

TO: Madison Arts Commission
FROM: Francesca Rodriguez
RE: Access and availability to cultural spaces
DATE: September 3, 2018

Current Situation

In response to community concern about the lack of affordable arts and cultural spaces, the Madison Arts Commission (MAC) is researching a meaningful and strategic policy recommendation to address the shortage of cultural spaces¹ as well as the access and availability to cultural spaces. On the near east side, where a high concentration of artists have lived and worked since the 1970's, development has recently claimed many existing affordable art studio spaces and galleries. MAC believes that without strategic intervention, the availability of affordable cultural spaces will continue to diminish, especially where new and rapid development is replacing existing arts spaces. This will create adverse impacts of displacement for arts and cultural groups and critical constraints for artists, collectives, and organizations in Madison to pursue their work effectively. "Cultural displacement" has happened in other cities, particularly in cities that did not do enough to plan for the future and are now in a cultural space crisis, such as the Bay Area, New York, New Orleans, Philadelphia. Madison can learn from the failures of other municipalities.

Additionally, the city's adopted Cultural Plan from 2013² states, as a broad strategic goal: *Strengthen policy and practice around creative sector facilities utilization and development.* The City's new Comprehensive Plan, currently under review, identifies seven main strategies to ensure "that Madison is a vibrant and creative City that builds upon its cultural and historic assets."³ One of those key recommendations is to "create safe and affirming community spaces that bring people together and provide social outlets for underrepresented groups." The commission is particularly interested in equitable strategies that lead to permanency and artist ownership of studios, galleries, and housing throughout Madison. MAC is especially interested in communities that are underserved and/or are undergoing rapid development that poses the most immediate threat to existing affordable artistic spaces.

MAC's investigation is still developing and will continue to include more analysis of national, and municipal best practices. MAC's recommendations will be aspirational in

¹ The definition of a cultural space broadly includes all arts presentation spaces, including museums and galleries, live theaters and cinemas, bookstores and record stores, live music venues, and multidisciplinary arts spaces. These spaces are typically open to the public.

² http://www.cityofmadison.com/dpced/planning/documents/Cultural_Plan.pdf

³ <https://imaginevadisonwi.com/workbook-2-vibrant-creative>

design and hope to create a vibrant cultural landscape so that other benefits can also be realized for the wider community. Later this fall, MAC plans to present the full city council with a policy memo with recommendations considering the above outlined concerns and analysis.

Possible Recommendations

That said, MAC's forthcoming policy recommendations could address the following:

- Leverage municipal economic development policies to assist artists and organizations acquire spaces through direct financial assistance using city incentives to offer below market leases or technical assistance programs that help creative industries become established or stay in the City of Madison.
- Expand the number of City owned and managed workshops, studio spaces, and common areas.
- Innovate zoning and permitting to use affordable temporary spaces as cultural sites. The City or a City/County partnership could establish a program to create affordable temporary art spaces in private developments or underutilized spaces.
- Offer technical assistance to build artist and arts non-profit capacity to fundraise, manage their facilities, and purchase spaces at a later date. Through direct financial grants, one-on-one technical assistance, and real estate readiness training, provide safe, stable, permanent, and affordable real estate solutions for local arts organizations.
- Consider a community land trust that could acquire and steward land in trust for permanent community benefit and affordability. The trust would ensure arts uses in perpetuity.
- Position Madison's arts and cultural community as an economic development strategy. Tout Madison's cultural amenities and publicize benefits.
- Work with community development corporations. Madison has a strong community-based nonprofit sector, which could be fertile ground for promotion of artist space development as a revitalization strategy.