

2017

Artwalk Maine Summit – Minutes



Kerstin Gilg and Christine Norris
State of Maine
4/24/2017



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Artwalk Maine 2017 Summit **Minutes**

Kerstin Gilg
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04-24-2017

Event date – 04-05-2017

Event time – 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Event location – Coastal Enterprises Inc. at 30 Federal Street. Brunswick, Maine

Lead Coordinator – Kerstin Gilg – Maine Arts Commission
Co-Coordinator – Christine Norris – Maine Arts Commission
Co-Coordinator – Ryan Leighton – Maine Arts Commission
Event Assistance – Priscilla Kelley – Maine Arts Commission
Lead Community Partner – Trevor Geiger – Brunswick Downtown Association
Co-Community Partner – Daniel Wallace - Coastal Enterprises Inc.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Artwalk Maine was started in 2010 with support from the Maine Arts Commission, Maine Office of Tourism and The Maine Community Foundation. The initiative collected information from Maine communities hosting artwalks/ open studios/ gallery crawls, and posted the findings on a dedicated website. In 2011 the Maine Arts Commission took over the administration of the site and became the primary contact for the **Artwalk Maine** Initiative.

Administration of Artwalk Maine consists of managing the website and keeping the information current. At a minimum, checking the site annually (February/ March) and making sure dates and times are accurate for the coming year.

The **Artwalk Maine 2017 Summit** was a half-day event with the primary offering being a four person panel discussion around particular artwalk practices. This was followed by breakout sessions focusing on topics chosen by the sector.

AGENDA

9:00 – 9:30	Doors open, coffee and pastries.
9:30 – 9:40	Welcome remarks and presentation of survey data.
9:40 – 11:15	Panel discussion followed by Q&A.
11:15 – 11:30	Break and room set-up.
11:30 – 12:30	Idea Development Breakout Discussions.
12:30 - 12:45	Idea Development reporting to the group.
12:45 – 1:00	Networking time / end.



Panelists featured at the panel discussion were:

- **Connie Lundquist (Brunswick)**
- **Dinah Minot (Portland)**
- **Cynthia Orcutt (Kingfield)**
- **David Troup (Rockland)**

<p><u>DISCUSSION TOPICS</u> <u>(selected through registration survey)</u></p> <p>1- Growing Your Artwalk 2- Funding Your Artwalk / Measuring Value 3- Selling Artwork at an Artwalk</p>
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ATTENDANCE

The original estimate for attendance was for a total of 30 registered attendees. Having 39 people registered exceeded expectations. Several registrants were unable to attend, but their absence was offset by unregistered attendees arriving on the day.

Attendees almost exclusively consisted of individuals that were directly invited via email. These were artwalk organizers, community leaders in organizations like the Main Street program, and municipal development staff.

Artwalk Communities Registered	Artwalk Communities Not Registered
Wiscasset Rockland Portland Lewiston/Auburn Kingfield Gardiner Damariscotta-Newcastle Brunswick Boothbay Harbor Biddeford - Saco Belfast Bath Bangor Kennebunk Village Artsipelago (Eastport) Bar Harbor*	Augusta Presque Isle Stonington** Quoddy Region** Peaks Island**
*Were unable to attend due to poor weather conditions.	**Communities that do not have a current artwalk, but were invited because they hosted them in the past.

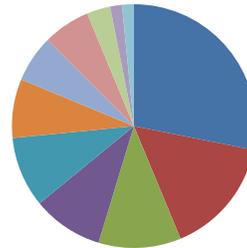
DATA SUMMARY

Pre Conference Questions/ Answers

- 1- Please select three key topics you would like to explore.
- Starting a community art walk
 - Getting funding to support a community art walk
 - Growing the art walk audience
 - Growing the number of artists participating in an art walk
 - Getting the art walk audience to spend more money on artwork
 - Getting the art walk audience to spend more money in the community
 - Determining a measurable economic value for an art walk
 - Building collaborations with other disciplines/ sectors through an art walk
 - Develop easier ways of art walk administration. (volunteer/artist coordination)
 - Creating the best visitor experience at the art walk

1- Please select three key topics you would like to explore.

Top three answers were:
 Growing the art walk audience,
 getting funding to support an art walk,
 getting the art walk audience to spend more.



2- In what town/community is your art walk located?

Artwalk leaders from across the state attended the Summit.

