

Erie County Cultural Plan

Initial Cultural Conditions Analysis

March 7, 2024

by AEA Consulting for Erie County



AEA Consulting

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About This Document

This document is a background paper that aims to create a common foundation for visioning sessions with the Steering and Advisory Committees for the Erie County Cultural Planning process. It combines insights from an initial round of interviews and site visits with research and asset mapping developed by AEA Consulting.

Please note that the conclusions and analysis expressed here are preliminary and serve as a spur to creative thinking. The Cultural Conditions Analysis will continue to be refined as the Plan process continues, leveraging input from the Steering and Advisory Committees, as well as guidance from forthcoming public meetings. The result will be an Updated Cultural Conditions Analysis shared in Phase 2 that will be a key input into the background of the resulting Cultural Plan.

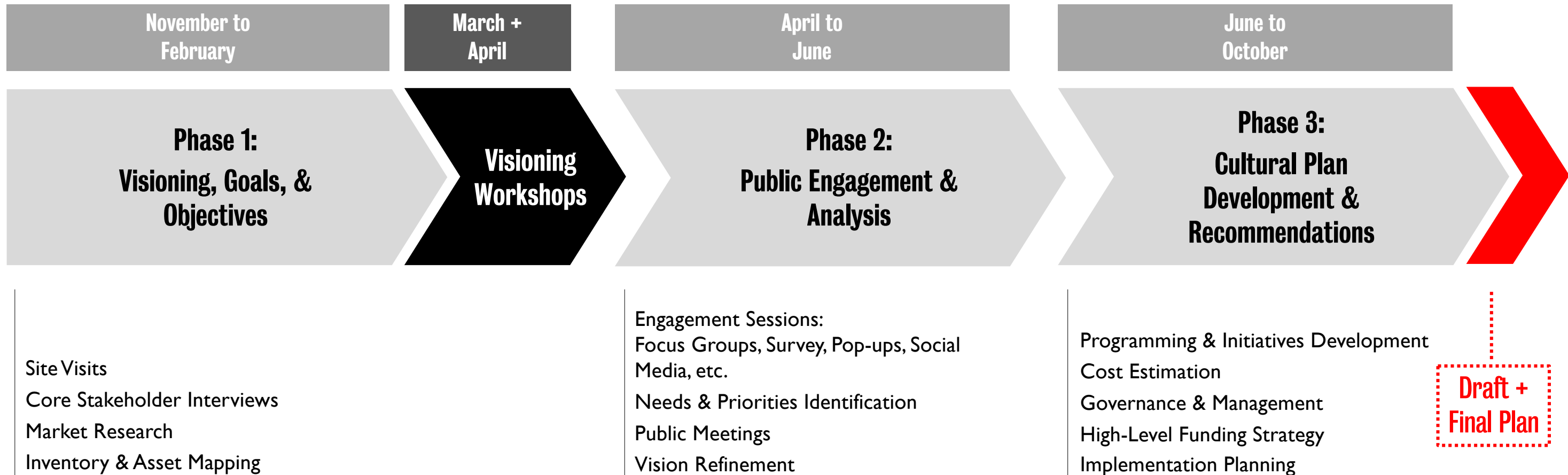


1. Background & Process



Erie County Cultural Plan

Process Overview



Defining Values

Erie County Cultural Plan Values Statement

“The plan is for the County of Erie, not for the government of Erie County – or for any other single entity.”

- **A focus on the common good** – transcending individual and community-specific aspirations to improve the lived experience of residents and visitors throughout Erie County.
- **Strengthening supportive, positive relationships** – transcending siloes and transactional relationships through genuine respect for and interest in different experiences, viewpoints, and strengths.
- **Inclusive, collective ownership** – facilitating the full presence and participation of historically marginalized voices.
- **Nurturing trust** –inviting meaningful participation and contribution from every individual involved in the planning process.
- **Transparency and accountability** – generous and candid communication among one another and with the broader public about the process, including opportunities as well as limitations.
- **Open-mindedness** – a willingness to explore and revise received wisdom and ways of doing and thinking.
- **Positivity** – uplifting the collective vision towards a more resilient, vibrant future.
- **Rigor** – clarity and care in the expression of our thinking, and a sustained, mindful commitment to all the values here defined



Background & Process

Defining Culture

What is included in the Plan?

Five categories at right will serve as the boundaries of “culture” for the cultural plan. *Media and individual artists/makers have been folded into “Creative Economy” in the asset mapping and initial cultural inventory evaluation.*

There may be other assets or categories that emerge throughout the process that are more tangentially related to the cultural sector. These will be considered as part of “support” for core cultural assets and the sector.



Nonprofit cultural organizations



Individual artists & makers



Creative economy



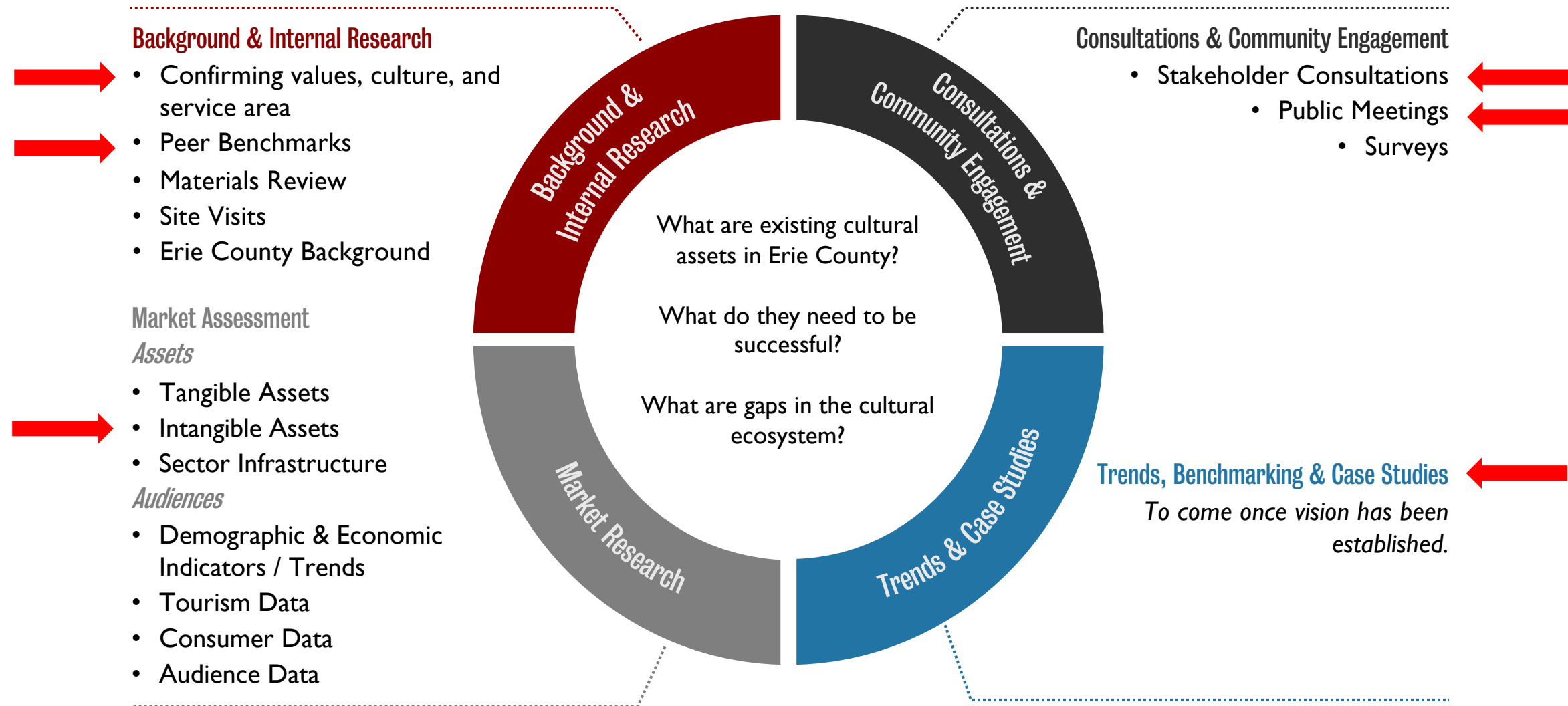
Landmarks & places (Built Environment)



Media



Understanding Erie County Arts & Culture Research Plan Overview



Background & Process

Understanding Erie County Arts & Culture Consultations (as of March 6, 2024)

Name	Role
Alma Carrillo	Executive Director, Buffalo Arts Studio
Janz Castello	Founder and Director, Buffalo Chamber Players
Anne Conable	Manager, Community Engagement, Buffalo & Erie County Public Library
Dave Kimelberg	Founder, K Art Gallery
Don Elick	Senior VP, M&T Bank Charitable Foundation
Megan McNally	Executive Director, The Foundry
Daniel Montante	President, Montante Solar / Arts Organization Board Member
Mark Mortenson	President & CEO, Buffalo & Erie County Botanical Gardens, GBCA
Bob Shibley	Director, Rudy Bruner Center for Urban Excellence, University at Buffalo
Maria Ta	Interim Executive Director, Buffalo String Works / Founder, The Ta Collective Consulting
Edreys Wajed & Alexa Wajed	Founders, Eat Off Art / Cultrue, Inc.
Seth Wochensky	Executive Director, Springville Center for the Arts and Board Chair, Art's Cafe



Background & Process

Understanding Erie County Arts & Culture Site Visits (through March 6, 2024)

December 2023

- Asbury Hall (Babeville)
- Buffalo AKG Art Museum
- Buffalo Architecture Center at the Richardson Olmsted Campus
- Buffalo & Erie County Central Library
- Burchfield Penney Art Center
- Darwin Martin House
- Graycliff
- Hispanic Heritage Council of WNY
- Irish Classical Theatre Company
- Just Buffalo Literary Center
- Kleinhans Music Hall
- Michigan Street African American Heritage Corridor HQ

- Road Less Traveled Productions
- Roycroft Campus
- Shea's Buffalo Theatre & Shea's 710
- Stained Glass Association of America
- Tri-Main Center (Arts Services Inc., Buffalo Arts Studio, Neglia Ballet, Western New York Foundation, Journey's End Refugee Services, artists Monica Angle, Alexa & Edreys Wajed)
- Trinity Episcopal Church
- Visit Buffalo Niagara

January 2024

- Buffalo Central Terminal
- Lancaster Opera House
- Springville Center for the Arts
- West Falls Center for the Arts



2.

Emerging Key Issues & Opportunities



Emerging Key Issues & Opportunities (1/3) based on research and findings as of March 6, 2024

Our emerging understanding of Erie County’s cultural life is one that is **active and vibrant**. While Buffalo and Erie County face challenges that are common to many midsize American metropolitan areas, especially those in the Rust Belt – longer-term population declines and a need for renewed economic development – culture can play a significant role in helping long-time residents feel pride in their place while attracting new residents, businesses, and tourists to an exciting and creative region.

To help accomplish this, there are a range of possible focal points for Erie County’s Cultural Plan – we have highlighted potential key areas in the next slides:

- **Defining Buffalo & Erie County’s “cultural story”** – Despite Erie County having a strong arts and cultural life, particularly as seen through its high numbers of independent artists as well as its more established cultural organizations – there is no individual or entity that has led a coordinated effort to serve as storyteller and/or marketer for the benefit of the arts & cultural sector as a whole. An effort through this process and beyond to define a cohesive cultural “story” – both realistic and aspirational – may help convey the power of arts and culture: breaking down barriers, promoting greater inclusion, supporting health & wellness (especially as older populations fight loneliness), and/or delivering economic benefits.

Some potential areas that have been discussed in interviews and site visits that might help Erie County stand out include: a “do it yourself” (DIY) ethos; the notable architectural history in the area, and its focus of preserving those assets; major cultural institutions / gems like Buffalo AKG, Just Buffalo, or Shea’s Performing Arts Center that “punch above the weight” of a midsize city asset; placing Buffalo’s contributions to Black cultural history and the civil rights movement in the 20th century; and the Olmstead parks system. Pulling those together into a cohesive whole provides an opportunity to expand reach intelligently.



Emerging Key Issues & Opportunities (2/3) based on research and findings as of March 6, 2024

- **Developing paths to funding and resources** – While Erie County’s governmental funding of culture has increased in the past decade, other investments in the Erie County cultural sector have declined recently. More established organizations have seen the impact of recent shifts of focus for foundations and major donors like the Oishei Foundation and the Western NY Foundation to other social causes, limiting direct financial support for the cultural sector. Meanwhile, smaller and emerging organizations have not historically had many of those opportunities. These resource limitations not only create direct operational challenges, but they have also created a greater sense of competition and tension between organizations, creating obstacles for greater collaboration as they vie for more limited funding.
- **Capacity building and developing shared resources** – Many of the organizations we spoke with – particularly smaller groups – pointed to a lack of internal resources in areas such as accounting, finance, and other administrative services, adding to the already numerous tasks being taken on by limited staff. At present, many rely on external firms for the work, but this can be costly. Building up staff capacity through shared training and learning might provide an opportunity for efficiencies and for investment to expand its impact. Another alternative that was discussed by several organizations in our conversations was developing a structure to share administrative resources between cultural organizations.

In addition (and aligning to the above), a shared education for the field on how to make a case for investment in the arts or how to align with other philanthropic priorities was also mentioned. This should also include peer-learning opportunities with other regions and/or organizations.



Emerging Key Issues & Opportunities (3/3) based on research and findings as of March 6, 2024

- **Elevating new groups of audiences & artists** – While Buffalo and Erie County’s population has declined when looking at a longer trajectory (like many prominent industrial regions of the 20th century), Erie County has actually seen recent population growth, in particular via an influx of immigrants that has picked up since 2010. These new residents to Buffalo present an opportunity for audience building, new creators, and the development of new cultural assets over the next 10-20 years. Creating pathways to reach these groups will also help make outcomes from the sector’s work more equitable.
- **Addressing access, particularly ensuring reliable transportation** – Some organizations in our interviews and site visits expressed that a lack of public transportation impacts programming and makes it difficult for residents to visit their programs – a challenge that can be particularly exacerbated in rural areas. This is relevant when it comes to youth programming, who do not have access to their own automobiles.
- **Maintaining affordability for artists & creative businesses** – One of the draws for many artists and creators in Erie County is the relative affordability of work and living space. As the County charts its future course, it should think about how it can get ahead of affordability issues that often rise around places where arts and culture have created a sense of “cool” – getting ahead of issues that other places have seen come alongside success.
- **Expanding visibility & influence for arts and culture** – With cutbacks in local media, there is a lack of coverage for the arts in Buffalo; neither is there a comprehensive arts and culture calendar. While the “CYOA Buffalo” newsletter has made an attempt to remedy this, a more systematic collaboration might provide broader benefits to the sector.
- **Cross-sector leadership and a seat at the table** – Some interviewees noted a sense of being siloed, and challenges in accessing local municipalities (though that was not a significant challenge at the state and county levels). Ensuring that visionary people – of all ages, races, backgrounds, etc. – have leadership roles in the sector and access to broader decision makers around Erie County, including government, business, community support organizations, etc.



3 Market Assessment

■ Overview



Market Assessment Methodology

This Market Assessment includes a variety of demographic, economic, consumer, and tourism indicators and trends as well as key assets, resources, policies, initiatives, and organizations that contribute to Erie County’s cultural ecosystem.

To make information useful for developing the cultural plan, benchmarking was used for contextualization, with the following considerations:

- Cultural employment and consumption data compared to peer counties where possible.
- Because the Plan will ultimately focus on impacting the cultural sector, Erie County was compared to its peer counties in cultural participation and employment indicators. Demographic data was compared with New York state and the US overall for 2022.
- To compare Erie County to its peer group, some of its baseline numbers may differ from those in the inventory to retain consistency with peers.
- Consistent, county-level consumer spending and employment data was available for 2021, during which time some organizations were not operating at full capacity due to COVID-19.

Key Sources

Areas of Analysis	Data Source(s)
Demographic and economic indicators: current state & trends	US Census
Cultural Sector Employment	North American Industry Classification System
Cultural Consumption	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Consumer Expenditure Estimates▪ MRI-Simmons Market Research Data
Tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Visit Buffalo Niagara Reports▪ Tourism reports from peer cities
Sectoral Impact	Previous reports (including Steering Committee-provided materials)
Programs & Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Previous reports (including Steering Committee-provided materials)▪ Consultations
Erie County-owned Facilities	Erie County provided data
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Erie County cultural funding data▪ Erie County policies



Market Assessment Methodology










Service Area

- Cultural assets and inventory analyzed are located in Erie County
- Primary audience focus are residents of Erie County
- Secondary audience foci are tourists and residents of neighboring counties.



Market Assessment Methodology

Peer Counties

County (Notable City)	Lucas, OH (Toledo)	Providence, RI (Providence)	Shelby, TN (Memphis)	Milwaukee, WI (Milwaukee)	Erie, NY (Buffalo)	Monroe, NY (Rochester)	Allegheny, PA (Pittsburgh)	Cuyahoga, OH (Cleveland)	Philadelphia, PA (Philadelphia)	Wayne, MI (Detroit)
Population (County)	431,212	656,672	929,178	938,123	949,715	757,322	1,246,116	1,263,667	1,596,865	1,789,781
Source										

-  Chicago Federal Reserve Peer City Identification Tool
-  NYTimes Twin Cities Index
-  SMU Data Arts Top 40 Vibrant Communities
-  Cultural Plans from S.C.



Demographic Indicators: Erie County in Summary

Demographics

- Erie County's population rebounded from decline, largely due to immigration in the past decade. This suggests that recent immigrants could be an important audience group and active participants/creators in Erie County's cultural ecosystem now and in the next 10-20 years.
- Erie County's income distribution suggests that it may have a smaller pool of large donors.

Cultural Participation

- Erie County is below its peer group median by most metrics of cultural participation.
- However, with 9.6% of its population having attended a music performance in 2021, Erie County leads its peer group and is above its median (7.1%). This suggests that live music is a key component of Erie County's cultural ecosystem. Further, that Erie County leads in attendance but is lower in spending on performing arts (including concerts), suggests that free concerts are an important part of the ecosystem.

Employment

- Erie County is at the top of its peer group in per capita employment of independent artists, writers, and performers. This suggests that individual artists are an important area of focus for this plan.



Cultural Inventory: Erie County in Summary

Cultural Assets

- Erie County does not have a central music sector promotion / service organization or agency, despite high audience participation and number of assets.
- Music (particularly free concerts), Cultural Heritage, and History organizations are key drivers of culture in rural areas.
- Creative economy businesses are largely located in Buffalo, with very few in rural areas.
- Architecture and Design landmarks, businesses, organizations, and workforce training programs are numerous and represent an important pillar of Erie County's cultural ecosystem in driving tourism and in fomenting collaboration within the sector.

Resources

- In the past decade, Erie County funding for arts organizations overall has increased, even when accounting for inflation (7%).
- Funding is relatively concentrated: 60% of Erie County funding is allocated to 5 non-profit organizations.
- There are several organizations that fulfill some aspects of what is desired for a cultural "hub" in Erie County: Fund for the Arts, Arts Services, Inc., Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance, Frontline Arts.
- The City of Buffalo has not fulfilled recent cultural funding commitments and does not contribute to the cultural sector as generally expected within a city of its size.



4. Market Assessment

Demographics & Economic Drivers

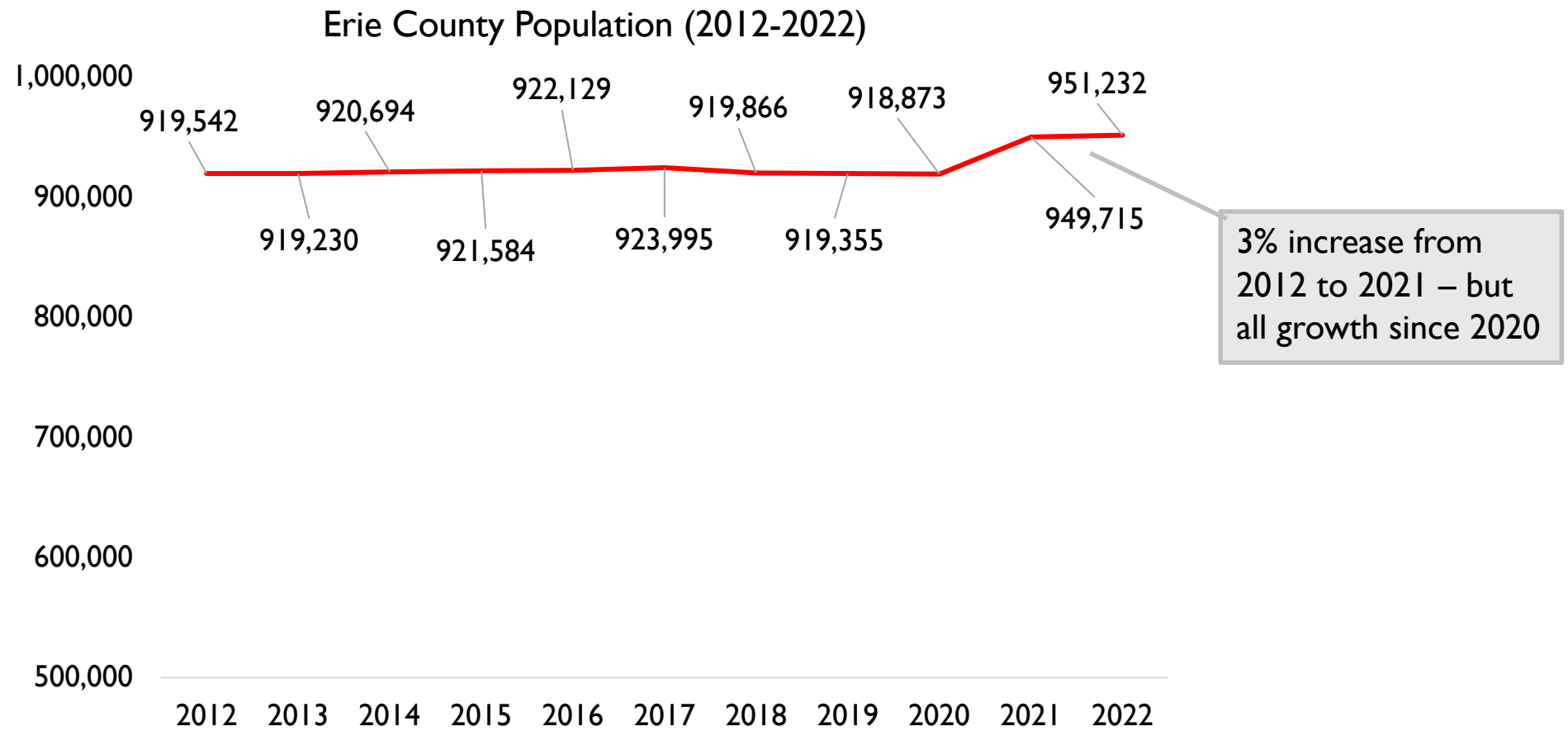


Erie County Demographics

Population (2012-2022)

In 2022, Erie County's Population was 951,242, a 3% increase from 2012. After declining from 2017-2019, population increased from 2020 to 2021. Growth in Erie County's population can be attributed largely to an increase in immigration. Erie County's population grew at the same rate as New York state's and at a lower rate than the US overall (7%) in the same period.

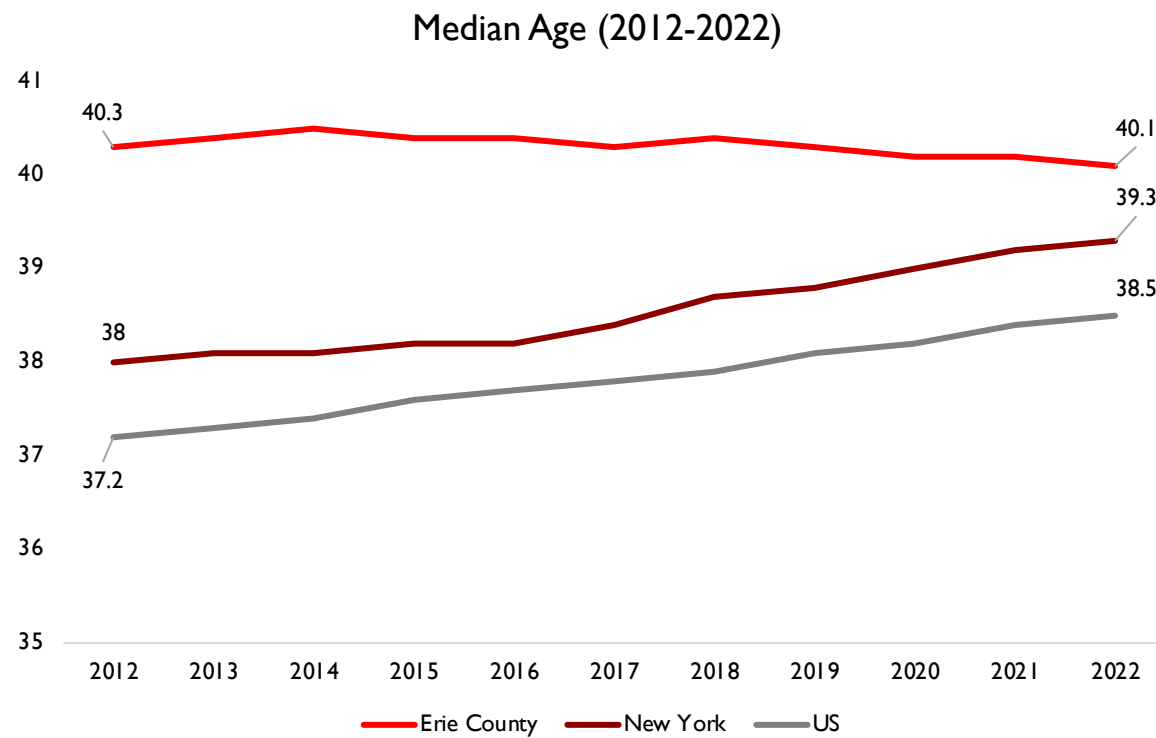
Over a longer-term trajectory, there have been more significant declines. The population of Erie County is down 15% since 1970, and the city of Buffalo has seen its population decrease by more than half since 1950.



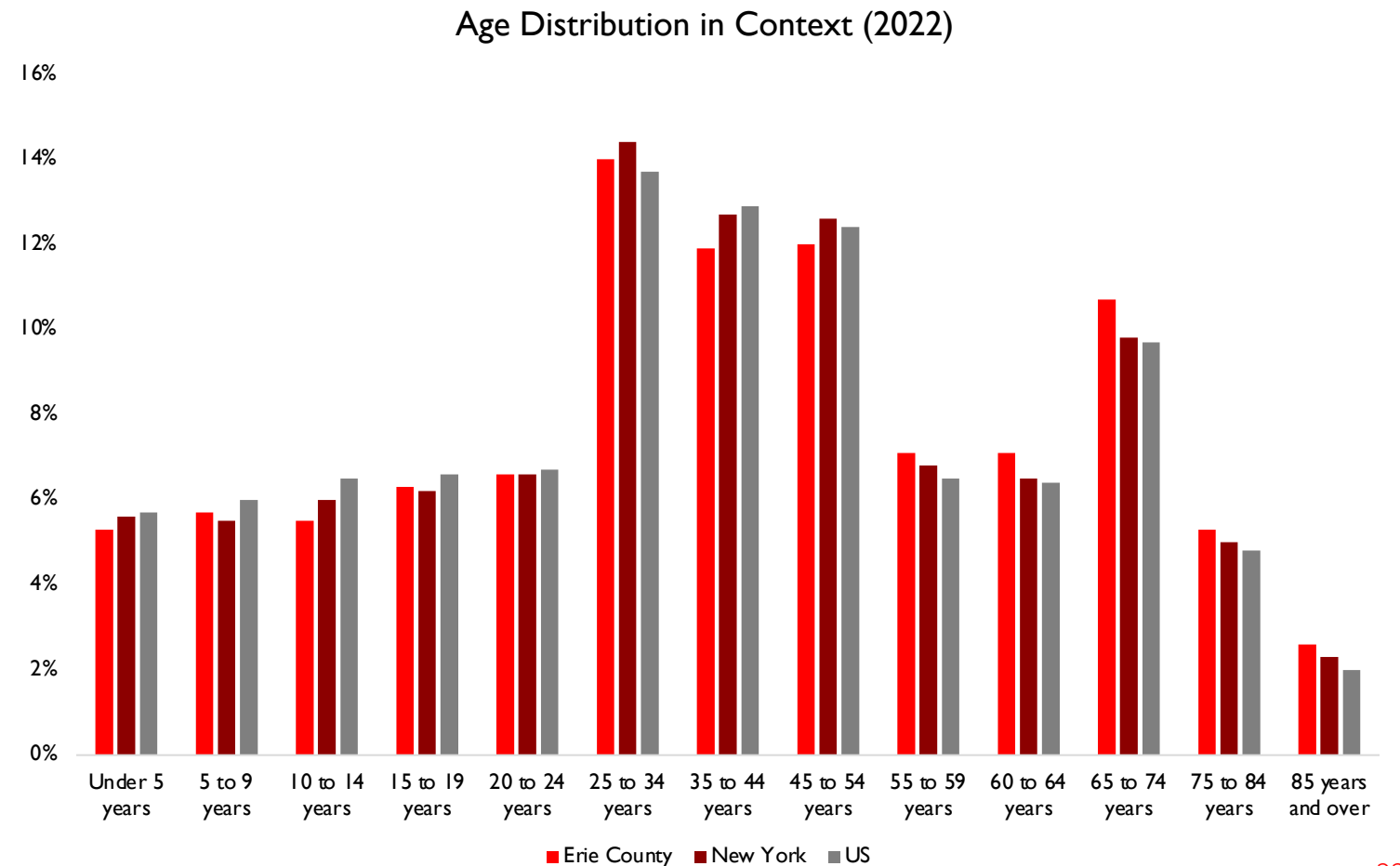
Erie County Demographics

Age in Context

With a median age of 40.1 in 2022, Erie County's population is older than New York state (median of 39.3) and the US overall (median of 38.5). However, while median age of New York state and the US has increased from 2012-2022, Erie County's decreased slightly in the same period.



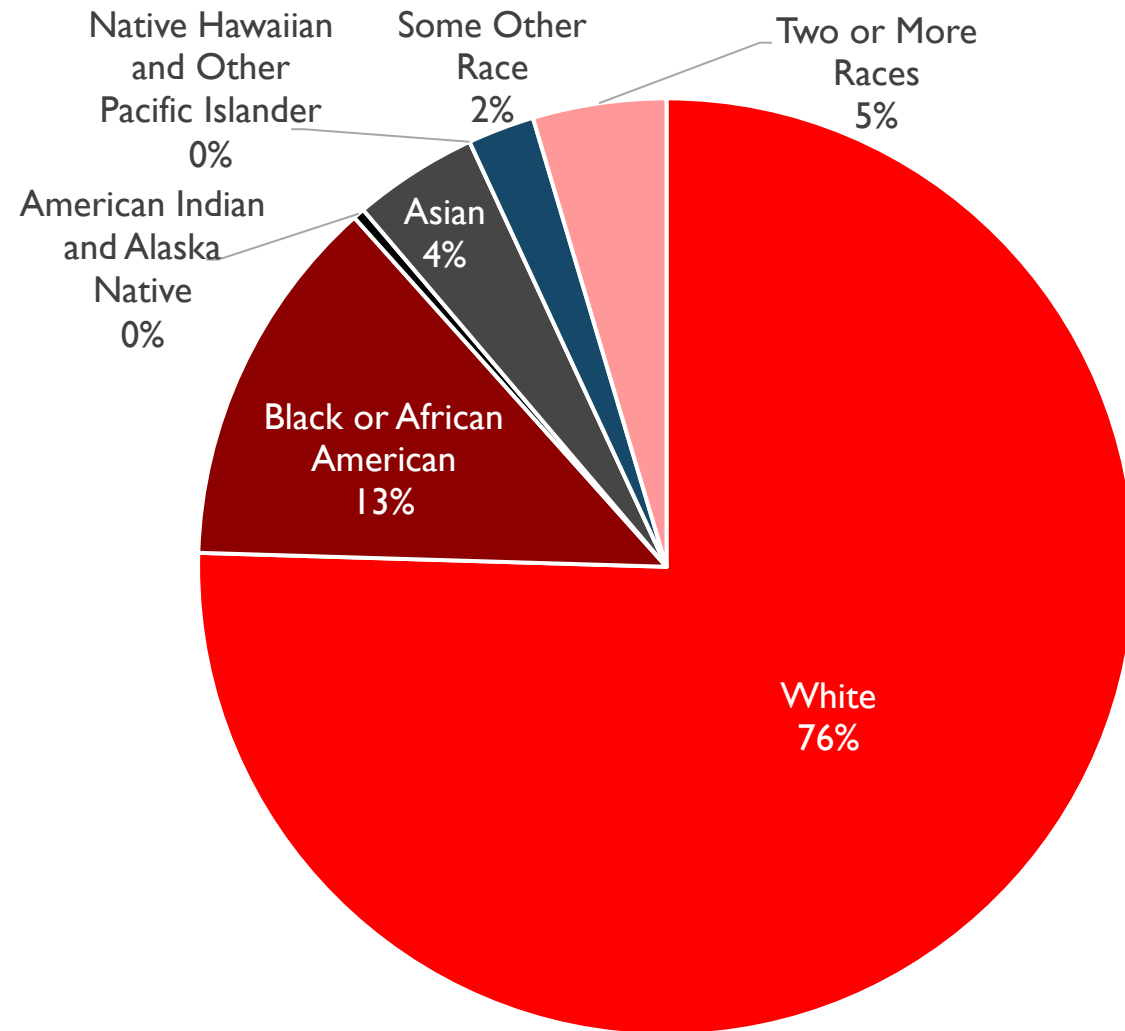
Erie County's distribution of population by age ranges is largely aligned with that of New York State and the US overall, with a slightly lower proportion of its population falling in the 25-45 age range and slightly higher proportion of its population in the 55+ age bands.



