



STRATEGIC PLAN 2022-2026



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PLAN DEVELOPMENT

This plan developed over the course of several years, starting from direct engagement with the Highlandtown Arts District community in 2021 (with the support of consultants from the Studio for Collaboration, Research, and Design) and incorporating ha! staff and stakeholder reflection throughout 2022.

Virtual and in-person workshops, surveys, events, and interviews were conducted to solicit feedback from a diversity of voices. We heard from 100+ residents and artists through our online surveys and spoke with 40+ stakeholders about their experiences and hopes for the district.

Contributors were encouraged to be candid in their responses, particularly in interview settings and in open-ended surveys. By preserving their anonymity, respondents were open with the consultants about their prior experiences in the district and ideas for the future.

Considerable effort was dedicated to engaging the Latino community in Highlandtown. Surveys were written in English and Spanish and translators were made available at in-person events wherever feasible. This plan serves as a starting point from which to build trust and continuous dialogue with the area’s large Latino community.

- Planning process:*
- Intro session with ha! stakeholders and consultants (May 2021)
 - Phone interviews conducted by consultants (May – August 2021)
 - Community survey (electronic) (64 respondents)
 - Artist survey (electronic) (44 respondents)
 - Three plan review sessions/focus groups with ha! stakeholders (October 2021)

DESIGNATION PURPOSE

Arts districts are economic revitalization tools that draw artists and sustain support for those artists living, working, performing, and/or selling in the district. Arts and entertainment district designations are useful in promoting an area by marketing its unique cultural traditions and creative enterprises to visitors, collectors, and developers/investors.

Arts-based enterprises, events, and activities act as a bridge-building tool between residents, merchants, and existing and new stakeholders. The Highlandtown Arts District builds community in neighborhoods experiencing cultural transition by creating a destination for culturally-informed art and expression from around the world in Baltimore.

