

D

DEXTER

# DEXTER WORKING PLAN



*Initial steps for  
implementing the  
Washtenaw County  
Cultural Master  
Plan in the  
DEXTER Area*

ArtsAlliance®

**Arts, culture, and creativity** are among the core elements that make Washtenaw County a special place. Look at any of the “best of” awards that the communities in this county regularly win and there’ll doubtlessly be listed a reference to the area’s high quality of life, with its arts and cultural assets typically highlighted.

**Arts and culture** have a long history in Washtenaw County. This longevity and the lively appearance of the arts and cultural community, however, mask the true fragility of this sector. Peer behind the polished facades of many arts and cultural organizations or talk to the artists practicing their craft here and you’ll find a vulnerable industry struggling to survive.

***The Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan is a response to that challenge.***

## Cultural Plan Background Information



The Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan is the result of an 18-month, community-based planning effort that emphasized the participation of cultural, educational, civic, business, and government representatives from each of the county’s key population centers: Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Dexter, Manchester, Milan, Saline, and Ypsilanti.

The plan reflects the direct input of nearly 5,000 Washtenaw County residents as captured in an online survey, an artists’ census, a study of the area’s creative economy, and in 29 interviews and community forums.

From the master plan, each population center has worked to customize the plan to its own local needs and interests.

***The Dexter Area Working Plan is a local response to this county-wide challenge.***

The overall planning process has been coordinated by the Arts Alliance, an organization serving the arts and cultural sector of Washtenaw County.

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## LOCAL PROCESS

The Arts Alliance partnered with its Dexter Cultural Community Leaders, Paul Cousins, Dexter Village Council Member and Jill Love, photographer and co-owner, Artistica Gallery, to arrange three public meetings in Dexter to discuss the future of arts and culture in the local community. Members of the Dexter Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee and Dexter residents participated in each of these meetings. As part of these discussions, more than 20 Dexter residents and committee members identified the key strategic areas from the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan that their community needed to address. They then developed and prioritized specific action steps, identified key implementation partners, discussed next steps, created a time line, and detailed measures of success for their community over the course of the next five years.



The six strategic areas in the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan include:

- Lifelong Arts and Education
- Creative Economic Development
- Capacity Building, Funding, and Investment
- Communications, Audience Development, and Advocacy
- Cultural Facilities
- Diversity and Access

Dexter area residents decided to focus on the following strategic areas in Dexter:

- Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy
- Capacity Building, Funding and Investment
- Cultural Facilities

The group identified specific recommendations to address each of these strategic areas.

Community leaders understand that the future growth and success of the county is inextricably tied to the health and well-being of arts and culture that contribute to the area's quality of place. In a true collaborative effort, these leaders along with hundreds of grassroots individuals, have played and will continue to play a critical role in identifying the challenges outlined in the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan and Dexter Area Working Plan and will continue to help implement the recommended actions.

# DEXTER PRIORITY ACTIONS

## Recommendations for Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy

### *Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy Vision Statement*

*To communicate the value of arts and culture to area residents, public officials, and visitors in a way that engages them and increases their awareness and understanding.*

*To foster a sense of creative community amongst cultural organizations and individual artists where communication can exist through media outlets, gathering spaces, and affinity groups.*

*To create an environment where all potential and current audience members feel welcome, comfortable, and invited to produce, support, and participate in arts and cultural experiences.*

*-Vision statement taken from Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan*

- **Increase communications about upcoming events, programs, exhibitions and arts and cultural activities in Dexter; create “buzz” for Dexter’s artistic community.**

**What?** Artists, arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses and residents in Dexter will have increased communications about what programs, events, exhibitions and activities that are happening locally. There will be a well-trafficked spot online where information specific to Dexter can be accessed. Dexter will be known as an artistic community by residents and non-residents alike.

**Why?** There are a lot of arts and cultural events happening in Dexter, but there does not exist a centralized method of communication. Often times, people may not be fully aware of what is available to them because a centralized communications system is not in place. Dexter is a very artistic and tight-knit community; this, however, is not always reflected in communications efforts.

