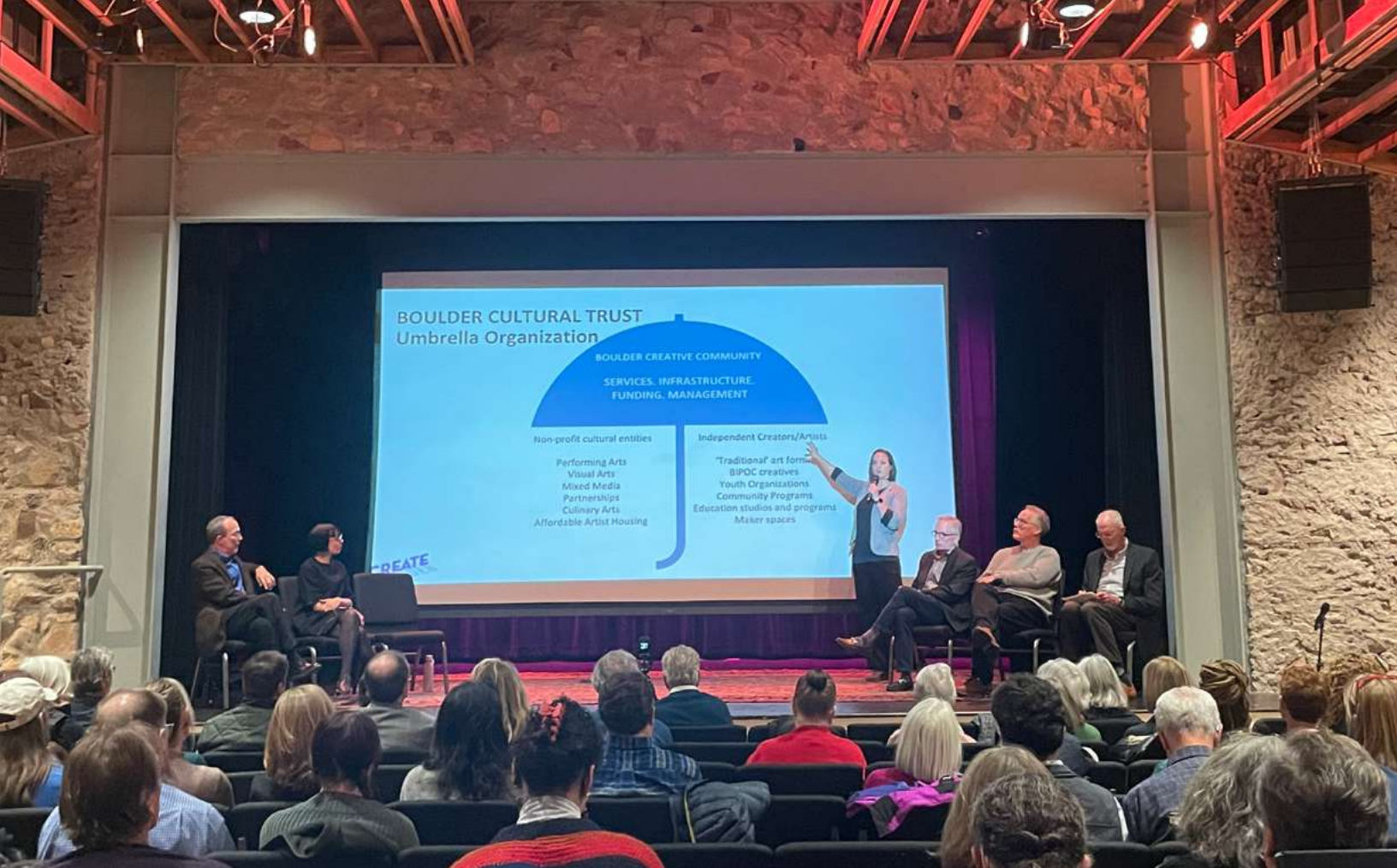




Is Boulder ready for a world-class Arts Complex?

A 10-To-15-Year Vision for the Future—Starting Today

Report from the Boulder Arts Complex Visioning Workshop
November 29 to December 1, 2022



CREATE
BOULDER

ABOUT CREATE BOULDER

Since launching in 2020, Create Boulder (<https://www.createboulder.org/>) has become the leading arts advocacy organization in the City of Boulder with an impact of \$800,000 of additional support for more than 60 artists and 40-plus arts and culture organizations.

Create Boulder commissioned the Arts Complex Visioning Workshop to help address the acute venue, workspace, and affordability challenges impacting Boulder artists and arts organizations. Create Boulder works in partnership with the City's Office of Arts & Culture and other arts and community leaders to help build a resilient and thriving arts and culture ecosystem through public and private support for the benefit of all who live, work, and visit the City of Boulder.

Report Acknowledgements

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(from top down)
1 & 2: Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA)
3 & 5: Dairy Center for the Arts
4: Local Theater Company, by Michael Ensminger

SECTION I:

Executive Summary

Does Boulder need—and can it support—a beautiful, multi-purpose, and centrally located arts complex, including a mid-sized new theater that seats 500 to 750 people?

For decades, arts supporters in Boulder have explored this question and have even launched efforts to create a plan to realize their vision for an arts complex. Despite many people's best efforts, and for various reasons, these efforts did not produce a viable path to developing an arts complex. In recent years, as other Front Range cities have built arts complexes, and as Boulder's arts community has expanded, the question has re-emerged with even greater energy and enthusiasm.

Over three days, from November 29 to December 1, 2022, Create Boulder, a nonprofit organization that supports artists and the arts in Boulder, convened a panel of experts experienced in the design and operation of cultural centers around the world. Their charge was to conduct a community visioning workshop to help identify a vision for an arts complex that could support a wide range of needs for Boulder artists and arts and culture organizations.

To prepare for the workshop, Create Boulder and the panel toured potential sites in downtown and central Boulder. On the first and second days of the workshop, the expert panel interviewed several dozen community stakeholders at the Boulder Chamber, including arts and culture leaders, elected officials, key city staff, and other community leaders. They considered current and future needs for arts and culture facilities, potential arts complex sites in downtown Boulder and beyond, and financial requirements and potential resources for building an arts complex.

At the workshop's community presentation on the final day, the panel's short answer was, "Yes, an arts complex could be achievable, in time."

The panel concluded that an arts complex is a worthy vision that could be realized in Boulder. However, as in any community, it would take years of planning, fundraising, and the development of supportive public-private partnerships to create a mid-size arts and culture complex appropriate for our city.

The panel found that the Boulder community had the desire and ability to work toward a longer-term vision of a signature arts complex that would meet a wide variety of needs in music, dance, theater, film, visual arts, mixed-media, festivals, museums, cultural gatherings, and more. In the shorter term, however, Boulder could make swift progress in meeting the community's needs through an "adaptive re-use" strategy that would recycle existing buildings to provide additional smaller spaces for performances, studios, rehearsals, galleries, lessons, administrative offices, and even affordable housing. The panel noted this nearer-term vision would be especially appropriate for our city, which has a successful history of adapting vintage buildings for arts and culture purposes.



