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.
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
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

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.

Creativity Feeds the Future of Work, Forrester, 2021

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?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creative Community Accomplishments</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Creating jobs for creatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nationwide &amp; global success / recognition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte羲 in Charlotte's arts community by building the largest arts &amp; culture complex within 300 miles of Charlotte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLT-QRTV community becomes the driving force for CLT!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We have unified our community and diversified.</td>
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<td>We have begun identifying where we have room to grow.</td>
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### Who is shaping the creative community?

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<td>Arts for All</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Receives NEA Grant in a Collaborative Workspace for Creatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlotte Models</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research Affordable Space for Creatives</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLT-Leads the charge</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLT absorbs more diverse and inclusive</td>
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<tr>
<td>We have learned to give by being</td>
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### What are some quotes that would be included?

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<td>We have worked as a community to become an emerging leader in the arts world.</td>
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<td>There's a great amount of creative potential in Charlotte, and we want to ensure that our city is a destination for artists and creatives.</td>
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<td>Charlotte is a place where people can come together and support each other.</td>
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<td>Artists in Charlotte are making an living.</td>
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**Note:** The text is a representation of the contents extracted from the image. It is not an exact transcription but a natural reading of the information presented in the image.
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.

1. Individual Thoughts
Leaders worked individually to brainstorm specific challenges and then identified 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

Lack of Mentorship & Business Training
- Perceived value to the community
- Lack of strong marketing / messaging
- Lack of business acumen
- Lack of political support / organization
- Lack of networking

Lack of Political Power / Organization
- Creative business savvy
- Art as social activism
- Creative industries development
- Education
- Investment in youth

Need for Affordable, Community Spaces
- More venues, lower rent, larger spaces / audiences for artists
- Music venues
- Creative space
- Affordable space

Resources
- Lack of corporate support
- Lack of funding
- Lack of exposure
- Lack of passion / fresh ideas

Respect & Education
- Lack of education for the arts
- Lack of respect for individual artists
- Lack of support for the arts district

Equality / Equitable Opportunities, Support for Diversity
- Lack of support for women of color in the arts
- Equality and diversity in the arts

"Old guard" mentality
- Old habits, lack of innovation
- The culture of the arts sector
- Frustrations with the current state of the arts sector
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. Lack of affordable community spaces that nurture and showcase creativity
2. Lack of equal and equitable opportunities that support a highly diverse community
3. Lack of mentorship and business training
4. Lack of input, influence, and organization from the broader creative community
5. Lack of resources and incentives which prevent the creative community from scaling

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

- 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

- 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/offering

- 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.