



Strategic Plan 2023-2026

spaceworks
tacoma

Cover Photos

TOP ROW: murals by Speakthunder Berry and Nori Kimura | interior of downtown building | mural by Jorge Garcia

SECOND ROW: mural by Lourdes Jackson | Bella Kim, Patsy Surh O'Connell, and Sun Watkins | Aikita Jones, SWASH

THIRD ROW: Adrienne Wicks and Jeff Libby, birdloft | touring Hilltop development | Taylor Cox, Coxswain Press

BOTTOM ROW: Yoshiko Yamamoto, Arts and Crafts Press | Dr. Matt Brignall, Dr. Noryang Yeschi, Dr. Luciano Garofalo, Dr. Gena Poling, Dr. Eileen Bhagwandeem, Link Community Clinic | Taylor Woodruff, Alchemy

Hand-drawn illustrations by Angela Larsen, Lovesome Dove

Introduction

Spaceworks Tacoma emerged as a creative response to vacant storefronts in Tacoma in 2010. This program of the Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber and joint initiative with the City of Tacoma includes a business incubator, affordable studios, a Black Business Investment program, and public art projects. Spaceworks is the primary business support program for Tacoma's creative economy and the only one with an emphasis on commercial space activation. Each year Spaceworks directly serves more than 125 microenterprises through training, alumni events, technical assistance, marketing, expert consultations, microloan referrals, subsidized studios, and public art opportunities. Thousands more are engaged through its website, newsletter, and social media.

In 2021, Spaceworks concluded up its first strategic plan, which spanned from 2016-2021. During that time, Spaceworks saw continued growth, new programs, staff and leadership changes, and major disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, working with Michael Jordan of Clarity Consulting, Spaceworks initiated a new strategic planning process to inform its next three years.

This strategic plan is generously supported and funded by the Umpqua Bank Charitable Foundation.

MISSION

Spaceworks makes
Tacoma culturally vibrant
and economically strong
through training and support
for artists and creative
entrepreneurs

Core Values

ENTREPRENEURIAL SPIRIT

We are responsive to the needs within our community and continuously evaluate and measure our impact.

INNOVATION & CREATIVITY

We are the testing-ground for new ideas and novel solutions.

DIVERSITY & EQUITY

We celebrate and are shaped by diverse people, voices, and perspectives. We create equitable access to economic and creative opportunities.

COLLABORATION

We partner with organizations and individuals to achieve collective impact and shared success.

The Process

To facilitate and advise on the strategic planning process, Spaceworks contracted with Clarity Consulting, led by Michael Jordan. With his recommendation, Spaceworks used the Scrum approach because of its iterative nature, emphasis on community-led outcomes, and the team-based project direction.

COMMUNITY-INFORMED DESIGN

This approach defines success as having community-informed outcomes. It ensures that before any projects or planning is done, clear direct input from the community is in hand. It is an adaptive process that allows space for input and adjustments when unexpected challenges occur without having to re-plan or reset the whole process.

There is a saying, “Design without purpose is just decoration.” Decoration doesn’t have real impact, and Spaceworks wanted to listen to the community and ensure that those voices have real impact. We didn’t want to hear a year from now, “Who asked for this?”



To ensure voices from the community were represented Spaceworks held two different community gatherings. We invited the community, stakeholders, and alumni. Every participant had some history and or interest in what Spaceworks does for the community, and what the future of Spaceworks will be.



In each gathering we wanted to learn from the community through the following ways; A needs and assets list, a user story, input on their perception/understanding of what Spaceworks is and does, along with what they believe Spaceworks should be in the future.

Their responses would share what they valued, what they needed, what they had to give. We also wanted to know what impact they believed Spaceworks should have in the future. We found the feedback immensely clarifying for what Spaceworks is and isn't.

With each exercise we saw diverse community members team up to share, challenges, needs and solutions. They knew that their input would impact the policy and practices of Spaceworks which would in turn impact their community. They had a seat at the table and were deciding the menu. For those unable to attend, we also had a separate online survey to collect additional feedback.

After compiling data and results from the community sessions Clarity Consulting met with the Spaceworks staff and steering committee. We combed through data and community input and discussed our observations. Patterns began to emerge and the feedback and recommendations began to fit under four strategic themes: accessible space, creative business support, artist pathways, and right-sized systems.



Strategic Priorities

1. Accessible Space

Ensure equitable access to physical space to anchor a vibrant creative economy in Tacoma.

2. Creative Business Support

Provide creatives with the tools, training, and resources to navigate the unique challenges of entrepreneurship.

3. Artist Pathways

Invest in our local creative economy by employing artists, who have the courage to shape and inspire our communities.

