

**Uptown ARTS Overlay Review Committee**  
**Report and Recommendations, November 2009**

**PART TWO–Economic Development Recommendations for the**  
**Uptown ARTS Overlay District**

**Table of Contents**

	<b><u>Page</u></b>
1. Executive Summary – findings and recommendations	2
2. Introduction	8
3. The Committee’s Findings	8
4. The Committee’s Economic Development Recommendations	10
4.1 Tax Policy	10
4.2 About District of Columbia economic development and related programs	11
4.3 Neighborhood Investment Fund	14
4.4 Hospitality Business Orientation Program	19
4.5 Streetscapes	20
4.6 Parking	20
4.7 Industrial Revenue Bonds	21
4.8 Commission on Arts and Humanities	22
4.9 Retail Action Strategy and Creative Action Agenda	22
4.10 Live/Work	23
4.11 Heritage Trails	24
4.12 Reeves Center	25
4.13 Central Union Mission Project	25
4.14 Verizon building 14 <sup>th</sup> and R Streets	26
4.15 City-owned property	26
4.16 Non-profit to develop and promote the arts district	26
Appendices	
A. ANC2F Recommended Actions	28
B. Economic Impact of the Arts	31
C. Brief History of the Uptown Arts District	34

## 1. Executive Summary

The recommendations contained in the economic development part of the Committee report are based on an exhaustive review of the DC government websites, interviews with numerous city officials, including information gleaned from city officials who attended our meetings, as well as interviews with developers, property owners, retailers, and owners and managers of art institutions in the neighborhood.

In considering the zoning recommendations, the Committee came to the conclusion that zoning recommendations, without being supplement by collateral economic development activity, would not achieve the community's goal of vibrant arts, retail and service corridor.

The recommendations contained herein have broad applicability across the existing overlay neighborhood, and are presented as recommendations to all the relevant ANCs and neighborhood-based organizations. These organizations may wish to consider, and implement, these recommendations in pertinent part. Because the Arts Overlay Committee was created under the authority of ANC2F, we have presented, in a separate appendix, a set of ANC2F-specific recommendations.

### **Executive Summary - Findings**

**The presence of arts in the neighborhood is important to economic development. For every dollar in direct and event-related spending, another dollar was generated in tax revenues and local household income.**

**Retailers and galleries are reporting upward pressure on rents**, caused by the growth in commercial property taxes over the past few years and by the relative success of the commercial corridor. With property tax increases passed along to commercial tenants, art galleries and non-profit arts institutions in particular are at risk. Restaurants are less subject to these pressures, due to cash flow from alcohol beverage sales.

In addition to paying rising taxes, **retailers and art institutions are reporting that the economic downturn is presenting a significant challenge.**

**Business owners, developers, and former city officials oppose the creation of a Business Improvement District to finance economic development.**

There are two reasons cited for this: (1) the area is too small and has too few businesses to support a BID (2) retailers are already struggling in the downturn and do not want landlords passing on additional increases. **To the extent city resources exist, or in the future can be allocated, to provide economic development to the arts district, those resources can either be**

**administered directly by the city** (e.g., streetscape projects administered by DDOT) **or can be in the form of resources that flow to a community-based organization(s) in the form of grants.** In the latter case, the neighborhood will need to consider the extent to which it can leverage existing 501(c) (3) or (c) (6) organizations, or whether new nonprofit organizations will need to be created to take advantage of grants programs.

**In reviewing the long list of economic development programs currently offered by the city, we found only one – the Neighborhood Investment Fund – that may be funded in FY10 and that is potentially available to neighborhood organizations.** A long list of other programs (Great Streets, Main Streets, etc) is not available to our area currently. However, as currently administered, **there are significant challenges to procuring money under the NIF for economic development,** even though the program was created by the Council for that purpose. The Committee report makes recommendations on how the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development should change the NIF program to encourage its use as an economic development tool.

### **Executive Summary -- Recommendations**

1. Tax policy: All retailers and small arts businesses were uniform in their view that property tax burdens had escalated to the point that higher rents were threatening their future success, in spite of the City Council's relatively recent efforts to cut taxes on the first \$3 million of a property's value. The Committee also recognizes that (1) the need for additional property tax relief for small businesses is not limited to the Uptown Arts Overlay; (2) the economic downturn and drop in tax revenues makes it difficult for the city to extend significant property tax breaks to all commercial property at this time; and (3) a property tax break more limited in geographic scope and limited in time might be attainable. For that reason, **the Committee recommends further property tax relief targeted to the city's 12 Neighborhood Investment Fund areas, which would include portions of the Uptown Arts Overlay in the Logan and Shaw neighborhoods.** ANCs and neighborhood organizations should advise their city council representative that further and temporary (2-3 years) property tax relief in the city's previously identified Neighborhood Investment Fund areas is advisable to help sustain small business and employment through the economic downturn. The Committee suggests that, as with prior relief, the measure should be targeted to the first \$3 million of assessed value to ensure the measure is targeted to small business, and there should be a measurable decrease in the assessment rate for the next 2-3 years.

In addition, **the city should study creative tax policies to determine whether there could be specific tax policies instituted to support arts uses and arts districts.** This tax policy could be directed to the Preferred Arts Use List now being developed in the zoning process, as amended by the zoning

recommendations made in Part 1 of this report. Relevant neighborhood organizations should consider making a request for examination of this issue to the city's CFO together with the Office of Planning and Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development.

2. Neighborhood Investment Fund: Pending in the FY10 budget is approximately \$835,000 for the Logan NIF. **ANC2F should call upon city officials to ensure that the NIF categories for funding in FY10 and beyond are sufficiently flexible with respect to economic development that the neighborhood can take advantage of the money to develop the arts district.** Once the funding categories are broadened to specifically include economic development, the ANCs can further consider how to encourage specific projects. In addition, the ANCs should also remain current on the NIF requests for proposal to be issued by the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in the October-November time frame. Once the rules are public, the neighborhood should work to ensure that NIF grants can be obtained by a qualified group or groups in support of the commercial corridor to the extent allowed under the rules.<sup>1</sup>

3. Uses of the NIF: The Committee recommends that to support the Arts Overlay district, ANCs and neighborhood organizations seek to **use the available funding on the following projects, in descending priority: (1) financial support for the Mid-City Business Association in support of retail activities in the Uptown Arts District, including a pilot Hospitality Business Orientation program; (2) visual branding/visual identity of neighborhood including, for example, banners;<sup>2</sup> (3) planning for development of an ongoing arts event to help develop the neighborhood's "brand" as an arts location; (4) development of public transportation routes to better support the community and alleviate pressures on parking; (5) planning for expanded street vending to focus on dead zones; (6) improving the use of vacant windows.**

4. Streetscape: While the U Street streetscape project appears to be on track and funded for FY11, the 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project's future is somewhat less certain. The **relevant ANCs should endeavor to remain in consistent**

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<sup>1</sup> At its September 2, 2009 meeting, the ANC2F adopted this recommendation, and on September 11, 2009, sent a letter to the Deputy Mayor recommending revision of the funding categories.

<sup>2</sup> An earlier attempt at organizing banners failed when the organizing entity (a 501(c)(3) that was inexperienced in economic development) apparently committed the funds without producing banners. Several retailers advised the Committee that they continued to have an interest in banners, especially if their business name could be added to the bottom of the banner, which was in the original plan. Given that the cost of this type of program is well under \$50,000, the Committee urges the ANC to take what steps it can to free up NIF for this purpose, possibly using Mid-City Business Association as the designated entity to organize the banners.

**communication with DDoT to press both projects to completion**, and, as relevant, to make their views known to the city council.

5. Parking: (a) DDoT should **perform a 14<sup>th</sup> Street parking study called for in the city's Comprehensive Plan**.<sup>3</sup> and (b) DDoT should install **the new credit-card meters** either as part of the streetscape project (in the case of U Street) or in advance of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project. Adjusting the pricing of parking and the time of day could benefit neighborhood retailers whose customers may need short-term parking.

6. Industrial Revenue Bonds: With the upcoming census, it is unclear whether the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Street area, now mostly designated as an Enterprise Zone, will continue with that designation, due to differences in poverty rates in the area from a decade ago. If the designation is lost, private enterprise will no longer be eligible for loans supported by IRBs. Even if private enterprise cannot take advantage of IRB-sourced borrowing, city-based 501(c) (3) organizations can do so even if the corridor loses its Enterprise Zone status. **The Committee recommends that this program should be explored further to the extent a section 501(c)(3) entity is formed or identified to promote an arts district.** Participation in the program would mean that the non-profit entity sees an opportunity to acquire or renovate real property. An example of such future development is the public property now operated between S & T and 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets NW.

7. Commission on Arts and Humanities: via the ANCs, or separately through established or new 501(c) (3) organizations, work with the Commission to **integrate the Uptown Arts District into the Commission's strategic plan. Consider launching a street arts festival and/or other cultural events to establish and brand the neighborhood as an arts district, and consider whether to apply for grants for a public arts** project in FY11.

8. Retail Action Strategy and Creative Action Agenda (Office of Planning): The **ANCs should monitor the release of these planning documents (expected in fall of 2009) and pursue how to use them in support of arts and retail in our neighborhood.** In particular, finding additional funding toward branding the neighborhood and highlighting the arts presence here is a top priority.

9. Artist Live/Work: In addition to the zoning recommendations made in Part 1 of this report, the **ANCs should work with developers to create live/work options for artists in new developments, and should further work with the Cultural Development Corp. to ensure that such projects developed are well-designed and will enhance the arts district.**

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<sup>3</sup> Action NNW-2.3.B: 14<sup>th</sup> Street Parking Study, The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capitol: District Elements.

10. Heritage Trails: The Cultural Tourism DC is in the final process of selecting projects for its remaining trails. While U Street has a completed trail, the 14<sup>th</sup> Street area in Logan does not have a trail and is not currently on the list to receive one. The **Committee recommends that the Logan Circle Community Association consider organizing a group of interested residents who would support a design committee, and make the neighborhood's interest known to Cultural Tourism DC.** Longer term, Cultural Tourism DC is considering how it might work to define “cultural corridors” that overlay the Heritage Trails, and the relevant ANCs should pursue this longer term strategy with Cultural Tourism DC, since it appears to align well with the community’s goals for an arts district.

10. Reeves Center: **The city should add an arts component to the future redevelopment of the Reeves Center.** The Office of Planning, and other relevant city agencies, should consult the community through the ANCs to develop a plan for how arts uses can be integrated into this building.

11. Central Union Mission project: This development project has been stalled repeatedly leaving a large “dead zone” on the east side of 14<sup>th</sup> between Corcoran and R Streets. In the latest development, a lawsuit filed by the ACLU concerning a constitutional question about the city’s ability to support an organization that has a religious purpose has stopped the project’s forward momentum. **The city needs to resolve the lawsuit and allow the creation of a new facility serving homeless individuals, thereby allowing development on the site to proceed.** The Committee views redevelopment of this site as critical to the success of retail and arts in the Arts Overlay District.

11. Verizon building at 14<sup>th</sup> and R Streets: This site of a Verizon central office facility, at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and R Streets, is presently a retail “dead zone”. The building is partially bricked in on the first floor. As a corner location, it is a critical site for the future of a successful retail corridor. The **Committee recommends that the city work with the community and Verizon to determine whether there are opportunities to utilize the space,** particularly on the first floor, in a different way and for retail use.

12. City–owned property: In the Office of Planning’s final reports on the Logan and Shaw NIF areas, there is an appendix listing all publicly owned properties. The **Committee recommends that future development of these publicly owned properties should be targeted to arts and/or artist live/work space, as appropriate.**

13. New neighborhood-based economic development organization: The **ANCs should consider whether existing non-profit organizations in the neighborhood are sufficient to support ongoing and coordinated economic development activity including, but not limited to, the development of an economic development strategy for the Uptown Arts District, acting as a grants recipient (e.g., for economic development and branding activity),**

**and promoting and cultivating the continued growth and success of the Uptown Arts District.** Throughout the recommendations, the Committee has referred to the need of non-profit organizations to carry out the work of building a strong and vibrant arts district. In part, this is driven by city regulations, such as entities eligible to receive economic development grants. In addition, the Committee found in its review that many successful arts districts around the country are supported by this type of non-profit entity, normally a “501(c) (3)”. Importantly, these entities do not compete for arts funding with arts institutions, but act as a promotion and development vehicle for the district. In the Committee’s view, a similar institution (or institutions) is needed to foster and promote the Uptown Arts District.

## 2. Introduction

As part of its review, the Committee considered whether economic development programs or other associated public programs or policies (e.g., streetscapes) could be used to sustain or promote arts uses, and/or could contribute to the continued development of local retail and restaurant businesses. The Committee exhaustively reviewed the city's websites, and examined all the programs of relevance to the arts and commercial sectors. In public meetings, the Committee met with staff members from the following offices and representatives of the following organizations:

- Office of Planning: Rebecca Moudry and Sakina Khan (Retail and Creative Action Strategies)
- Department of Small and Local Business Development: Camille Nixon
- Washington DC Economic Partnership: Steve Moore (President & CEO)
- Mid-City Business Association: Natalie Avery, Executive Director
- Downtown Business Improvement District: Scott Pomeroy

In addition, the Committee contacted numerous city officials to collect additional information about economic development programs. The Committee also sought the advice of developers and retailers about these programs.

