

The Arts as a Key Economic and Community Development Driver in the Richmond Region

Prepared for Richmond's Future

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Introduction

In 2013 the arts in the Richmond metropolitan area are thriving in artistic quality, diversity, and growth.

The expansion of the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in the last decade has transformed a good regional museum into a national treasure. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts is now the ninth largest comprehensive art museum in the country with over 33,000 items in the permanent collection. Attendance has doubled since the expansion with 630,000 visitors last year. In addition to the exhibitions in the galleries, the Museum educational programs, performances and special activities, restaurant, and gift shop draw people in. The Museum is now a bustling center of activity 365 days a year.

Virginia Commonwealth University's School of the Arts with 3100 students is one of the largest art schools in the country. The University plans to open the new Institute for Contemporary Arts in 2015 at the intersection of Belvidere and Broad Streets. This intersection is one of the busiest in the City with 32 lanes of traffic converging. Not only will the new center – designed by a world renowned architect, Steven Holl -- be an important addition to the arts scene, but it will be a major entry point for the VCU Monroe Park campus and for the western entrance to downtown Richmond.

A healthy art community includes a mix of professional organizations that provide ongoing seasons of performances or exhibitions for the public and are significant employers of artists; smaller organizations that add diversity to the arts programs for the public; and opportunities for individual artists to get their work before the public in a variety of settings. The Richmond area has this healthy mix. The large budget arts organizations include the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, the Richmond Symphony, the Richmond Ballet, Virginia Repertory Theatre, the Virginia Opera, and the Visual Arts Center. There is also a wealth of other arts organizations that have loyal audiences, employ artists, and are an important part of the overall economy of central Virginia - the Richmond Triangle Players, ART 180, Elegba Folklore Society, Henley Street Theatre, the Richmond Jazz Society, the Latin Ballet of Virginia, Richmond Shakespeare Company, and SPARC, to name a few. There are many art galleries which exhibit the work of both local and regional artists. New theatre companies and dance ensembles are created regularly. Like any small business, these new companies do not always survive. While they are in the existence, however, they provide an opportunity for actors, directors, playwrights,

dancers, and choreographers to hone their professional skills and to give the public more choices in theatre. Petersburg is home to the Petersburg Symphony, Sycamore Rouge Theatre Company, and the Petersburg Area Art League Gallery.

There exists a wide range of festivals in the area - the wildly successful Richmond Folk Festival that attracts 200,000 people to the riverfront, the Maymont Jazz Festival, the French Film Festival, 1708's InLight Festival, and the 2nd Street Festival, as well as festivals with a wide variety of performances and exhibitions of art highlighting Latin America, Greek, German, Celtic, and Native American cultures. Other major festivals within easy driving distance are the Virginia Film Festival in Charlottesville and the Virginia Arts Festival which presents performances from Williamsburg to Virginia Beach.

There is a strong creative writing community in central Virginia. Bookstores and museums host readings by local and visiting authors. The New Virginia Review and James River Writers promote these writers and their work.

The number of art galleries in Richmond continues to grow. There are concentrations of these galleries along West Main Street and on West Broad Street between Belvidere and Adams Street. Coordinated gallery openings, such as Richmond's First Fridays, are highly popular all over the country. One of the factors spurring the growth in the number and diversity of these galleries are graduates of the VCU School of the Arts. The gallery owners have transformed blocks of run-down buildings into a lively street scene of color and activity.

The avocational arts – choral societies, community theatres, and art clubs – enrich the community by providing more options for the arts audience and by allowing people who are not professional artists the opportunity to show their artistic talents.

Richmond has an active commercial music scene with the National Theatre, multiple music clubs downtown and in Shockoe Bottom, and at least ten music recording studios.

