

PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

In 1976 Charlotte's business, civic and cultural leaders articulated a vision for transforming the decaying north end of Tryon Street, in Charlotte's central business district, through capital investment in cultural facilities. The specifics of that vision are what residents and visitors know today as Spirit Square, Discovery Place, the Afro-American Cultural Center and the NC Blumenthal Center for the Performing Arts. Public and private investment in these signature cultural facilities led the way to the creation of additional facilities within the Center City - the Mint Museum of Craft + Design, the Levine Museum of the New South, the McColl Center for Visual Art and the main branch of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library. Soon to be realized are the Sports and Entertainment Arena, ImaginOn: The Joe & Joan Martin Center, a renovated Ovens Auditorium, Central Piedmont Community College Theatre, renovated and expanded Theatre Charlotte, a new home for Actor's Theatre, and rehearsal and educational facilities for the North Carolina Dance Theatre and Charlotte Repertory Theatre.

Additional development occurred over the same period outside the Center City, including an expansion and renovation of the Mint Museum of Art and the Charlotte Museum of History, the establishment of the Carolina Raptor Center and a new visitors center at the Historic Latta Plantation.

The majority of these cultural facility projects were developed through public/private partnerships that have invested in excess of \$200 million over the last 25 years. This nationally recognized model is the hallmark of Charlotte's cultural development.

However, the vision of 1976 that created the framework for conceiving and developing individual cultural facilities in the past no longer speaks to the realities of cultural institution growth or to the dynamics of the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community in the 21st century. Now, a new vision is required.

To develop the Cultural Facilities Master Plan, the Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, in partnership with the Foundation For The Carolinas and Charlotte Center City Partners, established a Blue Ribbon Committee of interested stakeholders to direct the study. In order to assure broad input and consensus, the planning process included an assessment and inventory of existing cultural facilities; an analysis of regional demographics; small group meetings with key stakeholders; town hall meetings; interviews and a visioning charrette (a session that gave intense focus to problems and issues in a creative environment).

Our vision for Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural facility development:

- Enables cultural institutions to move forward with their individual plans yet contains the framework to connect them to the broader vision of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's future and to each other;
- Addresses not just the facility needs within Charlotte's Cultural District but the needs of the rapidly growing municipalities and neighborhoods across Mecklenburg County;
- Builds upon the community's commitment to education and the integral role that cultural institutions play in academic attainment and lifelong learning;

- Recognizes the changing dynamics of our suburban communities and our public institutions;
- Articulates the needs of neighborhoods and municipalities as well as the Center City Cultural District;
- Values historic preservation as an important resource and tool for connecting us to our past;
- Supports the role of culture in a vibrant tourism industry;
- Creates opportunities for shared infrastructure and collaboration; and
- Forges new partnerships that will create the synergy required for cultural institutions to thrive, propelling the next 25 years of cultural development.

Four themes frame our recommendations. Together, they constitute a collective framework for the future development of cultural facilities in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The themes that provide the context for our recommendations are:

Target Markets – Whose needs are we trying to meet?

- Our primary focus must be to meet the cultural needs of local citizens;
- Tourism will benefit from excellence in cultural programming;
- We must meet the needs of our diverse population and growing international communities;
- Neighborhoods and municipalities should benefit as well as the Center City; and
- We must serve the needs across the full “lifecycle” of our citizens yet emphasize meeting the needs of our young people.

Cultural Offerings – What types and mix of facilities are needed?

- Give priority to continued development of cultural excellence and growth of our premier cultural institutions;
- Support a balanced cultural portfolio that spans a full range of performing and visual arts, science, history and heritage programming;
- Cost-effective incubation of emerging cultural organizations, creative individuals and audiences;
- Weave diversity into the cultural fabric of our community and its cultural institutions; and
- Explore big ideas that Charlotte can become “known for” among broader regional and national audiences.

Facility Placement and Infrastructure – Where should cultural facilities be located?

- Continue to locate major cultural facilities in the Center City;
- Create geographically dispersed venues to incubate creative individuals and audiences in neighborhoods and Mecklenburg towns;
- Ensure that infrastructure is in place to support facility growth and development;

- Make prudent use of existing venues through historic preservation, ranging from full restoration to adaptive re-use, and creative joint-use facility development; and
- Provide fair and open access to a full range of public facilities and spaces.

Public/Private Partnerships – How do we make our vision a reality?

- Keep partnerships between the public and private sectors at the center of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural development;
- Extend our tradition of public/private partnerships to the growing communities of Cornelius, Davidson, Huntersville, Matthews, Mint Hill and Pineville;
- Explore potential partnerships with Charlotte Mecklenburg School, the Public Library of Charlotte Mecklenburg and Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department;
- Work closely with other community-based groups, like Charlotte Center City Partners and Visit Charlotte, to ensure continued development of the infrastructure needed to support facility growth and development and to connect our cultural resources to residents and visitors alike.

THE CONCEPTUAL PLAN

The results of our extensive community engagement have yielded a broad menu of projects and development objectives. The recommendations included in this section affirm the core vision of cultural facility needs and address the themes that provide the framework for this plan. Specific facility recommendations are grouped in the following categories:

Current Projects	Actors' Theatre Central Piedmont Community College Theater Charlotte Repertory Theatre ImaginOn NC Dance Theatre Theatre Charlotte
New & Renovated Facilities	Major Markets: Afro-American Cultural Center Auxiliary Facility Carolina Raptor Center Discovery Place The Mint Museums 1200 and 2800 Seat Theaters Niche Markets: African American Golf Museum Carolina Aviation Museum Charlotte Trolley Museum Film venue(s) in the Center City Heritage Facilities Capital Improvement Fund Second Ward High School National Alumni Foundation Wing Haven
Community Facilities	Community Cultural Centers Low-cost studio and creative individual live/work space Non-curated gallery space Spirit Square Expansion
Infrastructure	Cultural District Underground Parking Cultural District Way-Finding History/Heritage Information Center History/Heritage Trails Park and Greenway Interpretive Signage & Nature Center Additions Public Art
Big Ideas	Art, Science & Technology Museum (frequently referred to as the auto museum) Greatest Places The Bechtler Museum Traditional Music Hall of Fame

CURRENT PROJECTS

Recommendation I

Provide financial support to complete projects currently under construction or in final phases of their development.

Currently several key projects that should be completed as key cultural venues are under construction or in the final stages of design, development or fund raising.

Actors' Theatre of Charlotte

Description: New facilities will include administrative offices, rehearsal rooms, new 180-seat performance facility, scenery and costume shops and storage. The Actors' Theatre is embarking on a fundraising phase to purchase their new facility and to cover the cost of renovation. Cost is understood to be \$1.2 million.

Charlotte Repertory Theatre

Description: New facilities will house administrative offices, rehearsal rooms, scenery and costume shops and storage. The Theatre is actively renovating its new space and is in a fundraising phase to pay for the renovation work. Estimate additional funding needed is approximately \$150,000.

Central Piedmont Community College Theater

Description: A 1,000 seat-theater, which will have limited availability for community events due to CPCC programs; however, CPCC encourages discussion of opportunities for community collaboration. Estimated cost is \$30 million, no additional funding is required. Construction began in fall 2003, opening 2006.

