Preliminary Findings
from the Artist Census

Boulder Arts Commission
September 19, 2018
Today’s Presentation

> Artist Census Survey
  Data received from ~300 professional artists
  Destination survey, quantitative information
  Questions on finances, demographics, housing, etc.

> Artist Census Focus Groups
  Interviews with 32 professional artists
  Qualitative information
  Questions on context: how to survive / thrive as an artist

> Questions for the Arts Commission
Goals of the Artists Census

> Confirm anecdotes we are hearing from the community.
> Clarify and expand our understanding of the lives of artists.
Part One

Background Information
Background Information for the Artist Census

Fact: Boulder is a home for artists.

- Our examination of Bureau of Labor Statistics data shows that about 4,500 artists work in Boulder. That’s about 3.5% of the workforce.

- The National Endowment for the Arts finds that Boulder has the 3rd highest concentration of artists in the country.

Source: Creative Vitality Suite by WESTAF
Background Information for the Artist Census

Fact: Boulder is a home for artists.

> The definition of professional artists we are using for the Artist Census is derived from filings of employment in the following SOC codes:

- 27-1012 Craft artists
- 27-1013 Fine artists, including painters, sculptors, and illustrators
- 27-1019 Artists and related workers, all other
- 27-2011 Actors
- 27-2031 Dancers
- 27-2032 Choreographers
- 27-2041 Music directors and composers
- 27-2042 Musicians and singers
- 27-3043 Writers and authors
- 27-4021 Photographers
Part Two

Survey Findings
1: Wages and income from arts professions is low.

> 36% of Boulder-resident Artists have an household income below the living wage for a 2 adult household: $43,721.60*

> When considering the living wage for families of four or more, the number of our artists who are in a vulnerable position jumps to just over 40%.

> 40% who report individual earnings below the living wage for a single adult also report a household income below the living wage.

*Source: Living Wage Calculator, Dr. Amy K. Glasmeier, MIT
Artist Census Survey: Findings

1: Wages and income from arts professions is low.

> 80% of artists have a second job outside of the arts industries. Those jobs account for 57% of their earnings.

> Musicians, jewelers/crafters, and visual artists have the highest portion of their income from a non-arts job.

> Dance and Theater professionals report the most income from teaching.

> Photographers have the highest income from their art: 28%.
2: Cultural Nonprofits are Important to Income

> With the exception of writers, artists of all disciplines report that 51% - 72% of their arts income is from involvement with an nonprofit organization.
3: Lots of artists live in Boulder, some find a market here.

> A plurality of artists balance their income from inside and outside the city. One-third say they work primarily in Boulder.

> About 71% of our artists are residents of the City of Boulder. 29% of artists live elsewhere.

> It is likely that our artists who identify as Latinx are much more likely to live outside of Boulder: nearly 43%.*

*Based on an under-representative sample: more research is needed.
Artist Census Survey: Findings

4: Our artists are predominantly educated, white, home-owning, long-time residents.

- Nearly half of respondents were over 55 years old. Focus groups indicate slightly more variation in age.

- 54% of respondents who are Boulder residents have lived here more than 16 years.

- 24% consider themselves “emerging”. 35% are “mid-career”. 41% are “established”.

- About 70% own their own home. Yet, those under 34 years old are far less likely to own: 21%. This is below the national average for home ownership at that age.*

*Source: 36% according to the National Comparison of Home Ownership, US Census Bureau
Artist Census Survey: Findings

4: Our artists are predominantly educated, white, home-owning, long-time residents.

> 88% of respondents identify as white. However, all other race/ethnicities appear to be underrepresented in the survey as compared with the community as a whole.

> 70% identify as female, 29% male, and 1% gender variant/non-conforming.

> Just over 4% are disabled.
Part Three

Findings from the Focus Groups
City of Boulder Office of Arts and Culture
‘Artists Sustainability Workshops – August 2018’

high-points summary

...prepared for the 09.19.18 Arts Commission Meeting
who we worked with...

5 two hour focus groups with artists living and/or working in Boulder.

We had artists from both the visual and performing arts.

