

Grey District Arts Strategy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This strategy is intended as an evolving document to help challenge and guide community, investors, and Council when making strategic decisions into the next 5 or so years.

Drawing on funding from Creative New Zealand, the Grey District Council (GDC) contracted the West Coast Society of Arts to bring together a community-led plan for the arts in our district.

We surveyed 151 individuals and interviewed 23 arts-related and community groups in the Grey District.

We analysed relevant national and local plans and reports impacting the arts including: GDC 2021 – 2031 Long Term Plan, Te Tai Poutini West Coast Regional Workforce Plan 2022, GDC Satisfaction Survey 2021, GDC Public Art Policy 2015, GDC Signage, Interpretation & Public Art Framework 2014, GDC Economic Development Strategy 2015, Greymouth CBD Redevelopment Plan 2019, and the recent Takiwā Poutini report.

The 2021 GDC resident satisfaction survey found only 49% of residents were proud of how the District looked, and noted: “those who do not feel a sense of pride primarily mentioned the District is run down...and that the CBD is dying with lots of empty shops”. This perception of a dying Central Business District has been increasing steadily for the last 10 years.



In our survey we asked how the arts can contribute to the best possible future version of the Grey District. Three of the four top results focus on upgrading the CBD:

- ▶ 20% of respondents said they would like to see more public artworks, including murals and sculptures.
- ▶ 18% of respondents said the arts could help beautify the town and increase vibrancy.
- ▶ 14% of respondents proposed uses for empty buildings, including pop-up events and galleries, artist studios, window displays and fully repurposing key heritage buildings.

We asked “Out of ten, how necessary do you feel the arts are to a healthy society?” Nobody at all scored this 0 to 4, and 67% gave it the highest possible score of 10, or “absolutely essential”.

49% of respondents said having a thriving arts scene available contributed substantially to their decisions to stay in the district (ie: they scored it between 8 and 10 out of 10. Only 22% scored this question lower than 5)

Four themes have been identified running through public feedback and existing plans, and these themes have informed our GOALS.

- ▶ Increasing Vibrancy - more public art in our communities! Revitalise the Central Business District
- ▶ Participation - in arts activities, in community life
- ▶ Celebrating our assets - showing who we are, celebrating what we have, enticing visitors to stay longer
- ▶ Boosting well-being - increase access to creativity, connection and belonging for all community members.

We propose the following actions to reach these goals, and identify potential leadership and level of urgency for each one.

<h2 style="margin: 0;">INCREASING VIBRANCY</h2> <p style="margin: 0;"><i>The arts make our civic landscape exciting! People love coming to Māwhera!</i></p>		
<p>Rationale: Telling our stories/seeing our unique cultures reflected, attracting visitors, increasing civic pride, enhancing our own experience.</p>		
<p>Challenges: Lack of coordination, ongoing maintenance, funding plan, over-committed volunteers.</p>		
Actions:	Priority level	Leadership
<p>Set up the Creative Activation Team (CAT) proposed in the 2019 CBD redevelopment plan - This needs to be Sector-Led, including people from our local iwi, Council, and ideally connecting to young people and the wider community. This would be an independent advisory body.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ This team would help coordinate public art, create relationships with artists and volunteers/public, make regional connections, ensure positive messaging, map and enhance pathways for increasing prosperity for creatives, create opportunities for networking across the sector and grow into a pivotal role. 	1	WCSA/GDC
<p>Create a paid role for a district Cultural Activator (CA). This role would be responsible for assisting many of the proposals in this strategy, including support of the Creative Activation Team..</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Support practitioners to develop, coordinate, resource ideas, to tell their stories ◆ Coordinate networking opportunities and events, promote collaboration across the sector ◆ Could house the arts coordinator in an empty CBD building 	1	CAT/GDC/WCSA
<p>Develop a cohesive plan and resource stream for maintaining the existing artwork across the Grey. Act quickly, start with Tony Manuel's Gateway/Pou. Adjust Public Art Policy if necessary.</p>	2	CAT/GDC
<p>Increase the amount of high-quality public art in the CBD. (Connecting Ara Pounamu to new public art and CBD revival could be an opportunity and priority.)</p>	2	CAT
<p>Telling our stories. An opportunity to address the historical imbalance of who is represented in public art through collaboration with iwi.</p>	1	Iwi/CAT
<p>Activate empty downtown spaces with pop-up events and installations.</p>	1	CAT/Mawhera Inc/landlords/GDC
<p>Complete work on gateways and CBD redevelopment plan.</p>	In progress	GDC/BPA

PARTICIPATION

Diverse and accessible opportunities to engage

Rationale: Strong desire from community as evidenced in Arts Strategy survey data.

Challenges: Affordability, choice and variety, paying performers, tutors, organisers.

Actions:	Priority level	Leadership
Cultural Activator/Creative Activation Team helps coordinate and promotes activities, and supports existing efforts	2	CA
Resourcing for Kaupapa Māori creative spaces	2	Iwi/CAT/GDC
Cultural Activator helps facilitate local groups' access to funding	2	CA
Enhance communication and access to information about cultural activities	2	CAT/GDC

CELEBRATING OUR ASSETS

Our stories, who we are, made manifest in our environment. Our own enjoyment of our district is enhanced, increasing numbers of visitors recognising the Grey as an arts destination

Rationale: We love living here - we communicate that and all that our district offers

Challenges: Visitors don't stay long in the district. Ensuring messaging is congruent with experience

Actions:	Priority level	Leadership
Raise profile of local arts and artists through the Te Tai Poutini Artist Legacy Project, an annual Open Studio tour, and an arts trail map	In progress	WCSA/CAT
Investigate how the arts can help retain visitors for longer in the District	2	CAT/DWC
Promote the district as an arts destination	2	DWC/CAT
Support existing efforts for annual arts / performing arts festival/s	2	All



BOOSTING WELL-BEING

Safe spaces to connect, a thriving and inclusive community

Rationale: We recognise the power of the arts to boost wellbeing, but some sectors of the community perceive a lack of access or empowerment

Challenges: Feelings of isolation, some Māori have told us they feel unwelcome in current spaces, some other people feel the arts are elitist or unaffordable

Actions:	Priority level	Leadership
Facilitate and support the development of family-friendly and diversely-welcoming spaces where group, cultural and arts activities can be programmed	1	CAT
Resource education around inclusivity, focusing on biculturalism	1	GDC

DWC = Development West Coast

GDC = Grey District Council

WCSA = West Coast Society of Arts

BPA = Greymouth/Māwhera Business and Promotions Association

Iwi = Te Runanga o Ngati Waewae

