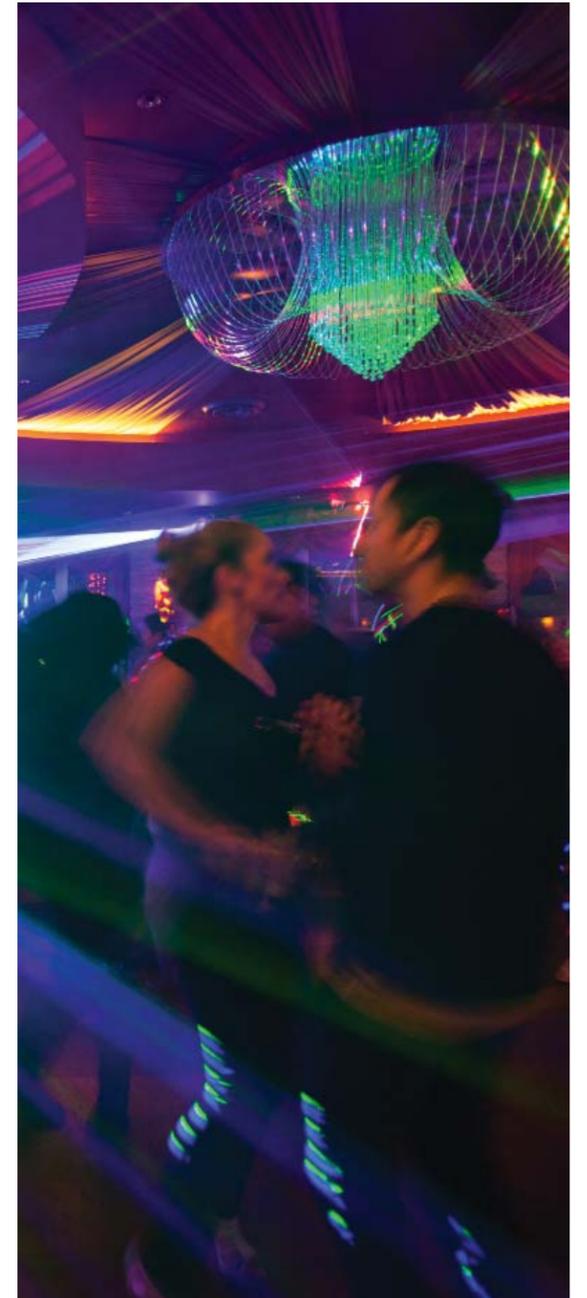
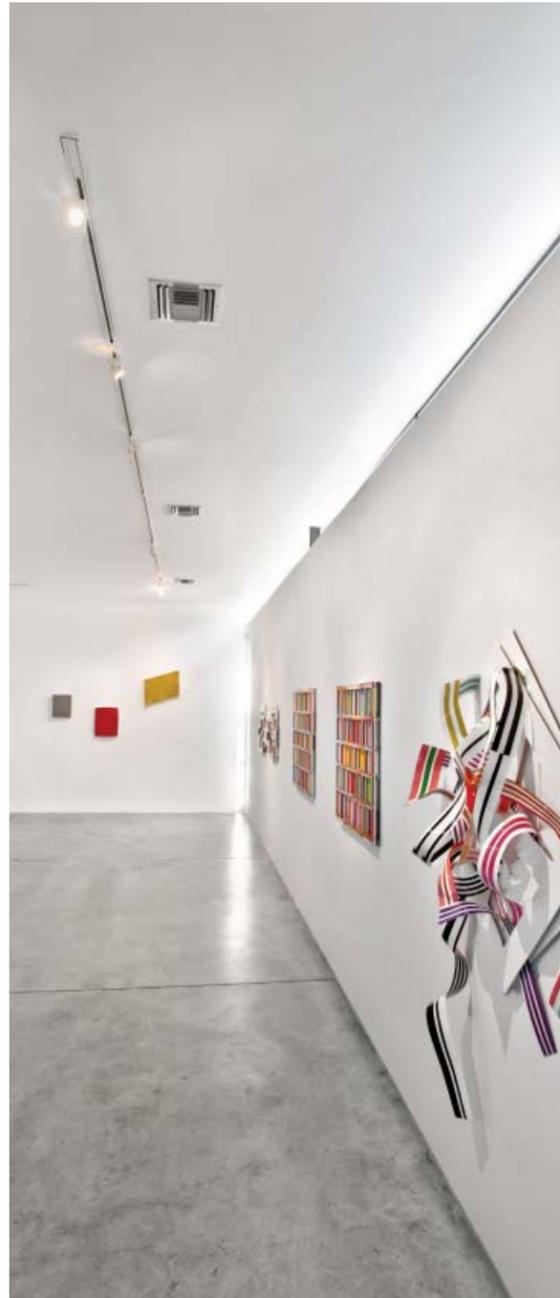




