

A REVIEW OF THE ARTS IN OUR PEER COMMUNITIES

How other cities in our region use investments in *Arts & Culture* to add new attractions, improve their local economies, enhance their quality of life, and encourage civic growth.

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Please note: *This document is a supporting appendix of our larger proposal to create sustaining funding for operations of the Gahanna Area Arts Council - to support our city's Creative Economy. This portion only identifies **how much** some of our peer-communities invest in their respective Local Arts Agencies, but does not address how those funds are used. This document is not a proposal (nor a suitable substitute), as the revenue examples listed are not tailored to Gahanna or our existing tax base. It does not suggest solutions; it serves only for comparison.*

An Introduction

The Arts in Gahanna, as Compared to our Peers

By now, it's no secret that, compared to our peers, Gahanna has some lost ground to make up for in the arena of Arts and Culture. While many Arts Councils established themselves following block grants in the 1970s, the Gahanna Area Arts Council began its formational work in 2016. That nearly 50-year gap leaves our community with some work to do.

Before 50 years ago, only 400 U.S. cities had Arts Councils, but during the last half-century more than 4,000 more have established and officially recognized dedicated agencies to help the Arts flourish in their communities. These Local Arts Agencies (LAAs) provide programs, services, and grants with the specific aim to strengthen their respective cities' creative economy, draw in new visitors, and make the Arts accessible to all their residents.¹

Recently, *Americans for the Arts*, the nation's leading non-profit organization for advancing the Arts in America, published *The 2018 Profile of Local Arts Agencies*, a 126-page study that outlines the current state of LAAs.² This profile shows budget trends, sources of revenues, policies, programs, partnerships, and the resulting impact to their respective communities, and — lucky for us — provides Gahanna with a clear road map of what next-steps are needed to help our city close the gap.

How Much Ground Do We Need to Make Up, Exactly?

Using aggregated data from *The 2018 Profile of Local Arts Agencies*, the Gahanna Area Arts Council has compiled a checklist of how our organization *currently* compares to the rest of the 4,500+ active Local Arts Agencies. On the following pages, please read that checklist, noting in checkboxes both where we measure up well and where we can do better.

¹ Americans for the Arts, *The 2018 Profile of Local Arts Agencies: A Detailed Report about the Local Arts Agency Field*, March 31, 2019 — https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2018_LocalArtsAgencyProfile_FullReport_REVISED.pdf

² Ibid.

Peer Communities LAA Programming³

- 85% of LAAs present their own cultural programming to the public.**
- 64% of LAAs operate at least one cultural facility.** 51% of LAAs manage or operate a public art program independent of a facility.
- 81% of LAAs anticipate that demand for their services will increase in the next two years.** This includes 27% who anticipate that it will significantly increase. 18% expect demand will stay about the same. Only 1% of LAAs expects demand for their services to decrease during the next two years.
- 84% of LAAs are able to provide direct financial support to artists in their communities.** The most common method that LAAs use to provide this financial support is by awarding grants.

Peer Communities LAA Governance Structure⁴

- Most LAAs define their primary service area as either a single city or town (35%).** Fewer LAAs define their primary service area as multiple counties (19%) or an area that includes multiple cities and/or towns but not defined by county borders (13%).
- More than one quarter of LAAs serve communities of 50,000 or fewer people (27%).** One half of LAAs serve a community that is home to between 50,000 and 500,000 (48%). Only 15% serve populations of 1 million or more.
- 70% of LAAs are private nonprofit organizations,** though most of these are still affiliated with local government. The remaining 30 percent are most often a fully integrated local government agency.
- 93% of LAAs are held accountable to a board of directors (93%).** Overall, these boards or have an average of 17 members.
- 84% of LAAs have at least one paid employee.** LAAs with paid staff that serve a community of fewer than 100,000 people have, on average, 2 full-time paid positions, 3 part-time paid positions, and four seasonal positions. Only 8% of LAAs are able to operate with their board and volunteers alone.

³ Americans for the Arts, *The 2018 Profile of Local Arts Agencies: A Detailed Report about the Local Arts Agency Field*, March 31, 2019 — https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2018_LocalArtsAgencyProfile_FullReport_REVISED.pdf

⁴ Ibid.

