" of cultural planning come to pass? Have cities embraced cultural planning as integral to their comprehensive planning as Dreeszen advocated? Have cultural planners stepped up to the need identified by Dreeszen of more sophisticated research and planning techniques? Has cultural planning through this “larger-than-the-arts community involvement” moved local arts agencies and arts communities into larger roles in their respective communities, bringing the resources, capacities, and know-how of the cultural sector to bear on important community development issues?

⁴ Ibid., 91.

⁵ Ibid., 243.

⁶ Ibid., 244.

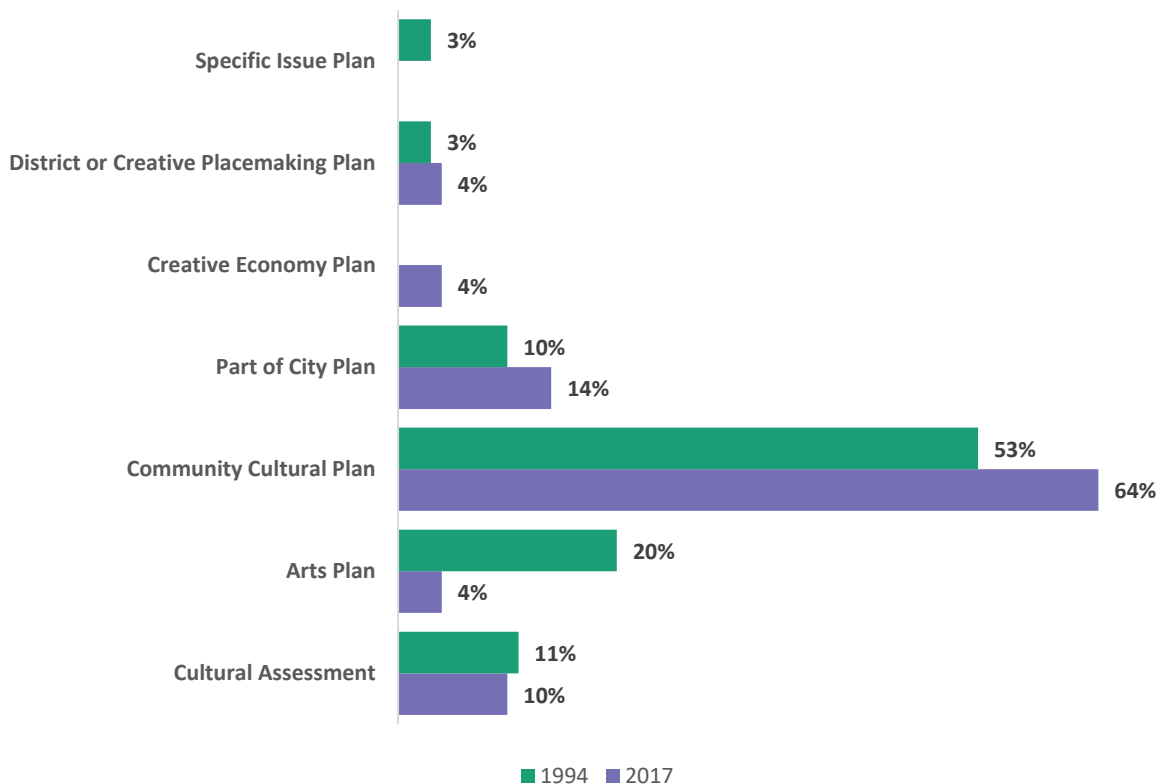
⁷ Ibid., 239.

Research Findings

Plan Types

There is no consistent or strictly adhered to typology of cultural plans among cities or planning consultants. The practice is generally driven by arts agencies or municipal planning leadership that often employ consultants who conduct the work based on their own experience or using another city's plan as a model. From his 1994 review of plan documents, Dreeszen devised a set of plan types (see Figure 1) that remains a frequent reference both in the United States and Canada.⁸ This typology was used in the 2017 survey with a few modifications as recommended by Dreeszen. What he called a *specific district plan* was modified in the 2017 survey to include *creative placemaking*; one new type was added, a *creative economy plan*. Agencies surveyed in 2017 were asked to characterize their most recent plan using these typologies.

Figure 1: Plan types 1994 to 2017



⁸ See Anne Russo and Diane Butler, *Cultural Planning Toolkit: A Partnership between 2010 Legacies Now and Creative City Network of Canada*. Creative City Network, Vancouver, BC, 2009. (https://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/cultural_planning_toolkit.pdf)

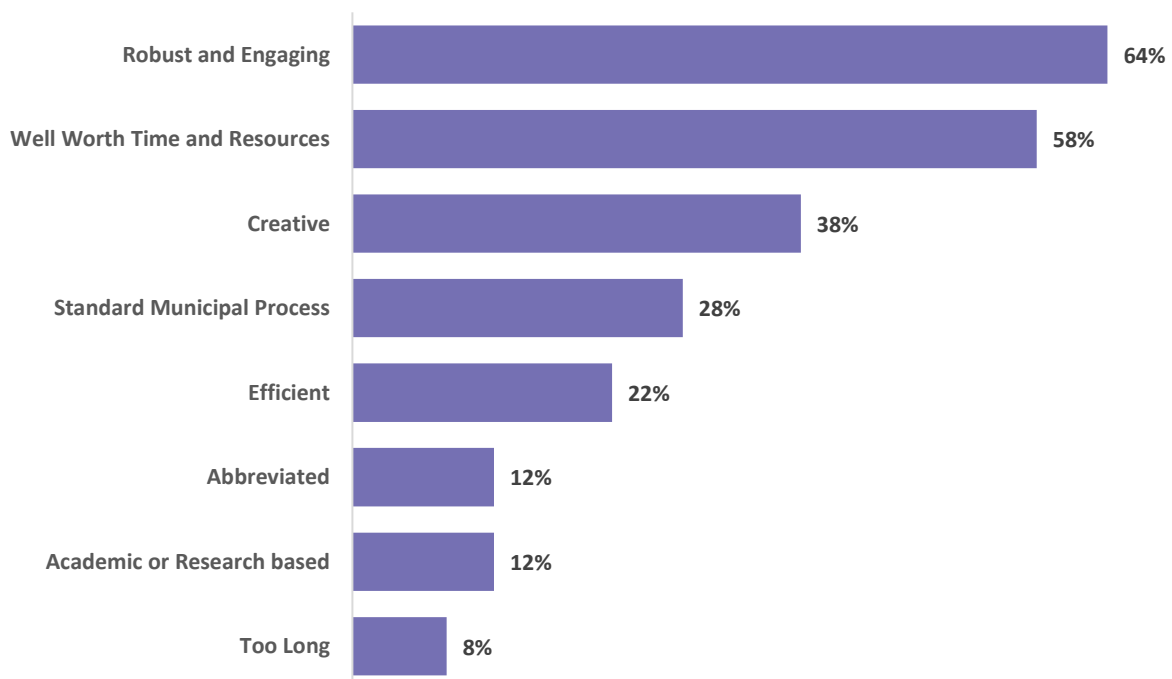
The graph in Figure 1 illustrates a shift, from 1994 to 2017, with fewer arts plans and more community cultural plans. This indicates more community-wide planning focusing on a variety of topics beyond art, which may reflect more inclusive definitions of culture in 2017 than in 1994. The 2017 data also indicate a small increase in plans that are components of city or county comprehensive plans; however, this is not significant enough to claim growth in municipal planning involvement in cultural plans over time. Given the growing popularity of cultural district development and creative placemaking, especially since 2010, it is surprising that Specific District/Creative Placemaking Plans did not change measurably from 1994 to 2017. One explanation could be that local arts agencies serving as the primary respondents to this survey may not be the same entities engaging in creative placemaking. Alternatively, respondents did not consider the process of preparing for placemaking or specific districts to be within the same category as cultural planning.

The Planning Process

The 2017 survey asked respondents to choose from various descriptors related to the process of planning. (*Process* was defined in the question as the way the planning was conducted to involve the public, artists, organizations, and municipal agencies.) Respondents could select as many choices as they liked and the average number of choices per respondent was 2.5.

Figure 2: Character of the planning process

The most common descriptor was “robust and engaging,” selected by 64 percent; 58 percent chose “well worth the time and resources.” But it could be discouraging that 36 percent and 42 percent, respectively,



did not feel the process was robust and engaging nor well worth the time and resources. “Creative” was selected by 38 percent. Twelve percent said it seemed “academic” or “research-based” and 28 percent characterized it as “standard municipal planning.” Only 22 percent said it was “efficient,” whereas a smaller percentage chose “abbreviated” (12 percent) or “too long” (8 percent), suggesting the time spent was by and large considered appropriate.

Some 80 percent said the planning process itself had a positive impact, indicating that well-constructed planning processes were appreciated by a strong majority of the entities commissioning or playing a leadership role in cultural planning. “Robust and engaging,” “creative,” “efficient,” and “well worth the time and resources” appear to have made an impact on the quality of the outcomes or, in some cases, may have spawned tangential or unexpected positive outcomes.