DISTRICT SNAPSHOT

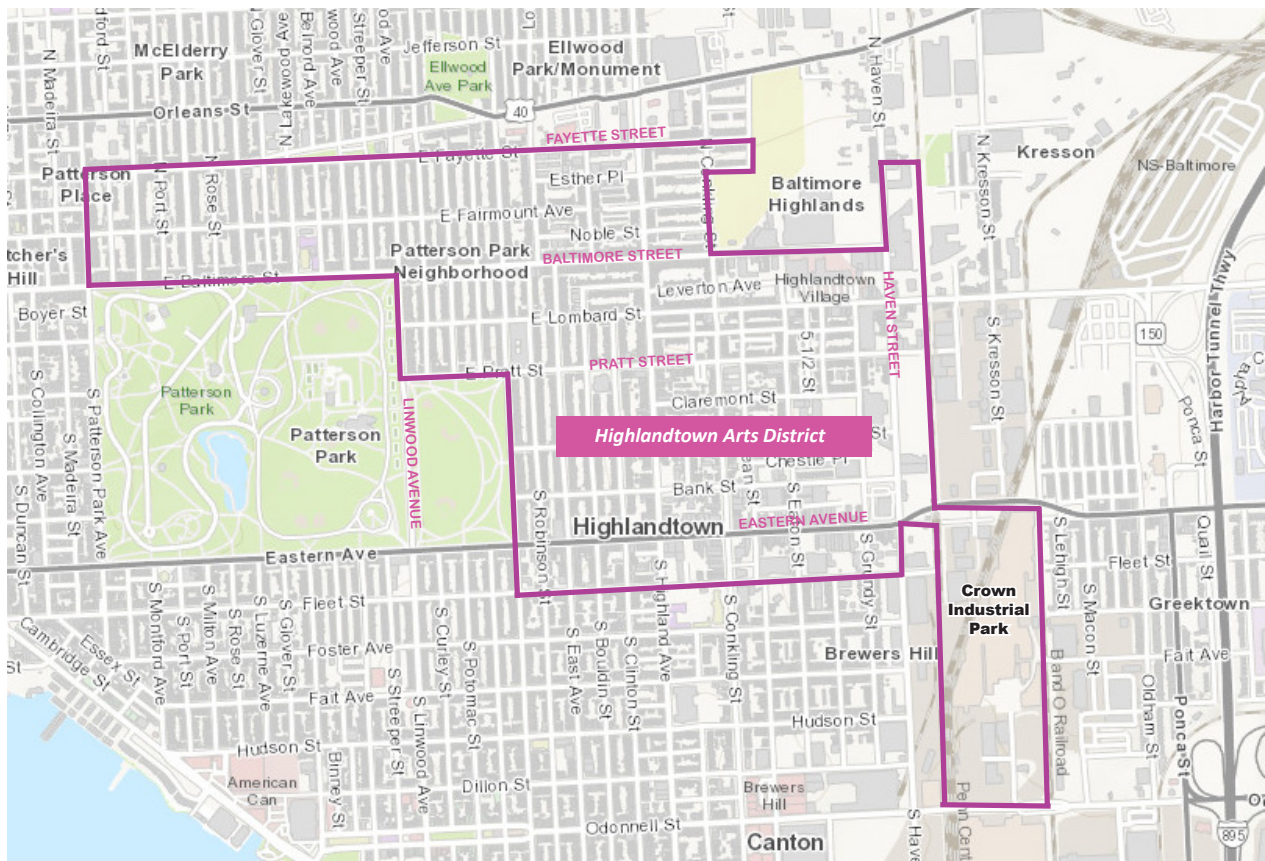
The Highlandtown Arts & Entertainment District (ha!) is known as Baltimore City's most eclectic arts district, filled with public art, painted screens, puppet makers, piñata makers, and parades. Established in 2003, ha! is one of 29 arts districts in Maryland, four of which are in Baltimore. The Highlandtown Arts & Entertainment District is the second largest geographic district in the state, incorporating the residential communities of Highlandtown, Baltimore Highlands, and Patterson Park, along with the commercial corridors of Eastern Avenue, Lombard Street, and Haven Street, and the historic Crown Cork & Seal complex.

Originally settled by southern and eastern European immigrants, today retailers and artists come from five continents, including Africa, Asia, Europe, and the Americas. According to the 2020 Census, the district is home to more than 12,500 residents, with 47% identifying as white, 37% identifying as Latino, and 17% identifying as Black. The district has nearly

290 businesses, with designers, jewelry makers and puppeteers working alongside coffee roasters, herbalists, and chefs.

The district contains a major community arts facility at the Patterson Theater, a former movie theater converted in 2003 by the Creative Alliance into eight live/work spaces, two galleries and a black box theater and the Creativity Center, opened by the Creative Alliance in 2022. Other arts facilities include Skyloft Gallery and Studios and the largest branch of the Enoch Pratt Free Library system, the Southeast Anchor Library. The Crown Industrial Park complex originally housed Crown Cork & Seal, a bottle cap production factory founded in Baltimore shortly after the inventor of the bottle cap patented his creation in the 1890s. The 17-acre campus is now the workplace of over 100 painters, sound engineers, film production companies, cabinet makers, and more, spread out in studios across 27 buildings.

HIGHLANDTOWN ARTS DISTRICT BOUNDARIES



VALUES + GOALS + STRATEGIES

The interviews and surveys revealed four main values that drive the recommendations for the Highlandtown Arts District:

1. inclusive leadership
2. consistent, intentional engagement
3. collaboration
4. resource sharing

The strategy actions presented incorporate these key values into activities aimed at growing the audience of the district, preserving artist live/work spaces, strengthening artists' income and business skills, and involving a diverse set of stakeholders in the district's operations.

GOALS

STRATEGIES

Organize district planning sessions for artists, gallery owners, cultural institution staff, and other stakeholders, thereby creating a representative set of voices with meaningful influence within the district.

