

Cool Cities Growth Initiative

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| Initiative Name | Art Hop |
| Description of Initiative | <p>Each event features a schedule of art exhibitions that are open to the public. Refreshments are provided, which adds to the celebratory atmosphere. Participants include art galleries, museums, and businesses.</p> <p>Each month the Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo provides a brochure of the Art Hop schedule. For each participating site, there is one photo representing the exhibition. On the back of the brochure (usually a large format postcard) is a map that shows the location of each venue. The schedule is sent to local media and posted on the Arts Council's Web site www.kalamazooarts.com</p> <p>Background and History A monthly Art Hop (or Art Walk or Gallery Hop as other events are called) is not unique. Other cities — many of them larger than Kalamazoo — hold such events. In larger cities, the core participants are usually traditional art galleries. These events also are typically confined to a discrete geographical area so patrons can walk from one site to the next. Often participants are lined up along the street. Kalamazoo's Art Hop began with a core group of exhibition sites, none of which were located next to each other. Only a few of them were traditional art galleries. Most of the original Art Hop sites were local businesses that housed rotating exhibitions by local artists provided by the Arts Council. These core sites included an architectural firm, two hospital clinics, a hair salon and a restaurant, in addition to the Arts Council's own office. When it began in 1996, the Arts Council first held the event (then called a Gallery Hop) quarterly. As more privately run galleries sprang up, they joined the schedule and in 1998 the Art Hop became monthly event and drew in more people.</p> <p>As the Hop grew in popularity it gained attention from downtown restaurateurs who noted increased business on those nights. It also gained attention from downtown retailers who wanted to attract the Hop visitors to their stores. In 1999, the Arts Council was approached by the downtown development authority (Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. or DKI) to plan an expanded Hop that would include more downtown retailers. The idea was to turn the downtown stores and offices into temporary gallery spaces that would be featured on the Art Hop. These venues would not become regular exhibition sites but would display the art for a few days before and/or after the Art Hop. These expanded Art Hops introduced new audiences to the artists and their art and at the same time brought Art Hop patrons to downtown stores they might not otherwise have visited.</p> <p>This first expanded event was held in October 1999 and was highly successful. Since that time, the Arts Council and DKI have jointly sponsored these larger expanded Art Hops four times a year — in March, June, October and December. These expanded Art Hops have anywhere from 21 to 35 venues, while the remaining eight traditional Art Hops typically average eight to 12 venues.</p> <p>In 2000, musical groups were added to the Art Hop. It should be noted that not all performances are suited to an Art Hop. Patrons must be free to move about easily so a performance that would be disrupted by this kind of movement won't work. However, some of the retailers who participate in the expanded Art Hops have small ensembles or solo acts playing in their stores, which has worked out fine.</p> <p>Refreshments The Art Hop schedule is built around what are known in the art world as "opening receptions."</p> |

