

MINT HILL CULTURAL ACTION PLAN

Prepared by Hyperion Associates
on behalf of
the Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg, Inc.
and
the Town of Mint Hill, North Carolina

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Finally, thanks to the citizens who participated in the wonderful scarecrow competition. Their work made the Mint Hill Cultural Summit something to crow about.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The Town of Mint Hill and the Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg initiated a cultural planning process in Mint Hill. The goal of the plan is to learn what arts and cultural resources and activities citizens of the community desire. The plan will guide the arts and cultural development work of the Arts & Science Council and the Town of Mint Hill over the next several years. The plan acknowledges and relies on a number of important assets within Mint Hill upon which cultural development can build and makes connections between recommended arts and cultural development initiatives and broader community goals.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS AND RELATED RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a high level of citizen interest in arts and cultural development and the town supports certain cultural activities, but no municipal mechanism for systematic decision-making to advance cultural affairs exists.

The Town should create a municipal Committee on Arts and Culture charged with advising the town with regard to implementing this cultural plan, the development of cultural facilities and grounds, the expenditure of local and ASC funds, the creation of policies framing municipal support for festivals, the development of programs and services, and creating community support for the arts and culture. The ASC should provide information and assistance during the committee's first, formative year.

Mint Hill is investing in creating a downtown that functions as a bona fide center of community life and commerce. At the same time, arts and cultural activities are being stifled by a lack of available space.

Local arts and cultural development should support the emergence of the downtown as a center of civic activity, commerce, and citizen engagement. In particular, the community should create a public/private partnership to renovate the Bain Auditorium for use as an initial community cultural center, identify and reserve an additional parcel on the Town Hall Campus for a future community cultural center, and develop appropriate portions of the Town Hall Campus green for flexible festival and amphitheatre uses. The ASC should support these efforts with training and technical assistance that positions local leaders to make successful program, facility, and fundraising decisions as the project evolves.

Residents of Mint Hill participate in arts and cultural activities frequently, but consider the alternatives available in Mint Hill weak in quality and diversity.

The Arts and Culture Committee should enhance local programs' quality and diversity. Strategies recommended include continuing municipal sponsorship of Art in the Park, working with the Matthews Community Center to promote classes, theatrical productions, exhibitions and special events at that center to Mint Hill residents, providing for the rotating display of Mint Hill Arts members' work within Town Hall and providing the group with meeting space, engaging local arts leaders in ASC sponsored community arts development training, connecting local festival organizers to arts-related training and technical assistance through the ASC, determining the need for a municipal collection of festival equipment, supporting downtown merchants through special event coordination, continuing the scarecrow competition as an annual event, and encouraging membership in Mint Hill Arts. When Mint Hill Arts matures, it should explore the feasibility of creating shared studio spaces for local artists.

Residents of Mint Hill have difficulty locating accurate, complete, and timely information about available arts and cultural activities. In addition, artists and arts consumers are often isolated from one another.

The Arts and Culture Committee, the town, and the ASC should strengthen residents' access to information about the arts, artists, and cultural resources. Strategies for improving availability of information include increasing the frequency and cultural content of the town newsletter, including Mint Hill artists in the ASC Artist Directory, including local arts and cultural activities in the ASC's electronic Cultural Calendar, increasing the accessibility of the Cultural Calendar itself, linking local arts and cultural events and organizations' websites to the town website and keeping that information current, providing current marketing and media contact information to local arts and cultural leaders, and engaging the ASC's marketing and communications staff in the development of technical assistance programs.

Mint Hill has a growing population of resident artists and handful of on-going arts and cultural organizations. In order for arts and cultural activities to meet residents' needs, both artists and arts and cultural organizations will need support.

The Arts and Culture Committee, Mint Hill Arts, the Mint Hill Historical Society and the ASC should nurture the growth and development of local artists and arts and cultural organizations. Their work should include scheduling an ASC Artists' Café in Mint Hill, establishing an annual Mint Hill Arts Roundtable for networking and information exchange, using ASC services and grant funds to help advance the placement of the Earth Echoes collection within a suitable organizational home, and supporting the continuing site development efforts of the Mint Hill Historical Society. In addition, the ASC should take a leadership role in bringing together the various public and private owners and managers of Mecklenburg County's historic sites and begin a frank discussion of the prospects for shared programs, services, management, and marketing, including discussion of any potential mergers.

While Mint Hill's residents place high value on arts education, public school art teachers in Mint Hill face profound institutionalized constraints against delivering meaningful arts instruction.

The ASC and Mint Hill Arts should support local art teachers and arts instruction in the public schools. In particular, the ASC should work with ArtsTeach to make arts enrichment opportunities accessible to Mint Hill's schools and students, include all Mecklenburg schools and students in special opportunities and recognitions, and evaluate the efficacy of its current advocacy efforts in advancing arts instruction. Mint Hill Arts should reach out to parent groups supporting arts education and recruit them to membership and joint action.

Mint Hill has a number of neighborhood-based organizations that are interested in civic advancement in general and the development of a community cultural center in particular, but these groups lack connectivity to broader community affairs.

The town should strengthen links between Mint Hill's many neighborhoods and community-wide initiatives by forming a Neighborhood Organizations Forum through which these groups could connect, develop their own capacities, and engage in community-building activities. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with the Forum and its membership in developing arts and cultural programs for the community.

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PART ONE: FINDINGS

I. BACKGROUND

The Town of Mint Hill and the Arts & Science Council of Charlotte-Mecklenburg initiated a cultural planning process in Mint Hill. The goal of the plan is to learn what arts and cultural resources and activities citizens of the community desire. They retained a consulting firm, Hyperion Associates, to conduct that plan. Hyperion Associates used a variety of research techniques to learn more about Mint Hill's arts and cultural programs and services, its citizens and artists, and its aspirations as a community. This work has included

- Meeting with ASC Vice President for Planning Robert Bush, ASC Planning and Research Associate Katherine McAlpine Mooring, Town Manager Todd Lamb and Deputy Town Manager Brian Welch to discuss municipal issues and to tour the community.
- Touring the Country Doctor Museum and its site, the grounds adjacent to town hall, Philadelphia Presbyterian's Kerr Building, the Mint Hill Public Library, local parks, and the town hall itself to get a sense of the community spaces now available to support cultural meetings, events and activities.
- Engaging the UNC Institute for Urban Affairs to conduct a telephone survey testing resident preferences for leisure activities.
- Working with a locally appointed Cultural Action Plan Steering Committee in designing ways to reach out into the community, identifying key groups and individuals to engage in the process, and arranging a group of meetings hosted by Steering Committee members.
- Interviewing Mint Hill's municipal elected officials.
- Meeting with Craig Lewis to discuss the Lawrence Group's work in crafting the downtown Mint Hill plan.
- Researching local issues related to cultural development including demographic projections, land use issues, community history, municipal plans for infrastructure development, and economic development issues.
- Conducting an interview with the head librarian of the Mint Hill Library to learn about the library's experiences with cultural programming.
- Conducting small group meetings hosted by Steering Committee members with visual and performing artists and arts educators.
- Supporting artists in the visual arts discussion group, who decided to form and have formed a group called Mint Hill Arts. The group welcomes all artists, art supporters and creative thinkers. Mint Hill Arts has already become a focal point for local arts activity.
- Conducting a meeting of neighborhood association leaders, also hosted by Steering Committee members. Participants volunteered to survey their memberships concerning cultural preferences in general and their desire for a community cultural center in particular. A community cultural center is already under long-term discussion in the community and among elected officials.
- Developing, and distributing a Consumer Survey for neighborhood associations to use both via email and via printed copies for public drop-off sites (town hall; library) and neighbor-to-neighbor use.

- Conducting and analyzing the Consumer Survey Thanks to the work of these neighborhood organizations the citizen volunteers with whom they worked, data from a large number of Mint Hill residents has been incorporated in these finding.
- Presenting the Mint Hill Cultural Summit, an opportunity for the community to showcase its arts and cultural strengths, to learn about the findings of the plan, and to make suggestions for cultural development.

This plan will guide the arts and cultural development work of the Arts & Science Council and the Town of Mint Hill over the next several years. In acknowledgement of the cooperation between these two entities, the Arts & Science Council has granted the town of Town of Mint Hill a permanent seat on its board of directors and will provide an implementation grant to the town upon adoption of the plan.