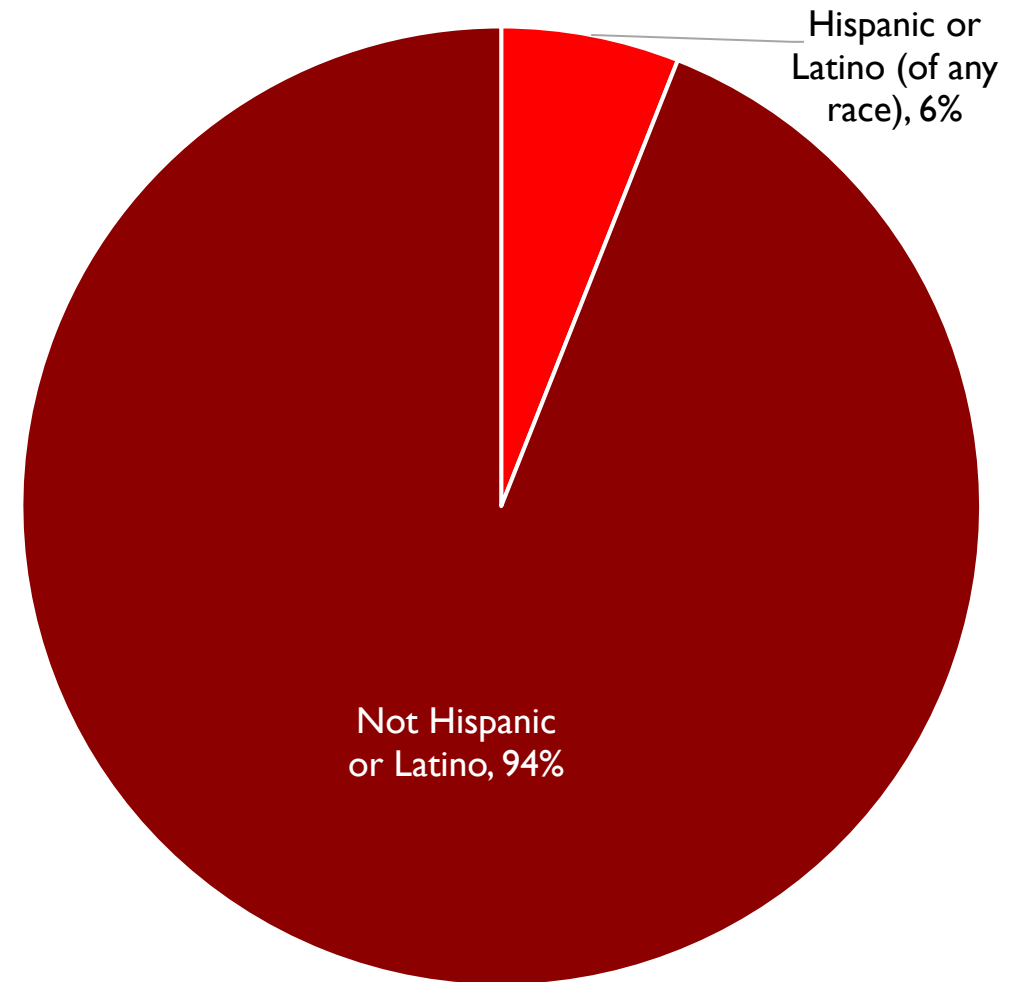
Erie County Demographics

Race & Ethnicity

Erie County Racial Demographics (2022)



Erie County Ethnic Demographics (2022)

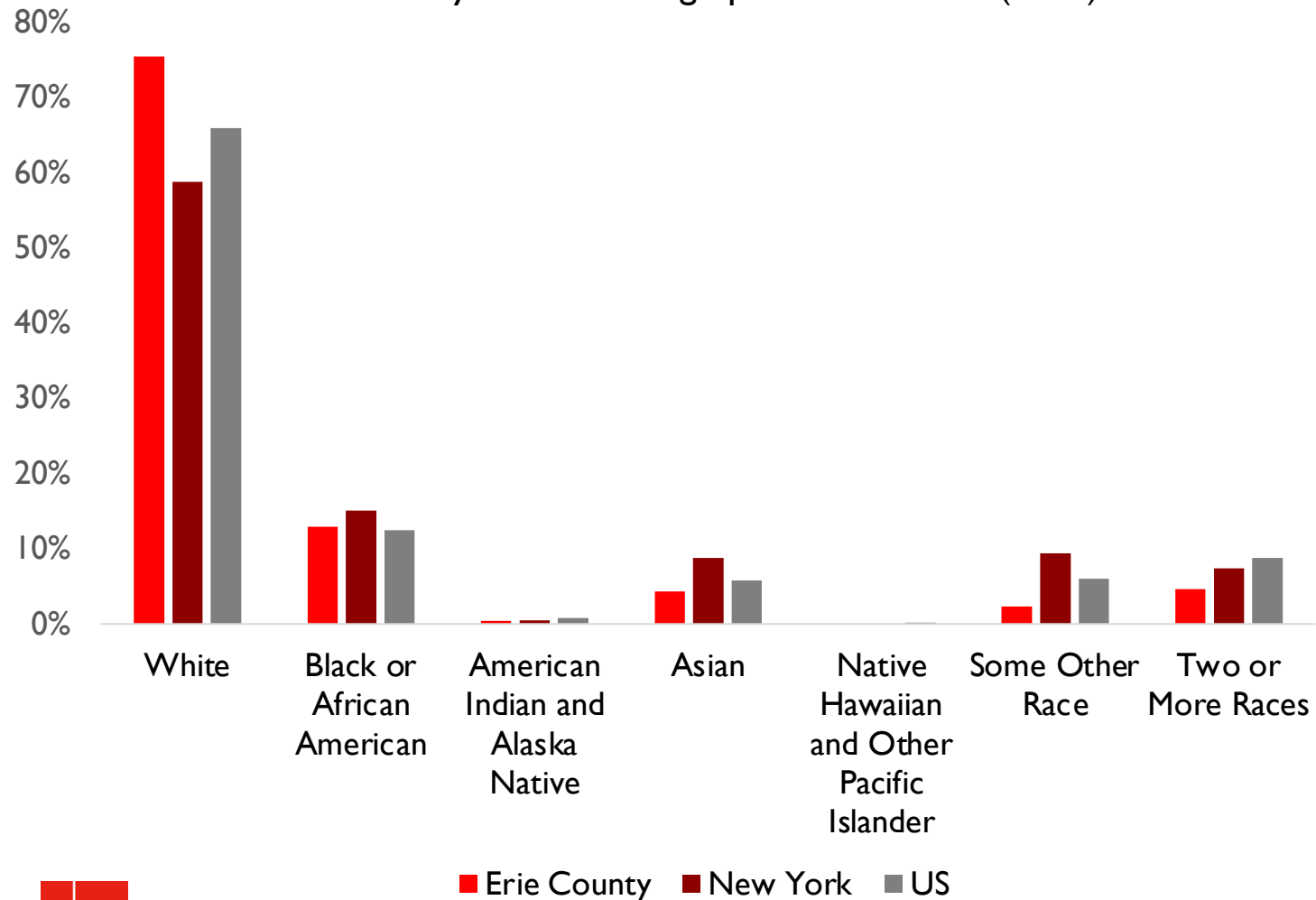


Erie County Demographics

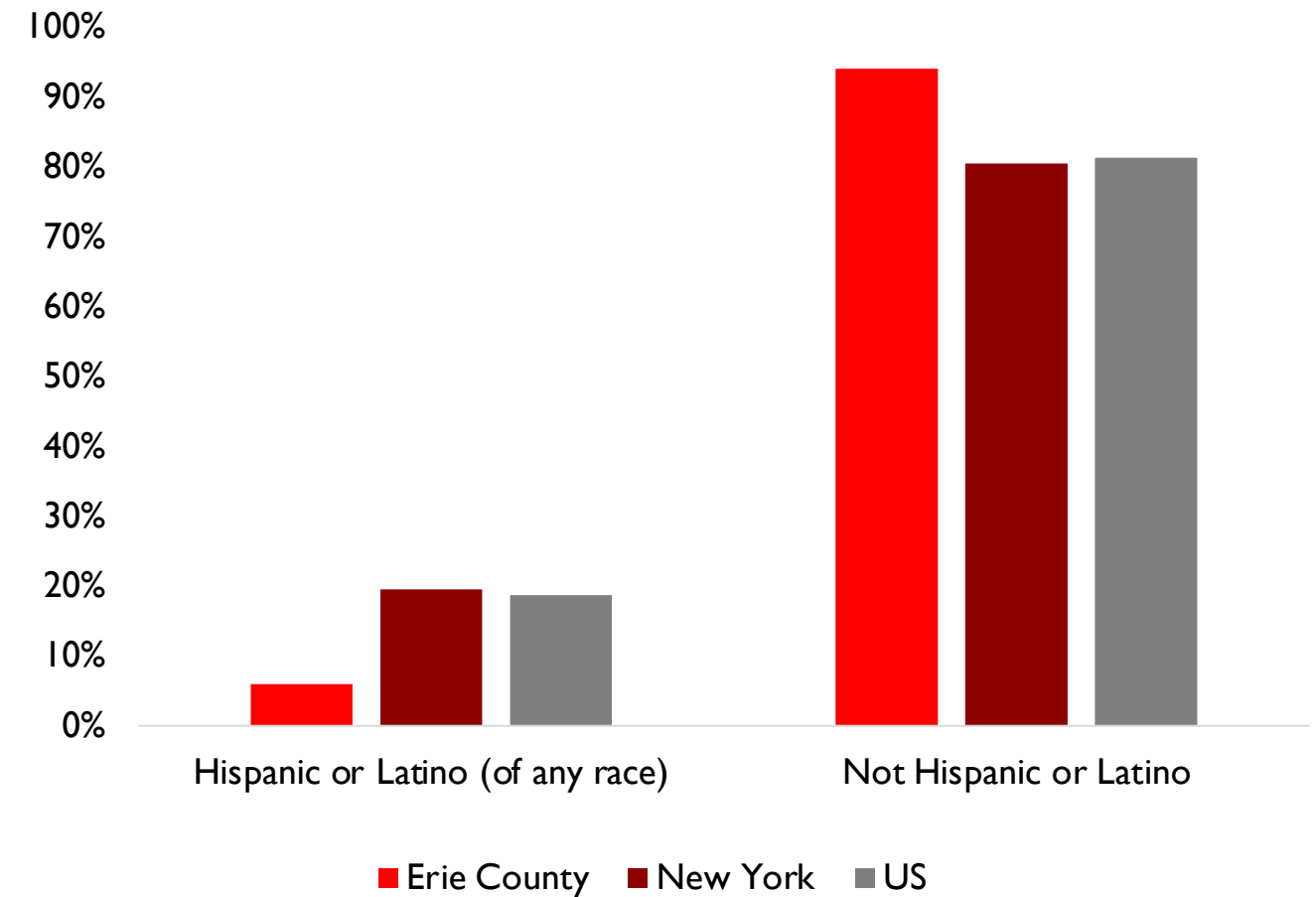
Race & Ethnicity in Context

A slightly higher percentage of Erie County's population is white than New York state and the US overall. The percentage of Erie County's population that is Hispanic/Latino (6%) is less than half of New York state's (20%) and the US overall (19%).

Erie County Racial Demographics in Context (2022)



Erie County Ethnic Demographics in Context (2022)



Source: American Community Survey 2012-2022.

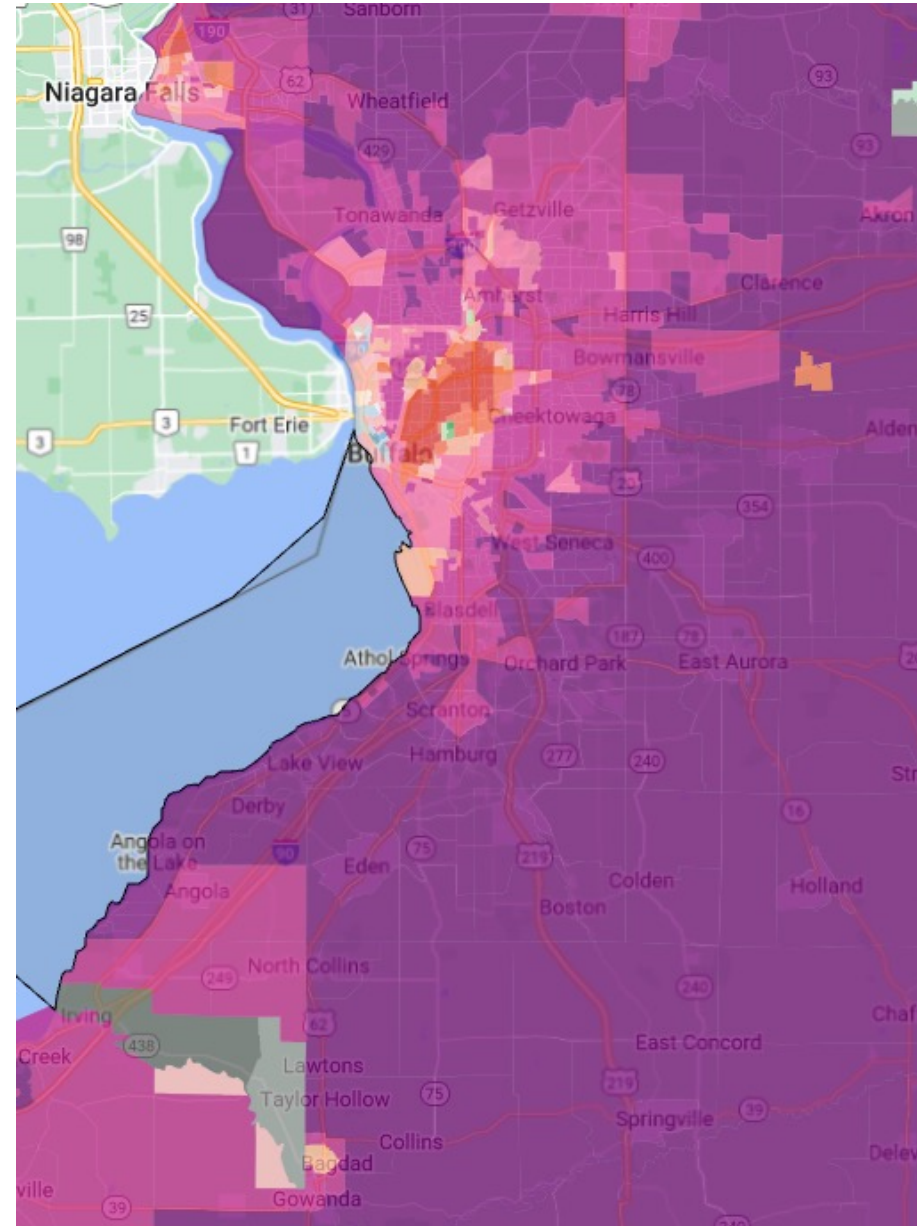
Erie County Demographics

Mapping Race & Ethnicity in Erie County

While Erie County's population is somewhat less diverse than New York state or the U.S. as a whole, Buffalo itself has a major Black population, with more than 100,000 Black residents (37% of the city's population). These residents are largely centered in Buffalo's east side communities.

Percentage of Residents by Race
(by census tract)

	<30%	30-50	50-70	70-90	90%+
American Indian	Lightest Gray	Light Gray	Medium Gray	Dark Gray	Black
Asian	Lightest Green	Light Green	Medium Green	Dark Green	Black
Black	Lightest Orange	Light Orange	Medium Orange	Dark Orange	Black
Hispanic	Lightest Blue	Light Blue	Medium Blue	Dark Blue	Black
White	Lightest Pink	Light Pink	Medium Pink	Dark Pink	Black
Ties	Yellow				

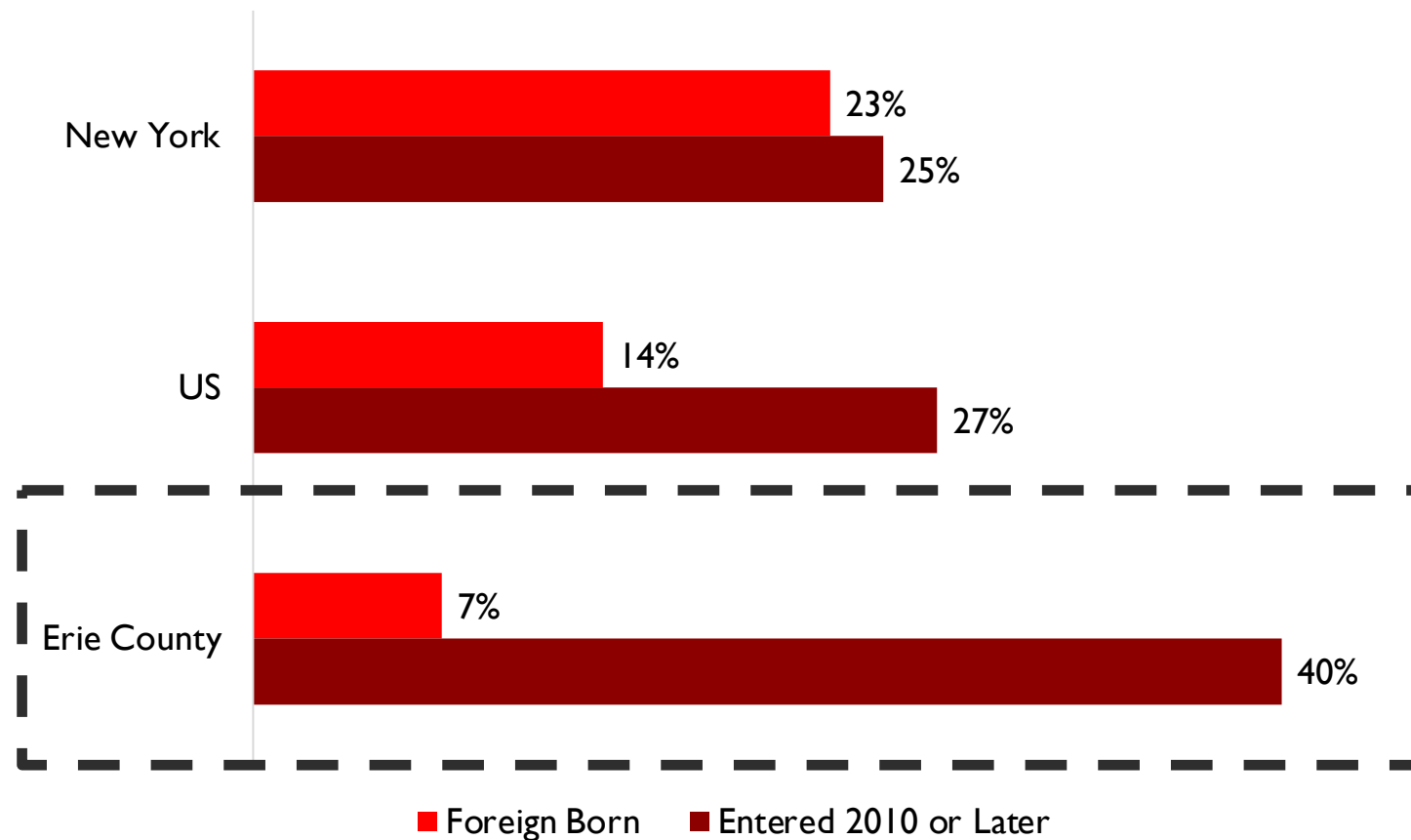


Erie County Demographics

Immigration

The percentage of Erie County's population that is foreign born is less than a third of New York state's and half of the US overall. However, the percentage of Erie County's foreign-born population that entered the US in 2010 or later is 15 percentage points higher than New York and 13 percentage points higher than the US overall. Recent immigrants are a crucial to consider when planning for the future of Erie County's cultural ecosystem.

Percentage of Population that is Foreign Born and Year of Entry (2022)

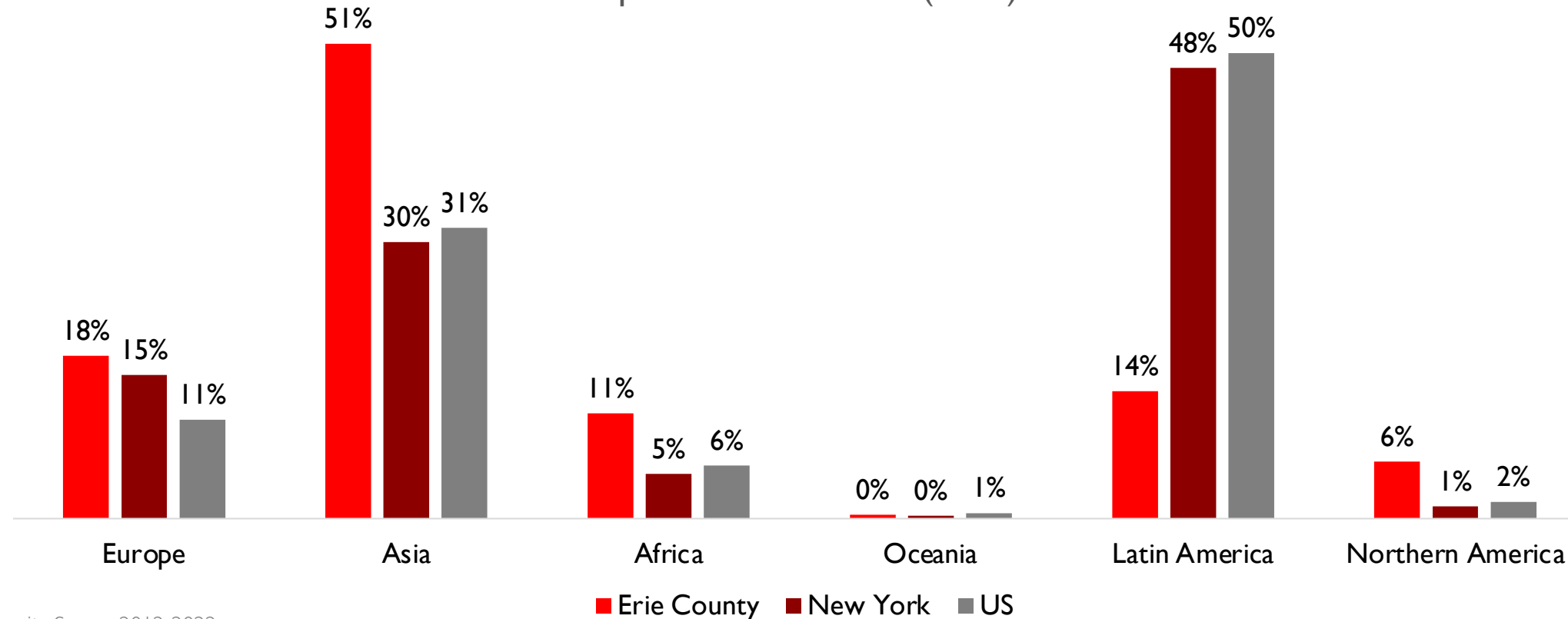


Erie County Demographics

Immigration by Region

Erie County's foreign-born population is distinct from New York state and the US overall in world regions of birth. Notably, the proportion of foreign-born residents who were born in Latin America is approximately a fourth of New York state and the US overall. A significantly higher proportion of Erie County's foreign-born population was born in Asia (51%) compared to New York state (30%) and the US overall (31%). And, the proportion of Erie County's foreign-born population that was born in Africa is double that of New York state and nearly double the US overall. These divergences from state and national trends suggest that Erie County's approach to planning for population shifts in its cultural ecosystem will need to take an approach sensitive to specific cultural contexts.

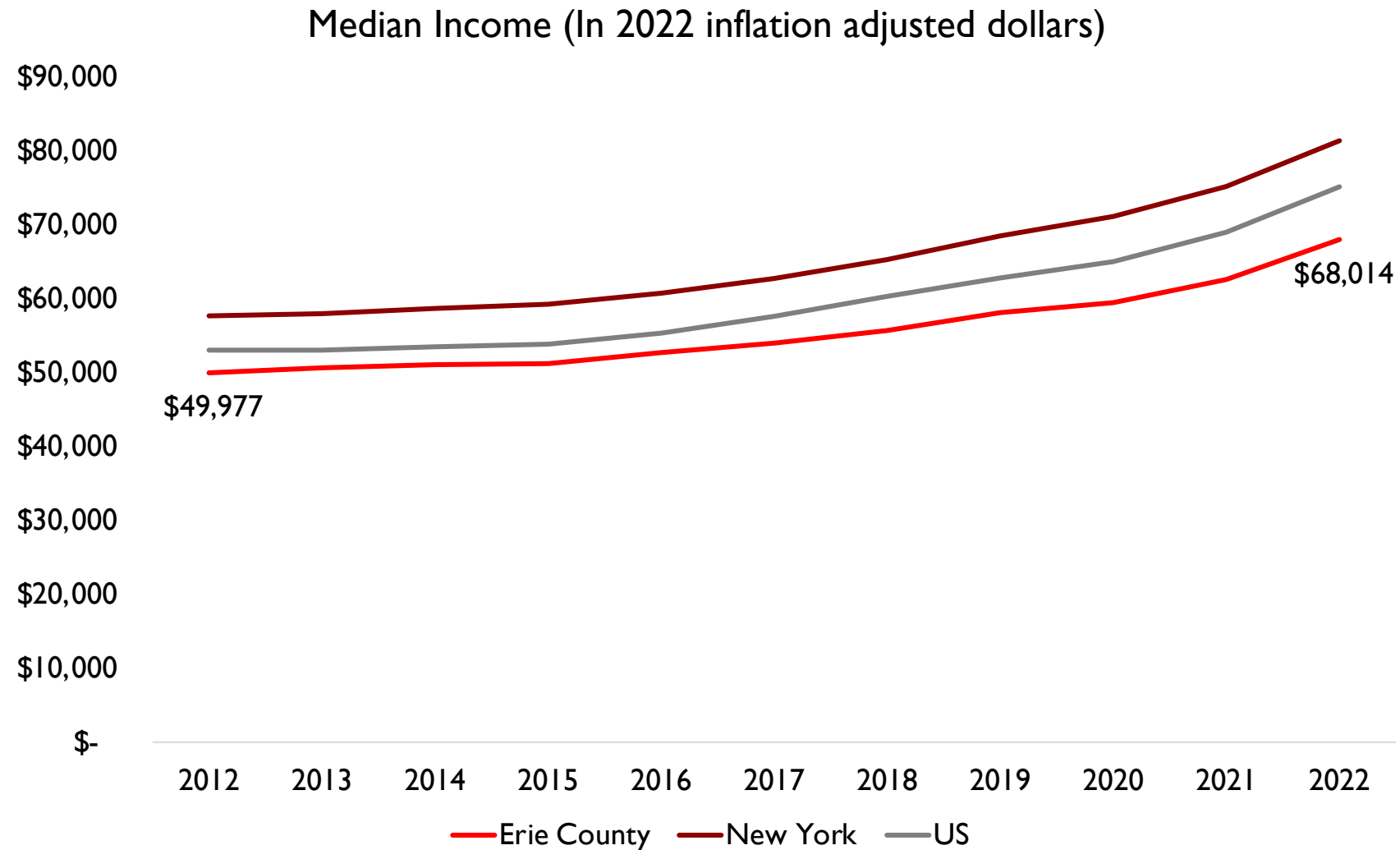
World Region of Birth of Foreign-Born Population in Context (2022)



Erie County Economy

Income

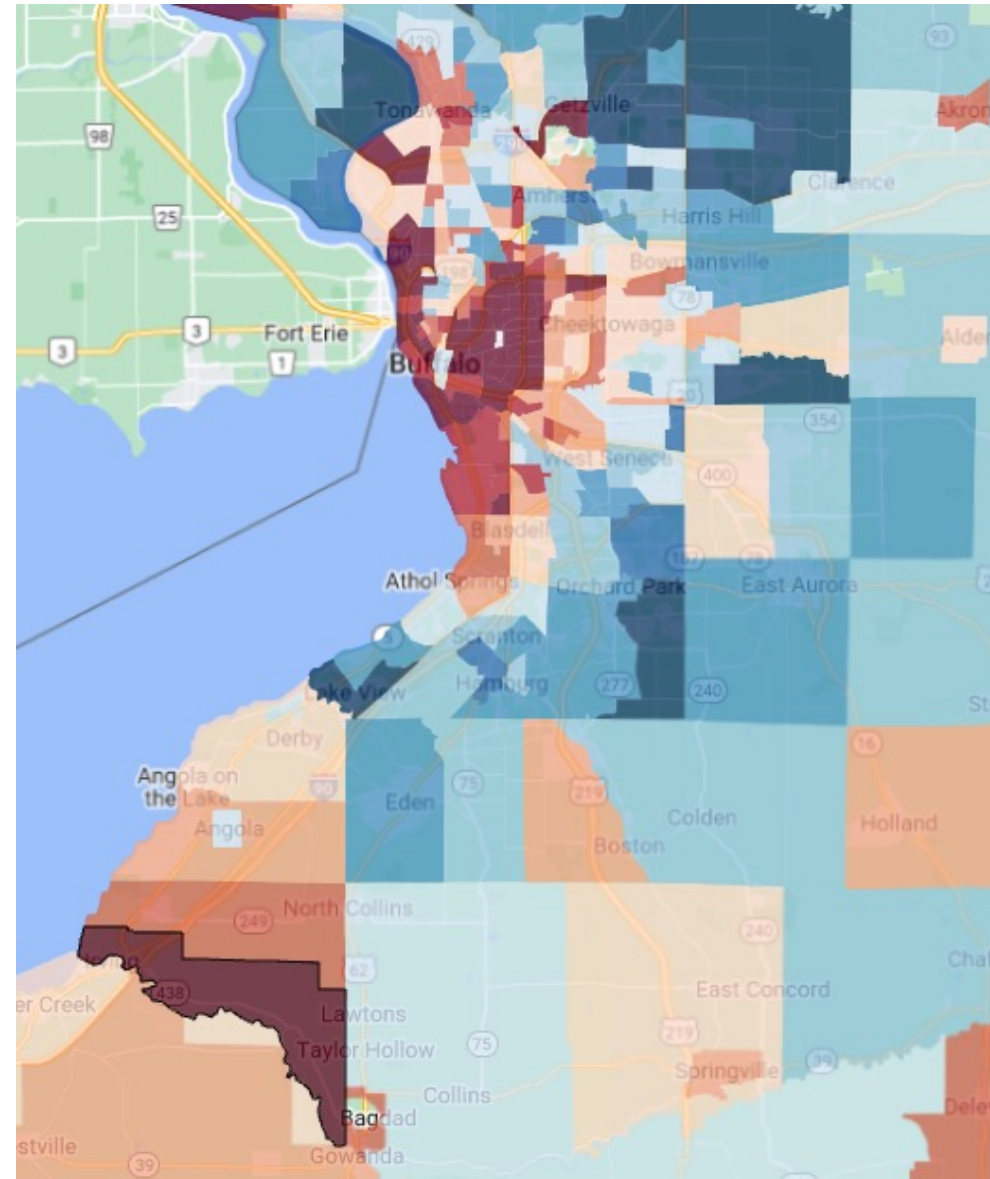
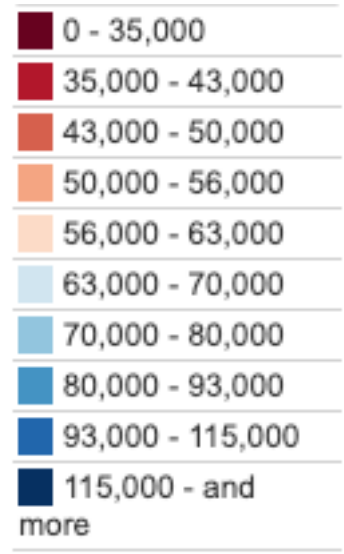
In 2022, Erie County's median income was \$68,014, which was below New York state (\$81,386) and the US overall (\$75,149). Erie County's median income grew by 36% from 2012 to 2022, less than New York state (41%) and the US overall (42%) during the same time period.



