

CITY OF NEWTON

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN

LONG RANGE PLANNING COMMITTEE REPORT

Wednesday, April 14, 2010

Present: Ald. Linsky (Chairman), Lennon, Sangiolo, Crossley, Blazar, Danberg, and Fuller
Also present: Robert Rooney (Chief Operating Officer)

#73-09 PRESIDENT BAKER, ALD. HESS-MAHAN, VANCE, ALBRIGHT, LENNON, SALVUCCI, LINSKY & SCHNIPPER requesting discussion of the recommendations of the Citizen Advisory Group as may be relevant for long-range planning for the City for coming fiscal years.

HELD

Ald. Linsky reminded the Committee that at the last meeting there was a presentation by two former members of the Citizen Advisory Group, Malcolm Salter, and Neil Silverston, on an economic reporting model. Ald. Fuller pointed out that the economic model came out of a recommendation of the Long Range Planning Committee to create a five-year forecast of revenues and expenses. The previous administration responded to the request and created a five-year forecast for the prior three years; however, the new administration has not done a five-year forecast for this budget cycle. Normally the forecast is done in January or February in preparation for the budget. It is an important first step in developing the budget and Ald. Fuller stated that it should always be included in the annual cycle. Ald. Danberg voiced her support of the administration providing an annual five-year forecast.

Ald. Fuller provided the Committee with a written update (attached) on the initiatives that she originally generated in January of 2010. Ald. Fuller explained that in January of 2010 she came to the Long Range Planning Committee with a long list of initiatives that grew out of the Citizen Advisory Group that the City might want to tackle in the next couple of years. Ald. Fuller reviewed each of the initiatives with the Committee. The Finance Committee through its Financial Audit Sub-committee is working on forming an ad-hoc audit committee to work with the Mayor's Office to update, revise, and improve the financial management guidelines that were approved by the Board of Aldermen in January 2008. The first priority of the Committee is likely to be the financial reserve policy. However, there are other equally important initiatives to address like the compensation policy, which drive about 70% of the budget. At the moment, there is no compensation policy. The City needs to determine where it wants to be in terms of compensation and develop a policy. The city also needs to decide what activities should include a user fee, whether the fees should be full-cost or partial and which activities should be subsidized. The ad hoc committee should also look at a long-term capital assets analysis and debt service policy. The City needs some guidelines to determine what percent of the budget should be put towards debt service and capital asset management. Ald. Fuller added that the City needs to begin to address retiree health care benefits funding. The City is currently not funding

retiree health care benefits. The City needs to create a policy that addresses funding the retiree health care benefits, how much to fund per year, and what the funding source to use.

The Financial Audit Sub-committee is also working on developing a more comprehensive mission statement for the ad hoc committee. The draft of the mission includes responsibilities of the committee, such as review of the effectiveness of the City's internal control systems, looking at the substantive material weaknesses evaluation of significant risk or exposure facing the City and review of the policies and procedures related to uses of expense accounts, public monies, and public properties.

Ald. Fuller updated the Committee on the other initiatives not related to the ad hoc committee. There has been no broad work done on consolidating, outsourcing, and regionalization opportunities. However, some of the individual departments have begun to look at these types of possibilities. The Board of Aldermen has not begun any work on the initiative. The Board is beginning to look at long-term capital asset management. There is currently a proposed resolution before the Board requesting that the Mayor finance a study of the physical condition of the City's capital assets including buildings, roads, sidewalks, parks, and infrastructure resulting in a database to be used to prioritize the City's capital maintenance needs. The Mayor's Office is looking at how to precede with capital maintenance projects. The Mayor's Office is working on vehicle use guidelines.

Ald. Linsky suggested that the Committee hold the discussion of the initiatives until the next meeting of the Committee. He recommended that the Committee review Ald. Fuller's update before the next meeting and the Committee members thanked Ald. Fuller for all of her hard work. Committee members supported the Chairman's recommendation and the item was held.

(1) update on ongoing initiatives

(a) report on capital budgeting

The Committee will discuss capital budgeting at a later date.

(b) report on Green Communities Act

Ald. Crossley provided the Committee with an update on the Green Communities Act. The docket items related to earning the Green Community Badge are on the brink of passage. Each Docket Item has gone through the appropriate Committee/s and has been approved through a resolution or voted no action necessary as the docket item is already doable under the City's ordinances. A request for a resolution will be referred to the Programs and Services Committee, which contains all of the language of each of the docket items in order to present documentation to the State that the City has met all of the Green Community Badge requirements as concisely as possible.

Ald. Crossley added that fifteen communities have passed the stretch code and are intending to submit an application to the State to earn the Green Community Badge in order to apply for the associated grant. Ald. Crossley heard that of the fifteen communities four of them are not likely to earn the designation due to the energy-action plan requirement. The City of Newton is well on its way to showing that it can achieve the 20% energy savings over five years as required. The Planning Department is overseeing the Green Community Badge application, which will be submitted as a draft for review by the State next week. The final application will be submitted as soon as the Board resolution is available. The deadline for the application is May 14, 2010 and the grant application must be submitted by May 28, 2010. It is critical that the City submit the grant application as soon as possible.

The Committee thanked Ald. Crossley for all the work she has put forth to earn the Green Community Badge. Ald. Crossley recognized volunteer Stephanie Gilman for all of her work related to gathering all of the energy data required by the State.

(2) report on other potential initiatives

(a) presentation by Newton Cultural Alliance

Members of the Newton Cultural Alliance joined the Committee and provided a packet of information on the relationship between art and culture programs and the economy. Information contained in the packet is available on the Long Range Planning Committee page. Adrienne Hartzell introduced the members of the Newton Cultural Alliance in attendance: Thomas Concannon, Charles Eisenberg, Susan Paley, and Ald. Danberg.

The Cultural Alliance was formed approximately five years ago shortly after the former Carr School became available to non-profit organizations to rent space within. The City's own Cultural Affairs/Arts in the Park Division is also located at the former Carr School. Ms. Hartzell recognized Linda Plaut, Director of the Cultural Affairs Division, huge contributions to the cultural activity in the City. Ms Plaut is responsible for many cultural and art related programs, such as programs for children, Arts in the Parks, park concerts, and dances.

Many of the cultural organizations felt that an alliance should be formed to work together to inform people of the many different cultural and arts related programs and entertainment within the City. There are 11 cultural and arts organizations in the cultural alliance. There is a large wealth of cultural resources in Newton but after the terrorist attack in September of 2001, there was a large drop in audiences because people did not want to go out or congregate in public places. It made it very difficult for art organizations to survive. In response to the plight of the organizations, the Mayor made the Carr School available. The cultural organizations became aware of the need within the City to have greater advocacy and really use arts to pull the community together. The Cultural Alliance developed the tag line "Uniting Culture and Community."

The Cultural Alliance has a three-pronged mission: to increase awareness and advocacy for arts and culture in the City, the second part is to work on economic development by working

with the business community and to try to find a way to increase audiences and revenues. The third prong of the mission is to work towards have a permanent cultural facility in Newton, as so many cities across the country have. There have been all kinds of activity but no real place to focus performances and exhibitions. One of the first things that the alliance did before incorporation was to apply to the Massachusetts Cultural Council for a cultural facility's grant. The Newton Cultural Alliance has received two grants from the Cultural Council. The first grant money received was to study what groups and organizations across the City might comfortably work together in a collaborative environment, was completed last year. The second grant that was received is for study of a potential collaborative facility at a specific site in the City. The alliance is currently studying various locations around Newton, such as the Andover-Newton School. The alliance also received the John and Abigail Adams Grant, which is a planning grant for a sustainable economic development project. The alliance has begun talking with NewTV and the Chamber of Commerce to develop a plan to work together to enhance revenue and audiences.

The Newton Cultural Alliance's new website will be available next week and will contain a calendar of Newton activities and events. The Arts Boston Organization powers the website. They have cutting-edge software that they wish to share with municipalities and organizations across the Commonwealth. The Newton Cultural Alliance is a pilot project for the Arts Boston Organization's website.

Ald. Danberg stated that the City has been talking about how to regionalize and how to cooperate with other communities. People and groups working together can maximize the available resources. The Cultural Alliance believes it has found a way to help the cultural and arts organizations in the City of Newton with a very small amount of money by hooking into the Arts Boston website. There is now a state of the art website for cultural events in the City of Newton for \$1,000 a year.

Ald. Linsky pointed out that you do not see communities that are viable that do not have a strong culture and art components. It has been shown that one of the main reasons that people choose to live in a community is that it has a rich arts culture. Ald. Fuller asked what role or action the alliance would like the City of Newton to take. Ms. Hartzell thought that would be great if there was a link to the Cultural Alliance on the City's homepage. Also down the road, she would like to consider working with the city on grant writing and other public/private partnerships like working to strengthen the economic driver of the arts in the City. She would also like the City's support of a cultural center within the City.

The Chair thanked the members of the Cultural Alliance for their presentation.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:03 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Alderman Stephen Linsky, Chair

**Update on Potential Initiatives for the City of Newton Board of Aldermen
2010 – 2011**

Prepared for the Long Range Planning Committee of the Board of Aldermen
by Ruthanne Fuller
April 13, 2010

In January 2010, I outlined ten initiatives that the Board of Aldermen could take in the next couple of years that could make a significant difference in the life of the City.

This is a brief update on the initiatives.

The potential initiatives included:

1. Compensation Guidelines: This is being folded into the work of updating the Financial Management Guidelines (see #6 below).

2. Retiree Health Care Funding: This is being approached in two ways. First, the Audit Subcommittee of the Finance Committee will be discussing the idea of establishing a separate trust fund, to be known as the Other Post Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund, into which appropriations may be made for future post employment benefits, especially health care coverage for retirees. The Audit Committee or the Finance Committee will also be discussing:

- Amount of annual required contribution that should be funded now and over the next thirty years for both the annual costs and the amortized amount of the unfunded actuarially accrued liability
- Source of funding for the annual required contribution (General Fund (specific source(s)?), debt exclusion override, general override or some combination of the three)

Second, the possibility of retiree health care benefits will be folded into the work of updating the Financial Management Guidelines (see #6 below). See the attached memo as well.

3. User Fee Guidelines: This is being folded into the work of updating the Financial Management Guidelines (see #6 below).

4. Organizing for Effectiveness & Efficiency: Consolidation, Outsourcing and Regionalization: No action at the moment by the Board of Aldermen.

5. Long Term Capital Assets: There are quite a few steps related to managing and funding the City's capital assets more effectively. A few of them have action plans:

- The Board of Aldermen is considering a resolution to the Mayor to conduct a comprehensive survey of the physical condition, maintenance and renovation/replacement needs of municipal buildings, roads, sidewalks, recreational, utility and other infrastructure elements throughout the city, resulting in a database for prioritizing, maintaining and tracking of maintenance, and capital projects (docket item #68-10).
- The Mayor's Office is rethinking the process of how municipal and school maintenance is done and by which departments and personnel

- Reviewing the guidelines for percent of revenues devoted to debt service to increase the amount of funded debt and thus redress the persistent bias against infrastructure spending is being folded into the work of updating the Financial Management Guidelines (see #6 below).
- Improving analysis of potential capital expenditures including analyzing all capital investments on a life-cycle cost basis is being folded into the work of updating the Financial Management Guidelines (see #6 below).

6. Financial Management Guidelines: The Finance Committee has an ad hoc group working with the Comptroller and the Mayor's Office to review and update the financial management guidelines. A broad variety of financial policies might be considered including:

- Financial Reserves Policy
- Compensation Policy
- User Fee Policy
- Capital Assets Analysis and Debt Service Policy
- Retiree Health Care Benefit Funding Policy

Creating a more robust Financial Reserves Policy is likely to be the first step.

7. Vehicle Use Guidelines: The Mayor's Office is working on this issue.

8. Financial Control Procedures: The Audit Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee is in the process of drafting a more comprehensive mission, including its purpose, structure, composition, and responsibilities. The current draft of the mission includes the responsibility for the following:

- Consider the effectiveness of the City's internal control systems, including information technology security and control.
- Evaluate areas of significant risk or exposure facing the City; assess the steps management has taken or proposes to take to minimize such risks; and periodically review compliance with such steps.
- Understand the scope of external auditors' review of internal control over financial reporting, and obtain reports on significant findings and recommendations, together with management's responses.
- Review with the Executive office the policies and procedures with respect to public officials' and management's use of expense accounts, public monies, and public property, including, for example, their use of City vehicles.

The Audit Sub-Committee is also pursuing with Department heads improvements to the City's financial control procedures.

9. Community Foundation Task Force: No action.

10. Fire Call Box System Review: No action.

Retiree Health Care Funding

Prepared for the Audit Sub-Committee of the Board of Aldermen Finance Committee

by Ruthanne Fuller

Updated February 26, 2010

Newton, like the vast majority of cities and towns in Massachusetts and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts itself, is facing an enormous financial issue related to the unfunded liability for retiree health care and other non-pension benefits.¹ These non-pension post-employment benefits are, in plain English, health care and life insurance coverage for retirees and their survivors.

Background Information:

As noted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Special Commission on Other Non-Pension Employee Benefits in July 2008,

In order to recruit and retain public service employees, state and municipal governments across the country have for decades been offering pension and other post-employment benefits (OPEB), most notably health care. The offerings have, in general, helped state and local governments attract quality employees ...

The City of Newton is pre-funding its pension obligations. (In FY2009, for example, we made the appropriate actuarially required contribution of \$12.6 million.)

In contrast, at present, Newton pays for its retirees' health care and life insurance coverage on a pay-as-you-go basis. In other words, Newton did not set aside money in the past when these employees were actively working in order to pay for their health care and life insurance when they retired. Nor is Newton now setting aside funds for its current employees in order to pay for their health care once they retire in the future. Rather, these "unfunded" retiree health care costs are, as a matter of policy, paid for through annual appropriations. (The health insurance contribution rates of plan members and Newton are 20% and 80%, respectively. Newton reimburses 80% of Medicare Part B premiums paid by retirees. The plan members and Newton each contribute 50% towards a \$5,000 term life insurance premium.) In FY09, the cost of the pay-as-you-go method came to \$14.1 million dollars.

