



**Community
Perspectives
on Planning for the
Future
of Arts and Culture
in Atlanta**

Office of Cultural Affairs
March 2007

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Purpose

The City of Atlanta has long supported the arts, recognizing that a vigorous cultural community is vital to the city's overall prosperity. In 1990, under Mayor Maynard Jackson, the city affirmed its support by creating the "Atlanta Blueprint for the Arts," a strategic plan which was put into action during the 1990s. In 2001, the city updated the plan to identify which recommendations had been completed and which needed additional attention.

In 2005, the Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA), in cooperation with the Fulton County Arts Council, set out to create a new strategic plan for support of the arts. This plan would outline goals, strategies and tactics for strengthening the arts and culture sector in Atlanta and Fulton County. Circumstances arose that prevented County participation.

The OCA collected a considerable amount of community input about the state of arts and culture in Atlanta and identified key issues a new cultural plan should address. It shared this input with Mayor Shirley Franklin in 2006, compelling her to form a new task force on arts and culture funding and to raise the priority of making Atlanta a "best in class" city for arts and culture.

The OCA is now issuing this report, conveying the opinions expressed by civic officials, local arts and community leaders, and members of the general public. This document serves as a benchmark to measure the success of Atlanta's past efforts to support the arts, and as a guide for potential investment of the city's resources in the future.

Process

On March 2, 2005, Mayor Franklin announced that the OCA would undertake a community cultural planning process. The OCA began its work by hiring consultants from AMS Planning & Research, and TMG Worldwide. These consultants were selected based on their expertise in market research and strategic planning specific to arts and culture.

The OCA gathered community opinions on the state of arts and culture in Atlanta from March 2005 to September 2005, using the following methods:

- ∞ Interviews with more than 50 civic officials, arts and community leaders, artists and city staff
- ∞ A survey conducted through the OCA web site, which received responses from more than 750 people
- ∞ "Open space" public forums, attended by more than 200 community members and arts and cultural ambassadors

- ∞ A survey of Neighborhood Planning Units, returned by 71 NPU chairs and members

Beginning in August 2005, the OCA and its consultants reviewed and evaluated the feedback received, with the help of a steering committee of arts, civic and community leaders. Together, this group identified key concerns and opportunities facing Atlanta and began work on a strategic plan.

In April 2006, the OCA and its consultants met with the mayor's staff to present their early research findings. In response, Mayor Franklin created an Arts and Culture Funding Task Force to address the prevailing concern over financial support for the arts. This group of private-sector leaders met in May 2006 to review the state of public funding for arts and culture in Atlanta. The task force report is appended to this document.

Results

While the opinions expressed by the more than 1,000 people interviewed and surveyed touched on a vast number of specific topics, the OCA and its steering committee found that most of the ideas fit into one of four themes:

1. **Leadership:** Atlanta needs champions for the arts and culture sector at every level of government. Participants want the mayor, city council and the OCA to provide visible and consistent leadership in advocating for arts and cultural development, funding, integration and support.
2. **Public Funding:** The city should identify a dedicated, public revenue source that can better support arts and culture programs and initiatives. Simply put, there are not enough public dollars to go around among Atlanta's wealth of artists and small, medium-sized and large arts organizations. In the public survey, 93 percent of respondents said the City of Atlanta should fund the arts and culture, and about half of those surveyed said the arts should rank "extremely high" on the city's agenda.
3. **Facilities:** Atlanta needs to have excellent, attractive, affordable arts facilities throughout the city for artists and arts organizations. Respondents want more and better facilities in all areas of the city, so that neighborhood and niche organizations have appropriate venues to reach the community.
4. **Education and Awareness:** Participants within the arts community expressed interest in raising both public awareness of the broad spectrum of arts and culture opportunities in the city, and public appreciation for the contribution that the arts make to Atlanta's quality of life, viewing these as tasks to be tackled by both the city and the arts community. Respondents also wanted Atlanta's city government to demonstrate its consciousness of the importance of the arts, through increased attention to arts initiatives and programs, and especially through funding educational arts opportunities for Atlanta's youth. In the web-based survey, 95

percent of respondents said it was “extremely important” for children to have access to arts education in Atlanta Public Schools.

