



South Salt Lake

Arts Council Program and History Interpretation
Services

Stakeholder Interviews Report

August 2024



summary of key takeaways

Familiarity with Arts and Culture in South Salt Lake

- All interviewees were aware of City-produced signature events and programs
- Most interviewees were aware of the Scott School and had some familiarity with the building's historical significance and current programming
- The City has an “up and coming” arts scene that is a bit small, a bit “scrappy,” but all community centric

South Salt Lake's Current Successes and Local Impacts

- The City's signature programs and events are exciting, well attended, and uniquely local
- South Salt Lake is a diverse community with a rich tapestry of cultures and lived experiences
- The City has a thriving creative scene that is supported by the Arts Council and embraced by the community

Potential Challenges and External Factors

- Be mindful of future development that could impact the City's affordability and displace artists and the diverse communities of South Salt Lake
- Preserve the “soul” of South Salt Lake by protecting and resourcing local small businesses, artists, and creative industries

Opportunities for the Future

- Transform the Scott School to be more community-focused and open to the public
- Use the Scott School to support and showcase local artists
- Lift up and embrace the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of the local community
- Cultivate partnerships to develop new types of programs and events that reach different demographics (e.g., inter-generational)
- Embrace the intersectionality of the arts and the many ways that communities define and engage with arts, culture, and creativity
- Amplify and resource the Arts Council's current programming and events
- Utilize the arts as a catalyst to define South Salt Lake's identity and encourage smart growth

A Vision of Success: South Salt Lake will...

- Provide accessible programs and events that speak to the diverse artistic and cultural tastes of all residents and communities
- Amplify and grow support and resources for artists
- Work to preserve its identity while at the same time have a defined brand that is grounded in arts and creativity
- Ensure that programs and events are inclusive and accessible to all South Salt Lake residents
- Honor the diverse cultures, communities, and traditions and amplify them through programs that are guided by the community



*"The vibrancy in South Salt Lake is obvious - they are doing really good things to engage their communities through some wonderful and exciting events. **There is a lot of potential there.**"*

-Interview participant

overview & background

South Salt Lake (the City) engaged Create Today LLC to create a strategic plan for the South Salt Lake Arts Council and its use of the historic Scott School. This plan will guide how the City will continue to support the arts and how its spaces and resources could best be used by and for the community.

The Stakeholder Interviews were the first of several externally focused research endeavors and an integral part of the Listening Phase of the strategic planning process. The Create Today team conducted 11 one-on-one interviews in July 2024 with a broad spectrum of stakeholders.

methodology and process

Create Today, with guidance from the Task Force, developed an interview protocol (see Appendix A) to help guide the conversations. The questions covered a range of topics, including familiarity of/experience with arts and culture in South Salt Lake, current successes and things that should be continued, external and internal challenges, and future opportunities that the City might want to explore.

The list of stakeholders was curated by the Task Force to ensure representation of the breadth of the City's diverse communities and individuals. Create Today contacted 13 individuals via email, of which 11 were interviewed. These conversations lasted anywhere from 40-60 minutes and yielded a wealth of qualitative data.

The data was cleaned and anonymized to preserve the confidential nature of the conversations. Direct quotes were used throughout the report to better illustrate the ideas, themes, and emotions that were conveyed throughout the interviews. All of the direct quotes are denoted with quotation marks and italicized formatting.

The stakeholder interviews research was a non-probability purposive sample, which means that we did not randomly select individuals. However, purposive sampling is widely used in qualitative research and the 11 interviewees were intentionally selected based on their characteristics, knowledge, and lived experiences.