In the discussion below, the Committee has summarized the key economic development and related programs that could help support arts and commercial uses in the neighborhood. One of the overarching issues facing these programs is the effect the current economic downturn is having on public budgets. On the one hand, the 2009 federal stimulus temporarily raised the funding available from the National Endowment for the Arts enabling that organization to issue more grants. On the other hand, the city's budget for fiscal year 2010 (beginning October 1) has already been revised downward once, and may undergo further revision, due to falling revenues, causing a drop in available funds for a variety of programs. ***Any FY10 budget numbers presented in this report should therefore be treated as estimates only.***

## 3. Committee's Findings

1. The **presence of arts in the neighborhood is important to economic development**. Two decades of economic studies have shown that spending on arts (attendance at theatrical events, art galleries, etc.) has a multiplier effect – patrons go to restaurants or shop. In 2007, one study of the economic impact of the arts in the greater Washington DC area found that, in addition to direct spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations of \$1.21 billion, audiences spent an additional \$935.24 million in event-related spending. Together, this activity supported 45,175 full time equivalent jobs, generated \$1011.96 million in household income to local residents, and resulted in \$163.78 million in state and local government revenues. Stated more simply, **for every dollar in direct and event-related spending, another dollar was generated in tax revenues and**

**local household income**. Significantly, this study actually understated the economic effects, as it excluded for-profit arts activities and spending by individual artists

**Retailers and galleries are reporting upward pressure on rents**, caused by the growth in commercial property taxes over the past few years and by the relative success of the commercial corridor. With property tax increases passed along to commercial tenants, art galleries and non-profit arts institutions in particular are at risk. Restaurants are less subject to these pressures, due to cash flow from alcohol beverage sales.

In addition to paying rising taxes, **retailers and art institutions are reporting that the economic downturn is presenting a significant challenge**. While the goal of public policy is not to ensure the survival of individual businesses, the Committee looked for ways in which city policies could best support the maintenance and enhancement of the arts and retail sector.

**Business owners, developers, and former city officials oppose the creation of a Business Improvement District to finance economic development**.

There are two reasons cited for this: (1) the area is too small and has too few businesses to support a BID (2) retailers are already struggling in the downturn and do not want landlords passing on additional increases.

**To the extent city resources exist, or in the future can be allocated, to provide economic development to the arts district, those resources can either be administered directly by the city** (e.g., streetscape project administered by DDOT) **or can be in the form of resources that flow to a community-based organization(s) in the form of grants**. In the latter case,

the neighborhood will need to consider the extent to which it can leverage existing 501(c) (3) or (c) (6) organizations, or whether new nonprofit organizations will need to be created to take advantage of grants programs.

**In reviewing the long list of economic development programs currently offered by the city, we found only one – the Neighborhood Investment Fund – that may be funded in FY10 and that is potentially available to neighborhood organizations**. A long list of other programs (Great Streets, Main Streets, etc) is not available to our area currently. However, as currently administered, **there are significant challenges to procuring money under the NIF for economic development**, even though the program was created by the Council for that purpose.

## 4. Economic Development Recommendations

### 4.1 Tax Policy

During the course of its deliberations, the Committee discussed whether tax policies could be of use in retaining or enhancing the corridor's arts presence or retail/commercial presence. In public hearings, the Committee consistently heard that growing property taxes has taken a toll on both artists and retail entrepreneurs. While the city council did enact (in 2007) some tax relief on the first \$3 million in property value (a measure that would benefit small property owners), this has come after a number of years of property tax increases that have been passed on to tenants in commercial leases. The Committee is saddened to report that the size of the property tax burden is putting local art galleries in jeopardy.

For example, the galleries at 1515 14<sup>th</sup> Street are facing rent increases due to the combined effect of mounting property taxes and the need for the building's owner to rent the gallery floor spaces at market prices. The owner's efforts to refinance the building to lower costs, and ensure retention of the galleries, have failed, with lenders wanting to see market rates. One gallery, G Fine Art, is in the process of closing, and the future of the remaining galleries is tenuous.<sup>4</sup> Gallery owners in other parts of the arts overlay zone similarly reported upward pressure on their leases that is making it harder for them to stay in business.

All retailers and small arts businesses were uniform in their view that property tax burdens had escalated to the point that higher rents were threatening their future success, in spite of the City Council's relatively recent efforts to cut taxes on the first \$3 million of a property's value. The Committee also recognizes that (1) the need for additional property tax relief for small businesses is not limited to the Uptown Arts Overlay; (2) the economic downturn and drop in tax revenues makes it difficult for the city to extend significant property tax breaks to all commercial property at this time; and (3) a property tax break more limited in geographic scope and limited in time might be attainable

For that reason, the Committee recommends further property tax relief targeted to the city's 12 Neighborhood Investment Fund areas, which would include portions of the Uptown Arts Overlay in the Logan and Shaw neighborhoods. ANCs and neighborhood organizations should advise their city council representative that further and temporary (2-3 years) property tax relief in the city's previously identified Neighborhood Investment Fund areas is advisable to help sustain small business and employment through the economic downturn. The Committee suggests that, as with prior relief, the measure should be targeted to the first \$3 million of assessed value to ensure the measure is

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/07/30/AR2009073003864.html>

targeted to small business, and there should be a measurable decrease in the assessment rate for the next 2-3 years.

The Committee looked at other tax policies that might benefit the arts, but found the record on those to be mixed. For example, Maryland has a state policy exempting the sale of art in designated arts districts from state sales tax, but our interviews with a leading Baltimore arts district indicated that this policy was not having an effect on incentivizing art sales in the district.

Local retailers and developers were also consulted about whether the area should develop its own Business Improvement District (BID) which would enable special taxation of property owners resulting in a pool of money that could be used for BID development. Almost universally, the recommendation was not to create a BID for two reasons: (1) the area is too small to support a BID (2) retailers are already struggling in the downturn and do not want landlords passing on additional increases.

#### 4.2 About District of Columbia economic development and related programs

In reviewing city programs and policies that might contribute to arts, retail and other commercial development in the arts overlay district, the Committee looked to determine whether there are programs that either targeted the arts overlay district in some way, or that are city-wide, but that could be of use to area business. Such programs could help the community maintain and enhance arts uses, as well as ensure that the area not just weather the economic downturn, but continue to grow and attract retail business. The following chart contains the key programs available from the District of Columbia. Following the chart is an explanation of a subset of those programs that are of particular interest.

<b>Program and Agency Description</b>	<b>Funded and available to 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets?</b>
<b>Neighborhood Investment Fund</b> Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development <i>Purpose: an annual, non-lapsing fund to finance economic development and neighborhood revitalization in 12 targeted areas of the District, including Logan and Shaw ANCs; capitalized by an annual contribution of 15% of the personal property tax, not to exceed \$10 million city-wide</i>	Funding to Logan and Shaw pending FY10 budget
<b>Great Streets</b> Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development	No

<p>Department of Transportation  <i>Purpose: Authorized for up to \$95 million for corridor development for selected corridors; includes reconstruction of 3 identified corridors plus a streetcar project in Anacostia; 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets not included</i></p>	
<p><b>Main Streets</b>  Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  <i>Purpose: Targeted program to assist specific neighborhoods in various initiatives tied to economic development; not currently available to 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets; Main Street program for 14<sup>th</sup> Street was dissolved several years ago</i></p>	No
<p><b>Retail Action Strategy</b>  Office of Planning  <i>Purpose: City-wide strategy to support neighborhood revitalization, meet retail needs of residents and visitors, promote small and local business, create a sense of place; no separate funding – tool will be used to channel existing city programs; study looked at 20 focus areas around the city, not including 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets; final report expected fall 2009</i></p>	Not applicable
<p><b>Creative Action Agenda</b>  Office of Planning  <i>Purpose: City-wide strategy to expand the creative economy by assessing creative assets, assessing support systems, reviewing zoning rules and incentives; no separate funding – tool will be used to channel existing city programs; final report expected fall 2009</i></p>	Not applicable
<p><b>Streetscape</b>  Department of Transportation  <i>Purpose: create a harmonized and safe transportation corridor for pedestrians, bicyclists, mass transit, and automobiles through street, crosswalk and sidewalk design, including associated amenities (lighting, garbage cans, etc.); separate streetscapes drafted for 14<sup>th</sup> and U</i></p>	<b>U Street project moving forward FY11; 14<sup>th</sup> Street planned FY12</b>
<p><b>Neighborhood Development Projects</b>  Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  <i>Purpose: Targeted on a per project basis to promote a development on a smaller scale than TIF (below)- e.g., Convention Center Hotel; currently supporting \$60 million in activity; all current activities outside of 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets</i></p>	No

<p><b>Industrial Revenue Bonds</b>  Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  <i>Purpose: Source of funding to banks to make below market-rate loans available to enterprise zone businesses or 501(c)(3) entities city-wide, with minimum loan sizes in the \$2-\$2.5m range; no projects currently in the arts overlay zone</i></p>	No, but eligible
<p><b>Clean Teams</b>  Department of Public Works  <i>Purpose: Targeted to Main Street areas and BIDs with less than \$1 million in revenues; \$1.3 m authorized in FY09; U Street has sought a grant for FY10</i></p>	U Street may have coverage pending final FY10 budget
<p><b>reStore Technical Assistance Grants</b>  Department of Small and Local Business Development/DMPED  <i>Purpose: City-wide program to provide technical assistance to small businesses, provide assistance to BIDs or nonprofit economic development organizations on promotion and business inventories (CD-TAP grants) , unfunded for FY09 and FY10; agency expected to continue to offer small business training for FY10</i></p>	No
<p><b>Façade Improvement Programs</b>  Department of Small and Local Business Development/DMPED  <i>Purpose: Targeted program to specific neighborhoods to support façade improvements of local business; not available to 14<sup>th</sup> and U Street</i></p>	No
<p><b>Tax Increment Funding/ Payment in Lieu of Taxes</b>  Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development  <i>Purpose: City-wide program in support of large development projects; not used for neighborhood-scale developments</i></p>	No
<p><b>Enterprise zone</b>  Deputy Mayor for Economic Development  <i>Purpose: Local business located in zone gets consideration in local government procurement; 14<sup>th</sup> and U is partially covered by this zone; designation tied to poverty rates – unclear if area remains in the zone post-2010 census; zone systems to expire at end of FY09 unless legislatively extended</i></p>	Not applicable

<b>Technology zone</b>	Not applicable
Deputy Mayor for Economic Development <i>Purpose: To promote and attract technology businesses; partially overlaps with arts overlay zone; no funding for a number of years, but program continues to appear on websites</i>	

As the above chart indicates, the area covered by the Uptown Arts District is currently not eligible for most economic development programs that are targeted to specific geographies. A number of other programs are either not funded or are strategies that were not intended to become funded programs. As of the writing of this report, the FY10 planned city budget continues to include \$835,000 in Neighborhood Investment Fund resources for Logan and Shaw. However, there are significant challenges in using this money in support of maintaining or enhancing an arts presence, or even some challenges in applying it toward retail/commercial revitalization. Below is more in depth description of that program, as well as several other programs that might be of interest.

### 4.3 Neighborhood Investment Fund

The NIF program is an economic development tool created to assist neighborhoods in making “a significant and visible impact” in their areas. Both the ANC areas for Logan (ANC2F) and Shaw are scheduled to receive funding under the NIF program in FY10, budget permitting. As of this writing, each area was scheduled to receive \$835,000, although if downward revenue pressures continue, the amounts could be revised. A NIF award must be spent in a one-year period, from the date of grant. In addition, by statute there are three sub-parts of the NIF program: (1) the Target Area Grant Program for economic development; (2) the Predevelopment Grant Program for affordable housing and mixed use development; and (3) the Land Acquisition and Predevelopment Loan Program, also for affordable housing and mixed use development. It is the Committee’s understanding that the Council is only funding the first component – the Target Area Grant Program.

For both Logan and Shaw, a comprehensive NIF plan has recently been completed by the the Office of Planning.<sup>5</sup> Boundaries for the two NIF areas are as follows and overlap the Uptown Arts Overlay in substantial part:

- Logan: corner of 9th Street NW and Florida Avenue NW; south on 9th Street NW to Massachusetts Avenue, NW; to 16th Street NW; north on

<sup>5</sup> <http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1285,q,571098,planningNav,|32341|.asp>

16th Street NW to U Street, NW; and east on U Street NW to Florida Avenue NW.

- Shaw: the block of streets bordered by Florida Avenue NW, North Capitol Street NW, Massachusetts Avenue NW, and 9<sup>th</sup> Street NW.