The prevalence of these four themes throughout the research suggests that any strategic plan for the arts undertaken by the City of Atlanta should make these four areas its top priorities.

Participants

Mayor Shirley Franklin

Atlanta City Council

Lisa M. Borders, Council President
Hon. Carla Smith, District 1
Hon. Kwanza Hall, District 2
Hon. Ivory Lee Young, Jr., District 3
Hon. Cleta Winslow, District 4
Hon. Natalyn Mosby Archibong, District 5
Hon. Anne Fauver, District 6
Hon. Howard Shook, District 7
Hon. Clair M. Muller, District 8
Hon. Felicia A. Moore, District 9
Hon. Clarence T. Martin, District 10
Hon. Jim Maddox, District 11
Hon. Joyce Sheperd, District 12
Hon. Ceasar C. Mitchell, Post 1
Hon. Mary Norwood, Post 2
Hon. H. Lamar Willis, Post 3

City of Atlanta Staff

Dianne Harnell Cohen, Commissioner
Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Affairs
Camille Russell Love, Director, Office of Cultural Affairs
Jennifer Damis, Community Cultural Plan Intern
Tashina Nettles, Administrative Assistant
Eddie Granderson, Program Manager, Public Art Division
Alonzo Craig, Program Manager, Performing Arts Division
Erin Bailey, Facility Manager, Chastain Arts Center
Pauline Smith, Director, Atlanta Cyclorama
Tiffani Bryant, Supervisor, Art in Education, Performing Arts Division
Monica D. Prothro, Supervisor, Contracts for Arts Services, Performing Arts Division
Nnena Nchege, Administrative Analyst, Music Festivals, Performing Arts Division
Dorian McDuffie, Supervisor, Public Art Program, Public Art Division
Etienne L. Jackson, Supervisor, Public Art Program, Public Art Division
NeShunta Smith, Budget Technician, Administrative Division
Rosa Gordon, Administrative Analyst, Administrative Division

Steering Committee

Nadia Abdur-Rahman, *Mohammed Schools*
John Ahmann, *Dowling, Langley and Ahmann*
Haziq Ali, *Organized Rhyme*
Valetta Anderson, *DeKalb Council for the Arts*
Vincent Anthony, *The Center for Puppetry Arts*
Kim Bitz, *Atlanta Coalition of Performing Arts*
Susan Booth, *Alliance Theatre at the Woodruff*
Jim Bruns, *The Atlanta History Center*
Herbert Charles, *Morehouse College*
Annette Cone-Skelton, *Museum of Contemporary Art of Georgia*
Lisa Cremin, *Metro Atlanta Arts Fund*
Kim Cushman, *Piedmont Park Conservancy*
Rebecca Demaris, *Boys and Girls Clubs*
Tina Dunkley, *Clark-Atlanta University Art Galleries*
John Eaton, *Institute for Non-Profit Management*
Robert Frazer, *Premiere Events*
Leslie Gordon, *Rialto Theatre*
Jo Ann Haden-Miller, *Atlanta Convention and Visitors Bureau*
Dennis Hanthorn, *Atlanta Opera*
Peggy Harper, *Atlanta Planning Advisory*
Cooper Holland, *Central Atlanta Progress Inc.*
Stephanie Hughley, *National Black Arts Festival*
Tom Key, *Theatrical Outfit*
Lisa Kincheloe, *GLA*
Nicki Lancaster, *The Quest for Public Education*
Alice Lovelace, *MoDaSo Collective*
Sam Mahone, *High Museum of Art*
John McFall, *Atlanta Ballet*
Dee Dee Murray, *Murray Media Music*
Bill Nigut, *Metro Atlanta Arts and Culture Coalition*
Veronica Njoku, *Fulton County Arts Council*
Bill Nunn, *Actor*
Gail O'Neill, *HGTV*
James Patterson, *Clark-Atlanta University*
Quanda Rodriguez, *The Atlanta Symphony*
Louise Shaw, *Arts Consultant*
Barney Simms, *Atlanta Housing Authority*
Michelle Smith, *Emory University*
Rob Smulian, *Atlanta Contemporary*
Timothy Tew, *Atlanta Gallery Association*
John Thigpen, *Performing Arts Community*
Greg Torre, *Georgia Film Video and Music*
Jay Tribby, *Very Special Arts*
Nikki Tucker, *Southern Arts Federation*
Gordon Vernick, *Georgia State University Jazz Studies*

