



**A program of the Louisiana  
Cultural Economy Initiative  
Under the direction of the  
Office of the Lt. Governor  
Office of Cultural Development  
Division of the Arts**

The Cultural District Program was created as a part of the Cultural Economy Initiative. It is managed by the Office of Cultural Development in the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism under the Office of the Lt. Governor of Louisiana.

The Cultural Economy Initiative grew out of the basic belief that our artists and cultural workers are Louisiana's greatest natural resources! We want Louisiana to be an environment that supports and celebrates our cultural workers.

Since it was launched in 2008 the Cultural District program has been embraced by towns and neighborhoods who are working to revitalize their communities and are using art and cultural activity to help create a sense of identity and spark economic development.

# Cultural Economy Initiative

Sustaining the people who create and preserve artistic and cultural products and assets

Enhancing capacity for production

Developing new markets for their creations

The Cultural Economy Initiative and the Cultural District program are all about sustaining the people who create and preserve the artistic and cultural assets of Louisiana -- our artists, musicians, writers, designers, performers, and our wonderfully talented chefs

The Office of Cultural Development is working to accomplish this by inviting communities to develop Cultural Districts to improve the capacity for creative production and provide new markets for cultural products.

## Program Purpose

For local governments to revitalize communities by creating locally driven hubs of cultural activity

## Benefits

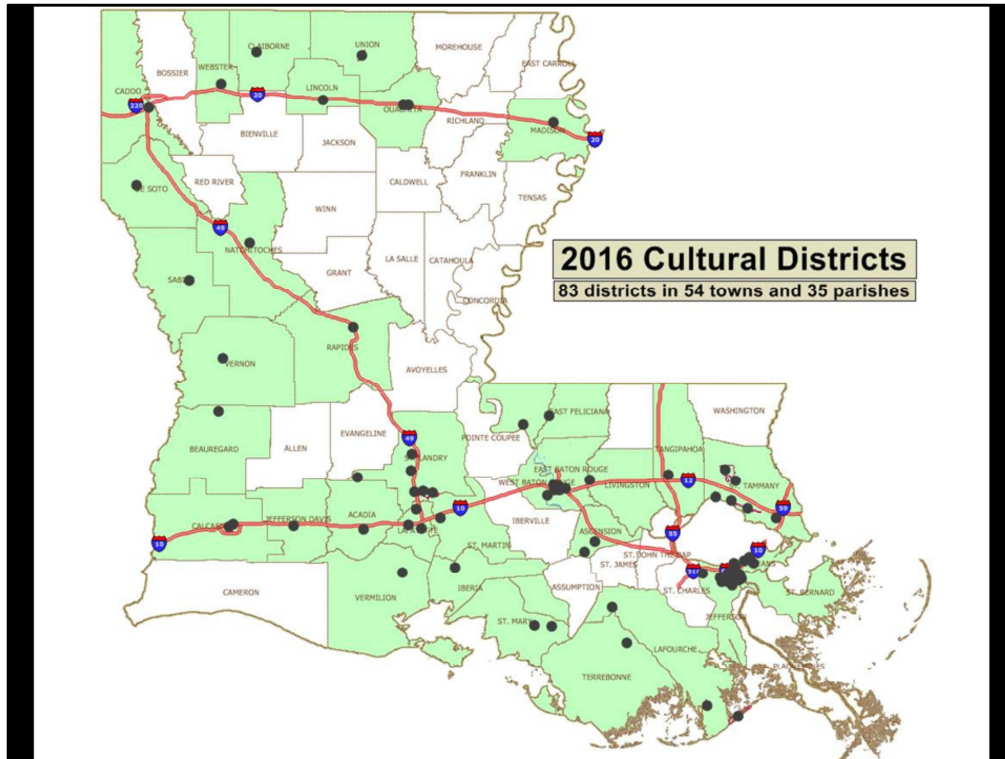
Increased cultural activity, occupancy, commerce, jobs, and sense of community identity

The Cultural District program provides an opportunity for local governments to designate a specific area as a hub of cultural activity. They apply to the state and if the criteria are met, the district is certified.

Criteria: Districts must be:

- Geographically contiguous
- Distinguished by cultural resources that play a vital role in the life and cultural development of the community
- Focus on a cultural anchor- such as an art institution, art & entertainment business, an area with art and cultural activities or production
- Engage in the promotion, preservation, and educational aspects of the arts and culture of the locale
- Contribute to the public through interpretive and educational uses

Some of the benefits associated with being a cultural district are increased cultural activity, increased occupancy, improved commerce, new businesses and jobs, and an improved sense of community identity.



Since it was launched in 2008 the program is widely popular among local governments and organizations who are working to revitalize communities and neighborhoods through art and cultural development.

Effective July 1, 2016 there are 83 cultural districts certified in 54 towns in 35 parishes across the state.

5 new Cultural Districts were certified effect on July 1, 2016 in Scott, Ruston, Homer, Cinclore (WBR) and Frozard (St Landry)

## Program Incentives

1. Historic Preservation – expands eligibility of state historic tax credits for rehabilitation of commercial and residential structures to cultural districts
2. Visual Arts and Crafts – state and local sales tax shall not apply to original, one-of-a-kind works of art

There are two tax incentives that come with cultural district certification.

- One is the state historic tax credit, which extends eligibility to property owners of both commercial and residential buildings to apply for state historic tax credits for renovation projects to historic buildings.
- The other is that original, one-of-a-kind works of visual art sold within the boundaries of a Cultural District are exempt from state and local tax.

\*\*It must be noted, and is explained in more detail on the website, that beginning July 1, 2016 a portion of the state sales tax exemption for original art was temporarily suspended for 2 years. Currently qualifying works of original art sold in Cultural Districts are exempt from local tax, but must charge 3% state tax.