MIDTOWN MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

MIDTOWN CULTURAL
ARTS MASTER PLAN

HOUSTON, TEXAS
NOVEMBER 2015





With an established and growing mix of public and private uses, Midtown is among Houston's most vibrant neighborhoods.

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How to use this document

The Midtown Cultural Arts Master Plan integrates established and emergent practices of neighborhood placemaking through cultural arts and extensive input from community stakeholders, producing a series of connected strategies to guide Midtown's cultural arts agenda for the next decade.

To both emphasize the relationships between the Master Plan's recommendations and to better facilitate their implementation, this document has been designed to be interactive.

[Blue underlined text](#) indicates a hyperlink to relevant information, such as policies or sources of data that might be used to implement key elements of the Master Plan. Clicking on this text in the document will open the corresponding URL in your web browser.

[Gray underlined text](#) indicates an internal link to another section elsewhere within in the Master Plan, such as a figure or related recommendation. Clicking on this document will open the corresponding section of the document.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

In addition to being one of Houston's most walkable neighborhoods, Midtown is also served by the city's METRORail.

CONTEXT

INTRODUCTION

Midtown is a pedestrian-oriented urban district southwest of Downtown Houston. The neighborhood is uniquely positioned in the heart of the city. Midtown's boundaries can be roughly defined as the properties south of I-45 (Pierce Elevated), west of SH 288, north of US 59 and east of Montrose and Freedmen's Town. The northwest segment of this area is less easily defined and incorporates property west of Bagby Street. Being geographically surrounded by freeways not only gives it easily identifiable borders, but also makes Midtown readily accessible from any part of Houston. Additionally, with three METRO Rail stations located within its boundaries, Midtown has access to every transit option in Houston at its front door.

Midtown is a vibrant neighborhood with approximately 767 acres of land within its boundaries and roughly 300 acres that have not been redeveloped. Midtown's 22.9 miles of streets and approximately 325 city blocks identify it as an obvious extension of what is now Downtown.

Midtown continues to thrive and grow with both new construction and restoration of historical structures. The growth and improvements in the community are overseen by the Midtown Redevelopment Authority and the Midtown Management District with the support of the City of Houston and franchise utility entities.

CULTURAL ARTS IN MIDTOWN

There is no shortage of culture in Midtown. The community is home to over 90 cultural arts organizations including theaters, galleries, music venues, dance studios and creative businesses who are vested in the community and historically prominent to Houston. In addition to arts organizations, Midtown is also known as one of Houston's best culinary destinations with more than 30 chef-owned restaurants. Midtown celebrates this creative culture by sponsoring art projects such as Eyeful Art Murals and Designs' mural "Preservons La Creation," the largest Mural in Houston, and by hosting Art in the Park an annual art event that draws approximately 5000 visitors a year.

