



# Creative Economy Connect

**STAKEHOLDER MEETING | SUMMARY REPORT**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



The Actors' Gang / Photo: Ashley Randall

**The landmark 2017 CREATIVE ECONOMY REPORT OF CULVER CITY recognized the significant contributions of creative industries to our city's economic vitality, competitiveness and recent growth at a rate faster than nearly every other local economy in Los Angeles County, including the City of Los Angeles. Even more encouraging, our Creative Economy has produced a multiplier effect in which our existing base is attracting new creative businesses at an exceptional rate, thereby growing our local workforce and the amount of revenue they generate.**

To better understand the specific ways Culver City can continue to support and strengthen its creative ecosystem, and appropriately diversify it for optimal long-term sustainability and competitiveness, the City Council and Cultural Affairs Commission sought recommendations from many of the creative industry stakeholders identified in our Creative Economy Report.

A one-day meeting convened in July 2019, brought together over 30 individuals representing a range of creative industries from large corporations to startups and small-to-mid size businesses, education institutions, artists and arts organizations, and City departments to address key questions about their contributions and needs. Within this were prominent leaders in digital media, film and entertainment, architecture and interior design, marketing and communication, branded content, theatre and the arts, and creative co-working, to name just a few.

Using the **World Café** approach, which brings people together to discuss issues that matter, our participants met to consider:

- The contributions that our creative industries make to the city's economy
- The needs our creative industries have to increase or sustain their contributions
- Specific challenges and barriers faced by creative industries

While the day-long session and subsequent follow-up conversations unearthed a wealth of ideas and perspectives, the dominant theme connecting them was the concept of **interdependence**.

Each stakeholder expressed a critical understanding that a robust Creative Economy does not operate in silos, or when a dominant player controls the playing field. Rather, its success depends on creating and nurturing a **dynamic, open environment** where each participant is encouraged to connect, engage, network, share and gain perspective from each other, regardless of their size, profitability or area of expertise. This falls in line with how creativity itself flourishes when there is constant interchange and community, and our stakeholders consistently cited this as a key component for attracting new creative enterprises, and creating deeper anchors for those already here.

An extension of interdependence was **equal opportunity**. Given the increased presence of large corporations in Culver City, concern was expressed about their influence on City attention and investment, as well as tangential effects that could prevent entrepreneurs and startups from gaining a foothold. Limiting opportunities for smaller organizations and startups could result in making our Creative Economy shallow, less competitive, and less resilient to national, regional or industry-specific downturns.



Steven Ehrlich & Patricia Rhee, Ehrlich Yanai Rhee Chaney Architects



Overall, our findings can be grouped into three key action points for prompt consideration and action:

## ACCESS

Ensure that all Creative Economy stakeholders, regardless of size, income, category/field of work or ethnic composition, can equally participate in, benefit from and have a voice within our Creative Economy and city.

## CONNECTIVITY

Create open, transparent, dynamic ways for creative stakeholders to meet, network, learn from, inspire and join together in ways that will benefit their work, strengthen their roots in Culver City, and expand the city's revenue and reputation as a unique, burgeoning creative hub.

## OPPORTUNITY

Develop initiatives and programs that will expand the city's Creative Economy at all levels, targeting new categories and entrants (entrepreneurial, SME and corporate) that will harmoniously sync with our existing base, thereby creating even greater possibility, revenue, investment and security for long as well as short term gain.

In line with the above, all stakeholders expressed the need for the City to take a leadership role in realizing access, connectivity and opportunity — not only to ensure equality, but also **transparency** and the facilitation of relationships with other key local stakeholders, City departments and community groups. They also advocated for the City to take the lead on **uniformly branding** Culver City as a unique, competitive creative destination. Creation of a consistent profile and message from the City, in all channels, is seen as a prime opportunity to attract new entrants that best fit with our Creative Economy profile, and are best able to widen the economic and interconnectivity pool. Stakeholders also saw opportunity to leverage City branding for their own marketing and reasons for committing to Culver City.

This report captures the recommendations and ideas from the meeting participants in detail. All are consistent with recommendations from the Culver City Economic Development Implementation Plan, and the Culver City Strategic Plan. Most notably were recommendations for assisting creative organizations with commercial space or venues, facilitating partnerships between corporations and creative organizations, providing opportunities for workforce development, internships and apprenticeships, and financial investments in arts, creative projects and organizations. The stakeholder feedback and recommendations contained in this report will hopefully help to inform planning for Culver City's Economic Development, Community Cultural and General Plan updates.



Vox Femina Los Angeles / Photo: Frances Chee

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Photo: Jazz Bakery

# Creative Economy Connect

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING | SUMMARY REPORT



Front & Center Theatre Collaborative Extravaganza / Photo: Culver City Unified School District

## BACKGROUND

Since Culver City's incorporation in 1917, the creative economy has played an important role. In April 2017, Culver City published *The Creative Economy Report of Culver City*<sup>1</sup> (Creative Economy Report). The Report was commissioned to simulate the *Otis Report on the Creative Economy of the Los Angeles Region*. The Creative Economy Report represented the first time the Los Angeles Economic Development Corporation applied its analysis to a single city. Data were collected from a variety of city sources, including the Culver City Unified School District, Finance Department, Cultural Affairs Division and the Parks, Recreation, and Community Services Department. Data were also collected from federal and state agencies to provide information for analysis focusing primarily on 2014.

