

# Guest opinion: Kathleen McCormick: Ballot Issue 2A advances equity in Boulder

By [DAILY CAMERA GUEST OPINION](#) | [openforum@dailycamera.com](mailto:openforum@dailycamera.com) | Boulder Daily Camera. November 1, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. *By Kathleen McCormick*

As a past chair of the Boulder Arts Commission (BAC), I'd like to share how 2A would help fast-forward the City toward greater diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility by increasing outreach and opportunities for traditionally underserved and marginalized communities. Without raising taxes, this 0.15% renewing tax's provision of an estimated \$3.7 million in annual funding for arts and culture would be a game changer, supporting a more sustainable arts and culture ecosystem and offering benefits for the whole community. Supported by City funding, the arts and culture community has been working toward greater equity and is excited about possibilities for expansion with additional funds.

The NAACP Boulder County endorses 2A as “unequivocally supporting arts and culture programming in Boulder. Through the arts we, as a community, can defy stereotypes, share cultural identities, narratives and values — artists have always paved the way to freedom.” BAC grants in recent years have supported hugely successful and impactful NAACP projects about the arts, culture and history of Black Americans, including a Civil Rights-era photojournalism exhibit at the Dairy and world-class (free!) music performances that filled CU's Macky Auditorium with families and kids.

Look and listen around Boulder, and you'll find countless examples of BAC-funded arts and culture grants working to make us a more inclusive, welcoming and

engaging city. Street Wise Arts' murals on downtown walls, underpasses and all over the city display vivid artworks by women, BIPOC and LGBTQ+ artists that celebrate diversity. Through grants to artists and arts organizations that partner with local schools, community nonprofits and human service agencies, BAC has funded projects for El Centro Amistad, Out Boulder, Boulder Housing Partners and Feet Forward. BAC grants have supported Luna Cultura and the Boulder Museum for Indigenous Peoples' Day and Motus Theater for powerful UndocuAmerica storytelling by undocumented immigrants. City arts grants help BMoCA introduce Black, Latinx and other contemporary BIPOC artists and the Dairy Arts Center provide the Creative Nations Sacred Space for indigenous artists.

BAC arts grants fund many arts education programs for our youth, whose intellectual, social, emotional and creative development is key to their futures and ours. These include cultural field trips for hundreds of third to fifth graders, Boulder International Film Festival's film program for Boulder High students, Local Theater's playwriting program at Casey Middle School and Boulder MUSE's free after-school music lessons at Uni-Hill Elementary. eTown musicians have mentored formerly homeless youth in the TGTHR (Attention Homes) community. Parlando School of Musical Arts offers scholarships for music lessons and Boulder Studio Arts provides free pottery classes for low-income kids. BAC grants, though critical support, typically fund only a fraction of these organizations' budgets. (Check out a list of grants at [boulderarts.org/bac/bac-grant-awards](https://boulderarts.org/bac/bac-grant-awards).)

"Arts for all" efforts have been underway in Boulder for years. In 2016, BAC adopted a statement on cultural equity and then rewrote the scoring rubric for the city's competitive grants process to encourage new and more diverse artists and organizations, focusing on equity and contributions to the community. BAC tweaks the grant application and outreach process annually in response to feedback from

the community. It partners with the City's Human Relations Fund in giving grants that support equity and civil and human rights. BAC was honored to be the first department to participate in the city's extensive equity training program. With seven members appointed by the City Council for five-year terms, BAC is one of the most diverse city boards, representing LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities and a wide range of interests in arts and culture.

Community involvement will be key to determining the priorities for allocating the 2A arts/culture revenues, and you can help. In 2024, the City's Office of Arts and Culture, with community input, will refresh the Community Cultural Plan. A master plan for 2A investments will need to be approved by BAC and the City Council. This process could ensure more and larger grants for diverse nonprofit arts, culture and heritage organizations, arts education, multicultural events, public art, affordable workspaces and new or renovated arts venues.

Together we can determine the most equitable ways to invest 2A revenues to support the community we say we want to become, one that celebrates equity as well as creative expression and joy. Please vote for 2A.

*Kathleen McCormick is an organizer for the 2A ballot measure campaign.*

*McCormick served on the Boulder Arts Commission from 2016 to 2023 and was chair from 2020 to 2022.*