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Protecting, Promoting and Celebrating Key West's Architecture, Culture and Intangible Heritage  
Since 1960

## **UNESCO Designation of Key West in its Global Creative Cities Network**

### **Executive Overview**

Key West has successfully become one of only 2 U.S. cities recommended by the United States Department of State as a UNESCO Creative City (along with New Orleans). The process has been very competitive as no more than two cities from a country are selected in the same are selected in the same cycle.

A "UNESCO Global Creative City" award is a permanent designation with many benefits for Key West as a city that makes culture and creativity a strategic driver for our resilient and sustainable development. When a city receives a UNESCO designation, it sees a surge in visitors eager to experience its cultural significance. The application process for designation has been led on behalf of The City of Key West by Old Island Restoration Foundation, with an Advisory Committee of leading local cultural organizations, along with the support of Monroe County and local educational institutions, County Library, School Board and Literacy Volunteers.

Looking forward, the Key West UNESCO team will operate through a dynamic public-private-partnership, led by a local UNESCO Office that will leverage the expertise, talent and resources of Key West's primary cultural & educational organizations along with infrastructure, resources, private funding, The City of Key West and Monroe County Tourism Development Council.

UNESCO will announce cities designated in UNESCO's Global Creative Cities Network this year to likely begin in conjunction with the City of Key West's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. This announcement will take place as soon as October 31, 2025, but not later than the end of 2025. The Key West UNESCO Advisory Committee will establish an independent UNESCO Office.





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## **BENEFITS TO KEY WEST**

UNESCO designation would enable Key West to:

- Be **promoted through a global network**, sustaining a **national and global boost of recognition** as the first Creative Literary City in the Caribbean and one of only 5 in the Western Hemisphere from the U.S. through South America.
- **Stand out as an international destination** for literature and the creative arts, and the types of visitors and residents **that spend more, stay longer and invest in UNESCO-branded destinations**.
- **Be a more powerful draw** for authors, playwrights, scriptwriters, artists, actors, and musicians to participate in festivals, seminars, workshops and other events.
- **Capitalize on local employment opportunities in the creative fields in Key West for our children**.
- **Improve educational opportunities** through enhanced local programs and partnerships with schools, universities and museums across the U.S. and in other countries.
- **Build sustainable tourism**, with fewer impacts to local police, infrastructure and fragile environmental resources.





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### **UNESCO PUBLIC-PRIVATE-PARTNERSHIP BUDGET**

Because benefits are **economically valuable to chosen cities** in terms of reputation, tourism, and revenue, UNESCO requires an on-going commitment from **private and public sources**.

#### **\$450,000 Annually:**

- \$150,000 City of Key West
- \$150,000 Monroe County TDC
- \$150,000 Private Donated Office Space/Private Organizations

#### **City of Key West: FY 2026**

##### **\$150,000 UNESCO Operations Budget**

- UNESCO OFFICE: \$30,000 fees, taxes, etc.
  - On \$150,000 space @100% donation
- DEDICATED UNESCO STAFF: \$85,000
  - UNESCO Coordinator
- OFFICE EQUIPMENT & SUPPLIES: \$20,000
  - Computers, Printers, Phones, Desks, Chairs, Letterhead/Printing
- UNESCO Annual CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK MEETINGS (Required)
  - Travel: \$15,000
    - 1X per year @ 2 people \$9,000
    - Americas Regional Meetings X 2 \$6,000

