

Montgomery County Cultural Plan

Task 2.5 Presentations to Boards and Classes Summary Memo

Prepared by Metris Arts Consulting

September 5, 2025

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Metris and AHCMC worked together to build awareness about the Montgomery County Cultural plan through brief presentations to boards, commissions, and classes across the county. We met with thirty-seven groups between February and September 2025. In these presentations, we explained the purpose and process for the cultural plan, invited feedback, and encouraged the boards to connect the constituencies they represent with inclusive opportunities for participation. We cast a wide net, seeking

opportunities to present to boards and commissions that represent diverse geographies, including urban, suburban, and rural Up County communities. We also reached out to groups representing some of the key constituencies we identified in our stakeholder analysis. These groups included:

- Government officials and agencies (representing both Montgomery County and independent jurisdictions within the county)
- Specially designated districts, such as urban districts and arts and entertainment districts
- A selection of Montgomery County's ninety boards and commissions, prioritizing groups that most align with key stakeholder constituencies and/or advance intersectional opportunities
- Regional Service Center Citizen Advisory Boards
- Boards for AHCMC grantees and community organizations
- Businesses
- Philanthropy
- Distinct ethnic, affinity, and culturally specific groups
 - Racial and ethnic communities
 - Specific immigrant communities
 - Religious communities
 - LGBTQIA+ communities
 - Disability communities
- Geographic/regional communities
- Libraries



Montgomery Planning Board Live Stream, April 11, 2025

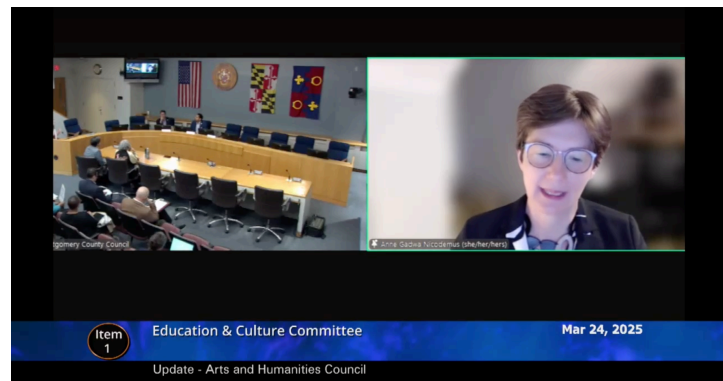
- Older adults
- Students and youth

We sent requests to fifty-three boards and commissions and three schools, requesting fifteen to twenty minutes during one of their regularly scheduled meetings or classes. To reach a greater number of entities cost-effectively, Metris created a video recording of our presentation. Metris and AHCMC also shared the presentation duties to cover more ground. AHCMC's CEO and Deputy Director presented to roughly two-thirds of the groups, using our recorded presentation as an element of their talks, and Metris met with the rest. There were thirteen groups for which we requested, but were unable to schedule a presentation time. We sent each of those groups a link to the video. See Appendix 1 for a list of presentations. See Appendix 2 for presentation slides.

Our cultural plan research and community engagement efforts are focused on three central pillars derived from priorities identified through in-depth community research:

- **Belonging:** Creating a community where everyone belongs and can lead culturally rich lives
- **Intersectionality:** Using arts, culture, heritage, and creative expression to help solve community challenges
- **Cultural sector resilience:** Helping our artists and our cultural communities thrive

The presentations to the boards and classes touched on all three pillars. By building awareness among a wide range of groups about the cultural plan process and opportunities for inclusive participation, we fostered belonging as part of the process, not simply as a desired result of the plan. In our conversations with boards and commissions from different aspects of county life, we identified intersections with arts, culture, and the humanities across a wide spectrum of activities. Our presentation to bodies representing the cultural sector helped ensure their concerns about resilience were heard.



Education and Culture Committee, March 24, 2025

PRESENTATION CONTENT

During the brief presentations, Metris and AHCMC introduced the cultural planning process, explaining for those unfamiliar with the term what cultural planning is and what it can accomplish. We shared the pillars of the new cultural plan: belonging, intersectionality, and cultural sector resilience. We also discussed priorities that had already begun to emerge in our creative engagement work.

In each presentation, we encouraged listeners to take advantage of opportunities to participate in the planning process, and to encourage the groups and people they connect with to do so as well. The presentations provided a useful platform to promote public engagement opportunities like the community survey, Community Conversations, and Cultural Preserves pop-ups.

We also answered questions and listened to board and commission members' ideas and concerns about how the County supports and benefits from arts, culture, and the humanities.



Matrix Arts Consulting Presentation, 2025

REACTIONS

"I'm so happy and grateful that the county is still doing this type of program and reaching out to different cultures to make sure we have a voice."

Our interactions with Montgomery County boards and commissions were overwhelmingly positive. Members said they appreciated the sharing of information and expressed support for the idea of creating a cultural plan based on pillars of belonging, intersectionality, and cultural sector resilience. Many of the groups engaged in lively discussion, asking questions and sharing their ideas.

