

Arts & Culture

EconomicDevelopmentAsheville.org

One of Asheville's most distinct and deeply-rooted assets is the arts.

With an arts culture comes a creative independence and a desire to share and collaborate that not only nurtures the arts community, but can be good for business of all types.

The City is home to a diverse community of people working in creative fields — a greater concentration than that of the state or nation.

They often are drawn here by a world-class reputation and a centuries-old legacy of handcrafted objects, music and dance, and they remain here for this mountain city's high quality of life and ever-expanding creative possibilities.

Visual artists working in every media imaginable are showcased in hundreds of gallery spaces and open studios, at dozens of juried shows devoted to fine arts, studio craft and handmade items, and in public art installations throughout the city.

Local and visiting musicians and performers find eager audiences in Asheville's venues — from arena, auditoriums and outdoor festivals, to intimate theater spaces and clubs, and even on the lively sidewalks of downtown.

And a growing number of digital artists are applying technology in new and innovative ways — from scientific visualization and animation, to film and video production.

Focus Report from the



Asheville-Buncombe County



Photo by Michael Oppenheim.

“Our Asheville way of life is conducive to creative output compared to life in a big city. While artists do find inspiration in both places, I think the natural beauty here is what helps the creative spirit.”

— Hilary McVicker,
Board Chairman, The MAP (Media Arts Project)
Communicatrix, The Elumenati

Creativity at Work

Creative economy enterprises can influence successes of all economic sectors by:

- **Fostering creative thinking and collaborative opportunities.**
- **Attracting other talent and businesses to the area.**
- **Increasing the pace of innovation, commerce and tourism.**
- **Contributing to a clean, sustainable economy.**
- **Improving quality of life.**
- **Fostering a sense of place.**
- **Conserving history and heritage.**

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation Industry in the Asheville MSA

- **Jobs: 6,500 in 2011**
- **Job growth 2005-2011: 17%**
- **Top Occupations include: Musicians and Singers, Writers and Authors, Multi-media Artists and Animators**

Source:
EMSI Complete
Employment

Tradition of Arts

Western North Carolina's tradition of the arts reaches back centuries to the Cherokee and their extraordinary skills in pottery, basket weaving, carving and tool-making.

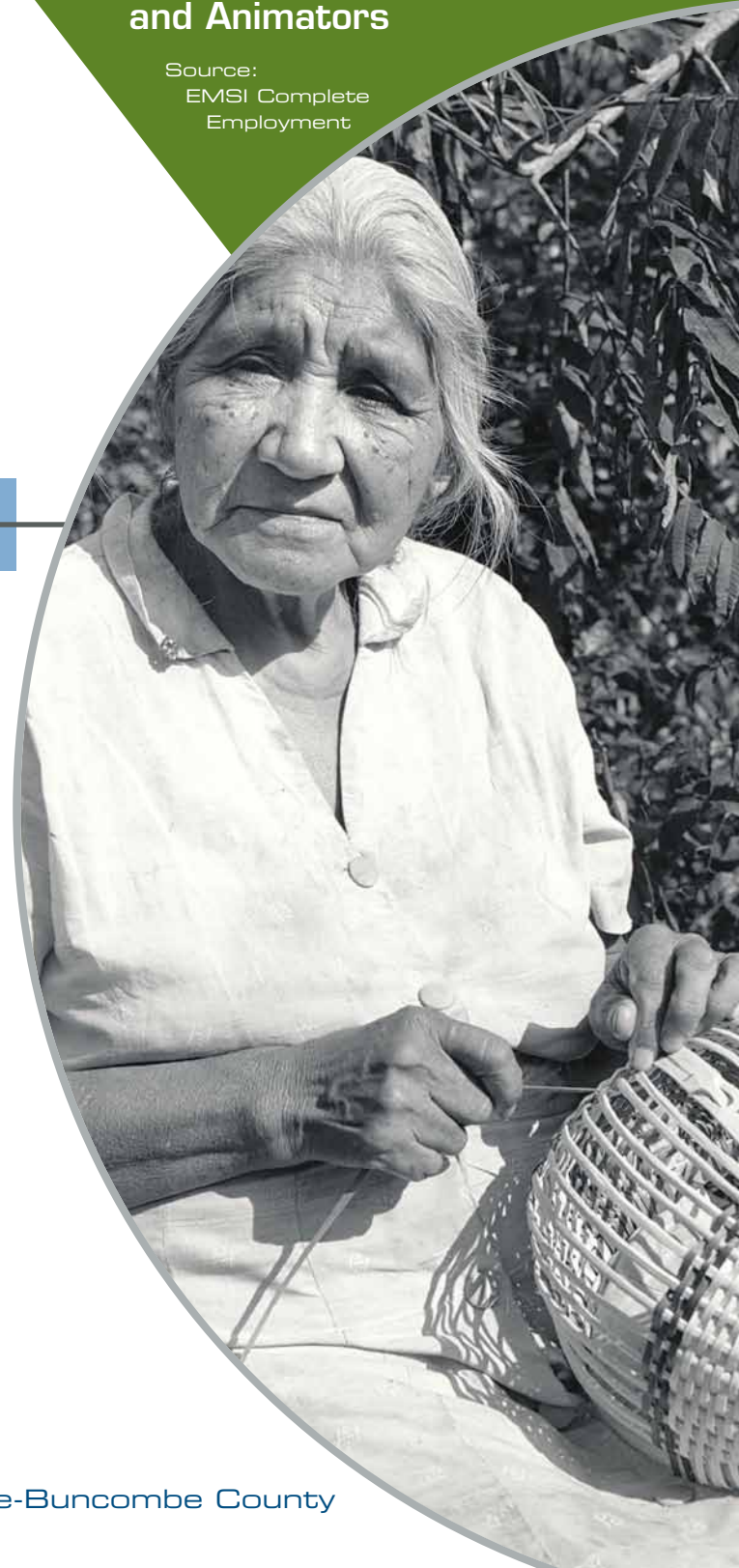
By the 1700s, Scots-Irish settlers arrived bringing with them their talents for music and dance and an independent and industrious spirit.

