

Community Effects of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center

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Abstract

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This thesis examines the potential placemaking and economic impacts of the proposed Marymoor Arts and Science Center in the Marymoor Village neighborhood of Redmond, Washington. As currently planned, the mixed-use building would function as a civic center to host a variety of programming rooted in arts and science and offer affordable housing units designated for artists. This thesis supports the due diligence process of OneRedmond, the nonprofit organization currently leading the project. The analysis draws on a comparable case study approach, examining the context, programming, and documented community and economic effects of three other similar institutions across the country. These comparable facilities include the Patricia Reser Center in Beaverton, Oregon; the Clay Center in Charleston, West Virginia; and the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center in New Brunswick, New Jersey. Organizational documents, external reports, and news coverage were reviewed. GIS and demographic analysis of the area surrounding each facility was also conducted.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center

The Marymoor Arts and Science Center (MASC) will be a multi-functional cultural hub, integrating arts enrichment, science learning, and community gathering all in one space. With its current proposed site, positioned immediately south of the Marymoor Village light rail station, the building would serve as a landmark at the gateway to the Marymoor Village neighborhood. As a large multi-level structure, the MASC has the potential to function as an iconic architectural feature, visible from both the light rail corridor and State Route 520 (see Figure 1). The building



Figure 1 - Early rendering concept of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center. The building is directly adjacent to the park and the light rail station. The newly constructed affordable housing buildings are also present behind the center. (OneRedmond & ZGF Architects, n.d.-a)

would provide all-season indoor recreation next to the large Marymoor Park that hosts a variety of outdoor activities.

OneRedmond is guiding the MASC through its due diligence phase, prior to the establishment of an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit that will ultimately operate the facility. OneRedmond is a multifaceted nonprofit organization that serves as Redmond's Chamber of Commerce, conducts economic development work under contract with the City, and operates as a community foundation for Redmond.

The Marymoor Arts and Science Center is designed as a multi-use facility consisting of spaces capable of holding performance, exhibition, and education activities, along with standalone housing areas. The building would include a flexible 1,200-seat theater, a 250-seat children's theater, a 120-seat planetarium, classroom and practice spaces, exhibition areas, and maker-oriented learning environments. Figures 2 and 3 are OneRedmond's early design concepts, created by ZGF Architects, showcasing the different elements of the building. Public amenities would include gathering space, food and beverage offerings, and retail elements. An accessible rooftop space overlooking Marymoor Park would provide opportunities for outdoor programming and community events. The design envisions partnerships with local tribes, with Indigenous history and culture expressed through programming, exhibitions, and food. In addition to its cultural and STEM programming, the project would incorporate housing units intended to support artists, visiting performers, or program-related residents. While the broader project is currently planned to include several hundred more housing units in an adjacent

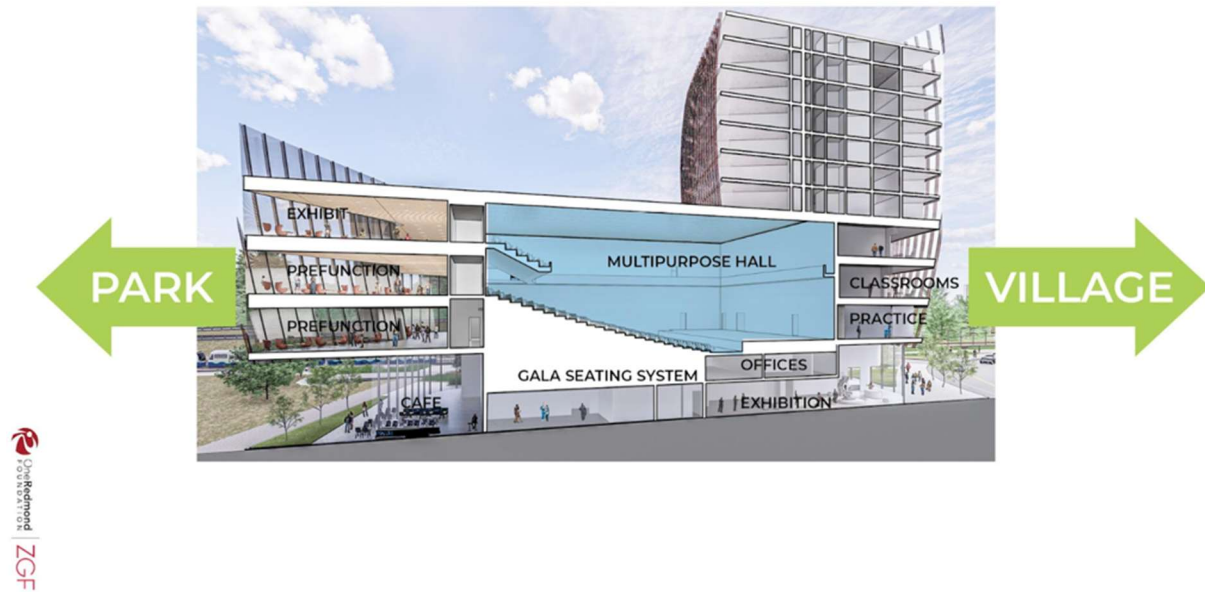


Figure 2 - View of the interior of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, highlighting the Multipurpose Hall (OneRedmond & ZGF Architects, n.d.-c)



Figure 3 - View of the MASC highlighting the STEM related components. Includes option to utilize the children's theatre as an educational movie screening (OneRedmond & ZGF Architects, n.d.-d)

affordable housing development, currently referred to as “The Residences,” this research focuses exclusively on the cultural facility building of the proposal.

This study looks at the potential economic and social impact of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center by examining similar institutions that succeeded in other cities. The intent of this work is not to examine the feasibility of the MASC, identify key conditions, or determine the probability of success, rather it is to demonstrate what the impacts of a successful project could be if proper conditions were met. From this analysis, we will be able to more accurately assess claims made by the project, and estimate the potential positive impacts it could have on the local community and surrounding region.

Integrating housing within the site introduces the potential for the MASC to function not only as a destination, but as part of a lived-in neighborhood environment. Residents would have immediate access to the facility’s programming while also being embedded within the broader Marymoor Village area. The surrounding neighborhood includes a mix of commercial, retail, and recreational uses, including Redmond Town Center, Marymoor Park, and a range of grocery and service-oriented businesses. This mix of land uses could support the possibility of daily life occurring in proximity to the site, rather than the MASC functioning solely as an event-based destination.

1.2 Research Question

The goal of this research is to answer the question: *What placemaking and economic impacts could the Marymoor Arts and Science Center have on the surrounding community, based on comparable facilities?* This study does not assess feasibility or predict outcomes, but rather

demonstrates the range of community and economic effects the MASC could generate given proper conditions. Although the vision for the project is compelling, the success of cultural infrastructure depends on more than design and concept; it requires that the building functions effectively as a community asset over time. Cultural facilities have the ability to create economic vitality and placemaking, yet the scope of the impacts are not always clear to begin with.

As a proposed project, the MASC raises several important questions regarding its potential role within the community, including how it may influence local development patterns, attract visitors, and function as a cultural destination within the Eastside. This study is intended to support OneRedmond's due diligence by examining documented outcomes from comparable facilities and the conditions under which those outcomes were achieved, providing a basis for understanding what the MASC could offer the community under similar circumstances. The findings may also provide insight for stakeholders involved in the project as they consider strategies to support its long-term success within the community.

1.3 Problem Statement

Over the last several decades, Redmond, Washington has been evolving and expanding from a suburban community into an urban, transit-oriented city within the Seattle metropolitan region. During this period, major employers have moved to the area, generating population and employment growth, shaping the city's identity as a focal point within the region's tech-driven economy. Notably, Nintendo established a presence in Redmond, and Microsoft later moved its corporate headquarters to Redmond in 1986 (The Centre for Computing History, n.d.), cementing the city's trajectory as a tech hub. Since the 1980s, the population has almost

quadrupled from around 22,000 to now over 80,000 people (City of Redmond, 2025-a). As this growth has continued, high-capacity transit also became necessary. The expansion of Sound Transit's Link light rail system, with four stops opening in Redmond since 2024, has played an important role in strengthening connectivity to the rest of King County and supporting the city's densifying urban form (City of Redmond, 2025-d).

To accommodate this population growth, the city has identified a need for additional gathering and program space serving residents of all ages (City of Redmond, n.d.-d). Existing facilities such as the Redmond Community Center are present, but do not fully address the demand for a large-scale, regional cultural destination typically found in more urbanized centers.

OneRedmond has responded with the Marymoor Arts and Science Center (MASC) concept.

There are several reasons why the Marymoor Arts and Science Center could be needed not only within Redmond, but across the Eastside of King County, Washington. The City of Seattle has buildings that house comparable uses such as the Pacific Science Center, McCaw Hall, and the Paramount Theatre; however, these locations can pose an inconvenience for the large and growing population to the east of Lake Washington. Smaller indoor performing arts venues in the area exist such as the Kirkland Performance Center with 394 seats (Kirkland Performance Center, n.d.), the Village Theatre in Issaquah with under 500 seats (Village Theatre, n.d.), or theatres located at high schools. In comparison, the large theater space within the MASC is currently estimated to have a capacity of 1,200 seats and with an adjustable floor allowing for a multitude of uses. Residents of these Eastside communities would likely benefit from an alternative venue that avoids the congestion and inconvenience associated with traveling to the regional urban center of Seattle for large-scale cultural enrichment. Preliminary community engagement indicates support for the concept.

Focusing on Bellevue, the closest facility aligning with some of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center (MASC) functions is the Meydenbauer Center, a civic building that primarily operates as a convention center. The Meydenbauer Center has a 410-seat theatre (Meydenbauer Center, n.d.), but lacks a large-scale performance space and is not nearly as multi-dimensional in use as the proposed MASC. Additionally, the Meydenbauer Center does not have STEM-related activity space such as a planetarium.

The MASC could also serve as a destination venue with the potential to attract visitors to the region and generate associated-related expenditures within the local economy. The second floor (containing the large flexible hall) alone is estimated to be able to accommodate 1,000-2,000 people. Given three additional levels and a rooftop, the building could have the capacity of hosting events for several thousand people. The City of Redmond currently encompasses ten hotels, demonstrating an existing lodging base capable of supporting overnight visitors (City of Redmond, n.d.-b). However, Redmond lacks a large-scale convention, performing arts, or civic event facility that would regularly generate multi-day visits. The lack of such an institution represents a gap in the city's cultural infrastructure. As a bonus outcome, the MASC could leverage Redmond's own hotel capacity and retain visitor expenditures within its economy, strengthening Redmond's ability to capture and circulate cultural and event-related spending locally.

With a capacity to host events for hundreds to several thousand and multiple levels of programming, the Marymoor Arts and Science Center would operate at a scale uncommon on the Eastside. Given the limited availability of comparable large-scale cultural facilities outside of Seattle, the MASC would be convenient for those who live in East King County jurisdictions such as Bellevue, North Bend, Woodinville and the unincorporated areas to the East. This is

based on the assumption that these communities lacking access to similarly scaled venues or those with only smaller facilities, would be more likely to utilize a regional destination such as the MASC. Beyond the immediate Eastside attendee base, the recent opening of the Link light rail 2-Line across Lake Washington connects Bellevue and Redmond to the broader regional transit network, making the MASC accessible to riders from Seattle, Lynnwood, Federal Way, and other west King County communities along the system. Additionally, residents of other nearby jurisdictions accessible by car, such as the Tacoma and Everett areas, would also be within reach.

The Eastside of King County has a significant STEM presence. Tech giants including Amazon, Google, Meta, Nintendo, Nvidia, SpaceX, and Microsoft all have locations in the region. Not only is Redmond home to Microsoft's corporate headquarters, it is also a hub for space industry businesses. Redmond-based companies produce over half of the satellites currently in Earth's orbit and are projected to manufacture over 75% of the world's future satellites (OneRedmond, n.d). A multifaceted cultural center, particularly with science components and programming may resonate in a community that is tied to the STEM industry.

While many aspects of the proposal may change, the vision reflects a comprehensive cultural center within Redmond. Given the city's substantial population growth and continued urbanization, there is a reason to assume increasing demand for a regional-scale arts and science center that extends beyond the capacity of existing community facilities. As such, the MASC may function as much needed civic infrastructure, influencing placemaking, economic development, and long-term community development.

1.4 City of Redmond

As a rapidly growing city within the Greater Seattle area, Redmond has made planning and policy changes to guide its transition from a suburban to a more urban, transit-oriented community. The City of Redmond has recently adopted changes to their Comprehensive Plan, Marymoor Village zoning, and Economic Development Strategic Plan. Redmond 2050 is a major update to the City's Comprehensive Plan released in November 2024. It details planning goals and policies as it relates to the development of the city through 2050 as it transitions from a suburb to an urban city. The Economic Development Strategic Plan was adopted in July of 2024 and guides the City's economic development programs and policies through a five-year timeline, while positioning the city for long-term growth. Marymoor Village, the neighborhood in which the MASC is proposed, has undergone rezoning to support higher-density, mixed-use, and transit-oriented development around the new Marymoor Village light rail station. The rezoning, vision, and goals in these documents demonstrate the City's intent to cultivate a vibrant, mixed-use urban center where integration of a cultural amenity like the MASC is possible.

Redmond 2050 From Suburb to City – Comprehensive Plan

Within Redmond 2050's Land Use plan, the City has updated policies pertaining to the land use strategy of each of the city's Urban Centers (Figure 4). All the centers emphasize mixed-use development patterns. Specifically, Marymoor Village's Mixed-Use Designation (Policy LU-33) highlights opportunities for transit-oriented housing, and employment near the light rail station. Cultural uses are specifically identified as permitted and encouraged to support community values.

As a cultural center integrating arts and science programming, the MASC would align with these adopted land use policies

contributing to the type of civic infrastructure envisioned for the Marymoor neighborhood (City of Redmond, 2025-a).

Within the Comprehensive Plan's Economic Vitality element, policies EV-19 and EV-22 articulate goals that are directly relevant to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center.

EV-19 Enhance local arts, culture, recreation, nightlife, and social amenities that promote Redmond as an attractive place to work and live.

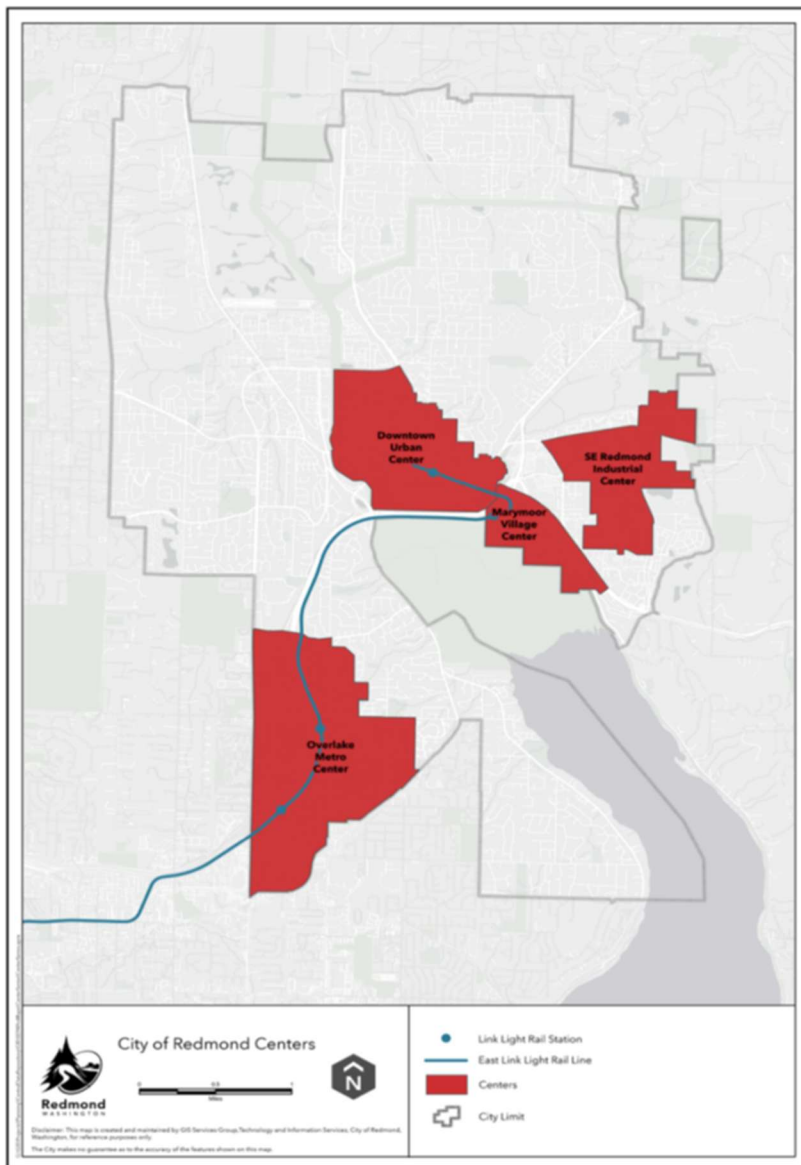


Figure 4: City of Redmond Centers (City of Redmond, n.d.-e)

EV-22 Support Redmond’s growth as a tourism destination and foster tourism-related initiatives that bring investment and economic benefit. (City of Redmond, 2025-a)

Together, these policies emphasize cultural and tourism amenities in strengthening community and economic vitality. Policy EV-19 highlights the importance of arts, culture, recreation, and social amenities that residents and workers within Redmond could easily access. The MASC would align with this policy by creating new space for these activities to take place. The center could also draw in visitors through its events, performances, and exhibits, contributing to EV-22 in growing Redmond as a tourist destination. The MASC could bring in spending from non-residents, serving as a source of external economic activity to the benefit of the community.

Zoning

In June 2025 the City of Redmond rezoned the Marymoor Village neighborhood, the area identified for the proposed Marymoor Arts and Science Center. This update consolidated the zones in the neighborhood (see Figure 5) (City of Redmond, 2025-b). The potential site for the MASC would be in the Marymoor Core district, adjacent to the light rail station.

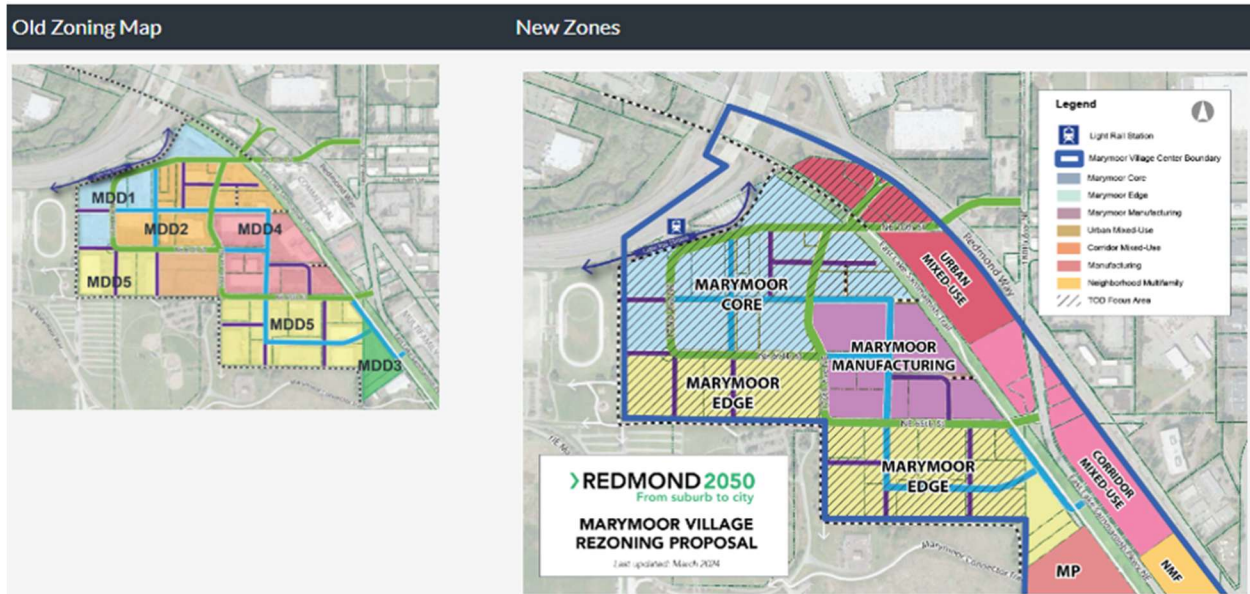


Figure 5: Marymoor Village Rezoning 2050 (City of Redmond, 2025-b)

This area has been identified to provide transit-oriented services including entertainment, education, housing, and employment through mixed-use buildings (City of Redmond, 2025-c). The proposed MASC incorporates these elements, aligning with the planning intent of the Core zoning designation.

