

Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

Executive Summary



Irisol Gonzalez paints at Andriell Terrace for the Urban Arboretum Trail project, 2021. Photo by Ernesto Moreno.

Foreword

Dear Fellow Charlotte-Mecklenburg Residents,

As co-chairs of the City of Charlotte's Arts and Culture Advisory Board and the arts and culture plan steering group, we are thrilled to share the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan—a comprehensive, 10-year plan to sustain and cultivate arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. As Charlotte and Mecklenburg County rapidly grow and change, so does our arts and culture sector's needs and opportunities. This plan was the result of a community-wide effort to identify how we can support and grow arts and culture in, by, and for our community as it evolves.

Arts and culture have long contributed to our quality of life here in Charlotte-Mecklenburg: They bring us together, build understanding, contribute millions of dollars to our local economy, enhance social ties and emotional wellbeing, support learning and innovation, and offer opportunities for both self-expression and professions. The collective vision in this plan gives us a framework for



Cyndee Patterson
Arts and Culture Advisory Board
Co-Chair

how we can ensure a thriving, inclusive and equitable community through arts and culture for the long term. We encourage you to find the places in the plan that resonate most with you and play your role in this journey. If that is in collaboration with your fellow Charlotteans and Mecklenburg residents, so much the better! The plan is meant to be a living document to use, iterate on, and adjust as we go.

We humbly thank the thousands of you who shaped this plan through your participation in meetings, surveys, interviews, and events. We thank the Arts and Culture Advisory Board members, the community steering group, and additional task force members who volunteered hundreds of hours to the development of this plan. Thank you, as well, to the City staff and consultant team for facilitating this massive endeavor.

Now, let's keep it going: The journey is the destination, and we look forward to walking the road together.



Kevin Patterson
Arts and Culture Advisory Board
Co-Chair

Charlotte won my heart in 2018, when I was first introduced to the city and its arts and culture community as part of the team at the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation. Since 2021, I have been honored to serve as the city's first arts and culture officer — a distinct opportunity to become immersed in this very special community and work more deeply and immediately as a member of the community of artists, creative groups, and residents that I serve.

Arts and culture are vital to both the economy and quality of life in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. Arts and culture attract visitors, sustain residents, create jobs, and promote placemaking and place keeping. Arts and culture also are a powerful force for good in our community, providing opportunities for education, civic engagement, entrepreneurship, personal expression, and mutual understanding.

Many Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents know that we have a vibrant arts and culture scene, but there is more work to be done. That's why the City of Charlotte commissioned the development of a community-based, comprehensive arts and culture plan. Charlotte is a city that is proud of its ongoing arts and culture heritage, and the community partners who led development of this plan, including the City of Charlotte, are committed to making it accessible to all.

This plan envisions the future of the arts and culture sector in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. It was developed through a collaborative process led by a community steering group of artists and creative practitioners, arts and culture organizations, community members, business, civic, and philanthropic leaders, and city and county officials and incorporates input from over 3,300 area residents. It outlines a shared vision and a roadmap for achieving a thriving, inclusive, and sustainable arts and culture community that benefits all people in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Realizing the shared vision by implementing this plan is going to take all of us. I thank every person who has shaped this vision and plan, and I look forward to the collaborations — new and ongoing — that will get us to our destination together.



Priya Sircar (she, her, hers)
Arts and Culture Officer

Executive Summary



Vision

A community where all people value, support, and thrive through arts, culture, and creativity.

Philosophy

Arts and culture are essential to our community.

Through arts and culture, we come to know and understand each other. We appreciate our pasts and build a better future together. Through arts and culture, our daily lives vault from existing to thriving.

Arts and culture are vital, and we do not take them for granted. Every person deserves to experience creativity and cultural enrichment. Together, we must cultivate arts, culture, and creativity for everyone.



*ALAANA: The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan uses the racial and ethnic identifiers African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American.

**LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or questioning), Intersex, Asexual and other associated communities. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

The Road to the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

WHY

The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan was created to ensure a thriving arts and culture ecosystem to benefit all in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Numerous local and national studies demonstrate the enormous value of arts and culture to community life in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Benefits include advancing quality of life in more vibrant neighborhoods, generating pathways for social mobility, bolstering economic resilience, and improved physical and mental health.

