

**Houston Arts and Cultural Plan  
Community Advisory Committee  
December 10, 2014  
4:30 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Agenda**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Co-Chairs Philamena Baird and Rick Lowe  
Minnette Boesel, Mayor's Assistant for Cultural Affairs

**2. General Plan Overview**

Patrick Walsh, Planning and Development Department Director

**3. Arts and Culture Plan Objectives and Status**

Minnette Boesel, Mayor's Assistant for Cultural Affairs  
Debbie McNulty, Lead Consultant

**4. Community Engagement Strategy**

Monica Danna, Black Sheep Agency

**5. Results of Kickoff Event Vision Exercise**

**6. Discussion**

**Committee Meetings will be held the second Wednesday of the month at 4:00pm.**

**Next Meetings:**      **January 21**  
                                 **February 11**  
                                 **March 11**  
                                 **April 8**  
                                 **May 13**  
                                 **June 10**  
                                 **July 8**

**Houston Arts and Cultural Plan  
Advisory Committee Meeting 12/10/14**

**Comments on Arts and Cultural Plan**

**What do you think is important to keep in mind throughout the process or needs to be included in the plan?**

- The level of accessibility of some cultural offerings
- Provide infrastructure for a thriving and growing culture
- More of what is already happening
- Houston has a great track record already
- Invest more resources in existing arts and culture
- Get the word out to people on how exciting Houston is
- Have plan be known to all
- Get people to communicate
- Would like to see more of what has already flourished here
- Keep in mind the artist perspective and the literary artists
- Houston has cultural infrastructure that is great
- A rising tide lifts all boats and there is great potential for institutions to use their extra capacity in theaters, museums, zoo, parks and would like to find ways for more Houstonians to get to what we have and also encourage more tourism
- The more people we have visit the more revenue we will have and organizations can sustain themselves in a better way
- Stay focused
- Set goals that we can achieve
- Set higher goals that might be harder to achieve
- Would like cultural plan to be concise enough with a great profile that will go national and international and be very well recognized
- Now is an interesting time to be in Houston - a great time and a good time to capitalize on all this energy
- Would like to see us have our ear to the street
- Assist with the great stuff that is already happening and shine a light on it

- Interested in how we can use the K-12 system and our two tier one universities and other universities here in helping us to broaden the definition of professional success for an artist
- Interested in artists voice and diverse artist voice and preserving the history of all the work that has been done in Houston and of the different artists and disciplines that have come here and thinking about disciplines and diversity of culture
- Important to think about what's going on with small and midsize groups and how we can make Houston welcoming and supporting place for these groups because we are a huge city and there is no reason why we can't have lots of midsize groups of every sort (dance, art galleries, museums, etc...)
- How people from mainstream can learn more about and connect with diverse communities
- How do diverse communities plug into the plan and have a way to exhibit their arts and culture to the mainstream so they can showcase what they have
- Would like to see plan to lift Houston out of being the bad guy of oil and gas business; there are people cheering with each dollar a barrel of oil drops; I would like this plan to prove the human capital and innovation and creativity that is here
- Big non-profits are just as creative and inventive, innovating, and holding on by a thread when it comes to sustainability as smaller groups
- The Center for Houston's Future in the Arts and Cultural Heritage report used 990 data that includes capital campaigns and makes it look like more operating money than is true. I want to be sure we as a leadership group don't fractionate and pit ourselves against one another because ultimately Houstonians lose out if we do and sometimes the big guys look like we have a lot of money but we don't
- Don't put orgs against each other (big v. small)
- Make art more accessible to all Houstonians
- Want the average Houstonian to have a say in this plan

- I know we have beautiful art installed around the city but I don't know if people feel they had a say and I want them to be able to say "yeah I know why we do this"
- Arts is inclusive of international sector (sister cities) of which there are 17 around the world that have different cultures and different engagement and hope they can participate and be engaged as well
- Emancipation Park is a historic site built by former enslaved people and is really the oldest park in Houston. My interests tie into this because of the art, history, and culture and seeing it as representing all people and demonstrating the connectivity between all of us (whatever our religions, ethnic groups, geography, and different types of art forms are) and way to have it exposed from the smaller things and all the way up.
- For the plan what I'd like to see is that everybody sees themselves in it and that the key thing is we look at it stimulating creativity by identifying artists as all of us—some are professional, but we are all creative and I'd like the message to be about our creativity and diversity to get out there and have it change the way people see Houston
- Educational role of the arts is the future
- Arts and culture are what truly changed the city the past 60 years
- For us to take the message of what the arts and culture truly represent – the totality of it and get that out there, I think it will increase the opinion and our visibility across the world
- Put our arts and culture out there so that it will increase our visibility to the national and international crowd
- Help the world recognize and really know how artsy and cultural Houston is
- I recently read a book by a 17<sup>th</sup> century English writer who said that a city that doesn't have art is uncivilized so I hope this project will civilize Houston and you civilize a city by making sure that all voices are heard and something I'm particularly interested in is voiced of people of color and Latino voices
- My primary crass hope is more money, but a nuance of that is our delivery system; not sure it is as efficient as we can be

