

In-Depth Analysis of Eugene's Cultural Review Process

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Introduction

Although the city of Eugene initiated a Cultural Policy Review in 2005 for a unique set of reasons, the creation and implementation of a cultural plan is not a unique strategy. Many cities in the United States and abroad are recognizing the important role of arts and culture in urban regeneration. Culturally-driven regeneration can take many forms, but it is essentially developing, implementing, and assessing a wide range of urban regeneration schemes through a cultural lens. Its perceived potential for success is based on the belief that cultural regeneration accomplishes two things necessary for the survival of American cities – a competitive edge and quality of life (Evans, 2005). Eugene's mayor, Kitty Piercy, and a concerned city council have pledged to bring life back to the core of the city, and they are hoping to use the arts to do it.

Planning Needs

The Eugene's Cultural Policy Review was initiated for economic, physical, social, and cultural reasons. Foremost among them is a need for more effective revitalization of the downtown area. Eugene's downtown has been a source of frustration for citizens and city government for much of the last 30 years. Downtown streets have been closed to encourage

foot traffic, then re-opened to encourage downtown as a destination. Empty storefronts, demolished buildings, and groups of street kids are often cited in letters to the editor as reasons for the death of downtown. No one denies that downtown is a problem – although Eugene’s downtown could be much worse. There are pockets of upscale activity with a restaurant and a retail store next to two empty store fronts; an art gallery just down from abandoned office buildings, ;a state- of- the- art library across from a huge water-filled hole in the ground. Eugene’s downtown is not as dangerous or dilapidated as it could be, but the need for change is apparent.

In addition to a need for revitalization, the city is faced with a looming shortfall in the Transient Room Tax (TRT) fund, a major source of funding for the City’s Library, Recreation and Cultural Services (LRCS) Division. In 1997 ballot measure 47/50 passed, ending the City’s funding of Cultural Services through general funds. As a result, in 1998 the entire portion of the TRT was shifted to Cultural Services to cover \$1 million of its \$1.8 million annual revenue loss. The TRT is generated from tourist traffic using hotel rooms, and has stayed stable over time, but hasn’t increased with inflation – unlike the operating expenses of the Cultural Services Division. As a primary income stream for the Hult Center, another shortfall in the TRT could be disastrous for the LRCS (Rinaldi, 2007). Additional current revenue streams from ticket sales, facility rentals and fees from resident companies are not sufficient to maintain Hult Center operations (Jones, 2006) and due to the Hult Center’s non-compete agreement with its resident companies, fundraising and grant revenues are severely limited. In addition, resident companies are struggling to stay solvent, causing further instability for the Hult Center’s funding base (Bearns, 2006).

Therefore, a need “to focus on cultivating cultural tourism (historical preservation in public art and architecture-including public art, historical buildings and sites, among other things” is

being addressed as part of the CPR process(Eugene, FAQ, 2006). Insert other financial issues here?

The city is hoping that the Cultural Policy Review will provide opportunities for better communication and coordination among arts organizations. In its Request for Proposals, the city specifically called for the creation of a “cultural facilities master plan and better collaboration among cultural organizations,” in recognition of the multiplicity of arts and culture groups throughout the Eugene metro area. Initial assessments by Marc Goldring of WolfBrown (formerly Wolf, Keens and Co.) corroborated the remarkable number of cultural opportunities, reporting that Eugene has a “sophisticated cultural arts scene, out of proportion to its size” (GoldringBrown, 2006). The committee saw that cultural events were plentiful but poorly coordinated, and saw the CPR process as “an opportunity to create a more cohesive image of Eugene’s cultural scene that will help promote Eugene as a place where the arts flourish” (Cariaga, 2006, p. 7).

In 2005, Eugene’s city council adopted a slogan, “The Greatest City of the Arts and Outdoors,” and the Cultural Policy Review is expected to lead to strategies for the positioning of Eugene’s downtown as an arts center. David Kelly, former City Council member and Vice Chair of the CPR Committee sees the need for the CPR process arising out of “a basic community love for the arts, a desire to foster a sense of community in downtown, concerns about the median ages of audiences at arts events and a perceived lack of coordination among arts providers were other drivers.” (Kelly in Goldring, 2006). Mayor Piercy added that the “status of the visual arts in the community” is also a concern also (Brown, 2006).