WHY NOW

Charlotte-Mecklenburg continues to grow and diversify, while grappling with historical and ongoing economic and racial disparities. Cultural equity is a key goal as Charlotte-

Mecklenburg strives to be a 21st-century community with livable neighborhoods, strong connectivity, creative residents, and visitors drawn to its innovative vitality.

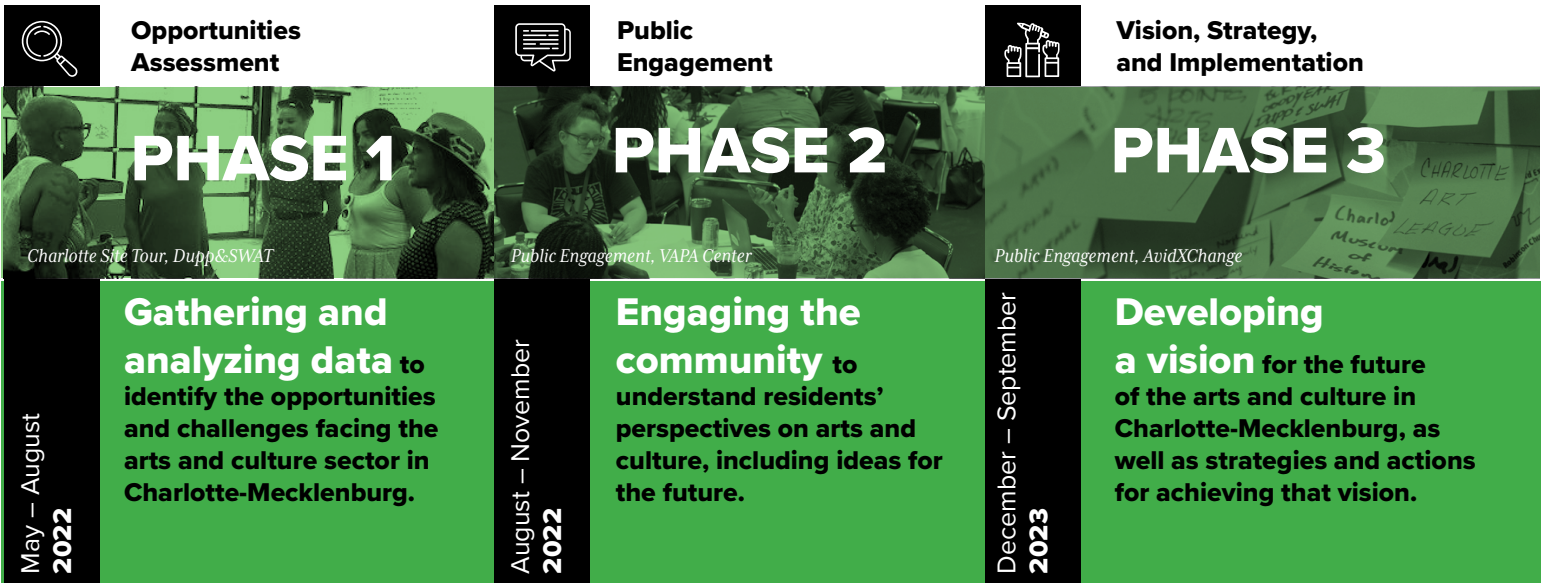
The Charlotte-Mecklenburg area is rich with creative talent, with a history of support from the City of Charlotte (city), Mecklenburg County (county), corporations and private foundations, towns, and individual donors. However, by 2020, a decades-long decline in workplace giving, shifts in corporate philanthropic philosophies, and lagging recovery from economic downturns resulted in significantly reduced revenues to the Arts and Science Council (ASC) and, by extension, reduced funding to arts and culture organizations. The global coronavirus pandemic exacerbated these financial challenges.