Philip Verre, *High Museum of Art*
Sam Yi, *Churchill Grounds Jazz Café*

Consultants

AMS Planning & Research: Arthur Greenberg, *Director*; Lynette Turner, *Project Manager*; Christopher Caltagirone, *Research Director*; Bill Cleveland, *Center for the Study of Art & Community, Open Space Forums*

TBG Worldwide: Zee Bradford, *Program Manager*; Marcel English, *Program Manager Assistant*

REPORT ON COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVES

HISTORY

The City of Atlanta's Office of Cultural Affairs (OCA), formerly the Department of Cultural Affairs, was established in 1974 as a division of the Department of Parks, Recreation and Cultural Affairs. Its mission is "to promote rich and diverse cultural experiences in the City of Atlanta while preserving and protecting the city's cultural heritage." Prominent OCA programs include the Atlanta Jazz Festival, management of the public art program, grant funding through "contracts-for-services" with arts groups and artists, and arts education programs for young people. The OCA also manages city facilities including the Chastain Art Center, City Hall East gallery, Gilbert House and the Atlanta Cyclorama, and oversees the facility contracts for Chastain Park Amphitheater, Hi-fi Buys Amphitheater and the Trolley Barn.

In 2005, Mayor Shirley Franklin set forth an agenda with three areas of focus: homelessness, education and economic development. With a firm belief that arts and culture play a vital role in Atlanta's overall prosperity, the OCA – in conjunction with the Fulton County Arts Council – set out to develop a new strategic plan that would directly tie support of the arts and cultural sector to achieving the mayor's larger goals for the city.

Prior to this time, the city's last major strategic plan for the arts was the "Blueprint for the Arts in Atlanta," developed in 1990 under Mayor Maynard Jackson and updated in 2001.

Since the creation of the Blueprint document, Atlanta had seen significant change in the arts landscape, including the foundation in 2003 of the Metro Atlanta Arts and Culture Coalition (MAACC), an independent group working to support and promote arts and culture throughout the metro area. MAACC's activities are targeted directly at areas that previously have been of concern, including creating stable funding sources for individual artists and cultural organizations, and informing the public about arts and culture opportunities.

Therefore, before developing a new plan, the OCA wanted to gauge the community's current outlook on the state of arts and culture in Atlanta. Only by hearing from the community could the OCA know how effective its prior activities and strategies had been, and which areas called for the greatest attention.

During the research stages of planning, circumstances arose that prevented Fulton County from participating. As a result, the OCA was not able to go as far in the planning process as it had hoped; however, by issuing this report, the OCA hopes to share the considerable amount of community input it gathered.

RESEARCH TIMELINE

March – April 2005

- ∞ Mayor Shirley Franklin announced the beginning of a community cultural planning process.
- ∞ Consultants held kickoff meeting and initial brainstorming session with steering committee members.
- ∞ Consultants interviewed more than 50 artists, arts organization leaders, city council members, city staff, and civic and community leaders.
- ∞ Web-based survey offered on the OCA Web site. Received more than 750 responses.

May 2005

- ∞ Steering committee reviewed background documents including the “Atlanta Blueprint for the Arts” and the OCA strategic plan.

July 2005

- ∞ Community forums held at a centrally located public school, attended by more than 200 people from the general public and from the arts and cultural community.