II. LOCAL CULTURAL ASSETS

Mint Hill has a number of important assets upon which any plan for cultural development must build. These key cultural assets include

- **A well-used, welcoming public library.** The library enjoys a long tradition of community support, a relatively new facility, and a creative and flexible approach to cultural programs.
- **The very active Mint Hill Historical Society.** The Society is currently increasing its programming, building new community partnerships with artists and farmers, and enhancing its site to include new facilities. The Country Doctor Museum grounds and complex have become a focal point for community cultural activity.
- **A significant number of citizens who are practicing artists.** Mint Hill is home to artists working in many disciplines including vocal music, instrumental music, theatre, dance, storytelling, ceramics, painting, drawing, metalworking, textile arts, traditional crafts, and so forth.
- **The new Mint Hill Arts organization.** This organization, which grew out of the cultural planning process, is a nexus for local artists and arts supporters who come together regularly to share ideas and initiate action. This group, although very new, has already helped initiate the new Art in the Park festival, organized art activities for the Mint Hill Cultural Summit, and is working with the Mint Hill Historical Society in their consideration of using the Country Doctor Museum site as a home for increased arts programming.
- **Mint Hill Madness and several smaller festivals.** Madness is a successful and well-established community festival that draws a large crowd each year. Several smaller festivals including a family fun day, a car show, and barbeque, and a tractor show are also regular parts of the community's recreational year. The newer Art in the Park and Scottish festivals have recently come on board.
- **Earth Echoes, a private collection.** This collection of 10,000 masks, folk toys, puppets, musical instruments, dolls, eggs, traditional clothing, pottery, and ceramic and wooden figurines from around the world is privately owned by the Helms family of Mint Hill. Earth Echoes is a unique teaching collection, and its owners are currently seeking a way to make the collection permanently available to residents of the greater Charlotte area.

- **A strong tradition of community volunteerism.** Residents of Mint hill often volunteer through houses of worship, civic organizations, and area schools. Their work has supported a remarkable local athletic association, several strong special events including fairs and festivals, a range of school arts and enrichment activities, and many faith-based programs for children and families.
- **A citizenry that is generous in providing financial support for cultural activities.** The community's generosity has been demonstrated by meeting both the library's and the Mint Hill Historical Society's needs for capital support, by the many residents who give to the Arts & Science Council's annual fund drive, and by the many local businesses who regularly sponsor special cultural events.
- **Faith community support for the arts.** Mint Hill's faith community is home to much of the music accessible to residents, both as a part of worship services and by virtue of providing venues for public music presentations, including an annual Charlotte Symphony performance. In addition, area houses of worship conduct fairs, tours and special programs that often include the arts.
- **Local businesses whose work relies on or provides creative products.** Examples of these businesses include Lamon Records, Fat Man Fabrications, Monogram Magic, and Creative Naturescapes. The presence of businesses whose work is intimately related to creative endeavors often provides both a base of support and a cadre of local leaders for cultural development.
- **Elected officials who are prepared to invest in the quality of life in Mint Hill.** Elected officials demonstrate an enlightened understanding of the relationship of cultural opportunities to educational advancement, civil conduct, social cohesion, and economic development.
- **Emerging leaders at the neighborhood level.** With a growing interest in participating in municipal affairs, especially as they relate to issues of social cohesion and quality of life, these neighborhood leaders assisted in the community cultural planning process to ensure that their neighbors' needs and opinions were considered.
- **Undeveloped public lands in the heart of the downtown.** These lands could be developed, over time, to include outdoor and indoor spaces for a variety of purposes notably including community cultural uses. The site could support festival grounds, a modest amphitheatre, and even a dedicated community cultural center for classes, performances, workshops, and activities.
- **A very high level of citizen interest in cultural affairs.** Mint Hill's residents have high levels of attendance at special cultural events and are frequent library users. In addition, citizen responses in interviews, surveys, and public meetings related to this planning process revealed strong patterns of cultural participation and clear ideas for needed local arts and cultural development.

III. LOCAL ISSUES AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Every community faces a changing landscape of issues as they move forward through time; questions of arts and cultural development are a part of that landscape. Often, arts and cultural programs and services can have a positive impact on critical issues confronting citizens and elected officials alike.

Becoming a Full Service Community

Today in Mint Hill, the evolution from suburb to fully-fledged community is central to virtually all public decisions. Citizens express their expectation that Mint Hill develop a full complement of community services. Elected officials understand that as travel time to Charlotte increases (because of a growing population and traffic congestion), Mint Hill will need to provide more varied and robust recreation options for its residents. Arts and cultural programs are a critical component of any comprehensive approach to recreation.

A Sense of Place

In order to grow in a manner consistent with its aspirations, Mint Hill has begun to invest in the way it looks. Recent local efforts have begun to define and beautify the downtown area. These efforts to advance the physical appeal of the built environment help raise the community's visibility, strengthen its draw as an economic center, and increase residents' sense of place. All of those gains work together to increase residents' and businesses' pride in, and commitment to, Mint Hill. Cultural installations, exhibitions, and programs can and often do play a lead role in advancing the sense of place.

Honoring the Past and Inventing the Future

In the community conversations that were a part of this planning process, a theme emerged. Mint Hill's residents are committed to the idea of building a community identity that respects the past but also one that embraces the new. This very mixture, the honoring of the past and the welcoming and inventing of the future, is present within the broad outlines of arts and cultural programming. History programs and services and the traditional arts help honor and keep the past; expressive art forms and the sciences embrace and help define the future. Appropriate programming decisions can help Mint Hill develop the identity it seeks.

Connecting People's Lives

The people of Mint Hill are also anxious to find more ways of engaging new neighbors and neighborhoods in community affairs. As newcomers arrive, they seek avenues to make friends, to find people with common interests, and to link themselves more meaningfully to the community. Arts and cultural can help cement bridges between residents by providing opportunities for shared work and for exploring commonalities. The arts are also a place where individual differences in talents, interests, experiences, background and worldview make the community's voice truer, richer and more captivating. In addition, Mint Hill has a growing population of seniors and empty nesters. These residents, while not new to the community, require leisure-time activities that respect their skills and interests. For many, arts, science, and history activities and organizations can be vital links to the community, engaging their skills and providing continued, meaningful roles as contributors to civic life.

Promoting a Balanced Tax Base

In order to keep residential tax rates manageable, Mint Hill needs to continue attracting new businesses. Businesses, in turn, are attracted to areas with a high quality of life, including cultural life. Hence, the development of arts and cultural amenities is a sound part of any local economic development strategy. For the Town of Mint Hill, it makes sense to regard cultural amenities as a necessary part of its current efforts to advance a sustainable infrastructure supported by a balanced tax base.

IV. NEEDS AND PREFERENCES OF LOCAL RESIDENTS

This community cultural planning process has used three main methods for learning about the arts and cultural needs and preferences of local residents. First, a statistically reliable Cultural Life Telephone Survey has been conducted countywide. Data from Mint Hill has been extracted, and analyzed in comparison to countywide data. This survey provides information on attendance and participation patterns and preferences, travel time preferences, attitudes toward public funding of cultural activities, satisfaction with in-school arts instruction, beliefs about the contribution of arts and culture to quality of life and economic development, and private giving patterns and plans.

Second, a Consumer Survey was conducted. This survey is particular to Mint Hill. It looks more closely at the leisure time needs of local residents; their sense of which age groups need more service; the kinds of cultural events that would bring residents to the downtown; the quality, affordability, scheduling, diversity, location of, and adequacy of information about local cultural activities; the kinds of programs residents (both adults and children) would use in terms of content and format and the frequency with which they would use them. This survey also explores the question of how well utilized a community cultural space might be.

Third, the consultants conducted a series of one-on-one interviews and group meetings, including a community-wide Cultural Summit. These included community members identified by the Mint Hill Community Cultural Plan Steering Committee such as elected officials, municipal and library employees, teachers, neighborhood leaders, local artists, and civic leaders. Opinions and ideas from all these stakeholders were recorded in detail and, taken together, helped shape these findings.

A. The Telephone Survey

Each year, the Arts & Science Council contracts the UNC-Charlotte Urban Institute to conduct a statistically reliable telephone survey of the citizens of Mecklenburg County. This survey, called the Cultural Life in Mecklenburg County Survey, tests the opinions of residents about a variety of cultural issues. As a part of the Mint Hill Community Cultural Planning process, data from that survey provides a mechanism for learning about the opinions of Mint Hill's residents on many issues, and of comparing their opinions with those of the broader group of Mecklenburg County residents.

Frequency of Attendance

From this survey, we learn that 34.3% of Mint Hill's residents attend 1-3 cultural events per year, and another 25.7% participate in 4-6 events per year. These figures are a few percentage points higher than for Mecklenburg County as a whole.

