



City Council Special Meeting
April 8, 2026
CitySpace, 100 5th Street NE
Charlottesville, VA 22902

Juandiego R. Wade, Mayor
Natalie Oschrin, Vice Mayor
Jen Fleisher
Michael K. Payne
J. Lloyd Snook, III
Kyna Thomas, Clerk

AGENDA

4:00 PM - 6:00 PM WORK SESSION – Arts and Culture

- I. Call to Order**
- II. Roll Call**
- III. Councilor Reports from Boards & Commissions**
- IV. Work Session**

Charlottesville City Council will hold a special work session on Wednesday, April 8 from 4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. at CitySpace to discuss local arts and culture initiatives.

Dr. Andrea Douglas, Executive Director of the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, will present an update on the “Swords into Ploughshares” project.

Deputy City Manager James Freas and Maureen Brondyke will review the Public Arts Commission and distinguish between the Commission and the Arts Council.

This work session will not include a public comment period.

- V. Adjournment**

This is an in-person meeting with an option for the public to view electronically by registering in advance for the Zoom webinar at www.charlottesville.gov/zoom. The meeting may also be viewed on the City's streaming platforms and local government Channel 10.

Individuals with disabilities who require assistance or special arrangements to participate in the public meeting may call (434) 987-1267 or submit a request via email to ada@charlottesville.gov. The City of Charlottesville requests that you provide 48 hours' notice so that proper arrangements may be made.

City of Charlottesville
Office of the City Manager

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“To Be A Place Where Everyone Thrives”



To: City Council

From: James Freas, Deputy City Manager

Date: April 8, 2026

Re: Public Arts Council

Art is a vital component of Charlottesville’s identity. Music, literature, sculpture, murals and other art forms permeate the culture as outlets of individual expression, reflections of the community, and as ways to recognize the City’s past. Over the last several years though, the City has played little active role in either managing the art it owns or in broadly supporting the ecosystem of the arts, except through allocations of funds to individual organizations through the Vibrant Community Fund.

The Land Use chapter of the Comprehensive Plan reads, under the goal of Expanding the Understanding and Recognition of Community History and Culture, Strategy 8.2:

Encourage community vitality and interaction through the incorporation of both private and publicly funded art into public spaces, neighborhoods, signage, gateways, and nodes of development. Ensure neighborhood engagement and involvement in this process.

City Council has underscored this strategy in its strategic plan, prioritizing that the City take action to support and expand public art. City staff is requesting up to \$70,000 in City Council Strategic Investment Funds to support the creation of a Public Art Commission and a Charlottesville Arts Council to meet the needs and goals identified above.

Public Art Commission

The role of a Public Art Commission is to make recommendations to the City Council for the management of the City’s public art collection. The role is very specific and necessary so that the City may make informed decisions with regard to the collection of artistic pieces that it owns. These are decisions around maintenance and restoration, expanding the collection, and deaccessioning (removing) pieces. The composition of the Public Art Commission should include people who are knowledgeable in the arts as well as reflective of the community’s culture and history.

It is an essential element of public art today that the City owns, or otherwise exercises control, over its public art collection. Beyond having control for the purposes of ensuring maintenance and upkeep of an art piece, ownership allows the City to also own the “speech” that an art piece represents. Where the City only owns the venue that an art piece is displayed within – the public location where the art is displayed – the City cannot regulate the content of that art, which is effectively protected free speech under the First Amendment of the US Constitution. Allowing a person or organization to display a piece of art in a public space requires that the City afford the same opportunity to any other person or organization, with little regard for the content of the art to be displayed.

Once created, a Public Art Commission would be tasked with developing a set of procedures and criteria for the consideration of public art investments and a plan for the development and maintenance of the City’s public art collection. This plan would result in annual work plans that would be presented to Council, potentially including requests for funding to support acquisition or commissioning efforts. A Public Art Commission would guide the essential public conversations around public art installations in the City as well as providing a venue to discuss the logistics of location and materials for each piece. This role is particularly important for public memorials commemorating the history of the City, which would require engagement with entities such as the Historic Resources Commission in addition to the public processes described above.

Without a Public Art Commission, changes to the City’s public art collection, whether to grow it or to remove older pieces, will continue to be ad hoc and uninformed by a broader sense of strategy. Given the level of effort necessary to consider growing this collection, it is likely that there will continue to be little to no expansion in the City’s public art collection, absent this Commission.

Art Council

An Arts Council, in Charlottesville, would be a non-profit entity focused on coordination and long-term stewardship of the City’s art ecosystem. The Council would lead coordinated action in support of the art community through communication and advocacy, helping to identify the issues and potential solutions that can collectively strengthen artists and arts organizations in Charlottesville. Ideally, such an organization would receive financial support from the City, Albemarle County, and private philanthropy.

With City support, an Arts Council could fill the following roles for the City:

- Distributing through grants the City’s contributions for the arts, potentially enhanced with additional private sector contributions.
- Managing City sponsored art competitions or requests for proposals.
- Advising on actions or investments the City could make to support the Arts sector in Charlottesville, such as the creation of an Arts District. Helping to collect input on such proposals from the art community and the broader public.
- Assisting in the management of Arts-oriented City facilities.

Strategic Investment Fund Request

City staff initially requested \$100,000 to complete the work associated with creating the proposed public art commission based on a scope of work developed in December 2025. Initial feedback has been that staff scale back this request. Staff have removed from the scope of work consideration of a Public Art Master Plan and the development of a public art inventory as both of these are time intensive and not strictly necessary for the Commission to begin its work. The scope otherwise focusses on developing the infrastructure necessary for the Public Art Commission to function, including developing a staffing strategy and budget, development of the commission's processes and procedures, and the criteria that will be used to guide selection processes.

Within the work that would be funded there is significant opportunity for collaboration between the efforts to develop a regional arts council and establishing the City's Public Art Commission. In many localities nationally, there is considerable overlap between what staff has identified as a public art commission and an arts council. Based on the needs specific to Charlottesville, staff believes these two entities should be distinct with the public art commission specifically focused on the City's public art collection while the arts council is both regional in scope and more broad in its focus. Despite that distinction, staff expects that there will be benefit to both entities to collaborate as we collectively work towards shared goals of supporting and enhancing the arts community in Charlottesville.

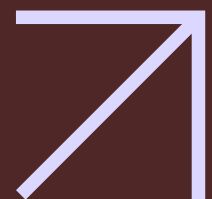
CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA ARTS COUNCIL FEASIBILITY STUDY

Charlottesville, Albemarle, and the surrounding counties have a robust arts and culture sector but lack a centralized, coordinated structure to support its creative communities. This synthesis includes findings from a 2025-2026 community-driven planning process exploring whether a coordinated Charlottesville Area Arts Council should be created — and if so, provide recommendations for the most feasible model for governance, scope, and scale.

