



*Chapter 9*

**ARTS AND CULTURE**

# Overview of Chapter

---

Thousand Oaks offers a rich local arts community and has become a regional destination for arts, culture, and entertainment opportunities. The City is home to an abundant and diverse collection of cultural assets including businesses, nonprofit organizations, venues, people, and cultural heritage places. Residents work as independent artists and performers, musicians, designers, tech workers, writers, among others. Current cultural participation by residents includes attending performances at the Civic Arts Plaza's Bank of America Performing Arts Center (BAPAC) or other community theatre spaces, viewing exhibits at various galleries, small informal events at local restaurants, citywide events, and activities, as well as access to other outside events in neighboring cities. The Thousand Oaks Grant Brimhall Library is one of the central points for cultural participation in the community and has significant arts and cultural offerings for a city the size of Thousand Oaks. Currently, many events are geared toward mature residents (over 40) or the very young (under 10). Thousand Oaks youth and young adults want opportunities to participate in cultural activities in the City. Teenagers and young

adults are seeking activities such as speaker series, creative spaces to collaborate on projects, places to gather with other like-minded youth, music festivals, and more accessibility to arts activities.

This chapter of the General Plan describes the arts and culture system of Thousand Oaks and provides goals and policies to support and enhance the vibrant cultural environment and creative economy of the City.

Topics covered in this Element include:

- Statutory Requirements
- Cultural Assets
- Cultural Affairs
- Arts and Cultural Funding
- Key Issues and Opportunities
- Goals and Opportunities

## Statutory Requirements

---

The State of California does not require that a City's General Plan address arts and culture. However, the City views this as an essential topic for the community and, therefore, it is included as an optional element. There are no other State or Federal compliance or requirements specific to arts and culture to be treated in the General Plan.

# Background

This section provides background information on arts and culture within the City, including physical facilities and cultural programming.

## Cultural Assets

Thousand Oaks is home to an abundance of cultural assets which play a critical role in elevating arts, culture, and the heritage of a place. Ensuring arts and culture continue to be considered in City decision-making will strengthen the cultural sector. Listed below are descriptions of some of the City's key cultural assets and issues or opportunities that related to the General Plan.

### Civic Arts Plaza

Designed by nationally renowned architect Antoine Predock, and opened in 1994 at cost of \$63.8 million, the Civic Arts Plaza is the crown jewel of Thousand Oaks. The building combines Postmodern and Modern architecture styles and is home to City Hall and The Bank of America Performing Arts Center (BAPAC) theatres. The City's 2017 Downtown Core Master Plan sets forth a new concept to reimagine the Civic Arts Plaza campus and neighboring city-owned parcels into an active pedestrian environment that incorporates an outdoor amphitheater and other features to maximize use and enjoyment by residents and visitors.



*Civic Arts Plaza (photo by Joe Virnig)*



*Kavli Theatre*



*Musical performance at Kavli Theatre*



*Classical music concert at Kavli Theatre*

## Performing Arts Venues

The City's Civic Arts Plaza's BAPAC which includes the 1,800-seat Kavli Theatre and the 394-seat Janet and Ray Sherr Forum theatre (which doubles as the Andrew P. Fox City Council Chambers and Planning Commission venue) is home to the larger proportion of ticketed performing arts events in Thousand Oaks.<sup>33</sup> The theatres offer a wide variety of live performances and events from national touring shows and concerts to local arts and cultural events. The box office processes more than 170,000 tickets and averages \$8.5 million in ticket sales each year, and approximately 200,000 patrons and 25,000 school children attend 250 performances and events annually.<sup>34</sup> The BAPAC is home to three resident companies: Pacific Festival Ballet, New West Symphony, and 5-Star Theatricals. The BAPAC operates as a rental venue, with approximately 70% of the current theatre activity coming from local renters.

In addition to BAPAC's theatre venues, Thousand Oaks has an impressive additional nine theatres throughout the City. Two are large venues, with 1,000 seats or more, and the other eight are small- and mid-sized. There is a total of nearly 5,000 theatre seats in the City. These venues are owned by the City, California Lutheran University, Conejo Recreation and Park District (CRPD), Conejo Valley Unified School District (CVUSD), and a private nonprofit. These purpose-built performing arts venues are supplemented by additional places used occasionally for performances, such as the libraries, parks, places of worship, and community rooms. There is a range of outdoor public festivals and celebrations produced each year in Thousand Oaks and there is a demonstrated need for and interest in developing a large-scale amphitheater and festival site in the City.

