

# CULTURAL DYNAMICS

Cultural Dynamics is a collaborative, community-driven endeavor to shape Philadelphia's first Cultural Plan. It was launched in November 2024 at Drexel University, and featured NEA Chair Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD. The process convened artists, cultural workers, institutions, funders, residents, and civic partners to understand what Philadelphia's cultural sector needs to thrive—and to mobilize the community toward collective action.

The Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance led the effort in partnership with PA Humanities, Drexel University's Antoinette Westphal College of Media Arts & Design, and Creative Philadelphia.



Nina Elizabeth "Lyrispect" Ball,  
Deputy Director of the Painted Bride Art Center  
Photography by Ryan Brandenberg

**"What's happening in Philadelphia is consequential for the country."**

— Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, PhD

## 500+

**Total Participants**

representing arts, culture, humanities, education, civic sectors, and neighborhoods citywide

## 4

**Community Conversations held across Philadelphia in partnership with**

Ensemble Arts & Philadelphia Orchestra  
(Center City)

FringeArts (South Philadelphia)

The Charles L. Blockson Afro-American Collection in partnership with the Center for Anti-Racism at Temple University  
(North Philadelphia)

Institute of Contemporary Art of University of Pennsylvania (West Philadelphia)

## 1

**Virtual Cultural Dynamics Insight Session**  
to validate and refine findings

## 114

**Narrative Responses**  
to sector-wide online survey

## 6K+

**Coded Statements**  
gathered from transcripts and surveys

### PROJECT PARTNERS

GREATER PHILADELPHIA

**CULTURAL  
ALIANCE**

**pd**  
humanities

 **Creative Philadelphia**

 **DREXEL UNIVERSITY**  
**Antoinette Westphal**  
College of Media Arts & Design

# KEY INSIGHTS

- **Philadelphia's cultural assets are abundant but under-recognized.** The city needs a coordinated marketing strategy that elevates local artists, highlights neighborhood experiences, celebrates diverse histories, and boosts participation—positioning Philadelphia as a premier cultural destination.
- **Cultural vibrancy exists citywide, yet siloed systems and uneven access to resources limit connectivity.** Strengthening Philadelphia's cultural infrastructure requires bridging divides through shared platforms, coordinated promotion, and improved transit access.
- **Rising real estate costs threaten the affordability and availability of studios, rehearsal rooms, live-work spaces, and other facilities.** Philadelphia must adopt stronger zoning tools, cultural districts, historic preservation incentives, and adaptive-reuse policies to secure long-term, community-rooted space.
- **Artists and cultural workers face low wages, unstable gig work, and rising living costs,** undermining both personal livelihoods and the city's creative economy. Equitable pay, benefits, and clear career pathways are essential to retaining talent and sustaining cultural vitality.
- **Funding opportunities remain inequitable and difficult to navigate,** forcing many artists and small cultural organizations to self-fund. Strengthening the sector requires diversifying revenue streams, reducing grant barriers, supporting operations, and investing in underfunded communities.
- **Verbal support from City leadership has not led to structural investment or recognition.** Philadelphia needs strong, permanent cultural advocacy—including dedicated governance, cultural representation in policymaking, and sector-wide advocacy—to drive lasting, equitable change.

## FUNDERS & PARTNERS



newventurefund



DREXEL UNIVERSITY  
Antoinette Westphal  
College of Media Arts & Design

WilliamPennFoundation

CALL TO ACTION

*Philadelphia has the talent, assets, and community imagination to lead the nation in showing how culture strengthens civic life.*

To realize that potential, we must:

## UNIFY

Strengthen connections across neighborhoods and disciplines, build shared infrastructure, and develop a coordinated sector voice.

## AMPLIFY

Increase the visibility, recognition, and value of arts, culture, and humanities as core to the city's identity and future.

## INVEST

Commit long-term, equitable resources to the people, spaces, and systems that sustain creative work.

Speak up for Philadelphia's first Cultural Plan. Read the full report for how you can strengthen our city's cultural ecosystem.



[pahumanities.org/CulturalDynamics](http://pahumanities.org/CulturalDynamics)

*“What if Philadelphia became a cultural treasure unto itself ... and made commitments to that?”*

— Research Participant