The rezone also includes a section dedicated to tribal connection and integration. Notably this update confirms that art museums and cultural center uses are permitted within the Marymoor Village and includes incentives for contributing features that support tribal recognition and placemaking within the neighborhood (City of Redmond, 2025-c). These provisions indicate the City’s intent to incorporate indigenous culture into the district’s identity. A facility like the MASC, particularly if it meaningfully integrates a tribal partnership would be consistent with this vision.

Economic Development Strategic Plan

The latest adoption of the City’s Economic Development Strategic Plan from July 2024 establishes strategies to expand Redmond's economic base while enhancing quality of place. The plan is organized around six strategic priority categories called Focus Areas. Several of which correspond to the functions envisioned for the Marymoor Arts and Science Center.

Focus Area 3: Cluster Diversification and Expansion has an overarching goal to *expand established and growing clusters to strengthen competitive advantages and attract businesses that diversify Redmond’s economy, enhance economic resilience, and increase tax revenue.* (City of Redmond, 2024). Within this focus area, there are (City of Redmond, 2024):

Strategy 3F. *Support initiatives to highlight and grow the Creative Economy*

Strategy 3G. *Leverage and support tourism assets and initiatives in alignment with the Tourism Strategic Plan for continued cluster awareness and growth*

Strategies 3F and 3G include specific actions that are particularly relevant to the proposed MASC. Based on the specific actions (Appendix 1) outlined in Redmond’s Economic Development Plan, it is evident that arts, culture, and tourism are central to the community. An anchor facility like the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, located within the core of the Marymoor Village unifies many action strategies. It would contribute to the creative economy, furthering Strategy 3F and addressing the City’s goal of developing a sizable indoor cultural venue as explicitly stated in Action 3F.5. Simultaneously, the MASC would support Strategy 3G by serving as a tourist destination that strengthens the draw to the area with the adjacent Marymoor Park. Together, this would create a cluster where tourists could enjoy numerous amenities including a diverse array of arts, recreation, and cultural programming.

In addition to cluster diversification strategies, the Economic Development Strategic Plan also emphasizes district-level placemaking and transit-oriented development. Section 6 *District Development and Placemaking* includes actions (City of Redmond, 2024):

6C. Leverage light rail and continue to prioritize planning and resources for key investments in growth centers to reinforce unique identities as vibrant cultural and commercial centers.

6D. Preserve and promote the arts, entertainment, events, cultural assets, and sciences in Redmond to attract new firms, industries, residents, and visitors.

Given its proximity to the light rail station and location within the core zone of the Marymoor Village, the MASC would be consistent with Action 6C's emphasis on reinforcing growth centers as culturally distinct hubs. The building also aligns with Action 6D, as it would provide space for and expand cultural programming. By hosting performances, exhibitions, and events the MASC could increase visitors and draw in economic activity associated with arts and cultural consumption by generating more workers and consumers alike.

1.5 Local Opportunity

Nestled between the 640-acre Marymoor Park (City of Redmond, n.d.-a) and the Marymoor Village light rail station, the proposed site of the MASC occupies a location that could integrate well with the surrounding neighborhood. Opportunities available to visitors of Marymoor Park

include sports, trails for walking and biking, community gardening, concert going, and an off-leash dog park (King County, n.d.-b). In addition to the outdoor summer concert series, the park is also temporarily home to Cirque du Soleil. This is a modern circus performance featuring acrobatics, storytelling, and music that takes place under temporary big top tents during the late winter and early spring (Cirque Du Soleil, n.d.). With some artistic events already occurring in the area, the MASC would bring a stable yearlong space that would cement a creative community cluster as envisioned by the City of Redmond.

The MASC would be visible from Washington State Route 520, a highway that connects Seattle to Redmond serving 124,000 daily users (Stantec Consulting Services Inc, 2023). Affordable housing apartment buildings developed by a selected partner would be located on the southern section of the site. While the size of the housing buildings is still to be determined, they are currently estimated to include at least 300 apartment units. In addition to the benefits of being adjacent to a cultural facility, the Marymoor Arts and Science Center would be a buffer between the 520 highway and the housing, protecting residents from vehicle pollution and noise.

Figure 6 shows the MASC's location within the context of surrounding amenities and infrastructure. In addition to the State Route 520 and Marymoor Park, Redmond Town Center and the Redmond Connector Trail are all within walking distance from the site. Redmond Town Center is a commercial shopping center comprising various businesses including dining, healthcare, hotel, and entertainment. Redmond Connector Trail is a walking and bike trail that runs along a stretch of the light rail line through the Marymoor Village neighborhood. The 3.9-mile trail has an estimated 250,000 users annually (City of Redmond, n.d.-c), which will

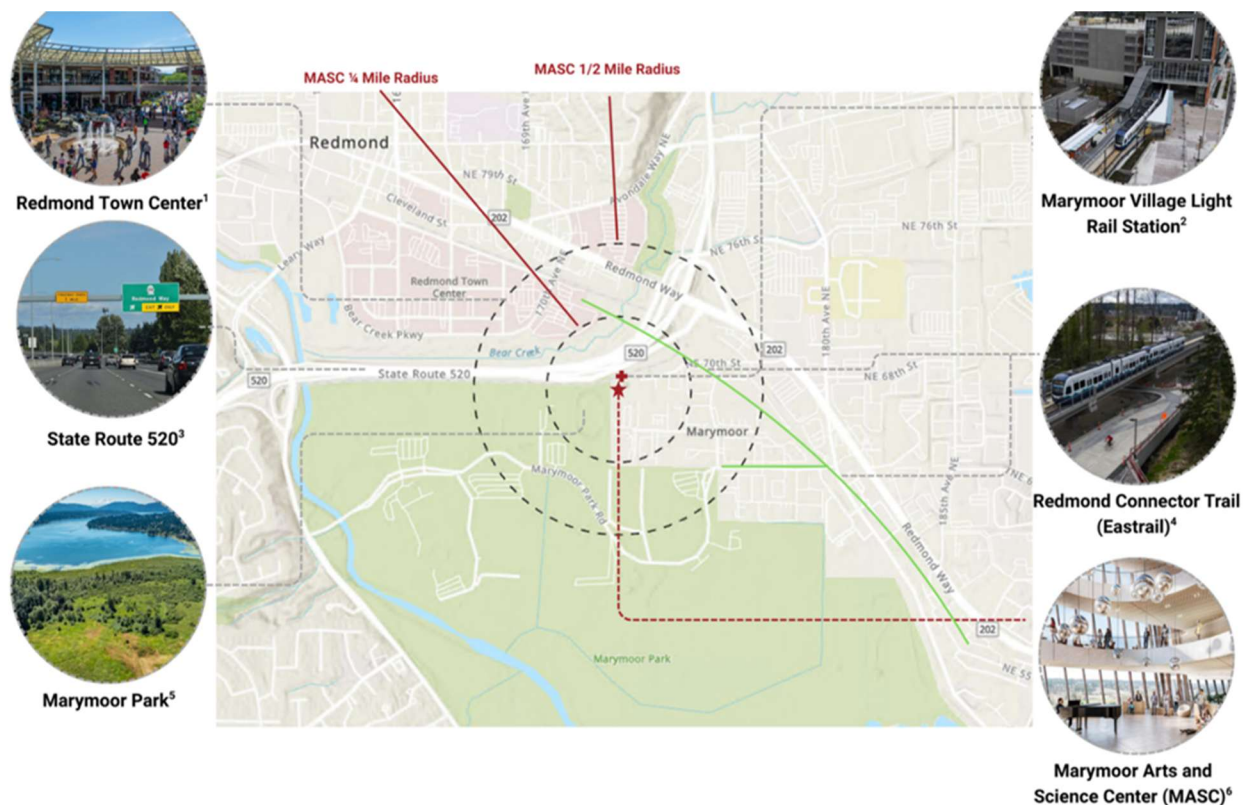


Figure 6 - Marymoor Arts and Science Center location and surrounding amenities (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)
¹ (ExperienceRedmond, n.d.), ² (Lambert, 2025-a), ³ (SounderBruce, 2017), ⁴ (Lambert, 2025-b), ⁵ (Experience Redmond, n.d.-b), ⁶ (OneRedmond & ZGF Architects, n.d.-b)

eventually feed into the Eastrail trail, a planned 42-mile trail connecting many East King County cities from Snohomish to Renton (King County, n.d.-c).

Community engagement has been ongoing for the past three years, which has included the public, tribes, private and non-profit organizations. This was done to both build support while also collectively constructing a vision that would benefit the community. OneRedmond began reaching out to local arts, cultural, and STEM groups starting in 2023. Since then, over 100 organizations have been engaged in discussions about the project. Over 50 of these organizations are based in the Eastside. Conversations have occurred with experts and organizations that provide similar facilities to their communities across the country. Engagement efforts have

included a range of businesses and nonprofits including those involved in orchestra, dance, choir, astronomy, and history. Full support of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center has been received by the Duwamish Tribe, who are indigenous to present-day Seattle and much of the Greater King County area (Duwamish Tribe, n.d.). The first engagement event with the general public regarding the MASC occurred in December 2025 during the City of Redmond's annual Redmond Lights celebration at Redmond Town Center. It was a free community event with art installations, performances, craft booths, and lights on display. Initial community response to the project has been receptive and more engagement will be continued in 2026 and beyond.

Chapter 2

METHODS

2.1 Research Design

This study synthesizes insights from academic literature alongside reports produced by the nonprofits and government organizations with institutions comparable to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center. Specifically, placemaking and economic impacts are examined. Drawn from the literature review, placemaking effects analyzed from these facilities include community identity, programming diversity, and land-use clustering; economic effects include jobs, along with visitor spending and tourism. Using the documented community outcomes of three case studies as illustrative examples, this analysis evaluates the potential impacts that the MASC may yield for Redmond and the broader East King County region. The case studies facilities were selected based on a series of characteristics shared with the Marymoor Arts and Science Center (Tables 3).

Table 3 – Case Study Characteristics Table

Facility	Location Type	Types of Programming	Land-use Clustering	Nearby High-Capacity Transit	Housing	Opening Date	Capacity (people)	Type of Venues
Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (Beaverton, OR)	Suburban (Portland)	Arts	Yes	Yes	No	2022	1340	Theater, Meeting rooms, Lobbies
Clay Center (Charleston, WV)	Urban Core	Arts and Science	No	No	No	2003	2000+	Theaters, Lounge, Lobby, Museum, Planetarium
New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (New Brunswick, NJ)	Urban, non-core (NYC)	Arts	Yes	Yes	Yes	2019	700+	Theaters, Rehearsal, Studios, Office, Residential

The case study sites are:

- Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (Reser Center) in Beaverton, Oregon
- Clay Center in Charleston, West Virginia
- New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) in New Brunswick, New Jersey

These facilities were selected based on their alignment with several key criteria relevant to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, including programming focus, the presence of land-use clustering, access to high capacity-transit, and housing components. Institutions located in primary urban core areas were deprioritized unless they offered strong relevance in other categories, such as incorporating both arts and science programming or being part of a similar mixed-use development pattern.

The *Patricia Reser Center* for the Arts in Beaverton, Oregon was selected due to strong contextual similarities to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center. Similar to Redmond, Beaverton is a Pacific Northwest suburb located just outside a major metropolitan core, functioning in relation to Portland much as Redmond does to Seattle. The Reser Center is also adjacent to a light rail station and situated within a deliberately planned mixed-use district. These characteristics make it a comparable case, even though its programming focuses exclusively on the arts.

The *Clay Center in Charleston*, West Virginia is included as a case study because it is one of the few institutions in the United States that integrates arts and science programming in a manner similar to the proposed MASC, with an onsite planetarium as a focal feature. While Charleston is the state's largest city, it operates at a significantly smaller metropolitan scale than major cities such as New York City or major tech hubs like Seattle. This makes the Clay Center a fitting

comparison for evaluating how comparable cultural infrastructure performs in a mid-sized urban environment.

Similarly, the *New Brunswick Performing Arts Center* was selected because it is located within an established land-use and cultural planning district, providing an example of the type of amenity clustering that the MASC could contribute to in Marymoor Village. Additionally, a similar level of mixed-use housing integration is present, along with comparable access to a high-capacity transit line. Although New Brunswick is an urban setting, it functions as a non-core city within the larger New York metropolitan area, located approximately 27 miles from Manhattan. This relationship is comparable to Redmond, which is roughly 21 miles from downtown Seattle, reinforcing its relevance as a case study despite its urban density.

Several additional institutions were initially considered but were excluded because they did not align with the criteria most relevant to evaluating the MASC. Facilities located in major urban cores were not selected, as their market reach and development patterns differ from suburban or non-core urban settings. Other potential comparables were not part of coordinated land-use clustering, lacked proximity to high-capacity transit, or were significantly older facilities lacking relevance to contemporary development contexts. In several cases, limited availability of programming or economic impact documentation prevented meaningful comparison.

The selected institutions represent cases where community and economic effects have been documented or anticipated, providing a basis for understanding what outcomes the MASC might reasonably expect under favorable circumstances and the conditions that could lead to them.

2.2 Data Sources

Document analysis was conducted using materials produced by the institutions themselves as well as external sources that report on their operations, impacts, and development contexts.

Qualitative data was gathered from impact reports, strategic plans, programming materials, publicly available studies, and academic literature. Quantitative data was drawn from annual reports, IRS Form 990 filings, and other publicly available financial documents. Geographic and demographic analysis was conducted using ArcGIS Pro, with data sourced from ESRI for both the MASC and the comparable institutions.

For the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, project information was provided by OneRedmond based on the current proposed model of the project. Additional materials were drawn from work produced by ZGF Architects, who created the initial conceptual design work for OneRedmond. Geographic and demographic analysis was conducted using ArcGIS Pro, with ESRI data used to analyze the local market area for the MASC and each comparable institution.

Data sources for the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts included recent IRS Form 990 filings, annual programming information, and the organization's 2026-2028 Strategic Plan. Since the facility operates under the legal name Beaverton Arts Foundation Inc., some documents are reported under that entity. A key source was a 2021 agreement between the City of Beaverton and the Beaverton Arts Foundation, which outlines the governance structure, operational responsibilities, facility components, and the broader mixed-use development in which the Reser Center is situated.

The Clay Center provided the most extensive set of publicly available reports. IRS Form 990 filings, financial reports, the *Your Gift in Action* Report, and an economic impact study by the

Center for Business and Economic Research at Marshall University offered data on economic impacts such as employment and tourism generation. Additional information on programming, placemaking, and educational activities was derived from their 2020-2025 Strategic Roadmap report, 2023-2024 Annual Report magazine, and the Clay Center’s website.

For the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, information was obtained from a community impact report by Building America, a community development entity involved in the project. NBPAC’s official website provided details on the facility’s programs, history, and the residential and office elements incorporated into the development. Due to operating under a public-private partnership model rather than as a nonprofit, IRS Form 990 filings are not available. Instead, information was gathered from interviews and public presentations by the developer, DEVCO, which offers first-hand insight into the design, development process, and connection with surrounding land uses. Additional contextual information from the City of New Brunswick and Middlesex County was used to understand how the facility fits within the city’s cultural district and the county’s cultural and economic development priorities.

2.3 Analytical Approach

The analysis employs a comparative methodology, examining patterns, divergences, and contextual factors that influence how each facility contributes to its surrounding community.

Placemaking impacts are evaluated through qualitative indicators such as programming diversity and the degree to which each facility participates in clustering with other cultural, recreational, or mixed-uses. Attention is given to how each institution contributes to community identity,

supports public life, and enhances the vibrancy of its district. These elements are assessed through document analysis, programming materials, and evidence of district-level planning.

Economic effects are examined both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitative measures include employment generation, visitor spending, and tourism activity. Qualitative indicators include narratives from the facilities about their economic role. The vibrancy that cultural facilities create through placemaking also generates economic opportunities, as surrounding land uses and local businesses benefit from increased foot traffic and district identity.

In addition to community and economic effects, challenges and considerations that have emerged at these institutions are examined. Media coverage such as news reporting and business journals are used to identify these challenges, along with weaknesses self-reported by the institutions' leadership as documented in strategic plans, financial filings, and public interviews. While the selected facilities were chosen partially due to successful results that have occurred, these challenges suggest that achieving favorable outcomes is not straightforward. These challenges and how the institutions have responded to them offer considerations for the MASC.

Chapter 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Introduction

Cultural institutions function not only as venues for artistic or educational programming, but as anchors of community identity and generators of economic activity. Two broad areas of impact are commonly examined across the literature on cultural infrastructure: the social and spatial effects often associated with placemaking, and the measurable economic outcomes linked to cultural infrastructure. While the term placemaking is not always used explicitly, the literature consistently shows themes of how cultural buildings shape community identity, how diverse programming produces its own social benefits, and how these institutions interact with surrounding land uses in ways that contribute to broader district or clustering patterns. Economic literature provides more quantifiable approaches to evaluating outcomes such as examining employment, visitor spending, and tourism. Together, this research provides the framework for assessing the potential community effects of comparable cultural facilities.

3.2 Placemaking of Cultural Institutions

3.2.1 Community Identity

The foundation of placemaking lies not merely in design, but how a building creates meaning through human interaction. Scholars of placemaking argue that community identity emerges through repeated social practices. Forester's collection of placemaking studies calls this "shared rituals", which can take the form of events, performances, or gatherings. Identity is reinforced through narratives, such as the stories communities tell about themselves. Identity is then sustained through participation, whether through individual engagement, co-creation, or shared use of space (Forester, 2021).

Placemaking scholars emphasize that the practice is community driven rather than top down. Community identity is co-created and grounded in local meaning, as residents determine how their public places look and function, creating a place attachment activated through stewardship. In doing so, people have their love of place confirmed (Courage et al., 2020). This aligns with Project for Public Spaces, which defines placemaking as a community based process through which residents shape public spaces to reflect shared values (LeGates & Stout, 2020).

Scholars note that placemaking is directly related to cultural visibility and power, since places reflect identity and memory. In settler-colonial contexts, placemaking has often determined whose identities are affirmed or marginalized, as colonial planning rendered Indigenous presence invisible. This has led to Indigenous representation and history being frequently suppressed in many urban places (Nejad et al., 2020).

Cultural institutions shape lived experience, especially as public facilities are broadly accessible, allowing visitors to reflect the general population. Research has shown that visitors often represent a broad cross-section of the population, with a mix across ethnicity, age, education, and

income. In fact, impacts have been reported as strongest among minorities and low-income individuals in the case of the California Science Center (Falk & Needham, 2011). Similarly, scholarship on place-based arts initiatives shows that marginalized groups can be empowered when placemaking creates space for self-representation and belonging. One dissertation argues that community identity is strengthened when placemaking amplifies the cultural expressions of existing residents rather than imposing external narratives (Oosthuizen, 2022).