Selected responses to open-ended question regarding planning process:

- *“The process of planning was as valuable as the actual plan. Through the process, we engaged a broad cross-section of the population in a deep, rich conversation about the meaning and value of culture. The process itself resulted in several stand-alone projects. The process galvanized the community. One member of the City Council noted that in their 20 years of public service they had never seen a City-led planning process engage so many members of the community at such a level.”*
- *“This planning process brought many community leaders to the same table to discuss how the arts could play a role in our local economy and city growth. Although many of these participants did not believe in the role of arts and culture in economic development at the start.”*
- *“Community leaders began to see that including the creative community in community development plans has far reaching benefits. The process also amplified the need for better coordination, collaboration and support within the creative sector and between the creative sector and the rest of our community.”*
- *“We organized community input sessions focused on particular topics—public funding, capacity building, education, etc.—then organized small group meetings to delve deeper into each topic. The benefit of this was that we attracted a broad cross-section of the community. The downside was that many participants stayed within their comfort zone, only attending meetings related to their area of expertise, which led to some participants’ confusion about the larger picture and the prioritization of each piece of the plan.”*
- *“It was the first time the community has had artist/creative-driven planning processes for community change. It was much more engaging, creative, and out of the box thinking to stimulate local, traditional institutions and community members to think about their community differently.”*

Culture as Defined in Cultural Planning

The practice of cultural planning since its 1970s origins has embraced, generally, a narrow definition of *culture*, as in institutions and arts practices most often rooted in Western European traditions. **Defining *culture* as it relates to the practice of cultural planning guides the scope of planning and whether it includes or has relevance to all or just some of the increasingly diverse populations of cities and towns across the United States.** To determine an understanding of how *culture* was defined, Dreeszen relied on a text analysis of a large number of plans in addition to his survey. He acknowledged the challenge of determining “widely shared aesthetic values” in cultural plans and observed that “cultural plans are usually concerned with nonprofit visual and performing arts, artists, arts audiences, arts education, public art, arts facilities and systems of funding support”⁹ (p. 20). He went on to acknowledge that some plans addressed creative expressions of ethnic groups, literature, design, historic preservation, special public events and festivals. He found that a few plans included cultural tourism, downtown revitalization and economic development.

Dreeszen’s research on the first 15 years of cultural planning, found the practice served mostly to advance institutional interests of largely Eurocentric arts institutions and the creative practices within their purview. Thus, the scope of many early plans addressed those interests with little consideration for the cultural practices (formal and informal) of communities of color and recent immigrants, not to mention the creative economy, recreational, and social, activities of the entire population. Public space design and activation, cultural tourism, cross-cultural interaction, and other community and human development work were likewise not significant in that earlier cultural planning. More recent cultural planning, however, has begun to include some or all of those areas and more in fairly significant ways.

To ascertain the status and possible changes in the definitions of *culture* used in cultural planning over time, the current study examined the ways communities defined *culture* via their cultural planning work. A series of responses were sought related to the parameters of culture used or cultural resources included in the planning process. **The survey found that few cultural plans or documents explicitly define *culture*.** Rather, different communities and planning consultants use their own implicit definitions. Of course, culture as a phenomenon is virtually impossible to define and surely has considerable variation in meaning from place to place. The 2017 study assessed these definitions by relying on responses in the cultural plans related to cultural resources, types of activities, and types of organizations included.

⁹ Dreeszen, "Reimagining Community," 1994, 20.

The 2017 survey asked: “In its definition of culture for the scope of the planning, did your plan include . . . [any or all of a list of 17 types of cultural resources]. The top cluster of those cultural resources included in plans indicated by 75 percent or more were:

Nonprofit arts sector	94 percent
Art fairs and festivals	86 percent
Independent artists	80 percent
Cultural organizations, including history and heritage	78 percent
Youth service organizations with creative or cultural activities	78 percent

Also in the top third were:

Organizations serving ethnic communities	74 percent
Neighborhood or citywide festivals celebrating other aspects of history, culture, or ideologies	74 percent
Educational entities	66 percent

These cultural resources are commonly—although clearly not universally—assumed among typical players and resources in contemporary arts and cultural communities. Some less ordinary, or less expected, activities and entities included:

Activities promoting civic engagement	60 percent
Public celebrations recognizing outstanding people or ideas	58 percent
Neighborhood-based or social service organizations with creative or cultural activities	56 percent
For-profit creative businesses that sell, display, or present unique or locally designed products or services	54 percent
For-profit creative businesses that design or produce unique local products or services	52 percent
Recreational, outdoor, or environmental organizations and activities	50 percent

This cluster begins to broaden to include what are typically considered non-arts entities and activities none of which were named in Dreeszen’s study. These included for-profit enterprises in the creative sector along with recreational and environmental activities. These represent a more inclusive list from most 1980s cultural planning that Dreeszen described.

Among activities selected by fewer than 50 percent of the respondents, were:

- For-profit businesses that present or exhibit products imported into the community 32 percent
- Local food-growing or food-producing entities 24 percent
- Culinary arts 22 percent

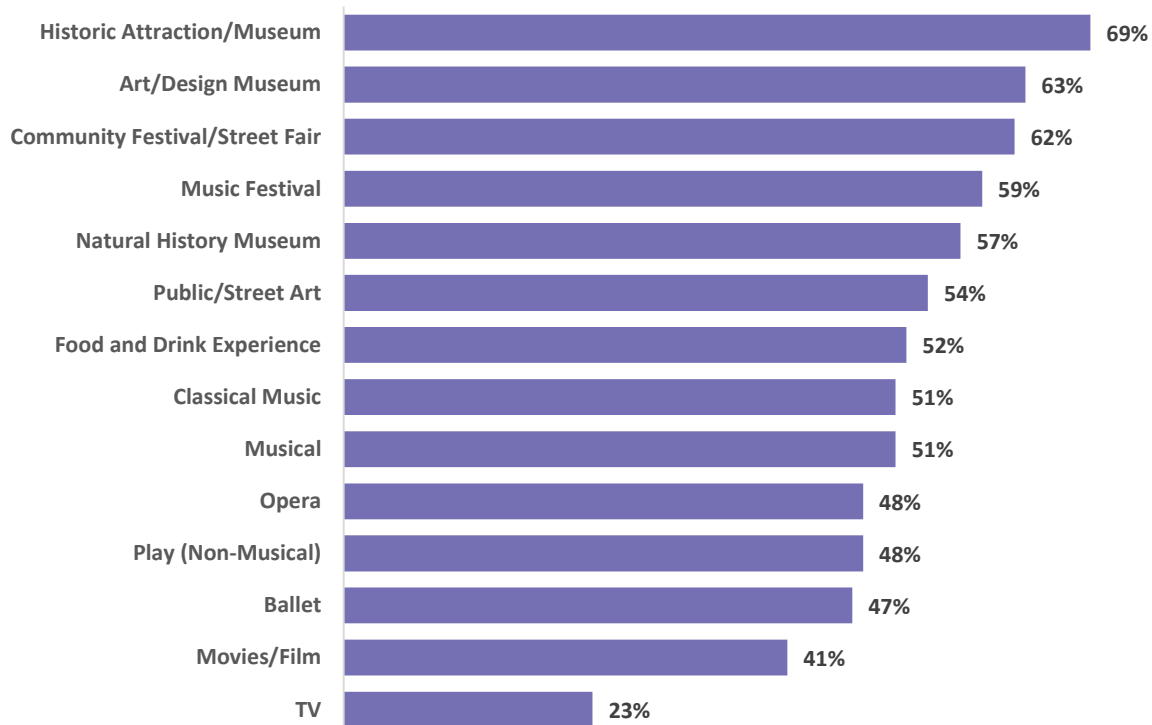
Culinary arts and local foods and foodways are core to the sense of identity for communities in some regions of the United States, yet those resources score lowest of local cultural resources overall.

With no directly comparative data from 1994, it is difficult to assess how the definitions of culture used implicitly or explicitly changed during the two-plus decades. Academic literature on cultural planning from Canada, Australia, and the United Kingdom, along with assertions by Dreeszen, fault early cultural planning for relying on narrow definitions of culture that favor Eurocentric, institutional arts. That said, it would appear that cultural planners have expanded what they include in cultural planning.

Contrasting Market Research Defining Culture

LaPlaca Cohen, a research and market strategy firm found in their report *Culture Track '17* considerable change in the cultural landscape of the United States since 2001. They wrote, “the narrow niche of culture had expanded to include public parks alongside art museums, food and drink experiences alongside dramatic theater, and street art alongside classical dance.”¹⁰

Figure 3: Activities Defined as Culture, LaPlaca Cohen¹¹



¹⁰ LaPlaca Cohen, *Culture Track '17*, 2017, 7.