- Plan can address the fact that our institutions (art/cultural, including art schools) are reflecting our community and how we can continue to address that
- Better educate Houstonians about the art we have in our city and make that more accessible
- Include art as a basic part of education because I think before you can advertise the wonderfulness of Houston and its art to the world, you have to make sure our own residents are understanding and knowledgeable and are able to avail themselves of it.
- There needs to be a deepening of understating of the value art as a viable field for children to study and understanding that communities value art to the degree they allow their children to major and be educated in the arts, particularly at the secondary level. Children are dissuaded from studying the arts because there is a notion that you can't get a job and we need those young people out there creating and expressing and pushing a way forward for all of us
- Want the plan to help us understand the value of education to develop the next generation of artists
- Green-space is important for arts
- There are sections of the community that don't just engage themselves because they don't feel like they belong or they don't know how to engage. How do you engage those people that are not engaged right now? Because all the town hall meetings or social media, all that works for people who are already engaged.
- In my business we use what we call focus groups and that may be a particular community or it could be a diverse community. It's not just open town hall meetings.
- In the Indian community there is a wide range of art forms and culture niches and so to get a group of people who represent the bands, the music and all of it and have those people and show them what the plan is and how it can benefit them.
- That is where I am kind of lost here; I am not even sure what a cultural plan is.
- I get a sense that the community engagement part is going to be is something that people are going to want to talk about.

- In our own organization when we make a strategic plan there is always an incentive to follow the plan or people are held accountable for achieving the plan and in a way that influences your fundraising and the decisions you make on hiring and in my mind before we set up something trying to be everything for everyone, the City of Houston is commissioning the plan and what we don't want of course is a nice booklet with a vision from the arts community that would be an awesome plan, they say we did it, you can even have a booklet if you want and that's the end of it.
- I think what would help influence the direction of the way we go is thinking that we want it to be effective and successful and for there to be some incentive for things to happen and we need to understand a little bit more what the City might be willing to contribute to it in a variety of ways, what we might be able to convince the City to either contribute to it or what commitment does the City have to actually help follow through and support this plan?
- If it's taking a backseat and possibly being more informative to Houston Arts Alliance, well that's one strategy, if it's help with parking and infrastructure things that also double up with tourism, well that's another thing that we could climb on to if we knew that we might be able to get more parking or more accessibility. So to me it might be beneficial to start with, is the City really going to support this plan?
- What does it look like? Is it money or something else?
- I'd like to pick up on the top ranked word from the Vision Activity which is "Collaboration" and I hope that we don't use that word in a kind of a superficial level. In my experience I remember things in Houston and things folks in Houston do really well is come together and form partnerships to do unusual things and those opportunities kind of arise and you can't anticipate them in a plan in a preordained way that says "here's what's going to happen." And that's a messy process, so what I hope this plan can do is establish its vision and define success so we know what we want to be and develop some tools that enhance the ability to collaborate and innovate and not create straight jacket or a set of preordained

outcomes because there's just too many opportunities with the diversity of arts groups and communities that we have.

- For the community engagement portion, if tomorrow everybody got on social media and email and asked their respective communities and followers who are interested in what they're doing what was important to them and we tried to pare through what the objectives are, naturally we would get responses as diverse as the people here.
- It's a great point about getting into communities that aren't checking their Facebook every four and a half minutes and looking at the demography of Houston that could very well be a lot of people and some of those people might very well bring some of the most interesting things to the table that we otherwise might not see but we don't want to end up in a situation where we're engaging the community just for the sake of engaging of engaging the community. We don't want people to have the experience of saying "well I saw something posted up there about the overwhelming number of people that want this but it was kind of ignored." I think what happens when you engage with the community but you don't really give them meat and potatoes down the road you will reinforce this idea that we are in this ivory tower and come up with all these great ideas and we ask you what you'd like to see and don't really have a way to make it manifest.
- I'm interested in the larger framework of placing the work we do in a larger context. I'm curious if we could see the cultural plan that was done twenty years ago because I feel like if there is work that has been done, that framework could be a great foundation for this conversation and we can see the successes and failures and what a cultural plan looked like prior to this so we aren't starting from scratch even though that was a couple of decades ago. I think that would be really helpful in this process and to acknowledge the work that has been done in creating that cultural plan.
- I'm interested in what a cultural plan looks like in other cities. That might be really helpful to have that as a resource to see what other cities have in their cultural plans if that is something available as a resource and possibly online or that we share through email so we

have a larger context for what cultural planning looks like within other cities.