ImaginOn

Description: A joint project of the Charlotte Mecklenburg Public Library and the Children's Theatre Company, ImaginOn will include two theaters of 550 seats and 250 seats, respectively. Planning and design began in 1997. Construction is currently underway and will be completed in 2005. Cost is \$36,200,000, no additional capital funding is required.

North Carolina Dance Theatre

Description: New facilities will contain administrative offices, dance rehearsal rooms, storage and preparation spaces. The NC Dance Theatre is seeking private funding to undertake its facility design and construction, planned as a 44,000 sq. ft. facility. Project cost is understood to total \$6 million of which \$1 million is still needed.

Theatre Charlotte

Description: This second phase of Theatre Charlotte's Master Plan will include an upgrade of the public lobby, provide new offices and create a new studio theater. Theatre Charlotte is currently fundraising to support its expansion, having successfully achieved its Phase 1 renovation of the backstage areas. Project cost is estimate is to be \$500,000 of which \$200,000 is needed from public sources.

NEW & RENOVATED FACILITIES

Recommendation II

Provide new or renovated cultural facilities to meet the needs of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's major cultural institutions located primarily within the Center City:

Afro-American Cultural Center

Description: Renovate and expand the Afro-American Cultural Center (AACC). Constructed in 1911, the present facility was once a church in a traditionally African American neighborhood preserved through adaptive re-use in the 1980's. It includes galleries, offices and a 130-seat performance space, but no space for scenery and costume preparation or rehearsal. While these spaces have been considered satisfactory in the past, the AACC's expansion and renovation plans show that improving them with a new and larger multi-use rehearsal and performance space would not only allow the Center to be more effective, but would also serve the needs of many smaller companies who need rehearsal and performance space of modest size but high quality.

The need for visual arts facilities are much more substantial. Current gallery space is inadequate for the permanent collection, and limit the quality of temporary exhibitions that the Center can borrow. There is limited exhibit space and no storage space for the Hewitt Collection given to the institution by the Bank of America.

Rationale:

- Multicultural and specifically inter-racial trust has been shown by recent studies to be a significant community need in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. While all cultural facilities and arts organizations can help to address this need, the Afro-American Cultural Center is in a unique position to play a leading role, if given the requisite support.
- The AACC in substance and as a symbol can become the touchstone for all other ethnic-specific cultural undertakings in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- The institution and its facility are considered icons and community treasures and should be encouraged to achieve the highest level of competency attainable.
- The staff is working effectively with the Center's currently limited resources and can achieve much more with larger and better facilities.
- The Hewitt Collection is of national stature and an important resource that should be appropriately preserved, documented, interpreted, and displayed at the AACC. The Collection provides greater depth to the existing permanent collection of the AACC.

Auxiliary Facility

Description: Develop an existing structure or structures to provide affordable office, rehearsal, preparation, simple performance and exhibition, and storage space for a wide range of performing and visual arts groups and individuals. This space could be found in an existing commercial warehouse, old or new, where large, column-free bays could readily be outfitted as rehearsal spaces, scenery and costume shops, performance space, exhibition galleries, administrative offices and abundant storage.

Interior space in the warehouse incubator or auxiliary facility being developed for performing arts storage and rehearsal activities can be fitted with environmental controls and security to function as storage for artifacts, especially industrial history, transportation and other larger artifacts representative of the history of Charlotte-Mecklenburg for the Charlotte Museum of History and Levine Museum of the New South. The Collection Storage Area would be secure but would not require staffing except when one of the two museums brings their personnel to utilize it.

Rationale:

- The need for storage, office, workshop, and rehearsal space was one of the most urgent and consistently expressed requirements by almost all performing arts groups interviewed, large and small. This facility would have an immediate positive impact on the quality of public offerings by almost all performing arts companies in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- While solving many immediate space needs of individuals and organizations, this facility would also encourage a high degree of interaction among the user organizations. Administrative and production resources could more easily be shared among participating groups.
- The bulk space would take the pressure off facilities such as the NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center, Spirit Square and the Afro-American Cultural Center.
- The “incubator” space would encourage the development of new arts initiatives.
- The addition of a black box theater, classrooms and a small exhibition space would expand the uses of this facility and encourage broader community access and use. It could essentially take on the function of a community cultural center as well as an arts incubator.
- Although Charlotte has two history museums, the Charlotte Museum of History and Levine Museum of the New South, which were recently built with good facilities, neither has space to develop collections other than those needed for exhibition purposes: i.e., neither is developing a representative collection of Charlotte-Mecklenburg artifacts.
- Need is especially great for storage space to preserve larger artifacts, such as industrial history or transportation items.
- Project would facilitate long-range cooperation between Boards of the Charlotte Museum of History and the Levine Museum of the New South.

Carolina Raptor Center

Description: Initiate a Master Plan and Feasibility Study in order to upgrade facilities to support expanded environmental education programs, biological research and training at the Carolina Raptor Center, and to explain the importance of natural habitat biodiversity through new exhibits and signage along the existing $\frac{3}{4}$ mile nature trail. Based on results of the Master Plan and Feasibility Study, build a new education center, research/veterinary hospital, and other supporting facilities as part of Phase II.

Rationale:

- The natural environment of the Piedmont is an integral part of the heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg. With the increasing urban growth of the County, the heightened awareness of environmental issues of urban development such as air and water pollution, water shortages, land consumption, and the depletion of non-renewable natural resources, there is a pressing need for environmental education for both children and adults.
- Enhance appreciation for the Piedmont as a setting for regional habitat biodiversity, and the interaction of humans with those habitats.
- Serve as a promotional site and connecting point for the public to all local environmental organizations.
- Acknowledge the uniqueness of the Carolina Raptor Center's biological research and wildlife rehabilitation and maximize its potential as a teaching resource for local university biological and veterinary students and faculty.
- Bring the Carolina Raptor Center's facilities into compliance with ADA standards.

Discovery Place

Description: Implement plans to renovate Discovery Place as platform for delivering the latest in science and technology. Upgrade the appearance of the building and address access and circulation problems. Completely revolutionize the exhibitions and programs in the galleries to provide an all, new visitor experience.

Rationale:

- Opened in 1981, Discovery Place has provided science and technology interactive experiences for the school children and families of Charlotte and the surrounding region. Now 22 years old, the building is in need of renovation to improve the visitor experience and fulfill the museum's mission.
- Increase the number of visitors from the current audience comprised primarily of school children and young families. Enhance exhibits and programs to attract a broader audience to respond to the changing demographic in Charlotte and surrounding counties.

- With the addition of the Omnimax theater in 1991 and changing exhibit hall and the parking deck and Education Center in 1988, the primary entrance to Discovery Place has become 6th Street. Through the renovation of the building, a Tryon Street presence and a central orientation lobby will be created to improve traffic flow.
- Discovery Place is one the top 10 science museums in the country, known for its leadership in program and curriculum development. Building on this success, Discovery Place will develop new state-of-the-art, nationally recognized exhibits and programs, which will benefit the local visitorship.

Mint Museum of Art

Description: Relocate the Mint Museum of Art from Randolph Road to a site, to be selected, in the Center City. As Charlotte's premiere visual arts institution, the Mint Museum of Art requires a facility that will allow it to grow both its collection and programs.

