



Town of Chapel Hill VARSITY THEATRE TASK FORCE

Monday, January 28, 2019 at 8:30am
Chapel Hill Public Library
100 Library Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514

Meeting Agenda

Members Present: Council Member Michael Parker (Co-Chair), Council Member Rachel Schaevitz (Co-Chair), Mandey Brown, Matt Gladdek, Justin Haslett, Emily Kass, Greg Overbeck, Sharon Rothwell, Paul Shareshian, Justin Simmons, Kaze Thomas, Marlon Torres, Xilong Zhao

Members Not Present: Kathy Atwater, Gerald Bolas, Hardy Butler, Dan Cefalo, Kameron Southerland, Don Tise, Brenda Womble

Staff Present: Susan Brown, Jim Huegerich, Sarah Poulton, Ross Tompkins, Katie Murray

Others Present: None

I. Opening

Jim Huegerich

Meeting began at 8:32am.

a. Approval of December 17, 2018 Meeting Minutes

December 17, 2018 meeting minutes were approved.

b. Approval of Agenda

January 28, 2019 agenda was approved.

c. Public Comment

None

II. Business

a. Public Meeting Rules

Town Staff

Background: Town staff reviewed public meeting notice rules and basic rules of respectful meeting conduct.

Action taken: No action was anticipated or taken.

b. Role of Process Facilitator

Jim Huegerich

Background: Jim Huegerich introduced himself and his role as facilitator of the Task Force meetings.

Action taken: No action was anticipated or taken.

**c. Review Task Force Charge
and Schaevitz**

Council Members Parker

Background: The Council charge was reviewed.

Action taken: No action was anticipated or taken.

d. Brainstorming activities

Jim Huegerich

Background: Three exercises were completed by Task Force members:

- a. Defining key terms: Downtown, community, performing arts, center/venue
- b. Question-storming: What questions do you have of the following groups around the future use of the Varsity Theatre as a performing arts venue?
 - Downtown stakeholders
 - Artists and performers
 - Community arts organizations
- c. Who and where should we consult next?

Actions taken: Notes from these exercises are included as an attachment to the meeting.

III. Open Forum

Jim Huegerich

IV. Adjournment

Meeting Materials:

- Notes from brainstorming activities

Next Meeting: February 18, 2019 at 8:30am Library Room A

Public Charge: Consider the possible use of the Varsity Theatre at 123 East Franklin Street as a community performing arts center.

Specific Charge: Determine the following:

- What would be the vision for such a venue? What types of programming would be appropriate and desired by our community?
- How would such a venue meet community needs, reflect community values, and attract a wide range of individuals to the Downtown and what would be the economic impact on the Downtown?
- What would be the costs of this conversion for both acquisition and necessary refurbishment – and how long would it require? How would these costs be paid for and what kinds of partnership(s) might be feasible?
- What would be the business model of the new entity in terms of ownership, ongoing management, and ability to be financially secure and self-sustaining?

Defining Key Terms: Task Force member small groups were asked to brainstorm what each of four key terms mean to them. The terms included "Downtown," "Community," "Performing/Arts", and "Center/Venue."

Term	Definition	Category
Downtown	Carrboro to Henderson on Franklin St	Physical description
Downtown	-Franklin St Raleigh St to Carrboro -Rosemary Small areas of Cameron & Columbia	Physical description
Downtown	Intersection of: -Franklin St & Cameron Ave -UNC & Chapel Hill Linda's to Carrboro on Franklin St	Physical description
Downtown	Walkable from intersection of Columbia & Franklin St	Physical description
Downtown	-Campus area -Morehead to (Weaver Street) Market -Business district -Community -Linear	Hybrid
Downtown	More urban, less residential	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Where folks go to meet	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Culture, business, and social activity center	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Center of creativity & attractions	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Open later at night	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	A place to feel safe & comfortable & like you can get from A to B without incident	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Musical legacy	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Very accessible by public transit	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Center of public events - to host the community event	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	The economic & cultural heart of Chapel Hill Food & drinks Not enough parking The past & the future of Chapel Hill in conflict ("architecture of old and new that don't feel connected")	Attribute / Characteristic
Downtown	Vibrant but fractured Multi-use spaces Too many empty store fronts "Pockets of vibrancy with space between them" "Used to be able to park and have full day & night's activities"	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	Anyone who lives or visits here	Technical description
Community	Different ages Different cultures Different "likes"	Technical description
Community	Families & friends	Technical description
Community	Tourists	Technical description

