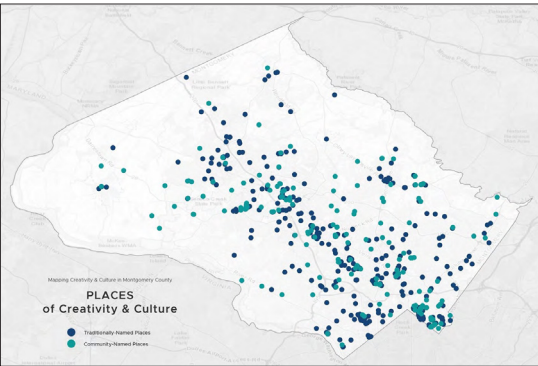




CULTURAL PLANNING FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County, 2021-



Bressi is facilitating a process to prepare a new cultural plan for Montgomery County, Md., a jurisdiction of 1.1 million people adjacent to Washington D.C. As in-house cultural planning consultant, he has helped the Arts and Humanities Council of Montgomery County establish the project framework and recruit and select a consultant.

The County has changed dramatically since its last cultural plan was completed more than 20 years ago. Its population has tripled and its non-white population has grown so rapidly that it is now more than half the County's population. Just as important, since then, ideas about how cultural planning have evolved dramatically, from plans to support cultural institutions to plans that consider how public-private partnerships can support the creative and cultural life of people in the community.

Bressi has lead AHCMC through two years of preparation for the plan. In 2021, he led a collaborative effort between AHCMC and the Maryland-National Capital Planning Commission to develop the Arts, Culture and Design chapter of the County's comprehensive plan, which expanded the County's traditional focus on physical design and placemaking to lay the groundwork for community-based arts and culture strategies.

In 2022, Bressi advised AHCMC on two research projects that serve as a foundation for a future cultural plan – an exploration of what “arts and culture” mean to diverse County residents (MJR Partners), and mapping of the County's cultural assets, both traditional resources and places identified by community members (Civic Arts).

Based on that research, Bressi prepared a white paper to help the County prepare for its cultural plan. The white paper recommended that the plan should:

- Explore new paradigms for expressing the purpose of and understanding the impact of public support of arts and culture, as related to cultural and community resiliency and individual growth.
- Consider how people engage with arts and culture in their everyday lives, not only their interaction with traditional arts organizations and venues.
- Consider how a wide range of County resources and policies – beyond traditional arts grantmaking – impact the cultural life of its residents.
- Recognize the challenges to effective, broad-based community engagement, including planning fatigue, changed attitudes towards gathering as a result of the pandemic, desire not to be seen by public agencies, lack of understanding of how a cultural plan is relevant to people's lives, and distrust in planning processes.

Bressi is now supporting the selection and on-boarding of a consultant, with anticipation the plan will be underway in July 2024.



Top: Asset map comparing traditional and community-identified cultural resources (Civic Arts)

Above: Sample cultural identity-mapping data collection (MJR Partners).

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