The School of the Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University has contributed significantly to the growth of the arts in central Virginia. VCU offers degrees in all of the visual and performing arts disciplines, creative writing, and film. U.S. News & World Report ranks the VCU School of the Arts as #1 in quality among U.S. public universities and the sculpture department is ranked as #1 among all U. S. universities. Approximately 30% of the students of the School of the Arts stay in Richmond after graduation, ensuring a steady influx of talented and skilled young people into the local economy. Although not of the size of the VCU School of the Arts, the University of Richmond, Virginia Union University, and Virginia State University also have strong art and music programs.

The arts facilities in central Virginia are not grouped in one location, which makes participation and attendance in the arts easier for the public and provides more venues for artists to present their work to the public. Downtown Richmond has CenterStage, the Richmond Ballet headquarters, the November Theatre at 114 West Broad Street, the Hippodrome Theatre on North Second Street, and the West Broad Street art galleries. The Manchester neighborhood has Plant Zero and the Dogtown Arts Center. VCU has the Grace Street Theatre, the Singleton Arts Center, and the Anderson Gallery. The Landmark Theatre at the edge of the VCU campus is currently under renovation. The University of Richmond is home to the Modlin Center for the Arts with a beautiful theatre and art galleries. The Cultural Arts Center in Glen Allen not only serves Henrico County but also attracts people from throughout the region. The Steward School theatre, also in Henrico County, often hosts regional arts organizations. The Scott's Addition area of the City is home to the Richmond Triangle Players, SPARC, and CultureWorks. For over 50 years the City of Richmond Parks & Recreation Department has presented an annual festival of the arts in Dogwood Dell in Byrd Park.

Many Central Virginia churches have music series for the public. Public libraries and community centers present storytellers, musicians, and literary readings.

Why the Arts Are Important to the Region

A healthy arts community is of vital importance to people who love and participate in the arts, as practitioners, audiences, volunteers, and donors. They want high quality performances and exhibitions, comfortable arts facilities, and a wide variety of content in both their favorite art form and across the multiple art forms.

However, the arts are also an important economic driver for the region, an invaluable enhancement to education, and a key factor in building a vibrant community that will attract young workers to the area and encourage families to stay in the region.

Importance of the Arts to the Region's Economy

It is a challenge to get an accurate report on the economic impact of the arts in central Virginia. The direct spending of the nonprofit arts organizations in the Richmond region funded by the Virginia Commission for the Arts, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the Richmond Folk festival is over \$30 million. However, this figure does not include spending by commercial art galleries and individual artists. The vast majority of artists, particularly those in the first half of their careers, do not work full time at their art but have one or even two other jobs in other fields. They work at advertising and design agencies, teach, or wait tables. Actors and opera singers all function as independent contractors. The Richmond Ballet and the Richmond

Symphony have full time dancers and musicians, but these performers are a small segment of the artists of central Virginia.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, among metropolitan regions of comparable size, Richmond is ranked 5th in the number of people working in the arts, design, media, and entertainment industries. As comparison, Austin ,Texas, is ranked 1st and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina, is ranked 4th in this same group of metropolitan areas.

Traditional economic impact studies have generally focused on the impact of the not-for-profit arts industry. However, actors, theatre technicians and designers routinely move back and forth between the not-for-profit arts organizations and for-profit enterprises, such as television and film, design, advertising, publishing, and recording. There is limited information nationally and no central Virginia information on the combined economic impact of the not-for-profit and the for-profit arts-related industries.

Arts facilities and arts and cultural districts have a long history of serving as anchors for downtown and neighborhood revitalization. A sizable segment of young professionals, as well as empty-nesters, like to live in areas within easy walking distance of arts and entertainment activities and restaurants. They like vibrant and appealing streetscapes.

Many communities across the country are working to build “creative clusters” of industry. Grouping both established and emerging firms in similar fields with educational institutions can create synergies and lead to faster growth. Creative industry clusters include advertising agencies, artists, artisans, designers, software game developers, architects, and interior decorators. Central Virginia with its many artists and advertising firms already has several such clusters. It is important for the economic development offices of the area local governments to pay attention to and learn about the current and future potential impact of arts and culture on the regional economy.

