



HouArts in Action



May 2025

PLAN FOR TODAY



AGENDA

Welcome & Opening Remarks Bao Long Chu & Marci Dallas

HouArts Platform & Strategy Overview

Station Breakouts

- Policy in Play

- HouArts Impact MadLibs

- Social Media Training

- Story Share

Wrap-Up & Next Steps

Art and culture are the heartbeat of the thriving Greater Houston region.

But too often, the impact and needs of this essential sector are left out of the conversation. HouArts in Action is a unified approach to champion arts and culture across the region.

We are building a coalition of artists, organizations, business leaders, and community ambassadors to amplify the collective voice of the creative sector and put arts on the agenda.

MILESTONES

- ✓ **COMMUNITY KICKOFF**
December 13th, 2024
- ✓ **HOUARTS TOWN HALL**
January 23rd, 2025
- ✓ **ADVOCACY TRAINING WEBINAR**
January 29th, 2025
- ✓ **TEXAS ARTS ADVOCACY DAY**
February 5th, 2025
- ✓ **HAA COMMUNITY MEETING**
February 13th, 2025
- ✓ **COMMUNITY ROUNDTABLES**
March 24th, 2025
- ✓ **PLAN RELEASE**
May 13th, 2025

TASK FORCE

*Janice Bond • Michelle Bonton • Jessica Brown • Leila Cartier •
Gracie Chavez • Sha Davis • Claudia de Vasco • Sharon Fletcher •
Mark Folkes • Amy Gibbs • Lindsey Hurst • RUEROB Jackson •
Jack McBride • Trisha Morales • Shareef Rabie • Chandler Snipe •
Sarah Stauder • Monica Villarreal*

CONSULTING TEAM

CONDUIT GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
CULTURAL LAUNCH
FORD MOMENTUM!
PADRON & CO.
TREPWISE

FUNDERS



HOUSTON CULTURAL DISTRICTS

What is HouArts in Action Championing?



PUBLIC FUNDING

Protect and Grow Public
Funding for Arts & Culture



VIBRANT SPACES

Create and Preserve Vibrant
Cultural Spaces



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY

Build Pathways to Prosperity for
Artists & Creatives



EFFECTIVE STORYTELLING

Communicate the Richness of
Houston's Culture

What is the approach?

PUT ARTS ON THE AGENDA

ESTABLISH & DEEPEN PARTNERSHIPS

Public Funding

Protect and Grow Funding Streams for Arts & Culture

Public funding for the arts in the Greater Houston area is an essential component of ensuring that the region remains a global leader in arts and culture. HouArts' top priority is around demystifying, protecting, and expanding funding for the sector.

Key Strategies:

1. Ensure a renewal of the arts allocation for Hotel & Occupancy Taxes (HOT funds) in 2027 and beyond.
2. Sustain and improve regional Civic Art Ordinances/ "percent for art" policies across the region.
3. Identify opportunities to catalyze arts funding with existing funded entities, including TIRZs, management districts, and Boards and Commissions at the County and regional level.
4. Work with County Commissioners and officials to make it easier to deploy existing HOT arts funding at the county level identity opportunities for expanded arts funding from Harris County.
5. Build a public campaign to establish a permanent allocation for arts and culture.

Broward County, FL



Broward County, Florida has established a sustainable arts funding approach that differs from tourism-dependent models by primarily utilizing county general fund allocations. The Broward Cultural Division, the county's

designated local arts agency, receives funding through the standard county budgeting process, effectively positioning arts and culture as an essential government service rather than a special interest. Guided by the Broward Cultural Council advisory board, this funding mechanism provides greater stability during economic fluctuations that might impact tourism-based revenue sources like hotel taxes.

The Cultural Division administers various grant programs to distribute these funds to arts organizations and artists throughout the county, creating a more reliable foundation for the local cultural ecosystem. The county is also active in efforts to insulate the sector from budget cuts - recently launching a \$1M fund for cultural events and festivals in response to statewide budget cuts by the Governor. This approach demonstrates how a county can play a leading role in funding the arts and view it as a core allocation rather than relying on specialized or visitor-dependent revenue streams.

HouArts learnings: *Counties can play a leadership role in driving and funding the arts, with direct allocations.*

Vibrant Spaces

Create and Preserve Vibrant Cultural Spaces

Vibrant street-life and cultural spaces are the lifeblood of neighborhoods, reflecting unique character and sustaining economic activity. HouArts will work to ensure that existing spaces are supported, and collaborate on efforts to make streetlife more vibrant through integrating local artists, musicians and creatives into the region's urban fabric.