Made possible with support from the City of Charlottesville, UVA Arts, The FUNd at CACF, the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation, and CACVB



PROJECT DEVELOPED BY A COMMUNITY-LED STEERING COMMITTEE, NEW CITY ARTS, AND RUBY LOPEZ HARPER



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INTRODUCTION



According to [Americans for the Arts](#), “The nation’s thousands of Local Arts Agencies (LAAs), councils, and commissions promote, support, and develop the arts at the municipal or county level, ensuring a vital presence for the arts in communities across the United States. Each LAA is uniquely tailored to its community, evolving to meet local needs and making the arts accessible to all. Though no two LAAs are identical in mission or programming, they all work toward sustaining the health and vitality of the arts and enriching the lives of their constituents. Local Arts Agencies (LAAs) play an essential role in fostering vibrant and inclusive communities. They champion a wide range of artistic expression, ensuring that the arts and culture are accessible to everyone and enriching public life in social, cultural, educational, and economic ways.”

New City Arts asked artists to shape our organization’s strategic priorities for the next 3 years. Repeatedly, artists shared:

- ***“We need the Arts Council to come back,”***
- ***“Who initiates the formation of an Arts Council matters,”*** and
- ***“It could be about an arts council energy.”***

Our organization accepted the charge by launching a collaborative, community-driven, professionally facilitated study in Summer 2025. **This coalition-building planning process was rooted in the belief that sustainable arts infrastructure should be shaped by the community it serves**, ensuring that Charlottesville’s artists and arts and culture sector have the resources they need to thrive.

464 study participants imagined how this place can be a vibrant, equitable, and resilient home for artists, arts workers, and arts organizations and remain a cultural destination in Central Virginia.

A community-led Steering Committee and Ruby Lopez Harper, a knowledge expert on local arts agencies, formed the recommendations in this packet from robust community input, a review of existing infrastructure including findings from our *Create Charlottesville/Albemarle Cultural Plan*, and fundings models from five peer cities.

The Steering Committee included 9 artists and represented 14 organizations or municipalities: the City of Charlottesville, Albemarle County, CACVB, the Jefferson School African American Heritage Center, Live Arts, CreativeMornings, Empowered Players, the Music Resource Center, Visible Records, the Charlottesville Black Arts Collective, McGuffey Art Center, PVCC's Art Department, UVA's Studio Art program, and Light House Studio, joining the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation, UVA Arts, The FUNd at CACF and 49 arts and culture organizations and 160 community members who publicly endorsed this planning process.



If this study's momentum is matched by local leadership and includes right-sized, phased investment, the result could be a local arts agency set up to:

- Provide leadership for existing arts resources decentralized among different municipal departments;
- Strengthen the cultural venues that residents and visitors love;
- Support the festivals, exhibitions, and performances that bring in tourists, bolster residents' quality of life, result in positive economic impact, root us in our shared histories, and strengthen our connections; and
- Ensure that Charlottesville is a place where artists can live, work, and thrive.

BACKGROUND

Need: Charlottesville, Albemarle, and the surrounding counties have a robust arts and culture sector but lack a centralized, coordinated structure to support its creative communities. This packet synthesizes findings from a 2025 community-driven planning process exploring whether a coordinated Charlottesville Area Arts Council should be created — and if so, provide recommendations for the most feasible model for governance, scope, and scale.

How We Got Here: Piedmont Council for the Arts (PCA) was a vibrant regional arts advocacy hub from 1979-2017 that provided a home for collaboration, networking, and support for artists and arts organizations in Charlottesville and Albemarle.

Key efforts PCA led included:

- Regional marketing efforts for arts and culture,
- Regular community-wide arts and culture roundtables and monthly networking events,
- Conducting the region’s Arts & Economic Prosperity Study IV, collecting crucial data on the economic impact of arts and culture locally, and
- Funding and steering the region’s first-ever cultural plan to help community stakeholders prioritize and strategically respond to needs and opportunities in the area’s cultural sector.

Though PCA served as the designated arts agency of Charlottesville and Albemarle, it was not established as a fundamental agency or an Office of Arts and Culture. The organization was required to apply for municipal funding every year through what is now known as the Vibrant Community Fund. This arrangement ultimately created an unstable funding environment and gutted the organization financially. In 2016, the City of Charlottesville reassigned PCA’s level funding of \$45,000 and added \$12,000 to create a \$57,000 earmarked fund for Arts Coordination and Planning after expressing a lack of faith in PCA’s leadership turnover.

Notably, this move evidenced that the need for a local arts agency was not in question from the City’s strategic perspective. Instead, they needed a new, feasible arrangement for arts and culture resource management, success, and sustainability. In 2017, grassroots local efforts gained traction but were ultimately not successful in standing up a new arts council. This momentum led City Council to double the available funds for professional facilitation, bringing the total to \$114,000, though still without a

community-based anchor to lead these efforts. In 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic, the City sunsetted these funds that were set aside for Arts Coordination and Planning.

Revitalized Efforts: In 2024, artists and community members who were desperate for coordination and support asked New City Arts to design a community-led effort to bring back a local arts agency. This need for a local arts agency surfaced during the organization's strategic planning process co-created with artists and community.

- Charlottesville & Albemarle self-identify as a creative region known for arts and culture, but many arts and culture organizations closed or were at risk of closing.
- Community members expressed a need for a central information hub for resources like a First Friday Art Walk map or calendar of events.
- Our region was left out of the most recent national American for the Arts' *Arts & Economic Prosperity Study*, research usually led by a local art agency to determine how many dollars are generated from every \$1 spent on arts and culture in our region. PCA last led this research for our region in 2015, producing *Arts & Economic Prosperity Study 5: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences in the Greater Charlottesville Area*.
- The 2013 *Create Cville: Charlottesville/Albemarle Cultural Plan* is the last time a regional vision for arts and culture priorities was formalized.

These identified gaps bolstered what New City Arts understood to be the City's same commitment to long-term arts investments. Under Recreation, Arts, and Culture, the City's Strategic Plan explicitly names goals to enhance investments in community arts and cultural programming and events, review and propose additional programming accessible for all, and strengthen investments through the Vibrant Community Fund. Simultaneously, the City Manager's office was beginning to explore best practices for commissioning, maintaining, approving, and deaccessioning art on public property in order to stand up a Public Art Program. In comparable communities, local arts agencies and public art commissions are distinct but not mutually exclusive. The timing was right to gain additional community insights, leverage the momentum behind the City's strategic plan, and mobilize resources towards addressing the demonstrated need for a coordinated public art program.

New City Arts met with potential stakeholders to design an equitable, community-driven, professionally-facilitated feasibility study that could result in findings and recommendations applicable to Charlottesville's needs, goals, context, and resources. This \$37,500 study was funded in 2024-2025 with grants and in-kind commitments from the Anne & Gene Worrell Foundation, the City of Charlottesville (City Manager's Office), The FUNd at CACF, UVA Arts, and CACVB and launched in summer 2025. The final report and recommendations follow 6 months of robust community input from artists, cultural organizers, community members, and staff from arts/culture organizations.

