

By the Square Foot Dinner + Data Report

On April 5th Cobalt Connects hosted Dinner + Data, an event designed to bring the local artist, real estate and creative community deeper into the conversation that is driving the By the Square Foot study. Sixty participants participated in the sold out event at the Players' Guild Theatre. The participants ranged in artistic discipline and career level, as well as including City of Hamilton Culture staff, Hamilton Arts Council staff, Arts Build Ontario staff, real estate developers and agents, studio facility owners and programmers, and curious citizens.

The 3-hour event opened with an introduction to Cobalt's motivation for the project, an overview of Initial Findings from a community survey completed by 226 artists, creative workers and cultural organizations in Hamilton.

Following the introduction participants engaged in a lively open conversation about issues facing the sector with a focus on space, representation, geography and a number of other fundamental issues facing the sector. The content below is a transcription of content from the discussion and activities made available to the participants.

As Cobalt moves forward with the By the Square Foot study we'll use these ideas and threads to help us focus our effort.

We sincerely appreciate the expertise and experience of the participants and look forward to further engaging them and their colleagues in the conversation.

Should any of the issues below resonate with you, your organization, company or community we encourage you to connect with us:

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Common themes:

affordability,
online resources,
sales / business / income (\$\$\$),
gender / racial / ability / cultural diversity,
permanence, specific individuals (see 'Interview' section),
critical spaces,
sharing & connections,
using empty / unused / underused spaces (specific examples provided),
helping artists *own* their spaces

Category: Data

Numbers, surveys, databases, member lists, tax data

- Where are the areas that have infrastructure then identify affordable locations
- Online resources: how to connect artists to collectives and artists to each other
- Need for short term (~ 3 months) project-based rental (collective)
- Buyer/investor data
- Time and desired works space
 - o Do we want permanent space?
 - o 1 year rental
 - o 3 months?
- Find out what industries use a lot of art and attract them
- Gender stats
 - o What about trans / gender nonconforming artists
- Find out who is successful and why? Business-minded artists !
- Find out where clients are coming from
- What percentages of sales are made online (outside Hamilton)?
- How long is a sales cycle?
 - o Are they selling on impulse?
 - o How important is Geography
- How do income stats compare across ethnicity
 - o White artists vs racialized artists?
- How many artists are on social assistance (OW / OOSP – disabled artists)
- How are artists paying for their spaces?
 - o Grants?
 - o Day job?
 - o Sales not always primary earnings...

Category: Interview

People to talk to: city officials, developers, artists ...

- Understanding the needs of professional artists – those recognized by their peers. They are one of the many reasons people continue to move here
- Speak to the manager of real estate at the city re: pilot programs about using city space (Sarah Wayland)
- Where are the visible minorities?
- What is bringing artists to Hamilton (to practice)?
- Musicians !
- Let's talk to Hamilton's top art collectives and where/how they make purchases
- The case for supporting creative industries with public money is that it creates an exciting, dynamic environment to attract/retain talent and investment in many economic sectors
- Critical spaces
 - o Experimental spaces
- Interview existing artist collectives in Hamilton.
 - o What do they have and what are they missing?
- Ways to group artists of varying levels/skills together
- Artists ... always artists
- Mentorship
- Third space, conglomeration artists, market coffee, offices, temporary meeting space, workshops, think target
- Neil Everson & Jason Thorne (Ec. Dev.)
- Chris Phillips (WF)
- John Ariyo & Al Fletcher (Neighbourhood) – they can connect you to the community developers

Category: Focus Group

Small bundles of people with shared experience

- The absentee landlords of Barton
- Heavy production use space
 - o Spray booth, laundry, technical
- Rentable space for workshops & arts education
- Multiple use theatre / art?
- Critical spaces
- Hamilton's Bob Young has a self-publishing business he created when he encountered (self-)publishing barriers
- Help for those who wish to self publish & market
- Skill development and workshops
- Bring art based businesses together
- Unique and specific production spaces (foundry, etc.)
- Successful artist AND successful business (how to connect?)
- Artist-run collectives can access bigger space for less than \$14/mo.
- Emerging artists and the spaces they need
- Experiences/spaces
- Artists with disabilities and LGBTQ artists
 - o Toronto has Tangles Arts & Disabilities and Buddies in Bad Times
- Space to create vs Space to earn
 - o Should a retail center be on James?