Portland, Rockland, Brunswick, Gardiner, Belfast, Biddeford-Saco, Bath, Damariscotta Newcastle, Eastport, Norway, Kingfield, Lewiston Auburn, Bar Harbor, Wiscasset, Kennebunk, Augusta

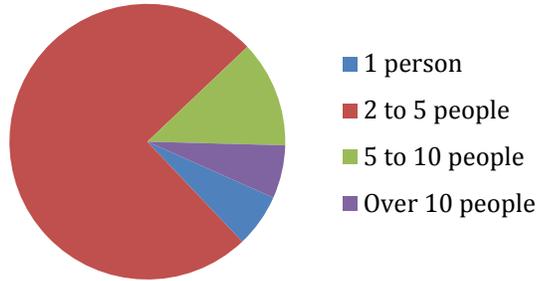
3- In what year was your first art walk held?

Artwalks in Maine began around 2000 in Portland and have increased by one or two communities each year.

- 2000 Portland
- 2000 Rockland
- 2001 Brunswick
- 2005 Gardiner
- 2007 Belfast
- 2007 Biddeford
- 2007 Saco
- 2008 Bath
- 2008 Damariscotta Newcastle
- 2008 Eastport
- 2009 Norway
- 2010 Kingfield
- 2010 Lewiston Auburn
- 2012 Bar Harbor
- 2013 Wiscasset
- 2015 Kennebunk
- 2015 Augusta

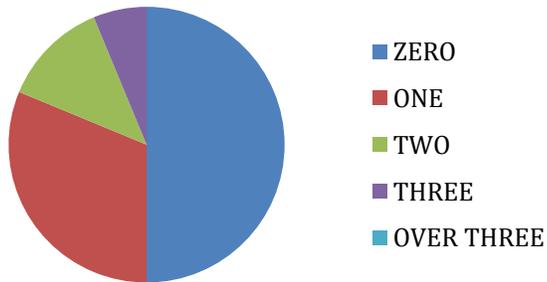
4- How many people are key organizers for your art walk?

Most artwalks are organized by a small group of community members, with smaller communities having fewer organizers and larger communities having more. An outlier on this is Portland – a large community with only one organizer.



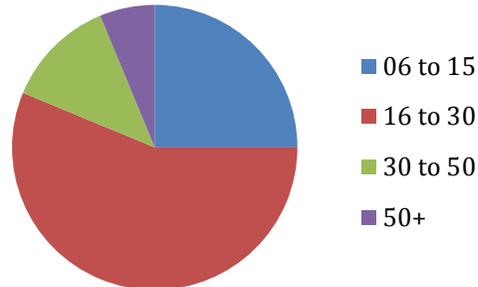
5- How many people are paid to facilitate your art walk?

Half of the respondents indicated that organizing the event is an unpaid position. I could not see a trend and I assume it relates to other community resources that support the artwalk.



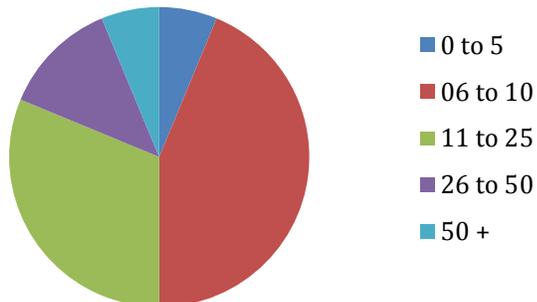
6- How many artists participate in an average art walk in your community?

Artist participation is closely associated with the overall community population size.



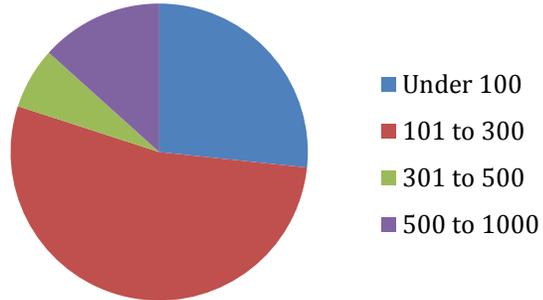
7- Approximately how many arts organizations/businesses actively participate in an average art walk in your community?

Business participation is closely related to overall population, with a few outliers like Lewiston/ Auburn and Wiscasset reporting very high involvement in relation to similarly sized communities.



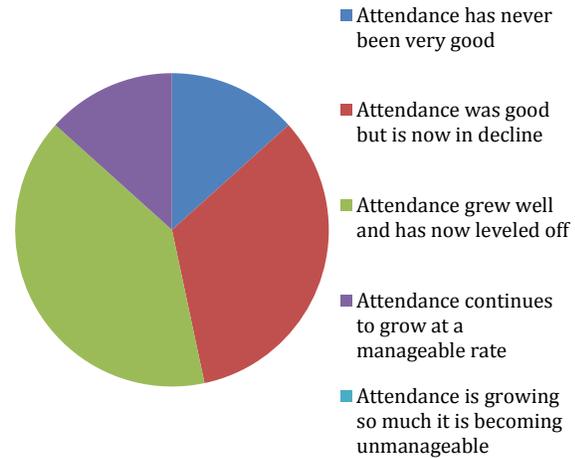
8- How many visitors attend an average art walk in your community?

