

Springfield Creative City Collective Strategic Implementation Plan

The Springfield Creative City Collective is a coalition of economic development stakeholders focused on the transformation and revitalization of the Springfield creative and cultural economy, through sustainable and culturally proficient initiatives that interconnect advocacy, racial equity, social justice, professional development, and strategic investment.

Heal

The foundation of Springfield’s sustainable economic growth involves the recognition of socioeconomic inequities, the development of culturally proficient solutions and a commitment to community trust building. This work is essential to transforming the economic behaviors and potential of the Springfield Creative and Cultural Economy.

Health, Wellness & Holistic Care

Health, Wellness & Holistic care has become a national priority in recent years, due to the undeniable reality that a significant number of the United States population is challenged with mental health and substance use concerns. “Mental illnesses are common in the United States. Nearly one in five U.S. adults live with a mental illness (52.9 million in 2020).” [NIMH » Mental Illness \(nih.gov\)](#) The Springfield Health Equity report, produced by the Public Health Institute of Western Massachusetts, also highlighted this reality that “Mental health is essential to an individual’s overall well-being, and is closely connected to physical health. Mental disorders are among the leading causes of disability in the United States and suicide remains the 10th leading cause of death.” [PHI-Report-2019-04-29_web.pdf \(publichealthwm.org\)](#) This report has described the specificities of the Springfield health and wellness crisis with accompanying statistical evidence from a variety of empirical research studies on our community. When designing a plan to transform and revitalize the creative and cultural economy of Springfield, we must build culturally proficient strategies to address the health and wellness crisis of the community in tandem. The individuals and families we are asking to increase engagement with the economic sectors of our city, must be considered at the core of every initiative we facilitate.

The Springfield Health Equity report continues to explain, “Despite overall increases in rates of individuals seeking and receiving mental health treatment in recent years, racial inequities in mental health care remain higher than nearly any other health services area. Springfield residents continued to be hospitalized for mental health-related conditions more than twice as often as all Massachusetts residents (1,995 vs 853 per 100,000)(MDPH Acute Care Dataset, 2012-2015)(Figure 13). When examining by race/ethnicity, White and Latino/a residents continued to experience the highest rates of hospitalizations due to mental health conditions in Springfield. Statewide, the highest rate was among Black residents.” - [PHI-Report-2019-04-29_web.pdf \(publichealthwm.org\)](#). The Springfield communities health and wellness must be prioritized as we seek their consistent engagement in the creative and cultural economy.

The intersection of multiple pandemics and epidemics have impacted adults as well as children to such a degree, that children’s mental health is now identified as a national crisis as well. There is now a renewed focus on

Springfield Creative City Collective Strategic Implementation Plan

ensuring access to quality social emotional and mental health care for youth and families. Springfield deserves creative leadership who keep this focus prioritized. The impact of the intersection of the pandemics and epidemics are tremendous and are being highlighted throughout the school related research coming out in the field. The research highlights the impact on children's mental health and the difficulty students are having in accessing their executive functioning capacity to engage in their academic studies. Without a focus on the social emotional aspect of youth, we miss opportunities to support their ongoing development. Not addressing this need, will negatively affect students' ability to tune into academic instructions and successfully participate in their learning. Our youth are essential stakeholders to building and sustaining a creative city, therefore their health should be prioritized. Families are reporting on a consistent basis that their mental health is challenged by the stressors of economic challenges, food insecurity, homelessness, prior adverse childhood experiences and existing psychological distress that if not addressed will result in them entering the emergency rooms and or higher levels of care similar to the youth care trajectory. This reality has and will continue to negatively impact the creative and cultural economy of Springfield if it remains unaddressed.

Throughout history, the arts and culture ecosystem has been a space for creatives to use multiple mediums to express themselves and contribute to the overall health of individuals and communities. The history is replete with outcomes of higher quality of life experiences when individuals are able to engage their whole self in their work, recreation, education and overall self care activities. Attending to creatives' whole self is not an option, but an absolute necessity for a growing and developing cultural ecosystem. As such it is critical that access to culturally competent and linguistically appropriate services be provided to children and families in our communities. It is absolutely imperative that the barriers to accessing diverse mental health modalities and approaches (traditional and non-traditional) be removed to ensure that children and family are able to live, love, work, go to school and play in their communities and not have to access the emergency room and or higher levels of care including inpatient psychiatric stays and residential care for mental health services. "Behavioral Health Equity is the right to access quality health care for all populations regardless of the individual's race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, or geographical location. This includes access to prevention, treatment, and recovery services for mental and substance use disorders." [Behavioral Health Equity | SAMHSA](#)

It is worth noting the state of opioid epidemic and the impact of Covid-19 on individuals and families as referenced below. As it relates to the opioid epidemic, "The number of drug overdose deaths increased by nearly 5% from 2018 to 2019 and has quadrupled since 1999. Over 70% of the 70,630 deaths in 2019 involved an opioid. From 2018 to 2019, there were significant changes in opioid-involved death rates." [Understanding the Epidemic | Drug Overdose | CDC Injury Center](#) Regarding the matter of national mental health crisis, The American Psychological Association states the following: "APA's 2020 Stress in America survey released in October revealed that Americans have been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and are struggling to cope with the disruptions on top of other factors creating stress, including political conflict, the impact of racism, and an economic downturn. The combination of these compounding stressors and the persistent drumbeat of an ongoing public health emergency has prompted APA to sound the alarm on a growing mental health crisis that could yield serious health and social consequences for years to come." [The national mental health crisis \(apa.org\)](#)

Springfield Creative City Collective Strategic Implementation Plan

With the above in mind, the reality is this, the development of the cultural economy must include a focus on all aspects of individual health and wellness including mental health if it is to become a thriving and sustainable economy. Having the capacity to provide behavioral health services, triage care and make appropriate referrals are all needed within the ecosystem. It requires identification of community resources, trusted messengers, skilled workforce, and established authentic partnerships which are key components necessary in the building of an infrastructure that can support the ongoing community needs. Art has been ever aligned with healing society's through creatively innovative mediums. We will be working to coordinate consistent and sustainable creative opportunities to help elevate the overall quality of life for Springfield residents.