



ARLINGTON COUNTY, VIRGINIA  
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMISSION  
1100 NORTH GLEBE ROAD, #1500  
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA 22201  
(703) 228-0808 • FAX (703) 228-0805



February 13, 2019

The Honorable Christian Dorsey, Chair  
Arlington County Board  
2100 Clarendon Boulevard, Suite 300  
Arlington, Virginia 22201

RE: Arlington Commission for the Arts 2018 Annual Report

Dear Chair Dorsey,

It is with great pleasure that I submit this 2018 Annual Report to the Arlington County Board on behalf of the Arlington Commission for the Arts (ACA).

As you are aware, the ACA is governed by the *Arlington County Policy for the Support of Arts Organizations and Artists (Policy)*, which was adopted by the County Board in 1990. This policy recognizes the important role that cultural activities play in determining quality of life and expresses in the following goals:

1. To create a climate within the County that is conducive to the growth and development of Arlington's artists and arts organizations through public and private support.
2. To foster the development of excellence and diversity in the arts insuring that a varied program of cultural activities is available to satisfy the interests of Arlington's citizens.
3. To guarantee to all artists and arts organizations an open and fair policy which assures equal access to County arts resources.
4. To encourage development of a public/private partnership in support of the arts.

As stated in the Commission's Charter, adopted July 24, 2014, the duties of the ACA include assisting the County in the development of cultural policy; undertaking the responsibilities allocated to it in the *Policy* -- which includes distributing County resources available to Arlington artists and cultural organizations for facilities, financial support, administrative services and technical support. In addition, and importantly, the Charter explicitly highlights that it is ACA's responsibility to keep County and community leadership apprised of issues and actions regarding the development of cultural policy; support Arlington's artists, arts organizations and programs; and continue the growth and development of the cultural life of the County.

## Key Accomplishments for 2018

1. **Adoption of *A Framework for Arlington's Cultural Spaces*** -- To address one of the high priorities in *Enriching Lives: Arlington Arts and Culture Strategy*, the Commission established a Cultural Facilities Task Force, charged with developing a framework to help Arlington plan for, invest in, and manage existing and future cultural spaces and facilities to meet changing Arlington community needs.

The Task Force -- comprising members of the Arts Commission, the Economic Development Commission, and the community -- inventoried existing cultural spaces in Arlington, convened community members to shape a vision for cultural spaces, elucidated guiding principles to achieve the vision, and recommended next steps for prioritizing future cultural spaces and facilities.

Key concerns about cultural spaces in Arlington that surfaced during the Task Force's work include:

- In Arlington, it is difficult to cluster cultural spaces or activities that allow for an "official" destination or "night-out" experience.
- Many locations are spread throughout the County, without adequate signage or visibility.
- Limited funds, growing pressure on land use, and competing priorities has meant that it has become difficult to invest in new, dedicated cultural facilities, resulting in the perception that Arlington has lost its commitment to this work.
- The location of many performance spaces in public schools has created limitations on programming, access, and expected amenities.

The following Vision Statement emerged from community discussion and listening sessions:

*We envision a diverse and inclusive community with an imaginative array of spaces and places that enable a full range of arts and cultural activity for creation, presentation, enjoyment, and education.*

The Guiding Principles for future planning and decision making include affirming the value of cultural spaces to community vitality; leveraging the location of these spaces to strengthen and enhance neighborhoods, community gathering places, and commercial areas; providing equitable access to cultural spaces; and linking these spaces to the County's economic realities and requirements.

This Framework's documentation, research, and community input should serve as a useful foundation for evaluating future investment in new or repurposed cultural spaces. Accordingly, the Task Force suggests the following priorities and next steps:

- Keep the process going.
- Cultivate and grow stakeholder involvement.
- Conduct a true needs and demand study.
- Elevate cultural activities and spaces in the county's planning discussion.
- Responsibly plan for what is needed.

2. **FY 2019 Arts Grants Recommendations** – The Commission received 43 grant applications for FY 2019. Of the \$215,810 available for distribution, the Commission recommended that two Individual Artists receive grants of \$5,000 each. The Commission also recommended that 15 organizations be awarded Projects Grants totaling \$205,810 and that 17 organizations be awarded Space and Services Grants. In making its decisions and recommendations, the Commission followed the guidelines outlined in the *Policy* and oversaw a fair and comprehensive process for the distribution of the County's arts grants resources.

## Activities in 2018

The Arlington Commission for the Arts held 11 regular meetings in 2018. Topics discussed at meetings included the changing dynamics of providing arts and culture services in Arlington, communication about and implementation of strategies in *Enriching Lives*, as well as reviews and approvals associated with various Public Art projects. Marsha Semmel served as Chair and Tina Worden served as Vice Chair.

The work of ACA was organized around five committees -- Executive Committee, Grants Program and Grants Review Committees, Strategy/Engagement Committee and Public Art Committee – as well as four task forces – Cultural Facilities Task Force, Youth Ambassador Task Force, County Fair Task Force and Cultural Equity Task Force. Arts Commission members also served on other county-wide efforts including the Four Mile Run Valley Plan and the Public Spaces Master Plan (POPS). Public outreach activities included participation in the Arlington County Fair and serving on the Crystal City Steering Committee.

In 2018, official correspondence with the County Board included expressed support for an arts and Industry district as a component of the Four Mile Run Valley Plan, and a request to reconsider proposed funding reductions for AIM.

## Looking Forward

For 2019, the Arlington Commission for the Arts has formulated a work plan that will focus on:

1. Advancing general principles and recommendations from CFTF report to stakeholders and County Board;
2. Continuing to communicate and collaborate with stakeholders, including other County Commissions, about fulfilling the goals of the *Enriching Lives* strategy;
3. Participating in the Technical Advisory Panel to develop alternative recommendations for arts and industrial district in 4MRV;
4. Identifying areas and actions to address cultural equity in the arts and holding Cultural Equity Training for Commissioners and staff;
5. Developing and advancing Public/Private Partnerships to enhance arts programming and commerce;
6. Continuing to support CAD's efforts to build capacity in Arlington Arts Organizations;
7. Increasing the visibility of ACA members at arts and community events, exhibits and programs;
8. Expanding conversations at Commission meetings by inviting outside experts and arts leaders to inform the Commission on issues and opportunities that affect arts and culture in Arlington;
9. Refining the Arts Grants Program to align with the *Enriching Lives* strategy; and,
10. Continuing to listen to our community (including artists, arts groups, cultural groups, and community members) about their visions for the arts and culture in Arlington.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide you with the 2018 Arlington Commission for the Arts Annual Report.

Respectfully,

*Marsha Semmel*

Marsha Semmel  
Chair, Arlington Commission for the Arts

cc: Arlington County Board Members  
M. Schwartz  
S. Flanagan-Watson  
V. Hoskins