

Kansas City Global Music Strategy



Creative City KC

City of Music

Member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network

Kansas City, MO USA

June 2025

Creative City KC Inc.

UNESCO City of Music



Introduction

Creative City KC has developed this Global Music Strategy with the City of Kansas City Missouri to advance Kansas City's music economy.

Creative City KC, Inc. is the founding organization that established and maintains Kansas City's membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. As a member of the **UNESCO Creative Cities Network** and the only City of Music in the United States – we are actively working to grow our creative industries.

The following Goals and Strategies were presented to the Mayor and City Council of the City of Kansas City Missouri on October 31, 2024 – World Cities Day. The purpose of this strategy is to shift the culture within the city and City Hall to better support key aspects of our music economy and to build the music ecosystem from the inside out.

Kansas City has many amazing musicians, music educators, producers, venues, music businesses, instrument makers, and cultural assets. This Music Strategy recognizes Kansas City music history while focusing on musicians as keepers of a living heritage and creative legacy.

Music and sound often play second fiddle to design and visual arts in Kansas City. This strategy and the goals described herein aim to raise public awareness and appreciation for Kansas City musicians and our music economy.

We are open to your input and participation. Please review the Goals and Strategies and provide feedback to Creative City KC.

You can email us at:

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Co-founder, Dr. Jacob Wagner, wagnerjaco@umkc.edu

Thank you!



Music Strategy Goals

for Kansas City, Missouri

- 1. Grow Awareness of Kansas City's Membership in the UNESCO Creative Cities Network as the first City of Music in the U.S.**
- 2. Enhance Music Educational Opportunities**
- 3. Strengthen Kansas City's Music Infrastructure**
- 4. Preserve Kansas City's Musical Legacy as Cultural Heritage**
- 5. Include Music and Culture in Public Policy for Well-Being and Public Good**
- 6. Promote Gender Equity in Music and the Creative Economy**
- 7. Improve Data and Information Technology for Kansas City's Music Economy**
- 8. Incorporate Music into Neighborhoods and Placemaking**

Goal #1: GROW AWARENESS OF KANSAS CITY'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK AS THE FIRST UNESCO CITY OF MUSIC IN THE UNITED STATES

Build public awareness of Kansas City's prestigious designation as the United States' first UNESCO Creative City of Music.



1.1 Enroll the City of Kansas City, Missouri's Department of Communications, Visit-KC, the Film Office, and other city agencies to publicly promote Kansas City's membership in the UCCN. Promote musicians and the creative industries as economic drivers and leverage the UNESCO brand for international business success.

1.2 Promote *the Kansas City Sound* – from the historical roots of gospel, ragtime and blues – to the modern music of Kansas City Swing and Bebop - to living legacy of the 21st century and beyond. Focus on the innovators and entrepreneurs who develop the music, and the places and communities where the music lives.

1.3 Promote UNESCO's *Mondiacult Declaration*ⁱ and the *Braga Manifesto*ⁱⁱ to grow support for culture – and music, as a public good in Kansas City. Recognize Kansas City's international reputation at home and use international strategies and tools to build a sustainable urban economy.

1.4 Invite local, national and international audiences to attend Kansas City's annual International Day of Jazz concert as part of Kansas City's regular calendar of cultural events to promote and sustain tourism, increase performance opportunities for local jazz musicians, and offer educational opportunities through a youth – education component – and include area high school bands to participate.

1.5 Promote and implement the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals within city agencies and through city polices: <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>



Goal #2: ENHANCE MUSIC EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

Increase access to music education and learning opportunities across the life cycle.

2.1 Increase equitable access to music education and learning opportunities through partnerships with local music educators, music schools, institutes, as well as performing groups that offer music lessons and workshops.

2.2 Leverage funding from the Department of Labor's Apprenticeship Program to create workforce development and career education opportunities through the American Music Apprenticeship Program (AMAP).ⁱⁱⁱ

2.3 Bridge music education with international language and cultural competency by leveraging Kansas City's international and cultural community-based organizations to prepare Kansas City youth and musicians for overseas performance and career opportunities linked to international business.

2.4 Promote the Film and Music Workshop with Creative City KC and Foresight Entertainment as an annual event to educate students aspiring to enter the creative industries on "behind the scenes" occupations. Utilize the State of Missouri Film Tax Credits, and the City's Film Office to promote and grow opportunities for women and other underrepresented groups with limited access to educational opportunities in the creative industries.

2.5 Coordinate learning and knowledge exchange opportunities between among the Sister Cities, the Ethnic Enrichment Commission, Global Ties, IRC, the World Trade Center, and related international organizations based in Kansas City.



Goal #3: STRENGTHEN KANSAS CITY'S MUSIC INFRASTRUCTURE

Grow the Music Economy by investing in the infrastructure necessary to support and strengthen the Music Sector.

