https://www.journalgazette.net/business/fort-wayne-area-leaders-announce-music-economy-plan-office/article_47a8f156-56cc-4642-a6c5-f2a1a264968d.html

Fort Wayne area leaders announce music economy plan, office

Cincade Drudge | The Journal Gazette
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Jessa Campbell, director of destination development communications at Visit Fort Wayne, speaks Thursday at Promenade Park during an announcement about the agency's progress on the city's music economy.

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A coalition of public officials, private companies, and philanthropic organizations Thursday launched a plan to guide the area's music economy strategy and announced it will open an office focused on the effort.

The Fort Wayne/Allen County Music Economy Strategy unveiled by Visit Fort Wayne is the next step in the city's ambitious 10-Year Tourism Master Plan, which aims to transform the region into a thriving destination for visitors by boosting regional commerce and showcasing the area's character, officials said. The Fort Wayne Music Office will support that plan.

The music strategy aims to nurture existing cultural and economic musical frameworks that already exist across the county rather than manufacturing a music scene from scratch. The regional music ecosystem accounts for a total economic output of $3.1 billion and supports about 6,900 local jobs, according to data released Thursday.

Jill Boggs, CEO of Visit Fort Wayne, emphasized that the city's music scene already draws regional visitors with potential for growth.

"This announcement is not about creating a music scene," Boggs said during the presentation. "It's about building the incredible music ecosystem that already exists in our community. ... This is not the beginning of our music story. It's the beginning of our next chapter."

The plan's road map features 17 recommendations intended to optimize the area's music landscape across promotion, education, policy and placemaking.

The recommendations are marked as goals that can be achieved in less than a year, between a year or two, or in three or more years.

Sound Diplomacy completed an in-depth analysis of the regional ecosystem. The resulting strategy is designed to support the community by leveraging and growing the music economy.

The Fort Wayne Music Office will serve as a hub to coordinate, promote and activate the local music sector while championing the region as a vibrant destination, officials said.

It will create an organization dedicated to marketing and elevating Fort Wayne's musical assets, including the nationally recognized education and production programs at Sweetwater, Purdue University Fort Wayne and the University of Saint Francis, alongside historic live venues such as Embassy Theatre, The Clyde and The Brass Rail.

"We know having a group and a person thinking about music as a community asset every day is what will be needed to ensure the success of the strategy," said Jessa Campbell, director of destination development communications at Visit Fort Wayne.

The development of the strategy and the operational oversight of the new music office are steered by a newly formed, seven-partner Music Board.

This group draws leaders from multiple sectors, including the city of Fort Wayne, and Surack Enterprises and Sweetwater. The philanthropic and nonprofit interests on the board are represented by Arts United of Greater Fort Wayne, Embassy Theatre, Greater Fort Wayne Inc. and Visit Fort Wayne.

The community initiative's initial research and development phases were financially supported by regional entities, including the Knight Fund at the Community Foundation of Greater Fort Wayne, the Don Wood Foundation and the Northeast Indiana Strategic Development Commission.

The Music Board is searching for the music office's first executive director.

Interested applicants can find more information about the position at FortWayneMusicOffice.com.

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cdrudge@jg.net

Cincade Drudge
Intern

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