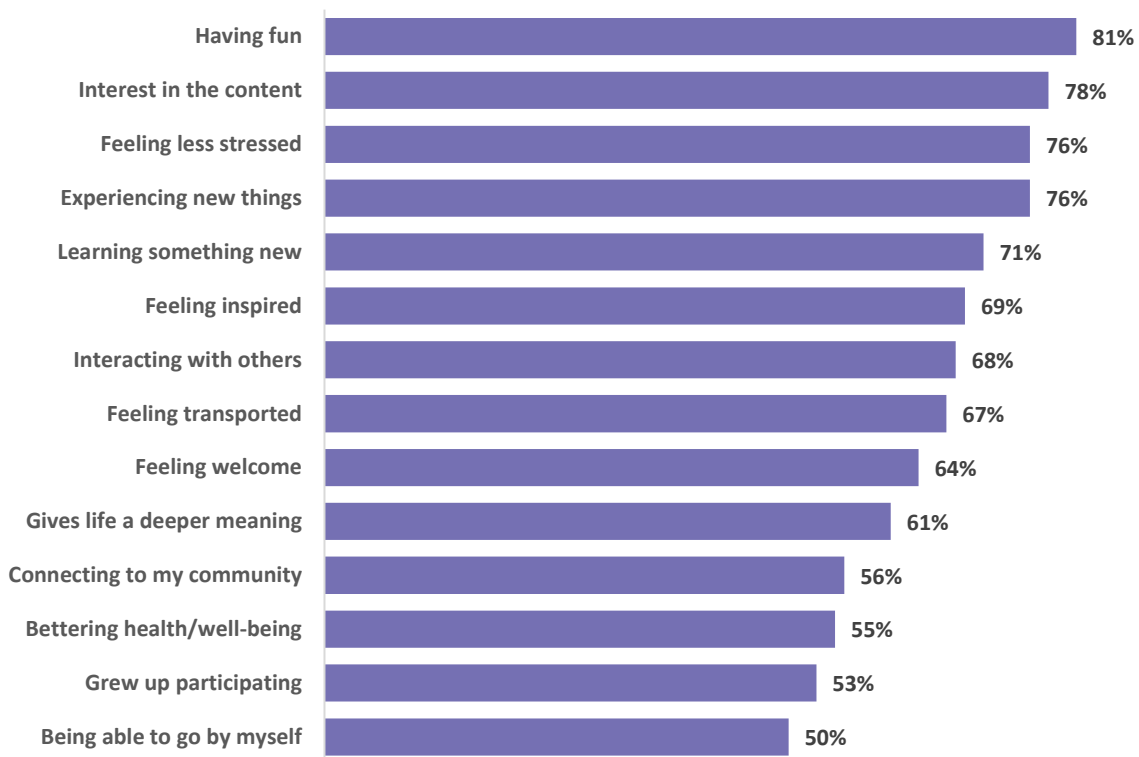
¹¹ Ibid.

The LaPlaca Cohen study also looked at the characteristics of what attracts audiences and what can drive them away: “Irrelevance is often the culprit: the primary barrier to participation is feeling that a cultural activity is ‘not for someone like me,’ followed by lack of awareness (‘I didn’t think of it’). These rank even higher than basic barriers such as inconvenience, not being able to find anyone to go with, and cost.”¹²

“People of color (those who self-identify as being a race other than Caucasian, or self-identify as Hispanic) are 82% more likely than non-Hispanic Caucasians to say that a reason for not participating in cultural activities in the past year is that these activities don’t ‘reflect people of all backgrounds.’”

Arts and cultural agencies commissioning cultural plans, and consultants they employ, appear to be behind the curve in how they go about defining culture. Of course, given the hyper-local nature of cultural planning and the national scope of LaPlaca Cohen, it is important to account for considerable variation on a community-by-community level.

Figure 4: Motivators for Cultural Participation, LaPlaca Cohen¹³



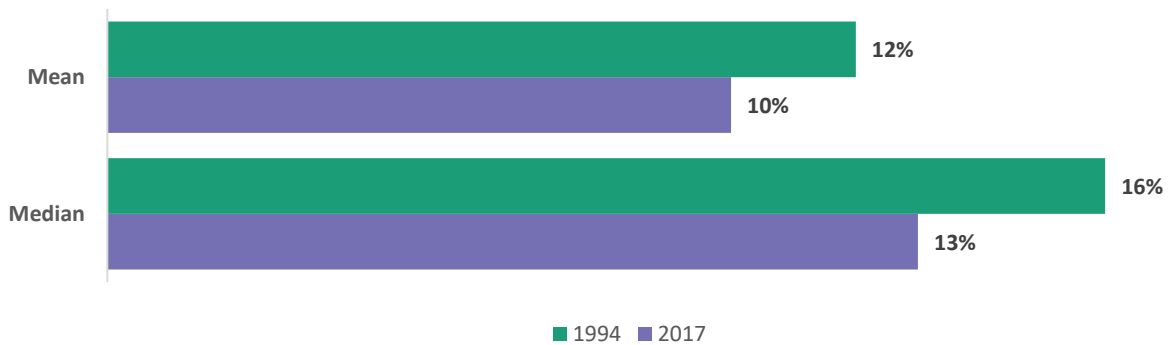
¹² Ibid., 13.

¹³ Ibid., 11.

Professionalization of Cultural Planning

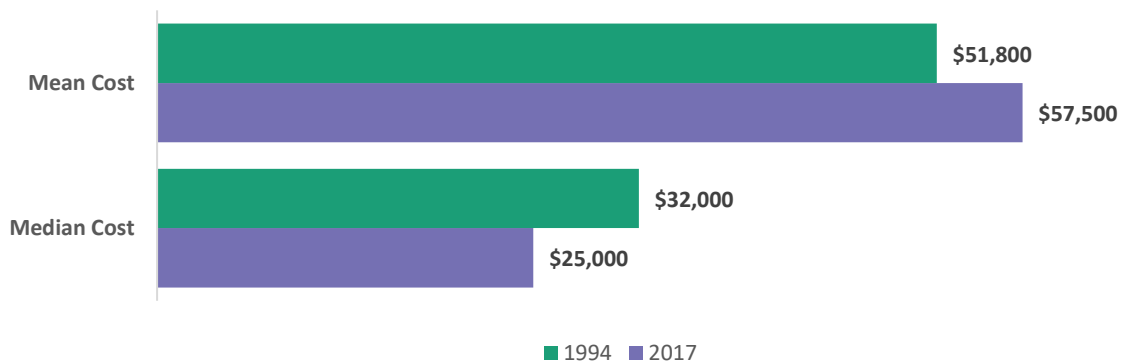
Between 1994 and 2017, the average time for planning grew a little shorter while average costs of completing a plan increased about 10 percent (adjusted for inflation). There was an increase in the percentage of plans led by consultants, and data collection methods became more sophisticated. Together, these suggest an **increasing professionalization of the practice**.

Figure 5: Months for completion of cultural plans



The reduced time to complete cultural plans in 2017 in comparison to 1994 suggests that agencies conducting planning expect them to be done in a quicker fashion, or that the consultants they engage, and/or the practice at large has become more efficient over time. Alternatively, those communities that have completed more than one cultural plan in the past couple decades may use their experience to be more efficient. Of course, there are possible negative implications to hastening the process, such as not giving sufficient time for broad-based input and/or fully vetting recommendations.

Figure 6: Mean and median cost of cultural plans adjusted to 2016 dollars



Both studies included plans produced at different and unknown times during their relative decades, so the dollar equivalency in their cost is not precise. **Nevertheless, data from both studies indicate more plans were produced in the lower price range while the average expenditure appears to have grown.** In both studies, the number of plans produced at the highest-end price tag (over \$200,000) were roughly the same. Thus, the increase in the average was not skewed by one or more large-budget planning projects but likely reflects modest growth in average cost.

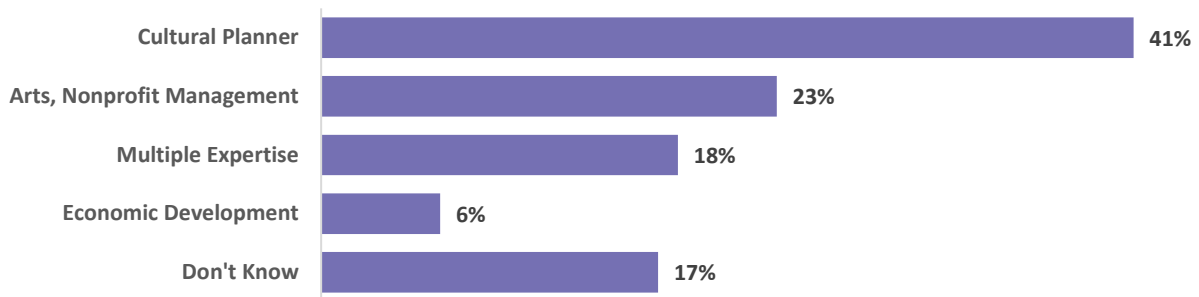
During the years of cultural planning covered in Dreeszen's study, he found that between 66 percent and 70 percent of plans involved a consultant. Of the 2017 survey respondents, 80 percent reported use of consultants. This indicates an increase in use and availability of professionals in the field and/or a sense among local agencies that the process had grown more complicated and required assistance from experienced or qualified planners. Results from the 2017 survey indicate that a majority of the consultants employed were considered national consultants and just under one-third from the local area or region. Teams that mixed local and national consultants were used in 17.5 percent of plans and a small number of consultants were considered international.

