



KALAMAZOO-PORTAGE RANKED 5th AMONG 10 MOST ARTS-VIBRANT MEDIUM COMMUNITIES IN THE NATION

The 8th Annual Arts Vibrancy Index from SMU DataArts Compiles List of 40 Most Vibrant Arts Communities Across the U.S., Based on Measures of Per Capita Supply, Demand and Government Support for the Arts

KALAMAZOO, MI, Thursday, October 26, 2023 – The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo is celebrating the Kalamazoo-Portage community’s inclusion in the Top 40 Arts-Vibrant Communities of 2023 list.

SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, today released its 8th [Arts Vibrancy Index](#), which identifies Kalamazoo-Portage as number 5 in the list of 10 Medium communities in the United States through an analysis of the level of supply, demand, and government support for the arts in more than 900 communities across the country. Organized into three separate lists based on community population size, totaling 40 communities across the country, this year’s Arts Vibrancy Index is the first to include numerical rankings since 2020, a reflection of arts organizations returning to in-person activities and performances following the easing of pandemic restrictions. Kalamazoo, along with its neighbor Portage, returns to the list for the second straight year, having debuted in the rankings in 2022.

[Related research](#) by SMU DataArts shows that Local Arts Agencies like the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo are powerful catalysts of arts vibrancy which ensure that the arts remain an integral part of community life. The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo specifically addresses the local arts community in hopes that it will feel seen, supported, and uplifted knowing that its contributions are culturally enriching our society. The greater Kalamazoo area is home to many arts and culture organizations like the Black Arts and Cultural Center, Kalamazoo Symphony Orchestra, The Gilmore Piano Festival, Air Zoo, Kalamazoo Institute of Arts, Kalamazoo Civic Theatre, Farmers Alley Theatre, and the Gilmore Car Museum.

Arts-vibrant communities can be found in every region of the United States—a finding which arises from an objective analysis of the data, and not from selecting communities by hand to achieve geographic representation. “The arts and culture sector was hit hard by the pandemic, and some organizations and communities are still recovering. The Index is an opportunity for communities to affirm and celebrate the individuals and organizations that are the sources of arts vibrancy in their region, whether that’s artists who have mastered a local craft tradition over generations, a cultural festival that families enjoy year after year, or a cherished historic theater, museum, or arts-education center. For organizations, funders, local citizens, and public officials, the Arts Vibrancy Index is a powerful resource that leverages data-driven evidence to illuminate how the arts contribute to an area’s economy and public life,” stated **Dr. Zannie**

Voss, Director of SMU DataArts. “One way that public leaders can spark arts vibrancy in their communities is by expanding funding for local arts agencies, which spurs arts employment, stimulates more artistic activity, and increases the strength of geographically dispersed arts-vibrant cultural resources throughout communities.”

The List

In addition to the top arts-vibrant communities listed in the Arts Vibrancy Index, arts-vibrancy scores for every county in the United States can be viewed on an interactive map that identifies arts and cultural strengths that are present in every community. (Also known as Metropolitan or Micropolitan Statistical Areas, these communities have boundaries that are defined by the United States Census Bureau.)

Medium Communities (population: 100,000 – 1 million)

Medium communities are home to populations ranging from 100,000 to 1 million people. **Canton-Massillon, OH**, is new to this list, while **Santa Fe, NM**; **San Rafael, CA**; and **Pittsfield, MA**, have appeared on the list of top medium communities every year since 2015. **Ann Arbor** and **Kalamazoo-Portage, MI**, are returning to this list following their 2022 debuts.

1. Pittsfield, MA
2. Santa Fe, NM
3. Ithaca, NY
4. San Rafael, CA
5. Kalamazoo-Portage, MI
6. Boulder, CO
7. Missoula, MT
8. Canton-Massillon, OH
9. Burlington-South Burlington, VT
10. Ann Arbor, MI

The overall Arts Vibrancy Index is composed of 13 unique measures that cover aspects of supply, demand, and public support for arts and culture, and are adjusted for cost of living and population differences among communities. In this year’s index, the analysis approach was updated to weight the 13 inputs based on their relative explanatory power for the underlying concept of arts vibrancy. This approach improves measurement consistency in the face of data availability delays or other changes in individual datasets from year to year. All financial metrics have been adjusted for cost of living in order to level the playing field. The cost of doing business varies based on local conditions, so the same dollar goes further in some communities than others.

ABOUT THE ARTS COUNCIL OF GREATER KALAMAZOO

The Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo exists to infuse arts and culture into the commercial, educational, and creative economies of our region. The ACGK provides access to a broad range of artistic and cultural

opportunities through grants, promotion, advocacy, and free programming to the seven-county region which it serves. For more information visit the ACGK website at www.kalamazooarts.org.

ABOUT SMU DATAARTS

SMU DataArts, the National Center for Arts Research, is a project of the Meadows School of the Arts at Southern Methodist University. The mission of SMU DataArts is to provide and engage both organizations and individuals with the evidence-based insights needed to collectively build strong, vibrant, and equitable arts communities. Its research efforts range from academic papers published in leading journals, applied research undertaken with community partners, and actionable insights shared directly with arts practitioners. Its programs provide business intelligence tools and resources to help arts leaders leverage data to answer critical management questions and connect research analyses to their own work. Recent publications include research reports on [emergence from the COVID-19 crisis](#); [the alchemy that drives high performing arts organizations of color](#); [audience diversity, equity and inclusion in large performing arts organizations](#); [impact of investments made in diverse creative communities](#); and more.

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Editor's Note: An infographic provided by SMU DataArts summarizing the Kalamazoo-Portage region's score is attached for your use.