<sup>1</sup> The Center of Art Culture Music Technology Architecture Fashion Design Entertainment – The Creative Economy of Culver City



The 2017 report defined Culver City's creative economy as:

**Businesses and individuals involved in producing cultural, artistic and design goods and services**

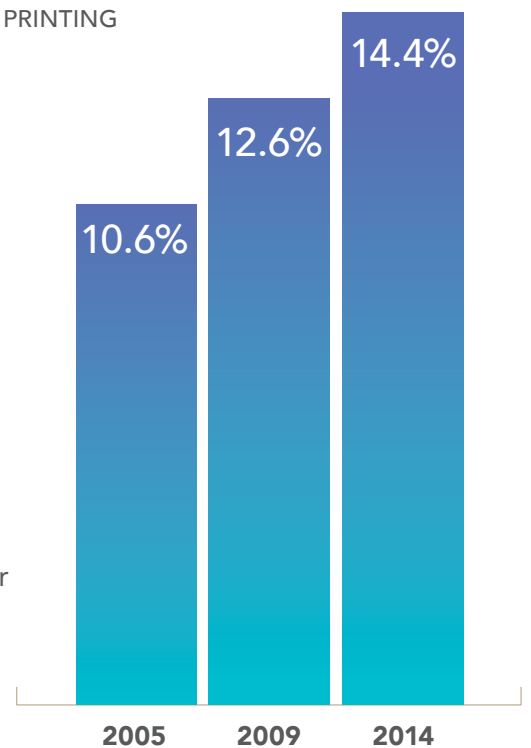
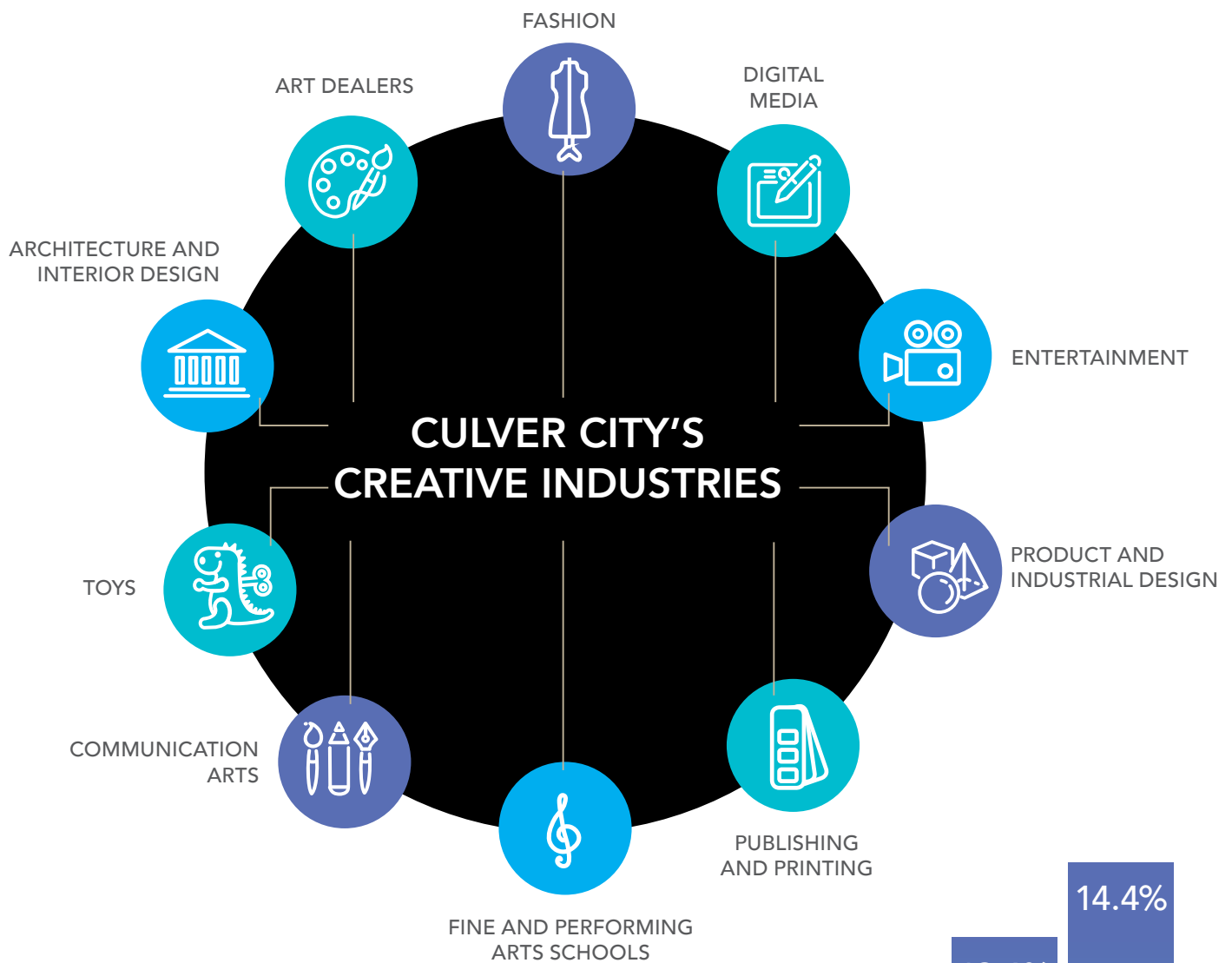
Creative industries in Culver City include fashion, digital media, entertainment, product and industrial design, publishing and printing, fine and performing arts schools, performing arts providers, communication arts, toys, architecture and interior design, and art dealers. According to the Creative Economy Report, these industries employed over 8,000 individuals and generated over one billion in income by 2014. Communication arts, digital media and entertainment accounted for the most employment opportunities in Culver City. The Report also noted that in addition to documented salaries and wages, growth in the city's creative economy was also fueled by self-employed individuals (although specific data were not as readily available).



Culver City Public Theatre / Photo: Caleb Kneuen



Rainbow by Tony Tasset / Photo: Louise Coffey-Webb



The Report stated that between 2005 and 2014, employment in Culver City's creative industries grew from 10.6 percent to 14.4 percent, and the number of creative industries establishments grew by 30 percent. Wages and salaries increased by 66 percent during the same period.

**CREATIVE INDUSTRIES EMPLOYMENT**



The creative industries have historically been anchored geographically by three pillars:

## THREE GEOGRAPHIC PILLARS OF THE CULVER CITY CREATIVE ECONOMY\*



### HAYDEN TRACT

**The Hayden Tract** is characterized as a “dense cluster of creative enterprises” and provides homes for architects, film, sound and design studios, and the UCLA Margot Leavin Graduate Arts Studios.

### CULTURAL CORRIDOR

**The Cultural Corridor** stretches along Culver Boulevard and includes the Ivy Substation, The Culver Studios, Kirk Douglas Theatre, Sony Pictures Studios, Veterans Memorial Building, Culver City Historical Society, and Wende Museum.

