



NEW CASTLE COUNTY, DELAWARE CREATIVE ECONOMY ADVANCEMENT AND TOURISM EXPANSION (CREATE) PLAN

NEW CASTLE COUNTY is the northernmost county in the First State. Sound Diplomacy's research found that there are many creative economy assets in the county, but that stakeholders would benefit from more collaborative and strategic thinking. In addition, while Wilmington is a destination for events in the state, upcoming Downtown development initiatives (and the area's economic development) would benefit from embedding cultural activity into city life. In order to help New Castle County take advantage of opportunities to grow its creative economy, the Delaware Arts Alliance has partnered with Sound Diplomacy to develop an action plan which is the combined result of desk research, stakeholder consultation, and data analysis.¹

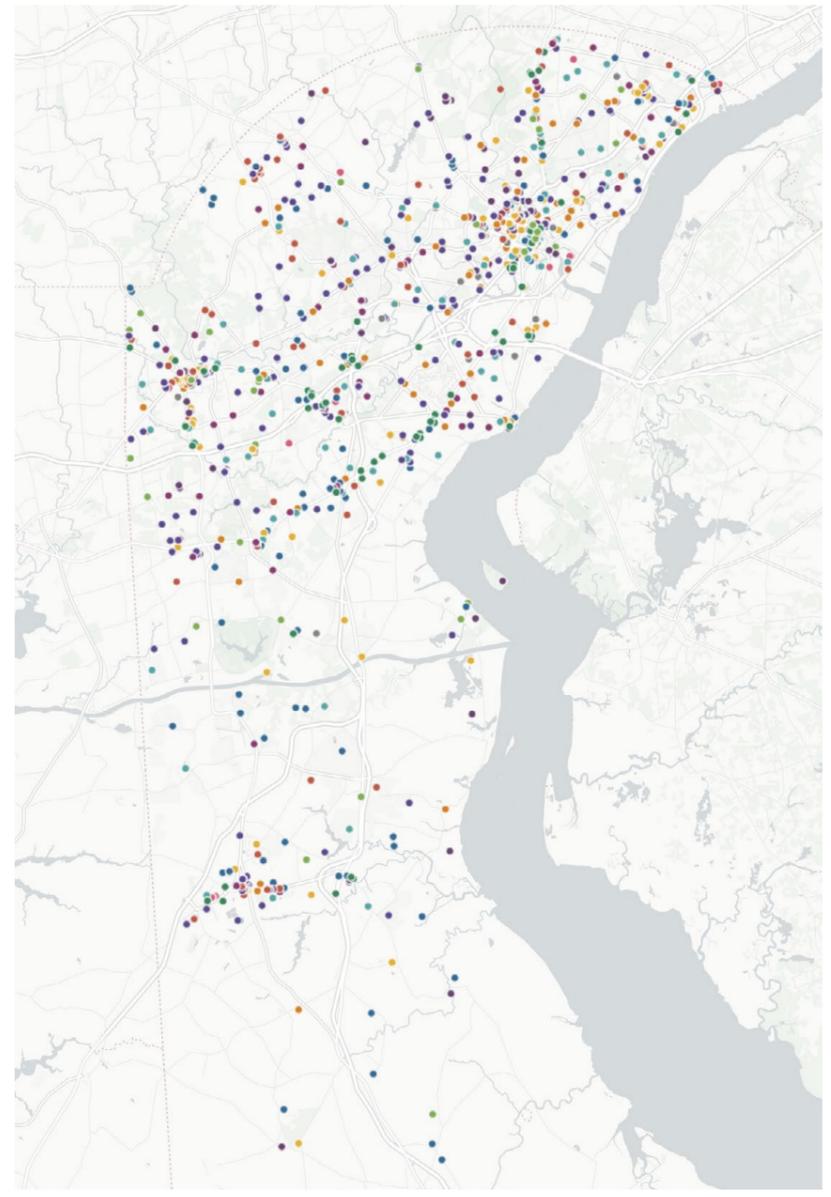
¹ These findings are specific for New Castle County. Please see the full CREATE Plan for statewide findings.
² GVA is the output minus intermediate consumption (the costs of all inputs – food and beverage suppliers, legal services, transportation, equipment, etc.).
³ Please refer to the statewide executive summary for the full SWOT analysis.



