

Summary of key ideas raised at SSCAB Neighborhoods Committee meeting on 2/25/2019

Topic: Arts & Entertainment

Strengths:

- **Community vitality:** Arts and entertainment events – and, in particular, outdoor events and activities – contribute to feelings of vibrancy, public safety, and an openness to trying new things. These events draw groups of people who would not normally spend time together.
- **Economic impact:** The Arts & Entertainment District incentivizes entertainment organizations to remain in the area and provides a state income subtraction for local working artists. Arts events – especially free events – draw large numbers of people who patronize area businesses.
- **Public support:** The State and County commitment to grants of general operating funds (as opposed to the more restrictive project-based grant funding) was praised as critical for sustainability of arts organizations.
- **Transportation & accessibility:** Proximity of Metro and public parking garages to downtown arts venues and education spaces is viewed as an asset, especially for artists and arts audiences with disabilities.
- **Diversity of art forms:** There is pride in and appreciation for the wide range of art forms and cultural festivals produced and presented across our regional service area.
- **Community investment:** Small local businesses, such as restaurants and coffee shops, host local performers and showcase local art on their walls. Area residents have demonstrated their financial support arts activities, especially early childhood arts and literacy programs.

Challenges:

- **Noise amplification:** Amplified noise from buskers in public spaces can interfere with the public's ability to hear and enjoy programmed outdoor events (e.g. Silver Spring Jazz Festival in Veteran's Plaza).
- **Rising cost of space:** Increasing residential and commercial rent prices are putting pressure both on artists living in the area and on arts organizations that rent office/studio space here.
- **Government transition:** Artists and arts organizations are grappling with an unexpected need to educate newly elected officials about the arts community and its importance in Montgomery County. Artists worry that their work is being perceived as a drain on resources rather than as a driver for economic activity, public safety, and livability.
- **Visibility of arts programming:** The public is more aware of outdoor events than of indoor activities (e.g. indoor programming at the Silver Spring Civic Building and the Takoma Park Community Center). For all types of events and exhibitions, it can be challenging to get the word out to interested audiences.
- **Empowering arts organizations:** Many organizations feel uncertain about how to measure and evaluate their programs, making it difficult for them to communicate effectively with stakeholders. Artists and art administrators can feel undervalued or sidelined in County discussions of policy and planning.

Invited guests participating in this meeting: Elizabeth Gallaresi, Silver Spring A&E District; Lysette House, Friends of the Library, Montgomery County; Cassie Meador, Dance Exchange; V. Kuroji Patrick, independent artist; Heller An Shapiro, ArtStream; Brendan Smith, City of Takoma Park; Lisa Martin, Silver Spring Town Center, Inc.