- **Promote Dexter as an artistic and historic community; use its charm as a marketing hook as well.**

**What?** Dexter will be a destination known for its arts and cultural opportunities and for its historic assets by both local and out-of-town audiences. Arts and culture along with heritage and history will be showcased to lure new customers to the community’s restaurants, shops, and other businesses.

**Why?** Dexter’s charm and its artistic and historical assets are not currently used as effectively as possible to attract residents and visitors from surrounding areas. There is increasing recognition of Dexter as an artistic community and a community known for its history, but these assets are not reflected in communications and marketing, or used to attract new audiences.

- **Ensure increased and consistent arts and cultural media coverage (including previews and reviews of exhibitions and performances).**

**What?** Dexter arts and cultural events will have a strong presence in local media coverage. Partnerships will be made with existing and new media outlets. Local audiences will be aware of the arts and cultural happenings that are taking place in Dexter.

**Why?** With the changes of the area's local newspaper, there may not be as much coverage of local arts and cultural events. Many arts and cultural organizations and creative businesses depend on coverage about local events and program listings, as well as previews and reviews, to reach their audiences.

- **Increase youth and family participation and involvement in arts and cultural activities and events.**

**What?** More youth and family-focused activities will exist in Dexter. These events and classes will coincide with existing Dexter festivals and partnerships with the schools will be strengthened. Information about youth and family-focused cultural activities will be easily accessible, and events and programs will be well attended by the community.

**Why?** As gas prices rise, there is a need for youth and family-oriented cultural activities that do not require driving to another community. Dexter is home to many festivals and events, especially during the summer, but there is not always a place for youth and families.



Jenny's Market House © Jill Love

## Recommendations for Capacity Building, Funding and Investment

### **Capacity Building, Funding and Investment Vision Statement**

***To envision a publicly and privately financed fund that exists in perpetuity to support a stable, vibrant arts and cultural environment that will contribute to the economic and personal well-being of Washtenaw County residents, workers, and visitors.***

*-Vision statement taken from  
Washtenaw County Cultural Master  
Plan*

- **Develop a directory / registry of artists, arts and cultural organizations, and creative businesses in the area.**

**What?** A centralized list of the arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses and artists in Dexter will be available. Community members will be able to search for information about what is available in their area. Artists will be able to identify the venues are available for them to display, perform, or show their artwork. Artists will also have a place where they can connect and find one another. The list will include updated information and will be available online.

**Why?** There is no central information source that includes information about the arts and cultural organizations, creative businesses, and artists are based in Dexter. Artists often do not know where to look for information about available venues or how to find each other. Similarly, community members and arts and cultural organizations may not be aware of the opportunities available to them.

- **Research new funding models to support the arts and cultural sector in Dexter.**

**What?** The Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee will be in a position where it can apply for grants and explore and implement new funding models. The community will be actively involved and interested in the health of its arts and cultural assets. The arts and cultural sector in Dexter will be supported and valued by the community.

**Why?** A sustainable funding model for the arts and cultural sector does not exist. The Arts, Culture and Heritage Committee is not fully aware of what grants and trainings are available to it, and to date no fundraising efforts have been initiated by the committee.

- **Develop partnerships and collaborations within the arts and cultural community and with other village and county-wide entities.**

**What?** A strong collaborative spirit exists in Dexter and the arts and cultural community frequently works with local and county-wide entities on various initiatives. There will be strong partnerships and collaborations between the village, schools, chamber, surrounding areas, and more. These increased connections will drive business downtown and engage new audiences.

**Why?** There exists a need to more proactively build partnerships and collaborations between the arts and cultural community, village, schools, chamber and other entities. Organizations and individuals are not always aware of what is going on, and as a result, opportunities may be missed.

