

:: Research & Discovery

To get an accurate read of our community's needs and wants, Beet Street received input from more than 500 community members, leaders, and stakeholders through focus groups, stakeholder meetings, individual interviews with civic leaders and an electronic survey. Best practices from regional and national arts and culture centers were studied. Experts and professional peers provided consultation and advice. This research has not driven our strategy, but it has informed it. In short, we set out to listen first.

Discovery – Survey, focus groups, and interviews

As expected, our primary research to get direct feedback from the community specifically about Beet Street produced a mix of positive and negative feedback. On the one hand, respondents and participants expressed a lack of clarity around Beet Street's mission, purpose, or the value it provides. Commonly expressed concerns included: past programming has lacked broad appeal; unclear mission, vision, and lack of metrics and measurable goals; and possible duplication of services with the City, DBA, and other arts and culture organizations.

On the other hand, most people believed Beet Street does enhance arts and culture offerings in Fort Collins. And, perhaps most important, a vast majority believe Beet Street has tremendous potential to achieve our vision and goals.

Local Conditions

The Fort Collins community is home to many unique local arts and culture organizations including museums, dance troupes, theatre companies, musicians and musical offerings, as well as individual visual artists. Additionally, Fort Collins has a burgeoning design community and other “creative class” businesses that make up the Uniquely Fort Collins economic cluster. Fort Collins is well positioned regionally to be the next great arts and culture community. However, many of the arts and culture organizations are struggling with current economic conditions, audience development and funding.

If Fort Collins is to be a nationally recognized arts and culture center and destination then Beet Street must create world class experiences with world class partners that are financially and organizationally stable. Artists must be able to make living wages if we want to have a vibrant arts scene in our community.

Beet Street staff met with the major arts and culture organizations as well as with key stakeholders to determine what the community needs to thrive. All of the groups agreed that they need help with advocacy, shared marketing and calendars, long-term funding strategies and business coaching.