New accounting standards issues by the Government Accounting Standards Board (GASB) in 2004 require municipalities to disclose the total amount of these actuarially determined future liabilities and the amount required to be paid currently to cover these future health care and life insurance costs. In addition, the Government Accounting Standards Board recommends, but does not require, that the annual required contribution be funded each year.

According to the FY09 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report prepared by Newton's Comptroller, the total unfunded future liability stood at \$595.6 million as of June 30, 2009. The annual required contribution (ARC) represents a level of funding that if paid on an ongoing basis in the present is projected to cover these future liabilities. *For FY09, Newton needed to pay \$33 million dollars this year (above and beyond the current \$14.1 million that we did pay) to fund*

¹ These retiree health care and other non-pension benefits are often labeled as "Other Post-Employment Benefits" with the acronym, OPEB.

our future liability. This \$33 million payment is not a one time payment. Newton will need to pay more than \$20 million - \$25 million *annually* for the next thirty years. *In light of Newton's current budget of approximately \$300 million in which there is considerable concern about lack of funds to pay for current level of services and such underfunded areas as capital maintenance and refurbishment, this \$33 million represents a significant area needing additional funding..*

The pay-as-you-go method that Newton (like so many other cities and towns) is using is not sustainable. Because life expectancies and health care costs are rising simultaneously, the future retiree health care costs represent a significant unfunded obligation. Newton, like so many other cities and towns, has made a commitment to public service employees to provide health care benefits after they retire – these commitments are growing annually and Newton, like so many others, has not adequately saved to pay for these commitments.

A useful analogy is to think of the City of Newton continuing to make purchases on its credit card while only paying the minimum balance.

Pre-funding is both prudent and necessary. By saving early, the total liability is reduced dramatically. According to an analysis by the Commonwealth, full pre-funding following the guidelines of the Generally Accepted Accounting Principles for Governments *reduces the liability by 45%.*² Without pre-funding, Newton places on future Newton residents a crippling obligation. Without pre-funding, Newton also seriously threatens its commitment to pay former, current and future retirees health care and life insurance benefits.

Until very recently, individual cities and towns had to get legislative approval from the Commonwealth to establish a retiree healthcare trust fund. Cities and towns like Needham, Lexington and Wellesley did just that. They sought and received a home rule petition to set up a trust fund. In May 2007, Wellesley citizens voted yes overwhelmingly (a 68% yes vote) for a \$1.8 million debt exclusion override annually for ten years to fund their liability.

Cities and towns in Massachusetts can take advantage of a law passed in 2009, MGL Chapter 32B, Section 20. This law allows the local option of establishing an Other Post Employment Liability Trust Fund. This irrevocable trust fund provides a vehicle to make contributions to meet the unfunded liability. The City of Cambridge, for example, recently accepted this and made an initial transfer of \$2.0 million from the City's Health Insurance Claims Trust fund into it.

One of the important choices that the City of Newton has been making is to not set aside money currently for any of Newton's health and life insurance post-retirement benefits for employees that have already retired and for current employees who will eventually retire.

This policy is fundamentally flawed. It transfers to future Newton tax payers costs that are appropriately born by the current ones and fails to take advantage of the power of compounding that pre-funding permits. While Newton has been facing difficult funding decisions for a number of years, the City has an obligation, morally and fiscally, to find the funds to pay for its commitments to retirees. Waiting until the Commonwealth passes legislation to force

² Special Commission to Investigate and Study the Commonwealth's Liability for Paying Retiree Health Care and Other Non-Pension Employee Benefits. "Reporting and Funding OPEB Liabilities." July 2008.

municipalities to fund these liabilities (as it did with pensions) simply puts off until tomorrow payments that should be made today at much lower amounts.

In the midst of our severe budget pressures – with revenues from the State declining, high unemployment in the City (over 6%), rising health care costs, and capital assets needing significantly more funding – we may be tempted to ignore or postpone this investment. But, we do so at our own peril. The bill for retiree health care costs is already high and will continue to rise significantly if we do not set aside enough money to pay for them while simultaneously looking for ways to bring down costs. In addition, future residents of Newton will face high annual costs to fund these liabilities, lower bond ratings, less money available for services, and higher taxes if we do not have the discipline today to fund retiree health care benefits.

Parker Sub-Committee:

A Subcommittee of the City's Finance Committee, chaired by Alderman Ken Parker, was appointed to study this issue. Joining Alderman Parker on the Subcommittee were Aldermen Marcia Johnson and John Freedman; Newton residents Robert Gifford and George Foord; and City Comptroller David Wilkinson.

The subcommittee's report was issued in December 2009. Its recommendations were:

1. The City should accept Chapter 479 of the Acts of 2008, allowing the creation of a dedicated trust fund for advance funding of post retirement health care benefits (*Note: This is also known as Massachusetts General Law Chapter 32B, Section 20, Other Post Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund*);
2. The City should offer all employee bargaining units the opportunity to contribute to this fund up to a set amount with a match based on the current ratio of health care premium contributions;
3. The City should take all reasonable available measures to control the rate of increase in employee health care costs for current employees and retirees, while making quality health coverage; and
4. The amount of funds available for matching employee contributions should be increased in years in which the rate of increase in cost of current and retiree health care benefits is low and there is sufficient operating budget flexibility.

Conclusion and Next Steps:

Newton should address the commitments it has made to its employees for non-pension post-employment benefits with planning, prudence and fiscal responsibility. Just as Newton has been funding its pension liabilities, so too it should be funding its retiree health insurance liabilities.

As a first step, the Board of Aldermen should discuss and pass the following docket item:

Ald. ... requesting that the Board of Aldermen adopt the provisions of Massachusetts General Laws Chapter 32B, Section 20 which allows the City of Newton to establish a separate trust fund, to be known as the

Other Post Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund, into which appropriations may be made for future post employment benefits, especially health care coverage for retirees.

In addition, the Finance Committee may want to appoint a Sub-Committee that might include Aldermen, staff members and possibly citizens to address:

- Amount of annual required contribution that should be funded now and over the next thirty years for both the annual costs and the amortized amount of the unfunded actuarially accrued liability
- Source of funding for the annual required contribution (General Fund (specific source(s)?), debt exclusion override, general override or some combination of the three)
- Methods to reduce the costs of health care

PART I. ADMINISTRATION OF THE GOVERNMENT

TITLE IV. CIVIL SERVICE, RETIREMENTS AND PENSIONS

CHAPTER 32B. CONTRIBUTORY GROUP GENERAL OR BLANKET INSURANCE FOR PERSONS IN THE SERVICE OF COUNTIES, CITIES, TOWNS AND DISTRICTS, AND THEIR DEPENDENTS

Chapter 32B: Section 20. Other Post Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund; local option; funding schedule

[Text of section added by 2008, 479 effective January 10, 2009.]

Section 20. A city, town, district, county or municipal lighting plant that accepts this section, may establish a separate fund, to be known as an Other Post Employment Benefits Liability Trust Fund, and a funding schedule for the fund. The schedule and any future updates shall be designed, consistent with standards issued by the Governmental Accounting Standards Board, to reduce the unfunded actuarial liability of health care and other post-employment benefits to zero as of an actuarially acceptable period of years and to meet the normal cost of all such future benefits for which the governmental unit is obligated. The schedule and any future updates shall be: (i) developed by an actuary retained by a municipal lighting plant or any other governmental unit and triennially reviewed by the board for a municipal lighting plant or by the chief executive officer of a governmental unit; and (ii) reviewed and approved by the actuary in the public employee retirement administration commission.

The board of a municipal lighting plant or the legislative body of any other governmental unit may appropriate amounts recommended by the schedule to be credited to the fund. Any interest or other income generated by the fund shall be added to and become part of the fund. Amounts that a governmental unit receives as a sponsor of a qualified retiree prescription drug plan under 42 U.S.C. 1395w-132 may be added to and become part of the fund.

The custodian of the fund shall be: (i) a designee appointed by the board of a municipal lighting plant; or (ii) the treasurer of any other governmental unit. Funds shall be invested and reinvested by the custodian consistent with the prudent investor rule set forth in chapter 203C.

This section may be accepted in a city having a Plan D or Plan E charter by vote of the city council; in any other city by vote of the city council and approval of the mayor; in a town by vote of the town at a town meeting; in a district by vote of the governing board; in a municipal lighting plant by vote of the board; and in a county by vote of the county commissioners.

<http://www.mass.gov/legis/laws/mgl/32b-20.htm>

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Who is the Newton Cultural Alliance

A consortium of Newton-based non-profit arts and cultural organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life in Newton through programming and collaborative work promoting arts and culture in Newton.

There are three prongs to NCA's goals:

Advocacy and awareness - Economic development - Facilities

NCA seeks to build awareness of the richness in cultural activity that exists in Newton and the potential for even greater activity. The resources of the city are diverse and widespread.

- The first goal is to build public awareness through signage, a comprehensive website and a cultural calendar to include the multitude of cultural opportunities and venues.
- The second prong is to seek economic stimulus and development for the City of Newton through cultural tourism and development of arts and cultural partnerships with the business community of the area.
- The third prong is to consider and develop but a short/medium term as well as a long term plan for shared cultural facility(ies) to house offices, classrooms, rehearsal and teaching spaces and ultimately performance space.

Incorporated in 2009 as a not for profit (pending) organization, the current board members are:

- President, Thomas Concannon, former Mayor
- Charles Eisenberg, Treasurer
- Victoria Danberg, Clerk
- Directors:
 - Joe Carella (Scandinavian Living Center)
 - David Gastfriend
 - Robert Gifford
 - Tessa Gordon
 - Barbara Grossman
 - Adrienne Hartzell (New Philharmonia Orchestra)
 - Sachiko Isihara (Suzuki School of Newton)
 - State Representative Kay Khan
 - Susan Paley (The Village Bank)
 - Andy Vizulis (Newton Symphony)

NCA is currently located on the web at www.newtonculture.org. Physical office is at Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Farwell Hall. 617-332-4300. The NCA will shortly be reaching out to the colleges and churches of Newton.

As of this time, membership includes:

- Organization memberships:
 - Boston Ballet School
 - Capella Clausura
 - Highland Glee Club
 - Historic Newton
 - New Arts Center
 - New Philharmonia Orchestra
 - Newton Symphony Orchestra
 - Sharing a New Song
 - Suzuki School of Newton
 - Zamir Chorale
- Other organizations with membership pending:
 - Newton Choral Society
 - Turtle Lane Theater
- Potential organizational membership:
 - All Newton Music School
 - Highland Jazz
 - Newton Art Association
 - Newton Community Chorus
 - Newton Country Players
 - Youth Pro Musica
- Potential community partners:
 - Boys and Girls Club
 - City of Newton
 - JCC
 - NewTV
 - Newton -Needham Chamber
 - YMCA

March 2010

About the Newton Cultural Alliance

Vision & Mission

The Newton Cultural Alliance is a coalition of non-profit cultural organizations whose mission is to **promote, sustain and enhance Culture in Newton in service to the community**. The NCA has been created to actively promote concepts and ideas of culture and arts for the City of Newton and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. The NCA is designed as a resource for the entire community to inspire, educate and bring together audiences and artists to celebrate the arts and enrich the cultural life in Newton. It serves as a gathering place for the community at large and cultivates the creation and continuance of youth programs and opportunities for multi-generational interaction designed to broaden social skills and knowledge in the cultural arts. The NCA assists and supports non-profit organizations that sponsor programs that further these purposes and encourages and promotes culture and arts within the various villages of the City of Newton. www.newtonculture.org.

Goals

- To actively promote concepts and ideas of culture and arts for the improvement and quality of the environment within the various villages, within the geographical area of the City of Newton and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts
- To assist and support non-profit organizations that sponsor programs that further these purposes
- To encourage and promote culture and arts within the various villages of the City of Newton
- To foster the creation and or continuance of youth programs designed to broaden social skills and knowledge in the culture and arts, and to foster opportunities for multi-generational interaction through culture and arts
- To receive gifts of property, both real and personal, and to raise funds from private and public sources to implement the above goals and to establish a reserve fund from which earning and or principal may be withdrawn to promote these goals

History of the Newton Cultural Alliance

- 2004 the City began exploring a home for the arts at the former Carr School, in Newtonville
- September 2005 four local non-profit organizations - Suzuki School of Newton, New Philharmonia Orchestra (NPO), New Repertory Theatre and WarmLines - began working with the Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs at the former Carr School, now known as the Newton Cultural Center.
- 2007 NCA awarded MCC Feasibility Planning Grant
- February 2008 NCA hosted an open community meeting to discuss the idea of developing a cultural facility in Newton, bringing local arts organizations together and furthering community awareness.
- May 2009 NCA awarded 2nd MCC Feasibility Planning Grant
- June 2009 NCA became incorporated
- 2009 the NCA has established office space on the Andover Newton Theological School Campus (ANTS)
- 2009 the New Philharmonia Orchestra and the Newton Symphony Orchestra joined the NCA on the ANTS Campus
- November 2009 Announcement of NCA Membership Program
- January 2010, receipt of a John and Abigail Adams Planning Grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council – to plan the **Newton Cultural Passport Program** – which will develop ways to raise awareness of Newton's cultural products and create synergies between the Alliance's member organizations and the business community in an effort to increase revenue for both.

NCA Grants Summary

To date the NCA has been awarded three Massachusetts state grants: two feasibility study grants from the Mass Development/Massachusetts Cultural Council's (MCC) Cultural Facilities Fund to explore the concept and planning of a permanent facility for Newton cultural organizations and an Adams Arts Planning Grant for a cultural economic project.

