

14 Arts + Culture

14.1 Introduction

The arts and cultural activities are essential 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, work, and visit.

This element also recognizes the role of the arts, as well as creative cultural, historical, and educational engagement in creating and preserving the quality of life that has drawn people to Gig Harbor. Within the context of the City of Gig Harbor's Comprehensive Plan; culture, alongside the arts, refers to the shared values, beliefs, customs, traditions, and creative expressions of the city while also promoting diversity and inclusivity. Culture encompasses the unique character and identity of Gig Harbor, as shaped by its history, its demographics and community spirit.

The Arts and Culture element includes supporting all aspects of community that contribute to a rich and vibrant quality of life:

- the visual arts (e.g., paintings, sculptures, photography)
- the performing arts (e.g., music, dance, theater)
- the literary arts (e.g., poetry, fiction, journalism)
- ancestral and folk craft traditions
- cultural heritage and history
- community events and festivals
- community spirit (building connections, social cohesion, and a sense of belonging among residents)
- recognizing the importance of preserving and celebrating local culinary traditions, supporting local food systems, and fostering a vibrant food culture that contributes to the community's character and quality of life
- preserving any element of language and dialect unique to Gig Harbor.

Of particular interest is to incorporate a recognition of the history of the city and area into local arts and culture. The city's maritime history, which continues even today, is important to acknowledge and celebrate as a basis for the development of the historical downtown.

We also acknowledge that we are located on the traditional homelands of the Puyallup Tribe, who have lived on and cared for these lands since time immemorial and continue to do so today. Local arts and culture in Gig Harbor must appropriately and respectfully elevate these stories to assist in whatever way possible to support this community.

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

14.2 Using this Element

The City of Gig Harbor hopes to explore 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 audiences, seeking to:

- Clarify city policy related to the 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.

Arts and culture are more than just enjoyable activities - they are vital elements of what makes Gig Harbor special. This element of Gig Harbor's Comprehensive Plan focuses on how we can use the arts and culture to make our city a better place for everyone:

- **Creativity + Economic Vitality:** Support creative businesses, individuals and initiatives that bring jobs, innovation, and vibrancy to our city. Arts and culture are not just nice to have - they can be a big part of what makes Gig Harbor unique and economically strong.
- **Public Art + Community Design:** Sponsor public art, art that speaks to Gig Harbor's identity – with sculptures, murals, and installations. Great design and art in public spaces help build pride and a sense of belonging among residents and it helps to have Gig Harbor stand out. It is like a friendly nod from our town, saying, "This is Gig Harbor!"
- **Education + Engagement:** We believe in lifelong learning and want to support opportunities for everyone to engage with the arts and other cultural endeavors. Whether it is through classes in public schools, workshops, or community events, we want to foster a culture where learning and participation in the arts and culture are valued.
- **Spaces + Places:** Support the formation and maintenance of welcoming spaces for cultural and artistic activities, events, and connections that bring us together. Spaces and places that would help our cultural scene thrive, from maker spaces to performance venues to art galleries.
- **Culture + Heritage:** Our past shapes our future. We will work to preserve and share our city's history, traditions, and cultural legacy; while integrating it into our development plans. These activities help to ensure a strong sense of roots and community.
- **Inclusivity:** Ensure that the arts and cultural initiatives are accessible, representative, and inclusive of diverse peoples, perspectives, ages, and abilities.

14.3 History

The arts and cultural activities have long played an important role in establishing Gig Harbor's visual identity and pride of place. In 1999, the idea for a memorial celebrating Gig Harbor's maritime history spurred the 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. 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 to draw tourists to Gig Harbor and boosting local revenues. In addition, the GHAC has led to the commission of numerous artworks in the city, including several important installations at 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, the 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.

The 2018 work plan also has 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. The CAC's research identified the following goals and potential outcomes applicable to Gig Harbor 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 residents;
- 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 cultural 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 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.

14.4 The Gig Harbor Arts Commission

The Gig Harbor Arts Commission (GHAC) plays a pivotal role in local culture by supporting and promoting the arts and arts organizations. The commission, established under GHMC [2.49.030](#), oversees the acquisition and placement of public art, fosters arts and cultural programs for the enrichment of residents 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 continued 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 residents.
- 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 residents and visitors alike can be engaged and inspired.

14.5 Goals and Policies

- ▶ **AC-1 Create an environment for artistic and cultural activities to flourish to benefit local quality of life.**
 - AC-1.1 Provide leadership in the arts and culture by advocating for the development of various arts and cultural activities that benefit residents.
 - AC-1.2 Collaborate with the city's Direct Marketing Organization and Pierce County Tourism to enhance local artistic, historic, and cultural tourism.
 - AC-1.3 Partner with local Tribal Nations in the promotion of traditional and contemporary Indigenous arts, ensuring that these cultural expressions are both visible and celebrated throughout our public spaces.
 - AC-1.4 Establish a city arts fund to provide grants for artists, writers, performers, and nonprofit organizations offering creative and cultural experiences in the community.
 - AC-1.5 Monitor needs and trends in community arts and culture to keep policies and programs relevant and up to date.
- ▶ **AC-2 Maintain and enhance the city's public art program to create visible landmarks and cultural points of reference that reinforce local identities, cultures, and character.**
 - AC-2.1 Advocate for creative public spaces such as display areas, performance spaces, and other public venues to serve residents and visitors.
 - AC-2.2 Create a cohesive wayfinding and interpretive signage strategy and incorporate unique city landmarks into this system.
 - AC-2.3 Explore expanding the Public Art Fund to acquire and manage public art such as commissioned works, temporary installations, direct purchases, and community projects.
 - AC-2.4 Encourage the integration of high-quality public art into new development projects.
 - AC-2.5 Provide oversight and support for community resources dedicated to arts and culture.
 - AC-2.6 Develop selection criteria for public art that addresses the physical context and provides opportunities for local artists to participate.
- ▶ **AC-3 Foster an arts and cultural environment that sparks curiosity and invites exploration by residents and visitors.**
 - AC-3.1 Support quality arts education, including schools and the community college, as well and foster life-long learning to integrate the arts into the community.

AC-3.2 Foster partnerships between the city, the business community, and arts and culture organizations to support arts and cultural programming.

AC-3.3 Pursue opportunities for public engagement with artists, conservators, and historic preservationists to allow the community to observe and learn from their work.

► **AC-4 Encourage adequate, affordable, and appropriate spaces for artistic and cultural activities for all.**

AC-4.1 Identify short- and long-term arts and cultural facility needs and priorities to address these needs.

AC-4.2 Encourage new venues for different cultural and artistic activities, such as visual and performing arts centers, marketplaces, performance and exhibition spaces, and maker spaces.

AC-4.3 Advocate for and incubate, where possible, current and future arts-related businesses and support facilities such as open studio spaces, maker spaces, and live-work housing.

► **AC-5 Identify, preserve, and advance cultural heritage and history.**

AC-5.1 Preserve and reuse historic and cultural sites in partnership with local entities devoted to preservation.

AC-5.2 Encourage historical interpretation to be integrated with adaptive reuse of historical and cultural sites.

AC-5.3 Promote tourism through geographical, cultural, and historic themes that complement other strategies.

AC-5.4 Support cultural interpretation and learning through art.