

Culver CITY

GENERAL PLAN UPDATE

CULTURAL CASE STUDIES

EXISTING CONDITIONS REPORT | AUGUST 2020



OVERVIEW

CULVER CITY'S CULTURAL CONTEXT

As documented in the "Arts, Culture and Creative Economy" section of the *Existing Conditions Report*, the creative economy has a long and rich history in Culver City. In its earliest days as the "Heart of Screenland," the city was a locus of film production and has since further developed to be known for its strong ties to the broader creative economy in the form of architecture, design, the arts, music, and film. With recent developments and growth brought on by large creative economy employers like Amazon, Apple, HBO, Beats Electronics and Sony, the City is considering ways to ensure that all manners of cultural workers benefit.

INTRODUCTION TO THE CASE STUDIES

In support of Cultural Planning Group's work in the *Existing Conditions Report*, HR&A Advisors, Inc. (HR&A) conducted a nationwide scan of cities with constructive policies or tactics for supporting arts and culture. The issues and cities discussed below were selected based on their applicability to concerns detailed by Culver City's arts and cultural community, as well as their ability to showcase ways private development and organizational structures can help support citywide initiatives and strategic plans. Additionally, given the significant impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on all facets of life, the cases also refer to ways cities can help protect their cultural communities in the face of dramatic economic shocks. All cases discussed are followed by a series of best practices for Culver City to consider in any adjustments to its arts and culture policies and plans.

CASE STUDIES

SUPPORTING ARTISTS AMIDST ECONOMIC DISRUPTION

ISSUE

Creating a supportive environment for cultural workers depends in part on sustaining the creative community's resiliency in the face of one-time economic shocks and longer-term recessions and assisting the most vulnerable groups in weathering adverse impacts such as loss of income, housing, or access to healthcare. As of this report's writing, the economic downturn provoked by the novel coronavirus (aka COVID-19) pandemic is an example of such a shock. Cities nationwide are finding that federal small business support and stimulus funding might not reach all those in need, or sufficiently bridge the gap to the next paycheck. Those impacted in the short-term may also continue to experience adverse impacts long after the "shock" is over. Cultural workers who rely on gatherings and live events will be prevented from working so long as social distancing measures are still in place, which could continue long after "shelter-in-place" directives are lifted. Commercial renters who operate cultural venues are also susceptible, and in some cases, have joined advocacy efforts for citywide rent freezes.



Visitors gather at food trucks during Culver City's 2017 Art Walk and Roll Festival. Source: <https://www.culvercityartwalk.com>

ACTION

Cities nationwide¹ are providing relief grants for art and cultural workers who have lost income due to the pandemic. These grants are just one way that cities are seeking to help their cultural communities cope with the ongoing economic impacts of COVID-19, and do not necessarily convey the comprehensive amount of relief funding available. Among a selection of relief funds featured here for their geographic variety (see Figure 1), individual relief grant amounts ranged from \$500-\$1,200 that were issued to applicants who demonstrate a loss of income due to the pandemic. The grant terms vary regarding which kinds of cultural workers qualify (e.g., whether they are self-employed, or practice in a particular cultural field), how need is assessed, and how much money is available overall. Many put a focus on those cultural workers whose livelihoods are the most dependent on the kinds of physical gatherings that are prohibited in the wake of COVID-19, such as those in dance, theatre, and live music.

Most relief funds include partnerships with city governments to provide outreach and some form of financial support (using existing City arts or general funds). Still, the funds featured here tend to derive mostly from state support or those raised by nonprofit arts organizations for COVID-19 relief. In the case of Boston's relief fund, for instance, the City is part of the application process, but grant funding is derived entirely from individuals and private foundations managed by local arts nonprofits. Los Angeles' relief fund is wholly derived from City funds and managed by the City's Department of Cultural Affairs, with no formal partnerships with nonprofits or state entities. As of this report's writing, some Los Angeles City Council districts have also opted to redirect developer fees for future cultural events in their districts to provide cash grants to artists, arts organizations, and performance venues impacted by COVID-19.² Because the pandemic is ongoing and the extent of the crisis not entirely clear, many of the funds are soliciting donations continually to support those in need.