4. Right-Sized Systems

Strengthen our administrative systems and marketing to better communicate our values, opportunities, and impacts.

Strategic Priority #1

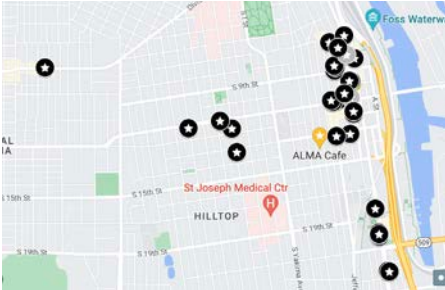
Accessible Space

Ensure equitable access to physical space to anchor a vibrant creative economy in Tacoma.

VISION

By 2026, Spaceworks will manage a portfolio of commercial spaces that reflect the needs of creatives at different stages of business. Spaceworks will also provide the resources and connections to other leasing opportunities within Tacoma.





MANAGING SPACE

- Exit out of 1120 Pacific lease to find a location that better serves our strategic goals and community needs (FY23)
- Manage a new space of micro-retail opportunities (e.g., pop-ups, short-term leasing) (FY24-25)
- Build a “For Property Owners” section of the Spaceworks website (FY24-25)
- Manage a new space of artist studios (FY25-26)



ADVOCATING FOR SPACE

- Each year, help place at least 6 new businesses in physical brick-and-mortar locations (FY23-26)
- Advocate for home incubator friendly policies (FY23-24)
- Advocate for micro-retail and commercial kitchens (FY23-25)
- Create and maintain an online listing of creative spaces in Tacoma (place to make, exhibit, gather, perform, etc) (FY24-25)



WORKING WITH PROPERTY OWNERS AND DEVELOPERS

- Convene property owners to learn their needs of our alumni (FY24)
- Create easy-to-access opportunities for temporary public art installations with property and business owners (e.g., expansion of rapid mural program) (FY24-25)
- Create MOU template that encourages and supports leasing with Spaceworks alumni (FY25)

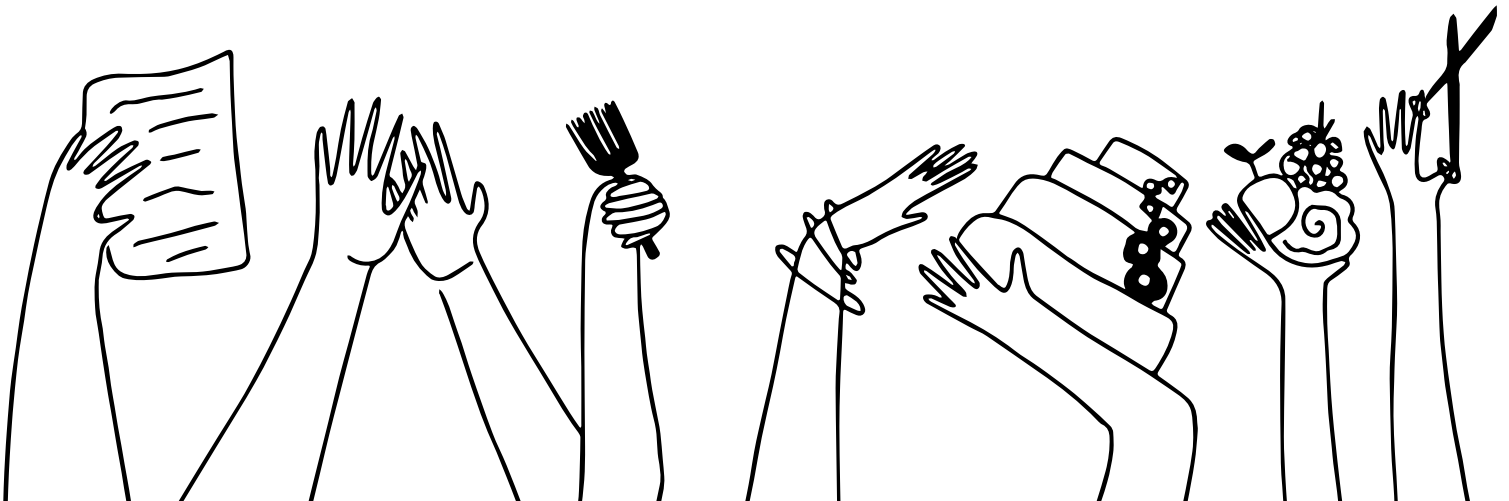
Strategic Priority #2

Creative Business Support

Provide creatives with the tools, training, and resources to navigate the unique challenges of entrepreneurship.

VISION

By 2026, Spaceworks is taking a more public leading role in Tacoma's creative economy and continues to serve as the primary organization for training creatives as business owners.