### ARTS DISTRICT

**The Culver City Arts Business Improvement District** includes contemporary art galleries, and creative enterprises such as architecture, advertising, culinary arts, post-production, and interior design.

Creative industries are an integral part of Culver City’s history. Beginning with Ince/Triangle Students (later the home of Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios), Culver City has become home to film studios, art galleries, performing arts and other organizations that bring arts and culture to the residents of Culver City.

\*For the purposes of the 2017 Report, the geographic pillars were defined as above. However, as Culver City continues to attract creative companies and organizations, the geographic pillars are rapidly shifting.



The Actors' Gang / Photo: Ashley Randall

In addition to these three geographic areas, creative for-profit and nonprofit organizations are located throughout the city. For instance, performing arts groups such as dance, theatre, music, symphony orchestras, choral music groups, as well as arts education and programs that engage community members in learning about or participating in arts-related events serve as cultural influencers and contribute to the creative economy. The growing influx of creative organizations into Culver City has contributed to a rapid shift in the traditional geographic areas for the creative economy.

The Creative Economy Report provided a framework for future discussions about ways to include creative industries in Culver City's planning and programming efforts. The report highlighted opportunities to identify areas for targeted investments to attract creative enterprises and, to develop strategies for Culver City to compete with neighboring cities which may seek to attract these same industries.

Further, the Report provided a foundation for facilitating and strengthening partnerships and collaborations among creative and cultural organizations and corporations located in Culver City. Most importantly, the findings from the Creative Economy Report can be used to develop strategies to strengthen Culver City as a unique cultural hub.

Recognizing the value of creative industries' contribution to Culver City's economy, the City Council sought recommendations from creative industry representatives on ways to interpret and apply the findings of the Creative Economy Report. To respond to the City Council's request, the City's Cultural Affairs Division proposed stakeholder meetings to obtain feedback from a wide cross-section of community and creative industry stakeholders. Information from the meeting would be used to develop recommendations for the Culver City Cultural Affairs Commission and the City Council. The recommendations might also be used to contribute to strategic and economic development planning, as well as for the Community Cultural Plan and General Plan updates.

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING



The Actors' Gang / Photo: Ashley Randall

Members from Culver City's creative industries were invited to a stakeholder meeting on July 11, 2019, at the Wende Museum. The purpose of the meeting was to solicit feedback on the findings of the Creative Economy Report. Participants were invited to meet and identify the needs of Culver City's creative industries and make recommendations about ways to support creative and cultural organizations' continued contributions to Culver City's economic growth.

### The goals of the stakeholder meeting were to:

- Identify gaps or needs of Culver City's creative economy
- Recommend priorities and actions necessary to support creative and cultural organizations

### Outcomes of the meeting were intended to make recommendations for:

- Leveraging the findings of the Creative Economy Report to support cultural and economic growth for the City
- Aligning recommendations for the creative economy with Culver City's strategic and economic development plans, as well as the Community Cultural and General Plan updates



## PARTICIPANTS

To ensure representation of the many creative organizations in Culver City, Cultural Affairs Division staff developed a list of organizations within the creative industries. The source used to create the list were all businesses and organizations registered in Culver City that met the creative or cultural classification. The lists were organized into the following categories:

- Architecture & Interior Design
- Art Dealers (Artists and Galleries)
- Communication Arts
- Digital Media
- Education
- Entertainment
- Fashion
- Fine & Performing Arts Schools
- Performing Arts Organizations
- Product and Industrial Design
- Publishing and Printing
- Toys

From the established categories, Cultural Affairs Commissioners and Cultural Affairs Division staff identified representatives to be invited to the stakeholder meeting. One priority for creating the invitation list was ensuring that diverse stakeholder perspectives were represented. Therefore, at least one representative from each of the industries was invited. Also, representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, the Culver City Arts Business Improvement District, the Culver City Historical Society, the Downtown Business Association, and the City Council were invited to participate. Cultural Affairs Commissioners, Culver City Executive staff and, Economic Development staff were also among the invitees.

**Over 90 individuals were invited to participate in the all-day meeting. Almost 50 individuals (55 percent of those invited) responded to the invitation with 36 (40 percent of the invitees) joining the meeting on July 11.**

Participants at the meeting were representatives from most of the creative industries in Culver City. Those unable to attend were contacted after the meeting and were invited to provide input.



*Hanging Garden* (detail) by Ed Carpenter / Photo: City of Culver City

## MEETING APPROACH

### THE WORLD CAFÉ METHOD<sup>2</sup>

Several options for conducting the stakeholder meeting were considered, including meetings in multiple locations using a focus group format. Members of the Cultural Affairs Division staff and Cultural Affairs Commission agreed to a one-day meeting that brought several of the key stakeholders together to discuss the report findings, their needs, and to elicit their feedback regarding support of Culver City's creative industries. The one-day meeting was selected to maximize the interaction and networking opportunities for creative industry stakeholders. More importantly, it was determined to use *The World Café* method of conducting the meeting.

The **World Café** is a method for creating a living network of collaborative dialogue around questions that matter. It builds on the power of collaboration and encourages creativity and innovation. The **World Café** method emerged in 1995 when a small group of business and academic leaders came up with a plan to form small, intimate table conversations about the questions that had drawn them together. The founders recorded the insights that resulted from the discussions on paper "tablecloths." Through the table conversations, the participants noticed emerging patterns in the thinking and found that the innovative process gave birth to an experience of collective intelligence that transformed the depth, scope, and quality of the collaboration.

As demonstrated below, this method allowed collaborative dialogue around important questions or prompts. Participants were afforded the opportunity to step away from their daily responsibilities and to connect with other industry leaders.

The **World Café** approach is built on Seven Principles that, when used together, foster collaborative dialogue, active engagement, and constructive possibilities for action. These principles include exploring questions that matter, encouraging everyone's contributions, connecting diverse opinions, and identifying patterns, insights, and deeper meaning. The principles that guide the discussions also help to encourage clear contexts and hospitable spaces.