While the planning exercise can help communities focus in on their needs, the final determination of the categories for funding is a separate process conducted by the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development (DMPED). Once budgets are final, DMPED publishes a request for proposal document that lists the categories of programs that are eligible for funding, and solicits grant applications from 501(c)(3) organizations in those categories.<sup>6</sup>

In FY09, the DMPED initially announced four categories of grants that could be awarded: (1) vocational training and job placement (2) senior and youth programming (3) small business technical assistance and (4) affordable housing preservation. The office later narrowed the funding categories to three: (1) senior or youth programming (2) small business technical assistance and (3) affordable housing preservation. In the FY09 fiscal year, applicants could apply for \$25,000 - \$200,000 in awards. The 501(c)(3) organizations had to have been active for two or more years.<sup>7</sup>

Current FY09 grantees are not listed on the City's website, but the 2008 projects are. For Logan, three groups were funded. The Hung Tao Choi Mei Leadership Institute, 1351 U Street, received \$50,000. This organization offers kung fu lessons to city children as a way of building fitness and character. Serenity, Inc, 1223 Pennsylvania Ave NW, a counseling services organization, received \$75,000 for the "Welcome Home Project." Finally, Washington Very Special Arts of 1100 16<sup>th</sup> St NW received \$53,600 for its "Beyond Walls Project." This group works with at risk children and youth using training in visual arts. As these amounts total only about \$175,000, it would appear that any additional monies earmarked for Logan may have been utilized by other programs in the remaining 11 neighborhoods that currently participate in the NIF.

In another example, in the Shaw NIF for 2008, money went toward research for the Howard Theatre/Ellington Plaza redevelopment project (\$30,000), the Mount Lebanon Community Service Center (\$200,000), the "Welcome Home Project", and a facility project for Bread for the City (\$300,000).

As of this writing, DMPED staff did not know what the categories or "goals" for the FY10 funding cycle would be. The goals could be the same or different from

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<sup>6</sup> DMPED staff report that the NIF's "target area program" will be the only active part of the NIF for FY10, and for that reason, this summary reflects only that portion of the NIF program.

<sup>7</sup> Grant announcements are made after the beginning of the fiscal year and are open for 30-45 days. ANCs are consulted on tentative awardees before a grant is made final. This year, final awards for FY09 were issued in April 2009.

FY09. However, staff was anticipating an announcement of funding availability, and the associated rules for the program, sometime in the early-October to early-November timeframe.

It is interesting to juxtapose the DMPED grants process and spending categories, above, with the NIF planning document authored by the Office of Planning in 2008 based on community meetings in Logan and Shaw.

The “Logan” plan identifies four top level goals, and multiple strategies associated with those goals.<sup>8</sup>

<p><b>Goal 1: Spur revitalization along neighborhood commercial corridors through the promotion of arts and cultural activities.</b></p>	<p><i>Strategy 1:</i> Fund seasonal and yearly cultural and artistic events to enhance existing businesses and institutions.  <i>Strategy 2:</i> Promote 14th Street and U Street as a unique retail and arts district with marketing and promotional materials such as newsletters, advertisements and websites.</p>
<p><b>Goal 2: Retain, improve and attract neighborhood oriented retail businesses.</b></p>	<p><i>Strategy 1:</i> Improve and upgrade the physical condition of stores along 14th Street, 11th Street and 9th Street through façade improvements and other exterior improvements.  <i>Strategy 2:</i> Support efforts to attract new retail to 9<sup>th</sup> Street, Rhode Island Avenue and 11th Street.  <i>Strategy 3:</i> Provide start-up business technical training to both neighborhood residents as well as other DC residents interested in starting their own businesses in the area.</p>
<p><b>Goal 3: Enhance the public realm and civic spaces to create a walkable safer, cleaner and more active environment.</b></p>	<p><i>Strategy 1:</i> Support public space maintenance programs along the five main corridors of 14th Street, U Street, 11th Street, Rhode Island Avenue and 9th</p>

<sup>8</sup> “Overall, enhancing the public realm to create a more attractive and safe environment along the commercial corridors was identified as the top priority for NIF Funds.” Rounding out the top five and in descending order: (1) Façade improvements programs on the commercial corridors; (2) Improvements to existing tree boxes and the creation of new tree boxes; (3) Use existing call boxes to showcase the neighborhood “brand”; and (4) Fund affordable housing programs for workforce housing.

	Street to improve cleanliness, safety and appearance.
<b>Goal 4: Preserve existing subsidized affordable rental housing units within the NIF area.</b>	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Promote existing government programs and support new or expanded non-government programs that aid in rental housing preservation.

The Shaw NIF Plan has the following goals and strategies:

<b>Goal 1: Preserve long term affordability and maintain the quality of existing affordable housing units</b>	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Fund the expansion of existing, or the creating of new, programs to assist in finding affordable units, transitioning to homeownership, housing rehabilitation, or home energy efficiency programs
<b>Goal 2: Develop vacant lots and rehabilitate vacant buildings.</b>	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Target Pre-development and Acquisition assistance to redevelop vacant and abandoned properties and structures for residential or mixed-use development throughout the entire NIF area.
<b>Goal 3: Improve the quality of neighborhood retail along the 9<sup>th</sup> Street, 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Florida Avenue, Rhode Island Avenue, North Capitol Street corridors and within the Mount Vernon Triangle area.</b>	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Support the development of a small business incubator spaces to house shared business services and small business technical assistance programs to foster and develop local entrepreneurialism <i>Strategy 2:</i> Fund the development and distribution of promotional materials of existing District and non-District government small business programs and events.
<b>Goal 4: Develop and clean, safe and attractive public realm through community stewardship and beautification activities.</b>	<i>Strategy 1:</i> Fund new, or the expansion of existing, programs and events that focus on public space maintenance and/or beautification. <i>Strategy 2:</i> Create new, or expand existing, programs to provide commercial business owners with improved exterior safety and lighting improvements along the 7 <sup>th</sup> Street, 9 <sup>th</sup> Street and North Capitol Street

	corridors.
<b>Goal 5: Improve opportunities for youth entrepreneurship and career development.</b>	<i>Strategy 1: Create new, or expand existing, programs to connect area youth with the Shaw NIF area business community to develop job training, placement and/or apprenticeship opportunities.</i>

It is important to understand that the planning documents, and the funding requirements document, are different, are the product of different executive agencies, and that the planning document does not control actual spending. It is the categories of funding that DMPED announces at the time grants are solicited that control the type of projects that will be funded. Based on the Committee’s review, in the FY09 cycle, DMPED departed from the Office of Planning conclusions with respect to the Logan and Shaw NIF areas, issuing three funding categories citywide that did not significantly coincide with the Planning document.

Moreover, DMPED staff note that there are inconsistencies between the planning document and how DMPED has historically issued grants. For example, the Logan NIF planning document’s call for the promotion of arts and culture in the neighborhood, including cultural events and festivals, cannot be funded under the DMPED’s grant rules, according to DMPED staff. NIF funds cannot be used for one-day events or promotional activities.

Assuming DMPED were to create categories for funding that would allow the community to work toward achievement of the goals contained in the planning documents, there are a number of activities relevant to the retention and support of arts and retail that could be supported under the goals and strategies identified by the Office of Planning.

In the Committee’s view, economic development funding represented by the NIF is a scarce resource that should be carefully utilized by the ANCs representing the Uptown Arts Overlay. Based on the extensive testimony received at our public meetings, the Committee recommends, in descending priority, that the following activities be funded by the NIF: (1) financial support for the Mid-City Business Association in support of retail activities in the Uptown Arts District, including a pilot Hospitality Business Orientation program, discussed in the next section; (2) visual branding/visual identity of neighborhood including, for example, banners;<sup>9</sup> (3) planning for development of an ongoing arts event to

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<sup>9</sup> An earlier attempt at organizing banners failed when the organizing entity (a 501(c)(3) that was inexperienced in economic development) apparently committed the funds without producing banners. Several retailers advised the Committee that they continued to have an interest in banners, especially if their business name could be added to the bottom of the banner, which was in the original plan. Given that the cost of this type of program is well under \$50,000, the

help develop the neighborhood's "brand" as an arts location; (4) development of public transportation routes to better support the community and alleviate pressures on parking; (5) planning for expanded street vending to focus on dead zones; (6) improving the use of vacant windows.

While façade restoration and green or "clean" teams may be worthy of consideration in a time of more generous city budgets, the Committee urges some caution in funding either of these activities with scarce NIF monies.<sup>10</sup>

Unfortunately, until the DMPED releases its document specifying the rules for FY10 funding, it is not clear how much reliance can be placed on these funds relative to the effort to maintain and enhance arts uses and retail/commercial. In the Committee's view, the relevant ANCs should request the assistance of DMPED to ensure that the categories selected can benefit economic development in the community. Once funding categories are revised, each ANC should also carefully scrutinize the request for proposals from DMPED and determine how the money might best be spent in support of economic development and whether there are eligible entities to apply for grants.<sup>11</sup>

#### 4.4. Hospitality Business Orientation program

One of the uses of NIF money, if the NIF were properly targeted, is for a pilot Hospitality Business Orientation (HBO) program for new businesses opening up in the 14th and U area. The HBO is a program used in other cities with mixed use arts and entertainment districts including Philadelphia and San Diego. Its purpose is to orient those opening a dining, entertainment or events businesses to understand the city's rules and regulations, the permitting and licensing process, and the timeline required in order to avoid prematurely committing or over-committing resources unnecessarily. It also offers a resource to new and existing businesses on how to remain current, train new managers, find best solutions for trash management and noise control and establish better communication with government and community representatives. The Mid City Business Association is interested in supporting such a program, but to fund it, the NIF program categories would need to be broadened and 501(c)(6) organizations would need to be able to qualify for funding. Alternatively, if the NIF cannot be made available to 501(c)(6) organizations, support to fund the HBO program might be found through another city funding source.

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Committee urges the ANC to take what steps it can to free up NIF for this purpose, possibly using Mid-City Business Association as the designated entity to organize the banners.

<sup>10</sup> Green teams can cost as much as \$175,000 per year based on past experience.

<sup>11</sup> At its September 2, 2009 meeting, the ANC2F adopted this Committee's recommendation with respect to the NIF, and on September 11, 2009, sent a letter to the Deputy Mayor recommending revision of the funding categories.

## 4.5 Streetscapes

The DC Department of Transportation conducts in-depth studies of streetscapes, with the goal of creating safer corridors for vehicular, mass transit, bicycle, and pedestrian movement, as well as creating designs that are more lively and supportive of economic development.<sup>12</sup> Both U Street and 14<sup>th</sup> Street have recently been the subject of such studies, and there are pending proposals for each street. Notably, the 14<sup>th</sup> St Study (2008) won Merit Award from American Society of Landscape Architects (Maryland and Potomac Chapters).<sup>13</sup> The U Street study, from 18<sup>th</sup> Street to 9<sup>th</sup> Street, was completed in 2005.<sup>14</sup>

According to the DC Department of Transportation, the process by which streetscapes become funded and are implemented is to first have the project placed on the Council of Government's Transportation Improvement Plan (TIP), a document that includes current and future projects. The U Street streetscape is on the list for construction to begin in FY11, and will include repaving and reconstruction of 18<sup>th</sup> Street to 9<sup>th</sup> Street. The 14<sup>th</sup> Street plan has recently been placed on the TIP list for construction to begin in FY12, budget permitting. In addition, the engineering design for the 14<sup>th</sup> Street project is now ongoing, and is expected to take 9-12 months to complete. The Committee is pleased that both projects are moving forward, but notes that the absence of funding for the 14<sup>th</sup> Street project is a major concern for the community, retailers and property owners along the corridor. In the Committee's view, the relevant ANCs should (1) stay in touch with city leaders to assure that the streetscape funding remains in place (for U Street) or is put in place as soon as possible (for 14<sup>th</sup> Street).

## 4.6 Parking

Parking policies tend to raise passionate responses from those who want more parking, or certain types of parking, or even less parking. The Committee learned in meetings and through correspondence from interested neighbors that there are strongly held views and little consensus. For that reason, the Committee did not focus its time on solving the neighborhood's parking issues, since that topic would alone have occupied all of our volunteer time. We did, however, take comment from merchants, developers, and various interested

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<sup>12</sup> There are currently about 52 such studies on the DDOT web page. <http://www.ddot.dc.gov/ddot/cwp/view.a,1249,q,561095,ddotNav,{32399}.asp>

<sup>13</sup> In the case of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape, DDOT estimated in 2008 that the cost of long and short term improvements to transportation, sidewalks, crosswalks, trash receptacles, tree boxes, bike racks, etc., would be about \$5million. <http://www.14thstreetstudy.com/>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.ddot.dc.gov/ddot/cwp/view.a,1249,q,641546.asp>

parties about what if anything should be done to improve parking along the commercial corridors. David Alpert of the Greater Greater Washington blog counseled that the corridor would be best served by new credit-card serviced parking meters that would allow the city to adjust the price upward to a level that encouraged turnover in parking, and might also allow adjustment by time of day. While there was some concern that the new meters had been problematic when introduced in other neighborhoods, the Committee's view is that, if the prices are properly set, such meters could support neighborhood businesses by making them more accessible to customers in vehicles. That issue is particularly important to the home furnishings retailers, and to certain other retailers, whose customers might not be in a position to "carry" their purchased merchandise from the store. While these new meters will become part of the streetscape when the streetscape projects are completed, area ANC's should consider requesting installation of meters earlier in support of the businesses in the Uptown Arts Overlay. In the case of U Street, to the extent the streetscape project continues on track for FY11, this concern may be less than along 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

In addition, the Committee noted that the City's Comprehensive Plan calls for a parking study.<sup>15</sup> The proposed study would cover 14<sup>th</sup> Street and the adjacent side streets. Issues to be addressed include parking needs for area theaters, businesses and residents. The Committee recommends that this study be conducted, taking into account the planned changes to the streetscape.