Access to arts and cultural resources has been shown to be associated with improvements in community wellbeing and civic engagement. These outcomes are reflected in higher levels of volunteering and civic participation. The ArtsFund Livability Impact Study of the Arts argues that arts and culture spaces provide the grounds where people feel connected and experience belonging. This study suggests that these are not just passive venues, but are spaces intentionally designed to foster connection. These venues also serve as infrastructure for nonprofit arts organizations. ArtsFund reports that for every three nonprofit arts organizations, there is one associated non-arts gathering space (ArtsFund, 2025). These institutions reinforce support networks among organizations, as they do not act alone, but operate as part of broader community systems.

3.2.2. Programming Diversity

Beautiful public spaces can be built, but programming ultimately creates the emotional connection, symbolic meaning, and shared experiences that make a place meaningful (Thomas et al., 2015). Programming at cultural institutions produces social outcomes that extend beyond attendance. A study of the California Science Center by Falk and Needham found that visitors were significantly more likely to learn new information, deepen their existing knowledge, and

develop more positive attitudes toward science and technology. These findings highlight how facilities capable of hosting diverse and interactive programming can shape not only knowledge learning, but also long-term attitudes towards the material and ongoing engagement beyond the initial visit (Falk & Needham, 2011).

Additionally, diversity of programming is important because providing wide ranges of programming can bring diverse groups into shared spaces. The Crosstown Arts building in Memphis, Tennessee illustrates this through gallery exhibits, community shows, youth afterschool programs, block parties, and performances. These activities spark "creative and social frictions", which are interactions that create dialogue and build new relationships (Thomas et al., 2015). Studies show that creative placemaking is most effective when diverse voices are incorporated, including both arts and non-arts stakeholders. Broad community participation is essential for ensuring that programming reflects community needs and strengthens placemaking efforts (Daniel & Kim, 2020).

Effective placemaking can bridge social capital, creating connections across social, racial, and cultural groups. Programming can create opportunities for these cross-group encounters. In the Crosstown case, these encounters occurred through parallel gallery spaces, and community events. Programming can even be a tool to negotiate tensions — differences can be acknowledged, shared experiences can be realized, definition of "community" can be refined, and importantly, dominant narratives can be challenged. These practices show that programming within cultural spaces can be a democratic tool, enabling communities to express their voices and shape a more inclusive public life (Thomas et al., 2015).

Creative placemaking can occur through arts programming as means to generate community development. Programming functions as a tool through which stakeholders such as local government, nonprofit arts organizations, and economic or community development agencies pursue community engagement, attract tourists, or strengthen neighborhood identity. Artists contribute to planning processes through non-traditional means like storytelling and creative expression, positioning them as partners in shaping community development strategies. That said, there are challenges to achieving diverse programming, including resource limitations, lack of community buy-in, and political support. These barriers illustrate the need for intentional community engagement and collaborative approaches to programming (Daniel & Kim, 2020).

3.2.3. Land-Use / District Clustering

When cultural uses are integrated into development strategies, they can anchor surrounding land uses, strengthen neighborhood identity, and support local economic activity (Daniel & Kim, 2020). The concept of creative placemaking is a planning approach that strategically shapes the physical and social character of a neighborhood around arts and cultural activity. At the district level, this is described as the "aestheticization of space", a process through which artists and arts infrastructure can make formerly industrial or underutilized areas desirable for investment, propelling land-use changes (Matthews, 2010). Cultural districts that emerge from this process can function as redevelopment tools, with clustering of cultural uses serving to spur development and create an identity for the neighborhood.

Rich and Tsitsos illustrate this dynamic in their study of the state-sponsored Station North Arts & Entertainment District in Baltimore. In this case, arts clustering operated primarily as branding used to attract investment, with the relationship between cultural uses, housing, and commercial

activity framed as a way to make the area more desirable for development (Rich & Tsitsos, 2016). While the district succeeded in drawing new activity, the authors note that these efforts are often shaped by powerful institutions like universities, community development corporations and private foundations, whose influence can outweigh that of longtime residents. This raises questions about who generates and who ultimately benefits from cultural district development in the long run.

The Crosstown neighborhood in Memphis offers another example where arts programming is integrated into a mixed-use district. This large-scale adaptive reuse project of a Sears distribution center functions as an "urban magnet", bringing together healthcare, education, residential, and commercial uses, with arts organizations playing a key role in activating the space and attracting visitors. At the site level, performances, markets, and festivals can reinforce clustering by generating foot traffic and social interaction (Thomas et al., 2015). The Crosstown case illustrates how cultural districts can operate as integrated networks of uses where intentional programming amplifies the benefits of their proximity, rather than being simply collections of adjacent buildings. Crosstown was not selected as a primary case study because its arts programming is scattered throughout the development among many other uses such as religious, commercial, and healthcare. In the case of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center and selected comparables, the cultural facilities function as clear anchors to their districts. The Crosstown example does provide evidence for arts programming activating district-level clustering, something the comparables with more prominent cultural anchors demonstrate as well.

Despite the social benefits, creative placemaking strategies are frequently tied to economic development goals, with one study finding that over 80% of such initiatives pursue economic outcomes (Daniel & Kim, 2020). While these strategies can draw new businesses, cultural

venues, and visitors, they can also accelerate real estate values and threaten the affordability of the artists and residents the district was originally meant to support. This is described as the "SoHo" effect, where artists help create a desirable cultural area, only to be priced out as redevelopment intensifies (Rich & Tsitsos, 2016). The real estate value that is generated may undermine the community that made the place meaningful to begin with.

3.3 Economic Impact of Cultural Institutions

Beyond placemaking, cultural institutions are widely studied for their economic contributions through employment, along with visitor spending and tourism. Scholars do caution that while economic benefits occur, these investment returns should not be the primary reason for policy decisions regarding these facilities, as their value extends beyond economic outputs (Cwi & Lyall, 1977).

3.3.1. Employment

Cultural institutions create both direct jobs (staff employed by the facility itself) and indirect jobs (multiplier effect), which are created through the spending of employees, guest artists, and audiences throughout the local economy. An economic impact study of arts institutions in Baltimore by Cwi and Lyall found that across eight institutions there were 404 direct and 771 indirect jobs created. Indirect job estimates are likely undercounted in this study since indirect jobs were calculated only based on the first wave of spending brought to the market area by the institution. Realistically there are multiple rounds of subsequent spending that were not accounted for by the multiplier in the model. These can be jobs created by suppliers buying from

their own suppliers, or restaurant workers who spend their wages elsewhere in the local economy (Cwi & Lyall, 1977).

Employees of the institutions tend to live locally and in turn, spend most of their money locally. Cwi and Lyall's study found that in Baltimore, 80% of staff lived in the city with two-thirds of their disposable income staying in the metro area. This suggests that cultural centers can provide a baseline of employment income that circulates in the local economy. Scholars do point out that since economic impacts are not the core mission of these cultural institutions, that other land-uses may be more efficient at creating jobs (Cwi & Lyall, 1977). For example, there could be alternative land uses on the same plot of land such as a retail center, office complex, or light-industrial park that could generate more employment.

While the broader literature documents employment impacts across cultural institutions nationally, the context most relevant to the MASC is Washington state. ArtsFund reports that the arts sector specifically supports 191,245 jobs in Washington, ranking 6th among all states. These jobs contribute \$70.2 billion to the state's economy, ranking third nationally (ArtsFund, 2025). Washington state's arts and cultural sector accounted for the highest share of any state in the country with 9.5% of Washington's total GDP as shown in Figure 7, though this reflects Washington's broader creative economy including publishing and retail industries, not just performing arts and cultural institutions. These findings show that arts and related employment is thriving and an important sector in Washington.

3.3.2. Visitor Spending & Tourism

The out-of-region visitors of cultural centers are a key economic driver, making up a disproportionate share of spending relative to their share of total attendees. One national study found that 30.1% of arts and culture event attendees travel from a different county. These visitors spend nearly twice as much at \$60.57 per person compared to \$29.77 for local attendees. Of the out-of-county attendees, 77% stated the primary purpose of the visit was specifically to attend the cultural event (Americans for the Arts, 2023). A study in Baltimore found that out-of-area patrons made up only 2-14% of the total attendees depending on the facility, yet contributed nearly half as much spending as local audience members (Cwi & Lyall, 1977). Lodging, meals, transportation costs, and childcare all contribute to this higher spending incurred by travelling attendees (Americans for the Arts, 2023).

International evidence from Europe reinforces this dynamic. Research from the Netherlands found that cultural infrastructure like museums, festival grounds, or performance venues can enhance a city's image globally and attract high-value foreign visitors. These cultural assets can serve as anchor attractions increasing tourism demand and boosting the overall appeal of the city as a destination (Russo & van der Borg, 2010).

Spending by traveling guest artists is a small, but real contributor as well. Guest artists include conductors, soloists, directors, and other non-resident performers. Like traveling visitors, they also spend at hotels, dining, and other local businesses and often have family members or other additional support teams who contribute to local spending (Cwi & Lyall, 1977). While guest-artist spending is modest compared to broader audience spending, it represents one of the many channels through which cultural facilities generate economic activity.

Visitor figures can vary widely depending on the facility. For example, within the City of Baltimore, one facility had 24% out-of-region attendees, whereas another had 76% (Cwi & Lyall, 1977). These figures fluctuate throughout the year. Major cultural events such as festivals will generate surges in visitor spending and lodging demand (Russo & van der Borg, 2010).

Much of the strong economic value of traveling cultural tourists is due to their time spent in a community overnight. Nonlocal attendees who report overnight lodging expenses spend on average \$204.40 per person, more than three times the average nonlocal attendee spending of \$60.57 (Americans for the Arts, 2023). A recent Washington state study found that counties with the highest levels of state arts funding generated higher hotel/motel revenue. This increase in lodging business reflects the rise in attendance at cultural events and performances from visitors who require overnight accommodation (ArtsFund, 2025). International research similarly finds that tourists that come for cultural enrichment tend to stay longer and support the hospitality sector, such as hotels and restaurants, more than the average visitor (Russo & van der Borg, 2010).

The spending that visitors bring to these facilities creates multiplier effects as local businesses and employees spend a portion of their subsequent income locally. A single dollar may circulate through numerous successive rounds of expenditure before exiting the local economy. For example, a theater company buys paint from a hardware store, the hardware store pays its clerk, the clerk buys groceries, the grocery store pays its cashier, and so on (Americans for the Arts, 2023). Multiplier values vary based on the size and diversification of the economy. Larger, more diverse markets have higher multiplier effects as they retain more spending locally (Cwi & Lyall, 1977).

Although some local audience spending may always occur regardless of cultural infrastructure, just at a different venue such as a restaurant or bar, research also shows that cultural events retain economic activity that might otherwise leave the community. While one study notes that local spending is partially substitutable (Cwi & Lyall, 1977), more recent national research finds that 51% of local attendees would have traveled to a different community to attend a similar event if the local option were unavailable (Americans for the Arts, 2023). This suggests that cultural facilities do more than redirect existing local economic activity — they prevent local spending from going to other cities that have the desired amenities.

3.4 Synthesis / Gaps in Literature

The existing literature shows that cultural facilities provide meaningful social, and economic impacts. The impact categories emphasized in this chapter — community identity, programming diversity, district clustering, employment, and visitor spending — reflect how planning, culture, and arts literature developed consistent conceptual frameworks on these buildings. These topics appear repeatedly across studies of cultural infrastructure and provide a basis for evaluating the potential impacts of a new facility. Despite the breadth of information currently available, there are several important limitations around these known findings. The majority of the research is uneven in terms of geographic, urban context, and facility types, leaving unanswered questions around how these institutions would function in other settings and conditions.

The literature review categories were determined based on the research question and goals from the City of Redmond's planning and economic development departments and because they are supported by multiple sources across different institutions. Real estate value changes and

environmental sustainability are impacted by the development of these facilities however, they are beyond the purview of this study as the focus is on placemaking and overall economic effects.

Existing research often has an urban bias, with studies focusing on large, major cities, and their urban cores. The institutions within suburban and rural contexts are understudied, leaving questions about how cultural facilities perform in such places. There is also limited research on facilities that have arts and science programming combined. Most research focuses on performing arts centers, museums, or science centers as individual entities, rather than mixed multi-use buildings.

The literature documents that clustering of arts and culture is an effective strategy in economic and community development, but the economic activity it generates can drive up property values and cost of living in surrounding areas, raising risks of displacement through gentrification. Often, these are the very artists and low-income residents the district was designed to support. While these effects are noted, there is little guidance in the literature on how to counteract these unintended results. Similarly, studies show that intentional cultural programming across neighborhoods — such as throughout storefronts, parks, and other public spaces — contributes to vibrant communities. Less is reported on the cases of singular buildings that house a multitude of cultural programming or several of these facilities in close proximity that form cultural districts. This thesis addresses these gaps through a comparative case study, examining comparable institutions to draw insights about the potential impacts of a proposed suburban arts and science facility integrated within a district rich with cultural activity.

Chapter 4

FINDINGS

4.1 Overview of comparable institutions

The three comparable institutions selected for this study represent a range of urban contexts, programming approaches, and land-use strategies. The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts in Beaverton, Oregon opened in 2022. This performing arts and cultural hub is located in the Portland metropolitan area, within a planned mixed-use district, and situated adjacent to the MAX Light Rail line. The Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences opened in 2003 in Charleston, West Virginia. This is one of the few buildings in the country that integrates performing arts, visual arts, and science programming, specifically with a planetarium. The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) opened in 2019 in New Brunswick, New Jersey. This mixed-use project located within the New York City metropolitan area includes two theaters, 207 apartment units, and office spaces, all within the same building. These institutions share a range of similarities to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, with more information summarized in Table 3 in Chapter 2. Figures 8, 9, and 10 are images of the exterior of each of the three facilities.



Figure 8 - The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts (Opsis Architecture, n.d.)



Figure 9 - The Clay Center (Clay Center, n.d.-a)

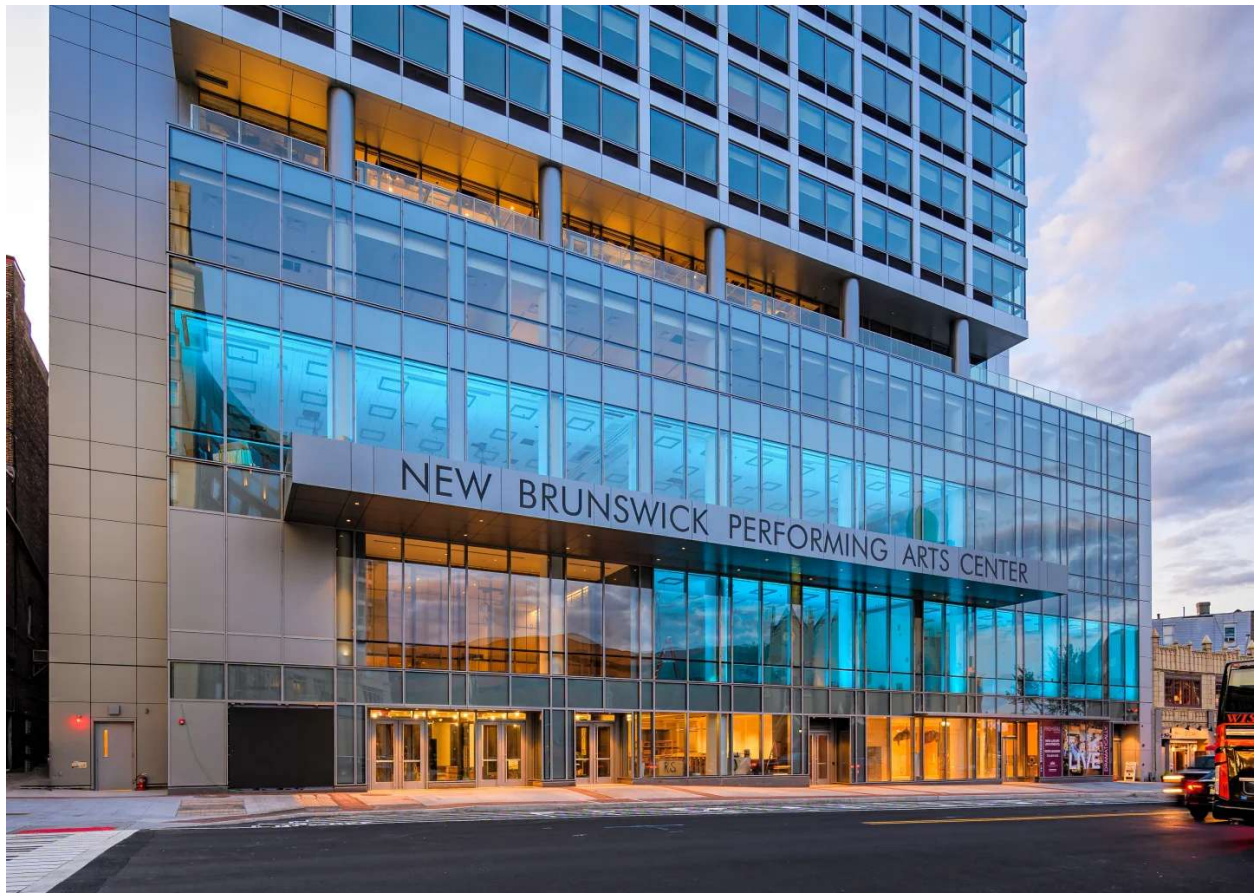


Figure 10 - The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (George Street Playhouse, n.d.)

The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts is a performing arts facility totaling approximately 46,366 square feet, with a 550-seat main stage theater, gallery space, lobby, and arts education spaces (Opsis Architecture, n.d.). The Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences encompasses 240,000 square feet with its 1,900-seat Maier Foundation Performance Hall, a 150-200 seat black box Walker Theater, the Avampato Discovery Museum with interactive science exhibits across multiple floors, the Juliet Museum of Art, and the Caperton planetarium theater (Kent, 2011). The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center is a 450,000 square foot mixed-use building anchored by a 462-seat theater and a 252-seat theater. The Center also contains rehearsal spaces,

30,000 square feet of office space, 207 residential units, and a 344-space parking garage (Building America Community Development Entity Inc., 2018).

Figure 11 shows 25-minute drive time areas surrounding each facility to illustrate the regional context of each institution, and Table 4 summarizes demographics for each area. Full demographic data for each comparable building is found in Appendix B.

