

Arts + Culture

 CITY of CHARLOTTE



Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

Key Findings of Research Analysis

CACP Public Engagement, AvidXchange



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State of Culture Report At-a-Glance

In 2022, the City of Charlotte began a process to create the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan to lay a foundation for strengthening the arts and culture landscape in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.

The year-long process is being undertaken in three phases:

PHASE 1



Opportunities Assessment



CACP Site Tour, Dupp&SWAT

May – August
2022

PHASE 2



Public Engagement



CACP Public Engagement, VAPA Center

August – November
2022

PHASE 3



Vision, Strategy, and Implementation



CACP Public Engagement, AvidXChange

December – June
2023

The plan is being led by a steering group that includes the Arts and Culture Advisory Board, as well as City of Charlotte staff working with a consultant team led by Lord Cultural Resources.

The State of Culture Report does not make recommendations. Instead, it presents consolidated findings from the research and analysis conducted in Phases 1 and 2 of this process. These findings are summarized in eight emerging insights.

An Ecosystem in Crisis

The Charlotte-Mecklenburg area is rich with creative talent. However many stakeholders expressed that the creative ecosystem is on the verge of financial crisis, or even collapse.

The model that funded the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector for many years, which included robust workplace giving, no longer provides sufficient funding, in line with broader national funding trends. This trend is expected to continue due to what many economists believe to be an impending recession.

The 2008 economic downturn exacerbated funding challenges for the sector, as has the COVID-19 pandemic, and audiences are still not at pre-pandemic levels.

Time is running out

Currently, many small and grassroots organizations and independent artists, self-finance their art, which

is unsustainable. At the same time, mid-size and large organizations are also truly vulnerable. **The Charlotte-Mecklenburg area needs to change how it supports arts and culture.**

The Infusion Fund was introduced as a temporary measure to stabilize the sector, but time is running out since the Infusion Fund ends in FY 2024 (June 30, 2024).

culture sector (per the Americans for the Arts Social Impact Explorer tool); losses in arts and culture mean the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area would lose many other opportunities such as talent attraction and retention, education, health and wellness, workforce development, tourism, and more. Enhancing the arts and culture sector would, conversely, create more opportunities in these areas.

A key imperative of the forthcoming Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan is to identify and gain consensus for ongoing investment in arts and culture in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area, from both the public and the private sectors.

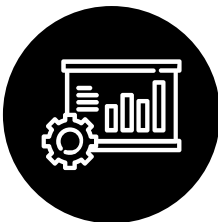
**Why This Plan Now:
What’s at Stake**

There is a real risk that without a dependable, ongoing revenue stream, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector could suffer major losses, with organizations of all sizes failing and artists leaving both the field and/or the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area for opportunities elsewhere.

Research has demonstrated many benefits to having a robust arts and

Everyone in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area has a stake in supporting arts and culture, including philanthropists supporting the sector, audiences attending events and buying tickets, companies and corporations appropriately valuing the contributions of creatives, and government setting arts-friendly policies and allocating sufficient funds.

The State of Culture Report lays the foundation for the planning process with a 360-degree review of the area’s cultural environment, including:



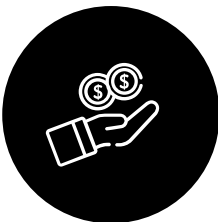
Analysis

Analysis of existing data and plans pertaining to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector



Assets

A cultural asset inventory and map



Funding

A funding assessment



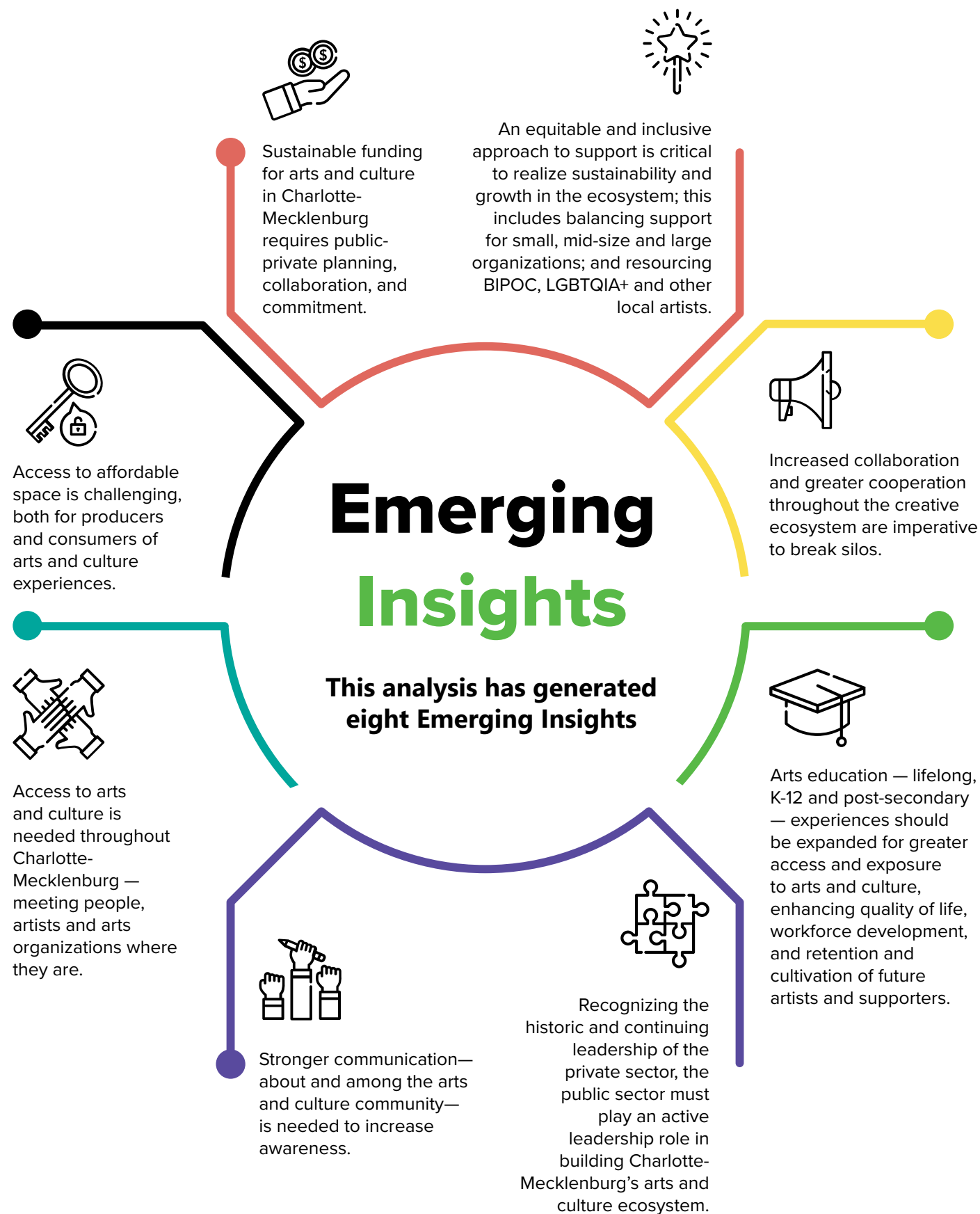
Comparables

An examination of funding and governance in comparable communities across the nation



Engagement

Key findings from robust areawide community engagement



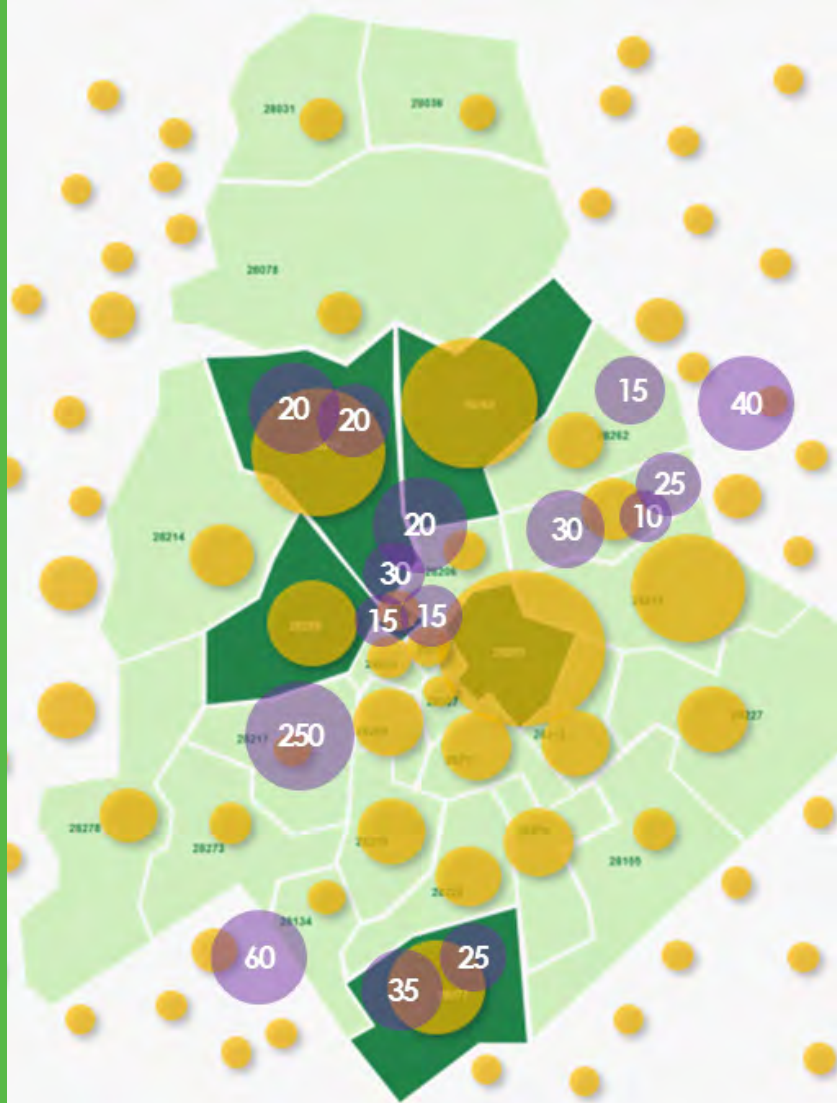
Robust Engagement



MORE THAN

3,240

AREA RESIDENTS IN 75 ZIPCODES



Next Steps

FEBRUARY

State of Culture Report will be shared online with the public

MARCH 15

Deadline for public feedback on State of Culture Report

MARCH to MAY

Taskforce implementation workshops and draft Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

JUNE

Finalize Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan

2023

MARCH 8

Virtual State of Culture Report public event

MAY

Testing workshops with public and plan revisions

MARCH Finalize priorities for the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan based on refined insights, and form taskforces (one taskforce per priority)

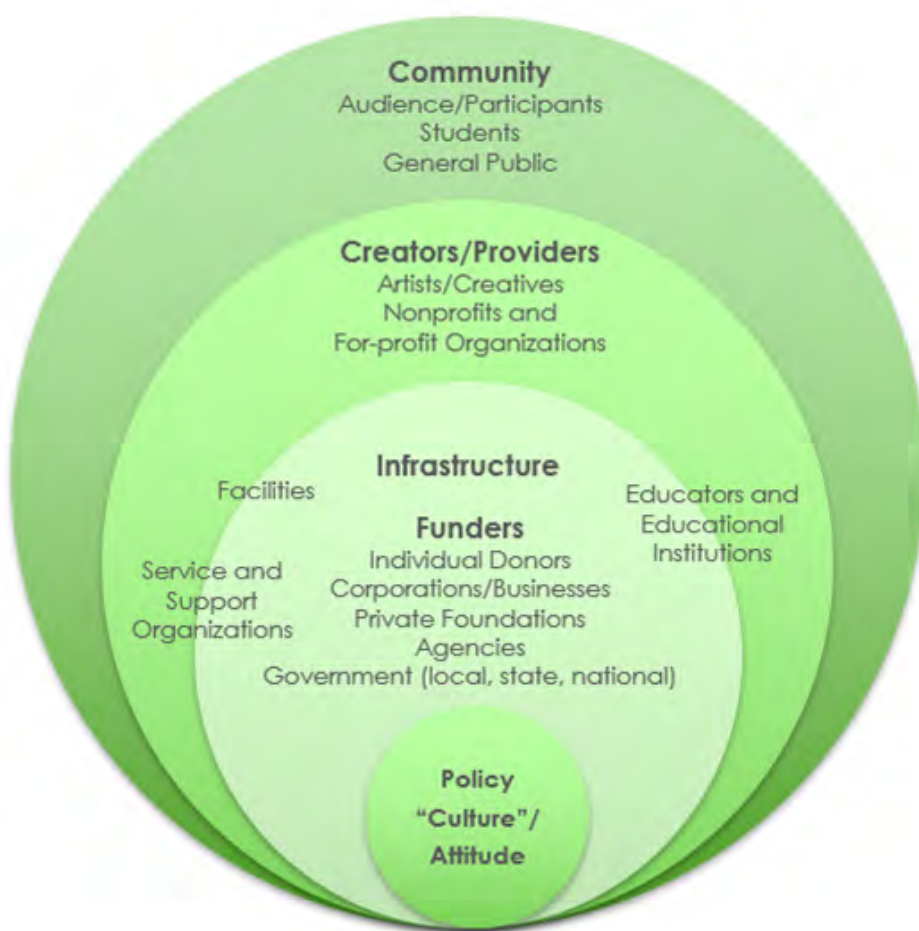
Executive Summary

Executive Summary

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is one of the fastest growing communities in the nation. Home to the country's 16th largest city, the area hosts major headquarters for banking, fintech and other industry giants as well as multiple higher education institutions. It is an increasingly diverse community with growing Asian, multiracial and Hispanic populations throughout the area. Overall, the population is composed of just over 45%, 30% and 6% identifying as white, Black and Asian respectively; of that 4% identifying as multiracial and nearly 15% identifying ethnically as Hispanic. A major attractor—and retainer—for residents and visitors¹ is the area's many arts and cultural offerings—from blockbuster Broadway tours to artist-funded arts experiences. The regional cultural sector serves audiences totaling more than two million per year and employs thousands of workers, annually generating major economic impact each year.²

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative ecosystem includes many layers, each of which rely on and support each other. As it has done with its successful business and community development planning, Charlotte-Mecklenburg seeks to harness its strengths in the arts and culture sector to grapple with its challenges.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Creative Ecosystem



Each circle radiates outwards, bolstering and serving the next larger circle. At the foundation of the ecosystem is a culture of support that values arts and culture begetting policy, funding, entities and activities. As a result, those impacts nurture a culture and attitude which feeds right back into this ecosystem.

¹ https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pARTnership_retainandrecruit1.pdf

² Americans for the Arts' 2017 Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Report

A Community in Crisis: Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Creative Ecosystem



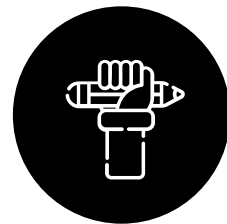
Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture ecosystem includes a history of support from the City of Charlotte (city), Mecklenburg County (county), towns, corporations and private foundations, and individual donors. This support has resulted in numerous successes, including:



Construction, financing and continued maintenance of major city-owned cultural facilities



Creation and support of the Arts & Science Council (ASC) through state, county, city, corporation, workplace and individual giving funds



A growing public art program supported by a percent-for-art ordinance



However, by 2020, a years-long decline in workplace giving, shifts in corporate philanthropic philosophies and lagging recovery from economic downturns had resulted in significantly reduced revenues to the Arts & Science Council (ASC) and therefore, reduced funding to arts and culture organizations. These financial challenges were exacerbated by the global coronavirus pandemic in 2020. While the ASC has served for many years as Charlotte's primary arts and culture agency and continues to be a valued member of the arts and culture ecosystem, the City of Charlotte identified the need to a) stabilize the sector in the near term and b) determine a new path for the growth and sustainability of the arts and culture sector. **The city identified a two-pronged approach to address these needs:**

INFUSION FUND



Development of a comprehensive arts and culture plan, through a community-engaged planning process, to identify a sustainable future for arts and culture and to foster a thriving creative ecosystem to the benefit of all Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents.

ARTS AND CULTURE PLAN



The establishment of the Infusion Fund, a temporary, three-year initiative to stabilize the arts and culture sector from fiscal years 2022-2024, spearheaded by the City of Charlotte, partnering with the Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) and private donors.



An Ecosystem in Crisis— What's at Stake

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is rich with creative talent. However many stakeholders expressed that the creative ecosystem it is on the verge of financial crisis, or even collapse.
- The model that funded Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture sector for many years – which included robust workplace giving – no longer provides sufficient funding, in line with broader national funding trends. This trend is expected to continue due to what many economists believe to be an impending recession.
- The 2008 economic downturn exacerbated funding challenges for the sector, as has the COVID-19 pandemic, and audiences are still not at pre-pandemic levels.

Time is running out

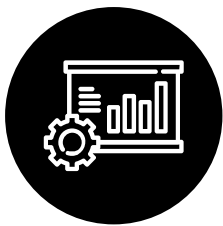
- Currently, many small and grassroots organizations and independent artists, self-finance their art, which is unsustainable. At the same time, mid-size and large organizations are also truly vulnerable. Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs to change how it supports arts and culture.
- The Infusion Fund was introduced as a temporary measure to stabilize the sector, but time is running out since the Infusion Fund ends at the conclusion of FY 2024 (June 30, 2024)
- There is a real risk that without a dependable, ongoing revenue stream, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector could suffer major losses, with organizations of all sizes failing and artists leaving both the field and/or the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area for opportunities elsewhere. Research has demonstrated many benefits to having a robust arts and culture sector (per the Americans for the Arts Social Impact Explorer tool); losses in arts and culture mean the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area would lose many other opportunities such as talent attraction and retention, education, health and wellness, workforce development, tourism, and more. Enhancing the arts and culture sector would, conversely, create more opportunities in these areas.
- A key imperative of this plan is to identify and gain consensus for ongoing investment in arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, from both the public and the private sectors.
- Everyone in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a stake in supporting arts and culture – including philanthropy supporting the sector, audiences attending events and buying tickets, companies and corporations appropriately valuing the contributions of creatives, and government setting arts-friendly policies and allocating sufficient funds.



A Comprehensive Arts and Culture Plan

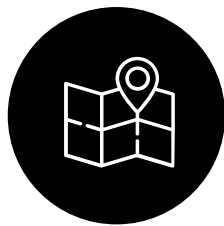
In summer 2022, the City of Charlotte launched a process to develop its first-ever Arts and Culture Plan⁴. Guided by the public and private sector-appointed Arts and Culture Advisory Board⁵, the city’s arts and culture officer, and a steering group of additional community leaders from across Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan is a rare and timely call to explore and shape Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s cultural future.

The State of Culture Report lays the foundation for the planning process with a 360-degree review of the area’s cultural environment, including:



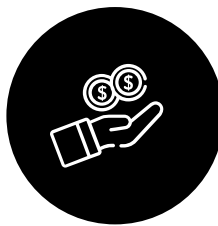
Analysis

Analysis of existing data and plans pertaining to the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector.



Assets

A cultural asset inventory and map.



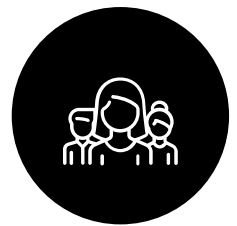
Funding

A funding assessment.



Comparables

An examination of funding and governance in comparable communities across the nation.



Engagement

Key findings from robust areawide community engagement.

Next Steps

In the next phases, the team will use this information to facilitate development of community-wide priorities and strategies, along with recommendations for their implementation.

⁴ There have been numerous arts and culture planning processes led by ASC. Those plans were reviewed as a part of the preliminary document review, these efforts have been integrated into this process.

⁵ Arts and Cultural Advisory Board is a body of community members appointed by the Mayor and City Council as well as the FFTC and ASC.

⁶ <https://Charlottenc.gov/CityManager/Pages/City%20Vision%20and%20Mission.aspx>

Intersection With Other Plans

There are three legs on which this arts and culture planning process stands: public engagement, broad and deep research and analysis, and finally, shared ownership and investment among residents, government and the business and philanthropic communities. This report synthesizes the findings from the first two phases of this process, which encompass public engagement and several other elements of research described below. The public engagement conducted thus

far, and the collaborative approach to come in the next phase as the plan is developed, are designed to cultivate the broad ownership necessary to provide a solid foundation for successful implementation of the eventual plan.

Several themes relevant to the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan emerged from this review, including:

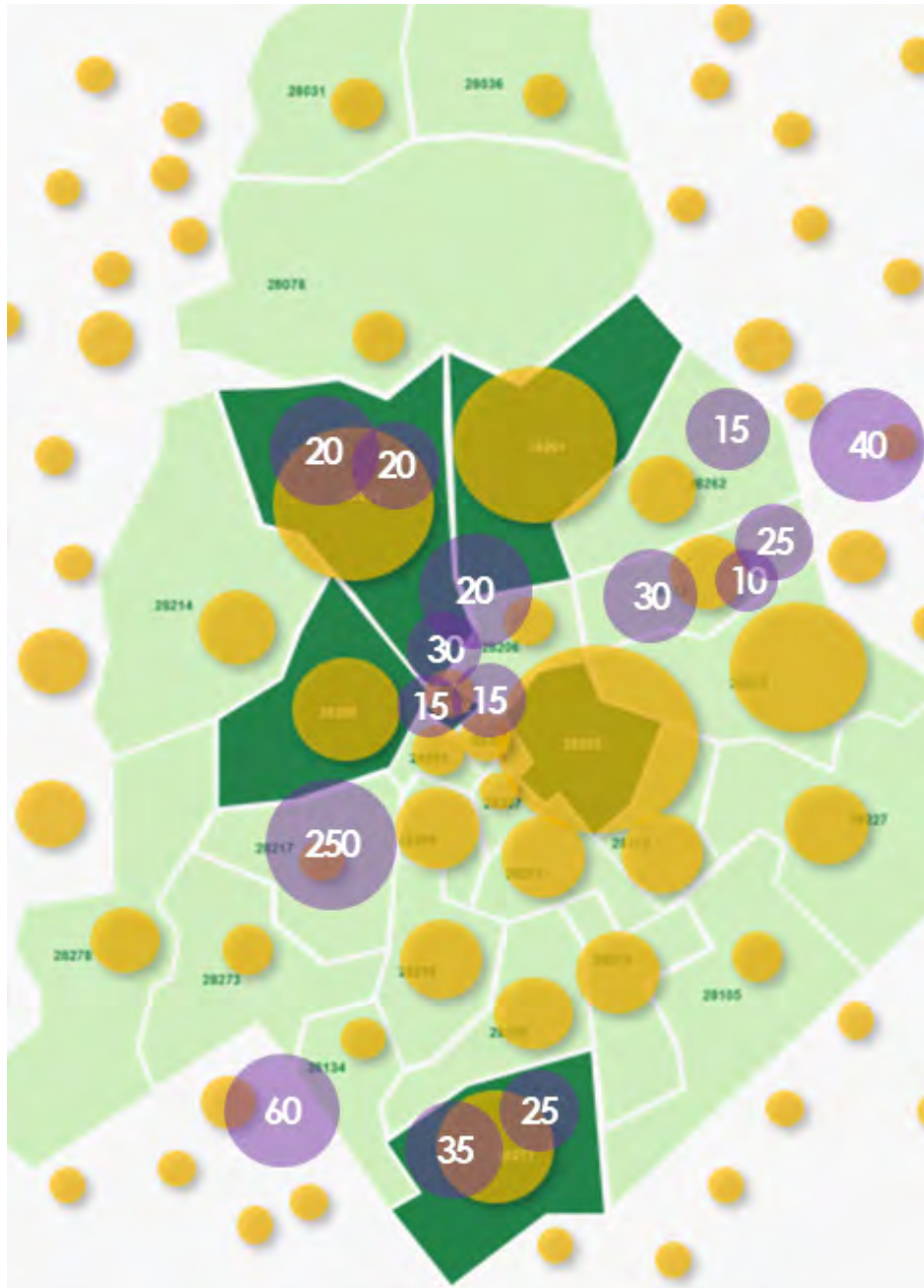
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is rapidly growing and diversifying, but economic and racial disparities exist.

