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# CREATIVE BIRMINGHAM

DESIGN

*Literary & Publishing*  
GRAPHIC DESIGN, ARCHITECTURE  
& PRODUCT DESIGN

# CULTURE & HERITAGE

MUSEUMS, LIBRARIES, AND HISTORIC SITES

NEWSPAPERS, TV, RADIO,  
FILM & VIDEO PRODUCTION,  
AND RECORDING STUDIOS

# MEDIA & FILM

# PERFORMING ARTS

THEATRES & THEATER COMPANIES,  
MUSICAL COMPOSITION, PRODUCTION,  
CHOREOGRAPHY, & DANCE

# VISUAL ARTS & CRAFTS

PHOTOGRAPHY, PAINTING, POTTERY,  
GLASSBLOWING, & FURNITURE MAKING

# CULINARY ARTS

CHEFS, CATERERS, CRAFT BREWERS, MIXOLOGISTS,  
FOOD STYLISTS, FOOD TRUCKS, RESTAURATEURS

# STOKING INNOVATION IN THE MAGIC CITY: BIRMINGHAM'S CREATIVE INDUSTRIES

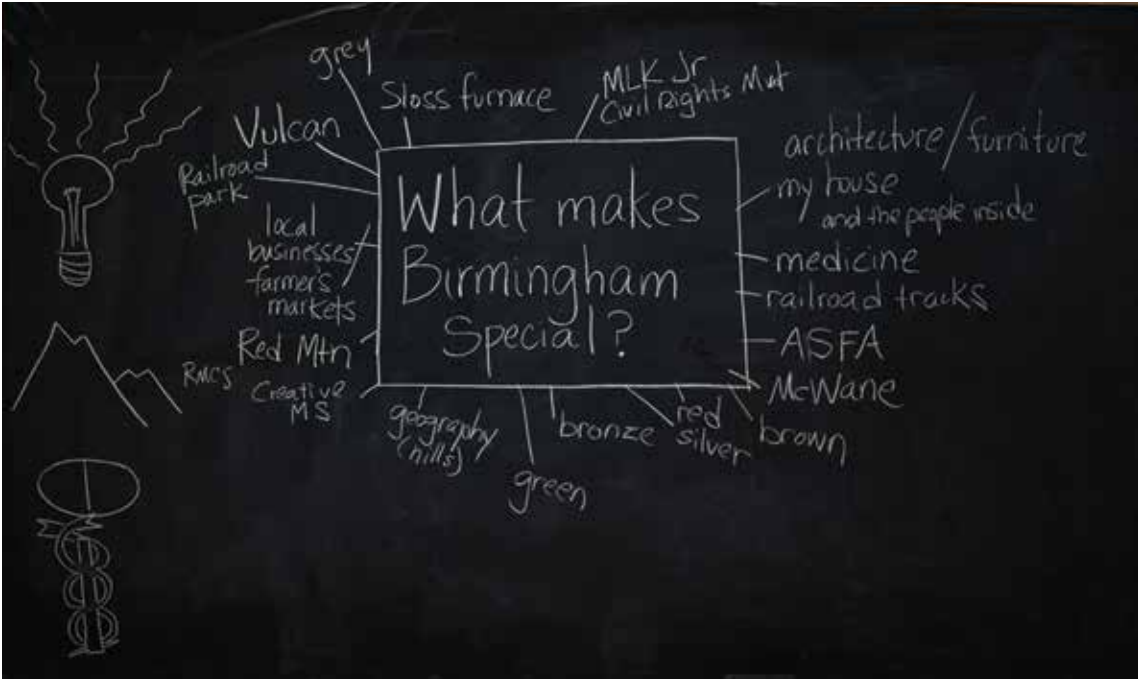
*A Report to*

## THE CULTURAL ALLIANCE OF GREATER BIRMINGHAM

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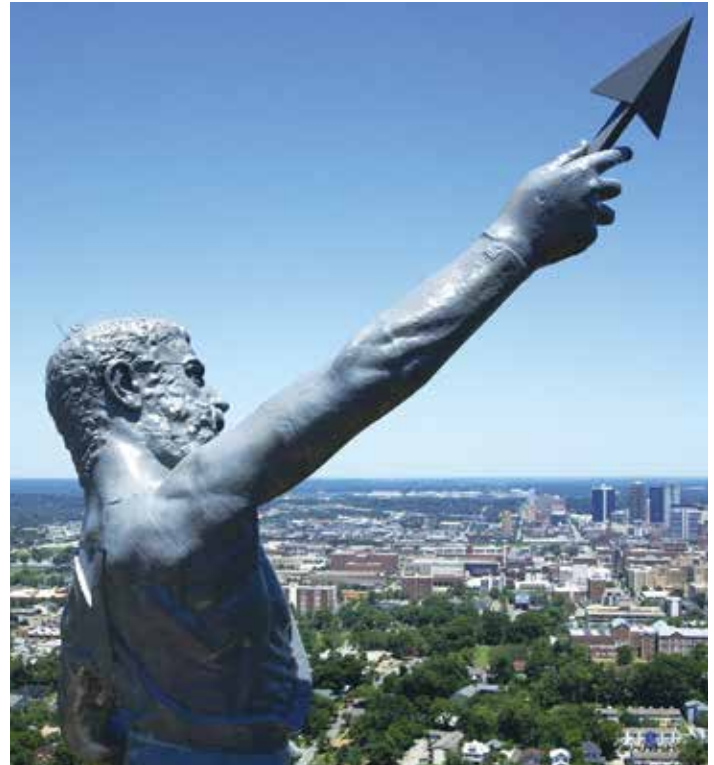


Progress, prosperity, and growth headlined national media coverage of the city's 2013 commemoration of the civil rights events that made Birmingham infamous 50 years ago. Attention to Birmingham's vibrant food and beer scene, award-winning parks, and new attractions highlight how revitalization efforts are improving the city's image.

To capitalize on this forward movement, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham (the Alliance) sponsored an in-depth research study to inform residents, leaders, and stakeholders on growing Birmingham's economy.

This resulting report, **Stoking Innovation in the Magic City: Birmingham's Creative Industries**, provides a snapshot of our arts, culture, and design communities at a critical stage where investment and stewardship can be a catalyst for continued momentum. The **Creative Industries Plan** examines labor statistics across industries and occupations and provides a strong economic case for encouraging the arts, culture, and design. Results are focused on how to increase opportunities for success and contribute to innovation, growth, and quality of life in Birmingham. The plan's eight strategies reach across creative sectors to government, education, and businesses, as well