Claire Ashley Exhibit
Image Courtesy of BMoCA

Key Findings

- **Boulder’s arts and culture community needs more support and soon.** Audiences have not returned to pre-pandemic levels. Government relief funds will dry up in 2023.
- With “infrastructure” support, **artists and arts and culture organizations more easily could become self-sustaining** and grow their activities and organizations in our high-cost city.
- **The original idea of building a medium-size stand-alone performance venue has evolved.** The community stakeholders interviewed for this workshop supported expanding this concept to a full-fledged arts complex that could host many art forms, cultural events, and community activities.
- **Many stakeholders did not express a critical need for a stand-alone theater with 500 to 750 seats.** Some questioned how the expense of such a venue could be justified, given how much or little such a facility would be used. Others said many local performing arts groups would not be able to afford the use fees needed to cover such a facility’s costs.
- **Immediate space needs tend to be more practical.** Performing, visual, and other arts groups face challenges in securing affordable leased spaces for studios, galleries, classes, and administrative offices. Performing groups also need affordable “back-of-the-house” space for rehearsals, storage, and scene/costume shops.
- In the longer term, **consolidation of arts spaces into a single or multiple related facilities could benefit the arts and culture community**, as well as the entire community.
- **The community needs time to raise the interest and funds** required for a multi-million-dollar campaign to build a large new arts and culture complex.
- **The city will not build or operate an arts and culture complex.** But city funding, land, and vacant buildings could provide critical support in the form of multiple smaller arts facilities, and could help provide the critical foundation for a larger arts complex.
- **Boulder needs a “champion” group of arts leaders**--an “umbrella” organization that could engage in planning, fundraising, design, and management of an arts and culture complex or multiple smaller facilities.
- **Why start now?** There is a short timeframe in which city funds and buildings may be available to support arts and culture needs.



Boulder's Story Slam, image: <http://storyslamboulder.com/>

Major Recommendations

- 1. Create an umbrella organization, such as a cultural trust, foundation or nonprofit, to engage community interest, raise funding, apply for grants, and provide general administrative, logistical, and real estate support for artists, cultural, and arts organizations.** Cultural trusts are a successful model used in many other cities such as Denver, the Vail Valley, Pittsburgh, Memphis, and Oakland/San Francisco.
- 2. Repurpose existing buildings for immediate arts and culture needs and to expand the city's arts infrastructure.** With funding and administrative staff in place, the umbrella organization should lead the effort to secure city support for repurposing existing vacant buildings for uses such as studio, office, rehearsal, exhibit, and performance spaces for artists and culture organizations.

The panel considered the potential for repurposing city-owned downtown buildings, including the West Arapahoe Senior Center, the recently landmarked Atrium Building at 13th and Canyon, and the historic brick building that now houses Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA). The panel also considered repurposing New Vista High School (previously Baseline Middle School), which is owned and managed by the Boulder Valley School District (BVSD).

In addition to providing much-needed space, these buildings could be activated more quickly and at lower cost than constructing a new arts complex. Adaptive re-use of available buildings within or close to the Civic Center and downtown would respond to Boulder's values, such as recycling and sustainability. This strategy also would allow a big first step toward branding Boulder arts and culture with physical facilities in visible central locations.

Once renovated, these buildings could continue to support arts and culture-related needs and remain part of the city's arts and culture infrastructure, serving the community even after development of a new arts complex.

- 3. Over the longer term, develop the organizational capacity to design and build a multi-purpose, multi-cultural, and multi-media arts and culture center.** The panel ballparked the cost of a new cultural arts center at \$60 million to \$80 million in today's dollars. The panel noted that, while this cost estimate may seem like a hard lift now, developing a new arts center is an ambitious and visionary goal that is well within the capacity of the city to achieve. With strong leadership, this vision could draw community and financial support in the near future to plan and build this facility over the longer term.
- 4. Set a timeline and begin to establish a cultural trust and to raise funds.** Time is of the essence within a window of three to four years when city financial resources, underused real estate, and wider community support are most likely to materialize.
- 5. Create Boulder has emerged as the leading candidate to convene arts and culture leaders and supporters to provide feedback on the vision workshop recommendations and to discuss the organization's mission, goals, funding, administration, and incorporation. Create Boulder should take the lead in establishing an arts and culture umbrella organization.**

SECTION II:

Background

Boulder's Quest for an Arts Complex

Boulder has many assets that other Colorado communities would love, among them a major university, 46,000-plus acres of natural open space, and a successful downtown pedestrian mall.

Yet Boulder lacks what many Front Range communities have—a central, modern, and multi-use arts complex that is both large enough to accommodate a variety of arts and culture experiences and affordable for local arts and culture organizations to use.

Over the past 30 years, Boulder arts advocates have discussed the need for a performing arts center. Many local artists and performing arts groups have identified the need for a state-of-the-art theater with between 500 and 750 seats, a performance-space niche

that does not now exist in Boulder. Multiple efforts to develop an arts complex, however, have not led to a successful campaign. But now, with audiences returning from the Covid pandemic, a growing need for arts and culture spaces, and potential new funding and support for arts and culture, many arts, culture, and civic leaders are considering whether the time has come to make this long-sought vision a reality.

For the visual arts, Boulder also has the current BMoCA building, NoBo Art District galleries and studios, and city-sponsored murals and other public art, as well as the CU Art Museum. The popular annual Open Studios Tour highlights the work of hundreds of working artists.



Boulder Arts Complex Panel Participants



“An architecturally interesting art complex would help Boulder find its groove. It needs to be an active space that attracts newer artists trying to get a foothold.”

The Arts Center at Willets (TACAW), a \$7M project in Basalt, Colorado.

Visioning Workshop Purpose

In the fall of 2022, Create Boulder stepped up to organize a three-day workshop to gather information as part of a visioning process for an arts complex. The idea was to hear a variety of perspectives and assess whether Boulder was ready to launch such a project and what it might entail.

Create Boulder assembled a consultant team of six panelists with expertise in architecture, landscape architecture, land acquisition, financing, and arts center administration and management (see bios on page 24). Create Boulder asked the expert panel to assess Boulder’s arts and culture facility needs, whether the community had the ability to create a new arts and culture complex with a mid-size theater, and whether the time was right to launch this effort. Create Boulder and panelists visited potential sites in downtown and central Boulder to prepare for the visioning workshop.

Visioning Workshop Process

The community expressed great interest in participating in the visioning workshop. Create Boulder had invited several dozen stakeholders to be interviewed by the panel, and despite cold and snowy weather, the vast majority showed up in person or virtually via Zoom.

