

## **Community Observations: Building Cultural Audiences**

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*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](mailto:mdemott@durhamarts.org)*

*Thank you.*

- This is a very broad topic – audiences for what? It depends on the type of cultural program, where it's held, what age group is targeted, etc. If we are looking broadly, we need to include churches and schools since so much cultural activity goes on there. There is also great interest in family-oriented events and activities with a range of options for people of all ages.
- Yet while cultural activity in Durham is broad, it is not deep. There's lots going on but people are not always aware of everything that is available. And the interest in much of what is available can be relatively light.
- There is not much going on in Durham that is of interest to young people (perhaps in the Triangle but not Durham). People from 18 to 35 years of age find the range of what is offered "boring."
- People are looking for more clubs, more opportunities to experience culture in informal settings. To support that, better transportation would be required, for example buses running at night for home-bound visitors.
- There is an interest in world music and ethnic art and folk culture reflecting the populations that currently live in Durham as well as throughout the Triangle.
- Cost is a significant barrier and we need to figure out a way to address this through subsidies, free or discounted tickets or some other mechanism along with an effective system to distribute them.

- We need to develop Durham as a “cultural hub” with a sufficient amount of activity to make a trip to downtown Durham appealing. Developing consistent levels of activity that are scheduled consistently will also help to build audiences. We need groups to coordinate their scheduling of events. A master calendar of events that goes out well in advance would be very helpful as well.
- Keep in mind that our audiences will be from throughout the Triangle but that we need to build local audiences as well.
- We need a major jazz festival. In general, it would be great to have one major event rather than 3 or 4 smaller ones.
- To make the downtown more effective as a destination for arts and entertainment, we need better parking. We also need a more effective way for people to get information about what’s going on.
- Young people often make last-minute decisions so having a way to get the word out is important. We need to include the entertainment interests of young people in this plan – “hip hop” is not historically included in most definitions of culture and that leaves out many young people, not just African Americans.
- We need to figure out how to get the attention of students at local colleges and universities – develop activities in Durham that appeal to them. It is problematic that young people are less exposed to arts in school which makes it harder to build youth audiences.
- We need to cross market cultural events with other non-cultural activities at various venues. People tend to be myopic in support of “their” cultural organizations and don’t “see” other arts groups. We need to help break down those barriers.
- We need a mix of venues, not just the Carolina Theatre. We must take advantage of churches, schools, parks, a wide range of opportunities to experience arts and culture.
- Another barrier is child-care. If it is possible to arrange child care at the venue, that would be helpful. If it were free, that would be even better.
- Downtown as a cultural destination: local businesses can post information on cultural activities in their windows. Develop kiosks or a staffed ticket and information center. The perception that there is crime downtown is a barrier to attendance. Traffic patterns are also a barrier – people should be encouraged to use mass transit. We need more walkable sidewalks (like Ninth and Broad in Hillsborough).