

IMAGINE 2025

**A VISION FOR CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG'S
21ST CENTURY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

Funded by Arts & Science Council

Planned in collaboration with Diane L. Mataraza Inc. Consulting Services

September 2014

Dear Charlotte-Mecklenburg Community:

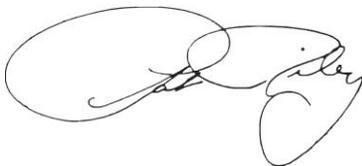
It has been my honor to serve as the Co-Chair of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Life Task Force, a broad-based leadership team who determined that for the cultural sector to be healthy, it needed to adhere to certain short and long term goals. In order for the cultural sector to be vibrant and achieve what the citizens of Mecklenburg County desire, the Arts & Science Council (ASC) needed to roll out the 2014 Cultural Vision Plan, completed a year ago and lay dormant until the Cultural Life Task Force work was finalized. Together with Diane L. Mataraza, Inc. Consulting Services, ASC and the talented group of community leaders who served with me on the Task Force, we are proud to bring forward the Cultural Vision Plan based on the input of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's citizens, who provided invaluable insights about the past, present and future of our community's cultural life.

The plan builds on the work of several plans that came before it, but we are at an interesting moment in time, with new challenges and new opportunities. We need to continue to protect and enhance Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative and cultural community as a unique asset that engages and supports every major element of the local economic ecosystem. Few other sectors touch and benefit everyone – from neighbors on the West Side and businesses Uptown, to middle school students in Myers Park and recent immigrants in East Charlotte.

Quite simply, our community is growing and changing, and planning for our cultural future needs to reflect the needs and dreams of the variety of citizens that makes Charlotte-Mecklenburg so uniquely and excitingly diverse. We invite everyone to share the vision and become active participants in building an even more vibrant and inclusive creative and cultural community.

Clearly there is much to be done to implement the recommendations of the Cultural Vision Plan over the next five years. It's time to no longer imagine what's possible, but to make it so. On behalf of the Task Force and ASC, I thank you for your support of the development of the plan, and look forward to collaborating with you to define and shape the future of arts, science, history and heritage in Charlotte-Mecklenburg for this generation and the next.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Pat Riley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Pat Riley
Chair, 2014 Cultural Vision Plan

THE EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A. INTRODUCTION

Culture connects people and strengthens communities. Few places in America exemplify this better than Charlotte-Mecklenburg. With the public and private sectors investing more than a billion dollars in arts, science, history and heritage since 1977, cultural development has played a significant role in our community's growth, globalization and long-term economic prosperity.

Just as significant is Charlotte-Mecklenburg's dedication to exploring the benefits of culture for all citizens. In 2010, the Arts & Science Council (ASC) commissioned the fourth countywide Cultural Vision Plan in its 54-year history, enlisting the participation of more than 1,800 area residents. Unlike previous plans, this one, created during the worst economic crisis in decades, provided us with the opportunity to rethink ways the cultural sector could further contribute to community vitality. The role and impact of the arts and culture were examined and debated through a series of visioning sessions focused on neighborhood development, community building, quality of life, community vitality and identity, education, lifelong learning, economic development and tourism. All of these areas are integral to the future success of arts and cultural programming in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

These visioning sessions also confronted politically charged issues:

- ✓ Are our community's cultural investment and stewardship policies as far-reaching as they could be, or do they tend to favor the traditional major institutions?
- ✓ Given Charlotte-Mecklenburg's demographic change, with non-whites representing 52 percent of the population, is our current definition of the arts and cultural sector comprehensive, accessible and inclusive?
- ✓ Is the cultural sector as intentional as it could be in assisting with important community agendas?

Leaders considered how this new plan could transcend the success of previous ones and encourage even more robust creativity and innovation to make Charlotte-Mecklenburg a better place to live, work and play. Our entire community faces new challenges in the wake of the economic recession. Corporations, non-profits and government are all reevaluating the way they do business, and the arts and cultural sector is no different. But we believe our current challenges can be solved through a proactive plan that addresses the shifting funding model before it's too late.

