



OFFICE OF ARTS & CULTURE
SEATTLE

December 7, 2020

Over the course of the past 30 days, the public has had the opportunity to comment on the proposed creation of a new City-chartered public development authority (PDA), known as the **Cultural Space Agency**.

A group of community members presented an application to the Mayor's Office (linked [here](#)) and the Mayor now has the option of granting and issuing the new organization's charter.

What follows is a wrap-up of the feedback the City received throughout this comment period.

The feedback was unanimously positive. There seems to be great excitement for the creation of the new PDA, reflected both through the formal input received, and through a monitoring of comments on social media, and through coverage in the mainstream media.

Representative comments:

"I am writing to **urge approval** of the charter for the Cultural Space PDA. Global, national and local crises have converged this year to further exacerbate racial and social inequities... The Cultural Space PDA will be a **vehicle for grass roots investment**."

"The Cultural Space Agency creates a tangible local tool and national model to **transform structural racism** within the public realm."

"This PDA is the only way that Seattle can turn back the clock... It is a **tremendous start** to make up for the shameful status of our **beautiful city**."

"The **Capitol Hill Arts District**... offers our unequivocal support for the creation and abundant funding of a Cultural Space Agency in Seattle... We endorse and encourage the Agency to focus on equitable investments in communities of color and the community ownership of cultural space."

"The Central District was **once a hotbed** of culture, actors, artists, musicians, fine artists, spoken word... Bring that culture back to the CD. **This project is the perfect fit**."

"This entity is an **overdue and desperately needed** mechanism to help preserve and create cultural community spaces – which have been and continue to bear the brunt of

Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor | Randy Engstrom, Director

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displacement and disappearance in our rapidly gentrifying city... This new structure has the potential to be **extremely helpful** to the CID community.”

“...It will offer a model for other cities to follow on of how **government**, the independent sector, **philanthropy** and social **impact investing** can collaboratively support the artistic and **creative heart and soul of a city.**”

“Please approve and fund the creation of the Cultural Space Public Development Authority. **Seattle needs it!!!**”

“It is a start to fix our core... Artistically... Consciously... And **build back community** with trust and hard work... This will start to unite us and **bring hope back** to all.”

“My neighborhood is becoming **more gentrified by the day** and I really hope the city works to keep spaces affordable for BIPOC cultural institutions and retail spaces so they are **not all pushed out.**”

“This looks like a **great idea** to help build community and preserve the art that is already there!”

“That's **awesome!!** Glad to see the city stepping in and **trying something interesting.**”

“This is really interesting. **We're finally doing right.** I'll keep an eye on this.”

“Step in the **right direction**, I hope!”

“During the pandemic, it seems **smart to work on these sorts of projects.**”

“While I and thousands of my fellow Seattleites participate in making music together every year, there is an **unfortunate lack of appropriate spaces** in which to present our art.”

“A mid-sized concert hall would **benefit the city of Seattle and its citizens in countless ways**, and we hope that with the formation of this new public development authority, this dream might come **one step closer to being realized.**”

“Thank you for making this happen. **It is the just and right thing to do.**”

“**This is the kind of thing real cities do...**”

Full text of commentary received during 30-day public comment period

(This appendix does not include social media comments, some of which are excerpted above)

From: Cassie Chinn <cchinn@wingluke.org>
Sent: Tuesday, November 17, 2020 4:27 PM
To: ART_Arts_and_Culture <Arts.Culture@seattle.gov>
Subject: Cultural Space PDA comment

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you for this opportunity to provide public comment on the proposed Cultural Space Agency PDA (CSA). As a member of the Seattle Arts Commission (SAC) and co-chair of its Facilities and Equitable Development (FED) Committee, it has been an honor to help steward its development over the last 5+ years.

The SAC and FED center racial equity as a core value for our work and have partnered with the Office of Arts and Culture not only to ensure that a racial equity toolkit was implemented as part of the CSA's initial conception with robust community engagement in iterative processes through the Build Art Space Equitably cohort, but also to embed racial equity values as an ongoing foundation for the CSA itself. Through its governance structure and decision-making processes and its accountability to historically marginalized communities through its Constituency, the CSA creates a tangible local tool and national model to transform structural racism within the public realm.