Figure 1: Regional Context

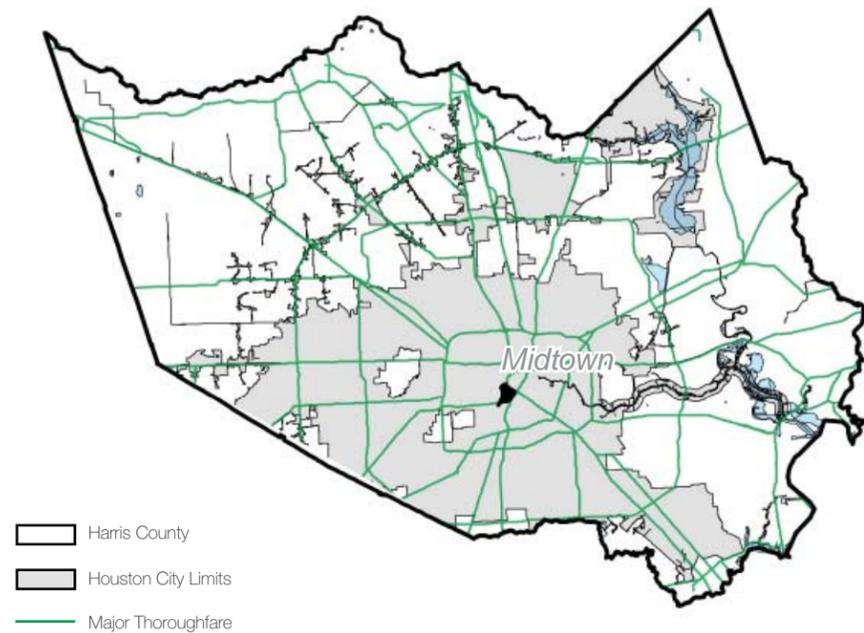


Figure 2: Neighborhood Context



OVERVIEW

THE MIDTOWN MANAGEMENT DISTRICT

The Midtown Management District (the District), created in 2000, levies an assessment paid by property owners for programs, maintenance and services that benefit the District. The District has a board of directors (appointed by the Texas State Legislature) that oversees a 10-year service plan guiding all marketing, public safety, urban planning, cultural arts and entertainment, and service and maintenance efforts within the district. In 2010, the District received a highly esteemed Cultural Arts & Entertainment Designation from the State of Texas. Midtown is the first Management District in the State of Texas to receive the Cultural Arts and Entertainment District Designation.

THE MIDTOWN REDEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY

The Midtown Redevelopment Authority (the Authority) oversees the Reinvestment Zone Number Two, City of Houston, Texas (the Midtown TIRZ) and is responsible for physical and capital improvements in Midtown. In 1995, the TIRZ was created “freezing” the ad valorem taxes generated from the district for 30 years. From the baseline appraised value of \$211 million, every increase in value and the taxes it generated is committed to the District for 30 years. Today, the appraised value of property in the district is over \$1.6 billion. This gives the Authority the ability to issue bonds based on the current and anticipated increase in value.

The Authority uses the TIRZ funds to improve the District by providing services for basic infrastructure improvements in the District. The Authority focuses its efforts on the following service areas: economic development; residential development; and public right of way improvements. These services range from affordable housing and parking garages to adding park space and wide, beautiful sidewalks with great streetscapes and decorative street lamps for the District. Through the Authority's implementation of highly successful infrastructure projects, the General Assembly has twice extended the life of the Midtown TIRZ. The first extension, in 2011, renewed the TIRZ through 2033, while the second, in 2015, will run through 2048.

While the District is responsible for maintaining the Cultural Arts District designation, the Authority is a critical partner in implementation of the Cultural Arts Master Plan.

MIDTOWN CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION

As authorized by [H.B. 2208 of the 79th Legislature](#), the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA) designates cultural districts in cities across Texas through a competitive application process. Cultural districts are special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization. These districts can become focal points for generating businesses, attracting tourists, stimulating cultural development and fostering civic pride.

The Cultural District designation does not come with funding, but qualifies the district and nonprofit groups within it to apply for state and national project grants. To receive grant funding, a strategic plan is preferred so that funders can see how the project fits into the overall vision. The strategic plan must articulate how each strategy recommendation fits into the overall vision and furthers community-supported goals.

