

Arts Alliance Arts Space Survey Summary of Results

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Background: A shortage of cost-effective arts space in the Ann Arbor area has been a much-discussed issue for many years as a result of generally high real estate costs. The issue took on greater urgency in the past few years as a facility housing many artists on the edge of downtown Ann Arbor (the “Tech Center”) experienced a devastating fire and was subsequently replaced by a new YMCA. As a result of the difficulty of finding space, some artists have moved to less expensive facilities in nearby Ypsilanti or in Detroit. Meanwhile, Jackson is developing a large live-work facility in hopes of attracting artists away from cities like Ann Arbor.

These trends have resulted in increased discussion, particularly about the dangers to our local economy for which culture is considered a major attraction to potential visitors and companies. The chatter, however, has resulted in little understanding of the scope of the need or demand, and few efforts to address the potential problem. The Arts Alliance of the Ann Arbor Area, a division of the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce and an umbrella organization for the local arts community, decided to take on this issue. We started with a survey of local artists and arts organizations to assess and understand the need for space; this report summarizes the results.

Executive Summary of Results: As expected, the survey identified strong need for additional space affordable to and usable by artists and groups working in the arts. Just meeting the expressed needs of the survey respondents would require development of a substantial facility as large as any local museum. Space was needed in a variety of areas, with the largest (about one-third of the total need) being studio space for individual artists; gallery, storage, and office space followed. The need spanned across respondents, from individual artists to groups, and across all types of arts. There was strong support for a facility that allowed co-location with other artists and arts groups.

Although the need for space may not be a surprise, some aspects of the need may be unexpected. Many of the respondents were willing to consider shared instead of dedicated space. A smaller proportion were willing to consider space on a short-term basis. Perhaps most surprising was the relative unimportance to most respondents of being in a downtown Ann Arbor location. Although most preferred to be in or near the City, only a small minority said they needed to be in downtown.

The biggest challenge identified by the survey is addressing the issue of cost. This was the top priority of most respondents, and only a handful estimated that they could afford to pay anything close to market rental rates.

The Arts Alliance will be taking these results and working to figure out how to address the identified needs.

Methodology: A subcommittee of the Arts Alliance board developed a survey document which was inputted into Zoomerang, an online survey tool that allows cost-effective survey distribution and compilation of results. Paper surveys were also prepared for those who preferred not to use the online version. The survey was distributed and publicized as follows:

- Email notifications of the survey went out to about 200 artists and arts organizations for which the Arts Alliance had email addresses. The notifications included a link to the Zoomerang survey. Recipients were encouraged to forward the emails to others whom they thought would be interested in the issue.
- Paper copies of the survey were mailed to another 200 artists and arts organizations (in addition to those who received emails) on the Arts Alliance's mailing list. The list includes individual artists and organizations for all types of arts from visual to theater to music (popular and classical); it also included several businesses that cater to artists and might have been able to distribute surveys.
- Press releases were sent to area media, which resulted in prominent coverage of the survey in the Ann Arbor News, and in the Business Review weekly newsmagazine for the business community.
- Information about the survey was also distributed by the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce, including in its e-newsletter to member businesses.

The survey comprised 29 questions about the type of artist or organization and about their need for space. A copy of the survey is included after this report. In total, 74 responses were received. Most were done on the Zoomerang website; the paper copies received were inputted into Zoomerang to get a comprehensive compilation of results. Tallies of the results were prepared by David Esau, chair of the project committee. Where respondents gave ranges (such as for estimated space needs or what they could pay for space) we used an amount in the center of the range for purposes of preparing averages and totals. Results are generally reported here in the order of the questions on the survey.

Respondents: The 74 respondents divided into the following types (some respondents chose more than one option):

- 40 (54%) were individual artists
- 25 (34%) were from presenting or producing organizations working in the arts.
- 22 (30%) were from people or organizations working in arts and cultural education.
- 16 (22%) included information in an "other" column, primarily elaborating on the other responses.

The respondents were divided by type of art ("area of focus") as follows (some respondents chose more than one option):

- 41 (55%) worked in visual arts. 32 of these were individual artists.
- 13 (18%) worked in theater. 4 were individual artists.
- 17 (23%) worked in music. 4 were individual artists.

- 11 (15%) worked in dance. 4 were individual artists.
- 9 (12%) worked in “functional art (crafts/furniture)”. Of these, 7 also classified themselves in visual arts. All 9 were individual artists.
- 13 (18%) classified themselves as “other.” This included 5 working in fiber and/or wearable art, and 3 working in facilities presenting historical exhibits and/or buildings. 9 were individual artists.