*Peer Communities LAA Government Affiliation*⁵

- The largest source of funding for most LAAs is local government support (29%),** followed by personal donations, private sector contributions, and earned revenue.
- LAAs are instrumental in the establishment of local option taxes** — designated tax revenues that are used to fund arts and culture locally. 36% of LAAs report that their community has a local option tax from which funds are used directly to support the Arts and culture.
- 97% of LAAs are involved in using the Arts to address community development topics,** either through their own programming or through the programming of a grantee. Most commonly these are topics related to tourism (74%), youth development and education (71%), economic development (68%), history, tradition, and heritage (68%), and community development (65%).
- 47% of LAAs report that the Arts have been integrated into comprehensive community-wide planning efforts.** This could include a city's master plan or a community foundation's regional needs assessment.
- 24% of LAAs report that their community has completed (or updated) a community cultural plan within the past five years.** Local arts agencies usually play a leadership role in community-wide cultural planning efforts.
- 15% of LAAs report that a new cultural district is currently under development.** Currently, only 9% of cities with a LAA have a cultural district (sometimes called an arts & entertainment district).

Let's Get Specific.

It's evident from the *Americans for the Arts* aggregated survey data that the local governments of many cities the size of Gahanna invest directly in their LAAs as part of their strategy to increase tourism, grow economic development, build on their heritage and historical traditions, and foster community cohesion. But it's hard to tell from the survey alone precisely how much these cities are investing or what results individual communities have seen from their investments.

So, on the following pages, please read the detailed reports of some LAAs we've chosen to highlight because of their proximity and population. None is an exact demographic match (to each other, nor to Gahanna), but we hope that by presenting an extended array of communities, we can display the full range of what we might expect if Gahanna's City Council joins the 4,500+ communities that currently invest in their Local Arts Agency.

⁵ Americans for the Arts, *The 2018 Profile of Local Arts Agencies: A Detailed Report about the Local Arts Agency Field*, March 31, 2019 — https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2018_LocalArtsAgencyProfile_FullReport_REVISED.pdf

Canton, Ohio

Population ⁶ :	70,909 people — 2730.18 people/mi ²
Location:	Stark County, approximately 20 mi south of Akron, 60 mi south of Cleveland
Local Arts Agency:	Arts in Stark, est. 1970 as the Canton Cultural Center for the Arts
LAA Operating Budget ⁷ :	\$3,226,534
City Contribution ⁸ :	\$74,736
Arts District:	Canton Arts District, est. 2009

The City of Canton might be known all over the country as the home of the Pro Football Hall of Fame, but that tourist destination exists on the outskirts of town and until recently was actually drawing from the city's resources, not adding to them, and leaving the downtown corridor in a state of disrepair. According to Mayor William J. Healy, it is the Arts, not recreation and sports, that has led to the turnaround of their community⁹ —

*The Arts District adds another dimension to the quality of our downtown area, offering one more reason for people to visit the city. **It encourages people to stay downtown for longer periods of time, benefiting the surrounding restaurants and businesses.** These activities also change the mistaken perception that downtown Canton is unsafe and an undesirable place to be, and encourages young people to take an interest in their community.*

*Arts-rich cities have thriving entertainment districts, and they tend to become destination points for tourism and regional commerce. **Businesses are more likely to locate in areas that have points of interest built around the Arts.***

*The Canton Arts District and many other cities examined in this thesis are encouraging examples of what can happen when an Arts-based community development strategy is put in place. **Tourism increases, jobs are created, and communities are reinvigorated.***"

⁶ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

⁷ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Tricia Ostertag, *Using The Arts For Economic Development: A Case Study Of The Canton Arts District* (2011), p. 19-20 — etd.ohiolink.edu/!etd.send_file?accession=akron1302545989

Carmel, Indiana

Population ¹⁰ :	92,198 people — 1970.28 people/mi ²
Location:	Suburb due north of Indianapolis, along the outerbelt
Local Arts Agency:	N/A - Block grants awarded via the city's general revenue fund
City Contribution ¹¹ :	\$1,336,060 (2019)
Arts District:	Carmel Arts and Design District, est. 2004 (<i>announced 2003</i>)

Carmel has always had a culture of art, but like most midwestern cities, until the early 90s there had been no concerted effort to grow the Arts community in an organized fashion. That began to change when then-Mayor Ted Johnson gathered interest for the city's first Arts Council¹², and began to really take off in 2003 when then-Mayor Jim Brainard announced a dedicated Arts District. Read this excerpt from the founding press release¹³ —

“This exciting arts initiative will change the future of arts in Carmel,” said Mayor Jim Brainard. “I see this as another positive step toward the revitalization of the Old Town area.” Several cities across the country have had positive economic development success with creating designated arts districts. From coast to coast, communities are realizing the positive economic and social benefits generated by the arts industry.

