

Introduction

In 2015, Ogden City received an “Our Town” grant from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) to use creative placemaking and engagement with the arts to revitalize the area between Downtown Ogden and the adjacent East Central residential neighborhood. This area was envisioned as a Creative District intended to achieve the following goals:

- Encourage artists and other creatives to work and live in the district
- Create new opportunities for the community to engage with art, particularly in the public realm
- Develop a vibrant connection between Downtown and East Central, contributing to the revitalization of East Central



Artist Rachel Pohl and community volunteers celebrating the unveiling of a new mural in the Creative District.

The focus of the Our Town grant was to develop a community vision, conceptual plan, and identity for the Creative District. The vision and conceptual plan are presented in the Creative District Master Plan, which is currently being reviewed by the Ogden City Council. Supportive activities included arts events and installations, and new resources for artists and creatives.

Public Outreach

Community visioning efforts have shaped the Creative District Master Plan. Informal meetings with artists, creatives, and arts organizations were held throughout 2016. In spring 2017, two small focus group sessions and a community-wide open house were held, and attendees were asked to share their perspectives on opportunities, challenges, and project priorities for the Creative District. Attendees were especially interested in funding and business support for creative activities, lighting, public art, transportation, and performance space.

In addition to input from these outreach efforts, a steering committee helped to guide development of the Creative District Master Plan. This group met monthly in 2017-2018 to refine the objectives and recommendations for the district. A second community-wide open house was held January 2018 to gather feedback on a draft version of the plan.

Throughout the planning process, Ogden City and its partners also coordinated pilot projects, to test different concepts in the Creative District and engage with the community. Projects included the Rachel Pohl mural at 25th & Adams (in partnership with the Weber Art Council), several outdoor video projections during First Friday Art Stroll, and MOMENTS Festival, a one-night festival of ephemeral art. The final pilot project during the planning process will be the Painted Streets project, which is creating several new street murals in the Creative District. Designs were selected through a public call for art and community volunteers are now helping to paint the murals.

Goal, Objectives, and Strategies

The goal is for the Nine Rails Creative District to be an epicenter for art and culture that provides opportunities for the creative community to live, develop, share, and teach their diverse skills for the benefit of Ogden’s artists, citizens, and visitors. Five objectives were developed to support this overall goal, with specific strategies defined for each objective. For more details, please see the “Goal, Objectives, and Strategies” section of the Creative District Master Plan.

Recommendations

The Creative District Master Plan recommends that the Creative District include the area between 24th and 26th Streets, from Grant to Madison Avenues. This area provides a critical connection between Downtown and East Central, and links to already vibrant places such as Historic 25th Street, The Junction, Washington Boulevard, and the Jefferson Avenue Historic District. Within this boundary, there is a smaller intensive area that will be the initial focus for public investment and an updated zoning designation.

The district will be known as the Nine Rails Creative District. This name pays tribute to Ogden's history as a railroad town, originally as a major connection point for the Transcontinental Railroad and later, a hub for nine different rail lines. "You can't get anywhere without coming to Ogden" was a city slogan for a decade or more. The Nine Rails name is also symbolic of the Nine Muses from Greek mythology, which represent diverse forms of artistic expression.

The master plan includes recommendations for public spaces and projects (such as public art and new plazas), streetscapes (including lighting and wayfinding), redevelopment (focused on a new zoning designation), and programs and activities (such as new festivals or events). Specific recommendations, with phasing, area described below. For a complete discussion, please see the "Recommendations" section of the Creative District Master Plan.

Phase 1, Years 0-3
Public Spaces and Projects – Gateway art installation at 25 th St & Ogden Ave; painted crosswalks; murals; events & festivals; food truck hub; art/play installation at Lester Park; Ogden Ave plaza
Streetscapes – Improvements to 25 th St and Ogden Ave, including: emphasis on pedestrians; traffic calming; wayfinding and signage; lighting; street furnishings; landscaping; accessibility
Planning – New Creative District Zone to allow higher density and mixed uses; support implementation of Bicycle Master Plan, Transportation Master Plan, and Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) project
Phase 2, Years 3-6
Public Spaces and Projects – Neon Plaza on Kiesel Ave and Butler Way stairs
Streetscapes – Improvements to Porter Ave (Butler Way), Kiesel Ave, Adams Ave, Jefferson Ave, Orchard Ave, Madison Ave, and 2400 block of alley east of Washington
Phase 3, Years 6+
Public Spaces and Projects – Lester Park
Streetscapes – Improvements to 24th Street and 26th Street
Other – Bus Rapid Transit (BRT)

Work in Progress

Although Ogden City and its partners are still in the early stages of this project, we are excited to see momentum building in the Creative District. Several examples are included below:

- Ogden First, a non-profit arts organization, has developed PLATFORMS in a formerly vacant lot; now it is an outdoor gallery with rotating art installations and performances.
- A property owner is renovating a 60,000 sf building in the district that had long sat vacant. Once renovated, the Monarch will serve as a creative hub with proposed uses include artist workspace, an event center, gallery, and dining.
- Several design firms and other creative businesses have relocated to the Creative District and are making improvements to commercial buildings.
- The Painted Streets project has introduced several large murals on the 25th Street roadway in the Creative District. The mural designs were selected through a public call for art. Community volunteers helped to paint the murals.