- On the first day of the workshop, panelists interviewed more than three dozen arts, culture, and community leaders about Boulder’s cultural facility and performance space needs. These stakeholders included Boulder’s mayor and city council members, city department directors, local arts and business leaders, and other community members.
- The next day, the panel digested stakeholders’ ideas and comments to develop this report’s findings and recommendations. They assessed the viability of sites and existing buildings, and considered the needs of the local arts community and how they could be met through an arts complex.
- On the third day, the panel shared their findings and recommendations in a public presentation at eTown Hall attended by more than 200 community stakeholders.
- Many stakeholders who attended the presentation also attended informal meetings to provide feedback on the workshop and ideas that emerged.
- Create Boulder announced plans to expand the process in 2023 with more community input and to create goals and identify short-term tangible actions.

To view the workshop panel’s presentation, see: <https://www.createboulder.org/arts-complex>

Workshop Visioning Statement for the Panel

For decades, arts organizations and community groups in Boulder have sought to create a performing arts center. Many Front Range communities, including Denver, Arvada, Fort Collins, Lone Tree, and Parker, have developed arts centers that have become successful and treasured community resources.

Create Boulder asked the expert panel to assess Boulder’s arts and culture facility needs, whether the community had the ability to create a new arts and culture complex with a mid-size theater, and whether the time was right to launch this effort.

The purpose of the visioning workshop and this report was not to create a master plan or design proposal, or to launch a fundraising campaign, but rather to discover through community engagement what the nucleus for an arts complex vision might look like.

Overall Boulder lacks the space and facilities for a broader range of arts and culture events. Boulder arts and culture leaders have identified a “niche” need for a performing arts venue that could seat audiences of approximately 500 to 750 people. The Dairy Arts Center (Dairy) has three theaters with caps of 99, 116, and 250 seats, and Boulder’s eTown Hall seats 220 people. On the campus of the University of Colorado (CU), Macky Auditorium’s grand space has over 2,000 seats, but it is more expensive to rent than most arts organizations can afford. Chautauqua Auditorium and the downtown Boulder Glen Huntington Bandshell are open only in warmer months. Popular festivals such as the Boulder International Film Festival squeeze into multiple spaces.

Ideally an arts complex would be located downtown, a popular destination that offers other cultural facilities and is rich in access to restaurants, hotels, shops, parking, and public open spaces. Downtown’s southern edge includes the 27-acre Civic Center extending from 9th to 14th streets and including Boulder Creek, the Boulder Central Public Library, Central Park, the Farmer’s Market, the Boulder Dushanbe Tea House, and major municipal buildings. Just up the hill at Broadway and University, CU is about to receive two new hotels and a conference center. All these civic, educational, and retail destinations could help build an audience for an arts complex, which in turn could enrich downtown’s cultural offerings, support local businesses, and create a link between central Boulder and the CU campus. Other potential sites outside of downtown also could be considered. A timeline and other considerations will be essential to creating a realistic vision for the community.

“This community is hungry for something big that we can be proud of. We need to make a statement about this place being a center for the arts. Centralization builds on uses. How do we make sure it operates and is run well?”



Boulder Philharmonic at Macky Auditorium, Jamie Kraus Photography

SECTION III:

“The arts are a critical part of the economy and support the character of our community.”

Panel Findings

What’s Needed, Opportunities, and Challenges

The panel findings confirmed support from key city officials and arts organizations to create an arts complex, including a new theater with space for 500 to 750 seats. But they also said the arts and culture community expressed other more pressing needs that should be considered before focusing exclusively on a new facility. They recommended a 10-to-15-year plan to address some of the most pressing needs in the near term and work towards building a new theater as part of an arts and culture complex in the longer term. Here are more specifics about the panel findings:

What’s Needed

- A range of performance spaces that can accommodate 300 to 900 people
- Visual arts galleries
- Multicultural community gathering space
- Rehearsal space for music, dance, and theater
- Support space for offices, storage, and equipment
- Meeting and conference rooms
- Affordable artist housing
- Shared organizational services
- Spaces for artists, such as studios, maker space, and classrooms
- City support, potentially through funding, land, and buildings
- Additional financial support through fundraising



Sacred Spaces, Creative Nations
Image Courtesy Dairy Center for the Arts

BOULDER ARTS CENSUS AND NATIONAL RANKING

Arts and culture comprise a surprisingly large and yet often underappreciated economic sector in the City of Boulder. According to the 2019 artist census conducted by the City’s Office of Arts and Culture:

- Some 4,500 professional artists live in Boulder, comprising 3.5 percent of the city’s workforce. (Bureau of Labor Statistics)
- Boulder has the nation’s third-highest concentration of artists, right behind Los Angeles and Santa Fe. (National Endowment for the Arts)
- About 71 percent of our artists are residents of the City of Boulder and 29 percent live elsewhere, usually around Boulder County.
- Nearly 43 percent of artists who identify as Latinx live outside the City of Boulder.

In addition, according to SMU Data Arts (culturaldata.org), the Boulder region ranks 7th for arts providers among metro areas in the U.S., but only 104th for private-dollar support and 168th for government support.

7th

Boulder’s ranking for arts providers among metro areas in the U.S.

104th

Boulder’s ranking for private-dollar arts support

168th

Boulder’s ranking for government arts support



Photo by Michael Ensminger, courtesy Local Theater Company

Opportunities

- **The city has the ability to provide funding and potentially land and facilities.**
- **There is general support** and no stated opposition to a potential arts complex from the arts community, CU, and the greater community.
- The city's current arts and culture complex, **the Dairy Arts Center, supports this effort** as it will provide needed space for larger programs that exceed the Dairy's capacity.
- There is **potential to tap the city's Community, Culture, Safety & Resilience Tax (CCRS Tax)**, estimated at \$18.5 million annually (see page 17).
- The cost of adapting existing buildings for arts uses is about half that of building a new ground-up complex. **Adaptive re-use of existing buildings** also could happen sooner. Redeveloping city buildings will take much less time compared to the fundraising, planning, design, city approvals, and construction of a new building.
- Though fundraising is always competitive, **Boulder as a community has the financial resources to support this vision.**
- Sites outside of the Civic Center include the East Boulder Subcommunity or a site with access to U.S. 36 to **help attract a regional audience.**
- Another possibility is **vacant and unprogrammed land** at Valmont City Park.
- The **vision needs to be broad** enough to include all arts and culture, education, training, and creative endeavors such as the digital and culinary arts.
- To **draw audiences from all ages and cultural backgrounds**, provide immersive, interactive experiences (examples: Meow Wolf, Immersive Frida Kahlo, David Byrne's "Theater of the Mind").
- **Private investment follows public investment.** City dollars are critical to create a nucleus of funding and raise matching dollars from foundations, other government agencies, and the private sector. City support could include funding, a ground lease, urban infrastructure, or "setting the regulatory framework."

"Creative placemaking is needed to create a bridge between the different communities. How do [we] grow audiences? There are possibilities for collaborating and interdisciplinary work with a 500-to-900 seat space."

“The location is important. We need to connect the power of music with our spectacular mountain setting.”