Recent figures indicate that the Indianapolis non-profit arts industry spending is about \$300 million. “Imagine what the economic impact that a combination of retail and arts organizations located in a central geographic area will have for the Old Town area,” said Brainard.

Today, we don't have to imagine, because the City of Carmel is thriving. The Arts and Design District is home to 11 galleries, along with many more boutique shops and restaurants. **The area is bristling with live music, comedy nights, and vibrant streetscapes.** Developers are building a mix of residential and retail units, the majority of which will be sold to the inhabiting business owners so they might have a stake in the District.¹⁴ And as a result, people are flocking. Carmel's population continues to grow 1.9% year-over-year, a figure outpaced by their jobs (up 2.5% annually), median incomes (up 2.5% annually), and property values (up 4.5% annually).¹⁵

¹⁰ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

¹¹ City of Carmel — <http://www.carmel.in.gov/Home/Components/News/News/3409/25>

¹² Ficara, Doreen, *The Carmel Arts Council 20th Anniversary: Supporting the Arts*. (R. Carter, Ed.). Indianapolis, IN — IBJ Publishing.

¹³ Heck, Nancy, City of Carmel, *Arts & Design District in Carmel Announced by Mayor Brainard*, (Press Release, November 8, 2003) —

¹⁴ Carmel Arts and Design District — <http://www.carmelartsanddesign.com/pressmedia/pressmedia.html>

¹⁵ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/carmelcityindiana>

Columbus, Indiana

Population ¹⁶ :	47,143 people — 1,712.6 people/mi ²
Location:	Bartholomew County, about 40 mi south of Indianapolis
Local Arts Agency:	Columbus Area Arts Council, est. 1972 as the Driftwood Valley Arts Council
LAA Operating Budget ¹⁷ :	\$461,910
City Contribution ¹⁸ :	\$159,283
Arts District:	Downtown Columbus Arts & Entertainment District, est. 2002

Columbus, Indiana is home to a modern Arts revolution. Its Arts and Entertainment District houses one of the most significant collections of modern architecture, art, and design in the world, consisting of **more than 80 buildings built by prominent architects and 360 more pieces of public art** crafted by internationally celebrated creators. Fueled by the civic-minded industrialist J. Irwin Miller, the city's architectural explosion has attracted some of the world's most notable modern master architects including I.M. Pei, Cesar Pelli, Harry Weese, Gunnar Birkerts, and Eero Saarinen.¹⁹

In Columbus, the Arts build on the rich history of the city itself. In the Arts and Entertainment District, contemporary works can be found between is a unique blend of historic structures, including buildings on the National Register of Historic Places, seven National Historic Landmarks; indoor and outdoor public parks that are creatively designed, unique and accessible; art and design galleries and cultural tours.²⁰

And these buildings do more than look pretty. The most significant architectural investments have been made in schools, libraries, parks, civic amenities, health care facilities, and affordable housing.²¹ This remarkable design heritage is an enduring reflection of Columbus' commitment to creative excellence, and provides us an ideal environment to study how **the arts can improve people's lives and make communities stronger**.

¹⁶ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

¹⁷ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Indiana Arts Commission — <https://www.in.gov/arts/2763.htm>

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Exhibit Columbus — <https://exhibitcolumbus.org/>

Cumberland, Maryland

Population ²² :	19,707 people (71,655 people in the county) — 1,937.62 people/mi ²
Location:	Allegany County, between the Pennsylvania and West Virginia borders
Local Arts Agency:	Allegany County Arts Council, est. 1975.
LAA Operating Budget ²³ :	\$300,964
City Contribution ²⁴ :	\$175,537
Arts District:	Downtown Cumberland Arts & Entertainment District, est. 2002

In 2009, the Cumberland Arts & Entertainment District was presented with the inaugural Outstanding Achievement Award by the Maryland Department of Commerce, in recognition of Cumberland’s success in creating innovative strategies that filled downtown vacancies, drew out-of-state artists to the District, and rehabilitated abandoned buildings²⁵ Read this excerpt from Governor Martin O’Malley’s presenting remarks —

*Under the leadership of the Allegany Arts Council, Cumberland has **harnessed the power of the arts** to attract businesses, encourage economic development and foster civic pride. This district is a model for Arts and Entertainment District programs. The promotion of artists and arts events, the strengthening of local cultural enterprises and active community partnerships has resulted in job opportunities and significant contributions to Maryland’s economy.*

And read also this quote from Allegany Arts Council Director Andrew L. Vick’s acceptance speech —

*The arts have been one of the **key elements of the revitalization** of downtown Cumberland. Even in challenging financial times, an investment in the **arts pays major dividends.***

Through the market recession, Cumberland continued to invest in the Arts, and it paid off. Estimated attendance at arts and cultural events increased from 16,600 in 2014 to 35,700 in 2015 and 45,190 in 2016, raising the regional tourism profile of the Downtown Cumberland Arts & Entertainment District and increasing foot traffic to local businesses.