Key Strategies:

1. Partner with management districts, TIRZs, and county precincts across the region to support plans for vibrant streetlife in public spaces, including parks. Identify opportunities to better integrate local artists and performers into programming and activations.
2. Encourage activation of ground level storefronts with art displays, starting with buildings owned by the city, county, and other public entities. Encourage leaders to explore innovative models activate vacant commercial properties, leveraging partnerships with landowners and local business associations.
3. Work towards full ADA accessibility in cultural facilities, museums, and surrounding streetscapes by collaborating with city agencies, disability advocates, and designers to address physical, sensory, and communication barriers.
4. Work with policymakers to facilitate the easy activation and rentals of publicly owned community centers and cultural facilities, with a focus on streamlining and simplifying booking processes.
5. Collaborate with local and regional planning entities to explore strategies to incentivize developers to embed cultural spaces in new construction and preserve existing creative spaces by leveraging deed restrictions and district-based protections.
6. Explore the creation of low-cost policy interventions that can reduce barriers to artists and performers, such as musician loading zones.



Wild Wonderland a Mosaic by Dixie Friend Gay
located in Midtown Park

“So much of arts is being able to gather and share space. If more folks could stumble upon arts happenings that are walking distance and nearby them it would do wonders for our cultural fabric.”

- Town Hall Attendee

Austin, TX



Austin, Texas has implemented several innovative programs to preserve and enhance cultural spaces in the face of rising property values and development pressures. The Austin Cultural Trust manages the disbursement of two significant public funding sources to preserves historic and iconic cultural buildings and creates new spaces for creative and cultural uses: the \$12 million Creative Spaces Bond approved by voters in 2018, and the \$4.9 million Iconic Venue Fund. Separately, the Creative Space Assistance Program provides direct financial support to creative venues and organizations facing displacement or rising costs, offering grants that can be used for rent subsidies, facility improvements, or accessibility upgrades.

This program specifically targets spaces that might otherwise be priced out of rapidly developing areas.

The city has also implemented practical solutions like dedicated musician loading zones in the entertainment district, particularly around Sixth Street and the Red River Cultural District. These specially designated parking spaces allow performing artists to load and unload equipment near venues without risking parking tickets or contributing to traffic congestion. Together, these programs showcase Austin's multi-faceted approach to supporting cultural spaces through both major funding initiatives and practical infrastructure accommodations designed to keep creative activity viable amid urban growth and development pressures.

HouArts learnings: *The public sector can play a significant role in facilitating the preservation and creation of cultural spaces, and it's happened right here in Texas.*

SPOTLIGHT CASE STUDIES

Denver, CO



Denver has an established local government agency, Denver Arts & Venues (DAV), which will play a key role in Vibrant Denver in partnership with the city's economic development agency. DAV is currently investing in window activation along the 16th Street corridor by partnering with artists and art studios to add temporary art and sculpture installations. DAV also

operates a busker program, which uses live music as an activation tool and pays artists to draw foot traffic to retail businesses.

A local nonprofit arts organization, RedLine, is also working to activate vacant retail spaces in downtown Denver. RedLine partners with developers and connects them with artists who can provide ground-floor activation in exchange for low-cost leases of workspaces on other floors.

HouArts learnings: *There are numerous ways that government entities can facilitate the activation of downtown spaces with art and artists.*

Economic Opportunity

Build Pathways to Prosperity for Artists & Creatives

Art is not possible without artists and creatives, many of whom report challenges maintaining and scaling their creative practices. HouArts will work to identify and advocate for solutions that that help artists and creatives stay in Houston.

Key Strategies:

Distribute information on evolving policy and regulations, as well as existing grant and commercial opportunities at the Local, County, State and Federal levels.

1. Advocate for participation and integration of local artists and performers into activations for conventions and special events.
2. Seek to identify and facilitate public funding for workforce development initiatives within arts and culture, with a focus on supporting and training local artists to be eligible for major activations and installations.
3. Remove policy barriers and explore opportunities to facilitate the development of artist live & workspaces across the region.

SPOTLIGHT CASE STUDIES

Minneapolis, MN



Minneapolis has developed notable support systems for artists through collaborative efforts between public and private entities. Springboard for the Arts, headquartered in the Twin Cities, provides artists with professional development, healthcare resources, incubator programs designed to build sustainable careers, and a list of live/work spaces throughout the city.

The city's Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy department works to integrate arts into public policy and economic development.

Minneapolis has implemented the Creative City Challenge, a program that commissions public art installations at the Minneapolis Convention Center Plaza. The city has also established arts districts with specific zoning considerations to support creative spaces.