Current workspaces:

Location:

- 21 (28%) worked from home. 17 of these were individual artists.
- 13 (18%) worked in a space in a commercial building. 9 of these were individual artists.
- 12 (16%) worked in a space in a facility designed for the arts. 3 of these were individual artists.
- 4 (5%) worked in a space in an industrial building. All were individual artists.
- 3 (4%) worked in an outbuilding on a residential property. 2 were individual artists.
- 21 (28%) chose “other.” This included several who worked in multiple facilities, several working in educational facilities, and several who rented space in less common buildings such as churches and child care facilities. Only 5 of these were individual artists.

Size:

- 30 (41%) current spaces were in the range of 0-500 square feet in area. Half of these were in a home or an outbuilding on a residential property. 22 were the workspace for an individual artist.
- 15 (20%) current spaces were in the range of 501-1,000 square feet in area. 11 were the workspace for an individual artist.
- 6 (8%) current spaces were in the range of 1,001-2,000 square feet in area. 2 were the workspace for an individual artist.
- 23 (31%) current spaces exceeded 2,000 square feet in area. 5 were the workspace for an individual artist.

Ownership:

- 27 (36%) respondents own their current workspace. 16 of these worked from home or an outbuilding on a residential property. 15 were individual artists.
- 25 (34%) respondents rent their current workspace. 12 of these work in a commercial or industrial building. Only 4 worked from home or an outbuilding on a residential property. 15 were individual artists.
- 22 (30%) respondents chose “other,” mostly because they use somebody else’s space for free. Most of these worked in educational facilities. Some used varying combinations of rented, owned, and/or borrowed space. 10 of these were individual artists.
- 35 (47%) respondents would prefer to own their workspace. 13 of these currently rent, and 4 currently use free or borrowed space. 19 were individual artists.

- 14 (19%) respondents would prefer to rent their workspace, mostly those who are currently renting. 10 were individual artists.
- 21 (28%) respondents chose "other." Of these, 8 expressed a preference for free or donated space; 8 expressed a willingness to either rent or own depending on the facility and/or finances. 10 were individual artists.

Space Needs:

- 43 (58%) respondents said their current space *was not* sufficient for their needs. 28 (38%) of these were individual artists; 14 (19%) were presenting or producing organizations; and 13 (18%) worked in arts/cultural education. 14 (19%) worked from home or a residential outbuilding; 3 (4%) from an industrial building; 7 (9%) in a facility designed for the arts; 7 (9%) in a commercial building; and 12 (14%) other. 26 (35%) worked in visual arts; 10 (14%) in theater; 8 (11%) in music; 7 (9%) in dance; 5 (7%) in functional art; and 7 (9%) other.

30 (41%) respondents said their current space *was* sufficient for their needs. 11 (15%) of these were individual artists. Responses were similarly scattered among all types of current spaces and artistic areas of focus.

- For the 27 (36%) respondents who provided estimates of total space needs, the total need was about 51,850 square feet (the total excludes two very large museum users that would have skewed the results). See below regarding space breakdown by use, for additional information. 12 (14%) of these respondents (all individual artists and working in visual arts, functional art and/or fiber art) estimated space needs of 1,000 square feet or less, and the largest of the 27 was 5,000 to 6,000 square feet.

The question on current space used just asked respondents to put their use in categories instead of specific amounts. However, if we assume that the 27 who estimated needs average in the center of the range for current use, then the total need represents an increase of over 100% from what respondents are using now.

- 14 (19%) respondents had conducted a study of their space needs in the past 5 years. 6 (8%) of these were satisfied with their current space, which we assume means in most cases the study resulted in a relocation to a more satisfactory space.
- 19 (26%) respondents are currently actively working on an expansion or relocation. 11 (15%) of these are individual artists.
- Many of the respondents were not able to break down their space needs by type or use of the space. Those who did, however, listed space needs totaling over 108,000 square feet (or more than twice the amount given when asked for total requirements by an earlier question). The total again excludes the same very large users that would skew results. Some of the variation could be from spaces serving multiple uses, but it also highlights the need to actually study spatial requirements by use

instead of estimating a total need. The uses required covered a wide range of types, including the following:

Office space:	11,365 SF
Studio space:	34,890 SF
Practice rooms:	600 SF
Group rehearsal space:	9,100 SF
Performance space (up to 100 seats):	2,500 SF
Performance space (over 100 seats):	4,400 SF
(but several noted need for auditoriums of various sizes, from 150 to 600 seats)	
Gallery space:	16,870 SF
Storage:	13,355 SF
Shop space:	6,500 SF
Live/Work space:	8,350 SF

- 42 of the respondents (57%), 21 of them individual artists, said the various spaces they need do not need to be contiguous, typically these were the larger users; 22 (30%) respondents (15 of them individual artists) said they should be contiguous.
- 26 of the users (35%) , 15 of them individual artists, said the space should be for their exclusive use; 41 (55%) respondents, 22 of them individual artists, said it could be shared. Of those who were willing to share, 11 (15%) said their primarily use was during the daytime; 15 (20%) said the primary use was during the evening; the rest answered from “both” or “all” to different times of the day, week, or year.
- 42 (57%) respondents, 23 of them individual artists, could not make use of short-term space; 26 (35%) respondents, 15 of them individual artists, could.
- Locations for desired space broke down as follows:

Downtown Ann Arbor:	8 respondents	(11%)
Within Ann Arbor city limits:	17 respondents	(23%)
Within Ann Arbor area:	20 respondents	(27%)
Within Washtenaw County:	8 respondents	(11%)
Other:	12 respondents	(16%)

Of the “Other” responses, 6 noted a preference for locating in Ypsilanti.
- A wide variety of reasons were given for preferred locations. Most, however, stressed proximity to home; proximity to workers, volunteers and/or customers; or proximity to one of the local universities. Two of those interested in Ypsilanti locations stressed arts outreach to an underserved community.
- When asked to rank considerations in selecting a facility, cost was the most important, selected as the top priority by 28 respondents (38%). Overall, considerations ranked as follows (based on average score; 1 was highest ranking, 7 was low):

Cost: average score of 2.33

Location: average score of 2.73

Space characteristics: average score of 3.33

On-Site Parking: average score of 3.87

Display/performance space: average score of 3.89

Shared facilities: average score of 5.25

Supporting uses: average score of 5.29

- Many comments were received about specific requirements for facilities. The most common was the necessity of an abundance of light, either natural or artificial. Several commented on the importance of a space with a floor specifically designed for dance. Also requested multiple times were darkroom space and access to water. On-site facilities that were requested multiples times, but in response to other questions, included ceramic kilns, good security, administrative functions like copying/printing/scanning, communal space for discussion, and shipping/receiving facilities. One interesting comment was the occasional need to expand space temporarily to work on a large commission or other project.
- A variety of responses were received regarding desired supporting facilities near the workspace. Access issues tended to dominate: 9 (12%) mentioned proximity to bus stops or transportation options; 9 (12%) mentioned parking either on-site or nearby. Other facilities receiving multiple responses included food and drink available on-site or nearby; art supply stores, banks, and a post office.
- 56 (76%) of the respondents – 33 of them individual artists – said there was advantage to being co-located with other artists or artists groups; 12 (14%) respondents – 5 of them individual artists – said there was not. 37 (50%) said “visual arts” artists or groups were appropriate for co-location; 22 (30%) said “theater;” 25 (34%) said “music;” 17 (23%) said “dance;” and 25 (34%) said “functional art.”
- Of those 43 (58%) respondents that said their current space was not sufficient, 28 (38%) ventured estimates of what they could pay for new space. Amounts ranged from \$5/month to about \$2,750/month. 3 (4%) respondents said they could not pay anything. Correlating costs with space estimates (in square feet or SF), the amounts respondents could pay varied from \$0.07/SF/month to \$1.67/SF/month with an average of \$0.41/SF/month. Only two of the respondents exceeded \$1.00/SF/month, which would be a reasonable entry point for leasing low-end commercial space (although space in downtown Ann Arbor and other high-demand areas could easily be twice that cost).
- Many different responses were received regarding what could be accomplished with more and/or better space. The most common was increased production of art and/or better quality work, due to being able to focus on the work instead of the need for space or dealing with scattered facilities. This was particularly true of groups that used borrowed space where they had to work around other schedules. Other frequent answers included more involvement of the community, through

more volunteer or educational opportunities; better collaboration with other artists; and the ability to take greater artistic risk by having space to try new ideas.

Next Steps: The Arts Alliance will be taking the results of this survey and developing a strategy to address the identified need for space for artists and arts organizations. A likely next step will be working with local commercial developers and realtors, and others with available space, to develop a database that can match space with users.

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This study was sponsored in part by Cornerstone Design Inc, an Ann Arbor architectural firm providing creative, responsive architectural services for commercial and non-profit clients since 1989.

The Arts Alliance: The Arts Alliance of the Ann Arbor Area is a division of the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce. It was developed out of the Washtenaw County Arts and Cultural Summit in 1999, when arts and community leaders of all types gathered to identify critical needs in the local arts community; the Arts Alliance has been working its way through that list of needs since its founding in 2001.

Notable activities of the Arts Alliance include working with the Ann Arbor Convention and Visitors Bureau to develop a comprehensive cultural calendar (available through the CVB website, www.AnnArbor.org), and surveying local arts organizations and patrons about the economic impact of local arts activities. The results of the latter study should be released this summer. Other programs include serving as the regional regранter of Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs minigrants, and the Culture ZONE project which is a calendar of cultural activities geared toward youth at www.culturezone.org. For more information on the Arts Alliance, contact Tamara Real, Director of the Arts Alliance, at 734.214.0112 or by email at artsalliance@annarborchamber.org.