Participation Versus Attendance in Cultural Activities

91.4% of Mint Hill's residents would like to either participate in or attend cultural events. Of these, 8.6% prefer to participate, 57.1% prefer to attend, and 22.9% prefer to do both. In comparison, residents countywide are more likely to wish to participate (18.4%) and to attend (57.5%), but less likely to wish to do both (14.7%).

Acceptable Travel Times to Adult Cultural Activities

Most Mint Hill residents (57.1%) would be willing to travel 15-30 minutes to participate in a cultural activity. Another 25.7% of respondents would travel longer. Hence, activities within the 16-30 minute travel zone are accessible to 82.8% of the population. This is a critical piece of planning

information, since travel time to Charlotte, the historic seat of the area's cultural programming options, can be expected to get longer in the foreseeable future due to traffic congestion. Soon, Charlotte's offerings will be beyond reach for many not in terms of distance but rather in terms of time.

As is common, Mint Hill's residents would drive longer to attend a cultural event than to participate in one. Forty percent (40%) would drive 15-30 minutes, and the remaining 60% would drive longer than 30 minutes to do so.

The Importance of Children's Cultural Participation

Mint Hillians, like all residents of Mecklenburg County, feel it is important for their children to be engaged with cultural activities. Most (64.3%) value participation for their children above attendance (7.1%), but a significant group (28.6%) feel both attendance and participation are of equivalent importance. No respondents believe neither attendance nor participation is important for children.

Acceptable Travel Times to Children's Cultural Activities

Parents in Mint Hill are willing to travel about as long to take their children to cultural activities as they are for their own cultural activities. In terms of children's cultural activities, half (50%) of parents would travel 15-30 minutes and an addition 50% would travel even longer.

Satisfaction with Arts Instruction in the Schools

Mint Hill's residents are somewhat less satisfied with the art instruction their children receive in the schools than are residents countywide. Twenty percent (20%) locally as compared to 31% countywide describe themselves as very satisfied. Ten percent (10%) locally as compared to 21.3% countywide describe themselves as somewhat satisfied. More Mint Hill respondents are neutral (40%) than residents countywide (24.4%). The remaining 30% of local residents are somewhat or very dissatisfied, as compared to 23.3% countywide. It seems clear from the history of this survey that respondents have very different expectations for, and therefore satisfaction with, school-based arts instruction.

Attendance Patterns

Overall, Mint Hill has a slightly higher rate (48.6%) of attendance at arts, science, and history programs than county residents as a whole (43.2%). It is interesting to look at the types of programs attended most frequently locally and countywide, and compare local differences to local availability of activities. On the following page, complete answers are charted. It seems likely that greater diversity of local offerings would lead to different attendance patterns.

MOST FREQUENTLY ATTENDED ARTS, SCIENCE, AND HISTORY PROGRAMS

	Mecklenburg County	Mint Hill
Nature/Science	33.5%	12%
School	19.3%	12%
Visual Arts	11.6%	4%
Theatre	10.7%	8%
Music	10.3%	28%
History	5.2%	12%
Dance	2.6%	0%
Other	6.9%	24%

Reasons for Attending Cultural Events

Most (44.1%) Mint Hillians and most residents countywide (53.3%) attend cultural events for entertainment or enjoyment. The next most frequently given reason (23.5% locally and 15.2% countywide) is cultural enlightenment, enrichment, or education.

Barriers to Attendance at Cultural Events

Residents of Mint Hill face two predominant barriers to attendance at cultural events, lack of time (61.1%) and lack of information about program availability (16.7%). Both these barriers are greater in Mint Hill than in the county as a whole for whom 46.6% lack time and 14.2% lack information. The greater number of residents in Mint Hill who feel they lack time for cultural events is probably yet another reflection of the fact that they must often travel outside of Mint Hill for cultural events, making the time commitment longer for them than for residents living in proximity to a greater number of cultural activities.

Locally Available Leisure-time Activities

Generally speaking, there are fewer locally available leisure-time activities in Mint Hill than in the county as a whole, or at least fewer about which residents are aware. Note that in the table on the following page age-appropriate social clubs/ nightlife for teens, arts and cultural programs for all ages, and history/heritage programs appear to be in especially short supply locally.

LOCALLY AVAILABLE LEISURE-TIME ACTIVITIES

	Mecklenburg County	Mint Hill
Age-appropriate social clubs/ nightlife for teens	22.9%	25.7%
History/heritage programs	50.8%	42.9%
Gardening & Landscaping classes	51.1%	47.1%
Nature, environmental, science programs for adults	51.4%	45.7%
Nature, environmental, science programs for teens	54.2%	47.7%
Nature, environmental, science programs for young children	59%	48.6%
Arts & cultural programs for teens	46.6%	28.6%
Arts & cultural programs for adults	58.9%	42.9%
Arts & cultural programs for young children	57.1%	40%
Bars, clubs & nightlife	74.1%	54.3%
Sports programs for adults	71.3%	55.9%
Sports programs for teens	78.4%	71.4%
Sports programs for young children	80.1%	68.6%

Opinions Concerning the Use of Public Funds for Cultural Programs

Mint Hill's residents believe in local public funding for cultural activities. They have a higher degree of support for local government funding of the arts (88.6% locally, 78.7% countywide), sciences (88.6% locally, 84.8% countywide), and history (94.6% locally, 83.1% countywide) than do residents of the county as a whole. Given a choice between funding arts and culture with increases in the local property tax, the food and beverage tax, the hotel motel tax or a car rental tax, Mint Hill's residents prefer, as do residents countywide, to tax outsiders through hotel motel and car rental taxes. Given Mint Hill's growth and anticipated growth in the local tax base, it seems reasonable to assume some increased commitment to arts and culture is possible without increasing local property taxes.

With regard to requiring that 1% of the cost of construction of public buildings being used to enhance the facility with public art, the reverse is true. A slightly higher percentage of county residents (69.8%) approve of this approach than do Mint Hillians (62.9%).

Quality of Life and Economic Development

Overwhelmingly (91.4%), residents of Mint Hill believe arts, science and history organizations make a positive contribution to the quality of life in Charlotte-Mecklenburg. The vast majority (82.9%) believes these organizations make Mecklenburg County more attractive to businesses and individuals considering relocating to the area.

Giving to Cultural Organizations

Residents of Mint Hill have contributed to the arts more frequently (65.7%) than residents of the county as a whole (57.4%), as might be expected given the community's relative wealth. While 17.4% of Mint Hill residents have increased their giving to arts, science, and history organizations over the past year, 13% have decreased giving and 8.7% have stopped altogether. Most (60.9%), however, have maintained their level of giving.

Looking forward, Mint Hill residents' see their contributions to cultural organizations growing. Twenty-one point seven percent (21.7%) anticipate increasing their giving, 60.9% expect to stay at the same level, 13% anticipate a decrease in giving, and only 4.3% plan to stop altogether.

This information reflects two factors. The first is some combination of interest, ability, and willingness to give. The second is opportunity to give. When a community launches a major initiative, such as a capital campaign for a facility, it can drive significant local changes in these responses.

B. The Consumer Survey

Over 130 residents of Mint Hill completed a Cultural Action Plan Consumer Survey. The survey, which was made available on-line and in public places and distributed with the help of many willing neighborhood-level organizations, provides valuable information. Because the survey was not based on a formal sampling technique, it should be regarded as representing trends in public opinion.

Rating Quality, Affordability, Scheduling, Diversity, Location, and Information

One aspect of the survey took a look at six critical and foundational factors in the public's view of current cultural offerings available in Mint Hill. It asked each respondent's view of the quality, affordability, scheduling, diversity, information about, and location of cultural activities. Respondents rated each of these factors on a five-point scale that ranged from "poor" to "great."

In rating the **quality** of available cultural activities, 42% chose the rating "okay" but more residents selected "not so good" (28%) and poor (10%) combined than "pretty good" (18%) and "great" (3%) combined. Overall then, respondents are reporting that there is certainly room for improvement in the quality of cultural activity available. Below, and following each discussion, all responses are shown with categories of response arranged from most to least frequently given responses for each particular question.

QUALITY - HOW GOOD ARE ACTIVITIES?

Okay	Not so Good	Pretty Good	Poor	Great
42%	28%	18%	10%	3%

When considering **affordability** of cultural activities, most respondents (37%) once again choose "okay" but in this case nearly as many chose "pretty good" (31%) and a good number chose "great" (21%) with very few selecting "not so good" (7%) and "poor" (4%). In short, 81% found

affordability “okay” or better. Affordability, then, does not appear to be a frequent barrier. It should be noted, however, that in affluent communities such as Mint Hill, although affordability is infrequently a problem, those few for whom cost is a barrier can all too easily be left out unless specific steps are taken to protect their access.

