



CITIZEN ARTIST BALTIMORE



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citizenartist.vote

Priorities Statement

Findings from Citizen Artist Baltimore Listening Sessions and Surveys January 2016

Baltimore is home to thousands of voters who are also artists, theatre, concert, and museum-goers, and creative workers. They care about core civic issues like public safety and education but their votes will also be strongly influenced by candidates' positions on arts and culture. Citizen Artist Baltimore (CAB), a broad-based, nonpartisan get-out-the-vote coalition, conducted a series of listening sessions with hundreds of voters around Baltimore. Our goal is to communicate those voters priorities with the candidates and mobilize thousands of arts supporters on Election Day.

CAB held seven listening sessions throughout the month of January 2016 in geographically diverse parts of Baltimore City. Sessions were held at The Windup Space (Station North Arts & Entertainment District), Zella's Pizzeria (Hollins Market), Arch Social Club (Pennsylvania Ave.), Baltimore American Indian Center (Upper Fells Point), Cherry Hill Public Homes (Cherry Hill), Wombwork Productions (Walbrook), and the Meyerhoff Symphony Hall (Mt. Vernon). Members of the CAB steering committee, representing arts and culture organizations of varying sizes and constituencies, facilitated these sessions. City residents who were unable to attend a listening session were invited to participate through an online survey.

Hundreds of Baltimore citizens shared their priorities, values, and ideas about how the city can sustain and strengthen its arts, culture, and humanities assets. CAB sorted, analyzed, and contextualized these responses, distilling them into priority statements of the arts and culture issues most relevant to voters in the upcoming election. Overall, participants emphasized the need for equity and the role of arts and culture in healing and building communities. These were infused into all aspects of the conversations. Three main areas of importance emerged: Healthy Communities, Arts Education, and A Supportive Infrastructure. Participants stated their desire for a citywide arts agenda, strategy, and/or planning process to address these areas comprehensively.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Culture / community value(s) / health

Baltimore's strength lies in the flourishing creativity of its diverse communities. Arts and culture are everywhere: from marching bands and choirs to murals, gardens, museums, theaters, and DJ nights. Culture has always brought life to the city. It empowers people to express themselves creatively while connecting with deep traditions and supporting themselves and their communities.

Personal expression is not only a joy, but a necessity. Day-by-day, cultural organizers and community groups practice the healing power of art through programs such as after school poetry productions, drawing classes, dance, mentoring, and more. Year-round, grassroots level cultural organizations and programming make invaluable contributions to the health and wellness of communities throughout the city. Places like neighborhood art centers, churches, and barbershop galleries serve as anchors to their communities and sources of positive energy. That Baltimore City thrives on culture is not just a downtown or arts district phenomenon - it's happening on streets and blocks throughout the city. Culture is who we are and must be respected, embraced and supported for the benefit of all.

Marketing / promotion

Baltimore City's cultural renaissance is being led by long-term residents as well as inspired new arrivals. Arts and culture is one of the most effective and genuine ways to represent our city nationally and abroad. Branding and promoting the city with its cultural assets will socially and economically benefit local artists, creative producers, [cultural](#) groups, and the city as a whole. The city should do what it can to cultivate local, national and global media outlets covering the positive stories of Baltimore's ongoing arts and cultural successes.

City officials leading internal and public conversations need to be mindful of using empowering language when representing our people and places on city websites and through city publications. The words we use affect public perception of communities. Baltimore is more than a city of "at risk" individuals living in "disenfranchised" neighborhoods. We are a collection of resilient communities led by powerful people working together to overcome the very tangible effects of long-term economic and racial challenges. Baltimore's legacy of survival and success is a story interwoven with our unique arts and cultural expressions. For the benefit of our neighbors, ourselves, and our city—leaders must put our best and truest faces forward by representing Baltimore as a creative place of strength and celebration.

ARTS EDUCATION

Over and over, the need for quality arts education was echoed in every community. This priority has been best synthesized through the Baltimore Arts Education Coalition, which [calls](#) for "*...ensuring annual equitable access to sequential vocal and instrumental music, visual arts, theater and dance instruction taught by qualified professionals in all Baltimore City Public Schools.*" Currently, Baltimore City Public School students have unequal access to arts education when compared to surrounding school districts. Baltimore City public school students deserve the same advantages as students in other counties. Enabling students to express themselves, share their voices and present opportunities to showcase their talents will help them create positive approaches to problem solving. More and more, the private sector is looking for creative thinkers, makers and doers who can work across disciplines in pursuit of needed innovation. Arts education prioritized and funded equally with science, technology,

engineering and math provides competitive career opportunities in the ever growing, interdisciplinary STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics) fields. However the need for art education does not stop when the school bell rings. Youth need places to go after school for meaningfully structured time in spaces facilitating positive personal expression. CAB supports reopening recreation centers and fully funding programs for youth during after-school hours.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Economic Impact / employment / workforce / business development

Studies reveal that the economic impact of the arts in Baltimore City is substantial and significantly larger than in other similar cities. (See data from Americans for the Arts 2010 report, below).

- There are 9,500+ full time equivalent jobs in the arts. This is double the median number found in similar size regions.
- The sector generates \$16 million in Local Tax Revenue.
- Nonprofit Arts & Culture attendees spend average of \$17.00 per person at area restaurants, garages, etc. not including cost of admission to event. (Source: Americans for the Arts)

Arts and culture clearly brings great value to the city of Baltimore. Participants expressed desire for a city department devoted to the specific needs of the nonprofit arts and culture sector, just as the city provides for small businesses. By assisting the arts with tax incentives, job training, small business development, planning and permitting, space allocation, and more, such a department would ensure the growth of this economic sector in a way that benefits people across all parts of Baltimore and generate a strong return on investment.