With less than a handful of exceptions (Dreeszen among them), cultural planning consultants who produced plans during the decade covered in this 2017 study are different from those producing plans during the decade prior to the 1994 research. Because early cultural planning grew as a vehicle to address the interests of arts organizations, Dreeszen found, consultants borrowed methods from strategic planning and marketing research: "The tendency of cultural plans to rely upon the simplest planning methods suggests that some training into more sophisticated techniques would be helpful". In the same light, Dreeszen asserted that "local arts agencies and planning consultants could learn more about the political nature of community planning."¹⁴

Fewer than half of the consultants engaged to conduct or facilitate cultural planning in the 2017 study were described as having cultural planning as their primary area of expertise; 17 percent of respondents said they didn't know the primary expertise of consultants. No comparable question was included in the 1994 survey.

¹⁴ Dreeszen, "Reimagining Community," 1994, 234.

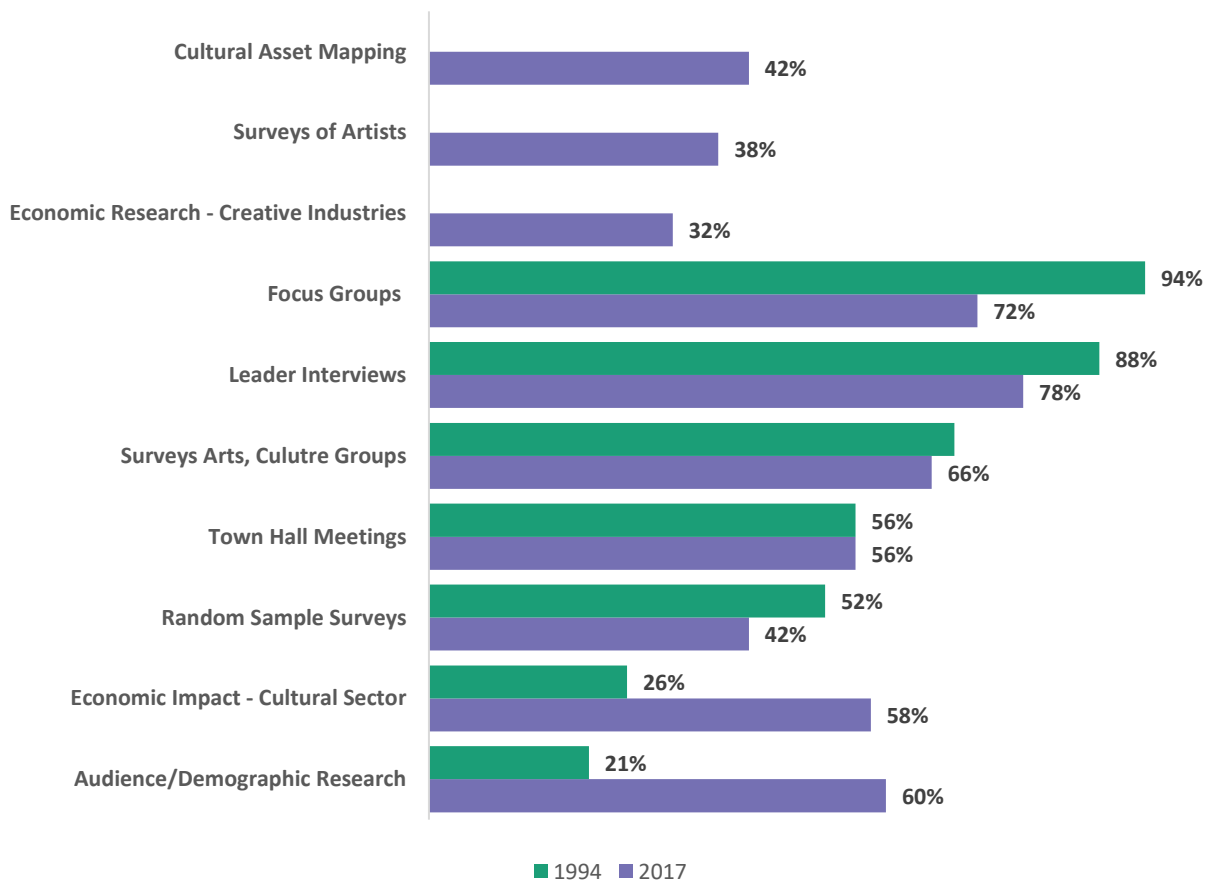
Figure 7: Primary areas of expertise of cultural planning consultants



The mix of professional backgrounds of those conducting cultural plans reflects a dearth of professional training as well as a lack of understanding of the practice and/or a mix of expectations by commissioning entities. It may also indicate a shortage of consultants available with a depth of cultural planning experience.

Methods for gathering data appear to have become more sophisticated over time. In 1994, Dreeszen found the top five methods to be focus groups, interviews with opinion leaders, surveys of arts and cultural organizations, public/town hall meetings, and random sample public surveys. He reported only two others: economic impact research of the cultural sector; and audience/demographic research.

Figure 8: Data gathering methodologies used in cultural planning



Respondents to the 2017 survey indicated they used more sources of data and tools for engaging their communities than respondents from the 1994 survey. Accordingly, the 2017 survey offered more choices in response to a proliferation of known data-gathering and community-engagement methods. The top three methods remained the same as in 1994 (focus groups, interviews, and surveys) but changed order. The top five reported in 2017 included: interviews with opinion leaders; community focus groups; surveys of arts and cultural organizations; audience or demographic research; and economic impact of the cultural sector. Also employed by more than half, and at the same rate in both surveys, were public or town hall meetings. These meetings are generally a requirement for community planning processes in the United States, and are required in nearly every formal city planning practice. Therefore, it was surprising that they occurred in fewer than 60 percent of cultural planning projects.

Methods reported in the 2017 survey not found in the Dreeszen study included cultural asset mapping (42 percent), surveys of artists (38 percent), and economic research on the creative industries (32 percent). Numerous highly experienced cultural planners, especially in Canada and Australia, such as Greg Baeker¹⁵ and Colin Mercer,¹⁶ both active in cultural planning during the 1990s, cite asset-mapping as fundamental to the practice. According to Australian cultural planning scholar Deborah Stevenson, “cultural asset mapping, widely accepted as being the first step in any cultural planning project is about place and tracing the intersection of place and meaning.”¹⁷ However, at least in the United States, cultural planners did not begin widely using cultural asset-mapping until the early- to mid-2000s. Given that fewer than half those surveyed in 2017 used asset-mapping, it is still clearly not standard practice.

Additional data-gathering and community engagement methods, not reflected in Figure 8, that represent methods used by 20- to 30 percent surveyed were:

Branding/identity research	30 percent
Artist-led creative processes	30 percent
Interactive Web/social media	28 percent
Partnerships with municipal agencies	26 percent
Partnerships with community groups	22 percent
Partnerships with academic institutions	20 percent

This wider mix of methods and less dependence on a few data sources suggest greater sophistication and presumably inclusion of more people, organizations, and data sources in the planning processes.

¹⁵ Greg Baeker, *Rediscovering the Wealth of Places: A Municipal Cultural Planning Handbook*, Municipal Knowledge Series (Municipal World, 2010).

¹⁶ Colin Mercer, "Cultural Planning for Urban Development and Creative Cities: Unpublished Paper Based on Previously Published Articles and Chapters and Prepared for a 2006 Shanghai Conference on Creative Cities," 2006. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/237307278_CULTURAL_PLANNING_FOR_URBAN_DEVELOPMENT_AND_CREATIVE_CITIES

¹⁷ Deborah Stevenson, *Cities of Culture: A Global Perspective*, Routledge Advances in Sociology (London and New York: Routledge, 2014), 39.

Artist-led creative processes, also a newcomer to the toolkit, were used by 30 percent, a seemingly high number for an emerging practice.

Relationship to City Comprehensive Plans and Planning Oversight

Dreeszen found that 49 percent of plans in his survey had been adopted formally as part of their respective city comprehensive- or master plan. The 2017 survey found a slight variation, with 52 percent reporting their plan had been adopted into the city comprehensive plan. Dreeszen advocated that cultural planning “needs to be integrated with other forms of community-wide planning.”¹⁸ However, the lack of meaningful change in the percentage of plans adopted into city comprehensive plans is one of the surprising findings in the current study.

