APRIL 2021

The Future of Charlotte's Creative Community

A gathering of motivated creative leaders came together to explore opportunities and determined guiding principles that would allow the city's creative community to thrive.

EY wavespace™ + CHARLOTTE IS CREATIVE

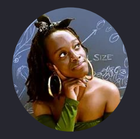
Black Lives Matter Street Mural Coverage, by Charlotte Star Room

Together we can accomplish the impossible

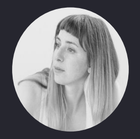
The creative communities' challenges are best solved by convening people with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, not through the loudest voices or largest organizations.

With your support, our community of thoughtful, committed creatives can replace traditional silos with networks of partnerships working together to shape a thriving creative community.

Thanks to our creative community leaders



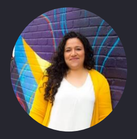
Alaetra Chisholm
BlvckLae



Amy Herman
Goodyear Arts

Ana Ogbueze
Diversity On And Off Stage

Carla Aaron-Lopez
BLKMRKTCLT



Caro Diaz
CLT En Espanol

David Butler
Hue House

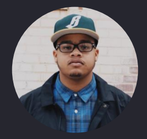
Gavin Donell
Filmmaker

Hannah Hasan
Spoken Work Artist

Irisol Gonzalez
Artist

Jamar Grant
Saint Eido Works

Jason Jet
Musician & Grindhaus Studios



Jeff Lockhart
The Clean Slate USA

Jim Dukes
Charlotte Art League

Jinna Kim
Actress

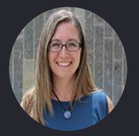
Joe Kuhlmann
The Evening Muse

John Howard
AAF

John Tosco
Tosco Music

Jose Alverez
Prospera

Katya Gorlatov
Tech Creative



Liz Fitzgerald
ASC

Lonnie Davis
Jazz Arts Charlotte

Lucas Ayers
CLT Shooters

Maddy Holly-Carothers
CLTBlackOwned

Manoela Edgerton
KiiK Create

Gray Edgerton
KiiK Create

Manoj Kessavan
Que-O's

Manuel Campbell
Aspire Capital

Meredith Connelly
Artist

Monique Douglas (Stubbs-Hall)
Studio 229

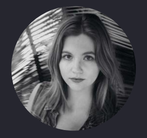
MyLoan Dinh
Moving Poets

Nkem Thompson
In Our Nature / Bird Pizzeria

Quinten Talley
On Q Productions

Ricky Singh
Charlotte Lab School

Rosalia Torres-Weiner
Artist



Sandi Suter
AIGA

Sharon Dowell
Artist

Sir Abstraxxx
Spoken Word Artist / Photographer

Steven Williams
Ninth Pasture / An Atelier

Tim Miner
Charlotte is Creative

Uday Vedre
Framework 4 Future

Wendy Hickey
Art Pop Street Gallery

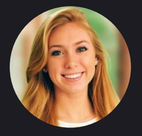
William McNeely
Do Greater Foundation

Yung Citizen
Musician

Bermon Painter
EY wavespace

Katie Mank
EY wavespace

Sarah Smith
EY wavespace



Addison Garrigus
EY wavespace

Draper Brown
EY wavespace

Jordan Johnson
EY wavespace

Gathering the creative community

Charlotte is Creative collaborated with EY wavespace, using their proven innovation methods, facilitators, and technology to craft an interactive workshop.