Cultural Facilities Grants

The Facilities Planning grants proposed a two-phased vision to create a mid-size community arts center and ultimately a performing arts center. In the current economic climate with more gradual funding options than originally planned, this facility planning has undergone some modification by now adapting a "three Tier" approach.

Cultural Facilities Feasibility Planning

Tier I: Project Budget: \$37,500 (completed November 2009)

The study funded by the first of the MCC's planning grants demonstrated the need and compatibility for shared office, classroom, and modest rehearsal/ performance space in a viable location and identified potential partners in Newton to be part of the alliance managing these shared resources. Tier I determined that the best model to consider is one having two types of participants: 1) Residents of the Cultural Center and 2) Regular renters. (As of this writing, Potential Residents include: New Philharmonia, Newton Symphony Orchestra, Suzuki School of Newton and New TV. Potential renters include The Boston Ballet's Metrowest School.) This concept study also considered other key points including adapting a reasonable long range timeline, governance structure and benchmarking of similar collaborative facilities in existence throughout the U.S.

Tier II: Project Budget: \$54,000 (in progress)

Based on the Tier I plan, NCA identified a potential partnership with the Andover Newton Theological School (ANTS) on their Newton Centre campus and is in the process of exploring a business plan for developing a cultural center with Resident Companies (NSO, NPO & NCA) and offices, rehearsal spaces being rented out to members and a mid-sized rehearsal/performance space. Tier II of the vision is being funded by a second MassDevelopment/MCC Grant, with matching funds from NCA Member Board members and individuals in the community. If Andover Newton Theological School is determined to be a suitable landlord for this cultural center, an architectural study would consider buildings available to NCA on the ANTS campus, taking into consideration suitability of space, ADA compliance, security and fire/safety. This partnership would leverage ANTS's historic campus in new mission-aligned ways through the renovation of existing buildings to create a mid-size community arts center. The final deliverable will be a fully-developed business plan with space usage defined based on the architectural conceptual drawings and the completion of negotiations with ANTS regarding the terms of a partnership.

Tier III

The grant received for the Tier II study was only a portion of the funds requested. As a result a Tier III has now been established as the "yet to be funded" portion of the feasibility study. In Tier III, The Wayland Group or similar fundraising counsel will be engaged to conduct a fundraising feasibility study and create a capital campaign road map based upon the results of the fundraising study.

Adams Arts Grant

Project Budget: \$3,750 (in progress)

NCA has received a grant to create a Newton Cultural Passport Program, to develop ways to raise awareness of Newton's cultural products and create synergies between the Newton Cultural Alliance's member organizations and the business community in an effort to increase revenue for both.

As of February 1, 2010

Environmental Analysis

In the city of Newton there are over twenty non-profit cultural groups including: 2 symphonies, 3 large choruses, New Art Center, New Art Association, Boston Ballet school, 2 music schools, Newton Country Players, Newton Historical Society, Jackson Homestead, a playwright's association (Commonwealth Project), Chinese Dance Association, Highland Jazz, Highland Glee Club, among others.

The abundance of organizations has a substantial economic impact on the City of Newton and is recognized as an asset to the city. There is a very high level of involvement by members of the community in and around these organizations. On the one hand, this involvement roots the cultural organizations in the community – which strengthens culture in the city and makes it irrevocable. On the other hand, this high level of engagement necessitates a need for diplomacy and coordination amongst the different organizations in dealing with political and economic forces in the City.

Newton is a wealthy philanthropic community that supports and patrons the Arts in the city and in the Greater Boston Area. That said, the abundance of organizations depending on limited resources, is a constant challenge in the pursuit of contributed income. The NCA needs to balance its need to be a financially viable institution with its members' needs to tap the same resources. Fortunately, Cultural leaders in the City have been invested in the creation of NCA and continue to be supportive of its activity.

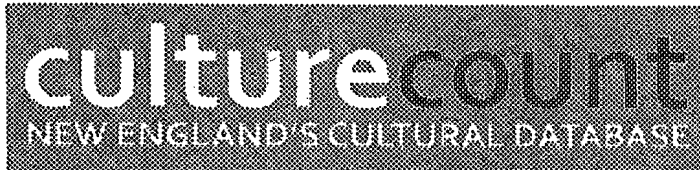
During a community meeting in July 2009, leaders of Cultural institutions in Newton agreed that there was an evident need for a service organization such as the NCA in the City. An umbrella service organization will have greater weight and promote visibility for all members. This will also help in creating more of a "circuit" around Newton in a binding force serving as a "Chamber of Commerce for the Arts". The NCA has the potential to lead symposia, conferences and workshops in addition to serving as the main advocators for the Arts in Newton.

NCA hopes to build awareness of the richness in cultural activity that exists in Newton and the potential for even greater activity. The resources of the city are widespread and building public awareness of all the various cultural venues will be part of NCA's goals. The NCA hopes to establish a cultural calendar for its members as well as a website for comprehensive information about cultural activity in Newton and to stimulate tourism. This City of Newton is a prime destination for Cultural Tourism and combined with the nature of its community and existing Economic Impact, using one voice to promote the Arts and advocate for them is a very efficient strategy.

Currently the NCA has a non-binding agreement with Andover Newton Theological School to explore the possibilities and opportunities for synergistic programming and space sharing.

**Newton Profile:
Economic Impact on Income from City Organizations**

Art and Culture Proving Their Worth



Impact Calculator

Selected Town: NEWTON

Selected Organizations: All Cultural Organizations

For fiscal year 2003, the organizations listed above spent a total of: **\$18,849,975**

As a result of this spending:

Income Estimate

The organizations selected had the following economic impact on income in the community listed above:

Direct Impact of Cultural Non-Profit Spending: \$18,849,975

Indirect Impact on Related Industries: \$6,967,566

Induced Impact on All Sectors: \$5,379,901

Total Local Economic Impact: \$31,197,444

Employment Estimate

The organizations selected supported the following estimated jobs based upon the average weekly wage in the community listed above:

Employment Impact among Cultural Non-Profits: 387.50

Indirect Employment Impact within Related Industries: 74.02

Induced Employment Impact in All Sectors: 49.72

Total Local Employment Impact: 509.90

Property Value Impacts

As a result of its organizational spending, the organizations selected contributed the following estimated contribution to the value of homes in the local community:

NEWTON, MA

Total Impact on Average House Value: \$ 71,845

Percentage of Impact on Average House Value: 11.03 %

Art and culture proving their worth

The Boston Globe

Study looks at how six Framingham nonprofits create jobs and help spur local spending

By Denise Taylor, Globe Correspondent | March 11, 2010

Each year, 30,000 people visit the Danforth Museum of Art. Hundreds of youths participate in its free school programs, thousands of all ages enroll in art classes, and still more view exhibitions.

With this kind of score card, the Danforth finds it easy to convince the community of its value as a cultural asset.

But an economic engine?

A newly released study suggests that the Danforth and five other Framingham cultural institutions generate nearly double their budgets in local spending annually, creating scores of jobs along the way.

"For people who believe in the arts, they get it when we tell them art is good because we know it's good," said Danforth's executive director, Katherine French. "But that's preaching to the converted. When we go to funders or business leaders or town officials, we need to be able to point to an argument that isn't a matter of opinion."

So, the Danforth and five other Framingham cultural organizations — Amazing Things Arts Center, Framingham History Center, Framingham Public Library, Garden in the Woods, and Performing Arts Center of MetroWest — united for an economic impact study paid for by the Sudbury Foundation. It was no academic exercise.

All six organizations are in the midst of, or are gearing up for, fund-raising campaigns to improve their facilities and ultimately make Framingham a tourist destination. They say proof of the jobs and business they create cinches their argument for financial support — especially during tough economic times.

"Most of us are in aging town buildings. For instance, the History Center has three buildings on the common that are all in serious disrepair that need to be renovated," said Anne Murphy, executive director of the Framingham History Center. "At the same time, the START Partnership, which we are all members of, is working together to make Framingham a destination. We have a pilot program to draw people from across the state and New England to Framingham during the 150th anniversary of the Civil War coming up in 2011."

With the report in hand, all six hope potential contributors will better see the full worth of the institutions' plans, both cultural and economic. "These studies are helpful because it's important to remind people that arts and cultural organizations, like most nonprofits, are actually economic engines," said Debbi Edelstein, executive director of New England Wildflower Society's Garden in the Woods. "We're small businesses, and as small businesses we have the same impact as other small businesses. We hire people, we rent or buy space, and we purchase goods and services in the community."

The six groups hired Concord consulting firm Carlisle & Co. to conduct the START Partnership Economic Impact Study, and results were released in January. In part, the findings codified what those from the six study organizations already knew.

Together, they have a combined annual operating budget of \$6.3 million, which they spend mostly locally. They also support 87 full-time equivalent jobs. In short, their numbers would make any small to mid-size business proud.

But then, the study goes on to measure the nonprofits' broader financial impact. When these ripples are counted, the report says the groups actually generate \$11.4 million yearly — or nearly double their own budgets — in local spending. The lion's share of that impact, \$4.1 million, is generated by the Framingham Public Library's two branches.

"We've become more of a cultural institution," said the library's director, Mark Contois. "We host over 700

programs per year such as Friday films and Sunday concerts."

If spending levels hold steady, the study says the full economic impact of the six Framingham nonprofits will create \$127 million in local spending and 2,004 jobs over the next 10 years. If the six organizations carry out their planned \$20 million in renovations over the next decade, that investment would trigger another \$36 million in area spending, and also create 537 more jobs, according to the study.

The renovations range from necessities, such as a new heating plant for the Danforth, to projects that will expand services and draw more patrons. Among them, the Performing Arts Center hopes to install wood floors in a second rehearsal room, which would increase the number of classes it can offer. Garden in the Woods intends to increase comfortable seating, offer refreshments, and expand its gift shop. The History Center has ambitious plans, still under wraps, to transform itself into a significant cultural destination. Each hopes the START Partnership study will help them meet those goals.

"In this day and age when arts are being cut, we have to point out that we have a greater importance than just a social impact," said Sherry Anderson, executive director of the Performing Arts Center of MetroWest. "We need to show we are good places to invest. We don't just help a child to learn to play guitar, we do so much more."

Business owners in Beverly, where the North Shore Music Theatre folded in January 2009, say they don't need a report to tell them the arts impact their earnings. After the theater's closing, both the local Chamber of Commerce and downtown development organization Beverly Main Streets heard complaints of a drop-off in business. Most came from restaurant owners.

"When North Shore closed it really [affected] us," said Laura Wolf, general manager of Beverly's Wild Horse Cafe. "The theater brought in not only people from miles around for shows. A lot of actors and people that worked at the theater used to come here as well. So it was a really good thing for the community to have the theater going. It kept the downtown on people's minds even when shows were not running."

North Shore is under new ownership and will reopen this month.

The START study results may prove to be of use to more than the six organizations in the report. "All of this information is very helpful and we're in the midst of a long-term analysis plan and initiative to do some downtown improvements and this will be an important piece of information that will assist us in that regard among a number of others," said Framingham's town manager, Julian Suso. "It's all about working together."

State Senator Karen Spilka, who recently introduced a jobs bill to the state Legislature that includes a proposal for a MetroWest Tourism and Visitors Bureau, also indicated the study results will add heft to her argument.

She said it "can be used very easily as backup information as to the positive impact the creative arts bring to the area and why we need our own tourism and visitors bureau."

Advocates for the arts say recognition of the impact of the creative economy is overdue. "In the past, we've often separated cultural organizations as if they were separate from the flow of the economy," said Dan Hunter, a nonprofit consultant and former director of Massachusetts Advocates for the Arts, Sciences, and Humanities.

"One of my favorite stories about the Museum of Fine Arts is that when the Boston Redevelopment Authority did a survey of the city's largest employers in 2002, they didn't even ask the MFA. And if you look at the survey of the top 25 employers, in 2002 the MFA would have ranked 13th. The BRA never even thought to look at that," he said.

"That is one of the key aspects of this: It's breaking down the silos that say this is nonprofit, this is for profit, this is schools, this is higher ed. They all interact and they are all part of the economy." ■

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The Massachusetts Cultural Council

The Impact of the Creative Sector on the Economy

Cultural Tourism Defined

Economic Development: The Public Benefit



The Massachusetts Cultural Council: Growing the Creative Economy

Impact on the Massachusetts Economy

- The nonprofit cultural sector has a \$4 billion overall economic impact in Massachusetts, supporting more than 37,000 jobs.
- Tourism is the third-largest industry in Massachusetts, supporting 120,000 jobs overall. Arts and culture are primary draws for visitors.
- Historic/cultural tourism generated nearly \$2 billion in 2006.
- Among all 50 states, Massachusetts ranks #1 in the number of architects as a percentage of the total workforce, #2 in the number of designers, and #4 in the number of artists.

MCC Investment in the Creative Sector

- MCC will invest nearly \$9 million this year in the creative sector.
- MCC provides operating and facilities grants to 17 of the state's top 25 tourist attractions.
- Massachusetts tax dollars invested in historic/cultural travel have a significant return on investment – more than 5:1.
- MCC's **Cultural Facilities Fund (CFF)** has invested nearly \$37 million in 215 capital projects that will account for an estimated \$1 billion in construction costs since 2007.
- The CFF has already created more than 5,700 jobs for architects, engineers, contractors, and construction workers, and 570 new, permanent cultural sector jobs.
- MCC's **Adams Program for the Creative Economy** has invested \$7.4 million in 79 economic development efforts involving more than 650 organizations over 10 years, in such cities as Worcester (local economic impact: \$40 million), Pittsfield (\$16 million), and New Bedford (\$21 million).

MCC Services to Support the Creative Sector

- **The Massachusetts Cultural Data Project** (www.massculturaldata.org) is a powerful online financial management tool designed to strengthen arts and cultural organizations.
- **hireCulture.org** is a free online job listing service for creative employers and jobseekers. The site averages 1,400 sessions per day.
- **ArtistLink** (www.artistlink.org) has provided technical assistance to 80 artist space projects in 20 communities; its online artist space finder (www.artspacefinder.org) has 350 current listings.
- **MatchBook.org** is a free online service connecting performing artists and the people and organizations that hire them. The site currently has 2,300 users, and has had more than 500,000 visits since launching in 2006.