- visual artists (fine art, multi-media, digital, ceramics, textiles, sculpting photographers, film-making).
- performing arts (classical, world and jazz music, theater, dance, circus).

Each session included 6-10 participants.

Topics covered: ‘surviving’ & ‘thriving’ as an artist in Boulder; arts within the city & community.
‘Here for the Boulder lifestyle ... hard to make a living’

Our artists live and work here because it is a good place to live

...but NOT because it is a great place to live and work as an artist.

The people we worked with love living here ... but find it increasingly difficult to BE here.

For most, it feels like a constant struggle to stay afloat.
Our artists are surviving (barely) and feel ‘squeezed’.

It’s an every-day struggle and juggling act to figure out how to live and work here.

The number of affordable housing, working and performance space options shrink as costs continue to rise.

The SQUEEZE

For most, their art income has not kept up with rising costs.
Finding spaces that are affordable, available, accessible and suitable is a constant challenge.

The lucky ones make it work with the support of an income-earning partner.

Many feel they have no choice but to move outside the city.

Others turn to communal/ collective options that are hard to find and may not comply with city regulations. (The need to stay under the radar adding to the stress and uncertainty of their everyday lives.)
There is a very real ‘tension’ between the desire to create and produce art and the practical business of making a living from it.

This further exacerbates the survival ‘squeeze’...

The practical business side of art today demands a lot of time and attention.

Their art is within their wheel house of talent, passion and drive...... BUT, the business of art requires very different skills (and they don’t make enough to hire others to help them).

Opportunity: programs that help support the artists navigate the business side of art through professional development or pooled resources.
The pursuit of grants is a great example of an opportunity-cost balancing act

Feel that the whole grants arena is a crap-shoot, with too many artists pursuing too few dollars.

Require an investment of time that is hard to justify even if an application is successful.

Opportunity: ensure grants application processes are in-line with the award amount and likelihood of success.
Despite the high number of artists living here, Boulder is not seen to have a thriving, vibrant or highly visible Arts Scene.

Boulder is largely defined by its outdoor lifestyle & commercial success which dominate and overshadow the role and influence of the Arts in local culture.

Felt to be ‘little pockets’ of creativity but definitely not considered a happening arts scene – little edge, excitement or buzz.
The number one emotional ‘Felt Need’ for artists in Boulder is greater connection to a Boulder Arts Community...

They want to feel connected to an arts community that is valued and vibrant, to be inspired and to inspire, to connect and to collaborate

...and that is not happening enough!
From the vantage point of Boulder’s artists, the value of art is under-valued by the City & the business community....

A small portion of these artists were aware of the Community Culture Plan, most were not.

While there are some promising first steps, all wished the City did more to promote the intrinsic value of the ‘arts scene’ here.

AND, to find ways to encourage and facilitate significant support from the new commercial players in town.
AND, the quality of artistic talent here is felt to be under-appreciated by the public.

The money is known to be here...the challenge is to help the community see the value in nurturing and supporting the local arts scene.

Most feel they must travel and/or market their art outside of Boulder.

They know that outside talent, coming to Boulder, has greater credibility than local artists.

And complain that people here are reluctant to buy art or attend live performances here, but do so readily when they travel.

**Opportunity:** create an initiative to celebrate Boulder’s local top talent and raise the profile and credibility of the arts community overall.
pulling the threads together... surviving as an artist in Boulder is a struggle, but there are clear opportunities for community initiatives that could help.

Explore creative ways to support artists with their space and live/work needs
... or our artists will be forced out of Boulder.

Explore ways to **shine a light** on ‘One Boulder Arts Community,’ to promote & celebrate all facets of the arts here.

*The goal = to evoke pride, enthusiasm & support from locals and visitors.*

Develop a communications campaign to encourage the community to ‘GET OUT’ & the artists to get out of their silos.

Challenge the business community to engage and support the arts.
Help create bridges to foster connections.

Arts & Culture initiatives are valued and doing good things.
There is a further need to **provide business tools and resources** to help artists forge connections with other artists within and beyond their disciplines.
Thank you City of Boulder Office of Arts + Culture!!

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Questions?

What is missing?