Central Virginia benefits in many other ways from having home-town professional arts organizations. For example, the Richmond Symphony has a core of full time musicians under contract. The musicians also teach, both in local schools and through private lessons, and form small professional ensembles, thereby raising the quality of musical education throughout the region and providing more performance options for the classical music audience. As Richmond Ballet dancers reach the end of their performance careers with the Ballet, some of them are forming new dance companies in other communities. Actors who perform at the Virginia Repertory Theatre also act in commercials for Richmond advertising agencies.

The arts also help the regional economy through cultural tourism. Cultural heritage tourism is not new (the Grand Tours of Europe began in the 16th century), but in recent years the attraction of culture, history, and the arts to travelers has received renewed attention by

tourism and local government officials. There are many benefits to cultural/heritage tourism. It is based on existing attractions and does not require major capital outlays for theme parks, golf courses, or convention/meeting facilities. Studies show that cultural/heritage tourists tend to spend more per day than other types of tourists. Local arts and cultural entities benefit from an increase in attendance, and the increase in revenue stays in the community.

The wealth and diversity of central Virginia's cultural attractions is beginning, but just beginning, to be recognized outside of the immediate area. It is a common reaction of visitors, even from such short distances as Washington, DC, to state "I had no idea how much Richmond has to offer its visitors."

The Picasso exhibit at the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts in 2011 was a major event for local cultural tourism. The Virginia Museum of Fine Arts was one of only three museums in the United States to host this traveling exhibition from the *Musee National Picasso* in Paris. Over 230,000 people from up and down the East Coast came to see the exhibit. A study by Chimura Economic & Analytics showed total spending by these exhibition visitors to be \$22,500,000 which resulted in \$354,786 in state and local tax revenues. Hotels and restaurants in the region reported increased revenues during the exhibition.

A survey of visitors to the Virginia Museum showed that over 94% of people from out-of-town had the Picasso exhibition as the primary reason for their trip to the area. In addition to promoting destination attractions, such as the Picasso exhibition, the region should also promote its smaller arts and cultural attractions. If business travelers and people visiting family and friends can be encouraged to extend their stays by even one day to attend local performances, festivals, and exhibitions or to take a walking tour of the city's architecture and history, there will be a significant cumulative impact on local tourism spending.

Importance of the Arts to Education in the Region

All of the not-for-profit arts organizations in central Virginia have, in addition to their public performances and exhibitions, educational programs for young people and adults. Arts organizations receive their not-for-profit designation from the IRS on the basis of these educational programs. There are classes, summer theatre camps, internships, in-service workshops for teachers, and master classes going on all the time. Some of these educational programs take place in the arts facilities, some take place in schools both during the school day and after school, and others are held in neighborhood centers. These programs enhance the work of art, music, and drama teachers in public and private K-12 schools in the region.

It is important for all students to engage in some type of arts education in their school careers. Numerous studies have shown the benefits of arts education. Some students will develop a passion for music, painting, or acting. Students with a passion for one subject tend to do better

academically across the board – an excitement about learning spills over into other areas of the curriculum. Even students who do not develop a life-long interest in the arts benefit from the skills taught through study of the arts – self-discipline, teamwork, creative thinking, and problem-solving.

A National Governors Association study found that children who study the arts are:

- Four times more likely to be recognized for academic achievement
- Elected to class office within their schools three times as often
- Four times more likely to participate in a math and science fair
- Three times more likely to win an award for school attendance.

As one example of how the arts can be integrated into other subjects, the VCU School of Engineering designed its coursework to incorporate the analytical program in engineering with the creative flair of artists and architects. The da Vinci Center offers joint classes in sculpture and mechanical engineering. This approach recognizes the importance of design in maintaining leadership in American manufacturing. For example, the success of Apple has as much to do with the design of the products as their technical capabilities.

It is critical that local school divisions maintain strong arts education programs, despite the scheduling and funding pressures. The schools should continue to work in partnership with local arts organizations to provide well-rounded experiences in the arts for all students that include practicing art forms, studying the history of the arts, and integration of the arts with other areas of the curriculum.

