



ARTS & CULTURE

WHY IT MATTERS

Arts and culture are known to enhance a person's quality of life. They offer personal enrichment and growth, and opportunities to make new connections and be more involved in a community. Casper has a rich and unique history full of historic neighborhoods, monuments, trails and historic places. In the case of a city, arts and culture add to its value and appeal, and can contribute to community and economic development. Arts can be an effective tool to deliver health care, education or social services and help achieve better outcomes such as improved early learning, higher educational achievement and enhance business performance.

"Several researchers have argued that people are increasingly first choosing where they want to live and then seeking employment there. In today's economy, the ability to attract and retain creative human talent is the key to economic growth. In fact, the cities that are most successful in attracting workers are the ones that have exciting art and cultural offerings. The arts and culture sector is an integral part of the new economy."

- Michigan State University, Impact of the Arts.

The "Creative Class," a workforce group involved in innovative and creative processes, are a key driving force for economic development. A community must have "talent, tolerance, and technology" to attract this group (*Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida). As Casper aims to diversify its economy through attracting new talent and job sectors to its city, it will be important to focus on developing the city's arts and cultural identity. Creating an appealing environment and cultural scene will help attract people that are considering relocating to Casper.

EXISTING CONDITIONS

Casper's arts and culture contributes to the quality of life of the city, and offers a diverse assortment of opportunities for a city of its size. Fort Casper and National Historic Trails Interpretive Center offer great exhibits on the history of Casper and the West, while The Nicolaysen Art Museum (The Nic) is one of best contemporary art museums in the Rockies.

The Wyoming Community Development Authority, the Downtown Development Authority (DDA), City of Casper, Keep Casper Beautiful, and local service clubs are all contributing to growing the arts in Casper through public art installations, designing public spaces, and engaging the community in participating in art and culture opportunities. The WyoCity™ Public Art Project is helping to explain the new City Brand through art.

Throughout Casper, bronze sculptures can be seen, with many paying homage to Casper's natural resources, and their important place amongst the history of the West and settlement of the American frontier. More recently, street art and murals have been commissioned to add to the art scene around the urban center. The Nic is a popular Downtown art museum that, in addition to its exhibitions,



KEY POINTS + ASSUMPTIONS

Casper boasts one of the best contemporary art museums in the Rockies, The Nicolaysen Art Museum.

Citizens' increasingly acknowledge the importance and role of arts and culture in the community.

A unique culture can add to the community's economic development and quality of life.

Young adults often select where to live first based on quality of life and amenities versus making their locational decisions on employment.

hosts and sponsors community events. The Science Zone is a science museum in Casper that focuses on providing innovative ways to engage youth in arts and science. Art321 is a nonprofit organization that hosts art exhibitions and community workshops, and the monthly Art Walk (**Map 2-6**). Along with these art and museum venues, art and music events are emerging in parks and small

plazas such as Movie in the Park, Food Truck Fridays, Art Walks and other festivals. Venues for these local community events are limited but include the Tate Pumphouse, Yellowstone Garage, The Nic in Downtown, and regional parks. The developing David Street Station is currently under construction in Downtown, which will offer a unique venue for the community.

"The film industry brings lots of money, is temporary on its impact and helps advertise our community. Let's put an effort to have more of this type of business. Let's also work on a vibrant maker space where our youth can invent and create things." - Public Comment



Casper Ice Arena is home to the Casper Coyotes Hockey Team, and among other events the Center offers public workshops, high school sports competitions, Broadway plays, rodeos, themed entertainment and educational exhibits, shows, and expositions. Casper has played host to the College National Rodeo Finals every year since 2001.

Casper has a rich and vibrant history and offers many opportunities to explore this community. Fort Caspar Museum is a museum that tells the history of Casper's settlement. The National Historic Trails Interpretive Center is a must-see destination in Casper with exhibits that share the history of the West while Downtown Casper and the Old Yellowstone District showcases unique historic architecture.



CITIZENS' PERSPECTIVE

While it is clear that there is a local art/cultural district budding in the urban center, residents feel that the City needs more year-round public events, city-wide activities, entertainment options, and entertainment venues. They want the City to invest more in the arts and cultural opportunities. Stakeholders would also like the City to invest in programs to attract more artists to Casper. Residents have expressed how The Nic is an important part of the community, and they'd like to see more events, alleyway murals and improvements sponsored by the art museum.

Casper residents have stated that the city is lacking an identity and a unique "vibe" or feel to the urban center. They feel that strengthening the city's arts and culture can help nurture a Casper identity. Residents want more events that are unique to Casper, and event series that they feel will help create a unique vibe. Stakeholders also expressed that supporting the urban core and local businesses will help Casper's identity.



Residents want to keep the small-town feel that so many people love about Casper. The community wants to focus on maintaining that small-town perception in the neighborhoods around the urban center to help preserve the friendly, safe, familiar and connected characteristics that Casperites love. The public sees fixing and maintaining existing local roads and sidewalks as a necessity in improving neighborhood character and appearances.

Downtown, Casperites overwhelmingly support the DDA's vision for a public plaza that can serve a diverse community, through entertainment for children, teenagers, and adults. The community's vision for a public plaza would include a gathering place for informal and formal events that could act as a landmark and anchor. Residents believe that a popular, well-designed and -maintained public place such as this would greatly contribute to creating a city that is capable of

attracting new residents and supporting new and existing businesses.

Stakeholders want to see design guidelines and sign standards for commercial properties throughout the urban center to help unify the district, preserve historical landmarks and architectural features, and insure that new development compliments the existing built form. The community wants Casper's urban center to become a destination with a unique character.

MAP 2-6. CASPER'S CREATIVE ASSETS