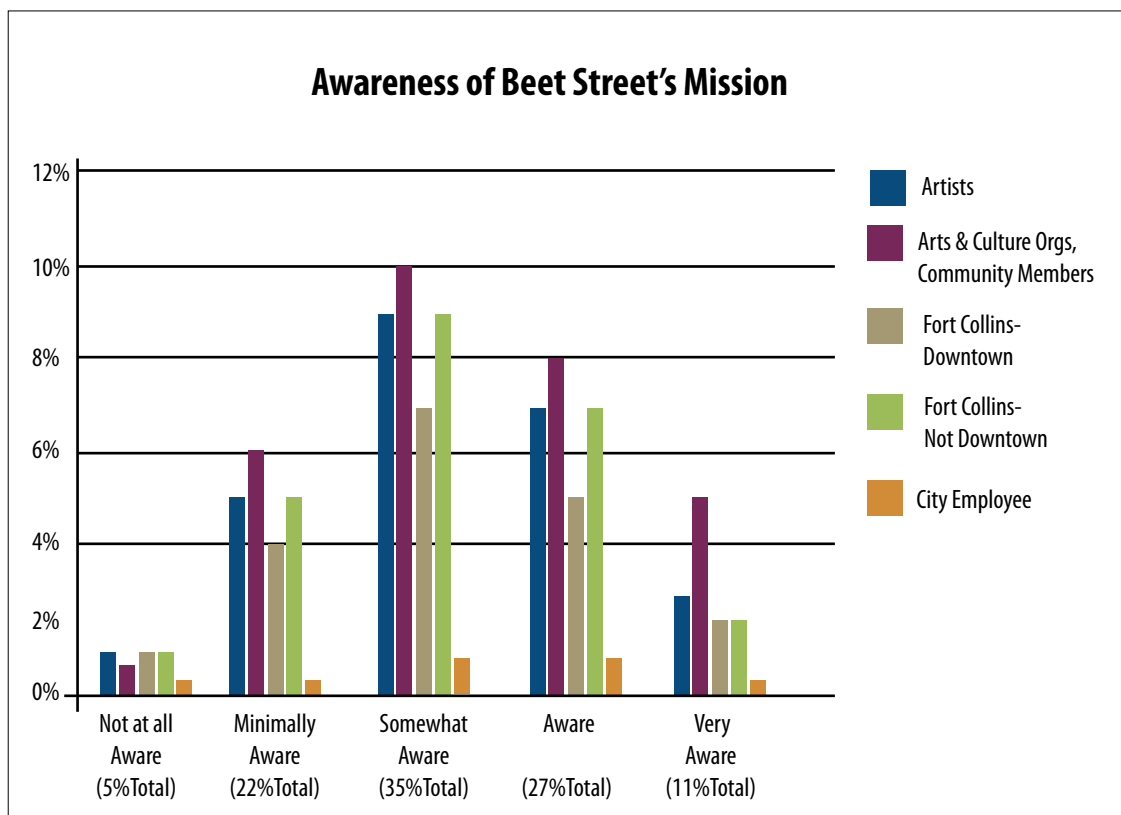
Best Practices

Beet Street conducted secondary research on several regional arts community best practices including the cities of Colorado Springs, Santa Fe, Grand Junction, and Denver. We also received consultation from the Western States Arts Federation (WESTAF).

Realizing that much of what our arts community needs is encompassed in roles that arts councils traditionally play, we studied councils to determine the best role for Beet Street in our community. We learned from WESTAF and our own research that arts councils are different in every community. To be successful, the roles councils play and the services and support they provide must be based on the unique, organic needs of the arts and culture community. But several very successful communities (Santa Fe and Denver) do not have arts councils at all. This is not to say that these arts communities develop without the vital industry support that an arts council provides; rather, in these communities, several different groups provide the roles and services needed by the arts community.

Most arts organizations gain the greatest value from shared technology – calendars and ticketing – and shared marketing. WESTAF also reports that assistance for arts groups is best when it stays at a high level. Services should support organizations to make them stronger and more efficient and provide cost-effective marketing.

:: Key Survey Findings



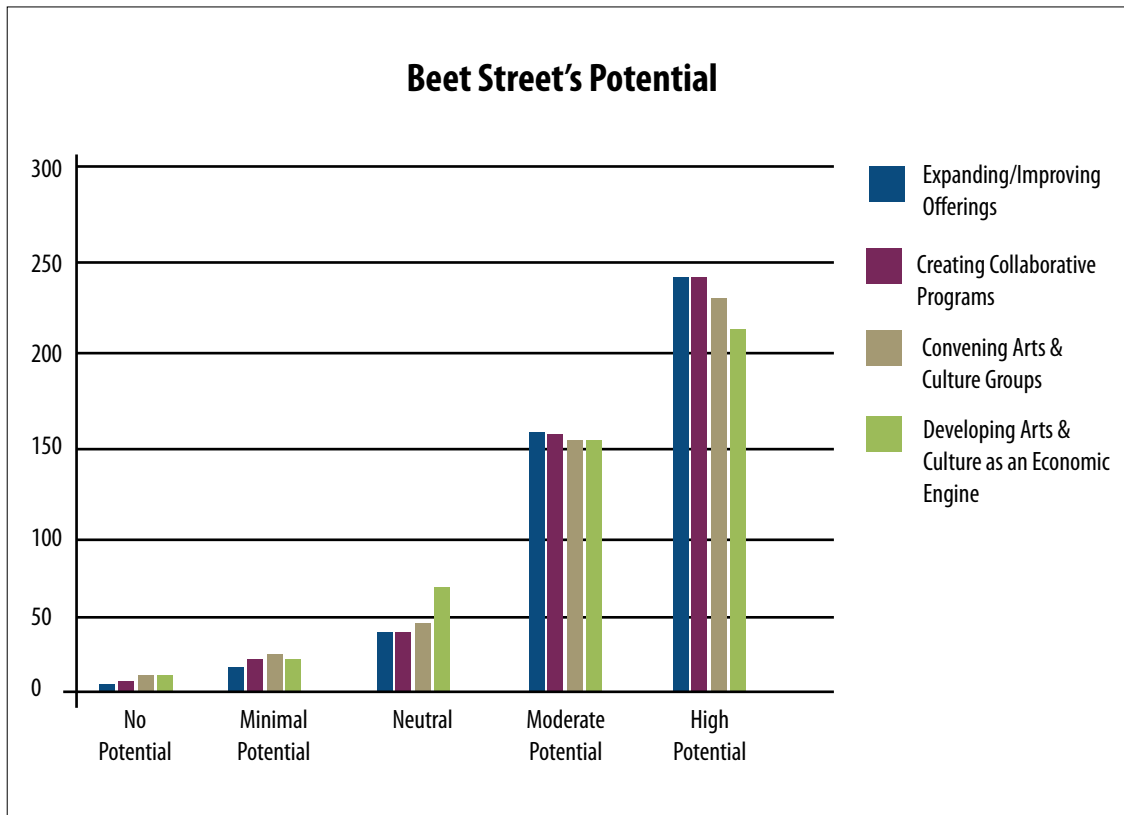
The majority of participants could not clearly articulate Beet Street's purpose or provided value.