Utilizing the **World Café** method for eliciting feedback from Culver City's creative industry stakeholders proved valuable in bringing creative minds together to talk about the importance of cultural and creative industries' contribution to Culver City's economic foundation and growth. The use of the World Café gave equal voice to all of the participants regardless of the size of their organization. The World Café provided the perfect opportunity during the meeting to harness the energy that comes from collective problem-solving.

<sup>2</sup> World Café Community Foundation Creative Commons Attribution 2015 <http://www.theworldcafe.com>

## STAKEHOLDER MEETING AND PROCESS

The one-day meeting engaged individuals from creative industries in discussions about their contribution to Culver City's creative economy. Participants met first in diverse industry groups to discuss questions related to their collective contributions to Culver City's economy. The participants then met in industry-specific groups to identify their needs.

Participants were assigned to sit at one of eight tables to ensure that different industries were represented at each table. The meeting began with a welcome from the facilitator and brief remarks from the Mayor and the Deputy Director of the Wende Museum.

Information about the **World Café** process and instructions were provided to the participants. Full participation, active listening, ensuring contribution from all table members, and assuring confidentiality were provided as ground rules to maximize the meeting's outcomes. Most important to the process, table participants were encouraged to have fun and get to know their tablemates.

**"I wanted to extend my gratitude for yesterday's event. Days like that continue to keep me feeling grateful for living in Culver City. Thank you for all of everyone's work, making that a success."**

—World Café Stakeholder Participant



Justinian Jampol, The Wende Museum / Photo: Rob Stark



## CAFÉ QUESTIONS

While assembled in different industry groups, participants were asked to consider two prompts. The first question asked about the ways creative industries collectively contribute to Culver City's economy.

**Question #1: Creative industries make a significant contribution to the economic growth and employment of Culver City. As members of the identified creative industries, describe ways to contribute collectively in the future to the following areas:**

- a) City revenues
- b) employment
- c) tourism
- d) corporate development
- e) community growth.

The second prompt encouraged participants to discuss specific needs or gaps in resources that are necessary to assist creative industries and to help sustain their contributions to Culver City's economy.

**Question #2: Thinking about the opportunities discussed in Question #1, identify specific needs/gaps in resources that will assist and support the Creative Industries' contribution to Culver City's economic growth.**

Following lunch, groups were reconvened in table groups according to their industries (architecture, arts and education, communication arts, performing arts schools and performing arts providers, entertainment, and digital media). The groups were asked to consider a prompt that focused on the specific needs of their respective industries. Representatives from creative industries were asked to identify resources and supports to facilitate their continued success. Specifically, participants were asked:

**As you consider your respective industries, what resources and supports are necessary to ensure your industry's or organization's continued contribution to Culver City's economic growth?**

Following the discussion of each prompt, each table presented a summary of their discussion. In addition to the group discussion about the questions, each table recorded notes from their discussions.

Representatives from publishing and printing, and art dealers and galleries were unable to participate in the July 11 meeting. They were interviewed in the weeks following the July 11 stakeholder meeting. Their responses, along with the responses from the one-day meeting are summarized below.

## STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

The responses from each of the tables, and for each of the questions gathered at the stakeholders meeting and from subsequent interviews were summarized and analyzed to identify key themes. The themes are presented below.



Photo: City of Culver City

## CONTRIBUTION TO CITY ECONOMIC GROWTH

**During the meeting, stakeholder participants engaged in a lively discussion about the ways creative industries contribute to Culver City's economic growth.**

The 2017 Creative Economy Report emphasized the high growth of businesses such as entertainment and digital media. These two industries account for the fastest growing and most significant contributors to Culver City's creative economy. Along with acknowledging the growth of these two specific industries, the meeting participants emphasized that creative industries operating or headquartered in Culver City pay business taxes, which represent an important source of revenue. In addition, creative organizations that provide products and services to the public, also generate sales taxes for Culver City.

Creative organizations in the Hayden Tract, the Cultural Corridor and the Arts District, as well as other parts of Culver City, generate revenue by leasing creative office, retail, and production spaces.

Entertainment and digital media companies are responsible for a high concentration of jobs in Culver City. Among these entities are television and film software publishing, audio electronics, broadcasting, computer systems design services, advertising, graphic design and biotechnology. The expansion of high-profile companies such as Apple, Amazon Studios, and HBO attracts employees and drives economic activity. Entertainment and digital media companies attract employees who rent and buy homes within the city, and who take advantage of the city's resources (e.g. restaurants, shopping, cultural events and schools). Participants from creative industries pointed out that notwithstanding

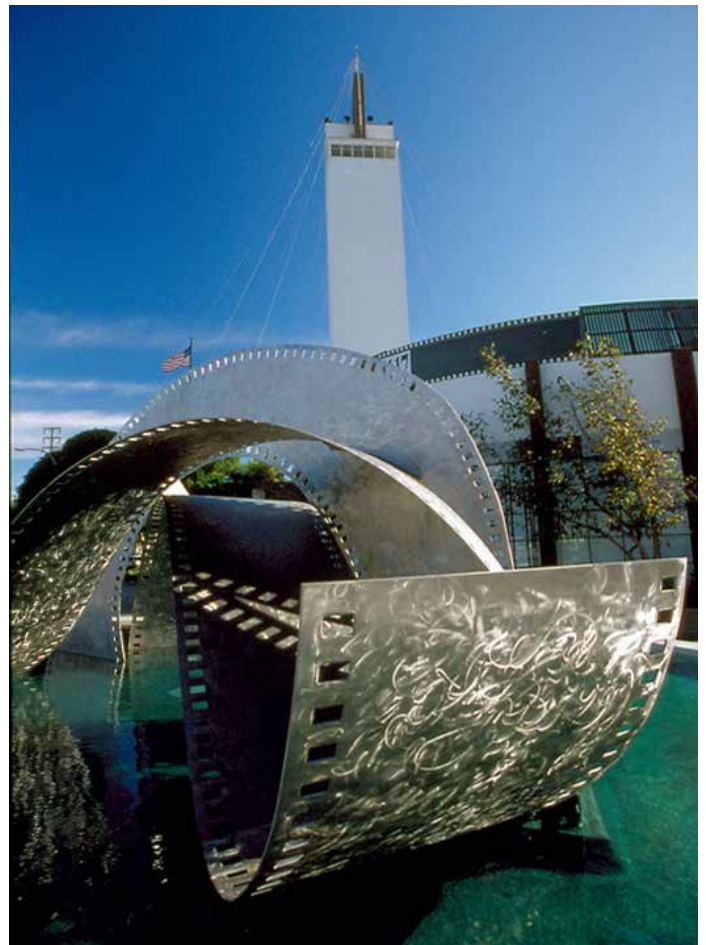
the rapid expansion of large corporations, all of the creative organizations in Culver City create meaningful jobs where people can grow and have a sense of purpose. Participants pointed out that small and mid-sized organizations focus on retaining employees and offering important employee and community benefits. Also, supplemental, seasonal, and short-term employment opportunities are generated by creative industries. The participants emphasized that as leaders of different creative organizations they also offer resources, products, and services to schools, businesses and community institutions.