1. Implement district planning and programming with the guidance of a diverse team of stakeholders.

Produce creative programming that reflects the cultures represented in the Greater Highlandtown area, thereby attracting a growing number of diverse attendees.

2. Continue and expand inclusive district events and programming.

Preserve and create affordable artist workspaces, in light of improving real estate market conditions in the district, thereby retaining an active artist workforce in Highlandtown.

3. Advocate for the preservation and creation of quality, affordable artists workspaces.

Sustain and grow arts and entertainment-related venues and entrepreneurs, thereby reducing vacancy rates in commercial buildings in the district.

4. Develop existing—and increase new—partnerships between businesses and artists.
5. Support the development of entrepreneurial and business skills for artists.

Market and promote district amenities/businesses to visitors, thereby growing the audience/customers/patrons of the district artists and businesses beyond events and business hours.

6. Implement marketing campaigns that promote the arts district and grow awareness of artists and businesses in the district.
7. Develop district navigation that helps residents and visitors recognize and navigate the district.

Improve public spaces through capital improvements and creative placemaking, thereby attracting business owners, residents, and visitors.

8. Activate the arts district with more visual art.

Implement district planning and programming with the guidance of a diverse team of stakeholders.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE
1A Reach out to stakeholders from key social, community, and cultural institutions within the district individually, annually, to invite them to join the Implementation Team. Survey them about meeting structure, topics, and their role.	NEW	STARTING IN 2022
1B Hold quarterly meetings. Modify meeting structure/format as appropriate to maximize meaningful participation.	NEW	STARTING IN 2022
1C Review membership for racial, gender, and economic diversity, matching the districts' demographics.	NEW	ANNUALLY, STARTING IN 2023

PARTIES TO ENGAGE

- Southeast CDC staff members
- Community association members
- Elected officials who have a hand in shaping the district
- School staff in the district
- Anchor institutions that hold signature district events and support the efforts of the district:
 - Creative Alliance
 - Friends of Patterson Park
 - Southeast Anchor Library
- Cultural organizations that support the efforts of the district and the community at large
 - Nuestras Raíces
 - CIELO/Artesanas
- Business owners who operate and conduct business within the district or who provide resources to support the efforts of the district and its artists
- Artists who are collaborative and support the efforts of the district
- Key artists who may not live or work in the district, however they provide access, insight and resources for the district and the community of artists who live and work in the district
- Economic strategy partners who support the efforts of the district can provide access and new audiences for district artists and programs:
 - Highlandtown Main Street
 - Baltimore Development Corporation
 - Baltimore BASE Network



To stay connected with the heartbeat of the district's artist, business owners, community members, and visitors, Southeast CDC staff organize regular meetings with district stakeholders to plan events and guide district operations

In the past, these meetings primarily focused on the district's monthly First Friday Art Walks. In the future, the coordinating meetings should expand to include other district functions, including soliciting input on vending opportunities, collaborative marketing, and public art installations.

Continue and expand inclusive district events and programming.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
2A Maintain existing signature events: Art Walks, Great Lantern Parade, Fiesta Baltimore, and the Parade of Latin Nations, etc.	ONGOING	2022-2027	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident artists Gallery owners Creative Alliance
2B Review list of potential programs generated from the community survey in the plan and determine what can led by ha! staff, district partners, or community members.	NEW	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Friends of Patterson Park Maryland State Arts Council, as possible sponsor
2C Identify and secure needed resources to support programming and events.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts, as possible sponsor
2D Incorporate selected additional programming and events into district event calendar.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local corporations, as possible sponsors



The arts district has a number of signature events, but we heard from artists and community members that they would like to see more.

Some things we heard during our interviews were:

“We want more. More markets and fairs, especially outdoors. Open studio tours where we can interact with artists at work.”

“It would be awesome if there could be some art events held in the park.”

Advocate for the preservation and creation of quality, affordable artists workspaces.

	ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
3A	Maintain district property inventory to include existing businesses, art spaces, potential live/work space, retail spaces, and potential arts-focused development sites. Document condition of current available spaces, including code compliance and habitability.	ONGOING + NEW	2022-2026 (Quarterly)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resident artists and organizations • Maryland State Arts Council • Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts
3B	Work with existing arts businesses on long-range business planning and succession planning. Provide needed resources and technical assistance to enhance their capacity to maintain their businesses.	ONGOING	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Representative's Offices • Community organizations • Americans for the Arts
3C	Provide training with artists on cooperative and similar alternative business and property ownership models that work in other arts districts.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-focused developers
3D	Fundraise and advocate for the development of affordable artist studio and housing, including the Crown Industrial Park.	ONGOING	2022-2026	
3E	Coordinate artist and resident engagement in development processes.	ONGOING	2022-2026	



A main focus of any arts district should be providing affordable, long-lasting space for artists to maintain their practice and sell their art, regardless of the area's improving economic conditions.

Throughout the discovery and feedback phase of this plan we heard concern around limited studio space or spaces that are in jeopardy of being renovated into another use.

While some artists own their spaces (Highlandtown Gallery, Springsteen Gallery, 3402 Art), other artists lease affordable space in places prime for redevelopment (Crown Industrial Park).

Some things we heard during our interviews were:

"Can we support community opportunities to own galleries and venues?"

"I would love to be a part of a co-op retail space or art studio space."

Develop existing--and increase new--partnerships between businesses and artists.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
4A Maintain artist and business registries.	ONGOING	2022	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business and non-arts organizations within the arts district who will hire artists for in-store installations and services • Artists within the district • Maryland State Arts Council, as a possible funder
4B Identify and document current partnerships where artists are working with non-arts businesses to install in-store exhibits, create pop-up events, or provide services (such as graphic design, photography, interactive events).	NEW	2022	
4C Develop pop-up vendor registry for area artists to be paired with ha! venues; update quarterly.	NEW	2022	
4D Develop a “How-to Hire ha! Artists” guide, determine the format, and share the guide with area businesses; update annually.	NEW	2022	
4E Curate pairings between artists and businesses.	NEW	2025	
4F Identify local business or consultant that can take over the coordination of these partnerships from ha! staff.	NEW	2025	



Through the discovery phase of this plan, we heard a desire to provide opportunities for businesses and artists to collaborate.

“We have businesses reaching out about artists curating their spaces.”

“Are there opportunities to collaborate with existing neighborhood businesses?”

Support the development of entrepreneurial and business skills for artists.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
5A Catalogue existing business trainings available for artists; determine appropriate method for sharing; implement quarterly, or as needed.	NEW	2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Established artists and creative businesses who mentor emerging artists District arts and cultural institution staff who manage information sharing
5B Identify gaps in training for business skills.	NEW	2024-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland State Arts Council, as a potential funder
5C Identify and promote past and current successful growth of artists.	NEW	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts, which provides artist skill workshops
5D Develop Highlandtown-based mentorship or training program for artists who are ready to grow their practice and physical space use.	NEW	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Baltimore Creatives Acceleration Network, as an artist businesses development provider



Through the discovery phase of this plan, we heard a desire to provide support for artist to grow and understand the economic resources available. Some things we heard were:

“We need to share the understanding of the economics of being an artist and the resources available.”