Figure 1: COVID-19 Relief Funds for Cultural Workers

City	Amount Per Capita ³	Maximum Individual Grant	Total Relief Fund Amount	Funding Sources
Baltimore, MD	\$0.16	\$500	\$94,400	City-sponsored arts nonprofit, state council, private foundations
Boston, MA	\$0.17	\$500	\$120,000	City department, arts center, private donors
Houston, TX	\$0.03	\$1,000	\$77,900	City department, City-sponsored arts nonprofit, private donors
Los Angeles, CA⁴	\$0.04	\$1,200	\$160,000	City department
Providence, RI	\$0.09	\$1,000	\$100,000	City department, state council, private donors

Source: HR&A

¹ As of this report's writing, at least 20 U.S. cities are offering COVID-19 relief funds for art and culture workers. Source: [Americans for the Arts](#).

² "L.A. City Council approves plans to turn developer fees into emergency arts grants", *Los Angeles Times*, May 16, 2020.

³ As of April 17, 2020. Most funds are soliciting contributions on a rolling basis, as needed, so these figures are minimums.

⁴ Does not include the amounts raised by specific council districts for district-level relief.

IMPACT

As a supplement to other relief efforts, providing artists with direct cash assistance can help a community's vital cultural population survive short-term shocks. Particularly for self-employed and freelancing cultural workers, providing direct cash assistance can help cover essential expenses such as food, rent, and healthcare. Having the City be part of administering the funds, in partnership with local arts institutions and community groups, can also help ensure that the fund is effectively tailored to meet the specific needs of workers across the cultural community. While it's too early to determine the overall impact of the relief funds featured above, the short-term need for these funds is apparent, given the number of cities offering them as well as the unprecedented rate of national unemployment claims filed in response to COVID-19.

BEST PRACTICES

- Cities that wish to protect their artistic and cultural community members can provide relatively immediate, short-term relief in the form of direct cash assistance. Artists and cultural workers, particularly those who are self-employed or who rely on freelance gigs, are uniquely vulnerable to the negative impacts of COVID-19.
- Strong partnerships among City arts/cultural affairs departments, local nonprofits, and cultural-focused foundations can help protect the most vulnerable cultural workers. Raising and administering worker relief funds strengthens collaborative relationships and builds more robust art and cultural networks.
- Rallying to provide nimble and responsive relief funds in the face of short-term shocks can help ensure essential protections under challenging times. Cities would benefit from having these in place as short-term shocks are inevitable. To protect their cultural community reliably, they may consider establishing a permanent cultural worker relief fund that will preemptively collect funds to be deployed during future shocks. In Culver City, this fund could potentially be an element of the Cultural Trust Fund.

ORGANIZATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CITY ARTS & CULTURE EFFORTS

ISSUE

Culver City already has a rich selection of cultural assets. Members of the arts and cultural community have expressed that their relationship with the City could be stronger to nurture those assets and incentivize arts and cultural workers to continue living and working in Culver City. To date, funding has been the City's primary means of support. Still, as articulated in the "Arts, Culture & Creative Economy" section of this report, the City's investments in arts and culture have overall been modest. Funding has primarily been derived from private avenues. The Culver City Arts Foundation (CCAF) (aka Culver Arts and the Culver City Cultural Affairs Foundation) is an entirely volunteer-run, City-sanctioned arts nonprofit focused on raising money for the arts via private donations, but their contributions and capabilities are modest. Fees levied on development to support public art also contribute to the City's funding. While it may be possible for the City to expand the potential of these existing tools, they may still not be sufficient to meet the City's goals. Expanding the City's arts expenditures is also considered a non-starter.

CULTURAL CASE STUDIES

While protecting the methods mentioned above is important, the cultural community has explicitly expressed a desire for more support via marketing and outreach efforts to advertise their work and facilitate networking with patrons. At this time, staffing and resources at the City level suggest providing these services will not be feasible. But the City may be able to meet these needs by sanctioning a separate, independent entity to offer more support for its cultural community and assets, one that is less susceptible to City budgets and private development instabilities.

ACTION

As the City has already expressed hesitancy in expanding its resources for funding arts and culture, it may be possible to extend its reach without stretching City budgets by strengthening alternative organizational structures and shifting responsibilities. Cities nationwide rely in some manner on nonprofit agencies that, through a variety of formal and informal agreements with their local government, then function as the acting arts council and department for the City. Characteristics of these nonprofits and their agreements vary based on each City's needs. In some cases, they serve not only arts and culture but also related City services for economic or workforce development. The City's relationship with CCAF is an instance of one such relationship, with relatively limited agency and capacity on the Foundation's part (compared to similar organizations in other cities).