Challenges

- The potential short-term adaptive-use concept and the longer-term arts complex vision both **need leadership to launch and sustain development efforts.**
- This **requires a new “umbrella” organization** to coordinate efforts, raise funds, plan, and eventually operate an arts complex.
- The umbrella concept **requires forming a cultural trust, special district, or nonprofit foundation or organization.**
- The umbrella organization **could also be established by expanding an existing nonprofit organization**, such as Create Boulder or the Dairy Arts Center.
- Building a ground-up new facility in the downtown-Civic Center area will be more complicated, expensive, and time-consuming than renovating existing buildings.
- Cost estimates to develop a new ground-up arts complex range between \$800 and \$1,000 per square foot, or **\$60 million to \$80 million** total.
- Building a new arts complex **could take 10-to-15 years.**
- A new facility would **need a specific site to attract interest and dollars.**
- A new facility would require a location decision that favors a site either in the downtown, Civic Center, and central Boulder area or somewhere on the city’s periphery.
- **Height limits could constrain the location and function of a facility.** For example, a traditional theater with a “fly loft” requires a 70-foot building height, which far exceeds Boulder’s development height limit of 55 feet.
- A facility with a fly loft and rigging may not be essential, however, and in any case would be expensive to get approved and built.
- **Downtown sites have flood-plain issues** that make it difficult to build below-grade (“You can’t go up, and you can’t go down”).
- A **multi-modal site is desirable**, but a performance space with 500 to 750 seats requires hundreds of parking spaces for the audience, staff, and artists. **A parking management study is needed** to explore solutions such as using existing public parking structures and shared parking facilities.
- **The city will not fully fund, build, manage, or program a new arts complex.**
- **Public subsidy is a must** to make such a facility sustainable. The Arvada Center, for example, receives about 30 percent of its \$14 million annual budget as a city budget item.
- Although CU has supported this visioning effort, **the university is not likely to participate** in the creation and operation of an arts complex, as CU’s needs are being met on campus.
- New or renovated facilities **need to support local artists and arts and culture organizations**, not primarily out-of-town shows and artists.
- **Affordability is a big issue** for all arts and culture spaces, including housing for artists.
- As a progressive city, the Boulder community is more likely to support causes than cultural facilities.
- The arts complex vision **needs to make a compelling case for business-sector support**, especially within the tech sector.
- **Operation of an arts complex should not be turned over to a commercial venue operator.** The panel gave several examples of where the “concessionaire” model has failed to produce what the community wants and needs.



Discount Ghost Stories at Boulder Bandshell
Photo by Michael Ensminger, courtesy Local Theater Company

Panel Responses to Key Questions

What are your criteria for a successful Boulder arts and culture complex?

A successful arts complex will serve a wide range of arts pursuits, highlighting local arts and a diversity of age, orientation, culture, and ethnicity. Like a central library or courthouse, the facility will express civic pride through excellent and sustainable design and materials. But the complex probably will not be a public building. An excellent financial plan is also needed to ensure the complex will be well-used and endure over generations.

Is the best location for a new arts complex downtown or outside of downtown?

The Civic Center area of downtown would provide an exceptional location that would support downtown businesses and provide a “town-gown” link to CU. However downtown sites might be more difficult and expensive to develop because of regulatory constraints and floodplain issues, to name two challenges. Other sites are worth considering.

If downtown, what are the top sites based on location, availability, circulation, and access?

The panel believes the top sites include the current BMoCA Building, which would allow for expansion onto adjacent city-owned properties. The West Arapahoe Senior Center, perhaps combined with a repurposed adjacent north wing of the Boulder Public Library’s main Branch, which includes the Canyon Theater. The Alfalfa’s Market building and site, if it could be bought or leased, offers a gateway location, potential theater space, ready-made parking, and the potential for expansion over time.

What are your top sites outside of downtown?

The panel did not thoroughly evaluate other sites, although the New Vista/Baseline School adaptive re-use idea is intriguing.

Should this be a single-use facility or mixed-use? Mixed-use development can include galleries, artist studios, a cafe, affordable housing, compatible commercial development, and other uses.

Mixed-use for sure. A stand-alone theater might be needed, but it would run the risk of being dark most nights and vacant most days because local arts organizations likely could not fully program or afford to rent the space.

Could an arts and culture complex be accommodated in a single building? Or is there potential for a campus with related buildings within walking distance and connected by urban design and infrastructure?

A single complex building is a desirable but expensive option. Creating such a space might place it beyond the reach of the budgets of many local arts organizations. The adaptive-reuse strategy could create a campus layout with buildings connected by sidewalks, bridges, bike paths, and transit.

What is the potential for daily public use, including public space that will attract people during nonprogrammed times?

The potential for daily use is very high if the complex includes classes and community events. The panel also showed the example of the Oslo Opera House, which features a dramatic slanted roofdeck with spectacular views that is heavily used like a public park and for large concerts.



Boulder Ballet, image credit: Boulder Ballet

What is a basic target budget for land acquisition, design, and construction?

At today's costs, \$60 million to \$80 million is needed for a new arts complex. New construction costs for specialized buildings today range from approximately \$800 to \$1,000 per square foot. Adapting and recycling buildings could cut those costs in half.

Given budget limitations and competing demands, how can and should the city participate?

City funds could be reappropriated from the Boulder Public Library system, which will be funded through a new library district tax in coming years. City funding also could be earmarked through a sales tax that is up for renewal, and by using funds already allocated to improve the 27-acre Civic Center. The city also could donate, or make available at very low cost, city-owned land and vacant or underused buildings, and could contribute to or underwrite the cost of building maintenance.

What are potential management structures to program and operate a successful arts complex?

From our experience, management by the city, university, or a private company is not an option. This is best left to a well-organized, endowed, and funded cultural trust, foundation, or nonprofit organization. An organization like The Dairy Arts Center, which desires more and larger spaces for all the arts, could expand to manage a larger or new arts center.

How may programming be diverse and inclusive, especially to attract a nontraditional audience including young people, people of color, and nonEnglish speakers?

Programs that are immersive and interactive appeal to broader audiences. Inviting in and making room for indigenous artists and Day of the Dead celebrations, as the Dairy Arts Center has done, can reach out to new audiences. The new David Geffen Hall at Lincoln Center is experimenting with pay-what-you-can ticketing to attract the local, diverse audience on Manhattan's West Side. Some stakeholders observed that we should not forget the "traditional" performance arts such as chamber and symphonic music, and that audiences tend to grow into these genres as they age.

SECTION IV:

Funding, Finance, & Fiscal Sustainability

The panel noted several major steps needed to fund and program arts and culture facilities and to ensure their economic sustainability over time.