Thank you to the leadership of the City for the creation of the CSA, support for its early years of development and capacity building, and future partnership opportunities to come.

Sincerely,
Cassie Chinn

Cassie Chinn | Deputy Executive Director
Wing Luke Museum of the Asian Pacific American Experience
719 S. King St. Seattle, WA 98104
p 206.623.5124 x131 | f 206.623.4559
wingluke.org

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From: lisa erickson <lisaruth.erickson@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, November 15, 2020 9:36 PM
To: ART_Arts_and_Culture <Arts.Culture@seattle.gov>
Subject: Cultural Space PDA comment"

This pda is the only way that Seattle can turn back the clock
It is a tremendous start to make up for the shameful status of our beautiful city.
It Is a start to fix our core ...
Artistically ...
Consciously ...
And build back community
With trust

And hard work
this will start to unite us and bring hope back to all

Thank you for making this happen
It is the just and right thing to do

Peace and love

Lisaruthericksondesigns
Equinox studios
6555 5th ave south
Seattle wa 98108

206.679.5810

Hilary says
[November 10, 2020 at 8:25 pm](#)

Will this new structure be helpful to your community? Yes

Is cultural space important to the development and the protection of your neighborhood?
ABSOLUTELY. My neighborhood is becoming more gentrified by the day and I really hope the city works to keep spaces affordable for BIPOC cultural institutions and retail spaces so they are not all pushed out.

What projects would you like to see supported? Arts and culture spaces, immigrant + owned restaurants and retail

How could your community, your neighborhood, your organization, connect to this new entity?
Tbd

[Chris](#) says
[November 11, 2020 at 11:44 pm](#)

This looks like a great idea to help build community and preserve the art that is already there!

During the pandemic, it seems smart to work on these sorts of projects.

From: William White <wwhite@osscs.org>
Sent: Thursday, November 19, 2020 4:20 PM
To: ART_Arts_and_Culture <Arts.Culture@seattle.gov>
Cc: Jim Hattori <jhattori@comcast.net>
Subject: Cultural Space PDA comment

To Mayor Durkan, Ms. Martinez Simmons, and the Seattle Office of Arts & Culture:

I write in support of the charter to create the Cultural Space Agency.

As the music director of Orchestra Seattle and the Seattle Chamber Singers, I can personally attest to the vitality and ingenuity of Seattle's performing arts scene. As you know, the arts are one of the city's economic engines, and the performing arts in particular engage an admirably large proportion of the city's residents. Seattle is endowed with an abundance of orchestras, bands, and choruses; the Greater Seattle Choral Consortium boasts 92 member ensembles and Live Music Project lists 38 orchestras in our region; it would be hard to count accurately just how many chamber music ensembles are active.

These groups are comprised of people from all walks of life, from professional musicians to students to school teachers to medical personnel to engineers to civil servants. Playing and singing in these groups knits them together as a community, and they are among the most engaged, passionate, and thoughtful citizens you will ever meet.

But while I and thousands of my fellow Seattleites participate in making music together every year, there is an unfortunate lack of appropriate spaces in which to present our art. The city has only two spaces appropriate to concert music: Benaroya Hall in downtown Seattle and Meany Hall on the campus of the University of Washington Campus.

These are excellent facilities, but financial and schedule constraints put their use far out of reach of the grand majority of Seattle's classical music organizations.

A mid-sized concert hall would benefit the city of Seattle and its citizens in countless ways, and we hope that with the formation of this new public development authority, this dream might come one step closer to being realized.

With thanks for your consideration,

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William White
Music Director & Principal Conductor
Orchestra Seattle | Seattle Chamber Singers
c 847-651-5055
www.osschs.org

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From: John Kirschenbaum <jnkbaum@gmail.com>
Sent: Wednesday, December 2, 2020 5:19 AM
To: ART_Arts_and_Culture <Arts.Culture@seattle.gov>
Subject: Cultural Space PDA comment

I am writing to urge approval of the charter for the Cultural Space PDA. Global, national and local crises have converged this year to further exacerbate racial and social inequities. Political leadership at city, state and national levels is important but subject to election cycles. Grass roots, community focused investment is a permanent way to address those inequities. The Cultural Space PDA will be a vehicle for grass roots investment.

