

## Chapter 14 Arts + Culture Element

### Introduction

The arts and cultural activities are valuable tools for accomplishing larger community goals including economic vitality, quality education, and community design. Investment in the arts is an investment in making Gig Harbor a better place to live and work.

This Arts + Culture Element identifies ways in which the City's goals and aspirations can be realized through inclusion of arts and culture among other considerations in comprehensive planning.<sup>1</sup> The vision for the City's arts and cultural future is expressed here, identifying relationships with other City policy, and presenting specific policies and strategies the City may pursue to realize desired outcomes.

This element also recognizes the essential nature of arts and cultural activities as ways to express, honor, and educate residents about the past, from the community's early formation to narratives rooted in native culture and pre-history.

### Using this Element

The City of Gig Harbor hopes to realize the expansive potential of local arts and culture, addressing the community's needs for artistic involvement and expression and recognizing how powerful the arts can be in achieving multiple community aspirations. This element serves multiple roles and multiple audiences, seeking to:

- Clarify City policy related to arts and culture;
- Guide decision-making and future investments by other City departments, the Gig Harbor Arts Commission and other local groups and organizations;
- Identify complementary policies and community initiatives including land use, community design, transportation, economic development, parks and recreation, and capital facilities.

This element is organized to provide a brief introduction to arts and cultural advocacy in Gig Harbor and a summary of associated benefits, followed by a three-part listing of related policy. The policy is categorized and expressed from broad-brush and aspirational ("goals"), to more topical and directive ("policies"). Readers may note the flexibility of this approach as providing flexibility for implementation, where aspirational objectives are supplied to guide – rather than attempt to anticipate and direct – ever-evolving behavioral patterns and activity needs. This approach is dynamic, benefitting from regular review and coordination and updating with the rest of the comprehensive plan.

### History

Arts and cultural activities have long played an important role in establishing Gig Harbor's visual identity and pride of place. But prior to 2001, there were no city-sponsored cultural art

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<sup>1</sup> Considerations regarding the Arts in this element to include "visual art, music, theater, dance, poetry and prose, film and other creative endeavors...", per 2018 Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan amendment application.

grants or monies for public art. In 1999, the idea for a memorial celebrating Gig Harbor's maritime history spurred formation of a group that championed the installation of such a feature and later became the City's first Gig Harbor Arts Commission (GHAC) in 2001.<sup>2</sup> Since then, the GHAC has helped lead and support a wide range of arts and cultural activities including art fairs, festivals, concerts, theatrical and dance performances, workshops and lectures – all helping draw tourists to Gig Harbor and boosting local revenues. In addition, the GHAC has led the commission of numerous artworks in the city, including several important installations in City Hall and sculptures at the Bogue Viewing Platform, Maritime Pier and in Ancich Park.

Gig Harbor incorporated arts-related policy in its 2012 comprehensive plan's parks and recreation element. In February 2018, City Council approved a work plan including the goal to create a separate and distinct arts and culture element for the Gig Harbor Comprehensive Plan. By this, the City set a course to more effectively coordinate its resources with arts and cultural activities, boosting the city's unique position in the region and helping realize the many of the community's long-term goals.

The 2018 work plan also led to the creation of a Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), which reviewed numerous other regional and state arts and culture plans, reports and economic studies. Among benefits seen in their research findings, the CAC noted numerous outcomes applicable to in Gig Harbor and its goals, including:

- Arts, culture and creativity contribute to the physical, mental, social, and economic well-being of communities;
- Arts and culture nurture creative thought and expression and encourage an exchange of ideas among citizens;
- The arts provide tools for accomplishing larger community goals such as economic vitality, quality education and community planning and design;
- The arts help strengthen the cultural fabric of communities and enrich the lives and spirits of residents;
- Arts and culture activities contribute to local prosperity by providing employment, attracting out of town visitors and boosting sales tax revenues;
- Arts and cultural programs can enhance the image of a community, thereby attracting new businesses and workers;

The CAC, with the help of the City's Tourism & Marketing Department, also created a widely-distributed and successful survey regarding arts and culture values in Gig Harbor. Findings from this questionnaire – reflecting responses from 915 community members – show strong support for the idea that arts and culture are essential in creating a healthy, vibrant and prosperous city.

These and other findings show that Gig Harbor residents understand and support the value of arts and culture as a means of strengthening the community and fostering economic growth.

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<sup>2</sup> The famed Fishermen's Memorial in Jerisich Park is a bronze statue by Russian artist Alexandre Safonov.