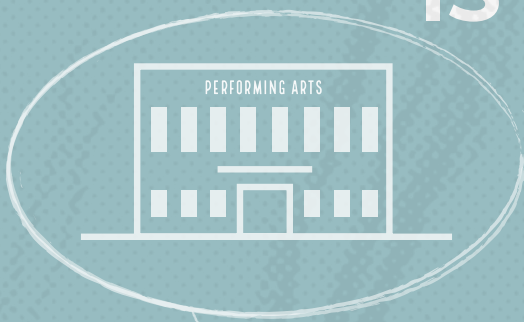
Financing a nonprofit facility can be achieved through what is known as a “capital stack.” This layer cake of resources can include:

- Tax credits for historic preservation that will attract private investment
- Foundation grants
- Corporate sponsorship
- Naming rights
- Philanthropy (members like you!)
- Special districts or authorities with taxing power
- Access to city taxes and general funds
- The city’s contribution of donated or discounted land and buildings

Continuing operations can be funded through:

- Earned revenues such as ticket sales and venue rentals
- “Unearned” revenues such as grants and donations
- Use of renewable energy to reduce overhead
- Government funds such as program-specific grants and a line item in the city budget

HOW BIG IS AN ARTS COMPLEX?



750-seat theater
100,000 sf
~2 city blocks
~375 parking spaces

~140,000 sf needed

According to architects who have designed performing arts spaces, a 750-seat theater of two stories in height requires about 100,000 square feet of building space in a 25,000-square foot footprint. This is equal to about two city blocks. Additional space is needed for parking. Typical patron parking standards specify one space for every two seats, or 375 parking spaces for 750 seats. Performers and staff also need a place to park. The total space needed could easily reach 140,000 square feet, not counting plazas or other outdoor gathering spaces. “Structured” parking (parking garages) are space-savers compared to parking lots, but very expensive to build, costing \$50,000 or more per space.

By comparison The Colorado Building at 14th and Walnut, Boulder’s tallest commercial building, totals 88,000 square feet. Boulder’s Target store at 28th and Pearl totals 135,000 square feet, not counting the parking lot and loading areas.



Image credit: Rocky Mountain Theatre for Kids

Potential City Funding Sources

- **Boulder’s Community, Culture, Resilience and Safety (CCRS) Tax** is a city tax for capital improvements through 2036. In November 2021, voters approved the extension of the city’s 0.30 percent Community, Culture and Safety Tax (CCS), which was originally approved in 2014 and extended for four years in 2017. Revenue from this tax helped fund construction and renovation projects for many infrastructure and nonprofit projects throughout the city, including the Museum of Boulder and the Dairy Arts Center.
- The “new” **CCRS tax is expected to generate an estimated \$217 million over 15 years** to finance projects that support community safety and well-being. Up to 10 percent (about \$22 million) will be allocated for to-be-determined nonprofit infrastructure projects that serve the community. Criteria for grants were being finalized in 2023, with the first grant applications opening shortly thereafter. While there may not be a requirement of private funds to match municipal funds, Boulder has a history of this type of arrangement going back to the first iteration of this tax in 2014, and it could be a powerful capital campaign tool.
- In addition to the nonprofit grants, the CCRS tax allocated \$8 million for infrastructure projects for the Civic Area and \$4 million for a Pearl Street refresh. The Boulder Parks and Recreation and Community Vitality departments are working on how these funds will be spent.
- The new **Library District, approved by voters in November 2022**, will be supported by a new **corresponding property tax** also approved by voters. The district likely will begin operating on January 1, 2024, freeing the city of an annual obligation to fund the library’s operations and building maintenance. In recent years, the city has spent about \$10 million annually on library operations (\$9.2 million in 2022 and \$11.1 million in 2023), and another \$2 million to \$3 million a year on facilities maintenance. The city should realize this approximately \$12 million in annual municipal savings starting in 2024 or 2025, depending on how quickly the new district can become operational and start collecting its dedicated tax. On March 9, 2023, the City Council had the first of several conversations on how to re-allocate these budget dollars, whose majority source is undedicated sales tax.
- Another potential funding source is **the city’s 0.15-percent sales tax**, which sunsets in 2024, and will be up for renewal on the 2023 ballot. Currently it is undedicated and generates about \$6 million per year.

SECTION V:

Working Toward the 10-to-15-Year Vision

The panel recommended actions for meeting the immediate needs of the arts and culture community, as well as nurturing a longer-term vision for an arts complex (see pg 22). The panel said both an umbrella cultural arts organization like a cultural trust and a special district option merit further study, and that adaptively redeveloping existing buildings could provide for space needs sooner and at lower cost.

Umbrella Organization: The Cultural Trust

Every major civic effort needs a champion. The panel noted that a champion does not exist today for an arts complex but could be developed through collaboration among Boulder’s leaders in the arts, civic life, institutions, and business to serve two related groups and purposes:

- Nonprofit cultural organizations focused on performing arts, visual arts, mixed media, arts education, studio space, maker space, and affordable housing for artists; and
- Community programming and independent creators of traditional and new art forms from our diverse arts and culture community, including Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) and LGBTQ+ artists and creatives.

An umbrella organization could provide services, funding, organizational infrastructure, and management through the following actions:

- Forge a coalition of arts interests to pursue a unified and inclusive vision.
- Raise money to support the creation of facilities while also supporting artists and arts organizations.
- Fund and guide a planning and design process to adapt existing or create new facilities.
- Negotiate for the use of existing facilities to provide space for the arts in all its forms.
- Provide organizational support for arts organizations.
- Program facilities to provide services to artists and the whole community while ensuring financial sustainability.

Continuing operations can be funded through:

- Earned revenues such as ticket sales and venue rentals
- “Unearned” revenues such as grants and donations
- Use of renewable energy to reduce overhead
- Government funds such as program-specific grants and a line item in the city budget

A cultural trust typically is a nonprofit organization that funds and manages diverse arts and culture initiatives within a geographic area. It can support a unified vision across diverse interests, organize fundraising through charitable giving and grants, and manage facilities and programs.



Don Coen, The Migrant Series
Image courtesy BMoCA



trustarts.org/pct_home/about/cultural-district

Examples of cultural trusts include:

The Pittsburgh Cultural Trust, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania (<https://trustarts.org/>): Founded in 1984, the Pittsburgh Cultural Trust has transformed the city’s former “red light” district into a 14-block cultural hub of urban development that includes the performing and visual arts and festivals.



<https://artistcommunities.org/directory/residencies/crosstown-arts-residency-program>

Oregon Cultural Trust, Salem, Oregon (<https://culturaltrust.org/>): Created by the state legislature in 2001, the Oregon Cultural Trust provides a tax credit to donors, who contributed \$5.2 million in 2020.

Crosstown Arts, Memphis, Tennessee (<https://crosstownarts.org/>): Founded in 2010, Crosstown Arts spurred redevelopment of a vacant 1.5-million square-foot Sears warehouse as a multidisciplinary arts center. Crosstown Arts secured 30 funding sources for the \$200 million renovation of the historic structure, which today houses a 420-seat theater, shared studios, artist housing, galleries, a music venue, offices, and other facilities.