August – September 2005

- ∞ Summary of research provided to steering committee to guide continued discussions with the public.
- ∞ Additional meetings held for deeper dialogue on central issues raised during community forums. Subcommittees met in three work sessions on each of the following topics:
 - Partnerships and decision makers
 - Youth and education
 - City government and OCA issues
 - Promotion and marketing
 - Facilities
- ∞ Conducted mail survey of 303 Neighborhood Planning Units (NPU). Received 71 responses from NPU chairs and members, a response rate of 23.4 percent.
- ∞ Strategic planning discussions began among the OCA, consultants and steering committee.

April 2006

- ∞ The OCA and its consultants met with Mayor Franklin's staff to present their early research findings, which showed significant concern about the level of funding for Atlanta's arts and culture organizations. In response, Mayor Franklin created a task force on arts and culture funding and announced renewed emphasis on making Atlanta a "best in class" city for arts and culture.

RESPONSES

Interviews with Civic, Arts and Community Leaders

In spring 2005, consultants met with more than 50 elected city officials, leaders in the arts and in the broader community, and members of the OCA staff, interviewing them individually or in small groups. Their input varied based on their individual roles, but many interviewees shared common opinions. Those that were most frequently mentioned included:

- ∞ The arts need to be available to youth, both in and out of school.
- ∞ Atlanta has an active arts community, including an energetic grassroots / "underground" arts movement.
- ∞ Atlanta does not offer enough support to individual artists and small arts organizations.
- ∞ While Atlanta offers many excellent arts and cultural activities, it is not a leader in the areas of theater and dance.
- ∞ It is sometimes difficult for the public to know what arts and cultural opportunities are available, due to lack of cooperation among arts groups and lack of cohesive marketing. This is especially true of activities being offered by smaller organizations.
- ∞ Atlanta lacks a theater district / arts district.
- ∞ A strategic plan should ensure that Atlanta offers a diverse range of art and cultural activities, and that those activities are accessible and affordable to everyone.

The comments made by the OCA staff also touched on several concerns specific to their office. These included:

- ∞ The OCA needs additional staff, particularly personnel to handle public relations, marketing, and grant writing / fund raising, and more manpower for the public arts program.
- ∞ The work of the OCA has been hurt by budget cuts to and / or discontinuation of some programs in recent years, such as Materials for the Arts, Day in the Park with the Arts, Arts Hotline and Arts-in-Education.

Public Web Survey

In the first quarter of 2005, the OCA offered a survey via its Web site, which was completed by 757 respondents. Below is key data that was collected.

Questions about patronage of the arts:

Types of arts and cultural events attended in the previous year, by location of the event (figures show the percent of respondents who gave a particular answer):

	In the city of Atlanta	In Fulton County	In the metro area, but not in Atlanta / Fulton County	Outside metro Atlanta
Performing arts	94	67	68	63
Visual arts exhibit or museum	81	58	55	66
Science or natural history museum	52	NA	NA	NA
Historic site or museum	50	NA	NA	54
Outdoor arts festival / fair	38	65	64	58

Reasons for not attending arts and cultural events more often (multiple responses allowed):

Lack of time	53%
Cost of attending	45%
Lack of information	38%
Parking / access problems	32%
Lack of events in Atlanta	24%

Arts and cultural interests, ranked from most to least popular

Types of events	Percent of respondents interested
Art exhibitions	80+
Art in public places Stage plays Arts fairs / festivals	70-80
Jazz music Film series	60-70
Classical music Historic sites / programs / museums	50-60

Leisure activities, ranked from most to least popular

Types of activities	Percent of respondents participating
Movies Reading	80+
Travel Time with family	70-80
Outdoor activities Entertaining at home Exercise Television	60-70
Home improvement Arts / crafts	50-60

Questions related to OCA programs:

Can you recall seeing art in public places?

Yes 93%
No 7%

“I often notice murals, sculpture, other art in public places.”

Strongly agree 22%
Somewhat agree 45%
Somewhat disagree 22%
Strongly disagree 10%

“Having art in public places makes Atlanta a more appealing place to live in or visit.”

