

Charlotte City Council Arts and Culture Policy Memorandum

Presented to the Jobs and Economic Development Committee on January 3, 2023

This memorandum will summarize City Council’s process to date for developing an Arts and Culture Plan and offer a draft action by Council to guide remainder of Arts and Culture Officer Sircar’s and consultants’ work on creating a plan.

Background

In January 2021, Mayor Lyles charged an ad-hoc committee of council members (Eiselt, Driggs, Graham, Winston, Bokhari) with developing a policy for arts and culture. This action was prompted at least in part by a decline in private donations to the Arts in Science Council, calling for an increase in public funding to preserve the social and economic benefits of a vibrant arts community in Charlotte. The task of the committee was to establish the goals and principles on which an increased City investment in the arts would be based.

In March 2021, the ad hoc Committee issued a memorandum recommending the appointment of an Arts and Culture Officer, the creation of an Arts and Culture Advisory Board, and the process for allocating \$12 million of City and private funds to supporting the arts in each of fiscal years 2022, 2023 and 2024 (see memorandum attached). The Arts and Cultural Advisory Board, composed of 18 representatives of the arts community appointed by the Mayor, Council and private funders, would work with the Arts and Culture Officer to develop an Arts and Culture Plan. City Council approved the recommendations in the memo on June 28, 2021 (RFA attached). Following the Council action, City Manager Jones hired Priya Sircar to serve as Arts and Culture Officer, and Council and Mayor Lyles appointed nine Culture Advisory Board members alongside nine appointments by private funders. Ms. Sircar and the Cultural Advisory Board hired three consulting firms to assist in the preparation of an arts and culture plan.



Last summer, Mayor Lyles asked Councilmembers Winston, Graham and Driggs to engage with the remainder of Council to identify individual priorities and begin the process of establishing a consensus position of Council on what the Culture Plan should look like. Summary results of these conversations were shared with Council through a slide presentation prepared by Ms. Sircar and the consultants (attached). The key findings of the presentation appear on slides 5 through 7, entitled “Councilmember Conversations: What we are hearing from you”:

Council feedback: Priorities for Arts & Culture

- Building neighborhoods (how can arts & culture affect public safety, vibrancy, mobility, etc.)
- Economic development
- Workforce development and job creation through the arts
- Vibrant arts community that supports the big city-owned facilities while also supporting grass roots to ensure equity and diversity
- More art & culture outside of city center i.e. NoDA, Ballantyne, University City, etc.
- Including for profit and entertainment, not just nonprofit

Council feedback: Potential Funding Sources

- Build on existing public/private partnerships and form new ones
- Funding contributions from city and county (include County towns)
- Charlotte Economic Commission Committee
- Community Block Development and Neighborhood Beautification Grants
- Leverage cultural tourism attract people to live/work/play in Charlotte
- Tax – property, hotel/motel
- Utilize percent for art beyond current limitations

Council feedback: Needs

- Affordable housing and workspace
- Workforce development
- Economic mobility: ability to grow in your industry
- Opportunities for youth
- Increased direct-to-artist support
- Create support mechanisms for individual artists to thrive and build up specific sectors i.e. film industry
- Coordinate all aspects of business needed for arts
- Branding

Council feedback: Opportunities

- Connect with Corridors of Opportunity
- Educate public about value of arts & culture
- Leverage zoning and land use to connect to arts
- Integrate arts into other policy areas, housing, transportation, etc.
- Activate parks, public green spaces through the arts
- More public art: murals, sculpture, free outdoor performance, using blank walls as canvases
- Increased art and arts education in schools hiring local artists and creating exposure
- Ensure arts & culture in Charlotte captures the full spectrum of diversity in communities

In December 2022, Ms. Sircar and the Cultural Advisory Board released a State of Culture report developed in collaboration with the consultants. They intend to offer a draft Arts and Culture Plan for Council consideration in May of this year. In order ensure that the plan aligns with Council priorities, it is suggested that Council vote on an action that lays out a framework for commitment of City funds. Below is a draft for Council consideration of an action that could be brought up for a Council vote:

Draft statement of Council Position

Resolved that a vibrant arts community is essential to a healthy community and Charlotte's future economic and social development. Recognizing this, City Council hereby adopts the following policy for arts and culture:

- City funding for the arts will continue after the Infusion Fund expires at the end of FY 2024, subject to annual budget approvals by Council
- Discussions will be conducted with private funders to determine their potential continuing involvement in arts funding after Infusion Fund expiry
- Efforts will be made to diversify funding support to new partners and revenue sources
- The future funding plan will ensure that adequate operating funds are provided to programs based in City-owned facilities (legacy)
- The Arts and Science Council will continue to manage the City's Public Art investments as well as a portion of other grant funding in line with the current Opportunity Fund. This grantmaking by the ASC will be accompanied by an admin fee in line with those payable to the other grantmaking organizations.
- Subject to agreement with private funders, other grants shall be awarded by established non-profit organizations, nominated in the Arts and Culture Plan, that have established presence in the areas supported by the Plan. The allocations to these funding organizations will reflect key Council priorities, as reflected in the opportunities section of the Councilmember conversation report (see above).