

Community Observations: Strengthening Leadership

The following is a synthesis of a group process at a community meeting held at the Hayti Heritage Center on June 17, 2003 as part of the Durham Cultural Master Planning process. It was attended by over 110 people. Participants were able to comment on a series of seven issue areas that had been identified by the DCMP Steering Committee. We are eager to hear your reactions to these observations. In particular:

- 1. Do you agree with these observations?*
- 2. Do you feel that there are any inaccuracies?*
- 3. Is there anything missing that should be added?*

Please review this document and send any comments you may have to mdemott@durhamarts.org

Thank you.

There was much discussion in this group about downtown development, the growth of cultural organizations, artists' needs, and other topics that are indirectly related to leadership. Those comments have been integrated into the other papers and the comments reported below were those specifically connected to developing and strengthening leadership.

- There was a sense that the existing mechanisms for **developing and informing civic leaders** in Durham don't provide an adequate grounding in the range and importance of arts and culture in the City and County.
- Leadership programs such as "Leadership Durham" were seen as **elitist** and not available to the broader community. There was a sense that it is important to include the average "Joe" or "Jane" in this planning process.
- It is important to understand the **current level of leadership** and how supportive of arts and culture civic leaders are. Perhaps the cultural plan can provide some information on this. And while we want to be inclusive and not elitist, it probably would be wise to engage Leadership Durham. We also need to encourage local businesses to buy into the community and develop a greater sense of ownership about Durham.
- We need better and **more inclusive dialogue**. We need more representatives from the various communities to speak together – across racial and ethnic lines and including corporate and government leaders as well.

- Often politicians make promises or sound supportive of arts and culture while they're campaigning. We need to develop a mechanism (perhaps a forum at DAC or Hayti) so that individuals running for local office can be **quizzed about their stand on issues relating to arts and culture**. And we need to keep a scorecard for elected officials to hold them accountable for what they supported in order to get elected.
- Better **publicity** about arts and culture will help. Durham's civic leadership will be stronger on arts and culture when residents make it a priority. If arts programs are brought to schools and churches, familiarizing more people with what's going on, that will help.
- We need to create **new leadership** or better inform our existing leaders on the ways that arts and culture can further the civic agenda – bring more visitors to our downtown, serve our school children, etc.
- It is also important to **strengthen the leadership within the cultural sector**. There are many leadership training programs at the region's colleges and universities. Duke has an excellent continuing education course in nonprofit management could be of value to build leadership in the cultural sector.