Selected open-ended responses relative to city involvement

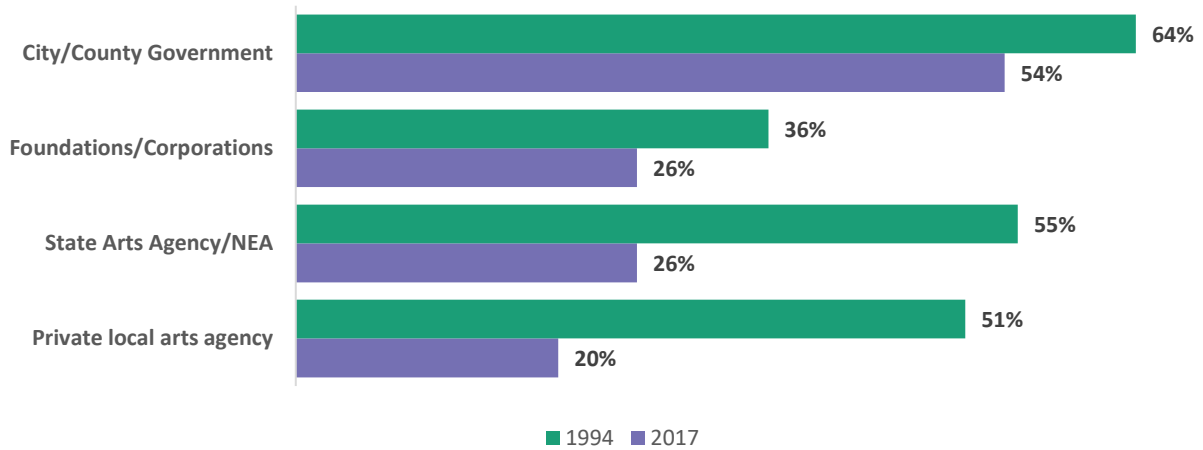
- *“Although the City administration sent in a letter of support for the consultancy, they did not attend any of the meetings. There was a lot of confusion between City and city as the plan was developed.”*
- *“Participating community leaders, city government, and the lead arts organization had some major disconnects. The consultant had to regroup the committee midway through the consultancy to get everyone on the same page.”*
- *“Luckily, one of the participants, a city councilor, is now the current mayor. He is very much on board with the Cultural Plan now.”*

Further detail solicited for the more recent study, with no comparable data from the earlier study, found that 22 percent of the cultural plans had been produced simultaneously and as integral to a city comprehensive plan. Also, 16 percent reported that the cultural plan was produced prior to the comprehensive plan to help inform the larger plan, and 12 percent reported their cultural plan was produced as a follow-up to their city’s comprehensive plan. **This may suggest greater communication and coordination between cultural agencies and city planners;** without directly corresponding data, however, it is impossible to confirm.

Dreeszen concluded in 1994 that most cultural plans were conducted without prior authorization from a local government. Some evidence to suggest this change comes from an examination of organizations funding the plan. Both the 1994 and 2017 studies asked survey respondents to check as many funding source choices as apply. In 1994 more respondents checked multiple sources than did those in 2017, indicating a greater variety of funders for these earlier plans than occurs later.

¹⁸ Dreeszen, "Reimagining Community," 1994, 234.

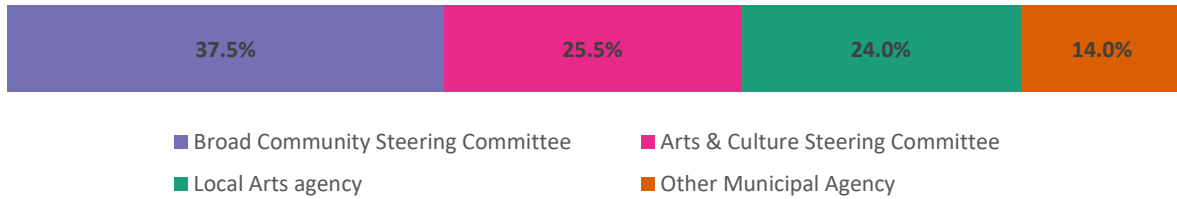
Figure 9: Sources paying for cultural plans



Results in 2017 indicate fewer sources than in 1994, with less in matching funds from public or private arts funders. **This suggests that from 1994 to 2017, more plans were paid for by singular sources, with local government and/or local arts agencies picking up a larger share of costs.** Presumably, many such allocations are approved in municipal budgets and are therefore at least on the radar of municipal government leaders.

In the 1994 survey, 69 percent of respondents indicated planning was overseen by a steering committee. The 2017 survey distinguished between a steering committee representative of the arts and culture community and a steering committee representing broader or more mixed-community interests. The combined total of oversight by a steering committee, then, in 2017 was 63 percent, something of a reduction since 1994. Use of steering committees is recommended by some planning consultants, including Dreeszen, and sometimes requested by agencies commissioning a plan. If more recent plans were created under the auspices of other municipal agencies, steering committees may not have been used as frequently in that context.

Figure 10: Primary responsibility for oversight of cultural planning, 2017



Given significant growth in the percentage of planning designated *Community Cultural Plans* (See Figure 1), the use of steering committees might be assumed to expand as well. A decline in use of steering committees may be considered positive to the extent that municipal departments are more invested in cultural planning, yet at the same time negative, in that a cross-sector of community leadership appears less involved. Reduced use of steering committees could also explain why the average time needed for completion of plans has declined.

Expectations Versus Outcomes

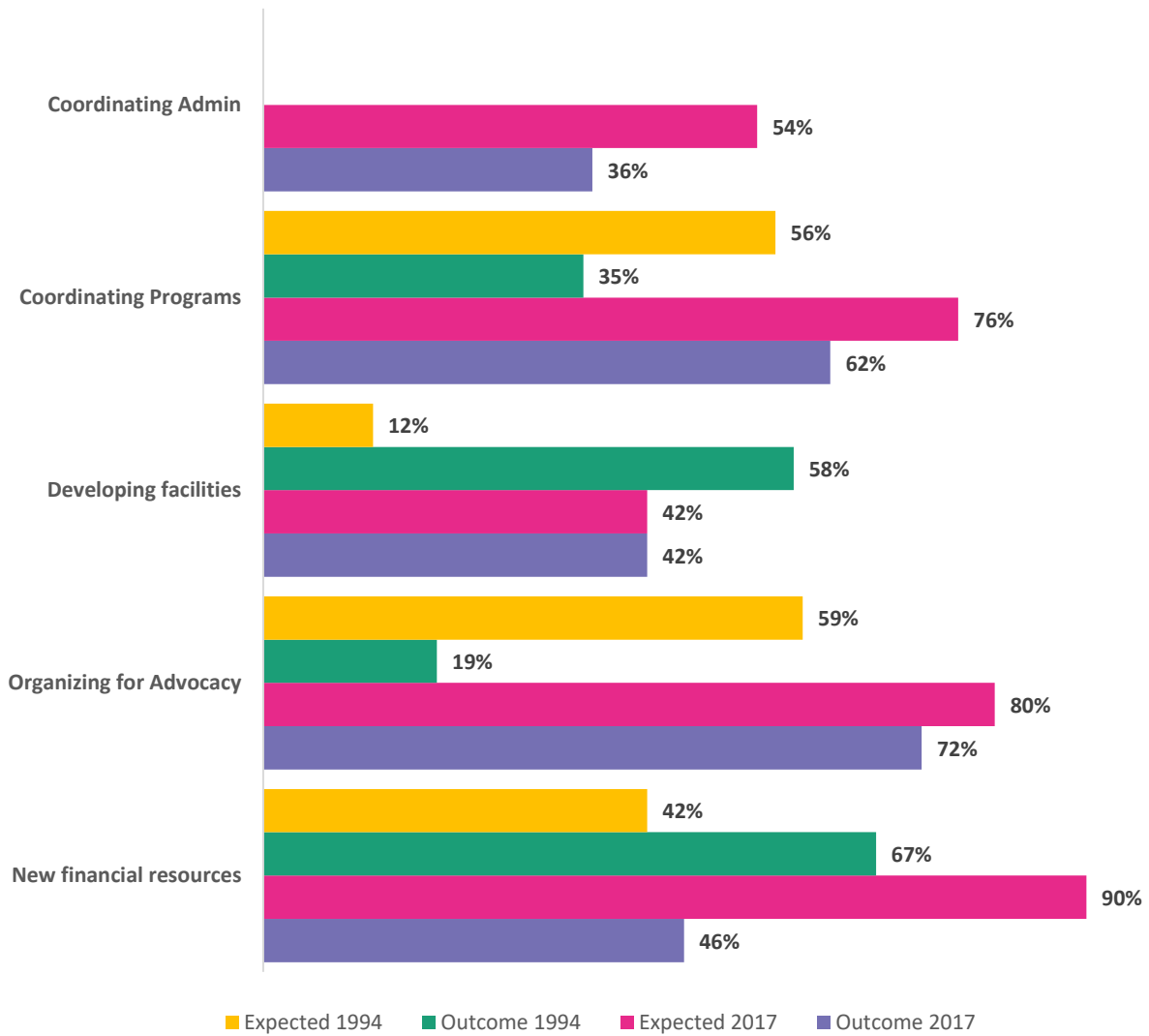
Near the beginning of the survey, respondents were asked about expectations of cultural planning, with parallel questions toward the end related to outcomes or changes experienced by respondents related to the community. These represent opinions based on individual memories and impressions. Nonetheless, aggregate data, compared with similar data from 1994, reveal clear patterns.

In most cases, agencies commissioning or leading cultural planning had high expectations for planning and subsequent community outcomes. **These expectations were generally higher than the outcomes they reported. This would be expected, as planning is aspirational.** In the 2017 survey, in all but one of 22 categories, expectations exceeded subsequent outcomes by an average of 18 percentage points. More importantly, in comparison with data from 1994, the types of expectations and outcomes changed significantly. In 2017, expectations were higher in most areas and, with a couple of noteworthy exceptions, outcomes were stronger than in 1994.