Although the biggest need that precipitated the initiation of the Cultural Policy Review may have been downtown revitalization, the timing was driven by a looming shortfall in the City’s Library, Cultural and Recreation Services income, and the need for leadership and coordination

among Eugene's many cultural organizations. The desire to raise the cultural profile of Eugene may not be a need, but it may lead to fulfillment of the city's entire downtown agenda.

Planning is bringing the future into the present so that you can do something about it now.
-Alan Lakein

Desired Outcomes

In addition to the planning needs discussed above, those involved with the Cultural Policy Review, including city leaders, arts and culture leaders, and citizens, have identified several key desired outcomes specifically related to the process of developing the plan.

Assess the current state of arts and culture in Eugene

It has been almost 20 years since the last city-sponsored cultural planning process, so it is important that this cultural review process re-assess the state of the arts and cultural sector. A Request for Proposal was initiated and after an extensive process, the city contracted with WolfBrown Co. (formerly Wolf/Keens), consultants with cultural planning experience in cities of similar size who would provide a perspective on how other cities have created a working cultural plan. The consultants utilized phone interviews, on-site observations, small group interviews, and community input gathered online and in person to gain an understanding of the current operation situation and capacity of cultural organizations and artists in Eugene. In addition, a survey that elicited over 2,500 responses provided data on the role of arts and culture in the lives of Eugene's citizens. This section came from the January 16, 2007 presentation by WolfBrown. The citation would be (Brown, 2007) ←-----this entire section needs citations – which passages and where was it lifted from? No citation is needed here. Perhaps a general citation to the Eugene main webpage?

Build a transparent, participatory planning process

Because any plan that arises from the CPR will need support from every sector of the community, the city of Eugene has been strongly committed to a process that is both participatory and transparent, allowing for multiple channels of involvement from the arts community, the city, and individual Eugeneans. Key leaders in the arts community as well as interested citizens and city volunteers were selected to serve on a Cultural Policy Review Committee, which was charged with overseeing the work of a consultant firm. The Cultural Policy Review Committee was formed in order to build teamwork by strengthening “direct communication between the Cultural Services Division and Mayor, City Council, Cultural Services Advisory Committee, Mayor’s Committee on Cultural Policy Review for the Arts, stakeholders, interested citizens and news media(City of .” (Eugene, FAQ, 2006). decisions”(Eugene, FAQ, 2006).

In order to build a more participatory process, the city budgeted \$40,000 towards marketingCity of (Eugene, FAQ, 2006). This budget includes print advertisements in The Register-Guard and Eugene Weekly, two postcard mailings to all Eugene households (approximately 70,000 pieces), and electronic notices to key partners and individuals who signed up to receive feedback information electronically. The city’s commitment to maintaining a transparent process is evidence through the City of Eugene web site, under Cultural Services, Cultural Policy Review. There, citizens can read through minutes, budget reports, presentations, status and preliminary reports, graphics, photos, charts, and other forms of communication related to this process. For example, the recommendations made by the consultants throughout the CPR process are found in the Situation Paperpaper section of the website. After the public has added their comments based on the consultant and

recommendations based on the consultants recommendations listed in this section, the Mayor's Committee reviews and evaluates the priority and action items from the public feedback given. goals ”(, **FAQ** The sequence of collecting and valuing public input via the website and public meetings is on-going throughout the planning process.