Erie County Economy

Mapping Income in Erie County

Average Income (\$) (by census tract)



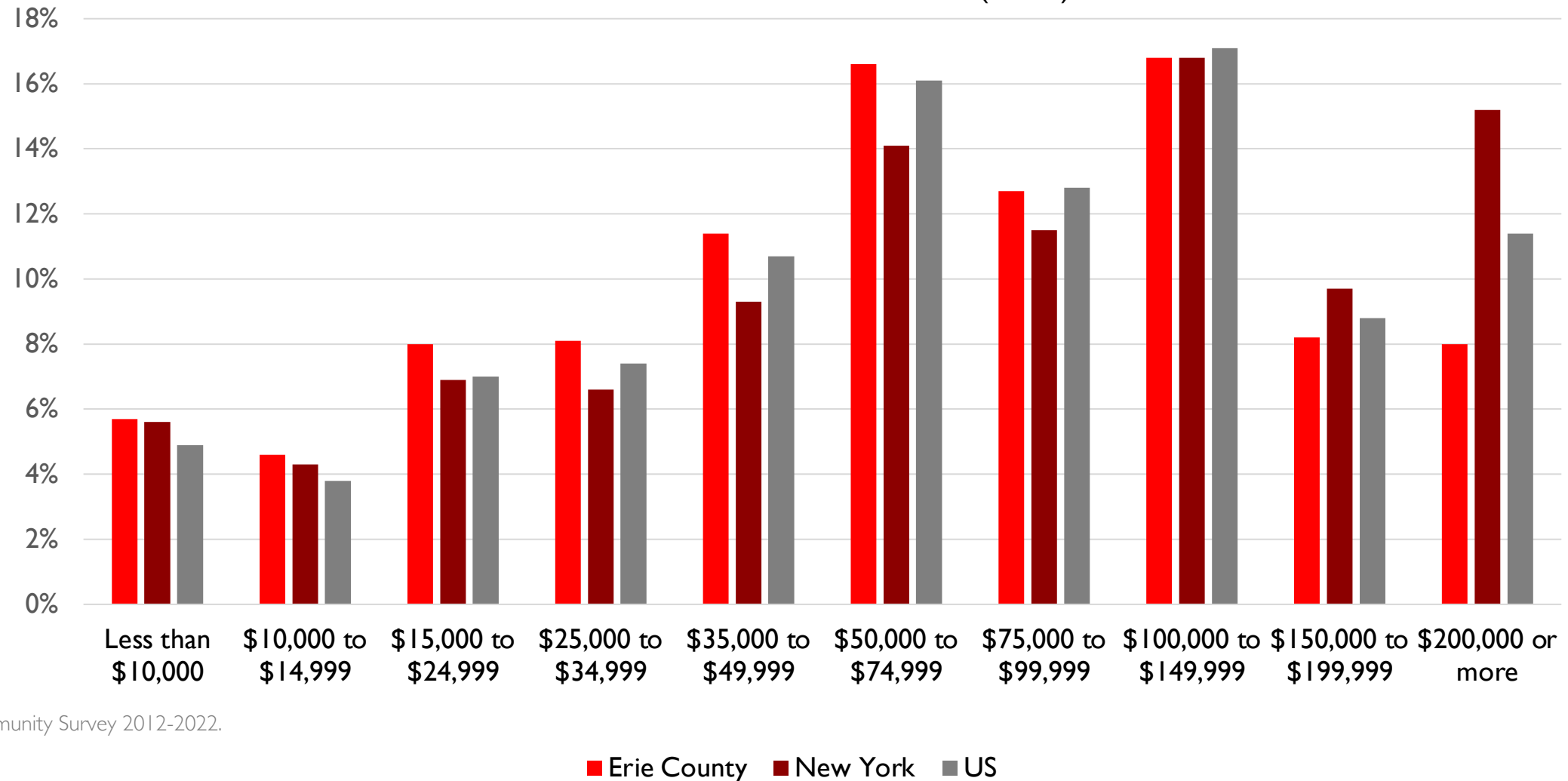
Source: Justice Map.

Erie County Economy

Income in Context

Erie County has higher percentages of residents in the \$15,000 to \$75,000 income bands than New York state and the US overall. A lower percentage of Erie County residents are in the \$150,000+ income bands, with a significantly lower percentage of the population in the \$200,000+ band (8%) than New York (15%) and the US overall (11%). This smaller pool of high-income residents suggests a potentially smaller major donor base for private arts and cultural funding.

Income Distribution in Context (2022)



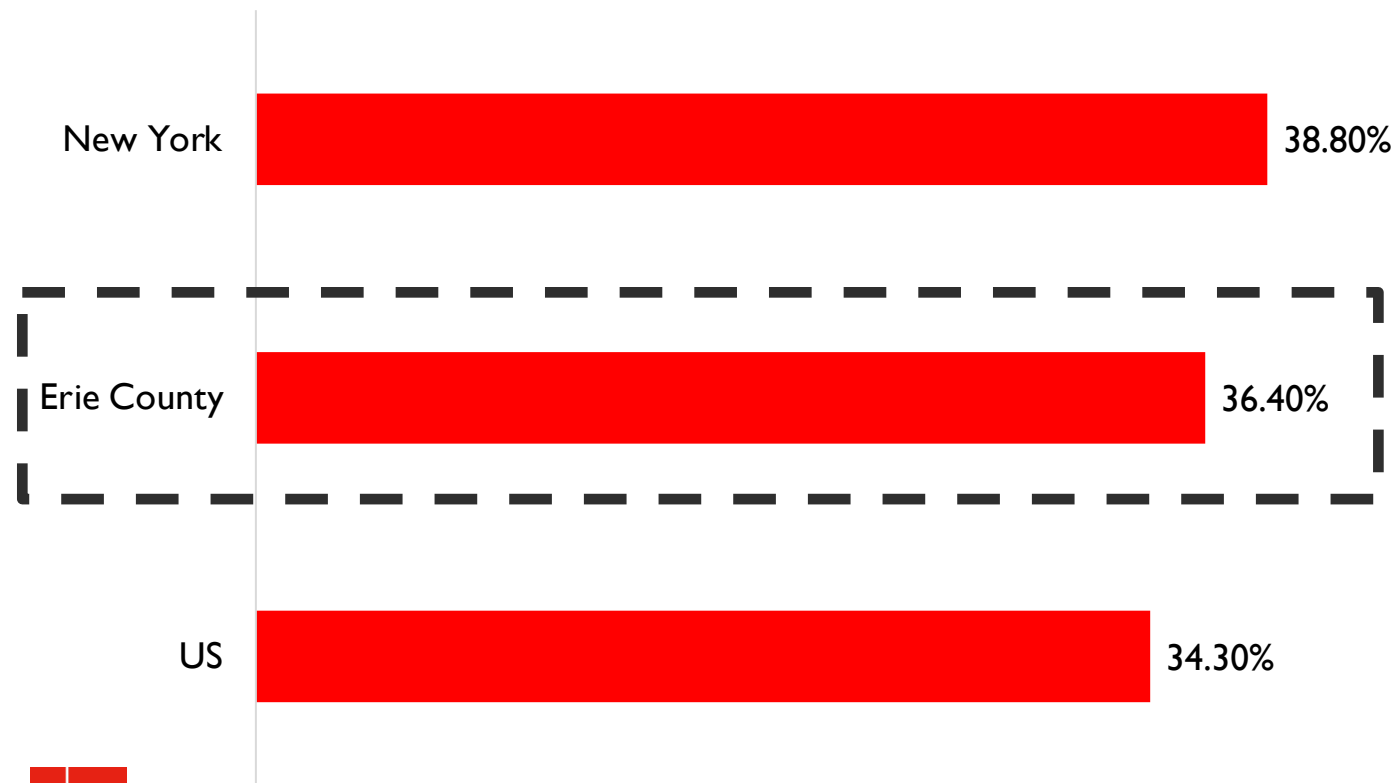
Source: American Community Survey 2012-2022.

Erie County Economy

Education & Poverty Levels

Erie County has a slightly lower percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher than New York, but slightly higher percentage than the US at large. Erie County has a slightly higher poverty level than both New York state and the US at large. As arts audiences have traditionally been more likely to have higher college degrees and to be more affluent, these statistics may suggest a slightly lower propensity for cultural participation in Erie County than in New York and the US overall.

Percentage of Population with Bachelor's Degree or Higher (2022)



Poverty Level (2022)

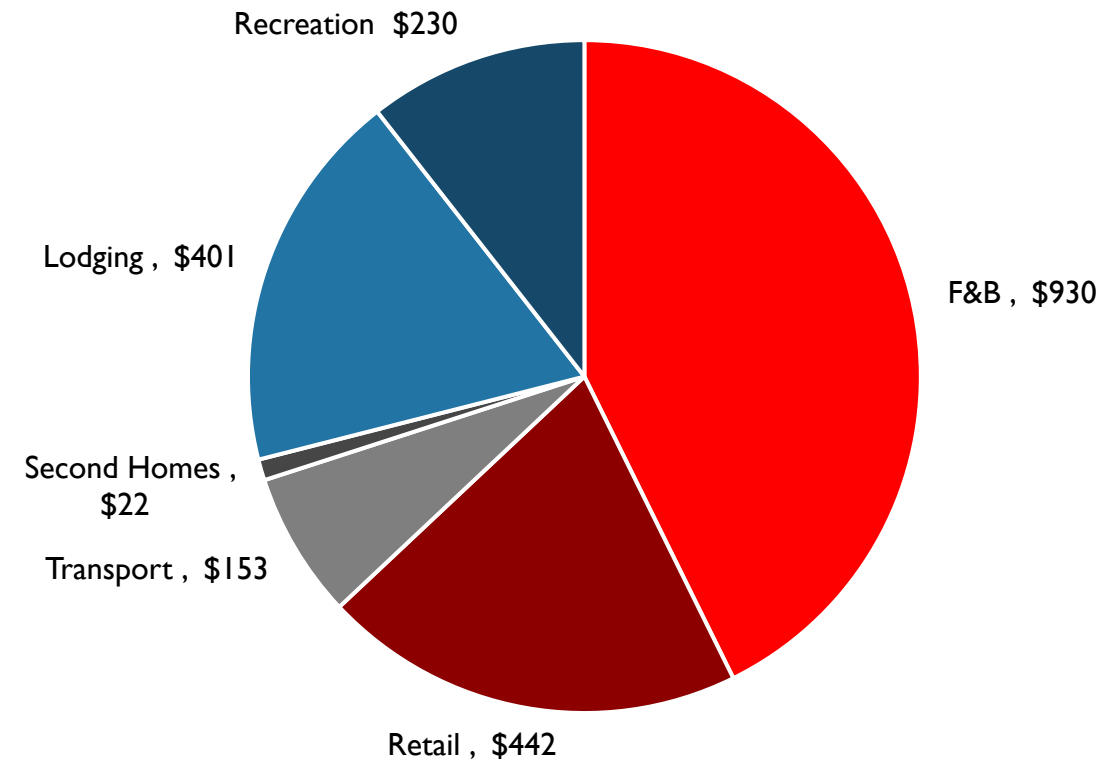


Erie County Economy

Post-Pandemic Tourism Overview

- After dipping during the pandemic, in 2022, Traveler Spending in Erie County reached \$2.2 billion, above 2019 (\$1.8 billion)
- Spending in Erie County represented 64% of WNY tourism sales.
- Visits from Canada are still 25% lower than pre-pandemic, however the uptick in spending represents the growth of new markets.
- 11% of Traveler Spending is on Arts & Culture.

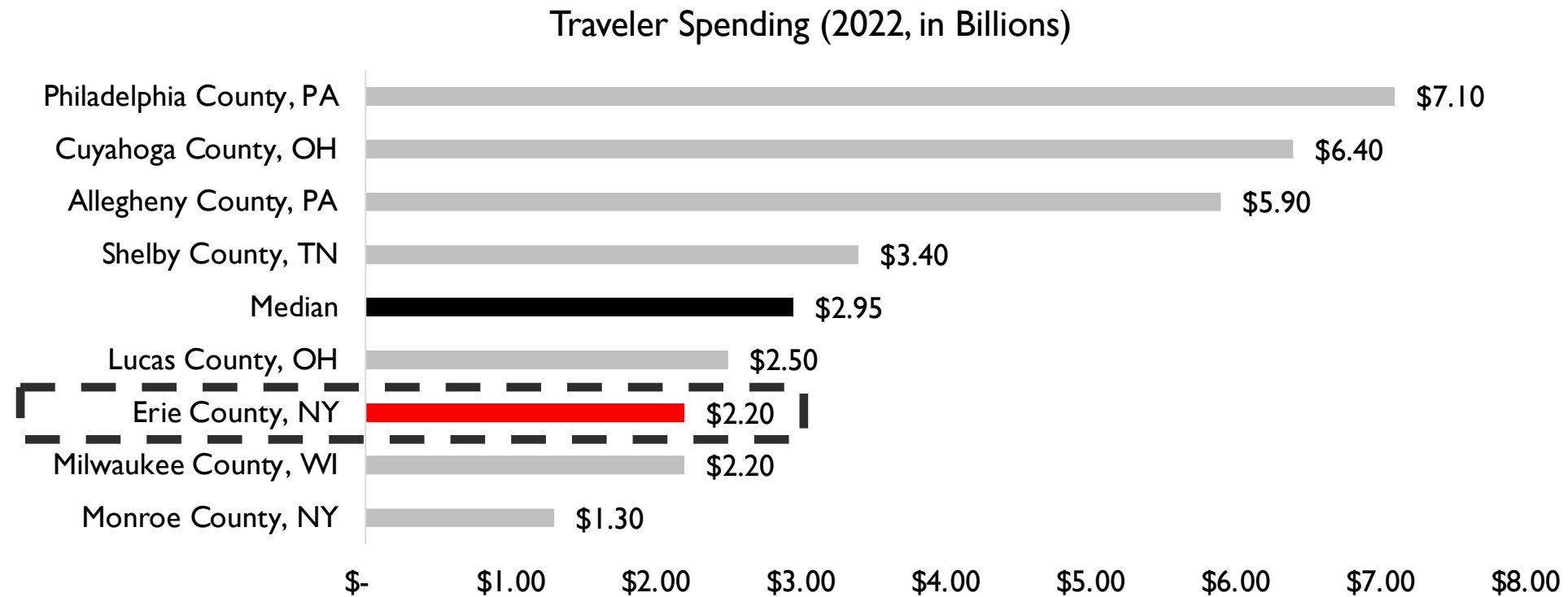
Traveler Spending in Erie County (2022, in millions)



Erie County Economy

Tourism Indicators in Context

Erie County is at the low end of its peer group in traveler spending.



Sources: Visit Buffalo Niagara, Destination Toledo, <https://www.toledo.com/news/2021/10/18/daily-dose/destination-toledo-recognized-for-marketing-excellence-with-state-tourism-awards/>; TRIB Live, <https://triblive.com/local/regional/pittsburgh-tourism-bounces-back-from-pandemic-freefall-new-report-shows/#:~:text=Data%20shows%20Pittsburgh%20welcomed%20an,to%2083%25%20of%202019%20numbers>; Cleveland News, [https://www.cleveland.com/travel/2023/10/cleveland-welcomed-nearly-18-million-visitors-in-2022-almost-back-to-pre-pandemic-levels.html#:~:text=Cuyahoga%20County%20welcomed%2017.9%20million,while%20they%20were%20in%20town](https://www.cleveland.com/travel/2023/10/cleveland-welcomed-nearly-18-million-visitors-in-2022-almost-back-to-pre-pandemic-levels.html#:~:text=Cuyahoga%20County%20welcomed%2017.9%20million,while%20they%20were%20in%20town;); Visit Milwaukee, [https://www.visitmilwaukee.org/tourism-insights/#:~:text=According%20to%202022%20data%20from,metropolitan%20Chicago%20\(16.5%25\)](https://www.visitmilwaukee.org/tourism-insights/#:~:text=According%20to%202022%20data%20from,metropolitan%20Chicago%20(16.5%25);); Visit Rochester, <https://www.visitrochester.com/newsroom/press-releases/post/2022-tourism-spending-sets-a-record/#:~:text=Overall%2C%20visitor%20spending%20was%20up,the%20Finger%20Lakes%20region%20here>; Visit Philadelphia, <https://www.visitphilly.com/media-center/press-releases/philadelphias-tourism-industry-releases-2022-annual-reports/#:~:text=Visit%20Philadelphia%20Results%20C2%B9%3A,up%2015%25%20from%202021>; Memphis Travel, <https://www.memphistravel.com/membership/tourism-economic-impact>; Tourism Economics, <https://esd.ny.gov/sites/default/files/Greater-Niagara-2022-NYS-Tourism-Economic-Impact.pdf>



5. **Market Assessment**

Cultural Participation Indicators

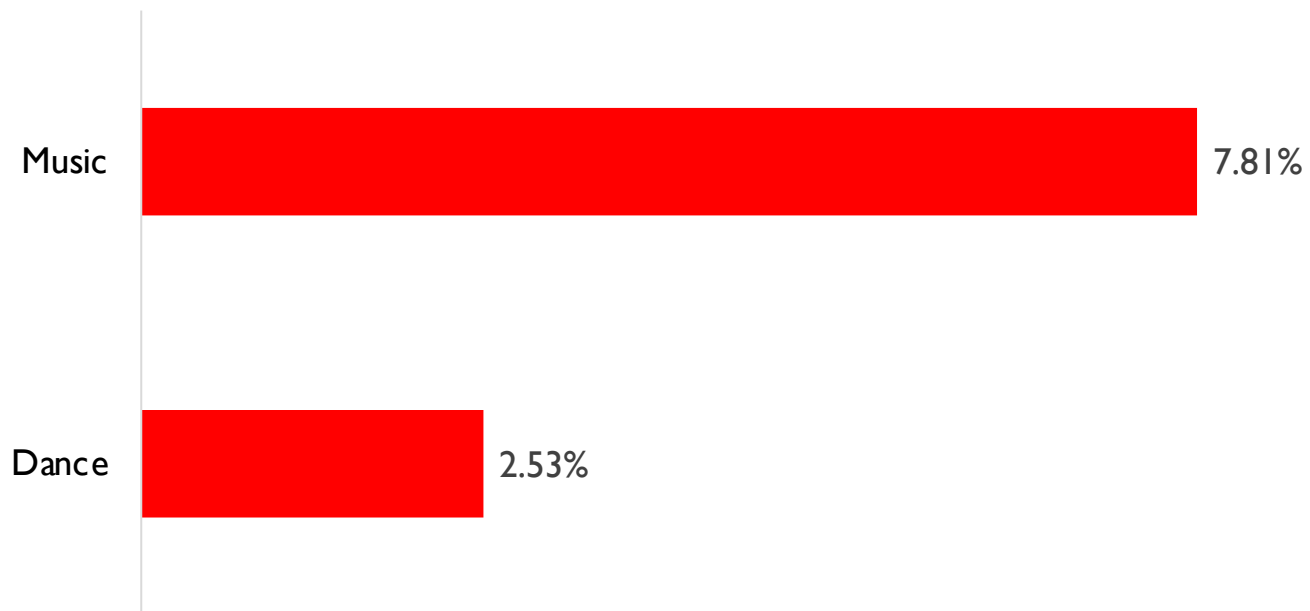


Cultural Participation Indicators

Attendance & Spending on Culture in Erie County

Nearly 8% of all Erie County households attended a music performance in 2021, while nearly 3% of households attended a dance performance. Average household spending on plays, operas, theatre, and concerts was \$40, more than spending on parks or museums (\$28), but a third less than spending on sporting events (included for context for leisure spending overall).

Percentage of Households Attending Music & Dance Performances (2022)



Average Household Spending on Leisure Activities (2021)

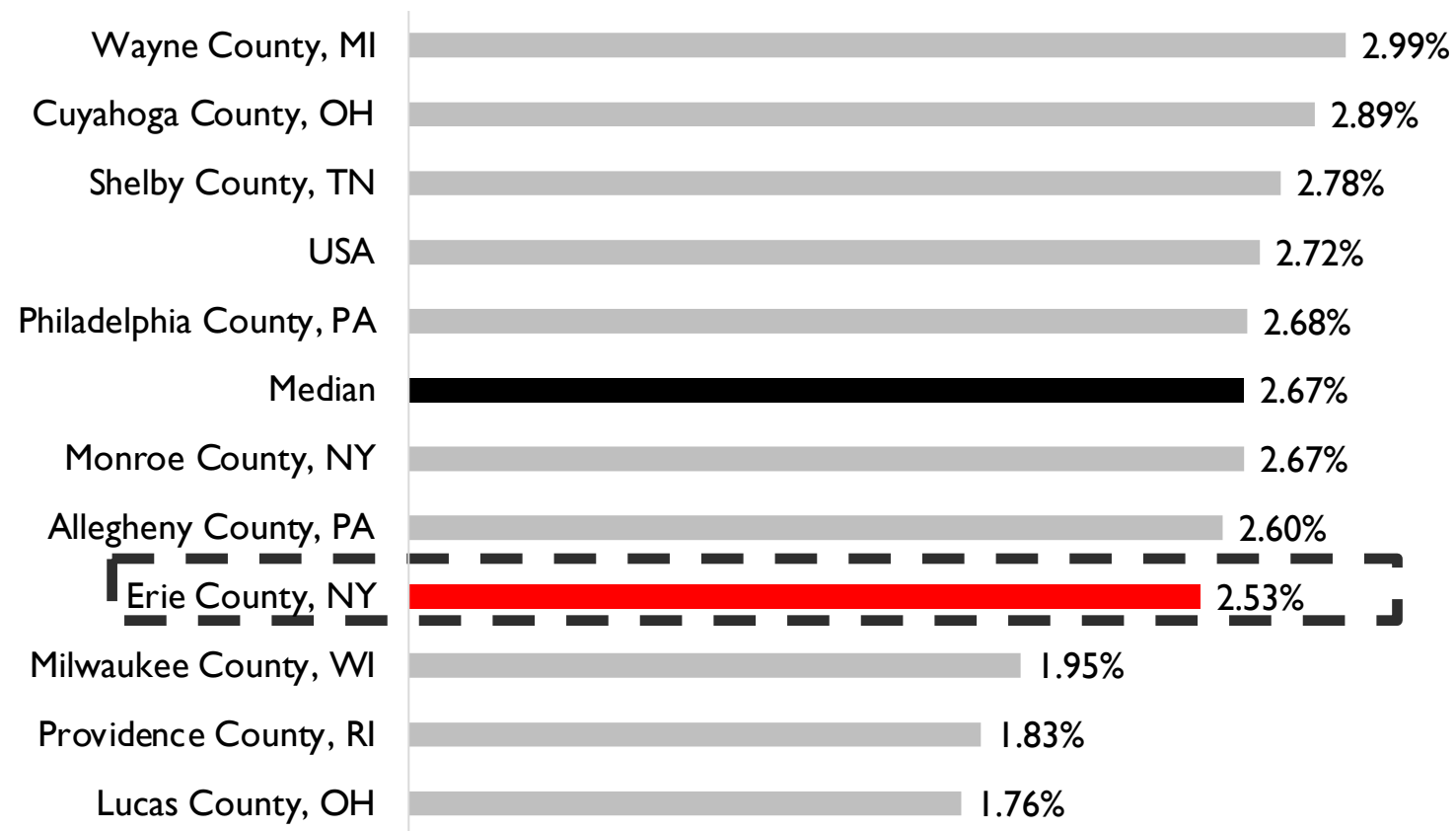


Cultural Participation Indicators in Context

Dance Attendance

2.53% of Erie County's population attended dance performances, putting it near the bottom of its peer group and slightly below the median of 2.67%.

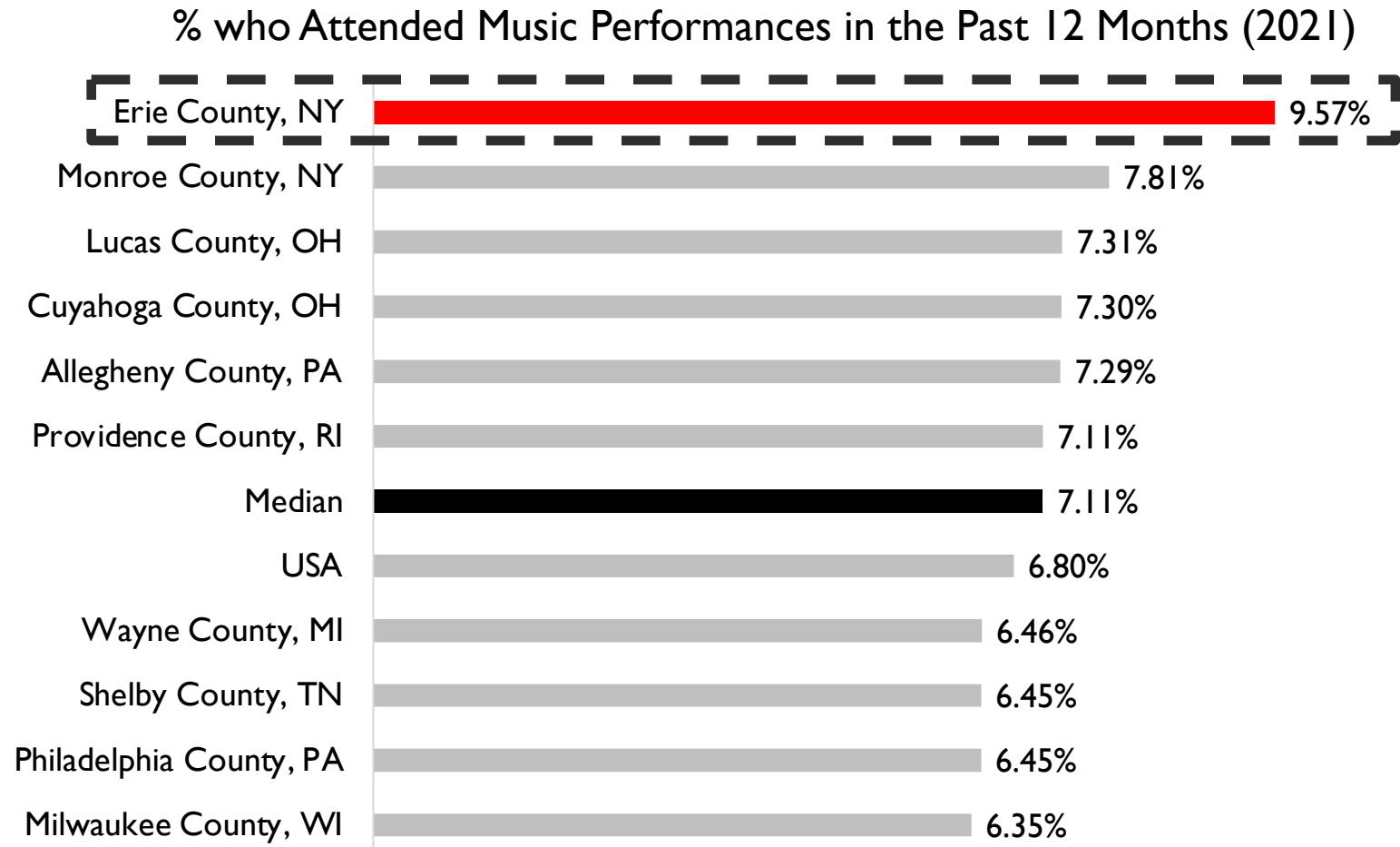
Percentage of Population Attending Dance Performances
(2022)



Cultural Participation Indicators in Context

Music Attendance

Notably, with 9.57% of its population having attended a music performance in 2021, Erie County leads its peer group and is above the median (7.11%). This suggests that live music is a key component of Erie County's cultural ecosystem. That Erie County leads in attendance, but is lower in spending on performing arts (including concerts), suggests that Erie County's offering of free or low-price concerts is attractive to audiences (See "Cultural Participation Indicators in Context: Performing Arts Spending" Slide).

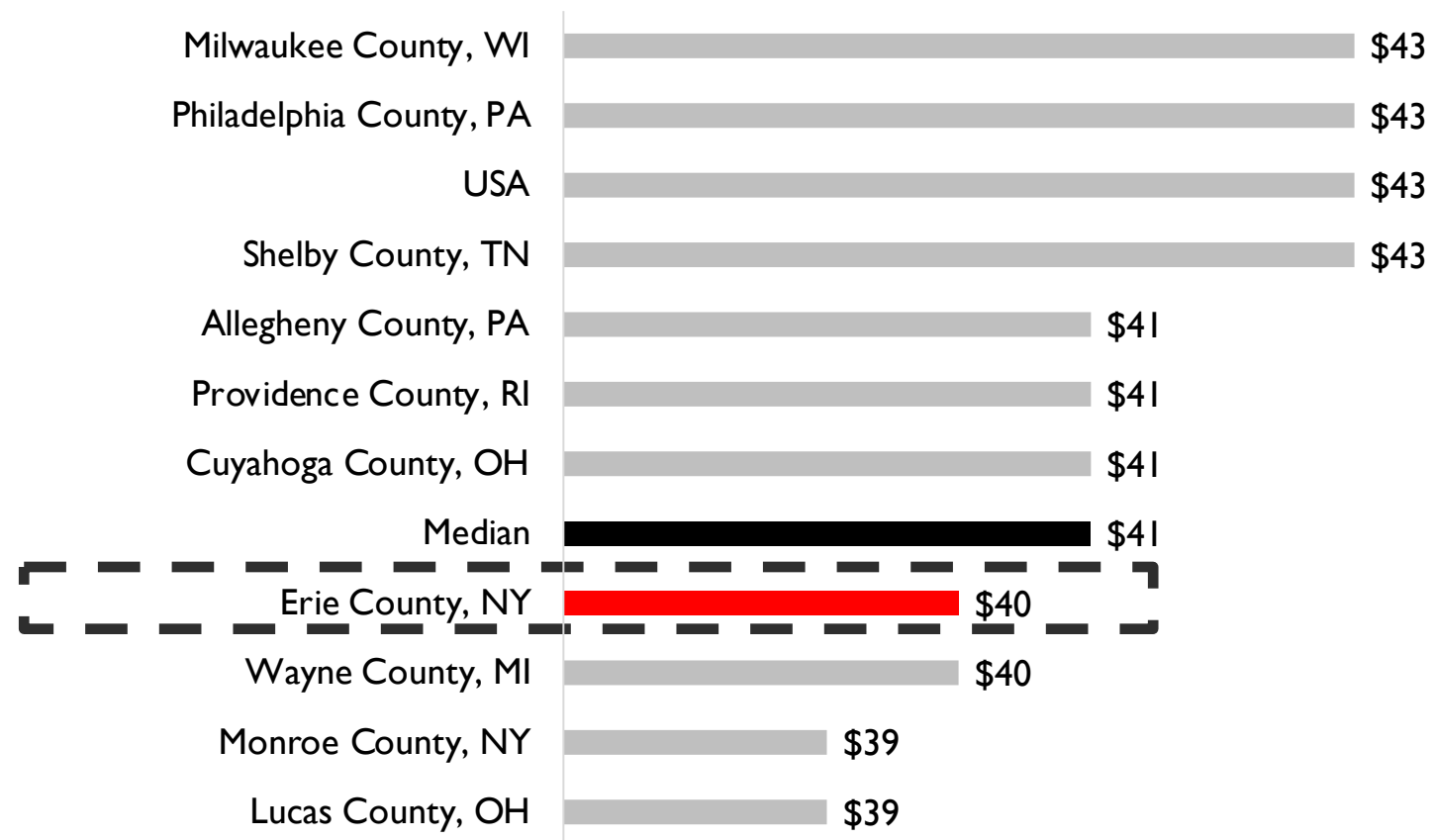


Cultural Participation Indicators in Context

Performing Arts Spending

On average, Erie County households spent \$40/year on tickets to plays, theater, operas, and concerts. This is \$1 below its peer group median. All counties do have professional sports, except for Monroe County, NY. Providence County, RI and Lucas County, OH have professional sports, though not major league.

Average Household Spending on Plays, Theatre, Operas, and Concerts (2021)

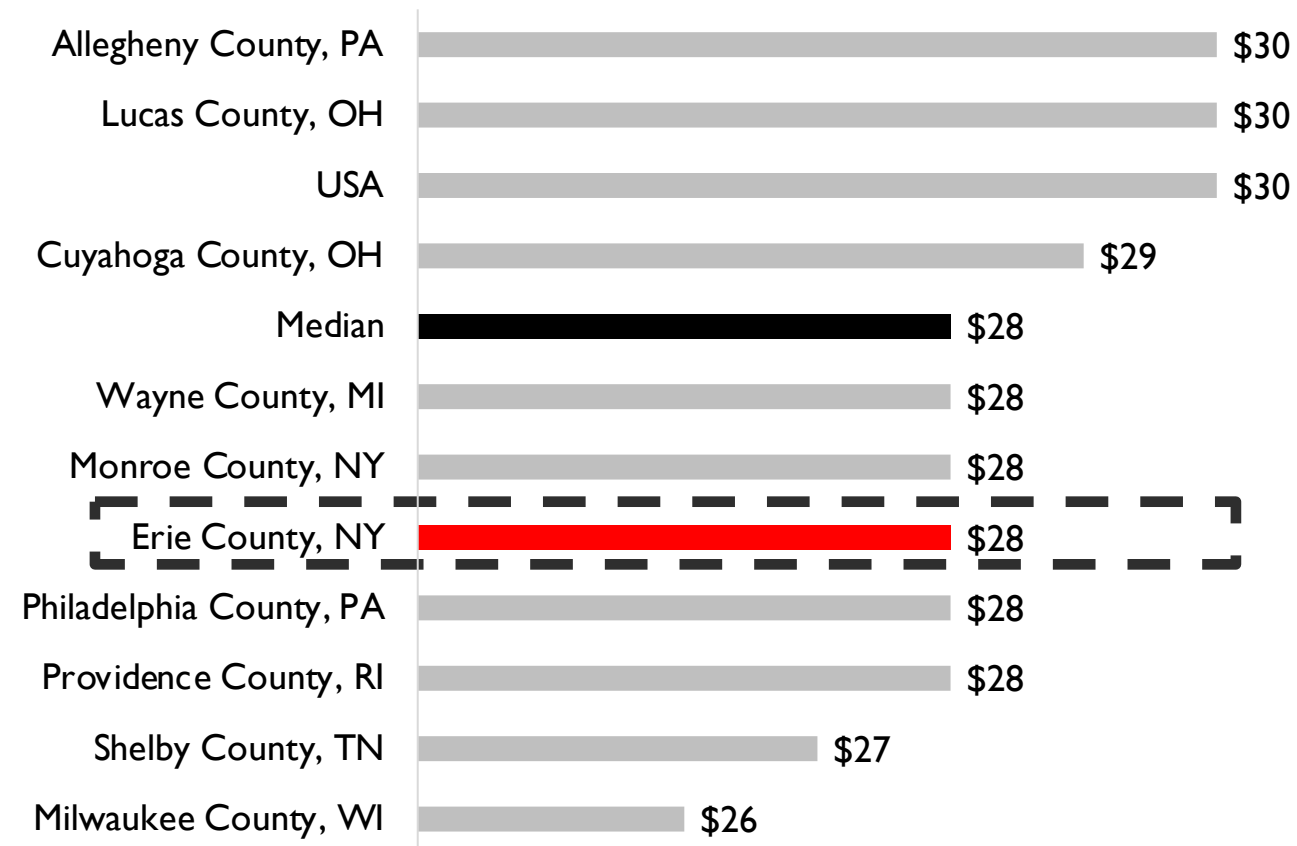


Cultural Participation Indicators in Context

Parks or Museums Spending

On average, Erie County households spent \$28/year on admissions to parks or museums, in line with the median for its peer group.