<sup>33</sup> The term Civic Arts Plaza refers to the entire civic complex encompassing two theatres, City Hall, and associated municipal offices. The two theatres – the Fred Kavli Theatre and the Janet and Ray Scherr Forum Theatre are referred to as the Bank of America Performing Arts Center (BAPAC).

<sup>34</sup> <https://toarts.org>

## Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations

A robust nonprofit arts community, with significant talent and resources, is present in Thousand Oaks. Performing arts are abundant and considered a pillar of the city's arts identity. Local arts organizations appreciate the value BAPAC brings to the community. There are 37 tax exempt arts and cultural organizations – music, museums, theater, visual arts, dance, cultural heritage, and botanical gardens – providing a range of programming and cultural places. The oldest organization was founded in 1955 and there has been continuous development of new arts and cultural nonprofits in the community addressing different cultural programming.

## Public Artworks

While the City does not currently have a public art program, public artwork has been mentioned in City Council policy over the years. There is a small temporary collection of outdoor sculptures located at the Civic Arts Plaza complex and at the Grant Brimhall Library. In recent years, there has also been a project of public art sculptures, Conejo Cottontails, which are standardized but individually artist-decorated rabbit figures, sponsored jointly by two local nonprofits, Art Trek, and the Arts Council of the Conejo Valley.



*Conejo Cottontail public artwork*

## Art Galleries

There are relatively few galleries and visual arts venues in Thousand Oaks. Two galleries are operated by the City: the Thousand Oaks Community Art Gallery at the Newbury Park Library and the Fred Kavli Theatre Gallery. A third is located at the Hillcrest Center for the Arts, operated by CRPD and the Arts Council of the Conejo Valley. These spaces often exhibit and serve area artists. They are complemented by the William Roland Gallery of Fine Art at California Lutheran University, and the Conejo Valley Museum at Janss Marketplace.



*Example of an art exhibition in a Thousand Oaks art gallery*



*McCrea Ranch Cultural Heritage Site*

## Cultural Heritage Sites

A diverse collection of 15 historic and cultural sites are found in Thousand Oaks, ranging from museums and historic homes to heritage trees. They span historical periods from Native American to recent 20th Century landmarks. Examples include the Chumash Indian Museum, McCrea Ranch, and the Stagecoach Inn Museum. All are available to the public (with various restrictions), and many are listed on national and/or county registries of historic places.

## Creative Economy

Thousand Oaks' creative industries and occupations are a significant cultural asset to both individuals and community development. There is a strong presence of artists and other creative professionals in the City, with nearly 9,000 creative jobs reflecting a population of photographers, musicians, writers, designers, and others who live and/or work in Thousand Oaks.<sup>35</sup> There are additional people, not included in the count of 9,000, who consider themselves avocational artists. Collectively, the creative economy presents an opportunity to expand and capitalize on the unique brand of Thousand Oaks as a community who values artistic expression and community culture.

---

<sup>35</sup> *Creative Vitality™ Suite is an industry standard data solution for measuring the for-profit and nonprofit arts, culture, and creative sectors provided by Western States Arts Federation (2018).*

# Thousand Oaks Alliance for the Arts

The Thousand Oaks Alliance for the Arts (TOArts), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, funds a portion of BAPAC theatre operations through a partnership with the City. Annually, TOArts presents approximately 50-60 performances at the BAPAC, provides arts education programming and funding, and makes grants to community organizations utilizing the BAPAC venue.

# Arts & Culture Roundtable

The Arts & Culture Roundtable has up to 15 at-large members and serves as a convening body to bring together representatives of local arts organizations, local working artists, and arts educators to discuss issues, challenges, and collaborative opportunities in the community. The Arts and Culture Roundtable advises City Council on artistic and cultural activity within the community.

# City Arts Funding

The Civic Arts Plaza was originally authorized by the voters in 1987 along with a 1984 advisory initiative (Measure B) stating that City cannot subsidize theatre operations. The theatres – now referred to as BAPAC – operate as an enterprise fund which is to be self-supporting on revenues and private contributions, without reliance on City General Funds for operations.

The theatres generate the balance of needed operating revenues from ticket sales, user fees, and related theatre rental revenues. The theatre leadership has been able to arrive at a successful funding formula that eliminates the need for a general fund operating subsidy, and that the TOArts endowment is now sufficient to secure its annual operating commitment to the theatres.

With this rich cultural landscape as a foundation, cultural development policies and strategies for the Arts and Culture Element supports the arts and cultural life for Thousand Oaks residents.