Cultural Planning to Advance Cultural Sector Needs

In 2017, the highest ranked outcome related to internal sector needs was in building connections among the cultural activities in the community. Eighty-eight percent hoped to achieve this result, in contrast to 84 percent who rated this as a positive outcome—also one the highest expectation-to-outcome showings.

Figure 11: Expectations versus outcomes relative to concerns within the cultural sector



Most industries or professions are interested in advancing their own financial security. The greatest variation between expectation and outcome in the 2017 survey was in finding new financial resources for the arts: 90 percent rated this as an important goal and 46 percent reported it as an outcome. Another question asked whether, as a result of planning, the community experienced greater public investments in the arts and greater funding from private sources. Greater public investments were indicated by 42 percent of the responses, while 50 percent reported more or significantly more funding from private sources since completion of the plan. In contrast, in the 1994 survey, 42 percent said

finding new financial resources was among the reasons they conducted planning, while 66 percent said they subsequently experienced an increase—this would appear to be a surprise outcome for some. This speaks to the growing reasons for conducting planning beyond seeking new or increased financial support.

In the 2017 survey, 80 percent indicated they entered planning hoping to better organize the cultural community to advocate on its own behalf; 72 percent reported they achieved more capacity for advocacy. The sector has made considerable progress in this area. In 1994, Dreeszen found that 59 percent entered planning with this same expectation; only 19 percent said they had favorable outcomes in capacity for collective advocacy. However, in a separate but related question, Dreeszen reported that 39 percent of local arts agencies cited improved visibility and credibility of their agency as a result of their cultural plan.

Coordinating administrative resources was also among the areas of lower expectation in 2017 at 54 percent, with 36 percent reporting improvement in that area, the second lowest outcome in that survey. On the other hand, 76 percent expected to achieve coordination of program resources, while 62 percent saw progress in that area. In the Dreeszen study, 56 percent expected coordination of program resources, whereas 35 percent reported positive outcomes.

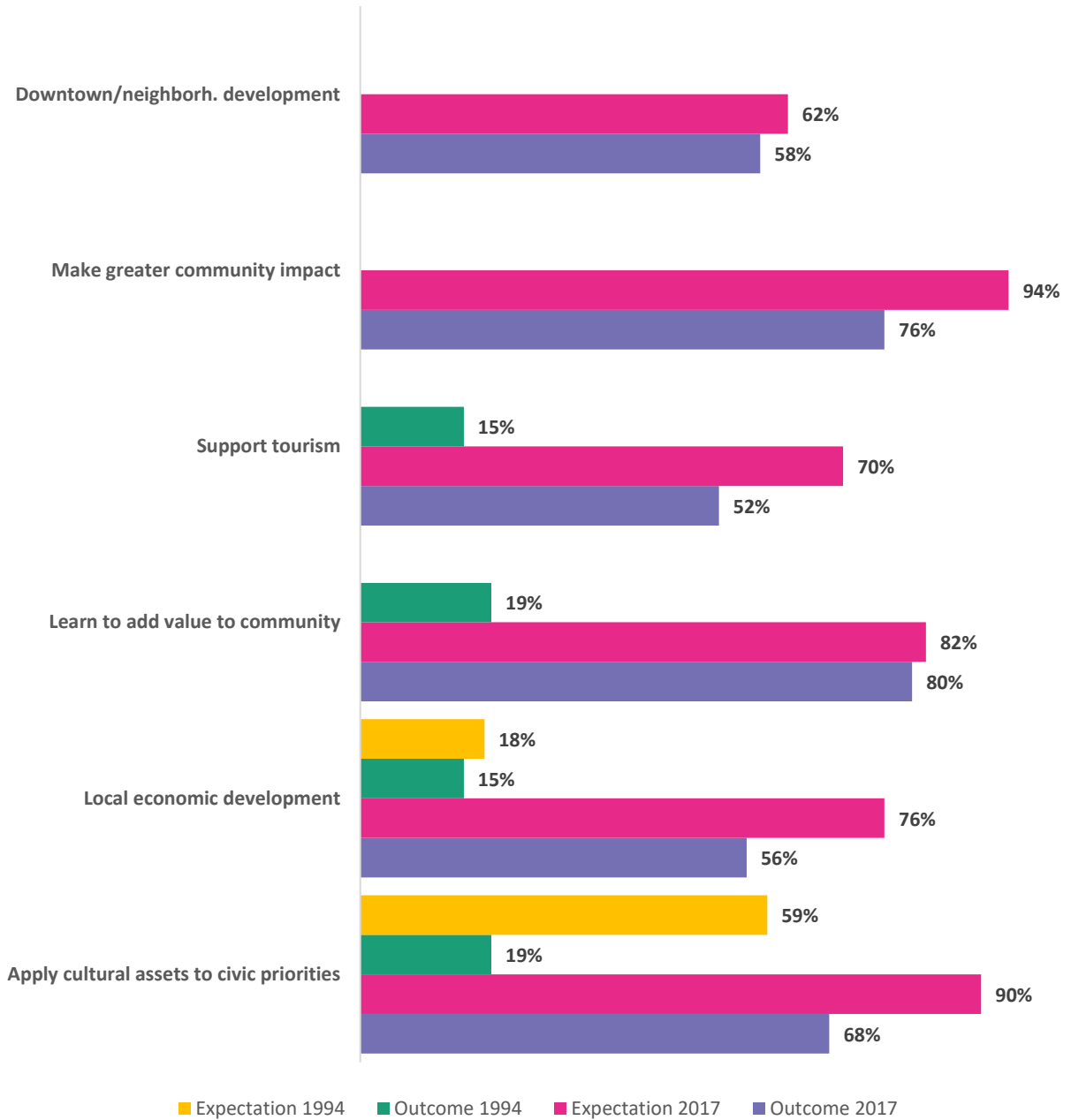
Assessing the need and viability of new cultural facilities was an area with relatively low expectations. Forty-two percent expected progress in that area and 42 percent saw affirmative results. This was the only category in which expectations and outcomes matched. In the 1994 survey, Dreeszen reported only 12 percent entered planning with the expectation of assessing the need and viability of new cultural facilities, but 58 percent indicated this as an outcome.

Cultural facility development was one of two areas where Dreeszen found outcomes rated higher than expectations. The other, also mentioned here, was in finding new financial resources. These results suggest that cultural planning from the 1980s was less understood or predictable and, as Dreeszen concluded, centered more around the internal sector interests of arts organizations and their audiences. **The new data reflect a shift in that regard, with more of the outcomes focused outwardly on the contributions the cultural sector make to their communities.**

Cultural Planning to Advance Community Needs

The top reason cited for conducting a cultural plan in the 2017 survey—listed by 94 percent of the respondents—was to enable the cultural community to make greater community impact. The kinds of impact were not specified, but this indicates a desire to contribute outwardly to the community, rather than focus strictly inward on the benefits planning could bring to the sector itself. Fewer, or 76 percent, reported greater community impact resulted from their plan, yet this still remains among the higher outcomes. Just 18 percent reported that their ability to impact the community had not changed.

Figure 12: Expectations versus outcomes relative to community-wide concerns



The second highest positive outcome overall—and the highest in community outcomes—was learning new ways arts and culture can bring value to the community; 80 percent reported gains in this area in comparison to 82 percent who hoped for this result, the most consistently high expectation-to-outcome. In sharp contrast, in the 1994 Dreeszen study, only 19 percent reported learning new ways to bring value to the community as an outcome.

Identifying strategies to apply cultural resources to civic priorities tied with finding new financial resources for second highest expectation in the 2017 data. It was anticipated by 90 percent, with 68 percent indicating improvement. Only 19 percent indicated it as an outcome in 1994.

Downtown or neighborhood, economic, and tourism development all showed consistently higher outcomes in 2017 than in the 1994 survey. These areas seem to have more contemporary relevance as the cultural sector began to see itself taking a role in local economic development after the 1990s. Organizing arts and culture for downtown or neighborhood development was an expectation among 62 percent in 2017, with 58 percent reporting greater impact on local development. In the Dreeszen study, 34 percent indicated downtown or neighborhood development as a result with no data reported on expectations.

