

**Houston Arts and Cultural Plan
Community Advisory Committee
April 8, 2015
4:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

- 1. Welcome**
Philamena Baird and Rick Lowe
- 2. Project Update**
Debbie McNulty
- 3. Assessment and Draft Strategies**
Mustafa Tameez
- 4. Closing**
Philamena Baird and Rick Lowe

Next Meeting: May 13

4PM – ~~5PM~~6PM

Wednesday, April 8, 2015

Arts and Cultural Plan Advisory Committee Meeting

Comments on Assessment and Draft Strategies for the arts and culture section of Houston's General Plan

Goal 1 - A strong, visible presence of arts and culture within the City organization

- Be cautious of how the text is worded
- Inadequate support for all arts organizations, big or small
- Small department is also important.
- Did we get a # for how much the City invests through Houston First into facility?
- Whatever data the consultants have collected on what other cities are doing... the charts that were included in the report were not detailed enough.
 - This information would be very helpful.
- Money is not apples to apples
- GHCVB is marketing funds...perhaps this should be more specific as to what the money is used for.
- In regards to comparables, how is money being distributed, where is it coming from, etc?
- If we want to be all that we want to be, we have to show how far we have to climb
- This should hopefully be an aspirational plan. We want to see what our colleagues are doing. Where do we sit on the scale?
- There has to be a more significant commitment to the arts in order to have world class arts
- We are world class. We need to recognize that we need to be more
- Not private funding. This is about City funds.
- This is a plan that is looking at City investment of the arts.
- What would be more galvanizing of a call-to-action as to show how we are not measuring up to our competitors. Private and public funding are different.
- If you create an office within the City – are the funds going to be sucked up in the City instead of being distributed to the organizations?
- A couple more people might help coordinate resources better. Nobody wants a bureaucracy, however, there has to be someone to provide answers.
 - HAA does provide these answers. The City off loaded these duties to a non-profit. The question is, is it more efficient to move some of these services back to City Hall?
- Yes, this is a question of efficiency. For example, if someone asked where all the public art is in the city, there are several entities.
- Who holds the office accountable? The Mayor?
- This is an insulting statement (#10 on assessment)

- Needs to be better worded. A portion of the community goes through a peer-review and a portion does not, however, this does not say that.
- If you are not familiar with this, it needs to be clarified.
- The funding formula for HOT is clearly set and I can supply language to this. And it was re-negotiated 18 months ago.
- Needs to be transparency on who does what? When is it reviewed?
- The mayor and her colleague Andy with Minnette decided.
- Now we are looking at the health of all organizations. We should be talking about more money. However, if this is the situation we are in, there needs to be equitable access to how organizations get the money. That is why we are here – to talk about it.
- We have very detailed outline of how HOT money is being used, however, who is holding those accountable in how they use the money?
 - “It’s really rude to talk across people.”
- Can we be more specific about what type of data we are collecting?
- Are we talking about heads in beds? Is this about tourism? A cultural destination is not made just by the legacy institutions; it is the health of the cultural landscape as a whole.
- There is legal interpretation. The money has to be spent in a certain way.
- It is important to learn from others. I.e. – Austin – ALL organizations impact the quality of the arts in our city.
- I have to object strongly to the language. Perhaps the needs to say “the City has not requested information that might help it establish an overarching policy.”
- Many of the issues that I brought up are not represented in the recommendations. I am scared that the recommendations are pre-conceived. That concerns me.
- The people in the city have a million different concerns. The mayor walked into a meeting and said something to the extent of “I want to reexamine how the City distributes HOT.”
- I share some of Gary’s concerns. Because these are public documents, there needs to be a great deal of sensitivity. I am concerned about how some of these things seem to be shaping up. There is now a sense out in the community that there are things need to be changed in a short span of time. Council members are looking for things, we need to be aware of this and be our own critics.
- Can we talk about order and priority. Maybe these are not our priorities?
- We have to be aware of the history of how the arts have been funding.
- In regards to goal 1 strategies, that position that is running that has to be cabinet level – it needs to say that. It can not be a division or an office of. That person has to be right in the ear of the mayor or I don’t think we have accomplished much.
- There is still the question of accountability of funding and there needs to be transparency within each department if an apartment is created.

