

Artown

Artown's mission is to strengthen Reno's arts industry, enhance our civic identity and national image, thereby creating a climate for the cultural and economic rebirth of our region.



Artown has been inspiring community through the arts since 1996.

In 1996 a group of city and business leaders worked through the Arts and Culture Commission (City 2000) and used the arts as a tool to bring people back to a dying downtown Reno. These individuals went to Park Lane Mall and interviewed folks asking them a simple question: If we created a celebration of the arts in downtown Reno, would you come back downtown? People responded overwhelmingly NO! The Arts at Culture Commission decided to press on regardless. They hired Karen Craig Public Relations who worked closely with Mark Curtis, Howard Rosenberg and Tim Jones. They asked many arts organizations to create a project, performance or exhibit in the downtown region and designed posters on which they listed all the events from July 8 – 28 and 'Uptown Downtown Artown' was born. Despite the naysayers, a stunning estimated 30,000 people showed up and thus began the evolution of the arts in Reno.

Artown 1996: July 8 - 28



What used to be a hot month sandwiched between a rodeo and a car show has now become the best month of the year in northern Nevada! As Artown enters its 25th anniversary, we anticipate an estimated attendance of more than 300,000 during July 2020 which will take place in over 140 locations, featuring over 500 multi-disciplinary events with 75% of all events offered admission free. Artown partners with 145 local and regional arts partners to create the festival.

And just look at downtown Reno after 25 years of the arts leading the way! Where else are you able to come downtown create an art project, watch a baseball game, catch a movie, have an eclectic and affordable meal, raft in the river and then watch some of the best artists in the world perform – all for under \$40!

Over the last 25 years, City of Reno’s elected officials have been visionaries in understanding how the arts enrich communities. Back in 1999, a New York newspaper linked The City of Reno’s identity to Artown and coined the phrase “Reno is Artown.” Your ongoing belief underscores this partnership and branding initiative. Many other similar size cities including Santa Fe, New Mexico; San Rafael, California; Missoula, Montana and Asheville, North Carolina have followed suit in understanding the value of festivals. They have come to realize that when festivals are done right, they promote a city’s brand, foster the arts and community engagement, increase tourism and bolster revenues for the city and local businesses. Artown showed us that areas in need of revitalization can be transformed through a vibrant and multi-disciplinary arts festival. Artown is firmly embedded in the DNA of our city and has evolved to become an essential component of our region’s shared, living heritage.

And the benefits don’t end here. Artown is always finding creative ways to invite those who lack access to the life-changing benefits of the arts. Recently, Artown invited members from the Downtown Reno Ambassadors, Dress for Success, The Eddy House, Our Center and Women and Children Center of the Sierra to attend a formal theatrical experience. As a way to introduce them to the magic of live theater, and how events like these can transform their lives and make them feel genuinely part of the community, Artown provided a list of “How to’s at the Theater” to make the experience truly enjoyable. This was done at our Encore Series, which are events Artown presents outside of July. During the festival, Artown has always been inclusive and accessible to everyone!

The artistic quality and scope of events offered by Artown encourages audiences of all ages, cultural backgrounds and preferences, the opportunity to expand their personal horizons. Artown offers experiences that positively influence the individual and our community collectively.

Artown’s festival has far reaching influence in job creation, and economic impact to our region. Prior to and during the 31-day festival artists, productions teams, musicians, visual artists are needed to perform direct services. Some artists are brought to the area specifically for the festival, but an estimated 90 percent of the artists live locally. City employees; restaurants; art shops; supply stores; framers; music stores, and venue owners all provide services and merchandise needed by artists, and patrons. Transportation companies are called upon for service, while the communication and media industries are consumed in promoting our region.

Artown has the vision to use multidisciplinary and cultural performances as a means to erode away cultural barriers and extend inclusiveness and accessibility to all populations. Artown works diligently to parallel the makeup of our ever changing population. To that end there has been a significant shift and increase of diversity, equity, access and inclusion. The scope of Artown’s



art and cultural offerings provides the ideal opportunity to encourage patrons to broaden their understanding of art and culture by attending events that lead with artistic excellence, merit and diversity.

The festival builds a stronger community because it offers programming that reaches all ages groups, and opens the channel for greater intergenerational communication. Artown encourages exploration of other cultures, people and their art forms.

What lies ahead for the 25th Anniversary?

Artown promises to WOW the community and all visitors who enjoy Reno annually during July.



Due to the City of Reno's commitment to provide the festival with major funding here are some incredible events that are offered admission free which is only possible because the Reno City Council has made arts and culture a civic priority.

- Artown is commissioning; paying local artists for the creation of four works of art by regional artists which include a neon exhibit, a multi-disciplinary work of dance, visual arts and music on City Plaza, an interactive artwork of 25 years in review and the Artown 2020 poster
- Opening Night includes cultural activities for children, MarchFourth Marching Band and Hot Sardines which are all packed into the opening celebration and include performances by children of many cultures at McKinley in the early evening.
- Closing Night we will celebrate our Native American Cultures with superstar Buffy Sainte-Marie and a festive pow wow with the Shoshone, Paiute and Washoe Tribal members in full regalia
- Children will Discover the Arts which is held at McKinley Arts and Culture Center every single weekday in July. Some examples of discovery may include puppetry, Taiko drums, Chinese dancers, storytelling and watercolor just to name a few
- Every Wednesday in Wingfield Park will feature music from around the globe, Fridays will be Rollin' on the River and Movies in the Park. Weekend celebrations include July 4th featuring the Reno Phil complete with fireworks after the show, The Reno Basque Festival, Gospelfest, The Reno Muni Band and Pride
- Midtown comes alive every Sunday evening in the urban amphitheater outside the Brasserie Saint James and will feature eclectic artists whose artistry is not familiar to our audiences

The festival includes some gated offerings but they are affordably priced and extremely popular. These include:

- Dragon Lights at The Wilbur D. May Arboretum
- Artown Headliners include Jake Shimabukuro, Croce does Croce, Kronos Quartet, Sheléa, Keb MÓ and the extraordinary international contemporary dance company Vertigo from Jerusalem
- Pops on the River with The Reno Phil

Artown is built on collaboration and funding from many sources. This festival model is unique! Where else will you find a community whose morale is constantly elevated with 31 days filled with arts and culture? The City of Reno makes this all possible because its elected officials believe in quality of life, laughter, and connecting us to each other. Your commitment and funding makes all this possible and your investment parlays into millions of dollars in economic impact and community good-will.

In the City of Reno, nonprofit spending on the arts is well above the national median of \$35.7 million and tops \$89 million. This spending by organizations and their audiences supports 2,658 full-time equivalent jobs, generates \$52.8 million in household income to local residents, and delivers \$8 million in local and state government revenue*. Investment in the arts not only enhances our quality of life, but the City's investment contributes to community's economic well-being.

Additionally, the creative industries are the 4th largest employer in Washoe County, this region has become a hub for artists due in no small part to Artown's presence in the community for 25 years. Artown hires artists, cultivates nonprofits and markets it all to the community and region.

*Numbers from the Americans for the Arts AEP5 (Arts & Economic Prosperity 5) 2015/16 study.