Strengthening the Arts in Central Virginia

Although the arts are thriving in quality and diversity, there are opportunities for enhancing the arts in our region. The not-for-profit arts organizations that contribute greatly to Richmond's quality of life, to the economy, and to education are fragile institutions. These organizations have talented managers and dedicated boards of directors, but like their peers across the country, these arts organizations are undercapitalized in finances and human resources. The people who founded these organizations and those who run them today are dedicated to the art forms and to serving the public. As a result, they tend to do more programming than current resources permit.

Unlike other industries, the arts have few areas that can provide productivity gains through technology and reduced employment. It is a cliché in the art field but factual to state that it takes just as many musicians to perform Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in 2012 as it did in 1824.

It takes a vast amount of hard work to build a not-for-profit arts organization – creating a history of high quality performances or exhibitions, raising sufficient funds to hire both artists and an administrative staff, recruiting and training an effective board of directors, and building a brand identity in the community. If an established arts organization goes out of business, another one does not immediately spring up to take its place. It is, therefore, important to the community to sustain its arts organizations and to keep as many artists in the community as possible.

Funding is always an issue. Richmond has a wonderful history of outstanding philanthropy by many individuals dedicated to the Richmond community. In order to thrive, however, the arts need a diversified funding base with support, not only from individuals, but also from businesses, local and state government, and private foundations. Having a diversified funding base also means that the arts are not dependent upon one source as economic, political, and other societal trends come and go. In the current economy it has been a struggle for businesses to maintain their support of the arts, there is great pressure on foundation endowments, and state and local tax revenues have declined.

The leadership of CultureWorks is to be commended for creating a planned giving fund through the Community Foundation of Greater Richmond. The purpose of this fund is to develop a significant funding source for the arts in the future. This fund will be invaluable in promoting and sustaining the arts in central Virginia in future decades.

There also needs to be an additional funding source in the near future. Until the economy improves, it is unlikely that funds could be raised to create a local endowment fund for the arts. However, it is a good time for key leaders in the community to begin discussing ways to build and administer such a fund.

Local Government Role in Support of the Arts

Because the arts are vital for the quality of life, economy, and education of the region, local governments in the area should continue taking a pro-active role in incorporating the arts into community planning. Henrico County made a major commitment to the arts when the Cultural Arts Center at Glen Allen was created. The City of Richmond has provided funding to artists and arts organizations, presents performances for the public at the annual Dogwood Dell Festival of the Arts and at the Landmark Theatre, and provides extensive classes in the arts for youth and adults at the various parks and recreation centers. There are ongoing conversations about revitalizing the Hull Street corridor by making it an arts hub with an emphasis on serving Hispanic and African-American audiences.

It is now time to go to the next step of creating local arts commissions, similar to the model followed in the Hampton Roads region of the state, which has proven to be a successful regional approach. The eight localities of Hampton Roads – Williamsburg/James City County, Newport News, Hampton, Norfolk, Virginia Beach, Chesapeake, Suffolk, and Portsmouth – all have local arts commissions similar to the Virginia Commission for the Arts which collaborate regionally. Each local arts commission has a board of citizens appointed by the City Council or Mayor who represent the people of their community. There is at least one, usually part time, staff person who is an employee of that local government and who is the administrator for the arts commission. Each of these local arts commissions is charged with promoting the arts in its own locality. The commissions serve as a voice for the arts within city government. Each of the local arts commissions has followed its own path in promoting the arts. They distribute local government funding for the arts and serve as a forum for discussing issues about the arts in their respective communities. Members of these eight local arts commissions meet together periodically. As a result, Hampton Roads as a region has increased the understanding of the public and of local officials of the impact of the arts on the area.

If the local governments of central Virginia each created their own local arts commissions, CultureWorks, the private, not-for-profit arts council that serves the entire region, is the logical entity to convene regular meetings of representatives of all of the local governments arts commissions. This model ensures that each local government continues to have its own voice for the arts while the region-wide meetings strengthen communication and give a forum for discussing the arts on a regional basis.