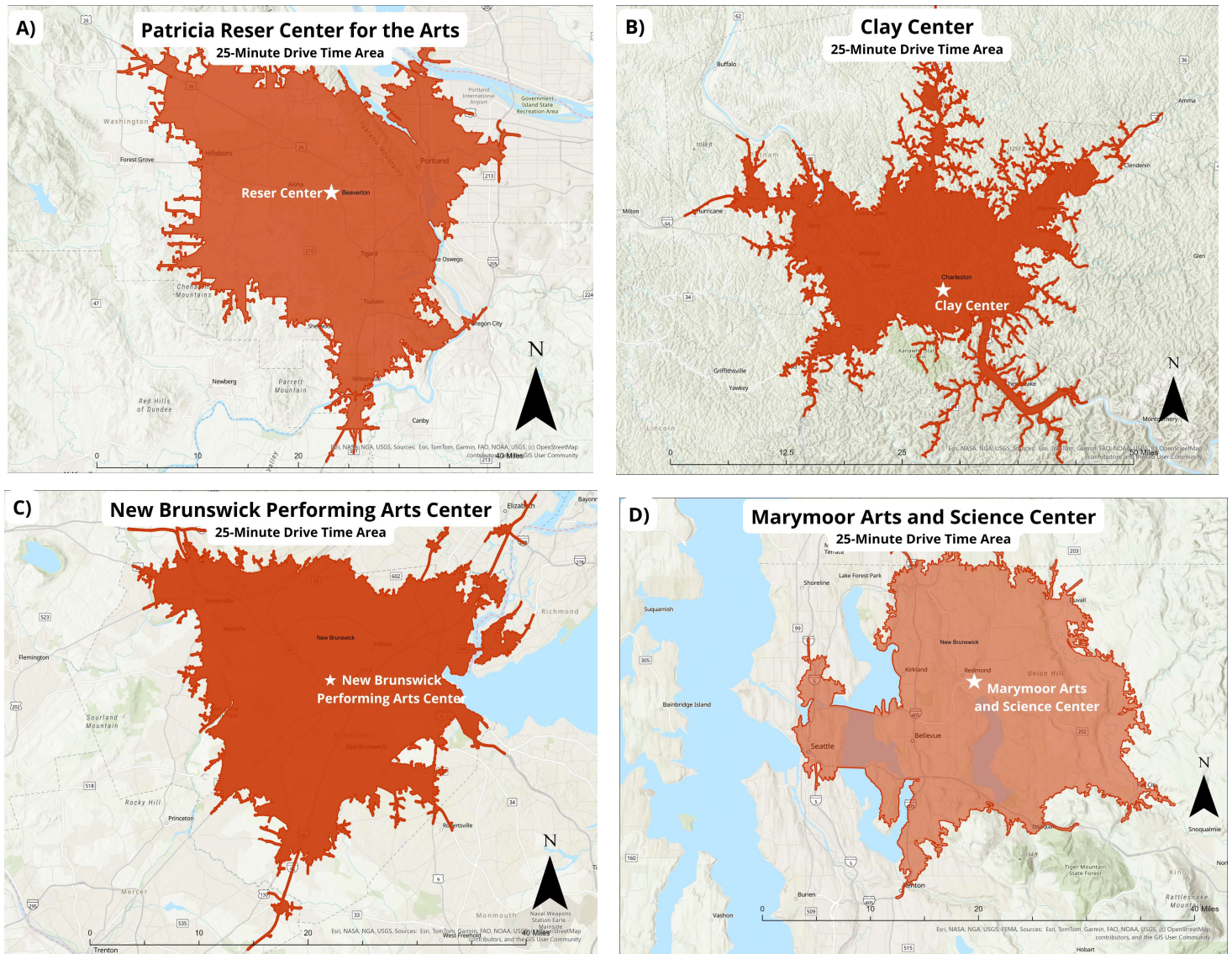


Figure 11: 25-minute drive time areas for comparable institutions. A) Patricia Reser Center, Beaverton, OR. B) Clay Center, Charleston, WV. C) New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, New Brunswick, NJ. D) Marymoor Arts and Science Center, Redmond, WA (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)

4.2 Placemaking Impacts

4.2.1. Community Identity

Across all the institutions a theme of community ownership emerges, whether this be through legal and operating structures or through institutionalized relationships.

The Patricia Reser Center has an agreement with the City of Beaverton, OR establishing a public-private governance structure. While the Reser Center is operated by an independent nonprofit organization, the facility itself is city-owned, and leased to the Beaverton Arts Foundation for \$1 per year. The City retains a non-voting board representation and annual reporting requirements (The City of Beaverton, Oregon & Beaverton Arts Foundation, Inc. dba Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2021). This gives the city a formal role in the Reser Center's operations, ensuring the building remains publicly owned while professionally managed. In their agreement with the City of Beaverton, the Reser Center has several key statements regarding the building's purpose in serving the community. The Mission Statement lays out a clear goal to uplift the different groups of people in the area, stating the building will “foster joy... and understanding in our diverse community”. Similarly, the Vision Statement seeks to “honor the cultures and customs of [the] community”, while the Community Commitment even pushes back against dominant power structures to “counter privilege with equity and access” (The City of Beaverton, Oregon & Beaverton Arts Foundation, Inc. dba Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2021). The Reser Center's Strategic Vision explicitly has a goal to be an "indispensable part of the community" (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-b), reflecting a commitment to becoming permanently embedded into the social fabric of Beaverton. Across all three

institutions, the community has different stories of stewardship, but in each case, the facilities function as more than a venue, they are a part of the community's ongoing story.

The Clay Center operates under a non-profit entity, the Clay Center For The Arts & Sciences Of West Virginia Inc (Clay Center, 2025). While it receives some government funding, this represents only 3% of the center's budget. Notably, 98% of the board's 74 members participate in annual giving for the Clay Center. Their contributions represent over 22% of operating support, playing a significant role in sustaining the arts and science center financially. This suggests levels of care and personal ownership by the board, who are themselves community members. The Clay Center operates in a demographically and economically distinct context from the other comparables, serving a community with lower median incomes and less demographic diversity than the Beaverton and New Brunswick market areas, as documented in Table 4 in Chapter 5. Despite this, the facility's role in expressing and anchoring community identity is equally evident. The Clay Center's Strategic Roadmap states “community pride in the Center extends beyond the impressive building, its museums and theaters, encompassing the hopes and spirit of the community and its vision of prosperity and success at a national level.” This is particularly meaningful given West Virginia's economic context of coal decline and population loss (Clay Center, n.d-b.). The Clay Center is framed as a symbol of aspiration, not just a cultural amenity.

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center's (NBPAC) public-private partnership structure is the most complex with eight different partners — New Brunswick Development Corporation (DEVCO), City of New Brunswick, Middlesex County, Pennrose, New Jersey Economic Development Authority (NJEDA), New Brunswick Cultural Center, Rutgers University, and the New Brunswick Parking Authority (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). This wide range of institutional support demonstrates how community ownership of the project is spread

across government, university, nonprofit, and private sectors. While more complex in structure, this reflects a similarly intentional effort to root the facility within the community through formal relationships, much like the Reser Center's agreement with the City of Beaverton. In an interview by the New Jersey Future organization, Chris Paladino, President of the New Brunswick Development Corporation described it as "a little bit of a payback for the arts community", framing the center as a recognition of artists' contributions to New Brunswick. Mark Sharp, the Operations Manager of the NBPAC said "artists live above us, around us, and come in to work here every day (New Jersey Future, n.d.)." His comments reflect how the affordable housing component serves to sustain an arts community in place rather than displacing it. The NBPAC hosts a Taste of French Street Festival, a bilingual community celebration of a specific New Brunswick neighborhood's cultures, traditions, and local businesses (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). This is an example of how the facility functions as a gathering space representative of the local community, amplifying their cultural expression. The NBPAC hosts a Taste of French Street Festival, a bilingual community celebration of a specific New Brunswick neighborhood's cultures, traditions, and local businesses (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). This is an example of how the facility functions as a gathering space representative of the local community, amplifying their cultural expression.

4.2.2. Programming Diversity

All three institutions offer broad, multi-disciplinary programming. The Clay Center's programming diversity is the most distinctive, structured around the combination of arts and science. This fusion of performing arts, visual arts, and STEM under one roof is central to the

Clay Center's mission statement which frames this combination as "the most holistic way of understanding the world around us". The Clay Center has a performance hall, a children's museum, art museum, and planetarium (Clay Center, n.d.-a). The planetarium is shown in Figure 12.



Figure 12 - The Caperton Planetarium & Theater at the Clay Center (Clay Center, n.d.-d)

While the Reser and the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) do not offer science programming, they intentionally offer programming that varies across multiple art forms, disciplines, and age groups as does the Clay Center. The Reser Center explicitly defines four programming areas: professional artist presentations, rentals for community and commercial users, rentals for nonprofit arts organizations, and arts education and outreach programs (The City of Beaverton, Oregon & Beaverton Arts Foundation, Inc. dba Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2021). The NBPAC has four resident companies that collectively cover a broad range —

from classical and contemporary ballet through American Repertory Ballet, plays and musicals through George Street Playhouse as shown in Figure 13, Tony Award-winning African American theater through Crossroads, and undergraduate and graduate programs across dance, film, music, theater, and visual arts through Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of Arts (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). Across all three institutions, programming breadth emerges as a deliberate strategy for engaging diverse audiences and providing community relevance.



Figure 13 - A George Street Playhouse production at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (Discovery Jersey Arts, n.d.)

The three facilities used as comparables to the MASC have programming that is designed to reflect and serve diverse ethnic communities and cultural traditions, bringing different groups into these shared spaces. The NBPAC hosts 250 performances a year (Hernandez, 2025), reflecting a deliberately broad programming approach. The current 2026 season includes classical ballet, African American political drama, South Asian theater, Chinese dance and music, stand-up comedy from Indian and Arab American performers, an R&B and soul violin performance, a student ballet recital, and a neighborhood cultural festival (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). Similarly, the Reser Center's programming brings diverse groups into shared space. From April through June 2026 alone, the season includes Cuban music, Bangladeshi theater adapting Shakespeare, Arabic language education, Marathi musical theater (India) as shown in Figure 14, Asian American storytelling in partnership with The Immigrant Story, and a hip hop showcase in partnership with Education WithOut Borders (The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-b). While the Clay Center does not detail ethnic programming to the same degree, it does report the differing age demographics that frequent the various components of the facility. For example, families and schools go to the Discovery Museum within the facility, while adult audiences primarily attend the classical performances, and a mix of ages attends Broadway shows (Clay Center, n.d.-a). Across all three institutions, programming is a mechanism to allow diverse community members to share and benefit from a shared space, enacting the placemaking function that the literature associates with intentional programming diversity.



Figure 14 - Marathi Musical Theater at the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center based on the legacy of Marathi Natyasangeet from India (The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-c)

Free and low-cost programming serve as tools that these cultural facilities use to enable equitable access, ensuring the facilities serve their full communities rather than only more affluent residents. The Clay Center ensures its programming reaches underserved communities through its Clay2Go mobile museum. Clay2Go offers free visits to all West Virginia public schools, reaching 10,053 students across 11 counties. Additionally, the main center in Charleston allows all Kanawha County schools to visit for free through county commission funding, and the Adopt-A-School program provides transportation, free admission, and lunches to Title I elementary schools, which receive federal funding to support students from low-income families (Clay Center, n.d.-c). The Reser Center has identified free and lower-cost programming as a strategic

priority. Planned initiatives include a free monthly weekend morning activation in the lobby for children and ticketed lab experiences at \$10, while current programming already includes the First Friday Art Walk and A Beat Happening. These initiatives reflect that programming diversity is incomplete without economic accessibility. A cultural facility that serves only those who can already afford it narrows rather than expands the community it shapes.

Programming partnerships with community organizations are central to how these facilities serve their communities. Nearly every event at the Reser is presented by the Reser directly or co-presented with a community organization such as Cool Islam, Portland Hip Hop Week, PDX Jazz, and Portland Bangla Theater (The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-b). At the Clay Center, 54 of the 85 total concerts and shows in the Maier Foundation Performance Hall were presented with community partners. That is nearly two thirds of all performances being co-presented with local organizations (Clay Center, n.d.-c). The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center's (NBPAC) partnership model operates at two levels — through its resident companies and through its rental programming. One resident company, the Crossroads Theatre Company, is "the nation's premier African American theater" with a mission to "put forth realistic, multi-dimensional images of Black people". Additionally, NBPAC's rental event type list includes Arangetram, which is a South Indian classical dance graduation ceremony, alongside concerts, dance, fashion shows, film screenings, fundraisers, lectures, and theater. The explicit inclusion of Arangetram as a named event category reflects the South Asian community presence in New Brunswick and suggests the facility actively markets itself to that community (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). Across all three institutions, programming is shaped through relationships with community groups, embedding each facility within local culture.

4.2.3. Land-Use and District Clustering

All three facilities were selected in part for their land-use context. The literature provides evidence that when cultural buildings are integrated into development strategies, they can anchor surrounding land uses, strengthen neighborhood identity, and support local economic activity. In each case, transit access and the presence of other cultural uses were examined to assess district-level amenity clustering within the immediate vicinity of each facility. Nearby land uses that could benefit from facility-generated foot traffic, including restaurants and hotels, were also identified.

The Reser Center anchors what the City of Beaverton has designated the Arts and Innovation District, a mixed-use area in downtown Beaverton, Oregon oriented around cultural programming and complementary development (City of Beaverton, n.d.). As shown in Figure 15, the facility is adjacent to a parking garage with ground floor retail space, both developed as part of the broader Reser Center project (The City of Beaverton, Oregon & Beaverton Arts Foundation, Inc. dba Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2021). While the Reser Center does not contain housing of its own, immediately across the street from the entrance of the arts center is a mixed-use development containing condos, a coffee shop, and restaurants at the ground level. The residents of the building, along with the businesses, directly benefit from proximity to the Reser Center. Those who live across the street have direct access to programming, while nearby businesses are positioned to benefit from foot traffic generated by performances and events. The Beaverton Central MAX Light Rail Station is located just south of the facility, with a public plaza in between. The City of Beaverton permits the Reser to utilize the plaza for programming and community events (The City of Beaverton, Oregon & Beaverton Arts Foundation, Inc. dba

Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2021). As shown in Figure 15, two apartment buildings and a hotel are also located in close proximity, with three additional restaurants nearby. Together, these uses create a dense cluster of cultural, residential, hospitality, and transit uses around the facility. This concentration of complementary uses within walking distance of the Reser Center reflects intentional land-use clustering and cultural placemaking at the district level.

Figure 15 shows the land-use context surrounding the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts.

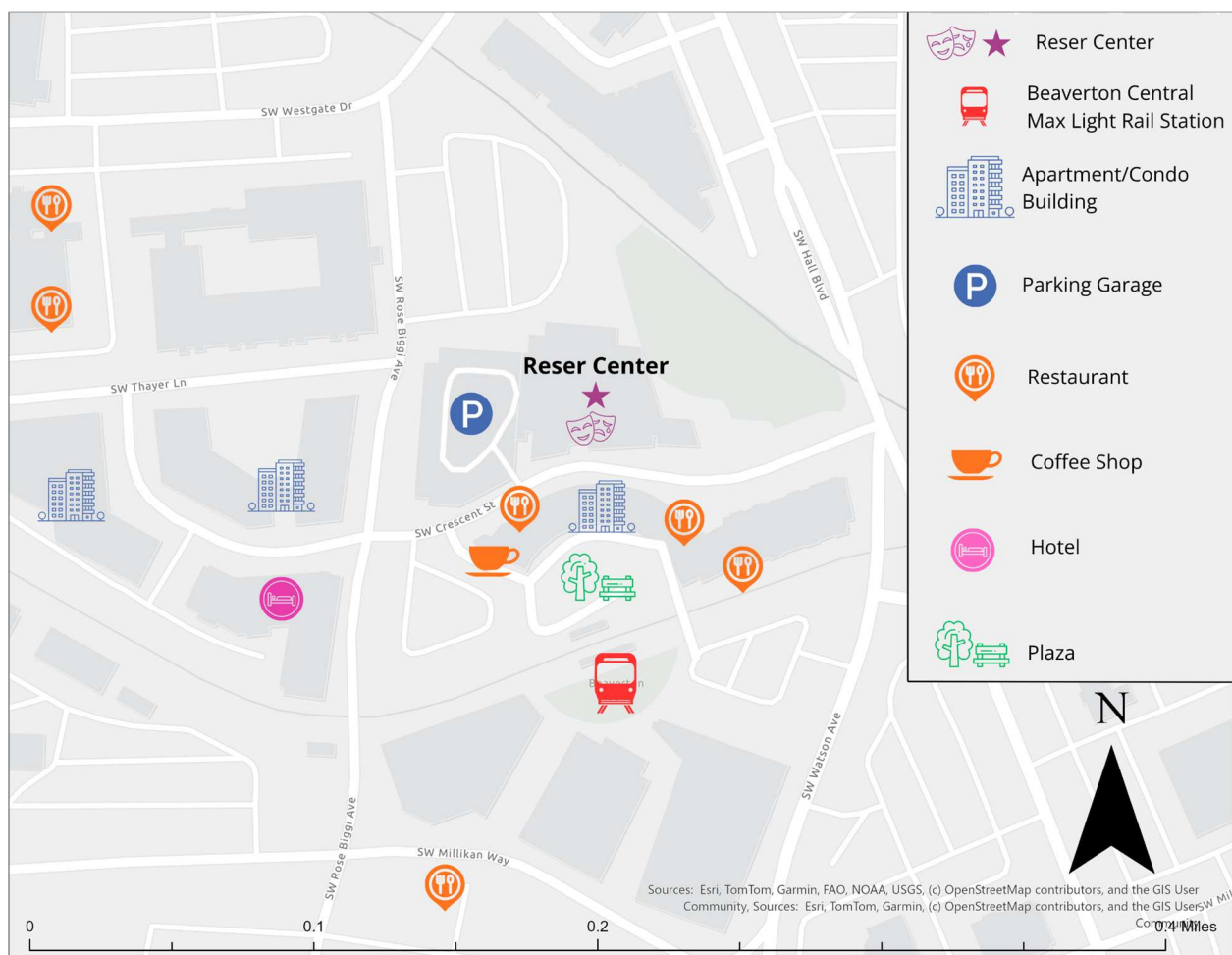


Figure 15 - The Reser Center and complementary surrounding land-uses (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center (NBPAC) was developed as part of intentional land-use clustering strategies. The facility is situated within the city's Downtown Cultural Arts District. The center's website frames the building as a "transformational project that has propelled the district into a spotlight as the region's most exciting and dynamic performing arts center" (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). Additionally, the NBPAC was designed as part of a larger transit-oriented redevelopment district strategy, the Downtown Transit Village Redevelopment Initiative (Building America Community Development Entity Inc., 2018), reflecting the center's proximity to the New Brunswick Station. The station serves NJ Transit's Northeast Corridor Line and Amtrak and is less than half a mile to the northwest, connecting the facility to the broader regional transit network. As shown in Figure 16, the facility is directly adjacent to the State Theatre New Jersey, a historic venue designed by architect Thomas W. Lamb in 1921 and one of the oldest theaters in the state, forming an immediate cultural cluster (State Theatre New Jersey, n.d.). Across the street from the entrance of the NBPAC is Monument Square Park, and beyond it a hotel. The hotel is The Heldrich, which is also used as a convention center. The Heldrich complements the performing arts facility by serving visiting audiences and event attendees. The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers University is located on the other side of the State Theatre, reinforcing the district's cultural and civic character. Within a several-block radius there are 12 restaurants, 6 apartment buildings, and an additional park, reflecting a dense mix of businesses, residential buildings, and public spaces.

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center itself functions as a mixed-use cluster. The facility includes two theaters, rehearsal spaces, a 344-space parking garage, 207 residential units with affordable housing marketed to arts workers, and 30,000 square feet of office space for

Middlesex County's arts and cultural programs (Building America Community Development Entity Inc., 2018). Arts organizations from across the region are welcome to utilize the NBPAC with its collaborative workspaces (New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, n.d.). Ricardo Khan, co-founder of the Crossroads Theatre Company and a longtime member of New Brunswick's arts community, described the anticipated effect of the arts on surrounding commercial activity: “What is the one magnet that brings people together, that brings restaurants in, that brings commerce and hotels? It's the arts (New Jersey Future, 2020).”

Figure 16 shows the land-use context surrounding the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center.