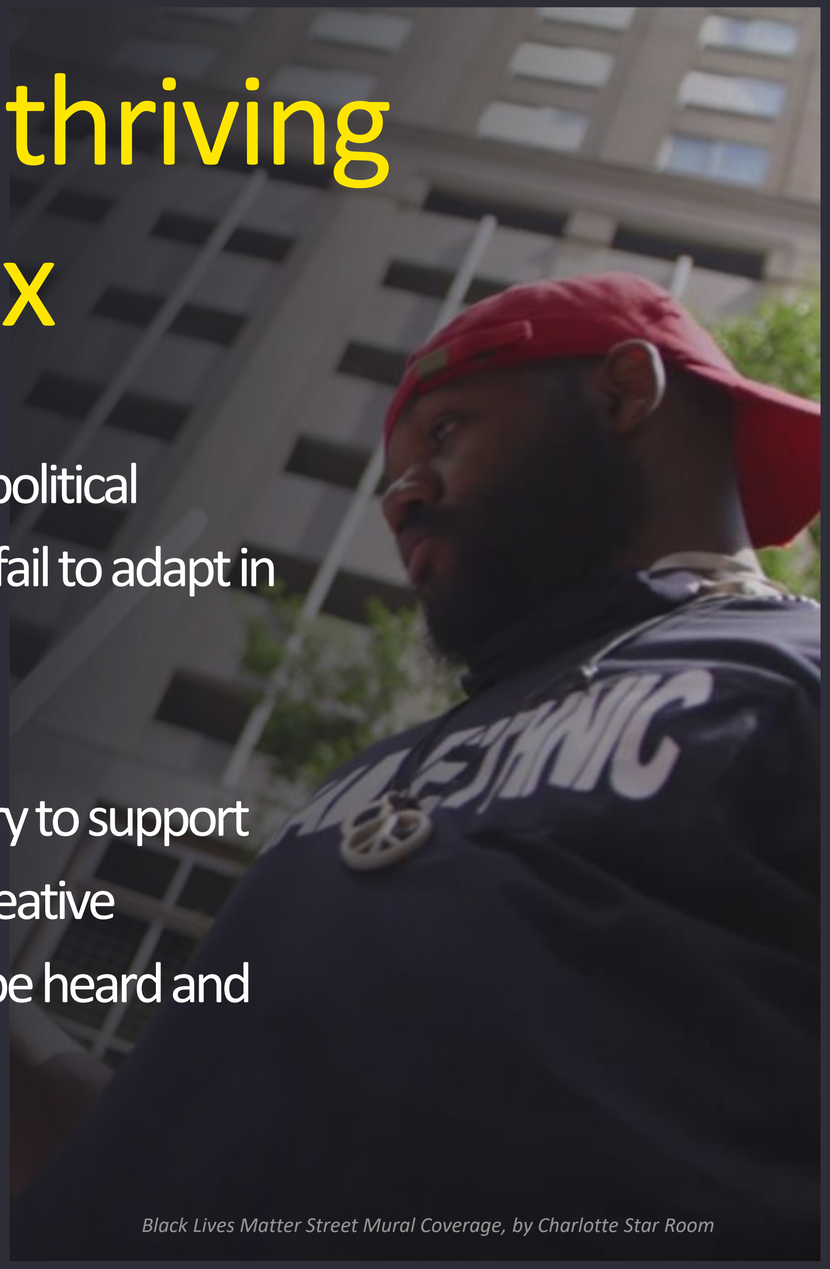
The agenda of the day:

- Inspirational message from attendee, Scott Avett
- Thinking big about the future of Charlotte
- Diagnosing current challenges
- Drafting guiding principles
- Overview of next steps
- Closing spoken word performance from Hannah Hasan

What's required to foster a thriving creative community is in flux

Historically, governments and other organizations stuck in their own political structures, processes, and hierarchy often make siloed decisions and fail to adapt in meaningful ways.

In order to achieve success in the truly disruptive work that's necessary to support our *entire* creative ecosystem (including individual artists and small creative businesses and organizations), their unique insights and needs must be heard and heeded to inform this change.



Black Lives Matter Street Mural Coverage, by Charlotte Star Room

Creativity multiplies the effective use of every other business tool

Creativity Feeds the Future of Work, Forrester, 2021

Charlotte is home to many motivated creatives who are severely underutilized during this time of change. They are serious about the business of creativity and its impact on our city. Their knowledge, perspectives and insights are necessary to help Charlotte find a creative advantage to execute on both incremental and disruptive innovative initiatives that help the city stay relevant and future-proof.

Black Lives Matter Street Mural Coverage, by Charlotte Star Room

What conditions need to exist in Charlotte to allow our entire creative sector to thrive?