#### 4.7 Industrial Revenue Bonds

Industrial Revenue Bonds are an alternative source of capital that enterprise zone businesses and 501(c)(3) entities can use to finance, for example, the purchase price of real estate and/or renovation costs. Instead of negotiating with a bank where the bank uses commercial capital sources at a market rate, the bank would use IRB-sourced funding, enabling the cost to the borrower to drop to well below market rates. The borrower's commitment is to the bank, not the city, but the City Council must approve each deal that utilizes IRB funding. As with any loan, there are closing costs. The smallest loan size typically using IRBs is in the \$2 – \$2.5 million range. However, there is a stream of federal stimulus money that has essentially opened the door for smaller banks to participate in IRB lending, a move that is expected to also put competitive pressure on closing costs. As a result, staff estimates that loans as small as \$1-1.5 million are more feasible. The relevant ANC's should be aware of this program as a potential future development tool for the corridor.

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<sup>15</sup> Action NNW-2.3.B: 14<sup>th</sup> Street Parking Study, The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capitol: District Elements.

## 4.8 Commission on Arts and Humanities grants and planning

The Commission on Arts and Humanities provides grants in several categories. Categories are: (1) education, (2) project-based (direct to artists, festivals), (3) capacity-building and operating support, and (4) capital project grants (including public art).<sup>16</sup> Several of these categories are of interest and could be used to better support an arts district.

With respect to festivals, up to \$30,000 per festival was available in FY10 (application date has passed). According to the agency's website, its purpose is to fund festivals with significant arts components that: encourage growth and promote awareness of quality arts activities throughout the city, support local artists, stimulate economic benefits to the community, promote a sense of community identity, and make arts experiences accessible to District residents and visitors. To receive a grant, an organization needs to be a 501(c)(3) or similar nonprofit.

Similarly, arts districts may wish to brand themselves via use of public art. The Commission offers grants for both the creation and installation of public art. Again, the organizations must be nonprofit.

The Commission also maintains a strategic plan that governs its activities throughout the city. Significantly, the Arts Overlay Zone is not mentioned in the plan. The Committee recommends that the ANCs work with the Commission to better integrate the extensive arts presence in our neighborhood with the Commission's planning. A 501(c)(3) organization could also be well-positioned to pursue public art installations or a neighborhood art-focused street festival.

## 4.9 Retail Action Strategy and Creative Action Agenda

Although both of these are Office of Planning exercises, without independent funding, the Retail Action Strategy and the Creative Action Agenda are likely to contain recommendations that become embedded in future city funding programs, as well as in policies and regulations. Based on the Committee's review of these still-evolving documents, the two initiatives are likely to be helpful to our neighborhood as broad expressions of the priorities that the city will place on further developing retail and the arts sector.

For example, the Creative Action Agenda document preliminarily identified key "challenges" for the arts as a lack of affordable housing and work space for

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<sup>16</sup> Grant opportunities are listed here:  
[http://dcarts.dc.gov/dcarts/cwp/view.a.3.q.527915.dcartsNav\\_GID.1514.dcartsNav.131624|.asp](http://dcarts.dc.gov/dcarts/cwp/view.a.3.q.527915.dcartsNav_GID.1514.dcartsNav.131624|.asp)

artists, permitting and other regulatory issues as a barrier to growth, and limited financing and marketing of products and services.<sup>17</sup> To the extent the Agenda document can spur the city to find answers to these issues that will benefit our neighborhood as well. One idea that is already under development is an artists “space finder” website that can help artists connect with reasonable gallery and work space. The document may also contain strategies for temporary use of vacant space, an idea sparked mostly positive feedback to our committee.

The Retail Strategy may also be of help, as the document has some focus on incubating and supporting small and local retail.<sup>18</sup> Without exception, panelists presenting to the committee and community members attending the meetings spoke favorably on the neighborhood’s strong local retail presence, as opposed to the presence of large national chains. Strategies might include promotional campaigns by neighborhood, as well as neighborhood “branding” – two ideas that the Committee members believe are important to further enhance both arts uses and retail uses. At our meetings, Mid City Business Association, its members, and professional developers all pointed to the absence of a “brand” that sets the neighborhood apart and makes it attractive. Mid City reported that the branding function it performs today is financed entirely by businesses themselves.

ANC2F, or its designee, should closely monitor the release and implementation of these two documents to determine whether the policies that they contain can be leveraged to the neighborhood’s benefit.

#### 4.10 Live/Work (zoning issue handled elsewhere)

In defining an arts district, planning professionals will sometimes ask whether the district seeks to become primarily an arts production zone or a consumption zone. In reviewing the existing presence of arts in the overlay zone, the Committee learned that this district is both a production zone and a consumption zone. There are more than 40 working visual artists who are members of Mid City Artists. The area continues to support a number of galleries, although these may be declining in number. Finally, the neighborhood has significant institutions such as Studio Theatre, the Lincoln Theatre, the Source Theatre, the Black Cat, and other organizations that offer patrons the opportunity to view a wide variety of visual art, theater, and musical performances. In the Committee’s view, the area should continue to strive to be both a place where arts are produced and consumed.

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<sup>17</sup> <http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1354,q,646285.asp>

<sup>18</sup> <http://planning.dc.gov/planning/cwp/view,a,1282,q,641497.asp>

In testimony before the Committee, both artists and city officials noted the problem (not restricted to our area) of affordable housing and workspace for artists. This issue has become increasingly an issue as Logan area housing prices have escalated in recent years. In other cities that the Committee reviewed, diverse live/work solutions have been developed to address this issue. In some places, non-profit development specifically for artist owners or tenants has been developed in cooperation with city officials. In some states, tax relief of various types is available in designated arts districts. DC has recently allowed one developer in the NoMA area to assign some affordable housing units for rent by artists in live/work arrangements. Thirty such units will be available (2010) in the Lorree Grand at Union Place. Cohen Companies are the developers. The Cultural Development Corporation is handling the marketing and qualification of artist/tenants. In addition to this project, Cultural Development reports that another rental project with a live/work component is in planning for the area around the Rhode Island metro stop. To the extent this development proceeds, units here would be available in 2011.

Prior to Loree Grand, DC had also authorized the development of a downtown building for partial use as artist live/work space. The Cultural Development Corporation worked with the developer to create Mather Studios at 916 G Street NW, a collection of 12 condominiums reserved for live/work in a 50-unit building.<sup>19</sup> The units were sold in 2003 with more than 50 individuals qualifying for the 12 units available. According to CuDC, artists needed to earn between 50-80% of area median income to qualify.

Creating new opportunities for live/work arrangements, rental or ownership, within the arts district would help support and expand the presence of arts in the neighborhood, particularly with respect to visual arts.

#### 4.11 Heritage Trails

U Street-Shaw had one of the first Heritage Trails in the city. Trails are marked by signage that provide information about the historic importance of the site and/or the famous Americans who worked or performed there. Trails are designed to lead the participant through a neighborhood, while providing interesting details of the neighborhood's history. Cultural Tourism DC is the entity working with the DDoT to establish 17 such trails throughout DC. Its 10<sup>th</sup> trail will be installed in October 2009 in Columbia Heights.

According to Linda Harper, the Executive Director of Cultural Tourism DC, it takes about two years to plan and install a trail. A diverse community working

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<sup>19</sup> [http://www.culturaldc.org/projects/artist\\_housing.html](http://www.culturaldc.org/projects/artist_housing.html)

group is required in order to initiate a project. Ms. Harper reports that there has been some interest from Logan Circle in undertaking a heritage trail, but that the interest has not been sufficiently diverse or sustained. However, Cultural Tourism DC is in the process of picking the final trails that will round out its commitment to deliver 17 DC trails. If the Logan neighborhood is interested, and if there is a group of individuals willing to work on the project, it may be possible to include a 14<sup>th</sup> Street/Logan trail. Alternatively, if the initial project completes without a 14<sup>th</sup> Street trail, it may be possible to find alternative sources to pay for a trail in the future. The Logan Circle Community Association has been alerted to this opportunity, and volunteers are currently pursuing further information from Cultural Tourism DC.

Beyond the Heritage Trail project, Cultural Tourism DC is interested longer term in working with communities to define the “cultural corridor” that overlays a trail, and how to make that neighborhood more attractive to city residents within the neighborhood, outside the neighborhood, as well as to enhance tourism. The ANCs should explore this longer term strategy with Cultural Tourism DC, since it appears to align well with the community’s goals for an arts district.

#### 4.12 Reeves Center

The city should add an arts component to the future redevelopment of the Reeves Center, located at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets. Testimony before the Committee revealed a broad consensus that the present use of the Reeves Center was not viewed as a community asset. In particular, the existing retail offerings on the first floor of the center were not viewed positively, and in no way relate to or promote the arts district. In fact, there appears to be no arts use of the building whatsoever, despite its prime corner location at the intersection of the Uptown Arts Overlay major thoroughfares. The Office of Planning, and other relevant city agencies, should consult the community through the ANCs to develop a plan for how arts uses can be integrated into this building.

#### 4.13 Central Union Mission project

This long-awaited development project has been stalled repeatedly leaving a large “dead zone” on the east side of 14<sup>th</sup> between Corcoran and R Streets. In the latest development, a lawsuit filed by the ACLU concerning a constitutional question about the city’s ability to support an organization that has a religious purpose has stopped forward momentum on the development. Simply put, the city needs to resolve the lawsuit and allow the creation of a new facility serving homeless individuals, thereby allowing development on the site to proceed. The Committee views redevelopment of this site as critical to the success of retail and arts in the Arts Overlay District. The Office of Attorney General must dispose of the legal action and allow this key development project to proceed.

#### 4.14 Verizon building at 14<sup>th</sup> and R Streets

This site of a Verizon central office facility, at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and R Streets, is presently a retail “dead zone”. The building is partially bricked in on the first floor. As a corner location, it is a critical site for the future of a successful retail corridor. The Committee recommends that the city work with the community and Verizon to determine whether there are opportunities to utilize the space, particularly on the first floor, in a different way including the use of retail.

#### 4.15 City–owned property

In the Office of Planning’s final reports on the Logan and Shaw NIF areas, there is an appendix listing all publicly owned properties throughout the NIF areas. The Committee recommends that future development of these properties should be targeted to arts and/or artist live/work space, as appropriate.

#### 4.16 New neighborhood-based economic development organization

The ANCs should consider whether existing non-profit organizations in the neighborhood are sufficient to support ongoing and coordinated economic development activity including, but not limited to, the development of an economic development strategy for the Uptown Arts District, acting as a grants recipient (e.g., for economic development and branding activity), and promoting and cultivating the continued growth and success of the Uptown Arts District. Throughout the recommendations, the Committee has referred to the need of non-profit organizations to carry out the work of building a strong and vibrant arts district. In part, this is driven by city regulations, such as entities eligible to receive economic development grants. In addition, the Committee found in its review that many successful arts districts around the country are supported by this type of non-profit entity, normally a “501(c)(3)”. Importantly, these entities do not compete for arts funding with arts institutions, but act as a promotion and development vehicle for the district. Such entities are capable of advancing the goal of branding the district, promoting an area as an arts destination, and aiding artists and arts institutions in a variety of ways. In the Committee’s view, a similar institution (or institutions) is needed to foster and promote the Uptown Arts District.

## Appendix A

### Economic Development Recommendations Specific to ANC2F

1. Tax Policy: First, recommend to Councilman Jack Evans' office that further and temporary (2-3 years) property tax relief in the city's previously identified Neighborhood Investment Fund areas is advisable to help sustain small business and employment through the economic downturn. The Committee suggests that, as with prior relief, the measure should be targeted to the first \$3 million of assessed value to ensure the measure is targeted to small business, and there should be a measurable decrease in the assessment rate for the next 2-3 years.

Second, ANC2F should request the city's CFO, Office of Planning, and Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development study creative tax policies to determine whether there could be specific tax policies instituted to support arts uses and arts districts. This tax policy could be directed to the Preferred Arts Use List now being developed in the zoning process, as amended by the zoning recommendations made in Part 1 of this report.

