



## ARTS & AFFORDABILITY

While the South End is home to an evolving landscape of businesses and jobs, it is also well-known as one of the City’s arts districts. Thriving arts and maker districts contain a variety of uses and are in a constant state of motion—and the South End is no different.

As “urban pioneers,” artists benefit from setting up shop in areas with low rents or high vacancy. Over time, as neighborhoods evolve, rising rents leave artists reacting to the forces around them instead of having the ability to control where they work and what they pay. **The Arts & Affordability Toolkit is an important resource and companion to this plan.** The Toolkit, (Appendix D) outlines a number of potential strategies that could be explored to help artists take the reins in determining the future of arts space in the South End.



IMAGE SOURCE: AS220.ORG



***“I think we need to try and find ways for the artists to be able to do some kind of a co-op, gain financial control over their spaces so they’re not at the whim of owners that decide to sell...to others who might be able to pay a little more.”*** COMMUNITY COMMENT FROM PHONE BOOTH AT ARTS RIOT

Many of the strategies in the Toolkit discuss models for artists' ownership or partnership in the management of arts spaces. While it's certainly not the only strategy for preserving arts and affordability in the South End, it is an important one.

Ownership can be one of the most successful ways to ensure ongoing affordability. But being in control requires much more than simply owning space. The capacity to lead and manage the acquisition, development, programming, maintenance, and operations of a building is a must for any organization or individual interested in providing arts space. In a city of Burlington's size, the capacity to provide these spaces will depend on pooling a variety of resources and actors within and outside of the South End. And it's good business to pull in a variety of people and organizations—many of the skills and resources needed to acquire and manage affordable space go well beyond what most artists have the capacity to provide. Taking on responsibilities of real estate development or property management can be a big distraction from the making. On the flip side, owners and managers of commercial space may not have a thorough understanding of the current and future space and programming needs of an arts district.

The City of Burlington is committed to ensuring affordable artist and maker spaces are sustained and grown as the city and South End change. What can be done to keep things moving forward?

**planBTV South End outlines strategies to support and grow:**

- collaboration and continued support for organizations that can strengthen the arts district
- models of ownership/property development to address the affordability and availability of artist's space in the South End
- visibility and density of the district that brings customers and vibrancy

## Strategies for Arts & Affordability

### ENHANCE COLLABORATION AND SET UP FOR SUCCESS.

There are opportunities to strengthen the South End as an arts district through partnerships that combine a variety of arts, business and property management expertise.

 **Prepare an assessment of the economic impact of the arts and identify space/resource needs.** This assessment should include an inventory of the current arts-related economic activity, supporting resources/infrastructure in the City today, and needs for the future. The role of and opportunities for the South End as an arts district should be clearly identified—what types of arts spaces and resources will be successful in an arts/maker/enterprise district.

 *Work with partners to prepare an assessment of the economic impacts of the arts; identify specific opportunities for the South End.*

 *Burlington City Arts, Community & Economic Development Office, CHT*

 **Form a Collaborative Working Group** representing a broad array of skills and perspectives to support each other. Think of it as the “South End Maker Space Water Cooler”—a melting pot of ideas and relationships where conversations happen, ideas are born, and people are connected. What should it do? The Arts & Affordability Toolkit outlines some of the key players that should be involved in this working group and some of the critical first steps this group could pursue in order to expand space available for an arts district. A quick snapshot includes:

- **Gather South End artists & makers** in a discussion about their goals and needs for an arts district.
- **Gather South End property owners** to discuss their goals, worries, needs.

- **Create a Technical Assistance team of experts** in brownfields, finance, and property management and arts district programming to advise developers and arts entrepreneurs.
- **Engage landlords of artist space in honest (and difficult) conversations** about generational transitions and future plans.
- **Get the Burlington City Arts (BCA) market studies out there!** Developers and property owners need solid numbers to help them provide appropriate spaces.
- **Maintain a database of artists/makers with space needs** as a supplement to the market studies.
- **Publish the Arts & Affordability Toolkit** (an appendix to this plan) online and educate!
- **Think about capacity and leadership.** What needs to happen? Who can lead?
- **Don't get overwhelmed!** Pick one project, even if small, and focus on getting the system and capacity in place to succeed! Word on the street indicates a cooperative arts/maker retail space would be a great first goal.