To stabilize the sector, the city identified a two-pronged approach:

1. The establishment of the Infusion Fund, a temporary, three-year initiative spearheaded by the City of Charlotte in partnership with the Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) and private donors¹, to sustain local cultural organizations and artists in fiscal years 2022, 2023, and 2024.
2. The creation of this arts and culture plan, which involved a community-engaged process and provides a blueprint to ensure a successful future for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

HOW AND WHEN

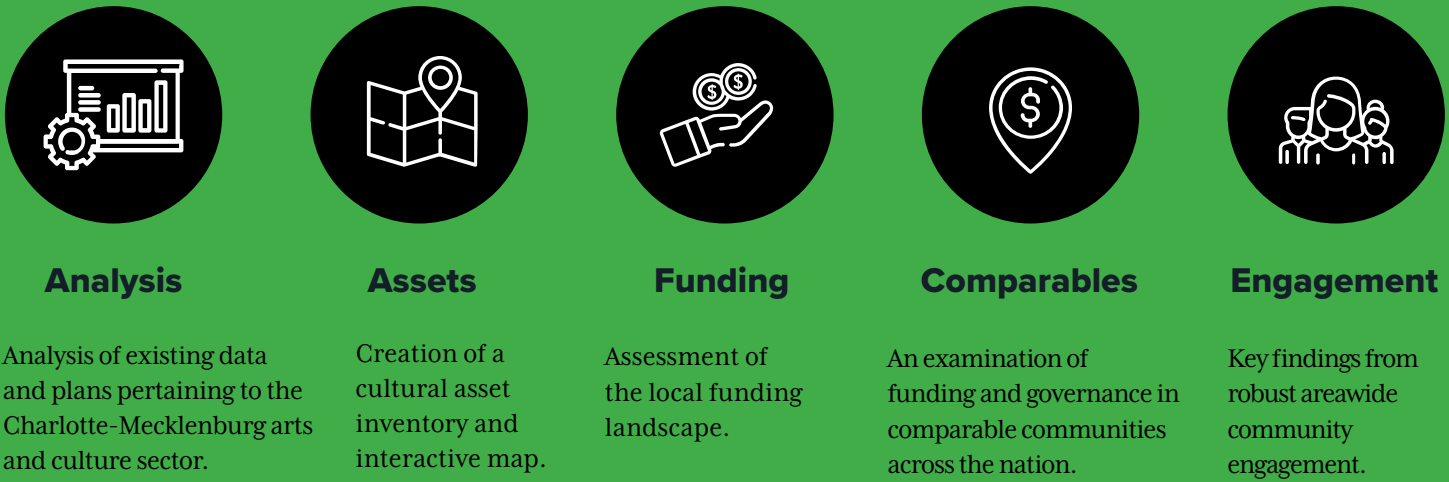
The planning process spanned nearly 18 months, beginning in Spring 2022 and ending in Fall 2023.



¹ Infusion Fund partners

The State of Culture Report was released in February 2023 to provide the results of the extensive data collection and analysis in Phases 1 and 2 of the planning process.

The State of Culture Report laid the foundation for community decision-making with a 360-degree review of the area's cultural environment, including:



WHO: INCLUSIVE PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

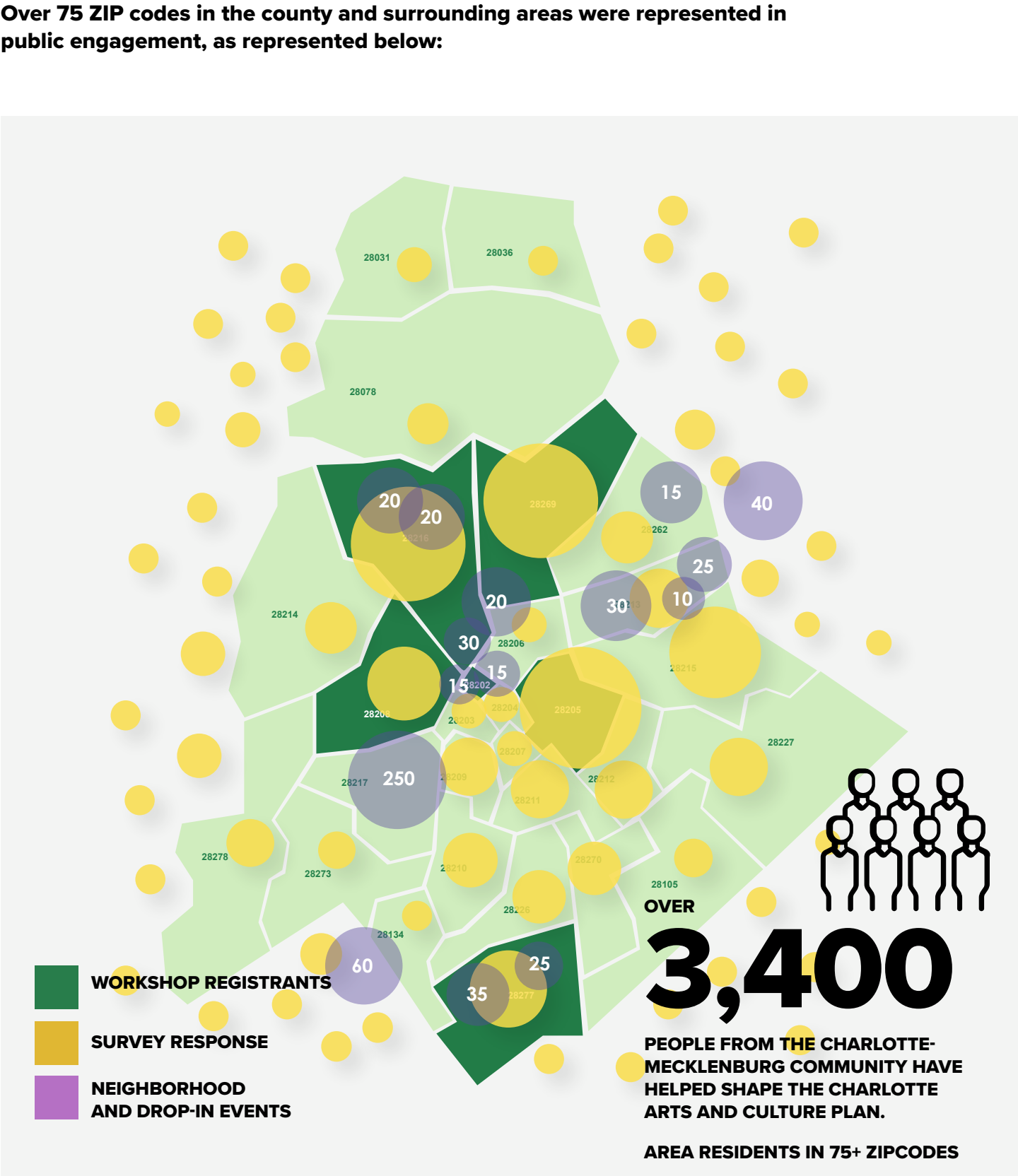
The process was guided by a steering group of 40 community members, including the city's Arts and Culture Advisory Board, to ensure that the future of arts and culture is shaped by diverse voices. The Advisory Board includes representatives from across the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community; half of the board is appointed by Charlotte's mayor and city council, and half of the board is appointed by the Foundation For The Carolinas on behalf of private sector donors, including one appointment by the Arts & Science Council. Additional community members served on taskforces to develop the strategies and implementation activities found in this plan. Altogether, the strategies to realize this plan were developed by over 70 community voices, working together.

The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan's public engagement process was extensive and inclusive and included:

- Countywide meetings
- Online survey of cultural participation
- Community conversations and Do-It-Yourself Toolkits
- Community Ambassadors
- Neighborhood/drop-in events
- Stakeholder interviews
- Sectors workshops
- Digital communication and outreach

The final stages of this planning process included conversations with city council members, staff of the county, city, and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and the public, to ensure clarity and consensus on the contents of this plan.

Public meeting for Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan



STRATEGIES

Strategies for each priority are listed below. In the implementation plan, each strategy is accompanied by detailed actions to achieve the priorities and strategies.

PRIORITY 1

Ensure sustainable and reliable funding for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg through public-private planning, collaboration, and commitment.

Strategies

1. Secure significant, ongoing public sector support — primarily ongoing, annual support from the city and county, with supplemental support from state, regional, and national sources.
2. Foster ongoing/increasing private financial participation.
3. Build organizational development capabilities.
4. Build capacity of organizations and artists/creatives to develop sustainable revenue models appropriate to their respective operating models (nonprofit, for profit, individual). (See Priority 2 re: coordination and implementation of arts and culture plan priorities).