Baltimore, Maryland's Office of Promotion & The Arts (BOPA) is one such quasi-governmental entity that has taken a more dynamic and influential role in cultivating arts and culture in the city. Formed in 2002 from the merger of the Mayor's Advisory Committee on Arts & Culture and the Baltimore Office of Promotion, BOPA has been operating as an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit since 2004. In addition to providing grants, managing resources, and putting on events for the cultural community, BOPA oversees tourism and serves as the City liaison for film/television production. BOPA is known for taking an "entrepreneurial"⁵ approach to support arts and culture. It does so by actively pursuing and cultivating external funding sources, via foundations and agencies at the county, state, and federal level (hence its "quasi-governmental" status) that otherwise might not have been available or accessible to City departments. Earned income from BOPA-led events also helps fund their ongoing arts and culture initiatives. The City of Baltimore supports a significant portion of BOPA's operating needs – in 2017, it provided \$2.5M from general and special fund revenues, nearly half of BOPA's \$5.5M total operating revenues.⁶ The volunteer-run CCAF, Culver City's closest equivalent to BOPA, does not receive operating revenue support from the City, and operates at a significantly lower funding scale – last year, it set a goal of raising \$90,000 for arts-related grants. The City of Baltimore's strong relationship with BOPA creates a decisive incentive mechanism for the agency to act according to shared priorities.

IMPACT

Empowering an external agency to manage arts and cultural growth in the City can help diversify funding streams in addition to those otherwise available from City governments. Coupling arts and cultural responsibilities for other related areas such as tourism and film production (as shown in the

⁵ ["How Boston and Other American Cities Support and Sustain the Arts"](#), The Boston Foundation (2016).

⁶ City of Baltimore's ["Fiscal 2018 Agency Detail – Volume II"](#), Board of Estimates Recommendations, and [BOPA's 2017 990 form](#) filed with the IRS.

CULTURAL CASE STUDIES

Baltimore example) increases opportunities to leverage cultural assets for multiple ends. This restructuring could also make the City, through the Foundation, more agile and responsive to the requests of the cultural community – for example, that the City provide more marketing services.

Currently, CCAF fills a role like BOPA's, albeit relatively minimally. Through a memorandum of understanding with the City, the Foundation focuses solely on fundraising from private sources to support related City initiatives. With redirected City funds, the Foundation could take on a more expansive role and more aggressively pursue additional funding sources – a direction that it has expressed interest in taking.



A performance by Heidi Duckler Dance at the Baldwin Hills Overlook (2017), supported by Culver City's Performing Arts Grant Program. Photo: City of Culver City.

BEST PRACTICES

- Diversifying funding mechanisms for arts and cultural programs will help reduce stress on City budgets and protect programs from an overreliance on the ebbs and flows of private development.
- Empowering a locally-embedded and City-supported nonprofit to take a proactive, entrepreneurial approach to arts programming and funding can be a more productive use of City funds than staffing a City department. This method essentially creates a de facto city arts department, but in a more agile organization with more capacity and access to funding opportunities.
- A nonprofit already operating within Culver City's cultural community is likely to be more aware of and responsive to local needs and sensitivities, helping to inform City policy and strategic planning accordingly. For example, CCAF is partnering with the Helms Bakery District (HBD) for a year-long art installation and grant program called *Projecting Possibilities* in an effort to find comfort and connectedness through art, architecture, and design during

the times of the coronavirus pandemic. The effort features a new artist each week for 52 weeks, an entire year of rotating digital art exhibitions to celebrate, nourish, support, and promote Los Angeles-based, emerging artists. Each artist receives a stipend of \$400 in addition to the exposure.⁷ CCAF is sharing the cost of the artist's stipend with HBD. The Helms Bakery District is also providing the space, projection equipment, and staff time required for artist selection, installation, and promotion. The program was originally conceived of to last one year but may be extended as several more established artists who wished to have their worked showcased have donated the \$400 back to the program so an emerging artist could benefit.⁸