The research team advises caution when extrapolating general observations from the interviews results and applying them broadly to the entire South Salt Lake population. The goal of this research was to listen and learn, and to lay a solid foundation for the planning process upon which the subsequent phases of work will be built.



stakeholders

The final sample of 11 stakeholders represented the following sectors and perspectives:

- Local government and elected officials
- Artists and individuals working in the arts and cultural sector
- Local businesses, including nonprofit and human and social services and faith-based organizations
- Economic development
- State-wide funding agencies

common themes

Familiarity with Arts and Culture in South Salt Lake

To start the conversations, we asked each interviewee a series of questions to establish a baseline of their backgrounds and to better understand their overall engagement in arts and culture in South Salt Lake. To ensure that all interviewees could approach this question with their own unique perspectives, we clarified that “arts and culture” could be defined in the broadest possible terms, from attending a performance to singing in a choir to culinary arts and cooking.

Interviewees were very aware of City-produced signature events and programs

All interviewees had either participated in or could readily name an arts and culture event or activity in South Salt Lake. Mural Fest and Craftoberfest were the two events that all interviewees had either awareness or attended. A more detailed description of interviewees’ comments on these two events is included later in the report under South Salt Lake’s Current Successes and Local Impacts.

Most interviewees had some familiarity of the Scott School

The majority of interviewees knew of the historic Scott School and were able to generally discuss some of the activities that previously and/or currently occur in the space. However, several interviewees had never visited the Scott School nor could describe in detail the current use of the space and its activities.

The City has an “up and coming” arts scene that is a bit small, a bit “scrappy,” but all community centric

About half the interviewees went deeper in their characterization of the arts and culture scene in South Salt Lake. Collectively, these interviewees described the scene as: new or “just starting out,” “small but mighty,” “grassroots,” “artist-centered,” and embraced by the community and the government (i.e., South Salt Lake Arts Council).

*“Thinking about the arts and culture scene in SSL, **it feels very young to me.** But that’s a good thing! It hasn’t been fully developed and there is a small town feel to it where you can still afford to come here, create art, and not have to compete with one another.*
-Interview participant



South Salt Lake's Current Successes and Local Impacts

The next set of questions focused on the current successes of the City's arts and cultural programs and activities. Interviewees were not given any prompts during this line of questioning, that is, they were not asked explicitly about the success of any one program or event, but rather, were asked to respond to a broader inquiry: "What is currently working well or something successful in South Salt Lake?"

The following observations are ordered by prevalence, that is, the first item below was the most shared across all the interviews and the last item was the least shared.

The City's signature programs and events are exciting, well attended, and uniquely local

Nearly all interviewees commented on the success of South Salt Lake's large events, Mural Fest and Craftoberfest. Interviewees shared specifics on what they believed made these events so successful, including:

- A focus on local and regional artists and creative businesses
- Family-friendly events that everyone can attend
- An outside location that provides a more "passive" form of engagement
- The programming expands the intersectionality of arts and culture with architecture, live music, industrial arts, food and beer, etc.

"The Mural Fest - definitely a big success! That brainchild of the Arts Council is so inspiring to me and it's cool to think that someone sat down and dreamt this up. There is a lot of potential, but it still feels very small."

*"These types of events are **putting South Salt Lake on the map.**"*

"Mural Fest has been growing every year. I love that it brings artists from outside the state."

"Some of the big successes are Mural Fest and Craftoberfest. They are free and fun, and all different sorts of people get the opportunity to see these events every year."

South Salt Lake is a diverse community with a rich tapestry of cultures and lived experiences

With a population of about 27,000, South Salt Lake is a small city however it is one of the most socially and economically diverse¹ within Utah. According to the U.S. Census, 22.4% of South Salt Lake's population are foreign born compared to 8.4% for the entire state of Utah, and a much larger share of South Salt Lake's population identifies as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, Person of Color) versus the state of Utah (49% vs 24%)². The diversity of the City was acknowledged by nearly all interviewees and celebrated as a strength that could be further amplified and supported. The opportunities around this strength are shared in greater detail in the Opportunities for the Future section of this report.

"We have so many different cultural groups and it is great for our community to see that."