A variety of arts performances, museums, and cultural venues attract tourists to Culver City. Participants noted that museums attract local, national and international audiences, and the city's architecture, movie industry, and art galleries draw many visitors to the region. Public art, street murals, and walking tours attract growing regional and international attention through posts on social media, as do festivals and concerts. In addition to generating revenue through tourist attendance at performance and events, meeting participants acknowledged that tourists attracted by cultural and artistic opportunities increase demand for Culver City's restaurants and hotels as well. The attraction of Culver City's creative industries is recognized by the public. Performing arts venues, events, and organizations attract visitors likely to dine in and explore the city.

Creative industry participants stated that Culver City's relationships with international sister cities offer opportunities to share cultural experiences and to serve as cultural ambassadors. These partnerships help to expand the cultural reach of Culver City by attracting visitors and raising the visibility of cultural and artistic offerings.

Large studios such as Sony Pictures Studios contribute as sources of corporate development that translate into community benefits. Many of the participants discussed how Sony Pictures Studios represented the "gold standard" as a creative and corporate partner and suggested ways the studios' partnership with Culver City could serve as a model for the city's partnerships with other large studios or corporations.

Representatives from creative industries were able to identify a variety of ways their work positively contributed to Culver City's economy. It was through their consideration of the first question that participants at the meeting were able to recognize and articulate their collective value.



Veterans Memorial Building / Photo: schafphoto.com



## CREATIVE INDUSTRY NEEDS

The second question asked meeting participants to identify resources and supports that creative industries needed to continue to bring value to Culver City's economy. Participants began by identifying barriers and issues that create challenges for creative industries.

Transportation emerged as a common theme among the participants. Also, participants noted that, as individuals with higher incomes move into Culver City, there appears to be a housing imbalance. Fewer affordable housing options exist for employees of smaller creative organizations and business that may pay less. The increase in housing costs and the decrease in affordable options often results in the displacement of local artists and lower-wage employees who work in creative industries.

The table groups discussed other challenges, such as access to real estate (commercial buildings). Decreasing office/studio inventory limits their ability to sustain their work or to grow, and the rising costs of commercial real estate in Culver City has resulted in the displacement of some creative organizations (especially nonprofit arts organizations). Some participants offered examples of buildings that were not up to code and affected the availability of workspaces.



Photo: Hackman Capital Partners

## SPECIFIC INDUSTRY NEEDS

Meeting participants were also grouped according to industries. They responded to the third question that focused on specific industry needs to sustain their contributions to Culver City's economy. For the final question, the table groups included Architecture and Design, Performing Arts Schools, Performing Arts Providers, Entertainment and Arts, and Education. Each table group was asked to consider resources and supports necessary to enhance their contribution to Culver City's creative economy.



*Umbrella* by Eric Owen Moss / Photo: schafphoto.com

### **Architecture and Design**

Representatives from the Architecture and Design industry identified increased constraints and regulations imposed by the city as a significant challenge. Although the participants acknowledged that the standard for architectural design should be high, the standard can also create impediments for firms that bring diversity. Architectural representatives noted that it was important to them to know that Culver City supports their work and is willing to provide resources and opportunities for their success.

During the stakeholder meeting, representatives from architectural firms identified the need for Culver City to foster innovation and suggested design competitions for all projects (private and civic) to allow young firms opportunities to be recognized and win bids for projects. The representatives noted that small start-up firms do not have ways to connect with established firms to learn from best practices. They also expressed a need for developing ongoing connections with community members and with contractors engaged in new developments to help support and sustain their work.

### Performing Arts Schools

Performing Arts Schools offer unique services to residents of Culver City and neighboring communities. In addition to providing cultural jobs, they engage directly through partnerships, sponsorships, and professionals who interact with students through visits to local schools. Representatives from performing arts schools stated that support from local school principals and the Culver City Unified School District (CCUSD) School Board would enhance their ability to continue to provide services to schools and contribute to the economy. Limited opportunities to develop partnerships between performing arts schools and various arts programs in local schools were examples of barriers to performing arts schools' ability to bring added value and resources to Culver City schools. Representatives from performing arts schools also expressed a need for reasonable rates for venue rentals.

### Performing Arts Providers

Performing Arts Providers reported needing access to lists of arts organizations with which to connect. The providers also emphasized the need for funding that is not solely tied to ticket sales. Specific mechanisms to market performances and attract audiences were necessary to help sustain performing arts providers. Additionally, participants stated that they would benefit from the City's support in facilitating and building relationships between nonprofits and corporations as a way to identify opportunities for non-programmatic funding. Providers noted that certain buildings that serve as venues for performances require upgrading and maintenance to support their continued work. The Veterans Memorial Auditorium was offered as an example of a venue in need of specific upgrades.

**"That was a terrific event –well conducted, informative, and inspirational. The attendees brought both wisdom and insight into the queries and engaged enthusiastically throughout the process."**

**...Meeting stakeholder participant**



Culver City Symphony Orchestra / Photo: Matthew Hetz



### Entertainment and Digital Media

Representatives from entertainment and digital media identified issues related to parking and transportation as major challenges to their industry. The representatives also identified zoning restrictions as an important barrier to their sustained contribution to Culver City's economy and encouraged incentives for developers to attract other companies to the area.

