

## Executive Summary

### A Framework for Arlington's Cultural Spaces

In 2016, the Arlington Commission for the Arts launched a broad and collaborative community effort that resulted in *Enriching Lives: Arlington Arts and Culture Strategy*, which was adopted by the Commission in 2017. To address one of the high priorities in the 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.

The full report can be found on <https://commissions.arlingtonva.us/commission-arts/>.