LEVERAGING PRIVATE DEVELOPMENT TO PROMOTE THE ARTS

ISSUE

While already recognized for its cultural assets and supportive environment for the creative economy, Culver City has an opportunity to leverage its developmental growth to address the concerns of the creative community further. In stakeholder interviews,⁹ professionals from the city's architecture, music, and theatrical professions expressed how rising office and residential rents were putting pressure on them to live and work elsewhere, despite their strong appreciation for the city's previously identified advantages for cultural workers. Principal among their concerns was a desire to directly benefit more from the city's growth and planning processes – particularly given the cultural community's role in attracting new development to the city in the first place. To this end, the cultural community asked that the City take advantage of new development to help generate more supportive funding. Without protections, new growth could leave the cultural community behind, as well as compromise the city's reputation of upholding arts and culture.¹⁰

⁷ ["Projecting Possibilities,"](#) Helms Bakery District (2020).

⁸ Telephone communications, Angela Anthony, HBD, August 31, 2020.

⁹ The City Council considered an item related to this issue at its August 24, 2020 meeting (Agenda Item A-3). Below are links to the staff report and associated Creative Economy Connect Stakeholder Meeting Summary Report: Staff Report:

<https://culver-city.legistar.com/ViewReport.ashx?M=R&N=TextL5&GID=535&ID=26908&GUID=LATEST&Title=Staff+Report>,

Creative Economy Connect Stakeholder Meeting Summary Report:

<https://culver-city.legistar.com/View.ashx?M=F&ID=8732646&GUID=BBF2F9B1-B089-48AE-9005-C0B58BF3ABDA>.

¹¹ [City of Berkeley Percentage for Public Art on Private Projects ordinance \(7579\)](#).



"Rainbow" (2012) by Tony Tasset, commissioned under Culver City's Art in Public Places Program. Photo: Joshua White / jwpictures.com

ACTION

To ensure that any continued growth maintains and expands the city's cultural assets, the City can better leverage future development to support arts and culture by strengthening particular existing programs. This could be in prioritizing the cultural community's interests in development agreements and community benefit exactions related to discretionary approvals. Fortunately, Culver City has already established ways to showcase arts and culture through development. In particular, the City's Art in Public Places Program (APPP) showcases art around the city but can be strengthened to better suit private developmental tendencies and the desires expressed by the local cultural community. As detailed in this report's "Arts, Culture & Creative Economy" section, the APPP has enabled a strong showing of public art pieces installed citywide. The APPP is funded almost entirely through a percent-for-art (PFA) program, which requires most development projects contribute one percent of their total building permit valuation to the arts. The only exceptions currently are the majority of staff costs and contributions from Sony and CCAF toward the Performing Arts Grant Program and the recently launched Artist Laureate Program. As currently written, the PFA contribution can take multiple forms, including an in-lieu fee to the Cultural Trust Fund, installing an on-site artwork, incorporating a cultural facility into the project, having the building's architecture qualify as art, or donating artwork directly to the City.

Culver City is one of the approximately 80-100 cities and municipalities nationwide with a PFA program, most of which are set to one percent for private development projects. In a typical year, the PFA yields approximately \$385,000 for the Cultural Trust Fund through in-lieu fees, though more

CULTURAL CASE STUDIES

recent years have yielded higher amounts (just over \$900,000 in FY2018 and FY2020) due to developmental spikes. In 2013, the City revised the APPP to specify that the permanent on-site art provided through the program must have a minimum value of \$75,000 – meaning that for projects with Building Permit valuations less than \$7.5 million, the developer would be required to pay the in-lieu fee unless they voluntarily choose to increase the 1% allocation to at least \$75,000, thereby affording them several options for fulfilling the program requirement, including the option of commissioning art. According to the City, this adjustment has helped encourage a balance between revenues and art installations. Fulfilling the PFA by incorporating a Cultural Facility must also meet various criteria that assures its accessibility for local artists and those supported by the City’s arts grants.

While the City should be proud of its existing support of the arts through its PFA, based on current averages, the program has generated relatively modest resources, and the City anticipates that revenues will begin to decline again in FY2020-21. These amounts are much less than what was invested by developers into permanent art over the last few years. The following are ways other cities have enhanced their PFA and public art programs to dovetail with developer interests and the needs expressed directly by its cultural community.