Community	Carrboro All Orange Western Durham Northern Chatham Anyone that uses Downtown	Technical description
Community	Sports Families Students	Technical description
Community	Neighbors Coworkers Patrons/customers Businesses Access Shared experiences	Technical description
Community	A society in a physical environment with residents having diversified background living together with social interactions	Technical description
Community	Unified ecosystem of values & vision Free / government funded Visitors serving & being served by residents	Technical description
Community	-Connection -Intersection of all things art music & culture -What it can provide & support for art service "Incubation of community's talent" "Local talent as cultural export"	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	Doesn't matter if you can pay	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	Character	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	Local pride	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	-Network -Local identity & pride -Diverse talent -Perspective of local needs	Attribute / Characteristic
Community	A place to share talents (develop through classes, showcase through events, etc.)	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Educational Inspirational	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Publicly shared expression	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Anything performed for entertainment	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Live exchange of perspectives, ideas & experiences	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Any live cultural event Can be free or ticketed Requires minimum of 2 people: 1 performer and 1 spectator	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	More live music	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Live entertainment (music, plays, dance, comedy)	Attribute / Characteristic
Performing / Arts	Stage performance Professional Non-professional	Technical description

Peforming / Arts	Dance Theater Film Live music Comedy	Technical description
Peforming / Arts	Media Spoken word Street art	Technical description
Peforming / Arts	Can be "live" (music, play) or recorded (film)	Technical description
Peforming / Arts	Music Theater Film Improv Dance	Technical description
Peforming / Arts	Creative arts programming	Technical description
Center / Venue	Gathering space, open to all	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Accessible	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Accessible Safe Comfortable	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Nexus Focus Premiere destination	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Accessible to everyone, promoting everything	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Learn/create Gather Work	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Intersection of people, arts, etc.	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	Creative Hive	Attribute / Characteristic
Center / Venue	-Stage Gallery Studio Workspace/place to create Sound	Physical description
Center / Venue	Name to associate type of performance	Physical description
Center / Venue	Physical Place Festivals Community Groups Private Events Rentals Receptions, Parties	Physical description
Center / Venue	Single control location. Comprehensive collection. Representation of the greater field.	Physical description
Center / Venue	Building to house performance	Physical description
Center / Venue	Enough space Good environment	Physical description

Question-storming: Task Force members were asked to document what questions they have for key stakeholder groups around the Council charge of creating a performing arts center. The stakeholder groups included Downtown stakeholders, performers/artists, and arts organization stakeholders.

Stakeholder Group	Question
Downtown stakeholders	What impact would a vibrant Downtown performing arts center have on your business?
Downtown stakeholders	Do biz owners understand economic impact of the arts?
Downtown stakeholders	What is your 5-10-20 year business plan?
Downtown stakeholders	Do you even want something like this?
Downtown stakeholders	Would such a venue help? Concerns about parking?
Downtown stakeholders	What do we need more of downtown and do you think this transformation can promote that?
Downtown stakeholders	Is this a profit-driven business project, or public interest-driven project?
Downtown stakeholders	Birth party and church service is somewhat away from performing arts, isn't it?
Downtown stakeholders	What do you think is missing downtown?
Downtown stakeholders	Will a town sponsored venue be equivalent to a local 506 or Cat's Cradle at incubating new talent?
Downtown stakeholders	How can the Town of Chapel Hill help local businesses adapt to/benefit from a venue space like this?
Downtown stakeholders	Where will the money come from for renovations?
Downtown stakeholders	Is the town good at managing a business?
Downtown stakeholders	Will/can the Town be attached to a venue with controversial art?
Downtown stakeholders	How are community art spaces currently performing in Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Durham, Raleigh, and Nationally?
Downtown stakeholders	Would new venue compete with existing businesses for parking?
Downtown stakeholders	What changes need to be made to building to accommodate all sorts of art events?
Downtown stakeholders	Is there demand for another performance space?
Downtown stakeholders	What do other downtowns have/do that you wish our downtown had/did?
Downtown stakeholders	What activities or events bring people downtown? (including UNC events)
Downtown stakeholders	What are the past, present & future strengths, weaknesses, opportunities & threats to you/your operations
Downtown stakeholders	What did you choose to do business in Chapel Hill? Why do you continue to do so?
Downtown stakeholders	For Downtown Restaurants: -Would such a venue help your business? When? Would different breeds of events be better or worse? Do you have concerns about parking? Are there collaborative opportunities