Cultural Tourism

Cultural Tourism 101

—Cultural Tourism 101

Understanding

—Who's Visiting and Why

Connect with Your

—Regional Tourism Council

10 Ways to Tap into Tourism

See What Others Have Done

Who's Who in Cultural Tourism

—Glossary of Terms

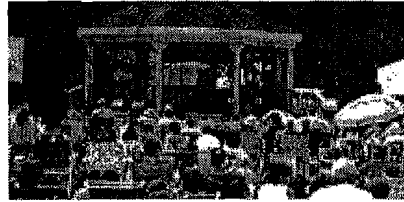
Web Resources

Current Research

Adams Arts Program

Join MCC eMail List

Annually, tourists in Massachusetts generate about \$11 billion in spending. How many of these travel-related dollars affect your organization?



Most people think of tourists as visitors from other areas of the country or other countries altogether. But because Massachusetts hosts so many varied vacation and cultural experiences, it benefits us all to expand our definition of tourists as people who live close by, in the next town over, or clear across the state.

With that unique perspective in mind, we offer here an online primer to cultural groups statewide seeking more information on connecting with tourists in the hot new realm of "cultural tourism."

Annually, tourists in Massachusetts:

- Generate \$11.2 billion in direct spending
- Generate an additional \$751 million in state and local taxes
- Support 124,800 jobs in a variety of industries

What, Exactly, is Cultural Tourism?

Cultural Tourism is the travel industry's term describing travel and visitation activities directed at an area's arts, heritage, recreational and natural resources. It's not a new phenomenon (tourists have come to Massachusetts for decades to experience these things), but it is a new way of connecting with visitors eager for a cultural excursion. These multi-cultural and multi-generation visitors make destination choices related directly to a region's performance, artistic, architecture and historical offerings. In Massachusetts, we have several of the world's best cultural destinations.



Why Is Cultural Tourism Hot Now?

People have always come to Massachusetts to visit our cultural sites, but only recently have we discovered what makes these visitors tick. Recent tourism research indicates clearly that Cultural Tourists are a force to be reckoned with. Here's why:

1. Cultural Tourism is the fastest growing sector of the travel industry.
2. Cultural Tourists spend \$62 more per day and \$200 more per trip than other travelers.
3. Cultural Tourists include multiple destinations during a visit and stay one half-day longer at each destination.
4. Cultural Tourists have higher levels of income.

How Can I Take Advantage of the Cultural Tourism Boom?

Getting a piece of the Cultural Tourism pie takes planning, creativity, collaboration and a good knowledge of the basics. Select a link from the menu above to get started.



MCC

Grant Programs

Applications/Forms

Services

News

Advocate

Current Advocacy & Public Policy Research

Community Building Research

Student Achievement Research

Youth Development Research

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Economic Development: The Public Benefit

Current Research

"A strong arts and cultural sector is vital to the future of New England's economic growth and competitiveness."

—The Creative Economy Initiative
A New England Council Report, June 2000

MCC Economic Impact Fact Sheet (PDF)

Creative Industries: Business & Employment in the Arts
Americans for the Arts (AFTA), (c) 2008

AFTA's yearly *Creative Industries* reports document business and employment data for both the for-profit and the non-profit arts industries in order to illustrate the scope and importance of the arts to the nation's economy. Users can search the 2008 reports by U.S. Congressional or State Legislative district.

The Creative Economy: A New Definition
New England Foundation for the Arts, (c) 2007

New England Foundation for the Arts (NEFA) and the six New England state arts agencies have partnered on region-wide research projects for 30 years to demonstrate the cultural sector's economic force. Progressing from a series of paper surveys limited to the nonprofit sector to a thorough and demonstrative analysis of all types of organizations and individuals, this research has become the foundation for local and statewide efforts to build New England's Creative Economy. NEFA has now refined its methodology for analyzing this important economic sector, and presents its rationale and recent findings in this report.

Key findings:

Massachusetts has a competitive edge in both cultural enterprise and cultural worker employment.

- Massachusetts has the highest number of architects as a percentage of the total state workforce, the second highest number of designers, and the fourth highest number of artists in all disciplines.
- Massachusetts has 15.5% more cultural workers than the national average, and 23.5% more artists.
- Unemployment rate among cultural workers is 2% lower than the overall Massachusetts unemployment rate.

Cultural Economic Development Projects: Impact Studies
Center for Policy Analysis, University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, 2002-2003

The University of Massachusetts Dartmouth Center for Policy Analysis conducted independent research to measure the economic impact of three separate projects

tunded through the Massachusetts Cultural Council's Cultural Economic Development Initiative from 2000-2003. While each of the three projects were quite different, each was successful in using increased participation in cultural activity to spur local and regional economic activity.

Key findings:

The local programs funded by the MCC stimulated economic activity, including new job creation, new business development, and additional sales at both cultural and non-cultural business.

- Launched with an MCC grant of \$11,500, Campus Provincetown's total economic impact was nearly \$600,000 -- approximately \$51 dollars generated for every state dollar spent in grant money. ([See this study.](#))
- Boston Cyberarts 2003 generated a regional economic impact of over \$2.5 million and created over 32 full-time equivalent jobs, including many in the hospitality and professional services industries. ([See this study.](#))
- AHAI New Bedford had an economic impact of over \$200,000 in 2001-2002, generated on nights with almost no economic activity in downtown New Bedford previously. ([See this study.](#))

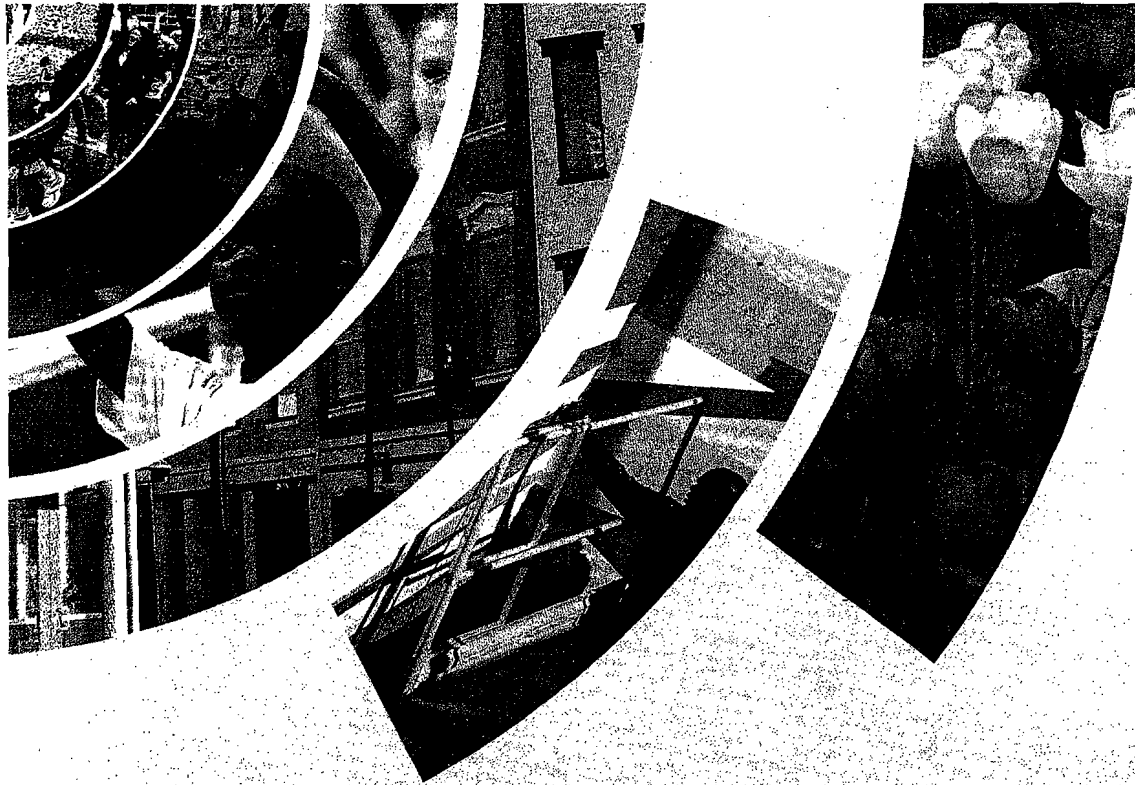
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The Arts Ripple Effect:
A Research-Based Strategy to Build
Shared Responsibility for the Arts

Produced by the Topos Partnership for the Fine Arts Fund

FineArtsFund

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Acknowledgements

The Fine Arts Fund thanks the Carol Ann and Ralph V. Haile, Jr./U.S. Bank Foundation and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation for their support of this report.

FineArtsFund The Fine Arts Fund is enhancing our community with arts and cultural experiences that offer joy, promote inclusion, and inspire creativity for a strong region. We accomplish this by engaging the entire community in supporting experiences that benefit people and sustaining and strengthening a healthy arts and culture sector. Toward these ends, we provide leadership, resources, and services. We organize and manage the nation's largest annual community fundraising campaign for the arts. Each year tens of thousands of people donate to this campaign, supporting about one hundred local arts organizations. We leverage the collective strength of our arts and culture to expand participation, develop innovative collaborations, and promote Cincinnati as a great place to live, work, and visit.



Founded by veteran communications strategists Axel Aubrun and Joe Grady of Cultural Logic and Meg Bostrom of Public Knowledge, Topos has as its mission to explore and ultimately transform the landscape of public understanding where public interest issues play out. Our approach is based on the premise that while it is possible to achieve short-term

victories on issues through a variety of strategies, real change depends on a fundamental shift in public understanding. Topos was created to bring together the range of expertise needed to understand existing issue dynamics, explore possibilities for creating new issue understanding, develop a proven course of action, and arm advocates with new communications tools to win support. For more information:

website: www.topospartnership.com

email: team@topospartnership.com

Photo credit: Scott Beseler, Philip Groshong, and Margy Waller



February 12, 2010

City's vitality, creativity on the upswing

By Margy Waller

Last year, I decided to move back to Cincinnati from Washington, D.C. A job offer at the Fine Arts Fund appealed, but initially, I wondered about leaving the vibrancy of a bigger city. Turns out, the creative things all around us make this community even better than when I left a decade ago.

Two benefits in particular convinced me: the growing vitality of our neighborhoods and the variety of events connecting people.

The daughter of two musicians, I grew up here guaranteed to experience the many opportunities of our arts: music, dance, theatre, museums, and so on. But, before I accepted the job, I needed to see whether I could find a place to live as inviting as neighborhoods I'd come to love in D.C.

With friends and family as tour guides, I discovered a region bursting with creative things happening from Covington to North Side, Oakley to Clifton, Madisonville to downtown, and beyond.

New galleries, theaters, and community centers bring economic vitality to these neighborhoods. There's lots of energy and life on the streets and people want to be part of these appealing places where there are concerts and tourists, renovated buildings, festivals, and new housing.

Walking along Vine Street, I was amazed by the changes there.

The Ensemble Theatre has long been an anchor for the block just north of the central business district. Today, the theater sits in the midst of new stores and restaurants. The beautiful, old architecture of surrounding housing is renovated and colorful.

Around the corner is the new Art Academy filling two historic structures with students and galleries, changing the character of that block dramatically.

Just down the street is the Know Theatre and home of our Fringe Festival with bright murals painted on both sides of the building. It offers a cozy spot for cocktails and socializing before and after shows. The Know regularly hosts community events that bring people together for all sorts of civic and creative endeavors.

These spaces offer more than innovative plays and paintings, but also dancing, music, video installations, community forums, and so on.

This arts ripple effect has led to even more economic vitality on surrounding streets with busy bars, restaurants, a general store, furniture and coffee shops. These places are a stage for events too. I've been to photography exhibits in the general store, listened to live music in the bars, and watched a show in a coffee shop. Festivals are a regular occurrence too.

This vibrancy draws more people to the area. We see them walking and talking, looking at the historic buildings all around, heading toward Findlay Market (our growing public market with cheese, ice cream, crafts, farm produce, and so on). A timeless diner up the street is packed for brunch on weekends.

These sights convinced me to move back to Cincinnati. It's not just the Vine Street area. We're fortunate to have so much, yet it sometimes feels like we take it for granted.

When I try to imagine Cincinnati without the large and small arts organizations and events that draw people together, making our neighborhoods exciting and busy, it's obvious that I would not have moved back here without them.

We should be proud of what we've built, and make sure we all do our part to support the arts that make our city the place we want to live, work, play, and stay.

Margy Waller is VP, Arts & Culture Partnership at the Fine Arts Fund, which just relocated to the Vine Street area she describes.



Introduction

In late 2008, leaders of the Fine Arts Fund in Cincinnati embarked on a research initiative designed to develop an *inclusive community dialogue leading to broadly shared public responsibility for arts and culture in the region.*

We concluded that our work with the community through arts and culture must be based on a foundation that incorporates a deeper understanding of the **best way to communicate with the public in order to achieve that shared sense of responsibility.**

Many of us have spent years searching for the strongest possible message and the best case on which to build support for the arts. Yet the messages we have used, and successfully integrated in the dialogue across the country, have not yielded the broad sense of shared responsibility that we seek.

For example, we have observed years of successful attacks on public policy proposals to provide limited funds to the arts as part of the national budget. Unfortunately, the arts are an easy target in the public forum – vulnerable to the charge that *art is nice, but not necessary.*

Indeed, while we know that many people in our region say they like and value the arts, this has not been enough in recent years to grow charitable giving or public funding for arts and culture. Historically, we've had great success raising funds for the arts in our community. Yet, we are observing a plateau in that support that has little to do with the current economy and threatens the future success of our community. Furthermore, already minimal public funding of arts and culture has declined in recent years at the same time that our sector has continued to make the case for more investment in sustaining the arts.