<https://gfvail.com/>

Quad Cities Cultural Trust, Bettendorf, Iowa (<https://www.quadcityculturaltrust.org/>): More to Boulder’s small-city scale, this cultural trust, which spans the Illinois-Iowa border and is headquartered in Bettendorf, Iowa, was formed in 2007 to serve six core cultural organizations and a population of 400,000.

Vail Valley Foundation, Vail, Colorado (<https://vfv.org/arts/>): Here in Colorado, the Vail Valley Foundation, established in 1981, operates the Gerald R. Ford Amphitheater (the main home for Bravo! Vail Music Festival) and the Vilar Performing Arts Center, and hosts the Vail Dance Festival.



<https://mcdenver.org/holiday-theater>

Denver Cultural Property Trust, Denver, Colorado (<https://continuumpartners.com/denverculturalpropertytrust/>): Closer to home, the Denver Cultural Property Trust, a nonprofit organization founded by Denver’s for-profit developer Continuum Partners, recently acquired the 100-year-old, 400-seat Holiday Theater for use by the Museum of Contemporary Art (MCA). The organization also works to develop housing for Denver’s creative community.

Create Boulder + Cultural Trust

Create Boulder is exploring the idea of establishing a cultural trust for Boulder and is seeking volunteers to be part of a team to create a vision and plan. If you’re interested in providing feedback or getting involved, please contact Create Boulder at info@createboulder.org.

Special Districts

Special districts are commonly used to support public spaces and programming in commercial areas, especially those focused on shops, restaurants, and entertainment. Special districts are funded by agreement through property owners and businesses located within the districts. A special district can manage programming such as festivals, branding, marketing, design, and maintenance of outdoors features such as flower beds, signs, benches, and parking.

One example of a special district is Denver's River North (RiNo) Arts District (<https://rinoartdistrict.org/>), which embraces parts of four historic and cultural districts, as well as four organizations that support local artists, businesses, residential neighborhood interests, marketing, advocacy, and maintenance.

Boulder can point to two existing and very successful special districts: the quasi-municipal Downtown Boulder Business Improvement District, which encompasses 49 blocks, and the city's Central Area General Improvement District (CAGID), which manages downtown parking. The City of Boulder could establish another downtown or central Boulder special district specifically to support a new arts complex or series of arts and culture facilities.

Adaptive Re-Use of Buildings

Developing a new arts complex could cost \$60 to \$80 million and take years to find the right site and raise funds to plan, design, and build. On significant challenge is that the arts and culture community has immediate needs that include performance space but also focus on affordable space for rehearsals, technical, teaching, administration, and housing.

For the shorter term, and to produce faster results, the panel recommended studying the adaptive redevelopment of existing properties that are underused or vacant today. This could be accomplished at a fraction of the cost of building new space. Since the buildings are already in place, they are not subject to as lengthy a planning and approval process as ground-up construction. An adaptive project could begin with developing one building and proceed with phases or additional buildings as financial and other support becomes available. Recycling buildings also addresses Boulder's goals in environmental sustainability and preserving the historic fabric of the city.

Potential Sites for Adaptive Re-use of Buildings

Buildings worth considering for adaptive re-use could include the following, all located close to downtown, the Civic Center, and CU:

The Atrium Building, 13th and Canyon. Recently landmarked, this historic bank building is owned by the city and currently used as city offices. The city plans to vacate the structure. Conceptual plans have already been drawn to envision renovation of the interior. The city potentially could lease this space to an arts organization at low cost.



The Atrium Building, Credit: Historic Boulder



909 Arapahoe, Credit: Boulder Community Health

West Senior Center, 909 Arapahoe. This facility is considered obsolete. But it includes a large kitchen, offices, and presentation space that could be easily adapted by all kinds of artists and arts organizations.



1750 13th Street, Credit: BMOCA

Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMOCA), 1750 13th Street. Located in a historic city-owned building in the “East Bookend” section of the Civic Center, BMOCA is currently raising money to vacate this spot for a new building that will be built in the North Boulder (NoBo) Arts District.



1651 Broadway, Credit: Dean Callan & Company

Former Alfalfa's Market, 1651 Broadway. Privately owned and vacant since it was closed in 2021, this 37,000-square-foot market would lend itself nicely to a variety of arts uses in a “gateway to downtown” site. The open-span grocery floor would be particularly adaptable for a “black box” theater with moveable seats. Ample parking already exists on site, which is located in the heart of a walkable neighborhood, and next to major transit and biking routes.

New Vista High School/Baseline Middle School: According to Historic Boulder, the architecturally significant New Vista High School (formerly the Baseline Middle School), which is slated for demolition and replacement by a new \$27.7 million school, could be adapted to create a new arts and culture complex. The 1952 building contains features the arts community desires, including an auditorium with good acoustics, a gym that could be used for rehearsals, a kitchen and cafeteria for the culinary arts, and classrooms with natural light. One stakeholder interviewed highlighted the school's location in central Boulder with excellent highway, transit, and pedestrian and bike access. The panel noted that the Boulder Valley School District has not been approached with this idea and may not welcome it.



New Vista High School, Credit: BVSD

SECTION VI:

What's Next?

For the community's arts complex vision to move forward, someone will have to lead it. This effort would be best achieved through professional staffing. A great first step would be for a coalition of arts organizations to hire an entrepreneurial part-time arts professional to begin organizing and fundraising for the vision. An ideal outcome by the end of 2023 would be the formation of an organization charged with coordinating fundraising, budget, facilities, and programming. Eventually this could grow into a vibrant nonprofit or special district with reliable and sustainable funding.

Steps in this process could include:

-Community buy-in: Engage the broader Boulder community in this effort as well as city officials and civic institutions.

-Cultural community outreach: The arts complex visioning workshop received extensive input from the performing arts community, civic leaders, nonprofits, and business leaders. Next steps in the discussion need to include diverse interests in all the arts, education, and social equity.

-Leadership development: Champions need to emerge to lead this effort and to forge a cultural trust or other entity to manage finances, facilities, and programming.

-Funding and finance: The effort needs a detailed and realistic budget supported by a plan to raise revenues through event revenues, facility rentals, grants, donations, and government subsidy over time.

-Property and partnership: With organization and finances in place, the effort becomes tangible through the donation, acquisition, or leasing of buildings for adaptive use and by programming by artists and arts organizations.

**Join us on the journey and receive updates by contacting:
info@createboulder.org**

“In order for Boulder to evolve into a regional nexus for the arts, we should launch a robust process that considers creating a performing arts center. A thriving arts community is emblematic of a vibrant community.”

- Matt Benjamin, Boulder City Council Member

POTENTIAL PROJECT TIMELINE

20	23	activation planning pop-ups staffing
	24	
	25	adaptive reuse of buildings
	26	
	27	planning viability fundraise
	28	
	29	adaptive reuse of buildings
	30	
	31	capital campaign venue design
	32	
	33	
	34	
	35	design
	36	construction staffing fundraise
	37	
	38	
20	39	

APPENDIX

Panelist Bios & Comments

Gena Buhler

Associate Principal, Theatre Projects, Denver



With over 20 years of experience in event production, venue management, operational logistics, and festival and program development, Gena joined Theatre Projects from the City of Aspen, where she worked as the executive and artistic director for the Wheeler Opera House. She also has worked as the theatre director at Vilar Performing Arts Center in Beaver Creek and in New York as an agent for The Road Company and IMG Artists. She started her career in festival management.