Rationale:

- An expanded museum is required in order to meet the demands of the Mint's collections, exhibitions, programs and audience through increased gallery, educational, storage, auditorium and visitor services space.
- The current City-owned site is in a flood plain, which, along with property deed restrictions, limit expansion potential to about half of near term needs. Also, the site is isolated from Center City visitor traffic.
- A Center City location would allow the Mint to serve residents and visitors better by establishing a destination attraction for Charlotte.

1,200 and 2,800 Seat Theaters

Description: Design and construct a new 1,200-seat theater with full stage house capabilities. This theater would be used for a wide range of performance activities suitable for this seat count, including dance, music, opera and musical theater.

Design and construct a new 2,800-seat theater with full performance capabilities for the presentation of large dance productions, Broadway touring shows, major performing artists and other large public assembly events.

Rationale:

- The new 1,200-seat theater will be used as the primary performance venue of the North Carolina Dance Theatre (NCDT). It will provide an excellent home for the majority of the NCDT's season, with the exception of its annual *Nutcracker* offering. The proposed seat count of 1,200 will better suit the needs of the dance company than the 2,100 seats in

the Belk Theater. By moving the majority of the NCDT programming to this new venue, much needed additional performance time will be made available in the 2,100-seat Belk Theater for use by the Charlotte Symphony and Opera Carolina. The availability of this new theater will allow all three of the major performing arts organizations to continue to grow artistically and financially. It will have the technical amenities necessary for the NCDT and excellent acoustics so that it can be used for smaller orchestral and operatic productions, as well as for touring shows. The theater will also be available for other local arts groups and occasional touring productions that can effectively use 1,200 seats.

- First consideration for the 1,200-seat theatre was given to the restoration of the Carolina Theatre; however, the facility needs assessment conducted through this planning process determined that, the Carolina Theatre cannot fulfill the current production requirements of existing, professional performing arts organizations. The stage house limitations (e.g. stage depth, wing space, loading dock, and production support) cannot be overcome on the current site. However, these limitations would not prohibit an historic preservation effort.
- The 2,800-seat theater further reduces scheduling problems at the Belk Theater allowing more performance opportunities in the Belk Theater for the Charlotte Symphony and Opera Carolina which have a strong need for additional performance dates.
- The NCDT could perform its annual production of *The Nutcracker* in this theater with 700 more seats than at the Belk Theater.
- A 2,800-seat house would suit Broadway touring shows and major touring artists much better than at the 2,100-seat Belk Theater or the 2,450-seat Ovens Auditorium.
- Ovens Auditorium would continue to be a performance venue for other types of productions.

Recommendation III

Support the evolutionary development of facilities for other existing groups that fill important but more niche interests within Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural portfolio:

African American Golf Museum

Description: Support a feasibility study to examine opportunities and constraints of an African-American Golf Museum and Hall of Fame. The museum would honor the accomplishment of African American golfers not only in the sport, but also in the struggle to integrate golf, gaining access to the major tournaments and courses — a struggle in which Carolina golfers have played a significant role. A small collection has been developed elsewhere in North Carolina, but annual Hall of Fame inductions would generate much of the collection. Exhibits could use high-tech audio-visual and interactive means to tell the story of African Americans in golf. The museum

would be linked to the annual African American Golf Tournament that was played in Charlotte for the first time in July 2003.

Rationale:

- Such a specialized museum facilitates placing the Carolina's African American heritage in broader national context, which is of value for both residents and visitors.
- The struggle for integration and subsequent success of African American golfers provides an inspiring story of role models especially relevant to young African Americans.
- The museum could attract both a special interest and more general tourist market, including the growing African American tourism market.

Carolina Aviation Museum

Description: Support plans for a feasibility study for the possible expansion of the Carolina Aviation Museum (CAM). Currently occupying 30,000 sq. ft. at Morris Field adjacent to Charlotte-Douglas International Airport, with 75% of its collection on display, the museum is operated by volunteers who propose to restore 2,640 sq. ft. of a World War II barracks on Morris Field. In the mid-term (5-10 years on) they hope to add the World War II Holman-Moody Hangar to their site for educational and other purposes. Ultimately (10-25 years on) they would like to develop a new purpose-built museum with World War II ambience.

Rationale:

- Aviation history began in the Carolinas; the World War II focus of the CAM meets a market interest in the aviation of that period.
- The collection being preserved by the CAM constitutes a significant aspect of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's heritage, which can most cost-effectively be preserved and interpreted on this site.
- The CAM's plans will also preserve and interpret WWII heritage buildings.

Charlotte Trolley Museum

Description: In July 2003 Charlotte Area Transportation Systems (CATS) took over operation and maintenance of Charlotte Trolley's heritage streetcar program. Charlotte Trolley proposes to develop part of the historic trolley barn in the South End as a museum, while CATS will use the rest of it for maintenance of the fleet of heritage trolleys. The cars would serve as centers for Charlotte Trolley's educational presentations.

Rationale:

- Charlotte Trolley has been a popular and well-loved heritage service, which is now moving from its former volunteer status to a more professional level of operation.

- Museum would strengthen South End attractions and link them to the operating heritage trolley service.
- Charlotte Trolley has an established educational role with 3rd grade classes studying local history and geography, as well as with Charlotte families; the museum would allow Charlotte Trolley to develop this service further.

Film venue(s) in the Center City

Description: Charlotte Center City Partners should lead the effort to establish commercial, independent and art film venues in the Center City **by the private sector**. Film series programs are currently presented at Spirit Square, The Light Factory, the Visulite Theatre and the Neighborhood Theatre. Film venues can be developed in a variety of locations including existing venues, or in new construction in uptown commercial development projects.

Rationale:

- There is a demonstrated need for additional film opportunities in Center City.
- Possible opportunities exist to collaborate on facility and programming with Charlotte-Mecklenburg Public Library, which has expressed an interest in a film and media library.

Heritage Facilities Capital Improvements Fund

Description: Establish a Heritage Facilities Capital Improvements Fund to meet the ongoing needs of the area's historic plantations and other heritage sites and attractions. Heritage attractions in Charlotte-Mecklenburg that could participate in such a fund would include:

- Hezekiah Alexander House operated by the Charlotte Museum of History
- Historic Latta Plantation
- Historic Rosedale Plantation
- Historic Rural Hill Farm
- Mint Hill Historical Society
- James K. Polk Memorial.

The recommendation is for the ASC to collaborate with these institutions and the Mecklenburg County Department of Park & Recreation (which already cooperates in the operation of several of these facilities) to establish an annually regenerated and cumulative fund that could be spent at the discretion of each institution, held in reserve for a planned future development, or even exchanged with other fund members in return for commitments of future funds, in order to enable one or another institution to proceed with a more significant project each year.

Rationale:

- Realistic recognition of the fact that all of these institutions have specific needs for restoration, renovation and repair, with some particular projects for building or extending

Visitor Centers, adding libraries or research facilities, or moving new buildings to their sites. These needs are and will be on-going, because it is the nature of these enterprises to require repeated capital investment.