## The Gig Harbor Arts Commission

The Gig Harbor Arts Commission (GHAC) plays a vital role in local culture by supporting and promoting the arts and arts organizations. The Commission oversees the acquisition and placement of public art, fosters arts and cultural programs for the enrichment of citizens and visitors, encourages an environment for the success of working artists and strengthens new and existing arts organizations. The Arts Commission supports the following statements:

- The arts provide tools for accomplishing larger community goals such as economic vitality, quality education and community planning and design.
- Arts and culture are essential to the continuing growth and development of our community's economy, education, and quality of life. Support of the arts is an investment in making our community a better place to live.
- The arts help strengthen our cultural fabric and enrich the lives and spirits of our citizens.
- Arts and cultural programs are a powerful economic development tool in their ability to enhance Gig Harbor's image and thereby entice new businesses to locate here.
- The arts can be a source of civic pride and Gig Harbor is a place where citizens and visitors alike can be engaged and inspired.

## Goals & Policies

### Creative + Economic Vitality

*Acknowledging the important dynamic between creative enterprise and economic vitality.*

**Goal 14.1** Enhance the quality of life in Gig Harbor by creating an environment in which artistic and cultural activities flourish.

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### Related Policies

**14.1.1** Provide arts and cultural leadership for the city as advocates to the Mayor and Council for the development of arts and cultural activities for the benefit of its citizens.

**14.1.2** Collaborate with the Gig Harbor Tourism and Marketing Department and Pierce County Tourism to increase artistic, historic, and cultural tourism in Gig Harbor.

**14.1.3** Strengthen the operational capacity of the arts, heritage, and cultural community through the development of a city arts fund to support grants for artists/writers/performers and non-profit organizations that offer creative and cultural experiences.

**14.1.4** Keep current with community arts and culture needs and trends, shaping actions to be adaptive and relevant to changing conditions.

## **Public Arts + Community Design**

*Sponsoring functional anchors for pride of place that are unique to the community.*

**Goal 14.2** Strengthen and expand Gig Harbor's public art program to create visible landmarks and cultural points of reference to reinforce the harbor's identity, culture and character.

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### **Related Policies**

**14.2.1** Advocate for the development of creative public spaces; create a cohesive wayfinding and interpretive signage strategy, including the identification of unique city landmarks.

**14.2.2** Consider expansion of the Public Art Fund to acquire and manage works of public art through commissioned works, temporary works, direct purchases, and community projects;

**14.2.3** Advocate for the inclusion of quality public art in new construction projects.

**14.2.4** Manage the community's resources dedicated to arts and culture and provide tools to guide grant programs for the arts, protocols for accepting donated art, a framework for arts commissions, locational criteria for public art, and other needs as they may arise in Gig Harbor's evolving arts environment.

## **Education + Engagement**

*Supporting ways to engage citizens in lifelong arts- and culture-related learning opportunities.*

**Goal 14.3** Foster a unique, plentiful and learning-oriented arts and cultural environment.

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### **Related Policies**

**14.3.1** Demonstrate a commitment to quality arts education and life-long learning by advocating for comprehensive inclusion of the arts throughout our community.

**14.3.2** Foster partnerships between the city, the business community and arts and culture organizations to create and produce education and engagement opportunities for Gig Harbor citizens through the sponsorship of arts and cultural programming.

**14.3.3** Explore opportunities for the public to watch artists, conservators, and historic preservationists at work and to observe the creative process as well as participate in hands-on learning experiences.

## **Spaces + Places**

*Recognizing the need for space and facilities to foster culture activities.*

**Goal 14.4** Encourage the development of adequate, affordable and appropriate spaces for artistic and cultural activities for all.

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**Related Policies**

**14.4.1** Respond to the growing need for artistic and cultural facilities; identify short- and long-term facility needs and priorities.

**14.4.2** Encourage the development of venues suitable for cultural and artistic activities including visual and performing arts centers, marketplaces, performance and exhibition spaces and maker spaces.

**14.4.3** Advocate for current and future arts-related businesses, open studio spaces and live-work housing.

**Culture + Heritage**

*Understanding the past to guide plans for the future.*

**Goal 14.5** Identify, preserve, and advance the city’s cultural heritage and history.

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**Related Policies**

**14.5.1** Advocate for the preservation, interpretation, and adaptive reuse of historic and cultural sites in partnership with local entities devoted to preservation.

**14.5.2** Recognize the value of heritage and cultural arts to promote tourism for Gig Harbor using geographic and historic themes that complement other types of visitation and travel experiences.

**14.5.3** Support projects that use the arts as a vehicle for understanding and celebrating other cultures and Gig Harbor heritage.