Implement marketing campaigns that promote the arts district and grow awareness of artists and businesses in the district.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
6A Maintain monthly Art Walk promotions (focused on open venues, pop-up artists, and special activities).	ONGOING	ONGOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Artists within the district to share offerings, review proposed marketing, contribute to marketing costs
6B Maintain online promotion of artists, businesses, and events on ha! social media sites and website.	ONGOING	ONGOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District arts and cultural institutions Staff manage marketing campaigns
6C Share stories of Highlandtown’s diverse cultural landscape (for example through the Sabor de Highlandtown project of Latino-owned food businesses).	ONGOING	ONGOING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland State Arts Council for funding support for marketing
6D Identify additional collaborative marketing opportunities among the district’s programs, artists, and arts-based businesses.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Visit Baltimore for regional marketing support Live Baltimore as a marketing partner
6E Implement a marketing strategy for connecting with residents living in the arts district with non-digital promotions.	NEW	2024	
6F Implement a regional marketing campaign for the district.	NEW	2023-2025	



Throughout the process of development of this plan we heard a need for collaborative efforts in marketing. Some things we heard were:

“We can’t afford a billboard for our gallery, but maybe we could pool our resources and have a billboard for our district events.”

“Marketing is expensive. If we can share the cost, we could expand our reach.”

Develop district navigation that helps residents and visitors recognize and navigate the district.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
7A Identify map points that highlight the district's cultural amenities and resources, by adapting the Art Walk printed map, Highlandtown Main Street printed map, and public art inventory.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Highlandtown Arts District businesses Website developer or sign builders
7B Evaluate navigating methods and district identification, including printed map, navigational markers, electronic kiosk, mounted maps, pole banners, etc.; consider future adaptability.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District arts and cultural institutions
7C Fundraise and implement preferred wayfinding methods.	NEW	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maryland State agencies for funding support



During the discovery phase we heard mixed responses to where the district is and where events might be beyond Eastern Ave. Some things we heard were:

"I want to see people hanging out and engaging beyond Eastern Ave. There is more to see."

"Is there a map we could use year-round? When people stop by after the Art Walk and want to know where to go next, I have to give them directions and hope they get there."



Activate the arts district with more visual art.

ACTION	NEW OR ONGOING	TIMELINE	PARTIES TO ENGAGE
8A Develop a District Art Plan that identifies highly visible locations and district gateways where public art could be installed (including murals, sculpture, lighting installations, bus shelters, etc.), including Conkling Plaza. Consider how to embed district branding.	ONGOING	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resident artists and organizations Elected officials Baltimore Office of Promotion and the Arts
8B Research artists from Highlandtown and beyond who are experienced with public art installations that suit the identified locations.	NEW	2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategic Partners and Funders Potential development partners
8C Develop budgets and fundraise for identified public art sites.	NEW	2025-2026	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Businesses within the district
8D Implement District Art Plan by opening call for proposals and facilitating community engagement for each site.	NEW	2025-2026	



Throughout our feedback sessions and during the discovery phase of this plan, we heard a need for visual elements to bring people to other areas beyond Eastern Ave.

Some things we heard were:

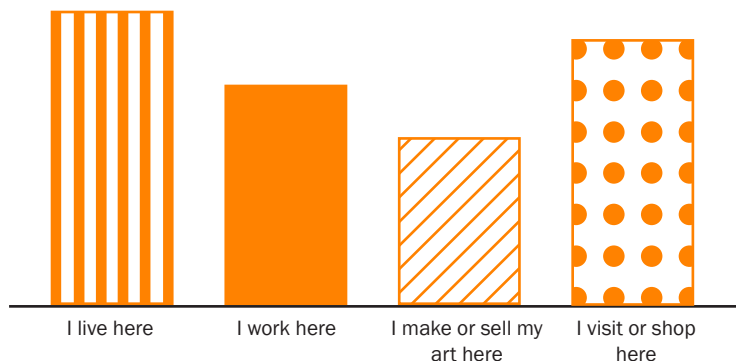
“Maybe we can get businesses to keep up the Artwalk flyers beyond the event so people have a visual marker and keep wondering throughout the district.”

“Can we do something like the sidewalk paint in other neighborhoods or signs on the light poles, so people know they are still in the district?”

ARTIST INPUT

In 2021, 44 surveys were collected from Highlandtown artists. The following provides a summary of those findings, which informed this strategic plan.