Charlotte is Creative and EY wavespace convened a workshop with 40+ creative leaders to explore innovative ideas intended to challenge the status quo and create guiding principles to aid all stakeholders in their efforts to support a thriving creative community. The workshop focused on three key areas:

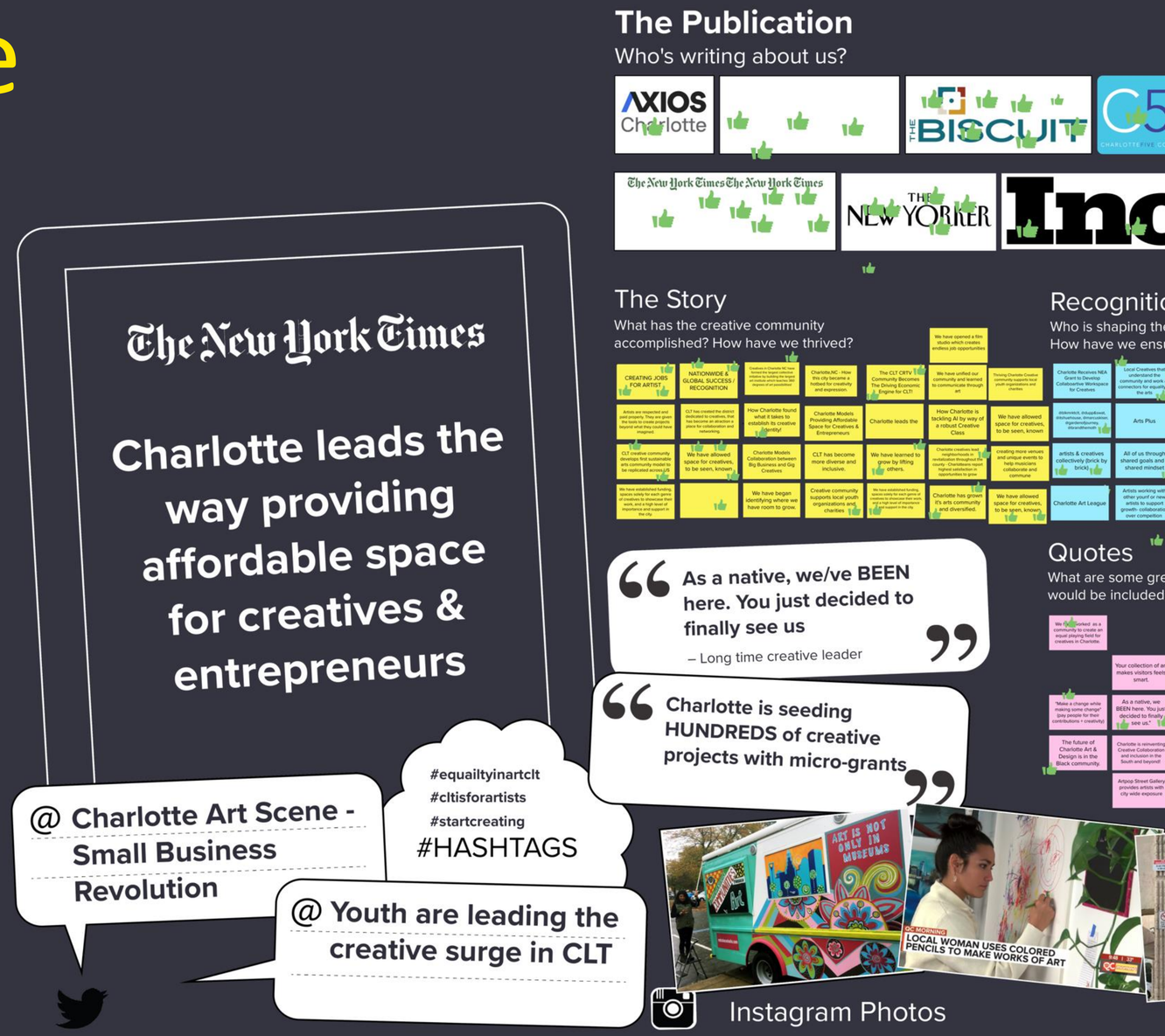
1. Imagining the Future
2. Diagnosing Current Challenges
3. Crafting Guiding Principles

Imagining the Future

Leaders were asked to imagine that 5 years from now the Charlotte creative community is being featured in publications because we successfully built a thriving, equitable ecosystem for creatives.