FINDINGS OVERVIEW

STUDY METHODS

From August 2025 to January 2026, New City Arts Initiative engaged an independent consultant to explore whether a coordinated Charlottesville Area Arts Council could strengthen the local arts ecosystem. Ruby Lopez Harper, previously responsible for supporting 4,500 local arts agencies during her time at Americans for the Arts, brought local arts agency expertise to this research. New City Arts was the administrative home for the study with Maureen Brondyke (Executive Director) serving as the project lead.



Ruby Lopez Harper
Facilitator



Maureen Brondyke
Project Lead

To ensure this work was shaped by the people the Arts Council would serve, a community-based **Steering Committee** was stood up through a public, self-nomination process to guide the planning process, review findings, and co-create recommendations.



Andrea Douglas



Ann Wall



Annie Temmink



Brittany Fan



Courtney Cacatian



Dutch Senft



Fenella Belle



Jalia Dillard



James Freas



Jeremy Stern



Jessica Harris



Jordan Perry



Natasha Woods



Olivia Gabbay



Tobiah Mundt

From October-December 2025, Ruby and the Steering Committee incorporated multiple engagement methods and included 464 participants through:

- Public convenings and community conversations
- Monthly steering committee meetings
- Targeted conversations with stakeholders, artists, and arts workers
- A bilingual (English and Spanish) community-wide needs assessment



The consultant reviewed available documentation of existing infrastructure and asset mapping including findings from the *Creative Charlottesville/Albemarle Cultural Plan*, Percent for Art background, Vibrant Community Fund support for arts and culture, and prior *Arts & Economic Prosperity* findings for Charlottesville/Albemarle. She also conducted peer city benchmarking, compared funding and operational models across the country, and examined local arts agency structures, roles, and scale. This high-level financial and operational context from selected peer cities was used to inform scope and phasing considerations. The study was publicly supported by 49 organizations and 160 individuals.

No organizational structure, steward, or outcome for a local arts agency was assumed at the outset. Analysis emphasized patterns across formats, not isolated anecdotes.

KEY FINDINGS

Participants described a deeply committed and active arts community operating within a **fragmented ecosystem** that places an additional burden on artists and organizations, particularly those operating with limited staff, funding, or institutional support.

→ INFRASTRUCTURE & COORDINATION 01

Existing opportunities and resources are hard to access. Participants want shared infrastructure, clearer communication, and a visible coordinating entity. They cautioned that existing resources for the arts be repurposed, rather than matched, for arts coordination.

→ SPACE, AFFORDABILITY & ACCESS 02

The negative impact of Charlottesville's high cost of living on artists and cultural organizations is real. Artists struggle to find affordable rehearsal, creation, and exhibition spaces. Interest centered on advocacy and mapping available spaces.

→ ARTIST LIVELIHOOD & WELLBEING 03

Artists expressed fear of being priced out. They face financial precarity and administrative burden. They want predictable, transparent systems and reduced friction in accessing support.

→ EQUITY, TRUST & TRANSPARENCY 04

Trust has slowly eroded without regular invitations to collaborate (something central coordination would traditionally provide) and what seems like competition for very limited resources. Trust must be built through clear processes, transparent decision-making, and accountability.

→ VISIBILITY, NAVIGATION & ADVOCACY 05

People want clearer communication, shared data, and accurate storytelling about the arts and culture ecosystem. Data like the economic impact of arts spending locally is needed for advocacy but is nonexistent without a local arts agency to collect this information using industry standards.

→ CAPACITY CONSTRAINTS 06

Burnout and limited staffing are widespread, due in part to organizations with limited capacity filling the gaps left by the traditional work of a local arts agency and without an advocate to bolster the municipal and philanthropic resources that already exist. New efforts must be phased, realistic, & adequately resourced.

CORE RECOMMENDATIONS



Results include recommendations for next steps and identified peer cities—Winston-Salem, NC; Iowa City, IA; Boulder, CO; Corvallis, OR; Ann Arbor, MI—whose local arts agency models can inspire how our community stands up an arts council. The community has spoken, and the opportunities for alignment are clear. The full *Findings & Recommendations* report highlights these points and shares possibilities for future action.

The recommendations detailed in the full *Findings & Recommendations* report emphasize a feasible subset of roles commonly associated with local arts agencies, based on local input, readiness, and capacity. They include:

1

**ESTABLISH A FOCUSED
501C3 ARTS COUNCIL WITH
A CLEARLY DEFINED INITIAL
SCOPE**

2

**EMBED TRANSPARENCY AND
ACCOUNTABILITY AS CORE
OPERATING PRINCIPLES**

3

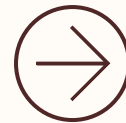
**CENTER EQUITY AND
ACCESS IN STRUCTURE AND
PRACTICE**

4

**INVEST IN SHARED
INFRASTRUCTURE**



NEXT STEPS



During an 18-month readiness period—while 501(c)(3) status is pursued—the work should focus on testing the feasibility of the recommendations by meeting with stakeholders, public communication, hosting open information sessions, digging deeper with peer city arts agency leadership into what is applicable to our own governance model, and exploring questions left unanswered without deeper engagement, specifically:



How do young people want arts council programs to be co-created to support them?



Survey responses and participation patterns indicated that additional outreach would be needed to more fully engage rural communities, as well as Black, Brown, Asian, and other communities whose participation was lower than census indicators suggest. Engagement over the next 18 months with these communities may benefit from:

- Relationship-based, culturally responsive approaches
- Partnerships with trusted community organizations
- Formats that recognize geographic, capacity, and access constraints

Given the limited rural participation during this study’s phase, the findings do not currently support a definitive recommendation regarding geographic reach. Instead, they suggest the need for a phased approach in which geographic scope is informed by additional rural engagement, resource considerations, and capacity assessment.

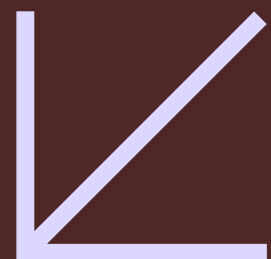
While recommendations are informed by comparative research and national examples, the work ahead is squarely local work. Decisions about structure, governance, and priorities must be shaped and stewarded within the Charlottesville area, and grounded in local knowledge, relationships, and accountability. These recommendations preserve momentum and create conditions for thoughtful, locally grounded decision-making rooted in clarity, care, and appropriate governance.

City Council's interest in standing up an arts council and public art program in coordination with one another comes at a perfect, strategic time. Clear governance emerged as a non-negotiable condition for success.



This overview of the findings was formed by Steering Committee members Dr. Andrea Douglas, Ann Wall, Annie Temmink, Brittany Fan, Courtney Cacatian, Dutch Senft, Fenella Belle, Jalia Dillard, James Freas, Jeremy Stern, Dr. Jessica Harris, Jordan Perry, Natasha Woods, Olivia Gabbay, Tobiah Mundt, and project lead, Maureen Brondyke.

