

INTEGRATING ARTS AND PLANNING AND EXPLORING METRO'S ROLE IN SUPPORTING THE REGIONAL ARTS ECOSYSTEM

Date: March 12, 2026
Department: Planning, Development & Research
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Presenters:
Malu Wilkinson (deputy director)
Dana Lucero (principal regional planner)
Molly Cooney-Mesker (communications and engagement manager)
Lakeeyscia Griffin (senior public affairs specialist)
Subashini Ganesan Forbes (artist)
Length: 90 minutes

ISSUE STATEMENT

Metro is featured prominently in Smart Growth America's *Lessons from the Culture and Community Cohort (2025)*. "The integration of arts and culture into regional planning represents more than a new engagement technique—it reflects a fundamental shift in how planning organizations understand their role and responsibility to the communities they serve. This shift is both possible and powerful, yielding deeper community relationships, more inclusive processes, and planning outcomes that better reflect the needs and aspirations of all residents." Staff from Planning, Development & Research will share lessons learned from this national training cohort, reflect on the 3-day Future Vision artist residency and preview other arts-related Future Vision engagement efforts. They will present highlights from the 2024 regional arts strategy framework, *Our Creative Futures*, and invite Council to discuss Metro's future role in supporting the arts ecosystem in our region.

When government works with artists, it signals to communities that it is open to innovation. "...For the MPOs and regional planning agencies that undertake this work, the rewards extend beyond better engagement metrics or more diverse public meeting attendance. They include rebuilding trust with communities harmed by past planning decisions, elevating voices historically excluded from decision-making, and creating the conditions for truly collaborative, community-centered planning."

ACTION REQUESTED

Metro Council provides feedback about the recent and upcoming arts-related engagement and the integration of artists and creative practices into planning programs and projects. Council explores other roles Metro may play in supporting the regional arts ecosystem.

IDENTIFIED POLICY OUTCOMES

Through conversation and response to staff presentations, be able to provide input to Councilors Lewis and Hwang's resolution.

POLICY QUESTION(S)

- Is Council interested in exploring opportunities for Metro to support the regional arts ecosystem?
- Does the draft resolution help to clarify ways Metro can support the regional arts ecosystem and bring arts into planning work?

POLICY OPTIONS FOR COUNCIL TO CONSIDER

Council can choose to endorse Resolution no. 26-5574 - For the purpose of affirming Metro's commitment to a vibrant and thriving regional arts community and embedding creative artistic practices as planning and engagement tools throughout Metro's work.

STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS

Staff recommends Council endorse Resolution no. 26-5574

STRATEGIC CONTEXT & FRAMING COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Metro Council has been supportive of the Planning, Development & Research Department's Community Placemaking program since its inception in 2017. Council liaisons serve in an essential advisory role to the program. In 2024, Council updated the code and rules that govern the construction excise tax to ensure secure funding for these grants, the outcomes of which clearly demonstrate innovative and hyper local means of achieving community stability.

BACKGROUND

A healthy and sustainable arts and culture ecosystem is essential to our regional economy, community stability and sense of place. Metro's investment in the arts is evolving -- from facilitating the GLEAN program that supports artists who prompt people to think about consumption habits and inspire creative reuse for the region, to the concluding relationship with the regional arts venues. Meanwhile several significant arts-related opportunities in the Planning, Development and Research Department have surfaced. This year, the Community Placemaking program marks its tenth cycle of supporting artists and arts and culture efforts that strengthen people's connections to each other and places they care about. The yearlong national training cohort offered by Smart Growth America concluded by emphasizing that, because of the long investment in artists through the placemaking program, Metro is uniquely well-situated to delve into meaningful planning work that integrates artists and creative practices. Should Metro forge ahead with a robust arts, culture and planning program, it would join one of only a few regional governments innovating in this field and realizing transformative results.

Staff is piloting integrating arts and planning in aspects of the Future Vision project. The former creative Laureate of Portland is serving as the arts program manager for the project, influencing not only engagement opportunities but the lens by which planners and leaders view the foundations of the work. She developed and curated the Future 50 artist residency hosted at Metro Regional Center March 3 through 5, 2026. It was well attended by Councilors, staff, leaders of arts organizations and members of the public. Audience

members were deeply moved. The mingling of government and art, government and feelings stirred meaningful reflections on how our everyday work influence people's lives.

Metro is partnering with The Curiosity Paradox, a creative studio specializing in Access Art Design, to help advance Safe Streets for All outcomes and implement the Regional Transportation Plan. The Curiosity Paradox will help Metro and its partners increase capacity to see access not as accommodation but as a creative force that opens new possibilities. The studio will support accessible and creative engagement that centers community members disproportionately impacted by traffic deaths. Through this partnership, the project will seek new ways to partner with artists, inclusively engage community and shift traffic safety culture through a series of three community conversations in June.

Staff will share additional arts and planning efforts they hope to implement and invite Council to consider what else is possible if we lean into the power of the artists in our region and invite new, creative, human-centered ways of envisioning and conducting Metro's work.

ATTACHMENTS

1. Lessons from the Culture and Community Network
2. Our Creative Futures
3. Draft Resolution No. 26-5574

[For work session:]

- Is legislation required for Council action? Yes No
- If yes, is draft legislation attached? Yes No
- What other materials are you presenting today? See attachments