- It is consistent with the coordinated approach of the ASC to provide for these needs on a systematic basis, without attempting to determine specific annual requirements and priorities each year of each institution over the next quarter century, but leaving such determination to each individual site and/or to the deliberations of the Historic Properties Commission to be convened for that purpose.
- Such a fund would ensure the preservation of these important extant fragments of Charlotte-Mecklenburg heritage, made all the more precious by the extensive demolition of much of the rest of the area's built heritage. Public/private partnership in such a fund could provide a means for systematic on-going support of these heritage attractions' inevitable capital improvement needs.
- Such a fund would encourage long-range financial planning for capital improvements related to reasonable expectations of the requisite resources, and would establish a basis for cooperation among the participating institutions.

Second Ward High School National Alumni Foundation

Description: The Foundation's aim is "to create a community-driven cultural and heritage tourism site in the original Second Ward High School Gym — the only part of the high school left standing." The gym could be developed as the exhibition site for the Foundation's artifact and archival collection with a permanent format but changing content — each decade in the 1923-69 school's history could be featured in turn, with interactive audio-visuals showing personal reminiscences of the school, its teachers and students. The Foundation now owns a property on Beatties Ford Road but needs to return to Center City, specifically the Second Ward, to meet its need for additional collection storage and office space, with temporary exhibition space. Such space could be added to the gym in future, although temporary offices and storage could be provided elsewhere in Center City as an interim measure, in order to focus the group on their work in the gym and to give them a presence in Center City.

Rationale:

- The High School was an important locus of cultural development in the African American community, and the Foundation is an important organization in recovering African American heritage in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- Demolition of the High School in 1969 was one of the mistakes of the past that can be mitigated somewhat by making a creative exhibition center out of the gym.
- Developing the gym as such a facility will demonstrate a serious commitment to the preservation and celebration of African American heritage.

Wing Haven

Description: Wing Haven is currently proceeding with a 2,000 sq. ft. addition to its facilities, two-thirds of which are new offices, with the remainder including a small interpretative center.

Rationale:

- Support Wing Haven's program for establishing indigenous botanical species in the Gardens to attract and sustain regional wildlife and interpreting this program to the public.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

Recommendation IV

Ensure that cost-effective space is available and readily accessible to developing creative individuals and audiences within their natural community:

Community Cultural Centers

The Arts & Science Council should undertake a Master Plan and Fundraising Study for the development of high quality, multi-disciplinary Community Cultural Centers combining exhibition, performance, classroom, rehearsal, artist studios and public meeting spaces. Consideration should be given to proposed Centers that include a “children’s learning center” (a mini-children’s museum), that provides dynamic and educational fun for young children and their parents and caregivers. The children’s learning centers could be multi-disciplinary in approach embracing visual and performing art, science, history and heritage.

The Master Plan study would determine where the Centers would be located in order to meet the geographic needs of the broader community and the needs of the City and County’s ethnically diverse populations.

Although each Center should have its own architectural character, a set of modular specifications for each facility component can be created in order to:

- Guide the development of all such facilities,
- Ensure equity across the County, and
- Enable arts presenters to create traveling programs that could easily be installed or performed at each of these facilities.

Approximately six facilities are recommended over the next 25 years (i.e. an average of one every four years). There are already facilities proposed for North Mecklenburg and East Charlotte. For maximum leveraging of community fiscal resources and ability to attract audiences, opportunities to combine Community Cultural Centers with existing or proposed schools, libraries, and park facilities are recommended. Intergovernmental cooperation, such as facility sharing, will allow arts programming to begin sooner and be assured of being in a location that is already supported and visited.

The facilities should be located within neighborhoods and communities within the City of Charlotte and in the other municipalities of Mecklenburg County, and should reflect the diversity and interests of the residents of these areas in their governance, staffing, audiences and presentations. Cultural programming would be interpreted broadly, including not only performing and visual arts, but also the spoken word, crafts, literature, folkways, foodways, and more. Programming would seek to meet the specific needs of each neighborhood and community; thus, some Centers may choose to include an interactive Children’s Learning Center

component, or programs designed by and for youth, or programs that explore a specific ethnic heritage.

The collaborative nature of these Centers indicates the possibility of opportunities for public and private fundraising. This recommendation deserves more study and detailed thought about joint use and financial opportunities.

Rationale:

- Charlotte's population is expanding tremendously in its numbers, ethnic diversity, educational attainment and interest in the leisure activities offered by a major city. The need now is to establish a relationship of dynamic exchange by creating neighborhood cultural facilities and programs that are rooted in the community but have access to the professional arts of Center City.
- Community Cultural Centers are essential to the development of a more culturally aware population, which will in turn support the Center City arts institutions as participants and as audience.
- Community Cultural Centers are critical in increasing opportunities for public participation in the life of the community.
- Community Cultural Centers play a critical role in advancing emerging creative individuals and cultural groups which need more access to affordable, modest performance, rehearsal and classroom facilities.;
- Suburban municipalities face persistent public pressure for affordable, accessible cultural venues.
- The retirement of existing schools, and the development of new schools, libraries and park facilities, provide opportunities for the cost-effective development of such Community Cultural Centers on a facility-sharing basis in many neighborhoods.

Low-cost studio and creative individual live/work space

Rationale: Modeled on comparable projects elsewhere, this project would provide affordable working studios or live/work space for visual and other creative individuals, on the condition that the artists would open their studios on a predetermined schedule (e.g. Studio Saturdays—the first Saturday of each month) for the public to see—and possibly buy—their work.

Rationale:

- Artists need low-rent studios if they are to produce significant work in Charlotte. Due to Charlotte's rapid growth and relatively strong local economy there are not a great many suitable warehouses or comparable spaces.

- The public needs an opportunity to “demythologize” art by seeing artists at work in their studios and having the opportunity to buy art directly from studios rather than only in commercial galleries.

Non-curated gallery space

Description: Establish and operate galleries for amateur, semi-professional and professional visual artists to rent, in order to exhibit and sell their work.

Rationale:

- Artists need venues independent of commercial galleries and curated museum or art center space to exhibit and sell their work.
- Public needs opportunities to see work produced by artists active in the area.
- A Charlotte Community Gallery serves as a bridge for artists to make the transition from amateur to semi-professional and on to professional status while showing their work and developing a market for it.

Spirit Square Expansion

Description: Spirit Square is currently functioning under the management of the NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center. Over time, Spirit Square has evolved and will continue to evolve as the current tenants “graduate” to other facilities. The Community School of the Arts is one present example in need of more permanent space, and The Light Factory, which has only recently moved in, clearly has the potential to relocate once again in a few years. However, many existing institutions are already requesting more access to performance, rehearsal and classroom facilities, the need for which has been expressed repeatedly throughout our meetings and interviews, particularly by smaller dance, music and theatre companies. Expansion plans could be accommodated in the existing parking lot, if parking for Spirit Square could be offered in the proposed underground parking decks under the projected nearby park in First Ward.

Rationale:

- Smaller theatre, music and dance companies need more access to affordable, modest performance, rehearsal and classroom facilities.
- Spirit Square has served emerging arts groups in the past and will have greater capacity to do so in future, if the opportunity presented by its parking lot is seized.
- This would be a mid-term development, dependent on the provision of major underground parking capacity under the proposed two-block park in First Ward.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Recommendation V

Work with City, County and private stakeholders to link Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural facilities to the community, its businesses and its public amenities with a vibrant, coherent set of signs, trails, and way-finding information.

