



Atlanta Regional Commission

**COMMUNITY
ENGAGEMENT
& ARTS
2021**

ANNUAL REPORT

**THE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ARTS TEAM
WAS FORMED IN 2021 TO AMPLIFY ARTS &
CULTURE WITHIN THE PROGRAMS, PRACTICES &
POLICIES OF THE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
GROUP AT THE ARC.**

**THROUGHOUT THIS YEAR, WE'VE DEFINED, THEN
REFINED, OUR MISSION AS A TEAM...**

DECEMBER 2020:

to engage historically excluded and marginalized communities using arts and culture strategies intentionally co-designed with community circumstances, needs, and desires in mind.

JANUARY 2021:

to reimagine and ultimately center community engagement within the ARC's Community Development Group by experimenting with/modeling/piloting the integration of arts and culture into our programs, practices, and policies (and opportunities) leading with historically and persistently/presently marginalized and excluded communities, narratives, and social and cultural practices so that community outcomes and quality of life improve.

OCTOBER 2021:

to reimagine community engagement within the ARC's Community Development Group by embedding arts and culture within our programs, practices, policies, and opportunities with Black and Indigenous communities and communities of color that have been historically marginalized and excluded to improve community outcomes and quality of life.

AS A NEWLY FORMED TEAM, WE HAD A FEW MORE STATEMENTS TO THINK THROUGH...

VISION:

Communities in the Atlanta region that have been historically and systemically marginalized and excluded are centered and supported as partners and co-creators in the planning process to express and fulfill their ideas and desires through their own social, artistic, and cultural practices.

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT:

The Community Engagement and Arts team acknowledges that we live and work upon the ancestral lands of Indigenous peoples, including the Cherokee and Muskogee, from which the political entities comprising what is the present-day Atlanta region were established through acts of land dispossession and forced removals.

Much of this region's culture, economic growth, and development would not exist without the forced labor of enslaved Africans, and the wounds caused by centuries of enslavement and white supremacy persist through today.

We commit to reparative practices including, but not limited to, dismantling any inequities within our policies, systems, programs, and services; centering the people, knowledge, cultures, practices, traditions, and values of Black and Indigenous people, and communities of color; amplifying, collaborating, compensating, and advocating for the artistic, social, cultural, and economic endeavors of these communities; and directing access, resources, and power through our work toward these communities.

WE CRAFTED A SET OF VALUES THAT WE REFLECTED ON WITH EVERY MOVE...

☆ EQUITY & JUSTICE

Through our community engagement and arts and culture work, we commit to advancing social, cultural, economic, and environmental equity and justice for, by, and with people, especially artists and culture bearers, and organizations from vulnerable and under-served communities.

☆ COLLABORATION & CO-DESIGN

We affirm the knowledge, power, and joy within the communities we serve. We seek specifically to collaborate with communities that planning has historically and systemically excluded and often harmed by practicing the mindsets, methods, and conditions of co-design.

☆ CURIOSITY & COURAGE

We commit to taking risks, embracing curiosity and imagination, and acting with courage and resolve to navigate constant complexity and occasional conflict while challenging an inequitable and unsustainable status quo.

☆ REFLEXIVITY

We acknowledge our positionality, privilege, and power as employees in a regional planning agency tasked with designing and managing programs and policies that influence community decisions and outcomes. We commit to transparency and accountability, questioning our assumptions, and evaluating ourselves and our actions.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & ARTS PROPOSED STEPS TO SUCCESS

STEP 1 RESOURCE

Identify Internal Capacity
Redesign Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta (ALMA) program
Hire Intern with Arts and Design Background

STEP 2 RESEARCH

Research Case Studies & Best Practices
Define Mission, Vision & Values
Develop Equity Statement
Craft Land Acknowledgement

