

Arts and Culture Council Committee

In January, Mayor Lyles charged an ad-hoc committee of council members with developing a policy for arts and culture as an economic development strategy for Charlotte. The City Council recognizes that arts and culture play an important role in economic development by attracting businesses and visitors to the city, and in providing a vibrant quality of life for all residents. Properly resourced, the arts and cultural sector (which currently employs more than 58,000 people, including in supportive roles), has the potential to grow sustainably, into a diversified industry that provides primary and supportive jobs in the creative economy.

More broadly, while a dynamic arts and culture sector has the ability to raise Charlotte's profile as a destination city, it also plays a critical role in addressing some of our community's greatest challenges around social justice, education, workforce development and equitable access to opportunity.

The Council ad-hoc committee met on Feb. 8th to discuss how refocusing our arts and culture resources can address these tenets, and in relation to the Council's policy priorities regarding accountability, inclusion, diversity and economic opportunity. The following points/questions were raised:

- How can the City's investment in arts and culture further our economic development and tourism goals?
- How do we use City resources to cultivate an environment where a broader spectrum of creative groups can flourish even as legacy organizations are sustained yet called to more equitable service?
- What are the needs of the creative community?
- How can public/private partnerships collaborate to achieve outcomes that are relevant, impactful and that benefit the entire community?
- What metrics should be applied to determine best use of resources?
- How should arts organizations who receive public funding be accountable for becoming more relevant and responsive to the community?
- How can arts and culture be redefined to deliver the best product to the public?
- What can we get the private sector more engaged in supporting arts and culture?

In response to these discussions, we propose to the City Manager, Mayor and Council a budget recommendation for this year that also includes a framework for a long-term plan to maximize City resources in a manner that develops stability in the arts and cultural sector, incentivizes opportunities for sustainable growth of local artists and arts and culture organizations, grows the industry ecosystem, and responds to the needs of the community:

1. An increase in funding for the arts and cultural sector to \$4mm for FY2022, contingent upon private sector funding that matches or exceeds this amount. These combined funds will be placed in a third-party administrative account to directly fund existing arts and cultural organizations.
2. For the FY2022 City budget, funds from this account will be allocated to the recipients of last year's ASC grant recipients at levels sufficient to ensure that their support for FY2022 is equal to what they received in FY2020, with the understanding that there is a commitment to develop a Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan in future years. A short-term plan must be developed to allocate remaining funds that is transparent, inclusive and innovative by design.
3. Looking beyond the immediate grant cycle, the City Manager will establish an Arts & Cultural Commissioner who will be charged with overseeing a Board of Advisors appointed by public and private sector funders and is reflective of the community: artists, patrons, corporate and individual donors, educators, artistic directors, industry executives and neighborhood leaders.
4. Under the leadership of the Arts & Cultural Commissioner, the Advisory board will develop a Comprehensive Arts & Culture Plan to:
 - Develop a grant-making process that aligns with the Council's broader policy goals and focuses on funding innovative opportunities that shall be open to all artists and arts groups as long as they can demonstrate how such funding will help strengthen the sector overall.
 - Develop an innovative approach to determine how public and private resources can have the most impact on achieving sustainable growth and innovation across the entire sector.
 - Assess how City assets can be used more equitably and inclusively to encourage collaboration across the sector.
 - Build a 10-year Arts & Culture Plan incentivizing organizations or sectors to develop new approaches to delivering relevant, equitable and inclusive arts and culture to the community.