Attendance to the event is closely associated with the overall community population size.



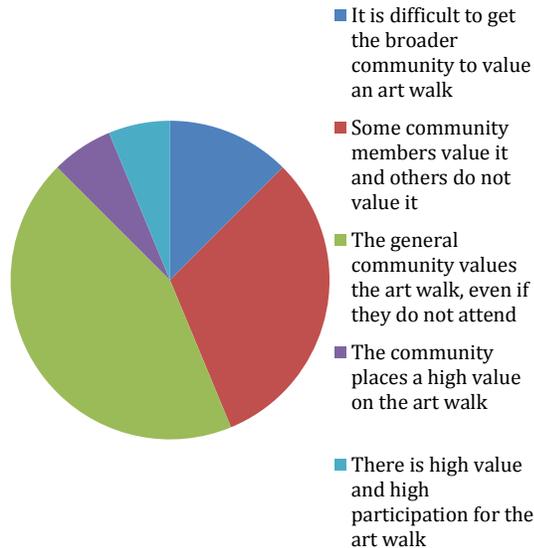
9- How would you describe attendance for your art walk?

There are no indications that artwalks in Maine experience unmanageable growth. Norway and the Damariscotta-Newcastle artwalk reported that attendance isn't meeting expectations, while the majority of events have plateaued or are starting to decline. Rockland and Kennebunk seem to have good growth.



10- How does the broader community value your art walk?

There seems to be a connection between attendance and perceived community value. Artwalks reporting challenges around growth also reporting that the community may not appreciate the event. Wiscasset is the only community reporting a high level of both value and participation.



BREAKOUT DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Of the ten breakout topics offered through the registration survey, the top three selections were Growing Your Artwalk, Funding Your Artwalk/Measuring Value, and Selling Artwork at an Artwalk. At the conclusion of the panel discussion, participants were instructed to move to their first session for 30 minutes, after which they could remain or move to another topic for an additional 30 minutes.

Maine Arts Commission staff and Trevor Geiger of Brunswick Downtown Alliance facilitated each discussion, recorded highlights, and then reported out to the group to close the meeting. Growing Your Artwalk was the most popular choice throughout.



Growing Your Artwalk

Summary

This session was the most attended in both sessions. Good advice was given about ways to leverage what currently makes your community a destination and having that intersect with the artwalk in some way. Strong community collaboration was seen as an important ingredient in a successful event. Physical location logistics also need to be carefully considered for communities that are not particularly walkable, or for multiple communities wishing to collaborate on an event. The general rule was 'it is better to have an amazing small event than an adequate large event'. Success will lead to growth, growth may not lead to success.

What does growing an artwalk mean to you?

- Having a community presence and engaging with the 'whole' community
- Growing the artwalk's location as a destination
- Expanding the volunteer base and event participation
- Strong audience participation and keeping the event fresh
- Making use and expanding the event's physical location
- Increasing the number of even participants each year
- Soliciting event sponsorship



What are the signs of successfully growing an artwalk?

- Strong participation from "both sides" of the event
- Good communication with vendors, participants, event facilitators
- Strong social media presence
- Willingness to spend money on high quality marketing, good graphics, rack cards, etc.
- Event represents all fields of the arts; attracts artists "from away"
- Cross industry collaboration with local farms, craft breweries and other local businesses
- Well organized list of vendors, walking map/ website, etc.

What are the challenges for growing an artwalk?

- Logistics can make or break an artwalk. Location is key. The more spread out the location, the more challenging to put on the event
- Engaging your audience. If the community doesn't support the event, then it won't be successful
- Lack of an artwalk identity often results in loss of participation over time
- Scheduling conflicts/ competing with artwalks/ territorial artists
- Lack of manpower

What are some tips and tricks to growing an artwalk?