### Arts and Arts Education

Members from Arts and Arts Education entities spoke about their need for a community advisory council to connect artists with Culver City and surrounding communities. They discussed networking with nonprofit organizations to provide access to venues to display their work. Rising rents have displaced galleries and other arts and culture venues which negatively affect the arts and arts education organizations. Further, the rising cost of housing has made it difficult for local artists to live and work in Culver City.



Photo: Alexey Steele

### Publishing and Printing

While some members of the publishing and printing industry consider it unique from the other categories of creative industries, representatives discussed general needs for creative industries, and suggested ways the publishing and printing industry might contribute to Culver City's creative economy.

For example, increasing awareness about Culver City's creative industries can positively contribute to the vibrancy of the creative economy. Publishers and printers suggested creating guidebooks to the city's creative businesses and organizations. These guidebooks might be used to incentivize patronage by offering discounts for products or services. Maps and walking tours of creative venues including architectural firms, art galleries, and design studios would also help to educate and increase visibility.

The Art Walk was cited as an example of an event that successfully raises the visibility of creative industries, and provides exposure for members of the publishing and printing communities through book signing and sales. However, the Art Walk is an event that occurs annually, and the interviewees stated that if events such as the Art Walk could be offered at least twice a year, it would help to support their work and the work of other creative organizations.

### Art Dealers and Galleries

Members of the Art Dealers/Galleries industry identified a number of challenges that have significantly impacted the industry. According to the respondents, Culver City has lost almost sixty percent of the art galleries. One contributor to this decline was the ban on permits for events and gatherings. Acknowledging the safety implications of the ban, the representatives noted the ban disinclines galleries and dealers from choosing to locate in Culver City. Also, the lack of available parking near galleries was cited as another significant factor related to the decline in art galleries in the city. Finally, the rates for commercial rents and leases were described as prohibitive for some galleries and dealers.

The influx into Culver City of digital media companies and studios has caused City officials to strengthen the city's infrastructure to support these industries. In doing so, it has changed the nature of the way many in the public engage with galleries and art dealers. With art increasingly available through digital means, galleries are closing and

original works of art are being placed in storage, reducing the opportunity for the public to view art in galleries. The respondents did note however, that one remaining platform for viewing original art in person is art fairs.

Other issues affecting the creative economy, particularly with respect to public art was the participants' observation that public art is not well cared for. This lack of maintenance (the streetscape and pedestrian walkways) sends a message that public art is not important. To change this perception, the participants suggested that Culver City support the creative community by developing a plan to create an environment for people to appreciate public art (clean streets, adequate lighting, gardening and maintenance). Another suggestion was to engage developers in supporting the community including providing low-income housing for artists who are displaced by high rents. Finally, the participants suggested that Culver City encourage developers to create and fund arts budgets as a means of investing in the city's creative economy.



Fresh Paint / Photo: Lindsay McGee

## MEETING SUMMARY

The one-day stakeholder meeting of representatives from Culver City's creative industries was successful in reemphasizing the important contributions the industries make to Culver City's economy. These organizations pay city taxes, lease real estate, rent venues, and attract, entertain, educate, and support community members.

The creative industry leaders emphasized the **interdependence** between their industries, and with the other business and social entities in the city. Continued support of the creative industries in Culver City is vital to maintaining the city's economic ecosystem.

The meeting offered opportunities for creative industry representatives to discuss their collective and specific industry needs to sustain and grow their organizations as well as their continued contributions to Culver City's economy. The stakeholder meeting resulted in recommendations for **Access, Connectivity and Opportunity** that will assist Culver City's creative industries to continue to be vibrant contributors to the city's economy.



Photo: Nishita Doshi



## RECOMMENDATIONS

The feedback from creative industries representatives pointed to several opportunities for the City of Culver City to continue to provide resources and support for specific industry needs.

## ACCESS

Creative industries require access to resources to support their continued growth. Examples include:

### Career Education and Professional Development

Creative industry stakeholders spoke extensively about educational, employment, and professional development opportunities to support those in, or considering entering, creative industries.

Participants provided examples of educational opportunities that introduce individuals to creative industries or build their skills through career and technical education. They emphasized community college programs (i.e., West Los Angeles College) that lead to creative jobs. The participants suggested that professional and educational training certificate programs offer options for individuals making early or mid-career transitions into creative industries. They also noted that education and skills training develop a creative workforce pipeline necessary to sustain the contributions of creative industries.

