



GREATER BUFFALO CULTURAL ALLIANCE

The Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance envisions a community that values arts and culture and the integral role they will play in our region's future.

## **Arts and Culture in the City of Buffalo: A Position Paper for City Government in 2018 and beyond**

*Issued by the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance*

The City of Buffalo is widely viewed as being in the midst of a renaissance, while it is also noted that for many citizens and neighborhoods significant challenges remain. As both a key contributor to the former, and a key resource for the latter, arts and culture plays a significant and unique role in the City of Buffalo's health and future. Numerous studies and reports have shown:

- The not for profit cultural sector and its audience in Western New York has an annual economic impact that measures in the hundreds of millions of dollars (Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 Report);
- This sector generates tens of millions of dollars in local tax revenue (Arts & Economic Prosperity 5 Report);
- There are over 500 arts-related businesses located in the City of Buffalo (Americans for the Arts 2015 Creative Industries Report);
- With the reduction of in-school visual and performing arts classes, there is greater demand for arts and cultural engagement for youth out of school and in the community;
- Arts education helps children develop higher level skills such as critical thinking and problem solving;
- The arts have a positive impact on the development of local communities and social networks;
- Arts and culture help to engage new immigrants with social institutions;
- The arts contribute to innovation within a community;
- A key indicator of innovation and progress in cities is a prominent public art program;
- Artists and cultural organizations regularly take the lead in neighborhood revitalization and preservation, as evidenced in the Grant-Amherst, Theatre District, and Michigan-Broadway neighborhoods;
- Arts and culture is a key component of Visit Buffalo Niagara's tourism efforts and a frequent lead mention in national and international stories about the city;
- Cultural amenities are utilized in the attraction and retention of new economy businesses and knowledge workers to the city.

As all of the above shows, cultural organizations and artists are critical to a city's success. By any indicator, Buffalo is a leading cultural city. Many of our peer cities have strong and multi-faceted partnerships between the cultural sector and city government. It is for that reason that the Greater Buffalo Cultural Alliance hereby calls upon the candidates for Mayor of the City of Buffalo to publicly voice their support of and commitment to the following items in their administration should they be elected to office.

**Support for Cultural Organizations in the minimum amount of \$2 per capita.** Currently, city funding for the arts sits at roughly \$0.40 per capita, which amounts to only \$125,000. Raising this level to \$2 per capita would provide a more appropriate amount of support to existing organizations and be significant enough to encourage the growth of new organizations to further meet the community's needs. Also, the budget line for cultural funding is currently co-mingled with anti-violence funding. Both of these items are important and deserving of their own dedicated line item.

**Creation of a routine, transparent, and peer-review based process for awarding cultural funding.** Release of the cultural funding application at a regular yearly interval, and a transparent process based primarily on peer review is an accepted best practice at the county, state, and federal level, and the organizations and residents of the City of Buffalo would be best served with the same.

**Full enforcement of the one percent for public art requirement.** The City of Buffalo charter requires that : "The Art in Public Places Program shall apply to all capital improvement projects as defined below, including multiphase projects on a single project site, whose budgeted cost of construction and design for a single project or for the total of such multiphase projects is equal to or greater than \$1,000,000. An amount equal to 1% of the total budgeted construction and design cost of the capital improvement project shall be included in the budget for the planning, design, construction, repair and maintenance of works of art created pursuant to this article." The City of Buffalo, through the leadership of the Mayor, should fully enforce this requirement for every applicable project.

**Develop a cultural plan for the city.** The City of Buffalo should take the lead on creation of a cultural plan. Cultural Planning is a way of looking at all aspects of a community's cultural life as assets and resources. Cultural Planning creates an overarching policy and planning framework to guide support for the cultural sector and to integrate cultural consideration into all aspects of City planning and decision making, and translates the cultural needs and identity of a community into a tool for implementing recommendations. This plan should be developed in full coordination with the city's cultural sector.

**Creation of a Department of Cultural Development within city government, staffed by a cabinet-level appointee.** Leading arts cities including Pittsburgh, New Orleans, and Austin integrate arts and culture into their governmental infrastructure through a department within the city. This department should serve as professional staff to the Buffalo Arts Commission, facilitate the annual grants process, direct the one percent for public art program, and facilitate the creation of a cultural plan. The director should be a part of all major city initiatives to insure that arts and culture can contribute to major municipal work.

**Inclusion of cultural leaders in city efforts.** City government has numerous commissions, councils, or committees that work on important aspects of the city's operations, and the Mayor is able to appoint individuals to other boards and commissions as well. As community leaders, those in the cultural sector should be actively recruited for these appointments; this will bring additional and needed skill sets and ways of thinking to important efforts.