THE CHARLOTTESVILLE AREA ARTS COUNCIL
FEASIBILITY STUDY: FULL FINDINGS &
RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ATTACHED



Charlottesville Area Arts Council Planning Process

Findings and Recommendations Packet

January 2026

Produced for New City Arts Initiative

by Ruby Lopez Harper, independent consultant

Executive Summary

Purpose and Design of the Planning Process

This executive summary presents recommendations emerging from the Charlottesville Area Arts Council Planning Process, undertaken to assess whether and how a coordinated arts council structure could support the local arts and culture ecosystem. From the outset, the planning effort was intentionally designed to be community-driven—focused on listening, aggregation, and interpretation rather than advancing predetermined outcomes.

The purpose of this phase of work was to understand areas of alignment, priority, and caution within the local arts community; to consider how existing efforts and investments might be better coordinated; and to provide a grounded foundation for informed discussion about what could come next. This phase was not designed to finalize decisions related to governance, funding, staffing, or program implementation.

How Community Input Was Gathered and Interpreted

The planning process incorporated multiple engagement methods, including public convenings, targeted conversations with artists and arts workers, Steering Committee deliberation, and a bilingual community needs assessment. Engagement approaches emphasized accessibility, multiple entry points, and opportunities for both structured and open-ended input.

Rather than relying on a single data source, analysis focused on identifying where perspectives aligned across formats and participant groups, while also noting areas of divergence or tension. This approach prioritized aggregated patterns over individual anecdotes and was intended to surface reliable insights while remaining transparent about the scope and limitations of the work.

What Was Heard Across Engagement Activities

Across engagement methods, a consistent picture emerged. Participants described a deeply committed and active arts community operating within a fragmented ecosystem. While many organizations and individuals are doing strong work, participants repeatedly cited challenges related to coordination, navigation, access to information, and the cumulative strain of operating with limited capacity.

These conditions were not described as a lack of talent, effort, or creativity. Instead, they were framed as structural challenges that place additional burden on artists and organizations, particularly those operating with limited staff, funding, or institutional support.

Participants also emphasized the importance of trust, transparency, and accountability. Past experiences with initiatives that moved quickly or lacked clear communication shaped a strong preference for approaches that are phased, realistic, and grounded in visible decision-making practices. Across conversations, there was broad agreement that any future structure must be clear about what it is, and what it is not, from the outset.

Why an Arts Council Was Explored

Within this context, community input suggested interest in an arts council not as a singular solution or central authority, but as a mechanism for coordination, shared infrastructure, and long-term stewardship. The role envisioned is one that supports and strengthens existing efforts rather than replacing or competing with them.

Participants did not express a need to convince public partners of the value of arts and culture. Rather, they identified an opportunity to better align existing commitments, investments, and initiatives through a structure designed for collaboration, clarity, and public trust.

At the same time, participants expressed caution. There was clear concern about overreach, unrealistic expectations, and the potential for new structures to inadvertently disrupt already limited resources. This feedback strongly informed the disciplined and phased nature of the recommendations presented here.

Core Recommendations

The recommendations outlined below reflect the themes, priorities, and cautions consistently surfaced through the planning process. They emphasize:

- Establishing a focused arts council with a clearly defined initial scope
- Embedding transparency and accountability as core operating principles
- Centering equity and access in structure and practice
- Investing in shared infrastructure that supports the field as a whole

These recommendations prioritize feasibility, sequencing, and trust-building over breadth, and they defer decisions related to grantmaking, facilities, and large-scale program delivery until additional community input, appropriate governance and capacity are in place.

Next Steps and Readiness for Future Action

In addition to presenting recommendations, this phase of work identifies potential next steps intended to support continuity and readiness following the conclusion of the facilitated planning period. These next steps are not implementation directives. Instead, they describe how learning, communication, and coordination could be sustained while future decisions are considered through appropriate local processes.

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of maintaining momentum without creating disruption or confusion. As a result, the next steps described here focus on preparation rather than action—supporting transparency, alignment, and additional learning where needed, rather than launching new programs or committing resources prematurely.

Future efforts benefit from continued communication with the community, intentional coordination among existing partners, and focused opportunities for additional input, particularly from youth, rural communities, and racially and culturally derived communities whose participation was more limited during this phase.

Local Stewardship and the Work Ahead

While informed by comparative research and national examples, the work ahead is squarely local work. Decisions about structure, governance, and priorities must be shaped and stewarded within the Charlottesville area, grounded in local knowledge, relationships, and accountability.

The findings and recommendations summarized here are intended to serve as a shared reference point to support that locally led work—not to replace it.

Looking Ahead

Taken together, the outcomes of this planning effort are designed to support readiness rather than resolution. They preserve momentum without overreach and create conditions for thoughtful, locally grounded decision-making rooted in clarity, care, and appropriate governance.

Purpose of This Packet

This packet is intended to support thoughtful consideration of recommendations emerging from the Charlottesville Area Arts Council Planning Process. It translates documented community input, comparative research, and steering committee deliberation into a set of proposed directions and considerations for the road ahead.

The packet is designed to be read as a synthesis and interpretation of what has been learned through this phase of work. It does not attempt to reproduce all engagement activity or analysis in full; instead, it focuses on the patterns, priorities, and cautions that were consistently surfaced across multiple forms of input.

This document is meant to:

- Provide a shared reference point for the Steering Committee as it considers next steps
- Clarify what the planning process has surfaced with confidence
- Distinguish between recommendations, early actions, and questions that require additional time or validation

This packet is not a final implementation plan, a funding proposal, or a commitment to specific programs, staffing levels, or timelines. Those decisions intentionally sit beyond the scope of this project and would require additional governance, capacity, and public process.

Evidence Base & Process

Overview of the Planning Process

The Charlottesville Area Arts Council Planning Process was conducted from September to December 2025 and was intentionally designed to gather input from a broad range of participants across the local arts ecosystem. Engagement methods emphasized accessibility, multiple entry points, and opportunities for both structured and open-ended input.

The process included:

- Public convenings and community conversations
- Sessions with artists, arts workers, and community partners
- Regular convening and discussion by a 15-member Steering Committee
- A bilingual (English/Spanish) community needs assessment

Rather than relying on a single engagement method, the process sought to understand where perspectives aligned across different formats and participant groups.

Participation Snapshot

During this phase, engagement activities reached hundreds of participants through a mix of in-person and virtual formats. Participation included:

- A 15-member Steering Committee providing consistent guidance and stewardship
- Public in-person events with strong attendance
- Small conversations focused on specific segments of the arts community
- A bilingual community needs assessment that received 157 responses

Detailed participation data is included in the appendices. Participation numbers reflect engagement touchpoints rather than unique individuals, as some participants engaged in more than one activity.