Strongly agree 78%
Somewhat agree 17%

“Atlanta residents receive good value for tax dollars spent on OCA programs.”

Strongly agree 27%
Somewhat agree 31%
Somewhat disagree 19%
Strongly disagree 10%
Don’t know 13%

How important is it for the city to support (figures show the percent of respondents who gave a particular answer):

	Extremely important	Somewhat important	Not very important
Arts in Downtown / Midtown	84	13	3
Arts in public places	59	30	8
The Jazz Festival	48	37	8
Arts in neighborhoods	69	25	6

Questions about the arts and cultural sector

How do you rate the availability of arts and cultural programs in Atlanta?

Excellent 9%
Good 40%

Fair	39%
Poor	11%
“Arts and cultural groups are doing a good job of serving the community.”	
Strongly agree	13%
Somewhat agree	58%
Somewhat disagree	22%
Strongly disagree	5%
“Arts and cultural groups are a source of pride for the community.”	
Strongly agree	66%
Somewhat agree	22%
“Arts and cultural programs in Atlanta provide good value for the money.”	
Strongly agree	42%
Somewhat agree	43%
Somewhat disagree	10%
How much impact do the arts have on the city’s economy?	
Significant	61%
Modest	25%
Very little	9%
Should city government provide funding for arts and culture?	
Yes	93%
No	3%
How important is it for kids to have access to arts education in Atlanta Public Schools?	
Extremely	95%
Somewhat	4%
Where should arts and culture rank on the city’s agenda?	
Extremely high	50%
Somewhat high	42%
Somewhat low	6%
Where do you get information on arts and cultural events?	
Newspapers	79%
Web sites	68%
E-mail	64%
Family / friends / word of mouth	62%
Radio	52%
Direct mail	32%
Television	30%

Demographic information about the respondents

How long have you lived in Atlanta?	
10 years or more	54%
6 years or less	22%
How many children under age 18 live with you?	
None	82%
One or two	16%
What is your age?	
25 – 34	34%
35 – 44	24%
45 – 54	20%
55 – 64	14%
What is your level of education?	
College degree	43%
Graduate school	43%
What is your race?	
White	75%
African-American	16%
Hispanic	2%

Neighborhood Planning Unit (NPU) Surveys

In September 2005, consultants mailed 303 surveys to Atlanta’s Neighborhood Planning Units. The following is a summary of the 71 responses received.

The survey first asked about issues of concern in the respondent’s neighborhood. Most responses fell into the general categories of public safety, housing and development, streets and the “built environment,” and challenges facing individuals (such as unemployment and homelessness).

Among specific arts / cultural issues mentioned were:

- Lack of parks
- No public art / historical markers / statues
- No cultural activities and events / no cultural activities for children
- No venues for culture / arts / performing arts / lack of funding for cultural spaces
- No support for artists
- Not being informed about cultural activities

When asked to describe their awareness of OCA programs and services, about one-third of respondents did not cite any specific knowledge of the OCA. Of those who said they were aware of the office’s duties, most identified the office’s purposes as providing

educational programs, coordinating the government's cultural activities, and raising awareness of cultural opportunities. Others noted funding and advocacy functions, and several comments cited the OCA's role in enriching the overall quality of life for Atlanta's citizens.

Specific responses about the OCA's purpose included:

- Organizes art fairs / concerts / festivals
- Promotes cultural events in the city
- Sponsors festivals, artistic venues, public art projects, concerts
- Arts and cultural programming
- Visual and performing arts programs sponsored or supported by the city
- Sponsors summer concerts in the park, art show at the malls
- Plans and implements cultural programs that are community and family oriented
- Organizes, develops and presents cultural enhancing activities for city residents
- Provides venues for and promotes social and cultural events throughout the city
- Promotes public art and manages cultural / music events in public venues
- Brings arts programming and events to city, serves everyone
- Sports and recreational events, music and theatrical events, art events
- Atlanta Jazz Festival and public art
- Provides recreational event tickets

Most widely known were the OCA's public art program and the Atlanta Jazz Festival. Programs with the lowest awareness were youth art education and contracts for arts services grants.