AFFORDABILITY - HOW AFFORDABLE ARE ACTIVITIES?

Okay	Pretty Good	Great	Not So Good	Poor
37%	31%	21%	7%	4%

Responses to the survey indicate that overall arts and cultural activities are scheduled in a way that is convenient to residents. Seventy-eight percent (78%) rated **scheduling** as “okay” or better, while only 22% described scheduling as “not so good” or worse. Since no schedule is convenient for all users, this response rate can be viewed as an indication that most things are convenient for most users.

SCHEDULING - HOW CONVENIENT ARE TIMES ACTIVITIES OCCUR?

Okay	Pretty Good	Not So Good	Great	Poor
39%	29%	16%	10%	6%

Generally speaking, residents are also comfortable with the **location** of cultural activities. Eighty-three percent (83%) rated location “okay” or better, while only 16% described location as “not so good” or worse. It is important to understand these answers in the context of the relatively few venues available in Mint Hill. Note that this response is about the access to a location, not about the sufficiency of those locations for cultural activities.

LOCATION- HOW ACCESSIBLE ARE THE ACTIVITIES TO YOU?

Okay	Pretty Good	Great	Not So Good	Poor
34%	27%	22%	11%	5%

Asked “How broad are available choices?” respondents reveal that they are less satisfied with the **diversity** of cultural activities than with their quality, affordability, scheduling, or location. Nearly half (47%) called the diversity of local arts and cultural offerings “not so good” and another 27% chose “poor.” In contrast, 21% described diversity of current activities as “okay” and 6% as “pretty good.”

No respondents chose the descriptor “great.” Clearly there is room for a greater diversity of cultural activities in Mint Hill.

DIVERSITY - HOW BROAD ARE AVAILABLE CHOICES?

Not So Good	Poor	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
47%	27%	21%	6%	0%

For over half of all respondents, it is not easy to learn about cultural activities that may be available. Thirty-three percent (33%) believe that the availability of **information** is “not so good” and another 26% call it “poor.” Only 41% consider the availability of information “okay” or better. Underlining the importance of developing information systems to share arts and cultural information more broadly is the fact that 17% of survey respondents declined to rate cultural offerings in Mint Hill because they described themselves as “too new to the area” to respond.

INFORMATION - HOW EASY IS IT TO LEARN ABOUT CULTURAL ACTIVITIES?

Not So Good	Poor	Okay	Pretty Good	Great
33%	26%	25%	12%	4%

Cultural Attractions in Downtown Mint Hill

From this survey, we learn that arts and cultural events can play a powerful role in **bringing residents downtown**. Asked what kind of events would bring them downtown, respondents favored concerts (90.9%), farmer’s markets (85.6%), food festivals (78.8%), garden shows (62.9%) arts and crafts demonstrations (59.8%), art fairs (59.8%), and outdoor movies (54.5%). These percentages are often higher when one looks at the subgroup of respondents with children. Those with children would also be drawn downtown by special events as follows: concerts (96.2%), food festivals (92.5%), farmers markets (83%), outdoor movies (75.5%), garden shows (73.6%), art fairs (67.9%), arts and crafts demonstrations (66%), street artists (56.6%), and seasonal nature programs (52.8%). On the following page, all responses are shown.

KINDS OF CULTURAL ACTIVITIES THAT WOULD BRING RESIDENTS DOWNTOWN

	All Respondents	Respondents w/ Children
Concerts	90.9%	96.2%
Farmers Markets	85.6%	83%
Food Festivals	78.8%	92.5%
Garden Shows	62.9%	73.6%
Arts & Crafts Demonstrations	59.8%	66%
Art Fairs	59.8%	67.9%
Outdoor Movies	54.5%	75.5%
Street Artists	47.7%	56.6%
Seasonal Nature Programs	40.2%	52.8%
Ethnic Festivals	37.1%	50.9%
Storytellers	31.1%	49.1%
Public Dances	31.1%	32.1%
Historical Pageants	28%	28.3%
Talent Shows	25.8%	26.4%
Open Microphone Events	17.4%	26.4%

Age Groups in Need of Cultural Programs

When asked what age groups in Mint Hill are most in need of arts, science, or history programs, over 50% of respondents selected elementary, middle and high schoolers as well as adults and seniors. Only the preschool age group fell below 50%. Highest levels of need were reported for elementary schoolers (61.9%) and adults (71.4%) On the following page, all responses are shown. Notice that respondents with children were more likely to affirm need among minors. Respondents to this question were free to select as many categories as they believed apply.

AGE GROUPS IN MINT HILL MOST IN NEED OF ARTS, SCIENCE, OR HISTORY PROGRAMS

	All Respondents	Respondents w/ Children
Preschoolers	32.5%	36%
Elementary School Age	61.9%	78%
Middle School Age	57.1%	66%
High School Age	53.2%	56%
Adults	71.4%	76%
Seniors	53.2%	44%

Kinds of Cultural Activities Respondents Prefer to Attend

Respondents were also asked to identify kinds of cultural activities they would like to see or attend and those in which they would like to participate.

In describing what kinds of activities adults would like to attend, at least 50% of respondents selected the categories non-music theatre (78%), music theatre (68%), vocal music (64%), fabrication arts (59%), media arts (56%), science and nature programs (56%), visual arts (51%), and historical programs (50%). Respondents with children were also asked what kinds of cultural activities their children would like to see or attend. At least 50% of these respondents indicated their children would prefer science and nature programs (57%), literary arts (55%), music theatre (55%), instrumental music (53%), and media arts (52%). Complete responses are given in the table that follows.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES MINT HILL'S ADULTS AND CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO ATTEND

Adults - Attend	All Respondents	Children - Attend	Respondents w/ Children
Instrumental Music	78%	Science & Nature	57%
Non-Music Theatre	69%	Literary Arts	55%
Music Theatre	68%	Music Theatre	55%
Vocal Music	64%	Instrumental Music	53%
Fabrication Arts	59%	Media Arts	52%
Media Arts	56%	Non-Music Theatre	49%
Science & Nature	56%	Vocal Music	40%
Visual Arts	51%	Fabrication Arts	36%
Historical	50%	Ceramic Arts	36%
Ceramic Arts	49%	Historical	32%
Textile Arts	45%	Visual Arts	32%
Graphic Arts	41%	Dance	30%
Dance	40%	Textile Arts	26%
Literary Arts	36%	Graphic Arts	25%

Kinds of Activities in which Respondents Prefer to Participate

In describing what kinds of activities adults would like to participate in, categories with the highest response rates included science and nature programs (38%), ceramic arts (31%), fabrication arts (28%), textile arts (28%), visual arts (22%), dance (22%) and graphic arts (21%). Respondents with children indicated the kinds of activities children would like to participate in are visual arts (47%), science and nature programs (34%), ceramic arts, (32%), dance (30%), literary arts (30%) textile arts (26%) and non-music theatre (19%). Complete responses are shown on the following page.

CULTURAL ACTIVITIES IN WHICH MINT HILL’S ADULTS AND CHILDREN WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE

Adults - Participate	All Respondents	Children - Participate	Respondents w/ Children
Science & Nature	38%	Visual Arts	47%
Ceramic Arts	31%	Science & Nature	34%
Fabrication Arts	28%	Ceramic Arts	32%
Textile Arts	28%	Dance	30%
Visual Arts	22%	Literary Arts	30%
Dance	22%	Textile Arts	26%
Graphic Arts	21%	Non-Music Theatre	19%
Historical	18%	Instrumental Music	17%
Literary Arts	12%	Music Theatre	17%
Instrumental Music	9%	Vocal Music	15%
Non-Music Theatre	8%	Media Arts	11%
Media Arts	7%	Graphic Arts	11%
Music Theatre	6%	Fabrication Arts	9%
Vocal Music	3%	Historical	6%

Structure of Cultural Programs Respondents Prefer

In designing cultural programs, it is important to know what structures or formats work for consumers. Respondents to this survey prefer weekend (82.4%) and evening (61.1%) activities. Some differences emerge, however, in comparing the preferences of all respondents to the preferences of respondents with children. Not surprisingly, those with children have higher rates of interest in summer camps (43.4%) than the larger group of all respondents (20.6%). After school programs are also more attractive to those with children (26.4%) compared to all respondents (14.5%). Weekday daytime activities are less attractive to respondents with children (18.9%) than to all respondents (28.2%). On the following page, all responses are shown.