PURPOSE OF THE PLAN

The purpose of the Cultural Arts Master Plan (CAMP) is to engage Midtown and the applicable community in creating a 10-year cultural arts strategic plan. The CAMP will be used as a guide in strategic decision making over the course of its 10-year relevance. The process will allow Midtown to define what the Cultural Arts & Entertainment District designation means in the context of local resources, energy and vision.

The recommendations in this plan will:

- Identify partnerships
CAMP will identify key organizations that can assist Midtown in leveraging state, federal and local funding to maintain the Cultural Arts District Designation.
- Guide capital improvements
CAMP will suggest a framework plan for locating future cultural art investment and a set of guidelines for selecting artwork.
- Propose policy changes
CAMP will recommend changes to the District

policy in order to establish a sustainable protocol for managing, maintaining and funding cultural art within Midtown.

FUTURE CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendations in this plan are specifically geared toward the Midtown Management District. However, as the Midtown Redevelopment Authority, City of Houston and others as appropriate continue to invest in Midtown, there are key considerations that they should keep in mind to support and strengthen cultural arts within the district. The following are a few key considerations:

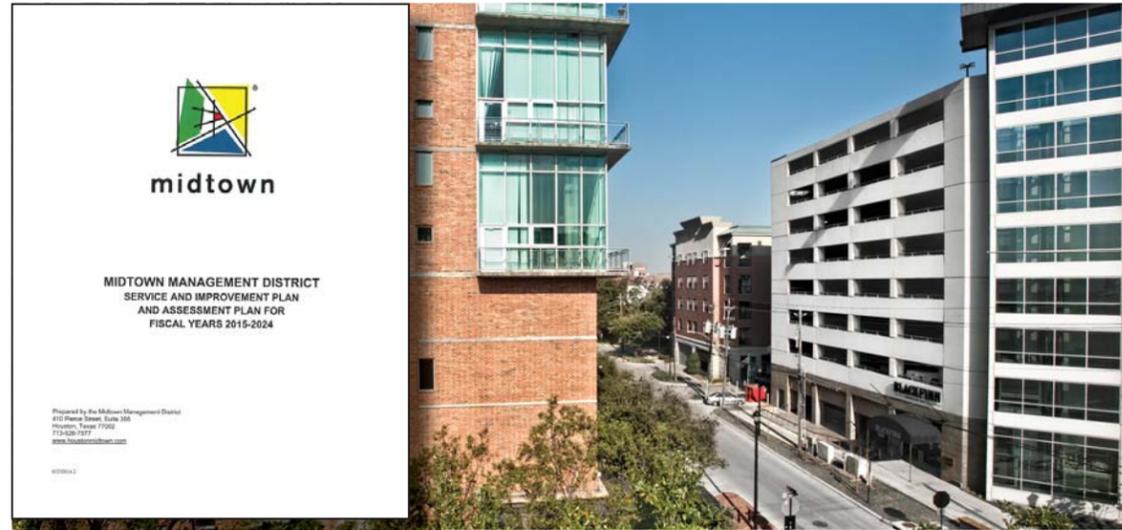
- Incorporate art into private development
As a vibrant neighborhood in Central Houston, Midtown will continue to see mixed use redevelopment. Midtown and the City of Houston should work with developers to incorporate cultural art amenities such as restaurants, creative work spaces and cultural art venues.
- Support affordable artists spaces
As Midtown continues to solidify its identity as a citywide destination, it will be critical for the District to maintain a diverse mix of both visitors, patrons and creators of cultural art.
- Percent for Art Funds
Many successful cultural districts fund public art through percent for art funds. The term percent for art refers to a program, often a city ordinance, where a fee, usually some percentage of the project cost, is placed on large scale development projects in order to fund and install public art.



