

**Houston Arts and Cultural Plan  
Community Advisory Committee  
July 22, 2015  
3:30 – 5:30 p.m.**

1. **Welcome**  
Philamena Baird
  
2. **Project Status**  
Minnette Boesel
  
3. **Review and Discussion of Plan Vision Statement**  
Jerry Allen
  
4. **Review and Discussion of Plan Recommendations**  
Jerry Allen
  
5. **Closing**  
Philamena Baird

Next Meeting            Wednesday, August 12  
                                 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

**Wednesday, July 22, 2015**

Arts and Cultural Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

**Comments on draft vision #1**

- Frankly, I have seen many different statements that could be applied to any city around the country.
- When I read the last portion, not a singular space – not “center”
- What are we doing in Houston that sets us apart? I do not see that in the vision statement
- How many times can they use the word “cultural”?
- I am not sure if “worldwide destination” is what we are
- “Creative professionals” a lot of people live here that do not consider themselves artists but make a valuable contribution to the creative community
- This is outward facing. I don’t think this is what cultural planning is about. Cultural planning used to have one agenda – it was about more money for the arts. More talk about economic development and place making. The most recent iteration – cultural planning is about building a community and quality of life for citizens in the community.

**Comments on draft vision #2**

- Very brief – a few words mean a lot. Re: 1<sup>st</sup> draft, take the first part – it means a lot. On the second vision, this could be the bullets. What I suggest is that you keep it brief so that people will remember it.
- The first vision statement is an ego trip.
- I think the focus should be internal. The city’s first responsibility is to provide cultural opportunities to our citizens.
- I am curious about the word “means” – it suggests specific funds.
- I think you could take that out (“means”).
- Grammar – all visitors
- I don’t mind “means” – this could be roadmaps, strategy, access – I think this is important. Perhaps there is a better word?
- Another reaction – the final phrase – “to participate...” – this presupposes that those riches are there and healthy and isn’t the plan about enhancing that.
- It assumes that everyone is an artist / wants to be an artist. Some people want to just enjoy the art. Here the emphasis is turning everyone into a cultural player.
- We meant it to be anyone – the person strumming their guitar on their front porch, the person buying a high price ticket, etc. Everyone engages in the arts in different ways. The intention here is to embrace all forms of participation in the arts as valid forms.
- A lot of people do not have the opportunity to experience the arts. I like the word “experience”.
- If it’s not available they can’t enjoy. I agree with Gary that not everyone is an artist – the vast majority just wants to enjoy art.
- The word diverse seems redundant.

- I think the word diversity is a strength for Houston. Why not celebrate and communicate that?
- Maybe it's the placement of the word diversity / diverse?
- Art-maker / consumer debate – I think this vision statement takes that into account. It is a continuum.
- We will take these statements into account. Send specific thoughts to me via email.

**Activity: Prioritize comments to draft recommendations:**

(Red – 1<sup>st</sup> priority comment, Yellow – 2<sup>nd</sup> priority comment, and Blue – 3<sup>rd</sup> priority comment)

Elevate arts and culture in the City structure as a City priority.

- Yellow: Good as is
- Yellow: Not just a city priority but a community priority. Reposition the arts in the minds of Houstonians and the politicians will follow.

Strengthen relationships with anchor arts and culture institutions as key economic and community drivers.

- Yellow: Respect the value of these arts orgs and institutions

Develop a new dedicated revenue source to support of arts and cultural programs and projects, in addition to the Hotel Occupancy Tax.

- Red: this is essential- could be achieved by taxing restaurant tabs
- Red: Absolute priority for the entire project
- Red: Without a bigger pie the tensions between organizations will increase
- Red: This is the most important and is fine as written
- Red: Be creative, think of more than just taxes (which are ok): united way for arts civic crowdsourcing MMD Partnerships, sponsorships
- Red: More funding critical to health of all initiatives and organizations
- Red: I like the idea of 1.) Increased funding, 2.) having dedicated funds
- Red: Explore property management. Corp. property ownership by presenting a unified force of arts organizations applying for funds.
- Red: Great idea to create an addition to sales tax in the +6 9- county MSA to support arts funding in the region
- Red: first and highest priority
- Red
- Red
- Yellow: Develop a new dedicated rev. stream. But make sure there is equitable distribution of funds.
- Yellow: Approach city in UNITED way; unity city for arts
- Blue: What would happen if the arts community organized as 1 voice. This is third only because other centered leadership with collective interest what have to emerge.
- Blue: essential to provide fullest support of education and outreach.

Support continued and expanded use of economic development tools and ordinances to promote cultural facility development and affordable live / work spaces for artists and creative businesses.