The largest arts organizations in the region are headquartered in the City. Close ties and communication between the local arts community and the City of Richmond toward shared goals is very important. The City has a vested interest in supporting the revitalization of Broad Street west of downtown and of Manchester where the arts are already having a significant impact. The City has invested tens of millions of dollars in CenterStage. The City's downtown Arts and Cultural District, established in June, 2012, and the newly created Manchester district should prove to be helpful in enabling arts and cultural organizations to have an enhanced presence in downtown Richmond, and to foster economic development. The same is true of downtown Richmond's Shockoe Design District.

Research and Policy Analysis of the Arts

In addition to strengthening the partnership between local governments and the arts, there would be great benefit in having more research and policy papers about the arts in central Virginia. There is plenty of anecdotal evidence of the impact of the arts on the central Virginia economy, education, and quality of life but little statistical information. The Community Cultural Action Plan is helpful but is based primarily on the views of the arts and cultural

community. Business leaders and local government officials need to become more aware of the current impact and future potential impact of arts and culture on neighborhoods and on the region as a whole. It is a natural role for one of the local universities, possibly Virginia Commonwealth University, in light of its commitment to training future artists in all fields of the arts, to become a leader in research and analysis of the local arts and cultural industry. The urban studies/planning faculty in the Wilder School could work in partnership with such entities as CultureWorks and the Virginia Commission for the Arts to determine critical issues and areas of study. Such analysis would give local government leaders and planners a better understanding of the arts and cultural industry and provide a roadmap for developing public policy relating to this key industry. As an example, a group of VCU planning students issued a report in 2012 that suggested creating a business cluster on Hull Street that would include the Latin Ballet of Virginia, the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Spanish Academy and Cultural Center, along with other nonprofit organizations and businesses.

The national Bureau of Economic Analysis, in partnership with the National Endowment for the Arts, is beginning to evaluate the contributions of the arts and cultural sector to Gross Domestic Product. Having the national figures will provide a context and comparison for research on the arts in Virginia.

Public Art

The term **public art** refers to works of art in any media that have been planned and created in order to be placed in the public domain, usually outside and accessible to all members of the public. Sometimes public art is also exhibited in public spaces indoors, such as government buildings. Curators, the entities that commission the artwork, and the artists who create it consider, not only the artwork itself, but also the specific requirements of the site and community involvement and collaboration in planning the site, the artwork, and the process for introducing it to the public.

Examples of public art in the City of Richmond are the statues of historic figures along Monument Avenue and in Capitol Square, the statuary in Hollywood Cemetery, the Bill “Bojangles” Robinson statue on Leigh Street, the Bateau Man on Brown’s Island, and work created under the auspices of the Richmond Public Arts Commission. Some examples of the latter are the bronze sculpture at the Richmond Ambulance Authority, the ceramic tile and stained glass windows at the entrance to Fire Station 16, and the hanging sculpture Skyrider at the Main Street Train Station.

Public art enhances the visual image of communities and is of interest to visitors. The Greater Richmond Convention & Visitors Bureau, working in partnership with the Richmond Public Art Commission, CultureWorks, and the Valentine Richmond History Center, should develop and

market public art trails with information about each piece of art, the artist who created it, and the significance of the artwork to the community. Such trails complement and can be linked to existing architectural and historic trails and walking/driving tours.

City Admissions Tax

The City of Richmond has a 7% tax on ticket sales for certain events, including theatrical performances. Such a tax is authorized under state law, but not every locality in Virginia has chosen to impose this tax. The tax has the obvious benefit of adding to the City government revenues but raises the price of tickets for people attending performances in the City. There are several issues pertaining to the admissions tax. It is not collected from all cultural organizations since museums and botanical gardens are exempt under the City Code. Some localities have imposed an admissions tax but have exempted not-for-profit organizations. There is also the question of whether some performers, to maximize their fees, bypass the City of Richmond in favor of localities without an admissions tax, thereby reducing the options for Richmond audiences. As with any tax, the issues of equity and cost-benefit are complex. It would be helpful to have a study of these issues by an entity outside of the arts and cultural community, such as one of the local universities or a research firm.