SCHEDULES AND FORMATS SUITING RESPONDENTS' FAMILIES

	All Respondents	Respondents w/ Children
Summer Camps	20.6%	43.4%
After School Programs	14.5%	26.4%
Weekday Daytime Activities	28.2%	18.9%
Evening Activities	61.1%	56.6%
Weekend Activities	82.4%	86.8%

Likelihood of Participation at a Community Cultural Center

Much conversation in community interviews conducted as a part of the planning process centered on the need for a community space or spaces for cultural programs. As a result, this survey asked respondents "If Mint Hill had a space where community members could gather for interesting, affordable arts, science, or history activities such as classes, workshops, performances, or clubs, how often would your family be likely to participate?" Respondents could mark as many descriptions as applied to their own family. Their answers show extremely high rates of interest in special events (87%) and workshops (74%) with strong interest in weekly activities (41.2%). Patterns for children's attendance were similar with special events ranked highest (75.5%) followed by occasional activities (54.7%) and weekly activities (50.9%). Only 2.3% of all respondents indicated they would not make use of this space. Of respondents with children, 100% indicated they would make use of a community cultural space. Below, all responses are given.

PROJECTED PATTERNS OF PARTICIPATION AT A COMMUNITY CULTURAL SPACE

	All Respondents	Respondents w/ Children
I would attend weekly activities such as classes or clubs	41.2%	49.1%
My children would attend weekly activities such as classes or clubs	N/A	50.9%
I would attend occasional activities such as workshops	74%	71.7%
My children would attend occasional activities such as workshops	N/A	54.7%
I would attend major special events such as plays or concerts	87%	90.6%
My children would attend major special events such as plays or concerts	N/A	75.5%
I would not make use of this space	2.3%	0%

C. Interviews and Community Meetings

An Eager Community

The meetings and interviews conducted as a part of this plan were fascinating. Mint Hill is clearly a community poised to burst open with a new level of civic participation. Behind every story and opinion, comments revealed a tremendous wealth of human skill and enthusiasm, waiting only for a catalyzing event or opportunity to galvanize action.

Striking examples include the rapid growth and development of the Mint Hill Historical Society site (already under way when this plan began) and the astonishingly swift development of Mint Hill Arts, catalyzed by a single meeting of visual artists originally called together as a one-time discussion group to provide input into this plan. From that meeting of nine artists around a dining room table in April of 2005 to this writing a mere six months later, that group has taken off. It has expanded its membership, worked with the Historical Society to explore the prospects for art exhibitions and spaces at the Country Doctor Museum site, taken a lead role in creating the first Art in the Park festival, and planned arts exhibitions for the Mint Hill Cultural Summit. All it took to ignite this activity was to gather nine artists together in a single room. Natural leaders stepped up and moved ahead on their own. It is likely that this kind of explosive energy for cultural development exists elsewhere in the community as well.

Isolation and Lack of Information as Barriers

Consumers, art teachers and artists alike reported problems in promoting and learning about public events. While there are scattered resources including a local paper, the library newsletter, the Charlotte Observer, and the town website and its links, it is clear that members of the community do not feel there is a reliable and complete place to turn for information. Indeed, this was born out not only in interviews and meetings, but also in the consumer survey, as noted above. Residents would like to see a centralized, comprehensive listing available to the public on a regular basis.

Artists report great difficulty in finding one another for joint action, for inter-personal support, and for professional development. Many reported years of isolation from others with similar interests. They called for a registry of some kind, where artists could identify themselves to one another. Additionally, such a registry could be available to the public so that event organizers, businesses, and consumers in need of their services could locate local artists.

Space for Cultural Activities

Space for cultural activities, and indeed a wider variety of civic activities, is in extremely short supply in Mint Hill. Over and over again, residents reported that the population has outgrown the resources that traditionally filled that need. Schools and churches, while generous in sharing their cultural facilities when they are able, are now so heavily programmed that need outstrips availability for public use. For many participants, this need is expressed in terms of a desire for a community center where people from Mint Hill's many neighborhoods can come together as a community around common interests. For some, the need is for specific cultural spaces with specialized capacity or equipment (for example, a ceramics studio and kiln).

While many ideas came forth, the most frequently repeated request was for the development of a downtown community cultural center accompanied by the development of festival-ready grounds. Such a center could include dedicated spaces for ceramics, painting, textile arts and crafts, and metal and woodworking. In addition, the center could provide for the performing arts by including a small auditorium with support spaces including rehearsal, set-building, and instructional or rehearsal space. Since residents have a high degree of interest in science and nature programs, some spaces for

nature classes and activities would make a logical addition and could include a simple laboratory, a greenhouse, and instructional space. Grounds might include an amphitheatre, walk ways, lighting, occasional benches, restrooms, and electrical hook-ups for vendor and display areas. Pedestrian and bicycle connectivity to the Historical Society Site would be ideal, and could support cooperative programming in the future.

The Downtown as a Public Commons

Certainly, the creation of such a center would go a long way to helping Mint Hill establish the downtown as a vibrant public commons. Since many residents spoke of Mint Hill's need for citizen cohesion and for a stronger sense of commitment to the community (as opposed to just their various neighborhoods), since the Town has already begun to invest in beautifying the downtown, and since the municipality owns available land, there is no more logical space to develop needed cultural amenities. The picture of a community campus connected to a bike path system where the Town Hall, related public buildings, and a community cultural center are situated on a fully handicapped accessible green that can support a wide variety of special events is very real in the minds of many citizens. If that green has gardens of native plantings here and there and if the public buildings all have rain gardens, tended by participants in the cultural center's science and nature programs, so much the better. If the bike paths are enhanced occasionally by the works of local sculptors, and artist-designed benches dot the way, then better yet, residents say.

Arts in the Public Schools

While there is no question that students in area public schools both enjoy and benefit from arts instruction, local arts educators sounded distress calls in discussions related to this plan. They feel, almost universally, that the District's current emphasis on testing has diminished their ability to do their jobs well. They report a variety of frustrations, paramount among which were lack of time to engage students in creative endeavors and lack of flexibility in the larger school environment to engage in cross-disciplinary planning and programming. It is difficult, for example, to get permission to take students on field trips or even to learn when academic teachers may be planning a field trip to which they could link their arts instruction. Art teachers feel pressured not to engage in enrichment activities such as residencies, so they can focus classroom time on standardized test-related content. In addition, increasing numbers of teachers are being reassigned to new schools each year, and the development of collegial relationships is being truncated.

For these teachers, resources are a serious problem. Most art programs depend in significant part on parent booster activities. These, in turn, produce more revenue at schools with wealthier student demographics and less at schools where children come from families who already have less. Art teachers long for consistent relationships with local businesses who might patronize their on-going efforts and help equalize inequities.

Like local artists, art teachers report striking isolation from one another. Most middle school art teachers have never met the elementary art teachers who prepare their students, and high school teachers do not know the middle school teachers whose graduates they instruct. Many have never seen one another's facilities. While the district does conduct professional advancement activities that bring various groups of teachers together, none is focused on geographic regions where pupils in common are served.

ArtsTeach, the Charlotte-based organization whose mission is to enhance arts education through partnerships between artists, arts organizations, and the public schools is almost entirely invisible to Mint Hill's public school art teachers. A few have a dim recollection of publications listing arts resources for teachers produced years ago. Some few recall residency activities, but are frustrated

that these seem to be available only at the elementary level. These teachers admit that they may be getting information about these outside resources via e-mail, but in chorus reported not having time to read e-mails either carefully or in some cases at all.

Teachers indicated that intergenerational arts programs are very effective and provide an excellent means to allow students with particular talents or interests to advance. They bemoaned the lack of a community facility where such programs could be undertaken. Some teachers reported frustration with the fact that while community groups and local governments turn to their students for performances and exhibitions to help make events successful, those same entities do little to support their struggles to keep arts instruction strong within the schools.

Local schools face great facility pressure, and theatre programs in particular get squeezed out. In the sixth grade, a year art teachers see as critical to exposing children to the arts (because sports participation is not yet available to students) there is neither time nor money available to accomplish broad exposure. And when arts organizations offer special invitations to participate in programs or events, too often those attentions are directed at the School of the Arts, further impoverishing the cultural opportunities available to Mint Hill's general population of school children.

The only bright light in these discussions was the fact that a Mint Hill area drama teacher, Kenneth Koch, had been selected as Teacher of the Year, perhaps signaling a dawning recognition at the District level that the arts require more serious support to achieve their promise. Given the fact that residents of Mecklenburg County report high degrees of conviction that arts instruction advances academic achievement, it is a matter of deep concern that arts educators are so universally experiencing feelings of stress, under-valuation, and institutional embattlement in doing their jobs.