Even as business and philanthropic leaders have established new goals for the arts and culture sector through the Cincinnati USA Cultural Partnership, other local groups have criticized these efforts in an apparent attempt to undermine public support.

We determined that we needed more analysis and knowledge of public views and assumptions about arts and culture to develop the necessary foundation for a conversation that leads to increased shared responsibility and public support.

This report summarizes a year of work and important findings for widespread use by others. While leaders of business and other nonprofit sectors have conducted research using framing science methodology to develop communications strategies for change, this is a *first-in-the-nation* analysis for arts and culture.

In the long term, we want broad support and public demand for arts and culture. While most people *feel positively* toward the arts, we will have to change the conversation in order to *motivate action* by the public for the arts. This research is designed to develop the communication tools necessary to motivate that action.

We will share these findings widely – both locally and nationally – in the belief that supporters should use them in communication about our sector, creating the echo chamber necessary for the sense of shared responsibility that is critical to future success.

We hope that this report will also inspire leaders in other cities and regions to use this research and to replicate it in order to influence the national conversation which shapes media content and, in turn, the public will.

The Fine Arts Fund
November 2009



Executive Summary

Supporters of the arts have struggled to develop a national conversation that makes the case for robust, ongoing public support for the arts.

Supporters of the arts have struggled to develop a national conversation that makes the case for robust, ongoing public support of the arts. While arts enthusiasts feel deeply about the importance of the arts and can speak quite eloquently about a number of aspects such as the universality or the transcendent nature of the arts, many have been frustrated by an inability to spark a positive, national, constructive public conversation on the topic – in Cincinnati and elsewhere. Instead, public spending on the arts is too often criticized as an example of “wasteful” government spending or “misguided” government intrusion into an area where it doesn’t belong.

In order to create a more constructive public dialog, it is necessary to explore the dynamics in the current public conversation – in the media, for instance – as well as in the thinking of the majority of people who do not

focus on the arts in their daily lives.

Understanding attitudes and beliefs more deeply is a key to negotiating them more successfully in future efforts. And of course messages intended to create public support must be tested with audience members in order to find out whether they can effectively create new conversations and new perspectives. A new argument, or lens on the issue, is useful to the extent it can move people to shared action in support of the arts.

Once an effective approach is identified, it can be the basis not only for new conversations with the broader public, but also with leaders in various sectors of public life, from business to government to the faith community. While nuances and emphases will vary from context to context, the essence of a public conversation is that the same themes echo from a variety of sources, in a variety of voices.

When legislators, business leaders, community leaders and so forth all take in the same core messages – and in turn repeat them to their own constituencies – the resulting “echo chamber” can begin to transform the accepted common sense on the issue.

After a year of investigation into the topic, this research finds that public responsibility for the arts is undermined by deeply entrenched perceptions that have nothing to do with government and everything to do with understanding of the arts. Members of the public typically have positive *feelings* toward the arts, some quite strong, but *how they think* about the arts is shaped by a number of common default patterns that obscure a sense of public responsibility in this area.

For example, it is natural and common for people who are not insiders to think of the arts in terms of *entertainment*. Problematically,

entertainment is a matter of personal taste, not public responsibility, and is an extra not a necessity.

Furthermore, art-as-entertainment is difficult to distinguish from other forms of entertainment, such as professional sports or reality television.

Underlying what people say are several assumptions that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good:

The arts are a private matter: Arts are about *individual* tastes, experiences and enrichment, and *individual* expression by artists.

The arts are a good to be purchased: Therefore, most assume that the arts should succeed or fail, as any product does in the marketplace, based on what people want to purchase. [1]

People expect to be passive, not active: People expect to have a mostly passive, consumer relationship with the arts. The arts will be offered to them, and therefore do not need to be created or supported by them.

The arts are a low priority: Even when people value art, it is rarely high on their list of priorities.

The end result of these patterns – most of which are probably not unique to Cincinnati – is that it becomes easy to see government aid, for instance, as frivolous or inappropriate. Even charitable giving can be undermined by these default perceptions.

The existing landscape of public understanding is not conducive to a sense of *broadly shared responsibility for the arts*. To achieve that objective, we need to change the landscape by employing a message strategy that:

- Positions arts and culture as a *public good* – a communal interest in which all have a stake,
- Provides a *clearer picture* of the kinds of events, activities and institutions we are talking about,
- Conveys the importance of a *proactive stance*, and
- Incorporates all people in a *region*, not just those in urban centers.

Holding typical arts messages up to these standards clarifies why some messages, even emotionally powerful messages, fail to inspire a sense of collective responsibility. Art as a

transcendent experience, important to well-being, a universal human need, etc., all speak to *private, individual* concerns, not *public, communal* concerns. While many people *like* these messages, the messages do not help them think of art as a public good.

Messages that are more communal in nature, such as the commonly used economic investment message, or a message about creating a great city, fail for other reasons. For instance, traditional economic messages end up competing with other (usually more compelling) ideas about how to bolster an economy.

Of the many communications approaches explored in testing, one stood out as having the most potential to shift thinking and conversations in a constructive direction. This approach emphasizes one key organizing idea:

A thriving arts sector creates "ripple effects" of benefits throughout our community.



We need a message strategy that positions arts and culture as a public good.

We learned that the following two ripple effects are especially helpful and compelling to enumerate:

- A vibrant, thriving economy: Neighborhoods are more lively, communities are revitalized, tourists and residents are attracted to the area, etc. Note that this goes well beyond the usual dollars-and-cents argument.
- A more connected population: Diverse groups share common experiences, hear new perspectives, understand each other better, etc.

These ideas can be expressed in a variety of ways, but the following is one example of putting them together in a brief text:

Why do leaders of cities around the country think of arts and culture as important priorities? Because when creative activity is happening in large and small ways throughout an area, it creates surprising ripple effects of benefits, even for those who don't participate directly. The arts ripple effect creates at least two kinds of benefits: 1) in the economic vitality of an area, and 2) in how communities come together and understand each other. In economic terms, theaters, galleries, concerts and so on mean more energy and life in a community, more tourists, more renovated buildings, more people and businesses moving to an appealing

place. A vibrant arts environment with music, storytelling, and community art centers also means more people coming together to share experiences and ideas, connecting with each other and understanding each other in new ways. Cincinnati has historically supported the arts and enjoyed the benefits of these ripple effects. We should be proud of what we've built, and take responsibility for keeping our investment going.

This organizing idea shapes the subsequent conversation in important ways. It moves people away from thinking about private concerns and personal interests (me) and toward thinking about public concerns and communal benefits (we). The arts are no longer just nice – they become necessary because practical benefits become just as apparent to people as does the emotional appeal. Importantly, people who hear this message often shift from thinking of themselves as passive recipients of consumer goods, and begin to see their role as active citizens interested in addressing the public good.

The Sector/Ripple Effects Frame is distinct from existing messages in several important ways:

- It focuses on public, community-wide benefits, not private benefits (such as individual enrichment).
- It goes well beyond the limited

dollars-and-cents economic argument to offer a richer, more vivid picture of thriving, vibrant communities filled with life and energy.

- It ties a practical point together with the less tangible, but emotionally powerful public benefit of sharing experiences that allow people in a community to better understand each other and live and work together.
- It incorporates a new term, "arts ripple effect," that is simple and vivid, and helps people learn and remember the main idea.
- When fleshed out with examples like galleries, theaters, and concerts, it provides a very concrete picture of an active arts community.

Taken as a whole, this approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians. They are able to repeat the gist of the point, and their discussion suggests they understand the idea and find it a compelling argument for widely shared responsibility for the arts.

Finally, the focus of this project is specific to the Cincinnati area, but it is fair to assume that at least some of the default patterns of thinking, as well as responses to new messages, reflect patterns that would be repeated elsewhere. While it would be risky to assume that this strategy is identical in other cities or regions, we believe this project provides a head start for those planning to embark on similar efforts in other parts of the country and at the national level.



The Topos approach makes use of unique analytical tools, many of which we have developed or adapted from other disciplines. The analysis that follows is based on multiple rounds of research conducted over the course of one year, including cognitive elicitations, a media review, focus groups, and "talkback" testing of messages.

Cognitive Elicitations

In order to explore the default patterns of thinking and association on topics related to broadly shared responsibility for arts and culture, Topos conducted a series of one-on-one, semi-structured, recorded interviews with a diverse group of 20 individuals in the Cincinnati area, in September and October 2008. [3] The goal of this methodology, adapted by Topos principals from methods of psychological anthropology, is to identify the underlying patterns that persistently guide reasoning, even if subjects also have other perspectives, or "know better" on some level. In other words, we uncover *how people think* about an issue and what drives that thinking, rather than simply chronicle *what they know*.

The sample included 12 women and eight men, representing a range of ages and educational experiences, diverse races and partisanship, and different lengths of time living in the Cincinnati area.

Media Review

Frames are created and reinforced in a variety of ways, and media coverage is a leading driver and shaper of dominant frames. To explore the current landscape of opinion and better understand the frames in play, Topos conducted a thorough review of over one hundred articles and notices from Cincinnati's daily and weekly papers that focused or touched on arts and culture.

The articles were carefully reviewed to identify and analyze the frames commonly in play in Cincinnati media coverage that are likely to influence public understanding.

Focus Groups

In order to explore the group dynamics as Cincinnatians discuss the issue and to determine which messages hold up under debate and which do not, Topos conducted four focus groups with engaged citizens (people who are registered to vote, who pay attention to the news and who are involved in the community) representing a range of demographics (mix of gender, age, education, political affiliation, etc.). Two of the groups consisted of Cincinnati citizens who are arts-connected (meaning they attend or participate/perform in art three or more times each year), and two consisted of those who are not arts-connected.

Two groups were conducted at the beginning of the message and strategy development phase (May 13, 2009), to provide a baseline against which to measure subsequent efforts, and two were conducted after a significant phase of "talkback" testing of various communications approaches (July 9, 2009), in order to investigate the different dynamics in public discourse that result from introducing new frames to address the topic.



TalkBack Testing

The "talkback" approach allows us to clearly determine how a single key concept, such as a particular aspect of a complex issue like arts and culture, is understood and remembered by members of the public. The testing is designed to assess whether a given idea has the capacity to become an organizing principle for thinking and communicating in a new way about the issue – as well as its overall effects on reasoning and engagement.

In the talkback method, subjects (in telephone interviews or Internet surveys) are presented with brief texts (roughly 80-120 words) and then asked several open-ended questions, focusing in part on subjects' ability to *repeat the core of the message, or pass it along to others*. Measures of the effectiveness of a message include subjects' ability to remember, explain, use, and repeat the explanatory ideas.

Talkback subjects included a diverse group of over four hundred individuals. Over half (207) of these were residents of Greater Cincinnati, including Northern Kentucky; 65 were other Ohioans; and 131 were from neighboring states (Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois and other parts of Kentucky).



Our Perspective & Research Approach

Underlying the conclusions and strategic implications of this analysis is a unique perspective on communications informed by cognitive and social science. Developed over a decade of close collaboration between its three principals, Topos' mission is to transform the landscape of public understanding by studying and rethinking a given public interest issue from the ground up. A basic premise of the Topos approach is that, while it is possible to achieve short-term victories on issues through a variety of strategies, real change depends on a fundamental shift in public understanding.

*Only when people
see an issue in
a new way can
they begin to act
accordingly.*

Only when people see an issue in a new way can they begin to act accordingly. In this way, our work seeks to *lead the public to new understanding, rather than just follow what the public already values or believes to be true.*

The Topos approach is grounded in the science of framing, which tells us that the terms and images that are used to introduce a topic can have a powerful effect on how we see and understand it. A frame is a "central organizing idea... for making sense of relevant events, suggesting what is at issue." [2] This central organizing idea has consequences for how people define the problem and solution, and attribute responsibility for addressing the problem.

Many communications efforts on social issues are unsuccessful because they fail to establish a frame that will help people understand the issue in a new way. Instead, communicators frequently rely on

simply heightening the emotional power of a message, or turning up the dial on existing communications frames. An emotional appeal will be insufficient if the fundamental framing is flawed. Beyond tapping emotions, communications must often provide people with a new conceptual understanding of an issue that helps them appreciate the big picture and the causal dynamics at work in a way they didn't before.

Our approach is designed to 1) give communicators a deeper picture of the issue dynamics they are confronting, 2) uncover the fundamentally different framing alternatives available to them, and 3) deliver communications tools with a proven capacity to shift perspectives and create a favorable climate for change.

The Landscape: A Situation Analysis

Though Cincinnatians have positive feelings toward the arts, how they think about the topic is guided by a number of common default patterns that are often counterproductive. In particular, these habitual perspectives often obscure a sense of collective responsibility for the arts.

The Traditional Narrative: The Arts and "High Culture"

Until recently, there was a dominant narrative to explain why arts and culture are important to a community and a public responsibility – *the arts have a unique ability to lift individuals and communities to a higher and better state.* For much of the past century, supporters of the arts were able to evoke this strong and familiar idea about "high culture" to create a sense of public good.

While this idea may have been strongest among elites, nevertheless it offered a widely understood rationale for public support of the arts, related to the greater good. Unfortunately, it is clear that this narrative no longer shapes Cincinnatians' thinking or discourse about the topic in a meaningful way.

The idea that the arts have a *unique ability to lift individuals and communities to a higher and better state* has died out almost without a trace. For the most part, interview subjects in our research showed no awareness that such an idea was ever significant to creation of local organizations like the Cincinnati Opera or the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra, for instance.

Neither are current Cincinnati residents focused on embracing the arts as a way of showing that they are "moving up." Instead, they appear to see little or no connection between

the arts and social class. The opera and so forth are simply niche tastes – things that some people happen to enjoy.

