

Woodstock's Commitment to the Arts

A comprehensive plan to strengthen Woodstock's artistic legacy

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I. The Reality We Must Address

We are fortunate to have an extraordinary concentration of working artists living among us: internationally celebrated writers, filmmakers, musicians, visual artists, dancers, and theater makers. Serious practitioners of the arts who have chosen to make their lives here.

Yet we face a paradox: despite this wealth of talent, despite our historic role as a colony of the arts, and the creative legacy associated with this town, many Woodstock artists work in isolation without support or recognition. Some of our performance venues are dark too many nights of the year, some of our arts organizations lack infrastructure and municipal support, and some of our arts presenters face challenges in getting out the word about upcoming events.

Yet thousands of people visit Woodstock each year, and this town is home to hundreds of accomplished artists. We have the talent, the venues, and the potential audience needed to boost the impact of our arts activities significantly.

What we need are strategic, modest investments to leverage the cultural capital that already exists.

II. Four Initiatives to Support Arts Activity in Woodstock

Initiative 1: Comprehensive Arts Calendar, Newsletter and Communications Hub

Our first initiative would create a unified voice for Woodstock's cultural life through a monthly publication that promotes all of our arts offerings to the public and to the press.

This communications hub will be multi-platform - featured on our website and social media - and printed copies will be distributed in restaurants, bars, and shops throughout town.

In addition to event listings and spotlight features about artists and venues, the newsletter will also promote available studio space rentals, performance slots, discount tickets, and volunteer opportunities with arts organizations. It will demystify the booking process for local venues, and make arts participation more accessible to everyone.

The town will also use this newsletter to actively promote our cultural activities to local and regional press, in order to amplify the efforts of individual artists and organizations.

Initiative 2: Annual Woodstock Arts Festival

The Town Board would organize and facilitate a two-weekend celebration of the creatives and arts venues within our community.

The festival would feature a marathon of music, poetry, and theater performances in our established venues, alongside studio tours that connect the public with visual artists in their working spaces. We'll feature pop-up performances in unexpected locations around town, as well as film screenings, literary readings, spoken word and dance performances.

The festival will be participatory, accessible and joyful by design.

Our goal is to create an annual pilgrimage for arts lovers throughout the region, while building artistic enthusiasm and cohesion among our residents, and celebrating the creativity that makes Woodstock unique.

The town government would help promote and organize the festival, and provide coordination and support to make it sustainable and successful. We would also work with local businesses and the chamber of commerce to encourage business sponsorship of the festival.

Initiative 3: Woodstock Arts Series: Year-Round Curated Programming

To maintain cultural momentum throughout the year, we would establish a monthly event series that rotates among arts venues in town: performances, exhibitions, screenings, open mics and readings that will happen year-round.

The town's role would be to coordinate, promote, and spotlight key events at town venues on a monthly basis, with a strategic focus on filling venues on nights and hours that are currently dark.

By rotating among diverse venues and genres, we would aim to ensure broad community engagement, create a consistent cultural rhythm and build regular attendance habits.

Initiative 4: Professional Development and Skills Training

We would launch a lecture and workshop series featuring a rotating roster of experts from Woodstock and surrounding areas, who can offer practical skills training for arts professionals in grant writing, marketing, contract negotiation, budgeting, and other practices that can improve career longevity. The goals of this initiative would be to help artists sustain their work financially, and to strengthen the retention of creative talent in our community.

III. How the Town Can Facilitate Creative Success

The town government can provide active permitting assistance, help artists and organizations navigate government processes and ease the burden on creatives who may be unfamiliar with municipal bureaucracy.

We would also actively seek funding for cultural programs on behalf of our town, via grants from the New York State Council on the Arts, Ulster County Arts Council and Arts Mid-Hudson, as well as from private foundations that support civic arts programming.

We would also encourage and facilitate business sponsorships for arts and arts education programs. Our newsletter would actively solicit and highlight examples of businesses that support cultural activities.

None of these initiatives will entail significant expenditures by the town, but the immediate benefits of these initiatives will include increased visibility for arts programs, greater event attendance at venues venues, boosted economic activity and stronger community cohesion.

IV. Looking Ahead

Further down the road, we would aim to explore exciting possibilities that include commissioning public works of art and offering small grants and residencies to artists.

The town would actively seek funding sources for both near-term and future arts initiatives from county and state grants as well as private foundations and corporate sponsors.

We would commit to measuring impact and adapting arts initiatives based on community feedback. Our initial rollout of these initiatives would begin in the spring, with a phased approach that allows us to build on success.

The aim of these proposed initiatives is to preserve the creative legacy of Woodstock, and to allow it the infrastructure to grow and thrive.