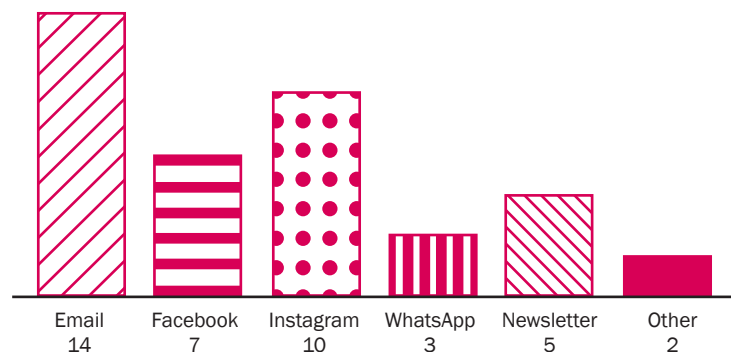
1. Do you live or work in the Highlandtown Arts District?



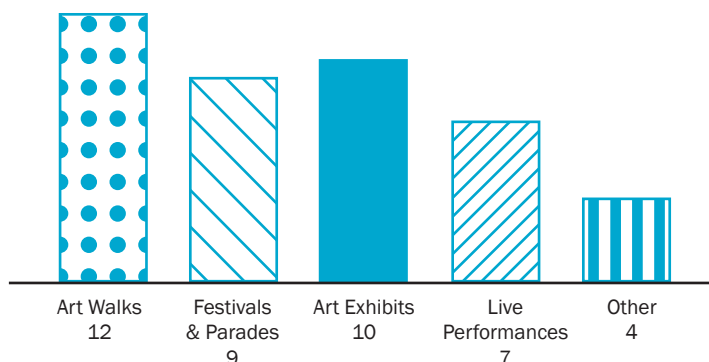
2. What led you to choose to live or work in the Highlandtown Arts District?

- District arts venues/cultural attractions (8)
- Close to the Patterson Park (6)
- Reasonable housing prices (6)
- Close to food options (3)
- Crown Industrial Park studios (2)
- Diverse culture (2)
- Other Latinos lived here (2)
- I work at an arts non-profit
- Access to public transit
- Access to 895
- Easier parking
- Walkability
- Didn't know this was an arts district

4. How would you like to hear about opportunities and events?



5. Which activities have you participated in as an artist?



3. If someone asked you “Where is the Highlandtown Arts District?” what would you say?

- Near Patterson Park (6)
- Near Creative Alliance (5) – “where the bright benches and trash cans are”
- Highlandtown (3)
- Between Eastern and Gough along Conkling
- Top of the hill on East Baltimore St. and past the park
- Between Greektown and Patterson Park, north of Canton
- Southeast Baltimore, east of Patterson Park
- East of Highland Ave to Conkling St and south of Pratt St. to Eastern Ave
- E. Gough St.
- Focused on Highlandtown but including surrounding neighborhoods of Canton & Patterson Park
- East of Patterson Park between Eastern and Baltimore up to Haven
- Not sure (3)

6. What kinds of events and resources would you like to see in the arts district for artists?

- Outdoor art market/festivals (4)
- Studio tours (2)
- Live performances/music (2)
- Happy with the variety of art at the existing Art Walks
- Opportunities for gallery shows
- Opportunity to be part of publications
- Artist talks
- Exhibits
- Art Walk hours extend to 9pm to attract a younger crowd in the summer
- Opportunities to network/collaborate
- Art Battles
- Food trucks