Cultural District Underground Parking Deck

Description: Develop an underground parking garage beneath the proposed park in First Ward. This would provide fee-based public parking. The underground garage should *not* be dedicated to one of the cultural institutions proposed for the property, since such dedication results in empty streets. Rather, the elevators bringing patrons to the surface should deliver them onto the planned green space and streets around the park. From there, patrons would walk to nearby attractions, retail and dining, or access the Gold Rush Trolley for the same purpose. This would keep people on the streets and enhance its appearance, especially at night and on the weekends, as active and lively. *This is an important long-range solution to the viability of the Cultural District.*

Rationale:

- Parking will continue to be a necessity in Center City even with the new transit system.
- The current proposal offers the best and most cost-effective method of achieving a sufficiently large volume of parking without taking up many barren blocks of paving (as at present).
- There is a need to convey a sense of liveliness and excitement in the Cultural District and Center City due to the movement of people on the streets, especially after work and on weekends. An underground parking garage that is not linked directly to any one attraction, but delivers everyone up to the park and streets, is the most effective way of accomplishing this.

Cultural District Way-Finding

Description: Coordinated by Center City Partners, this City and County infrastructure project is already underway and will provide important methods of linking the cultural facilities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and enlivening Center City via:

- **Transportation:** The City and County have plans for: (1) improved roads; (2) a new radial transit system that connects outlying communities with Center City via an accessible, comfortable and affordable bus and rail system; and, (3) air traffic. The transit and road system in particular offer opportunities for public art, Heritage Trail stations and other cultural expressions.

- **Parks and Greenways:** The Little Sugar Creek Greenway, a 15 mile stretch of trails that cut through the City and County will offer appealing opportunities for combining cultural events, leisure activities and nature.
- **Signage:** A coordinated signage program will increase awareness of and access to cultural opportunities. This program can be linked to the History and Heritage Trail program.

History/Heritage Information Center

Description: A History/Heritage Center would serve to orient residents and visitors to the heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and would be compatible with the new History/Heritage Trail system. The Center would offer small, informative exhibitions, include interactive maps and audio-visual kiosks, be a starting place for walking and driving tours, and be a full Visitor Information Center for tourists, business visitors and newcomers. Subject matter should include a full range of local topics. The Director and staff should be capable of implementing the Way-finding system, developing tours and other cultural opportunities. A subsequent addition to staff that might be considered in future could be a County Archeologist. This was a need that emerged from interviews with history and heritage organizations.

Rationale:

- To inform visitors and residents about the rich heritage of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County.
- To encourage the public to explore the existing heritage attractions and events by ensuring that locations of historic interest are suitably marked and related to others.
- To develop and sustain Heritage Trails and to encourage the public to use them.

History and Heritage Trails

Description: The History and Heritage Trails would be a coordinated system that connects existing (and proposed) heritage and history attractions and interprets formerly unmarked sites to the public. The system could include specific thematically linked “trails” or tours; for instance an African American Heritage Trail would link all four buildings designed by an early 20th century African American architect. A Traditional Music Heritage Trail might link the location of radio station WBT with all sites where recordings were made prior to 1940. Both could have printed maps and audio tours to be picked up and dropped off at a central location. Interpreting currently unmarked sites on the trails could involve graphics, interactives or even cased artifacts on display at transit shelters or similar locations on the streets, as well as the conventional plaques on buildings.

Rationale:

- To stimulate a growing awareness of the history and heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

- To make residents and visitors aware of the City's and County's communities, rather than perceiving their environment as new-built.
- To strengthen the heritage preservation movement, so that more of the City and County's historic fabric is preserved in future.
- To support the existing museums, historic houses and other heritage attractions.

Park and Greenway Interpretive Signage & Nature Center Additions

Description: Support the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department's enhancement of parks and greenways with interpretative signage so that these public spaces become outdoor learning exhibits. For example, the signage program will identify indigenous plants. Interpretation centers are to be added to the Department's three Nature Centers.

Rationale:

- To support environmental education and the appreciation of the natural heritage of the Piedmont throughout the County.
- To increase understanding of environmental problems due to urban development and human occupation of habitats.

Public Art

Description: The Public Art Master Plan has been approved by the City and County and it works in close correlation with the CATS' Public Art Program for the new transit corridors and stations. With the establishment of the "Percent" for Art Ordinances by the City and County, the public's collection of public art works will grow more rapidly not only in the Center City but in communities and neighborhoods across Mecklenburg County. The Public Art program can become a primary connection between the public and the growing, diverse cultural offerings of the City.

BIG IDEAS

Recommendation VI

Continue to explore and coalesce community support behind one or two major new ideas capitalizing on serendipitous opportunities that have the greatest potential to make Charlotte-Mecklenburg a cultural destination.

A near-unanimous finding of the interviews and meetings in this planning process was an agreement that Charlotte needs to develop one or more *big ideas* into major attractions that could make a difference for the city and its visitors, so that Charlotte might become a more powerful cultural heritage or cultural tourism draw, as well as providing its own residents with a richer mix of arts, education and entertainment. Indeed, one of the significant changes insisted upon by numerous groups and individuals was that it is not a question of one “magic bullet,” but rather of a combination of *big ideas* that could be developed over the next few decades.

As the national cultural experts participating in the charrette observed, Charlotte already has several facilities that may be considered in this context – the Levine Museum of the New South, and especially the Mint Museum of Craft + Design. They particularly emphasized the latter as a model rooted in the craft tradition of the Piedmont, but taking that tradition to new levels of national and international quality in its collection and exhibitions.

Each of the following proposed ideas is worthy of continued discussion and detailed planning, focused not only on the new facility needs they imply but also on the significant new programming that would be involved.

Arts, Science and Technology Center

Description: This *big idea* has been proposed by a single potential donor, who has suggested that it should be wide-ranging— combining the arts with science and technology subjects in order to appeal to a very broad market. Bruton Smith is associated with automotive technology, particularly with NASCAR, and although he has agreed that it is possible that the new Museum might include these elements, he is firm in suggesting that they are by no means essential to the much broader concept that he envisages. His emphasis on a broad scope is well-founded: although many persons interviewed were enthusiastic about the potential of a NASCAR focus, in fact the enthusiasts for any sport and the enthusiasts for a museum of that sport are two very different publics; similarly a transportation museum focused on the automotive industry could be successful, but only if full advantage is taken (at high cost) of every possibility of interactivity, and of linking the subject to its social history, in order to make it of wider interest and appeal.

An important issue affecting its development is the relationship between this project and the recommended development of Discovery Place at its present location as a more focused Science and Technology Center. If this project were to go ahead, it would appear advisable and necessary to coordinate its development with the Discovery Place project. It would not be impossible to undertake this reconciliation: the subjects of science and technology (let alone the arts) provide

ample range for agreements to specialize in one discipline or another, or to develop certain specializations in each. Thus this project might focus on automotive transportation, while Discovery Place could concentrate on biotechnology, medicine or space exploration, for instance.