2. Neighborhood Investment Fund: Pending in the FY10 budget is approximately \$835,000 for the Logan NIF. ANC2F should call upon city officials to ensure that the NIF categories for funding in FY10 and beyond are sufficiently flexible with respect to economic development that the neighborhood can take advantage of the money to develop the arts district. Once the funding categories are broadened to specifically include economic development, the ANCs can further consider how to encourage specific projects. In addition, the ANCs should also remain current on the NIF requests for proposal to be issued by the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development in the October-November time frame. Once the rules are public, the neighborhood should work to ensure that NIF grants can be obtained by a qualified group or groups in support of the commercial corridor to the extent allowed under the rules.<sup>20</sup>

3. Uses of the NIF: The Committee recommends that to support the Arts Overlay district, ANC2F work with neighborhood organizations to seek to use the available funding on the following projects, in descending priority: (1) financial support for the Mid-City Business Association in support of retail activities in the Uptown Arts District, including a pilot Hospitality Business Orientation program; (2) visual branding/visual identity of neighborhood including, for example, banners; (3) planning for development of an ongoing arts event to help develop the neighborhood's "brand" as an arts location; (4) development of the Circulator

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<sup>20</sup> At its September 2, 2009 meeting, the ANC2F adopted this recommendation, and on September 11, 2009, sent a letter to the Deputy Mayor recommending revision of the funding categories.

routes to better support the community and alleviate pressures on parking; (5) planning for expanded street vending to focus on dead zones; (6) improving the use of vacant windows. ANC2F is supposed to have an opportunity to sign off on grants before the DMPED announces them, and ANC2F should insist that it have the opportunity to review these grants prior to DMPED's announcement to ensure consistency with these priorities.

4. Streetscape: ANC2F should adopt an immediate resolution addressed to the City Council and to DDOT supporting the 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project, calling for funding of the project as soon as possible. Request that the city consider providing matching funds in order to get the project initiated in FY11, and failing that, to do so for FY12. In addition, the ANC2F resolution should request that the engineering design now beginning remain as true to the award-winning design concept as possible.

5. Parking: The ANC2F should call upon DDOT to do the following: (a) DDOT should perform a 14<sup>th</sup> Street parking study called for in the city's Comprehensive Plan.<sup>21</sup> and (b) DDOT should install the new credit-card meters either as part of the streetscape project (in the case of U Street) or in advance of the 14<sup>th</sup> Street streetscape project. Adjusting the pricing of parking and the time of day could benefit neighborhood retailers whose customers may need short-term parking.

6. Industrial Revenue Bonds: With the upcoming census, it is unclear whether the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Street area, now mostly designated as an Enterprise Zone, will continue with that designation, due to differences in poverty rates in the area from a decade ago. If the designation is lost, private enterprise will no longer be eligible for loans supported by IRBs. Even if private enterprise cannot take advantage of IRB-sourced borrowing, city-based 501(c)(3) organizations can do so even if the corridor loses its Enterprise Zone status. To the extent a section 501(c)(3) entity is formed or identified to promote an arts district (per the recommendation below), ANC2F should recommend to that entity to further explore the parameters of the IRB program. Participation in the program would mean that the non-profit entity sees an opportunity to acquire or renovate real property. An example of such future development is the public property now operated between S & T and 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Streets NW.

7. Commission on Arts and Humanities: ANC2F acting itself, through a committee, or pursuant to a new 501(c)(3) organization discussed below, work with the Commission to integrate the Uptown Arts District into the Commission's strategic plan. To the extent a new 501(c)(3) is created, consider launching a street arts festival and/or other cultural events to establish and brand the neighborhood as an arts district, and consider whether to apply for a grants for a public arts project in FY11.

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<sup>21</sup> Action NNW-2.3.B: 14<sup>th</sup> Street Parking Study, The Comprehensive Plan for the National Capitol: District Elements.

8. Retail Action Strategy and Creative Action Agenda (Office of Planning): The ANC should monitor the release of these planning documents (expected in fall of 2009) and pursue how to use them in support of arts and retail in our neighborhood. In particular, finding additional funding toward branding the neighborhood and highlighting the arts presence here is a top priority.

9. Artist Live/Work: In addition to the zoning recommendations made in Part 1 of this report, ANC2F should work with developers to create live/work options for artists in new developments, and should further work with the Cultural Development Corp. to ensure that such projects developed are well-designed and will enhance the arts district.

10. Heritage Trails: The Cultural Tourism DC is in the final process of selecting projects for its remaining trails. While U Street has a completed trail, the 14<sup>th</sup> Street area in Logan does not have a trail and is not currently on the list to receive one. The Logan Circle Community Association is interested in leading this activity, and volunteers are in the process of contacting Cultural Tourism DC for more information relative to forming a design committee. Longer term, Cultural Tourism DC is considering how it might work to define “cultural corridors” that overlay the Heritage Trails, and ANC2F should pursue this longer term strategy with Cultural Tourism DC, since it appears to align well with the community’s goals for an arts district.

10. Reeves Center: ANC2F should recommend to the Office of Planning that this city-owned building should house an arts component. While not in the ANC2F district, the Reeves Center is one of the more important buildings in the Uptown Arts Overlay, and currently lacks a relationship to the arts district around it. Adding an arts component would further the overall advancement of the arts district, including the area represented by ANC2F.

11. Central Union Mission project: ANC2F should recommend to Councilman Jack Evans and Attorney General Peter Nickles that the city resolve the lawsuit that is currently stalling the development of this important site on 14<sup>th</sup> Street. As the ANC is well aware, this development project has been stalled repeatedly leaving a large “dead zone” on the east side of 14<sup>th</sup> between Corcoran and R Streets. In the latest development, a lawsuit filed by the ACLU concerning a constitutional question about the city’s ability to support an organization that has a religious purpose has stopped the project’s forward momentum. The city needs to resolve the lawsuit and allow the creation of a new facility serving homeless individuals, thereby allowing development on the site to proceed. The Committee views redevelopment of this site as critical to the success of retail and arts in the Arts Overlay District.

11. Verizon building at 14<sup>th</sup> and R Streets: This site of a Verizon central office facility, at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and R Streets, is presently a retail “dead zone”. The building is partially bricked in on the first floor. As a corner location, it

is a critical site for the future of a successful retail corridor. The ANC2F should request that the Office of Planning and the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development and Committee hold a meeting with Verizon officials to discuss whether there are opportunities to utilize the space inside and outside the building, in a different way and for first floor retail use.

12. City-owned property: In the Office of Planning's final reports on the Logan NIF areas, there is an appendix listing all publicly owned properties. ANC2F should ask the Deputy Mayor for Planning and Economic Development, the Office of Planning and the Zoning Commission that future development of these publicly owned properties should be targeted to arts and/or artist live/work space, as appropriate.

13. New neighborhood-based economic development organization: ANC2F should consider whether existing non-profit organizations in the neighborhood are sufficient to support ongoing and coordinated economic development activity including, but not limited to, the development of an economic development strategy for the Uptown Arts District, acting as a grants recipient (e.g., for economic development and branding activity), and promoting and cultivating the continued growth and success of the Uptown Arts District. Throughout the recommendations, the Committee has referred to the need of non-profit organizations to carry out the work of building a strong and vibrant arts district. In part, this is driven by city regulations, such as entities eligible to receive economic development grants. In addition, the Committee found in its review that many successful arts districts around the country are supported by this type of non-profit entity, normally a "501(c)(3)". Importantly, these entities do not compete for arts funding with arts institutions, but act as a promotion and development vehicle for the district. In the Committee's view, a similar institution (or institutions) is needed to foster and promote the Uptown Arts District.

## Appendix B

### Economic impact of arts in the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets Arts Overlay Zone

Studies demonstrating the positive relationship between arts and jobs, tax revenues and other retail activity are legion. The American Association for the Arts website alone lists some 500 such studies.<sup>22</sup> While the Committee's review did not uncover studies specific to 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets, or specific to the District of Columbia, the overwhelming volume of evidence contained in economic studies demonstrates that arts activities, in addition to the direct jobs and revenues they create, have a significant effect in growing retail revenues, jobs, and tax revenues.

Patrons of the arts eat at restaurants, stay in hotels, and shop for other retail merchandise. Jobs created in these service and retail sectors in turn support additional indirect economic activity. Cumulatively, the economic impact of all this indirect activity is quite large. In 2007, one study of the economic impact of the arts in the greater Washington DC area found that, in addition to direct spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations of \$1.21 billion, audiences spent an additional \$935.24 million in event-related spending. Together, this activity supported 45,175 full time equivalent jobs, generated \$1011.96 million in household income to local residents, and resulted in \$163.78 million in state and local government revenues. Stated more simply, for every dollar in direct and event-related spending, another dollar was generated in tax revenues and local household income.<sup>23</sup> Significantly, this study actually understated the economic effects, as it excluded for-profit arts activities and spending by individual artists.

Other studies reviewed have found similar effects. A brief sampling:

- Philadelphia (2008): Each dollar invested in arts by local government returns \$5.00 in local tax revenue, while each dollar invested by state government returns \$2.50 in state tax revenue<sup>24</sup>
- Baltimore (2007): Nonprofit arts groups spend \$154 million, while generating a total economic impact of \$270 million, including \$23 million in state and local government revenue.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Americans for the Arts, The National Arts Policy Database  
<http://www.americansforthearts.org/NAPD/modules/resourceManager/publicsearch.aspx>

<sup>23</sup> Arts and Prosperity III, The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations in Greater Washington, Americans for the Arts (2007) <http://www.cultural-alliance.org/economicprosperityIII.html>

<sup>24</sup> Arts, Culture and Economic Prosperity in Greater Philadelphia, the Greater Philadelphia Cultural Alliance (2008). <http://www.philaculture.org/research/reports/2008-portfolio> This study also found direct and indirect economic benefits to the region similar to those from the Washington study cited above.

- Maryland (2007): Every \$1 spent in the nonprofit arts sector generated more than \$2 in expenditures on goods and services.<sup>26</sup>

In the Committee’s public meetings, the view from 14<sup>th</sup> and U Street retailers, restaurateurs, and arts entrepreneurs strongly supports the view from the economic literature that the arts economy is positively related to the retail and restaurant economy. In fact, some retailers saw a direct relationship between the presence of art galleries and their retail sales of complementary merchandise, with significant overlap in customer base. Other retailers, whose merchandise was less correlated with arts, nevertheless cited the importance of an arts presence as presenting a positive image of the area, and therefore drawing in customers. Retailers also reported increased sales before or after performance activities at area theaters. For restaurateurs, the relationship with arts activities was even more direct and obvious. All retailers and restaurateurs appearing before the Committee supported a strong arts presence in the 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets area as benefiting their own businesses.

The Committee found few quantitative studies measuring the impact of an arts presence on development. However, numerous reports exist detailing the role that arts institutions play in rejuvenating blighted areas, raising property values, making urban areas safer and more desirable. For example, the Reinvestment Fund conducted a study of the Philadelphia housing market between 2001 and 2003 to determine if the city’s “block groups” improved due to the presence of the cultural assets. That study found a strong association between the presence of cultural assets and accelerated development.<sup>27</sup>

Local developers related views that are consistent with the economic literature. In meetings with the Committee, local developers saw a benefit to undertaking a project in areas with strong cultural assets. In their view, the presence of arts activities contributes to the positive image of an area. This could translate into making it easier to attract tenants or buyers and/or in better prices. [*Developers’ views on the use of zoning to attract arts uses, or other techniques to attract arts uses, are discussed in elsewhere in this report.*]

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<sup>25</sup> The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts Organizations in Maryland, Maryland State Arts Council (2007) <http://www.msac.org/news.cfm?id=240&sec=news>

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> Natural Cultural Districts (2007) Mark J Stern and Susan C Seifert, The Reinvestment Fund (TRF) and the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) at the University of Pennsylvania, with support from the Rockefeller Foundation. “Using a six-category scale, TRF estimated that 13 percent of block groups improved by more than two categories—for example, from being a *reclamation* block group in 2001 to a *transitional* block group in 2003. This improvement was not distributed evenly; many local housing markets remained flat over the two years. What explained which block groups improved and which did not? The level of cultural assets in a block group correlated very strongly with block group improvement. More than half of the block groups with the highest concentration of cultural assets—our “natural” cultural districts—improved by at least two market categories while less than two percent of the other block groups showed comparable improvement.” <http://www.trfund.com/resource/creativity.html>

Finding: Arts activities are an important ingredient in driving economic prosperity for 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets for retailers and restaurateurs and, although the link is weaker, in supporting further development. A mix of arts, retail, and restaurant uses increases revenue for all businesses, provides jobs, adds to local tax revenues, and contributes to further development, thereby creating a commercial corridor that is economically healthy.

## Appendix C

### **Evolution of Arts Uses in the Arts Overlay Zone** **A short (and incomplete) history of the arts on 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets**

While there has been a significant amount of research and writing about the “Black Broadway” of U Street during the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, less information is available about the renaissance of arts and arts institutions in the neighborhood since the riots of 1968, and why the neighborhood can claim as many arts institutions as it does.