Average Household Spending on Parks or Museums
(2021)

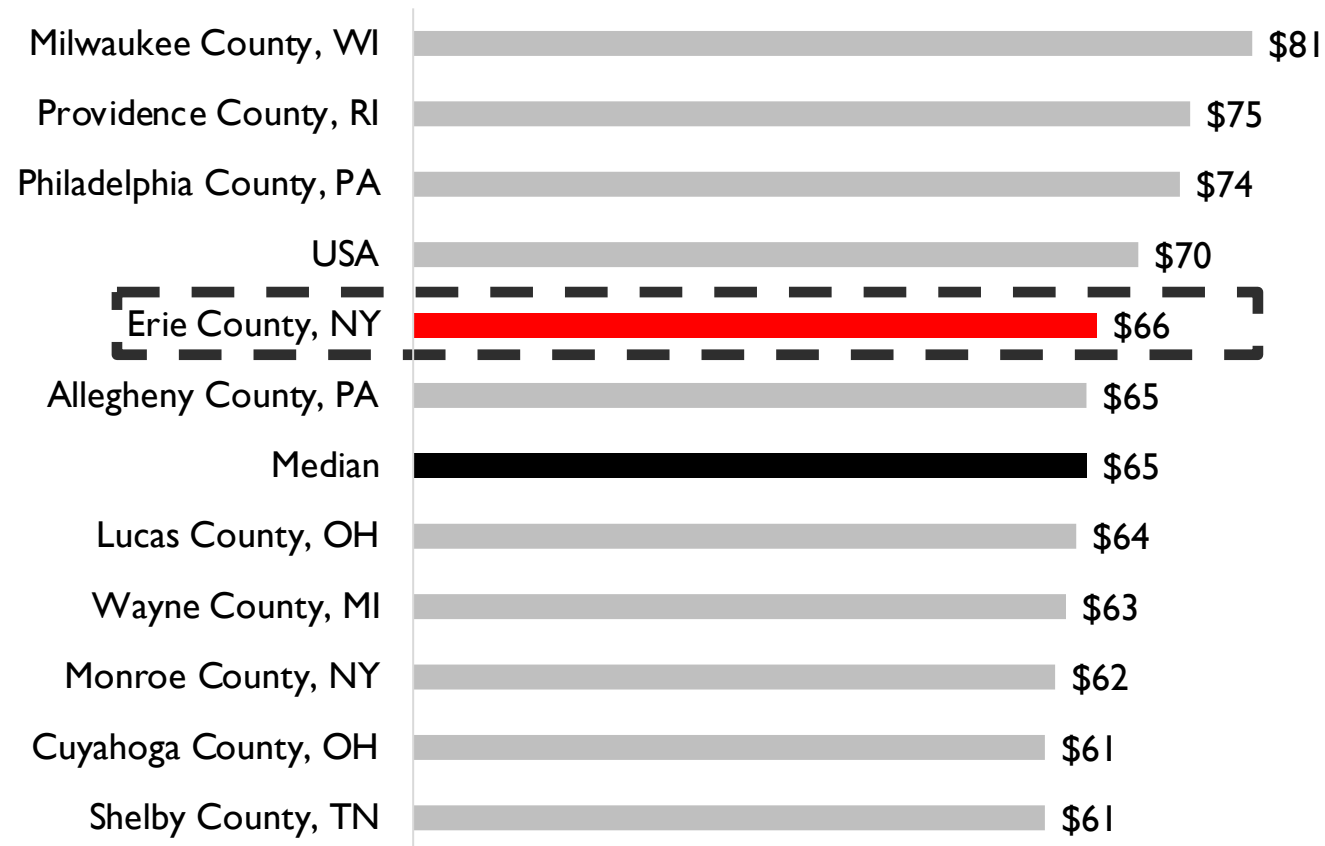


Cultural Participation Indicators in Context

Sports Spending

On average, Erie County households spent \$66 per year on sporting events, above the peer group median (\$65). This data point is included for reference to contextualize cultural spending.

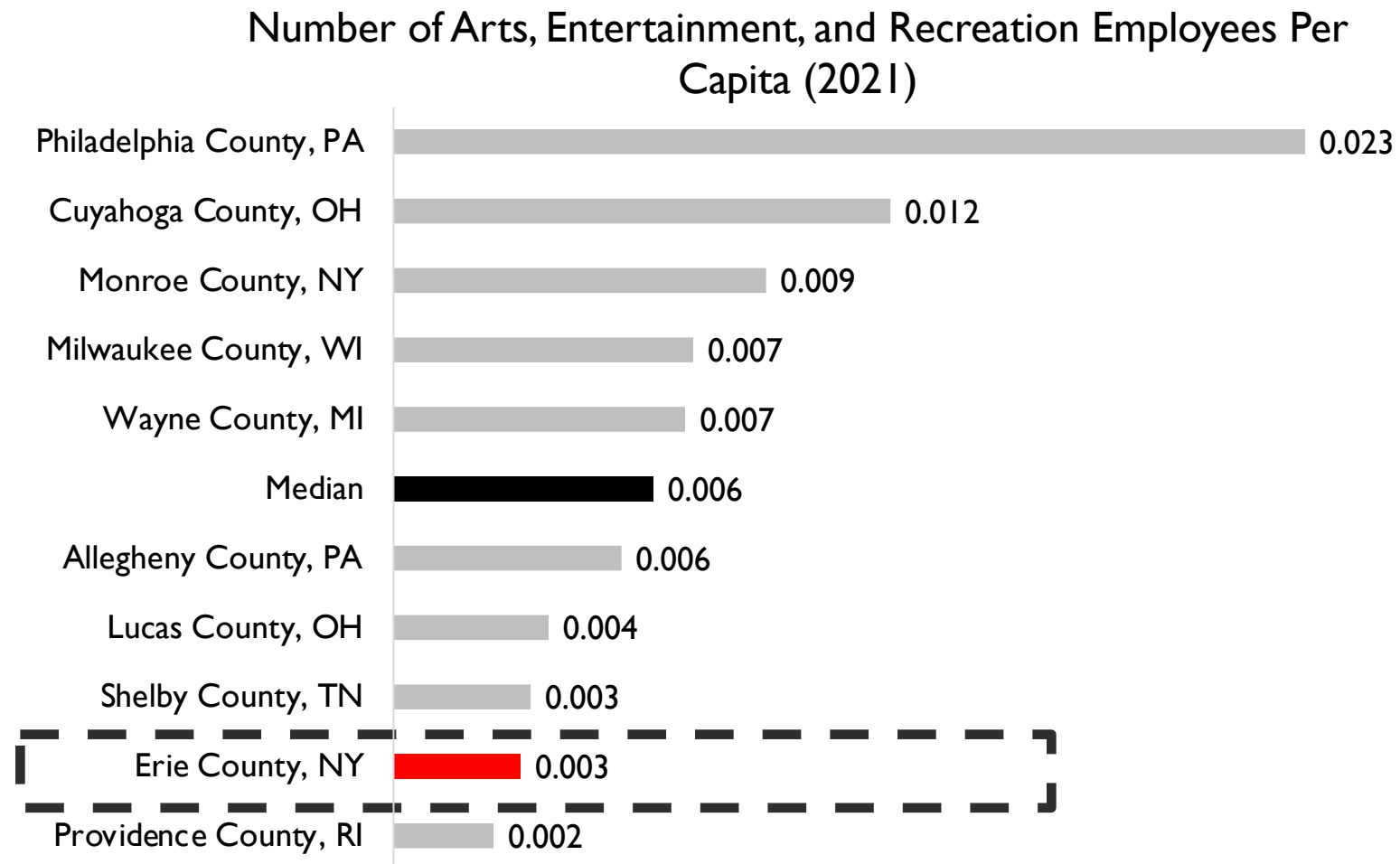
Average Household Spending on Sporting Events
(2021)



Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Arts, Entertainment, and Recreation

Erie County is near the bottom of its peer group in number of arts, entertainment, and recreation employees per capita.

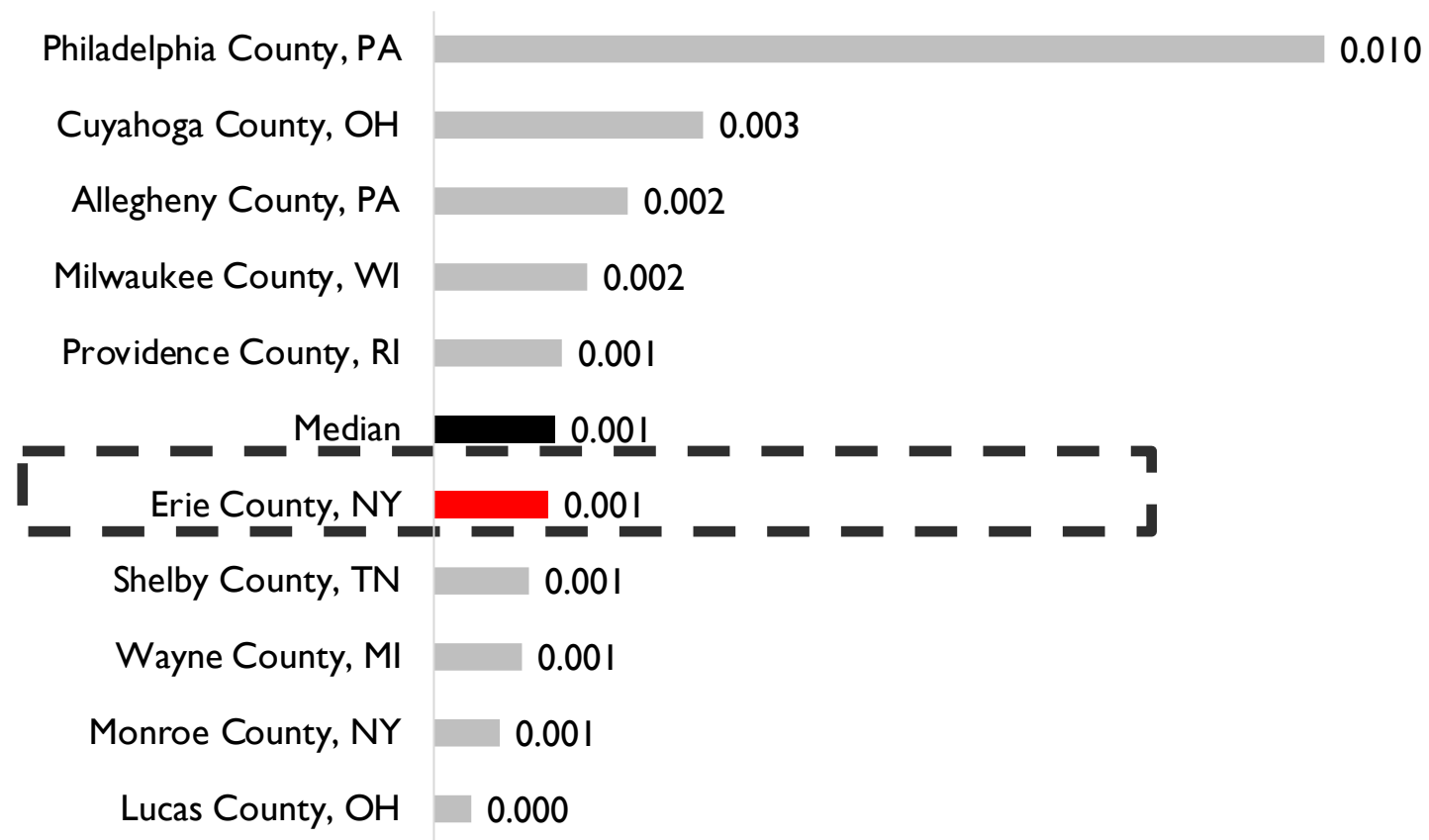


Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries

Erie County is aligned with its peer group median in per capita employment in performing arts, spectator sports, and related industries employment.

Number of Performing Arts, Spectator Sports, and Related Industries Employees Per Capita (2021)

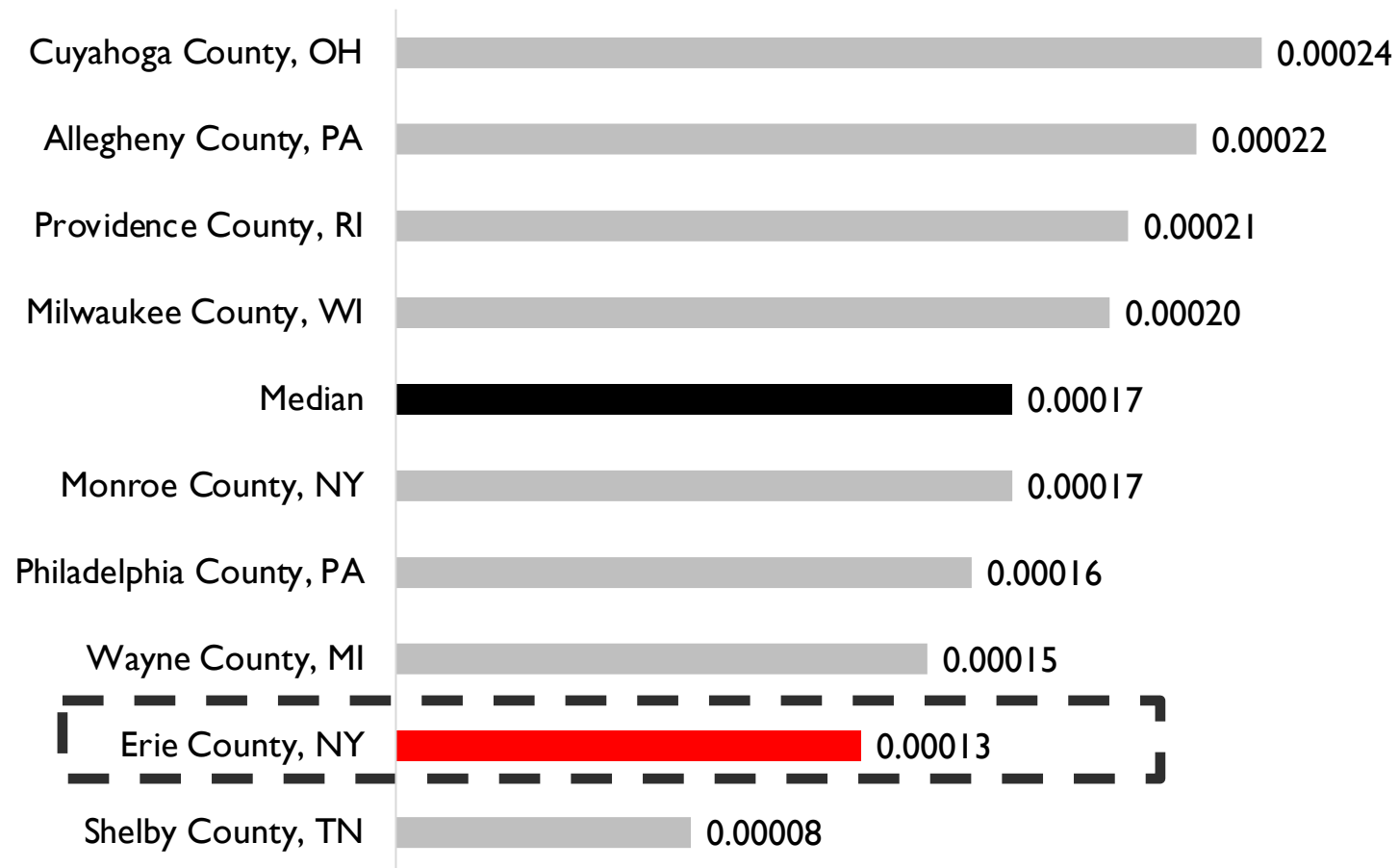


Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Musical Groups and Artists

Erie County is at the bottom of its peer group in employment of musical groups and artists per capita. This figure represents all musical groups and music artists who are registered as being primarily engaged in this work; it does not capture all people in Erie County who play music and/or are occasionally paid to play music.

Number of Musical Groups and Artists Per Capita (2021)

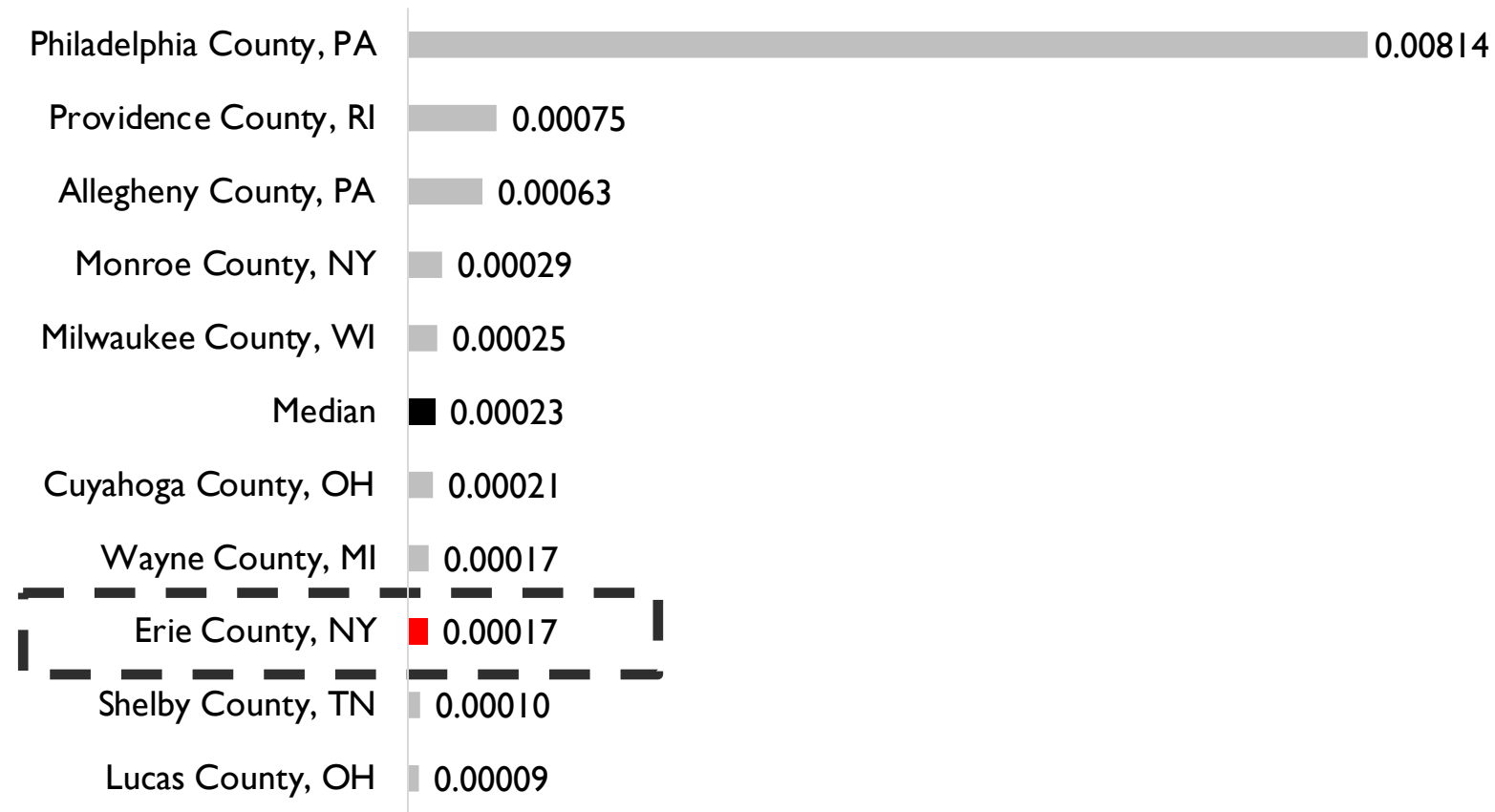


Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Promoters

Erie County is at the bottom of its peer group in employment of promoters of performing arts, sporting, and similar events.

Number of Promoters of Performing Arts, Sporting, and Similar Events Per Capita (2021)

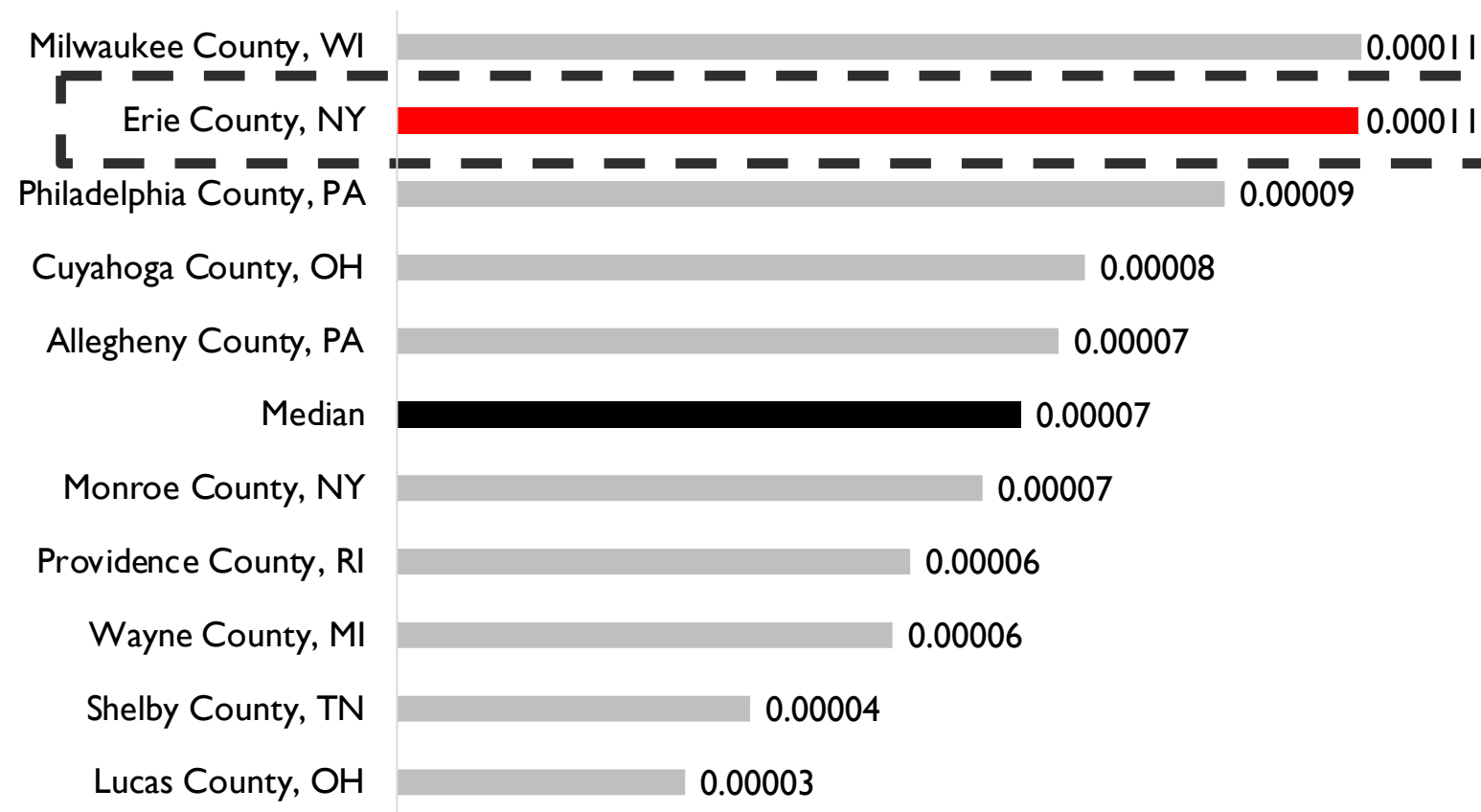


Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers

Erie County is at the top of its peer group in per capita employment of independent artists, writers, and performers. This suggests that individual artists are an important area of focus for this plan. This figure represents all independent artists who are registered as being primarily engaged in this work; it does not capture all people in Erie County who write, perform, or make art; or those who occasionally do so.

Number of Independent Artists, Writers, and Performers Per Capita (2021)

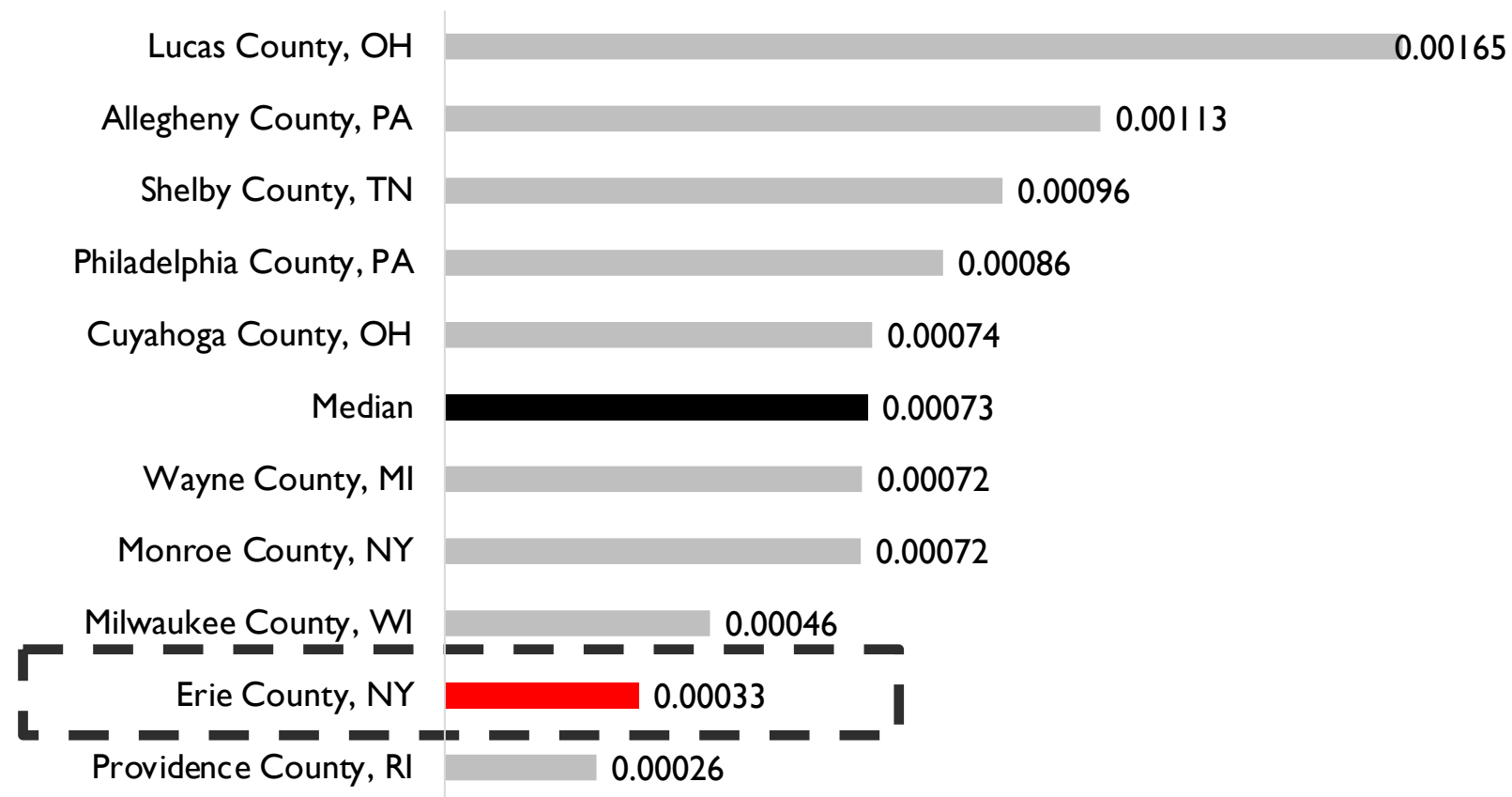


Cultural Employment Indicators in Context

Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions

Erie County is at the bottom of its peer group in the number of museum, historical site, and similar institutions employees per capita.

Number of Museums, Historical Sites, and Similar Institutions
Employees Per Capita (2021)



Impact of Arts & Culture in Erie County

Key Findings: Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 Report, February 2024

A primarily quantitative study by Americans for the Arts, drawn from 2022 data found:

- Arts & Culture generated \$381.4 million in economic activity in the (5 county) WNY region during 2022 – \$192.0 million in direct spending by arts and culture organizations, an additional \$189.4 million in related audience spending. This economic activity supported 8,221 jobs, provided \$327.4 million in personal income to residents, and generated \$121.0 million in tax revenue to local, state, and federal governments.
- 90.2% of the 4.2 million nonprofit arts and culture attendees were residents, and 9.8% were nonresidents (from beyond the WNY region), demonstrating strong regional audience participation alongside room for significant growth in the tourism market, within which 67.1% of attendees reported the primary purpose of their WNY visit was “specifically to attend the performance, event, exhibit, venue, or facility” and of whom 54.7% were first time attendees (compared to 27.9% of local attendees).

Among the study's overarching recommendations:

- AEP6 seeks to reposition the Arts & Culture sector – in WNY as elsewhere – as a vibrant industry and economic engine, rather than an expendable charity, while also emphasizing the social benefits the sector provides in terms of community engagement and well-being.
- AEP6 also advocates for “critical funding conversations about BIPOC and ALAANA organizations receiving fair and proportional financial support in the face of a 2019 AFA report that found “among local arts agency grantmaking organizations, the largest 16% of grant recipients (by budget) received 73% of the dollars awarded.”



Impact of Arts & Culture in Erie County

Key Findings: Upstate NY's Creative Spark, October 2023

A primarily qualitative, descriptive study of trends and conditions by Center for an Urban Future found:

- “Employment in the arts and culture sector across upstate New York surged 35 percent from 2009 to 2019, nearly 10 times the overall rate of employment growth upstate (4%) and three times the growth rate of the healthcare sector (12%). This employment boom occurred in nearly every corner of the state, with striking arts sector job growth in Buffalo (59%)...” and “in spite of declining levels of public investment in the arts across upstate New York.”
- With respect to Erie County, which is lauded for its sustained support of Arts & Culture, “The problem is that more arts groups are now competing for these funds: according to Mariely Ortiz... in 2023 there were 107 different organizations that applied for funding, up from 67 in 2014 – a 63 percent increase.” CUF goes on to say, “Perhaps the greatest challenge facing the arts sector in Buffalo, however, is an inequitable distribution of resources.”
- CUF advocates (principally to NY State) for fuller recognition of the latent possibilities in Arts & Culture funding and for their integration into economic development initiatives: “[T]he under-the-radar arts sector has provided a much-needed economic jolt and created new opportunities for inclusive growth. By better integrating the arts into NYS economic development planning [including the REDCs, DRI, and Market New York – in addition to investing in stronger arts infrastructure like arts councils and arts districts], policymakers have an opportunity to build on recent momentum and lay the groundwork for a more vibrant, sustainable, and equitable economy.”

Among the study's overarching recommendations particularly germane to Erie County are:

- *Make the arts and culture sector a centerpiece of statewide economic development planning.*
- *Invest in place-based arts infrastructure, including arts councils, arts districts, and other arts service organizations*
- *Ensure that New York State's ambitious housing plan includes housing for artists.*
- *Develop infrastructure to provide shared 'back office' services for small arts organizations.*
- *Generate new, dedicated revenues for the arts at the county and city levels.*
- *Put artists to work promoting, strengthening, and supporting their communities.*



6 Market Assessment

■ Cultural Assets



Erie County Cultural Asset Map

Overview

An asset map was created to inventory significant cultural organizations, businesses, and sites in Erie County. The asset map will be used as a tool to guide insights about Erie County's cultural ecosystem, including challenges and opportunities. Its aim is to capture the breadth and depth of Erie County, but it is not comprehensive.