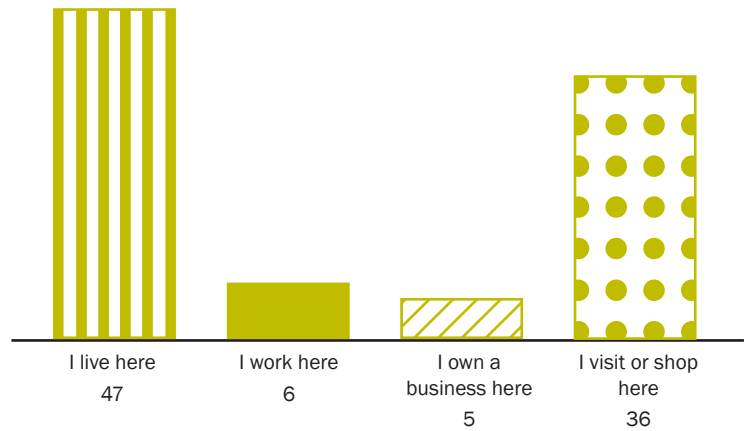
COMMUNITY INPUT

In 2021, 64 surveys were collected from the greater Highlandtown area about the Arts District. The following provides a summary of those findings, which informed this strategic plan.

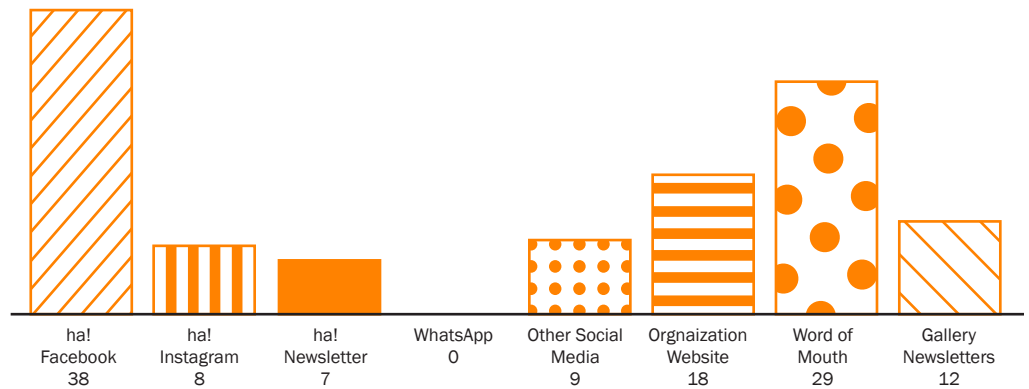
1. Where do you visit from?

- Highlandtown, Patterson Park, Greektown, Fells, Canton - 21224 (44)
- Butchers Hill - 21231 (5)
- Charles Village - 21218
- Midtown - 21201
- Dundalk
- Reisterstown - 21136
- Nottingham, MD
- Washington, DC - 20015
- Severna Park - 21146

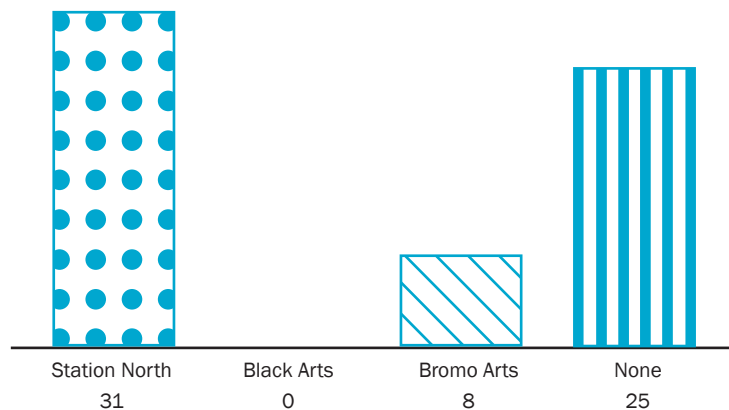
2. Do you live or work in the Highlandtown Arts District?