**Cultural Facilities  
Vision Statement**

***To provide better access to new and existing facilities (both arts and non-arts facilities and empty buildings); to enable artists to pursue their craft at all levels; and enable arts and cultural organizations to fulfill their missions in a stable and resource-efficient environment.***

*-Vision statement taken from  
Washtenaw County Cultural  
Master Plan*

## **Recommendation for Cultural Facilities**

- **Identify a facility that can serve as a focal point and arts center for all Dexter arts and cultural activities, including classes, performances, and exhibitions.**

**What?** A facility that houses classes, performances, and exhibition space will exist in Dexter. This facility will be available for the community to use and will be the focal point of arts and culture in the community. Artists will be able to use the space for performances and showing their work, and community members will be able to use the space to participate in classes and other programs.

**Why?** A list of all the spaces and buildings available for rent or purchase in Dexter is not available. Artists, arts and cultural organizations, and creative businesses may not be fully aware of all existing community assets. There does not exist an arts center that can be utilized by local artists and community members.

| Recommendation   | Implementation Partners   | Start Date                               | First Steps   | Resources   |
|--|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Communications, Audience Development and Advocacy</b>   |   |  |   |   |
| Increase communications about upcoming events, programs, exhibitions and arts and cultural activities in Dexter; create "buzz" for Dexter's artistic community | Village of Dexter, Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, arts and cultural organizations, artists, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce, local art galleries | Near term: 6 - 12 months                 | Develop of list of key arts and cultural contacts and those interested in the arts; develop and send regular email announcements about happenings; Partner with the Arts Alliance on their county-wide web portal | Arts Alliance, media, Ann Arbor Area Convention & Visitors Bureau   |
| Promote Dexter as an artistic and historic community; use its charm as a marketing hook as well.   | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce, local art galleries   | Near term: 6 - 12 months                 | Install 1-3 heritage / historical signs in downtown Dexter; Initiate a speakers series in partnership with the new library  | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, village, library, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce                                   |
| Ensure increased and consistent arts and cultural media coverage (including previews & reviews of exhibitions and performances)                                | Dexter Leader, CTN (Community Television Network), Arts Alliance  | Near / Medium term: (6 months - 3 years) | Develop partnerships with local and county-wide media; brainstorm communication mechanism to reach local audiences  | Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce, arts and cultural organizations, local art galleries                                   |
| Increase youth and family participation and involvement in arts and cultural activities and events   | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, schools, library   | Near / Medium term: (6 months - 3 years) | Establish youth activities to coincide with Dexter festivals; Develop youth based programs and partner with schools   | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, schools, library, Arts Alliance, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce |

| Recommendation  | Implementation Partners   | Start Date                               | First Steps   | Resources   |
|---|---|--|---|---|
| <b>Capacity Building, Funding and Investment</b>  |   |  |   |   |
| Develop a directory / registry of artists, arts and cultural organizations, and creative businesses in the area   | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, Arts Alliance, local art galleries   | Near term: 6 - 12 months                 | Create a complete list of who / what is in Dexter and what he/she/it is doing   | Arts Alliance, Artists' Census data, local art galleries  |
| Research new funding models to support the arts and cultural sector in Dexter.  | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, Arts Alliance  | Near term: 6 - 12 months                 | Participate in grant writing training course/workshop; explore possibilities of starting an arts boosters program; organize town hall meetings to talk the health of the arts and ask for community input | NEW, Washtenaw Community College, Arts Alliance, Washtenaw County, Village of Dexter, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce |
| Develop partnerships and collaborations within the arts and cultural community and with other village and county-wide entities                                    | Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee, Village of Dexter, schools, library, village, Arts Alliance, local businesses, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce, local art galleries | Near / Medium term: (6 months - 3 years) | Communicate regularly with educators, businesses and the community about arts & cultural updates & opportunities; research other existing models.   | Dexter Public Library, Schools, Senior Center, Village, Arts Alliance, Dexter Area Chamber of Commerce                |
| <b>Cultural Facilities</b>  |   |  |   |   |
| Identify a facility that can serve as a focal point and arts center for all Dexter arts and cultural activities, including classes, performances and exhibitions. | Village of Dexter; Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee   | Long term: (4 - 5 years)                 | Identify what spaces / buildings are available and what costs would be involved in using the space  | Village of Dexter, local art galleries  |

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN WASHTENAW COUNTY

Arts and culture are important to the quality of life and well being of Washtenaw County. This fact was well documented in the data collected to create the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan.<sup>1</sup> The following provides highlights of what we know about arts and culture in Washtenaw County and comes from the information gathered in the cultural plan's online survey, focus groups, artists' census, and creative economy analysis.

