

Some thoughts on central critical issues in BCA's Artist Space Survey.

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Although there are a number of questions that are taken from another housing survey, the responsibility for this survey rests with BCA.

As a start, we artists (apparently the population the survey was sent out to) were told that the survey was one to be carried out by BCA to seek information on artists' spaces. As many people noted, both in comments written as answers to survey questions and in personal communication when the survey was circulating, it is clear that the intent of the survey was to help the City make the case to put housing in the Enterprise District.

The results of the survey do not support the City's case.

Regarding specific issues, there is no information linked to the survey of how the survey was made (for example, the methodological questions such as which population was surveyed, number contacted -- % respondents), etc., which are basic issues in conducting larger surveys. Not all of the respondents are Burlington residents, and only 24% of the respondents said that they paid rent on studios in the South End, which indicates that this is not a survey aimed at taking the pulse of the South End artist/renter community.

The final title of the survey is Burlington Artists Work Space and Housing Survey. This is fine, but the critical points are that these concepts are conflated in the actual survey, resulting in confusion for the respondent and for those who would like to glean the results of the survey.

As a start, several questions allow us to get a sense of the artist community that responded to the survey

Q1; what kind of art? 284 answers (50% painting/drawing/mixed media)

Q7: are you a full-time artist? 64.32% say no (Q8 logically asks if you have supplemental income which is unclear, but many have 3 - 40 hours a week -- very few artists live on their art).

Q2 56.49% work (do their art) in their homes and 23.86 work partially in their homes (14.74% do not work in their homes)

From Q2, most respondents answer that they work in some way or other in their homes. But there is nothing to assume that (a) for "yes" that is their only work space (you can work in your home and a studio even if you answer "partially"), or (b) for "no" those who do not work at home work in a separate studio.

Comment: this is the first in a series of misleading questions that do not specify "studio."

The question should have read:

In the following questions, please consider work place (for example for performers) and studio as equivalent.

Do you work exclusively from a studio at home? Do you have a separate studio from your home?

Note also that up to about 80% of these artists are already in a live/work environment. Keep this in mind when we look at later misleading questions on live/work space. The first of these is the next two question Q3 and Q4.

Where in the area would you prefer to locate your studio or live/work space if you had a choice?

It is here that definitions needed to be made clear and since they were not, the answers are invalid.

For example, define what is meant by a live/work space and why the question is being asked. This could be done by stating the following:

We define live/work space as a specially built type of housing in which the artist has both a residence and a studio.

And, this could be stated to remain above board in honesty with the artists:

We are mainly attempting to assess the support for building this kind of housing in the South End Enterprise Zone. It is well known that allowing residential zoning in traditionally industrial artists' areas raises rents for studios as well as commercial spaces and drives out both the artists and the businesses. Knowing this, would you want live/work spaces in the Enterprise District?

That way, Q4 would make more sense since most respondents are already living in a live/work space and specific questions could then be asked such as:

Would you generally prefer to live in such a live/work housing unit if it was affordable?

Would you prefer to live in such a live/work housing unit if it was affordable and built in the Enterprise District?

Back to Q3 which should have followed Q4. The question: "where would you prefer to locate your studio or live/work space?" is misleading. This is clear in the answers some of which are about studio space only and others about live/work space that is either specially built (which is the hidden agenda of the survey) or is the naturally occurring way to maintain art and affordability. The answers

- a. could be read as studio only
- b. the answers could be read as live/work space built housing only
- c. the answers could be read as yes (or no), "I would love to live in that area and have my studio there" (not the assumed built live/work housing that the survey implies).

You get a sense that the respondents were not hoodwinked with this question by reading the comments. Also note that, based on this question, the majority do not want to locate either studio or live/work space in the South End, and that the much later question Q25 asks about living in the South End most of them do "if appropriate housing were available" (appropriate housing here is misleading).

The questions should have been:

Where in the area would you prefer to locate your studio?

Would you consider living in such a live/work housing unit if it were built in the South End Enterprise Zone?

Would you consider living in such a live/work housing unit if it were built in the South End outside the Enterprise Zone?

Would you consider living in such a live/work housing if it were built somewhere else? Which area would be your choice?

So, with this in mind, the answers to Q5 and Q6 are inconclusive and misleading if you are trying to find answers to studio rental or built live/work housing. Many artists would love to have an affordable studio in the South End (several comments make this distinction clear). They would read Q5 as how much would they pay for a studio. Numbers: 238 out of 286 responded, 60.92% yes, in the follow up 161 responded (slightly higher than the 60.92%).

For example, if you answer yes to Q4 then Q5 how much could you afford to pay for a live/work situation, and the distinction about built live/work housing is not made clear, then this question should read as follows:

If you are interested in renting a built live/work housing unit, how much could you afford? With a quick look through responses to Q5 the average affordable rent comes out to just about \$875 month. What kind of space would that cover in this live/work space scenario?

For reasons stated earlier (lack of distinction between studio, live/work situations already in or similar, or built live/work housing) Q6 is again misleading and that is reflected in the answers. For example, answer numbers 1 through 39 include 19 who need 800-1200 sq ft for their "live/work space" but there are also 4 who need 100-300, 3 who need 300-500, and 5 who need 500-800 sq ft. These would then be houses that

include at least one living room, one kitchen/dining, and one studio. A single-level tiny house of this type could, as a minimum, then need about 400 sq ft to have a 10 x 10 studio. In Q15: the ideal size start at 100 and go up to about 800, with many requiring 300 - 500 sq ft. would mean a live/work housing unit at least 1000 sq ft. Add to this special needs (Q16, Q17, Q18) and you begin to see that in spite of BCA's efforts to make the survey look like artists support built live/work housing (ie since the basic distinctions were not shared), the answers are unreliable.

Nothing in the survey states that affordability of studio needs to be connected to affordability of housing (they can be separate issues), although the questions seem to be set up to do this. This hoodwinking is compounded by the lack of clarity in distinguishing studio and built live/work housing in all of the questions relating to housing only. For example, Q33 asks which factors are important in looking for a new home, etc. There are a lot of questions about housing that follow, some of which are odd. It seems that these questions were tacked on to the BCA survey from another survey called SE Employee Housing Survey.

I will not go through this parallel survey at this time (unclear which employees were contacted, etc -- or who did the survey, CHT?), other than note Q2 and Q3 which ask if you are living in Burlington and if not would be interested in living in the South End (yes, 60.28% from 151 of 214 respondents), a question that once again does not ask if any of these people would like to live in housing in the Enterprise Zone. For these and similar reasons, the SE Employee survey is inconclusive in that regard and should not be used to push housing in the Enterprise Zone.

Getting back to the BCA artists survey and the housing questions I will only note the following. Some questions were taken directly from the SE Employee survey and are senseless such as Q26: would you live in a 3 or 4 story building with an elevator etc if it was built (you can answer yes or no to this irrelevant to the question of where it would be located since the question is not tied to the question of where).

Although it is interesting to know how and where artists live and what they would like to live in, there is nothing in the housing questions that imply that the solution to any issue is to build housing in the Enterprise Zone.

There is nothing in this survey that supports building any kind of housing in the South End Enterprise Zone.