3.1 Develop and adopt a Fair Pay for Publicly Supported Gigs within the City of Kansas City, Missouri, focused on live musical performances for events paid for with public funds (such as NTDF) and gigs at City-run facilities (such as the Blue Room and GEM Theater). Work with the musicians, venues and NTDF stakeholders to develop and review the policy.

3.2 Review local hiring policies at city facilities, hotels, convention centers, entertainment groups, and agencies to increase the employment of local music and musicians. Work with local musicians to raise the visibility of local musicians as performing artists for hotels and other organizations that regularly hire musicians.

3.3 Work with the AFL-CIO local representatives to strengthen the historic Local 34-627 Union (est. 1899) to increase the benefits of membership and grow the union locally. Work with the AFL-CIO to rebuild the musicians' union. This effort can help provide more affordable health insurance and other related benefits for local musicians interested in becoming union members.

3.4 Provide professional development training for musicians from local, national, and international experts from across the music and creative industry spectrum.

3.5 Build local capacity in the music industry through investment in infrastructure and human capital – access to music technology, space for rehearsals, and production. Address opportunities for licensing, publishing, production, public events, and streaming.

3.6 Develop systems for shared business development and small business success among musicians as entrepreneurs. Work with KC BizCare, the Kauffman Foundation, and other local stakeholders in this area of economic development to support music industry development.

3.7 City Hall should engage musicians and creatives through a musician-in-residence program that allows the city to include composers or other music industry professionals in creative approaches to city events, meetings, and other opportunities.



Goal #3: STRENGTHEN KANSAS CITY'S MUSIC INFRASTRUCTURE [cont'd]

3.8 Recognize and support musicians as entrepreneurs. Work with City agencies such as KCBizCare office, the Kauffman Foundation, KC SourceLink, UMKC Center for Neighborhoods, Alt-CAP, and other creative economy advocates to build programs that support musicians as small businesses and creative entrepreneurs.

3.9 Grow support from Kansas City and the State of Missouri to invest in the foundation for live music performance, musical entrepreneurship, and the growth of music production and live music performance in the region.

3.10 Increase access to live music in neighborhoods – including venues and public spaces, through strategic use of the NTDF fund and other public resources. Leverage private dollars to build capacity and sustain the local music economy. Work with neighborhood organizations and local venues to grow areas of the city through investment in music.

3.11 Promote live music performances in public spaces and look at opportunities to develop this aspect of the music economy, especially in advance of large events, festivals, and celebrations.



Goal #4: PRESERVE KANSAS CITY'S MUSICAL LEGACY AS A TANGIBLE, INTANGIBLE, AND DIGITAL HERITAGE.

Promote awareness and appreciation of the Kansas City's legacy of musical innovation – from the historical roots in gospel, ragtime, and the blues – through the modern innovations of swing, bebop and big band – to the cutting-edge innovations of today's musicians.

4.1 Recognize the historical significance of the founders of Local 627 and modern Kansas City musicians, through new approaches and partnerships that will sustain the living heritage of Kansas City music and make it accessible to youth and the general public.

4.2 Promote Kansas City Swing, Bebop and Modern Jazz through new partnerships that celebrate music as a performing art - and the preservation of Kansas City music as tangible, intangible and digital heritage of global significance.

4.3 Recognize and protect local jazz landmarks and leverage UNESCO as a recognized global cultural brand that promotes authentic local culture and heritage. Protect local musical landmarks – such as where jazz musicians lived, practiced, played, and prayed – beyond 18th and Vine and existing historical landmarks. Integrate jazz history and heritage into the local preservation initiatives and neighborhood development.

4.4: Engage national partners to support the Congressional ratification of UNESCO's Convention for Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

4.5 Engage UNESCO to recognize Kansas City Swing and Bebop as UNESCO Intangible Heritage of global significance and outstanding universal value.

4.6 Work with local historical archives and institutions, such as the Kansas City Museum, Bruce R. Watkins Center, and the Marr Sound Archive at UMKC, to develop broader awareness, and appreciation of the importance of Kansas City's musical heritage.



Goal #5: INCLUDE MUSIC AND CULTURE IN PUBLIC POLICY FOR WELL-BEING AND PUBLIC GOOD

Recognize the power of music to increase public safety and build a culture of peace.

5.1 The City Council and Mayor should Review and Adopt [UNESCO's Mondiacult Declaration](#)^{iv} and the *Braga Manifesto*^v to grow support for culture – and music, as a public good in Kansas City.

5.2 Reduce public policies that are a barrier to the growth and health of the local music economy. For example – review the Dance Hall Ordinance and other policies that may hinder or prevent the growth of the local music economy.

5.3 Leverage local and state investment in Major Sporting Events (FIFA2026) and other Major Events for local benefits for tourism through community watch parties, and other gatherings at the neighborhood scale that promote paid performances by local musicians.