EXISTING CULTURAL ARTS PLANNING IN MIDTOWN

EXISTING CULTURAL ARTS PLANNING IN MIDTOWN

The District is forward thinking in its efforts to sustain its unique identity and vibrant cultural arts even as it continues to redevelop. There are several existing planning efforts that the District has put in place that lay the foundation for the goals and strategies recommended in this plan.

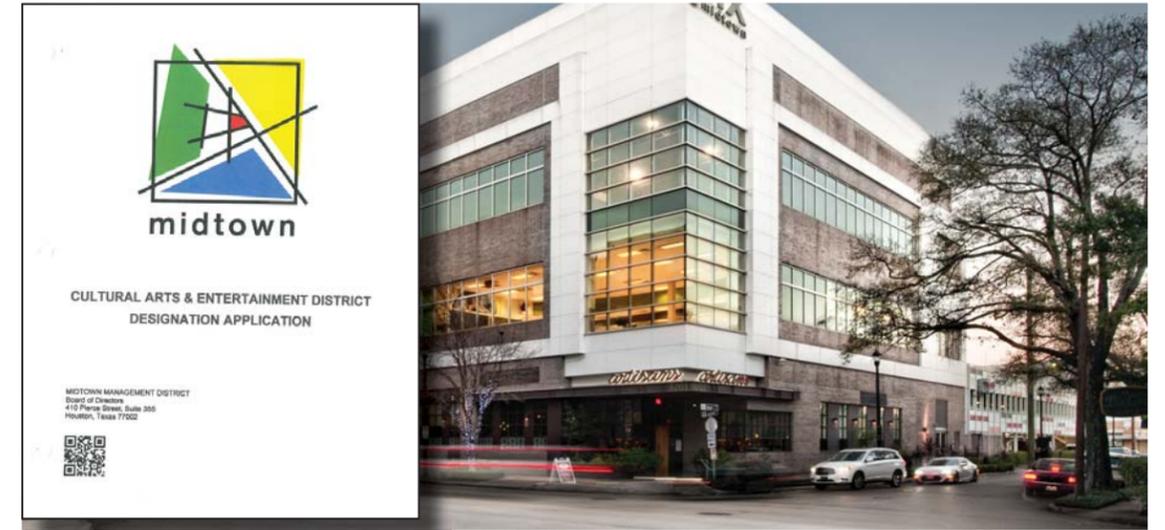


[THE 2015-2024 MANAGEMENT DISTRICT SERVICE PLAN](#)

This document constitutes a 10-year Service and Improvement Plan and Assessment Plan (Service Plan), for the District for Fiscal Years 2015-2024. This Service Plan sets forth the mission, goals, and objectives of the District and describes the services and improvements to be provided by the District. The Service Plan prioritizes cultural art goals and objectives throughout. Of the 40 goals listed in the service plan, 16 of them are related to arts programs, policies and projects. Some of the objectives listed include:

- Establish a formal review process for the District to recruit, accept, review, and implement temporary and permanent public art and civic art programs.
- Analyze current cultural and entertainment activities and plan for future programming.
- Activate the Midtown parks with cultural and entertainment programs reflective of our diverse community.
- Convene various District arts organizations, residents, real estate affiliates and other sectors annually creating a focus group that will provide feedback for the cultural arts and entertainment programs.
- Work collaboratively to respond to requests for quality of life enhancements and opportunities for artists.
- Delineate District gateways with public art.
- Establish a formal review process for the District to recruit, accept, review, and implement temporary and permanent public art and civic art programs.
- Analyze current cultural and entertainment activities and plan for future programming.
- Activate the Midtown parks with cultural and entertainment programs reflective of our diverse community.
- Convene various District arts organizations, residents, real estate affiliates and other sectors annually creating a focus group that will provide feedback for the cultural arts and entertainment programs.
- Work collaboratively to respond to requests for quality of life enhancements and opportunities for artists.

The CAMP will incorporate the objectives listed above into actionable programs, policies and projects and recommend an implementation plan to see the objectives become a reality.