Festivals and Special Events

Like many smaller communities, Mint Hill has more experience with mounting special events like festivals than any other kind of cultural program. For the most part, these events are community-driven with the town a key cooperating player. Residents see these events as important contributors to the quality of life in Mint Hill, and they would like to see more special events developed. Ideas for additional special events included the development of an international cultural festival with programs and activities connected to all the cultures contributing to the area's population, an expanded Concerts on the Green series at Town Hall, an expanded Mint Hill Madness featuring more arts activities and presentations, and a South Mecklenburg festival that might rotate from one area community to another over a series of years. Often, residents mentioned the need to make these events accessible and appealing to seniors and disabled residents.

Participants in the planning process had a number of suggestions focused on the need for better ways of marketing special events. Over-the-road banners and improved signage and maps were frequently mentioned, as was the need for a central cultural calendar listing all sorts of cultural offerings in Mint Hill.

There is a division of local opinion with regard to the best location for Mint Hill Madness, however the overwhelming majority of residents who were interviewed in this process strongly favor a downtown location. Some favored the location because it helps develop the downtown as a center of community identity and some because it helps develop local businesses located there. These residents do not accept the argument that lack of downtown parking constitutes a barrier to festival attendance. Whatever decision is ultimately made concerning the location of Madness, it is clear

that the town needs to clarify its own policy with regard to use of the parks for festivals and the parameters of its role in supporting them. Answering these questions up front, before cultural programs grow and increase in number, will help insure consistent, fair, and productive use of city resources.

A Voice for Civic Concerns

Mint Hill is maturing, and as it matures a need is arising for regular mechanisms through which neighborhoods and homeowners' associations can join the on-going civic dialogue. These groups are bursting with ideas and energy, and could become key allies to the town (as they have been in completing this plan) in building a stronger community. While these groups expressed strong interest in arts and cultural programs and the creation of a community center, they also have interests in broader areas of civic life. They expressed a desire for more communication with one another and with their elected leaders and local decision-making processes, and for more information on how to strengthen their own organizations.

Developing these groups, and creating regular ways for them to come together with local elected officials to share ideas and concerns, can help Mint Hill keep all its citizens engaged in a civic affairs. Across the nation, such groups can and do host special neighborhood events, conduct voter registration drives, host candidate forums, host meetings with elected officials for the exchange of information, conduct regular neighborhood opinion gathering, sponsor neighborhood beautification and public safety programs, and serve as a conduit linking volunteer energy to community building efforts of all types. They help underpin not just arts and cultural development, but the whole range of civic participation.

Lifelong Learning in the Arts, Science, and History

In Mint Hill, residents have a desire for lifelong learning in the arts, science, and history. They long for places and spaces where they might take a gardening class, learn about the local environment, be part of an historical research project, attend performing arts activities, or learn to throw pots. In talking about these things, they think of themselves as individuals, as a part of an intergenerational family, and as members of a community. Often, they express the desire to be more deeply connected to the place they live and to the growing number of people who share their spot on the planet. They speak of having fun, of learning new skills, of sampling something new, and of coming together with one another. The residents of Mint Hill look with longing in their eyes at the Matthews Community Cultural Center. They believe it is time for Mint Hill to begin building for a future that includes a place for arts and culture to come alive for all generations.

PART TWO: RECOMMENDATIONS

I. CREATE A MUNICIPAL COMMITTEE ON ARTS AND CULTURE.

A. The Town should formally establish an Arts and Culture Committee. This Committee should be appointed by the Mayor and approved by the Town Board based on a formal, open application process and have 11 (eleven) knowledgeable and committed members including

- The Mayor's appointee to the ASC board;
- A representative of the business community;
- Two representatives of the community-at-large;
- A representative of the visual arts;
- A representative of theatre, dance, or other performing arts;
- A representative of the musical arts
- A representative of the Mint Hill Library;
- A representative knowledgeable about history and historical programs;
- A representative of the sciences, and
- A public school arts teacher (visual, musical, or performing)

B. The Arts and Culture Committee should be charged with overseeing the local aspects of implementing this cultural plan. In particular, the committee should be required to

- Work with the ASC to negotiate an expenditure plan for the ASC's implementation grant to Mint Hill (\$20,000). At the discretion of the Committee, some or all of this money may be distributed through a grant or request for proposal process and may be joined together with local Tourism Revenue funds available for cultural purposes into a single fund.
- Advise the Town annually regarding the support of eligible arts and cultural activities under its Tourism Revenue Fund.
- Develop a policy governing the role of the Town in supporting special events such as festivals and including access to municipal facilities and grounds, public safety issues and costs associated with special events, loaned equipment and personnel, and financial participation and fees.
- Recommend an annual slate of municipally supported arts and cultural development activities including programs for children, teens, adults, and seniors. In the initial years, these programs will be confined to programs on the town green, in existing municipal spaces, in parks, or in rented or shared facilities such as faith community facilities,

schools, the library, residential facilities, or commercial spaces (vacant or occupied). Later, some of these activities will become programs at the proposed Bain Cultural Center. In recommending these activities, the Committee should be guided by the preferences for content, scheduling, and format identified in this plan and care should be taken to offer diverse, high-quality programs. Where practicable, (for example, in the case of classes or controlled admission special events) these activities should be supported by user fees with appropriate scholarship provisions made.

- Work with local festival organizers to coordinate a balanced calendar of annual festivals including both the tradition and contemporary arts. Give consideration to the creation of an international festival to include representation from all the cultures, past and present, contributing to Mint Hill's history and development.
- Work with the town regarding the creation of a community cultural center at the Bain Auditorium assuring that its redesign responds to needs identified in this plan and ensuring qualified, arts-knowledgeable professionals (architects, engineers, and landscapers) assist in its design.
- Work with the town regarding the upgrading of the town's downtown acreage to accommodate outdoor festivals, assuring that its design responds to needs identified in this plan and ensuring qualified, arts-knowledgeable professionals assist in development of the festival site.
- As the Bain Cultural Center is being designed and thereafter, establish a recommended budget, staffing structure, programs, fee structure, scholarship policy, and use policy. This work should include planning for the creation of a Friends of Bain group dedicated to supporting the cultural center with volunteer efforts and fundraising.

C. The Arts and Culture Committee should be governed by a conflict of interest policy that prohibits staff or board chairpersons from any local organization receiving municipal cultural funding (including Tourism Revenue funds) from sitting on the committee. In addition, the policy should require that persons who do sit on both the board of a local organization receiving local cultural funding and the Committee reclude themselves from participating in discussions or votes concerning financial awards to their organizations or other matters with a direct fiduciary impact on the subject organization.

D. Terms on the Arts and Culture Committee should be staggered, and limited to three years. Appointees should be prohibited from serving more than two consecutive terms.

E. Members should be required to attend committee meetings as a condition of appointment, and membership should be automatically revoked following two or more unexcused absences in any given year. Should a vacancy occur for this reason or because of resignation, the Mayor and Town Board should fill the vacancy using the same procedure as the one outlined for making original appointments.

F. In general, meetings of the Arts and Culture Committee should be open to the public and should conform to the town's open meeting standards.

G. The ASC and the town should send a staff representative to each meeting of the Arts and Cultural Committee for the first year and as invited thereafter to serve as information

resources. The Town Manager or his designee should provide staff support to the committee as necessary after the founding year.

H. The town should provide the Arts and Culture Committee with an annual budget of \$20,000 derived from the Tourism Revenue Fund or other local revenues as best suits the community's budget management plan and designated for use, based on recommendations of the Committee, for eligible arts and cultural activities. These uses could include support for festivals and special events, classes, workshops and or public performances and exhibitions. These funds should be considered a match to the ASC's annual contribution to the town, and should grow in the case that the ASC contribution grows. This allocation should subsume any continuing cultural funding gifts the town may be making to outside activities (for example, support for the Mint Hill Historical Society).

II. SUPPORT THE EMERGENCE OF THE DOWNTOWN AS A CENTER OF CIVIC ACTIVITY, COMMERCE, AND CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT.

A. The town should work with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools to determine the feasibility of securing municipal ownership of the historic Bain School Auditorium building and renovating the facility for use as a community cultural center. Since CMS has indicated a willingness to transfer the facility under one of several plans, the main first stage issues are securing a clear understanding of the facility's fundamental soundness and estimating repair and retrofitting costs. The Town Manager should work with the Arts and Culture Committee and the ASC to identify professionals knowledgeable in cultural facility issues to complete these assessments. Should renovation prove feasible (as is likely), the town should negotiate a transfer of ownership (at a likely cost of \$1) from CMS to the town and begin the restoration.