Rationale:

- If produced at a sufficiently high level of excellence, a general museum of arts, science and technology that includes but is not exclusively focused on automotive technology and the NASCAR phenomenon centered in Charlotte could have a broad public appeal throughout the Carolinas, and thus could serve as one of the *big ideas* that could transform the cultural tourist potential of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Greatest Places

Description: *Greatest Places* is the working title given to the major new attraction proposed for development by Discovery Place, which is an element of the umbrella concept, *Places of Discovery*. The facility would provide an opportunity in one location for a "stroll around the world to visit the Earth's greatest natural places". Large-scale re-creations of a broad range of living terrestrial, aquatic, and marine environments will form the core of the exhibitions. Visitors will pass from a surrounding rain forest to a vast desert, then find themselves at the bottom of the ocean surrounded by the flora and fauna of each habitat. The engulfing environments, if produced to a high level of realism and scale, will have a unique status in the United States and will certainly have a powerful "word of mouth" draw, persuading tourists who would otherwise pass by to stop in Charlotte.

This proposal has roots in the Appalachian Mountains and surrounding Piedmont Plateau, a habitat that may be featured, and would address factors currently impacting our own region. The project includes a landmark green building to house the immersive living habitats adjacent to a "Great Park" that may be developed to depict North Carolina indigenous plant and animal species. An important component will be to combine research with exhibits so that the new educational attraction would also serve as a study center dedicated to finding ways to better understand and protect Earth's remaining great natural areas. Thus, *Greatest Places* curators and scientists would not merely be exhibiting habitats that are fast vanishing, but would also be participating in the worldwide struggle to understand and preserve them. Federal funds might be attracted to this purpose.

Rationale:

- The theme is rooted on human identity with the natural habitat and the crucial question of maintaining the growing human population without extinguishing the habitats of other creatures that are vital to it.
- Like the other big ideas, it has the potential for nation-wide and global resonance in the research that would be needed for its permanent and temporary exhibitions and in the role that such a center could play in global environmental education and preservation.

- Discovery Place has the capacity to plan and design it to the level of excellence required to achieve its potential as an internationally recognized cultural attraction and educational resource.
- It is conceived by Discovery Place to complement its renewed focus on science and technology at the existing Tryon Street site.

The Bechtler Museum

Description: Contemporary art museums have recently been established in major metropolitan cities of the United States and provide a vibrant addition to the cultural life of these communities. The sizes of these museums are modest. They are highly focused exhibitions of artworks, which offer the viewing public a more intimate experience. Such an opportunity may be immediately available to the citizens of Charlotte through the generosity of Andreas Bechtler.

Mr. Bechtler has inherited an extraordinary collection of 20th Century modern and contemporary art that tells a story of his family and their personal rapport with many of the greatest artists of our time. The inherited works, joined with his own collection, includes approximately 100 sculptures, 350 paintings, 500 original prints, and 60 limited edition artist illustrated books. The collection includes works by: Alberto Giacometti, Pablo Picasso, Max Ernst, Joan Miro, Alexander Calder, Andy Warhol, Edgar Degas, Georges Braque, Fernand Leger, Jean Tinguely, Kenneth Noland, Alfred Manessier, Eduardo Chillida, Barbara Hepworth, Le Corbusier, Georges Rouault, Paul Klee, Sam Francis, Jasper Johns, Tom Wesselman, Bridget Riley, Ben Nicholson, Nicolas de Staël, and Mark Tobey, among others. The collection is primarily European with particular strengths in French, Swiss and Spanish artists. English and American artists are included as well. The parties involved in this project hoped that the process would be further along in the valuation of the collection before the release of the Cultural Facilities Master Plan. The value of the collection has not yet been established. The interested parties are in the process of securing an item by item appraisal of the collection and have reason to believe that the value will be quite substantial and significantly larger than any previous art collection committed to the Charlotte community by a private or public contributor.

A handful of civic leaders approached Mr. Bechtler to discern his interest in helping establish one of these single-focus museums in Charlotte for the benefit of its citizens. Mr. Bechtler has responded by expressing an interest in committing his highly valued collection to the public. This gesture of extraordinary generosity would require equally generous acts by private and public sectors. The capital costs of the museum would be borne by the public sector while the private sector would endow the museum, enabling its exhibitions and education programs to be accessible to the public at large.

The perfect site for the Bechtler Museum is the property bordered by 6th Street and Tryon. This site has two very important advantages. First, it is contiguous to Charlotte's other single-focus museum, namely the Mint Museum of Craft + Design (also devoted to contemporary artworks). Second, the site includes the Carolina Theatre.

The proposed museum facility includes 35,000 square feet of gallery, storage, offices and public spaces and exploration of the feasibility of the use of the Carolina Theatre auditorium as a film and lecture hall.

The Bechtler Museum is an immediate “big idea” that merits the full attention of our civic and cultural leaders. It is an opportunity that may escape our community if we are not prepared to act in a timely manner with generosity equal to that of Mr. Bechtler himself.

Rationale:

- Creation of a single-focus museum in Charlotte follows an American cultural trend, while distinguishing itself through a specific collection of merit.
- A generous patron has stepped forward to share a highly valued collection of artworks by famous 20th Century artists.
- A site has been selected that is contiguous to another single-focus museum.
- The site provides for the opportunity to explore the feasibility of the use of an historic property.

Traditional Music Hall of Fame

Description: Music Museums and Halls of Fame rooted in local traditions have shown significant power as major attractions not only within a region but also by attracting more widespread renown:

- American Jazz Museum in Kansas City
- Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville
- Experience Music Project in Seattle
- Rock & Roll Hall of Fame and Museum in Cleveland
- Motown Museum in Detroit (under design).

A Traditional Music Museum or Center and Hall of Fame in Charlotte would focus on the acoustic musical traditions developed to the level of fine arts in the Piedmont – string band, bluegrass, gospel and blues. A Museum and Hall of Fame focused on these traditions would draw together contributions from the outlying areas of the Carolinas, the African American community, and a considerable segment of the youth who are rediscovering these traditions in Charlotte today. The attraction might be called either a Museum or a Center, because in addition to a permanent collection centered on the stories of the Hall of Fame inductees (great pickers, gospel groups, blues singers) and both permanent and temporary exhibitions featuring audio-visuals of great performances, it should include a theater for live music by today’s greats. The 1200-seat theater recommended earlier would meet this need if it were integrated with this facility.

A temporary exhibition gallery would be another important component, not only for changing exhibitions to feature particular musicians and new inductees to the Hall of Fame, but also in

order to feature the authentic musical traditions of the many countries from which Charlotte's growing international community originates — Latin American and Caribbean rhythms, Greek folk songs or the gamelan sounds of southeast Asia, for instance. Like the Mint Museum of Craft + Design, the Traditional Music Museum and Hall of Fame would be based in Piedmont traditions, but could reach out to link up these regional art forms with those of comparable quality from across the nation and around the world.

Rationale:

- We have recommended this 'big idea' for further consideration because it fits local and regional strengths with national and global standards of excellence so well, and because it has the potential to draw the entire community together, not only as an audience but as creative contributors —traditional pickers, gospel groups, blues performers and practitioners of the many international music traditions that have been brought to Charlotte by recent arrivals.
- It is a *big idea* that can be developed locally and would be a source of pride for Charlotteans, yet could have "word of mouth" that could cause long-distance vacationers passing through the area to plan an extra stop in Charlotte.
- It is relatively easy to develop by a public/private partnership that the ASC could foster, combining long-standing organizations like the Charlotte Folk Society with dynamic new forces who have indicated an interest in coming together to make a Traditional Music Center happen.
- It honors the past, but also celebrates today's creative musicians, thus linking Charlotte's heritage with contemporary creativity, attracting the kind of creative people who can make a city vibrant over the next quarter century.