MIDTOWN CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION APPLICATION

The application for the Cultural Arts and Entertainment Designation lays out a strategic plan for maintaining the cultural arts designation which includes goals and an overview of the management structure.

The goals for the Cultural Arts and Entertainment District are:

- To create arts based jobs and to increase the overall economic growth within the framework of cultural development.
- To engage the arts community and the business community in collaborative efforts to offer community based events, educational workshops, public art projects and programming that create arts based economic growth for the entire Midtown area.
- Increased tourism to the Midtown community by growing current arts related events and adding new projects and events.
- To encourage development of new arts and arts related organizations within the boundaries of Midtown.

To manage the designation, the application proposes a plan to establish a Cultural Arts and Entertainment District Committee. This committee has been created, but the CAMP will help articulate the role of this committee beyond coordinating events. This committee can also expand to oversee the implementation of the plan and allocate funding, oversee acquisition of artwork and support creative expression throughout the district.

VISION, CHALLENGE AND RESOLUTION

VISION

The CAMP should be a guide to strategic decision making over the course of its 10-year relevance. This process will allow Midtown to develop policies, projects and programs in the context of local resources, energy and vision. The CAMP should provide clear guidelines for prioritizing cultural arts efforts and outline the required resources and capacity necessary to provide these services. The CAMP should foster cultural art that is inclusive, diverse, accessible and exciting. The outcome should be uniquely "Midtown"; a direct reflection of the people living, working and creating in the community.

CHALLENGE

The cultural art amenities within Midtown are individually strong, but there is limited accessibility and coordination among them. In addition, there is no clearly defined process to facilitate, manage, promote, and maintain cultural arts amenities within Midtown. How can the District coordinate the effort among the various art entities within Midtown and provide the necessary support and organization to foster a vibrant and celebrated district?

APPROACH

The CAMP will communicate implementable projects, policies, and programs to multiple agencies in Midtown with clear guidelines, responsibilities and intended value for investment over the next 10 years. Emphasis should be placed on coordination and collaboration among cultural arts organizations in order to strengthen and celebrate the existing cultural arts amenities already thriving within the district.



The Midtown Cultural Arts and Entertainment District is home to more than 90 art venues.

GOALS

GOALS

At the beginning of the project, the team identified four goals derived from the previous planning efforts and input from the client team, arts organizations and the community. The goals were validated and confirmed by participants of the CAMP Vision Workshop.



GOAL 1: DEVELOP A MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE FOR IMPLEMENTING AND MAINTAINING MIDTOWN'S CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT DISTRICT DESIGNATION.



GOAL 2: ENSURE THAT CULTURAL ARTS AND ENTERTAINMENT IS INCLUSIVE OF ALL FORMS OF EXPRESSION AND INCLUDES DIVERSE PROGRAMS, POLICIES AND PROJECTS THAT ARE ACCESSIBLE TO ALL.



GOAL 3: SUPPORT AND STRENGTHEN EXISTING CULTURAL ART VENUES AND AMENITIES.



GOAL 4: INSPIRE CREATIVITY IN THE PUBLIC REALM.