¹ <https://ssl.gov/284/About-South-Salt-Lake>

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/UT,southsaltlakecityutah/POP645222?>



*“South Salt Lake is a place you put your roots down. In fact, **many people from all over the world have come here to build community.** All the refugee communities here and different languages and cultures. It’s one of the things that makes this place so unique and beautiful.”*

The City has a thriving creative scene that is supported by the Arts Council and embraced by the community

Interviewees talked about South Salt Lake Arts Council’s commitment to elevating the local arts and cultural community. A few interviewees described this support from the City as “critical” to the creation of such a thriving, community-centric creative scene. One interviewee shared that the City is a place where you feel supported and embraced by the government as well as the local community, and that feel of South Salt Lake is one of a “*rising tides lifts all ships*” where you “*don’t have to feel like you’re in competition with everyone.*”

“The Arts Council is involved in showcasing and promoting all the local artists. I love that mindset from the Arts Council and the local government.”

“There is an awful lot of interest in the arts from the community and the City is doing a magnificent job.”

*“The City embraces creativity. It’s a very creative place. The institutional support for the arts [the Arts Council] - despite being new - is really felt. **They [Arts Council staff] are all very passionate people and deeply committed to elevating arts and culture in South Salt Lake.**”*

Potential Challenges and External Factors

Create Today did not specifically ask interviewees to share any challenges or external factors that could impact South Salt Lake’s ability to move forward with an arts and culture strategic plan. However, several themes naturally came up during the conversations, all of which were focused on the current and future growth and development.

Be mindful of future development that could impact the City’s affordability and displace artists and the diverse communities of South Salt Lake

Several interviewees commented on recent, new developments in South Salt Lake’s downtown area as well as the larger housing crisis in the region due to high home prices and few affordable housing options.³ According to several interviewees, South Salt Lake City’s affordability was a factor that helped to originally attract artists and creative individuals, which was the source of tension and conflict expressed by several interviewees. They shared a desire to see the City grow and improve but also cautioned the City to be mindful not to displace the artists and communities that make South Salt Lake “*special.*”

*“It’s in a vulnerable position. The City has been depressed for so long but now it looks like development is ramping back up again. I’m pretty sure they are starting to build a lot of apartments in downtown. Housing and affordability are an issue all over Utah and it could be a big problem in South Salt Lake. It’s been a sleeper city, but I think that’s all about to change **and I fear that [growth and development] could impact artists and refugee communities and displace them.**”*

³ <https://www.sltrib.com/news/2024/03/08/5-numbers-that-show-just-how-bad/>



Preserve the “soul” of South Salt Lake by protecting and resourcing local small businesses, artists, and creative industries

*“I’m concerned about how we can keep things super local. Jack in the Box, Chipotle - these types of chains don’t encourage people to stay and hang out. People just drive through, get their food to go and then leave. How can we get people to stay and linger. **How can we encourage more community building through small local businesses that are unique?**”*

“We need to keep and preserve the city’s soul by investing in small businesses. Use public resources to go back in and protect these businesses that make the city unique”

*“I’m really concerned with how fragile the local business community is, especially with all the construction going on. We have such a tight-knit community where local businesses are collaborating with other local businesses. **It’s a grassroots part of the city that makes us unique.** I don’t want to see that go away with more construction and chains [national businesses]”*

Opportunities for the Future

Interviewees were asked to consider future opportunities for South Salt Lake as well as the role the City could play in supporting the local arts, culture, and creative sector. This area of inquiry is always an exciting component of any community listening process because it allows residents to build off current strengths and envision a future.

In general, the key themes that interviewees shared about future opportunities focused on: the Scott School, the City’s diverse communities, open and accessible programs, growing new and current programming and events, and the future support of arts and culture in the City’s development.

Transform the Scott School to be more community-focused and open to the public

Nearly all interviewees who commented on the Scott School spoke to the importance of the building becoming a space for and by the community. Some interviewees focused on the Scott School becoming a community center while others talked about it becoming more of an art gallery. However, all interviewees agreed that the Scott School needs to be a community-focused space that is open and accessible and provides that “third space” where residents and neighbors can gather and be in community.

