

**Houston Arts and Cultural Plan
Community Advisory Committee
May 13, 2015
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

- 1. Welcome**
Philamena Baird, Rick Lowe

- 2. Indicators**
Debbie McNulty

Review and discussion of indicators report

- 3. City Program Models**
Jerry Allen, Mustafa Tameez

Review and discussion of comparison study

- 4. Next Steps**
Jerry Allen, Mustafa Tameez

- 5. Closing**
Philamena Baird, Rick Lowe

Next Meeting Wednesday, June 10
 4 p.m. – 6 p.m.

Wednesday, May 13, 2015

Arts and Cultural Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

Comments on the Indicators report

- Sense of the local community support of the sector – Houston is low in several of these areas as compared to other comparison city. This is a blunt view of the numbers. There is less support as a community for arts and cultural life in Houston than is perceived by others in the field.
- City-level data produced by and available at Americans for the Arts – Houston is lower than many others.
- San Francisco is tiny – it may have a high concentration of arts institutions that serve a larger metropolitan area. Houston is a much larger geographic area. What about cities more like Houston geographically – Atlanta, San Antonio, etc. That way we are comparing apples to apples.
 - Yes, San Antonio might be a better comparison. Larger Metropolitan areas. We want to capture the funding entities.
- Does diversity factor into this?
- Do metrics help us go in a certain direction in terms of funding? What are we going to get out of this?

Summary of the Fresh Arts Artist Town Hall

- Artist town hall was held at El Dorado Ballroom
- Roughly 200 attended
- The things that were brought up and agreed upon as important issues were: affordable live/work spaces, access to more funding and city sponsored opportunities, artist representation in civic leadership, greater transparency / awareness of process, equitable compensation standards (transparency), greater inclusion of diverse artists, and general professional development.
- The consensus in the room was that this is the beginning of the discussion.
- Stewarding the artist community. Small and mid-size organizations are struggling to make ends meet – artist development is out of the question because of stretched too thinly.

Comments on the Benchmark Study

- Should we be looking at Houston First dollars for Houston, who manage many cultural/arts sites? Should I be discounting some dollars because of this? Is that a fair thing to say?
- When we look at these numbers, it gives you a rough idea of where we are.
- San Fran gives \$12 million for the fine arts museum from the City. It has increased every year.
- Yes, they get a tremendous amount. The Fine Arts museum is city owned and operated in San Francisco. You could add the \$12 million to the mix. You could also add the funds that they give to the symphony. This was a judgment call – it is very difficult to find the criteria to make things comparable.

- If we really want to look at comparable data – look at the large institutions and whatever is comparable to HAA. Look at how the big, medium, and small orgs are supported in these cities. If we look at this as a document to show that Houston is low in funds to support these organizations, it will also emphasize that point. We need more leveraging data.
- Per capita is a way to look at this.
- The conversation seems singular. What is missing is how the organizations are funded beyond public funding. What about public, private, etc.
- If you look at any one aspect of the plan, it will be lacking. You are seeing all of the pieces. This is one way of looking at this internally. As we listen to these conversations, you are going to come to it from your stand point - we need general agreements. Per capita is a fair lens.
- Every one of these cities has unique/historical relationships to bigger institutions (ex: Dallas Museum of Art). Public investment, if we look at four states, we need to look at public funding and private funding. We are not looking at the full picture if we are not looking at that.
- This is aspirational, but could we start looking at per capita instead but aggregate size of non-profit organization sector. I don't know if anyone has done this study yet. A lot of studies have been about per capita...
- Per capita is something that city council will understand and is important to them. Charlotte is a unique model. Dallas was all general fund – no HOT funds.
- Charlotte is an outlier in this cohort of cities. It's the least comparable of the cities. This united fund captures some cooperate funds but mostly matching funds.
- 100% of arts funding in Dallas is general fund.
- There are differences in governing structures. Dallas is a city manager rather than the Mayor in Houston.
- The other thing about Dallas that makes it unusual is that they adopted a policy that funds land aquisition for cultural interties. I am not aware of other cities that do that.
- If we were to try and increase funds, we would have to build some consensus from the community. There are compromises that must be made. The community has to be ONE voice – not multiple voices.
- The question of equity in Houston is that the pie is too small! This is the direction I urge you to move towards.
- The purpose of the plan is to make the pie bigger. The conversations you have in the planning process... this is a poll. You NEVER like the results. When you do a poll, you find out no one knows you or likes you. In this process, Margie led a number of groups, artists, public, and neighborhood groups – different things came out. We have to address those things. We have all had candid conversations; however, together we have to deal with facts and perceptions. Some are just perceptions and we need to change the way we talk about these things. Our job from the planning stand point is to put that on the table for you.

- There are orgs that have always supported my career – how is this going to change the small orgs who are always struggling and pay the individual artists?
- The purpose of these conversations within the advisory group is that you take the learning and find out where to go from here.
- Artist fellowships are included in the comparable data. We can spend our time talking about how you want to re-slice the \$7 per capita or we can increase to \$20 per capita so that demands are met. This planning process can be effective.
- There are going to be winners and losers in the short term when looking at how to re-slice the pie, however, in the long run everyone wins.
- Is the reason why per capita money is so low is because we get more private funds?
- Austin and Philadelphia has a lot of private funds and this is troublesome (i.e. – Pew Foundation moving out of Philadelphia).
- Cost of living is so low in Houston (however, we all know this is changing). We need to get to the point where we talk about how this is important to the community and the people of Houston. That is the conversation we need to have. It is more about what we want to be as a city. This is how we will increase our conversation – if we have this conversation.
- Cultural cities are becoming unaffordable for individual artists. Artists must be able to live and work in the city and this is being threatened.
- If we are talking about how to sell this concept – it would be helpful on how to dig down deeper in cities that Houstonians “get” – Dallas, Denver, etc. Take fewer cities and really drill down as part of a sales pitch.
- If the strategic goal is to be the art city – there has to be an aspirational goal.
- Dig down deeper into the types of groups to address the perception of the inequality. There is never going to be enough for anyone. But it is important to do apples to apples.
- Regarding LA, the city’s budget is focused on neighborhood based programing and arts education programing. The larger institutions are funded by the county. LA city funding funded small and mid-size orgs. The community conversations were not negating the role of the larger institutions. Those programs are visible and appreciated. There is a perception that arts education, individual arts orgs, and small orgs, are not equitable. Not how much money but that community arts organizations can not access funding in the same way. In some of the cities being compared – it’s the voice of that community-based leader!
- We do not get a dime from the County.
- Aspirational goals are important. Everyone wants more access.
- Thank you for putting this information together. As an individual artist – it tends to be that emerging / younger artists are paid to be educators. For the small / mid-size orgs and individual orgs, it seems to me that we need to broader define the definition what HOT funds cover or find other sources of funding that does not generate tourism.

- The city DOES provide funds for after-school arts education. Better collaboration in order for advocacy. We can't be our worst enemies.
- This represents itself as an opportunity. I urge you to try to imagine circumstances where the entire arts community benefits in the long term. What are the short term consequences? Work together and work collaboratively.