VISION WORKSHOP

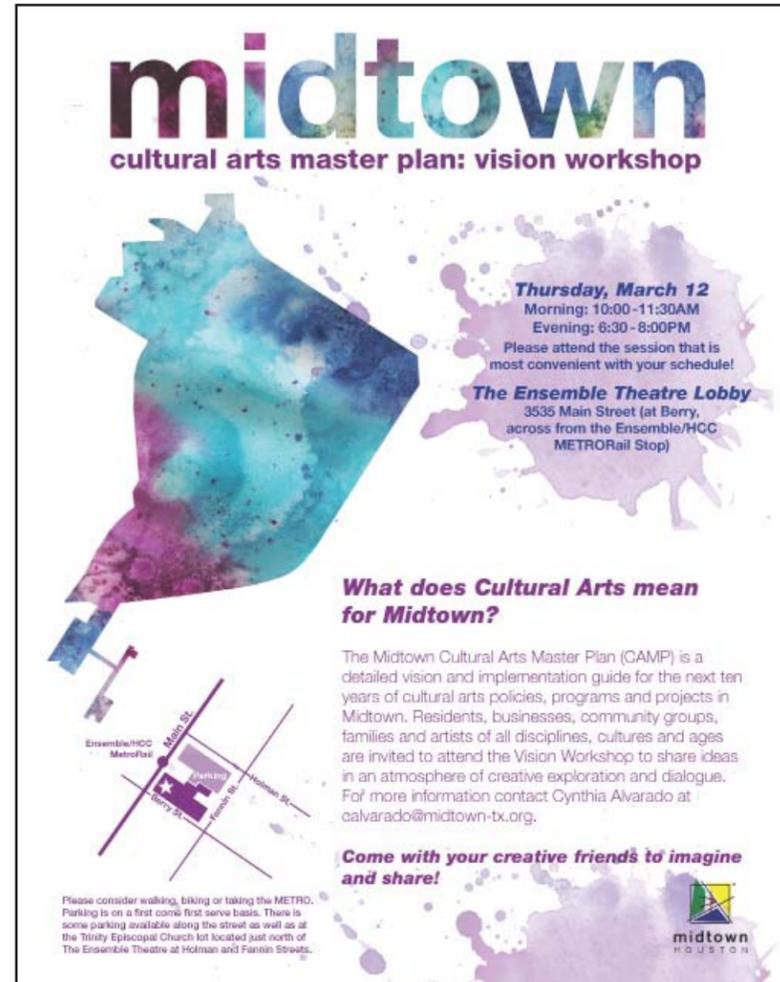
VISION WORKSHOP

The project team engaged the arts community and the local leadership in a half-day workshop to develop a vision for the CAMP. The Vision Workshop solidified the goals of the plan, identified cultural arts resources through an asset mapping exercise, and identified potential projects policies and programs with a sticky-note brainstorming exercise. Keypad polling was used to prioritize strategies and goals immediately and allow the group to view and discuss challenges and opportunities in real time.

STICKY-NOTE BRAINSTORM

A brainstorming exercise was conducted to identify potential projects, policies and programs and to identify how participants define cultural art in Midtown. The key takeaways from the brainstorming exercise were:

- Cultural arts should be integrated into the fabric of the area as much as possible. Many suggestions for artistic lighting, painted crosswalks, sidewalk art, murals and outdoor sculpture installations.
- Cultural arts should be interactive. Whether the pieces themselves are interactive, in a functional or entertaining way, or their creation is interactive. There should be opportunities for locals to contribute via contests, grants and kickstarters.
- There should be opportunities for more informal performance such as outdoor performance space, jazz festivals, street festivals, even a suggestion to remove the noise ordinance.
- It should be unique. The area should feel organically hip, eclectic and youth-driven. It should feel like an “incubator” for talent.
- There should be many art-driven events. Suggestions included First Thursdays, art crawls, art shows and poetry readings. Suggestions for some kind of main event that will draw interest. A set trail leading people to significant art displays, such as Boston’s Freedom Trail, or a large-scale public installation.
- There should be a component of public outreach, for both artists and homeless and underprivileged in the area.
- Cultural art should be easily accessible and walkable. It should encourage people to visit and stay awhile, with food trucks, bars, restaurants, etc.



midtown
cultural arts master plan: vision workshop

Thursday, March 12
Morning: 10:00 - 11:30AM
Evening: 6:30 - 8:00PM
Please attend the session that is most convenient with your schedule!

The Ensemble Theatre Lobby
3535 Main Street (at Berry, across from the Ensemble/HCC METRO Rail Stop)

What does Cultural Arts mean for Midtown?

The Midtown Cultural Arts Master Plan (CAMP) is a detailed vision and implementation guide for the next ten years of cultural arts policies, programs and projects in Midtown. Residents, businesses, community groups, families and artists of all disciplines, cultures and ages are invited to attend the Vision Workshop to share ideas in an atmosphere of creative exploration and dialogue. For more information contact Cynthia Alvarado at calvarado@midtown-tx.org.