## **People in Washtenaw County Value Arts and Culture**

- 63% said arts and cultural programs were very important to their choice to live in Washtenaw County.
- 75% said that business support for arts and culture made a difference when they chose what businesses to patronize.

## **Many Businesses Recognize the Value of Arts and Culture to the Bottom Line**

- 63% said that access to arts and culture was important in their decision to locate or keep their businesses in Washtenaw County.
- 57% thought access to arts and cultural programs was important in helping to recruit and retain qualified workers.

## **The Creative Sector Plays a Distinct Role in the County's Economy**

- 4.6% of the county's total workforce works in the creative economy.
- 10% of the county's total payroll is generated by the creative economy.
- 823 students from the University of Michigan and Eastern Michigan University earned degrees related to the creative economy in 2007.

## **The Quality of Our Cultural Offerings is Generally High, but not Everyone has Access to Them**

- 88% were satisfied with the quality of arts, heritage, and interpretive science programs in their community.
- 66% felt that good science and arts education is not equally available to students throughout the county.

## **Artists (visual, performing, and literary) are a Significant Force in Washtenaw County**

- 2,530 individuals responded to the Artists' Census and were classified as *Washtenaw County Artists*. Of these, 1,173 individuals satisfied criteria and were identified as *Working Artists*.

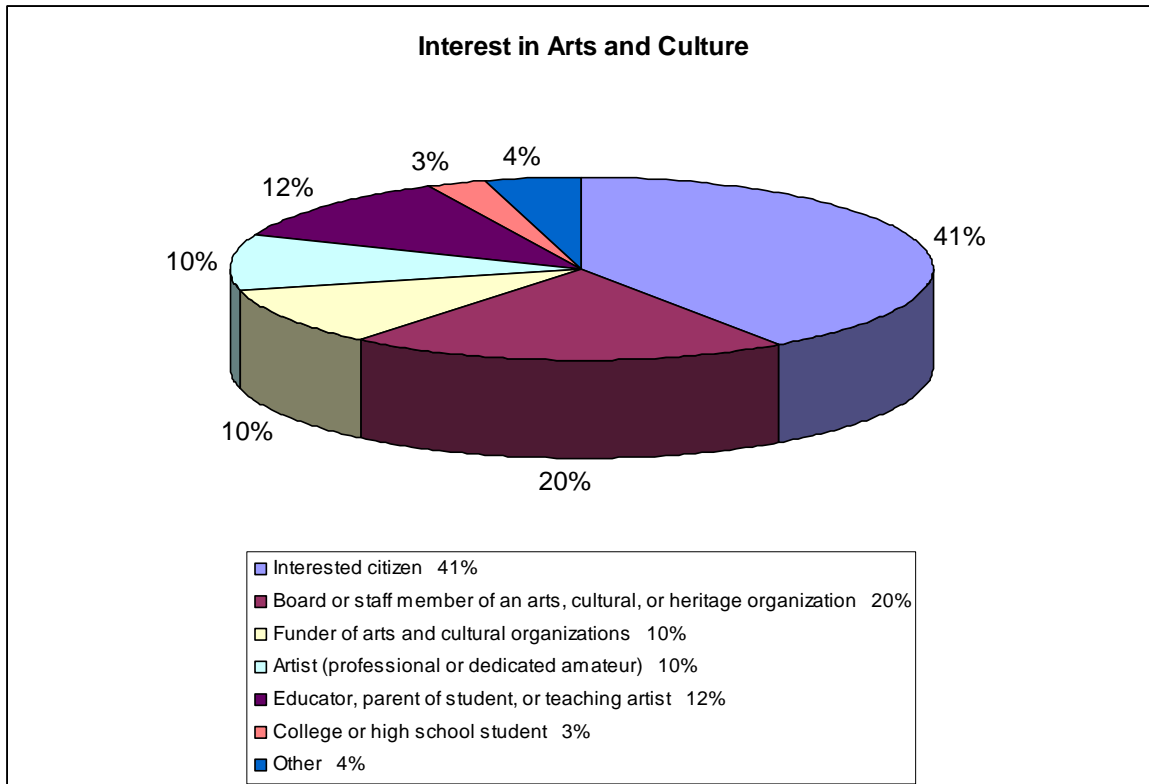
<sup>1</sup> This data is reported in the following documents, which can be accessed at [http://a2artsalliance.org/initiatives\\_culturalplan.asp](http://a2artsalliance.org/initiatives_culturalplan.asp):

- Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Online Survey Report
- Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Community Forums Full Archival Report
- 2008 Artists' Census Report
- The Creative Economy Analysis conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK, 2008

# WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT ARTS AND CULTURE IN DEXTER

## ONLINE SURVEY

The Arts Alliance conducted an online survey between October 2007 and January 2008 to gather information about residents' attitudes toward arts and culture in Washtenaw County. Thirty-seven Dexter residents responded to the 52-question survey, representing 2.43% of the 1,535 survey respondents who completed the survey. Dexter residents identified themselves as follows:



## ARTISTS' CENSUS

The Washtenaw County Artists' Census was administered by the Arts Alliance as part of the cultural plan. This census ran from April 1 through May 17, 2008. Ninety-seven artists from Dexter responded to the census, representing more than a 4% response rate relative to Dexter's population. This was the highest percentage of artists relative to population to respond to the census in the county. Forty-three Dexter artists were identified as *Working Artists*.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>*Working Artists* were classified based on meeting all of the following criteria: 1) self-defines as an artist; 2) works as a visual, performing, or literary artist; 3) spends 40 or more hours a month on his/her creative field; and 4) shares his/her artwork beyond family and friends. Criteria was adapted from *Crossover: How Artists Build Careers across Commercial, Nonprofit and Community Work*, a publication produced by Dr. Ann Markusen of the University of Minnesota.

## FOCUS GROUP MEETINGS

As part of its research for the Washtenaw County Cultural Plan, the Arts Alliance held three small discussion groups, or “community forums,” in Dexter to gather in-depth resident input. These forums were held between October 2007 and January 2008. Some of the key issues that came up in these forums included:

### Dexter Cultural Assets – What’s Special about Dexter?

- **Village charm** Dexter residents have a strong sense of community. Businesses are mostly local and the planning board hopes to control future development of chain retail outlets and extensive new residential options. The community is close-knit and friendly.
- **Community events** Forum participants described many community events including: Dexter Daze, Victorian Christmas, Apple Days, and bike race.
- **Community cultural organizations** A community theatre, band, and orchestra are among the cultural organizations offering programs.

### Dexter Challenges

- **Retain village atmosphere** Dexter wishes to retain local ownership of businesses and avoid big-box retailers and sprawling growth.
- **Arts corridor** The Chamber of Commerce would like to see a regional arts corridor.
- **Communication** Cultural organizations seem to rely primarily on word of mouth marketing. A community calendar is needed.
- **Funding** Local leaders could not raise \$500 from the village council to study starting an arts commission. Cultural leaders don’t know what funding is available.
- **Limited arts education** Opportunities for instruction in visual and performing arts are limited. There is no arts advocacy.