Boulder’s creative community has been working hard to produce, perform, collaborate, and create in different settings and facilities across the community. Through our interviews and research, we heard many stories about artists having to leave Boulder because of lack of space, funding, and housing. We also heard stories of success and synergies by artists and organizations who have found a way to survive in Boulder. In the end, our engagement experience painted the picture of a cultural process need that will require much more than just a traditional cultural arts and entertainment venue. Our panel also appreciated and had awareness that the organizations we engaged with in this quick process do not represent the diverse array of Boulder organizations and artists; however, this group did provide us with a clear glimpse into the struggles and needs of many in the creative community.

If Boulder can create these envisioned supportive creative spaces that focus on the entire lifecycle of the creative process, it could make Boulder a special and unique place for artists and cultural arts supporters – perhaps in a much more impactful way than a traditional arts center alone could do. The challenge ahead for Boulder is for a coalition to rise-up to lead this project and process forward to fund, design, build and manage this necessary infrastructure. In following Boulder’s mission of sustainability, the opportunity to adaptively reuse existing spaces could quickly create many of the spaces needed in a phased approach. In the end, a funding mechanism must still be developed, because without that, this need will only remain a dream.--GB

Michelle Delk

ASLA, Partner, Director of Landscape Architecture, Snohetta, New York

Since 2001, Michelle has led diverse urban projects across North America. Her work includes realization of downtown plazas, conceptual and construction plans for hundreds of acres of parks, streetscape revitalizations, development of open spaces for campuses, and creation of new civic public spaces.



Although we certainly didn’t have the opportunity in the short time we were there to meet representatives from every organization and effort, we began to understand that many of these groups are disparately spread across the city, doing their best to make the most of a variety venues and facilities that do not always meet their needs. This distribution creates some challenges, but also offers a powerful potential. Coming together under the recommended “umbrella” organization forms a type of cultural network that can strengthen the presence, identity, and accessibility of the already established performing arts groups across the city.

In essence, rather than focus on consolidating to one location or one site, the entire city fabric is the location of this performing arts network. With leadership and collective effort, very quickly this unique (yet currently under-recognized) part of Boulder’s unique identity can become more visible and potent. Over time, as recognition builds, we see the potential for an additional facility to be added to this network. The ultimate design should consider location in the city, relationship to environment, connection to communities, and program opportunities to not only provide additional space to meet the needs of these (and future groups) but to embody and engage the unique position and identity of Boulder’s home along the Front Range.--MD

Mark Heiser

Director for the Denver Performing Arts Complex at Arts & Venues



With Denver Arts & Venues since 2016, Mark was previously Managing Director of The David H. Koch Theater at Lincoln Center in New York, the home of the New York City Ballet. Mark previously was General Manager of Cal Performances at the University of California Berkeley, one of the largest performing arts presenting organizations on the West Coast. Mark has a Bachelor’s degree in Drama from the University of California at Irvine and a Master’s degree in Dramatic Art/Arts Administration from the University of California at Davis.

Following interviews with the cultural community and city stakeholders, the theme that emerged was the immediate need for support space, such as offices and rehearsal space, for the varied cultural organizations in Boulder. Importantly, the need for a performing arts venue of between 500-750 seats was not apparent. Certain conditions such as height restrictions and floodplain conditions would be a challenge to overcome if such a venue were located downtown. It was also clear that a larger venue would not have any utility to CU Boulder Presents. Touring events also were not a significant factor in evaluating the need for a performing arts venue. What emerged was the recommendation to use existing facilities as adaptive reuse venues that could meet the immediate needs of the local artists and performers in Boulder. Further, an “umbrella” nonprofit organization should be created that could leverage visibility and fundraising opportunities to the smaller organizations currently struggling to maintain stability.—MH

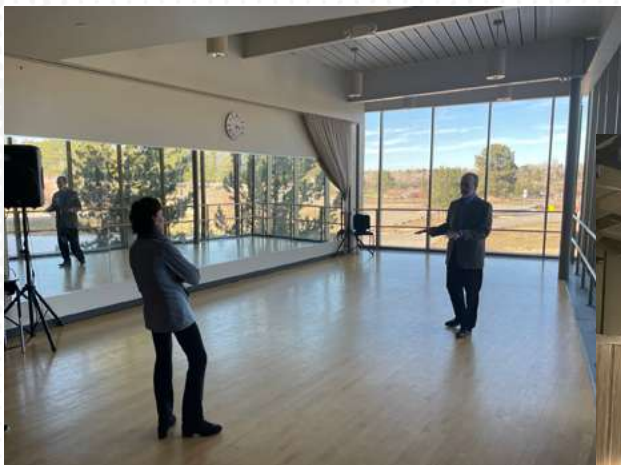
Bruce O’Donnell

Principal |Starboard Reality, Denver



Bruce is a fifth-generation Coloradoan with expertise in land use, entitlements, master planning and real estate development, as well as infrastructure and water development. Bruce recently completed his third term as a Planning Commissioner for the City and County of Denver.

Numerous relatively small, proud, and nimble arts organizations in Boulder are struggling for funding, identity, and the ability to afford space for back-of-house needs, office, and rehearsal space. A theme arose to explore if all these disparate organizations with common missions could gain critical mass and thrive under an organizational umbrella operated under a nonprofit structure. The City of Boulder is willing and capable, and needs to be a partner in this effort. The City can, in some way, contribute both funding and real estate to foster the community’s vision and need for space, programming, and governance that creates a platform to support numerous arts organizations. For example, existing well located and underutilized buildings owned by the City could form an arts innovation and incubator hub. The umbrella organization needs to operate to develop proof of concept and identify, vet, and pursue its long-term capital and facility needs.”—BO’D



Panelist Tours of Comparable Facilities



Chris Wineman

Principal, Semple Brown Architects, Denver



Chris is a senior arts executive and consultant specializing in the development and design of arts facilities. His experience helps him examine the strategic questions of feasibility and institutional need. His experience in fundraising and board relations helps him maximize the design team’s value to a capital campaign. Project experience includes the Ellie Caukins Opera House, the King Center for the Performing Arts, and the Parker Arts, Cultural & Events Center.