Come with your creative friends to imagine and share!

Please consider walking, biking or taking the METRO. Parking is on a first come first serve basis. There is some parking available along the street as well as at the Trinity Episcopal Church lot located just north of The Ensemble Theatre at Holman and Fannin Streets.

midtown HOUSTON



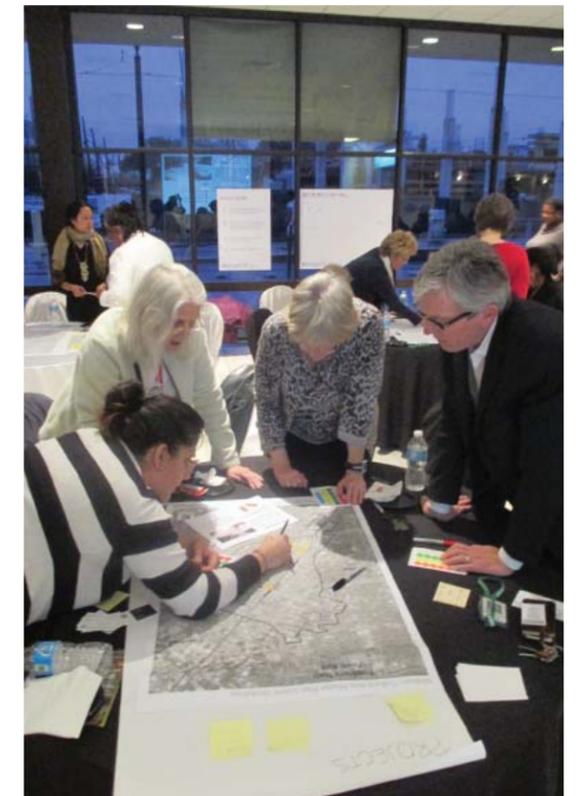
Vision Workshop participants brainstormed strategies to include in the Cultural Art Master Plan.

VISION WORKSHOP

MAPPING EXERCISE

For the mapping exercise, participants were asked to place a colored sticky dot on places of cultural interest. As is discussed further in the [Existing Cultural Amenities](#) section of the Resource Assessment chapter, the color of the dot corresponded to a different type of cultural amenity. Blue dots corresponded to restaurants and entertainment venues; yellow dots corresponded to cultural art facilities; purple dots corresponded to creative businesses; red dots corresponded to works of art; and green dots corresponded to community services. This activity helped identify the existing cultural arts facilities, creative businesses, works of arts and entertainment venues within Midtown. Participants also identified areas that lacked cultural resources and nodes within the district that have clusters of cultural destinations. The key takeaways from the mapping exercise were:

- There seems to be perceived hubs of activity in the south-central part of the study area, near The Ensemble Theatre, and then another smaller node of activity at the southernmost tip, near the Museum District.
- There was a distinct lack of activity on the east side of the study area, particularly as you head north. This was also called out as an area in need of activation in several comments.
- The yellow dots were placed more than any other color at 114. Green dots were placed the least at 26, followed by red dots at 37. This could point to a perception of the Arts District having many facilities and venues for the enjoyment of the arts, but less notable singular pieces.
- The “Creator” Mural was the most mentioned single work of art.
- The MATCH was mentioned the most often overall.
- The Ensemble Theatre and Houston Community College were the most mentioned theaters by a wide margin.
- Continental Club was the single most mentioned entertainment venue, though areas around Brazos Street and Gray Street were cited as being hubs for bars and restaurants overall.
- Baldwin Park was the most mentioned point of cultural interest.
- The Buffalo Soldier was the most mentioned museum.
- Many people cited various murals, but called them different things, or placed them in slightly different locations. This could support the idea of a formal art crawl or trail, pointing out less obvious attractions.



Vision Workshop participants identified existing cultural art amenities.