When asked specifically how the OCA can better serve their neighborhoods, respondents most frequently requested better publicity for OCA-sponsored events and programs. Other comments focused on improving access to the arts, helping to form partnerships, providing more youth programming, and incorporating public art into the neighborhood. Specific programs requested included:

Arts and culture needs of neighborhoods in general

- Neighborhood-focused, small-scale arts opportunities
- Community-driven concerts / festivals
- Local artists' show / jazz performances, plays, art shows using local talents
- Neighborhood or block parties
- Neighborhood visual art galleries
- Community theater company performances

Needs in specific neighborhoods

- Concerts in Memorial Park
- Arts program in Adair Park neighborhood
- Jazz programs in Cascade area
- Community art center, art classes at Ben Hill recreation center
- Summer concerts and yearly art show in Ben Hill

- Public art in Wolf Creek and Ben Hill Parks
- Jazz or music fest in Eastlake Park
- Music program in Freedom Park
- Concerts and exhibitions in Anderson Park, Maddox Park
- Assistance for the Defoor Center on Defoor Ave.
- Art program at new public school (Bolton Academy)
- Jazz concert in Northwest Atlanta
- Senior Citizen Center, aquatorium, walking trails in Greenbrier area
- Concert hall, bookstores, nice restaurant, skating place, eyeglass store in Greenbrier
- Art activities for those who work downtown – “art making on your lunch hour”
- Art objects installed by city at main entrance to Market need to be refurbished

Other

- Art on historical contributions of Black people / African-American heritage
- Spirit-based plays and concerts and contemporary plays
- Cultural / historical films and videos held in local venues
- More cultural activities other than arts and crafts – plays and dance recitals
- Increased marketing of art galleries and Atlanta History Museum

Open Space Forums

On July 6 and 7, members of the community were invited to participate in a “community conversation about the future of the arts in the city ” at a centrally located public school (Inman Middle School). More than 200 people attended.

The discussions were framed by the following question: *How can Atlanta best support the development of its cultural resources?*

Consultants used open-space technology (OST) to facilitate the sessions. The OST process provides a fluid, group environment that enables individuals to explore ideas, network with like-minded colleagues, make decisions and take action.

In the introductory session, participants were asked to identify issues, ideas and / or opportunities related to the key question above, and then to participate in smaller group workshops to further discuss the topics that emerged.

The following is a list of the topics that were generated and discussed at the community forums. Because these topics were raised by the participants themselves, they reflect the issues of greatest interest among those who attended.

A more complete summary, which lists the major concerns and ideas discussed under each of the topics below, is available from the OCA web site at www.oaatlanta.com.

Topic: Arts learning – advancing life-long learning in the arts

Subtopics:

- ∞ Identifying candidates for political office who would be advocates and activists for learning through arts education
- ∞ Creating opportunity and integrating the arts for children in our schools
- ∞ Achieving true arts education in all disciplines in the schools and in children’s lives
- ∞ Inspiring and motivating our children to all facets of the arts
- ∞ Building an infrastructure of arts-related organizations to simply and immediately serve the needs of the Atlanta Public Schools in a way that supports the momentum of the “arts focus” that is already underway

Topic: Sustainable culture – developing the systems and infrastructure necessary for the arts to thrive

Subtopics: Public leadership focused

- ∞ Raising the city’s emphasis on and recognition of the arts, and establishing the Bureau of Cultural Affairs [note: BCA was the predecessor to OCA] as a free-standing city agency
- ∞ Supporting the arts and cultural resources through planning and zoning
- ∞ Incorporating mixed-use development with cultural planning
- ∞ Separating the BCA from the Bureau of Parks and Recreation to give it a separate administration

- ∞ Defining the most productive role for the BCA, in consideration of limited and decreasing funding for the arts
- ∞ Preparing the city's emerging arts leaders for organizational stability and leadership succession