3. How do you find out about Highlandtown Arts District events?



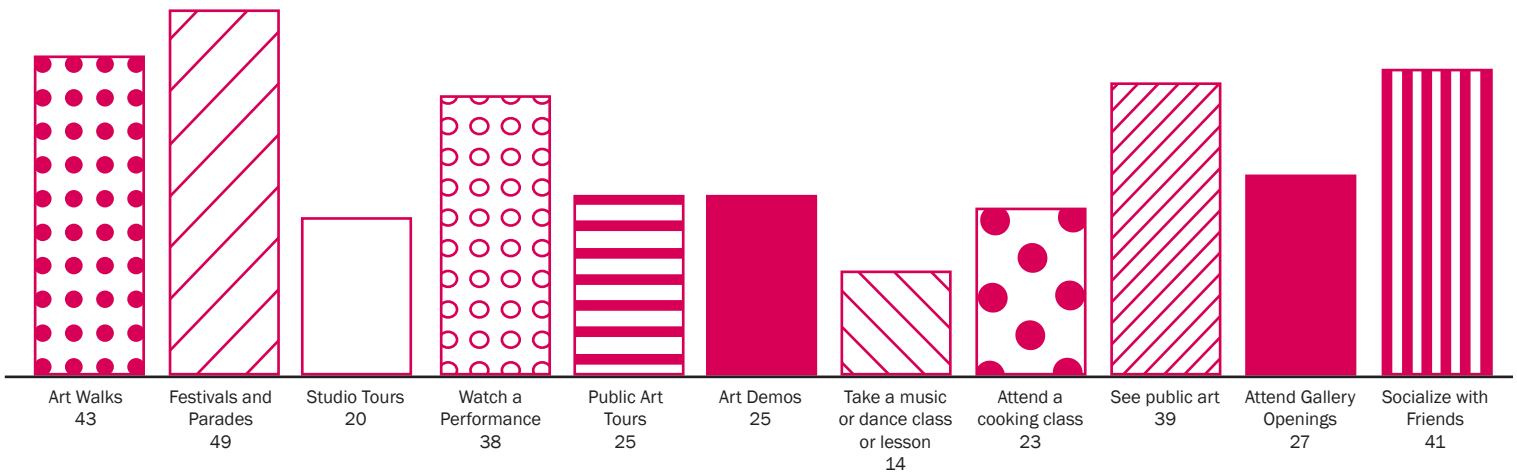
4. What other arts districts do you visit, if any?



5. Where would you say the Highlandtown Arts District is?

- East of Patterson Park, north of Canton (14)
- In Highlandtown surrounded by Eastern, Gough, Highland, Conkling (13)
- Down Eastern Avenue from Creative Alliance to the Library (9)
- Around Creative Alliance (5)
- All over Highlandtown (2)
- Southeast Baltimore (2)
- South of Pratt towards Eastern Avenue and east of Ellwood towards S. Haven
- Eastern Ave and East Ave
- Top of the hill on E. Baltimore past the park and down to Eastern
- Between Lombard and Eastern, East and Conkling
- Didn't know we had one
- Not sure (2)

7. Which Highlandtown Arts District events are you most likely to participate in?



8. Do you have any additional feedback or ideas for us to keep in mind?

- Keep it happening, you're doing a great job (8)
- Art events for kids (3) - and adults in separate but close areas adult dance classes
- More publicity on events, especially to people not on social media (2)
- Share map and events in monthly newsletters of nearby community associations
- Newsletter or flyers delivered
- Better signage and marketing to represent the district (what and where)
- Looking forward to the festivals returning (2)
- Art Walk map available online
- Art markets in the park with live music
- Free concerts in the park
- Temporary sculpture exhibit in the park
- Interactive art/shows incorporating the community
- Trash cans and removal of illegal dumping
- Open mic or comedy shows at coffee shops
- Highlight the Zappa sculpture
- More murals
- More public art besides murals in unexpected areas
- Bike parking
- Street closure, food festival, art
- Ethnic food festival
- More façade upgrades
- Considered effort by artists who sell in the neighborhood to cleanup and beautify the areas beyond the main art retail borderlines
- Clean up the Conkling Street Corridor



SOUTHEAST
community development corporation