Thank you,
John Kirschenbaum
206 550 9722

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Ruby Holland <keepyourhabitat@gmail.com>
Thu 11/12/2020 1:42 PM

To: Richter, Matthew

Hi Mathew, I'm answering the letter that you recently sent. You mentioned that we could recommend projects that we'd like to see supported. I would like to recommend Wa Na Wari at 911 24th Ave. in the CD. This is the home of Inye Wakoma that has been repurposed as an art space with rotating exhibits by local and regional artists. The CD was once a hotbed of culture, actors, artists, musicians, fine artists, spoken word. Inye is attempting to bring that culture back to the CD. This project is the perfect fit for BASE, in my humble opinion. Please check it out. You can Google it. Thanks, Mathew, Ruby Holland

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December 6, 2020

RE: Cultural Space Agency Feedback

Dear Mayor Durkan and Mr. Engstrom,

The Capitol Hill Arts District Steering Committee, comprised of community members and leaders of arts organizations alike, offer our unequivocal support for the creation and abundant funding of a Cultural Space Agency in Seattle. The value of such an institution extends beyond the preservation of existing arts space to the durability of our communities and the focus on placemaking within them. We endorse and encourage the Agency to focus on equitable investments in communities of color and the community ownership of cultural space.

In our neighborhood and across Seattle, we have witnessed a phenomenon by which arts organizations lose their spaces and survive, barely, by the outstretched resources of others in our community who themselves become more vulnerable by their generosity. These moments strengthen our relationships, but they test our resilience. The loss of one space weakens others nearby; when a theater or a dance studio loses its lease, that vacancy reduces foot traffic and deactivates the environment around it.

In pursuit of this new mission **to preserve our city's cultural spaces, build community wealth, and invest in cultural communities of color**, we would like to see the following projects supported:

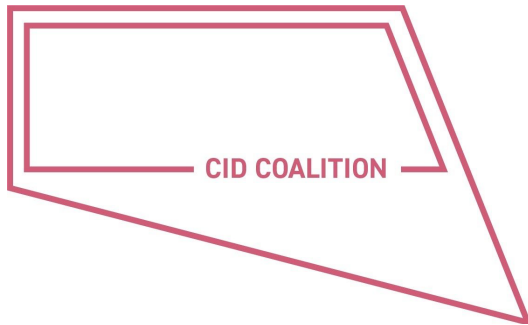
- **Capitol Hill Arts Stabilization Fund:** The [Rise Together](#) campaign is a collaboration of six partner organizations across Capitol Hill, the Central District, and White Center (Africatown Community Land Trust, Byrd Barr Place, Community Roots Housing, GenPRIDE, Southwest Youth and Family Services, and White Center Community Development Association) to raise funds for seven community-driven equitable development projects. With a goal of \$1 Million, [Capitol Hill Arts Stabilization Fund](#) will provide seed funding for Community Roots Housing to purchase arts space, keeping rents affordable and ensuring that presenting arts organizations remain on Capitol Hill for decades to come.
- **Commercial space at Photographic Center Northwest:** A potential ground floor master lease or ownership of roughly 4,000 square feet of commercial space within the upcoming development at [Photographic Center Northwest](#) in the Central District.

The Capitol Hill Arts District is a coalition of arts advocates galvanized to keep the neighborhood a thriving art scene invested in the creation of daring work, independent artists, and emerging ideas. We promote cultural engagement, harness resources, and preserve, enhance, and create space for artists and the arts. We look forward to furthering our partnership with the Seattle Office of Arts and Culture to advance equity and opportunity for artists and arts organizations in Seattle.

Sincerely,

The Capitol Hill Arts District Steering Committee





December 7, 2020

Dear Seattle Office of Arts & Culture and Seattle City Councilmembers –

Thank you for facilitating the establishment of this new Cultural Space Agency. The Chinatown-International District (CID) Coalition aka Humbows Not Hotels believes this entity is an overdue and desperately needed mechanism to help preserve and create cultural community spaces – which have been and continue to bear the brunt of displacement and disappearance in our rapidly gentrifying city.

The CID Coalition believes this new structure has the potential to be extremely helpful to the CID community. The CID Coalition was formed in 2017 to respond to heightened gentrification, displacement and unaffordable developments that threaten to drive out small businesses and long-term tenants and do not serve the economic, cultural, and social needs of the existing community.