- Cultural equity continues to be a goal as Charlotte-Mecklenburg strives to be a progressive 21st century city with livable neighborhoods and strong connectivity for all to enjoy.

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture assets contribute to the city's vision⁶ as America's Queen City and its aspiration to be a leader in arts and culture tourism, driving the community's economic development goals and contributing to continued development and growth.

This State of Culture report does not make recommendations. Instead, it presents consolidated findings from the research and analysis conducted in Phases 1 and 2 of this process.

Engaging Charlotte-Mecklenburg



What Did We Hear?

The strengths, challenges and desires expressed by participants revolved around 10 overarching findings. The findings include:



Best Practices from Comparable Communities Relevant to Charlotte-Mecklenburg⁷



CACP Site Tour, Uptown Light Rail station

Through qualitative crowd-sourced information, interviews, as well as data sourcing described below, the team developed an inventory of Charlotte-Mecklenburg physical arts and culture assets. The inventory provides insights on the current situation of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's physical arts and culture assets and points to possible opportunities. The map contains nearly 1,000 assets, which include 90 Infusion Fund grantees, more than 200 city-owned and county-owned public art pieces each, respectively, more than 200 works of art at 110 public transit stations via the Art in Transit program and 137 Placemaking Sites. All of these assets require funding support to maintain a healthy vibrance.

The cultural asset map provides a visual picture of the arts and culture amenities that exist in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Importantly it shows that:

- Most assets are in areas with higher incomes than the county's median household income of \$69,240 and in majority-white census tracts.
- Uptown boasts a large concentration of cultural amenities — more than 50.
- At the same time, many areas outside of center city currently have few arts and culture amenities, for example there are fewer than 30 physical arts and culture assets in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Corridors of Opportunity. Pockets of programming across Mecklenburg County are emerging as new clusters of investment and activity in geographic areas outside of the city center.

NEARLY

1,000
cultural assets

CULTURAL AMENITIES
MORE THAN

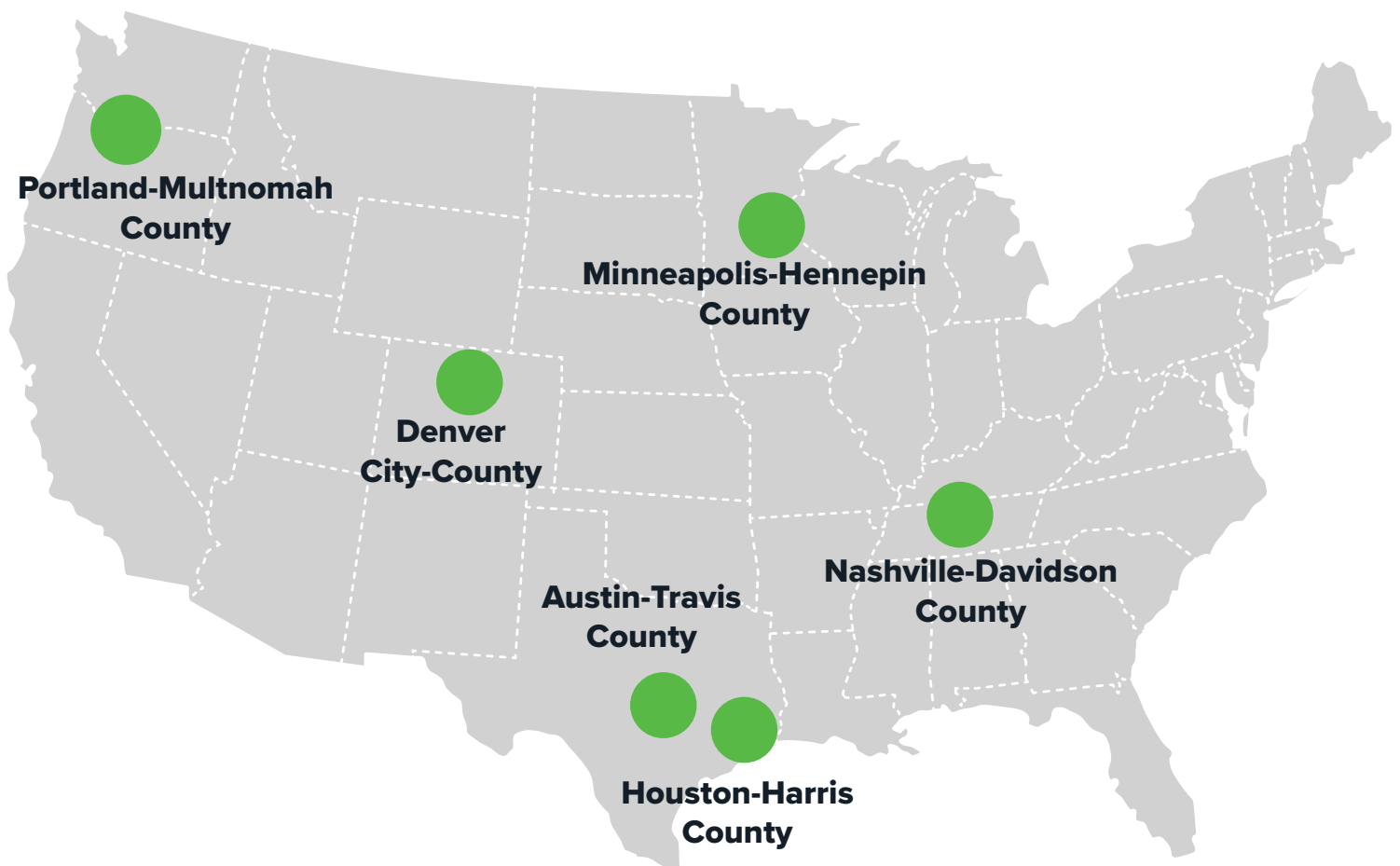
50 ▲
in Uptown

FEWER THAN

30 ▼
arts and culture assets
in Charlotte's Corridors
of Opportunity

Learning from Comparable Communities

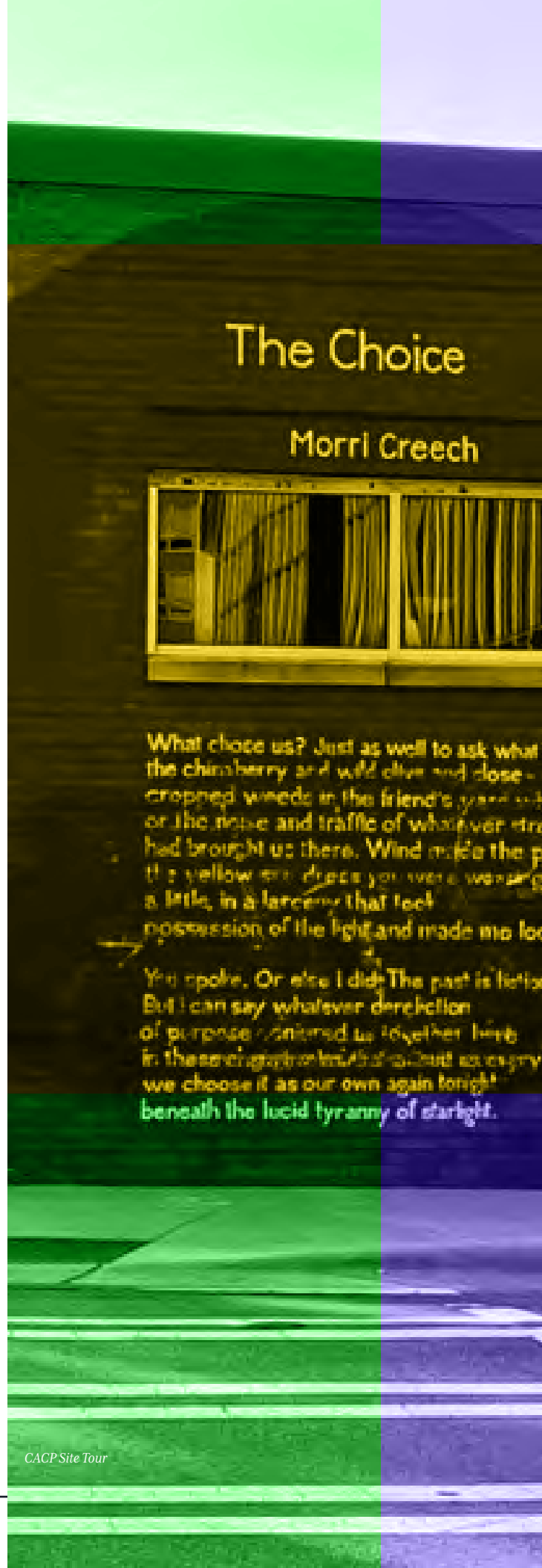
Just like Charlotte-Mecklenburg, communities throughout the country are investing in their arts and culture sector to improve their community. An important part of this planning process has been to research comparable communities to understand how they invest in arts and culture to create vibrancy, support local creative workers and generate economic activity through the arts and culture industries. The communities include:



⁷ See section 4.1 Benchmarking- for criteria of comparable cities

Best Practices from Comparable Communities Relevant to Charlotte-Mecklenburg ⁷

- **Public funding for arts and culture:** Most communities profiled (all but Minneapolis and Nashville) have a recurring public funding source to support arts and culture. Municipal general funds are a funding source for arts and culture in most of the communities profiled.
- **Additional municipal support for arts and culture:** In some places, the city or city-county municipal office often plays the role of connector — to city and county departments, opportunities, technical assistance and other non-monetary resources and support. Municipal entities also have a clear public mandate to address issues of equity.
- **Private support for arts and culture:** Few of the communities profiled have a dedicated private funding stream of direct grant support for arts and culture organizations. Most corporate funding is in the form of sponsorships, memberships or a facilities fund. The majority of the six communities profiled see substantial philanthropic support via periodic gifts and donations to arts and culture organizations, as well as commissions (i.e., transactional earned revenue for the commissioning of an art piece, project or program) from private and corporate foundations. Several of the communities employ a public-private partnership model to provide access to affordable and appropriate space for arts and culture activities.
- **Independent nonprofit organizations:** A few of the communities profiled have a private 501(c)3 organization dedicated to “ecosystem support.”
- **Arts and culture promotion:** Tourism agencies, CVBs and business alliances are generally leaders in marketing arts and culture for external audiences including tourism, talent and business attraction. Local and grassroots publications serve the role of marketing arts and culture to internal audiences, i.e., the local community.



What choice us? Just as well to ask what
the chinberry and wild olive and close-
cropped weeds in the friend's yard and
on the nose and traffic of whatever street
had brought us there. Wind made the p
the yellow and dress you were wearing
a little, in a larceny that felt
possession of the light and made me lo
You spoke. Or else I did. The past is better
But I can say whatever dereliction
of purpose combined us together here
in these empty rooms and about as empty
we choose it as our own again tonight
beneath the lucid tyranny of starlight.

⁷ See section 4.1 Benchmarking- for criteria of comparable cities



Funding Evaluation

To better understand how arts and culture is supported in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, an assessment of the funding landscape was conducted to evaluate the value, quality, reach and impact of recent arts and culture funding. This assessment was performed through:

- Interviews with a sampling of funders, artists and arts and culture organizations.
- Desktop research into the stated priorities and impact goals of funders.
- A review of available grant proposals to understand location, type of funded organizations and equity in funding.
- A profile of city and county funding for arts and culture over the past 10 years.

Arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have historically been supported by the city and county through maintenance and debt service of city-owned cultural facilities operated by arts and culture organizations, the city-county public art programs supported by a percent for art ordinance, unrestricted support by the City of Charlotte, the Arts & Science Council (ASC)'s general operations and grant making, and restricted support by the County of the ASC's programs. Other Mecklenburg County towns also provide support to offerings serving their residents.

Nonprofit and private sector organizations also support arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg though total investment amounts by many of these organizations is unknown due to lack of reporting consistency, transparency and availability.

Funder Priorities

Across all types of funding entities, there is broad support for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Investors prioritize the following issues (in alphabetical order):

- Arts education
- Individual support
- Organizational support and technical assistance
- Vibrancy and identity

The funding evaluation identified several findings of existing and recent approaches to support the arts and culture sector. These include:

- Long-term financial commitment from the city on city-owned cultural facilities through maintenance and debt service.
- Larger organizations and cultural institutions have long received operational support from ASC until fiscal year 2022, and currently through the Infusion Fund with funding from the City of Charlotte and private donors.
- Corporate support for the arts and culture sector, especially in sustaining the large legacy organizations, is strong in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- ASC, Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte is Creative, and the city's Placemaking Program support smaller organizations, individual creatives with fresh ideas, and in general, those who cannot qualify for hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants. The Infusion Fund's small, unrestricted grant pool and Opportunity Fund grants have also helped fill this gap.
- Higher education institutions all prioritize arts and culture as a key draw to the area and an important facet of a well-rounded education.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture investors lack a unified or coordinated strategy for funding the wide variety of organizations according to their own priorities and those of the arts and culture community.
- ASC and now the Infusion Fund largely provide operational and programmatic funding rather than funding that helps small-/mid-sized organizations to scale.
- Investments can be inefficient, being awarded to an organization just to be given from the recipient to another grantee. For example, city-owned facilities are subsidized by the public sector, but rents are charged to small organizations seeking to use those spaces, and fiscal sponsorship fees are often paid by small organizations to larger nonprofits that are granted funds out of the same funding pool, rather than to a third party.
- Funding relationships with ASC/the city have been very transactional for arts and culture organizations, with other necessary supports (e.g., technical assistance, marketing, networking) supplied to some extent, but not at the level desired by grantees. In other communities, it is not uncommon for municipal entities to provide this type of assistance — in others, a standalone nonprofit provides this type of assistance.
- Political, corporate and arts and culture leaders struggle to find consensus over their position on the role of the ASC moving forward.
- Small-/mid-sized organizations lack support in finding and holding affordable space for their work, as opposed to larger institutions which have city- or county-gifted or subsidized facilities.
- There is currently no dedicated funding for maintenance of public art and placemaking spaces.

What It All Means

The findings across all research inputs — public engagement, asset inventory and map, comparable benchmarking and case studies, and funding evaluation — have been synthesized into eight emerging insights.

Emerging Insights

- 1** Sustainable funding for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg requires public-private planning, collaboration, and commitment.
- 2** Recognizing the historic and continuing leadership of the private sector, the public sector must play an active leadership role in building Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture ecosystem.
- 3** Access to affordable space is challenging, both for producers and consumers of arts and culture experiences.
- 4** Access to arts and culture is needed throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg — meeting people, artists and arts organizations where they are.
- 5** An equitable and inclusive approach to support is critical to realize sustainability and growth in the ecosystem; this includes balancing support for small, mid-size and large organizations; and resourcing BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and other local artists.
- 6** Stronger communication—about and among the arts and culture community— is needed to increase awareness.
- 7** Increased collaboration and greater cooperation throughout the creative ecosystem are imperative to break silos.
- 8** Arts education — lifelong, K-12 and post-secondary — experiences should be expanded for greater access and exposure to arts and culture, enhancing quality of life, workforce development, and retention and cultivation of future artists and supporters.

Where Do We Go From Here?

This report represents the conclusion of the primary public engagement and listening phase as well as the research and analysis.

Following the approval of this report, the team will:

- 1 Share the findings of this State of Culture Report with the public and receive feedback on the emerging insights.
- 2 Work with the project team and steering group to use this information to articulate priorities for the plan.
- 3 Identify and form taskforces to develop and refine strategies to address the priorities.
- 4 Write and distribute a draft Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan that will be tested with the public and refined into the final Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan.

As this report demonstrates, Charlotte-Mecklenburg has many opportunities to strengthen its arts and culture ecosystem for the benefit of all communities.



This State of Culture Report is a tool to inform prioritization of these opportunities in the next phase of planning.

Section 1

Introduction

1. Introduction

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is one of the fastest growing communities in the nation. Home to the country's 16th largest city, the area hosts headquarters of banking, fintech and other industry giants like Bank of America, Siemens, LendingTree, Honeywell, Wells Fargo, Lowe's and others, as well as multiple higher education institutions, including the University of North Carolina at Charlotte, Queens University, Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC) and Johnson C. Smith University. It is an increasingly diverse community with growing Asian, multiracial and Hispanic populations. Overall, the population is composed of just over 45%, 30% and 6% identifying as white, Black and Asian respectively; of that 4% identify as multiracial and nearly 15% as ethnically Hispanic. Residents and visitors are attracted to the area's many arts and culture offerings, including visual, performing, literary and media arts experiences and local creative businesses. The regional cultural sector serves audiences totaling more than two million per year and employs thousands of workers, annually generating major economic impact each year.⁹

While Charlotte-Mecklenburg teems with energy, the community is also hard at work addressing social challenges, such as affordability, displacement, sustainability and public education. An enduring concern

of Charlotte-Mecklenburg is economic mobility, prompting city and community-led initiatives to address barriers to economic mobility (see [Charlotte Opportunity Initiative report](#)). In 2021, the city council adopted the [Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan](#), which is now in early stages of implementation.

As it has done with its successful business and community development planning, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is looking to harness its strengths in the arts and culture sector to grapple with its challenges. Arts

and culture play a critical role in addressing the challenges outlined above, especially when integrated throughout communities. Americans for the Arts provides extensive data on the many benefits for sectors such as education, health, workforce development and more.¹⁰ The graphic below is a snapshot of the Americans for the Arts +

Social Impact Explorer. The Explorer tool, provides fact sheets with data points for each category and offers further resources such as a reading list and examples of organizations addressing these topics. Arts and culture provide ideal opportunities to build social capital across socioeconomic backgrounds. Much of the arts-based efforts to address social change in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have been documented by a recent study by Arts Impact CLT.



⁹ Americans for the Arts' 2017 Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Report

¹⁰ <https://ww2.americansforthearts.org/explorer>

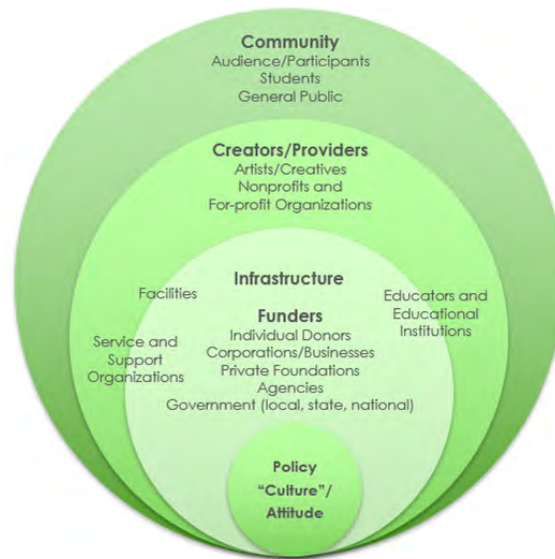
1.1 A Community In Crisis: Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Arts and Culture Ecosystem

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative ecosystem includes many players and types of stakeholders who perform various functions and/or (inter-)act in multiple ways. The area's arts and culture landscape features nonprofit organizations of all types and sizes across artistic disciplines, history and science. These range from large institutions such as Blumenthal Performing Arts, the Mint Museum, Discovery Place, Levine Museum of the New South and others, to small- and mid-size organizations such as Jazz Arts Charlotte, BOOM Charlotte, McColl Center, Charlotte is Creative, Hue House, ArtPop St. Arts+, and Moving Poets, to name but a few. Charlotte-Mecklenburg is also home to creative individuals, businesses and artist collectives such as BLKMRKTCLT, Nouveau Sud, Charlotte Art League, OBRA Collective, Namaste Artists and many others.

Inspired by the collaborative spirit between the public and private sector throughout the community, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture ecosystem includes a history of support from the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, towns, corporations and private foundations and individual donors. That support has resulted in numerous successes, including:

- Construction, financing and continued maintenance of major city-owned cultural facilities.
- Creation and support of the Arts & Science Council (ASC) through state, county, city, corporation, workplace and individual giving funds.
- A growing public art program supported by a percent-for-art ordinance.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg Creative Ecosystem



The many arts and culture stakeholders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg can be conceived of in layers or concentric circles, each of which relate to and support the adjacent layers. The diagram graphically depicts the relationship of each layer to the next. Each circle radiates outwards, bolstering and serving the next larger circle.

Of course, there is overlap in functions and relationships represented here. The comprehensive process and resulting plan must consider all of these stakeholders and participants to create a useful, implementable plan for the future. At the foundation of the ecosystem is a culture of support that values arts and culture begetting policy, funding, entities and activities.



Construction, financing and continued maintenance of major city-owned cultural facilities



Creation and support of the Arts & Science Council (ASC) through state, county, city, corporation, workplace and individual giving funds



A growing public art program supported by a percent-for-art ordinance

1.2 Why an Arts and Culture Plan? Why Now?

What's at Stake?

An Ecosystem in Crisis

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is rich with creative talent. However many stakeholders expressed that the creative ecosystem is on the verge of financial crisis, or even collapse.
- The model that funded Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture sector for many years – which included robust workplace giving – no longer provides sufficient funding, in line with broader national funding trends. This trend is expected to continue due to what many economists believe to be an impending recession.
- The 2008 economic downturn exacerbated funding challenges for the sector, as has the COVID-19 pandemic, and audiences are still not at pre-pandemic levels

Time is running out

- Currently, many small and grassroots organizations and independent artists, self-finance their art, which is unsustainable. At the same time, mid-size and large organizations are also truly vulnerable. **Charlotte-Mecklenburg needs to change how it supports arts and culture.**
- The Infusion Fund was introduced as a temporary measure to stabilize the sector, but time is running out since the Infusion Fund ends in FY 2024 (June 30, 2024).

- There is a real risk that without a dependable, ongoing revenue stream, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture sector could suffer major losses, with organizations of all sizes failing and artists leaving both the field and/or the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area for opportunities elsewhere. Research has demonstrated many benefits to having a robust arts and culture sector (per the Americans for the Arts Social Impact Explorer tool); losses in arts and culture mean the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area would lose many other opportunities such as talent attraction and retention, education, health and wellness, workforce development, tourism, and more. Enhancing the arts and culture sector would, conversely, create more opportunities in these areas.
- A key imperative of this plan is to identify and gain consensus for ongoing investment in arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, from both the public and the private sectors.
- Everyone in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a stake in supporting arts and culture – including philanthropy supporting the sector, audiences attending events and buying tickets, companies and corporations appropriately valuing the contributions of creatives, and government setting arts-friendly policies and allocating sufficient funds.