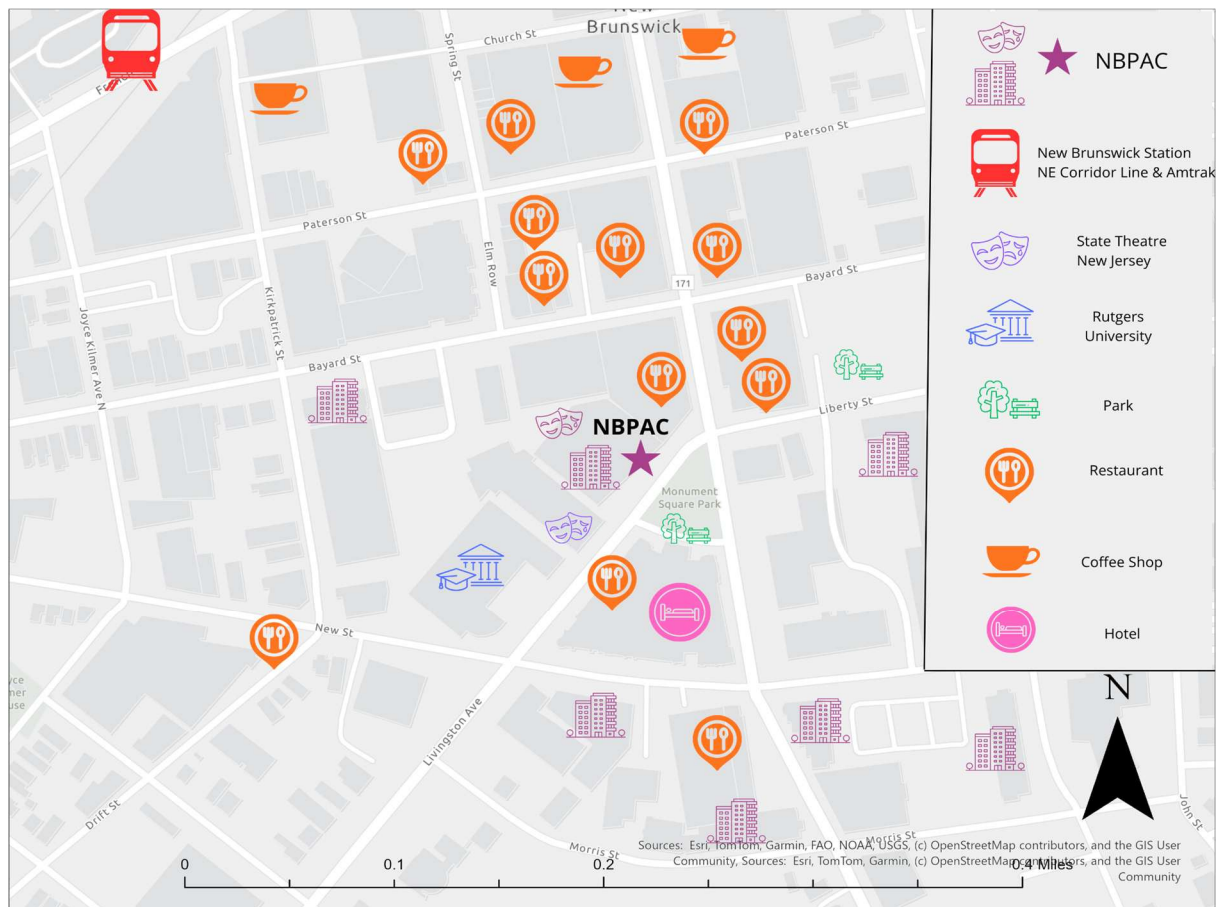


Figure 16 - The NBPAC and complementary surrounding land-uses (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)

The Clay Center is located in downtown Charleston, West Virginia. The building functions as a standalone asset rather than being a component of a planned mixed-use district. As shown in Figure 17, there are two bus stops directly outside the facility, providing public transit access, although it lacks the high-capacity rail connections present at the Reser Center and NBPAC. Surrounding the Clay Center are two bars, a park across the street, two hotels, and a nearby restaurant. There are two apartment buildings and the GoMart Ballpark within a two-block radius. The GoMart Ballpark is a 4,500-seat baseball stadium home to the Charleston Dirty Birds. Its location less than half a mile away suggests that the Clay Center is within a broader entertainment district even without the deliberate land-use clustering strategies evident in Beaverton and New Brunswick. While the Clay Center is not a part of a mixed-use development, and the facility does not incorporate residential, office, or retail components, the presence of nearby hospitality uses, a park, and a sports venue suggests it is one of several important pieces of downtown Charleston's cultural landscape.

Figure 17 shows the land-use context surrounding the Clay Center.

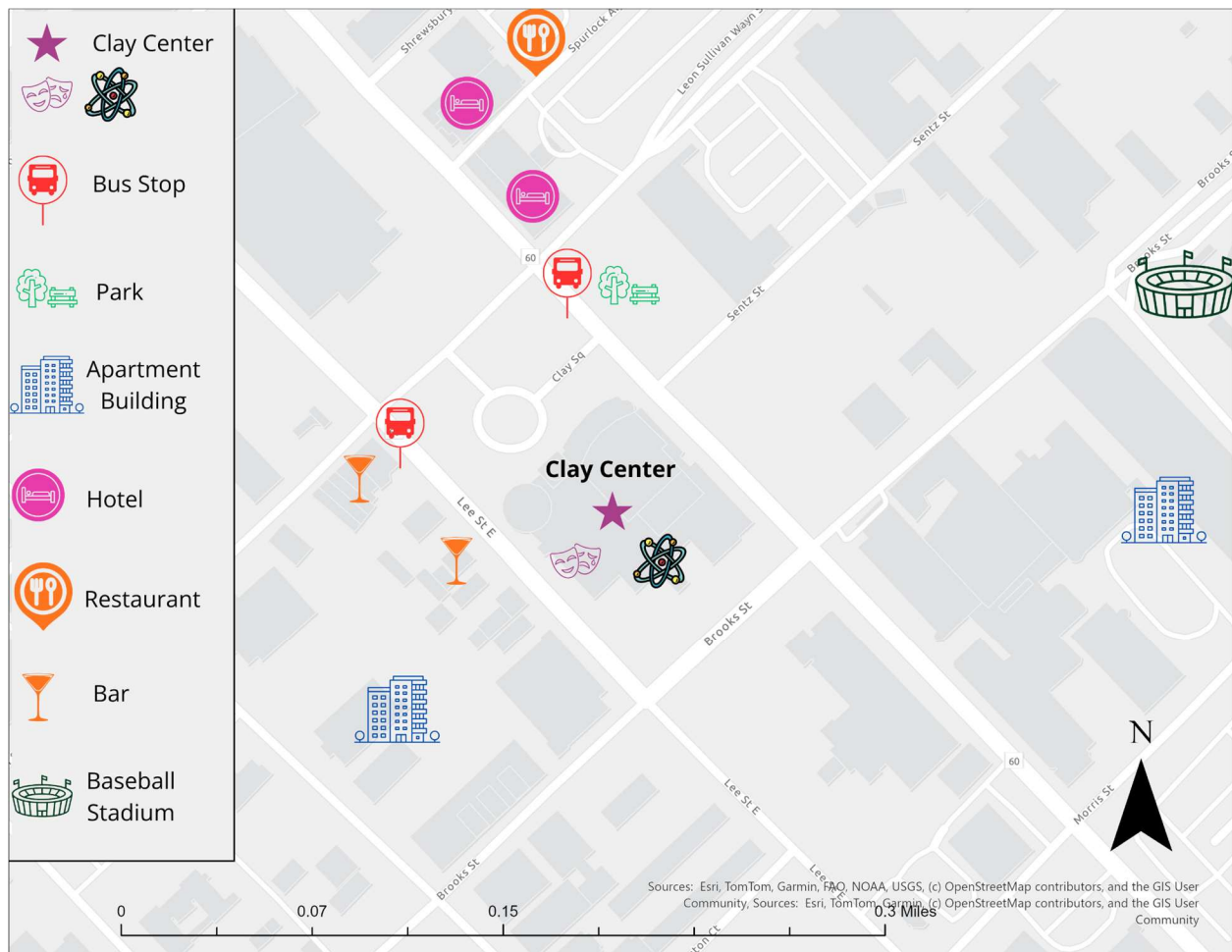


Figure 17 - The Clay Center and complementary surrounding land-uses (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)

Across the three comparables there is a spectrum of land-use clustering present. The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center and Reser Center are part of deliberately planned clusters. Both are key assets within their respective districts, integrated with transit, housing, and nearby commercial uses. While the Clay Center was not a part of such coordinated approaches, it exists within a broader downtown entertainment landscape. Public transit emerges as a feature across all three cases, suggesting its importance in access to the facilities. Both the NBPAC and Reser

Center are close to high-capacity rail. While the Clay Center benefits from bus lines that go directly to the venue, it lacks the regional connectivity that rail provides. A distinctive clustering characteristic of the NBPAC is the mixed-use integration within the building itself. The building contains a mix of theaters, housing, office space, and collaborative workspace. These cases suggest that cultural infrastructure can generate or be a key part of district-level clustering, although the depth and range can vary depending on the urban and transit context.

4.3 Economic Impacts

While economic impacts are generally not the purpose of cultural centers, these institutions affect area employment trends and tourism in their surrounding communities. Across the three comparables, the Clay Center offers the most comprehensive economic data given that the facility has existed for a longer time period than the others and has been the subject of an economic impact study conducted by Marshall University in 2011. The Reser and NBPAC, as newer facilities, have more limited publicly available economic outcome data thus far.

4.3.1. Employment

The three comparable facilities support employment through in-house staff, contracted artists, and production teams, with further influences throughout the economy due to multiplier effects. The scale of these employment impacts and level of available documentation vary across each facility. The newest one, the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts currently has the smallest workforce at 44 employees reported in its 2023 Form 990, the most recent publicly available tax

filing (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2023). This number is likely increasing as the building's Strategic Plan identified a weakness that the staff is at or over capacity, suggesting the programming demands have outpaced the current workforce (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-a). Total yearly compensation of those employees was \$1,929,230, which increased from \$1,570,414 a year prior, suggesting the workforce is expanding as the center matures. There is also a relatively significant number of volunteers – 127 (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, 2023). Having opened in 2003 (Clay Center, n.d.-a), the Clay Center has developed a workforce of 93 employees that receive a combined yearly compensation of \$2,411,011 (Clay Center, 2025). In addition to having more full-time staff, the Clay Center has a larger operation than the Reser Center with performing arts, visual arts, museum, and planetarium components. The full-time staff are supported by 130 volunteers (Clay Center, 2025). With the public-private partnership model, employee information is not publicly available for the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, although it is estimated to have more than 120 full-time equivalent jobs once fully operational (Building America Community Development Entity Inc., 2018). These projections were made in 2018 during the building's development, a year before it opened (Makin, 2019). A comparison of the volunteer and staff levels of each of the three comparable facilities is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Employee and Volunteer Counts

Institution	Reser Center	Clay Center	NBPAC
Number of Employees	44	93	120+ (projected)
Number of Volunteers	127	130	N/A
Volunteer-to-Staff Ratio	2.89	1.40	N/A

The most comprehensive employment documentation came from an economic impact study conducted by Marshall University on the Clay Center in 2011, which examined the facility's effects throughout the West Virginia economy. Using the IMPLAN input-output model, the

study found that at the time, the center supported 379 jobs through both the Clay Center's direct employees and the West Virginia Symphony Orchestra, which was housed and performed at the Clay Center. There were 312 direct positions that generated an additional 67 jobs indirectly through multiplier effects. The indirectly generated jobs were distributed across accommodations, food service, retail, and professional services. The direct payroll of employees was \$4.5 million, which generated an additional \$2.2 million in income throughout the West Virginia economy from the employees spending their wages on goods and services. While these figures are from 2009-2010, they establish a scale of employment multiplier effects that a facility of this type and scope can generate (Kent, 2011).

Employment generation extends to workers compensated through programming activity at each facility without being directly employed there. For example, the Clay Center spends \$766,560 in artist fees, costs separate from direct staff compensation (Clay Center, 2025). The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center has a partnership with the Mason Gross School of the Arts at Rutgers University, which enabled a new musical theater program for the university (Wien, 2017). This creates both faculty employment, and represents workforce development for future arts workers who would not have this educational opportunity if it were not for the NBPAC. Similarly, the Reser Center is committed to workforce development. The Reser's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan includes an initiative to "grow job training opportunities". The plan positions the Reser as a "regional resource for preparing the next generation of arts workers" with a "consistent pipeline of workers who land jobs in the arts nationally"(Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-a). While cultural facilities create significant direct employment and secondary employment through multiplier effects, workforce development opportunities allow these centers to strengthen the broader arts labor market.

4.3.2. Visitor Spending & Tourism

Visitor spending and tourism are another economic effect documented across the three institutions. The Clay Center has the most comprehensive data, while the newer facilities, the Reser Center and NBPAC, offer information focused more on anticipated visitor activity. The Marshall University economic impact study analyzed out-of-area visitor spending, which can be considered an additional impact resulting from the presence of the Clay Center. Community members would be spending locally regardless, making tourism a distinct measure of economic activity attributable to the facility's existence. Approximately 9% of visitors were not West Virginia residents, bringing new dollars into the state's economy. These out-of-state visitors were estimated to have spent \$190,000 annually, of which about 70% was spent at restaurants and hotels. The remaining 30% came from retail and related expenditures. Due to multiplier effects, the \$190,000 from tourist spending generated an additional \$110,000 in the state's economy (Kent, 2011). More recent data from the Clay Center's 2022 Your Gift in Action report documents that a similar visitor pattern persists, with 13,000 of 145,000 visitors having traveled over 75 miles from Charleston (Clay Center, 2022). While the visitor spending data documents a meaningful revenue stream, it is still a small fraction, as the Marshall Study measured a \$16.4 million total economic output, with the majority coming from local spending and the subsequent multiplier effects (Kent, 2011).

While the Reser Center and the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center do not have publicly available reports studying visitor spending, there is documented evidence of anticipated visitor activity that these institutions were expected to generate for their local economies. The Washington County Visitors Association invested \$630,000 into the Reser Center, reflecting the

potential the local tourism industry saw in the facility (Wang, 2020). The NBPAC was framed as a regional draw before it was opened. Middlesex County Freeholder Director Ronald Rios, speaking on the building during its 2017 groundbreaking, referred to it as a "destination for people from all over the Northeast Region" (Makin, 2017), demonstrating an intention for the center to serve as more than just a local amenity.

4.4 Challenges & Considerations

The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts has faced opposition during its development and several challenges since opening. The most recent Strategic Plan has a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Concerns (SWOC) analysis that identifies staff at or over capacity as a weakness. This suggests that the current workforce of the facility is not at a level to keep up with the programming demands. The same SWOC identified lack of diverse funding as an additional weakness and an increased competition for talent from a "crowded presenting landscape" as a challenge (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-a). Executive Director Chris Ayzoukian highlighted in a 2026 Portland Business Journal interview that most performances in the Reser's 550-seat theater (see Figure 18) are financially unsustainable without the support of sponsorship. Additional headwinds he identified include rising touring artist fees, pressure on lodging tax revenue, and declining hotel occupancy. Ayzoukian described post-pandemic competition from home entertainment, what he calls "the couch", as a sector-wide challenge to live performance attendance (Hayes, 2026). Prior to the building's construction there was some pushback from the local hotel industry, one of the sectors the literature identifies as a primary beneficiary of cultural

centers. The City of Beaverton City Council approved a 4% hotel lodging tax in 2016 to help fund the Reser Center. Hotel operators opposed it, as it would make Beaverton the second highest lodging tax jurisdiction in Oregon, claiming they would become less competitive than neighboring cities of Hillsboro and Tigard. One hotel operator even questioned whether a local cultural arts center could even function as a tourism magnet, pushing back against the argument that the center's existence would compensate for the extra hotel lodging tax (Brettman, 2016).



Figure 18 - The 550-seat Mainstage Theater at the Reser Center (The Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-b)

Documented issues of the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences have largely revolved around finances and attendance. In 2016, Clay Center President and CEO Al Najjar stated that the Clay Center faced deficits for several years after the Clay Foundation, a private foundation that had provided significant operating support, phased out its contributions to the center. This lack of

donations, along with less grant revenue resulted in an almost \$400,000 shortfall that led to the elimination of two programs, a digital storytelling initiative and an after-school program for public school students (Lammers, 2017). This illustrates that financial dependency on a few major sources may create vulnerabilities. Further challenges occurred around that same time as attendance dropped from approximately 102,000 people in 2004 to 56,000 in 2016. The reason for this nearly 50% drop in attendance over the course of a decade was attributed to minimal change in programming and exhibits (Clay Center, n.d.-b). The Clay Center responded to this decline with a \$10 million renovation campaign, raising an additional \$8 million for future upgrades. This investment in renovations rebounded attendance to beyond initial peaks by 2019 (Marks, 2018). This recovery illustrates an important consideration — a facility must evolve to remain relevant. The institution's 2023 990 reports that even after two decades of operation and a successful renewal campaign, the Clay Center carries a \$3.4 million operating deficit, suggesting that financial sustainability remains a persistent challenge for cultural centers regardless of age, reputation, and community support (Clay Center, 2025).

Due to the relatively recent opening, documented challenges of the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center primarily relate to its development. A concept for the center was first announced in 2007, but failed to gain traction. The plan was then revived in 2015 (New Brunswick Today). At the building's October 2017 groundbreaking, Chris Paladino, president of DEVCO, the company that developed the NBPAC, said that it had been 3,502 days since the project was first announced. This long timeline demonstrates the complexity of bringing a large public-private backed cultural facility to completion. Paladino also noted the financing complexities required to make the project happen, stating that "it would be virtually impossible for a private company to do what we were able to do" (Makin, 2017). The project involved multiple government,

nonprofit, and institutional partners across eight distinct financing mechanisms (Bergeron, 2017), further demonstrating the level of public and institutional support required to bring a facility of this scale to communities. Since the building's opening, there has been limited published news on challenges, although in 2025 a joint interview with leaders of both the NBPAC and the neighboring State Theatre New Jersey revealed some struggles within the community. Sarah Chaplin, the Executive Director of the State Theatre New Jersey recognized that there are financial barriers to arts attendance within the immediate community as both facilities are part of the same performing arts district. In response, the State Theatre developed subsidized ticket programs for low-income patrons. The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center did not address this issue in the same interview (Hernandez, 2025).

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION

This chapter addresses the research question: "what placemaking and economic impacts could the Marymoor Arts and Science Center have on the surrounding community?", through the comparison of three comparable centers, the: Patricia Reser Center, Clay Center, and New Brunswick Performing Arts Center. Developed in support of OneRedmond's due diligence process for the MASC, this analysis is not intended to project specific outcomes or evaluate project feasibility. Instead, it situates the MASC within broader community and economic effects that comparable facilities have documented or anticipated under favorable conditions, therefore suggesting the range of impacts the MASC might have.

5.1 Interpretation of Findings

To better understand the three comparable centers: Patricia Reser Center, the Clay Center, and the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center; a Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT) framework is applied to evaluate each center's dynamics more easily (Figures 19, 20, and 21). These factors are identified to understand what conditions shaped each facility's community and economic impacts, which can be used to inform the MASC project.

Reser Center – Strengths

Within its first few years of operation, the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts demonstrated several strengths. The facility serves as an anchor of the City of Beaverton's Arts and Innovation District, a planned mixed-use area surrounded by complementary uses including restaurants, lodging, and housing. Its proximity to the Beaverton Central MAX Light Rail Station supports regional accessibility, facilitating audience access throughout the Portland metropolitan area. An additional strength is based on the Center's programming partnerships with local cultural organizations. Nearly every event that is not directly presented by the Reser is co-presented with a community organization. This diversity of programming includes Cuban music, Bangladeshi theater, Marathi musical theater, and Arabic language education among others, which illustrates an intent to serve a diverse range of community members rather than a narrow set of demographic groups.