*Aerial view of the Civic Arts Plaza and City Hall*

# Key Issues & Opportunities

This section identifies the key opportunities for the City, relative to arts and culture. This list was developed in combination of the engagement phases and to address issues facing the City now, and in the future, and the opportunities for positive change. The topics inform the overall direction identified in the goals and policies listed in the following section, and within implementation actions listed in Chapter 13: Implementation.

## Cultural Equity

There is a significant opportunity to advance cultural equity through all the goals of this Arts and Culture Element. These include strengthening policy and funding for arts and culture; diversifying arts programs and attracting new audiences through culturally relevant performances; intentionally expanding arts opportunities to all neighborhoods and communities; and including artists and creatives with diverse backgrounds in delivery of activities and projects.

## Arts and Economic Development

Attracting technology workers and young adults to Thousand Oaks has been a communitywide goal since its inclusion in the 2017 Thousand Oaks Economic Development Strategic Plan. Arts accessibility will enhance Thousand Oaks as a more attractive place to live, therefore strengthening the overall local economy. Creating vibrant places across the City and providing relevant programming for different community groups is a critical part of the overall economic development goals, and the arts and culture goals of the City.

The upcoming renovation and redevelopment of the Civic Arts Plaza will emphasize the space as a local asset for arts and cultural events, entertainment, and community gathering spaces. The expansion of diverse arts programming and spaces presents the opportunity



*Kavli Theatre*

to transform the relationship between BAPAC, City Hall and the community, and to create a cultural destination for residents and for visitors. There is opportunity to activate the campus through community business and nonprofit partnerships - creating exciting, diverse programming and placemaking, while supporting and growing the local creative economy.



## Citywide Cultural Development

Expanding the role of the Thousand Oaks Cultural Affairs Department can be a catalyst for citywide cultural development and can address the inequities of accessibility to the arts for many communities. Developing partnerships with the community to create and help to deliver arts and cultural programming to all residents will significantly increase access and exposure to the arts.

## Public Art

Public art is also a powerful tool to address community identity, equity and inclusion, and community dialogue. The City should consider expanding public art requirements throughout the City. It can increase cultural vitality/activity for the new Downtown Core as well as throughout Thousand Oaks neighborhoods and should be broadly defined to extend beyond sculpture to a range of permanent and temporary public art.

## Youth Arts

Thousand Oaks is known for being family-friendly and for its exemplary education system. Cultural policies that advance arts education in the community and schools are another way to address inequities in the arts. Arts learning serves many purposes: career pathways, youth safety, mental health, crisis and trauma management, academic achievement, tolerance, equity, inclusion, and more. Looking forward, a focus on youth in the community also cultivates the next generation of arts and creative practitioners and supporters who may one day work and live in Thousand Oaks.



*Youth art activity at a community festival*

### Community Cultural Collaborations and Partnerships

Thousand Oaks is a community known for its well-established practice of City collaborations with local businesses, nonprofit organizations, The Grant Brimhall Library, CRPD, California Lutheran University, and others. Formalizing cultural collaborations will provide significant opportunity to infuse cultural programming throughout the city. An Arts and Business Roundtable convened by the Cultural Affairs Department is an opportunity for collaborative planning for the new Civic Arts Plaza and other arts initiatives.

### Arts Funding

Thousand Oaks residents value arts and culture, as apparent through the many facilities, nonprofit organizations and coalitions, programs, and other activities. However, to harness and strengthen economic opportunities of arts and culture, improve arts education, and cultural equity, the community will need to invest additional resources in local arts funding. Since the City is at this juncture where it is considering new artistic and cultural functions, expanded funding must also be considered as a critical goal. Sources of funding, apart from the policy related to BAPAC and the self-sufficiency of its enterprise fund, will be required.



*Outdoor performance in the Civic Arts Plaza*

# Goals and Policies

---

The following section includes goals and policies for the Arts and Culture Element. In addition, related goals and policies are integrated throughout the General Plan in the Land Use, Community Facilities and Services, and Governance Elements.

## Arts and Economic Development

**Goal AC-1: Embrace arts and culture as a key partner to Thousand Oaks' economic development.**

**1.1 Creative sector.**

Continue to develop programs and support systems for Thousand Oaks' creative sector, attracting new workers to the community and retaining current workers and businesses.

**1.2 Creative spaces.**

Prioritize the development of arts and creative spaces and gathering places within mixed use, commercial, retail, and civic developments.