Approach to Analysis

The following section outlines the sources, methods, and interpretive approach used in this phase of work.

Given the range of perspectives and potential outcomes associated with this work, intentional steps were taken to ensure that the findings and recommendations were not driven by a predetermined conclusion or preferred structure. Analysis prioritized areas of convergence and divergence across surveys, community conversations, and Steering Committee discussion, with caution exercised where input was limited or uneven. The recommendations presented reflect that discipline and are grounded in the feedback and data gathered through the planning process, rather than the professional opinions or external interests of those facilitating it.

The consultant served in a neutral facilitation and synthesis role throughout this phase of work. No organizational structure, steward, or outcome was assumed at the outset. Instead, analysis focused on identifying where community input converged, where perspectives diverged, and what conditions would be necessary for any future structure to be viable, trusted, and accountable. Recommendations emerged through this process rather than preceding it.

Analysis prioritized aggregation over anecdote. Themes were identified by examining where similar needs, concerns, and aspirations appeared across:

- Survey responses

- Idea Gallery discussions
- Public conversations
- Steering Committee dialogue

Attention was paid both to convergence, where input was consistent across groups, and divergence, where perspectives differed or tensions emerged. This approach was intended to surface reliable insights while avoiding over-weighting individual viewpoints.

Scope and Limitations

This phase of work focused on listening, synthesis, and interpretation. It did not attempt to:

- Resolve all questions related to structure, funding, or staffing
- Validate findings through a statistically representative sample
- Design or pilot full-scale programs

Some engagement sessions were postponed or moved to virtual formats due to inclement weather, which influenced participation patterns. These limitations are noted to provide transparency and context, not to diminish the strength of the overall findings.

While the planning process included participation from a range of artists, arts workers, and organizations, input from rural communities and young people was more limited than desired. As a result, additional engagement will be necessary before final decisions are made regarding the geographic reach, service priorities, and long-term scope of an arts council. This includes deeper listening with rural communities as well as sustained engagement with young people as contributors and leaders within the arts ecosystem.

Comparable City Context

As part of the evidence base for this planning process, a small set of comparable cities was reviewed to better understand how local arts councils and arts agencies operate at different scales and with varying roles. This review was not intended to identify models for replication, but rather to ground the recommendations in a realistic understanding of capacity, sequencing, and resourcing.

The comparable cities included in this analysis were selected to reflect communities that share key characteristics with the Charlottesville area while offering a range of arts and cultural infrastructure models. Each is anchored by higher education institutions, has a visible and active arts and cultural sector, and operates at a scale where relationships, identity, and coordination matter as much as formal authority. At the same time, these cities differ meaningfully in how arts leadership is structured, funded, and governed.

Organizing structures range from municipally staffed offices supported by dedicated public revenue, to nonprofit intermediaries with regranteeing authority, to decentralized or hybrid models. Together, these comparisons provide a cross-section of approaches that illuminate how funding mechanisms, institutional roles, and community values shape arts ecosystems. These cities were not selected as models to replicate, but as reference points to help surface questions of scale, authority, sustainability, and alignment that are relevant to the Charlottesville area's context and future considerations.

Reviewing these examples helped clarify the relationship between organizational role, governance readiness, and available resources, and reinforced the importance of phasing, role clarity, and alignment between ambition and capacity.

Insights from this review informed the recommendations that follow, particularly those related to scope, infrastructure investment, and the distinction between operational capacity and future grantmaking authority.

Seeing these differences side by side made clear that scope, staffing, and grantmaking are inseparable. It also illuminated when filtered through themes surfaced between the Idea Gallery and Survey responses that skipping steps will be what undermines credibility.

Framing the Community Conversations

In addition to surveys, public convenings, and Steering Committee deliberation, community conversations were informed by a shared framing document: *Seven Ways Local Arts Agencies Work In, With, and For Their Communities*.

This framework was used to ground discussion in a set of commonly recognized roles that local arts agencies may play, including advocacy and policy, facilities, funding and financing, partnerships and planning, programs and events, services, and visibility.

Rather than presuming which roles would be appropriate for the Charlottesville area, the framework was introduced to:

- Establish a shared vocabulary among participants and across conversations
- Expand the conversation beyond a single organizational model
- Clarify what was possible without implying what was recommended

Participants examined and explored the framework as a discussion tool, intentionally reflecting on which roles felt most needed, most feasible, or most concerning in the local

context. Input generated through these conversations was aggregated and analyzed alongside survey responses, Idea Gallery themes, and Steering Committee dialogue.

The use of this framework helped ensure conversations were both expansive and grounded, while avoiding premature conclusions about structure, scope, or scale.

What We Learned: Cross-Cutting Synthesis

Across conversations, formats, and months, the same needs surfaced with surprising consistency, even when people disagreed about solutions. While perspectives varied in emphasis and urgency, the following areas appeared repeatedly and form the foundation for the recommendations that follow. In many conversations, participants referenced roles articulated in the Seven Ways framework as points of comparison when discussing what felt appropriate, achievable, or concerning in the local context.

Across all inputs, one constant was clear: people are deeply invested in the arts in the Charlottesville area, even when they disagreed about structure or solutions.

The examples included below are drawn from survey responses and Idea Gallery discussions and are intended to demonstrate the types of needs and possibilities surfaced through the planning process, not to prescribe specific solutions or commitments.

These findings are grounded primarily in community input and are further informed by the consultant's awareness of national examples and models that participants themselves referenced or expressed interest in, used to contextualize, rather than prescribe, potential paths responsive to the concerns and desires surfaced.

Infrastructure & Coordination

Participants consistently described a fragmented arts ecosystem in which information, resources, and opportunities are difficult to navigate. While many organizations and individuals are doing strong work, there is limited coordination across efforts, leading to duplication in some areas and gaps in others. Rather than calling for a single entity to "do everything," input pointed toward the need for clearer coordination, shared infrastructure, and a visible point of connection that supports, rather than replaces or disrupts, existing efforts.

Across survey responses and Idea Gallery discussions, this need was most often framed in practical terms: making existing activity easier to find, understand, and access. Participants emphasized coordination and communication as enabling functions that could strengthen the ecosystem by improving visibility and reducing friction, rather than by introducing new programs or structures.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced include:

- Interest in shared calendars, centralized information hubs, or coordinated communication tools to reduce duplication
- References to existing coordination efforts that participants felt could be better aligned or supported
- Ideas about lightweight infrastructure that prioritizes clarity over new bureaucracy

Space, Affordability & Access

Concerns related to affordable and appropriate space surfaced across multiple conversations. Participants described challenges securing rehearsal, creation, exhibition, and gathering spaces, alongside anxiety about displacement and long-term sustainability. These concerns were expressed across disciplines and organizational scales, reflecting shared pressure points rather than isolated issues.