- Blue

Provide greater oversight of City arts and cultural grants and ensure fairness, equity transparency and accountability in the allocation of funds.

- Red:
- Blue: This is so important- we need total transparency
- Blue (half): Do not support this. Equity and fairness is subjective, will facilitate (?)
- Blue:

Clarify the purposes of the HOT tax and articulate clear goals for the distribution of City arts and cultural grants for organizations and artists. Restructure process so all artists and organizations apply.

- Red: Strongly agree that changes in distribution- conversations based on collective self interest
- Yellow: the second sentence should be removed. NOT all artists and orgs do things that qualify for HOT funds and therefore they should NOT apply. We do not want the state to take our HOT away due to misuse.
- Blue: Delete last sentence. All artist and orgs may not be eligible for HOT funding.
- Blue: yes- restructure processes so everyone has to apply and increase funds to go with it
- Blue (half): do not support this. Fairness and equity is subjective. Politicizes process
- Blue:
- Blue:

Increase funding to small and emerging arts and cultural organizations.

- Red: make sure the word artist is included. For me, this priority is at the same level as R3- goes hand in hand
- Blue: need to add the word 'artist' and artist-led projects grass roots arts initiatives

Increase funding to culturally-focused arts organizations and artists.

- Yellow: Merge R12 and R13 to make room for a recommendation dedicated to ARTISTS
- Yellow: 1. Increase funding for smaller arts orgs. 2. Increase funding for ethnic groups

Support quality arts education in Houston's public schools.

- Red: My exposure to the arts in grade school awakened my interest as an adult. My parents were unable to access the arts in Houston as minorities.

- **Red:** My favorite, an important seed which will pollinate all arts organizations
- **Red:** I think this needs to be expanded to include the diverse cultures present in Houston- world culture education.
- **Yellow:** Need to coordinate funding efforts with school districts to fund schools most in need
- **Yellow:** Essential to our city
- **Yellow:** Financial support. Quality teachers
- **Blue:** Find ways for city to fill gaps in arts education missing from public schools by using after school programs, etc. for arts education cuts
- **Blue:** this is too vague- support doesn't mean anything so it needs specific suggestions on how to accomplish this
- **Blue:**

Develop strategies to deliver arts and cultural programs, and services and public art out into the neighborhoods.

- **Yellow:** and develop public transportation to take people to the major art institutions
- **Yellow:**
- **Blue:** leverage experience of Mayor's Office of Special Events-fold into office of cultural affairs
- **Blue:** critical in serving our citizens
- **Blue:** decentralization is important in a city this size

Leverage Houston's "world city" image and cultural offerings to increase attraction of international visitors.

- **Blue:** This presupposes that Houston has a strong world city image. I am not so sure. More work is required.

Work with Houston First/GHCVB in promoting Houston's International Arts venues and diverse world cultural designations as a major part of destination marketing.

- **Yellow:**

Develop and highlight cultural arts programs and initiatives that celebrate diverse artists, cultures and communities of Houston and work with Houston First / GHCVB to develop a program of neighborhood based cultural tourism.

- **Red:** Develop program of NBHD- cultural tourism and education, and use this as means for delivering arts and cultural programs with NBHD's
- **Red:** Ensuring that the rich diversity of this city is reflected in the art

Partner with area universities and institutions, i.e., the Texas Medical Center, on initiatives that enhance arts and culture as part of Houston's identity including arts in medicine programs.

- **Yellow:** very important strategic leveraging to expand arts service & opportunities for artists

- **Blue:** Partnering with corporations and property owners

Centralize Civic Art oversight in the Office of Cultural Affairs.

- **Yellow:** if art is important it should be reflected in the structure of the city

Update the Civic Art ordinance and include some aspects of horizontal construction as eligible for 1.75 percent for civic art.

- **Yellow:** this is a great suggestion and a means to provide funding for public art in neighborhoods
- **Yellow:** expand the ordinance to include green space
- **Yellow:**
- **Blue:** agree to update ordinance to include all horizontal construction.

MISC

- **Red:** we are 42% under national average for artist employment. Why is there no recommendation about making Houston more hospitable for artists?