PRIORITIZATION

The project partners and Blue Ribbon Committee were charged with both assessing the needs for cultural facility development and establishing a prioritization for addressing the assessed needs.

Recommendation VII

Cultural facility development should be phased in order to systematically address the needs assessed through the planning process.

Phase I

The following projects have been identified as being essential with a compelling urgency. They are critical for the future development of Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural community. The following projects are so designated because they:

- Respond to critical and urgent facility needs;
- Have a made a credible business case for raising the initial capital expense or the project meets an assessed need for which a credible business case for the initial capital can be made;
- Have a robust, comprehensive business plan that ensures overall artistic and financial health of the institution or with additional study can clarify artistic and financial goals which will ensure the health of the institution; and
- Have demonstrated committed, capable leadership ready to lead the fund raising and facility project or are of such compelling urgency that leadership will be forthcoming.

The following projects are recommended as needing development over the next five to seven years:

- **Discovery Place** – Renovation and expansion of North Tryon Street facility; new exhibits. Estimated Cost - \$47,000,000 (\$34 M capital; \$10 M endowment and \$3 M master plan)
- **The Mint Museums** – New Center City facility. Estimated Cost - \$90,000,000 (\$50 M capital and \$40 M endowment)
- **Auxiliary Facility** – Rehearsal, office, construction and storage facility for performing arts organizations and history museums. Estimated Cost - \$9,000,000 (\$8 M capital and \$1 M endowment)
- **Afro-American Cultural Center** – Renovation and expansion of facility on existing East 7th Street site and adjacent City-owned parcel. Estimated Costs - \$13,000,000 (\$10 M capital and \$3 M endowment)

- **Carolina Raptor Center** – Master Plan for Center, begin Phase I of Master Plan implementation. Estimated Costs \$500,000.
- **The Bechtler Museum** - New Center City Museum and adaptive re-use of the façade and portions of the Carolina Theatre. Estimated Costs \$40,000,000 (\$20 M capital and \$20 M endowment)
- **Community Cultural Centers** - High-quality, multi-disciplinary space combining exhibition, performance, classroom, rehearsal, artist studio, and public meeting spaces. Six Centers spread geographically across Mecklenburg Co. over 25 years of plan. Estimated Costs Phase I \$5,000,000 (\$250,000 master plan and \$4.75 M capital for 2 Centers in Phase I).
- **1,200-seat Theater** – To fill void in performance venues between current 750 and 2,100 seat facilities and reduce schedule demands on Belk Theatre at NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in order to allow increased dates for Charlotte Symphony, Opera Carolina and Broadway tours, to name a few. Estimated Costs \$30,000,000 (\$20 M capital and \$10 M endowment)
- **Film venue(s) in Center City** - Commercial, independent and art film venues in the Center City. Estimated Costs N/A (private sector initiative as part of Charlotte Center City Partners development efforts, The Light Factory should be consulted as a partner and presenter of art film).
- **Current Projects** – Financial support to ensure completion of current efforts to develop rehearsal and educational facilities for the North Carolina Dance Theatre and Charlotte Repertory Theatre, complete renovated and expansion of Theatre Charlotte, and a new home for Actor’s Theatre. Estimated Costs \$1,500,000 (\$1.5 capital).

Total Capital and Endowment Investment for Phase I - \$236 million (\$152 million Capital and \$84 million Endowment).

Phase II

The following projects have been identified as being worthy and of definite value but without the urgency of projects identified as Phase I. These projects are recommended for development in years eight to fifteen of the plan:

- **Carolina Raptor Education Center** – Build Education Center and other facilities based on Phase I Master Plan efforts.
- **Community Cultural Centers** – Continue building Centers based on Phase I Master Plan efforts.

- **2,800-seat Theater** - Design and construct a new 2,800-seat theater with full performance capabilities for the presentation of large dance productions, Broadway touring shows, major performing artists and other large public assembly events which would further reduce schedule demands on Belk Theater at NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center in order to allow increased dates for Charlotte Symphony and Opera Carolina, among others.
- **Second Ward High School National Alumni Foundation** – Develop an African-American heritage site and home in the Center City for the Second Ward High School National Alumni Foundation.
- **Afro-American Golf Museum** - Support a feasibility study for an African-American Golf Museum and Hall of Fame and any other sports-related museums or halls of fame under consideration.
- **Low-cost studio and creative individual live/work spaces** - This project would provide working studios or live/work space at low rent for visual and other creative individuals.
- **Non-curated Gallery Space** - Establish and operate galleries for emerging to professional visual artists to rent, in order to exhibit and sell their work.
- **Spirit Square Expansion** – Expand facility into the parking lot at corner of 7th and College Streets to meet the needs of organizations for additional classroom, studio, rehearsal, performance and exhibition space.

Other Deserving Projects

The following projects have been identified as deserving of consideration for future development:

- **Carolina Aviation Museum** - Support plans for a feasibility study for the possible expansion of the Carolina Aviation Museum.
- **Charlotte Trolley Museum** - Develop part of the historic trolley barn in the South End as a museum.
- **Heritage Facilities Capital Improvement Fund** - Establish a Heritage Facilities Capital Improvements Fund to meet the on going needs of the historic plantations and other heritage sites and attractions.
- **Wing Haven Addition** – Complete addition to Wing Haven Offices and Interpretive Center.

Infrastructure

Work with City, County and private stakeholders to link Charlotte-Mecklenburg's cultural facilities to the community, its businesses and its public amenities with a vibrant, coherent set of signs, trails, and way-finding information.

- **Cultural District Way-Finding** - Coordinated by Center City Partners, this City and County infrastructure project is already underway and will provide important methods of linking the cultural facilities of Charlotte-Mecklenburg.
- **Cultural District Underground Parking Deck** - Develop an underground parking garage beneath the proposed park in First Ward as an important long-range solution to the viability of the Cultural District.
- **History/Heritage Information Center** - A center would serve to orient residents and visitors to the heritage of Charlotte-Mecklenburg and would be compatible with the new History/Heritage Trail system.
- **History and Heritage Trails** - The History and Heritage Trails would be a coordinated system that connects existing (and proposed) heritage and history attractions, and interprets formerly unmarked sites to the public.
- **Park and Greenway Interpretive Signage & Nature Center Additions** – Support the Mecklenburg County Park and Recreation Department's enhancement of parks and greenways with interpretative signage so that these public spaces become outdoor learning exhibits and the addition of interpretative centers.
- **Public Art** - With the establishment of the % for Art Ordinances by the City and County, the public's collection of public art works will grow more rapidly not only in the Center City but in communities and neighborhoods across Mecklenburg County. The Public Art program can become a primary connection between the public and the growing, diverse cultural offerings of the City.

THE FINANCING STRATEGY

This section of the report presents a companion strategy for funding the development of cultural facilities identified through the planning process and presents recommendations for general financing principles, recommendations for securing public funds, when required, as well as research on funding models used across the United States for cultural facility development.

Since 1976, the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community has invested \$250,000,000 in new, renovated or expanded cultural facilities and endowments to support the expanded programming and operating costs of these facilities. The primary method for this investment has been through public – private partnerships. A summary of local government, state government and private sector financing of capital projects and associated endowments between 1977 and 2003 is include in this report as *Appendix A*.