PRIORITY 2

The public sector must partner with an already active private sector to play a leadership role in building Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture ecosystem, including governance and funds delivery.

Strategies

1. Establish and implement a joint, public-private governance structure focused on cultivating a sustainable, thriving arts and culture ecosystem in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
2. Ensure and coordinate ongoing delivery of equitable, accessible, and inclusive funding and services to/for the arts and culture sector.
3. Shift the decision-making for funding and the direction of the arts and culture sector to be more inclusive and transparent.

PRIORITY 3

Equitable, accessible, and inclusive support and funding are critical to advancing, growing, and sustaining *ALAANA , **LGBTQIA+, and other artists and institutions — particularly small and mid-sized organizations — that have been historically marginalized in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture ecosystem.

Strategies

1. As part of the new governance process, ensure that equity goals are defined and progress is regularly evaluated and reported by an external auditing body.
2. Create an ecosystem of funding to support artists and arts and culture organizations at multiple levels or tiers; tiers may be based on the organization's budget size.
3. Provide an application and a grant process designed to engage and attract artists and organizations who traditionally are underrepresented in funding awards to apply for grants.
4. Growth Fund: Create resource (funding and training) pathways for individual artists and small, mid-size and grassroots organizations to advance with mentoring, guidance, and assistance.

PRIORITY 4

Provide access to affordable space for the creation and experience of arts and culture.

Strategies

1. Partner with city/county/private businesses to 1) convert vacant spaces into multidisciplinary art centers and 2) identify/incentivize the creation of arts districts inclusive of all forms of art for creation/rehearsal/ practice/display and experience.
2. Partner with developers and corporations to intentionally build, renovate, incorporate, and operate

*ALAANA: The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan uses the racial and ethnic identifiers African, Latinx, Asian, Arab, and Native American.

**LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer (or questioning), Intersex, Asexual and other associated communities. These terms are used to describe a person's sexual orientation or gender identity.

multidisciplinary art spaces into new construction and existing buildings for practice/rehearsal/creation/display and experiences.

3. Prioritize local artist access and affordability to city-/county-owned public art and non-traditional art spaces (i.e., libraries, schools, parks, houses of faith, etc.).

PRIORITY 5

Eliminate barriers to arts and culture creation and participation.

Strategies

1. Provide tickets and transportation to arts and cultural events.
2. Enable cross-cultural shared collaborations, shared experiences throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and an abundance of diverse, local creative work throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
3. Ensure the resources exist in neighborhoods and communities throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg whereby creatives at all levels are encouraged and supported.

PRIORITY 6

Achieve widespread awareness and visibility of arts and culture through strengthening communication.

Strategies

1. Conduct qualitative and quantitative market research in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to understand:
 - Attitudes of non-participants toward the arts and motivating factors for arts and culture participation.
 - Extent of support by participants and reasons for support (or lack thereof).
 - Perceptions of the value of a vibrant arts and culture ecosystem in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area.
2. Create, implement, and maintain a comprehensive Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture communication plan with revised branding, marketing, and messaging, including social media hashtags or other mediums, in conjunction with the Charlotte Regional Visitor Authority and other regional partners to encourage

increased local participation in arts and culture and to raise national and international visibility of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture offerings.

PRIORITY 7

Foster collaboration and cooperation throughout the creative ecosystem and with other sectors.