5.4 Build opportunities for musicians to better understand and influence public policy through residencies, positions on Boards and Commissions, and direct involvement in policies and programs.

5.5 Implement a Citywide Marketing and Music Policy Strategy.

5.6 Engage City Planning and other agencies to review city policies and their impact on the local music economy. Review the zoning code, the Dance Hall Licensing process, and other policies that may create barriers to the growth of the local music economy.

5.7 Review affordable housing policies to include the musician's occupation as consideration for application acceptance and rent subsidy.

5.8 Leverage Kansas City as a regional center for healthcare to build a healthy music economy in Kansas City. Build upon the existing legacy of organizations that promote healthy musicians – such as the Midwest Music Foundation, the CODA Jazz fund, and other similar organizations.

5.9 Support music as healthcare, music therapy, and the mental health impacts of live music. Local musicians are leading already in this area of health innovation, including Brian Kennedy (hits to healing), and Art as Mentorship's programs with the World Health Organization (WHO) and Arts for Everybody.



Goal #6: GENDER EQUITY IN MUSIC AND THE CREATIVE ECONOMY

Promote women in leadership with the Music Economy

6.1: Promote women in leadership with the Music Economy. Increase access for girls and young women through inclusive music programs and education.

6.2: Promote the use of SDG Goal 5: Gender Equality through key initiatives and programs – such as the Key Change Program – Gender Equality in Music Industry and the production of the EQ Equalizer Project in Kansas City (2025) which promotes the storytelling of women as creatives.

6.3: Utilize the Film and Music Workshop with Creative City KC and Foresight Entertainment to provide opportunities for women in the creative industries. Develop programs and workshops to highlight Women in Film, Media, and Music in the Kansas City region and promote growth opportunities for women in film and music

Kansas City has a long history of leadership by women in music, from the early pioneers to the modern greats. The legacy of these women and the tradition of the Kansas City Women's Jazz Festival (1978-1985) should be more than an interesting historical footnote. **Kansas City's membership in UNESCO provides opportunities for a new chapter in gender equality in music.**



Goal #7: IMPROVE DATA AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY FOR KANSAS CITY'S MUSIC ECONOMY

Capture data daily across platforms rarely used to better Kansas City's Music Economy and Ecosystem.

7.1: Use existing public data to map and analyze the true impact and value of our Music Economy and Culture over time.

7.2: Creative City KC and the City of Kansas City work together to develop new incentives for better data collection, entry, and analysis that adequately represent the impact of the music economy in Kansas City, Missouri.

7.3 Work with the KCBizCare Office, and other local agencies to better understand why musicians are missing from a variety of programs and datasets that measure and track our local economy and business activity. Pursue a non-punitive approach to formalizing more music businesses and promote musicians as creative entrepreneurs. Address disincentives to licensing and other programs.

7.4 Assure that credits for arts and creative industries in the real estate development process will benefit the artists, musicians, and creatives – not just the real estate and construction industries.



Goal #8: INCORPORATE MUSIC INTO NEIGHBORHOODS AND PLACEMAKING

Use music in placemaking to increase safety and the health of our neighborhoods in Kansas City.

8.1: Leverage the NTDF funds and other similar place-based programs to include musicians, music performance and other neighborhood-based cultures of music.

8.2: Work with neighborhood leaders in all City Council Districts to increase the attention to creative placemaking and music heritage.

8.3: Connect the tangible heritage of place to build assets for neighborhood economic development and heritage tourism – including the homes of musicians, clubs, other historic sites.

8.4: Work with Porchfest, Dunbar Days, Make Music Day, UMKC Center for Neighborhoods, and other neighborhood-based festivals and events to promote local music and neighborhood safety.

***Creative placemaking and place-keeping** are recognized globally as best practices for (re)connecting people to the everyday spaces in neighborhoods. Music can be a powerful community engagement tool to bring people together. Musicians and artists are critical to the health of neighborhoods.*

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This is a revised and updated version of the Kansas City Global Music Strategy that was presented at City Council on October 31, 2024 in the Business Session.

Notes

i <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/mondiacult-2022-states-adopt-historic-declaration-culture>

ii <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-creative-cities-endorse-braga-manifesto-during-xvi-annual-conference-network#:~:text=The%20endorsement%20of%20the%20%E2%80%9CUNESCO,the%20post%2D2030%20development%20agenda>.

iii The AMAP program was established by Anita Dixon-Brown, who procured through the Department of Labor a RAPIDS code signifying “musicians” as a unique occupation. This opened up opportunities for union-based apprenticeship programs within the BLS category of Musicians and Singers.

iv <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/mondiacult-2022-states-adopt-historic-declaration-culture>

v <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/unesco-creative-cities-endorse-braga-manifesto-during-xvi-annual-conference-network#:~:text=The%20endorsement%20of%20the%20%E2%80%9CUNESCO,the%20post%2D2030%20development%20agenda>.