

Amanda K. Edwards

1. Do you have an Arts & Culture policy plan or policy statement?

If so, please send a copy.

While I do not currently have an Arts & Culture policy plan, my core focus is about building a Houston where each of us can thrive here, including the artistic community that brings such value and character to our city. As a former Project Row Houses Board President and At-Large Houston City Council Member, I know the significance of supporting both large and small performance and visual arts & culture in our community. Arts & culture is one of our most significant gems in our city. I look forward to working with cultural advocates like Cultural Launch to fully address the needs of Houston's artists. My vision for this community is to make Houston's Arts & Culture a more prominent part of the Houston narrative and ensure that we promote and support this gem both internally and externally. While I was on City Council, I led a widespread effort that resulted in the SuperBowl paying for Art murals painted by the community in different parts of our city.

2. How do you personally participate in the arts and culture both in Houston and when traveling?

Like any proud Houstonian, I love the variety of arts opportunities available to us as residents, from world-renowned endeavors like Houston Opera to one-of-a-kind events like the Art Car festival. But one of my most fulfilling volunteer accomplishments over the course of my career was serving as board president of Project Row Houses, a phenomenal local organization dedicated to providing cultural and artistic opportunities as it builds community within the Third Ward area.

3. What specific strategies would your administration undertake to ensure the growth and stability of the creative sector?

Just like too many Houston residents, artists often struggle to make ends meet, taking on work outside of their creative field just to pay the bills, and too many of these jobs do not pay a living wage. That is why the City of Houston's recent efforts on minimum wage have been so important, and why I will fight to continue to expand wage and benefits protections as mayor. I will ensure that arts funding through our

local agreement with HAA is adequate, and I will implement a citywide arts & innovation festival to provide more awareness about the vast arts community in Houston. I will also use the convening power of the mayor to bring artists and arts organizations together with public and private funders and local developers to address the particular needs of artists with respect to live/work options. Solving these issues starts with a collaborative stakeholder effort to identify the specific housing and workspace barriers artists are up against and – through research including a survey of other cities’ best practices -- to identify potential solutions that will work here in Houston.

4. What opportunities exist for Houston’s artists and creative community to work more closely with city departments?

A significant number of our city construction contracts have a percentage of public art funding attached to them. I will enhance that avenue of securing public art. I want Houston to be known nationally for its public art murals and visual arts performances so I will increase these elements. Another way of supporting underserved communities would be to examine where opportunities exist to use our landmark district designation to support our diverse neighborhoods, unique landmarks, and cultural spaces. These designations can really highlight the cultural spirit of our neighborhoods and provide a point of connection for small businesses, artists and community residents. As mayor, I will also advocate for creative partnerships that can target arts engagement directly to communities with the least access, including through arts-specific after-school and summer enrichment programs for young people.

5. The amount of public funding for the arts through grants is currently limited to HOT funds. Would you consider any additional funding mechanisms and if so, please explain?

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neighborhoods and provide a point of connection for small businesses, artists and community residents. As mayor, I will also advocate for creative partnerships that can target arts engagement directly to communities with the least access, including through arts-specific after-school and summer enrichment programs for young people.

6. Which recommendations would you prioritize from the FY22 Mayor's Office of Cultural Affairs (MOCA) Equity Review?

The FY22 MOCA Equity Review highlights some important progress the city has made toward a civic art program that represents the full representational breadth of our city; it also makes clear that we have some way to go to fulfill that goal. What connects the different observations and recommendations in the report is the need for real, substantive community involvement in our decision-making as a city. Whether deciding about city art acquisitions or whether and how our public development projects incorporate public art, it matters that community voices are at the decision-making table. As mayor, I will prioritize actively seeking and incorporating input from all of our diverse communities as we make Houston a truly world class city with respect to art and culture.