Mobilizing the cultural sector on behalf of tourism was an expectation among 70 percent in 2017, with 52 percent experiencing positive outcomes. Only 15 percent of respondents in the 1994 study indicated favorable outcomes related to tourism. There was a higher expectation in 2017 for bringing the cultural community together to work on economic development at 76 percent, with 56 percent seeing more such coordination. In the Dreeszen study, 18 percent expected planning to increase involvement in economic development, with 15 percent reporting favorable outcomes. **Contributing to downtown and economic development and to tourism was not significant to the cultural sector prior to 1994; these areas have become far more important in more recent cultural plans.**

Planning for Cultural Equity

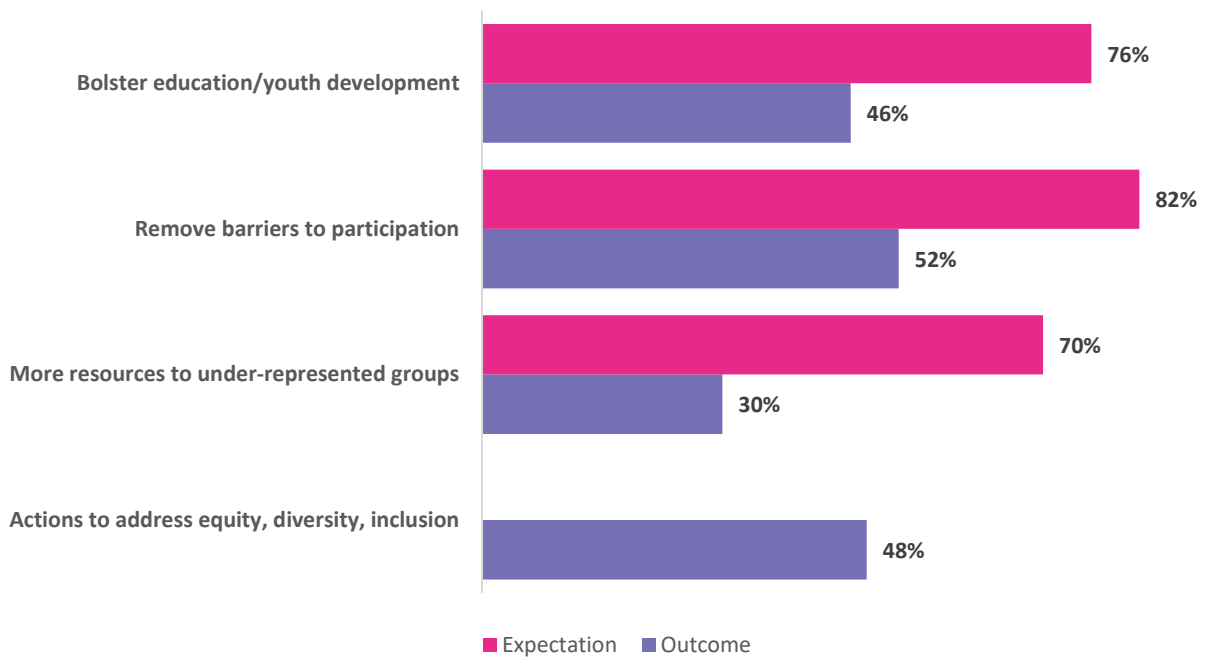
Allocating **more resources for under-represented communities ranked the lowest of all outcomes of cultural planning in 2017. While 70 percent expected this to be an outcome, only 30 percent reported progress.** This ranked as the second greatest variation between expectations and outcomes and should be of concern to communities and cultural planners alike.

Of the 30 percent who reported allocation of more resources to under-represented communities as an outcome, only 4 percent reported allocating *much* more and 26 percent reported only *somewhat* more. This had the highest rating of no change: Fifty-eight percent reported conditions being the same as before planning. **Given widespread statements by the cultural sector that it strives for greater cultural equity, this evidence suggests that cultural planning by-and-large has not contributed meaningfully to improving the distribution of resources to under-represented communities.**

Selected responses to open-ended question about cultural equity: Please describe in what ways your cultural plan addresses diversity, equity, and inclusion.

- *"Developed a directory of ethnic and cultural resources in [. . .] County."*
- *"Encourage ethnically and culturally diverse artists and arts organizations to participate."*
- *"In existing calendars and directories."*
- *"Partner with arts or cultural organizations to produce jointly sponsored cross-cultural events."*
- *"'Diversity' is one of the four major pillars of the plan. A new grant initiative—Community Cultural Connections (CCC)—sprung from our Diversity work group. Since inception there have been 100 CCC grants awarded totaling \$200K, injecting the arts into under-served communities—neighborhood association, inner-city churches, social service nonprofits and outlying parts of our county."*
- *"An arts access committee was added to the list of standing committees in the local arts agency."*
- *"Committees formed to address concerns. Public Recognition sought input from all ethnicities."*
- *"Guiding principles of plan center on community building and bridging difference."*
- *"It calls [diversity] out, however, as one of the top six initiatives, it is the one that has moved the slowest."*
- *"... a Sanctuary City and broadly racially diverse. While some City departments and practices have been closely scrutinized for evidence of racism, the nuances of cultural equity and inclusion have not been tackled in an arts-focused way in the current planning literature."*
- *"Priority: Advance equity and inspire connection and community transformation—Equity is about first recognizing systemic issues that need to be thoughtfully and respectfully addressed, including any impediments to participation and access to resources, all of which frame the focus for this priority."*
- *"The City's Historic Preservation program has preserved historic and cultural resources and farmland. The traditional cultures of the area, kept alive by our[indigenous] neighbors and other tribes, provide diversity and a living connection to our ... past."*
- *"There was an emphasis to bring arts/culture into neighborhoods, especially those identified as under-resourced. The notion of bringing the art to the viewer also addresses providing opportunities for those who cannot (for whatever reason) travel into the core of the city to partake in arts/culture."*
- *"We addressed issues of racial equity throughout the plan, integrated these into all policy areas and identified the different roles that can be taken by the public sector and foundations, private sector and businesses and nonprofits."*
- *"We have included a D&I statement with our plans."*
- *"Acknowledges needs and will prioritize business development targets but primarily based on artistic content development as ways to generate revenue and thus build economic strength and unity within the industry."*
- *"Creating one collaborative marketing system that promotes all arts events, and is accessible to anyone where they can filter out what kind of art they want to participate in or find relevant. Eliminating barriers to participation being awareness."*
- *"Will move to adopt AftA equity statement."*

Figure 13: Expectations versus outcomes relative to cultural equity and inclusion in cultural plans



In another area of the survey, by an almost even split, 48 percent said their plan included specific actions to address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the cultural life of the community. At least half, or 52 percent, said their plans did not. In a related question about removal of barriers to create more cultural participation, 82 percent entered planning with this expectation and 52 percent reported progress in this area. This is almost double the average variation between expectations and outcomes. Meanwhile, 76 percent conducted planning, hoping to bolster education and youth development through the arts, with 46 percent reporting favorable outcomes. In the 1994 study, 60 percent reported positive impact on education and youth. Why there is a decline here remains a question.

Overall, the 2017 survey showed cultural planning to be aspirational as to the sector’s larger purpose and role in communities. It also indicates that the cultural sector has increasingly worked to address a wider variety of civic concerns. For whatever reasons, expanding and valuing cultural diversity showed the least progress.

Success Metrics

Few cultural plans included formal measures to evaluate their success. Some 44 percent of respondents in the 2017 survey said they have not done so; another 10 percent indicated they did not know. Of those who do evaluate their success, 22 percent said they use quantitative metrics defined in the plan and 20 percent said they use qualitative metrics defined in the plan. Local arts agencies in some cases have established metrics; 18 percent said their agency has qualitative measures and 14 percent said their agency has quantitative measures. Externally driven measures of success are fewer; just 12 percent said they employ qualitative metrics and 12 percent said they use quantitative metrics developed by other funders.

Selected responses to open-ended question about metrics:

- *“Each section has indicators that relate to the topic/goal.”*
- *“Measures were primarily qualitative, but also included a plan to participate in AFTA’s Arts in Economic Prosperity 5 to gather local data about the economic impact of local arts and cultural activity.”*
- *“Mostly anecdotal, but we can point to some tangible results: the establishment of [an] arts building, \$200K in [new] grants, new grade levels added to our elementary arts initiative, etc.”*
- *“Our (quantitative & qualitative) metrics were developed collaboratively with our economic development and planning departments to align with some of their indicators and embedded in how the LAA evaluates the creative workforce.”*
- *“Our metrics are not aligned specifically to the plan but to telling the story of the sector more clearly and effectively.”*
- *“Our study began as an economic impact study, and ended up being a baseline comparison study with some suggestions for additional studies needed. We then participated in Economic Prosperity V study.”*
- *“Primarily based on completion of the stated action items. Since then our organization has created a new set of success measures for the organization which we track regularly.”*
- *“Success metrics are largely based on business-sector definitions of financial health for organizations: growing assets, growing income, growing expenses. For public-facing enterprises, attendance and other participant data is the primary basis for success. More sophisticated data points (like cross-tabs with public transit ridership) require more capacity than many organizations in the city can leverage.”*
- *“We have a ten-year strategic plan for our agency with yearly benchmarks.”*
- *“We worked with a consulting group to develop the evaluation framework. Our plan has six goal areas, with each goal having a different evaluation process.”*

Addressing Community Development Issues Through Cultural Planning

The 2017 survey asked whether cultural plans addressed community development issues in addition to the cultural development of their communities. Questions matched categories from the 2015 Local Arts Agency Census. This allows comparison of 2017 data with those of a larger sample of arts agencies from just two years prior.