In today's more democratic, inclusive, and culturally diverse environment, the elevation narrative is basically irrelevant, and no new narrative has really taken its place. An important part of the art advocate's rhetorical toolkit, a rationale for why the arts are important to the greater good, has been lost.

I think that these days, as a member of the arts community, we have to prove a little more to people why the arts are worth it. It's become more about proving the legitimacy of things. You can't just say anymore this is great, go see it . . . I mean, even in terms of arts education. Arts education is becoming more about how can you use the arts to promote normal or regular subjects.

25-year-old woman, arts educator

Not a Clear Category

Many Cincinnatians treasure particular arts and culture experiences very highly, and virtually all acknowledge their value. However, *there is often no single category that organizes these thoughts, memories, feelings, etc. into one coherent topic in their minds.* "The arts" does not evoke much feeling as a category, while culture has a strong connection with ethnicity, or events focused on a distinct culture.

For insiders, "the arts" is a clear and important category (even if it might be a bit fuzzy at the edges). For those who are not connected to the arts, though, there is no such clear category. Instead, the specific components that all fall under a single heading for insiders are associated with a variety of distinct topics (discussed below) that are not necessarily closely connected to each other.



Average people may have strong feelings about concerts, or about movies, or festivals, etc. – but not much to say about the category as a whole (just as they may have strong feelings about dogs, cats or horses, but not much to say about mammals).

Associated with this category problem is a problem with vocabulary. Common insider terms like "the arts," "fine arts," or "culture" may or may not mean the same thing to average Cincinnatians.

Arts could be things like roller-skating, if you do it that way.

49-year-old man, salesperson

Fine arts? I think expensive. I can't afford it. I think of elegance and shiny, beautiful things . . . Right when you walk into the art museum, there's this huge blown-glass chandelier thing that hangs from the ceiling and it is so pretty. That's what I think about when I think of fine art.

29-year-old woman, homemaker

Adding the word culture doesn't help as it is almost always understood as something like ethnicity. "Cultural events" are ones that celebrate or focus on a particular (ethnic or regional) culture – such as Hispanic or African-American events.

Default Understandings

There are several common understandings that dominate non-insiders' thinking about the topic:

The arts as entertainment: The most natural way for people to think about the arts falls under the heading of *entertainment*. Arts happenings are often lumped together with many other kinds of enjoyable "things to do."

It's something different to do. It's a learning experience in addition to being something social. And it's just something to expand your mind and make you think, rather than sitting in a bar or something.

33-year-old woman, office worker

Though entertainment and enjoyment are obviously valued, there are important downsides to this default understanding:

- Art-as-entertainment is a matter of taste, and is not associated with collective responsibility or public value.
- Entertainment is often viewed as an "extra" or a luxury that people choose to indulge in or not as they have the time, money, and inclination.
- The perspective reinforces a passive consumer relationship to the issue – the opposite of collective responsibility.

The arts as personal expression: When people do distinguish art and arts events from other kinds of events – such as football games or reality TV shows – they often focus on the idea of individual expression and creativity.

[Art] is a way of expression. A lot of people write books to express their ideas and their fantasies or dreams. A lot of people paint pictures ... A lot of people create music to explain their childhood or describe a future.

29-year-old woman, homemaker

While people may believe personal expression is valuable and important, it is also a *personal matter* more than a *public one*.

The arts as beauty: Thinking about the arts sometimes focuses on beauty, refinement, and an attractive environment.

It's nice to have something artistic around you. I just poured a patio in the backyard last year and instead of square I made it like a teardrop just 'cause it's different and it looks good 'cause it's different. Not that the square one would have looked bad, but this one looks different and then that's pleasing. Again, you get back to the thing of art being subjective.

56-year-old man, retired city worker

In this way of thinking, the arts are not understood as the cause of good things happening in a city. Instead, the arts are a *pleasant result* of fundamentals being in place.

The arts as a school subject: People who aren't used to thinking about the arts tend to think in terms of *art as a school subject*. "Art class," "art teacher," etc. are familiar phrases, and discussions of the arts easily trigger such associations. While it would obviously be a positive development if arts education received more support, art and music are not perceived as core subjects, so the understanding of art as a school subject can end up reinforcing the secondary importance of the arts.

Art's not what they consider an absolute necessity. It's easy to cut. I mean, they cannot cut core classes, and you have to have your English, math, science, social studies.

50-year-old woman, bookkeeper

Another common association with arts education is as a way to expose children to the arts when they fail

to get arts in other ways. Again, this leads to more support for arts education, but does not necessarily convey the communal benefits of the arts.

I think a lot of it is to introduce it to our children to allow them to be able to see some of it. Because some kids just don't know about art.

Woman, not-arts-connected, greater Cincinnati

Consequences of Default Understandings

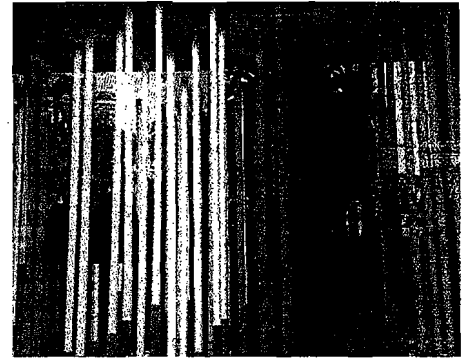
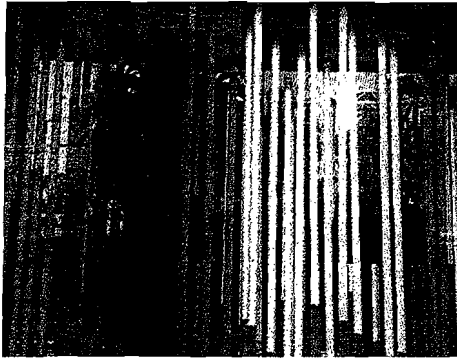
The result of these default understandings is that even when people can clearly focus on the arts, the way they think about the topic makes it less likely Cincinnatians can see art and culture as a broadly shared responsibility. Underlying all these default understandings are some consistent perspectives that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good.

The arts are a private matter: Arts are about *individual tastes*, experiences and enrichment on one side (i.e., for consumers), and *individual expression* on the other (for the artists).

I think just arts and things like that are just more important to [some] people 'cause that's how they've grown up, or that's just how their mind works. People like different things and that's just what people like.

21-year-old man, computer tech

The arts are a good to be purchased: Since entertainment, particularly professional entertainment, shapes people's understanding of and relationship to the issue, the arts are subject to the economic thinking that people bring to other products. For example, supply and demand comes up fairly frequently, e.g., if enough people want it, they will pay and it will succeed.



Underlying all these default understandings are some consistent perspectives that work against the objective of positioning the arts as a public good.

If the arts cannot justify their existence by attendance then they should be replaced by endeavors that can . . . City funding should not be viewed as a substitute for self-support. If a music festival . . . needs city funding to cover the expenses that admissions should cover then I question if that's a good event to support.

61-year-old woman, clerk

It is not fair to make everyone pay for something that they may not necessarily enjoy or take part in.

31-year-old woman, paralegal

(Note that a version of "marketplace" thinking can even apply when people are focusing on the role of donations in supporting the arts. People donate to the organizations or art forms they happen to value.)

People expect to be passive, not active, in this area: People take, and are expected to take, a mostly passive stance toward the arts. "We" are the consumers of what "they" (the professional artists) provide.

I don't think you definitely need to be active as far as making the art . . . It seems like there's enough people that want to do that.

31-year-old woman, events coordinator

The arts are a low priority: While most Cincinnatians value the arts, this does not mean arts and culture are high on their list of priorities, particularly public priorities.

I think by and large we're distracted by other things. In fact, every now and then I'll make a comment about something being very interesting from an artistic point of view, and it seems like more often than not I receive sort of a little look of disbelief from the other person. "Huh? What? What are you talking about?" Most people I know are pretty practical-minded and not into daydreaming and things like that.

61-year-old man, municipal worker

The end result of these patterns – most of which are probably not unique to Cincinnati – is that it becomes easy to see government funding, for instance, as frivolous or inappropriate. Even charitable giving can be undermined by these default perceptions.

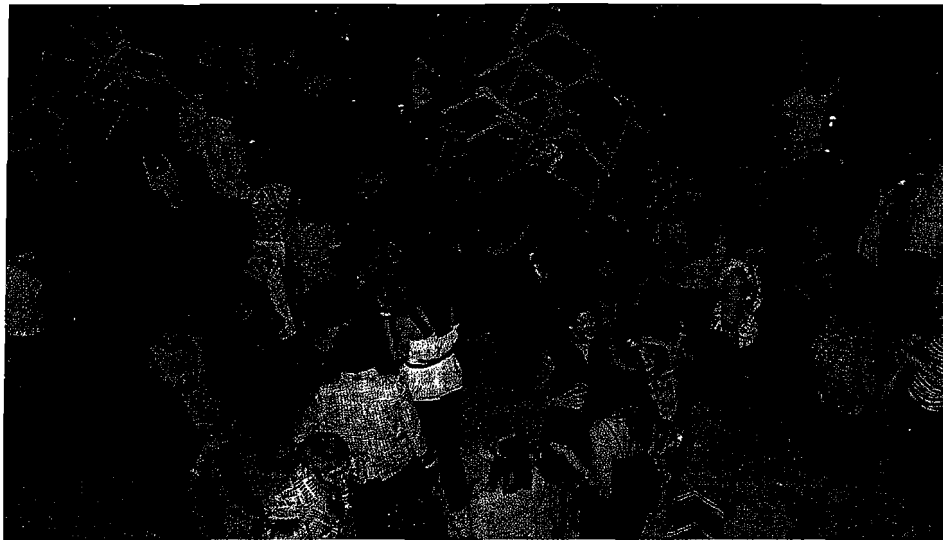
Downtown

One final problem bedevils conversations on arts and culture in Cincinnati in particular: a default focus on the major institutions and the downtown environs where they are located. This focus is problematic because:

- It limits thinking to a narrow range of what arts and culture encompasses,
- It narrows thinking to a small geographic area that some residents feel more connected to than others,
- It can trigger associations with the "high art" that is seen as a particular niche taste, and
- It can trigger distracting thoughts about safety and neighborhood crime.

I'll state my opinion in one sentence. I don't like downtown, so you can ask me why and whatever but I don't like downtown. There is a lot going on and I've been to some of the events and they are very nice, but I am not comfortable downtown.

Woman, not-arts-connected, greater Cincinnati



Changing the Landscape: Creating New Understandings

The existing landscape of public understanding is not conducive to the kind of relationship to the arts the Fine Arts Fund wants to establish. To overcome the obstacles discussed in the previous section and create a sense of *collective responsibility for the arts*, an effective message strategy must:

- Position arts and culture as a *public good* – a communal interest in which all Cincinnatians have a stake,
- Provide a *clearer picture* of the kinds of events, activities and institutions we are talking about,
- Convey the importance of a *proactive stance*, and
- Incorporate the *entire region* (as opposed to just downtown Cincinnati).

The arts create “ripple effects” of benefits throughout our community.

To determine whether or not various frames meet the above criteria, testing went well beyond exploring whether research participants like or agree with a particular message. Instead, our measure of success is whether or not a frame can change people’s perspective. Therefore, we held the message accountable to factors such as whether it prompts people to focus on certain aspects of the topic (such as public benefits) rather than others (such as personal tastes or downtown crime); whether a message is coherent and memorable; whether it promotes the idea of public/collective action; and so on.

After testing dozens of options, a clear strategy for success emerged. (See next section for discussion of approaches that missed the mark.)

The Main Organizing Idea: “Arts Ripple Effect”

Of the many communications approaches explored in testing, one stood out as having the most potential to shift thinking and conversations in a constructive direction. This approach emphasizes one key organizing idea:

The arts create “ripple effects” of benefits throughout our community.

It is especially helpful and compelling to enumerate two particular ripple effects:

- A vibrant, thriving economy: Neighborhoods are more lively, communities are revitalized, tourists and residents are attracted to the area, etc.
- A more connected population: Diverse groups share common experiences, hear new perspectives, understand each other better, etc.

This simple idea shapes the conversation in important ways:

| Away from Problematic Understandings | Toward Constructive Understandings |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Me: Personal tastes and interests | Us: Community beliefs |
| Individual | Public/Community |
| Passive consumer | Active Citizen |
| Downtown | Everywhere |
| Emotional | Emotional and practical |

Taken as a whole, the "ripple effect" approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians. They are able to repeat the gist of the point, and their discussion suggests they understand the idea and find it compelling.

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

The arts are important not only because they can stimulate the creativity of the individual, but also because they can revitalize large cities. Creativity and art can cause a ripple effect that helps business and tourism in cities. In fact, it can invigorate the city's energy, and can even reduce crime.

54-year-old woman, attorney, Cincinnati

Because the arts can bring together a diverse community, allowing people to meet and exchange ideas. These same people might not otherwise have met, or been inspired to communicate their ideas, visions and goals with each other. All of this can spark economic growth in an area, and lead to new buildings and a sense of excitement, which in turn can lead to more tourism.

49-year-old man, salesperson, Akron

The arts are important to a city because they help citizens interact, fight crime, bring communities together, and create an overall beneficial ripple effect on the entire city.

22-year-old woman, administrative assistant, Cincinnati

The arts create jobs – jobs for those who are the artists but also they have a ripple effect on the community. The place that holds the performance, the advertisers, even the ones who print the programs receive work and thus pay that is taxed by the community and government.

58-year-old woman, religious educator, Cincinnati

It creates a ripple effect of benefits, both directly and indirectly . . . It improves the vitality of an area and the economy. More arts mean more culture in neighborhoods. Economically, the increased enthusiasm and construction projects in turn increase tourism, which increases the economy . . . Arts and culture benefit the city as a whole, both economically and culturally.

22-year-old man, assistant manager, Cincinnati

Though the main organizing idea is simple, clear and concise, there are several aspects communicators should keep in mind in order to get the most benefit, and a number of additional supporting points to reinforce the central idea.