The Cultural Policy Review Committee is also committed to reaching out to every segment of the our community including representatives from the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, members of from the Hispanic, African American, Asian, and other cultural communities, community members, business leaders, youth, and educators throughout the Eugene /Springfield community-metro area. Individuals from these groups were also were invited to sit on the CPR Committee. and provide outreach through interviews, small group meetings, and public surveys(Eugene, FAQ,2006)

Design a realistic implementation plan

.” As outlined by Tina Rinaldi, chair of the Cultural Policy Review Committee, “The city of Eugene has long played a major role in underwriting cultural activities, but it has been more than 20 years since the city reviewed its cultural policies.” (Rinaldi 2007). information is still relevant and is to be considered as part of the evaluation process Many questions were raised regarding the completion of a cultural policy including what role the city may play in supporting arts and culture, what contributions could private sectors make, and how can artists and arts organizations improve their situations.

Although in January 1996, Resolution 4474 endorsing the “arts plan” was adopted, this document was not fully implemented. (Brown 2006) (Committee 1996). However, noted in WolfBrown’s observations, information in the 1996 ArtPlan is still relevant and is to be considered as part of the evaluation process. (Brown 2006)

The city is therefore emphasizing the importance of creating a realistic, flexible implementation plan. The Consultant Marc Goldring has described the final plan as being “a road map, not a blueprint,”, meaning that the plan will provide a vision, but not step-by-step instructions for attaining that vision (Brown, 2006). The final plan will provide an assessment of the current situation in Eugene’s cultural sector and a vision for the future of arts and cultural development in Eugene. “The primary goal is to establish an agreed upon course of action for the City's support and involvement regarding arts and culture within the prescribed area of downtown Eugene”. (Eugene, FAQ, 2006). The plan will show a series of goals with recommended strategies under each goal statement. Each goal will describe who the possible lead implementors may be with a given ballpark budget. The members involved in the CPR process are aware of the difficulty in establishing priorities. The CPR committee, therefore is asking for feedback from the public in order to help steer the priorities to reflect the needs of the community.

A successful communication plan is more effective when the theme is strong and messages are consistent, rather than scattered. The City Council City Council and the City is committed to developing a communication plan **that** supports, reinforces, and reflects the goals of the community CS and city government. The cultural plan will provide an assessment of the current situation in Eugene, via the consultants’ consultants “Eugene Cultural Census” report, a consultants Facilities Review, the Cultural Services 2006/08 Biennium Business Plan, and from various forms of public input. - Much of the plan's recommendations may not require official city action. Therefore, the city is not solely responsible for implementing the final plan. The local City and County governments, , the school districts, civic groups such as the Chamber of Commerce Band the Convention and Visitors Bureau Association of Lane County (CVALCO), universities and colleges, among many others will be responsible for the plan

once the consultants are gone (City of Eugene, FAQ, 2006).

Strategies that require significant city action will be presented to City Council for acceptance and further consideration, but other strategic goals may move forward with relative speed. “The consultants will assign priority to the recommendations based on their assessment of the importance of a given strategy relative to the financial and human resources required to implement it” (Eugene, FAQ, 2006). Based on the available resources and leadership, a central task of the early phase of implementation will be to refine priorities. The city may have additional recommendations after the CPR plan has been presented to them. The CPR committee is aware of this possibility and therefore is strategically moving towards a realistic plan that will fulfill the needs of the community.

Leadership

The City of Eugene is a public entity, representing in the best interest, and on behalf of, the community. The organization begins with the citizens of Eugene. Collectively, “the people” strive to preserve the natural beauty of this valley and uphold the values that address quality of life issues. Among those values is the desire to maintain a vibrant and thriving arts and culture sector. Active citizen participation is critical in a thriving environment and participation in arts and culture contributes to its economic and social wellbeing. (Committee, 1996).

Reporting to the people are the Mayor and City Council. These elected officials are charged with meeting community needs, administering laws and public policy, and making contributions that enhance quality of life. They are also responsible for hiring, evaluating and mentoring the city manager, overseeing various boards and commissions, including the Citizen Advisory committees. The Mayor and City Council are involved in many aspects of governance. The City Council is comprised of Bonny Bettman for Ward 1, Betty Taylor for

Ward 2, Alan Zelenka for Ward 3, George Poling for Ward 4, Mike Clark for Ward 5, Jennifer Solomon for Ward 6, Andrea Ortiz for Ward 7, and Chris Pryor for Ward 8. Among their council's interests is maintaining a vibrant arts and culture sector. Toward that end, in 2005, the City Council identified promoting arts and outdoors as one of their top eight priorities and adopted "World's Greatest City for the Arts and Outdoors" as a city slogan (Jones, 2005). They have approved funding for arts-related projects and all have attended cultural events.