CenterStage

Several years ago a group of city leaders began planning and fundraising to transform the Carpenter Center into a major downtown performing arts center. They encountered many obstacles along the way, but fortunately for the Richmond region, they persevered. The CenterStage facility with 179,000 square feet, has three performance venues, an interactive educational facility, and gallery space. CenterStage opened to great fanfare in September of 2009 with ten local performing arts groups on stage. The goals for CenterStage were to have a world class facility for the performing arts and to be a catalyst for downtown economic activity. As the home of the Richmond Symphony and Virginia Opera and the venue for the large scale productions of the Richmond Ballet, CenterStage is invaluable to the success of these important arts organizations. The educational program is a great asset to the community with classrooms and a state-of-the-arts digital center. K-12 students from Richmond and the surrounding counties can learn all aspects of the arts from playwriting to performing to stage design to video editing.

The City of Richmond has made a major financial contribution to CenterStage, and the entire community has a stake in seeing the organization succeed, flourish, and reach its full potential. CenterStage is currently functioning primarily as a building and rental facility rather than a vibrant producing arts organization in its own right. Audiences are eager to have new and different artistic experiences. The success of the Modlin Center series and of the Virginia Arts

Festival in Hampton Roads demonstrate the demand. In addition to being the home for Richmond performing arts organizations, there should be a regular season of touring performers at CenterStage. Such a series would mean more activity in the CenterStage building, draw new audiences to downtown, and help to get a segment of the community invested in CenterStage as its own entity. There are many performing arts centers around the country that have found the way to balance fulfilling the needs of the resident companies and producing their own seasons with their own audiences. Following the lead of the Richmond Ballet's Studio Series and the new Richmond Symphony Rush Hour Concerts, CenterStage can experiment with performance times and formats. With the number of people now living in downtown Richmond, there is an untapped market beyond the traditional arts audience. Beginning a new performance season will require additional financial resources, of course, but would be an invaluable service to the community. The Landmark Theatre is currently under renovation and will be managed as part of CenterStage in the future, which will bring in more revenue for the combined operation.

The current governing structure of CenterStage makes it challenging to develop a compelling artistic vision. CenterStage was built with the use of historic tax credits which requires a division of responsibility with one entity managing the building and another entity managing the programming inside the facility for a period of several years. Serious thought should be given to creating a clear and effective management structure once the time period for this legal requirement has expired. In order for CenterStage to be an artistic success, its CEO should be an experienced arts professional with the authority to lead the organization forward. This individual should answer to the board of directors and will be responsible for CenterStage and for the newly renovated Landmark Theatre. Once there is more activity in the building, economic activity in the area will follow.

A final issue about CenterStage is parking. The original plans for what is now CenterStage called for a parking deck immediately across the street. As plans developed, however, it was noted that there is an abundance of parking within a few blocks. While it is true that people who live or work downtown are familiar with the parking options, people who do not regularly come downtown now are often intimidated about the parking situation. Whether true or not, there is still a perception among many people that downtown Richmond is an unsafe area and they are uncomfortable walking even short distances, particularly after dark. The City government should work with the leaders of CenterStage to address this issue. There are a number of options that would address this problem, such as purchasing or building an existing parking lot or deck specifically for CenterStage, reaching an agreement with Virginia state government for use of the 7th & Franklin Street deck in the evenings, providing valet parking, or contracting a privately owned parking deck as CenterStage parking with appropriate signage, lighting, directions, and security.

The Film Industry

The film industry in central Virginia includes both local film-making and commercial productions by out-of-the-area film companies and producers. Recent economic realities have had a devastating effect on the local industry.