Strategies

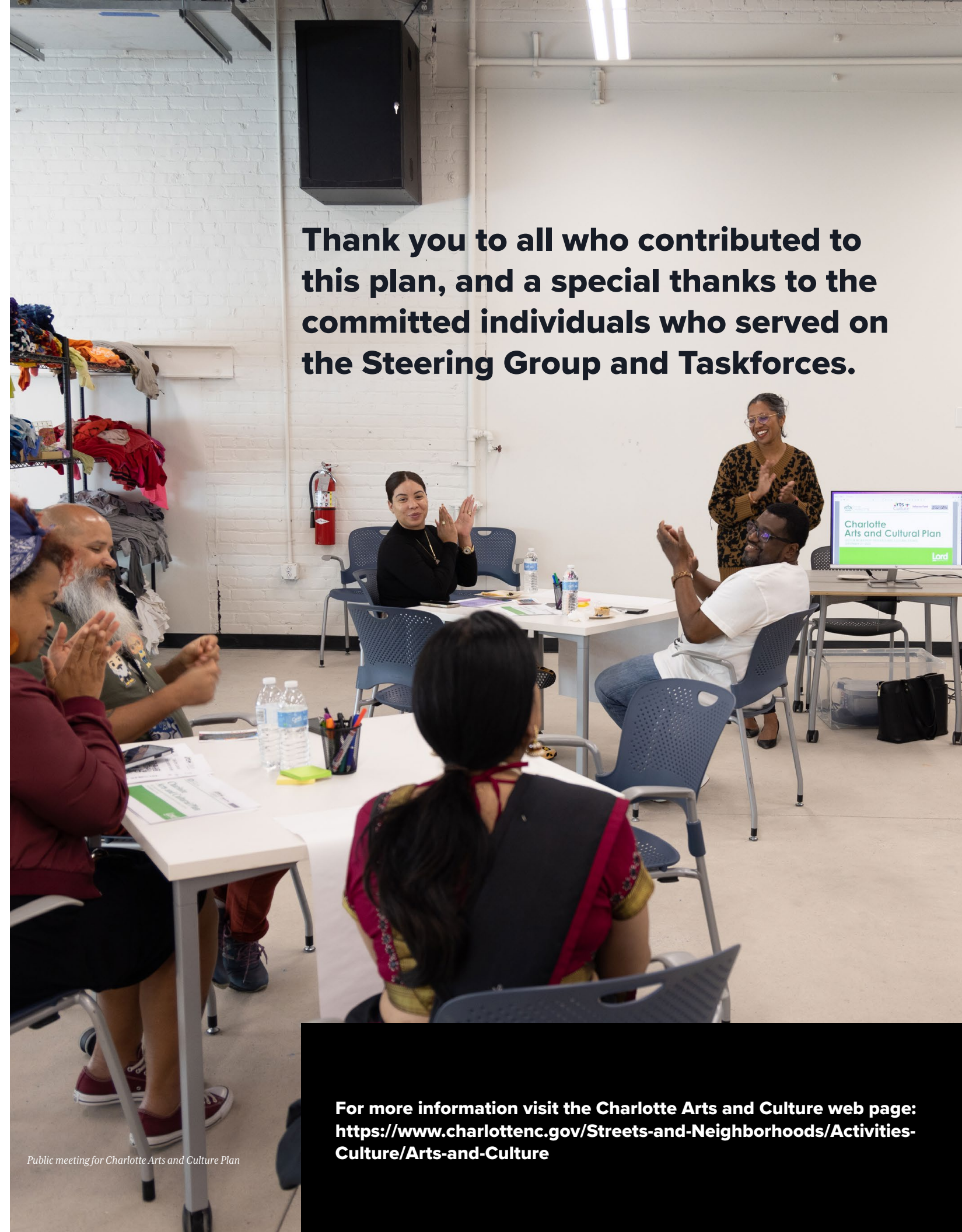
1. Incentivize and enable cross-sector collaborations within the creative ecosystem and with other sectors (such as healthcare, manufacturing, education, social service, etc.) through funding and technical support.
2. Build capacity for collaborations across the sector through networking, infrastructure, and financial resources.

PRIORITY 8

Expand arts education experiences — early childhood to lifelong learners — for greater access and exposure to arts and culture, enhancing quality of life, robust workforce development, and the retention and cultivation of future artists and supporters.

Strategies

1. Articulate and advocate for the value of arts education across all demographic sectors, i.e., all ages, races, genders, ethnicities, geographic locations, etc.
2. Strengthen arts education in all pre-K-12 schools — public, private and charter.
3. Increase support for arts teachers and teaching artists through increased funding, leveraging community partnerships and professional development opportunities.
4. Fortify and expand educational programming from local arts organizations.
5. Create pathways for people to become professional artists, entrepreneurs, and business owners within the creative sectors.



Thank you to all who contributed to this plan, and a special thanks to the committed individuals who served on the Steering Group and Taskforces.