I learned that Boulder’s cultural community is diverse, entrepreneurial, and very committed to the development of grassroots expression. The community’s organizations and individual artists have created unique and vibrant work. Notably, that development has occurred with relatively minimal infrastructure support and less philanthropic leadership than many comparable communities. That’s one of the primary reasons that we didn’t recommend the development of a “heavy infrastructure” project like a new arts center – that would have been a significant mismatch to the community’s strengths at this time. Instead, we proposed an alternative path that is lighter in capital, more able to change directions quickly, and better suited to the scale of Boulder’s artists and organizations.—CW

Michael Leccese

Panel organizer and moderator



In 2022, Boulder resident Michael retired after 16 years as executive director of ULI Colorado, a chapter of the global Urban Land Institute. Previously Michael was a communications consultant, journalist, and editor covering architecture, urban design, and real estate. Currently he chairs Boulder’s Housing Advisory Board (HAB) and is on the Advisory Board of CU Denver’s College of Architecture and Planning. He recently was appointed to the State of Colorado’s Regional Air Quality Council (RAQC).

As a Boulder resident since 1993, arts supporter, and architecture buff, I would have been pleased to see the panel recommend a flashy new arts center right away. However, our panel was charged with listening to the community to determine their needs and then find practical ways to meet them. The adaptive re-use approach is exciting in its own right. By recycling buildings, the concept is matched to Boulder’s sustainability goals. It will provide needed spaces and support for the arts while activating buildings and public spaces that are now dead or semi-dead. It’s affordable, manageable, and creates progress while keeping everyone’s eye on a larger vision. The next step is to include many more voices within Boulder’s arts and culture community and the wider community in this discussion.— ML

APPENDIX

Boulder Arts and Civic Leader Comments on the Create Boulder Workshop:**Matt Chasansky, Manager, City of Boulder Office of Arts and Culture:**

"In the meeting Create Boulder put together, I saw a room full of smart, civic-minded people ready to brainstorm solutions. That might be the building of a new venue. And I was heartened to hear many other ideas on how the places we build for culture address our problems and fulfill the promise of the arts as a tool for social cohesion and prosperity."

Melissa Fathman, Executive Director, Dairy Arts Center:

"The Dairy Arts Center operates three theaters for over 100 arts organizations per year, and yet there is still more demand than the Dairy's facility can provide with our current footprint. I am thrilled that a conversation with a variety of stakeholders and an impressive panel of experts is taking place, and I am reminded of the old saying 'build it and they will come.' In Boulder's case, 'they' are already here and we need to get busy building infrastructure and mechanisms to support our continually expanding creative economy."

John Tayer, CEO of Boulder Chamber:

"The Boulder Chamber recognizes that this analysis is an important inflection point in consideration of a significant community investment in our local arts and culture ecosystem, along with the economic benefits such a facility can generate."

Allyn Feinberg, Co-Chair, PLAN-Boulder County:

"PLAN-Boulder County supports the consideration of an arts and culture complex by the citizens of Boulder. While there are many details to be determined, PLAN-Boulder views this effort as a much-needed way to bring the community together. A performing arts center, a focal point of the complex, could transcend political positions, age, and economic status, and could offer something for every member of the community."

Charlene Hoffman, CEO, Visit Boulder:

"I'm pleased with the process Create Boulder and the arts community is taking to assess the creation of a new performing arts facility in Boulder. We have this obligation to be relevant and reflective. A development like this could be significant to our entire community, honoring our arts, history, tastes, and demographics, while also creating a meaningful culture that invites our entire community to participate."

Chip, CEO, Downtown Boulder:

"An arts complex could greatly leverage and expand the existing asset that arts and culture are to Boulder's identity and economy. There are many details to explore before such a vision could possibly become a successful reality. The first step is to have a conversation."

Matt Benjamin, Boulder City Council Member:

"Investing in the artistic genius throughout our city gives Boulderites more opportunities to ignite their imaginations and to inspire us all. In order for Boulder to evolve into a regional nexus for the arts, we should launch a robust process that considers creating a performing arts center. A thriving arts community is emblematic of a vibrant community."

Sina Simantob, Founder, Highland City Club and Highland Institute:

"Since Fredrick Law Olmsted Jr.'s 1910 plan, Boulder has strived to build a world-renowned cultural arts center in our downtown along Boulder Creek. For the past 50 years, we have been busy buying all the open space we can. But, with that task mostly accomplished, we can now focus on the realization of this long-held dream. Today, Create Boulder is best positioned and has the highest chance of success to accomplish this 112-year-old dream."

Create Boulder Arts Complex Visioning Workshop Stakeholders

Aaron Brockett, Mayor, City of Boulder
Allyn Feinberg, co-chair, PLAN Boulder County
Amanda Berg Wilson, co-founder/artistic director, The Catamounts
Andrew Krimm, executive director, Boulder Symphony & Music Academy
Ann Moss, arts activist, Boulder
Bob Yates, member, Boulder City Council
Brad Mueller, director, Planning & Development Services, City of Boulder
Brandy Lamae, CEO/creative director, Workshop 8 Architecture/Interiors/Graphics
Brian Jack, executive director, Greater Boulder Youth Orchestras
Bruce Borowsky, chair, Boulder Arts Commission
Charlene Hoffman, CEO, Boulder Convention & Visitors Bureau
Charlotte La Sasso executive director, Boulder County Arts Alliance
Chip, CEO, Downtown Boulder Partnership
Claudia Anata Hubiak, executive director, Boulder Ballet
Cris Jones, interim director, Community Vitality, City of Boulder
Dana Faulk Query, creative cat, Big Red F Restaurants
David Dadone, executive director/chief curator, Boulder Museum of Contemporary Art (BMoCA)
Elizabeth McGuire, executive director, Colorado Music Festival
Emiliano Lake-Herrera, director, Visitor Experience & Community Partnerships, Visit Boulder
Georgia Michelle, vice chair, Boulder Arts Commission
Helanius J Wilkins, associate chair/director of dance, CU Boulder Theater & Dance Department
Joan McLean Braun, executive director, CU Presents
John Davis, dean, University of Colorado School of Music
John Tayer, president/CEO, Boulder Chamber
Kathleen McCormick, past chair/member, Boulder Arts Commission
Kathy Beeck, co-founder/director, Boulder International Film Festival (BIFF)
Kenneth Woods, artistic director, MahlerFest Colorado
Kimberly Brody, executive director, Ars Nova
Len Segel, executive director, Historic Boulder
Mara Mintzer, Growing Up Boulder
Maria Cole, member, Boulder Arts Commission
Matt Benjamin, member, Boulder City Council
Matt Chasansky, manager, Office of Arts & Culture, Community Vitality, City of Boulder
Melissa Fathman, executive director, Dairy Arts Center
Nancy Smith, founder/artistic director, Frequent Flyers Aerial Dance
Richard Epstein, RE Architecture (consultant to Civic Center Master Plan 2015)
Ryan Honey, executive director, The Arts Center at Willets (TACAW)
Sacha Millstone, president, The Millstone Evans Group
Sara Parkinson, executive director, Boulder Philharmonic Orchestra
Scott Rodwin, president, Rodwin Architecture
Sina Simontob, founder, Highland City Club
Travis Albright, Future Arts Foundation, and chief operating officer, eTown
Wendy Franz, managing director, Colorado Shakespeare Festival