Category: Best Practice

What are other cities doing, what do other artists do?

- A pop up gallery network where landlords of unique spaces with vacancy, sponsors with interest in the arts, art galleries needing more activity & artists can connect through this business model, creating solo or group shows. Full promotion through advertising and social media
- “Make marriages” between investors and tenants (creative artists)
- Find ways to link artists and digital arts with the digital economy
 - o Look at Stratford’s U of Waterloo creative arts campus (downtown)
- Sharing is caring
- Is this about moving the creative community or multiplying?
 - o Why go ... add !
- Inclusive neighbourhoods, artists shouldn’t be forced out of spaces/neighbourhoods
- Don’t resist or try to control the local economy – make it work for you & piggy-back on it
- Pittsburgh!!!
- Group artist space
 - o Multiple artists pool resources/money to get larger spaces/cheaper \$/sq. ft.
- Non-profit space hubs (Ottawa, Toronto)
- Talk to David Carter at Innovation Factor about “hamontconnect” a simple app that connects people
- Artists in the planning department (Real Estate?) advise...
 - o See Minnesota and Los Angeles
- PROGRAMS !
 - o Art crits
 - o Community collaborations
 - o Exhibitions
 - o Versatile space
- Support artists in all areas
 - o Hamilton as a WHOLE ARTIST SPACE
- Unique creative spaces – retail/commers & Art
- Community bonds – for investing in space/building investment
 - o Like CSI in Toronto
- Artists are leaving already. People move to improve their conditions, affordability, etc
 - o Our real-estate market is a reflection of that ... ¼ from Toronto
- self-employment
- Education
- Business skills
- Linkages
- Residency programs like U of Windsor

- Emerging artist = living and working
- Like historic art district in Charleston & Alexandria, how can Hamilton's historic sites (SC) provide art spaces?
- Why are dealers/buyers not investing in Hamilton? How can we drive them here?
- Take advantages of move of film industries from Toronto
- Who is teaching creative about being entrepreneurs?
- Look at PORTLAND (Ore) & BUFFALO
 - o Buffalo tourism & culture website: "Explore Buffalo"

Category: I have no idea where this goes but I'm curious about...

- How do granting systems work?
 - o Who is the audience?
- Municipal involvement and why?
- What about a living arts centre at the waterfront bay area? Developers might support/fund as it makes condos & businesses attractive to tenants
- What about concession street on Hamilton mountain?
 - o Is there a stereotype about 'the mountain'?
- What is driving 'we' to leave?
 - o A lack of meaningful audience is apart from art crawl – which is not to say one doesn't exist but it needs to grow
- What support is there for artists with home studios not taking up additional Hamilton real estate?
 - o Any compensation?
- How about support services for artists? Publicity, promotion, grant writing, sales marketing, tech?
 - o Share costs of retraining?
- Who is NOT here?
- Film industry needs space where: traffic noise is minimal (if indoors, brick walls, triple glazed windows)
- Film industry needs space which is large enough that a film crew can fit in there (with cameras & equipment)
- A Hamilton artists collective website
 - o One stop to find out anything
- Where the music club scene is in Hamilton and why it's so much less vibrant seeming (ie. To make it, musicians play in Toronto where people pay for shows)
- How can we better use the Arts Advisory Commission of the city?
 - o Can they advise / sit in on certain projects?
- Can intentionally places residencies help activate new creative neighbourhoods?
 - o Mountain / Flamborough / rural space residencies
- Helping artists purchase property is essential
- Where are we going next?
- Shared space with other not-for-profits (mutual programming)
 - o Example: disenfranchised populations
- Take advantage of empty industrial warehouse space
- What about proposing a non-tax system for artists in Hamilton property-wise?
- Established businesses, as 'anchor' tenants surrounded by creative individual artists?
- How do we get transit to the affordable locations?

- Turn city centre into a new hub – it's empty / sunny / central / currently a brutal misuse of prime space
- Retreat – natural quiet
- Space matching
- Mentoring / coaching
- Connections equipment
- Connections:
 - 1) Artists: build/form collectives
 - 2) Private investors supply space to collectives
 - we need a connection service
- Church on King just east of Delta ideal artist space
- Need to decentralize perception of arts scene
 - Multiple nodes that include JSN but add others to the mix
- Build in upcoming spaces like waterfront