Culture Blocks: Bringing arts and culture experiences to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's communities

Culture Blocks is a program funded by Mecklenburg County and administered by the Arts & Science Council, providing grants ranging from \$5,000 to \$50,000 for cultural activities within specific geographic areas to connect communities to arts and culture experiences closer to where residents live. Culture Blocks models community responsiveness, carefully working with grantees to collect community feedback, and demonstrates collaboration by partnering with libraries, recreation centers, parks and community spaces.

Image source: <https://www.Charlotte-Mecklenburgonthecheap.com/culture-blocks-inclusive/>



Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture sector is at a pivotal moment. The global coronavirus pandemic in 2020 followed on the heels of significant, years-long declines in workplace giving, shifts in corporate philanthropic philosophies and lagging recovery from economic downturns that had resulted in reduced revenues to ASC and therefore reduced funding to arts and culture organizations. While ASC has for many years served as Charlotte-Mecklenburg's primary arts and culture agency, and continues to be a valued member of the arts and culture ecosystem, the City of Charlotte identified the need to a. stabilize the sector in the near term and b. determine a new path for the growth and sustainability of the arts and culture sector. The city identified a two-pronged approach to addressing these needs:

- **First, the establishment of the Infusion Fund**, a temporary, three-year initiative to stabilize the arts and culture sector from fiscal years 2022-2024, spearheaded by the City of Charlotte, partnering with the Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC). FFTC led a campaign to raise \$18 million from the private sector to support the Infusion Fund, ultimately raising \$20 million to support the Infusion Fund and an additional \$3 million for other arts and culture related activities. By committing to match \$18 million raised from the private sector, the city doubled its public funding for arts, science and history organizations. Together, an annual pool of public and private dollars will help revive and sustain local cultural organizations and artists in fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024.
- **Second, the development of a comprehensive arts and culture plan** through a community-engaged process to foster a thriving and sustainable creative ecosystem that benefits all in Charlotte-Mecklenburg¹².

¹² <https://digitalbranch.cmlibrary.org/Charlotte-Mecklenburg-journalism-collaborative/updated-chetty-study-data-paints-a-surprising-picture-of-economic-mobility-in-mecklenburg-county/>



An 18-member Arts and Culture Advisory Board¹³ was established by the Charlotte City Council to oversee distribution of these resources and guide the planning effort. The advisory board includes representatives from across the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community; half of the board is appointed by Charlotte's mayor and the city council and half of the board is appointed by FFTC on behalf of the private sector donors, including one appointment by the ASC. The position of arts and culture officer was created in the Office of the City Manager to lead the work from a city staff perspective, and to work with the advisory board to achieve the Infusion Fund's and the city's objectives regarding arts and culture. Additional information regarding the Infusion Fund, including its contributors and grantees can be found at <https://Charlottenc.gov/arts-culture/>.

This State of Culture Report presents the findings from the first two phases of the arts and culture planning process.

It provides critical information about Charlotte-Mecklenburg's current arts and culture ecosystem that will culminate in the Phase 3 development of the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan to articulate the community's vision, strategy and implementation plan.

These findings provide common ground on the current state of arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to guide decisions in Phase 3 of planning. The report assesses what is working well, what can be improved and identifies opportunities.

¹³ Individuals on both the advisory board and the steering group are listed in Appendix A

1.3 Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Arts and Culture Planning Context

There are three legs on which this arts and culture planning process stands: public engagement, broad and deep research and analysis, and finally, shared ownership and investment among residents, government and the business and philanthropic communities. This report synthesizes the findings from the first two phases of this process, which encompass public engagement and several other elements

of research described below. The public engagement conducted thus far and the collaborative approach to come in the next phase as the plan is developed are designed to cultivate the broad ownership necessary to provide a solid foundation for successful implementation of the eventual plan.

PHASE 1



Opportunities Assessment



CACP Site Tour, Duppp&SWAT

PHASE 2



Public Engagement



CACP Public Engagement, VAPA Center

PHASE 3



Vision, Strategy, and Implementation



CACP Public Engagement, AbidXChange

- Project Management Planning
- Research and Analysis/Market Overview of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Cultural Landscape
- Start-up Meeting and Tour
- Preliminary Stakeholder Workshop with Existing Arts and Cultural Organizations
- Public Engagement and Communications Strategy
- Cultural Amenities and Facilities Infrastructure Analysis/Asset Map
- Funding Evaluation
- Cultural Trends and Comparables Assessment
- Presentation and Discussion of Preliminary SWOT Analysis

- County-wide Meetings
- Online Survey of Cultural Participation
- Stakeholder Interviews
- Toolkit Distribution
- Ambassador Support
- Focus Groups/Sector-Focused Workshops
- Community Conversations
- Neighborhood/Intercept Events
- Municipal Roundtables
- Presentation and Discussion: State of Culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg

- Draft Arts and Culture Plan
- Potential Funding Models and Governance Structures
- Strategy Development and Implementation Workshops
- Testing Workshops
- Final Arts and Culture Plan



CACP Site Tour, Charlotte Art League

The arts and culture advisory board, steering group and staff have emphasized the importance of eliciting a vision for culture based on the needs and wants of people in neighborhoods throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The research and analysis have been grounded in robust, inclusive community engagement with an equity lens, ensuring that as many voices participate as possible. The detailed methodology tasks are described later in this report.

“

Charlotte is a planning city. And you can see evidence of how those plans have changed this little town to a big city in a short period of time.

— Interviewee

1.4 Intersection with Existing Plans

To ensure the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan builds from and reflects recent planning efforts, the process began with a thorough literature review of prior planning efforts and current implementation processes taking place in Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The following reports and plans were reviewed¹⁴.

- Arts Impact CLT Landscape Scan and Arts-Based Social Mobility Study (2022)
- ASC 2016 Creative Vitality Report (2016)
- ASC 2018 Cultural Key Performance Indicators Report (2018)
- ASC Cultural Equity Report (2020)
- Business Realities of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Creative Community Survey (2022)
- Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Master Plan (2021)
- Charlotte Future 2040 Executive Summary (2021)
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Life Task Force Report (2014)
- Charlotte Opportunity Initiative (2020)
- City of Charlotte Capital Investment Plan and Public Art Information (2022)
- City of Charlotte Strategic Mobility Plan Draft (2022)
- City of Charlotte Unified Development Ordinance (2022)
- City of Charlotte Placemaking Hub
- City of Charlotte Corridors of Opportunity Recommendations Report (2021)
- Cultural Facilities Master Plan (2004)
- Future of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Creative Community – Charlotte is Creative and EY Session Recap (2021)
- Imagine 2025 - A Vision for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's 21st Century Cultural Development (2014)
- Community Priorities Report, ASC and UNC Charlotte Urban Institute (2020)

Several themes relevant to the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan emerged from this review, including:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg is rapidly growing and diversifying and economic and racial disparities exist.
- Cultural equity continues to be a goal as Charlotte-Mecklenburg strives to be a progressive 21st century city with livable neighborhoods and strong connectivity for all to enjoy.
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture assets contribute to the city's vision¹⁵ as America's Queen City and its aspiration to be a leader in arts and culture tourism, driving the community's economic development goals and contributing to continued development and growth.

Exploring these themes in greater detail informs the current culture planning work.

¹⁴The Imagine 2025 plan was funded by the Arts & Science Council and planned in collaboration with Diane L. Mataraza Inc. Consulting Services.

1 Charlotte-Mecklenburg is rapidly growing and diversifying and economic and racial disparities exist.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's population is increasingly demographically diverse

Charlotte-Mecklenburg has become increasingly diverse since 2000. The white population has decreased from 58% in 2000 to 47% in 2020. Meanwhile, the Hispanic or Latino population has grown from 7% to 15%, and the African American population has expanded from 33% to 36%. The Asian population has also increased from 3% in 2000 to 7% of the city.¹⁶

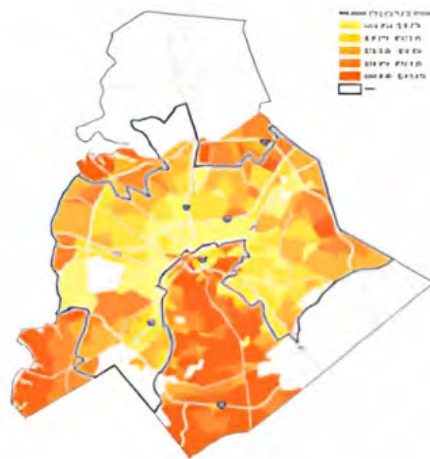
Geography and demographics play a large role in determining quality of life for Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents

Specifically in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the phenomena of the “arc” and “wedge” visually explains disparities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The primarily non-white populations in the arc, which spans the eastern, northern and western areas of the city, are more likely to experience poverty, be exposed to environmental injustice, lack access to essential amenities and services and have fewer employment opportunities than their wealthier and often white counterparts in south Charlotte-Mecklenburg.



The Arc

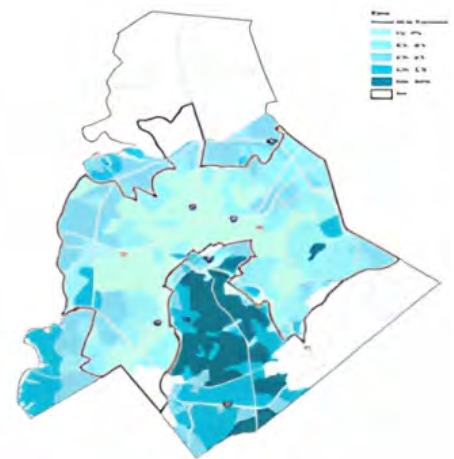
One of the early products of the Charlotte Future 2040 Comprehensive Plan process is the "Built City Equity Atlas" known more commonly as the Equity Atlas. The Equity Atlas examines Charlotte's built environment and socio-economic characteristics through an equity lens identifies an "Arc" of vulnerable populations and communities of color that extends around center city Charlotte to the east, north, and west. This spatial pattern was identified using household Income data, 2) race data, and 3) voter participation rates to identify areas of the city most likely to be historically and currently underrepresented.



Income

The median household income for the city is around \$61,000. Average household incomes in Uptown and SouthPark are around \$100,000 The average income within the Arc is approximately \$49,705. Access to transportation is one of the highest indicators of job accessibility and economic mobility.

Charlotte's highest income areas are heavily concentrated in a wedge of neighborhoods south of Uptown.



Race

Racial distribution is largely consistent with median household income data. The map below shows the percentage of the White population distributed throughout neighborhoods in Charlotte. In 2017, a concentration of White population spanned from south of Uptown to the South Carolina border. A component of the Arc map, race clearly follows a spatial boundary of segregation in Charlotte.

Minority neighborhoods are heavily concentrated within the Arc.

Source: 2040 Comprehensive Plan

2 Cultural equity continues to be a goal as Charlotte-Mecklenburg strives to be a progressive 21st century community with livable neighborhoods and strong connectivity for all to enjoy.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg is addressing these disparities and becoming a progressive, livable city for a multitude of different populations through bold initiatives

Recent planning efforts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg have furthered the city's efforts to become a modern, livable hub. The city's new comprehensive plan and mobility plan, the overhaul of its Placemaking Program and new investments into identified Corridors of Opportunity have created avenues for the city to create interconnected, 10-minute neighborhoods that boast stronger arts and culture offerings and experiences, more equitable social and economic outcomes and a real sense of local identity and charm.

A 10-minute neighborhood is defined as ***“a community where residents can walk short distances from home to destinations that meet their daily needs.”***¹⁷

The city's Corridors of Opportunity efforts have made initial forays into integrating arts and culture into the corridors, including an artist-in-residence program and creative engagement specialists in the Albemarle Road and Central Avenue corridor, and working with creatives (Blue Tide Creative, Charlotte is Creative and individual artists) in the Sugar Creek Road and I-85 corridor.¹⁸

However, cultural programming has not kept up with recent diversification

The reports analyzed (see section 1.4) suggest that cultural programming and grants have not kept up with the area's diversification.¹⁹ In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, some residents report that “... cultural programming does not reflect the priorities and values of the region's changing demographics.” Only 58% of the community feels cultural programming reflects its diversity. Seventy percent of white respondents agreed that there was indeed “something for everyone,” but only 48% of non-white residents reciprocated the sentiment. On top of this, only nine of the 38 organizations that received ASC Operating Support Grants funding from 1991-2020 were African, Latinx, Asian, Arab and Native American-serving organizations. This paradigm must shift for cultural equity to become a reality.²⁰

Additionally, in previous public engagements, artists and creatives have prioritized the need for support in finding affordable, community-based spaces to work

ASC's 2020 [Community Priorities Report](#) hones in on the need for affordable collaborative spaces where artists can work. This insight was further bolstered by [The Future of Charlotte's Creative Community Report](#) in 2021, which found that among the six main supports that artists need to thrive in their work, affordable housing and collaborative spaces are top priorities. Artists and arts organizations also cited high rental costs as a barrier to collaboration with schools, as many artists cannot afford the cost of renting space needed to create and rehearse in advance.

¹⁵ <https://Charlottenc.gov/CityManager/Pages/City%20Vision%20and%20Mission.aspx>

¹⁶ Percentages have been rounded to numbers without decimal points

¹⁷ <https://www.kirklandwa.gov/Government/Departments/Planning-and-Building/10-Minute-Neighborhood-Analysis#:~:text=What%20is%20a%2010%20Minute,needs%20places%20to%20walk%20to.>

¹⁸ ‘Corridors are defined geographic areas of a city that often contain major roadways and are vital to the health of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's communities and the city as a whole. Six corridors in the city with systemically high unemployment and poverty rates have been identified as focus areas for a special economic development initiative, Corridors of Opportunity.’ [Corridors of Opportunity](#) (2021)

¹⁹ ASC 2016 Creative Vitality Report (2016); ASC 2018 Cultural Key Performance Indicators Report (2018); ASC Cultural Equity Report (2020)

²⁰ ASC Cultural Equity Report 2020 (2020)

3 **Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts and culture assets contribute to the city’s vision²¹ as America’s Queen City and its aspiration to be a leader in arts and culture tourism, driving the community’s economic development goals and contributing to continued development and growth.**

Public art is a prominent aspect of Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts-driven placemaking efforts

Public art is ingrained in local policy and funding. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County jointly launched a [public art program](#) that was formalized by county ordinance in 2002 and by city ordinance in 2003. The program has resulted in the creation of dozens of original works of art in public places throughout the city and county. The purpose of the program, according to the ordinance, is to include public art “in appropriate capital improvements projects that will promote the cultural heritage and artistic development of the county, enhance the county’s character and identity, contribute to economic development and tourism, add warmth, dignity, beauty and accessibility to public spaces, and expand the experience and participation of citizens with visual arts.”

The program is governed by a “percent-for-art” ordinance that dictates city and county guidelines for the funding and commissioning of public art. This is an industry-standard approach to funding public art in municipalities. The ordinance, [which is available online](#), stipulates that any “capital project paid for wholly or in part for the construction or substantial renovation of any building, facility or open space to which the public is generally invited, including projects in the Business Corridor Program, with exceptions for legal restrictions and [Charlotte Area Transit System] improvement” allocate 1 percent of the project construction costs to a fund for public art. The eligible sites for such public art projects include any public building, facility or open space that is accessible and available to residents. The Ordinance was first established in 1981 and updated in 2003.

Strengths of Public Art Program

Charlotte-Mecklenburg was an early adopter in the United States of a percent-for-art ordinance, which became more widespread in the 1990s and early 2000s. The Public Art Commission is responsible for elements of the administration of the program as stated in the ordinance: artist selection, design phase approval, acceptance of work into collection and deaccessioning artwork as needed. The Public Art Commission also annually reports to city council on work completed and in-process.

Philadelphia was the first major U.S. city to introduce such a policy in 1959, with other municipalities following suit: Baltimore in 1964, San Francisco in 1967 and Seattle in 1973. The program is administered by the ASC with input from the Charlotte City Council and a public art commission on artist selection, design phase approval, acceptance of work into collection and deaccessioning artwork as needed.

The articles of incorporation from 2003 provide a relatively robust framework for the administration and implementation of the public art program, outlining its purpose and intent, definitions, function of the commission and its composition, the appointment of members, the role of the ASC, funding, acquisition and ownership.

Opportunities for the Public Art Program

While Charlotte-Mecklenburg historically has been a leader in public art, given its early adoption of an ordinance for capital projects, there is no ordinance requiring or incentivizing private developers to include public art into their budgets, which is a growing trend in major U.S. cities. In the absence of an ordinance, many cities provide toolkits, resources or informal incentives, such as expedited permitting or additional air rights, to encourage private developers to consider investment in public art. On the city and ASC websites, there are mentions of supporting private developers in commissioning public art, but without an ordinance or a formal recommendation mechanism, there is no way to track the investment, amount or quality of public art that is funded through private landowners. There is also no policy currently on accepting donations of public art.

²¹ <https://Charlottenc.gov/CityManager/Pages/City%20Vision%20and%20Mission.aspx>

²² ASC is not contractually responsible for managing the city’s public art website.

²³ <https://artsandscience.org/public-art/>

²⁴ <https://Charlottenc.gov/Charlottefuture/Pages/PublicArt.aspx>

A public art page hosted on ASC's website provides basic information on the public art program²² and features 16 selected completed projects and six in-situ commissions.²³ However, there is no working mechanism to search for completed projects or to see a comprehensive list of successfully implemented commissions.²⁴ Additionally, no statistics regarding the total number, condition or evaluation of completed public art commissions are publicly available. What's more, there is no dedicated funding for maintenance or conservation of public art, nor is there funding or a policy in place guiding decommissioning when the art may have reached its end of useful life or repairs are too costly to maintain. The introduction of such policies, common in other markets, could help the City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County as they are responsible for the maintenance, conservation, collections management and deaccessioning of public art. So could the earmarking of public art dollars for these activities, which currently are not funded.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture sector has achieved relative growth and prosperity in recent years, anchored by strong economic impact and job creation

In general, the [arts and culture sector](#) has been growing steadily. Residents increasingly ask for cultural amenities closer to residential areas.

Setting the Context

Understanding this background is instrumental to placing the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan into context and ensuring the plan integrates with other stated priorities.

Like in many places, Charlotte-Mecklenburg is stratified in terms of the experiences of different demographics. This exists from socioeconomic outcomes to disparities in arts and culture funding access. Inequities are systemic and longstanding, and these issues will not be overcome without consistent support from both public and private parties — in particular, support from funders will be key for any realities to shift.

As Charlotte-Mecklenburg becomes increasingly diverse, the area already has plans to invest in infrastructure to support its economic goals, greater mobility, positive social outcomes and a more visible and vibrant arts and culture environment. With collective support from municipal, business, nonprofit and for-profit partners, Charlotte-Mecklenburg can produce a thriving arts and culture sector that has diverse offerings in various locations, disciplines and prices; creates and sustains jobs; adds to quality of place; attracts visitors, businesses and residents, and contributes to the solution of complex social problems.

Oakland, California: Encouraging public art investment by private developers

In 2014, the City of Oakland added to its existing public art ordinance (authorizing the allocation of 1.5% of municipal capital improvement costs towards public art) by adopting a new requirement for .5% of residential, or 1% of nonresidential, private development project costs for freely accessible public art on site or within the public right of way. City Public Art staff, with guidance from a Public Art Advisory Committee, administers these funds and provides vision, planning and project management for Oakland's public art collection. As of 2020, Oakland's Cultural Affairs Division, Economic & Workforce Development created a [Public Art Checklist for Private Development](#), to facilitate and streamline the process.

Image source: <https://www.thecrucible.org/oakland-public-art/>, Artist: HYBYCOZO



Section 2

Public Engagement Findings

CACP Site Tour, Photographer: Brittany Clampitt

2. Public Engagement Findings

An essential component of this arts and culture planning process is understanding the perspectives of the public in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Phase 2 of the planning process included a multitude of ways to engage various communities, to collect data about the successes, opportunities and challenges of experiencing and creating arts and culture in the area, and to yield a shared vision for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that these communities can participate in achieving.

This process highlights the range of voices that make up the area, employing a variety of methods to engage with various communities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. These methods included countywide meetings, workshops focused on specific arts and culture sectors and topics, stakeholder interviews, city and county staff roundtables, neighborhood/drop-in events, ambassadors, an online survey assessing residents' participation in local culture, and do-it-yourself conversations that residents hosted using a conversation guide. The myriad of opportunities to engage allowed participants to provide input in ways most comfortable for the participant, for example the team showed up at community events and festivals, to meet and talk with people who otherwise may not have been aware of the planning process.

The engagement strategy sought to balance the objectives of cultural consumers, producers and supporters and ensure that a variety of voices shape the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan.

2.1 Whom We Engaged and How

Working in collaboration with the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan's steering group, composed of more than 40 volunteers from across the spectrum of arts and culture, the team organized several methods of input from the community that culminated in these findings. The input of arts and

culture organizations and artists at the Preliminary Stakeholder Workshop June 22, 2022, also informed the design of the process.

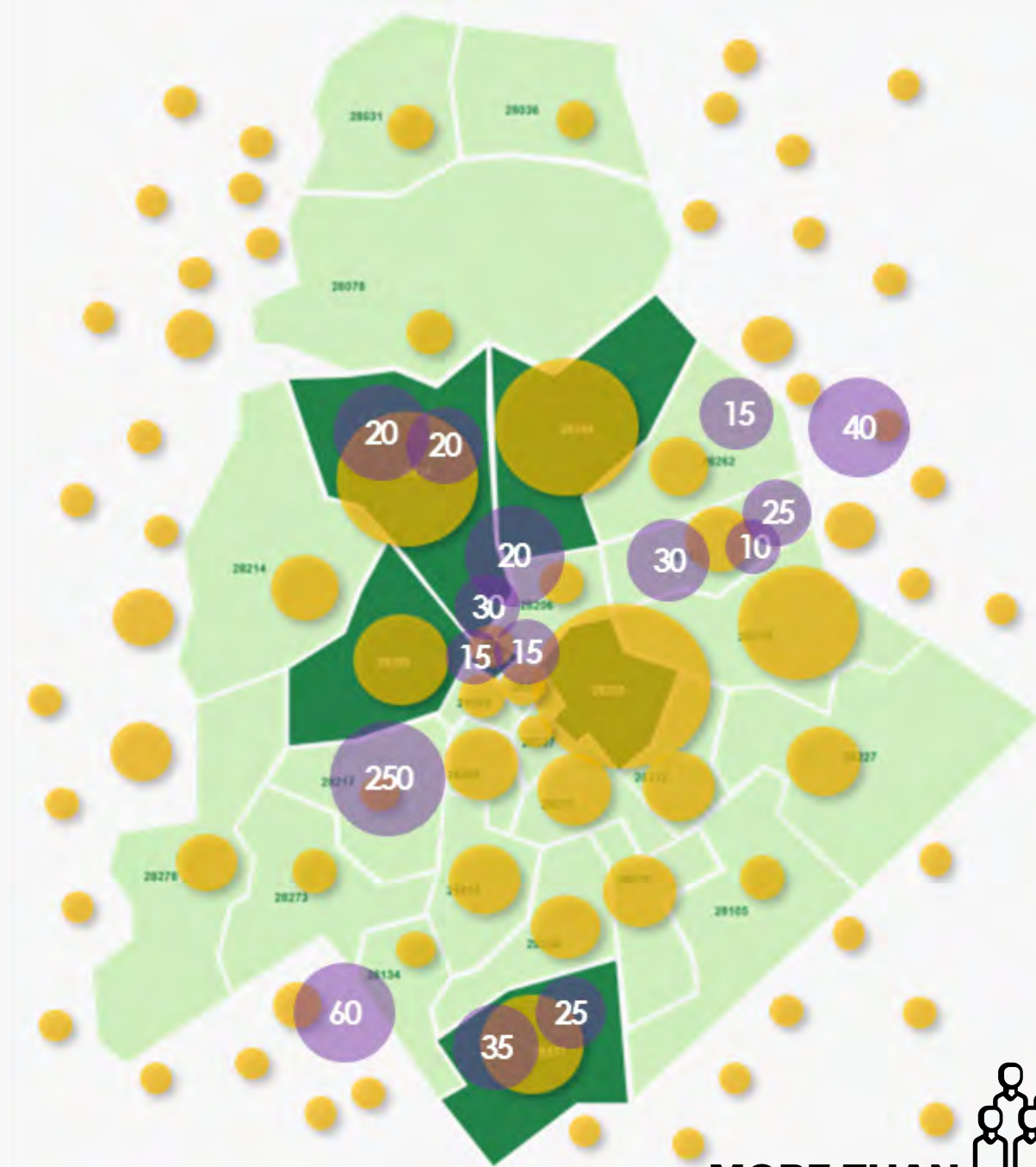
Ensuring that the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan's public engagement process blanketed the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area and heard from a broad range of residents and workers was paramount. However, from the outset, the combined team always agreed that participation must reflect the geographic and demographic range of the city and county. See appendix C for demographic details on attendees.