STEP 3 REIMAGINE

Craft How-To Kit(s)
Apply lessons learned from ALMA to other CDG programs

STEP 4 IMPLEMENTATION

PHASE 1

ALMA 2021
Metro Atlanta Artist Survey

PHASE 2

ALMA 2021 Forum
Artist Interviews

PHASE 3

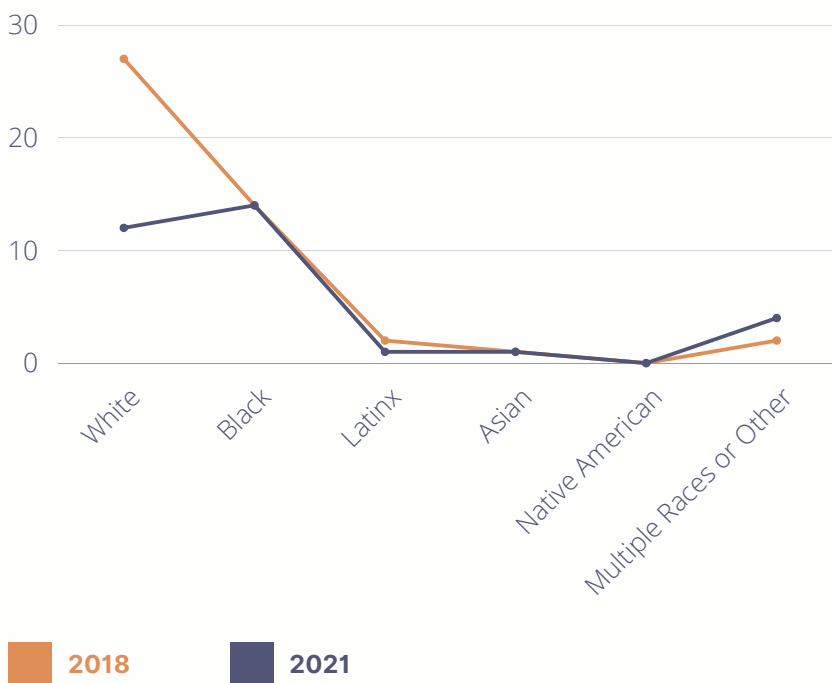
Arts in Planning Handbook
Community-Based Organization (CBO) Forum

PHASE 1

ALMA 2021

Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta (ALMA) is an annual leadership program offered by the ARC that has traditionally gathered regional arts leaders, administrators, and elected officials to learn about key issues and opportunities for the arts community. This year, we redesigned the ALMA admission process and the program itself to be more diverse and encourage cross-sector teams to develop arts-and-culture-centered proposals to address community challenges. By inviting working artists into the program and compensating them for their participation, we encouraged artist collaboration in a space where they have historically been an afterthought.

ALMA Class Demographics



We intentionally considered applicants' racial, ethnic, and gender identity in the recruitment and admission process to ensure that the class more accurately reflected the demographics represented within the region.

PHASE 1

METRO ATLANTA ARTIST SURVEY

As we launched our reimagined community outreach initiatives, we partnered with local government, planning, and arts organizations to develop the Metro Atlanta Artist Survey. The survey was created and shared via Public Input, a virtual platform with tools to curate public engagement strategies for community projects.

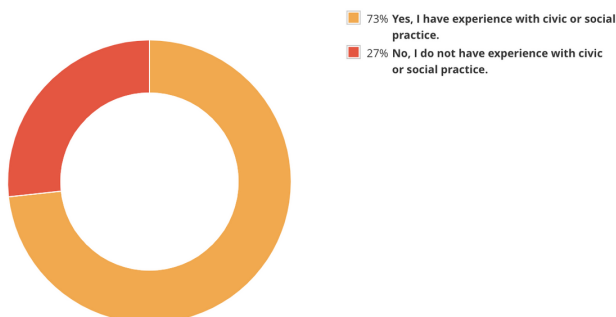
GOALS:

- Identify local artists who are experienced and interested in civic work
- Identify ways to support artists in their work in and with communities
- Create a directory of artists whom we can call upon for civic partnerships

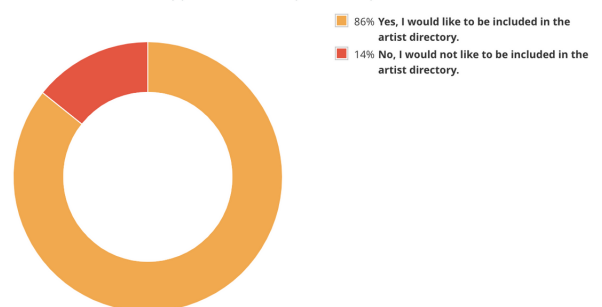
OUTCOMES:

- Discovered the range of artistic disciplines that the ARC can partner with for civic initiatives
- Identified disparities within the responses in hopes to avoid them moving forward
- A directory of 64 working artists who are experienced and interested in civic work

Do you have experience with civic or social practice?



Are you interested in being included in a directory of artists to be considered for civic art opportunities and partnerships?