- Making use of vacant storefronts, i.e. temporarily renting a space and fill with artists can spur community growth and economic development -Farmington Artwalk
- Provide free food through partnerships with local farms and businesses -Belfast Creative Coalition
- Annual memberships to fund the arts and event expenditures -Belfast Creative Coalition
- Collectively promote artwalk on social media; attract media coverage -Rockland Artwalk
- Have annual meetings with artwalk participants both before and after the season begins and ends -Wiscasset Artwalk
- Make event parking easy and accessible. No matter where it is, make it a party - High Peaks of Maine
- Be inviting, shake hands with your neighbors, form partnerships with local organizations -Wiscasset Artwalk
- A well-organized website and walking map is the most valuable tool for soliciting event sponsorship -Creative Portland
- Give them something different, redefine what the art walk is and capitalize on that brand
- Be open and inviting to everyone, no matter how quirky or unconventional. The broader the platform, the more stable it will be



Funding Your Artwalk / Measuring Value

Summary

Primary discussions focused on the relationship between the event and sponsors. The way artwalks engage a community can be very important to many businesses that also share community engagement as part of their mission/ strategy. Funding models were varied and were predicated on individual community dynamics/ resources/ strategy. However, the artwalk map was identified as a key means of providing value. For Measuring Value it was recommended that organizers create an end of season "Sponsor Report" which could include: clippings of articles in which sponsors are included, copies of promotional materials on which sponsors have a presence, screen-shots of website, social media, etc. and attendee numbers. This will also help track growth over time.

Gardiner:

- \$50 artist fee for whole season (\$30 for part season)
- Business Sponsors pay, but everyone gets on map

Wiscasset:

- Approx. \$3000 annual budget, 1/3 of which comes from fees
- 90% participation from galleries and retail shops in town
- \$50 for physical locations to participate, \$25 artist/one-time event fee
- Sponsors: Banks, Real Estate Agents, & Donations from Residents

Rockland:

- Fees + Sponsorship
- Most of the sponsorship value comes before the event (in form of promotion)
- Arts group AIR (Arts In Rockland) collects fees
- First National Bank as BIG SPONSOR
- Wanted "Community Engagement"
- Employees from Bank act as greeters at Farnsworth and they open the "Front Doors" on Main Street (which are usually closed/used as exit only)

Biddeford/Saco:

- Venue fees of \$100 per season each
- Sponsorships: Local Businesses (esp. Law Offices, Real Estate)

Portland:

- Majority of funding from City TIF fund
- Sponsorships mostly in kind (from media, etc.)

Damariscotta:

- Funding from Advertising & Artists Fees (\$135 each)
- Approx. 30 artists total

Norway Arts Festival:

- \$4000 - \$5000 budget/ 60 – 80 artists
- Exhibitors: \$60 tents on closed down Main St.
- Sponsors: Corporate, banks, local businesses



Selling Artwork at an Artwalk

Summary

A variety of participants were involved in this lively discussion. These participants included; artists, artwalk organizers, and gallery owners. There was a general consensus that having an artwalk is not the best strategy for direct art sales, however it is a good strategy for local public relations and including/educating one's community in the arts.

During both sessions three points quickly stood out:

1. It is important to engage everyone attending the event in an effort to make a personal connection.
2. Offer items with a low price-point for purchase, such as greeting cards or other kinds of reproductions with the artist's work.
3. Collect contact information from visitors so they may be notified of future events.

Selling is not the top priority for some artists, but how do they maximize the potential for future sales?

- Go into an artwalk not expecting to sell work, think of it as a community event.
- Personalize the work and tell the story or inspiration behind it. "Stories sell art." People like to know about the artist and what inspired their work.
- Plein air painters could consider painting on-site to draw people's attention, leading to conversations, and creating a personal connection. This can be a great opportunity to educate art novices about the creative process.
- Engage everyone and take the opportunity to give out business cards.
- Collect information from visitors to follow up with folks who show interest. Send them information about new work or locations it will be displayed.

What are some ways to generate sales at an artwalk?

- Many times patrons want smaller, less expensive items to purchase. These smaller items can provide good exposure for the artist.
- Brick and mortar sellers may do better with larger, more expensive items.
- Serving alcohol can relax folks but too much is detrimental and expensive.
- Clear pricing is important, people can be intimidated by requesting pricing.
- Have a reasonable price point for each piece of work, and increase the price slowly. Pricing by square inch or size is reasonable.
- Artists should not increase prices due to commission charged by the gallery, but galleries may increase prices due to expenses like framing.

What are some things to consider when setting up an artwalk?

- In larger communities, alternating locations of performances can help keep the crowds from concentrating.
- More concentrated areas don't sell as well because of the flow of people.
- Consider a drawing to win a piece of artwork.
- Donate a percentage of sales to a charitable organization may interest patrons.
- Avoid overloading consumers with concentrated areas of paintings, sculptures, etc.