What did the headlines say about our successes within the creative community?

View the exercise



Imagining the Future

What has the creative community accomplished?

- Creating jobs for artist
- Nationwide & global success / recognition
- Creatives in charlotte NC have formed the largest collective initiative by building the largest art institute which teaches 360 degrees of art possibilities!
- Charlotte,nc - how this city became a hotbed for creativity and expression.
- The CLT CRTV community becomes the driving economic engine for CLT!
- Artists are respected and paid properly. They are given the tools to create projects beyond what they could have imagined.
- CLT has created the district dedicated to creatives, that has become an atraction a place for collaboration and networking.
- How Charlotte found what it takes to establish its creative identity!
- Charlotte Models Providing Affordable Space for Creatives & Entrepreneurs
- Charlotte leads the market
- We have allowed space for creatives, to be seen, known
- Charlotte Models Collaboration between Big Business and Gig Creatives
- CLT has become more diverse and inclusive.
- We have learned to grow by lifting others.
- Charlotte creatives lead neighborhoods in revitalization throughout the county - Charlotteans report highest satisfaction in opportunities to grow
- Creative community supports local youth organizations and charities
- We have established funding, spaces solely for each genre of creatives to showcase their work, and a high level of importance and support in the city.
- Charlotte has grown it's arts community and diversified.
- We have allowed space for creatives, to be seen, known
- We have opened a film studio which creates endless job opportunities
- We have unified our community and learned to communicate through art
- Thriving Charlotte Creative community supports local youth organizations and charities
- How Charlotte is tackling AI by way of a robust Creative Class
- We have allowed space for creatives, to be seen, known
- creating more venues and unique events to help musicians collaborate and commune
- We have established funding, spaces solely for each genre of creatives to showcase their work, and a high level of importance and support in the city.
- CLT creative community develops first sustainable arts community model to be replicated across US
- We have began identifying where we have room to grow.

Who is shaping the creative community?

- Arts Plus
- Charlotte Receives NEA Grant to Develop Collaboartive Workspace for Creatves
- Local Creatives that understand the community and work as connectors for equality in the arts
- Charlotte Ranked best Place for Creatives to Build their Business
- NC Dance District & Project Full Out
- @blkmrktclt, @dupp&swat, @itshuehouse, @marcuskiser, @gardenofjourney, @brandthemoth
- JazzArts Charlotte
- 1. The artists themselves. 2. Charlotte is Creative 3. Arts Council 4. Foundation for the Carolinas
- Fossil Films
- Creative startups and tech world that works towards highlighting the artists and promoting their work
- Grindhaus Studios
- @saint.eido , @itshuehouse
- 9189 Art Gallery
- Music Everywhere CLT, BPA, ASC, Evening Muse, Tosco Music
- Charlotte creative Carla Aaron Lopez, first noted for the Local Street pop up, elected mayor of Charlotte, a clear indication of the creative leadership charlotte has embraced!
- ASC, Camp North End, Ctr City Ptnrs, CLT is Creative, C3Lab, galleries, and Individuals--SO MANY! John Love, Jr., Ruth Ava Lyons and Paul Sires (back in the day), I can go on and on...
- @cltshooters
- Event Organizers CLT Is Creative
- Black and brown creatives are leading the charge
- Local Charlotte Creative Organization recognized for its effort to bring International artists and diversify the creative landscape
- artists & creatives collectively (brick by brick)
- All of us through shared goals and a shared mindset
- Artist Unification
- Artists working with other younf or new artists to support growth-collaboration over compeition
- Charlotte Art League

What are some quotes that would be included?