PHASE 2

ARTS & CULTURE FORUM

In 2021, group projects were added to the ALMA curriculum to encourage actionable, interdisciplinary, arts-centered problem-solving. The projects considered existing initiatives and objectives of the ARC and its programs and resulted in proposals demonstrating what's possible when artists and creatives are part of the planning process from the outset: impactful work that reflects and welcomes diverse perspectives. The forum—which gathered the groups to present their project proposals—reflected goals within the ARC's Arts, Culture, and Placemaking Strategic Plan. Group project prompts were as follows:

BUS STOP CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

Inspired by an existing Livable Centers Initiative (LCI) grant, groups were challenged with the task of conceptualizing bus stop pedestrian safety and creative placemaking in Metro Atlanta neighborhoods.

ALLEYS IN TUCKER

With some guidance by the City of Tucker, and hopes to inspire their Arts in the Alleys Initiative (an ARC 2021 CDAP project), groups envisioned the integration of public art into the alleys in downtown Tucker.

A REGION REMEMBERS

In the thick of the Covid-19 pandemic, groups reflected on the question of how to memorialize an ongoing pandemic with a focus on community care and resilience.

PHASE 2

ARTIST INTERVIEWS

Analysis of the Metro Atlanta Artist Survey revealed a dramatic underrepresentation of people of color among the respondents. There was also a lack of LGBTQIA-specific data in both the data we collected and regional demographic data. Underrepresentation of these groups led us to work more closely with local artists with these identities and who have experience working in community.



Jesse Pratt Lopez
Photojournalist
Trans Housing Coalition



Taylor Alxndr
Drag Performer
SFQP



Jacque Pritz
Dancer
DanceATL



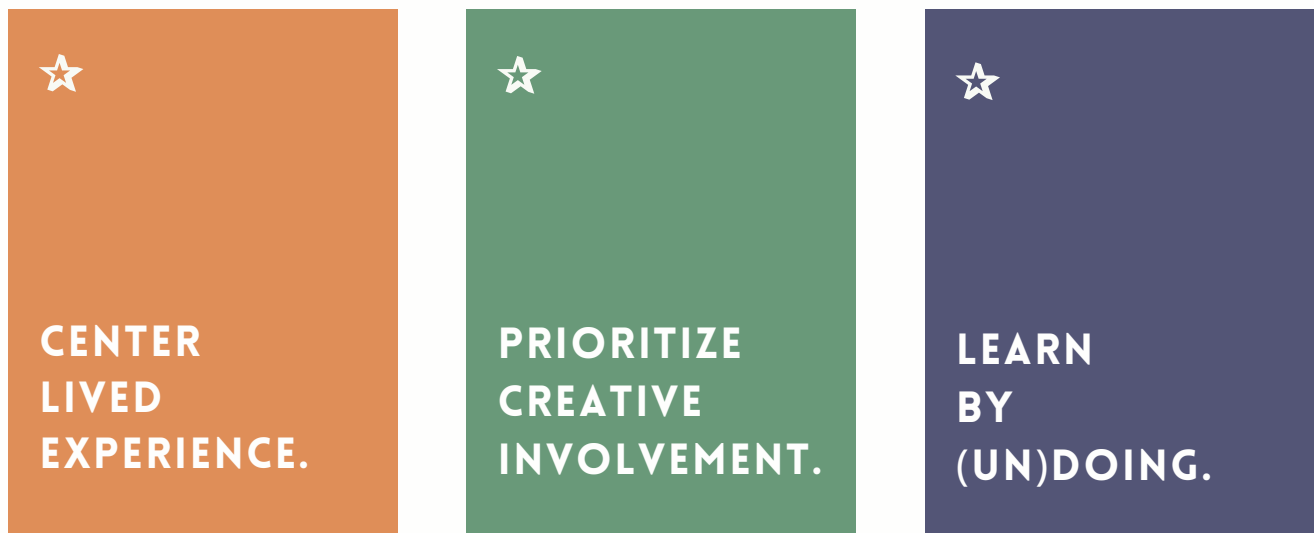
Aysha Pennerman
Visual Artist
Impactful Brush

These conversations reiterated many of the themes revealed in the survey, including a call for an emphasis on supporting marginalized people through community work. They demonstrated a need for consistent support in the form of financial backing for resources, materials, community centers, leadership, and events. They expressed that they tend to work with others with similar intersectional and marginalized identities, as there is a shared understanding of inequities and the importance of building community amongst these groups.

PHASE 3

ARTS IN PLANNING HANDBOOK

Our journey of amplifying arts and culture in community planning revealed certain principles that we consider central to taking steps toward success. Our first Arts in Planning Handbook elaborates on these principles and demonstrates how to fulfill them through exercises and case studies.