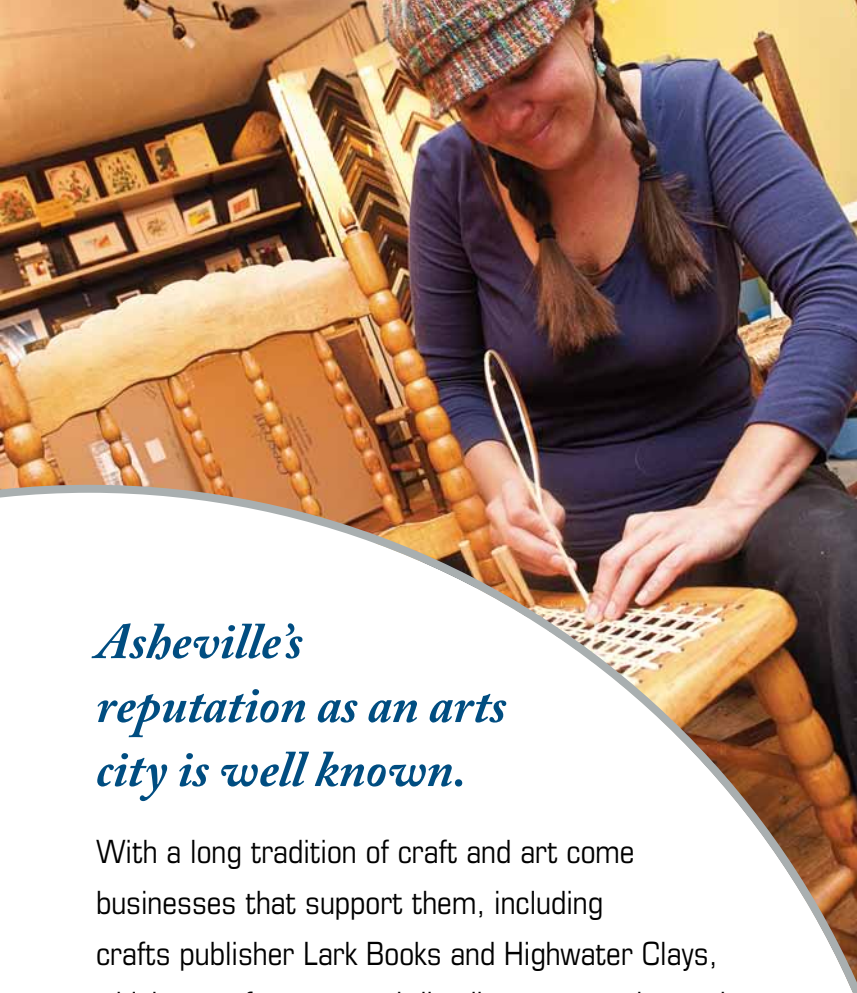
George Vanderbilt chose Asheville to build his Biltmore home in the late 1800s. Construction of the 250-room chateau took six years and brought to town renowned architects and some of the finest artisans in the world – many who remained and helped to build some of the city's most treasured architecture.