This is a first attempt to put together a history of the theatric, visual, and musical arts as these institutions appear at the end of the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, and is not meant to serve as a comprehensive review. A more thorough study of the history of arts in the community needs to be undertaken in order to capture a complete picture. In addition, much of the history is due to the initiative and accomplishments of a few key individuals, and those people each deserve to tell their story in their own words. As the arts district continues to develop, it will be important to return to this document and expand upon it to better appreciate why arts institutions are among us, how they have been able to sustain, and what can be done to encourage their longevity and growth in the decades to come.

#### **Theatres and theatrical groups**

The riots that followed the assassination of Martin Luther King left 14<sup>th</sup> and U Streets largely intact, but scarred. Merchants used metal grates and sliding garage-style barriers to close their businesses at the end of the day. Families that lived in the neighborhood moved away, with residential buildings being acquired by real estate investors, who then broke interiors into apartments for rent. Vacant property was not unusual. 14th Street became the District’s red light zone, in particular on the southern end near Thomas Circle. Street prostitution was so heavy in the area that by the mid-late 1970s, police were barricading parts of Logan Circle to divert traffic away from residential streets. One small supermarket existed on P Street between 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>, but the area was bereft of retail beyond liquor stores, convenience stores, and a smattering of fast food and take-out.

But it was in this period, the late 1970s, that two institutions took root that would become prominent in the neighborhood – The Studio Theater and The Source Theatre.

#### **The Studio Theater**

<http://www.studiotheatre.org>

The Studio Theatre was founded in 1978 by Joy Zinoman, Russell Metheny, and Virginia Crawford. At its inception, Studio operated from shared space at 1443 Rhode Island Avenue NW, in a building whose subsequent demolition contributed to community mobilization to establish the Greater 14<sup>th</sup> Street Historic District. At that time, Studio shared space with the Zenith Gallery and The Dance Place. As artistic director, Ms. Zinoman began establishing The Studio as a theatre company that would premiere new works, stage innovative revivals as well as offer performance art. Mr. Metheny served as resident set designer.

The success of Studio from its inception drove the company to find bigger space. In 1980, Studio rented 1401 Church Street, a warehouse that had been used to store hot dog vendor carts. In that space, Studio built a 110-seat theater that was later used by the Woolly Mammoth theatre company (a company that has since relocated out of the neighborhood) and briefly as Studio Theater Secondstage (2000-2001).

Seven years later, in October of 1987, The Studio Theatre moved again to a new rental location at the corner of 14<sup>th</sup> Street and P Streets. This former automobile showroom and repair shop was converted into the 200-seat Mead Theatre. Offices and classrooms were built on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The main entrance to the building was from the P Street side. In 1993, following a successful capital campaign, the theatre purchased the building.

The theatre continued to prosper and successfully attracted donors willing to contribute toward its expansion. In March 1997, Studio completed a \$5.5 million renovation, adding the 200-seat Milton Theatre. In October 2001, Studio purchased the two adjacent buildings on 14<sup>th</sup> Street (1507 and 1509), and initiated a \$11 million capital campaign to integrate those structures into its growing theatrical complex. Two additional theatres were added, as well as the new glass atrium entrance on 14<sup>th</sup> Street.

While most associate The Studio with critically-acclaimed theatrical productions of national importance, the institution is multifaceted. It offers an acting conservatory for professional training, and has served as the host for other theatre festivals, such as the Black Women Playwright's Festival. Its "Art Motivating Youth" programs provide scholarships to young actors, apprenticeships to college students and, under the Passport to the Imagination program, free performances for classrooms and teachers including a discussion of the performance.

## **The Source Theatre**

<http://www.sourcedc.org>

About the same time as The Studio Theatre opened for business on Rhode Island Ave NW, The Source Theatre Company began operating at 1835 14<sup>th</sup> Street NW in 1977.

Source produced five plays a season, but its impact on the theatrical community was broader. Source initiated the annual Washington Theatre Festival, which has developed

more than 700 plays since 1981. For 20 years, a 10-Minute Play Competition was part of the event. According to the Washington Post: "From its earliest days, Source did theater with a capital T: gay Holocaust dramas, Strindberg, Shakespeare. Plays put together on a shoestring budget, performed in a theater with a curtain and a set of mismatched folding chairs — and not much else. It had some commercial successes, but also a few flops."

The company bought the building in 1987, using \$365,000 in money borrowed from the city. The city gave the group an additional \$500,000 for renovations in the late 1990s. The performance space included a 140-seat theatre. But by 2006, the city's mortgage had been in arrears for 10 years, according to the Washington Post. The Source also sought and received grants from the Commission on Arts and Humanities. In 2004, the Commission gave the theater a \$25,000 grant for roof repairs, which were apparently never undertaken, and from 1999-2002, gave another \$112,550 for various projects.

Peggy O'Brien, chairman of the company's board from 2000-2006, said the group's dire financial situation forced the sale of the building. She told the Washington Post that "[t]he building had to be sold. The debts continued to mount and we could not find a way out. We have been actively trying for a number of years to reverse this downward spiral. We just had to admit we just couldn't do it. There is a real considerable level of debt." In addition to the city, creditors apparently included the IRS and Actors Equity.

Though Source has had several co-productions in recent years, O'Brien told the Post she considered the theater's final production to be the Amiri Baraka play "Dutchmen," presented in 2002. From that point, the theatre was available for rent to other groups in need of a place to rehearse and perform.

In 2004, the Meyer Foundation gave the Source a \$10,000 grant for management assistance to develop a financial plan. According to the Post, the Foundation never received a financial plan. By 2006, the Source company owed more than \$600,000 to the Internal Revenue Service, utility companies and others and could no longer continue to operate.

In early 2006, the company announced the sale of its building to Bedrock Management, owner of Bedrock Billiards and Buffalo Billiards, which planned to turn it into a bar and grill. But city officials (including Councilman Jim Graham) and neighborhood activists wanted to see the building remain a theatre. Cultural Development Corp., a DC-based nonprofit that has an ambitious agenda in support of arts and artists, ultimately bought the building and began a \$3 million renovation.

By early 2008, the building began operating once again as a rental theatre space. The Cultural Development Corp. also announced the revival of the three-week Source festival. In 2008, it had received 900 submissions for the summer festival showcasing new works by actors, directors and playwrights. In addition, the second floor of the building now houses office space for the Constellation Theatre, the In Series theatre company, the Washington Improv company, and a part of the Commission on Arts and Humanities. In Series is the primary organizer of the use of the space. Cultural Development Corp. is in the final stages of a capital campaign to pay off the mortgage it assumed when it purchased the building in 2006.

## **Speakeasy DC**

<http://www.speakeasydc.org>

Speakeasy DC was founded in 1990 as the Washington Storytellers' Theatre, and in 1997 became "Speakeasy DC." The organization, run by Executive Director Amy Saidman, promotes the art of autobiographical oral narrative, organizing and promoting "open mic" nights for aspiring storytellers. The organization regularly attracts crowds in excess of 200 people for its storytelling events. Participants are given seven minutes to tell a personal story around a theme selected for the night, and anyone can sign up to tell their story.

The open mic events have become so successful that the organization has repeatedly been faced with having to move in order to accommodate larger attendance. From its 1997 location inside the Black Cat, the organization moved to HR-57 in 2000, and in 2007 to Cada Vez nightclub (now Station 9). In September 2009, Speakeasy will move to a new location – the Town nightclub at 8<sup>th</sup> and U Streets near the 9:30 Club. The Town has ample seating and could easily host 300 Speakeasy fans. The organization charges about a \$10-\$15 cover fee, and in its new location, the local restaurant Nellies will provide food.

Ms. Saidman said that Speakeasy is firmly rooted in the U Street neighborhood. "It has the right vibe," she said. Among the attributes important to her, Saidman says that the location is a real neighborhood where people live, locally owned businesses where you can get to know the owner, there's a sense of history and arts history, and its racially diverse. She said that her customers are a mix of neighborhood residents and others, and that when they come to a show they patronize other eating and drinking establishments in the neighborhood. Storytellers participate for many reasons. They may want to get more comfortable in front of an audience, they are aspiring actors or comedians, or they just want to have fun in a creative activity.

In addition to its primary mission of offering storytelling, Speakeasy DC is also involved in classes to help people improve their storytelling skills, consulting for private industry, and in presenting rehearsed "ensemble" shows. The group's entries in the Capital Fringe Festival proved to be the top sellers for the festival.

## **Washington Improv**

<http://www.washingtonimprovtheater.com/>

The Washington Improv is currently located at the Source Theatre since the renovation of that facility in 2008, and many of its performances are offered at that location.

Originally, when the group was formed in 1986 under the direction of Carole Douglass, the Improv performed at various locations around Washington. Improvisational theater is loosely organized around a group of actors, possibly with a preselected theme or genre (e.g., musical), but is improvised based on audience suggestion. The Washington Improv has a national reputation, and is often invited to perform at improv festivals around the country.

The company disbanded for a time in 1992, but by 1995, Douglass was again teaching improv at Universalist National Memorial Church at 16th and S, NW. By 1997-1998, the workshops have turned into performances. With the departure of Douglass to Europe, WIT then hires Second-City alum Catherine Weidner as interim artistic director. WIT presents performances at Logan Circle venues Metro Cafe, Diversite, and other clubs around the District. By 2000-2003, the theatre is gaining a national reputation and solidifying its local following. By now the group is performing both long and short form improv, and is beginning to organize into ensembles. In addition, at this time, the troupe launches an Improv Training Program of its own, led by Topher Bellavia.

That program today teaches improv to some 200 students per year. The group continues to evolve on- and off-stage, performing at the DC Arts Center and Source Theatre Company, then in the Source building where WIT is headquartered today. Under the artistic direction of Katie Carson, WIT fine-tunes its unique brand of freeform improvisation and further builds its national reputation. By 2004, WIT hires its first full time artistic director, Mark Chalfant, a former student. WIT at this time is resident at Flashpoint, a downtown arts incubator run by the Cultural Development Corp., and its productions continue to expand in popularity.

By 2009, the WIT's Fighting Improv Smackdown Tournament was featuring over 120 improvisers vying for the championship. In addition to its training programs, the group now also offers workplace training to corporate clients.

### **Constellation Theatre**

<http://www.constellationtheatre.org/>

Founded in 2007, Constellation Theatre is one of the new arrivals to the 14th Street theater scene, further cementing the corridor as a center of visual and performing arts in the District.

The independent theater company staged their first performance, a production of Isben's "A Dream Play," in summer 2007 at the The Source theater on 14th Street. Shortly thereafter, they temporarily moved to the Clark Street Playhouse in Crystal City while The Source underwent a complete renovation, returning to The Source upon its reopening in 2008. DC Metromix remarked that Constellation has attracted "positive attention for its innovative design, outstanding ensemble work and brilliant ideas."

The Theater's mission is to create "epic, ensemble theater to reveal the vast range of the human experience" and to "awaken [their] audience with powerful visual imagery, original music, elevated language and heightened movement." In April 2009, Constellation received the 2009 John Aniello Award for Outstanding Emerging Theatre Company at the Helen Hayes Awards ceremony.

### **In-Series**

<http://www.inseries.org/>

Independent theater company In Series is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to presenting DC artists in an inspiring and eclectic blend of opera, cabaret, theater, dance, chamber music, poetry, and Latino heritage productions. It started life in 1982-83 as The Concert Series at Mount Vernon College, and has been staging critically acclaimed productions ever since. The In Series name was adopted in 1988-89, inspired by the frequent use of the words “intimate” and “innovative” by music and dance critics. In the late 1990s, In Series was spun-off as an independent arts organization, which is its organizational structure today.

The In Series specializes in presenting DC artists in an inspiring and eclectic blend of productions, and has developed a self-proclaimed special niche within the cultural life of the DC region with its trademark cabaret and experimental chamber opera productions. Joseph McLellan of The Washington Post has described In Series’ performances as “bright, innovative productions, unlike anything else available in the Washington area.” In Series stages productions at the Source Arts Center, in addition to other locations throughout the District.

### **Living Stage Theatre Company**

In 1966, Robert A. Alexander founded what would become “the preeminent theatre for social change” in the space currently inhabited by the Source Theatre on 14th Street. Alexander served as artistic director for the improvisational Living Stage Theater Company until 1995. The theater served as the outreach arm for Arena Stage, and dissolved in 2002.

Living Stage’s mission was “to transform individuals and communities through creative empowerment,” and they were bound by a philosophy that “every one is born an artist and the act of creation is the ultimate act of self-affirmation.” A typical performance consisted of many creative forms and broken into three basic sections. Yet, since the artwork was improvisational the structure could change at any time based on the demand of the participants/audience. The first part of each workshop focused on a scenario in which the main character was always the same age as the participants and faced a dilemma. At a crucial moment, the scene froze, and the group improvised how the scenario could be resolved. During the second part of the workshop, the participants worked on theater exercises to develop skills in communicating emotions and creating characters, on building sets and more. Then, each group worked together to create an improvisational performance of its own.

