



**TESTIMONY TO THE COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK  
Int. No. 1136 - In relation to a comprehensive cultural plan.  
November 19, 2013  
Arts & Business Council of New York**

My name is Karen Zornow Leiding and I am the Director of Arts & Business Council of New York Programs. I am testifying on behalf of my organization and on behalf of Americans for the Arts, a national arts service and research organization with offices here in New York City. I testify today in support of establishing a comprehensive cultural plan for New York. While other speakers will testify to the merits of and methods for establishing a cultural plan, my testimony will focus on providing a national perspective on this issue, and on the impact of the arts sector on the business sector.

NYC remains the cultural capital of the world, and the Office of the Mayor, the Department of Cultural Affairs, and the City Council deserve congratulations and thanks for their ongoing support of the arts. But, in accordance with the principle of *kaizen* (“always improving”), more can be done, and one of the best ways to do more is to have a comprehensive plan to sustain this vital sector of our city’s economy and quality of life.

A quick survey of the top ten municipalities in the U.S.<sup>1</sup> shows that NYC is the only one of those that does not have some sort of cultural plan. Highlights from other cities in the top ten that do have cultural plans are:

Chicago: Chicago updated its 1986 cultural plan in 2012. This plan creates a framework to guide the city’s future cultural and economic growth. The Chicago Cultural Plan is very detailed and contains a set of 10 priorities, 36 recommendations and 200+ ideas for making them a reality, within four categories: People, Places, Policies and Planning Culturally. Chicago’s proposed 2014 City budget includes a \$1.25 million investment to support initiatives of the Chicago Cultural Plan.

Since Chicago’s cultural plan<sup>2</sup> was enacted in 2012, half of its 241 Initiatives have been addressed to date. These initiatives have helped make Chicago even more tempting to tourists and improve the city livability of its residents. A few examples:

- 487 Chicago Public School (CPS) staff have been designated as Arts Liaisons, with 77% coverage in schools in the program’s first year, and 60% of CPS schools (376) have completed the Creative Schools Certification.
- An inventory of Chicago’s cultural assets<sup>3</sup> revealed over 220 dance companies, over 200 theatre companies, over 200 presenting stages, and over 225 music venues. The next phases of this project will focus on determining which visitor segments to target; and developing and testing cultural tourism promotional tactics. The study also revealed that while Chicago was highly rated in general for its arts & cultural attributes, unaided awareness of Chicago’s specific arts & culture attractions is low.

As evidence of the arts sector’s impact on a wide variety of other sectors, the 2012 Chicago Cultural Plan has been incorporated into other Chicago City plans: Chicago Technology Plan, Healthy Chicago (Public Health), and Chicago Pedestrian Plan (Transportation).

Philadelphia: In 2011, the Mayor’s Cultural Advisory Council (MCAC) created a plan<sup>4</sup> that establishes a clear set of goals, objectives and strategies to realize Philadelphia’s vision for a thriving artistic and creative community. A few of their accomplishments so far are:

- Launching the Creative Philadelphia Initiative to support creative economy efforts and create opportunities for cross-networking of artists, cultural organizations and creative businesses.
- Funding eight creative facility projects through a \$500,000 Creative Industry Workforce Grant program with funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).
- Securing \$250,000 in funds from the NEA to preserve arts jobs.
- Producing the city’s first temporary public art project, Soil Kitchen, in conjunction with the Environmental Protection Agency’s Brownfields Conference.

In New York, as in other cities, a cultural plan can assess and improve not just community *support for* the arts, but also community *benefits from* the arts. The arts strengthen sectors from education to healthcare, veterans' assistance, social services, and, of course, business, jobs, and the local economy. A cultural plan can increase both the visibility of artists and arts organizations and the larger civic community's awareness of the potential of arts and culture to contribute to community and economic development. New York's creative industries have not only contributed to the City's economic bottom line, but have also been the first footprint for economic development and neighborhood revitalization.

**The arts are good for business. Nonprofit arts and culture organizations of all sizes, in all boroughs, are proud and active members of the business community—employing people locally, purchasing goods and services within the community and creating mutually beneficial partnerships with other businesses to help them build market share, enhance their brands, reach new customers and provide valuable employee benefits.**

The economic impact of nonprofit arts organizations in New York City in 2010<sup>5</sup> was more than \$3 billion in direct spending, with over 100,000 people employed on a full-time, part-time or consultant basis (the equivalent of just under 34,000 full-time employees). Over 98.6 million people attended performances, exhibitions, classes and workshops throughout the five boroughs. Ancillary spending by these attendees on such things as drinks, meals, parking, and shopping generated additional income for local businesses.

The arts are integral to the ongoing vitality of the city. Our goal is to sustain and strengthen the arts citywide, since the arts create and support jobs, spur urban renewal, attract new businesses, draw tourism dollars, generate tax dollars, and enhance community development.

A cultural plan for New York City will chart a roadmap for continued cultural and economic growth and will become the centerpiece for sustaining NYC's reputation as a global destination for creativity, innovation and excellence in the arts. And after all, you can't score if you don't know where the goal is.

Thank you.

Karen Zornow Leiding  
Director of Arts & Business Council of New York Programs on behalf of Americans for the Arts  
1 E. 53rd St., 2nd Fl.  
New York, NY 10022  
212.279.5910 x1126  
[kzleiding@artsandbusiness-ny.org](mailto:kzleiding@artsandbusiness-ny.org)

<sup>1</sup>*Top ten U.S. cities by population in 2012: NYC, LA, Chicago, Houston, Philadelphia, Phoenix, San Antonio, San Diego, Dallas, and San Jose.* (<http://www.infoplease.com/ipa/A0763098.html>)

<sup>2</sup><https://www.cityofchicago.org/content/dam/city/depts/dca/Cultural%20Plan/CCP2012FinalExecSumm.pdf>

<sup>3</sup><http://www.choosechicago.com/articles/view/Cultural-Tourism-Newsletter-September-2013/1025/>, *Choose Chicago Cultural Tourism Benchmark Study Executive Summary*

<sup>4</sup><http://bit.ly/uhy0j5>, *Creative Philadelphia Vision Plan Executive Summary*

<sup>5</sup> *"The State of the Arts: A Summary Overview of New York City's Nonprofit Cultural Organizations, Their Strengths and Challenges,"* issued in June 2011 by the Alliance for the Arts. The figures were pulled from the Cultural Data Project reports of the 1,100 incorporated arts nonprofits who submitted them with their funding applications to the Department of Cultural Affairs. We know that statistic undercounts the number of arts organizations in NYC, as we know not all of them have filled out Cultural Data Project reports.