The Virginia Film Office was created in 1980 to attract filming and film production in all parts of the state for the purpose of creating jobs and revenue. Although its primary purpose is to attract new business to the state, the Film Office is also concerned with the growth and sustainability of the local film-making industry. New Millennium Studios in Petersburg is a full service film production facility with studios and production equipment. They create films and television series that employ local talent and crew. New Millennium's Legacy Media Institute also offers training to college-age students on all aspects of film production. The Richmond Moving Image Co-op produces the James River Film Festival and a juried competition for short films. The Virginia Production Alliance advocates for the film industry at the General Assembly. The Richmond Chapter of the Production Alliance sponsors an annual event designed to introduce VCU Cinema graduates to the film industry. The Virginia Screenwriters Forum brings screenwriters together so that their work can be read and evaluated by their peers. The French Film Festival brings the newest French films to the area and hosts international filmmakers for panel discussions and workshops.

Virginia Commonwealth University has three film programs:

Cinema program – Bachelor's degree in Cinema Production. Focused on independent filmmaking, this program trains students to create narrative films, emphasizing the writing, producing, shooting, and editing. Students are required to have a second major or two minors to supplement the Cinema coursework.

Photography and Film Program – This BFA and MFA program emphasizes film as an art form and the filmmaker as an artist. Students learn to write, direct, shoot, and edit individual and small group projects using various formats.

Kinetic Imaging – A BFA and MFA program in which students learn the art of creating motion picture art using video, animation, and sound.

The University of Richmond offers a BA major and minor degree in Film Studies. This program emphasizes the study of film as a cultural media. There is some opportunity to learn about the details of creating a film, but the program is primarily academic.

Richmond is one of the three major production areas for commercial film-making in the state. A trend in film production that has lasted for decades and will likely continue for many more

years is the creation of films with government-related themes. This trend spans all genres, including mysteries, thrillers, love stories, and special effects films. Although some filming of the iconic monuments in Washington is necessary, there are numerous security, traffic, and logistical challenges to filming in the city. Fortunately, Richmond's governmental, residential, and commercial architecture doubles perfectly for the nation's capital at any time in the last 200 years. Church Hill and Fan architecture replicates the row houses of Washington, the State Capitol rooms and hallways can be used as government meeting rooms and offices, and the House of Delegates chambers are a close duplicate of the United State Congress. Downtown Petersburg, Center Hill Mansion, and other residential buildings also perfectly represent the world of 1800 and 1900 America. At new Millennium Studios' 54 acre lot, any environment can be created.

At one time there was sufficient filming in central Virginia to provide regular work for local film crews. Other states and countries then began offering increased incentives to recruit film production in their locales while Virginia's support of the film industry stayed at modest levels. The increased competition for film production harmed not only central Virginia, but also decimated the southern California film industry. Film crew members have either changed careers or moved to other states. In 2000 the economic impact in Virginia from the film industry was \$88 million, and in 2010 it was \$20 million. More recently the ROI of Virginia's new incentive program, has proven successful with the shooting of "Lincoln", "Killing Lincoln", and a number of other films shot in the past 2 years.

Changes in film technology, however, offer many opportunities. The switch from film to digital shooting and the development of new high quality, small, and affordable equipment has reduced the cost of filming. At the same time, the demand for content has increased as a result of new outlets, such as hundreds of cable channels, smart phones, gaming, on-demand viewing, and streaming video capabilities.

Given the pressures on state revenue, it is not likely that Virginia will be able to compete in terms of monetary incentives with other states and with Canada for major film productions. However, there are opportunities to expand the pool of local talent in making low budget films. For example, a portion of the existing film incentive money could be directed to building the local film infrastructure. The Virginia Film Office and the Virginia Commission for the Arts have the knowledge and capability to evaluate proposals for funding and direct the support to local film-makers with the talent and ability to produce high quality films. The Virginia Film Office, New Millennium Studios, and local universities could build partnerships to provide more training for young people living in central Virginia for the many "behind the camera" jobs of the film industry. There should also be training for young filmmakers in how to develop an artistic vision for their films.