Imagine If ...

A mobile arts network brought arts and science to you no matter where you live in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Traveling music, dance and theatre shows, *artmobiles*, filled with art-making materials and artists to spark hands-on creativity would be among the familiar sights that build livelier and stronger communities,

Let's see it through.

B. VISION SUMMARY

The new Cultural Vision Plan and its three overarching themes envision Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural longevity in bold, progressive ways. As we look beyond focusing primarily on the "the majors" and traditional arts and cultural organizations, the plan compels us to rethink criteria we use to define our community's most vital 21st-century cultural assets – and to rethink the ways we invest in them.

The genesis of better ideas and solutions will emerge from cross-sector synergies and partnerships. With such partnerships in place, and an innovative new funding model to provide stability for our core cultural institutions to jumpstart for future growth, we believe plan results will far exceed what any of us ever could have imagined or achieved on our own.

OUR VISION

Build Community

We envision a future in which opportunities to create, participate, be involved in, learn from and enjoy arts and cultural expression will be more abundant than at any other time in our history. Culture will play a more intrinsic role in enlivening, engaging and enriching all of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's communities, helping to build strong bridges and increase dialogue, understanding and tolerance. Neighborhoods will nurture, support and celebrate their authentic cultures and creative expression. Partnerships between cultural organizations and community entities (including churches, merchant and neighborhood associations, clubs, schools and more) will increase shared ownership and create the catalyst for new and different neighborhood initiatives and projects.

Increase Program Relevance and Innovation

We envision a future where cultural activity fully reflects the changing face of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. Cultural opportunity, the variety of experiences and the quality of offerings will attract more people and resources than ever before. All forms of creativity, from the most traditional to the newest emerging, will be welcoming, affordable and relevant. Residents will enjoy opportunities close to home and be able to participate in activities in both traditional and non-traditional settings. Risk-taking, innovation and transformation will define the local cultural sector. This will be a place where originality is indigenous and groundbreaking contemporary work is created, not simply imported.

Make arts, science, and history central to K-12 Education, ensuring that Charlotte-Mecklenburg's students are critical, creative thinkers

We envision a future where every student will have an education in which innovation and creativity are central, and where arts, science and history education will positively influence and boost graduation rates. The strength of the cultural sector will help ensure that Charlotte-Mecklenburg students successfully compete locally, nationally and

internationally. We imagine Charlotte-Mecklenburg growing even more attractive for business location because of its access to excellent K-12 education opportunities. And we see continually increasing levels of synergy and cooperation between the arts and cultural sector and the education community. Our *Blueprint for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's Education Partnership* (SUMMARY – SEE APPENDIX) and methodology will be recognized, respected and replicated nationally and beyond.

Imagine If ...

Mass Senior Tango Takeovers and other fresh and unexpected programs were developed and organized at arts magnet centers for seniors, similar to magnet schools for students. Why should arts programming end after childhood?

Let's see it through.

I. A COMMITMENT TO CHARLOTTE-MECKLENBURG'S CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Culture has always played an important role in the growth of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. We were one of first communities in the nation to understand how arts and culture stimulates and fuels community and economic development, and we are proud of the billion-dollar cultural investment demonstrating this commitment. Over the past 35 years, comprehensive planning has effectively guided Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural development. The 1990s ushered in particularly dramatic growth, kicking off with the 1991 Cultural Vision Plan that helped to diversify the boards and staff of our major cultural institutions while elevating the level of annual giving and building endowments. Momentum continued with the 1998 Plan, when the clustering of arts, science, history and heritage placed Charlotte-Mecklenburg ahead of the creative economy curve. By expanding the traditional perception of "the arts," we also expanded the breadth and depth of community support, and annual campaign fund contributions nearly tripled during the 1990s. In the years since, even grander visions continued

to leverage greater community investment. Implementation of Phase 1 recommendations of the 2004 Cultural Facilities Master Plan resulted in a \$250 million investment in our Cultural Mile, anchored by the McColl Center for Visual Art on North Tryon Street and the Levine Center for the Arts on South Tryon Street.

Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural sector fuels the economy. In the *Arts & Economic Prosperity Study IV* by Americans for the Arts, based on fiscal year 2010 data, our annual economic impact was measured at \$203 million, excluding any capital expenditures related to the opening of new or renovated cultural facilities. Our cultural opportunities attract consumers from other counties in both North and South Carolina all year long. Mecklenburg's cultural market-draw exceeds 2,500 square miles and generates annual revenue in excess of \$100 million. The *Creative Vitality Index (CVI)*, a national metric of cultural sector health in U.S. cities by WESTAF, ranks us 31 percent higher than the national average, placing Charlotte in the company of America's greatest cities.

Four million customer experiences are reported each year. This impressive number doesn't tell the entire story, as it is reported only by organizations receiving funding from ASC. Of the four million, nearly half of the experiences are for children and youth, and 40 percent come from outside Mecklenburg County. Cultural opportunities are offered by over 150 organizations whose primary mission is arts, science, history or heritage. More than 100 other area nonprofit organizations, including the YMCA of Greater Charlotte, the Sandra & Leon Levine Jewish Community Center, and Communities in Schools, also bring arts and cultural programs to residents across the county. And showcasing their creativity are the life blood of our cultural sector: more than 17,000 dancers, choreographers, musicians, actors, filmmakers, writers, visual artists, scientists, inventors, photographers, designers and more, represent 2 percent of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg workforce.

In Charlotte-Mecklenburg, arts and culture are the bedrock. We are a community continuously building upon our strengths and striving to improve. The wins benefit everyone:

- We understand how cultural expression and participation enrich and contribute to the quality of life for all;
- We recognize the positive effects of arts and culture in neighborhood and community life;
- We believe in the power of partnership – for decades, city and county government have worked hand-in-hand with the private sector to support arts and culture;
- We value the unique ability of arts and culture to increase academic rigor and success in school;
- Every day we see and appreciate how well-placed public art, and beautiful architecture and design, contribute not only aesthetically to our small town centers and Charlotte’s cityscape, but also to community aesthetics and sense of place;
- We see how culture spurs economic development and tourism, and builds civic pride.

Imagine If ...

Charlotte became a hub of creative industries, attracting the best and the brightest in information technology, architecture, advertising, film production and research and development – all essential components of a thriving, creative economy.

Let’s see it through.

II. PLAN CHARGE

BUILDING COMMUNITY: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

The City of Charlotte, within Mecklenburg County, is the center of the nation’s third-largest mega-region: CharLanta, stretching from Raleigh-Durham to Atlanta. Although Charlotte is considered a mid-sized city with a population of 792,627, it is still the nation’s 17th largest city. The current population of Mecklenburg County is 986,160, an increase of 39 percent since the 2000 census. Together the Charlotte-Mecklenburg metropolitan area is part of a wider 13-county region, home to 2.4 million residents.

Among these residents, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's population has grown more diverse: non-whites comprise 51 percent of the population. *Business North Carolina* reports 850 foreign-owned companies in the Charlotte region today and, in Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, 84 languages are spoken among the student population. Charlotte is the second-highest Latino hyper-growth city in the country, with the greatest numbers of immigrants arriving from Mexico, India, Vietnam and El Salvador. Beyond the economic and social change that globalization brings to our communities, it also poses significant cultural development opportunities and challenges.

In ASC's 2012 UNC Urban Institute Cultural Life Survey¹, key findings included the fact that arts, science and history programs are critical to the quality of life in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, with heightened public awareness of the value of creativity and innovation. Focus groups also underscored the need for more thoughtful growth, stating: "With all the excitement and pride in our new cultural buildings, there has not been enough attention how the activities in them connect with the community. Somewhere along the way, it feels like we lost our soul." Mindful of such comments, this new plan encourages institutions to pursue partnerships that will strengthen our sense of community and generate more authentic integration of arts and culture with education, safe neighborhoods and other vital Charlotte-Mecklenburg priorities.