Before the end of his term on the City Council, David Kelly frequently expressed his support for the arts, and now, listing himself as an "arts advocate," he is currently serving as vice chair of the Cultural Policy Review Committee (Officer, 2005). City Manager Dennis M. Taylor has been managing six major areas of city government for the last 10 years - Central Services, Fire and Emergency Medical Services, Planning and Development, Police, Public Works, and Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services (LRCS). Taylor is charged with upholding the office's mission, which is to "provide administrative direction to the organization in aligning City work with City Council direction and community values.† We support elected and appointed officials, promote an informed public, and work to ensure City government is effective, accountable, and inclusive." From the City Manager's web site http://www.eugene-or.gov/portal/server.pt?space=CommunityPage&cached=true&parentname=CommunityPage&parentid=3&in_hi_userid=2&control=SetCommunity&CommunityID=620&PageID=0 (Citation?) Managing complex departments with different missions requires the ability to balance priorities and changing social trends.

In the area of Library, Recreation, and Cultural Services, City Manager Taylor relies on the leadership of new Executive Director Renee Grube, who has been the Director of the Recreation Services Division of the LRCS since 2003 and with the City for the last 20 years.

She replaced Angel Jones, who began serving as Assistant City Manager on January 1, 2007 (Jones, 2006). Grube oversees three distinct areas within her organization, all with different needs and priorities.

Under the leadership of Interim Director Laura Niles, Cultural Services offers a wide range of programs including free Summer Concerts in the Park, Hult Presents, and Support Hult Center Operations (SHO) a volunteer organization serving the needs of the Hult CenterSHO, and community outreach to local schools (K-12), Lane Community College, University of Oregon, social services agencies and organizations. Cultural Services also manages and operates two city-owned public facilities – the Hult Center for the Performing Arts and Cuthbert Amphitheater (Officer, 2005). Niles oversees three areas within the Business and Community umbrella – Budget and Finance, Relations, and Operations. In addition, the award-winning [Jacobs Gallery](#), a public/private partnership housed in the lower level of the Hult Center, provides free admission to approximately 12 annual exhibits of visual art produced by well-known artists in the region, and is featured on most First Friday ArtWalks (Officer, 2005). Niles has been a strong leader and arts advocate in the community for the last 20 years and has participated in many community boards and committees related to the arts. Currently, she is also serving on the Mayor’s Cultural Policy Review Committee.

On April 12, 2006, Mayor Piercy appointed 21 community representatives including Niles and former councilor Kelly to the Mayor’s Cultural Policy Review Committee. The objective of the process is to “collaboratively review current conditions, services and gaps, and identify community-supported options that will assist the City Council in defining the City’s ongoing role in the arts and culture” (Bohman, 2006). Mayor Piercy appointed Tina Rinaldi as the chair of the committee. Rinaldi is a University of Oregon arts management educator, former director of the Jacobs Gallery and a current member of the Lane County Cultural

Coalition. The mayor also appointed (former) City Councilor David Kelly, an arts advocate, as vice chair of the body (Bohman, 2006). Angel Jones, (former) executive director of Library, Recreation and Cultural Services, and Laura Niles, interim division manager of Cultural Services, will also staff the committee. Cultural Services Ddirector of Operations Mark Loigman was assigned project manager. Below is a list of committee members.

