

Guest opinion: Marie-Juliette Bird: 2A will help local artists infuse Boulder with creative culture

By [DAILY CAMERA GUEST OPINION](#) | openforum@dailycamera.com | Boulder Daily Camera October 15, 2023 at 6:00 a.m. *By Marie-Juliette Bird*

I'm writing with a plea to my fellow Boulderites to please vote "yes" on Ballot Issue 2A!

Artists belong in Boulder! We count among the highest per-capita creative population in the country, yet our arts funding is a third of most similar-sized cities.

Growing up in Boulder, my parents taught, and I spent most afternoons at Ballet Arts, a dance studio nested above Tom's Tavern (now Salt) on 11th and Pearl. Being part of the downtown creative scene shaped my identity and informed my bushwhacked life path; I went on to serve as president of my class at Juilliard before heeding Niwot's call back home, launching The New Local Nonprofit in 2019.

In contrast to my childhood here, renting in downtown Boulder is now so prohibitively expensive that a ballet studio could never afford space on Pearl Street, nor can studios, independent galleries or artists compete with the national chains that dominate our historic downtown.

One year ago, our nonprofit realized a dream come true by signing a lease on Pearl Street! Our new HQ is the iconic, yellow Victorian just west of Spruce Confections, The Montgomery House. We love being on West Pearl and the community loves becoming part of The New Local! But even with 60-plus local artists sharing our gallery space, five creators renting studios and our teachers offering multiple, daily workshops, we still rely on substantial community support to cover our overhead.

We persist because it's vital to carve out a space downtown where creatives interface with new audiences — visitors who come to Pearl St. — as well as residents, who take our classes and infuse their homes with artwork by locals. We also represent the city in a glowing light, enlivening a beloved landmark with inclusive programming that showcases Boulder's brightest creatives.

The passage of 2A would infuse \$3.75 million dollars a year into Boulder's Arts and Culture budget, which, for context, is less than 10% of the yearly budget for our cherished Open Space program. This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to effect real, positive change to the arts in Boulder while ensuring that public safety and human services

continue to receive crucial funding. This ballot measure is an extension of a pre-existing sales tax of 0.15% that will not result in raised taxes.

I'd love for kids growing up in Boulder to have the quality of experiences that I had. And I'd love for local artists and arts organizations to continue infusing our city with the creative culture that makes this place special.

Please vote "yes" on 2A and, critically, vote for City Council members and a mayor who support this vital measure.

Find information on the candidates who support 2A here:
thenew-local.org/pages/yes-on-2a

Marie-Juliette Bird lives in Boulder.