Questions

Our presentations sparked perceptive and thoughtful questions. Board and commission members asked about the funding needed from local, state, and federal sources to bring the plan into fruition and how funding changes at the federal and state levels might affect the County. Many of their questions pertained to the pillars of the plan.

Belonging

Participants asked about our community engagement methods, communicating clearly that they needed to be robust and inclusive.

Cultural Sector Resilience

Participants were interested in hearing how the cultural plan could address pressing needs for the cultural sector, such as funding, space, shared knowledge, and promotion of the sector.

Intersectionality

Board and commission members wanted to know more about budget sharing and policy changes that might integrate the arts and humanities into the priorities of other County departments and agencies. They also asked about how the cultural plan would intersect with other plans in the county and its constituent jurisdictions, including Takoma Park's cultural plan, Thrive 2050, and the future expansion of Metrorail.

Suggestions

The groups we spoke to also had a number of suggestions for how to conduct the planning process, as well as for items that should be included in the final plan. They included:

- Increase validation and visibility for the cultural sector and what it can contribute to the county
- Define how arts, culture, and humanities can intersect productively with the county's work in housing, tourism, economic development, microentrepreneurship, parks, and other factors
- Clarify how art, culture, and humanities activities can help people feel safe and strengthen social cohesion
- Strengthen how arts and culture are represented intersectionally at the county government level with a cabinet-level position for AHCMC's leader
- Consider zoning changes that would remove barriers for art and culture organizations
- Review plans from other localities, including Winston-Salem, North Carolina's plan repositioning its focus from the tobacco industry to "Arts & Innovation"
- Include destination creation and marketing throughout the county for its potential impacts on economic development and intersectionality
- Strengthen relationships between arts and entertainment (A&E) districts in the county and the state's Main Street Program. Montgomery County's only current Main Street is in Takoma Park, which is not an A&E district.
- Consider the regional cultural sector needs, beyond the county's boundaries. There may be opportunities for County venues to meet the needs of groups no longer performing at DC's Kennedy Center or other DC venues due to the current political situation.

"We need a place to have meaningful dialogue and discuss openly the joys of expressing our heritage and the issues that arise from our differences."

While our time with each group was brief, the boards and commissions we spoke to were receptive and enthusiastic about the cultural plan. They wanted to stay informed and contribute to our efforts. We encouraged all of them to participate in the community survey to provide more details on their opinions and concerns. They suggested other groups to which we could present, offered to host community conversations with communities they are connected to, and readily agreed to share the link to our community survey widely. Their participation has helped us raise awareness about the cultural plan throughout the county and get input from a wide range of voices.

APPENDIX 1: LIST OF PRESENTATIONS

Presentation	Date
Completed	
Office of Community Partnerships (OCP)	2/19
Montgomery County Appropriations Committee/Education & Culture	3/24
The Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission (M-NCPPC) board	4/10
OCP - Interfaith Advisory Group	4/21
Wheaton Urban District Advisory Committee (WUDAC)	5/13
Office of Racial Justice	5/21
Bethesda Art & Entertainment (A&E) District Board	5/22
Silver Spring Urban District	5/27
OCP - Middle Eastern Advisory Group	5/28
Nonprofit Montgomery	6/2
Create Arts Center	6/2
Dance Exchange	6/2
Thomas S. Wootton High School	6/5
Sheppard Pratt School	6/9
Visit Montgomery	6/10
Mid County Regional Service Center (RSC)	6/12
Bethesda Urban Partnership	6/17
OCP - Asian Pacific Islander Advisory Group	6/17
BlackRock	6/30
Olney Theater	7/7
Kentlands Foundation	7/8
Sandy Spring Museum board	7/9
Silver Spring and Wheaton A&E boards	7/10

Presentation	Date
OCP - African American Advisory Group	7/10
BlackRock Youth Arts Camp	7/25
Gaithersburg City Council	7/14
Montgomery County Media	7/16
Amazing Theater	7/18
Bethesda Regional Service Center (RSC)	7/21
Remembrance and Reconciliation	7/22
The Community Foundation	7/29
Leadership Montgomery	7/30
Takoma Park City Council	7/30
Friends of the Library, Montgomery County (FOLMC)	8/6
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce	8/13
Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) board	Submitted video testimony 8/21
Scheduled or Pending	
Montgomery County Chamber of Commerce	9/18
Rockville City Council	10/13
Montgomery County Economic Development Corporation (MCEDC)	TBD, Sept
Montgomery College board	TBD

Video Sent in Lieu of Presentation
OCP - LatinX Advisory Group
OCP - Caribbean Advisory Group
OCP - LGBTQ Advisory Group
OCP - Senior Community
Montgomery County Collaboration Council
Universities at Shady Grove
One Montgomery Green
Montgomery Black Collective
Manna Food Center
East County RSC
Up County RSC
Silver Spring RSC
Maryland Black Chamber of Commerce
Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Montgomery County (HCCMC)
Montgomery Women

APPENDIX 2: METRIS PRESENTATION SLIDES