- We have worked as a community to create an equal playing field for creatives in Charlotte.
- Your collection of art makes visitors feels smart.
- "There's a great amount of unrecognized creatives of color here who deserve a spotlight for their commitment to their craft."
- Empowering Future Creators
- Charlotte inspires creativity. Its one of the only cities that I can thrive as an artist.
- Charlotte seeds HUNDREDS of creative projects with micro-grants
- "Charlotte has the talent."
- I feel like I belong , I can empower and be empowered by creatives around me.
- "Make a change while making some change" (pay people for their contributions + creativity)
- As a native, we BEEN here. You just decided to finally see us."
- Charlotte finally made the right decision instead of the most profitable one
- A reimagined industry.
- Understand errors of the past so we dont repeat them
- Zoning Changes to Protexct
- The future of Charlotte Art & Design is in the Black community.
- Charlotte is reinventing Creative Collaboration and inclusion in the South and beyond!
- Tech community and art can go together, support and elevate each other.
- Artists in Charlotte are making an living wage, supporting other trades, and boosting growth and economy in our city.
- I discovered something new!
- Artpop Street Gallery provides artists with city wide exposure

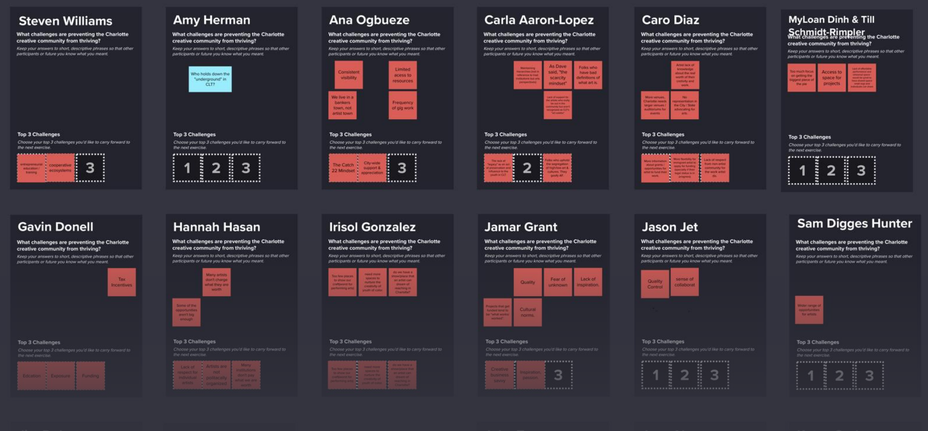
Diagnosing Current Challenges

Leaders were asked to identify the nature of the challenges they are facing – specifically, focusing on the critical issues that prevents Charlotte's creative community from thriving.

View the exercise

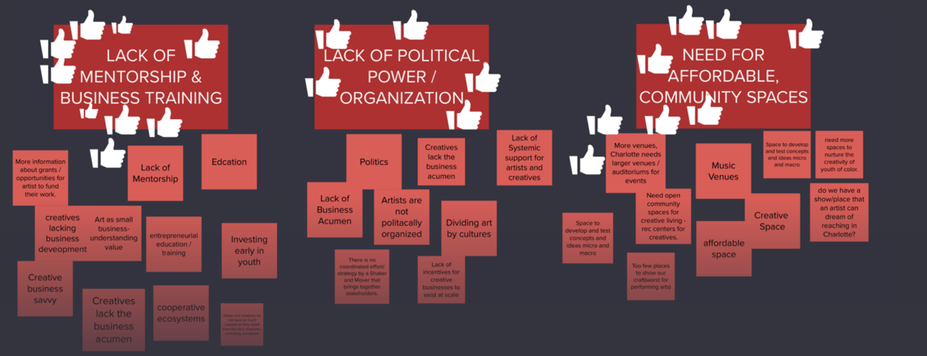
1 Individual Thoughts

Leaders worked individually to brainstorm specific challenges and then itentified their top three.