*“**This could be a place to build community.** Making that space available and a place to gather. This facility offers opportunity for a gathering space.”*

“Community centers can be active lively spots that are used at all times. Scott School could be more activated like a community center. We often get feedback that it is a bit of a maze. Wayfinding and signage could be helpful. The area behind the building in between the Scott School and the cottage gets really dark. More illumination is needed, especially during winter when it gets darker earlier.”

“...the school has history of community focus and history of community support. The school should continue this tradition and focus on the broader community.”



“We have the opportunity to make more third spaces - there doesn’t seem to be a lot of these around here. That neutral space that helps people to get out of their home, that includes Wi-Fi, working space, a café, classrooms, etc.”

Use the Scott School to support and showcase local artists

Several interviewees talked about the need to support and present the work of local artists, creatives, and communities. In this sense, the Scott School could operate as a gallery space that highlights both professional and amateur artistic work and provide community members with a vibrant space for interaction, reflection, and dialogue. More spaces for visual artists – including maker spaces and spaces for artist residencies – was something that was also communicated to Create Today as a need across the County in the Salt Lake County Arts and Culture Master Plan. This was one of the recommendations for the County to pursue over the next ten years (2020-2030).

Interviewees also shared opportunities to build off existing programs in the City (ex. Mural Fest) and find ways to integrate artistic residencies into future curatorial programming at the Scott School.

“Have the city create a space for artists to have their work scene. A gallery but also a community space where people can gather for free.”

“I would love to see an ongoing gallery space. Maybe a wall dedicated to Mural Fest at the Scott School - a whole wall of reproductions. Love the idea to see the reproductions of past murals all in one place and give the mural artists extra presence. The gallery space in the School could also hold events and the proceeds could support the artists and students.”

“One possibility to help the Scott School become more self-sustaining would be to create artist retreat studios or residencies, like the Mendocino Art Center in CA. The artists could get the studio space cheaply or maybe housing, if the City could find a place to build some, at the School and in turn they would offer community services and teach classes. This would also help a lot of the artists that are being displaced by gentrification.”

*“You could have resident artists and they do their work there for a period of time and show what they do. More of an open studio space. Maybe a few times a week, the **community could come into the space and engage with the artists and talk to them about their work.** This could put the City on the tourist map too.”*

Lift up and embrace the cultural, racial, and ethnic diversity of the local community

Most interviewees shared opportunities for the City to support the local diverse communities through creative and artistic endeavors that honor their rich cultural legacy and help them maintain a connection to their heritage and roots. The City could build off existing events and holidays, such as Hispanic Heritage Month, Juneteenth Celebration, or World Refugee Day. Additionally, there are opportunities to create programs that actively engage local communities and allow them to guide the programming based on their own strengths, needs, and aspirations. Regardless of the approach, community buy-in and trust would be paramount to building and sustaining authentic and community-centric programming that could build bridges and foster community pride.

“This is a ‘we’ situation not a ‘you’ or ‘me’ one. We need to focus on the whole community and make sure we are giving everyone those same opportunities. South Salt Lake is an extremely diverse



community, and we need to make sure we are tapping into all of those aspects of the community. We could help refugee communities stay connected to their own heritage through dance, dress, different types of arts, cooking...that's what we need to do."

*With the strong, local ethnic populations, **I wonder how the City could celebrate those voices and better serve those populations through activities and art forms that are more relevant to them?**"*

"There is an opportunity to connect all these programs and organizations: Promise, Arts Council, Interfaith, the City, and create programming that speaks to the local communities. South Salt Lake is so diverse and it has the opportunity to do something within itself that might not happen in other parts of the state. The sky is the limit!"

"The neighborhoods here are so diverse and rich. We have so many living traditions! The Scott School would be a great place to engage local communities and especially many people from within those communities - a collaboration with older and younger. We could go beyond just traditional art forms and think about wood making or quilting or food. How can we preserve a lot of the traditional art already here?"

