Dear Arts Anchors, Funders and Partners:

Thank you for joining us on January 28th. We appreciate your time and willingness to engage with us and each other around the issues, challenges and opportunities we often only discuss one-on-one or within our organizations.

After some time to absorb that very rich conversation here is a summary of what I heard:

• There is clear interest in continuing to meet and ensuring inclusive representation in all conversations.
• There is a strong desire to shift the narrative about Baltimore and highlight positive stories related to our arts and cultural assets AND to focus collective action on what we can do together in the near term.
• No single leader in any sector should be expected to carry this work alone. We need to lead together and there are actions we can take to reframe the challenges and move toward opportunities

An overarching question to inform future work might be first: What are our shared values and vision in guiding our collaborative work?

The 3 big issues that resonated loud and clear to this note taker and in this order of priority:

• The current Baltimore narrative
• Public Safety
• Public transportation

**The current narrative about Baltimore is our greatest challenge and our greatest opportunity.**

• Taking hold of and changing the Baltimore narrative – and ALL that it means
• Doing our own internal and collective work to ensure we are not feeding the negative narrative and not fueling racial bias
• The Arts can and should lead on this issue
• The through-line of our narrative should be investing in the city’s strongest assets – the arts and culture community

Some questions to ask ourselves:

1. What is our opportunity as an arts community at large to rewrite Baltimore’s current narrative and make it our own?
2. Are we ready to focus from the inside out? Changing first how we talk to each other about our shared history, our institutions and ourselves?
3. Specifically, are we all comfortable acknowledging and talking about racial bias, structural and institutional racism, and how we will work together to remove it from our individual and shared narratives/communications?
4. What is our opportunity to engage in, support and enhance the rebranding work initiated by Visit Baltimore?
5. How can we work together to balance media bias with positive stories?
6. What are our opportunities to generate national and international stories?
7. Who are the creatives who can help us with the message and how can we support them as partner and collaborators in this work?
8. How can we be guided by the work of independent artists making a positive impact and pushing for a positive narrative already?
9. How are we each using new media and how can we use it together?
10. Other cities have been successful in doing this – what lessons can we learn from them?

Public Safety – Reframing this as an opportunity we can do something about.
In our meeting I heard us already sharing honest feedback and asking questions that began to reframe the issue.

Some questions to ask ourselves first:

1. What are our opportunities as an arts community to influence improved public safety?
2. What does our organizational “welcome sign” look like?
3. How does our staff, at every level of the organization, engage with visitors inside and outside of our facilities?
4. Are our facilities and our operations contributing to our neighborhoods by offering a safe and welcoming place? inside? Outside? On the immediate block? In the neighborhood?
5. How do we each frame our organization and buildings as an asset to our communities?
6. How do each welcome our immediate community into our facilities and to our events?
7. How do we each specifically welcome youth?
8. How do we each talk about our surrounding community in our print materials, web, press/event releases etc.?

Transportation – An opportunity to be strong regional advocates

1. What are our opportunities as a community of artists, arts and cultural organizations, anchors, and partners to influence improved transportation systems?
2. How can we engage our influential boards in a deeper understanding of this challenge and as advocates for opportunities to improve transit?

NEXT STEPS:

Maryland Philanthropy Network will lend its convening capacity and support to our arts councils and other representative groups to bring artists, arts anchors, arts funders and others to a relevant, broader and inclusive group to shape and inform collaborative efforts.

Visit Baltimore has offered to host a next meeting and brief attendees on its evolving marketing and civic pride campaigns.