While solutions varied, participants consistently framed space as an area where better coordination, information-sharing, and advocacy could make a meaningful difference. Rather than calling for direct ownership or management of facilities, input emphasized the need for clearer pathways, shared understanding, and collective approaches, particularly at the intersections of public, nonprofit, and private space.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced include:

- References to advocacy around zoning, permitting, or public policy affecting creative space
- Interest in mapping or information-sharing about underutilized or temporary spaces
- Curiosity about partnerships that could improve access without requiring ownership or management of facilities

Artist Livelihood & Wellbeing

Artists and arts workers spoke candidly about financial precarity, limited access to consistent support, and the cumulative strain of navigating complex and often opaque systems with limited resources. Wellbeing was frequently described not as an individual challenge, but as one shaped by how support structures are designed, communicated, and administered over time.

Rather than emphasizing one-time relief or emergency responses, participants expressed interest in approaches that improve the overall conditions under which artists live and operate. These included predictable pathways for accessing support (both funding and other resources), transparent criteria and timelines, and coordinated

systems that reduce administrative burden. In this context, “systems-level” support was understood to mean clear processes, fair and reliable decision-making, and consistent communication; factors that influence stability and wellbeing as much as any single intervention.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced include:

- Interest in guaranteed basic income pilots for artists, particularly models tested in other communities
- References to direct support approaches that prioritize predictability and transparency in eligibility, process and decision-making
- Desire for systems (like grants or support) that reduce the time and labor required to navigate opportunities and assistance
- Curiosity about pilot-scale or partnership-based approaches involving public or philanthropic entities
- Recognition that artist wellbeing is shaped by structural conditions, like stable housing and affordable venues, not solely by individual programs

Equity, Trust & Transparency

How decisions are made emerged as a central concern across engagement activities. Participants emphasized transparency, clear communication, and accountability as essential conditions for trust, particularly in light of past experiences where engagement did not result in visible outcomes or sustained follow-through.

Trust was consistently described not as something that can be established through structure alone, but as something built through repeated, observable practice over time. This theme cuts across conversations about governance, funding and distribution, participation, and public engagement, underscoring that equity and trust are shaped as much by how decisions are made and communicated as by what decisions are made.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced include:

- Calls for clear public criteria around decision-making and resource distribution
- Interest in community review or advisory mechanisms
- Desire for feedback loops that allow participants to see how input informs outcomes

Visibility, Navigation & Advocacy

Many participants expressed a desire for clearer, more consistent communication about opportunities, resources, and decision-making processes across the local arts ecosystem. This was often framed as a navigation challenge: even when opportunities

exist, they are not always easy to find, understand, or access, particularly for artists and organizations operating with limited capacity.

Participants also articulated interest in collective advocacy and storytelling that more accurately reflects the breadth and diversity of the local arts community. Better data, shared narratives, and accessible information were seen as tools for strengthening both internal coordination and external understanding of the role arts and culture play locally. Across these conversations, participants emphasized the importance of accuracy, inclusion, and accountability; particularly around who speaks on behalf of whom, clarity in how “community” is defined and how the community is represented internally and publicly.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced include:

- Interest in collective storytelling that accurately reflects the breadth of the local arts ecosystem
- References to shared data or narrative tools that could support advocacy efforts
- Desire for clearer public-facing communication about opportunities and priorities

Capacity Constraints

Across organizations and individual practitioners, capacity limitations emerged as a persistent and shared reality. Participants noted staff shortages, burnout, and reliance on unpaid or underpaid labor, as well as the cumulative strain of participating in multiple uncoordinated initiatives. These conditions were described as shaping not only day-to-day operations, but also the ability to engage meaningfully in new efforts or planning processes.

As a result, participants consistently cautioned against launching new structures, programs, or expectations without corresponding investment in capacity. There was broad agreement that future efforts must be designed with realistic pacing, clear scope, and sustainable support in mind, so that participation does not further exacerbate existing strain.

Examples of ideas and approaches surfaced by participants include:

- Recognition that new efforts should start small and be phased
- Interest in coordination and shared infrastructure as a way to reduce strain
- Caution against launching programs without adequate staffing or administrative support

Interpreting the Findings: Why an Arts Council

The planning process surfaced the strong and consistent message that the Charlottesville area benefits from a deeply committed arts community, yet lacks a coordinating structure with the mandate, visibility, and accountability to steward the ecosystem over time.

Participants did not describe an absence of activity or talent. Instead, they pointed to fragmentation, including how information is spread across organizations, uneven access to resources, and limited coordination among entities that are often working toward similar goals. These conditions place additional burden on artists and organizations already operating with constrained capacity.

For the purposes of this packet, the recommendation of an arts council refers to an independent, nonprofit entity designed to steward coordination, transparency, and shared infrastructure for the local arts ecosystem. It is not envisioned as a comprehensive service provider or replacement for existing organizations, but as a connective and accountable structure that supports the whole arts community, not just a select few.

Community input suggested interest in an arts council not as a singular solution or central authority, but as a mechanism for coordination, navigation, and long-term stewardship. The role envisioned is one that supports and strengthens existing efforts, rather than replacing or competing with them.

Notably, this desire for coordination was paired with skepticism toward new structures that move too quickly or without clear accountability. Past experiences surfaced concerns about structures operating without transparency, or promising more than they can sustain. As a result, the case for an arts council that emerged from this process is a bounded and phased one. The path forward must be grounded in clear roles, realistic capacity, and accountable governance.

Importantly, the findings do not suggest a need to “convince” the City or County of the value of arts and culture. Rather, they point to an opportunity to better align and coordinate existing commitments, priorities, and investments through a structure designed for collaboration and public trust. An example that was shared during the discovery period was a Percent for Art program that generated new revenue through capital developments in the area. This surfaced and generated interest because it does not disrupt the existing funding models and structures that support the arts.

Questions related to geographic scope surfaced throughout the planning process. While some participants expressed interest in region-wide coordination, others emphasized

the importance of ensuring that any future structure does not unintentionally privilege urban-centered access or visibility. Given the limited rural participation during this phase, the findings do not currently support a definitive recommendation regarding geographic reach. Instead, they suggest the need for a phased approach in which geographic scope is informed by additional rural engagement, resource considerations, and capacity assessment.

These recommendations are designed to reduce the risk of stalled momentum, diffuse accountability, and community fatigue that can accompany extended planning without clear stewardship.

Core Recommendations

As these recommendations are considered, it is important to distinguish between funding required to support operational and programmatic capacity and funding that would support direct grantmaking. Community input consistently emphasizes the need for coordination, communication, and shared infrastructure; functions that require dedicated operational resources. Decisions related to grantmaking authority, scale, and distribution carry distinct governance, risk, and accountability considerations and are intentionally deferred until organizational structure, scope, and readiness are more clearly established.

The following recommendations are offered as a coherent set. Individually, each responds to a specific need identified through the planning process; collectively, they describe a disciplined approach to establishing an arts council that is responsive, realistic, and accountable.