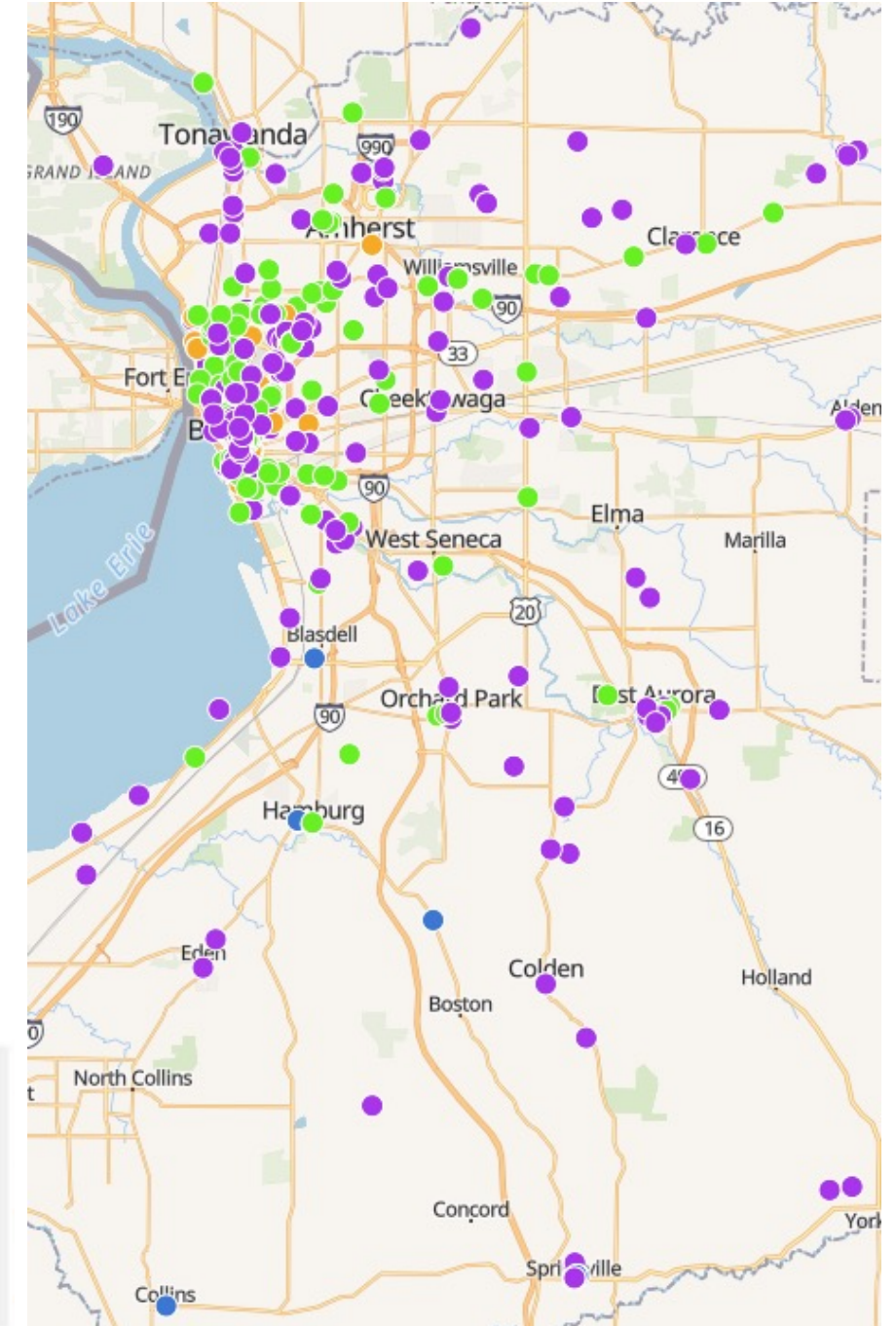
The map / inventory is an iterative process. After AEA generated a first draft of the map, Steering and Advisory Committee members have added to it, and community members will also be engaged in contributing to it as the process advances.

- 476 assets were inventoried across 4 sectors and 19 artistic disciplines based on the agreed upon definition of culture.
See "Cultural Asset Mapping Approach" Slide for full taxonomy.
- 16 assets do not appear on the list due to a lack of physical location / address availability.
See "Other Inventoried Organizations" Slide.

Online Interactive Map

The map is meant to be used in its interactive, online form:
maphub.net/abares/erie-county-cultural-assets.

Erie Cultural Asset Map – Full Inventory



Legend

- Non-profits
- Built Environment
- Creative Economy
- Government



Erie County Cultural Asset Map

Notes on Approach

- The map is limited to assets that are primarily part of the arts, culture, and creative industries. See “Additional Assets that Support Culture” Slide.
- Assets on the map are not tied to past, present, or future funding decisions of Erie County, though most organizations funded by Erie County are included in the map.
- Individual artists, musicians, and proprietors are not included.
- Funders are not included.
- To capture assets of all sizes, there were no criteria set around staff or budget size.
- Assets that could be categorized in multiple sectors and disciplines were identified the one that is most instrumental to making the program happen. For example, a summer concert in a park hosted by a City / Town falls into the “Government” rather than “Built Environment” category.
- The analysis of assets mapped in the Initial Cultural Conditions Assessment represents the inventory as of March 2024. The most up to date version of the Asset Map is available online at maphub.net/abares/erie-county-cultural-assets.







Cultural Asset Mapping Approach

Taxonomy

Sectors

Cultural Disciplines

 <p>Non-profit Arts and Cultural Organizations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture • Arts Engagement • Craft • Cultural Heritage • Dance • Festivals • Film & Media • History • Hub • Literature • Live Music Venues • Music • Natural History & Science • Performing Arts • Performing Arts Venues • Theatre • Visual Arts
 <p>Creative Economy Businesses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architectural Firms • Arts Retail (independent art or artists/ design-driven retail) • Fashion • Film & Media • Hub • Dance • Literature • Live Music Venues • Music • Visual Arts
 <p>Built Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Architecture • Public Art (e.g. murals, sculptures) • Parks
 <p>Government</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Music • Hubs – including libraries



Cultural Asset Mapping Approach

Sourcing & Constraints

Constraints

- Primarily cultural programming (ex. removed nursing homes)
- Locally owned / headquartered in Erie County
- Registers on Google Maps

Government

Nonprofits Arts and Cultural Organizations

Creative Economy Businesses

Built Environment (includes landmarks and places)

Sources

- Advisory / Steering Committees
- Consultations / local knowledge

Sources

- Erie County Funding Data (2019-2024)
- Erie County Rural and Suburban Request Data
- Wilson Applicants
- 990 database (all arts and cultural in Erie County)
- Consultations / local knowledge
- Previous reports
- Advisory / Steering Committees

Sources

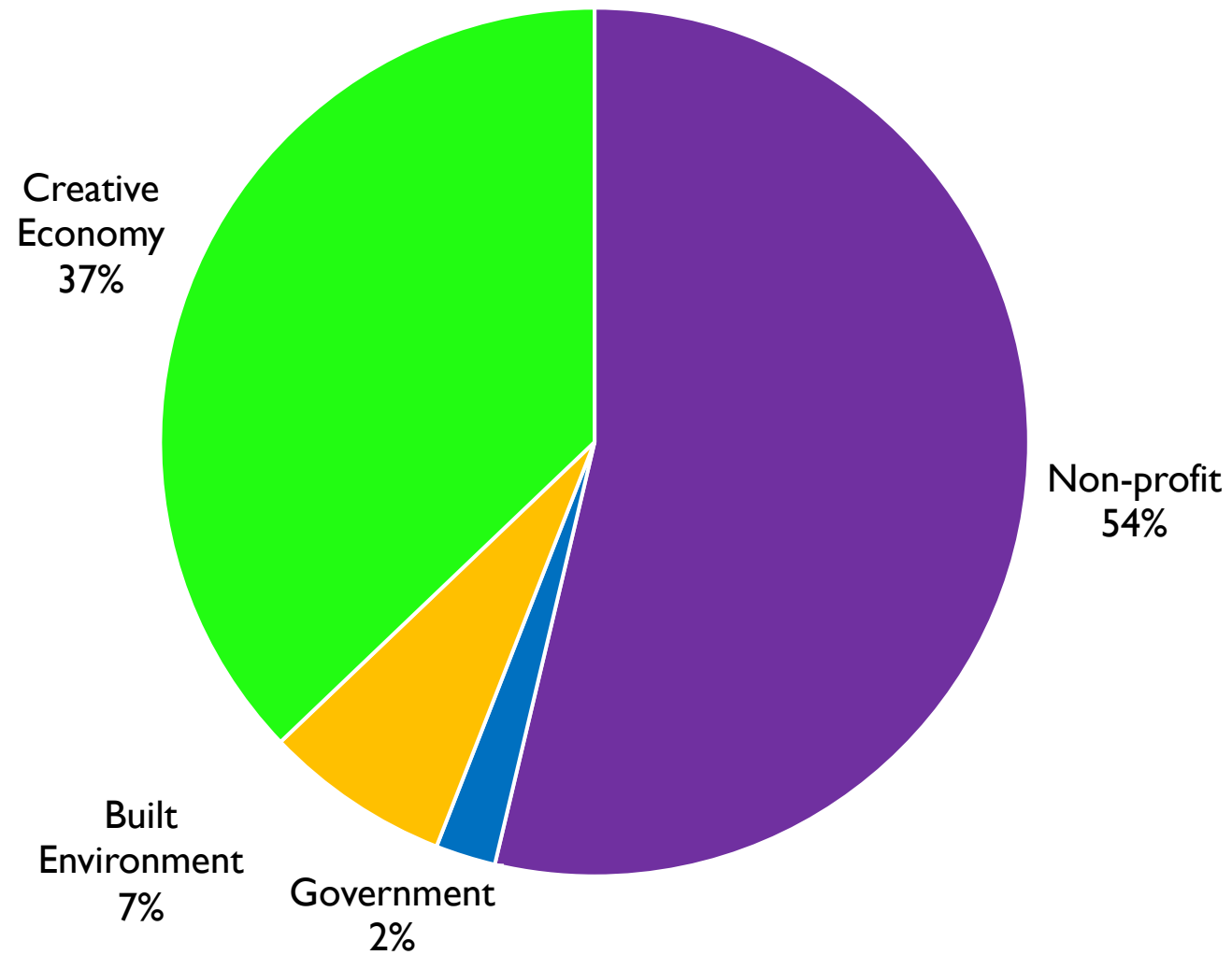
- Web Scraping
- Consultations / local knowledge
- Previous Reports
- Advisory / Steering Committees



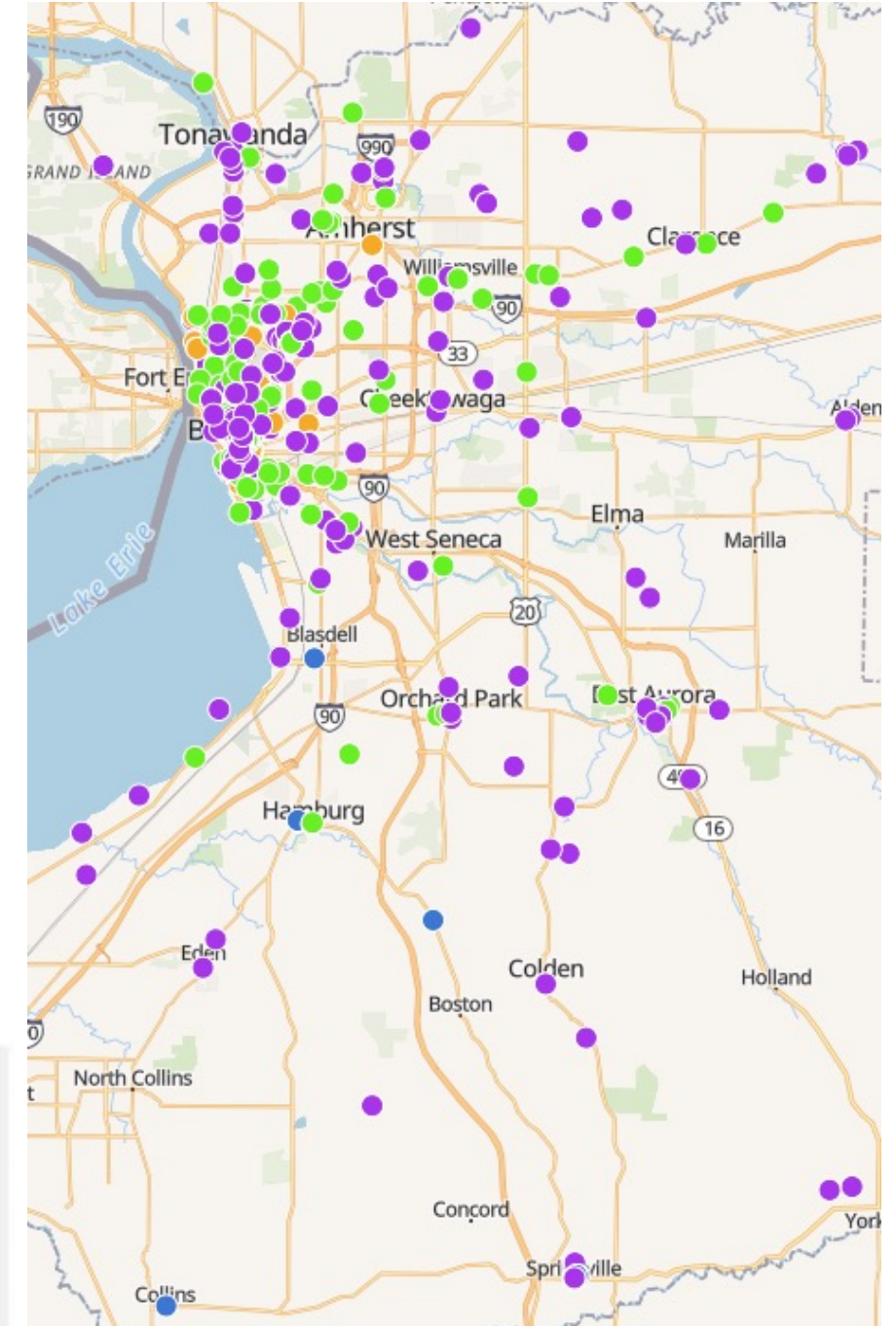
Erie County Cultural Asset Map

Sector Overview

Breakdown of Assets by Sector



Erie Cultural Asset Map – Full Inventory



Legend



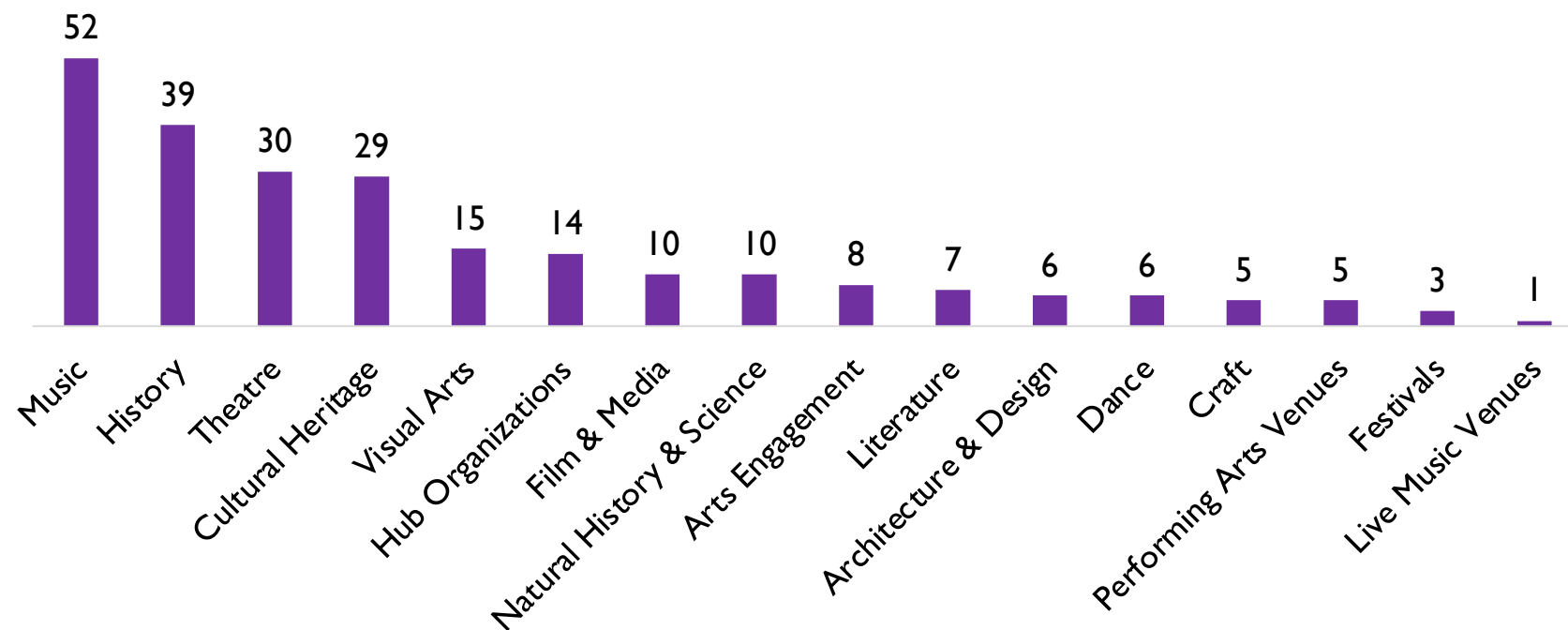
Erie County Cultural Asset Map

Sector: Non-profit Arts & Cultural Organizations

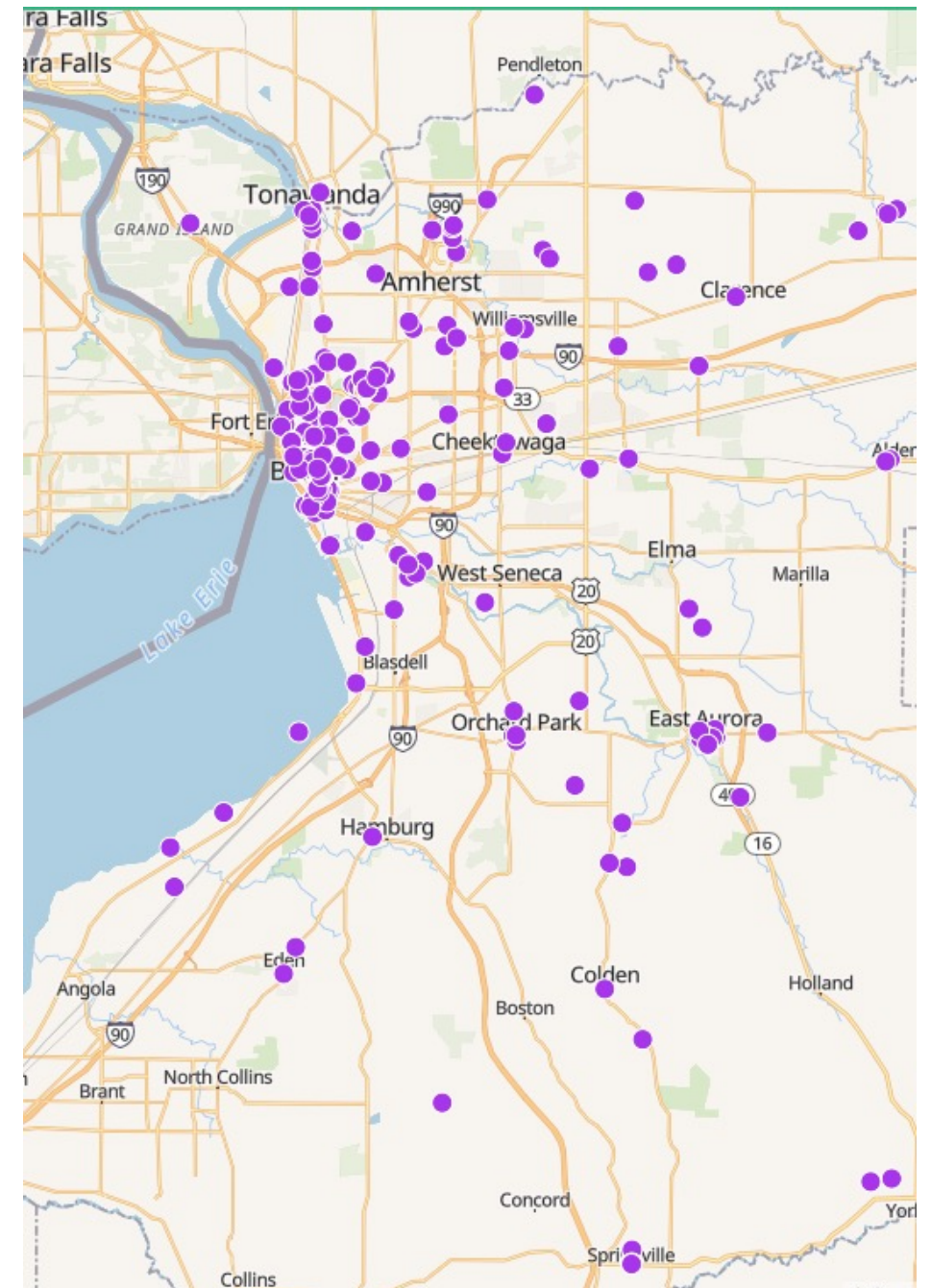
Non-profit arts and cultural organizations are considered the core of Erie County's ecosystem, as their missions are focused on supporting artists and creating new work, serving audiences, and contributing to Erie County's vibrancy and quality of life.

- With 240 of the 447 assets inventoried, non-profits represent the largest sector in the ecosystem.
- Organizations are concentrated in Buffalo with clusters in Amherst, East Aurora, Orchard Park.

Non-Profit Sector Breakdown by Discipline



Non-profit Arts & Cultural Organizations in Erie County

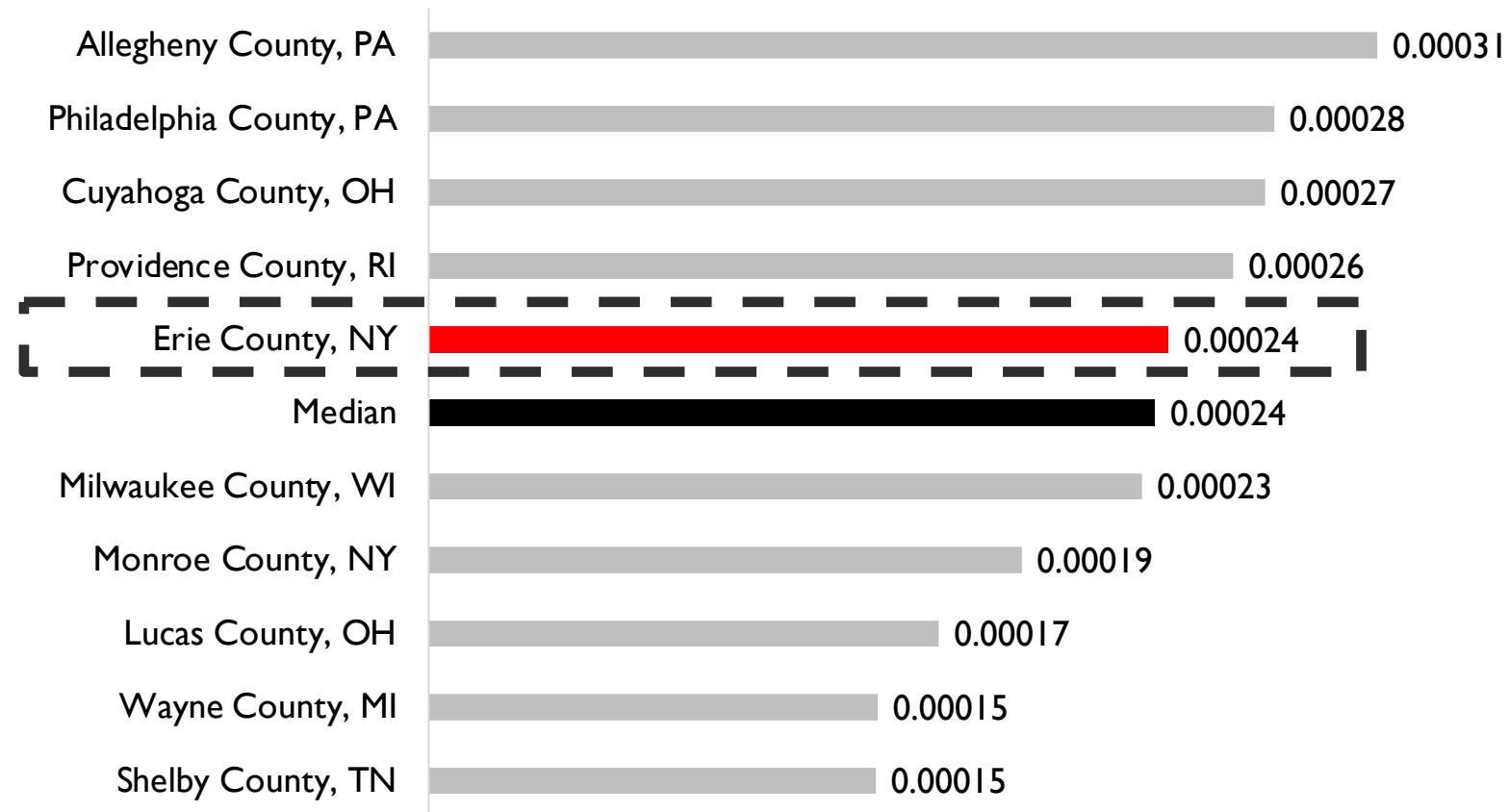


Arts & Cultural Organizations in Context

Number of Non-profits in Erie County Compared to its Peers

Comparing the number of all registered arts, cultural, and humanities nonprofits per capita in Erie County to its peers in a standardized manner shows that Erie County is aligned with the median of its peer group, showing that it does not have an unusual number of cultural sector nonprofits.

Registered Arts, Cultural, and Humanities Nonprofits Per Capita (2021)



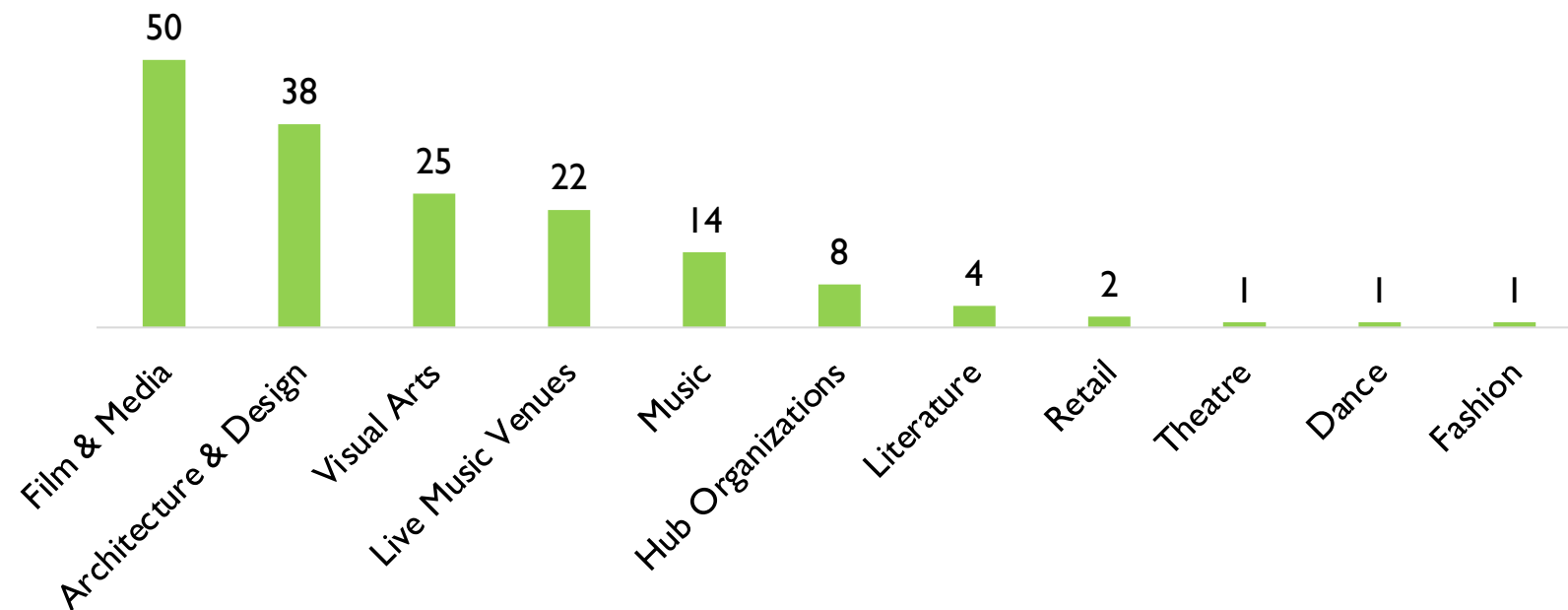
Erie County Asset Map

Sector: Creative Economy Businesses

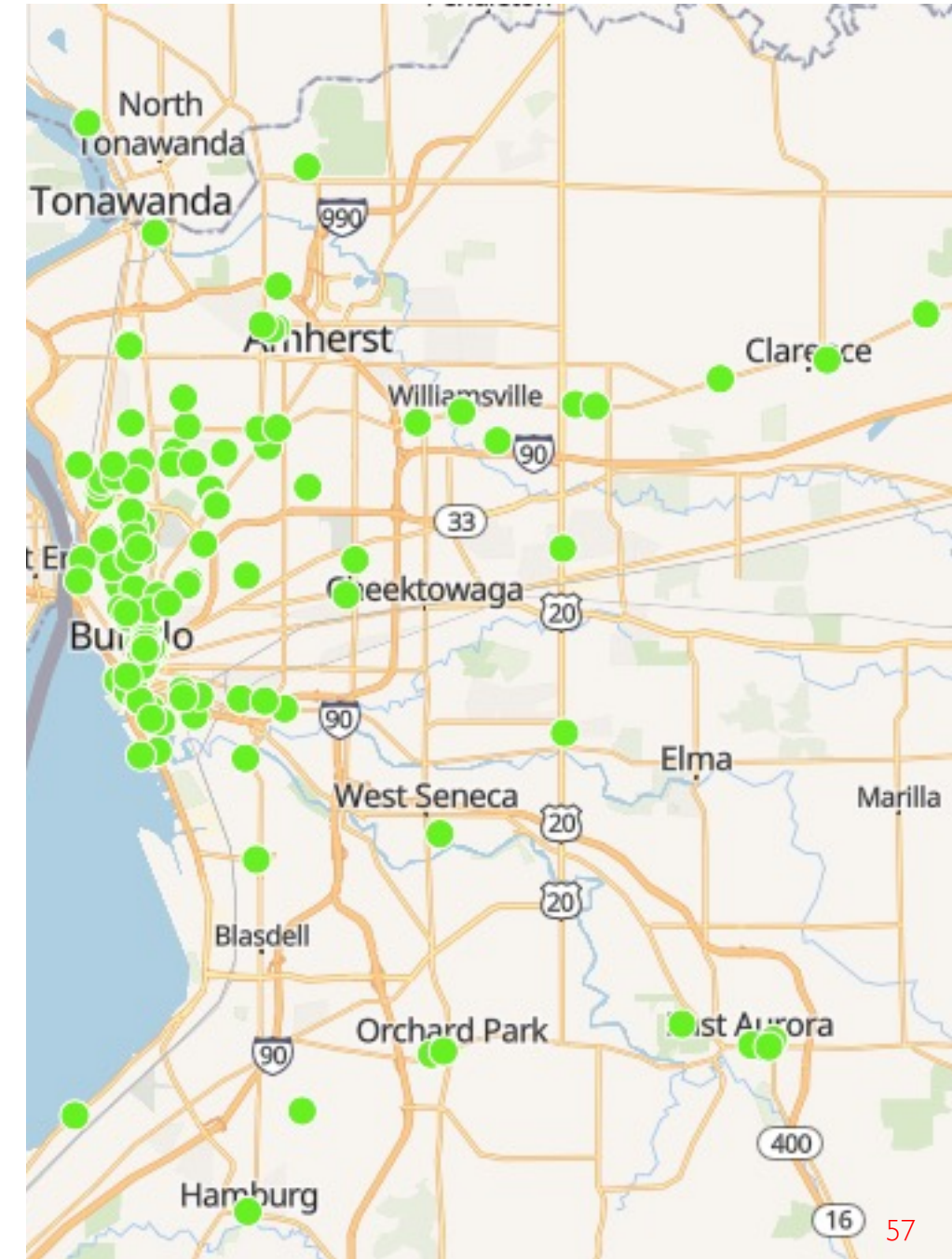
Creative economy businesses are an important part of the ecosystem because they employ artists and creatives, while also contributing to growing industries like Film & Media and live events, and driving Erie County's built environment through architecture and design.

- 166 of the 447 assets are creative economy businesses.
- Organizations are most concentrated in Buffalo.
- This sector represents the greatest potential for additions by community members, particularly in retail.