Top responses related to community development issues addressed in cultural plans compared with the current activities and/or funding programs of local arts agencies (LAAs) were:

	Cultural plans	Existing LAA programs
Tourism and community identity	76 percent	40 percent
Economic development	72 percent	34 percent
Education	60 percent	32 percent
Use of public space	60 percent	29 percent
Cultural preservation	60 percent	26 percent
Cultural or racial awareness	50 percent	26 percent
Civic engagement	44 percent	25 percent
At-risk youth	26 percent	28 percent
Social equity	22 percent	9 percent
Housing	22 percent	5 percent

A list of additional concerns with lower responses included environmental issues, transportation, literacy/illiteracy, local food movement, public safety, physical and mental health, aging, contested history, displacement, immigration, crime prevention, hunger/food justice, and imprisonment/rehabilitation.

Inclusion of these issues in cultural plans indicates intention to engage in these areas of civic concern. Local arts agency data are reflective of actual programs, either directly offered by the agency or funded through grant programs. The 2017 survey revealed a striking comparison of the top ten areas above (spanning from tourism to social equity). Cultural plans addressed these topics in most cases by double the percentages found in the 2015 local arts agency survey. The only exception among the top ten cultural plan civic issues was *at-risk youth*, which surveyed similarly between cultural plans and local arts agencies.

Remorse and Unexpected Outcomes from Planning

One question in the 2017 survey explored a sense of remorse among those involved in cultural planning. The same list of civic issues was provided, with a question asking what issues were missing that the respondents' wish their community's plan had included. The greatest response was in the area of social equity, in which 36 percent stated that they want to do more. The second area was at-risk youth (22 percent). Both of these were already in the top 10 areas addressed in plans.

Environmental issues and use of public space were each noted by 22 percent. At 20 percent were aging, civic engagement, mental health, homelessness, and immigration.

Social equity was addressed by 50 percent in plans and 36 percent in the wish-it-were-included response. If combined, social equity would total 86 percent—higher than the top civic concern of tourism that was included in 76 percent of plans.

While significant numbers of respondents expressed their aspiration to address these social issues, there was little change related to progress in areas such as resource allocation for under-represented groups. Removal of barriers also showed disappointing results.

An open-ended question was asked to gather potential topics not covered or that were a genuine surprise. All responses had a positive slant.

Selected responses to open-ended question about unexpected outcomes:

- *“A Downtown re-enhancement project was created—and includes a public art component.”*
- *“Built positive relationships with arts and culture organizations that serve underserved populations, with individuals and neighborhood business associations through our collaborative creative engagement approach and work with racial equity advocates.”*
- *“Nonprofit and private sector groups are using the final document as a guide in developing new programming as well as modifying existing programs. The document framed implementation as a community-wide responsibility. However, the speed with which organizations and foundations are taking up the work has been a surprise.”*
- *“Set the stage for revamping LAA's business model.”*
- *“The economic impact to our community was much higher than expected.”*
- *“The planning process occurred when relationship issues between arts and cultural organizations were fragile. There were some leaders that felt their voices were not reflected and that because of that, the plan was not as meaningful as it could have been. We have since tried to move beyond this and advanced portions of the plan that do have sector support.”*

Selected responses to open-ended question about unexpected outcomes (continued):

- “. . . the realization that our cultural plan was not just about the artists, organizations, and businesses. That audience members and citizens in general were also affected by the [city’s] culture of creativity and had to be thought of as recipients of the . . . Cultural Master Plan. Arts Commission and arts community in general have also become more active in communicating and lobbying City Council.”
- “We found arts education was a huge priority for our region—for those that appreciate art and don’t. A majority of our population wants their kids to have art in school and out.”
- “Cultural Districts have emerged from this plan—to be implemented with state funds. A lot more cross-sector collaboration. An emergence of arts in higher education consortium that wants to collaborate to get students to participate in the arts at different regional colleges/universities, want to collaborate on events that go across campuses, share a yearly arts planning calendar, and develop the town/gown relationships.”
- “Good response from independent artists that we thought would happen but not to the same extent it did.”

Conclusions

A number of significant changes or trends in the practice of cultural planning are evident from comparing the 2017 data to that of earlier surveys. Dreeszen’s assertion in 1994 that “cultural planning appears to provoke the local arts agency leaders to see a larger sense of community”¹⁹ is affirmed—and this could be extended to local arts agencies and perhaps the cultural sector at large, as both tend to be significantly involved in cultural planning processes.

Cultural plans appear to lean toward **expanded definitions of culture** that are somewhat more inclusive than they have been in earlier decades. Among the changes in cultural planning indicated by the data are an increase in professionalization of the practice. **Greater sophistication in data collection and planning methods** are employed and **more city government agencies appear to be taking responsibility for paying the costs of planning**.

Fewer than half the cultural planning consultants engaged by communities specialize in cultural planning in a field with a 40-year history. It is not surprising that the ranks of cultural planners have not grown measurably; it remains a relatively small “industry.” Very few graduate-level courses or professional development opportunities related to cultural planning are available in the United States. It

¹⁹ Ibid., 178.

is a field of practice with no professional associations, conferences, or newsletters. Local arts agencies that sponsor cultural plans meet at conferences such as Americans for the Arts, which has occasional discussions about cultural planning. Since 2016, a recognized interest group in arts and culture—part of the American Planning Association—has sponsored a few panel discussions at recent conferences.

There is no change evident in the percentage of cultural plans that are being fully embraced by and made part of city comprehensive plans. Dreeszen advocated in 1994 that more cultural plans be adopted formally by cities but there is little evidence this has increased.

Perhaps most significantly, the expectations and outcomes of cultural planning have shifted. Aspirations of cultural planning have moved from an emphasis on serving the internal needs of the nonprofit cultural sector to better understanding how the sector can address or contribute to a variety of concerns relevant to their communities. The contrast in outcomes between the 1994 and 2017 studies reflect considerably different priorities.

The most significant single outcome reported in 1994 was finding new financial resources for the arts. The second highest was bolstering education and youth development, followed closely by new cultural facilities. In 2017, however, these were among the lowest outcome areas. Instead, building connections within the cultural sector, learning new ways to add value to communities, **better organizing the cultural community for greater community impact**, and better organizing for advocacy were the top outcome areas. This indicates both changing conditions and expectations in the arts sector and **a shift in the scope of cultural planning**. It provides some evidence for a turn to greater community involvement that Dreeszen foresaw.

However, one area where cultural planning outcomes fall surprisingly short is in cultural equity. Many seem to see cultural equity as a goal, yet it ranks lowest among the outcomes. This is a signal that **the sector is ill-equipped to address issues of equity**, in spite of stated intentions, and the sector has not been willing to meaningfully shift resources to this effort.

Cultural planning appears to take a leadership role in fostering community development through the arts. The practice brings together the cultural sector on a local level and helps it express and codify optimistic intentions. Some plans construct strategies to help local arts agencies and cultural sectors find ways to take a more central role in key civic issues in their communities. There are significant gaps in this leadership, however, namely in the areas of cultural equity, building relationships with the city planning practice, and providing professional development for those involved in the practice itself.

Plans are aspirational by nature; the data suggest that cultural planning has the effect, as Dreeszen suggested, to accelerate “what would otherwise be a gradual shift in emphasis for arts development to also embrace community development.”²⁰

²⁰ Ibid., 91.

Questions Moving Forward

Research presented in this report helps develop perspective on the state of the practice of cultural planning in the United States since the 1980s. As with most research findings, old questions persist and new questions are uncovered that could not be fully addressed within the scope of the research. All can benefit from further investigation.

- How does the purpose of cultural planning vary from place to place and in relation to conditions; who is served by cultural planning? Is the purpose of cultural planning to strengthen the capacities and boost resources available to the formal arts and culture sector? Is it to position or re-position the sector within its respective community and to better connect it to civic partners and civic concerns? Can it do both? Is its function to serve the cultural sector, or is it to enable the sector to be of greater service to the larger community? Would a formal typology of cultural plan types—building on earlier work by Craig Dreeszen—help distinguish between different functions with recommended steps and methods for each type, or should each community and circumstance dictate a unique planning approach?
- Many players in the cultural sector, and cultural planners on the local level have stated goals to advance cultural equity, yet evidence indicates these goals are far from being met. While communities in the process of planning declare their intentions to make more resources available to under-represented communities and create conditions that are more inclusive, how can cultural plans and cultural planners help them achieve better results?
- A fixed definition of culture likely will remain elusive and context driven. How should communities and planners approach the topic? Are there ways to define culture that are practical and, at the same time stretch thinking to be inclusive of the people and practices within each community?
- Craig Dreeszen felt it was important for cultural plans to be adopted by municipal governments as addenda to or as central elements in their comprehensive plans. About half of those responding to both the 1994 and 2017 surveys indicated their plans had been adopted formally by their municipalities. What have been the benefits of these adoptions, if any? Is a close relationship with formal city planning important; why or why not? Alternatively, would cultural plans be more effective if generated as part of city comprehensive planning?
- Given the wide array of metrics used to evaluate the social and economic impacts of creative and cultural practices, and the inconsistencies of evaluations, is this an area planners and local cultural agencies should focus efforts to address?
- As a community or civic practice, is it important to further professionalize cultural planning and/or to promote training or certification for planners? As data point out in this report, cultural planning was the primary expertise of fewer than half the consultants engaged to conduct cultural plans. For a field with no formal standards and little-to-no professional training available, would there be benefits in development of a field of professional practice?