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of awareness of Beet Street's mission. Although the majority of respondents are aware or very aware of Beet Street as an organization, a noticeably smaller number of respondents are aware or very aware of Beet Street's mission (38% of total responses, leaving 62% of all respondents who are unaware, minimally aware, or only somewhat aware of the mission). These results indicate that Beet Street has room for improvement in educating the public about our mission and may need to redefine the mission to make it more accessible and engaging, so the public has a real sense of Beet Street's vision and purpose.

Of those that knew about Beet Street's origin based on Chautauqua, NY, most have stressed that Beet Street has failed to live up to this model due to lack of infrastructure, lack of community support, and poor leadership. Value was seen in collaboration and in providing information on arts and culture offerings, though audiences believe both can be improved.

Many believe Beet Street does enhance the arts and culture offerings in Fort Collins

And most said this was our reason to exist. But most want to see our enhancement primarily through collaborative efforts rather than Beet Street programming. Participants feel Beet Street should collaborate on programming, perhaps with the exception of one or two signature events per year.



Most agree Beet Street has tremendous potential

Opinions varied about what Beet Street should achieve, but most saw great opportunities for success. Most said we have the potential to have a positive impact in programming, collaborating, convening, and economic development. Participants were asked to assess the future potential for Beet Street in each of these areas, and nearly half of all participants argue that Beet Street has high potential to have a positive impact in all areas. There was no significant difference in opinion between the different audience groups.