These recommendations emphasize a feasible subset of roles commonly associated with local arts agencies, based on local input, readiness, and capacity, while intentionally deferring others for future consideration.

While not all themes or desires surfaced through the planning process are reflected in these recommendations, this was intentional. These recommendations are not intended to be a catch-all, but rather focused and achievable. This approach allows for continued input and prioritization as community needs evolve, are addressed through early activities, or are further clarified in subsequent phases.

These recommendations reflect areas where community input, readiness, and feasibility are most clearly aligned. Where interest was strong, but readiness or capacity was limited, ideas were intentionally deferred rather than excluded.

Recommendation 1

Establish a Focused Arts Council with a Clearly Defined Initial Scope

Community input supports the establishment of a nonprofit arts council with a deliberately bounded mandate. The initial scope should prioritize coordination, information-sharing, and field support. These are critical functions that are currently fragmented or inconsistently resourced.

Bureaucratic and procedural timing considerations are real. Because securing a 501(c)(3) designation can take up to 18 months, initiating this work now allows momentum to continue and provides a tangible indicator of progress that can be communicated to the community and celebrated along the way.

The arts council should be designed to complement existing organizations and public agencies, providing connective tissue rather than duplicating programs or services already in place.

This recommendation reflects repeated calls for clarity, navigation, and shared infrastructure, alongside caution about overreach or mission drift.

Key considerations include:

- Phased development rather than a full launch of all potential roles (see Next Steps: Continuity, Coordination, and Readiness)
- Explicit role definition at the outset
- Ongoing public communication about scope and priorities

This recommendation does not assume:

- Immediate grantmaking authority or the launch of competitive grant programs
- Ownership, management, or operation of facilities or real estate
- Responsibility for delivering or replacing existing programs, events, or services
- The reallocation or disruption of existing public or private arts funding currently supporting local organizations

The following high-level financial context gathered from the comparable city data illustrates the range of operating scales associated with different arts council roles and capacities. These figures are provided for reference only and are not intended to suggest a local budget target.

City	Organization	Total Annual Budget/ Revenue	Grant-making Budget	General Notes
Winston-Salem, NC	Arts Council of Winston-Salem & Forsyth County	\$5.5M (revenue)	\$2.8M	Grantmaking represents ~50% of overall activity; substantial unrestricted and dedicated revenue supports both grants and operations
Boulder, CO	Boulder Arts Commission/ Office of Arts + Culture	~\$3.5M (2025 budget)	\$1.48M (42%)	Grantmaking is a core function, paired with significant staffing, administration, and programmatic investment
Iowa City, IA	Arts Iowa City	\$95K (revenue)	N/A	Limited operating scale; no documented grantmaking activity

Figures shown are drawn from publicly available summaries and budget information and are included for contextual reference only.

Recommendation 2

Embed Transparency and Accountability as Core Operating Principles

Across engagement methods, participants emphasized that trust is built through consistent, visible practice. Transparency in decision-making—specifically how priorities are set, how resources are allocated, and how feedback is incorporated—was described as essential across every form of input.

Transparency has already begun to take shape as a foundational practice through this planning process, establishing a baseline for the behavior and mindset the community

can expect moving forward. Open communication, invitations for review, and opportunities for input as programs and guidelines are developed will demonstrate that this work is being done differently and with the community at the center.

This recommendation calls for transparency and accountability to be treated as foundational elements of the arts council's operational design, from bylaws to funding guidelines and distribution.

Key considerations include:

- Documented decision-making processes
- Clear communication about who decides what, and why
- Regular public reporting on activities and learnings

This recommendation does not assume that:

- transparency alone resolves historical mistrust without sustained practice
- all decisions will be universally agreed upon
- accountability is limited to reporting rather than learning and adjustment
- transparency can be achieved without dedicated staff capacity and systems

Recommendation 3

Center Equity and Access in Structure and Practice

Equity and access surfaced as cross-cutting concerns rather than discrete program areas. Participants emphasized the importance of language access, geographic inclusion, and attention to who is able to participate—and who is not.

One of the greatest opportunities identified through this process is the ability to embed equitable practice from the outset. Treating equity as a foundational mindset provides a clear compass for decision-making and interaction, helping the arts council remain focused, authentic, and accountable as it evolves.

This recommendation underscores the need to embed equity considerations into governance, staffing, engagement, and resource allocation decisions from the start.

Key considerations include:

- Language access and inclusive engagement practices
- Awareness of capacity constraints faced by artists and organizations
- Avoidance of reliance on unpaid or underpaid labor

This recommendation does not assume that:

- equity can be addressed through a single program or initiative
- participation barriers can be resolved without sustained outreach and resourcing
- unpaid or underpaid labor is an acceptable means of inclusion
- equity considerations will not evolve as community needs shift

Recommendation 4

Invest in Shared Infrastructure

Community input consistently pointed toward the need for shared tools, data, and coordination mechanisms. While programs and events are visible expressions of arts activity, participants emphasized that infrastructure—often less visible—is what sustains the community over time.

Multiple calendar initiatives surfaced during the project period, including one launched while the planning process was underway. This provided a clear example of both the energy present in the community and the challenges that arise in the absence of coordination. Without a shared coordinating entity, overlapping initiatives can unintentionally compete for attention and capacity, contributing to fatigue among artists, organizations, and participants.

This recommendation prioritizes investment in tools, templates, data collection, and coordination roles that support artists and organizations broadly.

Key considerations include:

- Reusable resources and templates
- Shared data and research
- Convening and information-sharing functions

This recommendation does not assume that:

- infrastructure investments will immediately produce visible public outcomes
- coordination replaces the need for individual organizational autonomy
- shared tools eliminate the need for relationship-building and trust
- infrastructure can be sustained without long-term operational support

Governance & Accountability Framework

Clear governance emerged as a non-negotiable condition for success.

To ensure this is cemented from inception, there is a strong recommendation for a governing board focused on stewardship, policy, and accountability, rather than a working or fundraising board with blurred roles.

Establishing this governance structure from the outset helps ensure the arts council remains grounded in its purpose as it grows and transitions. It also reduces the risk of the organization being “captured” by competing interests or individual agendas—concerns that were raised repeatedly during the planning process.

This framework emphasizes clarity of authority, separation of governance and operations, and transparent relationships among the arts council, public partners, and the community.

Key elements include:

- A governing board with defined responsibilities and limits
- Clear distinction between board oversight and staff operations
- Transparent decision-making protocols
- Regular evaluation and public reporting

Relationships with City and County partners should be clearly articulated, emphasizing collaboration and alignment without compromising the arts council’s independence or accountability to the community.

Guardrails should be established early to prevent mission drift, overextension, or role confusion as the organization evolves.

Next Steps: Continuity, Coordination, and Readiness

The activities and timeline in this 2025 study included documentation review, establishing a local steering committee and meeting monthly, a community launch event, multiple listening sessions, benchmarking comparable cities, and a needs assessment. My recommendation is based on this defined scope.