- **Articulating community priorities and aligning them with APPP resources.** An updated strategic plan that clearly articulates community priorities for arts and culture investments, coordinated with the City's implementation plan to achieve defined objectives, is an essential element to build private sector stakeholders' confidence and support for these initiatives. Developers want their contributions to be spent responsibly and impactfully, appreciated by the community, and effectively leveraged. Cultural community stakeholders want the APPP to share and execute their priorities. A City-led strategic plan for the APPP can help establish this, in part through providing public engagement opportunities and prioritizing cultural community interests in developer agreements, i.e., growing Cultural Trust Fund resources via the PFA program's in-lieu fees. Most California cities with robust arts and culture programs have adopted a citywide arts and culture plan, which is updated periodically.
- **Enhancing the effectiveness of the PFA requirement.** Some cities’ PFAs incentivize developers to pay the in-lieu fees rather than provide on-site public art by setting the value of the public art option at a notably higher percentage of the overall construction costs. For instance, the City of Berkeley’s PFA requirement may be met through on-site publicly accessible artworks valued at 1.75 percent of construction costs, or through an in-lieu fee of 0.8 percent of construction costs.¹¹ Berkeley also allows developers to combine both options – if developers provide publicly accessible art within their development that is valued at less than 1.75 percent of construction costs, they then also have to pay 80 percent of the difference as an in-lieu fee. This also helps close loopholes for developers that seek to have “project features” qualify as public art. Culver City could emulate programs like Berkeley’s that incentivize in-lieu fees in this way, while taking care to ensure that the program also encourages developers to fulfill the PFA in the way that best serves City interests and satisfies the developer's goals for their investment.
- **Encouraging APPP projects by local artists.** In concert with promoting arts of the highest and enduring quality, the APPP should prioritize showcasing the work of local artists or

¹¹ [City of Berkeley Percentage for Public Art on Private Projects ordinance \(7579\).](#)

CULTURAL CASE STUDIES

leveraging in-lieu PFA fees to support the needs of the existing cultural community directly. Should the developer decide to install an artwork on-site, or incorporate a cultural facility into the project, the City should encourage through the approvals process that these be sourced from local artists (or otherwise employ local workforce necessary to the installation) and continue to prioritize servicing local cultural organizations. For instance, the City of Los Angeles' percent-for-art program provides developers with pre-approved lists of local artists and manufacturers.

IMPACT

While it is essential to provide some flexibility in the way that developers fulfill the PFA program, requirements must follow an overarching strategic plan for the APPP, and be stringent enough to ensure that the program is actively supporting the City's arts and cultural assets. Developing a strategic plan for the APPP as part of an overarching Cultural Plan update – with opportunities for stakeholder input from both the cultural and private development communities – will help ensure that the program meets the interests of all parties involved. The strategic plan's guidance will also help tighten operations and strengthen the overall efficacy of these initiatives to celebrate arts and culture in Culver City.

Whatever the timeframe adopted in the strategic plan (every ten years or more frequently), it should include specific goals and actions in the short-, medium- and long-term. Articulating the local community's arts and culture vision to development and philanthropic stakeholders, while demonstrating the City's capacity to implement said vision given resources and staffing, will also be vital in strengthening public-private partnerships. Finally, streamlining policies and deploying tactics that make it easier for the private sector to participate and their contributions appreciated, is another primary method to broaden the tent of partners. Tactics such as pre-approving local artists and manufacturers not only directly benefits them by providing more revenue, venues, and workspaces, but also strengthens the creative community's relationship with the City by engaging them more closely in the cultural planning process. It also showcases the PFA as a public symbol of Culver City's cultural cachet. Similarly, diversifying the kinds of artistic and cultural products that qualify for inclusion in the APPP (such as through events or open-space programming) will help include a wider breadth of the cultural community, while also giving private developers more options for fulfilling the PFA requirement.

BEST PRACTICES

- Developing a strategic plan for the outcomes of arts and cultural programs, in collaboration with the arts and culture community and private developers (as appropriate), will help ensure individual initiatives' incremental successes move citywide goals forward.
- PFA programs are commonplace funding mechanisms for showcasing a city's cultural cachet, but can best serve the needs of local artists if they actively promote (or even require) local art and cultural workers be used. This includes accepting programming and events-based arts, alongside permanent, physical structures.
- Ensuring that the easiest option for developers to satisfy the PFA requirements actively serves the interests of the art and cultural community can help prevent "token" arts contributions.