### **A Vision for Dexter: What Might This Community Look Like in Five Years?**

- **Thriving downtown** In 2013, an arts corridor helps develop a thriving downtown. Shops, galleries, bed and breakfasts, antique stores, and a hotel attract visitors and residents downtown.
- **Comprehensive arts education** A strong arts education program provides all students with education in the visual and performing arts. Arts partners and artists-in-residence enrich learning.
- **Active arts center** By 2013, a visual and performing arts center provides opportunities for artists, audiences, and learners. Development of a local arts commission could support these initiatives.
- **Performances** In five years, strong concert seasons attract steady audiences. Adequate funding assures the community has access to quality programs.

*The above data about Dexter drawn from the Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Online Survey Report, Washtenaw County Cultural Assessment Community Forums Full Archival Report, 2008 Artists' Census Report, and The Creative Economy Analysis conducted by Ann Arbor SPARK, 2008.*

*Data from forums collected and narrative written by Cultural Plan Associate Consultant, Susan Badger Booth.*



**Honey House © Jill Love**

## DEXTER COMMUNITY INPUT

The following individuals participated in at least one of the three public meetings held in Dexter to work on the Dexter Working Plan. Meetings included a public forum and two working group meetings.

These individuals have demonstrated a strong interest for arts and culture in their community. They could serve as the nucleus to oversee the implementation of this plan.

Jeanne Adwani  
Audrey Becker  
Jerusha Clark  
Paul Cousins  
Judy Feldmann  
Cheryl Hall  
Jon Hartman  
Gloria Leininger  
Jill Love  
Mary-Ellen Miller  
Julie Jafee Nagel

Louis Nagel  
Courtney Nicholls  
Joe Nowak  
Pam O'Hara  
Thomas Rosenbaum  
Anne Savage  
Victoria Schon  
Michael Vickers  
Kandie Waggoner  
Mona Walz  
Helen Welford

Members of the Dexter Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee:

Audrey Becker - Chair  
Jerusha Clark  
Jill Love  
Julie Jafee Nagel  
Louis Nagel

Pam O'Hara  
Thomas Rosenbaum  
Anne Savage  
Michael Vickers – Vice-Chair  
Paul Cousins - Ex Officio

*These members will serve as the lead partner for moving this plan forward in Dexter.*

The mission statement of the *Dexter Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission* is as follows: *Dexter's Arts, Culture, and Heritage Commission* promotes and facilitates arts and culture in Dexter, Michigan. [Their] mission includes increasing awareness of Dexter's heritage and history; serving the local community by providing networking resources and opportunities; acting as a liaison to existing artistic and cultural organizations; and fostering a wide range of cultural activities that enrich our community.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

*Special thanks to all the individuals who have helped the Dexter Working Plan come to fruition.*

*Every effort was made to include the names of those individuals that participated in this process. Please excuse any omissions, misspellings or other oversights.*

### Photo Credits

All photos © of Jill Love

#### **Front cover:**

*Row (from left to right)*

Dexter Christmas Run

Dexter Monument Park

Dexter Daze Parade

*Column (from top to bottom)*

Dexter Gazebo

Dexter Winter Parade

Reddeman Farms Golf Course in Dexter

#### **Background Information:**

*From left to right*

Downtown Dexter

Honey House

*The Dexter Working Plan, Initial Steps for implementing the Washtenaw County Cultural Master Plan in the Dexter Area* was written in June 2009 by Angela Martín-Barcelona, Marketing Director, Arts Alliance. Susan Badger Booth, Assistant Professor, Department of Communication & Theater Arts at Eastern Michigan University wrote the summation of the Dexter focus group meetings. Tamara Real, President, Arts Alliance, served as Project Manager.

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# INVESTORS IN THE CULTURAL PLAN

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### Susan Badger Booth

Eastern Michigan University

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## Arts, Culture & Heritage Committee

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Jill Love

Julie Jafee Nagel

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Dexter Village Council Member

### Jill Love

Photographer

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### Michael David Nisson, Hole in One, L.L.C.

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### Tamara Real, President

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### Cynthia Johnson, Special Projects Coordinator

*The Arts Alliance serves all of Washtenaw County, working to create an environment where culture and creativity can flourish and the arts are accessible to all.*

ArtsAlliance®

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