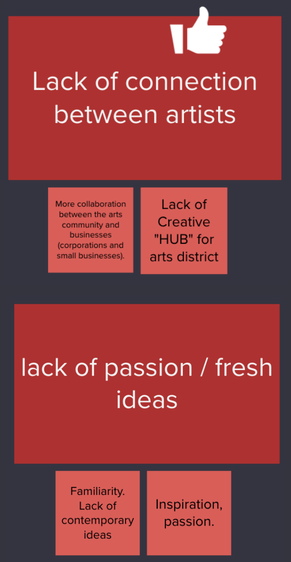


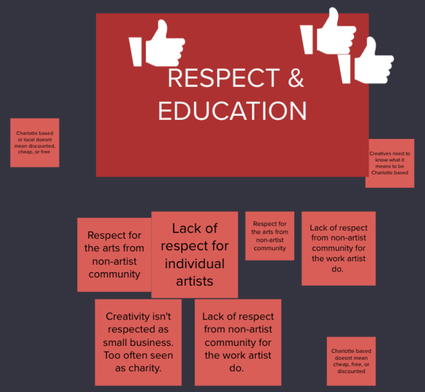
2 Group Consolidation & Prioritization

The group worked together to categorize their ideas into logical themes, then prioritized which challenges would be used to create guiding principles around.



Diagnosing Current Challenges





Crafting Guiding Principles

Leaders chose five challenges and moved into breakout discussions where each group created a series of guiding principles for the challenge they were assigned.

Top 5 Challenges

1	2	3	4	5
Lack of affordable community spaces that nurture and showcase creativity	Lack of equal and equitable opportunities that support a highly diverse community	Lack of mentorship and business training	Lack of input, influence, and organization from the broader creative community	Lack of resources and incentives which prevent the creative community from scaling
View the exercise	View the exercise	View the exercise	View the exercise	View the exercise

Other Challenges

Lack of strong marketing practices and messaging around the value of the creative community	Lack of respect for the arts and creatives from organizations	Lack of connection between creatives	Risk-averse “Old Guard” mentality that limits involvement and progress	Lack of passion and progressive ideas that inspire and drive innovation

Recommended Guiding Principles

These guiding principles are intended to act as guardrails as future decisions are made while directing energy and focusing efforts on initiatives that help the community thrive.

1 Increase access to affordable community spaces that nurture and showcase creativity

Principles

- Enable more creatives to participate in business development conversations and organization boards that are not arts centered
- Elevate the spaces that have already been established and create better accessibility to those spaces for Charlotte creatives
- Improve developers' understanding of the value that a diverse & inclusive arts community has on the city and economy at a macro and micro level

2 Embrace input, influence, and organization from the broader creative community

Principles

- Amplify the voices of the broader creative community, intentionally and consistently including smaller organizations and individual creatives
- Increase engagement with adjacent communities to ensure diverse voices are being heard
- Improve education, understanding, and programming that empowers the community to engage in the political discourse and influence decisions based on what they need, not what others think they need

3 Create and leverage resources and incentives that support the creative community in scaling their businesses/offerings

Principles

- Increase access to resources that create an inclusive ecosystem of opportunities, collaboration, networking, advocacy, and funding across all creative mediums and disciplines
- Improve incentives for larger organizations to leverage funds given to employ and engage individual creatives

Recommended Guiding Principles

These guiding principles are intended to act as guardrails as future decisions are made while directing energy and focusing efforts on initiatives that help the community thrive.

4 Establish and grow equal and equitable opportunities that support a highly diverse community

Principles

- Improve access to tools and resources based on what communities need vs what others think they need
- Enhance the sense of community by proactively including different creative disciplines to influence goals and decisions
- Improve grant structures that also include smaller organizations, immigrants, and individual creatives including the language used in grant applications
- Increase opportunities to encourage, fund and foster the arts and creative careers at younger ages (support the next generation)
- Increase opportunities for more grants that take chances on new ideas and allow creatives to stretch or test new programs/offerings

5 Create and champion mentorship and business training for creatives

Principles

- Improve and increase access and awareness to the existing mentorship and training resources
- Improve relationships between creative leaders (at all levels of growth) and key city decision makers
- Improve integration of creative leaders with key city decision makers so that creativity can be part of the DNA of the city
- Increase a culture of sharing, transparency, and support where the community can learn from each other
- Augment education efforts to include entrepreneurial support, training, and guidelines that creatives can integrate into their craft and improve their livelihoods
- Improve understanding of the importance, value and necessity of creative businesses and gig creatives

Charlotte leaders & creative stakeholders, let's shape our future together.

This deck is a summary of a four-hour community discussion convened in April 2021. An accompanying video will be available upon request. We'd love to discuss ideas expressed in the meeting in greater detail.

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