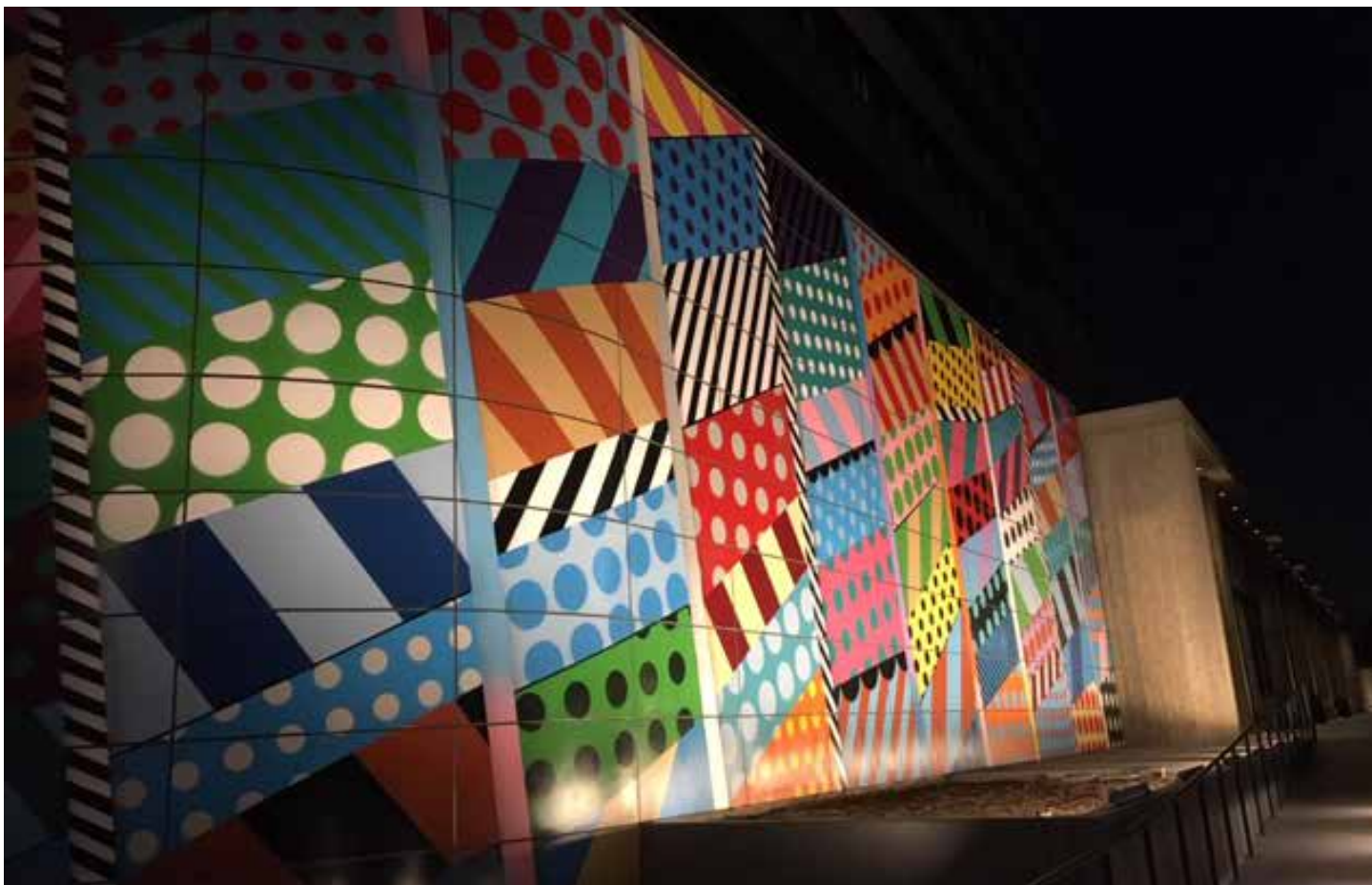
Training programs that help connect employees and corporations were among the recommendations provided by the group. Internships and apprenticeships and professional development opportunities were all examples offered as strategies to support individuals who work in creative industries.

### Arts Events and Programming

Stakeholder participants from creative organizations stated they would benefit from community programming if Culver City can provide venues, or offer ways to share spaces for community and cultural engagement. Providing access to resources for local and visiting artists can provide the support necessary to ensure their continued contribution to the creative economy. Free cultural, community, and education programs, as well as public art in community spaces, increase the visibility of creative organizations and encourage engagement and support of their efforts.



*Moving Pictures* by Wick Alexander & Robin Brailsford /  
Photo: City of Culver City



*Bloom Dimension* by Jason Woodside / Photo: Louise Coffey-Webb

## CONNECTIVITY

**Essential to all creative stakeholders were connections with businesses and organizations to provide opportunities for resource and information sharing, and, where necessary, collective problem-solving. Meeting participants provided examples of ways Culver City could facilitate those connections.**

### Partnerships

Public and private partnerships emerged as an important theme and led to specific recommendations. Participants suggested that Culver City facilitate connections between creative entities and nonprofit and corporate partners. They emphasized that these partnerships offer important benefits for creative professionals. Participants noted that partnerships with nonprofit and business entities could result in financial and other contributions to cultural programs. In addition, creative industry stakeholders suggested Culver

City find ways to facilitate the “big helping the smalls” (connecting start-up and small companies with large or established companies). They also suggested that Culver City consider convening stakeholder groups and conducting regular meetings to understand creative organizations’ needs and to connect them with available resources. One participant at the meeting stated, “The value of stakeholder gatherings [such as the creative industry stakeholder meeting] is that they bring diverse organizations together to collaborate and support each other.”

## OPPORTUNITY

**Business and financial opportunities were important supports for creative industries. Examples include:**

### **Marketing and Public Relations**

An important need identified by several creative industry representatives was marketing and public relations. Their recommendation aligned with City planning reports that noted, despite Culver City's success in expanding arts and culture institutions, the City suffers from limited name recognition as an arts destination. To that end, participants recommended creating a unified brand for creative industries. According to the industry stakeholders, building and communicating a brand might be accomplished in the following ways:

- Hiring a marketing and public relations or community relations professional to assist individual creative organizations, or a collective of organizations create and market their brand to raise awareness about the value of Culver City's creative industries.
- Updating the Culver City website to match the vibrancy of the cultural and creative offerings and to connect visitors to cultural activities. Participants suggested that the website contain a calendar of events or a community board of cultural and creative activities.
- Developing partnerships with local publications and travel publications to advertise cultural events, encourage tourism, and increase awareness of Culver City's cultural industries.
- Using social media (e.g., Twitter, Instagram) to highlight creative and cultural activities, using the hashtag #CULVERCREATES.
- Creating a speaker's bureau to identify and encourage spokespersons and ambassadors for creative industries and to raise awareness about public art, historical buildings, and Culver City architecture (e.g., Culver Hotel, Ivy Substation, and the Citizen Building).

### **Funding and Financial Support**

Small nonprofit organizations and groups emphasized the need for financial support. Stakeholders at the meeting suggested enhancing the role of the Culver City Arts Foundation, the Cultural Affairs Commission and growing the annual arts program. They noted that the City's Art in Public Places Program (APPP) should continue to provide funding to support art and cultural offerings. Participants suggested that Culver City create or support an entity to help manage, fundraise, and develop boards for nonprofit organizations.

Members from small for-profit and nonprofit organizations also recommended that Culver City offer subsidies for rent and find ways to promote institutional support. The meeting participants asked that commercial developers and corporations be encouraged to support cultural programs and invest in public arts. For example, if Culver City can encourage corporations to provide support and funding voluntarily for creative and cultural organizations, the funding would contribute to the organizations' sustained work. Creative industries stakeholders spoke to opportunities for new and expanding companies in Culver City to fund arts and culture. The growing presence of major corporations presents opportunities to attract private funding for creative endeavors, especially if Culver City can continue to work with the development community to integrate public art into major projects both voluntarily and through existing requirements.