as other growing industry sectors such as healthcare, technology, and manufacturing. Guiding and implementing the recommendations would first require capacity building and dedication of resources. This enhanced organizational structure, plus investment in education and small businesses, will allow Birmingham to build on its unique personality and create an attractive environment for innovation and growth. With our wealth of cultural assets and talented people, the city is perfectly positioned to support and nurture new creative endeavors and ensure all residents of Birmingham have equal opportunities to realize their full potential.



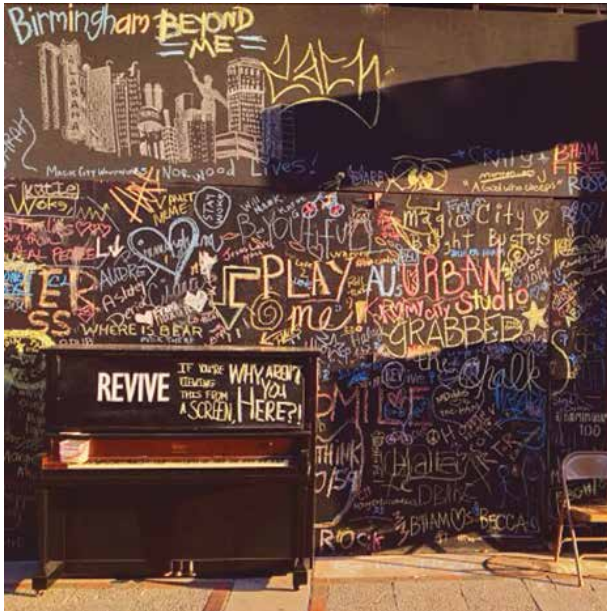
## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONTEXT

At the turn of the 20th century, Birmingham earned the moniker “The Magic City” because of its rapid growth from a small railroad crossing town into a bustling manufacturing and industrial city. Decades later, when iron and steel waned as economic forces, the city turned its focus to healthcare and research with the University of Alabama at Birmingham leading the way. Throughout Birmingham's history, the abundance of art and culture has given the city its unique cultural personality and creative character. Birmingham's long traditions of music, art, and theater have been preserved, even in the face of industrialization, modernization, and change.

Arts and cultural activities have always supported the city's economy and are poised to influence future growth. Additionally, the creative industry sector and its specific subsectors generate new jobs, recruit talent and businesses, and enhance the amenities available to everyone in the region. Birmingham's ability to grow and prosper in the future depends on its willingness to encourage this next wave of innovation, entrepreneurship, and ingenuity. Positioning the city at the forefront of a new economy requires investment in creative endeavors and activities in the local environment, schools, and workplaces.