Flexibility

In principle, the idea of diverse ripple effects can apply to any number of benefits.

Communicators can choose any they like, as long as they are careful not to trigger the problematic defaults discussed earlier, such as reinforcing personal benefits, entertainment or arts as a school subject.

Two particular benefit streams are mentioned above because:

- They represent two very different kinds of communal benefits, reinforcing that arts and culture produce a range of effects that benefit the public.
- They allow communicators to have a single conversation about both the practical and less tangible benefits of arts and culture.
- Each proved to be a particularly strong and intuitive idea.
- Each can be illustrated with several easy-to-understand examples, for clarity.

Vibrant and thriving: distinct from the typical economic argument

The recommended approach includes a reference to economic benefits, and this proved to be an important strength, since no matter how much they value the arts for their own sake, supporters must be able to also point to practical, tangible benefits as they discuss the issue.

Taken as a whole, the "ripple effect" approach proves clear and compelling to many Cincinnatians.



Imagine a friend says to you, "The last thing this city should be spending money on is another dance troupe or art exhibition!" What would be a good response in favor of the arts?

Investing in the arts creates a ripple effect throughout the city. Spending money on a dance troupe or art exhibition promotes the local community and can have a positive effect on tourism and a long-lasting effect on the local economy.

25-year-old woman, finance manager, Cincinnati

The city would be investing in its own future by supporting a dance troupe or art exhibition. These help to promote tourism and instill a sense of pride and ownership in the citizens of the city.

52-year-old woman, business manager, Cincinnati

Importantly, the recommended approach does not simply rehash the familiar and limited idea that investments in the arts help the economy of an area. In particular:

- It does not focus on the dollars-and-cents economic argument that can easily be undermined by other industries that can provide greater returns on the dollar or different kinds of jobs,
- It offers a richer and more vivid picture of economic benefits (thriving neighborhoods filled with life and energy) that evokes quality of life, and
- It is expressed with a particular term/image ("ripple effect") that helps set it apart.

More connected: desire for unity

The second benefit – through sharing common experiences and new perspectives people in a community can better understand each other and live and work together – is less tangible than the prosperity benefit noted above. However, it speaks to a genuine desire noted by Cincinnatians to have more unity among residents.

We have a lot of different types of

people in Cincinnati. When functions come or when any event comes to Cincinnati, it caters to one group here. It doesn't cater to all the groups. It's segregated big time ... why can't it be multicultural? It's like there is always – we just cater to one specific group and there is multiracial people out there.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

This idea is a new, graspable way to think about the public benefits of the arts.

I think art and music can definitely be a different avenue of social communication amongst a group. You can get a lot of things from art and music that you can't read in a book necessarily, or in a newspaper. So in that respect, you can get a lot from it. It can definitely get a lot of people talking and thinking about a new idea.

Arts-connected man, Cincinnati

There is so much going on out in the world that we miss. If you bring in the arts and the culture, you can see what everybody else's perspective is.

Not-arts-connected man, Cincinnati



Coining a term

The main idea of the approach – that arts cause (unexpected) effects that benefit the community – could be conveyed in any number of ways. The phrase “ripple effect” proved to be a memorable and user-friendly way of capturing this key idea – presumably because it is both familiar and relatively vivid. Whether or not communicators choose to use this particular phrase, they should take care to find simple and vivid language to make the same point. Further, experience in a variety of issue areas has shown that the use of a new but quickly grasped term can help make an idea easier to remember and focus on. If communicators use phrases like “the arts ripple effect” (or others) they are subtly cuing audiences that there is a new idea to pay attention to.

It is a ripple effect with arts and culture. A vibrant arts environment will bring more people together as well as grow our city financially . . .

This was eye opening!! Thank you so much for helping to spread the word of the importance of arts and culture activities.

34-year-old woman, manager, Pennsylvania

Community-wide benefits

One of the keys to the message is that it does not focus on the value to individuals, but on what the arts offer to *communities* – including those who don’t participate directly. This is a big-picture perspective that guides people away from the default understandings of the arts as personal enrichment, entertainment tailored to particular tastes, etc.

Arts create a ripple effect throughout a city. The benefits are far-reaching, and help make a city vibrant.

39-year-old woman, Cincinnati

The arts are important to a city because they help citizens interact, fight crime, bring communities together and create an overall beneficial ripple effect on the entire city.

22-year-old woman, administrative assistant, Cincinnati

A concrete picture of an active arts community

To combat the problem that “arts and culture” doesn’t call to mind any clearly defined idea, it is important to flesh out any claims about the arts ripple effect with concrete examples of the kinds of activities and institutions that help create the effect – galleries, theaters, concerts, community art centers, etc.

Beyond downtown

In order to avoid the downtown trap, it should be made clear that a wide variety of arts and culture activity results in a range of benefits throughout the area.

The ripple effect causes good things to happen in area neighborhoods . . . It makes me feel more positive about the arts and what effects they have on an entire city and its people.

39-year-old woman, accountant, Cincinnati

Civic pride

Though it did not prove compelling enough as the lead idea, research subjects were often motivated by the idea that Cincinnati's commitment to the arts is a source of pride, and makes the city distinct from other places. Quite a few brought this idea up themselves, even when it was not mentioned in test materials.

I think it speaks to our rich heritage and is a source of pride, really, when you live here, when you realize how much there is here.

Arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

The arts stimulate a ripple effect in a community. They help revitalize neighborhoods, encourage tourism, build a sense of pride, and encourage people to work together to maintain and nurture their city.

52-year-old woman, business manager, Cincinnati

Call to collective action

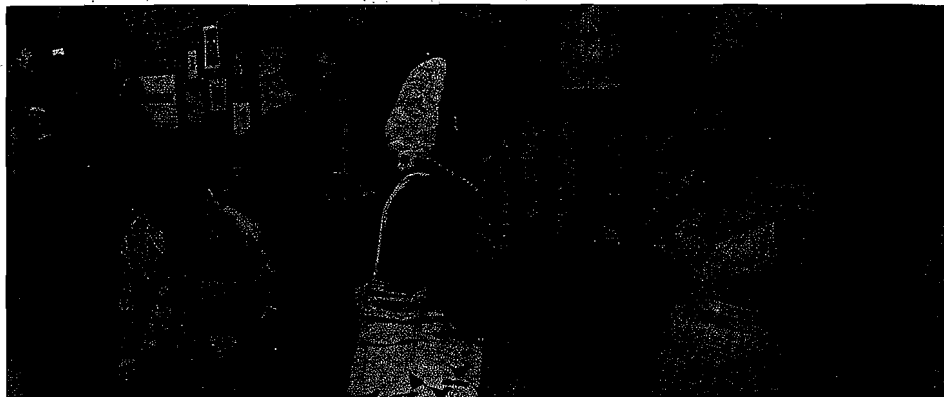
It is helpful to be explicit about the idea that "we" need to take responsibility and take action on the issue. This can be expressed in various ways, such as the idea that past investments in the arts created huge payoffs for Cincinnati, and "we have a responsibility to keep that investment going."

I believe we do have a responsibility to keep it going, and not only keep it going but make it better.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

Sample paragraph

The sample paragraph illustrates one way communicators might express the main organizing idea and several supporting points. The language in this chart closely resembles texts used in testing and the full paragraph above. We also include the framing effect column to highlight the intentions of the text.



| Language | Framing Effect |
|--|---|
| <p>Why do leaders all across the country think of arts and culture as important priorities?</p> | <p>Frames as public priority – affects cities/areas, not just individuals</p> |
| <p>Because when creative activity is happening in large and small ways throughout an area, it creates surprising ripple effects of benefits, even for those who don't participate directly.</p> | <p>Avoids "downtown focus". Emphasizes broad benefits – not just for those who enjoy the arts.</p> |
| <p>The arts ripple effect creates two important kinds of benefits: 1) in the economic vitality of an area and 2) in how communities come together and understand each other.</p> | <p>Treats "arts ripple effect" as a special term to focus on; emphasizes multiple streams of public benefits</p> |
| <p>In economic terms, theaters, galleries, concerts and so on mean more energy and life in a community, more tourists, more renovated buildings, more people and businesses moving to an appealing place.</p> | <p>Creates a picture of "economic" benefits that go beyond dollars and cents; gives concrete examples of art and culture.</p> |
| <p>A vibrant arts environment with music, storytelling, and community art centers also means more people coming together to share experiences and ideas, connecting with each other, and understanding each other in new ways.</p> | <p>Creates a picture of intangible community benefits; gives concrete examples of arts and culture</p> |
| <p>Cincinnati has historically supported the arts and enjoyed the benefits of these ripple effects. We should be proud of what we've built and take responsibility for keeping our investment going.</p> | <p>Triggers civic pride, reminds people of collective responsibility to maintain what's been built.</p> |



Approaches That Miss the Mark

It is easy for seemingly promising messages to fail.

In this issue area, as in many others, it is easy for seemingly promising messages to fail. A message can accidentally trigger counterproductive perspectives, can make wrong assumptions about an audience's knowledge or concerns, or can be fundamentally misunderstood because an audience's own assumptions interfere.

In this section, we review a number of messages that proved not to have the same potential as the recommended approach. These failures offer particularly helpful illustrations of how messages in this area can fall short.

Note that there are some obvious directions that were not included in testing, because of the strong traps that had been identified earlier in the research. For instance, none of the texts promote a stronger appreciation of arts as great *entertainment* – since framing arts as entertainment ends up promoting a passive stance, where the marketplace is expected to determine what succeeds and fails, etc. Likewise,

none of the tested materials focuses on art as an important means by which we *express ourselves*, since this perspective promotes a view of arts as a private, individual matter rather than a public one.

Civic Inspiration

Great civilizations have always invested their resources in great public works of art, architecture, and performance. The Greeks, Mayans, Romans, ancient Chinese and others created civilizations that pushed human progress forward with new inventions on every front – and their great traditions of public art, music, performance and so on helped that progress by inspiring people with pride and vision. America, too, has inspired the world with its music, films, plays, and the architecture of its great cities. We need to keep that momentum going by remembering that public art has the power to inspire all of us to greater things.

Results:

The idea that great art inspires us and helps progress was basically not heard by research subjects – perhaps because it is a very unfamiliar idea in this era.

Instead, the message was boiled down to the much simpler (and less explanatory) idea that great cities and civilizations produce great art.

Overall, the argument did not prove compelling.

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

The arts can bring respect and admiration to a city.

43-year-old man, self-employed

What are your personal reactions to the statement?

Any expression of oneself is important to any society because without art life would be pretty boring. We need more entertainment areas.

30-year-old woman

Great Cities

Great cities have always invested in great public works of art, architecture and performance because they inspire people with pride and a vision of achievement. When it comes to support for the arts, Cincinnati has historically been first-rate. Our parents and grandparents recognized the value of the arts, and it is partly their investment in our museums, galleries, concert halls and cultural organizations that has put Cincinnati on the map, and made us one of the great cities of the region and the country. We have a responsibility to keep that investment going for our children, grandchildren and future generations.

Results:

This variant on "civic inspiration" resonates well with arts supporters, who already take pride in what Cincinnati has achieved.

It helps those already committed to the arts focus on our current responsibility to uphold them.

On the other hand, there are certain traps in this phrasing that undermine its effectiveness:

- It can be heard as a message about decline.
- Its focus on the past can trigger objections that we should focus on what the city needs now (such as economic help).

We have a responsibility to living, breathing people. Not to some dead thing hanging on a wall.

47-year-old man, health care professional, Cincinnati

- More generally, its historical focus can fail to connect with people.

Rich grandparents and rich parents have supported the arts. If they enjoy attending concert halls, etc. let them give money to them.

41-year-old woman, professional, Cincinnati

- Finally, its emphasis on the great downtown institutions is a liability for reasons discussed earlier in the report.

We have a responsibility to our children, grandchildren and future generations to make this city safer; it isn't going to make any difference if we have the best museums, etc., in the world if you're going to get mugged or shot while going to or from them. If we do not clean up the city, no one will go to the museums, etc.

39-year-old man, electrical engineer, Cincinnati

Health and Science

As Americans, we often overlook the connection between our health on one hand, and experiences like art, music, dance and stories on the other. In fact, these kinds of arts experiences are essential to our physical and mental well-being. They have been scientifically proven to improve the health and well-being of premature babies, the elderly, those suffering from depression, stress, pain, and some specific diseases like Parkinson's. It's not just that they are relaxing or distracting – like watching sports on TV for some – but that somehow humans are "wired" to need these kinds of experiences with each other, just as we need vitamins, physical exercise and so forth. And if our environment doesn't provide them we don't do as well.

Results:

The main idea struck many as new and interesting.

But, the story quickly reduced to the idea that relaxation helps reduce stress – and any particular significance of arts and culture disappeared.

That the arts are soothing and make people happy and healthy. I want to see arts more accessible to those who are low-income and to those who are ill so that they may get the benefits.

30-year-old woman, homemaker



It's good to have something positive to concentrate on rather than all the negatives that are out there weighing the world down.

31-year-old woman, homemaker, Cincinnati

When their attention is directed toward stress relief, then any activity that relieves stress becomes equivalent with art.

It's a stress relief for me when I get involved with my church. Just different things we do in our church, when I get involved it relieves the stress I get, the anxiety.

Arts-connected, woman,
greater Cincinnati

My dad, after he retired he became a hospital chaplain. In that job you can see a lot of people, unfortunately, pass away in the hospital. So sometimes it is kind of tough and he's like, "Sometimes I just need to go see a stupid movie." That's exactly – the whole stress thing is huge.

Arts-connected, man,
greater Cincinnati

The story also reinforced an individual focus, rather than helping promote the idea of collective stakes and collective responsibility.

I believe that things like art are helpful in our feeling better, especially emotionally . . . but there are other areas that are more important. I would prefer to see the arts receive more funding from private individuals and companies rather than taxpayers' money.