These recommendations highlight important opportunities to strengthen the creative and cultural ecosystem of Culver City. Support of these creative industries will allow them to continue to make a significant contribution to the city's economy.



## ALIGNMENT WITH OTHER CULVER CITY PLANNING EFFORTS

The feedback provided by the creative industries stakeholders was in many instances consistent with the outcomes of other Culver City planning efforts. It should be noted that the findings from this process were consistent with one of the City's strategic priorities – strengthening revenues for Culver City.

The presence and importance of arts and cultural institutions that contribute to Culver City's creative and innovative ecosystem were also highlighted in the Culver City Economic Development Implementation Plan (EDIP)<sup>3</sup>. The EDIP identifies Culver City's creative economy as a primary economic engine as evidenced by the high concentration of entertainment and digital media companies. These companies account for the fastest growing and most significant contributor to the economy. Also highlighted in the EDIP was the influence of Culver City's creative industries that expand the cultural reach of the city to attract visitors and increase awareness of cultural and artistic offerings.

In addition to the contributions of creative industries, participants spoke to the impact of issues addressed by the EDIP. For example, transportation was a common theme that emerged during the meeting. Participants described how changing mobility, traffic congestion, greater density and parking challenges affected creative industries. They also spoke about challenges created by poor pedestrian and bicycle infrastructures.

Of note, participants articulated the impact of a housing imbalance and how shrinking affordable housing options are displacing artists, and other members of the creative community. Participants also emphasized the importance of maintaining a balance between addressing the needs of developers and facilitating the continued contributions of creative entities to the economic ecosystem of Culver City.

Many of the recommendations from the creative industries stakeholders were consistent with those from the EDIP and from Culver City's strategic plan. For example, the EDIP highlighted **connectivity**, and suggests that Culver City support and retain design, architecture and engineering businesses by convening stakeholder groups and conducting meetings to understand business needs. The Culver City Strategic Plan, the EDIP and the creative industries stakeholders spoke to the importance of facilitating partnerships, especially between larger corporations and smaller creative businesses and organizations.

Access might be facilitated through City efforts to assist organizations find or retain space to reduce the burden of rising commercial lease costs, a suggestion from both the meeting participants and included in the EDIP. Both stakeholders and the EDIP suggested the City continue to support creative industries by making additional investments in internships, apprenticeships, and workforce development for individuals working in, or interested in working in creative industries.

Finally, stakeholders, the EDIP, and the City's strategic plan emphasized the importance of **opportunity**—financial support for arts organizations through fundraising, direct contributions, or contributions to a trust or foundation that supports arts organizations, as a way of continuing to support creative organizations and contributing to their growth.

<sup>3</sup> Developed for Culver City by Strategic Economics, the Economic Development Implementation Plan guides the City's economic development strategies.

## SUMMARY

Many of the recommendations presented above will help frame continued discussions about Culver City's economy in general, and the creative economy specifically.

As consultants begin to assess Culver City's cultural ecosystem in preparation for completing the Community Cultural and General Plan updates, these recommendations can be used to understand stakeholders' perceptions of Culver City's current assets, as well as their funding, marketing, and branding needs and concerns. Further, some of the stakeholders in Culver City's creative industries spoke to the need for a policy framework to support the creative economy. As the Arts, Culture and Creative Economy section of the updated General Plan, and the Community Cultural Plan update are developed, the recommendations from the creative industries stakeholders will help set policies to:

- Sustain the creative economy through public and private partnerships
- Strengthen the cultural infrastructure
- Support and develop the creative economy workforce
- Offer public art and spaces for creative endeavors
- Encourage arts and cultural education
- Provide funding
- Develop cultural marketing and branding

The one-day stakeholder meeting provided a unique opportunity for representatives from creative industries to come together to discuss challenges and opportunities to support and grow Culver City's creative economy. In addition to making recommendations for the Cultural Affairs Commission and City Council consideration, the meeting provided a rare chance for representatives from diverse creative industries to network and collectively problem-solve.

The World Café was a method that facilitated discussions about what mattered and allowed all voices to be included in the process. While not all members of Culver City's creative organizations were involved in the stakeholder meeting, the meeting should be considered an important point of departure for future discussions during the preparation of the Community Cultural and General Plan updates.

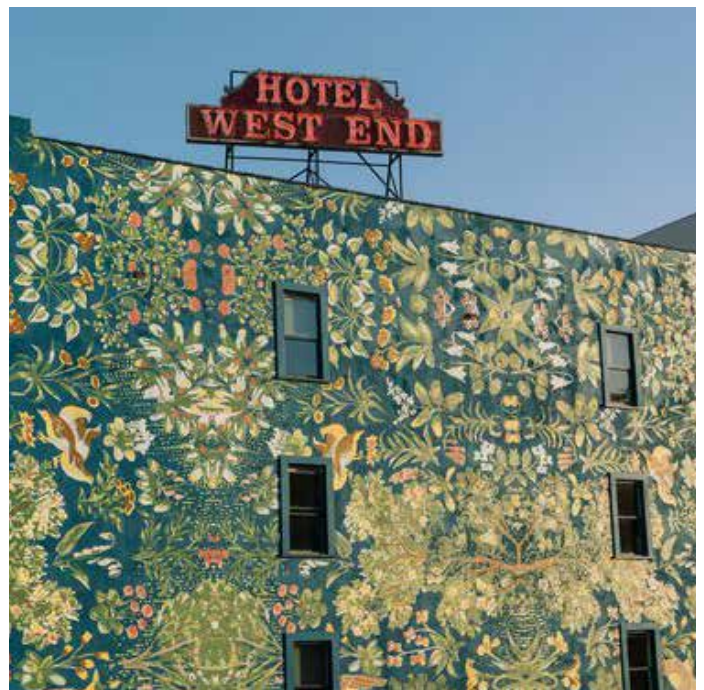


Photo: Louise Coffey-Webb