HouArts learnings: *To support artists and address the barriers they have in sustaining their practices requires policy support, affordable space initiatives, and professional development resources that connect artists to economic opportunities. A powerful nonprofit intermediary working in collaboration with government entities can help drive this coordination.*

Effective Storytelling

Communicate the Richness of Houston's Culture

Those who are tapped into the arts and cultural ecosystem of the city see Houston as brimming with cultural assets. But many residents and visitors lack of awareness of this richness. HouArts will work to change this perception, facilitating a partnership between the sector and the entities responsible for promoting and advertising Houston to visitors and businesses.

Key Strategies:

1. Collaborate with city leaders to facilitate the growth of leisure and cultural tourism as a way of attracting and extending stays of visitors.
2. Package and highlight the stories that make Houston's arts and culture scene unique and diverse.
3. Explore creative messaging channels, including documentary, influencers, and other non-traditional advertising approaches.
4. Partner with VisitHouston to identify events and narratives to drive visitors to Houston for its arts and culture offerings.

Dallas, TX



The Dallas arts community has significantly increased and improved their collaboration with Visit Dallas over the last five years, following the sector becoming more unified during the COVID-19 pandemic. Today, the Dallas arts ecosystem and Visit Dallas collaborate on several strategic initiatives including a coordinated marketing campaign that evolved Dallas Arts Week into Dallas Arts Month.

Visit Dallas incorporates arts and cultural attractions in its tourism marketing materials and connects convention attendees with cultural experiences. Signature events like AURORA, which transforms downtown with light and sound installations, and Dallas Arts District Block Parties receive promotional support through tourism channels. This has helped the city garner awards and national recognition, including Dallas Arts District being named the top arts district in the country by USA Today for multiple years running. In 2020, Dallas-based watch company - JBW - and a Dallas filmmaker Tramaine Townsend, focused on elevating various subcultures of Black people in Dallas and challenging conceptions of the city, and went on tour at film festivals across the country.

HouArts learnings: Cultural institutions, creatives, tourism organizations, and local businesses can work together to enhance a city's appeal to visitors while strengthening its cultural identity.

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Additional Areas of Need, Where Others are Positioned to Lead



Arts Education

Encourage arts instruction and arts-embedded learning opportunities in classrooms and schools across the region.

This frequently came up as an area of focus and concern for residents and creatives. Arts Connect Houston is a leader in this space – please refer to their website for more information and updates, including their annual State of the Arts Report.

Lead: Arts Connect Houston



Housing Affordability

Ensure Houston is an affordable place to live and work for arts workers.

Stable and affordable housing is one of the most crucial factors in ensuring a vibrant arts community. Most of this work will be led by housing nonprofits and public authorities. However, there may be specific opportunities for flexible leases following recent land acquisitions in EaDo by TxDot and/or opportunities to expand live-work spaces in the Warehouse district.

Potential Leads: Houston Housing Authority, Harris County Housing Finance Corporation, LISC Houston, Houston Housing Collaborative



Resource Sharing

Create new vehicles for mutual aid, collective purchasing and capacity building among artists and creatives.

This was a key area of interest and support in conversations with the arts sector. HouArts is not a direct programmer, and is focused more on partnerships outside the sector rather than within it. However, one or multiple of the arts support organizations in the city are well-positioned to create digital repositories of information and grant opportunities, as well as to facilitate cooperative economies across the creative sector.

Potential Leads: Fresh Arts, Houston Arts Alliance, Dance Source

"Arts is an investment that pays off—not just in an improved quality of life for Houstonians, but economically as well. We're in the business of business too!"

- Town Hall Attendee



Xin Chao Houston - Caroline Truong, 2020, midtownHOU Arts Micro Grant Project



ELECTED OFFICIALS

Great Cities Invest in the Arts

The arts are not a luxury—they are an economic driver, a community necessity, and a powerful tool for education, public safety, and civic pride.

Supporting the arts strengthens Houston's future.

Every \$1 of HOT funds invested in arts and culture generates \$2.16 in local tax revenue.

When making a decision to stay in or relocate to a new city, arts and culture offerings influence people's decision making about as much as the quality of schools.



BUSINESS LEADERS

Everything Is Bigger in Texas, Including Our Arts Business

Investing in the arts isn't just good for culture, it's smart for business.

A thriving arts sector boosts economic growth, attracts top talent, and makes Houston a more vibrant place to live and work.

Arts and culture organizations generated \$1.3b in total economic activity in 2022.

Locals and non locals alike spend an average of \$38.50 in the local economy when they attend an arts and culture event.



TOURISM & HOSPITALITY

The Arts Light Up Houston

A vibrant arts scene means more hotel stays, dining, and retail spending.

By thoughtfully investing in promoting cultural tourism, we attract more visitors, strengthen our global reputation, and grow the hospitality industry.