TRAINING

- Each year, support at least 45 participants through cohort training and other workshops (FY23-26)
- Partner with other organizations for business topics outside of our expertise (FY23-26)
- Review and update curriculum to align with current opportunities (e.g., commercial space leasing) (FY24)
- Create library of free, Spaceworks-branded resources on website (FY26)



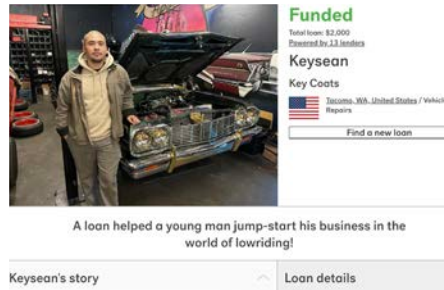
EQUITY

- Reduce the racial wealth gap through an emphasis Black entrepreneurship and the Hilltop (FY23-26)
- Continue to track demographic information of participants, staff, volunteers, and contractors (FY23-26)
- Codify best practices (e.g., partial payments in contracting) into policies (FY24-25)



CREATIVE ECONOMY

- Maintain and share key statistics about Tacoma's creative economy (FY24-26)
- Formalize the creative economy as a key emphasis area of support and advocacy within the Chamber (FY24-26)
- Center Tacoma's role in state-wide efforts to grow Washington's creative economy (FY23-26)



FUNDING

- Maintain relationship with Kiva to offer microloans for first-time borrowers (FY23-26)
- Offer microgrants directly to Spaceworks alumni (FY23-26)
- List local funding resources and opportunities on website (FY24-25)



COMMUNITY

- Host quarterly gatherings of Spaceworks alumni and supporters (FY23-26)
- Convene alumni and mid-career businesses to create programming that differs from start-up businesses (FY24)
- Work with Chamber on relevant membership benefits and programming for creatives (FY24-25)
- Formalize partnerships with other organizations that support Spaceworks participants (e.g., markets, business districts) (FY25-26)

TOP ROW: Graduates of the Spaceworks Business Plan Cohort and Black Business Investment program | Taylor Cox, Coxswain Press | Dr. Matt Brignall, Dr. Noryang Yeshi, Dr. Luciano Garofalo, Dr. Gena Poling, Dr. Eileen Bhagwande, Link Community Clinic

BOTTOM ROW: Installation by Dion Thomas | Keysean Billups, Key Coats

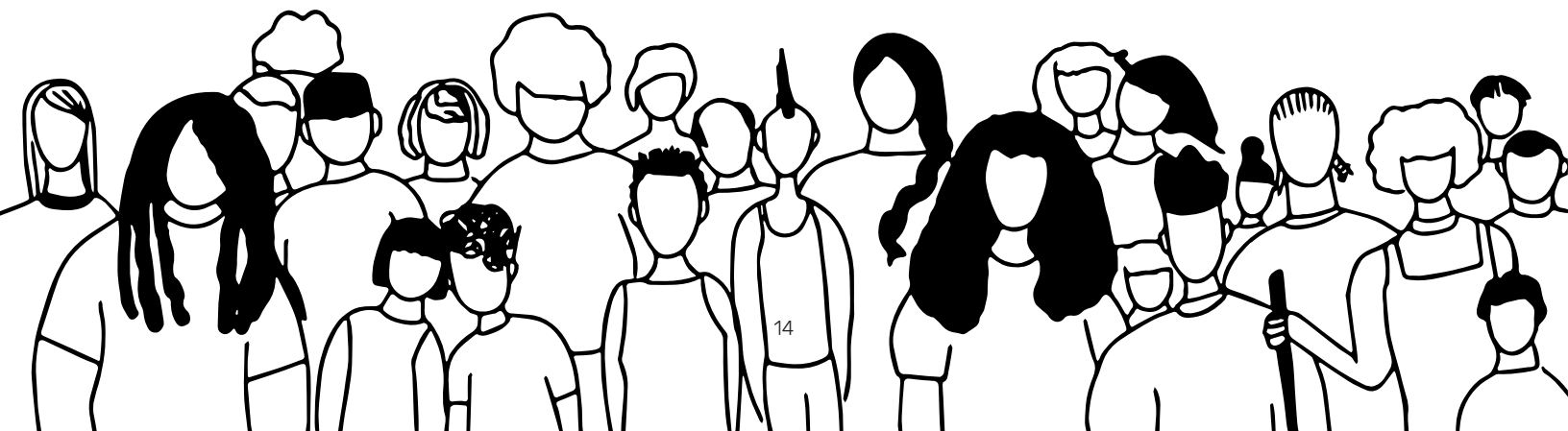
Strategic Priority #3

Artist Pathways

Invest in our local creative economy by employing artists, who have the courage to shape and inspire our communities.