Almost every ZIP code in the county and surrounding areas were represented in engagement.

“I wanted to attract the best and brightest, to make this place more interesting, attractive ... and the arts do all of that.”

—Interviewee

Through this process, more than 3,200 people from the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community to date have engaged with the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan process.



WORKSHOP REGISTRANTS

SURVEY RESPONSE

NEIGHBORHOOD AND DROP-IN EVENTS

MORE THAN 

3,240

AREA RESIDENTS IN 75 ZIPCODES

Countywide Meetings

While arts and culture plan conversations were open to all, four meetings, in particular, were designed to engage anyone in Charlotte-Mecklenburg interested in strengthening the future of local arts and culture through visioning and engagement. Two meetings were hosted in person and two were hosted online to provide a variety of opportunities to attend. The goal of these meetings was to hear from a broad cross section of Charlotte-Mecklenburg community members and residents, rather than any one sector. Using Eventbrite, the consultant team and city staff created registration websites open to the public and publicized these on the city website and through social media and word of mouth. The in-person meetings featured a large map of Charlotte-Mecklenburg on which participants described where they experienced arts and culture, and other stations where participants described how they thought of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's "superpower" to identify strengths and get a flavor of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's community identity. At the in-person kickoff meeting in August, participants were welcomed with a cultural performance by Venezuelan dancers Mila and Keudis Sanchez of Cultural Spaces Productions and engaged with vendors from Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative community. The virtual meetings utilized Slido²⁵ polling to replicate the in-person stations. The countywide meetings, engaged a total of 201 participants.



CACP Public Engagement



CACP Public Engagement

Countywide Summer Kickoff Meetings

AvidXchange **VIRTUAL: Zoom**

143 **32**

participants

Aug. 24, 2022

participants

Aug. 25, 2022

Countywide Fall Meetings

VIRTUAL: Zoom **Charlotte Art League**

12 **14**

participants

Sept. 15, 2022

participants

Sept. 17, 2022

²⁵ Real-time polling platform

Online Survey of Cultural Participation

In partnership with the steering group, the consultant team and city staff designed and implemented a survey in English and Spanish to gain input about needs and priorities, such as work spaces, access to information about events and programs, of Charlotte-Mecklenburg creatives, business owners, funders, audiences and arts and culture organizations regarding how to support a vibrant and sustainable arts and culture ecosystem, and to understand overarching participation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture landscape. The surveys were open from late August through mid-November to ensure equitable reach and representative participation. The surveys were published on the City of Charlotte's arts and culture webpage, the city's social media accounts, sent to all Eventbrite registrants and to the constituents, neighbors and networks of the steering group. Approximately 1,100 individual community members completed the survey.

Community Conversations and DIY Toolkits

An important part of understanding Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture landscape is meeting the community where they already are. The team developed a guide to help community members host their own conversations about the future of local arts and culture with their colleagues, neighbors and families. These community conversations were hosted by local organizations and collectives such as the Obra Collective, Music Everywhere, Three Bone Theater and the Charlotte Dance Alliance. The downloadable toolkits were made available on the city's arts and culture webpage in English and Spanish and were provided upon request via the dedicated email address for the plan. Responses from these self-facilitated conversations were collected by the planning team throughout the entirety of the public engagement phase.

Neighborhood/Drop-In Events

To inform Charlotte-Mecklenburg-area residents about the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan process, invite their participation and solicit input through conversation. The consultant team attended 12 Charlotte-Mecklenburg based community gatherings throughout the city. There were also 3 neighborhood workshops convened by Charlotte is Creative and Creative Mornings that were facilitated by members of the arts and culture community. The team distributed flyers with a QR code to the survey and information about upcoming workshops. A key overarching goal of these neighborhood/drop-in events was to reach people who might not otherwise know about the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan process. Through these events, the consultant team and city staff interacted with more than 750 individual members of the community, including collecting emails for further engagements. The events included:

- National Night Out, Aug. 2
- Charlotte Creatives at West End Studios Event, Aug. 2
- A Vibe Outside, Aug. 20
- Festival of India, Aug. 27
- Creative Mornings, Sept. 2
- Camino Celebra la Arte & Cultura, Sept. 15
- Charlotte International Arts Festival, Sept. 16
- Black Girl Art Show, Sept. 18
- Live Art Demo with Ricky Singh, Sept. 21
- Johnson C. Smith University Home Game, Sept. 24
- Charlotte Chalk Art Festival, Oct. 1
- Charlotte is Creative, Oct. 20
- Rumbao Latin Dance Social, Oct. 28
- Music Everywhere CLT, Nov 1
- Obra Collective Artists Community Conversation, Nov 2
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Arts Educators Roundtable, Nov. 4
- Creative Mornings, Nov. 4

Stakeholder Interviews

The consultant team interviewed more than 100 stakeholders in one-on-one or in small groups, in person, by telephone and virtually. Interviews took place from July 2022 to January 2023. Interviewees included Charlotte City Council members, Mecklenburg County commissioners, cultural leaders such as executive directors of arts and cultural institutions, individual artists and creatives, city and county staff and representatives from the business and philanthropic community. The stakeholders were identified by the consultant team and city staff in collaboration with the steering group. The goal of these interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the arts and culture landscape from various perspectives to begin prioritizing needs and identifying opportunities.

Sector Workshops

The consultant team and city staff, in collaboration with the steering group, developed a series of 90-minute workshops for 14 arts and culture sectors and topics. The workshops engaged representatives of each sector in focused dialogue about their sector's needs and challenges and began to identify opportunities. Some workshops were hosted virtually and others in-person. The arts and culture sectors engaged included:

- Arts and culture spaces
- Arts education
- Business and philanthropic community
- Community arts and culture support organizations and neighborhoods
- Creative arts businesses
- Cultural events and festivals
- Communities of faith (i.e., house of worship)
- Film and media
- Independent artists, creatives and entrepreneurs
- Museums and cultural heritage institutions
- Music
- Performing arts
- Theater
- Visual arts

Ambassadors

The ambassador initiative was launched in this phase to reach communities and audiences who were not adequately represented in public engagement efforts by the midpoint of those activities. Ambassadors particularly focused on increasing engagement in Spanish-speaking communities to create more opportunities for all neighborhoods and ZIP codes to be represented in the survey, workshops, and subsequent findings. The ambassadors will extend their engagement into the next phase of the process focused on vision, strategy and implementation planning.

Activities of the Ambassador Program

- Attended community events to share information about the process and how people can get involved.
- Collected qualitative input from small group discussions within individual neighborhoods.
- Engaged their ambassadors' networks on social media to promote awareness of the planning process to encourage survey participation.

Digital Communication and Outreach

Beyond the public engagement strategy developed at the beginning of this phase, the consultant team and city staff developed a communication strategy to best leverage digital platforms to continue conversations outside of the facilitated meetings and build awareness of all the opportunities to participate in the process. This strategy utilized Facebook events and posts, Instagram filters and posts, a Linktree QR public engagement hub and a dedicated email for community members to send questions and feedback. Paper versions of the DIY conversation toolkits and postcards with the Linktree QR code were available at all in-person engagements.



Charlotte

Legend

City Council Districts

Art Home

Arts + C

What do you
and cu
Charlotte-Mecklenburg

List three sites where the name of the place
you experience arts and culture along
neighborhood address and place

City of Charlotte A

2.2 What Did We Hear?

A variety of opportunities and challenges were expressed through the engagement process. Comments ranged from challenges in finding affordable space for production and consumption of arts and culture to opportunities to collaborate with the public and private sector. People are hopeful and excited about the future of arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The following section will present the key themes and findings from what people said in the public engagement activities.

The strengths, challenges and desires from participants revolved around 10 overarching findings. Each finding is followed by quotes illuminating these ideas. Expanded detail of all public engagement can be found in Appendix D.

1. Charlotte-Mecklenburg has tremendous arts and culture strengths to build upon.

Participants were unanimous in their praise for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's diverse intergenerational arts and culture talent. Migration of all types enriches Charlotte-Mecklenburg's culture overall. It provides fertile ground for the development of diverse talent. Charlotte-Mecklenburg has such a deep well of talent, placemaking efforts, higher education institutions supportive of arts and culture, excellent festivals, outstanding institutions, a burgeoning film and TV industry, a robust jazz scene, strong comedy, excellent culinary and brewery options, increasing collaborations between large organizations and community artists, excellent murals and public art. Some of the feedback includes:

- "We need people to create an atmosphere where there's civic pride, excitement, and recognition that it's everyone's duty to support arts and culture." - Interviewee
- "Charlotte-Mecklenburg is obsessed with the idea we don't have a personality, but we absolutely do, and creatives are big part of quality of life and driving tourism." - Workshop participant
- "The potential for cross-collaboration does not have a ceiling since you're dealing with creatives." - Interviewee
- "We have an incredible, collaborative spirit that can be built on and nurtured, that is key to our identity." - Interviewee
- "The arts organizations contribute to life of the city, bring people to the region — the arts are what attract people and companies." - Workshop participant

2. Equitable and sustainable funding is a major concern for all in the creative ecosystem.

There is widespread consensus that no one, monolithic entity can sustain the arts and culture sector, that there needs to be collaboration among public and private entities, and clear roles for each. Many believe there should be a combination of funding and service delivery entities, not just one. For example, participants noted the sales tax referendum that narrowly failed²⁶. Earned revenue for creatives, and growth opportunities for creative businesses, are critical components in supporting a vibrant, arts and culture ecosystem:

- "Arts organizations need predictable, ongoing, multiyear support for general operations, in addition to project-based funding." - Interviewee
- "It all comes down to funding. I know there is a lot of opportunities, I just don't always know where to find them or how to go about the application processes. It gets frustrating." - Workshop participant
- "Charlotte-Mecklenburg is willing to put a mass amount of money towards the arts, but that money seems to be going to the same people all the time. People are not taught how to speak the language." - Workshop participant
- "I'm worried about those working artists out in the community. Where is the support for them? How are we making sure they are being supported?" - Interviewee
- "People in Charlotte-Mecklenburg need to understand their role in supporting a vibrant, creative city, for example, by purchasing tickets in advance, subscribing to seasons of performances, and including arts and culture in their annual giving." - Interviewee

"Arts organizations need predictable, ongoing, multiyear support for general operations, in addition to project-based funding."

—Interviewee

²⁶ A sales tax referendum was also proposed and failed in 2014 to support the sector.



McColl Center and BOOM Festival: The power of small and mid-sized arts organizations

While Charlotte-Mecklenburg has established excellent larger arts and culture organizations, the arts and culture landscape is also immeasurably enriched by its smaller and mid-sized organizations as well.

McColl Center, a nationally acclaimed artist residency and contemporary arts center in Uptown Charlotte, is a hub for creativity and connection between artists and communities. McColl provides subsidized artist studios, access to modern equipment and tools, entrepreneurship programs, and 5,000 feet of gallery space to exhibit and sell work. In addition to having a longer-term residency, McColl's CO-OP programs offer month-to-month access to their space, tools and equipment, including media printmaking, 3D and laser cutting and ceramics labs and woodshop. McColl serves both local artists, and with its Catalyst Artist-in-Residence program, invites nationally renowned artists in advanced stages of their career to spend time at McColl Center and connect with local artists and the community.

BOOM Charlotte, an artist-led performance and visual arts showcase of contemporary and experimental works, began in 2016 as a multi-day art festival in Plaza Midwood. Since then, it has grown into a year-round art initiative, providing access to communities who may have access to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's larger art scene. In collaboration with other community organizations, BOOM also has created innovative programs to serve the community, such as BOOM Echoes. In December 2022, BOOM Echoes East collaborated with Refugee Support Services in East Charlotte to highlight arts and culture by the area's vibrant array of immigrant communities.

Image source: <https://boomcharlotte.org/>
Photo by Carter Wade

3. Center city and uptown institutions are a key strength to support while simultaneously and equitably supporting arts and culture in neighborhoods.

The seven facilities owned by the city and leased to key cultural organizations — the Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Blumenthal Performing Arts, Discovery Place Science, the Harvey B. Gantt Center of African American Arts + Culture, the Mint Museum Uptown and Mint Museum Randolph, and the Knight Theater — need continued support. However, smaller organizations at the grassroots level also need support. Ideally, collaborations between large and small can allow for mutually beneficial resource sharing and the development of new audiences and greater relevance. Some of the feedback includes:

“We should move forward and evolve, but also take lessons from the past and our history can tell us a lot about how we can do better for all our communities.”

— Workshop participant

- “It is not an either/or proposition; thriving cities have both major arts institutions and neighborhood arts. We are a smart, growing city. We have to figure out how to support both.” – Interviewee
- “There has been a longstanding principle in Charlotte that says if you don't have a strong downtown, you'll never be a successful city, but the pendulum has to swing. We have to invest in the outer ring.” – Interviewee
- “There's a huge opportunity to overlay arts into Corridors of Opportunity, and to layer into the [Unified Development Ordinance], for example with creative zones that support the art with tax incentives or credits.” – Interviewee
- “Artists of color are left out of the process sometimes. Calls for artists rely heavily on social networks and who you already know. Rather than artists whose audiences are really excited about but don't have the connections.” – Workshop participant
- “We should move forward and evolve, but also take lessons from the past and our history can tell us a lot about how we can do better for all our communities.” – Workshop participant

4. Coordinated and well-resourced leadership is needed for the arts and culture community.

Contributors recognized a need to collectively articulate the value and impact of arts and arts creators to create well-funded and reoccurring opportunities within the business and government sectors. This plan will require the support and collaboration of all the arts and culture ecosystem and that structure will need representative leadership to further any wide-reaching initiatives. Some of the feedback includes:

- “We are a growing city and everyone knows that. Working with actors, dancers and models, we all acknowledge that we are going to be the next Atlanta, but we need to discuss what will take us to that next level. It starts with leadership.” – Workshop participant
- “Success could be the city/county government encouraging

collaboration between the haves and have-nots, all of the large organizations have same challenges, all out here trying to get funding, underpaid, we need to come together and find those win-win solutions, and that won't happen unless we're led there.” – Workshop participant

“If we could get all the creative minds of Charlotte together on a regular basis, think of what we can accomplish for our communities.”

— Workshop participant

• “If we could get all the creative minds of Charlotte together on a regular basis, think of what we can accomplish for our communities.” – Workshop participant

• “Visionary leadership is needed to provide incentives to [better articulate the value of art and art

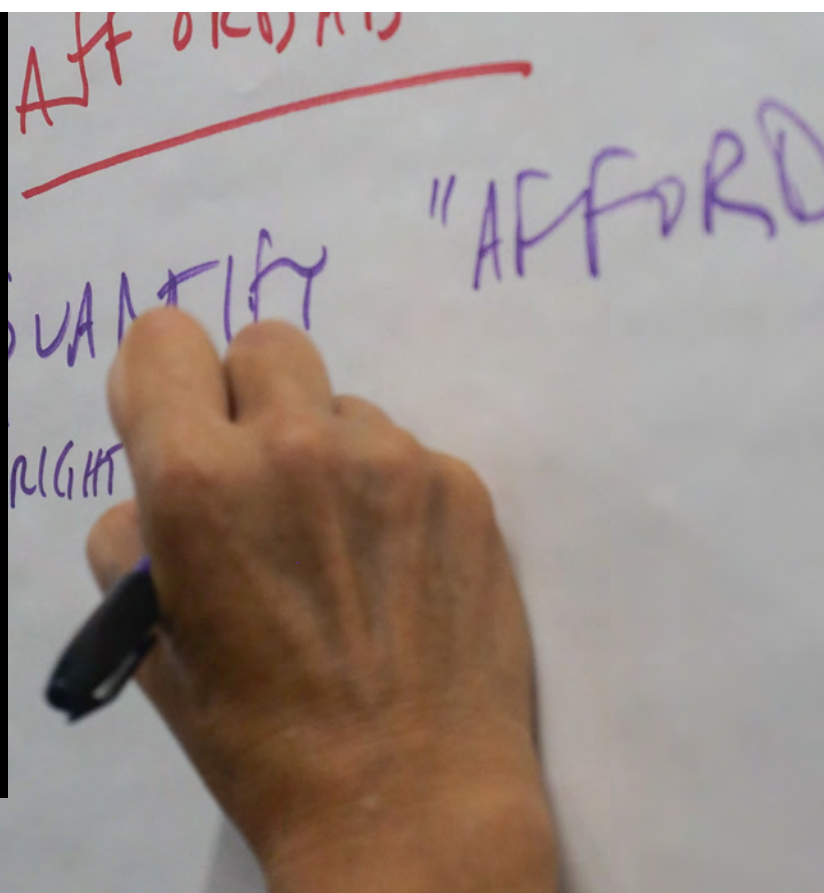
creators, grow Charlotte's film and media industry].” – Workshop participant

• “Collaboration — among the city, the county and the region, large and small cultural organizations, established and emerging talent and across sectors — is key to success.” – Workshop participant

What is “well-resourced leadership”?

In comparable municipalities, well-resourced leadership includes, among other things:

- Convening arts and culture entities to facilitate collaboration, identify needs and opportunities, as well as to address issues of equity.
- Report on the economic impact of the arts and culture sector to support marketing and tourism.
- Nurture and bolster the health of local arts and culture organizations — legacy institutions, grass-roots organizations and everything in between.
- Support innovation and adaptation to new market needs.
- Encourage the creation of new start-up/additional localized art and cultural assets and the development of local talent.



5. Affordable and accessible space is a key need.

Displacement and affordable space have a big impact on the creative community. Space challenges have been exacerbated by Spirit Square – a space that in the past housed many performing and visual arts opportunities - closing in 2021 for renovation. Many noted that creatives are getting displaced by rising real estate costs. While this affects all residents in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, artists often need live/workspace, which can lead to tailored approaches to providing affordable artist spaces. There is also a need to think differently about what is required of “non-traditional” or gig economy workers to ensure access to living and working spaces. Some of the feedback includes:

- “Space is expensive, and costs are pushing resident creatives and businesses further out of the city center.” – Workshop participant
- “The renovation of Spirit Square demonstrates the fragility of space issues for the arts and culture community.” – Workshop participant
- “There’s a loss of grassroots energy for the arts in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Back in the day, in NoDa, there was a home for artists. We’ve lost the home [gathering place, workspaces] for young artists. Everyone is scattered.” – Workshop participant
- “Activating under-used spaces, such as schools, public spaces and empty retail, etc., and connecting the creative community to those spaces is key.” – Interviewee
- “Placemaking is not just public art, it is also taking underutilized spaces and making them better for people to gather.” – Interviewee

“Placemaking is not just public art, it is also taking underutilized spaces and making them better for people to gather.”

— Interviewee

Spacefinder: Connecting artists and creatives to spaces for artistic production and exhibition

Spacefinder Dallas helps artists and community groups find spaces. The tool is a database of rental spaces in Dallas available to artists, community groups and cultural organizations. Spacefinder Dallas is created and supported by the City of Dallas’ Office of Arts & Culture after extensive community feedback during the 2018 Dallas Cultural Plan.

In the past, the nonprofit Fractured Atlas provided Spacefinder tools in a variety of cities including New York City, Baltimore and numerous Canadian cities, but in 2020, they discontinued this service to focus their resources on fiscal sponsorship. However, the model of connecting artists to spaces is still used in other cities and is a helpful tool for the creative community.

Chicago Artists Coalition features a Spacefinder tool on their website that allows artists to see a variety of spaces for production, rehearsal, exhibition and other creative needs, while also allowing creative businesses to advertise their services.

Image source: <https://www.redclaydance.com/rentals>



6. Nurturing local, homegrown and emerging talent with promotion and professional development, and ensuring that all feel welcome, is critical for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative future.

Equity in promotion and support of arts and culture rose to the top of discussion. There is a wide array of diverse local cultural activity that needs greater support and attention. For example, support for local theater was cited as a particular gap, though there are passionate theater artists in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Naturally occurring, organic arts and culture communities and happenings are what distinguishes Charlotte-Mecklenburg as a future creative epicenter. While some opportunities to nurture homegrown talent exists, participants voiced a need for more. Some of the feedback includes:

- “We need to better support and spotlight all of Charlotte’s local talent.” - Interviewee
- “There’s not a lot of opportunities for immigrant artists. This has changed over time, but we are looking for more opportunities.” – Workshop participant
- “Charlotte’s lack of nurturing local theater is a great mystery. Why does a city of our size not support homegrown theater in a way that other cities of our size do?” – Workshop participant

“Charlotte’s lack of nurturing local theater is a great mystery. Why does a city of our size not support homegrown theater in a way that other cities of our size do?”

— Workshop participant

Mint Museum Uptown’s “LOCAL/STREET” exhibit: An effort to make a city-owned facility available for collaborations and local artists

The Mint Museum hosted the LOCAL/STREET exhibit starting in 2021, featuring BIPOC community-based artists. The exhibit was so successful another edition of the exhibit was created in 2022 as a pop-up exhibition lasting for a week in June. According to local artist Carla Aaron-Lopez quoted in the Charlotte Observer “After one year, the exhibition is beginning to take shape as a citywide representation of artists and creatives.” LOCAL/STREET demonstrates a commitment to supporting the local creative community and creating a truly welcoming environment. Creating the exhibition was a model of collaboration: Aaron-Lopez curated the exhibit along with the Mint Museum’s chief curator, Jennifer Sudul Edwards, with help from Charlotte is Creative.

Image source: <https://www.charlotteobserver.com/charlottefive/c5-things-to-do/article262454892.html>, Art is by @ArtByPercy. Carey King



“Charlotte has the talent to compete with the big East Coast cities, we just haven’t figured out how to support or market the value of what Charlotte is creatively, to not only people outside of Charlotte but also to our own communities.”