²² United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

²³ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Maryland State Arts Council, *Cumberland Tapped for Outstanding Achievement Award* [Press release, March 25, 2009] — <https://www.msac.org/press-release/cumberland-tapped-inaugural-arts-entertainment-outstanding-achievement-award>

Dublin, Ohio

Population ²⁶ :	47,619 people — 1303.32 people/mi ²
Location:	Suburb due northwest of Columbus, along the outerbelt
Local Arts Agency:	Dublin Arts Council, est. 1983 as an ad hoc committee
LAA Operating Budget ²⁷ :	\$1,080,082
City Contribution ²⁸ :	\$891,864
Arts District:	Dublin Art in Public Places (<i>a program, not a district</i>), est. 1988

The Dublin Arts Council is one of the most respected suburban Local Arts Agencies in the country and is often referenced as a gold standard for what the Arts can do for a community. It administers year-round programs like its visual arts exhibits, a summer concert series, and contemporary dance projects, but is renowned mostly for its two most award-winning endeavors — the *Art in Public Places* Program and the Dublin Arts Center.

Dublin's *Art in Public Places* Program began in 1988 and contains more than 70 pieces of public art — currently valued at \$3.2 million²⁹. The program **distinguishes the City of Dublin, enhancing the quality of life for Dublin's residents, and strengthening the city as a destination for visitors.**

In addition to the annual contribution the City of Dublin makes toward the Dublin Arts Council's operating budget (identified above), the City also owns the facilities of the The Dublin Arts Center, which they lease to the Arts Council. Located on Riverside Drive, the center contains several multi-purpose classrooms, darkroom, ceramics studio, an Arts-specific library, two gallery spaces, and conference room to meet community needs.

But while Dublin is certainly to be commended for its commitment to the Arts, **there are other opportunities for Gahanna to capture entire markets of regional Arts activities** that Dublin has yet to pursue. For example, while the *Arts in Public Places* program integrates Art into many of their neighborhoods, it does not have a unified, specific Arts District. And while the Dublin Arts Center offers high quality visual-art programs, it does not contain any rehearsal, auditorium, or performance spaces for musicians, dancers, or theatre groups.

²⁶ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

²⁷ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Dublin Arts Council — <https://dublinarts.org/visual-arts/publicart/>

Piqua, Ohio

Population ³⁰ :	20,987 people — 1810.09 people/mi ²
Location:	Miami County, 27 miles North of Dayton
Local Arts Agency:	Piqua Arts Council, est. 1991
LAA Operating Budget ³¹ :	\$121,178
City Contribution ³² :	\$57,493
Arts District:	N/A

The Piqua Arts Council does a great job of getting art off the walls, out of galleries, and into their community. Each year, they throw an *Arts and Ales* festival, a *Music in the Park* concert series, and even *Dancing with the Piqua Stars*. They focus on education efforts, holding frequent artist workshops, and partnering with schools to build high quality creative classroom programs for every grade level.

In many ways, the origins of their organization (and the challenges in their community) mirror our own —

In 1990, a group of Piqua citizens began discussing the need for an organized group to sponsor and promote the arts ... [resulting in] the formation of a new committee of the Piqua Area Chamber of Commerce in January of 1991... the ‘Piqua Arts and Humanities Council’.

During its first few years, the Council set the pattern for its role in the community by sponsoring and creating a diverse and exciting schedule of activities. The Council provided theater training for junior high students, the Music in the Park series ... and an annual art exhibit that serves all age levels. In 1997 [the Council] moved out from under the Chamber of Commerce to become an independent arts organization.

*The Council has followed a long and positive tradition of arts and music organizations in Piqua. **But the Council has features that separate it from its predecessors ... most importantly longevity.** The average length of time for any ... arts group in Piqua has been about three years. But the Council,*

³⁰ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

³¹ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

³² Ibid.