VISION

By 2026, Spaceworks has consistent public art activations that provide business training and revenue for local artists. There is funding available so that any vacant or boarded-up storefront can have an art project, if desired.





ARTSCAPES 2.0

- Grow and support the new Public Art Coordinator position (FY23)
- Prioritize business districts and public-facing areas for Spaceworks-led projects. For areas outside of our scope, provide resources, recommendations, and processes for others to lead their own projects (FY23-26)
- Create a map of current and past Spaceworks public art projects (FY23-24)
- Use Spaceworks displays, like the Woolworth Windows, as revenue-generating opportunities for artists (FY23-26)
- Ensure that formal property agreements are in place for all public art projects (FY24-25)



ARTISTS AS BUSINESS OWNERS

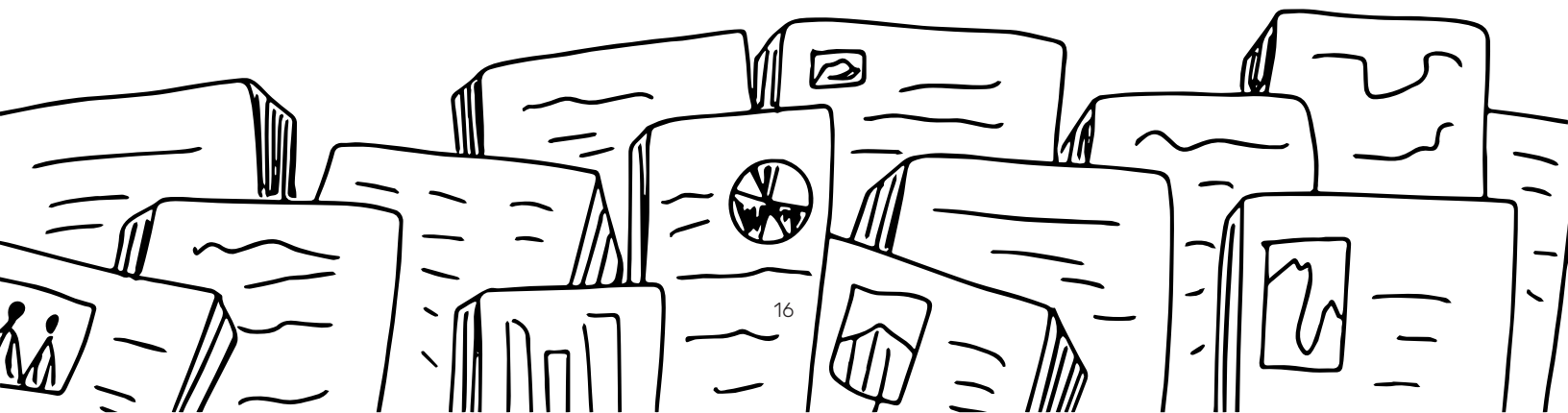
- Serve as the go-to organization for “business training for artists” in Tacoma (FY24-26)
- Fundraise and commit to higher stipends for artists for Spaceworks-funded projects (FY24-26)
- Support artists as cohorts and increase participation in Spaceworks business incubator (FY24-26)
- Convene community conversation about equitable wages and other high-priority topics (FY24)

Strategic Priority #4 **Right-Sized Systems**

Strengthen our administrative systems and marketing to better communicate our values, opportunities, and impacts.

VISION

By 2026, Spaceworks can clearly and effectively communicate its impact, with consistent year-over-year statistics tracking. This results in a 30% increase in financial support across all FY23 revenue categories (grants, contracts, donations, sponsorships).





ADMINISTRATION

- Write business plans for any new leasing opportunities (FY23-26)
- Audit revenue all streams and align to grow our programs (FY24)
- Remove software systems that are no longer working for us or are duplicative with the Chamber (FY24)
- Clearly define the number of alumni and create consistent metrics for multi-year tracking (FY24)
- Shift from Excel to a more robust tracking system for technical assistance and program participation (FY24)
- Produce a consistent annual report (FY24-26)



MARKETING

- Create a print and digital map of Spaceworks alumni and projects (FY23)
- Revisit and update Spaceworks brand and graphic identity (FY24)
- Re-design and overhaul website (FY24)
- Hire alumni to tell their Spaceworks stories in their own words (FY24-26)
- Send quarterly Director's update to donors and key stakeholders (FY24-26)
- Help Chamber tell the Spaceworks story (FY24-25)
- Create templates for all communications and marketing material (FY25-26)



STAFF DEVELOPMENT

- Create annual work plans and conduct annual performance reviews (FY23-26)
- Offer on-boarding training on topics, such as creative placemaking, creative economy, economic development, property development, commercial leasing (FY25-26)