 *Create a South End Working Group; write a mission statement, and set goals and a timeline for results.*

 *Participants may include: SEABA, Burlington City Arts, Community & Economic Development Office, state-wide agencies and organizations, developers, property owners*

 **Continue to support Burlington City Arts (BCA), South End Arts and Business Association (SEABA), and other arts organizations.** BCA can play an instrumental role in ensuring South End artists continue to thrive and grow by offering mentorship and technical assistance. SEABA can lead the way locally, by engaging in collaborative relationships and participating in the recommended South End Working Group. BCA and SEABA will need to work closely together to achieve goals.

## **EXPLORE STRATEGIES FOR PRESERVING AND CREATING AFFORDABLE ARTIST SPACE.**

There are opportunities to proactively preserve/create affordable artist space in the South End through partnerships that combine financial, technical and management expertise.

 **Evaluate models for preserving/creating affordable artist space.** The Arts & Affordability Toolkit outlines a range of models that could be utilized to provide space. Each of these models presents its own benefits and challenges. These models, and properties that may be good candidates to deploy these models, are discussed in greater detail in the Toolkit:

- **artists/maker owned models:** common artists-as-owners structures include: an individual mission-driven artist as a developer; artist-owned spaces through a cooperative or an LLC; artist or non-profit organization joint venture with a developer; and arts organizations that own/lease space to others
- **non-profit and for-profit developers models:** artist space projects are complicated, and much needed expertise and resources can be gained by working with non-profit developers, for-profit mission-driven developers, or other for-profit developers
- **artist space through City actions models:** this could include a policy for affordable arts components of new development on City-owned land, or as a component of disposition and/or redevelopment of City-owned property

 *Use the Toolkit to evaluate sites/buildings which may be good candidates for new space. Use market data and results of the arts assessment to create a viable arts/maker business plan and approach developers; consider a city policy about arts space in public projects. (See page 116).*

 *To be used by organizations such as South End Working Group, SEABA, Burlington City Arts, Community & Economic Development Office, property owners, developers*

**Create zoning and development regulations to help expand the supply of artist space.**

Zoning strategies can be used to encourage, or even require, new affordable spaces for production and display. However, a balanced, feasibility-based approach is important. Make the regulations too weak, the South End has lost an opportunity to expand its inventory of artist and maker space. But require projects to provide too much subsidy—either in the amount of artist/maker space or in the limits on rent or sales price—and a project could become financially infeasible. Regulatory strategies to consider are spelled out in more detail in the Arts & Affordability Toolkit, and include:

- **Consider incentives for new development projects to incorporate a portion of arts space** to ensure that the inventory of arts/maker space grows along with other uses. A typical range is 5-10% of the project square footage. This requirement could identify work space, performance/exhibit space, or space for public art on the ground floor/ exterior of buildings. This requirement must be carefully informed by the City’s development economics and the results of BCA’s market study for new spaces.
- **Establish a process for verifying tenants/occupants**, when space is provided that is meant to be preserved as affordable or used exclusively by artists. This will help ensure the proper use of subsidized spaces and prevent gentrification/displacement of artists by non-artists within arts-specific projects.
- **Provide incentives for creation/preservation of arts space in existing commercial buildings.** Incentives could include: a code/regulations advocate that helps landlords understand what and how to improve spaces while retaining affordability; providing tax breaks or grants to offset costs of code compliance and upgrades without passing the costs of improvements to artist tenants; or, allowing increased density/ infill on sites to help retain affordability.

Consider the appropriate zoning and development regulations to reinforce the South End as an arts district. (See page 40).

Dept. of Planning & Zoning, Community & Economic Development Office, Burlington City Arts, South End Working Group, SEABA, developers

**EXPAND THE VISIBILITY OF THE ARTS DISTRICT TO PRESERVE AND ENHANCE ITS VIBRANCY.**

**Continue to incorporate the arts and the story of the neighborhood’s history into the physical fabric of the South End.** Strengthen the visibility of the arts by prioritizing the retention (and expansion where possible) of existing buildings to support artists and makers, and encourage creative use of building façades, public space and signage.

Implement the Parks recommendation of this plan to incorporate a Pine Street Arts Corridor and Linear Arts Park (See page 78) into the South End. Consider additional opportunities for self-guided tours/apps to communicate these stories.

Department of Parks, Recreation & Waterfront, Department of Planning & Zoning, Burlington City Arts, SEABA

**Communicate the South End’s unique character and advantages** to potential and future arts and maker enterprises/ venues and their visitors/consumers.

Continue and expand upon existing marketing, events, and infrastructure, like South End Arts Hop, to increase visibility and create a critical mass of resources and enthusiasts to support the district.

Efforts by SEABA, Burlington City Arts, Community & Economic Development Office



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