Creative Economy Sector Breakdown by Discipline



Creative Economy Businesses in Erie County



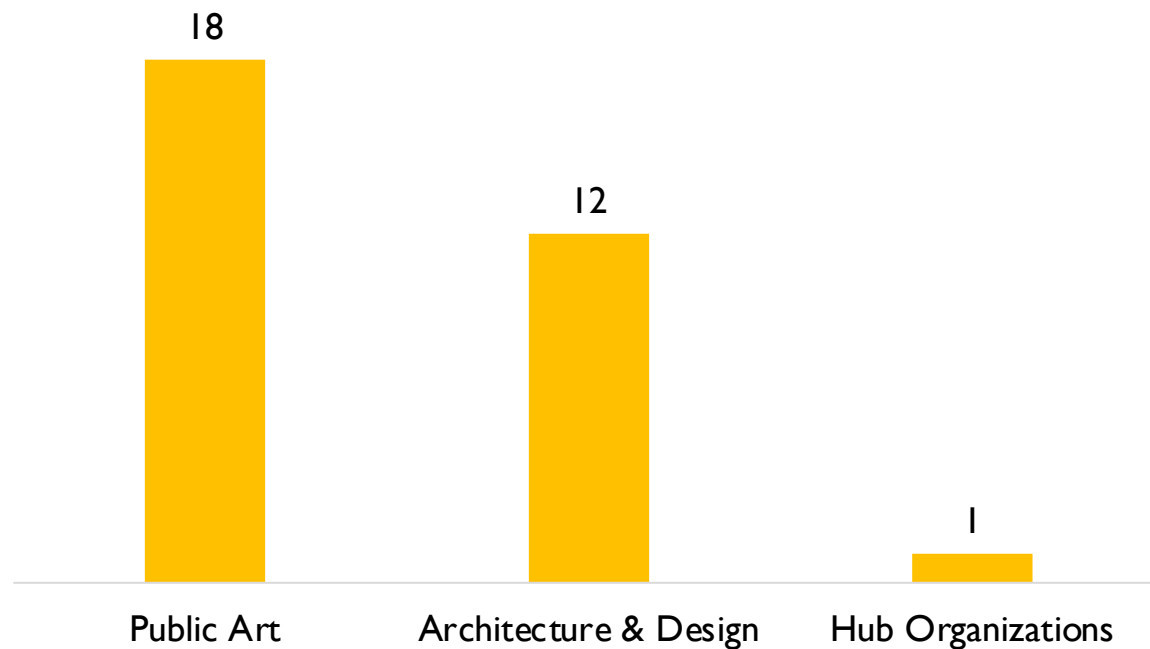
Erie County Asset Map

Sector: Built Environment

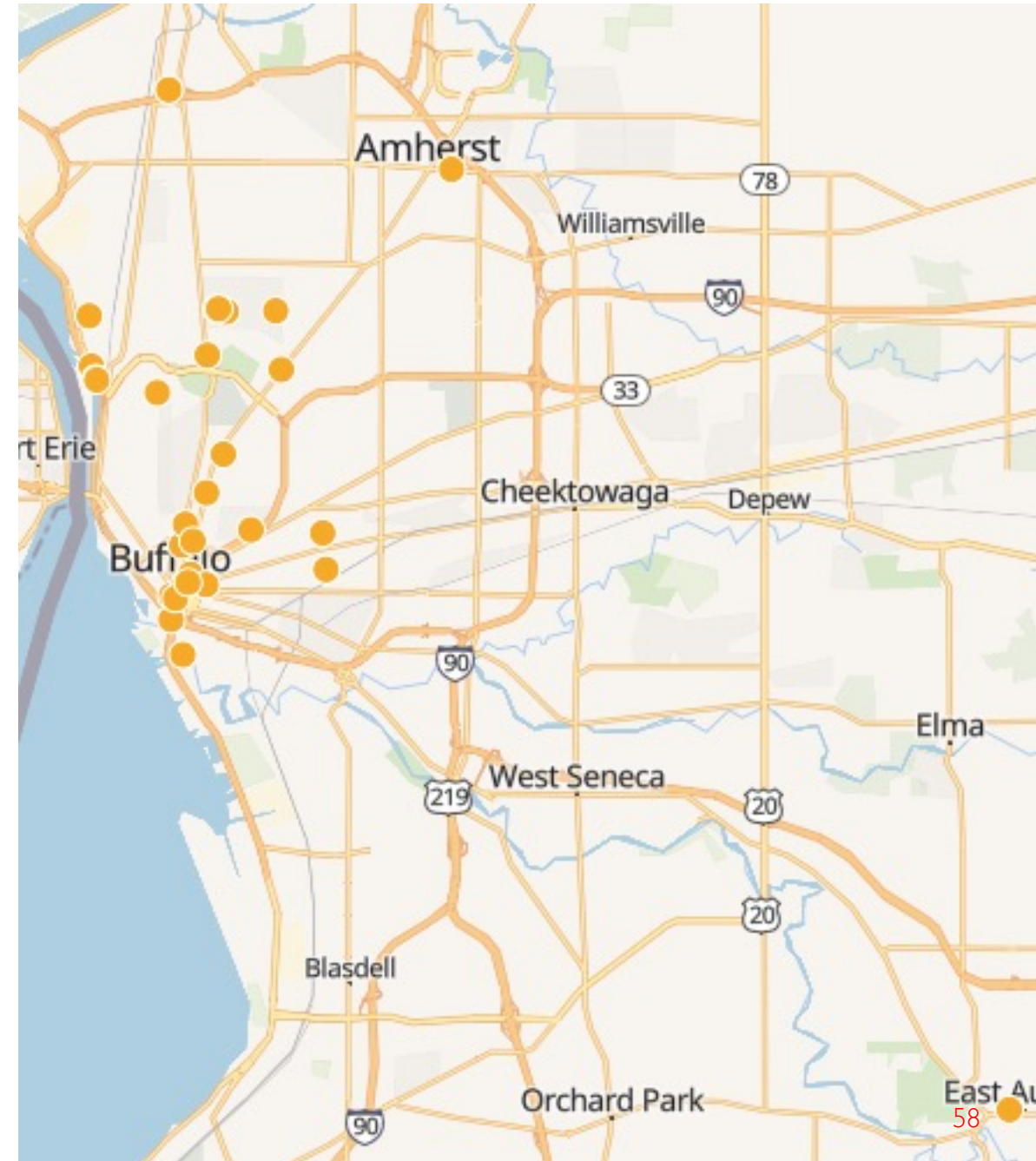
The Built Environment is a particularly important category for Erie County, as it includes architectural landmarks, which drive tourism.

- 31 of the 447 assets are Built Environment sites.
- Built environment assets that are mapped are most concentrated in Buffalo.
- Three significant assets in this category – Graycliff, the Darwin Martin House, and Roycroft – are captured in non-profits.

Built Environment Breakdown by Discipline



Notable Built Environment Sites in Erie County



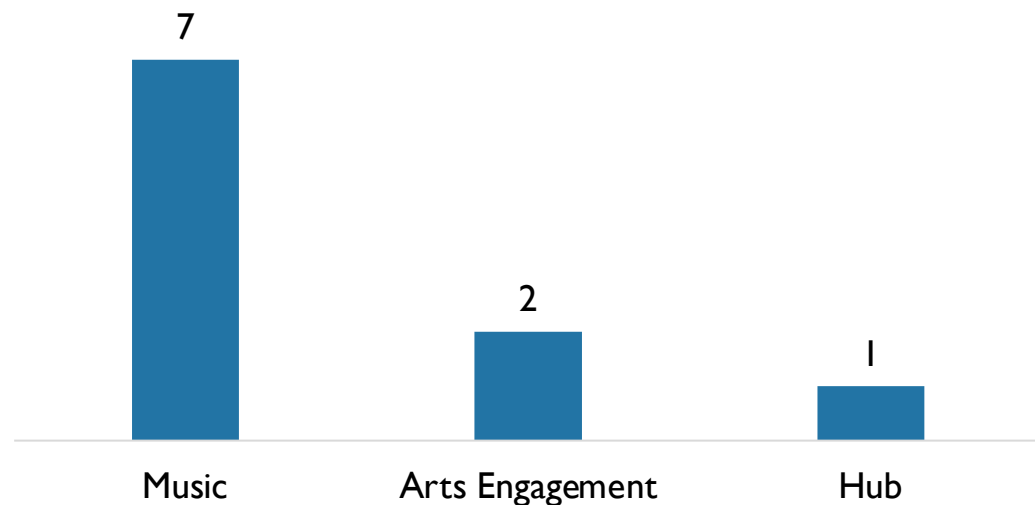
Erie County Asset Map

Sector: Government Facilities & Initiatives

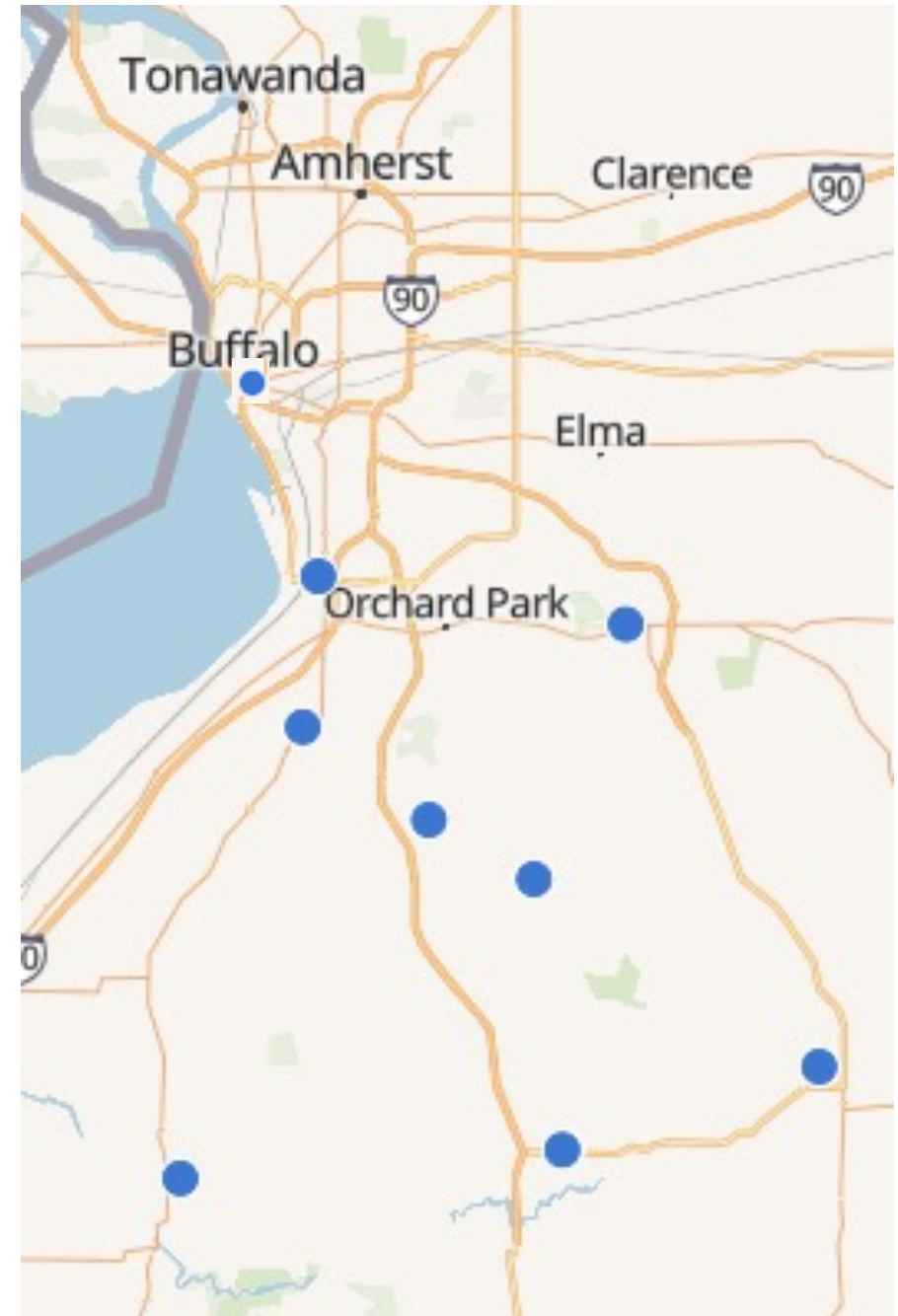
This sectoral category was created to account for facilities and initiatives that are primarily government-owned and operated where significant cultural activity occurs. Facilities owned by Erie County, but operated by a non-profit are captured in the non-profit category (See “Erie County Facilities & Major Capital Investments Slide”).

- The 10 facilities / initiatives here are either libraries or free concert series, which demonstrates that in rural areas, local governments play a key role in the arts and cultural ecosystem.

Government Facilities & Initiatives Breakdown by Discipline



Government Facilities & Initiatives

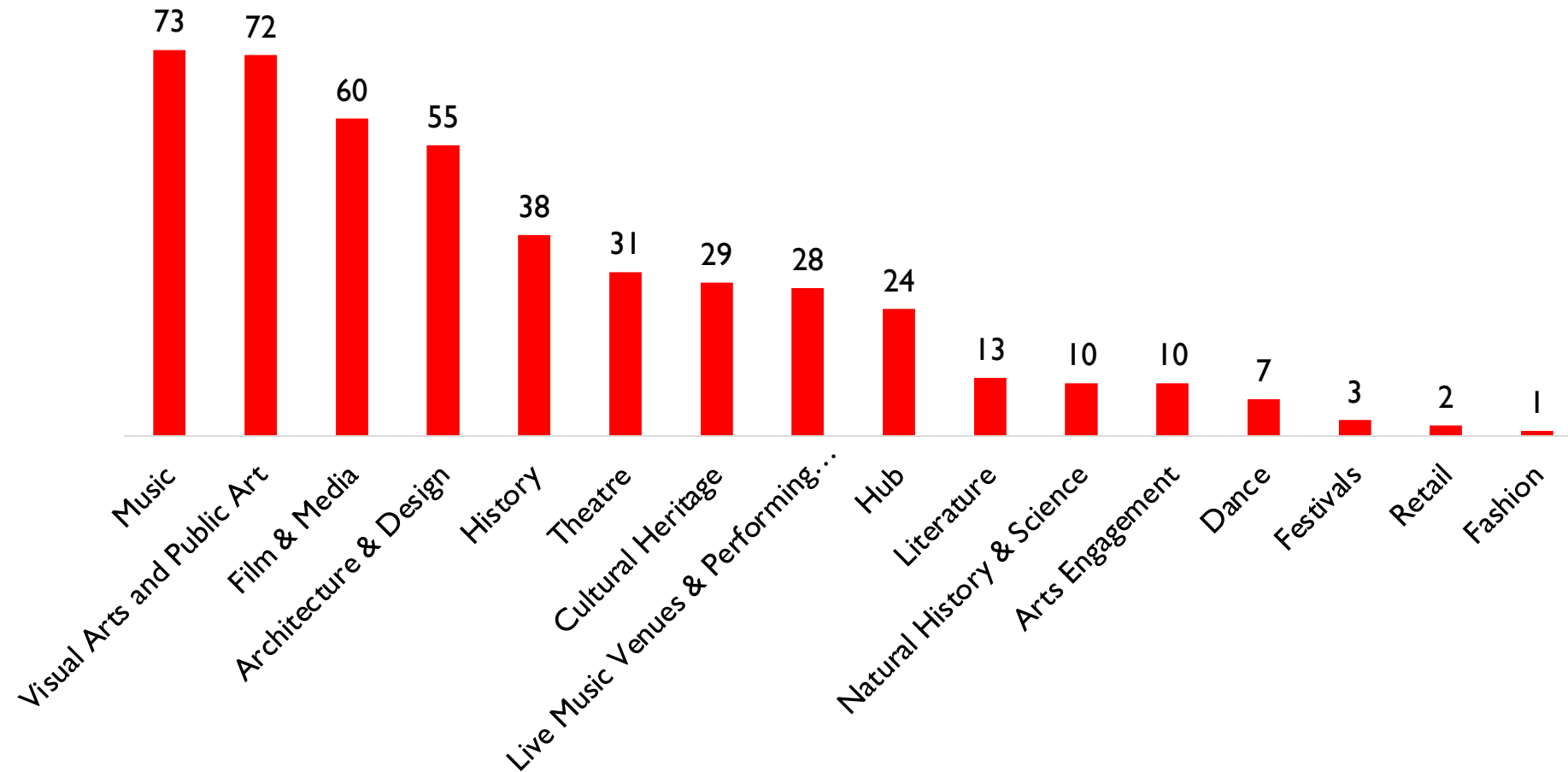


Erie County Asset Map

Overview of Disciplines

Of the 448 assets inventoried across the non-profit, creative economy, built environment, and government sectors, the top five disciplines they represent are Music, Visual Arts & Public Art, Film & Media, Architecture & Design, and History. The slides that follow include detailed analyses of disciplines with 10 or more assets.

Asset Breakdown by Discipline



Visual Arts & Public Art and Live Music Venues & Performing Arts Centers were analyzed together, though they appear as separate categories on the asset map.

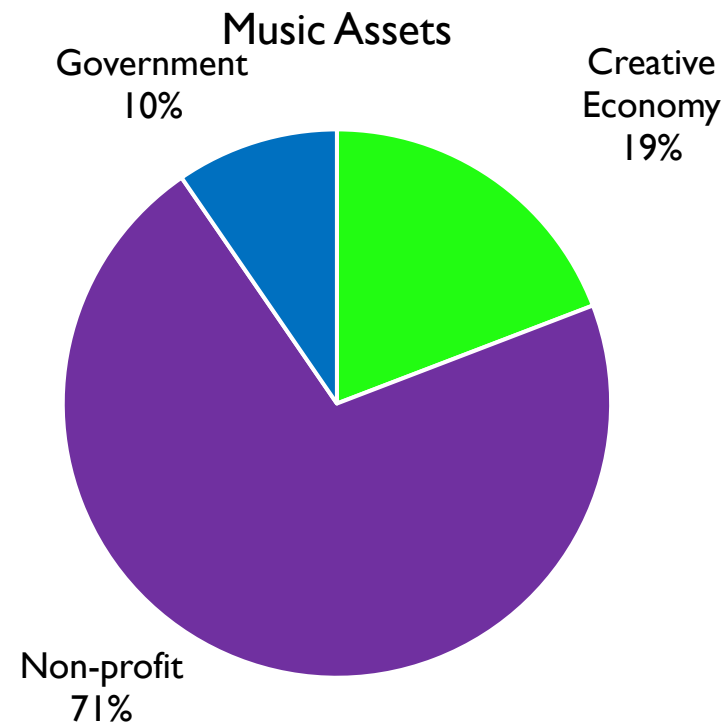


Erie County Asset Map

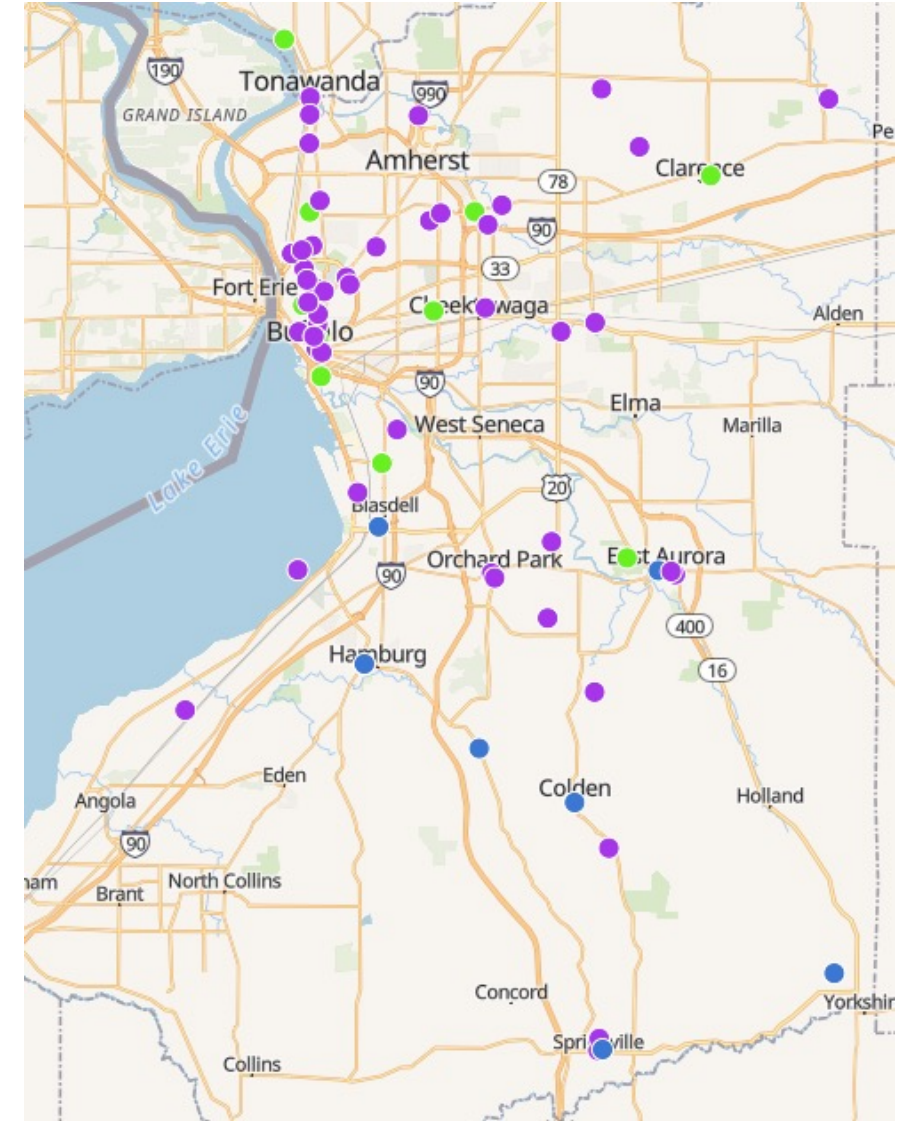
Discipline: Music

This category is wide-ranging, capturing assets ranging from chamber music non-profits to record labels.

- There are 73 music assets.
- Free concert series that are hosted by local city / town governments are important cultural assets in rural areas.
- There is not a central music industry service / promotion organization.



Music Assets



Market Assessment: Cultural Assets

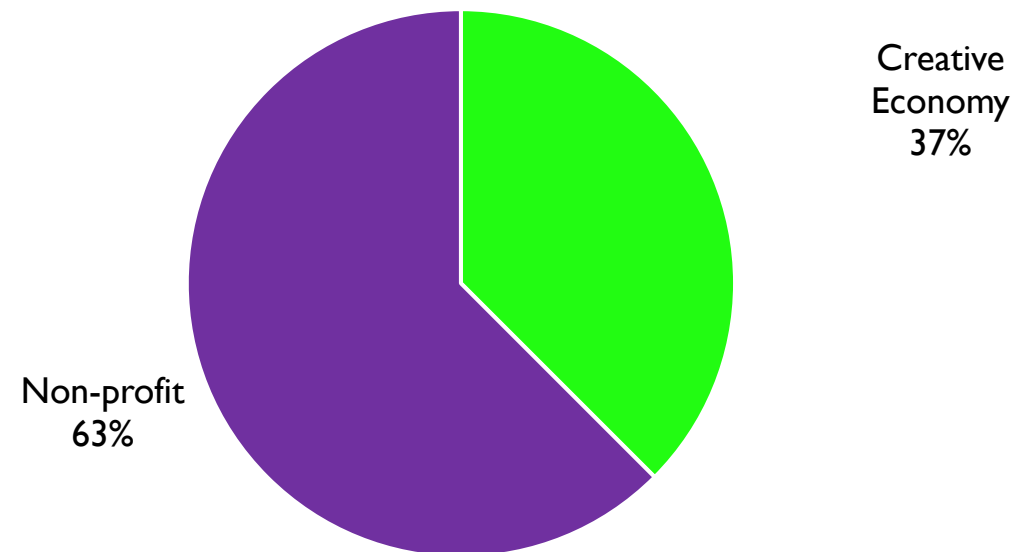
Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: Visual Art & Public Art

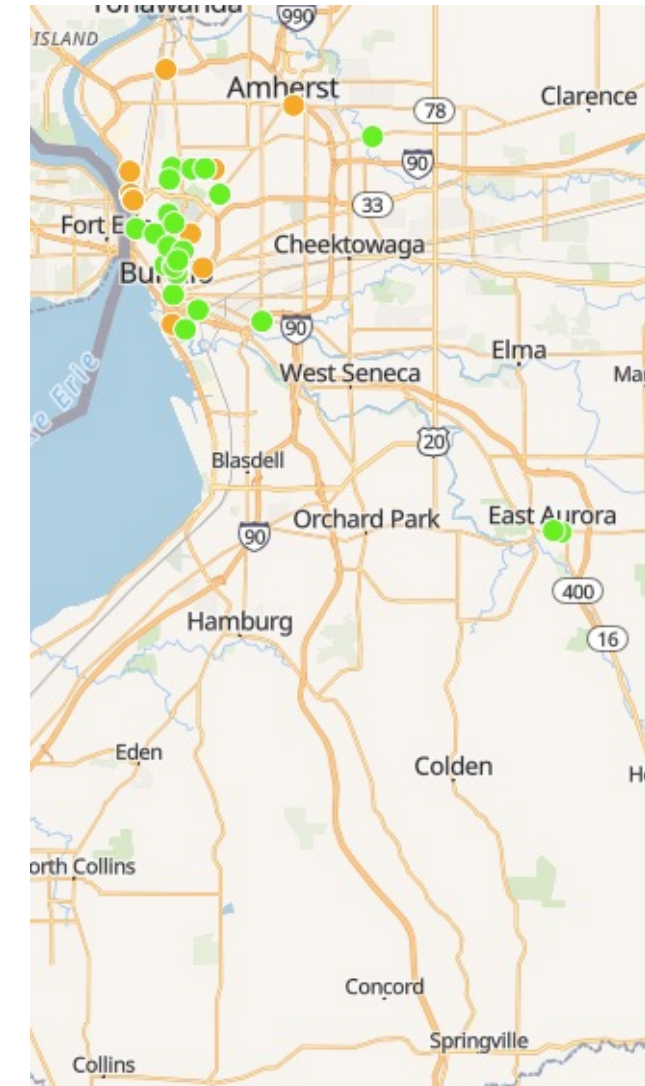
Visual Art and Public Art organizations were inventoried in separate categories, however, they are closely linked.

- 40 Visual Arts assets were inventoried.
- 18 Public Arts assets were inventoried, all of which are in the Built Environment category.
- There are a significant number of public art assets not included in the inventory; significant absent assets should be identified in community engagement (See "Additional Assets that Support Culture" Slide).

Visual Arts Assets (does not include Public Art)



Visual & Public Art Assets



Erie County Asset Map

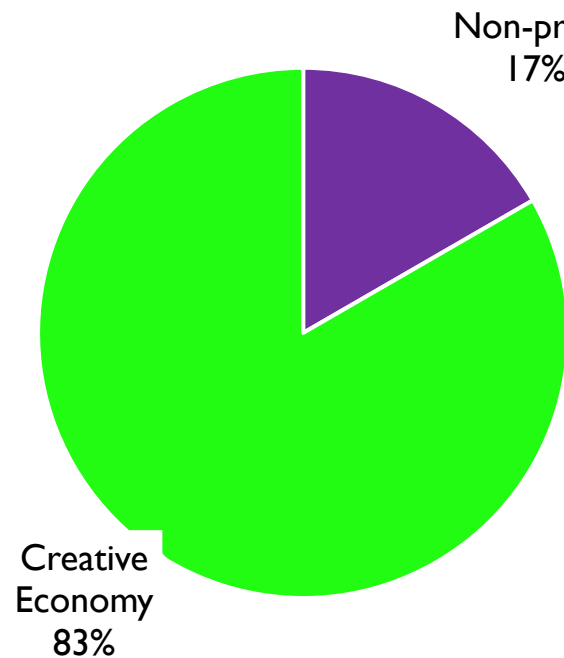
Discipline: Film & Media

This category includes film studios and other film production outfits, commercial video production companies, gaming companies, locally owned media companies, local movie theatres, and film festivals.

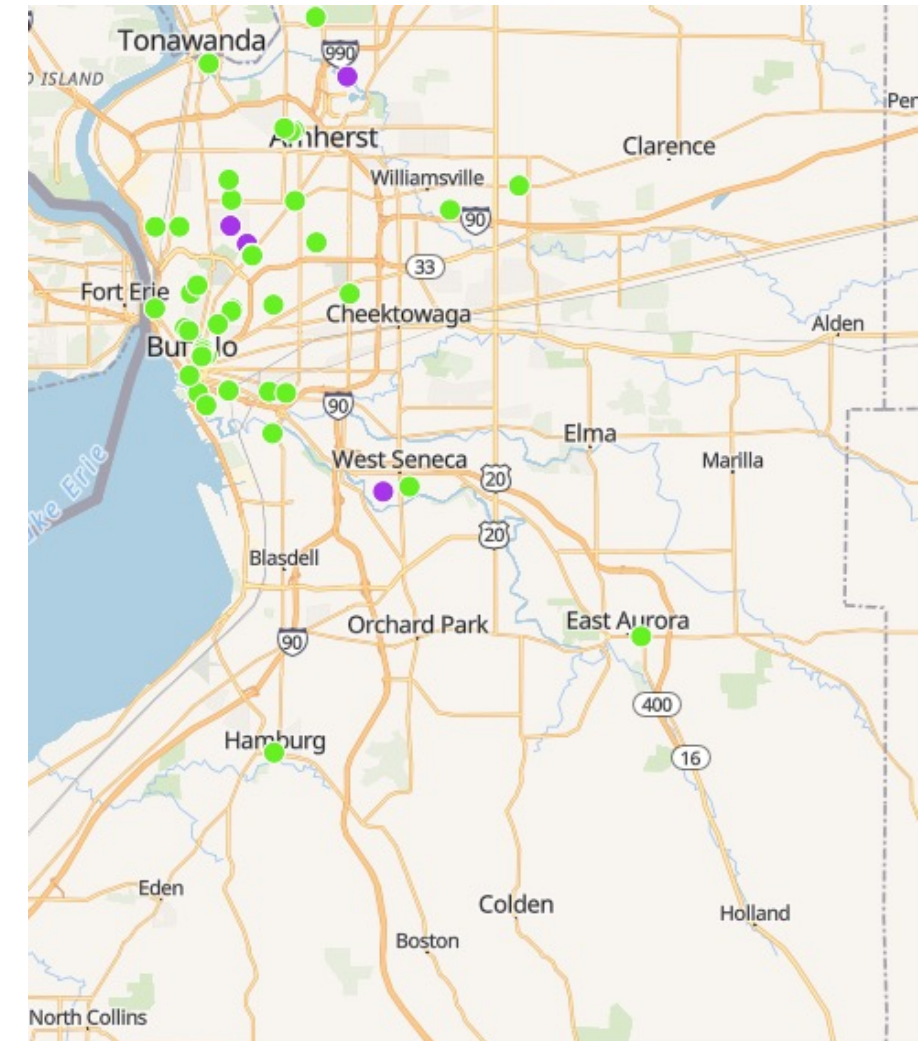
- There are 60 Film & Media assets included in the inventory.
- There's been growth in the film industry for production, including studios like Buffalo Filmworks, which is the largest motion picture film studio in Upstate New York, as well as festivals and service organizations.

Recording studios are captured in Music.

Film & Media Breakdown by Sector



Film & Media Assets

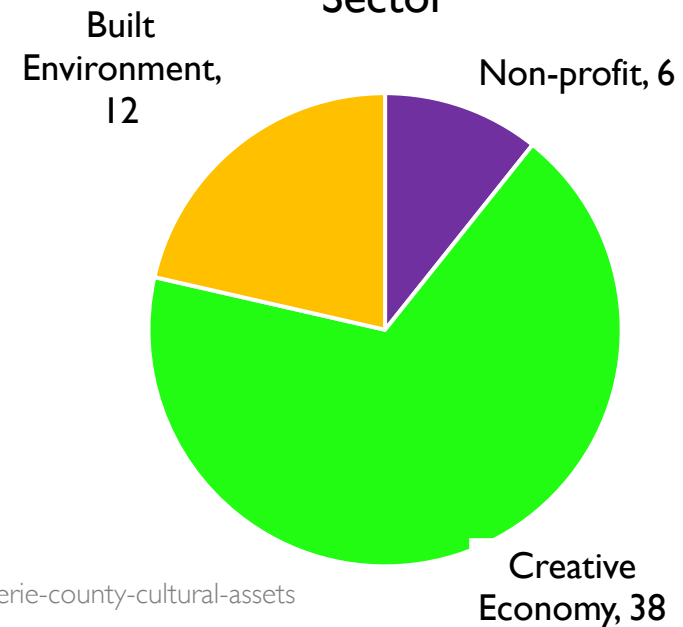


Erie County Asset Map

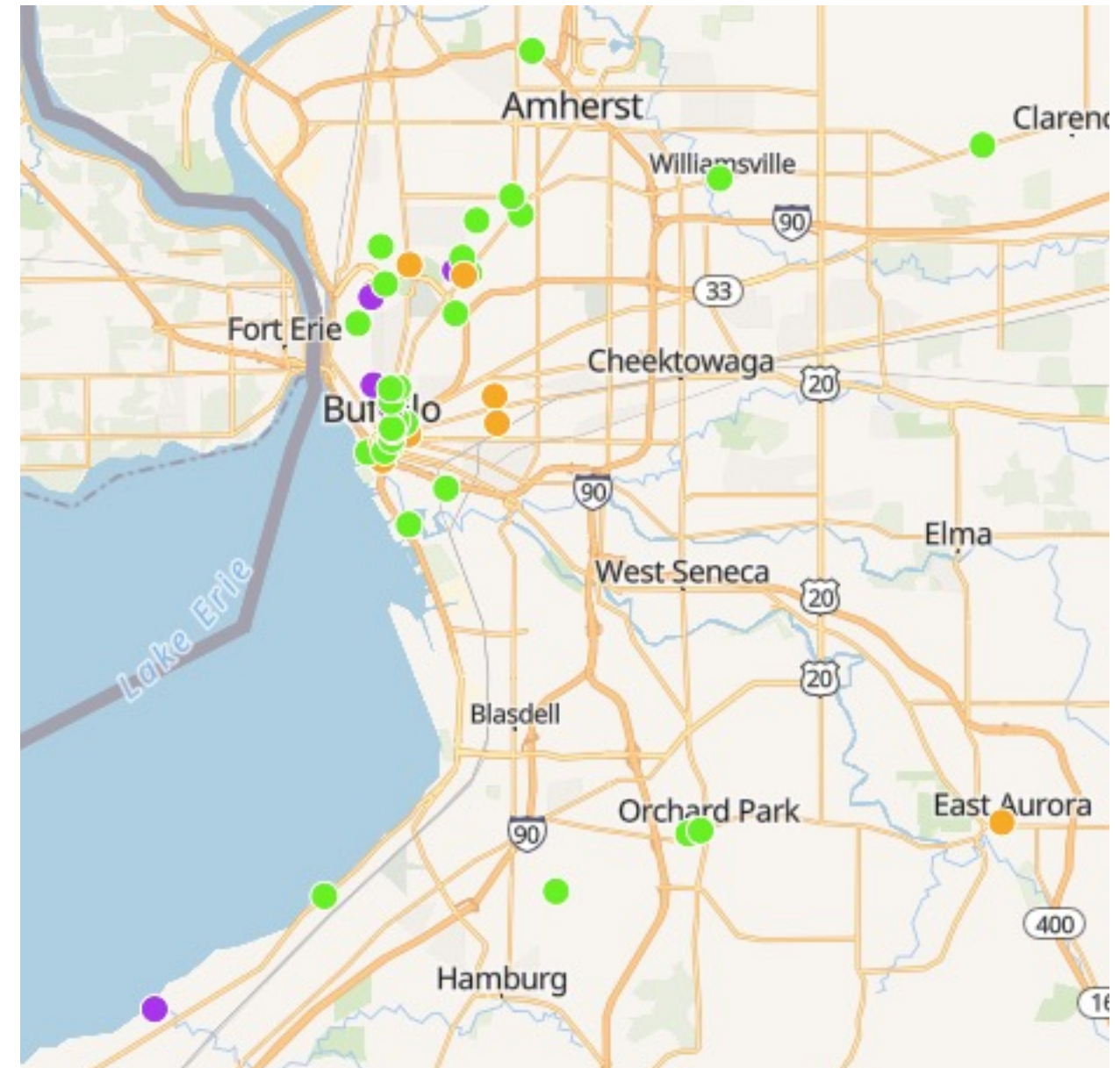
Discipline: Architecture & Design

- There are 55 Architecture & Design assets.
- Frank Lloyd Wright sites, including The Darwin Martin House and Graycliff are particularly significant drivers of tourism and national attention. The Roycroft is also a tourism driver.
- The Richardson Olmstead Campus is poised to become a more significant architectural asset as it continues to be developed and includes the Lipsey Architecture Center. The Central Terminal is another key adaptive reuse project.
- Though the Buffalo AKG Museum of Art is represented in Visual Arts, it is also an architecturally significant site.