Avant-garde emerged in the 1930s with the founding of Black Mountain College, an experimental educational community that included some of the most influential visual artists, composers, poets and designers of the 20th century.

Today, the influences of this long creative history remain and contribute to the city's ever-deepening arts legacy.

Julia Ned Taylor (1902-1991) making a white oak ribbed basket.
Photo courtesy Qualla Arts & Crafts Mutual Collection.





Asheville's reputation as an arts city is well known.

With a long tradition of craft and art come businesses that support them, including crafts publisher Lark Books and Highwater Clays, which manufactures and distributes ceramics and equipment supplies.

The city center itself is a work of art, with exquisite urban architecture that dates back to the late 19th and early 20th centuries, including the largest collection of Art Deco structures in the Southeast outside of Miami.

Downtown is home to the Asheville Art Museum and YMI Cultural Center, public art installations featuring sculpture, outdoor murals and the 30-station Urban Walking Trail. There are dozens of gallery spaces showcasing the unique and talented work of local and regional artists and craftspeople.

Outside downtown, communities of artists are flourishing in rural settings, small towns and neighborhoods. Industrial areas such as the River Arts District are being reclaimed, enhancing the area's business landscape and promise.

River Arts District

The River Arts District (RAD) characterizes the growing vibrancy and possibilities of the city's multi-faceted arts scene.

Once a largely abandoned industrial area, the District today is home to 180 artists working in warehouses and commercial buildings that have been converted into studio spaces. An increasing number of the properties are owned by the artists themselves, committed to maintaining affordable rents for others who want to work in the District.

RAD is also home to the Asheville Area Arts Council, a theater, dance studios, restaurants and pubs, as well as manufacturers and a growing professional workforce – all seemingly drawing inspiration from one another. A River Arts District Business Association formed in 2010 and joins the long-established River Arts District Artists Association in supporting and promoting the people working in the District community.

Brandy Clements fourth-generation chair caner.
Photo by www.DavidSimchock.com.

Economic impact of craft industry in WNC

- **Overall: \$206.5 million**
- **From craft artisans: \$86.2 million**
- **From retailers: \$57.7 million**
- **From craft consumers: \$31.5 million**
- **From craft suppliers and publishers: \$15 million**
- **From craft educators: \$11.8 million**
- **From craft non-profits: \$4.4 million**
- **Overall increase since 1995: \$84.5 million**

Source: DESS Business Research LLC, 2008



Music

An exciting and innovative mix of Asheville-based enterprises is helping build the city's reputation in the music industry.

Emerging and established national artists come to the city regularly to record their music at world-class facilities like Echo Mountain Studios, or visit the makers of their instruments at places like Moog Music, the Abell Flute Company or Stauffer Percussion.

From offices in downtown, Music Allies and its sister company, Creative Allies, work to market and promote bands, festivals and brands around the world.

And with venues like The Orange Peel, which *Rolling Stone* magazine has called one of the best in the nation, as well as countless festivals showcasing music ranging from bluegrass and old-time to electronic, Asheville is known far and wide as a great place for acts to perform.

Moog

Moog Music's relocation in 2011 from an industrial park to a highly visible part of downtown is a tangible example of the company's commitment to Asheville.

The manufacturer transformed a once-abandoned building into a landmark. An eye-catching mural and rows of picture windows entice visitors to come in and have a look around. Once inside, they can experiment with one of Moog's world-famous electronic instruments, take a factory tour to see how they're built, or maybe even catch a glimpse of one of the hundreds of recording artists who pass through the doors every year.

Through events like Moogfest – the three-day festival that attracts more than 25,000 electronic music fans to town every fall – and AHA AVL – a new showcase for emerging musicians in the area – Moog is using its worldwide reputation in the entertainment industry to promote Asheville's homegrown talent and vibrant music scene.

Toro Y Moi, Brian Eno.
Photos courtesy Moog Music Inc.

Music Allies / Creative Allies

Like so many others, Sean O'Connell was drawn to the Asheville area by the lure of the outdoors and its emerging reputation as a hotspot for indie rock, folk and bluegrass music.