To illustrate the context of creative industries in Birmingham's economy, in-depth analysis of the region's 12-15 economic sectors or clusters was gleaned from three recent documents: Blueprint Birmingham, A Growth Strategy for the Seven-County Region, Birmingham Business Alliance, 2010; Accelerate Alabama, A Strategic Economic Development Plan, Economic Development Partnership of Alabama, 2012; and the Comprehensive Master Plan for the City of Birmingham, 2013. The healthcare, finance, insurance, and other services sectors have been relatively strong throughout the recession. Targeted growth sectors include healthcare, biological and medical technology, and some niche areas of advanced manufacturing. Notably, the “arts, entertainment, and tourism” sector shows promise as a catalyst for Birmingham's economic growth. Emphasizing food, entertainment, heritage, arts, and culture gives all industry sectors the assets needed to recruit businesses and workers. Plus, these assets are vital to attracting tourists, conventions, and other visitors. By supporting Birmingham's unique creative culture, entrepreneurship, new businesses, and new jobs develop.

The emphasis on arts and culture is not a new focus. In 2002, a coalition of leaders developed the Cultural Master Plan, celebrating the region's rich heritage and diversity. That plan emphasized the size of the cultural sector and the importance of cultural industries to the city's economic development. Recommendations included increasing funding and support for the arts and expanding participation among minority populations through education and neighborhood-based programming.



Then, in 2012, the Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham's Arts and Economic Prosperity Study (by Americans for the Arts) concluded that nonprofit arts and culture organizations generated \$234.9 million in economic activity. These Birmingham nonprofits alone supported an estimated 6,805 full-time-equivalent jobs. Employment growth in arts, entertainment, and recreation expanded approximately 25% (fourth highest out of the city's 18 industry clusters) from 2001 to 2010.

This report builds on those previous studies. A steering committee was formed to guide researchers as they first explored traditional economic development methods to measure Birmingham's creative jobs and the wealth they generate. Researchers further used online and in-person interviews and research, plus input from the steering committee and focus

groups. This report defines the broad creative industry sector and its sub-sectors, and explores businesses that transform, distribute, and commoditize art, design, and culture to consumers. Direct economic activities with the city's creative industries are measured, as well as larger indirect effects. Recommended strategies and activities are outlined with a special emphasis on creating educational opportunities and support.

Art, culture, and design enrich people's lives, enhance communities, give pleasure, and provide educational and emotional experiences. This intrinsic value combined with the significant economic contribution establishes a new context for funding the arts, culture, and design and justifies much greater public sector investment in creative enterprises and activities. To remain competitive, the city must take advantage of this opportunity to reinforce and solidify its position. To strengthen the economy and generate employment, Birmingham must bolster existing strengths, remove obstacles to success, and develop new and innovative opportunities.

Suggested strategies to achieve those goals were developed from the consultants' local research and exemplar success stories from other communities. To reap the full benefits of its creative people and creative industries, Birmingham should create an overarching organizational strategy to help prioritize, develop, and implement the strategies and actions; identify strategies that build on ongoing activities and require immediate action; and plan long-term strategies to develop the creative industries in ways that generate and equitably distribute wealth and opportunity. Creative investment promises to grow Birmingham's economy and ultimately improve the quality of life for everyone.

## MEASURING THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

To measure the scale of the creative industries' economy, the number of jobs and amount of income associated with producing goods and services were considered. Using the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes, this study estimates employment in defined creative industries and defined creative occupations, including nonprofit employees, freelancers, and the self-employed. Further data was gathered from focus groups, individual interviews, online surveys, site visits, open forum summits, and steering committee meetings.



**TOTAL EMPLOYMENT IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND CREATIVE OCCUPATIONS**

**22,700+**

CREATIVE WORKERS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES 6300+

CREATIVE WORKERS IN OTHER INDUSTRIES 5400+

NON-CREATIVE WORKERS IN CREATIVE INDUSTRIES 11,000+



CREATIVE INDUSTRY JOBS PRODUCE ANNUAL EARNINGS EXCEEDING

**\$558 MILLION.**



## CREATIVE INDUSTRIES CONTRIBUTE TO ALL INDUSTRIES

Creative industries and occupations comprise the six interrelated sectors pictured. For this report, creative industry jobs were counted and financial impact measured. The resulting conservative estimates offer insight into the potential for greater economic growth in Birmingham when creative industries and jobs are supported.