[because it is an independent 501(c)(3)] has exceeded that many times over as an active and vibrant organization.³³

³³ Piqua Arts Council — <http://www.piquaartscouncil.org/who-we-are.html>

Portsmouth, Ohio

Population ³⁴ :	20,171 people — 1894.86 people/mi ²
Location:	Scioto County, on the bank of the Ohio River
Local Arts Agency:	Portsmouth Area Arts Council, est. 1970
LAA Operating Budget ³⁵ :	\$136,655
City Contribution ³⁶ :	\$58,961
Arts District:	N/A

Though Portsmouth has a high poverty rate (35.1%) and low median household income (\$27,943)³⁷ it has a very **prolific cultural impact** in the region. Read this list of assets compiled by their Chamber of Commerce³⁸ —

*The **Southern Ohio Museum & Cultural Center** ... houses two permanent installations ... three other galleries, and also offers a 100-seat theatre ... reading room ... classroom ... [and] off-site circus arts studio.*

*The **Vern Riffe Performing Arts Center** is a 102,000 square foot state-of-the-art facility ... [with a] theater that seats 1139 people and features full theatrical stage lighting and sound.*

*The **Portsmouth Wind Symphony** [consists of] community members ranging in age from local high school students to retirees ... The concert season typically includes a Fall Concert, a traditional Christmas Concert, a Spring "Pops" Concert, [and] on July 4th, an outdoor concert in downtown Portsmouth.*

*The **Southern Ohio Light Opera** [features] exciting guest artists, favorite local talents, magnificent scenery, stunning costumes, elegant dancing and a thrilling full orchestra [at] its annual operetta(s).*

In addition, they reference **multiple community theater programs** for various participant groups, as well as the Bonneyfiddle Arts Center, an additional, members-only cultural center, educational facility and art gallery.

³⁴ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

³⁵ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ United States Cescus Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/sciotocountyohio,portsmouthcityohio/PST045218>

³⁸ Portsmouth Area Chamber of Commerce — <https://www.portsmouth.org/arts.html>

Asheville, North Carolina

Population ³⁹ :	91,902 people — 2,030.71 people/mi ²
Location:	Western North Carolina, in the Blue Ridge Mountains
Local Arts Agency:	Asheville Area Arts Council, est. 1952 as the Asheville Civic Arts Council
LAA Operating Budget ⁴⁰ :	\$357,502
City Contribution ⁴¹ :	\$113,648
Arts District:	The River Arts District, est. 1993

Asheville is a large town that, specifically because of its thriving Cultural Arts Scene, is rapidly turning into a small city. Over recent years, it has been optimistically dubbed “Beer City,” “Craft City,” “Climate City,” “Foodtopia,” and most charmingly “**the Paris of the South.**” Both travel-guide Lonely Planet and Forbes have designated it as a must-visit destination, and in 2018, Southern Methodist University named it one of the Most Vibrant Arts Communities in America. Read this recent article from Atlanta culture magazine, *Burnaway*⁴² —

*If one measure of vibrancy is growth, well, **there’s no question that the city’s visual arts sector is developing.** Three crucial arts institutions are currently undergoing major expansions/renovations. The Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center is consolidating its two downtown galleries into a larger single space on College Stt ... The recently opened Momentum Gallery is relocating to a copious 15,000 square foot new space on Broadway, making it one of the largest private gallery spaces in North Carolina. And the Asheville Art Museum is moving into the last stages of a \$24-million renovation... In the River Arts District, the banks of the French Broad are now dotted with restaurants, bars, and the sleek New Belgium brewery, alongside dozens of studios with their doors flirtatiously open to passersby.*

And the growth is not slowing down. In just a one-mile stretch of their River Arts District, where **more than 200 artists occupy some 22 buildings**, an additional 10 restaurants, a couple more breweries and retail shops, and about 368 more apartments are in the works.⁴³

³⁹ United States Census Bureau — <https://www.census.gov/>

⁴⁰ Internal Revenue Service Tax Filings Form 990 — <https://www.irs.gov/>

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Stoll, Diana C., “How Did Asheville Make the List of 40 Most Vibrant Arts Communities in America?”, *Burnaway*, Aug 29, 2018 — <https://burnaway.org/how-did-asheville-make-list-40-most-vibrant-arts-communities/>

⁴³ Boykin, Sam, “How the River Arts District accelerates Asheville’s appeal”, *Business North Carolina*, September 2017 — <https://businessnc.com/how-the-river-arts-district-accelerates-ashevilles-appeal/>

First Thing's First

It's clear from the aggregated data that most communities with a Local Arts Agency invest public money directly into that LAA. And it's clear from the highlighted exemplars that city governments who do so often see an *astounding* return on their investment. But before Gahanna chooses whether *we* should invest in the Arts as a community development strategy, it's important to ask some important questions:

1. Is using *public* money the best way to invest in the Arts?
2. Is the fact that *other* communities invest enough reason for us to do so, too?
3. And is it *really* the job of the government to provide Arts and Culture for its residents?