Downtown stakeholders	What demographic groups come downtown - -day -evening -weekend
Downtown stakeholders	What can you do to benefit from/partner with the Varsity space proposal (how can you work with it)?
Downtown stakeholders	What are barriers to coming downtown? (based on data not "feelings")
Downtown stakeholders	How will you make downtown feel safe?
Downtown stakeholders	Why is it not easy to go downtown?
Downtown stakeholders	What are perceived barriers to folks coming downtown?
Downtown stakeholders	What are the days/events when you see a lot of action downtown?
Downtown stakeholders	Why will people want to come here?
Performers / Artists	What days/times of day are best for your work?
Performers / Artists	Ratio of rehearsal to performamnce (time wise)
Performers / Artists	Who is the audience for your art?
Performers / Artists	Who is your audience? -Age -Other demographics -Geography
Performers / Artists	Why here vs. Durham, Chatham, Raleigh, etc.
Performers / Artists	Why do leave Orange to work, create, learn?
Performers / Artists	Where do you create? Why Chapel Hill? What tools/resources do you need?
Performers / Artists	Do you consider yourself a "Chapel Hill Artist"?
Performers / Artists	Do you feel underserved by existing venues?
Performers / Artists	Do you feel we really need another venue for arts?
Performers / Artists	How much rent can you pay?
Performers / Artists	Do you make (enough) money from your art?
Performers / Artists	What do you need to perform?
Performers / Artists	What are your space needs? -physical space -equipment -access -light/power
Performers / Artists	Do you need office space as well as performing space?
Performers / Artists	What kind of environment is conducive to creating your art?
Performers / Artists	What do you need?
Performers / Artists	What type of venue do you need? What kind of marketing support?
Performers / Artists	What do you need to grow your art?
Performers / Artists	Do y'all still need affordable art studio space? (answer is yes. has always been yes)
Performers / Artists	What performing venue do you prefer, a garden-like nature environment, or a cozy dark room?
Performers / Artists	Wjere do you perform now?

Performers / Artists	Do you have difficulty finding affordable venues?
Performers / Artists	Would a performance center help you? What would you need it to have? Who would pay?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	How many groups are turned away by DT (campus arts venues)? What size, what are their needs?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Can we have more classes/workshops/etc. that promote creativity etc? Closer than the ArtsCenter, for instance
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	What model(s) are self-sustaining (pay for themselves)?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Can Town of Chapel Hill possibly reach out to more downtown venues to hold events & performances there?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Why aren't you in Downtown? Is it all \$?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	More walkable ArtWalk, studios, exhibits, public performances [140 West?]
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Can ArtWalk be resurrected in a more contiguous manner? More walkable?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	What kinds of space needs do you have? Can you/would you pay for it? How often?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	-Who does your art look to serve? -What mediums/programs fulfill this need?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Who is your current/desired audience?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	How large is your current audience?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Do you consider your org. a "Chapel Hill Arts Org."?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	What is your business model/structure?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	What support do you provide -\$ -other services
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	What data do you have regarding facilities?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	For those with venues, what is current demand for performance space?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Seeking a comprehensive art center, or a performing arts center?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	How can we organize an arts venue to have opportunities for free space for artists?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Do you feel underserved by existing venues?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Is the physical space big enough to actually be a viable public arts venue?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Do we really need another venue for arts?
Arts Organizations Stakeholders	Do you need new/more performance space?

Venues to Explore: Task Force members brainstormed other Downtown theaters to either visit or learn more about.

Venue	Location
Carolina Theater	Durham
Golden Belt	Durham
Cary Arts Center & Coco Booth Theater	Cary
N. Davidson Arts District (NoDA)	Charlotte
Merrimack Repertory Theatre	Massachusetts
Boston Center for Arts	Boston
Michigan Theater	Ann Arbor, MI
LFK Arts Center	Lawrence, KS

Notes from the group:

Successful & unsuccessful places and models

What are the financial characteristics of similar successful venues elsewhere?

What is an ideal mix of events?

Can these venues succeed without subsidies?

What physical features are necessary in terms of stage, sound system, seating flexibility, etc.?

How does one accommodate "profit-making" & non-profit needs?

Parking Lot: Issues not discussed or covered in other exercises.	
Item	Note
Role of local government entity & how that affects model, outcomes, etc. (good and bad)	From "Other Venues" sheet
Landscape of arts venues, especially downtown	From "Other Venues" sheet
Oversaturation of art is a good thing	From "Other Venues" sheet
Other uses (weddings, birthday parties, etc)	
Assess needs	
Sustainability	
Convene & learn from existing downtown arts venues (& include UNC, ie Forest Theater) - where are the gaps?	
Safety of Downtown	