Bill Blix - Retired arts instructor, sculptor, Public Art Committee member

Kirk Boyd - Artistic Director, Willamette Repertory Theatre*

Cheryl Crumbley - Communications consultant, arts advocate

Alan Evans - Downtown business owner, arts advocate

Mindy Linder - Community theater actor, arts advocate

Jerry McDonnell - Architect*

Kaz Oveissi - Downtown business owner, arts advocate

Jeff Morton - Manager of Quality Inn and Suites*

Gretchen Hult Pierce - General Manager/CEO of Hult & Associates*

Rich Scheeland - Retired Cultural Services Division Manager, arts advocate, actor

Tim Smith - Interested community member*

Betty Snowden - Real estate business owner, arts advocate

Rex Stevens - Interested community member*

Yvonne Stubbs - Artist, interested community member*

Andrew Toney – former Lane Arts Council director, Lane County Cultural Coalition
member

Mary Unruh - DIVA director, Public Art Committee member

Kari Westlund - President/CEO of Convention & Visitors Assoc. of Lane County*

Rick Williams - LCC Arts Chair, writer, Public Art Committee member

Marguerite Zolman - Interested community member*

Members marked with an asterisk () are also members of the Cultural Services Advisory Committee.*

Members of this committee are comprised of artists, community leaders, private citizens, educators, and business owners, many having participated in previous arts committees and cultural conversations.

Resources

When it comes to the Arts and Culture, Eugene has an abundant wealth of Arts and Culture resources, including physical structures, active arts organizations, strong leaders, and a concerned and interested citizenry. First of all, The Eugene/Springfield metro area has a sizable Eugene has a large inventory of performing arts and entertainment facilities which and they are fairly well distributed around throughout the community. Two of these spaces have been used throughout the Cultural Policy Review process to host public meetings and presentations by the consultants. The Hult Center, owned and operated by the city, is a world- class venue with three performance areas - Silva Concert Hall, the Soreng Theater, and the Studio One. Privately owned Northwest Christian College has a large gym as well as a small chapel that can be used for small events. Lane Events Center, at the fairgrounds, includes an exhibit hall, performance hall and four large meeting rooms. The University of Oregon has several facilities including Erb Memorial Union, Beall Hall, Robinson Theater, the Dougherty Dance Theater and McArthur Court. Lane Community College has two great smaller performance spaces - the fan-shaped Performance Hall and the Blue Door Theater.

Outside of public and university-owned spaces, there are a variety of performance spaces managed by the profit and non-profit sectors organizations. These venues include

WOW Hall, a nonprofit venue for alternative music, owned and operated by the Community Center for the Performing Arts (CCPA), The Wildish Community Theater, located in Springfield, Dougherty Dance Theater, The Very Little Theater, the Actors Cabaret, and Lord Leebrick Theatre Company. The Shedd Institute for the Arts is home to three more spaces: for Arts and entertainment, including the Jaqua Concert Hall, The Great Hall, and the Recital Hall. The McDonald Theater, in the downtown district, hosts about 75 events per year, mostly rock, pop, and alternative music concerts, and it has a capacity of just under 1000.

Besides performing arts venues, Eugene is home to a variety of public, for-profit, and non-profit arts organizations. They are too numerous to mention in its entirety, but some of the better-known organizations include DIVA, the Maude Kerns Art Center, Sparkplug Dance, Lane Arts Council, the Eugene Symphony, and the Eugene Ballet Company. These organizations differ in size, scope, missions, and arts disciplines, but they are all committed to celebrating improving the state of arts and culture in Eugene.

To that end, their leaders, members, audiences, and constituents represent a large part of the population that will be affected by the recommendations that come out of the city's Cultural Policy Review.

Eugene's citizens are interested in the arts as well. In a 2006 arts and culture survey of area residents, WolfBrown expected Eugene's returned survey count would be high, considering the proliferation of arts organizations. They estimated the response would be approximately 500 surveys returned. The fact that the Cultural Review Committee received over 2,500 responses to the arts and culture survey that was sent out in the summer of 2006 shows evidence that Eugene is home to a relatively high percentage of people who are concerned about arts and culture. In Wolf Brown's preliminary report they stated, "The level of community involvement in this Cultural Policy Review is extraordinary, based on participation at public

meetings and responses to the cultural census. This reflects a view among residents that the process affords an opportunity to address cultural issues in a systematic, effective fashion” (Citation, 2006Wolf Brown).