At the January 2012 Cultural Summit that brought together nearly 150 organizational leaders and artists, increasing accessibility to arts and cultural opportunities was the leading priority. How to address accessibility is the tougher question. For the purposes of this plan, accessibility touches on four factors identified in the planning process: welcoming and inviting opportunities, relevant content, affordability and location.

¹ UNC Charlotte Urban Institute study, a random digit dial phone survey of 400 Mecklenburg County residents over the age of 18, the 8th study of its kind commissioned since 2003.

Imagine If ...

Colonies of artists and scientists could live and work in affordable spaces that give them room to rehearse, create, invent and exhibit, welcoming the public to experience it all with them.

Let's see it through.

What are the barriers to accessibility? According to findings in recent online and telephone surveys, cost is considered a major obstacle to cultural participation in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. White respondents in the online survey rated affordability of cultural experiences at 49.6 percent, and non-whites rated affordability at 43 percent. Free days, two-for-one ticket offers, coupons and family passes appear to have widespread appeal. Throughout the visioning process, many participants shared stories of their enjoyment of festivals and free days at large-scale arts and cultural events, and expressed the hope that these special offers will continue.

Residents want activities closer to home, particularly those living outside the I-485 loop. North and South Mecklenburg residents at Town Hall Visioning Sessions rated the desire for activities closer to home at a very high level, 88 and 86 percent respectively. Many think there is plenty of cultural programming in Mecklenburg County, but want a more equitable distribution of this programming. Residents also said they would like to see more neighborhood development similar to Charlotte's North Davidson (NoDa) community, and more of an effort to "unhide" many invisible gems in neighborhoods around the county. It is telling that residents younger than 35 ranked the desire to attend events in Uptown Charlotte highest (at 67 percent), while non-white residents rated it lowest (at 50 percent).

More proactively than in past efforts, this new Cultural Vision Plan:

- Encourages all arts and cultural entities to become more actively involved in strategies to improve the quality of life for *all* Mecklenburg County residents.
- Invites creative individuals from all communities to become more visible, and provides tools to support them in building their capacity.

- Supports all cultural providers from the oldest to the youngest in using cultural programming to create more welcoming, relevant, enjoyable, accessible and engaging opportunities for residents.
- Challenges us to use arts and culture to create pathways and bridges, assisting new immigrant assimilation while also offering opportunities for all of us to better understand and welcome our newest neighbors.
- Urges us to work side-by-side with other sector community leaders to explore how shared ingenuity could address larger community challenges. Additional investment and resources could significantly strengthen the connections between the cultural sector and the greater community.
- Provides actionable next steps to create new revenue streams, encourage transformative change and build enduring partnerships to meet future needs.

Imagine If ...

Charlotte became the destination for one of the nation’s most popular and acclaimed Fringe Festivals, celebrating challenging and innovative art and introducing the community – and the nation – to what’s next on the horizon.

Let’s see it through.

INNOVATION AND RELEVANCE: CHALLENGES, OPPORTUNITIES AND SOLUTIONS

At no other time in our history has Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s cultural sector been as poised for tremendous opportunity, yet so challenged by unpredictable change. For decades, the generosity of business and industry, combined with annual support from local government, shielded Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s major cultural institutions from fluctuations in the national economy. Then the hard-hitting recession arrived. ASC’s Annual Fund decreased 38 percent (from \$11.4 million in 2008 to \$7.1 million in 2009) and since 2002, local government funding was reduced by 50 percent. This revealed an imbalance, as cultural organizations had become more reliant on ASC funding rather than their contributor base or their consumer base, with some organizations receiving as much as 45 percent of their budgets from ASC. A five-year goal

to reduce these unsustainable ratios achieved results, but not to the extent which is necessary. Currently 17 of 25 major institutions receive between 10 and 20 percent of their annual operating budgets from ASC's annual fund drive, far above the national average of grants portions of organizational budgets that range from three to five percent. However, developing a strategy to bridge core cultural organizations from the funding framework that has served the community for 40 years to one that is rooted in new economic and philanthropic realities is critical to the health and future of our cultural sector.