— Workshop participant

7. Maximizing opportunities for local working artists and arts organizations is top of mind.

The creative economy can be a major driver of job creation and retention and economic and workforce development. The impact of corporate and creative economy collaborations, valued appropriately, will financially benefit involved entities while also elevating the role of artists as entrepreneurs and small businesses. From there, artists and creatives need ongoing support — with professional development and income opportunities — to develop their business and entrepreneurial skills. Some of the feedback includes:

- “I have lived in Charlotte for many years and the number of creatives seem to be rising but there are not many who can afford to be working artists as their only source of income. It is expensive to live and work within Charlotte as a creative.” – Workshop participant

- “The role of grassroots organizations is extremely important in nurturing local creatives—ArtPop Street Gallery, BLKMRKTCLT, Charlotte Art League, Charlotte is Creative, Namaste Artists, and Hue House, that champion local and emerging artists, build trust and cultivate relationships.” – Interviewee
- “Charlotte has the talent to compete with the big East Coast cities, we just haven’t figured out how to support or market the value of what Charlotte is creatively, to not only people outside of Charlotte but also to our own communities.” – Workshop participant

Houston Cultural Events Calendar: A shared resource for the community

The Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) in Houston, Texas, maintains a Cultural Events Calendar as a service of the City of Houston to all residents and visitors. Users can search by keyword, category, organization, venue, city or start/end date, to find about arts and culture activities going on in the Houston area.

Users are asked to create a free account before submitting an event. Submission guidelines are clearly stated on the site.

HAA has also posted a tutorial video on the site to instruct users on submission guidelines, the review process, how to make your event stand out and grantee requirements. Additionally, the site includes a phone number and help desk as well as a section for feedback to ensure the site meets the needs of users.

Image source: <https://calendar.haax.com/>



8. A lack of awareness and coordination of arts and culture activities, organizations and opportunities presents a major challenge.

Better marketing and promotion are needed for the cultural ecosystem. Many stakeholder interviewees said it is hard to know all that is happening and expressed a desire for a master calendar. Coordination is needed to break silos of various kinds (e.g., between artists, organizations, sectors, neighborhoods), and to better plan events in ways that can be mutually beneficial. It is especially important to promote local, emerging, homegrown talent. Educating the public about the benefits and value of arts and culture is a large part of addressing the awareness issues. This need has been identified before, in 2007 ASC created CharlotteCultureGuide.com in response to a comprehensive audience development study that resulted in the need for a central place to find arts and culture events. Over time, due to sector revenue challenges and the need to prioritize operating support, the budget for CharlotteCultureGuide.com dwindled and it has not developed into the effective communication tool as hoped. Some of the feedback includes:

- “Sometimes you find out that there is an event going on at the exact same time, on the same weekend, pulling the same audiences in different directions and splitting up attendance. We can do better of coordinating with each other to ensure that we are supporting each other not competing.” – Workshop participant
- “There’s not a central place to go to [in regard to working with the school system]. You have to use the arts education directory and just go from there.” – Workshop participant
- “There is simply not enough recognition of all that Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts and culture sector has to offer.” – Interviewee
- “Not everyone knows how good we are or where we could be, where we are and where we are trying to go. This plan is a perfect opportunity to educate the community.” – Interviewee

“There is simply not enough recognition of all that Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts and culture sector has to offer.”

— Interviewee

9. K-12 and post-secondary arts education experiences should be expanded for greater access and exposure to arts and culture, which can support workforce development, enhanced quality of life and cultivate future supporters of arts and culture.

Arts education should be strengthened in K-12 education and the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts community can build upon on higher education partnerships and assets. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) has collaborations it can build on, such as projects it has done with the Mint Museum, its roster of local artists who work with the schools and its artist residency program. Mecklenburg County is the primary funder of arts education managed by ASC, including its School Funding Opportunities providing curriculum-aligned experiences through assemblies and residencies in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, independent schools and charter schools.

The arts, as connected to Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM), is a major skill set of interest to funders in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that can be leveraged to grow Charlotte-Mecklenburg's workforce. Public engagement participants would like to see more science, technology, engineering, arts and math programs offered and supported, and supporters also need to understand the inherent innovation that is integral to making art. Some of the feedback includes:

- “We have a need to get arts back in our schools — it is so important and a top priority. Arts education needs regular investment. The city and county have got to come together on this.” – Interviewee
- “Arts education can demonstrate that being a creative entrepreneur is a legitimate career and not a hobby.” – Interviewee
- “Arts education is a top priority for me — especially how the arts are a form of mental health therapy, and also helps with the appreciation of the environment.” – Interviewee

“Arts education can demonstrate that being a creative entrepreneur is a legitimate career and not a hobby.”

— Interviewee



Arts+: Bringing transformative arts education to communities throughout the Charlotte-Mecklenburg region

Arts+ is a Charlotte-Mecklenburg-based nonprofit arts education organization, spun out of the Arts365 program of ASC. Their mission is unleashing creativity, transforming lives and building community through outstanding and accessible arts education.

Arts+ models collaboration, and fosters space and programming partnerships which are increasingly needed in the recent wake of the closing of Spirit Square (for renovation). As they note in their 2021-2022 Impact Report, while occupying space in the Visual and Performing Arts Center, they teamed with The Light Factory to offer photography summer camps to youth and teens. Other partners include OurBridge (a Charlotte-Mecklenburg nonprofit providing resources to refugee and immigrant families), OBRA (Observe, Bridge, Respond, Art) Collective (a collective of LatinX visual artists), The Bechtler Museum of Modern Art, Blumenthal Performing Arts, Charlotte Mecklenburg Library, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte Symphony Orchestra, Discovery Place and many area churches

Image source: [Arts Plus 2021-2022 Impact Report chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://www.artsplus.org/uploads/documents/Arts-Impact-Report-2022.pdf](https://www.artsplus.org/uploads/documents/Arts-Impact-Report-2022.pdf)

10. Public art is a growing program that has been noticed and more is desired.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's public art success can be leveraged to expand access to arts and culture. The city already supports creativity through its creative placemaking efforts, though there is a lot of room for growth and additional support for those efforts. While the percent-for-art program is a great start, Charlotte-Mecklenburg would benefit from the program being expanded to apply to more than just visual art:

- “We need to take action, by [expanding] programs, for example, when [Namaste Artists] worked with CATS on bus shelters in low-income neighborhoods to encourage public transport use, provide opportunities to artists, and show the community they are heard.” – Interviewee

- “What if we redefined what public art means for Charlotte-Mecklenburg? Murals are a great addition to any arts and culture landscape, but what about activating spaces through music or through performing arts? There are other ways we can engage the public.” – Workshop participant
- “There seems to be a lot of support and money going into art in public spaces but [it is] all going to visual artists. [The support] may not even entertain a proposal from me a choreographer. Why couldn't you have an incredible image of a dancer, connect you to a link to lead you a short video of performing artists?” – Workshop participant

For more information, please see the detailed Appendix C.

“What if we redefined what public art means for Charlotte-Mecklenburg? Murals are a great addition to any arts and culture landscape, but what about activating spaces through music or through performing arts? There are other ways we can engage the public..”

— Workshop participant



Section 3

Cultural Asset Inventory and Map

3.Cultural Asset Inventory and Map

An important part of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture ecosystem are the physical locations where artists and arts and culture organizations are producing and presenting work, and where audiences and users are experiencing arts and culture.

Through qualitative crowd-sourced information, interviews, as well as data sourcing described below, the team developed an inventory of Charlotte-Mecklenburg cultural amenities. The inventory provides insights on the current situation of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture assets and points to possible opportunities.

The inventory work began with existing maps and databases of creative sector assets, known arts and culture facilities, public art locations and city and county placemaking sites, as well as by gathering information about where investments are made into arts and culture throughout the county. These data were then augmented through in-person asset mapping, where community members at public events, sector workshops and other happenings were asked to identify places where they experience arts and culture.

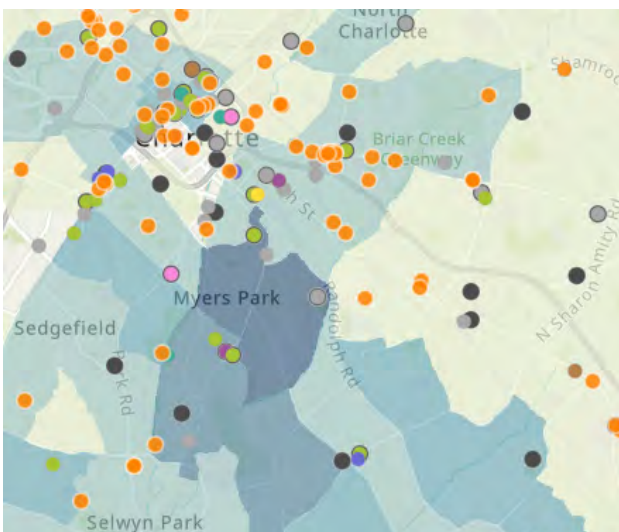
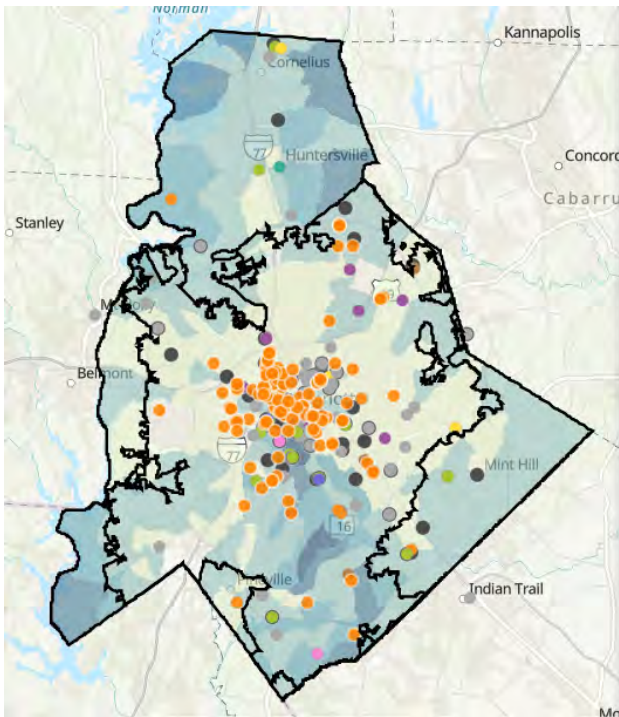
The inventory was then transferred to a GIS-based cultural asset map that includes layers of economic and demographic data. The goal was to identify trends and gaps and to inform arts and culture investment and policy strategies.

The map contains nearly 1,000 assets, which include 90 Infusion Fund grantees, more than 200 city-owned and county-owned public art pieces each, respectively, more than 200 works of art at 110 public transit stations via the Art in Transit program and 137 Placemaking Sites. All of these assets require support to maintain a healthy vibrance. Mapped assets fell into the following categories (organized from most to fewest):

1. Public art (400)
2. Art in Transit (200)
3. City Placemaking (137)
4. Performing arts/theater/dance/opera (67)
5. Visual arts (48)
6. Nonprofit (41)
7. Arts education (33)
8. Independent creative (31)
9. Festival/presenting (30)
10. Gallery space (26)
11. Museum, zoo or exhibition space (22)
12. Folk, craft and traditional arts (19)
13. Studio/working space (18)
14. Performance space (16)
15. Heritage or historical site (15)
16. Motion picture/television/film (13)
17. Music, sound, radio (12)
18. Retail (7)
19. Design (including marketing) (6)
20. Literature (6)
21. Software/technology/new Media (5)
22. Supply chain/production space (3)
23. Architecture (2)
24. Fashion (1)

The cultural asset map provides a visual picture of the arts and culture amenities that exist in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Importantly it shows that:

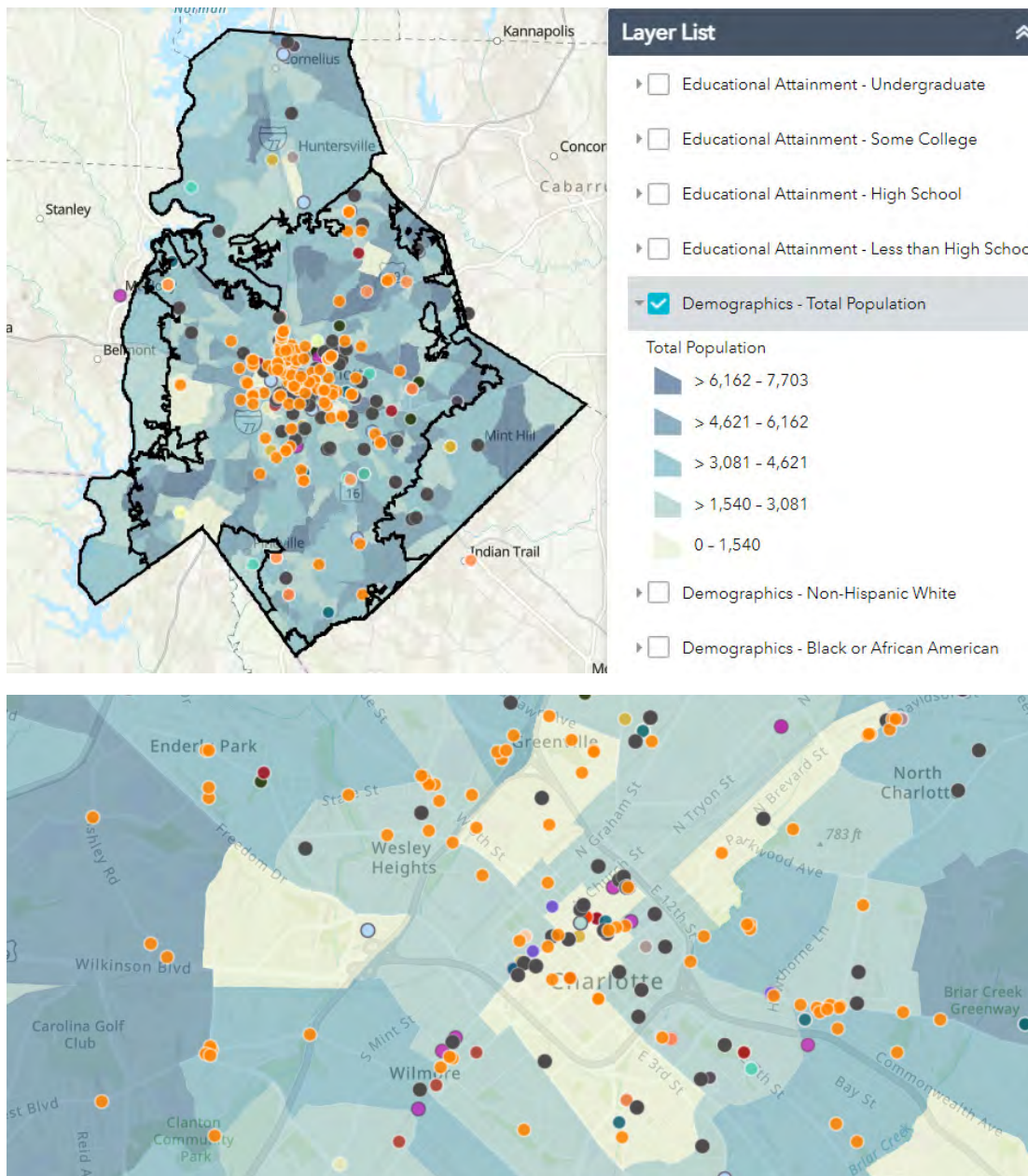
• **Most assets are in areas with higher incomes than the county's median** household income of \$69,240, in areas with home values above the county's median home value of \$253,500 and in majority-white census tracts. This has equity implications, as people living in lower income and more diverse areas have less access to arts and culture, and creative businesses and workers struggle to find affordable spaces to produce, showcase and perform.



Though the map shows that there are many assets located in areas with a lower median home income (yellow), still the vast majority are in areas with higher median incomes (all shades of blue).

• **Uptown boasts a large concentration of cultural amenities**, (~50) which is to be expected given that the city center is the economic nucleus of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Home to Charlotte-Mecklenburg's many financial institutions, large employers and major attractions like the convention center, NASCAR Hall of Fame and the Carolina Panthers' Bank of America Stadium, the Uptown area is a logical place to house major cultural institutions, as the concentration helps drive visits and a sense of a robust arts and culture environment.

• **At the same time, there are fewer arts and culture assets in many areas outside of center city** and county, pointing to a need for more distribution of arts and culture in neighborhoods where people live, to enable more equitable access to amenities, as well as greater vibrancy and quality of place development throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg, so visitors and residents alike can have a richer overall experience.



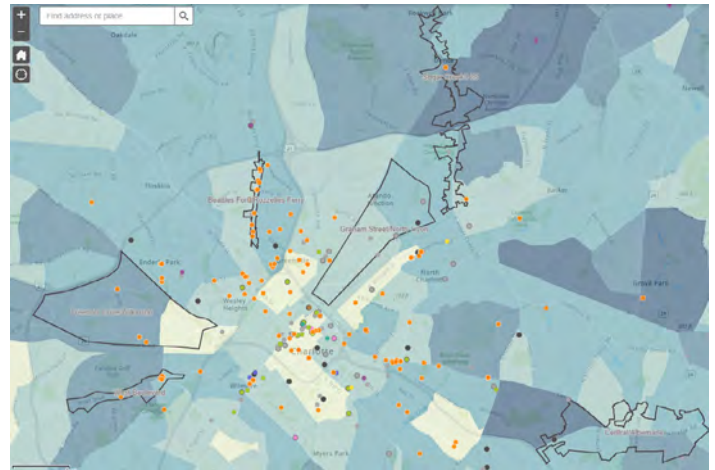
The map (left) shows fewer assets in highly populated areas (shaded dark blue) and a (right) concentration of those in more sparsely populated areas, especially around Uptown.

- **Charlotte's Corridors of Opportunity²⁷ currently have few (30) arts and culture amenities.** The city plans to incorporate more placemaking and cultural programming in these designated places, which are experiencing systemically high unemployment and poverty rates, to help the city reach other development and investment goals in these six corridors.
- **Pockets of programming across Mecklenburg County are emerging as new clusters of investment and activity** in geographic areas outside of the city center. For example, the area around the Camp North End development has several other amenities inside and nearby (Goodyear Arts, Porch Productions, Crown Keepers), the town of Matthews has a small cluster (Charlotte Master Chorale, Matthews Heritage Museum, Matthews Playhouse of the Performing Arts) and there is a small hub around Davidson College at the north of the county (Duke Family Performance Hall, Wooden Stone Gallery, Common Thread Collective, Davidson Community Players).

Bringing arts and culture programming to publicly owned spaces throughout the county, like libraries, community centers, and schools, could be a natural way to increase the geographic spread where arts and culture are experienced. For example, Dallas's Big Thought program brings hands-on experiential learning to schools, classrooms, and after school programs across the city, and has become a national model in arts education.

Ultimately, the cultural asset map could be published online as an additional way to market cultural amenities located throughout the county and help the public identify arts and culture resources to patronize throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Map of Corridors of Opportunity



Of the Corridors of Opportunity, Beattie's Ford/Rozzelles Ferry has the most assets at (11), followed by Graham Street/North Tryon (6), West Boulevard (5), Sugar Creek/I-85 (3), Freedom Drive/Wilkinson (3) and Central/Albemarle (2).

²⁷ "Corridors are defined geographic areas of a city that often contain major roadways and are vital to the health of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's communities and the city. Six corridors in the city with systemically high unemployment and poverty rates have been identified as focus areas for a special economic development initiative, Corridors of Opportunity." [Corridors of Opportunity](#) (2021)



Implications for Consideration

The nearly 1,000 assets in Charlotte-Mecklenburg all require support—whether maintenance, operating support, programming, or other support—to continue to benefit the community over the long term. The clustering of assets in and around Uptown is critical to maintaining a vibrant downtown core that is attractive to visitors and locals and important for business and talent attraction. However, given the gaps in where assets are located (currently primarily in higher-income and predominantly white census tracts, and away from high-population areas where many residents live), there is an opportunity to advance the equity of arts and culture assets by encouraging development in other pockets of the city and county. This may help with affordability of production and performance space for arts and culture activity, since real estate is less expensive outside of Uptown, and municipally owned facilities (like libraries, community centers, and schools) could be utilized at low or no cost.

Section 4

Comparable Communities

Charlotte International Art Fair installation at Ballantyne Golf Course, Artist: Mentalgassi

4. Learning From Comparable Communities

The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan will be a unique blueprint to respond to the opportunities and needs of the community, building on the efforts of a wide range of organizations and leadership. Similarly, communities throughout the country are investing in their arts and culture sector to improve their community.

It is important as a part of this planning process to research comparable communities to understand the ways in which they invest in arts and culture to create vibrancy, support local creative workers and generate economic activity around the arts and culture industries. Comparable communities were chosen for Charlotte-Mecklenburg for the purposes of benchmarking — i.e., evaluating how each community stacks up along various metrics like population, economic growth or arts and culture employment — while others were identified for inspiration regarding how they support their arts and culture ecosystem.

4.1 Benchmarks

Several comparable communities were researched to understand how they support, govern and fund arts and culture, and what models, best practices and lessons learned may be applied in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. A starting list of comparable communities was sourced from the City of Charlotte's 20 cities identified by the city's economist as peers for Charlotte-Mecklenburg to be used for economic development benchmarking:

- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|-----------------|
| • Arlington, TX | • Houston, TX | • Nashville, TN |
| • Atlanta, GA | • Indianapolis, IN | • Omaha, NE |
| • Austin, TX | • Kansas City, MO | • Portland, OR |
| • Columbus, OH | • Long Beach, CA | • San Diego, CA |
| • Dallas, TX | • Louisville, KY | • Seattle, WA |
| • Denver, CO | • Memphis, TN | • Tulsa, OK |
| • Fort Worth, TX | • Minneapolis, MN | |



These communities were presented and discussed at the Arts and Culture Advisory Board meeting May 24, 2022, as were several criteria and characteristics to consider in narrowing down the list to about 10 communities to study further. These criteria included:

- Presence of a city, county or regional cultural plan within the last 10 years that guides arts and culture investment and strategy.
- Population growth-related issues like those facing Charlotte-Mecklenburg, such as transportation, displacement and equity addressed in a cultural plan or elsewhere.
- Established public funding mechanism for arts and culture (funded through tax district, percent for art, general fund or other).
- Presence of an arts and culture agency, department or council that is housed within a local government office, in a standalone nonprofit, or a combination of both.
- Recent population and/or economic growth, along with similar density and racial diversity.
- Demographic similarities in median household income, median home value and/or arts and culture employment.

Running the list of 20 peers through this lens resulted in 11 communities that met all or most of the above criteria:

- Austin, TX
- Dallas, TX
- Denver, CO
- Gwinnett County, GA (not on the original list of 20 peers, but identified by the consultant team as an inspirational community for supporting arts and culture)

- Houston, TX
- Louisville, KY
- Minneapolis, MN
- Nashville, TN
- Oakland, CA (not on the original list of 20 peers, but identified by the advisory board as an inspirational community for supporting arts and culture)
- Portland, OR
- Seattle, WA

These communities were benchmarked against Charlotte-Mecklenburg in several key data indicators, including economic and population growth, total employment and population size, housing affordability and arts and culture sector employment (a full list of arts and culture related occupations can be found in appendix D), to identify the most relevant comparable communities to study further.