Reser Center – Weaknesses

The Reser Center's weaknesses largely revolve around being a relatively new organization and financial sustainability. The Center's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan, identifies staffing capacity as an area of concern, suggesting the current personnel levels have been insufficient to meet the growing demands of the organization's programming (Patricia Reser Center for the Arts, n.d.-a). The Strategic Plan further suggests that overdependence on a limited range of funding sources, a concern corroborated by the Executive Director Ayzoukian confirmed in a February 2026 interview, in which he noted that most performances are unable to achieve cost recovery without

underwriting or sponsorship (Hayes, 2026). Together these weaknesses suggest that while the Reser Center has demonstrated considerable success in programming that is popular with the community, both its financial model and its organizational infrastructure require further development before the institution can be considered a stable and self-sufficient operation.

Reser Center – Opportunities

The Reser Center is positioned to capitalize on several promising opportunities. The facility's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan expresses a commitment to enhancing Beaverton's profile as a regional cultural destination, which the local tourism industry is supporting. The Washington County Visitors Association pledged \$630,000 to the arts center, recognizing its potential as a tourist destination. The Strategic Plan also identifies workforce development as a priority, positioning the Center as a contributor to regional employment generation beyond its programming activity. This training and educational goal provides an opportunity to extend the facility's community impact beyond just programming, but as a further employment generator. The continued development of the Beaverton Arts and Innovation District, within which the Reser Center sits, provides another opportunity. As the city advances its mixed-use development agenda, the Reser Center stands to benefit from an expanding network of complementary uses, increased neighborhood attractiveness and growing base of regular patrons with increased housing density. Given the center's established role as a neighborhood anchor, the City is well positioned to leverage this cultural identity to attract further investment to the area.

Reser Center – Threats

The Reser Center faces several threats with implications for its long-term growth and financial stability. Rising touring artist fees and an increasingly crowded presenting landscape intensify pressure on programming costs. Executive Director Ayzoukian has described the post-pandemic rise in home entertainment, what he refers to as "the couch", as a sector-wide threat to live performances. Another threat to the Reser Center is its financial dependence on lodging tax revenue, a funding mechanism established by the City during the facility's development. As the Center's operating budget is directly tied to local hotel occupancy rates, any decline in lodging demand correspondingly reduces the tax revenue available to support operations. The dependency is further complicated by the 4% lodging tax adopted to fund the center, which made Beaverton the second highest lodging tax jurisdiction in the state of Oregon. Notably, this made Beaverton's total lodging tax rate higher than neighboring Hillsboro and Tigard, whose lower tax rates may attract more hotel guests. The resulting rate difference may place Beaverton at a disadvantage in attracting hotel guests, thereby eroding the very tax upon which the Reser relies. This dynamic introduces a self-reinforcing vulnerability, the fiscal mechanism designed to sustain the Reser Center may simultaneously suppress hotel occupancy, generating a cyclical decline that undermines both the hospitality sector and the cultural institution dependent upon it.

Figure 19 displays the SWOT analysis of the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts.



Figure 19 - SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts

Clay Center – Strengths

Over the course of more than two decades of operation, the Clay Center for the Arts and Sciences has demonstrated several distinct strengths. As one of the few facilities in the United States that integrates performing arts, visual arts, and science in one building, this range of programming is a unique characteristic that few comparable institutions can match. The

combination of arts and science is central to the facility's mission, which frames the fusion as "the most holistic way of understanding the world around us" (Clay Center, n.d.-b).

The Clay Center also demonstrates strong board engagement and financial stewardship. Ninety-eight percent of the board's 74 members participate in annual giving, with their cumulative contributions representing over 22% of the center's operating support. This reflects a high level of personal investment. This level of financial commitment suggests that stewardship of the facility extends beyond being merely a governing obligation.

Over time, the Clay Center has become more than just a place for arts and science learning — it has framed itself as being embedded in Charleston and West Virginia's cultural identity. The Center's Strategic Roadmap characterizes the facility as a symbol of civic aspiration amid the state's economic challenges, including population decline and the contraction of the coal industry. More significantly, the Clay Center has demonstrated a capacity for institutional adaptation. Following a substantial decline in attendance between 2004 and 2016, due to minimal changes in programming and exhibits, the center undertook a \$10 million renovation campaign that not only reversed this trajectory but produced attendance numbers surpassing initial peaks by 2019. This ability to adapt and evolve has likely led to the Clay Center's longevity and could continue to prove critical in the years to come.

Clay Center – Weaknesses

The Clay Center's weaknesses are concentrated primarily in its financial position and surrounding land-use context. The 2023 Form 990 reveals a \$3.4 million gap between revenue

and expenses, raising substantive questions regarding the institution's long-term fiscal sustainability. Compounding this concern is the Center's vulnerability of funding dependency. In 2016, the phasing out of operating support by a private foundation resulted in a \$400,000 shortfall in donations and grant revenue, directly resulting in the elimination of two community programs. This case illustrates the institutional fragility that can arise from concentrated reliance on a limited number of major funding sources.

The Clay Center differs from the Reser Center and the NBPAC by its land-use context. Unlike those facilities, the Clay Center operates as a standalone asset rather than as an anchor within a planned mixed-use district. It lacks proximity to high-capacity rail transit, with bus service representing the only public transit option. While the Clay Center is located within a broader downtown area that includes other entertainment uses, the absence of intentional, high density clustering strategies limits the district-level pedestrian activity from which the other two comparables benefit.

Clay Center – Opportunities

There are several opportunities that the Clay Center can build upon. The center's 2015 capital campaign yielded \$8 million beyond its \$10 million renovation, with the surplus designated for future facility upgrades, demonstrating its recognition that periodic improvements are needed to sustain attendance over time.

An economic impact study conducted by Marshall University found that approximately 9% of Clay Center visitors originate from out of state, with more recent data showing that 13,000 of

145,000 visitors in 2022 traveled more than 75 miles from Charleston. This established tourism source represents an opportunity that can be grown, especially given the facility's distinctive combination of performing arts, science museum, and planetarium that few comparable institutions can offer.

The Clay Center's community outreach initiatives present an opportunity to extend the institution's reach to those who do not have the means to travel. The Clay2Go mobile museum serves 10,053 students across 11 counties and the Adopt-A-School program provides complimentary access to Title I schools. Through these efforts, the Clay Center can reach additional counties and underserved communities across the state. These already established relationships and programming models provide meaningful access to communities that could benefit from a cultural facility, yet do not have adequate time or money to reach one.

Clay Center – Threats

The Clay Center faces several threats to its long-term stability. The center's history suggests that sustained attendance is contingent upon ongoing programmatic and physical revitalization. Attendance fell from approximately 102,000 in 2004 to 56,000 in 2016 when programming and exhibits remained largely unchanged for over a decade. While the subsequent renovation campaign successfully reversed this decline, the threat remains if the center fails to maintain a commitment to continuous innovation.

Another threat is the loss of major funding sources, primarily from major private foundations and donors. The withdrawal of support from the Clay Foundation in the mid-2010s resulted in direct programming cuts. If similar financial relationships end, further downsizing may result. The

broader socioeconomic context of Charleston and West Virginia constitutes a structural threat that warrants particular attention. West Virginia's median household income is below the national average, which limits the pool of residents who can regularly afford discretionary spending such as tickets and memberships to plays and museums. If the broader economy experiences shocks such as recessions, the Clay Center's revenue may be disproportionately affected, rendering the center increasingly dependent upon philanthropic contributions from donors and foundations (sources that have been vulnerable themselves) even more critical.

Figure 20 displays the SWOT analysis of the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts.



Figure 20 - SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the Clay Center

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center – Strengths

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center has several notable strengths. The most distinctive is the mixed-use character of the building itself, which integrates several complementary uses within a single structure. These include two theaters, rehearsal spaces, 207 residential units that include affordable housing for artists, 30,000 square feet of office space for arts and cultural programs, and a 344-space parking garage. This mixed-use programmatic integration represents a strength not shared by the other comparables, which rely more heavily on neighboring sites for complementary land uses.

The facility further benefits from its proximity to the New Brunswick Station, located less than half a mile away. The station serves NJ Transit's Northeast Corridor Line and Amtrak, connecting it to the broader region.

The NBPAC has an eight-partner ownership structure with both public and private entities. This broad base of ownership ranges from government, university, nonprofit, and private sectors, embedding the facility in the community. The NBPAC is anchored by four resident companies providing consistent, diverse, and high-quality programming. These include classical and contemporary ballet through American Repertory Ballet, plays and musicals through George Street Playhouse, Tony Award-winning African American theater through Crossroads Theatre Company, and undergraduate and graduate arts programs through Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts.

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center – Weaknesses

NBPAC's primary weakness is its status as a relatively new institution, having opened in 2019. Unlike the Clay Center, which has had over two decades to establish deep community integration, the NBPAC has had limited time to mature, a trajectory further disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic, which interrupted in-person gatherings shortly after opening. The facility likely has other weaknesses, but due to its unique ownership structure and limited time in operation, publicly available disclosure documents were limited. For example, nonprofit institutions such as the Clay and Reser Centers are required to release 990s, something the NBPAC is not required to file. As a result, the NBPAC assessment of weaknesses is thinner than the other two comparables due to this documentation gap, not necessarily because it faces fewer challenges.

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center – Opportunities

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center is positioned to capitalize on several promising opportunities. The facility's transit-oriented location is a significant asset for the regional audience. Its proximity to New Brunswick Station, served by both NJ Transit's Northeast Corridor Line and Amtrak, enables convenient access for visitors traveling across the northeast. US. Middlesex County Freeholder Director Ronald Rios expressed this vision during the 2017 groundbreaking, describing the NBPAC as "a destination for people from all over the Northeast Region". The Center's partnership with Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts presents another opportunity for growth. The availability of the facility's production spaces has already facilitated the development of a new musical theater program at Rutgers generating

faculty employment and establishing an educational pipeline for emerging arts professionals. Strengthening this connection with Rutgers would benefit both the NBPAC and the broader arts labor market in the region.

New Brunswick Performing Arts Center – Threats

The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center faces several external threats. The State Theatre New Jersey, a historic 1,800-seat venue that has operated since 1921 is located directly adjacent to the NBPAC. While the clustering of these two facilities may generate collective benefits for the surrounding arts district, the State Theatre’s longevity and established profile position it as an enhanced competitor for both audience members and donor support. Another threat is financial barriers within the community that could affect attendance. In a 2025 joint interview, State Theatre Executive Director Sarah Chaplin acknowledged financial barriers to arts attendance as a challenge within the district. This led the State Theatre to create subsidized ticket programs for low-income patrons. While this was acknowledged by the neighboring theater, the NBPAC is in the same market area and is likely affected similarly by local economic conditions that would cause a drop-off in ticket sales.

Figure 21 displays the SWOT analysis of the Patricia Reser Center for the Arts.



Figure 21 - SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) Analysis of the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center

Synthesis and Volunteer and Staff Analysis

Several cross-cutting patterns emerge from the three comparable institutions. Each facility has formal institutional relationships with its surrounding communities: the Reser operates under an ownership agreement with the City of Beaverton, the Clay Center benefits from strong financial contributions from its board members, and the NBPAC functions within a multi-partner public-

private governance structure. Each of these ownership models demonstrates the mechanisms through which each center has been formally embedded within its respective community.

A common challenge across each institution is financial sustainability. The Reser Center's structural dependency on lodging tax revenue, has caused concern as most performances require external sponsorship to achieve fiscal viability. The Clay Center is currently carrying an operating deficit despite being an established asset in its community; additionally, the NBPAC's surrounding community faces financial barriers to arts attendance, as evidenced by the neighboring State Theatre's development of subsidized ticket programs.

Proximity to transit also emerges as a shared characteristic. Both the Reser Center and NBPAC both benefit from nearby high-capacity rail access, while the Clay Center is served by bus lines. This pattern suggests that access to public transit is important for accessing cultural facilities and may even be a contributing factor for their success.

The reliance on volunteer labor to supplement paid staff represents a fourth recurring theme. As shown in Table 4 in Chapter 4, the Reser Center has 127 volunteers supporting 44 paid employees, a ratio of approximately 3 volunteers per staff member. The Clay Center has 130 volunteers supporting 93 employees, a ratio of 1.4 volunteers per staff member. Volunteer data was not publicly available for the NBPAC. This scale of volunteers may suggest: 1) volunteers can keep staffing costs manageable for cultural facilities that are not always financially self-sufficient and 2) cultural centers are often able to draw in a significant number of community members, reinforcing the place attachment and civic ownership themes documented across all three institutions.

5.2 Implications for the MASC

Analyzing the demographics of the 25-minute drive time areas of the three comparable institutions and the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, as shown in Figure 11 in Chapter 4, reveals different socioeconomic contexts as summarized in Table 5. These demographic differences help explain varying approaches to community engagement, programming, land-use surroundings, job creation, and tourism, across the institutions and inform the implications considered for the MASC project.

Table 5– Demographic Comparison of 25-Minute Drive Time Areas¹

Institution	Reser Center	Clay Center	NBPAC	MASC
Population (2025)	1,017,341	167,232	967,129	834,815
Median Household Income (2025)	\$108,517	\$61,990	\$111,408	\$156,274
% Went to live theater in last 12 months (2025)	14.52%	9.98%	12.91%	15.99%
% Went to museum in last 12 months (2025)	20.86%	13.07%	12.91%	23.53%
% White population (2025)	66.38%	84.01%	39.03%	52.01%
% Black population (2025)	3.62%	7.70%	11.96%	3.70%
% Hispanic population (2025)	26.34%	1.76%	26.34%	8.10%
% Asian population (2025)	10.54%	1.40%	23.62%	30.47%
% Two or more races population (2025)	11.87%	5.74%	10.27%	9.89%

Demographic variables from ArcGIS GeoEnrichment Service, by Esri, 2026

(<https://www.arcgis.com>)

Community Identity

The findings suggest that cultural institutions generate strong placemaking impacts when programming and design reflect the communities they serve. The developer of the New Brunswick Performing Arts Center framed the building as payback for the arts community, recognizing all that the artists have contributed to New Brunswick. The Crossroads Theatre

¹ Hispanic or Latino is an ethnicity category that overlaps with other racial categories in this data set. Population totals may exceed 100%.

Company, as one of the four resident companies at the NBPAC, ensures African American cultural expression is embedded into the facility's core programming. Similarly, the Reser Center demonstrates how a cultural facility can serve as a shared space for the different ethnic groups within its surrounding area with its commitments to Cuban music, Bangladeshi theater, Marathi musical theater, and South Asian storytelling. The Clay Center positions itself as a symbol of aspiration for residents navigating economic decline, illustrating how such cultural buildings can rally people even in challenging contexts. Across all three comparables, placemaking impacts appear strongest when the facility prioritizes the existing community.

The MASC could pursue a similar approach in Redmond. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that 40.3% of Redmond residents identify as Asian (U.S. Census Bureau, 2024). Within the immediate Marymoor Village neighborhood, both a campus of the Evangelical Chinese Church of Seattle and a mosque (the Muslim Association of Puget Sound) are near the site, representing some of the differing religious and cultural communities in the area that the MASC could serve. A robust community integration would include programming and formal partnership opportunities with these and other religious and cultural organizations in the surrounding area. Beyond these immediate neighboring institutions, the broader Redmond community reflects a significant South Asian population. One in ten residents identify as being of Indian origin specifically, a population that has been reported to have grown substantially alongside the local tech sector (Jones, 2014). The Reser Center's inclusion of Marathi musical theater and Asian American immigrant storytelling provides a direct parallel that the MASC could incorporate, reflecting the identities of significant portions of the community. Semilla Flamenca, Eastside Dance, the Lake Washington Symphony Orchestra, Columbia Choirs of Greater Seattle, VALA Arts, and Expressions Arts are among the over 100 organizations that have already engaged with

the early stages of the MASC, demonstrating that an existing arts community is present and shows interest in the facility. A particularly meaningful opportunity to express a local community's identity is through partnering with tribes, expressing Indigenous history and culture through programming, exhibitions, and food. The Duwamish Tribe has endorsed the project following engagement with OneRedmond, which is further reinforced by the City of Redmond's zoning incentives for tribal recognition within Marymoor Village. The literature establishes that in settler-colonial contexts, placemaking often erases Indigenous presence. The MASC is an opportunity to reverse this pattern by centering Indigenous culture as a foundational element of the facility's identity.

Programming Diversity

The most directly comparable programming model to the proposed MASC is the Clay Center, with its integration of performing arts, visual arts, and science within the same facility. This combination of arts and science is central to the Clay Center's mission which states it is "the most holistic way of understanding the world around us". The MASC's design has elements that closely match the Clay Center, suggesting its programming can also serve audiences across age groups and interests. The MASC is proposing a 1,200-seat theater, 250-seat children's theater, 120-seat planetarium, classrooms, and maker-oriented learning spaces. The Clay Center has a 1,900-seat performance hall, a black box theater, a children's museum, an art museum, and a planetarium. Redmond's strong STEM presence, including Microsoft's corporate headquarters and a space industry cluster that produces over half of the satellites currently in Earth's orbit, suggests that science programming at the MASC could resonate with a community made up of

professionals and families connected to those fields. A pattern documented across the three comparable institutions is that programming is deliberately shaped to reflect the interests and identities of the surrounding community. While the Reser Center and NBPAC do not have science programming, they do have multi-disciplinary arts programming that engages diverse audiences, which is still an applicable approach that the MASC can similarly adopt.

Equitable access to programming represents a strategic consideration that both the Clay Center and Reser Center address that the MASC would benefit from incorporating in its planning. The Clay Center's Clay2Go mobile museum initiative serves 10,053 students across 11 West Virginia counties, and its Adopt-A-School program provides transportation, free admission, and lunches to Title I schools. Similarly, the Reser Center has free and lower-cost programming as one of its strategic priorities, with free monthly lobby activations for children and reduced-price ticketed lab experiences at \$10, reflecting efforts to broaden socioeconomic access.

These models demonstrate how cultural facilities can expand accessibility across socioeconomic groups. If equitable access is a priority, the MASC could consider similar strategies. Although the immediate Redmond market area is relatively affluent, there are lower-income areas such as in nearby South King County, that a mobile outreach program similar to Clay2Go could serve effectively. Analogous free or discounted ticketing models to those implemented at the Reser Center could also be adopted.

The Reser Center's prioritization of children could be considered in the context of the MASC's programming strategy. The facility's 250-seat children's theater and planetarium both provide dedicated spaces for school field trips or family-oriented programming throughout the week.

Land-Use and District Clustering

The comparable institutions demonstrate that cultural facilities can create district-level placemaking effects when integrated with intention and careful planning that takes account of the surrounding social, cultural, and spatial context. Spatially this includes proximity to mass transit, housing, and complementary commercial uses. Socially and culturally, it includes programming partnerships with community organizations and design choices that reflect the identities of residents. The MASC's proposed site in the Marymoor Village neighborhood presents a clustering context, that while sharing some similarities, is currently in an earlier stage of development, with significant opportunity to emerge as a distinctive cultural district as the neighborhood transforms.