Subtopics: Marketing and communication focused

- ∞ Increasing publicity and promotion for the arts
- ∞ Developing a marketing apparatus that will create a “cross-pollination” of audiences for our diverse cultural and arts institutions
- ∞ Among cultural organizations, better disseminating information about arts and entertainment in metro Atlanta
- ∞ Getting the attention of city leadership, philanthropists and decision makers
- ∞ Using the City of Atlanta's new branding campaign to position the city as an arts and culture Mecca – and then taking advantage of that position
- ∞ Giving incentives to television stations to promote arts and culture
- ∞ Working together better to enhance the cultural community (arts, humanities and historic sites) through packages, planning and shared promotions

Subtopics: Facilities focused

- ∞ Creating a performance center for grassroots, non-profit organizations that need workshop, class and performance space
- ∞ Encouraging private businesses and developers to donate and / or make available space for arts education, performance and display
- ∞ Supporting the development of first-class arts facilities for small and medium-sized arts organizations

Topic: Cultural participation – broadening and deepening participation in the arts

Subtopics:

- ∞ Continuing to create a great public art program involving citizens and arts
- ∞ Better engaging multi-ethnic communities to provide support for cultural programs, cultural institutions, artists and events
- ∞ Engaging underrepresented groups (youth, senior citizens' groups, ethnic groups) and improving outreach to these groups
- ∞ Ensuring that cultural planning includes humanities as well as arts
- ∞ Engaging the larger Atlanta community in understanding the contributions of the arts to their quality of life

Topic: Community development – integrating the arts into community life

Subtopics:

- ∞ Establishing partnerships among the BCA, the Atlanta arts community, and neighboring cities for the planning process
- ∞ Finding ways for an institution like Emory University to serve the outside community through arts outreach
- ∞ Incorporating the Caribbean arts into an economically viable segment of the Atlanta community
- ∞ Determining where the library system fits into cultural plans

Topic: Cultural investment – supporting the creation of art and the development of the cultural economy

Subtopics:

- ∞ Defining the role of the city in supporting small, medium-sized and large nonprofits (arts organizations), and determining whether the city's role should differ depending on an organization's size
- ∞ Providing more money from the City of Atlanta for artists to create art
- ∞ Finding ways for citizens to help fund cultural programs and to communicate with one another
- ∞ Assuring a source of stable funding to build more vibrant arts and culture
- ∞ Assessing the impact of the recent incorporation of Sandy Springs and the resulting loss of revenue on the arts in Fulton County and Atlanta

CONCLUSIONS

In reviewing the community's responses, the OCA, the planning consultants and the steering committee identified four central themes that encompassed most of the feedback received: leadership, public funding, facilities and education / awareness.

Leadership: Participants saw a need for arts and culture advocates among elected officials and city staff. This was viewed as critical for increasing the city's budget allocation for the arts, and for arts education funding in particular. Respondents also saw the potential for city officials to make arts and culture a priority when creating policies for planning, zoning and economic development.

Public funding: Respondents expressed concern about the amount of financial support available to arts organizations. Participants in the public web survey overwhelmingly said that city support of the arts throughout all neighborhoods is important, and 92 percent said that arts and culture should rank extremely high or somewhat high on the city's agenda.

Facilities: Respondents noted a lack of appropriate arts venues, especially for smaller arts organizations. Neighborhood Planning Unit leaders and others expressed interest in having more facilities throughout the city's many neighborhoods, to make arts and cultural events more accessible to all. At the same time, arts and community leaders bemoaned the absence of a central arts district.

Education and awareness: Many participants said that Atlanta has a healthy arts and culture community with a wealth of activities and events taking place; however, they also said that it is often difficult for the public to find out about arts and cultural opportunities. To combat this, many suggested finding ways to work together, both within the arts community and in conjunction with the city, to improve publicity and promotion. Similarly, many in the arts community expressed a need to raise the public's appreciation for the importance of the arts and culture in Atlanta's quality of life. Tying back into the "leadership" theme, respondents said that the city's elected officials need to take the lead in this area, demonstrating their appreciation for the arts and culture by making it a priority in city initiatives, programs and budgets.