*"Elevate the local cultures and their art forms. **It would be cool to have a space where we could have something year-round that builds off of and celebrates the local diversity.**"*

Cultivate partnerships to develop new types of programs and events that reach different demographics (e.g., inter-generational)

Interviewees shared the importance of partnerships to grow existing programs and develop new ones that create opportunities to engage new audiences. In the context of this opportunity, the partnership ideas focused on those between the Arts Council and other City departments, nonprofits, artists, community groups, and individuals. Programming partnerships could provide numerous benefits, including increased staff capacity and resources, built-in trust between partners and communities, and fresh and diverse perspectives to guide and inform new programs.

"Collaborate with South Salt Lake Library, it's right across the street from the Scott School campus. There could be a lot more collaboration and partnerships."

***"I would like to see more intergenerational work in South Salt Lake through partnerships.** Maybe we could give students some type of school credit for teaching some of the arts classes. Intergenerational resources and programs are important."*

"Partnerships are key! We are very happy to partner with South Salt Lake to our fullest capacity. We are coming into this community, and we are looking for them to guide us. We are looking to our partners that already have a presence in the community. How can we create a win-win situation?"

*"The government isn't as trusted as much. But we have trust. **Community-based organization that already have that built in trust could be partners in this work.**"*

"There used to be a farmers' market, but we don't have the capacity anymore. It was fairly small, but it included some produce/goods and also some local artisans. I know that people miss it and continue to ask about that. A partnership could help to bring this back."



Embrace the intersectionality of the arts and the many ways that communities define and engage with arts, culture, and creativity

Interviewees talked about the many ways that arts and culture intersect with different communities and the importance of taking a broad definition that goes beyond Eurocentric art forms (ex. ballet, classical musical, etc.). This speaks to the many ways that individuals and communities express themselves creatively and places equal importance on artistic practices that take place both in a theater and in a park, for example. This opportunity is particularly relevant to the diverse communities of South Salt Lake and needs to be part of the conversation around new types of programs.

“A quarterly family craft night would be great. Something that our families can come in and have something fun to do with the Arts Council. Something that’s seasonal and relevant to what’s happening in the community. Getting instructors from the community that are part of these underrepresented groups would be beneficial as well. I would love to see that.”

*“**Using the arts as a bridge between communities.** Art classes aren’t just an opportunity to fill the creative needs of a community, but they can also be an outlet to get away from their every day issues. This type of art and creativity can be something that communities and individuals are doing for themselves and not for their family or anyone else.”*

“Think about how food can collaborate with art and creativity. There is so much you can do with that: the art of food, designs with food, culturally different food. You naturally get peoples interested because food is a big part of every culture.”

Utilize the arts as a catalyst to define South Salt Lake’s identity and built its brand

Several interviewees discussed the exciting opportunity for arts and culture to play a significant role in building and defining the identity of South Salt Lake. This could play out in different strategies, programs, and investments on behalf of the City, such as amplify and further resource the Arts Council to take a more prominent role and better support local artists and creative activities, and to use the arts – especially public art – to help guide South Salt Lake’s downtown development and build a creative “core” that engages locals and attracts visitors.

“Murals are going a long way to draw interest from the community. Let’s build off of that! A lot of valley communities are copying that and doing murals on the sides of the buildings. I think there is a lot of opportunity to provide work for artists and use it as a fundraising tool.”

*“**Visual arts could be a big part of the downtown.** I would also like to see culinary arts take a big role in defining downtown. You could have small eclectic restaurants or a food hall that promotes cuisine from some of the local communities”*

“What is the city’s brand? This is something that needs to happen organically and in a way that doesn’t strip away South Salt Lake’s soul. The arts should be a part of that conversation.”

Defining a Vision of Success

Lastly, the Create Today team asked interviewees to think about the future, when the planning process is finished, and South Salt Lake is moving forward with its new strategic direction for the Scott School and for the



City as a whole. Most interviewees restated many of the opportunities that were detailed above. However, a few new ideas or visions of success emerged from these conversations.