FYI-At the State level, the return on investment for the annual arts appropriation is 3:1. (Maryland State Arts Council Arts Impact Study 2014)

TOTAL Economic Impact of the Nonprofit Arts and Culture Industry in the City of Baltimore (Spending by Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations <u>and</u> Their Audiences)			
	City of Baltimore	Median of Similar Study Regions <i>Pop. = 500,000 to 999,999</i>	National Median
Direct Expenditures	\$388,210,984	\$161,334,702	\$49,081,279
Full-Time Equivalent Jobs	9,505	4,800	1,533
Resident Household Income	\$260,413,000	\$114,667,000	\$35,124,500
Local Government Revenue	\$16,985,000	\$7,228,000	\$1,946,500
State Government Revenue	\$16,914,000	\$9,218,000	\$2,498,000

Grants / funding

The funding formula for nonprofit arts is part earned revenue and part contributed support. The latter is a three-legged stool: Individual, Corporate/Foundation, and Government. The State of Maryland commits more than \$16 million a year to the arts. In most jurisdictions this public support is matched in some ratio by the local government. Baltimore needs to create and commit to an annual appropriation to support the nonprofit arts and culture sector, and establish a funding system equally accessible to artists and organizations from every corner of the city. Consistent and equitable support is the only way to ensure that the assets of the cultural community will work for all of Baltimore's citizens.

CAB participants felt strongly that funding should be more equally distributed to both established and grassroots arts organizations led by and benefiting communities of color. Groups and artists operating at the grassroots level and/or not partnered with anchor institutions must have fair access to funding. Furthermore, the city needs to do a better job of making individual artists of color and smaller neighborhood organizations aware of funding opportunities. City-run arts grants need well-advertised and accessible information sessions as well as grant writing workshops so that future applicants can level the competitive grant-writing playing field and increase their chances of success.

Space

Through its listening sessions CAB found that creative space for art-making also serves as a much-needed foundation for cohesive communities and civic life. Like populations throughout the city, Baltimore's creative community feels the strain of finding and maintaining affordable housing. We advocate for housing solutions that are mindful of the needs of low-income populations, including those who identify as artists and cultural producers. The preservation and maintenance of existing working art spaces, many of which are located in former industrial space, is critical to the health of the creative community as well as the future growth of small manufacturing in our city. We advocate for preservation of existing industrial space for artistic production and other forms of light manufacturing, rather than rezoning these existing spaces for residential development.

Baltimore's creative communities face numerous administrative and bureaucratic barriers to establishing and maintaining physical space for arts-related purposes. Streamlining the purchase or lease of city-owned property through programs such as Vacants to Value would be of great utility to Baltimore's creative communities and the broader citizen base. Additionally, simplifying the permitting process and giving greater consideration to mixed-use zoning would bolster the success rate of creative entrepreneurs looking to sustain existing art spaces or add new ones to the city's cultural ecosystem.

At the neighborhood level, spreading the benefits of Arts & Entertainment designations beyond the current boundaries of the districts would enable more neighborhoods to benefit from the tax incentives, as well as the organizational and marketing potential of being an arts or cultural district.

Transportation / infrastructure

Safe, reliable, and affordable public transportation is necessary for the health of Baltimore's creative communities, as well as the health of the city as a whole. We advocate for incorporating the talents of Baltimore's creative communities into the city's transportation planning efforts through activities consisting of, but not limited to: enhancing bicycle infrastructure, local visual art on the interior and exterior of buses and light rail, public art as traffic calming, and artist designed wayfinding.

Access to wifi and broadband is vital to the health of the creative communities, our schools, and the sustained growth of other sectors. The city should create a comprehensive plan for implementing broadband in every neighborhood and treat the adoption of citywide broadband as it would any other public utility.

Arts agenda / developing strategies / cultural plan

Baltimore has a wide array of organizations and artists who embody the strength of Baltimore city. Over the past fifteen years and with the support of the Mayor's office, Baltimore has established and/or grown three state-designated arts districts, world class festivals such as Artscape, the Baltimore Book Festival and the much-anticipated Light City Baltimore. The city has continued to provide support to Baltimore's anchor institutions including those that steward city-owned collections. A wide range of awards and grants encourage artists to live and produce work in their hometown, and students from a number of world-class universities are falling in love with the city. At the same time, community-based artists have made important contributions in the lives of children and organizations large and small have given them access to art while very little is provided in school.

This growth, and the demonstrated assets that the creative sector brings, offers a great opportunity at a time when Baltimore is at the leading edge of wrestling with historic, institutionalized inequity. As a result, *now is the time to develop a multi-year strategic approach to arts and culture, one that in other cities has taken the form of a cultural plan, or cultural agenda.*

Issues of importance that could be addressed through a highly inclusive planning process include:

- Motivating regional cooperation.
- Developing dedicated funding streams for arts and culture.
- Meeting the needs of and supporting grassroots/neighborhood level efforts along with those of larger cultural organizations.
- Including the cultural sector and creative workers in decision-making across city departments and mobilizing artists to increase civic engagement.
- Developing a process that empowers community voices.

The plan could also better define the role of a cabinet level position for the arts, and might even identify a Chief of Arts & Culture (Arts Czar) to foster arts in the city.