It is difficult to discuss resources without mentioning money. As discussed earlier in this paper, a looming shortfall in monetary resources is partly responsible for prompting the Cultural Policy Review. However, the city also recognizes that the CPR process itself requires a financial commitment, and has budgeted \$250,000 towards the creation of a cultural plan. These monetary resources combined with a committed mayor and city council, along with a community full of great venues and creative and involved community members, represent a strong commitment towards improving the states of the arts and cultural sector. It is a great sign of hope for the future of Eugene.

Timeline

The timeline for Cultural Policy Review (CPR) represents a year- long process that commenced in June 2006 and is scheduled to finish in June 2007. The five phases of the timeline are as follows.

Phase 1	Project Startup & Initial On-site	June 2006-July 2006
Phase 2	Initial Public Process	August 2006-November 2006
Phase 3	Information Gathering	September 2006-February 2007
Phase 4	Report Out, Analysis, and Assessment	February 2007- April 2007
Phase 5	Review/revision of Preliminary Report	April 2007-June 2007

(WolfBrown, Updated November, 2006)

Phase 1: Project Startup & Initial On-site

Schedule June 12-July 30, on-site in mid-June

During the first phase of the process, the initial meeting of the Mayor's Committee was held. With input from the Mayor's Committee and city staff, a preliminary list of individuals and organizations to who should be involved in the process was identified. Existing research and other relevant materials were also cataloged and added. Then, a series of group meetings and individual interviews with community members were then conducted.

Phase 2: Initial Public Process

Schedule August 1-October 15, with on-site in the second half of September

Based on the information gathered in the telephone interviews and the sessions held in Phase 1, an initial Situation Paper was drafted (September 7, 2006). This Situation Paper was reviewed frequently and updated throughout the planning process. The consultants revised the Situation Paper to reflect community input through online comments as well as during the 2nd Mayor's Committee meeting and six community Dialogue Sessions (September 18-20, 2006) and submitted it for distribution and further feedback. The deliverable document the consultants will produce from this process is titled the *Revised Situation Paper*.

Phase 3: Information Gathering

During this phase of the process, the consultants undertook several information and data gathering strategies that were closely interrelated. Consultants worked closely with the Mayor's Committee throughout this phase, providing periodic updates and seeking guidance on survey instruments and interview protocols.

5) Key Informant Cultural Assessment

October 15-November 15, with on-site visit in the second half of November. In this step, the consultants conducted individual and small group sessions to gather additional feedback to the key issues. In addition, they conducted interviews and group meetings with board and staff representatives of cultural organizations. The purpose of these sessions was to gain an understanding of the current operation situation and capacity of cultural organizations and artists in Eugene. The deliverable product from this research is contained in the *Situation Papers* and the consultant's report.

6) Cultural inventory fact-finding

Schedule November 15-January 15

The consultants continued to gather information on organizations through their interviews and based on web research to provide a more current and comprehensive inventory of the City's cultural sector. The inventory deliverable is included in the consultants' report and will inform future plan recommendations. The presentation date was January 8-9, 2007.

7) Cultural census

(web based and hard copy survey of community on cultural participation)

Schedule October 1-December 1

This census was for gathering information on cultural participation from as broad a range of individuals in the community as possible. A survey instrument was designed and reviewed, and the web-based version of the survey was activated and put into use. Hard copy versions were distributed at key community locations as a way to make the survey effort accessible to those without web access. The survey was available throughout the month of November. This research provided valuable information about existing cultural participation and areas of interest for additional participation. A complete report of the findings were made available on

the portal city's website in late December and in the consultants' report as well.

8) Cultural facility evaluation

Schedule October-December 2006, with on-site in the early part of December

This included a questionnaire and a consultant site visit. The goal of this evaluation was to provide the necessary information to inform a cultural facilities master plan that focuses on the downtown area of Eugene. An inventory questionnaire was designed and distributed in October to over 100 organizations in Eugene and about 40 were returned. The facilities consultant was scheduled to be on-site. This research informed facilities-oriented goals and strategies in the cultural plan and is summarized and included in the consultants' report. This report will be submitted March 19-20, 2007.