As shown in Figure 22, the MASC site is directly adjacent to the Marymoor Village Light Rail Station to the north and the 640-acre Marymoor Park to the west, with the park also wrapping around the southwestern boundary of the Marymoor Village neighborhood. The light rail station mirrors the transit adjacency documented at both the Reser Center and NBPAC, connecting the MASC to the broader regional network. The adjacency to mass transit would provide a cheap and convenient method to reach the facility. While the Reser Center benefits from a public plaza between the facility and the MAX Light Rail Station, and the NBPAC has Monument Square Park across the street, neither approaches the scale or regional attraction of Marymoor Park, which already draws in a significant number of visitors through its bike/walking trails, sports facilities, outdoor concert series, and seasonal events such as Cirque du Soleil. With its current proposed location, the MASC would sit at the nexus between the park and an emerging urban center, creating a unique opportunity to capture visitors already drawn to the area and extend engagement into indoor arts and science programming year-round.

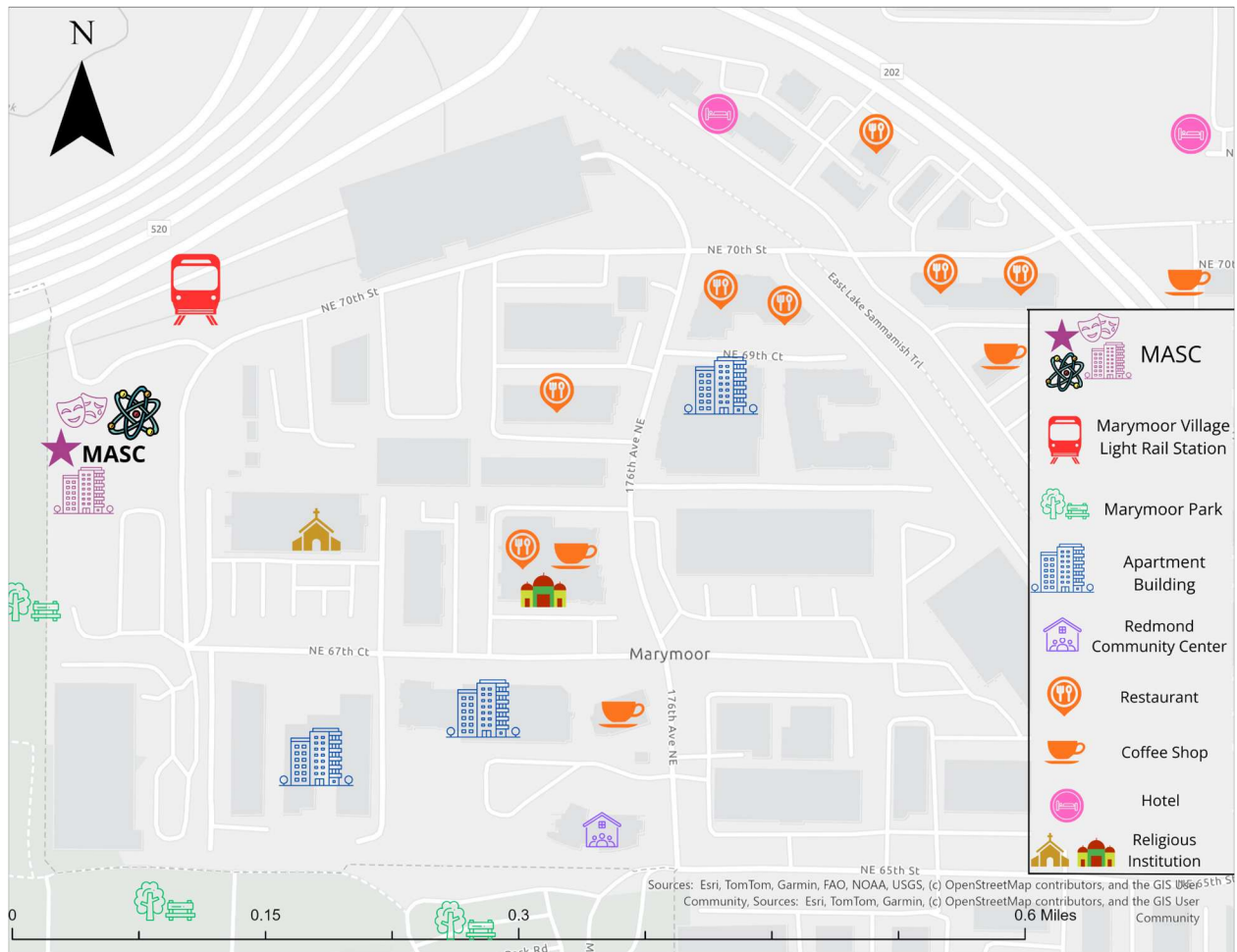


Figure 22 - The proposed site of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center and current complementary surrounding land-uses (Duncan Fields, 2026, OpenStreetMap)

Within a half mile of the proposed MASC location there are currently three apartment buildings, four restaurants, two coffee shops, one hotel, the Redmond Campus of the Evangelical Chinese Church of Seattle, the Muslim Association of Puget Sound (a mosque), and the Redmond Community Center. Just beyond a half mile from the site, there are three additional restaurants, two coffee shops, and a second hotel. The Redmond Town Center is a mixed-use commercial hub including dining, healthcare, hotel, and entertainment businesses. The Town Center is also a short walk from the Downtown Redmond Station, located one light rail stop to the north. The

existing urban landscape already shows early indicators of land-use clustering of buildings that would be complementary to an arts and science center. Currently the park, community center, church, and mosque offer space for community gathering and cultural activity. These can be complementary land-uses as they also generate foot traffic and create community relationships. The MASC could add to this community fabric, serving groups not yet represented in the area's existing institutions while also providing additional programming space for communities already present. While the development intensity is currently more modest than the established urban districts that the Reser Center and NBPAC are within, this reflects the beginning of a land-use environment that a facility like the MASC could both benefit from and anchor as the neighborhood continues to develop. The Reser Center and especially the NBPAC are surrounded by denser land-use clustering. The New Brunswick Performing Arts Center, for example, has 12 restaurants, 6 apartment buildings, and multiple civic uses within several blocks, including the State Theatre New Jersey and Rutgers University facilities. For the Marymoor Village area to grow into a comparable level of clustering, more mixed-use residential and commercial development would need to occur, consistent with what is envisioned through the City of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan for the area.

The Marymoor Core area, in which the MASC site is located, is largely light industrial. However, the City of Redmond has designated this area for transit-oriented mixed-use redevelopment through its Comprehensive Plan updates, identifying it as a priority location for entertainment, education, housing, and employment uses in mixed-use buildings. This suggests the area surrounding the MASC site will likely undergo significant redevelopment and densification in the coming years.

The Reser Center in Beaverton, Oregon offers a potential foreshadowing of how a similar scenario may unfold if the Marymoor Arts and Science Center is built in Redmond. The Reser Center was strategically used as an anchor institution for the city's Arts and Innovation District. The city is now actively seeking mixed-use residential development with ground-floor commercial spaces on nearby sites, framing these developments as attractive opportunities due to the nearby arts center. The MASC could have a similar opportunity to potentially define the character of what the Marymoor Village could become.

A concern with large-scale cultural venues is whether they generate active, vibrant environments throughout the day or function more like stadiums, where there is intense activity during events, but remain largely inactive otherwise. The MASC could avoid inefficiencies by leveraging its capacity to host a wide variety of programming throughout different times of day and the week. The building could accommodate field trips or conferences during weekdays, family-oriented programming and private venue rentals on weekends, with performance events during evenings, producing a distributed pattern of use that minimizes periods of inactivity.

This multi-use activation pattern is present at the Clay Center with its ability to host programming across its museums, planetarium, and performance halls. While the NBPAC and Reser Center operate with a less diverse typology of spaces, their venues are well utilized with the NBPAC hosting over 250 performances annually and the Reser Center maintaining consistent activity throughout the week by combining performances and instructional programming. The MASC's housing component introduces another opportunity for consistent vibrancy of the space. Residents living on site and next door ensure human activity is present regardless of scheduled programming, making the facility more than purely an event destination.

Employment

The comparable institutions collectively demonstrate that cultural facilities generate employment both directly through in-house staffing and indirectly through multiplier effects that extend throughout the local economy. Based on the comparables, the Clay Center most closely approximates the MASC in terms of programming scope, combining arts and science elements such as multiple performance venues and a planetarium. As the MASC matures and expands its operational capacity, a workforce of comparable scale may represent a plausible long-term trajectory. The Reser Center, which is still in its early years of operation, currently reports 44 employees, with its Strategic Plan identifying staff capacity as a current constraint, suggesting further growth is anticipated.

Volunteers can represent a significant dimension of community involvement in the MASC, supplementing paid staff. The Reser Center and Clay Center document volunteer-to-staff ratios of approximately 2.89 and 1.4 volunteers per staff member respectively. This suggests that if the MASC can attract similar levels of volunteer engagement as the comparable institutions, a substantial volunteer base could develop. Given the reported workforces at the comparables and if the employee and volunteer demand is similar, the MASC could expect to support between 44 and 93 direct employees as it matures, with a volunteer base outnumbering employees, potentially exceeding 100 volunteers. This estimate is based on a limited sample size and the total actual numbers will likely fluctuate throughout the life of the facility.

Beyond direct employment, the MASC would create further employment opportunities through multiplier effects. The Marshall University economic impact study of the Clay Center provides insight into how this mechanism could function for the MASC. The study found that the Clay

Center and West Virginia Symphony Orchestra together supported 379 total jobs, with 312 direct jobs generating 67 additional jobs in accommodations, food service, retail, and professional services. Although the MASC operates in a different economy than Charleston, West Virginia, the multiplier mechanism described in the Clay Center study is broadly consistent with patterns established in the broader literature on cultural facilities economic impacts. At the state level, ArtsFund reports that Washington’s arts sector is robust, supporting 191,245 jobs and contributing \$70.2 billion to the state economy (ArtsFund, 2025). A facility of the MASC's proposed scale could contribute to this strong sector while generating its own multiplier effects in Redmond and surrounding communities.

Workforce development represents an additional way the MASC could contribute to the regional labor force. The Reser Center's 2025-2028 Strategic Plan has a goal of preparing the next generation of arts workers, reflecting a programmatic commitment to cultivating emerging professional talent. Similarly, the NBPAC's partnership with Rutgers University's Mason Gross School of the Arts has created a workforce pipeline through its new musical theater program, which would not have existed without the facility's production spaces. The MASC would have an opportunity to partner with local arts organizations, universities, community colleges, and STEM organizations to create similar workforce education programs such as theater production or astronomy programs.

Visitor Spending and Tourism

Visitor spending and tourism represent another potential economic impact of the MASC, which is directly connected to the multiplier effects discussed in the above employment section. The

Marshall University economic impact study of the Clay Center found that approximately 9% of visitors were from out of state, spending an estimated \$190,000 annually of which about 70% was spent at restaurants and hotels. Through multiplier effects, the out-of-state visitor spending generated an additional \$110,000 throughout the West Virginia economy. More recent data from the Clay Center's 2022 impact report confirms a similar pattern of out-of-area visitors persists with 13,000 of 145,000 attendees traveling more than 75 miles. Redmond is actively densifying and has direct light rail connectivity to the broader Seattle metropolitan region, including the Seattle-Tacoma International Airport. These conditions suggest the MASC could generate visitor spending patterns equal to or exceeding what the Clay Center documented, although a dedicated economic impact study would need to be conducted to confirm.

Several specific contextual characteristics reinforce this tourism potential. Redmond's ten existing hotels provide lodging infrastructure for overnight visitors. State Route 520, which serves 124,000 daily users, connects to I-405 and I-5, which gives access to much of the Puget Sound region by car. This highway also passes by the site, creating passive awareness among drivers traveling through the corridor. The adjacent Marymoor Village light rail station would connect the MASC to the growing regional transit network, making it accessible to riders from Seattle, Bellevue, Lynnwood, Federal Way, and other communities along the current 1 and 2-Lines. The light rail connection allows travelers who are visiting the region easy access to Redmond for MASC programming, while simultaneously providing those who stay in Redmond hotels easy access to other cultural and tourist destinations across the broader Seattle area.

A distinct opportunity for the MASC is its potential to function as an all-season cultural destination, as the comparable institutions demonstrate with their year-round programming models. In doing so, it would complement Marymoor Park's primarily outdoor and

spring/summer programming as it would activate the district with cultural events year-round. During the summer months, a visitor could attend an evening concert at Marymoor Park, spend the following day at the MASC's planetarium or watch a performance in one of the theater spaces, stay overnight at one of Redmond's hotels, and still light rail to downtown Seattle — all within the same trip. A facility like the MASC would advance the City of Redmond's Comprehensive Plan policy EV-22, which is to grow Redmond as a tourism destination. The timing is particularly relevant as the city transitions toward an urban future as envisioned in Redmond 2050.

5.3 Equity Considerations

The MASC's housing component could address several equity concerns related to placemaking. As the Marymoor Village neighborhood densifies and redevelops, risks include displacement of lower-income residents, exclusion of artists from living near the cultural facility where they work, and the MASC becoming an amenity that benefits only higher-income community members. Without an intentional housing strategy, the MASC could become a cultural amenity that serves visitors while pricing out the arts community it seeks to support. The NBPAC's 207 residential units, including affordable housing for arts workers, illustrate how housing can embed a creative community within the surrounding neighborhood, rather than simply providing a venue for traveling performers. Mark Sharp, the Operations Manager of the NBPAC, highlighted this dynamic when he said that "artists live above us, around us, and come in to work here every day."

Unlike neighborhoods where the SoHo effect has displaced existing artists as redevelopment intensified, Marymoor Village is currently mostly light industrial, with presumably few resident artists in the area. Rather than protecting an existing arts community from displacement, the MASC and its housing component could create a new one. The area's existing light industrial spaces could potentially be converted into artist studios and workshops, providing the production spaces artists need in close proximity to where they live and perform. Maintaining strict artist and affordable housing requirements would ensure this creative community would remain as the neighborhood transitions and property values rise.

The governance structure of cultural facilities determines who has a voice in operations and whose interests they serve. The comparable case studies document a range of governance approaches through which cultural facilities can structure themselves to remain accountable and responsive to their communities. The Reser Center operates under a lease agreement with the City of Beaverton, an arrangement that preserves public ownership of the facility, while delegating management to a nonprofit arts organization, with the city retaining formal oversight. The NBPAC's eight-partner public-private ownership structure distributes oversight across government, university, nonprofit, and private sector stakeholders. The Clay Center, by contrast, is anchored by a large board of directors with a strong financial presence, with contributions accounting for over 22% of the center's operating support.

As OneRedmond works toward establishing an independent 501(c)(3) to oversee the MASC's operations, these cases represent a range of approaches through which a cultural facility can formally embed itself within its community. Determining how the MASC will establish institutionalized relationships with the City of Redmond, local organizations, and the public will be central to ensuring long-term sustainability and legitimacy as a public cultural asset.

5.4 Challenges and Pitfalls

While the findings suggest the MASC could have potential for meaningful positive effects under favorable conditions, the case studies reveal several challenges worth considering. Financial sustainability emerges as a common challenge for cultural facilities, as documented across all three case studies. At the Reser Center, most performances are unable to achieve fiscal viability without sponsorship revenue. The Clay Center carries a multi-million dollar operating deficit despite over two decades of operation and strong community support. The NBPAC's financial barriers to arts attendance among the surrounding population limit earned revenue potential from local ticket sales. This suggests a sector-wide pattern in which cultural facilities require contributed income from donors, government sources, and endowments, to sustain operations beyond what earned revenue alone can support.

These patterns are reflected in the MASC's own regional market in similar ways. The Bellevue Arts Museum, located in an adjacent city, ceased operations in September 2024 following multiple years of funding instability in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. Executive Director Kate Casprowiak Scher attributed the closure to an unsustainable financial model, stating that the museum "has relied too heavily on 'one-time' big donors" (Pfalzer, 2025). This case is similar to the Clay Center's experience when the Clay Foundation phased out its operating support, causing program cuts.

Another Bellevue example is the Performing Arts Center Eastside, a proposed large-scale multipurpose theater intended to serve the Eastside of King County. Despite repeated efforts to

advance the project the development stalled with no substantive progress despite multiple attempts to revive the project including under a different name, the Tateuchi Center. The Pacific Science Center in Seattle presents another illustration of sustainability pressures confronting established regional institutions: despite its long operational history and recognized community standing, the organization recently divested its IMAX theater to generate capital for facility improvements, providing another example of how long-standing regional institutions can face sustainability pressures that require difficult tradeoffs (Ward, 2026).

While the MASC has unique elements that differ from the other cases such as its mixed arts and STEM emphasis, along with housing integration, these local cases demonstrate that an innovative idea and community support do not necessarily guarantee financial sustainability. The governance and funding model for the MASC remains to be determined and will be a critical factor in its success.

Specific pitfalls from the case studies provide lessons for the MASC. The Clay Center has demonstrated that cultural facilities cannot remain operationally or programmatically static after opening. A decade without major renovation was associated with an attendance decline from 102,000 to 56,000, ultimately necessitating a \$10 million capital investment campaign to reverse. This experience shows the importance of budgeting for ongoing capital reinvestment from the beginning, beyond the initial construction phase, as stagnant exhibits and programming risk producing sustained declines in attendance and earned revenue.

The Reser Center's Strategic Plan identifies its staff is at or over capacity as a current weakness. This suggests that cultural institutions, especially newer, maturing facilities, should plan to gradually ramp up staffing levels as demand for programming grows.

The proliferation of home entertainment options is a competitive threat that the MASC, similar to other institutions, will need to address. Building a dedicated audience base early and developing strategies to further engage patrons could be solutions to this industry-wide issue. The post-pandemic rise of home entertainment can also be addressed through programming that cannot be replicated from one's home television such as large-scale spectacles, immersive planetarium experiences, hands-on exhibits, and community events that bring people together.

Rising touring artist costs documented at the Reser Center, the closest facility to the MASC from the comparables, constitutes an additional financial risk. To hedge against this, escalating programming expenses should be budgeted to account for potential rising talent costs.

Prioritization of community co-presentations and local resident companies as documented at both the Reser Center and NBPAC could offset these rising costs as well since it reduces reliance on touring productions, which carry additional costs that locally sourced programming would not necessarily have to incur.

The Clay Center's experience with the Clay Foundation's withdrawal and the Bellevue Art Museum's closure demonstrates the institutional vulnerability associated with concentrated funding dependency. To mitigate against analogous risks, the MASC should prioritize the development of diversified revenue streams, including membership programs, corporate sponsorships, government funding, and endowments. The Clay Center's model of strong board giving, with 98% of board members contributing over 22% of operating support, offers one example of how diverse investment structures can buffer against the loss of any single funding source. Government partnerships, such as the City of Beaverton's ownership model with the Reser Center, provide another layer of financial stability beyond what a solely nonprofit-operated facility could achieve. While there are high-profile companies within the Eastside and

broader Seattle markets that can be major funding sources, their support is not guaranteed and even if secured initially, may not be sustained over time. Broader financial support through community membership programs and government partnerships at the building's financial core could be a more reliable and less volatile approach, treating major corporate donors as supplementary rather than foundational revenue sources.

Chapter 6

CONCLUSION

6.1 Conclusion

The Marymoor Arts and Science Center could provide a significant opportunity for Redmond. Nationally, 76% of Americans feel that arts and culture are important to them, helping to build strong communities and bring joy to their lives, yet only half of Americans believe everyone in their community has equal access to arts (Paguaga, 2024). The MASC has the potential to help address this gap by bringing arts and science to the Eastside, an area that has long relied on Seattle for large-scale cultural experiences. Combining arts and science programming within one building would offer the community a rare and effective category of public space, with the Clay Center being among the only comparable facilities across the country that offer integration at a similar scale.

