

## Evanston officials, residents look to act on recent arts report

Evanston officials and residents are looking to implement suggestions made in the final report from the evanstARTs initiative, which was published last month.

EvanstARTs, a collaboration of the city of Evanston, the Evanston Community Foundation and the Evanston Arts Council in order to develop the arts sector in the city, created the report as a “roadmap for the arts.”

“The Foundation will continue to collaborate with its EvanstARTs partners, and looks forward to shining a light on our community’s significant and diverse cultural assets now and into the future,” Evanston Community Foundation president and CEO Sara Schastok said in a news release.

Judy Kemp, a working member with evanstARTs, presented the final report at City Council on March 10. She explained evanstARTs was a project aimed “to frame a strong vision for the arts in Evanston and to outline the steps it would take to elevate the profile of the arts in our city.”

The project lasted from July 2012 to January 2013 and included surveys, interviews and focus groups allowing anyone interested in the arts to provide feedback. Some artists surveyed for the report said there was a need for adequate spaces in the city, such as studios, to promote better communication and collaboration.

“The more tools we give them to connect, to be aware of each other’s projects, to look for partnership opportunities, the more we can help them take advantage of the potential to share those needed resources,” said Jennifer Lasik, Evanston’s cultural arts coordinator, in an email, adding she “will actively seek out ways to implement the goals and suggestions outlined in the report.”

“In Evanston, one of the greatest needs for our arts sector is the availability of affordable space, be it for studio, office, class or performance use,” Lasik said.

Kemp addressed at the meeting some of the ways the evanstARTs investigation had already impacted the city, citing the hiring of Lasik and the appointment of the mayor’s task force.

Lasik has been in the position since November. She said as cultural arts coordinator she works as a liaison between city officials and artists and art organizations in Evanston. One of her tasks is to “make Evanston a destination place for the arts,” she said.

The 77-page report prompted priorities of outlining a framework to plan and execute the city’s vision for the arts and setting up a development plan in accordance with the city’s goals, the Evanston Community Foundation said in a news release.

“There have been requests from all over the country from people who want to see what we’ve done, so we were excited to be able to release this to them to let them know what Evanston has done,” Kemp said.

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