9) Participatory fact-finding

Schedule October 15-January 15, 2007, with on-site in the early part of December

The consultants conducted in-depth interviews with residents to learn about what audience members value about their participation in arts and culture in their daily life. This information was presented on January 16, 2007.

Phase 4: Report Out, Analysis, and Assessment

Schedule March 2007

Based on the information gathered, the consultants will prepare a series of reports to be shared with the Mayor's Committee members. It will include consultant synthesis of research findings, the formulation of preliminary visions, goals, and strategies that will be reviewed by the Mayor's Committee and the community during the March on-site visit by the consultants. A draft plan was submitted on March 14.

Phase 5: Review/revision of Preliminary Report

Schedule April-June, 2007

During the last phase of the process, the consultants will be in Eugene on March 19 and 20 for a discussion and review of the draft vision and goals. The Mayor's Cultural Policy Review Committee meeting will be held on March 19, 2007. This meeting will be open to the public and there is opportunity for public comment. Community members will have the opportunity to provide comments and reactions to the consultants' draft outline. A final revised report to the city council, along with presentations will be submitted the week of June 25.

During the last phase of the process, the consultants will design and facilitate a series of issue-oriented meetings of the Mayor's Committee to discuss the draft planning report. The purpose of these sessions is to reach consensus on the details of specific areas outlined in the draft report. Once the review by the Mayor's Committee and community input is complete, the consultants will revise the draft planning to reflect the results of those sessions. A revised report, along with presentations will be submitted.

Analysis and Recommendations

An analysis of Eugene's Cultural Policy Review process reveals several key findings. We will discuss these findings, and then use them to inform a set of recommendations for arts and cultural leaders who wish to be involved in local cultural planning. At a meta-level, one must recognize the incredible commitment required to develop a cultural plan of this size and scope. It requires a Mayor and city government sincerely dedicated to the improvement of the arts and cultural sector, a sizeable planning budget, and a considerable amount of time. And these resources are needed just to *create* the plan, to say nothing of the commitments required to actually implement the plan. Commitments from the city speak to their strong belief in the

importance of arts and culture, and their potential to affect meaningful change.

The timing of this Cultural Policy Review is also worth noting. In some ways, it shows the city as taking a proactive, rather than reactive, approach to cultural planning. Instead of waiting until there was no longer enough money to fund the operation of the Cultural Services Division, including the Hult Center, the city considered a projected shortfall and took action. In other ways, one might argue that this review is long overdue. It has been nearly two decades since Eugene saw a city-sponsored cultural review. Since adopting the slogan, “World’s Greatest City for the Arts and Outdoors,” Eugene’s government likely recognizes the importance of updating its cultural policies, and maximizing existing potential within the arts and cultural sector.

Two themes that are mentioned throughout the Cultural Policy Review process are transparency and participation. This is not surprising – most cities undertaking a cultural planning process cite citizen participation and transparency of the process as important features. However, in many instances, these notions or commitments receive a great deal of lip service, but upon closer examination are not being seriously addressed. We found that the city of Eugene has, in fact, gone to great lengths to make the process transparent and participatory. Their success speaks in part to city leadership. Now in her third year, Mayor Kitty Piercy is committed to addressing the needs of all stakeholders and participants. Citizen input is collected online and at public meetings, and has helped shape the direction of the review. Clearly, participation was not an afterthought in this process – Mayor Piercy has helped develop a process where citizen participation is implemented in meaningful ways from the very beginning.

One part of the process that significantly increased transparency was the creation of a well-organized, continuously updated web site. A large part of the population today has access

to a computer and the internet, so placing all of the documents, notes, and reports related to this review online is an efficient, effective way to increase the transparency of the process. For those citizens without access to a computer, the city places regular notices in the newspapers, and sent out an informational mailing to every house address in Eugene. From every socio-economic level - from the Mayor to students of the arts, everyone has an opportunity to be in this process – to be a part of developing, approving, and implementing Eugene’s a cultural policy.