B. The Bain Cultural Center restoration should be funded through a public/private partnership, and a Bain Capital Campaign Committee should be formed to lead the effort.

C. The Town Hall Campus should be developed in part as a space for community festivals. This use should be integrated with other developments on the parcel and should include a modest amphitheatre, accessible and practical restrooms, walkways, lighting, electrical hook-ups, parking, occasional seating, wayfinding devices, restrooms, signage opportunities, and so forth. Consideration should be given to linking this site to the Country Doctor Museum site and the broader community by pedestrian and bicycle paths. This site development should recognize the link between Mint Hill's rural past and its current status. Designers should acknowledge that past with landscaping, gardens, natural habitat areas and preservation of green vistas.

D. The town should work with the Arts and Cultural Committee and the ASC to develop a timeline for pre-planning activities that will position Mint Hill's leaders to be skilled guides during the Bain renovation and redevelopment process. This work should include

- Conducting field trips for members of the town staff, the Arts and Cultural Committee, local elected officials, and neighborhood leaders to nearby community cultural facilities to learn about various models;
- Conducting training sessions for the staff, the Arts and Cultural Committee, the Bain Capital Campaign Committee, and local elected officials regarding the role of public

private partnerships in financing the renovation and operations of cultural centers in general;

- Training the staff, the Arts and Cultural Committee, the Bain Capital Campaign Committee and local elected officials regarding capital fundraising; and
- Articulating the specific program capacities desired in the local Bain Cultural Center.

E. The town should work with the Arts and Cultural Committee and the ASC to develop a funding strategy and fundraising plan for the facility including consideration of the membership of a campaign committee. This work should include consideration of a local cultural impact fee assessed on commercial and residential developers in Mint Hill and utilized to fund local cultural facilities development, maintenance, enhancement and debt service.

F. The town and the Arts and Cultural Committee should use the ASC as a resource in identifying appropriate professional support to

- Create a timeline for the redevelopment of the facility;
- Secure concept designs for the facility;
- Project capital costs for the facility;
- Develop a projected operating budget;
- Implement a public private fundraising plan;
- Secure final architectural and engineering designs; and
- Redevelop the facility.

G. The Town Manager, Director of Planning, and local elected officials should meet with the ASC's public art staff early on, to learn about ways in which the creation of a public art program could have an impact on the anticipated development of public buildings and grounds. Incorporating an artist on design teams could have an important impact on the quality and interest of the overall development and could help address the local desire for more artwork located in public places.

H. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with the town to develop effective, unique signage to support arts and cultural programs. Ideas to explore include street banners, special event flags or lanterns, or artist-created flexible-text entry signs. Whatever solution is identified, a particular high traffic spot or spots in the downtown area should come to be associated with information describing current community arts and cultural programs.

I. Until such time as the Bain Cultural Center can be developed, the town should explore the prospects for securing the community room at the library for arts and cultural programs. Since the town owns the property on which the library stands, and since arts and cultural programs are of benefit to both the town and the library, it may be that a schedule of jointly supported uses could be negotiated without charge to the town.

J. Over the long haul, the town should plan to develop a larger community cultural center on its Town Hall Campus and a site on the campus should be identified and reserved for this

use now. The site will become necessary as the town grows. This second facility will eventually be an adjunct to, not a replacement for, activities at Bain. It should only be developed after the activity level at the Bain Cultural Center is maximized and additional demand for cultural programming space is clearly apparent. It should be a mixed-use cultural facility serving the performing arts, the visual arts, and science and nature studies in a manner that complements or enhances activities that are possible at Bain. Care should be taken to identify and reserve a future cultural center site that has reasonable connectivity to the Historical Society and Bain sites laying the groundwork for collaborative programs and special events

K. With regard to both the Bain Cultural Center and any subsequent, additional community cultural center development, the design should recognize that literary arts will remain largely the province of the library, and historical programs the province of the Mint Hill Historical Society.

I. The Arts and Culture committee should support the development of a pedestrian and bike friendly community where neighborhoods and the downtown are connected by greenways. These greenways should be regarded as potential sites for sculpture, landscaping, wildlife habitats, and or community gardens. Consideration should be given to creating a spot for an outdoor reading space and garden, perhaps adjacent to the library.

J. In the event that the Bain Auditorium renovation proves infeasible, the town should move to begin construction of a community cultural center on the Town Hall Campus. It may be wise to consider this project as one that is undertaken in phases.

III. INCREASE THE AVAILABILITY, DIVERSITY, AND QUALITY OF LOCAL ARTS AND CULTURAL PROGRAMS.

A. The town should continue its sponsorship of Art in the Park, and the Arts and Culture Committee should work with Mint Hill Arts to create a sustainable design for growing the festival. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with the festival to design an annual Mayor's Purchase Award. Works purchased should be displayed in Town Hall now and later in the Community Cultural Center.

B. The Arts and Culture Committee should contact the Matthews Community Center Director, GERALYNN TRELLUE to discuss the possibility of publicizing classes, theatrical productions, exhibitions and special events at that center to Mint Hill residents via the Mint Hill newsletter or other mutually acceptable means. Since Mint Hillians have a high degree of interest in theatre, and since the Matthews Playhouse and Theatre Matthews are resident adult and children's theatre companies of the Matthews Community Center, a partnership of this nature could help the theatre expand both its audience and its volunteer performer base to include Mint Hill residents.

C. The town should support the growth and development of Mint Hill Arts by providing for the rotating display of members' work within Town Hall. In addition, Mint Hill Arts should consider approaching the library, area coffee shops and restaurants, banks, and malls to learn of their interest in exhibiting local artists' work or in hosting other exhibitions and performances.

D. The town should support the growth and development of Mint Hill Arts by providing for its free access to the library's community room, should an agreement with the library be reached. If

that is not possible, the town should work with Mint Hill Arts to identify another suitable free meeting location that is sufficient in size and provides reasonable amenities for their membership.

E. The town should assign the chair of the Arts and Culture Committee to work with the ASC in creating and participating in an on-going training program for Mecklenburg County's community cultural development leaders. This program should be designed as a regular professional group of those leaders and provide opportunities for sharing ideas, approaches, resources, and challenges.

F. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with the ASC to connect local festival organizers to diverse and high quality arts and cultural resources. It may be wise to consider this question as a regional one in which festival organizers from all over South Mecklenburg could be invited to a regularly recurring presentation explaining how to use the ASC's Cultural Calendar, its Artist's Directory, and outreach and satellite programs provided by its affiliates and associates. Coupled with a presentation by an experienced festival organizer addressing topics like "how to establish a juried competition," or "how to attract the best visual artists to your festival," or "how to book performing artists," such an event could enhance local festivals, increase opportunities for local artists, and provide new venues for outreach programs.

G. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with local festival organizers, Mint Hill Arts, and the Mint Hill Historical Society to determine the need for a collection of shared outdoor event equipment. This work should be directed at assessing whether or not such things as exhibition tents, temporary signage, lighting, audio equipment, mobile stages, or outdoor movie projectors are being rented so frequently, or needed so regularly, that purchase of a municipal collection would help stabilize events and or improve their quality. In addition, consideration should be given to the use of some of these resources, such as portable or mobile stages, as venues for neighborhood and on-street non-festival programs and street artists' performances.

H. The Arts and Culture Committee, in working to develop its annual slate of activities, should work with downtown merchants, existing special events, and civic groups to make sure that arts and cultural programs support the economic and social development needs of the community as feasible. For example, Mint Hill residents should come to expect a regular spring/summer/fall series of outdoor events at the town green and those events should be coordinated with businesses' open hours and/or special promotions when possible.

I. The Arts and Culture Committee should continue to develop the scarecrow competition undertaken as a part of this cultural planning process, making it an annual event. The event could be rolled into Art in the Park, the farmer's market or another festival or special event, but should be broadly promoted as way of bringing community members together in a creative endeavor. It may be that over time, the display of scarecrows could be community-wide and, like holiday lights, become an event during which residents walk, bike, or drive the community to see one another's entries prior to their display in a single location.

J. The Arts and Culture Committee should encourage artists of all disciplines and degrees of professionalism and arts supporters of all kinds to join Mint Hill Arts.

K. Once Mint Hill Arts' mission and membership stabilize, it should consider exploring the level of local interest in a shared rough studio space (for example, underutilized warehouse space) for the creation of art. If interest is sufficient, Mint Hill Arts should work with the ASC to

explore models for cooperatively managed workspaces, choose a feasible model, and implement it.