46-year-old man, dispatcher,
Burton, Ohio

Broadening our Horizons

Through art and music, we connect to and learn from each other, which makes us stronger as a community. There is a strong and surprising connection between a community's ability to get along and solve problems, and the art, music and dance experiences that are available to local residents. This is because arts experiences and an arts perspective provide benefits that can't be achieved in other ways. For example, they help open our eyes to the many different ways to see and interpret the world, to be sensitive to other perspectives, or help us see that there is more than one way to solve a problem. When our community offers us these ways to broaden our horizons, and we take advantage of them, we are more able to work together and make progress together.

Results:

This text resonates well with arts supporters, and taps into their sense of art's deep emotional value.

On the other hand, when standing alone the case about the arts' practical value is basically ignored or dismissed, and it does not end up promoting the idea of public responsibility.

The arts is a way to open our horizons and expose us to culture . . . but with the struggling economy there are other things that are more important than the arts . . . [They] are not an absolute necessity for citizens.

30-year-old woman, sales manager,
Batavia, Ohio

I think it depends on the city's budget situation. A city that has ample money should spend some on arts opportunities so that our views can be challenged in a fun new way.

32-year-old woman, homemaker,
Marblehead, Ohio

Human Universal

Music and art are what are sometimes called human universals – things that people have done in every single place and culture and period of history – along with work, meal times, some form of leadership/government, etc. We sometimes think of them as luxuries, but they are really a very basic aspect of human life, like eating or interacting with family. This is why more and more cities, states and countries are working to make sure that there are opportunities for people to experience and create music and art. They are a basic need that we shouldn't ignore as we set priorities for our communities.

Results:

The idea that the arts are a "basic need" is intriguing, novel and memorable to research participants.

On the other hand, the text offers no explanation for how or why we need art, music, and so forth. The result is that it ends up boiling down to an assertion that the arts are important.

Emphasis on the great downtown institutions is a liability.



References to the "creative community" are not very compelling or memorable.

The arts help to keep people well rounded . . . however, I do not think it is as important as eating!

40-year-old woman, greater Cincinnati

Few subjects pay attention to the more historical or scientific aspects of the text.

I would say it is important because it is part of who we are and helps us understand our backgrounds.

24-year-old woman, clerk, Bethel, Ohio

City Planning

What do cities need in order to prosper? City planners in American towns think of arts and culture as fundamental economic development tools. Galleries and theaters, music

festivals and public art, studios, lofts and community cultural centers are key tools cities have used to revitalize downtowns, attract tourists, preserve historic buildings and promote local vibrancy, stabilize communities and solve community problems. The creative community that comes together also helps a town by selling their artwork, investing sweat equity in neighborhoods, and providing a pool of talented workers for local employers. This is why encouraging and investing in the creative community makes so much economic sense.

Results:

Some aspects of this text resonate well with Cincinnatians, including the relatively concrete image of how arts can transform a city.

A downside is that it is easily read as a discussion of how to help "bad" neighborhoods, and can lead to a distracting focus on downtown Cincinnati and crime.

For something like stabilizing communities, in an abstract way the

arts can do that, but what really does it is police presence, availability of economic resources, job growth, etc.

39-year-old woman, editor, Pennsylvania

It does little to convince people to move the arts up their list of priorities about what a city needs to thrive.

Cities need water, resources, jobs, etc., but also need arts and cultural events. These are important to have a high quality of life in that city . . . Arts are important, but I believe there are other problems to be dealt with first.

20-year-old man, student, Pickerington, Ohio

The references to the creative community are not very compelling or memorable – this aspect of the text tends to disappear from discussion.

Innovation

Creativity and innovation have been keys to American success, and it turns out that creative activities like painting and music are linked to technological progress. The two go hand in hand. Almost all scientists who win Nobel prizes also do creative activities like painting, playing an instrument or

writing poetry. And many important inventions are based on innovations by artists – from micro-sutures adapted from the fine tools and threads used in lace-making, to microchips that are made using methods developed by etchers, silk-screeners and photolithographers. Even the encryption used in many of today's cell phones was invented by a composer and an actress, inspired by the structure of piano music. When we encourage creative activity we plant the seeds for innovation.

Results:

The main idea of this text, as well as the examples, struck research participants as new and interesting.

I never really thought about the arts and creativity being linked to technology. They always seemed as two separate and unrelated groups to me. In fact, the technological field seems very regimented and orderly while the arts seem more laid back and free-spirited. I can see the connection now that I really think about it.

48-year-old woman, homemaker,
Alexandria, Kentucky

But subjects did not easily bridge from the text to thinking about communal responsibility, or the well-being of a city/area – one of the central goals of the project. The following person includes this connection as an afterthought, but like other research participants, seems not to see a strong connection between the text and the question of what communities need.

The arts are a source of inspiration to many people. It not only supports tourism and provides a small amount of income to the city, but it may provide advantages in seemingly unrelated categories, like technology.

25-year-old man, student, Pennsylvania

Works of Beauty

The human spirit needs to experience beauty and excellence, as a change from our ordinary daily routines. Why do all cultures everywhere produce

fine creative works – music, paintings, poetry, carvings that are valued as the pinnacle of what the culture can achieve? Why are these great works considered treasures? Why are churches and temples decorated with beautiful objects? Why should it matter if a city had no orchestra to hear, fine paintings to look at, no museum to see them in, no quality theater to attend? Because works of beauty are important to the spirit and if they aren't there we lead lesser lives.

Results:

This idea is moving to many subjects, in that it captures some of their own feelings about the arts.

On the other hand, it is difficult for people to express the idea clearly themselves – it often boils down to something like “arts are important to people” – and therefore does not offer much help to people trying to justify investments in the arts.

The arts are important as a cultural thing for a city. They allow a variety of modes for expressing ourselves. With museums and centers we have places to go and enjoy these things and get away from the everyday life . . . It is about cultural pride and a necessary part of our lives.

64-year-old man, retired, Dayton, Ohio

It is also hard to tie this idea to the welfare of the city/region.

Imagine a friend says to you, “The last thing this city should be spending money on is another dance troupe or art exhibition!” What would be a good response to this in favor of the arts?

I suppose that I could say that the arts are important to the population's mental well-being but I would agree with the person.

37-year-old woman, Pennsylvania

Transcendence

Art can be a transcendent experience that takes us away from the familiar and everyday. It broadens our horizons by allowing us to experience new and different ideas.

Results:

This can be a powerful, emotional connection for many people.

However, it reinforces art as a personal, private concern. Transcendence causes people to think of benefits to themselves, not to the greater community.

Also, it can easily result in a very broad definition of art as anything beautiful or noteworthy.

Art can take you away from your problems no matter what it is – for that moment and time. In the car, at a light and you might hear something and it takes you. That's what that statement means to me. And the best part is sometimes you don't even know and then you wake from a minute and that was that experience from something art.

Not-arts-connected, woman, greater Cincinnati

Arts and Kids

When we talk about why art and music is important for kids we usually focus on how it's good for the kids themselves – it promotes better problem-solving skills, it teaches them ways to express their feelings, etc. But we often don't talk about how kids' arts and music experiences end up benefiting all of us. The benefits range from kids who are more likely to grow up to create new innovations that improve our lives, to the painters, musicians and storytellers of tomorrow who are going to make our cities more livable and our lives more satisfying.

Results:

This text resonates with those who believe arts are important for children.

One important weakness is that its attempt to refocus attention on broader benefits to the community is not very successful – research subjects continue to focus on benefits for kids.

I definitely agree we need kids to be involved with something and the arts are something that is influential and will help make a kid more rounded. But I do not feel there is as much future with the arts as with other professions or community activities.

25-year-old man, accountant, Cincinnati

What was the most important idea in the paragraph?

That kids need exposure to arts. That it fosters more creative thinking and problem solving.

39-year-old woman, office manager, Cincinnati

Additionally, it doesn't promote support for arts initiatives other than arts education, i.e., it has one important but limited use even when successful.

House and Home

There is a difference between a house and a home. You can have the foundation, lumber, plumbing, electric wiring, etc. without having a comfortable place you would want to live in. To make a home livable you need

everything from heat or air conditioning to furniture to paint on the walls. In the same way, an important part of what makes a city livable and special is the local creative activity, from art to music, dance, storytelling, etc. These are an important dimension of life in a community, and without them life is diminished. This is why, in good times and bad, so many cities support and encourage galleries and theaters, music festivals and public art, studios and community cultural centers.

Results:

Research participants found this analogy interesting and memorable.

And for supporters, it is a helpful way of encapsulating the value they see in a strong arts scene in Cincinnati.

A city is more than buildings, streets, homes, and parks. Without arts and creative enterprise, there is no spark to provide the city with a sense of community and charm . . . spending money on arts is as important to personal comfort as transforming bricks from a house to a home.

60-year-old woman, corporate trainer, Cincinnati

On the other hand, it is less successful at helping others see the value more clearly.

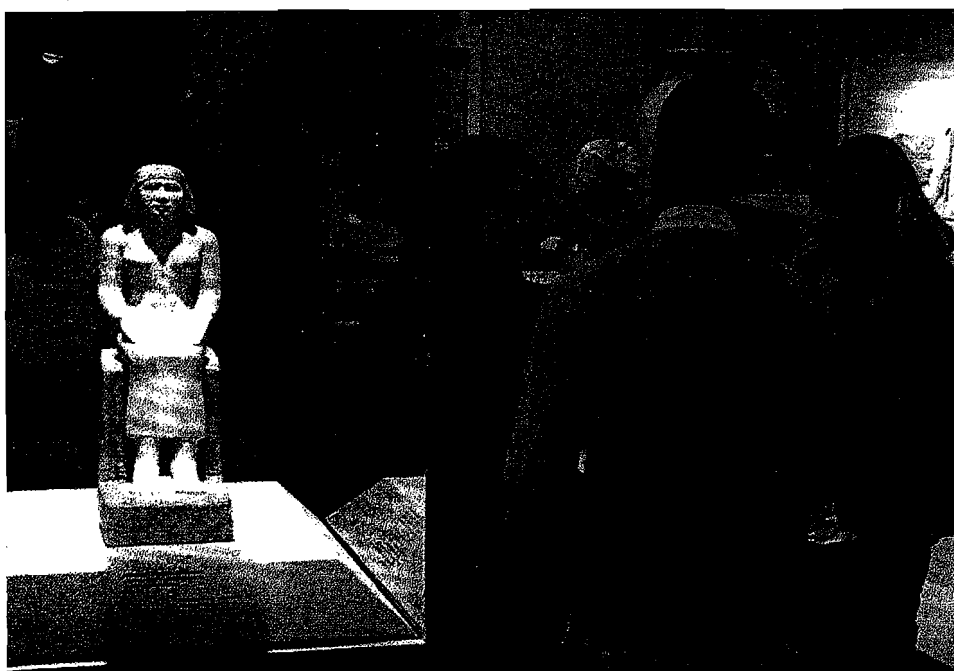
I agree about the house and a home, but in these economic times I don't agree with cities spending money that they don't have on the arts. That should be cut in these tough times.

45-year-old woman, educator, Cincinnati

How would you explain to a friend why the arts are important to Cincinnati?

I'm not sure it is ... Cultural heritage doesn't seem to be as important today as it was in the past.

33-year-old woman, homemaker, Cincinnati





Conclusion

The communications approach discussed in this report is more than a slogan or campaign image. It is an orientation that can inform any kind of communication – from interviews to websites to speeches – and should help make any of these communications more compelling and effective. A new frame for any issue is most valuable if it becomes a habit of mind for communicators, an organizing idea that informs their own thinking as well as their communications with others.

That said, the approach recommended from this research allows for a considerable degree of flexibility, depending on communicators' priorities and the circumstances in which they find themselves. The same basic organizing idea could be expressed with various words and images – "ripple effect" is helpful but other user-friendly language might work as well. A range of scenarios and examples could work effectively – involving a variety of arts events and institutions, different illustrations of economic vibrancy, and so forth.

It should also be noted that the tools recommended here are for arts supporters as well as audiences that are more neutral. Even those Cincinnatians who already feel a commitment to the arts can often feel they lack the ideas and words to make a compelling case or have

a lucid discussion with their peers, and the tools offered here can be just as useful with those who are already sympathetic as they are with those who need persuasion.

Finally, this research project has focused on developing helpful insights and tools for advocates of the arts in Cincinnati, but we also hope it provides a head start for similar efforts either nationally or in other parts of the country.

While some of the circumstances, obstacles, and opportunities are probably specific to the Cincinnati context – such as particular associations with cultural diversity, or with downtown neighborhoods and institutions – other findings are likely to be similar in other places. The idea of ripple effects of surprising benefits applies to any community, and both streams of benefits emphasized in the recommended approach are likely to resonate in many locations throughout the United States. While we can't be confident without testing – and local circumstances could certainly come into play – a compelling picture of economic vibrancy, or of a community that is more connected, stands a fair chance of motivating people in towns across the country. Hopefully, Cincinnati's experience will provide useful insights for those planning to embark on similar communications research efforts in other places.

*The tools
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are more neutral.*

[1] Note that people can toggle between contradictory default mental pictures, and sometimes arts are seen through the common lens of struggling arts organizations. But even so, these can naturally be thought of as struggling in their own marketplace – e.g., competing for donations rather than purchases [2] See Gamson and Modigliani (1987), "The changing course of affirmative action."

[3] Note that in-depth work with a relatively small group of informants has been the norm in cognitive anthropology, allowing researchers to work more closely with subjects than is possible using large-scale methodologies. Because a culture (of a nation or community) is defined by a set of broadly shared understandings and assumptions, studying cultural models is analogous to studying the structure of a natural language. One does not need a large group of speakers to determine the basics of a language's grammar and syntax – a few speaker will typically suffice. Similarly, working with only a relative few subjects, one can identify the commonly held belief system typical of those subjects' culture.

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