**For more information visit the Charlotte Arts and Culture web page:
<https://www.charlottenc.gov/Streets-and-Neighborhoods/Activities-Culture/Arts-and-Culture>**

Public meeting for Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

Arts and Culture Plan Steering Group

Arts and Culture Advisory Board

- Alleen Barber, Director, Executive Communications, Lowe's
- Charles Bowman, Bank of America President of North Carolina and Vice Chair for Wealth Management in North Carolina (Retired)
- Aisha Dew, Artist, Arts Administrator and Political Strategist
- Julie Eiselt, Former Charlotte City Council Mayor Pro Tem and At-large Commissioner
- Irisol Gonzalez*, Charlotte Artist
- Melody Gross, Domestic Violence Prevention, Courageous SHIFT
- Alvin Jacobs, Jr., Photographer and Activist
- Lex Kimbrough*, Filmmaker, Brave Boy Media
- Su Ping Lu, General Counsel – Securities, Governance and Corporate Finance, Honeywell
- Shefalee Patel, Independent Artist and Community Volunteer
- Corey Mitchell, Arts Educator and Founder/Artistic Director, Theatre Gap Initiative
- Grace Nystrum, SVP, Strategic Market Executive – Charlotte, Global Banking and Markets, Bank of America
- Cyndee G. Patterson, Advisory Board Chair; President, Lee Institute/The Duke Mansion (Retired)
- Kevin L. Patterson, Vice Chair, Arts and Community Board Member

- Pat Phillips, Independent Financial Services Professional (Retired)
- Lisa N. Schoder*, Vice President of Integrated Media and Partnerships, Lowe's
- Charles Thomas, Charlotte Program Director, John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Nick Tosco, Attorney, Poyner Spruill
- April Whitlock, Head of Corporate Citizenship, LendingTree
- Dr. Ricky A. Woods, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church-West

**Former Advisory Board Member, participated in process*

Additional Steering Group Members

- Carla Aaron-Lopez*, Photographer, Printmaker, Curator and Collagist
- Jose Alvarez, Vice President of Prospera-North Carolina
- David Butler, Photographer and Videographer, Hue House co-founder
- Alli Celebron-Brown, President & CEO of McColl Center
- CarlosAlexis Cruz, Associate Professor of Physical Theatre- UNC Charlotte
- MyLoan Dinh, Multidisciplinary Artist
- Charlie Elberson, Insights and Brand Strategy Senior Director, Wray Ward
- Dr. Maha Gingrich, Lead Control Management Officer-Policy and Governance at Wells Fargo
- Lois Inglad, Vice President, Community Engagement & Corporate Responsibility at Atrium Health
- Leslie Johnson, Deputy County Manager for Sustainable Communities
- Manoj Kesavan, Founder and Director of Charlotte BOOM Festival
- Joe Kuhlmann, Owner of The Evening Muse

- Chandra McCloud, Dance Department Chair, Northwest School of the Arts, UNC Charlotte
- Tim Miner*, Co-Founder of Charlotte is Creative
- Tom Murray, CEO at Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority
- Samantha Nevins, Executive Director-Disability Rights & Resources
- Joanne Rogers, Gallery Owner at Nine Eighteen Nine Studio Gallery, LLC, Co-Founder of VAPA Center
- Doug Singleton, Executive Director of Charlotte Ballet
- Kristerpher Smith, Senior Vice President, Strategy & Initiatives Manager at Bank of America
- Bob Stickler, Board member, Charlotte Museum of History
- Krista Terrell, President of the Arts & Science Council
- Marcellus Turner, CEO and Chief Librarian of Charlotte Mecklenburg Library
- Jay Ward, City of Charlotte Inaugural Poet Laureate
- Meg Whalen, Director of Communications and External Relations at UNC Charlotte
- Mike Wirth, Visual Artist, Digital Experience Designer, Muralist, Associate Professor of Graphic Design at Queens University
- *Former Advisory Board Members*
- ### City of Charlotte Staff
- Priya Sircar, Arts and Culture Officer
- Brittany Clampitt, City of Charlotte Communications
- Charlotte Lamb, Strategy and Budget
- Julia Martin, City Manager's Office



Public meeting for Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