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| | <p>Museums and galleries traditionally host a party to celebrate a new exhibit. It is a time for the artist's friends and family as well as art collectors to view the show. The Art Hop in Kalamazoo retains this tradition. Refreshments will vary from wine and cheese to punch and homemade cookies, which adds to the celebratory atmosphere. Our advice is not to advertise the refreshments so folks won't view this as a free meal.</p> | | | | | |
| Action Type | | Build New | | Expanding Existing | | Attract From Elsewhere |
| Timing | <p>Occurs first Friday of every month, but depending on how the holidays fall, the event is sometimes held on the second Friday in January and July. One reason the Art Hop has gained a following is that it has regular timing. Having the event every month gives it top-of-mind awareness. It's too easy to forget something that isn't held regularly.</p> | | | | | |
| Champions | <p>Lisa Williams Director of Communications and Art Hop Coordinator Arts Council of Greater Kalamazoo williams@kalamazooarts.com 269-342-5059</p> <p>Deb Droppers The Event Company Handles special events for Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. which partners with the Arts Council four times a year on special expanded Art Hop events. eventkzoo@chartermi.net 269-388-2830</p> | | | | | |
| Resources | <p>The Arts Council funds the Art Hop with the help of participants. Costs to design and print the monthly brochure are shared by Art Hop participants. The Arts Council mails the brochure to some 600 members and donors and distributes other brochures at participating sites and other places around town, such as Chamber of Commerce.</p> | | | | | |
| Performance Measures | <p>There is anecdotal evidence that restaurants and retailers have increased traffic on the night of an Art Hop, but there are no hard numbers to reflect true economic impact.</p> | | | | | |
| Model or Case Study References | <p>Columbus, Ohio, has held a monthly Gallery Hop in the Short North region of its downtown for many years. Every first Saturday night, the Short North is packed with people going in and out of the art galleries, furniture stores and hair salons along High Street. From 1985 to 1995, this section of town saw tremendous growth. By 1995, what had been a "low-rent" district had become a desirable place to live with high-end restaurants, condominiums, dry cleaning business – all the makings of an exciting and thriving neighborhood and business district.</p> | | | | | |
| Alternative Strategies | <p>If there are few or no art galleries in a city, then an Art Hop could still be held by turning stores and offices into exhibition spaces.</p> | | | | | |
| Synergy with Other Initiatives | <p>In 2003, we used the Art Hop model for another section of town and once again partnered with Downtown Kalamazoo Inc. (DKI). Portage Street is just outside downtown but too far away from the regular Art Hop paths. It is the subject of numerous development initiatives designed to make the area more viable for businesses and residents. There were nine participating venues including a branch of the Kalamazoo Public Library, an antique shop, an art gallery and a photographic laboratory. We have been asked by DKI to produce two of these special Art Hops on Portage Street in 2004.</p> | | | | | |
| Marketability or Buy-in Potential | <p>Businesses do not have to be a participating gallery venue to benefit from the Art Hop. Restaurants and clubs can attract customers before or after the event. Retail stores, too, can gain customers just by keeping their stores open.</p> | | | | | |

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| Risk Factors | For some people bad weather can hinder participation but we have found that even in really cold weather people still come out for the Art Hop. |
| Supporting Documentation | Copies of previous Art Hop brochures are being mailed. An abbreviated schedule can be found at www.kalamazooarts.com . Art Hop schedules are posted online approximately two weeks before the event. |
| Success Factors | <p>We believe the success of the Art Hop can be attributed to these factors:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Frequency and regularity. People depend on the first Friday of every month and they put it on their calendars. 2. Changing variety of art on display. 2. Free admission. 3. Ease of access and only moderately structured. You just pick up a schedule and go from one spot to the next. 4. No dress code, no tickets required. 5. Casual, friendly atmosphere – there is no distinction between people of different economic means. Everyone can be comfortable. |
| Tactic and Action Plan | <p>Displaying the Art Businesses that are not in the gallery business will want to first determine the type of space they have available to display art. Can they accommodate sculpture or only framed works? Be prepared to nail holes in the wall or to install some type of hanging mechanism.</p> <p>Finding the Art Galleries and museums already will have their own contacts with artists. Businesses looking to be an Art Hop venue can find artists by getting referrals from these galleries and museums or they might be able to find them through their own customers. The local arts council also might maintain an artist database that can be used as a resource.</p> <p>Art Comes First Non-gallery or museum venues should work with artists to display the work appropriately. There is no set rule as to the number of pieces to include in an exhibit. This will depend on the size of the artwork and the amount of available space. A minimum of six to eight pieces is a good start. The work should be displayed in a way that will draw attention to the art. This may require that store merchandise be re-arranged to accommodate the art.</p> <p>Making the Schedule The Arts Council has worked with the same graphic designer for several years and as a result we have production of the Art Hop brochure down to an efficient routine. Brochures are usually a large-format postcard. Depending on the size of the schedule, this could be 5.5 x 8.5, 11 x 5.5 or an 11 x 17 tri-folded to 11 x 5.5.</p> <p>Participating venues RSVP for the Art Hop two months in advance, providing details about the exhibit to be featured. They also provide a photograph of the work on display. This can be a slide, print or a digital file. This information is compiled at the Arts Council and then given to the graphic designer who creates the brochure. Brochures are mailed to Arts Council members and donors and are posted at participating galleries and other locations. A news press release of the Art Hop schedule is sent to the news media. An Adobe PDF file of each Art Hop schedule is posted on Arts Council Web site at www.kalamazooarts.com.</p> |
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