Collaboration and convening were identified as more important than programming

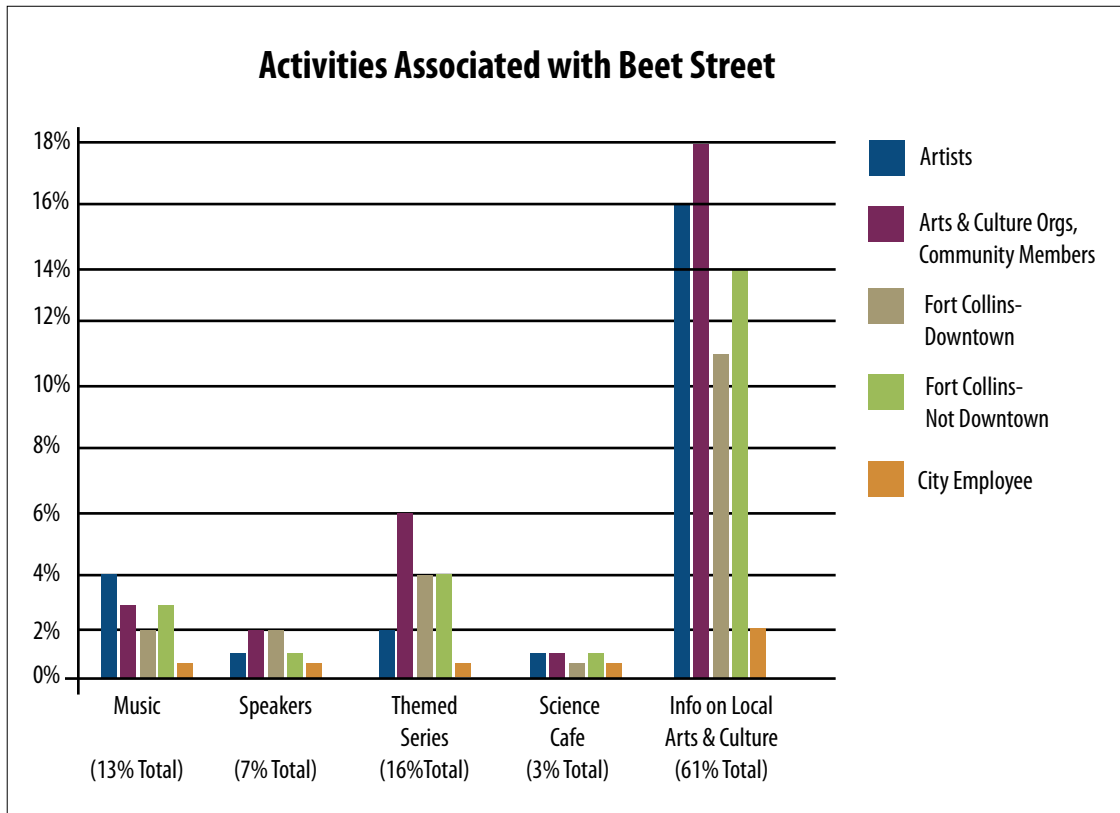
In interviews and focus groups, audiences believed collaborating with arts groups and acting as a convener of arts groups were more important than programming (survey respondents did not prioritize these options). Respondents strongly believe that Beet Street should not pursue any role or event that is not the result of collaboration.

Programming should have broader appeal and increased access to events

Suggestions about programming with broader appeal were consistently voiced. Some respondents believe Beet Street's past activities have appealed primarily to the director's taste or to the "elitists" in Fort Collins rather than focusing on what the community "needs" and can support.

Supporting and promoting local arts and artists over bringing nationally recognized performers

Respondents believe there needs to be more support for local artists and performers as well as an effort to educate the public about local offerings.



Most associate Beet Street primarily with information sharing

An overwhelming majority of respondents (61%) indicated they most associate Beet Street with information about arts and culture in Fort Collins (e.g. website and e-newsletter). These results can be interpreted multiple ways. First, since respondents were asked to indicate which activity was most associated with Beet Street, they may have been inclined to select information dissemination due to the frequency in which they receive the re:Beet e-newsletter and ease of access to information on Beet Street’s website. Second, these results may be interpreted to mean that the respondents view Beet Street as an information source more than as a programmer of arts and culture events. A general lack of awareness of Beet Street’s mission and the uncertainty many respondents expressed about attending a Beet Street event may support the latter interpretation of these results.

Beet Street should lead in the development of a community calendar

Participants identified a concise and comprehensive community calendar of events as a pressing need. They noted that while the primary benefit would be the ability to refer to one source for this information, it would also help increase interest in and attendance for arts and culture events as well as provide retail and lodging businesses with a way to inform patrons of local events, the lack of which was identified as a considerable frustration for these business owners.

The foundation is set. Our goals are well-established. The needs of the arts and culture industry are clear. And the community believes we can achieve our goals. Beet Street is ready to move forward with concentrated focus on programming, economic development, and facilities.