**Comments on draft recommendations**

- Develop a new dedicated revenue source to support arts and cultural programs and projects, in addition to the Hotel Occupancy Tax
  - Is that the operative assumption here? There would be no draw down from the existing HOT funds...current organizations would not lose any \$. There would not be a draw down from HOT funds from the recommendations?
  - HOT funds are a legislative device. Are there examples at state level?
  - Cultural districts – 5 Million new dollars were just approved for a Cultural District Grant Program
  - From overage – that’s where the arts education money came from two years ago.
  - Could we get clever with the property taxes being distributed back? There is a property tax cap- the city will have to return money to taxpayers because they are reaching the cap. If we could get them to include the arts – keep the money if it goes to the arts.
  - What do the city council members think? How do we know what the climate is if you haven’t spoken to city council?
  - We all agree there needs to be a bigger pot. It was distressing that this question was asked at the mayoral forum – none said they would support an additional tax for the arts. As we go to these candidate forums – we need to keep asking in new ways.
  - I think it’s worth pointing out – the speaker from LA (at the HAA forum) pointed out that raising taxes in Houston might be a different issue. There is a short-term danger.
- Support quality arts education in Houston’s public schools
- I thought the plan was to focus on the City of Houston’s resources.
- This came up NUMEROUS times during various conversations with the community and now in this room. I think that there are ways for the city to partner utilizing the libraries and community centers for locations for arts education.

- Is it about in-school or community?
- It's both. The mayor has a voice.
- The cluster is the funding side too – interesting grouping.
- City cannot tell HISD what to do in its district. It isn't just about HISD, there are many ISDs that serve the city.
- Interesting the clusters are on funding and education. Can't have one without the other.
- Advance efforts for regional arts and cultural planning
  - Has there been any interface in surrounding area's cultural plans (Sugar Land, etc.)?
  - There is potential for Regional support. In Denver, it is a regional tax.
- Provide greater oversight of City arts and cultural grants and ensure fairness, equity, transparency and accountability in the allocation of funds
  - Need to make the pot bigger
  - Loaded terms- fairness and equity. Two people looking at the same terms in different ways
  - The process is the issue not the amount of dollars. Smaller orgs continue to cannibalize each other. Need to make sure everyone is feeling the same pressures
- Mix of big and small ideas. The top row are the big ideas that seem very obvious- why have that be the lead/focus?
- Some of the recommendations can be combined in a group. It would be easier if grouped. This city could be much richer if we brought culturally-focused / ethnic groups to Houston.
- Individual artists should be recognized in the second commitment
- Market to local people and students not just tourists. Need cultural programs in our neighborhoods.
- There is not a single recommendation that focuses on individual artists. Artists are the foundation of everything we talk about.
- Language built in about smaller growing into mid-size. In terms of artists supporting the artists, professional development is key. Grassroots is also important. How do we support artists? It needs to be called out specifically – not tagged on.
- Raleigh – artist projects and community initiated projects – big!
- It is easy to overlook this in a large plan – but it's an eco-system and this is a vital piece.
- Looking at culture is bigger than individual artists. Historical, religious, art is part of the plan. Culture is much bigger than an artist's track- many people involved in expanding that. Exchanging ideas in a diverse city. Don't narrow that- an arts centric thing...culture which is broader. Artists are not the only people that need to be brought up
- We don't have anything specific to artists.
- Want to include term such as cultural traditions. Critical to have the arts educator of the year from the Mayor. Could coalesce a big audience and raise the level of discussion
- We have poet laureate, Mayor's Art Scholarship and Historic preservation.
- Needs to be every art form. It would raise the level of discussion.

- I looked at Chicago's plan and the way they presented the plan was in 3-4 pages. They captured only 4 or 5 items, but in each of those items there were 3 or 4 recommendations supported by fantastic data. Vision associated with each one. Everything you have said- how are you going to combine that into 4 or 5 that will capture attention?
- There is still time to prioritize the recommendations – I am on the general plan committee. Reorganize into five big ideas, perhaps.
- Look at other commercial industries. Why not film, graphic design, etc? Why aren't we going after some of those kinds of creative industries? Still not talking about creative economy as an income generator.
- Creative workers have increased by 21% in Houston since our initial Creative Economy Study 3 years ago.
- Can we attract more people to fill creative jobs locally? There seems to be something missing. We are so overwhelmed by oil and gas.
- Nurturing the creative industries is missing. Business for creative economy is here. Maybe that is missing. What can we do to encourage that?
- A more robust office of cultural affairs would help shape policy.
- We are growing exponentially – like it or not, we are the global center for energy. GHP focuses on that not creative center. I live for this – bottom line is – people who recruit, do not think we have a value to quality of life, that we do not have anything to offer
- Maybe the shift is creative business formation rather than attraction.
- Stop focusing on bringing in new business but cultivate what we have
- We need our universities to help to push this to create synergy.
- Shifting demography – that has to be part of the image of the city. It is represented in the plan. For example, representation of Latino is missing in the city policy making
- City gives tax incentives – they give millions to large entities.
- The number one drawback to bringing students to Rice was Houston itself.