Architecture & Design Breakdown by Sector



Architecture & Design Assets

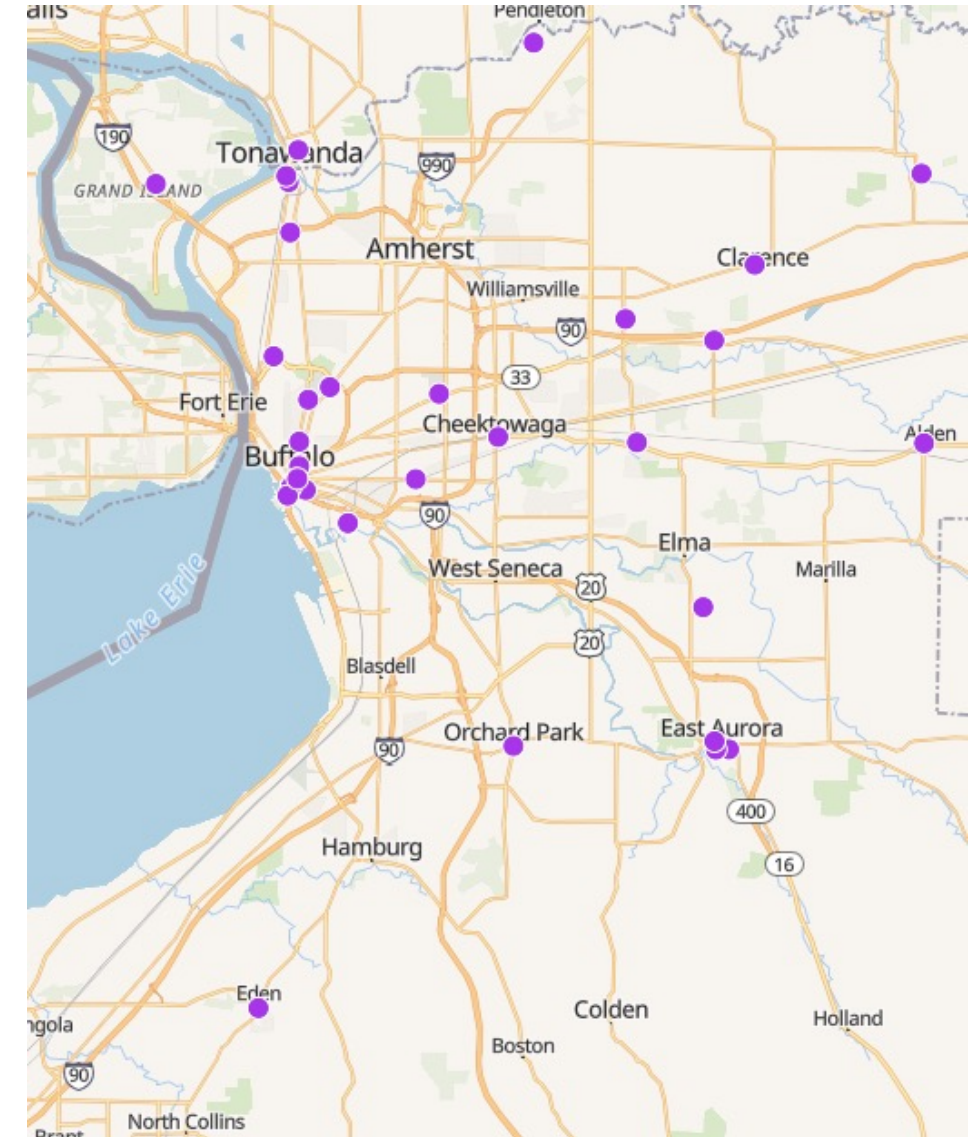


Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: History

- There are 38 History assets included in the inventory.
- All organizations are non-profits.
- These organizations are distributed across Erie County, suggesting that they are / could be rural cultural hubs.
- Many historical sites are also funded by their respective municipalities.

History Assets

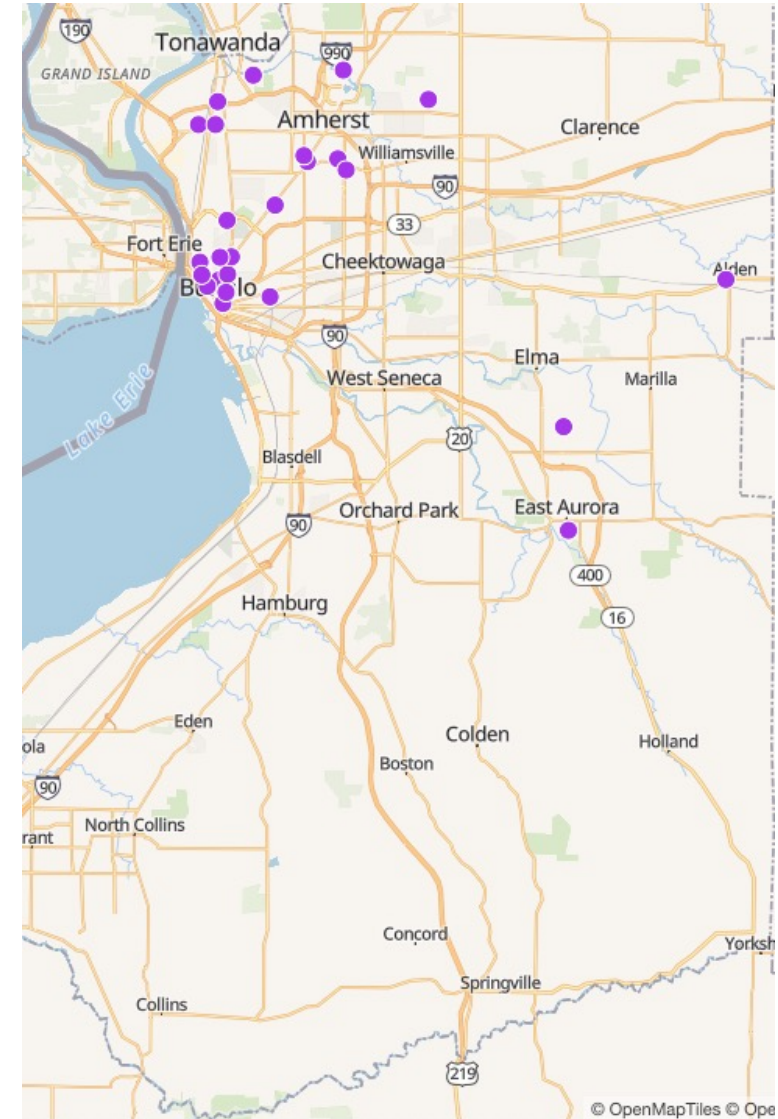


Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: Theatre

- 31 Theatre Assets were inventoried.
- All Theatre assets inventoried are a non-profit, except for 1 comedy club, which is a Creative Economy business.

Theatre Assets



Market Assessment: Cultural Assets

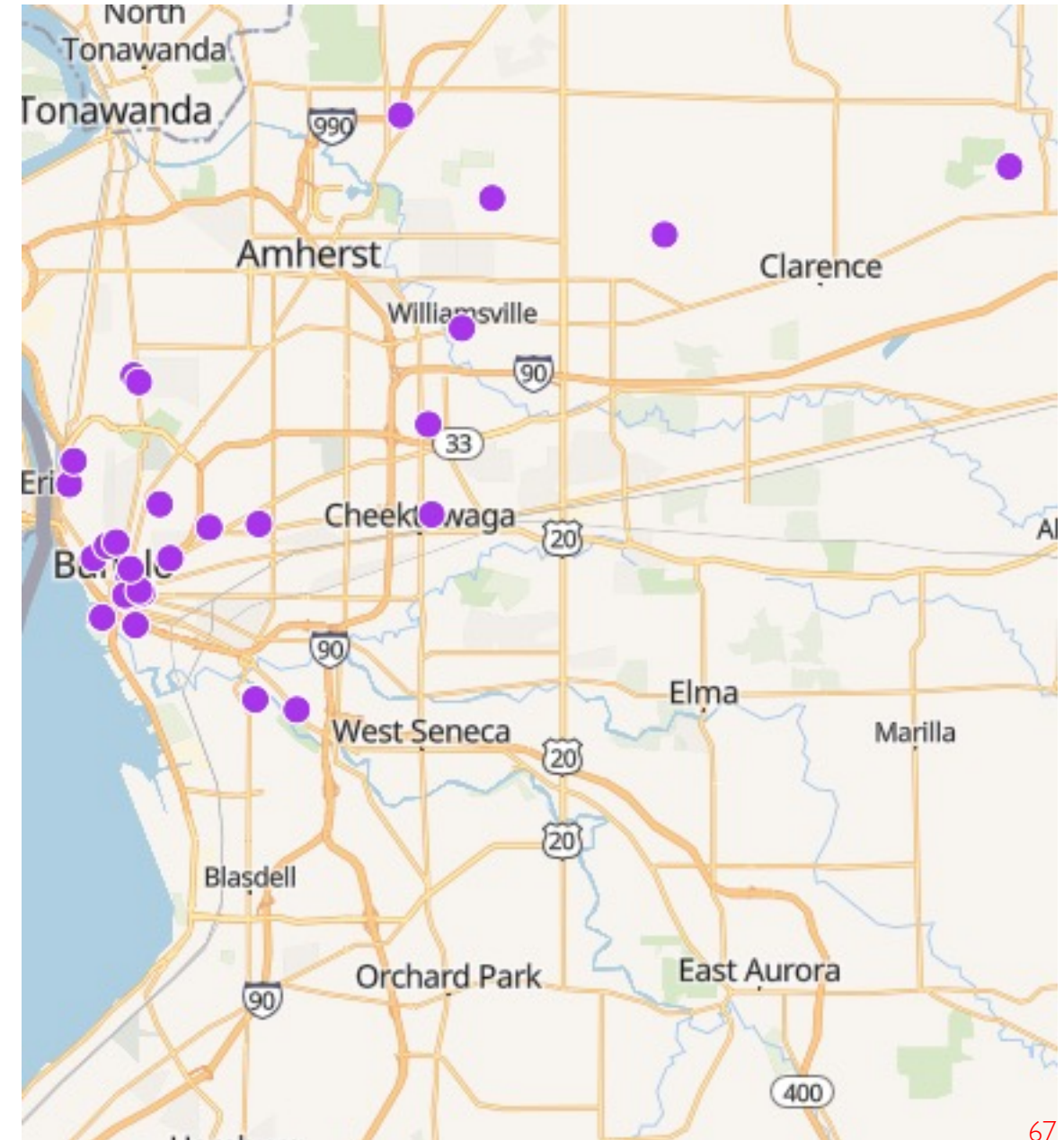
Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: Cultural Heritage

- There are 29 Cultural Heritage organizations, all of which are non-profits.
- Historically, these organizations have been associated with various white immigrant groups (Italian, Polish, Irish) and the cultural organizations, clubs, and festivals they founded. Increasingly, they're associated with more recent immigrant groups and/or BIPOC organizations that have equity-driven missions grounded in culture.
- The Michigan Street Heritage Corridor and Hispanic Heritage Center of WNY are two significant developments that are currently underway.

Discipline-specific Cultural Heritage organizations are captured in disciplines (ex. Devi Bollywood is in Dance).

Cultural Heritage Assets



Erie County Asset Map

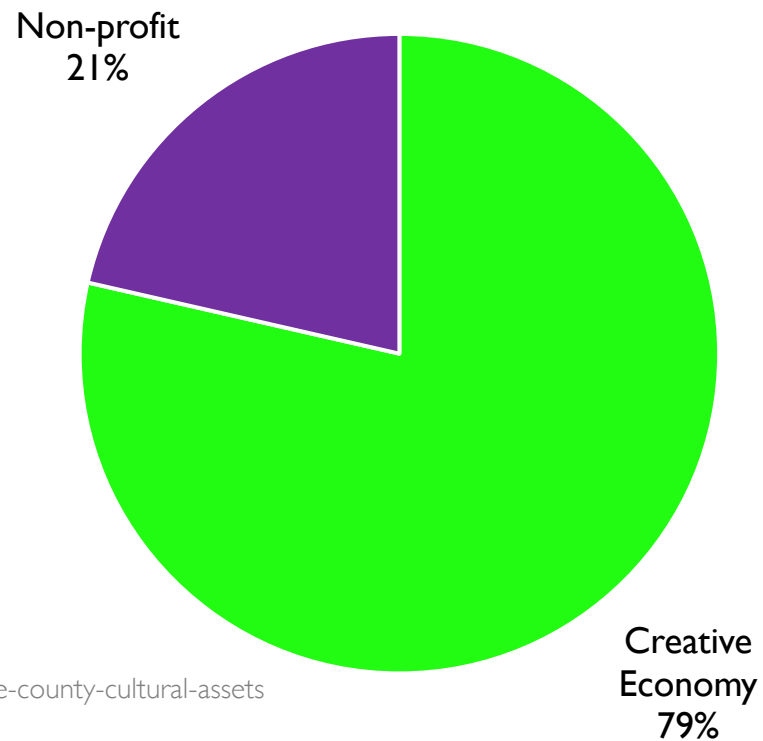
Discipline: Live Music & Performing Arts Venue Assets

Live Music Venues and Performing Arts Centers were inventoried in two separate categories.

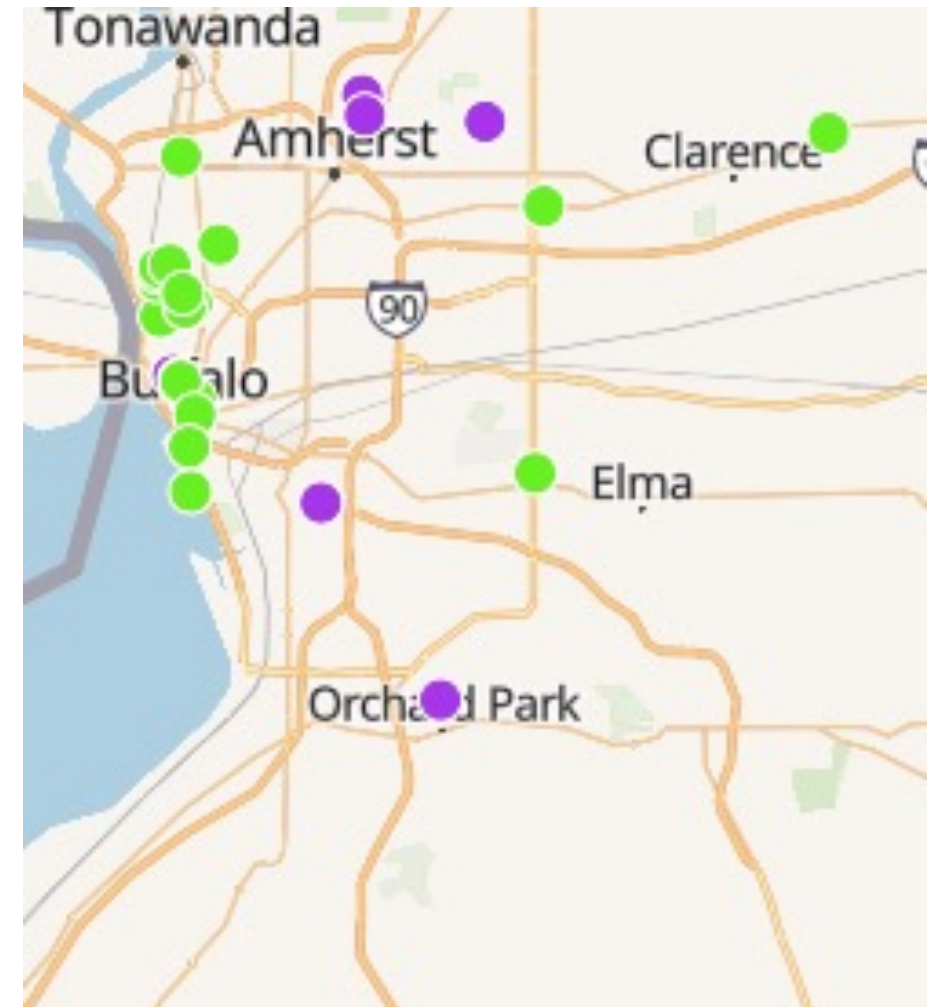
- There are 28 live music venues (28) and performing arts centers (5)

Organizations that host live music, but that have other arts programming (ex. West Falls Center for the Arts, Springville Arts Center) are in the Hub category. Parks where performances happen are captured in the Built Environment category. Free concert series are captured in the Music category.

Live Music & Performing Arts Venues



Live Music & Performing Arts Venue Assets

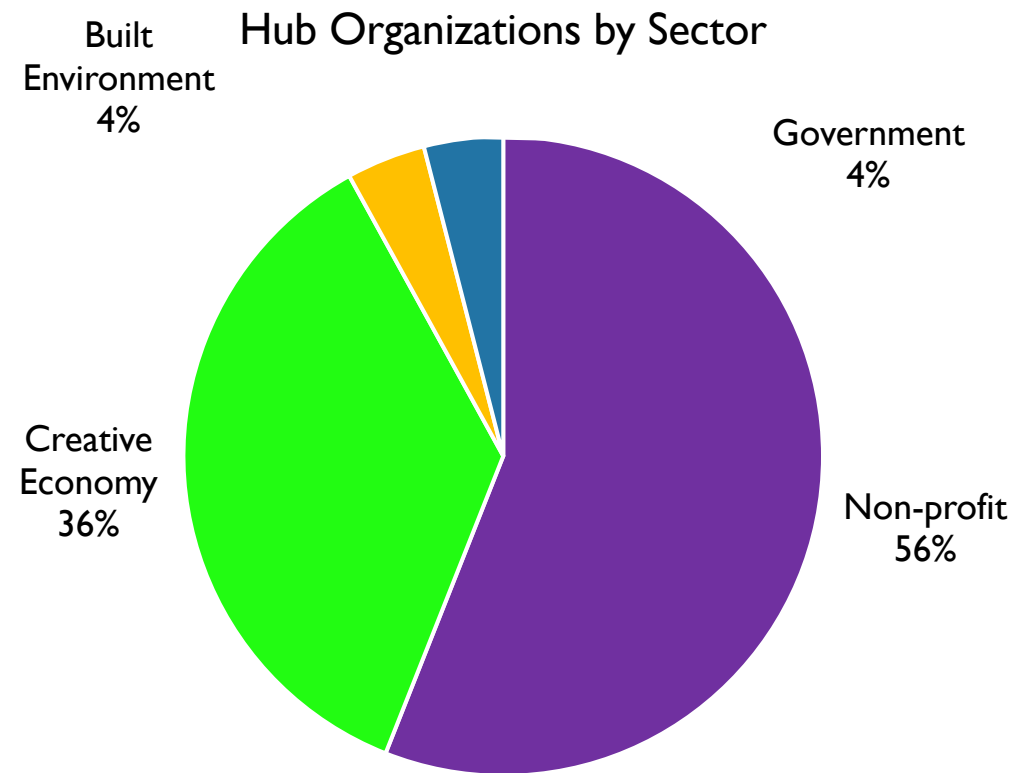


Erie County Asset Map

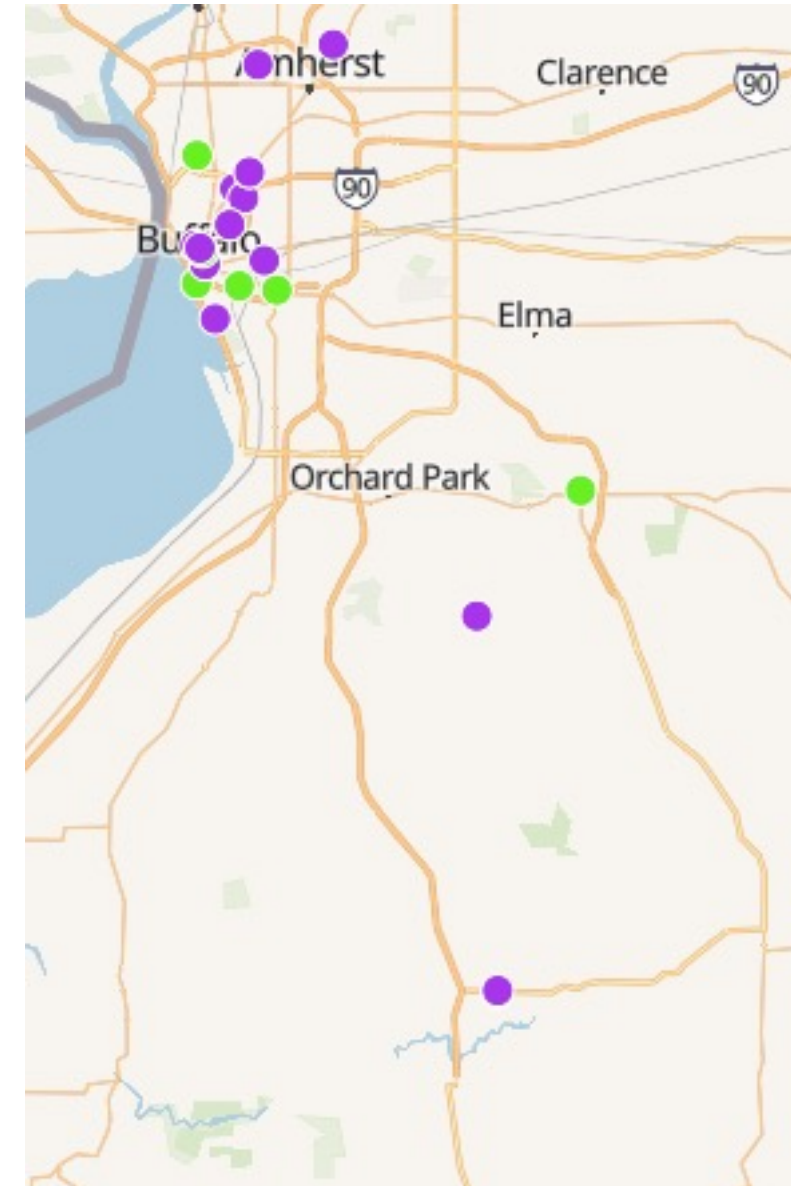
Discipline: “Hub”

This category aims to capture multidisciplinary organizations that serve as sites of convergence. “Hub” organizations may exist in other categories, but we’ve tried to capture those that may not fit in others and/or serve in convening roles in various parts of the ecosystem.

- There are 24 Hub organizations identified in the inventory.



“Hub” Assets



Erie County Asset Map

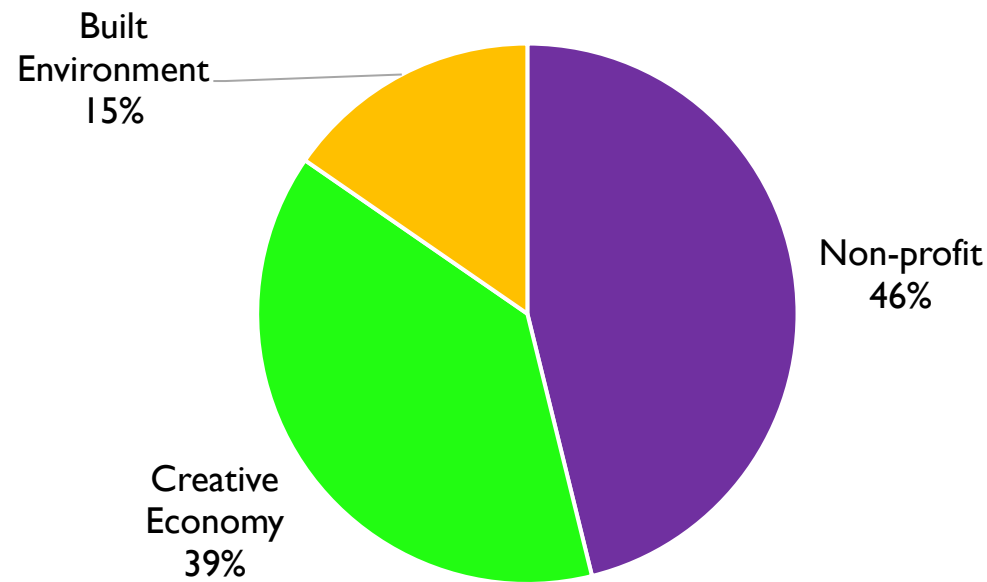
Discipline: Literature

With a history of literary communities that have formed around the University at Buffalo, Erie County has a vibrant literary culture for its size, including one of the country's top literary centers, literary legacies, and literary scenes.

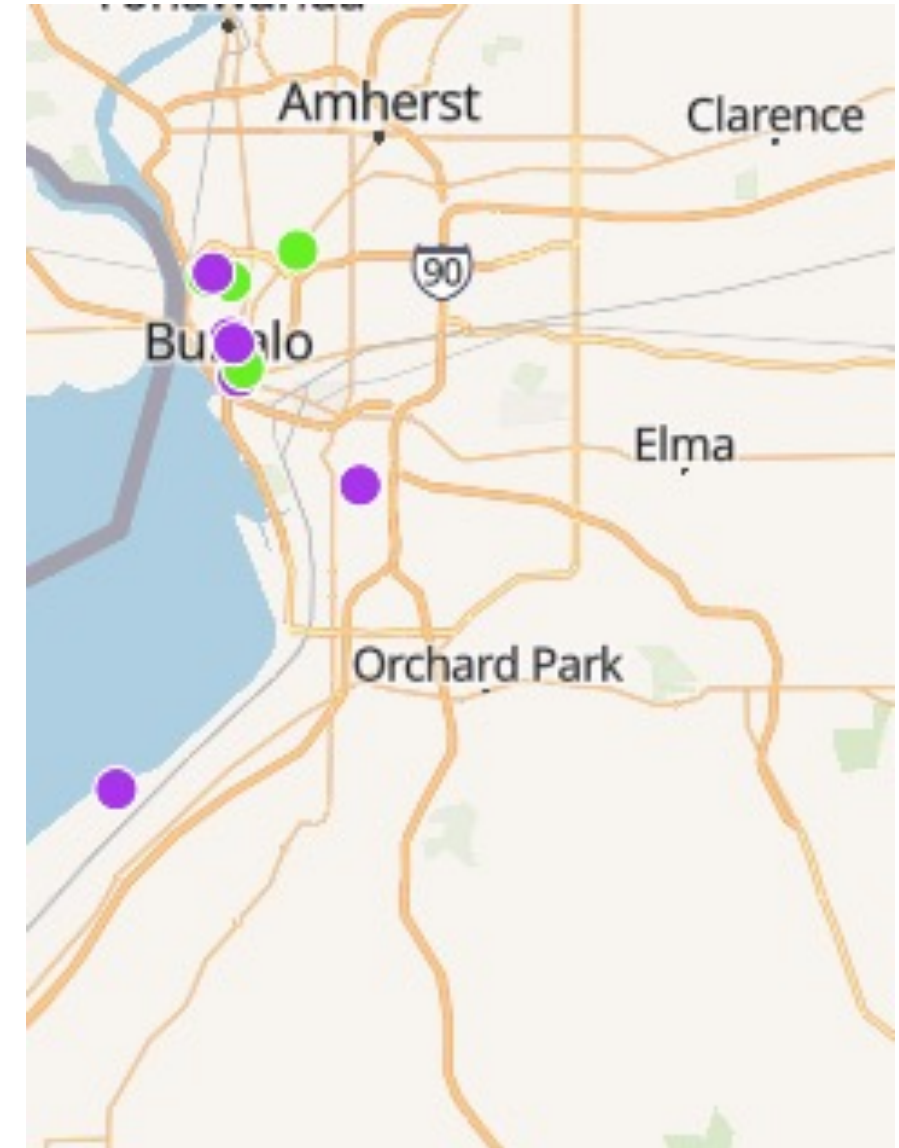
- There are 13 literature assets identified in the inventory.
- Few literature assets are located in rural communities.

Libraries are identified in the Hub and Arts Engagement categories.

Literature Organizations by Sector



Literature Assets

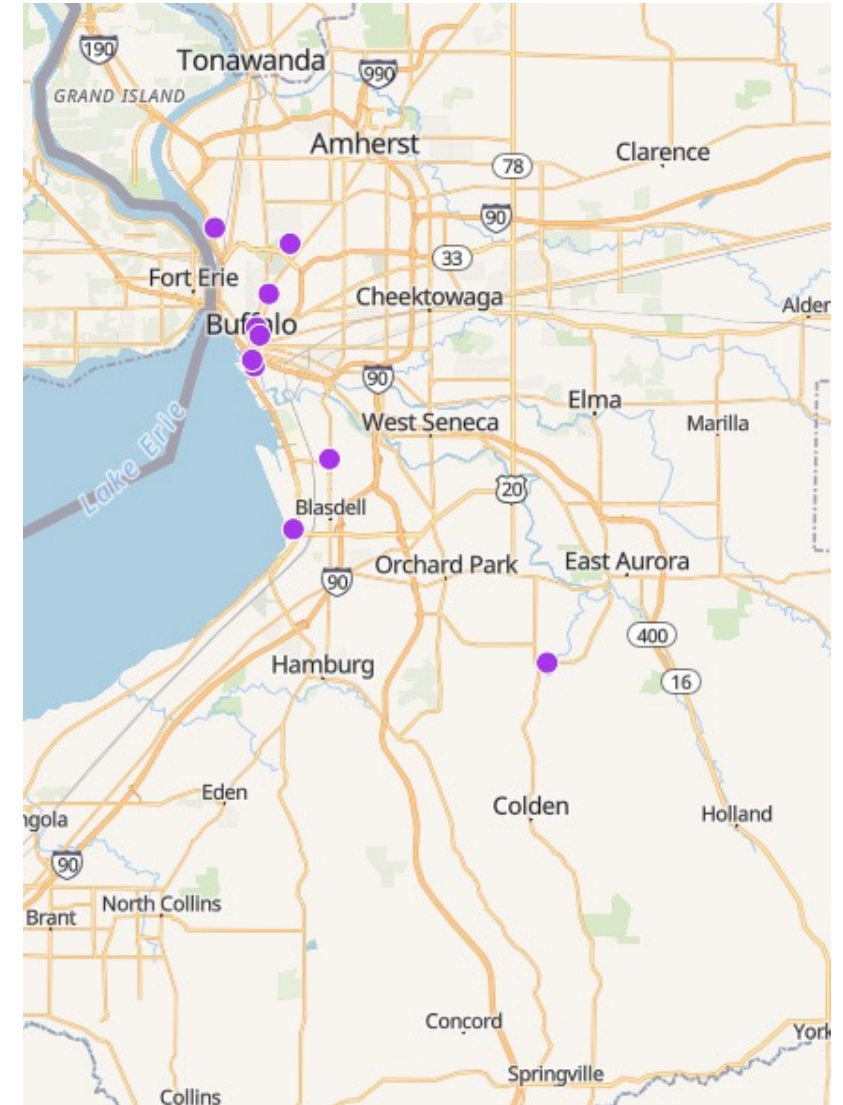


Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: Natural History & Science

There are 10 Natural History & Science assets, all of which are nonprofits.