### **Lincoln Theatre**

<http://www.thelincoltheatre.org/>

The Lincoln Theatre, otherwise known as “the Jewel on U,” first opened in 1922 and served as the center of a cultural renaissance along “Washington’s Black Broadway” from the 1920s through the 1950s. Despite a rather pedestrian exterior, the interior boasted a tremendous lobby whose ceiling is coated with gold, with a stage 27 feet high

and 38 feet wide bordered by elaborate Corinthian columns. The Lincoln was personalized by plaster ornamentation and busts of President Lincoln.

When it opened, it became one of the few theaters in Washington where black audiences could view recently released movies, and immediately became one of bustling U Street's most popular establishments. During this time, the Lincoln also was known for hosting an assortment of vaudeville and variety acts.

In 1927, upon its purchase by Abe Lichtman, the theater was expanded to include a cabaret, a hot nightclub, and a dance hall called the Lincoln Colonnade. Washington natives Duke Ellington and Pearl Bailey were joined by nationally acclaimed artists such as Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holliday, Nat King Cole, Cab Calloway, Louis Armstrong, and Sarah Vaughn who performed regularly on the Lincoln's stage. Even FDR had his birthday parties at the Lincoln Colonnade--which would, in 1940, also host a presidential ball.

Over the years, the theatre has been through numerous iterations: a silent film house and vaudeville stage, a movie house, a performance space, a ballroom, and a split-screen movie theater. In 1952, a television projection system was installed, and the theatre would host such events as viewing of popular sports contests. Like the Howard Theatre, the Lincoln also suffered financially after the onset of desegregation. Although the theater was damaged in the 1968 riots, it remained in operation until the early 80s, when it was boarded up--and remained that way until 1993.

In 1993, the theater was placed on the National Register of Historic Places and redeveloped by the District, who had acquired the property from bankrupt developer Jeffrey Cohen. The theatre officially reopened on February 4, 1994 with a performance of Barry Scott's "Ain't Got Long to Stay Here," about the life of Martin Luther King, Jr. Since that time, the refurbished 1,250 seat theatre has played host to numerous concerts, theatrical performances, film screenings and political events.

The theatre is now enjoying a self-described "second renaissance" and "remains committed to entertain, educate and inspire by offering and preserving an historical community treasure." Significant funding for the theatre's operations is received each year from the District, totaling approximately \$500,000.

## **Howard Theatre**

<http://www.howardtheatre.org>

The Howard Theater opened in 1910 and, in its heyday, hosted most of the major African-American performers of the time--serving as what has been called the epicenter of black Washington's culture and artistic hub of Shaw. A lavishly decorated theater, the Howard served as home for two local theater companies: the Howard University Players, and the Lafayette Players.

The Howard served as a crucial venue for the cultivation of a then-relatively obscure musical form known as jazz. It's early success served notice to other establishments up and down the east coast that venues targeting black audiences could thrive, and was the catalyst for the development of such venues as the Apollo in Harlem and the Uptown in Philadelphia.

During the Great Depression, the theater was briefly converted into a church, before being rechristened as an entertainment venue by new owner Shep Allen. Allen possessed a remarkable talent for uncovering young jazz talent, and the Howard quickly became known for showcasing cutting-edge jazz performers. For the next two decades, the theatre hosted such performers as Billy Eckstine, Louis Armstrong and Ella Fitzgerald. Franklin Delano Roosevelt attended balls at the theater held during the 1940s, when its exterior facade was stripped of its ornamentation in favor of the popular 1940s-era "streamline" style (which remains evident today).

In spite of the fact that the Howard was located in an overwhelmingly black neighborhood, and showcased only black performers, it's worth noting that its clientele was less homogenous--in fact, over 25% of the Howard's patrons were white.

During the 1950s and 1960s, the Howard lost some of its prestige as desegregation opened up previously off-limits performance venues around the city to black performers--and patrons. Virginia Ali, wife of Ben's Chili Bowl owner Ben Ali, said "This was like black Chinatown. This was a segregated city...but once we became integrated, the professionals and businesses moved out and it (integration) brought in a different kind of people."

The theater was converted into a performance venue for rock and r&b acts with some success, hosting such performers as Sammy Davis, Jr., and James Brown. However, the 1968 riots and subsequent deterioration of the U Street area eventually led to its closing.

In 1974, the Howard Theater Foundation was organized to rebuild the theater. It was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1974, and in 1975 hosted the first performance since its renovation, which featured Redd Foxx and Melba Moore. The theater closed a second time in 1980, while it was the oldest venue in operation in the country hosting black artists.

As of 2009, the theatre remains closed; however, work is underway to restore the theatre, with an anticipated reopening in 2010.

## **Visual arts**

While there had been a number of visual artists living and working on the neighborhood for decades, the development of the neighborhood as a location for numerous arts galleries began much later than the theatres, around the beginning of the 21st century.

The development of 14th and U streets as a haven for visual artists may be relatively recent, but should not be surprising. Until fairly recently, artist space along 14th and U streets was plentiful and affordable. The large buildings which formerly housed car showrooms were an ideal fit for galleries and artist space.

By the beginning of the 21st century, the 14th Street corridor hosted one of the District's highest concentrations of commercial galleries and had become the center for contemporary visual art in Washington. Galleries such as the Transformer, Irvine Contemporary, Plan b and others were hosting noteworthy shows and attracting crowds that extended into the thousands.

As the first decade of the 21st century draws to a close, 14th street's status as a center for contemporary art in the District is in jeopardy. Spikes in real property assessments, commercial lease rates and the recent economic turmoil have conspired to threaten the survival of many of the establishments--and have led to the closure of at least one. Whether the artists and galleries will be able to remain depends upon focused and sustained action on the part of the District government to ensure their viability along the corridor.

### **Mid City Artists (2000-)**

<http://www.midcityartists.com/default.asp>

Mid City Artists is a group of about 40 professional visual artists who live and work in the Dupont Circle and Logan Circle neighborhoods. The group formed about 2000-2001 at the time the neighborhood was initially experiencing significant development and the residential real estate market was first exploding. Its purpose was both to form a group with common interest around the visual arts, and to better take advantage of the changes in the neighborhood. Membership is open to professional artists who live and maintain a studio within a defined boundary. Supporting business members pay an annual fee and are listed on the group's website.

Mid City Artists offers studio tours several times a year, and have been extremely successful, with up to 200 visitors per studio. While a few artists have exhibited at galleries within the arts overlay zone, most exhibit outside the neighborhood, and some have standing relationships with galleries outside the area. The group's website lists

current shows and galleries where their work can be seen. A number of the artists in this group are area homeowners, and a majority have their studios in their homes. Mid City Artists reports very little turnover in membership, although a few artists have moved to less expensive areas of the city, and therefore have left the group.

### **Irvine Contemporary (2003 - )**

<http://irvinecontemporary.com>

Founded in 2003 by Georgetown University professor Dr. Martin Irvine, Irvine Contemporary specializes in contemporary art by early and mid-career artists with growing national and international reputations. It also features works by a select group of major, established artists for collectors interested in building collections with art works in every category of interest. Irvine prides itself on being a full-service gallery that focuses on the needs of collectors at any level of experience. Prior to opening the gallery, Dr. Irvine had been an art collector for 20 years and a private art dealer.

### **Transformer, 1404 P St NW (2002 - )**

<http://www.transformergallery.org>

Transformer is more than a gallery; it is a 501(c)(3) entity whose purpose is to build a broad network of support for emerging artists, their ideas and work, and educate audiences about emergent expression in contemporary visual art. Connecting and promoting emerging visual artists within regional, national and international contexts, Transformer partners with artists, curators, arts spaces, as well as commercial galleries, museums, and other cultural institutions in the development and presentation of exhibitions and programs. For example, artists are never charged fees to submit work for consideration or to present their work; on the contrary, artists are provided honoraria for exhibiting with Transformer, receive 70% of sales, and are provided with travel, material and marketing support. Moreover, Transformer presents art at locations other than its P Street location, such as a recent exhibition of DC-based artists in Mexico City. More than 500 artists have exhibited their work in 60 Transformer exhibitions and projects. In addition to our exhibitions, Transformer has supported over 1500 local, regional, national and international artists through studio visits, artist talks, panels, and other specialized programs. Audience participation has been recorded as over 10,000 plus attendees to exhibitions and program since inception.

The P Street location stems from the familiarity Co-Founder and Executive/Artistic Director Victoria Reis had with 14<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as the encouragement of former Fusebox Directors Sarah Finaly and Patrick Murcia (currently Irvine Contemporary Arts). Transformer's co-founder is Jayme McLellan. Transformer was the second visual arts entity to establish itself in the neighborhood.

Transformer's activities are supported by a host of foundations (large and small) as well as individual contributors and the Commission on Arts and Humanities. Its primary fundraising activity is an annual auction. Transformer presents and supports contemporary artists from diverse racial and cultural backgrounds working in a variety of media such as: painting, sculpture, photography, drawing, printmaking, book art,

video and installation-based work. Artists are selected for exhibitions and participation in programs through an open, competitive application process, overseen by Transformer's Executive Director and Advisory Council throughout the year.

Transformer, like other galleries, faces challenges. In the words of Ms. Reis: "Transformer works lean and mean. We try to be fiscally conservative and are working to diversify our sources of income as much as possible to continue to sustain the organization for the long term. We keep our overhead as low as possible to direct the majority of our income into direct support of artists and programs for artists/community." Among the issues currently facing the organization is the downturn in funding available from foundations due to the economic recession, which has required devoting more resources to fundraising.

### **Galleries at 1515 14<sup>th</sup> Street**

Developer Giorgio Furioso developed the building based on a famous gallery building in New York City, 420 West Broad St. in SOHO. The New York building contained four of the major galleries from upper east side near the Whitney and Guggenheim Museums. At the time, SOHO was an emerging neighborhood, like 14<sup>th</sup> Street used to be, but the gallery owners decided that there would be synergies in locating together, and their decision proved to be correct.

Furioso reported that when he bought 1515 in 2003, he wanted to bring the 3 or 4 high quality galleries to the building. Originally, he had hoped to place galleries on the first floor, but the discounted rental required to make the galleries work from a commercial perspective prevented him from doing so. The first floor became a restaurant. In developing the gallery spaces, Furioso provided all the build-out funding and acted as the general contractor gratis. The galleries therefore benefited in several ways – no build out costs, free contractor support, and discounted rent. As of 2009, the building needed to be refinanced. With commercial lending at its tightest point in recent memory due to the lengthy and deep economic recession, Furioso is reporting that banks are balking at financing a building where some tenants are paying below-market rates. With the refinancing pending, the future of the current rent structure, and the galleries' ability to meet a new rent structure, remains an open question. One gallery has closed due to the economic recession and the prospect of higher rent costs.

#### **Hemphill Fine Arts (2004-)**

<http://www.hemphillfinearts.com>

George Hemphill initially opened a gallery in Georgetown in 1993, and moved the gallery to 14<sup>th</sup> Street in 2004. Hemphill reports that his move was prompted by the neighborhood's promise and space conducive to gallery architecture. Hemphill Fine Arts is located at 1515 14<sup>th</sup> St. NW. The gallery hosts several events per show with shows scheduled to last two months each. Joint opening receptions coordinated with other neighborhood galleries have attracted

attendance between 250-1000, with as many as 2500 in some cases. The gallery also hosts private events by invitation only, for around 40.

Hemphill usually has two such private events per show -- a preview for serious collectors and the other for the benefit of a non-profit. Occasionally we host a lecture or panel discussion. This is in addition to regular traffic to view shows. Like other galleries, Hemphill reports that the economic downturn has negatively affected art collecting. Hemphill believes the city needs to do more with its tax policies, zoning policies and tourism promotion to ensure that galleries remain a vibrant part of the city.

### **Curator's Office**

<http://www.curatorsoffice.com/aboutgallery>

Curator's Office, created and owned by Andrea Pollan, is a business offering exhibition services, art consulting and collections management services. For example, CO will organize solo or group exhibitions of contemporary and modern art for museums, university galleries, non-profit galleries, commercial galleries, corporations and other institutions. CO develops educational publications and programs to complement these exhibitions. In its consulting and collections management, CO will work with clients to define and focus their goals, and to purchase art through reputable channels. CO will arrange for framing, lighting, installation and conservation.

At its location at 1515 14<sup>th</sup> St, Curator's Office (CO) periodically invites a curator (museum curator, critic, artist, collector, educator, promising student, gallerist) to display a tightly focused presentation of an artist or art collective's work. The invited curator provides an explanation for the selection and defines the cultural significance of that particular artist to contemporary art practice. From time to time, artists are invited to interpret the "office/micro-gallery space."

Ms. Pollan has worked for over twenty-three years in the visual fine arts. Trained as an art historian at Yale University, she has organized over 125 exhibitions of contemporary art for museums and galleries regionally and nationally. She has written numerous catalogs and exhibition brochures. Pollan has juried scores of art exhibitions and art fairs in the region including an exhibition at the Corcoran Gallery of Art. Pollan received an Arts Administration Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts in 1994. She has served on numerous boards and recently served on the board of the D.C. Chapter of ArtTable, a national association of women arts administrators.

