

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION**Arts Audience Participation Survey**

Jesse Canedo, Chief Economic Development Officer, 452-5236

Scott MacDonald, Arts Community Manager, 452-4852

Community Development

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

Staff will provide Council with a report on a recent community survey focused on arts and culture during the pandemic.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

As part of the City's ongoing work to support local arts and culture organizations adapt to the pandemic environment and build resiliency strategies, the Arts Program worked with Eastside partners to survey the experiences and preferences of Eastside arts audiences.

Staff completed over 25 individual meetings with arts organizations that illustrated the wide variation in how organizations were equipped to handle the challenges of the pandemic, how many often lacked the ability to reach out to their audience, and the many creative strategies being employed by some to get through the pandemic. These interviews plus subsequent discussions with the Eastside Arts and Culture Coalition pointed to a need for them to have more data to inform their future planning efforts.

As all major recent arts surveys in Washington State have focused on surveying artists and arts organizations to gauge the financial impact of the pandemic, staff saw an opportunity to survey the audiences of artists and arts and cultural organizations to offer a new perspective on the state of the arts during the pandemic and in the future. Recognizing that Eastside audiences may have different perceptions than Seattle-based audiences, Bellevue partnered with the Eastside Arts and Culture Coalition and the cities of Issaquah, Kirkland, Redmond and Renton to engage our interconnected communities.

The Eastside Arts Audience Participation survey looked at three main topic areas: general profile of survey responders, desired safety measures and comfort around a future return to in-person events, and gauging interest in alternative models of presentation. Bellevue administered and drafted the survey with partner input. In total, the survey received 1,074 responses largely from Eastside audiences. Outreach on the survey was done through the Cities' channels, social media, and arts organization's networks. The survey was offered in Chinese, English, Japanese, Korean, Russian, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Vietnamese.

Major Takeaways

Staff reviewed the overall findings for trends and themes that could be useful for artists and arts

organizations planning now and for the future. One key focus was on demographics, as many of the Eastside's organizations design their programming with specific audiences in mind. The data showed unique trends related to the age of respondents, whether they held memberships or season tickets to arts organizations or paid for virtual events. Major takeaways from the survey include:

- Arts on the Eastside doesn't stop at individual city's borders. All Eastside cities had a higher percentage of people attending events in those cities than the percentage of survey respondents that lived there.
- Bellevue is undisputedly the arts and cultural heart of the Eastside. Bellevue, where 38.4 percent of respondents lived, had 82 percent of all respondents attending events within the City, even higher than Seattle (78 percent). The next closest Eastside city was Kirkland (39 percent).
- Fifty-five percent of respondents attended events weekly or monthly. This is significant considering spending associated to arts activities is typically between \$3 and \$7 per dollar spent on tickets and Bellevue's position as the arts and cultural heart of the Eastside.
- Ninety-five percent of respondents wanted to see additional precautions taken before attending in-person events once they are allowed. Of those, 57 percent of respondents wanted a regularly available vaccine. This reinforces the need to develop strategies and support mechanisms that help organizations not only survive what could be a protracted return to normal business but thrive in the future.
- Age somewhat determined comfort level with returning to in-person events or interest in attending if an event was offered outdoors. Younger audiences typically were open to fewer precautions and potentially returning to in-person events sooner than older audiences, but this was not consistent.
- Respondents overwhelmingly liked the convenience of attending virtual events, including not having to park or travel, and noted that they were now able to attend events nationally and internationally. Although many people still prefer in-person events.
- Seventy-four percent of respondents were somewhat or highly likely to attend an art, cultural or educational experience they were interested in if it was offered outdoors with physical distancing.
- Impacts to the arts during the pandemic has affected our community. Respondents expressed a feeling of loss, both financial and emotional, with several stating that this loss had contributed to their depression, loss of creativity in themselves or their kids, and impacts to their relationships and marriages ("loss of date nights"). Many also expressed that the arts pivoting to a virtual format or new types of opportunities like the painted storefronts in Seattle and other cities, had helped them during this pandemic.

Note on the findings: This survey should be considered a moment in time since attitudes may change as time and conditions evolve. Respondents to the survey were generally active participants in the arts with 99 percent of respondents attending an art, cultural, or educational experience within the last year. They also trended older with 44 percent of respondents 55 years of age or older, 21 percent higher than the general population of the Eastside.

Next Steps

Staff will utilize the findings to assess additional opportunities to help artists, arts and cultural

organizations and arts audiences through the pandemic. To date:

1. The initial findings have helped with developing a modified version of Bellwether, planned for December of this year.
2. Continue to distribute the findings to artists and arts organizations across the Eastside through city, county and partner channels.
3. Staff will look at future arts and cultural programming managed by the Community Development Department and will discuss the findings with other departments to help inform possible modifications to improve accessibility and participation.
4. Staff may work with several Eastside arts organizations to explore a follow-up survey later in the fall to assess whether attitudes have changed.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

This work aligns with the implementation of several existing policies:

- *Bellevue Comprehensive Plan*. This project aligns with the Urban Design & The Arts element and the Economic Development element of the Bellevue Comprehensive Plan. It directly aligns with the following policies:
 - ED-2. Promote local businesses and locally produced goods and services.
 - ED-14. Recognize the economic development benefits of City and private sector investments in urban amenities like arts and culture, open space and recreational facilities, and high-quality urban design. Strengthen the City's assets in these areas as an explicit component of the City's economic development strategy
 - ED-13. Promote on-going communication between City and private sector to help guide the City's marketing and development efforts.
 - UD-13. Support and encourage art and arts programs that facilitate involvement, engagement, communication, understanding, and respect among the City's diverse population.
 - UD-16. Support and encourage lifelong arts education for all skill levels.
 - UD-19. Support artists and arts groups working in the community through City programs and private partnerships.
- *Cultural Compass*. This project directly aligns with three of the four core initiatives in the plan:
 - 1. Bellevue offers extraordinary cultural participation and learning opportunities for people of all ages. Example implementation measures: build new alliances across organizations; expand audiences
 - 3. Bellevue's maturing cultural sector builds its visibility, identity and capacity. Example implementation measures: provide enhanced information to Eastside residents and visitors about arts and culture; foster alliances and collaboration among cultural entities
 - 4. Bellevue develops and attracts strong leadership in support of its cultural sector's infrastructure and funding. Example implementation strategies: Build City's leadership role through coordination, alliance development, and policy direction

- *Bellevue Economic Development Plan*: The update currently underway and scheduled for adoption in late 2020 includes strategies to:
 - *Creative Economy*:
 - 1.1 Pursue regional collaboration that supports and promotes the creative cultural sector in Bellevue.
 - 1.2 Expand audiences for Bellevue's multi-cultural organizations and offerings.
 - Small Business and Entrepreneurship:
 - 2.2 Promote business resiliency and preparedness by aggregating and promoting best practices.
 - Capacity Building and Strategic Partnerships:
 - 1.1 Utilize a shared leadership model to convene, support and build the capacity of community organizations that the city can partner with

Fiscal Impact

There is no fiscal impact associated with this report.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS & AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS

A. Arts Audience Participation Survey Report

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

Cultural Compass