These incentives are useful tools to encourage preservation and reuse of buildings. They inspire art and cultural activities that contribute to a sense of community, revitalization and economic development.

## 2016 Annual Report Results

- **Rehabilitation Historic Buildings**– 611 commercial projects completed, with total \$ leveraged about 1.9 B
- **Sales Tax Exemptions**– 1,600 businesses, 270 organizations, and 4,900 artists benefitted, representing almost \$7.5 million of original art sales
- **Hubs of Cultural Activity**– 3,518 cultural events, 5.5 million people
- **Vacant Buildings**–Vacancy rate decreased by 3% - 10%
- **New Businesses**– 332 net growth in cultural businesses, 31% are art/cultural
- **Program Recognition as Model**– Mayors' Institute on City Design's (MICD), *Creative Placemaking*

We collect information each year from several sources about the impact of being a cultural district. The information collected is used to report to the legislature, to inform ourselves about how each district is organized and functioning, and to direct program improvements. We are seeing some very interesting trends-

- There have been lots of renovations sparked by historic tax credits– by the end of 2016, 611 commercial and 85 residential tax credit projects were completed in Cultural Districts, leveraging over \$1.9B and \$25.5M respectively, in qualifying and associated costs
- Almost \$7.5M in original art sales was reported. The same businesses that sold \$7.5M in original art reported \$2.5B in total revenue, indicating that art is an important cog in the economic wheel of a community.
- Each year we count more cultural events – over 3500 events attracted over 5.5 million people in cultural districts in 2016
- There is a consistent decrease in vacancy, year after year.
- In 2016 there was a net growth of 332 new business in these districts targeted for art and cultural development.

The information collected in the annual report indicates that investment in cultural assets and artistic resources pays off.

We see that the cultural district designation can be a catalyst for communities and neighborhoods, but the true value comes from the people.

## Success Factors

- A unique, authentic identity
- Community support
- Strategic partnerships
- Planning articulates a vision for the cultural district and the broader community
- Artists, live/work space
- Local planners and developers understand the power of arts and culture in community and economic development
- Anchor institutions and special events

Certain factors if already in place can contribute to the launch of a CD and its ongoing success. If not in place they can guide the action of planners for a new district.

- A unique, authentic identity that highlights what is special about the district and the community is in place.
- Community support of the district is in place to ensure continued success.
- Strategic partnerships have been brokered that result in a variety of resources.
- Inclusive cultural and strategic planning has been completed that articulates a vision for the cultural district and the broader community.
- A district has sustainable artist live/work spaces that provide artists with a productive environment.
- A local developer has committed to the cultural district and understands the power of arts and culture in community and economic development.
- Anchor institutions and special events are in place and they are the cornerstones of the community and the district.

## Success Factors- Cont'd

- Artists valued as members of the community
- Artist recruitment to welcome new artists and facilitate their establishment
- Events and venues are accessible
- Clear signage, distinctive logos, maps etc.
- A user-friendly website
- Marketing and promotion to attract visitors, potential residents and new businesses
- Supportive amenities such as restaurants, lodging and recreation

- Artists are partners, not products, and are valued as members of the community.
- Artist recruitment is an organized effort that shows how a community is willing to welcome new artists and facilitate their establishment.
- Events and venues are accessible to ensure that participation available to all of the community and visitors.
- Clear signage is in place so visitors and the community can recognize the boundaries. The signage can be enhanced with distinctive logos, maps and other visual materials.
- A user-friendly website with comprehensive information about the district is available for the community and for visitors.
- Marketing and promotion efforts are in place to attract visitors, potential residents and new businesses.
- Strong amenities such as restaurants, lodging and recreation bolster the efforts of the cultural district.



## Creative Placemaking

- Partners across sectors
- Strategically work together
- Shaping the physical and social character
- Around arts and cultural activity
- Animates spaces
- Rejuvenates structures and street capes
- Improves vitality and public safety
- Nurtures innovation

Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa define Creative Placemaking in a white paper for The Mayors' Institute on City Design, a leadership initiative of the National Endowment for the Arts.

“In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and nurtures artistic innovation by bringing diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired.”

## Creative Placemaking

Key ingredients present in successful creative communities

- Initiators
- Distinctiveness and Local Orientation
- Partnerships across sectors & missions

Most every place has the potential to be a Creative Place. There is no magic wand to wave but there are common indicators and concepts that work. All of the three key ingredients identified in the Creative Placemaking research are important elements for successful creative communities.

- Initiators
- Distinctiveness and Local Orientation
- Partnerships across sectors and missions

To me the key is the spark of a special person or team of people, who has the ability to ignite and unite. The crux of it all is people and partnerships.



## Application Guidelines and Form available online

[www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts](http://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts)

Deadline is March 1 each year

Gaye Hamilton, Cultural District Program Manager at  
Phone: 225.342.8161 or Email: [gHamilton@crt.la.gov](mailto:gHamilton@crt.la.gov)

There is one annual application cycle for the Cultural Districts Program. The deadline for new applications is March 1.

[www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts](http://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts)

Gaye Hamilton, 225-342-8161, [gHamilton@crt.la.gov](mailto:gHamilton@crt.la.gov)

Local governments designate a geographic area and apply to the Department of Culture, Recreation and Tourism for certification as a Cultural District.

Potential applicants should check the website for additional information- [www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts](http://www.crt.la.gov/cultural-development/arts/cultural-districts)

Review the Guidelines carefully for program specifications and application procedures including:

- criteria for certification
- important details about the tax incentives
- definitions of terms
- timeframes and deadlines
- instruction about how to apply
- annual reporting requirements
- vendor inventory requirements