During our year-long visioning process, a common perception emerged: "If cultural organizations were more dependent on the market and ticket sales for their sustainability instead of their annual arts fund allocation, they might be more aggressive in producing what audiences want." One leadership session participant expressed concern about diversity in programming: "You would think cultural activity in the neighborhoods would be the first place you'd find evidence of our demographic change – but that is not the case here." *Programming is changing, but not at a pace comparable to the same rate as the Charlotte-Mecklenburg population.* Some feel that our cultural landscape is stalled in a time warp, still programming for the predominantly white audience of the 1980s and 90s.

Adding to growth challenges, Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural organizations have been slow to diversify their boards and staff. And beyond program content, organizations struggle with decisions about where to program and how culture can be presented in more dynamic and meaningful ways -- not consumed from a seat, but experienced through active creation and participation.

Imagine If ...

Arts, science and culture inspired the same passion, excitement and loyalty as professional sports in our community. Why not tailgate before the opera? Are you on Team Don Giovanni or Team Carmen?

Let's see it through.

This new Cultural Vision Plan certainly recognizes the strides that arts and cultural organizations have achieved in reaching more consumers. The issue here is that outreach has been most successful with white audiences and not as successful with non-white audiences. Cultural leaders have countered criticism by stressing how hard it is to take creative risks or present innovative programs when struggling to make payroll. At the same time, participants in visioning sessions have encouraged ASC to use this planning process as an opportunity to rethink investment policies. Many have challenged ASC to provide incentives for dynamic, relevant programming, especially among those organizations slowest to change. Others believe funding and cultural investment should expand to support a wider variety of creators, especially those from new immigrant communities that are invisible to the general population.

New plan initiatives will require greater inclusiveness to gain traction and make progress. A case in point: though this planning process was well-publicized and timed to provide ample opportunity for broad-based participation, the white/non-white assessment ratio of response was 81:19 in a community whose white/non-white composition is 49:51. As Charlotte-Mecklenburg's globalization continues to evolve, there will be tremendous opportunities ahead to use culture as a tool in increasing cultural understanding and dialogue. And relationship building should start within the cultural sector itself – to build awareness, understanding, relationships and respect between the traditional organizations and cultural providers from new immigrant communities.

Changing philanthropic patterns have also contributed to the list of challenges facing the cultural sector. Especially since the recession, donor patterns nationally have shifted away from unrestricted workplace giving and united appeals, toward direct organizational support. Donors want to choose where their dollars go and see results first-hand. This trend in Charlotte-Mecklenburg was further accelerated during the recession, when the highest-yielding corporate workplace campaigns were hardest hit by employee reductions. In response, ASC quickly pursued its own innovation, moving aggressively to create new giving systems that would be

attractive to donors. While rethinking ways to energize the annual fund, ASC simultaneously created the online giving platform power2give, a new education and innovation fund. Now we are poised to reach the next level with the launch of a new funding initiative designed to recapture lost donors, and to substantially grow and expand the base of support for arts and culture in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Imagine If ...

Our school system provided a strong curriculum in history, the sciences and the arts, inspiring students to continue these educational paths in college – and then to return to Charlotte-Mecklenburg to enjoy long and successful careers in these fields.

Let's see it through.

ASC's new strategies to raise funds are also impacting how funds are allocated. The organization's current history of fund distribution – especially to major cultural partners – is based on an allocations policy that has been largely unchanged for decades. ASC leaders recognize that new giving trends compel us to rethink how investment policies can better align with a donors wants and the community needs. Change is not a choice, it is a necessity.