OBJECTIVES

- Stimulate economic activity** by fostering development and growth in all creative sectors.
- Raise awareness and share knowledge** amongst stakeholders in order to innovate and create a stronger and more sustainable ecosystem.
- Increase transparency and accountability** by introducing additional representative bodies for the full breadth of the creative economy and encouraging collaboration.
- Improve strategic policy and funding infrastructure to support the entire creative economy.**
- Foster cross-sector collaboration and interdisciplinary dialogues** to create new opportunities for the creative sector.
- Ensure that sustainability practices are embedded** into creative economy growth and development.
- Expand opportunities for professional development** for stakeholders in Delaware's creative economy.
- Provide a more equitable public education** and increase access to arts education for young people.
- Build Delaware's identity** around its creative economy and arts scene.
- Tackle geographic inequality** by embedding creative economy growth efforts into every county.
- Embed the values and imperatives of DEA&I** into Delaware's creative economy and strategic thinking around it.
- Put cultural tourism at the heart of Delaware's brand** and marketing efforts, and expand existing cultural tourism offerings.

MAPPING ASSETS IN NEW CASTLE COUNTY



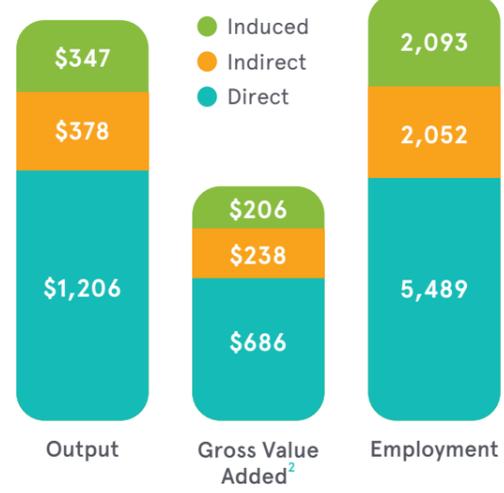
All categories are included and mapped on the [interactive map](#) developed specifically for Delaware.

- New Castle County hosts **1,298** assets, representing **51%** of Delaware's total creative and cultural ecosystem assets.
- The sectors with the largest representation in the county are design & creative services with **252 (19%)**, visual arts and crafts with **157 (12%)**, artistic creation & performance with **156 (12%)**, and audiovisual & interactive media with **145 (11%)**.

- DESIGN & CREATIVE SERVICES
- VISUAL ARTS & CRAFTS
- AUDIOVISUAL & INTERACTIVE MEDIA
- TOURISM
- ARTISTIC CREATION & PERFORMANCE
- PERFORMING ARTS: LIVE MUSIC, THEATRE, DANCE, CIRCUS
- BOOKS & PRESS
- CULTURAL EDUCATION
- INDUSTRY SUPPORT - RETAIL
- CULTURAL & NATURAL HERITAGE
- MUSIC RECORDING & PUBLISHING
- OTHER PROFESSIONAL & BUSINESS SUPPORT

ECONOMIC IMPACT ASSESSMENT

NEW CASTLE COUNTY ECONOMIC IMPACT CREATIVE ECONOMY (MILLION \$)



TOTAL MULTIPLIER EFFECT

For every \$1 of output of the creative economy, there is an output of \$0.60 in the rest of the economy.



SWOT ANALYSIS³

The following provides a sector-specific and transversal theme SWOT analysis of all research and stakeholder engagement findings from this project. The findings are divided by strengths and weaknesses (SW) within Delaware's creative economy and opportunities and threats (OT) that are outside of the creative economy but nonetheless influence it.

STRENGTHS

- New Castle County showcases strengths in **artistic creation & performance, performing arts, music recording & publishing, and cultural education.**
- Wilmington has **clear busking ordinances** and relatively clear municipal **event permitting processes.**
- Wilmington has initiated projects to **make people safer downtown**, including a free safety escort service and the Downtown Visions program.
- There are **active, community-oriented projects** in Wilmington that provide **cultural access and activities** to people in a range of contexts, including the unhoused.
- **Middletown** has a number of assets in the **audiovisual and interactive media sector.**

OPPORTUNITIES

- There are a number of well established projects in the city of Wilmington, and many of which have made a priority of equity. However, **none are targeted specifically at the creative ecosystem.**
- There are numerous Downtown Development Plans throughout the county. **These reflect an appetite to think strategically about urban development** and to upgrade infrastructure and opportunities for economic growth.