IV. STRENGTHEN RESIDENTS' ACCESS TO INFORMATION ABOUT THE ARTS, ARTISTS, AND CULTURAL RESOURCES.

A. The town should increase the frequency with which it publishes its newsletter and incorporate a regular column on arts and cultural activities. It should invite submissions from local arts and cultural organizations. In addition, this column should regularly remind readers of the ASC's electronic Cultural Calendar located on the web at <http://www.artsandscience.org>. The Arts and Culture committee should test the willingness of local faith communities to run the same articles in their newsletters or bulletins.

B. The ASC should alter its website to make the Cultural Calendar appear in a Google search for the words "Charlotte area cultural calendar." In addition, the calendar's url should be simplified in order to drive users to the resource more effectively.

C. The town should keep its website current should continue to provide space and or links on its website to all local arts and cultural organizations. It should link its bulletin board to the ASC Cultural Calendar. The Arts and Culture Committee's meeting announcements, agendas, and meeting minutes should be made available on the website in a timely fashion.

D. Mint Hill Arts should work with the Arts and Culture Committee, the library, and the ASC to make both artists and arts consumers aware of the ASC Artist Directory coming in January of 2006. This directory will allow artists to input their own descriptions and contact information to a searchable, public, on-line database. It will help artists in Mecklenburg County locate one another, and allow consumers to locate artists in whose work or services they have an interest.

E. The Arts and Culture Committee should assure the listing of town sponsored arts and cultural events on the ASC Cultural Calendar.

F. The Arts and Culture Committee should produce and keep updated a page on the town website called "Promoting The Arts in Mint Hill" This page should be designed as a resource for Mint Hill's citizens, arts and cultural organizations, and artists in marketing events. It should give appropriate contact information for press, media, the ASC Cultural Calendar, the town newsletter, neighborhood newsletters, faith community bulletins, useful private systems such as "The Town Planner" and related local resources. The ASC Marketing and Communications staff, who maintain records of this kind of information, should assist in this effort as necessary.

G. The Arts and Culture Committee should work with the ASC Marketing and Communications staff to deliver technical assistance in marketing to local arts and cultural organizations, leaders, and artists.

V. NURTURE THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL ARTISTS AND ARTS AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATIONS.

A. The ASC should work with Mint Hill Arts and the Arts and Culture Committee to schedule an Artists' Café in Mint Hill. Mint Hill Arts should use this event to recruit more members. ASC should use this event to begin linking its on-going artists' services to Mint Hill's artists.

B. The Arts and Culture Committee should establish an annual Mint Hill Arts Roundtable event, where artists, cultural workers, arts educators, members of the staff and board of local arts and cultural organization and arts advocates can gather to socialize, to learn about the ASC's resources, and to discuss their needs with members of the Committee. The Arts and Culture Committee should consider this information in developing its annual recommendations for programs and funding.

C. The ASC grants office should work with the Earth Echoes collection to secure appropriate professional assistance in determining its value, recommending its best uses, and seeking an appropriate institutional setting for its care, use, and keeping. Consideration should be given to both the Bain Cultural Center and Charlotte-based institutions, but in any case use of the collection should include Mint Hill's residents.

D. The Arts and Culture Committee should support the efforts of the Mint Hill Historical Society to continue their site and program development. Decisions about arts uses at the barn and on the grounds should be coordinated with uses designed for Bain. Consideration should be given to focusing the barn's capacities on providing spaces for the traditional arts.

E. Historical programming and site management is under strain all across Mecklenburg County. Many under-resourced sites are struggling with limited ability to engage in proper preservation and documentation or to program for the public. Similarly, marketing is weak. **The ASC should take a leadership role in bringing together the various public and private owners and managers of Mecklenburg county's historic sites and begin a frank discussion of the prospects for shared programs, services, management, and marketing, including discussion of any potential mergers.** These discussions should include consideration of the best ways to strengthen the Country Doctor Museum site including expanded programs, completion of the site plan, and increased use of the site for community events, historical programs and exhibitions, the farmer's market, and arts programs and events.

F. The ASC should evaluate its own staffing levels and make any necessary additions to its planning and development capacity in light of the collective recommendations of the South Mecklenburg community cultural action plans of which this is one.

VI. SUPPORT LOCAL ART TEACHERS AND ARTS INSTRUCTION IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

A. The ASC should work with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools and ArtTeach to improve Mint Hill area public school students' access to arts enrichment.

B. The ASC should focus special student opportunities and recognitions in the arts on all the county's schools and students, avoiding the tendency to concentrate opportunities exclusively on students attending the Northwest School of the Arts.

C. **Mint Hill Arts should reach out to arts supporting parent groups at area schools**, recruiting those supporters to membership and determining ways in which local students and arts educators can be supported in their work and included in community activities.

D. **The ASC should evaluate its current advocacy strategy and activity related to arts education.** Given the findings of the Cultural Life Survey documenting broad public support for the importance of art education and the problems arts educators are experiencing in the public schools (especially regarding pressures related to standardized testing), the ASC should be vigorously engaged (either directly or through its partnership with ArtsTeach) in public policy debates that constrain public school arts education.

VII. STRENGTHEN LINKS BETWEEN MINT HILL'S MANY NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITY-WIDE INITIATIVES.

A. **The town should support the development of a Neighborhood Organizations Forum.** This forum should be a nexus for community volunteerism and a mechanism for including grassroots organizations in civic dialogue on local issues including arts and cultural development. The Forum should be convened by the town board and include representatives of neighborhood level groups such as homeowners associations, garden clubs, and neighborhood organizations. The Forum should challenge representatives of these groups to identify ways in which the town could support their efforts at community-building, establish effective means of exchanging information, and assist the groups in becoming stable and effective in their work.

B. **The Arts and Culture Committee should establish links to the Neighborhood Organizations Forum and its memberships to engage their support in the development of both a Community Cultural Facility and annual slates of programs** that serve their constituents' arts and cultural needs. Often, partnerships of this nature can dramatically expand volunteerism, increase citizen engagement in public policy debates, and help sustain community beautification activities.

APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY INTERVIEW AND MEETING PARTICIPANTS

Commissioner Llyod Austin	Ginny Edelen	Suzanne Ledermann
Planning Director Lee Bailey	Commissioner Carl Ellington	Barbara Lowe
Paula Baldwin	Susan Griffin	Michael McRae
Charles "Doc" Beard	Becky Griffin	Katherine McKeever
Mayor Ted Biggers	Brooks Gullledge	Amy Medlin
Mark Booth	Ron Gullledge	Commissioner Katrina Ross
Patty Brooks	Sue Helms	Jenene Seymour
Barbara Cody	June Hood	Gloria Sowers
Vicki Crossman	Commissioner Stephen Horton	Kerri Staviski
Lisa Daly	Elaine Hunter	Pamela Sutis
Amie Davidson	Kenneth Koch	Neily Trump
Brian Davidson	Town Manager Todd Lamb	Brian Welch
Joy Davies	Crystal Liachoff	Kevin Wittman

APPENDIX B: CULTURAL SUMMIT ATTENDEES

Lloyd Austin	Dixie Helms	Parker Phillips
Barbara Banister	Jerry Helms	Donna Porter Rogers
Charles "Doc" Beard	Sue Helms	Liz Ralon
Pernette Behrendt	Teresa Hicks	Tina Ross
Porter Behrendt	Harold Hood	Bob Rowland
Mayor Ted Biggers	June Hood	Brenda Rowland
Sue Black	Mary Hyah	Beverly Rushing
Jane Burdick	James Hyah	Mike Rushing
Danie Chajanton	Melinda Johnston	John Sarkis
Linda Crane	Billy Kiser	Michael Shaw
Vicki Crossman	Ann Litaker	Gloria Sowers
Jeannette Driggers	Bill Litaker	Pat Stanley
Jane Dunne	Tony Long	Martha Strohm
Ginny Edelen	Jo Mann	Laura Sussman-Randall
Angie Edwards	Sue McDonald	Wendy Wilson Shaw
Pat Fuller	Katherine McKeever	Doug Singleton
Stephen Gravier	J. Michael McRae	Julie Toffaletti
Becky Griffin	Brenda McRae	Jean Vance
Gene C. Griffin	Tim Merrill	Tom Vance
Beth Hamrick	Judy Mizell	Janet Ward
Darrell Harrison	Pam Phillips	Jim Young

APPENDIX C: CULTURAL SUMMIT EXHIBITORS

Bloom
Costco
Discovery Place
Kent Dowell, Musician
Earth Echoes
Mint Hill Scottish Society
Mint Hill Historical Society
Mint Hill Arts and their Members
North Carolina Dance Theatre