Naturally the anticipation and uncertainty of doing things differently has added a level of stress to major institutions that are less agile and able to adapt to rapid change. In his March 2012 visit, Rodney Christopher, a Vice President at the Nonprofit Finance Fund, stated: "Great art is often created without lots of money and can be enjoyed for many years. Great arts organizations without the right kinds and amounts of money, however, often struggle to see another day." Christopher urged funders to invest in program innovation, but not to the extent that it threatens the long-term viability of the facilities offering it. He simultaneously urged the cultural sector to do its share: "Prepare for the future starting with greater willingness to explore new business and program delivery models, and adopt more market-savvy principles."

Of all public opinion survey results collected (1,082 respondents), 65.8 percent think the quality of Charlotte-Mecklenburg’s cultural offerings is excellent. But even in the most stable environments, keeping program content aligned with continually evolving consumer tastes is challenging. Given the pace and breadth of demographic change in Charlotte-Mecklenburg, more creative, forward-looking partnerships will be necessary. In public opinion assessment, the most substantial response differences were related to race/ethnic origin – above age, location or even length of residency. When online survey respondents were asked about the variety of offerings, and if they believed there was “something for everyone,” there was a 19 percent variance in the responses of whites as compared to non-whites: 71 percent of white respondents agreed that there was indeed “something for everyone,” as compared to half of nonwhites (52%) who thought there was not. In exploring the community’s appetite for more experimental programming (including where and how creativity is experienced), again the most substantial variance was race/ethnic origin. Seventy-six percent of non-white respondents want more participatory experiences, compared to 60 percent of whites. Town Hall Visioning Session participants offered scores of suggestions to more fully engage residents. And at each session, we heard the recurring hope that cultural providers will be as innovative with delivery as they are with content – *it’s about the entire experience.*

Imagine If ...

Science sheds and clubs sprang up across Charlotte-Mecklenburg communities, where materials and equipment would be available for all aspiring Einsteins and Curies to explore and experiment.

Let’s see it through.

Throughout the visioning process it was clear that most cultural organizations grasp what the issues are, but the bigger challenge is determining how to address them. The cultural sector must continually strengthen its value and relevance in the community on many levels, a task that will be simultaneously invigorating and daunting:

- Collectively, we need to carefully examine and refresh our entire cultural delivery system and determine how we can create greater synergy with agendas important to our community.
- Funding policy should be refreshed to incentivize change. We should continue to pursue strategies to manage donor expectations, and be realistic about the pace of cultural sector funding change.
- Individually, each organization needs to rethink every aspect of what it does, why, for whom and how. Which program and service offerings are most unique and valuable to the community? Programming, outreach, marketing, operating models, capitalization, technology and the personnel to best lead, manage and govern our organizations all must be carefully assessed and retooled. Professional expertise and broader nonprofit services/resources within the community could be tapped to assist.
- Cultural providers should be as innovative with delivery as they are with content – *it's about the entire experience.*
- The cultural sector needs to reimagine how to best capitalize on the ingenuity, resourcefulness, nimbleness and talent of its artists and creative individuals.
- Stewardship services that support and advance the entire arts and cultural sector will be more important than ever before.

Imagine If ...

The children of Charlotte-Mecklenburg begged their parents to read the story of the Meck Dec one more time, as interest in history among citizens surpasses that of reality TV. A community thrives when it knows where it has been and uses this knowledge to shape its future.

Let's see it through.

III. HOW WE PLANNED

Our work began in 2010 by identifying the most important ways Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural life could grow stronger. Three challenges emerged as our primary focal points:

- **How can Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural opportunities become more relevant and valuable in the lives of all residents and visitors?**
- **What can be done to see that all of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's creative enterprises thrive, and how can we keep our cultural offerings fresh, vital and relevant?**
- **What can we do to continually expand the impacts of a healthy cultural sector, and how?**

Questions in hand, visioning sessions began in earnest in March 2011. These sessions involved 184 community leaders representing all key sectors. On the heels of the visioning process, UNC Charlotte's Urban Institute conducted a random digit dial phone survey of 400 Mecklenburg County residents over the age of 18. In June 2011, a subgroup of visioning session leaders reviewed all ideas generated from the sessions and the results of the phone survey to affirm preliminary visioning themes.