- I feel like we had a false start on this. We had a kickoff event at which no one was really told what the job description was for this committee. I would have loved to have gone and done some research about this. When I have committees I tell people what I am trying to get out of that committee, how I am going to use their time effectively and efficiently, what they should anticipate for time to meet and what the end goal roughly looks like and it's clear we haven't done any of that and we all have slightly different opinions about that and I'd really like that job description defined for us all because we're part of this.
- The community ambassador element is absolutely key because the way this ripples out and gets traction is by people speaking about it with passion and belief about it and then moving that down the line. We did eight projects in four years in different communities. In three of them we had a real civic leader within that community preaching why that was important to that community and those three projects were extraordinarily successful and the other five were less successful because they didn't have someone from within that community saying this is important for this community because its working with a creative art form that we don't have a relationship with but we want to have a relationship with it. It's that personal passion that gives it traction and as we start to roll this out, that's what is going to give it traction in these communities who have no relationship with arts and culture at the moment. They have their own culture, but haven't necessarily connected with what an arts and cultural plan would look like.
- With the ByYou City survey what is our goal as far as audience? When you say the community, is that everyone in Houston as much as possible? Because I feel like if it's the Committee's mailing list it's going to be kind of the preaching to the choir of the people who are already interested in the arts, so what work is being done outside of the Committee being ambassadors and talking to people who obviously already come?

- Will you be providing information about what's going on in Houston and the arts community so we don't have to reinvent the wheel and a way to look at those programs and make them better?
- We should have put up the names of the Advisory Committee at the kickoff event so if people have questions, they could go talk to people they know on the committee. We have a limited amount of time for the meetings, so as much information in advance we can get and do pre-reading with help us be informed and come prepared for the meetings. I would love to have a short bio for everyone here. There are a lot of people but short bios, there are wonderful people in this room and that I've never met and so just knowing this is an amazing group of people and I want to be part of the group and not use the whole meeting to meet each other.
- I'm struggling with engaging the audiences before we know the scope. I'm struggling with who were talking to and what were talking to them about depends entirely on what's on the table in this plan and still after this meeting I feel ill equipped to answer questions that I have received just from the announcement of my name about the plan and what it's about. I think the elevator pitch is beautiful and concise but I'm still having a difficult time with wrapping my head around what this really means and what is going to be a possible outcome.
- The topics are so meaty and so vast it may require some smaller sub-committees that are really addressing these topics and then present to the larger group if there are people interested in doing that and can really dig in.
- I think it's our responsibility to the community to set some very ambitious goals and some very ambitious benchmarks not only to say this is how we're tracking but to say "by next year we will X" and have the City buy in because it's the only way we're going to prove that it's a working document and that we really mean what we say and that we're trying to collect the data and be bold in a couple of key areas.
- I think at the next meeting it would be very helpful to have a brief presentation on two great cultural plans or maybe one great plan

and the 1993 plan. Do it not by email but in the meeting so we're all seeing it at the same time.

- I think we all need to have a little patience. This is an exploration. If we're going to do something great it probably hasn't been done before and we all just need to work with the process.
- The deadline is fast and for those of us working on the General Plan too and they do things really quickly, so how can we be most effective to utilize what our top talented skills are so we can get to the end with the very best we can get with the timeframe that we have.
- The part I want to underscore because of my concern about the engagement of the broader community who really the first question from people I know of that don't sit in the circle of planning and they're not hooked up with the power movers, their first thoughts are why? Why should I say or do anything and what's in it for me? They don't say it like that but the issue is what's the connection to me? So I can do something on social media and make a little comment here or there, but how does it affect my life in some sort of way?
- Also in looking at the arts organizations and people who have strategic plans and doing the work currently and if we're not connecting with them, that's not really comprehensive. There should be an effort to engage with them and get what information they have about what they're doing so we're not just guiding the City's resources but we're thinking about it in a broader way. I don't know if we have a roll in that or not.