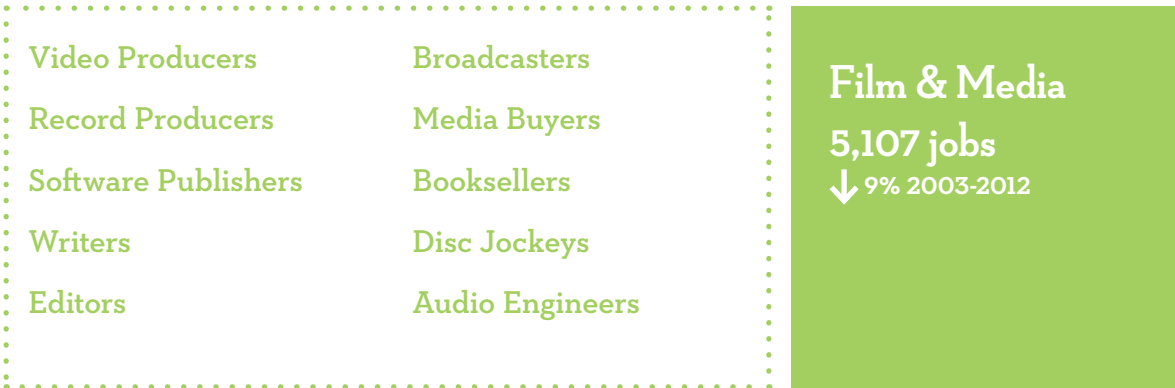
Performers, painters, and musicians are just the beginning of the creative industries. Chefs, architects, and printers make large contributions to the creative sectors and demonstrate how interrelated creative occupations can be with the city's economy. Arts and entertainment contribute directly to Birmingham's burgeoning tourism sector. Additionally, investment in creative sectors elevates the city's image and helps major sectors such as finance, healthcare, technology, and manufacturing attract and retain new businesses and a talented workforce.

As defined by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, creative jobs are directly represented in 6 out of 22 sectors. However, every job sector has some interest in a creative industry sector. Individuals in every industry can relate to others as customers, service providers, investors, or interested citizens.

**22,754** total creative jobs = 4.68 % of overall jobs in Jefferson County in **SIX** creative sectors



From this research, the most conservative estimates reveal that creative industry jobs produce annual earnings exceeding \$558 million. These numbers are considered conservative because creative occupations are often part-time, irregular, or contract jobs that are not measured in labor or tax-related data. The strength of the creative sectors can be seen in their growth over the last decade. Those creative industries with net losses are not simply shrinking. For instance, while jobs in newspaper and magazine print publishing have decreased at a rapid rate, Birmingham has experienced significant growth in digital media jobs.



The online intersection of digital media and computer technology is just one example of cross-over between the six creative sectors and the other 16 labor categories. Employment in all sectors needs access to a pool of employees who are well-educated, well-rounded, and able to innovate. Arts education in our schools prepares Birmingham’s next generation of workers for an ever-evolving job market. Investment in creative sector businesses improves Birmingham’s overall economy by supporting entrepreneurs, freelancers, and independent artists. Non-creative sectors depend on arts and culture programming to attract and retain talent in our region. But the creative economy is about more than providing activities. Creative industries, creative workers, and non-creative support workers are significant contributors to the quality of life in our community.

# SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

The proposed **Creative Industries Plan** requires Birmingham's commitment to strategic organization and planning. The overarching priority is to develop the community capacity to facilitate and execute the Creative Industries Plan, to include establishment of a formal **Creative Industries Board** or Stewardship Committee; development of strategic partnerships in the community; designing an effective, broad-based communications plan and developing a brand identity; development of a database of individuals and organizations; organization of networking events; securing funding for the organization; and cementing relationships with the business community.

To capitalize on current momentum, the Plan should focus particular attention on projects already in development. These ongoing activities include supporting maker spaces and food hub and processing facilities; establishing a design hub and institutionalizing Design Week; renovating the Gaston Hotel as an historic and cultural site that is part of the Civil Rights Trail; finding a venue for the showing and viewing of independent and foreign films; and further developing weekend or long-term residency crafts programs at Sloss Furnaces.

A brief description of eight core strategies with their recommended actions follows. For full detailed information about the recommendations, see page 44.