Luckily, our Government — at every level above our local municipality — provides us guidance:

At the **County level**, the Franklin County Commissioners are actively multiplying their investment in the Greater Columbus Arts Council. Just read this excerpt from an Oct. 22, 2019 *Columbus Dispatch* article⁴⁴ —

*Franklin County commissioners approved a **\$2 million** contract with the Greater Columbus Arts Council to fund artists and related organizations and facilities ... empowering the nonprofit council to give out grants directly rather than seeking county approval for each project.*

*The county has already given \$1 million to the council this year, bringing its total allocation with Tuesday's resolution to **\$3 million**. The commissioners intend to provide **\$4 million** next year.*

At the **State level**, the Ohio General Assembly is also expanding its support for the Arts. For example, in Ohio's 2020-2021 Biennial Budget, the Assembly allocated \$34,451,359 to the Ohio Arts Council — a 17.55% increase from 2018-2019.⁴⁵ Policy guidance even comes from Ohio Revised Code itself⁴⁶ —

Recognizing this state's responsibility to foster culture and the Arts and to encourage the development of artists and craftspersons, the general assembly declares it a policy of this state that a portion of the money to be spent by state agencies on the construction or renovation of public buildings be spent on the acquisition of works of art ... which **quality works of art ... [and] professional artists are to be recognized.**

⁴⁴ Kovac, Marc, *The Columbus Dispatch*, "Arts Funding, Jail Food Top County Commissioners Agenda" — <https://www.dispatch.com/news/20191022/arts-funding-jail-food-top-county-commissioners-agenda>

⁴⁵ Ohio Arts Council, *Ohio Arts Council Budget History 1966-2019* (courtesy Justin Nigro, Ohio Arts Council, 10/22/2019) — oac.ohio.gov

⁴⁶ Ohio Revised Code, 3379.10, "Percent for Arts Program"

And at the **Federal level**, Lawmakers on both sides of the aisle are similarly appropriating more funds for the Arts.⁴⁷ Just take a look at the recent history of appropriations for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA):

<i>Year</i>	<i>National Endowment for the Arts Appropriations⁴⁸</i>
2014	\$146,021,000
2015	\$146,021,000
2016	\$147,949,000
2017	\$149,849,000
2018	\$152,849,000
2019	\$155,000,000

Looking at this data, one might be surprised to see that, in fact, conservative legislatures typically *increase* Federal spending for the Arts as compared to their liberal colleagues.⁴⁹ But as former Governor of Arkansas (and 2016 Presidential Candidate) Mike Huckabee wrote in an op-ed, the conservative case for the Arts is quite clear⁵⁰ —

*To some, it may seem as though the \$147.9 million allocated to the NEA in fiscal year 2016 is money to be saved. But to someone such as me — for whom an early interest in music and the arts became a lifeline to academic success — **this money is not expendable, extracurricular or extraneous. It is essential.***

*[And] if the decision is to be made on purely economic grounds, consider ... [that] **the Arts are a \$730 billion industry**, representing 4.2 percent of our gross domestic product — more than transportation, tourism, and agriculture. The nonprofit side of the arts alone generates \$135 billion in economic activity.*

With this, the answers to our questions are just as clear, too —

In many of our peer communities, and at every level of our own government above Gahanna City Hall, representatives have consistently concluded that they have a responsibility — not just by individual preference of their person, but as an imperative duty of the office — to allocate tax dollars specifically for supporting Arts and Culture through their respective Arts agencies.

⁴⁷ The National Endowment for the Arts — <https://www.arts.gov/>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ 2019 Congressional Arts Handbook, https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/2019%20Handbook%20--ALL_0.pdf

⁵⁰ Huckabee, Mike, *The Washington Post*, “A Conservative Plea for the National Endowment for the Arts”, March 22, 2017 — <http://wapo.st/2MMV5IP>

Now, one question remains — will we join them? Or will we fall further behind?