The 2003 Cultural Facilities Master Plan has identified ten (10) Phase I projects with a projected investment of \$236 million (\$152 million in capital costs and \$84 million in endowments).

Recommendation VIII

Public/Private partnerships, the standard case for cultural facility development in Charlotte-Mecklenburg since 1977, are recommended as the primary funding method for future cultural facilities.

General Financing Principles for Public/Private Partnerships

- All projects will define the total cost of the project as including both the capital and endowment funds required for offsetting any shortfall in revenues to cover all program and operating costs of the new, expanded or renovated facility (the “Project Costs”).
 - A Business Plan for operating the new, renovated or expanded facility is required. The plan will examine the total cost for operations in the facility and all revenue sources, including, but not limited to earned income, contributed income, support from the Arts & Science Council, government sources and endowment income.
 - Any shortfall in operating revenues will be covered by income and appreciation from endowment funds raised as a part of the project. The size of the endowment should be large enough to preclude the necessity invading the corpus.
- Prior to conducting a fund raising drive in the private sector for a project that requires financial participation by a public partner (e.g. City of Charlotte, Mecklenburg County, Incorporated Town or Special District), the project must first obtain approval from the public partner that it will fund the proposed portion of the project cost contingent on required matching funds being raised from the private sector.
- That public partner(s) shall own any project in which it invests 50% or more of the original “Project Costs”.

- The public partner may obtain its original contribution through:
 - Methods of Finance:
 - General Obligation Bonds – Pledging tax authority of the public partner.
 - Revenue Bonds – Pledging the direct revenues generated from the project.
 - Certificates of Participation – Pledging the asset as collateral
 - Sources of Funding:
 - General Ad Valorem Property Taxes
 - Dedicated Sales Taxes
 - Cultural District Tax Levy
 - Entertainment Ticket Surcharge
 - Rental Car Surcharge
 - Parking Fees
 - Other dedicated revenue streams as approved by the governmental body
- The infusion of public funding should occur only after confirmation that the project has sufficient cash and/or pledges from the private sector or other sources (e.g. state or federal governments) to fulfill its obligations for funding of the project.
- If the public partner owns the facility:
 - Facility lease agreements shall be entered into between the public partner and the non-profit corporation sponsoring the facility setting forth the respective financial obligations of the parties.
 - In general the ongoing responsibility of the public partner shall be to fund utilities, capital replacements, annual and special maintenance and insurance on the facility it owns.
 - The lease fee for the non-profit shall normally be \$1 per year.
 - A management agreement shall be entered into between the public partner and the non-profit setting forth:
 - The type of use to be made of the facility.
 - The responsibility of the non-profit to fund the operating and programmatic expenses not funded by the public partner.
- If the public partner does not own the facility, the non-profit will be responsible for the ongoing funding all costs of operating the facility.

Standard Case

In the standard case, the public partner shall pay 50% of the project cost and shall own the resulting facility but special considerations may be given to greater or lesser % participation by the public partner and resulting ownership based on mutual agreement of the public partner and the non-profit organization.

Non Standard Case

There are a variety of possible innovative collaborative arrangements involving joint ventures among non-profit arts organizations, for profit businesses and governmental bodies. There is no one standard format but there are certain identifiable common elements such as:

- Construction economies derived from one structure housing more than one entity or function.
- Common support or infrastructure facilities serving two or more entities.
- Financing advantage of one entity versus another.

Two examples illustrating the possibilities inherent in the above elements - the NC School of the Arts-Krispy Kreme Headquarters project in Winston-Salem, NC and the Bank of America-NC Blumenthal Performing Arts Center project in Charlotte – are included as *Appendix B*.

Recommendation IX

A coordinated strategy and fund raising effort should be developed for raising the private sector resources required to match public funds invested in the recommended cultural facilities.

Unified fund raising efforts have long been effective in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. This includes both the nationally recognized annual united arts fund conducted by the ASC and the 1995 and 1997 endowment campaigns for the cultural community. It has been proven that these unified efforts provide cost savings and a broader public appeal that has resulted in successful fund raising campaigns.

Recommendation X

Local governments should identify and levy a dedicated revenue stream to fund the development of cultural facilities across Charlotte-Mecklenburg including a dedicated portion of revenue to cover any increased operating costs.

Local Government Financing of Cultural Facilities

Charter authority generally grants cities and towns authority to levy any taxes *not specifically prohibited* by the legislature. Counties may only levy taxes specifically authorized by the state legislature. Currently local governments nationally have demonstrated at least 26 different taxes, often identified by such titles as fees or surcharges. These include:

Real Property
Bank Franchise

Alcohol License
Machinery and Tools

Tangible Personal Property
Cable TV Franchise

Sale and Use	Cable TV Excise	Transient Occupancy
Merchant's Capital	Meals	Consumer Utility
Cigarette	Admissions	Recordation
Probate	Coal and Gas Severance	E-911
Oil Severance	Daily Rental Property	Income
Utility License	Motor Fuels Sales	Video rental
Business, Professional, Occupational License (BPOL)		

A complete review of funding scenarios used for cultural facilities across the U.S. is included in this report as a reference document as *Appendix C*. In addition to this summary, a more detailed review of these funding scenarios is available through the offices of the Arts & Science Council. The Committee evaluated funding scenarios to determine the feasibility of specific revenue streams. Evaluation criteria included:

- A review of the legislative authority required to enact the revenue stream;
- The timeframe required to levy the tax;
- The potential revenue generation; and
- The burden placed on any specific sector of the tax base.

While a number of the aforementioned revenue streams offer possibilities for the Charlotte-Mecklenburg community, it is the recommendation of this Committee that the following revenue streams best meet the above evaluation criteria and should be considered first as having the most potential for cultural infrastructure development:

Ticket Surcharge – The North Carolina General Statutes allow the City to levy a ticket surcharge under existing authority. A ticket tax is not currently allowed. A 3% ticket surcharge on tickets sold at all City-owned facilities would generate approximately \$1.8 million annually.

Rental Car – In 1997, the NC Legislature granted authority to the Triangle Regional Transit Authority and the Triad Regional Transit Authority to levy a car rental tax of up to 5%. The City of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County each have a 1.5% rental car tax that was approved to replace property tax on rental vehicles in 2000. The City does not currently have authority to impose an additional 5% as the authorized for the Triangle and Triad; however, authority could be requested from the Legislature. A 5% car rental tax would generate approximately \$5.7 million annually.

Prepared Food & Beverage – A one (1) cent increase would generate approximately \$13 million dollars annually. However, NC Legislative approval would be required to increase this is a countywide tax.

Occupancy Tax – Funds from the current occupancy tax (6%) are dedicated to tourism related facilities and programs (e.g. Convention Center, new Arena, Visit Charlotte and Mecklenburg municipalities). An increase in the current rate would require approval

from the NC Legislature. A 1-cent increase would generate approximately \$2.5 million annually.

Real Property – An increase in the property tax for capital purposes can be approved by the City Council or County Commission. No additional authority from the State is required. A one (1) cent increase in the current City property tax would generate approximately \$5.9 million annually. A one (1) cent increase in the current County property tax would generate approximately \$8 million annually.