Despite generations of racist and xenophobic policies and redlining, the CID continues to be an extremely rich neighborhood socially, artistically, and culturally. Thanks in part to the activism of our predecessors who sparked the CID preservation movement, the CID has been able to maintain and establish both the people and places that have nurtured this resilient community. However, we find ourselves again in need of effective tools for protection, ownership, and self-determination.

Over the past few years, the CID has seen a sharp rise in speculative development that outbids nonprofits for land and space; are far out of the price range of residents and small businesses (median income in the CID is approximately one-third of the citywide median income); fail to be culturally responsive to the needs of immigrants and BIPOC families, elders, workers, and the unsheltered; and contribute to longer-term dynamics that result in skyrocketing rents and real estate values that ultimately erode the culture, social fabric, and living legacy of the neighborhood. A [2017 study by National CAPACD](#) (Coalition for Asian Pacific American Community Development) found that 10% of low-income API families in the CID (over 350 families) were displaced between 2000 and 2014. Census data shows that between 2010 and 2017, the Asian population in the CID decreased by almost 21%; whereas the White population increased by nearly 54%. With the COVID-19 pandemic, we have also seen private developers exploit the crisis by attempting to sidestep public processes to quickly push through their developments – a clear example of “disaster gentrification.”

Some of these developments are also actively displacing legacy cultural spaces. One of these is Vibrant Cities’ proposed Jasmine development, which is displacing the historic Bush Garden restaurant, with plans to demolish its building — which holds over 100 years of Asian American, migrant and working class history. In addition to housing Bush Garden – an important cultural, community and activist hub since 1957 – the historic building has been home to ethnic clubs and speakeasies, theatre spaces, a Single Residence Occupancy Hotel and more since 1910. Bush Garden has continued to serve as a critical meeting and events space for not only the CID Coalition, but countless other grassroots groups, organizers, artists, nonprofit workers, residents, and visitors. Drag performances, experimental jazz, grassroots fundraisers, and participatory urban planning sessions are only a few of the innumerable

cultural, artistic and community-building events that have taken place at Bush Garden in just the past couple years.

While the Bush Garden small business has an opportunity to move to a new location, a community campaign has coalesced around an affirmative, alternative vision to prevent demolition and preserve the historic building (as well as build affordable housing on the adjacent lot) – in order to continue to be a home to intergenerational cultural and community spaces. While there has been great support for this vision, what is sorely needed is funds. Acquisition by the Cultural Space Agency of the Bush Garden/Elgin Hotel building to preserve, renovate, and expand its historic purpose as a cultural hub (coupled with needed housing for community members) – as opposed to being erased in favor of an inaccessible, market-rate tower – would be a crucial opportunity to support the survival and health of CID community members, organizations, and the neighborhood as a whole. Grassroots groups, artists, and cultural workers desperately need a space to continue to convene, create, and grow long-term community assets and power.

Thank you for taking the time to consider this input, and for the establishment of this Cultural Space Agency. We look forward to future conversations around opportunities to preserve and create cultural space in the CID, as well as opportunities to work together.

Sincerely,
Chinatown International District Coalition

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From: Maureen Ryan <ambystomo@gmail.com>
Sent: Thursday, December 17, 2020 8:47 PM
To: ART_Arts_and_Culture <Arts.Culture@seattle.gov>
Subject: Cultural Space PDA comment

CAUTION: External Email

Hello,

I'm writing with enthusiastic support for the creation of the Cultural Space Public Development Authority. The opportunities the Cultural Space PDA will make possible to support, maintain, and create new spaces for art, creative community, and creative economy are essential as a way for Seattle to respond to its affordability crises and the disproportionate effects of this on arts organizations. Meanwhile, it will offer a model for other cities to follow on of how government, the independent sector, philanthropy and social impact investing can collaboratively support the artistic and creative heart and soul of a city. The possibilities that could come into reality through the Cultural Space PDA will meaningfully support and grow arts, culture, and equity in Seattle: protecting the ability of long-standing creative pillars to remain in the city while supporting and facilitating the emergence of new and diverse spaces and communities of creative practice and offerings. Please approve and fund the creation of the Cultural Space Public Development Authority. Seattle needs it!!!

Sincerely,

Maureen Ryan
Seattle resident