The resulting list of peer communities are recognized arts and culture leaders and included the following (listed as city-county for comparison of data against Charlotte-Mecklenburg):

- Austin-Travis County
- Houston-Harris County
- Denver City-County
- Minneapolis-Hennepin County
- Nashville-Davidson County
- Portland-Multnomah County

The following high-level trends were observed among these six communities as compared to Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

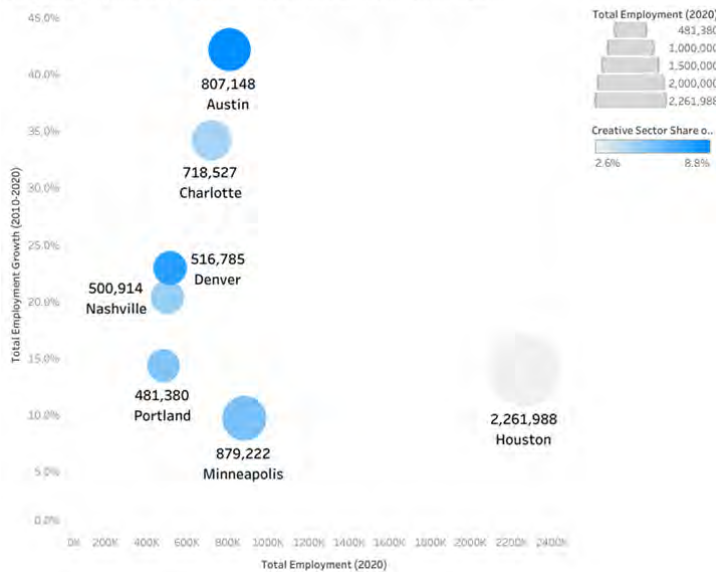
Benchmarking Trends

The following section provides benchmarking information to illustrate, from a data perspective, how Charlotte-Mecklenburg compares to these peer art and cultural leaders.

Economic growth

The economy in Charlotte-Mecklenburg continues to grow, more significantly than most of its peers. This is consistent with Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s economic development aspirations as an attractive, modern and competitive city.

Total Employment by Total Employment Growth (2010-2020)



Source: BLS QCEW. Non-disclosed data estimated by Fourth Economy.

Austin-Travis County grew the most between 2010 and 2020 at 42%, followed by Charlotte-Mecklenburg at 34%. Houston-Harris County grew by 13.8%, while Minneapolis-Hennepin County grew by just 9.6%.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg

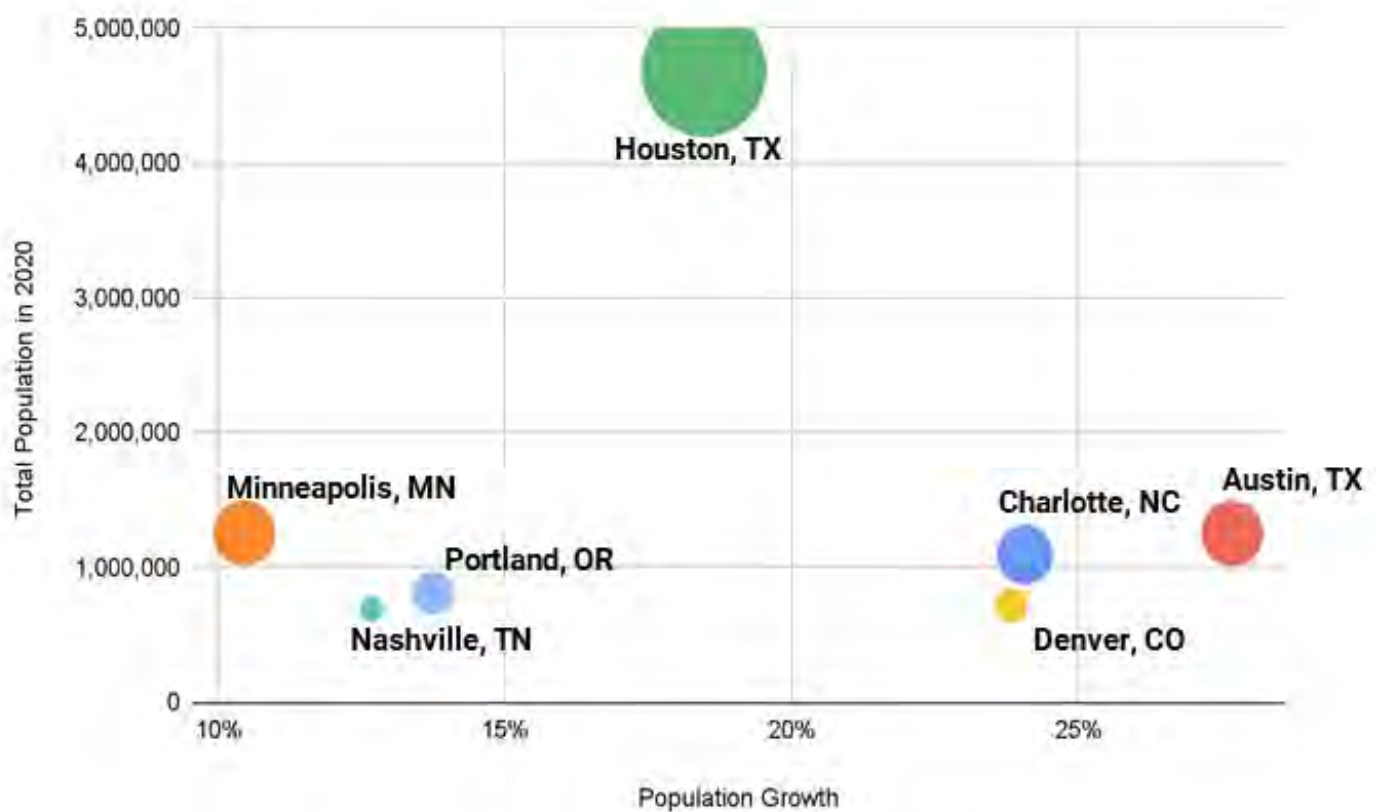
34% ▲

Charlotte-Mecklenburg grew second most among its peers

Population Growth

Charlotte-Mecklenburg (24.1%), Austin-Travis (27.7%) and Houston-Harris (18.5%) have seen significant 10-year growth. Minneapolis-Hennepin, Nashville-Davidson and Portland-Multnomath grew less than 15% between 2010-2020.

This type of population increase indicates success in **talent attraction**, which is a **driving trend in Charlotte-Mecklenburg**.

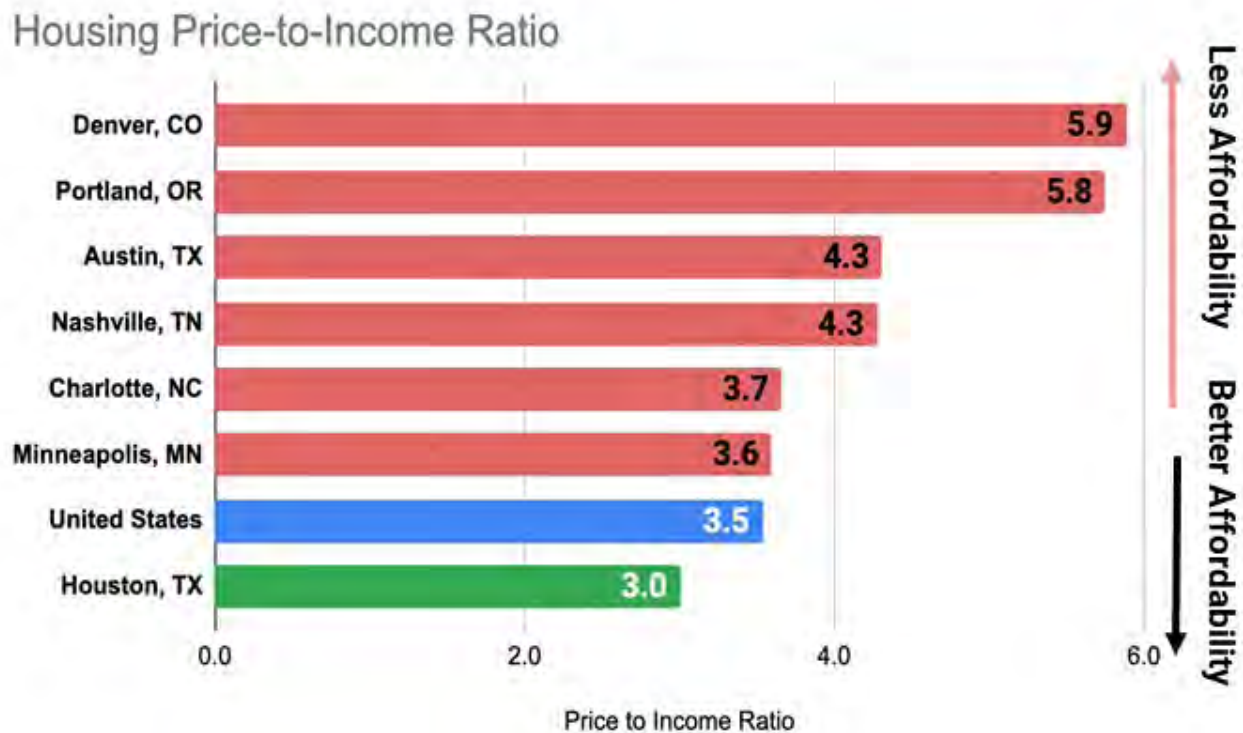


Source: U.S. Census ACS 2010-2020

Housing Affordability

Maintaining housing affordability as Charlotte-Mecklenburg grows is important to continuing to attract and retain talent.

In this chart, the ratio is 3.7 for Charlotte (Mecklenburg) meaning the median family needs to invest 3.7 times their annual income toward the purchase of a home. Charlotte-Mecklenburg is more affordable than Austin-Travis, but less than Minneapolis-Hennepin and Houston-Harris.



Source: U.S. Census ACS 2016-2020. Red – above U.S. average; Green – below U.S. average

Arts and Culture Occupational Growth

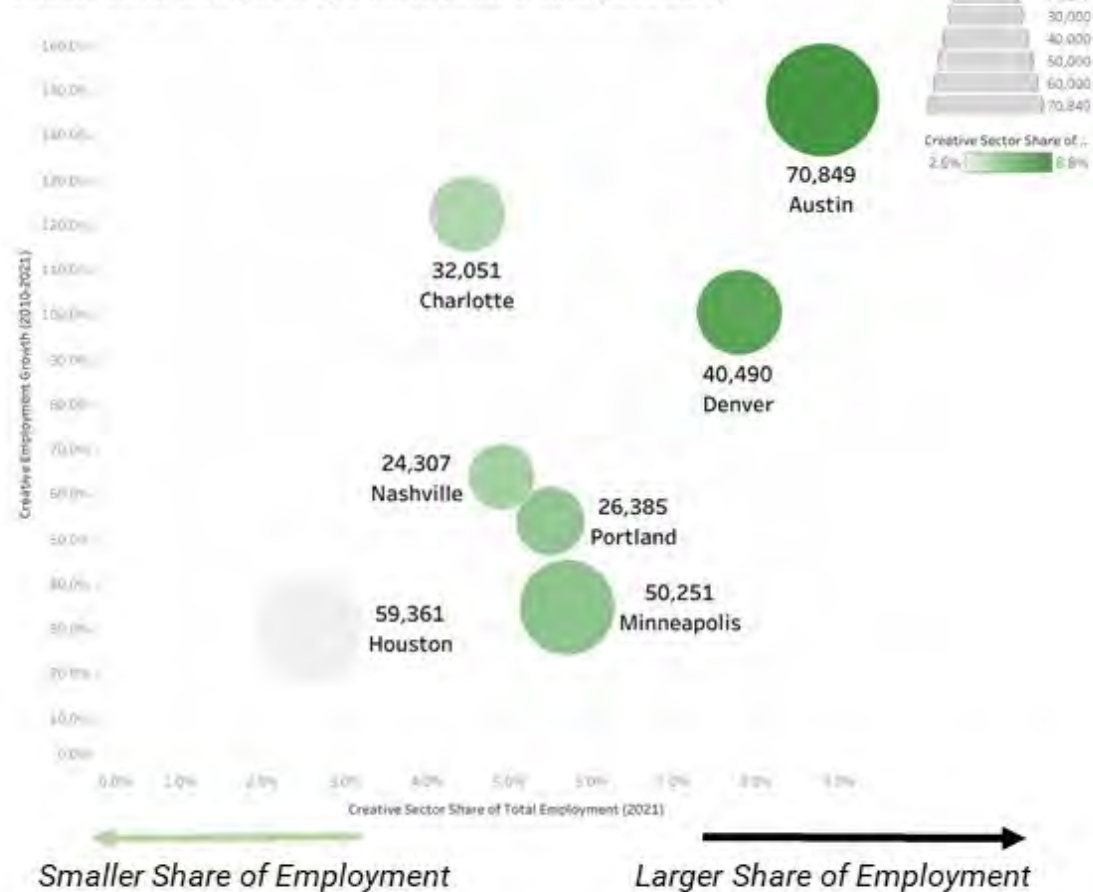
Arts and culture occupation employment grew the most between 2010 and 2021 in Austin (Travis) at 147%, followed by Charlotte (Mecklenburg) at 122%. Minneapolis (Hennepin) and Houston (Harris) grew the least at 34% and 30% respectively. A full list of arts and culture related occupations can be found in the appendix.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg 4.5% of those employed are employed in arts and culture-related occupations, as reported by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. These are occupation-based rather than industry-based, i.e., includes

videographers working in government or any industry, but does not include accountants working in television. Austin-Travis's arts and culture employment as a share of total employment is highest at 8.8%, followed by Denver-Denver at 7.8% and Minneapolis-Hennepin at 5.7%. Houston-Harris has a much lower arts and culture share of employment at 2.6%.

A larger share of total employment indicates a robust ecosystem with direct and indirect jobs to support the sector. Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a lower share than all but one of the benchmarks.

Creative Sector Employment by Creative Sector Growth (2010-2021)



Source: BLS QCEW. Non-disclosed data estimated by Fourth Economy



CACP Site Tour, Charlotte Art League

Arts and Culture Sector Employment

The Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan team narrowed down the benchmark communities from six to three (Austin, Houston and Minneapolis) for the purposes of analyzing arts and culture employment. Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a smaller number of people working in arts- and culture-sector occupations than its peers. However, when looking at occupational employment as a share of total arts- and culture-sector employment, **it punches above its weight in motion picture and television, music sound radio, printing/publishing, photography and photofinishing and historical sites (See appendix D for chart).**

Note that these numbers do not capture 1099 or independent gig workers operating in the arts and culture space, as those workers are not tracked in the U.S. to any reliable extent. We know that there are many individuals who fall in this category who likely make up a huge proportion of the total arts and culture employment in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and the other communities profiled.²⁸

Overall, compared to its benchmarks, Charlotte-Mecklenburg underperforms in several occupational areas, based on employment in those occupations as a percentage of overall employment, including design and creative services, arts education, museums, mobile food services, zoos and botanical gardens, theater, independent artists, performers, musical groups and other performing. Building a strong local talent base of professionals who have the skills and experience to help support the industries that make up the arts and culture sector is imperative to their growth and prosperity, as well as job growth in this sector and ensuring Charlotte-Mecklenburg has a strong cultural future.

²⁸ There are some ways to establish approximate estimates, such as by looking at non-employer establishments via the census. In an effort to avoid overestimation of the data, this report offers the information as sorted by industry.



Charlotte's Ranking Position Relative to Profiled Peers

	Charlotte	Minneapolis	Houston	Austin
Motion picture/television	1	4	3	2
Historical sites	1	2	4	3
Printing/publishing	2	1	3	4
Music sound radio	2	4	1	3
Photography and photofinishing	2	1	3	4
Promoters; agents and managers for artists	2	1	3	4
Dance	2	1	3	4
Design and creative services	3	1	2	4
Arts education	3	2	1	4
Museums	3	2	1	4
Mobile food services	3	4	2	1
Zoos and botanical gardens	3	4	1	2
Theater	3	2	1	4
Independent artists and, performers	4	2	3	1
Musical groups	4	1	2	3
Other performing	4	1	2	3

The chart above shows the industries where Charlotte has a higher proportion of employment compared to other cities. Industries with ones are where that city leads in having a higher proportion of workers, two shows where they come in second followed by three and four where they fall behind the other cities.

4.2 Case Studies

For each of the six communities that met all or most of the assigned criteria and met benchmarking similarities (Austin-Travis County, Houston-Harris County, Denver City-County, Minneapolis-Hennepin County, Nashville-Davidson County, Portland-Multnomah County), a case study was developed that now supports an understanding of how the public and private sectors work together to fund, govern and support the arts and culture community. The full profiles are included in Appendix D with key takeaways noted below.

Key Takeaways Relevant to Charlotte-Mecklenburg

What follows are key takeaways around how arts and culture is administered in each (i.e., the main funding and service delivery entities and the functions they perform), as well as how those entities and functions are supported.

Public Funding for Arts and Culture

Most communities profiled (all but Minneapolis and Nashville) have a recurring public funding source to support arts and culture. The exceptions rely on percent for art and/or general fund contributions to support arts and culture organizations and activities. For example, Austin and Houston utilize a percentage (15% and 19% respectively) of their hotel occupancy tax for arts and culture granting; Denver allocates 1 cent of every \$10 in sales tax revenue to support its arts and culture sector; and Portland directs a \$35 income tax to its Art Education Fund. These are all in addition to their percent for art funding to support public art, which all communities make use of.

Municipal general funds are a funding source for arts and culture in most of the communities profiled, especially for public art. This is true even for those that have no municipal arts and culture office (Portland relies solely on an independent 501c3, the Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC)) to administer its public arts and culture funding.

For example, Houston allocates \$15 million from the city's general fund to the Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) for organizational support to arts and culture entities, creative entrepreneurship, creative events and festival operations,

and \$750,000 in general funds for the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs to focus on arts and culture planning and the preservation of historic architecture and management of the City of Houston's Civic Art Program. Minneapolis uses its general fund to support the staff of the Minneapolis' Office of Arts, Culture, and the Creative Economy (ACCE), which develops arts and culture policy, researches the economics of the city's creative sector, works with city departments to support creative projects and runs a placemaking initiative to better support the creation of healthy, equitable and inclusive communities and ecosystems. Nashville and Portland use their city-county general funds used for grant making to arts and culture organizations (\$3 million and \$3.6 million respectively). In most communities, capital projects and larger initiatives are supported by state and federal grants, as well as bonds.

Additional Municipal Support for Arts and Culture

In some places, the city or city-county municipal office often plays the role of connector – to city and county departments, opportunities, technical assistance and other non-monetary resources and support. This is true whether the municipal office directly funds arts and culture organizations or not. For example, in Minneapolis, the Metropolitan Regional Arts Council (MRAC), a private 501c3, is the entity that provides grants to individual artists and other nonprofits, while ACCE provides non-monetary technical assistance. MRAC is funded by the Minnesota State Arts Board via an annual legislative appropriation from the state's arts and culture heritage fund. In Nashville, the Nashville Office of Arts and Culture (DBA Metro Arts), in addition to directly funding artists, organizations and neighborhood projects, and creating an equitable arts and culture strategy for the city, also connects artists to resources that may support their endeavors.

Municipal entities also have a clear public mandate to address issues of equity. All the communities profiled have a city, county or regionally supported equity strategy associated with their arts and culture or other municipal plans. For example, in Austin, the [Nothing About Us Without Us Racial Equity Anti-Displacement Tool](#) was developed to help evaluate and shape \$7.1 billion in transit investments for more equitable outcomes and direct \$300 million toward community-identified projects that redress past displacement harm and prevent future displacement in the city of Austin. Sample indicators measured include homeownership rates, rate of poverty and business ownership by race and ethnicity.

[The City of Houston Equity Atlas](#) is an interactive tool that provides a visual depiction of different indicators to help decision making to focus on equity issues and make Houston an equitable city to live. Quality of place indicators measured by the tool include Access to Parks and Greenspaces by Census Tract: The ratio between the percentage of the population who lives within 0.5 miles of a public park space by majority-people-of-color and majority-non-Hispanic-white census tracts (or ZIP code), and art grants by ZIP code: the ratio between the percent of art grants approved by majority-people-of-color and majority-non-Hispanic-white ZIP codes. In Minneapolis, the [Strategic & Racial Equity Action Plan](#) along with the city's Comprehensive Plan, also known as Minneapolis 2040, is a set of interconnected policy ideas that the community has lifted up over the past two years for the city to pursue. It includes goals around strategies such as increasing arts and creative spaces, venues and districts; emphasizing the value of Minneapolis' arts and culture artists and creative workers and incorporating arts and culture in community development, affordable housing production and preservation and cultural districts.

Private Support for Arts and Culture

Few of the communities profiled have a dedicated private funding stream of direct grant support for arts and culture organizations, with most corporate funding coming in the form of sponsorships, memberships or a facilities fund that supports legacy organizations like the symphony, Broadway theater, ballet and opera. For example, Austin leverages its large corporate presence to support arts, culture and creative-based events via sponsorship and membership, rather than providing grants/operating funds. Meanwhile, the Houston Arts Alliance receives \$9 million annually from corporate, individual and philanthropic donors.

Instead, most of the six communities profiled see substantial philanthropic support via period gifts and commissions from private and corporate foundations, especially for large, legacy organizations. For example, in Denver, the Bonfils-Stanton Foundation is a major philanthropic supporter of arts and culture, while in Houston, the Menil and Moody Foundations provide substantial giving to legacy organizations.

Several of the communities employ a public-private partnership model to provide access to affordable and appropriate space for arts and culture activities. For example, Austin's Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is currently housing the city's Cultural Trust, a recently established pool of currently public funds that aims to preserve and open creative spaces throughout town. AEDC's 501(c)(3) status allows it to gather and leverage private funds. As of March 2022, the city's Arts and Music commissions were working together to make a joint ask of local corporations to increase their support of the creative sector. The commission's long-term goal is to develop a strategy to raise more private sector money for creative spaces and work opportunities.

Austin Cultural Trust, Texas: Nurturing creative spaces throughout the community

Austin's Economic Development Corporation (AEDC) is currently housing the city's Cultural Trust, a pool of public funds established in 2018 that aim to preserve and open creative spaces throughout town. AEDC's 501(c)(3) status allows it to gather and leverage private funds.

Goals of the Austin Cultural Trust are to support acquisition and preservation of arts, cultural and music spaces within Austin. Through purchase and long-term lease, the Austin Cultural Trust creates affordable spaces that support artists and arts organizations, preserves historic and iconic cultural building and spaces for creative and cultural uses and provides for cultural assets to exist in all parts of the city.

Image source: <https://www.austinedc.org/projects>



Independent Nonprofit Organizations

A few of the communities profiled have a private 501(c)3 organization dedicated to “ecosystem support,” leading activities like hosting events calendars, advertising opportunities for creatives and cultural organizations, connecting entities to performance or production space, and offering operational support. In some cases, this is a stand-alone organization, such as RACC in Portland, in others it operates as a municipality-supported, arms-length organization, working closely with and on behalf of the city/county, like HAA in Houston. These organizations sometimes act as funding entities, granting funds to arts and culture organizations, but not always. For example, in Austin, the municipal office, City of Austin, Economic Development Department, Cultural Affairs Division, is the entity that does grant funding, while the nonprofit Austin Creative Alliance, hosts a city-wide events calendar, opportunities hub and co-working space for creatives. It also serves as a paymaster for small and emerging theatre companies, and can be hired as a project manager for stage productions, festivals and screen producers.