### **Adamson Gallery (2005-)**

<http://adamsongallery.jimdo.com/>

This gallery had its origins in a lithography studio opened by David Adamson in 1979 elsewhere in the city. By 1993, Adamson had become one of the first digital ateliers in the world, and his studio grew and expanded, as he worked with scores of artists creating prints of fine art. In 2005, Adamson moved the gallery part of

his business to 1515 14<sup>th</sup> St., attracted by the space and favorable cost structure, as well as the presence of multiple galleries. His studio is at 11<sup>th</sup> and N Streets. Up to 200 people regularly attend events at the Adamson Gallery

### **G Fine Art (2004-2009)**

G Fine Art moved from Georgetown when the founder, Ann Gawlak, entered a partnership with local developer Georgio Furioso, who was hoping to lease space to art galleries in a building he was developing just north of the Studio Theatre. The gallery's operations were funded by art sales and consulting fees. G Fine Art attracted hundreds of visitors to its opening, and continued successfully for several years thereafter. Although successful, G Fine Art saw its costs mounting, including utilities.

In 2009, when Furioso had to refinance his building, the below-market rents negotiated with galleries, including G Fine Arts, was proving to be a problem for commercial lenders. Facing the prospect of market-based rents, G Fine Arts closed in August 2009.

### **Gallery plan b**

1530 14<sup>th</sup> Street

<http://www.galleryplanb.com>

Gallery plan b, located in the exciting Fourteenth Street arts corridor, provides a casual, hip space for a dynamic group of both established and emerging local artists to show and sell their art. Plan b presents both group and solo shows for paintings, photography, drawings, prints and sculpture.

### **Project 4 (2006 - )**

1353 U St NW

Gregory Kearley

<http://www.project4gallery.com>

Owner Gregory Kearley is an architect whose firm, Inscape Studio, designed the addition and renovation of the building in which the gallery is located. Kearley reports that he started Project 4 with three friends. The gallery, originally located at 903 U Street, opened in February of 2006 and moved to its current location in November 2008. According to Kearley, the group started Project 4 because of our strong interest in the arts and because they felt DC was emerging as a center for the arts. The gallery has been successful, attracting 150 guests to openings and 25-50 people for artists' talks.

By the time the gallery opened, Kearley said that he believed 14<sup>th</sup> Street had become the center of the contemporary art world in DC. "We would have liked to have located

somewhere on 14<sup>th</sup> Street between P and U Streets; however, we did not have the resources to do so.” Kearley reports that “an obstacle” to developing business is the gallery’s location on the third floor of a building. Kearley estimates that the Hamiltonian Gallery, located in the same building but on the street level, typically gets two or three times the attendance of Project 4. The group would prefer a ground floor location, but to date, that is not economic.

Project 4 is facing issues similar to those of other galleries in the current economic downturn. Kearley is now the sole owner of the gallery, and must sustain the business based on sale of art. “Our primary challenge is financial. There are not many people buying art with the current economic situation. Since we are a commercial gallery we don’t have the ability to receive grants as would a non-profit.” Kearley notes that tax incentives for arts directed businesses could help galleries like his stay in business, as well as zoning mechanisms that would incentivize developers to offer low cost space to galleries.

### **Hamiltonian Gallery (2007 - )** **Hamiltonian Artists**

<http://www.hamiltonianartists.org/program.html>

Hamiltonian Artists is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing professional development opportunities for creative artists in their early careers. The program offers a competitive two-year fellowship program for new innovative visual artists in all media, which are awarded through an annual competition.

The "So Hamiltonian Fellows Program" will function as a creative incubator for artists who have finished their academic training and may still be exploring their artistic directions in alternative art spaces, but have not yet transitioned into a career path as an exhibiting artist. The program hopes to ensure that artists represented by the gallery will learn some of the basic entrepreneurial skills necessary to achieve success as an exhibiting artist while they continue to grow artistically. Participating artists will also gain valuable experience in the administration of both a non-profit art space and a commercial gallery.

The Hamiltonian Gallery is a dynamic space in the heart of the growing Washington DC contemporary art district. The gallery focuses on innovative works by emerging and mid-career artists. In conjunction with Hamiltonian Artists, the gallery will promote new artists, aiding in their further development. Through our dynamic exhibitions and gallery programs, we seek to broaden the cultural dialogue within our modern community.

The gallery has more than 2,000 square feet of exhibition space with a prominent storefront on U Street NW, between 13th and 14th Streets. The gallery is one of the first green contemporary art exhibition spaces in DC, balancing eco-conscious design and the requirements of a professional exhibition space for artists working in a variety of media including painting, sculpture, photograph, video, audio, digital, and site-specific installation.

### **Ganymede Arts (2003 - )**

<http://www.ganymedearts.org>

Located in the back of Miss Pixie's Furnishings store on 14th Street, Ganymede Arts bills itself as "DC's GLBT Arts Company." Ganymede is dedicated to the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) experience, and lists its mission as "to provide high-quality, professional theatre and art that fosters social and cultural awareness of and for the GLBT community."

Founded in 2003, Ganymede produces and promotes theatrical performances and other performing arts events featuring GLBT artists. Productions are staged at their own theater in the back of Miss Pixie's, or at various other locations throughout the District (including the Church Street Theatre). Every year, Ganymede organizes a "Fall Arts Festival," a multi-day event featuring performances by dozens of artists.

### **Pinkline Project (2003 - )**

<http://www.pinklineproject.com>

Philippa Hughes came to D.C. as a lawyer, but discovered rather quickly that her passion was with the arts. Thus, in 2003, she founded the Pinkline Project, a private organization dedicated to promoting the local arts scene and providing a venue for emerging artists to develop a network of contacts and involve themselves in the artistic community.

In addition to operating a website which functions as a space to advertise upcoming arts-related events of interest to local artists, Pinkline arranges and promotes gatherings for local artists. One in particular, hosted in 2007 in a space at 14th and Church, attracted several hundred artists and members of the community. Several other events have been held since that time. The events bring together artists from across various mediums--visual, musical, performance, etc.--in order to present a unique event that "pushes the boundary" of traditional art and arts events in the District.

Pinkline is funded almost entirely by Hughes herself, although her website is attracting some advertisers. The events which she coordinates, she says, typically pay for themselves, either via sponsorship dollars or a small entry fee.

## **Music and other performance spaces**

## **Black Cat**

<http://blackcatdc.com/>

In 1993, Dante Ferrando, at the time the owner of what he believes was “the only sit-down restaurant along 14th Street,” opened the Black Cat, a nationally known performance venue for indie rock bands and a mainstay along 14th Street ever since.

From the Black Cat’s website: *“In the early 90s, DC suffered from a lack of good concert venues, especially spaces that catered to the areas underground music scene. Hoping to revive the tradition of independent music in Washington, a group of investors (most of them musicians) opened the Black Cat in September 1993. Since opening its doors, the Black Cat has been a home for local and national talent, thereby playing its own part in the explosion of indie rock that marked the last decade.”*

Ferrando said that he had been looking for space along 14th Street for several reasons: close proximity to his restaurant, the number of large spaces available along the corridor, due to auto showrooms which at one time populated 14th Street, and the fact that the neighborhood was becoming a center for artists in the District, which he felt made a good fit for his rock club.

Since opening the Black Cat 16 years ago, Ferrando has seen the neighborhood change considerably, from an area largely populated with abandoned and derelict properties, to one of the most popular neighborhoods in the city. He worries, though, that the changing culture of the neighborhood threatens businesses who have been here a long time. “Artists are great pioneers,” he says “but it’s frequently difficult for them to stay.”

Ferrando mentioned that he has seen his costs rise rapidly in recent years; in addition to labor and food and drink costs, his real estate taxes run to approximately \$180 per day, part of a total annual tax burden of nearly \$250,000. He indicated that, if he wanted to, he could change the Black Cat’s business model and move it away from hosting live music to a venue for parties and special events, which would bring in more money. Yet no such plans are in the works.

“I’m driven by artistic motivations,” he said. “The Black Cat isn’t profit-driven, and so I have no plans to change the nature of the business. I like the crowds that attend our shows, and I like the type of music and bands that we attract.”

As to the challenges facing small businesses owners and artists in the neighborhood, Ferrando admits that there are many. A lack of parking, the threat of higher rent-paying establishments such as bars and restaurants taking over the neighborhood, and a bureaucracy that makes it challenging for business owners to open and operate ventures in the neighborhood.

Ferrando indicated that he would like to see more daytime traffic and a focus on maintaining a mix of retail in the area, particularly focusing on businesses that stay open

later into the evening to act as “transitions” between the daytime crowd and the nighttime crowd.

## **Twins Jazz Club**

<http://www.twinsjazz.com/>

For nearly a decade, Twins Jazz has been contributing towards keeping the U Street jazz tradition alive by bringing some of the biggest performers in today’s jazz world to its stage on the second floor of a building at 14th and U streets.

The original Twins Lounge opened in 1986 at 5516 Colorado Avenue NW Washington DC as an Ethiopian restaurant twenty-three years ago in a space that previously featured jazz and blues music. Several musicians suggested showcasing live jazz performances. Local and jazz legends were soon booked to perform. “I fell in love with Jazz ever since,” says owner Kelly. Twins Lounge’s sister club, Twins Jazz, opened in 2001.

Twins indicates that it “strives to not only be a jazz venue, but a social and economic force in the local and regional community.” It not only features popular, staple jazz artists, but also offers opportunities for young, aspiring musical talents attending Duke Ellington School of the Arts, Georgetown University, Howard University, Catholic University, American University, University of Maryland College Park and Baltimore, George Washington University, and other surrounding area schools. Music students are encouraged to participate in weekly jam sessions, to learn their craft from more experienced musicians.

The club strives to create an environment reminiscent of clubs during the Harlem Renaissance, where listeners come for the intimate setting and musicians remain after their performance to interact with patrons. In addition, they aim to bring greater appreciation and understanding of jazz from traditional to the contemporary, via festivals, forums and workshops.

Twins perpetuates and cultivates "authentic" straight-ahead traditional jazz while uniquely incorporating fine dining, attracting significant national media recognition.

## **HR57**

<http://www.hr57.org/>

14th Street institution HR-57--the “Center for the Preservation of Jazz Blues”--is both a functioning jazz club as well as a self-proclaimed music cultural center. HR-57 takes its name from a House Resolution first passed by congress in 1987 that designated jazz as "a rare and valuable national American treasure." The non-profit center opened in 1993, and seeks to “provide a place where aspiring musicians gather to learn the history and culture of the genres of jazz and blues.” As the only organization of its kind it provides a

venue for the exchange of ideas and information between aspiring and professional musicians, students, and aficionados of the genres and the general public.

In addition to weekend performances featuring popular local and national jazz acts covering a diverse range of styles, HR-57 also hosts jazz jam sessions every Wednesday and Thursday evening. These jam sessions, where musicians and vocalists perform the tunes they enjoy, serve to help fund operational costs.

Education is an integral part of their operation. Music workshops and music classes are offered for beginners and advanced musicians. Lectures and seminars on the genres are also a part of programming. Professional educators, lecturers and musicians assist in all aspects of educational programming.

A portion of programming is geared toward those with little or no exposure to music history or appreciation classes, and the segment of the public with interest, but little or no background in the genres. Public schools students from around the country and the metropolitan area come to visit and to gain insight to the history of this music which embodies our democratic ideals. Their budding youth jazz orchestra consists of area students. Participants ranging in age from 10 to 21 learn and perform the music of the big bands.

## **Bohemian Caverns**

<http://www.bohemiancaverns.com>

Jazz club Bohemian Caverns traces its history to 1926, when the club--then known as Club Caverns--opened in the basement of the Davis Drug Store located at 11th and U streets. Club Caverns soon became an integral part of Washington's "Black Broadway," luring such stars as Cab Calloway and Duke Ellington and attracting black Washington's most influential citizens..

Club Caverns would continue to operate as until the 1950s, when it changed its name to Crystal Caverns and, eventually, Bohemian Caverns. It was during the late 1950s and early 1960s when Bohemian Caverns became arguably Washington's most popular and most successful jazz club. Author Hollie L. West wrote that "In its time, the club became the place in Washington to hear the most contemporary development of Jazz."

During this time, Bohemian Caverns routinely attracted the biggest names in jazz--John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Pearl Bailey, Dizzie Gillespie, Louis Armstrong and others were just some of the luminaries to grace its stage. Summing up this period in the Caverns' history, musician George Botts noted that "it was one big jam session."

Unfortunately, as with other noted establishments along the U Street area, the 1968 riots took a tremendous toll. Already faced with sagging attendance and financial hardship, the riots sealed the club's fate, and it closed in September 1968.

With U Street's resurgence in the late 1990s, interest in reopening the club was piqued. After conducting a faithful restoration of the club's interior--right down to the pseudo-cave decor--Bohemian Caverns reopened for business in 1999. Though no longer a destination for the biggest names in jazz, Bohemian Caverns continues to attract quality local and national musicians to performances throughout the week. A new restaurant--Mahogany--recently opened in the upstairs space above the Caverns.