**1.3 Civic Arts Plaza Campus Master Plan.**

Support and enhance the Civic Arts Plaza Campus Master Plan's goals to develop arts and culture spaces and programming for the new Civic Arts Plaza.

**1.4 Competitive advantage.**

Take steps to incorporate the arts and cultural vibrancy and vitality of Thousand Oaks as a distinct competitive advantage for the City as a place to live, work, and recreate.

## The Civic Arts Plaza and Cultural Affairs

**Goal AC-2: Ensure the Civic Arts Plaza remains the vibrant cultural center of Thousand Oaks.**

**2.1 Arts programming.**

Continue to focus on the high quality of the Civic Arts Plaza facilities and programs while expanding and enhancing offerings.

**2.2 Finances.**

Sustain the financial health of the Civic Arts Plaza operations and programming and explore new funding sources in addition to the TOArts policy related to BAPAC and the enterprise fund.

**2.3 Resident organizations.**

Ensure longevity for the resident organization program, providing continued incentives and benefits, such as reduced theater fees, donated office space, and marketing assistance.

**2.4 Arts and business roundtable.**

Develop an Arts and Business Roundtable to expand community partnerships, assist with programming of the new Civic Arts Plaza and other relevant topics for advancement of the arts for the City.

## Resident Cultural and Creative Experiences

### Goal AC-3: Enhance and expand arts, cultural, and creative experiences throughout all areas of the community.

#### 3.1 Public art.

Adopt a City Public Art Ordinance to develop a City public art program that creates permanent and temporary art works in locations and places throughout the City.

#### 3.2 Citywide arts experiences.

Through the Cultural Affairs Department, expand the current arts and cultural programming to extend to venues and spaces throughout the city, including informal places and experiences.

#### 3.3 Cultural facilities.

Take steps to identify partnerships and locations in Thousand Oaks for a large (10,000+ seat) venue for concerts, festivals, and other entertainment and cultural events.

### Goal AC-4: Foster new generations of culturally literate and healthy residents.

#### 4.1 Lifelong learning in the arts.

Working with local organizations and the schools, support access to lifelong learning in the arts for all residents of all ages in community settings.

#### 4.2 Partnerships.

Further define and develop partnerships and collaborations among the CVUSD, California Lutheran University, the arts community, and other agencies in the provision of arts learning for youth.

#### 4.3 Cultural relevancy.

Continue to develop and expand arts and cultural programming that appeals to diverse cultural interests, including young adults, families, youth, seniors, and other specific audience groups.

#### 4.4 Program expansion.

Expand Cultural Affairs Department programming by developing partnerships, identifying satellite venues, and creating new programming for all communities and neighborhoods.

## City Arts and Culture Leadership

### Goal AC-5: Assure effective arts and cultural leadership for the Thousand Oaks community.

#### 5.1 Creative sector leadership.

As part of the development of an Arts and Business Roundtable, convene and activate Thousand Oaks' creative sector and facilitate their participation in civic leadership.

#### 5.2 Community leadership.

Activate the Arts and Culture Roundtable with specific responsibilities as a community advisory body.

#### 5.3 Shared leadership.

Continue and expand Thousand Oaks' well-established practice of City collaborations with the Library, CRPD, California Lutheran University, CVUSD, and others to leverage these relationships for arts and cultural programming, information sharing and facilities.

### Goal AC-6: Utilize arts and culture as a policy tool for other civic goals.

#### 6.1 Equity, inclusion, access.

Utilize art to provide a unique opportunity for engagement and programming content strategies to develop relationships with the Thousand Oaks community.

#### 6.2 Community health.

Utilize arts and cultural programming to support community health policies (teen suicides, crisis response), and social service initiatives.

### **6.3 Creatives in City government.**

Develop artist-in-residence or an artist-in-residence on demand program within City government to provide creative perspectives and services in planning, design, communications, community engagement, and other functions.

### **6.4 Cross-departmental.**

Convene City departments on a regular basis to explore cross-departmental initiatives with Community Development, Public Works, Police, and Library Services.

## **Arts and Cultural Funding**

### **Goal AC-7: Secure diverse and sustainable arts and cultural funding.**

#### **7.1 Expanded impact.**

Allocate City funds to support arts and cultural programming and functions outside the Civic Arts Plaza and its enterprise fund.

#### **7.2 TOArts.**

Support the Thousand Oaks Alliance for the Arts (TOArts) to continue and expand its funding partnership with the Cultural Affairs Department in support of programming in places other than the Civic Arts Plaza.

#### **7.3 Dedicated funding source.**

Explore development of a dedicated revenue source for arts and culture.