Arts and Culture Promotion

Tourism agencies, Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) and business alliances are generally leaders in marketing arts and culture for external audiences including tourism, talent and business attraction. For example, arts and culture experiences in Austin are most heavily marketed by [Visit Austin](#), the city’s tourism authority. The city also has an official [Cultural Tourism Plan](#), published in 2015, that lays out the city’s strategy surrounding the cultivation of visitors in the area. This plan’s impact included a series of workshops on marketing and public relations for individual artists and organizations, growing organic audiences and experiences. The city also put further investment into cultural events, parks and festivals as part of this strategy.

Houston’s [tourism authority](#) heavily markets Houston as a destination for arts and culture experiences, alongside the marketing work of HAA, while the city’s economic development public-private partnership, the [Greater Houston Partnership](#), heavily covers arts and culture as a key economic asset to the city’s prosperity. Meanwhile, in Minneapolis, both ACCE and the [city’s tourism authority](#) market arts and culture to an external audience.

Local and grassroots publications serve the role of marketing arts and culture to the local community.

The Austin Chronicle, Austin’s alternative newspaper, is the go-to resource serving local audiences and visitors for arts and culture news and happenings; it hosts a comprehensive online events calendar and links to the calendar or website at <https://www.austinchronicle.com/>. In Houston, publications like *Glass Tire*, [Houston Press](#), and [Houstonian Magazine](#) consistently publish local happenings related to theater, museums and other cultural events for residents and visitors. In Minneapolis, local publications such as [Mpls.St.Paul Magazine](#), follow arts and culture as a consistent digital and print beat. Groups such as the [Northeast Minneapolis Arts District](#) offer marketing support to arts and culture nonprofits and creatives. Specifically, a partnership with the local University of St. Thomas gives artists a team of senior-level marketing students who will spend a semester designing a marketing project. offer marketing support to arts and culture non-profits and creatives. Specifically, a partnership with the local University of St. Thomas gives artists a team of senior-level marketing students who will spend an entire semester designing a marketing project.

A deeper dive on each community, contained in the appendix, showcases the unique elements of each, which may or may not be applicable to Charlotte-Mecklenburg, but nevertheless are interesting findings to learn from.

All the communities profiled have strong systems in place for supporting and growing their arts and culture ecosystems. Typically, these systems include both the public and private sectors working together to reach common goals, guided by a cultural plan that outlines key priorities, as well as a shared understanding of how investments in the arts and culture sector helps achieve broader community objectives around equity, economic development and other quality-of-life issues like housing, safety and transportation.

Governance and Service Delivery in Comparable Cities

Community	Funding Sources	Annual Impact	Fund Manager	Governance
Charlotte-Mecklenburg County, NC	ARPA + General Fund 1% Percent for Art Rental Car/ Tourism Tax	\$6m for Infusion Fund Grants \$2.8m for Public Art \$11m for Facilities	City's Arts and Culture Advisory Board Public Art Commission	9 private leaders and 9 government appointees 9 community members, with Charlotte, Mecklenburg, and ASC each w/3 appointments
Austin-Travis County, TX	15% of HOT Revenue 2% Percent for Art	\$10m for A&C grants \$3.5m for Public Art	City's Economic Development Department's Cultural Affairs Division	11-person committee appointed by city council
Denver-Denver County, CO	Sales Tax Revenue (1c of every \$10 in 7-county region)	\$60m for A&C grants	Science and Cultural Facilities District board	11-person special-purpose unit of government, appointed by city council, county commissioners, and governor
Houston-Harris County, TX	19% of HOT revenue 1.75% of City Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) projects for Public Art	\$1.8m for HAA \$9m from Corporate, Individual, and Philanthropic donors for A&C \$15m City of Houston general fund spending on A&C \$2.8m for Public Art	Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA)	31-member board of directors and various sub-committees
Minneapolis-Hennepin County, MN	1.5% for Art	\$2m for Public Art	Minneapolis arts commission	17-person public governing body appointed by mayor and council. Applications reviewed by the city Zoning and Planning Committee
Nashville-Davidson County, TN	1% for Art City-County General Fund	\$3m for Public Art every 3 year cycle \$3m for A&C grants	Nashville Office of Arts and Culture (DBA Metro Arts)	15-person Arts Commission, elected through public nomination, appointed by the mayor and approved by council
Portland-Multnomah County, OR	2% for Art City-County general fund \$35 Income Tax to Art Education Fund	\$3.8m for Public Art \$3.6m for A&C grants \$13m for Arts Education	Regional Arts & Culture Council (RACC)	501(c)3 staff and board follow recommendations of the Public Art Advisory Committee - 2 RACC board members, a RACC Design Committee member, and 6-8 arts professionals



Section 5

Funding Evaluation

5. Funding Evaluation

To better understand how arts and culture is supported in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, an assessment of the funding landscape was conducted to evaluate the value, quality, reach and impact of recent arts and culture funding.

This assessment was performed through:

- Interviews with a sampling of funders, artists and arts and culture organizations.
- Desktop research into the stated priorities and impact goals of funders.
- A review of available grant proposals to understand location, type of funded organizations and equity in funding.
- A profile of city and county funding for arts and culture over the past 10 years.

This analysis is important for Charlotte-Mecklenburg to ensure its investments into arts and culture further its economic development and quality of place goals while supporting the arts and culture businesses, organizations and talent that make up the local ecosystem. Ultimately, Charlotte-Mecklenburg seeks to create a sustainable funding model for arts and culture economy throughout the county.

5.1 Public Funding for Arts and Culture

Investing in arts and culture supports business attraction, tourism spending, talent attraction and retention and upward mobility for cultural workers and community identity. Public investments into arts and culture typically include:

- Direct operational and programmatic grants to arts and culture organizations.
- Connecting arts and culture entities to technical assistance and other non-monetary resources and support.
- Commissioning/managing public art and placemaking programs, including maintenance, conservation and removal.
- Addressing issues of equity.
- Contributing to public-private facilities funds to provide access to affordable arts and culture space.
- Reporting on the economic impact of the arts and culture sector to support marketing and tourism.

These functions help nurture and bolster the health of local arts and culture organizations (both legacy institutions, grassroots and everything in between), support innovation and adaptation to new market needs, encourage the creation of new start-up/additional localized art and cultural assets and the development of local talent, enhance quality of place and vibrancy for residents and visitors alike, advance equity and access and encourage private sector support of the ecosystem.

Municipal Support for Arts and Culture

	Direct Grants	Public Art	TA and non-\$	Equity Plan	Facilities	Impact Reporting
Charlotte	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Austin	✓	✓			✓	✓
Denver	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Houston	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Minneapolis		✓	✓	✓		✓
Nashville	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Portland	✓	✓	✓	✓		

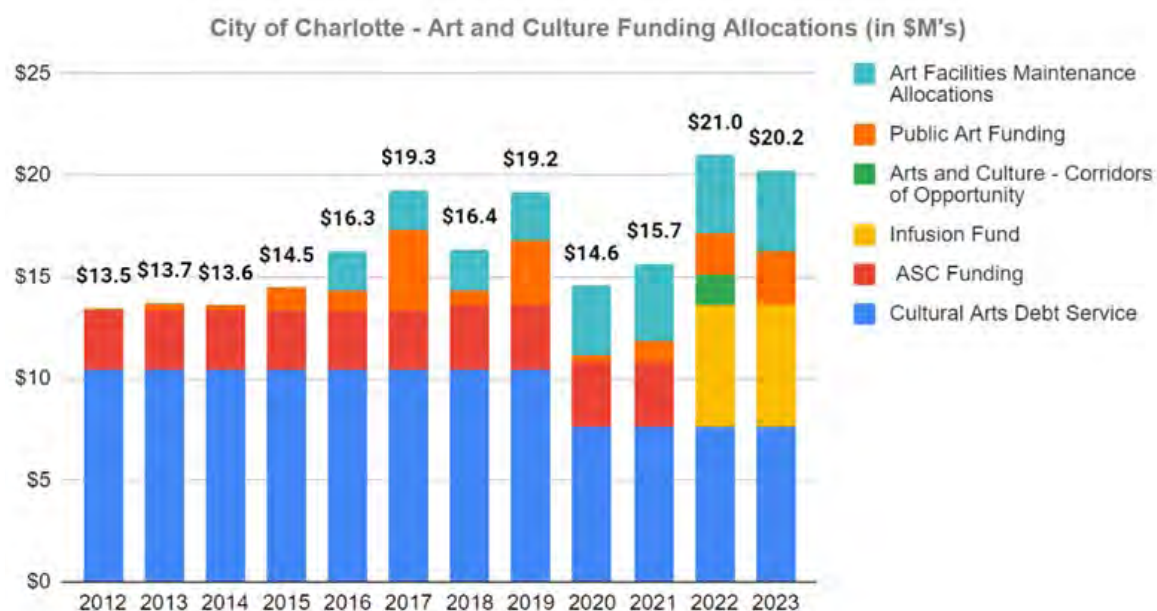
The above chart shows which of the above-described functions each of the comparable communities' municipalities invest. More information can be found in the case studies in the Appendix D. Regarding facilities, Austin manages one (African American Cultural and Heritage Facility), Denver manages five (Red Rocks, Denver Performing Arts Complex, Denver Coliseum, Colorado Convention Center and McNichols Civic Center), and Houston manages one (Miller Theater).

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, the most recent annual public funding for arts and culture is as follows:

City of Charlotte (FY 2023)

FY 2023 - City of Charlotte Support for Arts and Culture	
\$7.60	Debt service on city-owned cultural facilities
\$6.00	Infusion Fund: City-managed pool of funding raised from a mix of public and private funding (cCity's contribution: \$4M General Fund and \$2M ARPAAmerican Rescue Plan Act)
\$3.95	Maintenance of city-owned cultural facilities
\$2.65	1% for art of construction costs of city's capital improvement projects ²⁹
\$0.15	Placemaking Hub: City-led pool of funding for placemaking projects
\$20.24	Total

The FY 2022 amounts are the largest in the past decade as shown in the following chart.



²⁹ Public Art Funding is dependent on the value of projects in the CIP and therefore fluctuates in any given year.

FY 2023 - Mecklenburg County Support for Arts and Culture	
\$2.70	Debt service on county-owned cultural facilities
\$1.70	1% for art of construction costs of county’s capital improvement projects
\$1.10	Restricted funding for ASC Culture Blocks
\$1.0m	Restricted funding to ASC ³⁰
\$0.45	Restricted funding to Arts+, Studio 345 program
\$0.05	Restricted funding for arts therapeutic recreation services through Ppark and recreation
\$7.0m	Total

As stated earlier, arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg has historically been supported by the city and county through maintenance and debt service of city-owned cultural facilities operated by arts and culture organizations, the city-county public art programs, supported by a percent for art ordinance, unrestricted support by the City of the Arts & Science Council (ASC)’s general operations and grant making, and restricted support by the County of the ASC’s programs. The North Carolina Arts Council and the county’s six suburban towns provide additional funding that fluctuates year-to-year to ASC to support the sector.

Over the past decade, workplace giving has significantly declined in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, and the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in declines in revenue for many arts and culture organizations, a trend expected to continue due to what many economists believe to be an impending recession. To address these challenges, the City of Charlotte and Foundation For The Carolinas (FFTC) established the Infusion Fund — a three-year initiative to stabilize the sector to identify a sustainable path forward in fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024 (July 1, 2022-June 30, 2024,) while a comprehensive arts and culture plan is developed.

With the city’s match of the \$18 million raised from the private sector, this annual pool of public and private dollars is helping to revive and sustain local cultural organizations and artists in this moment, by restoring operating funding for the 38 organizations previously funded through the ASC to much higher levels after years of decline, continuing support of artists and organizations through ASC’s programs, providing unrestricted grants to 51 organizations that did not previously have access to this flexible type of funding and the new Opportunity Fund that has provided nearly \$1 million of timely, project funding to artists and groups on a rolling basis via a mechanism that complements the limited other funding opportunities. The Infusion Fund is set to run out in June 2024, and there is no plan for funding after that time. The arts and culture plan will seek to identify a sustainable funding model for supporting the sector.

³⁰ Restricted Funding to ASC: (Cultural Vision Grants, School Funding Opportunities, Artist Support Grants, Artists Fellowships, Artists SEED Grants, Technical Assistant Grants)

5.2 Additional Arts and Culture Investors

Nonprofit and private sector organizations also support arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg though total investment amounts but many of these organizations are unknown due to a lack of reporting consistency, transparency and availability:

- Arts and culture organizations (as self-funders)*
- Arts & Science Council (ASC)
- Central Piedmont Community College (CPCC)
- Charlotte Center City Partners
- Charlotte is Creative (CIC)
- Corporations, including:
 - Atrium Health
 - Bank of America
 - C.D. Spangler Foundation/National Gypsum Company
 - Duke Energy
 - Hugh McColl
 - Lowe's Companies, Inc.
 - LendingTree/LendingTree Foundation
- Davidson College
- Foundation for The Carolinas (FTTC)
- Johnson C. Smith University (JCSU)
- John S. and James L. Knight Foundation
- Queens University of Charlotte
- University of North Carolina at Charlotte (UNCC)



CACP Site Tour, DUPP&SWAT

Artist Self-funding: The effects of artist-funded projects

*It is important to note that many arts and culture entities, especially small, grassroots organizations and individual creatives, often self-fund their work, investing effort, time and money to ensure work is produced. In 2022, part of the Infusion Fund, the Opportunity Fund, awarded \$600,000 in mini-grants, though demand outpaced the available funding, indicating a need for more grant funding to support emerging and grassroots organizations. schools) could be utilized at low or no cost.

5.3 Revenue Needs and Capacity

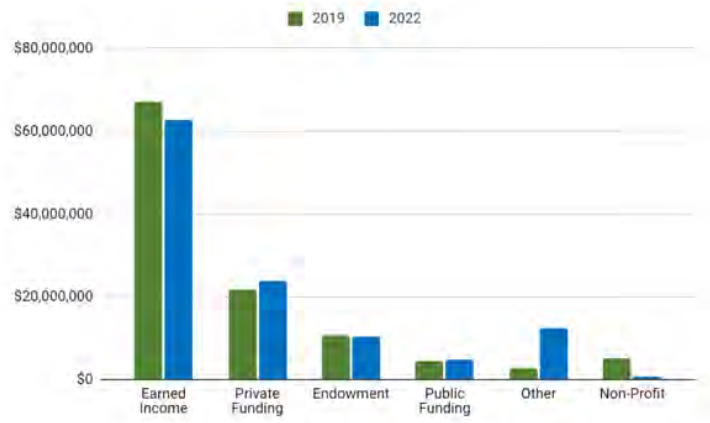
To gauge earned and contributed revenue levels and needs, an assessment was conducted of data available from Infusion Fund grant recipients and applicants.

NOTE: This assessment is not meant to indicate the needs of the entire sector; rather, the following data points represent portions of the sector and are intended to provide an indicator of the appetite and need for resources as the comprehensive plan is developed.

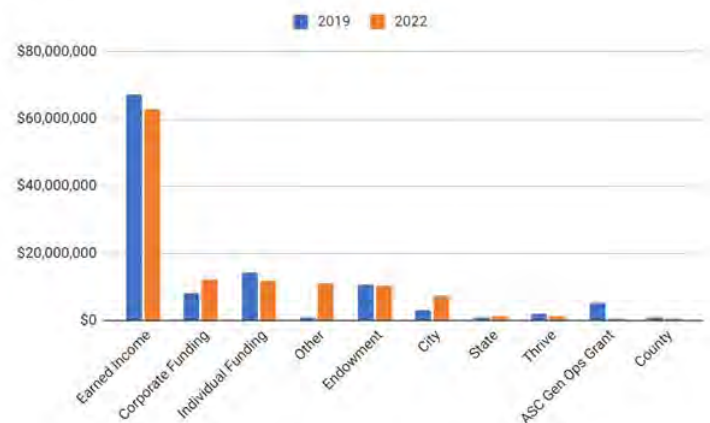
An analysis of the 38 annually funded organizations for FY 2019 and FY 2022 reveals revenue sources that are predominantly driven by earned revenue, followed by private funding, endowments, and then public funding. Private funding includes individual donations, as well as family, private and corporate foundations. Public funding encompasses city, county, state and federal sources. Nonprofit funding in this case refers mainly to general operating grants from ASC, which were largely replaced by the city's unrestricted operating grants by 2022. "Other" spiked in 2022, largely because it includes federal COVID-19 relief funds, such as the Small Business Administration's Shuttered Venue Operators Grant.

Earned revenue dropped between 2019 and 2022, in part due to the difficulties many arts and culture organizations continue to face due to the pandemic, as audiences and patrons have been slow to return, and have yet to bounce back to pre-pandemic levels.

Annual Revenue, 38-Annually Funded Organizations, Self-Reported



The charts above shows self-reported revenue in FY 2019 and FY 2022 for the majority of the 38-annually funded organizations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Due to reporting, this is 34 of the 38 – three organizations did not file this report, and one, Actor's Theatre of Charlotte, is permanently closed as of the time of this publication. This graph also includes the Blumenthal which is an outlier, with earned revenue of over \$40million.



A more detailed breakdown shows public funding as city, county, and state, and private funding separated into corporate versus individual funding. Note, earned revenue does contain an outlier: Blumenthal Performing Arts earned over \$40million and \$46million in FY19 and FY22 respectively.



CACP Site Tour, McColl Center

Additional Funding Needs Across the Sector

It is important to keep in mind that the 38 annually funded organizations include organizations of all sizes, and are one piece, though significant, of the bigger picture of the arts and culture ecosystem. The arts and culture ecosystem introduced at the beginning of this report also includes many other nonprofits, artists, and creative businesses. The following data is intended to provide a flavor for the additional needs of the sector.

In 2022, the Infusion Fund conducted two open calls: one for unrestricted funds for arts and culture organizations and groups, and one for the Opportunity Fund—a grant mechanism for timely project support. The open call for unrestricted support provided \$400,000 to 51 organizations in the Charlotte-Mecklenburg area that met the eligibility requirements; however, the call elicited over twice as many funding requests. Some organizations supported through

this open call had been in operation for nearly a decade or, in one case, even 15 years, without having received annual operating support or any kind of unrestricted support prior to this.

Meanwhile, through the Opportunity Fund, 33 projects received nearly \$1 million. Approximately half of the recipients were nonprofit organizations, while a quarter were artists/creatives and another quarter were groups that were not formal nonprofits. In total, nearly 80 funding requests were received for over \$2 million—the bulk of these requests were received and awarded in a period of only 2 months. **The volume of these funding requests indicates the scale of arts and cultural activity in Charlotte and Mecklenburg, as well as the demand for resources to fuel this activity.**

5.4 Funding Evaluation

Key Takeaways

Together, the public, private and nonprofit funders listed above support the arts and culture sector financially via direct grants, sponsorships, fee for service and commissions.

Funder Priorities

Across all types of funding entities, there is broad support for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Investors prioritize the following issues (in alphabetical order):

- **Arts education** (K-12, post-graduate): ASC, FTTC, Knight Foundation, Mecklenburg County, CPCC, Davidson College, JCSU, Queens University, UNCC.
- **Individual support** (travel, career development, project funding): ASC, Knight Foundation, UNCC, Davidson College, CIC.
 - Fellowships, internships, apprenticeships (e.g., conferences, retreats, research, residences).
- **Organizational support and technical assistance** (mentorship, marketing, design, networking): ASC, City of Charlotte, Knight Foundation, UNCC, CIC, JCSU, Queens College.
 - Small business support (start up, supplies, equipment, infrastructure, studio/lab space).
 - Operations support (technology, organizational capacity, planning, staffing).
 - Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (via funding, training).
- **Vibrancy and identity** (placemaking, events and festivals, public art, community spaces): ASC, CCCP, City of Charlotte, Knight Foundation, UNCC, JCSU, Corporations.
 - Community building, community engagement (project-based, sponsored admission).
 - Attracting newcomers (visitors, residents, businesses).

Strengths

The funding evaluation identified several findings of existing and recent approaches to support the arts and culture sector. These include:

- **The city and county have made long-term financial commitments on city-** and county-owned cultural facilities through maintenance and debt-service.
- **Larger organizations and cultural institutions have long received operational support** from ASC until fiscal year 2022, and now through the Infusion Fund with funding from the City of Charlotte and private donors.
- **Corporate support for the arts and culture sector**, especially in sustaining the large legacy organizations, is strong in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- **ASC, Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte is Creative and the city's Placemaking Program support smaller organizations**, individual creatives with fresh ideas, and those who cannot qualify for hundreds of thousands of dollars in grants. The Infusion Fund's small, unrestricted grant pool and Opportunity Fund grants have also helped fill this gap.
- **Higher education institutions prioritize arts and culture as a key draw to Charlotte-Mecklenburg** and a key facet of a well-rounded education. UNC Charlotte, [Central Piedmont Community College](#), Davidson College, Johnson C. Smith and Queens University provide access and funding to arts and culture for students and faculty with ideas and aspirations related to the creative sector, as well as performing venues and gallery space for the community. Each helps fund faculty projects and activities; faculty at these schools also become part of the local arts ecosystem and commission artists from the local community, nationally and internationally to show work, teach masterclasses write and direct plays, etc.

Opportunities

The funding evaluation also identified opportunities for enhancements to the current ecosystem and approaches:

- **Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture investors lack a unified or coordinated strategy** for funding the wide variety of organizations according to priorities.
 - Funders all have different scopes and strategies. Colleges and universities act out of their best interest. Corporations funnel funds to what they perceive as aligning with their values and act out of their values and with the goal of being good corporate citizens in concert with their mission.
 - This approach prevents groups from coming together and collaborating on issues such as achieving cultural equity, creating access to cultural events and embedding arts into education at all ages.
 - Equity is not codified as a priority in grant making in a standardized way — quantifying equity would help Charlotte-Mecklenburg begin to set equity targets.
 - A coalition or formal organization of corporate stakeholders working together to fund arts and culture could mean a new era of impact in the community's arts and culture sector.
- **Cities like Austin have nonprofits composed of corporate stakeholders and interests that fund arts and culture** adjacent to and in partnership with the work of city government, such as the Austin Cultural Trust that is housed within the Austin Economic Development Corporation.
- **In these cases, corporations can collaborate and do work according to their own priorities** while also working with the city to make the area more attractive for investment and commerce.