Goal 2 - Internationally-recognized cultural and entertainment opportunities

- Is this about event planning? Or does this involve cultural destinations, place making?
- It goes beyond planning policy. It is alignment of departments and their day-to-day running of departments.
- Assessment 9, my concern is that the general plan had a lot of push back about historical districts.
- We don't have historic districts. Tourists can't visit because there are not sidewalks (especially ones that are ADA compliant). Our amenities have to have facilities that comply with ADA compliance! I think we need a strong statement from this group in regards to thinking about where the general plan is going.
- For the purpose of this, should we just be saying that this is highlighted in the general plan
- This is about dual representation.
- On #6, there is a structure when HAA was established that continues to be used as the state model to best provide arts oversight. The fact that we have people on the board of HAA by ordinance, I sit on the GHCVB by ordinance, etc. We have an infrastructure in place that assures policy dialogue.
- It's inadequate. Every effort the museum district has made has been rebuffed. For those who are not part of HAA process, there is a big loss. If their primary goal is to promote conventions and the hotels downtown, the arts are always going to fall short.
- Laurette is on that board and represents the museum district. Whether we like what is happening, it is better than five years ago.
- Is that aspirational. I would not use GHVCB as my advertising agency. I would not endorse them. I would distribute the money to each of the arts orgs. I do not want to hand to them the responsibility to promote our programs. Recent history has shown they have a different agenda and priorities and it shows that they are not effective. I am happy to coordinate – we all want to coordinate, but whether they are the right agency to act as the coordinator – that's the question.
- We (MD) feel closed out
- The MFAH used to have a seat – Gwen Goffe and she was very vocal. Committees exist in GHCVB now. If we want the buy-in, you have to have a seat at the table and speak up. Now there are more objectives, such as the George R. Brown. We need to speak up!
- This goes to the heart of what is distasteful about this whole process. We have a lot of the experience – we need ways to convene. I would never go into a meeting and tell you what to do, however, no one is not asking.
- We need more opportunities to convene together.
- Their (GHCVB) primary responsibility is heads in beds.
- We should take a big chunk of the GHVCB and put it in the hands of the arts groups to control their own marketing strategies.
- Their focus is different. The pie needs to be separated out. Dallas is \$36 million, Houston is \$5 million.

- There is not enough money to go around... this has to be listed in all points.
- There is a lot of validity to this conversation, just not enough money.
- Use of privatized money and City money in L.A. for cultural affairs. In Chicago, the mayor moved the GHCVB to the A+C office. The messaging was an arts message. There are success models out there already.

Goal 3 - A thriving local arts and creative community

- I immediately take issue with number 2.
 - Earning power is different than cost of living reduction
- We are not even tracking with Phoenix in terms of artist employment. We were dead last in our region (south-west). The only silver lining is the cost of living, which is going up.
- I am sure you have some numbers behind some of this data. Economic impact study to frame the language in assessment?
- Number 8, “is not” – instead of may not – and put this as #1!
- Independent artists need to be more significantly represented. Perhaps an emphasis on cultivating local talent and retaining talent.
- How do you define a local anchor institution?
 - Universities, major health institutions, etc. – those that will not go out of business soon or ever.
- You don’t dream of a career in the arts in Houston. I want that to change. How do we help out those institutions that help out individual artists? Employment, career development, etc. I just want to see in our community at large be better stewards of the individual artists.
- A large chunk of our budget is to employees that are artists.
 - But is that to employ artists or art administrators
 - Perhaps that is taking away from their creation of art.
- What about incentive businesses – movies, films, graphic design, etc. We are missing out on attracting that talent. What is missing?
- Creative climate – that tool was designed specifically to put in front of the GHCVB to say to invest in the arts. We got a blind eye from the GHVCB.
- I don’t think that was a failure, we can use this as a springboard.
- I think UH is a great opportunity
- Needs to be a database for artists. There is no centralized place for the city. Fresh Arts does not cover the scope of the city.
- Create tax incentives in Louisiana! There has to be some sort of business incentive.
- About 1 on strategies – this is important. Can’t we come up with another source of revenue for the arts? We have a lot of ideas! Cigarette tax was used in other cities. Why can’t we talk about this for Houston?
- About 80% of my workforce considers himself or herself to be artists. However, they do not make art for income.
 - Administrators generally outnumber artists 3 to 1.

- Identifying as an artist and not generating income in their art. We have to identify who artists are.
- Other sources of revenue → Listed examples, such as Denver, St. Louis, Detroit, etc.
 - One of the beauties of the Denver tax is that it's regional.
- The county pulled funding four years ago. They do not contribute anything - zero.

Closing Conversation

- We have three goals. What should be the first goal?
- reverse them - 3-2-1 (A thriving local arts and creative community → Unique and internationally-recognized[...] → A strong, visible presence of arts and vulture within the City Organization)
- Are we missing the opportunity to put in more statistics in making our case. Not just benchmarking. Constantly talking about HOT funds, would it be valuable to say that this pot funds ___% of the museum district, etc. The power of leveraging is tremendous.
- Concerned we are not talking about the HOT funds. If we continue to allow ourselves by HOT funds, it undoes all the things we are talking about.
- It's the only source of funding...
- There is a perception that the HOT funds are a large source of funding. It's a small percentage of our budget.
- In many of these cities that are successful, it's usually the mayor who leads the charge to change legislation of arts funding allocation