

HOME > NEWS > LOCAL

Arts Community Hopes to Put Spotlight on Arlington Art Scene

Cultural arts district status could boost awareness, group says

By Tim Ciesco and NBC 5 News | Monday, Jul 7, 2014 | Updated 8:24 PM CDT



Tim Ciesco, NBC Arlington Reporter

Arlington is known for sports and amusement parks, but the city is hoping to raise it's profile when it comes to culture by creating an arts district.

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Arlington is known worldwide for its stadiums and

theme parks, but when it comes to the city's music, art and theater scene, many people who live there have no clue it exists. Now, the arts community is working to change that.

Whether it's a night out at Levitt Pavilion, a symphony concert at the Arlington Music Hall or a youth summer camp at Theatre Arlington, the arts are very much alive in the American Dream City.

"It is very vibrant," said Norman Ussery, executive director of Theatre Arlington. "The quality of talent here is really amazing."

Ussery says, unfortunately, not everyone sees that.

"People have trouble finding out what's in their own backyard," said Ussery.

He says not only are people unaware of the arts opportunities in Arlington, patrons of one particular organization don't often support the others.

"Right now, a lot of our patrons have no idea that 100 steps down the street is the Arlington Museum of Art" said Ussery. "Designation of Downtown Arlington as a cultural arts district will

...museum of art, said Seery. Designation of Downtown Arlington as a cultural arts district will provide focus.”

For a little more than a year, several arts organizations and the Downtown Arlington Management Corporation have talked about creating a cultural arts district that they could market as a destination.

“I believe strongly that cultural arts sets us apart from other communities,” said Tony Rutigliano, president and CEO of the Downtown Arlington Management Corporation. “It makes us unique.”

The team is now taking the first step towards making that happen by recently applying for cultural arts district status from the Texas Commission on the Arts.

They admit this process won't catapult Arlington's art scene to overnight fame. But given time, they're confident it will help people see Arlington has more to offer than just stadiums and theme parks.

“It's going to give people a better understanding of what is available in Downtown Arlington,” said Rutigliano. “And it's going to help us facilitate the revitalization of Downtown.”

The group will find out this fall if the district will be recognized by the state.

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