

Leah Brenner Clack: Budget: Increasing arts funding will be transformational across the community

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Boulder's a great place to live, ranking on top of many "best of" cities, including third in the list of "most vibrant arts communities." But does Boulder really support its artists creating this vibrancy? Not really. Boulder currently allocates only \$17 compared to \$43 per person in other similar-sized cities. This comes as a shock to everyone I speak to outside of the arts community. Artists and organizations have been consistently struggling to make ends meet and compete for breadcrumbs of grant funding.

Funding the arts does so much more than just support music, theater, dance, visual arts, film and murals. It also means funding free community and youth programs including the underserved, homeless /formerly homeless, and BIPOC and LGBTQIA artists, which is a big part of Street Wise Arts' mission as well as most other arts organizations across the board.

Artists and organizations of all sizes are advocating for dedicated long-term arts funding — a modest \$3.75 million, which is a tiny percentage of the city's \$550 million budget. We were able to organize and gather over 4,000 signatures in one month in support of renewing the entire 0.15% existing sales tax for dedicated arts funding. There was no "threatening" ballot initiative to get the council to agree to a 50/50 split of the 0.15% tax renewal with a 7 to 2 vote. Voting on ballot measures is our right as Boulder citizens, not an intimidation tactic.

The city's budget has ballooned with tax revenue and will see another increase from the former library funding to the tune of some \$9 million. This means that arts funding will not take away from other essential human services. This is a tiny slice of the relative pie.

Leah Brenner Clack, executive director of Street Wise Arts, Boulder