Based on this analysis of the city of Eugene’s Cultural Policy Review process, we have a series of recommendations. It is worth mentioning that these recommendations deal directly with the *process* of designing a plan, and not the outcomes. Some of them apply directly to the process in Eugene, while others are directed at leaders in the arts and local government who are interested in strategies for designing successful planning processes in their own cities and towns.

First of all, the manner in which the city of Eugene generated participation and created transparency may serve as a model for other cities. As we learned from our classmates’ presentations on cultural planning in cities across the country, generating citizen participation is a difficult task. When major metropolitan areas receive just a few hundred, survey responses, one must assume Eugene’s city did something right to receive over 2,500. This is not to suggest that Eugene’s process was flawless, but it was relatively clearly effective. Using Eugene as a model, those looking to initiate a cultural review should first consider integrating meaningful participation into the entire plan, not just the final few steps. In addition, they should consider a wide range of methods for gathering citizen input, including e-mail, website postings, telephone interviews, and face-to-face meetings with individuals and groups. Comments, suggestions, and feedback should be documented and filed in an accessible, public

location. Citizens should be regularly updated on the progress of the cultural review process, and provided opportunities to respond.

If a planning process is truly participatory, the final product should be a “road map, not a blueprint” (Brown, 2006). A “road map” is flexible and allows for ongoing citizen input on how to best achieve a stated vision. If cities are going to invest the money, time, and resources to develop a cultural plan, it is in their best interest to design a plan that can adjust, in response to economic, social, and structural changes. An additional benefit to designing a participatory, flexible plan is that the final product is more sustainable, since people citizens are more likely to invest in the implementation of a plan that they contributed to when they feel a sense of ownership.

A city should also design a cultural review process based on its unique characteristics of culture, people, and place. Before adopting a planning process that worked elsewhere, a city should examine its unique culture. For example, the city of Eugene was particularly sensitive to providing people the time and space to voice their opinions, knowing that Eugene’s citizens are known for being opinionated and quick to dismiss a process that they feel does not accommodate them. It is also important to consider divergent cultures *within* a city, and plan events that cater to different sectors. For example, if a city wants to encourage participation from a variety of socio-economic sectors, they might not want to hold every planning meeting in the ballroom of an upscale, ritzy downtown hotel. Or, if a city wants to generate input from those outside the arts and cultural sector (human services, sports, etc.) they may want to consider adjusting their approach to specifically appeal to these sectors. For example, they may hold a public forum at a community recreation center, shelter, or civic organization’s meeting room may bring in citizens who might otherwise consider a cultural policy process out of their interest area. Additionally, holding meetings at universities, colleges and business

forums, as well as public city council meetings and neighborhood association meetings may be another way to outreach to additional members who would normally not be involved in the process. Since a direct mail campaign only reached the Eugene population in this review, perhaps involving Springfield citizens via advertising in their new local newspaper, participating in their city meetings or functions may be another way to outreach. If the purpose of a review is to reach and involve each and every community member, identifying those individuals or groups is the first step. For example, the student community can be reached via advertising in their newspaper only after the group is identified as a group to outreach to.

For leaders in the arts and cultural sector looking to get involved in cultural policy, it is extremely critical to petition local leaders about the importance of arts and culture. To paraphrase former council member David Kelly in our class presentation, “Four letters from a constituent about an issue means it’s important, twenty means it’s an entire movement.” Every council member may not be as receptive to citizen input, but nevertheless, arts and cultural leaders should encourage their local leaders to align with state and local agencies and organizations in recognizing and supporting the role of the arts in culture in creating a vibrant, livable city.

***If you don't design your own life plan, chances are you'll fall into someone else's plan.
And guess what they have planned for you? Not much.
- Jim Rohn***

REFERENCES

Please see added reference below-author of this section is Wong, Warren.

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