As next steps, ASC leaders met Charlotte-Mecklenburg leaders to seek their thoughts on the community's most critical priorities and how the cultural sector could play a greater role in addressing them. These meetings included the elected and professional leaders of the City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Mecklenburg Towns and the leaders of the Charlotte Chamber, the Foundation For The Carolinas, the Charlotte Regional Partnership, Charlotte Center City Partners, Charlotte Regional Visitors Authority, area colleges and universities, United Way and MeckEd.

In November and December of 2011, more than a thousand county residents participated in an online survey to further test if we were headed in the right direction. In January 2012, ASC

convened a Cultural Summit, facilitated by McColl Center for Visual Art's Innovation Institute, in which 141 cultural organization leaders and artists participated. A post-summit online survey clarified sector needs, challenges and priorities.

In February, three Town Hall Visioning Sessions were convened in Matthew, Cornelius and Charlotte. Existing cultural sector research, the plans of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's chief leadership organizations, and city and county government master plans were included in the discussions.

This new Cultural Vision Plan is the result of many minds, many conversations and many meetings. It benefits from the guidance of community leaders, the candid views of residents and the dedicated work of the cultural sector. Once adopted by ASC's Board of Directors, this plan will be presented to Mecklenburg County, the City of Charlotte and the Towns of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville for review and adoption.

IV. TAKING ACTION FOR THE FUTURE

The next step with the Cultural Vision Plan brought together civic, corporate and community leaders. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Life Task Force was created to protect and enhance the region's creative and cultural community as a unique asset that engages and supports every major element of the local economic ecosystem.

The 23 members of this citizen task force were nominated by the Charlotte City Council, Mecklenburg County Commission, Arts & Science Council, Charlotte Chamber, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, Charlotte Center City Partners and Foundation For The Carolinas.

The Task Force began its work in May 2013 and completed its final recommendations in May 2014. Its research included data-intensive study of funding mechanisms, trends, cultural organization budgets, and best practices from comparable cities across the country.

The group heard presentations from industry experts, major funders, current and former Charlotte cultural sector executive directors, the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute, the Greater Charlotte Cultural Trust, City and County budget officials, a senior Americans for the Arts executive, and four executive directors of arts agencies in Dallas, Denver, Nashville and Cincinnati that are comparable to the Arts & Science Council.

From these in-depth explorations of cultural sector operations and best practices, the Cultural Life Task Force recommends four key actions to ensure vibrant, accessible arts, science and history programs for future generations in Charlotte-Mecklenburg:

- Restructure private sector giving to increase individual, corporate and foundation donations directly to the Cultural Partners and other nonprofit cultural organizations. Establish ASC as the gateway for new cultural donors and participants who enter the sector through a workplace campaign and are then invited to develop strong relationships directly with Cultural Partners. ASC develops a donor database that is shared with Cultural Partners to move donors' information and connections to the Cultural Partners.
- Engage local and state government to recommit and expand support for the cultural sector by restoring the public/private partnership that built and grew the local arts, science and history sector.
- Redesign ASC and its mission from the ground up so that it can be more effective in leading the cultural community's adaptation to 21st-century trends in philanthropy, demographics and citizen participation. Focus ASC on adapting to a constantly changing environment, continuously refreshing the case for the cultural sector and allocating funds responsively.
- Support the ASC Cultural Partners with administrative, fundraising, and managerial resources as they focus on revising, building and continuously improving their programmatic, revenue and governance operations and sustainability.

For further information about the recommendations of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Cultural Life Task Force, please visit

<http://artsandscience.org/programs-a-services/cultural-planning/cultural-life-task-force>