He also felt the town with its bohemian vibe, independent spirit and low overhead compared to the country's major entertainment hubs – was an ideal place to launch a new business.

In 2002, O'Connell founded Music Allies. From its downtown offices, the company promotes bands, record labels, festivals and pop-culture brands through online, strategic and radio marketing. Clients have included Justin Timberlake, Jack Johnson, Ani DiFranco, the Hangout Music Festival, Bonnaroo and the Life is Good festival.

A second venture, Creative Allies, launched in 2010 and connects an online community of more than 22,000 graphic artists and designers around the world with musical acts and brands that need artwork for merchandise. Clients include the Beastie Boys, South by Southwest festival, the Counting Crows, Feist and local brands like Asheville Brewing Company and Tupelo Honey restaurant.



*“We have always loved visiting Asheville.
...After meeting members of the
business community and imagining
our company in downtown
Asheville, we decided now
was the perfect time.”*

— Adam Blumenthal, CEO
and Chief Strategist,
Curious Sense

Digital Arts

Asheville is home to a growing community of highly innovative digital artists.

Graphic and interactive designers, visualization experts, film producers, animators and game developers all work here, with many reaching across and outside of the digital arts industry to create amazing projects.

The Elumenati, for example, brings scientific data and research to life for clients like RENCi (REnaissance Computing Institute), NOAA and NASA with its immersive technology design.

American Green Media’s documentary films showcase the important and life-altering work of its clients – from American Green International’s efforts to introduce sustainable technologies to developing communities worldwide, to Bent Creek Institute’s initiative establishing the region as an integrative wellness center by developing and conserving our plant biodiversity.

Digital artists are also connecting and collaborating in increasing numbers with those working in dance and the performing arts, fashion, music and fine arts.

One of America’s top 5 music venues (The Orange Peel)

— Rolling Stone magazine, 2008

The MAP

The MAP (Media Arts Project) is a nonprofit organization of artists and professionals who believe the media arts are integral to the vibrant cultural and economic life of the Asheville area.

Founded in 2004, the nearly 400-member group cultivates innovative arts and technology through programming, professional development, outreach and education.

Work includes the MAP Community Grants, which fund innovative arts projects, and {Re}HAPPENING, an annual evening event staged in collaboration with the Black Mountain College Museum + Arts Center that showcases sculpture, dance, performance, sound and new media and the connections between those art forms.

The MAP also maintains an online directory where local digital artists can post their portfolios, share ideas and network. The directory currently lists approximately 150 members working in digital and graphic arts, information visualization, film and video production, animation and video game production.

Photo: *Fibre Libre*, artist’s book by Bridget Elmer;
www.flatbedsplendor.com.

*At events like
HatchAsheville and TEDx,
creative minds from the arts,
business, education, science and
social activism come together to share
ideas and inspire change.*

The Asheville area is rich with resources that inspire artists in their work and teach them how to craft their businesses.

There are organizations eager to help entrepreneurs launch new enterprises or grow existing ones. Area schools and programs allow artists to share ideas and refine skills. Asheville is home to HandMade in America, which is nationally renowned for its work to develop economies based on craft and cultural heritage, and to the Southern Highland Craft Guild, which has been supporting craftspeople of the region for more than 80 years. Within a few hours drive of the city are the internationally acclaimed Penland School of Crafts and John C. Campbell Folk School.

In the region's colleges and universities, studies are available in a wide range of creative pursuits – from studio art, performing arts and writing, to new media and music technology. Students can also learn the business of arts through programs like the Professional Craft Program at Haywood Community College. In addition, a wide array of highly specialized schools and programs offer instruction in music, dance, performance, fine art and craft.

“It was important to find a location that reflected our interest in preservation, our corporate values of sustainability, as well as the history and heritage of our locally sourced materials. We found the perfect complement in the River Arts District.”

— Darren Green, Owner,
The Old Wood Company

“There’s something about being immersed in other creative endeavors going on around you that can give you a charge.”

