



Date: August 8, 2022

To: Robin Chalhoub, Community Services Department Director

Re: Cultural Core Year-5 Executive Summary and Year-6 Budget and Plan

The Cultural Core Budget Committee has reviewed and approved the budget and plan for Year-6 of the Cultural Core Initiative. We seek the Salt Lake County Council's approval for the Cultural Core Year-6 budget and plan. Below is an executive summary of Year-5 performance and Year-6 plans.

Five years ago, Downtown SLC Presents was selected to implement the ambitious Cultural Core Action Plan, a 20-year investment to advance downtown Salt Lake as the premier cultural district in the Intermountain West. We are pleased to continue as the implementation manager for the Cultural Core. We reassert our commitment to our mission of building a vibrant downtown creative community.

After being awarded the contract in 2017, Downtown SLC Presents worked with stakeholders, creatives, and consultants to dream and imagine an apparatus that would be efficient with limited resources, malleable to serve our community, and dynamic and agile to achieve lofty goals. Comprehensive conversations led our organization to construct the brand identity of The Blocks, a cue to Salt Lake's history of numbered blocks that delineated distinct districts. We are proud of the work completed: activations like Open Streets, fully-animated by funding from The Blocks for street buskers; marquee placemaking like GLOW, a free winter activation using large-scale experiential sculptures; promoting legacy arts organizations and amplifying smaller entrepreneurial artistic endeavors; large scale murals painted by artists and art lovers; and literally dozens of other projects focused on expanding and diversifying Cultural Core artists and audiences. We learned a lot during the inaugural five years and are excited about the potential before us all in the core. We are uniquely qualified to take up the next five years of implementation and will do so in collaboration with the artistic community and under the guidance of the Cultural Core Budget Committee. In elevating arts, culture, and entertainment downtown, we have helped exhilarate the economy for the entire region. We look forward to working with you to continue making this an extraordinary city.

## **YEAR-5: July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022**

THE BLOCKS continued to heavily invest in marketing and promoting arts, culture, entertainment, and nightlife programming in the Cultural Core. Digital ads, social media, radio, and online/mobile content are our biggest areas of investment. These efforts resulted in consistent growth of public awareness of offerings. Through our data feed partnership with Now Playing Utah, we prominently display event listings on theblockssl.org. There are, on average, more than 100 events, programs, and happenings each month that we promote and amplify. Additional amplification and support is lent through our social media and blog efforts. Boosted posts, paid social media, targeting and retargeting are some of the ways we engage a wide demographic. We have seen an increase in social media reach on Facebook and Instagram and reached more than 100,000 users just on those two platforms. Across all our social media platforms we consistently reach more than 250,000 users. Additionally, our partnership with the Salt Lake Tribune resulted in growth in pageviews and average views per article. Since January of 2022, 46 Salt Lake Tribune articles were written featuring Cultural Core content and reached more than 210,000 users. Additional investments in Spanish language radio ads, social media ads, and translated press releases, has expanded our reach and continues to be an area of focus so that we can be on the leading edge of equity and inclusion. Our Main Street kiosks provide more than \$80,000 in advertising value each year for Cultural Core programmers. We proudly and prominently display program and event advertisements in our 4 kiosks located along a high traffic area of Main Street.

THE BLOCKS worked hard to highlight the people, spaces, places, and opportunities to engage with the arts. Nimble activations and new audience experiences were created through Open Streets activations, including the expansion of our Eccles Lobby activation partnership with Salt Lake County Arts & Culture, Alleyways Amplified on Edison Street, Groove at Gallivan, Glow Sculptural Garden, and a series of musical activations in partnership with Visit Salt Lake. These activations were enjoyed by businesses and their employees, conventioners, and of course the many visitors who come to Salt Lake City to enjoy all of the amenities found in the Cultural Core. We deployed our event programming assets 40 times to 30 programmers and provided an in kind value of \$15,000. In the last year we have deployed more than \$50,000 to artists, makers, and creators and facilitated more than 300 activations that featured more than 800 performers.

We continue to invest in THE BLOCKS Public Art and Mural Trail app with videos, photos and artist information on over 60 pieces of public art and murals within THE BLOCKS. We also invested in street pole banners to promote organizations producing programming within the Cultural Core and recently unveiled a new multilingual banner campaign as part of our diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Other signature events and programs include Last Hurrah, an annual legacy event on new years eve that welcomes 10,000 visitors to the Gateway to ring in the new year and Locally Made, Locally Played, a partnership with KUAA radio to showcase local musicians. This program, airing twice a week, continues to reach viewers internationally, nationally, and throughout our state. More than 40% of listeners come from outside of Salt Lake City, but within Salt Lake County.