While economic growth is not the primary purpose of cultural facilities and should never be the determining factor of their existence, this research does document real positive impacts. Jobs get created both within the center and throughout the economy. Visitors travel for these experiences and also patronize other businesses in the area. The MASC could be in a good position to achieve these benefits, especially considering its potential location adjacent to Marymoor Park, connected to the expanding LINK Light Rail network, and surrounded by hotels, restaurants, and

a densifying mixed-use neighborhood. The comparable institutions demonstrate that outdoor public spaces adjacent to cultural facilities can extend activation beyond the building itself. This is documented at the Reser Center where the adjacent plaza is actively used for programming. With 640 acres, Marymoor Park offers a far greater outdoor area than any of the comparables, suggesting the MASC could function as part of a unique indoor/outdoor cultural hub in a way no comparable institution can match. For a city transitioning toward an urban future, the MASC has the potential to be a defining civic anchor, providing the kind of shared cultural infrastructure that transforms a neighborhood into a community.

6.2 Limitations

While this research offers meaningful insights into the potential community and economic effects of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, several limitations should be acknowledged. One limitation is that the Marymoor Arts and Science Center is currently in the conceptual and due diligence phase. As a result, this thesis is being written under the assumptions made of the current plan, which will almost certainly change to some degree. This research is evaluating potential outcomes based on comparable facilities, none of which will be perfect cases, therefore limiting the strength of any claims resulting from these findings.

A further limitation is this study relies on secondary data sources, such as economic impact analyses, city reports, and academic literature. The findings of this thesis are dependent on the validity of the original sources. Placemaking in particular is difficult to quantify, with findings being largely qualitative and subjective.

Depending on the length of time some of the comparable facilities have existed, long-term impacts may not have fully come to fruition. This may lead to findings that could be relevant at one point in the MASC's lifetime, but not during another.

The scope of this study is limited to two impact areas of study — placemaking and economic impact. This was done as a conscious decision to focus on more social and community aspects, but as a result other important outcomes are not being explored. These other effects include aspects of public health, environmental sustainability, regional competition effects, traffic, and long-term policy implications.

My perspective carries an inherent research bias, as I am being mentored by staff at OneRedmond. I also hold a general disposition in favor of arts, culture, and learning. To mitigate these biases, I ground my findings in evidence drawn from comparable institutions and established literature.

Although this study draws on literature and documentation from comparable cases to anchor its analysis on the MASC, the risk of overstating anticipated benefits cannot be fully eliminated. A similar risk applies to the analysis of comparable buildings and their surrounding geographies. Contextual details — such as local history or the particular qualities that distinguish each community — may be overlooked. Given my considerably greater familiarity with Redmond and the broader King County area than with the other regions where comparable sites are located, oversimplifications in those comparisons are possible.

6.3 Future Research Directions

This study examined the placemaking and economic impacts of cultural facilities comparable to the Marymoor Arts and Science Center through document analysis from both primary and secondary sources. Several dimensions identified through the findings and literature warrant deeper investigation than was possible within the scope of this research.

More precise quantitative estimates of economic impacts could be conducted utilizing formal input-output models. One such example is the IMPLAN economic assessment software used by the Marshall University study of the Clay Center, which could yield more rigorous projections of employment generation and visitor expenditure attributable to the MASC. The literature documents that real estate value appreciation is a significant placemaking outcome associated with cultural facilities. This dimension was not examined in the present study, but could be relevant given the City of Redmond's planned redevelopment and densification of the Marymoor Village neighborhood. While this study documented a range of civic ownership structures across the comparable centers, a dedicated analysis of which organizational models would be most appropriate for the MASC represents a substantive avenue for future research. While OneRedmond has engaged with comparable institutions as part of its due diligence process, additional firsthand insight into the operational strengths and challenges of these facilities would enrich the background needed to guide the MASC's development.

Several additional important topics were not addressed within the scope of this study but should be considered as the MASC moves forward. The continuation of rigorous feasibility analysis is critical as this research does not assess financial or operational feasibility. Systematic analysis of these dimensions will be essential as the project advances further towards implementation.

Parking infrastructure and demand is another consideration that was not examined in this study. Although the MASC is planned as a transit-oriented development, there may be a number of patrons who access the facility by private vehicle. A thorough assessment of parking demand and supply in the Marymoor area will be an important part of the project's feasibility.

Environmental sustainability should have dedicated research attention given the MASC's adjacency to the 640-acre Marymoor Park and the City of Redmond's sustainability goals. Unlike the comparable institutions examined in this study, the MASC would border and directly interface with a large regional park. A cultural facility of this scale may affect the park's ecosystem if careful and deliberate planning does not occur. Future research should analyze how the building's operations, including increased foot traffic, event-related noise, lighting, and stormwater runoff could affect the park's natural areas. Additionally, research should be conducted exploring how design and programming can strengthen the connection between the MASC and the park, treating them as complementary assets rather than separate destinations.

Finally, upon a successful opening, the commissioning of formal post-occupancy impact studies, similar to the Marshall University study on the Clay Center, would provide empirical data on the facility's actual community and economic contributions over time. Such research would serve a dual function: informing the continued operational development of the Marymoor Arts and Science Center, while simultaneously contributing to the broader body of knowledge in the field of cultural facility planning.

Appendix A

City of Redmond’s July 2024 Economic Development Strategic Specific actions from Strategies 3F and 3G within Focus Area 3 that are particularly relevant to the proposed MASC (City of Redmond, 2024):

- *Action 3F.1. Work closely with the Redmond Arts and Culture program and commission to connect and convene Redmond's creative community and support their continued growth.*
- *Action 3F.2. Work with partners to develop a comprehensive marketing strategy to leverage the community’s arts, culture, and innovation sectors and promote Redmond locally and nationally with a focus on showcasing the creative community.*
- *Action 3F.3. Engage the creative community to better understand the support and space needs of arts and culture organizations and individual artists in Redmond.*
- *Action 3F.4. Cultivate projects and partnerships that foster collaboration and business support between the creative community, arts and cultural organizations, and local technology companies.*
- *Action 3F.5. Collaborate with community partners to plan for and support the creation of a dedicated sizable indoor cultural and arts venue in Redmond.*
- *Action 3G.1. Continue efforts to develop and offer diverse and inclusive arts, recreational, and cultural programming that draws visitors to Redmond.*

- *Action 3G.2. Support Redmond's Tourism Program and the Tourism Strategic Plan to align the City's tourism efforts for economic impact.*
- *Action 3G.3. Leverage and promote Redmond and the surrounding area amenities to attract increased visitation (including Marymoor Park, Woodinville Wine Country, Sammamish Valley, and Lake Sammamish).*
- *Action 3G.4. Leverage corporate tourism visits for future business investment in Redmond.*

Appendix B

Comparable Institution Drive Time Area Demographics

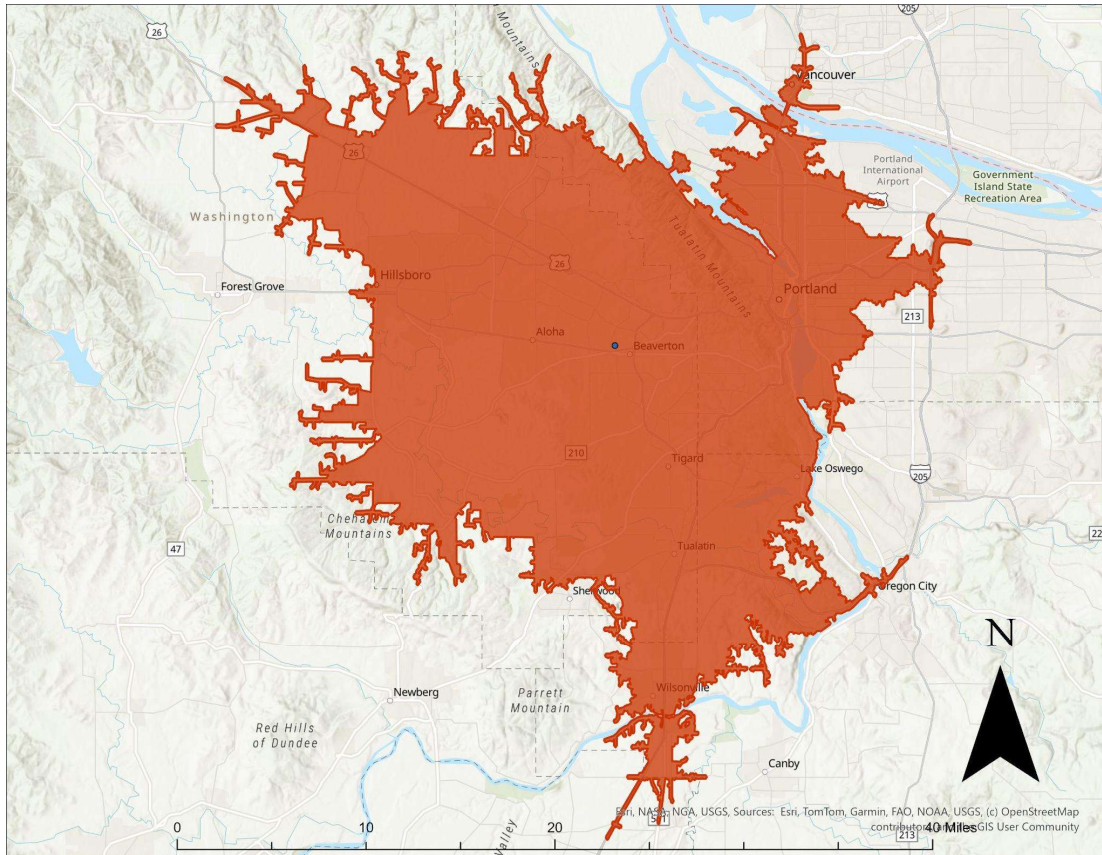


Figure 23 – Reser Center 25-Minute Drive Time Area

Demographic Summary	2020	2025
Population	986,654	1,017,341
Households	414,894	429,888
	2023	2025
Median Household Income	\$102,324	\$108,517
		2025
Median Net Worth		\$259,410
Net Worth Index		114

Educational Attainment 2025	Number of Adults	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	271,135	36.40%
Graduate/Professional Degree	171,507	23.03%
Total	442,642	59.43%

Product/Consumer Behavior 2025	Adults	Percent	MPI
Performing Arts			
Attended classical music/opera performance/ 12 mo	48,781	5.86%	133
Attended dance performance in last 12 months	37,976	4.57%	110
Went to live theater in last 12 months	120,747	14.52%	125
Museum/ Fine Arts			
Went to museum in last 12 months	173,480	20.86%	130
Went to art gallery in last 12 months	122,743	14.76%	135
Popular Music			
Attended country music performance in last 12 mo	47,558	5.72%	94
Attended rock music performance in last 12 months	106,569	12.81%	118
Arts Participation			
Played musical instrument in last 12 months	79,023	9.50%	114
Did painting/drawing in last 12 months	94,160	11.32%	107
Danced/went dancing in last 12 months	70,410	8.47%	108

Table 6 – Reser Center 25-Minute
Drive Time Area Demographics

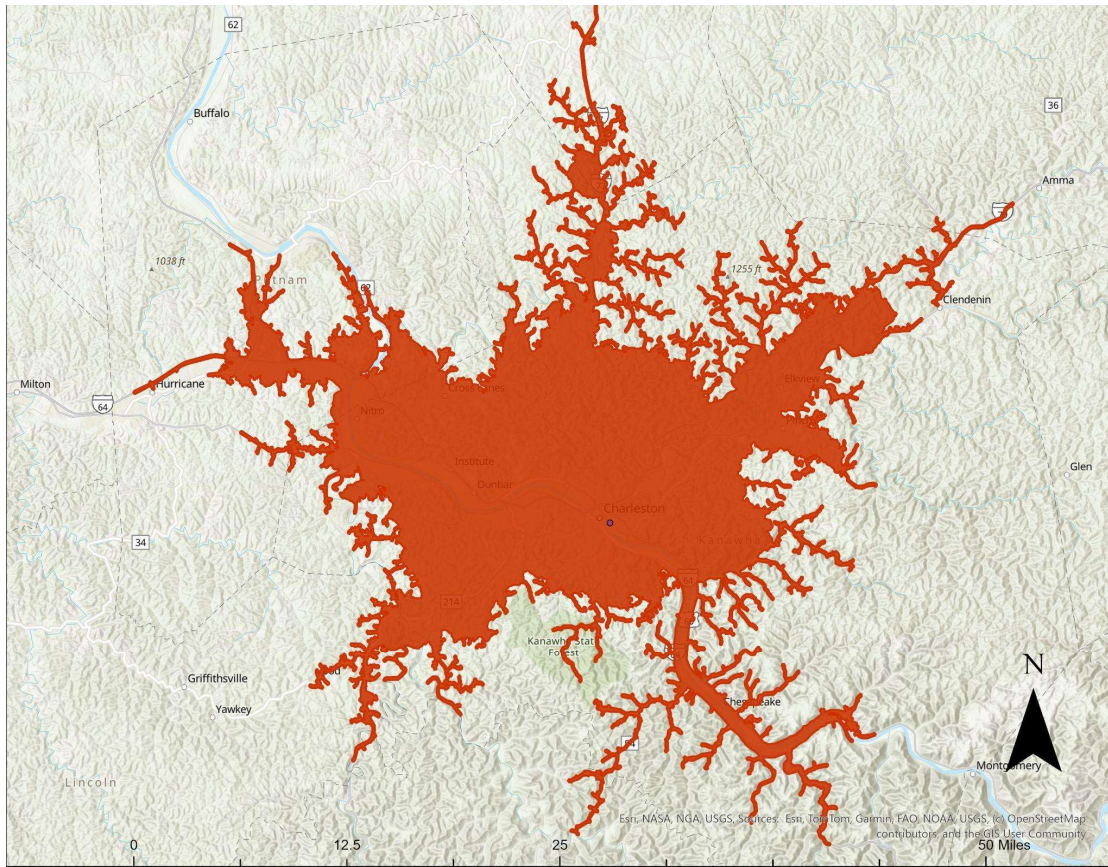


Figure 24 – Clay Center 25-Minute Drive Time Area

Table 7 – Clay Center 25-Minute Drive Time Area Demographics

Demographic Summary		2020	2025
Population		174,142	167,232
Households		76,354	74,777
		2023	2025
Median Household Income		\$61,457	\$61,990
		2025	
Median Net Worth			\$165,948
Net Worth Index			73

Educational Attainment	Number of Adults	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	24,047	19.48%
Graduate/Professional	16,165	13.10%
Total	40,212	32.58%

Product/Consumer Behavior 2025	Adults	Percent	MPI
Performing Arts			
Attended classical music/opera performance/ 12 mo	5,148	3.78%	86
Attended dance performance in last 12 months	5,069	3.72%	90
Went to live theater in last 12 months	13,596	9.98%	86
Museum/ Fine Arts			
Went to museum in last 12 months	17,796	13.07%	82
Went to art gallery in last 12 months	12,367	9.08%	83
Popular Music			
Attended country music performance in last 12 mo	9,211	6.76%	111
Attended rock music performance in last 12 months	14,020	10.30%	95
Arts Participation			
Played musical instrument in last 12 months	10,376	7.62%	91
Did painting/drawing in last 12 months	14,052	10.32%	97
Danced/went dancing in last 12 months	8,708	6.39%	82

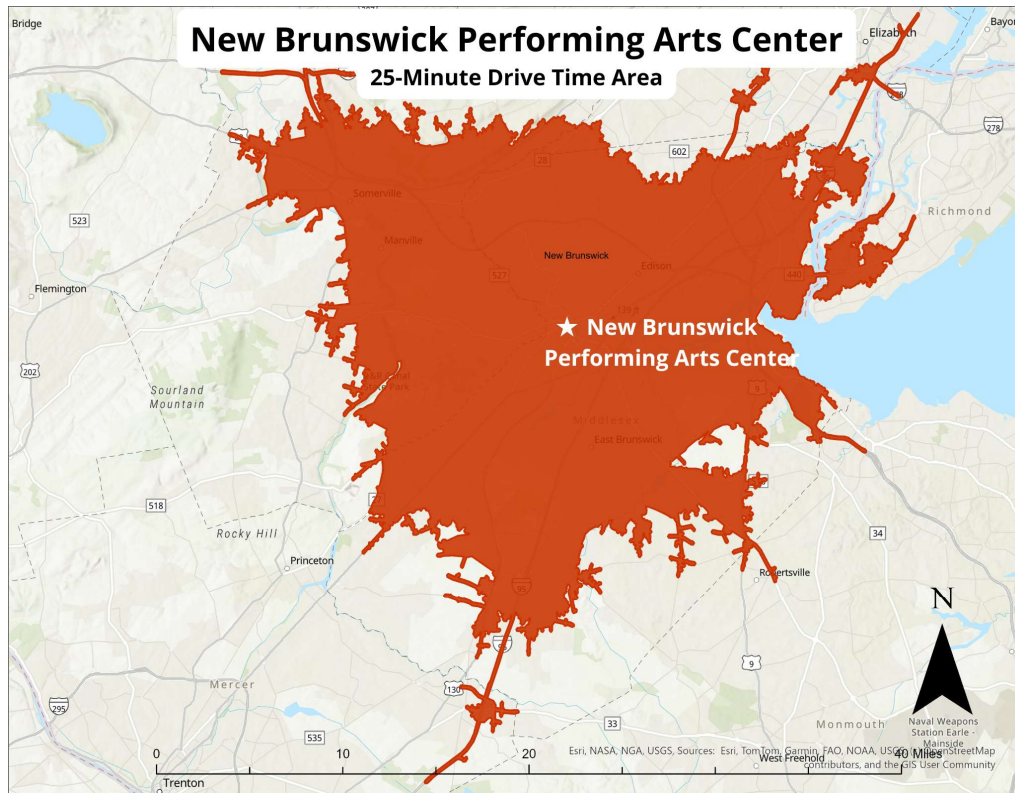


Figure 25 – New Brunswick Performing Arts Center 25-Minute Drive Time Area

Table 8 – New Brunswick Performing Arts Center 25-Minute Drive Time Area Demographics

Demographic Summary	2020	2025
Population	959,477	967,129
Households	333,116	342,619
	2023	2025
Median Household Income	\$107,885	\$111,408
		2025
Median Net Worth		\$333,332
Net Worth Index		146

Educational Attainment 2025	Number of Adults	Percent
Bachelor's Degree	179,988	26.60%
Graduate/Professional Degree	125,733	18.58%
Total	305,721	45.18%

Product/Consumer Behavior 2025	Adults	Percent	MPI
Performing Arts			
Attended classical music/opera performance/ 12 mo	39,186	5.09%	115
Attended dance performance in last 12 months	32,615	4.23%	102
Went to live theater in last 12 months	99,453	12.91%	111
Museum/ Fine Arts			
Went to museum in last 12 months	139,745	12.91%	113
Went to art gallery in last 12 months	95,007	12.33%	113
Popular Music			
Attended country music performance in last 12 mo	41,259	5.36%	88
Attended rock music performance in last 12 months	91,742	11.91%	110
Arts Participation			
Played musical instrument in last 12 months	66,855	8.68%	104
Did painting/drawing in last 12 months	81,344	10.56%	99
Danced/went dancing in last 12 months	65,141	8.46%	108

Abbreviations

DEVCO - New Brunswick Development Corporation

Eastside - East King County, WA

MASC - Marymoor Arts and Science Center

MPI - Market Potential Index

NBPAC - New Brunswick Performing Arts Center

NJEDA - New Jersey Economic Development Authority

PACE - Performing Arts Center Eastside

Reser Center - Patricia Reser Center for the Arts in Beaverton, Oregon

STEM - Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics

SWOC - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Concerns Analysis

SWOT - Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats Analysis

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