— Matt Sprouse, Partner, Sitework Studios
President, River Arts District Business Association

Asheville-area organizations working with artists to help them build their businesses

- **HandMade in America:** Offers professional development training for craft artists, connects craft artists with design, building and real estate professionals, and the consumer through its Craft, Architecture and Design program and WNC Craft Registry.
- **Southern Highland Craft Guild:** Offers marketing and sales assistance to more than 900 members through exposure at annual craft fairs and five regional craft shops.
- **Mountain BizWorks:** Offers loans, lines of credit and training to help entrepreneurs in start-up and existing business development.
- **Small Business and Technology Development Center:** Offers training and education for business start-ups, financial analysis and assistance, marketing help, research.
- **Asheville Area Arts Council:** Offers professional and audience development, grant funding opportunities.
- **Arts2People:** Offers business skill training through the Artist Resource Center and connects artists needing work or retail space with donated vacant commercial real estate needing revitalization through the Handcrafted Artisan Revitalization Project.
- **The Big Crafty:** Provides exposure for more than 150 independent artists and crafters through two annual fairs.
- **Sequoyah Fund:** Offers loans and supports creative economy businesses located in seven far-western counties of WNC.



*Consistently recognized
as a top arts small city,
including No. 1
in 2010 and 2011.*

— *AmericanStyle* magazine

A survey of more than 2,200 full- and part-time professional craft artists in WNC revealed:

- 56 percent of respondents operate a full-time business
- 33 percent have full- or part-time employees
- \$48,000 is the median household income for artists
- There are more than 130 craft galleries in WNC
- 70 percent of their inventory is produced in WNC

Source: DESS Business Research LLC, 2008

HandMade in America

Asheville-based HandMade in America has been working since 1995 to support and grow the region's craft economy.

From its innovative projects to help revitalize small towns to its Craft Registry online database that showcases more than a thousand artists, HandMade has been hailed as a national model for communities that want to use their creative and cultural assets for economic development.

A major focus for HandMade is fostering entrepreneurship in the region's craft artists. The organization offers professional development programming that teaches participants a wide range of skills – from budgeting, pricing and merchandising, to how to write an artist's statement, develop a portfolio and push through creative blocks. HandMade is also helping to identify the region's largest craft clusters and potential business opportunities in those clusters.

Nowhere Branch Angora Goat Farm.
Photo courtesy HandMade in America.

Many area organizations offer instruction in specific kinds of visual and performing arts, including:

Asheville Aerial Arts
Asheville Ballet
Asheville BookWorks
Asheville Contemporary Dance Theatre
Cloth Fiber Workshop
Earth Guild
Fine Arts League of the Carolinas
Mountain Metalsmiths School of Jewelry
and Lapidary
Odyssey Center for the Ceramic Arts
Stella Adler Studio of Acting
Swannanona Gathering
Terpsicorps Theatre of Dance



Filmmaking in Asheville

The Asheville area has a long filmmaking history -- from the silent movie "The Conquest of Canaan," shot in 1921 in downtown, to "The Hunger Games," a major motion picture filmed in summer 2011 at locations throughout North Carolina, including Asheville, Black Mountain, Barnardville and the dense forests of nearby DuPont State Park.

Filmmakers are drawn here not only for the diverse and picturesque locations, but for the generous tax incentive program offered by the state and the deep pool of experienced and talented moviemaking professionals living in the Asheville area.

More than 50 movies have been shot in Western North Carolina including:

All the Real Girls	The Green Mile	Nell
Being There	Hannibal	Patch Adams
Bull Durham	The Hunger Games	Richie Rich
The Clearing	The Hunt for Red October	Thunder Road
Dirty Dancing	The Journey of August King	The Winter People
Forrest Gump	The Last of the Mohicans	
The Fugitive	My Fellow Americans	

The Asheville area offers a great number of schools and programs focused on arts education, including several of international-renown.

- **Penland School of Crafts**
attracts more than 1,300 students and 14,000 visitors a year from around the world. Founded in 1929, the school was originally an outgrowth of a craft-based economic development project.
- **John C. Campbell Folk School**
offers more than 830 weeklong and weekend classes a year in traditional and contemporary craft, art, music, dance and writing. The school was established in 1925 to nurture and preserve the folk arts of the Appalachian Mountains.
- Area colleges and universities
UNC Asheville, Western Carolina and Appalachian State, Warren Wilson, Mars Hill and Asheville-Buncombe Technical Community College offer instruction in visual, performing and multimedia arts and creative writing through their undergraduate and graduate degree programs.
- **Haywood Community College Professional Crafts Program**
is nationally recognized for teaching students a unique combination of technical and business skills. Students work in clay, fiber, wood or metals and earn a two-year degree at the end of the program.

Jennifer Lawrence on the set of THE HUNGER GAMES. Photo by Murray Close, courtesy Lionsgate.

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