The Houston Museum District has more annual visitors than all major sporting events and the rodeo, combined.

43% of Americans strongly consider whether the destination is rich in arts when deciding where to vacation.

Nonlocal visitors spend an average of \$60 in the local economy each time they visit and arts and culture event in Houston.



RESIDENTS

Arts & Culture Are What Makes Houston Feel like Home

In H-Town, our arts & culture offerings are an expression of our diversity.

A stronger cultural sector means better neighborhoods, more local events, and a more connected community.

Lower income neighborhoods with cultural resources, public art, and community engagement can see a 18-40% reduction in serious crime.

81% of youth who engage in arts programs report improved self-esteem and confidence.

Arts participants are more than twice as likely to volunteer in their communities, independent of education, age, gender, or race.

Greater Houston: Three Futures

FUNDING IS REDUCED:

**Greater Houston loses jobs, joy,
and well-being as arts access shrinks.**



FUNDING IS MAINTAINED

**Greater Houston treads water
while other cities surge ahead**



FUNDING IS INCREASED

**Greater Houston boosts its economy, energizes its cultural
scene, and strengthens public health for all residents.**



Annual Dates

HouArts is going to establish an annual cadence for arts celebration, reporting and advocacy that those inside and outside the sector can rely on and participate in.

OCTOBER

Hou Arts State of the Arts

Celebration and summary of progress

Meet and greet with elected officials

Collective agenda-setting

JANUARY

Set priorities for upcoming budgeting and legislative sessions

Develop scripts and key targets.

FEBRUARY

Arts Advocacy Day (odd years at the State Capitol, even years at the City or County)

Five Year Plan

Plan Year 1

May 2025 - April 2026

PROTECT WHAT WE HAVE

Representation within Houston Mayor's Office

Focus on function and eligibility of current Harris County funding streams

Secure local funding within Houston: city HOT Funding Renewal for 2027 contract

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Hold conversations to identify opportunity windows in Vibrant Spaces area, including ground-level activations and live-work spaces.

Leverage workforce resources and training opportunities in the creative economy to improve eligibility and relevance for future major art activations.

Distribute information on evolving policy and regulations and existing grant and commercial opportunities.

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Launch and select a communication and branding firm to launch campaign to impact the public conversation.

Capture and distribute short videos to reinforce advocacy message.

Plan Year 2

May 2026 - April 2027

PROTECT WHAT WE HAVE:

Funding Streams: HOT Funding
Renewal, Civic Arts Ordinance

Solidify new partnerships and
relationships with educational
institutions and business partners.

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Advance promising opportunities
around vibrant spaces and the
built environment

Explore opportunities to
expand eligibility and amount
of County funding

Partner with VisitHouston on
specific citywide opportunities

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Package and highlight the stories
that make Houston's arts and
culture scene unique and diverse.

Plan Year 3

May 2027 - April 2028

LAY THE GROUNDWORK

Determine path forward for
permanent allocation for
arts and culture.

IMPROVE CONNECTIVITY

Facilitate the easy activation of
public spaces and facilities.

Advocate for improved local artists
participation and integration into
activations for conventions and
special events.

CHANGE THE NARRATIVE

Fundraise for and launch
sub-grants for documentary
and arts writing

Execute against
branding campaign

Plan Years 4 & 5

May 2028 +

FUND THE FUTURE

Execute against plan to deliver permanent allocation for arts and culture.

BUILD ON SUCCESSES

Analyze areas of significant progress across the agenda; replicate approach into new areas.

Deepen existing partnerships and develop new partnerships to secure wins to date and create new opportunities into the future.

How the Platform Informs Annual Priorities & Campaigns



Platform

Overview of what we are advocating for, including funding and changes to rules or regulations.



Movement Infrastructure

Build the Base & Train Champions
Monitor, Adapt, & Create New Campaigns



Annual Priorities or Campaigns

Time-bound efforts to advance a specific component of the platform.

Ask
WHAT

Target
WHO

Message
WHY

KEY CONSIDERATIONS MOVING FORWARD

**Designing Legal Structure,
Membership & Governance**

Supporting & Sustaining Champions

BREAKOUTS

Policy in Play

*Isaac MacDonald + Marci
Dallas + Scott Carter*

HouArts Impact MadLibs

Celina Vargas + Maya Ford

Social Media Training

Tiye McKethen

Story Share

Alyssa Figueroa

NEXT STEPS

- **Learn more about the platform and the impact stats**
Visit HouArts.org
- **Sign up to be an Arts & Culture Champion**
QR Codes are around the room, and will be shared in a follow-up email.
- **Spread the Word!**
Forward the website to a friend or colleague, and encourage them to get involved!