A Vision of Success: South Salt Lake will...

- Provide accessible programs and events that speak to the diverse artistic and cultural tastes of all residents and communities
- Amplify and grow support and resources for artists
- Work to preserve its identity while at the same time have a defined brand that is grounded in arts and creativity
- Ensure that programs and events are inclusive and accessible to all South Salt Lake residents
- Honor the diverse cultures, communities, and traditions and amplify them through programs that are guided by the community



appendix a: interview protocol

The questions listed here are prompts – not all interviewees will be asked every question and not all questions will be asked in the same order. Please consider this as more of a template for the interviewer to use as a guide in the conversations.

introduction

South Salt Lake City has engaged Create Today LLC to create a strategic plan for the South Salt Lake Arts Council and its use of the Historic Scott School. This plan will guide how the City will continue to serve as a center for the arts and how its spaces and resources could best be used by and for the community.

current familiarity and engagement

1. To start, would you mind telling me a little more about yourself, maybe how long you've lived in South Salt Lake, or your relationship(s) to South Salt Lake, if any; what you do for work, and anything else that you'd like me to know before we get started?
2. In what capacity have you engaged with the arts in South Salt Lake (e.g., as an artist, donor, staffer, attendee, etc.)? Please tell me what different types of events or programs you've attended/seen in South Salt Lake.
3. When you think of an arts and culture program in South Salt Lake, what comes to mind?
 - Prompt: How do you define arts and events and culture?
 - Prompt: Is this something in a theater? Out in the community? Culturally specific? Visual or performing art?
4. Are there other venues or arts and culture programming in the region, similar to what takes place in South Salt Lake, that you have performed in/donated to/staffed/attended events?
 - Prompt: What types of events?
 - Prompt: Thinking generally about your attendance at arts and culture programming – anywhere, in Salt Lake County, in the Region, or in another location – what do you like to attend or what do you typically see?

what's working now in South Salt Lake

5. In what ways is South Salt Lake City currently successful in supporting arts and culture?
 - Prompt: Successful in programming and events
 - Prompt: Successful in venues and facilities
 - Prompt: Successful in supporting artists and arts organizations



6. What about the South Salt Lake Arts Council's current programming and events is important to preserve for the future?
7. Do you consider the programming and events unique and/or distinctive?
 - Prompt: What about it is unique or distinctive?
8. What role should the South Salt Lake Arts Council play in the local arts and culture community?
 - Prompt: Programmer of events
 - Prompt: Funder and provide resources
 - Prompt: Convener and community builder
 - Prompt: Professional development

opportunities for the future

9. What opportunities do you think the City could explore and take advantage of in the future?
 - Prompt: greater funding, expansion, different sub programs, potential partnerships, Historic Scott School
10. Is there anything the City could do that would encourage you to attend more arts and culture events and programming?
 - Prompt: Programming beyond downtown
 - Prompt: Programming in open spaces
 - Prompt: Different types of programming
 - Prompt: Programming at alternate dates/times
11. For artists/arts organizations: Are there any opportunities for how the City could support artists and arts organizations?
12. Are there any opportunities for partnerships or collaborations between the City and ...?

defining a vision of success

13. What could success look like over the first five to ten years for arts and culture in South Salt Lake, more broadly, for communities, residents, and artists/arts organizations?
 - Prompt: If you were at your favorite event/program, five years from now, what would you see? How would it feel? Who would be there from the community?
14. How could the City ensure that its events and programs are accessible to everyone?
 - Prompt: Greater accessibility
 - Prompt: What about for the different communities of South Salt Lake?



15. We are doing a community survey as a key component of our research and we want to ensure the survey is accessible and has the greatest opportunity to gather feedback from a wide range of South Salt Lake residents, especially from communities who typically don't have the opportunity to participate in these types of research projects. Do you have any suggestions or insight, specific to South Salt Lake, that might help us to provide an accessible and equitable survey?

16. Are there any other comments you would like to share that would enrich or inform this planning process?