WEAKNESSES

- There were strong efforts in the recent past to develop a cultural district in Wilmington but that program is no longer in operation, and **the city does not have an officially designated cultural district.**
- There is **significant geographic inequity** in terms of arts access, with activities distinguished by stakeholders as "above" and "below" the Chesapeake and Delaware canal.
- Various stakeholders in **more rural parts of the state noted feeling left out of Delaware's creative scene.** The mapping reflects this through a heavy concentration of assets in Wilmington and New Castle County.
- Event permits for for-profit events are **difficult to obtain.**
- There is a lack of evening **public transport options.**

THREATS

- In general, the Downtown Development projects do not secure people sufficient access to cultural activities and **arts and culture are largely missing from these plans.**
- Though there have been investments in public safety and development, there is still a lingering perception of **downtown Wilmington**, particularly from people who live elsewhere in the state, **that it is unsafe.**
- **There has been an increase in houselessness in the county, and issues around poverty.** At present, the creative sector is not generally seen as part of the solution to these issues, and the arts program run for unhoused people in Delaware has faced opposition.
- Historically, determined **efforts to develop a cultural district in Wilmington were unsuccessful.**
- Culture is **not playing a big role in Wilmington's downtown development.**

REGULATIONS, PERMITS & LICENSING UPDATE

New Castle County, and its town and city councils, should review regulations, permits and licensing processes which impact the creative economy, with a focus on those listed below.

National benchmarks for these topics are provided in the full report. In addition, it should collaborate with Delaware's Alcoholic Beverage Control Commissioner and other statewide stakeholders to modernize liquor licenses in the state and implement a One-Stop Shop for permits and licensing processes.

County Regulations to Review

- Sound Ordinance
- Event Permits
- All Ages Ordinances

City Regulations to Review

- Sound Ordinance
- Agent of Change
- Busking

CREATE Plan Recommendations

Informed by the research and analysis outlined here, these are the actionable recommendations that require regional involvement and implementation. New Castle County Council, alongside the councils in Middletown and Wilmington will need to be involved in implementing and supporting these recommendations, as will city and town councils. Recommendations 3, 8, 10, 12 and 22 in particular require legislative support.

RECOMMENDATIONS

COUNTY ACTIONS

CREATIVE ECONOMY DEVELOPMENT

#1 Establish a Creative Economy Task Force That Continues To Build Cross-Sectoral Collaboration and Engage Stakeholders

Stakeholders located in New Castle County should be included in this Task Force.

#2 Establish Creative Hubs in Each County

A creative hub in New Castle County will improve residents' access to cultural life.

#3 Update Special Event and Performance-Related Permits and Licenses at the State, County, and City Level

Inspired by national benchmarks, New Castle County should review and revise licenses and permits related to events.

#4 Develop a Statewide Digital "One-Stop Shop" for Permits and Licenses

Permit and licensing processes from across New Castle County should be included in this platform.

INDUSTRY SUPPORT

#5 Include the Creative Economy in Statewide Business and Economic Development Communications and Programs

Economic and business development plans in New Castle County should be inclusive of creative economy sectors.

#8 Modernize Delaware's Film & Media-production Industry

New Castle County should review and revise its film permits.

TOURISM

#9 Develop a Statewide Cultural Economy Brand to Benefit Tourism, Economic Development, Export, and Audience Development

Stakeholders from New Castle County should be involved in planning and implementation efforts to generate this brand and identity.

#10 Increase Cultural Tourism Offerings

New Castle County should identify opportunities for linking its creative economy with tourists and tourism assets.

FUNDING

#12 Identify Additional Revenue Streams to Support Delaware's Creative Economy

Stakeholders from across the county should work to identify funding sources and investment opportunities for the for-profit arts and creative sectors from untapped organizations and entities.

EDUCATION

#14 Secure Arts Funding for Every Student in Public Education

Stakeholders from New Castle County should campaign for sustained arts education funding from the State, and the County and City governments can supplement arts education funding with their own investments.

#16 Improve Career Development Opportunities for Secondary Education Students

Introduce county-specific career days and mentorship programs to facilitate the entrance of more young people into the creative industries.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

#18 Host Professional Development Workshops and Lectures

Local business development and creative economy professional groups should be part of efforts to organize, promote and host workshops, lectures and networking events on creative economy professionalization across the state.

INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

#21 Identify and Promote Spaces for the Creative Economy

Vacant and underused property in towns and cities throughout New Castle County should be reviewed for their viability to be used by artists and other creative economy professionals.

#22 Support Access to Increased Public Transportation in Delaware

New Castle County should identify ways in which existing public transport gaps could be covered by localized services, i.e. shuttle buses for special events.

MARKETING AND AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT

#23 Offer Transit Shelter and Outdoor Advertising Space to Nonprofits

Publicly owned facades and buildings in New Castle County should be identified and offered as sites where creative economy organizations can advertise events and initiatives.