During the next 18 months, as nonprofit status is pending approval, participants expressed a strong desire to maintain continuity and coordination following the conclusion of this facilitated planning phase. These next steps reflect what could responsibly occur within this 18-month period. These needs surfaced during the study period but require additional time and resources to be accomplished.

Capacity Considerations

If New City Arts Initiative is asked to continue as the administrative steward supporting continuity, coordination, and documentation following the conclusion of this planning phase, additional capacity will be required to do so responsibly and sustainably. As such, the City and County should consider providing time-limited financial support to underwrite the added coordination, communication, and convening work required.

Focused Engagement Opportunities

Participants consistently emphasized that meaningful engagement is iterative and that not all perspectives can or should be gathered through a single planning phase. Several focused engagement opportunities were identified as potential ways to deepen understanding and inclusion without pre-determining future structures or programs.

The examples below are offered as illustrative possibilities, not commitments, and would require additional design, consideration, and resourcing if pursued.

Youth Convening or Summit

Participants expressed interest in a dedicated convening for young people and emerging creatives to surface priorities, explore pathways for leadership development, and establish early relationships with civic arts infrastructure. A youth convening—modeled on earlier in-person community events—could provide a structured entry point for young voices while informing future governance and engagement practices.

Such a convening could:

- Create space for young peoples' perspectives that may not surface through traditional engagement formats
- Build early awareness of how local arts infrastructure functions
- Support long-term leadership development and inclusion

Input from this convening could be documented and shared as part of ongoing planning, with clear communication about how it informs, rather than determines, future decisions.

Additional Community Input: Rural and Underrepresented Communities

Survey responses and participation patterns indicated that additional outreach would be needed to more fully engage rural communities, as well as Black, Brown, Asian, and other racially derived communities whose participation was lower than census indicators suggest.

Future engagement with these communities may benefit from:

- Relationship-based, culturally responsive approaches
- Partnerships with trusted community organizations
- Formats that recognize geographic, capacity, and access constraints

These efforts would support a more complete understanding of community needs while reinforcing trust and transparency.

Guardrails and Accountability

To maintain continuity while building clarity and trust, continued administrative stewardship by New City Arts Initiative should be guided by clear parameters:

- Time-limited designation
- Defined scope and responsibilities
- Regular public communication and documentation
- Clear transition points as an arts council structure is established

These guardrails ensure that the organization's stewardship supports, rather than preempts, future governance decisions.

New City Arts Initiative's administrative stewardship concludes when formal governance for an arts council is established, authority is transferred, and the coordination and documentation activities described above are complete.

Early Actions to Support Continuity

Early actions that support continuity and readiness may include:

- Regular public communication about findings, documentation, and progress to maintain momentum and interest
- Coordinating collaborator meetings and laying the groundwork for organizing
- Meeting with potential funders and resource partners to support the new arts council and its potential
- Maintaining a centralized repository for planning materials and resources to foster trust and transparency
- Hosting open information sessions to explain next steps and answer questions and continue engagement and input
- Convening community partners to surface alignment, gaps, and dependencies to avoid redundancy and leverage existing resources
- Preparing draft governance concepts or process maps for future consideration by the new arts council

Each of these actions is intended to support clarity and readiness, not to preempt future decisions or formal authority.

Looking Ahead: What This Packet Enables

This packet provides a documented synthesis of community input, comparative learning, and Steering Committee deliberation. It establishes a shared reference point for understanding what has been learned and what considerations should guide future action.

It does not finalize decisions related to governance, funding, staffing, or programming. Those determinations will require additional authority, capacity, and public process beyond the scope of this phase.

The recommendations and next steps outlined here are intended to inform and support locally led decision-making, not to supplant it. The work ahead will require continued engagement, care, and leadership from within the community, as well as collaboration among organizations, public partners, artists, and residents.

Taken together, this packet is designed to support readiness rather than resolution. It preserves momentum without overreach and creates conditions for thoughtful decision-making grounded in clarity, accountability, and appropriate governance.

References, and Supporting Materials

The following materials were reviewed, referenced, or considered as part of the Charlottesville Area Arts Council Planning Process and informed the recommendations presented in this packet. These materials reflect a combination of documented community input, comparative research, and planning resources used to support synthesis and interpretation.

- **Planning Process and Governance Context**
 - Project scope, timeline, and engagement design
 - Roles and responsibilities of project partners and facilitators
 - Steering Committee roster and member biographies
 - Steering Committee meeting agendas and discussion notes
 - Materials reviewed for background and context:
 - Piedmont Council for the Arts, Create Charlottesville: An Arts and Cultural Plan for Charlottesville and Albemarle and related documents
 - Arts and Economic Impact Study IV, The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations and Their Audiences in the Greater Charlottesville Area, VA (Fiscal Year 2010)
 - Websites such as Thomas Jefferson Planning District Commission, Visit Charlottesville/Albemarle County and the Vibrant Community Fund
 - Attachment V, Percent for Art Background
 - Create Charlottesville Survey, Planning and related documents
- **Community Engagement and Participation**
 - Public convenings and facilitated community conversations
 - Arts worker–focused sessions and small-group discussions
 - Bilingual (English and Spanish) community needs assessment
 - 1:1 conversations, as requested
 - Participation counts and engagement summaries across in-person and virtual formats
- **Survey and Community Input Materials**
 - Community needs assessment survey instrument
 - Aggregated survey response data and demographic summaries
 - Thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses
 - Idea Gallery submissions and thematic synthesis
- **Framing Tools and Comparative Context**
 - Seven Ways Local Arts Agencies Work In, With, and For Their Communities (used as a discussion framework)

- Comparable city research examining local arts agency structures, roles, and scale
- High-level financial and operational context from selected peer cities, used to inform scope and phasing considerations
- **Operational and Structural Considerations**
 - 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts council model and explanatory resource
 - Governance, accountability, and transparency considerations synthesized from planning discussions
 - Capacity, sequencing, and feasibility considerations referenced during analysis
- **Informal Context and Communications**
 - Informal communications and individual conversations reviewed to support situational understanding and coordination during the planning process
(These materials informed facilitator context but were not treated as formal inputs unless substantive information was documented elsewhere.)
 - City of Charlottesville, Research Plan, January 2023
 - City of Charlottesville, Economic Development Strategic Plan, 2024-2028
 - Transient Occupancy Tax allocation, Dec 2025
 - Albemarle County, Comprehensive Plan (AC44), 2025
 - Albemarle County Strategic Plan FY24-28, Adopted October 2022

Additional Materials

In addition to the materials summarized above, several supporting documents were developed or compiled during the planning process to inform analysis and recommendations. These materials were delivered to the project lead and Steering Committee as the project progressed.

These materials include:

- Detailed survey analysis and data summaries
- Idea Gallery documentation and thematic synthesis
- Comparable city research dossiers
- 501(c)(3) nonprofit arts council model and related structural reference materials