Natural History & Science Assets



Market Assessment: Cultural Assets

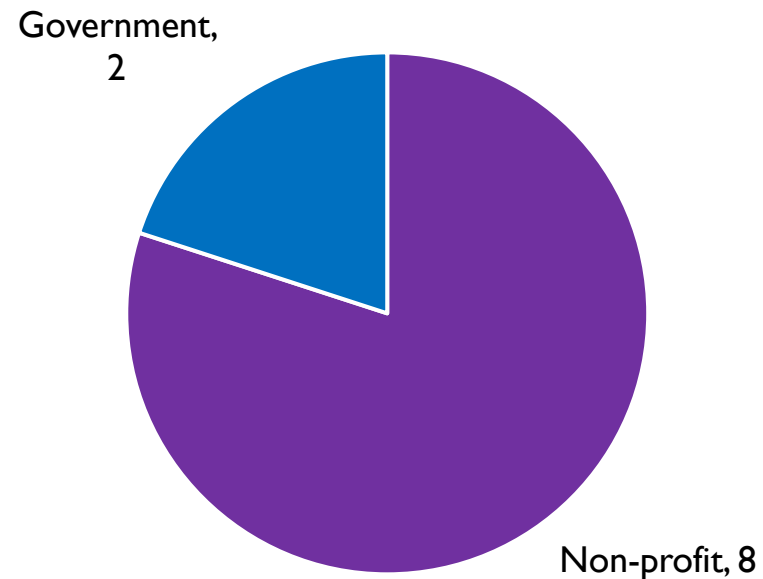
Erie County Asset Map

Discipline: Arts Engagement

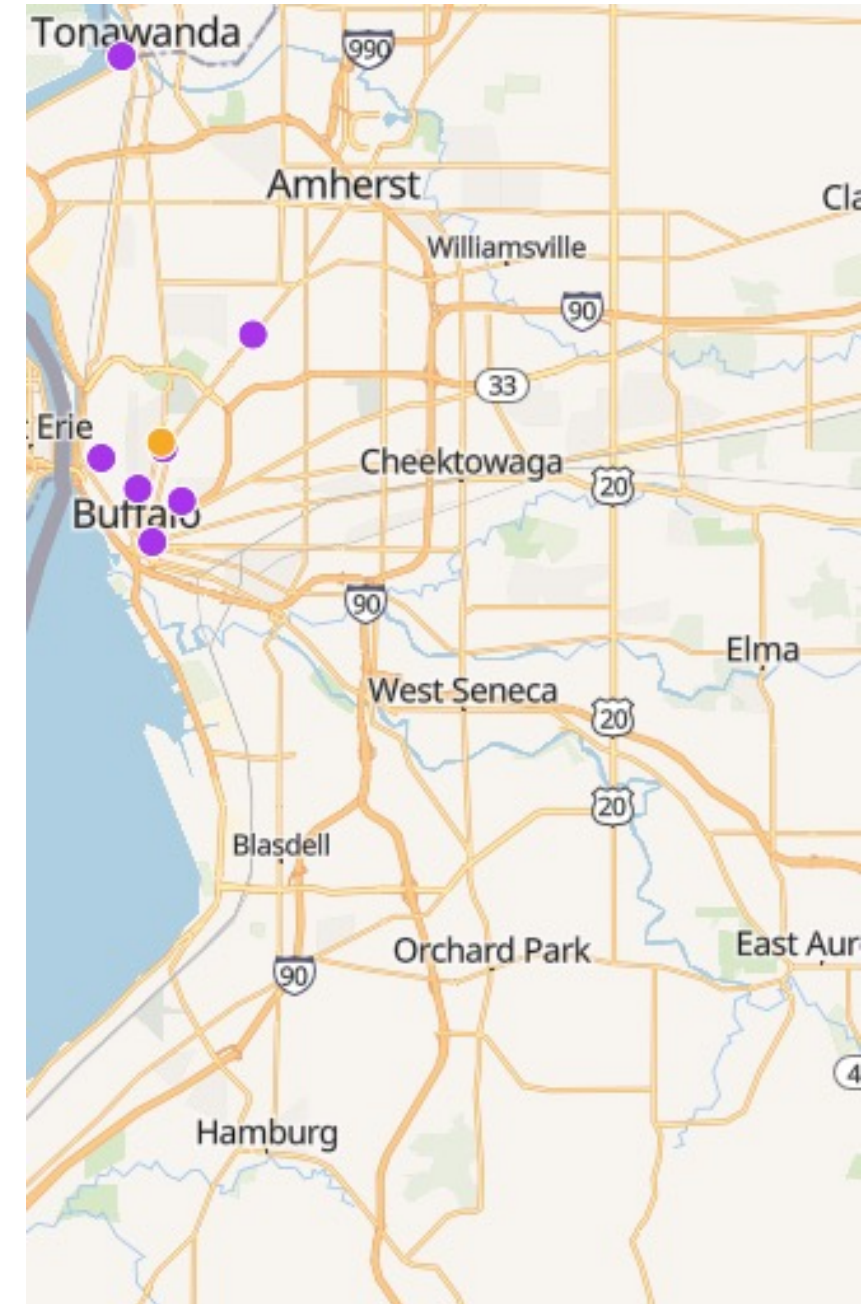
Arts Engagement organizations primarily focus on teaching and other programming that brings non-expert audiences, including youth, into contact with art-making and education experiences across disciplines classes and/or use the arts to address other societal issues. *Note that many organizations in other disciplinary categories undertake arts engagement activities.*

- There are 11 Arts Engagement assets.

Arts Engagement Breakdown by Sector



Arts Engagement Assets

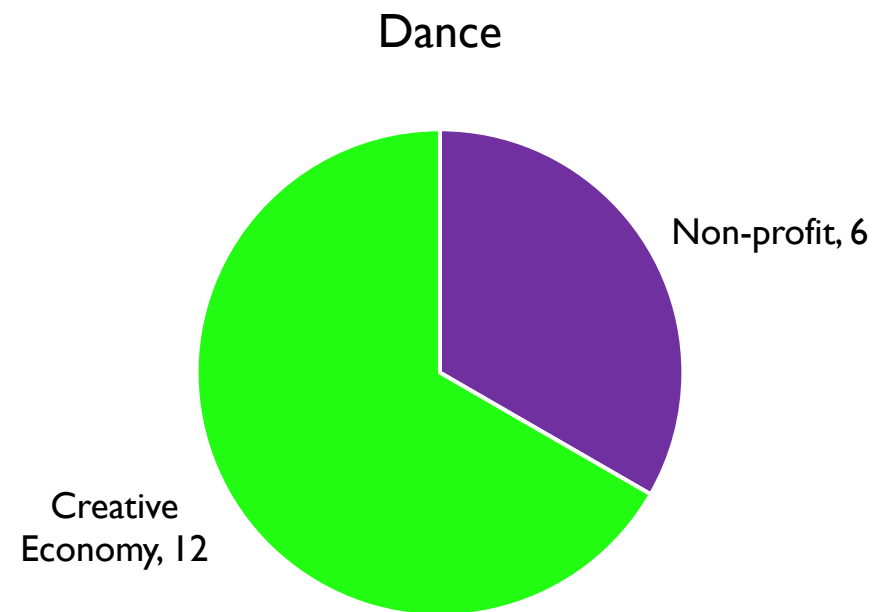


Erie County Asset Map

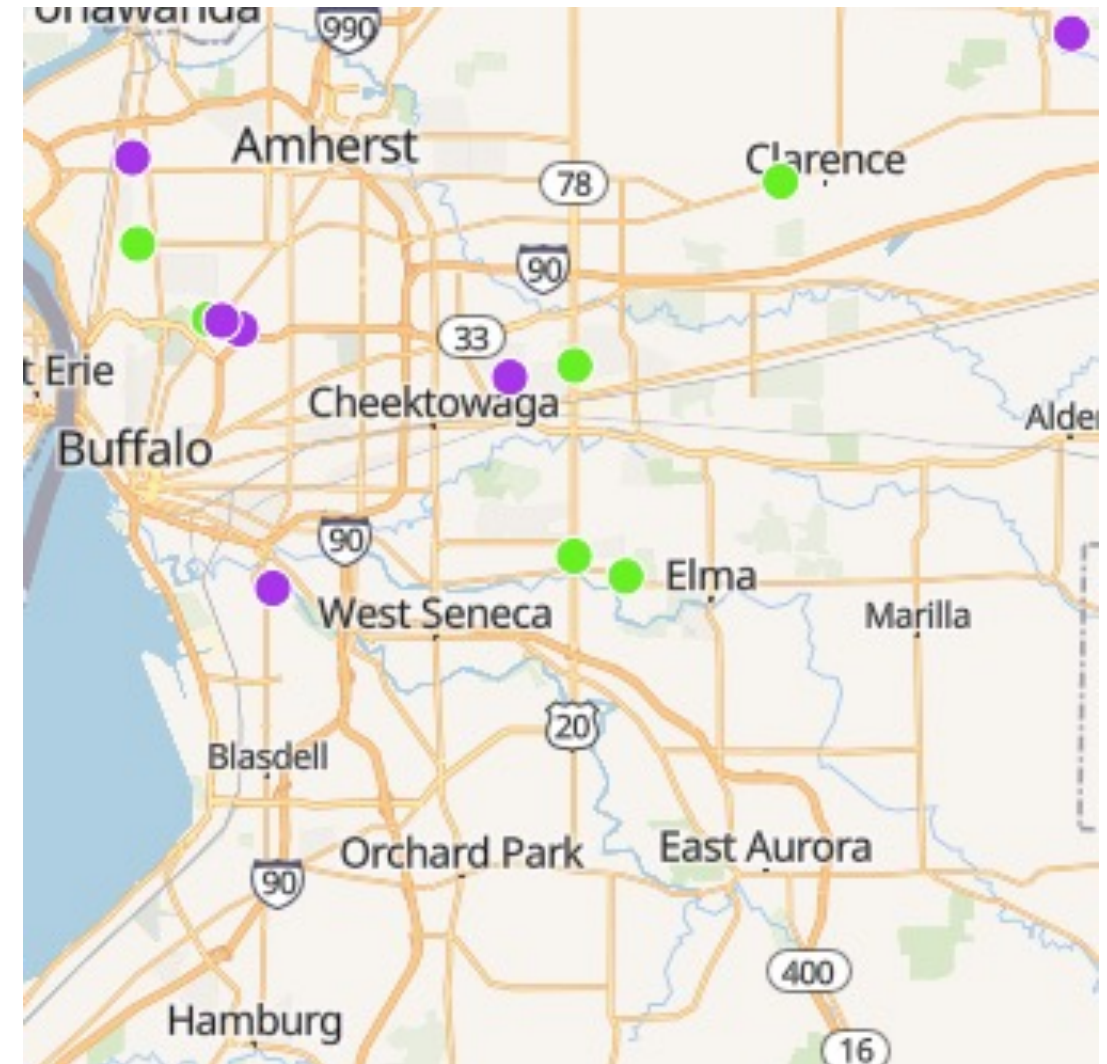
Discipline: Dance

Arts Engagement organizations primarily focus on teaching and other programming that brings non-expert audiences, including youth, into contact with art-making and education experiences across disciplines classes and/or use the arts to address other societal issues. *Note that many organizations in other disciplinary categories undertake arts engagement activities.*

- There are 18 Dance Assets.
- 12 are for-profit dance studios and 6 are non-profits.



Dance Assets



Erie County Asset Map

Disciplines with Fewer than 15 Assets

Of the 19 disciplines represented in the inventory, 5 have fewer than 10 assets. In some cases, community engagement can supplement currently inventoried assets. However, some may simply be smaller fields.

Fashion

Buffalo Fashion Runway and New Era Caps were the only fashion asset identified in the creative economy sector.

Buffalo Fashion Runway is an initiative supported by BootSector, a local non-profit that supports start-ups and entrepreneurs. It is collaborative with others in the arts sector. In September 2023, it held the sold-out runway show, “A Confluence of the Arts.” In February 2024, it held its “Black Carpet” Event and a pre-event at the Buffalo AKG Museum of Art.

Festivals

3 assets were categorized as Festivals because they were not discipline specific. All are non-profits. In rural areas, festivals and carnivals are more pronounced cultural sites.

Discipline-specific Festivals are captured in disciplines (ex. Porchfest is in Music).

Retail

2 Creative Economy retail businesses were identified.

Bookstores were included in Literature.



Other Inventoried Organizations

Some assets were not included on the Asset Map because they are not associated with a physical location with a public address. They are captured on the asset inventory spreadsheet.

Film & Media

- 22Reform
- Big Buffalo Films
- Blue Dot Media
- Bruckman Media LLC
- Genx Ent LLC
- Green Stamp Imaging, LLC

Hubs

- CYOA Buffalo
- Frontline Arts
- Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance

Cultural Heritage

- Afro-American Historical Association of the Niagara Frontier, Inc.
- General Pulaski Association

Music

- Griselda Records
- Ars Nova Chamber Orchestra Buffalo
- Quiet Country Audio / QC Audio (Lancaster, NY)

Fashion

- Buffalo Fashion Runway

Live Music Venues

- The Lavender Room



Additional Assets That Support Culture

Libraries, Parks, Public Art & Adjacent Cultural Facilities

While the Asset Map inventoried cultural assets including libraries, parks, and public art, there are additional libraries, parks, works of public art, and other facilities that support culture. They were not all included to retain focus on identifying assets, however, full lists are included here for reference. The inventory only included Erie County, but the Cultural Plan will include strategies to connect with other cultural initiatives and audiences in the region.

- [Buffalo Public Library System Branch List](#)
- [Buffalo AKG Art Museum Public Art Initiative Map](#)
- [Springville Public Art Map](#)
- [Erie County Public Parks / Forest Locator](#)
- [The Olmstead Park and Parkway System Map](#)
- [Seneca Nation Cattaraugus Community Center](#) – The Seneca National Community Center, among other arts and cultural initiatives of the Seneca Nation are not included on the map because they are not located in Erie County. However, artists in Erie County participate in cultural programming at the Seneca Nation Community Center, and the Seneca Nation should be considered in the Cultural Plan’s strategy to connect to the region.



7 Market Assessment

- Resource Inventory



Resources

Erie County Cultural Funding: Governance & Staffing

The Erie County Cultural Funding program was established in 1977 by County Executive Regan; today, it is part of the Department of Environment and Planning (DEP), with a primary role as a funder of non-profit cultural organizations in Erie County. The Funding Program primarily provides annual General Operating Support to arts and cultural non-profits, but does also allocate funding to capital projects. Its stated goals for funding are to:

1. *To advise Erie County Government regarding the role of the County's cultural agencies and their significance to its citizens, economy, and quality of life.*
2. *To provide and advocate for equitable and effective processes and procedures for the distribution of County funds to cultural organizations.*
3. *To foster the development and growth of vibrant, diverse, quality cultural agencies.*
4. *To promote access to these cultural organizations to all County citizens and visitors regardless of their physical ability, economic group, or geographic location.*
5. *To promote diversity in the cultural fabric of the Erie County community by encouraging representation of all diverse groups in the make-up and activities of these cultural organizations. This includes Board members, staff, volunteers, and programming.*
6. *To require fiscal responsibility including a diversified funding base for all cultural organizations.*

In addition to funding it also:

- Collects and analyzes data on County funded organizations.
- Hosts a listing / calendar of funded organizations on its website.
- Shares resources on its website (*largely populated by Arts Services Inc.*).
- Coordinates with tourism and cultural heritage organizations to enhance tourism through culture in Erie County.

Staffing

The Department is led by the Deputy Commissioner of Planning and Economic Development; Thomas Baines serves as Deputy Commissioner in 2024. The Cultural Funding program is administered by the Senior Planner (Mariely Ortiz) with additional guidance by the Chief Planner (Mark Rountree) and support from the Assistant Planner (Briana Zuchowski)

Erie County Arts & Cultural Advisory Board (EACAB)

Funding decisions are made by the EACAB, a volunteer board made up of 15 Erie County residents representing a variety of backgrounds and areas in the County. They serve a maximum of 2 3-year terms consecutively, but can wait 2 years to be eligible for a reappointment.



Resources

Erie County Cultural Funding: Process

The Erie County Cultural Funding Program adheres to the following process for distributing funding:

1. The DEP and EACAB announce the funding cycle in the beginning of the calendar year. Grants are made for the following year, usually in February.
2. County hosts applicant briefings.
3. Organizations submit applications (usually in April); DEP staff ensures they are complete.
4. DEP and EACAB distribute applications to reviewers.
5. Reviewers meet as subcommittees to discuss and assess applications; they offer feedback to all applicants, which are sent after funding recommendations are made.
6. DEP collates all reviews and assigns percentage of funding increase based on review results. Increases are based on the County's maximum total increase percentage for all grants as a whole (provided by County Budget Office).
7. Recommendations are added to the Department's budget request, which is sent to the County Executive and Budget Offices.
8. County Executive reviews recommendations and ensures that they align with expected available funds. County Executive's "Proposed Budget" is published in October.
9. Legislature reviews Proposed Budget; holds Budget Hearings, and revises budget in November. Changed budget is approved and becomes Adopted Budget.



Resources

Erie County Cultural Funding: Eligibility & Funding Levels

- Nonprofit 501(c)3 organizations that are located and providing services in Erie County that can provide 1 year of tax filing documents are eligible to apply.
- Erie County states that organizations must fulfill one of the following in their mission:
 - *An organization that operates on a countywide or recognizable community level, which by the nature of its cultural activities and/or collections, is unique, distinctive and of significant quality*
 - *An organization that provides visitors with access to programs and displays of the performing, visual, literary and media arts, and/or to exhibits and collections, which preserve and interpret our cultural, natural and scientific heritage*
 - *An organization that particularly serves the cultural needs of significant segments of the County population, thereby contributing to the quality of life in Buffalo and Erie County.*

With the caveat that: Organizations such as social and/or multi-service, educational, athletic, after-school, or religious organizations for which cultural activity is not a primary purpose are not eligible.

- Applicants apply in 1 of 3 tiers, which are determined by budget size. Non-profits can submit 1 application and may request no more than 20% of their previous fiscal year's operating expenses.
 - Level 1 applications may request up to \$50,000;
 - Level 2 applications may request more than \$50,000 and up to \$200,000;
 - Level 3 applications are for requests of over \$200,000.

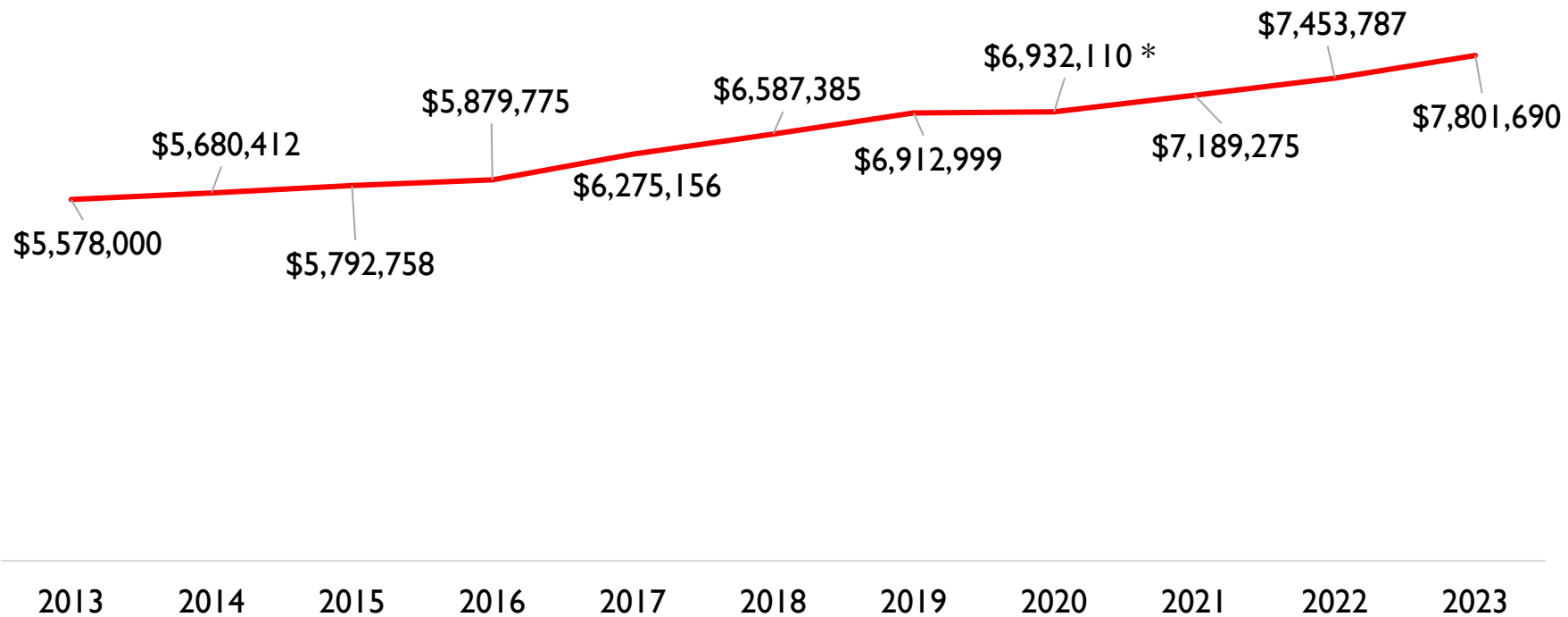


Resources

Erie County Funding Overview – Amount Awarded

In 2023, Erie County’s Adjusted Budget for Cultural Funding was \$7,801,690. In the past decade, Erie County funding has increased by 40%. When adjusted for inflation, it has increased by 7%.

Funding Distributed by Erie County to Cultural Organizations (2013-2023)



* Does not include one-time \$5 million allocation to Buffalo AKG Art Museum .

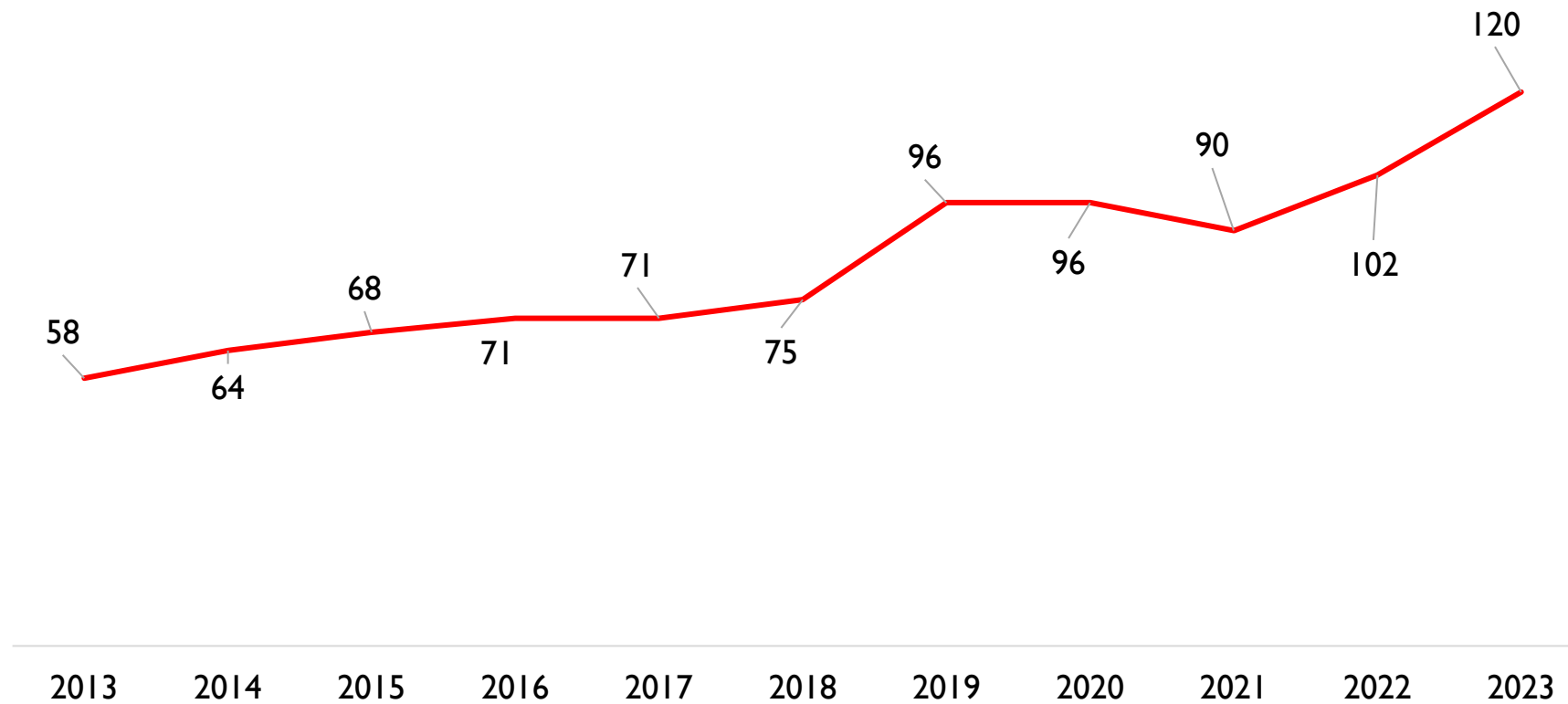


Resources

Erie County Funding Overview – Number of Organizations Funded Annually

In 2023, Erie County distributed \$7,801,690 in funding to 120 groups. In the past decade, the number of organizations Erie County funds has increased by 106%.

Number of Organizations Funded (2013-2023)



Source: Erie County Budgets, 2013-2024. All budget figures are Erie County reported Actuals, except for 2023, which is Erie County's Adjusted Budget for Cultural Funding, published in 2024. Allocations do not include Capital Awards.

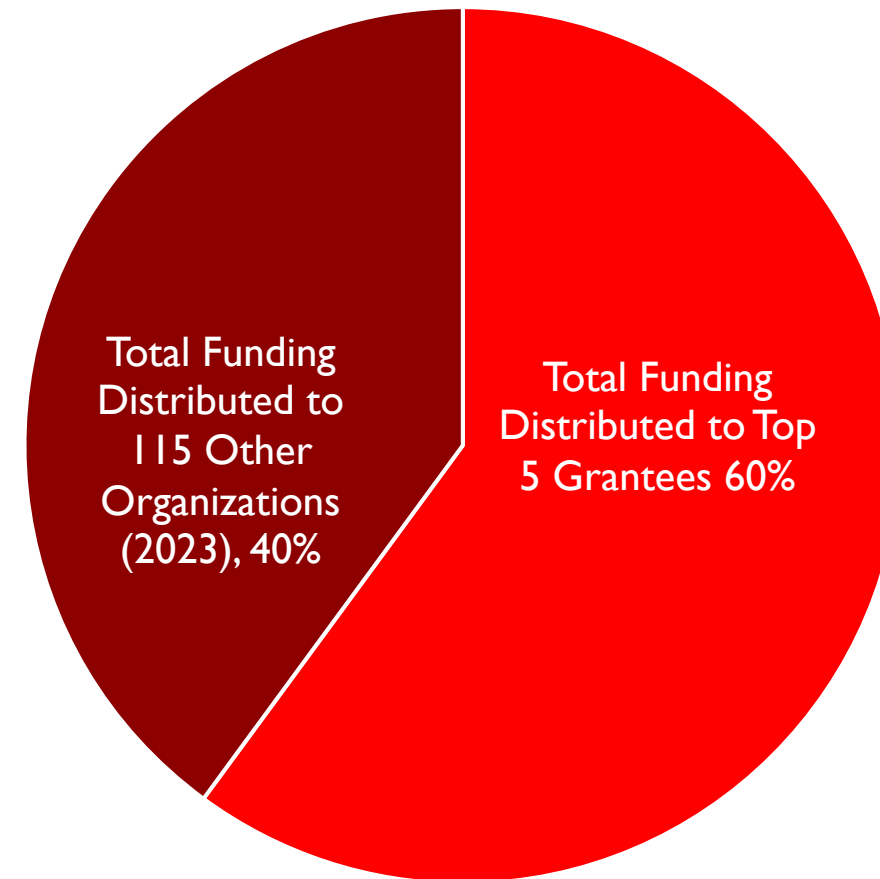
Resources

Erie County Funding Overview – Top 5 Funded Organizations

In 2023, Erie County funding to 5 organizations represented 60% of total cultural funding awarded, a 7% increase from 2013. The composition of this group has remained constant in the past decade since 2013. In 2023, The Buffalo Zoo’s funding allocation was 23% of total funding awarded.

Organization	Erie County Funding (2023)
The Buffalo Zoo	\$1,700,000
Buffalo Museum of Science	\$955,000
Buffalo Philharmonic Orchestra	\$940,000
Buffalo AKG Art Museum	\$675,000
The Buffalo History Museum	\$417,000
Total	\$4,687,000

Erie County Cultural Funding Distribution (2023)



Resources

Erie County Facilities & Major Capital Investments

Publicly Owned Facilities & Major Capital Investments

- **Kleinhan's Music Hall** - City owned; \$650,000 capital investment by Erie County
- **Shea's Theatre** - City owned; \$750,000 capital investment by Erie County
- **The Buffalo History Museum** - City owned; \$650,000 capital investment by Erie County
- **Buffalo Museum of Science** - City owned; \$500,000 capital investment by Erie County in science facility and \$1.1 million in Tift Nature Preserve
- **Buffalo Botanical Gardens** – County owned land and structure. Botanical Gardens is responsible for the interior maintenance and operation and minor capital improvements/maintenance, grounds. County is providing capital funds for expansion.

Major investments in Non-County Facilities

- **Buffalo AKG Art Museum** - \$5 million for expansion
- **Roycroft Campus**- approximately \$1 million over several years
- **Theodore Roosevelt Inaugural National Historic Site** - \$150,000
- **Darwin Martin House** - \$1 million plus over multiple years
- **Buffalo Zoo** - \$2 million
- **Explore and More Children's Museum** - \$150,000
- **Hispanic Heritage Cultural Institute** - \$500,000
- **Buffalo & Erie County Naval & Military Park** - \$1 million over multiple years

Select Non-Cultural County Facilities

- **Highmark Stadium** - County owns the stadium and stadium land until 2026.
- **Buffalo Niagara Convention Center** - County facility on County land. County pays for annual capital improvements, operation is funded through the bed tax and County annual budget funding.



Resources

Major Funding Sources and Partnerships to Support Culture (Public)

Sales Tax

Erie County's cultural budget is funded by the general County budget, the primary source of which is sales tax. In 2022, Erie County projected \$987M in sales tax. It will retain \$545M and share \$441M with cities, towns, villages, school districts and Niagara Frontier Transportation Authority.

Hotel Occupancy Tax (tourism)

Erie County has a 3% Hotel Occupancy Tax ("bed tax"). Total revenue for 2024 is expected to be \$11.4 million. It allocates ~\$3M of the tax to Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN) annually. As of December 2023, short term renters of vacation homes are also required to pay the tax. While the tax is not dedicated to Erie County's Cultural Funding Program, VBN bolsters the efforts of many cultural organizations.

Percent for Art

In July 2023, the Public Art Act of Erie County was signed into law, which will allocate 1% of building costs of Erie County capital projects to acquire and maintain public art at the site (up to \$10,000). The fund will be used to implement projects in the Master Public Art Plan and/or those selected by the Arts in Public Places Committee.

New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA)

NYSCA provides significant funding to arts organizations and artists in Erie County (and throughout NY state). In 2024 NYSCA made 88 grants in all program categories for Erie County, totaling \$3,584,500. Arts Services Inc. is its regranteeing agency for Erie County & western NY. In 2023 and 2024 funding through ASI for individual artists and community regrantees totaled roughly \$1.2M per year, which included new \$1M allocation secured through statewide advocacy to support artists (a Senate Initiative Grant).



Resources

Major Funding Sources and Partnerships to Support Culture (Public)

Municipal Funding

Municipalities in Erie County also fund cultural activities, notably arts engagement activities in libraries and free concerts in parks.

City of Buffalo

While the City of Buffalo committed \$400,000 to arts and anti-violence organizations in its 2023-2024 budget, for several years, the distribution of funding has stalled. The City's lack of meaningful participation in the cultural sector is notable and a challenge for Erie County's larger cultural ecosystem.

Federal Funding

Arts organizations in Erie County are also eligible for federal funding, including from the National Endowment for the Arts and National Endowment for the Humanities, among other sources.

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Resources

Major Private Arts Funders in Erie County

Private funders play a role in resourcing the sector. In some cases, investments can shape directions of the sector and help to seed new initiatives. Key developments in the Erie County’s philanthropic community include some shifts to concentrate funding in racial equity initiatives and commitments to ongoing, significant unrestricted annual funding.

Funder	Total Grantmaking (2022)
M&T Charitable Foundation	\$41.2M
Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo (includes the Wilson Foundation)	\$41.0M
John R. Oishei Foundation	\$12.0M
Cullen Foundation	\$9.2M
Tower Family Fund	\$6.6M
Wendt Foundation	\$4.8M
Cameron & Jane Baird Foundation	\$2.7M
James H. Cummings Foundation	\$2.2M
Rich Family Foundation	\$2.0M
Western New York Foundation	\$1.7M

Family Foundations (may give to the arts)

- Angel Family Foundation
- Zemsky Family Foundation
- The Baird Foundation
- Conable Family Foundation
- Hyde Foundation
- The Fatta Foundation
- Gisel Family Foundation
- Louis P. Ciminelli Family Foundation
- Spaulding Family Foundation
- The Arrison Family Charitable Foundation
- Lippes Family Charitable Foundation



Notable Sector-Wide Programs, Services, and Organizations, and Initiatives in Erie County

Consultations showed a need for a “hub” organization to provide centralized resources, advocacy, promotion, and collaboration opportunities across Erie County’s cultural sector. Several organizations already exist that do aspects of this work.

Fund for the Arts (FFA)

Fund for the Arts is a funders’ cooperative administered by the Community Foundation for Greater Buffalo. Established by the 2005 “Sustaining Arts and Culture in Buffalo Niagara” Plan. Has distributed \$2.6M in funding and established ASI, Inc. and Arts Partners for Learning WNY.

Arts Services Inc. (ASI)

ASI is a regional arts council that makes grants, provides professional development resources artists and organizations, administers an Arts Access program, and is an advocate for the arts. ASI was founded following the 2010 Western New York Arts and Cultural Support Initiative Report for New York State Council on the Arts and the Fund for the Arts.

Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance (GBCA)

GBCA began as an informal meeting of WNY cultural organizations. In 2009 it became an official cultural alliance that advocates for a strong sector. It secured funding for the Cultural Plan.

Frontline Arts

Frontline Arts is a coalition of arts organizations, community members, and artists that formed in 2018 to advocate for sustainable funding for organizations that have been historically marginalized. Key partners are the African American Cultural Center, El Museo, Locust Street Art, and Ujima Company.

CYOA (“Choose Your Own Adventure”)

CYOA Buffalo is a free, volunteer-run weekly newsletter with cultural event listings.

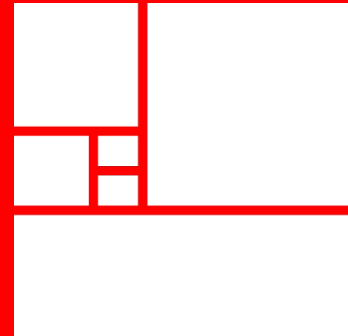
Partnership for the Public Good (PPG)

While not strictly a cultural organization, PPG is a policy, research, and advocacy organization that includes arts and culture in its issues, with a particular focus on Buffalo and Erie County.

Visit Buffalo Niagara (VBN)

Visit Buffalo Niagara is the region’s tourism agency. It promotes arts and cultural organizations and events.





AEA Consulting