We recently brought Locally Made, Locally Played out of the studio and onto the stage. On July 24, 2022, the Locally Made, Locally Played live music stage presented by THE BLOCKS, entertained more than 2500 people with a free concert.

Glow Sculpture Garden continues to grow! Large scale art installations animate Gallivan Center to delight visitors in the heart of our city. These installations, especially popular during the holidays, are an additional amenity brought to you by THE BLOCKS as part of our larger holiday campaign efforts to welcome audiences to the Cultural Core.

Open Streets continues through Labor Day. The closure of Main Street, creating a pedestrian promenade and allowing businesses to safely expand their premises to serve additional customers, continues to be a huge success. We program more than 150 artists per month to entertain visitors as they stroll along Main Street. These performances highlight the breadth and depth of our creative community and provide a platform for creatives to share their craft with more than 25,000 visitors each weekend.

Success was validated with data collected through our website, media partners and social media channels as well as feedback from the creative community. Visitation to the Cultural Core and dwell time within the Cultural Core are both very meaningful metrics and we have seen increases in both. Ticket sales cannot be the only metric for measuring audiences and marketing performance as they do not accurately capture the diversity of artistic content nor the diversity of the audience. That is why we utilize Placer.ai and Zartico. Placer.ai is a data tool that allows us to compare visitation in specific areas, time of day, and events to understand visitor trends. For example, Placer.ai allowed us to see the increase in visitors and increase in dwell time for Open Streets. These figures validate our marketing and promotion efforts as well as our programming efforts. We saw a direct correlation between Open Streets and BLOCKS programming to the number of weekend visitors to downtown. Zartico is a new tool we will begin using in the 2022-2023 fiscal year. It provides insights on Cultural Core patrons and their economic impact. This data will inform how we adjust programming and promotions to expand and diversify the audience. We have access to this powerful data source through our strategic partner Visit Salt Lake. Industry data from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute is also very helpful to understand the economic impact that is generated by direct and indirect spending inside the Cultural Core and across Salt Lake County.

#### **Year-6: July 1, 2022 through June 30, 2023**

Continued investment in the individuals and organizations programming in the core remains a priority. We are focused on building audiences and growing awareness of the vast arts, culture, and entertainment opportunities in THE BLOCKS. In year-6 THE BLOCKS will focus on promoting existing arts organizations' programming and investing in placemaking throughout the cultural core. Marquis events include: Open Streets, Glow Sculptural Garden, Last Hurrah!, NBA All Star week activations, Groove at Gallivan, Locally Made, Locally Played, and BLOCKS Social House. BLOCKS social house is a quarterly event aimed at our local arts and culture leaders to better understand their changing needs so we can continue to support Cultural Core programming. These marquis events led by THE BLOCKS are in addition to the more than 100 programs and events that happen on a monthly basis.

Our marketing and promotion strategies will continue to target audiences across the County, State, and Intermountain west. As more and more organizations take advantage of BLOCKS resources we will continue to invest in photographic and video assets. This will ensure not only a rich asset bank for use in our ongoing promotions and marketing campaigns, but will help THE BLOCKS and the creative community have a greater online presence. A specific focus on Spanish language content is aimed at growing audiences and increasing equity and inclusion.

Program and event expenses are focused on increasing artist opportunities, supplementing existing arts organization programming, working closely with arts organizations to curate content and offerings, audience development, and providing opportunities for our creative community to program through the continuation of various placemaking projects and strategic deployments of the BLOCKS Truck and assets. We will measure success through visitation, ticket sales, artist and arts group participation, and economic impact.

**THE BLOCKS continues to be a leader in programming, placemaking, and promotions. In the last 12 months we have supported more artists than ever before, created strong placemaking and programming opportunities that have driven audiences to the Cultural Core, built audiences, and strengthened our economy. The work completed, investments made and overall impact in year-five garnered great support from our creative community stakeholders, Cultural Core Budget Committee Representatives, businesses, and audiences. THE BLOCKS reach, brand awareness, and overall impact continues to grow and the implementation of the Cultural Core Master Plan is on target. The partnerships that have been forged will continue to strengthen and grow, creating exciting opportunities for arts and culture to flourish and guide THE BLOCKS over the coming years. Thank you for your support.**