Conclusion

The arts and cultural industry is a key driver that will contribute to making Richmond a world class community in 2030, serving both local audiences and visitors to the region. Richmond residents should take pride in their local artists and arts organizations. With attention to a few key issues, the region will see great benefit from the continued flourishing of the arts and culture.

Summary of Recommendations

- It is time for key leaders in the community to begin planning a local endowment fund for the arts. Although it is not the right time to begin fundraising, given the current economy, it is a good time to begin discussing ways to set the mission of such a fund, to build the fund, to determine how the fund will be administered, and to decide how funds will be distributed in the community. This fund would complement the planned giving fund already established by CultureWorks and the Community Foundation of Greater Richmond.
- The local governments in the region should create local arts commissions, following the model of Hampton Roads, which has local arts commissions in eight localities and which has functioned successfully on behalf of the region. These local arts commissions, as described earlier in this report, serve as the voice of the arts community within local government and provide a forum for a public discussion of local issues in the arts. These local arts commissions should also meet together on a regular basis to build partnerships and address regional issues in the arts. CultureWorks, the private not-for-profit arts council that serves the entire region, is the logical entity to convene regular meetings.
- The arts play a significant role in the image and economy of the City of Richmond, and the City has made a major financial investment in the arts. The City would benefit greatly from building a strong, collaborative partnership between the City and leaders in the arts.
- Although arts and culture play a significant role in the image and economy of the region, there is little statistical and analytical information about the impact of and challenges facing arts and culture in the area. It is a natural role for one of the local universities to take a leadership role in providing such study and analysis. Having more objective information would help local officials, business leaders, and leaders of the arts community in planning for the future.

- The Richmond region is rich in both historic and contemporary public art, art which is created with the intent of being placed in the public domain and easily accessible to the public at large. Other communities in Virginia and across the country have had great success in developing public art trails for local residents and visitors to the region. Central Virginia, possibly through a partnership of the Richmond Convention & Visitors Center, the Richmond Public Art Commission, CultureWorks, and the Valentine Richmond History Center, should create a public art trail. This trail would complement and can be linked to existing architectural and history trails.
- There needs to be a study of the impact of the City of Richmond admissions tax. Although this tax is a source of revenue for the City, there are issues of equity with some but not all cultural organizations being required to collect the tax. In addition, there is the question of whether the higher ticket prices resulting from the tax have a negative impact on attendance, particularly in the downtown area that the City is working so hard to promote.
- Because the City of Richmond has invested so heavily in CenterStage, the success of the performing arts center is of vital importance to the entire community, and everything possible should be done to enable the organization to reach its full potential. Because the founders of CenterStage used historic tax credits as a means of financing the construction, there is a legal requirement of having a separate entity to manage the building in addition to the entity responsible for the programming inside the building for a period of several years. Serious thought should be given now to a plan for managing CenterStage once the time period for the historic tax credits has run out. There should be a clear and efficient management structure with an experienced arts professional as the CEO for CenterStage and the Landmark Theatre who answers to a board of directors. Such a management structure would make it far easier to carry out the artistic vision that will make CenterStage an artistic success, which in turn will lead to increased activity in the building and increased economic development in the area.
- In addition, a plan should be developed by City and CenterStage leaders for CenterStage parking. The arts audience, like everyone else, wants safe and comfortable surroundings. Having dedicated parking, whether owned or leased by CenterStage, with adequate signage, directions, lighting, and security, is critical to building larger audiences for the events at CenterStage. The options are to build or purchase a parking deck specifically for CenterStage, to provide valet parking, or to lease space from state government or a private parking deck.

- The local film industry would greatly benefit from a pool of funds, possibly drawn from the state incentive fund, to support local film-making projects. With the advent of smaller and affordable filming and editing equipment and with the expansion of demand resulting from new outlets for film - such as cable channels, smart phones, gaming, on-demand viewing, and streaming video – it is a good time to strengthen the local film infrastructure.
- There should be more training opportunities for local film-makers, both for the creative side of film-making and the “behind the camera” jobs. New Millennium Studios and local universities are currently providing such training, and these efforts should be expanded.

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