## 1. DEVELOP AND RETAIN TALENT

- Expand Arts and Design Education in the Public Schools
- Make Career Paths and Economic Opportunities Explicit and Available to People Making Career Choices
- Require Entrepreneurial or Business Skills in Educational Programs for Careers in Creative Fields
- Expand Media and Design Programs in Public Education with Particular Emphasis on Recruiting and Reaching Minority Populations
- Consider Becoming a Replication Site of the National Center for Arts and Technology (NCAT)
- Increase Access to Higher Education in Design
- Develop Internships for Art and Design Students
- Expand Local and Residential Crafts Programs at Sloss Furnaces



## 2. BLEND THE ARTS WITH SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY TO NURTURE INNOVATION

- Coordinate Existing Efforts that Integrate Learning among Sciences, Arts, and Humanities
- Establish a Design "Wing" at the Innovation Depot for Companies Developing Creative Products or Services
- Organize Monthly Events that Combine Creativity and Innovation







### 3. EXPAND SUPPORT SERVICES AND BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH THE BUSINESS AND CORPORATE COMMUNITY

- Develop Business Services Tailored to Freelancers, Microenterprises, and Nonprofits
- Establish Formal Connections to Cities Outside of the U.S. to Expand Markets and Learning
- Nurture and Advertise the Existing Niche Markets in an Effort to Make Use of Existing Publishing Talent
- Establish a "Loaned Executive" Program
- Enhance Film and New Media Business Opportunities

### 4. ESTABLISH BIRMINGHAM AS A HUB FOR DESIGN

- Integrate Design into Technical Education
- Make Manufacturing Technologies Available in Schools in Low-Income Parts of the City
- Initiate a Creative Challenge Program

### 5. FURTHER DEVELOP BIRMINGHAM'S CREATIVE DISTRICTS

- Inventory and Promote the Creative Enterprises, Assets, and Available Space for Each Business District
- Strengthen the Relationship with the Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau
- Expand the Use of Public Art that Matches Each Neighborhood's History or Culture
- Encourage the Use of Local Art in Private and Public Enterprises

## 6. LEVERAGE THE ECONOMIC POTENTIAL OF THE CITY'S CULTURAL ASSETS

- Develop a Longer-Term Civil Rights Heritage Strategy
- Create a Birmingham Cultural Collaborative to Develop Shared Marketing Opportunities, Product Development, and Services

## 7. DEVELOP THE ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY TO STRENGTHEN BIRMINGHAM'S MUSIC INDUSTRY

- Create More Collaboration and Partnerships Among Musicians and Groups
- Use Public Art and Public Venues to Increase Visibility and Guide Tourists Interested in Music History
- Create More Centralized and Coordinated Organizational Capacity for the Music Industry
- Increase Emphasis on Music Education

## 8. STRIVE TO CREATE A PROSPEROUS AND EQUITABLE REGIONAL FOOD SYSTEM

- Identify Business Opportunities for Culinary Entrepreneurs that Will Create Jobs
- Establish Food Hubs for Processing and Distributing Regionally Produced Food
- Increase Access, Availability, and Affordability of Healthy Foods for All Residents



# FINAL THOUGHTS

The abundance of art and culture in Birmingham has given the city its distinct creative identity. The creative industry sector here has the potential to create new jobs, recruit talent and businesses, and enhance the amenities available to everyone in the region. Expanding arts and design education will be beneficial to develop and retain talent in the city. Further developing Birmingham's creative districts will encourage creative enterprises. New opportunities for growth and entrepreneurs will be found by expanding support from the business and corporate communities. The arts and culture enrich people's lives, enhance community spirit, and provide both educational and emotional experiences. Birmingham has a cultural responsibility to preserve civil rights heritage sites and personal histories. It is time to capitalize on Birmingham's current forward movement to reinforce and solidify the city's position as a vibrant, active community. Investment in creative industries ensures economic growth, while further improving the quality of life for everyone in the region.

## Project Steering Committee

Chair: Brian Giattina, GA Studio/Cultural Alliance of Greater Birmingham board member

Chip Brantley, Desert Island Supply Company

Carol Butler, Mike and Gillian Goodrich Foundation

Shaun Chavis, Oxmoor House/Time Home Entertainment, Inc. and FoodBlogSouth

Carol Clarke, Regions Bank

Keith Cromwell, Red Mountain Theatre Company

Chris Davis, Graphic Designer/Illustrator

David Fleming, REV Birmingham

Ann Florie, Leadership Birmingham

Sara Hamlin, Greater Birmingham Convention and Visitors Bureau

Elias Hendricks, Wee Care Academy/former city councilor

David Hooks, University of Alabama at Birmingham

Bruce Lanier, Standard Creative, LLC

Matt Leavell, Alabama Innovation Engine

Kate Nielsen, Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, Retired

Jay Pigford, ArchitectureWorks

Ken Rhoden, Alabama Power Company

Tom Spencer, Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama

Frank Stitt, Highlands Bar and Grill

Perry Ward, Lawson State Community College

Brandon Wilson, Wilbron Institute

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there's **always** something going on

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