The handbook was a realization of our team's goal of creating how-to kits for collaborations between artists and planners. Originally intended to exist for multiple audiences, this version is a reflection of our own journey and includes tools for those in similar positions to do integrate arts, culture, and community into their planning processes.

Our hopes for future iterations include a handbook for artists working in civic space and for community-based organizations looking to expand their impact through the power of arts and culture.

PHASE 3

COMMUNITY BASED ORGANIZATION FORUM

In response to our research regarding the underrepresented counties and demographics within our region, we extended an invitation to community-based organizations within these areas and identities to join us for a conversation to imagine a future for their communities to thrive. This forum was created from our understanding that in order to truly be able to collaborate and co-design, especially with underserved communities, we must build strong relationships with those we hope to serve. Participating CBOs include:

Alif Institute

Arts XChange

Ballethnic

Center for Pan Asian Community Services (CPACS)

Clarkston Community Center

Latino Community Fund - Georgia

Freedom University

Global Village Project

Southview Cemetery

We Love Buford Highway

The intention of the forum was to brainstorm project ideas with these CBOs so that we could aid in bringing their ideas to fruition through our existing programs. Instead, the forum, robust with thoughtful conversations, revealed that the challenges these organizations and their communities face run deeper than a concrete project and that they are navigating a common challenge: amplifying their histories and forming a collective understanding and support for their missions.

2021

BY THE NUMBERS

from 2018-2020 vs. 2021, the racial & ethnic diversity within ALMA increased by **23%**

36 artists of color participated in ALMA as students, speakers, facilitators, jurors, etc.

118 artists of color participated across all of our programs & activities in 2021

\$13,900 paid to artists across all CEA programs & activities in 2021 (hoping to double in 2022)

\$2,500 paid to community-based organizations across all of our programs

\$37,500 budgeted to community-based organizations across all of our programs in 2022

2022

LOOKING AHEAD

ALMA

Participating community-based organizations from communities of color will be better positioned and equipped to utilize arts and culture, with artists from their own communities, to participate in and lead community planning and engagement efforts.

Working artists will learn to work more effectively with people from different backgrounds, provide insight into problem-solving in different ways, and share their perspective to help attendees see things in a holistic way.

Our team will acquire and share examples of deepening relationships with community-based organizations and how they engage, establish, and deepen relationships with their own community.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Our team will facilitate demonstrations and discussions with CDG colleagues around community engagement using examples from the ALMA class.

We will explore community engagement strategies beyond traditional surveys and increase our collection of demographic information in all forms of engagement so that we can consistently measure and improve our reach.

We will continue centering people with underrepresented communities in our work and increase our engagement with these groups. We will double engagement with QTBIPOC artists and residents and share success with our colleagues so that our work can inform their community planning from the beginning, considering the methods of engagement that are best for our most underserved communities.

We will strive to eliminate the use of jargon from all forms of our communications so that underrepresented communities can easily understand and become involved in our programs and activities.

2022

LOOKING AHEAD

CBO COHORT PROGRAM

Community-based organizations led by and serving communities of color in the Atlanta region who incorporate arts and culture traditions and practices in their work will have acquired greater knowledge and capacity to develop their community engagement and planning efforts and participate in ARC programs and projects.

CEA staff will have an opportunity to learn how to meaningfully collaborate and co-design with communities that planning has historically excluded and harmed.

1.CEA/CDG will have acquired substantive and actionable knowledge and feedback from CBOs to create/update regional policies for a more equitable and sustainable Atlanta region for the ARC and our member jurisdictions.

ARTS FORUMS (INFO FORTHCOMING)

GRATITUDE

COMMUNITY

Atlanta Regional Commission
Community Development Group

Department of City Planning

Fulton County Department of
Arts & Culture

Atlanta BeltLine

Boston MAPC

Southern Fried Queer Pride

Impactful Brush

Trans Housing Coalition

DanceATL & Emory Arts

Arts Leaders of Metro Atlanta
2021 Class

Arts & Culture Forum Participants

Design by Tatiana Bell

MEMBER(S)

Samyukth Shenbaga
Marian Liou
Josh Phillipson
Rachel Will
Tatiana Bell

Sonia Sequeira
Dorian McDuffie

Alex Francombe

Miranda Kyle

Jennifer Erickson
Annis Sengupta
Emma Boast
Daniel Koff
Claudia Zarazua

Taylor Alxndr

Aysha Pennerman

Jesse Pratt Lopez

Jacquelyn Pritz

(See pg 10)