Challenges

The funding evaluation identified opportunities for improving investments in arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg to create efficiency, better reporting and better potential outcomes:

- **Overall, more financial resources** - contributed and earned - are needed throughout the sector, including individual artists/creatives, nonprofit organizations, and creative businesses.
- **ASC and now the Infusion Fund provide operational and programmatic funding** rather than funding that helps small/mid-sized organizations to scale. For example, many arts and culture organizations cite the need for more unrestricted/operating support, instead of special/new project funding. And the formula for receiving operating support for those organizations that do receive is based on a flat percentage of current budget levels, which keeps small organizations small and doesn't allow for growth of larger organizations.
- **Investments can be inefficient, being awarded to an organization** just to be given to another grantee (i.e., rent, fees). For example, city-owned facilities are subsidized by the public sector, but rents are charged to small organizations looking to use those spaces, and fiscal sponsorship fees are often paid by small organizations to larger nonprofits that are granted funds out of the same funding pool, rather than to a third party.
- **Grant applications are not standardized across funding entities and are complex**, multi-part and abstruse, putting a burden on especially smaller grantees that have less staff capacity for fundraising. Standardized grant applications are becoming a best practice in the philanthropic community.³¹
- **Funding relationships with ASC/the city have been very transactional for arts and culture organizations**, with other necessary supports (e.g., technical assistance, marketing, networking) supplied to some extent but not at the level desired by grantees. In other communities, it is

³¹ <https://www.commongrantapplication.com/>

not uncommon for municipal entities to provide this type of assistance — in others, a standalone nonprofit provides this type of assistance.

- **Corporate leaders view arts and culture priorities as building a ‘world-class city’ with legacy institutions that attract top talent.** This is reflected in corporate and private funding as well as media coverage, which tends to be focused on large established organizations. Others see the tide turning toward more grassroots, diverse organizations that build authenticity and community. Some media outlets are beginning to promote these initiatives, including those led by and focused on artists and communities of color.
- **Political, corporate and arts and culture leaders struggle to find consensus** over their position on the role of the ASC moving forward.
- **Small/mid-sized organizations lack critical support in finding and holding affordable space** for their work, as opposed to larger institutions which have city or county-gifted or subsidized facilities.
- **There is currently no dedicated funding for maintenance** of public art and placemaking spaces.

Economic Development and Arts and Culture

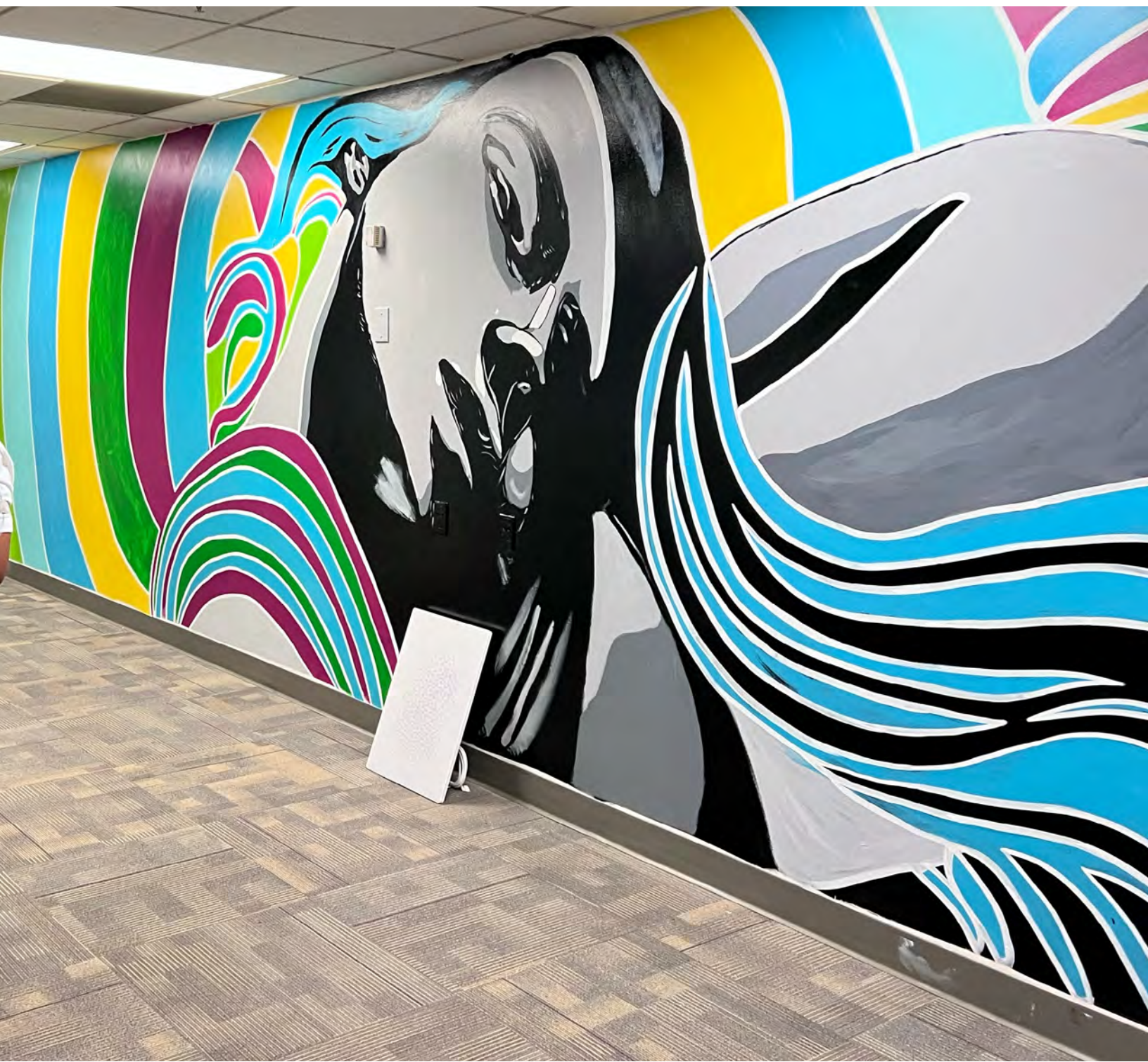
As noted in the benchmarking data, the arts and culture sector is growing employment and economic opportunities. The expectation is that this trend will continue and provide direct and indirect economic development benefits for the community.

In addition, artists, cultural bearers³² and other creative individuals should be treated as potential entrepreneurs and economic drivers, whether they operate a nonprofit or LLC.

³² Culture bearers are often defined as individuals who carry and transmit cultural values, traits, and practices between communities, especially to preserve ancestral knowledge.



CACP Site Tour, VAPA Center



Section 6

Emerging Insights

6. State of Culture: Emerging Insights

6.1 What It All Means

As illustrated by the thousands of Charlotte-Mecklenburg residents who have participated in this arts and culture planning process thus far, the people of Charlotte-Mecklenburg are committed to a vibrant cultural life in the region.

There are numerous ways that arts and culture enrich the daily life of area residents and can further address community priorities. To focus finite resources — energy, time, funding, etc. — the Arts and Culture Plan will articulate a clear set of area-wide priorities for arts and culture. The identification of the following emerging insights is the first step in articulating those area-wide priorities.

Ten insights have emerged across all research inputs — public engagement, asset inventory and map, comparable benchmarking and case studies, and funding evaluation — and are synthesized below. These insights are the precursor to the development of priorities for the Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan. Through discussions with city and county government, residents and arts and culture stakeholders, these insights will be further developed, modified and refined into the final priorities.

The emerging insights are:

1. Sustainable funding for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg requires public-private planning, collaboration, and commitment.

Funding is overwhelmingly the biggest concern for most stakeholders who provided input for this report. When speaking about a sustainable funding source or source, many stakeholders pointed to the critical role of public investment in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, especially understanding the numerous, data-supported positive outcomes that stem from increased investment in arts and culture, that would benefit all in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, not just those who see themselves as “fans” of arts and culture.

Another crucial element cited is creative work in the private sector. This type of earned revenue—which as noted in this report is the largest source of revenue—would, with sustained, reliable investment, be even stronger. By leveraging public funding to increase support of the arts and culture sector, whether from the general fund and/or other resources — adjacent sectors will also benefit from an arts and culture investment such as education, public safety, workforce development and tourism. Investment in arts and culture results in future gains for all, for example, creative businesses contribute to economic development and prosperity in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Finally, philanthropy is essential to fund arts and culture. As with corporate funding, that funding is technically outside of the purview of what can be controlled by the outcomes of this Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan. While corporate and philanthropic funders/partners set their own priorities, this process and the forthcoming plan provides the opportunity and vehicle to coordinate public and private sector priorities to achieve shared goals and complement each other in other for mutual and broad benefit.

2. Recognizing the historic and continuing leadership of the private sector, the public sector must play an active leadership role in building Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts and culture ecosystem.

Beginning with the ongoing governance, support and maintenance of the city-owned arts and culture facilities, the City of Charlotte has assumed a leadership role by investing in outstanding arts and culture facilities in the center city area. The corporate and philanthropic community as well as residents, especially, are looking to the public sector to lead with clarity regarding the needs of Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s arts and culture sector to best serve area residents.

The public sector, especially government, is charged with the responsibility of representing and serving the people

of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Through this process, it is clear that residents desire equitable access to arts and culture experiences and resources, like funding and space. Ensuring sustained leadership, management and coordination of the arts and culture sector on a scale and capacity equipped to address the myriad of needs of Charlotte-Mecklenburg is seen as a primary responsibility for the public sector.

3. Access to affordable space is challenging, both for producers and consumers of arts and culture experiences.

It is overwhelmingly clear that limited access to space to create and experience arts and culture is hampering Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture sector. It is limiting opportunities to attract creative industries,

audiences, residents and tourists. Publicly owned facilities are limited and restrictive due to cost and location.

Those spaces that are available present challenges due to environmental issues — from size of spaces to the need to address abatement. There is widespread frustration across the sector and particularly in the lack of performance facilities around the area that can be used by both arts and culture producers and the public.

The growth of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative industries, like the film industry, are hindered by the lack of appropriate spaces to create and present. Artists, in various disciplines, expressed having trouble finding affordable living or studio spaces as their neighborhoods are developed and they are priced out. Overall, there is a positive attitude towards the opportunities to reimagine existing spaces to be more inclusive of all types of art, as well as more inclusive of small and large organizations, and for these spaces to be accessible for multiple arts experiences.

4. Access to arts and culture is needed throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg — meeting people, artists and arts organizations where they are.

Access continues to be a major barrier to experiencing arts and culture in communities throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg. There are stark differences in arts and culture experiences across Charlotte-Mecklenburg due to transportation, costs of participation, and locality of venues. Although there are opportunities for free and reduced cost arts cultural experiences, there is a lack of awareness of how to access those opportunities — both from organizations as well as individuals. Many areas with less access are within the boundaries of the City's Corridors of Opportunity presenting a keen avenue for leadership in providing arts access in these areas.

In the benchmarked cities, arts and culture is considered a quality-of-life function. In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, quality of life organizations and the facilities in which they are located — parks, recreation centers, libraries, etc. — are largely operated by the county. This presents a tremendous opportunity for the county to equitably provide access to arts and culture in existing facilities across the area. For example, small theater spaces could be provided in libraries and further expansion of arts and culture programs and experiences through parks and recreation centers.

What can public sector leadership look like?

In comparable municipalities, public sector leadership in arts and culture can include:

- Direct operational and programmatic grants to arts and culture organizations.
- Connecting arts and culture entities to technical assistance and other non-monetary resources and support.
- Commissioning/managing public art and placemaking programs, including maintenance, conservation, and removal.
- Addressing issues of equity.
- Contributing to public-private facilities funds to provide access to affordable arts and culture space.

These functions enhance quality of place and vibrancy for residents and visitors alike, advance equity and access and encourage private sector support of the ecosystem.

5. An equitable and inclusive approach to support is critical to realize sustainability and growth in the ecosystem; this includes balancing support for small, mid-size and large organizations; and resourcing BIPOC, LGBTQIA+ and other local artists.

While Charlotte-Mecklenburg provides arts and culture experiences to all in the region, stakeholders expressed that local artists need to be better nurtured, resourced and recognized. The diversity and volume of local creative talent in Charlotte-Mecklenburg is deep and wide. However, many feel that inequities persist regarding support of BIPOC, LGBTQIA+, and local artists, hindering their sustainability. This was particularly emphasized around local theater, though the need to support local artists in all disciplines was repeatedly noted.

There is palpable frustration regarding the limited economic resources available for small to mid-size arts and culture organizations, institutions, and individual artists. There is a demand to address issues created by a shrinking donor pool, decreased emphasis on the arts by the corporate philanthropic sector and perceived inequities in the allocation of equitable public funding. Current strong support from the corporate sector is often geared to artists and programs that are nationally-focused, rather than artists and culture organizations that are living, working and/or based in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.



Blumenthal Performing Arts and Camp North End: Connecting Van Gogh to Charlotte-Mecklenburg artists

In 2021, Blumenthal Performing Arts worked with Camp North End to bring to Charlotte-Mecklenburg the Immersive Van Gogh exhibit, and featured ten local Charlotte-Mecklenburg artists-in-residence as part of the exhibit, creating an opportunity for them to showcase their work in dialogue with this blockbuster traveling show. The total economic impact of this show for Charlotte-Mecklenburg was estimated to be nearly \$40 million.

In a press release for the exhibit, Blumenthal's Director of Artistic Experience Bree Stallings noted that the "immersive Van Gogh Artist-in-Residence program brings together some of the best artists in our community, both emerging and established, who come from a diverse background of mediums and approaches to their work." The artists in residence were provided dedicated studio space for the length of their residency and the opportunity to showcase and sell original art to attendees of the immersive Van Gogh exhibit.

This exhibit was a highly successful example of collaboration between a large organization, community artists, as well as with an international producing partner (Lighthouse Immersive) and a local site, Camp North End, which has become a popular community site for creative businesses and experiences.

Image source: : <https://www.blumenthalarts.org/news/detail/immersive-van-gogh-Charlotte-Mecklenburg-extends-through-january-2>

³³ Organizations of ALL sizes are at risk in Charlotte-Mecklenburg but small to mid-size organizations are particularly vulnerable.



Arts-in-Transit: Integrating artists into public transportation

Charlotte Area Transit System has successfully integrated art into passenger bus shelters, providing a model that can be expanded to further integrate artists into transportation initiatives, provide opportunities for artists to gain exposure and income, beautify neighborhoods and tell powerful stories to instill civic pride and attract visitors. For the Randolph Billingsley Passenger Shelters in Grier Heights, CATS' Art-in-Transit staff hired local artist Michelle Tejuola Turner to create pencil drawings of historic structures, portraiture and nature relevant to the community. Tejuola worked with the Grier Heights community to identify local citizens whom she honored by creating their portraits for the project.

Image source: <https://Charlotte-Mecklenburgnc.gov/cats/transit-planning/art-in-transit/completed-projects/Pages/billingsley-shelters.aspx>

6. Stronger communication—about and among the arts and culture community— is needed to increase awareness.

The presence of arts and culture — and even utilization of opportunities already in place — throughout the area is challenged by a lack of coordinated communication and marketing around arts and culture activities of all kinds. This includes experiences, opportunities and education. Producers and consumers are looking for a centralized database of events, artists and resources — a central place to learn about events, find peers for collaboration and access resources to help each other advance their practice. The existing directories are dated and limiting — for example only available in print as opposed to virtually — and present challenges with learning about the wide variety of events and opportunities from places that focus on specific genres or networks.



CACP Site Tour, Charlotte Film Society

³⁴ <https://ww2.americansforthearts.org/explorer>

7. Increased collaboration and greater cooperation throughout the creative ecosystem are imperative to break silos.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's arts and culture future can be bright — if well-coordinated and resourced. The sector has the nascent infrastructure needed — post-secondary programs, growing creative industries and the willing ear of the public sector. To leverage these opportunities for growth — especially of the arts and culture infrastructure — collaboration within and among arts and culture community and other sectors is key.

This collaboration is happening in small ways but can be accelerated, through mutually beneficial partnerships with businesses, healthcare, transportation and education. While some organizations are already pursuing collaborative efforts, stakeholders expressed a desire to see even more collaboration to bring the Charlotte-Mecklenburg arts and culture community together and make it stronger. They want to see more opportunities for networking and collaboration across the sector to build audiences and expand reach of arts across the area. Americans for the Arts Social Impact wheel provides extensive data on the many benefits of the arts for sectors such as education, health, workforce development and more. All residents of Charlotte-Mecklenburg can benefit from greater integration of arts and culture throughout community needs.

Many suggested an open-access network to identify opportunities for collaborative work within and across mediums. It was suggested that leadership from the city serve in the role of connector and convener, between diverse groups and sectors to help facilitate collaborations, providing resources and staff to sustain the system of relationships.

8. Arts education — lifelong, K-12 and post-secondary — experiences should be expanded for greater access and exposure to arts and culture, enhancing quality of life, workforce development, and retention and cultivation of future artists and supporters.

Arts and culture are created and experienced in many ways throughout Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Paramount for the development of artists, patrons and the infrastructure to support a thriving arts and culture sector is exposure to the arts beginning at an early age. Across the country, arts education has been cited as conducive to increased student retention, higher graduation rates and numerous other positive outcomes. The arts, as connected to STEAM, is a major skill set of interest to local funders, that can be leveraged to grow Charlotte-Mecklenburg's workforce. More science, technology, engineering, arts and math programs should be offered and supported, and supporters also need to understand the inherent innovation that is integral to making art.

Arts education should be strengthened in K-12 and the arts community in Charlotte-Mecklenburg and can build upon on higher education partnerships and assets. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools has collaborations it can build on, such as projects it has done with the Mint Museum, its roster of local artists who work with the schools and its artist residency program.

Section 7

Next Steps

7. Next Steps

This report represents the conclusion of the primary public engagement and listening phase as well as the research and analysis.

Following the approval of this report, the team will:

- 1** Share the findings of this State of Culture Report with the public and receive feedback on the emerging insights.
- 2** Work with the project team and steering group to use this information to articulate priorities for the plan.
- 3** Identify and form taskforces to develop and refine strategies to address the priorities.
- 4** Write and distribute a draft Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan that will be tested with the public and refined into the final Charlotte Arts and Culture Plan.

Appendix A:

Acknowledgements

CACP Public Engagement, VAPA Center

City of Charlotte

Acknowledgements

Arts and Culture Plan Steering Group

Arts and Culture Advisory Board

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4. Ryan Bergman, Strategy & Budget Director at City of Charlotte
5. Tariq Bokhari, District 6 Member, Charlotte City Council
6. Brent Cagle, Assistant City Manager, City of Charlotte
7. Alli Celebron-Brown, President and CEO of McColl Center
8. Erin Chantry, Manager, Urban Design Center, City of Charlotte
9. Dena Diorio, County Manager, Mecklenburg County
10. MyLoan Dinh, Multidisciplinary Artist
11. Tracy Dodson, Assistant City Manager and Economic Development Director, City of Charlotte
12. Edmund Driggs, District 7 Member, Charlotte City Council
13. George Dunlap, Chairman of Board of Mecklenburg County Commissioners and District 3 Commissioner
14. Larken Egleston, Former Charlotte City Councilmember
15. Julie Eiselt, Former Mayor Pro Tem, City of Charlotte
16. Lois Inland, Vice President, Community Engagement & Corporate Responsibility at Atrium Health
17. Jay Everette, Senior Philanthropy and Corporate Social Responsibility Leader, Wells Fargo
18. David Fisk, President and CEO, Charlotte Symphony
19. Tom Gabbard, President and CEO, Blumenthal Performing Arts
20. Davita Galloway, Founder and Co-owner of dupp&swat
21. Malcolm Graham, District 2 Member, Charlotte City Council
22. Lauren Harkey, Vice Chair of the Public Art Commission. Owner/Director – Hodges Taylor Art Consultancy (City of Charlotte Appointee)
23. Dr. Todd Herman, President and CEO of the Mint Museum
24. Monica Holmes, Executive Manager, Corridors of Opportunity and Assistant Director of Planning, Design, and Development, Design + Preservation Division
25. Tobe Holmes, Planning and Development Director, University City Partners
26. Mark Jerrell, District 4 Commissioner, Mecklenburg County
27. Renee Johnson, District 4 Member, Charlotte City Council; Founder and Executive Director, Triumph Services.
28. Marcus Jones, City Manager, City of Charlotte
29. Tom Lawrence, Executive Director, The Leon Levine Foundation
30. Mary Mack, Senior Executive Vice President and CEO of Consumer and Small Business Banking, Wells Fargo

31. Michael Marsicano, President and CEO, Foundation For The Carolinas
32. Hugh McColl, Co-Founder and Chairman Emeritus, Falfurrias Capital Partners
33. Laura Meier, District 5 Member, Charlotte City Council
34. Tim Miner, Co-Founder, Charlotte is Creative
35. Brook Muller, Dean of the College of Arts + Architecture, UNC Charlotte
36. Eric Mullis, Executive Director, Goodyear Arts
37. Tom Murray, CEO, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority (CRVA)
38. Matt Newton, Former District 5 Member, Charlotte City Council
39. Matt Olin, Co-Founder, Charlotte Is Creative; Co-Publisher, The Biscuit; Host of CreativeMornings/Charlotte
40. Jill Olmstead, Chief Human Resources Officer, LendingTree
41. Cyndee Patterson, Advisory Board Chair; (Retired) President, Lee Institute/The Duke Mansion
42. Kevin Patterson, Vice Chair, Arts and Community Board Member
43. Susan Patterson, Former Board Chair, Arts & Science Council
44. Greg Phipps, Former District 4 Member, Charlotte City Council
45. Justin Pierce, Lead Media Arts Teacher, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)
46. Su Ping Lu, General Counsel - Securities, Governance and Corporate Finance, Honeywell
47. Elaine Powell, District 1 Commissioner and Vice Chair, Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
48. Susan Rodriguez-McDowell, District 6 Commissioner, Mecklenburg Board of County Commissioners
49. Victoria Rogers, Vice President for Arts, Knight Foundation
50. Till Schmidt-Rimpler, Founder, Moving Poets in Charlotte
51. Doug Singleton, Executive Director, Charlotte Ballet
52. Todd Smith, Executive Director, Bechtler Museum of Modern Art

53. Michael Smith, President and CEO, Charlotte Center City Partners
54. Anna Spangler Nelson, Chairman, Spangler Companies, Inc.
55. Bree Stallings, Director of Artistic Experiences, Blumenthal Performing Arts
56. Marcey Stone, Leading Corporate Social Responsibility, Honeywell
57. Amy Strecker, President, Duke Energy Foundation
58. David Taylor, President and CEO, Harvey B. Gantt Center for African-American Arts and Culture
59. Krista Terrell, President, Arts & Science Council (ASC)
60. Victoria Watlington, District 3 Member, Charlotte City Council
61. April Whitlock, Head of Corporate Citizenship, LendingTree
62. Lacey Williams, Program Manager, City of Charlotte
63. Catherine Wilson Horne, President and CEO, Discovery Place
64. Braxton Winston, Mayor Pro Tem, Charlotte City Council

Group Interviews:

Hispanic-Latino Leadership Council

City Staff Roundtable

County Staff Roundtable

Arts Organization Focus Group

- BOOM Charlotte, Manoj Kesavan
- Three Bone Theater, Becky Schultz, Robin Tynes-Miller
- Nouveau Sud, Carlos Alexis Cruz
- Discovery Place, Audra Acey
- India Association of Charlotte, Lal Vishin

City of Charlotte Placemaking Group

- Angela Berry
- Jackie Clare
- Erin Gillespie
- Bruce Jones
- Chris Lange
- Casey Mashburn
- Brandon Ray
- Justin Ritchey

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Host Sites for Public Engagement

AvidXchange

Charlotte Art League

Goodyear Arts

Independent Picture House

Innovation Barn

Little Rock Cultural Center

Nine Eighteen Nine Studio Gallery at VAPA Center



